LATVIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

TOWARDS #NATO2030:

THE REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE BALTIC STATES AND POLAND

EDITORS: MĀRIS ANDŽĀNS, MĀRTIŅŠ VARGULIS

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The publication "Towards #NATO2030: The Regional Perspective of the Baltic States and Poland" offers a collection of articles that reflect on topical security issues of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Authors from the region discuss transforming regional security policies and realities towards NATO 2030. Particular attention is devoted to the transatlantic link, Baltic defence, the NATO–Russia relationship, and the role of other emerging elements and actors. Issues beyond traditional regional security challenges are also addressed.

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Contents

MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING INTERNAL COHESION

TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS AND RESILIENCE

STRENGTHENING AND EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS

POSTFACE

Note by the Editors

The Latvian Institute of International Affairs is privileged to present its input to the #NATO2030 reflection process. A process that began in December 2019 with a plea from Allied leaders has accumulated steam, with reflections from across different regions and multiple domains. It is indeed essential that NATO enters and endures the next decade in light of current and (un)expected events and developments.

The Latvian Institute of International Affairs contributes to the #NATO2030 reflection process with a collection of views from academics and think-tankers from across the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as Poland. The well-known Russia-related concerns of the Baltics and Poland are ever evident, and they maintain prevalence in this analysis as well. Nevertheless, this group of experts from North-Eastern Europe also underline other significant themes. These issues include the internal cohesion of NATO, new horizons of operation and resilience, as well as the need to strengthen and expand NATO partnerships.

We hereby acknowledge the generous support provided by the NATO Public Diplomacy Division. As this volume of articles demonstrates, solidarity and solid partnerships remain indispensable in order to efficiently navigate through times of uncertainty and shape regional and national security strategies in a wider transatlantic framework. We hope you will enjoy the reading!

Māris Andžāns, Mārtiņš Vargulis

Address by the President of the Republic of Latvia

In December 2019 at the NATO leaders' meeting marking the 70th anniversary of the Alliance, Allies agreed to initiate a reflection process to further strengthen the political dimension of NATO. The process of #NATO2030 was established. We are now able to consider the implications and to plan for the implementation of the findings of the Secretary General's group of experts. Meanwhile, the Latvian Institute of International Affairs (LIIA) has been fortunate to bring together 16 distinguished Polish, Lithuanian, Estonian and Latvian specialists in order to contribute to the discussion from a regional perspective.

During its 71 years, NATO has been not only the most successful defense Alliance in the history but has also maintained its core values and democratic principles. Among these is the right of all Allies to have their voices heard and the certainty that their security needs are recognized by the Alliance. This has been convincingly exemplified by the Enhanced Forward Presence in our countries which has substantially increased our security and demonstrated once again NATO solidarity and cohesion.

Now, as we look ahead to a rapidly transforming world, Baltic and Polish researchers offer a set of conclusions indicating the most challenging aspects and ways forward from a regional perspective. Particular attention has been paid to the transatlantic link, Baltic defense, as well as the role of Russia in the regional security constellation and its relations with NATO. This publication offers a collection of recommendations reflecting the perception of the Baltic States and Poland. Their aim is to contribute to the overall study developed by the group of experts.

While raising awareness of the most challenging issues from a regional perspective is important, so too is the development of a wide-ranging discussion on the issues regarding NATO's future development. This is important for the Baltic States and Poland, but it is equally important in all other Allied countries. We must ensure that there is an

informed debate in the mass media about NATO. This must result in improvements to the popular understanding of NATO and its activities which is essential to the Alliance's future success.

With this in mind, LIIA will be organising a public discussion based on these papers in the middle of December. I hope and trust that this will facilitate the kind of public debate which will strengthen NATO's role in the future and enable the implementation of #NATO2030 findings.

We live in a rapidly changing security environment in which NATO must adapt quickly if it is to continue to provide the defence and security on which we all rely. NATO has demonstrated this ability in the past. Now it must do so once again.

Egils Levits

FURTHERING DETERRENCE AND ASSURANCE

Managing Deterrence and Escalation on NATO's Eastern Flank

TOMS ROSTOKS

Introduction

NATO aims to be stronger militarily, more united politically, and have a more global outlook in response to increasing international competition by 2030.[1] Success in attaining these aims cannot be taken for granted though. Domestic politics in NATO member states and increasing great power competition may render achieving the above aims either easier or more difficult. Also, the success or failure of achieving these aims will have a direct impact on NATO's ability to manage deterrence and escalation in the Baltic Sea region. Although NATO has become more Russia-centred in recent years – something that the Baltic States and Poland appreciate – its aims for the next 10 years offer a more mixed picture. A greater emphasis on military strength and political unity signal further progress in terms of defence and deterrence, while a more global approach, which is really a codename for China,[2] may result in less attention paid to Russia. If that happens, the security of eastern frontline states may yet again become de-prioritised. This would make the management of deterrence and escalation more difficult.[3]

NATO has until now largely succeeded in deterring Russia in the Baltic Sea region without having to deal with regional crises that would

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[1] Jens Stoltenberg, "Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Launching #NATO2030 – Strengthening the Alliance in an Increasingly Competitive World", 8 June 2020, *NATO*, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_176197.htm.

[2] Peter Roberts, "NATO 2030: Difficult Times Ahead", 15 June 2020, *RUSI*, https://rusi.org/commentary/nato-2030-difficult-times-ahead.

[3] The views of officials from Poland and the Baltic States on the future of NATO have been summarised in the following study: Michał Baranowski, Linas Kojala, Toms Rostoks, Kalev Stoicescu, "What Next for NATO? Views from the North-East Flank on Alliance Adaptation", 2020, *International Centre for Defence and Security*, https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ICDS_Policy_Paper_What_Next_for_NATO_Baranowski_Kojala_Rostoks_Stoicescu_June_2020.pdf.

warrant addressing the issue of escalation. This chapter aims to find out what NATO needs to do to make sure that its successful track record in terms of deterring Russia on the Eastern Flank of the Alliance continues unabated. To this end, the chapter consists of three parts. The first part looks at NATO's deterrence logic in the Baltic Sea region and its past efforts to make deterrence work. The second part identifies the existing gaps in NATO's deterrence posture and addresses what can be done to redress those gaps. The third part looks at various factors that may interfere with NATO's deterrence efforts in the Baltic Sea region. Throughout the chapter, deterrence is discussed in both conceptual and practical terms. Although the concept of escalation must have been on decision-makers' minds when deterrence measures were planned, both NATO and Russia have managed to avoid escalation.

Deterrence – what has been done

NATO has tried to identify solutions for how to deter Russia on the Eastern Flank of the Alliance since the start of the conflict in Ukraine.[4] The logic of deterrence in the Baltic (Sea) region has been fairly straightforward. NATO's deterrent efforts have been hampered by normative and practical considerations, which rendered the aim of achieving a military parity with Russia impossible and unnecessary. The emphasis was thus on achieving sufficient deterrence and aiming for a middle ground between the *status quo ante*, which was untenable, and a heavily reinforced posture with a military presence in the Baltic States, which would be deemed by Russia as too provocative and in breach of the NATO-Russia Founding Act. The result was a combination of a number of factors, such as increased defence spending in the Baltic States (particularly by Lithuania and Latvia), more military exercises in the Baltic region, signalling resolve to protect the Baltic States, which are arguably the most vulnerable frontline Allies, a renewed focus on the core functions of the Alliance by NATO's militarily most powerful member states, and the placement of the multinational battalions in the Baltic States and Poland. These measures have been supplemented

[4] Nora Vanaga and Martin Zapfe, *NATO's Conventional Deterrence Posture, Deterring Russia in Europe: Defence Strategies for Neighbouring States*, (Routledge, 2018), 49.

by an increasing focus on Russia's confrontational behaviour in Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere. It has been widely acknowledged that Russia poses a number of military and non-military threats to states in its neighbourhood and beyond. Aggressive military exercises, election interference, disinformation campaigns, assassination attempts of Russian nationals abroad and, most recently, the assassination attempt of the key opposition leader – Alexei Navalny – have prompted Western governments to monitor Russia more closely. As a consequence, the NATO–Russia relationship has increasingly been based on deterrence.

At the heart of NATO's present deterrence posture in the Baltic region and Poland is the assumption that the combined military power of the Alliance is vastly superior to that of Russia. Hence, there is no need to achieve parity in the Baltic region with Russia. If, however, deterrence would fail, Russia would initially score military successes – but then its aggression would trigger NATO solidarity, because forces from more than two thirds of NATO member states are present in the Baltic States and Poland. NATO member states would then use military and other instruments at their disposal to expel Russian forces from the Baltic region. It would not be possible for Russia to control escalation because NATO's defeat in the Baltic region would have far-reaching, devastating consequences for the Alliance, putting its very existence in question. NATO would have no choice but to escalate irrespective of Russia's initial military gains. This is probably also well-understood in Moscow. NATO is so valuable to its member states that it would have to be preserved at all costs. In other words, NATO is too big to fail. Starting a military conflict with NATO would have immeasurable military, political, and economic costs for Russia. Thus, back to square one – deterrence should hold because NATO would respond forcefully.

None of the conflict scenarios would work for Russia. A *fait accompli* would provoke a forceful reaction from NATO. The initiation of an international crisis would give NATO sufficient time to respond. Covert violent actions and nonviolent subversion would result in a further deterioration of relations between Russia and the West without achieving Russia's key political objectives in the Baltic region.[5] Besides, Russia's interests in the Baltic region are more limited than is

[5] Andrew Radin, "Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Threats and Potential Responses", 2017, *RAND*, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1577.html.

often recognised.[6] Military aggression against the Baltics would entail significant risks and would bring very few benefits. Thus, even a limited NATO deterrent posture in the Baltic region would be sufficient. If subversion and limited aggression would not bring the desired results and a far more aggressive approach would risk devastation, then initiating a military conflict in the Baltic region would be imprudent.

Deterrence – what needs to be done

Although the existing NATO deterrence posture has been sufficient so far, there are serious gaps in Baltic States' defences. At present, a *fait accompli* is possible, which would make it more problematic for NATO to reclaim territories lost to Russia in a potential future conflict. Thus, the aim should be to strengthen NATO's presence in the Baltic region by making the *fait accompli* scenario more unlikely. The integrated capabilities of the Baltic militaries and NATO eFP battlegroups in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia may be insufficient to prevent an attack that aimed to overwhelm the Baltic States' militaries quickly and separate them from their allies by closing the Suwalki gap between Poland and Lithuania.

There are a number of things that can offset Russia's military advantages in the Baltic region and make it more difficult for Russian forces to operate. Tony Lawrence identifies three sets of measures that should be addressed to strengthen NATO deterrence. First, some of the capability shortfalls should be addressed. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (with NATO support) should acquire air defence capabilities, which they are currently lacking. This would make it more difficult for Russia dominate the Baltic airspace, and it would slow down an attack. Also, the maritime component of defending the Baltic States should be addressed. The Baltic States have mainly invested in land forces over the past 10 years, and it would be up to NATO to address threats that Russia poses in the maritime domain. Second, NATO's

[6] The issue of Russia's potential motivation has been addressed in the following publication: Michael J. Mazarr, Arthur Chan, Alyssa Demus, Bryan Frederick, Alireza Nader, Stephanie Pezard, Julia A. Thompson, Elina Treyger, "What Deters and Why: Exploring Requirements for Effective Deterrence of Intrstate Aggression", 2018, *RAND*, 57–63.

ability to move large numbers of troops through Europe should be improved. Currently, there are administrative and physical hurdles that make it difficult to move troops and military equipment across borders. Although administrative hurdles in the case of a conflict are likely to pose less of a problem, the physical infrastructure should be adjusted to military needs. Moving heavy military equipment by rail is preferable – therefore, significant improvements are to be expected in the coming years, because Rail Baltica will help to get rid of an important bottleneck at the Polish-Lithuanian border, which exists because of the differences between the European gauge (on the Polish side) and the Russian gauge (on the side of Lithuania). Third, the US's military presence in the Baltic States is currently very limited. Arguably, the deterrent potential of US troops is stronger than that of troops from most other member states of the Alliance. A stronger US military presence in the Baltic region would have a stronger deterrent effect.[7] These steps would greatly increase the deterrent posture of the Alliance in the Baltic region without necessarily provoking Russia.

Three more other steps can be taken to strengthen NATO deterrence. First, some key NATO member states can increase defence spending, and this has the potential to strengthen deterrence in the Baltic region as well. The Baltic States' militaries, together with the eFP multinational battlegroups, can provide a modest deterrent, but in the end it is the Alliance that deters.[8] Thus, strengthening the military capabilities of, for example, Germany, and rebuilding military capabilities suited for high-intensity warfare can further strengthen deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank.

Second, the Baltic States themselves can strengthen deterrence in the Baltic region. They have the most to lose if deterrence fails, and their militaries are rapidly developing. Although much has been done in recent years, the Baltic States are going to acquire new capabilities in the coming years as equipment that has been procured will be delivered. For example, Estonia already received the first two self-propelled K9 155 mm howitzers from South Korea in August 2020, and

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[7] Tony Lawrence, "Continuing to Build Credible Deterrence and Defence in the Baltic Region", Transatlantic Futures: Towards #NATO2030, Andris Sprūds, Mārtiņš Vargulis (eds.), 2020, *Latvian Institute of International Affairs*, 96–108.

[8] Martin Zapfe, "Deterrence from the Ground Up: Understanding NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence", *Survival*, 59:3, 2017, 157.

the remaining 16 howitzers are slated to be delivered in the next few years.[9] The same goes for Lithuania, which procured 88 Boxer infantry fighting vehicles from Germany. Lithuania received the first two vehicles in 2019, and the remaining 86 are to be delivered by the end of 2021.[10] Also, the Baltic States may take further steps to strengthen deterrence if the threat from Russia increases. The Baltic States' militaries are relatively small, and a recent report suggests that universal conscription for two years should be introduced to increase the number of forces available for defence.[11] Although this proposal has been regarded until now as far-fetched, possibilities for the Baltic States to strengthen their military capabilities do exist. Leaders of the Baltic States have repeatedly signalled that they may consider increasing defence expenditure as a portion of GDP if that would be necessary. Also, this is the least provocative element of NATO deterrence, because Russia has been sensitive about troop deployments from other NATO member states, while remaining relatively silent about the Baltic States' own efforts.

Third, there is some untapped potential for cooperation between the three Baltic States. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have cooperated on numerous defence projects in the past 30 years, but common procurement has too often been an unattainable goal. Although there is no progress with regard to trilateral military procurement, Latvia and Estonia in May 2020 placed a joint order with Saab Dynamics AB for the supply of Carl-Gustaf M4 anti-tank weapons.[12] In the maritime domain, a recent report recommends that the Baltic States should "invest in small multi-purpose naval vessels to provide capabilities for anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, command and-control, and enhanced maritime situational

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[9] ERR News, "K9 Self-Propelled Howitzers Admitted into Estonian Defense Forces", 10 October 2020, https://news.err.ee/1145412/k9-self-propelled-howitzers-admitted-into-estonian-defense-forces.

[10] DefenseWorld.net, "Lithuania Gets First 2 of Its Ordered 88 Boxer Infantry Fighting Vehicles", 25 June 2019, https://www.defenseworld.net/news/25026/Lithuania_Gets_First_2_Of_Its_Ordered_88_Boxer_Infantry_Fighting_Vehicles#.X7JLYGgzbIU.

[11] Richard D. Hooker, "How to Defend the Baltic States", 2019, *The Jamestown Foundation*, 13.

[12] LSM.LV, "Latvia, Estonia Place Joint Order for Modern Anti-Tank Weapons", 20 May 2020, https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/defense/latvia-estonia-place-joint-order-for-modern-anti-tank-weapons.a360541/.

awareness".[13] To make these vessels more affordable, they should be acquired, commanded, and operated on a common basis.

All in all, crucial steps have been taken over the past few years to strengthen NATO's deterrence in the Baltic region, but there are still critical capability shortfalls, some of which cannot be addressed by the Baltic States themselves. This would require greater NATO involvement. Also, deterrence can be strengthened by making cross-border military mobility in the European part of the Alliance easier, by strengthening the US military presence in the Baltic States, through a concerted effort by NATO member states to increase defence spending, and through a determination on the part of the Baltic States themselves to develop military capabilities and cooperate with each other.

Caveats

Since its creation, NATO's main focus has been on ensuring the security of the transatlantic area, with European security being of particular importance. Times have changed, but there is a renewed emphasis on deterring Russia, which is a testament to the lasting character of the European security environment. This section examines several factors that may interfere with NATO's ability to deter Russia and manage escalation in the Baltic Sea region. It deals with three key geographic areas – Russia, the US, and the European part of NATO – and the processes that may affect them. International competition seems to have been on the rise, and it is expected to intensify in the coming years.[14]

First, the future relationship between Russia and NATO is not pre-determined. Although NATO tried to build a more cooperative relationship with Russia after the break-up of the Soviet Union, this effort seems to have failed. Russia is no longer a difficult partner; it is an adversary to be deterred. Russia's annexation of Crimea and support

[13] Heinrich Lange, Bill Combes, Tomas Jermalavičius, Tony Lawrence, "To the Seas Again: Maritime Defence and Deterrence in the Baltic Sea Region", 2019, *International Centre for Defence and Security*, https://icds.ee/en/to-the-seas-again-maritime-defence-and-deterrence-in-the-baltic-region/.

[14] Michael J. Mazarr, Jonathan Blake, Abigail Casey, Tim McDonald, Stephanie Pezard, Michael Spirtas, "Understanding the Emerging Era of International Competition: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives", 2018, *RAND*, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2726.html.

for separatists in Ukraine's Donbass region seemingly offered ample evidence of Russia's aggressive behaviour. If Russia could commit military aggression against a country of more than 40 million people, then any of its neighbours could become the target of a military or hybrid attack in the future.

NATO's assessment of Russia's intentions has been derived from multiple aspects of its behaviour as well as Russia's military capabilities, which have grown considerably since its military encounter with Georgia in 2008. It should, however, be kept in mind that even though something can be done militarily, this does not mean that there is a sound political logic in support of such behaviour. A critical precondition for the success of NATO's deterrent efforts in the Baltic region is Russia's relatively low interest in initiating a fight with the strongest military alliance on the planet over three small sovereign states that have little to do with Russia's vital, or even significant, foreign policy interests.[15] Also, it should be noted that developments in the second half of 2020 indicate that Russia is not a trigger-happy state. The crisis in Belarus after the presidential election and the escalation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict provided ample opportunities for Russia to use military force, but Russia chose not to intervene militarily. This is a clear sign that Russian leadership is well-aware of the fact that in most cases the use of force may backfire and that it may emerge from the conflict severely weakened. This would most likely be the case in any future conflict involving Russia and NATO on opposite sides. If Russia's behaviour offers any indication of its goals with regard to the Baltic States and Poland, then it is possible that the next 10 years will witness a less alarmist interpretation of Russia's foreign policy. After all, deterrence is a temporary strategy that eventually evolves into a more peaceful relationship or descends into a military conflict. Both are possible with Russia, but a strengthened NATO military posture in the Eastern Flank is likely to reduce the possibility of miscalculation.

Second, European security will be affected by the security competition between the US and China in the Asia-Pacific region. The US has been key pillar of European security for decades, and it still plays that role. The international security environment, however, has changed

[15] Bryan Frederick, Matthew Povlock, Stephen Watts, Miranda Priebe, Edward Geist, "Assessing Russian Reactions to U.S. and NATO Posture Enhancements", 2017, *RAND*, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1879.html.

considerably because of the rise of China. The US has responded by increasing its military presence in East Asia. Much has been written about the possibility of a military encounter between the US and China, but it is undeniable that both great powers are engaged in strategic competition that is prone to escalation. Thus, it is likely that the US's involvement in European security will be conditioned by the intensity of competition in the Asia-Pacific region. If that competition at some point escalates into an open military confrontation, then there will be ripple effects that will affect European security, especially if the US loses in a high-intensity military encounter with China. Although a military confrontation would entail enormous risks, it could still occur because of misperceptions, miscalculations, domestic political reasons, escalating regional conflicts involving both great powers, and widely different perceptions of military power on both sides.[16] As China's military power will grow in the coming decade, the likelihood of a military confrontation increases. Such a conflict would have far-reaching consequences for European security.

Third, NATO's ability to deter Russia will largely depend on the ability of key European states to increase and sustain adequate defence spending. The defence expenditures of the European members of NATO have been lagging for decades, and this has been a continuous point of contention in transatlantic relations. While European defence spending has increased in the past few years, accompanied with dedicated European defence integration efforts, the future is as uncertain as ever. It is unlikely that the European part of NATO, battered by the economic consequences of Covid-19, will be able to follow through on its promises of more defence spending. Although NATO's Eastern Flank – Poland and the Baltic States – are likely to preserve their relatively high defence expenditure, the other European NATO states may redirect some defence expenditure to other causes, unless the Covid-19 crisis is followed by a rapid economic recovery.

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[16] There is no agreement in the literature on the military power of the US and China, on how the power is distributed, and on how far China has progressed militarily over the past decades. For examples of this debate, see the following sources: Michael Beckley, "The Power of Nations: Measuring What Matters, International Security", *International Security*, 43:2, 2018, 7–44; Stephen G. Brooks, William C. Wohlforth, "The Rise and Fall of Great Powers in the Twenty-first Century", *International Security*, 40:3, 2015/16, 7–53; Eric Heginbotham et al., "The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power", 2017, *RAND*, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR300/RR392/RAND_RR392.pdf.

Conclusion

NATO's deterrence on its Eastern Flank has been successful up until now. Even though it is very difficult to gauge whether deterrence has succeeded,[17] NATO's efforts in the Baltic Sea region have certainly alleviated the concerns of the Baltic States and have made it more difficult to initiate aggression against the Baltic States without provoking major military escalation. Deterrence in the Baltic region is going to be further strengthened in the coming years, as the Baltic States will carry out their procurement plans and acquire new military capabilities, NATO remains a sizable and symbolic presence on the Eastern Flank, and the Allies work collectively to fill existing military gaps. If the future is more or less like the present, then deterrence should hold. The problem, however, is that the present international system is prone to economic, political, military, climate, health and technological crises. Thus, the next 10 years are likely to be as turbulent as the previous 10 years. The Alliance will need to be militarily capable and flexible to prevent the worst scenarios from happening. In the Baltic region, the Alliance will have to demonstrate flexibility to adjust its deterrence posture to the actual level of military threats posed by Russia. Unless Russia's domestic situation and policies undergo a profound transformation, there is no reason to expect an improvement in NATO-Russia relations. Sustaining a credible deterrence posture in the Baltic region would also require the ability to manage the escalation of potential crises. In this regard, a number of recommendations can be offered:

- The Baltic states should continue strengthening their military capabilities and cooperate among themselves where possible.
- NATO should fill the existing gaps in the Baltic States' military capabilities, such as air-defence systems and naval capabilities.
- NATO should continue working as closely as possible with Sweden and Finland.
- The successful deterrence of Russia is not possible without the active engagement and military presence of the US.

[17] The absence of military conflict can be explained either by successful deterrence or by a lack of motivation on the part of the potential aggressor. Estimations of general aggression are difficult to produce. Only when immediate deterrence is applied might it be possible to conclude whether it succeeded or not.

- European members of NATO should continue to invest in military capabilities for mechanised high-intensity warfare.
- NATO should cooperate with the EU to make military mobility in Europe easier.
- NATO should constantly monitor Russia's behaviour to detect any changes in its foreign policy motivation and risk propensity.
- When necessary, deterrent measures and red lines should be communicated as clearly as possible to avoid miscalculation on the part Russia – therefore communication channels with Russia should be kept open.
- NATO member states should keep in mind that deterrence, costly as it is, is still cheaper than defence.

Finally, the issue of adopting a more global approach for NATO should be addressed. The Baltic States and Poland are likely to fully endorse a more military-capable and politically united NATO, but it remains to be seen what a more global approach to international security would entail. There is little doubt that China has arrived on the world stage and that it has the potential to transform the international security environment well beyond the Asia-Pacific region. A more global NATO with a greater focus on China is certainly worth contemplating. After all, NATO is one of the few mechanisms for crafting a common position towards China by states that share common values and a common transatlantic identity. Depending on the scope of NATO taking a more global approach, this would entail a partial renegotiation of the principles upon which the Alliance was founded in 1949. The geographical scope would shift as a result, and so would considerations about the circumstances under which members of the Alliance would consider using military force. A more global NATO would also entail a different military toolset. Ultimately, a greater focus on China would include the risk of European member states of NATO being drawn into a great power conflict between the US and China. Although NATO can probably do both – deter Russia and increasingly focus on China – the consequences of a more global approach are likely to be profound. NATO will need to be reminded that its core responsibility is ensuring the security of Europe.

Towards a Credible Deterrence and Defence Posture in the Baltics in 2030

MARTIN HURT

Introduction

Since 2014, NATO's deterrence and defence posture has evolved quickly following decisions taken at the Wales, Warsaw and Brussels summits. These decisions were a result of long and complicated negotiations between Allies. Looking back, many of these decisions have been implemented, and the results are tangible for everyone to see on the territories of NATO nations. But not all decisions are publicly available and the linkages between some of them are not obvious to the wider audience, which is why public attention is sometimes misdirected.

This paper aims at analysing the decisions that have been taken at these summits, their implementation, how the security environment has evolved, and what is needed to maintain a credible deterrence and defence posture as seen from a Baltic perspective.

According to the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, credible deterrence and defence is essential as a means to prevent conflict and war. What often is forgotten or ignored is the word "credible". Credible from whose perspective? To answer this question, it is important to keep in mind that it is the deterrence and defence posture that is considered. Thus, the posture must be perceived as credible when seen from the other side, meaning Moscow, rather than from Rome, Athens or Berlin. To assess the existing deterrence and defence posture in the Baltics it may be useful to analyse the developments that started in 2014 with Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

1. Focusing on collective defence and assuring Allies

At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government agreed to a Readiness Action Plan (RAP) to improve the Alliance's capability to respond swiftly and firmly to new security challenges. The RAP consisted of a package of measures aimed at reassuring Alliance populations and adapting NATO as an organisation that forms the basis for further improvements of the posture. One of these assurance measures was intensified NATO maritime patrols in the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea with the Standing NATO Maritime Groups and Standing NATO Mine Counter-Measures Groups. Another visible measure was and still is the enhanced air-policing of Allied airspace.

While some of the assurance measures are still in place, the more important and more complicated part was the sub-package of adaptation measures. These were intended to introduce long-term changes to NATO's forces and command structure.

The NATO Force Integration Units, or NFIUs, have been set up, as has a new Multinational Divisional Headquarters for the Southeast in Romania. Also, the readiness of the Multinational Corps Northeast Headquarters in Szczecin, Poland has been raised, and its role has been enhanced to become a hub for regional cooperation.

These adaptation measures also included making the NATO Response Force (NRF) more responsive and capable. In 2015, the size of the NRF roughly tripled, from 13,000 to about 40,000 troops, including land, sea, air and special forces components. Within the NRF, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) of around 20,000 troops was set up.[1] This has, however, not eliminated two challenges that have persisted since the inception of the NRF: force generation and limited interoperability. Problems in force generation have dogged the NRF almost since it was first declared to have reached full operational capability in 2006. European nations in particular, in the throes of declining budgets, slow-evolving force transformation, and competing real world requirements, have had difficulty providing the units and funds needed to generate the force.[2] The

[1] NATO, "The Secretary General's Annual Report 2015", https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_01/20160128_SG_AnnualReport_2015_en.pdf.

[2] Charles Barry, "Building Future Transatlantic Interoperability Around a Robust NATO Response Force", October 2012, *Institute for National Strategic Studies*, https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/archives/transcur/Trans-Current-7.pdf.

launch of the NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI) – i.e. the decision taken at the NATO Brussels Summit in 2018 to keep 30 mechanised battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 combat vessels ready to use within 30 days or less from 2020 – appears initially to have created unhealthy competition with the NRF.[3] The main reason for force generation issues in the NRF is a lack of resources to train and equip the force and to maintain it at high readiness.

A second issue related to the NRF is maintaining the level of interoperability that is achieved for each rotation. While Allied units and personnel may retain a degree of the interoperability and capability development that accompanies an NRF train-up, they risk completely wasting the readiness built and maintained over that nearly two-year period of both pre-rotation training and assignment as an NRF-designated unit. This represents a significant cost at a time when many Allies are likely to face increasing defence budget pressure in the wake of the COVID-19 recession.[4] A lot of effort is invested in delivering the NRF, and that cannot be maintained over time.

It would not be fair to blame the NRI for worsening the NRF's force generation issues. The initiative aims to enhance the readiness of existing national forces.[5] Instead, the deteriorating security environment, with renewed great power competition, has increased the demand for high-readiness forces that Allies regretfully have been slow to meet. Time will tell to what extent the Allies will manage to raise the readiness of their forces to the extent necessary to meet the needs of both the NRF and the NRI.

2. From assurance to deterrence

Seen from a Baltic perspective, the decisions taken at the Warsaw Summit were as important as the ones taken at Wales, if not even more important since they explicitly put in place several other elements important for NATO's deterrence and defence posture.

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[3] NATO, "NATO Readiness Initiative", June 2018, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_06/20180608_1806-NATO-Readiness-Initiative_en.pdf.

[4] John R. Deni, "Disband the NATO Response Force", , NATO 20/2020, *Atlantic Council*, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NATO-20-2020-Disband-the-NATO-response-force.pdf.

[5] NATO, "NATO Readiness Initiative", *op. cit.*

The central decision was to establish an enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to unambiguously demonstrate, as part of NATO's overall posture, Allies' solidarity, determination, and ability to act by triggering an immediate Allied response to any aggression. The eFP comprises multinational forces provided by framework nations and other contributing Allies on a voluntary, sustainable, and rotational basis. They are based on four battalion-sized battlegroups that can operate in concert with national forces – they are present at all times in these countries, underpinned by a viable reinforcement strategy.[6]

The first part of the above decision about the eFP being part of NATO's overall posture refers to deterrence and defence being based on an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defence capabilities. eFP, obviously being part of the conventional element, needs the other capabilities to be successful as a deterrent and a trigger in case of a potential attack.

NATO's nuclear capabilities are a core component of the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture, especially *vis-à-vis* state actors like Russia. NATO's nuclear deterrence posture relies on nuclear weapons forward-deployed by the United States in Europe, as well as on the capabilities and infrastructure provided by the Allies concerned. A number of NATO member countries contribute a dual-capable aircraft (DCA) capability to the Alliance. These aircraft are central to NATO's nuclear deterrence mission and are available for nuclear roles at various levels of readiness. In their nuclear role, the aircraft are equipped to carry nuclear bombs in a conflict, and personnel are trained accordingly.[7]

Germany plans to replace the increasingly obsolete Tornado aircraft that today fulfil the DCA role. Minister of Defence Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer has proposed buying American F-18s to fulfil this role. This sparked internal debate and criticism from opponents who questioned both Germany role in NATO's nuclear burden-sharing arrangement as well as the proposal to select a US platform instead of a European alternative. A decision would have to be approved by the Bundestag,

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[6] NATO, "Warsaw Summit Communiqué", 9 July 2016, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.

[7] NATO, "NATO's nuclear deterrence policy and forces", 16 April 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50068.htm.

and this is currently scheduled for 2022 or 2023, leaving room for uncertainty and speculation about the commitment and contribution to NATO's nuclear mission of Europe's most significant economic power.

The second element of the Warsaw Summit decision, concerning multinational forces provided by framework nations and other contributing Allies on a voluntary, sustainable, and rotational basis, has worked surprisingly well since 2017. As of October 2020, 23 Allies contributed to the four battlegroups.[8] Interoperability remains a challenge because of the relatively large number of participants *vis-à-vis* the small formations.

The third important element of the above decision is the notion that the four eFP battlegroups are underpinned by a viable reinforcement strategy. The thinking behind setting up the eFP was that of creating a tripwire on NATO territory that, in case of an armed attack, would trigger rapid reinforcement of the region, meaning large formations would be deployed from NATO Allies into the theatre. This has proved to be more complicated than previously thought.

3. Challenges to rapid reinforcement

3.1 Readiness and capabilities

In case of an armed attack against any of the eFP host nations, they would require rapid reinforcement to withstand the forces and advanced capabilities that a near-peer adversary like Russia would be able to amass. German divisions of the scale and quality that would be required will only start becoming available around 2030. Many forces in Europe are at too low a readiness level to be relevant in today's security environment, as demonstrated by difficulties contributing to the NRF and the NRI.

Enhancing readiness requires time and funding. Division-level enablers, meaning combat support and combat service support units, take many years to develop. Existing infrastructure needs to be refurbished and complemented with new facilities and training areas being (re)claimed. The defence industry, which was streamlined and

[8] NATO, "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence", https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/10/pdf/2010-factsheet_efp_en.pdf.

made efficient in the years following the end of the Cold War, today struggles with developing, producing, and delivering rapidly increasing quantities of equipment. Personnel must be recruited, trained, and educated. One should bear in mind that it takes 15–20 years to raise senior officers.

Allies' defence spending has increased steadily in recent years. By the end of 2020, European Allies and Canada will have spent an extra 130 billion US dollars on defence since 2016. This figure is due to rise to 400 billion by the end of 2024.[9] Still, some nations will notice that this may not enable them to meet their NATO commitments in terms of the requested quality, quantity, and deadlines. Meeting the 2% spending target is not only important to move towards a fairer burden sharing *vis-à-vis* the United States but also to ensure European security. Moreover, the Biden administration can be expected to be very demanding on Europeans to step up and deliver more, and this will require additional resources.

Developing new capabilities is not only about nations delivering more individually, but also collectively. This is especially true for the Baltic States with their limited resources and their need to generate synergies to the largest extent possible to mitigate capability shortfalls.

In times of crisis, NATO will be heavily engaged in the protection of transatlantic sea lines of communication and in preventing Russia from accessing the Atlantic. The deployment to the Baltic Sea of warships primarily designed for blue water operations should be regarded as a possibility, rather than as a certainty to be relied upon. The states surrounding the Baltic Sea will thus need to be able to establish and maintain sea control to protect Baltic Sea routes, ports and other critical infrastructure, to counter amphibious operations and to disrupt the actions of the opponent's Baltic Fleet. The capabilities required to achieve these tasks are not fully in place; neither are the arrangements for cooperation among the Baltic Sea states that are necessary to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.[10] The Baltic States are currently

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[9] NATO, "The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019", https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf_publications/sgar19-en.pdf.

[10] Heinrich Lange, Bill Combes, Tomas Jermalavičius, Tony Lawrence, "To the Seas Again: Maritime Defence and Deterrence in the Baltic Region", (International Centre for Defence and Security, 2019), http://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ICDS_Report_To_the_Seas_Again_Lange_Combes_Jermalavicius_Lawrence_April_2019.pdf.

looking for common solutions for the maritime domain through the 3B Naval Vision 2030+. Considering the size of the Baltic national navies and defence budgets, each nation alone cannot achieve much. But through regional cooperation, the nations can ensure minimum requirements for the maritime domain and support NATO activities.[11]

Russia's Armed Forces' electronic warfare (EW) capability development will pose a serious challenge to the proper planning and execution of NATO's defence of the Baltic States, and NATO's entire Eastern Flank, in the event of a Russian assault. This capability is an integral part of Russia's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) approach and is clearly tailored to target NATO's C4ISR. Russia's growing technological advances in EW will allow its forces to jam, disrupt and interfere with NATO communications, radar and other sensor systems, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and other assets, thus negating advantages conferred on the Alliance by its technological edge. As a result, NATO needs to plan, revise its scenarios, and train to conduct defensive and offensive operations in a fiercely contested electromagnetic spectrum battlespace.[12]

Key air defence shortfalls in the Baltic States relate to C4ISR[13] and weapon systems. The three states alone will not be able to address these shortfalls and must look to NATO and the Allies for assistance. Together, the Baltic States and the rest of NATO can take a shared, coherent approach to enhance deterrence and air defence in the Baltic region. The Baltic States should mitigate these air defence shortfalls, most of which should be implemented through a common Baltic approach and will require substantial investment and reprioritisation.[14]

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[11] Martin Herem, "Estonian chief of Defence Forces: Regional cooperation as the main enabler," 2 December 2019, *Defense News*, https://www.defensenews.com/outlook/2019/12/02/estonian-chief-of-defence-forces-regional-cooperation-as-the-main-enabler/.

[12] Roger N. McDermott, "Russia's Electronic Warfare Capabilities to 2025: Challenging NATO in the Electromagnetic Spectrum", (International Centre for Defence and Security, 2017), IV-V, http://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/ICDS_Report_Russias_Electronic_Warfare_to_2025.pdf.

[13] Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance.

[14] Sir Christopher Harper, Tony Lawrence, Sven Sakkov, "Air Defence of the Baltic States", (International Centre for Defence and Security, 2018), V, http://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ICDS_Report_Air_Defence_Christopher_Harper_Tony_Lawrence_Sven_Sakkov_May_2018.pdf.

3.2 Military mobility

Another area of concern that currently hampers rapid reinforcement is, simply put, military mobility, or using the NATO term, the enablement of SACEUR's Area of Responsibility that includes infrastructure, cross-border movement permission procedures, and related civilian and military capabilities needed to support the rapid deployment of heavy military forces.

High expectations were put on the EU to step up and fund the civilian-military dual-use of transport infrastructure through a proposed 6.5 billion EUR envelope as part of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) in the next EU long-term budget (2021–2027). After negotiations, only 1.5 billion EUR (1.69 billion EUR in current prices) for military mobility remained.[15] The Rail Baltica project will, by 2026, connect Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius to Warsaw and beyond on the European 1435 mm gauge.[16]

In general, movement requirements and procedures are easier in the eastern parts of Europe, including in the Baltic region, where Allies have made particular efforts to ensure that the reception of foreign forces will be as smooth as possible. For an emergency deployment, for example to deter an attack, timescales for completing the required paperwork are likely to be of the same order of magnitude as timescales for the movement itself, and legal and procedural delays may have an operational impact.[17]

Capability shortfalls, both in terms of command and control as well as logistic capabilities, are about to be addressed by NATO and individual Allies. Important elements are the adapted NATO Command Structure, including the Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) in Ulm, Germany and the Joint Logistic Support Groups, as well as forces and capabilities related to Reception, Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM).

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[15] European Commission, "Joint Report to the European Parliament and the Council on the Implementation of the Action Plan on Military Mobility from June 2019 to September 2020", 19 October 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/legislation/join20200016.pdf.

[16] Ben Hodges, Tony Lawrence, Ray Wojcik, "Until Something Moves. Reinforcing the Baltic Region in Crisis and War", (International Centre for Defence and Security and Center for European Policy Analysis, 2020), 17, http://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ICDS_Report_Until_Something_Moves_Hodges_Lawrence_Wojcik_April_2020_cor.pdf.

[17] Ben Hodges, Tony Lawrence, Ray Wojcik, *op. cit.*, 13–14.

Reinforcement has so far not been sufficiently exercised. Six years after the US launched the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), prior to 2017 known as the European Reassurance Initiative, the US remains the only nation regularly exercising brigade-level reinforcement. The NATO-led exercise "Trident Juncture 2018" involved the deployment of several brigades and generated many lessons. The UK has practised reinforcement through "Tractable", which took place in October 2019.[18] "Exercise Defender-Europe 20" was limited because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Exercises should take place in the Baltic region to stress-test legal and procedural systems, infrastructure and coordination, command and control. The exercise programme should include both large-scale reinforcement exercises and a healthy mix of small and large emergency readiness deployment exercises (i.e. no-notice or snap exercises) to force the military movement apparatus to respond and become more agile.[19]

4. A volatile security environment

The Baltic Sea region should not be looked at in isolation but together with developments in other regions that have an impact on Baltic security.

4.1 Belarus

Recent events in Belarus have highlighted the potential for an increased Russian military presence near NATO's borders. In recent years, President Lukashenka of Belarus has pushed back on Russian proposals to establish an air base on Belarus's soil. Until now, Russia's military presence in Belarus has been limited to two military sites: a strategic ballistic missile defence site operated by Russian Aerospace Forces in Hantsavichy and the global communications facility for the Russian navy in Vileyka.[20] In September and October, Russian forces were involved in a number of exercises in Belarus, indicating a persistent presence

[18] The British Army, Tractable, https://www.army.mod.uk/news-and-events/events/tractable/.
[19] Ben Hodges, Tony Lawrence, Ray Wojcik, *op. cit.*, VI.
[20] Tony Wesolowsky, "Russian Military Creep In Belarus Raises Security Alarms", 4 October 2020, *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, https://www.rferl.org/a/russian-military-creep-in-belarus-raises-security-alarms/30874178.html.

of forces rotating in and out of the country.[21] This could be seen as an attempt to mirror eFP in the Baltic States and Poland. In any case, this development has the potential to increase the military threat in northern Europe.

The Warsaw Summit decision to establish the eFP in the Baltic States and Poland was made in reaction to Russia's aggression against Ukraine but without considering increased Russian military presence at NATO's borders. A new normal of the Russian military's semi-permanent presence in Belarus with the possibility of boosting it within hours would have a more direct impact on the security of NATO and the EU than Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014. Also, the potential subordination of Belarusian forces to Russia's political-military leadership, if it materialised, should be countered by the Alliance to demonstrate resolve.

Therefore, such developments would have to be balanced by NATO capabilities in the Baltic Sea region to mitigate the risks that stem from the reinforcement strategy not yet being fully implemented due of the reasons listed above. The eFP battlegroups would not necessarily need to be strengthened, but instead NATO should consider making its rapid reinforcement more credible by maintaining forces at high readiness in or close to the Baltic Sea region, by exercising reinforcement and by temporarily forward deploying forces and capabilities, including but not limited to joint fires, to the region.

4.2 The Arctic and the northern Atlantic Ocean

The Arctic is of increasing strategic importance for the Nordic and Baltic countries as it connects Northern Europe with Asia. It is also an area of great power competition, involving Russia, the United States, and the growing role of China. There is also increasing military activity in the northern Atlantic Ocean, as the Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap has returned as one of NATO's strategic concerns. The area is important for US and Canadian reinforcements to reach Europe in crisis and conflict. Also, it is considered by Russia to be the doorstep to the Kola peninsula and Russia's nuclear second-strike capability.

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[21] Pavel Felgenhauer, "Russia Reasserts Control Via Nonstop Military Exercises in Belarus", 17 September 2020, *Jamestown Foundation*, https://jamestown.org/program/russia-reasserts-control-via-nonstop-military-exercises-in-belarus/.

Increasing great power competition in the Arctic and in the northern Atlantic Ocean pushes NATO and EU members, including Denmark, Germany, Finland, and Sweden, to divert military forces and capabilities to those regions to demonstrate military presence. In addition, Sweden would also need to keep its vitally important harbour of Gothenburg open. Consequently, these forces would in crisis or conflict not be available in the Baltic Sea, leaving more room for the Russian Armed Forces unless other nations step up, i.e. the Baltic States and Poland, who have no ambition of deploying forces to the Arctic or the northern Atlantic Ocean.

5. Recommendations

Here follows a number of recommendations aimed at speeding up the implementation of the agreed deterrence and defence posture while at the same time maintaining readiness to further strengthen it depending on developments of the security environment.

NATO should:

1. Regularly exercise reinforcement of the eFP Battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland as part of major NATO exercises.
2. Closely monitor Russia's military presence in Belarus, assess related threats and, if required, strengthen the deterrence and defence posture to mitigate the increasing threats to the sovereignty of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland by maintaining forces at high readiness in or close to the Baltic Sea region, by exercising reinforcement and by temporarily forward deploying forces and capabilities, including but not limited to joint fires, to the region.

The Baltic States should:

1. Take greater responsibility for regional security and defence by strengthening capabilities, individually as well as collectively, for peace, crisis, and conflict in the electromagnetic spectrum and in the air and maritime domains, including through the 3B Naval Vision 2030+.
2. Continue to improve Host Nation Support capabilities and finalise the Rail Baltica project by 2026.

In addition:

1. Allies should step up reinforcement exercises to improve the credibility of NATO's approach of rapid reinforcement.
2. Allies should increase defence spending to a level that enables them to fulfil their spending and NATO defence planning commitments and to demonstrate their credibility *vis-à-vis* the US under Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

A2/AD and Beyond: The Baltic Sea Region in the New NATO Strategic Concept

BEATA GÓRKA-WINTER

Introduction

Along with the dynamic development of Russia's military capabilities, as well as extended anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) measures, the debate over the possibility to secure the Eastern Flank countries has been revitalised over the last several years. Previous such heated deliberations, especially where the Baltic States were concerned, took place in the pre-accession era. Since that time, NATO's Eastern Flank has made a Herculean task of adopting a defence posture that goes far beyond a classic "Narva exercise[1]" and is in sync with the dynamic development of the security environment, including widespread classic military build-up together with preparations for hybrid scenarios.[2] In this article, the context of the current debate over the place of the Eastern Flank countries in the contemporary security architecture will be presented along with possible solutions to new trends in military developments in the region.

Quite a vast amount of time has passed since the period when military planners from the North Atlantic Alliance were for the first time racking their heads over future contingencies for prospective new members of NATO. The most relevant question at that time was: "how do we defend the Baltic States territories?", which were commonly believed to be "indefensible" due to their size, location and the proximity of overwhelming forces in the Russian Federation, as well

[1] Exercise included a scenario of turmoil in Estonia by meddling of the Russian Federation in Russian-speaking population in Estonian city of Narva.

[2] See: Andrew Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics. Threats and Possible Responses*, (RAND, 2017). Also: Bartosz Fraszka, "Baltic States Versus Russian Hybrid Threats", 26 October 2020, ***Warsaw Institute***, https://warsawinstitute.org/baltic-states-versus-russian-hybrid-threats/.

as the unpreparedness of the fledgling militaries of these countries in terms of countering these threats without a solid assistance from the Allies.[3] After their accession to NATO and not without a serious delay – stemming mainly from the concentration of the Alliance on its antiterrorist angle and the consumption of what was believed to be an ever-lasting "peace dividend" in Europe – contingency plans for this region were finally approved in 2010 and are now being updated due to the changing nature of threats coming from the region's potent neighbour.[4] Moreover, starting after Russia's aggression in Crimea, and following a whole set of war games prepared by prominent think-tanks (RAND, CSBA) and military planners which proved that a mere three days would be needed for the Russian military to seize the territories of the Baltic States,[5] NATO's posture in the region was seriously strengthened in the aftermath of the Warsaw Summit in 2016, with the establishment of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence and Force Integration Units, the strengthening of the Baltic Air Policing mission with new bases and fighters, and the prepositioning of munitions (APS). The main contributions here came from the European

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[3] See for example: Bengt Anderson, Lars Wallin, "A Defence Model for the Baltic States", *European Security*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (Spring 2001), 99; Beata Górka-Winter, "Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania", *NATO Member States and the New Strategic Concept: An Overview*, Beata Górka-Winter, Marek Madej eds., (PISM, 2010); ***Security of the Baltic Sea Region Revisited amid the Baltic Centenary. Riga Conference Papers***, Andris Sprūds, Māris Andžāns eds., (Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2018), https://www.baltdefcol.org/files/files/publications/RigaConferencePapers2018.pdf.

[4] The Russian-Georgian war in August 2008, which ultimately resulted in some territorial loses for Georgia (also from the pending process of "borderisation"), constituted a most serious wake-up call for NATO's Eastern Flank states, as the hostile actions of Russia proved that the new security architecture in Europe has never been accepted by Russia's political and military establishment. In a series of non-papers, these countries pressed on adopting contingency planning for the "newcomers" to NATO, which finally materialised in 2010 with the adoption of "Eagle Guardian" defence plans for the region. See: Wikileaks, "NATO contingency planning for our Baltic Allies", 15 December 2009, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09STATE127892_a.html.

[5] See: David A. Shlapak, Michael Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank. Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics", (RAND, 2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html. See also: Alexander Lanoszka, Michael A. Hunzeker, "Confronting the AntiAccess/Area Denial and Precision Strike Challenge in the Baltic Region", *The RUSI Journal*, 161:5, 12–18, 2016, DOI: 10.1080/03071847.2016.1253367; Billy Fabian, Mark Gunzinger, Jan van Tol, Jacob Cohn, Gillian Evans, "Strengthening the Defense of NATO's Eastern Frontier", 19 March 2019, *Centre for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment*, https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/strengthening-the-defense-of-natos-eastern-frontier.

Deterrence Initiative (EDI) introduced by the United States.[6] Not only is Russia providing a constant incentive for NATO military adaptation due to its political choice of declaring the Alliance its main adversary in all documents of a strategic nature, but also by conducting military actions aimed at restoring its sphere of influence[7] and by strengthening its military potential in the immediate proximity of the Eastern Flank of NATO.[8]

Unquestionably, the general pace and direction of Russia's military modernisation is something that provokes sleepless nights for military planners in some Western capitals. Unlike European countries, despite periodic budgetary problems stemming from crises and sanctions, since 2008 Russia has steadfastly implemented structural and well-thought-out military reforms prompted by sober reflections in the aftermath of the military campaign against Georgia (the "New Look" reform programme). Its focus is on the army's professionalisation and on re-arming with modern equipment (having reached 60% at present), as well as on assuring higher readiness. Even though post-Crimea sanctions have greatly weakened Russia's spending potential, it has nevertheless managed to triple its defence expenditures (as measured in exchange rates adjusted for purchasing power) over the past two decades (2000–2019), with outside sanctions only temporarily slowing, but not halting, the ongoing modernisation efforts, thus gaining an edge over those countries which feel most threatened by hypothetical Russian military operations, such as NATO's Eastern Flank states.

In 2019 alone, Russia's military budget was 65.1 billon USD (up 4.5% compared to 2018 in real terms), which constitutes a 3.9% share of its GDP and places Russia among the top five military spenders according to SIPRI.[9] The main thrust in this modernisation – to which the country gives priority treatment – is air defence systems, self-guided missiles,

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[6] Michelle Shewin-Coetzee, "European Deterrence Initiative", 25 January 2019, *Centre for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments*, https://csbaonline.org/research/publications/the-european-deterrence-initiative/publication/1.

[7] See: Sergey Karaganov, Dimitry Suslov, "A New World Order: A View from Russia", 4 October 2018, *Russia in Global Affairs*, https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/a-new-world-order-a-view-from-russia/.

[8] See a complex analysis on this subject by IISS: IISS, *An Introduction to Russia's Military Modernisation: an Assessment*, (IISS, 2020).

[9] See: Siemon T. Wezeman, "Russia's Military Spending: Frequently Asked Questions", 27 April 2020, SIPRI, https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2020/russias-military-spending-frequently-asked-questions.

bombers, radar networks, anti-ship systems, and even nuclear-propelled drones. Additionally, the widespread belief that Russia's quantitative advantage in equipment (whose unit cost is on average lower by a third compared to the West) could be easily offset by Western technological supremacy has been weakening of late, in step with a slowing of the pace of modernisation and technology growth in European countries. Even allowing for the fact that some of the declared modernisation programmes are pure propaganda (such as the target of reaching the level of 30% full automatisation of its weaponry by 2030), there can be no doubt that Russia has put intense effort into narrowing the technology gap with the West. As Michael Kofman underlines, "in practice the Russian military has bought a tremendous amount of hard conventional military power and spent considerably on nuclear modernization. Since 2011 one could count close to 500 tactical aircraft, over 600 helicopters, to more than 16 S-400 regiments along with countless air defence systems for the ground forces, 13 Iskander brigades, thousands of armoured vehicles, ballistic missile and multipurpose nuclear powered submarines, i.e. the list is extensive. Indeed, roughly 50% of the sizable Russian defence budget is spent on weapons procurement, modernization and R&D".[10] Russia is also investing heavily in disruptive technologies, including AI research, but according to estimates their financing is still lagging behind their two main competitors: the US and China.[11] Having said that, Russia's budget for AI is still significant at 12.5 million USD a year. In 2019, the National Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence (NSDAI) for the period up to 2030 was also released by President Putin.

A quick look at the last trends in Europe show quite a reversed dynamic. Western military budgets are consumed by personnel spending (soldiers' pay, pensions, welfare), which absorb 60–70% of NATO countries' defence budgets. Given the high costs of some much-prolonged out-of-area operations (especially in Afghanistan), there is only a small amount left for research and development (which NATO recommends to be 2% of the defence budget) and for the

[10] Michael Kofman, "Russia's Armed Forces under Gerasimov, the Man without a Doctrine", 1 April 2020, https://www.ridl.io/en/russia-s-armed-forces-under-gerasimov-the-man-without-a-doctrine/.

[11] Simon Bendett, "In AI, Russia Is Hustling to Catch Up", 4 April 2018, *Defense One*, https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2018/04/russia-races-forward-ai-development/147178/.

implementation of new disruptive technologies which, as some analysts argue, would guarantee a decisive advantage in future battlefield operations. Even the United States, which remains the innovation leader, spending on research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E), peaked in 2009 (at 92.6 billion USD) and has been on a downward trend in successive years (to 67.6 billion USD in 2015), and it only later returned to a stable rate of growth.[12] In 2018, the US spending rate was set by Trump at 16%, but in Europe the situation remains dramatic. R&D spending in the EU countries (excluding Denmark), which in 2006 was a mere 9.8 billion USD, fell by almost a third over 2006–2013, most pronouncedly in Spain (by half!), Italy and the United Kingdom. The EDA countries in 2007 finally agreed to a 2% R&D target, but at present such spending only slightly exceeds 1%. Disruptive technologies, which in the next several years may thoroughly change the conduct of armed operations – e.g. by increasing situational awareness or changing the system of control and command (C2) – are largely AI-driven. This year, European leaders agreed on 80.9 billion EUR, rather than the proposed 94.4 billion EUR, over the next seven years for the "Horizon Europe" R&D programme. From 2014–2020, research got 7.1% of the overall EU budget; for 2021–2027, research is provided with only 4.5%.[13]

According to research by McKinsey consultancy experts, spending by tech giants on AI-based technology in 2016 reached 20-30 billion USD, with the US and Asian companies being the biggest spenders and Europeans trailing far behind. Judging by the plethora of reports recommending major increases in this line of expenditure in various countries, the next decade is going to see players such as China or India quickly narrowing their technology gap with NATO in certain areas – the air force, cyber defence, land systems, and sensor networks – precisely by embracing innovation in these fields.[14]

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[12] Thomas Marino, "Maintaining NATO's Technological Edge: Strategic Adaptation and Defence Research & Development", 8 September 2017, *NATO Parliamentary Assembly*, https://www.nato-pa.int/document/2017-maintaining-natos-technological-edge-marino-report-174-stc-17-e-bis.

[13] Quiring Schiermeier, "Science Money Slashed in EU's € 1.8-trillion Budget Deal", 22 July 2020, *Nature*, https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02199-3.

[14] China announced a 7% increase in defence spending this year, with the figure estimated to rise to 260 billion USD by 2022. In the international market for AI deployment, China now comes second and has plans for reaching global leadership, and generating 150 billion USD worth of business, by 2023 (through the "Made in China" project). Similarly, Russia wants to reach a 30% ratio of AI-run robotised military equipment by 2025.

The same holds true for non-state actors, who can access advanced technology solutions right now, which is especially true within the present pattern, where innovations are within the civilian domain.

What is even more sobering from the perspective of the Eastern Flank countries is the trend of placing a large amount of advanced weapons close to Alliance borders, especially in the Kaliningrad exclave,[15] where Forpost UAVs with miniature precision radars were dispatched to fly over the Baltic coast and the sea. There is also the Bal land-based anti-ship missile system. Additionally, Russia is forming a new air division HQ in the Kaliningrad region (a combat hub) in charge of monitoring air operations in real time over the Baltic Sea and adjacent areas and boosting the capabilities of rocket brigades. Russia is also planning to enlarge its Iskander brigades from 12 to 16 launchers each – 32 missiles could be fired simultaneously in one salvo. These have a range of 380–500 kilometres. Currently they are testing even more advanced Iskanders-K, which can carry nuclear payloads and were planned to be deployed to nuclear military units in 2020.[16]

Over the past three years, the Russian armed forces have conducted 18 large-scale exercises, with up to 100,000 troops of different types (including land, sea, air, air defence, airborne, special forces,[17] logistical and engineering forces, internal troops from the Ministry of Interior, medical units and army psychological personnel) deployed in some of them and with nuclear attacks simulated against NATO. Among the tasks performed were: search and rescue; amphibious landing and anti-landing; air and ground strikes; submarine and anti-submarine warfare; missile strikes with long-range precision strike assets; and airborne and air assault operations. Moreover, as far as theatre of nuclear weapons is concerned, Russia is the largest nuclear weapons state globally, and much effort is put into modernisation in this field, with the recent deployment of a new

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[15] Fredrik Westerlund, "Russia's Military Strategy and Force Structure in Kaliningrad", 2017, *FOI*, https://www.foi.se/download/18.7fd35d7f166c56ebe0bbfe7/1542369070079/RUFS-40_Military-strategy-and-force-structure-in-Kaliningrad_FOI-Memo-6060.pdf.

[16] Warsaw Institute, "Drones, Battle Tanks, Aircraft and Iskanders: Russia Advances Military Build-up in Kaliningrad", 16 December 2019, https://warsawinstitute.org/drones-battle-tanks-aircraft-iskanders-russia-advances-military-buildup-kaliningrad/.

[17] The Russian special operations command and control structure was restored after 2008 with a focus on increasing the capabilities of SOF units (counterterrorism, subversion, cyber).

intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) – the RS-28 Sarmat, replacing the more obsolete SS-18 – and the deployment of an advanced submarine carrying a new ballistic missile, adding dual-capable cruise and ballistic missiles to its theatre land and sea forces. Also, Russia is deploying the land-based Kalibr, which is a violation of the INF Treaty, and is performing flights of nuclear-capable bombers near NATO airspace, simulating attacks in a move that only supports Western experts' arguments that NATO's nuclear deterrent is quickly eroding.

A2/AD – why bother, and how to react?

Apart from the robust saturation of NATO-adjacent areas with conventional and non-convectional capabilities, anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) measures add to the general concerns of a Russian military build-up. A2/AD is mostly identified as a Russian strategy to limit the ability of NATO forces to strengthen the Eastern Flank of the Alliance (Poland and the Baltic States) in the case of a potential conflict between Russia and NATO. The debate over this issue has been taking place for some time already, starting when it turned out that Russia has developed and deployed a complex defence system, which is believed to be "impermeable", and has the potential to disrupt Allied deterrence efforts. The term alone is a Pentagon acronym for a Chinese strategy on how to overcome American supremacy, and it was then also applied to deliberations on Russia's potential (this is, however, contested by some military researchers) to dominate the theatre of operations.

The general idea of A2/AD in the understanding of most Western military planners is that it precludes NATO from planning resistance to hypothetical Russian aggression by deploying forces for conventional combat operations. Another idea is that Russia pushes for the exclusion of NATO from the Baltic Sea and ensures that this area is under their dominance. To make this plan feasible, Russia is investing in air defence (via the surface-to-air missile systems S-300, S-400 and the forthcoming S-500) and Russian naval deployments, which are capable of threatening NATO aircraft that operate in parts of Poland and the Baltics.

As a solution to this problem, air forces and aviation assets are pointed to, as well as more long-range, survivable, precision strike

capabilities from a ground sites with proper density. As US Defense Secretary Robert Gates underlined several times, the need for more solid investments in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets is also present, as without the means to identify, process, and strike targets, fighters alone will be of limited use.[18] The augmentation of the NATO air operations centre in Italy with properly trained targeting specialists was also listed. Then-Supreme Allied Commander Breedlove in his testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in April 2015 pointed out that critical gaps in intelligence collection and analysis were detected after Russia's push in Ukraine, and "the Alliance's knowledge of Russian involvement on the ground in Ukraine has been quite limited". More investments in NATO's airborne ISR assets are thus of critical importance, and a sort of "Manhattan Project" was even mentioned to "reconstitute its analytical capability to process and exploit intelligence on Russian military capabilities and operations".[19]

Towards #NATO2030 within a military context

As NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg underscored during the last Riga Conference on 12 November, the NATO 2030 project is about:

- Staying strong militarily.
- Strengthening the political Alliance by putting emphasis on finding unifying elements for all Allies.
- Adopting a more global approach to cooperation with partners.

While political "unifiers" are sometimes difficult to find, nobody is currently questioning the need for a constant strengthening of the Eastern Flank and for maintaining a credible deterrent in this area. The latest report of the Reflection Group formed to provide some recommendations to the Secretary General also underscored this necessity.[20] NATO's

[18] US Department of Defense, "Robert M. Gates, speech to the Navy League", 3 May 2010, https://www.defense.gov/observe/photo-gallery/igphoto/2001157926/.

[19] Philip Breedlove, quoted in: Dave Majumdar, "Can America Crush Russia's A2/AD 'Bubbles'?", 29 June 2016, ***The National Interest***, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/can-america-crush-russias-a2-ad-bubbles-16791.

[20] NATO, "United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group appointed by the NATO Secretary General", 25 November 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf.

incoming new strategic concept, as advertised by the NATO SG, should definitely be adapted to new realities, including military challenges coming from Russia. Why can't it be solved at a lower level of military doctrines, and should it be introduced in the new strategic document? As many researches argue, the whole idea of a tactical interpretation of A2/AD (which has also been defined as a "new normal") is useful to highlight the problem and make it more imaginable for politicians deciding about military spending and budget allocations – however, it still remains a buzzword when we take into account the whole concept of waging a modern war.[21] As Kalvik argues, Russia is identifying a threat coming from the US in the form of the possibility of an "aerospace blitzkrieg", when the initial period of war is decisive and the adversary is determined to seize the initiative and capture the strategic initiative. To degrade the American advantage, Russia is determined to use a whole correlation of forces and means, not only those accessible within a single domain (air, land, naval), and also deployed in a specific theatre.[22] Therefore, it is determined to achieve information superiority (through ISR satellites), build layers of integrated air defences, dominate the cyber-domain and use cyberspace as an operational environment in information, intelligence and penetration operations, and to implement all kinds of subversive hybrid scenarios and potent disinformation machinery.

In such a complex environment, the traditional ways of projecting power are considered to be obsolete, and many analysts argue that there is an urgent need for NATO to start to "think big" again and find a new source of competitive advantage; considering the American potential in space and space technologies, any such advantage must include this particular component. The same applies to the cyber-security domain (including 5G and 6G technologies). Moreover, a sectoral approach should be replaced by a holistic concept of warfare resulting in the Alliance restoring its room for manoeuvre. A for the Baltic States, offsetting Russia's A2/AD capabilities means keeping forward defence postures in the land (recreating divisions and corps as manoeuvrable units, assuring military mobility, strengthening special forces cooperation,

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[21] Luis Simon, "Demystifying the A2/D2 Buzz", 4 January 2017, *War on the Rocks*, https://warontherocks.com/2017/01/DEMYSTIFYING-THE-A2AD-BUZZ/.

[22] See: Jan Kalvik, "Russia Does Not Have an A2/AD-strategy! Nor does it have Gerasimov doctrine", 24 October 2018, https://www.etterretningen.no/2018/10/24/RUSSIA-DOES-NOT-HAVE-AN-A2-AD-STRATEGY/.

and revising procurement policies to coordinate efforts) and air domains.[23] The Air Policing mission should be transformed into more robust Air Defence. In the same vein, considering Russia's military build-up in close proximity to the territories of the Eastern Flank countries, the concept of deploying boost-phase interceptors should be once again revised. For many years, the American Missile Defense Agency was slow to develop this layer of anti-ballistic and missile defence due to some technical feasibility concerns, but with technological advancement this trend should be continued.

As for military perspective, the pace of the reforms in NATO should be considered as satisfactory. Yet, can we assume that this region is already in position to deter the threats coming especially form the Russian side in a credible way? The answer is obviously "no" and these countries are still racing against time (considering the "lost decade" when they declined the possibility of making their armed forces more effective and capable), sometimes with political indecisiveness and inconsistency. All of these create the image of the Eastern Flank a bit too "benign" considering the developments in the East when direct and open military intimidations together with large disinformation campaign and other hybrid actions are taking place on daily basis (like incursions of fighters and drones into the territory of these countries).[24] One of the most important element of the disinfo campaign delivered by the Russian apparatus in different forms (classic media, troll's farms and even some think-tanks) is spreading opinions that by strengthening the Eastern Flank NATO is challenging the security of Russia and these countries who join these efforts are forming ati-Russian coalition of forces. At the same time Russia is not mentioning their actions spoiling the state of relative stability of this region (militarization of Kaliningrad, military drills with non-transparent scenario, CFE and INF suspension and the like).

The general context of NATO's military adaptation is difficult, however. On the positive side, the cessation of Western deployments

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[23] See: Robert Dalsjö, Christopher Berglund, Michael Jonsson, "Bursting the Bubble Russian A2/AD in the Baltic Sea Region: Capabilities, Countermeasures, and Implications", March 2010, *FOI*, https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R--4651--SE.

[24] See: Thomas Frear, Łukasz Kulesa Ian Kearns, "Dangerous Brinkmanship: Close Military Encounters Between Russia and the West in 2014", November 2014, *ELN*, http://quote.ucsd.edu/deterrence/files/2014/12/Dangerous-Brinkmanship.pdf.

(such as in Afghanistan) would allow it to streamline financial resources for other tasks. The main obstacle is the Covid-19 pandemic, which is consuming the mindsets of politicians and influencing countries' economies. In many countries, the pandemic has led to a serious reshaping of the government's priorities, not to mention the tasks of their militaries and future defence budgets prospects. Most importantly, within NATO, the "Defender 2020" exercise, crucial military drills for the Eastern Flank, much-awaited and prepared for, were reduced and partially postponed, creating serious doubt about how the Alliance would react, for example, in a situation of biological warfare – would it be able to react effectively within the context of a serious shortage of manpower due to a growing number of infections? All these concerns also apply to the Eastern Flank countries, which should once again advocate for their vital interests in security to be recognised by the new NATO strategic concept using also regional formats as 3SI or B9 grouping.

NATO's Involvement in Strategic Stability and Arms Control: The Role and Interests of the Baltic States

TOMAS JANELIŪNAS

Introduction

In the last decade, we have been facing an interesting phenomenon. On the one hand, after the end of the Cold War, the topic of strategic stability has lost the interest of academic and analytical research. The threat of a nuclear conflict between the US and Russia declined significantly, and strategic disarmament agreements have been seen as a matter of mutually beneficial habits. On the other hand, after the Russia-Georgia War in 2008 and especially after the Russia-Ukraine War in 2014, a need to review strategic stability and deterrence credibility *vis-à-vis* Russia appeared as a pressing issue. This applies both to the bilateral US-Russia relationship and to the assurance for extended deterrence: i.e. NATO's role and credibility to deter Russia from potential conflicts in Eastern Europe. The Baltic States have come into focus while modelling scenarios for a potential NATO-Russia conflict and calculating actual needs to provide a credible deterrence in the region.

The latter challenges became even more pressing with the rapid collapse of the traditional system of strategic stability and arms control. The main arms reduction treaties that were formed during the Cold War and extended from 1990s to 2000s began to crumble like dominoes: in 2002 the US withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (AMB) Treaty;[1] in 2015 Russia announced that it has officially halted activity in the group

[1] Arms Control Association, "U.S. Withdrawal from the ABM Treaty: President Bush's Remarks and U.S. Diplomatic Notes", 15 January 2002, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002-01/us-withdrawal-abm-treaty-president-bush%E2%80%9s-remarks-us-diplomatic-notes.

on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE),[2] and the announcement of Russia's intended suspension of the CFE came already in 2007; after an initial suspension of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the US formally announced it had withdrawn from the treaty on 2 August 2019; and in May 2020 the US officially notified its intent to withdraw from the 1992 Open Skies Treaty.[3] In fact, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) remains the only US-Russia arms control treaty in effect – however, it has not yet been agreed whether and under what conditions it will be extended (the treaty is slated to expire on 5 February 2021).

We are facing the risk of a new nuclear armament era: both Russia and the US are declaring their intentions to modernise and expand their nuclear capabilities, including hypersonic weapons and low-yield nuclear weapons.[4] Both countries are adapting their nuclear postures: in February 2018, the Department of Defense of the US released its *Nuclear Posture Review* (NPR),[5] where it laid out US plans for nuclear strategy and force structure, and Russia published a similar document titled *Fundamentals of the Russian State Nuclear Deterrence Policy* in June 2020.[6]

What does this mean for future global strategic stability and NATO's abilities to preserve peace in Europe, and particularly ensure security for the Baltic States? What kind of scenarios could we expect for the next

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[2] Reuters, "Russia says halts activity in European security treaty group", 10 March 2015, *Reuters*, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-crisis-europe-security/russia-says-halts-activity-in-european-security-treaty-group-idUSKBN0M61RH20150310.

[3] Kingston Reif and Shannon Bugos, "U.S. to Withdraw From Open Skies Treaty", June 2020, *Arms Control Association*, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-06/news/us-withdraw-open-skies-treaty.

[4] Amy F. Woolf, "Russia's Nuclear Weapons: Doctrine, Forces, and Modernization", 10 July 2020, *Congressional Research Service*, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R45861.pdf; Richard Weitz, "Russia's New Nuclear Doctrine: Don't Mess With Us—But Let's Talk", 22 June 2020, *World Politics Review*, https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/28857/what-s-behind-the-new-russian-nuclear-weapons-strategy; Michael Kofman, "Sound Nuclear Policy Must Understand and Address Russian Nuclear Strategy", 30 September 2020, *CATO Unbound. A Journal of Debate*, https://www.cato-unbound.org/2020/09/30/michael-kofman/sound-nuclear-policy-must-understand-address-russian-nuclear-strategy.

[5] US Department of Defense, "Nuclear Posture Review", 2018, https://dod.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/NPR/.

[6] The President of the Russian Federation, "Basic Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence", June 2020, https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/international_safety/disarmament/-/asset_publisher/rp0fiUBmANaH/content/id/4152094.

decade concerning NATO's involvement in strategic stability and arms control? This article intends to review the main interests of the Baltic States regarding a potential strategic security architecture and NATO deterrence options. It also provides highly simplified scenarios for how trends in strategic stability may change in the nearest future and what recommendations apply to the Baltic States' posture regarding favourable outcomes in the field of nuclear deterrence and disarmament.

NATO and strategic stability: the conundrum of deterrence

Since NATO's *Deterrence and Defence Posture Review* was published in 2012, NATO's actual posture has changed remarkably, and actions intended to increase the conventional deterrence credibility against Russia gained a clear shape in the form of forward deployment. However, as Veebel and Ploom noted, "nuclear aspects have still remained the least changed part of the Alliance's deterrence spectrum."[7] In official NATO statements, we can find a typical mix of concerns related to the increased risk of an arms race, as well as commitments to effective arms control:

> NATO Allies are seriously concerned by Russia's fielding of a nuclear-capable missile system, which poses a significant risk to Alliance security and is in violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. In response, NATO is implementing a balanced, coordinated, and defensive package of measures, ensuring credible and effective deterrence and defence. Allies do not intend to deploy new land-based nuclear missiles in Europe nor enter into a new arms race and remain committed to effective arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.[8]

In contrast to the changing US position, during the last few years NATO has remained mostly passive and reluctant in formulating a bold and clear nuclear posture as part of an effective extended deterrence

[7] Viljard Veebel and Illimar Ploom, "The Deterrence Credibility of NATO and the Readiness of the Baltic States to Employ the Deterrence Instruments", *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* Vol. 16, Issue 1 (2018): 178, http://doi.org/10.2478/lasr-2018-0007.

[8] NATO, "Deterrence and Defence", 26 May 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_133127.htm.

strategy. Despite a theoretically supported value of "strategic ambiguity", some studies argue that a huge asymmetry in the nuclear weapons deployed in Europe, especially in the field of non-strategic nuclear arms, just undermines NATO deterrence credibility. As the authors of the RAND study state, the deterrence posture in the Baltic States is militarily weak and generally questionable,[9] and therefore "NATO would need to consider substantially enhancing and improving its conventional forces based in and near the Baltic states; fielding some limited nonstrategic nuclear weapons feasible for use throughout a conflict, including very early in the conflict."[10]

Paradoxically, the Baltic States, for a long time mostly refraining from debates about strategic stability or nuclear deterrence, became a reason for intensified discussions about NATO nuclear deterrence recently. The Baltic States region is seen as one where escalation or de-escalation strategies could be tested in practice when it comes to a potential NATO-Russia clash.[11] Conflict escalation scenarios are no longer taboo, although some European leaders are still shy of accepting the probability of a NATO-Russia conflict. As experts point out, NATO must reclaim escalation and counter-escalation strategies as tools of crisis management and deterrence, and this is an essential method to prepare the necessary steps for increasing its own security.[12]

According to Gomez, there are three challenges that will affect US nuclear policy: changing US threat perceptions, the erosion of traditional arms control agreements, and the rise of non-nuclear strategic technologies.[13] The problem is that so far there has been a

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[9] Paul K. Davis et al., "Exploring the Role Nuclear Weapons Could Play in Deterring Russian Threats to the Baltic States", 2018, ***RAND***, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2781.html.

[10] Ibid., 88.

[11] Lohren B. Thompson, "Why The Baltic States Are Where Nuclear War Is Most Likely To Begin", 20 July 2016, *The National Interests*, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/why-the-baltic-states-are-where-nuclear-war-most-likely-17044; Jüri Luik and Tomas Jermalavicius, "A plausible scenario of nuclear war in Europe, and how to deter it: A perspective from Estonia", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 73 (2007): 233-239, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2017.1338014.

[12] Łukasz Kulesa and Thomas Frear, "NATO's Evolving Modern Deterrence Posture: Challenges and Risks", 2017, ***ELN***, https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/NATOs-Evolving-Deterrence-Posture-ELN.pdf.

[13] Eric Gomez, "U.S. Nuclear Policy at an Inflection Point", 16 September 2020, *CATO Unbound. A Journal of Debate*, https://www.cato-unbound.org/2020/09/16/eric-gomez/us-nuclear-policy-inflection-point.

greater urgency to respond to technological change and to look for ways to close the holes created by the development of technology, and strategic and diplomatic decisions are not keeping pace.

As Kofman stated, there are at least two sources of strategic instability that make Russia and the US nervous: for the US, it is Russia's growing non-strategic nuclear arsenal, and for Moscow, it is the long-standing US superiority in long-range conventional weapons.[14] The asymmetry of different kinds of nuclear capabilities creates a lot of room for uncertainty and risks of miscalculations in the rationality of the opponent. So far, it seems that neither Russia nor the US or NATO has a consistent and clear (for itself and for the opponent) crisis management strategy supported by adequate deterrence capabilities.

The deterioration of transatlantic relations poses another important structural challenge to NATO. Calls from European leaders, particularly French President Emmanuel Macron, for strategic European autonomy create a great deal of uncertainty about how much the US will be inclined to maintain its physical military presence in Europe. As Macron declares that NATO is becoming "brain-dead"[15] and urges for more enhanced defence integration in the EU, the Eastern-flank members of NATO (the Baltic States, Poland, and Romania, in particular) still prefer to maintain the US's strategic attention in Europe and seek to persuade the US to strengthen its military presence near Russia's borders. But inevitably, the US will have to devote more and more energy to deterring China. Not surprisingly, US President Trump wants to include China in nuclear non-proliferation agreements, even though this only makes it more difficult to reach a stable agreement with Russia.[16]

Given these challenges to strategic stability, the next decade will see a lot of tension in the international system, and strategic stability will not be guaranteed.

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[14] Michael Kofman, "Sound Nuclear Policy Must Understand and Address Russian Nuclear Strategy", 30 September 2020, *CATO Unbound. A Journal of Debate*, https://www.cato-unbound.org/2020/09/30/michael-kofman/sound-nuclear-policy-must-understand-address-russian-nuclear-strategy.

[15] The Economist, "Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead," 7 November 2019, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead.

[16] Jack Detsch, "Trump Wants China on Board with New Arms Control Pact," 23 July 2020, *Foreign Policy*, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/23/trump-china-russia-new-arms-control-agreement-start/.

Scenarios of strategic stability and arms control in Europe

There are two important trends that are likely to determine the specifics of nuclear deterrence and arms control in Europe and the Baltic region in the next decade.

The first is whether ideas of European strategic autonomy will gain a practical realisation. In the radical case of Europe's strategic separation from the US, we can expect the EU countries to eventually lay the foundations for a common European defence system (including a so-called European army) and the US will withdraw its permanent troops from Europe. As an alternative to this, the trend could be for the US to increase its military presence in Europe, including the enhanced deployment of both conventional and nuclear forces.

Second is whether Russia will seek to increase its nuclear armaments (especially tactical and intermediate-range nuclear weapons) to be able to threaten nuclear conflict even during conventional clashes. Such a situation would increase the probability that Russia may provoke a conventional war with the calculation that NATO would not take the risk of escalating and crossing the nuclear

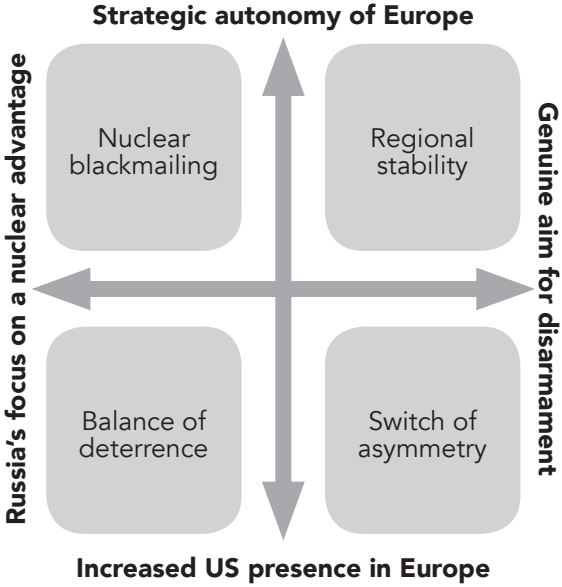

Figure 1. **Scenarios of strategic stability and arms control in Europe.** Source: Compiled by the author

threshold. The opposite trend would be Russia's honest desire to reduce tensions, limit armaments, and achieve strategic stability in Europe. It should be emphasised that a genuine, fair disarmament is not yet in Russia's interest, and political proposals to start negotiations often hide Moscow's intentions to accept on paper the current asymmetry in Russia's favour.

The most dangerous scenario for the Baltic States would be a withdrawal of the US military from Europe due to consolidated European autonomy paired with Russia's nuclear advantage in all categories of weapons over the European countries. This scenario could lead to a tacit "nuclear blackmailing" – a situation when European countries would avoid any confrontation with Russia, fearing potential escalation in which a nuclear weapon could be used. Possessing no practically deployable nuclear means in Europe and having no assured response to the nuclear threat, the European countries, including Baltic States, would become open to blackmail from Russia and would probably be forced to reduce even their conventional deterrence forces, ostensibly so as not to provoke Russia.

On the other hand, if the US were to withdraw from Europe, it could hypothetically be expected that Russia would no longer feel a military threat from the European direction and would pursue a genuine nuclear disarmament. Such a scenario could potentially lead towards real stability in Europe, and perhaps even to a nuclear-free Europe. Regional stability would be highly desirable for the Baltic States, as it would finally break out of its security dilemma. However, such a scenario is highly unlikely, as Russia is not inclined to lose its advantage in specific arms categories. Until now, one of Russia's main geopolitical goals has been to push the US away from Europe, because without US support, Europe remains weak in military terms.

If the US maintains or even strengthens its nuclear presence in Europe, we can expect a return to classic nuclear deterrence if Russia is not inclined to pursue nuclear disarmament. According to this scenario, the US would expand its nuclear deterrence arsenal with tactical and medium-range weapons, thus reducing the current asymmetry between Europe and Russia. Only after symmetry has been achieved in all categories of nuclear weapons and clear guidelines of response to nuclear provocations have been set can a return to real disarmament treaties be expected. Only this time, it would include tactical nuclear weapons.

It is also unlikely, but a possible scenario, that Russia, seeing the growing determination of the US to strengthen its military capabilities in Europe, could offer real options for disarmament, including a limitation of the weapons that now constitute Russia's advantage. Russia's changing attitude could be motivated by a deteriorating economic situation or growing internal social tension. Russian politicians should remember how the arms race with the US during the Cold War ended for the Soviet Union, so the risk of exhausting its economy remains high. Such a strategic retreat by Russia could lead to a temporary asymmetry in the US's favour – at least by way of gaining the ability to dictate the terms of disarmament. For the Baltic States, it could offer a rare opportunity to express their security interests in the strategic balance and to record the conditions of Russia's confinement for a long time.

The interests and role of the Baltic States: recommendations

The Baltic States have consistently pursued security interests based on the greatest possible role for the US in Europe and a clear nuclear deterrent against Russian provocations. In recent years, there has been a dominant view among experts that the best way to deter Russia from provocations, including the use of tactical nuclear weapons, is to ensure deterrence by denial.[17] However, some authors state that the current military situation in the Baltics does not facilitate a credible denial:

> A lack of capabilities undermines the credibility of NATO's conventional deterrence posture despite its clear effort to communicate the threat to the other side. The only reason why the lack of capabilities on the Eastern Flank has no negative consequences for the Alliance is because Russia has (currently) no need to advance its state interests by resorting

[17] Luik and Jermalavicius, *op. cit.*; Robert M. Klein, Stefan Lundqvist, Ed Sumangil and Ulrica Pettersson, "Baltics Left of Bang: The Role of NATO with Partners in Denial-Based Deterrence", 2019, *Strategic Forum*, *https://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-301.pdf?ver=2019-07-23-142433-990*; Ulrich Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics. A NATO Playbook,* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018), https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Kuhn_Baltics_INT_final_WEB.pdf; Vylius Leskys, "Thornbush Strategy – Deterrence by Denial in Lithuania," 17 June 2019, *Small Wars Journal*, https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/thornbush-strategy-deterrence-denial-lithuania.

to military force. At the same time, deterrence fails repeatedly at the sub-conventional level and it will probably continue to fail in the future.[18]

Not surprisingly, the Baltic States are firstly seeking the widest possible choice of conventional deterrence options. However, the Baltic States face a security paradox. The Baltics are very sceptical about the arms control agreements proposed by Russia, as such agreements could limit NATO's ability to achieve parity between conventional and nuclear capabilities on its Eastern Flank. But on the other hand, completely unrestrained armaments in the region could lead to an escalation of tensions in which Russia would have a permanent advantage.

However, this dilemma does not mean that the Baltic States cannot have a clear position on the strategic balance. The following Baltic interests – and, consequently, recommendations – to pursue within NATO (and in relation to the US) could be formulated:

1. Prevent NATO opponents (especially Russia) from gaining a real or perceived strategic advantage that would lower the threshold for a conventional conflict (i.e. it would encourage Russia to escalate conflicts in the hope that NATO would not respond to provocations or attacks for fear of further escalation).
2. Maintain a clear US nuclear deterrence commitment to all NATO members and a NATO nuclear sharing option. Continuously updating and informing the Baltic States about changes in the strategic response would be much needed.
3. Seek a sound, rational, and clearly communicated nuclear deterrence logic, supported by factual capabilities, that does not allow the use of nuclear weapons to be extended to the tactical level with the calculation of avoiding a strategic response.
4. Promote an eventual return of the US and Russia to negotiations on the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties (NEW START), potentially including intermediate-range missiles categories – thus replacing the obsolete Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and covering a wider range of nuclear weapons. The clear regulation of intermediate-range nuclear weapons would be in the interest of the Baltic States, as it is this type of weapon that might be deployed

[18] Matus Halas, "Proving a negative: why deterrence does not work in the Baltics", *European Security* 28:4, (2019): 431, https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2019.1637855.

near the Baltic States (e.g. in the Kaliningrad region) and increase the overall risk of conflict escalation. The Baltic States should express an explicit position to US representatives on our interests in nuclear arms regulatory agreements, seek wider acceptance among European countries, and support options for a broader agreement.

5. Seek to exclude China from the strategic arms limitation talks between the US and Russia, as this would complicate negotiations with Russia and wash away compliance with the agreement. However, support the negotiation of bilateral US-China strategic stability agreements.
6. Avoid regional conventional arms limitation treaties, as this would potentially reduce the conventional deterrence of the Baltic States (i.e. it could limit the concentration of A2/AD equipment in the Baltic States), where NATO still has a disadvantage.

Given that the Baltic States may become the cause of nuclear escalation between NATO and Russia, it is somewhat strange that so far the Baltic States themselves have only been very formally and episodically involved in discussions on the use of nuclear weapons for deterrence. As Murauskaitė pointed out,[19] possibilities for NATO's nuclear deterrents were not practically reflected in Lithuanian public discourse (and this could be the case with Latvia and Estonia also). Only recently have NATO's nuclear deterrence issues been addressed in articles by Baltic academics and experts. So far, the role of the Baltic States in formulating a clearer NATO strategy for nuclear stability has been very fragmented or non-existent.

These trends could change if the US reviews its policy on the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. This will require a more active involvement by European countries in the debate, and perhaps even a concrete commitment to host nuclear weapons or delivery systems. Although the Baltic States are unlikely to become a region for nuclear deployment, a louder voice on how to ensure the security of the Baltic States from nuclear conflict would be much needed.

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[19] Egle Murauskaitė, "Nuclear Matters: Lithuanian Security Culture in the Context of NATO Trends", *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review,* Vol. 16, Issue 1 (2018): 35–58, http://doi.org./10.2478/lasr-2018-0003.

The next decade is likely to see growing tensions and uncertainty over the use of nuclear weapons. These challenges need to be tackled resolutely and without delay. One way or another, the strategic return of the US to Europe, with concrete deterrence options based on broader military capacities, is still more desirable for the Baltic States. Historical experience shows that benevolent behaviour by Russia is unlikely, and only assured pressure can force Moscow to negotiate for real.

MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING INTERNAL COHESION

Retaining NATO Unity in the 2020s – the View from Rīga

IMANTS LIEĢIS

Introduction

The turmoil produced by the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 is likely to have implications for the first half of the decade and beyond. It arrived at a time when NATO was already dealing with a number of fundamental challenges: the rapid development of new technologies with implications for military and defence issues, including in space; the potential breakdown of the arms control and disarmament regime; the emergence of multifaceted hybrid threats appearing in the grey zone below traditional military threats; a rising China and assertive Russia on the outside of NATO, with behaviour increasingly affecting countries on the inside; the traditional values system of the Alliance fraying in important member states, in parallel with unresolved budgetary discrepancies. All these issues are of concern to Latvia.

NATO's strength has been its ability to meet multifaceted challenges. Resilience and resolve have been the glue keeping NATO united for over 70 years. Looking towards 2030 – will it stick? How are the current challenges perceived and being addressed in Latvia and our region? What recommendations can Latvian expertise offer in addressing these challenges? How should NATO adapt in moving through its eighth decade as the strongest military alliance the world has seen?

In promoting the agenda of NATO 2030, launched on 8 June 2020, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg refers to three pillars – staying strong militarily, being more united politically and taking a broader approach globally.[1] It is meant as a reflection on strengthening the Alliance in an increasingly competitive world. In practice, the process is

[1] NATO, "Secretary General launches NATO 2030 to make our strong Alliance even stronger", 8 July 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/176155.htm.

likely to be an analysis of NATO as it is today, with a view to also paving the way for preparing a new Strategic Concept in 2021.

There is currently another reflection process also taking place within NATO. A reflection group was appointed by Jens Stoltenberg on 31 March 2020 with a mandate to make proposals on further strengthening NATO's political dimension by offering recommendations to reinforce Alliance unity and increase political coordination and consultation between Allies. The group of five men and five women from various member states, co-chaired by US representative Wess Mitchell and German representative Thomas de Maizière, was scheduled to report to the Secretary General towards the end of November, which would allow for the meeting of NATO foreign ministers to discuss and possibly endorse the proposals in December 2020. No doubt a NATO summit meeting, possibly during the summer of 2021, would give further indications on how the reflection process should be further moved ahead.

Out of the three NATO 2030 pillars mentioned by Secretary General Stoltenberg, and given the mandate of the reflection group, I propose to focus on the political unity of NATO and how it is being tested. By budgetary requirements, by the need to maintain robust defence and deterrence, by disagreements amongst members, and by talk of European autonomy and sovereignty. Amongst NATO's many challenges, I perceive these as being amongst the most crucial for Latvia.

First, a few words about reaching reflection.

Reaching reflection

In analysing the political unity element, it is useful to remind ourselves about what prompted these decisions to reflect.

There appear to have been two particular "culprits" that helped provoke the debate – Presidents Trump and Macron. In 2017, the former called the Alliance "obsolete".[2] Two years later, his French counterpart used the words "brain dead".[3] Trump was speaking in the context

[2] Cyra Master, "Trump worries NATO with "obselete" comment", 15 January 2017, *The Hill,* https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/314432-trump-nato-is-obsolete.

[3] The Economist, "Emmanuel Macron in his own words (English)", 7 November 2019, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-in-his-own-words-english.

of defence spending-lite by Europeans, in particular with a swipe at Germany. Macron's comments in turn were aimed at Turkey and the US, bemoaning a lack of coordination amongst NATO members. Though the rhetoric may have been harsh, and it was not well received in our region, the underlying causes which prompted the use of such words need to be addressed. Troops from one NATO country (in this case, France) should never be placed in danger through the actions of other NATO Allies. US concerns about insufficient burden-sharing amongst NATO Allies, and America's attempts to get many European countries to contribute more, preceded President Trump. The pressure and cajoling will no doubt continue during the Biden and subsequent presidencies.

Money makes the world (and NATO) go round

Political unity is strained because of the uneven allocations made by Allied countries towards defence. NATO provides no legal obligation for its members to each pay their fair share. Voluntary political guidelines include references to allocating 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) on defence, with 20% of defence budgets being used for equipment and related research and development. These were re-iterated in September 2014 at the Wales Summit – a summit focussing very much on NATO's reaction to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and military engagement in eastern Ukraine some six months earlier. Estimates for 2020 indicate that one-third of Allies (10 out of 30) meet the 2% guideline and that all NATO countries have increased the percentage allocation since 2014.[4]

Around 70% of total spending on defence by NATO governments is covered by the US, which led President Trump in 2018 to pronounce, firstly, that America does not "want to be suckers anymore" and, secondly, to lash out at Germany for being "delinquent".[5] There was probably an element of "America first" underlying these pronouncements, including a push for Allies to buy more US military equipment. At the same time, the

[4] NATO Public Diplomacy Division, "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013–2020)", 21 October 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/10/pdf/pr-2020-104-en.pdf.

[5] Donald Trump, "Trump: What does the US contribute to NATO in Europe?", 30 July 2018, *BBC*, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-44717074.

US defence budget allows America to remain the world's leading military power and to project that power beyond NATO's Euro-Atlantic space. Protecting American interests in supporting Europe is nothing new. This notion underscored US's financial support for Europe after the Second World War. "If the United States was to avoid […] overextension […] then it should bolster the strength of allies in such a way as not to deplete its own",[6] wrote John Lewis Gaddis in discussing the Marshall Plan of 1947.

"Overextension" of the projection of American power remains a pertinent issue to this day. This is why it is crucial for European Allies to consider scenarios where the US is militarily engaged in, say, the South China Sea at a time when NATO's interests in Europe are threatened. Without, of course, pushing for "strategic autonomy", to NATO's detriment.

American arguments about Germany spending scarce resources on the Russian-German Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project to the detriment of defence are of course well understood in the Polish-Baltic region. Germany's economic weight within Europe needs to be adequately reflected in its defence spending commitment within NATO, which is estimated at 1.57% of GDP for 2020. Next year is an election year with the bowing out of Chancellor Merkel, but defence spending as a priority must stay high on the agenda.

The four countries (Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) hosting NATO's enhanced Forward Presence on the Alliance's Eastern flank are all currently devoting more than 2% of GDP towards defence. In Latvia's case, Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014 was instrumental in convincing successive governments to increase defence spending. In 2014 it was less than 1% of GDP, but today it exceeds 2%.

Solidarity amongst Allies on defence spending is an important element in retaining political unity. The efforts being made since 2014 are showing results, but there are still 20 member states that are not meeting the 2% guideline, which has a deadline of 2024 for implementation (as agreed at the Wales Summit). The current pandemic will have dire economic consequences in all NATO countries. Defence budgets should not be cut. Member states should aim to implement the guidelines agreed for 2024 so as to prevent the health crisis from evolving into a security crisis.

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[6] John Lewis Gaddis, *George .F. Kennan. An American Life*, (Penguin Books, 2012), 279.

Political unity on defence and deterrence

NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission has been crucial in ensuring the defence of all of NATO's territory since Latvia and her two neighbours joined the Alliance in 2004. There are grounds for Allies to provide not just air policing, but also air defence.

Ten years after the Baltic States' accession to NATO, the regional security situation was negatively affected by Russia's aggression in Ukraine in spring 2014. International norms and agreements were cast aside by Russia's military intervention. This aggression unsettled regional security more than the cyber-attacks on Estonia in 2007 or the military intervention in Georgia in 2008. It prompted the Alliance to re-prioritise core elements of its defence and deterrence. The reaction was measured, commensurate and defensive in nature. Latvia highly values the political unity that led to the deployment of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), which has consisted of four multinational battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland since 2017.

Is the eFP sufficient to carry out the core mission of defending and protecting one another? Regrettably, Russia's actions and use of hybrid war tactics – cyber-attacks, interference in elections, the use of chemical weapons, disinformation, and breaches of arms control agreements – have continued since 2014. In order to retain a robust, resilient defence and deterrence posture, some further steps could be taken:

1. Lessons learnt from the downgraded NATO exercise "Defender Europe" last spring need to be implemented. There is a need to focus on the length of time required for the movement of forces and equipment across the Atlantic and within Europe, as this remains a crucial aspect of NATO's role in the Baltic region.
2. Urgent work needs to be continued and consensus maintained on addressing threats that remain in the "grey area" and may fall below traditional Article 5 scenarios. The 2018 Brussels Summit about assisting Allies at any stage of a hybrid attack is a step in the right direction.[7] Coordination with other actors, such as the EU and NGOs, should be developed. Helpful suggestions in a recent CEPA report could be used as a starting point.[8]

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[7] NATO, "Brussels Summit Declaration", 11 July 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm#21.

[8] Lauren Speranze, "An Agenda for NATO's next generation", 9 November 2020, *CEPA*, https://cepa.org/an-agenda-for-natos-next-generation/.

3. The robust defence and deterrence posture needs to be maintained as an ongoing prerequisite for conducting a dialogue between NATO and Russia. Within this dialogue, NATO can encourage Russia to abide by arms controls agreements in seeking to revive the regime.

Keeping Turkey in the fold

Turkey is a crucial Ally within the Alliance. Recent differences in viewpoints about Turkey's regional role have caused friction. Latvia, together with our Baltic neighbours and Poland, received collateral damage as a result of these frictions. Turkey's military action in north Syria last year was one of the reasons that led President Macron to refer to NATO as being "brain dead", given the lack of prior warning from our Turkish Ally and the fact that French special forces deployed in the region could have come under fire from their Turkish military colleagues as well as being left vulnerable by the potential withdrawal of US troops. As a tactical manoeuvre, Turkey originally refused to approve NATO's defence plan for Poland and the Baltic States, even though this plan has no direct bearing on Turkey's strategy in Syria. President Erdogan subsequently agreed to approve the plan at NATO's 70th anniversary meeting of leaders in December 2019.

Bilateral differences between France and Turkey also erupted over freedom of speech issues, radical Islamism and related terrorist attacks in France during the last few months. Not to mention the heightened tension between Turkey and Greece (and others) in the Eastern Mediterranean following Turkey's drilling activities.

NATO should continue to play a political role by offering divergent members the chance to have open and transparent discussions to deconflict differences. The way in which NATO was recently able to offer Greece and Turkey a mechanism for communication to reduce tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, including a 24-hour hotline, proved to be useful. An alliance of 30 democratic members will inevitably have differences of opinion.

This is nothing new. Looking back at NATO's last 70 years, lots of examples crop up. Fundamental differences already arose in 1956 between the United Kingdom and France on the one hand, and the United States on the other, over the Suez Canal crisis. In 1966, French armed forces were removed from NATO's integrated military command,

and they only returned following the Strasbourg-Kehl Summit of 2009. Tensions between some European allies and the US were rife during the Iraq war of 2003, including when French President Chirac criticised Eastern and Central European countries for "missing an opportunity to shut up" because they supported America.[9]

Divergent interests and positions should not prevent NATO from carrying out its fundamental task of member states defending and protecting one another. NATO needs to continue to be used as a platform to overcome and minimize the consequences flowing from different views.[10]

Given the geostrategic importance of Turkey to NATO, an honest dialogue with our important NATO Ally needs to be conducted. This is also important to convince Turkey that, for example, Russia cannot be perceived as an alternative. Turkey's purchase of a radar system from Russia makes the system incompatible with NATO's, and this is another bone of contention within the Alliance. Despite that, it needs to be stressed to our Turkish partners that NATO remains crucial to the defence of their territory. Contradictions amongst Allies cannot be allowed to fester, but the ultimate strategic choice that Turkey makes concerning its future security remains to be taken in Ankara.

European strategic autonomy in NATO

Any talk about Europe becoming "strategically autonomous" or "sovereign" must be considered within the context of NATO and the transatlantic link. Closer cooperation between the EU and NATO? Yes. European or EU collective defence as an alternative to NATO? No.

NATO's future depends equally on US engagement in Europe and on European Allies providing military capabilities to strengthen collective defence within the Alliance.

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[9] Craig S. Smith, "Chirac Upsets East Europe by Tellit it to 'Shut Up' on Iraq", 18 February 2003, *The New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/18/international/europe/chirac-upsets-east-europe-by-telling-it-to-shut-up-on.html.

[10] NATO, "NATO Secretary General: we need to work together to find common solutation", 13 November 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_179487.htm?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NATO%20Update%20week%2046&utm_content=NATO%20Update%20week%2046+CID_ec58840852850140 1719cff8cd546d5e&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=Read%20more.

Discussions about strengthening Europe's role in NATO, tied to the "burden-sharing" debate, are nothing new. As the Biden administration takes over in 2021, European Allies need to consider how best to support America. Apart from continuing with efforts on defence budgets, European partners could help France tackle terrorism threats in the Sahel, thereby relieving the pressure for US engagement. Europe must also continue to work closely with America in moulding joint policies towards Russia and China.

The "bark" of President Macron, the main proponent of European strategic autonomy and sovereignty, is fiercer than the "bite". Even though France's underlying rationale is to consider scenarios where the US does not come to help Europe in an emergency, this French thinking has been around before. Paris planned similar scenarios during the spat with America over the war in Iraq just under 20 years ago. If the approach leads to stronger European capabilities within NATO, this is positive. In a recent interview[11], President Macron referred to European capabilities having been built over the last few years whilst claiming that the United States will only respect Europeans "as allies if we are earnest, and if we are sovereign with respect to our defence".

Sovereignty of decision-making in defence remains with nation states, and whilst improved defence capabilities and closer cooperation through the EU is welcome, talk of either European sovereignty or autonomy within NATO is not. In this regard, the approach taken by Germany's Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer should be more widely accepted by Europeans. To quote a recent interview:

> "Illusions of European strategic autonomy must come to an end: Europeans will not be able to replace America's crucial role as a security provider […] There is no real reason why Europeans should not be able to show more of a presence — and more muscle, when needed — in the Baltic Sea".[12]

Needless to say, the closing words of this quote hit the nail on the head. Whilst Germany's "framework nation" status in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania is highly appreciated, greater German

[11] Groupe d'etudes geopolitiques, "The Macron Doctrine. A Conversation with the French President", 12 November 2020, https://geopolitique.eu/en/macron-grand-continent/.

[12] Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, "Europe still needs America", 2 November 2020, *Politico*, https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-still-needs-america/.

muscle through land forces on Baltic territory would also help to improve regional deterrence and defence.

Unity through adapting

The evolution and survival of NATO has come about thanks to its remarkable ability to adapt. This was most recently illustrated in the decade leading up to 2020, when the focus away from out-of-area operations and towards territorial collective defence took place speedily. Latvia, as part of NATO's eastern flank benefited from this shift of focus and the political solidarity that accompanied it.

Further adaptation in the current decade up until 2030 is rightly being addressed by the reflections taking place within NATO. Political unity amongst 30 divergent democracies will play a crucial part in maintaining their defence and security. Staying more united politically will also contribute to remaining strong militarily and taking a broader approach to NATO's role globally.

Up until midway through the current decade, political unity will be tested by the ongoing pandemic and the related strains on national economies. By 2025, greater unity needs to be achieved by at least 20 members reaching the 2% GDP guideline for defence expenditure. During this time, encouragement, rather than destructive talk of the Alliance being "obsolete", can be expected from NATO's leading country, America. In parallel, EU members within NATO can continue to talk the talk of "autonomy" and "sovereignty", but they need to walk the walk of strengthening the capabilities on offer within the Alliance. If there is no perceivable change in the Russian leadership's assertive and destructive global role, NATO's defence and deterrence posture on its eastern flank must be strengthened by political consensus. Turkey should stay as a crucial member of the Alliance, as long as Turkey's leadership considers it to be in the country's strategic interests.

The view from Rīga on questions of political unity in the years ahead is inevitably coloured by regional concerns. But this view also adapts to realities. It will remain a 360-degree view, as the distinct threats to other Alliance partners far away from the eastern flank must also receive united political support and solidarity from Latvia and regional partners. Therein lies NATO's strength.

Options for Strategic Partnerships for the Baltic States in 2030: The Defence Nexus of the United States, NATO, and the EU

VILJAR VEEBEL

Introduction

At the launch of the NATO 2030 Initiative in November 2020, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg addressed the challenges that the Alliance faces in an increasingly competitive world and called to make NATO even stronger.[1] Stoltenberg's proposals to make the Alliance stronger both militarily and politically and to take a broader approach globally are more than justified in this current era of uncertainty, conflicts, and mistrust. Over the last years, some studies have seriously questioned the military capabilities and readiness of NATO in defending the territory of its most exposed members. A study by David A Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson[2] is perhaps the most well-known of these. Moreover, some NATO members have not demonstrated particular unity and cohesion in mutual relations. The tensions between US President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron over the future of the Alliance at the end of 2019, or the clash between Turkey and Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean in June 2020, are some examples of opposing views and recent conflicts among members of NATO. A quotation from POLITICO that NATO countries seem less likely allies than rivals, if not outright enemies, is quite appropriate in

[1] "Strengthening the Alliance in an increasingly competitive world. A conversation with the Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg", 8 June 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNxanhvngJc.

[2] David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics", 2016, *RAND*, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html.

this context.[3] Finally, the balance between the global and regional tasks of NATO remains delicate, as the Alliance consists of 30 member states, each representing their own threat perceptions and national interests. For example, in summer 2020, Turkey blocked the Alliance's updated defence plans for the Baltic countries to deter Russia from realising its aggressive ambitions and asked the Allies for more support in Turkey's conflict with the Kurds in northern Syria. In this context, it is clearly a challenge for the Alliance to reach consensus between NATO members on the global approach that NATO should take.

The Alliance's success in making NATO even stronger depends on the contribution and efforts of the United States. Both the military capabilities and financial resources of the Alliance clearly depend on the resources of the United States in the sense that the defence expenditure of the United States represents more than two-thirds of the defence spending of the Alliance as a whole – the contribution of the United States to the operational costs of NATO as an organization is by far highest of the Alliance's members, and some essential capabilities of the Alliance such as intelligence, surveillance, air-to-air refuelling, ballistic missile defence, and others are provided mostly by the United States.[4] Thus, it is important to explore more deeply the role and the future prospects of the United States in strengthening NATO, including through ensuring the security of the Baltic countries.

The current study examines this topic from two different angles. First, the financial challenges are discussed referring to Trump's constant criticism that a majority of NATO Allies do not meet the commitment of 2% of GDP on defence spending and his proposal that the Allies should actually double their defence spending targets. The study discusses the motives of the United States in making this suggestion and investigates the potential impact of an increase in defence expenses, particularly in light of the NATO 2030 initiative. Second, the study discusses the potential of the Alliance to gain more political prestige in the future and to become a strong political union, particularly under the leadership of the United States. Third, the study will debate the value of the EU-led defence cooperation mechanism

[3] David M. Herszenhorn, Rym Momtaz, J. Barigazzi, "Rough seas for NATO as Turkey clashes with allies", 24 June 2020, *Politico,* https://www.politico.eu/article/rough-seas-for-nato-as-turkey-clashes-with-allies/.

[4] NATO, "Funding NATO", https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm.

PESCO as strategic alternative to US leadership in NATO. The final section concludes and makes some suggestions on the measures the Baltic countries should take to feel more secure and protected in the future in the collective defence framework.

Is Trump's suggestion to double the defense spending target a solution for European security?

In 2018, US President Donald Trump made a statement that the United States carries too much of NATO's mutual defence burden and suggested that NATO Allies should double the defence spending target to 4% to ensure the Alliance's strong deterrence.[5] In light of this, it is reasonable to ask whether a significant increase in the defence expenditures of the Alliance's members would be a solution for the EU in enhancing Europe's security in the long-term. This section focuses on two specific aspects in this respect. First, what is the theoretical and functional logic behind the 2% (or even 4%) commitment? Second, what does a contribution of 4% of GDP mean to NATO European Allies? In other words, is it both reasonable and feasible for EU countries?

In general, it is difficult to find either theoretical or practical justifications for the Alliance's 2% (or even the 4%) commitment. On the one hand, there is no evidence that a share of 2% of GDP does not harm countries' economic sustainability, but that higher shares would do so. On the contrary, over the last 50 years the share of US defence expenditures has varied between 3.5% and 8% of GDP[6] without harming the country's economic sustainability. On the other hand, there is also no rational correlation between the 2% commitment and the Alliance's necessary military capabilities; in practice, the countries need real military capabilities to protect themselves, not just numbers on a piece of paper to demonstrate how committed they are. In this regard, a comparison of Estonia, France, and Germany is a good illustrative example. Estonia spends about 2.2–2.3% of its GDP on national defence and is one of the few NATO countries that fulfils the

[5] Louis Nelson, "Trump suggests NATO allies should double defense spending target to 4 percent", 11 July 2018, *Politico,* https://www.politico.eu/article/trump-suggests-nato-allies-should-double-defense-spending-target-to-4-percent/.

[6] For example, the US's defence spending was 5.3% in 2009 and 3.5% in 2018.

2% commitment to NATO. However, even in doing so, the country has no capacity to buy tanks, fighters, advanced air defence systems, coastal defence capabilities, and so on. France, at the same time, spends less than 2% on national defence, but can still afford to sustain more military capabilities – including nuclear capabilities and aircraft carriers – not to mention the country's own capability to produce tanks, aircraft, etc. Germany spends in nominal terms as much money overall on national defence as France does, but receives in return a completely different set of military capabilities, which does not include, for example, nuclear capabilities and aircraft carriers. In this respect, the Alliance's commitment of 2% of GDP seems to have no substantive justification in real terms, but it is something that has been considered as a rational and politically acceptable number at some point in time, having later on been turned into some sort of "mantra" without any reasonable explanation as to why it should be exactly 2% and not 1.5%, 2.5%, or 3.5%. However, from another angle, the last time the Alliance's average defence expenditures were higher than 4% was in 1990, before the break-up of the Soviet Union. Since then, the share of the Alliance's defence expenditures has constantly decreased; this has been associated with the view that since there exists no bipolar confrontation in the world arena anymore, it is irrational and unnecessary to spend so much money on defence and military readiness. Thus, based on a similar logic, it could be argued that the fact that the United States expects other NATO countries to increase national defence expenditures to the same level as they were during the Cold War means that they also expect that there exists a global confrontation that is similar to that of the Cold War period.

Coming back to Trump's statement that the United States carries too much of NATO's mutual defence burden while other Allies do not contribute enough to the collective security network, two aspects should be highlighted that allow us to see the other side of the story. First, to avoid a situation where major European major powers are over-armed, it was expected already during the establishment of NATO in 1949 that the United States would play the key role in ensuring security in Europe. Second, over the last decade, both the United States and other NATO countries have decreased their national defence expenditures at an even pace, so today in both cases the defence expenditures reached up to 70% of defence spending in 2009. Furthermore, the high share

of defence spending of the United States is directly related to the high political and strategic ambitions it has in the global arena, while most other NATO members do not have similar ambitions.

Today, the overall trend to increase defence spending is already visible in many NATO countries. All Alliance members except Greece and Canada have increased their defence expenditures since 2018, with the average growth rate at almost 5%, and the increases were highest in Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Turkey, and the Netherlands. However, coming back to Trump's suggestion that the Alliance members should increase defence spending from its current average level of 1.36%[7] to 4% of GDP, this would mean that current defence expenditures should be tripled. The situation is most problematic for Luxembourg, where the level of defence expenditures is about 0.5% of the GDP. The plan to increase national defence spending to 4% of GDP would mean that Luxembourg has to spend an additional significant amount of money on national defence even though the country does not face any significant security threats. Furthermore, to fulfil the 4% commitment, the United States itself must increase its national defense expenditures by about 15%. In nominal terms, this means that the financial resources that the United States has to contribute to national defence exceeds the overall sum that France, Spain, and Germany are currently paying for national defence expenditures. In this light, it is highly likely that as a result of this step, the role of the United States becomes even more dominant in the collective security framework.

Next to that, it is also obvious that both the threat perceptions and the military needs of NATO members differ significantly, depending on whether they border friendly NATO partner countries or hostile major powers. The young countries that are located in historic conflict areas or in the border regions of the Alliance are more exposed to security risks and need, therefore, more military capabilities than the NATO members that are surrounded by stable neighbours. To illustrate this, for example, Estonia or Latvia today spend twice as much as Portugal on national defence in relative terms, as far as the share of GDP is concerned. However, despite Baltic efforts, there is a long "wish list" of military capabilities that the Baltic States urgently need to feel safe and secure.

[7] In some countries, like Spain, Belgium, Slovenia and Hungary, defence spending covers about 1% or even less of GDP.

Portugal, on the other hand, has difficulty understanding what kind of additional military capabilities it should buy in the future. In this light, there exists a risk that, particularly in the case of those countries who contribute about 1% of GDP to national defence, an enforced increase in defence spending would not result in an increase in real military capabilities. As regards some weapons and arms systems, the supply-side is generally rigid, and it is just not possible to buy twice as much ammunition, fighter aircraft or some other military equipment in the next year.

Finally, an enforced increase of national defence spending would also to some extent disturb the current regional balance between France and Germany. Today, both countries use more or less the same share of GDP for national defence. Should the countries be forced to increase national defence expenditures to 4% of GDP, it would mean that in nominal terms, the defence spending of Germany would be one-third higher than that of France.

The answer to the question of whether NATO should start a revision of the 2% commitment of its member states right now is clearly a "yes" – however, it should be done in a more reasonable way than was suggested by Donald Trump in 2018. First, it would be rational to set different defence spending levels for different countries, meaning that Estonia and Germany do not have to contribute to the same proportion of GDP. This also means that in the future the system could be more balanced and that the financial resources that the United States has to contribute additionally to national defence will not exceed the sums that France, Spain, and Germany together are paying for their national defence expenditures, referring to the example discussed above. In addition, it would be rational to keep the share of defence spending in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom at the same level to avoid mutual competition and tensions. Second, the contributions of countries to the Alliance's capabilities should consider their needs and threat perceptions. In practice, relying on the idea that NATO is a collective security framework with the well-known slogan of "one for all and all for one", it could be challenging to force the most exposed NATO countries to contribute more, assuming that some of them are not living as prosperously as other NATO partners. Following on from this, the most intriguing question is: what happens in a situation where the most vulnerable NATO countries refuse to spend more on national defence but at some point in time need NATO support?

Is the United States helping or hindering NATO in becoming a stronger political union?

In his speech, Jens Stoltenberg stressed the ambition of making NATO politically stronger in the future and of finding a stronger consensus sooner and more systematically among Alliance members. This ambition is directly related to national interests as well as political developments in the United States. In particular, the Baltic countries are under emotional pressure in this respect.

During the presidency of Donald Trump, the United States was complaining about its leading role in the NATO Alliance and asked for other countries to contribute more. Furthermore, the country also adopted a relatively low profile in some conflicts, for example, by distancing itself from broader conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean. This is in deep contrast, for example, with the behaviour of the United States in 1974, when the involvement of the United States (and not the NATO Alliance as such) solved the conflict between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus. Conversely, from the viewpoint of the Baltic countries, the current security situation in Europe does not look optimistic despite the efforts of France to enhance cooperation on defence among EU member states in the framework of the PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) initiative. Hypothetically, should a conflict break out today in the Baltic region between Russia and some of the Baltic countries, the Baltics will most likely get real help from the United States or the United Kingdom and not much help from EU member states. The PESCO initiative gives some hope in this respect, but it clearly needs years if not decades to realise its potential.

The election of Joe Biden as the 46th President of the United States will change the overall picture. Some liberal politicians in Estonia greeted this with joy and support. They expect that this step creates favourable conditions for strengthening defence-related cooperation in the Western world again because in their opinion, Joe Biden knows that the security of the United States depends on the strength of the relationship between its transatlantic allies.[8] They also expect that United States will maintain its military presence in Europe; however,

[8] See: Marko Mihkelson, "Eesti-USA suhted Joe Bideni võidu järel" [Estonian-US relations after Joe Biden's victory], 7 November 2020, *ERR (Estonian Public Broadcasting),* https://www.err.ee/1156418/marko-mihkelson-eesti-usa-suhted-joe-bideni-voidu-jarel.

it is not expected that NATO European Allies could again overlook the 2% commitment. Thus, the trend to increase national defence spending will remain, and any development in this field should be considered particularly carefully by taking into account all potential implications. It is also expected in Estonia that Joe Biden will continue to support the strengthening of the Alliance's Eastern Flank. Finally, at least for Estonians, it is significant that in 2004, the Estonian Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana was nominated to Joe Biden to honour Estonia's independence. In this light, hopes are high at least in Estonia that the United States will gain back its credibility in the global political arena, and this also makes it clearly easier for NATO to achieve its aim of becoming an influential political union. Thus, there are again high hopes for the United States in Estonia. Furthermore, it is also expected that close relations with the new Biden administration could improve Estonia's reputation in the eyes of NATO Allies, considering the turbulent times in the local political landscape in Estonia.[9]

Another aspect that should be discussed in this context is the unity of NATO. Recent clashes between NATO partners have not contributed to a unified image and voice of the Alliance. Furthermore, even in Estonia, people have split feelings about the Alliance. For example, based on a local public opinion survey in Estonia from autumn 2019 titled "Public opinion and national defense," there is a large disparity between the attitudes of Estonians and non-Estonians living in Estonia towards NATO. Non-Estonian respondents seem to be significantly more pessimistic about NATO; while 81% of Estonian respondents trust NATO, only 36% of respondents from other nationalities living in Estonia feel the same. Furthermore, about 91% of Estonians who participated in the survey and 38% of survey respondents of other nationalities support NATO membership.[10] A strong political union cannot afford such a divided image. Furthermore, non-Estonian people living Estonia are actually most critical about the 2% commitment, arguing that there is no need to spend so much money on military capabilities, as Russia is not planning to attack Estonia, and that money should be spent on

[9] See: Marko Mihkelson, "Eesti-USA suhted Joe Bideni võidu järel" [Estonian-US relations after Joe Biden's victory], 7 November 2020, *ERR (Estonian Public Broadcasting)*, https://www.err.ee/1156418/marko-mihkelson-eesti-usa-suhted-joe-bideni-voidu-jarel.

[10] Ministry of Defence of Estonia, "Public opinion and national defence (2019)", https://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/sisulehed/avalik_arvamus/report_fall_2019.pdf .

hospitals or families in need. Estonians, on the other hand, consider the NATO Alliance the main security guarantee and feel frightened about Russia's aggressive ambitions.

Could PESCO and European defence initiatives be reasonable alternatives for strengthening NATO?

The launch of the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation for Security and Defence (PESCO) in December 2017 has created some excitement among Baltic politicians and military experts. The launch of PESCO happened during the Estonian presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2017 and was a surprise even to Estonians themselves – the initiative appeared among the country's priorities only shortly before the beginning of the Estonian EU presidency. The proposal to move towards joint European defence capabilities coincided with the period when fears have increased in Baltic States because of Russia's aggressive behaviour in the aftermath of the events in Ukraine. In the hope that new security and defence initiatives could make Baltic nations feel safer and more secure, it is definitely worth analysing what politicians, scientists, military experts and the public think of PESCO and renewed European defence initiatives, and what their motives are for this.

However, the proposal to establish European strategic autonomy and independent capabilities has been welcomed by local politicians in Estonia mostly with caution and pessimism. The arguments against it vary from unnecessary duplication to a lack of solidarity in terms of NATO and threats to bilateral relations with the US. For example, Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas clearly states that in his opinion, Europe does not need a separate army, and he does not support the idea of European strategic autonomy and the EU taking more initiative in terms of security and defence. His arguments are mostly based on the idea that no competition and duplication between the EU and NATO are needed, and the only way the EU and NATO could contribute to increased security in Europe is by boosting mutual cooperation.[11]

[11] Riigikogu, "XIII Riigikogu stenogramm, 16. mai 2017" [The protocol of the XIII Riigikogu on 16 May 2017], 16 May 2017, http://stenogrammid.riigikogu.ee/201705161000.

Minister of Foreign Affairs (formerly Minister of Defence) Urmas Reinsalu argues that the proposal is not a practical cooperation initiative, but a political declaration with little to offer to meet the current security needs of Estonia and the other Baltic States. He also stresses that the idea of the European Union taking more initiative and commitment in European defence requires the inclusion of national defence issues in the treaties, but since the latter requires consensus between the EU member states, it would be difficult to achieve in practice. He also points to the solidarity principle in the EU, arguing that in crisis situations, the solidarity clause could be applied already, and this could be more important for Baltic States than evolving defence initiatives.[12]

The deputy-chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the national parliament Marko Mihkelson states that Europe's current role and mandate in the field of security and defence should not be changed too easily, based on the argument that only Russia's actions demand it. He also stresses that the initiatives and activities that strengthen the role of the European Allies in NATO and deepen economic and military cooperation at the transatlantic level should be prioritised.[13] One of the members of the European Parliament (MEP) from Estonia, Urmas Paet (*Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe*), is concerned about the currently inefficient use of the EU battle groups, as well as about financial issues. However, he also states that the EU should continue with the plan.[14]

The reaction of the Estonian military community to the proposal to increase Europe's current role and mandate in the field of security and defence is also pessimistic. Although the serving members of

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[12] Postimees, "*Mikser nimetas ELi ühisarmee ideed huvitavaks*" [Mikser says the idea about the European army is interesting], 9 March 2015, https://www.postimees.ee/3116883/mikser-nimetas-eli-uhisarmee-ideed-huvitavaks.

[13] Risto Veskioja, "*Mihkelson Junckeri EL-i ühisarmee plaanist: tänast Euroopa julgeolekuarhitektuuri ei tohiks kergekäeliselt muuta*" [Mihkelson about Juncker's plan: the current security structure in Europe should not be hanged easily and casually'], 9 March 2015, *Delfi,* http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/mihkelson-junckeri-el-i-uhisarmee-plaanist-tanast-euroopa-julgeolekuarhitektuuri-ei-tohiks-kergekaeliselt-muuta?id=70968709.

[14] Risto Veskioja, "*Paet: Junckeri EL-i ühisarmee plaaniga tuleb edasi minna, kuid lihtne see olema ei saa*" [Paet: Europe should go on with the idea of the European army, but it will not be easy], 9 March 2015, *Delfi,* http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eesti/paet-junckeri-el-i-uhisarmee-plaaniga-tuleb-edasi-minna-kuid-lihtne-see-olema-ei-saa?id=70968879.

the Estonian military forces have avoided public comments on the idea, two ex-military opinion leaders in security and defence issues in Estonia (both are also members of the national parliament), Lt. Gen. Johannes Kert and Gen. Ants Laaneots, have made their opinion clear on this topic. Lt. Gen. Johannes Kert argues that the EU's efforts to consolidate the EU's foreign policy, which among other instruments includes military force, seems to be a rational step, and that common military forces combined with the EU membership in NATO give a boost to increased standardisation, the more optimal use of resources in Europe, and a better operative decision-making mechanism. However, he says that European strategic autonomy may be created only in the 2030s and questions the real ability of European defence cooperation (including PESCO) to function as a tool of collective deterrence due to the geo-strategical advantage that NATO has over the EU.[15] In principle, he seriously questions the purpose for which the European initiative is needed, when NATO is fully functional. Gen. Ants Laaneots states that the idea to create European strategic autonomy and related capabilities could get entangled in the different interests and demands of the EU countries.

However PESCO as a structural cooperation initiative is seen having great potential as long as it is not competing with the interests of the US and the functions of NATO. The importance of this initiative has been stressed both by local leading politicians and by representatives of the military forces. The Estonian Prime Minister, Jüri Ratas, calls PESCO first and foremost a "fundamental step" which shows that 25 countries are focused on closer cooperation in the area of security and defence and are committed to increasing national defence expenditures and improving national defence capabilities. Furthermore, he particularly highlights the so-called "military Schengen" project (or the "Schengen of tanks", using his expression) as a cooperation area with high potential, as it would allow moving military equipment from one EU country to other EU member states. The Estonian Minister of Defence, Jüri Luik, stresses both the political importance and the practical value of PESCO. On the one hand, he sees PESCO as a political "umbrella",

[15] Johannes Kert, "Euroopa Liit vajab tulevikus kindlasti ühiseid relvajõude" [The EU definitely needs common military forces in the future"], 13 December 2015, *Delfi*, http://maaleht.delfi.ee/news/maaleht/arvamus/johannes-kert-euroopa-liit-vajab-tulevikus-kindlasti-uhiseid-relvajoude?id=73143221.

or a cooperation form, which would send a clear signal both to EU member states and to Russia that the EU is strongly interested in the joint activities of the EU member states in the defence area, and that the EU is willing to take joint political, defence-related, and financial actions to strengthen this cooperation. In this light, he also stresses that PESCO is an example of the viability of the EU – it focuses not on just another problem or crisis, but on the future and positive ideas. Conversely, Jüri Luik points out that PESCO has a very practical side in the form of joint projects, and he also is positive about the possibility that countries like Norway and the UK could participate in these projects, which would definitely be in the best interests of Estonia. The development of innovative solutions in the PESCO framework has also been stressed by Luik, who has mentioned that Estonia has submitted an innovative project in unmanned ground systems and that the most influential countries in the bloc, like Germany and France, were interested in the project. He has also stressed that it is important to be flexible in involving third countries in developing smart and innovative defence technologies as well as in supporting the cross-border activity of small and medium-sized businesses[16].

Next to that, a survey[17] of the ECFR from 2018–2019 indicates that the Baltic countries are definitely interested in gaining additional security guarantees at the EU level. On the one hand, as far as the perceptions of the Baltic countries of the EU as a security actor are concerned, the Baltic countries consider the EU as a transatlantic geopolitical project that needs to increasingly provide its own security, with NATO remaining the backbone of European security.

On the other hand, at the national level, all three Baltic countries are to a greater or lesser extent supporting the PESCO initiatives. Estonia sees PESCO as an essential initiative that could significantly contribute

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[16] LETA, "EU defense ministers discuss cooperation, security of Western Balkans", http://www.leta.lv/eng/defence_matters_eng/defence_matters_eng/news/1705D1A1-0CE0-491C-AB5B-BA1F6F767017/?text, 13 August 2018; see also Ministry of Defence of Estonia, "Estonia looking to develop unmanned land systems within the framework of European defence cooperation", http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/en/news/estonia-looking-develop-unmanned-land-systems-within-framework-european-defence-cooperation.

[17] Susi Dennison, Ulrike Esther Franke and Pawel Zerka, "The Nightmare of the Dark: The Security Fears that Keeps Europeans Awake at Night", 23 July 2018, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 27, https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/SECURITY_SCORECARD%283%29.pdf.

to national security and is particularly interested in establishing a so-called "military Schengen Area", which would help EU member states' military units pass through one another's territory. Latvia was initially reluctant to participate in PESCO. Nonetheless, as long as PESCO enhances Latvian security and supplements NATO's role, the country will see the initiative as a useful way to strengthen relations with its European allies. Lithuania supports closer EU cooperation on security and defence, and it is leading a PESCO project on cyber rapid response.

In terms of allies, Baltic positions are more similar to Germany, the Benelux countries, Spain and Italy, while diverging from the UK and Poland (finding the EU to be more of an economic project) and as well from France and Finland, preferring Europe to take the initiative in terms of strategic autonomy.

Conclusions

Although the Baltic countries are safer than ever before as members of the EU and NATO, and there have been no direct acts of violence on the part of Russia against Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania over the past decade, the Baltic countries still feel insecure due to their neighbour's actions in testing the credibility of the current international security order in various regions worldwide. These fears culminated in the military conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008 and in Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian region of Crimea in 2014. Both actions have clearly demonstrated that Russia has conducted itself without any fear of retaliation and has planned and executed aggressions with great sophistication, initiative, and agility. Russia's determination to restore its sphere of influence in the former Soviet republics is also the reason why the Baltic countries are afraid that Russia might attack them as well.

The Baltic States enjoy security guarantees directly in NATO and indirectly through membership in the EU and active cooperation in the field of security and defence policy. Despite the existence of these guarantees, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are still vulnerable to Russian actions and intervention. The discussion of whether NATO member states should increase their defence spending remains most likely a focus of the Alliance in light of the NATO 2030 initiative. It seems to be inevitable, considering Stoltenberg's aims and ambitions, for NATO

to become even stronger in many ways. Since this means that NATO should be more efficient in deterring Russia, it should, in principle, also be in the best interests of the Baltic countries.

However, it cannot be excluded that Russia could be deterred when current resources are used in a more efficient way while maintaining the current level of defence expenditures. In this way, such options like PESCO, despite their current uncertainty, could function as a corollary to the current NATO framework if it is more efficiently and synergistically developed. Estonia sees PESCO as an essential initiative that could significantly contribute to national security and is particularly interested in establishing a so-called "military Schengen Area", which would help EU member states' military units pass through one another's territory. Nonetheless, the clear focus for the future should be on the question of how to get the maximum amount of ready-state military capabilities for each euro or dollar. This will not be achieved through blanket statements and requirements of 2 or 4% of GDP expenditures on defence, but instead through smart, targeted spending that incorporates and integrates existing capabilities and extant gaps.

Turkey and the Eastern Flank of NATO: The Polish Perspective

ADAM BALCER

Introduction

The future of NATO in the upcoming decade will be shaped by developments in various parts of the world, with the particular importance of regions that border its European members located on the Eastern Flank and Southern Flank, respectively. The internal cohesion of NATO, namely relations between the strongest member states, will constitute the second key factor determining its position in the world. Turkey should be recognised as a particularly interesting – even unique – case. Turkey is the only NATO member state that due to its geographic location "unites" both flanks. Turkey also represents one of the most important challenges regarding the internal cohesion of the Alliance due to internal political developments (an authoritarian slide) and the transformation of its security policy (more unilateral, assertive and interventionist). This article will focus on the current role of Turkey within NATO, paying a special attention to Ankara's role in the Black Sea, a key region bordering the Eastern Flank. Turkish security policy in NATO and the Black Sea region is particularly important for Poland, which (after Turkey) possess the second largest military potential on the Eastern Flank and generally belongs to a group of the most significant NATO member states. Therefore, Poland's security policy in NATO and directed towards regions bordering the Eastern Flank will be also analysed in the article. It will end with a prognosis concerning the future of NATO and provide the Alliance with the recommendations from the Polish perspective regarding Turkey and the Eastern Flank.

Turkey and Poland in NATO: a basic audit of power

The threat perceptions of NATO member states always diverged to a substantial degree, mostly due to their geographic location, social and political structures, and military potential. However, the variety of interests, tensions and even competition between the main powers has in recent years reached an unprecedented level in the history of the Alliance. Currently, Turkey is the NATO member state whose own security policy most often contradicts the mainstream of the Alliance. Moreover, Ankara's assertive – and sometimes even aggressive – interventionist and unilateral policy, because of its military potential, has a huge impact on NATO and provokes serious tensions with other main players, currently especially with France. According to "Global Fire Power", which has since 2006 released rankings of the conventional military strength of countries, Turkey possesses the fourth most powerful armed forces in the NATO (after the US, France and the UK), and the 11th most powerful in the world.[1] Turkey's solid military capabilities are based on its rising defence budget. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates that Ankara increased its military expenditure from 15.7 billion USD at current exchange rates in 2015 to 20.5 billion USD in 2019. Its share of the GDP raised from 1.8% in 2015 up to 2.7% in 2019. In effect, the Turkish defence budget is the 15th largest in the world and the 7th biggest in the NATO.[2] However, GDP-based on PPP (purchase power parity) rates, which are designed to control differences in price levels, provide a more precise measure of the real purchasing power of the GDP of each country. Research conducted by Peter E. Robertson from the University of Western Australia suggests that the real military purchasing power of Turkey should be increased almost 2.5 times and that right now it approaches 50 billion USD, exceeding Italy's and Canada's and making it 11th in the world and 5th in NATO.[3] At the same time, Turkey has developed its defence industry in recent years, which

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1 Global Fire Power, "2020 Military Strength Ranking", https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp.

2 SIPRI, "Military Expenditure Database", https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex.

3 Peter E. Robertson, "International Comparisons of Real Military Purchasing Power: A Global Database", *The University of Western Australia,* https://ecompapers.biz.uwa.edu.au/paper/PDF%20of%20Discussion%20Papers/2019/DP%2019.13_Robertson.pdf.

resulted in a substantial rise of Turkish arm exports and a decrease of imports. According to SIPRI, comparing the periods 2010–2014 and 2015–2019, the Turkish export of arms increased by 90%, while its import decreased by almost 50%.[4] These trends express a new Turkish security policy which has become decisively more sovereign and independent from NATO's mainstream. The policy is also characterised by the Turkish military's engagement abroad, including interventions on an unprecedented scale in its modern history. Turkey intervened in civil wars of Syria and Libya, as well as the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict over Nagorno Karabakh. Turkey established several military bases abroad and signed agreements concerning comprehensive cooperation in the security field with some non-NATO countries (for instance, Libya, Qatar, and Somalia). The foreign policy of Turkey, based on the projection of power, resulted in exceptional tensions between Ankara and the other members of NATO, particularly France and Greece.

Moreover, Turkey increased its cooperation in the security field with Russia on a scale incomparable with any other member state within NATO. In fact, Turkey is the only NATO member state that did not impose any sanctions on Russia after its aggression against Ukraine in 2014. In 2017, Turkey signed an agreement with Russia regarding the purchase of S-400 anti-aircraft weapon systems. The Russian-Turkish rapprochement resulted in a substantial deterioration of relations between Turkey and the US. In 2019, the US blocked the sale of F-35 multirole combat aircraft to Ankara. Washington stopped the deal because it had serious concerns that Russia's access to the Turkish S-400 would allow Moscow to gather information on the F-35s. On the other hand, Russian-Turkish relations also represent a challenge to NATO security, because paradoxically aside from cooperation they are also shaped by rising competition, which includes proxy wars. These sometimes involve the Turkish and Russian armed forces (mostly mercenaries, the air force, and combat advisors, but rarely also regular troops) as protagonists. Military incidents between them could spin out of control and escalate. In a worse-case scenario, they could turn into a direct confrontation on a bigger scale.

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[4] Pieter D. Wezeman and Aude Fleurant, Alexandra Kuimova, Diego Lopes da Silva, Nan Tian, Siemon T. Wezeman, "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2019", March 2020, *SIPRI*, 2, 6, https://www.sipri.org/publications/2020/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-international-arms-transfers-2019.

Turkey's problem with aligning with NATO's mainstream views is more serious, structural and internally motivated. Indeed, Turkey's the authoritarian slide presents the most significant reason behind Turkey's current gradual detachment from NATO. Although, NATO as a military alliance, in comparison to the EU, pays less attention to the political systems of its member states, it is still generally founded on certain basic system of values (democracy). Until recently, Freedom House, an American foundation evaluating political systems in the world, had not designated any member state of NATO as being a "not free" country since the mid-70s. Only few of them have been defined as "partly free". The situation changed dramatically in 2016, when Turkey – after a failed *coup d'état* – was relegated from the category of "partly free countries" to being a "not free" state.[5] Authoritarianism in Turkey is intertwined strongly with nationalism, which stands behind Ankara's new assertive foreign policy. It serves as a key source of legitimacy for the ruling elite, diverting the attention of Turkish society away from grave internal economic problems.

Poland's geographic location (it has borders with Belarus, Ukraine and Russia of a length approaching 1200 km) and its history (almost 300 years of mostly being under Russian domination with short interruptions, including the loss of independence) make Warsaw particularly sensitive of Russia's security policy and preoccupied with the Eastern Flank of the NATO. Poland, taking into consideration its military potential, is definitely the most important NATO member state located on the Eastern Flank. Global Fire Power evaluated the Polish armed forces as being 21st in the world and 8th in NATO.[6] According to SIPRI, as far as military expenditure is concerned, Poland occupies the 10th place in NATO, just after the Netherlands. However, taking into consideration the above-mentioned study on the defence budget measured by GDP PPP, Poland's military expenditure exceeds Netherland's, Spain's and Canada's, making it the 7th biggest in NATO. Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014 contributed to the rise of the Polish defence budget from 9.3 billion USD in 2013 to almost 12 billion USD in 2019. Its share of GDP increased from 1.8% in 2013 to 2.0% in 2019 (and 2.1% in 2018).[7]

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[5] Freedom House, "Freedom in the World", https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world.

[6] Global Fire Power, *op.cit.*

[7] SIPRI, *op.cit.*

Poland's security was also strengthened by the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), the NATO defence and deterrence military posture deployed on Polish territory and the Baltic States. This was approved at the NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016. The bulk of eFP deployments are composed of US soldiers. Indeed, in recent years Poland has also intensified on an unprecedented scale its military bilateral cooperation with the US. For the first time in the modern history of Poland, 4,500 US troops – mostly on a bilateral basis – are deployed on Polish soil, and their number is going to increase by 1,000 in the coming months. Within the framework of bilateral agreements, US military infrastructure will be developed in Poland, allowing the US army to immediately raise its contingent up to 20,000 soldiers in case of an emergency situation. Poland also signed with the US several comprehensive agreements on the purchase of military equipment, including F-35 multirole combat aircrafts and Patriot systems.

Turkey and Poland in the Black Sea region

The Black Sea is the most unstable area of the regions bordering NATO's Eastern flank. In fact, NATO – due to the membership of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey – should be perceived as a part of the Black Sea region. Moreover, Ukraine and Georgia, two more countries from the region, belong to NATO's "Enhanced Opportunity Partners" group, established under the Partnership Interoperability Initiative in June 2020 and composed of six countries. Georgia and Ukraine also aspire – alongside Bosnia and Hercegovina – to join NATO, and in 2008 the Allies formally agreed that they will become members of the Alliance in future. Nevertheless, the Black Sea is one of the regions in the world that has in recent years particularly often experienced wars, guerrilla actions, terrorism, military incidents, massive violations of human rights, a high level of criminality, and social unrest. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the region has been an arena for many armed conflicts, which has probably resulted in the death of more than 200,000 people and created several millions refugees. Currently, there are two ongoing low-intensity armed conflicts in the region (Donbas in Ukraine, and guerrilla warfare instances in the North Caucasus). However, there are also four frozen conflicts (Transnistria in Moldova,

Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia). In certain conditions, these might easily turn into fully-fledged conventional conflicts, as seen in the most recent Armenian-Azeri war over Karabakh (September-November 2020). Revolutions and massive protests, which have happened often in the Black Sea area and are sometimes accompanied by bloody riots, constitute another exemplification of instability in the region.[8] NATO engagement in the region is challenged by the unprecedented number of breakaway unrecognized "states" and occupied territories (Transnistria, Eastern Donbas, Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Karabakh).[9] Their emergence and existence depends mostly on Russian support. Of the regions near the Eastern Flank of NATO, Russian armed forces have been in recent years the most engaged in combat in the wider Black Sea region. They attacked their neighbours (Georgia and Ukraine), waged a war against insurgents in the North Caucasus, and provided armed support to separatists in Georgia and Ukraine. Russian troops are also deployed in all of the above-mentioned contested territories and in Armenia on a scale incomparable with any other region in the world.

Turkey treats the MENA bordering the Southern Flank as a top priority region in its security policy. It definitely occupies more important place than the regions neighbouring the Eastern Flank of the NATO. As far as the Eastern Flank is concerned, Turkey, because of its geographical location, is very strongly focused on the Black Sea region. Ankara perceives Eastern Europe, and especially the Baltic Sea, as remote regions. Turkish engagement in the security sphere in the Baltic region is particularly limited. Turkey belongs to a small group of the NATO member states (along with Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, and

[8] The massive protests in Ukraine in 2004–2005 and 2013–2014, in Moldova in 2009 and 2015–2016, in Georgia in 2003 and 2011, and in Abkhazia (a separatist republic) in 2014 and 2020 had a decisive impact on the trajectories of the countries (snap elections, changes of governments and presidents, etc.). They were often accompanied by civil unrest, leaving dead demonstrators, particularly during the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine (2013-2014). It resulted in the death of more than 120 persons, caused by an attack by police and special forces against demonstrators.

[9] In the most recent "Freedom in the World" ranking, issued by the Freedom House for almost 50 years, Azerbaijan and South Ossetia got 10 detailed points, occupied Crimea 8 and Eastern Donbas 5. The scale is 0 (a completely not free country) to 100 (an absolutely free one). See: Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2020. A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy", https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy.

Portugal) that do not take part in the eFP. In contrast to Turkey, all major NATO member states participate in the eFP. Turkey's cautious position could also be explained by the specific relationship between Turkey and Russia. It seems that Ankara wants to avoid engagement in NATO's direct deterrence toward Moscow, particularly if NATO deployments operate in the Baltic region, close Russia's borders. On the other hand, it should be admitted that Turkish soldiers regularly participate in the Rapid Trident exercises, which are the largest NATO-Ukraine drills. They take place mostly in Ukraine's interior – namely, in Eastern Europe rather than in the Black Sea region.

Due to its military and economic potential, Turkey is the NATO member state (apart from the US) that enjoys the largest influence in the Black Sea region. Turkish strength is increasing, although it definitely does not match Russia. Since the fall of Soviet Union, Turkey has established particularly close cooperation in the security field with Georgia and Azerbaijan and to a lesser degree with Ukraine. Turkish armed forces organised – along with their partners from those countries – many military drills and provided them with training, weapons and equipment. Turkey also became an important stakeholder in recent decades in the region regarding its soft security (social and economic stability), contributing substantially to a decrease of the Black Sea countries' economic dependence on Russia and an increase of their economic sovereignty. Turkey plays a significant role in various economic sectors in the Black Sea region (including in terms of foreign trade, FDI, the construction sector, tourism, labour immigration, official development aid, etc.).[10] However, this also means that the region became more exposed to a possible negative spill-over from Turkey, whose economy has become considerably more fragile and exposed to external factors. On the other hand, for many years Turkey has

[10] Turkey became the most important trade partner of Azerbaijan and Georgia (at around 15%) and a relatively significant partner for Ukraine and Moldova (at 5–7%). Turkey became the key source or destination (in the case of Azeri companies) of FDI for Azerbaijan and Georgia and relatively relevant for Ukraine and Moldova (if Turkish investments registered in third countries are included). Turkish construction companies implemented in the above-mentioned countries projects worth more than 25 billion USD. The Turkish market also attracts a lot of labour immigrants and suitcase traders from the region. Data can be found on the webpages of the Turkish ministires of Trade and of Foreign Affairs: Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Turkey, https://www.trade.gov.tr/; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/default.en.mfa.

attempted to avoid an indirect confrontation with Russia in the security sphere in the region. However, in recent years the situation has started to change. Turkey provided decisive military support (particularly drones), planning support, technical assistance and advice to Azerbaijan during the Armenian-Azeri war (from September-November 2020). This was a game-changer that tipped the balance in favour of the Azeri side and allowed Baku to achieve a sweeping victory (the reconquest of 70% of occupied territories). Ankara also built diplomatic international support for Azerbaijan, especially by mobilising members of the Turkic Council around the Azeri cause.[11] Turkey's support for Azerbaijan should be perceived as an attempt to extend its sphere of influence, both by strengthening its position in Baku and by marginalising Russia's influence over the region, which is mostly realised through Armenia. The firm Turkish support for Azerbaijan convinced Baku to continue its offensive several times despite Russia's diplomatic pressure to stop it.

The unequivocal Turkish support for Azerbaijan provoked tensions not only between Ankara and Russia but also with France and the US. At the beginning of the conflict, Turkey issued a statement vehemently dismissing the joint declaration from France, Russia, and the US calling for an immediate ceasefire. The diplomatic clash was particularly spectacular between France and Turkey because Paris decisively took the side of Armenia. Russia's diplomatic intervention mitigated the Azeri victory (through the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in Karabakh in parallel with the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces), but the opinion that Russia imposed its own terms and emerged as the big winner still seems to a huge degree overstated. [12] As Richard Giragossian, director of the Regional Studies Center, an independent think-tank based in Yerevan, points out, "Turkey has regained its lost role as "the primary military patron" of Azerbaijan, one it had forfeited when Azerbaijan was crushed by Armenia when war over Nagorno-Karabakh first erupted in 1991. "Turkish arms sales and advisers have now replaced Russia" and will want to keep things that

[11] The importance of the Turkic Council, made up of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey and Uzbekistan, has increased in recent years. Uzbekistan, the most populous Turkic state after Turkey, joined in 2019. Turkmenistan dramatically intensified cooperation with the Council and is planning to apply for observer status.

[12] On the other hand, the Russian peacekeeping mission will be small, and its prolongation after five years will depend on the consent of Azerbaijan. The Azeri refugees will be allowed to return to the part of Karabakh controlled by Armenians.

way."[13] Moreover, a Russian peacekeeping contingent will be formally controlled by Turkish military observers. Turkey also saw the opening of a transport corridor via Nakhichevan (an Azerbaijani exclave bordering Armenia), albeit monitored on Armenian territory by Russian border services, that gives it access to Azerbaijan proper. The increase of military cooperation between Turkey and Ukraine represents another example of the most recent Turkish challenge to Russia in the security field in the Black Sea region. Ukraine is a particularly attractive partner for Turkey because of the substantial potential of the Ukrainian defence industry.[14] The rise of cooperation in the defence sector between both countries has been accompanied by the unprecedented intensification of bilateral visits at the highest level (the presidential level). A deal on Ukraine's purchase of Turkish drones signed in January 2019 set the stage for an expansion of cooperation in the security field between both countries. In February 2019, during the Turkish presidential visit to Ukraine, an agreement was signed that included a military assistance funding package for the Ukrainian armed forces worth some 35 million USD. After the US, it is the largest military aid provided by any NATO member state to Kiev. During the visit, Turkey and Ukraine opened a new chapter of cooperation regarding space (and intelligence satellite technologies in particular), including the transfer of technical knowledge to Turkey's recently established space agency and to a leading Turkish state-owned manufacturer of missile and rocket engines and satellites. In 2019, Ukraine decided also to sell a quarter of the shares of its main engine manufacturer to Turkish companies, while Turkey sold Ukraine surface-to-sea anti-ship missiles and radar-surveillance and communication systems. In August 2019, Turkey and Ukraine signed a memorandum of intent laying the ground for cooperation in other sectors of the defence industry – for instance, Ukrainian assistance for engine development in the Turkish national fighter jet project and the launching of a joint long-range drone programme. According to Metin

[13] Zaman Amberin, "Who really won in south Caucasus?", 11 November 2020, *Al-Monitor*, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/11/turkey-azerbaijan-intervention.html.

[14] According to SIPRI, between 2010 and 2014 Ukraine occupied 8th place among the exporters of weapons in the world. Ukraine's share of global arm transfers approached 3%. This decreased substantially between 2015 and 2019 due to the war against Russian aggression. See: Pieter D. Wezeman and Aude Fleurant, Alexandra Kuimova, Diego Lopes da Silva, Nan Tian, Siemon T. Wezeman, *op.cit.*

Gurcan, a Turkish security analyst and former military officer, "Ukraine today stands out as Turkey's chief partner in a series of critical military technologies […] Technological cooperation between the two sides has dramatically increased over the past two years, laying the ground for a techno-scientific alliance with far-reaching implications for the geopolitical balance of power in the Black Sea basin."[15] According to Gurcan, Turkish and Ukrainian companies are currently working on around 50 joint defence projects. Certainly, the outcome of that cooperation and the implementation of that project remain to be seen, and this will define the character of the Turkish-Ukrainian relationship.

Warsaw, because of its location in Central Europe on the shores of Baltic Sea and its lack of access to the Black Sea, traditionally is more preoccupied with the security situation in the Baltic Sea and in Eastern Europe, as defined through the prism of Poland's eastern borders with Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. Currently, because of the Russian aggression that started in 2014 against Ukraine, the country occupies a key place in Polish security policy. Poland reacted to the aggression by expanding its cooperation with Kiev. Poland substantially supported Ukraine's soft security by strengthening economic cooperation with it. For instance, it opened up its market to around one million Ukrainian labour immigrants. Polish-Ukrainian cooperation also increased after 2014 in the sphere of hard security. In September 2014, Poland signed an agreement with Lithuania and Ukraine that established the joint Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade, headquartered in Lublin (Poland). In January 2017 it reached full operational capability. The creation of the brigade was based on earlier cooperation between Ukraine and Poland and between Lithuania and Poland in the battalion format. Poland also participates regularly on a large scale in Rapid Trident, the main NATO-Ukraine military exercises. During the most intensive phase of Ukraine's war against Russian aggression (from January 2014-July 2016), Poland provided Kiev with non-lethal military assistance at the third-highest value (5.5 million USD) after the US and Canada.[16] Nevertheless, there

[15] Gurcan Metin, "Turkey on course to strategic partnership with Ukraine", 22 October 2020, *Al-Monitor*, https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/10/turkey-russia-increasing-defense-cooperation-ankara-kiev.html#ixzz6crA95mM2.

[16] Goble Paul, "Friends in need: 18 countries who gave Ukraine non-lethal military aid", 5 August 2016, *Euromaidan press,* http://euromaidanpress.com/2016/08/05/friends-in-need-18-country-who-supplied-ukraine-with-non-lethal-weapons/.

is a still huge potential for military cooperation between Poland and Ukraine, which to a certain degree remains untapped due to political bilateral tensions.

The Georgian-Russian war in 2008[17], and especially the annexation of Crimea (2014) and Russia's intervention in Donbas (since 2014), has started to modify Poland's perception of the Black Sea. This modification was also influenced by the fact that Romania, which besides Poland and Turkey possesses the largest military capabilities on NATO's Eastern Flank, in recent years became the most important regional security partner for Warsaw. Poland shares concerns with Romania regarding Russia's aggressive policy, however, Romania's security policy is very strongly focused on the Black Sea region. In November 2015, Poland and Romania were the initiators of the "Bucharest Nine" initiative, which is a forum for coordinating positions on the security of NATO's Eastern Flank countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia). From the time of its establishment until November 2020, the B9 held eight meetings: three at the level of heads of states and governments, two at the level of defence ministers, and three at the level of foreign ministries.[18]

Within the NATO format, Romania also cooperates closely with Turkey in the Black Sea region. On the other hand, Polish-Turkish cooperation in the security field is limited. Nevertheless, Bucharest promoted an increase of this cooperation in a trilateral format. As a consequence, the Polish-Romanian-Turkish Trilogue was established in 2012 and has been organised regularly since 2016 at the level of the foreign ministers. The format aims at strengthening the coordination of positions on key issues for regional security between the three countries. However, the efficiency of the Trilogue would probably considerably increase if it were operated by the ministries of defence.

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[17] Poland developed after the Rose Revolution in 2003 a close military cooperation with Georgia. The Polish air defence system bought by Tbilisi played an important role during the war in 2008.

[18] Sergiy Gerasymchuk, "Bucharest Nine: Looking for Cooperation on NATO's Eastern Flank?", July 2019, *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Kiev*, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/ukraine/15574.pdf.

Conclusions, projections and recommendations

The future of Turkey – because of its military and economic potential and its geographic location – will shape to a large degree the development of NATO in the coming decade. Currently, the Turkish assertive and sometimes aggressive security policy seems to be becoming more and more inspired by Russia's *modus operandi* (military interventions, incidents and provocations, involvement in proxy wars, the establishment of military bases abroad, etc.). The internal political trajectory taken in Turkey will have a crucial impact on Ankara's relations with the other NATO member states. The more authoritarian Turkey will be, the more its security policy will become unilateral and nationalistic, by default undermining NATO's cohesion. At a certain point, due to the rising divergence of interests, even the membership of Turkey in NATO may be at stake.

On the one hand, the chance of a reversal of Turkey's authoritarian slide should not be excluded. Indeed, after the establishment of democracy (albeit with serious flaws) at the beginning of the Cold War, Turkey only for short periods turned into an authoritarian regime. As a consequence, even if the current Turkish ruling elite tries to replicate Russia's political model, it will meet with much stronger social opposition than in the Russian case. The further drift of Turkey away from NATO may push it closer to Russia. On the other hand, however, the more economically powerful Ankara becomes, the more Turkey will be ready to challenge Moscow in various regions, including the wider Black Sea region. According to the most recent IMF projections, Turkey's GDP PPP in 2020 approached 60% of Russia's, and in 2025 the ratio will exceed 65%.[19] However, the performance of the Turkish economy has been very volatile in recent years, making reliable projections considerably more difficult.

The Turkish-US relationship will have a particularly important impact on the internal cohesion of NATO. Outgoing US president Donald Trump, because of his close personal relationship with Turkish President Recep Erdogan, shielded Ankara from a very serious US backlash by, for instance, not endorsing Congress's sanctions. Nevertheless, in

[19] International Monetary Fund, "World Economic Outlook Database", October 2020, https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2020/October.

the coming years, due to a bipartisan consensus in the US concerning taking a critical attitude towards Turkey's current security policy, a significant escalation of tensions between Ankara and Washington seems highly probable. Moreover, the geopolitical rivalry between France and Turkey in the Mediterranean will remain another key challenge to the NATO's stability.

Conclusions and recommendations

Taking into consideration all these factors, it seems that NATO should do as much as possible to avoid the scenario of Turkey's *de facto* or *de jure* exit from the Alliance. This negative scenario is of key importance for Poland because of its location on the Eastern Flank. However, until now, Warsaw does not seem to be adapting its NATO policy to the new developments (Turkey's assertive and unilateral policy, Ankara's drift from NATO and its authoritarian slide, the contradictory Russia-Turkey relationship that falls between cooperation and competition, the intensification of Turkish-Ukrainian cooperation in the security field, etc.). Moreover, although Poland's engagement in the Black Sea region in the security sphere has increased in recent years, there is still huge room for improvement.

Poland should promote the idea that the Alliance in the coming decade must focus particularly on the use of its structures as instruments in order to strengthen cooperation between Turkey and other member states, as well as between NATO and its closest external allies. NATO should encourage Ankara to participate in as many projects, missions and initiatives as possible. NATO's institutions and its member states should also try to mediate conflicts between Ankara and other Allies. Poland could play the role of intermediary in diplomatic activities. However, Poland faces a substantial challenge to undertaking this role due to its internal political trajectory. NATO should also more decisively support the idea that certain fundamental values (democracy) must be shared by all member states. It should be assumed that a new US presidential administration will be also more sensitive on that issue.

In effect, the NATO will probably become more outspoken and consistent in its criticism of the authoritarian developments in Turkey. The issue of values represents Poland's Achilles heel within NATO. The

Polish government has been conducting "reforms" that are criticised by most NATO member states, including US President-elect Joe Biden and his party, as leading towards the dismantling of the rule of law and the undermining of liberal democracy. In consequence, Polish relations with key NATO member states (France and Germany) deteriorated considerably in recent years or are on the verge of the crisis (as is the case in the US). With the further illiberal backslide of Poland, Warsaw's diplomatic potential within NATO will remain to a large degree constrained, and the Polish case will be misused by Turkey as an excuse (referring to double standards) to reject criticism concerning the authoritarian trends.

NATO member states should also prepare a basic code of conduct that should exclude the purchase of military equipment from certain states, including Russia and China, as well as drills with them. In order to bind itself more closely with Turkey, NATO should definitely engage considerably more in the Black Sea area by organising more drills and expanding cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine (via training, arm transfers, education, exercises, etc.), while involving the Turkish armed forces in the initiatives. Therefore, the development of cooperation between Poland, Romania and Turkey in the security field in the region is of particular significance. The trio should also engage as much as possible with Ukraine and Georgia in these common military activities. In the best case scenario, Polish-Romanian engagement with Turkey in the security sphere in the Black Sea may even at some point allow Warsaw to convince Ankara to engage itself in the Baltic Sea region, including through the deployment of its armed forces in the eFP.

TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS AND RESILIENCE

Gravity of "Star NATO": Can the Alliance Pull the Baltics Into Military Space Affairs?

TOMAS JERMALAVIČIUS, ALEJANDRO LEAL

Introduction

On 4 December 2019, at a meeting of heads of state and government in London, NATO agreed to recognise outer space as yet another – already the fifth – operational domain, on par with the three traditional (land, air and maritime) and one new (cyber) domains. The meeting's declaration stated: "We have declared space an operational domain for NATO, recognising its importance in keeping us safe and tackling security challenges, while upholding international law". Prior to this meeting, in June 2019, the Alliance's defence ministers endorsed an overarching Space Policy for NATO. On this occasion, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that the Alliance "can play an important role as a forum to share information, increase interoperability, and ensure that our missions and operations can call on the support they need."

These developments do not mean that NATO is a novice in outer space affairs. During the Cold War, the Alliance even owned and operated its own space capability – in the form of communication satellites – and associated ground infrastructure.[1] In the post-Cold War period, NATO formulated its Approach to Space (2012) and included space operations in its joint doctrine (AJP-3.3 B Allied Joint Doctrine for Air and Space Operations, 2016), as well as implementing the Policy for Space Support in Operations (2018).[2] However, the dawn of a new era that is often termed as a "New Space" age, in which technological, economic and geopolitical developments are making outer space ever

[1] NATO, "Defence and Deterrence. NATO, We Have a Lift Off", https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/declassified_138278.htm.

[2] Tim Vasen, *Resiliency in Space as a Combined Challenge for NATO,* (Joint Air Power Competence Centre, 2020), 21–22.

more "congested, contested and competitive," has prompted the Alliance to review and expand its approach.[3]

The London Declaration does not mean that the Alliance has just become an autonomous actor in space, alongside nation-states or international organisations such as the European Union (EU). Military and dual-use space capabilities will continue to be owned and operated by the Allies, who will make them available when necessary for NATO's operations and other needs. As Stoltenberg's words indicate, NATO is positioning itself as a political-military forum and a platform for coordination, sharing, interoperability and integration – with all the attendant implications to individual Allies and partners, including the three Baltic States. But apart from signing up to the consensus in the North Atlantic Council regarding the Alliance's overarching space policy, can Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania become more engaged and competent stakeholders in contributing to this policy? And, given their strategic interests, concerns and capabilities, what does being stakeholders in NATO's collective space enterprise exactly entail for them?

A critically important and rapidly evolving domain

The dependence of human civilisation on space-based assets has increased over recent decades, making these assets critical to the functioning and resilience of our interconnected societies. From positioning, navigation and timing (PNT) to global communications and Earth observation, these assets provide services without which modern life as we know it is simply impossible. Financial transactions, travel, logistics, electricity transmission, land and forest management, agriculture and aquaculture, environmental protection, weather forecasting, telecommunications, scientific exploration, disaster response and many other areas of human activity draw, to one degree or another,

[3] 'Contested, congested and competitive' or 3Cs is the term that first became an established characterisation of outer space in the U.S. discourse starting with its 2011 National Security Space Strategy. See: U.S. Department of Defense & U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "National Security Space Strategy (Unclassified Summary)", 2011, *DOD & ODNI*, 1, https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Reports%20and%20Pubs/2011_nationalsecurityspacestrategy.pdf.

upon those services.[4] Damage to or the loss of these assets in space would have a very wide-ranging impact on our economies, security and safety – in the Baltic region and elsewhere.[5]

The emergence of private actors in outer space presents new legal and security challenges. In the early days of space exploration, the number of actors was quite limited; activities were primarily conducted by the US and the Soviet Union. By the 1990s, the privatisation of space activities began to gain traction as countries realised the potential benefits of working with the private sector. Less extensive logistical arrangements, lower costs, greater efficiency and advanced technology have allowed private actors to enter the arena. Private enterprises not only build and operate various satellites but also increasingly demonstrate excellence in launch capabilities. Over the past decade, technological developments and the emergence of private actors have profoundly changed the dynamics of outer space. Private investment has risen to an average of $2 billion a year and is expected to increase steadily. It is estimated that the space industry could be worth $1 trillion by 2040.[6] Effective cooperation between the private sector and government will become a critical advantage for any nation seeking to maintain access to and the use of outer space in peacetime, in conflict and in war. In terms of security policy, this raises the question of whether attacking this economically significant but privately owned infrastructure might lead to military responses by the governments concerned.

Space assets are also crucial to the provision of services to all other military operational domains (air, sea, land and cyber), as well as to civilian security agencies. Members of NATO are heavily dependent on space-based capabilities for ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting), the positioning and navigation of units and platforms, secure communication and real-time data-links, and other critical functions necessary to support decision-making, provide early warning (e.g. of a ballistic missile attack), conduct military

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[4] Jeff Greenblatt and Al Anzaldua, "How space technology benefits the Earth?", 29 July 2019, *The Space Review,* https://www.thespacereview.com/article/3768/1.

[5] Richard Hollingham, "What would happen if all satellites stopped working?", 10 June 2013, *BBC Future,* https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20130609-the-day-without-satellites.

[6] Morgan Stanley, "Space: Investing in the Final Frontier," 2 July 2019, https://www.morganstanley.com/ideas/investing-in-space.

operations, and ensure the protection of critical infrastructure.[7] Such dependency is bound to grow in the future, because, in the age of artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics, space-based capabilities will be ever more essential in providing the necessary data and connectivity for networked AI-enabled military forces.

This makes space-based assets a valuable target for adversaries during military conflicts, and it has already prompted various NATO Allies and partners to reconsider how they should protect those assets and how they should organise themselves to ensure continued access to and freedom of operation in outer space. This was recently highlighted by the US decision to re-establish its Space Command, which was very shortly followed by the establishment of the US Space Force as the sixth branch of the armed forces.[8] Other nations are following suit in reorganising their military structures and allocating funds to prepare themselves for the age when military operations from and in outer space will be the new normal.[9] The Baltic States, with their land-centric force structures and rudimentary perspective even on the air domain (let alone space), should not be expected to be in the top or even middle tier of players, but they should still work to establish meaningful and effective linkages between their long-term defence development priorities and the space domain – or risk being exposed to the consequences of negative trends in this domain.

Tensions in the "global commons" of outer space

The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 states that: "Outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty, by means of use or occupation, or by any other

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[7] Beyza Unal, *Cybersecurity of NATO's Space-based Strategic Assets,* (Chatham House, 2019), 17–18, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2019-06-27-Space-Cybersecurity-2.pdf.

[8] Leonard David, "Trump Officially Establishes US Space Force with 2020 Defense Bill Signing", 21 December 2019, *Space.com,* https://www.space.com/trump-creates-space-force-2020-defense-bill.html.

[9] The Japan Times, "Japan eyes new defense unit to monitor space from ASDF base in west Tokyo", 22 August 2019, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/08/22/national/japan-space-monitoring-unit/#.XhRgH0czZPY; Dominic Vogel, "German Armed Forces Approaching Outer Space", October 2020, *SWP,* https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2020C49_GermanArmedForcesOuterSpace.pdf.

means."[10] Territories in outer space are not fixed and thus fall outside traditional notions of territory and sovereignty, even though there are some ongoing disagreements over where national airspace ends and outer space begins.[11] Outer space has been categorised as *res communis*, and its legal framework contains similar approaches as the Antarctica Treaty System and the Law of the Sea Conventions. However, the erosion of the international rules-based order and rising geopolitical tensions on Earth may well extend into outer space.

The geopolitical context, technological trends and new concepts of warfare raise the unpalatable prospect of the militarisation of space. The Outer Space Treaty does not prohibit that – it only bans the deployment of nuclear weapons in it.[12] But while an attack against terrestrial objects on the Alliance's territory from future space-based weapons would constitute a clear act of armed aggression, it remains to be seen if an attack on, for instance, satellites owned by an Allied government could eventually trigger requests to activate Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Even if the current answer is "no" or "it depends," it will be hard to avoid further discussions given the growing importance of the space domain.[13] After all, the Alliance has already agreed that devastating cyberattacks could prompt an invocation of the collective defence clause, and some nations are very clear about their national responses to acts of aggression in outer space. For instance, the French Space Defence Strategy of 2019 explicitly states that "in the event of armed aggression in space, France may avail itself of its right of self-

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[10] United Nations, "Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies UN Treaty of Outer Space", 19 December 1966, *United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs*, https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/outerspacetreaty.html.

[11] Outer space is usually considered to begin at the altitude of 100 km (the so-called Kármán Line), but various nations and national agencies may use different approaches, which would inevitably have legal consequences concerning the extent of national sovereignty and airspace defence. For more, see: Nadia Drake, "Where, exactly, is the edge of space? It depends on who you ask", 20 December 2018, *National Geographic*, https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2018/12/where-is-the-edge-of-space-and-what-is-the-karman-line/.

[12] See Joan Johnson-Freese and David Burbach, "The Outer Space Treaty and the weaponization of space", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 75:4, 137-131.

[13] Alexandra Stickings, "Space as an Operational Domain: What Next for NATO?", *RUSI Newsbrief,* Vol 40, No. 9, October 2020, https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/stickings_web_0.pdf.

defence."[14] It is hard to imagine its Allies, such as the Baltic States, standing aside should Paris decide to request the activation of Article 5 in response to an escalating conflict in outer space.

Aggression in outer space or from the surface of the Earth against space-based assets is not in the realm of technological fiction. Various countries are developing and deploying counter-space capabilities that are able to destroy, degrade, deny or compromise space-based assets. These include kinetic means, such as anti-satellite (ASAT) missiles, as well as non-kinetic capabilities. Countries ranging from China and India to Russia and the US have tested and demonstrated their ability to destroy satellites with missiles.[15] Russia is also developing a new system that is able to deploy into outer space swarms of small "killer satellites" loaded with explosives that would be carried into orbit by missiles launched from a MiG-31BM fighter aircraft.[16] This is a concept that will enable counter-space operations that are cheaper, faster, larger in scale and less demanding (e.g. in targeting accuracy) than employing ground-launched ASAT missiles.

The destruction of a satellite, however, inevitably produces thousands of pieces of debris that scatter across Earth's orbit, potentially provoking a chain reaction. Such an event – known as Kessler syndrome – could severely threaten space activities and prevent the use of satellites in specific orbital ranges for decades if not longer. Given that Russia itself (and China, for that matter) is becoming increasingly dependent on space infrastructure as a result of its military modernisation, some analysis suggests that Moscow is interested in developing a diverse set of kinetic counter-space capabilities primarily as a deterrent for such space-dependent powers as the US, as well as being an escalation control instrument that expands the range of options available to decision-makers.[17] In the event of a regional military

[14] Ministry for the Armed Forces, "Space Defence Strategy", 2019, 26, https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/574375/9839912/Space%20Defence%20Strategy%202019_France.pdf.

[15] Gerry Doyle, "Anti-satellite weapons: rare, high-tech, and risky to test", 27 March 2019, *Reuters,*https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-india-satellite-tests-factbox/anti-satellite-weapons-rare-high-tech-and-risky-to-test-idUKKCN1R80Q1.

[16] Bart Hendrickx, "Burevestnik: a Russian air-launched anti-satellite system", 27 April 2020, *The Space Review,* https://www.thespacereview.com/article/3931/1.

[17] U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, "Challenges to Security in Space", 2019, 24, https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Space_Threat_V14_020119_sm.pdf.

crisis in the Baltic area, this would echo the logic of nuclear signalling in order to deter the US and other Allies from reinforcing the Baltic States.

At the same time, the application of more affordable and easily available electronic and cyber-warfare methods could be just as disruptive. Satellites are vulnerable to cyber and electronic attacks, which can have reversable or irreversible effects. This includes the use of radio-frequency energy to interfere with or jam the communications of a satellite, the use of directed energy weapons to dazzle their sensors, and the use of software and network techniques to influence or compromise computer systems linked to satellite operations or even to hijack the satellites themselves.[18] Such non-kinetic counter-space capabilities, as well as some means of kinetic attack (e.g. using hijacked satellites to damage or destroy other satellites, or conducting Rendezvous Proximity Operations to approach and damage an opponent's satellites), will become part of the repertoire in the so-called "grey zone" conflicts that Russia and China excel at and so far tend prefer to direct military confrontation. For the decision-makers in the Baltic States, this raises the spectre of space services (such as imagery, communications, or global positioning and navigation) provided by Allies or commercial partners becoming restricted or unavailable at some critical points during a security crisis manufactured by Russia.

If a mechanical failure – due to a natural incident or hostile action – leading to a denial of service or complete loss of space assets occurs during a period of heightened geopolitical tensions, the possibility of escalation and broader conflict could arise. At this point, in the words of Joan Johnson-Freese, "the chances of maintaining a space war at a limited level appear similar to those of fighting a limited nuclear war: not good."[19] Scenarios like this may require that NATO not only coordinate the development of new capabilities and enhance its space threat awareness, but also incorporate diplomacy into the implementation of its space policy in order to advance international norms of responsible behaviour with regard to space-based systems and assets, build

[18] Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "Electronic and Cyber Warfare in Outer Space", 2019, *The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR),* https://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/electronic-and-cyber-warfare-in-outer-space-en-784.pdf.

[19] Joan Johnon-Freese, *Space Warfare in the 21st Century: Arming the Heavens* (Routledge, 2017), 98.

transparency and trust, and preserve the overall strategic stability, which could be threatened by escalating conflict in outer space.[20] For the Baltic States – which have become sceptical towards arms control, CSBM and other frameworks and initiatives involving Russia – this might become a difficult proposition, prompting them to define some clear "red lines", the crossing of which might weaken the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture. However, doing so would entail understanding strategic issues related to outer space and defining their own perspective.

The Baltic perspective and challenges

The recognition of outer space as an operational domain has various implications for the Alliance and its individual members, even if NATO's ambition is not (yet) to become an actor in it. As Kęstutis Paulauskas points out, the "implementation of space as an operational domain will allow NATO's military commanders to properly and fully take into account space requirements in training and exercises as well as defence and operational planning."[21] The Alliance will now be busy defining and refining its requirements for space capabilities and then, through the defence planning process, will seek to ensure that the capabilities of all NATO nations are catalogued and coordinated, as well as that national plans take into account NATO's needs and do not leave any significant gaps when put together. The Alliance's planning of multidomain operations (MDOs), joint doctrine development, standardisation processes, and training and exercises will include space considerations as a composite part.[22] By establishing a Space Centre, the Alliance has already started to make some visible structural adjustments, allowing it develop space domain awareness, share data, and coordinate activities within NATO's overall command structure – and there is much more less-visible but equally

[20] Frank A. Rose, "NATO and outer space: Now what", 22 April 2020, *Brookings,* https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/22/nato-and-outer-space-now-what/.

[21] Kęstutis Paulauskas, "Space: NATO's latest frontier", 13 March 2020, *NATO,* https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2020/03/13/space-natos-latest-frontier/index.html.

[22] Tim Vasen, *op.cit.*

important work being done across the Alliance in order to implement its overarching space policy.[23]

Where does this put the Baltic States? The space domain has always been a blind spot in the defence planning and capability development processes in the three capitals. Just a few years back, mentioning the need to consider the implications of developments in outer space drew blank faces at best and outright ridicule at worst. Interest in support from space-based assets was confined to small, specialised military communities of practice such as ISR, communications, naval and special forces, or air surveillance. It seldom, if at all, entered the considerations of the high command or defence planners, as the Baltic States retained their steady focus on developing land forces as their top priority – even though land operations rely, to a considerable extent, on the availability of various space-based services. Space ignorance also stands in stark contrast to all the attention paid to the cyber domain, which was declared a new operational domain by NATO in 2016, leading to such steps as the establishment of a dedicated Cyber Command in the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF).[24]

NATO's London decision is now tentatively putting space on the mental map of the defence leadership in the Baltic States. In a recent media interview, for instance, the Commander of the EDF Major General Martin Herem said that this was potentially a new area for trilateral Baltic military cooperation, and he even suggested that the Baltic States draw upon the civilian sector's work in order to develop their own space-based capability (in the form of nanosatellites).[25] Although this may sound like a somewhat poorly thought-through idea – not least because trilateral Baltic military cooperation has been underperforming in many other areas that are less challenging

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[23] VOA News, "NATO Chief: Alliance to Build Space Center at Ramstein Airbase in Germany", 22 October 2020, https://www.voanews.com/europe/nato-chief-alliance-build-space-center-ramstein-airbase-germany.

[24] NATO, "Warsaw Summit Communiqué", 9 July 2016, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm; Piret Pernik, "Estonian Cyber Command: What is it for?", 26 November 2018, *ICDS*, https://icds.ee/en/estonian-cyber-command-what-is-it-for/.

[25] Kärt Anvelt, "Kaitseväe juhataja: rahuajal nagunii sõda ei saa, siin vähemalt on mingi väike lahing" [Chief of Defence Forces: In peacetime there can be no war anyway, at least there is some little battle here], 26 October 2020, *Eesti Päevaleht*, https://epl.delfi.ee/uudised/kaitsevae-juhataja-rahuajal-nagunii-soda-ei-saa-siin-vahemalt-on-mingi-vaike-lahing?id=91450670.

or complex than venturing into outer space – it still marks a welcome turn of sentiment regarding opportunities related to space as an operational domain.[26] At the same time, it is necessary to understand that any national or regional ambition that is linked to a broader NATO framework would take a long time to acquire shape, to develop all the ingredients necessary for its success, and then to reach maturity as an integral part of national defence.

In this process, however, there are some issues and aspects that could already be addressed by Baltic defence policymakers and military planners in the short- and medium-term:

- At the policy level, there is a need for national and regional (e.g. within the format of the Baltic Ministerial Committee) discussions on what would constitute acts of aggression in outer space that would warrant the invocation of Article 5 and where the "grey zones" of conflict lie with regard to adversarial kinetic and non-kinetic action against the space assets and infrastructure of the Allies. This is a necessary mental exercise that would help the Baltics appreciate how various scenarios may unfold and when a collective diplomatic and military action might be called upon (or when scenarios would just warrant security consultations under Article 4).
- The Baltic States should also consider applying the expertise they acquired in the process of defining and promoting international norms of responsible behaviour and confidence-building measures in cyber space to outer space affairs. As their security rests on universal adherence to international norms as much as on collective defence alliances and military capabilities, such efforts – including through arms control frameworks – would serve to enhance stability in outer space.[27]

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[26] For more on the state of and prospects of Baltic military cooperation, see: Tomas Jermalavičius, Tony Lawrence and Anna-Liisa Merilind, "The potential for and limitations of military cooperation among the Baltic states," *Lithuania in the Global Context: National Security and Defence Policy Dilemmas,* Irmina Matonytė, Giedrius Česnakas and Nortautas Statkus eds., (General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, 2020), 280–306.

[27] Some useful conceptual work has already been done in the region. See, for instance:Katrin Nyman Metcalf, "A Legal View on Outer Space and Cyberspace: similarities and differences", Tallinn Paper No. 10, 2018, *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, https://www.ccdcoe.org/uploads/2018/10/Tallinn-Paper_10_2018.pdf.

- Defence establishments in the Baltic States should perform a comprehensive assessment of their needs and requirements in terms of space support for their military capabilities, activities and territorial defence plans, and then they should develop a clear picture of how these could be fulfilled – through the Alliance as a coordination and sharing platform, or through bilateral agreements with some key spacefaring partners and agreements with trusted commercial partners.
- From the decision-makers at the top to commanders in the field, the Baltic States should develop their understanding of, procedures for, and skills in using space-based assets that are available through NATO or through bilateral or commercial arrangements. Just as calling in and coordinating Allied airpower to support ground units required skills and instruments that have been honed by the Baltic military for years, the ability to request, direct and utilise space-based assets in support of strategic decision-making or national and multinational operations in the region will not materialise overnight either. In addition, they must establish positions responsible for space support coordination and liaison with the Allies in their own force structures. If and when a military crisis erupts in the region, it will be far too late to acquire such skills and establish such procedures and positions, while it would be highly irresponsible to assume that all this would be taken care of by other Allies from the outset and in full – an attitude that has afflicted Baltic defence thinking with regard to some other aspects of the region's defence (such as air or maritime defence).
- The policymakers in the ministries of defence and defence staffs should consider how the Baltic States could each individually, or as a regional cooperative cluster, contribute to the Alliance's role in relation to outer space – in line with the imperative of sharing the burden and acting as security producers, not just consumers. Possibilities such as contributing to the Alliance's SSA with ground-based sensors, supporting NATO's resilience in space through the redundancy of ground infrastructure required to operate the space-based assets of the Allies, and developing and seconding qualified staff able to work with space domain management (the shortages of which will be almost inevitable in the NATO command structure) are just a few directions in which they could think.

- Baltic military planners should also thoroughly assess all the implications of denied, degraded or compromised space support services as a result of adversarial action in outer space against assets of the Allies, partners or commercial providers. Assessments of Russia's means and ways of hindering Allied reinforcements of the Baltic States in times of crisis or conflict often focus on air and sea denial, electromagnetic spectrum action and long-range standoff precision strike capabilities, or even information warfare, but less so on what role Russia's space and counter-space capabilities would play in such scenarios. Likewise, the impact of such adversarial action on the provision of critical civilian services, and consequently civilian resilience, should be properly appreciated – especially in light of how intertwined this resilience has become with military capabilities and their effectiveness in NATO's thinking.
- In cooperation with their Allies and partners, the Baltic States should also study and understand the role that space capabilities play in Russia's military concepts, order of battle and operations, and what those capabilities actually are. This knowledge would facilitate designing plans on how the armed forces of the three countries could contribute to disrupting and degrading Russia's space-based services in the event of a military conflict, or at least to protecting their own forces and concealing their intent and movements from Russia's military space-based or space-enabled systems.
- All these efforts would have to be supported by relevant education, training and exercises. The Baltic States would need to identify and systematically utilise the courses in military schools and colleges of NATO Allies that provide specialist education and training on military space matters, while also addressing this domain in their own professional military education systems and their programmes designed to develop operational planning competencies (including at the Baltic Defence College – their common joint and higher command and staff college). Military exercises in the region – national, multinational and Allied – would also need to feature elements that train units to integrate space support into their tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) and, in case of an escalating conflict in outer space, to operate

in environments in which such support has been significantly degraded, denied or compromised.

- As part of their effort to understand the strategic dynamics of the outer space domain and educate themselves in how multilateral coalitions navigate challenges in it, the Baltic States should seek possibilities to observe (or at least be routinely briefed on) the outcomes of the annual Shriever Wargame – the US-led exercise that by now already involves eight US allies.[28] This would draw on the precedent established by involving them in a broadly similar enterprise – Nimble Titan, a global integrated air and missile defence multinational experiment conducted by the US Strategic Command.[29]

In the medium- and long-term, the Baltic States should also seek to carve out for themselves certain niches in supporting NATO's role in the space domain, perhaps through the Framework Nation concept that is likely to be applied across the Alliance to develop particular technologies and capabilities by joining projects under the lead of more resourceful and experienced spacefaring Allies. To a large extent, that role will depend on which particular strengths their budding space industries eventually develop, as well as on whether the existing strengths in their national science, technology and industrial base (e.g. cybersecurity, the laser industry, or sensorics) can be successfully leveraged in the space sector – both in cooperation with international partners and also through EU frameworks.[30] In this regard, it will be crucially important for the defence ministries of the Baltic States to ensure that defence interests and needs are continuously reflected in the national space policies and in dual-use research and development work undertaken by public and private entities.

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[28] Tyler Whiting, "Schriever Wargame: Critical Space Event Concludes", 4 November 2020, *Space Operations Command,* https://www.spoc.spaceforce.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2404914/schriever-wargame-critical-space-event-concludes.

[29] See Andreas Schmidt, "Nimble Titan – Ballistic Missile Defence in a Regional, Cross-Regional and Global Environment", JAPCC Journal 22, https://www.japcc.org/wp-content/uploads/JAPCC_Journal_Ed-22.pdf.

[30] Estonia has been a full-fledged Member State of the European Space Agency (ESA) since 2015; Latvia became an Associate Member State (i.e. it reached the final stage of accession to the agency) in 2020; Lithuania is farthest behind and is completing only the first phase of the accession process, the implementation of the Plan of European Cooperating State, which was signed in 2015.

Currently, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have only a very modest record of experimenting with some elements of spacefaring (such as putting nanosatellites in Low Earth Orbit, LEO) – mostly as scientific and engineering projects in academia. Their governments and their public and private entities do not operate any assets in outer space, let alone assets that would require protection due to their critical function, and their knowledge of the domain is very limited. The experience of other Allies shows that it takes many years of sustained research and technology programmes to reach the level of competence that would turn a nation into a credible contributor to NATO's policy and capability development. As one Norwegian scientist from that country's defence research agency FFI put it in an informal conversation with the author of this article, "we have spent decades conducting space technology R&D, but only now [do] we have something valuable to say at the NATO table."

Conclusion

The Baltic States can take many small, immediate steps to become more active stakeholders in NATO's collective space enterprise. Most of those steps entail structural adjustments, the reorganisation of processes, and adaptations of strategies, plans and doctrines. More importantly and fundamentally, there is a need to change the attitude towards and perspective on space among the political and military leadership as well as among members of the armed forces, for only that will open prospects for the deeper and more meaningful integration of space issues into national defence. The emerging vibrant New Space industry in the Baltic States – and the support it receives from those parts of the governments that work with technology and the innovation sector – demonstrate what can be achieved if there is keen interest, realistic ambition and a willingness to seize new opportunities.

At the same time, the importance of a long-term vision should not be neglected. Space has always been a realm where bold dreams stretched the boundaries of the possible. It would have been hard to imagine, back in the early 2000s, that by 2020 any of the Baltic States would be among the leaders in the cyber operational domain and, for example, trailblazers in the development of unmanned ground vehicles

or in experimenting with 5G in the military.[31] Thus, it may well be that, come 2030 or 2040, each of them individually or all three of them together will be operating swarms of military or dual-use nanosatellites providing additional layers of resilience, with a regional focus in ISR or communications functions, and even contributing to NATO's space domain awareness or the protection of Allied space-based assets. New Space is developing furiously, and the Baltic States have every opportunity to capitalise on the trends sent in motion by it and thus to exploit its economic, security and military benefits, which used to be reserved only for elite spacefaring nations.

The only major factor holding them back is the entrenched attitude of space ignorance in defence circles and the attendant lack of impetus to incorporate the space domain into their long-term defence planning, development and experimentation efforts. Some other small nations, such as the Netherlands, have already begun the journey of reflecting upon and defining their military interests and their role in the outer space domain in order to increase their relevance within NATO.[32] Hopefully, the Alliance's decisions of 2019 and a push from the emerging local space industry will provide this necessary impetus to the Baltic defence establishments. Given that the space domain's relevance cuts across all other military operational domains and given its significance to the civilian sector, this would be worth more than just lip service or random thoughts from the defence leadership of the Baltic States.

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[31] The Baltic Times, "Estonia, Latvia and 5 other nations to develop NexGen unmanned ground system, apply for EDIDP funding", 23 August 2019, https://www.baltictimes.com/estonia__latvia_and_5_other_nations_to_develop_nexgen_unmanned_ground_system__apply_for_edidp_funding/; LSM.lv, "Latvia launches first 5G military test site in Europe," 13 November 2020, https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/defense/latvia-launches-first-5g-military-test-site-in-europe.a381607/.

[32] Liam van de Ven and Patrick Bolder, *The Closing Window: Dutch Relevance in Space Examined*, (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2019), https://hcss.nl/sites/default/files/files/reports/The%20Closing%20Window-%20Dutch%20Relevance%20in%20Space%20Examined.pdf.

Invisible Battlegrounds in the 21st Century: Psychological Warfare, Influence Operations and Their Impact on NATO's Future From the Baltic Perspective

HOLGER MÖLDER

Introduction

The growing attention paid to psychological warfare and influence operations characterises the Baltic security environment on the threshold of third decade of the 21st century. This is an easily misperceived invisible battleground, which to great extent is a result of the ongoing status conflict between the Russian Federation and the West – including Western political institutions like NATO – over recognition and respect in the international system. Information is becoming a key issue in the modern international security environment, and this trend has significantly influenced and reshaped military strategies based on the multifaceted approaches of modern hybrid warfare. Enhanced means of communication (the internet, social media) and their widespread use in many areas of life has created a favourable environment for influence operations in which influential international actors are pursuing their strategic goals at relatively low cost. In the contemporary post-truth environment, direct military conflicts between great powers have been replaced with permanent psychological warfare in which manipulations with information, influence operations and conspiracy theories can be effectively used in promoting a culture of fear by actors interested in challenging the valid international system. Though armed conflicts between nations still largely affect our understanding of warfare, prospective battles in the future may be fought in various media environments, where feelings and beliefs can be used as weapons instead of tanks and cannons, and where limited military operations only support a massive propaganda war.

Fear has proven itself as an important force that impacts international politics, justifies the activities of conflicting actors, and produces enmities and polarisations within the international system. A "culture of fear" describes a persistent emotional condition produced by actors who are using fear strategically as a political incentive, increasing instability and anxiety in social discourses and relationships.[1] A strategically induced culture of fear is often built according to the best strategies of the Hollywood movie industry, supported by strong polarised images of "friendly US" and "hostile others" which are then intensively emphasised and disseminated during as they make their way into the minds of the audience. Hostile image-building is often a result of a divisive ideological polarisation, which relies on a clash of fundamental ideas on the economy, government, politics, lifestyle, identity, social norms, and values, and which makes judgement calls about the economic, social, and political order. This is nothing new in the history of mankind – during the Cold War, social conflict ideologies (i.e. Marxism) polarised the international society by focusing on capitalism, colonialism, welfare, and inequality. Identity politics has become the ideological keyword of the current time. In the 21st century, Western society is deeply divided between supporters of conservatism and liberalism, nationalism and globalism, protectionism and free trade, among others. Calls for unity often remain just a shout in the wilderness, which makes modern Western liberal democratic societies extremely vulnerable.

Psychological warfare deliberately manipulates information and influences emotions, judgement, and the subsequent behaviour of individuals or groups in fulfilling their particular political ambitions.[2] Today's psychological warfare is likely to be based on scientific and technological advantages, and the most successful intervention of

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[1] See: Frank Furedi, *Culture of Fear Revisited. Risk-taking and the Morality of Low Expectation*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006); Frank Furedi, *How Fear Works: Culture of Fear in the Twenty-First Century*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018); Brian Massumi, *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception*, (Duke University Press, 2015); Brian Massumi "Fear (The Spectrum Said)", *Positions*, Spring 2005, 13(1): 31–48; Holger Mölder, "The Culture of Fear in International Politics – Western dominated International System and its Extremist Challenges", *Extremism Within and Around Us*, Alar Kilp and Andres Saumets eds., (Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2011), 241–264.

[2] Eric Shiraev and Holger Mölder, "Global Knowledge Warfare: Using Strategic Imagination to Harness Uncertainty and Fear", 2020, *The Cipher Brief,* https://www.thecipherbrief.com/global-knowledge-warfare-using-strategic-imagination-to-harness-uncertainty-and-fear.

modern technology into international influence operations takes place trough computational operations focusing on the dissemination of politically or ideologically motivated strategic narratives. Sophisticated status-seeking actors (e.g. Russia, China, Iran, India, and more) have shown a specific interest in using computational propaganda for their foreign influence operations.[3] Global contenders to the valid international order have supported various alternative ideological movements and conspiracy theories, destroying the credibility of the Western liberal democratic community that is represented by NATO and the European Union. The administrations of Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping are using aggressive narratives about the decline of Europe in their status-related attempts to change the world order and replace liberal democratic values with stronger nationalist challenges that undermine human rights and cooperative security.

Russian influence operations in the Baltic region

The Russian Federation takes influence operations very seriously and has become an advanced actor in the battleground of psychological warfare. The Kremlin has evidently many times interfered in Western elections, and it actively disseminates its strategic narratives for various public audiences. In 2017, Russian media coverage was extended to 161 languages, including smaller languages such as Danish, Icelandic, Romanian and Catalan.[4] The strategy of Russia's international TV channel RT is primarily aimed at Russian, English, Spanish and Arabic viewers; they have been most successful in the first three categories.[5] For example, RT's videos distributed via the social media platform YouTube attract up to a million viewers a day and have been visited

[3] Samantha Bradshaw and Ph. N. Howard, "The Global Disinformation Disorder: 2019 Global Inventory of Organised Social Media Manipulation", 2019, *Oxford, UK: Project on Computational Propaganda,* https://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/93/2019/09/CyberTroop-Report19.pdf.

[4] The Moscow Times, "Study Finds Russian Media Increased Foreign Language Broadcasts by 58 Percent", 28 April 2017, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2017/04/27/study-finds-russian-media-increased-foreign-language-broadcasts-by-58-percent-a57842.

[5] Robert W. Orttung and Elisabeth Nelson, "Russia Today's strategy and effectiveness on YouTube", *Post-Soviet Affairs,* 35(2), pp. 77–92, 2019, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1060586X.2018.1531650?journalCode=rpsa20.

four billion times since 2005.[6] Social media also makes it easier for mainstream messages to reach target groups. In 2012, the Internet Research Agency was founded in St. Petersburg, and it has since become a successful trolling enterprise that conducted influential social media campaigns on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In the United States, their posts reached the computers of tens of millions of social media users.[7] In a speech addressed to members of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences on 26 January 2013, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation General Valery Gerasimov presented a so-called "non-linear approach" to military strategy, according to which differences between peacetime and wartime will disappear, making a state of war between contending powers permanent. In the new security environment, war is never publicly declared, and military actions carried out by uniformed personnel and undercover activities simultaneously support each other.

The Baltic region cannot isolate itself from global trends and should be prepared for rapid challenges that influence the security environment globally and regionally. General Gerasimov gave evidence of Russia preparing offensive attacks to achieve its strategic goals, in which the Baltic countries may potentially become a target for various hostile activities. Since 2009, every four years Russia has been organising the "Zapad" military exercise in the Baltic region, which has always been accompanied by intense media campaigns around it. Large-scale military exercises help to build the image of an unstable security environment, alongside a historic memory that tells us "the Russians are coming", may give the impression that the situation could lead to a much-feared war between Russia and the West at any moment.

This may open a door to various conspiracy theories, causing the emergence of a culture fear in the Baltic region. Popular narratives that address the security concerns of ordinary citizens can often be found in the chatrooms of public media environments: "NATO does not come to help us", "NATO does not have defense plans for the Baltic

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[6] Director of National Intelligence, "Background to "Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections": The Analytic Process and Cyber Incident Attribution", 6 January 2017, https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/ICA_2017_01.pdf.

[7] Philip N. Howard, Bharath Ganesh andDimitra Liotsiou, et al., "The IRA, Social Media and Political Polarization in the United States", *Computational Propaganda Research Project,* https://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/93/2018/12/The-IRA-Social-Media-and-Political-Polarization.pdf.

states", "NATO's collective defense principle does not work", "They do not understand us in Brussels", and many other similar claims easily undermine the credibility of NATO's deterrence capabilities and are close to pro-Russian rhetoric.[8] The multiple vulnerabilities of contemporary times became visible during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemics. On 21 March 2020, Andrius Petrinis[9] published a column in the Lithuanian edition of the Russian propaganda agency publication *Sputnik* called "Occupying the EU. How the coronavirus killed a united Europe and showed who is who." that aimed to produce and spread anti-Western sentiments in the public audience. Petrinis claimed that the unity of the EU is questionable after the crisis and that the coronavirus exposed the unpleasant reality of Western solidarity. He pointed to growing divisions between the EU and the US, in which supporters of European federalisation have fallen behind in their fight against Euroscepticism.

> "Before "the viral bubble" burst, it seemed that the European Union was slowly but purposefully moving towards a United States of Europe, led by French President Emmanuel Macron. First of all, this process was facilitated by the growing disagreements between the EU and the US (the latest example of "friendship" is the decision of Donald Trump, without any agreement with "partners", to close America to inhabitants of Europe). And then the coronavirus hit, the battle against which offers the perfect opportunity for real political and institutional leaders to emerge. In other words, the EU as an institution and supporters of its federalisation could take advantage of this "ideal storm" to strengthen the role of Brussels. But the result was radically opposite. The President of the European Commission is trying to offer regrets, Brussels cannot mobilise, EU members barricade themselves within the borders of nation states, solving problems by their own as much they can …"[10]

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[8] Holger Mölder, "Hirmukultuuri loomine moodsas hübriidsõjas Venemaa ja õppuse Zapad 2017 näitel. Sõjateadlane" [Creating a culture of fear in the modern hybrid war with Russia: The case ofthe Zapad 2017 exercise. Military scientist], *Estonian Journal of Military Studies*, VIII (8), 64–85, 2018.

[9] Andrius Petrinis is a columnist for the Lithuania edition of *Sputnik News*, which is a state-owned news agency of the Russian Federation. *Sputnik News* was launched in 2014 and operates in 31 world languages, including Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian. *Sputnik Estonia* (since January 2020) and *Sputnik Lithuania* operate from Russia.

[10] Andrius Petrinis, Sputnik, "Захват ЕС. Как коронавирус убил единую Европу и показал, кто есть кто" [Occupying the EU. How the coronavirus killed a united Europe and showed who is who] 21 March 2020, *Sputnik News*, https://lt.sputniknews.ru/columnists/20200321/11659770/Zakhvat-ES-Kak-koronavirus-ubil-edinuyu-Evropu-i-pokazal-kto-est-kto.html.

Petrinis claimed the Covid-19 pandemic is giving a death blow to European humanism and liberal democracy, which turned out to be a fiction. The author criticised Western civilisation, its values, as well as the most influential countries in the EU – Germany and France – accusing them of moving towards dictatorship, restrictions on human rights, and the establishment of total control over society.

> "… with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, European humanism and democracy immediately ended. Germany, for example, has suspended the reception of refugees on its territory, and in France the quarantine conditions resemble martial law. This has a deep meaning: the very nature of Western civilisation is inhuman rational individualism, social Darwinism and the absence of an effective civilian vaccine against dictatorship (a quick and easy transition from unlimited freedom to total control is possible at any moment without any problems)."[11]

The author notes that the impact of the coronavirus may bring Europe tragic consequences by showing Europe's weakness and decline. He describes the EU as a failed utopian project, which should now return to a past when fragmented nation-states competed and fought with each other.

> "… The conclusions from the history of the coronavirus in Europe are rather sad: the weakness of the anti-crisis system, the lack of political leadership, and the decline of European solidarity, humanism and the idea of democracy. In other words, the problem is solvable, but through great suffering, and it seems that the natural condition for Europe is a "motley blanket" of nation states living according to the principle "my home is my fortress" – a system of Greek city-states, not the Roman Empire."[12]

According to Petrinis, the European Union represents an empire, and the best way to move on will be the dissolution of it, which is not consistent with the popular narratives spread in Russia claiming that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a tragic historical mistake and

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[11] Andrius Petrinis, Sputnik, "Захват ЕС. Как коронавирус убил единую Европу и показал, кто есть кто" [Occupying the EU. How the coronavirus killed a united Europe and showed who is who], 21 March 2020, *Sputnik News*, https://lt.sputniknews.ru/columnists/20200321/11659770/Zakhvat-ES-Kak-koronavirus-ubil-edinuyu-Evropu-i-pokazal-kto-est-kto.html.

[12] Ibid.

that Russia should retain its imperial traditions. Rather, it manifests the Kremlin's strategic interests, where the decline of Europe supports Russia's ambitions to restore its status as a great power. The strategic narrative emphasised by Petrinis tells as a story about a strong and powerful Russia compared to a weak and declining Europe, a story in which the Baltic countries should bandwagon with the stronger side. If European countries start to fight against each other again, it might strengthen the status of Russia.

Today, Russia may recognise the Baltic countries as members of NATO, which refers to a being part of the West. At least there is no direct evidence of official statements made by the Putin administration that might counter geopolitical realities in the region. Nevertheless, for the Russian Federation, the Baltic countries represent the vulnerable part of the West, a part which is strongly affiliated with the post-Soviet space and therefore remains open to influence operations and psychological warfare. Concern about possible aggression from Russia is understandable, but exacerbating the military threat through the media also exacerbates the adoption of culture of fear in society, which can strengthen expectations of a forthcoming war and provoke an irrational response by one party or the other. Brigadier General Riho Ühtegi[13] argues that all conflicts between Estonia and Russia since December 1924 have been hybrid conflicts, and the deterrence of Russia and avoidance of panic are not the sole tasks of the Defence Forces.[14] In sum, any irrational action may correspond with Russia's interests, which has the goal of destabilising the security situation, reducing support for NATO and the European Union and encouraging the dissemination of extreme discourses in the region.

The Estonian media has been extremely vulnerable to all kinds of signals that affect Russia's potential aggressive intentions to conquer the Baltic States. Typical headlines from the Estonian media include: "NATO Secretary General admits: Russia exercised a nuclear strike

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[13] Currently the Commander of the Estonian Defense League.

[14] Lauri Laugen, "Kolonel Riho Ühtegi: venelased võivad jõuda Tallinna kahe päevaga, aga nad surevad siin" [Colonel Riho Ühtegi: The Russians can reach Tallinn in two days, but they will die here], 11 July 2018, *Delfi.ee,* http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/valismaa/kolonel-riho-uhtegi-venelased-voivad-jouda-tallinna-kahe-paevaga-aga-nad-surevad-siin?id=83007857.

against Sweden in 2013", "Report: NATO cannot protect the Baltics from a Russia attack," "US think tank: Russia is practicing a conquest of the Baltic Sea," "The BBC shows Russia's invasion, Putin can test hybrid war in the Baltic States", "British Minister of Defense: Putin may repeat in the Baltic States what happened in Ukraine", "British general: Russia may attack the Baltic States in a similar way to Ukraine"[15] – these are not found on the Russian propaganda channel *Sputnik*, and such titles show how the security prospects of the Baltic Sea region are reflected in the mainstream media in Estonia.

A shared information space may produce much potential damage that Russia is able to use in its influence operations against the Baltic States. For example, the buckwheat crisis of 2010, which started in Russia but rapidly spread through the Baltic countries, clearly demonstrated that a considerable part of Baltic population can be easily managed by psychological operations by targeting knowledge

[15] Lauri Laugen, "NATO peasekretär tunnistab: Venemaa harjutas 2013. aastal tuumarünnakut Rootsi vastu"[The NATO Secretary General admits: In 2013, Russia exercised a nuclear attack on Sweden], 3 February 2016, *Delfi.ee* http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/valismaa/nato-peasekretar-tunnistab-venemaa-harjutas-2013-aastal-tuumarunnakut-rootsi-vastu?id=73587119. Helen Mihelson, "Raport: NATO ei suudaks Baltikumi Venemaa rünnaku eest kaitsta" [Report: NATO would not be able to protect the Baltics from Russian attack], 3 February 2016, *Postimees,* https://www.postimees.ee/3562693/raport-nato-ei-suudaks-baltikumi-venemaa-runnaku-eest-kaitsta. Õhtuleht, "USA Mõttekoda: Venemaa harjutas Läänemere saarte vallutamist 2015",[US think tank: Russiapracticed conquering of the Baltic Sea islands], 26 June 2015, https://www.ohtuleht.ee/683285/usa-mottekoda-venemaa-harjutas-laanemere-saarte-vallutamist. Lauri Laugen, "BBC saates kujutatakse Venemaa sissetungi Lätisse ja brittide loobumist Vene tuumarünnakule vastamisest" [BBC program depicts Russian invasion of Latvia and British refusal to respond to Russia's nuclear attack], 1 February 2016, *Delfi.ee,* http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/valismaa/bbc-saates-kujutatakse-venemaa-sissetungi-latisse-ja-brittide-loobumist-vene-tuumarunnakule-vastamisest?id=73565521. ERR, "Rasmussen: Putin võib katsetada hübriidsõda ka Balti riikides 2015" [Rasmussen: Putin may test hybrid war in Baltic states in 2015], 6 February 2015, https://www.err.ee/529365/rasmussen-putin-voib-katsetada-hubriidsoda-ka-balti-riikides. ERR, "Briti kaitseminister: Putin võib korrata Ukrainas toimunut Balti riikides 2015 [British Secretary of Defense: Putin may repeat what happened in Ukraine in the Baltics in 2015], 28 February 2015, https://www.err.ee/530125/briti-kaitseminister-putin-voib-korrata-ukrainas-toimunut-balti-riikides. Vahur Koorits, "Briti kindral: Venemaa võib rünnata Balti riike Ukrainaga sarnasel moel" [British general: Russia can attack the Baltic states in a similar way to Ukraine], 20 February 2015, *Delfi.ee,* http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/valismaa/briti-kindral-venemaa-voib-runnata-balti-riike-ukrainaga-sarnasel-moel?id=70845085.

and information.[16] In the situation of a status-related war of narratives, some more extreme movements in the Baltic countries are trying to justify claims made by the Kremlin and thereby confirm narratives that can be found in the Russian media. Some years after the buckwheat crisis, another panic-related fear of migration followed a quite similar pattern. In its ongoing status conflict with the West, Russia makes continuous efforts to destabilise the Baltic countries by boosting images such as "war between Russia and the Baltic States is inevitable in the future", "the West will not help the Baltics", "there is a strong discrimination against the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic countries, which is close to apartheid", and "Baltic nations fought alongside Nazi forces in World War II", hoping to convince the public audience of a declining Europe where the Baltic nations have no future.[17]

New security challenges and a need for strategic imagination

The security environment today is much more comprehensive, but just as complicated, as it was 100 years ago. We are not fighting the Napoleonic wars anymore, and past strategic geniuses like Clausewitz and Jomini – with all immense respect due to them – belong to history. Complacency often leads to preparing for "fighting the last war", which basically means using the lessons learned from the last conflict in the hopes of winning a future one. A failure of imagination was mentioned in government reports in the United States as one of the reasons for the intelligence failures prior to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.[18]

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[16] When in Russia people began to buy buckwheat for about a week now, news about rising prices and buckwheat shortages have also spread to Estonia. See: Berit-Helena Lamp, "Tatrapaanika jõudis Venemaalt Eestisse" [Buckwheat panic reached Estonia from Russia], 13 september 2010, *Postimees,* https://tarbija24.postimees.ee/312423/tatrapaanika-joudis-venemaalt-eestisse.

[17] Holger Mölder, "Culture of Fear: the Decline of Europe in Russian political imagination", *A Continent of Conspiracies: Conspiracy Theories in and about Europe*, A. Krouwel, A. Önnerfors, eds. (Routledge, 2021).

[18] Eric Shiraev and Holger Mölder, *op. cit.*

Estonian journalist Kaarel Tarand[19] discusses the causes of mind games:

> There are many educated older men sitting in the headquarters, in a field of thought, and so on, and so on, and they are thinking about games that they cannot really carry out on the terrain. I understand that the soldiers also need to create their own budgets and that's why they also need to show a threat of war, but everyone who thinks, both here and there, can understand that if one side, our side in the West, has five times more people and 25 times more economic power, then the other party can not endanger us in any way.[20]

This will be one of the most intriguing security challenges for the next 10 years – by using ideological polarisation as a weapon, strategic contenders will actively use influence operations on behalf of their strategic ambitions and will promote psychological warfare for the destabilisation of the global security environment. Educated forecasting would be an important component for NATO in building successful security strategies and supportive public policies that may correctly apply to the existing geopolitical realities in 2030. Nevertheless, information alone is useless until it is transferred to knowledge by using methods to persuade an attentive audience. Strategic imagination is a method for the creative and critical assessment of possible scenarios involving threats to security; this allows security experts to find the correct ways for risk assessment, and to creatively assess the probability of emerging threats, even those that appear improbable to some.[21] The new world will be a multidimensional world, where cyber influence will more strongly affect daily living arrangements and the personal security of citizens.

Assuming that Russia is the source of instability, the question is why the West, including the Estonian media, is often entwined with the ambitions of creating a new world order pushed by Russia and the incitement of a terror culture accompanied by military force

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[19] Kaarel Tarand is an editor-in-chief of a weekly newspaper *Sirp*.

[20] ERR, "Analüütikud: sõjalised mõttemängud ei tähenda soda" [Analysts: Military brainstorming does not mean war], 5 February 2016, https://etv.err.ee/v/valismaa/fc4f9923-b41e-40c5-8d53-72ac4a1514ae/analuutikud-sojalised-mottemangud-ei-tahenda-soda.

[21] Eric Shiraev and Holger Mölder, *op.cit.*

demonstrations. Estonian media expert Ilmar Raag[22] brings an interesting nuance to this in his blog:

> "In the case of the Estonian media's [reaction to] Ukraine and Russia, we first see an interesting paradox. Although, on the one hand, they are quite aware of the Kremlin's information operations, on the other, sources that are uncertain are nevertheless used."

Raag explains this by pointing to the behavioural culture of the media, in which the desire to find a conflict exceeds social responsibility. Conflict can be more easily sold on the security market than peace. The strategic purpose of Russian information warfare activities seems to be to call for a revision of the international system, which is still largely dominated by the Western countries. Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev[23] has pointed out that if a permanent conflict that seeks to revise existing power relations challenges the current system, it is an advantage for the challenger. From the Baltic point of view, joining the war hysteria that is developed and disseminated in various media environments by the Kremlin only worsens the security prospects of the Baltic Sea region.

Conclusive remarks

Identity construction appears to be becoming a power in philosophy, the social sciences and politics. Strategic narratives that force polarisation can foster societal solidarity after they succeed in creating a supportive group identity in the imaginary conflict, with "others" defined as enemies. Many totalitarian and authoritarian regimes whose relationship with society may otherwise seem unreasonable have been successful in fostering such collective identity feelings, supported by syndromes of uncertainty, fear and historical nostalgia. Strong identity construction is profitable for many totalitarian regimes that experience

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[22] Ilmar Raag, "Väike paanikakäsitlus. Jäljed liival enne vihmasadu" [A little panic. Traces on the sand before the rain], 9 April 2015, http://ilmarraag.blogspot.com/2015/04/vaike-paanikakasitlus.html.

[23] Ivan Krastev, "Putin's world. Project Syndicate", 2014, http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ivan-krastev-blames-the-west-s-weak-response-in-crimea-for-empowering-russia#AK0vzVbmtIUQCseG.99.

the necessity to divert public attention away from urgent economic, social and environmental issues. The current ongoing turbulent time period teaches us that liberal democratic values and human rights cannot be taken for granted. At least in some sections of society, extreme populist ideologies (e.g. national socialism in Germany, fascism in Italy, and communism in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba and North Korea, as well as many current exceptionalist political trends based on the personal cult of a strongman leader, such as Trumpism in the United States or Putinism in Russia) are able to get a considerable amount of public support.

At some point, a culture of fear may become a part of that identity. Conflict-focused assessments and feelings may help to construct credible group solidarity through storytelling, by which well-elaborated strategic image-building can tell us how the well-intentioned "us" differs from "others" with hostile intentions. Psychological warfare strategies, where fear affects how we perceive different patterns of behaviour, guide the focus of the audience away from rational decision-making and toward a mythologised and petrified form. Influence operations create a basis for the obligatory narrative of "the enemy", which can be a personified nation or cultural phenomena. Russian influence operations in the Baltic region are seeking destabilisation in order to reduce Western influence in the neighbourhood of the Russian Federation and to imply to countries in the Eastern part of Europe, formerly allies of the Soviet Union, that a secure future only awaits them if they link their destiny to the interests of Russia.

Propaganda and disinformation in the age of uncertainty – how to strengthen NATO capacities

ALEKSANDRA KUCZYŃSKA-ZONIK

Introduction

The spread of false information during the pandemic has become a global phenomenon, embodying a high degree of *uncertainty*. Its dynamics further increased during the novel pandemic of COVID-19, which was an opportunity to share misinformation, conspiracy theories and speculation about the virus. As UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres mentioned, an "infodemic" is a large increase of information associated with a specific topic, whose growth can occur exponentially in a short period of time. Thus, the term infodemic applies to disinformation and misinformation spreading amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, carried out by both state and non-state actors, that reduces trust in public institutions, undermines common understandings within communities, and ultimately erodes *social cohesion*. In the information age, the scale of an infodemic is amplified as a result of technology and social media, which are being used on a massive scale.

The pandemic has provided a good example of a disinformation campaign applied both by China and Russia to shape the positive image of themselves for internal and external purposes. Since January 2020, China has applied so-called "mask diplomacy". By shipping medical supplies to European countries, *China* was seeking to improve its image as a responsible global leader. While global media coverage about China's mask diplomacy perceived it negatively, some effects were observed in Serbia where the media portrayed China's donations as acts of benevolence. Afterwards, similar strategies were applied by Russia in the post-Soviet area. It disseminated news stories containing both true and false elements concerning the virus to promote itself as a donor country. Additionally, Russia's infodemic included a narrative

of secret US laboratories and "coronavirus incubators", as well as false accusations about NATO's role in the fight against pandemic. In fact, Russia's information campaign was carried out in order to weaken Western institutions (to show them as incapable of dealing with the crisis) and to destabilise and undermine Western societies.

Propaganda and disinformation from a regional perspective

Due to asymmetric potentials, the development of communication technologies and the openness of democratic states, disinformation has been one of the most effective instruments of global competition and power. Information activities have been used by both state and non-state actors as an instrument of influence and to strengthen their international position. For Poland and the Baltic States, Russian disinformation has particular geopolitical objectives which include Russia's aspirations to entrench the international position of the state and to restore its role as a superpower in the world and in the Central and Eastern region, as the Soviet Union had in the past. The target states' historical and cultural background and the current socio-political situation both facilitate Russia realising its misinformation campaign[1]. As a result, both Poland and the Baltics face the same information problems. They are heavily targeted by Russia using fake news, false or unverified facts, and conspiracy theories. In Poland, Russian media plays a minor role, but they are quite active in sharing anti-American, anti-Ukrainian, and anti-Lithuanian sentiments to inspire division within Polish society. They focus mostly on deteriorating bilateral relations between the country and its neighbours. In contrast to Poland, in the Baltic States Russian propaganda is much more effective because of the large Russian-speaking audience. But both in Poland and the Baltic States, the effect is reinforced when the media message is accompanied by parties, businesses, NGOs and other pseudo-independent institutions that help Russia realise its policy towards other countries. Sharing Kremlin ideology, they act like defenders of Russian

[1] Andrew Radin, "Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics. Threats and Potential Responses", 2017, *RAND*, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1577.html.

politics. All of these deepen the vulnerability of target states to sources of disinformation delivered by Russia and its masked allies.

Apart from Russia-led disinformation activities, there are additional non-state actors applying harmful and misleading conspiracy theories, secret plots and alleged stories that may secretly manipulate the recipients, provoke divisions and undermine liberal societies and democracies. Their aim is to provoke, manipulate or target people for political or financial reasons. Due to the increasing amount of information that appears in social media, it is difficult to control the quality and reliability of information. Additionally, people may spread false information either unconsciously or purposely. As a result, campaigns to promote media literacy and critical thinking, as well as to raise public awareness to prevent information challenges and risks, are needed. Increasing the capacity of society in the field of disinformation has a relevant impact on democratic values around the world, including freedom of information and media independence. This enhances social trust and *government* performance as well.

Fortunately, public awareness has been growing thanks to the joint efforts of governments and local media in terms of promoting the high quality of information regardless of the language and the socio-economic status of the recipients. This is important in Latvia and Estonia, where Russian-speaking communities may be particularly vulnerable to disinformation as they obtain information from abroad. Recently published data brings evidence that the popularity of local Russian-language media in Estonia (ETV+) has been increasing. Although it cannot compete with the (foreign) Russian media in terms of the quality of entertainment programmes, the reliability, credibility and accuracy of information are its advantage.

Well-informed societies are more resistant to outside informative influence. But a quick and effective response to potential threats requires "strategic communication" – this is what Poland's Defence Minister Mariusz Błaszczak stressed during the 2019 NATO Information & Communicators Conference in September[2]. Strategic communication is part of a range of communication-related issues: it is about how to effectively deliver the message to key audiences. Even in diplomatic

[2] PolandIn, "Strategic communication essential to face disinformation: Poland's def min", 25 September 2019, https://polandin.com/44552705/strategic-communication-essential-to-face-disinformation-polands-def-min.

contexts, strategic communication is crucial for delivering a unified message through public diplomatic channels and in public affairs[3].

To deal with disinformation and propaganda, a variety of policies are being implemented on national, regional and international levels. First of all, the national level involves a series of complex efforts that aim at counteracting the immediate threats of manipulation and at creating favourable conditions for safeguarding information development. Tasks in the field of strategic communication (including public diplomacy, social communication, information operations and psychological operations) are carried out by various units and departments. They use various tools in the modern information space (such as traditional and social media, marketing and branding) and seek to include strategic communication into their activities with the goal to tackle disinformation. Apart from broadcast prohibitions, censorship and restrictions on media disseminating disinformation, states strive to create an open, pluralistic information environment – to monitor human rights violations and abuses, to develop a free and independent media, as well as to shape a resilient and critical civil society. Poland and the Baltic States have announced that they are aware of the challenges and they have introduced several measures and instruments to tackle disinformation. However, the level of institutional development in the sphere of information security, the comprehensiveness of the legal framework, the existence of state-level long-term approaches to information security, as well the quality of countermeasures by the media community and civil society in Poland, Latvia and Lithuania are not of good quality according to the Disinformation Resilience Index (DRI, 2018). Similarly, a report on strategic communication in Poland[4] underlines a lack of coordination among the various bodies of state administration that weakens the ability of the state to counteract information threats effectively. The report points to the insufficient adaptability of these particular states and their communities in

[3] M. Daugulis, "Strategic Communication: perspectives and challenges for Latvia within the EU and NATO", 2017, *Latvian Institute of International Affairs*, https://liia.lv/en/opinions/strategic-communication-perspectives-and-challenges-for-latvia-within-the-eu-and-nato-575.

[4] Prague Security Studies Institute (PSSI) and Center for Propaganda and Disinformation Analysis (CAPD), "Strategic Communication in Czech Republic and Poland", 2019, https://www.pssi.cz/projects/62-strategic-communication-in-czech-republic-and-poland-comparison-of-perspectives-and-practices.

addressing political, economic, and societal intentional pressure and falsehoods spread by various types of sources[5]. In contrast, Estonia has already developed its strategic communication measures to keep the public informed about the security situation and avoid a panic, neutralise hostile subversive activity, and expose fake information and prevent its spread[6].

Secondly, on a regional level, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have agreed to build cyber and hybrid resilience within the region, while cooperating with the EU and NATO in those fields remains their priority. They stress the need to continue developing existing multilateral formats, and the participation of the United States in information activity in the region is still an essential element of their security. Positive effects seem to be predictable because Poland and the Baltic States share the same view on information threats, which are enhanced by similar traditional patterns, culture and religious, ethnic and national identities, as well as by custom and values.

But holistic strategic communication approaches to fight disinformation are necessary. They involve a great deal of planning and analysis, clearly defined objectives, and using the right channels and selected audience. Previous means of counteracting informational threats have proven ineffective, and their scale and scope appear inadequate to face the challenge presented by the contemporary disinformation campaigns in the transatlantic space. To tackle these problems, the states need more internal solidarity and external support. Poland and the Baltic States agreed that a joint Allied response to disinformation campaigns and systemic solutions are needed – therefore, NATO's role is crucial, involving not only military capabilities but also information and digital technology. As a result, the *NATO strategic agenda contains active and systemic actions aimed at tackling* foreign influence operations and cyber defence with respect for fundamental democratic principles and values.

Taking into account the challenges and threats arising from the modern information environment, the role of communication in the

[5] The Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" and the Eurasian States in Transition research center (EAST Center), "Disinformation Resilience in Central and Eastern Europe", 2018, http://prismua.org/en/dri-cee/.

[6] Ministry of Defence of Estonia, "National Defence Development Plan for 2017–2026", https://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/riigikaitse2026/arengukava/eng/.

process of global information creation and transfer, and the necessity for deepening cooperation between partners, Poland proposed a project involving the efficient flow of information between the defence ministries of individual NATO countries and the headquarters of the Alliance to enhance their capabilities to fight with disinformation. The project included the greater involvement of the members in a joint activity to respond to the threat posed by disinformation and to build the groundwork for a longer-term approach to strengthening the information environment based on democratic principles. There are other international organisations and agencies – such as the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki (Finland), the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (StratCom) in Riga (Latvia), and the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn (Estonia) – dealing with countering hybrid threats, which are a priority for NATO. Their aim is to raise awareness about the identification of risks and capabilities, as well as to contribute knowledge and expertise to NATO. Moreover, exposing disinformation campaigns is an important role for some European Union agencies. The states contributed to the idea to establish the UE Rapid Alert System to connect disinformation experts from different member states in March 2019. Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were then among those who supported a joint initiative *for the European Union to create a communication strategy that provides reliable information regarding 5G to states and to European citizens in October 2020*. Finally, there are the Council of Europe, the OSCE and other regional structures (such as the Nordic-Baltic Eight, NB8), which support countries in building their capacities by developing legislative proposals, organising regular exercises, and providing discussions on countering hybrid threats at the ministerial and other levels.

Future scenarios for the transatlantic community

Both the Baltic States and Poland are hardened and partially immunised to information attacks, having dealt with Soviet propaganda in the past and mendacious Kremlin memory narratives[7]. As a result, they

[7] Marta Kepe, "NATO: Prepared for Countering Disinformation Operations in the Baltic States?", 7 June 2017, *RAND*, https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/06/nato-prepared-for-countering-disinformation-operations.html.

are more aware of the character of the Kremlin's information warfare than the rest of the region. This may be useful for experience-sharing between NATO members. But in the face of a pandemic, modern non-military threats are increasing. An overload of information and fake news produced by multiple state and non-state actors could contribute to potential destabilisation and information chaos. Additionally, so-called "information fatigue" – mental *exhaustion* arising from exposure to too much *information* – may be problematic. Frequently repeated messages about risks and can be counterproductive, and society may lose its vigilance. It might jeopardise the public communication effort and discourage individuals from following the recommendations. Furthermore, there are digital technologies such as artificial intelligence that are used in response to reveal misinformation and expose the malign foreign and domestic actors involved in disseminating it[8]. Algorithms and computer programs can help people fight fake news. NATO is a part of this digital transformation. Using programs to automatically remove disinformation from websites could help to manage the information space, but it can easily lead to restrictions on freedom of expression and democracy. This raises the question of who should be responsible for controlling the information sphere and who should be a censor. According to some experts, there is so much false information that people should learn to live with it and develop their media awareness. Finally, we have been observing the emergence of new risks and challenges – including climate change – which undoubtedly require NATO's traditional approach to be reshaped to focus on the future. These issues all highlight that NATO military tools are not always the best instrument to deal with such global issues.

Nevertheless, governments have to build international cooperation frameworks and multilateralism to counter disinformation and propaganda, to elaborate multi-level and multi-dimensional information national strategies, to intensify collaboration with free and independent media, and to support civil society organisations. These joint efforts can help countries improve government accountability, conduct public health campaigns, build trust between institutions and citizens, and strengthen social cohesion to empower national and ethnic minorities

[8] Lauren Speranza, "An Agenda for NATO's Next Generation", 9 November 2020, *CEPA*, https://cepa.org/an-agenda-for-natos-next-generation/?fbclid=IwAR1jSgdivypvouwyL2XOYOwCo3OBn-pEia2kmEKHf9CxPdkje8cf91ILyYQ.

in the countries. Based on an analysis of NATO's role, the following conclusions and recommendations regarding propaganda and disinformation have been drawn.

Non-military threats do not exclude a role for NATO, as it also uses diplomatic, humanitarian, and political means. NATO has a strong political mandate to counter hybrid threats, but it cannot act alone. Strengthening information and cyber security should be an integral pillar of NATO-EU cooperation, as well as other regional formats. This means furthering collective efforts to increase synergies and create stronger links between their member countries. An institutional network of interconnections across NATO member states, international and regional organisations, national communities, and the private sector helps with the exchange of information, with facilitating cooperation channels and with successfully reacting to information challenges, threats and risks. Additionally, new formats such as the Three Seas Initiative may contribute to NATO achievements in developing digital technology related knowledge, skills and infrastructure within the communities.

Secondly, NATO members should *exchange* knowledge and *experiences*, and should share *best practices*. The Baltic States in particular have much experience in dealing with disinformation, countering misleading narratives and building societal resilience. Much can be learned from the experience of Poland as well in terms of *developing systematic resilience* strategies for information warfare and hybrid threats, as well as enhancing regional connectivity. Furthermore, independent NGOs, think tanks, academics, fact-checking organisations and civil society may influence the battle against disinformation and propaganda.

In light of increasingly serious challenges, media and information literacy, critical thinking and the capacity to identify disinformation are essential. But in the digital age, building public awareness of the technology and mechanisms of disinformation is particularly important. Many false or misleading stories are fabricated and shared using computer programs and bots. To fight this, NATO needs innovations, advanced technology and digital solutions. Moreover, NATO members should pay attention to information literacy and the digital skills needed to empower citizens and build a more resilient society. Special efforts should be dedicated to vulnerable groups – children, the young, and

national and ethnic minorities in the countries – in order to ensure equal access to information and the benefits arising from the potential of digital technologies, while also maintaining the highest standards of data and privacy protection.

Finally, NATO should take all appropriate steps to develop strategic communication based on democratic values. Effective resilience to information threats requires transparent and consistent strategies, coordinated measures and strong communication capabilities, including openness, inclusiveness and responsibility. In particular, the coronavirus pandemic has revealed that intensified digital communications should be one of NATO's priorities and NATO should demonstrate strong crisis-management mechanisms to cope with disinformation. Finally, a strategic communication campaign may include support for local or national minority media broadcasters to ensure high-quality standards in journalism.

Towards Resilience in 2030: NATO Allies and Partners in the North-East of Europe

PIOTR SZYMAŃSKI

Introduction

In recent years, "resilience" has become a buzzword across the Nordic and Baltic region, which constitutes NATO's Northeastern Flank. This relates to a rise in hybrid threats and a growing interest in the concept of "comprehensive security". Born from the Cold War doctrine of total defence, it encompasses military and non-military aspects of national security and crisis management. Enhancing national resilience to various threats and emergencies, and securing vital functions of state and society, are key elements of a comprehensive approach to security and defence in a less stable and less predictable international environment.

It was only in 2020 that strategies and reports pertaining to resilience were adopted in several countries in the Nordic and Baltic region.[1] Poland's 2020 National Security Strategy aims at consolidating the national security management system and developing civil defence. Latvia's 2020 State Defence Concept stresses the importance of a "culture of preparedness" and comprehensive defence, mentioning "resilience" a dozen times. Further north, Norway's report on public security for 2020–2021 focuses on streamlining civil-military cooperation

[1] Poland's National Security Bureau, "The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland", 12 May 2020, https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dokumenty/National_Security_Strategy_of_the_Republic_of_Poland_2020.pdf; Latvia's Ministry of Defence, "Valsts Aizsardzības Koncepcija" [State Security Conception], 24 September 2020, https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/AiMVAK_2020_projekts.pdf; Sweden's Ministry of Defence, "Substantial investment in total defence", 16 October 2020, https://www.government.se/press-releases/2020/10/substantial-investment-in-total-defence/; Norway's Ministry of Justice and Public Security, "Samfunnssikkerhet i en usikker verden" [Societal security in an usafe world], 16 October 2020, https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/ba8d1c1470dd491f83c556e709b1cf06/no/pdfs/stm202020210005000dddpdfs.pdf.

as well as bolstering local preparedness, whereas Sweden's total defence bill for 2021–2025 provides increased funding for the military and for strengthening national resilience in this NATO partner country. The total defence concept has also been implemented by Estonia and Lithuania since 2008 and 2014, respectively. Estonians have even coined a neologism, *kerksus*, which denotes resilience. On top of that, Finland – another NATO partner nation – is known for its comprehensive security system and for being passionate about security of supply.[2]

These developments fit into a recent emphasis on resilience in NATO. In October 2020, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called for enhancing Allied resilience as one of the priorities of the NATO 2030 initiative. According to the Secretary General, resilience is enshrined in NATO's DNA and encompasses, among other things, robust infrastructure (both physical and digital), civil-military cooperation, security of supply, and the exchange of information on foreign investments in critical infrastructure projects.[3] This paper provides a brief overview of NATO's approach to resilience, lists potential challenges and risks, and examines possible ways for the Alliance and the Northeastern Flank countries to strengthen resilience in the upcoming decade.

Resilience: NATO's way

At the 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO leaders agreed to seven baseline requirements aimed at enhancing the Alliance's resilience: the assured continuity of government and critical government services, resilient energy supplies, the ability to deal effectively with the uncontrolled movement of people, resilient food and water resources, the ability to deal with mass casualties, resilient civil communications systems, and resilient civil transportation systems. The laying down of these requirements was followed by the development of the evaluation

[2] Piotr Szymański, "New ideas for total defence: Comprehensive security in Finland and Estonia", 31 March 2020, *Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW),* https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-report/2020-03-31/new-ideas-total-defence.

[3] NATO, "Keynote speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Global Security 2020 (GLOBSEC) Bratislava Forum", 7 October 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_178605.htm?selectedLocale=en.

criteria (2017) and preparedness guidelines (2018), which are embedded in Article 3 of the Washington Treaty.[4] Since 2014, NATO has also stepped up its efforts to counter non-military threats as a part of the Allied response to hybrid operations. Ensuring shared situational awareness, launching a new branch for the analysis of hybrid threats within the Joint Intelligence and Security Division, putting counter-hybrid support teams on standby, and adopting the 2016 Cyber Defence Pledge (together with the establishment of the Cyberspace Operations Centre) were among the crucial means of strengthening Allied resilience. The issue of 5G and the resilience of communications systems is of ever-growing importance as well (as a part of the protection of critical infrastructure).[5]

In October 2020, NATO defence ministers received a report on resilience that assesses vulnerabilities across the Alliance. Discussions on more ambitious requirements and a stronger mandate for NATO regarding resilience are underway in view of the 2021 summit. Consequently, new ideas concerning the next Strategic Concept are emerging. These include, among others, adding "resilience" as a fourth core task of NATO (on par with collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security) in order to reinforce member states' efforts to boost resilience in a number of domains. A new take on resilience would require approving resilience capabilities goals and designating resources for mutual assistance.[6] The Covid-19 pandemic provided an additional argument in favour of that proposal.

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[4] "In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack". Source: NATO, "Civil preparedness", 27 October 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49158.htm.

[5] Piotr Szymański, "Towards greater resilience: NATO and the EU on hybrid threats", 24 April 2020, *Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW),* https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2020-04-24/towards-greater-resilience-nato-and-eu-hybrid-threats; Henrik Larsen, "The pandemic could enhance NATO's resilience", 16 June 2020, *Center for Security Studies (ETH Zürich),* https://isnblog.ethz.ch/defense/the-pandemic-could-enhance-natos-resilience.

[6] NATO, "Online pre-ministerial press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers", 21 October 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_178940.htm?selectedLocale=en; Anca Agachi, Jim Townsend, "Build resilience for an era of shocks", 14 October 2020, *Atlantic Council,* https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/nato20-2020/build-resilience-for-an-era-of-shocks/.

Challenges and risks

There are four main challenges with regard to the future activity of NATO and its member states in the field of resilience.

Balance between resilience and defence. Assigning a greater role to resilience in NATO is clearly in the interest of the Northeastern Flank countries, since it is aimed at limiting the vulnerabilities of the transatlantic area. However, member states should seek synergies between investments in resilience and reinforcing the main role of the Alliance – collective defence – in the first place. NATO's future resilience architecture should be designed to ensure a favourable operational environment for the armed forces. Focusing primarily on non-military threats at the expense of Article 5 tasks, including the defence and deterrence *vis-à-vis* Russia, would be the wrong thing to do, especially due to growing international competition.[7] A situation in which NATO members boost their investments in resilience just to offset cuts in defence expenditures and declining military capabilities should be avoided.

Information sharing. The main responsibility for enhancing resilience lies with the member states. NATO itself is better suited to perform a subsidiary role in this process, encompassing coordination, planning and expertise. It could also motivate Allies to do more in the field of resilience. However, this would require advanced information and intelligence sharing – an area in which NATO faces several shortcomings.[8] Dealing with the member states' unwillingness to share sensitive data related to critical infrastructure protection, emergency stockpiles or cybersecurity would be a major task for NATO officials.

Divergent economic interests. Bolstering NATO's resilience could also face serious hurdles stemming from the conflicting economic interests between Europe and America and between individual Allies.

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[7] Artur Kacprzyk, Łukasz Kulesa, Marcin Piotrowski, Marcin Terlikowski and Wojciech Lorenz, "NATO and the Coronavirus: Navigating Unchartered Waters", 30 July 2020, *Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM),* https://pism.pl/publications/NATO_and_the_Coronavirus_Navigating_Unchartered_Waters.

[8] Jan Ballast, "Trust (in) NATO – The future of intelligence sharing within the Alliance", September 2017, NATO Defense College, https://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=1085.

Incompatible approaches to Chinese technologies in the development of new 5G networks and to reducing dependence on China in terms of supply chains suggest that reaching a common position within the Alliance may take some time. In addition, it may be difficult to develop and then follow stricter guidelines on foreign direct investments from non-NATO and non-EU countries (in critical and strategic sectors), especially during a time of economic recovery after the pandemic, when each country will seek to reinstate economic growth and advance its economic interests. All in all, the question of the effectiveness of NATO's measures in this respect reflects the broader dilemma – how to strike a balance between "market and private" and "planning and public" strategies in enhancing resilience.[9]

Changing mindset. Finally, the successful containment of the Covid-19 pandemic may lead to a decline of the preparedness-oriented mindset among NATO members. In that case, strengthening Allied resilience, through for instance the expansion of national emergency reserves and stockpiles, might be viewed as unprofitable and as of secondary importance, as was the case prior to the 2020 pandemic. The recent shortage of ventilators and personal protective equipment is a result of this attitude. As Estonian Defence Minister Jüri Luik noted during the first wave of the pandemic: "A quick glance at the international situation tells us that insufficient stockpiles have rather been the norm because humans are by nature optimistic when making plans. This intrinsic optimism allows us to postpone acquiring crisis stockpiles when drawing up budgets. The decision is an easy one to make, as the world is used to relying on normally highly accurate supply chains even when ensuring vital services, while a million euros needed for masks can always be used for something more pressing during peacetime".[10] Returning to "business as usual" and losing momentum in preparations for future crises may significantly hider NATO's resilience architecture and lead to a failure to leverage the lessons learned from the pandemic.

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[9] Harvey Sapolsky, Eugene Gholz and Caitlin Talmadge, *US Defence Politics: The Origins of Security Policy* (Routledge, 2009), 8-10.

[10] Jüri Luik, "First lessons from the coronavirus crisis", 20 April 2020, *Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR),* https://news.err.ee/1080034/minister-of-defense-first-lessons-from-the-coronavirus-crisis.

Recommendations: some ideas for NATO and the Northeastern Flank

Reinforcing the institutional framework. Reinforcing Allied crisis management mechanisms to better tackle serious disruptions to the vital functions of state and society could take NATO's resilience to the next level. These would include disruptions of critical supplies and services, as well as disruptions related to large-scale accidents and disasters (ranging from CBRN incidents to outbreaks of infectious diseases). Some of these are becoming increasingly likely due to the impact of climate change and the resulting elevated risk of wildfires, drought or storms. Although the Alliance will not fully relieve the member states or replace intergovernmental cooperation (including the EU toolbox) in dealing with major disruptions, the provision of a tailored peacetime assistance mechanism under a NATO flag could facilitate crisis response when national resources are significantly overstretched. It may also demonstrate Allied solidary – something which Italy missed during the initial stage of the Covid-19 pandemic.[11] Expanding and maintaining the recently established NATO stockpiles of medical and protective equipment through the NATO Support and Procurement Agency and delivering a robust pool of resources to the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) – which could be used for different crisis scenarios – could serve as a springboard for the development of NATO's future resilience architecture.[12] Given the EADRCC's experience and know-how in pooling national resources and in managing various emergencies, NATO leaders should consider increasing its budget so that it can hire additional staff and carry out more ambitious exercises. In addition, the *ad hoc* NATO Pandemic Response Trust Fund could stay in place even after the ongoing crisis by

[11] Elisabeth Braw, "The Coronavirus Pandemic Should Be NATO's Moment", 31 March 2020, *Defense One,* https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/03/coronavirus-pandemic-natos-moment/164239/.

[12] Baiba Braže, "NATO Strengthens Resilience in Response to Covid-19 Pandemic", 4 September 2020, *Turkish Policy Quarterly,* http://turkishpolicy.com/article/1014/nato-strengthens-resilience-in-response-to-covid-19-pandemic; Lauren Speranza, "Six reasons NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre is important for our future security", 7 April 2020, *Atlantic Council,* https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/six-reasons-natos-euro-atlantic-disaster-response-coordination-centre-is-important-for-our-future-security/.

taking the form of the Resilience Trust Fund, with financial contributions from all member states and partner nations. In October 2020, the Czech Republic and Slovakia filed a request for ventilators stockpiled by NATO in order to deal with the second wave of Covid-19, which shows that agile resilience mechanisms in the Alliance are necessary.[13]

Security of supply. Safeguarding security of supply in the transatlantic area should be at the heart of NATO's strategy for building a more resilient Alliance. This issue has been especially relevant since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, which revealed many vulnerabilities related to a dependence on supplies from non-NATO and non-EU countries, mainly China. NATO Allies, including the Nordic and Baltic region countries, should rethink the way in which the import of strategic goods and critical supplies is secured. Some member states have already started to develop solutions for the diversification of supplies (an example of this is the UK's "Project Defend").[14] NATO is well suited to take a leading role in coordinating these efforts. They could get governments to agree on common guidelines regarding security of supply, including emergency stockpiling and domestic production. NATO's crisis reserves system should be underpinned by a capabilities planning process and specific requirements for each ally on the amount of critical supplies stored in state-run and private warehouses (including water, food, medicine, personal protective equipment, fuels, etc.). Creating a robust public-private partnership in this field should be encouraged, since it would increase the ability to provide vital services and secure the continuity of industry in case of major disruptions. Finland's National Emergency Supply Agency is often mentioned as a role model is this regard.[15]

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[13] NATO Support and Procurement Agency, "Czech Republic Receives 60 ventilators from NATO stockpile", 27 October 2020, https://www.nspa.nato.int/news/2020/czech-republic-receives-60-ventilators-from-nato-stockpile.

[14] Institute of Export & International Trade, "Project Defend: New approach to national security aims to diversify supply and 'reshore' manufacture", 22 May 2020, https://www.export.org.uk/news/509100/Project-Defend-New-approach-to-national-security-aims-to-diversify-supply-and-reshore-manufacture.htm.

[15] Henri Vanhanen, "COVID-19 and European security of supply: Growing in importance", 8 October 2020, *SAGE Journals*, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1781685820966908.

Exercising resilience. NATO 2030 should exercise tasks related to seven baseline requirements on resilience to a greater extent. Allies need to carry out complex exercises involving civil-military cooperation, with tasks for local authorities (thereby testing a whole-of-government approach), contributions from the private sector, and civil defence. This would facilitate Host Nation Support in terms of logistics, transport, replenishments and situational awareness. In particular, cooperation with the private sector should be emphasised – in the event of a larger NATO operation, around 90% of military cargo is projected to depend on civilian transportation.[16] NATO's Trident Juncture 2018 collective defence exercises, which tested the Norwegian total defence system, can serve as an example of a comprehensive approach to military exercises. The same applies to national-level drills in the region (including live, command post and table-top exercises).

Military mobility. Albert Einstein rightly noted that "nothing happens until something moves". This famous quote seems especially relevant for military mobility, which is frequently described as NATO's Achilles heel. The capacity to streamline the movement of military reinforcements or non-military crisis aid should be considered an element of Allied resilience. Currently, there are many ways in which the Alliance and its member states could contribute to the enhancement of military mobility. The biggest NATO Allies should develop their logistics capabilities (including airlift capabilities) and regularly rehearse large-scale deployments involving NATO's Joint Support and Enabling Command. NATO and the EU need to further encourage their member states to limit bureaucratic procedures that hinder military movement. Finally, establishing vital rail connections and upgrading cross-border road infrastructure on the Northeastern Flank are major tasks for Poland and the Baltic States (this is being addressed with the development of the Rail Baltica railways and the Via Baltica highway).[17] Being the largest road transport carrier in the EU, Poland is well-placed to take an active

[16] Keynote speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Global Security 2020 (GLOBSEC), *op.cit.*

[17] Ben Hodges, Tony Lawrence and Ray Wojcik, "Until Something Moves: Reinforcing the Baltic Region in Crisis and War", April 2020, *International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS) and Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA),* https://cepa.org/cepa_files/2020-CEPA-report-Until_Something_Moves.pdf.

role in facilitating the shipment of military cargo or international aid across Europe.

Resilient maritime infrastructure. In the coming decade, countries from the Nordic and Baltic region should increase their efforts to safeguard maritime infrastructure. This would involve both military (primarily navy) and civilian agencies. The protection and surveillance of ports and sea lines of communication (which are vital for the inflow of goods during a crisis), submarine telecommunication and power cables, as well as offshore wind farms and pipelines are among the potential areas of cooperation. Besides this, accelerating the digital transformation of the energy and transport sectors highlights the importance of cybersecurity and resilient ICT infrastructure. In the case of new submarine pipelines, which are set to allow gas transit all around the Baltic Sea region, the Vilnius-based NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence (ENSEC COE) could be a hub for expertise and discussions on joint activities in this field.[18] During a transition to renewable energy, natural gas still constitutes a significant part of the Nordic-Baltic energy mix as a "backup fuel". Therefore, regardless of a shrinking appetite for gas, its undisrupted supplies will remain an important factor affecting regional resilience – especially in countries that have traditionally been dependent on imports from Russia.

Civil defence and individual preparedness. NATO's Northeastern Flank needs more investments in civil defence, taking into account lessons learned from the ongoing pandemic. Civil defence has long been neglected in Poland and the Baltic States. After joining NATO, their armed forces become increasingly focused on expeditionary operations and – since 2014 – on developing high-end military capabilities for territorial defence. In both cases, civil defence was moved down the agenda or overlooked. In Poland, for instance, the military (mainly territorial defence troops) effectively took over the duties of civil defence during the 2020 pandemic, scrambling to fill this gap in the national crisis management system. The task of upgrading civil defence would be spread over multiple years and

[18] It relates to the Baltic Pipe project scheduled for 2022 (connecting Norway, Denmark and Poland) and the Balticconnector, which was decommissioned in 2019 (connecting Estonia and Finland).

should encompass: comprehensive contingency plans and evacuation procedures, systematic exercises involving different emergences, regulations providing for a clear division of responsibilities, the involvement of local authorities and smaller communities (like residential areas), skilled personnel, a well-functioning emergency notification system, investments in the capacity of the healthcare system, a network of shelters for the population in major cities (equipped with basic emergency supplies) and, last but not least, civil defence education (courses and classes in schools). The last one – aimed at teaching first aid, disseminating a code of conduct in crisis situations and revealing disinformation techniques – should constitute a foundation for individual preparedness and psychological resilience. Common emergency awareness and encouraging people to maintain household supplies that would last for at least several days (medicines, food, water, batteries, etc.) would increase citizens' self-sufficiency during emergencies in the spirit of moderate prepperism.[19] A recent study by Estonia's Rescue Board shows that residents of large apartment buildings – common in this part of Europe – are the most vulnerable group in terms of emergency preparedness.[20] In order to achieve the above-listed goals, the Northeastern Flank countries should provide appropriate financing for civil defence. Since this is a cross-ministerial effort, a separate fund for the development of civil defence could be a solution.

Conclusions

Adopting a more comprehensive approach to security, the Nordic and Baltic region countries have embarked on a number of resilience-oriented initiatives over recent years. These efforts are intended to fill the gaps in their crisis management systems, enhance their defence

[19] Ivo Juurvee, Ramon Loik, Mari-Ann Ploom, Tõnis Hintsov, Andres Parve and Eerik Heldna, "Preparing for Crises in Estonia: Improvement Options for Civilian Food and Emergency Goods Supplies", February 2020, *International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS),* https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ICDS_Report_Summary_Preparing_for_Crises_in_Estonia_Juurvee_Loik_February_2020.pdf.

[20] Marcus Turovski, "Rescue Board: 5 percent of apartment building residents ready for crisis", 4 October 2020, *Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR),* https://news.err.ee/1142920/rescue-board-5-percent-of-apartment-building-residents-ready-for-crisis.

postures and complement investments in high-end military capabilities. NATO's renewed emphasis on resilience – arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, discussions of 5G networks and the rise of hybrid warfare – will motivate its member states, including on the Northeastern Flank, to go further in enhancing Allied "herd immunity" to a whole range of kinetic and non-kinetic threats. However, bolstering resilience in NATO may turn out to be a bust if the member states do not deal with diverging threat perceptions and economic interests, a reluctance to share intelligence and sensitive data, as well as the lack of both "worst case scenario" thinking and a culture of preparedness.

Member states should consider reinforcing NATO's mechanisms and institutional framework (for instance the EADRCC) for emergencies and crisis management. This should be followed by agreeing on new guidelines for security of supply and establishing capability development plans for resilience. The screening and control of foreign investments in strategic sectors, improving military mobility and practicing different aspects of total defence during major NATO military exercises are other means of strengthening Allied resilience. The Northeastern Flank countries should, in turn, focus on developing their civil defence systems and emergency stockpiles for the armed forces and healthcare, as well as on regional cooperation in protecting critical infrastructure (including maritime infrastructure). Tailored investments in resilience are a kind of insurance that NATO member states should and could afford to buy, eventually investing in comprehensive and long-term 2030 coverage.

STRENGTHENING AND EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS

NATO Enlargement for the Coming Decade: What to Expect for Georgia and Ukraine?

EMILIJA PUNDZIŪTĖ-GALLOIS

Introduction

After the accession of the last candidates that had been in the NATO antechamber for several years, Montenegro and North Macedonia, the NATO enlargement process has slowed down. Several factors contribute to this situation. First, NATO enlargement is increasingly being brought up as a major problem that has antagonised Russia and has caused the current political and security crisis between Russia and the West.[1] Second, the two countries that are actively aspiring to become members, Georgia and Ukraine, are entangled in territorial conflicts (which once again place Russia in the centre of the security nexus of the region), are still on the path of administrative, economic and security reforms, and lack strategic importance to many Alliance members. In addition to this, Alliance members are preoccupied with numerous other problems, such as newly emerging threats and the unity of the transatlantic community in general. This increasingly pushes enlargement out of the agenda of NATO's primary interests.

This essay endeavours to consider these elements in order to assess the best way forward for the transatlantic community, the Baltic States and Poland. We will discuss, accordingly, the political position to be taken on the principle of NATO enlargement and on Russia's opposition to it, the readiness and determination of Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO, political and security conditions for their accession, and finally,

[1] John Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (2014): 77–89, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault; Stephen F. Cohen, "Have 20 Years of NATO Expansion Made Anyone Safer?", 18 October 2017, *Nation*, https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/have-20-years-of-nato-expansion-made-anyone-safer/.

the place that enlargement should take in the future NATO agenda. We will also examine other instruments in the NATO toolkit that can be used for reaching out to its partners, and consider their pertinence for the management of enlargement expectations.

Setting things straight about past NATO enlargements

The year 2014 brought the most acute crisis in relations between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War. Russian efforts to prevent European Eastern Partnership countries from drifting towards transatlantic institutions, the annexation of Crimea and the escalation of separatism in Eastern Ukraine were clear signs that Russia was challenging the international order that underpins multiple dimensions of cooperation for the continent. The events provoked European soul-searching, with politicians and scholars asking themselves where it all went wrong.[2] NATO enlargement is one of the major bones of contention between Russia and the West and, to some, is a primary reason for Russia's exclusion, alienation, and antagonization. Some even go as far as to say that NATO enlargement was a strategic mistake.[3]

The problem of NATO enlargement is not a new one. It has been a controversial issue since 1990, when American and German leaders were still negotiating the fate of Germany with the Soviet Union.[4] Opinions diverged in the West about the benefits of NATO enlargement before both ensuing waves in 1999 and in 2004 – and even more so before 2008, when the prospect of membership was to be decided for Ukraine and Georgia.[5] The arguments are well known: opponents feared unnecessarily antagonising Russia and the risk of chain-ganging with the inclusion of small, unstable states that had

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[2] Anne Marie Le Gloannec, "On Morality and Mistakes: Did the West Provoke Russia over Ukraine?", 14 April 2014, *American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Johns Hopkins University*, http://www.aicgs.org/issue/on-morality-and-mistakes-did-the-west-provoke-russia-over-ukraine/.

[3] Comments of Jolyon Howorth at a seminar on European security at CERI, Sciences Po Paris, Spring 2019.

[4] Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe,* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

[5] See the special issue of *International politics. Legacies of NATO Enlargement: International Relations, Domestic Politics, and Alliance Management*, Vol. 57, No. 3, June 2020, James Goldgeier and Joshua R. Shifrinson, eds.

unresolved issues in their neighbourhoods, while Russia clearly ceased to be a priority in Western defence strategies. Proponents argued for consolidating stability through a diffusion of democratic standards, especially in the defence sector, an endeavour for which transatlantic institutions provided many undeniably efficient tools. Not least, the idea of a Europe that is united not by the will of great powers, but according to the principle of the free choice of all European countries, had much salience and convinced several important decision-makers at the time.[6] Many of these arguments, on both sides, still stand today, and they influence strategic thinking about future enlargements.

Russian opposition to NATO enlargement was known to the West since the very beginning, but its consistency was unclear. On the one hand, Moscow signed up to major documents, such as the Charter of Paris, that founded the new European security order upon democratic principles and recognised the right for states to choose their own security arrangements.[7] On the other hand, reactionary forces within Russia, which regretted the demise of the great power status of their country and which still saw the United States as an enemy,[8] subsisted and were gaining more or less strength within the Russian parliament and within the military and administrative establishment. Russian leaders, in talks with their Western counterparts, evoked the problem they had with the hard-liner opposition,[9] but from a diplomatic perspective, this did not mean that compromise was impossible. Difficulties and instabilities in domestic politics are common everywhere, but they do not preclude the possibility to adjust positions and push through compromises between governments. This is the premise upon which Western diplomacy proceeded. Yeltsin, despite his

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[6] Strobe Talbott, cited by: Kimberly Marten, "Reconsidering NATO expansion: a counterfactual analysis of Russia and the West in the 1990s", *European Journal of International Security* 3, no. 2 (2017): 135–161.

[7] The corresponding citation from the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe* of 1990 would be this: "With the ending of the division of Europe, we will strive for a new quality in our security relations while fully respecting each other's freedom of choice in that respect".

[8] Kimberly Marten, "NATO enlargement: evaluating its consequences in Russia", *International Politics,* 57, no. 3 (2020): 401–426.

[9] The most famous one was the statement by Andrei Kozyrev in the 1992 CSCE meeting: *The Independent*, "Diplomats shocked by Kozyrev ploy", 15 December 1992. Similar positions were expressed by analysts, for example: Sergey Karaganov, "Presentation given at an international conference",*NATO and EU Enlargement: the Case of the Baltic States,* Atis Lejiņš, Paulis Apinis eds., (Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 1996), 28–38.

firm positions against NATO enlargement, did seem to be malleable to Clinton's pressure, who played the leader of a democratic, status-quo power, a standard to which Russia was still aspiring.

NATO offered quite a number of "compensations" that the Russian leaders could propose to their domestic audiences, including an exceptional partner status for Russia with NATO, special consultations mechanisms (i.e. the Permanent Joint Council and later the NATO-Russia Council), agreement to abstain from stationing nuclear and other additional permanent "substantial combat forces" in the new Alliance members,[10] and, not least, a re-orientation of the political purposes of NATO, which evolved from a defensive alliance into a security community with a wide and flexible partnership and cooperation network beyond its borders.[11] Through these mechanisms, NATO provided ample space for Russia to find its proper place in the new security environment, to use creatively the tools available to it, and to constructively tilt the power balance in its favour in the long run, if it so wished.

What is certain is that Russia did not propose any alternative credible vision for European security, other than revisionism, i.e. maintaining the spheres of influence in its neighbourhood,[12] and an institutional *table rase*, i.e. the dismantlement of NATO. The first was unacceptable in terms of the democratic standards to which Russia itself had subscribed, and the second was unrealistic, as there were no practical reasons to dismantle an efficiently functioning and a highly successful alliance, the purposes of which had far exceeded the simple containment measures of the Warsaw Pact. NATO had provided many more benefits than sceptics dare to admit: a rationalisation of security costs, the

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[10] NATO, "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France", 27 May 1997.

[11] NATO, "NATO Declaration on Peace and Cooperation Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council (The Rome Declaration)," 8 November 1991.

[12] President Yeltsin proposed security guarantees to the Baltic States in 1997: Phillipe, Perchoc, *Les Etats baltes et le système européen 1985-2004 : être Européens et le devenir [The Baltic States in the European Suste, 1985-2004],* (Peter Lang, 2014); for the Russian approach to "peacekeeping" in its neighbourhood in the early 1990s, see also Pavel Baev, *Russian Army in a Time of Troubles,* (Sage, 1996). The culmination of the discourse about the regions of "privileged interests" is the President D. Medvedev interview delivered in 2008: Dimitry, Medvedev, "Intervyu Dimitrya Medvedeva telekanalam "Rassiya", pervamu, NTV" [Interview of Dmitry Medvedev to the TV Channel "Rassiya"], 31 August 2008.

harmonisation of strategic cultures, and the normalisation of peace in the European continent, to name just a few.[13] At the same time, Russia did not use the concessions given by the West to appease its domestic opposition, nor did it adequately exploit the diplomatic process to convince the West of the "serious problem" that NATO enlargement posed to Russia. On the contrary, when Vladimir Putin acceded to power, enlargement did not seem to be a major difficulty for him. When the Lithuanian president, on his visit to Moscow in 2001, told Putin that Lithuania had the right to join the security alliances of its choice, the Russian leader replied, "yes, you have such a right," and he sent the happy Lithuanians home.[14]

Even if, undoubtedly, Russia's distaste for NATO enlargement was known to the West, it did not appear to be an insurmountable problem, especially given numerous NATO-Russia cooperation initiatives which were vibrant throughout the 2000s.[15] Arguably, today's crisis could have been "modelled" from a realist theoretical point of view: when one major power exits a confrontation as a clear loser, it is likely to be provoked by the advancement of the winning power. However, international relations scholars agree that the realist perspective gives only a partial view of international politics. Issues such as the institutionalisation of cooperation, economic interdependence overtaking security concerns, the diffusion of values and norms, the transformation of domestic political landscapes through international influence, the weight of the personalities of leaders, and the potential for historical change within the dynamics of the diplomatic process open up innumerable possible futures for any situation. This is not the subject of this essay, but one may suppose that those who devised and implemented NATO enlargement strategies had substantial reasons to believe in one of the brighter possible European futures, rather than the grim Machiavellian reality in which we find ourselves today.

The biggest fallacy of the realist interpretation by far is that it ignores the entire swath of European territory occupied by the Central

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[13] Karl Deutsch, *Political community and the North Atlantic area: international organization in the light of historical experience*, (Princeton University Press, 1957).

[14] Valdas Adamkus, *Be nutylėjimų: dienoraščiai, vertinimai, pastabos paraštėse* [Without reticence], (Vilnius: Tyto Alba, 2004).

[15] Paul Fritch, "The NATO-Russia Partnership: More than Meets the Eye", 1 April 2007, *NATO,* https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2007/04/01/analysis-the-nato-russia-partnership-more-than-meets-the-eye/index.html.

and Eastern European states, as if they had neither sovereignty nor political will. As if they were mere subjects of the European security process, "bargaining chips" for the big powers or, as some like to call them today, anonymous "states-in-between".[16] This interpretation is not only questionable from the justice perspective – it is empirically wrong. Politicians and diplomats from these countries have been striving to highlight their role, and, finally, scholarship has appeared that analyses the impact of the agency of the Central European states in the process of NATO enlargement.[17] The decision to enlarge NATO certainly got its impulse in Washington, but had not the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, the Baltic States and others expressed their will to become members, the question wouldn't have even emerged. The enlargement process was long, difficult, and very uncertain, with diplomats and politicians from Central and Eastern Europe engaging in lobbying, negotiations, pressure campaigns, diligently adopting reforms, and costly signalling to the Alliance that they were ready to be security providers despite their strained budgets and under-developed economies. The enlargement question presented itself to the 16 Alliance members not simply as an issue of whether or not to strengthen a "Cold War alliance", but as a political question of how to respond to the calls of new European democracies and to the pressure that their diplomats, politicians and diaspora mounted in relation to them.

More importantly still, the Central-European perspective on NATO enlargement defies the "humiliation" argument that is widely exploited by Russia in claims that NATO or the West owe something to it. Yes, it was certainly psychologically difficult for Russia to pull the Red Army out of the occupied territories, but it was not the fault of the West that the "host" countries demanded such a pull-out. Neither was it the fault of the West, NATO or the United States that Russia lost its power of attraction and that its former "satellites" chose to turn away from it as soon as they could. Instead of building on its trustworthiness and prestige, Russia continued intimidating its neighbours by refusing to negotiate the retreat of Russian

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[16] Samuel Charap, et al., *A Consensus Proposal for a Revised Regional Order in Post-Soviet Europe and Eurasia* (RAND, 2019).

[17] Amélie Zima, *D'ennemi à allié: L'adhésion de la Hongrie, de la Pologne et de la République tchèque à l'Alliance atlantique (1989-1999*) [From an enemy to an ally: The accession of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Alliance (1989-1990)], (Peter Lang, 2019).

armed forces from Estonia and Latvia, by mounting an international discreditation campaign about Russian minorities, by pushing for a transit corridor through Lithuania for the Russian military and civilians travelling to Kaliningrad, and so on.[18] One could assume that history may still be hiding diplomatic instances where Russian representatives felt insulted by America's haughtiness about being the winners of the Cold War.[19] This could have roused a sentiment of humiliation for Russians, who had been feared and respected just a few years before but were widely disregarded after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, to be fair, these are bilateral issues that Russia can address with the United States and they have little to do with the complex, multifaceted and multi-dimensional negotiations on NATO enlargement.

Henceforth, the question about the NATO enlargement should be formulated not as whether it was a mistake or not, but whether alternative solutions were politically feasible and at what cost. Given Russia's tergiversations, which did not at the time promise a certain future confrontation, it would have been politically and diplomatically very difficult for Western politicians in 1990s and early 2000s not to embrace within the transatlantic institutions those democracies that were energetically pushing the NATO door open for themselves.

Recognising the success of NATO's enlargement policy

These elements are important to consider when discussing the future of NATO enlargement. To date, NATO has undergone several successful enlargement waves. The inclusion of small European nations such as the Baltics or Balkans did not necessarily augment NATO's military potential, but certainly contributed to more stability in Europe. The

[18] Sven Gunnar Simonsen, "Compatriot Games: Explaining the 'Diaspora Linkage' in Russia's Military Withdrawal from the Baltic States", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 53, no. 5 (July 2001): 771–791; Emilija Pundziūtė-Gallois, "Too big to shun ? Baltic minimalist diplomacy with Russia" (PhD diss., Institut d'études politiques de Paris, 2019).

[19] The famous words of George Bush, conveyed to Helmut Kohl in one of their conversations, that "We prevailed and they didn't. We cannot let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat" are often cited as an expression of the American attitude towards their victory of the Cold War. See: George H.W. Bush Presidential Library, "Memorandum of Conversation between Helmut Kohl and George Bush at Camp David", 1990, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116232.pdf?v=65e06b995fb880df523dbbdfde348797.

strength of NATO consists of not only its military capacity, but also of the solidarity of its nations, to which small members are especially attached. The Baltic States are among the few Allies contributing the agreed 2% of their GDP to defence budgets, and have been held up as examples to other Allies on numerous occasions – for instance, the Lithuanian engagement as the leader of a PRT in Afghanistan in 2004, or the more recent Estonian advancements in cyber-security. It is said that the President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, "saved" the NATO summit in Brussels in 2018 with a convincing speech directly addressing President Donald Trump and defending Germany against undue criticism. President Trump recognised the "great job" done by his Lithuanian colleague after the meeting, and President Macron thanked her for defending Germany, mentioning, *entre-autres*, that it is important when "small countries do that".[20]

Those who know NATO from the inside will agree that the Alliance is not only about military strength, but also about the political and diplomatic process whereby able professionals from a variety of countries, and bearing a variety of experiences, contribute their meaningful share.[21] The countries that might be accused of causing the "brain-death" of the Alliance are typically the "older" members, while the new adherents in general strive to keep the organisation relevant. We can conclude, therefore, that in most respects, NATO enlargements have been successful and beneficial to the Alliance. These are sufficient reasons for NATO to remain faithful to its "open door" policy as a foundational principle, and to insist that decisions to accept new members will be taken independently, without *droit de regard* from outside.

Heeding the "Russia factor"

This being said, Russia remains an important factor in the future process of NATO enlargement. As opposed to the uncertainties of the past, today no doubts are left about Russian opposition to Georgia's and

[20] The Lithuania Tribune, "Unexpected words to Grybauskaitė from Trump and Macron", 13 July 2018, https://lithuaniatribune.com/unexpected-words-to-grybauskaite-from-trump-and-macron/.

[21] Vincent Pouliot, *International Security in Practice. The Politics of NATO-Russia Diplomacy,* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Ukraine's accession to NATO. The Russian argument remains unjust and unacceptable – as was the case in relation to the other enlargements, it is not for Russia to dictate the security arrangements that its neighbours choose. In spite of that, Russia's conflictual opposition and increasingly assertive reaction to Western outreach in the region is a factor to be heeded, not least because it is precisely in these two countries that Russia has dared to use conventional and unconventional – and for a long period of time unthinkable – tools of intervention. In this sense, Russia has become an objective obstacle to NATO enlargement, and has *de facto* imposed its grip on its neighbourhood, where Western democracies are increasingly wary to intervene. As opposed to the period before 2008, the Western nations now know that they risk a military confrontation if they integrate Georgia and Ukraine into the Alliance. The regrettable injustice of the situation needs to be recognised, but its reality also needs to be reckoned with.

Lucidity in the current situation is fundamental. Ukraine and Georgia continue to proclaim their wish to join the Alliance, and they are right to remind their Western interlocutors about the "Bucharest formula", in which NATO envisioned their eventual membership. The Western leaders are also right to politically support Georgian and Ukrainian aspirations.[22] It is a political process in which commitments and the credibility related to them are important. Some may write off public speeches as vain and inconsequential in practice, but, in diplomacy, symbolic messaging has value: it keeps political options open and sustains hopes to move closer to the objective when circumstances allow. Also, such public support for Georgian and Ukrainian membership in NATO upholds the credibility of the Alliance as a community of free states, which has an accession clause in its founding treaty and which has repeatedly reaffirmed its open-door principle. This serves as a counter-message to those who argue that the fates of nations should be determined by their geography and the whims of their neighbours.

Symbolism aside, Ukraine and Georgia, as well as the NATO Allies, should judge realistically when the right moment for the accession comes, and should be prepared to seize the moment when it does

[22] RFE/RL, "Pompeo Hails Georgia's NATO Aspirations, Backs Territorial Integrity", 12 June 2019, https://www.rferl.org/a/pompeo-georgia-nato-hopes-territorial-integrity-russia-ossetia-abkhazia/29994583.html.

come. In the meantime, the aspiring candidates should strengthen their preparedness and use all available possibilities to increase their security to the fullest.

Strengthening preparedness

The major problems for the candidacy of Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO today are the territorial conflicts in which they are entangled. This might be a surmountable problem, allowing eventual NATO accession, if the conflicts are contained and do not pose the risk of a military flare-up. Some Georgian scholars insist that Germany first became a NATO member with its territory divided (same is valid for Cyprus, which joined the European Union without sovereignty over part of its territory).[23] This could be considered a precedent for Georgia and Ukraine, although the obvious differences between the situations must be taken into account. For now, the comparison seems to be too distant to be feasible. In any case, it is unrealistic to hope that NATO membership would in any way help the resolution of these conflicts, as some analysts hope.[24] It is clear that some kind of settlement of the territorial problems of Georgia and Ukraine would have to precede their accession.

Another problem, perhaps even bigger than the first one, is the increasing disinterest with the region by Western governments. "Enlargement fatigue" is a factor to be addressed. The process was much easier for the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, which are not only geographically more proximate, but also historically closer and more enthusiastic about their accession: reforms quickly came forward, publics were supportive, and the political elite was united.[25] Transformation in Georgia and Ukraine not only came later, but is also slower. Ukraine is struggling with corruption and has difficulties absorbing assistance funding, and it still has a long road to consolidating

[23] Kornely Kakachia, Bidzina Lebanidze, Shalva Dzebisashvili, "Game of (Open) Doors: NATO-Georgian Relations and Challenges for Sustainable Partnership", September 2020, *Georgian Institute of Politics,* http://gip.ge/game-of-open-doors-nato-georgian-relations-and-challenges-for-sustainable-partnership/.

[24] Ibid.

[25] In Lithuania, for example, political parties established a tradition in 2001 to sign public agreements on major foreign policy goals, including their unwavering support for national transatlantic aspirations.

its military.[26] Georgia is tormented by a fragmented political landscape, uncertainties about the irreversibility of its anti-corruption success, and lingering problems in its security-sector reform.[27]

Last, but not least, the West's enthusiasm for exporting democracy and (by consequence) stability eastward, which was rife in the 1990s, has lost momentum. The overall world-wide trend is towards isolationism, a preoccupation with domestic problems, and nationalism, with the United States taking the lead in the process. The Americans remain steadily present in NATO – as with their historical engagement – but they are increasingly wary of getting involved in new theatres and are withdrawing from recent ones, showing less and less activism as the "leaders of the free world".[28] Europe is in the process of rethinking its international ambitions in light of prompts from beyond the Atlantic to increase defence spending, and the impulse from within to develop strategic autonomy but without much clarity of how to achieve it.[29] New security challenges – terrorism, migration, cyber-security, information warfare, populism, and public health – preoccupy European nations, making them much less patient with needy neighbours asking for security guarantees.

Georgia and Ukraine have done much to demonstrate their readiness to contribute to collective security. They actively contribute to NATO operations, they participate in numerous cooperation programmes, and they both have become Enhanced Opportunities Partners, a framework reserved for the most active collaborators. These elements seem not enough to "push through" security guarantees in exchange, as the latter have become very costly. However, this is what seems to be left for Georgia and Ukraine, as the NATO leadership

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[26] Leonid Litra, Alyona Getmanchuk ,"One Year of Zelensky's Presidency: One Step Forward, One Step Back", October 2020, *Ifri*, https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/etudes-de-lifri/russieneireports/one-year-zelenskys-presidency-one-step-forward-one.

[27] Voices of Transparency, "From Concentrated power to state capture: Georgia's backsliding anti-corruption reforms", 14 February 2019, https://voices.transparency.org/from-concentrated-power-to-state-capture-georgias-backsliding-anti-corruption-reforms-c94d76bb2b21.

[28] The absence of a visible and clear American public reaction to the protests in Belarus in Autumn 2020, for example, is striking.

[29] Hugo Meijer and Marco Wyss, "L'impossible renaissance de la défense européenne : généalogie d'une cacophonie stratégique" [The impossible renaissance of European defence : genealogy of a strategic catastrophe], 9 May 2019, *Le Grand Continent*, https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2019/05/09/limpossible-renaissance-de-la-defense-europeenne-genealogie-dune-cacophonie-strategique/.

proposes "strategic patience". Before the Alliance is ready to offer a credible membership perspective to Georgia and Ukraine, time should be taken to strengthen the security of these countries by the means available and to increase their importance to the Alliance itself. This was the strategy that the Baltic States adopted in 1996, when it became clear that their membership was "postponed".

A good example of NATO partners that are so integrated with NATO that their membership in many respects seems almost irrelevant are Sweden and Finland. These countries are especially active in partnership programmes, often assuming leadership roles and contributing with finances and expertise. They are also among the first to join NATO operational efforts (Sweden was quicker to offer its support to the NATO operation in Libya in 2011 than some of the Allies were). Both are integrated into the normative transatlantic "security community" through the application of high democratic standards domestically and active participation in cooperative networks regionally and internationally: they are members of the EU, and they promote advanced cooperation with the Scandinavian countries and with the states around the Baltic sea. The absence of the Article 5 guarantee certainly remains a legal problem, but in case of a conflict, there is no doubt on whose side they or the NATO Allies would stand. The security of the Baltic region is unimaginable without these two important NATO partners. In the meantime, they continue to build a robust defence for themselves independently.[30]

Ukraine and Georgia could follow this example. Acting as security providers and participating in common operations, they should not see this as a sacrifice (or a "dirty job") for the Allies in exchange for possible future security guarantees, but as an opportunity to strengthen their own capacities. Ukrainians and Georgians should use NATO and EU assistance to the fullest to improve military standards, increase inter-operability, raise the professionalism and readiness of their forces, improve legal standards, and proceed with the democratic and economic reforms. They should align politically with the West,

[30] Barbara Kunz, "L'Europe du Nord face au défi stratégique russe: quelles réponses politiques et militaires?" [Northern Europe in the face of the strategic challgenge posed by Russia : what political responses ?], October 2018, *Ifri,* https://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/notes-de-lifri/russieneivisions/leurope-nord-face-defi-strategique-russe-reponses.

demonstrating that they belong to the same security community, and should anchor themselves within the Black Sea region as indispensable partners for regional security.

At the same time, Georgia and Ukraine, as well as those Allies who support their future membership in NATO, should re-align their communication efforts. The discourse of national and foreign political leaders, who argue that the lack of a clear membership perspective hinders enthusiasm for Georgia and Ukraine to continue with reforms, is outdated and begins to be counterproductive. Not only does it fail to convince the more reticent Allies about the necessity of membership (for the numerous reasons evoked above), but it disillusions the Georgian and Ukrainian publics and works as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Economic, democratic and military reforms, with which the transatlantic institutions are assisting Georgia and Ukraine, are beneficial to these two countries regardless of the promise of future membership. This is something that the leaders of Ukraine and Georgia need to be convinced of and need to convince their publics about. Numerous partnership tools, tailored according to the specific needs of the countries, are useful to building their own security, and in doing so, increasing their attractiveness to the Alliance itself. The medium-term objective for Ukraine and Georgia, while awaiting membership with strategic patience, should be to become like Sweden and Finland: strong, capable of defending themselves, and indispensable for regional security and for NATO. This is not an easy way forward, but as far as current circumstances allow, it is no less realistic than obtaining a Membership Action Plan from an undecided Alliance.

Recommendations

1. Ukraine and Georgia should draw the maximum benefits from the cooperation tools that NATO offers through its partnership programmes:
   - They should join the other actively engaged partners in negotiating even closer integration with the Alliance (the EOP is a result of precisely such lobbying by the most "useful" contributors).
   - They should robustly step-up their reform efforts, not as a "price to pay" for security guarantees, but as a means to strengthen their

own security, with or without the Alliance. Communication should be adjusted accordingly.
   - They should continue or increase political and diplomatic cooperation (including cultural and public diplomacy) with the Allies, especially the most reticent ones, to convince them about their belonging to the European community of values.
   - Public diplomacy and "nation branding" to build what is called "reputational security"[31] is fundamental: make Ukraine and Georgia appear to the transatlantic publics as countries that are impossible not to defend.
2. The Baltic States and Poland should continue to support Ukraine and Georgia in their reform efforts, and to promote their transatlantic aspirations, politically and diplomatically.
3. The Baltic States and Poland should also join the Ukrainian and Georgian communication efforts in constructing their European and Atlanticist reputation, while stressing the importance of domestic democratic and security reforms, in spite of the distance of an actual membership opportunity.
4. The Baltic States and Poland should also be the promoters of a proper political analysis of post-Cold War European integration and the importance of the transatlantic values for peace in the continent. Democracy, the rule of law and security are not an "American conspiracy": they are the fundamental rights of free European peoples, and are the very essence of the European security order.
5. NATO, in the meantime, should keep the open-door principle standing. It is a matter of credibility for the Alliance and a matter of its ambition. If it is aspiring to a modern identity – not as a military block directed against one aggressive superpower, but as a security community with global reach – it should maintain a dynamic relationship with its most active partners and remain open to those who wish to become full members. Prudence will most probably continue to underpin Allied considerations of enlargement, but NATO should not abandon the very principles upon which it stands, it should recognise the success of its past decisions, and it should reject the insinuations that it has no right to exist.

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[31] Nicholas J. Cull, "The Tightrope to Tomorrow: Reputational Security, Collective Vision and the Future of Public Diplomacy", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy,* 14 (2019): 21–35.

New Threats Require New Partners: How the Baltic States, Poland, and NATO Should Deepen Global Partnerships to Counter Emerging Threats at Home

KRISTĪNE BĒRZIŅA

The Baltic region's geography has been the single most important factor in its security vulnerability. For the Baltic States and Poland, having an adversary on their borders pushed the countries to join NATO and seek transatlantic cooperation to guarantee security. But the region's focus on Russia has made it slower to recognise threats coming from further afield. Future threats to the region are not solely going to be determined by geography, although the traditional threats posed by Russia are not going away. The region is increasingly at risk of cyber-attacks, economic coercion, and information manipulation from China and other authoritarian countries, such as Iran and North Korea, who can apply the same playbook. When it comes to countering threats from far-flung actors, the region is behind.

As full members of NATO and the European Union, the Baltic States and Poland play an outsized role in shaping transatlantic and European security policy. This makes them prime targets for foreign interference and influence operations from authoritarian states. NATO requires unanimous support from all members to make decisions, as does the EU for foreign and security policy. Both NATO and the EU implementing defence and economic policies (including sanctions) to counter authoritarian countries far from their borders. If China, North Korea, or Iran wanted to block NATO or EU decisions or actions against them, it would require turning only one country to derail the whole process. As a result, authoritarian adversaries are keen to develop influence operations in the Baltic States and Poland.

The Baltic States and Poland have developed a keen awareness of the costs of economic or technological dependence on Russia, but the risks

of developing close technology and infrastructure ties with China have received less attention. Instead, in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, China's role as potential economic partner has taken precedence. Poland and the three Baltic States signed up to China's 17+1 cooperation format in 2012, and Warsaw and Riga have hosted summits of the format.[1] Only recently has their trade-oriented outlook begun to change.[2] The Baltic countries and Poland's limits on Huawei technology in 5G networks is a sign of the region's growing awareness of new technological risks.

In learning to defuse Russia's hybrid threats, the three Baltic States developed expertise on cyber threats, disinformation, and energy security that they have shared with the rest of the Alliance. A prime example of this is that the lessons Estonia learned from suffering cyber-attacks from Russia in 2007 inspired the Alliance's efforts in cyber security – the culmination of which was the official inclusion of cyber as a domain of operations in 2016.[3]

The Baltic region and NATO will need to apply their experience identifying economic, technological, and infrastructure dependencies on Russia to newer economic areas – digital technology in particular – and new threat actors in order to stay ahead of emerging threats.

Addressing new asymmetric or technological threats will require extensive cooperation within and outside of the Alliance. The security and defence sectors in Baltic States and Poland will need to build partnerships with private industry and academia, all of which will need to cooperate with each other to maintain situational awareness and a technological edge. The defence sector alone cannot protect the Baltic region, nor NATO as a whole, from new emerging threats. Resilience against new technological threats and dependencies require the region and NATO countries more generally to develop technologies of their own to counter authoritarian technological advancements.

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[1] Ivana Karásková, Alicja Bachulska, Ágnes Szunomár, Stefan S. Vladisavljev eds., *Empty shell no more: China's Growing Gootprint in Central and Eastern Europe,* (Association for International Affairs, 2020), 16, https://chinaobservers.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CHOICE_Empty-shell-no-more.pdf.

[2] Kristi Raik, "17+1 Cooperation Is Turning Sour: Shared Concerns Over China Can Help Repair the Transatlantic Relationship", 15 October 2020, *International Centre for Defence and Security,* https://icds.ee/en/171-cooperation-is-turning-sour-shared-concerns-over-china-can-help-repair-the-transatlantic-relationship/.

[3] Laura Brent, "NATO's Role in Cyberspace", 19 February 2019, *NATO,* https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/02/12/natos-role-in-cyberspace/index.html.

Moreover, NATO alone cannot face down the new technological challenges posed by authoritarian adversaries. To counter the threats posed by China, for example, the Baltic States and Poland – and NATO as a whole – will need to develop much more significant partnerships with Pacific democracies, who have deep experience with China's traditional military, economic, technological, and information space threats in their region. Strengthening diplomatic and security ties to Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, and other Asian democracies should become a priority for the Baltic region.

China's drive for global influence: Threats not on NATO's borders, but at home

China may seem a distant concern for the Baltic region, especially as compared to the threat of Russia. But China is increasingly threatening NATO countries – not from a battleship or tank on their borders, but from within societies through technology, through strategic investments that can create dependencies and lead to economic coercion, and through information influence operations.

The growing conflict between transatlantic democracies and China is no longer "emerging." It is explicit. NATO expressed concern over China's influence for the first time in 2019 in the London Declaration: "We recognise that China's growing influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance."[4] In June 2020, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg explained the risks China poses:

> "This is about China coming closer to us. It's not about NATO moving into the South China Sea, but about the fact that China's coming closer to us. We see them in the Arctic. We see them in Africa. We see them investing heavily in infrastructure in our own countries. And, of course, we see them also in cyberspace […] so, resilience, the protection of our infrastructure, the concerns about foreign ownership and foreign control, is on the NATO agenda."[5]

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[4] NATO, "London Declaration", 4 December 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm.

[5] NATO, "Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers", 17 June 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_176520.htm?selectedLocale=en.

Countries in the Baltic region have identified China as a threat, especially in the cyber and technology realms. In its 2019 Annual Report, Latvia's Constitution Protection Bureau found that "the number of China's cyber operations has been gradually increasing, and it is posing a serious threat to the security and interests of Western countries – a trend that is expected to continue."[6] The assessment goes on to specify that:

> "China's massive espionage campaigns have not only threatened security but also harmed economies of the Western countries. China is using cyber-spying on a wide range of targets throughout the world, conducting cyber-operations against public and private companies, academia, government institutions, military and defence sector, and non-governmental organizations, involved in cooperation with China. The obtained information is used to increase China's economic, military and political influence."[7]

The Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service's annual report explained the large-scale goals behind China's more aggressive posture: "The underlying goal is to impose its own worldview and standards, building a Beijing-led international environment that appeals to China."[8] The report identified threats, including in the information space, and provided an extensive analysis of the dangers of China's economic strategy and technology.

Information environment

The Baltic region and NATO are at risk of aggressive information campaigns from China. Since the middle of 2019 and the Hong Kong protests, China has begun to take a more aggressive line against NATO countries, especially when China's political system, actions against minorities, or Covid-19 response are involved.

Prior to the beginning of the Hong Kong protests in 2019, Chinese diplomats barely had a presence on Twitter. In the past year and a half, Beijing has turned to Twitter to push aggressive messaging on European and US Covid-19 responses,[9] conspiracy theories on the

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[6] Constitution Protection Bureau of the Republic of Latvia, "2019 Annual Report", 26, https://www.sab.gov.lv/files/Public_report_2019.pdf.

[7] Ibid., 27.

[8] Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, "International Security and Estonia 2020", 71, https://www.valisluureamet.ee/pdf/raport-2020-en.pdf.

[9] Mark Scott, "Chinese Diplomacy Ramps Up Social Media Offensive in COVID-19 Info War", 29 April 2020, *Politico*, https://www.politico.eu/article/china-disinformation-covid19-coronavirus/.

origins of the virus,[10] threats of trade retaliation in response to decisions against Huawei's role in European 5G networks,[11] and other sensitive issues. By the second half of 2020, over 170 Chinese diplomats have accounts on Twitter,[12] showing the dramatically increased importance of this social media platform for China's messaging.

The diplomats' aggressive messaging is targeting NATO Allies and partners. In response to a statement of support for Hong Kong from the US, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (who form the "Five Eyes" intelligence partnership), Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said that "No matter if they have five eyes or 10 eyes, if they dare to harm China's sovereignty, security and development interests, they should beware of their eyes being poked and blinded."[13] This kind of belligerence is growing more common from Zhao Lijian and other Chinese officials.

In October 2020, Liu Guangyuan, the Chinese Ambassador to Poland, tweeted[14] against US efforts to establish a "Clean Network" for technology – a network that Poland, Latvia and Estonia have joined.[15] The tweet alleges that the US is engaged in "cleansing", which has human rights undertones. In the very least, this campaign, which was shared by Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials already in August,[16] seeks to fray the transatlantic alliance between Poland and the United States.

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[10] Ambassade de Chine en France, "Quand le patient zéro a-t-il commencé aux États-Unis?", 13 March 2020, *Twitter,* https://twitter.com/AmbassadeChine/status/1238372362371977217.

[11] Guy Faulconbridge, Martin Quin Pollard, "China warns UK: 'Dumping' Huawei will cost you", 15 July 2020, *Reuters,* https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-huawei-trump/china-warns-uk-dumping-huawei-will-cost-you-idUSKCN24G0LF.

[12] Jessica Brandt and Bret Schafer, "How China's 'Wolf Warrior' Diplomats Use and Abuse Twitter", 28 October 2020, *Brookings Institution*, https://www.brookings.edu/techstream/how-chinas-wolf-warrior-diplomats-use-and-abuse-twitter/.

[13] Associated Press, "China Says Five Eyes Alliance Will Be 'Poked and Blinded' over Hong Kong Stance", 20 November 2020, *The Guardian,* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/20/china-says-five-eyes-alliance-will-be-poked-and-blinded-over-hong-kong-stance.

[14] Liu Guangyuan, "5G is common future of mankind and cooperation can be mutual benefit", 23 October 2020, *Twitter,* https://twitter.com/AmbLiuGuangYuan/status/1319682838816559104.

[15] Michael Pompeo, "The Tide Is Turning Toward Trusted 5G Vendors", 24 June 2020, *U.S. Department of State,* https://www.state.gov/the-tide-is-turning-toward-trusted-5g-vendors/.

[16] Hua Chunying, "The Clean Network and the Dirty Spots", 9 August 2020, *Twitter,* https://twitter.com/SpokespersonCHN/status/1292415453696991232.

China's embassies have supported counter-protests against pro-Hong Kong democracy demonstrations around the world. These counter protests have led to skirmishes, including in Lithuania.[17]

China seeks positive coverage in the press. The Chinese Communist Party "manipulates and controls information to downplay and crowd out adversarial narratives and advance those that serve its interests."[18] This extends to pressuring the free press in the Baltic States. In Estonia, journalists investigating China's influence in the Baltic States received an email from China's ambassador to Estonia reprimanding them for their coverage and arguing that journalists "are expected to promote China-Estonia relations" and "to cherish the friendly relations" between the countries.[19]

The Baltic States and Poland are more familiar with Russia's disinformation landscape. Rather than being a weakness, this expertise is a strength that can be easily adapted to decode China's new methods. Frequently, the Chinese disinformation apparatus piggybacks on Russia's disinformation infrastructure, retweeting or otherwise amplifying narratives found on *RT*, *Sputnik* or other Russian sources.[20] Their tactics are also similar – Chinese agents have created fake social media accounts, much like the best-known Russian trolls, and have also sought to sow discord in NATO societies,[21] including on issues such as Black Lives Matter, which is completely unrelated to China's interests.[22]

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[17] Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, *op.cit.*, 73.

[18] Matt Schrader, "Friends and Enemies: A Framework for Understanding Chinese Political Interference in Democratic Countries", May 2020, *Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund of the United States,* 2, https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Friends-and-Enemies-A-Framework-for-Understanding-Chinese-Political-Interference-in-Democratic-Countries.pdf.

[19] Re:Baltica, "Pēc augustā publicētās rakstu sērijas par Ķīnas ietekmi Baltijas valstīs…," 29 October 2019, German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Twitter,* https://twitter.com/rebaltica/status/1189051737040048128.

[20] Jessica Brandt and Bret Schafer, "Five Things to Know About Beijing's Disinformation Approach," 30 March 2020, *Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund of the United States,* https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/five-things-to-know-about-beijings-disinformation-approach/.

[21] Edward Wong, Matthew Rosenberg, Julian Barnes, "Chinese Agents Helped Spread Messages That Sowed Virus Panic in U.S., Officials Say", 22 April 2020, *The New York Times,* https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/22/us/politics/coronavirus-china-disinformation.html.

[22] Mark Scott, "Russia and China Target US Protests on Social Media", 1 June 2020, *Politico,* https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-china-us-protests-social-media-twitter/

Trade and technology dependencies

The allure of China, especially in the aftermath of the 2009 financial crisis that devastated the Baltic region, is in the potential for trade. Cooperation with China through the 17+1 format has not reaped the economic gains that many hoped.[23] And more importantly, the region is increasingly aware that the promise of trade comes with strings attached. The Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service argues that China uses foreign investment "to create dependency. It is a distinct possibility that China will use its close trade ties as a weapon when international relations deteriorate."[24]

This is a critical lesson for the Baltic region and NATO countries more broadly as they develop trade ties with China and other authoritarian states, especially in new technological fields. This year, many NATO countries are selecting their 5G network equipment suppliers. China's Huawei is one possible manufacturer, as are Europe's own Nokia and Ericsson. China has put significant political capital in helping Huawei succeed in the race to install 5G infrastructure.

For China, technological dominance is about more than economic gain. China seeks to become a global leader in high-tech manufacturing, in line with it is "Made in China 2025" strategy. Information and communications technology are core elements of this ambitious agenda, as is leadership in setting telecommunications standards.[25]

Estonia,[26] Latvia[27] and Poland[28] are limiting the role of Huawei in their 5G networks, on security grounds. Concerns run high. Poland arrested an employee of Huawei in 2019 on charges of espionage.[29] Even beyond concerns over the behaviour of individual employees, structural factors should lead the region and NATO to question the wisdom of

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[23] Kristi Raik, *op.cit.*

[24] Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, *op.cit.*, 75.

[25] James McBride, Andrew Chatzky, "Is 'Made in China 2025' a Threat to Global Trade?", 13 May 2019, *Council on Foreign Relations,* https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/made-china-2025-threat-global-trade.

[26] ERR News, "Ministry drafts bill aimed at curbing Chinese 5G tech," 27 July 2020, https://news.err.ee/1117398/ministry-drafts-bill-aimed-at-curbing-chinese-5g-tech.

[27] LTV Panorama, "Latvia Sides with US in Huawei 5G Fight", 20 February 2020, *Public Broadcasting of Latvia*, https://eng.lsm.lv/article/economy/economy/latvia-sides-with-us-in-huawei-5g-fight.a349114/.

[28] Reuters, "Huawei fears it may be excluded from Poland's 5G network", 9 September 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-5g-huawei-idUSKBN2602BY.

[29] BBC News, "Poland Spy Arrest: China Telecoms Firm Huawei Sacks Employee", 12 January 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46851777.

using Huawei equipment for economically significant infrastructure such as 5G networks.

First among these factors, 5G will have long-term strategic implications for the region. 5G technology will transform many sectors of the economy, much as the shift from 3G to 4G brought smart phones and the gig economy. But unlike the prior transition, because future 6G networks will rely extensively on 5G infrastructure, investments made in 5G equipment are more likely to lead to long-term dependencies. And unlike previous generations, when it comes to developing 6G technology, China is already in the lead.[30]

The second factor is the lack of independence of Chinese technology companies from the party state. China's 2015 National Security Law requires Chinese companies to cooperate with the government "to maintain national security." Similarly, a cybersecurity law requires that network operators like Huawei to provide "technical support and assistance" on matters of national security.[31]

For NATO, the challenge of maintaining security and democratic norms in the technological realm will only increase in the next decade as new technologies and artificial intelligence transform the civil and military realms.

New threats exploiting old vulnerabilities

The Baltic States and Poland have extensive experience with the structural vulnerabilities China is seeking to exploit. The region's infrastructure links with Russia have proven a security vulnerability. Extensive rail, pipeline, and electricity connections have put the region at risk of: 1) economic coercion from Russian actors, who have maintained business interests in the region since the end of the Cold War and use commercial links to wield pro-Kremlin political influence, and 2) outright cut-offs of essential services.

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[30] Lindsay Gorman, "A Future Internet for Democracies: Contesting China's Push for Dominance in 5G, 6G, and the Internet of Everything", 27 October 2020, *Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund of the United States,* https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/future-internet/.

[31] Ashley Feng, "We Can't Tell if Chinese Firms Work for the Party", February 2019, *Foreign Policy,* https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/07/we-cant-tell-if-chinese-firms-work-for-the-party/.

The threats posed by China follow similar patterns. The Baltic States and Poland are at risk of having key critical infrastructure compromised and elites co-opted.[32] With Russia, the problematic sectors have been energy, rail, and shipping. In China's case, the sectors are telecommunications and tech. Resilience measures that have reduced dependence on Russia in key economic areas will also work on new technology and digital issues. But the Baltic States and Poland need to expand public and policymaker awareness of China as a potential threat, and they should adapt existing resilience measures to include areas of interest to adversaries such as China. These actions need to be deliberate and society-wide, cooperative across NATO and the EU, and most importantly, global in scale.

Recommendations

National governments and NATO should:

- **Support society-wide education on countering threats from new actors**

Disinformation and cyber-attacks do the most damage when they exploit vulnerabilities within a society or institution. National governments in the Baltic region and Poland should continue to implement and expand society-wide media literacy, cyber hygiene, and technology education campaigns. NATO should support these efforts through financial resources for society-level programmes and through the development of common educational materials.

In the Baltic region, public education efforts have been built around the idea of Russia as a potential threat actor. Educational campaigns should also specifically look at China, Iran, and North Korea as potential threat actors who can imitate and build on Russia's disinformation toolkit.

These education programmes should not only focus on how adversaries use certain tactics against a population, but they should also provide context on why authoritarian systems may seek to manipulate our open internet platforms, independent media and

[32] Kristine Berzina, "5G Security: The New Energy Security", 12 November 2020, *Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund of the United States,* https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/5g-energy-security/.

democratic institutions. A society-wide understanding that threats comes not from any particular app or commercial opportunity but from the actors that stand behind that individual case can lead more durable resilience against the ever-changing range of tools used by authoritarian adversaries.

- **Invest in technology, research, and language and regional studies education**

NATO and its members need to increase their investments in and ambitions for scientific and technological innovation within higher education and private industry. They should also promote and fund scientific cooperation between Allied nations and provide frameworks for cooperation with private industry in areas relevant to security and defence.

The building blocks for better technological innovation should take place on a national level – governments need to evaluate whether math and science education is adequate, as well as whether sufficient international cooperation mechanisms exist to create a young generation of democratically minded entrepreneurs and researchers.

Not all attention should be given to STEM subjects. National governments, groups of Allies, and NATO itself should support the study of the Chinese language and other critical languages. China funds a network of Confucius Institutes that provide Chinese language teachers and curricula, which is widely used across NATO countries, including in the Baltics.[33] Increasingly, these institutes have fallen under scrutiny for their links to the CCP and possible ties to espionage in the US[34] and Belgium.[35]

NATO and allied nations should create mechanisms for students and academic institutions to develop language capacity and a regional

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[33] Inese Liepiņa, Sabīne Bērziņa, Holger Roonemaa, Mari Eesmaa, Naglis Navakas, "The Rough Face of China's Soft Power", 2 September 2019, *Re:Baltica*, https://en.rebaltica.lv/2019/09/the-rough-face-of-chinas-soft-power/.

[34] Greg Myre, "As Scrutiny Of China Grows, Some U.S. Schools Drop A Language Program", 17 July 2019, *NPR*, https://www.npr.org/2019/07/17/741239298/as-scrutiny-of-china-grows-some-u-s-schools-drop-a-language-program?t=1606302441405.

[35] Stuart Lau, "Belgian university closes its Chinese state-funded Confucius Institute after spying claims", 11 December 2019, *South China Morning Post*, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3041617/belgian-university-closes-its-chinese-state-funded-confucius.

understanding of China without relying on programmes affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party. This is especially important in the Baltic region and other less-wealthy NATO states, in which education funding has presented a challenge. One model could be the US Defense Department's support for language education in the United States[36] and the US State Department's Critical Language Scholarship Program.[37] The United States should consider expanding its language learning programmes to include NATO Allies and should support similar programmes in other NATO countries.

- **Cooperate with the European Union and work within its structures to improve security in technological and economic areas**

The European Union and NATO both are tackling many of the same questions about their future relationship with China. In 2019, the European Union called China "an economic competitor in the pursuit of technological leadership, and a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance."[38] Like NATO, the EU will need to strike a balance between engaging with China in areas of mutual interest and protecting itself from security threats.

In many cases, the European Union is better-equipped than NATO to address asymmetric threats in the economic and digital realms. Many hybrid concerns are already captured as part of EU-NATO cooperation.[39] In addition to these measures, NATO Allies who are EU member states should make full use of EU tools to counter economic dependence. The EU's foreign investment screening mechanism[40] is relevant for countering the threat of technological dependence and economic coercion. Similarly, the EU has launched a robust 5G toolbox

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[36] See the example of the Language Flagship: The Langauge Flagship, https://www.thelanguageflagship.org/content/about-us.

[37] Critical Language Scholarship, https://clscholarship.org/.

[38] European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "EU-China – A Strategic Outlook", JOIN(2019) 5 final, Strasbourg, 12 March 2019, 1, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf.

[39] European External Action Service, "EU-NATO Cooperation", June 2020, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_nato_factshee_june-2020_3.pdf.

[40] European Commission, "EU Foreign Investment Screening Mechanism Becomes Fully Operational", 9 October 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1867.

and is forcing EU countries to be accountable for their progress in mitigating the security risks (including political risks) of 5G rollout.[41]

The EU plays an essential role in reducing the Baltic States' and Poland's infrastructure vulnerabilities. Outdated and limited transportation infrastructure connections between the four countries and their EU and NATO neighbours is a security vulnerability. Inadequate rail and road connections thwart military mobility.[42] Moreover, the lack of adequate infrastructure creates an opportunity for Chinese investors seeking to gain regional influence through investments in major infrastructure projects. Using infrastructure links as vectors for influence is a central dimension of China's Belt and Road Initiative.[43] Notably, Chinese state companies have expressed interest in building a strategically important undersea tunnel between Finland and Estonia.[44]

For security reasons, the region's countries will need to support EU efforts and increase their own commitments to modernise and integrate regional infrastructure. EU funding has been crucial for the development and financing of the RailBaltica project – a railway stretching from Warsaw to Tallinn. This project, like many Baltic-Polish infrastructure projects, has suffered delays from disputes between the four countries.[45] Other strategically significant regional projects that had EU backing also suffered because of regional infighting, including a Baltic LNG terminal that failed to get off the ground.[46]

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[41] NIS Cooperation Group, "Report on Member States' Progress in Implementing the EU Toolbox on 5G Cybersecurity", July 2020, *European Commission,* https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/report-member-states-progress-implementing-eu-toolbox-5g-cybersecurity.

[42] Ben Hodges, Tony Lawrence, and Ray Wojcik, "Until Something Moves: Reinforcing the Baltic Region in Crisis and War", April 2020, *International Centre for Defence and Security and the Center for European Policy Analysi,* https://cepa.org/cepa_files/2020-CEPA-report-Until_Something_Moves.pdf.

[43] European Court of Auditors, "The EU's Response to China's State-Driven Investment Strategy", Review no. 3, 2020, 42, https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/RW20_03/RW_EU_response_to_China_EN.pdf.

[44] Naglis Navakas, Holger Roonemaa, Mari Eesmaa, Inese Liepiņa, "The Golden Handcuffs of Chinese Investment", 5 September 2019, *Re:Baltica,* https://en.rebaltica.lv/2019/09/the-golden-handcuffs-of-chinese-investment/.

[45] Baltic News Service, "Baltic PMs to Hold Summit after Delays in Rail Baltica Project", 10 February 2020, *LRT English*, https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1141209/baltic-pms-to-hold-summit-after-delays-in-rail-baltica-project.

[46] LETA/TBT Staff, "Lithuania Broke its Promise to Latvia over LNG Terminal - Former Ambassador", 20 February 2018, *The Baltic Times,*https://www.baltictimes.com/lithuania_broke_its_promise_to_latvia_over_lng_terminal_-_former_ambassador/.

The Baltic States and Poland should come together and make full use of the EU's financial and logistical assistance in updating common infrastructure. NATO should work with the EU to address the defence and security dimensions of the EU's infrastructural, economic, and technological initiatives.

- **Develop deeper cooperation with democracies in Asia and the Pacific region**

The Baltic States and Poland have developed robust cooperation within the structures of NATO and the EU to ensure their defence. The region is less likely to turn to Pacific democracies to partner on security and defence. As China becomes a bigger security threat to Europe, the region and NATO will need to deepen their security cooperation with Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and others. These countries have expertise on China's threats, much as the Baltics have unique insights into deterring Russia's aggression.

Japan and Taiwan can provide expertise on identifying and countering China's disinformation campaigns. The government of Taiwan has accused China of leading disinformation attacks targeted at Taiwan's citizens, including the coordinated use of state-run social media accounts and private content farms.[47] Japan's annual defence review accused China of Covid-19 disinformation in 2020.[48]

Australia has deep experience with the negative economic consequences of displeasing Beijing. China is Australia's biggest trading partner. But speaking openly about China's misdeeds has hurt trade relations between the two countries. China has imposed trade restrictions worth billions on Australian products, including barley, beef, cotton, coal, and wine, and China has threatened to disrupt the participation of Chinese citizens in Australia's educational system and tourism.[49] This is a response to a number of actions that Australia has taken, from calling for greater attention to China's actions in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan, to demanding an independent investigation

[47] Matt Schrader, *op.cit.*, 9.

[48] Tim Kelly, "Japan Accuses China of Pushing Territorial Claims During COVID-19 Pandemic", 14 July 2020, *Reuters*,https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-defence-whitepaper-idUSKCN24F040.

[49] Daniel Hurst, "How Much is China's Trade War Really Costing Australia?", 28 October 2020, *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/oct/28/how-much-is-chinas-trade-war-really-costing-australia.

into the origins of Covid-19, supporting the Australian Strategic Policy Institute's research, banning Huawei from Australia's 5G network, and unfriendly reporting on China by the Australian media.[50]

Given that the Baltic States and many NATO countries have already been warned that they will face consequences in response to unfriendly reporting, Huawei bans, and support for Hong Kong and other democratic and human rights issues, it would benefit the region and NATO to work more closely with Australia to learn how it responded and countered these aggressive measures from China. China aims to single out and make examples of countries that question China's behaviour. If NATO countries showed unified support for Australia, China's tactics would be less effective in Australia and less likely to be tried in Europe.

Deeper cooperation between NATO countries and democracies in the Asia-Pacific region should take multiple forms. First, more sustained, formal political dialogue through NATO is a good starting point. Some countries have already attained enhanced partnership status, and this cooperation should be deepened and extended to other democracies in the region.

More work needs to be done by NATO nations, including the Baltic States and Poland, to deepen diplomatic, trade, and defence partnership, as well as cultural ties with Asia-Pacific democracies. Diplomatic contact is an essential prerequisite for this. Latvia and Lithuania recently took a step in the right direction by deciding to open embassies in Australia. It would be most welcome to see the greater involvement of Pacific countries in strategic dialogues and exercises in the Baltic region.

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[50] Jonathan Kearsley, Eryk Bagshaw, Anthony Galloway, "'If you make China the enemy, China will be the enemy': Beijing's fresh threat to Australia", 18 November 2020, *The Sydney Morning Herald,* https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/if-you-make-china-the-enemy-china-will-be-the-enemy-beijing-s-fresh-threat-to-australia-20201118-p56fqs.html.

NATO and European Strategic Autonomy: The 2030 Perspective

MARCIN TERLIKOWSKI

Over the last six years, the North Atlantic Alliance has experienced deep changes in its military strategy, structures and force posture, all in response to a rapid deterioration of the transatlantic security environment after 2014, with both a resurgent Russian threat and the rise of terrorism in the first place. Yet, these sometimes revolutionary changes have been not coupled with a formal change of strategy, with the 2010 New Strategic Concept kept formally valid despite being widely considered as outdated. The NATO 2030 strategic reflection process is meant to address this gap by providing a fresh look at how the Alliance's political dimension may be improved. While it is not clear whether this will lead to the start of the formal process of drafting NATO's next strategic concept, it is safe to assume that its outcomes will have deep effects.

The fact that it is the very first strategizing exercise run within NATO since 2010, and the very wide scope of the reflection, are what makes the NATO 2030 process unusual. Within the proceedings of the Expert Group and other strains of work undertaken by the Secretary General, a number of novel factors have been analysed with regards to their influence on NATO. Among these there are consequences of the rising economic and military power of China, the ramifications of a rapid development of disruptive technologies, and the effects of climate change on the security of Allies. Surprisingly enough, little attention is given to the defence ambitions of Europe and their potential effects on both NATO's political cohesion and overall military capacity.

This may be striking, as there has been a major advance over the last four years with regards to the European Union's defence initiatives. Wrapped-up in the concept of "European strategic autonomy", they indicate that Europe may want to revise the role of NATO and the US in safeguarding its security interests. For some favourable circumstances, including the change of the American administration in 2021 and the

rapidly expanding framework of EU-NATO cooperation at the technical level, the potential to have NATO benefit from the EU's initiatives is great. Yet so are the chances of failure, which may constitute a serious blow to the transatlantic bond and the Alliance itself. Hence, the NATO 2030 process must reflect on what it may mean for the Alliance's tasks, tools and actions to have a majority of its European Allies more willing and able to implement their defence policies outside the Allied political and operational framework.

The Eastern Flank countries, and Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in particular, may seem to not be the focus of these processes. Relying on the credibility of NATO's defence and deterrence for safeguarding their core interests, sovereignty and territorial integrity, they have been cautious towards the European strategic autonomy concept due to its potential to undermine NATO. Yet the way for NATO to accommodate the increasing ambitions of major EU member states with regards to reinforcing the EU's defence capacity may have a crucial effect on the security of the Eastern Flank, which is based on both political cohesion in the Alliance, including transatlantic relations free from serious strains, and a credible force posture. Hence, the Eastern Flank nations should work in NATO and the EU towards implementing scenarios in which the European drive to build-up its own defence capacity reinforces NATO, rather than undermines it.

European strategic autonomy – keyword or buzzword?

It's obvious to note that the concept of European strategic autonomy is neither defined in any official document, nor there is any group of EU member states that would declare a shared understanding. Consequently, this term has become a genuine buzzword – it has been hotly debated for the last five years, while there is no full understanding about its potential substance. The origins of the concept go back to the 2016 Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS). It is implied by the EUGS – albeit indirectly – that autonomy would translate into the ability of the EU to formulate its own goals with regards to security and defence, and to have them implemented by military means without being reliant on other actors such as NATO or the US, should the two opt-out. The EUGS goes

further and suggests that autonomy has both a crisis management and a territorial defence dimension. It should also involve the capacity to address novel security challenges and threats, such as those emanating from energy dependencies, cyberspace or the information domain[1].

At the same time, some other terms were also used to refer to the general idea of improving the overall capacity of the EU to act in the area of defence without relying on external support. Most prominently, President Macron has been pushing a far-reaching interpretation of this concept and has spoken numerous times about "European sovereignty"[2], while German strategic documents instead call for a European Security and Defence Union as the optimal form for implementing Europe's growing defence ambitions[3]. Most recently, German politicians, with Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, went on to propose a "European Pillar in NATO" and called the pursuit of European strategic autonomy an illusion[4].

The Eastern Flank countries have been clear outliers in these discussions, mainly for their clear, NATO-centric stance. Poland invariably argues that all defence initiatives of the EU should be "compatible with and complement NATO"[5]. Similar assessments were formulated many times by the Baltic States[6]. The main reason behind the Eastern Flank's reluctance to embrace the concept of European strategic autonomy lays, obviously, in the concern that a bold defence

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1 Publications Office of the European Union, Shared Vision, "Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy (EUGS)", June 2016, https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3eaae2cf-9ac5-11e6-868c-01aa75ed71a1.

2 Reuters, "*Macron: Europe needs its own sovereignty in defence, even with new U.S. government"*, 15 November 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-france-macron-idUSKBN27V0RN.

3 Markus Kaim and Hilmar Linnenkamp, "The New White Paper 2016 – Promoting Greater Understanding of Security Policy?", November 2016, *SWP,* https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2016C47_kim_lnk.pdf.

4 Bundesministerim der Verteidigung, "Speech by Federal Minister of Defence at the Bundeswehr University Munich Anngret Kramp-Karrenbauer", 7 November 2019, https://www.bmvg.de/resource/blob/4503744/5cc807454992c867757734df2ebcb316/20201119-dl-englische-rede-data.pdf. .

5 Mariusz Błaszczak, "Europe's alliance with the US is the foundation of its security", 25 November 2020, *Politico,* https://www.politico.eu/article/us-poland-europe-alliance-foundation-security/.

6 For national positions on strategic autonomy, see: Hans P. Bartels, et al. eds., *Strategic Autonomy and the Defence of Europe. On the Road to a European Army?,* (Dietz, 2017), 152–165, 255–264, 264–279.

cooperation agenda in the EU may easily lead to both political strain in NATO and a practical weakening of Allied defence and deterrence. This may in turn undermine the commitment of major European Allies to defending the Eastern Flank. At the same, the Eastern Flank nations see the value of the EU in the context of improving military mobility – as one of the key elements of improving the credibility of NATO defence and deterrence, which rests on the ability to swiftly move reinforcements from Western Europe to the Eastern Flank – and countering hybrid threats, including disinformation and propaganda. Hence the focus of Poland and the Baltic States on improving EU-NATO cooperation.

Indeed, in the form in which it is put in the EUGS, the European strategic autonomy concept does encroach on the tasks of NATO. Yet, it is not clear what kinds of actions the EU would like to undertake autonomously. In other words,: what is Europe's level of ambition in security and defence? Perhaps more importantly, the stepping stones of the concept are also not clear, or, to simplify, what it is not clear what concretely has to be done to make the EU autonomous.

Both expert debates and practical developments within the EU suggest some basic answers to these questions. It is safe to assume that there are three main dimensions of strategic autonomy: political/ institutional, operational (military), and industrial[7]. The latter pertains to the ability of EU member states to develop armaments that are not based on foreign (non-EU) technologies or subject to external (again: non-EU) export control systems. Hence, it is understood to involve investing into a European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB), so that the EU is able to offer competitive solutions, allowing member states to avoid building dependencies on foreign providers of armaments[8].

This can be linked to the military aspect of strategic autonomy, with regards to which the EU has long expressed its intention to be able to plan, prepare, deploy, command and conduct military

[7] Daniel Fiott, "Strategic autonomy: towards 'European sovereignty' in defence?", 30 November 2018, *EUISS,* https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/strategic-autonomy-towards-%E2%80%98european-sovereignty%E2%80%99-defence.

[8] For national approaches to the question of strategic autonomy, see: Feliz Arteaga, Tomas Jermalavicius, Allessandro Marrone, Jean-Pierre Maulny, Marcin Terlikowski, "Appropriate Level of European Strategic Autonomy", November 2016, *Armament Industry. European Research Group,* https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/ARES-Group-Report-Strategic-autonomy-November-2016.pdf.

operations without support from NATO or the US (although – and for sure – such missions would still belong to a very limited spectrum of contingencies). To make this possible, the EU would need more than just actual capabilities, like highly deployable force packages, enablers, C2 structure and logistic support[9]. What would also be needed is the ability to use its military capabilities freely in any scenario of choice. This assumption excludes reliance on armaments burdened with the technology-related rights of a non-EU state, which may easily block – or at least hamper – its deployment. Hence the largely unnoticed linkage of the operational aspect of autonomy with the defence-industrial aspect.

Finally, the political/institutional dimension is about the broad freedom of the EU to pursue policy goals seen as best addressing core European interests, be it in the security, economic, or any other domain. The EU aims to develop institutions, procedures and a political/strategic culture that would enable joint decision-making, independent from the stances taken by other actors, mostly the US.

Regardless of how vague these parameters of strategic autonomy may seem, a valid question arises about where the EU stands as of today with regards to its implementation. How does it perform on a scale, where there is complete dependency on NATO and the US on one side of the spectrum, and full independence on the other end?

The growing scale of the EU's ambitions

By 2016, when the EUGS was presented, the EU had already proved that it was able to deploy executive military operations with little or no NATO/US support. Missions in Africa (such as EUFOR TCHAD/RCA), in the Gulf of Aden ("Atalanta") or in the Mediterranean ("Sophia") proved that the EU could deploy forces under its autonomous political and legal framework, though with full reliance on the member states' capabilities and mostly according to NATO standards in terms of logistics, enablers, etc. Likewise, the EU has been operating the battle groups system, meant to provide member states with roughly a brigade-size rapid reaction force, ready to be deployed in scenarios of

[9] Sven Biscop,"Battalions to Brigades: The Future of European Defence", *Survival,* 62:5, 105–118.

peace-enforcing and peace-keeping in the European neighbourhood. Yet the popular perception was that the EU was irrelevant in addressing the key security crises affecting it – like the conflicts in Libya or Syria, or the Russian aggression in Ukraine – and was doing next to nothing to help member states with developing military capabilities.

Post-EUGS developments saw the latter problem addressed thoroughly. The launch of PESCO and the establishment of the EDF marked a quantum leap in the EU's approach to capability development. While PESCO established a unified framework for military and defence-industrial cooperation in the EU, the EDF provided a financial assistance mechanism for member states willing to invest jointly into new defence technologies and capabilities[10]. As of 2020, there have been 47 PESCO projects launched in total, varying from small military-to-military cooperation endeavours, through initiatives regarding the development of innovative defence technologies, to large armament programmes like EURODRONE or the European Patrol Corvette. Following a pilot period from 2017–2020 with a limited budget, the final EDF framework for 2021–2027 was agreed upon in 2020, including its budget of 7 billion EUR. These funds will be used to help with both researching innovative defence technologies and developing actual military capabilities in member states. Finally, the EU also introduced the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), a structured mechanism to identify cooperation opportunities and induce the joint development of capabilities by member states[11].

The EU also addressed the operational dimension by beefing up its nascent operational HQ, functioning under the name of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), so that it is able to plan, prepare, deploy, command and conduct up to a brigade-size executive military operation[12]. More importantly, perhaps, the EU has also developed competencies in an area clearly linked with territorial defence, i.e. the core task of NATO – this happened with

[10] Marcin Terlikowski, "PESCO: Two Years Later", 23 January 2020, *PISM,* https://www.pism.pl/publications/PESCO_Two_Years_Later.

[11] For a comprehensive analysis of the recent EU defence initiatives see: Justyna Gotkowska, "A European Defence Union? The EU's new instruments in the area of security and defence", December 2019, *OSW,* https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-report/2019-12-02/a-european-defence-union..

[12] Thierry Tardy, "MPCC: towards an EU military command?", 7 June 2017, *EUISS,* https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/mpcc-towards-eu-military-command.

the EU's engagement on the topic of military mobility, in which both a flagship PESCO project was launched and the European Commission proposed an action plan. The latter provides for both the use of the EU's regulatory framework and funds for infrastructural programmes in order to allow more smooth transfers of forces, weapons and military equipment through internal EU borders thanks to both simplified legal procedures and infrastructure that is new or has been updated according to military needs.

For NATO, these developments meant that the concept of European strategic autonomy, no matter how it is defined, is implemented in a way that could potentially adversely affect the Alliance. Hence, the drive to put formal EU-NATO cooperation on new ground, so that coordination, coherence and synergies between different initiatives could be guaranteed. Following joint declarations by NATO's Secretary General and the EU Presidents of the European Council and of the European Commission from 2016 and 2018, the EU and NATO engaged their international staffs in cooperation on over 70 different common actions[13]. While cooperation at this technical level is generally assessed very positively and constitutes a breakthrough in a long stalemate between the EU and NATO, there is clearly still uncertainty in NATO as to how Europe's pursuit of strategic autonomy will be framed in the months and years to come, and what effects on the Alliance it will have.

The 2030 perspective: three scenarios

If European efforts to implement the strategic autonomy concept bring tangible results in the run-up to the year 2030 depends, obviously, on a number of factors. The most important will be, perhaps, the extent to which the post-Covid-19 crisis will affect defence expenditure levels in Europe. The evolution of the security environment will also play a big role. There is, however, another factor which may be truly decisive. It is in relation to European efforts to implement the concept of strategic autonomy towards NATO and the transatlantic bond. Basically, three scenarios are possible. While one scenario is realistic,

[13] Gustav Lindsrom and Thierry Tardy, eds., *The EU And NATO The essential partners*, 2019, EUISS, https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/eu-and-nato.

two are a remote possibility and serve mostly as thought experiments, indicating different ends of the spectrum on which the EU is trying to define its new defence role. They are: a decoupling of Europe's pursuit of strategic autonomy from NATO; a grand bargain in which European defence ambitions would be implemented within the Alliance; and sectoral coherence and limited cooperation, which would largely be a continuation of the current trends and processes.

Decoupling

The decoupling scenario would involve European Allies – or a significant group of them – pursuing an ambitious form of European strategic autonomy. This would translate into reinforced cooperation on developing the EU's own military capabilities, following strictly European defence plans (with the CDP and CDMP likely reinforced), rather than being synchronised with, and feeding into, NATO's processes. Furthermore, the EU would likely bolster its autonomous command and control capacity (clearly beyond the currently planned capacity of the MPCC), building on strategic enablers that are developed and operated jointly in European formats. The most notable of these would be space-based capabilities (navigation, timing, reconnaissance, and the Galileo and Copernicus missions), strategic airlift (possibly with an expanded European Air Transport Command, which already involves seven EU member states) or medical support (based on related PESCO projects, such as the European Medical Command). This would likely be accompanied with closer cooperation on a political level by a group of the most potent European states who are willing to further deepen the integration of their defence policies (with the Franco-German duo in the core). This could be pursued within the EU, as is currently happening, with the latest case being France, Germany, Spain and Italy politically leading the implementation of PESCO in 2018 and its review in 2020. A new format, potentially taking the form of a European Security Council, would be a vaguely defined consultative body[14]. On a defence-industrial level, the EU could go for a "buy European" principle, making it difficult for member states to acquire armaments from non-EU companies, including through government-to-government contracts.

[14] Jo Coelmont, "Will a European Security Council bring strategic relevance?", 23 March 2020, *EGMONT*, https://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2020/03/spb124-jo-coelmont.pdf?type=pdf.

Being the least likely, this scenario bears at the same time the gravest consequences for NATO and the Eastern Flank in particular. Developing military capabilities in Europe in this way, in which NATO capability targets are disregarded, would quickly lead to both transatlantic and intra-European tensions and, ultimately, to a loss of credibility for Allied defence and deterrence. For the single set of forces principle, it does matter from which playbook states read regarding their plans for investments into military capabilities. If capability priorities developed by the EU at some point depart drastically from NATO plans, the Alliance will take a serious blow. If, in addition to that, the EU moved forward with implementing the mutual defence clause from Article 42.7 TEU in the context of territorial defence, the very basics of the European security architecture would be questioned.

But it would be enough for a practical decoupling if major European Allies refocused their defence on achieving European strategic autonomy rather than implementing NATO plans. When speaking about the 2030 time horizon, it must be noted that this is already covered by NATO defence planning in terms of the agreed-upon future force posture of the Alliance. If a group of European Allies withdraws from commitments already made, for instance with regards to the NATO Readiness Initiative, then the implementation of NATO's operational plans regarding military responses to different contingencies would become even more dependent on the US than it is the case now. This itself would very likely fuel a serious transatlantic spat, as the US is unlikely to drop its goals with regards to improving burden-sharing in NATO, whether under the administration of Joe Biden or any future one. Second, tensions would arise also among European NATO members, as some are unlikely to ever embrace European strategic autonomy. Combined with transatlantic strains, this would likely paralyze decision-making in the Alliance and send to its adversaries a strong signal of a weak and divided NATO.

Last but not least, interoperability might suffer if new European capabilities follow new technical standards rather than complying with the well-established NATO norms. In the age of networked operations, integrating different systems to act jointly in a single battlespace may not turn out to be a straightforward task, particularly if these systems are developed from scratch as closed architecture.

For the Eastern Flank, such a scenario would mean less security against the Russian threat and a subsequent drive to ever-closer cooperation with the US. The further bilateralisation of America's commitment to European security would inevitably follow, with adverse effects on the security of the entirety of Europe, not only on the Eastern Flank. It goes without saying that the US alone is not able to credibly deter and defend NATO's Easternmost members against every potential form of Russian aggression. The sheer strength of American military power needs to be underwritten by the political cohesion of NATO as a whole, by the readiness of major European Allies to enable US deployments and military actions through logistical support, and by the civilian capabilities of the EU, the importance of which is hard to underestimate given the hybrid nature of the threat from Russia.

In other words, a decoupling of the US and Europe on the grounds of implementing European strategic autonomy would open the door wide for Russia to test both the credibility of American security guarantees for its NATO Allies and the willingness of major European members of the Alliance to stand up for the Eastern Flank. For this very reason it is unlikely to happen. Not only would a big group of EU member states who share an acute perception of threat from Russia try hard to block such a development, but also the proponents of European strategic autonomy themselves do not find it plausible to push the US out of Europe and thereby discard American security guarantees, as well as the nuclear umbrella.

Grand bargain

At the other side of the spectrum is the optimal scenario, in which the EU's defence initiatives and NATO actions dovetail to achieve a new level of coherence and synergy. The essence of such scenario would lie in a "grand bargain": the EU would be able to freely develop its defence capacity – in the sense that this would not raise tensions in transatlantic relations or strains within the EU itself – but its actions would have to be closely coordinated with, if not subordinated to, NATO plans and priorities. In this case, the Alliance would directly benefit from efforts to implement European strategic autonomy. For that to happen, however, the entire concept would have to be reinterpreted, or even overturned. Instead of being aimed at Europe's emancipation from NATO and the transatlantic bond, all the EU's defence activities would become

a tool to improve burden-sharing within the Alliance and increase the credibility of NATO's defence and deterrence. In other words, the very notion of autonomy would have to be dropped in favour of a new construct, like a European Pillar in NATO or the like.

If successful, such an effort would involve the EU using its newly developed defence tools, with PESCO, EDF and CARD at the forefront, to help European Allies live up to their capability-related commitments undertaken in NATO. A division of labour could also be agreed between the EU and NATO, with the latter focused on Article 5 contingencies and the former engaging more in crisis management operations in Europe's direct neighbourhood. Furthermore, the EU could augment NATO by providing a wide array of unique civilian capabilities in the context of hybrid warfare/grey zone activities, which involve threats in cyberspace, the information sphere or energy.

In such an ideal world, the Eastern Flank would benefit from an increased sense of security and political cohesion, both with the EU and in transatlantic relations. Most importantly, a clearly bigger contribution from European Allies in terms of capabilities could alleviate tensions around inadequate burden-sharing between the US and European Allies once and for all. Furthermore, the ability of the EU to fill the capability gaps in domains, where NATO is at a disadvantage because of its military nature, would mean more resilience. In the context of hybrid warfare or grey zone activities, having the EU working hand-in-hand with NATO to protect and defend NATO's Easternmost Allies would mean a lower chance that an actual security crisis with Russia develops.

Yet one has to be aware that while such a scenario is the most optimistic one, its likelihood is low. Major EU member states influenced the emergence of the concept of strategic autonomy in the works of HR/VP Federica Mogherini and her team in 2015–2016, and then they embraced it to a greater or lesser extent. It is simply unrealistic to assume that they would easily drop the goal of reinforcing Europe's military capacity in way that would give them more freedom in security and defence policy[15]. No matter how much of a change will come to American policy in NATO and towards the EU with the Biden administration, the political, operational and industrial interests of major

[15] On this, see, for instance: Sven Biscop, "Biden's victory and Europe's strategic autonomy", 24 November 2020, *EGMONT*, https://www.egmontinstitute.be/bidens-victory-and-europes-strategic-autonomy/.

European states will continue to differ from the US. In the defence industry, major European armaments producers will continue to build the competitive edge of the EDTIB so that European armaments can successfully compete with American offers, both in Europe and on global markets. At the operational level, some states will keep looking for the freedom to use military capabilities without caveats imposed by non-EU actors like the US, which is able to block the deployment of a given weapons system to particular theatres. In the political dimension, the ability to credibly present Europe on the global stage as a self-standing actor, independent from the US, is a value in itself, as it can profoundly reinforce Europe's negotiating position, particularly towards powers like Russia and China.

More of the same

Finally, there is the middle ground scenario, in which current trends in the implementation of the European strategic autonomy concept are extrapolated. Here, EU-NATO cooperation would gradually, though slowly, expand. Yet it would not cover some key spheres in which the interests of major EU member states makes them keep cooperation fenced off from the Alliance and the US.

The EU is likely to further develop and deepen cooperation with NATO on military mobility, on countering hybrid threats, mostly in cyberspace and the information domain, and on capability development, with the potential to further streamline and coordinate the EU's plans and programmes with NATO processes. Here, the decision to open PESCO to third states (taken at the beginning of November 2020) is particularly important, as it may open the door for the highly symbolic and practically beneficial involvement of the US in actual EU actions. Indeed, it would serve as the best proof of an increasing alignment between NATO and European defence ambitions if the US joined some flagship PESCO projects, run strictly within the political and legal framework of the EU while at the same time oriented toward NATO's needs. The best options for this would be the Military Mobility Project or some logistics-oriented endeavours that are currently run within PESCO.

On a political level, one could also expect a clear improvement in this scenario. The upcoming Biden administration is likely to go for a renewal of the transatlantic bond, not only through an outright change

of US policy in NATO, but also by changing America's approach to the EU, including Europe's defence ambitions. While this won't result in an endorsement of the concept of European strategic autonomy, the US is likely to look more favourably on European cooperation in developing capabilities. The only condition would be that it does not undermine – financially or in terms of interoperability – commitments undertaken by European Allies in NATO, and would not lead to a decrease of European defence expenditure. A change of tone from Washington is particularly likely if the narrative in Europe moves from a focus on "autonomy" to putting more emphasis on Europe's "responsibility" in taking on a larger burden in responding to security crises in its neighbourhood.

At the same time, no breakthrough is possible in the defence-industrial domain. The EDF will remain a tool aimed at supporting the EDTIB, particularly in the conditions of a difficult recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. A strong American hold on the European armaments market will continue to be seen as detrimental to the competitiveness of the EDTIB, to the ability of the EU to stimulate economic growth through innovation in military and dual-use technologies, and to sustaining employment in this branch of industry. Consequently, Europe is likely to pursue its flagship armaments programmes, such as the 6th generation air system (FCAS), regardless of American criticism and with an openly declared intention to compete with US's offer.

For the Eastern Flank, such a scenario would mean that the political cohesion of NATO, and the health of the transatlantic bond in particular, would continue to be at risk. While imminent challenges to the cohesion of NATO due to the potential decoupling of Europe and the US would be avoided, there would be still no game-changer that could remove this possibility once and for all. As a matter of fact, the middle ground scenario should assume that the newly formed balance between European defence ambitions and the transatlantic bond could turn out to be volatile. The change at the helm of the US administration in 2021 may help to find that balance quickly, but strains over the way in which Europe implements its defence ambitions can easily return. This could worsen if a major security crisis results in the main EU member states and the US splitting again, or if defence cooperation in Europe starts to speed-up outside the EU (like in the European Intervention Initiative), throwing the agreed mechanisms of cooperation and coordination with NATO into question.

Conclusions

Needless to say, it is in the best interest of NATO to get as close as possible to the grand bargain scenario, even if it is only remotely possible as such. At the same time, the Alliance should avoid a situation in which the decoupling scenario would happen "by default", even if it were not actually pursued. This could be the case if subsequent decisions by the EU cause a snowball effect whereby improvements of a seemingly technical character gradually lead to growing incompatibilities and clashes of interest between the EU and NATO. A steady increase in the scale of PESCO and EDF projects, or a step-by-step build-up of the EU's military command and control capabilities, may at some point reach critical mass and result in an inability to further keep the EU's actions coordinated with, and not undermining, NATO. At that moment, European defence would ultimately depart from the transatlantic context, entailing a likely upheaval within the European security architecture.

More importantly, however, the approach of NATO towards European defence ambitions may also induce such developments. If the Alliance is unable to reach out and engage those European Allies who pursue European strategic autonomy most outspokenly, the likelihood of failure increases. Hence the NATO 2030 process, aimed mostly at the political dimension of the Alliance, should also take a closer look at how the defence ambitions of the EU could become a part of the daily agenda of NATO. Allies who put their weight behind new defence initiatives of the EU should be ready to discuss it with other NATO members so that the consequences of the EU's actions are better understood and coordination at the staff-to-staff level is better implemented. In other words, there should be a bigger role of the capitals in preventing the EU and NATO to split apart, most importantly as regards their capability-oriented initiatives.

But technical fixes won't suffice. For sustained coordination and a growing coherence between the EU and NATO, both Europe and the US should come to terms with some basic truths. For its part, the EU should endorse the fact that despite ups and downs in the transatlantic bond and its rapidly changing nature, the US remains and will remain Europe's only genuine Ally. This is about common values and interests between Europe and the US, which still displays far more communality

than is case for European relations with Russia or China. Even if there are areas like trade in which American and European interests diverge, the transatlantic bond is unique on a global scale. Questioning it won't do Europe's own interests any good. The US, in turn, should acknowledge that Europe will not just stop pursuing some form of autonomy, even if it takes a limited form, deconflicted with NATO and focused on some precisely defined contingencies in which the EU would be capable to act without the Alliance or the US. This is simply the function of the increasingly unique role of Europe in the world, which requires from Europe more self-confidence and more freedom in pursuing its interests – with the use of military tools, if necessary.

For obvious reasons, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – as well as other Eastern Flank nations – should work particularly hard towards preventing all scenarios that could have adverse effects on the cohesion of NATO and the credibility of its defence and deterrence. Making sure that EU defence ambitions are coordinated with and complement the Alliance will require a proactive stance. The Eastern Flank should, first of all, aim to streamline PESCO and the EDF so that they are more oriented towards meeting capability targets that are formally agreed on or signalled in some other way in NATO. This could be done in particular through launching new PESCO projects, including defence-industrial endeavours, which would qualify for co-financing from the EDF. Furthermore, the US should be invited to join some of these new projects. This way, the Eastern Flank would signal its practical contribution to bridging the gap between NATO and EU capability-oriented actions and implementing the November 2020 decision of the EU, which – after a long period of uncertainty in this regard – made non-EU states eligible to join PESCO projects. Finally, the Eastern Flank nations should lead by example in implementing military mobility-related projects and in formulating strategic messages on how EU funds can be used to meet NATO goals. Similarly, the work of NATO Centres on Excellence in Lithuania (on energy security), Latvia (on strategic communications) and Estonia (on cybersecurity) should be made increasingly open for relevant institutions and agencies of the EU.

POSTFACE

Three Themes for NATO 2030 in the Eastern Flank: Conventional "Build-up", Addressing Hybrid Challenges and Strengthening the Community of Values

MARGARITA ŠEŠELGYTĖ

Introduction

Throughout history, NATO has demonstrated exceptional resilience, and an ability to endure and transform. Its fundamental collective defence function at the end of Cold War was complemented with two other roles: crisis management and cooperative security. At about that time, the Baltic States and Poland were striving for NATO membership, which for them primarily meant rectifying historical injustices, returning to the "European family" and defending against potential aggression from Russia as the successor of the Soviet Union (USSR). In contrast to the majority of other European countries and even the United States, for them Russia has never ceased to be a potential rival, and in order to not have history repeat itself they were searching for collective security guarantees.

Against hopes of democratisation, Russia started to slide back to authoritarianism and to nurture the idea of re-creating the USSR. Manipulating still-existing interdependencies and vulnerabilities in the political, economic and energy fields, Russia aimed to retain control over the political systems of those countries. The case of the impeachment of Lithuanian President Rolandas Paksas in 2003 on the eve of Lithuanian membership in NATO (2004) is a telling illustration. Several months before the inauguration of the president, the Lithuanian State Security Department released information about suspicious links between the president's office and a Russian businessman,

who allegedly had links with Russian organised crime groups and Russian intelligence, and who was a primary financial contributor to Paksas's electoral campaign (with about 350,000 euros)[1]. According to the department, this "operation" aimed to "control" the Lithuanian president, and through him to gain the access to NATO decision making. This affair might be defined as an early example of the hybrid operations Russia is increasingly employing today. Eventual membership in NATO and the European Union (EU) for Poland and Baltic States has not provided collective defence guarantees *vis-a-vis* Russia, but to a certain extent, through a strengthening of their own institutions restructuring of the economy, it has provided political "shelter" against potential interference operations.

It is important to admit, however, that when Poland and Baltic States joined NATO, crisis management and cooperative security were prevailing over the collective defence function. One of the directions for cooperation was renewed relations with Russia. A Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation defining a new security environment and new "red lines" was signed in 1997.[2] The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was established in 2002 to replace the Permanent Joint Council (JPC). It might be argued that despite NATO expansion to countries where Russia has been viewed as an adversary, NATO as an organisation moved closer to Russia. This trend, with occasional ups and downs, lasted up until the Ukrainian crisis, which took NATO by surprise. But yet again NATO has managed to transform and adapt. The decisions of the subsequent Wales and Warsaw summits have reinforced NATO's capacity to respond to new challenges in the region. Today, the Alliance is once again experiencing a crisis, caused by a crack in the transatlantic link and dis-unity within. This article aims – in the midst of discussion about NATO's future[3] – to assess the challenges NATO faces in the region and beyond, and to provide recommendations for NATO 2030.

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[1] Richard Krickus, "The Presidential Crisi in Lithuania: its Roots and the Russian Factor", *Wilson Centre*, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/292-the-presidential-crisis-lithuania-its-roots-and-the-russian-factor.

[2] NATO, "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperations and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation", 27 May 1997, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm.

[3] NATO, "Secretary General launches NATO 2030 to make our strong Alliance even stronger", 8 June 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_176193.htm.

Conventional "build up"

A conventional threat emanating from Russia is likely to persist in 2030. Although there were hopes that the situation might change in 2024 as the second term of Putin's second presidency would be coming to an end, constitutional changes recently affirmed by referendum in Russia would allow him to remain in power until 2036.[4] The confrontation between Russia and the West is likely to continue, as rivalry with NATO is essential for the Russian president in order to maintain the legitimacy of his regime. Based on these two premises and the still-existing military imbalance in the Baltic Sea region between Russia and NATO, NATO will have to continue its conventional "build up" in the region in 2030.

According to Sven Sakkov, the existing military imbalance makes this region the place "where Russia is at its strongest and NATO at its weakest, with the bulk of its forces far away."[5] There are a total of 19,850 active duty personnel in Lithuania, with 6,600 in Estonia, 6,210 in Latvia[6] and around 118,000 in Poland.[7] Each of these states also hosts for about a 1,000-strong enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battlegroup. The Russian armed forces consist of around 900,000 military personnel[8], with a great bulk of them concentrating on Russia's western border. The imbalance is reinforced by the existing A2/AD bubble, the ongoing modernisation of Russia's armed forces and the militarisation of the Kaliningrad enclave and the Suwalki corridor. Arguably, the eFP has increased security in the region[9], as those forces are expected to defend the territory alongside national forces should

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4 Alec Luhn, "Vladimir Putin, President until 2036?", 10 March 2020, *Politico,* https://www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-president-until-2036/.

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

6 International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Military Balance 2019", https://www.iiss.org/publications/the-military-balance/the-military-balance-2019.

7 Global Firepower, "Poland: Military strength 2020", https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=poland.

8 Keith Crane, Olga Oliver Brian Nichiporuk, "Trends in Russia's Armed Forces", *RAND,* 60, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2500/RR2573/RAND_RR2573.pdf.

9 Department of State Security of the Republic of Lithuania, "National Threat Assessment 2018", 2018, 58, https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ENG.pdf.

a conflict break out, but their main function is to ensure deterrence by being a tripwire, signalling to Russia that an attack on one of these states would result in immediate escalation to a full-blown conflict with NATO, which "would inflict substantial costs on an attacker and deny it the ability to quickly achieve its objectives."[10] Although the eFP has to be viewed as the biggest commitment by NATO to the Baltic States and Poland since their membership in the Alliance, in case of a conflict, successful defence relies on the speed of reinforcements. Its potential was strengthened by other NATO adaptation measures, such as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) or the establishment of a new multinational headquarters in Szczecin, Poland, but it still might be hampered by decision making, force generation and deployment delays. Therefore, the military reinforcement of its Eastern Flank will likely remain one of NATO's main priorities in 2030; the main issues to be addressed in this area are the permanent presence of troops in the region and investments in infrastructure and military mobility.

Having permanent and also more numerous NATO forces in the region might improve the existing imbalance on the ground and send a stronger deterring political message to Russia. One of the things preventing NATO from stationing permanent bases in the region is the quite contradictory interpretations among member states of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security – the agreement which, according to the mainstream opinion in NATO, prevents the Alliance from permanently stationing additional military capabilities on its Eastern Flank. The Baltic States and Poland, however, maintain that the act cannot be binding, as Russia has breached it by occupying Crimea and seriously degrading the security situation in the region. A political review of this basis for cooperation with Russia might be a good starting point for further reinforcements in the region.

Another particularity of the region's security is the importance of the US military presence. The capabilities, political will and speed of Russian forces makes US military power the only instrument able to ensure credible deterrence and defence in the region. Former President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė has noted that the "continuous presence of US troops and military equipment in the Baltic states is the strongest

[10] Dianne P. Chamberlain, "NATO's Baltic Tripware Forces Won't Stop Russia", 21 July, *The National Interest*, 2016, http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/natos-baltic-tripware-forces-wont-stop-russia-17074.

deterrence measure".[11] At the moment, US troops are present in Poland in a "rotational" eFP Framework, while in the Baltic States it is partially assured through temporary formats such as exercises (e.g. a US battalion was deployed to Pabradė in Lithuania from October 2019 to Spring 2020 as part of US Army Europe Operation Atlantic Resolve). But a timely and effective defence would benefit if those troops were stationed permanently. An initiative by US President Donald Trump to withdraw troops from Germany could be a good starting point for discussions to adapt NATO's presence to the current security challenges and reposition necessary troops, in particular US troops, closer to the Eastern Flank.

Another challenge for NATO in smoothing out the speed of reaction is the synchronisation of legal procedures surrounding military movement in member states and the development of adequate infrastructure, which is not adjusted for the movement of big numbers of forces and heavy equipment in particular. This challenge has already been identified and addressed by member states. The military mobility project within the EU's PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation), led by the Netherlands, is meant to address these challenges at least partially. It creates a framework for the approximation of necessary legal procedures and infrastructural adjustments around Europe in order to ensure the smooth and rapid movement of military reinforcements. Cooperation between the EU and NATO in implementing this project could serve as a good example for labour division, as NATO is able "plan and calculate the military's needs for transport across Europe to ensure credible deterrence"[12] while the EU provides funds and focuses on legal procedures. However, the implementation of military mobility goals might be hampered due to a lack of unity in efforts both within the EU (aims are scattered among a number of various formats and institutions, such as PESCO, the European Defence Agency, Connecting Europe Facility, and member states) and between the EU and NATO. A study released

[11] Dalya Grybauskaitė, "Exclusive U.S. attention to security of the Baltic states", 31 July 2017, *President of the Republic of Lithuania*, http://www.lrp.lt/en/press-releases/exclusive-u.s.-attention-to-security-of-the-baltic-states/28175.

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

by the Clingendael Institute admits that "the EU and NATO still remain very different entities which operate on a different political, legal and membership basis", and this causes mistrust, slowdowns and ineffectiveness.[13] Insufficient funding and a lack of willingness to contribute income on the part of member states might be another challenge (the initial proposal by the EU Commission for military mobility in the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027 was 6.5 billion EUR, but this was reduced to 1.5 billion)[14]. An agreement between the EU and NATO addressing these challenges and paving the way for the necessary cooperation would be a solution for the next decade. It is important to create transparent mechanisms to assess the military mobility needs of the Alliance and to search for a solution with partners such as the EU, as well as member states and businesses – to this end, financial incentives are also important. One potential project to re-invigorate the military mobility project is Three Seas Initiative[15], aimed at stimulating more a rapid development of the region stretching between the Baltic, Black and Adriatic Seas. More investment in infrastructure and defence in general should also be maintained in the countries across the region themselves.

Enhancing capabilities to address hybrid threats

Conventional defence is organic to NATO, but the security threats that are prevailing in the region today require different responses. NATO lacks the know-how and capabilities to respond to hybrid threats. Christopher Chivis distinguishes six tools of hybrid operations that Russia is using in the region: information and cyber operations, proxies, economic and political influence, and clandestine measures.[16] These tools are applied sequentially, simultaneously, or in any combination, and they create situations where peace, conflict and war intersect

[13] Ibid.

[14] Jacopo Barigazzi, "European Defence Hopes Live to Fight Another Day (just)", 29 May 2020, *Politico,* https://www.politico.eu/article/european-defense-hopes-live-to-fight-another-day-just-budget-eu-coronavirus-recovery-plan-mff/.

[15] Three Seas Initiative, http://three-seas.eu/about/.

[16] Christopher S. Chivis, "Understanding Russian 'Hybrid Warfare' and what can be done about it", 22 March 2017, *RAND Corporation*, 3-4, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT468/RAND_CT468.pdf.

with no clear boundaries.[17] Hybrid tools have been used by Russia in the post-Soviet area since the end of Cold War (and before), but due to the loss of other instruments of intimidation (e.g. military, political, and economic) as a consequence of the Baltic States' and Poland's membership in NATO and the EU, today Russia chooses to use more covert tools. Moreover, technological innovations and the increased influence of social media has created opportunities to inflict damage on the societies of the rival countries from a distance.

Cyber and information adversarial activities have been increasing in all Baltic countries since the crisis in Ukraine. The Lithuanian State Security Department indicates that the aim of those activities is to antagonise society and to reduce its trust in democratic process, state institutions and officials.[18] Direct attacks on the Baltic States in the information and cyber security sectors have also revealed a number of vulnerabilities present,[19] e.g. a dependence on Russian energy, societal cleavages and a lack of trust in state institutions. The 2017 National Security Concept of Estonia mentions threats such as uneven regional development, social inequality, poverty, poorly integrated segments of society (Russian speaking minority), and manifestations of intolerance.[20] These vulnerabilities are cleverly manipulated in order to inflict damage on society and the state. For instance, in Latvia, Russia manipulates Russian speaking minorities into questioning their loyalty to the state.[21] Society is directly targeted, aiming to reinforce divisions, to raise the level of conflict and ultimately to undermine and defeat the target country without launching a full-scale military attack. In order to steal, spread and manipulate information, modern cyber technologies are employed. Russia has invested a lot in cyber tools over the past

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[17] Dave Johnson, "Russia's Approach to Conflict - Implications for NATO's Deterrence and Defence", April 2015, *NATO Defence College*, 9, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/190782/rp_111.pdf.

[18] Department of State Security of the Republic of Lithuania, *op.cit.*, 58.

[19] Andrew Radin, "Hybrid Warfare in Baltics: Threats and Potential Responses", *RAND*, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports?PR1577/RAND_RP1577.pdf.

[20] Katiseministeerium, "National security concept of Estonia (2017)", https://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/national_security_concept_2017.pdf.

[21] Susi Dennison, Ulrike Esther Franke and Pawel Zerka, "The Nightmare of the Dark: The Security Fears that Keeps Europeans Awake at Night", 23 July 2018, *London: European Council on Foreign Relations*, 27, https://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/SECURITY_SCORECARD%283%29.pdf.

years.[22] This becomes a serious challenge for the states in the region as they are increasingly dependent on the internet, sophisticated digital technologies (including digital signatures, cloud-based civil services, and e-governance) and e-communication.[23] Information and cyber-attacks are also employed against NATO troops stationed through the eFP. At least two incidents have been recorded in Lithuania. The first one occurred on 15 February 2017 when the speaker of the Lithuanian parliament received a letter accusing German troops of raping a Lithuanian minor from a foster home, and this letter also went to the media. The police investigation that followed has proved that it was a false provocation. Another incident was directed towards the families of Dutch soldiers stationed in Lithuania. Their families have received telephone calls telling them to leave Lithuania.[24] Although NATO forces can be targets themselves, their tools to defend against this are limited – Martin Zapfe notes that the eFP is not designed for hybrid threats,[25] instead, their protection against hybrid threats is assured by national institutions such as the police and cyber-security or crisis management centres.

In order to increase resilience against cyber and information tools of interference, over the past few years the Baltic States have invested a lot either into restrictive measures such as introducing fines and suspending channels that display overt biases, or into the measures directed towards increasing media literacy or debunking fake news. Some successful initiatives, such as "Lithuanian elves", have developed at the societal level.[26] National cyber-security systems have also received a boost in finances and attention. But due to limited resources

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[22] Christopher S. Chivis, *op. cit*., 3–4.

[23] Viljar Veebel, "Baltic States and Cyber Deterrence: Taking or Losing Initiative against Russia"', January 2017, *FPRI,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319405692_Baltic_States_and_Cyber_Deterrence_Taking_or_Losing_Initiative_against_Russia.

[24] LRT, "Baltijos šalyse tarnaujančių NATO karių artimiesiems grasiimai telefonu" [Relatives of NATO soldiers serving in the Baltic States are threatened by telephone], 9 August 2019, htpp://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/pasaulyje/6/108630/baltijijos-salyse-tarnaujanciu-nato-kariu-artimiesiems-grasinimai-telefonu.

[25] Martin Zapfe, "Hybrid threats and NATO's forward presence", *CSS ETH Zurich Policy perspectives*, Vol. 4. No. 7, 2016, 1-4, https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/PP4-7.pdf.

[26] A group of 5,000 Lithuanian online volunteers that exposes pro-Russian trolls, fake online accounts, propaganda and disinformation; they also help journalists fact check their sources.

to defend themselves against large attacks such as the one that occurred in Estonia in 2007, the states in the region are also seeking international solutions. For the time being, the international capacity to defend the states in the region is quite limited. NATO has established three Centres of Excellence in each of the Baltic States concentrating on various aspects of potential vulnerabilities (cyber, energy and communications). [27] However, the aim of these centres is to conduct research and provide expertise – in case of an attack, they do not have a role.

The reflection on 2030 NATO should first of all involve a discussion, on a legal and procedural basis, on how to respond to large-scale hybrid attacks that member states cannot deal with on their own. Secondly, it should cover how to develop the capabilities necessary to respond to these threats. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty does not say anything about adversarial interference activities that fall short of the Article 5 criteria. This gap might be a tempting alternative for Russia, as it can hurt the whole Alliance through its weaker members and at the same time it would not provoke Alliance engagement. The discussion on the need to expand the definition of an armed attack within Article 5 occurred after the crisis in Ukraine erupted. The Wales Summit declaration defined cyber defence as "a part of NATO's core task of collective defence", which could lead to the invocation of Article 5 because "cyber attacks can reach a threshold that threatens national and Euro-Atlantic prosperity, security and stability."[28] However, the question of "what is the threshold" and "what NATO will do to respond to this attack" remain unanswered. In addition to this is the relevance of the potential use of other hybrid tools, e.g. information or energy, which is of particular relevance for the Baltic States since they remain connected to the Russian and Belarusian electricity grid (BRELL). Some experts have suggested an amendment to Article 5, removing the notion of "armed attack" from the definition.[29] However, this might be too risky because it is not clear what should be put in the definition

[27] The NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre, The NATO Energy Security Center for Excellence, and The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.

[28] NATO, "Wales Summit Declaration", 5 September 2014, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

[29] DELFI.lt, "Former NATO officer suggests changing Washington Treaty", 12 March 2015, https://en.delfi.lt/politics/former-nato-officer-suggests-changing-washington-treaty.d?id=67405116.

instead of the notion of armed attack – an amendment might make the article even more ambiguous. The other line of argumentation maintains that the article should be left as it is, as ambiguity could allowing decision makers to include much more into the definition and so expand the limits of potential engagement. Another more feasible way to institutionalise NATO's position *vis-a-vis* hybrid threats is to include them into NATO's Strategic Concept, which has not been reviewed for a decade.

The second task for NATO 2030 is to ensure that it has the tools necessary to respond to hybrid attacks. Although NATO has a limited ability to develop them on its own, existing partnerships and new ones (with other international organisations, states, NGOs, and private businesses) might be employed to facilitate this process. One natural partner in this domain could be the EU, as it is particularly well placed to respond to hybrid threats; Lieutenant General Vincenzo Coppola, Civilian Operations Commander at EEAS, argues that the EU is ideal as it has a "wide range of tools that can be used consecutively and simultaneously to address the crisis".[30] The EU already has necessary tools to respond to cyber and disinformation campaigns. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) might be particularly beneficial in the development of new tools. In two subsequent Joint EU-NATO Declarations in 2016 and 2018, member states pledged to enhance cooperation between the two organisations[31], and more than 70 joint activities ranging from cyber defence, the response to hybrid threats, capability development, exercises were identified. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has admitted that if PESCO and the EDF contribute to the development of capabilities that would fill the gaps, then "that would only benefit

[30] Vincenzo Coppola, "EU–NATO Cooperation on Rapid Response and Crisis Management," *EU – NATO cooperation a secure vision for Europe: discussion paper*, Angela Pauly, Arnaud Bodet, Robert Arenella and Eleanor Doorley eds., (Friends of Europe, 2019), https://www.friendsofeurope.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/dp_2018_web.pdf.

[31] NATO, "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," 8 July 2016, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm; European Council, "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," 10 July 2018, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/36096/nato_eu_final_eng.pdf.

NATO."[32] This would involve synergy and a pooling of resources – making the best use of the available ones is particularly relevant to small states, which due to their limitations have to prioritise capabilities and activities. For instance, Lithuania is leading one of the PESCO projects aimed at the creation of cyber rapid-response teams and mutual assistance enhancement in cyber-security. These capabilities could also be available for NATO purposes. More synergies could be sought between other EU projects and institutions, such as the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, located in Helsinki, and the other NATO Centres of Excellence. Finally, the inclusion of regional partners such as Ukraine and Georgia in various projects also could be very beneficial. Both of them over the last years have developed important know-how.

Strengthening the community of values

Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen defined the crisis in Ukraine as the "gravest threat to European security and stability since the end of the Cold War"[33], but NATO has managed to come out of it even stronger and more united. Over the past several years, NATO is arguably once again facing a serious crisis, this time caused by a cracking transatlantic link and weakened commitment to common values. During his electoral campaign, US President Trump accused NATO of being a relic of the Cold War and therefore "obsolete", which gave the US's allies a bit of a shock – in particular those whose security and even independence depends on their membership in the Alliance. To add insult to injury, during his presidency, Trump has been constantly criticising his European partners and executing unilateralism in international affairs. He withdrew from the Paris agreement, the Iran nuclear deal framework, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, and recently from the World Health Organization, and

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

[33] Fred Dews, "NATO Secretary General: Russia' Annexation of Crimea is Illegal and Illegitimate", 9 March 2014, *Brookings Institute*, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2014/03/19/nato-secretary-general-russias-annexation-of-crimea-is-illegal-and-illegitimate/.

he unilaterally decided to withdraw US troops from Syria and reduce their capacity in Afghanistan and Iraq. On a number of occasions, he has threatened to impose steel and aluminium tariffs on the US's European partners. It might be argued that Trump's foreign policy was creating a new normal situation, where international laws, agreements and institutions are no longer respected and long-term alliances are not cherished. Foreign policy based on transactions and zero-sum calculations was undermining the US's leadership, which had already suffered due to a changing power balance. The US ceased to be a defender of the main values that the liberal world order is built on, which was too handy for revisionist powers supporting authoritarianism and power politics.

US foreign policy has provoked negative responses in Europe and encouraged Europeans to push forward the idea of strategic autonomy. Last November, President of France Emmanuel Macron warned European countries that they cannot rely on the US to defend them anymore; he noted that "What we are currently experiencing is the brain death of NATO", and said that in order to be able to control its own destiny, Europe has to become a geopolitical power.[34] Although many continued to argue that despite these disagreements on a political level, during the Trump administration NATO continued to thrive and the US military commitments to European security on a practical level were unharmed or even increased, the actual damage done was more precarious and fundamental, because NATO is not only a military alliance but also a political one. Daniel S. Hamilton argues that the foundation of NATO is "nations bound by common values".[35] These values are indicated in the preamble of North Atlantic Treaty, where it says states are "determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law."[36] Departure from these values

[34] The Economist, "Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain dead", 7 November 2019, https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead.

[35] Daniel S. Hamilton, "Why NATO Needs a New Strategic Concept, What it Should Say, and How to Achieve it", *Transatlantic Futures Towards #NATO2030*, Andris Sprūds and Mārtiņš Vargulis eds. (Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2020), https://www.liia.lv/en/publications/transatlantic-futures-towards-nato2030-884.

[36] NATO, "The North Atlantic Treaty", https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

erodes the foundation of the Alliance and sends a political message both to rivals and friends outside that those values will not be defended. This affects the unity of the members as well as the commitment to democracy in those member states where it has been rather weak.

Despite the ambition for European strategic autonomy, the transatlantic link and the US military presence in Europe remains the cornerstone of European security. First of all, this is because of the US's military capabilities, which that none of the EU members separately or combined could match. In fact, currently, EU strategic autonomy is not matched with adequate capabilities. Secondly the role that the US has played for years in defending the liberal world order based on democratic values is needed by Europe, because it is only in this order that many Europeans can reach the levels of security and prosperity they enjoy now. It is highly likely that the tensions between autocracies and democracies we are facing now will increase in the nearest future, and therefore it is of the utmost importance to preserve the transatlantic link and democratic values inside NATO. Incoming US President Joe Biden and his administration have the necessary skills and willingness to work for this, and they likely will be Europe's partners after four years of uncertainty. But it is equally important to defend democratic values outside of NATO borders and to help other democracies to defend against autocracies. In order to do this, NATO has to strengthen existing partnerships with democracies worldwide and form new ones.

Conclusions

Looking at the current security challenges and changes in the international power balance, the scenario of NATO's "brain death" and it becoming "obsolete" in 2030 is still conceivable. This would be the worst-case scenario for the whole democratic world and an international order based on US leadership, and it would be fatal for the regions where geopolitical fights are fought. Several trends might lead to this scenario. First would be the inability of the Allies to mend the transatlantic link. Second is an unwillingness to defend democratic values. Finally, there is NATO's failure to transform to match the needs of the new security environment.

But efforts should be made to work for the best-case scenario, in which NATO retains its relevance and has a central position in the new international order as the leading security organisation among democracies. A strong partnership with democracies outside NATO is one of the key steps towards this goal. Another step is searching for partnerships with other international organisations – such as the EU, NGOs, and businesses – in order to develop holistic capabilities to respond to new security challenges, the majority of which require collective actions. NATO could be the key organisation for mobilising other stakeholders for common action.

The Baltic States and Poland are already big proponents of the transatlantic link, and it is important that they remain committed to it in the future, while at the same time being open for NATO' potential partnership with other international or national players. Being truly committed to NATO, they should also stay committed to the foundation of the Alliance – democratic values. Finally, by further strengthening their own defence and increasing resilience *vis-a-vis* hybrid threats, those countries would also contribute to the overall success of NATO.

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