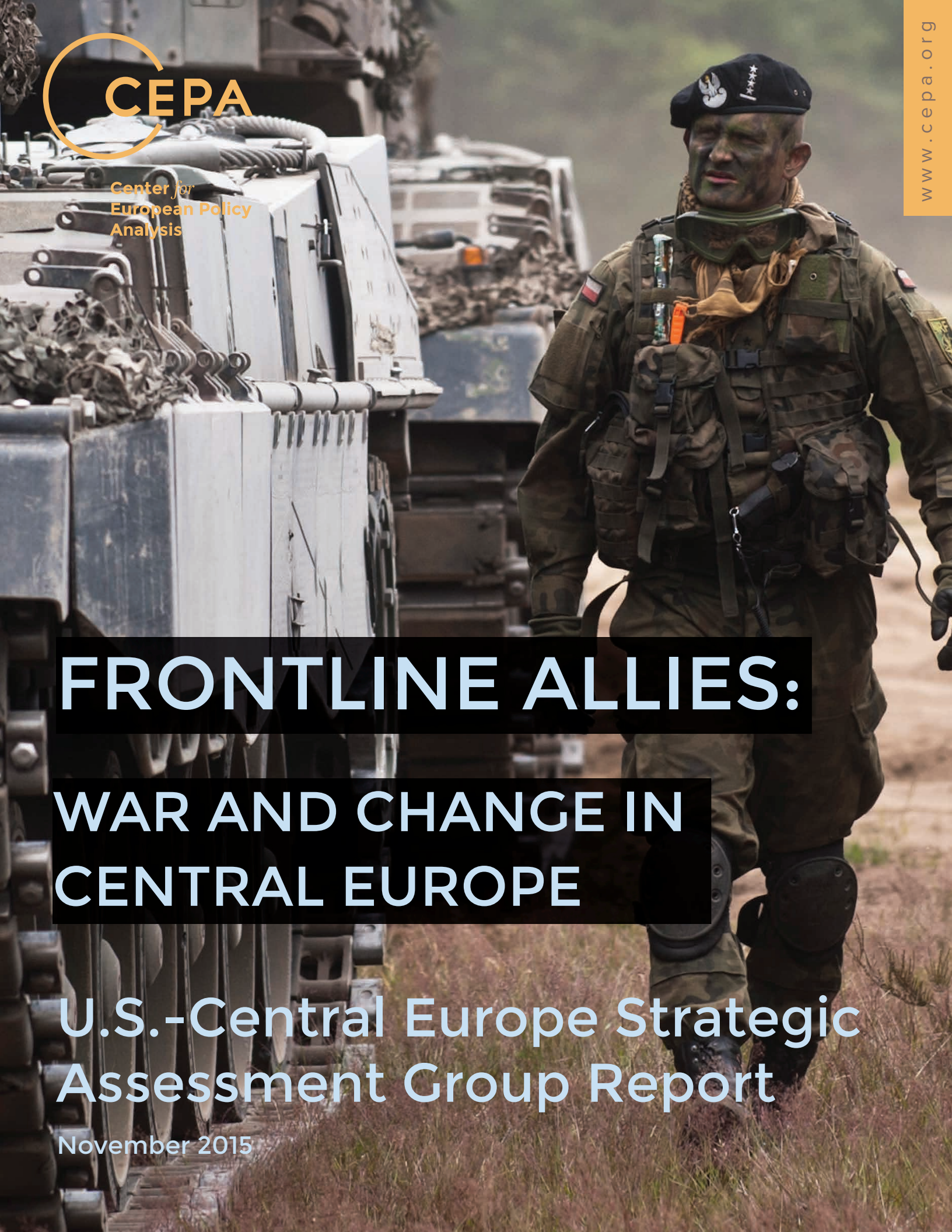

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FRONTLINE ALLIES:

WAR AND CHANGE IN CENTRAL EUROPE

U.S.-Central Europe Strategic Assessment Group Report

November 2015

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FRONTLINE ALLIES

War and Change in Change in Central Europe

The war in Ukraine is changing the behavior of U.S. allies in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). After years of tranquility, geopolitics has returned, bringing new forms of warfare that could threaten the vital interests or even existence of the small- to medium-sized democracies between the Baltic and Black Seas. American allies find themselves in a jittery and diplomatically fluid landscape where NATO still reigns but fears of Russia and doubts about Western reliability are growing. Though still nascent, changes are stirring that could reshape Central Europe for years to come. Old assumptions about the strength of Western institutions and the acquiescence of Russia are being re-thought. New alliances are being formed and new military doctrines contemplated while some seek to strike pragmatic deals with Vladimir Putin. The United States has not been closely attuned to these shifts, viewing CEE through the prism of early post-Cold War experience and reserving high-level strategy for the Middle East and Asia.

To address this gap, the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) conducted a yearlong exercise led by senior military and political experts to assess geopolitical change in frontline Europe. The aim was twofold: to examine how CEE foreign and security policies are adapting to the conditions created by the Ukraine war and to identify what these changes mean for U.S. strategy. The project found that, in virtually every CEE member state of NATO, the Ukraine War has been a catalyst for potentially far-reaching changes across a wide spectrum of military and diplomatic behaviors. Whether these changes lead to positive or negative outcomes for U.S. national security depends in large part on how they are channeled—a fact that Russia has been quicker to grasp than the West. The new strategic landscape of CEE offers an opportunity for a reinvigorated and specialized set of frontline alliances capable of stabilizing Europe's eastern flank. But reaching this goal will require the United States to be as active a participant in shaping outcomes as it was in earlier phases of the CEE transition.


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Trondheim
SWEDEN
Gulf of Bothnia
Tampere
Lake Ladoga
Turku
Helsinki
Saint Petersburg
Gävle
Gulf of Finland
RUSSIA
Oslo
ALAND ISLANDS
Tallinn
ESTONIA
Stockholm
Volga
Moscow
Skagerrak
Göteborg
Gotland
LATVIA
Riga
Kattegat
Baltic Sea
Vitsyebsk
Smolensk
LITHUANIA
Vilnius
Öland
DENMARK
Copenhagen
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Rome
MACE.
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Tirana
VATICAN CITY
Thessaloníkí
ALB.
Naples
TURKEY

Introduction

War alters the behavior of states. If geopolitics is the quest for the survival of the state, then war is the tutorial that teaches states what tools they must acquire in order to survive. War rearranges the priorities of states, casting a harsh light on the utility of arrangements developed during the preceding peace. Old diplomatic alignments may suddenly seem inadequate or misbegotten; new or deeper alliances may seem urgently needful. More dramatically, the return of war to a theater that was blessed by peace for a prolonged period of time clarifies and crystallizes the military needs of the state – in two ways. First, the belligerent state, Russia in this case, reveals itself as a military threat, challenging the desire of the targeted states to underinvest in instruments of war. Thus, states that justified small public expenditures on defense before a war may find themselves requiring larger and more capable militaries. Second, war clarifies the utility of existing military instruments. It may show that long-cherished ideas about the character of a future war were mistaken, and point to a need for altogether different weapons or doctrines to cope with the threat.

The change that war brings to the calculations of states constitutes perhaps the oldest rhythm of geopolitics. For most of history, it has been the norm; seasons of peace are interrupted by conflict and the preparation that it requires. Exceptions to this cycle are rare. The “long peace” in European diplomacy that began with the Congress of Vienna and ended with the First World War is one; the peace brought by the close of the Cold War is another. Through the eastern expansion of NATO and the European Union (EU), the West formed a zone of stability stretching from the Pacific Ocean to the eastern border of Poland that overrode the logic of change brought by warfare in both its diplomatic and military forms. By encompassing most of the Western world, it obviated the need for diplomatic jockeying and arms races that had characterized most of European history. Sealing this arrangement was the weakness of Russia and the abiding political and military involvement of the United States in European affairs. Lacking a serious threat, surrounded by the world’s largest trade bloc and backed by the conventional and nuclear guarantees of the world’s greatest superpower, Europe was sheltered, more than any other region, from traditional geopolitics.

No one benefited from this pause of history more the small and mid-sized states occupying Europe's historically troubled eastern frontier.[1] One need only look at the frenzied diplomatic alignments and military preparations undertaken by Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania during the 1930s to see how the threat of war forces diplomatic realignments and moral dilemmas on states that are small and geographically exposed. For CEE states, and above all, for the traditional chief victim of geopolitics, Poland, the order and stability brought by NATO promised to forever remove the need for these unending evolutions that would normally be required for polities in their position—perhaps indefinitely.

Russia's attack on Ukraine shattered these illusions, which had already been severely tested by the 2008 war in Georgia. The invasion of Europe's largest country showcased appetites and, more importantly, abilities on the part of Russia that defied Western expectations. The war demonstrated that Russia is more traditionally (that is to say, territorially) acquisitive in its contemporary foreign-policy goals: it wants to grab more land. It also showed that Russia has improved its military capabilities enabling it to carry out those goals against local political and military resistance without incurring serious diplomatic or military Western opposition. The inadequacies of NATO that were laid bare by Russian aggression in Ukraine are well-documented and do not need to be recounted at length here.[2]

The important point about the emergence of a more determined and capable Russia is that it has challenged the solvency of NATO as a system of security provision. Until now, this solvency had been either taken for granted or deemed unnecessary, insulating the Alliance's members, especially along its eastern frontier, against the historical process of adaptive alliance-building and military self-help. The war changed this, in two ways.

First, politically, the war in Ukraine modeled a new type of threat—quick, stealthy, low-intensity, and limited land conquests—perfectly engineered to exploit divergences of threat perception among NATO's western and eastern members, isolating vulnerable frontline states by impeding the process of political consensus needed for the Article 5 Collective Security guarantee to function.

1 Bulgaria, Estonia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Romania.

2 For a detailed analysis of NATO's shortcomings exposed by the Ukraine War, see "Collective Defence and Common Security, Twin Pillars of the Atlantic Alliance," Group of Policy Experts report to the NATO Secretary General, June 2014.

Secondly, militarily, the "limited war" tactics adopted by Russia in Crimea and the Donbas, with their emphasis on fast territorial faits accomplis, are a form of warfare well-designed to defeating NATO's security posture characterized by weak perimeter states reliant upon distant reinforcements. While NATO plans a defense-in-depth, Russia threatens to rewrite the map around the extremities.[3] Backed by an "escalate-to-deescalate" nuclear doctrine and growing Russian control of air superiority assets, these techniques represent a formidable strategic problem for the NATO alliance.

That the war in Ukraine has produced these effects is now widely understood. But for the most part, the conventional wisdom holds that any allied responses to the sharper security dynamics introduced by the war will remain within the bounds of NATO cooperation. That is to say, while the war may represent traditional security behavior on the part of Russia, the assumption is that the adverse effects of this behavior on NATO members will be heavily mitigated by the presence of NATO (and perhaps, to a different degree, of the European Union). Put differently, European states—including exposed CEE ones—remain sheltered from the 'normal' pressures that war creates for state-level diplomatic and military adaptation. Indeed, the widespread assumption is that the war has strengthened NATO by providing a reinvigorated military purpose for Western security cooperation after years of drift. The policy focus is therefore overwhelmingly on finding new mechanisms within the NATO context to make the Alliance more effective against the threat.

To some extent, this reasoning is valid. The war provides a clearer and more immediate (even existential) threat than any since the end of the Cold War and, in theory, this threat could come to form a "glue" binding the Alliance together more tightly with time. Russia's aggressive behavior may strengthen alliance solidarity. But beneath the surface of formal shows of unity such as that at the 2014 Wales NATO Summit, the Ukraine conflict has changed the priorities of the threatened states much more along the lines of traditional effects of war – namely, the spectrum of diplomatic and military responses has widened to include sub-regional ententes, military self-help, or searches for some accommodation with the threatening Russia. Well before the invasion of Crimea, a trend toward diversification in CEE foreign policies had begun to manifest itself, as the regional security and political environment became more competitive. The 2008 Georgia War prompted some frontline NATO states to invest more conspicuously in defense, a tendency reinforced by years of Russian military posturing and assertiveness. The drawdown of U.S. forces in Europe, together with a perceived cooling of American commitment to frontline allies during the Russia Reset period, prompted most states in the region to reevaluate their diplomatic positions in favor of either greater alignment with the EU, cooperation with nearby states or diplomatic openings to Moscow—or in some cases, all three.

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3 Jakub Grygiel and A. Wess Mitchell, "A Preclusive Strategy to Defend the NATO Frontier," *The American Interest*, 2014.

The Ukraine war has acted as an accelerant to these shifts. While still relying on the United States as primary security patron and NATO as the main vehicle of that patronage, CEE states are investing in alternative means for lessening their outright dependency on the United States in a crisis, hedging against its failure by investing in other arrangements, or simply augmenting the ability of the state to look after itself. These efforts have both a diplomatic and military dimension. Diplomatically, the war set in motion realignments of one kind or another in the international political investments of virtually every country between the Baltic and Black Seas. In the north, it created stronger incentives for the Baltic states to look for closer ties to non-NATO Nordic neighbors, which themselves have reasons to rethink neutrality and consider association with the Atlantic Alliance. For Poland, the war revealed a gulf in threat perception between itself and its southern neighbors, with a corresponding drop in the practical utility of the Visegrád Group format for Polish diplomacy. For the southern Visegrád countries, the war showed the potential liabilities of NATO membership as a source of irritation in relations with Russia and created temptations for alternative groupings with states like Austria for pursuing largely de-securitized regional agendas.[4]

Militarily, the war in Ukraine demonstrated to CEE countries the inadequacy of their defense capabilities and concepts, developed over the course of the previous decade. Most immediately, after years of emphasis on interoperability with larger NATO militaries for expeditionary, "out of area" warfighting, the Ukraine war has brought a reorientation toward traditional territorial defense on the European mainland. Instead of seeking to solve security problems in distant theaters, CEE states were reawakened to the historical regional challenge of building deterrence, using weapons and techniques available to a mid-sized, conventionally armed states. At the most basic level, the war showed the need for more men and armaments to be placed at the disposal of the state than at any point since the Cold War. In the period since the Russian invasion, every CEE state except Slovenia has announced or implemented increases in defense spending. In addition to a move toward generally larger militaries, the war prompted re-examinations of the types of weapons and military doctrines that these states need to defend themselves successfully from attack by a stronger power – in a nutshell, less power projection and more territorial defense. Finally, given the nature of the Russian threat showcased in Ukraine, the most vulnerable states in North Central Europe (Poland in particular) started to consider the necessity of military self-help. The activation of the alliance may, in fact, be too slow to deter, and if need be, to eject a Russian advance.

4 Dariusz Kałan, "The Slavkov Triangle: A Rival to the Visegrad Group?," *PISM*, 2015.

In both a diplomatic and military sense, the changes that the war is bringing to CEE strategic behavior, while nascent, are likely to be persistent influences to the region's geopolitical complexion for many years to come. If properly channeled, some of these tendencies could produce positive externalities for the region and NATO. Most notably, heightened security concerns could spur long-overdue increases in defense spending and prompt greater seriousness about using underdeveloped platforms for regional cooperation, both of which would mean greater self-reliance and less free-riding on the United States. At the same time, the trend toward strategic diversification among America's CEE allies, particularly when augmented by perceptions of American retreat and the presence of Russian subversive tactics, also carries potential negative ramifications, not only for the countries of this region but for Europe and America, including:

Greater division in NATO and the EU

Uncertainty fuels disunity. Only states whose basic security needs are met feel confident to invest in the everyday politics of cooperation, whether in NATO or in the EU. The less effectively those needs are met, the louder vulnerable members are likely to become, highlighting the contrast in threat perceptions with more secure members and fueling political crises.

Openings for Russian influence

Accommodationist tendencies in parts of the CEE region tend to work symbiotically with Russian subversive influence, strengthening Moscow's leverage in future crises. They produce a centrifugal effect in NATO, as capitals are tempted to distance themselves from projects or diplomatic stances that could antagonize Moscow. This offers abundant opportunities for Russia to use the complexities of the CEE region as an entry point for dividing and undermining NATO.

Reduced military interoperability

While natural and even desirable from a U.S. standpoint, the heightened emphasis on territorial defense in CEE states could lead to an over-investment in standalone capabilities. If uncoordinated with NATO, such changes could produce counterproductive tous azimuts defense postures that make CEE militaries out-of-sync with NATO, reducing cohesion in a crisis and squandering training accumulated during the ISAF mission.

Increased nationalism

Historically, the presence of external threats has acted as a propellant to domestic nationalism and intra-state friction in the CEE region. If unconvinced of NATO's reliability, CEE capitals are more likely to invest in go-it-alone policies that seek reduced interference from the EU and enhanced state control over strategic sectors such as defense and energy. In addition to complicating nascent attempts at regional cooperation, such tendencies sap the economic competitiveness and growth that are the best foundation for ensuring national security on a long-term basis. Moreover, Russian exploitation of nationalist impulses—for example, funding of the Hungarian far-right or encouragement of various dormant irredentist urges—heightens the isolation of CEE countries from the European mainstream and could generate new "brush fires" that grab Western attention away from Russian aggression.

Perennial crisis

CEE military posturing, if unsupported within a NATO political and doctrinal context, could provide inadvertent incitements to further Russian adventurism. The Georgia War and Crimea crisis demonstrated Putin's ability to use bold military strikes to redraw the map to Russia's advantage. Providing a pretext for escalating Russian ambitions could heighten the military risks facing the Baltic States—risks that NATO, in its current configuration, is not positioned to counter.

Given the stake of these outcomes for the Western security order, it is surprising that relatively little effort has been made in the United States to understand the scale of geopolitical change that is underway in CEE war and diplomacy. This is partly rooted in contemporary U.S. policy views of this region. For most of the post-Cold War period, Central Europe has been treated as a "post-historical" theater lacking in immediate geopolitical consequence and therefore of low strategic interest to the United States. This has translated into the downgrading of Europe as a priority alongside other, more pressing regions—most notably the Middle East and Asia. Within transatlantic policy studies, there has been a noticeable de-emphasis of defense and strategic issues in favor of economics, democracy and energy. Most strategic analyses have tended to gravitate to Asia Pacific or the Middle East. Among CEE-themed analyses, there has been a substantive tilt away from traditional strategy to focus on democracy, driven by the view that geopolitical competition was on the wane while international rule-making and institution-building was the wave of the future. Finally, most strategic analyses approach CEE through the lens of U.S.-Russia relations—a tendency that has been reinforced by the Ukraine crisis. Little effort has been made to study traditional geopolitics in the CEE region and virtually none to assess changing behaviors of allies and the implications they hold for U.S. global interests.

Among analytical work that is done on CEE itself, most focus on a single CEE state's actions (usually Poland's in the military realm), a bilateral relationship, a sector like defense technology (e.g., missile defense) or, more recently crisis management options in Ukraine. Developments tend to be assessed using traditional analysis, after an event has occurred, rather than as a strategic interaction between multiple actors with fluid motives. This is reinforced by the fragmented nature of U.S. government views of CEE. The State Department's approach to the CEE region tends to emphasize internal democratic developments and institution-building, while the Defense Department looks at CEE through a technical planning lens concentrated on types and numbers of troops/weapons needed for strategic reassurance. In both cases, the timeframe tends to be near-term.

The gaps in knowledge created by these approaches leave U.S. policy blind to changes in the fabric of state behavior in the region—what is shaping their views of the world and their position in it and how they are changing in imperceptible ways over time. Generally speaking, allies as a general category tend to be treated as a given in many studies. "Red on blue" exercises generally focus on two-part strategic interactions in which allies are assumed to be embedded within the behavior of the "blue team" (the United States). This reflects a longstanding U.S. assumption that our allies are firmly—and perhaps irrevocably—anchored to America both by choice, due to the similarity of their (mostly democratic) political systems, and by strategic necessity, due to their geopolitical location near historically expansionist states. As a result, accelerating changes in alliance behavior in CEE and other regions have the potential to take U.S. policymakers by surprise.

These habits no longer match geopolitical reality. The United States needs to understand the changes that are underway in its CEE alliances, and global alliances generally, in order to form a coherent strategy for responding to emerging constraints and opportunities and competing effectively with rivals in the 21st Century region.

Structure of the Strategic Assessment Group

To provide an enlarged analytical basis for U.S. policy on CEE, CEPA launched the U.S.-Central Europe Strategic Assessment Group. The purpose of this project is twofold: (1) To examine how CEE foreign and security policies are responding to the conditions created by the Ukraine war and (2) to identify what these changes mean for U.S. national security interests and how American policy should be adapted to shape CEE calculations and hence longer-term regional geopolitical outcomes. Over the course of a year, the Group held a series of closed-door seminars in Washington, D.C. and Warsaw, Poland. Each meeting consisted of a structured assessment of specific questions related to geopolitical change in CEE. These included:

1. What is the Russian calculus? What are Russian objectives toward the CEE region, whether in the form a strategy or ad hoc policy, and what costs are they willing to pay to achieve them? What are they trying to avoid (what do they fear)?

2. What are the CEE calculations post-Ukraine War? How are CEE states behaving now as a result of Russian aggression? How do their behaviors comport with U.S. assumptions and aims? Can they be "channeled"? Specifically, what can they do to force Russia to expend resources toward new purposes, preferably defensive in nature, and away from Russia's current expansionistic objectives? How can they increase the Russian costs above the accepted threshold?

3. What can the United States do to change CEE calculations? In particular, how can we incentivize CEE to take authorship of their security and spur long-term strategic thinking? How would the increased risks associated with a weakening of American extended deterrent impact CEE thinking? What benefits should the United States promise as rewards for greater local self-reliance but not appeasement of Russia?

In addressing these questions, the Strategic Assessment Group drew on senior experts from the United States and CEE allies. The Group included both non-governmental analysts and officials from government and the military. It conducted meetings with the Polish Ministry of Defense; the Polish Foreign Ministry; the combined directors of policy planning of the Visegrád Group; and numerous Baltic military and political officials.

Following this series of meetings, the Group solicited essays from its members highlighting major themes presented and discussed in the working group sessions. These essays are presented below, in three sections. In the first, three Group members (**Edward Lucas**, **Marcin Zaborowski** and **Jiří Schneider**) assess the changes that the Ukraine war is bringing in the diplomatic behavior of frontline allies. In the second section, four members (**Pauli Järvenpää**, **Thomas G. Mahnken**, **Andrzej Dybczyński** and **Ian Brzezinski**) examine the changes that the war is prompting in the military behavior of key allies, with a particular emphasis on the security dilemma in North Central Europe. In the third section, four members (**Elbridge Colby**, **Chris Chivvis**, **Jakub Grygiel** and **Wess Mitchell**) examine options that the United States to employ in responding to the evolving CEE geopolitical landscape.

Recommendations

From the working sessions and the highlighted essays, the project chairs developed a set of key findings that are elaborated in the conclusion of this report.* Among these findings, the following is a brief summary of priorities for U.S. policy elaborated in the report's conclusion:

1. Work to make frontline states less susceptible to limited war techniques.
2. Provide the tools to make these strategies viable.
3. Strengthen NATO's ability to conduct limited nuclear operations against Russia.
4. Fortify vulnerable points in regional military geography.
5. Make territorial defense NATO's top priority.
6. Make permanent basing the centerpiece of U.S. policy in Europe.
7. Prioritize U.S. strategic engagement with countries whose regional perspective is most congruent with that of the United States.
8. Prevent the isolation of Poland in regional diplomacy.
9. Channel cooperation among less resistant CEE states toward support of vulnerable neighbors.
10. Strengthen U.S. commercial-strategic presence in the CEE region.

Across these recommendations, one overarching point stands out as a central conclusion of the project: America must be an engaged participant in the CEE region if the conditions of stability that have prevailed there are to endure. The post-Cold War period has ended. The changes that are underway in CEE geopolitics can lead to either positive or negative outcomes, depending on how they are channeled. The new strategic landscape offers constraints, but it also opportunities—for a more capable set of indigenous forces to oppose Russian expansion. But this will only happen if they are steered in the right direction. And the only power on earth that can do so is the United States.

*These recommendations are the view of the project chairs and do not necessarily represent the opinions of all Working Group members.

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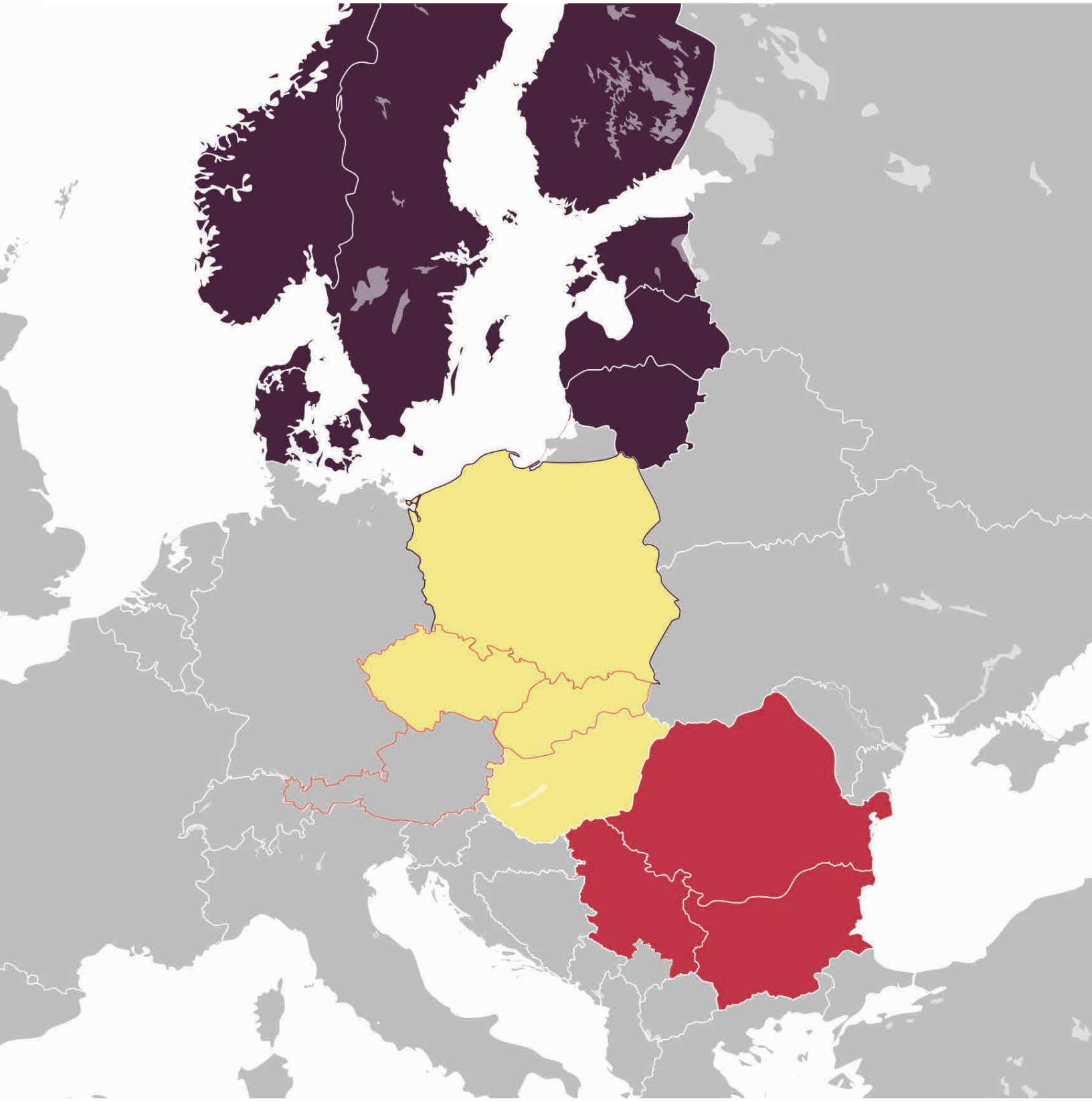
Alliance Structures



EUROPE'S NEW FRONTIER

Edward Lucas

Edward Lucas is Senior Vice President and Director of the Baltic Security Initiative at the Center for European Policy Analysis. He is also a senior editor at The Economist, the world's foremost newsweekly. His expertise includes energy, cyber-security, espionage, Russian foreign and security policy and the politics and economics of Eastern Europe.

In 2008 he wrote The New Cold War, a prescient account of Vladimir Putin's Russia. In 2011 he wrote Deception, an investigative account of east-west espionage. He is a strong critic of the fugitive NSA contractor Edward Snowden, and author of an e-book The Snowden Operation. His latest book is *Cyberphobia***. He has also contributed to books on religion and media ethics.**

The Problem

Europe's new frontline states are the Nordic five (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), the Baltic three (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), plus Poland. Six of the NBP9 border Russia. But all nine are exposed to the Kremlin's provocations and intimidation, which breach the conventions governing civilized behavior among neighbors and, in some cases, international law. These include aggressive espionage; targeted corruption; propaganda onslaughts; cyber-attacks; exploitation of ethnic and regional tensions; economic sanctions; coercive use of Soviet-era energy links; aggressive "snap" military exercises where the scenario involves attack, isolation or occupation (including the use of nuclear weapons); provocations in airspace, at sea and even (in Estonia's case) over the land border.[1]

These front-line states of the NBP9 face an assertive and revisionist power that has the means and willpower to pursue its goals and against which they cannot, as things stand, defend themselves. Their topography is unfavorable. Their defense spending is too low. They do not have the brains or the muscle needed to maintain regional security. Nor are their nearby allies interested. Leaders in the main West European countries look south, not east. Germany is unwilling to accept the possibility of military confrontation with Russia.

Admittedly, on paper the NBP9 are rich enough to defend themselves: their combined gross domestic product (GDP) is $2.3 trillion, roughly a third more than Russia's $1.7 trillion. Their population is 70 million—larger than France's. Their combined defense spending is $33 billion. They have world-class military aviation, naval (especially submarine), artillery, special forces, cyber and intelligence capabilities. As one country they would have a good claim to be the most militarily effective non-nuclear power in Europe.

1 The kidnapping of Eston Kohver, who was held for a year before being exchanged for a Russian spy.

Regional Defense Spending

($m)

Poland

9,507.90

Sweden

5,413.31

Norway

4,920.85

Denmark

3,726.67

Finland

2,843.84

Romania

2,180.83

Lithuania

458.90

Estonia

424.70

Latvia

237.51

Figures are to scale. Source: The International Institute For Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2015*.* Figures for Denmark, Norway and Sweden reflect *The Military Balance 2014*. Figures for Latvia reflect *The Military Balance 2013*. All data is most recent available. All data reflects current USD.

But the NBP9 are divided—into NATO and non-NATO, EU and non-EU, big and small, rich and poor, heavy spenders on defense and free riders. They are not in the same defense alliance. They do not coordinate fully (or in some cases at all) their threat assessments, military plans, purchasing or exercises. Elites and public opinion in Sweden and Finland fear entanglement in an American-led military alliance. The Baltic states fear any dilution of the Article 5 guarantee; Denmark is also skeptical of anything that might weaken the centrality of NATO. Norway, which has by far the largest interests in the Arctic, fears that the other countries do not understand the threats and opportunities it faces. The Nordic five—prosperous and established democracies—fear that the poorer and worse-governed Baltic states will not fit into their existing cooperation. The Baltic states do not trust each other or cooperate smoothly, and are worried that the rest of the region regards them as too small and too vulnerable to be taken seriously.

Poland and Estonia (the only NBP9 countries to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense) fear that they have to bear the burden of supporting other countries that spend less. Poland in particular thinks that its size and the depth of its strategic culture mean that it may be the loser in any arrangement that involves smaller, weaker and more muddle-headed countries. For their part, the Nordic and Baltic countries fear Poland's political unpredictability. The government of Donald Tusk was dependable. What will the next Polish government be like? Memories of the chaotic and unpredictable era of the late Lech Kaczynski, and his brother, Jarosław, who dominates the majority Law and Justice party, are still vivid.

The answer to these difficulties and divisions should be an institutional mechanism. But none exists. The Council of Baltic Sea States includes all the states of the region plus Russia, Germany and the European Commission but is a talking shop, not a security organization. Nordic defense cooperation—NORDEFCO—is increasing[2] but excludes the Baltics. Sweden has some bilateral security arrangements with Norway and others with Finland.[3] It is launching a new program of defense cooperation with Poland. Finland cooperates closely with Estonia on border issues. Nordic-Baltic cooperation has intensified under American leadership—a long-standing initiative known as e-PINE, for Enhanced Partnership In Northern Europe. This is slowly being transformed into a more defense-focused arrangement. But it does not include Poland.

2 Gerard O'Dwyer, "Sweden Proposes Aggressive Nordic Defense," *Defense News*, 2015.

3 Christopher Harress, "Scared By Russia, Sweden And Finland Make War Pact," *International Business TImes*, 2015.

These countries' strategic incoherence, their resulting inability to defend themselves without outside help, and the threat this creates to NATO's credibility in the region make the NBP9's security an issue of global importance. This turns a regional security problem into a global one.

The credibility of NATO, and thus of the United States as a European power, depends on whether it can guarantee the security of the NBP9 and in particular the three states most vulnerable to Russian subversion or surprise attack: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. For now, Russia has the edge over the West in the Baltic Sea region. The security gap is growing, not shrinking. Promises of improvement do not make up for current shortcomings. Nor can individual countries' efforts make up for the lack of a proper regional security architecture. The burden for the region's fragmented and inadequate security places a large and perhaps unsustainable burden on outsiders, which in itself creates a tempting target for Russia.

If the Baltic states are successfully attacked or undermined (for example, through coercive but non-military regime change), the damage already done to the European security order by Russia's successful seizure of Ukrainian territory will become irretrievable. America's role as the ultimate guarantor of European security could be over in a matter of hours. Denting America's credibility in Europe would have a huge and potentially catastrophic effect on security elsewhere. Allies such as Japan, Taiwan (Republic of China) and South Korea would find it hard to believe American security guarantees. They would be strongly tempted to either make their own arrangements with the authorities in Beijing or engage in a destabilizing nuclear arms race to guarantee their own security. In short: Bust the Baltic, and you bust the West. The way to stop that is to strengthen the NBP9.

The Argument

Russia does not want to restore the Warsaw Pact. It knows that in a full-scale non-nuclear confrontation with the EU and NATO it will lose. What it does want is to regain influence and insight in its neighborhood. The most likely means to this end is a cheaper and less risky combination of intimidation and subversion. It brings the prospect of victory without the risk of full-scale war. Russia's military bullying should be seen in this light—as part of psychological warfare. It encourages other countries to see the Baltic states as doomed and expendable, and to feel that taking risks on their behalf is dangerous.

As a result, the greatest vulnerability in the Baltic Sea region right now is public opinion. Russia does not need to wage war if it can stoke defeatism. If Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians believe that resistance is useless, then they are unlikely to resist. If Swedes and Finns believe that standing up for their Baltic allies will drag them into a disastrous war, then they will stand clear instead. If Poles believe that the Baltic states are a lost cause, and that Russia and Germany are (again) making deals over their heads and that America and Britain will do nothing to save them, they will be tempted to make the best of a bad job and do what deals they can. That requires making deterrence in the region visibly credible. It will not convince people to say that the U.S. is prepared to risk World War Three to defend Narva (a Russian-populated city in North-Eastern Estonia). But the sight of American and other allied military on the streets of Narva make it clear that the allied security guarantee is practical and immediate, not conceptual and distant.

This chimes with another objective. The best way of avoiding a full-scale military confrontation in the Baltic Sea region is therefore to make sure that other elements of security work better. Initial provocations must be dealt with speedily, firmly and smoothly, before Russia has a chance to fan them into a real security crisis.

The essential framework for this, pending (and probably even after) Swedish and Finnish membership in NATO, is NBP9 cooperation. We need to see the region as a whole, with interdependent security. No country can afford to stand aside, citing its historical, geographical or political specificities. Big countries have to get used to working with small countries, rich ones with poor ones, strong ones with weak ones.

This will involve some difficult rethinking of national preferences (and prejudices). Poland will have to take its smaller neighbors seriously. The Baltic states will have to accept non-NATO involvement in their defense. Sweden and Finland will have to intensify their cooperation with their NATO neighbors. NATO will have to accept that the specific requirements of northeast European regional security require a specific sub-NATO solution. The United States, as always in Europe, will have to engage in leadership, shoulder risk and spend money.

Implications for the United States

The indispensable coordinator and instigator of all these efforts is the United States. For each country in the NBP9, the bilateral security relationship with the U.S. is the most important component by far of their defense thinking. If the U.S. asks Polish soldiers to exercise in Sweden, or Swedish and Finnish aircraft to conduct exercises in the Baltics, it will happen. Without American leadership, the region's security will be bedeviled by squabbles about national particularities.

This will require rethinking America's engagement with NATO and its bilateral relations with the individual countries in the region. Both relationships must be subordinate to the overall goal of protecting the NBP9 in order to minimize the likelihood of the United States' role as the ultimate security guarantor being called into question.

Much of the groundwork for this is already in place. The U.S. has excellent bilateral relationships with each of the NPB9. Though the number of American military personnel in Europe has dropped by 35% since 2012, General Frederick "Ben" Hodges, the commanding general of the U.S. Army Europe has radically sharpened the profile of the forces under his command. Initiatives such as "Operation Dragoon Ride"—a spectacular public display of mechanized infantry capability through six frontline states in March-April 2015—gave a prominence to American military presence in Europe not achieved since the Cold War.

But to some extent the American military presence in Europe is an illusion. As General Hodges told the New York Times, his task is to make the 30,000 soldiers under his command look like 300,000.[4] He borrows tanks and bridging equipment, lacks the trucks and railcars necessary to transport armored vehicles and other heavy war machines, and relies on helicopters brought in temporarily from the United States.

These shortcomings can be disguised in the short term. But they do not fool the Russians, and sooner or later the Russian media will begin to get across the message that the American military presence in Europe is threadbare to the point of nakedness. The inescapable conclusion from this is that the U.S. will therefore need to increase its semi-permanent military commitment to the European continent. Temporary rotations of troops and equipment are costlier in the long run than keeping them permanently in the theater where they are needed. The later American forces deploy to an area of crisis, the greater the danger that they have to fight. And the weaker they are when the fighting starts, the greater the danger that the U.S. will have to escalate in order to maintain its credibility.

This will be a hard sell. Congress will not easily understand why the United States is borrowing money to defend countries where the standard of living is higher. There are two counter-arguments to this. One is that the allies concerned make big contributions to American missions in other theaters. The other, more fundamental, one is that so long as the United States wishes to remain a world power, it must at all costs ensure that its military commitments to its allies are credible.

A greater military commitment is only one part of the solution. Equally important is to ensure the maximum effectiveness of the NBP9's still-rudimentary security cooperation. This will require far greater diplomatic engagement by the United States. As explained above, the contradictions and neuroses of the region are sufficient to induce paralysis unless a powerful outside actor is at hand to overcome them.

The United States could profitably share the burden with the United Kingdom. But the main effort will still have to come from the agencies of the U.S. government. Finally, the U.S. should deprioritise the question of Swedish and Finnish NATO membership. If it happens, it is welcome. But American engagement in the domestic debate in either country will not help or hurry the decision-making process. The priority must be immediate and practical regional security cooperation, not finding a tidy conceptual framework. This will involve some difficult mental adjustments for American military planners and others wedded to the NATO-or-nothing school of thought. But there is no point in maintaining the purity of the NATO framework if the result is a deterioration, and perhaps a fatal collapse, in European security.

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4 Emmarie Huetteman, "Despite Cuts, U.S. Army Prepares for Threats in Europe" *The New York Times*, 2015.

Recommendations

The practical tasks within the avowedly untidy NBP9 framework are to shore up every aspect of regional defense and security cooperation, and to do so with the involvement of outside countries that are prepared to contribute but excluding those that will be a brake on decision-making. This means looking at the region not in terms of countries, but in terms of links and nodes. Where are the most important and most vulnerable connections, in terms of infrastructure, logistics, energy, trade, finance and investment flows, and communications? What targets are most at risk and how can they be hardened? What kind of resilience and redundancy can be built in? What is the role of civil society and non-military institutions in maintaining normal life during crisis conditions? The better-run countries in the NBP9 have a lot to offer their weaker neighbors in this respect. The following ten points are not exhaustive, but may serve to stimulate discussion:

1) Better coordination in the NBP9 against Russian espionage, corruption and organized crime would blunt the edge of the Kremlin's most potent weapons. Sharing financial intelligence, joint spy-catching and intensified cooperation among criminal justice systems is long overdue. So too is diplomatic pressure on politicians who undermine their officials' efforts.

2) The NBP9 combined have some useful capabilities in collating, analyzing and rebutting Russian propaganda and disinformation. These would be formidable if they were combined, rather than fragmented. The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga offers an obvious focus for such efforts.

3) A particular emphasis in this should go into collating open-source and unclassified information about Russian misbehavior and mischief in the region. This would make it much harder for the Kremlin to claim that nothing abnormal is going on.

4) The NBP9 should intensify their cooperation with the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, Estonia.

5) Sweden and Finland already have analysts at the NATO Fusion Centre in the UK. However, a new Fusion cell dealing specifically with Russia's threat to Baltic Sea security would develop this relationship further. It should combine open-source information with classified material from NATO and non-NATO countries, i.e., under NATO auspices but with full Finnish and Swedish participation.

6) The NBP9 need to establish a common approach to military procurement, interoperability, planning, training, exercises, information-sharing, crisis management, disaster-preparedness. Creating a culture of mutual trust will not be quick or easy. But that is all the more reason to start now.

7) A common approach to missile defense is long overdue. When Poland has Patriot missiles, will they defend only Poland, or other countries too? If Polish troops are regularly deployed in the Baltic states, and come under attack there, then presumably the Polish state would want to protect them with its best weapons. What role is there for joint procurement—for example, missile defense installations in the Baltic states, perhaps partly paid for and operated by other countries in the region?

8) Offensive military capabilities can be better coordinated too. America has allowed Finland and Poland to buy the AGM-158 JASSM (Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile).[5] Other countries should consider JASSM acquisition too, and defense planning for the region should take into account the possible use of JASSM as a collective deterrent.

9) NATO, as well as Sweden and Finland, needs to pre-position equipment and ammunition in the Baltic states, and allied forces need to be a robust and permanent (i.e., as long as is needed) presence in the region. These forces need a high degree of political pre-authorization. Just as the NATO warplanes that take part in the air-policing mission do not need a meeting of the North Atlantic Council to allow them to scramble to see off an intruder, the same should be true of the NATO land and sea forces in the Baltics. If Russia tries to intimidate a cable-laying ship in international waters, or exploit an infrastructure breakdown in Lithuania, it should receive an immediate NATO response.

10) Russian warplanes fly dangerously through civilian air-traffic corridors, with their transponders switched off. The European Leadership Network, a think-tank in London, advocates a special regime[6] for air safety, applying conventions developed during the cold war, and for the airspace off the coast of China. American leadership in this, as in the other points above, is both vital and likely to be decisive.

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5 JASSM Overview, *Lockheed Martin*, http://www.lockheedmartin.co.uk/us/products/jassm.html

6 Thomas Frear, "Step by Step: Managing Military Incidents Between the West and Russia" *The European Leadership Network*, 2014.

POLAND: THE CHALLENGES OF MIDDLE POWER DIPLOMACY

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The Problem

The war in Ukraine has put Poland back into its geopolitical dilemma of a state placed in an unstable security environment. Poland's sovereign statehood, built around the principle of rejoining the West, may be directly threatened as the result of Russia's current offensive and the spread of its hybrid warfare to the Baltic states.

This essentially means that Poland is again becoming a frontline state, which certainly narrows its diplomatic options although its relative importance for the West could grow. As Russia's military buildup in the Kaliningrad region and aggressive exercises foreseeing nuclear attack on Warsaw are intensifying, it is only natural that Poland will prioritize its own security and the security of its nearest allies, in particular in the Baltic region. While over the last 10-15 years Warsaw both was expected to and showed the ambition to make a mark beyond its immediate neighborhood – militarily in Iraq and Afghanistan and politically by offering its transition experience in democratizing countries, it should be expected that such activities will be declining now. Russia's aggressive posture is therefore successfully preventing Poland from becoming an outward-looking actor, but it also makes Poland a more central power for the Western alliance.

Becoming a Frontline State

For various reasons Russia is returning to Central and Eastern Europe as a factor directly challenging America's leadership role in European security. Until recently, the United States assumed that although Russia caused a nuisance or two on occasion, it essentially was on the same side of history. It was argued with good reason that the challenges for Russian security were now in China and Central Asia and that hence its rapprochement with the West was only a matter of time. These assumptions often meant that the role for NATO defined during the Cold War as the provider of security in Europe was seen as no longer central, if at all relevant. It was often argued therefore that the alliance must refocus to become a stability provider (in the Balkans) or peace-enforcer (in Afghanistan). The defense of Europe against the prospect of Russian aggression was and in many corners still is seen as an obsolete task for NATO. Ukraine is changing this perspective. Russia has already annexed a part of Ukrainian territory, and it continues to execute and sponsor aggressive actions in the east of the country in close vicinity to NATO member states.

Poland and its NATO allies would be unwise to close their eyes to the fact that Putin's Russia is a belligerent representing the greatest threat to the security of Europe at the moment. Recognizing this should have immediate implications for the way NATO positions its forces and builds credible deterrence. Poland should make a greater effort to acquire frontline state capabilities and position its forces along its eastern border. NATO and the United States should also invest in the security of Poland, which, as the frontline state, is assuming a major role for the entire alliance and America's role in Europe.

Implications for the United States

America established and maintained its postwar position in no small part through the system of privileged relations with frontline states in Asia – Japan and South Korea; in Europe – Germany, Italy and Turkey; and in the Middle East – the Gulf States.[1] In each of them the United States has had military bases and bilateral Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs). Since the end of the Cold War, perceptions of Europe as a potential battleground declined sharply in the United States and with them the presence of U.S. forces, which have been reduced from the Cold War strength of 340,000 to around 30,000 that remained in 2015.

As of now, the Ukraine crisis has not altered this strategic picture. While some symbolic rotational presence has been established in frontline Poland and the Baltic states, it is nascent and unable to constitute a meaningful deterrence. At the same time the U.S. presence in Western Europe continues to decline unaltered, as had been planned before the eruption of the Ukraine crisis.[2]

This suggests that, as of now, the U.S. administration has not perceived the Ukraine war and Russia's growing assertiveness as a challenge to its role in Europe and in the world. Or that, even if the administration is aware of the challenge presented by Russia, it is unable to act due to resource constraints and a growing number of challenges in other parts of the world, in particular northeast Asia and the Middle East. However, further delay in recognizing and acting on the new geopolitical reality in Central and Eastern Europe may prove costly for the United States, particularly if Russia decides to push its challenge into NATO territory and the Baltic States. It is therefore only a matter of time before the United States needs to either recognize Poland and the Baltic states as frontline areas or abdicate the role it has filled in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

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1 Israel also belongs to this group although it represents a case of its own.

2 See: "US to Close 15 bases in Europe," *BBC News*, January 8, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-30731926.

There is a chance that this recognition may come with the next U.S. administration. In practice this would mean an investment in the presence of U.S. forces in Central and Eastern Europe. As resource constraints are likely to continue for some time, the United States may decide to relocate some of the forces it maintains in Western Europe to the frontline areas.

Redefining Poland's Role as an Ally

As Poland was joining NATO in 1999, the alliance was embarking on its first-ever intervention in Kosovo. Ever since, NATO has thrown itself into redefining its role to expand beyond collective defense and embrace collective security. In reality, that meant that the role of defending NATO territory started to be seen as somehow archaic, and the new alliance was expected to expand its tasks to out-of-area operations aimed first and foremost at peace-keeping and peace-enforcing. Deterrence and territorial defense became uncomfortable terms in NATO headquarters associated with old-fashioned Cold-War thinking.

This evolution had major implications for planning processes. The lead European NATO powers, the United Kingdom and France, followed soon by Germany, issued defense white papers that argued in favor of abandoning the focus on territorial defense and investing in expeditionary capabilities. States like Poland that were reluctant to embrace this trend were criticized for maintaining their focus on territorial defense and making insufficient investment in expeditionary capabilities. The UK, France, Germany and then other NATO allies were drastically reducing their armed vehicles and tank divisions. Almost all European allies, Poland included, abandoned conscription, switching toward a much smaller all-volunteer-force. At the same time, the investment in developing expeditionary capabilities was very slow. A number of European NATO allies went back on ordering new-generation strategic airlift, while France and the UK failed to reach agreement on developing a joint transport aircraft.

In other words, the perceived change in the security environment in Europe has allowed NATO allies to drastically reduce their defense spending and move away from the focus on territorial defense. At the same time, despite the announcements of the shift toward expeditionary capabilities, investments in those capabilities have often proved to be lacking, delayed or all together cancelled.

Like other allies, Poland was expected to join this trend. Indeed, Warsaw proved to be one of the most active participants in out-of-area missions, becoming one of the major contributors to the operations in Iraq (over 3,000 troops) and Afghanistan (2,500 troops). Participating in these and other operations provided Poland's armed forces with a modernizing impulse and has also had the benefit of identifying some obvious technical inadequacies. It was also an important show of solidarity with the United States. But the investment made in those missions has also meant that a considerable share of resources was spent on operations that were not directly linked to Poland's own security.

This has led to a certain backlash in public opinion, which turned critical on Poland's participation in overseas missions. That sentiment filtered into elite opinion and had its impact on Poland's decision not to participate in NATO's operation in Libya and vocal criticism in Warsaw about the prospect of an allied operation in Syria (which never materialized).

As Russia entered into the war in Georgia in 2008, annexed Crimea in 2014 and then moved into eastern Ukraine, it is becoming clear that redefining the alliance's mission away from the core task of defending its territory was premature. Some NATO members have already reacted to the new reality. Lithuania reintroduced conscription; all Baltic states have raised their levels of defense spending; many others have halted defense cuts. Meanwhile, Poland has embarked on an ambitious plan of investing in its defensive capabilities that includes development of an air and missile defense system, as well as acquisition of attack and transport helicopters and submarines. The program was in fact discussed before the eruption of the Ukraine crisis, but no doubt the developments beyond Poland's eastern border have given an additional urgency to these investments.[3]

As Poland invests into its defensive capabilities, it is important that it do so to the benefit of the entire alliance. As a frontline state Poland has additional responsibilities, but NATO should also recognize that Poland and the Baltic states are potential battlegrounds and as such their added value does not come from investing in expeditionary capabilities and participating in overseas missions but in effectively protecting the eastern frontier of the alliance. Hence, the expectation that the frontline states would be investing in expeditionary operations seems misplaced, particularly under current circumstances. A real contribution that frontline states can make is to invest in the protection of the alliance frontier. To fulfill this purpose they need capable and well-equipped forces.

3 See: "Poland Military Modernization: The Road Ahead," CEPA Intelligence Brief No. 2, September 2015, http://www.cepa.org/content/cepa-intelligence-brief-no-2.

Poland's armed forces have traveled a long way since the outset of the transition. Evolving from a large conscription-based force of over 350,000 troops to an all-volunteer limited force of just over 100,000, Poland's armed forces represent a very different asset. The ongoing modernization program coupled with the consistent growth of defense spending has had a positive impact on the quality of Poland's armed forces.

However, in some areas there are considerable shortfalls resulting from the legacy of the communist period. For example, a majority of the forces remain allocated along Poland's western border while the eastern border is insufficiently protected. It is also argued that the reduction in the number of active personnel has been too deep and that the current force of just over 100,000 is insufficient to effectively protect NATO's eastern frontier. Geography – wide-open plains separating Poland from its eastern neighbors – and geopolitics suggest that Poland should organize its armed forces by focusing on a land warfare scenario. Poland's allies, in particular the United States, would do well to recognize this.

Forecast and Recommendations

After securing its membership in NATO and the EU, Poland had its "end of history" moment. It was widely believed that Poland is now safe and that thanks to the EU it will be steadily becoming more prosperous. With democracy and a market economy seemingly secured at home, Poland was beginning to look outward. The transformation of the armed forces, the end of conscription, taking part in a number of overseas missions – these were all the results of that perception. Prior to the emergence of the Ukraine crisis and following Obama's reset policy, Poland was also taking steps toward rapprochement with Russia. It was believed then that their historically acrimonious relations could undergo a process similar to the one that Poland experienced with Germany after the end of the Cold War.

The prospect of finding a modus vivendi with Russia was allowing Poland to look for a role outside its immediate area of interest. Hence Poland's participation in peacekeeping missions in sub-Saharan Africa, Congo and Chad, its activism in offering transition know-how in Tunisia and Myanmar. Warsaw's foreign policy under the leadership of Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski was evidently becoming more global. However, Russia's annexation of Crimea and its war in eastern Ukraine have reminded Poland that its security environment remains predatory in nature and that Warsaw cannot afford the luxury of spreading its resources thin. Therefore, although Poland would have wished to depart from the logic of a frontline state, it cannot and it will have to concentrate on its own terrain, becoming perhaps even more confined to its region than it has been so far.

1) While recognizing Poland as a frontline state, the United States should invest serious military resources and personnel in Poland. Working together with the Polish government, the United States and other NATO allies should develop an effective deterrence in and around the Baltic area. It is often argued now that the area is already covered by so-called “extended deterrence” – meaning conventional and nuclear capabilities that exist in Western Europe and could hit a predator in the aftermath of an attack. However, as the success of Russia’s hybrid warfare methods in Ukraine have demonstrated, the only deterrence that is truly credible is the one that discourages the predator from taking an aggressive action in the first place. The substantial presence of U.S. and allied troops in Poland and the Baltic states should fulfil that purpose.

2) Poland’s real contribution to Western security is its role in defending NATO’s eastern frontier. In the past, Poland has been pushed to participate in overseas missions and acquire capabilities allowing it to execute operations in remote parts of the world. Allowing Warsaw to concentrate on itself and the Baltic Sea would make more strategic sense. Poland’s eastern border lacks natural barriers and is therefore difficult to defend, requiring the existence of large land forces and mechanized divisions. While transforming its armed forces, Poland should be advised to concentrate on acquiring the capabilities that are adequate for such scenarios.

3) As a frontline state, Poland should gain a particular status for the U.S. defense industry. Poland has become one of the prime buyers of U.S. defense equipment in Europe. However, as of now, U.S. defense companies’ investment in Poland has been meager. A major investment contributing to Poland’s technological development would certainly give greater substance to the relationship and could boost the frontline state’s own capabilities.

HOW STRATEGICALLY UNIFED IS CENTRAL EUROPE?

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The Problem

Russia's recent, more assertive posture against the West and its aggression against Ukraine made differences between the policies, statements and actions by Poland and other countries of the Visegrád Group (V4) – the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia – more visible. Do different threat perceptions pose a key problem or are they just temporary? What are their causes: is it history, geography, incidental business interests or more structural factors?

This paper analyzes how significant these differences are and to what extent they predispose or predetermine a less coherent security posture from the V4 states in the future. How determined a reaction should we expect from the southern Visegrád states in the event of a military crisis involving Poland (or the Baltic states)? What are the potential implications for NATO and the United States?

Are recent diverging statements by the Czech Republic, Slovak and Hungarian representatives occasional cacophony, or do they reveal more fundamental policy differences among the V4 countries toward Russia? Contrary to previous expectations, V4 positions on Eastern policy vary "from Poland's pro-NATO and anti-Russian stance, to Hungary's attempt to emulate Moscow's regime, with the Czech Republic and Slovakia somewhere in-between."[1] Or, in a different matrix: "Hungary's realpolitik and Poland's ideological hostility to Russia place them at opposite ends of the foreign policy spectrum in their respective stances towards Moscow, while the characteristic Czech oscillation and Slovak caution equally impede a joint resolution on the Ukrainian crisis."[2] If that is the case, then no wonder "Poland prefers to talk to the like-minded Baltic States, Nordics, and to Romania."[3] There are clear arguments[4] that the V4 cannot serve as a regional defense format because of five structural factors affecting its geopolitical cohesion: differentials in national potentials, in military capabilities, in geographic exposure, in historical experience and consequently in geopolitical position.

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1 Frank Markovic, "What lies behind Visegrád Four's different positions towards Ukraine and Russia?," *European Public Affairs.eu*, September 5, 2014, http://www.europeanpublicaffairs.eu/what-lies-behind-visegrad-fours-different-positions-towards-ukraine-and-russia/.

2 Artur de Liedekerke, "Political Cacophony in the East: Višegrad Fraying at the Seams," *Yale Journal of international Affairs*, November 10, 2014, http://yalejournal.org/article_post/political-cacophony-in-the-east-visegrad-fraying-at-the-seams/.

3 Milan Nič, "Visegrád Defense Cooperation: Doomed to Fail or Survive?," *CEPA Deterrence Papers No. 6*, Center for European Policy Analysis, January 29, 2015.

4 Adam Klus, "What Makes the Visegrád Group so Geopolitically Fragile?," *New Eastern Europe*, June 5, 2015, http://www.neweasterneurope.eu/articles-and-commentary/1617-what-makes-the-visegrad-group-so-geopolitically-fragile%3E/.

This paper does not view the V4 as a natural expression of existing coherence of interests but, rather, as one of the tools that can be used to align national interests among the NATO allied neighbors. The V4 can cultivate a web of common interests and help to resist the temptation to betray the common regional interest to keep great power politics out of Central Europe. The alternative is to engage individually with the great powers and to let them to play the V4 against one another.

Are the above-mentioned differences only a projection of the different historical experience of individual nations, or do they reflect contemporary challenges? After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland were bound together by a fundamental unity of purpose. Though the first Visegrád Declaration in 1991 made a symbolic reference to the meeting of Czech, Hungarian and Polish kings in 1335, the transformative aspirations of the region were not based on history. The Visegrád Group was formed around contemporary challenges: to shape a new security order in Central Europe, to dismantle the Warsaw Treaty Organization, to push for rapid withdrawal of Soviet troops and to join the Western, Euro-Atlantic institutions.

The differences in security threat perceptions between Poland and its three southern partners in the Visegrád Group, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, could be attributed simply to geography. Poland is the only V4 country that is a direct neighbor with Russia, namely with the heavily militarized Kaliningrad Region. Moreover, Poland is directly exposed to annual Russian military exercises in neighboring Belarus. However, the example of Czech policy does not seem to fit into this formula: more distant, less concerned.

Poland cannot opt out from pursuing an active geopolitical strategy, but alone it is too weak “to exert a dominant influence.”[5] In other words, Poland needs regional backing to withstand geopolitical pressures. Thus, for Poland, Visegrád defense cooperation is (one, not the only) part of solution, not part of the problem. The V4 provides North-South balance in Central Europe and connects a geographically contiguous belt of frontline states from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Hungary’s geographical position means double exposure: to challenges from the East as well as from the South – in the 1990s it was the Balkan war, now it is migration. It has to be recognized by other V4 countries that the South often poses a more imminent security challenge to Hungary than the East does.

In all V4 countries there are similar or identical views on the security environment: there are concerns about Russia’s assertiveness and about NATO’s ability to counter it effectively; there is low confidence in the EU as security provider.

5 Ibid.

But although the assessments are held in common, the "conclusions driven from them, vary among V4 members substantially."[6] The differences in attitudes towards Russia stem from historical experience, ideological motivation, political opportunism and particular economic interests.

The key weakness of regional security cooperation lies in "the lack of national consensus and strategic comprehension of [the] security environment (threat assessment) among political leadership."[7] There is no coherent perception of security threats among politicians in countries on NATO's eastern flank, and their security assessments did not align in reaction to "Russian resurgence," as forecasted by some analysts.[8] The assumption that the V4 states would share the same concerns about Russia has not been validated. To the contrary, we have now a solid body of evidence that there is a cleavage within V4 policy towards Russia. The V4 did not form a "regionally focused security group with common security interests";[9] the discord between the V4 countries is "playing into Putin's 'divide and conquer' strategy,"[10] and the dissonance has created yet another contribution to European cacophony.[11] Yet the differences in threat perception can be ultimately aligned by a rational security policy debate.

The proverbially opportune attitude of the Czech, Hungarian and Slovak governments towards Russia has been shaped by recent history as well as by the contemporary political and institutional crisis of the European Union. The attitude of the political elite towards Russia is disproportionally influenced by a small but vocal minority promoting a "pragmatic business approach" based on a business model where the company takes the profits and the state bears the risks and liabilities by providing political support and credit guarantees. The above-mentioned business interests find attentive ears among regional leaders who do not want to fall behind their equivalents in Germany, France or elsewhere. After all, the popular argument goes, it would be stupid to once again leave the Russian market to other competitors from the West, as happened in the early 1990s.

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6 Marek Madej, "Visegrád Group defense co-operation: what added value for the European capabilities?," June 2013, Note No.19, *Nordika Programme, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique*, https://www.frstrategie.org/barreFRS/publications/notes/2013/201319.pdf.

7 Jiří Schneider, "Small-state Strategies for Strengthening Deterrence," *CEPA Deterrence Papers No. 3* (Washington, DC: Center for European Policy Analysis, December 10, 2014).

8 "The common threat of a Russian resurgence in its post-Soviet periphery would push the V4 members toward greater collaboration in military affairs, but the May 12 [2011 V4 Defense Ministers] meeting is the first indication that such collaboration is occurring." "A Militarized Visegrád Group?," *Stratfor*, May 12, 2011, https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/militarized-visegrad-group.

9 Ibid.

10 De Liedekerke, "Political Cacophony in the East."

11 Sofia Casablanca, "V4 divergences: symptom of a deeper crisis in Europe?," December 13, 2014, blog, Delfi, by the *Lithuania Tribune*, http://en.delfi.lt/opinion/v4-divergences-symptom-of-a-deeper-crisis-in-europe.d?id=66663186.

Moscow conducts a "beauty contest" among regional political mavericks like President Milos Zeman of the Czech Republic or Prime Ministers Viktor Orbán of Hungary and Robert Fico of Slovakia and other European politicians who tend to believe in their exclusive mediating role between Russia and the West. The winner would be rewarded by special economic deals with Russia.

The V4 as a regional security group is not a result of a permanent overlap of interests. Rather, it has been a normative project on how to anchor Central Europe's place in Euro-Atlantic institutions. Maintaining basic consensus about common values and joint purpose is fundamental for V4 coherence. Flirting with the idea of an illiberal state,[12] critical statements about the West as a whole and a preference for "pragmatic," "mercantilist" relations with Russia undermine the credibility of the respective countries, of the V4 as a regional player and of Western institutions in general (NATO, EU).

The V4 Prime Ministers' Declaration of June 2014 stated quite clearly that the security situation has changed and requires adequate response in terms of defense doctrine: "The aggression of Russia against Ukraine and the subsequent annexation of Crimea have changed the security environment in Europe and made us re-think our defense posture. . . . Our ambition is to gradually increase our defense spending towards the threshold of 2% of GDP and allocate [an] appropriate portion of our defense budgets to modernization projects with the aim to develop new defense capabilities."[13] It remains to be seen whether they will make their governments live up to these commitments that were later confirmed at the NATO Summit in Newport, Wales, in September 2014.

Because of "profound gaps between [the] defense budgets of V4 countries…[the] Polish budget is currently more than twice as big as the rest of [the] V4 counties taken together,"[14] it would hardly be possible to move forward in regional defense cooperation. "If three of the V4 countries will not increase their defense spending, regional defense cooperation will not fly and no meaningful capability development is imaginable."[15]

Hungary's policy towards Ukraine has been shaped through the prism of protection of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine. In May 2014, Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán said that the "Hungarian community should enjoy dual citizenship and broad autonomy rights." He was criticized by then-Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk as not only undermining the Western position but also being dangerously akin to the demands of Russian-backed separatists in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LNR).

12 Markovic, "What lies behind Visegrád Four's different positions."

13 Visegrad Group, "Budapest Declaration of the Visegrad Group Heads of Government on the New Opening in V4 Defence Cooperation," June 24, 2014, http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2014/budapest-declaration-of.

14 Madej, "Visegrád Group defense co-operation."

15 Nič, "Visegrád Defense Cooperation."

In June 2015, Minister János Lázár, the de facto chief of Hungarian foreign intelligence, informed the parliament that "the government and the Information Office are convinced that the future of Hungarians living in the Transcarpathia (southwestern Ukraine) will be a serious issue in the coming decade" and that the "Information Office is carrying out operations to protect Hungarian citizens in the Carpathian Basin" while conceding that "the Hungarian government is openly undertaking activities in Ukraine in total opposition to the wishes of the Ukrainian government."[16] In this respect, Hungary, by following narrow national interest, diverges from the rest of the V4.

In reaction to Russia's aggression towards Ukraine and its increased assertiveness, NATO decided additional equipment would be deployed in NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) as a part of reassurance measures. The area concerning pre-positioning – NATO's eastern flank –stretches from the Baltic states through Poland to Romania and Bulgaria on the Black Sea. Deployments to Poland and the Baltics – "Atlantic Resolve North" - will be accompanied by deployments of troops and equipment in Bulgaria and Romania – code-named "Atlantic Resolve South" – and, in the future, potentially in other countries such as the Czech Republic and Hungary.[17]

The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia initially refused to be part of this security plan, claiming that this attempt to strengthen NATO's eastern flank might contribute to increasing tensions between West and East. Hence they are not part of the first reinforcements phase. According to Gen. Hans-Lothar Domröse, commander of NATO troops in Eastern Europe, "In a first wave, we will establish permanent staffs in six eastern European and Baltic states, each 40-men strong and with officers from up to 20 countries," and "in a second wave, NATO will probably install further staffs in other countries – such as Hungary, Slovakia and Greece – to signal deterrence potential and defense preparedness."[18]

16 "Ukraine's foreign ministry is doing what it can to stop Hungary's spies and Hungarian diplomats from undertaking operations in Ukraine." http://budapestbeacon.com/public-policy/hungary-to-invest-in-espionage/25189; "Hungary actively spying on Ukraine – intelligence official," July 14, 2015, UNIAN Information Agency, http://www.unian.info/world/1100722-hungary-actively-spying-on-ukraine-intelligence-official.html.

17 This includes Georgia. See Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., "Putin Won't Blitz Baltic States – But NATO Has A Plan….,"March 2, 2015, *Breaking Defense*, http://breakingdefense.com/2015/03/putin-wont-blitz-baltic-states-but-nato-has-a-plan/.

18 Christoph Dreier, "NATO rapid reaction force exercises in Poland target Russia, June 22, 2015, *World Socialist Web Site*, http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article142732056/Putin-muesste-einen-furchtbar-hohen-Preis-zahlen.html.

At the NATO Summit in Newport, Slovak President Andrej Kiska proposed to NATO a logistical base near Poprad in northern Slovakia. In February 2015, Slovak Defense Minister Martin Glvač proposed that Slovakia could host one of the newly formed NATO command centers in Eastern and Central European countries. He noted, however, that the plans for the command center would materialize only if the ongoing crisis in Ukraine continued deteriorating.

In June 2015, Hungary's Minister of Defense, Csaba Hende, confirmed[19] that in the context of reinforcement measures adopted at the NATO Summit in Newport, one of the command centers of the NATO Force Integration Units will be set up in Hungary.

But the situation concerning U.S. pre-positioned equipment remains ambivalent. In June, Hungary's defense minister rushed to deny that "international press reports flagged US plans to deploy heavy weapons in Eastern Europe," and "possibly Hungary"; later he said that the United States "had not asked Hungary to be involved in the placement of heavy weapons in the region."[20] In July, Hungarian media again reported that "the United States could send Bradley fighting vehicles and M1 tanks to Hungary next year for military exercises as part of NATO's response to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine."[21]

In the context of U.S.-Hungarian relations, it is worrisome that Hungarian Minister János Lázár admitted during a parliamentary hearing in June that "sour relations between the United States and Hungary have affected information sharing between the two countries' spy services because Washington is no longer assisting Hungary in this regard."[22] The fact there is a different level of trust in the bilateral relationship between the United States and individual V4 countries does not necessarily affect the level of V4 defense cooperation, but it could potentially limit cooperation where the United States is involved bilaterally and not through NATO.

19 "We will be a Member of a Stronger NATO by Next Summer," Statement by Hungarian Minister of Defence Csaba Hende at the Annual Conference of Defence, Military and Air Attachés in Budapest, June 30, 2015, http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-defence/news/we-will-be-a-member-of-a-stronger-nato-by-next-summer.

20 "Defence Minister: United States Will Not Deploy Heavy Weapons in Hungary," June 26, 2015, *Hungary Today*, http://hungarytoday.hu/news/defence-minister-united-states-will-deploy-heavy-weapons-hungary-19140.

21 "U.S. could send tanks to Hungary for military exercises: report," *Reuters*, July 22, 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/22/us-hungary-usa-nato-idUSKCN0PW0NM20150722?feedType=RSS&feedName=worldNews.

22 Benjamin Novak, "Hungary to upgrade its espionage capabilities," *The Budapest Beacon*, July 12, 2015http://budapestbeacon.com/public-policy/hungary-to-invest-in-espionage/25189.

Some 2,100 soldiers from Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and the United States took part in the NATO exercise Noble Jump in June 2015.

Earlier, in October 2014, approximately 140 Hungarian soldiers formed a battalion-sized unit together with assigned Lithuanian and U.S. companies for combined training and participation in exercises in Lithuania and other Baltic states; the Hungarian unit was deployed in Lithuania until the end of 2014.[23] This demonstrates Hungary's approach of basic allied solidarity, and it is reasonable to assume that in case of any future security crisis in the northeast flank of NATO, Hungary would not look away.

The joint declaration of the V4 prime ministers adopted in Budapest on June 24, 2014, stated that the V4 aims at establishing a permanent V4 multinational force "which will be achieved by linking the V4 EU Battlegroup certification exercise with NATO's Trident Juncture 2015 exercise." And indeed, in June 2015, the exercise Capable Logistician 2015 focused on logistics command and control as well as theatre-level logistics, exercising logistic capabilities for NATO's exercise Trident Juncture 2015. Training and exercising of a modular regional multinational force for collective defense purposes would be the most visible contribution of the V4 to NATO's Connected Forces Initiative. To that end, in April 2015, V4 defense ministers were tasked to further explore "compatibility between NFIU's tasks and the V4 Training and Exercise Strategy."[24] The Czech Republic, on assuming the V4 presidency in July 2015, promised to "push for progress on the question of building up a permanent V4 military structure" and "to focus on a joint V4 airspace protection."[25]

Our point of departure is that "the question is not whether the V4 regional grouping will survive but, rather, what its aims and ambitions will be."[26] It is sufficient to develop three basic scenarios of V4 defense cooperation based on high, low and zero ambition:

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23 "Hungarian troops to reinforce NATO land forces in Lithuania," Delfi, by the *Lithuania Tribune*, http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/defence/hungarian-troops-to-reinforce-nato-land-forces-in-lithuania.d?id=66239954.

24 Visegrád Group, "Joint Communiqué of the Visegrád Group Ministers of Defence," April 23, 2015, http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2015/joint-communique-of-the.

25 Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, "Czech Presidency of the Visegrád Group (V4) – July 2015 to June 2016," http://www.army.cz/en/ministry-of-defence/strategy-and-doctrine/czech-presidency-of-the-visegrad-group-v4---july-2015-to-june-2016-112105/.

26 Justyna Gotkowska and Olaf Osica, eds., "Closing the Gap? Military Co-operation from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea," (Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies [OSW], 2012).

1) Ambitious progress. The V4 will succeed in the establishment of the Permanent Modular Force, operational for NATO and EU Rapid Reaction Forces. That would require securing resources and a permanent coordination mechanism for training, force generation and rotation, exercises, logistical support, and a command structure available for modular plug-in into broader multinational structures. The V4 countries will make reliable and mutually credible financial commitments secured against unexpected one-sided resource cuts (see lessons from NORDEFCO). The test will be how quickly the defense spending of laggards (Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) would catch up with that of Poland.

2) Piecemeal progress. The V4 will "muddle through" to align foreign policy attitudes, but it will reap only "low hanging fruits" in defense cooperation – training or exercises– and it will fail to transform a battle group into a permanent modular force and will give up on ambitious defense cooperation projects.

3) Stagnation/fragmentation. If the V4 governments would prefer narrow national interests (e.g., protecting the Hungarian minority in Ukraine) or particular economic interests (especially in energy projects) over the common strategic interest of the region, one cannot expect V4 cooperation to deliver, let alone in defense. Some 2,100 soldiers from Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and the United States took part in the NATO exercise Noble Jump in June 2015.

Recommendations

1) The V4 defense coordination mechanism for defense planning and rapid reaction force generation should be flexible as well as fully accountable on a national level. There should be a back-up/substitution mechanism in case some national element was not fully authorized for the required mission or there were any caveats.

2) The V4 countries should equitably engage in reinforcement on the eastern flank – for example, sending officers to the permanent staffs of the NFIUs.

3) The V4 leaders have to engage in regular security dialogue to bridge threat perception gaps and to uphold domestic security policy debate at a strategic level by putting nation-specific factors into a broader regional perspective. Analyses by the V4 Think Tank Platform[1] or other expert networks could be used as a good basis for debate.

4) 4. The cohesion of V4 security cooperation will be tested by challenges not only from the East but also from the South. Solidarity with Poland – as the V4 nation most exposed to a Russian military challenge – has to be coupled by solidarity with Hungary – currently the V4 nation most exposed to migration from the Balkans. Hungary's concern about the Hungarian minority in Ukraine and about migration from the South should not distort policy and divert resources allocated for regional cooperation.

5) 5. Working-level U.S.-V4 security and defense consultations (in NATO, at one of the regular security conferences) could serve as a useful tool to foster V4 cohesion and to keep the V4 trans-Atlantic spirit well and alive.

Conclusion

While recent Russian assertiveness undermined the credibility of the Visegrád Group as a regional security actor, the imperative for regional security cooperation in Central Europe (STRATFOR's "the logic behind the V4") has not disappeared. The better that V4 defense cooperation works, the less concerned one should be about the question in the title of this paper: all of the V4 would go for one. In my view, it would be overly shortsighted to sacrifice V4 cooperation to narrow national interests. But if the V4 would not work, it would not be a tragedy; it would be yet another lost chance for the region to punch according its weight.

27 JV4 Think-Tank Platform, http://old.visegradfund.org/think-tank/think-visegrad/

IS THE NORDIC-BALTIC REGION DEFENSIBLE?

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The Problem

With Russia's use of force first in Crimea in winter 2014 and then later in eastern Ukraine, the term "hybrid warfare" has entered the current military lexicon – or rather re-entered it, since the concept itself offers nothing particularly new. In fact, the substance of the term is age-old and combines, inter alia, military, economic, political, propagandistic and even cultural activities to achieve political objectives, preferably short of war or with the use of physical violence, if need be.[1]

What has appeared to come as news to most analysts is that military force, be it hybrid or traditional, is still useable currency in present-day Europe – and that Russia has a president, Vladimir Putin, who does not seem to shirk from using it.[2] This revelation has gotten many people, particularly in the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), the three Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), and Poland (abbreviated together as NBP9), rightly worried about the possible next steps. What if Russia will not stop where it is now, Crimea and eastern Ukraine, but continues to pressure and threaten its neighbors, including the NBP9?[3]

In this context, urgent questions arise with regard to NATO. What can a purely defensive alliance like NATO do to raise an aggressor's perception of potential costs in order to deter him? What are NATO's options and its ability to act? And, most importantly, what can each of these countries do themselves to raise the threshold of aggression against them?

The main argument this short paper presents is that despite all the recent interest in hybrid warfare, the traditional tools of warfare still matter. Therefore, ipso facto, we should not rule out the use of traditional deterrence tools either. They are available even for the predominantly small states that the NBP9 countries are. And, at the end of the day, it is only NATO that can form a decisive link between the Europeans and their North American allies.[4]

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1 For good general approaches with historical analysis, see Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, eds., *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See also Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

2 Mark Galeotti has put it well when he says that "what has changed is the world in which hybrid war happens." Mark Galeotti, quoted by Peter Pomerantsev, "We're all Putin's 'useful idiots,'" July 21, 2015, www.politico.eu/article/putin-useful-idiots-media-propaganda-cold-war-pundits-television.

3 For a description of unclassified RAND war games, see Terrence Kelly, "Stop Putin's Next Invasion Before It Starts", *World Report* (blog), March 20, 2015, http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2015/03/20/stop-putins-aggression-with-us-forces-in-eastern-europe. A brilliant analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the NBP9 defenses is offered by Edward Lucas, *The Coming Storm, Baltic Sea Security*, Center for European Policy Analysis, June 2015).

Approximate Ranges of Russian S-400 Missile Systems

Source: Stratfor

The Deterrence Options

The increased popular focus on hybrid warfare and an emphasis on its non-physical dimensions have tended to mislead us into thinking of warfare as mainly stealth operations by "little green men," information operations, cyberattacks, and applications of political or economic pressure. In reality, however, hybrid actions have most often been supported by the use of conventional methods of warfare.[5] Against the use of traditional military force by aggressors, the threatened states need the ability to deter their opponents by carefully designed and professionally executed regional or even local operations, as well as by threats of long-range operations.[6]

It will be argued here that there are three levels of deterrence options available even for small weak states threatened by a powerful aggressor: first, to provide extended deterrence, stronger allies can demonstrate support for their smaller partners; second, there is the option of "preclusive defense," or deterrence built on regionally or locally created defense capabilities; and third, there is the deterrent effect of potential long-range operations, which can deter aggressors by threatening their own most-valued assets.[7]

Option One

On the first level of deterrence, the NATO alliance showed its reassurance capabilities early on, as the Ukraine crisis began to emerge. To reassure the Baltic countries and Poland, in early March 2014 the United States deployed an additional six F-15C fighter aircraft to augment the four already assigned to the rotating NATO Baltic air policing mission in Lithuania, a mission that Britain announced that it would similarly reinforce later on.

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4 Doubts on NATO's potential role ("Without the United States, NATO is hollow – capability-wise and in strategic purpose") are presented by Jyri Raitasalo, "NATO is not a real military actor," War on the Rocks (blog), July 2015.

5 For a thorough study of hybrid warfare carried out by the Russians in Ukraine, see András Rácz, Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist, FIIA Report 43 (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, June 16, 2015).

6 For an excellent analysis of why strong local military capabilities are needed to deter an aggressor, see Jakub Grygiel and A. Wess Mitchell, "Limited War Is Back," *The National Interest*, September/October 2014, 37-44.

7 "Preclusive defense" is the term used by Grygiel and Mitchell in "Limited War Is Back."

At the same time, the United States sent twelve extra F-16 fighters and three C-130J air transports to Poland to bolster that country's own national capabilities. Furthermore, six more U.S. F-15s and two refueling aircraft were dispatched to Lithuania as part of the rotating NATO air policing mission in the Baltic airspace, and the United Kingdom announced that it would also similarly bolster the Baltic air policing capability when Poland took over the air policing mission at the Šiauliai Air Base in Lithuania.[8] In late April 2014, the Ämari Air Base in Estonia began hosting additional rotating Baltic air policing missions, with the first rotation handled by four Danish F-16 fighters.[9]

On top of all these measures, NATO announced that it would be updating its defense plans concerning the Baltic countries and Poland and developing a readiness plan that includes a review of joint exercises, threat assessments, intelligence-sharing arrangements, early-warning procedures, and crisis response planning. Furthermore, the United States announced that its efforts would include a European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) of up to $1 billion to be spent on further training and exercises, especially on the territory of the newer NATO allies.[10]

These measures went a long way toward reassuring the Baltic countries and Poland of concrete and robust support from the alliance, but even more was to come. The United States announced it was to rotate its land forces to the Baltic countries and Poland. The number of troops was to be low, just a company-sized unit (about 150 soldiers) to each of those countries.[11] The number of troops was only symbolic, but what was more important was that these troops brought their heavy materiel, including M1 A2 Abrams main battle tanks, with them. Late in April 2015, these tanks carried out several demonstrations of their fire power, for example, at the Tapa firing range in Estonia – the first time American tanks had ever done so in that country.[12]

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8 For further details of support to the Baltic states and Poland by the United States and NATO, see "Fact Sheet: U.S. Efforts in Support of NATO Allies and Partners," March 26, 2014, http://whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/26/fact-sheet-us-efforts-support-NATO-allies-and-partners.

9 "NATO opens an air base in Estonia," *Estonian World*, May 2, 2014, http://estonianworld.com/security/nato-opens-air-base-estonia-video/.

10 See "Fact Sheet: European Reassurance Initiative and Other U.S. Efforts in Support of NATO Allies and Partners," June 3, 2014, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/03/fact-sheet-european-reassurance-initiative-and-other-us-efforts-support-.

11 Ibid.

12 "First US M1 Abrams tank round fired in Estonia," Official Homepage of the United States Army, May 7, 2015, http://www.army.mil/article/148161/First_US_M1_Abram_tank_round_fired_in_Estonia/. The event took place on April 30, 2015, and the tank platoon displaying their firepower came from the 3rd Infantry Division, Ft. Stewart, Georgia.

Meanwhile, it began to be seriously discussed in Washington whether the United States should consider establishing a permanent military presence in the Baltic countries and Poland. At a minimum, these countries were hoping to have the United States pre-position heavy weapons as well as oil, lubricants, field rations, and other logistics materiel within their borders. Then, on June 13, 2015, it was reported that the Pentagon will be ready to store battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and other heavy weapons such as heavy artillery pieces for as many as 5,000 American troops – a full brigade's worth of equipment, formally called the European Activity Set – in several Baltic and Eastern European countries.[13] This will be a credible sign of American commitment, acting as a highly visible deterrent, the way the Berlin Brigade did after the Berlin Wall crisis in 1961.

These weapons will be stored in the three Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) as well as in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and possibly Hungary. The Baltic countries will have storage depots for a company-sized unit, with the other, larger countries preparing facilities for about a battalion-sized unit. While this proposal falls short of permanently assigning U.S. troops to these countries, positioning the equipment in local weapons warehouses saves the U.S. Army time, money and resources, and avoids having to ship the equipment to these countries later during a crisis scenario.

During his trip to Tallinn on June 23, 2015, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter confirmed this information and told his audience that "while we do not seek a cold, let alone a hot war with Russia, we will defend our allies."[14]

To support the U.S. effort, NATO's defense ministers finalized details at their June 2015 meeting on the six small headquarters – NATO Force Integration Units, or NFIUs – to be set up in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania. According to the ministers, each NFIU will consist of about 40 people and will play a key role in planning, scheduling exercises, and assisting potential reinforcement. It was also decided at the June ministerial meeting to establish a new Joint Logistics Headquarters to facilitate any necessary rapid movement of forces.[15]

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13 Eric Schmitt and Steven Lee Myers, "US Is Poised to Put Heavy Weaponry in Eastern Europe," *New York Times*, June 13, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/14/world/europe/us-poised-to-put-heavy-weaponry-in-east-europe.html.

14 VOA News, "US to Position Tanks, Arms in 7 European Nations," *Voice of America*, June 23, 2015, http://www.voanews.com/content/carter-us-will-not-rely-on-cold-war-playbook-with-russia/2833572.html.

15 "Statement by the NATO Defence Ministers on the Readiness Action Plan," press release, Meeting of NATO Ministers of Defense, February 5, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_117222.htm.

The ministerial also decided to increase the size of the NATO Response Force (NRF) to 40,000 personnel, a major jump from the previous level of 13,000. The meeting further confirmed that the NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), or Spearhead Force, was "operational."[16] France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom will be the rotating framework nations heading the Spearhead Force. At the same time, Germany, Poland and Denmark are developing the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin, Poland, to function as a regional headquarters. As a sign of alliance solidarity, the United States promised to contribute troops and enabling capabilities to the VJTF Spearhead Force including surveillance and transport aircraft and additional special operations forces.[17]

One final point: one cannot stress enough the need for these units to be multinational, for the sake of alliance solidarity. What the Baltic countries and Poland want most is a U.S. presence in their countries; however, it would also be a politically powerful signal to any potential aggressor if the units also included meaningful numbers of soldiers from other major European countries – especially from Germany (and thus a special effort should be made to include them in these formations). Similarly, deployments from France and the United Kingdom would be particularly welcome, not only because of these countries' conventional military prowess but also because they are European nuclear powers.[18]

Option Two

On the second level of deterrence, the critical question is what the NBP9 countries bordering Russia can do to build up their own ability to project deterrence. With the exception of Poland, all of these countries have only small standing armed forces. Most of them also have relatively small militarily trained reserves. The one exception is Finland, which has mobilizable reserves of 230,000 soldiers, with a total of as many as a million men (and a few thousand women) having received extensive military training.[19]

16 "Defence Ministers decide to bolster the NATO Response Force, reinforce collective defence," Meeting of NATO Ministers of Defense, June 24, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_120993.htm.

17 "Statement by the NATO Defence Ministers on the Readiness Action Plan."

18 This same point has been made by Henrik Praks, "Rethinking Deterrence and Assurance for the Baltic Region – Forward Conventional Deterrence and Defence Is the Key," blog, *International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS)*, June 18, 2015, http://www.icds.ee/blog/article/rethinking-deterrence-and-assurance-for-the-baltic-region-forward-conventional-deterrence-and-defence-is-the-key.

19 It raised eyebrows in some quarters when it became known that the Finnish Armed Forces was about to send letters to some 900,000 reservists in May 2015. See Pauli Järvenpää, "Anatomy of a News Item," blog, *ICDS*, May 28, 2015, http://www.icds.ee/blog/article/anatomy-of-a-news-item-1/.

Yet, the answer to the above critical question is, perhaps surprisingly, quite a lot. The fact is that all these countries have relatively large voluntary military organizations. In Estonia, it is the Kaitseliit, in Latvia the Zemessardze, and in Lithuania the KASP. By using their voluntary defense organizations, these countries could bolster their national defense capabilities relatively easily and quickly by creating a number of small units – perhaps no more than platoon- or at most company-sized – equipped with modern but simple-to-use and powerful anti-tank, anti-air and intelligence-related equipment. A special need would be to train a high number of groups for air-to-ground fire support tasks.[20]

The general mission for these small units would be to trade space for time. Also, they could inflict costs on the advancing aggressor.[21] Most likely they would not be able to stop a powerful and determined aggressor, but they could certainly make him slow down and regroup, which in turn would give the more powerful allies of the aggressor's victim time to bring their strength to bear on the situation.

These units should be trained and deployed to operate not just in their own country but throughout the NBP9. They could use such weaponry as traditional mortars, supported by modern counter-battery radars. Also, weapons such as the Javelin and TOW anti-tank missiles and the shoulder-launched Stinger anti-aircraft missiles would be ideal weapons for these troops, with mobility, sustainability and flexibility as their central assets.[22]

In addition to their function of slowing down an aggressor's attack, the main task of these troops would be to defend the key assets that sustain the vital functions of society – airports, transportation nodes, power stations and key military facilities – assets that are highly vulnerable due to the inability of these countries' relatively few professional units to provide adequate cover for all of them.[23]

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20 In fact, the three Baltic states together are comparable to Israel in size. By joining their efforts within the alliance, and with help from their friends and allies, they could readily increase their military power. I am indebted to Jakub Grygiel for pointing this out to me.

21 Their ultimate purpose would be to increase the ability to deter by denial. See A. Wess Mitchell, "The Case for Deterrence by Denial," *The American Interest*, August 12, 2015, http://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/08/12/the-case-for-deterrence-by-denial.

22 Or, in the anti-tank missile category, the Next Generation Light Anti-tank Weapon (NLAW) that Finland has just decided to acquire more of.

23 The total number of active military personnel in these three countries –Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – is somewhat shy of 20,000 soldiers. *The Military Balance 2014* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2014).

Voluntary defense organizations, provided that their units are well-trained and conduct regular exercises, would be able to fill the gaps here. The focus of improvements, like the ones outlined here, should be on rapid response. These troops would also know their operational areas like the backs of their hands, as they essentially would be operating in or near their own home villages and guarding the specific high-value sites they had already been trained and exercised to protect. Over time, such measures would need to be integrated into the concept of comprehensive security that the countries in the Baltic Sea region are beginning to put into effect.[24]

A Finnish example is of interest here. The Finns are now in the process of reorganizing their local troops to make them more mobile and resilient, equipping them with relatively simple but effective defensive weaponry. It would be worthwhile for Estonian and other Baltic defense planners to visit Helsinki and study Finland's plans for configuring, equipping and utilizing these troops. It is also good common sense for the Finns and the Baltic militaries to make joint materiel purchases for such troops in order to enjoy the benefits of scale.[25]

If adopted, all these measures would make it exceedingly difficult to take over the NBP9 countries without high cost in time, blood and treasure to the attacker, and they would also buy precious time for stronger alliance members to come to the rescue if push comes to shove.

Option Three

On the third level of deterrence, one basic observation that continues to hold validity is that traditional military force still counts. To conquer and hold territory an attacker needs real military capabilities, not simply the tools for carrying out hybrid warfare. Most likely the aggressor will use a mixture of both, hybrid and traditional. But if the defender is tough enough, he cannot be overcome by soft hybrid methods alone.

24 See this author's "Different Faces of Deterrence in the Baltic Region: From Heavy Metal to the Whole-of-Government Approach," *ICDS*, November 2014.

25 A positive example of close regional cooperation that produced noticeable benefits for both sides is the Finnish-Estonian air surveillance radar purchase. See Nicholas de Larrinaga, "Estonia Completes Air Surveillance Programme," *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, January 28, 2015, http://www.janes.com/article/48391/estonia-completes-air-surveillance/programme.

That has been proven by the Russian engagement in Ukraine. The anti-government separatists have been successful only as a result of the Russian conventional military support they have received from Moscow. Therefore, to be credible, the defenses of the Nordic-Baltic countries and Poland need "heavy metal."[26] Moreover, to raise the deterrence threshold high enough, they need not only defensive but also certain offensive capabilities. What would these capabilities be, and how could these relatively small countries acquire them?

First, the Baltic countries and Poland should be able to produce an up-to-date situational awareness picture that they could share with one another and with their other allies. One crucial component of that capability would be a modern air-borne electronic warfare system that would help collect and analyze raw electronic data and, when needed, could also be used for counter-electronic warfare missions. For the Baltic countries, each country would need one such system, while Poland would require several. Finland and Sweden already have such systems, which deploy highly modern technologies; they could be integrated into the Baltic and Polish systems as deeply as political constraints in these non-NATO countries would allow.

Second, another useful and also deliverable capability would be counter-battery radar systems that would help pinpoint the origins of an aggressor's artillery and mortar strikes. These systems should be closely attached to a counterstrike capability, by acquiring long-range artillery pieces and multiple-launch rocket systems or, better still, something like the U.S. Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), which would give the defender a range of more than 300 kilometers (180 miles). Such systems will most likely be beyond the financial reach of any of the Baltic countries, but not beyond Poland's. Here, the other allies could help by loaning or donating such systems to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Arguably, that would be a smart move, since by so doing stronger allies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany would be spared from using their own personnel for these tasks in the Baltic countries.

Finally, the aggressor's valuable assets could be threatened by a long-range airborne system, such as the Swedish-German–manufactured Taurus system or, in particular, the U.S.-designed AGM-158A JASSM (Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile), which is a low-observable cruise missile with a range of over 400 kilometers (240 miles). It can give the defender the ability to carry out precision strikes on high-value targets such as command posts, ballistic missile batteries, materiel depots, or air bases and hangars, where the system's penetrating warhead offers a credible destructive capability.

26 With his kind permission, I borrow this felicitous phrase from Lt. General Riho Terras, Chief of Defense, Estonia.

So far, the United States has released the JASSM only to a few handpicked customers. The first to get it was Australia. Of the Baltic Sea region countries, it was first released to Finland and later to Poland. In Finland, the system has been seen as a deterrent from the very beginning: "JASSM is just as much a deterrent capability as it is a strike capability. It makes the enemy pause and think twice about aggressive action, because it provides precision strikes on a wide range of valuable targets."[27] The fact that Finland deploys F-18 Hornets as its JASSM platform adds greatly to the credibility of Finnish long-range deterrence. For the first time in history, Finland can now credibly threaten to strike targets deep in the territory of the aggressor.[28]

On the third level of deterrence, one basic observation that continues to hold validity is that traditional military force still counts. To conquer and hold territory an attacker needs real military capabilities, not simply the tools for carrying out hybrid warfare. Most likely the aggressor will use a mixture of both, hybrid and traditional. But if the defender is tough enough, he cannot be overcome by soft hybrid methods alone.

Implications for the United States

As we contemplate the new security environment in Northern and Eastern Europe, ushered in by aggressive Russian military actions in and around Ukraine, there are many faces of deterrence. As has been discussed, the NBP9 countries should be aware of, and utilize to the best of their abilities, at least three levels of deterrence: extended deterrence provided by their allies; deterrence provided by their own actions, mainly to gain time but also to offer a credible deterrent; and deterrence provided by long-range capabilities to hit the aggressor where it hurts him most.

Moreover, what is clear from the preceding discussion is that the United States occupies a decisive position in the Nordic-Baltic-Polish geographical area when it comes to providing credible military deterrence in that region. The following observations and recommendations are highlighted here:

27 This is a quote from an unnamed Finnish Ministry of Defense official, describing JASSM's value to Finnish defense. There is also a rumor, unconfirmed, that as a consequence of the Polish purchase of JASSM, the Russians have relocated their planned airbase in Belarus 250 kilometers to the east. Julius Sabak, "JASSM for Poland – Is It Worth to Pay the Price," *Defence24*, November 6, 2014.

28 An exception of sorts is the use of Finnish special operations forces behind the lines in Soviet territory.

1) On top of all the commitments in the region the United States is already engaged in, it would cement deterrence provided by the allies to the NBP9 if NATO, led by the United States, would pre-position heavy materiel in the Baltic countries and Poland for a brigade-sized land force unit in each country. This would demonstrate alliance solidarity and provide a credible commitment to face a long-term set of challenges that Russian aggressive behavior has brought about in the Baltic Sea region. The pre-positioning arrangements should also include materiel for air force and naval units.

2) Plans for providing the European Activity Set to be pre-positioned by the United States in the Baltic countries (and in Bulgaria, Romania and Germany) still make sense and should be carried out. However, the materiel in these depots should be earmarked for incoming rotational forces and should be used regularly. Besides U.S. forces, such rotational forces should also include troops from major European allies, including Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.

3) Training and exercising of the forces earmarked for Baltic and Polish defense is essential. Equally crucial is reassessing and testing, on a regular basis, NATO's contingency plans for the collective defense of the Baltic countries and Poland. This goes especially for the NATO rapid reaction force established by the 2014 Wales Summit, or the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). Exercises should be frequent, realistic and robust. They should also be open to Finland and Sweden to participate in, if they so wish.

4) All regional countries should commit themselves to higher defense expenditures, with the NATO common recommendation of 2 percent of gross national product as a realistic and reachable guideline. Such burden sharing would be useful for improving interoperability and increasing military capabilities, but it would also show commitment to alliance solidarity, and hence contribute to deterrence.

5) For a more rapid allied response, Host Nation Support (HNS) arrangements should be built up as a priority, using NATO infrastructure funds if needed. The importance of the HNS arrangements will apply also to Finland and Sweden, the two non-allied nations that signed the HNS agreements with NATO during the Wales Summit.

6) For raising the deterrence threshold, the Baltic states' and Poland's defense capabilities should be supported through donations of excess equipment or through favorable conditions for purchasing such equipment. This should apply particularly to equipment that could be used for enhancing the capabilities of national defense forces (often voluntary or reservist forces) to gain time for a country's regular forces and for incoming allied forces to be engaged. It might be most efficient if the United States were to coordinate such efforts.

7) Bolstering situational awareness capabilities for a better reading of political and military developments in and around the Baltic Sea basin will also enhance deterrence. At the same time multinational cooperation in intelligence gathering, analysis and distribution should be improved. Here the participation and leadership of the United States will be essential.

8) It is important to react quickly and decisively to hybrid threats. Therefore the NBP9 countries, allied and non-allied alike, would benefit from jointly designing and executing complex "comprehensive security" or "total defense" plans that would bring together these countries' civilian and military authorities to work and integrate their separate efforts into a common response plan. U.S. involvement in this would be highly desirable.

For elements of long-range deterrence, plans should be carefully drafted and weapons systems meticulously selected. As the Baltic countries could not in most cases afford to have such high-tech and complex systems in their own national inventory, it would be up to their stronger and more prosperous allies to provide them the necessary platforms. This would make good sense from the viewpoint of NATO as a whole, since such assistance to the NBP9 would enhance deterrence not just in one particular country but in the entire Nordic-Baltic region.

COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES FOR SMALL STATES

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The Problem

Both in Europe and in Asia, today small states face coercion at the hands of their larger and more powerful neighbors. Russia used force against Georgia in 2008, has been using force against Ukraine since 2014, and could prospectively use force against a number of its other neighbors. China, for its part, has used a variety of coercive techniques in its territorial disputes with its neighbors. One common feature of these situations is an explicit effort by the coercing state to stay below the threshold of a military response and outside military intervention. As a result, small states have largely been left to their own devices to defend themselves against their more powerful neighbors.

The Argument

Small front-line states do not, however, lack options in the face of coercion. To the contrary, this paper argues that they could pursue a number of competitive strategies in an effort to make coercion less attractive. These include strategies of denial, which seek to harden a state against coercion; cost-imposing strategies, which seek to force an adversary to bear burdens sufficient for him to reconsider coercion; efforts to attack and render ineffective the adversary's coercive strategy; and strategies that seek to exploit divisions within the enemy's political leadership in order to end the coercive campaign. The United States can, and in many cases should, assist small front-line states in developing and implementing competitive strategies against their larger neighbors who are seeking to coerce them.

Strategy has to do with how a state or other political actor arrays its resources in space and time to achieve its political objectives against a competitor.[1] In other words, strategy represents the way an actor seeks to achieve his political objectives against a competitor. The key features of any strategy are rationality (the existence of political objectives and a plan to achieve them) and interaction with a competitor who seeks at the very least to achieve different objectives if not thwart our ability to achieve our aims.[2]

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1 For an overview of definitions of strategy, see Barry D. Watts, "Barriers to Acting Strategically: Why Strategy is So Difficult," in Thomas G. Mahnken, ed., *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century: Theory, History, and Practice* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 47-50.

2 Bradford A. Lee, "Strategic Interaction: Theory and History for Practitioners," in Mahnken, *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century*. 28-32.

Competitive strategies are a particular family of strategy that can be pursued in peacetime to achieve limited political aims.[3] Each of these aspects deserves consideration.

First, competitive strategies are generally pursued to achieve limited aims.[4] That is, they are meant to change a competitor's decision-making calculus and thus his strategic behavior. They do not seek the overthrow of an adversary. In this regard, the competitive strategy that the United States pursued against the Soviet Union succeeded beyond the wildest imaginations of even its most enthusiastic supporters.[5]

Second, competitive strategies unfold in peacetime. They can, and often do, involve the use of military assets, but focus on the latent use of force to deter rather than defeat a competitor. Peacetime strategy focuses on when and how states reveal their acquisition of new capabilities; what they choose to acquire; when and how they deploy them; and how they train with them. As a result, peacetime strategy leads to trade-offs that are not present in time of war. For example, governments face the decision of whether to reveal military capabilities in order to deter or influence a competitor, or whether to conceal them in order to preserve their operational effectiveness in a future conflict.

In addition, strategy in peacetime occurs with a greater sense of uncertainty than in war. As Sir Michael Howard famously wrote nearly half a century ago, planning in peacetime is akin to navigating a ship through a thick fog of peace.[6] Statesmen and soldiers generally have a much lower tolerance for risk in peacetime than they do in war. As a result, they often shy away from actions that could be seen as provocative for fear of exacerbating tensions with a competitor. Finally, it takes longer to determine the effects of one's strategy in peacetime than in wartime. Whereas the impact of one's actions on the battlefield manifest themselves in hours, days, weeks or months, the impact of peacetime actions often does not become apparent for years or more.

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3 Although it is, of course, possible to impose costs in wartime, the present discussion is limited to peacetime applications of cost imposition.

4 As Clausewitz wrote, "War can be of two kinds, in the sense that either the objective is to overthrow the enemy—to render him politically helpless or militarily impotent, thus forcing him to sign whatever peace we please; or merely to occupy some of his frontier districts so that we can annex them or use them for bargaining at the peace negotiations. Transitions from one type to the other will of course recur in my treatment; but the fact that the aims of the two types are quite different must be clear at all times, and their points of irreconcilability brought out." Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 69.

5 Thomas G. Mahnken, "The Reagan administration's strategy toward the Soviet Union," in Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich, eds., *Successful Strategies: Triumphing in War and Peace from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 419.

6 Michael Howard, "Military Science in an Age of Peace," *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies 119*, no. 1 (March 1974), 4.

As Bradford A. Lee has written, it is useful to think of four families of competitive strategy: denial, cost imposition, attacking an enemy's strategy, and attacking an enemy's political system.[7] Although each is distinct, often they have been carried out in combination with one another. Each presents potentially attractive options for small front-line states that face coercion by their stronger neighbors.

Denial

The first family is composed of strategies of denial, which seek to prevent a competitor from being able to translate its operational means into the political ends that it seeks. In other words, strategies of denial seek to make it physically difficult for an aggressor to coerce or attack. To work, the defender needs to possess the ability to demonstrate that an aggressor cannot achieve his aims at any acceptable cost.[8]

For some states, geography is favorable to a strategy of denial. Switzerland scarcely has to worry about aggression on the part of neighbors, even if they were so inclined. With the right investment in capabilities, Taiwan could harden itself against Chinese coercion.[9] In other cases, geography is less favorable. The Baltic states, for example, lack the geographic depth to make a strategy of denial by itself a winning strategy.

Even for small states, however, trends in military technology, particularly the growth and spread of precision weaponry as well as supporting intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems and command and control networks, increasingly favor a strategy of denial.[10] Modern anti-tank guided munitions (ATGMs); precision rockets, artillery and mortars; surface-to-air missiles; and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) provide a growing range of options for small states to carry out a strategy of denial. For example, Phillip A. Karber has argued that the sale of a relatively small number of advanced ATGMs would enable Ukraine to carry out a strategy of denial against Russian forces in eastern Ukraine.[11]

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7 Lee, "Strategic Interaction," 32-43.

8 A. Wess Mitchell, "The Case for Deterrence by Denial," *The American Interest*, August 12, 2015, at http://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/08/12/the-case-for-deterrence-by-denial/.

9 William S. Murray, "Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy," *Naval War College Review* 61/3 (Summer 2008), 13-38.

10 Thomas G. Mahnken, "Weapons: The Growth and Spread of the Precision Strike Regime," *Daedalus* 140/3 (Summer 2011), 45-57; Barry D. Watts, "The Maturing Revolution in Military Affairs" (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments), 2011.

11 Phillip A. Karber, "'Lessons Learned' from the Russo-Ukrainian War: Personal Observations," paper presented at the Historical Lessons Learned workshop sponsored by the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory, July 6, 2015, 23, 26, 43.

Cost Imposition

A second family of peacetime competitive strategy, cost-imposing strategies, seeks to convince an adversary in peacetime that the costs of continued competition or conflict are prohibitively high and that accommodation is a more attractive option. Cost-imposing strategies may seek to have any number of effects upon a competitor. They may, for example, seek to dissuade or deter a competitor from engaging in actions that are disruptive or threatening by convincing him that they are too costly, or ineffective, or will prove counterproductive. They may alternatively seek to channel a competitor into engaging in activities that are inoffensive or wasteful.

During the Cold War, the United States pursued a number of strategies against the Soviet Union that were meant to impose costs of various kinds on Moscow, including the Army's and Air Force's development of AirLand Battle beginning in the 1970s, the Navy's Maritime Strategy of the 1980s, the development of stealth aircraft, and the Strategic Defense Initiative.[12] More recently, America's adversaries have pursued cost-imposing strategies against the United States. Al-Qaida's September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, and the responses to them, resulted in considerable costs. Such costs go beyond the physical destruction of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the disruption of the economic life of the nation, to include the subsequent costs of transportation security initiatives and the time and efficiency costs that flow from them. Cyberattacks on U.S. government networks that have triggered the development and deployment of increasing layers of security have similarly yielded considerable costs, including that of developing and fielding cyber security as well as the efficiency losses associated with such security measures.

Although a strategy of cost imposition may be best suited to great powers, small states may have options to pursue such approaches as well. As I have argued elsewhere, states need to think about imposing costs across multiple dimensions: economic and political as well as military.[13] When viewed expansively, small states may have opportunities to impose disproportionate costs in peacetime against their stronger neighbors. Small states are able to impose diplomatic and political costs upon their adversaries as well by bringing together like-minded states to oppose coercion. More importantly, they will need to undertake methods to mitigate the costs that others can impose upon them.

12 Thomas G. Mahnken, "The Reagan administration's strategy toward the Soviet Union" in Murray and Sinnreich, eds., *Successful Strategies*, 403-431.

13 Thomas G. Mahnken, "Cost-Imposing Strategies: A Brief Primer," Center for a New American Security, 2014.

Attacking the Enemy's Strategy

A third approach is to attack a competitor's strategy by inducing him to engage in strategically self-defeating behavior. Russia's current campaign of coercion in Ukraine and increasingly in the Baltic states relies upon a certain degree of deniability. The ability to use social media and investigative journalism to expose Russian activities to the Russian public, to Europe and to the world provides an opportunity to attack that strategy.[14] Similarly, commercial imagery has been used to expose the full extent of China's efforts to literally change facts on the ground by creating new geographic features—China is turning submerged reefs into islands and building air strips, etc. in the South China Sea.[15] Such efforts attack a strategy of low-visibility coercion, forcing the aggressor to take more public – and more risky – action to continue.

Attacking the Enemy's Political System

A final family of competitive strategies seeks to attack a competitor's political system by forcing the competitor to face the prospect of political collapse or concession. Such a strategy may not be feasible for small front-line states, at least in the short term. Vladimir Putin appears to have considerable domestic support and has been able to silence many of his critics at home. Similarly, Chinese coercion in the South China Sea is backed by a groundswell of nationalist pride. That having been said, the successful development and implementation of competitive strategies of denial, cost-imposition and attacks upon an adversary's coercive strategy may, over time, open up splits within the his leadership that can be exploited.

Small front-line states may have knowledge of the internal dynamics of their larger neighbors by virtue of history, linguistic abilities, cultural connections, commercial links and so on. Such deep knowledge can be an asset, giving them and their allies a window into the internal dynamics of the rival and a potential tool to influence them.

14 See, for example, Maksymilian Czuperski, John Herbst, Eliot Higgins, Alina Polyakova, and Damon Wilson, "Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin's War in Ukraine," *Atlantic Council*, 2015.

15 See the website of the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative at http://amti.csis.org.

Implications and Recommendations for the United States

The United States can, and in some cases should, support small front-line states through a number of means.

First, a number of states in Central and Eastern Europe are contemplating investing in anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities. The United States should be supportive of such efforts. Washington should supply its allies and friends with the means to implement a strategy of denial. Depending upon local circumstances, these may include advanced ATGMs, surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs). The United States should also consider how it can alter its force deployments to support such a strategy.

Second, the United States should work with its allies and friends to identify cost-imposing strategies that can be used to counter aggression in peacetime. These should include the full range of instruments of statecraft: not just military, but also economic, political and diplomatic. The United States should consider actions that it can take unilaterally (developing and deploying new capabilities, for example) as well as those that it can undertake with its allies and friends (sharing technology and information, for example).

The United States should discuss with its allies the advantages and disadvantages of allies possessing independent capabilities for imposing costs on adversaries in wartime. On the one hand, an independent counteroffensive capability might be seen as more credible than a U.S. capability. On the other hand, allies are unlikely to be able to afford to deploy a capability nearly as effective as that offered by the United States.

Third, the United States should work to expose attempts at coercion. It should, for example, step up attempts to share information with its allies and friends and, where feasible, to make evidence of coercion broadly available to the public.

Finally, the United States should work to identify and, where feasible, exploit splits within the leadership in aggressor regimes. This is likely to be a long-term effort with uncertain chances for success, but the more that we know about the internal decision-making of aggressor regimes, the more successful our efforts to influence them in peacetime are likely to be.

CAN POLAND DETER RUSSIA?

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The Problem

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how Poland can deter Russia. Behind this question there are two fundamental assumptions, which are not acceptable by default:

1) Twenty-five years after winning back its independence, and 16 years after joining NATO, Poland needs – and needs urgently – to create a more self-contained security policy.

2) It is possible for Poland to deter Russia.

Since both assumptions are far from being acceptable by default, their presentation must be the element of the overall analysis.

Poland's Need for a new Security Strategy

Poland faced no major or minor security threats for 20 years after the democratic transition of the country began in 1989. Accession to NATO (1999) and the European Union (2004) seemed to be brimful of transition plans carried out, as well as the anchor of security for the long-term future. A stable international environment, with turmoil far from the country's borders, let Poland ignore its relative military weakness and trust security guarantees that were rather theoretical or declarative in nature.

This honeymoon period for Polish security ended somewhere around the beginning of the current decade. In public view, and present also among the country's political elite, this was caused by more and more aggressive attempts by Russia to rebuild its sphere of influence.

However, this is quite a simplistic view. No doubt, with Putin's rise to power and improving economic situation, Russian foreign policy toward what is called in Russian political language the "near abroad" changed. From the Polish perspective, the most threatening element of this change was the direct and massive use of military force against its neighbors. What was a wake-up bell in 2008 in Georgia became a ringing alarm in 2014 in Ukraine. However, highly destabilizing measures applied by Russia are not the only factor that changes Polish security remarkably. No doubt this factor is the most critical one. But its influence is intensified to a critical point by three others:

Factor 1: The "newborn problem" – Poland's inability to effectively face security challenges when/if left alone or when/if allies' intervention is postponed.

Factor 2: The "impotence problem" – The inability of European powers to actively and effectively respond when European security is challenged by Russia.

Factor 3: The "Svantevit problem" – The reorientation or ambiguity of U.S. foreign policy.[1]

The "newborn problem" has two separate but interconnected dimensions. Polish security strategy is highly – too highly – dependent on the country's international ties and affiliations. Or, more precisely, on the expected international reactions if Polish security is threatened.[22] Two relatively new facts support this observation. When the war in Ukraine started, Polish attempts to increase its security were focused mainly on NATO and its ability to protect its members. When France and Germany agreed to ignore Poland when attempting to settle the Ukraine conflict, Poland had no choice but to accept this.

The nature of the European "impotence problem" is far more complicated than just the differences of opinion about what measures should be applied when a country (Russia) challenges the basic principles of the European political order: non-use of force, territorial integrity and non-interference in domestic affairs. What I call "European impotence" is:

1 Svantevit (Pol. Świętowit) was an ancient Slavic deity depicted with four faces, each looking in a separate direction. If from the perspective of small democratic states threatened by powerful non-democratic neighbors the United States is a god they pray to, that god has a major defect: it wants to look in only one direction at a time. Today that direction is toward the Pacific.

2 This is not the place to discuss to what extent this is the necessity of the country's objective position and power, and to what extent it is the subjective heritage of the country's re-birth as an independent actor in 1990s.

1) Lack of strong political leadership at the level of both individual states and the broader European institutions and organizations.

2) The deeply rooted risk-aversion of European societies and political elites, which makes them very vulnerable to external political blackmail.

3) Political short-sightedness, which creates a "my backyard" mentality and results in an inability to respond to challenges that are not faced directly. One of the most negative consequences of this is a vulnerability to be set at variance with allies.

These factors greatly increase the probability that Poland could be abandoned when exposed to a real security threat. Moreover, one needs to be aware of two additional variables that could greatly increase European impotence when threat scenarios for Poland become true. First, as observed by the theory of alliances, an increase in the threat increases the cohesion of an alliance only up to a point. After a certain point of escalation of threat is reached, countries tend to pursue individual security strategies instead of keeping their alliance obligation. Second, if Russia decides to continue an aggressive international policy, one of the core elements of its strategy will be to erode European and trans-Atlantic unity. Both mechanisms must be taken into account when assessing international assurances of Polish national security. Last, but not least, Poland's specific historical experience rather supports the "impotence thesis." Rightly or wrongly, this subjective factor shapes the Polish perception of security as well.

The "Svantevit problem" is defined as the reorientation of U.S. foreign policy toward the Pacific region. From the Polish perspective, it simply means the United States would be less willing to engage in East European security problems, less capable of engaging in them, or both. The United States' current engagement in the Russian-Ukraine war, together with its far greater assertiveness than that of the EU and its demonstrated support for East European states, undermine the above fears. However, it should be clear that U.S. support for the security of East European states is conditional in nature. The conditions are set by globally defined American national interests and globally dispersed American capabilities. Nobody says Roosevelt was happy to give up Eastern Europe at Yalta. But nobody can say it will not happen again, if the United States is engaged in major conflict(s) in Asia.

All three factors presented above highly intensify the threat for Polish security created by Russia's attempts to restore its sphere of influence by military means. Hence they call for reshaping Polish security strategy.

Innovative Deterrence as Polish Security Strategy

When Poland's security is challenged by aggressive Russian foreign policy, the space for effective security strategy is very limited. From the Polish perspective, bandwagoning is not an option. Both countries represent two different civilizational models, with highly incompatible or contradictory political and social values. Differences of political regimes as well as contemporary interests' clashes are not the root cause of the problem, but just the expression of far deeper differences.

Balancing the threat created by Russia in Eastern Europe by using the methods of collective-actor deterrence is not an effective option, either. Collective-actor deterrence within or outside NATO, even if theoretically possible, is shaped by all the weaknesses presented above. Most importantly, collective-actor deterrence leaves Polish security too dependent on the actions (not) taken by the allies. Polish initiatives after the Russian invasion in Ukraine, as well as limited NATO reactions to the crisis, prove rather declaratively the inefficiency of the collective-actor deterrence approach. The bitter symbol of the lack of credibility of this type of deterrence within NATO is the fact that one of the expected defenders (France) sells offensive weapons (Mistral vessels) to the country (Russia) that threatens its allies (Baltic states, Romania). But whether one likes it or not, collective-actor deterrence remains the cornerstone of Polish security strategy today.[3]

The option for Polish security strategy that has not been discussed enough is individual deterrence. The question of if and how Poland could deter Russia was not even asked. The silence around one of the most prominent security strategies as an option for Polish security seems to have three sources. At first glance, it is evident that Poland is unable to deter Russia due to the lack of necessary capabilities. Despite being defensive in terms of the ultimate goal, deterrence involves both offensive measures and an offensive way of thinking; hence it was and still is not politically correct to analyze it as a real political option in contemporary Europe. Deterrence as a security concept still remains intellectual terra incognita most Polish politicians and analysts.[4]

3 Both the theory of alliances and deterrence theory prove the limited effectiveness of extended deterrence.

4 See the misunderstandings and misinterpretations of "extended deterrence" in Polish debates.

For the purposes of this analysis I will focus on the first point. Fair and square, Poland will not be able to achieve the level of military capability that would let it deter Russia in the traditional sense of the word. This is due to the combination of threat capability problems and rationality problems.

Polish conventional forces, even if a modernization program is completed, will not reach the level – in terms of size and firepower – that could pose a real threat of unbearable costs for the Russian army; additionally, for various reasons it is highly unlikely that Poland would try to bridge the gap by developing a nuclear weapon. When deterring Russia, one must take into account the threshold of pain of this country: Russia is able to absorb uniquely high military, economic and social costs without being forced to change its policy. Therefore, any attempts to deter Russia will lack credibility as long as they are built on conventional understanding of deterrence strategy. Since credibility is the precondition of effective deterrence, classical deterrence will not work. However, Poland is capable of developing and applying the concept I define as “innovative deterrence.”

Innovative deterrence should be composed of three pivots: *Extended deterrence*, in which the United States would play the role of the defender and Poland the role of the protégé. *Spillover deterrence,* in which Poland would use traditional measures to prevent its being isolated as the targeted state. *Nonconventional deterrence,* in which Poland would use nonconventional methods against nonconventional targets to retaliate if attacked.

Extended deterrence might be perceived as the exchange of goods between actors. To make it work, it must be profitable for both the United States and Poland. For Poland, the benefits of an extended deterrence relationship would include strong American political support for clearly defined Polish security interests in the region and real and remarkable American support for the increase of Poland's military capabilities in terms of finance, technology and information.

As the payoff for this investment, the United States would achieve the following benefits:

1) Decrease of direct military involvement in East and Central Europe.

2) Presence of a security proxy in the region, since Poland would have to perform some of the United States' contemporary security activities.

3) Increased level of control of Polish foreign and security policy (controlling function of any asymmetric alliance).

4) Decrease of uncertainty about the U.S. commitment, which is one of the sources of Russian assertiveness.

5) Leverage to influence European politics.

6) Effective and credible partner in U.S. global activities. The option for Polish security strategy that has not been discussed enough is individual deterrence. The question of if and how Poland could deter Russia was not even asked. The silence around one of the most prominent security strategies as an option for Polish security seems to have three sources:

The U.S. security interests include stabilization of Eastern Europe anyway. Hence, a well-established extended deterrence relationship with Poland would let the United States change a somewhat unstable and unclear involvement into a well-structured, long-term approach.

Spillover deterrence is the set of military and non-military measures and methods that would made it impossible for Russia to narrowly direct a security threat at Poland and Poland only. This is based on the observation that an apparent element of Russian strategy is to isolate the targeted state and decrease the probability of foreign aid by various means:

1) Most importantly, adjusting the level of aggression to the level of international reaction.

2) Trying to hide direct Russian military involvement.

3) Using non-direct military measures (e.g., arms delivery).

4) Presenting the conflict as very local in nature.

5) Increasing political conflicts within the targeted state.

6) Increasing political differences among the possible allies of the targeted state.

Any attempts to counter these measures put the targeted state into reactive mode. Polish deterrence strategy should bypass this reactive logic by assuming immediate, but controlled and scalable, escalation of the conflict from the bilateral to a multilateral (subregional, European, global) level. This can be achieved by the combination of: (1) Military strategy that would make it impossible for Russia to wage military conflict below the level of open war. Russia would be forced to choose between no conflict and full-scale war. (2) The use of sophisticated weapon systems outside the direct conflict area. (3) Leveraging the political, economic and social consequences of the conflict to other states. Hence, a threat to Polish security would mean a threat to the interests of other countries.

Spillover deterrence would make it impossible for the broader international community to ignore serious security threats to Poland, and Russia would have to take that into account when calculating both the scale and the costs of military conflict.

Nonconventional deterrence, as the third element of innovative deterrence, is based on the specific rationality of Russian decision-makers. As mentioned above, Russia is highly resistant to most of the measures that target the military capabilities of the country, its economy, the social or economic status of its population or international public opinion. However, this does not leave Russian decision-makers invulnerable to any retaliatory actions that could be designed. Nonconventional retaliatory deterrence should threaten Russian political leaders directly. This can be achieved by two means: (1) limiting Russian leaders' access to their private assets outside Russia, which is beyond the scope of Poland's capabilities and (2) undermining Russian leaders' ability to stay in power in an authoritarian political system.

The second measure opens the opportunities for retaliatory actions performed by Poland. The constant element of Russian political strategy is its information war waged against western societies and political elites. At the same time, Russia highly protects its own infosphere. The reason for this is Russian decision-makers' awareness, backed by historical experience, that controlling information is the key to their ability to control the society and keep the power. This is a centuries-old tradition in Russian political culture. Hence, nonconventional retaliatory deterrence should include the creation of independent information channels attractive and accessible to Russian society as the ready-to-use deterrence tool. When necessary, retaliation by conveying through these channels information that could destabilize the position of Russian decision-makers – for example, information about Russian casualties, corruption cases, administration ineffectiveness, poverty.

For various reasons these retaliatory actions should target not only and not basically the top Russian politicians. Targeting regional and local political lords would undermine the stability of the whole political system. This threat, if properly posed, could greatly increase the cost of aggressive behavior for Russian decision-makers.

The concept of innovative deterrence contains certain risks, from both the Polish and American perspectives. They include:

1) Progressive erosion of NATO, as the consequence of the creation of parallel security mechanisms.

2) Presence of a security proxy in the region, since Poland would have to perform some of the United States' contemporary security activities.

3) Increased level of control of Polish foreign and security policy (controlling function of any asymmetric alliance).

4) Decrease of uncertainty about the U.S. commitment, which is one of the sources of Russian assertiveness.

5) Leverage to influence European politics.

6) Effective and credible partner in U.S. global activities. The option for Polish security strategy that has not been discussed enough is individual deterrence. The question of if and how Poland could deter Russia was not even asked. The silence around one of the most prominent security strategies as an option for Polish security seems to have three sources: (1) uncontrolled escalation of conflict with Russia, as the consequence of badly handled innovative deterrence. This strategy requires competent and cold-minded political leaders. It remains unclear if Poland's political elite is mature enough to manage innovative deterrence as defined above. (2) Subordination of Polish security policy to U.S. interests, as the paradoxical consequence of the attempt to increase Polish autonomy. (3) Creation of a conflict-prone ally that could entrap the United States in unwanted conflicts. All these risks need to be mitigated before the theoretical concept of innovative deterrence becomes active political doctrine.

The Perspectives

The future of Eastern European security remains unpredictable. There is no scenario that can be definitely excluded from the scope of any analysis. Russia is currently the basic source of instability and insecurity in the region. As long as Russia's political regime can produce and pursue literally every political plan, no definite forecast can be made. However, the most probable scenarios are not positive ones. We cannot expect Russia to westernize its political regime both internally and externally, or to fundamentally change its foreign policy and become the security architect in the region.

Since Russia most probably will remain the source of threats for its Eastern European neighbors, both Poland and the United States face the following choices:

Both countries might continue their current security strategy, with some attempts to improve its effectiveness. For Poland that would mean further, and sometimes chaotic, modernization of military capabilities. For both Poland and the United States, it would mean attempts to strengthen collective defense guarantees within NATO and increase unity among its members. The most recent developments in the European security environment prove the limited effectiveness of this strategy, especially when facing a determined and ruthless challenger.

Both countries might look at other ways and options that could increase regional security. These options do not have to undermine the existing mechanisms (NATO), but they could more effectively mitigate regional threats. Furthermore, the zone of common security interest in the region is big enough for Poland and the United States to analyze and implement these options jointly.

The search for a new security strategy that could supplement the existing one seems to be a must for Poland. The concept described here as innovative deterrence is one of the possible recommendations. But far more importantly, Polish decision-makers must not found Polish security strategy on NATO collective security and the very limited military capability of the country only.

If Poland seeks an autonomous security strategy for the future, U.S. foreign policy should shape the relationship with Poland in a way that the United States would have real influence on this strategy. Moreover, strengthening security cooperation between both states could reward the United States with a real contributor to its own security. Extended deterrence is one of the best ways to achieve this.

BUILDING A BALTIC SECURITY PILLAR:

The Potentials of Enhanced Polish-Swedish Military Collaboration

Ian J. Brzezinski

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Brzezinski served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Policy (2001-05). Key highlights of his tenure include the expansion of NATO membership in 2004; the consolidation and reconfiguration of the Alliance's command structure; the standing up of the NATO Response Force; and the coordination of European military contributions to US and NATO-led operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans.

For his public service, Brzezinski has been awarded the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service; the Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gedimas; the Latvian Ministry of Defense Award; the Romanian Medal for National Service, Order of Commander; and the Order of Merit, Republic of Poland, Officer Class.

The Problem

Over the last decade, Russia's assertive military presence in the Baltic Sea has transformed it into a contested domain. Moscow's aggressive maritime and air operations in the Baltic Sea underscore how this body of water is a seam in the security architecture of Europe, one that separates the nonaligned countries of northeastern Europe from the NATO allies of north-central Europe.

The establishment of a Baltic Security Pillar comprising enhanced maritime, air defense and air force collaboration between Poland and Sweden would effectively address this seam. The inclusion of a limited U.S. dimension in such initiatives would not only significantly strengthen the capacity of this Baltic Security Pillar to reinforce regional security; it would also deepen the transatlantic relationship.

The Baltic Sea as a Seam in Europe's Security Architecture

The southern coastline of the Baltic Sea is largely composed of NATO allies, including Denmark, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Russia and its heavily militarized Baltic enclave, Kaliningrad, are the only non-NATO territories along this coastline. To the north, the Baltic coastline is the territory of two nonaligned countries, Sweden and Finland.

NATO has done much to deepen its ties with the latter two countries. Finland and Sweden are NATO partners and actively contribute to the alliance's peacekeeping operations and military exercises. However, these relationships do not match the commitments and engagement that come with NATO membership, particularly the alliance's pledge of collective defense embodied in Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty. Stockholm and Helsinki do not count on NATO for their security. They rely foremost on their national defense forces, a growing bilateral defense relationship, and Nordic Defense Cooperation (NORDEFCO) that also engages Norway, Denmark, and Iceland.

Moscow's provocative military actions in the Baltic region highlight, if not leverage, this seam separating and differentiating the Baltic Sea's nonaligned northern coast from the NATO allies that populate its southern coast.

Russia has repeatedly challenged the air space of countries situated on the Baltic Sea, including Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In the fall of 2014, Russian military aircraft intentionally penetrated Sweden's airspace. Russian military aircraft frequently traverse the Baltic with their transponders turned off, presenting a real danger to civilian and other aircraft. NATO reported last July that up to that point alone in 2015 it had launched aircraft more than 250 times to intercept Russian aircraft. Of those NATO "scrambles," 120 occurred in the Baltic region.

A foreign submarine, suspected to be Russian, probed Swedish national waters in October 2014, leaving Swedes stunned when the vessel surfaced close their national capitol, Stockholm, and then disappeared. In April 2015, the Finnish navy dropped depth charges against a suspected Russian submarine violating Finnish territorial waters. Russian surface combatants have harassed civilian research and industrial ships operating legally in the Baltic Sea.

These belligerent operations have been complemented by Russian military exercises notable for their magnitude and the frequent absence of any formal advance notification to neighbors. These latter "snap" exercises – the sudden and unannounced mobilization and deployment of forces – have been particularly troubling to the nations of the Baltic Sea. On December 5, 2014, Moscow launched, without any notice to NATO allies or partners, a „snap" exercise in Kaliningrad, Russia's Baltic enclave tucked in between Poland and Lithuania. According to the Russian General Staff, the exercise involved 55 ships, 9,000 servicemen, 250 tanks and armored personnel carriers, more than 100 artillery units, combat air support, and the deployment of Russia's new Iskander (SS-26) medium-range ballistic missile system.

In March 2015, Russia conducted another "snap" exercise that coordinated the forces of its Western Military District and its newly created Arctic Military District. Some 40,000 troops tested war plans for the sudden and near-simultaneous seizure of parts of northern Norway, the Swedish island of Gotland, the Danish island of Bornholm, and the Finnish islands of Åland. Control of those islands is critical to securing the Baltic Sea, including the air space and maritime corridors NATO would use to reinforce and defend Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

These and other exercises demonstrate the speed with which Russia can mobilize and deploy significant military force at the same time that its actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine underscore Moscow's elevated willingness to use such tools to alter its neighborhood. They heighten and validate concern about Moscow's ability to launch a sudden strike for limited territorial gain, one that would establish a fait accompli before NATO decision-makers could convene to agree on what had transpired and how to respond.

This military conduct has been accompanied by nuclear threats against the West made by senior Russian commanders and civilian officials, including President Vladimir Putin. Moscow has threatened to target its nuclear weapons on Poland, Denmark and others for their contributions to transatlantic missile defense. *The Independent* of London reported last April that in a meeting with U.S. officials, Russian generals threatened "a spectrum of responses from nuclear to nonmilitary" if the alliance deployed additional forces to the Baltic states.

Moscow's assertive military conduct is being facilitated by a determined modernization of the Russian military. President Putin is directing over $400 billion to expand the Russian fleet, introduce fifth-generation aircraft, deploy new missiles and air defense systems, militarize the Arctic, and upgrade his nation's nuclear arsenal. Much of this new kit is being directed to Russia's Western Military District, including Kaliningrad.

Putin uses his military actions to test, exercise and demonstrate Russia's growing military capability. They, along with Moscow's nuclear threats, are part of a strategy to intimidate and divide the countries that constitute the transatlantic community and to probe the resolve and capacities of the West. Moscow knows well that NATO has no formal security commitments to Sweden and Finland and vice-a-versa and that the military operations of NATO and the two countries in the Baltic against Russia are limited in scope. And, Moscow's assertive military conduct highlights those realities.

Building a Baltic Pillar: Poland, Sweden and the United States

Poland and Sweden have the military capacities and geopolitical heft necessary to establish an operationally significant Baltic Security Pillar, one that would strengthen the region's security and stability. By contributing to the capacities of this Baltic Security Pillar, the United States can catalyze its evolution, strengthen its capacities, and deepen and reinforce the bonds of the transatlantic security community.

Poland and Sweden may not be entirely symmetrical European powers, but when their respective experiences and strengths are compared, it is clear that the potentials of their collaboration are both significant and underutilized. Poland has a population of 38 million and a gross domestic product (GDP) of $548 billion (2014), while Sweden features a GDP of $571 billion (2014) and a population of 9.7 million. Poland's defense budget is just over $9 billion and Sweden's approaches $6 billion.

Poland is a NATO ally and stands among those in the alliance most serious about defense. Sweden is not a NATO ally but stands among the alliance's most important and operationally active partners, nations that cooperate with the alliance but do not share in its collective defense responsibilities. Both nations regularly contribute to international military missions, often under the NATO flag. Poland and Sweden sent forces to Afghanistan and the Balkans. Both nations have committed military elements to the NATO Response Force, the alliance's high-readiness force established to execute collective defense missions, crisis management and peace-support operations, and disaster relief services. The fact that Polish and Swedish units have been qualified for the NATO Response Force underscores their high-level professionalism and interoperability.

A Polish-Swedish Baltic Security Pillar would not only leverage their respective military capabilities but also build upon the increasingly close geopolitical relationship between these powers. In the years following the end the Cold War, Poland and Sweden were never rivals, but the two countries never fully leveraged their combined geopolitical weight until recently. Most notably, Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski and his Swedish counterpart, Carl Bildt, recognized their nations' shared interests in promoting democracy, rule of law, and human rights in the European space of the former Soviet Union. These two senior European statesmen used their personal and national influence to institutionalize this vision into what is now known as the EU's Eastern partnership.

Both Poland and Sweden have histories of collaboration with the United States dating back to the American Revolution. Polish military commanders Tadeusz Kosciuszko and Casmir Pulaski served as military leaders in the fight to free the American colonies from British colonial rule. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson insisted on the reemergence of the Polish state after World War I, and Washington stood firm with the effort of the Polish people to free themselves from the yoke of Soviet hegemony during the Cold War. Ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the U.S.-Poland military-to-military relationship has steadily deepened. Poland stands today among America's most trusted allies. Its air force flies U.S. F-16s (an important element in the bilateral security relationship) and hosts a U.S. Air Force detachment dedicated to facilitating bilateral exercises. Poland is in the process of acquiring the U.S. Patriot air and missile defense system and will soon host a U.S. missile defense interceptor base. As counterterrorism operations have become a primary concern, the relationship between the two nation's special forces communities has deepened significantly.

The U.S.-Sweden relationship is often underestimated, particularly its maritime military dimension. Swedes were among the first European colonists to settle in North America, and the Kingdom of Sweden was the first country not engaged in the U.S. Revolutionary War to recognize the young American republic. During the Cold War, the United States and Sweden developed and sustained a close maritime relationship, even when tensions were high between the two countries over the Vietnam War.

That relationship was underscored in 2005 by the two-year deployment of the Swedish submarine Gotland to San Diego where it was embedded in the U.S. Navy to exercise and test the latter's submarine and anti-submarine capacities. Not only was this an unusual demonstration by the United States of trust and confidence in the Swedish navy's subsurface capabilities; the Gotland's outstanding performance surprised many U.S. naval commanders. Today, the U.S.-Sweden security relationship has widened with bilateral exercises and Sweden's regular participation in NATO- and U.S.-hosted multilateral exercises.

The time is long overdue to begin leveraging the potentials of Polish-Swedish military collaboration, particularly in the maritime, aviation and air defense domains. Washington can and should play an important role in catalyzing and sustaining such cooperation, and to do so would not be a heavy burden. An expression of U.S. political support, participation in exercises, and the sharing of intelligence and competitive technologies would do much to galvanize and reinforce a capable Baltic Security Pillar.

The initial agenda for an enhanced Polish-Sweden defense collaboration could focus on Baltic operations in the following three arenas:

The Maritime Dimension

Both nations have an interest in ensuring that the Baltic Sea does not fall under the control of an aggressor force. Both have been disturbed by Russia's naval operations and exercises in that region. In the near term, Sweden and Poland could combine their efforts to expand their joint maritime situational awareness and contingency planning though coordinated patrolling and surveillance, increased joint exercises and deeper intelligence sharing.

On a longer-term basis, Poland and Sweden could coordinate, if not integrate, elements of their respective naval modernization programs. For example, both nations are acquiring new submarines. Sharing a common platform would facilitate interoperability. Close subsurface cooperation would increase their abilities to defend their respective territorial waters as well as reinforce the security and freedom of access of the Baltic Sea as whole.

The United States could add an important trilateral dimension to a Polish-Swedish maritime pillar by participating in exercises, sharing intelligence and, with regards to the Polish and Swedish submarine programs, providing technologies that would bolster their operational capabilities and interoperability. These could include command and control, sensor, and data management technologies as well as strike capabilities.

Aviation

Warsaw and Stockholm deploy very capable air forces. While the backbone of the Polish air force is the F-16 and that of Sweden is the Grippen, the two air forces have considerable experience in multinational operations. Expanding air-to-air cooperation is a natural extension of deeper maritime cooperation. Just as the Baltic Security Pillar would leverage Sweden's long-standing maritime bond with the United States, the Pillar's aviation dimension should leverage the Polish air force's deep relationship with the U.S. Air Force, including the U.S. aviation detachment deployed in Łask, Poland. The latter could be used to generate trilateral if not regional air exercises and, if necessary, operations.

Air Defense

Looking forward, particularly in light of Russia's aggressive air operations over the Baltic Sea and plans to deploy ever more advanced intermediate-range ballistic missiles, the Baltic Security Pillar could also feature an air defense dimension. Both Sweden and Poland are upgrading their air defense systems, and consideration should be given to how those efforts can be coordinated to maximize their coverage and effectiveness. This would be especially true should Sweden choose to acquire longer-range systems akin to Poland's plans to deploy the Patriot system. Indeed, a coordinated cross-Baltic Polish-Swedish air and missile defense architecture would be a boost to the region's security. It could be the backbone of a multinational Baltic air defense system involving others, including Finland, the Baltic states, Denmark and Germany.

The trilateral dimension of this Baltic Security Pillar, U.S. support, need not be an overly burdensome resource strain upon Washington. Force commitments could be limited to a few additional exercises and would not require new permanent stationing of forces in the region. It would, however, maximize the value of existing relationships the U.S. military has with Poland and Sweden to greater regional effect.

Strategic Benefits of the Baltic Security Pillar

In the two and a half decades following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Poland and Sweden have been good regional neighbors but they have never maximized the potentials of their defense relationship. Poland was initially focused on securing NATO membership and deepening its security ties with the United States, and on building the Visegrád Group involving the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia and, more recently, the Weimar Triangle with Germany and France.

During that same period, Sweden quietly nurtured its long-standing maritime relationship with the United States, focused on Northern Defense Cooperation with its Scandinavian neighbors and, until recently, saw little need to change its relationship with NATO. Limited time and resources and different threat perceptions were among the factors that distracted past Polish and Swedish defense establishments from leveraging their cross-Baltic potentials.

Today, the situation has been changed in large part by Russia's aggressive conduct. There is a real need for Polish-Swedish defense collaboration. The nations have common values and interests and an increasingly similar threat assessment. And they have the necessary resources and capabilities to build an operationally significant Baltic Security Pillar.

Joint Polish-Swedish activities and operations in the maritime, air, air defense and other domains would strengthen the security of the Baltic region. Both nations would garner useful expertise, knowledge and capability from the other. A Polish-Swedish security pillar would not be threatening in any way to Russian territory, but it would complicate and mitigate any effort by Moscow to intimidate, divide or strike against its Baltic neighbors.

Supporting a Polish-Swedish Baltic Security Pillar would serve these and other U.S. interests in the region. It would strengthen European capabilities without adding significant new burdens upon the U.S. military. The transfer of U.S. technology for Polish-Swedish military capabilities would lead to deeper defense industrial relations among the three. Trilateralized military-to-military engagement, standardization of procedures and equipment, contingency planning, and intelligence sharing would deepen Washington's security relationship with two key European nations, namely Poland and Sweden.

Four centuries ago, Polish-Swedish relations fluctuated between transactional alliances and direct conflict. Today, Poland, Sweden and the United States marshal a common commitment to democracy, an increasingly similar assessment of regional security dynamics, strong national economies, and capable, combat-proven military establishments.

Therein lies the potential to add a new and needed dimension to Europe's security architecture. A Polish-Swedish Baltic Security Pillar supported by the United States would deepen the transatlantic relationship and reinforce the peace in north-central Europe.

COUNTERING RUSSIAN NUCLEAR STRATEGY IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Elbridge A. Colby

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In 2012, he served as the deputy head for national security personnel on the Mitt Romney pre-transition effort and also worked on several of the campaign's security policy teams. From 2010 to 2013 he was a principal analyst and division lead for global strategic affairs at CNA. Before that, he served for over five years in the U.S. Government, including as policy advisor to the Secretary of Defense's Representative for the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, as an expert advisor to the Congressional Strategic Posture Commission, as a staff member on the President's Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the U.S. Regarding WMD, with the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, and with the State Department. Colby also serves or has served as a consultant to a variety of U.S. Government entities on a range of defense and intelligence matters. In 2014 he served as a staff member for the National Defense Panel.

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The Setting

Conflict involving Russia has become materially more plausible in Eastern Europe in recent years.[1] Coupled with Russia's increased focus on manipulating its large and diversified nuclear forces for strategic advantage, this is increasing the salience of nuclear weapons in the region. This set of developments presents a significant challenge for the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, neither of which currently appears adequately prepared or postured to respond effectively and appropriately to a conflict with Moscow, especially one involving nuclear weapons. The United States and NATO should therefore take steps to rectify this problem by adapting their strategic and military postures, strategies and doctrines with the aim of persuading Moscow that any attempt to use its nuclear forces against the alliance would be too risky, costly and dangerous to be worthwhile.

The Problem and its Implications

The fundamental problem at issue is composed of the heightened plausibility of conflict between the Atlantic Alliance and Moscow and the relevance of nuclear weapons in such a struggle. This latter element stems primarily from Russia's increased focus on and capabilities for the coercive use of its nuclear and strategic conventional forces. Left unaddressed, this heightened salience could give Moscow greater leverage in both war and chilly peace by strengthening the credibility and force of its threats.

The possibility of conflict between NATO and Russia

At the strategic political-level, there is increasing tension between Moscow on the one hand and many of its neighbors and those allied to them, including Washington, on the other over a range of political, economic and military issues in Eastern Europe. This is leading to an increased fear of war in the region, including involving NATO members.[2] On the one side, Russia's seizure of Crimea, its incursions into and support for separatist forces in Ukraine, and its increasingly bellicose rhetoric and menacing behavior regarding its former possessions to the west and south have persuaded many in the region and beyond that Moscow is prepared to employ force to

1 The author thanks Wess Mitchell, Jakub Grygiel, Guy Roberts, Julie Smith and David Yost for their helpful comments.

2 For a somewhat exaggerated but illuminating assessment, see Max Fisher, "How World War III Became Possible: A Nuclear Conflict with Russia is Likelier than You Think," *Vox*, June 29, 2015, available at http://www.vox.com/2015/6/29/8845913/russia-war.

pursue its strategic objectives, one of which many believe to be regaining ascendancy, if not hegemony, in its historical "near abroad."[3] Countries such as the Baltic states, Poland, and Romania in NATO, and Georgia and Ukraine outside of it, are thus concerned that they could become the victims of Russian military assault (or, in the case of Ukraine and Georgia, further assault). Indeed, many in these countries already regard themselves as being under at the least harassment and, to some, a form of political attack by Moscow.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin appears to be convinced that the West is out to emasculate Russia and make it a supine satellite. Moscow views as threatening and hostile steps viewed as legitimate and peaceful by the West, such as the integration of former Soviet republics into European and trans-Atlantic politico-economic and security institutions such as the European Union and NATO and the promotion of political reform and democratization throughout the region.[4] Moscow therefore seems increasingly ready to fight to secure what it judges to be its rights and prerogatives, some of which Moscow evidently sees as extending beyond its recognized borders. For instance, Moscow has pledged that it will protect ethnic Russians or Russian speakers beyond the borders of the Russian Federation.[5]

In light of these starkly differing and in key respects opposed perspectives, it seems plausible that conflict involving Russia and one or some of these states, including those that are members of the Atlantic Alliance, could break out. Such a conflict might emerge from an escalation of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, disputes over the orientation of Moscow-affiliated states like Belarus, the handling of internal political reform in such countries, attempts by the Kremlin to engineer or capitalize upon unrest in NATO states among Russophone or Russophile populations, and even outright attempts by Russia to seize territory it regards as having been illegitimately severed from it with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

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3 For a similar analysis, see Robert M. Gates, "Putin's Challenge to the West," Wall Street Journal, March 25, 2014. The sources of Russian strategic thinking and doctrine are the subject of extensive debate. Analysts differ as to what drives Moscow's strategy. Factors identified include resentment at Russia's lessened sway and prestige in its former empire and beyond and a consequent desire to recover them; insecurity in the face of NATO expansion and the Alliance and the United States' use of force outside of what Moscow sees as legitimate channels; deeply embedded cultural and organizational inclinations; simple paranoia and other factors. For a more extensive analysis of Russia's – and particularly Vladimir Putin's – foreign policy drivers, see Jeffrey Mankoff, Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield for the Council on Foreign Relations, 2009).

3 See, for instance, Vladimir Putin, "Address by President of the Russian Federation," March 18, 2014, The Kremlin, Moscow, http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889. See also the Kommersant interview with Nikolai Patrushev, head of the Russian security council, who identified color revolutions, along with terrorism, as the foremost threat to Russia and asserted that the United States "would much rather that Russia did not exist at all. As a country." Nikolai Patrushev and Elena Chernenko, "Terrorism, Ukraine and the American threat: the view from Russia," The Guardian, July 15, 2015, available at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/15/russia-terrorism-ukraine-america-putin.

4 See, for instance, Robert Coalson, "Russia Pledges to Protect All Ethnic Russians Anywhere. So, Where Are They?," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 10, 2014, available at http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-ethnic-russification-baltics-kazakhstan-soviet/25328281.html.

These or comparable political disputes could lead to the involvement of Russian-aligned "hybrid" elements (such as the much-discussed "little green men") and, if the conflict intensified, an assault by regular Russian forces.[6] If the contest were to take place on NATO territory, this would presumably entail hostile contact between such Russian forces and those of NATO or at least some subset of NATO countries, as the alliance would need to respond forcefully and ultimately effectively to such an armed assault on the part of Moscow. A failure to reply in such a fashion would call into question the efficacy, credibility and, ultimately, the viability of the Atlantic Alliance, with dramatic potential repercussions.

The relevance of nuclear weapons in a NATO-Russia confrontation

Should such a conflict break out between NATO and Russia, it would invariably unfold under the shadow of nuclear weapons, since Russia has a large and variegated nuclear arsenal, as does the United States and, albeit in smaller numbers, do the United Kingdom and France. Once a war broke out, no one could be sure that conflict would not escalate, and thus all parties would be acutely conscious of the potential for escalation and particularly escalation to the nuclear level. Indeed, such a conflict between NATO and Russia might "go nuclear" for a number of reasons. Such a war might spiral to higher levels of intensity even if neither side wanted it to, for instance through a failure to understand or observe each other's respective red lines, inadvertent escalation stemming from the nature of how the sides implement their military plans, and even simple accident.

But it is also possible that such a war might escalate to the nuclear level as the result of a deliberate choice by one of the combatants. Probably the most plausible-such escalation pathway would be through Moscow's attempt to use its nuclear forces to intimidate NATO into backing down. Indeed, there is significant evidence that Russia plans to make such higher-order capabilities part of a war with NATO.[7]

6 For a discussion of Russia's "hybrid" approach to warfare and coercion, see David Johnson, "Russia's Approach to Conflict – Implications for NATO's Deterrence and Defence," *NATO Defense College Research Paper 111* (Rome: NATO Defense College, April 2015).

In particular, Moscow appears to be refining a strategy of using nuclear and strategic conventional weapons (such as long-range, precision conventional munitions) in tailored and pointed ways with the idea of forcing Russia's opponent to acquiesce or settle on terms favoring Moscow.[8] Russian sources have occasionally described the objective of such nuclear employment as "de-escalation of aggression," an approach sometimes termed an "escalate to de-escalate" strategy.[9] An influential 2003 official document, for instance, described "[d]e-escalation of aggression" as the effort to "forc[e] the enemy to halt military action by a threat to deliver or by actual delivery of strikes of varying intensity with reliance on conventional and (or) nuclear weapons."[9] Russia appears to see both nuclear weapons of tailored effect and non-nuclear but "strategic" conventional weapons as being of potential use in such scenarios.[10]

Nor is this doctrine merely a paper proposition. Rather, Russian procurement and posture appear to provide Moscow with at least some ability to put its enunciated doctrine into practice. Based on its variegated nuclear forces and the platforms to deliver them, Russia appears to have the fundamental hardware required to conduct limited nuclear strikes against both military and non-military targets of value to the Atlantic Alliance, both in Russia's near abroad and deeper into Western Europe and even North America. Russia could use its large and diverse tactical nuclear arsenal as well as strategic-range nuclear and conventional weapons to conduct controlled strikes

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7 See, for instance, the reports of the discussions of the Elbe Group, composed of senior retired U.S. and Russian military officers. At the March 2015 meeting of the group, Russian participants, apparently authorized or encouraged by the Kremlin, specifically stated that Russia would use nuclear weapons against NATO. See, for instance, Ben Hoyle, "Putin: try to take Crimea away and I will give you a nuclear war," *The Australian*, April 2, 2015, available at http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/putin-try-to-take-crimea-away-and-i-will-give-you-a-nuclear-war/story-fnb64oi6-1227289725875; and Mike Bird, "Former CIA bureau chief: Putin is 'perfectly willing' to use nuclear weapons in Europe," *Business Insider*, July 10, 2015, available at http://www.businessinsider.com/cia-bureau-chief-says-putin-open-to-using-nuclear-weapons-in-europe-2015-7.

8 For the author's more extensive treatment of this doctrine, see Elbridge A. Colby, "Russia's Evolving Nuclear Doctrine and its Implications," (Paris: Fondation Recherche de Strategique, forthcoming).

9 See, for instance, Yury E. Federov, "Russia's Nuclear Doctrine," in *NIDS International Symposium on Security Affairs* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2010), 54; and Nikolai N. Sokov, "Why Russia Calls a Limited Nuclear Strike De-Escalation," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, March 13, 2014, available at http://thebulletin.org/why-russia-calls-limited-nuclear-strike-de-escalation. For a longer treatment, see the chapters by Sokov, Richard Weitz and other experts in Stephen J. Blank, "Russian Nuclear Weapons: Past, Present, and Future," (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011).

10 Sergei Ivanov, Minister of Defense, *Immediate Tasks of Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation,* Report of the Ministry of Defense, Moscow, 2003, 70. For further explication of this important document and how it relates to Moscow's limited nuclear conflict doctrine, see Nikolai Sokov, "Nuclear Weapons in Russian National Security Strategy," in Blank, *Russian Nuclear Weapons*, especially 205-208.

11 The inclusion of non-nuclear weapons for such strategic purposes appears to have received official sanction in the most recent Russian military doctrine. See "Russia's New Military Doctrine Names NATO As Key Risk," *Reuters*, December 26, 2014.

from a variety of aerial, maritime and ground platforms.[12] It is also known that Russia has exercised its forces to conduct such limited strikes designed to force war termination on terms favorable to Moscow.[13] Indeed, one expert claims that all of Russia's large-scale military exercises since 2000 have included the conduct of limited nuclear strikes.[14] Other reports have also indicated that Russia has frequently exercised such options.[15]

In a contest with NATO, then, Russia might threaten to use or actually employ its nuclear forces in selective, tailored strikes to demonstrate Moscow's willingness to "go nuclear" and thereby shock the alliance, break its political cohesion, and ultimately compel it to back down and terminate a conflict on terms favorable to Russia. The purpose of such strikes would not, presumably, be to defeat the alliance's military or strategic forces outright, but rather to manipulate the risk of escalation in such a way that Moscow would come out of the contest of wills the victor. Russia would have a range of options as to how to mount such attacks. It could, for instance, strike at targets deep in western NATO, hoping to shatter the sense of security and sanctuary of populations in Western Europe and North America. Alternatively, given Russia's large and diverse tactical nuclear arsenal, Moscow might use its nuclear weapons in relatively contained and controlled ways to exercise substantial influence on the course of the conventional fight, particularly since Moscow recognizes that it is conventionally inferior to NATO if NATO is able to bring the full brunt of its military power to bear.

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12 For a discussion of Russia's non-strategic nuclear arsenal, including its relevance to the "escalate to deescalate" nuclear strategy, see David Yost, "Russia's Non-Strategic Nuclear Forces," *International Affairs* 77, no. 3 (July 2001), especially 535-536.

13 In July 1999, Russian forces conducted a major exercise entitled Zapad [West]-99 in which Russian forces simulated the use of nuclear weapons from two Tu-95 and two Tu-160 bombers, including through use of nuclear-armed air-launched cruise missiles to strike against the countries from which the invasion was launched (often judged to be Poland and even the United States itself). See Jacob W. Kipp, "Russia's Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons," *Military Review*, May-June 2001, available at http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/russias_nukes/russias_nukes.htm. For the speculation that Poland and United States were targets of the limited nuclear strikes in this exercise, see, for instance, Marcel H. van Herpen, *Russia's Embrace of Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Its Negative Impact on U.S. Proposals for Nuclear Arms Reductions*, Cicero Foundation No. 11/04, September 2011, available at http://www.cicerofoundation.org/lectures/Marcel_H_Van_Herpen_RUSSIA_EMBRACE_OF_TACTICAL_NUCLEAR_WEAPONS.pdf.

14 Sokov, "Why Russia Calls a Limited Nuclear Strike De-Escalation."

15 See, for instance, Zachary Keck, "Russia Threatens Nuclear Strikes Over Crimea," *The Diplomat,* July 11, 2014, available at http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/russia-threatens-nuclear-strikes-over-crimea/; and Anne Applebaum, "War in Europe," *Slate*, August 29, 2014, available at http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2014/08/vladimir_putin_s_troops_have_invaded_ukraine_should_we_prepare_for_war_with.html.

Implications

The implications of this capability for the United States and NATO are significant and potentially grave. This is because, left uncountered, such a capability could provide Moscow with a formidable escalation advantage in the event of conflict with the Atlantic Alliance – or in calculations short of war about who would prevail in such a contest, which of course have significant strategic ramifications of their own. In concrete terms, an ability to use nuclear weapons flexibly and relatively controllably could allow Moscow to threaten to escalate to nuclear use in ways that would unfavorably shift the onus of escalation onto NATO and leave NATO "holding the bag." Such use would do so not only by providing a breathtaking signifier of Russian resolve and ability to hurt the alliance, but might also involve gaining Russia a substantial advantage in a conventional fight over, for instance, the Baltics.

Without a corresponding counterpunch to such Russian employment, NATO would be left with the choice of either not responding (or responding fecklessly) on the one hand or dramatically escalating in response. This choice would be especially urgent and difficult if Russian use had hobbled NATO's ability to fight a conventional war, for instance by interrupting the flow of forces into the region from farther in the rear. The demerit of a feeble response would be that Russia would thereby be incentivized to "double down" on its tailored nuclear options, continuing to employ them to try to force NATO to back down. The downside of dramatic counterescalation, on the other hand, would lie in the reality it could well court a matching response from an adversary possessed of a nuclear arsenal roughly equal that of the United States in strategic forces and considerably outmatching NATO's in theater-range systems. In brief, the challenge is not that Russia has any semblance of escalation dominance, but rather that it has capabilities to act at more and potentially more suitable echelons of the escalatory ladder. Given that neither side would want to continue mounting that ladder in the event of war, such advantages in flexibility and suitability could prove of great value and significance.

Without an adequate NATO riposte, then, Russia might be able to ascend to a level of the escalation ladder that the alliance could or would not match, and then use the coercive leverage created by this advantage to compel the alliance to accede to Russian terms, with possibly calamitous consequences for the integrity of NATO and the security order it oversees.[16] At the least, such a result would be likely to lead to a marked increase in Russian power over parts of Europe and to the serious weakening or even collapse of NATO, as well as to considerably greater security tensions and competition within and around Europe.

16 For classic discussions of the logic of this kind of strategy, see especially Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), and Herman Kahn, *On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1965).

What, then, would an adequate NATO response look like? Needless to say, there is no "right" answer to this question. Strategists differ about whether an alliance riposte to a Russian attack along these lines should be essentially proportionate to telegraph control or somewhat escalatory to emphasize the unwillingness to enter into a tit-for-tat fight, whether conducted in the same domain to maintain symmetry or in another to convey the willingness to surprise and discomfit Moscow, whether conducted off Russian territory to try to communicate restraint or on it to avoid harming the states the alliance is trying to defend, as well as along a number of other axes of potential decision.[17] Nonetheless, while the precise advisable retort to a Russian use of nuclear weapons would depend on circumstances and indubitably be subject to heated debate in the councils of the implicated governments and in the North Atlantic Council, in general terms it can confidently be said that the alliance would want to have the capabilities, strategy and deployments needed to respond to Russian employment in a controlled, discriminate and flexible fashion.[18] That is, regardless of one's view of how to respond to such Russian use, it would certainly need to be limited and controlled in some meaningful way, and thus the alliance or its nuclear-armed member states, particularly the United States, need the nuclear forces and supporting architecture required to make such limitation feasible.

17 For the author's own view on this problem, see Elbridge A. Colby, "Defining Strategic Stability: Reconciling Stability and Deterrence" in *Strategic Stability: Contending Interpretations,* Elbridge Colby and Michael Gerson, eds. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2013), 47-83.

18 It is also worth bearing in mind that the Atlantic Alliance has reserved the prerogative to use nuclear weapons first. Though the alliance has not emphasized this right since the end of the Cold War, NATO has nonetheless refused to adopt the "no first use" posture advocated by some member states in the years after 1991. While the alliance has made clear that it regards the circumstances under which nuclear weapons might be used as "extremely remote," and presumably even more so regarding NATO first use, it nonetheless remains the case that the alliance is officially open to such employment. See, for instance, NATO's 2012 Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (available here: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm), especially chapter 10, which provides a negative security assurance to non-nuclear weapons states in conformity with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations – that is, not Russia. This is particularly pertinent because, while the alliance enjoys general conventional superiority over Russia throughout most of the Euro-Atlantic area, it does not necessarily enjoy such advantage in some parts of alliance territory, most notably the Baltic states, where Russia may, under certain plausible circumstances, hold the upper hand. Given Russia's margin over the alliance in this area, it is not impossible that Russia could seize Baltic state territory and establish a strong defensive position against alliance counteraction, counteraction that would of necessity need to be fierce and expansive in order to dislodge well-entrenched Russian forces. In such a context, it is not inconceivable that the alliance would consider resorting to nuclear threats or even use against Russia, perhaps simply to forestall dramatic deterioration of NATO's position or further intrusion of Russia into NATO territory. For a discussion of the difficulties the alliance would face in dislodging Russia from such a position, see Forrest Morgan, *Dancing With the Bear: Managing Escalation in a Conflict with Russia* (Paris: Institut Francais Relations Internationales, 2012); and Eric Schmitt and Steven Lee Myers, "NATO Refocuses on the Kremlin, Its Original Foe," *New York Times*, June 23, 2015, especially the comments of David Ochmanek of the RAND Corporation.

Of course, neither side could be at all confident that a war involving nuclear weapons – or any significant war – between them could ultimately be limited, but it would be incumbent upon NATO to have the capabilities to try to limit one, not least because the absence of such an ability would open substantial possibilities for Russian coercive advantage.[19]

Fortunately, NATO and the United States are not without the means to respond to such an attempt by Russia to use its nuclear weapons for strategic gain. The United States has consistently sought the ability to conduct controlled, limited nuclear operations since the 1960s.[20] The United States therefore has many nuclear capabilities and their associated strategic assets, particularly the C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) systems, suited for the conduct of a limited nuclear war. These capabilities include the forward-deployed B-61 gravity bombs based in Europe for defense of NATO, weapons that can be delivered by the aircraft of the members of the alliance participating in the nuclear mission. The United Kingdom and France also have some capability for the conduct of limited nuclear operations, though the size of their arsenals and, more relevantly in this case, the limited reach and controllability provided by their C4ISR and supporting architecture mean their capabilities for flexible use are more modest than those of the United States.[21]

The problems for NATO are not, however, in its basic ability to conduct limited nuclear operations. Rather, the problems are essentially those of preparedness and degree of ability. It is not that the alliance is bereft of capabilities to conduct limited nuclear operations in response to Russian nuclear employment, but rather that the alliance is relatively ill-prepared to do so and that its ability to do so may be inferior to Russia's, and perhaps considerably so. The consequences of such inferiority in the capability to conduct a limited nuclear war could be that NATO would not be ready or able to respond effectively and appropriately in the event of a Russian attempt to "escalate to deescalate." Without the right capabilities and degree of readiness, the choices the alliance might face as to how to respond in such an eventuality might be too painful or demanding to be adopted.

19 For an exploration of the problems of limited nuclear war in historical and contemporary contexts, see Jeffrey A. Larsen and Kerry Kartchner, eds., *On Limited Nuclear War* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2014).

20 For a history, see the author's "The United States and Discriminate Nuclear Options in the Cold War" in *On Limited Nuclear War*, 49-79.

21 For British and French statements on limited yield options, see David Yost, "New Approaches to Deterrence in Britain, France, and the United States," *International Affairs* 81 (January 2005), 107-108.

The reasons for NATO's relative lack of preparedness in this domain are not mysterious. Since the end of the Cold War, the alliance has largely neglected consideration of how to grapple with Russia in a nuclear-shadowed contest.[22] Indeed, this has been of a piece with the alliance's general disinclination to plan and prepare for any kind of conflict with Russia, despite the invitation and initiation into the alliance of multiple new member states that were once part of the Soviet bloc and even the USSR itself.[23] Thus, while the alliance has extended the North Atlantic Charter's somber guarantee that all state parties would treat an attack upon one as an attack upon all to countries like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, the alliance has until recently done very little in the way of concretizing that pledge in the face of a resurgent Russia.[24] As a result, the alliance has been far from fully prepared for a conflict with Russia, and particularly for one that escalates to the nuclear level.

Fortunately, this is beginning to change in the wake of Russia's aggressive actions and belligerent noises since winter 2014, but NATO's progress in readying the alliance for the effective defense of its eastern members appears fitful, uneven and incomplete. Thus, while NATO has conducted a series of reassurance initiatives and the United States has announced the deployment of equipment and forces, including heavier elements, to the newer member states, these initiatives still leave NATO largely outgunned by Russian forces in the local balance of forces.[25]

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22 For a review of NATO's readiness for employment of its nuclear-capable aircraft in 2008, noting the alliance's general lack of preparedness, see the "Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management," Part II, December 2008, especially 14-17, available at http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/PhaseIIReportFinal.pdf.

23 See, for instance, Steven Erlanger, "Eastern Europe Frets About NATO's Ability to Curb Russia," *New York Times*, April 23, 2014, noting that NATO did not even develop plans to defend the Baltic states until after Russia's 2008 war with Georgia. But this development did not appear to entail significant changes to NATO's posture or deployments, and many analyses indicate that the alliance remains relatively underprepared for a Russian attack on the Baltics and potentially other East European member states. See, for instance, the United Kingdom House of Commons Defence Committee's report *Towards the next Defence and Security Review* (London: House of Commons, July 2014), especially chapter 4, available at http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmdfence/358/35802.htm.

24 Article V of NATO's Charter, the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, states: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

25 For some of the NATO reassurance initiatives, see the NATO fact sheet "NATO's Readiness Action Plan," February 2015, available at http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_02/20150205_1502-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf. For the U.S.-specific activities, see the U.S. Department of Defense Operation Atlantic Resolve fact sheet, June 11, 2015.

More to the point, the alliance's nuclear strategy and posture have been the area perhaps least touched by NATO's increased willingness to adapt its posture in light of the new threat from Russia. There has been some discussion of the need to adapt NATO's nuclear strategy in light of the evolved Russian threat and specifically Moscow's revised doctrine for employment of its strategic forces, but it is not clear how far these discussions have advanced or what concrete policy or posture shifts they have initiated.[26] Indeed, at least from the perspective of an outside observer, little thus far seems to have changed in the alliance's nuclear posture or strategy.

This is a problem because the alliance needs to be better prepared than it currently is to deal with a Russian attempt to use its strategic forces for escalation advantage in the midst of a conflict. NATO's best deterrent to a Russian attempt to leverage its escalate-to-deescalate strategy and capabilities for advantage is a demonstrated capability and will to respond in ways that are effective and, at the least, show Moscow that the costs and risks of such employment would outweigh its benefits. In other words, NATO's response should at the least vitiate any gains accruing to Moscow from such use. Ideally, the alliance should evince a clear awareness of the nature of the challenge posed by Moscow's tailored nuclear coercion strategy, demonstrate the will and preparedness to respond to such employment appropriately, and field a nuclear and strategic force capable of discriminate, controlled use. This posture would be best suited to deterring Moscow from seeking to gamble that it could materially gain by putting its strategy into practice.

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http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0514_atlanticresolve/Operation_Atlantic_Resolve_Fact_Sheet_11_JUN_2015.pdf. For a telling critique of the actual substantive effect of these activities, see, for instance, Jeff Jacoby, "Vladimir Putin isn't breaking a sweat over US tanks," *Boston Globe,* June 26, 2015, available at https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2015/06/26/vladimir-putin-isn-breaking-sweat-over-tanks/4eOCSAjaFADqqPQL0Dn7RP/story.html. As Jacoby noted, these reassurance initiatives do not involve any permanent deployment of U.S. troops on Baltic state territory, and he quoted a senior military official who said that the amount of armored force that was to be deployed would not "fill up the parking lot of your average high school." For the original quotation from the U.S. military official, and additional emphasis that these deployments would be spread across several different countries, thereby diluting their military impact, see Gordon Lubold, "U.S. Boosts Europe's Defense Against Russia," *Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 2015.

26 See, for instance, Geoff Dyer and Alex Barker, "Nuclear Deterrent on NATO Agenda Amid Rise in Russian Rhetoric," *Financial Times,* June 25, 2015; and Ewan MacAskill, "NATO To Review Nuclear Weapons Policy as Attitude to Russia Hardens," *Guardian*, June 24, 2015. The latter noted comments by U.S. NATO Ambassador Douglas Lute to the effect that "NATO, however, had not yet reached any conclusions or decided on 'what are the actions that are implied in our response.'"

Recommendations

To develop such a posture, the alliance could profitably take a number of steps. Such steps should be designed to deepen and show NATO's appreciation of the problem posed by Russia's strategy, improve the alliance's own ability to conduct limited nuclear operations, and strengthen and demonstrate its collective resolve and cohesion.

A crucial step in meeting this challenge is for the alliance to strengthen its ability to conduct a conventional defense of its eastern member states. Russia's ability to exploit its nuclear forces for coercive advantage likely turns on its ability to create a favorable *fait accompli* through its use of hybrid and conventional forces.[27] In light of the old saw that deterrence is easier than compellence, Russia would be in a stronger position to employ its coercive de-escalation strategy if it was only threatening nuclear escalation to block vigorous NATO counteraction (or, more likely, the scale of counteraction needed to eject Russian forces) than if it simply threatened to use nuclear weapons to try to gain territory. If the alliance can prevent Moscow from gaining such a foothold, therefore, it will be in a stronger position to prevent Russia from capitalizing on its escalate-to-deescalate strategy. Accordingly, the alliance would be well-advised to deploy additional defensive capabilities, particularly heavier forces, to the vulnerable eastern member states, especially the Baltic states and Poland. Such forces should be manifestly defensive but designed to make a Russian incursion into NATO territory a much costlier and more difficult proposition.[28]

In the nuclear realm, perhaps the most immediately useful remedial step is for NATO to develop a deeper internal grasp of the nature of the problem posed by Russia's integrated hybrid-conventional-nuclear posture and to develop a keener understanding of how the alliance should specifically posture and prepare itself to meet this challenge. The alliance would therefore benefit from candid, frank and informed discussions and analyses about the nature of the threat and methods of dealing with it. These should include policy deliberations and intelligence assessments on the matter as well as war-gaming, tabletop exercises and other scenario activities, which are useful in concretizing challenges and identifying effective mechanisms to counteract them. The alliance should also encourage appropriate government bodies as well as expert institutes and affiliates to analyze the challenge more deeply and propose responses. In addition, the alliance should ensure that planning staffs at Supreme Headquarters Allied Power Europe

27 For a more developed elaboration of this point, see Elbridge Colby, *Nuclear Weapons in the Third Offset Strategy: Avoiding a Nuclear Blind Spot in the Pentagon's New Initiative* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2015).

28 For further argument along these lines, see the author's "Step Up to Stand Down: The United States, NATO, and Dissuading Russian Aggression," *Foreign Affairs*, August 13, 2015, available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/poland/2015-08-13/step-stand-down.

(SHAPE) are adequately manned and that such positions are appropriately valued and employed. Accordingly, such staffs should regularly exercise and train for nuclear contingencies and should include adaptive planning efforts designed to ensure NATO can respond to unfolding and unpredictable scenarios effectively and appropriately. SHAPE linkages with U.S. as well as UK and French nuclear planning staffs should also be adequately grooved to ensure effective planning capabilities, including adaptive planning.[29]

But these exercises would and should also serve deterrent and political purposes. For instance, such exercises could usefully be held in part or as a whole in member states located in Eastern Europe, not only to improve military performance in that area but also to demonstrate the exercises' relevance to potential contingencies there. The exercises should also therefore be soberly and judiciously but appropriately publicized to send a deterrent message to Moscow that it could not expect to shock NATO into submission through nuclear employment. The exercises would also signal the cohesiveness of the alliance in sustaining and readying a credible collective nuclear deterrent. This would telegraph to Moscow that its nuclear use would be less likely to result in the splintering of the alliance than its will to respond in kind. < Such an ability would show Moscow that its military gains from nuclear use would be less than it might expect, riskier than it would hope, and thus too dangerous to be reasonably contemplated. Such resolve can also usefully be advertised by the continued rotation of U.S. nuclear-capable strategic assets through the European theater for such exercises and other purposes.

But while tabletop and field exercises are important in preparing the alliance and demonstrating its readiness to respond to Russian aggression, such practices would be idle without adequate capability. And it is not clear that alliance member states have the optimal forces for responding to a Russian use of nuclear weapons, especially in the medium- to longer-term. The alliance should not allow a situation in which it does not have the hardware necessary to effectively conduct limited nuclear operations against Russia, as this could open a significant gap in NATO's deterrent. Accordingly, the alliance – meaning here especially the United States – should focus on fielding nuclear forces suited for controlled, discriminate and flexible use. In concrete terms, it should focus on developing nuclear forces able to conduct precise, variable-yield strikes from a variety of platforms even in the face of sophisticated and dense adversary defenses, such as the ones Russia is and will be deploying in the coming decade.[30]

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29 See the similar recommendations in the "Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management," 16.

30 For a fuller exposition of the logic behind this argument and its concrete implications, see the varying but, on this fundamental point, similar submissions of Clark Murdock, Keith Payne and the author in Clark Murdock et al., *Project Atom: A Competitive Strategies Approach to Defining U.S. Nuclear Strategy and Posture* 2025-2050 (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2015). For a dissenting view, see the submission of Barry Blechman and the Stimson Center.

Programmatically, the United States should therefore ensure that it develops and procures in adequate numbers a new penetrating bomber (the LRS-B) that can carry gravity bombs and cruise missiles offering a variety of yields; a new long-range standoff cruise missile also offering a variety of yields to ensure a redundant penetration capability; and the F-35 variant to fulfill the DCA mission in Europe. The United States should also modify one or two Trident II D5s on each fleet ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) for primary-only detonation, thereby enabling a lower yield option from the sea-based ballistic missile force. The United States should also ensure that it has the appropriate enabling capabilities to conduct limited nuclear operations against Russia. These include developing jamming, electromagnetic pulse, and cyberattack-resistant C4ISR for nuclear operations, and especially terrestrial or air-breathing links to avoid excessive reliance on vulnerable space assets.

At the same time, other alliance members, particularly those involved in the DCA and SNOWCAT (support to nuclear operations with conventional air tactics) missions, should ensure that they adequately resource and exercise their elements of these important roles.[31] In particular, alliance members should replace aging F-16 and Tornado aircraft with their nuclear-capable successors.[32] In addition, SNOWCAT participants should ensure they adequately fund and prepare for the essential supporting aspects of any DCA mission, in particular the vital penetration capability. DCA that cannot plausibly penetrate Russian air defenses will be a far less credible deterrent; functions such as electronic attack and air defense suppression therefore may be as crucial to mission success as the actual carriage of the nuclear weapons themselves.

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31 For discussion of the SNOWCAT mission, see Karl-Heinz Kamp and Robertus Remkes, “Options for NATO Nuclear Sharing Arrangements” in *Reducing Nuclear Risks in Europe: A Framework for Action.* Steve Andreasen and Isabelle Williams, eds. (Palo Alto: Hoover Institution Press, 2011), 94.

32 Germany has indicated that it will replace its nuclear-capable Tornados with non-nuclear- capable Eurofighters. Other member states fielding DCAs should be strongly encouraged to replace their obsolete aircraft with nuclear-capable aircraft.

Conclusion

A disgruntled but somewhat reinvigorated Russia that sees itself pressed, encircled and disrespected is seeking to restore its leading position, if not its dominance, in the area of its former empire. To do so, it has been funding a significant military modernization campaign over the last decade or more, one that appears it may continue even as Russia faces economic headwinds. This buildup has already yielded a Russian force capable of acting quickly and efficaciously in its near abroad. It has also yielded a nuclear and strategic conventional force that appears capable of and ready for limited, controlled employment designed to force an adversary – namely NATO – to back down in the midst of a conflict. In other words, Russia at least plans and is posturing itself to take – or credibly threaten to take – a conflict with the West to higher levels, even if NATO would prefer not to do so. This has direct military and strategic implications in the event of outright conflict, but it also gives Moscow substantial coercive leverage, since even the credible threat to escalate – even without actually doing so – could give Russia the political upper hand in a crisis or war. Such leverage will be especially pronounced if NATO does not possess reasonable and credible responses to such controlled escalation.

For this reason, NATO must face forthrightly the real problem to its security caused not only by Russia's general aggressiveness but also in particular by Russia's ability to use nuclear and strategic conventional forces for advantage, and it must take the steps needed to minimize the strategic leverage Moscow could gain from its doctrine. Failing to do so would be to leave a considerable and possibly significant vulnerability in the alliance's defense, one that a more assertive Moscow might be willing to try to exploit. The best way to persuade the Kremlin that such a gamble would be far too risky and perilous is for the alliance to field the forces – conventional and nuclear – needed to respond efficaciously to such Russian aggression, and to demonstrate the readiness and will to employ them appropriately but nonetheless vigorously.

Failing to do this risks placing the future of European security in the good graces of the Kremlin. This, surely, is no safe or reasonable proposition. Rather, a measured but formidable strength, in the old but often validated formulation, is the surest guardian of stability. This has always been NATO's basic logic. There is no reason to think, after three quarters of a century of safety without war, that this is not still the most prudent approach.

U.S. POLICY AND CENTRAL EUROPEAN STRATEGIC DIVERSIFICATION?

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Europe's Security Crisis

After the Cold War, the key assumption underlying U.S. defense planning in Europe was that Europe had entered a period of long-lasting peace and that the catastrophic wars the continent had suffered in the twentieth century were a thing of the past. Europe had entered a post-Westphalian era in which international law, the institutions of the European Union, and norms about the use of force made major war obsolete.

Sadly, these assumptions no longer appear to hold. Europe now faces a daunting array of challenges that together are forcing a thorough rethink of U.S. regional defense strategy and Europe's role in American global defense policy. Europe's challenges are internal, external, political, economic and ideological all at once. Too many European economies are stagnating, as the drama over Greece's potential exit from the eurozone has underscored. Too many Europeans are moreover disaffected with European politics and feel excluded from the progress that Europe has made in the last two decades. Across the continent, far-right nationalism is a growing force that challenges the legitimacy of European elites and with it the legitimacy of a half-century of European integration. Meanwhile, there is a rising threat of terrorism from foreign fighters inspired by the growth of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to the south, not to mention the exodus of fleeing humanity.

These challenges alone are very serious. Yet piled upon them is the threat now posed by a revanchist Russia that has demonstrated a willingness to use military power to alter borders in Europe. That threat, itself no less significant, only exacerbates the others, creating a complicated and dangerous new European political and security dynamic.

For decades, U.S. and NATO defense posture along NATO's eastern flank had itself been grounded on the assumption that if Russia was capable of attacking NATO, it had no such intent. The alliance could thus focus resources on other areas, enjoying a peace dividend and directing defense resources toward other challenges. These assumptions proved correct for two decades. The United States and its NATO allies profited from the respite. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine in August 2014 changed the picture.

To date, the United States and its allies have responded to Russian military aggression against Ukraine with economic sanctions, pledges to increase defense spending within NATO, the establishment of a new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) and a one-billion-dollar U.S. European Reassurance Initiative (ERI). The United States has announced the pre-positioning of military supplies across several countries in the region, and some defense analysts are now calling for larger-scale, potentially permanent deployments of U.S. and allied air, ground and naval forces.

How far the United States will go in reorienting its defense policy remains to be seen and depends on multiple factors, including Russian behavior in Ukraine, the policies of U.S. allies and partners in the region, and the outcome of a broader debate over the significance of Europe in U.S. global defense strategy.

A critical dimension of U.S. regional defense strategy that often receives less attention than high politics and questions of U.S. troop deployments is American regional defense cooperation. The United States has invested for years in building bilateral defense relationships with countries across the region, large and small, rich and poor, allies as well as partners. The nature of these relationships, however, is changing in response to the new demands of the European theater and the new demands of U.S. allies and partners themselves. A new approach to regional defense cooperation is required, one that takes into account the changing regional political-military picture and focuses on strengthening regional capabilities for self-defense. This new approach will not be without its challenges for the United States.

The Evolution of U.S. Regional Defense Engagement

U.S. defense engagement in the region has passed through two distinct phases since the end of the Cold War. The first phase started in the 1990s, when the United States engaged the military and defense complexes of the former Warsaw Pact states in a deep and thorough effort to reform and strengthen their defense institutions. The objective of the defense engagement in this era was primarily political. It focused on guaranteeing that military and defense institutions were brought under civilian rule and that liberal democratic norms were inculcated into regional military culture. The United States bilaterally and through NATO worked to civilianize and professionalize the region's defense establishments. In the process, several of these countries joined NATO and the European Union in a process that spurred reform while simultaneously strengthening regional security and thereby reduced the risk of domestic backsliding.

With the 9/11 attacks, however, U.S. defense engagement objectives changed. The al-Qaida menace and subsequent multiyear, large-scale campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq changed the nature of U.S. defense engagement with Europe on a fundamental level. By that time, most of the countries in the region were democratized and had joined NATO and the EU or were well on their way to doing so. Many of these countries were moreover key supporters of U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The focus of U.S. regional defense engagement changed accordingly to emphasize developing a formidable set of deployable allied and partner forces and strengthening organic military capabilities to support and sustain such forces as part of broader NATO or U.S. coalitions. This meant investments on several fronts, and above all stressing interoperability for out-of-area coalition operations. Throughout this period, and even if those operations took place outside Europe, Europe's continued role as an important rear-basing location built in no small part on the relationships that had been developed in the previous decade.

Beginning in 2011, the confluence of reductions in U.S. and coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan set the stage for a third shift in U.S. defense strategy and partnership objectives in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). It would take Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, however, and the subsequent calls from multiple allies in the region, to begin the process of reorientation of U.S. regional defense engagement and open the third chapter in the story. That process is still in its early stages, but it is seems clear that U.S. efforts will shift emphasis from preparing U.S. allies and partners for overseas deployments to strengthening their capability for self-defense against a renewed Russian threat. It is the ways by which the United States will pursue that reorientation that remain under discussion.

Three Challenges for a New Regional Strategy

Strengthening defense partnerships will almost surely be one of the key lines of effort in this new strategy. Building stronger defense partnerships—both between the United States and its allies and partners and among those allies and partners—bolsters deterrence against Russia and other threats and strengthens NATO. If, over time, it leads to more capable regional militaries, it should also reduce the burdens on the American taxpayer. There are, however, at least three major challenges to building stronger defense partnerships in the region. First, there is the challenge of low regional capability. Second, there is the challenge of regional diversity, which the United States must navigate. Third, there is the challenge of ensuring that America's global perspective and objectives remain complementary with the more regional security perspective of U.S. allies and partners.

The first challenge the United States faces in the region is low regional defense capacity. It may be true that collectively the CEE countries comprise a force on par with major west European states such as Germany. This is true especially if wealthy Nordic partners are included in the equation.

Nevertheless, these countries do not, in fact, spend as a single unit. Moreover, in real and relative terms, defense resources in the vast majority of U.S. partners in the region are far too limited. Only Poland and Estonia currently meet NATO's 2 percent of GDP spending target. This is unfortunate, since given the immediate risk they face, these states ought to be spending at levels of GDP much closer to those of a country like Israel (5.2 percent in 2014) or of European countries during the Cold War, most of which spent 5 percent or more of GDP on defense. For front-line states such as the Baltics, in other words, even the 2 percent criterion should be viewed as a floor rather than a ceiling.

The challenge of free-riding is long-standing for the United States within NATO. Throughout the Cold War, transatlantic debate over who should pay for the defense of Western Europe was common. Since the end of the Cold War, the burden-sharing issue has also arisen over relative roles and burdens in the Balkans, in Afghanistan and in Libya.

The temptation for smaller countries like the Baltic states to free-ride by neglecting their own defense spending is considerable, given that they would need to spend significantly more than they do now to develop deterrent capabilities on an individual basis that would have a significant impact on the military balance in the region. Raising defense spending to such levels would be a political feat. Obviously, a country like Estonia cannot be expected to spend the same amount on defense that the United States does, where the annual defense budget is many times greater than Estonia's total national income.

That said, it is not impossible for these countries to increase their defense spending well above the 2 percent goal, and it behooves the United States to raise the bar and press them to do so even as it reinforces its own positions in the region. If the Baltic states were to coordinate their spending effectively and engage in pooling and sharing, joint procurement, and other forms of cooperation they would get much more bang for their buck. Consider, for example, the impact that a coordinated Baltic air defense system could have on deterrence in the region. It is not difficult to imagine, over the medium term, a joint Baltic purchase of relevant sensors, interceptors, and command and control (C2) nodes, potentially becoming a contribution to NATO missile defense.

In short, if the United States is to be expected to engage productively with these countries, they will need to spend far more on defense than they do. This is true for the practical reason that productive defense engagement requires effective defense capabilities. More important, however, is the fact that the United States will find it difficult to continue productive defense engagement with its Central and East European allies and partners if there is a perception that U.S. efforts are displacing national efforts. In other words, the United States will and should remain wary of moral hazard when it comes to its defense investments in the region.

Second, if the countries of the region are diverse in their capabilities, they remain diverse in their views on the importance and role of defense engagement with the United States. Interestingly, a shared sense of threat with the United States does not empirically correlate with the level or degree of interest in deeper defense engagement with the United States. For example, the United States has a strong military working relationship with Hungary, symbolized by the NATO Strategic Airlift Consortium C-17 fleet at Papa Air Base, despite the fact that Hungary's public rhetoric on the Ukraine crisis has often contrasted sharply with America's. America's current level of engagement with the Czech Republic is meanwhile less, despite a generally more similar (if not identical) outlook on Russia.

Under these conditions, it makes sense for U.S. defense engagement to focus primarily on strengthening relations with countries whose regional perspective is most congruent with that of the United States. Within these countries, moreover, defense engagement should focus on strengthening regional defense rather than other global U.S. objectives. Developing the ability of Sweden, Finland, the Baltics, Poland and Romania to deter aggression individually and cooperatively as allies or partners should take precedence in U.S. engagement over efforts to strengthen their capabilities for out-of-area operations that marked the post-9/11 decade. This means investment in military infrastructure, joint training, air and missile defenses, fighter aircraft, refueling, common plans, regional ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) capabilities such as small and medium-sized unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), information sharing and other areas. This is not to say that defense engagement should neglect strategic airlift and other areas that have been a focus for the last decade, but it does mean that those areas should now take somewhat less priority than they have in the past. Many areas of need, of course, overlap.

Third, even as the United States refocuses on the challenge of territorial defense in Europe, important differences over strategy and resource allocation may arise. Even if Russia's invasion of Ukraine demonstrated the veracity of some regional powers' warnings about the potential Russian threat, even if it has aroused increasingly intense debate over Russia in U.S. foreign and national security circles, the reality remains that the United States faces at least two other major challenges of no less—and some would argue much more—significance. These challenges are, of course, China and the continued threat posed by Salafi jihadi groups such as al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Over the course of 2014, the significance of the Russian threat returned to national headlines, but in 2015 the threat posed by ISIS has increasingly overtaken it in foreign and national security policy discussion in Washington.

It may be, even as the United States seeks to recast the language in which U.S. defense partnering across the region occurs by emphasizing regional defense, that the value of U.S. defense partnerships in the region declines proportionately to the willingness of states in the region to support U.S. objectives in these other areas. In other words, territorial defense may increase in significance in U.S. strategy and defense partnerships in Central Europe, but the pressing nature of the long-term struggle against ISIS and related threats could equally increase. Here there is a real potential for tension that would be counterproductive to achieving defense engagement goals.

To this end, two points are worth bearing in mind in formulating defense strategy. First, the objective of U.S. regional engagement should be to fortify the ability of these countries to provide for their own security, not to make their own security forces redundant. Europe is now clearly facing an extraordinary security challenge from the South as well as the East, and will have to address both challenges. The states in this region cannot ignore or excuse themselves from the responsibility of aiding the rest of Europe in efforts to address the problems created by the expansion of ISIS and the chaos of the twentieth-century state system of the Middle East and North Africa. However, it is natural that they be expected to focus primarily on the risk of Russian revanchism. The objective should be a set of mutually reinforcing security relationships in which the United States plays a role in the region but key elements of defense and deterrence are provided and funded by the countries themselves most at risk. Similarly, these countries should support U.S. and west European efforts to address the challenge of the South, but without being expected to assume primary responsibility for it. This objective may require that the United States play a larger regional role in strengthening deterrence and defense in the East over the near term, provided that the focus is on strengthening local capabilities rather than replacing them.

It will also be important not to exaggerate the difference between territorial and out-of-area defense requirements. Clearly, certain types of plans and systems are regionally specific. Some air and missile defense systems, for example, are of purely regional value. Nevertheless, many of the specific capabilities required for effective regional defense overlap with those necessary for effective military intervention overseas. Such areas include the need for tactical and mid-range airlift, the maintenance of sufficient munitions stockpiles, precision-guided weapons systems, deployable point missile defense systems, refueling, unmanned aircraft, cryptology, biometrics, and intelligence surveillance reconnaissance, among other areas.

Clearly, to navigate these challenges the United States will need to pay careful attention to what regional partners ask. But that alone will not be sufficient to build on the defense engagement opportunities available in the region. Partners themselves will need to find ways to invest more in their own defense. They will also need to continue to strive to cooperate with one another, even when the payoff from cooperation is long-term. Finally, regional partners will need to continue to bear in mind that America's interests are global and that America will approach regional problems with a global perspective, no matter how vital the security of Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe in particular, remains. In this regard, narrow-minded and parochial views on regional security problems are sure to be counterproductive and ultimately self-defeating. As discussed at length above, Russia is not the only threat the United States faces. Nor is it the only threat the countries of this region face, even if it is one of the most pressing in 2015. Not only is America a global power, but NATO and the European Union, upon which the countries of the region depend for their future security and prosperity, are both institutions with global interests. The threats that Europe faces today are complex and integrated. They thus require an integrated deterrence and defense posture that accounts not only for the global nature of the challenge posed by Russia but also the regional and global importance of other security challenges.

WHY FRONTLINE STATES NEED OFFENSIVE WEAPONS

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Central and Northern Europe cannot rely on the U.S. or NATO alone to maintain deterrence in the region. The nature of the Russian threat combined with the curtailed and distracted military might of the U.S. puts a premium on local capabilities. Deterrence needs to be built on local defenses; the guarantees and the solidarity of the alliance remains indispensable but it is not sufficient.

In particular, this chapter argues that states in Central and Northern Europe have to develop their own capabilities and doctrines that, while anchored in the wider alliance, must be able to inflict clear and immediate costs on the potential aggressor, Russia. And to do so, NATO's frontline states would be best served by acquiring the capacity to strike targets inside Russia. Such offensive capabilities will enhance their ability to deny Russia its limited objectives while at the same time decreasing the costs of allied reinforcements. They are the building blocs of a posture of deterrence by denial, but they also give these states an incipient capacity to punish Russia for its potential aggression.

Offensively-armed frontline states will stabilize the region in two ways. First, the ability to strike behind enemy lines strengthens and reassures the vulnerable states: they will be able to defend themselves more effectively while at the same time they can threaten to escalate the limited war to a higher level of violence, activating the alliance. Second, with the ability to hit some A2/AD assets of the enemy, these states can decrease for their security patron and their allies the costs of entering the geographic theater of war once hostilities have started. By lowering the costs for the external security guarantors, the frontline allies augment the credibility of the extended deterrence of their alliance.

The Imperative of Local Defense

The argument in favor of arming frontline allies with offensive capabilities is part of a larger recognition that the current security environment puts a premium on local defenses. First, this is due to the nature of the threat. The regional revisionist power (Russia in the case of Europe) seeks to act below the threshold of a full war. Russian wants a quick, limited military attack that would achieve a territorial fait accompli without escalating into a wider confrontation – and in the case of an attack on a NATO member, without unequivocally calling for the activation of Article 5.[1] Russia has now tested and implemented such an operation three times: in 2008 (Georgia), in 2014 (Ukraine), and in 2015 (Syria, albeit this operation may be more akin to a raid: a rapid attack for limited purposes, followed by a withdrawal).

1 Jakub Grygiel and A. Wess Mitchell, "Limited War Is Back," *The National Interest* (September/October 2014).

Russia has now tested and implemented such an operation three times: in 2008 (Georgia), in 2014 (Ukraine), and in 2015 (Syria, albeit this operation may be more akin to a raid: a rapid attack for limited purposes, followed by a withdrawal). Given the nature of the threat, the states that are the immediate targets are also the first responders: if they fold quickly and without offering a stiff resistance, there is little incentive for their allies to step in and the costs for doing so would be very high. It is up to the attacked states to arrest the initial assault and to incentivize their allies to fulfill their security commitments.

Second, the necessity of a robust local defense is made more pressing by the lower relative capabilities fielded by the alliance and the United States. Sequestration and global security worries for the U.S. combined with fiscal constraints or simply lack of political will in Europe are all contributing to a diminished military force facing a modernizing and aggressive Russia. While still very powerful, the Western alliance and the United States cannot offer the same quantity of forces as they did during the Cold War. Hence, even a much needed eastward realignment of U.S. permanent bases in Europe cannot suffice because there may be inadequate manpower and other assets to serve as a defensive bulwark or even as a tripwire. This reality again points to the need to develop local capabilities.

Local defense, however, must have an offensive component in order to be effective and to strengthen deterrence. In a nutshell, this means that the most vulnerable frontline states should acquire the capacity to project destruction into the territory of the aggressor, striking rear bases, airports, sea and river ports, logistical nodes, radar installations, anti-air batteries and so on. An exclusive focus on defensive capabilities, which aim to hamper the aggressor's advance into, and hold of, the targeted state, is not enough. It is certainly desirable and necessary for the frontline state to acquire abundant stockpiles of landmines, anti-tank missiles, anti-air and missile defense system, small arms, and artillery – and combine these assets with a "guerilla warfare" or "partisan" doctrine. Such a posture will increase the costs of a potential Russian attack, having a small but important deterrent effect. But given the conventional disparity between Russia and any individual frontline state, the ability of the attacked state to hold the front, or even to delay the advance long enough for the allies to come in, is likely to be minimal and in the end too costly to be politically palatable for the domestic audience.

Benefits for the Vulnerable Ally: Deterrence by Denial and Escalation

The ability to strike the aggressor state behind the immediate frontline, including on its territory, is congruent with a "deterrence by denial" approach. For instance, hitting the logistical lines and the staging areas on enemy territory hinders the attacking force, increasing the costs of an aggression and denying the enemy an easy achievement of his objectives. In fact, the mere threat of such strikes will force the potential aggressor to either extend its logistics behind the reach of the defending state or to devote resources to protect them – in either case making the preparation of an attack more costly.
The purpose of such offensive capabilities is therefore to establish a non-permissive environment for the enemy, hundreds of miles into its own territory. It is to enhance the ability to deny the enemy easy achievement of his goals.

The offensive capabilities that CEE states can acquire have an important secondary role: to punish the aggressor. Because of the small distance separating the frontline state from the aggressor, even a limited strike capacity will threaten the enemy's more valuable targets not directly involved in the offensive operations. The ability to offer a serious autochthonous threat of counter-value punishment is most likely beyond the resources of the relatively small frontline states (even a medium sized one like Poland): it would require large numbers of medium- and long-range weapons, capable to penetrate Russian air defenses and to inflict serious damage. But the small, incipient capability to punish the enemy can also contribute to strengthen deterrence simply by increasing the risks for the aggressor state.[2] The mechanism through which risk could be increased relies on the smaller state's willingness to escalate the limited war waged against it, thereby activating the wider alliance of which it is a member.

Offensive capabilities can deter by punishment by solving the "limited war" challenge posed by Russia. In any one-on-one conflict, Russia will maintain escalation dominance with its neighboring states, a dominance that a state like Poland or Romania can never hope to match on their own. But Russia has demonstrated no desire to engage NATO in a direct and large confrontation, deemed too risky, and is likely to try to wage a limited war meant to separate the targeted state from its allies. As it has done in Ukraine, Russia may pursue very small territorial objectives with modest military means – an operation that is limited in scope, time, and violence in order to avoid the intervention of the alliance behind the targeted state.

2 The classic distinction between deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment is in Glenn Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961).

The challenge that such an operation poses is that even if the distant security patron, the United States, places small numbers of weapons and soldiers as "tripwires," a limited war is likely to avoid targeting them and therefore will not trigger an automatic response from the wider alliance. The end result is that the frontline allies fear abandonment and call for renewed and greater reassurances.

Here is where offensive capabilities in the hands of the threatened state come into play. If the frontline state has the ability to escalate the limited war and to bring it above a clear threshold of violence to activate the alliance, the risks for the aggressor state are suddenly much greater. By striking even a small number of enemy targets outside of the immediate theater of war (in retaliation for an attack), the defending state (e.g., Poland) can put the attacking power (e.g., Russia) in front of an uncomfortable choice: either to respond by escalating the conflict and thus risking a larger confrontation that it wanted to avoid in the first place, or continue the limited war – or even end the war given the demonstrated willingness to increase risk by the defender. In all cases, the escalation pursued by the defending state brings its alliance into the contest, altering the risk calculus of the aggressor.

Another way to think about this dynamic is by considering the traditional fear that smaller vulnerable states, such as the CEE frontline ones, share. They are the beneficiaries of security guarantees of distant protectors, the United States and NATO. But there is always a doubt behind such guarantees: the alliance may not want to risk a large war for their geographic appendages and the faraway security provider may choose to accommodate (at the expense of its frontline ally) rather than oppose (at its own expense) the aggressive rival. If Moscow suggests that it could be appeased with a small territorial revision, Washington (or Paris, or Berlin) may choose to sacrifice alliance solidarity for that implicit promise of satisfaction. The vulnerable allies, such as Poland or the Baltic states, are justified to fear abandonment.[3]

To assuage that fear, the security guarantor can do several things to commit itself to the defense of its weaker ally. Clear public statements of the strength of its security guarantees commit the great power's reputation and assure the ally. Integrating the ally into the plans of the security provider further strengthen the belief in the commitment of the alliance. And, most importantly, placing troops and assets on the territory of the ally, making them vulnerable to the rival's attack, is a time-tested method of linking the security of the distant power to the fate of the smaller and vulnerable ally.

3 On entrapment and abandonment in alliances, see Michael Mandelbaum, *The Nuclear Revolution: International Politics Before and After Hiroshima* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chapter 6; Glenn Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," World Politics 36, no. 4 (July 1984), 461-495.

But the frontline ally also can also shore up the credibility of those security guarantees by threatening the enemy with an escalation that will activate the alliance. It is obviously a dangerous course of action for the defending state because it trades the short-term risk of a destructive escalation for the long-term advantage of allied support. But it forces the attacking state to face a more credible possibility of having to fight against the larger alliance rather than the single state it has targeted. It is a way of strengthening alliance credibility through the threat of escalation.

By striking targets in enemy territory, the defending frontline state escalates the war and entangles or draws its own allies into the confrontation. This can generate worries of entrapment among those allies, namely the fear that the actions of a smaller ally can force the security provider into a conflict that it would otherwise avoid. But this fear may be exaggerated. The frontline state is unlikely to use offensive capabilities for a preventive or preemptive strike, exactly because such an action would be considered provocative and would undermine the defensive nature of the wider alliance. NATO will not come to the aid of a member state that uses its military force to strike first, effectively abandoning that state. Were Poland, for instance, use its offensive arsenal before a Russian attack, it would risk committing political suicide. Estonia, Poland, or Romania will not initiate a war of aggression against Russia. It is much more likely therefore that they would strike Russian territory only after they had been attacked first – not entrapping NATO or the U.S. into a war of their own choice but committing them into a defensive war.

Benefits for the Alliance: Strengthening Extended Deterrence

A frontline ally with offensive capabilities has the additional advantage of strengthening the extended deterrent provided by a distant ally. Anytime a power extends the mantel of its security to other states, it promises to project its forces to their defense when needed. But the higher the costs of such a projection of power, the less credible the extended deterrent: the distant security patron may decide that the costs outweigh the benefits of defending the ally. This is a historic problem that has vexed alliances since time immemorial, and is particularly pronounced for maritime powers (e.g., Athens, Great Britain, the United States) for whom the seas provide a natural protection and thus diminish the incentive to incur costs in the defense of an ally on the other shore of the bodies of water.

It is also a problem that is being exacerbated by the growing capability of the rival states, Russia in this case, to deny access to U.S. (or allied) forces into the regional theater. China has been particularly skilled and advanced at building A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) capabilities that make U.S. presence and operations near its territory (and near or on the territory of its own allies) very difficult. But Russia has not been dormant in this area. For example, the entire territory of the Baltic states and roughly one-third of Poland are under Russian anti-air cover making the airborne arrival of NATO or U.S. reinforcement much more difficult (if at all possible, given the likely losses).[4] The fact that the allied territory and airspace is no longer a permissive environment diminishes the credibility of the American extended deterrent, which is predicated on the assumption that U.S. forces would arrive with relative ease to the frontline. That assumption is challenged by Russia's ability to inflict serious costs to the forces coming into the theater of conflict – and by doing so, Russia weakens the security links among NATO allies.

Arguably, the U.S. could eliminate or at least denigrate Russian A2/AD capabilities before reinforcing the local forces. But such an action would require an escalation of war that may be politically unacceptable to Washington or other allied capitals. A small incursion of "little green men" into Narva or a Polish border town, or even a much clearer Russian armored takeover of the Lithuanian corridor linking Kaliningrad with Belarus, may not be sufficient to motivate distant allies to strike at Russian radar installation or S-300 platforms. The incentives, and thus the credibility, are not there.

The frontline states, however, have that incentive – and with it, the credibility – because by opening up a window, even temporarily, into the Russian A2/AD cover they allow their allies to come in. Without the expeditionary support of their allies, these frontline states are unlikely to be able to defend themselves in a protracted confrontation with Russia. They have, therefore, a clear motivation to establish a permissive environment that would allow for the rapid projection of allied power to the area of conflict. To do so, they need offensive capabilities that can strike Russian radars, command and control centers, and perhaps some weapon platforms (e.g., ships with S-400 missiles positioned in the Baltic) in order to blind and weaken Russian forces.

They may not be able to conduct a lengthy campaign to eliminate completely Russian A2/AD assets. This would take capabilities that even the most security conscious country, Poland, cannot acquire and maintain. But the purpose is not to destroy fully Russian assets, but to denigrate them temporarily and sufficiently in order to allow the allies a relatively unopposed entry into the theater. Again, the effect is a stronger alliance because the credibility of the security guarantees is solidified.

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4 Gen. Frank Gorenc, "USAFE-AFAFRICA Update," *AFA-Air & Space Conference and Technology Exposition*, 15 September 2014, online at http://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/af%20events/Speeches/15SEP2014-GenFrankGorenc-USAFE-AFAFRICA%20Update%20at%20AFA.pdf.

Russia is a destabilizing force, and only a rare delusional analyst can hope for a return of Moscow as a potential partner to tackle global problems. What is needed then is a posture that deters Russia and defends the success of European stability. A restoration of stability is possible only with the participation of frontline allies in deterring the aggressive challenges posed by Russia. Well-armed frontline states, capable of hitting their proximate revisionist and common rival, are a source of stability in a U.S.-led alliance. They develop a missing and necessary component of the deterrence that undergirds regional stability, strengthening local defense and enhancing U.S. extended deterrent. The fact that the exposed ally may have an incentive to use its offensive capabilities in case of a conflict is a strategic asset for the alliance, not a risk to avoid at all costs. We should fear less the potential rearming of our allies and the strategic repercussions of it than the current military aggrandizement and territorial expansion of our rivals.

A DETTERENCE BY DENIAL STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC

Porcupine Quills and Bitter Pills

A. Wess Mitchell

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U.S. security policy in North Central Europe is based on deterrence by punishment. As in the rest of its global alliance network, American extended deterrence in this region functions on the premise that the United States will be able to defeat the local challenger through devastating counter-attacks. As for U.S. allies in Asia Pacific and the Persian Gulf, the credibility of American guarantees to Poland and the Baltic States has rested on the wide supremacy of U.S. military power—not only its large strategic nuclear arsenal but the "overmatch" that its U.S. conventional capabilities have been thought to provide in counter-attacking any aggressive move. Even more than in other regions, however, the credibility of U.S. security in the Baltic has been based from the outset on faith rather than evidence, as (uniquely among U.S. frontier allies), the United States has not maintained even symbolic troop presences in countries east of Germany. Given the parlous state of the Russian military and the vast superiority of NATO, it has long been assumed that this setup, involving retaliation in its most unsubstantiated form, would be sufficient to secure the vulnerable states of this region well into the 21st Century.

This turned out to be a bad assumption. In the space of a couple of years, the North Central European security environment has evolved in dramatic and unexpected ways that pose significant challenges for the continued solvency of a punishment-based deterrence. First, the local rival's military is proving to be better armed and led than we anticipated. Long discounted as backward, the Russian armed forces under Vladimir Putin have undertaken major technical and tactical improvements and incorporated important lessons from the Georgia War. It has pursued a multi-year, $700 billion defense modernization program that is bearing substantial fruit in Russian military operations in Syria.[1] In the words of one senior Pentagon official, Russia is now "fielding very advanced capabilities at an extremely rapid pace."[2] Its forces outstrip in size and quality any force between itself and Germany, outnumbering NATO's CEE militaries combined by 3:1 in men and 6:1 in planes. In the Baltic region, it has a 10:1 edge in troops and maintains air dominance over NATO's northeastern corner.

Meanwhile, the forces that the United States would have presumably drawn upon to correct these growing imbalances in the European theater are diminishing. Overall, U.S. defense structures have been cut to their lowest levels since before the Second World War. In Europe, they have dropped from 300,000 troops to 60,000. The Obama Administration has accelerated this process, removing 15 bases and the most combat-ready units, including two Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), two air squadrons and all remaining U.S. heavy armor.

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1 Steven Lee Myers and Eric Schmittoct, "Russian Military Uses Syria as Proving Ground, and West Takes Notice," *New York Times*, October 14, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/15/world/middleeast/russian-military-uses-syria-as-proving-ground-and-west-takes-notice.html?_r=0.

2 The Third U.S. Offset Strategy and its Implications for Partners and Allies, *U.S. Department of Defense*, January 28, 2015, http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/606641.

Surveying the regional military balance of power, Putin has boasted he could be in Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, Warsaw or Bucharest in two days. A recent RAND war game concluded that he is correct.[3]

Second, Russia is developing tactics for evading retaliatory deterrence.[4] The limited-war techniques used in eastern Ukraine consist of "jab and grab" land incursions specifically designed to avoid the traditional triggers of NATO's Article 5. These techniques operate below the threshold of deterrence by punishment and seek to create territorial faits accomplis that lower the costs of revisionism. Backing its stealthy battlefield methods is a tactical nuclear arsenal, larger than that of NATO by a 27:1 margin, deployed under a doctrine of limited strikes for strategic effect. The combination of limited war and escalate-to-deescalate nuclear warfare poses serious problems for deterrence by punishment. It makes aggression less identifiable (and therefore punishable) while wresting away the presumption of escalation dominance upon which effective retaliation is based. In a limited-war setting, punishment quickly morphs into compellence—not just dissuading an enemy but dislodging him.[5] This shifts the psychological burden of conflict—fear of retaliation—away from Russia and places it on the shoulders of NATO—fear of escalation. It puts the latter in the position of perpetually under-responding to ambiguous provocations (and thereby losing control of strategically vital spaces by default) or over-responding (and risking war).

Doubling Down on Punishment

So far, America's response to the erosion of its security mechanisms in North Central Europe has been "double down" on deterrence by punishment. The effort to provide strategic reassurance to the Baltic States and Poland through the first-ever deployment of U.S. tripwires in the region represents an attempt to visibly strengthen the trigger mechanisms of retaliation upon which effective deterrence in frontline regions has always been based. Similarly, the designation at the Wales NATO Summit of new, faster response forces that would deploy to the region in the event of a crisis is, at heart, an effort to improve the West's capacity for effective retaliation after an attack has already occurred. Such measures are likely to yield some positive results. The problem with both is that Russian techniques have rendered the very premise of effective punishment invalid. "Little green men" can go around the U.S. infantry company meant to serve

3 David Ochmanek, presentation of findings from the RAND Baltic Wargame, *Center for New American Security*, June 4, 2015.

4 For an analysis of limited warfare techniques in Ukraine and the challenge they pose to NATO, see Jakub G. Grygiel and A. Wess Mitchell, "Limited War is Back," *National Interest*, August 28, 2014, http://nationalinterest.org/feature/limited-war-back-11128.

5 For a discussion of the distinction between compellence and deterrence, see Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

as a tripwire. Crimea-style tactics can seize territory in minutes and hours, while even the fastest reaction units require days.

While maintaining the edifice of punishment, the time has come for the United States to add a new component to the logic of U.S. extended deterrence in the Baltic region: denial. Unlike deterrence by punishment, which threatens to hurt someone after he attacks you or your allies, deterrence by denial seeks to make it physically harder for someone to attack you.[6] Denial operates on the basis of cultivating fear in the mind of an aggressor that he will have to bear a degree of pain that exceeds whatever gains he hoped to achieve by taking the offensive. Historically, Great Powers have often used denial to protect valuable allies or territory located near a predatory rival. Prior to the nuclear era, denial was a more common way to achieve extended deterrence, since the tools for projecting military force were less reliable. When facing rivals that were stronger on the ground or far away, it was often more effective to impede their expansion in the first place rather than threatening to punish them after the fact.

Denial: Quills and Pills

There are two ways to do deny: make the object of the aggressor's desire harder to take, or make it harder to hold. The first involves providing powerful defensive weapons to increase the odds of a target country successfully fending off an attack by a superior force. In the 17th and 18th centuries, for example, France used subsidies, military advisors and units, and technology transfers to build up a line of mid-sized frontier states (Sweden, Poland, and Turkey) that successfully impeded the westward military expansion of Russia. The key to this strategy is that a strong patron must provide access to either a level or quantity of defensive technologies that the targeted state would otherwise not possess. Such a "porcupine" strategy is particularly effective in the contemporary battlefield environment, as a growing array of technologies favor the defense. Examples of under-utilized defensive tools and techniques that would provide the "quills" to a North Central Europe porcupine strategy include:

6 Glenn Snyder first drew the distinction between deterrence by punishment and deterrence by denial in 1961. See Glenn Snyder, "Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security," (*Princeton University Press*, 1961), pp. 14–16. For a recent discussion see Michael S. Gerson, "Conventional Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age," *Parameters* (2009).

1. Anti-tank weapons: Large armored deployments like those used by the Russian Army in Ukraine are very vulnerable to anti-tank weapons, which are mobile, concealable and cheap. Notable examples like the FGM-148 Javelin anti-tank missile, M72 LAW light anti-armor weapon, and AT4 Swedish light-armor weapon cost between two and two hundred thousand dollars apiece. As shown in Ukraine, the very knowledge that a defender possesses such weapons can slow an enemy advance.

2. Anti-infantry rockets: Small militaries facing larger opponents can increase their firepower using weapons such as the M202A1 Flash anti-personnel assault shoulder weapon. Such weapons are accurate, lethal and produce an outsized effect in undermining enemy troop morale.

3. Pre-targeted artillery: Modern artillery methods offer a highly effective area denial method. Artillery can saturate pre-targeted zones with anti-personnel or anti-armor rounds, denying mobility to the advancing force. Concealed artillery forces are survivable and effective deterrents. Tied with artillery is the use of white phosphorous shells. Legal for screening, illuminating, or marking targets, they have the secondary effect of scalding and disorienting attackers.

4. Flooding and channeling: The flooding of transit routes is an age-old method for hurting mobility and denying usable territory to an enemy. The impact of eastern Ukraine's waterlogged landscape on 2014 Russian military offensives illustrates how water can amplify the effectiveness of small units against larger forces even in the modern era. Flooding would be relatively easy to implement in parts of the Baltic region and riverine eastern Poland, and would pose significant engineering problems for advancing ground forces, while exposing attempts to bypass or drain flooded areas. Used in tandem with pre-targeted artillery, flooding could channel and bottle-neck attacking forces.

5. Landmines: U.S. allies in North Central Europe are signatories to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. However, there are important exceptions to these treaties. Anti-tank mines are effective, low-cost, hard-to-detect counters to superior armored forces such as those favored by the Russians that not regulated by any treaty. Their use can supplement mobile anti-tank capabilities in channeling attackers into favorable or pre-sited areas. Directional anti-personnel mines detonated by an operator are also not banned, and can be grouped to detonate in key defensive areas by a concealed observer.

All of these are examples of “equalizers” – weapons or techniques that states can use to make it harder for a stronger opponent to take territory by imposing costs on its forces during their initial attempts at incursion. A second type of denial is what might be called the “bitter pill” strategy: to make a piece of territory harder to keep if it is taken. Historically, this method has often been employed by states that are too small to mount a credible independent military defense for extended periods, but which possess the national willpower to sustain other forms of resistance more or less indefinitely. Since the ultimate goal of revisionist powers is to achieve quick, easy grabs, this strategy seeks the opposite: to show an attacker that any attempted conquests will be prolonged and costly. Sixteenth-century Switzerland is one example of a small state employing a “bitter pill” defensive strategy; 20th-century Finland is another. Both used scrappy defensive techniques and small but well-trained forces to advertise their indigestibility to potential predators.

The key to this strategy is the small state developing and honing both the capabilities and mindsets for long-term resistance well in advance of a conflict. Such strategies typically have three basic components, all of which U.S. allies in North Central Europe could begin to build at low cost. The first is homeland defense forces. These differ from normal military units in being smaller, more loosely organized, and trained for insurgency warfighting. There is a long tradition of states in Europe’s Eastern marches employing irregular units to impede stronger enemies: the Habsburgs used Pandours and Grenzers to defeat the Turks, the Poles employed light cavalry to defeat the Soviets in the 1920s, Lithuanian “Partizanai” sustained the fight against the Soviets into the 1950s. Preparing such forces in advance of a conflict (most states in the region already have a nucleus of irregulars upon which to build) sends a signal that any gains will be hard-won and painful—a message that the Russian military, with its aversion to Chechnya- and Afghan-style conflicts is likely to note.

A second element is depots. States can embrace insurgency warfighting concepts accompanied by pre-positioned arsenals at undisclosed locations across the country. Doing so lends further credibility to deterrence by signaling to the attacker the willingness of the country to sustain resistance long-term. Designating military resources geared to sustained low-intensity fighting sends the message that the commitment to denial is part of a serious and sustained strategy for the defense of the homeland and not just patriotic but amateurish weekend clubs. Third, for these measures to have their intended effect, they should be accompanied by a national mindset of resistance. Israel, Switzerland and Finland are examples of states in the 20th Century that cultivated a “nation-in-arms” mentality among their citizenries in order to strengthen deterrence against attackers. Such an approach could be particularly effective in the Baltic States, where legacies of resistance remain strong at the popular level.

Costs of Denial

Incorporating a "quills and pills" approach into Baltic deterrence would not require the United States or its allies to divert significant attention away from more traditional strategic reassurance measures—or eventually, large and permanent NATO basing for the region.[7] Nor would it prevent key states in the region—notably Poland—from also pursuing other, offensive-oriented approaches to national defense.[8] It would, however, require certain shifts in mindset for both the United States and countries in the region in how they approach the task of shoring up deterrence. For America, it would mean changing the way we think about the use of our own forces in North Central Europe. Unlike the "trip-wires" used for deterrence by punishment, which are understood to have low survivability and simply trigger reprisal, the purpose of troops deployed for deterrence by denial is to live and penalize the attacker. Hence, more thought should be given to what kinds of U.S. forces are sent and—most importantly—how they are tactically and doctrinally integrated with more robust local forces charged with defending the country.

For this to work, local forces must possess the levels of training, materiel and morale required to conduct denial on a modern battlefield. And that in turn requires the United States to embrace a less passive approach to arming and equipping its allies. For example, Estonia's recent procurement of Javelins (120 launchers and 350 missiles for service by 2016) could be doubled or tripled under renovated U.S. foreign military aid programs at low cost to the United States and high potential return in discouraging Russian adventurism. A systematic review of the weapons that the Ukrainian military learned it needed for a more effective defense (generally, a combination of anti-tank missiles and light vehicles to create "poor man's armor") could yield targeted areas where the United States can be preemptively equipping its frontline NATO allies.

Embracing deterrence by denial also holds implications for allied states. At a basic level, it implies a deeper commitment to local defense than some of these states have so far shown. This means higher spending, spending on certain kinds of weapons instead of others and concentrating more national defense resources on the most likely trouble zones (the essence of denial). This is an especially important consideration for states like Poland that still keep most of their heavy forces in the western portions of the country as a result of Cold War era basing structures.

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7 For a comprehensive defensive strategy encompassing both denial and punishment, see Jakub J. Grygiel and A. Wess Mitchell, "A Preclusive Strategy for the NATO Frontier," *The American Interest*, December 2, 2015, http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/12/02/a-preclusive-strategy-to-defend-the-nato-frontier/.

8 See the chapter in this volume by Jakub Grygiel.

It also means embracing a doctrinal mindset that prioritizes territorial defense over all other uses of the military. This is not without political risk, as it involves heterodoxy from the longstanding belief in NATO that member-state militaries must develop capabilities for out-of-area missions. In the post-ISAF, post-Crimea environment, such capabilities have low utility for states like Poland and Estonia. While dual-use capabilities allow for some resources to apply to both needs, the combination of small defense budgets (even with spending increases) and a newly-hostile neighborhood environment should lead to increasing specialization toward local defense rather than attempting to maintain both purposes. Over time this will require a doctrinal shift for the NATO Alliance that the United States and its allies should jointly encourage for all but the largest Western European militaries. Whatever perceived value the United States may lose through less expeditionary-capable CEE allies will be offset by the benefits of a more stable and well-defended European frontier.

Benefits of Denial

For America and allies alike, incorporating denial into the deterrence for North Central Europe would help to focus scarce resources to the places where conflict is most likely to occur. Technologically, it would play to many areas of advantage for defense in the modern battlefield. In tactical terms, it would lead to deployment of more tools that, should deterrence fail, are more easily redirected to the fighting and winning of a conflict than those used for punishment. Organizing North Central European states for stronger self-defense would raise the visible costs of revision without necessarily adding commensurate defense burdens for the United States. Bolstering denial capabilities of frontline allies enables America to concentrate its resources on upper-tier punishment. Critically in the current Baltic security setting, stronger and more visible frontline weapons and troops would help to amplify the trigger mechanisms for deterrence by punishment, the vagueness of which at present is a major propellant to the effectiveness of Russia's limited war methods.

Perhaps most importantly, a greater focus on denial could help to shift the psychological burden of 21st-century conflict in North Central Europe where it belongs: on the shoulders of an authoritarian state that wishes to rearrange the regional—and international—order. Where limited-war techniques enable revisionists to believe they can avoid triggering retaliation and thereby get away with an easy victory, an investment in deterrence by denial signals that they will pay a steep price for aggression at the place it occurs, ranging from a sharp rebuff to a war of attrition.

The aim in North Central Europe should be to limit options for easy revisions and to increase the immediate cost and difficulty of grabbing and holding territory. Building up such mechanisms will help the United States avoid the predicament of holding together through compellence what it could not through deterrence. The goal should be to instill a healthy sense of fear in Russia as a would-be predator. Doing this now, while the century is still young and Russia is mulling its regional options, will be a far cheaper policy in the long run than waiting for deterrence by punishment to fail and then trying to regain lost ground through coercion.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

War brings change to state behavior because it introduces something new into their environment – a threat or fear – for which they are not prepared. In the case of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, war has made state violence both more likely and less winnable for members of a seemingly powerful Western alliance that have long thought it impossible. While it takes many forms, the strategic adaptation that is occurring among Europe's frontier states has the same root: a perception that the mechanisms built in peacetime, whether alliances or armaments, are not adequate to the task of ensuring the survival of the state in the new conditions that have arisen with the war next door. These changes are normal in history and are likely to accelerate in the years ahead as the full weight of long-discounted Russia's imperial ambitions and above all capabilities is felt in that power's western borderlands.

The question for U.S. policy is, "to what effect"? The main driver of present changes in Central Eastern Europe behavior is fear of the new Russian threat. Fear can be a positive motivator if it leads to the right outcomes: better military forces, greater alliance cohesion and prioritization of strategic interests over petty squabbles. The problem is that the policy adaptations that are emerging from this fear in CEE are being steered by a combination of reactions of local policy elite, which are changeable, corruptible and for small states based on very small resource bases; and the meddling and influence of Russia, which aims to steer state-level changes to its long-term advantages. The United States is a presence felt only superficially, as a distant force nominally committed to Article 5 that has a recent history of unbalanced courtship of the nearby aggressor and a company-sized military force in each frontline state.

The goal of U.S. policy should be not to remove the fear of CEE allies but to channel it toward renewed interest in and commitment to traditional security concerns. The ultimate objective is to restore strategic stability and consolidate the Western security order in the region. While this has political as well as military dimensions, the underlying problem is military: Russia's ability to control escalation in a regional conflict—specifically, through the combination of limited wars, preponderance in local military balances and an escalatory tactical nuclear doctrine. This combination enables Russia to control the terms of military competition in the region and thereby manipulate risk. The overarching goal of U.S. policy should be to reduce Russian control of escalation and reduce the perceived payoff of future military gambles in the CEE region. This entails both military and diplomatic steps.

Military Recommendations

The thin end of the wedge for Russia's regional military strategy is its ability to gain conventional toehold that can be exploited to escalate crisis beyond NATO's appetite for confrontation. The military goal of the United States and its allies should be to strengthen deterrence by denying the opportunities to gain such toeholds at a local level while strengthening the mechanisms for punishment of aggression if it occurs. Specifically, the United States should:

1. Work to make frontline states less susceptible to limited war techniques. Encourage the development of cost-imposition strategies centered on conventional offensive weapons for states in the region large enough to support them. Among smaller states, encourage the development of denial strategies centered on abundant defensive capabilities.

2. Provide the tools to make these strategies viable. Use donations, equipment rollovers and a streamlined foreign military sales process to equip frontline states with advanced U.S. weapons systems. For larger states, this should include expedited supplies of standoff missile capabilities such as the JASSM (AGM-158). For smaller states, it should include anti-tank weapons, MANPADs, counter-battery radar systems and counter-strike capabilities such as long-range artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems.

3. Strengthen NATO's ability to conduct limited nuclear operations against Russia. The United States should lead in and promote the development of heightened capabilities for jamming, electromagnetic pulse and cyber attack-resistant C4ISR for nuclear operations as well as means for avoiding over-reliance on vulnerable space assets. It should encourage those allies that participate in the DCA and SNOWCAT missions to replace aging aircraft with nuclear-capable successors. NATO should conduct a nuclear warfare exercise and make tactical nuclear scenarios a standard feature in future NATO exercises.

4. Fortify vulnerable points in regional military geography. The United States should encourage the deployment of forces and defensive weapons to, e.g., the island Gotland, Poland's Suwałki gap, Lithuania's land corridor between Kaliningrad and Belarus, the Danish island of Bornholm, the Finnish island of Aland, Romania's Moldovan frontier and eastern Estonia. It should increase the size of U.S. regional deployments to the level of one brigade for each of the four North Central European states (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) and encourage regional allies to deploy their forces for forward defense.

5. Make territorial defense NATO's top priority. Beginning at the Warsaw NATO Summit, the United States and its CEE allies should promote the territorial defense of Europe as the organizing mission for NATO's immediate future. For U.S. policy, this should take precedence efforts to strengthen capabilities for out of area operations among CEE states.

6. Make permanent basing the centerpiece of U.S. policy in Europe. The United States and its CEE allies should treat the quest for large, permanent NATO military facilities east of Germany as their shared aim in Alliance councils and coordinate efforts to effect this outcome. The United States should devote the level of attention for persuasion and consensus-building to this aim that it devoted to NATO enlargement in the 1990s.

Diplomatic Recommendations

The political fragmentation of the CEE region reinforces Russia's escalation dominance by making some states in the region less likely to support the military steps or political unity needed to guard vulnerable members in a crisis. The goal of U.S. diplomacy should be counter this process on two levels: by making those allies that do wish to resist Russian aggression more effective in their combinations at the sub-NATO level; and by making those states that do not see Russia as a threat at a minimum not actively working to undermine and if possible supportive of the efforts of their more vulnerable neighbors. The United States should:

1. Prioritize U.S. strategic engagement with countries whose regional perspective is most congruent with that of the United States. In particular, the United States should promote systematic strategic engagement between Poland, Sweden, Finland and the Baltic States. It should be an active organizer and instigator of regional groupings in the same way that it has in the past: by (a) providing high-level, structured political engagement and (b) by making the benefits of U.S. strategic cooperation contingent on some degree of joint planning, acquisitions, etc. The United States should view the need to prompt greater military and political integration in North Central Europe with as much urgency as it treated the integration of Western Europe in the 1950s.

2. Prevent the isolation of Poland in regional diplomacy. An overarching aim of Russian strategy in the CEE region is to hinder Polish attempts at obtaining political and military support in a crisis. The United States should seek to counter this process by bringing its weight to bear in NATO—particularly vis-à-vis Germany—to establish the defense of Poland as an imperative for the Western Alliance. It should engage robustly with the incoming Polish government and subordinate any other agendas, including an eleventh hour Russian opening to cooperate on Syria or residual items from the U.S.-Polish bilateral agenda (restitution, etc.) to the central aim of strengthening CEE's largest state.

3. Channel cooperation among less resistant CEE states toward support of vulnerable neighbors. Divisions in the Visegrád Group rooted in varied threat perceptions make it less useful for providing direct support in a crisis. However, with some effort the Group could be brought to show more solidarity for Polish existential security needs. The United States should engage with the Visegrád Group at a more senior and systematic level, with Assistant Secretary-level attendance to regular ministerials. The aim should be to see the V4 prioritize regional defense over non-security concerns such as trade diplomacy with Russia or ethnic minorities.

4. Strengthen U.S. commercial-strategic presence in the CEE region. The United States should seek to counter Moscow's regional "beauty contest" with a dedicated promotion of U.S. industry among CEE allies in strategic sectors. Defense and energy are prominent examples of fields where the United States has lost substantial ground to Russia, largely because the United States Government has not devoted significant political effort to promoting U.S. companies. The United States should develop an agenda for regional industrial cooperation and R&D modeled on its PLUS-IP program with Poland.

In both military and diplomatic terms, the key is to encourage the development of other axes of resistance to Russia that do not depend entirely on a formal NATO-wide response. This can take the form of militarily more capable allies like Poland that possess the weapons to change Russian wartime calcualtions or diplomatic arrangements that make it harder for Russia to neutralize political support to the targets of its aggression.

Whether by arms or alignments, U.S. allies in the region are already groping at ways to increase their ability to cope with the central military fact of Russian control of escalation. Some are taking forms that with time could be inimical to U.S. and alliance interests. These changes should be expected to continue, as a natural feature of geopolitics. As in past centuries, it will be not just these states but larger outside powers that shape them to their larger aims. At present, Russia is the only power actively engaged in doing so, while the EU is in stasis and the United States is at best reactive. For this to change, the United States must move into a more proactive, strategic mode and become an intentional instigator to military preparation and diplomatic resistance. The indispensability of the U.S. role is that it is the only power that has the military-technological heft and political influence to steer the changes that are underway in CEE in a direction that is favorable for the long-term stability of the Western security order. If we fail to embrace this role, we should expect to see Russia play an increasingly destructive and divisive part in regional geopolitical outcomes, with long-lasting consequences for 21st Century security.*

*These recommendations are the view of the project chairs and do not necessarily represent the opinions of all Working Group members.

About CEPA

The Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) is the only U.S. think-tank dedicated to the study of Central and Eastern Europe. With offices in Washington and Warsaw, it has grown rapidly over the last decade to become the leading voice for strengthening security and democracy in the countries of post-Communist Europe. CEPA is at the forefront of the transatlantic policy debate on issues of defense, energy and democratic reform in Central and Eastern Europe. Its mission is to promote an economically vibrant, geopolitically stable and politically free Central and Eastern European region with close and enduring ties to the United States.

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