THE SIGNIFICANCE AND MODALITIES OF DETERRENCE: THE CURRENT MILITARY & STRATEGIC SITUATION IN THE BALTICS
EUROPEAN VALUES CENTER FOR SECURITY POLICY

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SECURITY STRATEGIES PROGRAM

A strategic program of the European Values Center for Security Policy which focuses mainly on security interests of the Czech Republic in the context of Trans-Atlantic Alliance, relations with Poland and increasingly aggressive behavior of Russia and China.

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INTRODUCTION

This text highlights the deterrent and reassuring measures as decided at last three NATO summits, including the Enhanced Forward Presence and the need for their reinforcement. The Alliance has 3.4 million active military personnel, while Russia has only 800 thousand soldiers. However, the numbers look different when specifically examining the region in question. If we are to count Allied forces in NATO’s Eastern flank (DE, V4, B3, RO, BG), the number lowers to a mere 0.5 million troops. If only the three Baltic states plus Poland are taken into account, the final number is only some 126 thousand soldiers—the vast majority of which is in Poland. Considering the concentration of the Russian Armed Forces in the Western military district and their readiness, the inferior position of the Alliance in the region is obvious.

The initial premise is that deterrence is not a “pointless provocation with a potential for escalation.” In its core, it is a “peaceful” concept. We do not need deterrence so we could fight; we need it so we would not have to.

The efficiency and credibility of deterrence have become the key issues in NATO agenda. With the Enhanced Forward Presence concept, the Alliance is to a certain extent returning to the era prior to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, when the forward-deployed main defence force played a more significant role, whereas after its dissolution the Alliance focused more on rapid reaction forces and augmentation forces. The strengthening of defence and deterrence is one of the highest topical priorities of the Alliance.¹

Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic contribute to NATO’s deterrence capabilities not only because of their commitments (such as Article 3 of the Washington Treaty) but also because in the current security environment such contribution is fundamentally connected with the safety of these states itself. Indeed, the best defence of a state is to secure a state of affairs in which the enemy will not launch an attack. We, central Europeans, have to ask ourselves whether our present contribution is sufficient.

Attention needs to be devoted to the value of German, Polish and Czech involvement in eFP. In an ideal case every foreign military mission has to, besides other things, provide a guidance for further development of the forces of the state that deploys them. An indisputable benefit of missions are the exercises connected with them. That applies to those missions in which armed forces engage in direct combat as well as to those whose aim is to prevent a threat, such as in the Baltics. In both cases, our soldiers gain experience.

A significant component of deterrence is one’s own resolve (to defend, to repel, or punish an attacker). If a potential enemy believes our resolve, it deters him. However, a potential enemy of the Alliance will not come to believe its resolve by simply reading NATO’s Strategic Concept. The whole picture also comprises of military doctrines of individual NATO members. Thus, it is worrying that the doctrinal gap between the United States and Europe is increasing.

Not only a debate on the state’s contribution to the NATO deterrence is needed but also on the meaning and modalities of deterrence as such.²

¹ The endeavour focuses mainly on making the Alliance’s decision-making procedures in times of crisis quicker and more effective, strengthening the Command Structure. The “readiness initiative’s” aim is to increase the readiness of a certain number of forces beyond the scope of the NATO Response Force (NRF) and Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). However, readiness does not concern only the quality and amount of forces but also the ability to quickly redeploy them (i.e. the reinforcement capability).

² Research projects dealing with the very nature of deterrence have been arranged by the U.S. Department of Defense. Among those who have dealt with this topic are Wess Mitchell, former CEO of CEPA and Assistant Secretary of State; or Shmuel Bar, a leading Israeli analyst that spend many years in the intelligence department of the IDF.
The deterrence is not a “pointless provocation with a potential for escalation.” In its core, it is a “peaceful” concept. We do not need deterrence so we could fight; we need it so we would not have to.
Dealing with the deterrence on the territory of the Baltic states, we can draw two kinds of recommendations: those that concern the posture of the German, Polish and Czech forces, and those that concern the adaptation of the strategy, both at the national and NATO level. The year 2019 brought a set of new Alliance documents: the so-called Political Guidance 2019 and subsequently a new Military Strategy of NATO. Also, the “30-30-30-30 Concept” is going to be implemented. The Secretary General of NATO initiated the preparation of a “comprehensive strategic assessment of Russia”, whose outputs should be discussed at a meeting of heads of allied countries in December 2019. The question arises, to what extent the voice of Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic will be heard during these discussions. These states need to have a very good argumentation basis to convince the key Allied partners that NATO should focus more on the threat coming from the East and strengthen deterrence accordingly.

Besides recommendations regarding the structure of forces and the strategy, some tracking the development of various indicators relevant for the threat assessment on NATO’s eastern flank will be suggested. It can be done through tasking relevant bodies of state administration as well as external, non-governmental, providers.

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3 By 2020, the Alliance should have 30 battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 naval combat vessels ready to use within 30 days.
**SCENARIO ANALYSIS**

**The worst scenario possible - a Russian attack on the Baltics**

Generally, the text elaborates on low-probability scenarios. It is called “prudent planning” or “horizon scanning” and large administrations, such as the EU or the US ones, work like that, especially in the field of crisis management. It is necessary to apply this approach in case of the Baltic states, too. German, Polish and Czech troops, stationed in the region to prevent such a threat, may face a situation when a thorough preparedness of their national administrations will be crucial.

At first, we have to analyze the hypothetical question of **why Russia could kinetically attack** even though it knows that it will eventually lose in a conflict with NATO in the Baltics. There are various factors that might play a role in Russian reasoning, such as internal threats to the stability of the Russian regime or an opportunity to extremely boost national pride by overrunning the Baltic states as quickly as in 60 hours (estimations from analyses commissioned in 2016 by the U.S. Department of Defence). Such a scenario also provides Russia with the opportunity to offer an agreement like the “six-point peace plan” that solidified Russia’s gains in Georgia after the war of 2008.

**By launching the risky venture in the Baltics, Russia would assert its position in the international arena even more than it did through its military intervention in Syria.** In addition, the attack would also serve as a demonstration of Russia’s military power to its own population. The Baltic states would learn their lesson and a clear message would be sent to all other countries thinking about NATO membership: “Entering NATO would not be a good deal for you. Even though the membership will provide you with a guarantee of aid (according to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty), it will not prevent you from ever being attacked.”

The Alliance would in this scenario be confronted with the necessity to carry out an operation liberating the Baltic countries. Is NATO ready, trained, and equipped to execute such an operation? Even in the best course of action, the operation would require some time to gather forces (VJTF is not sufficient for this kind of operation), during which NATO’s political cohesion would find itself under significant pressure. Russia would be intensively offering a “political solution” on its own terms to the conflict during this time.

Furthermore, it is certain that such liberation operation would be bloody and costly. The closure of the Suwalki Corridor by Russian forces (potentially with the help of Belarussian forces) alone would create an obstacle that would be very hard for the Alliance to overcome. In addition, the operation would demand launching strikes against targets (surface-to-air, surface-to-surface) that are located in close proximity to the Baltics, i.e. on Russian soil. That would bring about a risk of further escalation and increase the political sensitivity of the whole action even more.

Russia’s military build-up in its Western Military District plus major exercises like Zapad 2017 or exercises in the Baltic sea in 2018 are quite alarming. The Zapad 2017 consisted of three days of operations by combined-arms and armored land forces with extensive fixed and rotary-wing air support, large scale aerospace operations and engagement by the Baltic Fleet, and coastal defence units. The scenario of the exercise included trial runs of nuclear weapons and stretching of the anti-access/area

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4 Lately, this has been of special importance given the fact Putin’s regime bases its legitimacy towards Russian citizens to a large extent on its capability to wage war.

5 Some military simulations estimate this time to be just 35 days.

6 The ongoing reform of Russian armed forces lays exceptional emphasis on the modernization of their nuclear arsenal. The Russian nuclear doctrine is, as far as the possibility of using nuclear weapons is concerned, the most permissive amongst nuclear powers. Limited nuclear strike, especially in an early stage of armed conflict, is in a Russian military thought traditionally understood as means of maintaining escalation dominance or de-escalating the conflict. This place new demands on allied states with nuclear weapons, which have to adapt their nuclear doctrines. For more, see Matthew Kroenig. A Strategy for Deterring Russian Nuclear De-Escalation Strikes (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, 2018).
denial (A2/AD) umbrella above the conquered territory of Baltic states. Thus, the Russian A2/AD capabilities consolidate Russian territorial gains and create a much more difficult military problem for NATO to overcome.

There are four components of these capabilities that present the most significant challenges: long-range precision strike; integrated air defense systems (IADS); offensive and defensive capabilities in space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum; and massed artillery. Regular testing of these capabilities demonstrated that any army seeking to burst Russia’s A2/AD bubble above the Baltic would bear a high enough cost. The Alliance would face an even harder task if Russian forces managed to, for instance, make use of the local “fifth column” and seize Riga by airdrop overnight.

This again provides strong incentives for the West to accept some “reasonable agreement” in case of conflict. Such agreement might be very inconvenient for smaller countries on the Eastern flank of NATO. They will not be among the negotiating parties, like in 2008 during Russian-Georgian war.

The argument of those who regard the current eFP as sufficient to discourage Russia from risking a devastating conventional defeat as it weighs an attack against the Baltics is very weak. It is very unlikely that the Western political representation, much less the public, would countenance inflicting a devastating conventional defeat on Russia. On the contrary, there would be enormous public pressure calling for closing a deal with Russia as the liberation of the Baltics proceeds. This situation would very likely cause the required European unity to fall apart. It is hard to imagine that the public of Poland or Romania would accept striking such a deal in the same way as would the public of those European states that are more distant, more secure, and more relaxed vis-à-vis Russia. Fragmentation lines would likely emerge also within Germany etc. Russia already counts on these delays and fault lines. Therefore, the political vulnerability of NATO will play a much bigger role in Russian calculations than the possibility of a devastating conventional defeat.

This scenario is not highly likely; nevertheless, we must be prepared even for a low-probability scenario. Considering concentration of forces, their very high readiness, and some signals of possible challenges to the stability of the current Russian regime (the outcome of recent municipal elections, in which a non-systemic opposition achieved remarkable success; the fact that oligarchs close to Putin are losing money every day due to Western sanctions; and the unpopularity of the pension reform amongst Russian citizens), it is a scenario the probability of which may actually increase quite rapidly. Russia does not lack military capabilities needed for launching such an attack: it actively builds an A2/AD concept in Kaliningrad covering the whole Baltics, has sufficient firepower of armoured brigades, has elite paratroopers deployed in the adjacent Pskov Oblast, and regularly conducts military exercises. These might simply be quite tempting. If we accept that this layout is even a remote option for some Russian strategists, we must ask ourselves whether we are able to reduce its attractiveness.

Other conceivable scenarios:

There are other possible modalities of a potential Russian attack in the Baltic region, as it can be waged sub-strategically (through the cyber domain, attacks on vessels in the Baltic Sea, or on important railroads or aircrafts), accompanied by massive information campaigns (using the local media and think-tank scene which Russia has been building for years), or making use of various proxies (such as Kremlin-sponsored European radical and extremist parties). Russia is capable of provoking a crisis to which the West would not respond with strong retaliation. Therefore, it makes sense to make Russia believe that even a low-level attack would be met with a hard and immediate response.

NATO is currently pondering deterrence of threats that do not yet fall under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Within this framework, the British presented their report on Russian hybrid threats at the North Atlantic Council. Surely this is a much-needed course of thinking. However, the view of some NATO members, such as Poland or Lithuania, which claim that the classical deterrence against hybrid threat does not work, is also rele-

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7 To be able to speak of a truly devastating conventional defeat, NATO forces would have to keep going 100 km further after liberating the Baltics and seize some land from Russia – as a punishment and as a clear proof of Russia’s defeat.
vant. Moreover, it is only logical that a potential enemy will take deterrence less into account when thinking about an attack that would not trigger Article 5. The probability that such an attack would actually provoke retaliatory measures is lower than in the case of more evident conventional aggression.

From the political point of view, an attack under the Article 5 threshold could be even more dangerous for the Alliance than a conventional attack. That is because it would produce very sensitive political discussions about what should be done to defend the Baltic states.

Imagine a scenario in which Russian forces quickly enter the territory of some of the Baltic states on the grounds of “defending Russians living abroad”, which is in fact an official part of the Russian doctrine. That could happen, for example, in the border areas of Estonia or Latvia with the highest concentration of the Russian minority population (Narva, Latgale). Russia showed in Crimea, well before 2014, that it can master violent inter-ethnic clashes in the streets.®

Western military analyses show that Russians made enormous progress exactly in their capability to rapidly deploy forces. Russian armed forces are prepared for combat in 1-2 days from the moment of the declaration of an emergency. In 3-5 days, the Russian army is able to generate enough forces to execute limited combat operations in the Baltics, and in 8-10 days it is able to carry out extensive operations in the region. It means that before NATO could even react (e.g. by NRF of VJTF), the initial Russian “punitive expedition” would already be withdrawn. The aim of sending a warning to anyone standing up to Russia’s will would be achieved. What would the Alliance do at that moment?

Russia clearly demonstrated that “it would not allow Ukraine to leave its orbit” already in 2013. It was only after that when the crises in Crimea and Donbas began. The primary goal there never was to occupy Ukraine but to have available an efficient brake pedal that Russia can step on any time Ukraine starts to move closer toward NATO or EU membership. Even now, there is potential for some combination of another limited conventional attack on Ukraine and the hybrid one on the Baltic states. Therefore, we must project the analysis of possible Russian motives onto the Baltics and realize what we must prepare for. The main motive of Russia seems to be the testing of political coherence and military readiness of the whole Alliance. This applies rather in the Baltic than in the Ukrainian case.

Mere threat of the attack also counts

Even if the Russians never attack the Baltic states, they can still use the idea to blackmail Baltic politicians, both at the central and local level. It is easy to imagine the spine-chilling sensation that the Baltic politicians must have felt when they heard the Alliance’s intelligence briefing on the enormous qualitative progress of Russian military capabilities during the last exercise Zapad 2017. How would a politician from a small Baltic country, in whose constituency lives a large Russian minority, behave under such enormous pressure? Reassuring any NATO member is, naturally, in the Alliance’s own interest. The enhancement of deterrence on the Eastern Flank would strengthen the Alliance’s unity.

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® The author of the text made extensive research on situation in Crimea as a part of the endeavor of the Czech EU presidency in 2009 to strengthen the EU presence in the Crimean Peninsula. The finding was that Russia actively meddled into inter-ethnic tensions among local Russians and Crimean Tatars.
THE NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING RUSSIAN BEHAVIOUR

Russian thinking is determined by a wide range of factors. On top of that, there is a certain dose of irrationality incorporated in Russian thinking. Predicting Russian behaviour is thus rather difficult, as illustrated by the Western failure to do so before the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 or the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Naturally, this is not only due to the character of the Russian soul. It is due to Putin’s way of governance, which is based on his KGB experience. The problem is his belief in his own infallibility, which impacts even his closest circles. Putin can surprise, but he is not particularly strong in calculating consequences. Even in 2014, he expected the West to react in the same way as it did in 2008 in the case of Georgia.

Experts from the Potomac Foundation describe how members of the Russian General Staff think in their report on the war simulations focused on the Baltics and Poland which they held. The issue of various groups inside the top Russian power structure and their conflicting interests is worth analysing as well; however, it has more impact on the overall regime stability than on the form of strategic decision-making, which at least so far has been done by a highly disciplined narrow group of no more than ten people.

We can, of course, learn a lot about Russian military-strategic thinking by analyzing the complexity of the Zapad 2017 exercise. Firstly, Russians do not simply train individual branches of their army. Rather, it is a test of the state’s ability to mobilize rapidly. In this regard, they will be ahead of us, mainly thanks to the hierarchical nature of their whole state administration. Secondly, part of the exercise was a test of the A2/AD concept exactly over the Baltics (with the use of elements of electronic warfare). Thirdly, the exercise demonstrated substantial progress regarding the speed of deployment, even at long distance. That is problematic mainly due to the significantly slower capabilities of the Alliance to deploy a

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[10] Some Russian theorists (think-tanks or professors at MGIMO) seriously, in the spirit of classic “dialectics of history”, calculate with the fact that armed conflict will erupt in 10-20 years, for which Russia must be prepared. It is therefore relevant to analyse how much the voice of these scientists is heard amongst Russian decision-makers. For example, it would make sense to follow the monthly Vojenaja mysl and to translate to English. At one time, there was even an English mutation called Military Thought. In the Czech Republic, the journal is subscribed by the Military History Institute, which took over the recently abolished Agency for Military Information and Services at the Ministry of Defence.

sufficient number of troops that would augment the forces already present in the region in case of conflict.  

Even though the political decisions of strategic importance are made only by the leadership of the Russian Federation that is closest to Vladimir Putin (which most probably does not even cover the whole fourteen-member Security Council), the fact stands that these decisions have a wide public support and to a large extent mirror the thinking, needs, and preferences of those segments that the present Russian regime relies on (power structures, military-industrial complex, bureaucracy, the Orthodox clergy, media). Furthermore, the regime is increasingly dependent on strengthening Russia’s position abroad (even by waging war) due to the regime’s shift towards patriotic mobilisation as a legitimisation mechanism of the present regime, since the potential for economic growth and increased salaries of the masses has been exhausted.

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12 See the results of war simulations organized by the Potomac Foundations later in the text.
Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic contribute to NATO’s deterrence capabilities not only because of their commitments (such as Article 3 of the Washington Treaty) but also because in the current security environment such contribution is fundamentally connected with the safety of these states itself.
United States

The US discussion on deterrence is the most advanced one because it fits to the changed security and defence doctrine represented by new National Security Strategy and new National Defence Strategy. The need for deterrence of a potential enemy, namely Russia, is being openly declared by prominent representatives of the U.S. Army, such as the Chief of Staff General Mark Milley, the Supreme Allied Commanders Europe General Tod Wolters or his predecessors General Curtis Scaparrotti and General Philip M. Breedlove, or the former commander of U.S. Army Europe General Ben Hodges. Moreover, research institutions enter the debate on the modalities of deterrence as well. As it is common in the United States, they often work on behalf of the American administration. Some recommendations emerged after a several months-long preparation in the form of simulating war scenarios (war games), which shows how important this issue is there.

Deterring a major land power in Europe became a topic of intense study and debate for the first time since the Cold War and has led to numerous proposals on additional posture enhancements that NATO should take. Many of these proposals include recommendations that would take many years longer to implement than the posture enhancements currently underway.

There seems to be a consensus that effective deterrence in NATO’s Eastern flank and especially in the Baltics requires further changes and enhancements in the structure and deployment of American and Allied force. You can find bellow some proposals of the RAND Corporation, the CSIS and Atlantic Council, and the Army War College:

**RAND Corporation (2016)**\(^{13}\): 3 heavy brigades, Air, artillery, and other supporting elements also recommended;

**RAND Corporation (2015)**\(^{14}\): 3–4 heavy brigades, Air and missile defense forces recommended, along with additional supporting elements

**CSIS**\(^{15}\): 2 rotationally-based ABCTs, 1,000 headquarters staff

**Atlantic Council**\(^{16}\): Baltic States’ own forces upgraded to heavy brigades; 1 heavy brigade per Baltic State, additional anti-tank and air defense weaponry acquired by the Baltic States, 3 multinational (U.S./European/Baltic) battalions; 1 battalion per Baltic State, 3 rotationally-based, forward-deployed heavy brigades from NATO countries, (analogous to ERI’s ABCT; one brigade each from the United Kingdom, Germany, and Poland), additional supporting units supplied by the Netherlands, Denmark, and Norway
Army War College 17 1 rotationally-deployed ABCT, headquarters with a two-star command

The discussion in the USA is about broadening the concept of deterrence so that it would not only be about denying the very physical possibility of any short or long-term territorial gain (deterrence by denial) but it would also focus on potential punishment (deterrence by punishment). This question was explored three years ago by the former Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Wes Mitchell. 18 Ideally, both components of deterrence should complement each other. That said, it is also clear that the measures of deterrence relevant for defending the Baltics do not and cannot be concentrated only in this region.

It will be favourable for the threatened small NATO members if the truly convinced advocates of strong ties and commitments amongst allied states stay to be represented strongly in the US administration. In the words of the former Assistant Secretary of State Wess Mitchell: “For the United States, abandonment of, or by, allies is more dangerous in the long run to our health, happiness, and prosperity as a nation than any supposed entrapment to protect states whose existential interest in the perpetuation of a stable and prosperous world order is the same as—and, if anything, greater than—our own. America.”

What do the American proposals for further deterrence imply? Neither of the proposals for strengthening the Alliance’s defensive capacity in its Eastern flank will reverse the substantive imbalance of power in the region. Besides, the proposed measures were in most cases based on simulations of an attack. 19 Yet we want to focus on Russian thinking and try to ensure that such an attack will never take place. This idea comes from the conviction that even though the forces in the Baltics will be ordered to defend their territory, in reality, they will not be able to hold it. Currently, neither the air policing nor the forces are sufficiently robust. 20

The thesis of this paper is that the role of a deterrent, which Russian strategists would have to take into account, could be played by the capability of forces (Allied or, even better, local) to cause the Russian troops invading the Baltics’ soil as many human casualties and material losses as possible. This capability must be credibly communicated to the Russians including to the public well in advance as part of strategic communication. Russian representatives and experts do not mention human casualties and material loses at all when addressing the public. They only speak about victory.

Casualties amongst Russian soldiers are nowadays a significantly more sensitive issue in Russia than it was twenty or thirty years ago. The families of soldiers and related civic initiatives and independent media are able to elicit a considerable public response, such as the case of Russian losses in Syria showed. Looking from a psychological perspective, it will have an impact on both Russian and world public if an effective retaliation would come directly from the victims. That is why the Baltic forces should be equipped and trained for causing as many human casualties and material loses to the enemy as possible right from the initial stage of the conflict. However twisted this may sound, it is exactly that kind of strategic thinking that in the end might prevent those casualties.

Germany

The German government takes the security concerns of the Eastern flank’s countries seriously. It unequivocally supports the Alliance’s measures aimed at reassuring these states as well as the strengthening of the Baltics’

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17 Anderson R. Reed, Patrick J. Ellis, Antonio M. Paz, Kyle A. Reed, Lendy Reenegro, and John T. Vaughn, Strategic Landpower and a Resurgent Russia: An Operational Approach to Deterrence, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2016
19 Study of the RAND Corporation based on a simulation of combat operations came to the conclusion that seven Allied brigades with adequate air support and artillery capabilities could, if deployed at the very beginning of the conflict, prevent Russians from rapidly invading the Baltics. Nevertheless, not even that power would ensure a sustainable defence of the region.
20 A well-arranged summary of the gradual strengthening of American and Allied forces in the Baltics already since April 2014 can be found, for instance, in the book of J. Šír et al. Ruská agrese proti Ukrajině (Praha: Karolinum, 2017), see particularly Chapter 12 by L. Švec.
own defence capacity. By contrast, there are many voices in the SPD that say that besides retaliatory measures motivating Russia to change its behaviour and measures aimed at strengthening NATO’s defensive capacity, it is also necessary to seek opportunities for a dialogue with Russia, which would lead to increased mutual trust. Despite the fact that the SPD supports boosting the NATO Eastern Flank’s defensive capabilities, it also holds the view that such development should not be to the detriment of the dialogue and the trust-building with Moscow. In that sense, it argued against the permanent deployment of troops from Western NATO members in the Eastern flank. Other measures which are a response to the same military-security aspects were met with reserve (as “sabre-rattling”) amongst the members of the SPD. Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the current President of Germany and former Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, criticized the Allied exercise Anaconda 2016, whose aim was to demonstrate the readiness of NATO members to defend the countries of the Eastern flank. As a result, Steinmeier was then criticized by his coalition partner.

Despite the discrepancies within the political scene, the German security-military position on the Eastern Flank of NATO is a very solid one. The Enhanced Forward Presence battalion in Lithuania is led by Germany as a framework nation. Over the two years, roughly 8 thousand allied soldiers from nine NATO Allies have served in the unit on a rotational basis. At peacetime the NATO battalion battle group trains together with Lithuanian forces. As thorough and extensive research study conducted by the Latvian Institute of International Affairs in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung showed, Germany’s contribution to NATO’s eFP, is clearly a positive test case for the “Munich consensus” and Berlin’s willingness to assume more responsibility for international security and stability.

Germany is also, together with the USA, UK, Sweden, Belgium, Norway, and Israel one of the biggest suppliers of military equipment to the Baltics.

Still, when it comes to the eventuality of further strengthening the western military presence in Baltic states or in Poland above the already approved eFP framework, the discussion on the validity of the NATO-Russia Founding Act from 1997 plays a role. Even though stratified as well, the debate in Germany very much differs from those in Czech Republic or Poland. There is a prevailing consensus in the Czech Republic and fast unanimous consensus in Poland that the Founding Act is no longer valid. The strategic environment changed, and Russia has breached its obligations from a range of disarmament treaties. Moreover, the NATO-Russia Founding Act, signed in Paris, was merely a political agreement and not a legally binding international treaty. It ceased to apply at least in 2014 when Russia illegally annexed the Crimean Peninsula, drastically violating provisions of the Paris agreement.

Czech Republic

The Czech debate on NATO deterrence in the Baltics is the least developed one. The debates in the US, Germany, or Poland could serve as an example and a stimulus for Czechs. It is important not to restrict Czech strategic thinking by the limits of current national military doctrine (Concept of the Czech Republic’s Foreign Policy, Security Strategy of the Czech Republic, White Paper on Defence, Concept of the Czech Armed Forces 2025). Instead, it is needed to further shape and adapt the doctrinal documents.

The Czech army is much smaller than the German or Polish one. It is evident that the military defence of the Czech Republic would not be possible without the help of Allied states from the very beginning. It highlights the importance of the identification of how specifically Czech army can contribute to the Alliance’s deterrence capabilities. The national deterrent message

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21 Stenographic records from a Bundestag session on July 7, 2016 and September 9, 2016 (Plenarprotokoll 18/183, Plenarprotokoll 18/190).
22 Stenographic records from a Bundestag session on July 7, 2016 and September 9, 2016 (Plenarprotokoll 18/183, Plenarprotokoll 18/190).
should also include large military exercises in the threatened territory.

In order to help the strategic thinking focusing on the Baltics within NATO and the required military capabilities development, it needs to be underlined that the defence of the Baltics is a “forward defence” of the Czech Republic. Neither the Western nor the Southern flank of the Alliance will do the homework for the Czech Republic. The Baltics do not represent a “forward defence” for countries like the USA, UK, Canada, or France.

The difficulties stemming from the current Czech government composition were very visible during the negotiation of the comprehensive parliamentary mandate for the foreign mission of the Czech army for 2018-2020. The mandate passed through the Chamber of Deputies only thanks to support of the opposition parties like KDU-ČSL, ODS and TOP 09; the government coalition couldn’t muster a majority on this matter. The reason was a negative attitude of the Czech Communist party towards the eFP-mission, an integral part of the proposed comprehensive parliamentary mandate.

The three Baltic countries, together with Poland or Romania, are in the process of a clearly targeted armament with respect to their own defence as well as to their contribution to the Alliance’s deterrence capabilities. While assessing the Czech contribution to NATO’s defence and deterrence capabilities, the distinction between assurance measures (such as RAP, strengthening NRF, creating VJTF or NFIU) and deterrence measures (such as EDI, eFP, strengthening the NATO Command Structure, Air Policing, hypersonic weapons etc.) is needed. The Czech core focus should be on deterrence.

It is also necessary to rethink the Czech level of participation in the NATO deterrence strategy. Large exercises are needed, with the movements of at least a mechanized battalion, or even a whole brigade in the future. These exercises would take place in the area that is in the highest danger of threat realization. Necessarily, this would affect planning and acquisitions process. Some concrete recommendations that concern the 7th Mechanised Brigade, rotational deployment of the brigade’s battalion-sized task force in the Elblag’s area of responsibility, the new Czech airborne regiment, the Special Forces in general or rather robust Czech institutional base for combatting hybrid threats are to be found in the text of the first paper prepared for Berlin seminar (“The NATO Eastern Flank and the US military presence in the region”).

The quite underdeveloped Czech debate needs to be stimulated by variety of players. This underlay the establishment of the Security Strategies Program at the European Values Center for Security Policy.

Poland

There is a consensus among the Polish political elite that Russia is a revisionist power whose goals are in conflict with the strategic interest of Poland. The consensus, widely shared by the Polish public, is a solid basis for Polish long-term endeavor to strengthen Eastern Flank of NATO and to get as much US military presence on the Polish territory as possible.

The dispute between the Polish conservative government and the liberal opposition is on question to what extend the bilateral Polish-US initiatives are in harmony or in collision with Poland’s EU and NATO policy. The dichotomy applies also to the EU Common Security Defense Policy agenda. The current government of Poland is expressing openly its skepticism in many aspects of the CSDP.

Throughout the entire period of its NATO Alliance membership, Poland has sought to maintain NATO’s ability to carry out its vital mission—the territorial defense of its Member States. Poland has been raising the issue of the principle of Allied solidarity, the need to organize robust exercises related to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and the maintenance of relevant quantitative and qualitative military capabilities of individual Member States of the Alliance.

Russia’s actions in Eastern Ukraine and elevated activity of the Russian armed forces along the NATO borders have increased Polish advocacy for the Alliance’s adaptation to the new challenges. Polish government, regardless of its composition, has been arguing for measures

25 In the Polish case, it is worth mentioning the WOT forces (Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej). As war simulations have shown, if supported by attack helicopters, these forces can play a significant role in defending the Polish territory.

26 The SSP organizes once a month a closed-door debate on strategic issues with involvement of both governmental and non-governmental prominent experts.
that improve NATO capabilities to deter a potential aggressor and for effective defense in the event of an armed attack.

Poland’s contribution to the adaptation of the Alliance includes among others: The strengthening (along with Germany and Denmark—the other Member States) of command structures by hosting the Multinational Corps North-East in Szczecin along with the Multinational Division North-East in Elblag or by establishment of the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) in Bydgoszcz, a staff structure which fills coordinating tasks and planning for the Allied Forces deployed on Polish territory.

In the meantime, war simulations organized by the Potomac Foundation in Poland reached an unequivocal conclusion that, given the enemy’s potential capabilities, the concept of Allied Rapid Reaction Corps is too slow for the defense of the Baltics. That was the reason why, after the lobbying of Poland and the Baltic countries at the summits in Wales and Warsaw, the enhanced Forward Presence concept was adopted. One of the eFP Battalion is stationed in Poland.

To illustrate official Polish strategic thinking, which is very open and straightforward, it is worth mentioning the official document “Proposal for a U.S. Permanent Presence in Poland”, whose aim was, as the title suggests, to achieve a permanent presence of American armored division in Poland. Even though the final outcome of the strengthened US army presence in Poland will be much more modest, the idea of US military presence has an overarching positive echo in Poland.

Polish public debate on strategic issues, including the NATO Eastern Flank resilience, is quite developed. It concerns public as well as private media. Polish civilian and military experts are involved in the war gaming and workshops conducted in the United States with the aim to provide the administration with recommendations of the US force posture adjustment for deterring Russian on the Eastern Front. The Czech Republic can only envy such state of affairs.
MILITARY AND POLITICAL SOLUTIONS

Military solution

The security-military narrative must thoroughly distinguish what is deterrence and what is not (assurance and crisis management). The main mission of the Readiness Action Plan adopted in Wales was not to strengthen deterrence. The involvement of Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic in the NATO Response Forces is not a sufficient contribution to the deterrence on NATO’s Eastern Flank, contrary to the Germany-led battalion with Czech mechanized company in Lithuania, Canada-led battalion with the Czech mortar platoon in Latvia or US-led battalion in Poland. Moreover, the above-mentioned war simulations organized by the Potomac Foundation in Poland reached an unequivocal conclusion that, given the enemy’s potential capabilities, the concept of Allied Rapid Reaction Corps is too slow for the defence of the Baltics.

All relevant studies on this topic share the same belief that NATO must pay attention to the development of heavy forces on the NATO Eastern Flank in order to be able to deter (and potentially defeat) the threat of an attack on its Achilles’ heel. Sufficiently armoured ground forces must have adequate firepower, anti-aircraft equipment, and logistic capabilities. For instance, the above-mentioned study by the RAND Corporation from 2016 was very explicit in identifying those capability gaps. Since then, the Baltic armies have been working on filling the gaps. We must answer the question of how Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic contribute to this effort.

States most exposed to the Russian threat themselves must arm in a very consistent manner. Arms control is an integrated part of Russia’s military strategy: to advance its own military position while weakening that of its enemies. Russia is open to the arms-control agreements that would entrench its military superiority in Eastern Europe and prevent the technological gap between Russia and the West from growing. An important advantage of Moscow is the higher acceptance of war among the Russian public than among the Western one. Russian military strategists know this advantage might substantially diminish in the time of a real military conflict. The West can also evoke its warrior tradition. Therefore, Russia focuses on using this advantage to hinder already the preparation of the West during the peacetime. We must be aware the arms control fits into this tactic.

As already said, the most pressing issue is readiness and mobility. Here, the increased readiness of the Polish Armed Forces, new US military deployments, the Czech contribution as well as further enhancements of the eFP battalions will play a role. The eFP must not be stationary but dynamic. For instance, the Czech army within Germany-led battalion is now changing its posture from the mechanized brigade to the unit of reconnaissance and electronic warfare specialists.

One hypothetical option that addresses both abovementioned aspects of deterrence is to enable the mechanized brigades of Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic to be put on alert and ready to start the movement to the Baltic States’ territory automatically based on certain Russian threat indicators (see later in the text). Mechanisms that would specify which events would trigger putting the brigades on alert based on bilateral defense agreements is conceivable.

27 Sam Jones, „NATO Rapid Unit Not Fit for Eastern Europe Deployment, Say Generals “, Washington, D.C.: Atlantic Council, May 15, 2016a./
28 Although the newly created VJTF are quicker, they are not numerous enough. Besides, some high-ranking NATO officers believe that even the VJTF are too slow for the Baltics, plus they would be very vulnerable during their arrival.
29 David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO’s Eastern Flank. Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2016).
Last but not least, we should remember the wisdom of the well-known German approach of “Hilfe zur Selbshilfe” (helping people to help themselves). Helping to substantially increase the capability of the Baltic States by providing them with weapons and training can mitigate the sensitivity of the debate about the Russia-Founding Act. It is not an accident that Germany is among the biggest suppliers of military equipment to the Baltics.

The armed forces of the Baltic states are consequently expanding their heavy forces. All three of them have recently made purchases that considerably boosted their military capabilities. Especially the positive progress in building heavy armoured units and self-propelled artillery is of great importance.

We can see that all the Baltic States have recently made acquisitions which radically increased their military capabilities. Fundamentally important is the positive progress in building heavy armoured units and self-propelled artillery, although many systems are used, as they are still modern and high-quality. As experience from the armed conflict in Ukraine shows, good artillery plays a crucial role – up to 90% of Ukrainian government forces’ casualties were inflicted during artillery attacks. It seems that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have drawn their conclusions from this fact and, as a result, they are now developing their artillery capabilities.

On top of that, all these armies, no matter their size, are well-trained, and their members are characterized by patriotism and high motivation. It is prudent to doubt that the Baltic forces would be simply “smashed” by a conventional attack. The enemy would have great difficulties, especially if the attack was expected - a task that is the duty of intelligence services and analysts. In this sense, the “Hegemon” war simulation carried out by the Potomac Foundation (now The Centre for the Study of New Generation Warfare) showed that the first days of conflict might bring rather big losses of Russian/Belarussian armoured vehicles.

The entire NATO deterrence architecture, in order to be complete, must also entail robust follow-on force that will add to NATO readiness and mobility capabilities. The Framework Nation Concept (FNC) can be a part of the solution. FNC is a demonstration of the German decision to take greater responsibility for the European part of NATO. Germany, the second largest contributor to the Alliance missions and operations, aims at building-up “capabilities clusters” and preparation of the follow-on forces within FNC. A declared ambition is also to provide for one-third of the level of NATO’s ambitions. Its potential for increasing interoperability of the German, Czech and Polish forces should be further explored. Examples are already there; it is the planned affiliation of the Czech 4th mechanized brigade to the 10th German armored brigade. There is also a direct cooperation between the German and Polish combat units up to the level of armoured brigades. Polish soldiers are exercising along their German colleagues within Allied exercises and such cooperation is also envisaged on bilateral basis.

30 Estonia purchased 44 used but well-preserved and modern IVFs CV9035NL from the Netherlands (treaty signed in December 2014, vehicles delivered in 2016) and additional 35 vehicles from Norway which it plans to convert to command, recovery, and other types of vehicles (also purchased in 2016). Thanks to this acquisition, Estonia now has its own heavy forces (by the way, all Nordic countries and the Netherlands have these vehicles). Estonia has also recently ordered 12 modern Korean self-propelled howitzers (estimated delivery is 2020-2021) with an option on 12 more units. The same howitzers were purchased by Finland as well (delivery is currently taking place). Estonia and Finland plan to jointly handle logistics, maintenance, and exercises, which should lower the operating costs. Latvia purchased a large quantity (123) of reconnaissance IVFs (or rather light armoured reconnaissance vehicles) Scimitar from the UK’s surplus, which radically increased the combat capabilities of the Latvian army. Besides that, Latvia bought the American self-propelled howitzers Paladin from the surplus of Austria (47, which means that the Latvian army “outran” the Czech one in this regard). Lithuania bought 21 units of used but modern and well-preserved self-propelled howitzers PzH 2000 from Germany, whose delivery is currently in motion. It also acquired 88 units of modern German AFVs Boxer fitted with the Israeli-made Samson weapon station.
Political-strategic solution

The real nature of the Russian threat can be learned only in a comprehensive manner by combining the analysis of its capabilities, doctrine, exercises, and decision maker’s statements. The military doctrine of Russia is steadily developing. So is the force posture and capabilities. The division line between offensive and defensive tactics is blurred. Originally a defensive strategy known as “Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)”, it is placed into an offensive scenario that envisages outstretching the A2/AD umbrella above the Baltic States. A number of Russian nuclear weapons with very limited yields on vast array of delivery platforms have rather demonstrative than tactical meaning. Russia, being aware of its limited economic and military power, puts emphasis on the very initial stage of the conflict. The aim is to inflict strategic shock to the adversary so as to apply tactic of controlled escalation.

A significant change in Russia’s strategy since the Cold War is that the ultimate goal of Russia is not the defeat of the West but rather its decoupling. Not only should the USA be decoupled from Europe, but Western Europe should be decoupled from the European countries that once belonged to the Soviet sphere of influence. Russia’s military doctrine, exercises, capabilities and prevailing decision makers’ statements are deliberately directed on the Eastern Flank of NATO. Russia, unlike the Soviet Union, is not in fact targeting London, Paris, or Berlin. Within this context, the discrepancies in the threat assessment between countries in the former Soviet sphere of influence and countries like Germany, France or Spain are not groundless. The Ancient Romans called this strategy “Divide et Impera”. This is an extremely dangerous strategy that requires a corresponding strategic reaction on our side. The states of the Eastern Flank of NATO need to come up with strong reasoning to boost the resilience of that region. Keeping the political cohesion of NATO as well as the European Union is of utmost importance.

The political cohesion of the West is exactly what is on the target of Russia. Despite vast Russian military might, there is still a technological gap and some weaknesses in the Russian military. The Russian army, reliant heavily on conscription, has low reserve mobilization readiness. Russia also has a limited ability to project power in the global scale due to the weakness of its navy. The Syrian test showed Russian navy’s inferiority compared to the most advanced maritime powers. Despite having a big arsenal of cruise missiles which can be even further increased, Russia lacks sufficient long-range, persistent ISR capabilities (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) to support large-scale dynamic targeting operations at longer ranges. Russian military education is also outdated. The most decisive fact is its inferior economy when compared with the West.

Therefore, Russia would concentrate military operations of high intensity solely in areas adjacent to the Russian borders. In a conflict with NATO, Russia – as a centralized state- must target the political cohesion of the Alliance at its initial phase. The ability of the Russian leadership to manoeuvre its own public is its most significant tactical advantage. It made enormous progress in its capability to rapidly deploy forces. If we, the countries on the Eastern Flank of NATO, want to prevail, it is not only about capabilities. Most of all, we must defeat the strategy of the adversary. How to overcome the risks of decoupling is the crucial question.

This question has a political, rather than pure military answer. We need to find a way how to get our Western European partners on board. There will always be some discrepancy in the threat assessment of the individual member states in these multilateral organizations. Therefore, political cohesion requires first and foremost

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31 For Russia, the nuclear weapons still occupy an important place in its security strategy. Russia possesses thousands of warheads with a wide variety of yields on a vast array of delivery platforms. Delivery systems include sea-launched cruise missiles, ground-launched cruise missiles, air-launched cruise missiles, torpedoes, depth charges, air-to-surface missiles, gravity bombs and even an underwater nuclear drone. These Russian “tactical weapons” have a rather demonstrative, political character. They fit perfectly into the military strategy of de-escalatory nuclear strikes. Russia could, for example, use a “small” nuclear weapon on NATO military targets, such as bases, ground forces, ships, or aircraft. Especially if Russia were about to lose in a conventional conflict, it would induce such limited nuclear attack with a low-yield tactical nuclear warhead. Subsequently, it would offer the adversary (i.e. the West) the option to not go for a nuclear retaliation but rather for a “de-escalation” in a form of some “reasonable agreement”.
a mutual respect and solidarity between different regional or interest groups inside both these multilateral entities.

The differences of German or French threat assessments and those of countries bordering with Russia may be substantial is a matter of fact. One of the reasons is that Russia is not threatening them in the same scale. Moreover, neither Germany nor France do not have any global ambition like the USA that binds it to the defense of the Baltic above the NATO commitment.³²

Because of the substantial difference in the threat assessment, the Baltic States, Poland or the Czech Republic can only appeal on the European solidarity. Yet, the solidarity is not a one-way street. These states of the Eastern flank of NATO must provide solidarity with the Western Europe, be it NATO or EU agenda. Only this will entitle them to demand the reciprocity.

Intelligence: early warning

The year 2014 meant a big blow to the “strategic foresight.” The discipline, that was popular among policy planners or the intelligence community up until then. The well-known fact is that a cognitive ability of the human brain is based on its commemorative skills. We have no other choice than to use comparison with what we have in the memory for analysis of the current happening. To predict a completely new state of affairs, like the annexation of Crimea, is almost impossible. Therefore, instead of strategic foresight, policy planning and the intelligence community must focus on building early warning systems based on permanent observation and assessment of the defined indicators.

Some division of roles within the public administration aimed at tracking various indicators that influence the probability is needed. Such indicators are, for instance, the proximity of Russian strategic hawks to political elites and the question of stability or instability of the Russian regime etc. The legitimacy of the ideas included in this article is evident by simply looking at the current numbers of Russian forces in the region or at their regularly practised drills for readiness. Due to the reasons stated in the chapter “The need for understanding Russian behaviour”, it is advisable to systematically map the imminent proximity of the Kremlin and continuously analyze the main directions, problems, and trends it deals with. That concerns the main departmental publishing platforms of the Ministry of Defence (General Staff), outputs of expert structures affiliated with the regime,³³ or “discussions club” and similar formats (the annual Moscow Conference on International Security organized by the Russian Ministry of Defence, the Izborsk Club or the Valdai Discussion Club), which are capable of influencing and forming the intellectual breeding ground from which political decisions later arise.

It is necessary to monitor the current trends in Russian strategic thinking as well as to attempt to evaluate the impact of Russian strategists on actual decision-making (be it military or civic). Russian experts on their armed forces should be contacted and a dialogue should be established at specialized forums. The ministries of foreign affairs or the ministries of defence could start monitoring the monthly Voyenaja mysl. A project should also be announced, whose realisation would consist of contacting the employees of Voyenaja mysl and gathering behind-the-scenes information on the “influence” of its authors (or, for example, professors at MGIMO). The question is who could do research like this (academic or member of the administration).

The 24/7 monitoring of the information domain using the big data processing through artificial intelligence would provide us also with some warning signals. Companies that deal with it, like the Czech Semantic Vision,³⁴ registered a type of warning signals prior to the annexation of Crimea.

³² The US strategists are openly saying “we cannot lose Tallinn, because otherwise we would lose Taipei, Tokyo or Tel Aviv”.
³³ To illustrate, after the Ukraine intervention there was a lot of attention devoted to the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, whose chair at the time was an Orthodox fascist Leonid Rešetnikov, who evidently provided skewed data on alleged “pro-Russian” sentiments in Ukraine.
³⁴ Semantic Visions’ solutions have been successfully integrated into the world’s largest business commerce network SAP Ariba, which drives over US$3 Trillion in commerce – more than Amazon, eBay and Alibaba combined. Within the SAP Ariba system, Semantic Visions’ solutions provide timely risk assessment and warnings to the world’s leading companies.
The Baltic region constitutes a sort of a “forward defence” of the Czech Republic. Any attack here aims at the political and military cohesion of the entire North Atlantic Alliance.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

• We need to strive to achieve a political consensus that the level of the probability of the crisis scenario is not the decisive criterion influencing the composition and doctrinal basis of our, i.e. NATO, forces in the region of the NATO eastern Flank. In fact, a no less important criterion is the very structure and readiness of Russian armed forces there.

• It is impossible to evaluate current relations between the West and Russia without asking the question of whether it is possible to alter Russia’s behaviour. Russia is not an unpredictable regime like North Korea, which makes deterrence from hostile actions a policy option. Since we cannot change Russia’s behavior as a whole, we must focus on what we can influence. The fact remains that the balance of power in the Baltics is working to the Alliance’s disadvantage. There will never be enough NATO or local forces to halt a potential Russian attack. Their ability to slow down and aggravate a Russian invasion might probably not be enough to reliably deter the enemy, especially in case of a direct challenge to the Russian regime’s stability. Thus, we must project how to make the potential attack costlier for Russia, as an excessively high price might deter them.35

• Any military clash between the armed forces of Russia and any European state (even outside of NATO) that gets away without punishment will disrupt the confidence in the Alliance and its political cohesion. The international community has experience with the fact that Russia is prepared to use its armed forces wherever it might bring territorial or political gains. Even just disrupting the confidence in the collective defence of the West represents a political gain for Russia. In this respect, it is important to have the right messaging, even via robust Allied exercises or their scenarios36 and by appropriate strategic communication.

• As for the Russian public and the Russian leadership, it should be targeted by an active information “offensive” and made aware of the risk of considerable human casualties and material losses in case of the potential attack on the Baltics. The domestic propaganda together with a certain segment of the local movie production encourages Russians to believe that they can win a third world war. The aim here is to disrupt and refute this belief among the Russian public. The Russian decision makers and the leadership of the armed forces could be implicated by targeted messaging of possible heavy material losses. In other words, an attack on such small pieces of land would bring targeted destruction of the Admiral Kuznetsov, Russia’s aircraft carrier. This will signal that the adversary must count with both denial and punishment.

• Moreover, incorporation of retaliatory measures like sanctions into the deterrence architecture should be considered. Those, however, must be used very flexibly, strategically, and without any compromise. Some triggering mechanism that will combine an Allied threat assessment system with EU economic instruments could be on the agenda of the existing EU-NATO cooperation.

• War games represent a useful contribution to strategic thinking about the resilience of the


36 Allied exercises in the Alliance’s Eastern flank has so far comprised of hundreds of soldiers, a few thousand at most, whereas Russia regularly deploys tens of thousands of troops for similar exercises.
Eastern Flank. The results of the several months long exercises were shown in the chapter on the USA. These simulations also took place in Poland in 2017 and in Romania in 2018. The Polish simulation, organized by the Potomac Foundation/New Generation Warfare Centre, focused on the first 35 days of war from the launch of a Russo-Belarus attack on the Baltics and Poland. As such, it covered both the phase of the Russian invasion and the beginning of the liberation operation. Experts from Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic who experienced war games during their career. Why not organize some simulations focused on Baltic with participation of the experts of these three countries together?

• Some division of roles at the state administration level aimed at tracking various indicators that influence the probability of an attack would be useful. Such indicators are, for instance, the proximity of Russian strategic hawks to political elites or the question of stability or instability of the Russian regime. It is advisable to systematically map the imminent proximity of the Kremlin and continuously analyze the main directions, problems, and trends it deals with. It is also necessary to start monitoring the current trends in Russian strategic thinking to attempt to evaluate the impact of Russian strategists on actual decision-making (be it military or civic).

• Apart from further development on NATO deterrence posture in a form of eFP, attention should be paid to the total Baltic defense efforts. Is it possible to incorporate them into NATO's defense and contingency planning? What is the level of cooperation there between NATO and local government efforts on this? Specifically, how are these efforts planned for in the local and NATO's intelligence communities? Will unconventional defense efforts in the Baltics be consciously and deliberately incorporated into NATO's defense posture?

• The normative form of the issue, that is, the analysis of NATO's reaction based on the codified commitments or current strategic calculation, is one consideration. However, one cannot omit the more general line of thought concerning the psychological aspects which affect the public in Western countries. We can assume that the public would call for a devastating strike if the whole Alliance was invaded. But would the citizens of Allied states consider the potential invasion of the Baltics to be as serious as if the same happened to, for example, Germany or Poland, and warrant a counterattack?

• A need to defend of the Baltics by military force would pose an extraordinarily important challenge to the political coherence of NATO. Russian military planners surely know it very well.

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37 The simulations organized by the RAND Corporation were attended by, besides its own analysts, both uniformed and civil employees of various branches of the U.S. Department of Defense (including U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, Joint Staff, U.S. Army in Europe, and U.S. Air Forces Europe, together with the European section of the NATO Naval Command).

38 https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2779.html

39 Some French analysts hold the view that Russia does not aim to defeat the Alliance but to divide it. That is quite a realistic estimate. This paper asks what conclusions the French administrative state or the French public will draw from it.
The balance of power in the Baltics is working to the Alliance’s disadvantage. There will never be enough NATO or local forces to halt a potential Russian attack. Their ability to slow down and aggravate a Russian invasion might probably not be enough. We must project how to make the potential attack costlier for Russia, as an excessively high price might deter them.