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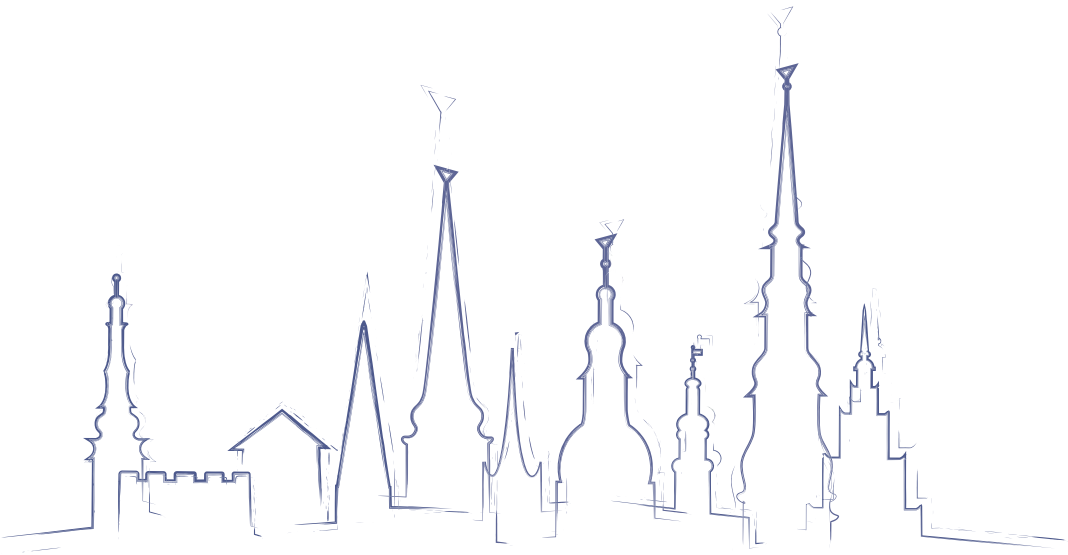

The Rīga Conference Papers 2019

NATO at 70 in the Baltic Sea Region

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The Rīga Conference Papers 2019 offer a collection of articles reflecting on the security of the Baltic Sea region amid the 70th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Authors from the region and beyond discuss the transforming regional security policies and realities. Particular attention is devoted to the Transatlantic link, Baltic defence, as well as the role of Russia in the regional security constellation and its relations with NATO. Also issues beyond the traditional regional security challenges are addressed.

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Note by the Director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs

The Latvian Institute of International Affairs and its partners are delighted to share a collection of essays on NATO and security developments in the Baltic Sea region. The discussion comes in the context of important anniversaries for the Transatlantic alliance: 70 years for NATO and 15 years for Baltic NATO membership. The Rīga Conference Papers 2019 build on the accomplishments of previous annual publications of the Rīga Conference. The Papers provide an assessment of challenges and transforming realities, and outline the prospects and scenarios for regional security. An outstanding group of distinguished international experts offer their opinions on NATO and the evolving Transatlantic link, the changing security policies, the role of Russia and the issues beyond the traditional security. We acknowledge the generous support provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the NATO Public Diplomacy Division. As this volume of articles demonstrates, solidarity and solid partnerships remain indispensable in order to efficiently navigate the times of uncertainty and shape regional and national security strategies in a wider Transatlantic framework. We hope you will enjoy reading our publication!

Andris Sprūds
Director, Latvian Institute of International Affairs

Address to the Participants of the Rīga Conference 2019

Edgars Rinkēvičs
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia

Dear participants of the Rīga Conference 2019,

For people interested in better understanding the strategic environment of the Baltic Sea region, it has become a great tradition to come to Riga, the beautiful and vibrant capital of Latvia, for the annual Conference that started in 2006. I am very delighted that this year you have marked the Conference in your very busy calendars and found a moment to stop by. This indicates that you are ready to contribute to a very noble cause–the security and the wellbeing of the Baltic Region and Europe.

As always, at the time of the Rīga Conference, many areas and issues attract our attention. This year is no different. The Baltic Sea security environment is shaped by a great deal of mutually related processes. There is no shortage of strategically important developments. For the European Union, this year's elections of the European Parliament have brought new dynamics and changes in the political composition of the highest level of European politics. Although a very complicated task, this might be the easiest part of what the citizens of Europe and the international community expect of the EU. The new team of EU's leaders have to politically energise the Union in a way that increases support of it, both among its citizens and consequently among its member states. The flip side of the coin is Europe's international role, its ability to promote and defend its values as well as its political, economic and security interests globally. I see this role as one of the very first priorities of the renewed European Union. This is why the Rīga Conference begins with the panel "Can the EU Reform Itself?"

For 70 years, NATO has been the backbone of transatlantic security. The only way the Alliance has been able to justify its importance to its allied countries was and is to fully grasp the changing transatlantic security environment and adjust to it. For that reason, a comprehensive and collective defence is the foundation of NATO's future defence. The Baltic Sea region today is secure and stable: through Enhanced Forward Presence of allies in the Baltic Sea region; through profound contributions to their own and transatlantic security provided by the Baltic States and Poland; through an appropriate level of financing allocated to the needs of defence; through bilateral cooperation of

allies and allied-partner cooperation. To ensure that it continues, NATO's security projection in the Baltic Sea region must remain a long-term task. And it has to be adjusted to the evolving security needs of the region. Allies that have not reached agreed targets of defence financing must act responsibly and provide their fair share to the defence architecture of the 21st century.

Having said that, I have to stress that although financing is critical for NATO's overall ability to carry out its tasks, it cannot be the only target to reach. NATO is the transatlantic collective defence organisation. And together we have to look for new ideas on how to make the Alliance more precisely tuned to the changing geopolitical picture. As with the EU, the people have to understand it.

We have to explore how the new dynamics of powers such as China, Russia and India, and previously isolated regions such as the Arctic, affect the security interests of the Baltic Sea. No region on the globe is far enough from Europe to be ignored.

Riga for a long time has been known as the centre of scientific research and skilful engineering. It provides a natural venue for participants of this year's Rīga Conference to examine risks and opportunities for democratic societies brought on by the accent on digital platforms, the gathering of data on a previously unprecedented scale, and the expansion of technological systems that use artificial intelligence. It is paramount to be able to navigate in these waters because technologies will affect our region's wellbeing and security more and more.

Welcome to the Rīga Conference and I encourage you to actively engage in discussions and Q&A sessions, and build your networks. That is the purpose of the Conference.

Preface.
NATO at 70 in the Baltic Sea Region

Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga
President of the Republic of Latvia (1999-2007)
President of the World Leadership Alliance / Club de Madrid

The Rīga Conference 2019 falls in a year that marks a whole series of anniversaries for events related to security in the Baltic sea Region. The first of these is, of course, the 70th anniversary of the creation of the North Atlantic Alliance on 4 April 1949, a major landmark in international relations which signalled the West's concerted readiness to defend its values in the ensuing decades of the Cold War. The other anniversaries mark the passage of smaller numbers of years, but their impact on the Baltic region, Europe and the world was no less significant.

Only four years before the 1949 founding date of NATO, Europe had been living the bloodiest moments in its long and bloodied history. In April 1945, the German Third Reich was in the last stages of its agony, the Soviet Union, as an ally of France, Great Britain and the USA in WWII, had its armies rampaging across East Germany and the rest of Eastern Europe, and the official defeat of Nazism was only a month away. New maps were drawn, and Germany was quartered into four (unequally sized) occupation zones by the then Allies. Nazism had been defeated, but Communism as an equally totalitarian ideology continued to thrive. Proud of its WWII achievements, the Soviet Union successfully continued an aggressive expansionist policy, continuing to acquire new vassal states in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe through military occupation and the installation of local puppet governments. By the time the Soviet occupation zone of a defeated Germany had turned into the totalitarian German "Democratic" Republic and the other three occupation zones were allowed to unite and form the truly democratic *Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Europe was effectively split into two antagonistic halves, divided by a North-South line of fiercely guarded borders. For the ensuing half-century, Eastern Europe would remain isolated behind an Iron Curtain that was more literal than metaphoric.

As for the Baltic Sea, in 1949 it was just as sharply divided as the European continent. The length of its Eastern and Southern littoral was under the iron grip of Moscow and its satellite countries and only its Northern and Western coasts belonged to the free world, namely Sweden and Finland as neutral countries. Only Denmark, located at the entrance to the Baltic, had both full control of its own borders and the protection of NATO available for its security. The borders of

the DDR reached far toward the West, right to the outskirts of the old Hanseatic city of Lübeck, and only a small stretch of the coast of Schleswig-Holstein gave West Germany access to the Baltic Sea.

It is symbolically significant that there was no peace treaty signed at the end of WWII, but only an armistice. Confidence in lasting peace took time to develop. Two years after the end of the war, on 4 March 1947, France and the United Kingdom signed a Treaty of Alliance and Mutual assistance that was specifically aimed at the eventuality of an attack by either Germany or the Soviet Union. The following year, 1948, this alliance turned into the Western Union through the inclusion of the Benelux countries (all of which had suffered German occupation during the recent war). Soon Portugal, Norway, Denmark and Iceland expressed the wish to join, as did Italy, a defeated Axis member now committed to democracy. It was only with the establishment of a formal transatlantic link, however, that a North Atlantic Treaty Organization could be born in 1949, thereby acknowledging the role of its two North American members in defending their European allies in both World Wars. The collective defence clauses of NATO formalised the commitment by both the United States and Canada to continue defending the freedoms of Western Europe in the future. Greece and Turkey joined in 1952, thus lowering the territorial tensions between the two countries and establishing a geo-strategically crucial presence of NATO in the Eastern Mediterranean. It took another six years, however, until May 1955, before a united West Germany was permitted to rearm and become a member of the Alliance. Mistrust of German military might had not entirely disappeared, and the continued heavy military presence of the USA in Germany went hand in hand with thinly veiled concerns that Germany should not become militarily too powerful. As the saying went at the time, the idea was "to keep the Germans down and the Russians out". This was largely acceptable to the West German population, who had paid much too dearly for the military ambitions of their Führer in the recent past, so much so, that both citizens and politicians came to take for granted that Germany had a special dispensation to spend proportionally less on its defence than other members of the same Alliance.

As alliances go, by 1955 NATO was a daring joint effort between countries that still very recently had been mortal enemies, namely the Western Allies of WWII as well as West Germany and Italy as former Axis partners. Both losers and victors among the early members made equally firm commitments to democratic forms of governance and a free market economy as a solid basis for peace and prosperity. Today, 70 years after the founding of the Alliance, it is clear that it

has been remarkably successful in achieving precisely the aims for which it was created, serving as a serious security deterrent and ensuring that, through decades of tensions between diametrically opposed ideologies, the Cold War remained just that, instead of degenerating into a nuclear Armageddon. No doubt, this success could be largely attributed to the combined military and economic might of the United States as a hegemon, but the European members did make a solid contribution to collective security, including the nuclear power acquired by France and the United Kingdom. In a decades-long atmosphere of security deficit, NATO grew rather like a crystal grows in a supersaturated chemical solution: first coming to embrace 12 countries, then growing to 15, with newly democratic Spain joining only in 1982. What is even more remarkable is that the Alliance was able to survive the end of the Cold War and even to continue expanding after it. That, however, brings us to another memorable year ending in the magical number 9, namely 1989, and the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

There are few events in recent history that have had such a visually striking, deeply emotional and lasting political and economic impact as the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. While the Iron Curtain was a very real barrier of barbed wires, guard towers and mine-fields around the borders of communist "workers' paradises", keeping the inhabitants from escaping to the free world, the Berlin Wall had become the easily recognizable symbol of a totalitarian power's reliance on brute force and coercion in order to survive. When the Wall was breached on the night of 9 November 1989, the whole world became witness and rejoiced along with the participants to the event – the young men climbing over the breach, the many hands hammering away at the hateful barrier, the streams of people charging across a border forced open by a massive demonstration of a collective will for freedom. After all, the blockade of West Berlin by the Soviet occupation forces in 1948, refusing access by land to the other three occupation forces, had served as a wake-up call to the Western powers about the depth of the open animosity and hatred toward all things Western that was a hallmark of Leninist-Stalinist doctrine, harking all the way back to the 1917 Revolution.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was the first step in the reunification of Germany and was immediately followed by the opening up of the formerly hermetically closed borders of Hungary and other Satellite countries. The Soviet Union seemingly still remained untouched in its constituent territories, but even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the first serious cracks had begun to appear in its very foundations. The year 1989 also happened to mark the 50th anniversary of the pre-war

pact of friendship between Hitler and Stalin. Signed on 23 August 1939 by their respective foreign ministers and generally known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, it contained secret protocols about carving up the Baltic countries and Poland between the two tyrants, each of them naturally secretly intent on acquiring the whole region. As this major anniversary approached, the Popular Fronts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had taken undoubted risks in publicising the existence and the content of the secret protocols as proof and a reminder of the illegitimacy in international law of their occupation and annexation. The inhabitants of the three Baltic countries seized the opportunity offered by the anniversary date on 23 August 1989 to publicly challenge the Soviet propaganda myth that their populations had asked to be admitted into the Soviet Union and to announce to the world that they were ready to reclaim their legitimate right to independence. In a remarkable achievement of transnational cooperation, two million people were organised into forming a living human chain, joining hands all across the three countries, proclaiming to the world that they were ready to reclaim their rights. Less than a year later Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia issued official declarations of renewed independence, and the three countries became truly free again after the failure of the Putsch of 19 August 1991 in Moscow. By the time the Soviet Union was officially dissolved in December 1991, the Baltic Sea had finally become a sea equally free of access all around its shores.

As the Soviet Union collapsed, there were those who deplored its disappearance as the counter-balancing hegemon in a bipolar world, leaving the United States as the only hegemon around. In that, the Western pundits bemoaning a newly unipolar world were echoing the lament of Russian President V. Putin, who had openly declared that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the biggest catastrophe of the whole 20th century. Clearly, in his mind there was no difference between Russia and the Soviet Union, hence he saw it as his task in life to restore as much of the Union's former glory to Russia as he possibly could. Such an attitude did not bode well for those countries at whose cost this former glory had been achieved, especially those on the littoral of the Baltic Sea, whose renewed independence had closed the window to Europe that Peter the Great had taken such pains to open. True, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were independent again, but could they possibly feel secure, three small countries with a large, still powerful and visibly greedy neighbour on one side and two peaceful but neutral countries on the other? Clearly, they had no realistic guarantees for their freedoms

unless they became more closely integrated into both European and transatlantic transnational structures.

In celebrating landmarks of passing time, so-called "round" numbers serve as good mnemonic aids, reminding us of where we come from and clarifying the directions into which we are now moving. 15 years is not in that sense a major anniversary, but I do believe it needs to be celebrated together with the other momentous occurrences of anniversary years ending with the digit nine. I am thinking, of course of the "Bing Bang" expansion of NATO, voted at the Prague summit of 2002 and entering into effect on 30 April 2004, fifteen years ago. What was achieved thereby was neither self-evident nor easily achieved. Ever since the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, there had been pacifist voices in the West (echoing thereby those issuing out of Russia) who claimed that, having no declared enemy, NATO should follow the same path by dissolving. Why spend money on defence, when there is no visible enemy anywhere on the horizon? Just think of all the other things that could be done with the money deflected away from defence spending! Fortunately for us all, less narrowly parsimonious minds prevailed, and the Western powers did not vote to demolish the collective security edifice that had taken decades of concerted efforts to construct. Not only did they decide to keep it, but even to rejuvenate and reform it. Most important of all, the then NATO member countries had the courage to risk displeasing Moscow and voted to enlarge the Alliance by admitting Central and Eastern European countries that had been members of the now-dissolved Warsaw pact: both Poland as a Baltic Sea country and the landlocked Czech Republic and Hungary.

Apart from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, four former communist Central and Eastern European states plus Albania also started clamouring for admission to NATO. Not all of these requests were received with equal enthusiasm by the then members and intensive diplomatic efforts had to be deployed, mostly to counter fears that extending NATO further along the Baltic Sea would most definitely displease the Russian Federation. Mercifully, this argument as well was countered by reemphasizing the basic principle that only members of the Alliance should have a right to decide its policy. A further obstacle in the path to admission was the strict requirement for tangible reforms and improvements in governance. These demands provided an enormously effective impetus for each candidate country to tackle tasks that were necessary, but not always easy to accomplish nor wildly popular with the electorate. When membership was ultimately achieved (together with EU membership for the Baltic Sea countries),

a major step forward had been made in these countries' path to catching up to half a century of political and economic stagnation (like Sleeping Beauty behind her wall of briars).

The major challenge for the future of the Baltic Sea region still remains its security. This will require first of all a continued and credible political commitment, as well as the physical presence of NATO forces, with both equipment and boots on the ground as part of the Enhanced Forward presence. Before 2014, any fears of attack or invasion were largely ridiculed. After the invasion and annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, such scenarios are no longer a laughing matter.

Rotating NATO Air Policing missions have proved their importance ever since 2004, responding to incessant, deliberately provocative flight violations and incursions into Baltic airspace by Russian military aircraft. (In 2017 alone, NATO fighters scrambled 130 times to intercept Russian military aircraft). The openness of the Baltic Sea also needs to be constantly safeguarded, as the nature of yearly Russian military manoeuvres indicates. As an example: the "Ocean Shield" military exercises of the first week of August 2019 played out the theme of blocking access to the Baltic Sea, using ships from the Kaliningrad Oblast as well as from St Petersburg. In recent years, other major joint military exercises with Belarus have included tens of thousands of participants, playing out such scenarios as "How to attack and occupy a small country on the Baltic Sea" or "How to prevent a small NATO member on the Baltic Sea to receive help from its NATO allies in case of an attack". A serious NATO presence in the Baltics is needed to serve as a warning and a deterrent to any potential invaders, not just for the sake of the survival of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and even possibly Poland, but for the security of all other member countries of the Alliance, especially those on the European continent.

It also goes without saying that security in the Baltic Sea region depends on a strong NATO, one to which the leaders of member nations are seriously committed, a NATO in which member states commit an equal proportion of their GDP to their own defence and that of their allies, and where joint procurement and effective interoperability are more than just pious wishes.

The Baltic Sea region can become a serious player in building a Europe that holds a world power commensurate with the size of its population and the strength of its collective economy. The region can make significant contributions in facing the global and local challenges that are and will be confronting the European Union. The Continent as a whole has to keep seeking the right equilibrium between mutual

solidarity and the effective pooling of collective forces on the one hand, and concerns about preserving national identities and cultures on the other. The Continent has to keep fighting xenophobia and extremism, but it also needs to acknowledge the fears, anxieties and uncertainties felt by many of its citizens. The exit of Great Britain from the EU will no doubt be a loss to the union. Let us hope that the historical commitment of the UK to NATO will remain undiminished. Europe is a great patch-work of countries with different histories, it is a mosaic of languages, religions and cultures. It has enormous creative and innovative potential and its progress to date has been achieved by taking one step at a time, decision by decision, country by country, region by region. Among the latter, let us hope that the Baltic Sea region will remain a region of peace and security, thus paving the way for its continued vitality and prosperity.

THE TRANSATLANTIC LINK AND THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Leveraging the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Two Years on

Christian Leuprecht, Alexander Lanoszka, Jayson Derow and Karolina Muti

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 stimulated greater defence cooperation throughout the Baltic littoral. Concerns about Russian aggression have once again made deterrence and territorial defence a priority for NATO and member states located along the so-called north-eastern flank. In July 2016 at the Warsaw Summit, NATO member states sought to adjust the Alliance's force posture, building on the deterrence and assurance measures it had adopted two years prior at the Wales Summit; it agreed to deploy the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP). Since early 2017, the Allies have been implementing this initiative across the Baltic states and Poland, which consists of four multinational battalion-sized battlegroups, to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, led respectively by the four Framework Nations of Great Britain, Canada, Germany, and the United States. Contemporaneously, the three Baltic countries have built upon existing cooperation frameworks like Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT), Baltic Airspace Surveillance Network (BALTNET) and Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL) to strengthen ties among their defence establishments. Poland, too, has joined these efforts, contributing forces not only to the Canadian-led eFP battlegroup in Latvia but also to a brigade (LITPOLUKRBRIG) that features staff members, battalions, and other units from Lithuania and Ukraine. The Nordic countries of Finland, Norway, and Sweden are also bolstering their defence ties: Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO) has been revitalised, while Sweden and Finland have been reaching out to the United States and NATO.[1]

Still, regional defence cooperation remains fragmented and falls short of realising its full potential. A recent report by an Estonian think tank observes: "there is a distinct impression that none of the three Baltic states regard trilateral military cooperation as an absolute priority, and that they only invoke its ideals as a matter of political ritual."[2] Each Baltic country's priority is to work bilaterally

1 Håkon Lunde Saxi, "The Rise, Fall and Resurgence of Nordic Defence Cooperation," *International Affairs*, vol. 95, no. 3 (2019), 659-680; and Juha Pyykönen and Stefan Forss, *Deterrence in the Nordic-Baltic Region: The Role of the Nordic Countries Together with the U.S. Army* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College Press, 2019), 73-83.

2 Tomas Jermalavicius et al, "NATO's Northeast Quartet: Prospects and Opportunities for Baltic-Polish Defence Cooperation," *International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS) Policy Paper* (November 2018), 6.

with the United States. Much to the chagrin of some of its NATO partners, Poland has been petitioning the United States to station permanent military forces on its territory. Absent a more robust effort at multilateralism the security architecture in the Baltic region risks assuming a hub-and-spokes character whereby the United States has strong linkages with local partners, which in turn have weak ties among themselves. Even the eFP battalions deployed in the Baltic region may ironically be complicit in encouraging bilateralism at the expense of multilateralism: by way of example, Canada's own defence relations with Latvia and each of the member states that contribute to the eFP in Latvia take on a bilateral character.

In this short essay, we argue that Canada and its eFP partners must take a broader view of the eFP deployment. To be sure, the immediate deterrence mission is essential: Russia is an antagonistic international actor that flaunts international norms and rules while its intentions cause much anxiety amongst its western neighbours. However, the eFP is slated to be operational until 2023, at least in Latvia, and Russia is not going anywhere. Political succession will be a key question in Russia's next presidential election, scheduled for 2024, which will generate even more uncertainty over Russia's future international behaviour. Concomitantly, transatlantic relations have grown tense since the United States has called into question its reliability as a security partner, whether as a function of its changing strategic goals or the idiosyncrasies of President Donald Trump.[3] In the medium term, then, Canada and its partners in the eFP battlegroup should come to see the mission not merely as a tactical deployment but more so as an opportunity to develop cohesion and collective competencies that will enable NATO missions elsewhere and to forge an operational partnership within the Alliance with proven synergies that its partners can leverage to exert influence at the NATO negotiating table.

The eFP in the short-term

The multifaceted purpose of the eFP battlegroups is well known: an army mission to reassure those members most alarmed about Russia, to strengthen local deterrence and defence measures, and to signal to Russia the Alliance's resolve and unity. Each of these missions is deceptively simple. How much reassurance is necessary depends on the threat assessment. A greater military threat needs

3 For a pessimistic assessment of the Trump presidency for U.S. alliances, see Joseph S. Nye Jr, "The Rise and Fall of American Hegemony from Wilson to Trump," *International Affairs*, vol. 95, no. 1 (2019), 63–80. On U.S. retrenchment more generally, see Luis Simón, "Understanding US Retrenchment in Europe," *Survival*, vol. 57, no. 2 (2015), 157-172.

a more robust response. Strong deterrence measures could be a source of reassurance, but they could also be provocative if the threat assessment mistakes defensive intentions for revisionist intentions. A weak deployment could inadvertently signal irresolution, but a strong deployment could stoke fears of encirclement.[4]

NATO's members have sought to square these circles by carefully designing the eFP battlegroups: two nuclear-armed countries are implicated as Framework Nations (Great Britain and the United States), the economic powerhouse of continental Europe (Germany) is another. That 23 NATO members are involved conveys a respectable degree of cohesion. The size and placement of the eFP battlegroups in their Host Countries indicate their lack of wherewithal to undertake offensive operations against Russia. Having become operational in early 2017, the troops that make up national contributions to the battlegroups deploy on a rotational basis.[5]

Absent a permanent stationing of forces in these relatively newer members of the Alliance, NATO can claim compliance with the NATO-Russia Founding Act (1997), which provides for no "additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces" to be placed on the territory of NATO's newest members.[6] But insistence on the NATO-Russia Founding Act by some NATO Allies may actually undermine the security and stability of Europe. Russian President Vladimir Putin seeks to divide the Transatlantic Alliance by exploiting disagreement within the Alliance. Rotational eFP deployments by member states have thus continued apace since Trump won the 2016 U.S. presidential election, months after the 2016 Warsaw Summit. Concern over Trump as regards to the eFP deployment has been twofold. On the one hand, over the course of the campaign he opined that NATO was outmoded. He chided treaty Allies for not doing their fair share in shouldering the common defence burden, even warning that not spending more on their defence burden would discourage the United States to come to their defence.[7] On the other hand, he has been reluctant to criticise the Russian leadership and has repeatedly articulated a desire to seek Russian cooperation in international matters. This reticence has been especially worrying in light of Russian interference in U.S. domestic politics. Fears abound

4 On these dilemmas, see Alexander Lanoszka and Michael A. Hunzeker, *Conventional Deterernce and Landpower in Northeastern Europe* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2019), 12-20.

5 For an analysis that compares rotational deployments and permanently stationed forces, see John R. Deni, *Rotational Deployments versus Forward Stationing: How Can the Army Achieve Assurance and Deterrence Efficiently and Effectively?* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2017).

6 "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation," NATO, May 27, 1997, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm

7 James Sperling and Mark Webber, "Trump's Foreign Policy and NATO: Exit and Voice," *Review of International Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3 (2019), 511-526.

that Trump might seek a grand bargain with Russia at the expense of NATO and its member states. The worst fears have yet to materialise: NATO still exists, U.S. deployments in Europe have remained intact and even expanded, while U.S. armed forces continue to participate in military exercises throughout the Baltic region and elsewhere.[8]

The eFP in the medium term

Transatlantic relations thus remain in crisis. The Trump administration has imposed trade tariffs on the European Union, warned against defence initiatives that do not fall under the auspices of NATO, continued to criticise supposedly unsatisfactory burden-sharing, and prefers to engage European countries bilaterally, as if to divide-and-conquer the continent, which plays right into Russian hands. The Trump administration's aversion to being constrained by arms control arrangements further destabilises transatlantic relations. After blows to U.S. credibility as the guarantor of the global financial system in 2008, free trade, and the liberal multilateral order, such U.S. behaviour further calls into question the reliability of the United States as a security guarantor and a politically reliable partner. Against this backdrop we make a case for leveraging eFP deployments more strategically, beyond the short-term tactical needs of deterring and defending against potential Russian revisionism.

EFP battlegroups enable NATO countries to learn to work together militarily and to strengthen operational synergies. These benefits in turn allow them to act as a more cohesive bloc that is less dependent on, and potentially more assertive against, the United States. Acute collective action problems abound across the Baltic region, which has key gaps in regional defence cooperation. As several analysts observe, "the Baltic states became very focused on cultivating, on a bilateral basis, relations with the lead nations and key partners of the eFP battlegroups deployed on their soil."[9] Although intuitive and understandable, these hub-and-spoke arrangements may actually exacerbate fragmentation of NATO: Lithuania purchases major weapons systems from Germany; Poland petitions the United States for permanent military basing; and Estonia builds on its legacy of defence cooperation with Great Britain left from their collective experience in Afghanistan.

8 Alexander Lanoszka, "Alliances and Nuclear Proliferation in the Trump Era," *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 4 (2018), 85-101.

9 Tomas Jermalavicius *et al,* "NATO's Northeast Quartet: Prospects and Opportunities for Baltic-Polish Defence Cooperation," *International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS) Policy Paper* (November 2018), 5.

In the meantime, joint procurement remains under-developed as do joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities to monitor Russian activity together and develop collective early warning mechanisms. Poland's contribution of forces to the Canadian-led battlegroup in Latvia enhances intra-regional connections, but not among the Baltic states themselves. Gains over the last five years cannot be taken for granted: the Battlegroups must be leveraged beyond simply improving ties between Framework Nations and Host Countries.

In effect, the eFP deployments in the Baltic region could serve as an experiment for wider defence cooperation amongst clusters of NATO countries, the Canadian-led battlegroup in Latvia being first and foremost among them. This Battlegroup is the quaintest of them all. Canada is not a European power and thus has less obvious interests at stake in the Baltic region than other Framework Nations.[10] As a percentage of its gross domestic product, it spends about as much (or as little) as Germany on defence. Yet its political heft in the region and economic interests are much smaller. Still, Canada is a credible champion of liberal internationalist values that are broadly shared in the Baltic region. The Canadian Armed Forces has a robust record of demonstrating its operational utility.[11] The participation of two apparently willing and able south European countries – Italy and Spain – makes the battlegroup in Latvia a good testbed for developing not only transatlantic, but also trans-European operational cooperation in practice. The latter is far from obvious, given the different perceptions of Russia as a threat actor among allies, which largely follows an east versus south divide in Europe.

Italy's geostrategic priority, for instance, is the Euro-Mediterranean area (the Mediterranean basin), which bears directly on its willingness and ability to contribute to NATO's three core tasks: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security. Italy has a marked preference for the crisis management pillar, an expertise honed over more than twenty years of involvement across many international missions.[12] However, Italy's activism in missions is tempered by a reluctance to commit to collective defence since Italians generally

10 Alexander Lanoszka, "From Ottawa to Riga: Three Tensions in Canadian Defence Policy," *International Journal,* vol. 72, no. 4 (2017), 520-537.

11 Christian Leuprecht, Joel Sokolsky and Jayson Derow, "Paying It Forward: Canada's Renewed Commitment to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence," *International Journal,* vol. 74, no. 1 (2019), 162-171; and Christian Leuprecht, Joel Sokolsky and Jayson Derow, *On the Baltic Watch: The Past, Present, and Future of Canada's Commitment to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia* (Ottawa, Canada: MacDonald-Laurier Institute, 2018).

12 Italian Ministry of Defence, *White Paper for International Security and Defence*, July 2015.

do not regard Russia as a primary threat to their security.[13] Italy's approach towards Moscow has been softer than that of the majority of European allies; the election of the Giuseppe Conte's government reinforced Italy's stance: the ruling coalition expressed pro-Russian sentiments with a stated preference for rapprochement with the Kremlin.[14] Italy and other allies on the southern flank had sought to counter-balance NATO's increased engagement on the eastern flank with a sustained commitment to the southern flank. During a NATO Ministerial meeting in 2017, member states decided to establish NATO's Strategic Direction South Hub in Naples, an information-sharing organization with the aim "to better understand challenges and threats emanating from Africa and the Middle East."[15]

That Italy's geopolitical interests differ from collective defence needs in the Baltic states and Poland makes the battlegroup in Latvia an interesting case of a cluster composed by NATO states that do not share common priorities. The eFP initiative in Latvia encourages the participating states to overcome geographic divides, to exchange lessons learned, and to develop new skills and expertise by learning from each other, thereby increasing common understanding and interoperability. The presence of medium-sized allies in the battlegroup, with advanced capabilities (Spain) and robust experience in missions (Italy), stands to enhance information exchange and learning with other smaller countries, thus enhancing cooperation among a larger group of allies, beyond mere bilateral relations between the Host Country and the Framework Nation. Among the four Framework Nations, the Canadian-led battlegroup is uniquely positioned to leverage its diversity to develop connections between – and among – NATO members that might otherwise have little incentive to strengthen security and operational ties. Improved operational synergies and efficiencies among medium-size and smaller allies provides collective military and political leverage for these member states within the Alliance whose return on investment for countries such as Italy over the medium term might include newer allies such as Latvia eventually being able to contribute to initiatives such as NATO's Strategic Direction South Hub.

With the security of its members through collective defence as NATO's core mandate, the only way of assuring the security of a North

13 Alessandro Marrone and Karolina Muti, "How Italians View Their Defence? Active, Security-oriented, Cooperative and Cheap," *IAI Commentaries*, no. 19|39, June 21, 2019; and Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and Laboratorio di Analisi Politiche e Sociali (LAPS), "Italiani e difesa," *Documenti IAI*, April 2019, https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai1908.pdf

14 Luigi Sergio Germani and Jacopo Iacoboni, "Italy: Is the Turn to Russia Reversible?" in *The Kremlin's Trojan Horses 2.0: Russian Influence in Greece, Italy, and Spain* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, November 2017).

15 NATO Strategic Direction South – Hub, "Mission," https://thesouthernhub.org/about-us/mission

Atlantic region from conventional and non-conventional threats is by means of the capacity and capability of a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). Establishing NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) as part of the Forward Presence framework represents a visible and persistent presence wherever NATO is being challenged. NFIUs foster collaboration with domestic armed forces and facilitate the rapid deployment of the NATO VJTF in times of crisis.[16] Forging a political consensus among 29 NATO member states takes patience, effort and time. In cases where consensus exists despite no willingness to have a full NATO mission, the eFP deployment model could be used. For even the most basic task of territorial defence and deterrence, NATO may need to revert to what former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld called "coalitions of the willing" should it fail to prepare adequately for what is its raison d'être.[17] Enhanced readiness, deterrence, and collective defence initiatives conducted by NATO aside, smaller coalitions of willing NATO member states can improve overall readiness, interoperability, and effectiveness of the NATO force structure. Close cooperation entailed within a coalition of the willing "is underpinned by a mutual understanding of political intent, decision-making and authorization; secure capital-to-capital communications; and familiarity established through political-level training and exercises;" all of which increases procedural readiness and political agility.[18] This notion of cooperation in limited partnerships and coalitions under a Forward Presence framework is "borne out of pragmatic necessity, for efficiency or out of operational demand" in response to a regional security crisis in which the member state confronted by such a threat is militarily and/or politically unwilling or unable to intervene.[19]

Within this deployment model, NATO member states still leverage the operating framework of the Alliance – its institutions, resources, and command structure – while unwilling member states have the option to abstain from such actions or to oppose the operation as a whole (but not veto it). Akin to the eFP as a deployment model, the concept of select states resolving to act in concert and to intervene with greater speed, depth and efficiency than the Alliance as a whole is not new per se.[20] For example, "NATO operations in the Balkans, Iraq

16 "NATO Force Integration Units," NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, https://shape.nato.int/operations/nato-force-integration-units.

17 Martin Zapfe, "Threatened from Within? NATO, Trump and Institutional Adaptation," *Strategic Trends 2017: Key Trends in Global Affairs*, eds. Oliver Thränert and Martin Zapfe (Zurich, CH: Center for Security Studies, 2017).

18 Jans Karlijn, "Strengthening NATO's Readiness Through Coalitions," King's College London News Centre, April 8, 2019, https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/strengthening-natos-readiness-through-coalitions

19 Ibid.

20 Martin Zapfe, "Threatened from Within? NATO, Trump and Institutional Adaptation," *Strategic Trends 2017: Key Trends in Global Affairs*, eds. Oliver Thränert and Martin Zapfe (Zurich, CH: Center for Security Studies, 2017), 88.

and Afghanistan have forged small groupings of allies and partners, comfortable working together and with similar political appetites for military intervention."[21] Deploying a coalition of the willing under a Forward Presence model pays considerable dividend insofar as "[l]ike-minded partners often share strategic and regional interests and can be more agile in terms of political consensus and decision-making, let alone military deployment. They have a willingness and capability to.... [r]each with the 'speed of relevance' as former U.S. Defence Secretary Mattis put it."[22] Together, a Forward Presence deployment model assembling a coalition of the willing would be relatively low-risk while developing NATO member states' capability, interoperability, training and readiness.

The eFP deployment model is elastic and can still serve core functions. For example, in the case of a crisis in the Baltics and Poland, while member states are preoccupied with forging a NATO consensus on a NATO response, eFP Framework Nations and Contributing States can move on a decision to support a member state. The eFP deployment is synonymous with deterrence and collective defence. The modus operandi of the eFP, then, is enhanced deterrence, which entails a quicker and more agile response than waiting on the Alliance as a whole. For enhanced deterrence through a persistent military presence acting as a "tripwire" to be credible, the Alliance needs to be willing and capable of imposing unacceptable costs in response to adversarial aggression. To this end, the recent NATO Readiness Initiative, with its call for a "Four Thirties" reactive approach, "requiring the Allies to be able to deploy in the case of a crisis in Europe up to 30 battalion-sized battlegroups, 30 squadrons of aircraft and 30 warships in no more than 30 days" is meant to improve force readiness.[23] As Lindley-French contends, this approach comes "... to grips with the force levels and structures credible 21st century deterrence demands by enabling rapid reinforcement of forward deployed forces in an emergency.... It is vital that NATO forces are held at sufficient readiness in sufficient mass to plug the dangerous extant gap between spearhead forces, follow-on forces (NATO Response Force), and the bulk of the NATO force structure, much of which would take up to 120 days to mobilise in an emergency."[24]

21 Jans Karlijn, "Strengthening NATO's Readiness Through Coalitions," King's College London News Centre, April 8, 2019, https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/strengthening-natos-readiness-through-coalitions

22 Ibid.

23 Kalev Stoicesu and Pauli Järvenpää, "Contemporary Deterrence: Insights and Lessons From Enhanced Forward Presence," *International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS) Policy Paper*, January 2019.

24 Julian Lindley-French, "NATO@70: Still Adapting After All These Years," *NATO Defence College Policy Brief*, no. 7, March 2019, 3.

Enhanced cooperation offers a powerful rejoinder to the criticism that NATO countries are not doing enough to share the burden. Although European allies are increasing their defence budgets, the implementation of deterrence by denial – that is, complicating possible efforts by adversaries to fulfil operational goals on the battlefield – through the implementation of full conventional force structures is seen as too expensive and politically contentious.[25] Ringsmose and Rynning suggest that initiative fatigue is partly a function of threat perception: "[s]ome allies see Russia as an opportunistic power that can be deterred by an enhanced tripwire, while others see threats from NATO's southern flank as being of far greater consequence to the Alliance's security and well-being. The former fear an over-geared policy towards Russia; the latter a geopolitical disequilibrium inside NATO if the east is allowed to trump the south."[26] By contributing 166 and 300 troops respectively to the eFP in Latvia, southern allies such as Italy and Spain prove that concrete, operational and political cooperation is feasible, an east-south divide in geopolitical interests notwithstanding.[27] In the case of Italy, contributing to the collective defence of eastern allies is a way to show its overall commitment to NATO and deflect criticism of its stagnant defence budget, which bucks the current trend in defence spending across Europe.

Allied commitment to the Baltic states and Poland in particular is also meant to persuade the Trump administration that "NATO was neither obsolete nor a club of states free-riding on American largesse as a means of shoring up the alliance."[28] U.S. support cannot be assumed. American presidents have long bemoaned allied burden-sharing. Under President Trump, such complaints have a new sense of political urgency. In light of President Trump's early public castigations, the reaffirmation of transatlantic solidarity through the implementation and sustainment of the eFP continues to take on even greater significance as the failure to assure the security of the Baltic states could surely mark the failure of the Alliance itself. At the same time, NATO Allies have the collective military and economic capacity to increase their individual military expenditures and to invest in NATO's policies and initiatives.

NATO's resourcing scheme is essential to demonstrating that it remains steadfast and committed to the security of all its members.

25 Julian Lindley-French, "NATO@70: Still Adapting After All These Years," *NATO Defence College Policy Brief*, no. 7, March 2019, 3.

26 Jens Ringsmose and Sten Rynning, "Now for the Hard Part: NATO's Strategic Adaptation to Russia," *Survival*, vol. 59, no. 3 (2017), 135.

27 NATO, "Enhanced Forward Presence", *Fact Sheet*, NATO, July 2019, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_06/20190627_1906-factsheet_efp_en.pdf

28 James R. McKay, "Why Canada is Best Explained as a 'Reliable Ally' in 2017," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2018), 137-164.

The reassurance measures of resource allocation and financial contributions convey this message to adversaries and NATO member states alike. Beyond investments required to address the security challenges that confront NATO, "the alliance also relies on all its members to maintain military capabilities that can be used for collective operations. Without these capabilities, the deterrent effect of NATO – specifically, its ability to dissuade others from threatening the security of alliance members – will erode."[29]

Nevertheless, the eFP model has its challenges and so needs to be strengthened accordingly. In the Canadian-led battlegroup in Latvia, with forces drawn from eight contributing member states and thus more than twice the contributing states than the other three eFP country deployments, the inability to pre-position the VJTF equipment due to the diverse multinational structure of the eFP battlegroup in an area under imminent or pending threat could prove to be a liability: national forces have potentially conflicting rules of engagement and greater variation in military equipment. As several security analysts warn, "[t]he VJTF is not regionally aligned, so if a conflict in… one area erupts at the same time as another crisis requiring a NATO response, the VJTF might be unavailable."[30] The overall combat readiness and capacity of the battlegroups risks being compromised or relegated to "ineffective 'Frankenstein' battalions."[31] The eFP's efficacy thus hinges on its multinational components.

Beyond the operational and tactical-level challenges associated with the eFP battlegroups, there remains a far more strategic question regarding the role of Framework Nations and their Contributing States. The battlegroups are best suited to deter by preparedness through the use of punishment should the most dangerous scenario occur: a Russian military incursion into eastern NATO member states' territory. However, the probability of such a crisis is low. Thus, where the aspirations of the eFP remain lacking is with regard to such battlegroups' response to crises that will fall below the threshold of Article 5. Such crises could be the result of attributable cyberattacks, ethno-political discord instigated from abroad and foreign disinformation campaigns.[32] Indeed, as the 2017 Canadian defence policy review notes, the increasing use of hybrid warfare, cyberattacks, and emerging technologies by revisionist states within

29 Roland Paris, "Is Canada Pulling Its Weight in NATO?" Open Canada, May 9, 2014, https://www.opencanada.org/features/is-canada-pulling-its-weight-in-nato/.

30 Wesley Clark, Jüri Luik, Egon Ramms and Richard Shirreff, "Closing NATO's Baltic Gap," *ICDS Report* May 2016, 18.

31 Ibid.

32 John Deni, "NATO's Presence in the East: Necessary But Still Not Sufficient," *War on the Rocks*, June 27, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/06/natos-presence-in-the-east-necessary-but-still-not-sufficient/

the "grey zone" has established a "more diffuse environment in which an increasing number of actors can exercise varying degree of influence."[33] These threats are obviously subtler than a major invasion force backed by nuclear weapons. As such, NATO members may have to develop the capacity to be resilient against a wider spectrum of contingencies than in the past. Fulfilling these needs may require strengthened cyber-defences of governmental agencies and military installations, improved biosecurity (as evidenced in the Skripal case), and even forging strong civil societies and civil contingency agencies to make them less susceptible to unconventional Russian aggression.

The eFP as a deployment model to use elsewhere

After nearly two years of implementing its stated initiative, the eFP battlegroup demonstrates several key accomplishments and offers a robust model for NATO to use elsewhere. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly Defence and Security Committee notes that the necessary and sufficient conditions for which the eFP can be employed as a deployment model that addresses conventional threats beyond the north-eastern flank revolve around four fundamental messages that can be drawn from its response to the Russian threat.[34] They are:

1. That the Alliance is solid;
2. That the Alliance possesses more robust capabilities and capacities in a particular region thanks to the sharing of resources and burden;
3. That a limited hostile incursion in a particular area of confrontation would be deterred in such a way as not to antagonise the adversary; and
4. That capabilities in military mobility are available in a crisis situation despite potential bureaucratic delays in the NATO command and control structure.

Alliance solidarity

The multinational character of the eFP battlegroups provides strategic depth in terms of military effectiveness. Although it demonstrates Alliance solidarity, it may be perceived as an Achilles' heel at the operational level. Nevertheless, by including the Framework

33 *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, Canadian Department of National Defence, 2017, 51.

34 NATO Parliamentary Assembly, "Resolution on Reinforcing NATO's Deterrence in the East," *Defence and Security Committee*, November 19, 2018, 13.

Nations and Contributing States, the enhanced Forward Presence as a deployment model elsewhere spreads risk across multiple allies. Were an adversary to challenge the territorial integrity of a member state and to threaten the security of its people, NATO member states forwardly deployed in that particular region would likely incur causalities, catalysing a quicker and a more unified response from the Alliance. Spreading risk is nothing new for NATO. Consider the multinational formations during the Cold War. Most notably, "the former Allied Command Europe (ACE) Mobile Force-Land was a brigade-sized force comprising fourteen of NATO's then fifteen member states. It was meant to be quickly deployed to an emerging crisis zone and to be a tangible manifestation of allied solidarity."[35] The eFP as deployed against Russian aggression plays a similar role along the Alliance's north-eastern flank.

Robust capabilities and interoperability

The multinational character and interoperable capacity of the battlegroups is a key feature of the eFP concept. It signals allied solidarity and enables burden-sharing. Notably, NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina in "the mid 1990s was composed of three multinational divisions led by France, the United Kingdom and the United States as framework nations, while the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in the late 1990s and into the 2000s decade comprised five multinational brigades led by these three nations, as well as by Germany and Italy. In Afghanistan, ISAF's Regional Commands and Provincial Reconstruction Teams also relied virtually all cases on framework nation arrangements (...)."[36] Two decades of experience implementing a Framework Nation arrangement among European Allies' land, air and maritime force structures and during operations conditioned a bolder, more robust, and responsive approach to threats against the Alliance's treasures, interests and values. Such interoperability is encapsulated in the Framework Nations Concept proposed by Germany and adopted by NATO to rationalise European defence investments and optimise not only NATO's, but also European defence capabilities and capacities.[37]

Implementation of the Framework Nation model employed through the eFP framework offers an opportunity "to translate a NATO

35 John R. Deni, "Enhancing NATO's Forward Presence," *Carnegie Europe*, April 27, 2017, https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/68792

36 Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, "*The Framework Nations' Concept and NATO: Game Changer for a New Strategic Era Or Missed Opportunity?*" NATO Defence College Research Paper No. 132 (2016), 10.

37 Ibid.

commitment to enhance the readiness and responsiveness of Allied forces, in support of deterrence and defense… by shortening their notice-to-move, into a deeper and longer-term effort to strength the Alliance's overall capacity to counter a sudden and threatening concertation of forces and systems, both in regular warfare and asymmetric environments, on its periphery."[38] The Framework Nation model within the eFP framework distributes roles and responsibilities across the Alliance, "in such a way that a combination of optimization and specialization can leverage the unique capabilities and skill sets of each Ally."[39] When confronted with delays associated with the sometimes frustrating, but ultimately necessary form of seeking political consensus before undertaking major initiatives, long negotiations ensued before the inception of what would eventually become known as NATO's eFP framework.

Deterring different types of aggression

Mitigating the increasing security threats that challenge the interests and territorial integrity of the Alliance necessitates a substantive investment in more effective, efficient and capable military deployment models and tools to provide a means of deterrence but avoid antagonising the adversary. Two such tools can be leveraged. The first is an enhanced forward presence that would create serious costs for adversaries when it is prepared and deployed selectively "with clear responsibilities, pre-delegated authority and maximally harmonised rules of engagement."[40] The second is a conventional military engagement that can promote security and stability in a situation that is below the threshold of grey-zone conflict and, in turn, conflict short of major interstate war. Together, an enhanced forward presence and conventional military engagement can contribute to effective operational capacity and capability across a broad spectrum of military operations, up to and including interstate warfare. That is, an eFP deployment model has the ability to provide an efficient and effective means of achieving multiple objectives in accordance with NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept.[41]

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38 Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, "*The Framework Nations' Concept and NATO: Game Changer for a New Strategic Era Or Missed Opportunity?*" NATO Defence College Research Paper No. 132 (2016), 5.

39 Ibid.

40 Martin Zapfe, "Deterrence from the Ground Up," *Survival*, vol. 59, no. 3 (2017), 152. See also John R. Deni, *Military Engagement and Forward Presence: Down But Not Out as Tools to Shape and Win* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College Press, 2016).

41 See Strategic *Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, NATO, 2010.

Expeditious military mobility

The eFP concept is premised on NATO and its member states reacting promptly with the 40 000-strong Response Force. Absent forward deployed combat troops, the core function of the eFP as a "mobile tripwire" requires a rapid response of the VJTF. On Europe's north-eastern flank, this entails traversing the Suwałki Gap, as a heavy Russian military presence will likely interdict access to Baltic airspace and maritime lines. Rapid deployment of forces under a NATO command and control framework would encounter political and logistical hurdles. Politically, "NATO states would first have to consent to activation of the VJTF, which is anything but certain. Yet, even after a potential decision by the NATO Council on the deployment of the VJTF and early activation by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, the alliance would quickly encounter logistical hurdles. It would struggle to field the necessary strategic transport aircraft vital for any such deployment."[42]

From a conventional operational posture, NATO's "tripwire" deterrence, therefore, relies heavily on reinforcements being deployed on short notice from the centre to the periphery of the Alliance.[43] Notice-to-move and notice-to-effect timelines will need to improve to ensure that any adversary would not outmatch NATO's forces by denying them freedom of movement to or inside the targeted area of operation through Anti Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) measures. NATO's collective response mechanisms will inevitably take time and political shirking. Confronted with an imminent threat, the eFP needs the capacity and ability to respond before a NATO-designated operation is launched. The eFP model can be employed as a response to a threat "[p]rior to the activation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, [and thus,] the military response will be an issue for individual Allies, especially those with troops on the ground. In this situation, the fullest possible integration of the eFP battlegroup… is important in ensuring coordinated joint action in the event of a crisis. It will also increase the overall credibility of the deterrence posture, as it demonstrates that the eFP will stand with…" NATO member states' forces and is prepared to take action if required.[44]

The 2016 Warsaw Summit was a crossroads for NATO. It symbolised the ending of a geopolitical paradigm of unipolarity defined for

42 Martin Zapfe and Nora Vanaga, "NATO's Conventional Deterrence Posture," in *Deterring Russia in Europe: Defence Strategies for Neighbouring States*, eds. Nora Vanaga and Toms Rostoks (London: Routledge, 2018), 19-59.

43 NATO Parliamentary Assembly, "Resolution on Reinforcing NATO's Deterrence in the East," 7.

44 Jüri Luik and Henrik Praks, "Boosting the Deterrent Effect of Allied Enhanced Forward Presence," *ICDS Policy Paper*, May 2017, 10.

decades by Western powers, a paradigm characterised by out-of-area operations and "the prominence of expeditionary warfare and by sizeable and enduring state-building enterprises…."[45] The Warsaw Summit did not fix all of NATO's shortfalls, but it did address a number of its security, functional and organisational challenges, especially the changing security environment in Europe. In some ways, the Alliance has seen a rebirth as a result of Russia's provocations and aggression. The great irony of Russia's actions is that they have rejuvenated the Alliance in a way unfavourable to Moscow's perceived interests, including the rotational presence of Allied troops east of Germany and a new NATO emphasis on territorial defence through collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security.[46] In overcoming the fallacy of composition, the eFP initiative represents an essential reinforcement of the Alliance's deterrence and reassurance posture through a recommitment to Article 5. From a strategic perspective, 23 of the 29 Allies involved brings collective defence back to the fore and has brought about a refocus and a recalibration of the Allies' military posture and operational planning. Moreover, by allowing the Alliance to deploy a persistent – but not permanent – modestly sized military presence, the eFP is able to deter Russia and reassure still-nervous Allies in the east without antagonising Moscow.[47]

Just as alliances should not be ends onto themselves, but rather means to advance common objectives, fostering closer links can improve cohesion within NATO ranks. This in turn strengthens deterrence since Russia would be less able to pick off NATO members and play them against each other. By leveraging the eFP for better collaboration among participating countries in the Alliance, we can operate better together militarily, and we can also operate more effectively as a political cluster within NATO. Clusters of states within NATO can thus strengthen collective security in the form of robust territorial integrity as well as freedom from undue political interference and other forms of subversion, and not just on NATO's north-eastern flank. By being able to act as a bloc that reflects a diverse subset of Allies, the eFP as a deployment model has the potential to exert leverage and influence in a way no participant state would be able to on its own. In light of Russia's permanent presence in the region, deepening such defence cooperation signals that member states are committed to the long game. Were Putin's possible succession

45 Luis Simón, "'Back to Basics' and 'Out of Area'" Towards a Multi-Purpose NATO," *The RUSI Journal 159* (3), 14, 2014.

46 Alexander Lanoszka and Michael A. Hunzeker, *Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in Northeastern Europe*, (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2019), 12-20.

47 John R. Deni, "Enhancing NATO's Forward Presence," Carnegie Europe, April 27, 2017, https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/68792

in the 2024 presidential elections to open a window of opportunity to reduce tensions, eFP force cohesion may well encourage dialogue or reassurance measures, all the while allowing NATO to hedge. By the same token, improved defence cooperation among local partners assures against the temptation of striking great power bargains at the expense of some member states. Thus, the eFP framework enables better coordination and optimisation within the Alliance, but then translating these synergies as leverage at NATO. By doing so, this also permits greater burden-sharing despite the resource constraints that Allies commonly face.

Conclusion

Under the eFP framework there is to be no permanent NATO mission. Instead, NATO members are present with a battalion and headquarters. For better or for worse, multinational headquarters capability and leadership experience is hard to come by. Without NATO leadership and its institutional memory, each Framework Nation would end up leading the military operations within its designated area of operation and engaging their forces as it sees fit. In the words of a key member of the International Staff at NATO headquarters, "multinational framework nation arrangements after the end of the Cold War, by promoting interoperability, have been an essential and irreplaceable component of NATO's enduring capacity to initiate and conduct operations successfully, despite recurrent operational challenges in various engagements and persisting resource constraints."[48] This speaks to the logic of deterrence: signal commitment to your adversary and credibly demonstrate the necessary capability and willingness to follow through. The eFP serves as an integral part of NATO's framework for deterrence and defence along the Alliance's north-eastern flank. It demonstrates that the Alliance is resolute in aggression against its members. However, the eFP is not a deployment model for just one part of Europe. In the medium term, the eFP lends itself to maturing into a cornerstone of the Alliance's conventional deterrence posture by developing a state of preparedness that embodies, symbolises and ensures allied capacity, capability and interoperability.[49] Canada's contribution is a function of this deep and continuing commitment to NATO – one that goes back to the very beginning of the Alliance, of which Canada was

48 Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, "*The Framework Nations' Concept and NATO: Game Changer for a New Strategic Era Or Missed Opportunity?*" NATO Defence College Research Paper No. 132 (2016), 10.

49 John R. Deni, "Enhancing NATO's Forward Presence," Carnegie Europe, April 27, 2017, https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/68792

a founding member.[50] In Latvia, that also amounts to a commitment over the medium-term to overcoming the fallacy of composition among troop-contributing states to optimise inter-operational synergies for future collective deployments elsewhere: a military and political mini-Alliance within the Alliance.

In a resource-strapped Alliance of 29 members that is confronted with myriad competing demands must be well rehearsed at working with a select subset of partners. Such a bloc of partners can exercise greater clout at the NATO table. It is a trust-, confidence- and credibility-building measure among multinational headquarters and battlegroups to ensure that current security clients such as Latvia also add value as eventual suppliers of collective security elsewhere. The eFP is thus a quintessential commitment to collective, transatlantic and Euro-Atlantic security over the short- as well as the longer-term. It enables the Alliance to respond flexibly to changing threat environments in a manner useful for deterrence, assurance, collective defence and burden-sharing.

50 Joseph T. Jockel and Joel J. Sokolsky, "Canada and NATO: Keeping Ottawa In, Expenses Down, Criticism Out ... and the Country Secure," *International Journal*, vol. 64, no. 2 (2009), 315-336.

NATO's Place in Canada's Interest-Focused and Rules-Based International Order

Alexander Moens, Joseph Waugh and Cornel Turdeanu

From 2014 forward, Canada has gradually built up its role in NATO's most recent endeavour of buttressing deterrence and defence in the Euro-Atlantic area. Canada's policy of leadership and participation in multiple missions in NATO, especially in Latvia, is fundamentally a sound pursuit of Canada's politico-security interests in a multilateral framework. This policy builds continental relations as well as girds Canada's attempts to further develop trade with Europe and compete for Canadian commercial projects in Europe.[1] It also registers Canada's true concerns about Russian threats to small democracies on its flank and the violation of Ukraine. NATO is a value-based alliance. It is an essential anchor in today's rules-based international order because its actions remain guided by "the principles of individual liberty, democracy, and the rule of law..."[2]

Smart policy is not enough. Though committed, Canada is now also more exposed. The threat environment regarding Russian action and potential is active and intense. Canada has national and general interest in helping NATO achieve a higher level of defence capability and capacity. Also needed is stronger public understanding in Canada and much quicker development of key areas of our military force across the modern non-nuclear spectrum.

The Crimean turning point

The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 constituted a clear and unprovoked violation of international law. Russia's action breached its own codified commitment in the so-called Budapest Memorandum of 1994 and the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997. Moscow's brazen attack shocked the world and demonstrated that it was willing to use force to take territory in Europe. As a result, the threat perception regarding what Russia might be prepared to risk in its relations with NATO's Eastern flank from the Baltics to the Black Sea has risen

1 A practical example is the Cernavoda nuclear powerplant in Romania which uses CANDU reactors. As the powerplant expands it is in the interest of CANDU and its parent firm SNC Lavalin to stay engaged in the project to finish the next two reactors, thus ensuring that Canada's civilian nuclear operators stay relevant and engaged in Eastern Europe. Air Baltic, Latvia's flag airliner provides another example, being the launching customer of the Bombardier CS300 (now the Airbus A220) with a firm order of 30 aircraft.

2 North Atlantic Treaty Preamble, NATO, Washington, April 4, 1949, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm

considerably. Would it now also risk direct interference in any of the Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic states or in Moldova? Would it use its apparent uptick in information distortion and cyber probing as a way to prepare for another surprise move?

The dramatic events in Crimea and the increasingly blatant evidence of direct Russian involvement in the Donbas region of Ukraine made NATO's deterrence and deployment posture since the end of the Soviet Union untenable. That posture and doctrine was based on the rationale that even as NATO enlarged its membership eastward, it was not going to place stationed troops or major weapon systems in this new territory. Allies had agreed in the NATO Russia Founding Act of 1997 that "in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces."[3]

The light military enlargement footprint that followed did not sit well with many Eastern allies, who have argued since their accession for greater NATO military presence and thus more deterrence value in the new space rather than leaving all of its capacity in Western Europe. However, the reluctance of many other members – led by Germany and France – to risk provoking Russia made it impossible for the Alliance to change its posture. After 9/11 and NATO's extensive involvement in International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) a few years later, the Alliance became deeply invested in crisis-response operations and peace building, further postponing the much-needed bolstering of its eastern flank.

However, after the watershed of Crimea, NATO nations realised that it would be unacceptable *not* to act. Canada was among them. Russia's breach of the rules-based international order could not be more blatant. Moreover, with more than one million citizens of Ukrainian descent, Canadian interests were acute.[4] NATO's new determination was expressed in the 2014 Wales Summit Declaration with condemnations of "Russia's illegal military intervention in Ukraine" being front and centre in the text.[5] At the same time, American President Barack Obama coordinated closely with European Union leaders, especially German Chancellor Angela Merkel to form a united

3 "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation," NATO, May 27, 1997, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm

4 Doug Sanders, "How Ukrainian politics became the most Canadian of Politics," *Globe and Mail,* July 5, 2019, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-how-ukrainian-politics-became-the-most-canadian-of-politics/

5 NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, August 30, 2014, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm, Para. 1, 16-31.

front regarding economic sanctions against Russia, including the targeting of influential actors in the oligarchic structure of Russia's economy.[6]

With hindsight, we can observe that NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept began its first steps towards revision in Wales. Interestingly, this coincided with a significant reset of the Alliance's efforts in Afghanistan. The "Resolute Support" Mission which began that same year changed NATO's work from peace enforcement to training and assisting Afghan forces. It is not the case that NATO's strategic concept (collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security) had to be replaced, but that within this trio the emphasis had to shift back to NATO's primary task of collective defence. Both NATO's deterrence and its defence posture now needed to be revisited.

Small steps on exposed flanks

The leading sentiment in NATO was that some form of reassurance had to be offered to NATO members especially in the Baltic and Black Sea areas. According to policy makers involved in the process, the Secretary General's office and members of the International Staff in NATO started to brain-storm the concept of a Readiness Action Plan (RAP).[7] NATO began planning so-called "adaptation measures," including a new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF).[8]

After Wales, the momentum for NATO reform continued, driven by more and more hostile Russian behaviour. Russia's opportunistic military foray into Syria in October 2015 to support the regime in Damascus put the US-led Coalition and Russian forces into dangerous proximity on opposite sides of that conflict. Russian-based actors with proven affiliation to the Putin government were exposed for meddling in various Western democratic elections and a hideous chemical weapons attack on a Russian in Britain. Large Russian "snap" military exercises which disregarded the long-standing protocols of advance notice and observers looked like preparations for a surprise invasion. Eastern European members' nervousness around Russian exercises is reasonable given that one 2014 snap exercise led to the invasion and subsequent annexation of Crimea.[9]

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6 Peter Baker and James Kanter, "Raising Stakes on Russia, U.S. Adds Sanctions," *The New York Times*, July 16, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/17/world/europe/obama-widens-sanctions-against-russia.html

7 NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, August 30, 20.

8 NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, August 30, 20, Para 8.

9 Michael Kofman, Katya Migacheva, Brian Nichiporuk, Andrew Radin, Olesya Tkacheva and Jenny Oberholtzer, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1498.html, 24.

At the same time as the Readiness Action Plan was put together, NATO wanted to stay within the spirit of the Russia-NATO Act and not change its posture to permanently stationed forces. What followed was a type of NATO compromise or sweet spot between giving ear to Eastern demands for greater deterrence and defence while at the same time satisfying other NATO members' concerns not to provoke Russia. The sweet spot came in the form of small NATO missions that would form an enhanced forward presence in Poland, and in each of the three Baltic states. All four would have a Framework Nation as leader which would provide most forces and set up its own headquarters to provide command and control. The Southern flank would get a "tailored" forward presence in the Black Sea region.[10]

Outputs more than pledges

The last Framework Nation to step forward was Canada. Most inside players believe that the Stephen Harper government, which lost the October 2015 elections, was not eager to commit to another NATO mission and indeed had not committed any troops to Resolute Support in Afghanistan. In the most difficult years of Canada's contribution to ISAF, Canada became frustrated with the many caveats other members used to limit their combat capabilities in theatre.[11]

However, both "friends of Canada" on the inside of NATO and President Obama by direct phone conversation with the Canadian Prime Minister advocated with the Canadian government to commit to lead a multinational effort in Latvia.[12]

The foreign policy articulated by the incoming Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau highlighted a renewed Canadian dedication to multilateralism.[13] In the words of a senior policy advisor, this dedication to multilateralism was a result of "Trudeau's brand of internationalism, which blends small l-liberal idealism and interest-based realism."[14] It was clear from Justin Trudeau's first

10 The Framework Nation Concept somewhat predates the Wales Summit. It allows various NATO Nations as well as non-member states to form clusters of "pragmatic cooperation" inside NATO but not inside the NATO Command Structure under SACEUR per se. See: Rainer L. Glatz and Martin Zapfe, "NATO's Framework Nations Concept," *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, No. 218, December 2017, https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse218-EN.pdf

11 A strong analysis of the various challenges of caveats can be found in David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

12 Confidential interview with Canadian policy official, May 21, 2019.

13 Doug Sanders, "Justin Trudeau vs the World," *Globe and Mail*, June 29, 2019, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-justin-trudeau-vs-the-world-how-the-next-government-can-reclaim/

14 Roland Paris, "Justin Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy," eds. Norman Hillmer and Philippe Lagasse, *Justin Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 18.

interactions with Vladimir Putin at the G20 summit in 2015 that Canada would continue to strongly oppose Russia's actions in Ukraine.[15] The appointment of Chrystia Freeland as foreign minister in 2017, given her unique understanding of Ukrainian culture and stated resolve to maintain the liberal international order, further strengthened the perception that the Trudeau government would stand by Eastern European NATO allies in the face of Russian aggression.[16]

Extended work in NATO's Defence Policy and Planning Committee on the reassurance plans, followed by several defence and foreign minister meetings helped prepare the Alliance to work out these commitments. The detailed politico-military preparations led the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw to put flesh on the bones of its Readiness Action Plan. The Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battalions would be in place by June 2017 and would demonstrate that an attack on one ally would mean an attack on the Alliance as a whole. The Alliance improvised on a classical deployment of tripwire forces to make a string of such tripwires of multinational forces, including German, British, American and Canadian. Prominently featured inside the Canadian Battlegroup were Spanish and Italian subcomponents as well as several smaller contingents from other allies.

Some 400 Canadian troops began deploying in early 2017, led by the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. By February 2019, the multinational Battle Group consisted of roughly 1,400 troops with eight participating nations.[17] It turned out that Canada would lead the most multinational battlegroup ever put together in the NATO context below Brigade level.[18] Such a highly visible multilateral role seemed to fit Trudeau's multilateral bill nicely. Knowing the restraints on Canada's defence budget, seasoned observers also surmised that the very multi-nationality could be a result of many demands on a relatively small pool of Canadian capacity and personnel.

Canada's leadership in the Battle Group has introduced a high tempo of training as well as adaptive military diplomacy to enhance multinational cooperation. It has also acted quickly to dispel Russian disinformation tactics aimed at undermining the legitimacy of the eFP among the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia. For instance, in the first year of the eFP, NATO troops were accused of polluting the environment and inflating real estate prices.[19] From the start, Canada

15 Roland Paris, "Justin Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy," eds. Norman Hillmer and Philippe Lagasse, *Justin Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 22.

16 Ibid, 46.

17 The Czechs and Slovaks joined the Polish, Spanish, Italian, Slovenian, Albanian and Montenegro contingents.

18 Confidential interview with Canadian official, June 11, 2019.

19 Confidential interview with Canadian officers in Latvia, June 2018.

has taken a pro-active stand in this war for the hearts and minds of the Latvian people. The coordination between the Canadian embassy, the Task Force Headquarters, and the Battlegroup has produced a clear overall message that Canadians are a solid NATO ally and good citizens. One of the best indicators of this track record is that Russian-language attempts at false news are decreasing in number.[20]

Nobody during NATO's 2014 Summit in Wales could have foreseen that President Trump would be the next American president or that he would be so hard on NATO at the diplomatic level or that he would insist that the 2 % Defence Investment Pledge actually meant here and now. Germany bore the brunt of Trump's negotiation assault, but Canada decided to double down on NATO commitments to deflect the same ire. Beside a training mission of some 200 troops in Ukraine and the eFP in Latvia, a Canadian ship regularly patrolled the Baltic and Black Sea and four or five CF-18 fighter jets took turns with various allies in NATO air policing missions in the Baltic states and Romania.[21] In 2018, Canada agreed to lead the NATO training mission in Iraq which now includes some 250 personnel.[22] Though in terms of material resources the training mission is not a large military undertaking, it has the advantage of high visibility and allowed Canada to continue in the region as a logical follow up to its participation in the US-led Coalition in Syria.

The Canadian government decided in May 2018 to renew its eFP lead nation role until March 2023.[23] In addition, it increased the number of Canadian troops from 455 to 540. The decision came a year before the existing commitment in Latvia would run out.[24] Notable for Canadian defence policy observers was that Canada's level of participation in NATO missions had far exceeded its contribution to UN peacekeeping even though the new Liberal government had during the 2016 election stated its dedication to the latter.[25] It took nearly two years for the Canadian government to come through with its modest participation in the UN mission in Mali and, even so, that commitment ended in 2019.

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20 Interview with multiple Canadian officials and officers in Latvia, June 24-28, 2019.

21 "Operation Reassurance," Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-reassurance.html

22 "Canada to command NATO mission in Iraq for a second year," Government of Canada, June 26, 2019, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2019/06/canada-to-command-nato-mission-in-iraq-for-a-second-year.html

23 "Operation Reassurance," Government of Canada, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-reassurance.html

24 Christian Leuprecht, Joel Sokolsky and Jayson Derow, "Paying it Forward: Canada's renewed commitment to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence," *International Journal* 74, no. 1 (2019), 167.

25 J.R. McKay, "Why Canada is best explained as a 'reliable ally' in 2017," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 16, no. 2 (2018), 137.

As Canada was stepping up in NATO missions, it also increased its investment in NATO command positions, including the Commandant of the NATO Defence College. The one wobbly leg in Canada's position, like several other NATO nations, is that Canada does not have a plan to reach the 2 % of GDP on military spending as part of NATO's defence investment pledge (DIP). Even in the bold spending promises of its new defence policy Strong, Secure, Engaged, the Canadian government will in the best-case scenario reach 1,4 % of GDP on defence by 2024-25.[26] Canada had been one of the hold outs during the tough negotiations on the specific DIP language in 2014. Canadian diplomacy contributed to the various qualifiers in the communique's paragraph, including the phrase stating that allies who do not meet the 2 % level "*will aim* to move towards the 2 % guideline… within a decade"[27] (Italics added).

The government in Ottawa has decided for now that Canada should underscore its NATO *outputs* while making the case with allies – especially Washington – that the 2 % *input* metric does not provide a sufficient picture of real NATO contributions.[28] Nearly everywhere it looked in NATO, Washington could see hands-on Canadian burden sharing.

Canada's active participation in NATO's policies in the Euro-Atlantic and Middle East as well as its ongoing training mission in Ukraine is sending several coherent messages: There are two NATO allies in North America, NATO is not "yesterday's alliance," Canada is an engaged multilateralist, and what you do is what matters, not simply some % of GDP.

Sound policy on shallow ground

What the government in Ottawa has not done in any systematic fashion is explaining to the Canadian people that Canadian actions in NATO achieve both Canadian values and interests. It is a prime investment for Canadian security and international political influence and thus Canada's own long-term security. The government is very clearly making the case on the international stage but remains reluctant to put NATO in the proper public policy space in Canada. The publicised visit of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in July 2019 accompanied with NATO blue lights on the Niagara Falls may be a small beginning.

26 "Strong Secure Engaged," Department of National Defence, 2016, http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/mdn-dnd/D2-386-2017-eng.pdf, 43.

27 "Wales Summit Declaration," NATO, August 30, 20, Para. 14.

28 Various confidential interviews with DND officials and Canadian NATO Officials, June 2019.

There is both a lack of academic interest and journalistic coverage of Canada and NATO. Part of this problem is that, apart from some generalities, the Canadian government is very mum about what it does, how it does things, and why it does them. Hence, the strategic-level objectives of Canada's ambitious pace of NATO deployments and the operational requirements to sustain these are not put in front of a wide enough set of Canadians to create understanding and support. An uninformed public and absence of scholarly work accompanying Canadian policies in NATO leaves the Canadian government orphaned in success or failure.[29] The mission of the Canadian-led eFP in Latvia is a case in point. Much can be analysed about what objectives it has achieved, how it might be strengthened, how it has been managed in terms of cost-effectiveness, how NATO and Canada need to respond to the complex risks the mission entails.

These risks include the great distance and logistical difficulty involved in resupply and reinforcement of the Battlegroup – especially in a conflict scenario – as well as the way in which both the Alliance and Russia interpret today's conditions of mutual deterrence and where that leaves the soldiers. For instance, the possibility exists that the militarily weak eFP deployments might allow Russia new opportunities to exploit the difference between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear weapon states in NATO.[30]

The Battle Group is exposed, but that does not make for a bad policy.[31] It comes with the territory of doing deterrence, defence, and Alliance solidarity in response to a risk-taking Russia. But does it need to be exposed to the extent that it is? The most important area for the Canadian government to consider is that NATO's nuclear deterrence value is strongest when in conjunction with NATO's ability to actually defend should deterrence fail. Modern defence means conventional military, cyber, information and covert skills and resources.

It will not do to simply say that Russia is a waning power that cannot afford a great-power conflict and therefore some 'political' deterrence is enough. Canada has to take a direct role in finding

29 In order to change the academic culture of neglect and to prepare Canadian students for careers in defence and diplomacy, the authors are part of a new annual programme called "The NATO Field School and Simulation Program". It is a new academic initiative meant to introduce Canadian and other NATO member nation university students to NATO's values, processes and interests by interacting, observing, experiencing and simulating. See: https://www.sfu.ca/natofieldschool.html

30 Alexander Lanozska, "From Ottawa to Riga: Three tensions in Canadian defence policy," *International Journal* 72 no. 4 (2017), 529.

31 Some analysts have outlined the types of risk the Canadian participation in eFP entails. For example see: Martin Zapfe, "Deterrence from the Ground Up: Understanding NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *Survival* 59, no. 3 (2017), 153-155; David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html; Alexander Lanozska, "From Ottawa to Riga: Three tensions in Canadian defence policy," *International Journal* 72 no. 4 (2017), 529.

relevant ways to boost NATO's deterrence value. If NATO's defence is too weak, its deterrence will be too risky.

Consider that over against NATO's small deployments in the Baltics stand more than 100 000 Russian troops with an estimated 22 manoeuvre battalions available for operations in the Western Military District.[32] Russian forces there and in Kaliningrad are not only capable of rolling over the tripwire and taking the Baltics in 48 hours or less, but also increasingly capable of denying air space and access for NATO reinforcements to come to the assistance of Canadian and other Western forces.[33] Russia also holds a vast superiority of short range missiles, including nuclear-weapons capable missiles. In January 2019, Moscow announced that some of its new M-Iskander intermediate range conventional/nuclear missiles with an estimated range of 300 miles would be deployed in Kaliningrad.[34]

NATO is not (yet) at the level of collective defence that can reassure all Allies. Canada has a direct stake in getting NATO to a higher level because Canada now needs to better secure our troops in this important mission. Canada has a dog in this fight. The only way to do so is through NATO and in close conjunction with the United States. We are not out on a unilateral limb. Since 2014, U.S. military spending in Europe has steadily increased from 985 million USD to 4,8 billion USD in 2018 and a 6,5 billion USD budget request in fiscal year 2019.[35]

When visiting multiple NATO installations in the Baltics and Romania, one cannot fail to see how much the United States is enabling the build-up of the defence of Europe.[36] It is spurring on NATO to re-create multinational division and corps headquarters throughout the East as well as a new logistics command, the Joint Support and Enabling Command, with 1500 personnel in Ulm, Germany. It is reconstituting a North Atlantic Fleet based in Norfolk, Virginia. It is calling for immediate capabilities and capacity needed vis-à-vis the Russian concentration and modernisation of its forces.

The Canadian investment in capabilities and capacity can be applied to multiple operational areas such as maritime assets to better secure

32 David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html, 5.

33 David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html, 4.

34 David Axe, "Russia's Deadly Iskander-M Ballistic Missile," *The National Interest*, January 2, 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/russias-deadly-iskander-m-ballistic-missile-headed-kaliningrad-exclave-40397

35 Michelle Shevin-Coetzee, "THE EUROPEAN DETERRENCE INITIATIVE," The Centre for Budgetary and Strategic Assessment, 2019, https://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/EDI_Format_FINAL.pdf

36 Evidence gathered by the authors in visits to air, army and navy bases in these regions in June 2019.

the North Atlantic and air assets to face the rapidly modernising air forces of adversaries, as well as battlefield weapons to bolster in-theatre defence.

The voting public is aware that the world around our historical "fire-proof house" is more insecure. Our Achilles heel is our lack of political priority/will and our cumbersome procurement policies. Canada should consider a multiple-year agreement between its two leading political parties on defence spending to create a procurement plan immune from partisan politics.[37]

37 Denmark has such an agreement in place. Australia launched a parliamentary inquiry into the feasibility of a bipartisan defence agreement in 2017, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/BipartisanDefAgreement/Terms_of_Reference

The US-Polish Enhanced Partnership to the Region's Benefit?

Justyna Gotkowska

The background for Poland's attempts to expand security and defence ties with the U.S. are shaped by Warsaw's threat perception. Poland perceives Russia as a systemic long-term challenge to the Euro-Atlantic community that is ready to undermine the existing security architecture in Europe also by resorting to military means. Warsaw does not exclude a worst-case scenario with a conventional or unconventional Russian assault on Poland and/or the Baltic states given the regional unbalance of forces to Russia's favour.

At the same time Poland, like all NATO eastern flank countries, has viewed the United States as the main ally that has both military capabilities and political will to guarantee peace and security in Central Europe vis-a-vis Russia. In the security and defence community in Warsaw, there is a broad consensus that Russia will refrain from taking aggressive actions only if there is a credible NATO and U.S. presence in the region. Therefore, since joining NATO in 1999, Poland has strived to secure not only more NATO engagement but also more U.S. military presence on the Polish soil, with at least mixed results until 2014. This policy has been pursued also in view of West European allies' diminished militaries and their engagement policies towards Russia.

The perception of a strong reliance on the U.S. in security and defence terms has been strengthened since 2014. First, it was the U.S. reaction under the Obama administration to reassure allies on the eastern flank and to deter Russia in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea regions. Since 2014, the U.S. has significantly strengthened its military posture in Europe and on the eastern flank and has spent billions of dollars via the European Reassurance/Deterrence Initiative. At the same time, the U.S. shaped and pushed for NATO decisions of 2014 and 2016 on the allied presence on the eastern flank and on increased military readiness of the European armed forces.

Second, the 2016 presidential election in the U.S. did not bring a change in the security and defence policy calculus of Poland. Contrary to the West European allies, the Law and Justice government started to perceive the Trump administration as an opportunity to enhance the U.S.-Polish ties – in times of shifting global balance of power, growing uncertainty about the future of the EU and NATO

accompanied by Russia's rise as an increasingly aggressive actor in the neighbourhood. The efforts to engage the U.S. closer in Poland and in Central Europe have been therefore perceived as a necessity in the changing strategic context of rising rivalry between the great powers, in which Europe is ill-suited and not prepared to step in for countries on the eastern flank if a conventional conflict occurs. Even though Poland acknowledges the West European military engagement on the eastern flank, it clearly sees that it lags behind the North American presence. In addition, the European debates on transatlantic burden-sharing have been fairly disappointing.

The reasons behind the Polish thinking about the Trump administration as an opportunity and less as a challenge have been manifold. Warsaw has seen not only the continuous rise in the U.S. military presence in Poland in the recent years but also noted the National Security and Defence Strategies of the Trump administration, where both China and Russia have been portrayed as strategic competitors and global revisionist powers.[1] But there are also other reasons.

The policies of the Polish conservative government and the Trump administration overlap to a certain extent. The Law and Justice party values national sovereignty and has been treating further EU integration with caution. It is sceptical to an open-door policy with regard to receiving refugees and migrants, especially from the southern neighbourhood, and is questioning the ambitious climate policy measures out of economic considerations. Similarly to the Trump administration, the current Polish government feels under pressure from the liberal mainstream media home and abroad.

The other factor that helped to strengthen U.S.-Polish relations was the changed policy of the Trump administration towards Europe. The Trump administration has targeted Germany, the largest EU economy and the favourite European ally of the Obama administration, for its big trade surplus with the U.S. and its unwillingness to sufficiently invest in defence. Berlin has also been at odds with Trump's policies on climate, migration and Iran, among others. In times when U.S. ties with Western Europe are strained, Poland has begun to enhance its position as a close U.S. ally also due to its readiness to invest in relations with Washington.

Poland's strategy has been aimed not only at increasing the U.S. military presence and at showing its commitment to high defence

1 Marcin A. Piotrowski and Bartosz Wiśniewski, "The U.S. National Security Strategy: The Trump Administration's Approach," PISM Bulletin, December 21, 2017, https://www.pism.pl/publications/bulletin/no-128-1068#; Marcin A. Piotrowski, "Changes in the Main Assumptions of the U.S. National Defense Strategy," PISM Bulletin, January 26, 2018, http://www.pism.pl/publications/bulletin/no-14-1085#

spending and willingness to acquire U.S. defence equipment. The Polish government has also strived to increase the U.S. economic presence in Poland and in Central Europe. This has included enhancing energy cooperation by Polish imports of the LNG gas from the U.S. as well as increasing opportunities for the U.S. involvement in regional economic cooperation via the framework of the Three Seas Initiative. All this, together with a positive stance of the Polish public towards the U.S. President, have contributed to the first successful visit of Donald Trump to Warsaw in July 2017. During his visit, Trump took part in the second summit of the Three Seas Initiative and held a cherished public speech in front of the Warsaw Uprising Monument. All that contributed to the strengthening of the U.S.-Polish ties.[2]

The U.S. military presence: Poland as a regional hub since 2016

Polish attempts to enhance military ties with the U.S. have not started with the Law and Justice government, but have been a priority for every Polish government since its membership in NATO – and even before. Poland has strived for years to expand the U.S. military presence on its soil. Until 2016, military cooperation was developed mainly between the air forces, as a result of the purchase of F-16 combat aircraft by Poland, and included pilot training, joint exercises and modernisation.

Since 2012, under the Civic Platform government, this cooperation has been complemented by the rotational presence of the U.S. combat and transport aircraft, the so-called Aviation Detachment, with U.S. Air Force participating in short training events few times a year in Polish bases in Łask and Powidz. An important element of the U.S.-Polish security and defence cooperation has been Poland's participation in the U.S. ballistic missile defence program in Europe (European Phased Adaptive Approach, EPAA) that was finally decided upon under the Obama administration in 2009 and became the core element of the NATO's missile defence architecture in 2010. Under EPAA, one of the two U.S. land-based missile SM-3 interceptor sites in Europe is based in northwest Poland and will be fully operational by 2020. The other one is placed in Deveselu, Romania.

In 2014, the U.S. reacted firmly to the Russian annexation of Crimea and the intervention in eastern Ukraine. These events have brought a boost in the U.S. military presence in Europe, including the eastern

2 "President Trump Visits Warsaw Ahead of G20 Summit," US Mission Poland, July 17, 2017, https://pl.usembassy.gov/trump_visit/

flank, as a part of the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), which was later transformed into the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI). The U.S. has also increased spending on this program from 0,9 billion USD in 2015 to 6,5 billion USD in 2019, covering increased presence, exercises and training, enhanced prepositioning, improved infrastructure and building partner capacity.[3] Importantly, the EDI's declared goal has been to demonstrate to both the European allies and to Russia the U.S. commitment to Article 5 guarantees of the Washington Treaty.

The real breakthrough for the U.S. military presence in Poland and in the region, however, came in 2016, when the U.S. Army decided to make Poland a hub of its military activity on the eastern flank within the EDI framework.[4] The Armoured Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), comprised of ca. 3500 soldiers, has been rotating mainly from military bases in southwest Poland for training and exercises across the eastern flank. The units of the Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) have been also rotationally stationed in Poland (as well as in Germany, Latvia and Romania). The sustainment task force with 900 soldiers has been operating on the eastern flank from its main base in Poland. A division-level command element has been moved to Poland (Poznań) from Germany in order to better coordinate the U.S. military exercises on the eastern flank. The U.S. Army has been also planning to store military equipment and munitions in the Polish Powidz military base (the so-called Army Prepositioned Stock, APS) that in 2023 together with facilities in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands will house equipment for a U.S. armoured division that in case of war will be relocated from the U.S. to Europe.[5] APS in Poland will be the biggest storage facility for U.S. military equipment on the eastern flank. Additionally to actions taken within the EDI, in 2016 the U.S. decided also to become the framework nation of the NATO battalion-sized battlegroup stationed in Orzysz, with a Stryker infantry battalion, near the so-called Suwałki Gap in Poland. Both the ABCT and the NATO battlegroup have been deployed to Poland in the first half of 2017.

"Fort Trump": the Polish bid

With Poland taking a privileged position in the U.S. military strategy towards the region and with a favourable view of the Trump administration towards Poland, the Law and Justice government

3 Michelle Shevin-Coetzee, "The European Deterrence Initiative," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2019, https://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/EDI_Format_FINAL.pdf

4 "Atlantic Resolve," U.S. Army Europe, https://www.eur.army.mil/AtlanticResolve/

5 "Fact Sheet: Army Prepositioned Stock," U.S. Army, April 2019, https://www.eur.army.mil/Portals/19/documents/Fact%20Sheets/APSFactSheet20190405.pdf?ver=2019-04-05-032016-170

started to consider deeper anchoring of the U.S. military presence in Poland, based so far on a rotational principle. In early 2018, the Polish Ministry of National Defence circulated in Washington a 20-pages long document entitled "Proposal for a U.S. Permanent Presence in Poland".[6]

The document proposed a permanent deployment of an armoured division and explicitly mentioned Poland's commitment to provide significant support by establishing joint military installations and provide for more flexible movement of U.S. forces. According to the document, Poland would be ready to provide financial support amounting to 1,5-2 billion USD, which would include the development of the infrastructure for housing a permanent U.S. military presence in Poland – not only military personnel but also their families – as well as access to additional state and local facilities linked to the need of such a deployment. In the appendix to the document, the Polish regions of Bydgoszcz and Toruń were presented as possible locations for U.S. permanent installations with details on transport infrastructure, airfields and training areas. The talks with the U.S. Department of Defense began.

The Polish negotiation tactics included also attempts to get support from the White House. The discussion on an increased U.S. military presence in Poland accelerated with the first visit of Poland's President Andrzej Duda to the White House in September 2018[7], during which a joint Declaration on Safeguarding Freedom, Building Prosperity through United States – Poland Strategic Partnership[8] was signed. The declaration covered not only security and defence but also energy cooperation as well as trade, investments, research and innovations. Statements on security and defence underlined the critical U.S.-Polish partnership and envisaged enhanced cooperation and deepening of military-to-military ties and defence industry partnership, however, without any meaningful details. It was only during the joint presidential press conference when President Duda mentioned that he would be happy to name an increased U.S. military presence a "Fort Trump" and hopes for a permanent U.S. military installation in Poland. For his part, President Trump mentioned Poland's readiness to pay for an increased U.S. military presence – contrary to other, wealthier U.S. allies.

6 "Proposal for a U.S. Permanent Presence in Poland," Ministry of National Defence, Republic of Poland, 2018, https://g8fip1kplyr33r3krz5b97d1-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Proposal-for-a-U.S.-Permanent-Presence-in-Poland-2018.pdf

7 "The US-Polish Alliance was stronger than before," The official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, September 18, 2018, https://www.president.pl/en/news/art,846,polish-presidential-couple-welcomed-at-white-house.html

8 "Safeguarding Freedom, Building Prosperity Through United States – Poland Strategic Partnership," The official website of the President of the Republic of Poland, September 18, 2018, https://www.president.pl/en/news/art,847,safeguarding-freedom-building-prosperity-through-poland-us-strategic-partnership.html

"Fort Trump": the U.S. debates

After Trump-Duda meeting, a controversial discussion among U.S. security and defence experts began on the pros and cons of an increased U.S. military presence in Poland. Warsaw was accused by some of bilateralisation of the security relations with the U.S. to the detriment of NATO and of introducing a harmful transactional approach in relations with Washington. Others deemed Polish approach a success of the Law and Justice government, who found the way on how to deal with the Trump administration.

The most interesting exchange, summing up also the views of other experts, was conducted in the fall of 2018 between Michael Kofman and the Michael Hunzeker and Alexander Lanoszka authors' duo on the War on the Rocks debate platform on national security issues. According to Kofman, the existing U.S. rotational force was sufficient and any additional moves would risk NATO cohesion and would be unnecessarily provocative towards Russia.[9] Kofman argued that the West overlooked the changes in Russia's warfare doctrine that is actually focused on long-range strikes and information operations and that the threat Russia poses to Poland and the wider Baltic region is inflated and a permanent U.S. presence is not only unnecessary but also would create a security dilemma. Hunzeker and Lanoszka shared the view that a permanent U.S. military base hosting a U.S. division might be counterproductive but disagreed on the assessment of the Russian military capabilities and political intentions.[10]

They favoured an enhanced dispersed permanent U.S. presence across a number of hardened "mini bases" encompassing also additional air and missile defence units. In their opinion, this would enhance deterrence, help to overcome the Russian anti-access challenge and signal a long-term U.S. commitment to the region among others. Hunzeker and Lanoszka acknowledged also the Polish and the Baltic states dilemma of either sticking to what has been agreed within NATO but what has been perceived as insufficient or working around the allied agreement by pursuing complementary arrangements with partners like the U.S.

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9 Michael Kofman, "Permanently stationing U.S. forces in Poland is a bad idea, but one worth debating," *War on the Rocks*, October 12, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/10/permanently-stationing-u-s-forces-in-poland-is-a-bad-idea-but-one-worth-debating/; Michael Kofman, "Revise and resubmit: an unconvincing proposal for permanent U.S. troops in Poland," *War on the Rocks*, November 1, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/11/revise-and-resubmit-an-unconvincing-proposal-for-permanent-u-s-troops-in-poland/

10 Michael Hunzeker and Alexander Lanoszka, "The case for a permanent U.S. military presence in Poland," *War on the Rocks*, October 22, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/10/the-case-for-a-permanent-u-s-military-presence-in-poland/

The more in-depth military studies from two influential U.S. think tanks came a few months later. The December 2018 "Permanent Deterrence: Enhancements to the U.S. Military Presence in North Central Europe" report[11] by the Atlantic Council task force on U.S. force posture in Europe chaired by General Philip Breedlove and Ambassador Alexander Vershbow generally favoured an enhanced U.S. and NATO capacity to be deployed in Poland and in the region. At the same time, the authors stressed the need to maintain the framework of deterrence by rapid reinforcement reaffirmed by NATO at the 2018 Warsaw Summit.

The report thus favoured a carefully calibrated mix of permanent and rotational deployments in order to avoid a divisive debate on whether such deployments are consistent with the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act or not. It recommended several measures with regard to the U.S. Army presence: upgrading and making the U.S. division-level headquarters in Poznań permanent; committing to a continuous rotational presence of the ABCT in Poland; deploying some of the short-range air-defence and rocket-artillery units (to be stationed in Germany by 2020) to Poland on a rotational basis; temporarily stationing the mid-range air-defence units for training purposes and continuously deploying enablers such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and engineers; deploying a new ABCT to Germany on a permanent or rotational basis with one additional battalion coming to Poland and the Baltic states for training and exercises.

The report also puts forward proposals with regard to the presence of U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy: establishing a new headquarters for one Combat Aviation Brigade in Poland; enlarging and making permanent U.S. Aviation Detachment in Poland; making permanent the U.S. MQ-9 reconnaissance drones detachment; conducting more U.S. Air Force exercises in the region; as well as establishing a new small naval detachment in Gdynia. The Atlantic Council report also stated explicitly that the U.S. should look towards a higher Polish and regional financial participation in the construction costs and long-term sustainment of necessary facilities and training areas.

The March 2019 "Strengthening the Defense of NATO's Eastern Frontier" report[12] published by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) concentrated mainly on the military

11 Gen. Philip Breedlove and Amb. Alexander Vershbow, "Permanent Deterrence: Enhancements to the US Military Presence in North Central Europe," Atlantic Council, December 2018, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/issue-briefs/permanent-deterrence-enhancements-to-the-us-military-presence-in-north-central-europe

12 Billy Fabian, Mark Gunzinger, Jan van Tol, Jacob Cohn and Gillian Evans, "Strengthening the Defense of NATO's Eastern Frontier," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, March 2019, https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/strengthening-the-defense-of-natos-eastern-frontier

aspects. It favoured a substantial enhancement of the U.S. military's European posture, slightly above the proposals listed in the Atlantic Council report. According to the authors of the CSBA report, the goal would be to aggregate a U.S. Army division in or near Poland ready for operations together with increasing the responsiveness of the U.S. forward forces. The proposed measures included: permanently basing of a U.S. division headquarters in Poland and a U.S. corps headquarters in Germany; permanently basing of U.S. rocket artillery and air defence units in Poland, permanently basing of division enablers in Poland like key combat support capabilities such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets, engineers and electronic warfare systems; posturing an additional ABCT in Europe; creating a resilient web of intra-theatre communications by improving infrastructure for incoming troops and developing lines of communications, enhancing pre-positioned equipment sets, munitions stocks and sustainment material as well as increasing the resiliency of forward-postured forces and infrastructure.

The June 2019 agreement: evaluation and regional impact

The second visit of Poland's President Andrzej Duda to the White House in June 2019 was concluded after over a year of tense negotiations on what the U.S.-Polish enhanced cooperation and deepening of military-to-military ties should mean in practice. During the visit, a Joint Declaration on Defense Cooperation Regarding U.S. Force Posture in Poland[13] was signed, outlining the elements of an "enduring presence" of the U.S. military in Poland. According to the declaration, Poland will host additional 1000 U.S. military personnel in the near-term (enhancing the rotational contingent of ca. 4500 soldiers already in place). The establishment of: a U.S. Division Headquarters (Forward), joint Combat Training Center (CTC), U.S. Air Force MQ-9 Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) drone squadron, an aerial port of debarkation to support the movement of forces, an area support group, a U.S. special operations forces capability, as well as infrastructure to support the presence of an armoured brigade combat team (ABCT), a combat aviation brigade (CAB) and a combat sustainment support battalion were agreed upon.

13 "Joint Declaration on Defense Cooperation Regarding United States Force Posture in the Republic of Poland," The White House, June 12, 2019, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/joint-declaration-defense-cooperation-regarding-united-states-force-posture-republic-poland/

The visit was preceded by the Polish government issuing a formal request to the U.S. in May 2019 for the procurement of 32 F-35A Joint Strike Fighter combat aircraft.[14] If finalised, it will be the third key U.S. defence procurement by Poland in recent years – after the Wisła air and missile defence program including the Raytheon PATRIOT system (with some Polish industrial participation) and the Homar rocket artillery program including the Lockheed Martin HIMARS system.

The results of the negotiations are below Polish expectations, but substantial enough to declare it a success.[15] The results were widely endorsed in Poland, however, there were also some questions on whether all the recent investments in the security and defence ties with the U.S. were worth the outcome. Nevertheless, the U.S.-Polish agreement comprises some key elements that have been already discussed by the experts. An important one is the establishment of a U.S. Division Headquarters on the basis of the division-level command element already functioning in western Poland, which means that combat operations of larger U.S. formations will be commanded directly out of Poland in case of a conflict on the eastern flank.

Worth noting is the establishment of a more enduring presence of the MQ-9 Reaper squadron for ISR purposes that has been stationed in Poland since May 2018[16] and the interlinked agreement on information sharing. The drone squadron will continue to provide for a better situational awareness for the whole region, not only for Poland. The joint Combat Training Center to be established in western Poland will make it possible for the U.S. troops to use the training areas in Poland more often and to a greater extent. The Center might also become a regional training facility on the eastern flank that enhances interoperability between the U.S. and its regional allies.

Investments in a Polish airbase, probably in Powidz, as an aerial port of debarkation will improve Polish host-nation capacity to receive more U.S. troops, which is beneficial to the whole region. According to the agreement, the U.S. will also establish an area support group in Poland which will allow for better logistics for the rotational troops in

14 Gareth Jennings, "Update: Poland formally requests F-35A combat aircraft," *Jane's 360*, May 28, 2019, https://www.janes.com/article/88806/update-poland-formally-requests-f-35a-combat-aircraft

15 For Polish assessments of the US-Polish declaration see: Marek Świerczyński, "Co zostało z amerykańskiego Fort Trump w Polsce?," *Polityka*, June 13, 2019, https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/1796620,1,co-zostalo-z-amerykanskiego-fort-trump-w-polsce.read; Artur Kacprzyk, "Increased US Presence in Poland is a Good Deal for NATO," European Leadership Network Commentary, June 21, 2019, https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/increased-us-presence-in-poland-is-a-good-deal-for-nato/; Marcin Terlikowski, "US-Polish Defence Cooperation Reinforced," *PISM Spotlight*, June 13, 2019, www.pism.pl

16 Jacek Siminski, "Almost unnoticed, U.S. Air Force begins MQ-9 Reaper drone operations out of Poland," *The Aviationist*, May 30, 2019, https://theaviationist.com/2018/05/30/almost-unnoticed-u-s-air-force-begins-mq-9-reaper-drone-operations-out-of-poland/

the region and, if needed, for the incoming ones. On its part, Poland has obliged itself to provide and sustain the infrastructure needed to host and support the enhanced U.S. troops (ABCT, CAB, combat sustainment support battalion).

The measures agreed upon are clearly not leading to the establishment of a "Fort Trump" in Poland, but are extending the already existing U.S. military presence, making it more robust and long-lasting, although not permanent per se. They will anchor the U.S. military to a greater extent not only to Poland but also to the eastern flank. When implemented, they will also allow for swifter deployment of larger units to the eastern flank in case of a conflict. It is worth to underline that the enhanced U.S. military presence is devised by the Department of Defense for the deterrence and defence of the whole region, but at the same time, it strengthens the pivotal importance of Poland as a hub for U.S. military activity on the eastern flank.

The U.S. does not view Poland as an exclusive ally with whom it concluded a bilateral partnership, which is well understood in Warsaw. The enhanced U.S.-Polish partnership is perceived by both sides not as an alternative to the regional defence and deterrence strategy of NATO but complementary to it. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has repeatedly supported stronger U.S. military engagement on the eastern flank and has welcomed the June 2019 announcement of the increased U.S. presence in Poland, which in his opinion shows the U.S. commitment to European security.[17] Poland also gained special support from the Baltic states for its efforts to enhance U.S. presence in the country, who are aware of the fact that more U.S. troops in Poland automatically means more U.S. military engagement in the Baltic Sea region. The results of the U.S.-Polish negotiations seem also to be balanced enough to the West European allies who raised no voice of criticism against the U.S.-Polish agreement. Thus, the odyssey of "Fort Trump" ended as a fair compromise for all sides involved.

17 "NATO Sec Gen satisfied with more US troops in Poland," *PolandIn*, June 13, 2019, https://polandin.com/43061565/nato-sec-gen-satisfied-with-more-us-troops-in-poland

THE BALTIC DEFENCE

The Baltic Sea in Peace, Crisis and War: Time to Get More Serious About the Maritime Domain?

Tomas Jermalavičius and Tony Lawrence

Over the last five years, since the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, NATO has been in the process of rapid adaptation to a new geopolitical reality. Part of this broad adaptation involved establishing forward presence in its eastern flank, including the Baltic area. Some of the most visible measures were implemented in the land domain, with the deployment of the multinational battalion battlegroups to the Baltic states and Poland, focus on cross-border military mobility and enhanced programme of military exercises as key elements. The air domain is also receiving significant attention, with the Baltic states in particular pressing for more allied air defence assets in the region and for transforming the Baltic Air Policing into an air defence mission. However, the maritime domain has not been as prominent in terms of public policy debates or visibility of practical steps undertaken in the Baltic area. This article aims to cast more light on what is being done and what is necessary to ensure security, deterrence and defence in the Baltic Sea – a body of water of pivotal economic and strategic importance to most of its littoral states.

The era of sea blindness and its end

During the so-called "expeditionary" era NATO's naval fleets shrunk in size and reduced their level of readiness, while capabilities across various disciplines of naval warfare, such as anti-submarine warfare, have eroded or were even lost altogether by a number of allies. Technological excellence of the Alliance in the maritime domain remained fairly intact and was amply demonstrated in various new platforms such as state-of-the-art aircraft carriers, submarines, amphibious assault ships, missile destroyers, frigates and corvettes commissioned by naval forces of the allies. Yet, the high cost of such platforms, shrinking defence budgets and the focus of maritime strategy on non-state threats during the post-Cold War period meant that their availability became very limited.

This does not mean that NATO navies were not busy: counter-piracy, crisis management, counter-terrorism and humanitarian relief

operations in different parts of the world demanded quite intensive commitment of the available naval assets and often called for doing more with less. However, the maritime domain as such was not as central to the strategic response of the Alliance to its security environment as it was during the Cold War, with the concomitant impact on the navies. This lack of attention and the resulting decline in naval capability and skills has come to be known as "sea blindness".[1]

As the world adjusts to an era in which great power conflict is no longer entirely inconceivable, defence establishments across the globe, including those of NATO and EU member states, have begun to put greater emphasis on the maritime domain. In part, this is simply a necessary rebalancing of force structures after the end of the post-Cold War period, during which NATO's focus on crisis response operations with dominant contribution by land and air components saw naval forces somewhat neglected. This renewed emphasis is also a response to the growing complexity of the maritime domain, the economic importance of the seas that surround us, and the need to prevent opportunities for malicious actors, state or non-state, to cause "hybrid" maritime mischief.

Among NATO states, it is also a reflection of the present-day model of conventional military deterrence, which relies on small frontline tripwire forces underpinned by the promise of large-scale reinforcement. In this model, collective defence will rely heavily on NATO's ability to keep sea lines of communication (SLOC) open – in particular across the Atlantic – to move significant numbers of troops and their equipment. And because it will be just as important to an adversary to prevent such movements, NATO's naval forces must once again be ready to engage in higher-end maritime conflict. NATO's rediscovery of the maritime domain was thus very evident in last year's exercise Trident Juncture, which saw a large naval component, including the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman and its accompanying strike group, operating in the Norwegian Sea.[2]

The maritime domain is also much more visible at the strategic level of the Alliance. In NATO's Brussels Summit of 2018, the Allies have stated:

> *We are reinforcing our maritime posture and have taken concrete steps to improve our maritime situational awareness. We have prepared strategic assessments on the Baltic and*

1 Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, "A Maritime Renaissance. Naval Power in NATO's Future," in *Routledge Handbook of Naval Security and Strategy*, eds. Joachim Krause and Sebastian Bruns (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016), chapter 26.

2 Megan Eckstein, "Truman Carrier Strike Group Operating North of Arctic Circle; First Time for US Navy Since 1991," *USNI News*, October 19, 2018, https://news.usni.org/2018/10/19/truman-carrier-strike-group-operating-north-arctic-circle-first-time-us-navy-since-1991.

Black Seas, the North Atlantic, and the Mediterranean. Through the enhanced exercise programme, we will reinvigorate our collective maritime warfighting skills in key areas, including anti-submarine warfare, amphibious operations, and protection of sea lines of communication. The posture will also ensure support to reinforcement by and from the sea, including the transatlantic dimension with the North Atlantic being a line of communication for strategic reinforcement.[3]

With time, this strategic review will lead to the Alliance that is much better prepared to deal with the threats in the maritime domain. However, one particular geographical area of the Alliance's responsibility, the Baltic Sea, needs a special attention due to its unique characteristics that are often difficult for the non-Baltic navies to appreciate and also due to its importance to the economies and security of its littoral states. The question is whether those states – both NATO and the EU members – are doing enough of what is necessary to ensure security, deter aggression and protect SLOC in the event of crisis and war.

Russia's challenge

Russia is already actively challenging the West in peacetime, using naval assets in the Baltic Sea to support its broader political strategy of re-asserting its influence. Its naval presence in the Baltic Sea is frequent, deliberately visible and occasionally confrontational, even provocative. The ships of its Baltic Fleet – by far the largest national fleet in the Baltic Sea – are frequently sighted in very close proximity to the territorial waters of the Baltic states while transiting between the bases in Baltiysk (near Kaliningrad) and Kronstadt (near Saint Petersburg). In addition to these routine transits, the Baltic Fleet has been active in showing presence, demonstrating readiness through live fire exercises, and, together with other branches of the Russian Armed Forces deployed in the Kaliningrad exclave, displaying Russia's negative attitude towards NATO's, especially U.S., naval presence (in particular when related to ballistic missile defence, e.g., Aegis ships). Recent examples of hostile activity include buzzing of the U.S. guided missile destroyer USS Donald Cook by Su-24 fighter jets and the harassment of a U.S. cargo ship on its approach to Klaipėda carrying

3 "Brussels Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels 11-12 July 2018," Press Release (2018) 074, NATO, July 11, 2018, paragraph 19.

equipment for exercise Sabre Strike 2017.[4]

The Baltic Fleet has also been used to obstruct the activities of other regional states. Throughout 2015, Russia repeatedly declared an exercise zone in Lithuania's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and ordered a ship laying the NordBalt power cable to leave the area, thus delaying the project. Russia also caused serious and quite unprecedented disruption to regional air traffic by declaring missile exercises in international waters just off the coast of Latvia, following the Baltic-U.S. summit in Washington in 2018.[5] In such instances, Russia employed naval power both to display its political stance in relation to activities and events of strategic importance to the Baltic states (increasing energy security, strengthening relations with a key ally) and to demonstrate its ability to shape the Baltic Sea security environment in ways it pleases. Russian naval activities are often timed to reinforce political messaging, highlight Russia's claim to naval preponderance in the Baltic Sea and emphasise the security, military and economic vulnerabilities of littoral states such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The Baltic Sea littoral states also need to be ready to deal with hybrid threats in the maritime domain. The Baltic Sea presents a determined adversary such as Russia with multiple opportunities for operations that use a mix of tools, such as informational, economic, criminal and irregular military activities, to achieve political objectives.[6] While the exact nature of a hybrid attack cannot be predicted, it is not difficult to imagine a range of actions that an adversary might take to damage a Baltic Sea state economically (for example, by disrupting commercial or tourist traffic, or undersea pipelines or cables), politically (for example, by provocations that cast doubt on its ability to safeguard its maritime territorial integrity) or militarily (for example, by using civilian vessels to gather intelligence or launch covert operations). Such actions are intended to create confusion, to be deniable and to create uncertainty about what sort of response is required, by whom. Continuous presence of allied and partner naval forces at sea and their ability to respond to hybrid incidents as well as to the demonstrations of force are thus key elements of security in the Baltic Sea area.

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4 Sam LaGrone, "Video: Russian Fighters Buzz USS Donald Cook in Baltic Sea," *USNI News*, April 13, 2016, https://news.usni.org/2016/04/13/video-russian-fighters-buzz-uss-donald-cook-in-baltic-sea; David B. Larter, "Russian military 'harassed' US-flagged merchant ship in the Baltic ahead of exercises," *DefenseNews*, June 27, 2017, https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2017/06/27/russian-military-harassed-us-flagged-merchant-ship-in-the-baltic-ahead-of-exercises/

5 Michael Birnbaum, "Russia tests missiles in the Baltic Sea, a day after Baltic leaders met with Trump," *Washington Post*, April 4, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russia-tests-missiles-in-the-baltic-sea-a-day-after-baltic-leaders-met-with-trump/2018/04/04/0a35e222-380d-11e8-af3c-2123715f78df_story.html

6 Martin Murphy and Gary Schaub Jr., "'Sea of Peace' or Sea of War – Russian Maritime Hybrid Warfare in the Baltic Sea," *Naval War College Review* 71:2 (2018) Article 9, 9-12.

NATO commands four peacetime standing naval forces, which provide deterrent presence and situational awareness, support exercises and conduct missions, as well as provide the core of the maritime component of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF).[7] Between them, Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1) and Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group One (SNMCMG1) are present in the Baltic Sea for around 300 days each year; however this presence is spread across the entire Baltic, and SNMCMG1 – the less effective force as far as deterrence is concerned – accounts for the larger share of days. However, except for periods of major exercises, it can be difficult to generate forces for these groups to step up the presence in the Baltic Sea as a measure of deterrence or in response to hybrid incidents. Large multinational exercises such as the US-led BALTOPS or the UK-led Baltic Protector – valuable as they are in ensuring visibility of Western naval power, practicing interoperability, enhancing situational awareness as well as exercising realistic scenarios of reinforcing and defending the Baltic states – do not fully satisfy the need for maintaining constant maritime situational awareness and readiness to manage Russia's challenge (whichever form it may take).[8] The Baltic Sea nations have to enhance their own efforts in this regard – and not only in peacetime but also in preparation for a potential major crisis.

The Baltic Sea in times of major military crisis

While the threat of a Russian military attack is regarded fairly low, Russia is the only conceivable existential threat to the sovereignty of the states surrounding the Baltic Sea.[9] Prudent defence planning requires that this possibility be taken very seriously. For the Alliance then, preserving unimpeded access to the Baltic states by air, land and sea have become key to bolstering the credibility of deterrence and, should deterrence fail, ensuring NATO's ability defend or restore the sovereignty of the Baltic states. In the maritime domain, this

7 "Maritime Groups," NATO, Allied Maritime Command, https://mc.nato.int/missions/maritime-groups.aspx.

8 Baltic Protector 2019, held in the Baltic Sea in April-July 2019, was the very first exercise of the maritime component of the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF). At its peak, the exercise brought together around 20 ships and 3000 personnel from all 9 JEF nations. Also, during the same period, the traditional BALTOPS exercise led by the US 2nd Fleet involved more than 50 ships, a dozen aircraft and 8600 personnel from 18 nations. See: "UK-led high-readiness force to deploy to the Baltic Sea," Ministry of Defence (UK), April 3, 2019, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-led-high-readiness-force-to-deploy-to-the-baltic-sea; Megan Eckstein, "U.S., NATO Want Expanded BALTOPS Exercise to Show Commitment to European Security," USNI News, June 19, 2019, https://news.usni.org/2019/06/19/u-s-nato-want-expanded-baltops-exercise-to-show-commitment-to-european-security

9 Välisluureamet (Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service), *International Security and Estonia 2019* (Tallinn: Välisluureamet, 2019): 4.

requires the capability to establish sea control in the Baltic in times of crisis or war to preserve SLOC.[10] The Baltic states are connected to the rest of the Alliance only by a narrow land corridor, the so-called Suwałki corridor. Securing this in a crisis or war would present NATO with a major challenge, while the only alternative means to bring reinforcements to and resupply them in the region is through the Baltic Sea and the airspace above.[11] The sea offers the only realistic means to do so on a large scale.

However, in the event of a large-scale conflict with Russia in the Baltic region, maintaining freedom of movement in the Baltic Sea would form just one part of NATO's overall defence efforts. The need to protect transatlantic SLOC and keep Russian naval forces bottled up behind the choke point of the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) gap would occupy the larger part of NATO's naval forces, including the newly re-constituted U.S. Second Fleet. The Baltic Sea would probably comprise just a secondary theatre of a large-scale conflict, at least in its initial stages. It is therefore unlikely that the Allies' principal surface combatants such as frigates would be available in any significant numbers to conduct operations in the Baltic, where they would in any case be vulnerable to the long-range weapon systems – such as the Kalibr family of cruise missiles and the Bastion-P coastal defence anti-ship system – whose development Russia has prioritised in its "new look" reform programme.[12] Furthermore, while such ships may be useful in showing presence and demonstrating intent, they are simply too large to be able to operate effectively in much of the confined and shallow Baltic Sea, and have sensor and weapon suites designed and optimised for blue water operations, not for the complicated hydrographic conditions of the Baltic.

The belief of some Baltic decision makers that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania should focus on the defence of the land, based on the assumption that NATO will take care of the sea and the air, is thus flawed. The Baltic Sea is not a problem for the rest of NATO – it is a problem for all of NATO, including the allies in the Baltic area. There is clearly a need for credible, local maritime capability that would underpin their commitment to Article 3 of the Washington Treaty to

10 Sea control refers to the employment of military forces to "destroy enemy naval forces, suppress enemy sea commerce, protect vital sea lanes, and establish local military superiority in vital sea areas" with the intent of securing the maritime domain and preventing its use by the enemy. Sea denial refers to attempts to deny an enemy's ability to use the sea without necessarily attempting to control it. *Command and Control of Joint Maritime Operations*, Joint Publication 3-32 (Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018), I-3, GL-7.

11 Ben Hodges, Janusz Bugajski and Peter B. Doran, *Securing the Suwałki Corridor: Strategy, Statecraft, Deterrence and Defense* (Washington DC: Center for European Policy Analysis, July 2018): 16.

12 Richard Connolly and Mathieu Boulègue, *Russia's New State Armament Programme: Implications for the Russian Armed Forces and Military Capabilities to 2027* (London: Chatham House, May 2018): 20.

"maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack."[13] The navies of the friendly countries that surround the Baltic Sea will have to be ready to protect their ports and other key infrastructure, maintain sea control over the final stretches of NATO's reinforcement routes, disrupt the hostile activities of Russia's Baltic Fleet and counter any aggressive Russian actions launched from the sea such as amphibious island grabs.

Stepping up the game in the Baltic Sea

Fortunately, many of the allied and partner countries in the Baltic area have recognised the need to modernise their maritime capabilities. Germany, for example, is doubling the size of its fleet of K130 class corvettes, modernising its mine countermeasures capability, increasing its submarine fleet, and replacing ageing frigates with a new multi-role combat ship. In all, the German Navy will grow from 46 to 60 vessels, and a significant part of this fleet will be configured for operating in special conditions of the Baltic Sea (i.e. shallow and confined waters). Finland, meanwhile, has embarked on a "Squadron 2020" project that will see four new multi-purpose corvettes brought into service by 2028.[14] Other states surrounding the Baltic Sea have less concrete plans for their Baltic operations. The Swedish Navy is working to regenerate some of the capabilities it reduced or retired after the end of the Cold War, including anti-ship and air defence missiles for its corvette fleet, new submarines and strengthened mine-laying capabilities. A recent defence commission report defining Sweden's defence priorities for the period 2021-25 also recommended maintaining land-based anti-ship missiles beyond their expected retirement date of 2025 and creating a new amphibious battalion to protect Sweden's west coast and the port of Gothenburg.[15] Poland, however, is not only struggling with an ageing fleet of legacy platforms, but has also found difficulties in defining what the level of ambition of the future Polish Navy should be. Denmark, meanwhile, which has recently acquired three very capable multi-purpose frigates, sees its navy as primarily a blue water one, protecting NATO interests in the North Sea and the Atlantic, and fulfilling its defence obligations to Greenland and the Faeroe Islands.

13 "The North Atlantic Treaty," NATO, Washington D.C., April 4, 1949, Article 3.

14 Ministry of Defence of Finland, *Squadron 2020: Finnish Defence Forces' strategic project* (Helsinki: Ministry of Defence, 2017): 11.

15 *The Swedish Defence Commission's White Book on Sweden's Security Policy and the Development of the Military Defence 2021-2025: Summary* (Stockholm: The Swedish Defence Commission's Secretariat, 2019): 4-5.

Nonetheless, the capability of the navies around the Baltic Sea to deal with the potential threats in their maritime neighbourhood is set to grow steadily in the coming years.

A key requirement for ensuring security in the maritime domain is comprehensive and continuous maritime situational awareness. Without a clear understanding of the normal patterns of traffic on the Baltic Sea – who is there, and what they are doing – it is less likely that the various agencies responsible for maritime security, including the navies, will be able to spot abnormal patterns and therefore detect possible hybrid attacks. Maritime situational awareness requires not only an appropriate range of manned and remote sensors, but also the presence at sea of naval and other maritime agency vessels. This, in turn, augments deterrence and ensures a ready means of response to any threat.

While there are frameworks for improving Baltic maritime situational awareness – for example the EU's Maritime Surveillance (MARSUR) project and the international Sea Surveillance Cooperation Baltic – the current situation falls some way short of the requirement. The importance of enhancing Baltic maritime situational awareness and of creating and sharing a Recognised Maritime Picture (RMP) is well understood among operators, but there are still considerable obstacles in the way of making this a reality. In particular, there are legal and political objections to the sharing of data both domestically among national agencies and internationally among allies and partners. For instance, Sweden and Finland – two NATO's Enhanced Opportunities Partners – are not contributing to the RMP developed and maintained by NATO's Maritime Component Command (MARCOM). Meeting the requirement for awareness is not then just a technical question, but an issue that will need higher level political attention and solutions.

Then, there is a question of effective and coherent command and control of operations in the Baltic Sea. NATO command structures often lack expertise on the maritime domain (e.g. Joint Force Command Brunssum) or do not constantly focus on the Baltic Sea and do not have sufficient expertise on its conditions (e.g. MARCOM). Thus, the German effort to build a multinational Baltic Maritime Component Command (BMCC) by 2025 is one of the most promising initiatives that could help bring together littoral states – including Finland and Sweden – and, when necessary, plug non-Baltic allies and partners into a single framework dedicated to managing common challenges in the Baltic Sea.[16] While it has yet to overcome some political, legal and practical obstacles – including a

16 Heinrich Lange, Bill Combes, Tomas Jermalavičius and Tony Lawrence, *To the Seas Again. Maritime Defence and Deterrence in the Baltic Region* (Tallinn: ICDS, 2019): 26-28.

degree of scepticism among some Baltic Sea navies – it could well become the main cooperation and coordination vehicle in planning and conducting maritime operations and other activities (NATO as well as EU's) in the Baltic Sea in peacetime, crisis and war. Germany's efforts to meet the expectations of the allies for more leadership are thus gradually extending into the maritime domain, but this does not absolve smaller and less capable allies such as the Baltic states from their part of responsibility for enhancing security, defence and deterrence in the Baltic Sea.

The development of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian navies

The present-day naval posture of the three Baltic states dates back to the mid-to-late 1990s when they received considerable international support for the development of their armed forces. Limited defence resources, a lack of experience among Baltic naval personnel, and the desire of many of the supporting states to restrict developments to those which could not be misrepresented as provocative towards Russia shepherded the three Baltic navies down the path of mine countermeasure capability. At the time, this was a practical and inexpensive route to building navies from nothing and, through the Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON) project, to instilling a culture of Baltic naval cooperation (although this has, unfortunately, faded somewhat in the absence of international persuasion – Estonia withdrew from BALTRON in 2015).[17]

This specialisation also meant that, by and large, the Baltic states have failed to develop any significant conceptual and strategic thought about the maritime domain. Their current national defence strategies barely mention it at all, let alone define national security and defence interests as well as envisage the means and ways of protecting them. (A notable exception is a concept of military defence at sea developed by the Estonian Navy[18]). The three navies are very small and under-resourced, constantly struggling to maintain or increase their capabilities and readiness.[19] Land forces and, to some degree, air defence, remain the highest priorities, and

17 "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania Concerning the Establishment of the Baltic Naval Squadron," *Likumi.lv (Latvijas Vēstnesis)*, https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=213544; "Estonia to pull out of Baltic mine countermeasures squadron," *Postimees*, January 8, 2015, https://news.postimees.ee/3049303/estonia-to-pull-out-of-baltic-mine-countermeasures-squadron.

18 *Estonian Military Defence at Sea: Capstone Concept*, Estonian Navy, (Tallinn: Estonian Navy, 2017).

19 Estonian Navy: 4 ships / 400 active personnel; Latvian Navy: 12 ships (plus 6 Coast Guard patrol boats) / 480 active personnel; Lithuanian Navy: 9 ships / 760 active personnel. *The Military Balance 2019* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2019): 102, 124-126.

thus the three Baltic states continue as countries highly dependent, in their security, defence and economic matters, on the Baltic Sea but not really growing into genuine naval nations.

Admittedly, mine countermeasures is an essential capability both because the Baltic Sea is well suited to mining operations that need to be countered, and because a large amount of First and Second World War explosive ordnance still lies on the seabed posing a risk to commercial shipping. This also represented a visible "niche" in NATO's catalogue of capabilities at the time when "niche" specialisation was fashionable. However, a continued focus on mine countermeasures alone will prevent the three Baltic states' navies from developing into the credible, mature organisations able to conduct a wide range of maritime security tasks they will need to be if they are to play a proper role in Baltic Sea security in peace, crisis and war and fulfil their part in providing for effective initial self-defence.

A Baltic naval future

The mine countermeasure fleets of all three states – Estonia's three UK-built Sandown class vessels, Latvia's five Dutch-built Tripartite class, and Lithuania's four UK-built Hunt class – are simultaneously approaching the end of their useful lives and will need to be replaced towards the end of the next decade. This presents an ideal opportunity for the three states to embark on a fresh path towards building broader naval capability in a collaborative fashion. Such an opportunity seems to have been acknowledged by the defence leadership of the three countries: the chiefs of the three navies have been tasked to develop a common vision for 2030. While the results are not yet publicly available, this vision might lead to much greater synergies between the three nations in their investments in new technologies (such as unmanned and autonomous underwater and surface platforms), in acquisition and life cycle management of new ships, in training and exercises and in the conduct of operations in the Baltic Sea.

Mine countermeasure capability will need to be retained, but the three states should also consider developing capabilities in three further areas. Firstly, the three navies should be able to execute – at least on a limited scale – other naval warfare disciplines. In particular, an ability to conduct anti-submarine and anti-surface operations will be important in enhancing the credibility of the Baltic navies. The optimal way for small navies to achieve a range of capabilities at reasonable cost is through the acquisition of small multi-purpose vessels, such as corvettes or fast patrol boats, perhaps augmented

with a range of unmanned vehicles. Finland's Squadron 2020 serves as a useful example of the range of capability that can be integrated into a modern, multi-purpose platform. Such vessels can also contribute to maritime situational awareness and provide command and control functions.

Secondly, the requirement to protect sea lines of communication and maritime infrastructure, and to deny an adversary the opportunity to disrupt friendly shipping movements, can be partly met through the development of mine-laying capabilities. Mines can be decisive in the defence of a small coastal state – Finland also provides an example of a small state that is highly proficient in both offensive and defensive mine warfare. Thirdly, another approach to protecting sea lines of communication and infrastructure is through the use of land-based, mobile anti-ship missiles. The balance between providing maritime defence from the sea and from the land in a Baltic context is an issue that requires further analysis of costs and operational effects.

The importance of the sea in peacetime, crisis and war requires the Baltic states to take their maritime responsibilities seriously and to tackle their own sea blindness in the next phase of their defence development. There is no doubt that capability development in the maritime domain will be expensive and that there will be other competing priorities. It is thus most unlikely that any of the three Baltic states can achieve the level of required capability alone. Instead, they must think seriously about acquiring, operating and commanding naval capability on a shared basis. Despite frequent pronouncements at the highest levels about the importance of Baltic defence cooperation, the reality has been one of missed opportunities. Defence cooperation is not easy and requires tremendous political will. It should be hoped that the political and military leadership of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will strongly endorse and continuously support the common vision of the three navies that puts such cooperation at the very heart of their future. Without this, the three Baltic navies are destined to be left on the periphery of the Baltic Sea naval community, and the Baltic states' defence and deterrence are bound to retain a significant vulnerability that the rest of the Alliance will not be able to fully remedy.

Air Defence Challenges and Prospects of the Baltic States

Tony Lawrence

The post-Cold War era is over and the prospect of an inter-state military conflict in Europe, although still unlikely, is no longer entirely unthinkable. Russia's 'new look' military reforms, launched after its flawed performance in its war with Georgia in 2008, have by now undoubtedly given it the capacity to inflict considerable military pain on NATO Allies and partners. Whether, where, and in what circumstances it might choose to launch a military attack on the West is, of course, much harder to assess. But it is at least clear that Russia has, through military exercises such as Zapad 2017, rehearsed large-scale conflict with NATO. Furthermore, it has shown itself ready to use military force – in Georgia, in Ukraine, in Syria – to advance its long-term strategic objectives of creating a global security order in which it plays a prominent role and in which it retains privileged interests in its neighbourhood.

The three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are perhaps the Allies most susceptible to a Russian military threat. They border Russia or its ally Belarus, they lack the strategic depth that would allow them to mount a flexible defence, and they are connected to the rest of NATO territory by only the narrowest of land corridors. In addition, Russia's highly militarised Kaliningrad exclave lies between Lithuania to its north-east and Poland to its south. The armed forces of the Baltic states are small and while the presence of NATO forces in the three states (and Poland) in the form of enhanced Forward Presence is a welcome fortification of the Alliance's deterrence posture, the combined Allied force posture in the region is still no match for Russia's. In the worst case, should deterrence fail, Russia could overrun the Baltic states in a short period of time and attempt to negotiate with the rest of the Alliance from a position of strength, perhaps also invoking the threat of nuclear weapons – the so-called "escalate to de-escalate" approach. The Alliance would be faced with the unpalatable choice of either abandoning the Baltic states, or conducting military operations to restore Baltic territory, no doubt at huge human and financial cost and an ever-present risk of nuclear conflict. Prudent defence planning in the present era thus requires that the Alliance should be able to deter a Russian attack on Baltic (and other Allied) territory and, if necessary, defend Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania against such an attack.

All three Baltic states are among the few Allies that meet or are very close to meeting NATO's Defence Investment Pledge, spending 2% of their GDP on defence and 20% of that figure on equipment. However, their small economies and the high cost of defence systems severely limits the capability they can afford to contribute to NATO's collective deterrence and defence efforts. All three states have major capability shortfalls, for example in long-range artillery, in any form of maritime capability beyond mine countermeasures vessels, and in armour. But air defence is perhaps the most pressing defence capability shortfall in the Baltic states.

Air defence in the Baltic states

Should Russia launch the type of fait accompli aggression described above against one or more of the Baltic states, it would intend to achieve its initial military objectives as rapidly as possible so as to establish facts on the ground before the Allies could respond. Air assets offer both speed and reach that cannot be matched by ground and maritime forces. Extensive air operations – including surveillance and reconnaissance, cruise missile, combat air and attack helicopter operations to interdict ground targets, and airborne insertions of ground force units – would thus be essential to successful offensive operations; likewise, air defence would be essential to successful defensive operations. The advantage currently lies substantially with the offence: the RAND Corporation's well-known series of wargames that tested the credibility of Baltic defence found that even with partial reinforcement of NATO combat air in the region – RAND assumed that some 18.5 squadrons would be available for a range of tasks including air defence against Russia's 27 combat air squadrons – Russia would still be able to reach the outskirts of Rīga or Tallinn within 60 hours.[1]

For air defence, all three Baltic states possess legacy anti-aircraft artillery systems and have acquired short-range air defence missile systems – most recently the MBDA Mistral in the case of Estonia, and the Raytheon Stinger in Latvia and Lithuania. Such systems typically have effective ranges of less than 5-10 km and are thus only suitable for protecting small manoeuvre units or for point defence of critical assets. Lithuania has also signed a contract to procure two batteries of the Kongsberg Norwegian Advanced Surface to Air Missile System along with the associated command and control capability. This

1 David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank. Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics," (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2016).

medium-range system, with a range perhaps of the order of 25 km, will substantially enhance Lithuania's capability, but will still fall a long way short of providing comprehensive air defence. Both Latvia and Estonia also have aspirations to acquire medium-range systems, but have so far been unable to find funding for these in their capability planning. Long-range systems, meanwhile, are and will remain beyond the three states' financial reach. Sweden's ongoing purchase of four Raytheon Patriot fire units and 300 missiles, for example, is likely to cost around 3 billion USD, well in excess of the combined total annual defence budgets of the three Baltic states.[2]

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania thus possess only very limited capabilities to defend against attacks from the air and thus to impede a Russian advance before the arrival of Allied reinforcements. Manoeuvre units conducting defensive operations, mobilisation depots assembling reserve units, forces deployed under enhanced Forward Presence, critical reinforcement infrastructure such as sea and air ports, and command and control elements would all be vulnerable to air attack. The defence of the Baltic states would be seriously handicapped before it had had the opportunity to begin in earnest.

NATO solutions?

In an ideal world (from the Baltic viewpoint), other NATO states would acknowledge, correctly, that these risks to Baltic security are also risks to their own security and would step in to fill this capability shortfall. Air policing of Baltic airspace, which has been conducted by other Allies since the three states joined NATO in 2004, is a precedent and possible model. But there are at least three problems with such an approach.

First, there is a general shortage of air defence capability in the inventories of Allied – and especially European Allied – states. In the post-Cold War era, the Allies focused their attention on expeditionary peace support and counter-insurgency operations against unconventional militarily adversaries. These operations were dominated by lighter-end land force operations and, to a lesser extent, offensive air operations. The Allies generally enjoyed air superiority in the theatres to which they deployed, and air defence was thus one of many warfighting capabilities that declined across NATO during this period. An indication of the magnitude of the shortfall may be found in a 2019 International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) study that used scenarios to estimate European capability requirements for

2 Jen Judson, "Sweden locked in to buy Patriot missile defense system," *Defense News*, August 10, 2018.

operations in which the U.S. was not involved. The study found that that Europe's NATO member states would need an additional 72-90 batteries of long range surface-to-air missile systems (at an estimated cost of 62-78 billion USD) to conduct a territorial defence operation in the Baltic region.[3] While it is reasonable to assume that any peacetime deployment of air defence assets to the Baltic region would include a U.S. contribution, it is also reasonable to assume that the U.S. would expect the European Allies to contribute substantially too; the IISS study suggests that they would struggle to do so. Meanwhile, at the same time as NATO's air defence capabilities have declined, Russia has invested substantially in this field, most notably in the long-range S-400 Triumph (SA-21 Growler) system, to build a very capable air defence network on its western flank and in the Kaliningrad exclave.

Second, the Baltic states have not developed local air command and control systems that would be readily able to integrate incoming air defence assets. The current arrangements have been developed through the Baltic Air Surveillance Network (BALTNET), a cooperative framework that dates from the late 1990s and provides for the acquisition, distribution and display of air surveillance data, and for limited air command and control within the three Baltic states. The BALTNET systems are, in turn, part of the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System, a NATO-wide capability for detecting, tracking and, if necessary, intercepting, air threats to Alliance territories, populations and armed forces. Air surveillance in the Baltic region is mostly good, with all three states operating modern radar systems to meet NATO requirements. However, there are: shortfalls in network connectivity both within and to/from the Baltic region that would prevent the network from achieving the high levels of availability and reliability needed for a continuously operating air defence architecture; shortfalls in command and control nodes and in qualified personnel to staff such nodes on a continuous basis, again reducing availability and reliability levels; and technical limitations that prevent the easy integration of incoming air defence assets.[4]

In short, while the systems developed under BALTNET may be adequate for the command and control of a peacetime operation such as Baltic Air Policing, they would be challenged (although workaround solutions may be possible) to command and control a continuous deterrence or defence operation involving incoming air defence assets. Even the three states' own short-range air defence

3 Douglas Barrie et al, *Defending Europe: scenario-based capability requirements for NATO's European members* (London: IISS, 2019): 38.

4 Sir Christopher Harper, Tony Lawrence and Sven Sakkov, *Air Defence of the Baltic States* (Tallinn: ICDS, 2018): 15-16.

systems are not presently integrated into BALTNET. Visiting assets would either need to be standalone, reducing their effectiveness, or would need to be supported by a NATO deployable command and control element. On a more positive note, these shortfalls have been recognised by the air forces of the three states who have agreed to develop by 2020 a BALTNET Future Configuration, which will provide greater levels of redundancy and back up in air command and control than is presently possible.

Third, there is the question of political will. It is not evident that all Allies perceive the Russian threat to be as serious as the Baltic states do. There are also those who believe that the enhanced Forward Presence – which is undoubtedly a substantial and welcome commitment by NATO as a whole to Baltic and Polish security – is a sufficient response to the present threat level. More broadly, this situation reflects a difference in viewpoints across the Alliance over the relative priorities that should be assigned to the "eastern" agenda (collective deterrence and defence) and the "southern" agenda (instability, migration, and terrorism to Europe's south). Whether this split results in real policy differences across NATO is unclear, but in any event 2018 research by the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS) found little appetite in any quarter for either enlarging or broadening enhanced Forward Presence.[5] It thus seems unlikely that, in the absence of any further degradation of the security environment, NATO would be ready to agree to a collective air defence mission in the Baltic region.

A less demanding step towards improving the air defence situation in the Baltic states advocated by some analysts is the conversion of the Baltic air policing mission to an air defence mission.[6] This alone would not result in comprehensive air defence coverage, which relies on layers of air-, ground-, and perhaps sea-based sensor and weapon systems integrated into a coherent whole, but it would be a considerable enhancement of current capabilities. Some of the measures necessary to achieve this goal could be put in place relatively easily, for example providing new rules of engagement to the deployed combat air units – although even this would likely require a good deal of political wrangling in Brussels. Other aspects might prove more challenging. An effective air-based Baltic air defence mission would, for example, entail the deployment of additional combat aircraft and airborne surveillance assets, whereas Baltic air

5 Kalev Stoicescu and Pauli Järvenpää, *Contemporary Deterrence – Insights and Lessons from Enhanced Forward Presence* (Tallinn: ICDS, 2018): 13-14.

6 For example, Philip M Breedlove, "Toward Effective Air Defense in Northern Europe," *Atlantic Council Issue Brief*, February 2018, 5.

policing usually involves only eight fighter jets, based at Ämari Air Base in Estonia and Šiauliai Air Base in Lithuania. Also, as noted above, the local BALTNET air command and control systems are not configured for continuous deterrence and defence operations, thus a Baltic air defence mission would necessitate the development or deployment of improved command and control functions.

A burden-sharing approach

While a standing NATO air defence presence in the Baltic region may be an unlikely prospect at present, there are nonetheless measures that the Alliance could take to improve air defence and deterrence. The most obvious of these is the deployment of air defence capabilities to the region on a routine, albeit temporary basis. This might take the form of exercises – dedicated component-based exercises of ground-based air defence systems, airborne surveillance systems, fighter aircraft, deployable command and control elements, and sea-based air defence systems, or more general exercises that involve an air defence ingredient – or it might take the form of rotational deployments, for example as elements of the enhanced Forward Presence battlegroups or as part of the U.S. European Deterrence Initiative. Exercises and deployments not only provide training, improve interoperability and allow Allied units to become familiar with potential crisis-time environments, but also send important strategic messages to potential aggressors regarding the solidarity of the Alliance and its commitment to Baltic security.

NATO could also accelerate the implementation of its Air Command and Control System, a programme that was originally conceived in the mid-1990s and whose delayed implementation has left NATO's Integrated Air and Missile Defence System running on a variety of dated legacy arrangements. Further, it could consider the level of authority delegated to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) to take preparatory military actions without the formal decision of the North Atlantic Council. At present, the SACEUR has considerably greater authority to act in preparing for land operations than in preparing for air operations, despite the much higher speed and greater potential for surprise of an air campaign.

Given their small – in cash terms – defence budgets, it is unavoidable that the three Baltic states will need to look to other NATO Allies for assistance in bolstering their air defence capabilities. But unless the Baltic states are ready to make efforts in this direction themselves, including through fresh investment or reprioritisation, the motivation

of Allies to support them will be reduced. There are two priority areas in which action is needed.

The three Baltic states first need to get their own house in order. The most pressing challenge is to enhance Baltic air command and control capability. This requires the enrichment of network connectivity, both within and to/from the region, in order to reduce vulnerabilities to system failure or deliberate attack. In addition, technical enhancements are needed to ensure that incoming air defence assets can readily be integrated into Baltic systems. This would not only considerably improve the effectiveness of air defence during times of crisis, but would also make the three states more attractive as exercise locations. Additional redundancy is also required in command and control nodes. While the infrastructure for duplicating command and control is mostly already in place in the three states (at the existing command and reporting posts in Ämari/Tallinn, Lielvārde and Karmėlava) there is at present a lack of trained personnel, in particular in key functions such as fighter allocation, surface-to-air missile allocation, and tactical data link management. Enhancing Baltic command and control to provide the capability for continuous operations is necessary for wartime situations, but would also make much easier – operationally and in terms of generating a persuasive case in its favour – the transformation of the current Baltic air policing mission into an air defence mission.

In parallel, NATO should be seeking technical and political solutions to ensure that air surveillance data can be shared to a greater extent than at present with Sweden and Finland. The geography of the Baltic region and the lack of strategic depth of the three Baltic states makes an understanding of air activity around Sweden and Finland a vital intelligence requirement for NATO air planners.

There is also work for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to do with regard to existing air defence weapon systems. Here, it is essential that the three states' existing short-range capabilities are integrated into the BALTNET command and control system. The current arrangements by which, in the presence of Baltic short-range systems, airspace control is only possible by procedural means is a risk to friendly air forces and unnecessarily constrains NATO air operations. Furthermore, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania need to be sure they have sufficient missile stocks for sustained operation of their current systems.

Both these measures are necessary if the three states are to make full use of their existing short-range ground-based air defence capability. But short-range systems alone are insufficient to address the air threat in the Baltic region and, in the absence of a permanent

NATO air defence presence, the second priority area is that the Baltic states should give serious consideration to following Lithuania's lead and investing in medium-range systems. This will be an expensive undertaking – Lithuania's contract to acquire two batteries of the Norwegian Advanced Surface to Air Missile System, including training, additional equipment, logistical support and system integration was reportedly valued at 109 million EUR.[7]

Baltic cooperation

The high cost of procuring medium-range air defence may be partly offset by cooperation between the three states; indeed, it would be inexcusable for them to embark on separate projects should they all elect to prioritise acquisition of this capability. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have established good habits of cooperation in air defence matters through the BALTNET project. While there have been periods of – sometimes great – tension, the fact remains that BALTNET, along with the Baltic Defence College, is one of only two of the flagship trilateral defence cooperation projects established in the 1990s that survives.

To the greatest extent possible, then, the three states should cooperate in the acquisition and operation of medium-range air defence systems. Procurement can be done jointly, in particular if Estonia and Latvia select systems that are compatible with those already chosen by Lithuania. There can be common facilities for maintenance and logistics support. Training can be common with the establishment of a single air defence school. Once these arrangements are established for medium-range systems, they can be built upon to also incorporate common arrangements for the existing short-range systems. The three states could also benefit substantially by building on the lessons of BALTNET, and its sister frameworks the Baltic Battalion, the Baltic Naval Squadron and the Baltic Defence College, to create a new framework for air defence. These frameworks, established during the 1990s with considerable international support, created environments in which technical, military, policy and governance issues could be discussed at a range of levels and promoted a culture of cooperation that encouraged the three states to overcome the challenges of working together, rather than to use them as excuses not to do so. The rejuvenation of such Baltic frameworks is long overdue.

7 Robin Hughes, "Lithuania, Indonesia Sign for NASAMS," *IHS Jane's Missiles and Rockets*, October 31, 2017.

In addition to cost and risk sharing, defence cooperation would bring other advantages. It promotes interoperability, which in turn would encourage a regional approach to air defence; the speed of air operations coupled with the limited size of Baltic territory means that air defence must be continuous and seamless across the three states. Also, cooperation would be a useful signal to Allies that the Baltic states were serious in their endeavour to acquire what might otherwise be an unaffordable capability. Allies would thus be more likely to look favourably towards their own role in this shared approach to strengthening Baltic air defence.

Conclusion

Air defence is a critical – probably the most critical – defence capability shortfall in the Baltic region. In a crisis, a lack of air defence would leave armed forces, populations and critical infrastructure vulnerable to Russia's very capable air forces and leave the Baltic states all but powerless to impede an attack. In peacetime, the thinness of this critical capability weakens deterrence. It is in the vital interest of the Baltic states and other Allies that this capability should be strengthened.

The Baltic states cannot provide sufficient air defence alone; nor is NATO likely to step in to fill the gap. However, a shared approach in which NATO routinely deploys air defence assets to the Baltic region, in particular longer-range systems, and in which the Baltic states enhance the command and control capability to support such deployments, and invest more in short- and medium-range ground-based systems should provide a workable alternative. Not only will all NATO member states need to work together to implement such an approach, but also Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will need to develop the closest possible habits of cooperation to implement effectively and efficiently their end of the bargain.

Deterring Russia in the Baltics

Toms Rostoks

The Baltic states are among the most vulnerable NATO member states. Their combined military capabilities are no match for the strength of the Russian forces stationed across the border. This was not regarded as a problem before 2014, but the annexation of Crimea and the start of the military conflict in eastern Ukraine have stoked fears that Russia may initiate military aggression against the Baltic states. This terrifying possibility has galvanised NATO and led to considerable efforts to build a sufficient and sustainable deterrent in the Baltic region. The concept of deterrence was largely absent from discussions on security in the Baltic region before 2014, but lately, the Baltic states have increasingly conceptualised their relations with Russia through the lens of deterrence. The first two parts of the paper look at the present deterrence arrangements in the Baltic region and the reasons why those can be sufficient for now, while the third part identifies potential problems stemming from the present NATO deterrence posture in the Baltic region.

Deterrence through Alliance solidarity

What are the key characteristics of NATO deterrence in the Baltic region? Deterrence has military and non-military aspects, with the former taking centre stage under conditions of acute conflict, while the latter playing an important role during peacetime, when a mix of military and non-military stimuli is usually enough to dissuade the adversary from military aggression. In the modern international system, interstate military conflicts are an exception rather than a rule, therefore non-military tools of dissuasion have grown in importance. Military force is still important, as it may determine outcomes of interstate conflicts, but state security is largely the result of self-deterrence rather than heavily militarised efforts aimed at deterring one's adversaries. This has been the approach taken by NATO in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea. NATO's efforts were aimed at creating a sufficient deterrent instead of creating a rough parity between Russian and NATO forces in the Baltic region. NATO's deterrence posture in the Baltic region aims to deliver the message that NATO is so heavily invested in the security of the three Baltic states that it would under no circumstances

tolerate a humiliating defeat at the hands of Russia. In short, even a regional military imbalance favouring Russia should be sufficient for the purposes of deterrence because any military victory that Russia would score in the Baltic region would be short-lived.

The present NATO deterrence posture in the Baltic region is based on four elements. The first element is the military capabilities of the three Baltic states themselves. Estonia had already reached the suggested level of defence spending by 2014 when the crisis in Ukraine broke out, and Latvia and Lithuania have ramped up defence spending rapidly, reaching the 2 % of GDP benchmark in 2018. Most likely, high defence spending in the three Baltic states will last well beyond the current turmoil in the European security system caused by Russia's policies against Ukraine because the experience of the past several years has demonstrated that it takes time and effort to build a viable military. It takes time to procure new military equipment, develop capabilities and learn how to use them productively. There are some indications that defence expenditure in the Baltic states may be increased even further in the coming years, depending on their defence needs. Even though the Baltic states' militaries are small in comparison to the military capabilities of their potential adversary, they are not insignificant either. The willingness of small nations' populations to defend their homeland should not be underestimated.

The second element is the military presence of allies in the Baltic states through NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP). Multinational deployments in the three Baltic states and Poland are relatively small and would not contribute much in terms of defence in case of full-scale mechanised warfare, but these deployments are visible signs of NATO solidarity. In case a conflict would break out in the Baltic region, most NATO member states would be present and involved from day one. This is deterrence by reputation because any real or symbolic defeat in the Baltic region would heavily damage the reputation of the Alliance.[1] Also, numerous leaders of other NATO member states have visited the Baltic states over the past few years, thus increasing the potential impact of domestic and international audience costs which effectively make it impossible to accept a potential defeat in the Baltic region. Inability to protect the most vulnerable members of the Alliance would be a blow too devastating even to be contemplated.

An obvious solution to the problem of the current mismatch of military power between Russia and NATO in the Baltic region would

1 For analysis of the potential problems related to eFP deployment, see: Martin Zapfe, "Deterrence from the Ground Up: Understanding NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *Survival* 59:3 (2017), 147-160.

be to ensure a more substantial military presence of the Alliance, but there are a number of reasons why that might be counterproductive. The oft-cited RAND study published in 2016 claims that in order to prevent the Baltic state defences being overrun in the case of a sudden Russian attack, NATO member states would have to deploy "seven brigades, three of them heavy armoured brigades" to the Baltic states. Moreover, this deployment should be supported by "airpower, land-based fires, and other enablers on the ground".[2] Were such deployments to happen, it would put a tremendous burden on the Baltic state and their NATO partners. Also, the existing literature on extended deterrence suggests that rapid moves aimed at changing the local military balance of forces can be politically and diplomatically destabilising.[3] Deterring Russia in the Baltic region is an important aim, but so is avoiding provocative moves that would contribute to further militarisation of this region.

The third element of NATO deterrence in the Baltic region is about the ability to deploy, resupply, and reinforce quickly. It is one thing to be heavily invested in the security of the Baltic states, but the Alliance also needs to be able to project its military power in the Baltic region in the case of a potential conflict. This element is quite problematic because Russia's ability to deny NATO troops access to the Baltic region in case of a military conflict is far from certain and so is NATO's ability to get its troops and equipment to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the face of Russia's A2/AD capabilities. The logic behind this element is solid though from both – Russia's and NATO – perspectives. If Russia would ever decide in favour of initiating military aggression against the Baltic states, it would like to keep a lid on this conflict by not allowing NATO member states to project military power in this region. To do this, Russia would need to close the Suwałki gap – a 64-mile-wide land strip between Belarus and Russia's Kaliningrad region – which connects Poland and Lithuania, to prevent NATO from transporting troops and equipment to the Baltic states. Russia would also try to control sea lines of communication in the Baltic Sea to prevent NATO shipments to the Baltic region by sea. To accomplish this, Russia would use its formidable A2/AD capabilities to close the Suwałki gap, thus presenting NATO with a formidable problem.

2 David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html, 1-2.

3 Paul K. Huth, "Extended Deterrence and the Prevention of War," (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). See also: Paul K. Huth, "Extended Deterrence and the Outbreak of War," *The American Political Science Review* 82:2 (1988): 423-443.

The Suwałki gap problem is well-known to NATO analysts and has been the subject of numerous analyses.[4] There is, however, an emerging consensus that Russia's ability to close the Suwałki gap and create impenetrable zones of exclusions has been somewhat overstated. As Robert Dalsjö, Christofer Berglund and Michael Jonsson conclude "on closer inspection, however, Russia's [A2/AD] capabilities are not as daunting, especially if potential countermeasures are factored in."[5] They claim that zones of exclusion created by Russia's A2/AD are much smaller and that countermeasures are available. NATO member states have acknowledged the problems of wartime access to the Baltic states, and have worked to counter Russia's presumed ability to close the Suwałki gap and create zones of exclusion. This has been a major theme of military exercises in recent years as well as a technological challenge for NATO member states. It is, however, not known at this point whether NATO would have what it takes to keep sea and land lines of communication open if a military conflict were to break out.

The fourth element of NATO's deterrence posture in the Baltic region is the combined military might of all members of the Alliance. The Baltic region is characterised by Russia's military superiority, but the overall Russia-NATO military relationship is heavily skewed in favour of NATO. In that sense, the Baltic states do not deter Russia, and neither are eFP deployments an effective deterrent. Only NATO alliance as such can deter Russia because of its combined economic, political and military might. Also, NATO will have the ability to deter until its key member states will be committed to the Alliance and will have the capabilities to defend their frontline allies.

Why is NATO likely to succeed in the Baltic region?

NATO deterrent in the Baltic region is likely to be successful despite Russia's regional military dominance. There are three reasons to support this argument. First, Russia's motivation in the Baltic region is relatively low, especially when compared to the two instances in the post-Soviet space – Georgia and Ukraine – where Russia has used military force to defend its interests. Motivation and interests of the potential aggressor are of paramount importance when

4 Wesley Clark, Jüri Luik, Egon Ramms and Richard Shirreff, "Closing NATO's Baltic Gap," ICDS, 2016. Martin Zapfe, Michael Carl Haas, "Access for Allies?" *The RUSI Journal* 161:3 (2016): 34-41. Paul McLeary, "Meet the New Fulda Gap," *Foreign Policy*, September 29, 2015, https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/09/29/fulda-gap-nato-russia-putin-us-army/

5 Robert Dalsjö, Christofer Berglund and Michael Jonsson, "Bursting the Bubble. Russian A2/AD in the Baltic Sea Region: Capabilities, Countermeasures, and Implications," FOI, 2019.

producing assessments about the effectiveness of deterrence. A weakly motivated potential aggressor might be easy to deter, while no amount of deterrence might be sufficient to deter a strongly motivated adversary.

When it comes to the Baltic states, Russia simply lacks the motivation and interests in the Baltic states that would justify the use of military force.[6] Access to the Baltic states' ports and transit infrastructure is no longer of vital importance for Russia. Also, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have been NATO and EU member states for 15 years. Although Russia opposed the Baltic states' NATO and to some degree also the EU membership in the early years of the 21st century, their membership in both institutions is a historical fact which would be too difficult to reverse. The status of the so-called compatriots in the Baltic states hardly calls for military interference or destabilisation of Baltic states' political regimes. There is little doubt that Russia would like to have more influence over domestic politics of the Baltic states and their foreign policy, but this has not been among Russia's key foreign policy priorities, and these efforts at gaining more influence in the Baltic region are likely to remain half-hearted. In short, current efforts at deterring Russia are likely to succeed largely because there is not much to deter in the first place, as Russia simply lacks motivation and interests to resort to military instruments vis-à-vis its Baltic neighbours. The risks are high, and the expected gains are negligible.

Second, despite limited military deployments to the Baltic states, NATO leaders (and leaders of NATO member states) have made it clear that they have the capabilities and resolve to defend the Baltic states. A recent RAND study on deterrence claims that "the US and NATO message to Russia warning it against an invasion of the Baltics is clear".[7] Although the likely NATO response to a potential Russian aggression in the Baltic region is by no means automatic, that is, it is going to be contingent upon particular circumstances, statements of NATO leaders and military deployments and exercises that have taken place in recent years make NATO military response more automatic than before. NATO member states are heavily invested in the security of the Baltic region, thus making a military response to a potential Russian incursion more likely.

Russia's responses to NATO deployments seem to confirm the above argument. Although Russian mass media often portray the West as

6 For a more detailed account of NATO deterrence in the Baltic region see: Michael J. Mazarr, et al, "What Deters and Why: Exploring Requirements of Effective Deterrence of Interstate Aggression," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), 55-86.

7 Ibid. p. 57.

weak and irresolute (the "paper tiger" argument), a recent study assessing Russia's reactions to NATO military deployments to the Baltic region concludes that "Russian leaders' current behaviour suggests that they see a strong commitment from NATO, and particularly the United States, to defend its allies". Thus, "it is likely that Russia currently assesses that direct aggression against a NATO member would likely result in a very damaging, and potentially disastrous, military conflict".[8] Although NATO's ability to defend the Baltic states with the troops and assets that it already has in the potential conflict theatre is limited, its resolve to defend the Baltic is strong. Not only it is strong in terms of signalling to domestic and international audiences, but it is also perceived as strong by the adversary.

The third reason why the current NATO deterrence posture in the Baltic region might be sufficient is that the potential aggressor is unlikely to be able to control the escalation of the conflict. This would be a key difference from the military conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine where Russia faced far weaker opponents who did not have NATO (or the U.S.) security guarantees and whose first instinct was to deescalate or refrain from using military instruments altogether. Thus, Russia could contain conflicts in Georgia's separatist regions and in the Donbass region in Ukraine. It could escalate or deescalate at will. The Baltic region would be different because of Lithuania's, Latvia's and Estonia's NATO membership. The three Baltic states would be somewhat less paralysed by Russia's display of force.[9] If Russia used the so-called hybrid warfare scenario that it used in Ukraine in order to destabilise the Baltics while staying below the NATO article 5 threshold, decision-makers in the Baltic states would feel less constrained from engaging the "little green men" militarily. If Russia unleashed heavy military aggression against the Baltics, it would risk an immediate collective NATO military response.[10] Taking into account consistent signalling of NATO's resolve since the Spring of 2014 to defend the Baltics, Russia would risk a situation where its efforts to deescalate the conflict after scoring political and military gains in its early stages would be futile. In other words,

8 Bryan Frederick, et al, "Assessing Russian Reactions to U.S. and NATO Posture Enhancements," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017): xii-xiii.

9 As Jan Angstrom and Magnus Petersson claim, it can be rational for weaker parties to escalate against regional/great powers, especially, if weaker parties have powerful allies. Jan Angstrom and Magnus Petersson, "Weak Party Escalation: And Underestimated Strategy for Small States?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 42:2 (2019): 282-300.

10 A relatively recently published RAND study identifies three potential conflict scenarios in the Baltic region: nonviolent subversion, covert violent actions and conventional warfare. Andrew Radin argues that recent preparations of the Baltic states make the first two scenarios less likely, while the third scenario is unlikely because of the risk of large-scale military confrontation with NATO. Andrew Radin, "Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Threats and Potential Responses," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017).

Russia would risk being involved in a prolonged military campaign where its efforts to deescalate might be hampered by NATO's resolve to return to status quo ante. Not only such a scenario might have dire consequences for Russia internationally, but it might also have devastating consequences domestically.

What could still go wrong for NATO

NATO limited deterrence posture[11] in the Baltic region should be sufficient, but this assumption may turn out to be wrong. Deterrence in the Baltic states can fail in two ways. First, it may turn out that NATO member states have misread Russia's intentions. The problem with identifying state intentions is twofold: intentions are hard to identify, especially when states' future plans are malign as states are likely to deceive others in order to gain strategic advantages, and intentions may change over time. As Michael Hunzeker and Alexander Lanoszka point out, Russia could be either "a revisionist actor, motivated by imperial ambitions" or "a defensive actor, motivated by fear and insecurity".[12] Russia's behaviour in recent years fits both images, but the problem is that this is not merely a semantic debate because each image requires a drastically different response to Russia's behaviour. A revisionist Russia requires a robust NATO response, while a defensive Russia should be assured and accommodated. Having the wrong image of Russia is likely to result in inappropriate policy responses and is likely to have effects opposite to those intended. NATO response to Russia's policies in recent years has been limited, that is, the measures that have been taken may be sufficient to deter a defensive, but opportunistic Russia, but are unlikely to deter a revisionist Russia. If NATO's assessment of Russia's intentions turns out to be wrong, the present deterrence posture is unlikely to hold.

Second, deterrence may fail if NATO does not adjust its deterrence posture according to changes in Russia's motivation and military capabilities. This is somewhat related to the problem of detecting changes in Russia's intentions, which is indeed going to be a fundamental challenge for NATO, but it goes way further. Getting Russia's intentions wrong and as a consequence adopting the wrong deterrence posture is one way in which deterrence may fail in the Baltic region, but Russia may pose significant challenges even

11 NATO deterrence posture in the Baltic region is limited precisely because its aim is to deter. NATO military presence in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia is considerably less suitable for defence purposes, as Russia enjoys clear local military superiority.

12 Alexander Lanoszka and Michael A. Hunzeker, "Conventional Deterrence and Landpower in Northeastern Europe," U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2019, xi.

without fundamentally altering its intentions regarding Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Russia may decide to probe NATO's readiness and resolve, Russia's military capabilities may change, and some aspects of Russia's behaviour may turn out to be undeterrable, such as spreading disinformation both at home and abroad and engaging in malevolent cyber activities. Because NATO deterrence posture in the Baltic region is insufficient for defence purposes, it should evolve depending on perceptions of Russia's intentions and capabilities. NATO's deterrence should be flexible, that is, it should be adjusted to changes in Russia's behaviour. Flexible deterrence should also entail consistent signalling of commitment to Baltic security and resolve to defend the Baltics if there were a need to do so. Flexible deterrence would also entail nonprovocative measures to make the balance of forces in the Baltic region more favourable for NATO with measures that neutralise Russia's strengths and to organise military exercises which would demonstrate NATO's ability to get troops and equipment into the Baltic states quickly. The number of deployed troops in the Baltic region may also be revised upwards, depending on Russia's policies.

Practicing deterrence is difficult, as the relationship between actions and consequences is not always straightforward, and policy-makers have to deal with many unknowns. NATO deterrence posture in the Baltic region might be sufficient for now, but the imbalance of forces in the region is the key reason why NATO may have to reinforce deterrence on its north-eastern flank at some point in future. This can be done with the help of signalling at the level of political decision-makers, but this may also have to involve reinforcing NATO's military presence in the Baltic region. It remains to be seen, though, whether NATO will have the resolve to change its deterrence posture in the Baltics if Russia's behaviour changes for the worse.

NATO AND RUSSIA

Relations between NATO and Russia from the Perspective of the Baltic states

Kalev Stoicescu

Perhaps there is no better way to try to understand Russia's narrative, but – most importantly – its real perceptions and intentions vis-à-vis NATO, and especially the Baltic states, than to take a fresh look at the events that unfolded after the premature declaration of the end of the Cold War. Then, Francis Fukuyama believed that history had come to its end, in the sense of the decisive and irreversible victory of western liberal democracy over eastern communist oppression. However, Samuel Huntington's theory of the continuing and exacerbating clash of civilisations (albeit on the background of globalisation) proved to be largely the correct assumption. In this article, relations between NATO and Russia are considered mainly in the context of the Baltic states and the Baltic Sea theatre.

Russia's president Boris Yeltsin recognized the independence of the Baltic states shortly after the failed coup d'état in August 1991. So did the moribund Soviet Union, under Mikhail Gorbachev, who was released from custody, as well as the United States, and many other nations. Nevertheless, relations between Russia and the Baltic states started to deteriorate very soon, because the Kremlin did not expect the Baltics to effectively leave Russia's sphere of influence, whereas Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania demanded firmly the withdrawal of former Soviet/Russian troops from their territories. NATO and EC/EU countries exercised strong pressure on Moscow until the withdrawal was completed by the end of August 1994. The Baltic states and Russia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program in 1994, but the Balts did it having the perspective of membership in the Alliance in their mind. On the other hand, Russia did not have the opportunity in the early and mid-1990s to destabilise and create frozen conflicts in the Baltic states, because Yeltsin dismantled the KGB and the subsequently emerged competing special services were fighting against each other for the leading role or even for survival. The Kremlin could not (yet) discredit itself in the West, as it needed western political and economic support.

Russia struggled with its own troubles (the 1993 constitutional crisis, the first Chechen War, Yeltsin's fabricated re-election in 1996 and the rise of oligarchy, the 1998 economic crisis) until the FSB, personified by the then rather obscure Vladimir Putin, emerged to

power in August 1999, and took a firm grip on the Kremlin and the country in 2000. By that time, the process of NATO's enlargement was in full motion. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary became members of the Alliance in 1999, and the Baltic states were soon to follow. Just like Yeltsin in early 1990s, Putin also had to consolidate his power, including through western support, in the early 2000s, and his emerging regime was not sufficiently strong in order to prevent the accession of the Baltic states to NATO, even if the Kremlin's rhetoric was – at that time – very harsh. The next ten years, until 2014, proved that Moscow was utterly wrong in its "predictions", as nothing catastrophic (a major destabilising crisis or conflict) happened in the Baltic theatre. Thus, the Baltic states had – from the early 1990s to early 2000s – a historic window of opportunity to strengthen their security, defence and economic prosperity through NATO and EU membership. They used this unique chance very effectively, but other nations – formerly incorporated into the Soviet empire – did not. Ukraine and Georgia were rather slow and late, and they continue to struggle with Russia over their right to be independent and to choose their own future.

Russia argued, particularly in the 1990s, that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania should remain neutral or non-aligned, following the example of Finland (i.e. to be either "Finlandised", as Estonia's northern neighbour was constrained to be during the Cold War, practically following Moscow's directions in all major policy issues, or – as a "compromise" – to join only the EU, but not NATO). The Baltic states could obviously not agree with Russia on that, because the Kremlin had proven (in 1939, 1940 and 1944) that ultimately it does not respect the neutrality of its neighbours. The best proof that the position and the path followed by the Baltic states is right, is the Russian aggression against Ukraine since 2014 (inter alia brutally breaching the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 that guaranteed Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity), and the repeated declarations by Russian leaders (including military commanders) that non-aligned Finland and Sweden would be regarded by Russia in case of a regional conflict as adversaries.

The Founding Act of 1997, concluded between NATO and Russia, was meant to be an important instrument in building mutual relations based on openness, transparency, predictability and trust. However, Russia deeply resented NATO's actions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (in order to stop the reported genocide conducted by the regime of Slobodan Milošević in Kosovo) without Kremlin's consent. Moscow claims that NATO's campaign/air operation of 1999

was the actual turning point in the relations between Russia and NATO, which have deteriorated ever since. More likely, the truth is that for Russia the Cold War never ended, as the Kremlin considered – according to its traditional zero-sum game mentality – that it had been "robbed" of its former Warsaw Pact "allies", and even the formerly occupied Baltic states, as NATO continued its open-door policy (enshrined in the North Atlantic Treaty) and the enlargement towards Russia's borders.

Since 1999, NATO did not deploy for 15 years, even temporarily, any command or other structures, troops or equipment, not to speak of hard security infrastructure in its newest member states. The only exception was the Baltic Air Policing (BAP) peace-time mission, just four fighter aircraft rotated in Šiauliai, Lithuania. In addition, the renovation of up to ten airbases from Estonia to Bulgaria, co-sponsored by host nations and NATO under the NATO Security Infrastructure Programme (NSIP). Later, this infrastructure programme turned out to be prophetic, but the air bases, of which some became state of the art, had very little use until 2014. In that sense, NATO's enlargement was for many years mostly political. The Alliance had almost entirely switched over to out-of-area operations and partnerships, largely neglecting collective defence, i.e. its core task, as most Allies did not wish to antagonise Russia, even if the spirit and the content of the 1997 Founding Act became increasingly outdated. The Baltic states and Poland rang bells in 2008 when Russia aggressed Georgia, but e.g. France was nevertheless ready to sell to Russia modern navy vessels (two Mistral helicopter carriers). The Allies could no longer neglect (or pretend not to understand) the seriousness of the threat after Russia illegally occupied and annexed Crimea, and incited and supported "separatism" in the Donbas.

This historic background illustrates, in a succinct way, the inevitability of Russia's confrontation with the West, particularly against NATO, and why and how the Baltic states and Russia took opposite paths. Now, Russia seems to dislike NATO perhaps even more than during the Cold War, and the Kremlin regards the Baltics as the spearhead of the Alliance against its western rim.

The new normality

Russia continues to prove since 2014 that its aggression against Georgia in 2008 was not a one-time affair or burst of anger and frustration, but a clear signal and demonstration of the Kremlin's revanchism and assertiveness. The security situation and the western

threat perception in general, and in the Nordic-Baltic theatre in particular, changed dramatically. It became obvious that this is not temporary bad weather, but a long-lasting change of climate, as Russia did not and still does not give any signs of willingness to change its policy and improve its relations with the West. To the contrary, "constructive" statements by the Kremlin have virtually no credibility because Russia's words and deeds visibly diverge.

We are now in what some call a version 2.0 of the Cold War. There is seemingly no ideological confrontation, but nevertheless, Russia fights desperately against liberal democracies, which it perceives as exporters of the so-called "coloured revolutions" and deadly threats to the autocratic and kleptocratic regime of the "collective Putin" (the Russian president and his inner circle of confidants). NATO is depicted in the Russian propaganda and disinformation channels, from Sputnik and RT to online news and social media "comments" by trolling factories, as Russia's arch-rival and main threat, as well as a Cold War relic that should have been disbanded long ago, instead of building new headquarters, bringing in new members, and deploying troops and conducting exercises in Russia's immediate vicinity.

The Allies deployed solidarity forces to the Baltic states and Poland soon after the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia, but these were originally very limited in size and scope. More aircraft were deployed to Šiauliai; and also the Ämari airbase, in Estonia, was lastly in full use. The presence of Allied air force elements increased to around two squadrons, but only in order to make the peace-time BAP more effective and demonstrate political determination, rather than starting to build up a solid air defence of the Baltic states. In addition, four U.S. companies of paratroopers were deployed – one each in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland – as a reassurance measure, but these small detachments – in spite of the highest deterrence value of the stars and stripes banner – were not sufficient in terms of size, and could not demonstrate NATO's solidarity at 28.

The Allies decided in 2016, at NATO's Summit Meeting in Warsaw, not without thorough debates on whether it would be better to strengthen the Allied presence in the Baltic states and Poland by deploying enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battalion-size battlegroups. The battlegroups were deployed in early 2017 to the Baltic states and Poland, and each has a framework nation, complemented by contributions from other willing Allies. They are embedded in local ground forces brigades. This was NATO's first real step to increase deterrence by denial on land in the eastern flank nations. NATO's approach is evident and cannot be misinterpreted

by Russia, if only purposefully. Every step made by the Alliance is a direct and proportionate response to Russia's behaviour, depending on the threat assessment, and the Allies make every effort to provide as much transparency and predictability as possible.

Nonetheless, Russia does not wish to follow NATO's example of defence, deterrence and restraint. Quite on the contrary, Russia's force posture in its Western Military District, especially the Kaliningrad, Leningrad and Pskov oblasts, including the Baltic Fleet, greatly exceeds its real defence needs, considering NATO's posture in the Nordic-Baltic theatre, and even including indigenous forces. In addition, as a rule, Russia behaves in a provocative manner with regard to NATO's defensive exercises, the peaceful passage of ships or flights of aircraft, while it conducts its own regular and no-notice combat control exercises. Russia has gone so far as to simulate nuclear attacks against NATO capitals and territories, or even against non-NATO Sweden. It would be inconceivable to think that NATO – e.g. at the end of regular exercises in or around the Baltic states and Poland – could likewise simulate nuclear strikes against Russia, or jamming GPS and mobile communications on Russian territory. However, such aggressive and dangerous behaviour against NATO (risk of incidents, but also to civil aviation etc.) seems to the Kremlin to be perfectly normal or at least justifiable.

Russia should know, or at least assume, that NATO's presence (eFP), as well as the independent U.S. presence – under the European Deterrence Initiative – in Poland and other eastern flank member states, would be strengthened in case the risk of Russian aggression against the Alliance becomes significantly higher, e.g. if Russia initiates, once again, high-intensity warfare in the Donbas and/or deploys forces to Belarus. On the other hand, Russia also knows that some NATO Allies are particularly worried about potential escalation that could get "out of control", even if there should be no doubt that Russia's president Vladimir Putin is simply not provokable, and therefore escalation is not something that depends directly on what the Alliance does or does not do. That is what Russia wishes to exploit fully – to encourage the Allies who tend to favour dialogue (even if it is fruitless), e.g. Germany and France, against those who seek a strict and adequate balance between deterrence and dialogue, foremost the Baltic states and Poland, but also the UK, Romania etc.

It shouldn't be, as well, a secret for Moscow that even in unchanging circumstances the Allies would have to strengthen at least some key capabilities in the Baltic theatre in the coming years, including air,

missile and coastal defence, as well as maritime presence. It means that NATO has to establish its own (sub)regional anti-access and area denial (A2AD), which is probably the best way to deal with Russia's A2AD "bubbles" in Kaliningrad and Leningrad oblasts, which cover the Baltic states and Poland almost entirely.

The main issue that is at stake, is whether NATO and Russia could find a mutually acceptable and durable modus vivendi any time soon. In other words, Russia should first answer the question whether it could agree (in terms of a durable agreement) to anything less than winning-ratio military dominance in the Nordic-Baltic theatre. The modus vivendi would mean, in that case, a stalemate situation that doesn't allow either side to manipulate or threaten the other. But that would be extremely difficult to achieve, considering centuries-old Russian traditions. Russia's neighbours have, as a rule, no other choice than to be vassals or foes, and the foes must be sooner or later turned into destabilised, weak and manipulable states that gravitate in the Kremlin's orbit. The only exception is Finland, due to its history and interests, and also Russia's desire to keep Finland out of NATO, and to show that it still has friends in the West (i.e. to offer Finland as an example of how Russia should be engaged, through dialogue and humble respect, rather than force and determination, even if it is clear that Russia respects only strength).

In fact, NATO, as a whole, does not exclude dialogue with Russia at all, which is as necessary, in parallel, as are credible Allied deterrence postures by denial and punishment. However, dialogue with Russia has not produced significant or tangible results in the past years, especially after 2014, as the Kremlin stands adamantly on the position that Russia has done nothing wrong (in Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere, or even in the Skripal murder, for that matter), and therefore it does not have to change its policy. Russia demands that the West (EU and U.S.) abandons the "unjustified" sanctions that were enforced against Russian entities and individuals. Moscow understands that Russia cannot compete with, threaten or blackmail NATO as a whole, but it still hopes to make use of promising opportunities in order to weaken and discredit the Alliance and its member states, especially by eroding solidarity through bilateral relations and deals made with Kremlin-sympathetic governments.

Is dialogue between the Baltic states and Russia possible?

The Baltic states and Russia have had only a handful of high-level contacts, visits or meetings since the 1990s. At the bilateral level, the Baltic states are clearly disadvantaged vis-à-vis Russia, as the Kremlin may eventually show a willingness to compromise only when it deals with other great powers. Even then, as it seems, Russia could be reluctant to make small steps that practically do not cost anything, and would be very useful for the Kremlin, probably because of its fear that it would be expected to take further steps. A good example is the meeting between the U.S. president Donald Trump and Russia's president Vladimir Putin in Osaka, Japan, on the margins of the G20 Summit on 28-29 June, 2019, when Trump reportedly discussed at length with Putin the release of the Ukrainian Navy sailors (and ships) attacked and arrested illegally by Russia near the Kerch Strait in November 2018. Russia might release them, sooner or later, as proof of "goodwill" and encouragement for Russian-appeasers[1]. But Putin hesitated to use the opportunity, and failed to demonstrate in Osaka that dialogue with Russia can be productive, and the Kremlin does not only continuously demand one-sided concessions from the West, which it calls "compromises".

Estonia, unlike Latvia and Lithuania, does not have land and maritime border agreements with Russia. In the 1990s Moscow had hoped to prevent Estonia from joining NATO and EU by simulating prolonged border negotiations and practically refusing to conclude (enforce) the agreements on the border, but it didn't work out for Russia. Borders between sovereign nations are obviously the most important aspect, the starting point of their relations. Negotiations between states, particularly neighbours, are the most direct and best way for promoting dialogue and understanding. Estonia has not demanded from Russia the return of the lands it grabbed through "administrative adjustments" in 1945 (about 5% of Estonia's pre-war total territory), and Tallinn agreed at the bilateral negotiations with the present de-facto control-line as a future uncontested legal border, but Moscow is nevertheless not ready to enforce the border agreements (that were signed, for a second time, in February 2014).

The Estonian president Kersti Kaljulaid took the initiative to meet with president Putin in Moscow, on April 18, 2019, but the ratification and enforcement of the border agreements, the most important bilateral matter between Estonia and Russia, was barely mentioned,

1 In German language – "those who understand" (i.e. are ready to always/ almost unconditionally appease) Russia.

without any commitments to take further steps. This unprecedented visit was intended, by the Estonian head of state, to be a gesture of goodwill. Neither side had expectations for reaching agreement on any (significant) issues, but it could have served as a point of reference for contacts and agreements at lower levels, in practical – e.g. transportation – if not political matters. The problem is that Russia regards the entire spectrum of foreign relations, including economic and even cultural affairs, tightly related to its political agenda and ambitions. Kaljulaid's visit was probably regarded by Moscow as a good opportunity to show (to the West, as well as other nations) that Russia is not and cannot be isolated, even if it actually isolates itself, and that also EU and NATO "Russophobe" countries will sooner or later have to show up on the Kremlin's red carpet.

One may assume that Russia recognises pragmatically that the Baltic states are members of the Union and the Alliance, and as such, they are out of the Kremlin's reach (in terms of dealing with them in a similar fashion as with Ukraine or Georgia). At least as long as the two major organisations are still strong and coherent. But on the other hand, one should not assume that Russia's ambitions and willingness to eventually once again subdue the Baltic states are gone, if such an opportunity ever appears. Future dialogue between the Baltic states and Russia, including at the highest level, has no real chance to be fruitful, as the Balts cannot make any compromises on their security and defence facing the Russian threat, and Russia does not wish to make any positive steps, such as to relieve tensions and improve the security situation in the Nordic-Baltic theatre. The Estonian-Russian meeting of presidents proved that dialogue is possible, due to Estonia's initiative, but it is practically ineffective.

The role of Estonia and other Baltic states in Russia-policy in NATO and the EU

Estonia, just like Latvia and Lithuania, has a strong voice both in NATO and the EU. Russia's attempts to qualify the Baltic stance on Russia as "Russophobe", which is an impediment in having good relations between Russia and the West in general, or certain countries in particular (e.g. Germany), have been largely unsuccessful. The Baltic states have preserved and enhanced their positive image in spite of the Kremlin's efforts (disinformation, provocations etc.), and proved that they are dedicated, constructive and useful Allies, and are worth to be defended against the Russian threat.

It is a major national interest of the Baltic states and Poland, as frontline countries and direct neighbours of Russia, to advance in both NATO and the EU policies that strengthen their security and defence, and on the other hand, provide practical means to influence Russia's behaviour. NATO's collective defence has been awakened by Putin's actions in Ukraine – Russia may dislike and argue against this claim, but it is a fact. Consequently, the Baltic states are very active in NATO in order to ensure that the eFP is further continued and strengthened, capability and presence (e.g. maritime) gaps/insufficiencies are remedied, and collective defence is practically rehearsed through regular, including large scale, exercises. The deployment of eFP and the continuous augmentation of American EDI are proofs of the effectiveness of Baltic and Polish diplomatic activity in NATO and major Allied capitals, including Washington D.C.

The main instruments of EU's policy with regard to Russia have become political/diplomatic and economic sanctions, as it is equally in the case of US-Russian relations. The Baltic states are actually among those EU members which are most affected by the sanctions imposed by the Union on Russia, and Russia's so-called counter-sanctions. Nevertheless, the Baltic states recognise and prize the necessity of the sanctions, as long as Russia has not fulfilled its obligations (with regard to the Donbas, i.e. the Minsk agreements) and returned to respect for international law (concerning Crimea). The list is longer, as Russia continues to meddle in Western elections, is massively spreading disinformation etc. Russia would certainly like the EU sanctions to be lifted, or at least alleviated, as a start towards relinquishing the punitive measures entirely. The Kremlin seems to be encouraged by and considers a break-through political victory the decision adopted in the Council of Europe to unconditionally restore Russia's voting rights, in spite of the Baltic and Polish (as well as Swedish and other) opposition. However, the Council of Europe is not the European Union, and even if Russia continuously encourages at least one of the Kremlin-sympathetic governments (e.g. in Athens, Sofia, Rome or Budapest) to break the Union's consensus on prolonging the sanctions, this doesn't (yet) happen. The Baltic states are very strong defenders of the sanctions, and the fact that these measures continue to be in force, and are eventually strengthened, is another proof of the influence of these countries in the EU.

Finally, the Baltic states and all other Baltic littoral countries, including Russia, will have to get accustomed to the new normality/reality in the Nordic-Baltic theatre, however uncomfortable that is to all parties. Russia will ultimately learn to live alongside

NATO's eFP and other forms of Allied presence in the region, as well as the 24/7 deterrence (combat readiness) of the Alliance. Dialogue between the Baltic states and Russia is possible (and perhaps in formal terms, keeping with the overall approach of NATO and EU, even necessary), but it is not conducive to any practical results, as long as Russia remains adamantly entrenched in its positions and rather prefers to escalate tensions. The Baltic states will certainly remain active in NATO and EU, as these are the multipliers of their actual strength and policy impact versus Russia. Their policy will continue to be effective as long as Russia does not succeed in breaking consensus/solidarity among Allies, e.g. on the continuation or strengthening, if needed, of sanctions.

NATO and Russia: The Future of a Relationship in Tatters

Sergey Utkin

[T]he Liaison Mission idea gives the Eastern Europeans a link to NATO but keeps them enough at arms' length to avoid alarming the Soviets, who would of course be invited also. Gorbachev has even publicly suggested Soviet membership in NATO. Now that is in our view out of the question but the Liaison Mission proposal could help him work to push aside the image of NATO as an enemy, an image so deeply ingrained in the mind of the Soviet public.

George H. W. Bush, President of the United States in 1989-93

I think we must show that NATO is moving with the times and demonstrate to the Soviet Union we are ready to take account of their sensitivities and concerns about their security in a Europe in which Germany is united and a full member of NATO. I think there are various ways in which we can do this. We can have more military-to-military contacts, we can strengthen NATO's role in confidence-building measures, we can have periodic meetings between NATO and individual East European and Soviet foreign ministers, we can keep open the possibility of a joint declaration between member states of NATO and the Warsaw pact. I understand that is what President Gorbachev wanted.

Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 1979-90[1]

The 1990s was the time of changes that were hard to predict and plan. The decade started with the Soviet Union as a reality to deal with, the incorporation of East Germany into West Germany and NATO as an important and ambitious goal, and the discussions whether the "former adversaries" would need to establish a regular dialogue with NATO at the level as high as ambassadorial. It ended when the former Soviet republics each charted their divergent foreign and security policy courses, Central Europe was either in NATO or on its way to NATO membership and weakened Russia had to cope with numerous internal challenges. In terms of European security architecture the decade started with the hope that a reinforced Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) could become the

1 "Verbatim Record of the North Atlantic Council Meeting with the participation of heads of state and government," Part I. C-VR (90) 36, London, July 5, 1990, declassified in 2014: 8, 17, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_archives/20141218_C-VR-90-36-PART1.PDF

embodiment of "Europe whole and free", bringing East and West together, and ended with an eventually unsuccessful attempt to take steps in this direction in line with the decisions of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Istanbul Summit in late November 1999, barely a month before the Russian President Boris Yeltsin left the office to his designated successor Vladimir Putin. By that time, most of the European countries were clearly looking at the EU and NATO as the actual pillars of the regional security order. Russia had to adapt to that unwillingly.

The road so far

Russian opposition to NATO enlargement has been vocal and well known. Yet before NATO set course on accepting new members, Russian leadership saw the Partnership for Peace launched in early 1994 as the framework that would provide equal status to all partners of the Alliance[2]. In some respects, already by the end of 1994, the time of the OSCE Budapest Summit, cold-war-like tensions were felt again. When it became clear that Russia was not able to prevent the enlargement, it had to find a way to live with it. In the Russian view, the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act concluded in May 1997 was supposed to address the first true post-Cold-War enlargement in 1999. What a number of capitals across Europe saw as an appealing opportunity, was seen in Moscow as a reason to be seriously worried. By 1999 the NATO Kosovo campaign triggered a severe crisis that has had repercussions for the NATO-Russia relations, as well as for the Balkans, to this day. Vladimir Putin was named Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation at the time of the Yugoslavia bombings and did not hide his concerns in relation to policies conducted by the West.

At the same time, Putin started his presidency with an attempt to build bridges to the West, which included trial balloons of a possibility of the Russian membership in the Alliance.[3] This was reinforced by the understanding the Russian President demonstrated with regard to the severe blow of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. The Russian reaction included valuable support provided for the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan. The creation of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) in

2 "NATO Expansion: What Yeltsin Heard," National Security Archive Briefing Book #621, March 16, 2018, https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2018-03-16/nato-expansion-what-yeltsin-heard

3 "NATO was born 70 years ago today. Moscow has always viewed it as a threat, but that hasn't prevented three attempts to join the alliance," *Meduza*, April 4, 2019, https://meduza.io/en/feature/2019/04/04/nato-was-born-70-years-ago-today-moscow-has-always-viewed-it-as-a-threat-but-that-hasn-t-prevented-three-attempts-to-join-the-alliance

May 2002 had to confirm this higher level of cooperation but also soothe the effects of the further unprecedented enlargement of the Alliance. Around the same time Presidents Putin and George W. Bush signed the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), which helped to keep the spirit of arms control alive in spite of the U.S. administration's decision to leave the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty announced a few months earlier.

The 2003 Iraq war delivered another blow to Russia's relationship with the U.S. but that time major European countries expressed their opposition to the U.S. actions, which made it harder to frame the disagreement as one between Russia and NATO. While practical cooperation developed on many levels, political tensions were pushing the sides onto a slippery slope. Russia was clearly concerned by the Rose Revolution in Georgia in late 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine a year after, when the West tended to see both as signs of hope. At the same time, the state of Russian democratic institutions and the rule of law was followed by many in the West with growing concern.

NATO and the NRC could not evolve in a vacuum, isolated from other facets of the West-Russia relationship. The growing distrust was a function of divergent concepts and goals in domestic and foreign policies. Time and again partners were getting unpleasant surprises from one another. Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007 and his visit to the NATO Bucharest summit in 2008 were designed as attempts of a serious and honest conversation but perceived as weird and unnecessary flashbacks of the Cold War.

Dmitry Medvedev's presidency had to become a new opening for Russia and the West but rather ended in a disappointment. Medvedev's ideas of a new regional security architecture were hardly even considered seriously against the background of the 2008 Georgia war. The proclaimed U.S.-Russia "reset" was often treated with certain scepticism on both sides, although it did produce the important New START treaty on strategic arms reductions. The attempts to negotiate a common approach to missile defence with NATO failed. The NATO operation in Libya in spring 2011 led to a public disagreement between President Medvedev and then Prime-Minister Putin, where the latter criticised the official Russian approach, which allowed the UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1973 be adopted and serve as a justification for the military action by allies.

Putin's return to the presidency in 2012 was again surrounded by harsh Western criticism of Russian domestic policies. The "earthquake" of the 2014 Ukraine crisis destroyed much of the NATO-Russia dialogue

assets. The response agreed by NATO allies at the early stages of the crisis included suspension of practical cooperation with Russia and the Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in the Baltic states and Poland. The infamous "Russiagate" around the 2016 U.S. presidential elections did not make things easier. The disagreements on borders in Europe, which seemed resolved in the 1990s, since 2008 include Kosovo, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and since 2014 Crimea. The armed conflict in Donbass has been the source of casualties and destruction for more than five years. The NRC functionality remains limited, as the NATO-Russia communication channels are mostly used to express well known acute disagreements. While deterrence and dialogue are a proclaimed NATO approach, one could say that each side perceives its current policy as the one of deterrence that does not exclude dialogue.

The great expectations

The 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act (NRFA) proclaimed the ambitious goal of building "together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security", clearly stating that "NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries. They share the goal of overcoming the vestiges of earlier confrontation and competition and of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation".[4] Starting from 1999 Kosovo, each crisis put these words to the test but the parties were never as far from the NRFA spirit as they remain since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis in 2014.

While the principle of indivisibility of security in Europe was part of the preamble to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the CSCE, the NRFA reiterated this. According to the document, NATO and Russia had to help to strengthen the OSCE "developing further its role as a primary instrument in preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, crisis management, post-conflict rehabilitation and regional security cooperation, as well as in enhancing its operational capabilities to carry out these tasks". Back in 1997, the OSCE process was leading towards the 1999 OSCE Istanbul summit marked by the adoption of the Charter for European Security[5] and the Adapted Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (ACFE). In fact, the NRFA acknowledged that the future European security framework would be defined in the

4 "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation," NATO, May 27, 1997, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm

5 "Charter for European Security," November 18, 1999, https://www.osce.org/mc/17502

institutions where every country of the region is equally represented, and that would lead to "a common space of security and stability, without dividing lines or spheres of influence limiting the sovereignty of any state".

The NRFA listed "new risks and challenges" with "aggressive nationalism", proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, abuse of minority rights and territorial disputes among them. The primary responsibility of the UNSC for maintaining international security was reconfirmed in the NRFA. The document gave a detailed description of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council as a mechanism for cooperation, including at the level of heads of state and government, stressing that the parties would not have "a right of veto over the actions of the other" as well as "infringe upon or restrict the rights of NATO or Russia to independent decision-making and action".

The most often quoted passage of the NRFA suggested that "in the current and foreseeable security environment" NATO will ensure its collective defence by means other than "additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces", although "reinforcement may take place, when necessary, in the event of defence against a threat of aggression and missions in support of peace" or during exercises, while Russia would "exercise similar restraint in its conventional force deployments in Europe". The understanding of "substantial" combat forces was never established legally but it was discussed, and NATO is aware that Russia tends to interpret it in a "minimalistic" way, as no more than one brigade in all of the new NATO member states[6].

The claims that the NRFA was violated were abundant during the 1999 Kosovo crisis when NATO attacked a sovereign state in Europe – Yugoslavia – without a UNSC decision, and in spite of Russian protests.

As NATO and Russia recovered from the 1999 blow and focused on the threat of terrorism, the 2002 Rome Declaration[7] establishing the NRC reconfirmed the parties' commitment to NRFA. The NRC concept implied that "NATO member states and Russia will work as equal partners in areas of common interest" as the NRC "will provide a mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision, and joint action for the member states of NATO and Russia on a wide spectrum of security issues in the Euro-Atlantic region". In the Russian view, this meant that the NRC had to work as 20 equal partners rather than 19+1, where NATO members had been *a priori*

6 Andrey Zagorsky, "Blueprint for transcending the European security crisis," *Russia: Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security,* eds. Alexey Arbatov and Sergey Oznobishchev, *IMEMO Supplement to the Russian Edition of the SIPRI Yearbook 2017* (Moscow: IMEMO, 2018): 107.

7 "Declaration by Heads of State and Government of NATO Member States and the Russian Federation," NATO, May 28, 2002, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_19572.htm

united by the common stance, and any new NATO member would join the club where Russia was already present. Hence, the frustration when the NRC decision-making capacities and atmosphere did not change much in comparison with the earlier format of interaction.

The strength of the NRC was the network of working bodies that helped dig deeper into particular issues. These included arms control and non-proliferation, civil emergencies, missile defence, logistics and a few others.[8]

By 2013, the fields of practical NATO-Russia cooperation were: counter-narcotics training in Afghanistan; helicopter maintenance trust fund and other support for Afghan Armed Forces; anti-terrorist cooperation including the STANDEX project to remotely detect explosives; Cooperative Airspace Initiative for early notification of suspicious air activities and air traffic transparency; countering piracy in the Gulf of Aden; joint work on Theatre missile defence, where disagreements prevented progress; consultations on a range of military-related issues; maritime search and rescue and civil emergency exercises; scientific cooperation; and a study on possibilities for joint work in defence industries.[9] In order to clarify terms in use a number of NRC glossaries were developed.[10] Much of this was already a routine business repeated every year as a standard mode of interaction.

At the time of deterrence

When the 2014 Ukraine crisis dashed many earlier hopes, multiple arguments were made that the NRFA did not correspond to the realities any more.[11] However, some NATO members, most obviously Germany, made sure the Alliance kept the NRFA formally and respected it in substance when the details of the eFP in the Baltic states and Poland were negotiated. So far NATO military presence at the territory of Russia's neighbours (NATO member states) remains limited in size and symbolically non-permanent due to the rotational principle. Reproaches are regularly coming from each side regarding the military activities in the proximity of NATO-Russia borders, but certain restraint is still exercised by both parties in comparison to a potentially feasible build-up.

8 "About NRC," NATO-Russia Council, https://www.nato.int/nrc-website/en/about/index.html

9 "NATO-Russia Council Practical Cooperation Fact Sheet," NATO-Russia Council, October 2013, https://www.nato.int/nrc-website/media/104666/nato-russia_council_factsheet_final_2013-11-07_trilingual.pdf

10 "2011 NRC Consolidated Glossary," Parts 1-2, NATO-Russia Council, https://www.nato.int/nrc-website/media/60018/nrc_consolidated_glossary_part_1_en-ru_.pdf, https://www.nato.int/nrc-website/media/59973/nrc_consolidated_glossary_part_2_ru-en.pdf

11 E.g.: John R. Deni, "The NATO-Russia Founding Act: A Dead Letter," *Carnegie Europe*, June 29, 2017, https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/71385

Much of the experts' debates on European security in the years since 2014 have been concentrating on the ways to limit the damage being done to the regional security. Among the most coherent and down-to-earth proposals is the one by Russia's leading European security expert Andrey Zagorsky, who points at the persistent value of the NRFA and suggests the following:

- Both sides shall officially acknowledge the fact that they do adhere to their military restraint commitments;
- Declare the intention to further exercise this military restraint on the basis of the NRFA and 2002 Rome Declaration;
- Start discussions limiting potential arms race in the Baltic region, making sure further stationing of new forces is unnecessary. Supporting measures could include reinforced limits and transparency measures with regard to military exercises in the area;
- If using the NRC in an operational way proves impossible due to the lack of consensus in NATO, other more flexible platforms could be used to reach the abovementioned agreements on mutual restraint;
- Bilateral agreements on confidence and security-building measures have to be made functional between Russia, the Baltic states and Poland;
- Minimise risks of dangerous military incidents in the air and at sea, possibly by establishing a NATO-Russia joint threat reduction centre.[12]

Even this modest agenda is not easy to implement. It implies that the sides would have to accept officially, at least on the sub-regional level in the Baltics, that the post-2014 relationship marked by deterrence is a new norm rather than an anomaly, and has to be managed rather than reversed to the *status quo ante*.

A similar but more institutionalised and detailed approach is suggested in the joint 2019 report by the European Leadership Network and the Russian International Affairs Council. They propose:

- Schedule regular meetings of the NRC at the level of ambassadors, setting a firm timetable that would make meetings less vulnerable to political turbulence. A high-level (ministerial) NRC meeting could provide political guidance for further work;
- Russia shall fill the position of Permanent Representative to NATO, which remains vacant since the departure of now Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko in January 2018;

12 Andrey Zagorsky, "Blueprint for transcending the European security crisis," *Russia: Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security,* eds. Alexey Arbatov and Sergey Oznobishchev, *IMEMO Supplement to the Russian Edition of the SIPRI Yearbook 2017* (Moscow: IMEMO, 2018), 111-112.

- Restore multiple channels for military-to-military communication, which have to be treated as a practical necessity in spite of persistent political disagreements. Dialogue on military doctrines shall be reactivated;
- Use NATO-Russia hotline in case of serious cyber incidents to avoid escalation. The NRC could serve for regular expert discussions on the rules that could be established for cyberspace;
- NATO shall clarify the distinction between the kind of interaction that falls under "no business as usual" category and the "business that needs to be done";
- Russia shall take a visibly more constructive approach on information exchange at the NRC, and make sure diplomatic overtures are complemented by restraint in military and propaganda activities;
- Run a table-top exercise on the management of air incidents;
- Make use of the less formal Track II dialogues, which could include setting up a Track-II-NRC made of NGOs and think-tanks or a NATO-Russia Wise Persons Study Panel bringing together former officials and senior experts. Among other things, these formats could be used to run simulation games, and launch studies of difficult historical matters, similar to the one tried in Russian-Polish context;
- To issue preferably identical statements on the absence of aggressive intentions towards one another;
- Define the NRFA term "substantial combat forces" and confirm its relevance;
- Increase transparency on sub-strategic nuclear forces;
- Create a zone of transparency and/or reduced military activities, possibly in the Baltic region;
- Make efforts to stop further erosion of arms control.[13]

A set of U.S.-focused recommendations was suggested by international relations professor Kimberley Marten in her report for the Council on Foreign Relations.[14] While concentrated on the credibility of NATO deterrence, they also include measures such as the U.S. using "formal and informal discussions to encourage Estonia and Latvia to better integrate their Russian populations".[15] Marten also suggested

13 *Towards a More Stable NATO-Russia Relationship. Euro-Atlantic Security Report,* ed. Katarina Kubiak, February 2019, https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/31012019-Towards-a-more-stable-Russia-NATO-relationship.pdf

14 Kimberley Marten, *Reducing Tensions between Russia and NATO*, Council on Foreign Relations Special Report No. 79, March 2017, https://cfrd8-files.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/03/CSR_79_Marten_RussiaNATO.pdf, 28-36.

15 Ibid., 32.

the U.S. had to reaffirm the desire to maintain the NRFA, and NATO had to clarify its definition of the "substantial combat forces", while supporting the work needed to limit dangerous military incidents and re-establish regional arms control.

Beyond the horizon

If some of the experts' recommendations look too ambitious today, they might become useful in a year or two from now, in case the major stumbling block – the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine – would gradually be getting its resolution. Looking into a more distant future of a few decades from now is never easy but some conclusions can be made about the long-term fates of the NATO-Russia relationship.

- Human nature may not change much but the future world of 8+ billion people may limit NATO and Russia's ability to practice a sort of 20th century Cold War. The importance of China, as well as the rise of Asia in a broader sense are clear and long-term. The attempts to deal with new challenges using old means, such as NATO, might prove futile. If the Alliance gets marginalised, Russian attention will shift away from it as well.
- Whatever future turns Russian domestic and foreign policies take, they will most probably never come to the point when the idea of Russia joining NATO would be seriously considered by either side. The world's two biggest nuclear powers and their allies will keep natural security concerns towards one another. As long as NATO and Russia exist, their proximity will be part of military calculus that will have to be managed properly;
- The question remains open, whether the NATO-Russia proximity would at some future point become immediate across the continent, with Sweden, Finland, Ukraine, Georgia and maybe in further perspective even Belarus joining the Alliance. At first glance, this looks like a desired future to some politicians in the countries named, as well as in NATO, but it would dramatically damage the state of regional security through severe confrontation along the fault lines. Designing guarantees that would make non-participation in military alliances a desirable and safe option has to be among the key regional security themes. This work may not wait until all conflictual issues are resolved. On the contrary, neutrality should boost détente. One could start with the Balkans, helping the struggling Bosnia to define itself as neutral, and Serbia to maintain its neutrality;

- Territorial disputes in the post-Soviet space and, so far to a lesser extent, in the Balkans, are the scars that the European security landscape might have to live with for many decades. The parties to conflicts often find many reasons to remain stubborn and only little motivation to move. In both troubled areas, Moscow's approach towards conflict resolution will remain important. The dynamics in conflict areas will affect NATO-Russia relations and vice versa;
- For better or for worse, NATO enlargement will stop one day, if it has not already. Some countries might even consider leaving if this would allow them to reduce their military expenditures and if the benefits of membership would become less evident. Keeping the giant NATO functional will not be an easy task. Parts of security establishment in Russia and in NATO would opt for a controlled confrontation in order to keep the allies and money coming their way. Suppressing this tune in the decision-making will be difficult. It will require benefits to come from NATO-Russia cooperation rather than confrontation, including for the military;
- Some of the trends set today may appear very durable. Given the tensions with Russia, NATO members consider Russian military industries troublemakers to be sanctioned rather than partners to cooperate with. Russia may for a long time remain a competitive supplier of armaments and a welcomed partner for military-to-military cooperation across Asia, Africa or Latin America, but not in Europe. The security establishments' interests will adjust accordingly;
- If the NRFA survives the darkest ages, it could one day be substituted with an updated successor document. Experts advise against deliberately killing the NRFA. To some, it may look nothing more than a reminder of a better time, but it still keeps the damaged relationship afloat;
- The NRC in itself was an attempt to reinvent the bicycle of the Permanent Joint Council. It can hibernate for a long time or be scraped but if better times come for NATO and Russia, the NRC would have to be woken up or reinvented. NATO-Russia troubles are political and military in nature, one should not look for their roots in the ways the NRC was organised. Multilateral institutions may serve as a forum helping to resolve a problem or a mechanism to secure mutual benefits, but the political will comes first.

Russia's Approaches to the Post-Soviet Conflicts and their Implications for the West

Sergey Markedonov

Today, Russia and the West face the most severe crisis in their relations since the end of the Cold War. The West accuses Russia of violating international law in Ukraine, while Russia claims that the West violated similar norms earlier in the Balkans and the Middle East.

Unlike the Cold War, the current stand-off does not have a clearly pronounced ideological or global nature (despite Ukraine's importance, it does not dominate the entire global agenda) and is not based on blocs, as was the case with NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The new confrontation involves the rigid assertion of each party's geopolitical and economic interests, including military and political intervention and unilateral revision of state borders.

The Ukrainian crisis has revealed a significant political divide between Russia and the West. It has become a marker of how greatly Russians and Europeans differ in their perceptions of the problems of nation-building, regional issues, the search for integration models, regional and global leadership and the division of responsibility among the leading players in the international politics.

In this context, the post-Soviet space which includes Ukraine, Moldova and the republics of the Caucasus is especially important. Appearing in the course of the USSR collapse, they have remained unresolved since the ceasefires in the early 1990s. By heating up periodically, these conflicts threaten broader European (and Euro-Atlantic) security, and by remaining unresolved, limit the chances of the newly independent post-Soviet countries at an economic relationship with EU and the United States, and provoke tensions between Russia and the West. Thus, the post-Soviet space today is receiving increasing attention among scholars and decision-makers due to its geopolitical fragility and unpredictability. It has always been one of the top priorities of Russia's foreign policy. After all, for the Kremlin, successful promotion of the country's national interests depends on stability and predictability in the states and regions bordering Russia.

At the same time, the EU (and NATO as well) after some enlargements treat this area as its neighbour, representing numerous security risks. The European Union has been seeking to diversify energy supplies by promoting South Caucasian transport routes and

monitors security conditions across the Black Sea region as part of its Eastern Neighbourhood programme, while the U.S. considers these areas as parts of the wider security puzzles (the Greater Middle East and the Wider Black-Caspian Sea region). All the actors, having different estimates of the reasons behind it as well as visions of the future developments, see the current Ukrainian conflict as the most destructive confrontation in Europe since the series of wars for the post-Yugoslav legacy.

In this context, certain ideas have been formed in the Western expert literature and the media.

As a rule, five narratives are in the focus:

- The identification of Russia as a revisionist state that violates the international law and the European order by questioning the sovereignty and independence of neighbouring countries;
- The absolutisation of the Crimean case, treatment of Crimea as a possible example case for breaking the status quo not only in the post-Soviet space but also in the Baltic countries, Central and Eastern Europe;
- The treatment of the confrontation between the Russian Federation and the West as a second edition or a "remake" of the Cold War;
- The identification of the Russian foreign policy with the personality of President Vladimir Putin, this approach de facto implying that it is about responding to the personal "Putin's course";
- The idea of Russia as the main source of European instability, as an unpredictable country, whose actions cannot be assessed rationally; but at the same time as a "giant with feet of clay" overloaded with internal issues (primarily in the republics of the North Caucasus and the Ural-Volga region to a lesser extent).

Meanwhile, these approaches tend to oversimplify the situation and fail to ensure a complete picture to properly shed light on the evolution of Russia's foreign policy approaches throughout the entire post-Soviet period. They also fail to articulate the reasons for changes in Moscow's approaches to both Western countries and the newly independent states of Eurasia. Most importantly, they do not clarify the motives and logic of the Kremlin. It should also be understood that in many cases Russia's activities were not manifestations of any proactive policy, but a response to actions undertaken by various partners of the Russian Federation, as well as their implementation of various projects.

In this regard, we believe it to be urgently important to consider the fundamentals of Russia's approaches to the post-Soviet conflicts in

the broader context of European security. This will make it possible to correctly perceive the available alternatives and opportunities for Moscow's foreign policy manoeuvring and, ultimately, the prospects of reducing or increasing confrontation with the West.

Russia: evolving its basic approaches

Throughout the period since the collapse of the USSR, Russia has seen a complex transformation of its foreign policy and approaches to the post-Soviet conflict resolution as a significant part and parcel of it. Starting with attempts to integrate into the "civilised world", Moscow eventually recognised the primacy of its special interests and the dissimilarity of its fundamental vision of the world order and European and global security with that of the West.

Yet, the negative trends of the last five years should not be exaggerated in this process. Russia declared its rejection of a NATO-centred world as far back as 1994, two decades before Crimea was incorporated into the Russian Federation.[1] The post-Soviet space was declared to be the most important priority almost immediately after the disintegration of the USSR.[2] At the same time, Moscow clearly separated its adherence to "international law", the special role of the UN, and the inviolability of the principles of non-interference in internal affairs as far as countries beyond the former Soviet Union were concerned (the Middle East, North Africa Yugoslavia), from the newly independent countries of Eurasia for which exceptions were made in the 1990 and 2000s.

Over the past three decades, Russia's capacity in terms of foreign policy efforts has varied. Faced with internal separatism, as well as difficulties of economic reforms, Moscow could not afford excessive external activities. However, as statehood and the economy consolidated, and risks of a split were overcome, international-level ambitions grew stronger, which does not mean, though, that Russia had previously been satisfied with its place and role after the end of the Cold War. The thing is that it could benefit from new opportunities to promote its vision. This is where the theories of a "multipolar world", which used to be voiced mostly as part of academic discussions, had a chance to be put in practice.

1 In his speech, Boris Yeltsin said that the "Cold War" was replaced by the "Cold Peace", and that the expansion of NATO undermined European security, based on the Charter of Paris for a New Europe (1990). From his viewpoint, the alternative to that scenario was a multilateral system (OSCE-EU-NATO-CIS). For details, see: https://yeltsin.ru/archive/audio/9035/

2 Fiona Hill and Pamela Jewett, *Russia's Interventions in the Internal Affairs of the Former Soviet Republics and Their Implications for US Policy towards Russia* (Washington: Brookings Institutions, 1994).

The reason for today's outburst of contradictions between Moscow, on the one hand, and Washington and Brussels, on the other, is not a "second Cold War" or ideology-driven differences, but the asymmetry of their perceptions of national priorities. Russia and the West have different points of reference in terms of what violates world order and international law. The Americans and their allies assess the doings of the Russian Federation as exclusive violations of European borders after World War II. But for Moscow, the violation of the international law began a lot earlier; and the Ukrainian-Crimean crisis is only a part of the broader process that began with the collapse of the Warsaw Treaty Organization, the USSR, Yugoslavia and the eastward expansion of NATO. The case of Ukraine is therefore not a dispute about "who started it." It is a story about the non-existence of operational and effective international law and efficient international arbitration for controversial issues relating to the relationship between the centre and periphery in crisis.

Again, as it happened before in the Balkans or in the South Caucasus, the world's leading actors disagreed as to clear criteria for secession or preservation of territorial integrity. Therefore, it should be understood that Russia's policy is not a compendium of phobias and fixations of the first person in the Kremlin. There is a good reason why there is little difference between assessments made by Vladimir Putin and statements about the status of Crimea made by such diverse politicians as Alexey Navalny, Mikhail Gorbachev and Mikhail Khodorkovsky. With or without Putin, Moscow will take care of its close neighbourhood, and as soon as it sees direct threats to itself, it will resort to force (as it happened repeatedly before Crimea). With or without Putin, Moscow is not interested in having a unipolar world in which its interests are either disregarded or perceived as unimportant because Russia's economic potential cannot be compared to that of the West. At the same time, with Putin or with any other leader, Moscow will be interested in pragmatising its relations with the U.S. and the EU, integrating into the global economy, as it is keen to benefit from economic and technological cooperation, as well as minimising the risks of terrorism.

This is why Russia's approaches to the post-Soviet conflicts have not represented a sort of a universal recipe. They vary depending on:

- level of their intensity,
- engagement of external actors especially NATO, U.S. and EU,
- impact of the conflicts on Russia's domestic security.

The conflicts: unity and diversity

Driven by conventional wisdom, pundits and journalists used to describe the tensions in the post-Soviet space as "frozen conflicts." However, this term looks a bit inaccurate today, first with the ongoing military escalation in Eastern Ukraine and hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed territory located between the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia. In both cases, the conflicting sides appear to be reluctant to observe ceasefire agreements. These hotspots are still facing a lot of casualties among civilians despite the fact that military clashes are currently not as intense as they were in 1991-1994 in Nagorno-Karabakh or January-February, 2015 in Donbass.

One should keep in mind that the conflicts in Eastern Ukraine and Nagorno-Karabakh didn't become models for the entire post-Soviet space. For example, Abkhazia and South Ossetia haven't become troublemakers for the Kremlin: the dormant ethnopolitical conflicts were not unfrozen. The Georgian factor decreased in these breakaway republics, with the Kremlin's opinion taken into account more seriously than Tbilisi's. For Moscow, Abkhazia and South Ossetia represent «a new reality for Transcaucasia», which Russia's foreign ministry and other special agencies are supposed to protect, as indicated by Russia's Foreign Policy Concept.[3] However, it doesn't mean that Tbilisi will yield and legally recognise this as the new normal. Moreover, even domestic dynamics in Georgia (mass protest rallies as they take place in June-July, 2019) can influence the bilateral relationship with Russia. The West supports Georgia's aspirations to regain its territorial integrity; however, there are no specific moves to change the current military and political status quo.

In the context of Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet space, the conflict in the unrecognised Transnistria, which is a part of the Republic of Moldova, is very important. After the 1992 ceasefire treaty, the military confrontation in the region came to an end and the protracted conflict was relegated to the secondary agenda. However, for the last years, it has become one of the key topics of the European security agenda amidst the crisis in Ukraine and the increasing confrontation with the West in the post-Soviet space. Nevertheless, now in spite of attempts of both Kyiv and Chișinău to diminish the role of Moscow in the resolution of this conflict, any significant escalation has not been brought to the country. Moreover,

3 "Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, December 1, 2016, http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2542248

the presidential election in Transnistria went well, without incidents and political tensions. Meanwhile, the socialist leader Igor Dodon came to power in Moldova, with his aspirations to normalise relations with Russia. Thus, his election is seen as a good sign for resolving the Transnistria problem through negotiations, not conflict. However, there are no guarantees that diplomacy will win because of domestic tensions between Dodon's team and the Moldovan government.

Thus, the post-Soviet conflicts have been evolving since the collapse of the Soviet Union, with some of them losing their relevance and others (like the confrontation in Donbass) coming to the fore and posing threats not only for a separate region but also for the entire Eurasian security system. Accordingly, there are no universal ways of resolving all conflicts. Every region requires a specific approach. And this is the key rule that drives Moscow now and has been driving it previously.

Russia's approaches: commonalities and particularities

According to Russia's 2016 Foreign Policy Concept, among the Kremlin's key priorities are "fostering democratic development of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, strengthening their international positions, providing them with security and bolstering social and economic restoration." During the 2012-2016 normalisation of relations with Georgia, Moscow drew several red lines. Specifically, Russia made it clear that it wouldn't talk about the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Instead, it expressed interest in improving relations with Tbilisi in the fields where Russia and Georgia can see eye-to-eye, provided the current status quo and reality in the South Caucasus won't be changed. This means that South Ossetia and Abkhazia should remain independent from Georgia, according to the Kremlin.

However, Moscow is not going to accelerate the process of possible incorporation of South Ossetia into Russia. That might be why the Kremlin recommended rescheduling the South Ossetia referendum on this problem after the end of the 2017 presidential campaign in this republic. The elections passed and the new Head of South Ossetia came to power as a result. However, this referendum has not taken place until now. Yet it cannot be ruled that this problem will come to the fore in the near future.

The referendum in South Ossetia might become a tool in the case of increasing tensions between Russia on the one side and Georgia and its Western allies on the other. However, oddly enough, the Kremlin's

new Foreign Policy Concept didn't mention the unrecognised Nagorno-Karabakh Republic while describing the conflict as Armenian-Azeri tensions. The Kremlin is ready to collaborate with France, the "EU representative", and the U.S. within the format of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) to resolve this problem. Yet, during the 2016 escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh, it was Russia that encouraged Baku and Yerevan to achieve the ceasefire and, after the de-escalation, participated in the negotiations. Today, the Kremlin's diplomacy is trying to maintain a balance between Armenia and Azerbaijan. At the same time, it doesn't put into question the territorial integrity of the latter despite the fact that Yerevan is a strategic ally of Russia, involved in Eurasian integration projects.

Likewise, Moscow is flexible on the Moldova/Transnistria issue, which allows it to manoeuvre. While recognizing Tiraspol as a participant of the peaceful negotiation process, Russia is not ready to recognise it as an independent state. The success of Dodon in Moldova's presidential elections of 2016 and his pledges to improve relations with Russia strengthen the positions of those who are ready to come up with a compromise. Later in 2019, during the institutional crisis provoked by inconclusive parliamentary elections (where three parties – the Socialist Party, the pro-European Union ACUM and the Democratic Party, led by the oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc - each got more than 20 % of the vote) Russia and the West (U.S. and EU as well) reached a compromise. It was based on the anti-oligarch consensus and de facto withdrawal of Vladimir Plahotniuc from the Moldovan political arena. Thus, Moldova became a unique place in the former USSR area where Russia and the West agreed on supporting the joint efforts of the pro-Russian Socialists and the pro-EU ACUM to form the new government and overcome the domestic crisis not following "zero-sum game" principles.

As Irina Bolgova, an expert from Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO University) argues, "the period of turbulence in the post-Soviet space, which reached its apex in 2014 during the Ukraine crisis, turned into a protracted phase." According to her, today none of the stakeholders is interested in a severe escalation of the situation because of potential grave implications.[4] That's why geopolitical players are just trying to use uncertainty in their own favour. In this context, Russia's position toward Donbass is very curious. Moscow has made it clear that it is not going to

4 Cit. in: *Mezhdunarodnye ontosheniya na postsovetskom prostranstve,* eds. Anatoly Torkunov and Artem Malgin, (Moscow: Aspect-Press Publishing House, 2017): 117-149.

repeat the Crimea experience in Eastern Ukraine. The Kremlin rather sees the Donbass military conflict as a tool of containment of Kyiv's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. That's why Russia so far has been reluctant to recognise the alleged People's republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. Another reason is that Moscow is concerned about the escalation of tensions with the West. On the other hand, Moscow clearly drew a red line: military oppression of the separatists in Eastern Ukraine is not the best option to resolve the Ukraine crisis.

Alexander Gushchin and Alexander Levchenkov, Associate professors of the Russian State University for the Humanities, suggest Moscow aims at exposing Kyiv's inability to fulfil its commitments on conducting elections in the separatist republics and amending the country's Constitution. In addition, the Kremlin seeks to reinvigorate the forces in Europe that are not willing to impose sanctions on Russia.[5]

Hence, Russia doesn't have a universal approach to resolving ethnopolitical and civil confrontation in the post-Soviet space. In Crimea, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it behaves like a revisionist country to withstand the West, but it is ready to cooperate with the U.S. and the EU in Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria. However, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine is much more complicated. It is aggravated with the harsh confrontation with the West and, especially, with Ukraine. Kyiv denies the fact of the political crisis in Ukraine while describing the conflict as Russia's direct intervention in the country, with the Kremlin denying these accusations. At any rate, Russia is not driven by a solid ideology or a set of values. It doesn't try to blindly project its experience of dealing with protracted conflicts to other former Soviet republics (like Belarus) or the Baltic countries being NATO-members. Therefore, revisionism is not an end in itself for Moscow. It is rather a tool that is employed only when the status quo proves ineffective (as was the case with Georgia or Ukraine). However, where the status quo (Armenia-Azerbaijan, Moldova) stays, Russia prefers making no abrupt movements.

In the cases of Belarus or the Baltic countries we have not seen any well-organised pro-Russian separatist/irredentist movements and protracted conflicts as well. This is why Moscow has no special motives, excuses and resources to intervene in the domestic developments (perceived as negative trends) in those countries. As for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Kremlin perfectly understands the stakes during the hypothetical confrontation. Automatically it would be an escalation with the joint NATO military and diplomatic potential. In the case

5 Aleksandr Gushchin and Aleksandr Levchenkov, *Ukraina posle Maidana^ pyat' let krizisa I nadezhd,* Working Paper No. 54, (Moscow: Russian International Affairs Council, 2019): 35-53.

of Belarus, the deepening of bilateral Moscow-Minsk tensions will provoke crises and splits in the Eurasian integration projects under the Russian auspices (CSTO and Eurasian Economic Union as well). This is why any Moscow's efforts towards establishing "a second Crimea" look as not quite realistic scenarios. In the Baltic/Belarus cases, they are not predetermined by the Ukrainian developments. Any bilateral dynamic between Russia and its neighbours has its own particular logic rather than an alleged "Grand Strategy". Even in South Ossetia, de facto controlled by Moscow and dominated by public opinion in favour of unification with "brothers in Russia's North Ossetia", Kremlin has rejected the idea of repeating the Crimean scenario. The repetition of this scenario in Belarus or Baltic countries has not become *Idée Fixe* of the Russian leadership.

Conclusion

Because of its geographic proximity and its long history of engagement, Russia still has vital security interests in the post-Soviet space. However, all of its approaches are determined by concrete developments. If it can avoid changing the status quo, it is not interested in breaking the "rules of the game." Still, if it sees a favourable status quo coming under threat, it can react in a tough way, be it by intervention, recognising a de facto state or through the transfer of territory. At the same time, the Russian leadership has neither the intention of restoring the USSR nor ideas of pursuing "imperial revenge." Its political behaviour is determined not by an ideological programme or even a clear strategy, but by reactions to security challenges as well as by the conflict dynamics. Russia is trying to prevent the collapse of the available negotiation frameworks such as the Geneva consultations on the situation in Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the negotiations on the settlement of the Eastern Ukraine, Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. These formats are channels of communication between the parties to the conflicts and all actors engaged in the peace process including the Western actors (U.S., EU and OSCE).

The Political and Military-strategic Impact of Arms Control Regime Failure on the Baltic Sea Region

Ian Anthony

In the 1990s huge stockpiles of conventional arms, chemical weapons and nuclear weapons were eliminated. From being the most heavily militarised space in the world, Europe became a world region in which military factors were pushed to the sidelines. Legal agreements with unprecedented levels of verification played an important role in making the transformation a relatively orderly process.

The annexation of Crimea and the challenge to Ukrainian sovereignty posed by Russia's aggressive actions from 2014 onwards highlighted a lack of preparedness should a military contingency arise elsewhere. Many European states emphasised enhancing military capability in response.

Maintaining, or building upon, the restraint measures negotiated in the 1990s received less attention as trust evaporated, and new negotiated limits on armaments will require a significant (and unexpected) change in approach by the most senior decision-makers in major powers.

States in the Baltic Sea region are cautious in their approach to arms control, but the economic burden of comprehensive defence measures is considerable, and domestic political support for increasing military expenditure is uneven across European countries. Once measures to enhance military capabilities have been implemented, finding a balance between defence, deterrence and restraint may become a higher priority for European governments, and at that point states in the Baltic Sea region will have to make a new assessment. States may seek the predictability offered by binding agreements, and the changes in the strategic geography of Europe make it highly unlikely that states in the Baltic Sea region could stand outside such arrangements.

The progressive decay and, in some cases, the collapse of global agreements is increasingly discussed. After August 2019, the 1987 Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty) will no longer be in effect. While they are not signatories to the Treaty, states in the Baltic Sea region that are members of NATO have been part of the discussion of how to prepare for a world without the INF Treaty.

Unless the United States and Russia agree on an extension, the

Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty) will expire in February 2021. If no new agreement is reached, at that point there will be no negotiated constraints on the size or composition of Russian or U.S. nuclear arsenals and no framework for a sustained discussion of nuclear weapon-related issues.[1] If predicting, and planning for, future nuclear contingencies states will fully depend on national technical means this will probably increase the investment in espionage and intelligence and promote secrecy.

In 1993, signatories to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (CWC) agreed never to possess or use chemical weapons under any circumstances. Since 2012 the use of chemical weapons has been confirmed on multiple occasions, and many of these attacks have been attributed to states that are bound by the CWC. The use of an agent with an almost total lack of impurities, a characteristic normally associated with chemical weapons, in the United Kingdom added a new dimension to the CWC. The attack was attributed to Russia and suggests that an undeclared stockpile of prohibited CW has been produced.

States in the Baltic Sea region that preserved full flexibility over the size and structure of national armed forces have generally been countries with limited military capabilities. Their position has been seen as reasonable as large, powerful states should not require security guarantees from small, weak states. However, Russia has argued that once states join NATO spaces within a powerful alliance where agreed restraints do not apply weaken the overall arms control framework. This "grey zone" as it has been labelled by Russian officials[2] is said to have contributed to the Russian decision to suspend application of the CFE Treaty provisions, and subsequently de facto leave the Treaty altogether.

Past experience with arms control in the Baltic Sea region

States in the Baltic Sea region have a diverse relationship with arms control. Russia, together with the United States, has been the central actor in developing and implementing arms control agreements.

1 At the G20 Summit in Osaka, Japan, the United States and Russia apparently agreed to begin discussing extending the New START Treaty.

2 Sergei Ivanov, "Maturing Partnership," *NATO Review*, Spring 2005.

Created to help manage the military relationship between adversarial blocs, arms control applied directly to the states belonging to Cold War alliances but had an indirect impact on the national security planning of states outside alliances.

While NATO always had a process of consultation on arms control issues, the same was not true in the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO). Arms control decision-making was tightly controlled by a small circle of actors in the Soviet Union, and the military was the dominant player.[3] Countries in central Europe had very little influence over policies decided in Moscow, while Soviet decision-making did not provide any point of entry for perspectives from Rīga, Tallinn, Minsk or Vilnius.

In the 1990s arms control agreements were evaluated as a risk by some states in the Baltic Sea region because of concern over their potential impact on, for example, membership of NATO or the effect of legally binding ceilings on the consensual deployment of foreign forces on national territory.[4] Finland and Sweden also remained outside the conventional arms control framework that grew out of bloc-to-bloc negotiations. Similarly, some states delayed accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction until after joining NATO.

The cautious approach has extended to initiatives for regional arms control. Concern that strategic advantages Russia inevitably enjoys in the region could be consolidated in any agreement has promoted a view of European security as a continuum, stretching from the Arctic to the Black Sea. Naval measures for the Baltic Sea have been rejected on the basis that the Baltic (unlike the Black Sea, which has a different legal status) is part of the world oceans, where freedom of navigation should be preserved.

What is meant by arms control today?

In parallel with legal restraints, the post-Cold War European security system included Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) intended to enhance the transparency and predictability of military activities. These CSBMs, elaborated mainly in the Vienna Documents on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, do not

3 Aleksandr G. Savelyev and Nikolay N. Detinov, *The Big Five: Arms Control Decision-Making in the Soviet Union*, (Praeger: Westport CT, 1995).

4 Zdzislaw Lachowski, *The Adapted CFE Treaty and the Admission of the Baltic States to NATO*, (SIPRI: Stockholm, December 2002).

appear to be in danger of cancellation and apply in all states of the Baltic Sea region. However, it has not been possible to adapt or build on the existing CSBMs in a meaningful way since 1999.

Continuous discussion within the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the tabling of many specific proposals, has not led to progress in adapting CSBMs to help manage contingencies that seemed far-fetched before 2014, but that are planning assumptions today. Instead, states are trying to sustain an open-ended inter-governmental consultation to promote transparency and predictability in force developments through a structured dialogue under OSCE auspices.

The structured dialogue has some of the characteristics of the Cold War-era Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: it is considered a worthwhile attempt to improve relations with Russia without trying to reach specific agreements, and with a realistic expectation of what can be achieved. Whether the structured dialogue can reduce current tensions remains unclear, but the process has proved a useful supplement to European CSBMs without suggesting that it could replace them.

The starting point for inter-governmental dialogue is to understand how the underlying problem arms control is trying to solve has changed. While Cold War-era arms control focused on general war, today states are mainly focused on which military capabilities can deter limited conflicts. The risk that a smaller territory would be seized, and that attacking forces could not be evicted, is a greater concern than preparing to defeat a general invasion. Future arms control is less likely to focus on restraining massive, heavily armoured land forces and more likely to consider smaller, highly manoeuvrable forces operating under the cover provided by land, sea and air-launched missile forces.

A benefit of arms control agreements was their contribution to building a detailed understanding of the military plans of other states. Breakthroughs in arms control verification were a recognition that secrecy around military matters did not enhance national or regional security. Verified information exchange supported assessments made through national technical means. The collapse of arms control agreements could reduce the quality of strategic assessments and increase the risk of either lack of preparedness to meet a strategic surprise, or worst-case planning that stimulates a wasteful and counter-productive action-reaction spiral.

States in the Baltic Sea region outside arms control agreements never had direct access to the information generated through

verification, while the states that remain in the 1990 CFE Treaty no longer have the information previously provided by Russia. Significant information is still available through the OSCE CSBM regime, in particular through the Annual Exchange of Military Information and the General Exchange of Military Information. This information could be exploited to a much greater degree than it is today in order to partly compensate for the loss of transparency and predictability in military development. More systematic analysis on a collaborative basis would supplement to information collected by national intelligence agencies.

European security and nuclear arms control

The 1987 INF Treaty was an important signal that a new quality of relations was possible between Cold War adversaries, and it helped open the door for the dramatic political changes in Europe from which states in the Baltic Sea region were among the principal beneficiaries. However, short-range missiles that were not banned by the INF Treaty (and that could no longer target Germany or Denmark after the collapse of the WTO) posed a potential threat to countries in the eastern part of the Baltic Sea region.

In 1997 Belarus and Ukraine proposed a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central and Eastern Europe including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Belarus, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Moldova, Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria. This proposal, which would not have constrained any Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons, never gained traction. However, NATO has accepted certain restrictions on its own nuclear weapon deployments.

The NATO–Russia Founding Act stated that the alliance had "no intention, no plan, and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new member countries, nor any need to change any aspect of NATO's nuclear posture or nuclear policy, and that it does not foresee any future need to do so." This commitment also applied to nuclear weapon storage sites, "whether through the construction of new nuclear storage facilities or the adaptation of old nuclear storage facilities."[5]

The Founding Act confirmed a policy that NATO had already implemented. Short-range nuclear weapons assigned to NATO and stationed in Europe began to be removed in the 1980s, as they were replaced with intermediate-range weapons that were then banned

5 "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation," NATO, May 27, 1997, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm

under the INF Treaty.[6] When the Founding Act was signed, the only non-strategic weapons assigned to NATO were gravity bombs for delivery by dual-capable combat aircraft.[7]

As the military and political context for nuclear weapons in Europe has changed, it is a very open question whether the parameters familiar from the Cold War are still valid. These parameters assumed a meaningful distinction between non-strategic and strategic nuclear weapons and a concept of escalation management in a major conflict.

Cold War planning involved nuclear attacks on Poland, but using nuclear weapons (all of which belong to the United States, and that could not be used without specific authorisation of the U.S. President) to attack targets in Russia would inevitably escalate a conflict into a strategic nuclear exchange. Moreover, dual-capable combat aircraft dropping nuclear gravity bombs on targets in Russia would have to refuel in air space contested by Russian air defence systems of increasing range and sophistication. This makes them the weapons perhaps least likely to be used.

Russia, by contrast, has compensated for the loss of intermediate-range missiles. The INF Treaty applied to ground-launched systems, and nuclear-armed air- and ship-launched missiles were treaty compliant. Russian surface warships and submarines began to be equipped with land-attack variants of nuclear-capable cruise missiles previously limited to anti-ship missions. Russia developed the RS-26 Rubezh missile that is classified as a strategic system under New START Treaty counting rules (and therefore exempt from the INF Treaty) because it was once tested to a range beyond 5,500 kilometres. All other tests of the missile have been at shorter ranges and the missile is said to have the theatre mission once performed by SS-20 missiles.[8]

In 2008, when Russia began its nuclear modernisation, some analysts pointed to the fact that Russian and NATO approaches to nuclear weapons appeared to be moving in opposite directions.[9] In 2010 the NATO defence and deterrence posture review proposed planning "in case NATO were to decide to reduce its reliance on non-strategic nuclear weapons based in Europe".[10]

The NATO review was conducted at a time when the United States expected follow-on negotiations after New START, including

6 Gregory Schulte, *Dispelling Myths about NATO Nuclear Posture*, The Euro-Atlantic Foundation, February 21, 1997.

7 France retained a nuclear-armed air-launched cruise missile under exclusive national authority, and the United States retained nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missiles until 2011, when the TLAM-N missile was retired.

8 Dave Majumdar, "Russia's Dangerous Nuclear Forces are Back," *The National Interest*, February 14, 2017.

9 Vaidotas Urbelis and Kestutis Paulauskas, 'NATO's Deterrence Policy – Time for a Change?', *Baltic Security & Defence Review*, vol. 10, 2008.

10 "Defence and Deterrence Posture Review," NATO Press Release, May 20, 2012.

non-strategic weapons. These talks have not yet taken place and NATO has not conducted a new review of defence and deterrence posture, but the termination of the INF Treaty has prompted a more active discussion inside the alliance of the role of nuclear weapons. The discussion is not confined to Brussels-based representatives but increasingly reaches back into capitals, as the issue now features regularly in ministerial level meetings.[11] A discussion of extended deterrence in Europe and the role of nuclear weapons appears inevitable, but competing narratives will be presented to a general public that is poorly prepared to evaluate the wisdom of different choices.

Extended deterrence and nuclear weapons

Even if the primary focus for deterrence is national defence, the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review underlined that because nuclear and non-nuclear forces do not provide comparable deterrence effects, allies and partners "place enormous value on U.S. extended nuclear deterrence".[12]

Nuclear extended deterrence is said to be achieved in inter-connected ways.[13] The Cold War assertion that for extended deterrence to be credible the United States must be willing to lose New York to save Berlin was short-hand for the problem of providing assurance to non-nuclear allies that there is a response to any contingency they might face, including confrontation with a nuclear-armed state. Broad participation in alliance nuclear missions was a way of creating an organic link between nuclear and non-nuclear aspects of deterrence to underline political as well as military solidarity.

The U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapon arsenal is estimated to be 230 B-61 gravity bombs, delivered by dual-capable fighter aircraft. Roughly 150 bombs are at six storage sites in five countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey), of which about 80 are earmarked for use by non-U.S. aircraft. The remainder are in the United States.[14]

The number of weapons has progressively declined but the U.S. decided to retain the dual-capable F-15E fighter in the U.S. Air Force,

11 In February 2019, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg explained that Allies were now discussing how to sustain effective defence and deterrence in conditions where the restraints imposed by the INF Treaty no longer apply. Stoltenberg indicated that NATO will take "coordinated, measured, and defensive" steps, but does not intend to deploy new ground-based nuclear missiles in Europe.

12 *Nuclear Posture Review*, Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 2018, p. vii.

13 Nuclear extended deterrence does not assume numerical parity or symmetry in the types of weapons deployed. All current estimates indicate that the Russian inventory of non-strategic nuclear weapons is larger and more diverse than that of the United States, with the lowest estimate suggesting a Russian inventory more than three times larger than that of the U.S.

14 Hans Kristensen and Matt Korda, "United States nuclear forces, 2019," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 75, April 2019.

and to ensure that European Allies would be able to purchase a dual-capable version of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter as their existing dual-capable aircraft left service. In addition, the U.S. decided on a Life Extension Programme for the B-61 nuclear bomb to ensure its functionality with the F-35. Nevertheless, the perception of broad participation became more difficult to sustain.

The European contribution to extended nuclear deterrence depends on the availability of dual-capable aircraft that can be matched with the U.S. B-61 bomb. Of the countries operating dual-capable fighter aircraft today Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey have committed themselves to buy the F-35 fighter. However, the status of the order from Turkey was placed in question when President Donald Trump signed legislation blocking the transfer, pending a decision by Turkey to reverse the purchase of advanced air defence missiles from Russia.[15] In Germany, the F-35 has been excluded as an option to replace dual-capable Tornado aircraft. In future only three countries might have the means to participate directly in nuclear sharing arrangements. Whether Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands would want to be left as the only European countries engaged in flying nuclear missions perhaps raises a further political question.

The future of extended deterrence in Europe

In successive Summits NATO allies have underscored that deterrence rests on an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defence capabilities. However, NATO is trying to do three things that are not easy to link in a coherent manner: sustain broad participation in the nuclear mission without increasing the number of non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe and while continuing to respect the letter and spirit of the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review proposed ways to strengthen extended deterrence: by modifying a small number of existing submarine-launched ballistic missile warheads to provide a low-yield option; and developing a modern nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM) to add "flexible and low-yield options to strengthen deterrence and assurance".[16]

Converting ballistic missiles to carry lower-yield warheads would not increase the overall size of the U.S. nuclear inventory but a

15 At the time of writing Turkey had passed the point where mandatory U.S. sanctions, including excluding Turkey from the F-35 fighter programme, were triggered. However, these sanctions had not yet entered into force. Jarod Taylor, "U.S. Sanctions and Turkey's Purchase of Russia's S-400 Air Defence System," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, Washington D.C., July 12, 2019.

16 *Nuclear Posture Review*, Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 2018, p. 55.

nuclear-armed SLCM would create a weapon that does not exist today. These proposed changes depend on funding, which is not assured.[17]

If new U.S. nuclear capabilities are sea-based, the notion of broad participation in NATO's nuclear deterrence may be weaker. European Allies may instead emphasise their contribution to advanced conventional forces and missile defences while calling for further increases in U.S. non-nuclear forces either stationed in Europe or present through the rotation of units.

Most European conventional strike capability currently consists of air- and sea-launched stand-off missiles with ranges, according to open sources, of approximately 500 kilometres. These missiles would have to launch from heavily contested air and sea spaces or make use of the air space of countries outside NATO (Finland and Sweden) to reach most targets in Russia.

Seen from this perspective, the development of a significant European long-range conventional strike capability that is fully integrated into NATO could emerge as a contribution to deterrence, and one that many (in principle all) allies could join without compromising the Russia–NATO Founding Act.

The United States is currently exploring the development of a conventional road-mobile cruise missile with a range of up to 5,500 kilometres.[18] While a U.S. system is likely to be available more quickly, in the medium term a modern, European ground-launched conventional cruise missile integrated with networked NATO intelligence, surveillance and target acquisition capabilities would be a significant contribution to extended deterrence.

After 2010, NATO leaders agreed that a collective ballistic missile defence system should be developed to provide full coverage and protection for NATO European populations, territory and forces against the threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles. The system is based on voluntary national contributions, with U.S. assets at the core of the capability at least in its initial phases. The recent United States Missile Defence Review emphasised meeting "evolving threats and new classes of offensive missiles as they emerge, including advanced, extended-range cruise missiles" and Hypersonic Glide Vehicles.[19]

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17 The draft text of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 indicates that Congressional approval will require a detailed explanation of the rationale for changes to the U.S. nuclear forces. Draft Bill H.R. 2500 "To authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2020 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes," Washington D.C., June 19, 2019.

18 *Conventional Prompt Global Strike and Long-Range Ballistic Missiles: Background and Issues*, Congressional Research Service report R41464, (Washington D.C., January 8, 2019): 39.

19 *Missile Defense Review 2019*, Office of the Secretary of Defense, January 2019, p. 53.

Missile defence is evolving from an exclusive focus on ballistic missiles newly acquired by states entering the missile age to consider a broader spectrum of missiles, including the most modern types that are more likely to be owned by major military powers. It can be expected that the assessment of NATO defence and deterrence in a post-INF Treaty environment will include discussion of an expanded European contribution to regional missile defence as part of a rebalanced approach to overall deterrence.

A framework for thinking about future arms control

If the starting point is that military realities condition arms control possibilities, a point of departure might be to revisit the 1989 NATO *Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament*. In that document allies established that the basic goal of arms control policy is "to enhance security and stability at the lowest balanced level of forces and armaments consistent with the requirements of the strategy of deterrence."[20]

Although the concept was agreed at a time when political conditions were improving, rather than deteriorating, the underlying purpose remains valid. The objective was not to achieve symmetry or parity of armed forces, which is not a realistic objective today in Europe, but to identify destabilising forces and equipment and then remove them.

Weapons that reduce stability probably include those that are developed and deployed at short notice or by surprise; those that force decision-makers to initiate military action without adequate time for proper assessment and those against which there is no defence. However, elaborating which armaments should be the primary focus of arms control should rest on a detailed assessment of the European military security context, including an analysis of the main tendencies anticipated in the next years.

States in the Baltic Sea region have not always joined arms control arrangements in the past, but it is very unlikely that they would be able to stand aside from any future agreements. Building a deeper and more detailed understanding of arms control would be a good investment as an integrated element of national security policy.

20 "The Alliance's comprehensive concept of arms control and disarmament adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council," Brussels, May 29, 1989.

A Key Russian Asymmetric Capability Damaged: the "Losharik" Accident and its Strategic Implications

András Rácz

On July 1, 2019, one of Russia's special purpose submarines, the AS-31 "Losharik", suffered a serious accident that killed fourteen of its crew and massively damaged the vessel. The unique capabilities, as well as the loss of the highly experienced crew, make the accident of strategic significance for Russia, as well as for the entire Euro-Atlantic alliance. The "Losharik" accident is likely to considerably limit the activities of Russia's special submarines, due to the loss of expertise and very special, unique capabilities of the AS-31. From the perspective of the Baltic Sea region, both factors are especially relevant. Even though the Baltic Sea is shallow enough for Russia's other midget submarines to operate on the seabed, the AS-31 was Russia's most modern special purpose submarine, and capability-wise it might be substituted by older midget subs only to a very limited extent. Yet, even these are capable of sabotaging underwater communication cables.

Russia has been engaged for decades in developing special submarines that are able to conduct operations in extreme depth and are also operational on the seabed. Most of these vessels belong to a unit called Main Directorate for Deep-Water Research (the Russian acronym is GUGI) that has a number of submarines built for special purposes. As these types of vessels are usually slow, they are transported close to the place of operation by a larger carrier-submarine. Once launched, special mini-submarines are able to collect intelligence, monitor both surface and underwater traffic, access and even disrupt underwater communication cables and deploy various devices to the seabed.

As pointed out by various authors, for example, by Kathleen Hicks,[1] the Baltic Sea region is especially vulnerable to such kinds of activities due to the high density of both underwater infrastructure as well as naval traffic. Concerns are widespread about Russian activities in the close proximity of key underwater communication cables.[2]

1 Kathleen A. Hicks et al.: *Undersea Warfare in Northern Europe* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2019) https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/160721_Hicks_UnderseaWarfare_Web.pdf

2 Sebastien Roblin, "Russian Spy Submarines Are Tampering with Undersea Cables That Make the Internet Work. Should We Be Worried?" *National Interest*, August 19, 2018, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/russian-spy-submarines-are-tampering-undersea-cables-make-internet-work-should-we-be

From Russia's perspective, using such special systems as the ones of the Main Directorate for Deep-Water Research is very much in line with the frequently used logic of contemporary military thinking that prefers to counter the adversary's numerical and technological superiority with asymmetric means,[3] including very high-tech solutions. As Tim Thomas aptly states, "asymmetric actions include secrecy, finding weak points and vulnerable facilities in an adversary, and imposing one's own version of conflict on an adversary," as well as destroying targets related to the economy and control systems of the adversary.[4]

What happened to the AS-31 bears direct relevance not only for the high oceans but also for the Baltic Sea region. Though the military units incorporating vessels of the Main Directorate for Deep-Water Research is located in the Far North, in the Murmansk region, one of the older carrier-submarines, a converted Delta-III class vessel, the Orenburg, has been on repair in St. Petersburg, indicating that carrier-submarines are able to operate in the Baltic Sea as well.[5] At present, GUGI uses two larger carrier-submarines, the Podmoskovye, a modified Delta-IV class ship, and a brand new one, the Belgorod, launched in April 2019.[6] Though both vessels are of massive size, Russia has recently demonstrated that even its large submarines are able and ready to sail into the Baltic Sea. In 2017 a Typhoon-class submarine sailed all the way to St. Petersburg to attend the annual naval parade,[7] becoming the largest-ever Russian nuclear submarine in the Baltic Sea. A year later an Oscar-class vessel, the Orel did the same.[8] They both are larger than both the Podmoskovye and the Belgorod, meaning that the Baltic Sea is a possible operational environment also for the newer carrier-submarines. All in all, developments related to vessels of the Main Directorate for Deep-Water Research are highly important also for the Baltic Sea countries.

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3 For a detailed analysis on contemporary Russian military thinking, see Timothy L. Thomas, "Russian Forecasts of Future War," *Military Review*, May-June 2019, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/May-June-2019/Thomas-Russian-Forecast/, as well as Krisztián Jójárt, *Revising the Theory of Hybrid War. Lessons from Ukraine* (Washington D.C.: Center for European Policy Analysis, 2019) https://www.cepa.org/revising-the-theory-of-hybrid-war

4 Timothy L. Thomas, "Russian Forecasts of Future War," *Military Review*, May-June 2019, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/May-June-2019/Thomas-Russian-Forecast/

5 Ramūnas Bogdanas, "Opinion: Hot October in the Baltic Sea," *Delfi.lt*, October 30, 2014, https://en.delfi.lt/politics/opinion-hot-october-in-the-baltic-sea.d?id=66265108

6 H. I. Sutton, "Spy Subs – Project 09852 Belgorod," *Covert Shores*, May 28, 2019, http://www.hisutton.com/Spy%20Subs%20-Project%2009852%20Belgorod.html

7 Thomas Nilsen, "Typhoon sails all way in surface position," *The Barents Observer*, July 19, 2017, https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2017/07/typhoon-sails-surface

8 Thomas Nilsen, "18 years after Kursk disaster, a sister ship shows off sailing all along Norway in surface position," *The Barents Observer*, August 9, 2018, https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2018/08/18-years-kursk-sister-submarine-show-and-sail-all-along-norway-surface-position

The AS-31 "Losharik"

The official classification of the AS-31[9] is nuclear deep-water station (*atomnaya glubokovodnaya stantsiya*) No. 10831, while the "Losharik" is an unofficial nickname, referring to a popular Russian cartoon figure. The construction of the vessel started back in the Soviet times, in 1988, in the secret area of the Sevmash shipyard in Severodvinsk. The "Losharik", then bearing the number AS-12, was the most advanced project of its kind, succeeding a series of smaller deep-sea submarines, such as the Project 18510 "Nel'ma". Due to the lack of resources, the construction stopped for years following the breakup of the Soviet Union, thus the submarine was completed only in 2003. After years of extensive testing, the submarine entered service in 2008.[10]

Though the vessel is surrounded by a high level of secrecy, it is known that it is a dual-use device. One of its main official tasks is to conduct scientific measurements, such as geological explorations in extreme depth up to 6000 (!) metres. The submarine is also able to collect debris or remnants of satellites that had fallen into the sea and take geological samples. It is equipped not only with various sensors, reflectors and cameras, but is also able to work outside of the ship by using an external manipulator and also has a smaller, remote-controlled vehicle.

It was the AS-31 that participated in the Arktika-2012 expedition[11], and as per the expedition's framework, it collected geological samples from the bottom of the seabed. The mission was conducted in order to prove that the seabed under the North Pole is connected to the continental shelf of Russia, thus supporting the argument that Moscow had the right to extend its territorial claims. During this expedition, the "Losharik" operated in a depth of 2,5-3 kilometres for altogether twenty days.[12]

Besides its civilian and scientific tasks, Western military sources often mention "Losharik" as a special purpose, deep-sea intelligence-gathering tool. Even Russian official newspapers tend to refer to the "Losharik" as a vessel that has important military capabilities as well – for example, an *Izvestia* article from 2012 exclusively named it as part of Russia's underwater intelligence

9 Though many sources named the ship as AS-12, de facto it was the number the vessel held before its modernisation. At present, it is the AS-31.

10 Pr. 10830 / pr. 10831 / pr. 210 – LOSHARIK. *Military Russia*, January 4, 2019, http://militaryrussia.ru/blog/topic-543.html

11 Alexey Mikhailov and Vladimir Voloshin, "Voenniy atomniy batiskaf «Losharik» ispitali v Arktike", *Izvestia*, October 29, 2019, https://iz.ru/news/538268

12 Sergey Yuferev, "Sekrety «Losharik»", *Voennoe obozrenie*, March 1, 2013, https://topwar.ru/24870-sekrety-losharika.html

apparatus.[13] Possibly one of the main tasks of the ship has been to access underwater communication and other cables, with the purpose of wiretapping, or even cutting them. Collecting intelligence on naval traffic and communication has been another likely use.[14] The AS-31 is reportedly able to deploy special military equipment (such as sensors) to the seabed,[15] or disrupt the functioning of the enemy's detection devices. Even predecessors of the AS-31 managed to reportedly collect wreckages of NATO aeroplanes and helicopters that have fallen into the sea,[16] and get hold of projectiles from enemy naval firing exercises.[17] Regarding the "Losharik", its extreme diving depth, as well as the specially designed propeller, provide the vessel with strong stealth capabilities. Besides, the submarine has retractable legs that provide the vessel with the ability to stand still on the seabed, making it nearly undetectable.

In December 2012, it was announced that the construction of another similar, though smaller vessel would be started in Severodvinsk, based on a "Nel'ma" type boat that was left unfinished in the Soviet times.[18] Meanwhile, the "Losharik" underwent a minor modernisation in 2016, but the details of the process are not known, except that the number of the vessel changed to AS-31. As a result of this modernisation, the "Losharik" became the most modern, absolutely unique system of the Russian armed forces. Even though Russia has a few other, smaller submarines of similar capabilities, i.e. conducting operations on the seabed (vessels of the "Nel'ma" and "Halibut" classes), these ships have an operational depth only around a thousand metres. This means that they could substitute the damaged AS-31 only in relatively shallow waters, such as the Baltic Sea, but not in the deep oceans.

The exact dimensions of the vessel are classified, some information is nevertheless available. The ship is approximately 70 metres long and has a displacement tonnage of 2000 tons. In order to withstand the extreme pressure, the hull is made of titanium alloy, while the interior is composed of altogether seven orb-shaped spaces. The first five compartments are interconnected with corridors, while the last

13 Alexey Mikhailov and Dmitry Balburov, "«Losharik» ostal'sya bez nositelya," *Izvestia*, December 29, 2012, https://iz.ru/news/542306

14 Kathleen A. Hicks et al.: *Undersea Warfare in Northern Europe* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2019) https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/160721_Hicks_UnderseaWarfare_Web.pdf

15 Atle Staalesen, "Defense Minister confirms fire onboard the «Losharik»," *The Barents Observer*, July 3, 2019, https://thebarentsobserver.com/ru/bezopasnost/2019/07/ministr-oborony-podtverdil-pozhar-na-bortu-losharika

16 Vladimir Ivanov, "GRU kontroliruet glubini okeanov," *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, September 13, 2007, http://www.ng.ru/regions/2007-09-13/100_gru.html

17 "Rossiya razvernula v Arktike glubokovodnuyu diviziyu," *Voenno-promyshlenniy kurier*, April 10, 2018, https://vpk-news.ru/news/42132

18 Alexey Mikhailov and Dmitry Balburov, "Minoboroni poluchit vtoroy «Losharik»," *Izvestia*, December 4, 2012, https://iz.ru/news/540754

two compartments are separated, containing only the nuclear reactor and the propulsion system. Due to the orb-shaped compartments, interior space is extremely limited in the submarine; nevertheless, it is able to stay underwater even for months, if needed.

The AS-31 is able to sail independently, but only with a very low speed. Hence, it has to be carried close to the target area by a larger carrier-submarine that the "Losharik" is able to dock to from below. This design has been developed in the Soviet era and has been used in a number of smaller submarine projects, too. The carrier-submarine of the AS-31 was originally a modified Project 667 BDR (NATO codename: Delta III) nuclear missile carrier submarine, the BS-136 Orenburg. The construction of this vessel was completed in 1981, and the submarine was rebuilt into a carrier in 2002. This conversion in practice meant that the middle compartment of the ship, originally containing the nuclear missiles, was removed and replaced by a docking station.[19] This docking compartment is able to host both the "Losharik" and also three mini-submarines of the "Nel'ma" type. A particular detail illustrating the relations in the post-Soviet Russian defence industry is that this docking station was not new, but it originated from another, older submarine, the BS-411, that was decommissioned in 2009.

During the July 1, 2019 accident, the "Losharik" was already carried by another submarine, the BS-164 Podmoskovye, originally a Delta-IV class vessel. This submarine was not much younger than its predecessor, the Orenburg, as it was completed in 1984. Moreover, before its conversion into a carrier submarine, Podmoskovye was waiting for 13 years in the Zvyozdochka shipyard and declined into an inferior state. To make things even more peculiar, the docking station built into the Podmoskovye was reportedly not constructed anew but was originally installed in the Orenburg.[20] With other words, during the time of the accident, the "Losharik" was using a docking station that was built already into the third ship in a row, probably raising questions about its overall reliability.

Under normal circumstances, the "Losharik" operates with a crew of 24 or 25, composed exclusively of officers. Due to the very special task of the vessel, crew members have been selected according to the highest criteria, and they reportedly represent the top of the elite of the Russian navy. This has become evident also for the wider public, once the names of the victims of the July 1

19 Alexey Mikhailov and Dmitry Balburov, "«Losharik» ostal'sya bez nositelya," *Izvestia*, December 29, 2012, https://iz.ru/news/542306

20 Alexey Mikhailov and Dmitry Balburov, "«Losharik» ostal'sya bez nositelya," *Izvestia*, December 29, 2012, https://iz.ru/news/542306

accident became public – this point is discussed in detail in the subsequent parts of this article.

Not only the crew's skills were extraordinary, but also their place in the chain of command was. The "Losharik" itself is subordinated directly to the military department of the Main Directorate of Deep-Sea Research of the Ministry of Defence, the unit No. 45707, located in Saint Petersburg.[21] The main task of this department is to conduct underwater intelligence, and it reports directly to the Minister of Defence. Meanwhile, the carrier submarine of the AS-31 belongs to the 29th separate submarine division, stationed in Gadzievo, Murmansk region. The unit was earlier a brigade and was upgraded to a full division in January 2018, clearly indicating the growing importance of its activities. As of April 2018, the division had two carrier submarines and had plans to acquire a third one, the Orenburg, provided that its repairs could be completed.[22]

The Accident and its short-term implications

According to the publicly available information, the AS-31 was completing an underwater exercise when the accident took place, though there are contradicting news about whether it happened when the "Losharik" was still deep underwater, or during the docking procedure. There was an explosion in the front compartment of the vessel, where the batteries are located, and thereafter a serious fire broke out. The captain of the carrier-submarine decided for an emergency surfacing, thus the Podmoskovye emerged around 9:30 p.m. on July 1 in the Guba Ura Bay, surprising a number of fishermen who worked there.[23] Though some analysts are sceptical about whether fishermen could really see anything in such a late hour,[24] July is the time of the year in the far North when at 9:30 p.m. practically there is still daylight. Fishermen later reported witnessing crew members working hastily on board of the Podmoskovye, and they saw bodies brought out from the inside of the vessel. Meanwhile, they saw neither flames nor smoke. Shortly after the surfacing, a

21 Nikolay Sergeev, "Pogibshie podvodniki sluzhili v voyskovoy chasti v Petergofe," *Kommersant*, July 3, 2019, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4019058, and Michael Kofman, "Fire aboard AS-31 Losharik: Brief Overview," *Russian Military Analysis*, July 3, 2019, https://russianmilitaryanalysis.wordpress.com/2019/07/03/fire-aboard-as-31-losharik-brief-overview/

22 "Rossiya razvernula v Arktike glubokovodnuyu diviziyu," *Voenno-promyshlenniy kurier*, April 10, 2018, https://vpk-news.ru/news/42132

23 Atle Staalesen, "Fishermen witnessed nuclear submarine drama," *The Barents Observer*, July 3, 2019, https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2019/07/fishermen-witnessed-nuclear-submarine-drama?fbclid=IwAR21UTlnvpZMo_DyCkeIq9lS2i2RBqZSp8NFLGYcmPfpNmkPMwr1AvLVZf8

24 Michael Kofman, "Fire aboard AS-31 Losharik: Brief Overview," *Russian Military Analysis*, July 3, 2019, https://russianmilitaryanalysis.wordpress.com/2019/07/03/fire-aboard-as-31-losharik-brief-overview/

warship and two tugboats arrived and towed the carrier-submarine (with the "Losharik" already docked underwater) to the Kola Bay.

By this time, the real drama was already over below the surface. According to the official explanation, the fire in the front compartment generated plenty of poisonous fumes, and these killed the fourteen victims of the accident. Regarding the cause of the fire, there are news about a short circuit, while other sources argue that the recently installed new experimental lithium-ion batteries caught fire.[25] Based on the available open sources, no conclusion can be drawn on the precise cause. Whichever was the case, initially, the danger of the fire spreading and destroying both vessels was real. This could be prevented by nearly two hours of hard and unquestionably heroic work of the crew, most likely by hermetically sealing away the first compartment from other parts of the vessel, thus preventing the fire from spreading further. This implies that the battery section got completely burned out, nevertheless, both the "Losharik" and the carrier-submarine could be saved.

This has been a dimension of critical importance both for regional and international security, taking into account that both the Podmoskovye and the "Losharik" are nuclear-powered vessels. Hence, a major accident could have even caused a nuclear disaster or very serious pollution. It is quite characteristic of Russia's state information policy that during the first day following the accident neither the Ministry of Defence nor the Kremlin admitted that nuclear submarines were involved.

The precise number of people on board of the AS-31 during the time the accident happened remains yet undisclosed. The vessel reportedly has berths for 24 people, but it can accommodate a few more people on shorter missions. Altogether fourteen out of all the people on board ied,[26] including the commander, Captain First Rank Dmitry Dolonsky, who held the Hero of the Russian Federation medal, among many other decorations. Captain First Rank Nikolai Filin died as well; similarly to Captain Dolonsky, he was also a Hero of the Russian Federation. Out of the fourteen dead, there were altogether seven captains first rank; moreover, two of them were relatives of high-ranking officers. Another three crewmen were captains second rank, and a lieutenant colonel of the medical service. Nearly all fallen

25 Yulia Nikitina, "Ogon', batareya. Na podlodke v Arktike zagorelsya eksperimentalniy akkumulyator," *Fontanka.ru*, July 9, 2019, https://www.fontanka.ru/2019/07/08/098/?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop

26 "Spisok pogibshikh chlenov komandi nauchno-issledovatelskovo glubokovodnovo apparata," Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, July 3, 2019, https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more htm?id=12239672%40egNews&fbclid=IwAR0P14J8cF0E9WSnYkm_0l0UF9ZztWN1MPJJLdWgaPc2buLk2MsRaApUlW4

submariners were richly decorated experienced veterans. All in all, thirteen of them were captains, which indicates both the importance and the very special status of the AS-31.

Nikolay Filin, aged 57, deserves special attention. He was a leading engineer of underwater weapons development, with a three-decades-long career at the Main Directorate of Deep-Sea Research. He was probably the most experienced senior member of the whole unit, decorated several times. He received the Hero of the Russian Federation medal in 2018.[27] A particularly tragic story is the one of Captain First Rank Denis Aleksandrovich Oparin. He was the son of Aleksander Ivanovich Oparin, commander of the military unit No. 45707, where the "Losharik" belonged, and also a Hero of the Russian Federation himself. In other words, the accident took the life also of the son of the unit's commander, which is probably unprecedented in the history of the post-1945 Russian submarine services.

The fallen submariners were in unison characterised by Russian state organs, as well as newspapers and experts (including the renowned Russian polar explorer Artur Chilingarov[28]) as exceptionally well-trained, brave and experienced specialists. All of them were buried on July 6 at the Serafimovsky cemetery in St. Petersburg, with full military honours. Another four crew members received the Hero of the Russia title post mortem, and all other fallen submariners were decorated too.

The fate of another five people is also known. They were hospitalised after the accident and were released from the Severomorsk military hospital on July 8. Four of them are submariners, while the fifth person was a civilian expert, reportedly from the Sevmash military plant, i.e. the builder of the AS-31. According to the publicly available information, this civilian passenger was saved by the self-sacrificing bravery of the crew, who managed to get the already unconscious expert out of harm's way, back into the safer parts of the vessel. The presence of this civilian expert may point at the assumption that the "Losharik" was testing some kind of new equipment when the accident happened.

27 "Filin Nikolay Ivanovich. Geroy Rossiyskoy Federatsii," *Geroi strany*, http://www.warheroes.ru/hero/hero.asp?Hero_id=28479

28 Aleksandr Gamov, "Artur Chilingarov o tragedii v Barentsevom more: Ya znal geroev-podvodnikov Denisa Dolonskovo i Nikolaya Filina... Zhal, glubina ikh ne otpustila," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, July 3, 2019, https://www.kp.ru/daily/26998.4/4059000/

Russian state communication on the accident

Regarding the exact task performed by the "Losharik", the Russian Ministry of Defence communicated only that the vessel conducted bathymetric measurement. Such generalisation is understandable to a certain extent, taking into account the general secrecy around the unit and its operations. However, this particular explanation is weakened by the assumption that normal bathymetric measurements hardly require the presence of experienced weapon development engineers on board (i.e. the above-mentioned Nikolay Filin), neither of a representative of the shipbuilding company.

It is worth noting how the Russian state media apparatus handled the information on the accident and the victims. During the first day following the accident strict secrecy was maintained, thus besides the fact of the accident and the number of victims nothing else was announced. Meanwhile, however, local news outlets and even national news agencies circulated various sporadic and often contradicting information already in the evening of July 1.[29]

On July 2, President Vladimir Putin had a public meeting with the Minister of Defence Sergey Shoigu, and ordered him to visit Severomorsk and personally supervise the work there. Putin had a small but interesting remark during this conversation, as he called the accident a "great loss for the navy and for the army in general".[30] If not a slip of tongue, this sentence might be interpreted also in a way that there were others on board who did not belong to the ranks of the navy, but to that of the army – though this remains a mere speculation, as this cannot be confirmed based on the accessible sources. On July 3, Shoigu visited Severomorsk and gave a press briefing there,[31] while the Ministry of Defence published the names and ranks of the fallen submariners. An interesting element is that the name of the ship was not confirmed even on this day, though both the Russian and international press had already identified that it was the AS-31 that had suffered the accident. Meanwhile, the Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov refused to answer the question of whether a nuclear-powered vessel was involved in the accident and pointed at the Ministry of Defence to answer such questions.[32]

29 Maksim Klimov, "Zaprogramirovannaya tragediya v Barencevom more," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 3, 2019, http://www.ng.ru/politics/2019-07-03/1_7613_lodka.html

30 ""Bolshaya poterya dlya flota I dlya armii": Shoigu dolozhil Putinu o gibeli moryakov-podvodnikov," *Rossiya 24*, July 2, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_BUN80J4xEY

31 "Shoigu rasskazal o pozhare na glubokovodnom apparate," *RIA Novosti*, July 3, 2019, https://ria.ru/20190703/1556159894.html

32 "Kreml' shchitaet normalnim nerazglasheniye vsey informatsii o ChP s podvodnikami," *RIA Novosti*, July 3, 2019, https://ria.ru/20190703/1556156789.html?in=t

On the next day, July 4, President Vladimir Putin had another public meeting with Shoigu,[33] and this time they discussed the accident in detail, among other matters. This was the first time that the Kremlin officially admitted that a nuclear-powered submarine was affected and identified that it was the AS-31 "Losharik."[34] From this moment onwards, the entire Russian state media apparatus began issuing greatly detailed cover stories on the accident, and the burial of the fallen crew was conducted already with full publicity.

Another particularity of the coverage of the events was that the Russian state media apparatus did its best to conceal the specific details of the accident and the purpose of the ship by picturing the AS-31 as a scientific research vessel of purely civilian purpose. Even articles that were slightly critical were largely conforming to the thick fog of secrecy around the accident.[35] There were even active efforts made to conceal the number of people on board. For example, the respected military-industrial journal *Voenno-promyshlenniy kurier* published an article on July 5 in which the author grossly understated the number of the crew of the AS-31 by writing that the vessel generally operated with a crew of 14 and was able to accommodate other 4-5 scientists as well.[36] Contrary to this statement, several pre-2019 sources described the AS-31 as a vessel that had a crew of 24[37] or 25[38] personnel, meaning that for some reason *Voenno-promyshlenniy kurier* decided to publish information that evidently contradicted the sources already available to the wider public.

As a result of this communication policy, the exact number of people on board of the AS-31 is still not known. Regarding the people on board, the only information available is on the deceased officers and the personnel who were hospitalised after the accident. As all the dead and wounded belonged to the Main Directorate of Deep-Water Research (with the exception of the sole civilian specialist), it remains unknown whom Putin might have referred to when he said that the accident was a great loss for the army too, and why was it necessary to understate the general number of the AS-31 crew.

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33 "Vstrecha s Ministrom oborony Sergeyem Shoigu," Prezident Rossii, July 4, 2019, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60913

34 Atle Staalesen, "Defense Minister confirms fire onboard the «Losharik»," *The Barents Observer*, July 3, 2019, https://thebarentsobserver.com/ru/bezopasnost/2019/07/ministr-oborony-podtverdil-pozhar-na-bortu-losharika

35 Maksim Klimov, "Zaprogramirovannaya tragediya v Barencevom more," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 3, 2019, http://www.ng.ru/politics/2019-07-03/1_7613_lodka.html

36 Konstantin Sivkov, "Kak spasali unikalniy korabl'," *Voenno-promyshlenniy kurier,* July 5, 2019, https://vpk-news.ru/articles/51274

37 Pr. 10830 / pr. 10831 / pr. 210 – LOSHARIK. *Military Russia*, January 4, 2019, http://militaryrussia.ru/blog/topic-543.html

38 Sergey Yuferev, "Sekrety «Losharik»", *Voennoe obozrenie*, March 1, 2013, https://topwar.ru/24870-sekrety-losharika.html, H. I. Sutton, "Spy subs – Project 10831 Losharik," *Covert Shores*, July 3, 2019, http://www.hisutton.com/Spy%20Sub%20-%20Project%2010831%20Losharik.html

All in all, the events of July 1 and thereafter underline the widely quoted assumptions that the credibility of Russian official communication remains indeed limited, particularly in extreme situations. Meanwhile, local news channels, as well as the remaining more or less independent media channels – particularly the ones that provided live coverage of the events, such as RBK – provided a lot more information on the events than state bodies did, especially in the first days after the accident.

Strategic implications

Undoubtedly, Russian armed forces lost a unique vessel designed for very special operations together with nearly all of its crew in the July 1 accident. Though the AS-31 was not destroyed, it is seriously damaged. Shoigu emphasized on July 4 that repairing the vessel is not only possible, but it is of absolute necessity,[39] indicating that the "Losharik" has no real replacement. Though the minister was optimistic about repairing the ship – arguing that the nuclear compartment was not damaged – the realities of the vessel's condition and its restoration are probably a lot more complex than this. Even if the reactor remained intact, as the fire was reportedly raging for more than an hour, it is safe to assume that the whole battery section is completely burnt out. Hence, it is quite probable that most electronic systems of the AS-31 were also damaged, including the sophisticated sensors and other equipment, as well as the wiring. Taking into account the current underfinanced state of the Russian armed forces, repairing the AS-31 might easily take a very long time. It is possible that instead of focusing on the half-burnt-out "Losharik", authorities rather decide to speed up the construction of a second similar vessel, as was already rumoured in 2012. And even if the vessel can be repaired, replacing the highly experienced, well-trained and exceptionally skilled crew will surely be neither an easy nor a quick task.

It is unlikely that the public will ever know what exactly the "Losharik" was commissioned to do when the accident happened. However, the unusually large number of very high-ranking officers on board (including the son of the unit's commander), as well as the communication efforts to conceal the possible presence of other people on the "Losharik" and their identities, indicate that AS-31 was performing a task of extraordinary importance. Whatever the

39 Michael Kofman, "Fire aboard AS-31 Losharik: Brief Overview," *Russian Military Analysis*, July 3, 2019, https://russianmilitaryanalysis.wordpress.com/2019/07/03/fire-aboard-as-31-losharik-brief-overview/

project was, it is safe to assume that it will suffer a serious delay, as senior people working on it lost their lives and the very vessel got seriously damaged.

One also needs to note though that regardless of the serious financial restrictions affecting the Russian defence sphere as well as the technological constraints related to the sanctions, resources have still been available for very special projects and systems, such as the AS-31 "Losharik". This is very much in line with the Russian efforts to search for very high-tech solutions in order to achieve symmetric effects with asymmetric means, described earlier.

The "Losharik" itself has indeed been such a tool and a truly unique device. Hence, the accident has seriously weakened Russia's underwater intelligence and special operations capabilities. As the AS-31 was the only special submarine able to operate deeper than approximately a thousand metres, a major consequence of the accident is that the operational capabilities of the Main Directorate for Deep-Sea research are now significantly reduced. Moreover, developing and testing new underwater weapon systems will probably also be slowed down, mostly due to the loss of the highly specialised personnel.

This does not mean, of course, that from now on NATO's underwater communication lines would be completely safe, or that Moscow would stop its claims for more Arctic territories by presenting various evidence and arguments. However, as long as the AS-31 cannot be repaired and replaced, the pressure on the Alliance to counter Russia's asymmetric naval tools will decrease considerably, due to three main reasons.

First, the accident of the "Losharik" is highly likely to curtail and slow down all underwater weapons development projects, due to the loss of the exceptionally skilled crew and experts. Second, the same is true to the everyday operations of Russia's special purpose submarines. The remaining few midget submarines have very limited operational depths compared to that of the AS-31: approximately 1000 metres vs. the 6000 metres of the "Losharik". This means that they are able to operate only on the seabed of relatively shallow waters, such as the Baltic Sea, but not in the deep oceans.

Third, the other midget submarines are much older constructions, and they did not go through similar modernisation that of the AS-31. This means that even if these can reach the Baltic Sea seabed, they are able to conduct considerably less tasks than the AS-31. Paradoxically enough, the fact that Russia's underwater special operational options were significantly narrowed down by the loss of

the “Losharik” indeed increases the relative value of simple sabotage actions against underwater communications cables, which even the older midget submarines are able to conduct. This is a factor that indeed needs to be taken into account by military planners both in NATO and Baltic Sea countries.

NATO AND OTHER PLAYERS – TOWARDS INTEROPERABILITY OR COMPETITION

The EU and NATO in Baltic Sea Region: Effective Partnership or Unnecessary Competition?

Margarita Šešelgytė

The Baltic Sea region is a very interesting region from the security point of view as the countries within it are very interconnected institutionally and economically. It might be argued that this region represents a classic security complex case, which, according to the Copenhagen school, is distinguished by high levels of interdependence in various domains and, most importantly, in primary national security concerns. Security of these states cannot be addressed independently.[1] Most of the sates in the region are also small states and possess limited resources to enable them to strive in international politics and protect them from external threats. Small states are more vulnerable to systemic instabilities than the large and medium powers. Moreover, the security environment in the Baltic Sea region is aggravated by the presence of a large revisionist power, which possesses vast military capabilities and the political will to use them. These characteristics play the main role in the security and defence policies of the states in the region.

According to small states theories, due to the lack of capabilities, small states try to ensure their security by joining alliances or bandwagoning that is seeking security guarantees from a large power. It might be argued that the states in the Baltic Sea region are doing both. On the one hand, they are members of NATO, the European Union (EU) or both. On the other hand, the U.S., even if sometimes it is written between the official lines, is considered the main military insurance vis-à-vis potential revisionism of Russia in the Baltic states, Finland, Poland and Sweden. The significance of the U.S. military presence in the region has even more increased after the occupation and annexation of Crimea. Although the states in the region do not consider the probability of potential Russian military invasion to be high, they cannot disregard it. Alongside already existing military imbalance in the region, Russia has been increasing its military presence in the region during past years (in Kaliningrad but also on its Western borders). Some twenty thousand of Russian military personnel, including a naval infantry unit and substantial

1 Barry Buzan, Žmonės, valstybės ir baimė: tarptautinio saugumo studijos po Šaltojo karo, (Eugrimas, ALK: Vilnius, 1997), 243.

anti-access, area denial capabilities are being hosted in Kaliningrad.[2] Due to the various factors related to the capabilities, the political will to use them, decision making and reaction speed, only the U.S. military power could ensure credible deterrence in the region either through NATO or on a bilateral basis. As Sven Sakkov, the Director of the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS), argues "deterrence works when you have capabilities to back it up" and Baltic Sea region is the region "where Russia is at strongest and NATO at its weakest, with the bulk of forces far away".[3] Therefore, from the military security perspective, the U.S. is indispensable for the regional security and this is one of the key factors determining security policies of the states in the region. One might argue that security cannot be limited to the military pillar, that the nature of threats and the strategies to counter them have changed over the years, but the huge military imbalance, unpredictability of Russia and historical experiences of the small states in the region make military deterrence one of the main parts of their security strategies.

Definition of threats has expanded over past years in the Baltic Sea region mostly due to the changing behaviour of Russia, which in order to avoid direct confrontation with NATO employs hybrid strategies of interference, encompassing cyber, information and psychological tools. Neither the U.S. nor NATO can provide the necessary capabilities to protect the states in the region against these challenges. The EU, on the other hand, has a complex and interconnected toolkit which might be used for this purpose. The President of Finland Sauli Niinistö proposed that fighting against hybrid threats should be a mission for the EU.[4] This was echoed by the Lithuanian Defence Minister Raimondas Karoblis, who argued that "purposeful enhancement of the EU capabilities for countering cyber threats has to become one of top EU defence policy priorities."[5] Apart from its potential to respond to hybrid threats, the EU is also a key factor for the non-military security in the region as for the years it has contributed to the resilience of these states in various areas: economy, good governance, society. Therefore, a safe and

2 Steven Pifer, "I Just Returned from NATO's Front Lines in the Baltics (And Russia Was On Everyone's Mind)," *The National Interest*, June 25, 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/i-just-returned-natos-front-lines-baltics-and-russia-was-everyones-mind-64196

3 James Marson and Thomas Grove, "U.S., NATO Moves in Baltic Raise Russian Fears," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 14, 2019, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-nato-moves-in-baltics-raise-russian-fears-11560543426)

4 Henna Hopia, "Finland," *Strategic Autonomy and the Defence of Europe - On the Road to European Army?* Eds. Hans-Peter Bartels, Anna Maria Kellner and Uwe Optenhögel, (DIETZ: 2017):166.

5 "Defense minister urges EU to step up capacities against hybrid threats," *Lithuanian Tribune*, May 19, 2017, https://lithuaniatribune.com/defense-minister-urges-eu-to-step-up-capacities-against-hybrid-threats/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=defense-minister-urges-eu-to-step-up-capacities-against-hybrid-threats

sustainable security environment in the region depends on the U.S. military presence, which should be ensured preferably through NATO, well-functioning EU and effective cooperation as well synergy between all actors in coping with multi-dimensional threats. The breakthrough in the long-time stalling relations between the EU and NATO in 2016 is, therefore, a very positive development for the states in the region, yet numerous challenges related to the transatlantic disagreements and the differences between the two organisations remain and make them anxious: will this cooperation evolve into an effective partnership enhancing regional security or end in unnecessary competition which eventually might weaken the transatlantic link? The latter scenario is what the involved states want to avoid at all cost.

"Berlin Plus" and "3Ds"

A status quo of clear labour division and no cooperation between NATO and the European Communities (EC) existed during the Cold War. NATO was the organisation aimed to ensure collective defence of its members and the EC concentrated on the economic integration efforts in Europe, security and defence matters were excluded from the responsibilities of the EC. Yet the changing nature of threats and conflicts in the Balkans, which have turned out to be an extreme security challenge for the Europeans, have pointed to the deficiencies of the European military capabilities, political will to engage the military and heavy dependence on the U.S. The first attempt to search for the solutions to these challenges was a proposal to strengthen European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within the framework of NATO. The changing nature of the EU and the new treaties opened the window for the development of the ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy) within the EU. But the non-military nature of the EU alongside the reluctance of some member states to invest more in the development of capabilities resulted in that for years the EU was concentrating on legal and institutional aspects of ESDP whereas the U.S. was urging the Europeans to focus on capabilities more. The former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright argued that the development of European military capabilities should be based on three standards for judgement ("3Ds"): non-delinking (European capabilities from NATO), non-duplication (EU and NATO) and non-discrimination against non-EU NATO members.[6] Disagreements over the direction of ESDP and the U.S. warnings for Europeans

6 "Secretary Albright's remarks to the North Atlantic Council ministerial meeting, Brussels," US Department of State, December 8, 1998, https://1997-2001.state.gov/statements/1998/981208.html

to invest more in capabilities became one of the main tensions in transatlantic relations and remains such until now.

Due to the EU dependency on NATO's military capabilities, there was a need to establish a legal basis to use them. A modified Brussels Treaty, which obliged the signatories of the Treaty to act in cooperation with NATO, using NATO military command structures, information capabilities and in consultation with NATO on military matters,[7] was taken as the model for the EU-NATO cooperation. The main goal of the agreement was to ensure the EU access to the command, planning and other capabilities of NATO, which the EU was lacking. The cooperation formula was defined in terms of "Berlin Plus" agreement (1999) and incorporated four elements: a) assured EU access to NATO operational planning; b) presumption of availability of the EU of NATO capabilities and common assets; c) NATO European command options for EU-led operations, including DSACEUR, d) adaptation of NATO defence planning system to incorporate availability of forces for the EU operations.[8] Negotiations on the terms of cooperation, however, have revealed a "political problem" which for the years will block closer EU and NATO cooperation. Turkey had fears that by not being an EU member it might get excluded from the decision-making process in the operations that make use of NATO capabilities. These fears were related to disagreements that existed between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus. Only when it was ensured that Cyprus and Malta will not take part in the EU crisis management operations in 2002, Turkey stepped back, and this allowed for the EU-NATO joint declaration on ESDP [9] which validated the Berlin Plus formula. The Declaration once again reaffirmed the principle of NATO's primacy, which meant that the EU will act only in the case when NATO refuses to launch the operation. The agreements allowed both organisations to successfully cooperate in the EU overtake of the mission from NATO in the current Republic of North Macedonia in 2003 and remains the legal basis defining the cooperation between the two organisations.

Fighting together in the new security environment

Despite remaining old political obstacles, a breakthrough in the EU-NATO relations was reached in 2016 and was partly related to the changing nature of threats and the increasingly complicated security

7 "Modified Brussels Treaty," Western European Union, http://www.weu.int/Treaty.htm

8 "Washington Summit Communique," NATO, 24 April, 1999, https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-064e.htm

9 "EU - NATO Declaration on ESDP," NATO, December 13, 2002, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_19544.htm

environment around and within Europe. Russian attempts to interfere in the presidential elections in the U.S., France and other countries made it clear that military tools are not sufficient to protect the sovereignty and political systems of Western countries. Interference operations below the threshold of NATO Article 5 can do as much harm for the viability of the state as the military interference and this is particularly relevant for the small states. One of the first cases of hybrid interference operations in the region were simultaneous cyberattacks on Estonian state institutions, banks, media outlets in 2007 conducted by Russia. These attacks kept the whole state in chaos for weeks. Although NATO responded to Estonia's call for assistance, it was restrained by the legal limitations, but also by the lack of necessary capabilities. The EU Global strategy adopted in 2016[10] has put an emphasis on the protection of the EU citizens and the use of the comprehensive integrated approach for that purpose. Lieutenant General Vincenzo Coppola, Civilian Operations Commander at the European External Action Service, argues that the EU is particularly well-placed to respond to hybrid threats as it "has magnificent and wide range of tools that can be used consecutively and simultaneously to address the crisis." These tools include trade, diplomacy, development aid and sanctions. "In the field of hybrid threats the EU has a broad civilian toolbox, including in the cyber field, its role in building societal resilience and disinformation campaigns."[11] Integration of two (military and civilian) approaches along with the wide range of capabilities is exactly what is needed to respond to contemporary security challenges, therefore cooperation between the two organisations sharing 22 members seems to be the most rational solution which should benefit all the members.

In two subsequent Joint EU-NATO Declarations of 2016 and 2018, the member states pledged to enhance cooperation between the two organisations.[12] More than 70 joint activities ranging from cyber defence, response to hybrid threats, maritime security, military mobility, capability development, exchange of information on cyber threats and sharing best practices, exercises, and support

10 "A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy," European Union Exgternal Action Service, December, 15, 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/eu-global-strategy/17304/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en

11 Vincenzo Coppola, "EU - NATO Cooperation on Rapid Response and Crisis Management," *EU – NATO cooperation a secure vision for Europe: discussion paper*, Eds. Angela Pauly, Arnaud Bodet, Robert Arenella and Eleanor Doorley, (Brussels: Friends of Europe, 2019), https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/eu-nato-cooperation-a-secure-vision-for-europe/

12 "Joint declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," NATO, July 8, 2016, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm; "Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," European Council, July 10, 2018, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/36096/nato_eu_final_eng.pdf

for partner countries were identified.[13] Four progress reports on the implementation of joint activities were submitted to NATO and the EU Councils pronouncing the success of cooperation,[14] which was echoed by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, who summed up relations between the two organisations as being lifted up "to new and unprecedented levels".[15] Former Deputy Assistant to the NATO Secretary General Jamie Shea in his recent Friends of Europe publication argues that the "3Ds" which were defining NATO-EU cooperation previously, have been replaced by other buzzwords such as synergy, pooling and sharing and coordination.[16] Synergy, pooling of the resources, making the best use of the available ones is particularly relevant to the small states, which due to their limitations have to prioritise capabilities and activities.

Two areas among other joint activities in particular are relevant to the Baltic Sea region. First of all, it is enhancing military mobility between the member states, which is one of the cooperation flagships. Being at the borders of both organisations and close to Russia, those countries are particularly dependent on rapid and smooth reinforcements in the case of a military attack. But the legal regulations for the border crossing of military personnel and equipment vary a lot among the member states. These differences might become a severe impediment for the speed of reaction. Moreover, infrastructure (roads, bridges) in the member states is not adjusted for the movement of big numbers of forces and heavy equipment in particular. This is the area where EU NATO cooperation might turn out to be very effective, as both organisations can contribute different needed resources – NATO is using its military expertise and concentrating on military needs, while the EU focuses on legal procedures. Funding will be provided for the necessary adjustments.

Another area where closer cooperation between the EU and NATO could benefit the states in the region is the development of capabilities necessary for both organisations, especially in the hybrid security field. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), European Defence Fund (EDF) and Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) might be particularly beneficial in that respect. NATO

13 "Relations with the European Union," Factsheet, NATO, July 18, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49217.htm

14 "Fourth progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by NATO and EU Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017," NATO, June 17, 2019, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_06/190617-4th-Joint-progress-report-EU-NATO-eng.pdf

15 "Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the European People's Party," NATO, March 8, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_164331.htm?selectedLocale=en

16 *EU – NATO cooperation a secure vision for Europe: discussion paper*, eds. Shea J. Foreword, Angela Pauly, Arnaud Bodet, Robert Arenella and Eleanor Doorley, (Brussels: Friends of Europe, 2019) https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/eu-nato-cooperation-a-secure-vision-for-europe/

Secretary-General J. Stoltenberg has admitted that if PESCO and EDF contribute to the development of capabilities that would fill the gaps "that would only benefit NATO."[17] Strengthening capabilities to address hybrid threats is one of the priorities in the security strategies of the states in the region. However, having limited resources, those countries are interested in cooperation with others in developing them, moreover, they put an emphasis on non-duplication, less bureaucratisation and effectiveness. Lithuania is leading one of the PESCO projects aimed at the creation of cyber rapid response teams and mutual assistance enhancement in cybersecurity. These capabilities are very important for Lithuanian national security in tackling hybrid strategies that Russia employs against it, but they could also be used in other regions against other attackers. More synergies could be sought between the EU projects and already functioning NATO institutions, such as the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence located in Estonia and the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence located in Rīga. The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats located in Helsinki is open for the participation for the members of both EU and NATO and is a good example of the joint activities.

Institutional challenges

The first attempts to reinvigorate cooperation between the two organisations revealed a number of challenges, both institutional and political. NATO and the EU for years have been existing in quite different environments and have developed different worldviews and logics of operation. NATO was a political military organisation, which had operated in the Hobbesian world, had well-defined goals, smooth decision-making processes and a clear U.S. leadership. The EU was a constantly changing entity whose primary goal was to promote European integration in quite diverse fields, ranging from agriculture and energy to trade, health and migration. Due to the lack of clear leadership, the EU has developed a consensus-based decision-making culture. The wide scope of activities and actors involved required the EU to strongly rely on regulative, legal power. These different paths of development produced very different organisational cultures, manifesting in how both organisations see the world, prioritise their goals and make the decisions. Lieutenant General Coppola argues that "NATO is in essence a military alliance" whose "main role is

17 Quoted in David M. Herszenhorn, "Europe's NATO problem," *Politico*, February 14, 2019, https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-nato-problem-defense-procurement-training-research/

to defend allies against aggression within the borders of NATO", whereas the EU is an actor of civilian nature.[18] These organisational differences have an impact on the political and practical cooperation. A recently released study on the EU and NATO cooperation in the framework of Military mobility produced by the Clingendael Institute has demonstrated the advantages of both organisations in implementing this project. It argues that the EU is more resourceful in legal and regulatory matters, it also has funds, whereas NATO is "able to plan and calculate the military's needs for transport across Europe to ensure credible deterrence".[19] On the other hand, the study admits that "the EU and NATO still remain very different entities which operate on a different political, legal and membership basis"[20] and this causes mistrusts, slowdowns and ineffectiveness. For instance, many documents in NATO are classified and that limits EU participation in a number of activities. Thus, despite the intensified political dialogue, day to day cooperation is far from being smooth. As the relations between the two organisations are still regulated by the old agreements, most of the joint activities are implemented on an informal basis, military to military contacts are stalling. A new agreement between two organisations better reflecting the needs of the current cooperation agenda might provide the solution to a part of the challenges, but due to political challenges, it is not feasible in the nearest future.

Political challenges

Political challenges for the cooperation might turn to be even more serious than the institutional ones. On the one hand, they are not new and relate to the old political problems such as tensions between Turkey and Greece, the participation of non-EU and non-NATO members in each other's activities and disagreements between the Europeans and the U.S. about the European capabilities. On the other hand, they became more alarming during the recent years as the cleavages in transatlantic relations went deeper: criticism of Trump towards European partners, doubts about the sustainability of NATO, disagreements on a number of issues in international politics

18 Vincenzo Coppola, "EU - NATO Cooperation on Rapid Response and Crisis Management," *EU – NATO cooperation a secure vision for Europe: discussion paper*, Eds. Angela Pauly, Arnaud Bodet, Robert Arenella and Eleanor Doorley, (Brussels: Friends of Europe, 2019), https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/eu-nato-cooperation-a-secure-vision-for-europe/

19 Margriet Drent, Kimberley Kruijve and Dick Zandee, "Military Mobility and the EU-NATO Conundrum," Clingendael Report, Netherlands Institute for International Relations, July 3, 2019, https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/Military_Mobility_and_the_EU_NATO_Conundrum.pdf

20 Ibid.

and trade. Decisions of the U.S. President to withdraw from the Paris agreement, agreement with Iran and INF Treaty provoked negative reactions in Europe, moreover, they have encouraged Europeans to push forward the idea of strategic autonomy, which has already been mentioned in the EU Global Strategy, but the discussions on what it means have been reinvigorated quite recently. At first, the definition of strategic autonomy was related to CSDP and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and meant the prospect of increased ambitions of the EU to act in those areas independently, although it was not clearly specified, from the U.S. While the fight of words between the U.S. President and European leaders intensified, the discussions on the definition of strategic autonomy expanded: it should cover not only security and defence matters, but also economy, politics etc.[21] The problem of strategic autonomy is related to the different visions of what does it mean in various member states but also within the states. The vision of it varies from quite bold ones of the creation of the European army, once proposed by Jean Claude Junker and later by the President of France Emmanuel Macron, to the vague idea of the gradual strengthening of European defence capabilities or the EU taking a more coordinated position in the UN.

The main challenge of the EU strategic autonomy for the countries in the region due to the particularities of their security environment is that the aim of the EU to pursue strategic autonomy in the defence field is not sustained with the necessary capabilities. Being the second trade power in the world, the EU might have independent decisions from the U.S. on trade, but its ability to deter Russia in the Baltic Sea region without the U.S. engagement is quite limited. Another challenge derives from the interconnectedness of various domains. The U.S. President D. Trump from the early days of his mandate has threatened to impose steel and aluminium tariffs on the European partners, potentially on automobiles.[22] A meeting between the U.S. President and the President of the EU Commission J. C. Junker has put a break on these intentions, but the rifts have resumed recently. Growing U.S.-EU trade competition might spill over into other areas. The U.S. ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchinson indicated that the EU cooperation should not become a mask for European protectionism: "we want Europeans to have capabilities and strength,

21 *European Strategic Autonomy: Actors, Issues, Conflicts of Interests: SWP Research Paper*, eds. Barbara Lippert, Nicolai von Ondarza and Volker Perthes, Stitung Wissenschaft und Politik, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin, March, 4, 2019, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2019RP04_lpt_orz_prt_web.pdf

22 Célia Belin, "NATO matters, but the EU matters more," Brookings, April 2, 2019, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/04/02/nato-matters-but-the-eu-matters-more/

but not to fence off American products, of course".[23] PESCO has received a lot of criticism regarding the conditions for the non-EU participants, it involves the U.S., but also other EU partners. The potential of trade disagreements poisoning the transatlantic link is dangerous for the EU-NATO cooperation, in particular in the relation of Brexit. When the UK leaves the EU, 80 % of NATO's defence expenditure will be coming from non-EU members. It might have very negative consequences for the Baltic Sea region, as the defence of the region from a potential Russian attack depends on the U.S. military capabilities and the U.S. and UK nuclear deterrent. Diverse threat perceptions that exist among Europeans might aggravate this challenge, as it might be difficult for instance for Italian or Greek politicians to convince their societies about the need to develop Cold War type capabilities or participate in the projects such as military mobility. Moreover, they will be more reluctant to seek compromises in the EU-U.S. disputes than the countries in the Baltic Sea region.

Conclusion

The intensification of the political dialogue between the EU and NATO as well as joint activities aimed to ensure better synergies in addressing contemporary security challenges and to develop new necessary capabilities are beneficial for the security of the Baltic Sea region. Although Finland and Sweden are not members of NATO, through enhanced cooperation they could be better involved in its activities. Moreover, being small states, the countries in the region might benefit from more efficient use of limited resources. Most of the states in the region have already invested a lot in the development of the capabilities enabling them to cope with the hybrid threats on their own and together with international organisations (NATO Centres of Excellence in Baltic states, European Centre of Excellence in Finland, PESCO project on cyber rapid response teams). This expertise could be better synchronised and used not only for regional solutions but also in other regions.

Inclusion of the European Partnership countries (EaP), such as Ukraine and Georgia, in various projects also could be very beneficial. Those countries over the last years have developed an important know-how. Their lessons learned on one hand could be beneficial for the security solutions in the EU and NATO. On the other hand,

23 Aaron Mehta, "US warns against 'protectionism' with new EU defence agreement," *Defence News*, February 14, 2018, https://www.defensenews.com/smr/munich-security-forum/2018/02/14/us-warns-against-protectionism-with-new-eu-defense-agreement/

the cooperation with the EU and NATO for the EaP states is a very important source of support necessary to increase the resilience within against Russian hybrid interference activities.

Military mobility is one of the most important projects among joint EU-NATO activities for the region at the moment. It is very important for the security of those states to have smooth legal and logistic procedures in the case of necessary reinforcements, as the speed of reaction is of the paramount importance. However, it is even more important to be sure that there are capabilities that will be dispatched, and, due to the particularities of the threat and the military balance in the region, at this time the U.S. (either through NATO or bilaterally) is the only actor which might provide them. Therefore, for the Baltic Sea region anticipating the benefits and disadvantages of the EU and NATO cooperation, the main question is what will the effects of this cooperation on the transatlantic link be, will it provide viable solutions for the existing political problems, or will be used as the space to mitigate the disagreements. More serious transatlantic disagreements might place the countries of the region between rock and a hard place, forcing them to take sides.

In the Grey Zone: Sweden as an Informal Ally to NATO

Anna Wieslander

Five years ago, the security situation in Europe radically changed for the worse with Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression in eastern Ukraine. Military non-aligned Sweden found itself located in a high-tension area on the front-lines of a strategic geopolitical contest.

About the same time, at the Wales Summit in September 2014, Sweden gained the Enhanced Opportunity Partner (EOP) status, providing for a tailor-made, deepened cooperation with the Alliance.

As NATO has revitalised its core mission of collective defence, Sweden, hand in hand with Finland, has succeeded in moving closer to the Alliance in that sphere, without having taken the formal step of applying for membership. This article explores the foundation and status of Sweden's ever-so-close partnership with NATO and examines the prospects of the partnership transferring into formal membership.

Current trends in the cooperation between Sweden and NATO

In 2014, Ukraine, also a NATO partner, came to the realisation that there is a red line between the Alliance's partners and allies when it comes to collective defence. For Sweden that red line is more of a grey zone. In the past five years, Sweden has moved to its closest position to NATO since the relationship started with Sweden joining the Partnership for Peace initiative in 1994. Sweden has transformed from being a close partner in international out-of-area missions to the closest partner in collective defence, to the extent that it can be called an "informal ally" in the Baltic Sea region[1]. "Informal" in the sense that Sweden has not signed the North Atlantic Treaty. "Ally" in the sense that should a crisis or war occur, Sweden would most likely align with NATO and meet the threat in concert, and is prepared to do so. Symptomatically, the then-U.S. Defence Secretary James Mattis said in a meeting with his Swedish counterpart in 2017 that "we will

1 The following text builds on an extensive analysis of Sweden as an informal ally to NATO, see Anna Wieslander. "What Makes an Ally? Sweden and Finland as NATO Partner", *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, March 15, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1057/s42738-019-00019-9.

stand by Sweden… It's not a NATO ally, but it is still, from our point of view, a friend and an ally."[2]

The driving force behind this major shift and closer cooperation has been the strategic and operational situation in the Baltic Sea region, where a crisis in one of the regional countries would inevitably affect the whole region. The sizes of the countries as well as the interlinked security and economic dependence in the Baltic Sea region has underpinned Sweden's, and equally Finland's, decision to cooperate more closely with NATO.

Table-top exercises have illustrated both the vulnerability of the region and how the prospects of successfully handling a crisis or war situation substantially improve through collaboration. There clearly are incentives for Sweden, Finland and NATO to align in case of a threat and meet it in concert. Such joint action would depend upon decisions taken in Stockholm, Helsinki and Brussels.

Sweden's depended relationship with NATO and NATO allies is a key pillar of the so-called 'Hultqvist-doctrine', named after Sweden's Defence Minister since 2014 Peter Hultqvist. The strategy focuses on enhancing bilateral and multilateral defence cooperation without giving any formal defence guarantees.

When NATO kicked off Trident Juncture, its largest collective defence exercise in decades, in Norway in October 2018, Sweden not only contributed substantial troops but had been actively involved in planning the exercise from the start. Reversely, when Sweden conducted the Swedish Army Exercise Northern Wind in March 2019, 7000 out of 10 000 troops came from Finland, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States.[3]

In line with Sweden's security doctrine from 2009 of solidarity, stating that the country should be able to "[…] both give and receive military support"[4], Sweden signed a MOU on Host Nation Support with NATO in 2016.[5]

The position of the closest partner to NATO would not have been possible without the tailor-made cooperation provided by the EOP, which has opened up a regular presence for Sweden in a range of

2 "Remarks by Secretary Mattis and Minister Hultqvist at the Pentagon", U.S. Department of Defense, May 18, 2017**,** https://dod.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1186980/remarks-by-secretary-mattis-and-minister-hultqvist-at-the-pentagon/

3 "Northern Wind: Swedish Army Exercise 2019", Swedish Armed Forces, 2019, https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/activities/exercises/northern-wind/

4 "Ett användbart försvar: Regeringens proposition 2008/09:140" Government Offices of Sweden, March 19, 2009, https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/1236f9bd880b495f8a9dd94ce1cb71de/ett-anvandbart-forsvar-prop-200809140

5 "Yes to memorandum of understanding with NATO on host nation support," The Swedish Parliament (the Riksdag), May 27, 2016, https://www.riksdagen.se/en/news/2016/maj/27/yes-to-memorandum-of-understanding-with-nato-on-host-nation-support-ufou4/

NATO working committees and ministerial meetings. However, these institutional elements per se do not lead to closeness. In order to have influence and get information as a non-member, a substantial amount of political energy is needed. There is no automatic information flow or a seat at the table. This has forced Sweden to be more inventive, active and pushy regarding cooperative initiatives than otherwise would have been needed. Clearly, the explicit political will to be a security provider in the new European environment has made a difference for Sweden, as well as Finland, in relation to NATO and put them in a category of their own. The challenge ahead is to stay relevant enough to keep the privileged position, given that the factor that caused the shift, the emerging threat perception, stays in place.

Prospects for Swedish membership in the Alliance

While there is solid, broad support for close cooperation with NATO, including collective defence, the hesitation to shift the military non-alignment to membership remains, both within the centre-left government and, to some extent, in public opinion. The dominant thinking among the political leadership in the government is that changing the security doctrine would be too dramatic. Remaining militarily non-aligned is viewed by policymakers as a contribution to predictability and stability in the Baltic Sea region.[6] When the government consisting of the Social Democrats and the Green Party took office in January 2019, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven in the statement of government policy declared that "Our military non-alignment serves our country well. Sweden will not apply for membership of NATO".[7] Meanwhile, the government remains committed to pursuing a deeper partnership with NATO.[8]

If the result of the September 2018 national elections had allowed for the four-party opposition bloc – consisting of the Conservatives, the Liberals, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats – to form the government, they would likely have steered Sweden toward NATO membership. The opposition supports NATO membership as a way to minimise the insecurity Sweden would face in case of a crisis or war by adding security guarantees to the already close relationship Sweden has with the Alliance. In addition, the membership would

6 Margot Wallström and Peter Hultqvist, "Inte aktuellt ändra svenska säkerhetspolitiska doktrinen," *Dagens Nyheter*, September 8, 2016, https://www.dn.se/debatt/inte-aktuellt-andra-svenska-sakerhetspolitiska-doktrinen/?forceScript=1&variantType=large

7 Stefan Löfven. "Statement of Government Policy," Government Offices of Sweden, January 21, 2019, https://www.government.se/speeches/20192/01/statement-of-government-policy-21-january-2019/

8 Peter Hultqvist. "Skadligt att rubba Sveriges strategiska försvarssamarbeten," *Dagens Nyheter*, June 27, 2019, https://www.dn.se/debatt/skadligt-att-rubba-sveriges-strategiska-forsvarssamarbeten/

increase Sweden's ability to deter potential threats before they materialise. Membership supporters also argue that Sweden, as part of the Western community, should work within NATO to support it as a liberal institution.

As for the public opinion, while acknowledging that different opinion polls showing different results, the majority of the polls reaches around 40 % in support of the membership, [9] The survey of the SOM Institute at the Gothenburg University has been measuring Swedish public support for NATO membership since 1994. Back then, only 15 % thought Sweden should join NATO. The highest support for NATO membership was noted in 2015, with 38 % of Swedes believing that the country should join NATO.[10] The latest poll from 2018 shows that 29 % think it would be a good idea for Sweden to join NATO, while 33 % think it is a bad proposition.[11] The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) has been conducting surveys since 1997, showing similar tendencies, but stronger support for NATO, since its question adds a longer time perspective for joining the Alliance. The biggest leap in the MSB survey occurred between 2013 and 2014 when opinions for NATO membership increased from 36 % to 48 %. In 2018, the number was down to 42 % in favour and 34 % against.[12]

About one-fourth of the respondents in the MSB survey did not have a view on NATO membership, while in the SOM opinion poll from 2018, as many as 38 % thought that the idea of joining NATO was neither good nor bad. Accordingly, a large number of Swedes still do not have a clear opinion on the matter. If Sweden were to join NATO, numbers would preferably need to stabilise around 50 % during the accession process, which possibly would need to include a referendum on the matter, as was the case with the EU membership.

Is Swedish NATO membership still on the agenda?

While defence, in general, has been more vividly debated in Sweden in recent years, NATO membership is not at the top of the agenda. Public opinion, as well as a debate about NATO membership, remains relatively stable. While opinion pieces both for and against

9 See, for instance, polls done by DN/Ipsos, the SOM Institute, MSB Opinion, and Sifo/SvD.

10 *SOM-rapport 2016:28, Swedish Trends 1986–2015*, eds. Henrik Ekengren Oscarsson and Annika Bergström, The SOM Institute at the University of Gothenburg, 2016, https://som.gu.se/publicerat/rapporter/rapporter#2016

11 *SOM-rapport 2019:07, Swedish Trends 1986-2018,* Eds. Johan Martinsson and Ulrika Andersson, The SOM Institute at the University of Gothenburg, 2019, https://som.gu.se/publicerat/rapporter/rapporter#2019

12 "Opinioner 2018: allmänhetens syn på samhällsskydd, beredskap, säkerhetspolitik och försvar," The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), 2018, https://www.msb.se/sv/publikationer/opinioner-2018--allmanhetens-syn-pa-samhallsskydd-beredskap-sakerhetspolitik-och-forsvar/

membership appear somewhat regularly, the debate lacks heat and the situation in which Sweden operates in a grey zone with regard to the Alliance seems to have settled in.[13]

The official Swedish inquiry on NATO membership in 2016 concluded that the Alliance would most likely welcome Sweden in a swift accession process but did not make any recommendations whether Sweden should apply or not.[14] Neither did the recent defence report from the Swedish Defence Commission from May 2019.[15] Rather, it underlined the importance of deepened cooperation with NATO and to maintain the EOP status in order to develop military capability both for territorial defence and international missions.

The report stated that it is not in Sweden's interest to undermine the credibility of NATO's collective defence. While NATO would never make itself dependent in its operational planning on a military non-aligned country, coordination of operational planning is of mutual interest in order to increase defence and security in the Baltic Sea region.[16]

Conclusion

Hesitation toward Alliance membership has not prevented Sweden from closer cooperation with NATO on territorial defence. This is a remarkable shift given both the history of NATO and the cautiousness of a non-aligned country. At the end of the Cold War, Sweden was neutral and its military hardly interoperable with allied forces. Now it is an active EU member and NATO's closest partner with almost full interoperability. Finland has the same status.

This status as informal allies in the Baltic Sea region has strengths as well as weaknesses. On one hand, it can strengthen collective defence by preparing for joint action if necessary. But if the status is not openly recognised, it can blur, and thus undermine, the joint commitment made by allies to each other.

13 See for example Hans Wallmark and Beatrice Ask, "M: Natoanslutning stärker Sveriges säkerhet på allvar," *Svenska Dagbladet,* February 18, 2019, https://www.svd.se/m-natoanslutning-starker-sveriges-sakerhet-pa-allvar; Pierre Schori, "Värna vår alliansfrihet – Nato är inget för Sverige," *Göteborgs-Posten*, April 15, 2019, https://www.gp.se/debatt/värna-vår-alliansfrihet-nato-är-inget-för-sverige-1.14521697; Mikael Oscarsson, "Hög tid för ett nytt svenskt strategiskt vägval," *Svenska Dagbladet,* June 15, 2019, https://www.svd.se/hog-tid-for-ett-nytt-svenskt-strategiskt-vagval

14 Inquiry on Sweden's International Defence and Security Cooperation. "Säkerhet i en ny tid" (SOU 2016:57) 2016, https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2016/09/sou-201657/

15 The Defense Commission comprises members of the eight parties of the Parliament (the Riksdag), experts and a secretariat. See the report: "Värnkraft - Inriktningen av säkerhetspolitiken och utformningen av det militära försvaret 2021-2025" (Ds 2019:8), May 14, 2019, https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/departementsserien-och-promemorior/2019/05/ds-20198/

16 "Värnkraft - Inriktningen av säkerhetspolitiken och utformningen av det militära försvaret 2021-2025" (Ds 2019:8), The Swedish Defence Commission, May 14, 2019, p. 295.

For Sweden and Finland, this status most likely means that they would both get, and would be expected to give, support from NATO in the event of a crisis in their vicinity. But this is a fragile position that depends on circumstances. In addition, both countries lack formal access to Alliance decision-making and joint operational planning. Developed consultation mechanisms and increased information exchange on operational planning could serve to address these drawbacks and speed up action in case of a crisis.

For domestic political reasons, joining NATO is not a near-term option for Sweden. Even if the next parliamentary elections in 2022 would lead to a centre-right government pushing for NATO membership, it would require broader support in the Parliament, stronger opinion polls and a close coordination process with Finland. For the foreseeable future, life in the grey zone is likely to continue. For many Swedes, it is a pretty comfortable place – as long as peace remains.

New Developments of the China-Central and Eastern European Countries' Cooperation and their Implications for the Baltic Region

Jing Long

The year of 2019 is a very special year for the cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries (China-CEEC cooperation). It is not only a year for a historic overall review of bilateral relationships in the course of the last seven decades but also a year for planning and prospecting the cooperation in an uncertain future full of opportunities and challenges.

Firstly, the year of 2019 marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationships between China and several countries in Central and Eastern Europe. For the new-born China, these diplomatic relationships established right after its founding once made a great contribution to China's return back to the world's stage. Today, when the Peoples' Republic of China is celebrating its great achievements in the diplomatic domain, bilateral relationships between China and CEECs seem more valuable, since they represent the starting point of Chinese diplomacy. Moreover, the value of these bilateral relationships is not only a historical one. Instead, they have also played an important role in motivating the creation of China-CEEC cooperation mechanism (originally also referred to as "16+1", since 2019 – "17+1"), and created an even more solid historical dimension for this new format of cooperation. It is also worth noting that many lessons and experience drawn from the ups and downs of the bilateral diplomatic relationships between China and CEECs have also become important principles of Chinese diplomacy, such as the non-interference into the domestic affairs, the rejection of ideological diplomacy etc.

Secondly, this year also marks the 30th anniversary of the transition in many Central and Eastern European countries. The transition was triggered by the fall of the Berlin Wall. As a product of the profound changes of the time, the transition in Central and Eastern Europe is also a driving force for more changes. For instance, the transition has brought a larger-scale single market and a more complete industrial chain within Europe and a more representative European Union. China's relationships with Europe have also changed accordingly. The first change is that China attaches more and more importance to the European Union by appreciating its impressive achievements

in European integration and the increasing influence at the world stage. The second change is that China not only attaches great attention to the western European countries but also emphasises a balance between its relationship with Western Europe and that with Eastern Europe. This has become one of the major driving forces for China to reboot its diplomacy with Central and Eastern European countries within the framework of China-Europe relations. At present, the Chinese academic circle of European studies is spontaneously conducting overall reviews on the last thirty years' transition in Central and Eastern European countries, including the development of their domestic economies and societies, and the implication to the whole Europe and the world in large.

Thirdly, it is also the year when the 8th China-CEEC Leaders' Meeting and the 2nd Belt and Road Forum for international cooperation were held. Both meetings can be regarded as milestones for the future development of China's cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries. The 8th China-CEEC Leaders' Meeting not only summarised the achievements of the past and reaffirmed the institutional construction of the "16+1", but also realised the first expansion of this cooperation mechanism and made the "16+1" turn into "17+1". Greece's accession is bound to bring about new changes and opportunities. Just two weeks after the 8th China-CEEC summit, a number of CEEC leaders were seen again at the Belt and Road Forum. Although the Belt and Road was born a year later than the "16+1", it is a larger-scale trans-regional initiative with more ambitious visions and prospects. Because of the emergence of the Belt and Road, the value of the cooperation between China and CEECs has been enhanced even more. On the one hand, the Central and Eastern Europe is a must-pass crossing on the Eurasian continent. Without the participation of the countries in this region, the land or sea Silk Roads would be impeded and efficient connectivity could not be realised. On the other hand, the cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries, relying on a clearer institutionalised framework and more concrete policy tools, entered the stage of intergovernmental communication and consultation earlier than the Belt and Road Initiative. After more than seven years' development, several cooperation projects have been launched and visible outcomes have been gained. The effect can be seen and lessons can be learned from the pragmatic cooperation between China and CEECs for the rest countries and regions along the Belt and Road. In other words, Central and Eastern Europe has become the exhibition area and the test field on the Belt and Road.

Of course, the year of 2019 is also quite special because of the dramatic changes in the international situation, which have brought great challenges and pressures upon China's diplomacy. In recent years, the competition between major powers has become more and more fierce. First of all, the United States has adopted an increasingly stringent containment policy toward China at bilateral, regional and international dimensions. At the bilateral dimension, what we can see is not only the trade war launched by the United States but also the closure of American market to Chinese investors and blocking of bilateral exchanges in high-tech fields. At the regional dimension, the United States tries to form a siege to contain China by strengthening its relationship with allies and putting forward the "Indo-Pacific strategy" and some other ideas in China's neighbourhood. At the global dimension, the United States tries to abandon internationally recognised institutions and agreements such as the WTO and the Paris Climate Change Agreement and regards multilateralism a zero-sum game which has only benefited China and other countries at the price of American interests.

At the same time, China-Europe relations are also undergoing a series of changes. Unlike the trend of development of China-U.S. relations, in which the competition is overwhelmingly increasing, the change of China-Europe relations is difficult to be summed up by a simple interpretation. Indeed, just as described in the EU's latest policy document on China "EU-China – A strategic outlook", China is regarded by the EU "simultaneously, in different policy areas, a cooperation partner with whom the EU has closely aligned objectives, a negotiating partner with whom the EU needs to find a balance of interest, an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance." Also approaching the observation from the bilateral, regional and global dimensions, it can be established that, at the bilateral dimension, though the competition between China and Europe is also increasing, the way Europe uses to defend itself against Chinese competitiveness is still largely based on the legislative approaches instead of national administrative instruments. At the same time, the EU also keeps using negotiations to deal with trade frictions with China. Against this background, the economic and trade interlinks have remained as the ballast stone of the overall relations and have not been damaged. At the regional dimension, the EU, on one hand, has launched the Berlin Process in the Balkans, accompanied with other EU policy instruments, such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) in order to restart the accession negotiations with countries in

this sub-region and used the Copenhagen standards to restrict the cooperation between Balkan countries and China. On the other hand, the EU also seeks cooperation with China on many regional issues such as the Iran nuclear issue, sustainable development in Africa, the reconstruction in Afghanistan etc. At the global dimension, both the EU and China attach great importance to the existing international institutions such as the UN and the WTO and support their necessary reforms. However, their views are different in terms of the details of the reforms. On some other global issues such as climate change and sustainable development, China and the EU share close positions while having differentiated appeals.

New developments of the "China-CEEC cooperation"

So, what new developments is the "China-CEEC cooperation" having under such circumstances?

Firstly, the new development of the economic situation in China and CEECs has helped shift the priorities of the cooperation. When the cooperation mechanism was established in 2012, the deep-seated impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the 2009 European debt crisis still played a determinant role in the choice of these countries in internal and external economic policies. From the Chinese side, to hasten the implementation of the "Going Out" strategy and explore new ways of investment has become the main goal of China's economic diplomacy in order to struggle against the declining of international demand and the domestic overcapacity in certain industries. Guided by this main goal, the Chinese government proposed 12 measures to expand the scale and the area of the cooperation, and to build a more institutionalised platform to facilitate the cooperation with 16 CEECs at the first summit of "16+1" in Poland in 2012. From the CEECs side, though the majority of these countries have walked out of the cliff-like recession, the problems such as the withdrawal of foreign investment, currency devaluation and rising unemployment remained serious. Attracting more foreign investment as soon as possible and alleviating the above problems with key economies outside the EU have become top priorities for most Central and Eastern European countries at that stage. In this context, China-CEEC cooperation was naturally shaped by the purpose of jointly addressing the financial crisis on the basis of complementary development needs.

Today, China has made great progress in digesting its overcapacities. At the same time, marked by the creation of the China International Import Expo as a symbol, China is committed to optimising its

import and export structure, combining the tasks of the stabilisation of its exports with the expansion of its imports in order to promote industrial upgrading, and realised a more balanced trade structure with a more open domestic market. From the perspective of Central and Eastern Europe, there has been a marked rebound in capital flows to Central and Eastern Europe within the EU in recent years. Among them, the European Structural and Investment Funds are replacing FDI from developed European countries within the EU in playing an increasingly important role in improving the environment and infrastructure construction, supporting domestic small and medium-sized enterprises, etc. Meanwhile, certain Central and Eastern European countries have begun to implement a strategy of renationalisation of some key industries. Governments of these countries are becoming more and more generous to such export-oriented companies than to foreign investors who only aim at expanding their domestic markets. The above policy adjustments have been reflected in the "China-CEEC cooperation". The priorities of cooperation have gradually shifted: at present, all participant countries no longer simply appeal for the net growth of the trade volume or accept Merger and Acquisition (M&A) FDI as the main way to enhance economic cooperation. Instead, they emphasise the combined use of foreign capital and domestic investment to develop the trade in high-quality, high-tech, and high value-added products, innovative cooperation and greenfield investment, which can bring more long-term economic and social benefit to the local people. These shifts of priorities of cooperation have made the "China-CEEC cooperation" step on to a much broader, wider and higher level.

Secondly, the new development of China-EU relations has also widened the path of cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries. Mutual trade and investment between China and the EU have long been the ballast stone for the stable and healthy development of China-EU relations. The EU has been China's largest trading partner for 15 years, and China has long been the EU's second largest trading partner. Bilateral trade reached a record high of 682,2 billion USD in 2018. At the same time, two-way investment also plays an increasingly important role in bilateral economic relations. Europe's investment stock in China has reached 132,18 billion USD, while China's FDI stock in the EU has reached 95,2 billion USD as of February 2019. The EU has become the second-largest destination for its overseas investment.[1]

1 "Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of Commerce," Ministry of Commerce, People's Republic of China, April 4, 2019, http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/press/201904/20190402856213.shtml

This April 2019, against the backdrop of rising protectionism and unilateralism in the global economy, the 21st China-EU summit not only set a specific direction for the future development of China-EU relations, but also played an exemplary role in supporting a more open, balanced and inclusive global economic order. The two sides actively worked on the timetable and road map for accelerating the China-EU Investment Agreement (BIT) negotiations, and Chinese side also made a voluntary commitment of making decisive progress in the 2019 negotiations aimed to reach a high-level agreement by 2020. The signing of BIT will substantially improve market access and create a more equitable and balanced investment protection framework, which will also help boost two-way investment between China and CEECs.

In addition to the progress in the field of investment liberalisation, China-EU cooperation in the field of connectivity is also becoming a new bright spot in China-EU relations. In 2013, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative with the goal of building and strengthening partnerships among the countries along the routes. In 2015, at the 17th China-EU Summit, the two sides decided to establish the "EU-China Connectivity Platform". The current progress of cooperation within this framework is that an agreement on the terms of reference for the Joint Study on sustainable Railway-based Corridors between Europe and China is going to be reached and put into implementation. In September 2018, the EU also released its "Connecting Europe and Asia" strategy. The emergence of these initiatives or cooperation platforms reflects the high recognition by both China and the EU of the importance of connectivity in the areas of transportation, energy, digital and people-to-people exchanges for future economic development and social stability. Compared to Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe has a huge demand for infrastructure in the above-mentioned areas. Synergies between the EU Strategy on Connecting Europe and Asia as well as the EU Trans-European Transport Networks and China's Belt and Road Initiative at these mutually recognised platforms will certainly accelerate the launch of specific cooperation projects in the Central and Eastern Europe.

Thirdly, the new development of the "16+1" format has expanded the scope of the cooperation and enlarged the scale effect of projects. At the 8th China-CEEC summit, Greece formally joined the cooperation mechanism as the 17th member from the European side. From the historical dimension, Greece cannot be regarded as a real Central and Eastern European country, not only because of its affiliation to the west camp during the Cold War but also because of its much earlier

accession to the EU. But from the geographic perspective, Greece is located at the southernmost tip of the Balkans, giving it geographical legitimacy to be a part of the cooperation. With Greece's accession, the Balkan Peninsula is now under the framework of "China-CEEC cooperation". Infrastructure construction projects can be integrated and laid out under the objective of enhancing connectivity throughout the Balkans. All relevant countries can also use the "17+1" mechanism for more efficient policy communication and coordination in order to shorten the preparatory and initiating process. Meanwhile, as a senior member of the European Union, who joined in 1981, Greece can also help promote the synergies between China's initiative and EU strategies in Central and Eastern Europe with its stronger voice and bigger influence in EU institutions. In short, Greece's accession is a product of a common need. We should not talk too much about the political implications of its accession, but rather think about how to make Greece's accession lead to more cross-border projects conductive to better connectivity within the Balkans as well as between the Balkans and the rest of Europe.

Implications for the Baltic region

So, what implications all the above changes of times and the new developments of the "17+1" are having for the Baltic region?

Firstly, Baltic countries have gradually seen more opportunities within the frameworks of China-EU relations and the "17+1" format. At the early stage of the "16+1", except Latvia, who once hosted the 5th summit in 2016, the other two countries – Estonia and Lithuania – showed little interest to this new platform. Several reasons were behind this indifference: geographically, the Baltic region regards itself as belonging to Northern Europe rather than to Eastern Europe. Economically, Lithuania and Estonia's GDP per capita indexes were the highest among 16 CEE countries.[2] A big disparity in economic development levels further reduced their enthusiasm for participation. Besides, due to the small scale of their domestic markets and the tradition of doing the majority of business with their neighbouring countries, they didn't see a high potential in promoting economic cooperation with China. Thus, although prime ministers and other high-ranking officials of these countries participated in almost every annual summit, they didn't take a leading role in

2 The volume index of GDP per capita in PPS is expressed in relation to the European Union (EU28) average set to equal 100. The index of Lithuania and Estonia is 81, only lower than Czechia and Slovenia among the 16 CEE countries. "GDP per capita in PPS," Eurostat, June 1, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00114

any coordination mechanisms or host forums for cooperation in certain sectors. The annual guidelines and outcome lists also show the lack of concrete economic cooperation results except for some people-to-people exchanges between the Baltic countries and China. However, from the Chinese perspective, in the recent two years, with the emergence of more and more concrete results of cooperation in Central Europe and the Balkans, more trends towards cooperation in trade and investment with China are emerging in the Baltics as well. For example, Estonia is trying to open the Chinese market for not only dairy products, but also for high-quality fish and poultry products. Both sides are discussing the feasibility of building a railway corridor from North-East China to Estonia in order to facilitate goods transportation. Several economic treaties were signed between China and Estonia including the Silk Road Initiative Memorandum, the Digital Silk Road Agreement, the E-Commerce Agreement and an action plan to promote cooperation in agriculture, fisheries and rural development in 2018-2022. As for Lithuania, it is also expecting more export of its competitive agricultural and livestock products to China and cooperation in finance and infrastructure after signing the Silk Road Initiative Memorandum in 2017.

Secondly, Baltic countries have brought potentials for cooperation at the sub-regional level. The three Baltic countries have a long-term history of cooperation with Nordic countries through various sub-regional co-operation formats, such as Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) and Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) etc. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region has also provided an innovative platform for more in-depth sub-regional integration. After the establishment of the "16+1" format, China is unlikely to create any new institutionalised mechanisms to promote its relationships with certain European sub-regions in order to avoid more suspicions from the EU. But it doesn't mean China has no interest for more cooperation at the sub-regional level in a "softer" way. For example, China has a strong interest in joining infrastructure projects linking the Baltic countries and the Nordic countries. Wider sub-regional cooperation can help overcome the limitation of the market scale of three individual Baltic countries and attract more Chinese investors.

Thirdly, the current global and regional situation has brought challenges to Baltic countries' cooperation with China. The deterioration of the China-U.S. relationship is now testing the diplomatic independence of CEE countries, including the three Baltic ones. It is a fact that many CEE countries largely rely on the NATO led by the U.S. in their national defence. The relationship with

the U.S. is the top priority of their foreign policy agendas. Marked by the visit of the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to certain Central European countries, the U.S. is now trying to demonise China by linking China's economic diplomacy with geopolitical or security ambitions, pressuring these NATO allies not to carry out cooperation with China in 5G and some other economic areas. Under these circumstances, a solid political mutual trust is the key element for the continuity of cooperation between China and CEECs, Baltic countries included, in the future.

NATO AND THE (RE)EMERGING ISSUES

Emerging Ecosystems of Power – Logics and Vulnerabilities in the Nordic-Baltic Region

Mika Aaltola

Power is increasingly premised on and shaped by global flows of resources, goods and data. The directionality of these flows creates dependencies and asymmetries that condition and restrict state sovereignty and, on the other hand, can be co-opted by the most powerful states in their competition. For example, the intense energy that flows between Russia and Germany in the form of the North Stream natural gas pipelines changes the Baltic Sea security environment. It heightens the tension between the right to have access to the energy markets and the need to pose a security claim over the route of the gas pipeline, as it becomes an important national interest. The security claim over the artificial flow infrastructure can be used to lower the claims of the other regional actors. China has successfully implemented this geostrategic scenario in the South China Sea through building artificial islands.

Geostrategic ecosystem refers to a political, economic, and technological system that has sustainability, self-organisation, and that can support different forms of actorness from unitary to distributed. After the end of the Cold War, a clear ecosystem revolved around the system created by the U.S. More recently, China has emerged from this U.S.-led ecosystem with a system revolving around itself. Overall the global and regional networks, interactions and flows therein consist of hub-and-spoke mobility dynamic, as the nodal points, centres, are more connected than the more marginal areas. The nodal points are often economically successful states. Their national power depends increasingly on the innovation economies being "fed" by the flows in a steady and resilient way. This means that they have a stake in the securing of the regional and global flows. For example, the U.S. geostrategy has been based on this premise for decades. It sees that it has a special role in the securing of the global flows, e.g. in the Persian Gulf or in the South China Sea. By denying this role, other states can act as spoilers of this type of national power. When Russia, in effect, blocked the sea-lines of communication reaching the Ukrainian ports in the Sea of Azov, it contested the U.S. geostrategy based on the U.S. being the guardian of the freedom of navigation.

Thus, some states territories are weightier than others, as they have accumulated more crossroads of flow-infrastructure, airports,

harbours, innovation hubs, global universities, digitalised services and cyber connections. These super-nodes can define and even regulate and secure the global flow system, as in the cases of trade, resources and finance. This capacity, in turn, defines states' weight in the global fabric of asymmetric interconnectedness. This weightiness translates into status and reflects the range of capabilities in the more extended domains of the emerging power-political competition.

The local intensity and regularity of such flows is increasingly a crucial indicator of a state's economic viability and its political influence. Securing steady access to such global flows and, on the other hand, denying, or disrupting the access from others poses a different set of domestic and foreign policy challenges to states in general, and especially to smaller states, than the challenges posed by the traditional Westphalian model. Smaller Nordic/Baltic states are increasingly caught in a crosscurrent between these two co-existing realities, as the newer flow-centric model emerges and the older territorial models enjoy a relative resurgence, as China and, to a lesser degree, Russia has been able to use the flows and the ability to act as nodal points, flow-disruptors and spoilers to their benefit.

Emerging ecosystems of power

The U.S. geostrategic imaginary has been based on maritime transportation and trade. This imaginary later expanded to air-travel and, ultimately, to space and cyber-space. This imaginary was not only domestic by connecting the American vision of geopolitics to wider global entanglements. America is continually on the move. The frontier is pushed beyond the present borders to newer spaces. The expansion of the horizon, the final frontier, was not a so much a physical barrier but a function of making power as movable as possible and, in practice, engineering various technologies of mobility to solve the obstacles for the emergence of a truly mobile form of global power. This logic of the U.S. power on the move led to the establishment of a relatively de-territorial, de-centralised and networked structures.[1] It should be noted that the emergent power political context is not static: instead it consists of a dynamic flow where nodal points are flexible and may move.

As people, resources, goods and data flow, power is seen as continually on the move, the language of power politics finds its expressions in the varying tempos of the mobility networks that

1 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard University Press: 2000): xi-xiii.

centre on the U.S. as the nodal point. The humming regularity of the logistical systems offers a signifier of the U.S. power to act as the "mover" in the global space. The opposite is equally expressive: the regular disturbances in the hub and spoke dynamic translate into lack of or a decrease in power.

The most well-known example of the hub and spoke as a political model involves the U.S. imagery of the Pacific security system after World War II. The model became popularly known as the hub and spoke alliance structure in the 80s. It meant that the U.S. (the hub) maintained a system of bilateral security arrangements with individual Pacific rim states (spokes) without a strong multilateral regime.[2] Similarly to a system of aeroplane routing, all the arrangements were supposed to converge in a U.S. "hub". From an embodied perspective, one important reason for the rise of the hub and spoke as an IR cultural model was that those innovating and experimenting with extensive notions such as "the Pacific security architecture" were among the foremost frequent fliers. Experts, university professors, decision-makers, and politicians were all among the global elite able to have lived and prospered through the existence of the hub and spoke-based aeromobility dynamic. For them, the system's physicality was embodied knowledge: it seemed to reveal something worthy and significant about the U.S. position vis-a-vis the others with a single self-evident schematic.

The hub and spoke world order imagery has also a strong liberal version. While referring to Aaltola's hub and spoke analogy,[3] Ikenberry illustrates how a hub-and-spoke system is often read as the microcosm of emerging global order: Ikenberry draws an explicit parallel from the changing global power hierarchy to the aviopolis were each "major power centers (airlines) have their own distinct and competing hub and spoke system".[4] The change into a hub and spoke pattern is what Ikenberry indicates might be happening to the global hierarchy of power. Ikenberry, as one of the major thinkers of the liberal world order, makes a distinction between a more unipolar hub and spoke arrangement and a multilateralist situation where actors coordinate their actions based on mutually agreed upon and shared rules and principles. Earlier Pax Americana hub and spoke relationship were clearly more unilateralist: one hub makes the decisions and

2 E.g. Kenneth Pyle, "Japan Rising: The resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose," *Public Affairs*, 2008, 225.

3 Mika Aaltola, "The International Aiport: The hub-and-spoke pedagogy of the American empire," *Global Networks* 5, (2005), 3.

4 John Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of liberal World Order," *Perspectives on Politics* 7, (2009), 1.

expects others – i.e. spokes – to follow suit.[5] In Ikenberry's later uses of the analogy, the hub and spoke is considerably more "fragmented" and with multiple competing hubs and partially overlapping major and minor spokes. The divergence of the U.S.-centric dynamic and the China-centric one is even more pronounced since the Trump Administration's rise to power and the hardening of the Chinese policies through the Belt and Road Initiative.

This vision of competing ecosystems sees China being able to develop its own competing system of flows and linkages that maintains the power of the centre. In some ways, China has started to be a nodal point of nodal points as it develops its own financing systems through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the 5G networks of Huawei. China has become a moving power and its power is on the move. Its power can also be felt in the Nordic-Baltic region as Chinese companies are planning major BRI-related infrastructure projects in the region. This power competes with the Western power system. For example, now two competing plans for the Helsinki-Tallinn tunnel exist. One will possibly be funded by the European Union, while the other could be funded and built by Chinese companies.

The transformation of the geostrategic imagery

Political world maps usually point out two types of human artefacts: borders encircling states and land-based logistics networks, i.e. roads, bridges and railways. Much of modern geostrategy has so far been fixed on borders of sovereign states. In the Nordic-Baltic region, the smaller states are prone to perceive themselves from this angle of sovereign statehood. However, this prevalent modern imagery can be contrasted with an alternative vision that has historic roots and is again becoming more relevant. This alternative can be exemplified by imperial Rome's territorial imagination. The limits of the empire were not precise and clear external borders in the contemporary sense that modern-day states find important to demarcate and secure. To an important degree, Rome's reach was empowered and also limited by its main roads and various access routes. Most of its legions were based in such a way as to secure and keep open these main arteries of the empire. It may be argued that the increasing transformation of the contemporary world order towards a system of circulatory flows is predisposed to rediscover such earlier and more imperial meanings of security. For example, as the China-centric ecosystem of flows emerges,

5 John Ikenberry, *Liberal Power and imperial Ambition: Essay on American Power and International Order*, (Polity, 2006), 241.

its function can most readily be understood from the imperial Chinese way of thinking that has thousands of years of history.

The aim of the "flow security" is to control access to and from the main global flows that connect remote extremities to regional centres or spokes on the one hand, and those regional spokes with the main global hubs on the other hand. Securing access to and ensuring the openness of such flows transforms the meaning of "security" increasingly away from "national defence" towards "resilience". Traditionally, spatial or territorial entities – e.g. states – were secured, or defended. Now, the flow-processes need to be made resilient. The regularity of flow's steady rhythm and the regularity of its pulse indicate a high level of resilience, and also higher stakes if this resilience becomes a vulnerability.

This era of global flows and competing flow-ecosystems used to be seen as the golden age of interdependence. By now, it is clear that the emerging era poses a clear challenge to the liberal notions of interdependence. Unitary, autocratic, and imperial actors such as Russia and China are on the move and are expanding their reach. The main global arteries guarantee wide access to the most remote regional and global peripheries. This access is often seen as bringing with it many benefits, such as links to production sites, financial centres, knowledge hubs, and security producers. Participation in these flow activities also catalyses the diffusion of norms, practices and standards. This fosters learning, shapes governance and influences how ''flow practices'' – e.g. interoperabilities, norms and standards – develop in the future. However, it is also becoming clear that the access can be achieved by competitors as in the case of Russian money laundering and China's IP infringement.

Growing concerns about cyber-crime, terrorism and human trafficking indicate that there is a much darker side to this emerging age of flows. For instance, unsanctioned or unsecured access to global flows via cybercrime can be a huge vulnerability for a state or a region. Decision-makers are increasingly preoccupied with preventing or mitigating possible disruptions, breakdowns and contagions. These challenges, in turn, are generating more active notions of resilience.

Global cyber flows – much like rivers – mould the terrain and geography in which they occur, in terms of both human and physical landscape. Recent elections in the U.S., France and Germany indicate an emerging practice whereby autocracies may meddle in democratic elections by hacking data, scandalising it through leaks, and amplifying the effect by creating intense cognitive flows of disinformation and distrust across social media. Through digital platforms that host much of the political discussions, the cyber flows translate into

cognitive flows and into public cognitions. These cognitions stimulate and spread. They move and intensify easily. Political movements are intimately intertwined ebbs and flows of public cognitions. They arouse, stimulate, captivate and overwhelm. Sentiments beget sentiments. They are contagious. Sometimes, they lead to whirlwinds, to highly tense vortexes of emotionality in a political community. The vorticity of sentiments is self-feeding. They may spread horizontally, involving new groups of people, and deepen vertically, becoming more and more intensive. They stimulate new political ideologies, as exemplified by the emergence of nativism and neo-nationalism.

Illegal shadow flows – e.g. of drug smuggling, arms trade, money laundering, human trafficking and cybercrime – are gaining importance and can be powerful in shaping local contours of power. For instance, it used to be that criminal organisations had a parasitic relationship with the local polity in which they were based. Today, however, such criminal activity may create symbiotic relationships with regional, national or international reach, and perhaps lower the incentive or ability of local authorities to completely paralyse or kill it off. Central American drug flows are illustrative of this dynamic. Cocaine flows from production sites in Latin America to markets mainly in the United States, but also in Europe. The disjunctive effect is intense. It shows how networked organisations can live off the flow itself instead of local polities. This gives them immense economic and political power compared to those state and local polities that exist along the flow. On the other hand, states can harness these actors for their own geopolitical benefit. For example, Russian money laundering networks effectively use illicit and criminal actors for the purposes that are earmarked by the state. Similarly, Chinese actors – private, business, and criminal – can work in unison for the overall geopolitical purpose.

Geostrategic uses of flow ecosystems

The central nodes to the rivalling ecosystems, the U.S. and China, have to come terms with the relatively de-territorialised forms of global life. The management of these civil societal, transnational and multinational actors is a key to the global movers. They are attracted by different types of inducements. The U.S. ability to employ its unique position in the dollar economy to use and direct financial flows has been behind the recent sanctions policies. Various actors have been sanctioned. The factor that allows for the U.S. to move the markets is the reach of the U.S. legal system and the need to have

access to the U.S. financial sector. For example, European businesses feel much pressure to avoid dealing with Iran despite the fact that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – the Iran nuclear deal – would allow access to the Iranian markets. The European Union has planned a financial tool to lower the risks for European companies. However, this method carries its challenges. The European Union is in fact, lowering the cohesion of the sanctions instrument and also increasing the likelihood of tensions when it comes to its most important trading partner. At the same time, the financial aspect, as well as the sanctions' tools, are becoming key characteristics of the overall scenario of "European strategic autonomy".

The Baltic states and Finland joined the modern statehood tradition century ago. Unlike, for example, Russia or Sweden, these states do not have their own well-formed imperial past. As a result, these states do not have a well-founded concept of their own borderlands beyond their territories. They also lack an understanding of their own spheres of interest vis-a-vis their neighbours. On the other hand, the membership in the European Union, the understanding of political order and power have evolved beyond strict sovereignty and territoriality conceptualisations. Their national economies, for example, are parts of larger networks that are regulated, to a degree, by supranational actors. Moreover, the national security of supply is no longer seen as autonomous and independent from wider regional and global logistical networks. Baltic states have also agreed for their defence and security be managed by NATO.

The hub and spoke type of thinking can be seen, for example, in many of the national strategies. In the case of Finland, many strategies envision the country to be a nodal point, hub and a regional centre through which many of the flows move. The national infrastructure development is seen as integrating into the regional networks in a way that highlights Finland and Helsinki as hubs or at least major sub-hubs in the region.[6] On the other hand, although many of the flows from maritime and data to finance and satellite communication do connect better to the four Nordic-Baltic states, many of the central decisions concerning the regulation of the overall system of flows and its operational logic are made outside of the four states. For a smaller state, the strategic foresight requires understanding the overall logic and how to best adapt to it by long term infrastructure and innovation policies.

6 "Ministeri Berner: Suomi ihmisten, tavaroiden ja datan liikenteen globaaliksi solmukohdaksi," Liikenne- ja viestintäministeriö, March 6, 2018, https://www.lvm.fi/-/ministeri-berner-suomi-ihmisten-tavaroiden-ja-datan-liikenteen-globaaliksi-solmukohdaksi-967871

Some of the investments require international partners. For example, the Helsinki-Tallinn tunnel is estimated to cost over 20 billion EUR and cannot be shouldered by Finland or Estonia. Similarly, the railroad connections across the Baltics and from Helsinki to the Arctic Sea are costly compared to the national economies. This leads to the need for finding investments. If a major external actor with its own strategic sovereignty over the operational logic can supply that funding, it can have influence in the region. Most of the infrastructure funding support has come from the EU in a way that, for example, Chinese funding has been avoided. However, the situation might change in the future as the ecosystems compete and provide seeming options and leeway for the smaller actors to secure their access to the increasingly competitive global space.

The interdependence paradigm has been based on the need for small states to specialise and integrate. The evolutionary space is not set or defined by them. They need to adapt and be agile.[7] This need to adapt to increasing interdependence has not been seen as ideological or geopolitical. This means that when the geopolitical competition is now increasing between China and U.S., the smaller actors in Europe are surprised to find that not all the investments are a value in themselves. The lure of Chinese infrastructure investments has been hard to resist since the awareness of power politics through finance and technology has not been tangible and evident. However, in the connection with Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine, its infrastructure development has been politicised and criticised in the Baltic Sea region. It could be that China's efforts are seen as less geopolitically meaningful and even useful as leverage over the Russian influence.

The Russian imperial thinking in terms of its neighbourhood and the need to co-opt the flows influences the small state understanding of the geopolitical realities in the Baltic Sea region. In this sense, the Russian newer power political practices set the standard of and expectations for the international transformation for the region. The Russian practices are a new application of the older geopolitics where the direct and indirect territorial control over the key strategic resources is the essence of the Great Game. The U.S. practices have been more based on the functional understanding of global dynamics. For the U.S., the key has been to directly and indirectly control and secure the key global functions in

7 Mika Aaltola, "Agile small state agency: heuristic plays and flexible national identity markers in Finnish foreign policy, " *Nationalities Papers*, 39,2 (2010), 257-276.

terms of trade and other flows.[8] Although Russian practices utilise its position in the flows and the asymmetries very effectively, its doctrine is more co-optive and straightforward. Whereas the U.S. is effectively setting the standards for the market-driven flows, Russia abuses the system secured and maintained by others rather than managing to transform the system or to set up its own ecosystem rivals for the existing U.S. centric model. The Chinese model is based on the imperial understanding in that, for example, its BRI projects are clearly China-centric. Although it does not seem to harbour intentions for territorial extensions, it still gains effective control over as it develops regional infrastructure. This effective control over additional territories is aimed to support the vibrancy and growth in the central areas inside China.

If the U.S. practice best resembles ecosystem thinking, the Russia model is most akin to the imperial standard. Russia's ability to maintain multidimensional global flows based in the innovation economy is limited. Russia uses what it has and what gives it additional added value. Its economy is based on the extraction of natural resources. It also uses national and ideological sentiments based on Russian language minorities in its neighbourhood. As a legacy of the Soviet period, it also has considerable military might in terms of the nuclear arsenal as well as conventional capabilities. It can also utilise shadow and black financial networks to advance its political and geopolitical goals. However, in terms of being able to develop independent full-fledged ecosystems in has failed.

For the Nordic-Baltic states, the U.S. centric model is more open for access with less conditionality than the Russian and Chinese alternatives. Its central standards have been maintained also by multilateral institutions. The open nature of the Western ecosystem has been the key to its success. The system has also integrated Russia and China with the result that cooperation with these actors has been possible. It is clear that this relatively win-win situation is now changing. The Huawei case, for example, illustrates how states and actors that enjoy full access to the U.S. centric ecosystem might lose the ability to fully cooperate with the Chinese networks.[9] It could be that in the future the access to the secured Western ecosystem of trade becomes more conditional than it was after the end of the Cold War.

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8 Mika Aaltola, Juha Kapyla and Valtteri Vuorisalo, *The Challenge of Global Commons and Flows for US Power*, (London. Rouledge, 2016).

9 e.g. Daniel Araya, "Huawei's 5G Dominance In The Post-American World," *Forbes*, May 6, 2019, https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielaraya/2019/04/05/huaweis-5g-dominance-in-the-post-american-world/#4fd47ed348f7

Characteristics of flow control and security in the Nordic-Baltic region

The states in the Nordic-Baltic region are all deeply integrated into the global trade and innovation networks and highly dependent on exports and investments. The societal fabric has been made wealthy and more stable based on the access to the main arteries of trade and the state security is seen as solidified by networked defence solutions. The dependency over access to trade and technology highlights the need to know the emerging logics of the power-political competition. How can the dependency on the intense flows and functions of the global space be used to create societal vulnerabilities and state-level insecurities in the contemporary world? How would the old maxim that trade integration creates security have to be qualified? I will next review the key characteristics of the overall flow security scenarios in the Baltic Sea region.

1. *Asymmetry*. Infrastructure enables connections. However, these connections are rarely even and reciprocal. One participant in the network can be much more dependent on the others and the others on it. The hub and spoke system is a hierarchical arrangement where hubs or hubs prevail over hubs, hubs over subhubs, subhubs over spokes and underspokes. For example, the airline connections in the region are based on a few major carriers and their regional hubs. The ability to fly to several major European hubs non-stop is limited to a few of the Nordic-Baltic capitals.
2. *Directionality*. The flows are not only asymmetric but also directional. The overall dynamic is towards one and two directions with the result that any disruptions in these major connections would lead to severe economic and political harm. The trade of Russian natural resources is important for the region. These resources are important as energy sources. The refining of the resources provides value to the national economies. In terms of added value, trade with major economies such as Germany and the U.S. is extremely important for the regional states. These directions are also important in the sense of catalysing local technological innovation. Without this directional access, the local economies would be much less intense and regional.
3. *Intensity*. The flow intensity between actors leads to a dependency even in the absence of clear directionality and asymmetry. These intense flows are also important

security-of-supply issues. Any disruption can lead to wide societal and state-level security ramifications.

4. *Dispensability*. The search for an alternative flow infrastructure can be hard if many functionalities are tied into one connection. For example, the Nord Stream gas pipelines lead to hardwired dependencies that can be hard to compensate. However, the alternative energy sources, such as liquified natural gas installations can lessen dispensability issues.[10] Diversification is a viable option to lessen the vulnerabilities that stem from reliance on a few intense flows.
5. *Horizontality*. In an ideal situation, the flow activities depend on market-driven actors whose interest in exerting geopolitical pressure is low. These horizontal connections between similar type of business-oriented actors can be regulated at the supranational level, e.g. through the European Union. However, this horizontal ideal is increasingly unfeasible as many actors in the autocracies are closely connected with the state interests as in the case of Russian or Chinese major corporations.
6. *Verticality*. In particular, the networks with actors in the autocracies can lead to an asymmetric situation. The Western business forms partnerships with businesses that are very close to state-level actors. Their motives are not only driven by market logic. The goals and objectives are related to the interests of the state, and the state can work through them in order to reach geopolitical goals. The verticality effect also highlights the difference between political systems. The liberal democracies in the region are vulnerable to the actors from autocracies as the rules and open access of the trade and investments are co-opted and abused by the autocracies.
7. *Trust*. The network of flows requires reciprocity and regulation that is based on trust. Trust is learnt through iteration of the transactions in the sense that there is a common sentiment that all the actors share the interest in the efficient maintenance of the flows. The power politicisation can lead to lowering of trust and, therefore, can decrease the overall efficiency of the flow-system. A decade ago, before the increased geopolitical tensions, the Chinese investments in the key infrastructure on the Nordic-Baltic region would have been welcomed. Now, there is much scepticism towards the ultimate motives of the investments. This indicates a decrease in trust that is going

10 Johny Ball, "Pipeline Politics: Putin, Europe and the Nord Stream 3," *New Statesman*, May 17, 2019, https://www.newstatesman.com/spotlight-america/energy/2019/05/pipeline-politics-putin-europe-and-nord-stream-2

to have longer-term impact of the development of the flow infrastructure in the region.

8. *Loyalty claims*. The relationships that are developed in the dynamic trade and investment networks can establish competing loyalty systems. For example, partnerships that are based on vertical arrangements with actors from the autocratic states can go beyond profit-seeking. They can provide shadow centres of power, especially in smaller states. The loyalties of those actors who profit from these partnerships can also be actionable in terms of geopolitical interests.
9. *Corruptibility*. The flows, networks, and partnerships can induce a persuasive element that inclines the actors towards obedience to foreign actors' national habits or goals. This quality can also be cultural. When a partnership is formed with actors coming from highly corrupted business and political cultures, they can introduce their own way of doing business to a country where the levels of corruption are much lower.
10. *Security claims*. The flows are also geographical and material. They cross certain geographical areas with the help of physical infrastructure. As the actors in the Nordic-Baltic region become dependent on the flows, their interest in making security claims over the area increases. In the cases when physical infrastructure has been expensive and it is potentially vulnerable, the states can make claims that they need to have the key role in militarily securing the infrastructure. e.g. Russia can make a claim that it needs to be militarily present along the route of the Nord Stream pipeline. The secondary consideration of security can become primary and thereby enable making claims that lower the security and sovereignty of other regional states.

Women in the Latvian and Estonian Military: NATO's Poster Students?

Elizabete Vizgunova

Historically, the stories of women "warriors" (the Amazones, Jeanne d'Arc or even women in the Inca battlefields) were used to supply evidence to strengthen the idea of "proper behaviour" of women, by establishing social limits of war, thus guaranteeing a return to normal in the post-war period.

Yet, beyond tales and myths, female participation in wars has been scarce and is characterised by exclusion (even though women have been indispensable performing the tasks of nurses, laundresses, cooks and, indeed, even soldiers).[1] Even nowadays, a woman's presence in the combat lines is a rare sight (only some 20 countries in the world permit it[2]; data from 2016 suggests 96,3 % NATO member nations allow it[3]), the number seemingly supporting the idea of centuries-old power structures. On the flipside, conflict creates a "window of opportunity" for women to access military and workforce mobility of unprecedented proportion (even if after conflict women are expected to return to "normalcy").

Despite the overall painful historic picture, the perception of women in military structures is changing rapidly. In most Western military structures, they are on their way of obtaining full status, gaining access to the same training and education as men and bringing new qualities to the service, therefore overturning centuries' old ideas of women as "weaker links". The military is the new frontline of shattering gender stereotypes.

The importance of women in ensuring international peace is acknowledged by major international organisations, such as the United Nations with seven resolutions (on Women, Peace and Security (1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242),[4] stressing all dimensions of female engagement in conflict resolution and peacekeeping, addressing the impact of sexual violence, training

1 Helena Carreiras, *Gender and the Military: Women in the Armed Forces of Western Democracies* (London and New York: Routledge. Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), 7.

2 Max Fisher, "Map: Which countries allow women in front-line combat roles?", *The Washington Post*, January 13, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2013/01/25/map-which-countries-allow-women-in-front-line-combat-roles/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.49511b45d282

3 *NATO Annual report on Gender Perspectives in Allied Armed Forces: progress made in pre-deployment and work-life balance,* NATO, December 17, 2017, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_149993.htm

4 "Promoting Women, Peace and Security," UN Peacekeeping, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/promoting-women-peace-and-security

and capacity for women to build gender equality, among others.[5]

NATO is equally becoming more aware of the need to tackle the absence of females in military structures through the policy of '3 I's': Integration (considering gender equality in NATO policies, programs and projects); Inclusiveness (promoting an increased representation of women across NATO); and Integrity (enhancing accountability with the intent to increase awareness and implementation of the women in peace and security agenda in accordance with international frameworks).[6] Indeed, NATO has also established an International Military Staff Office of the Gender Advisor (IMG GENAD) and the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives, working to integrate a gender perspective into all aspects of NATO operations.[7]

IMG GENAD deals with collecting and dispersing information on member states' activities vis-à-vis resolution 1325 and the follow-up resolutions, and upholds a dialogue on gender issues with partner countries. The Committee on Gender Perspective pushes gender mainstreaming (or the perspectives of both men and women) to cross-cut policies, programs and military operations of NATO. It advises NATO political and military leadership on gender-related issues and the implementation of the UN resolution 1325.[8]

In Europe, the three Baltic states pride themselves with well-established legal frameworks for gender equality and having a highly equal working environment (according to European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Gender Equality Index 2017 data, the three Baltic states score well above the European average in this domain; the overall indicators, however, leave the cluster below the European average, disclosing a number of problems with gender equality).[9] Latvia has also made the top 3 after Hungary (20%) and Slovenia (16,1%) of all active-duty female military personnel. Estonia is in the 19th place, falling short of NATO average of 10,9%.[10]

5 "Promoting Women, Peace and Security," UN Peacekeeping, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/promoting-women-peace-and-security

6 "Women, Peace and Security, Policy and Action Plan 2018," NATO, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_09/20180920_180920-WPS-Action-Plan-2018.pdf

7 "Gender Perspectives in NATO Armed Forces," NATO, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_101372.htm

8 Ibid.

9 "Index score/Estonia," European Institute for Gender Equality, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/EE

10 *Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives* (NATO: 2016), 11.

Table 1. Percentage of women in NATO member states' armies (data as of 2016)

HU	SI	LV	US	GR	BJ	CA	FR	AO	CZ
20	16,1	16	15,9	15,4	15,1	15,1	15	14	12,6
SP	**DE**	**HR**	**NO**	**PT**	**SK**	**UK**	**NL**	**EE**	**SE**
12,6	11,3	11	10,7	10,7	10,1	10,1	9,5	9,1	8,3
BE	**LT**	**LU**	**DK**	**RO**	**PL**	**IT**	**ME**	**TR**	**MK**
7,8	7,8	6,6	6,4	5,9	5	4,3	3,8	1,3	-

Source: NATO, "Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives", 2016, 11

This article, therefore, seeks to explore the situation of women in Latvia's and Estonia's military structures.[11] The Baltic states' militaries have recently celebrated the centenary along with the Baltic states themselves, therefore this short review is timely. The following two parts will review the roles of women in the military structures of Latvia and Estonia, concluding the article by trying to identify the most important factors affecting the role of women in the military of Latvia and Estonia.

Women's military roles in recent years: Latvia

Women in the military receive relatively little publicity in Latvia; however, the reason for this is likely the fact that the law ensures a gender-neutral approach to military posts since the re-establishment of independence in 1991, therefore becoming a norm. Currently, 15,1 % of the personnel in professional service and 17,8 % of the National Guard (Zemessardze) are female. Women are mostly employed in the fields of personnel management, financial planning, medical service, administration and record-keeping. This also explains why, in the Ministry of Defence, the numbers are much higher: the administrative structure is 40 % female and 60 % male; 41,6 % of the National Defence Academy staff are female.[12]

There are no "closed posts" and all training is available equally for everyone. In other words, the Ministry of Defence and all institutions in its subordination, including the National Armed Forces, implement the prohibition of discrimination principle (banning discrimination

11 Note: Lithuania was excluded due to unavailability of information or data on the issue.

12 Data provided by the National Academy of Defence, June 27, 2019.

based on gender, race, colour of skin, ethnic or social belonging, genetical characteristics, language, religion or faith, political or other views, belonging to a minority, material status, age, sexual orientation or disability[13]).[14] Enlistment requirements (including those related to physical characteristics) are the same for men and women – apart from the physical fitness test that has different requirements for women and men.[15]

Women are legally entitled to social aid during pregnancy. 78 weeks of paternal leave is transferrable between parents. Maternity and paternity leave is 68 weeks. However, no programmes have been put in place to support the work-life balance, or are aimed at parents that are both members of the National Army. Options like part-time employment are now allowed, and single or divorced parents do not receive any extra support.[16]

Other issues persist: the NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives report suggests that Latvia has not put in place policies to prevent sexual harassment or abuse, or formal procedures for complaints for victims. No cases were therefore reported (in 2016). This also leads to the absence of gender-related training programmes; however, gender is a part of operation planning and is included in the pre-deployment training.[17]

Latvia's mechanised infantry battalion, the National Guard or the National Defence Academy do not have any gender mainstreaming policy in place. Instead, the institutions are regulated by the Law on Military Service (Militārā dienesta likums), which is gender-neutral.[18] Since 2016, the number of women un the mechanised infantry battalion has remained roughly the same, which means that the proportion of men and women is 90 % to 10 % in the structure. Around 15 % of the serving women are officers, around 40 % – instructors and 45 – %soldiers. In 2014 and 2015, the numbers were lower, which could be explained by various factors: either the change of the regional situation (war in Ukraine), or the growing salaries in the military domain (Latvia reached the NATO

13 E-mail correspondence with the Ministry of Defence, July 12, 2019.

14 Jānis Rancāns, "Dien specvienībās un pārvalda personālu: sievietes Latvijas armijā", *Latvijas Sabiedriskais Medijs*, March 23, 2019, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/dzive--stils/cilvekstasti/dien-specvienibas-un-parvalda-personalu-sievietes-latvijas-armija.a313603/

15 *Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives* (NATO: 2016), 136.

16 Ibid., 139.

17 Jānis Rancāns, "Dien specvienībās un pārvalda personālu: sievietes Latvijas armijā", *Latvijas Sabiedriskais Medijs*, March 23, 2019, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/dzive--stils/cilvekstasti/dien-specvienibas-un-parvalda-personalu-sievietes-latvijas-armija.a313603/

18 "Military Service Law," *Likumi.lv,* July 1, 2002, https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/63405-military-service-law

2 % GDP expenditure target in 2018[19]). However, there is no research to back up these assumptions.[20]

Table 2. Percentage of women in the National Guard and professional service

	Percentage of women 31 December 2017	Percentage of women 31 December 2018	Percentage of women 01 July 2019
National Guard*	16,1	17	17,8
Professional service**	15	17,7	15,1

Source: E-mail correspondence with a representative of the National Guard, July 12, 2019

** The number of National Guardians in Latvia is currently 8200*

*** The number of soldiers in Professional Service in Latvia is currently 6500*

Within the military structures, the women interviewed from the National Guard, the mechanised infantry battalion and the National Defence Academy claimed that they have not been faced with any stereotypes over the roles of women. One of the interviewees suggested that "I have no knowledge of stereotypes towards women in the National Guard. At least I have not felt any directed towards me. Women in the National Guard fulfil their duties on the same level as men, shoulder to shoulder."[21]

Indeed, "In the army, everything is dependent on the woman herself – from how she presents herself, what she is doing and what she wants to achieve".[22] Female opinions in the Latvian army definitely require more research (and are deemed to vary from personality to personality), however, initial research seems to suggest that the traditionally highly masculine institution makes women feel as equals.

Importantly, despite public surveys not being carried out, one of the interviewees suggested she expects that traditional opinions over female roles in society still prevail and women in the military are still seen as an exception, rather than rule (despite awareness of demographic

19 "Latvia's defense spending will hit 2% of GDP in 2018", *Latvijas Sabiedriskais Medijs*, October 11, 2017, https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/defense/latvias-defense-spending-will-hit-2-of-gdp-in-2018.a253243/

20 E-mail correspondence with a representative of the Mechanised Infantry Battalions, July 17, 2019.

21 E-mail correspondence with a representative of the National Guard, July 12, 2019.

22 Jānis Rancāns, "Dien specvienībās un pārvalda personālu: sievietes Latvijas armijā", *Latvijas Sabiedriskais Medijs*, March 23, 2019, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/dzive--stils/cilvekstasti/dien-specvienibas-un-parvalda-personalu-sievietes-latvijas-armija.a313603/

issues which, for instance, likely play a role in determining the opinion of the Estonian population – see sub-chapter below).

Furthermore, the situation with the National Guard is particularly interesting, because service can be carried out simultaneously with regular job duties. Interviews suggested that since 2014, interest in forming a part of the National Guard spiked for men and women alike. This is also explained by the regional situation (the war in Ukraine) which has created more interest in acquiring the military skills necessary for national and personal protection.

Table 3. Percentage of women by service ranks

	31 July 2019	
Service Rank	**National Guard**	**Professional service**
Guardian/Soldier	21,40	10,9
Senior National Guardian/ Manger	13,59	19,09
Corporal	12,19	16,67
Sergeant	6,12	13,82
Sergeant-major	11,35	24,75
Chief Sergeant of Headquarters	7,23	10,42
Chief Sergeant	0	0
Lieutenant	0	9,09
Lieutenant-major	2,67	20,83
Captain	5,56	9,88
Major	3,70	7,89
Lieutenant colonel	0	4,35
Colonel	0	0

Source: E-mail correspondence with a representative of the National Guard, July 2019

In the National Guard, men and women alike fill in the broadest range of positions, ranging from soldier to lieutenant colonel. Women are more frequently seen in medical service, as personnel specialists, record keepers, accountants, financial specialists, cooks, lawyers, security professionals and in the orchestra, but they often take traditional "male positions", namely combat officers and instructors. The data in Table 3 of this article shows that women are still found more in the lower ranks in all structures of the National Armed Forces of Latvia (administrative positions instead of positions higher up the

chain of command; this is in fact characteristic to all NATO member states, as 24,5 % of women in NATO armies are employed in medical services, 13,7 % in logistics, 10,5 % in infantry, 6,5 % in communications, 6,4 % in administration, 5,0 % in personnel management, 3,3 % in finance, 2,9 % in intelligence, 2,3 % in legal services[23]).

Table 4. Percentage of women in post groups

Post group	National Guard	Professional service
Various soldier speciality posts	45,8	56
Instructors, commanders of small units	5,7	14
Officer	0,4	18
Musicians, orchestra	3,2	0
Medical personnel	0,6	7
Cooks	6,6	0
Car drivers	11,9	1
Riflemen	25,9	5

Source: E-mail correspondence with a representative of the National Guard, July 2019

Even though there is no publicly available data on all the missions Latvia has engaged in, in 2016, 10,7 % of women and 89,3 % of men took part in NATO operations.[24] However, Latvia has positioned itself as supporting the UN 1325 resolution of women in the military, calling for strengthening women's participation in peace processes and post-conflict processes.[25] Latvia does not have a National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325 and therefore the role of its women in peace and security commitments is still unknown.[26] As explained in the next sub-chapter, this situation is different from that of Latvia's northern neighbour Estonia.

23 *Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives* (NATO: 2016): 24.

24 Ibid., 138.

25 "At the UN Security Council, Latvia highlights the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, October 14, 2015, https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/latest-news/48270-at-the-un-security-council-latvia-highlights-the-role-of-women-in-conflict-prevention-and-resolution

26 "Country/Region profile of: Latvia," Women's International League for Peace and Freedom PeaceWomen, https://www.peacewomen.org/profile/country-region-profile-latvia

Women's military roles in recent years: Estonia

Estonia's experience in recent years shows a pro-active stance towards engaging women in the military. It is interesting to note that Norway's decision to extend mandatory military service to females, thus becoming the first NATO member of doing so since 2016, was an important factor sparking this debate in Estonia.

Since then, the International Centre for Defence Studies, a research centre under the Estonian Ministry of Defence (ICDS) has published a comprehensive study on women in Estonian defence forces[27] and various nation-wide polls have appeared, signalling that women and the military are now words which are to be sought in the same sentence more often (even in English language sources).

For instance, in spring 2018, Ministry of Defence reports that, since the 2013 decision of allowing women to undergo conscript service voluntarily, there is more understanding in society over this need. The poll suggests that out of the three options, "78% of respondents chose the opportunity to undergo conscript service voluntarily. 3% approved of compulsory conscript service for women while 17% held the opinion that women should not undergo conscript service at all".[28]

However, other research shows that that existing recruits view the military careers of women more favourably than the society at large. Opinions such as "women should be at home" are still present within the broader society, but receive little to no popularity among the service personnel.[29] In Estonia, as in Latvia, women in the military are seen as mal à l'aise: the opinion that women are "weaker than men" and have "special needs" (biologically speaking) are still seen as putting women in a worse off position for the service.

Thereafter, women are also seen as having a stronger motivation, being better disciplined and more hard-working than men. Overall, the contradicting views – on the one hand, having a favourable opinion towards female conscripts and, on the other hand, seeing women as ill-fit for the military structures – can be explained by the high awareness of demographic challenges faced by Estonia.

Nonetheless, Estonia's Ministry of Defence is actively pursuing the UN headline goals set by resolution 1325, and was a co-sponsor of the follow-up resolutions 1820 condemning sexual violence as a weapon of

27 Andres Siplane, "Women in the Estonian Defense Forces: Motivation, Attitudes, Experiences and Challenges", International Center for Defense and Security, December 2017, https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ICDS_Report_Women_in_the_Estonian_Defence_Forces_Andres_Siplane_December_2017.PDF

28 Juhan Kivirähk, "Public Opinion and National Defense", Estonian Ministry of Defense: Spring 2018, http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/public_opinion_and_national_defence_2018_march.pdf, 6

29 Ibid., iv

war; 1888 mandating peacekeeping missions to prevent and respond to sexual violence in armed conflict; and 2242.[30] In 2010, Estonia adopted the first action plan to implement resolution 1324 (2010-2014) by designating and systemising Estonia's activities regarding the gender aspect on international missions and within development assistance, as well as increasing the societies knowledge of the issue.

Estonia has kept a meticulous record of the implementation of the action plan[31] (*via* Implementation reports 2010-2011,[32] 2012,[33] 2013[34] and 2014[35]). Estonia's second action plan for 2015-2019[36] focuses on the improvement of women's situation in conflict and post-conflict regions as well as raising the awareness and enhancing cooperation and communication.[37] Resultantly, 103 female officers, non-commissioned officers and privates have participated in the mission over 152 times.

Table 5. Percentage of women and men by service ranks (data as of 2016)

Rank	Women	Men
General officers	0	0,1
Officers (Commandant, major, colonel)	4,4	12
Officers (Lieutenant, captain)	29,7	21,8
Non-commissioned officers	49,5	35,9
Private and corporal ranks	16,5	30,2

Source: NATO, "Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives", 2016, 99

30 *Women, Peace and Security,* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, https://vm.ee/en/women-peace-and-security

31 "Estonia's Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Estonia 2010–2014," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/1325_Estonian_action_plan_ENG.pdf

32 "Estonia's Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" in Estonia 2010 – 2014," of the period of 22 October 2010 – 31 December 2011, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/UN-1325_report_2011_ENG_veeb.pdf

33 "Estonia's Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security" in Estonia 2010-2014," of the period 1 January 2012 – 31 December 2012, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/UN-1325_report_%202012_ENG_veeb.pdf

34 "Estonia's Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security" in Estonia 2010-2014," of the period 1 January 2012 – 31 December 2012, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/UN-1325_report_%202012_ENG_veeb.pdf

35 "Estonia's Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in Estonia, 2010-2014, Final Implementation Report," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/1325_nap_lopparuanne_eng.pdf

36 "Estonia's Action Plan for the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 13255 on Women, Peace and Security in Estonia 2015-2019," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, https://vm.ee/sites/default/files/content-editors/diplomacy/human-rights/1325_tegevuskava_2015-2019_en.pdf

37 Ibid.

Estonia, as Latvia, has not put in place any comprehensive sexual harassment and sexual abuse prevention strategies, and there are no programs or training that would inform the soldiers on this matter. However, there is personnel that is ready to deal with sexual harassment, should it take place (without any formal procedures being established). Therefore, no cases of sexual harassment were reported in 2016.[38]

Estonia's parental leave is shorter than in Latvia's case, lasting only 20 weeks, but up to 3 years of maternity and paternity leave with 1,5 years of medium salary, as well as 3 extra days of leave for childcare each year are additionally provided. There are, however, no programs for work-life balance, or measures that would support parents that are both forming a part of the armed forces. Part-time job positions and non-existent, yet flexible hours are allowed if the soldier studies. There is no support provided for single or divorced parents.[39]

In 2017, Jüri Luik, Estonia's Defence Minister, signed a bill that introduced new opportunities for women in Estonia's Defence force. The bill seeks to inform women on their opportunities in the Estonian Defence Force; allow women to serve in all military units; install a feed-back system to ensure equal treatment of both men and women in the military; and improve the overall service environment of the Estonian Defence forces.[40] This bill follows the move to allow female conscripts to join the Defence Force in 2013.

Back then, the plan was to, in the next few years, to "reach 200–300 [of women in Estonia's Defence Forces – author's comment], or ten per cent of the total. At the same time, the number of women in active service should double from the current 11 per cent to 20 per cent. After all, the security situation in Europe demands a lot from our Defense Forces. This in turn means the Defence Forces should be made up of an equal number of talented men and women."[41] This means that neither of the policies aims to achieve full parity, but encourage women to join the national army by their own initiative, as well as assures necessary preconditions to advance traditional military career and leadership.

38 *Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives* (NATO: 2016), 99.

39 Ibid.

40 Andres Siplane, "Women in the Estonian Defense Forces: Motivation, Attitudes, Experiences and Challenges", International Center for Defense and Security, December 2017, https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ICDS_Report_Women_in_the_Estonian_Defence_Forces_Andres_Siplane_December_2017.PDF, 1

41 Silver Tambur, "Estonia Contemplates Female Conscript Service", *Estonian World*, February 9, 2013, https://estonianworld.com/security/estonia-contemplates-female-conscript-service/

By 2018, there were 108 women conscripts serving at the Defence Force.[42] The total number of conscripts having served in the Defence Force is 151.[43] Currently the overall female percentage of all Estonian Defence Forces active military service is 9,8 %.[44] They are mainly serving in supportive areas like various functions at headquarters (staff officers), medicine (doctors, nurses, paramedics), logistics officers, commanders, exercise/training functions, communications and finance. The current highest rank female officer in the Estonian Defence Force is a lieutenant colonel. In 2019, the Estonian Defence Forces will have the first female battalion commander.

The inquiries at the Estonian Ministry of Defence revealed that there is no registered gender pay gap in Estonian Defence Forces, nor any service restrictions for female military personnel exist. All positions, training opportunities and courses are opened and accessible equally to all.

As described earlier, the Estonian Defence Forces do not have a specific gender mainstreaming policy. Yet, the principles of gender equality are to be observed on every level and in each position in the Defence Force. Considering the pro-active approach, the main strategy and efforts are directed at raising awareness and promotion of women's involvement and wider participation in national defence. It focuses on the recruitment activities and campaigns introducing military service and career opportunities in the Estonian Defence Force, including different activities (e.g. Information days, projects such as „Conscript Shadow") to raise awareness, share experience and identify possible challenges. It also includes communication campaigns to increase knowledge and support among Estonian society and constant ongoing activities with other defence institutions and sub-institutions to raise awareness and support among overall society and target groups. Gender-related topics are addressed and integrated into different national school programs and curriculums of the Estonian Defence Force War Academy.[45]

Conclusion. Factors affecting women's military roles in Latvia and Estonia

The growing presence of women in military structures is linked to various cultural and social facts/factors – or the global trends? – that accommodate the understanding and acceptance of female

42 Silver Tambur, "Estonia Contemplates Female Conscript Service", *Estonian World*, February 9, 2013, https://estonianworld.com/security/estonia-contemplates-female-conscript-service/

43 E-mail correspondence with the Estonian Ministry of Defense, June 28, 2019.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

equality in the ranks. Military organisations have come a long way, transforming in shape, structure and function – a process which is also facilitated by international relations, technological changes, robotisation, occupational specialisation etc.

Latvia and Estonia have inevitably undergone rapid change since the collapse of the Soviet Union and joining the EU and NATO. Though, their quick striving towards "the West" (figuratively and practically, through emigration) both countries have created a situation where the gap of understanding between women in the military as a normal phenomenon of today's society and women in the military as an exception (or an abnormality) is still existent. However, the demographic picture of the Baltic states seems to become a variable here, therefore creating chances for a better understanding of women's military roles in the future and societal acceptance.

Latvia and Estonia have ensured substantive participation of women in the military (Latvia even making NATO's top 3) which is not far off NATO average indicators. Both in Latvia and Estonia, women are ensured full combat participation (thus making the two countries members of a very exclusive club) and a gender-neutral legal framework. There are no "closed posts" and women are able to train and learn the required skills under the same conditions as men. Both also seem to have women serving in "assisting posts" (administration, medical service, record keeping etc.) rather than higher commanding ranks (which is, however, most common in all NATO member states).

Both countries lack gender mainstreaming frameworks and rather rely on the notion of non-discrimination which is to be implemented consistently when following orders. Estonia and Latvia also have gaps to fill in building support systems for sexual harassment and abuse victims in working environments, installing appropriate teaching and learning programs with a substantive gender component as well as providing support for vulnerable employees through better work-life balance, in situations where both parents are in military service, to surviving spouses or single parents.

However, Estonia seems to be exhibiting a more pro-active stance when it comes to women in the military. This impression is perhaps stemming from the relatively recent introduction of gender-neutral conscription, where both men and women are able to participate on equal terms (since 2013). In addition, Estonia's track-record with keeping up with resolutions 1325 is certainly more successful than Latvia's, that has not yet drafted a national action plan and national goals regarding women in peace and security. This meaningful gesture is clearly adding to Estonia's public image as a North-bound country.

NATO's Continued Relevance in Cyber Defence

Piret Pernik

In modern society, activities of political, economic, social and cultural life depend to a large degree on digital connectivity. Almost every critical national infrastructure has a digital component, which renders it vulnerable to cyber threats. As a result, not only the 56,8 % of the world population who uses the internet (in North America and Europe respectively 89,4 % and 86,8 %) but literally everyone might suffer from the negative consequences of cyberattacks to public services like electricity, transportation, healthcare etc.[1]

In the military sphere, cyberspace penetrates traditional domains of operations (air, land, maritime, space) and constitutes a new domain. Digital technology is integrated across weapons systems and platforms, rendering them more capable and vulnerable at the same time. The rapid development of new technologies (robotics, artificial intelligence, drones, military internet of things etc.) poses an opportunity and a threat to the armed forces. "It is an opportunity for military organisations to deter enemies and, if necessary, make war better, faster, more effective, and less risky."[2] But it is also a threat because "China and Russia are becoming more technologically advanced, while the militarisation of commercial technology poses an increasing threat from non-state actors."[3] The adversaries of liberal democracies can target the entire spectrum of digital society with its civilian and military components, "strikes against which can achieve operational and strategic effects while remaining below the traditional thresholds for crisis and conflict."[4]

Armed forces are at the present amending the ends, ways, and means of their strategies and doctrines in order to benefit from new opportunities and provide security from threats. The hyper-connected environment bears myriad of attack vectors and a large attack surface. Moreover, cyberspace differs from conventional domains of operations, while cyber weapons differ from kinetic, as they bring "unresolved policy challenges [at the international level]

1 "World Internet Usage and Population Statistics, May 2019," *Internet World Stats*, https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm

2 Laura Schousboe, "The Pitfalls of Writing About Revolutionary Defence Technology," *War on the rocks*, July 15, 2019, https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/the-pitfalls-of-writing-about-revolutionary-defense-technology/

3 Ibid.

4 Paul J. MacKenzie, "Cyberspace NOTAM! NATO's Vision and Strategy on the Cyberspace Domain," *JAPCC Journal* June 12, 2019, https://www.japcc.org/cyberspace-notam/, 28.

about deterrence, attribution, and response."[5] Many believe that the rapid technological change has changed the character of war (how it will be waged), but the armed forces' strategies, doctrines, and concepts have not been amended to keep up with the change.

How well is NATO adapting to this change? The history of conflict in cyberspace dates back to 1986, but it was only in March 1999 when NATO web servers and NATO members were first targeted by Denial of Service (DoS) attacks conducted by Russian and Yugoslavian hackers.[6] Fast forward to 2017, when NATO had in average 500 cyber incidents per month, and this number has been growing. The alliance issued the first cyber defence policy in 2008, but it was only in August 2019 when NATO's military structure was given authority and resources to create comprehensive global situational awareness for cyberspace. Compared to the development of offensive cyber capabilities of China, Russia, Iran and North Korea, NATO is lagging behind in deterrence and defence, as well as the operational capability to integrate sovereign effects to military operations. Once the full operational capability of the new NATO Cyber Operations Centre (CyOC) will be attained (and if the centre will be adequately manned and resourced with technical automated platforms), NATO's capability will increase.

The question this article addresses is the following: how well is NATO adapting to cyber threats that "are becoming more frequent, complex, destructive, and coercive"?[7] Colonel Jaak Tarien, the Director of NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (NATO CCD COE), and Siim Alatalu, a researcher in the same centre, raised a question about NATO's continuing relevance in cyber defence.[8] The authors imply that NATO risks losing its relevance in the future. Other experts are critical about the present maturity of NATO to deter and defend against cyber threats. In this view, as of the second part of 2018, "the alliance [was] at roughly 10 percent of readiness when it comes to understanding, responding to, and preventing cyber threats" and is "nowhere near ready to face cyber threats at the "speed of relevance". [9]

5 Chistian Leuprecht, Joseph Szeman and David B. Skillicorn, "The Damoclean Sword of Offensive Cyber: Policy Uncertainty and Collective Insecurity," *Contemporary Security Policy*, May 27, 2019.

6 In 1986, Western German hackers, stealing information for the KGB, intruded computers of a U.S. research institute searching for secret information about the U.S. plan to intercept Soviet missiles. The cyberattack is called Cuckoo's Egg. See "Part 2: Realization," ed. Jason Healey, *A Fierce Domain: Conflict in Cyberspace, 1986 to 2012* (Cyber Conflict Studies Association, 2013).

7 "Brussels Summit Declaration," NATO, July 11, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm#20

8 Jaak Tarien and Siim Alatalu, "The Baltic Defence College, NATO and Cyber: Leading the Change," Ed. Mark Voyger, *NATO at 70 and the Baltic States: Strengthening the Euro-Atlantic Alliance in an Age of Non-linear Threats* (Tartu: the Baltic Defence College. 2019).

9 Sophie Arts, "Offense as the New Defense: New Life for NATO's Cyber Policy," German Marshal Fund, December 13, 2018, http://www.gmfus.org/publications/offense-new-defense-new-life-natos-cyber-policy

NATO heads of state and government announced at the Brussels summit: "We must be able to operate as effectively in cyberspace as we do in the air, on land, and at sea to strengthen and support the Alliance's overall deterrence and defence posture."[10] This article, therefore, examines the question if the alliance's modernisation and adaption enable it to successfully tackle the present and future challenges in the cyber domain, and what more needs to be done. To paraphrase the NATO Secretary General – what cyber capabilities are needed in order to become fit for purpose and fit for future threats?[11]

Cyber security as a national security issue

The silent battle has been executed by cyber powers below the threshold of use of force or an armed attack for a long time. A more recent trend is open cyberwarfare during peacetime, crisis and armed conflicts. Tarien and Alatalu have observed a paradigm shift in national security thinking which dates back to the early 2000s when states began to recognise that cyber threats are an important national security matter. Others have warned that because countries use cyberspace as "an instrument of war", we are heading towards "a virtual arms race" and erecting "digital iron curtains".[12] There has been another paradigm shift in national security thinking in the U.S. with the conceptualisation of day-to-day competition and conflict in cyberspace and the concomitant necessity of "defending forward."[13] Countries are also becoming more open about warfare in cyberspace. In June 2019, the U.S. Cyber Command conducted an offensive cyber operation against Iranian rocket and missile command and control systems (that were widely reported in media and confirmed by the Iranian authorities).[14]

What will these trends entail for NATO in terms of its ability to deter and defend against cyberattacks? In the future NATO could opt for an offensive cyber strike instead of a kinetic operation to support its missions and operations. Or vice versa, it could use a kinetic strike to stop ongoing cyberattacks or destroy an adversary's cyber attack

10 "Brussels Summit Declaration," NATO, July 11, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm#20

11 Jens Stoltenberg, "Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the SACEUR change of command ceremony," NATO, May 3, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_165813.htm?selectedLocale=en

12 Arun Vishwanath, "The Internet is already being weaponized. The U.S. cyberattack on Iran won't help," *The Washington Post*, July 9, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/07/09/internet-is-already-being-weaponized-us-cyberattack-iran-wont-help/?utm_term=.6439dbc1e66b

13 "Summary. Department of Defence Cyber Strategy 2018," US Department of Defence, https://media.defense.gov/2018/Sep/18/2002041658/-1/-1/1/CYBER_STRATEGY_SUMMARY_FINAL.PDF

14 "The Latest: US struck Iranian computers earlier this week," *AP News*, June 23, 2019, https://www.apnews.com/f80d75b616564b868b93b940103a0eb5.

capability. For instance, in June 2019, Israeli armed forces announced that they destroyed Hamas' cyberattack operatives located in a building in Gaza by an airstrike.[15] Thomas Rid does not see this kinetic offence as a precedent for the future of cyberwarfare, because Hamas intelligence was a legitimate military target of the Israeli defence forces in the ongoing armed conflict.[16] However, since NATO has declared the will to respond to cyberattacks by any, including kinetic, means, the alliance should consider which conditions justify offensive cyber operations against a civilian or military target, and kinetic actions against a cyberspace target. At present, there is uncertainty about conditions when a cyberattack amounts to use of force (or threat of it) or an armed attack under international law.[17] Such cyberattacks are also referred to as grey zone cyberattacks.

Implementing cyberspace as a domain of operations

Compared to what can be considered an incremental development of cyber defence policies and structures from 2002 onwards (when NATO first promised to strengthen capabilities to defend against cyberattacks), since 2014, NATO has taken important strides to increase its defensive posture against cyber threats.[18] In 2008, the Alliance began to organise the annual cyber defence exercise Cyber Coalition. It has integrated cyber elements into crisis management exercise (CMX). The NATO CCD COE organises technical cyber defence exercises and some of these engage strategic level decision-makers (Locked Shields). The centre also organises the cyber-kinetic exercise Crossed Sword. NATO invests into NATO cyber range located in Estonia. It has formed cyber defence focused committees and agencies among which the most important operational capabilities are NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA), which is not part of the military command structure, and a computer incident response capability (NCIRC) and rapid response teams.[19]

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15 Lily Hay Newman, "What Israel's Strike on Hamas Hackers Means for Cyberwar," *Wired*, June 5, 2019, https://www.wired.com/story/israel-hamas-cyberattack-air-strike-cyberwar/

16 Ibid.

17 Tallinn Manual 2.0 rule 69, which defines use of force, concludes that death, injury and physical damage or destruction of objects are uses of force, but other cases are less clear. See Part III "14. The Use of Force," Ed. Michael Schmitt, *Tallinn Manual 2.0 On the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

18 "Prague Summit Declaration," NATO, November 21, 2002, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_19552.htm?

19 NATO headquarters convenes several committees and boards dealing with cyber defence, among them: the military committee, the cyber defence committee, the cyber defence management board. NCIA provides CIS services, command and control and other services for the whole NATO enterprise.

The watershed decisions during the last six years are the following:

- At the Wales summit in 2014, NATO recognised that international law applies to cyberspace (more recently some NATO members have presented their views on how it applies). They also decided that cyberattacks can evoke a response under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.
- At the Warsaw summit in 2016, NATO declared that cyberspace is "a domain of operations in which NATO must defend itself as effectively as it does in the air, on land, and at sea." In practice, this implied that NATO began to operationalise the cyber domain by implementing inter alia a cyber defence roadmap (approved in February 2017). In June 2018, NATO's military committee approved the vision and strategy on cyber domain operations, and the first doctrine for NATO's cyberspace operations is expected to be issued in 2019.[20] In addition, NATO adopted a Cyber Defence Pledge, which requires its members to allocate more resources to the defence of national networks, military systems and critical infrastructure. Also, as part of the NATO defence planning process, members must fulfil NATO requirements of cyber capability development.
- At the Brussels summit in 2018, NATO established counter-hybrid teams to support members in the areas of cyber security, disinformation and energy security. Most importantly, on August 31, 2018, the NATO Cyber Operations Centre (CyOC) was launched, and soon after it was announced that nine NATO members (among them Estonia, Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK and the U.S.) will contribute sovereign cyber effects to support NATO missions and operations.

CyOC – a placeholder for a full cyber command?

In 2018 NATO decided against creating a full cyber command, instead, it took an incremental approach with a possibility of developing one in the future.[21] It was a prudent decision because creating a full-fledged command requires large investments and a strong political will, which was obviously lacking.

The CyOC is a part of the NATO military command structure and it is located at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Power Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium. SHAPE is a strategic level military headquarters for

20 Laura Brent, "NATO's Role in Cyberspace," *NATO Review*, February 12, 2019, http://nato.tagomago.be/files/Pages/2019/Also-in-2019/natos-role-in-cyberspace-alliance-defence/EN/index.htm

21 Kimberly Underwood, "NATO's Answer to Cyber Warfare," *The Cyber Edge, Signal,* April 1, 2019, https://www.afcea.org/content/natos-answer-cyber-warfare

one of the two components of NATO military command structure – the Allied Command Operations, which is headed by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR).[22] CyOC serves as a theatre component of cyberspace capability. Its director reports to deputy chief of staff for cyberspace, who serves also as a commander of NATO CIS group (also located in SHAPE).[23] The deputy chief of staff for cyberspace (at the present major general Wolfgang Renner) is the principal cyber domain advisor for SACEUR. Commanders of the three tactical level command components of NATO (land, air, maritime) are also respective domain advisors.[24] Hence, based on this function, CyOC can be considered a tactical level command that would be subordinated to joint task force commanders. SHAPE's other cyber defence organisations are the NATO CIS group (that provides communication and information services for the deployed components of the command structure and headquarters), and the J6 cyberspace division within a cyberspace directorate. [25] The CyOC has three branches – situational awareness, operations, and plans. The mission is threefold:

- to provide situational awareness for the cyber domain,
- to ensure cyber aspects of mission assurance,
- to manage the integration of cyber aspects into planning, executing and coordination of NATO exercises, missions and operations.

The integration of sovereign cyber effects into NATO missions and operations will enable the NATO joint task force commanders and subordinate commanders to benefit from these effects, but the NATO members would retain command and control of their offensive cyber teams. The U.S. would be an exception because the commander of the U.S. European Command holds also the position of SACEUR. Thus, the U.S. cyber command capabilities could be directed and controlled under the U.S. European Command commander and SACEUR simultaneously.[26]

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22 Allied Command Operations is responsible for the planning and execution of NATO missions and operations.

23 Wolfgang Renner, "CyOC: Introduction," remarks presented at *the CyCon US conference,* Washington DC, November 14, 2018, https://cyber.army.mil/Events/CyCON-US/Article/1716780/maj-gen-wolfgang-renner-deputy-chief-of-staff-for-cyberspace-shape/; Don Lewis, "What is NATO Really Doing In Cyberspace?" *War on the rocks*, February 4, 2019.

24 Tactical air command is in Germany, Ramstein; land command is in Turkey, Izmir; and maritime command is in the UK, Northwood. In addition to strategic and tactical level components, at the operational level there are three Joint Force Commands in the Netherlands (Brunssum), in Italy (Naples) and in U.S. (Norfolk). In 2018, two additional commands were created for maritime (Norfolk, U.S.) and logistics security (Ulm, Germany).

25 Wolfgang Renner, "CyOC: Introduction," remarks presented at *the CyCon US conference,* Washington DC, November 14, 2018, https://cyber.army.mil/Events/CyCON-US/Article/1716780/maj-gen-wolfgang-renner-deputy-chief-of-staff-for-cyberspace-shape/

26 Sydney Freedberg, "NATO to 'Integrate' Offensive Cyber by Members," *Breaking Defense,* 16 November 2018, https://breakingdefense.com/2018/11/nato-will-integrate-offensive-cyber-by-member-states/.

The largest part of the centre's work focuses on the first two missions.[27] The CyOC will attain full operational capability in 2023, but the manpower will be modest in size, only 70. The biggest development challenges for the centre will be the ability to recruit and retain a talented workforce, and to amass sufficient funding to acquire high-tech situational awareness and information sharing tools.

NATO's key missions in the contested cyberspace

With what can be considered a moderate composition and future outlook of the CyOC, it is questionable if NATO will be able to keep up with China's and Russia's ambitions to become words leading cyber powers. China and Russia launch "persistent campaigns in and through cyberspace that pose long term strategic risk" to the U.S. and its allies.[28] In the meantime there are indicators that these countries are seeking to cooperate more in cyber security matters which is likely to challenge the hope to increase global support for views of liberal democratic countries in the cyberspace. Media reports show that also Iran is establishing a stronger relationship with China in cyber security matters.[29]

NATO faces several challenges in the cyberspace: a myriad of threat actors, many stakeholders (civilian authorities, military, industry, civil society organisations, individuals etc.), the rapid technological change that expands the cyberattack surface (increasing vulnerabilities). Another key challenge is that the majority of nation-state cyberattacks are executed below the threshold of use of force or an armed attack, which makes deterrence and defence difficult.[30] The blurring of war and peace, state and non-state actors coupled with a difficulty to categorise a cyberattack as use of force, high level of uncertainty and misperception, the risk of escalation, and ambiguity related to political attribution process (and the reluctance of intelligence agencies to disclose evidence publicly) will complicate NATO's task to operationalise the cyber domain.

27 Wolfgang Renner, "CyOC: Introduction," remarks presented at *the CyCon US conference,* Washington DC, November 14, 2018, https://cyber.army.mil/Events/CyCON-US/Article/1716780/maj-gen-wolfgang-renner-deputy-chief-of-staff-for-cyberspace-shape/

28 US Department of Defence, "Summary. Department of Defence Cyber Strategy 2018," https://media.defense.gov/2018/Sep/18/2002041658/-1/-1/1/CYBER_STRATEGY_SUMMARY_FINAL.PDF

29 Zac Doffman, "Cyber Warfare Threat Rises as Iran And China Agree 'United Front' Against U.S.," *Forbes*, July 6, 2019, https://www.forbes.com/sites/zakdoffman/2019/07/06/iranian-cyber-threat-heightened-by-chinas-support-for-its-cyber-war-on-u-s/

30 Ibid.

Tarien and Alatalu espouse three lines of future activities for NATO:

- determine how to respond to cyberattacks in the grey zone (that is, below the threshold of use of force or an armed attack);
- leverage partnerships with global and regional partners, including the EU;
- implement cyberspace as the domain of operations (also known as operationalising the cyber domain).[31]

In the concluding part of this article, possible mission areas for NATO are introduced. In order for the Alliance to achieve superiority in the contested cyberspace in the coming years. NATO has to decide in which activity areas to take the leading role and where to support other actors (in particular nations and the EU), as well as what capabilities must be prioritised.

Implementing cyberspace as a domain of operations

While NATO has not revealed publicly how the implementation of the cyber domain will be realised (what are ends, ways and means), the following lines of activities have been outlined by several NATO representatives:

1. Securing NATO-owned and mission-critical assets

The oldest and most basic mandate is securing NATO information, networks and systems during peacetime, crisis and armed conflict. These tasks are carried out by the NCIA and the NATO CIS group that provide also situational awareness, communications, and command and control. NATO's security depends in addition on the cyber security of NATO members' networks (which are a part of the NATO force structure) and on host-nation's critical national infrastructure (such as communications, energy, transportation, water etc.). In this area, NATO oversees the fulfilment of Cyber Defence Pledge and the Baseline Requirements for National Resilience. The latter is designed to improve civil preparedness of NATO members, including commercial infrastructures and services.[32]

31 Jaak Tarien and Siim Alatalu, "The Baltic Defence College, NATO and Cyber: Leading the Change," In: Ed. Mark Voyger, *NATO at 70 and the Baltic States: Strengthening the Euro-Atlantic Alliance in an Age of Non-linear Threats* (Tartu: the Baltic Defence College: 2019), https://www.baltdefcol.org/files/files/publications/NATO_AT_70_AND_THE_BALTIC_STATES.pdf

32 "A More Resilient NATO, Deterrence, Defence and Dialogue," *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2018*, NATO, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20190315_sgar2018-en.pdf#page=13.

According to Jeremy Hunt, the UK foreign secretary, "resilience has been the area that we've actually made the most progress on in recent years."[33] However, both of these areas – national cyber security and critical national infrastructure – are the responsibility of NATO members themselves, whereas NATO can play only a supporting role in them. There are great differences in investments and capabilities between the allies. For instance, the UK has allocated 1.9 billion GBP to the National Cyber Security Strategy and is investing another 22 million GBP into the UK army's cyber operation centres. At the same time, the civil and military cyber capabilities of other NATO members are relatively underdeveloped and underfunded. The International Telecommunication Union's cyber security index 2018 ranks countries as following: the UK leads globally, Lithuania ranks 4, Estonia 5, but Greece ranks only 77, Romania – 72, the Czech Republic – 71, Albania – 62 and Montenegro – 61 globally. Hence, the maturity levels of the UK and Greece are very different, but collective security is only as good as the security of the weakest link connected to the network.

Therefore, NATO members could consider additional measures that would motivate robust investments into national resiliency. One option would be to create a common funding scheme (based on a model of the European Defence Fund of the EU) for capability development and research and innovation projects. Expert workshops in specific capability development areas (for instance, personnel policies on how to recruit, retain and build cyber force) could be organised jointly (so far, two NATO conferences on the cyber defence pledge have been held). Besides, NATO cyber leaders – such as Canada, France, Germany, the UK and U.S. – could offer specialist training and cooperation projects for smaller NATO members who are developing national cyber commands.

2. Ensuring mission assurance in cyberspace

Another key mission that armed forces in all countries must introduce is to make sure that when digital components or systems fail military operation will obtain its objectives. In some countries, armies are rehearsing kinetic exercise scenarios under these conditions. It has been recommended that NATO's military exercises include scenarios of operating "off-the-grid" – that is in a degraded operational environment where command and control, surveillance

33 "Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Cyber Defence Pledge Conference, London," NATO, May 23, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_166039.htm

and other systems cannot be trusted. NATO's crisis management exercise CMX and military exercise Trident Juncture include cyber elements, but mission assurance aspects have not been exercised.

3. Integrating cyber aspects to NATO planning, exercises and operations

NATO does not have its own offensive cyber capabilities and has no plans to develop them.[34] To overcome this disability, NATO members have made their national cyber capabilities (called sovereign cyber effects) available for collective use in order to support NATO missions and operations. The cyber effects must be integrated with NATO's air, land and maritime military operations in a cross-domain approach. NATO joint task force and subordinate commanders must understand how cyberspace and cyber operations can benefit the mission and help to achieve its objectives. Cyber domain advisors and planners must develop a course of actions for the commanders to choose from.

Since 2014, the NATO CCD COE has organised an annual tactical level technical cyber defence exercise Crossed Swords, which aims to train offensive cyber operations experts who perform penetration into computer systems (these specialists are called cyber red teams).[35] The training audience includes also situational awareness experts and cyber commanders, as well as special forces operators in a kinetic force team. In the exercise scenario, kinetic operations interact with cyber read team capability, performing tasks such as "forced entry, covert access, hardware extraction, target capture or take-down, intelligence collection, surveillance, or kinetic activities on enemy territory."[36]

In 2019, Crossed Swords exercise scenario simultaneous cyber and kinetic operations targeted industrial control systems, UAVs and UGVs, maritime surveillance systems etc. Similarly, the U.S. army has integrated cyber operators at the tactical level in order for battlefield commanders to better understand benefits from cyber effects. The U.S. Army deploys a comprehensive specialised detachment integrating cyber, intelligence, information electronic warfare and space capabilities also at theatre level. At operational and tactical

34 "Securing Cyberspace. Deterrence, Defence and Dialogue," *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2018*, NATO, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20190315_sgar2018-en.pdf#page=13

35 Crossed Swords exercise is organised jointly by NATO CCD COE and the Latvian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT.LV).

36 Bernhards Blumbergs, Rain Ottis and Risto Vaarandi, "Crossed Swords: A Cyber Red Team Oriented Technical Exercise," *Proceedings of the 18th European Conference on Cyber Warfare and Security ECCWS 2019*, University of Coimbra, Portugal, July 4-5, 2019.

levels (brigade, division, and corps), hybrid teams, composed of cyber, signal and electronic warfare capabilities, are going to be deployed under operational commanders.[37]

Comparably, the Dutch cyber command prepares cyber operations mission teams consisting of an intelligence specialist, technicians, defence and planning officers, and other experts who will be deployed under an operational commander.[38]

CyOC should participate in cyber-kinetic exercises, and it should develop exercises to train situational awareness, mission assurance, and integration of cyber and other types of operations under the joint task commander.

4. Responding to cyber operations below the threshold of use of force or an armed attack

NATO has a cross-domain approach to deterrence and defence – it can respond to a cyberattack by any means (military, diplomatic, economic etc.). Until now, the U.S. and the EU have responded to cyberattacks and hybrid attacks by the Chinese and Russian governments by diplomatic expulsions, economic sanctions, indictments and statements of public attribution. Adversary cyber powers (notably China, Russia, Iran and North-Korea) are conducting day-to-day offensive cyber operations during peacetime. Most of these attacks fall below the threshold of the use of force. The question arises how to respond to cyberattacks that do not trigger Article 5. Examples of such attacks are "cyber activities by adversary state and non-state actors such as crimes, espionage, and malicious cyber activities that do not amount to an actual attack because they do not meet the threshold of armed force," [39] what would be the appropriate response? In these cases, should NATO retaliate with an aim to stop an ongoing attack (or destroy the adversary's capability) and by what means (diplomatic, economic, cyber, kinetic etc.)? Retorsions (unfriendly but lawful actions such as economic sanctions, indictments, travel bans, public attribution) have been implemented by states individually, but the implementing of countermeasures collectively is a legally controversial matter and is subject to numerous

37 Mark Pomerleau, "How the Army is taking cyber units to the battlefield," *Fifth Domain,* March 13, 2019, https://www.fifthdomain.com/dod/army/2019/03/13/how-the-army-is-taking-cyber-units-to-the-battlefield/

38 Piret Pernik, *Preparing for Cyber Conflict – Case Studies of Cyber Command,* International Centre for Defence and Security, December 2018, https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/ICDS_Report_Preparing_for_Cyber_Conflict_Piret_Pernik_December_2018-1.pdf

39 Chistian Leuprecht, Joseph Szeman and David B. Skillicorn, "The Damoclean Sword of Offensive Cyber: Policy Uncertainty and Collective Insecurity," *Contemporary Security Policy*, May 27, 2019.

restrictions. As per the law of state responsibility, a countermeasure is an operation that would otherwise violate international law, but does not, because it is designed to put an end to a cyberattack.

At present, 16 NATO members have created a military cyber organisation (including cyber commands), but 11 NATO members have not announced such plans.[40] According to the Brussels summit declaration, "individual Allies may consider, when appropriate, attributing malicious cyber activity and responding in a coordinated manner, recognizing attribution is a sovereign national prerogative."[41] However, since only a few NATO members possess intelligence capabilities necessary for attributing cyberattacks with high confidentiality (mainly the U.S. and UK), timely intelligence and information sharing is critical for collective response. The option of responding with an offensive cyber operation is available only to few NATO members (such as the U.S. and UK and perhaps France, Germany and the Netherlands). In these cases, the CyOC could coordinate sovereign cyber effects in order to retaliate to a hybrid campaign against a NATO member, because these types of cyberattacks are currently most common (states have restrained from destructive cyberattacks).

The victim country could invoke Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty with an aim to ask CyOC's assistance for stopping an ongoing cyberattack or destroying adversary's capability. Article 4 allows for a consultation to coordinate responses if a NATO member feels that its security is threatened by a cyberattack. The CyOC's situational awareness and sovereign cyber effects coordination capability could be implemented also when Article 5 is invoked. So even in cases when NATO decides not to launch a mission or operation, it could assist the member to respond to a cyberattack. Moreover, in coordination with the EU, NATO members could implement the EU's recently adopted coercive sanctions as part of the diplomatic toolbox.

In the present political context, it is unlikely that the 29 members would be able to come to a unanimous decision on what type of cyberattack constitutes use of force and by what means such an attack could collectively be retaliated. Even legal scholars are uncertain when a cyberattack constitutes use of force. Tallinn Manual 2.0 proposes that an armed attack in cyberspace must cause death, injury or physical damage or destruction of an object, while other

40 These countries are Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Slovakia and Slovenia. Max Smeets, "NATO Members' Organizational Path Towards Conducting Offensive Cyber Operations: A Framework for Analysis," Eds. Tomas Minarik, Siim Alatalu, et. al., *2019 11th International Conference on Cyber Conflict: Silent Battle*, Tallinn, NATO CCD COE.

41 "Brussels Summit Declaration," NATO, July 11, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm#20.

cases are less certain, such as manipulation or destruction of data or huge economic loss.[42] For instance, the cost to the UK healthcare from WannaCry cyberattack was estimated at 91,5 million GBP, and the global cost from NotPetya cyberattack was estimated around 1,2 billion USD, but not many NATO countries attributed these attacks publicly, and the collective response was weak.[43] Thus, while there is an emerging trend of coordination of responses to cyberattacks as part of a hybrid campaign in the EU and NATO, more clarity is needed about the lawful conduct of cyber operations as part of military operations. [44]

It has been argued that in order to maintain credible deterrence against cyberattacks, NATO should not set the red lines (that is to state publicly which types of cyberattacks amount to the Article 5 response), because this would invite adversaries to launch attacks below the threshold (which they are doing anyway) or conduct attacks that would trigger Article 5 response in order to test NATO's resolve. Nevertheless, even if this strategic ambiguity will be retained, NATO should design policies and doctrines outlining the ends, ways and means of employing CyOC capabilities in response to the grey zone attacks, and cyber defence exercises should include respective scenarios.

5. Comprehensive global situational awareness in cyberspace

The prerequisite for operationalising the cyber domain is, of course, real-time and global cyberspace situational awareness. For a strong political consensus on a response to emerge, all 29 members must be convinced who is the perpetrator. In most countries, attribution is a political sovereign decision (backed up by technical, signal, human intelligence). It is possible that intelligence evidence (that can reveal sources and methods) will not be disclosed by the country who makes the attribution and other countries will support their decision based on the pre-existing confidence and trust in the attributing country. For instance, in 2018 the Baltic states, Finland, Denmark, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden supported the attribution by Five Eyes of notPetya cyberattack to the Russian government (and to Russian military). But there is a trend to increasingly share

42 Legal experts did not have a uniform opinion in these cases. See Part III "14. The Use of Force," Ed. Michael Schmitt, *Tallinn Manual 2.0 On the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations* (Cambridge: University Press, 2017).

43 Dan Swinhoe, "Is the world ready for the next big ransomware attack?" *CSO Online*, March 4, 2019, https://www.csoonline.com/article/3345967/is-the-world-ready-for-the-next-big-ransomware-attack.html

44 "Trends in International Law for Cyberspace," NATO CCD COE, May 2019.

this type of evidence among trusted partners. The UK authorities disclosed recently that the UK government's National Cyber Security Centre (which is part of an intelligence agency Government Communications Headquarters, GCHQ) shared cyber-related information and assessment with 16 NATO members.

The CyOC gathers situational awareness from a wide range of open-source, classified, civilian and military sources. Technical information from NSIRC and industry and commercial sources is fused with intelligence about threat actors and potential targets.

In the end, SACEUR gives a comprehensive cyber threat assessment about global cyberspace.[45] Since NATO members are historically reluctant to share intelligence, it has been recommended that "NATO should help overcome national reservations and encourage member states to share an even greater amount of intelligence assets and resources, particularly when it comes to prioritised intelligence needs and operational requirements."[46] For example, signal intelligence capabilities are almost exclusively owned by the U.S. and NATO's situational awareness will be affected by the U.S. willingness to share it.[47]

In addition to encouraging members to contribute to situational awareness, the CyOC must have robust resources to recruit and retain a talented workforce, and acquire and maintain high-tech automated real-time information and intelligence sharing platforms and tools.

6. Cooperating with NATO partners

NATO has established cooperation with industry and the EU in the field of cybersecurity and defence. It has been recommended in the past that the EU and NATO should create a joint working group to discuss cyber policy themes where closer cooperation can create synergy, for instance, to include the coordinated response to cyberattacks below the threshold of use of force into the common agenda.[48]

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45 NATO sources include: SHAPE J2, NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre, Allied Command Counter Intelligence, NATO Advisory Committee on Signal Intelligence, NATO Cyber Threat Assessment Cell, joint force commands and single service commands, NATO members. In addition, CyOC receives information from commercial and industry sources, as well as media and online sources. Renner, "CyOC: Introduction."

46 Artur Gruszczak, "NATO's Intelligence Adaption Challenge," *GLOBSEC NATO Adaption Initiative 2018*, https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NATO%E2%80%99s-intelligence-adaptation-challenge.pdf

47 Ibid.

48 For overview and recommendations on EU-NATO cyber security cooperation, see Piret Pernik, "EU-NATO Cooperation in Cyber Security and Defence," in: *EU-NATO Cooperation. A Secure Vision for Europe, Discussion paper* (Brussels: Friends of Europe, Spring 2019).

Other cooperation formats may be possible in the future. Martin Libicki recommends creating a cybersecurity alliance in the Baltic Sea region (without Russia and including the Netherlands and Norway). [49] Similarly, Toomas Ilves has been advocating the creation of a global alliance of liberal democracies for cyber security which could deal with cyberattacks that do not target NATO as a whole, but individual members of NATO and the new alliance.[50] The Baltic Cyber Alliance (having a smaller membership than EU and NATO) could operate under the German leadership and based on a shared regional threat perception towards Russia. Libicki has suggested that because NATO cyberattack capabilities (which he believes belong largely to the U.S. and UK) are less likely to be used if a victim country is European, the Baltic Cyber Alliance could have a role in responding to the Russian threat.[51] Both of these alliances would bring benefits, but there is also a risk of duplication and wasting scarce resources. Therefore, the top priority for NATO members should be allocating more resources to national resiliency and collective response capability development within the CyOC.

If the global alliance of liberal democracies were to be formed in the future, NATO could take a supporting role in promoting norms of responsible state behaviour, attributing cyberattacks etc. Together with the global alliance and the EU, NATO could be a venue for discussions about how norms apply in cyberspace. It could also be a driver in setting norms.[52] In the meantime, NATO CCD COE will serve as a hub for like-minded countries to contribute in the areas of technical, legal and policy themes, as well as exercises. For instance, non-NATO EU members Austria, Finland and Sweden are participating in the work of NATO CCD COE and Japan has announced that it will also join the centre.

This article argued that, in order to implement cyberspace as an operational domain, NATO does not need to take dramatic steps, instead, it should increase funding and other resources across the following lines of activities: defending own networks, ensuring mission-critical networks and cyber aspects of mission assurance, providing high-quality cyberspace situational awareness, designing policies and practical tools to integrate sovereign cyber effects, designing responses to the grey zone cyberattacks, and enhancing cooperation with like-minded regional and global partners.

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49 Martin Libicki, "For a Baltic Cyberspace Alliance?" Eds. Tomas Minarik et. al., *2019 11th International Conference on Cyber Conflict: Silent Battle* (Tallinn: NATO CCD COE).

50 Toomas Hendrik Ilves, "Cyberspace Operations in Coalition. Strength in Numbers," remarks at *the CyCon US conference,* Washington DC, November 14, 2018, https://cyber.army.mil/Events/CyCON-US/Article/1716780/maj-gen-wolfgang-renner-deputy-chief-of-staff-for-cyberspace-shape/

51 Ibid., p. 12.

52 Steven Hill, "Current International Law Challenges Facing NATO," *NATO Legal Gazette.* Issue 39, May 2019.

In the opinion of general Wolfgang Renner, SHAPE's deputy chief of staff for cyberspace, the development of CyOC may in the future lead to the forming of a full-fledged cyber command.[53] At the present NATO members might not have the political will to create such an organisation, but they can and should make sure NATO will be able to successfully execute missions and operations integrating the full spectrum of capabilities, and deter and defend against cyberattacks, including those in the grey zone.

53 Wolfgang Renner, "CyOC: Introduction," remarks presented at *the CyCon US conference,* Washington DC, November 14, 2018, https://cyber.army.mil/Events/CyCON-US/Article/1716780/maj-gen-wolfgang-renner-deputy-chief-of-staff-for-cyberspace-shape/

NATO's Relevance in Energy Security

Ramūnas Vilpišauskas

Energy security issues have been attracting significant attention in recent decades in the Baltic Sea region, not least because of the asymmetries in the interdependencies of energy supply links among the users and suppliers of energy resources. These patterns of (inter)dependence and the use of them by countries such as Russia to exercise power over the neighbouring countries for its political purposes acted as a major motivation for the efforts of the Baltic states and other countries in the region to increase their energy security in the context of perceived external risks.

The establishment and functioning of the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence (ENSEC COE) in 2012 in Vilnius should be seen as a collective effort to deal with risks to the energy security of NATO member states. It serves as an important signal that energy security concerns deserve collective attention and capacities to deal with energy-related risks for which NATO could provide an appropriate institutional platform.

However, as it will be discussed below, the activities of NATO in the area of energy security, though producing effects which extend beyond strictly military aspects of energy security, should be regarded only as a supplement to other national and regional policy measures aimed at increasing energy security. It is national, sub-regional and EU policies aimed at increasing the sources of supply, competition and innovation in the existing networks of electricity, natural gas, oil and other types of energy links which should continue to receive appropriate attention of the Baltic states and other allied nations' policymakers.

The role of NATO in energy security – beyond the military dimension

The NATO's role in energy matters became visible after its enlargements into the Central and Eastern Europe and the growing evidence of Russia using energy supplies as part of its foreign policy tools, as well as attacks on fuel convoys in Afghanistan, terrorist attacks on energy infrastructure and piracy threat to oil tankers. At the Rīga Summit of 2006 which occurred soon after the Russia-Ukraine gas dispute, NATO declared its support for a coordinated international effort to assess risks to energy infrastructures and to promote energy

infrastructure security.[1] The first report on the matter was discussed by member states in 2008 in Bucharest. It soon led to the decision of the allies to integrate energy security considerations into NATO's policies and activities and to set up an Energy Security Section in the Emerging Security Challenges Division at NATO Headquarters.

The establishment and activities of the NATO ENSEC COE, which currently includes 11 member states with Lithuania as a framework nation, and some contributing partners, demonstrate an increasing involvement of members of the alliance in the coordinated efforts which deal with risks to their energy security. Its mission has been to enhance the capability, efficiency and cooperation in energy security among NATO, its nations and partners through knowledge, expertise and strategy.[2] For example, in 2018, the centre implemented 62 projects and activities within the three areas of energy security defined by NATO: raising awareness of energy developments with security implications, supporting the protection of critical energy infrastructure and enhancing its resilience, and improving energy efficiency in military forces.[3] It has also been noted that Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and its "low-level war against Ukraine" added another important new dimension to NATO's energy security agenda – the linkage between energy and hybrid warfare as Russia increased the price of natural gas sold to Ukraine, expropriated energy assets in Crimea and supported separatists with energy supplies.[4]

In particular, NATO ENSEC COE activities are aimed at enhancing energy efficiency in the military through technological solutions and management by reducing consumption, costs, dependency and the environmental footprint to increase the security and effectiveness of operations, protecting critical energy infrastructure by building resilience against disruptions due to security risks such as political instability, hybrid threats, cyber-attacks, armed conflicts, terrorism, natural disasters and emergencies, and increasing strategic awareness of energy developments with security implications through sharing intelligence energy policy, scarcity, cross-border grids and climate change.[5]

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1 John R. Deni, "An Intergovernmental Approach to Energy Security: The Role of NATO," Ed. John R. Deni, *New Realities: Energy Security in 2010s and Implications for US Military*, (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, January 2014), 31-32.

2 See "Enhancing Cooperative Energy Security," NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence, https://enseccoe.org/data/public/uploads/2017/12/nato_ensec_coe_brochure_web.pdf

3 *Annual report 2018* (NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence: Vilnius, 2019), 4.

4 Julijus Grubliauskas and Michael Ruhle, "Energy Security: a critical concern for Allies and partners," NATO, July 26, 2018, https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2018/Also-in-2018/energy-security-a-critical-concern-for-allies-and-partners/EN/index.htm. Also see Michael Ruhle, Julijus Grubliauskas, "Energy as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare," NATO Research Division, Research Paper No.113, April 2015.

5 "Enhancing Cooperative Energy Security," NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence, https://enseccoe.org/data/public/uploads/2017/12/nato_ensec_coe_brochure_web.pdf

The latter elements of geopolitics, economics, technology and environment indicate a broad interpretation of the energy security concept which includes availability, affordability, efficiency and environmental stewardship.[6] Moreover, although the focus of NATO ENSEC COE is on strategic analysis, research, education, training as well as the development of concepts and standards thus acting as a hub for expertise for NATO, the effects of its activities extend beyond the operational elements of energy security. Some of the products developed by the ENSEC COE for military purposes such as mobile electricity generation facilities can also be used for civil purposes, for example, by serving the needs of the population in remote regions.[7] The analysis of the developments of renewable energy-related risks is another example of how the activities of the centre contribute to a wider understanding of the risks to the energy security of the NATO member states and can be useful to managing risks related to the growing use of renewable energy.[8] NATO ENSEC COE also cooperates with private business in its activities through public-private partnerships in developing dual-use technologies and technological solutions aimed at risk management. More generally, as the principles of energy security policies were refined, NATO has established working-level contacts with the International Energy Agency and the Directorate-General of the European Commission.

All those examples illustrate that NATO's role extends beyond purely military, operational aspects of energy security and provides a contribution to managing risks from a civil point of view. However, the use of its contribution and the broader developments of energy security, first of all, depend on the national, sub-regional and EU policies, in particular, coordination and consistency of different initiatives which affect availability, affordability, efficiency and environmental impact of energy resources and their use.

Persistent relevance of (un)coordinated national policies

Different countries are endowed with different natural resources and climate conditions which affect their domestic mix of energy sources. These natural differences, as well as the existing infrastructural

6 See Jakub M. Godzimirski, Ramūnas Vilpišauskas and Romas Švedas, *Energy Security in the Baltic Sea Region: Regional Coordination and Management of Interdependencies,* (Vilnius: Vilnius University Press, 2015), 10-12.

7 The author is grateful to Romas Švedas for his comments on the activities of NATO ENSEC COE, including this example.

8 See Energy Security: Operational Highlights, NATO energy Security Centre of Excellence, No. 12, Vilnius, 2019.

connections, lead to complex patterns of interdependences which link suppliers with users of different energy resources. International trade in energy resources contributes to enhancing energy security by increasing the availability and affordability of resources. However, under conditions of asymmetrical interdependence, when a particular supplier is the only or dominant supplier of resources such as natural gas, trade can become a foreign policy instrument aimed at pressuring trade partners to adopt certain policies which they would not adopt otherwise. For example, some analysts refer to "the strategic dimension" of the Russian energy policy positioning the latter within the broader "grand strategy" of Russia.[9]

The debates on energy security in the Baltic states are usually underpinned by the traditional concern regarding their relations with Russia. Different episodes of Russian authorities using energy trade for foreign policy purposes have created incentives which acted as an important driving force behind the national and regional initiatives to reduce dependency on supplies from Russia and increase alternative interconnections and supply infrastructure (LNG terminals, electricity connections and others). Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP) which involves a number of the Baltic Sea region countries and the European Commission served as an important platform for coordination of such national efforts to restructure the patterns of interdependence aimed at increasing energy security of the participating states.[10] Although often marked by delays and difficulties in solving disagreements on the modalities of those sub-regional projects, such as electricity links and LNG terminals, the implementation of those projects progressed significantly, reducing countries' sensitivity to potential manipulation of energy links by their neighbour.

To be sure, there are still unresolved issues which pose risks to the energy security of the Baltic states because of their exposure to external influence. Their efforts at synchronising with the continental electricity system and desynchronising from BRELL (IPS/UPS system) which currently connects them with Russia and Belarus still have to produce results. Also, the perception of the risks originating from energy projects in neighbouring countries such as the construction of the Astravyets nuclear power plant in Belarus differs in each Baltic state, complicating their coordinated response. National commercial calculations and domestic politics often act as additional barriers to

9 See Zuzanna Nowak, Jakub Godzimirski and Jaroslaw Cwiek-Karpowicz, "Russia's Grand Gas Strategy – the power to dominate Europe?", *EnergyPost.eu*, March 25, 2015, https://energypost.eu/russias-grand-gas-strategy-power-dominate-europe/

10 For more on this see Jakub M. Godzimirski, Ramūnas Vilpišauskas and Romas Švedas, *Energy Security in the Baltic Sea Region: Regional Coordination and Management of Interdependencies,* (Vilnius: Vilnius University Press, 2015).

a coordinated approach in dealing with potential risks to regional energy security. However, there are important other challenges to the energy security of the Baltic countries and broader Baltic Sea region in addition to those traditional concerns.

Finding the right balance between different dimensions of energy security such as availability, affordability, efficiency and sustainability is a continuous challenge for most countries. Increasing the diversity of sources of supply can often contribute to both availability and affordability, but this is not always the case, as the debates on the costs of LNG terminals illustrate. Although the technological progress contributes to solving the cost issue of different types of renewable energy, the growing use of renewable energy raises questions regarding different types of risks it poses to the local, regional and other electricity systems.[11] These debates are likely to accelerate as the EU institutions and member states increasingly focus on environmental aspects of energy policies. Appropriate regulatory policies and rethinking the role of the state in the energy sector as technological progress reduces barriers to competition are important in addressing those issues.

Importantly, since most countries are strongly interconnected by energy infrastructure and supply links with the outside world, a coordinated policy to increase energy security remains important and will most likely continue in different sub-regional groupings depending on the particular project. Nordic countries' cooperation in integrating their electricity market provides one example of good practice, whereas BEMIP provides another one, and to some extent has been built on the experience of Nordic countries. The energy union of the EU with its five pillars of energy security, integrated energy market, energy efficiency, climate action and research and innovation has also become important in addressing common challenges. Progress has been achieved in terms of addressing the issue of security of supply and measures to address environmental issues as well as energy efficiency, but EU is still lagging in terms of removing national regulatory barriers to the functioning of the electricity and gas markets in the EU28.

Different positions among the EU28 as well as within the transatlantic community towards projects such as Nordstream2 provide an illustration of the remaining differences in the perceptions of risks to energy security, commercial and geopolitical aspects of it and the resulting national policies with respect to cooperation with suppliers

11 Julia Vainio, "Changing security aspects for future energy systems: Renewable energy and possible risks at the local, regional, and global levels," NATO energy Security Centre of Excellence, Energy Security: Operational Highlights, No. 12, Vilnius, 2019, 5-10.

of energy resources. As noted by analysts, the divergent positions between different NATO allies on the role of NATO in the field of energy security, with Central and Eastern European NATO members strongly supporting its role and some Western European countries reluctant to provide their support, also has had an impact on the evolvement of NATO's role in energy security.[12] Poland and the Baltic states are also more supportive of shale gas imports from the U.S. through the LNG terminals compared to some other EU member states, such as Germany.

The increasing aggressiveness of Russia against its neighbours, in particular, Ukraine, has led to achieving consensus on some issues, for example, economic sanctions, among the NATO and EU members. However, national commercial calculations and polarised domestic politics in NATO and EU member states are likely to constrain agreement on what are the key priorities in addressing different aspects of energy security and especially regarding the most appropriate instruments to deal with them. Therefore, the most likely scenario is a continuation of a patchwork of national responses with coordination efforts depending on the salience of particular issues and the cross-border effects, often resulting in sub-regional groupings of countries proceeding with their joint projects.[13]

Conclusion

Although NATO's role has increased significantly in the last decade or so, it mostly focuses on intergovernmental measures linked to raising awareness of energy developments with security implications, supporting the protection of critical energy infrastructure and enhancing its resilience, and improving energy efficiency in the military forces. The effects of NATO policies extend beyond purely military aspects of energy security but are limited and dependent on national priorities of its member states. As it has been argued, that NATO's role "is limited to information sharing and consultations whereas member states, along with a growing EU role, are responsible for regulation and energy policy matters."[14]

12 John R. Deni, "An Intergovernmental Approach to Energy Security: The Role of NATO," Ed. John R. Deni *New Realities: Energy Security in 2010s and Implications for US Military* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, January 2014), 31. For a recent call for a more active role of NATO in response to Russia's use of coercive energy policy see Julian Wieczorkiewicz and Dominik P. Jankowski, "NATO's pending energy security crisis," *National Interest*, February 19, 2019, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/natos-pending-energy-security-crisis-45032

13 For an illustrative discussion on different sub-regional groupings within the EU and their approach towards Energy Union see *Securing the Energy Union: five pillars and five regions*, Ed. Gerald Stang (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, February 2017), Report No. 32.

14 Marc Ozawa, "Energy Security in the Baltic Region: between market and politics," NATO Research Division, NDC Policy brief No. 1, January 2019, 4.

From the point of view of the Baltic states, NATO's involvement into building strategic awareness, protecting critical infrastructure and contributing to greater efficiency is important. It is also important to support coordination between NATO and the EU in terms of developing the best-practice methods of increasing energy security of their members and responding to the changing external environment. For states which are particularly interdependent with the outside world, as Baltic and Nordic states are, established patterns of sharing information and coordination among allies are extremely important as such. However, the success of efforts at coordinated responses to external risks originates from national policies which are usually driven by commercial interests, perception of risks and domestic politics.

Growing into Complexity, Growing into Confidence: Strategic Communication and NATO

Mārtiņš Daugulis

The year 2019 for NATO and Strategic Communication is a symbolic one. With all players and institutions involved and on the same page in terms of the importance of strategic communication; with self-made agility to the changing environment; and non-stop challenges – NATO's communication regarding itself is as confident as never before in the latest decades. From panic-stricken searches of identity, now NATO is on the path where inner challenges are more intense than the outer ones, but still mostly relate to the business of member states than the Alliance as such. Of course, there are pivotal points to stress, but the good news is – most members of the Alliance understand *what* the Alliance is, *what* is does, and *why* it does what is does. This allows U.S. to discuss the issue on a higher level – as the past decade's skillset of StratCom has been developed to match a hybrid warfare environment, NATO's own narrative now is better framed, more stable and deliverable on tactical grounds, where there is more space for development, and, most importantly – this "reality on the ground" can be channelled into public information and common awareness.

What's more, this "same page" (or common understanding) is seen as the first opening in a common Western sense of security, not only in hybrid and new non-conventional hazards but also in the context of public governance and engagement of each of the member states. NATO as an institution is dealing with the issues of StratCom by looking for solutions to challenges all Western democracies are currently facing with the post-truth dystopic realities.

The presence of strategic communication in modern national security and external policy is linked to the global challenges faced by all Western societies with the changing public information consumption patterns over the last decades. In addition, the classical division of the spheres of strategic communication, where one field is linked to the challenges of the military area, while the other to a communication role and sense of applicability in the organisation's mission, from private to governmental level[1], terminology and dictionaries are increasingly referring to strategic crisis communication – the ability

1 Ieva Dmitričenko, "Strategic Communication," *APC Strategic Review* 4, Martch 2013, http://www.naa.mil.lv/~/media/NAA/AZPC/Apskats_Nr.4.ash

to respond to an intense and unplanned threat to the informative environment. In writing, it is the most common aspect of strategic crisis communication that responds to the challenges at the value level – crises are unpredictable and, when used as an instrument of provocation in an informational environment, are direct attacks against fundamental values in the broadest sense, which also requires an adequate response.[2]

From this perspective, "military-strategic" communication, public communication in the sense of day-to-day management (which we can generally also understand as principles of good governance in the context of communication) and strategic crisis communication, as a response to unplanned situations, overlap and become inseparable. It means that, for NATO, good internal governance of the organisation is equally important in the case of external challenges. The increasing complexity of threats links the need for growing competence to the need for growing confidence – the ability to face organisational issues as a normal process of development.

The year 2019: the borderline to communicate strategically

Most of the 2019 challenges are the issues of 2018, some framed in better and a more efficient way, some re-framed in new qualities. Before 2019, from the political communication perspective, we can definitely conclude that the role of personality was predominant over the institutional or organisational discourse. It was not a surprise that political issues were dominant – political communication has always been an integral part of NATO summits – speaking on role, identity, purpose and future of the organisation. Nevertheless, before 2019, communication was largely dependent on personal sympathies and antipathies among political leadership. There is a point of argumentation that political leaders cannot cause major shifts in the NATO development track, however, at the same time, public focus, narratives of deterrence, or just the sentiment of collectivity and responsibility are directly dependent on political leadership.

Such inter-argumentation of alliance member-state leaders sending puzzling signals to the public and the international society largely translated into signals of weakness. It is possible to conclude that such circumstances construct a sense of threat – generated not

2 W. Timothy Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay, "Strategic Intent and Crisis Communication: The Emergence of a Field," Eds. D. Holtzhausen, A. Zerfass, *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 498.

so much from outside challenges, but rather from inner viewpoint contradictions. What is more, from the strategical communication perspective it is nearly impossible to effectively deal with contra-arguments of alliance member state leaders without losing confidence points to Alliance itself. Words in the Strategic Communication narrative matter – and global headlines including quotes of Alliance member state leadership would be interpreted as a challenge for NATO itself. This narrative was not only multiplied by mass media, third countries and parties, but also by the political elite of NATO member-states themselves – looking for arguments and backing their own position regarding the increase of the national expenditure.

Equally important to the identity issues of NATO was the shadow of Russia. Before 2019, the narrative that compared Russia to NATO's strength was an issue, driven largely by the leadership of the NATO member states themselves. Taking into account the sensitive tension between the Alliance and Russia, balancing success in comparison was a highly fruitful seed for the narrative of the weakness of NATO in the worldwide media. Of course, also the of critics of NATO and of Germany in particular were creating a dichotomy of views – especially with one particular statement of NATO being "obsolete".[3] Despite the fact that such notions were expressed mainly by one political leader, it definitely served as a catalyst for discussion on the particular issue. It is a paradox – NATO's institutional capacity to maintain its narrative of strength despite political statements goes hand in hand with the fact that these political statements are made in the public sphere with enormous and increasing importance. Under such pressure on communication, NATO Public Diplomacy and narratives of all actors within NATO, except political level, become the main driving force to strengthen the Alliance. Or, re-wording this argument, before 2019, the need for taking the show back from politicians into the hands of militarists and NATO as a military organisation was crucial. The reason behind this is simple – "on-field" NATO is perhaps stronger than ever before; therefore, what needs to be done now is to tell, to show, to spread the message. As the year 2019 shows, NATO has found the proper balance and pathway in "de-politicising" its narrative or acting in representations through the focus on its military capabilities and organisational efficiency improvement.

The year 2019 clearly shows that NATO has overcome the negative sides of its previous legacy. The NATO 70th Anniversary shifts the attention away from personalities to the Alliance. As put by Dr Jamie

3 **"**Trump worries Nato with 'obsolete' comment," *BBC News*, January 16, 2017, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-38635181

Shea, Professor of Strategy and Security – NATO has reached its 70th anniversary in much the same state that has marked virtually every year of its existence. To commentators and pundits on the outside, the Alliance seems to be in constant crisis and each new form of crisis is seen to be finally the terminal one. On the contrary, to those working on the inside, NATO has never seemed in more robust shape: engaged in more places than ever before, churning out initiatives at a faster pace than ever and in ever-longer Summit declarations. Now that the Alliance is firmly back in its most indispensable mission of collective defence, its future would seem to be more secure than in a long time.[4] Of course, it is possible to put the emphasis on global strategic trends and to argue that the Atlantic is becoming wider – the days when Europe could rely on North America for its defence are over. Equally arguable is the deteriorating international security situation and the rise of illiberal authoritarians as reasons for the transatlantic partners to pull together, as they represent a diminishing slice of the world's population and economic power. An equally strong point of view will be the argument that NATO is a victim of history and of the strains put on multilateralism and the rules-based international order. Others will see in the Alliance a precious bulwark against these disruptive forces and a guarantee that the liberal democracies can still emerge the winners.[5] All those discussions have their place, but the year 2019 has shown that they all have to be seen in a complex picture with what NATO is doing on the tactical level, on a daily basis, how it copes with ad hoc issues – and from this perspective there is a sense of a non-stop increase in efficiency, strength and optimisation.

The list of duties is long – the NATO that is deploying additional forces in its eastern member states, holding major exercises, combating cyber threats and terrorism, conducting training and capacity-building missions in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, and welcoming new members into its ranks will stand in baffling contrast to a political and academic rhetoric that presents NATO as obsolete and Allies as a drain on resources for little return.[6] This gap in understanding – criticising NATO for its age-related problems and at the same time seeing its efficiency on delivery – shows some clear strategic communication issues from one side, but from the other side, the routine logics of every large organisation in a changing

4 Jamie Shea, "NATO at 70: an opportunity to recalibrate," *NATO Review Magazine*, April 5, 2019, https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2019/Also-in-2019/nato-at-70-an-opportunity-to-recalibrate/EN/index.htm

5 Ibid.

6 Jamie Shea, "NATO at 70: an opportunity to recalibrate," *NATO Review Magazine*, April 5, 2019, https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2019/Also-in-2019/nato-at-70-an-opportunity-to-recalibrate/EN/index.htm

environment transpire. The main issue here is: how to draft the future of NATO under two different premises (pessimists vs optimists); including changes and reforms that have to be discussed as soon as possible. This challenge definitely needs to be addressed, but, since the year 2019, a clear vision of self-reflection has transpired, which is a good start.

So, what are the issues that will be under discussion for NATO, and that will most directly put pressure on the strategic communication capacities?

1. The agility to react to multiple threats with multiple characteristics – and to explain it to the general public as well as to deter potential attackers. The overall recognition of the wide range of hybrid threats like cyber-attacks, disinformation and propaganda among NATO leaders leads to notions of strategic influence, thus linking it together with NATO's Article 5 common defence obligation that can be triggered in the case of a hybrid attack. The announcement of the launch of Counter Hybrid Support Teams in 2018 is a huge step toward countering the 21st century security and defence challenges. At the same time, 2019 and beyond asks for delivery on hybrid-defence, already not just in theory, but in practice.
2. The NATO burden-sharing issue – what kind of Alliance will exist by the year 2024 – when all NATO countries should reach the 2 % spending threshold?[7] In order to answer this question, several trends have to be taken into account, such as the structural challenges to NATO's own cohesion and the forecast on the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture by 2024. Capabilities that address threats, such as cyber, military interference with vital space assets, terrorism, border security, data manipulation, the protection of critical infrastructure and crucial supply chains, and humanitarian crises engendered by extreme weather events may resonate more with the public than traditional hard military items such as tanks and artillery.[8] This argues for NATO's defence planners to take a broad view of capability requirements. The 2 % should be a target for the European Union as well as for NATO.
3. NATO-EU relations – encouraging European defence is a question of NATO's sustainability. As the agendas of the two organisations increasingly overlap, with the EU branching into NATO-style defence while NATO has been branching into EU-style security, these calls

7 Dick Zandee, "The Future of NATO: The Fog over Atlantic?" *Strategic Monitor 2018-2019,* Clingendael, https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2018/strategic-monitor-2018-2019/the-future-of-nato/

8 Jamie Shea, "NATO at 70: an opportunity to recalibrate," *NATO Review Magazine*, April 5, 2019, https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2019/Also-in-2019/nato-at-70-an-opportunity-to-recalibrate/EN/index.htm

for greater cooperation have become ever more strident and urgent. And yet despite all this diplomatic and academic attention, NATO-EU relations seem to be a perpetual work-in-progress. Greater collaboration in some areas, such as countering hybrid warfare or cyber-attacks, is obviously welcome. However, it also highlights other security domains that should be under the joint responsibility of both institutions given the more dangerous and demanding environment developing in and around Europe.[9]

The year 2020: communicating the future at present?

Strategic communication of NATO in the most direct way also touches on the common understanding of what the regional "order" of the international system should be, highlighting a clear problem: various value systems use strategic communication to challenge the "truth of the rules" that states have. In order for an organisation to be respected in the international system, its strategic communication serves not only as a response to the challenges of foreign policy but also as an instrument that must consistently strengthen the existing values in "peacetime". It is another prism of strategic communication that highlights the need to review not only the challenges of the world in a descriptive manner but also to prepare for potential risk in the future.

According to Mervyn Frost and Nicholas Michelsen, in the NATO StratCom study, strategic communication is considered to be strategic only when its separate communication examples coincide with the long-term values and strategies expressed by that actor and the values in the system.[10] This "sustainability" of strategic communication also supports the convergence of areas in defence capacity, such as the inclusion of certain fundamental principles of protection into the basic education content, the enhancement of common media skills and critical stress skills in society, and the emphasis on ethically challenging issues in the political environment, by strengthening the value system that is consistent with the understanding of democracy.

This would also be a challenging section of the issue: internal policies have never, as yet, become a possible weapon in the communicational environment of foreign policy. The country's strategic communications in such a view are to develop not only

9 "Eu-NATO Cooperation: a Secure Vision for Europe," discussion paper (Brussels, Friends of Europe, Spring 2019), https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/eu-nato-cooperation-a-secure-vision-for-europe/

10 Mervyn Frost and Nicholas Michelsen, "Strategic Communication in International Relations: Practical Traps and Ethical Puzzles," *Defence Strategic Communications,* Volume 2, (Riga: NATO Stratcom, 2017).

interprofessional compositional capabilities in the field of foreign policy and security but also have to be able to manage internal political processes, knowing that it is also a part of strategic communication. Each citizen, public servant and politician is a unit of NATO StratCom both by being the target audience and a replicator of the NATO narrative at the same time. So, NATO activities as an integral part of the educational process and public state narrative are as important as never before.

This also illustrates the importance of the NATO Centre for Strategic Communications in particular,[11] as it ensures the development of common awareness in the field of disinformation recognition as well as the identification of skills (and recognition as necessary) at all levels. In addition, in 2019, the "scope" of the NATO Centre for Strategic Communications increased significantly, both thematically and in terms of events, ranging from high-level European conferences to technical step seminars on recognition and prevention of digital threats. It is important to point out here that the Centre of Excellence operates not only on the basis of empirical analysis, but also offers the theorisation of concepts in close coordination with the academic environment in Europe and worldwide, thereby extending the common knowledge base on the challenges and trends of today's strategic communication on security. The fact that the Centre, despite its geographical location, also addresses the issue of NATO's southern borders in the context of terrorism increases significantly the added value of Latvia in development and visibility of the sector outside of the problems that are exclusive to our region.

In the author's view, NATO's investment in the following strategic communication issues would be recommended:

- Strategic communication as a concept of security and defence has been firmly consolidated within NATO. However, it would be advisable to develop this concept through the prism and presence of good governance and transparency (where possible) also with usable narratives for media, opinion leaders and politicians. Putting it more simply – NATO is developing a "common narrative?" for NATO itself (which is an extremely progressive notion), but introducing it to other players outside NATO through narratives and stories is equally important from the perspective of replicator education.
- At the same time, strategic communication as a universal competence in the formulation and implementation of all NATO

11 "Annual report by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on progress and planned action on national foreign policy and European Union issues," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, Riga, 2018.

deeds, and in co-operation with the public on all matters, should also become a priority. The same story and narrative on all appropriate levels is a matter of development.

- The research of strategic communication – both at the NATO Centre for Strategic Communication and in the performance of academic and research centres – should be strengthened and promoted, according to clearly visible growth criteria in the field of strategic communication in the country and society.
- Promoting cross-institutional cooperation to develop a common understanding of strategic communication as such and potential challenges is to be continued in previous volumes.
- The inclusive dimension of strategic communication should be enhanced by promoting openness and cooperation with the media, non-governmental organisations and the research sector. It is strictly necessary to uphold the public education and sustainability of the fundamental values in the context of the information consumption, hybrid threats of the 21st century and acquisition of knowledge and skills in all groups of society, thereby promoting the resilience of society to informative pressures in the context of hybrid threats.
- The maximum involvement of the public in the implementation of the objectives of interprofessional communication and in the management of processes should be considered as the norm, in accordance with the principles of good governance.

Overall, it is necessary to move the discussion considering burden-sharing, NATO-EU relations and agility into the world of complex threats, but this needs to be done with self-confidence. The year 2019 shows that there is no need to overreact on existential issues of the Alliance (as it would be so appealing around the 70th Anniversary debates), instead, the challenges to overcome should be faced relying upon the daily picture of NATO's efficiency. Under the pressure of circumstances, NATO has grown into adulthood of the organisation and its own recognition of it, making NATO a place where leaders and teams, institutions and people have to be well-balanced, and, most importantly, able to outbalance the risks within. Institutions are watching leaders, leaders are watching institutions, this is effective modus operandi in any organisation, and NATO is no exception. If there is something to be changed in the bigger picture, it's only the sentiment – the sentiment of self-criticism as a source of weakness is simply not true; self-criticism is a part of strength if followed by action. And, considering action – NATO is undeniably growing in complexity and confidence.

Postface.
NATO in a Turbulent Future Environment

Edward Lucas

The Atlantic Alliance is the most successful military and geopolitical organisation in the history of the world. Past empires relied on force first and values (if at all) second. With NATO it is the other way round. NATO is not an "American empire" as its critics claim. It is an empire of ideas. Countries can leave NATO if they choose. They can opt out of aspects of its membership. And they can join – also of their own free will.

NATO's future environment is indeed turbulent. Big questions surround even the idea of alliances in an era of "America First". Anti-Americanism in Europe is a strong tide, not only on the far-left in politics. The failed expeditionary wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have given new weight to their criticism of American global leadership. The world financial crisis in 2007-8 dealt a heavy blow to public confidence in the financial and economic competence – and the integrity – of the people who run the western world. That has spilled over into questioning of the security architecture. Threat perceptions of Russia are not evenly shared in the alliance. Even countries with hawkish security cultures worry that the main adversary now is the Chinese Communist Party, not the declining Kremlin regime.

It is worth recalling that NATO has always faced a turbulent environment. Already at its start there were worries about the whole idea of integrating West Germany into a military alliance. The Anglo-American relationship came under huge strain during the Suez crisis in 1956. General de Gaulle removed France from NATO's military command structure in 1967. The alliance's moral credibility was dented by the membership of Portugal and Spain (under fascist dictators), and Greece and Turkey (under military juntas). The military credibility of the United States was severely damaged by the failed wars in Indochina. Many countries had profound worries about the reliance on nuclear deterrence, which is at the core of NATO doctrine. Others, such as Denmark, all but gave up any efforts to take part in territorial defence. The "peace movements" in Britain and continental Europe during the 1980s created great political upheavals.

After 1991, many voices argued that the Soviet collapse had made NATO redundant. It should be wound up and replaced with a pan-European security architecture including the Russian Federation

(and excluding, some said, the United States). Under the motto "out of area or out of business" NATO geared up for expeditionary warfare and peace-keeping, adding counter-insurgency, low-intensity warfare to the mix after 2001. NATO expansion was predicated on the idea that Russia was a partner. Treated in a friendly and transparent way, the Kremlin would not object to the alliance accepting new members. But because Russia was not a threat, there was no need to make plans or deployments to defend these new members.

Those comforting fictions gave way to a bleak realisation of the threat. The first big shock was the cyber-attack on Estonia in 2007, followed by the war in Georgia in 2008. The biggest jolt came when Russia invaded and occupied parts of Ukraine in 2014. As a result, albeit belatedly and partially, NATO has now returned to its core business – territorial defence – in a region stretching from the High North to the Black Sea.

NATO has rarely been ahead of this fast-changing security environment. Throughout its history, the alliance has struggled to adapt in a prompt and sufficient manner. At best, it gets ready to fight the last war. Often it has misread its adversaries' intentions, or indeed their existence. It would be optimistic to assume any change to this pattern of delay and complacency in future.

In that framework, this essay will examine the likely and possible changes to NATO's security environment, with a particular emphasis on the Baltic Sea region. The first question is the threat environment.

The looming danger, of course, is China. Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, the Chinese Communist Party has unsheathed its global ambitions, stretching from the Arctic to the Antarctic, via every continent. The mainstay of Chinese power is economic: the offer of privileged trade and investment arrangements for favoured countries, and punitively restrictive ones for those that displease the leadership in Beijing. China also strives for a hegemonic dominance of the global discourse on issues relating to it – Taiwan, Tibet, human and religious rights, Hong Kong and so forth.

This already presents a security threat in the Baltic Sea region. Through the "17+1" format, the Chinese leadership seeks to play divide and rule in the European Union, inviting countries – 16 ex-communist ones plus Greece – to take part in what is in effect a beauty contest, where the prizes are better economic ties with China. The West has partially pushed back against the "17+1" initiative, with Germany, the U.S. and the European Union adding their weight to the rival "Three Seas" initiative. The Chinese leadership has also applied harsh pressure to countries in the region that have adopted what it

perceives as hostile positions. Norway was punished for the decision of the Nobel Prize committee in 2010 to award the Peace Prize to the leading dissident, the late Liu Xiabo; it took six years to normalise relations. Estonia spent three years in the diplomatic deep freeze for its president's meeting with the Dalai Lama in 2011. Sweden has been punished for its support for the bookseller, Gui Minhai, a Swedish citizen abducted by Chinese security agents.

But this threat is not specific to the Baltic Sea region, and it does not appear that this part of the world is of particular interest to China.

The immediate and overwhelming danger to the region's stability, by contrast, is Russia. The Kremlin does not accept the post-1991 settlement in Europe. It regards the international rules-based order in general, and contemporary European security architecture in particular, as profoundly unfair. Russia expects to have a say over the internal and external policies of neighbouring countries. It dislikes the language and citizenship laws in Estonia and Latvia. It objects to the steps the Baltic states have taken to establish their energy independence. It insists that the modest deployments from other NATO countries as part of the Enhanced Forward Presence as an affront to its sovereignty. Farther afield, Russia has repeatedly warned Finland and Sweden not to pursue policies of beefed territorial defence and regional and transatlantic military integration.

The paradox of this approach is that it is counterproductive. Baltic politicians' warnings about the threat from Russia in the 1990s went unheard. Admission to NATO was contingent on accepting, at least publicly, that there was no threat from Russia. Sweden largely dismantled its territorial defence; Denmark took an even more radical approach. Finland's defence efforts were kept as low-profile as possible. Latvia and Lithuania sharply reduced their defence spending after the 2008 financial crisis.

That has changed sharply. Finland and Sweden have raised their defence spending. Sweden put troops back onto the island of Gotland, in response to aggressive Russian intelligence activity there. Finland has acquired the stealthy US-made JASSM cruise missile – the first European country to do so, though Poland subsequently followed the Finnish example. The Baltic states have all increased their defence expenditure. Allies now take Baltic security seriously. Russia is creating a cohesive, threat-aware and resilient region on its border: exactly what it wanted to avoid.

Russia's stagnant political system and endemic corruption seem to place the country on a path of relative decline. The brittleness of the political system gives rise to speculation about constitutional

short-cuts which Vladimir Putin could adopt to extend his time in power. Other, contradictory speculation concerns his diminished popularity and the rise of uncontrolled protest and dissent within the regime. Whether stable or in chaos, rising or falling, under Mr Putin's leadership or under someone else's, Russia will remain a pressing and unpredictable concern.

The security position in the Baltic region is in some respects a microcosm of the European security dilemma during the cold war. Topography gives Russia an advantage. Seen in narrow theatre terms, the Baltic states are hard to defend, with few natural barriers to an attack from the east, little strategic depth and vulnerable supply lines. Any conflict therefore faces the Baltic states' allies with unpalatable choices about escalation.

This parallel is useful up to a point. But it is worth stating the problem here is not means. The Soviet Union was a serious military adversary, with a conventional dominance in the European theatre that presented NATO with bleak choices in the event of a conflict. Russia is smaller and weaker. The Russian Federation's military budget (61 billion USD) is not quite double the combined defence spending of the NBP9 – the five Nordic countries of Denmark (3.8 billion USD), Finland (3.6 billion USD), Iceland (17,7 million USD), Norway (6.8 billion USD) and Sweden (5.7 billion USD), the three Baltic states of Estonia (637 million USD), Latvia (700 million USD) and Lithuania (1062 million USD), and Poland (12 billion USD). Admittedly, Russia gets more bang for the buck (or rumble for the rouble). But it has to maintain a blue-water navy, strategic and tactical nuclear weapons programmes, military space programmes, and worry about defending the world's largest country by land-mass. And it has no allies. The NBP9 have to worry only about their own territorial defence, and can count on a range of support both within and outside the NATO framework.

Russia's main advantage is not military force. It consists of other attributes: agility, risk appetite, breadth of tactics and willpower. Military pressure plays a role in bluff and intimidation, and in creating perceptions of crisis and indefensibility. But Russia does not wish for or plan the military conquest of its Baltic region neighbours. It is too weak for that. Its path to success lies through political warfare: playing divide and rule both inside its adversaries, and between them.

The fundamental security problem for the region therefore is preserving and strengthening internal and alliance cohesion. If the NBP9 were one country, or even a tightly knit alliance, they would easily be able to withstand any threat from Russia. But they are not. Sweden and Finland are not members of NATO. Norway is not a member of

the EU. Denmark is in the EU but has opted out of common security and defence policy. Military spending is fragmented, with wasteful overlap. This hampers the countries of the region in their ability to deal with conventional military threats. Nuts and bolts issues such as reinforcement, logistics and stockpiles of military material were severely neglected during the post-cold-war decades. Much remains still to be done: NATO has rightly created a new command, based in Germany, to improve its ability to move personnel and equipment across the continent. But what Russia can do in hours or days takes NATO weeks or even months.

More seriously, the countries of the region also face internal divisions: political, religious, ethnic, linguistic, geographical, cultural, social and generational. These are the main part of the "attack surface" for the Russian Federation. It targets them using information operations, cyber-attacks, money, subversion, diplomatic tools, targeted intimidation, abuse of the legal system (lawfare) and other means. The attacks come in two forms. One is directly exploiting tensions – for example highlighting fears of migrants. The other is attacking the credibility of public structures and institutions. The aim is to portray the liberal democratic order as a sham: corrupt and ineffective, and therefore not worth trusting – or defending.

This form of warfare (modishly called "hybrid" by some analysts) is hard for conventional military planners to deal with. The "kinetic" military elements are only part of a much wider whole. Dealing with them in isolation risks missing the point – and the nature of the threat. For example, dealing with irregular Russian forces disguised as football fans is relatively easy. They can be tracked from the moment they apply for visas. Their communications can be intercepted and broken. Their operation can be penetrated. They can be detained, arrested, charged or deported. Such measures may be beyond the resources of the regular police force of the target country. But they form part of a familiar set of tactics and skills.

Much harder for NATO is dealing with attacks that span the civil-military, public-private and classified-unclassified divide. How does a military commander deal with enemy propaganda that is being spread by legitimate domestic news outlets, who justify their activity on the basis of editorial freedom, or the need to "balance" conflicting viewpoints? What about a company that is operating entirely legally, but whose activities are a potential or actual threat to national security? What about politicians whose personal, financial and family interests lead them to adopt approaches to national security that are harmful, but short of treasonous? What about an

attack that uses a group based in one country, which is affecting the security of another?

Russia retains the ability to surprise NATO militarily. Particular flashpoints include the High North and the Black Sea region, as well as the Baltic Sea. Aggressive "snap" military exercises, including dummy nuclear drills, cause anxiety and highlight NATO's military weaknesses. The Baltic states still lack air defences – the rotating "air policing" mission conducted by NATO allies since 2004 is a long way short of full-scale defence. The deployment of intermediate-range nuclear-capable missiles following the looming collapse of the INF treaty aggravates fears already stoked by the deployment of Iskander missiles and the S-400 air defence system in the region.

Far more troubling, however are not big geopolitical gambits but the advance and exercise of Russian influence through other means. Russia continues to exert pressure through its local economic proxies, chiefly but not solely in industries such as energy, financial services and transport. It maintains close ties with parties on the far left (and far right) of politics. It maintains persistent information attacks through clandestine and overt means. It intimidates critics – the case of the Finnish journalist Jessikka Aro and the Swedish security analyst Martin Kragh are two signal examples. And these tactics are, as mentioned above, evolving. A particular worry is Russian sponsorship of groups that attract disaffected young people. These include biker gangs, soccer hooligans, anti-crime vigilantes (especially those targeting Roma) and survivalists. Russians with intelligence connections have been spotted working as trainers in martial-arts and shooting clubs. Much of this is still below the radar.

Even in their current state, Russian tactics are hard to deal with. Worse, they are evolving. Russia has repeatedly caught the outside world by surprise. Nobody expected the DDoS attack on Estonia during the "Bronze Soldier" events of the summer of 2007. Similar tactics were used against Georgia a year later: blocking and defacing government websites, in the attempt to manage the outside world's perception of the conflict. Nobody expected the "little green men" – regular soldiers, out of uniform – who seized Crimea in 2014. Nobody expected the hacking-and-leaking attack on the U.S. political system in 2016.

To be fair, the word "nobody" in this context is overstated. These tactics are not new. The Baltic states experienced the original post-Soviet combination of propaganda, dark money, organised crime, subversion and other tactics during the 1990s. Their attempts to warn other countries about this toxic cocktail, and the way it could be developed and deployed in future, were unsuccessful.

The ability to identify and counter next-generation Russian tactics is therefore crucial. Three in particular deserve scrutiny. One is the use of "deepfakes" – authentic-seeming audio and video material that shows real people saying and doing things that they have never done. Deepfakes have been deployed on at least one occasion by Russian spy-ops forces against the NATO presence in the Baltic region, though the details remain classified. Dealing with deepfakes is a global problem, far beyond the scope even of an international alliance such as NATO. The solutions will involve a mixture of better authentication (such as cryptographic signing of electronic material) and better media literacy – encouraging information consumers to weigh the credibility of the material they encounter. This will not be quick, but the Baltic sea region countries would be well advised to encourage the search for such solutions via their memberships of international bodies such as NATO, the EU, the OECD and the OSCE.

A second, related problem is the use of artificial intelligence to generate authentic-seeming messages. This has also been used in the Baltic Sea region, most notoriously against the German forces based in Lithuania, with highly adverse effects on morale. Modern technology makes it easy to establish the identity of targets, to collect personal information about them, to reach them via their phones or social-media accounts, and to generate convincing–seeming interactions. This can also be done on a smaller scale by human intervention, but AI allows the industrialisation of this process. AI-driven intervention into electoral processes and political discussion is only a matter of time. Western-style political systems are predicated on the assumption of realness among politicians, voters, canvassers and other participants. AI-generated personae strike to the core of centuries-old assumptions.

A third looming danger is "super-doxxing". This term is my invention – based on "doxxing" which is a form of online humiliation practised by pranksters, involving the collection and publication of private material, or "docs". I refer particularly to the aforementioned case of Ms Aro. A Finnish journalist, she was instrumental in bringing to light the "troll factory" at the Internet Research Agency in St Petersburg. As a result, she was the subject of a campaign of systematic harassment and bullying, including a spoofed text message from her deceased father, which in the end led to her leaving the country. The Finnish authorities were completely unprepared for this level of intervention by a hostile foreign power, and failed to protect or support Ms Aro.

This highlights the dangers faced by "soft targets" – people who play an important security-related role in public life, but who do not

work for the state and do not enjoy the protection that would normally come with it. Soft targets include academics, activists, journalists, researchers and think-tankers. These people may be a country's frontline defenders when it comes to identifying and highlighting Russian and other countries' influence operations. But they have little redress when they come under attack. As well as the social media and other threats received by Ms Aro, tactics can include physical intimidation, threats to family members, vexatious and costly legal threats, and the publication of real or invented personal information. Belatedly, Finland is now taking steps to protect at least some of its soft targets. Other countries in the region should follow suit.

Given this threat environment, how should NATO and its allies in the Baltic Sea region respond? An important shift in NATO thinking since 2004 has been to realise that the so-called "frontline states" are not just consumers of security, but contributors. This realisation began to dawn in Iraq and Afghanistan, where countries such as the Baltic states and Poland played loyal and effective roles in US-led missions. It intensified as the alliance began to appreciate the danger it faced from Russia, and the expertise in the Baltic states, Poland (and non-NATO Finland and Sweden) in analysing and countering Russian intentions and operations.

In particular, all the countries in the Baltic Sea region would do well to follow Finnish examples in dealing with the full-spectrum of Russian influence operations. Finnish armed forces operate to a high degree of readiness. No other country in Europe is able to have so many trained men and women under arms in such a short space of time. The military threat of a surprise attack is thereby greatly reduced. But these efforts stretch well beyond the military. Media literacy, for example, is taught in Finnish schools. Senior figures in Finnish society, from public services, industry, academia, media and government agencies take part in the four-week "National Defence Courses" which combine training and education on security threats and crisis management, with network-building. As well as building cohesion, they also enable the Finnish authorities to gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses.

A particularly powerful example – all the more so because of the low-key and disciplined information managements surrounding it – came from the largest security operation in Finland's peace-time history. This was a raid by hundreds of officials, including special forces, coastguards, military police, intelligence agencies, tax inspectors and others – on a complex of buildings in the country's south western archipelago. The owner was a Russian millionaire Pavel Melnikov, who

insists that he has no connection with the Russian states, but merely likes islands. Details of the raid are sketchy, and media enquiries are met with a polite but stony insistence that "the police investigation is continuing". What is known is that the investigators found military-style communications equipment, huge quantities of cash, decommissioned naval vessels (still, contrary to the rules, painted in their original camouflage), plus bunkers, underwater installations and a helicopter pad. Speculation in security circles is that the Airiston Helmi company was some kind of front for Russian special forces. Certainly, the premises were close to a number of sensitive civilian and military installations. The Finnish government was clearly sending several messages with the operation. To its own people, it was signalling that a line had been crossed, and that the state was prepared to take firm measures in response. To allies, it was showing its skill in combined operations, and also its ability to keep a secret. To Russia, it was showing displeasure, but also its determination that the issue should not escalate. No Finnish official has publicly connected this extraordinary event to the Russian state. The only criminal charges mentioned have been money-laundering and the use of off-the-books labour in the construction of the facilities. In short, Finland signalled both resilience and deterrence, showing that it could handle what could have become a major security crisis with discipline and cohesion.

The most important local security attribute for the Baltic sea region in the coming years will be resilience. Deterrence makes sense only at scale. The West – in the form of the EU and NATO has the economic, military and diplomatic clout to deter full-scale Russian or Chinese aggression. The danger is the "grey zone" – the realm of influence operations described above, which fall short of military conflict, yet can deliver the political outcomes sought by the Kremlin or other adversaries.

The Baltic Sea region countries are in the cross-hairs of Russian attention here. Whether they can develop and maintain the internal and external cohesion needed to withstand these assaults on their sovereignty and stability will be the defining question of the coming decades. NATO can and must play a role in that process. But it will not be central. The main work will be done by others.

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