

THE BALTIC DEFENCE COLLEGE

**NATO AT 70 AND THE BALTIC STATES:
STRENGTHENING THE EURO-ATLANTIC ALLIANCE
IN AN AGE OF NON-LINEAR THREATS**

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NATO at 70 and the Baltic States: Strengthening the Euro-Atlantic Alliance in an Age of Non-Linear Threats

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Mark Voyger

The Baltic Defence College book “NATO at 70 and the Baltic states: Strengthening the Euro-Atlantic Alliance in an Age of Non-Linear Threats” is the flagship publication project commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Baltic Defence College within the broader context of the 70th anniversary of NATO.

The year 2019 marks multiple dates that are of vital importance for the regional, as well as international security system, and that have positive, as well as potential negative implications. On 4th April 2019 NATO marked its 70th anniversary as “the most successful Alliance in the history of the world”. This book, therefore, reflects both the desire to build-up on this continuity, as well as the need to reform NATO for its primary role as the guarantor of peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region, by continuing to deter Russia in a conventional sense, while responding to the non-linear challenges of the age. 29th March 2019 also marked the 15th anniversary of the three Baltic States’ joining NATO, thus, the book places special emphasis on the increased security of the Baltic States within NATO, with several of authors offering a detailed assessment of the last 15 years coupled with recommendations for adapting NATO to better serve its expanded mission in the region in the 21st century.

Those anniversaries that also occur two decades after the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act in the spring of 1997, provide a unique opportunity for this book to serve as a strategic-level publication venue for the leading political, military and academic thinkers to share their in-depth analyses and propose strategic-level policy recommendations regarding the past, present and future of NATO as a defensive alliance vis-à-vis a resurgent Russia. Thus, the various aspects of the Russia threat not only to the Baltic region, but to the security of the entire trans-Atlantic community are explored with the context of Russia’s domestic, as well as regional and international agenda. The political developments inside Russia in 2019, barely a year into President Putin’s fourth presidential term, are not promising for the prospects of Russia’s evolving during the next decade as a responsible international actor that is at peace with its neighbours, and friendly to the West, quite the opposite. For this purpose, the book delves into the current status and potential future of Russia’s political, economic, social and legal systems, and their implications for Russia itself, but also for the Baltic region and NATO, as a whole. Finally, given the central role played by the military component even in non-linear, hybrid scenarios, the conventional threat that the Russian military poses, is also analysed in great detail, both from a historical, as well as contemporary perspective, a year before the completion of the Russian Federation’s 2020 military modernization plan.

Very importantly, beside its primary emphasis on NATO and the wider Baltic region, the book also examines the region's neighbourhood by drawing lessons from Russia's current and potential aggressive actions in Ukraine, Belarus, and the Black Sea region.

The book contributors include distinguished Baltic Defence College alumni, prominent political and military leaders from the NATO countries, representatives of the leading academic institutions and think tanks from Europe and the United States, as well as faculty members from the Baltic Defence College; as many of those authors also participated in the Baltic Defence College Russia Conference in March 2019. This diversity of backgrounds, opinions and styles has greatly enriched this anthology by incorporating the entire gamut of contributions – from thoroughly researched and annotated academic papers delving with specific issues related to NATO and Russia, to policy recommendations that discuss the need for a NATO reform and overall Western “Grand Strategy” vis-à-vis Russia within the broader pan-European and trans-Atlantic security context.

The introduction to the Baltic Defence College book has benefited from this multi-layered approach – by bringing together the strategic viewpoints of two of the most recognizable names in the political and international security circles in Europe – the former President of Latvia, Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga and Lieutenant-General (ret.) Frederick “Ben” Hodges, Pershing Chair at the Center for European Policy Analysis and former Commander of US Army Europe. Each of them shares their visions of both the political, as well as the military dimensions of Baltic security, within the context of NATO's adaptation to deter Russia and respond to the traditional and non-traditional challenges of the 21st century.

Chapter One opens with an article by the Commandant of the BALTDEFCOL Major General Andis Dilāns' that emphasizes the importance of NATO for the security of the Baltic region, as well as the specifics of the various strategic directions covered by NATO, and the need to continue focusing the attention of the Alliance on the Eastern flank. The chapter also offers a comprehensive overview of the Baltic Defence College and its activities over the last 20 years as a unique military academic institution within NATO, provided by one of its most prominent alumni – Brigadier General Almantas Leika, the former Commander of the Lithuanian Land Forces.

The broader themes of NATO and the multiple dimensions of trans-Atlantic security are covered exhaustively in Chapter Two, with distinguished NATO civilian leaders and military commanders weighing in on the various aspects of the ongoing reforms within NATO. Major-General (ret.) Gordon “Skip” Davis, currently the NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defence Investment, focuses on the importance of leveraging momentum and favourable conditions to seize opportunities over the next six years for delivering capabilities that are critical to deterrence and defence. General John “Mick” Nicholson,

the former “Resolute Support” Commander in Afghanistan discusses NATO’s comprehensive strategy aimed at deterrence and defence, and the need for increased mobility and speed of NATO’s Land Forces in order to respond to Russia’s conventional and nuclear threats to the Baltic region and the trans-Atlantic area, as a whole. The current Polish Ambassador to Estonia H.E. Dr. Grzegorz Kozłowski provides an extensive overview and analysis of the defence expenditures of the Baltic States, as well as recommendations on achieving greater efficiency in that regard. Colonel Jaak Tarien, the Director of the NATO Cyber Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, and his colleague Mr. Siim Alatalu, offer their insights into NATO’s policies in the cyber domain and the role of the Baltic Defence College in it.

Chapter Three then delves into the specifics of the Russia challenge to NATO and the West by exploring its multiple dimensions. Stephen Covington, the SACEUR’s Strategic and International Advisor analyses the four fundamental elements of Russia’s culture of strategic thought, their impact on Russia’s behaviour, and their implications for NATO. James Sherr from the International Centre for Defence and Security in Tallinn looks into the elements of Russia’s outlook and the Russian Grand Strategy vis-à-vis the West that they produce. The clash of worldviews between Russia and the West in the 21st century and the recommendations for the West on how to solve this strategic impasse are discussed by H.E. Vygaudas Usackas, the former Head of the EU Delegation to Moscow. The chapter also features a comprehensive analysis of ‘Putin’s Code’ as revealed in the Russian aggression against Ukraine in the Sea of Azov by Prof. Graeme Herd from the George C. Marshall Center; as well as innovative strategic-level policy recommendations by Prof. Julian Lindley-French on the ways Europe should respond to Russia’s complex strategic coercion. The persistent misperceptions of the West in its strategy of deterring Russia are revealed and analysed by Dr. Viljar Veebel from the Baltic Defence College. The historical depth of the entire debate is then provided by two prominent Sovietologists Diego Ruiz-Palmer, Senior Advisor at NATO HQ, and Baron Thierry de Gruben, the former Ambassador of Belgium to Moscow. The former offers a comprehensive overview of the elaborate plans of the Soviet and Russian military strategists vis-à-vis the Baltic region as part of the Soviet and Russian strategy to break NATO apart; while the latter discusses the continuity in the political and social developments of both the Soviet and modern Russian systems to demonstrate that one is the continuation of the other without a major historical break. The chapter concludes with a detailed and timely analysis by Glen Howard, the President of the Jamestown Foundation, of the growing importance of Belarus for both Russia and NATO.

Chapter Four broadens the functional scope of the book by exploring the various domains of Russia’s hybrid warfare on a regional and global scale, based on the specific Russian non-linear activities against Ukraine, the Baltic States and NATO, as a whole. Edward Lucas, the CEPA Senior Vice President, provides a comprehensive analysis of

Russia's influence operations and argues the need for the West to develop a coherent strategy to respond to the all-of-government approach employed by Russia in its non-linear confrontation with the West. Similarly, Brian Whitmore, the CEPA Russia Program Director offers his insightful perspective into Putin's "dark ecosystem" that leverages corruption, crime and active measures, and proposes an innovative strategy of "hybrid containment" to counter the Kremlin's hybrid aggression. Mark Laity, the SHAPE Chief Strategic Communications Advisor weighs in by discussing the critical role played by NATO's StratCom efforts in countering Russian disinformation. The editor of this volume then provides an innovative analysis of Russian "Lawfare" as a pivotal hybrid warfare domain, and argues the need for creating a NATO Lawfare Center of Excellence together with a broader global "Lawfare Defense Network" to successfully counter that hybrid threat. The economic underpinnings of Russia's aggressive actions are analysed by Dr. Christopher Miller from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, who explores the correlation between Russia's power projection efforts and its ongoing economic stagnation. Dr. Janusz Bugajski from CEPA offers his bold strategy for reversing Moscow's offensive and winning the "shadow war" with Russia, including by leveraging the protest potential of the Russian society and ethnic minorities. Finally, Ambassador Eitvydas Bajarunas from the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs offers a comprehensive outlook of Russia's hybrid strategy as applied against the Baltic States, to provide policy recommendations on how to counter hybrid threats at both the national and international levels.

The book concludes with political and military analysis of the strategic challenges that will continue to face NATO and the West throughout the 21st century, provided by General (ret.) Knud Bartels, the former NATO Military Committee Chairman; and the visionary approach to Baltic security over the course of the next 20 years offered by the Estonian Minister of Defence Jüri Luik.

The target audience of the book are the civilian and military leaders, the defence and security professionals, diplomats, government officials and members of the academia and think tanks from across the NATO and "Partnership for Peace" member-states. The book will be presented to the distinguished visitors, the media and other attendees of the Baltic Defence College Class of 2019 graduation ceremony on 20th June 2019.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editor would like to express the extreme gratitude and great indebtedness of the Baltic Defence College, as well as his own, to all the contributors to this unique volume who offered their excellent analytical articles and policy papers, and who were so exceptionally generous with their time, despite their multiple competing commitments throughout the Baltic region, within NATO, and on both sides of the Atlantic.

Special gratitude and appreciation are also due to the Ms. Jaana Reinek, who took upon herself the heavy burden of the technical editing of this book, and who accomplished this uneasy task with great dedication and professionalism, and in a very condensed timeframe.

Last, but not least, this book project owes a lot to the inexhaustible energy and creativity of the Baltic Defence College Dean, Dr. Zdzislaw Sliwa, who provided valuable insights and proposed effective solutions throughout the entire book-editing process.

INTRODUCTION

NATO and the Political Dimensions of Baltic Security

Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga

After the centenary celebrations of 2018 in all three Baltic countries, the beginning of the year 2019 gives Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania the occasion to jointly celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Baltic Defence College – an institution of crucial importance for their common security, and a visible sign of their ability to collaborate in questions of strategic importance. Over these past years, the College has proved its worth in pooling the resources of three neighbouring countries and providing a high-quality education for young men and women ready to embark on a military career. I congratulate all those who have been active in making this possible, and I offer my personal good wishes for the College's continued success in the future.

The creation of a common defence college preceded by five years the unforgettable accomplishment of all three of our countries becoming full-fledged members of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance, which this year will be celebrating the 70th year since its foundation. Twenty years ago, membership in NATO was still only a hope and a dream for us, and the obstacles in our path to acceptance seemed insurmountable at times. Not only was the need for enlargement still hotly debated among the then 15-member nations of the Alliance, but some were seriously questioning the very need for NATO's continued existence. After all, the remarkably successful common security space that these countries had enjoyed for half a century had been created in response to the international tensions of the Cold War. Now that the Warsaw Pact was dissolved, the Iron Curtain no longer divided Europe, and the long-mighty Soviet Union was no more, what was there to defend against? Had the very existence of the Alliance not become an anachronism? Had the need for common security not become obsolete? Could the resources necessary for defence not be better spent on other needs of society?

As President of Latvia at that time, I had occasion to witness first-hand the pro and contra arguments, and to participate quite vigorously in the debates. On the side of the member states, the main arguments focused on two fundamental questions: for and against NATO and its continued relevance, for and against NATO enlargement. Then, assuming that accord on these basic points had been secured, the next two steps were just as important: first, how large should the enlargement be; and second, which among the candidate countries should such an enlargement include?

The message from NATO to the candidate countries stated quite plainly that acceptance into the Alliance would not be a forgone conclusion. Their first priority, they were told,

would be to increase their defence capabilities in order to demonstrate that they would not be a drain on the collective security of the Alliance. This would require them to increase defence spending, build infrastructures, train personnel and acquire military equipment and ordnance. The steps on how this military readiness would be achieved were outlined for each candidate country in its Membership Action Plan (MAP), but even achieving the MAP goals would offer no guarantee for acceptance. The ultimate criterion would always remain the political readiness of each and every then member nation to accept each and every candidate country into the existing Alliance. This, in turn, would involve a continuous evaluation of the internal governance of each candidate country, and essentially political decisions as to its having reached acceptable standards of fundamental values of democracy. The American Congress in particular was very clear in emphasizing that the criteria of political readiness would be its prime concern when the time came for a vote on enlargement.

The demands made on the candidate countries were thus extremely exigent, and required not just the practical work of fulfilling them, but serious work in ensuring political consensus and support among their own citizens for such a massive effort. In this regard, Latvia and its neighbours had at least the advantage of very broad support from their populations, for the loss of their independence at the end of World War II and 50 years of Soviet occupation were still quite fresh in their collective memories. More even than the former Soviet satellite countries, they felt very keenly the advantages that collective security could provide for small countries that happened to live next to an expansionist and often ill-intentioned neighbour. More than those who had lived under democracy long enough to take it for granted, these countries knew too well how valuable an achievement it was to justify every possible effort in maintaining and defending freedom.

A military alliance can only be as strong as the commitment of its members, which is just as important as their collective military might. NATO had survived the Cold War because it stood for values that were still worth defending, whereas the Warsaw Pact had dissolved because the ideology on which it had been founded was bankrupt. In Russia, however, the transition to democracy was far from being accepted as an improvement. Even if the Russian people had suffered much under bolshevism and communism, they could not forget the grandeur and power of the former Soviet Union. They felt its collapse as an insult and a grievance imposed upon Russian pride. The independence of the former captive nations was seen by Russian leaders not just as an irritant, but as an insult, and all that these nations had gained they begrudged as a loss to themselves. The Russian Federation and Vladimir Putin as its leader thus undertook to deploy every form of influence to downgrade the prestige of NATO, weaken its power and, most importantly – to stop its enlargement.

Shorn of the territories of the former Soviet “republics”, but full inheritor of the USSR nuclear arsenal and its permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, the

Russian Federation undertook an active campaign of dissuasion from NATO enlargement, and strenuously objected to the inclusion of the Baltic countries under the security umbrella of the Alliance. To listen to some of the arguments advanced by Russia, its friends, supporters and sympathisers, you might think that no greater threat to mighty Russia could be conceived than the extension of NATO borders a few hundred kilometres to the north and to the east. Here was a country, ostensibly still a world power of the first rank, expressing ludicrous fears about the dangers posed to it by the defence forces of three small countries, forces that had had to be built up from scratch at the renewal of their independence.

That was the official rhetoric, in all the glory of its absurdity, but the point at issue was of the utmost seriousness. Russia was laying claim to a sphere of influence that should extend all around its present borders, a sphere within which its perceived national interests were to be taken for granted and within which international law would cease to apply. It took a number of years for many in the Western world to understand the implications of such a claim, but the events of 2008 in Georgia, the invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014, the continued conflict in the Donbas region and the latest developments in the Black Sea have by now taken away any former illusions.

Threats to security in our contemporary world, unfortunately, are no longer limited to military actions in the historically accepted sense of the word but include a vast panoply of tools of hybrid warfare, from cyber-attacks at every possible level of society to the massive dissemination of false news and disinformation. Information integrity has become just as important as territorial integrity. The rights of citizens to freely select their elected leaders are being attacked by manipulative interference in electoral processes. Tolerance for diversity is under attack by financial support to groups with extremist tendencies, while sowing the seeds of vague discontent weakens confidence in democratic institutions. None of the gains of previous decades and even centuries can be taken for granted. Every earlier accomplishment needs continued care and vigilance to be preserved and maintained.

The time is neither for isolationism, protectionism or chauvinistic nationalism. The need is for an intelligent understanding of the sweep of history, a deep sense of the values of democracy, and a commitment to solidarity as a guarantee of sovereignty, not a threat to it. The need is for enlightened leaders and a well-informed and well-educated public. May the Baltic Defence College continue doing its part in training both leaders and followers to face up to the challenges of the present as well as the future.

Adapting NATO to Deter Russia: Military Challenges and Policy Recommendations

Lieutenant General (ret.) Frederick Ben Hodges

In April 2019 in Washington DC, NATO will commemorate and celebrate the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Washington Treaty, which created the most successful Alliance in the history of the world. Our great Alliance has evolved and adapted to changing security environments over the last 70 years. It is not perfect or without need of continued efforts to ensure its readiness and relevance, but a longer-term view of our Alliance puts its viability and relevance into a proper historical and strategic context, and gives me great confidence and optimism about its future.

The strategic situation along NATO's eastern flank, from the Arctic, across the greater Baltic Sea region, and down to and thru the greater Black Sea region is as important today to the overall security and stability of Europe and trans-Atlantic relationship as at any time since the establishment of NATO. The Alliance has reacted and adapted quickly to the aggressive, revanchist behaviour of the Kremlin with measured, sustainable, transparent steps to increase the deterrence capabilities present on NATO's eastern flank.

In a relatively short amount of time, beginning with the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014, thru the NATO Summit in Warsaw in 2016, and most recently at the NATO Summit in Brussels in 2018 - merely four years - NATO has dramatically increased its defence spending and modernization efforts and transitioned from assurance missions to deterrence which requires an increase in capability.

The deployment of eFP (enhanced Forward Presence) Battle Groups, creation of new commands such as the Joint Sustainment and Enabling Command in Ulm, Germany, and increased exercises have all improved deterrence and demonstrated resolve. The transparency of NATO's actions has demonstrated the commitment of the West to stability and security and a desire to work with the Russian Federation as compared to the total lack of transparency and continuous illegal activities of the Kremlin.

However, much remains to be done to ensure long-term, sustainable deterrence that guarantees the security and freedom of all NATO members and our close friends and partners in the Baltic region, such as Finland and Sweden.

There are specific actions that NATO and its member-states need to take in order to maintain relevance, provide effective deterrence, ensure the collective security of all 29 Allies, and contribute to the security and stability across Europe.

Russia's leaders respect strength and so the Alliance must demonstrate that strength and resolve. Essential to its success are the following factors: No 1 - a common view of the threat; No 2 – a strong and reliable American leadership and unmistakable American commitment; No 3 – the cohesion of the Alliance; and No 4 - burden-sharing and specific improvements to Alliance capability.

Number One: A Common View of the Threat

Throughout Russia's history, its leadership has invariably respected strength and showed contempt for weakness and compromise. We should immediately disabuse ourselves of the notion that the current regime in the Kremlin even wants for Russia to be a normal Western nation that follows the international rules or maintain a normal relationship with us. We, the West, are constantly surprised by what the leadership of the Russian Federation does because we continue to hope and believe that they are thinking about security, relationships and sovereignty the way that we do. We should stop being surprised that they don't.

The objective of the leadership of the Russian Federation is to change the current international order, to undermine the cohesion of the Alliance and of the European Union, and to re-establish what they believe they are entitled to, namely, a ring of buffer states along its periphery that gives it security. This has always been the case, as it did not start with the creation of NATO, therefore, any claims by many in Western Europe that somehow the ongoing Russia's aggression against its neighbours is a response to a perceived NATO encroachment, with the addition of new members to the Alliance, is a complete fiction. For Russia, the idea of sovereignty only applies to Great Powers, as it believes that it is fully entitled to make decisions for countries like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, and others about whether or not they can join the EU or NATO, or host NATO troops and bases, permanent or otherwise.

The lack of transparency during the Russian Federation's exercises is intentional and adds to the intimidation factor of their actions, as does the routine inclusion of nuclear weapons and scenarios in those. All these actions are intended to put in the minds of Western leaders the very real prospect that any conflict would quickly go nuclear should Russia feel threatened.

The use of misinformation, economic leverage, brute military force, and violations of international law are part and parcel of Russian war. The Western leaders and analysts refer to this as hybrid warfare, the Gerasimov doctrine, or the grey zone, as they all try to categorize it into something understandable. The core principle of this Russian-style warfare is that it blends all of the elements of national power by putting the emphasis on

different domains where appropriate and depending on the specific objectives. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the Black Sea region and specifically as employed against Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and potentially Romania.

The effect of Russia's pressure and aggression is quite evident in the Ukrainian Black Sea port of Odessa nowadays, five years since Russia's attack on Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea. The construction of the massive bridge across the Kerch Straits should have been a clear signal to everybody that Russia had no intention of living up to its Minsk agreements or the Budapest Memorandum. Sadly, Russia's history is replete with examples of agreements broken by their leaders. The hand-wringing in some European countries about the US announcing its intention to leave the INF Treaty should have been aimed at Russia who had in effect already walked out of it ago when it developed missile systems that clearly violated that international agreement. As Bismarck once stated, a treaty with Russia is worth less than the paper it is written on. This, of course, does not mean that we should not work hard to maintain a working relationship with the Russian Federation, and that negotiating treaties is not worth the effort, quite the opposite. However, based on the maxim quoted by President Reagan in the 1980s – "Trust, but verify!" – any future agreements and treaties must also be accompanied by strong compliance protocols and transparency measures.

When it comes to Ukraine, the attack on the three Ukrainian Navy vessels last November, and the capture of the 24 Ukrainian sailors is an example of how Russia blends brute force with "lawfare", the twisting by Russia of the interpretation of existing laws, agreements and treaties in order to justify its own offensive actions. Russia has claimed that following the annexation of Crimea it is now Russian territory and that therefore the waters around Crimea, as well as the Ukrainian gas-extracting platforms in the Black Sea in those waters, legally belong to Russia. Thus, they have attacked the three Ukrainian vessels and thrown those 24 Ukrainian sailors in a jail in Moscow to stand trial for allegedly violating Russian territorial waters. If the West does not push back against this Russian blatant violation of international law and put pressure on Russia to immediately release those sailors and return those vessels, if merchant ships from other countries continue to use seaports in Crimea for commercial purposes, even though the Ukrainian government has declared them officially closed., then the West would be acknowledging de facto Russia's claims of legal sovereignty of Crimea. In that case, one can imagine Odessa being next on the menu, from where Russia could expand into Moldova, where 2000 Russian troops are based in Transnistria and potentially, toward Romania, a NATO ally.

I do not believe that Russia wants to invade Europe the way the Soviet Union wanted to do during the Cold War, when I was a young officer in an infantry battalion in Northern Germany in the period 1981-1984. As a Russian friend told me once, "Why would

Russia want to destroy the high table when what they really want is to sit at that high table?”

This still means that Russia would do all they can to undermine the Alliance, to exploit every crack in our cohesion. One of the ways of doing this, if we appear to be unprepared or unwilling to fight, is to launch a short, quick incursion into a NATO country such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania or perhaps Romania, and then see if the Alliance is able or willing to respond. Russia then would be able to test if all of NATO's members would actually be willing to go to war, especially if it threatens to evolve into a nuclear exchange.

Even smart, well-educated people in Western Europe are incredulous at such a scenario, as they would often ask: 'Why would Russia do that? It makes no sense!' They are right - it makes no sense to us, but if the Russian leadership thinks they can get away with it the way they did in Georgia, Ukraine and other countries along their periphery, then I believe they will continue with this type of aggressive behaviour. That is why we must have a clear-eyed sober view of what today's Russia is, and accept the fact that their leaders only respect strength and despise weakness and compromise. Without this, we will continue to be surprised by their actions and the safety and security of our Allies will remain under constant threat.

Number Two: American Leadership and Commitment

There is a lot of anxiety about American commitment and leadership these days, based on statements by the current US President about the relevance of NATO and the failure of many countries in the Alliance to do all that they should be doing in terms of defence spending. It is disappointing that the President has cast doubt on Article 5 and that he continues to speak so harshly about some of our Allies, especially Germany. His words, however, are a reflection of what many Americans happen to believe, and this will prove to be an issue for quite some time to come, well beyond the end of the Trump Administration, regardless of the number of its terms. There is no doubt, for example, that Germany is a great nation and an essential ally – a true leader on the continent of Europe, and indeed - in the world. It is, however, incomprehensible to most Americans, and in fact, most Europeans that Germany has failed to step up to accept a greater responsibility for the security of Europe and the deterrence of Russia. Some Germans would say that their history is why they cannot do more militarily and that their neighbours, Poland and France, in particular, would be very worried if Germany actually spent 2% of its GDP on defence. The truth is that no Polish or French official have ever said that, at least not in recent years, so it is time for Germany to step up and lead.

Similarly, the US allies and friends should assume that the incumbent President will be re-elected unless the US economy really tanked. Even if he is not, however, a Democrat

Administration will also undoubtedly maintain pressure on the NATO allies to do more, just as President Obama did, only at a higher level.

Having said all of that, it is worth noting that the facts on the ground are not reflective of what the President has said, in fact, it is just the opposite. Everything that President Obama promised at the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016 has in fact been delivered by the Trump Administration, such as prepositioned equipment for an armoured division, rotational brigades, eFP battle groups, and increased exercises. Defender 2020 and the funding authorized and appropriated by the US Congress for the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) has increased for three years in a row now. Importantly, the support by the US Congress for US leadership and active participation in Europe is better than ever. The support for spending is one manifestation, while the largest ever Congressional delegation at the 2019 Munich Security Conference is another example of America's commitment to the security of Europe.

President Trump is the 12th US President since America joined NATO. The United States has had more than 30 different Congresses and more than 20 different Secretaries of Defence since then. NATO has gone through various challenges, for example, France's decision to eject the NATO military HQ during the administration of President Charles de Gaulle. If one takes a long-term view of America's commitment, however, then it becomes obvious that our own security and prosperity are directly tied to a stable, secure, and prosperous Europe. The economic relationship between North America and the European Union is deeper and more extensive than any other relationship in the world. The United States does not have enough capacity to do everything by ourselves, so our most reliable allies come from Europe, as well as Canada and Australia. We will need allies more than ever if we end up in a conflict with China, which could happen within the next ten years, so the US is going to have to work hard to preserve this relationship.

Number Three: Cohesion

The best and most important aspect of deterrence is the cohesion of our Alliance. The combined populations, economies, militaries, and diplomatic strength of the 29 members of NATO dwarfs anything that the Russian Federation could muster, and the Russian leadership knows this. That is why they seek to exploit any cracks within our Alliance, and that is why we have to fight hard, endlessly, relentlessly, to preserve that cohesion.

The decision of the Alliance in Warsaw in 2016 to deploy eFP battlegroups was such a powerful step and symbol because all 28 nations (Montenegro had not yet joined back then) agreed that this was the right step to take - to transition from assurance to deterrence. This cohesion was an unmistakable signal to the leadership of the Russian Federation.

The issue of permanent forces (sometimes referred to as “Fort Trump”), vs. rotational forces in Poland and in the Baltics is another test of cohesion. Indeed, Poland made a very generous offer to host a US base, and permanent basing allowing us to deploy thousands of US troops in each of these countries would significantly increase our ability to respond to a challenge rapidly. The current US Administration should still engage in consultations with our other allies before agreeing to put troops in Poland on a permanent basis. Of course, Russia cannot and should not have the ability to veto any decision of the Alliance or its members, but nonetheless, some nations are concerned that such a deployment might be seen as unnecessarily provocative and a violation of the NATO-Russia Founding Act. It is not, as Russia has violated that Act multiple times by now, but still, the impact on the cohesion of the Alliance is something that must be considered before taking such strategic decisions. It is a reassuring sign that the US Congress has tasked the Administration to perform an analysis of this offer and report back by including an assessment of its potential impact on the Alliance within the context of the larger budget discussions, which would affect this decision. Ultimately, if the US Administration is willing to do the diplomatic work necessary to bring along the rest of the Alliance, to maintain our cohesion, then the US permanent basing in Poland deserves support.

Last, but not least, it is worth noting that Belarus has been able to keep Russian forces out of its territory despite constant pressure from Moscow. The West should not be naïve regarding Russia’s intentions to use Belarusian territory in the future, but so far it has been to the advantage of the Alliance that there are no large numbers of Russian troops stationed in Belarus. NATO and the EU should do all they can to enable and support the efforts by Belarus to be sovereign and self-reliant, without appearing to try to pull Belarus away from Russia, so that Belarus can continue to resist Russian pressure to allow stationing of their troops in Belarus. The statements of the Belarusian leadership in Minsk in November 2018 indicated that it would be much harder to continue resisting the pressure from Russia if there were US troops permanently stationed in Poland, something that is also worth considering before taking this strategic decision.

Number Four: Specific Improvements to Alliance Capability and Burden-sharing

No 1 - improve military mobility, including highways, railways, airports and seaports, bridges and tunnels. All of these require improved capacity to ensure sustained, more rapid throughput, and they must all be protected from cyberattack, missile strikes, and sabotage. Military mobility also requires increased capacity, especially in terms of rail. Currently there is not sufficient rail to move adequate armoured forces to critical points, such as the Suwalki Corridor, faster than Russian Federation forces could do that. Improved military mobility requires a significant improvement in the process by which NATO forces can move across borders, therefore, a “military Schengen zone” is much needed. Coordination with the various components of the “Three Seas Initiative” could

help create the infrastructure the Alliance needs, where it needs it, while also benefitting the local communities and economies. The large Polish “Solidarity Transportation Hub” project, between Warsaw and Lodz, is another example of integrating domestic infrastructure projects with military requirements.

No 2 - increase the logistical infrastructure in the region, such as pipelines, storage for fuel and ammunition, transportation units and assets, larger railheads for end-loading, prepositioned equipment, protected fibre optic communications networks emplaced, and rotational units to continuously man this expanded logistical infrastructure, as well as military police to assist with traffic and protection of this infrastructure and potential displaced civilians in a crisis.

No 3 - increase the rigor of exercises needed to develop the newer headquarters established by NATO such as the JSEC in Ulm and to improve the capabilities of the NATO Force structure HQs such as MNC-NE and the new division HQs that will provide the mission command over host nation forces and eFP battle groups and ensure they get the best possible intel, fire support, air defence, and logistics. Only through realistic, demanding exercises, to include pushing them to the point of possible failure, will the authorities and expectations of these HQs be fully realized.

No 4 - improved air and missile defence that is integrated and exercised on a theatre-wide scale each year. There is no doubt that any Russian attack would be preceded by missile strikes, as well as cyberattacks, to knock out or at least degrade critical infrastructure upon which the Alliance relies to execute its rapid reinforcement concepts. I think Germany and the Netherlands could take on a much larger role here.

No 5 - convert the Baltic Sea and Black Sea Air Policing missions to Air Defence with the appropriate changes in mission profile, rules of engagement, and capabilities. This puts in place an increased demonstrated capability, ahead of a crisis, to deal with Russian Federation incursions or attacks, which is essential to effective deterrence.

No 6 - improve maritime capabilities in the Baltic Sea and Black Sea. The Alliance needs a regional maritime HQ, located in both regions that can coordinate the efforts and capabilities of each of the nations in the region, to include Sweden and Finland in the Baltic Sea and Ukraine and Georgia in the Black Sea. These would include anti-submarine warfare, integration into theatre air and missile defence, protection of coastal facilities and seaports, and countering the current significant (and growing) A2AD capabilities resident in the Kaliningrad Oblast and Crimea. Romania should be the Center of Gravity for this effort in the Black Sea. Germany has stepped forward in the Baltic Sea with a new HQ, located in Rostock – DEUARFOR, that will soon evolve into a Baltic Maritime Component Command. In the Baltic Sea, NATO should have little trouble establishing ‘sea control’ when necessary because of the number of nations involved that have real maritime capability and because Denmark and Sweden control

the access into the Baltic Sea. It is a different story in the Black Sea where the Montreux Convention restricts the ability of non-Black Sea nations, such as the USA, the UK, Italy and Germany to operate there, thus, the Russian Black Sea fleet will always have a numerical advantage there. NATO will have to figure out how to offset that advantage through coordinated Black Sea deployments and exercises, shared intelligence, a common maritime picture, and ground based systems, especially in Romania, in order to create our own A2AD capability, especially in the western Black Sea.

All of the above would require increased defence spending and burden-sharing. Under the leadership of Secretary General Stoltenberg, many members of the Alliance have significantly increased their investments in modernization, readiness, and growth. Most are on track to meet their commitment to 2% GDP by the agreed upon target date of 2024. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania have all been particularly responsive in this regard and have set a standard for the rest of the Alliance.

However, it is time for the Alliance to adopt a more sophisticated approach to define investments in order to ensure that we have all the capabilities that we need, and which would help the NATO governments address their obligations within the context of their own unique domestic political and economic circumstances.

Some of the recommendations above could be enhanced with a changed approach to how nations spend their resources. For example, investments in improved infrastructure that have dual-use demonstrable military value, such as expanding rail capacity and bridges that can hold Abrams tanks, should count towards the two percent obligation. Similarly, improvements to cyber protection of airports and seaports should also be counted towards the two percent. All cyber defence in Lithuania, for example, falls under the Ministry of Defence, and so it counts towards their two percent of the budget. Improving research and development through support of some promising “start-ups” to create innovative solutions to security challenges could also count towards the two percent.

At the end of the day, the greatest and most important resource of the Alliance is our people, the Men and Women who serve in uniform or as civil servants to ensure our security and stability, who are always expected to be successful despite shortfalls in resources, manning, equipment, and time, and sometimes even in the absence of clear political guidance. Our civilian leadership should do all they can to emphasize and promote and encourage talented young people to continue to step forward and serve and lead.

CHAPTER 1

THE BALTIC STATES SECURITY REVISITED

The Baltic states' 15 Years in NATO: Which Strategic Direction Should the Shield Face?

Major General Andis Dilans

2019 is a year of many anniversaries – the 70th Anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), 20 years of the membership of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in the Alliance, 15 years of the ascension of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to the organization along with four more countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). There is another important anniversary – 20 years of one of the most successful military cooperation projects, the Baltic Defence College¹ (BALTDEFCOL) – that has truly catalysed the Baltic states' accession and integration into NATO and the European Union (EU) and has been acting as a real example of smart defence. The Baltic states did not miss the unique momentum to establish a commonly funded, administrated, and well-functioning professional military educational College. The nations decided to use single foreign language, English and to follow agreed NATO operational standards and procedures to change the culture of military leadership towards Western best practices with strong support from allied nations and partners. This is a unique example that does not exist anywhere else in the field of Professional Military Education (PME). In a relatively short period – only 20 years – the BALTDEFCOL explored these opportunities and developed the College into a well-known, highly professional, creditable, and creative establishment by educating military personnel and civil servants from the Baltic states, other NATO countries, as well as Partnership for Peace (PfP) and partner nations, enhancing multinational cooperation, and engaging in academic research in security and defence studies in the region. These past years have been a favourable and successful period in many ways, and with this book, the College significantly contributes to its professional fields of research.

In comparing the issues and subjects that were discussed and addressed 20 years ago with what we are dealing with and tackling now, there is an enormous change in the geopolitical situation. The current security environment has become highly complex and uncertain, and the related threats are still evolving. In the 21st century, we have witnessed provocative military activities, outrageous terrorist attacks, deliberate deception, targeted information campaigns, and unpredictable cyberattacks and other

¹ The Baltic Defence College Website - <https://www.baltdefcol.org/>

manipulations. The scale of these incidents is enormous. Acting together in concert, they question our existing way of life, democratic values, the principles which the transatlantic community is built upon, and its historical ways of cooperation, as these challenges are characterized by increasing international tensions and with global security and global economy directly affecting stability and defence of the Baltic states. Overall, it tests NATO as a whole and its Centre of Gravity² (CoG) – the unity and cohesion of the Alliance - but also that of each single member nation.

Clearly, these matters concern also peace and security in all of Europe. Around the dates when the Baltic states joined NATO and the EU, the latter's Security Strategy 2003 began with the sentence, "*Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free.*"³ This is definitely not the case anymore. The question now is, in which direction should the shield face in order to protect Western values and security and to build prosperity?

Undoubtedly, the prioritization of strategic directions which this shield should face depends primarily on a country's geographical location, as geography is key to designing military strategy, although this factor taken on its own does not provide answers to all questions⁴. For the countries lying on the shores of the Baltic Sea, the primary security concern is Russia, due not only to their mere geographical position on the map of Europe but also to their historical experience. Without doubt everyone in NATO nowadays would agree with this threat perception. It was not always the case, as had this question been asked just five years ago, one would have received quite diverging answers.

Someone from North America would have called for bringing the shield back to their home continent, as it was presumably no longer needed in Europe. The main question at that time was, why does the United States still have troops stationed in Europe since the Cold War ended and now we work well together with Russia? Alternatively, another question was, as there is no conventional threat, are Europeans not capable of defending themselves? This approach was applied also to NATO's expeditionary operation in Afghanistan, which was already perceived as a burden that had been

² The NATO definition of the Centre of Gravity (CoG) is as follow: The primary source of power that provides an actor its strength, freedom of action and/or will to fight. Based on AAP – 06, *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions*, Edition 2018, NATO, Brussels 08 November 2018, p. 24. See also: Robert Dixon, *Clausewitz, Center of Gravity, and the Confusion of a Generation of Planners*, Small Wars Journal 20 October 2015, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/clausewitz-center-of-gravity-and-the-confusion-of-a-generation-of-planners> (accessed: 12.03.2019).

³ *A Secure Europe in a Better World - European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003. [online] [s.l.]: Council of the European Union, 11.10.2004. Available on <http://ue.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> (accessed: 15.03.2019).

⁴ Susi Dennison et al., *The Nightmare of the Dark: The Security Threats that Keep Europeans Awake at Night*, The European Council on Foreign Relations, July 2018, https://www.ecfr.eu/specials/scorecard/the_nightmare_of_the_dark_the_security_fears_that_keep_europeans_aware_at_n (accessed: 15.03.2019) and *Threat Perception in the OSCE Area*, OSCE Network and Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, April 2014, pp. 28 – 32.

carried for over a decade already, in a situation where all military goals had been achieved.

Southern Europeans could have answered that NATO needs a shield in the Mediterranean against the threats and challenges emanating from the international terrorism south of Europe and that NATO could assist in the protection of the EU from illegal migrants coming across the sea by contributing to controlling the flow of refugees that would increase instability in all of Europe. Western Europeans would have stated correctly that we also need a shield in Africa itself to protect it from collapsing into perpetual turmoil. They could have also pointed out the extensive the West's role and commitments across that continent not being able to fully conform to NATO's command structures and capability targets at that time. Northern Europe would mainly be concerned about the implications of global warming on the Arctic in terms of its ecosystem, fishing areas, and the world's largest untapped oil and gas reserves. *"The Arctic seemed far away because it remained if not untouched, at least largely preserved from the changes caused by people. But the Arctic is feeling the full force of climate change."*⁵ Additionally, *"against the background of the conflict in Ukraine and Russia's tensions with the West, Russian military build-up in the Arctic has renewed concerns regarding the potential militarization of the region."*⁶ No doubt, Russia's militarization of Arctic has evolved drastically since 2014.

We, the nations of Eastern Europe, would have been raising voices, just as we do today that "the Russians are coming," but no one would be paying serious attention to that warning. At the same time, the region was not ready to seriously invest in self-defence capabilities. We referred to NATO as an omnipotent shield, based on the shared assumption that NATO would immediately come to our aid and do everything for us in case of a crisis or a direct threat from Russia. Recent history has shown that we, the Baltic states, cannot view our security in isolation from each other or in separation from our allies.

As Carl Bildt argued already in 1994, the Baltic states have a role to play for the West to understand and read Russia better:

"Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia should be watched closely as barometers of Russia's progress toward better relations with the West. Besides their

⁵ Jean-Marc Ayrault, French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, *The Challenge of the Arctic. National Roadmap for the Arctic*, Paris June 2016, p. 4, https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/frna_-_eng_-_interne_-_17-06-web_cle4fcfcc.pdf; D. Trenin, P. K. Baev, *The Arctic A View from Moscow*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington 2010, pp. V, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/arctic_cooperation.pdf, (accessed: 25.03.2019).

⁶ Ekaterina Klimenko, *Russia's Military Buildup in the Arctic: Political Rhetoric vs. Reality*, World Policy 14 October 2015, <https://worldpolicy.org/tag/ekaterina-klimenko/> (accessed: 25.03.2019); J. Käpylä, H. Mikkola, *The Global Arctic 133 – The Growing Arctic Interests of Russia, China, the United States and the European Union*, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki, 13 August 2013.

*strategic borders with Russia, these nations have been the historical harbingers of Moscow's intentions abroad, as their early revolts presaged the collapse of the Soviet empire. The Baltic states are still subject to a "demographic occupation" by post-war Russian immigrants, even if Russian soldiers have finally left. For those in Moscow who still harbour designs on the "near abroad," a greedy eye will focus on these newly independent nations first. Western nations, particularly the United States, must steel their resolve and preserve the place of the Baltic states in the new Europe."*⁷

It was a trenchant point those days and is still relevant and topical today.

Someone once told me, "*That we, the Baltic states, joined a NATO that was not the organization we wanted anymore*". Admittedly, the three Baltic nations joined the Alliance because of Article V and its principle that "*an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.*"⁸ Frankly, did we know or understand anything else apart from this? Not really, as we did not pay enough attention to other important variables in the defence and deterrence equation and NATO was indeed different to the organization to which we had aspired to join. Based on the threat assessments, NATO went through a number of reduction programmes and was successful. The Alliance went expeditionary, developed niche capabilities, and forgot about pledges of defence spending. Article V had to be ensured "through or in Afghanistan".

Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 changed this picture dramatically. At that time we rediscovered another provision within the Treaty, Article IV, which talks about the consultations in case the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of any of the NATO member states are threatened. NATO did actually invoke the Article IV during the Crimean crisis of 2014 by the request of the member states that felt the most threatened by Russia's aggressive actions. "*Consultation reinforces NATO's political dimension by giving members the opportunity to voice opinions and official positions. It also gives NATO an active role in preventive diplomacy by providing the means to help avoid military conflict*"⁹, but it does not make an individual state more capable or stronger. Arguably, our demands were satisfied, but as we saw the clouds darken in the East, we were not content; but at the same time, our Allies were not ready to do more.

⁷ Carl Bildt, *The Baltic Litmus Test*. Foreign Affairs September/October 1994, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/baltics/1994-09-01/baltic-litmus-test-revealing-russias-true-colors> (accessed: 25.03.2019).

⁸ *The North Atlantic Treaty*, Washington D.C. - 4 April 1949, Article 5, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm (accessed: 25.03.2019).

⁹ *The consultation process and Article 4*, NATO Brussels 17 March 2016, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49187.htm (accessed: 25.03.2019).

Only in 2014 did we “rediscover” the Article III of the NATO Treaty, which discusses effective self-help and mutual aid and the development of individual and collective capacity to resist an armed attack.¹⁰ Following this rediscovery, we began to react accordingly by increasing our defence budgets, investing in host nation infrastructure in order to make it capable of receiving increased numbers of Allied troops and equipment, and accelerating and enhancing the development of our own homeland defence forces and capabilities. Thus, it had taken a decade to internalize the Treaty, with Articles III, IV and V at its core, and to understand that they function best if the respective articles are applied in a coordinated fashion. During the first decade within NATO, we individually learned the articles of the North Atlantic Treaty in reverse order.

Therefore, five years ago, just before Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea, NATO was in an unhealthy debate on the regionalization of the organization, as interest clubs of like-minded nations were being formed within it. One could even call those informal mini-alliances within the greater alliance. This was exactly what our adversary desired to achieve – to divide NATO, to undermine our Western values, and to attack our CoG – the cohesion and unity of our Alliance.

It was exactly at that critical juncture for NATO when Russia invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea using the cover of the Olympic Games in Sochi and following the pattern that was tested in 2008 of using the Summer Olympics in Beijing as a cover for the invasion of Georgia. Russia formally incorporated Crimea into the Russian Federation on 18 March 2014, less than four weeks after the invasion of the peninsula. By doing so, Russia once again showed that she is the best “piece-keeper”¹¹ (albeit not a UN “peacekeeper”), as it would seize a piece of land from a sovereign nation and then keep it. Russia imposes its rules by creating so-called frozen conflicts in order to reach its strategic goals in what it perceives as its rightful sphere of influence in this manner. The same had occurred earlier in Moldova, then in Georgia and Ukraine (both in Crimea and in Eastern Ukraine). The difference between 2008 and 2014 was that NATO and the West as a whole did not return to business as usual with Moscow, and that proved to be a big miscalculation by Russia. In fact, Moscow achieved exactly the opposite effect of what it desired – NATO and Western societies became much more unified and cohesive, stronger, and more decisive in their responses.

¹⁰ *The North Atlantic Treaty*, Washington D.C. - 4 April 1949, Article 3, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm (accessed: 25.03.2019).

¹¹ The term was quoted as a joke used by former Georgia’s president, Mikheil Saakashvili. See in: *Russia and the West: Confrontational Russia*, The Economist 26 August 2008, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2008/08/26/confrontational-russia> (accessed: 27.03.2019). Martin McCauley, *Bandits, Gangsters and the Mafia: Russia, the Baltic states and the CIS since 1992*, Routledge London 2013, p. 387. T. Japaridze, *A View from Tbilisi: Are the Euro-Atlantic Partners Ready to Accept Russia’s Notion of a ‘Near Abroad’?* The Atlantic Council, 01 September 2015.

On the issue of which direction this shield should face, 29 Chiefs of Defence clearly stated and reconfirmed, during their meeting in Brussels in January 2019, that Russia and international terrorism are the major challenges¹² facing the Alliance. One could argue that these two challenges are similar, although they are not the same. The biggest difference is that terrorism does not pose an existential threat to NATO as an organization, nor to any of its constituent nations. It is still a serious challenge and no nation is fully protected against the terrorists' devastating actions, but the NATO nations' independence and sovereignty are not at stake. Therefore, while there may not be the need of a fully-fledged shield against terrorism, NATO still needs a proper tool like a "net" to catch radicals and extremists, but it can use its security services and law enforcement agencies to deal with those threats, and not necessarily its military.

On the other hand, Russia, as a state actor with its nuclear arsenal and massive and constantly increasing military capabilities, is not only a challenge but also a real existential threat. To deter it, NATO definitely needs a shield as well as a sword. Likewise we need to exercise how to use them and have to be ready to apply these tools whenever necessary. The geography and the geopolitical situation of the Baltic Sea region pose a security challenge for Europe, because it is a partially closed sea, joining the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean only through a number of straits. Therefore, those who control the straits control the sea along the shores of which one third of Europe's GDP is created.

This is a strategic competition, and together with ongoing regional instability, we recognize it as the most serious threat to our security nowadays. Russia is desperately trying to achieve recognition as a great power using all possible tools at her disposal, beginning with her military capabilities that include nuclear weapons, as well as hypersonic weapons as a New Year's "gift to the nation" commemorating the fourth inauguration of Vladimir Putin as Russia's president. Russia has developed a policy of power assertion and strategic pressure through military operations involving regular force or private military companies in countries as diverse as Georgia, Ukraine, Syria, Mali, Libya, and now, Venezuela. Russia is developing both nuclear and conventional capabilities along with a military build-up facing the West. Russia also uses covert operations involving chemical agents on the territories of NATO and the EU member states. Therefore, the Baltic nations' relationship with the Russian Federation is complicated. Consequently, we will never accept Russia's actions, which violate the principles of international law and use force against its neighbours. Next, we cannot

¹² *Press Conference, by the Chairman of the Military Committee, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, at the 180th meeting of the Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence session, NATO Brussels 16 June 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_162454.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed: 27.03.2019).*

accept Russia's policy of information warfare, which seeks to undermine the basic principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Russia's unclear intentions raise challenges and cause huge problems for Europe and NATO. Under these conditions, it is necessary not only to reassess, but also rather to re-write or, even more appropriate, to develop novel strategies in order to eliminate any potential threat. Primarily, this is necessary to increase the situational awareness in the operational area. Secondly, it is essential to invest in the construction of robust defence capabilities that are able to act and deal with the dangers coming from both state and non-state actors. These circumstances mandate improving armed forces interoperability among the Allies and partners as well as an enhancement of the cooperation with civilian counterparts and agencies in order to build the resilience of our societies. These are very demanding requirements, but jointly and comprehensively we are capable of doing it.

We are already on the way to this point; we now have NATO Enhanced Forward Presence¹³ (e-FP) troops in the region, but very similarly to the NATO Articles, we started to understand the e-FP in reverse order as well. It started with "P" – "presence", what began with NATO assurance measures, was stipulated in the Readiness Action Plan¹⁴ (RAP) and approved at the Wales Summit¹⁵, with the hope that this would be enough to convince Russia to reconcile with the West and return to business as usual. From the Baltic perspective, our main concern was the necessity for increased NATO presence in the region as a prerequisite for preserving our statehood. At that point, we were focused primarily on the presence element of our security policy, as the goals and demands were to have a stronger NATO and US footprint in our respective countries. It was successful, and a US company-sized unit was deployed with a number of tanks as military rotational deployments, called persistent presence. The term permanent presence was not acceptable then, as it was still a taboo out of concern that it might escalate the situation along the border with Russia. This was the perception at the time, regardless of the fact that three infantry companies spread over three countries facing three to four fully manned and equipped divisions and other combat ready troops on the Russian side of the border could not provoke any escalation from a rational point of view.

We also gained additional military exercises in our territories, although most of them had been previously planned as national ones, and they were re-labelled as NATO exercises from a STRATCOM messaging perspective. The biggest success was the agreement

¹³ *Boosting NATO's presence in the east and southeast*, NATO Brussels 16 June 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_162454.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed: 27.03.2019).

¹⁴ *Readiness Action Plan*, NATO Brussels 21 September 2017, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_119353.htm (accessed: 27.03.2019).

¹⁵ See: *Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales*, NATO Website, Brussels last updated 26 September 2016, https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm (accessed: 27.03.2019).

and decision to build the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) – small (some 40 personnel strong) NATO staff elements that are responsible for coordinating the NATO Response Force's (NRF) arrival and deployment into the host nations.

At the time, even the NRF would not have been able to arrive on time or with all required capabilities due to the inexistent or insufficient infrastructure, such as points of embarkation and disembarkation or required areas for forces staging in the region. Limited mobility and restriction enforced by the EU regarding the transportation of hazardous materials and explosives that military combat units would normally need complicated the situation even further. These were some of the hurdles that we had to face as we started our journey to relearn these collective defence requirements – all of which would have been so obvious and understandable for everyone in NATO during the Cold War.

At the Warsaw Summit¹⁶, we also learned what “F” stands for – “forward”, meaning physical ‘boots’ (soldiers) on the ground. The idea was that the more NATO nations are involved, the better, just like the Berlin Brigades¹⁷ during the Cold War in West Berlin, where all NATO nations were present within the US, British, and French brigades. Our perception was that it would increase the deterrence effect, and it would also help the Allies to better understand regional security concerns by being on our soil where they could even feel Russian encroachment on a daily basis, especially within our societies through the media and across the information space. That was undoubtedly quite a change for some nations.

Ultimately, we achieved a unity of thoughts, and in 2016, the Alliance declared that NATO was going to reinforce its protection measures in East Europe to enhance deterrence by setting up and deploying four multinational NATO battle groups¹⁸ of about 1,200 troops to each of the Baltic countries and Poland. Canada took the lead in Latvia, Germany was the framework nation in Lithuania, the UK acted as such in Estonia and U.S. became framework nation in Poland. It was about sending a clear signal to Russia that any aggression would be met immediately and not just by local forces, but by forces from across the Alliance, too.

Of course, someone may argue that such military deployments have a purely political rather than military effect because the force ratio between NATO and Russian forces only in their Western military district is not even comparable (the personnel ratio of

¹⁶ Read: *Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016*, Warsaw 09 July 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm (accessed: 28.03.2019).

¹⁷ For details see: *Dedicated to the Western Allies in West Berlin (1945-1994)*, <http://western-allies-berlin.com/> (accessed: 28.03.2019).

¹⁸ In details read: *NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence*, NATO Brussels August 2018, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_09/20180910_1809-factsheet_efp_en.pdf (accessed: 28.03.2019).

personnel of Baltic nations plus eFP versus the West Military District in combat units only is about 22 950 to 78,000 or even more)¹⁹. The other concern is that these military units would not be able to defend the Baltic nations in the case of a surprise conventional attack. The Baltic nations clearly understand that the e-FP mission does not exist for resisting the Russian aggression but for providing a guarantee that NATO's Article V would be activated immediately and that NATO as a whole would go to war with Russia since all those nations' troops would also come under the attack of Russia.

Finally, during the last year when all e-FPs had reached full operational readiness and had drawn some lessons from the region based on their partnership with local forces, their cooperation with the local population and their teamwork with national authorities, we discovered what "E" stands for – "enhance". We all learned that it is important to have troops on the ground in the region, but it is even more important to have the ability to employ them and act responsibly. Therefore, at the 2018 Brussels Summit, NATO looked for ways to shorten the period for reinforcing these troops in the region in case of a war, as well as for enhancing and enabling them with missing capabilities such as naval, air, air-defence, special operations, cyber, intelligence, and command and control. In addition, the so-called "Four 30s" plan was approved, meaning thirty ground battalions, thirty air squadrons, and thirty major naval combatants would be ready to be deployed and engaged with an adversary within thirty days²⁰. They definitely need to be exercised and proven to be functioning with operational maintenance in order to improve NATO's defence in the East. Other important steps such as the approval of the revised NATO Command Structure and the reduction of mobility problems within Europe were taken. These undoubtedly add to the cohesion and credibility of NATO's deterrence efforts.

Regarding our own readiness and capabilities, we are also focused on our homework. The necessity of common regional solutions to a common security challenges has once again been brought up. To the surprise of no one, the Allies see us, the Baltic states, as one operational area, so it would not be a surprise that we should seek answers to our common threats – to be on the forefront in its design. Individually, we can do a lot in adhering to Article III, but if it is not rooted in a "regional Article IV", with consultation and synchronization, it would bear little effect in the case of activating an Article V scenario.

¹⁹ Baltic states – 18 600, eFP – 4350, mover some US – 8850 in Poland vs. just Russian Wets Military District – 78 000 only in combat units. See: Scott Boston et al., *Assessing the Conventional Force Imbalance in Europe. Implications for Countering Russian Local Superiority*, RAND Corporation 2018, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2400/RR2402/RAND_RR2402.pdf p. 7.

²⁰ Alexander Vershbow, Philip Breedlove, *Permanent Deterrence*, Atlantic Council 07 February 2019, https://issuu.com/atlanticcouncil/docs/permanent_deterrence (accessed: 28.03.2019) and *Brussels Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels 11-12 July 2018*, Brussels 11 July 2018, Article 14.

Therefore, we have already increased our respective defence investments in order to meet the target of two percent of our GDP. We are creating new units in order to strengthen our territorial defences and to enhance the resilience of our entire societies. We are investing in our infrastructure in order to improve receiving, staging, and onward movement of incoming units from other NATO member nations. There is investment in military capabilities, e.g., purchasing radars, sensors, air defence, rotary wing, indirect fire, armoured vehicles, and other assets, and the development of comprehensive defence strategies in response to the current geopolitical situation. We recognize the e-FP as a catalyst for transforming the Alliance's combat effectiveness and interoperability. It also strengthens friendship among nations, units, and troops. It is evident that the e-FP battlegroups' presence in the Baltic region has boosted the development of regional military capabilities as well as improved the multilateral cooperation among like-minded nations.

NATO has to have its shield faced towards Russia, but at the same time, NATO has to be in a position to use its shield to protect *all* of its nations, their democratic systems, and Western values, in all other directions in a 360-degree approach. Therefore, we collectively as an Alliance, must continue strengthening deterrence in the wider Baltic region by simultaneously building and enhancing defence capacities and promoting greater burden sharing among the Allies.

We must continue developing and improving our capabilities, forces, plans, and procedures in such a manner that would dissuade anyone from daring to doubt our resolve. While adding important military capabilities and increasing NATO's capacity for rapid reinforcement, we must also preserve consensus within NATO. We need to avoid any possible conflicts at all costs, and for that reason, it is mandatory to continue to ensure NATO's cohesion and solidarity. As the great strategist Sun Tzu once wrote, *"The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy's not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable."*

Therefore, returning to the fragile geostrategic situation in Eastern Europe, let us open our minds to new horizons and try to formulate ideas in order to assist military leaders in forming sound military advice to political leadership. It must be clear that political identity is not the same thing as the geographical reality, and here we, the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, are "sitting in the same boat". The geography is as it is and to the rest of the world, most notably to our allies, as highlighted earlier, it is seen as a combined battleground. Therefore, no matter how much modern equipment we possess, no matter how advanced our fighting vehicles, vessels or planes are, if those are not interoperable and connected into common and joint command and control systems to provide a Common Operational Picture, it is a waste of efforts and resources.

Being in NATO's first line of defence requires us to make significant improvements in the field of Strategic Intelligence and the expansion in regional Situational Awareness through allowing the creation of a clear and vibrant situational understanding. A common image of the situation in the whole region and understanding of evolving conditions will improve prediction and rapidness to react diplomatically, politically, and militarily, if required. The RAP, with its NFIU's, Assurance Measures and Persistent/Rotational Presence, e-FP, etc., has changed many settings within the Baltic states' reality. Frankly, the security situation is becoming more complex, and we could find ourselves in reactionary mode rather than a pre-emptive one.

It is obvious that a single strategic and operational level education and learning establishment for ensuring a common situation awareness and understanding, as well as stimulating strategic and critical thinking is needed to avoid letting security developments overrun us. Here, the role of the Baltic Defence College to endure to be at the forefront of strategic and operational military thinking for the Baltic states, the Baltic region, and beyond, becomes even more important. In fact, the College has been doing it already for 20 years. As a Professional Military Education and academic institution, we possess all the possibilities to jointly and comprehensively **Educate** future military and civilian leadership, we have the potential to **Engage** in security and defence research, and we enjoy a unique opportunity to **Enhance** multinational cooperation among allies and partners without the caveats of political constraints.

Such an impressive triple "E" (Educate, Engage and Enhance) mission clearly highlights that the College could and should continue to be an asset, a "centre of excellence" if you will, of strategic and operational thinking for our common joint operational area. Who else should academically formulate a resolute response to the RAND's corporation well-known "60 hours"²¹ battle for the three independent Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as to which strategic direction should the shield face?

²¹ David A. Shlapak, Michael Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank, Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics*, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html; Wesley Clark, Jüri Luik, Egon Ramms, Richard Shirreff, *Closing NATO's Baltic Gap*, International Centre for Defence and Security, Tallinn 2016; Richard Shirreff, *War with Russia*, Coronet Books, London 2016.

The Baltic Defence College – a Unique Professional Military Educational Institution

Brigadier General Almantas Leika

Introduction

The creation of the Baltic Defence College started when the Ministers of Defence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania representing their respective Governments on June 12, 1998 in Brussels, Belgium, signed the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Estonia, the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania Concerning the Baltic Defence College. The Baltic States decided to establish Baltic Defence College, a joint educational institution. It was agreed that the College will be located in Estonia. The aim of the Baltic Defence College was to establish and continuously improve the training and development of senior staff officers of the armed forces and, if additionally agreed, civil servants of the Baltic States. It was decided that the working language of the College must be English. Activities and courses conducted by the Baltic Defence College, as their primary role, were supposed to-

- (a) take account of the general political and geographical conditions of the Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania;
- (b) reflect national defence tasks of the armed forces of the Baltic States;
- (c) mirror defence concepts of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania;
- (d) to the extent possible integrate NATO principles and procedures in order to prepare the Baltic States for NATO membership;
- (e) deepen the knowledge of the role and tasks of the international organisations involved in European security.²²

This was the start of the Baltic Defence College - a unique international professional military educational (PME) institution. The College was officially opened on February 25, 1999. This date is now considered the official birthday of the Baltic Defence College. The first Senior Staff Course started in August 1999.

²² "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Estonia, the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania Concerning the Baltic Defence College", June 12, 1998; available from: <https://www.baltdefcol.org/files/files/documents/Establishment.docx>; accessed December 02, 2018.

Since its start the College has grown and established itself among other Defence or Staff Colleges with all necessary and required attributes. The Baltic Defence College developed into an English-speaking international institution of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania providing PME at the operational and strategic level for military and civilian leaders of the Baltic States, their allies and partners. The College conducts applied research, hosts and co-hosts conferences and seminars and offers a fellowship programme.²³ The Baltic Defence College currently conducts Senior Leader Course (SLC), Higher Command Studies Course (HCSC), Joint Command and General Staff Course (JCGSC) and Civil Servants' Course (CSC). The College publishes relatively numerous publications - *Journal on Baltic Security*, *Ad Securitatem*, and *The Bugle*. The Baltic Defence College was undoubtedly instrumental in considerably contributing to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania becoming members of the North Atlantic Alliance. And what is of utmost significance, the College educated a considerable number – almost 1,500 – of senior military officers and civil servants. For the overview of the Baltic Defence College graduates see the Table.

Table 1. Baltic Defence College graduate numbers²⁴

Courses	Total	Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian students	
		Numbers	Percentage
Army Intermediate Command and Staff Course (AICSC)	142	118	83.1
Joint Command and General Staff Course (JCGSC)	840	570	67.9
Higher Command Studies Course (HCSC)	207	101	48.8
Senior Leaders' Course (SLC)	74	31	41.9
Civil Servants' Course (CSC)	122	110	90.2
Total	1,385	930	67.1

The author of this discussion has the honour and privilege to be closely connected with the College almost from the start. He graduated from the 2nd Senior Staff Course in 2001 and 1st Higher Command Studies Course (HCSC) in 2004. He then was posted to the Baltic Defence College as Course Director of the HCSC during the period of 2007-2010. He also attended the 1st Senior Leaders' Seminar in 2015. He was distinctly honoured and privileged to become a member of the College's Hall of Fame on April 12, 2016.

²³ Baltic Defence College, available from: <https://www.baltdefcol.org/?id=14> ; accessed December 15, 2018.

²⁴ Ibid.

Major General Andis Dilans, the 6th Commandant of the Baltic Defence College, insists that the College must maintain main focus 'on quality assurance and customer satisfaction, making the institution even more effective in responding quickly to drastic changes in security, political, economic, social and environmental spheres that the world is currently facing.'²⁵ The following discussion aims to address how better to ensure and increase the quality of the PME and customer satisfaction through capitalizing on distinct features of the College. Firstly, the author will sketch the distinct features of the Baltic Defence College. Then the significance of these distinct features for the education will be outlined. And lastly the author will consider some ideas how College's distinct features could be maximized even more in order to improve the utility of the College for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as a unique PME institution.

Distinct Features of the Baltic Defence College

Right from its foundation the Baltic Defence College aimed at providing standard PME for senior military officers of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania at an operational level. Initially it was the Senior Staff Course. Eventually it developed and evolved into the Joint Command and General Staff Course. Later in accordance with the initial Agreement and identified need to educate defence civil servants from the Baltic States, their Allied and Partner nations Civil Servants' Course was offered. Subsequently through the Higher Command Studies Course the College offered strategic level education for senior military officers and civil servants. The latest addition to the offered Courses was when in 2015 the Baltic Defence College started Senior Leaders' Course (initially a Seminar). While providing standard operational and strategic level PME the College acquired some really unique and distinct features that few or no PME institutions possess.

Firstly, the Baltic Defence College is jointly owned by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Thus, it became the official PME institution for the three Baltic States. Today senior officer development of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania could hardly be conducted without the College.

Secondly, the language of instruction at the Baltic Defence College is English as it has already been established in the Agreement between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania that established the College.²⁶ This makes the College a unique PME in continental Europe. Undoubtedly, this fact might be considered both as an advantage and a challenge.

The Baltic Defence College uses the commonly accepted NATO doctrine as part of its curriculum. The College originally was tasked to integrate into its teaching general

²⁵ Baltic Defence College, available from: <https://www.baltdefcol.org> , accessed December 02, 2018.

²⁶ "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Estonia, the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania Concerning the Baltic Defence College" from June 12, 1998; available from: <https://www.baltdefcol.org/files/files/documents/Establishment.docx>; accessed December 02, 2018.

political conditions, national defence tasks of the armed forces, and defence concepts of the Baltic States. Since Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania clearly expressed their determination to become fully fledged members of the North Atlantic Alliance already in 1994, the use of NATO doctrine as part of Baltic Defence College's curriculum was a logical development alongside the above-mentioned requirements. Consequently, instead of investing a significant effort in developing national or tri-national doctrinal publications it was accepted that the NATO doctrine would be utilised.

From its inception the College has distinguished itself from any other PME institution by its multinational character. This concerns both the faculty, as well as the students of the Baltic Defence College. This feature could be considered as a value added for the education that the College provides. At the same time, it establishes certain requirements for the College curriculum and calls for some additional efforts from the Baltic States.

The above listed distinct features of the Baltic Defence College enrich the education provided for senior military officers and civil servants. They constitute and emphasise the uniqueness of this PME institution. Since they will stay as long as the College exists it could be suggested that they should be continuously exploited and even maximised to increase the quality of education and even better ensure customer satisfaction.

The Baltic Defence College as an Official PME Institution of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania

The Baltic Defence College was established to meet the senior officer and civil servant educational needs of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The Baltic States consider the College as their official PME institution. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania fund the Baltic Defence College as well as define its courses' curriculum. They definitely use it to meet their senior officer and civil servant educational requirements.

Let us for a moment consider the situation that the Baltic States did not possess their own PME institution of this kind. The table shows that College's Joint Command and General Staff Course (JCGSC) educated a total of 840 graduates, including 570 from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. This number makes 67.9 % of all JCGSC graduates. These numbers were achieved throughout 17 classes. Let us see what might have happened if the Baltic Defence College had not been available to educate these numbers of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian officers but the requirement would have remained the same. For the sake of this discussion, it could be assumed that the Baltic States were offered approximately 180-230 seats at US, UK, German, French, and other national staff colleges during the same period of 17 years. It could be concluded that the overall Estonia, Latvian, and Lithuanian educational needs during 17 years was to educate 750-800 senior officers. It could be suggested that to satisfy all the Baltic States' senior officer educational needs would require increasing foreign nations' support four

times in case the Baltic Defence College did not exist. Even if these nations were ready to make this step Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania would have encountered some challenges in teaching their senior officers German and French. Both of these languages are not so widely taught and spoken in the Baltic States. Estonia might find itself in a better position as they can make additional arrangements to educate their senior officers in Finland. The only reservation might be that this education would not be received in a NATO country. Either way, such significant increase of foreign support is most unlikely. It becomes evident that even with the most positive foreign support trends Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania could hardly do without their own JCGSC at the Baltic Defence College.

Similar tendency and situation could be observed with regard to the College's Higher Command Studies Course (HCSC) student numbers. During the 14 years of its existence 207 students graduated the HCSC (see Table). This number includes 101 Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian students comprising 48.8 % of the total graduates. For the sake of this discussion, it could be assumed that the Baltic States were offered approximately 50 seats by other nations at their Senior Service Colleges. It could be suggested that the total need for this level of education is around 150 seats during 14 years. It is mostly unlikely that the nations that currently offer seats at their Senior Service Colleges would increase their support three times. Once again it becomes obvious that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania could not do without Baltic Defence College's HCSC to meet their need for this level senior officer and civil servant education.

Since the founding of the College in 1999 1,385 military officers and civil servants have graduated from it. Among them there were 930 graduates from the Baltic States, which makes 67.1 % of all the graduates (see Table). These numbers are also a testimony to the fact that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania consider the College as their own PME institution and utilise it to educate their personnel.

One more advantage that the Baltic States have as the owners of the Baltic Defence College is full control over the Courses' curriculum. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania can establish the aim and scope of the College courses, as well as include topics into their curriculum based on their requirements.

While the Baltic States continue utilising the Baltic Defence College to meet their needs to educate their senior officers and civil servants some caution could be exercised in order to ensure that even more is received from the first-class education provided by the College. Firstly, the proper selection of students must continue to enable that they receive the maximum from their Course curriculum. The course that prospective students are selected to attend should not come too early in their careers. If it is the case, the students might not be able to grasp the complexity of the Course curriculum. In case the students are selected to attend the College late in their careers it might

appear that they would not be able to return the invested time and effort later serving in their national military forces. Their motivation might suffer as well. To avoid such undesirable situations it could be considered that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania apply (as much) commonly accepted officer career model.

Due to the fact that all the three nations – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – possess relatively small armed forces serious considerations should be given not to select inadequately large numbers of their personnel to attend the College. Armed forces can develop only certain numbers of their officers to attend career courses. In case this balance is tipped-off it might appear that some students could be selected to attend a career course too early or too late in their careers. The best cure to prevent this potentially undesirable situation is probably to adhere to the already mentioned officer career model commonly accepted by the Baltic States.

English as the Language of Instruction at the Baltic Defence College

The language of instruction at the Baltic Defence College is English. This fact distinguishes the College from any other PME institution in the Continental Europe. It is the only such level PME institution where English the language of instruction.

The fact that English is the language of instruction at the Baltic Defence College is advantageous for the College's students. Through this they develop the ability to become more prepared for working with our Allies and Partners. This fact allows the Baltic Defence College to employ instructors from the Allied nations. It also increases the presence of Allied and Partner nations' students at the College. It ultimately boosts up the value of the education provided by the Baltic Defence College and better prepares the graduates for their future jobs.

It should also be recognised that the use of English at the College might negatively affect the development of national military terminology. This negative impact could be reduced due to the fact that in most of the cases very little strategic and joint planning and activities are conducted in a purely national environment. Strategic and joint operational procedures and considerations predominantly use Allied processes and procedures and in most cases they are conducted in close coordination and cooperation with the Allies.

Let us imagine for a while that the English language were not chosen as an official language of the Baltic Defence College. In this case it would have been really unlikely that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had agreed to use any of their languages as a language of instruction. Then the only option left for the Baltic States would have been to use the Russian language. It really sounds strange today but more than 20 years ago Russian was the language that most of population in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania could understand and speak. But then the College could have hardly accomplished one of its most important missions – prepare the Baltic States for NATO membership. It would

have implied that no (or only very few) Allied instructors had been available to support education at the Baltic Defence College. The fact that today this option sounds extremely weird once again proves the choice of English as College's language of instruction was the only adequate and reasonable solution.

It might be considered a challenge for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to select students with the required English language skills to study at the College. Studies in a foreign language are always recognised as challenging. The attention must be paid not only to spoken language skills. The students must possess proper reading and writing skills as well. Sometimes traditional English language training and tests do not help in determining whether individual officers have sufficient command of English to study at the Baltic Defence College. It could be suggested that in the longer run this challenge will be reduced to minimum as younger generations of Estonia, Latvian, and Lithuanian officers will undoubtedly become more fluent in English due to the fact that it becomes more and more dominant in most spheres of life in the Baltic States.

NATO Doctrine Taught at the Baltic Defence College

In the beginning the Baltic Defence College had the mission to better prepare Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania for their eventual membership in NATO. As logical development NATO doctrine became the basis for College courses' curriculum, especially the Joint Command and General Staff Course. Initially it saved a tremendous effort to develop common doctrine and write numerous doctrinal publications to be used at the College. As a result, the College graduates become intimately familiar with and well versed in NATO doctrine. This in turn put them in a more advantageous position to operate within NATO and multinational environment.

Teaching NATO doctrine at the Baltic Defence College in a wider sense exposes the College students to a Western value-based approach. While it may sound as a given today but it was not the case more than 20 years ago when the establishment of the Baltic Defence College was considered. Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian national military forces required this type of exposure at that stage of their development to initiate a totally new development phase of their officers. A Western value-based approach still remains significant aspect of the education provided at the College even today.

Let us for a moment consider that the Baltic Defence College had selected not NATO doctrine but a national doctrine as a basis for its curriculum. Most likely it would have been one of the English-speaking nation's doctrine. It would have implied that most of the instructors should have been from that nation. In that case the graduates when posted in NATO and multinational environment or working with their Allies would have to translate the national doctrine taught at the College into NATO doctrine. This situation might be considered as less advantageous than students becoming educated in NATO

doctrine. It is evident that the choice was adequate and reasonable. In the long run it enriched the education provided at the Baltic Defence College.

Some ideas could be considered to ensure that the College becomes even more engaged and emerged in NATO joint doctrine. It could be agreed that the Baltic Defence College becomes a member of the NATO Allied Joint Operational Doctrine Working Group. Membership in this Working Group would allow the College to be part of the discussions and processes related to the development and revision of NATO joint doctrine. Consequently, the Baltic Defence College faculty members could become more exposed to NATO joint doctrine considerations. This could also contribute to the Faculty's professional development. Even students could be included into these discussions. This would allow enrich the education provided at the College. In the longer run some considerations could be given whether the Baltic Defence College could act as proponent for a selected NATO joint publication. It would be accompanied by a serious challenge, but it could repay by increasing Faculty's professionalism and overall College's prestige.

Multinational Character of the Baltic Defence College

Right from the beginning the Baltic Defence College distinguishes itself by being a really multinational PME institution. The fact that it is an official Estonia, Latvian and Lithuanian PME institution already makes it multinational. At the beginning instructors from the supporting nations were present at the College to develop initial competence to deliver the established curriculum as it was non-existent within the Baltic States. Later this traditional multinational character continued with regard to both the Faculty members and students.

It could be hardly imagined the situation when at the initial stages of the Baltic Defence College development there were no instructors from the supporting Allied and Partner nations. They contributed with NATO perspectives to the College curriculum and educational process. They ensured that the Western value-based approach became an integral part of the education at the Baltic Defence College and subsequently through the College graduates part of the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian national military forces. At later stages, the presence of instructors from Allied and Partner nations allows to further enhance and enrich the education.

The student body was always multinational as well right from the start. Non-Baltic students could be subdivided into two larger groups. The first group is the students from the Allied nations. They were extremely useful before the Baltic States became fully fledged members of NATO. Their presence enhanced the education through informal interaction between the Baltic and Allied students. Now their presence preserves the significance since, as a rule, the Allied students are coming from the nations that Estonia,

Latvia, and Lithuania cooperate on operations and exercises. The second large group is the students from the Partner nations that the Baltic States and supporting nations consider to support and cooperate. Some of them are coming from the nations aspiring to join NATO. The rest are from the nations that we routinely work together both on operations or exercises. As of today, the Baltic Defence College can be proud of having its graduates from 40 nations.

This multinational character should definitely be considered a value added additionally to the high-quality education. College graduates gain from this since they most likely are posted in the jobs that require working in an international environment despite the fact whether they are within their national military forces or at NATO or other international headquarters. The bonds established between the students from different nations while studying usually are continued throughout their careers.

One might argue that presence of Allied and Partner students is not a requirement to ensure high quality PME. Then the Baltic students would be deprived of the opportunity to study and interact with the students from Allied and Partner nations. In this case the Baltic students would not have the opportunity to become used to international environment that they usually experience in their careers after the graduation of the Baltic Defence College.

As long as there is an interest to maintain the multinational character of the College we some considerations should be given how to better attract international staff and students. Some promotional activities, especially emphasising Baltic Defence College's strengths, could be conducted in order to attract qualified instructors to become members of the faculty.

Some steps could be taken to ensure that Allied and Partner students continue being part of the student body and subsequently an enriching factor of the education. Firstly, it could be ensured that as many as possible Allied and Partner nations recognise College courses equal to their national courses. This will provide additional motivation for their students to apply for the courses at the Baltic Defence College. In its turn, this also ensures that College courses meet highest quality education requirements, which are regularly checked by external audit and evaluators.

Having achieved this, a dialogue could be maintained with the Allied and Partner nations to ensure that their selected students meet the criteria applied for the Baltic students. It is important that the students from these nations alongside with being motivated to study at the Baltic Defence College attend a relevant course for his or her career stage. They should also demonstrate a proper command of English.

Conclusion

During last 20 years the Baltic Defence College developed into an outstanding PME institution that meets the requirements of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The College is the best example of a multinational cooperation effort among Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. It possesses unique and distinct characteristics – Baltic ownership, use of the English language and NATO doctrine, and multinational character – that enrich and enhance education at the College. The value of the College is recognised both by the Baltic States and wider community. The above discussion touched on only few characteristics of the Baltic Defence College. Undoubtedly there are many more that significantly contribute to the quality of education at the College. For example, the research conducted at the Baltic Defence College deserves a separate and extensive discussion.

It looks certain that the Baltic Defence College will remain a needed PME institution for the three Baltic nations. The most important is that the College meets the Estonian, Latvian and Estonian needs and requirements. Subsequently it implies certain changes. The Baltic Defence College is at that stage of development and maturity that does not require significant fundamental changes. Last 20 years witnessed College's movement towards maturity by meeting the Baltic States needs and requirements and providing first-class strategic and operational level education for their senior military officers and civil servants. In the future some changes and adjustments at the Baltic Defence College will be required in accordance to the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian interests and changing geostrategic environment. It should be once again reiterated that the key to success for the College is the ability to respond 'quickly to drastic changes in security, political, economic, social and environmental spheres that the world is currently facing.'²⁷ Consequently it implies that the Baltic Defence College should remain ready to adjust its curriculum accordingly to meet this challenge and continue providing high quality education. It could be suggested that to achieve this, the College should exploit all available means, including maximized use of the distinct and unique features of the Baltic Defence College – its Baltic ownership, use of the English language and NATO doctrine, and multinational character.

²⁷ Baltic Defence College, available from: <https://www.baltdefcol.org> , accessed on December 02, 2018

CHAPTER TWO

NATO'S ADAPTATION TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21st CENTURY

Achieving and Accelerating Delivery of Critical Capabilities for Deterrence and Defence

Major General (ret.) Gordon Davis

“For seventy years, the bond between Europe and North America has made NATO the strongest alliance in history. We are an alliance, bound by shared history, values and goals. Together we work to prevent conflict and preserve peace for nearly one billion people. Our solemn commitment to each other is that an attack against one Ally is an attack against us all. This bond guarantees our prosperity and security, and allows us to live our lives in freedom.

NATO has kept our countries and our people safe by continuously adapting to new security challenges. Today, we face the most unpredictable security situation in many years – including a more assertive Russia, cyber and hybrid threats, instability across the Middle East and North Africa, and a continued terrorist threat.

In response, NATO has stepped up again, responding to many challenges at the same time. We have strengthened our presence, increased the readiness of our forces, improved our resilience against hybrid and cyber threats, and increased our role in the fight against terrorism. We are cooperating with the European Union at unprecedented levels. We have opened our door to new members, eager to join our Alliance and contribute to our collective defence, which is the basis for prosperity. And we continue to innovate, and remain at the forefront of technological change. Fair burden sharing underpins everything we do, and we are making major progress, including with four consecutive years of rising investment in defence.”

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, 2019

Introduction

The next six years are decisive to ensure great power competition does not escalate to conflict. The period of 2019-2024 corresponds to Vladimir Putin's last expected term as the Russian President. Putin's military modernization program is largely complete. Russian combat readiness, military command and control, strategic planning, and civil-military coordination have been refined and exercised and continue to be adapted to respond to Russia's assessment of threats and challenges. Unfortunately, Russia views

NATO as both a challenge and a potential threat.²⁸ Russia's actions have demonstrated its intent to set favourable conditions vis-à-vis NATO with respect to speed of action and decisive military advantage, if only for a limited period of time.



Figure 1: **NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, at 2019 Defence Ministerial Meeting**

Source: NATO Headquarters. Source: NATO Public Affairs Office

The Transatlantic Alliance has responded and continues to adapt to a changing and uncertain security environment with significant enhancements in readiness, resilience, responsiveness, and posture, and in contributions to operations and missions. With respect to the Alliance's most challenging threats, Allies have responded with strong commitment and unity. Allies have collectively increased defence spending and agreed and resourced adaptation measures, including an enhanced NATO Response Force and a command structure fit for the purpose of responding to all threats. And in 2017, Allied Defence Ministers agreed to meet all capability requirements, in the form of national capability targets tailored to each Ally, necessary to achieve NATO's overall aims and objectives²⁹.

²⁸ The Russian Federation National Security Strategy (December 2015), paragraph 15: "...the further expansion of the alliance, and the positioning of its military infrastructure closer to the Russian borders are creating a threat to our national security."

²⁹ As part of the NATO Defence Planning Process, or NDPP, every four years NATO identifies the number, scale and nature of operations the Alliance should be able to conduct, referred to as the "Level of Ambition". NATO's Strategic Commanders then identify the capability requirements needed to support the Level of Ambition. These requirements are divided up and "apportioned" to each Ally as "capability targets", which have associated priorities and timelines. Allies are then responsible for delivering the capabilities in accordance with these priorities and timelines and report progress every two years.

These targets include priority capabilities critical to maintain NATO's technological edge and undermine adversary confidence in setting strategic conditions for aims which are contrary to NATO defence and security. These capabilities are designed to enable the Alliance to understand the environment, provide intelligence and warning, and secure and defend itself (including the Trans-Atlantic area and its forces abroad or operating in international airspace and waters). In addition, they will ensure freedom of action, enable response and reinforcement, and defeat aggression when and where necessary.



Figure 2 (left): **Russian SSGN Severodvinsk submarine.**

Source: © US Naval Institute, 19.06.2014, www.news.usni.org

Figure 3 (right): **Iskander - Russian mobile short-range missile system.**

Source: © The National Interest, 07.01.2017, www.nationalinterest.org

To meet these targets, the Allies are seizing opportunities to develop and deliver capability through national, multinational, and collective programs and initiatives. However, sustained action over the next six years will be essential to deter a potential adversary, strengthen NATO defence and security, and provide the greatest insurance policy of preventing potential conflict in the short term by denying a potential adversary the certitude of success in any scenario of aggression. Contributing to greater defence capabilities sooner simultaneously increases their deterrence effect and reduces perceived or potential vulnerabilities faster, which in turn can reduce the likelihood of crisis or conflict in the near term.³⁰

Favourable Conditions Exist to Deliver More Critical Capabilities in the Short Term

Favourable conditions exist that will not only help maintain the strategic military edge necessary to carry out the Alliance's core tasks³¹ well into the future, but can be leveraged today to focus national and multinational efforts on opportunities that will field critical capability sooner.

³⁰ Nations have agreed to consider accelerating capability delivery when circumstances permit. NATO Defence Capability Review 2017/2018 Defence Planning Capability Report.

³¹ According to NATO Strategic Concept 2010, the Alliance's essential core tasks are collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security.



Figure 4: **NATO AGS Global Hawk SQ-4 during first flight trials.**

Source: © Northrop Grumman, 26.05.2016

The 2014 *Wales Defence Investment Pledge* has reversed the previous downward trend of defence budgets and led to increased defence spending.³² National Plans that were recently submitted commit to continued increases in defence spending over the near term and identify national focus areas in capability development and delivery. Increased defence spending means there may be opportunities for programming of defence funds toward acceleration of critical capabilities – new or already planned.

In some cases, *off-the-shelf (OTS) solutions or existing programmes* can be leveraged for multinational cooperation or cost-effective and rapid acquisition of critical capabilities. NATO has programmes that will deliver in the near term, such as the Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) and Joint Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (JISR). Both AGS and JISR are programmes where additional capabilities could significantly enhance their deterrent and defence effects.

Many Allies have *Research, Development, Testing, and Evaluation (RDT&E) or Rapid Fielding efforts* underway in priority areas that could be leveraged for multinational or cost-effective solutions.

³² Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at Munich Security Conference, 15 February 2019. “Since 2016, NATO allies in Europe and Canada have spent an additional 41 billion dollars on defence. And by the end of next year [2020], that will rise to one hundred billion US dollars.”



Figure 5: **An overview of current multinational projects** ©

from left to right, top to bottom: Air Force Times, 06.12.2017, www.airforcetimes.com; DIFESA, 28.02.2018, www.difesa.it; Armscom, 29.03.2017, www.armscom.net; Daily Mail, 25.05.2015, www.thedailymail.co.uk; NAVY Recognition, 02.01.2017, www.navyrecognition.com; Airbus Defence and Space, 16.07.2014, www.airbus.com.

A number of *multinational projects* are established or underway that will deliver or could deliver more capabilities in critical areas. For example, NATO's first and longest enduring multinational project – the NATO Seasparrow Missile Program – will field an Enhanced Seasparrow Missile (ESSM) in the near future. The ESSM will improve air and missile defence for naval ships employed in a broad range of missions from air and missile defence, to sea control to anti-submarine warfare (ASW). Multinational projects for Maritime Unmanned Systems (MUS) and Maritime Multi Mission Aircraft (M3A) could potentially produce results in the near term to significantly enhance NATO ASW, Naval Mine Warfare (NMW) and Maritime ISR capabilities. A variety of Land, Maritime, and Air Battle Decisive Munitions projects are already delivering cost-effective solutions and could be leveraged to address shortfalls in critical capabilities.

NATO's National Armament Directors (NAD) have agreed to pursue a more *structured approach to multinational cooperation*. Based on NATO staff analysis, NAD Representatives are considering capability areas and opportunities for multinational

cooperation through the Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD).³³ The *CNAD's Main Groups* are working on numerous efforts, including *land, maritime, air and joint projects or new proposals*, all of which could be leveraged on critical capabilities. The Life Cycle Management Group (LCMG) and NATO Industrial Advisory Group (NIAG) are both studying concepts of *agile and rapid acquisition* or procurement. *Allies* are reviewing the implications of the recently released U.S. Missile Defence Review and the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) Policy. Both efforts could result in recommendations for capabilities and prioritisation of effort in NATO IAMD. NATO is working to complete the deployment of *critical airpower enabling capabilities* in the short to medium term (e.g. air command and control systems). Moreover, *Allies* continue to enhance tactical data links and combat identification systems in aircraft and air related systems.

NATO's Science and Technology (S&T) Board adopted a *new NATO S&T Strategy in 2018* that identifies "Accelerating Capability Development" as a major line of effort. The STB's aim is to focus NATO S&T activities and future work to leverage the rapid increase of scientific knowledge and pace of technological change in order to identify promising emerging and disruptive technologies that NATO can adopt to maintain NATO's technological edge.

NATO-EU Cooperation. NATO and EU have decided to strengthen their strategic partnership in concrete areas including by pursuing coherence of output between NDPP and EU's Capability Development Plan. EU efforts in Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and use of a European Defence Fund (EDF) to support Research and Development (R&D) and Prototyping represent potential opportunities for accelerated capability delivery in critical areas. Staff-to-staff coordination and transparency of PESCO project details will be critical to understanding potential opportunities for synergy and complementarity. Nations have agreed to the Secretary General's Functional Review proposal to better leverage innovation through the establishment of an Innovation Board and a dedicated Innovation Unit in the International Staff. The Innovation Board will leverage innovation efforts ongoing within Allied Command Transformation, the Armaments Community, and NATO's Science & Technology Community. The board's initial tasks will be to report to the NAC on the

³³ The CNAD meets twice annually in Plenary format and twice monthly in Permanent Session. The CNAD includes seven Main Groups and over 100 subworking groups which meet on a wide breadth of armaments issues throughout the year.

implications of disruptive and emerging technologies and identify areas that the Alliance should pursue.



Figure 6: **Airbus A330 MRTT (Multi Role Tanker Transport) providing, among other functions, air-to-air refueling.**

Source: © Airbus Defence and Space, 28.07.2016, www.airbus.com

The Military Committee is developing an *Alliance Military Strategy* (AMS). A new AMS will identify Ends, Ways and Means, the latter of which should inform capability development in critical areas. This work will be informed by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's (SACEUR) concept for an Alliance response to adversaries' strategies. Defence capabilities are an essential part of this concept to enable NATO to restore equilibrium, maintain decisive military advantage, and reduce the perception of potential adversaries of relative advantages they believe they may enjoy.

Last, but not least, NATO staffs are pursuing greater coherence and effectiveness in facilitating the capability delivery efforts of Allies. This includes intensified action to coordinate *communities of interest* essential to support increasingly complex capability development across both traditional and new domains, such as armaments and cyber. *Capability Vision Papers* will continue to guide development and future concepts, and improved *information management tools* will further enable cooperation and awareness across the DOTMLPFI³⁴ development spectrum.

Achieving Capability Targets and Accelerating Delivery Where It Matters

Taken as a whole, these favourable conditions will help to enable the national, multinational and collective fielding of capabilities, within the next six years, to Alliance forces in capability areas *that matter most for NATO deterrence and defence*. The

³⁴ Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities, Interoperability

overarching aim is to take forward the *most promising capabilities where additional national, multinational, collective, and NATO staff efforts would help maintain NATO's strategic military edge (i.e. achieve overmatch, superiority, pre-eminence against adversaries) in the short term*. Potential areas to explore further include joint command and control, joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, joint fires, joint airpower enablers, anti-submarine warfare, naval mine warfare, integrated air and missile defence and electronic warfare. Although this list is broadly aligned with agreed priorities, it should not be considered exhaustive or definitive as priority areas are reassessed frequently.

In addition to the “What?”, these conditions are good news for the “How?”. While Allies are ultimately responsible for integrating planning priorities into their own plans and deciding on which opportunities for assistance or acceleration to seek, conditions are ripe to facilitate on-schedule delivery. They will also help accelerate existing programmes to deliver in the near term and to influence existing or revising newly started programmes to deliver critical capabilities in the near term. Finally, they will facilitate the initiation of new projects on critical capabilities that may also deliver in the near term.

Allies will need to be selective and prioritise their efforts. Some capabilities will be linked to others and may need to be pursued in parallel or sequenced. Some are just too complex to complete in the near term; indeed, NATO armaments committees often focus on longer term capability challenges. Nevertheless, if development of a capability or capability area would significantly contribute to increased deterrence and strengthened defence, then there are several ways in which Allies, working together, can align and “thicken” existing efforts or explore new areas of cooperation, with NATO staff support.

- First, the NATO Defence Planning Process and related activities provide *visibility* over what each Ally has committed to deliver against their capability targets in the short and medium term, as well as their progress in doing so. Using this visibility, cross-domain and cross-staff coordination can be leveraged to assess capability targets and priorities alongside the following: national plans (including future acquisition and fielding), existing multinational projects and programmes, S&T³⁵, industry³⁶, RDT&E efforts and Rapid Fielding activities, OTS solutions, non-materiel solutions and opportunities to use multinational exercises to conduct operational testing and experimentation of critical capabilities under development.
- A next step is to *pursue the highest potential payoffs* in critical capability areas which can be delivered in the short term, including in new opportunities. This

³⁵ NATO's S&T community conducts a variety of activities throughout the year to include cooperative demonstrations of technology, studies, symposia, workshops, courses, meetings, and task group efforts.

³⁶ The NATO Industry Advisory Group (NIAG) undertakes studies partially funded by Allies, but primarily funded by Industry in areas of common interest to Allies and Industry, in order to provide advice in a particular area on Industry capacity, efforts underway and considerations for future development.

could include *encouraging and enabling new or expanded multinational cooperation* across the development timeline or wherever an ongoing project or programme may be (i.e. from R&D, to prototyping and experimentation, to production, to procurement and in-service support).

- The promotion of *acquisition reform and rapid acquisition concepts* is equally critical. A new mind-set is required. Acceleration of capability delivery will not work without robust and flexible acquisition practices and life cycle management, supported by a trained and experienced workforce. These, in turn, require the right legislative and regulatory conditions to be in place, which could be encouraged through cooperation. Industry should continue to be involved in the pre-competitive phase to promote Allies' understanding of existing capabilities and capacity and industry's understanding of general requirements. Once procurement is underway, chosen providers must have access to end users to ensure effective design, testing, and fielding.
- Finally, *interoperability is paramount for success*. Interoperability must be built in from the design stage as an inherent requirement and NATO standards incorporated or rapidly developed where absent. Certification of materiel standardisation must be reviewed and addressed.

The Way Ahead

Accelerated Capability Delivery can be taken forward within existing frameworks, processes, commitments and capacity. For armaments aspects, this could include integration, as appropriate, into the Structured Approach to Multinational Cooperation currently being implemented in the CNAD. Coordination will be essential across IS, IMS, the Strategic Commands, the CNAD and its Substructure (i.e. Armaments Community), the NATO S&T Community, and other key committees (e.g. C3 Board, Committee on Standardization, Defence Planning Policy Committee Missile Defence and Air and Missile Defence Committee, and, in the future, an Innovation Board) to enable synergy through information sharing, expertise, and focused support. Through the NATO Defence Planning Process, assessment of progress and feedback to nations on progress and their return on investment (in manpower and resources) will be critical to retain nations' awareness and support. Public diplomacy and strategic communications should be leveraged to highlight the benefit of accelerated capabilities in achieving increased deterrence and strengthened defence. Such a focus would help focus burden-sharing in cash and capabilities on concrete outputs relevant to effective deterrence and defence.

“Our world is changing and NATO is changing with it. But some things remain unchanged: our commitment to one another endures, giving us the strength to overcome our differences and rise to any challenge. Standing with unity and resolve in defence of our values, NATO will remain a pillar of stability in an uncertain world for the next generations.”

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, 2019

NATO's Land Forces: Strength and Speed Matter

General (ret.) John W Nicholson³⁷

NATO's strength and speed - both military and political - generate political options short of war. Both of these elements are necessary to counter the limited tactical advantages of Russian Federation forces and prevent further conflict.

The risk of war is not zero – of either a land war or nuclear escalation - but with its strength and speed, NATO is generating the necessary options to prevent conflict. If deterrence fails, NATO will prevail.

Introduction: The NATO Military Alliance

NATO is one of the most, if not *the* most, successful military alliance in history having helped deliver almost 70 years of peace in Europe. NATO was central to ending the Cold War without a global conflict, an event which brought freedom to tens of millions of people in Eastern Europe. The Alliance has contributed to preventing further conflict in the Balkans and has led a fifty-nation coalition in Afghanistan which has stabilized that country for over a decade. NATO accomplished this by adapting its enormous strengths to the circumstances of each crisis.

“NATO's new Readiness Action Plan, or RAP, answers the Alliance's call for a responsive deterrent in the face of state actors....With the RAP, NATO is implementing the most comprehensive reinforcement of collective defence since the end of the Cold War.”

-General Petr Pavel, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, in his speech to the European Parliament, 20 October 2015

As the Afghan campaign moved to a conclusion and NATO's heads of state visualized the future security environment at their Summit meetings in 2010 and 2012, they envisaged a strategic partnership with the Russian Federation.³⁸ However, in early 2014 after the Sochi Olympics, the Russian Federation's aggressive actions in Crimea and the Ukraine revealed a disturbing new evolution in Russian Federation behaviour and narrative.³⁹

³⁷ The original article was published by the National Defense University's *PRISM* magazine, Volume 6, Number 2, 18 June 2016. <https://cco.ndu.edu/PRISM/PRISM-Volume-6-no-2/Article/835046/natos-land-forces-strength-and-speed-matter/>

³⁸ NATO, Lisbon Summit Declaration, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, entry posted November 20, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm (accessed November 5, 2015), para. 23; NATO, Chicago Summit Declaration, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, entry posted May 20, 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87593.htm (accessed November 5, 2015), para. 36-38.

³⁹ Jens Stoltenberg, Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Munich Security Conference, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, entry posted February 6, 2015.

“Russia presents the greatest threat to our national security, so if you want to talk about a nation that could pose an existential threat to the United States, I’d have to point to Russia.”

-General Joseph Dunford, during the Confirmation Hearing to become United States Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 9 July 2015

As a result of Russia’s actions, NATO Heads of State at the Wales Summit established the Readiness Action Plan, including the enhanced NATO Response Force (NRF), to adapt NATO forces to deal with the threat posed by Russian aggression.⁴⁰ This also included the creation of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force or VJTF.

The RAP is composed of two main elements; Assurance and Adaptation measures. The Assurance measures include “continuous air, land, and maritime presence and meaningful military activity in the eastern part of the Alliance” on a rotational basis, while Adaptation measures are designed to increase the capability and capacity of the Alliance to meet security challenges. Since the adoption of the RAP, NATO has maintained a continuous presence in Eastern member states through the conduct of exercises and training amongst Allied forces. Adaptation Measures include increasing the size and capability of the NRF and the establishment of NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs). Six NFIUs have been established in eastern NATO states, designed to facilitate the planning and deployment of the NRF and additional NATO forces. NATO has also raised the size and readiness of Multi-National Corps North-East in Szczecin Poland in order to maintain constant oversight of the North-Eastern border. NATO is establishing Multinational Division South-East and directing it to maintain constant oversight of the South-Eastern border. Additionally, prepositioning military equipment for training on the territory of eastern Alliance members; improving NATO’s ability to reinforce eastern Allies through the improvement of infrastructure throughout the Alliance; and improving NATO’s defence plans through the introduction of the Graduated Response Plans. Each of these Adaptation Measures was designed to ensure that NATO has “the right forces in the right place and with the right equipment,” and “that they are ready to move at very short notice to defend any Ally against any threat.”⁴¹

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_117320.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed November 4, 2015).

⁴⁰ NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, entry posted September 5, 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm (accessed November 4, 2015), para. 5-9; Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, “Back to the future? Russia’s hybrid warfare, revolutions in military affairs, and Cold War comparisons”, *NATO Defense College Research Paper* no. 120 (October 2015): 11-12; Jens Stoltenberg, Comments at NATO Defense Ministerial 5 February, 2015, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, entry posted February 23, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_117188.htm (accessed November 13, 2015).

⁴¹ NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, para. 7-8; NATO, NATO’s Readiness Action Plan – Fact Sheet, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, May 2015, http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_05/20150508_1505-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf

“NATO’s new Readiness Action Plan, or RAP, answers the Alliance’s call for a responsive deterrent in the face of state actors. With the RAP, NATO is implementing the most comprehensive reinforcement of collective defence since the end of the Cold War.”

General Petr Pavel, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, in his speech to the European Parliament, 20 October 2015

The resulting “adaptation” of NATO’s land forces over the last year has resulted in strong, fast land forces which can generate options short of war. But if deterrence fails, will enable NATO to prevail decisively.

Strength Matters: NATO enjoys a significant Strategic Correlation of Force advantage over Russia which, if applied, will be decisive

Military planners analyse the “Correlation of Forces” at the strategic and tactical levels to determine relative strengths between potential adversaries. At the strategic level, this calculation evaluates factors such as: armed forces size and composition, military budgets, population, Gross Domestic Product, and political legitimacy. A comparison of these strategic factors is illustrative of NATO’s strategic strength.

The strategic advantages of the Alliance vis a vis Russia are telling: armed forces which are over four times larger, a combined population which is over six times greater, defence budgets which are 18 times larger, and GDP which is 20 times greater. Additionally, Russia’s downward demographic and economic trends suggest these ratios will remain for the foreseeable future. The current planned modernization of the RF armed forces does not appear sustainable.⁴²

(accessed November 24, 2015); Jens Stoltenberg, Opening remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the ceremony inaugurating the headquarters of the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) in Lithuania, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, entry posted September 3, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_122325.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed November 23, 2015); Jens Stoltenberg, Press statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the inauguration of the headquarters of the NATO Forces Integration Unit Romania (NFIU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization, entry posted July 2, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_121545.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed November 24, 2015); Alexander Vershbow, NATO and the New Arc of Crisis - Speech by NATO Deputy Secretary General Ambassador Alexander Vershbow at the Conference on NATO and the New Arc of Crisis, Fundación Botín, Madrid, entry posted October 28, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_124170.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed November 24, 2015).

⁴² Matthew Bodner, Putin Warns Russian Defense Industry Not to Fall Behind, The Moscow Times, entry posted July 19, 2015, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/putin-warns-russian-defense-industry-not-to-fall-behind/525853.html> accessed December 01, 2015

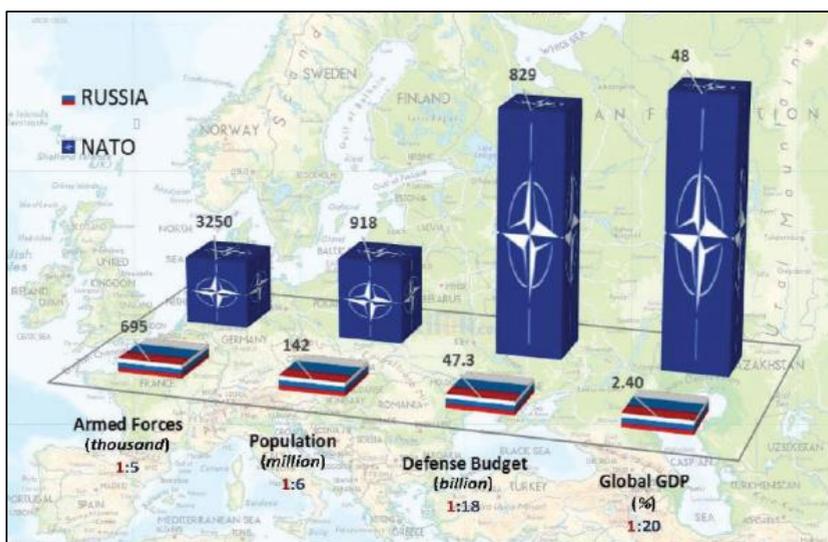


Figure 1: **The comparison of NATO and Russian military potential.**

Source: Unclassified information from NATO Allied Land Command (LANDCOM)

The one area of strategic parity is in nuclear weaponry, which poses an existential threat to Alliance members. But the mere possession of these weapons does not translate into strategic leverage unless one believes there is a possibility they might use them. As Henry Kissinger recently observed:

“The relatively stable order of the Cold War will be superseded by an international order in which projection by a state possessing nuclear weapons of an image of a willingness to take apocalyptic decisions may offer it a perverse advantage over rivals.”

-Henry Kissinger, World Order

The Russian Federation would appear to be such a state. Dr. Kissinger’s theory might explain the disturbing nuclear rhetoric emanating from Moscow; an attempt to translate their one area of strategic parity into leverage with the Alliance and as a means to fracture Alliance cohesion.

“Moscow’s nuclear sabre-rattling raises questions about Russia’s leaders’ commitment to strategic stability, their respect for norms against the use of nuclear weapons, and whether they respect the profound caution nuclear-age leaders showed with regard to the brandishing of nuclear weapons.”

-U.S. Secretary of Defence Ash Carter, Remarks on “Strategic and Operational Innovation at a Time of Transition and Turbulence” at Reagan Defence Forum: November 7, 2015

While a detailed discussion of nuclear policy is beyond the scope of this article, a willingness to leverage these capabilities as a form of escalation dominance is relevant to the discussion of how best to prevent conflict. Whether Russian leaders are bluffing or not, as some may believe, Alliance military leaders must assess their capabilities and stated intent at face value when planning how to deter and prevent conflict. Based on these statements and more, the risk of the Russians escalating a land war to the use of nuclear weapons is not zero. And if the risk is not zero, it becomes even more critical that we deter conventional conflict as a means to prevent escalation to nuclear conflict.

"[Russian] nuclear capability is significant; they have reorganized their conventional capability, their special operations capability. So Russia bears close watching and that is why I said they are the number one threat to the United States."

-General Mark A. Milley, United States Army Chief of Staff

"We were ready to do it."

Russian President Putin when asked in a documentary if he had been ready to put Russia's nuclear forces on alert to ensure Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine: March 15, 2015

"I don't think that Danes fully understand the consequence if Denmark joins the American-led missile defense shield. If they do, then Danish warships will be targets for Russian nuclear missiles,"

-Mikhail Vanin, the Russian ambassador to Denmark: March 21, 2015

"Asymmetric mega-weapons could appear in Russia by 2020 – 2025. They will rule out any threat of a large-scale war against Russia, even under the conditions of absolute superiority of the adversary in terms of traditional military systems."

-Dr. Konstantin Sivkov, President of the Academy of Geopolitical Studies explaining how a Russian mega-weapon could be used to create a tsunami off the coast of America or cause the Yellowstone super Volcano to erupt: March 25, 2015

"If they like being targets because of the American weapons systems, this is their choice. The deployment of elements of the BMD, the launch sites that are effectively aimed at our strategic nuclear forces – this is a problem for them. They automatically become our targets"

-Deputy Secretary of Russian Security Council, Evgeniy Lukyanov discussing Poland and Romania's deployment of BMD systems: June 24, 2015

"Given the powerful NATO air defense system on the European TOA, and the overwhelming superiority of the enemy in terms of fighter aviation, our airplanes do not have many chances of penetrating and reaching their targets. That is why, the deployment of systems, ...with nuclear payload, considerably increase the deterrent role of the Russian tactical nuclear weapons."

-Dr. Konstantin Sivkov, President of the Academy of Geopolitical Studies: June 24, 2015

"Over the past three years, companies of the military-industrial complex have created and successfully tested a number of prospective weapons systems that are capable of performing combat missions in a layered missile defence system."

-President Putin during a meeting discussing weapons designed to pierce a BMD shield: November 10, 2015

"Indeed, certain secret data was caught by the cameras, and that is why they were later deleted. We hope that this will not repeat in the future"

-Russian Presidential Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov acknowledging the development of unmanned submersible drones capable of carrying nuclear payloads: November 11, 2015

Analysis of Tactical Correlation of Forces: Why political and military speed matters

In order to determine how best to deter conventional conflict, we must examine the tactical correlation of forces. The Tactical Correlation of Forces is limited in time, scale and scope. While an adversary may be inferior at the strategic level, as Russia is, they may still be able to generate a positive Tactical Correlation of Forces at a specific place and time for a limited duration.⁴³

Military Science uses historical norms to determine what force ratios are required for successful tactical military operations. The chart below comes from US doctrine however similar ratios are found in most nations' military doctrine to include the Russian Federation.

The depicted force ratios here are the minimum necessary to predict success however they can be improved in one's favour through the use of Joint support: air, naval, Special Operations, Space, Cyber etc. If contemplating an attack with less than a three to one ratio, a prudent military planner cannot guarantee success. Hence the desirability of

⁴³ Keith A. Dunn and Stephen J. Flanagan, *NATO in the Fifth Decade* (Philadelphia, PA: Diane Publishing Company, May 1992), 242.

NATO being able to deliver to any eastern Ally a robust defensive force which achieves a 1:3 ratio against potential Russian aggression. Conversely, such a defensive force would not be escalatory in that it does not have favourable force ratios for offensive action.

However, under the existing set of conditions, the Russians enjoy certain advantages which enable them to generate a favourable force ratio for offensive action. If they were to successfully exploit a temporary tactical advantage to secure a gain, and then threaten nuclear escalation to check an Alliance response; they could parlay an area of strategic parity, (nuclear weaponry), and a limited tactical advantage into an enduring strategic outcome, the fracturing Alliance cohesion.

"Correlation of Forces" is a tool used to approximate the level of force required for a chosen mission. For example, the US Army uses the following table is used to determine force ratios for specific types of engagements:

Historical minimum planning ratios.		
<i>Friendly mission</i>	<i>Friendly : Enemy</i>	<i>Position</i>
Delay	1 : 6	
Defend	1 : 3	Prepared or fortified
Defend	1 : 2.5	Hasty
Attack	3 : 1	Prepared or fortified
Attack	2.5 : 1	Hasty
Counterattack	1 : 1	Flank

In a prepared defense you need at least one third of the forces of your attacker or 1:2.5 if you are in a hasty defense. To successfully attack you need at least 3 times the force of an adversary in a prepared defense or 2.5 times the force of the adversary in a hasty (rapidly created) defense.

Figure 2: "The Correlation of forces".

Source: Unclassified information from NATO Allied Land Command (LANDCOM)

What are the areas of tactical advantage which the Russians can generate?

Interior Lines. In the analysis of Tactical Correlation of Forces we first look at the interior lines⁴⁴ of the Russian Federation: the ability of the RF to mass troops faster than the Alliance at certain points on its borders with NATO countries i.e. Baltics, Poland. The Russians have three armies positioned in the Western Military District which can deploy 13-16 battle groups, totalling approximately 35,000 troops, within 48 hours to the border of the Alliance and another 90, 000 troops within 30 days.

Speed of decision-making. While the outcomes of RF decision-making are often criticized as illegitimate for not respecting existing international norms, the Russian Federation's unitary chain of command enables expeditious action across the whole of

⁴⁴ The US Army defines "interior lines" as Lines on which a force operates when its operations diverge from a central point. Department of the Army, ADRP 3-0, Unified Land Operations. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, May 2012), glossary 4.

government.⁴⁵ Conversely, while NATO's decisions possess the legitimacy of 28 Nations acting in unison, they require consensus among all 28 sovereign member states which can inevitably take time.

Tanks in Europe. The Russian Federation's armed forces, although four times smaller than the combined armed forces of all NATO allies, contains sufficient quantities of armour, air defence, long range fires and conscript soldiers to generate numerical advantage at certain points along our common borders before a large scale NATO response could be launched.

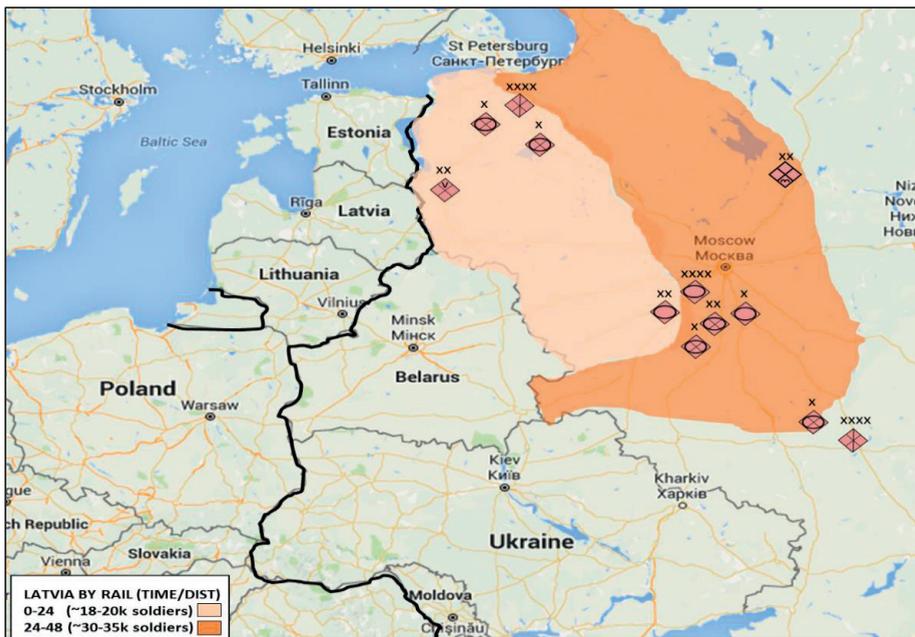


Figure 3: **Disposition of units in west part of Russia.**

Source: Unclassified information from NATO Allied Land Command (LANDCOM)

A comparison of RF and Alliance armour forces is instructive. While the Alliance has reduced its tank forces since the end of the Cold War, Russia has kept much of theirs in storage and modernized parts of their active force. Because of improved relations with RF at the time, the US removed all of its armoured forces from Europe by 2103. Therefore, even though the Alliance possesses more active armour forces than the Russians, these tanks are dispersed around the Alliance members States, meaning the

⁴⁵ Andrew Roth, Vladimir Putin's massive, triple-decker war room revealed, The Washington Post, entry posted November 21, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/11/21/vladimir-putins-massive-triple-decker-war-room-revealed/> (accessed November 30, 2015).

Russians can generate a local advantage in armour in certain areas for a finite period of time. If they chose (and could afford) to do so, the Russians could restore significant quantities of older model tanks, which could approach parity or even a numerical advantage against Allied forces.

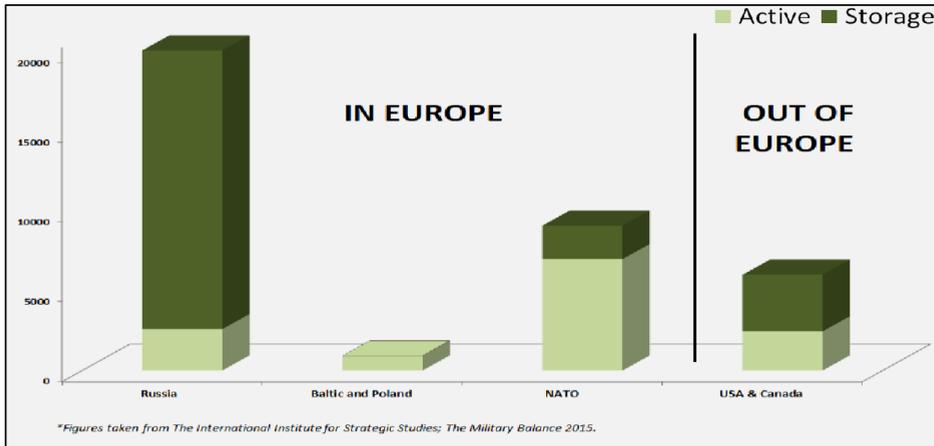


Figure 4: **Comparison of Russian Federation and Alliance armour forces.**

Source: *The Military Balance 2015*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London 2015. Unclassified information from NATO Allied Land Command (LANDCOM)

Snap Exercises. Through the use of 'snap exercises' and ambiguity, the Russian Federation repeatedly desensitizes and tests for weaknesses along NATO's boundaries. In concert with their annexation of Crimea and aggression against Ukraine, the RF has reduced transparency with NATO by exploiting provisions within the 2011 OSCE Vienna Document on security and confidence building measures. Allowing observers at large-scale exercises has been one of the principal ways in which nations have reduced the potential for mistake or miscalculation, which has often led to wars in the past. By classifying their exercises as "snap exercises" they invoke an exception within the Vienna document which does not require prior notification of OSCE member states.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Organization for the Security and Co-operation in Europe, Vienna Document 2011: On Confidence-And Security-Building Measures, <http://www.osce.org/fsc/86597?download=true> (accessed November 4, 2015), Ch. V Prov. 41, Chap. Van I Prov. 58; Damien Sharkov, Russian Snap Military Drill 'Could Turn Into Assault on Baltic Capital', entry posted February 23, 2015, <http://europe.newsweek.com/russian-snap-military-drill-could-turn-quick-assault-baltic-capital-308752> (accessed November 6, 2015); Jens Stoltenberg, Adapting to a changed security environment - Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington D.C. (incl. Q&A session), North Atlantic Treaty Organization, entry posted May 27, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_120166.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed November 6, 2015).

This exception is being used to increase the scale and frequency of these exercises beyond those allowed in the agreement as well as limit any observation. In fact, one such “snap exercise” was used to mask the invasion of Crimea in March 2014 and another was used to rehearse portions of their deployment to Syria.⁴⁷ These exercises enable the Russians to learn and improve their ability to conduct large-scale mobilizations and operational manoeuvre to generate the tactical COF advantage at key points using interior lines. Also these exercises use scenarios which specifically target NATO, such as their snap exercise in December of 2014 in which RF troops deployed into Kaliningrad and moved towards the Lithuanian border.

Anti-Access Area Denial (A2AD)⁴⁸. This military doctrinal term describes how RF forces seek to deny Allied access and freedom of action in key areas bordering the NATO-RF interface such as the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Far North and now the Eastern Mediterranean through the establishment of integrated Air Defence and Missile Zones.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Johan Norberg, The Use of Russia’s Military in the Crimean Crisis, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, entry posted March 13, 2014, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/13/use-of-russia-s-military-in-crimean-crisis/> (accessed November 23, 2015); Newsmax Wires, US Intelligence Lapse on Russian ‘Surprise’ Moves in Syria Probed, Newsmax, entry posted October 8, 2015, <http://www.newsmax.com/TheWire/us-intelligence-russia-syria/2015/10/08/id/695210/> (accessed November 23, 2015).

⁴⁸ Anti-access: Those actions and capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area. Area-denial: Those actions and capabilities, usually of shorter range, designed not to keep an opposing force out, but to limit its freedom of action within the operational area. Definitions found in: Department of Defense, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)*. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, January 2012), 6.

⁴⁹ By the early 1990s the Russian air defence paradigm was mature and well-studied, both by the Russians and their former opponents in the West. Several basic principles were implicit and well implemented in Russian designs, especially in the later generation of radars and missile systems:

1. Diversity in SAM systems and search/acquisition radars.
2. Geographically overlapping coverage by search/acquisition and engagement radars.
3. Networking of SAM systems and acquisition radars, using fixed lines and wireless radio links.
4. Increasingly, the deployment of highly mobile SAM batteries and radars.
5. Integration of passive Emitter Locating Systems (ELS).
6. Layered coverage with long range area defence SAMs and short-range point defence SAMs and AAA.
7. The wide use of emitting decoys to seduce anti-radiation missiles.
8. A hierarchical C3 system based primarily on mobile command posts at battery, district and regional levels.

Systems built around these eight ideas are now in production and being actively exported by Russian industry on the global stage. Therefore, any IADS which a Western air force must defeat post 2010 may be constructed in part, or wholly, around the fusion of the Soviet era and post-Soviet era IADS concepts.

Since 1991, Russia’s industry and research institutes have invested much intellectual capital and effort to overcome remaining weaknesses in the inherited Soviet model. These are reflected in a range of increasingly frequent design characteristics and deployment techniques in more recent Russian designs:

1. Mobility has improved, to the extent that many systems can “shoot and scoot” inside 5 minutes, to make lethal suppression extremely difficult.

2011 OSCE Vienna Document

Par.41. Notifiable military activities carried out without advance notice to the troops involved are exceptions to the requirement for prior notification to be made 42 days in advance.

Par.67.1. No participating State will carry out within three calendar years more than one military activity subject to prior notification, involving more than 40,000 troops or 900 battle tanks or 2,000 ACVs or 900 self-propelled and towed artillery pieces, mortars and multiple rocket launchers (100 mm calibre and above).

“The reality is that the rules-book of European security is out of date. We need to modernise it to reflect today's reality and re-engage Russia. We need snap inspections of snap exercises. We need lower thresholds for notification of exercises. We need measures to put more transparency on military activities and postures in Europe. And we need common standards to manage possible accidents and incidents at sea and in the air.

NATO is abiding by the rules and will continue to do so. At the same time, it is clear that we need a modernised regime negotiated within the OSCE framework. Unless we create a more intrusive and up-to-date transparency regime designed for this new reality, the danger of miscalculation, accidents and stumbling into a military confrontation is real and it is increasing.”

–Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, Modernising the rule-book of European security. November 26. 2015

Among the densest such zones in the world, these bastions include long-range surface-to-surface missiles systems and anti-ship missile systems. If activated, these networks would extend over sovereign Alliance land, sea and air space which could potentially set

2. Search/acquisition and SAM system engagement radars are to be actively defended against missile attacks by the use of point defence missiles, or AAA, the former independent or integrated into the area defence SAM battery.
 3. Surveillance and acquisition radars are shifting to the L-band, UHF-band and VHF-bands, reversing the trend to shorter wavelengths, and making stealth design increasingly difficult.
 4. SAM batteries are increasingly designed for autonomous operation, decoupling them from the rigid hierarchical command model of the Soviet era.
 5. Wireless radio networking of SAM batteries, search/acquisition radars, and command posts, is now almost universal.
 6. Most contemporary Russian radars are fully digital, frequency agile, and increasingly, advanced processing techniques such as Space Time Adaptive Processing (STAP) are employed.
 7. Most new Russian radars are solid state designs, and electronically steered phased arrays are preferred due to their agile beam steering and shaping capabilities, and high jam resistance.
 8. Radar range against conventional aircraft and missile kinematic range have virtually doubled since the early 1980s, in order to deny the use of support jamming aircraft.
- Dr. Karlo Kopp, Assessing Joint Strike Fighter Defence Penetration Capabilities, Air Power Australia, entry updated January 27, 2014, <http://ausairpower.net/APA-2009-01.html#mozTocId927290> (accessed November 13, 2015).

conditions for a violation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. If such an ART 5 situation were to occur, neutralization of these networks would require significant Allied Land, Air, Maritime and SOF Forces.⁵⁰ As one can see by the range rings of RF systems (Figure 5) in these bastions, the RF is attempting to recreate the defensive depth they lost with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, however, in so doing, they are increasing the potential for mistake or miscalculation which could escalate into armed attack against Alliance member states.



Figure 5: The ranges of selected missile systems of Russian Federation.

Source: Unclassified information from NATO Allied Land Command (LANDCOM)

The SS-26 ISKANDER Surface-to-Surface missile has a maximum range of 500 kilometres and if fired from the Kaliningrad Oblast can reach 5 NATO national capitals (Riga, Vilnius, Warsaw, Copenhagen, and Berlin) and most air and seaports within the Baltics with conventional or nuclear warheads. The SA-21 GROWLER Surface to Air missile has a maximum range of 400 kilometres, and extends over the sovereign

⁵⁰ Vko.ru, What You Need to Know About the Russia's Air/Space Defense System Concept, trans. by J. Hawk for South Front, entry posted September 8, 2015, <http://southfront.org/russia-air-space-defense-system-concept/> (accessed November 5, 2015); Stoltenberg, Adapting to a changed security environment, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_120166.htm?selectedLocale=en.

airspace of half of Poland, the entirety of Lithuania, and over half of Latvia. The SSC-5 BASTION Coastal Defence Missile System has an effective range of 600 kilometres and is currently deployed in Crimea and Murmansk. From its firing point on the Crimean peninsula, it can target any ship in the Black Sea.

NATO's goal is Conflict Prevention.

NATO prevents conflict through Deterrence.

NATO deters, in part, through the strength and speed of its forces.

Strength Matters

Speed Matters

NATO Military Focus and Capabilities must Evolve and are Evolving

Despite their overall strategic inferiority to NATO, given the Russian Federation capability to generate local tactical advantage in terms of the correlation of forces and to leverage its nuclear capabilities in a form of escalation dominance, how should Alliance military forces contribute to deterrence? Deterrence is ultimately a political outcome achieved in the mind of a potential adversary, convincing them that the costs of an action outweigh the benefits. The military supports our political leadership to deter in multiple ways. The Assurance measures in place contribute to deterrence through the presence of small Alliance forces training and exercising with our eastern Allies. Their presence demonstrates Alliance resolve and commitment to collective defence and, in the event of an armed attack, an adversary would be attacking multiple Allied forces thus potentially bringing to bear the full weight of the Alliance in response. The downside of this "Tripwire" approach is that these forces are not of sufficient strength to defend against a short notice Russian offensive therefore necessitating a campaign to retake Alliance territory after it had been seized. The costs of such an offensive campaign in terms of lives, material, time and money would greatly exceed the costs of defending that Ally and preventing the loss of territory in the first place.

An alternative to tripwire deterrence is to achieve deterrence through a forward defence. Positioning strong forces to achieve a favourable tactical COF for defence, one to three, would raise serious doubts in the mind of an adversary that they can achieve their objectives. Reducing the chances of an armed conventional attack reduces the potential that such a confrontation could escalate to the nuclear level, a desirable outcome given that the risk of nuclear escalation by the RF is not zero. But even though effective militarily in deterring aggression, this course of action would potentially violate the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act and invite escalation by the Russians. For these reasons, and the additional costs associated with forward defence, Alliance members have shown little appetite for this option. This leads us to a hybrid option in which we sustain tripwire deterrence while simultaneously improving our ability to rapidly reinforce and establish

an effective defensive posture as conditions warrant. Deterrence by demonstrating Alliance ability to quickly move strong forces to defend any threatened State within the Alliance. In short, we deter with strength and speed. NATO possesses the forces and capabilities to deter in such a manner, but they must be used in different ways than they have been since the end of the Cold War. What are these adjustments which the Alliance must make to deter conflict in this manner? First, we must start with an understanding of collective defence within the Alliance. The operative portion of the Washington Treaty which established collective defence within NATO is called Article 5.

Article 5

“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 recognized 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.”

- The North Atlantic Treaty (1949): Article 5 para. 1.

Indicators and warnings (I&W) First and foremost, the Alliance intelligence enterprise must provide adequate indicators and warnings of potential aggression which would result in the potential for an “armed attack” as per Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.⁵¹ These are essential to achieve the Speed necessary to prevent war by enabling the POL-MIL dialogue regarding timely deployments of the NATO Response Force and the High readiness Forces of the Alliance. I&W are not solely an intelligence function but involve the use of open source as well as diplomatic assessments. Without adequate I&W to initiate timely decisions, there will be no options short of war. A NATO Response Force which arrives early may be able to deter, but one which arrives late, after an armed attack has occurred will surely have to fight.

High Readiness Forces (HRF) This initiative would formally address a gap in current NATO Rapid Response timetables. The NRF, described above, can respond to a NAC unanimous resolution by beginning the deployment of the Spearhead Force, the VJTF of 8000 troops within 5 -7 days. The remainder of the NRF begins to move in 30-45 days. Main bodies of NATO Militaries would follow afterwards. Thus, there is a window of vulnerability in the early days and weeks of a crisis. This can be filled with other NATO forces.

⁵¹ NATO, The North Atlantic Treaty: Washington D.C. – 4 April 1949 (Washington Treaty), The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Last updated December 09, 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm (accessed December 01, 2015), Article 5.

In addition to the NATO Response Force, most nations of the Alliance maintain national high readiness forces. These forces are retained as national reserves and are not offered to NATO on a standing basis; but could be offered to NATO in the case of a potential Article 5 scenario. Additionally, they could deploy based on determination by a Nation that an Article 5 obligation to a threatened Ally is warranted. In either case, these HRF can deploy in days and weeks. Combined, the NRF and HRF of the Alliance total up to 4 Division equivalents, consisting of approximately 50,000 troops, primarily the professional Airborne and Marine infantry forces of each nation. The rapid deployment of these forces would achieve the necessary Correlation of Forces to defend, 1:3, within days or weeks and thus counter any RF tactical advantage. The Speed with which these forces can deploy enables the Alliance to counter, in part, RF interior lines and their streamlined political decision-making system.

These are also “forcible entry capable” units in the event certain airports or seaports are unavailable. This rapid reinforcement capability was exercised in August of 2015 when the NRF and HRF of nine Alliance nations conducted EXERCISE SWIFT RESPONSE 15. They assembled at a base in Germany and conducted numerous SOF and airborne operations in a simulated reinforcement of threatened Allies. This capability enables the Alliance to respond to multiple threats should they arise simultaneously, for example, if the RF attempted horizontal escalation across multiple areas such as the High-North, the Black Sea or Baltics. Given these HRF are light forces they do not constitute an offensive threat to RF and are therefore non-escalatory but are effective in defensive operations when they enjoy local air superiority. NATO Allies could consider at the upcoming Warsaw Summit a mechanism to make these forces available in extremis as an adjunct to the NRF capability, closing the aforementioned window of vulnerability.

This capability was most recently demonstrated on November 4, 2015 during Exercise Trident Juncture where 2nd Brigade 82nd Airborne Division, United State Army was alerted and deployed directly from Fort Bragg, North Carolina and jumped into San Gregorio, Spain 7.5 hours later preceded by US Air Force B52 bombers deploying directly from Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana.

Pre-Positioned Forces and Equipment. While the Alliance can move light forces quickly, heavier forces have a greater defensive capability against heavy Russian Federation forces. Their longer deployment times, 30-90 days, especially from the continental United States, lessens their deterrent effect early in a crisis. However, by pre-positioning tanks and other armoured forces, the Alliance can counter RF interior lines, more rapidly deploy heavy deterrent forces to threatened Allies in Europe and buy time for diplomatic resolution of a crisis. Proposals to pre-position a US Division set of heavy equipment in Europe would significantly enhance the deterrent capability of Alliance land forces by enabling a more rapid reinforcement of early arriving light forces with heavy combat capability.

Neutralizing A2AD. To retain freedom of action within Alliance territory and the surrounding air and sea space, the Alliance must develop effective counters to evolving Russian A2AD capabilities. While the RF may contend that these are defensive capabilities designed to protect them from NATO intrusion on their borders, they must also understand with certainty that any lethal use of these systems over Alliance territory could constitute an armed attack and invoke Article 5. Neutralization of these systems would be accomplished by Alliance Joint ISR and Joint Fires. These Allied capabilities exist but have not been arrayed against the RF A2AD sites. The continued RF expansion and deepening of these systems necessitates that the Alliance develop plans should it be necessary to defend ourselves. For example, the recent establishment of SA21 radars and missile infrastructure in eastern Syria extends the RF air defence coverage over sovereign Turkish (NATO) airspace, including Incirlik Airbase from where US aircraft operate against terrorists in Syria.

Fill specific gaps and equipment shortfalls. Understandably, the end of the Cold War and the conduct of a ten-year campaign in Afghanistan lead to an optimization of Alliance armies for the conduct of counterinsurgency operations, not for inter-state high intensity conflict against a symmetrical opponent. As a result, despite NATO's overall strategic advantage in the size of armed forces and defence budgets, there are certain gaps and shortfalls, which exist in some Alliance conventional capabilities. These need to be considered in view of the latest Alliance defensive planning, the Graduated Response Plans. To enable rapid reinforcement and deterrence, these capabilities include: Strategic Lift, anti-armour systems for light forces, Armour, Air Defence, Long Range Fires, Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance, and Electronic warfare among others. The Secretary General's encouragement of the 2% spending goal, if met, would go a long way towards filling these gaps and shortfalls.

Training and doctrine. Shifting focus from a decade of counterinsurgency to readiness for a high intensity collective defence against a symmetrical opponent necessitates a relook of existing doctrine and training. The advent of Hybrid Warfare is subject of intense study on how military forces best support alliance governments responses to hybrid threats⁵²: border control, law enforcement, intelligence and strategic communications challenges to name a few. These are being integrated into NATO exercises at all levels.

For the rapid deployment of light forces to deter against Hybrid threats, the creation of reconnaissance and security zones in support of National Home Defence Forces is key. If those same light forces have to deter against and armoured threat, they must transition

⁵² The US Army defines a Hybrid threat as the diverse and dynamic combination of regular forces, irregular forces, terrorist forces, and/or criminal elements unified to achieve mutually benefitting effects. Department of the Army, ADRP 3-0, Unified Land Operations. (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, May 2012), 1-3.

to a light anti-armour defence with local air superiority, which necessitates neutralization of any A2AD threat and sufficient fires and anti-armour capability within the light force. As time permits and heavy forces are deployed to conduct a forward defence of alliance territory, those forces must be trained in combined arms defensive operations. The unique conditions of this defence must be trained also: fighting within sovereign Alliance members states and protecting civilians and infrastructure to the maximum extent possible.

The Baltic Scenario: One hypothetical scenario which combines Russian use of a tactical COF advantage with escalation dominance is the defence of the Baltic States. Some argue that it is low probability but unquestionably of very high risk for the alliance. This would involve a rapid mobilization in the Russian Federation Western Military District to seize all or parts of the Baltic States ostensibly to protect ethnic Russians⁵³. (There were 30 Million +/-⁵⁴ Russians outside Russian Federation borders when the Soviet Union disbanded.) In reality, however, the seizure recreates strategic depth they lost with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Using their tactical COF advantage generated by a rapid mobilization of the 6th CAA, the 20th CAA and the 1st TA they hypothetically could seize parts or all of the three Baltic States and northern Poland. Such an attack would include activation of their dense A2AD network to isolate the area, prevent the introduction of reinforcements, and then threaten nuclear escalation to “freeze” the conflict. This would confront the Alliance with the dilemma of responding to a clear violation of Article 5 in which the Russians would threaten nuclear escalation - a prospect which the Russians would hope would fracture Alliance cohesion and change the global security architecture in their favour.

NATO military response to this prospect mandates detailed plans which maintain freedom of action in Alliance and international air, sea and land space by countering RF A2AD zones and meeting their tactical forces with sufficient strength to defend against

⁵³ Bonds, Limiting Regret, 7; Christopher S. Chivvis, The Baltic Balance – How to Reduce the Chances of War in Europe, Council on Foreign Relations, entry posted July 1, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/baltics/2015-07-01/baltic-balance> (accessed November 5, 2015); Terrence Kelly, Stop Putin’s Next Invasion Before it Starts, US News & World Report, entry posted March 20, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2015/03/20/stop-putins-aggression-with-us-forces-in-eastern-europe> (accessed November 5, 2015).

⁵⁴ On October 24, 2015 Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov published a detailed article in the official “Russian Gazette” titled “The Russian World on the Path of Consolidation”, in which he stated that “providing overall support to the Russian World is an unconditional foreign policy priority for Russia, which is embedded in the Russian Federation’s Foreign Policy Concept”. He concluded by expressing confidence that the Congress will “successfully solve the task that lie ahead of us in the interest of unveiling further the colossal potential of the Russian World.” In it he discussed Russia’s plans of using its diasporas, numbering approximately 30 million according to Lavrov, to support their efforts to expand Russian influence and to further Russian goals internationally. The original article in Russian can be found here: <http://www.rg.ru/2015/11/02/lavrov.html>

any armed attack of an Alliance member. We must then plan and rehearse those capacities in a transparent manner to clearly convey Alliance capabilities.⁵⁵

Speed Matters: Speed generates political options short of war

In this scenario, the speed of Alliance response in the first critical days and weeks would be vital to deterrence and conflict prevention. The chart below highlights the necessity of using rapidly deployable high readiness forces to achieve the correlation of forces necessary to adequately defend and therefore deter any Russian attack. The introduction of high readiness forces early enables the Alliance to achieve a 1:3 COF within two weeks and a 1:2.5 COF ratio soon thereafter, which means the RF forces would be incapable of achieving a *fait accompli*. This will be critical to preserving the time and space to resolve any crisis through diplomatic means.

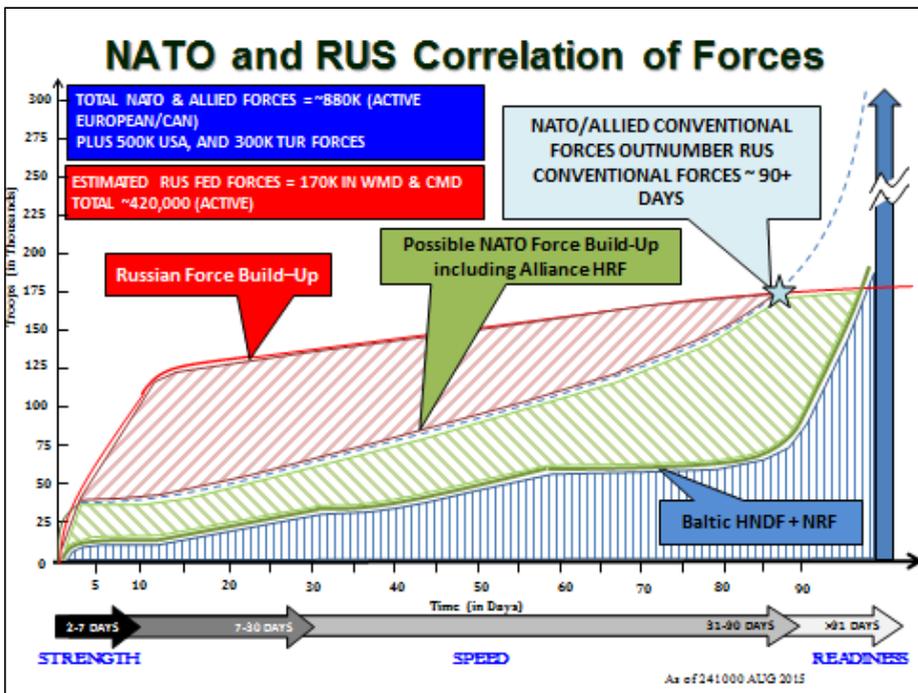


Figure 6: The correlation of forces between NATO and Russian Federation.

Source: Unclassified information from NATO Allied Land Command (LANDCOM)

⁵⁵ NATO, Statement by NATO Deputy Spokesperson Carmen Romero on NATO military exercises, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, entry posted August 12, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_122048.htm (accessed November 4, 2015); Drew Brooks, Russians keep eye on European training; Swift Response underway with hundreds of Bragg soldiers, Fayobserver.com, entry posted 27 August 2015, http://www.fayobserver.com/military/russians-keep-eye-on-european-training-swift-response-underway-with/article_242b12b5-589a-5d8b-9601-b5a66516cab4.html (accessed November 4, 2015).

Political Speed. In addition to military speed, we must also consider the speed of political decision-making. Political speed is required to preserve options short of war. A decision not to immediately act is a decision to forfeit certain military options, such as deterrence or defence and be left with no other option than a costly campaign to retake Alliance territory.

Therefore, expeditious political decisions preserve political options at a smaller military cost. Military leaders can contribute to expeditious political decision making through detailed military planning in advance of a crisis. Detailed planning informs the dialogue between military and civilian leadership over options. Detailed planning enables interoperability between military forces which also creates options for political leaders. Thus, NATO's strength and speed generate political options short of war. But, if deterrence fails, strength and speed enable us to prevail in conflict.

The cohesion and competence of NATO's land forces has never been higher. Our Armies are mainly composed of volunteer professionals who have served alongside one another for ten years in Afghanistan. This high level of professionalism and combat experience is unprecedented and far exceeds that of any other Alliance or individual Army on the planet, to include the RF. Our Soldiers are led by exceptional leaders who are intensely studying the emerging challenges we face and preparing their forces to meet those challenges. Alliance members should take heart from the quality of their Armies. Despite over a decade of combat, they are not tired, they are ready!

Managing uncertainty, creating options, avoiding mistakes or miscalculation

We must be alert to reduce the potential for mistake or miscalculation that could lead to a military confrontation which could then escalate. Mistake or miscalculation are reduced through increased transparency and communication with the Russian Federation political and military establishments. Transparency existed in the Cold War⁵⁶ but now, due to Russian actions, Transparency has been greatly reduced. There have been numerous calls to re-establish transparency through the proper notification and observations of exercises as recommended by Secretary General Stoltenberg and through reinvigorated maritime talks, air talks, ground exercise observers and other means to enable de-escalation in a crisis.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Examples of Cold War procedures which provided transparency include: the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (1972), the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (1972), the Peaceful Nuclear Explosion Treaty (1976), the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (1988), the Conventional Forces in Europe (1990), the Confidence and Security Building Measures (Vienna Document) (1990), the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (1991), the Open Sky Treaty (1992), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (1996), and the OTAN RUSSIE (2002). Examples were cited from: Allan Krass, *The United States and Arms Control: The Challenge of Leadership* (Wesport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 29-67.

⁵⁷ Agence France-Presse, NATO To Russia: Be Transparent on Military Drills, DefenseNews.com, entry posted May 19, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/europe/2015/05/19/nato-urges-russia-transparent-military-exercises/27606343/> (accessed November 4, 2015); Fyodor Lukyanov, U.S. and

“We should not sleep-walk into unintended escalation.”

-Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, November 26, 2015

Conclusion

NATO's first goal is conflict prevention. One way that military forces contribute to conflict prevention is by deterring conventional conflict. Conflict prevention is ultimately a political or diplomatic endeavour which is supported by the military's readiness to defend our vital interests. We deter through our strength and our speed. Strength and Speed are delivered through Readiness. Military Readiness costs money, but the costs of readiness pale in comparison to the human and material costs of war.

“If you desire peace, prepare for war.”

-Publius Flavius Vegetius

“You might not be interested in war, but war is interested in you...”

-Vladimir Ilich Lenin

Ultimately, we hope for a time when we can work together with the Russians in our areas of common interest.⁵⁸ Until that time comes, we in NATO's military structure must contribute to the prevention of a conflict by consolidating our strength, speed and readiness to provide options short of war. If deterrence fails, the strategic advantages that NATO enjoys means that we would prevail, but our mandate is to first and foremost prevent any conflict that threatens the objective of NATO for their nations to live “whole, free and at peace.”⁵⁹

Russia Back to Cold War Diplomacy, The Moscow Times, entry posted May 26, 2015. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/opinion/article/us-and-russia-back-to-cold-war-diplomacy/522383.html> (accessed November 5, 2015).

⁵⁸ NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, para. 21-23; NATO, Interview of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, entry posted November 29, 2014. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_115877.htm?selectedLocale=en accessed November 6, 2015; Stoltenberg, “Adapting to a changed security environment”, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_120166.htm?selectedLocale=en; Peter Zwack, “It's High Time for US, Russian Militaries to Start Meeting Again”, *Defense One*, 19 NOV 2015.

⁵⁹ NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, para. 1.

NATO Defence Expenditures and the Baltic Member-States

Dr. Grzegorz Kozłowski

NATO has set guidelines for defence expenditures at the Summit in Wales in 2014. According to them the member states should allocate at least 2 % of their GDP for defence, including 20 % for major equipment. The paper analyses two issues: the current policy of the NATO Baltic member states in that regard and factors which trigger difficulties in making a comparison of defence spending.

Introduction

Art. 3 of the Brussels Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussel 11-12 July 2018⁶⁰ confirmed the commitments “to all aspects of the Defence Investment Pledge” agreed at the 2014 Wales Summit. That includes expectations from the Member States to keep defence expenditures on the level of at least of 2 % of their Gross Domestic Product, including at least 20 % for major equipment. Among all the NATO Baltic Member States⁶¹, only Germany is lagging behind the set guidelines. That might pose a real challenge for the Alliance, especially in the context of the current foreign and security policy of the United States.

Background

NATO legal framework for spending on defence is quite precise. Art. 3 of the North Atlantic Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack”. The allies are committed to develop their defence potentials, both individually and jointly. These commitments have been already specified in the first Strategic Concept of NATO stated that „a successful defence of the North Atlantic Treaty nations through maximum efficiency of their armed forces, with the minimum necessary expenditures of manpower, money and materials, is the goal of defence planning”. This obligation was reiterated in different forms in the subsequent Strategic Concepts. According to the current Strategic

⁶⁰ Press Release (2018) 074, 11 July 2018, /in/
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm

⁶¹ For the purposes of this article, the Baltic Sea region is defined as the NATO member states belonging to the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) – Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Poland. Iceland is excluded since it does not have Armed Forces and not spending for defence at all.

Concept, Allies are committed to “sustain the necessary levels of defence spending, so that our armed forces are sufficiently resourced” and have to “ensure that NATO has the full range of capabilities necessary to deter and defend against any threat to the safety and security of [their] populations”⁶².

The necessary levels of defence spending have been agreed during the NATO Summit in Wales. Art. 14 of the Wales Summit Declaration stipulates that Allies will spend at least 2 % of their GDP for defence and will allocate “more than 20% of their defined budgets on major equipment, including related Research & Development”⁶³. Warsaw and Brussels NATO Summits confirmed this requirement⁶⁴.

The debate on the ‘appropriate level of defence spending’ has been vivid since the beginning of the Alliance and it is mostly connected with the expectations of the United States vis-à-vis the European Allies to be more financially and military engaged. It started during the so called ‘the Great Debate’ in Congress in 1951, in the context of the Marshall Plan and US engagement in Korean Peninsula. Senator John Stennis (D-MS) stated at that time that “(...) unless European nations show quick and conclusive proof of their economic and military support (...) we would have nothing left to do but withdraw our assistance”. The discussion went through the troop reduction talks in the late 1960s and early 1970s. At a 1963 National Security Council meeting, President John F. Kennedy stated that the US “cannot continue to pay for the military protection of Europe while the NATO states are not paying their fair share and living off the fat of the land”⁶⁵. US senators had been arguing for stronger and more independent Europe which would be able to assume most of the burdens of its own defence. Senator Mike Mansfield (D-NY), the majority leader in the Senate, considered the burden sharing imbalance within NATO ridiculous and unjust⁶⁶. In 1977 NATO Ministerial Guidance, the first defence spending target was issued. The Allies agreed at that time to increase defence expenditures by 3 % annually (to address larger defence resources of Soviet Union), but these guidelines have never been met. The discussion on the necessity of greater

⁶² 2010 NATO *Strategic Concept*. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_68580.htm , (accessed on January 13 2019).

⁶³ *Wales Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales*, Sep. 5, 2014. https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm , (accessed on October 30, 2018).

⁶⁴ See: *Warsaw Summit Communiqué, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016*, para 34, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm , (accessed on 20 December 2018).

⁶⁵ Senate Resolution 570, *Emphasizing the Importance of Meeting NATO Spending Commitments*, Congressional Record Senate, July 2018. <https://www.congress.gov/crec/2018/07/10/CREC-2018-07-10-pt1-PgS4878.pdf> , (accessed January 13 2019).

⁶⁶ P. Lazar, *The Mansfield Amendment and the US Commitment in Europe, 1966-1975*, Monterrey, Naval Postgraduate Studies, 2003–2006, http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/961/03Jun_Lazar.pdf?sequence=3 (accessed January 13 2019).

European engagement were coming back during 80s⁶⁷, after the Cold War⁶⁸, when the defence expenditures in Europe have been heavily reduced and at beginning of XXI century⁶⁹. Robert Gates, Secretary of Defence under Obama administration emphasized that “defence budgets – in absolute terms, as a share of economic output – have been chronically starved for adequate funding for a long time, with the shortfalls compounding on themselves each year”⁷⁰.

The change of policy was brought with the NATO Summit in Wales, but the new dynamics on defence expenditures came with the hard-line rhetoric from President Trump who put a burden sharing as the key priority in the US policy vis-à-vis NATO. Already in 2016 presidential campaign he described the Alliance as obsolete, emphasizing that the US is paying the vast majority of all NATO spending. He was especially critical in the context of 2018 NATO Summit in Brussels stating that “United States was paying for anywhere from 70 to 90 percent of it, depending on the way you calculate” and expecting that NATO Allies should be paying even up to 4 %⁷¹. That created political pressure which changed the course of thinking of many countries and put the burden sharing as one of the most important area of internal policy. The debate is vigorous as never before and could determine the position of transatlantic ties for the next decades. European allies, including the Baltic states, should closely monitor their approach towards defence expenditures.

Defence expenditures: The Baltic States

The US allocates for defence more than 700 billion USD per year, which is approximately 70 % of the defence expenditures of all NATO member-states. They spend two times more than all the other allies together and more than the seven other biggest spenders on defence all over the world. NATO Baltic States members are spending only 7,67 % of all the NATO member states defence spending. Germany (4th in NATO), as the biggest Baltic States, pay for the defence the most, which is 5,03 %. The others are allocating as follows: Poland (9th), 1,19 %; Norway (11th), 0,72 %; Denmark (14th), 0,43 % and the Baltic States (Lithuania – 20th, Estonia – 23rd, Latvia – 24th) with respectively 0,11, 0,06 and 0,07 %.

⁶⁷ i.e. an attempt to cap US force levels in Europe. see: A. Tonelson, *Promises, Promises: The Failure of US NATO Burden-Sharing Policy*, p. 2-3,

www.atlcom.nl/ap_archive/pdf/AP%202002%20nr.%203/Tonelson.pdf , accessed on Jan. 13, 2019.

⁶⁸ i.e. UK Prime Minister wrote in 1998 that „if Europe wants to maintain its commitment to Europe, Europe must share more of the burden share in defending the West’s security interests. Ibidem p. 6.

⁶⁹ The issue was discussed during NATO Summits in Prague (2002), Riga (2006; NATO Summit declaration explicitly addressed the budget issue: ‘we encourage nations whose defense spending is declining to halt that decline and to aim to increase defense spending in real term’ – see C. Ek, NATO’s Prague Capabilities Commitment, CRS Report for Congress, Jan. 24, 2007.

<https://fas.org/sqp/crs/row/RS21659.pdf> , accessed on Jan. 13, 2019; and Bucharest (2008).

⁷⁰ R. Fointaine, *2 Percent is no Magic Number*, Foreign Policy, May 24, 2017.

⁷¹ RAO Bulletin, July 15th, Veteran Information Bulletin, p. 6-7.

Table 1. Level of defence spending of NATO Allies (2017-2018)

	Country	Defence spending (in Millions of USD – current prices)		Share of defence spending among all NATO countries (%)	
		2017e ⁷²	2018e	2017e	2018e
1.	USA	685,957	706,063	71,55	69,67
2.	UK	55,344	61,508	5,77	6,07
3.	France	46,036	52,025	4,80	5,13
4.	Germany	45,580	51,009	4,75	5,03
5.	Italy	23,852	25,780	2,48	2,54
6.	Canada	22,467	21,601	2,34	2,13
7.	Turkey	12,972	15,219	1,35	1,50
8.	Spain	11,864	13,863	1,23	1,37
9.	Poland	9,935	12,088	1,04	1,19
10.	The Netherlands	9,788	13,023	1,02	1,28
11.	Norway	6,463	7,266	0,67	0,72
12.	Greece	4,748	5,004	0,49	0,49
13.	Belgium	4,504	5,114	0,47	0,50
14.	Denmark	3,780	4,376	0,39	0,43
15.	Romania	3,643	4,835	0,38	0,47
16.	Portugal	2,702	3,320	0,28	0,33
17.	Czech Rep.	2,255	2,821	0,24	0,28
18.	Hungary	1,468	1,733	0,15	0,17
19.	Slovakia	1,053	1,320	0,11	0,13
20.	Lithuania	816	1,062	0,08	0,11
21.	Bulgaria	723	1,014	0,07	0,10
22.	Croatia	698	799	0,07	0,08
23.	Estonia	540	637	0,06	0,06
24.	Latvia	512	701	0,05	0,07
25.	Slovenia	476	567	0,04	0,05
26.	Luxembourg	325	391	0,03	0,04
27.	Albania	144	179	0,01	0,02
28.	Montenegro	66	87	0,01	0,01
29.	Iceland	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
30.	Overall	958,711	1,013,406	1	1

Source: Communique PR/CP(2018)091, *Defence Expenditure of NATO countries (2011-2018)*, 10 July 2018, NATO Documents.

⁷² e-estimates.

According to the 2018 data (see tables 1 and 2 below) only three countries, US, UK and Latvia, are meeting requirements of spending 2 % of GDP for defence and 20 % for major equipment. In the context of the first factor we can group NATO Baltic Member States in three different baskets. First (Estonia – 2,14 %, Latvia – 2,0 %, Poland – 1,98 % and Lithuania - 1,96 %) are meeting (or soon-to-be meeting) the current requirements in terms of the level of defence expenditures and major equipment. Poland and Estonia have been spending an agreed amount since 2015 (certain minor deficits in keeping the reach by Poland stemming from the financial accounting i.e. not using full amount of money accounted for the budgetary year). Latvia and Lithuania are finally reaching this level in 2018.

In the second basket we have Norway (1,61) and Denmark (1,21), which are well below the target, but both of the countries are having plans to change the current situation. The Danish Government concluded recently an agreement to increase these expenditures by 20 % within the next five years (*Defence Agreement 2018-2023*)⁷³. But even with this growth Denmark will (at the current GDP it would mean – 1,9 % GDP) not reach the limit. Similar steps as in Copenhagen are being made in Oslo. Norway is spending this year a decent amount of 1,61 % of GDP with a plan to increase defence spending by 2020 by close to 0,9 billion USD above the current level⁷⁴. It will also be less than 2 % of GDP (for the current level of GDP - 1,8 %).

The most challenging situation with reaching the target is with a position of Germany. Berlin is spending on defence 1,24 % of GDP with a plan to increase it in 2019 only to 1,31 %. Any other proposals to reach the level of at least 1,5 % by 2024 seems to be currently politically and economically not feasible⁷⁵.

The second 'spending requirement' regards the structure of defence budget. According to the guidelines, at least 20% of the funds spend on defence should be allocated for the military equipment. It aims at the modernization and the acquisition of modern warfare systems by all Allies.

Four Baltic States are meeting requirements at this moment with: Latvia (31,58 – second highest level in NATO), Lithuania (28,88), Norway (26,77) and Poland (23,95). Estonia is close to 20 % target (18,15) and Germany and Denmark are staying behind (respectively 14,13 and 13,43).

⁷³ *Defence Agreement 2018-2023*. <http://www.fmn.dk/temaer/forsvarsforlig/Documents/danish-defence-agreement-2018-2023-pdf.pdf> accessed on Oct. 29, 2018.

⁷⁴ *Capable and Sustainable. Long Term Defense Plan 2016-2020*. Norwegian Ministry of Defence /in/ <https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/fd/dokumenter/rapporter-og-regelverk/capable-and-sustainable-ltp-english-brochure.pdf> , accessed on Oct. 29, 2018.

⁷⁵ S. Siebold, A. Shalal, *German mid-term military budget not enough, says defense ministry*, July 9, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-military/mid-term-german-military-budget-not-enough-says-defense-ministry-idUSKBN1JZ0XH>

Table 2. Level of defence spending & their share in the GDP of NATO Allies (2017-2018)

	Country	Share of defence spending in GDP (%)		Share of military expenditure spent on military equipment (%)	
		2017e	2018e	2017e	2018e
1.	USA	3,57	3,50	28.43	26.81
2.	Greece	2,38	2,27	15.47	12.40
3.	UK	2,11	2,10	22.03	21.68
4.	Estonia	2,08	2,14	19.22	18.15
5.	Poland	1,89	1,98	22.04	23.95
6.	France	1,78	1,81	24.17	23.66
7.	Lithuania	1,73	1,96	31.61	28.88
8.	Romania	1,72	1,93	33.20	34.69
9.	Latvia	1,69	2,00	19.57	31.58
10.	Norway	1,55	1,61	24.70	26.77
11.	Turkey	1,52	1,68	30.60	31.55
12.	Montenegro	1,38	1,58	4.89	9.66
13.	Canada	1,36	1,23	11.02	17.61
14-15	Bulgaria	1,27	1,56	8.10	28.86
	Croatia	1,27	1,30	7.53	13.25
16-17	Germany	1,24	1,24	13.75	14.13
	Portugal	1,24	1,36	10.02	12.97
18-19	Denmark	1,16	1,21	10.39	13.43
	The Netherlands	1,16	1,35	16.80	24.93
20.	Italy	1,15	1,15	20.68	21.12
21.	Albania	1,11	1,19	6.96	10.72
22.	Slovakia	1,10	1,20	17.74	21.05
23.	Hungary	1,05	1,08	15.34	15.08
24.	Czech Rep.	1,04	1,11	11.12	12.39
25.	Slovenia	0,98	1,01	4.04	8.22
26.	Belgium	0,91	0,93	6.41	8.20
27.	Spain	0,90	0,93	20.39	23.04
28.	Luxembourg	0,52	0,55	42.06	41.03
29.	Iceland	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Communique PR/CP(2018)091, *Defence Expenditure of NATO countries (2011-2018)*, 10 July 2018, NATO Documents.

Defence Expenditures. Burden-sharing.

NATO Guidelines for defence expenditures are clear. This kind of sources is 'denominated' in GDP and is defined as 'military effort' or 'military burden'. This measure – as it was put by NATO's Defence Review Committee in 1988 - is '(percentage of GDP devoted to defence) the best known, most easily understood, most widely used and (...) the most telling input measure. It broadly depicts defence input in relations to a country's ability to contribute. It takes rich and poor members' status into consideration and is not subject to distortion by exchange rate fluctuation'⁷⁶. The compromise agreed by the all member states of NATO cannot be directly questioned, but it does not mean that it is free of controversies. In fact, the optimal comparison of expenditures cannot be analysed only on the level of defence expenditures expressed in GDP, but it has to take into account at least four observations.

First, we have to remember that there is no common term for 'defence expenditures'. As M. Brzoska stated that "authoritative institutions have adopted standard definitions but national governments are free to use their own definitions". Thus, governments and international organizations often have differing views on the issue. This factor hinders comparative actions. They are, by nature, exposed to this type of inequalities⁷⁷. According to NATO's terminology they are "payment made by national government[s] specifically to meet the need of its armed forces"⁷⁸. This definition includes the budgets of the ministries of defence and defence-related expenditures of other public institutions. The scope of this definition is broad and allows Allies to label certain types of expenditures as defence spending.

Based on a report published by the Assembly of the Western European Union in 1983, a common definition of defence spending was adopted by NATO in 1952. It says that „defence budgets to NATO definition tend to be slightly higher than national defence budgets submitted to parliament, largely because it was easier to agree on a common NATO definition by including items already included in the defence budgets of at least one NATO country, rather than by excluding items not included in the national definitions of a majority of countries"⁷⁹. Conversely, the term "military spending" includes a broad variety of issues seen by particular Allies as defence-related, including payments to service pension funds, and costs of internal security forces that would serve under military command in⁸⁰.

⁷⁶ See J. Ringsmose, *NATO Burden-Sharing Redux: Continuity and Change after the Cold War*, Paper prepared for the ECPR Joint Session of Workshops, Lisbon 2009, p. 8.

⁷⁷ See K. Hartley, T. Sandler, *Handbook of Defense Economics*, vol. 1, Elsevier North Holland, 1995, p. 46-67.

⁷⁸ Communique PR/CP(2016)011, *Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2008-2015)*, 28 January 2016 /in/ http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_01/20160129_160128-pr-2016-11-eng.pdf (accessed 28th of March 2017).

⁷⁹ *Report of the Committee on Defence Questions and Armaments of the Assembly of Western European Union, Burden Sharing in Alliance*, Document 947, Paris, 1983, p. 13.

⁸⁰ See G. Kozłowski, *Finance NATO*, Bellona Editions 2008.

Table 3. Defence & development aid spending in selected NATO countries

Country	Defence spending		Development aid spending	
	2017e	2018e	2016	2017
US	3,57	3,50	0,186	0,177
Germany	1,24	1,24	0,699	0,667
Norway	1,55	1,61	1,046	1,114
Poland	1,89	1,98	0,147	0,134
Latvia	1,69	2,00	0,139	0,130
Lithuania	1,73	1,96	0,109	0,105
Estonia	2,08	2,14	0,190	0,186
Denmark	1,16	1,21	0,752	0,737

Source: OECD and NATO data <https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm> (accessed January 14 2019).

Second, we have to agree that there is a different allocation of defence resources among the NATO allies and only a limited number of them (to the vast majority – US) implement activities out of area on a larger scale. That brings a question of attribution of costs vis-à-vis the defence of the transatlantic area. Michael O’Hanlon’s assumption is that US defence spending can be divided into four parts (each of them for 100-200 bln USD): central defence needs (such as research and development, homeland security, global intelligence assets and operations), forces for Europe, forces for the Asia-Pacific and forces for the broader Middle East⁸¹. This the above-mentioned US argument on paying more than 70 % for a defence of Europe is at least controversial.

There is also an issue of ‘security culture’ which puts defence expenditures in certain political and historical framework. On one hand that could limit readiness of certain countries (i.e. Japan – with limit to 1 % of GDP) to increase defence spending, on the other hand it could lead to the perception of the scope and the role of military expenditures. For Germany, security cannot be “narrowed down to military spending. Development aid and humanitarian assistance also count as contributions to global security”⁸². This argument is reappearing in the ongoing debate between the US and some of the European Allies. The current US administration aims at increasing defence spending whilst limiting the role of development aid (see table 4). Should we use this argument on broader definition of security (defence plus development), the position of Norway (over 2,5 % of GDP), but also Denmark and Germany (altogether close to 2,00 %) would significantly change.

⁸¹ M. O’Hanlon, *The Art of the Military Deal*, The National Interest, May 5, 2016. https://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-art-the-military-deal-16070_ (accessed January 13 2019).

⁸² S. Islam, *Security is about more than just military spending*, Friends of Europe, 1 March, 2017. <http://www.friendsofeurope.org/security-europe/frankly-speaking-security-is-about-more-than-just-military-spending/>, (accessed February 16 2019).

Third, we have to underline that NATO member states make direct and indirect contributions to the costs of running NATO and implementing its policies and activities. Bigger portion of them are made indirectly due to participation in the military operation (principle costs lie where they fall); the rest of the are made directly when the costs are borne collectively, often using the principle of common funding. Within the principle of common funding, all member states contribute to an agreed cost-share formula, based on GNI; it represents small portion of member's defence budget (approximately 0,3-0,4 %) ⁸³. Common funding arrangements are used towards: NATO Civil Budget (NATO HQ running costs), NATO Military Budget (integrated Command Structure costs) and the NATO Security Investment Programme.

Table 4. NATO Common funded cost sharing formula.

Country	GNI (NATO countries) 2017		Common funded budgets – agreed share
	Nominal MUSD	percentage	
US	19.607.598	51,22	22.1387
Germany	3.753.343	9,80	14.7638
Norway	415.491	1,08	1.6472
Poland	504.476	1,32	2.7683
Latvia	30.045	0,08	0.1478
Lithuania	45.613	0,12	0.2379
Estonia	25.397	0,06	0.1157
Denmark	331.391	0,86	1.2157
Other Member States	13.574.191	35,46	56,9649

Source: *GNI (current US\$)*, The World Bank,

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.MKTP.CD?locations=IE-NE-PW> (accessed January 13 2019)

Agreed cost share formula reflects the real ability to pay of the Member States. It is calculated every second year taking into account changes in the GDP among the allies. The final result corrected with the US maximum cap which cannot exceed just over 22 % of all costs (similar solution is implemented in other international organization US is a member of) ⁸⁴.

Fourth, defence expenditures should be analysed in the broader context of 'burden sharing' ⁸⁵. The study on this issue began in 1966 when Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser utilized the collective goods theory to analyse uneven distribution of defence spending in the Alliance ⁸⁶. Their assumption was that NATO's output (security) is best

⁸³ Funding NATO, available from: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm (accessed January 13 2019).

⁸⁴ Limitations started with 1/3 and then 1/4 of the total costs.

⁸⁵ There is a wide literature on this issue. See i.e. J. Khanna, T. Sandler, *NATO Burden Sharing: 1960 – 1992*, „Defence and Peace Economics” 1996, n. 7, p. 115–133.

⁸⁶ M. Olson, R. Zeckhauser, *An economic theory of Alliances*, „Review of Economics and Statistics” 1966, n. 48, p. 266–279.

described as a pure public good; once a state is allowed into alliance, it is then impossible to exclude it from profiting from the benefits produced by the collective efforts, and adding of an additional member does not substantially subtract from the amount of defence available to those already in the alliance. As a consequence, the alliance would face a free rider problem where bigger countries are bearing disproportionate share of the burden⁸⁷. During the Cold War and under the NATO Strategy of Nuclear retaliation, the theory could have been justified, when allies based on the US nuclear power. It was especially relevant under the Mutual Assured Reaction doctrine, which assumed nuclear attack in the case of any attack on transatlantic territory⁸⁸. During the post-Cold War time, other theories were suggested and defended. For Todd Sandler “when defence is shared between nations in an alliance, the pure publicness of defence expenditures may be doubted, since for some defence outputs the providing ally may be able to withhold benefits from allies so that exclusion may be practiced”. Accordingly, the alliance-based security is an impure public good; larger powers retain the ability to resort to intra-alliance threats about the provision of security as well as different kinds of instruments generating fear of marginalization among smaller powers⁸⁹. The discussion on NATO burden sharing and the parity of costs and benefit analysis is going on and could be a matter of a thorough analysis.

However, it is worth emphasizing that as a former NATO Secretary General Jaaf Hoop de Scheffer stated “at NATO, a burden-sharing mechanism was developed to assess the manning commitments of nations for critical operational activities in relation to their GNI. This sort of arithmetic has the merit of giving some indications on burden-sharing, but (it) (...) cannot be fully captured in graphs and spreadsheets. (...). Totally fair burden-sharing may not be possible, but an organised security organisation like NATO undoubtedly allows us to come closer to it than could any other approach.”⁹⁰

Conclusion

According to NATO guidelines most of the Baltic Member states are meeting the requirements or they are close to meeting the requirement of 2 % of GDP for defence, including 20 % for major equipment. The only exception is Germany, which presents rather reluctant position vis-à-vis any major increases in defence spending and being exposed to constant pressure from the US.

Analysing the defence expenditures one can underline that a fair and full burden sharing in NATO is difficult to achieve. Definition and allocation of defence spending, different financial regimes and an economic theory of the Alliance are among controversial issued.

⁸⁷ J. Ringsmose, op. cit. p. 9.

⁸⁸ North Atlantic Military Committee Decision on M.C.48, 22 November 1954 p. 3 b „in the event of aggression they will be subjected immediately to devastating counter-attack employing atomic weapons”. <https://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/a541122a.pdf> (accessed January 13 2019).

⁸⁹ J. Ringsmose, op. cit. p. 10.

⁹⁰ J. de Hoop Scheffer, *Towards Fairer Burden Sharing in NATO*, Europe’s World, Summer 2008.

The Baltic Defence College, NATO and Cyber: Leading the Change

Colonel Jaak Tarien, Mr. Siim Alatalu

If your opponent has found a way to negate your industrial and technological advantage, and for whatever reason you are unable or unwilling to change your own parameters so as to regain the advantage, then you must fight on the battlefield he has set and on his terms.⁹¹

Introduction: The age of shifting of paradigms.

When studying at the Baltic Defence College (BDC) in the early part of this decade, one of the issues that recurred over different lectures and seminars was us – both as individuals as well as societies - living in age of shifting of paradigms. As future and soon-to-be-certified leaders of transformation, we were to learn how to take forward our national defences after graduation in a changing global environment, famously described by Donald Rumsfeld in 2002 to include “known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns”. For instance, when listening to presentations on Russian strategic thinking, little did we know that within only a couple of years, the unthinkable could actually become the new normal – and a paradigm shift. The following article written on the occasion of the BDC’s 20th anniversary aims to challenge today’s graduates to critical thinking ahead of paradigm shifts in the most dynamic theatre ever, cyberspace.

Paradigm shifts are in many ways the new normal. Since the founding of the College in 1999, we have been able to witness them in e.g. the ways international relations, threats, use of force and nations’ responses to them evolve. The overall theatre may look the same but at least some of the games played there are new. One of the new games is the ever-increasing digitalization of the way our societies work and the ever-increasing role of cyber security therein. The global digital connectivity of everything is unprecedented: “Internet, together with the information communications technology (ICT) that underpins it, is a critical national resource for governments, a vital part of national infrastructures, and a key driver of socio-economic growth and development.”⁹²

As a result, in the last 20 years it really has become essential for nations, for both their everyday national security as well as for their broader deterrence posture reasons to be cyber-savvy. In pursuit of one’s political objectives, to inflict damage to another nation’s economy and society, one could first opt for a cyber-attack on its industrial control systems, rather than start a military special operation. Concurrently, cyber defence has

⁹¹ Smith, Rupert. *The Utility of Force*. New York: Vintage Books, 2007. p 377.

⁹² Klimburg, Alexander. *National Cyber Security Framework Manual*. Edited by Alexander Klimburg. Tallinn: NATO CCDCOE, 2012. p 2.

become one of the means to the ends of national security, both alongside conventional military capabilities, as well as inside them. It is a paradigm shift.

On the operational level, *confidentiality*, *integrity* and *availability* have become the key terms for any military leader, planner or operator. In the past they would be first-hand considered terms that are foremost relevant to IT helpdesk staff. Today, they are central to any discussion on the implications of cyber on the functioning of military organisations, their operations and their overall role in national security. Threats to confidentiality (such as eavesdropping or traffic analysis of our systems), to integrity (such as modification, spoofing or repudiating the data in our systems) or to availability (e.g. denial of service) can all jeopardise military missions. Over a short period, cyberspace has become a new theatre of operations where no institution in a society - political, military, academic or private - can consider itself immune from cyber threats – and the questions of confidentiality, integrity and availability will need to be asked by everyone every day. Once again, a paradigm shift.

The Only Constant is Cyber

Against the background of globally shared buzzwords like “cyber is important!”, there remain many issues in cyber which are not shared nor even jointly defined. In many aspects, cyber embodies the 2,500 years old wisdom of Herakleitos of Ephesus that “the only constant is change”. For example, to date there is no one, universal definition for cyberspace itself but rather a set of different approaches (if not paradigms), from technical to legal perspectives. Accordingly, cyberspace can be defined as something “more than the Internet, including not only hardware, software and information systems, but also people and social interaction within these networks.”⁹³ Cyberspace is defined by international organisations like the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) (“systems and services connected either directly to or indirectly to the Internet, telecommunications and computer networks.”) or the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) (“the complex environment resulting from the interaction of people, software and services on the Internet by means of technology devices and networks connected to it, which does not exist in any physical form.”). Of national definitions, e.g. the United Kingdom defence cyberspace as “all forms of networked, digital activities; [including] the content of and actions conducted through digital networks.”⁹⁴ A prominent legal definition of cyberspace is offered by the Tallinn Manual 2.0 published by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence: “environment formed by physical and non-physical components to store, modify, and exchange data using computer networks”⁹⁵.

⁹³ Klimburg, 2012.

⁹⁴ Klimburg, 2012. p 8.

⁹⁵ Schmitt, Michael N., editor. *Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations*. Cambridge University Press, 2017. p 564.

The world's history has seen many paradigm shifts that have transformed the way we think of war (or nowadays more referred to as "armed conflict" – a paradigm shift in itself as well) and we are witnessing yet another of them right now. In the ancient times, shields made it more difficult to successfully use a sword. In the late Middle Ages gunpowder and fire power in general made hands-on close combat only the last resort in a battle. As coined by General Rupert Smith in his reflection on the utility of military force at the start of this century (a required reading for the Higher Command Studies Course at the turn of the decade) after WW2 nuclear power made industrial war practically impossible. Since the end of the Cold War we have mostly lived in the "paradigm of war amongst the people". Today, there are predictions of artificial intelligence-based systems fighting wars for us, if not against us.

The global community is already now under an increasing pressure from cyberspace – guided by people if not even governments, performed by code and computing power, aided by unaware, negligent or deliberate end-users. Cyber threats that target our ways of life (both e- and traditional) are increasing in nature, volume and complexity. For instance, cyberattacks that aim to destroy, deny or degrade military or civilian communications platforms can spread quickly across continents —such as the Mirai malware botnet attack of 2016. A form of such malware could be directed against, for example, IP addresses of the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, emergency services or anything that is Internet-connected and has an IP address⁹⁶. The breakout of a national security crisis is easy to imagine in such a situation. Items we might consider low-value and low-tech, could become to be used as a cyber-weapon.

The number of the users of internet – the main alley for delivering cyberattacks – has grown to over 4.1 billion at the time of writing this article.⁹⁷ More than every second person on Earth is online and the trend is ascending. We are also faced with the outlook of an Internet of Things (IoT) - i.e. our machines operating online by themselves – about to encompass the way we live our lives, both in-office and outside. Another even more serious challenge is also in sight – the proliferation of artificial intelligence-based technology, potentially with lethal skills.

For now, it remains safe to say that most of the cyber threats are still human in origin because in order to launch they rely on human intent. From petty criminals to triads, from white-hat hackers to government institutions, operations in cyber-space – either for the purpose of exchanging information, gathering knowledge about another party, disseminating propaganda or distributing manipulated code with the aim of inflicting

⁹⁶ Brantly, Aaron F.. "The Cyber Deterrence Problem." Edited by Tomaš, Jakcshis, Raik and Lindström, Lauri Minarik. 10th International Conference on Cyber Conflict CyCon X: Maximising Effects (NATO CCDCOE) 31-53. 2018. p 42.

⁹⁷ Internet Live Stats. 2019. Internet Live Stats. 20 January. <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/>. (Accessed 23.03.2019).

actual damage to lives or property – can and will involve anyone either in the offensive or a defensive role. It is a generally accepted belief that attacks from and within cyberspace that target people, institutions and services have become progressively more impactful in terms of scale.

Meanwhile, offensive cyber capabilities have become tools in nations' toolboxes for national power. To paraphrase the U.S. Cyber Command's new Command Vision⁹⁸ there is an ongoing competition for cyberspace. Offensive cyber operations, i.e. the „employment of cyber capabilities with the primary purpose of achieving objectives in or by the use of cyberspace“⁹⁹ are developing into a mainstream capability in military forces. On one hand, nations are working hard to establish their presence in cyberspace to secure their networks and systems and to be able to defend their societies online. On the other hand, they are also testing others' capabilities in the same area. The exact scope of which countries are developing which capabilities is difficult to make. In an assessment in already 2010 a NATO official said that "countries, such as China, have assembled within the people's liberation army up to 100,000 operators who work full time, as a full-time 9-to-5 job, in probing the systems of other countries and [...] about 100¹⁰⁰ countries in the world [...] are actively developing offensive, not defensive, but offensive — cyber capabilities"¹⁰¹.

Developing Cyber at NATO

The world and how our societies function have changed since the BDC was established. To recall - in defence and national security affairs, NATO at the time was celebrating its 50th anniversary. At the anniversary Summit in Washington, former foes from the Warsaw Pact, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland became members of the Alliance, and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania together with six other countries were recognised as potential future members by way of launching their Membership Action Plans (MAP). From the Baltic security perspective, the course of action to become members of NATO looked set. Rumour has it that even Russia at the time was contemplating joining NATO.¹⁰² Despite Russia waging a war in Chechnya or keeping

⁹⁸ U.S. Cyber Command. "Achieve and Maintain Cyberspace Superiority. Command Vision for U.S. Cybercommand." U.S. Cyber Command. March, 2018. <https://www.cybercom.mil/Portals/56/Documents/USCYBERCOM%20Vision%20April%202018.pdf?ver=2018-06-14-152556-010> (Accessed 24.04.2019).

⁹⁹ Schmitt, Michael N., editor. *Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Different sources offer even bigger numbers. For instance, the website of the Infosec Institute claims that at least 140 countries were developing cyber weapon.

¹⁰¹ Shea, Jamie. "Lecture 6 - Cyber attacks: hype or an increasing headache for open societies?" Brussels: NATO, 2 Feb. 2010. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_84768.htm. (Accessed 29.06.2018.)

¹⁰² AP. "Putin suggested Russia joining NATO to Clinton." *The Hindu*, 12 June, 2017. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/in-his-interview-with-oliver-stone-vladimir-putin-suggested-russia-joining-nato-to-bill-clinton/article18965562.ece#> (Accessed 24.04.2019).

its troops in other countries of the former Soviet empire, NATO had embraced a constructive relationship with Russia. The NATO Russia Founding Act in 1997 served as a “promise of closer cooperation among former adversaries”¹⁰³ A decade later, despite the aggression against Georgia and a short-lived freeze of relations between NATO and Russia as a result, there was a U.S.-led “reset” to relations with Russia, leading to even serious people at NATO HQ to consider having achieved a “Spirit of Lisbon” type of mutual understanding by the Summit of 2010.

20 years ago, there was also little to mention of NATO’s cyber posture. Hitherto, whilst steadily gaining importance internationally, cyber defence (and offence) issues were more the domain of the big powers of the former bipolar world. For instance, the first cyberattack by Russia against the United States dates back to 1986 when a hacker called „Hunter“ wanted to extract information from the US Army Redstone Rocket test site, related to President Ronald Reagan’s flagship Strategic Defence Initiative (the „Star Wars“ programme).¹⁰⁴

Cyber’s first ever entrance to NATO’s lingo happened only in November 2002 when at the Prague Summit the Alliance’s Heads of State and Government (HOSG) of the then-19 Allies agreed to “strengthen [their] capabilities to defend against cyber-attacks.”¹⁰⁵ The Prague Summit was the first meeting of the HOSG since the 9/11 terrorist attacks and thus eventually transformational in many ways for both individual Allies and for NATO as a whole. It was a time of great change for NATO – not only for the decision to invite the Baltic states along four other countries to become Allies but also for the transformation it undertook in its daily business, from structural changes (establishing Allied Command Operations and Allied Command Transformation, for instance) to mind set (conducting out-of-area operations).

It is therefore imperative to see the first steps of cyber at NATO in the bigger, global context. For instance, while physically internet connected the whole world, its effects were not as global. The number of people connected online was only 587 million or 9.4% of the global population,¹⁰⁶ compared to 3.553 billion or 53.8% in 2017.¹⁰⁷ Today’s

¹⁰³ NATO. Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation. 27 May 1997.

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25470.htm?selectedLocale=en (Accessed 24.04.2019).

¹⁰⁴ Popescu, Nicu, and Stanislav Secieru. "Introduction: Russia's cyber prowess – where, how and what for?" Edited by Nicu Popescu and Stanislav Secieru. *Hacks, Leaks and Disruptions: Russian Cyber Strategies*. European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2017. p 9.

¹⁰⁵ NATO. Prague Summit Declaration. 21 November 2002. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2002/p02-127e.htm>. (Accessed 8.07.2016).

¹⁰⁶ Internet World Stats. Usage and Population Statistics.

<https://www.internetworldstats.com/emarketing.htm>

¹⁰⁷ ITU. Global and Regional ICT Data. <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx> (Accessed 8.07.2016).

number represents roughly a six-fold growth since 2002.¹⁰⁸ For the broader society, cyber was an enabler for some government, perhaps even only office functions at best – internet was not to be a theatre for military operations. With NATO's own nationals being the predominant users of the global commons of internet, cyber for NATO in 2002 was really about national efforts to tackle emerging and mainly domestic cyber-related challenges to governments, induced by individuals rather than organised, national or trans-border entities.¹⁰⁹ Although NATO as an organisation had been cyber-attacked already¹¹⁰ by way of distributed denial of service and thus targeting NATO's *availability*, by today's standards these served rather only to make a political statement.

Concurrently to the transformation of NATO after the Prague Summit, a similar change was evident also at the BDC. According to Corum, „during the first years [of the BDC], the operational framework was territorial defence, using NATO standards and procedures. [today] all teaching in the field of tactics and operations is either of a general character or it deals with the issues and planning procedures of combined expeditionary operations.“¹¹¹ Eventually this evolved to the understanding that a focused approach by way of a Higher Command Studies Course is needed on “educating strategic level military and civilian leaders in overseeing and conducting the transformation of their armed forces from the old Cold War organization and paradigm to meet the current complex security needs of the NATO and Western nations to deal with the broad level of security threats that include dealing with counterterrorism, intervention operations, humanitarian operations and other operations that addressed the modern security realities. The change in the theme and focus to transformation paralleled what was going on in the major NATO nations and in the non-NATO Western nations“¹¹²

A wake-up call for NATO in cyber came in 2007 after the cyberattacks against Estonia. Remotely, these can also be said to have targeted NATO's *integrity*. The attacks were „informally¹¹³ but virtually universally“¹¹⁴ attributed to Russia.¹¹⁵ When Estonia sought

¹⁰⁸ Alatalu, Siim. “NATO's Response to Cyber Attacks.” In Ed. Nicu Popescu and Stanislav Secieru. *Hacks, Leaks and Disruptions: Russian Cyber Strategies*. European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Alatalu, Siim. “NATO's New Cyber Domain Challenge.” 2016 IEEE International Conference on Cyber Conflict. Washington, DC: Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, Inc. 1-8, 2016.

¹¹⁰ Healey, Jason, and Klara Tothova Jordan. “NATO's Cyber Capabilities: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow.” September, 2014. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/183476/NATOs_Cyber_Capabilities.pdf. (Accessed 24.04.2019).

¹¹¹ Corum, James S.. *History of the Baltic Defence College. The First Fifteen Years. The Story of a Successful Multinational Endeavour*. Tartu: Baltic Defence College, 2014. p 42. http://www.baltdefcol.org/files/docs/books/History_Book_2014.pdf (Accessed 24.04.2019).

¹¹² Corum 2014, p 40-41.

¹¹³ Attribution was difficult due to the lack of hard evidence, while the ‘defendant’ refused to comply with Estonia's request for legal assistance and a bilateral investigation. See more in Tikk, Kaska, & Vihul, 2010.

¹¹⁴ Alatalu, 2017.

¹¹⁵ Arquilla, John. “Twenty Years of Cyberwar.” *Journal of Military Ethics*, 2013. p 81-82.

Russia's assistance in determining the culprits, Russia held silence for more than a year.¹¹⁶ Strategically, this incident was noteworthy because it informally introduced a new era and a new trend of cyberattacks targeting nations as a whole. In Europe, the trend continued already in August 2008 with the Russian aggression against Georgia as well as in 2014 in the context of the Russian annexation of Crimea and aggression in Eastern Ukraine where cyberattacks were elements of joint military campaigns. NATO's first response to this new phenomenon followed at the Bucharest Summit in 2008 where NATO HOSG agreed on the following:

*NATO remains committed to strengthening key Alliance information systems against cyber-attacks. We have recently adopted a Policy on Cyber Defence, and are developing the structures and authorities to carry it out. Our Policy on Cyber Defence emphasises the need for NATO and nations to protect key information systems in accordance with their respective responsibilities; share best practices; and provide a capability to assist Allied nations, upon request, to counter a cyber-attack. We look forward to continuing the development of NATO's cyber defence capabilities and strengthening the linkages between NATO and national authorities.*¹¹⁷

In the 2009 Summit in Strasbourg and Kehl, the HOSG agreed to mention more potential sources of cyber threats such as non-state actors. By then, the first new cyber structures that NATO could rely on were established, the Headquarters-based Cyber Defence Management Authority and of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, Estonia. As an issue with increasing importance, cooperation with non-NATO partner countries was highlighted.¹¹⁸ It should be beyond reasonable doubt that by then NATO had already become subject to attempts to compromise its *confidentiality*.

Another major milestone was the Wales Summit in 2014 where NATO took two critical decisions. First it recognised the applicability of international law in cyberspace and second, from there on cyberattacks were considered eligible for consideration of an Article V decision. In July 2016, at its Warsaw Summit the HOSG declared cyberspace to become an operational domain for the Alliance, by reaffirming:

[...] NATO's defensive mandate, and recognize cyberspace as a domain of operations in which NATO must defend itself as effectively as it does in the

¹¹⁶ Tik, Eneken, Kadri Kaska, and Liis Vihul.. International Cyber Incidents: Legal Considerations. Tallinn: NATO CCDCOE, 2010. p 27. <https://ccdcoe.org/publications/books/legalconsiderations.pdf>. (Accessed 24.04.2019).

¹¹⁷ NATO. NATO Bucharest Summit Declaration. 3 April 2008. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm. (Accessed 8.07.2016).

¹¹⁸ NATO. NATO Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration. 4 April, 2009. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease (Accessed 8.07.2016).

*air, on land, and at sea. This will improve NATO's ability to protect and conduct operations across these domains and maintain our freedom of action and decision, in all circumstances. It will support NATO's broader deterrence and defence: cyber defence will continue to be integrated into operational planning and Alliance operations and missions, and we will work together to contribute to their success.*¹¹⁹

For the military command chains in NATO and the 29 capitals the Warsaw Summit declaration meant that the Alliance was now first to develop a doctrine to integrate cyber operations in support of conventional operations through cyberspace, at an equivalent level of interoperability that it has developed in traditional areas of warfare. Another side of the cyber coin agreed in Warsaw was the so-called Cyber Pledge, where they *inter alia* committed to developing 'the fullest range of capabilities to defend our national infrastructures and networks.'¹²⁰ It would be an understatement to say that compared to the statement in Prague NATO had come a long way in embracing cyber from a technical IT support matter to become a complex commitment of often sensitive national capabilities for a joint cause.

To illustrate the growth of NATO's cyber posture over its Summits, one can for instance rely on word count – how many words are spent on HOSG agreements on cyber at NATO in the respective Communiqués or Declarations against the tight scrutiny by each Ally in the drafting phase (see *Figure 1*). Clearly, with the exception of the 2004 Summit in Istanbul, the trend here too is ascending. While it is positive that most of these agreements have been based on concrete and tangible deliverables in terms of political (e.g. Article V applicability in cyberspace) and resource (Cyber Pledge) commitments, establishment of structures (Bucharest) or cyber threat perceptions (Strasbourg and Kehl) or broadening of NATO's overall scope (Warsaw), it remains relevant to ask the question, when and what will NATO do when an actual cyberattack occurs? The question regained relevance after 2017 when two global launches of malware, WannaCry by North Korea and NotPetya by Russia, created worldwide havoc.

There were also these two attacks that demonstrated that it has become feasible for nations to publicly attribute cyberattacks to their origin, and also to do so in a coalition setting. While NATO made another critical decision meanwhile and in 2017 decided to set up a Cyber Operations Capability at SHAPE, the story should hardly be considered to be over. For instance, if most of the key decisions for an Article V situations seem to be prepared, there appear to be less measures in place for situations that will not reach the threshold of Article V – but can still severely damage our societies.

¹¹⁹ NATO. "Warsaw Summit Communiqué." NATO website. 9 July 2016. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm. (Accessed 24.04.2019).

¹²⁰ NATO. "Cyber Defence Pledge", July 8, 2016. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133177.htm (Accessed 24.04.2019).

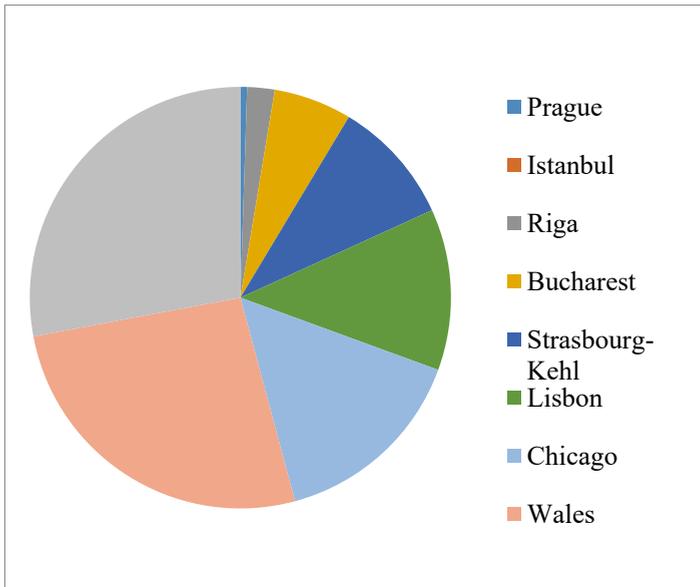


Figure 1. **Cyber's segment (in words) in NATO Summit Declarations 2002-2016.**

NATO's Continued Relevance in Cyber

As discussed in the previous chapter, over almost two decades NATO has had a rational, step-by-step approach to enhancing its cyber posture. Important to highlight, any decision at NATO can only be made based on a consensus between all the Allies. A careful consensus-building will reward the participants with an informed commitment by every participant. A gradual approach will also ensure that as many considerations as possible are included in the eventual decision. For an historian, for instance, the origins of the establishment of the CyOC at SHAPE can academically be traced back to 2010 when in a U.S. National Defense University report Weinrod and Barry, in the context of recommendations for the upcoming NATO Command Structure (NCS) reform, called for an enhanced attention to cyber within the NCS. To quote, "consideration must also be given to the military command structure's purpose in defence against cyber-attacks with regard not only to defence of vital NATO communications and information systems, but also supporting national efforts, especially at the seams between NATO and national networks. Critical cyber infrastructure is now an integral component of NATO territory as much as airspace and seas."¹²¹

Today, critical cyber infrastructure has not been heralded as one of the functions of the CyOC. Its role is seen as an institution serving NATO with a three-dimensional mission:

¹²¹ Weinrod, W. Bruce, and Charles L. Barry. NATO Command Structure. Considerations for the Future. Washington, DC: Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University, 2010.

- 1) providing situational awareness of the domain,
- 2) planning for the cyberspace aspects of allied operations, and
- 3) managing the execution of operational direction to ensure freedom of manoeuvre in all domains affected by cyberspace activities.¹²²

Lewis also highlights that “NATO has clearly stated it will not execute offensive cyberspace operations by NATO personnel under the NATO flag [but will] [...] integrate sovereign cyberspace effects from allies who are capable and willing to provide them”.¹²³

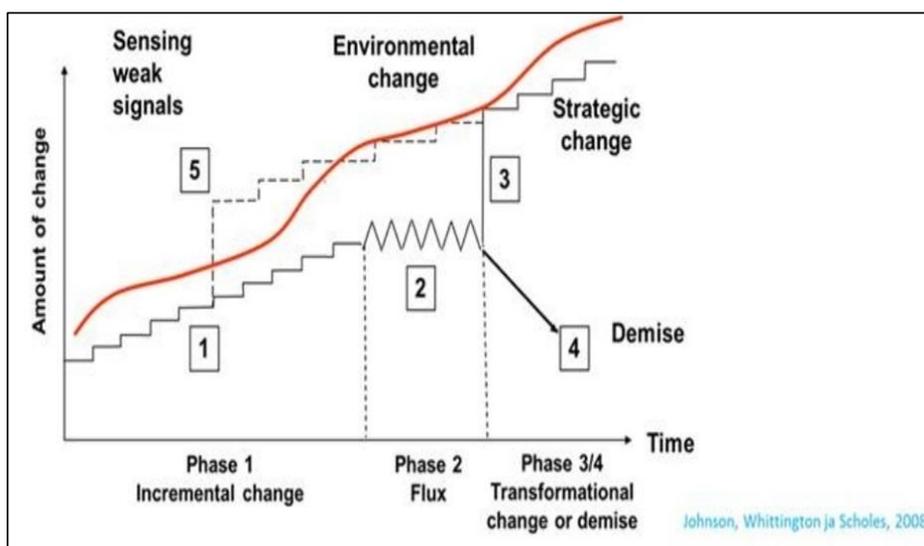


Figure 2: **Phases of Strategic Drift.** Based on Johnson, Wittington and Scholes, (2008)

At the same time, in our ever more interconnected societies maintaining the functionality of critical infrastructure (and of the critical information infrastructure therein, or of European CI – jointly run structures with cross-border services) are increasingly relevant for national security. On one hand, these could indeed be considered civilian areas of responsibility, rather than military. At the same time, there is no reason to question the indivisibility of cyber security; it is and will continue to develop as civilian and military, dual-use domain. While there are good reasons to consider NATO to be deployed as the ultimate tool for the last resort, the underlying cause for NATO is to provide defence to Allies 24/7.

¹²² Lewis, Don. “What is NATO Really Doing in Cyberspace?” War on the Rocks. 4 February 2019. <https://warontherocks.com/2019/02/what-is-nato-really-doing-in-cyberspace/>. (Accessed 24.04.2019).

¹²³ *Ibid.*

As a result, it is worth asking, whether – as we learned years ago in the HCSC from Johnson, Whittington and Scholes – NATO and cyber, despite the good progress, still risk leading to a strategic drift (see *Figure 2*) According to the authors, strategic drift is the „tendency for strategies to develop incrementally on the basis of historical and cultural influences, but fail to keep pace with a changing environment“.¹²⁴ Some of the issues will continue to ‘haunt’ NATO in the coming years are easier to predict. For example:

- Role of NATO in Article IV type of situations where cyberattacks on the scale of internationally wrongful acts take place, yet no classical use of force or armed attack happens. For example – hostile malware targeting and crippling national critical infrastructure such as power generation or water purification plants, or key financial sector institutions.
- Relations with likeminded Partner nations and options for cooperation and interoperability in cyber space. NATO has an extensive range of partnership agreements with non-NATO countries, totalling about 70 states (including Allies). Some of them have been granted Enhanced Opportunities Partnerships, while others seek to enhance their interoperability with NATO. Some of NATO’s partners from across the world are global leaders in cyber security and powerhouses in technology cooperation with whom could also benefit NATO.
- Relations with other International organisations, in particular with the European Union which especially since the Estonian Presidency of the EU Council in 2017 has stepped up its efforts in cyber issues.
- In-house tasks at NATO will continue to be the mainstreaming of cyber as such into NATO’s procedures, military training and education, exercises and business practices (cyber hygiene). This task remains dependent on how individual Allies pursue the same objectives nationally i.e. also on how the next generation of leaders of transformation comprehend and prioritise it.
- Placeholder for any relevant “unknown unknown”, surely to emerge as the ongoing paradigm shift further unfolds. (As put forth by General Smith, “the strategic aim [of the opponent] can be difficult to define and yet it is essential to do so.”¹²⁵)

These challenges require continued investment of attention and resources and progress is certainly being made. Strategically, nevertheless, to avoid strategic drift for NATO – and for our nations as part of it – what would be the transformative steps that need to be taken, to maintain NATO’s relevance for national cyber security?

¹²⁴ Johnson, Gerry, Richard Whittington, and Kevan Scholes. *Exploring Strategy*, 9th Edition. Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2011. p 158.

¹²⁵ Smith, 2007. p 15.

Conclusion

Predicting the future is an unimpressive task and evidently, we are still in the middle of a paradigm shift. Nevertheless, the least one can do is prepare oneself to undertake strategic change. We believe that the key to the success for any future leader of transformation will be a comprehensive approach to cyber. In addition, here are three courses of action, on the tactical, operational and strategic levels where our national security would benefit from their insight and attention the most:

1) Cyber security is everyone's business

Defence forces are by definition on the frontline of national security. With cyber now a part of national security, defence forces should also be on the frontline of cyber security. Defence forces provide unique capabilities to the national security toolbox and cyber cannot but be one of these. This requires an enhanced attention to military training and education and the role of cyber related skills therein – including at the top levels of military education provided by the BDC. It is critical to understand that this cannot be a sectoral effort but to effectively deal with it, a 360-degree approach is required, to encompass technology, strategy, operations and international law – to name some of the related areas. It is not a question of if but when our soldiers, airmen and marines could become targets to attempts at their confidentiality, integrity and availability. Only a dedicated approach to educate them from the start will entail a likelihood of success.

2) Sharing is critical

To know how to defend, one needs to know how offence works. It has been argued that against an adversary with sophisticated cyber skills, both cyber and conventional measures are hard-pressed. As characterised by Lynch, in the case of North Korea, to unleash viruses to upend North Korea's nuclear missiles, a consensus across U.S. Government agencies was needed – and was impossible to achieve.¹²⁶ The lesson learned is that the better the sharing culture, the better deployable the actual capability.

3) Coalition-building

It is also worth considering whether there is merit in looking beyond the Alliance borders to establish a more global alliance of likeminded democracies with a shared interest in safeguarding their societies together against cyber threats. According to President Ilves, “a non-geographical but strictly criteria-based [Alliance] to defend democracies, countries that genuinely are democracies as defined by free and fair elections, the rule of law, and the guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms could be established.”¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Lynch, Justin. “Behind the White House's Plan to be More Aggressive in Cyberspace.” Fifth Domain. 9 December 2018. <https://www.fifthdomain.com/congress/2018/12/10/behind-the-white-houses-plan-to-be-more-aggressive-in-cyberspace/> (Accessed 24.04.2019).

¹²⁷ Ilves, Toomas Hendrik. If Liberal Democracies are to Survive in the Digital Era, They Must Create a Defence Organisation. Keynote speech. International Conference on Cyber Conflict 2018. Tallinn, 30 May 2018.

CHAPTER THREE

RUSSIA'S RESURGENCE AS THE MAIN CHALLENGE TO THE 21ST CENTURY THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

The Culture of Strategic Thought behind Russia's Modern Approaches to War

Mr. Stephen R. Covington¹²⁸

Introduction

During the Cold War, the culture of Russian military strategic thought played a fundamental role in the Soviet system, shaping the structure of the Soviet Armed Forces, the type of strategic operations to be conducted in war, and the military system designed to meet the requirements of that unique strategic environment in accordance with the Soviet political leadership's aims in peace and war.¹²⁹ After years of marginalization, Russian military strategic thought has returned to a position of great influence inside Russia's political system, and strikingly so over the last four years, now playing a dominant role in the country's military preparations for war and corresponding economic priorities. Russian military strategic culture also provides President Putin with a strategic foundation and framework for Russia's most critical security and defence calculations in peace, crisis, and war. The return of traditional Russian military strategic culture to the forefront of Moscow's security policy decisions comes at a critical juncture in Russia's post-Cold War development.

The Four Pillars of Russian Strategic Culture

Russian strategic culture is a set of underlying assumptions or values that drive goal setting, interactions, capabilities, structure and ultimately behaviour. These fundamental, underlying assumptions shape all military concepts and establish their unique way for measuring how much or how little military security they have, need, or should be attained. Organizational psychology, led by Edgar Schein's work, holds that the strongest organizations are the ones with leaders that are aware of their own culture and cultivate it.¹³⁰ Organizational psychology also holds that most organizations are not

¹²⁸ The original version of this article was published by Harvard University's Belfer Center in October 2016. <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/culture-strategic-thought-behind-russias-modern-approaches-warfare>

¹²⁹ Chris Donnelly, *Red Banner: The Soviet Military System in Peace and War*, Jane's Information Group, UK, 1988.

¹³⁰ Edgar Schein, "Organizational Culture and Leadership", *The Jossey-Bass Business & Management Series*, Volume 2, Edition 4, John Wiley & Sons, 2010

conscious of their culture, and therefore lose it over time or leaders lose control of it. The Russian military leadership is very conscious of its culture of strategic thought, and the Russian military as a whole has a common understanding of what this strategic culture is built upon. It is the role of the General Staff as the 'brain of the army', the General Staff Academy, and other academies to institutionalize this culture of strategic thought into their officer corps. They cultivate it and reinforce it in almost every sphere of their education, thinking, planning, assessment, and decision-making. It was not lost during the tumultuous Yeltsin years, when the Russian military maintained its strategic thought despite being neglected by their political authorities and not having the capabilities to act strategically.

Russian military strategic thought reaches deeply into other security services and other government ministries, facilitating how the country functions as a whole in war. There is no Western equivalent to Russian strategic culture, and Western service culture should not be confused with Russia's culture of strategic thought. In fact, it is virtually impossible to create a single system of strategic thought in the West that approximates the Russian approach – and for good reason. The traditional autocratic, non-liberal Russian political system under Putin allows for a single, dominant form of military thought to merge with his political thought to shape government-wide decision-making process. In Western liberal democracies, the distribution of political power and the distributed ministry and agency responsibilities prevent a single strand of strategic military thought from emerging. Western military leaders simply cannot attain the influential role similar to that held by the Russian Minister of Defence and Chief of the General Staff under Putin or dominate the internal political process to establish national economic priorities upon preparing the country for war.

As the Soviet military held, Russia's military today holds that war is not only a competition between respective weapons' capabilities and forces, but it is a clash between military systems. How a nation organizes itself for war constitutes a single system that competes head on with the system of its opponent, and victory goes to the superior military system. Strategic culture is the glue for the Russian military system as a whole. The military system corresponds to their thinking about war, specifically political-military objectives, strategy, and operational art in war – and how pre-war crisis periods are managed. The Russian military system is designed to accentuate strengths, minimize weaknesses, and bring to bear in war every element key to generating combat power.

In my experiences working with the Russian military, there are four fundamental pillars of Russian strategic culture: **strategic uniqueness** demands unique military approaches to maximize and seize opportunity; **strategic vulnerability** demands aggressive counter-surprise measures for a Russia perceived as potentially 'undefendable'; the **initial period of war** determines Russia's fate in war; and going to war with Russia means going to war with "**all of Russia**".

Each pillar is clearly reflected in Russia's current military thinking on war, and each pillar mutually reinforces the other pillars. The Russian military 'system' today – with its snap exercises, military district administrative structure, regional operational-strategic commands, nation-wide control over mobilization, logistics, and transportation, and central national armed forces command and control centre in Moscow – is tailored to conduct war in a way that upholds the traditional elements of Russian strategic culture, departing sharply from Western doctrine, strategy, and practice. In peacetime, Russian military behaviour in peacetime is not sabre rattling solely for political effect or narrative. Russia's military behaviour and modernization program corresponds to contemporary Russian military assessments of the post-Soviet, modern strategic environment and Putin's political worldview, priorities, and aims, understood and acted upon through these four pillars of traditional strategic thought.

Putin's political aims vis-à-vis the European security system constitute on their own a significant part of the West's challenge to manage Russia's divergent policy aims in the 21st century. At the same time, the assumptions and values of traditional Russian General Staff strategic culture are prime drivers of Russia's military modernization, reorganization, and behaviour over the last few years. These Russian assumptions are very different from the assumptions and values of their Western counter-parts, and are a key factor in the emerging *strategic military asymmetry* between Russia and the West on 21st century security and military strategy – a strategic asymmetry that impacts on Europe's security in periods of peace, crisis, and conflict.

In comparison with the West, Russia's strategic approach in the military sphere is producing peacetime conventional and nuclear posture as well as military exercises with scale, purpose, and rhythm that differs significantly from that of the West. In a crisis, Russia's very different assumptions and values also can produce a different crisis management style, goals, and behaviour from that of the West, perhaps shaped by fundamentally different war avoidance strategies, potentially colliding with Western approaches at the very outset of a crisis. In conflict, Russia's strategic approach will differ in how war is conducted, the initial and ultimate goals in war, and how war is terminated.

Collectively, the traditional pillars of Russian strategic culture will shape how the Russian military evolves its military posture and strategies, sharply influencing Europe's future military security and equilibrium – even absent a Russian intent or interest in war with neighbours or the West. Combined with President Putin's worldview, and Russia's geo-strategic situation in the 21st century, the re-emergence of Russia's military culture of strategic thought has significant implications for Europe's security for years to come, whether measured in the short-term, a crisis avoidance context, or a long-term, strategic military balance perspective.

Strategic Uniqueness: Russia's Homeland Hybrid Strategic Offense - 'Little Green Men, Big Green Tanks, and Bigger Green Missiles'

The starting point of Russian strategic culture holds that Russia's geographic, political, economic, and strategic position is unique, and consequently military solutions for Russia's defence must be unique. The Russian military sees lessons learned in wars they wage or conflicts they observe through their understanding of Russia's strategic uniqueness. Their formulation of uniqueness contrasts sharply with the US idea of exceptionalism. U.S. exceptionalism can be seen in its most basic sense as the innovative integration of ideas, ideals, and practices. Strategic uniqueness for the Russian military at its core means the rejection of other ideas, ideals, and practices. In their view, strategic uniqueness means that Western or other defence models will not work for Russia, but only make Russia vulnerable and weak. In their rejection of other ideas, models, and practices, the Russians embrace their own course with an attitude of moral *superiority*, sometimes accompanied by misplaced sense of vindication in the actual rejection of other ideas, models, and practices.

Strategic uniqueness demands that Russia must, and will take a tailored, unique approach to its security from that of its neighbours and competitors – an approach that advances Russia's strengths and exploits the weaknesses of others. This is sometimes referred to as an asymmetric approach. However, asymmetry means something very different in Russian strategic culture than in a Western context. When the Russians use the term asymmetric in this sense they actually are speaking more to the unique strategic political-military landscape that Russia occupies, their economic-technological base, and the corresponding security and defence solutions it demands. The Russians don't invest in asymmetry for the sake of it, they invest in the totality of their security appropriate to the strategic security situation they face. For example, if ambiguous, non-attributable warfare means has a valid role in their unique strategic approach to war, then the Russians apply it. If it does not have a valid role, they just as easily reject it. The Russian military simply believes that Russia's unique strategic disposition demands different approaches from other countries, and this different unique approach is not similar or symmetric to neighbours or other great powers.

Strategic uniqueness also has been used to reject Western military reform models over the last two decades. Genuine political attempts were made to reform the Russian military in the early Yeltsin period. However, the term *reform* is more clearly understood by the Russian military as disenfranchisement, disempowerment, and defunding internally. Reform is also understood as Western attempts to undermine Russia's military system and thought. Numerous Western national and NATO attempts to assist Russian military reforms over two decades were rebuffed by layers of protective bureaucracy inside the Russian Foreign Ministry, Defence Ministry, and General Staff. The Russian military never made their rejection of Western models or practice a secret.

Russia's approach to hybrid warfare is an excellent example of Russia's strategic uniqueness driving approaches that differ from Western practice of "out of area operations" or "operations at strategic distance" in Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan. It is common in the West to think of the term "hybrid warfare" as being synonymous with 'ambiguous, non-attributable warfare'. Western attention to Russia's capability for employing special forces ("little green men"), information warfare, cyberattacks, political sabotage, economic pressure, lawfare, and energy blackmail - routinely called Russian hybrid warfare - is justifiable. However, this attention on the ambiguous, non-attributable warfare dimension of Russia's campaign on occasion has obscured the fact that the Russians wage hybrid warfare uniquely. In Ukraine – both Crimea and Donbas - we have observed this unique Russian approach to hybrid warfare, based on *their* understanding of what the term 'hybrid' means.

In the Russian approach, hybrid warfare is more synonymous to how a hybrid car works as a single vehicle with two different sources of power that interact with one another to propel the vehicle to a single destination. Hybrid warfare for Russia is the coupling of ambiguous, non-attributable means of war with 'non-ambiguous' means of war – conventional and nuclear forces. These two sources of power – ambiguous and non-ambiguous - are united and employed simultaneously in accordance with a single strategy to achieve a single set of objectives in a hybrid military operation. In effect, Russia's actual approach to hybrid warfare involves not only "little green men", but requires big green tanks, and even bigger green nuclear-capable missiles.

Over the first two decades of the post-Cold War period, Moscow conducted ambiguous, non-attributable actions against her neighbours and other powers. Cyberattacks, political subversion, economic pressure, intelligence operations, financial and energy blackmail, and information campaigns have been a common feature in Russia's attempts to influence and shape neighbouring countries in particular. However, conventional and nuclear posturing was not integrated into Russia's ambiguous warfare actions against her neighbours during this period. In the Russian view today, conventional and nuclear activities now are vital to employing ambiguous means of warfare, and the two military campaigns against Ukraine represent a shift in Russian thinking – now strategically, operationally, and tactically coupling these two forms of warfare.

This unique Russian approach to hybrid offensive war involves conventional and nuclear posturing *at the outset*, even if Moscow only elects to employ its non-attributable arsenal against an opponent. Russia's large-scale posturing of its conventional forces and concurrent posturing of nuclear capable systems in the Crimean operation were designed to pressure Kiev, shield Russia's other activities inside Ukraine, and intimidate Kiev with the prospect of a large-scale Russian invasion if Ukraine acted decisively against the Russian ambiguous campaign in Crimea and Donbas. In this sense, Russian conventional and nuclear force posturing – a **pressure and shield** approach - maximized

the impact of Russia's ambiguous campaign against Ukraine. From a Russian strategic uniqueness perspective, this approach to hybrid warfare is entirely logical given the fact that Russia's ambiguous campaign against Ukraine, adjacent to Russian borders, placed the Russian homeland at risk with the potential for both substantial military counter-actions by Kiev and potential third-party states to be drawn into the conflict. As a result, Russia's echeloned build-up of its conventional posture and nuclear activities were designed to counter, and dominate potential Ukrainian escalatory moves – and moves by others.

The coupling of both ambiguous and conventional/nuclear means of warfare is now a standard feature in Russian strategy, and required for success. The Russian military has a deep respect for the power of cyberattacks, recognizing that employing these ambiguous means can shock and stun an opponent at the outset of a campaign, destabilize the battlefield, and achieve initial results that weaken and disorient an opponent. However, these disorientation effects are not permanent and ambiguous means of warfare cannot seize and hold terrain, and are not on their own capable of achieving the final decisive result of a military campaign. The final result is achieved by conventional forces that can threaten to defeat or defeat the conventional capabilities of an opponent, and hold the strategic advantage.

This point was clearly reinforced when Russia attained its most decisive success in the Donbas campaign not with ambiguous means, but with the commitment of the Russian military directly into the conflict in the summer of 2014. This experience reconfirmed the unique coupling and the synchronized interdependence between Russia's ambiguous power and conventional military power to achieve decisive political and military objectives in regional hybrid warfare.

Russia's conventional and nuclear posturing not only dissuades Russia's adversaries in regional hybrid warfare, but also reflects real conventional and nuclear contingency planning as Putin described in a 2015 interview given to Russia's Channel One and quoted widely by the Western media.¹³¹ In fact, the strategic posturing of Russian conventional forces in the Southern and Western military districts and nuclear force exercises and activities around Russia in support of the Russian Crimean and Donbas campaigns were examples of traditional Russian contingency planning to prevent, and counter if necessary, third party involvement in crises.

Third-party involvement contingencies are a standard feature of how the Russians see, think, plan, and ultimately act in a military operation that has the potential, no matter how remote, for escalation with other nations or Alliances that are indeed nuclear capable.

¹³¹ "Vladimir Putin says Russia was preparing to use nuclear weapons 'if necessary' and blames US for Ukraine crisis", *The Independent*, 15 March 2015
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-says-russia-was-preparing-to-use-nuclear-weapons-if-necessary-and-blames-us-for-10109615.html>

Russian forces are postured, contingencies are pre-prepared, and orders are ready for transmission through a fast system of command and control. There are no gaps, operational pauses, long shifts between stages of a conventional conflict or during periods of escalation. As a war unfolds, the Russians are prepared at day one of the conflict for the wide range of possible ways the war could evolve, including nuclear options.¹³²

This Russian approach is fundamental to controlling the operational and strategic levels of conflict and maintaining dominance over escalation options at higher levels as the ambiguous and tactical conventional campaign is launched and waged. This is a very different approach to hybrid warfare when compared to Western military experience. The Russian approach is informed by Western experience and theory, but it is not a mirror image of Western experience and theory and can be described as *Homeland Hybrid Strategic Offense*.

Russian military thought is constantly evolving, and has evolved even from the theory and practice of two years ago in Ukraine. In his March 2016 article, Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov, further clarified Russia's understanding of hybrid warfare. Hybrid warfare is now assessed as being composed of one or several strategic operations that actually encompass the full spectrum of means and weapons available from information warfare to space-based weapons.¹³³ As such, hybrid strategic offense by Russia combines the most powerful means of ambiguous warfare and Russia's conventional and nuclear forces. Homeland hybrid strategic offense also redefines geographic theatres of military operation or strategic directions to be ground-air-space theatres of military action, requiring coordinated action and dominance across all domains in a campaign. In this Russian all-domain concept, conventional and nuclear forces in a hybrid strategic offense may move to higher levels of readiness, shift their posture on an operational or even strategic scale, or commence deployments from the outset of the conflict - both within Russia proper, and by forces located outside Russia's borders.

Russian strategic planners pride themselves on multi-variant military planning at the operational and strategic level. It cannot be assumed that the combined roll out of ambiguous, conventional, and nuclear capabilities in an incremental, sequential, or phased way that we observed in Ukraine will be the approach chosen in any potential future conflict. Nor can it be assumed that Russia's hybrid campaign against Ukraine serves as an unalterable template for a potential campaign against NATO nations. Most

¹³² See Maj-Gen. Vladimir Yatsenko, "The Nuclear Sentinel: The Exercises of the Soviet Army were helping the West restrain itself", *The Military-Industrial Courier*, Issue No 01-02 (616-617), 27 January 2016, Russian original from: <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/28916>. An embedded graph depicts the role of nuclear weapons in a major war during the crisis and early stages of a conflict.

¹³³ Valeriy Gerasimov, "Based on the Syrian Experience: Hybrid warfare requires high-technology weapons and scientific substantiation", *Military-Industrial Courier*, 07 March 2016, Russian original from: <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/29579>

certainly multiple models and variants for homeland hybrid strategic offense are being examined by the Russian General Staff and associated institutes – models that integrate General Gerasimov's characterization of modern hybrid war involving integrated ground-air-space conventional and nuclear actions, nested inside one or even several strategic operations. This evolving Russian concept of hybrid warfare is a modern example of strategic uniqueness in Russia's culture producing an asymmetric approach to war that diverges sharply with Western concepts and practice.

Perceptions of Strategic Vulnerability and Expecting Surprise: Strategic Command and Control and Mobility for Counter-Surprise

There is a duality in Russian strategic culture about war. Seeking strategic advantage and exploiting political and military opportunity in war coexists alongside perceptions of strategic vulnerability and fears for surprise. Russian culture's second pillar of strategic thought centres on perceived geo-strategic and technological vulnerability and uncertainty about Russia being truly defensible. On one hand, Russia's strategic uniqueness motivates the military to seek opportunistic offensive employment of the armed forces with an overly strong sense of superiority and decisive purpose. Simultaneously, the military planner holds a view that Russia is strategically vulnerable, susceptible to surprise, and not completely defensible, at least in a traditional Western understanding of a defensive approach.

In Russian thinking, there is also no distinction between the measures and capabilities needed for attacking and defending. As a land-based power conducting military operations on or adjacent to its territory, it is unquestioned by the Russian military that they will need to attack and defend, punching offensively and blocking defensively at the tactical, operational, or even strategic levels. Accordingly, the strategic offense requires defensive actions and an effective strategic defence depends on offensive actions. Any distinction between offense and defence in general has been further blurred by the lethality, range, and readiness of modern weapon systems. In their view, because wars with neighbours and even wars with countries at greater distances can involve other nations or other Alliances, Russian strategic planners must look at the totality of potential actors and plan for the appropriate defensive actions to protect offensive moves, as well as the appropriate offensive actions to protect defensive moves – at various levels and to various distances from Russian territory.

Despite Russia's long-held priority attached to surprising her opponents, the Russian military expect to be surprised at all levels. Perceptions of their vulnerability to surprise in Russian strategic culture drive approaches to war designed to minimize Russia's vulnerability to anticipated surprise by maximizing the counter-surprise power of Russian military actions. In particular, strategic command and control, strategic mobility, and military shock operations in *anticipation of surprise* are critical by-products of their perception of strategic vulnerability.

The well-known, traditional Russian focus on pre-emption, escalation dominance, surprise (suddenness and deception), shock and strike power, and speed of action are classic features of Russian military operations. These features contribute to gaining strategic advantage and countering perceived strategic vulnerability at the outset, during, and at the end of a military conflict. As a result, the Russian military thinks, plans, and acts more pre-emptively than many in the West would believe, focusing on the moves and next moves of an opponent and decisively disrupting those moves with pre-emptive action. In their view, there is no contradiction between this pre-emptive interpretation of countering anticipated surprise and being defensive. The entirety of the armed forces and its supporting military system are poised for quick, early action in a crisis, conflict, or war to pre-empt their opponent's ability to surprise them on multiple levels and in multiple ways. Strategic command and control are fundamental to the aim of pre-empting anticipated surprise.

Russian strategic command and control is characterized by the breadth of interaction between ministries in Moscow and throughout the country, single point of command over a crisis and war, and strategic direction of a war management process for the country as a whole. The single most important requirement for this system is speed in decision-making. At the same time, strategic command and control is designed to mitigate the strategic effects of inevitable surprise by operating at speeds and on scales of action opponents cannot match, effectively executing counter-surprise moves through varying types of strategic operations to reverse the impact achieved by an opponent's surprise actions.

Russia has established a modern command and control centre for the armed forces and other governmental organizations in Moscow. This strategic command and control centre is a modern version of the Stavka practice from World War II. General Gerasimov has stated that the purpose of this new centre is to accelerate the speed of decision-making, consolidate command and control of forces, and harmonize nation-wide actions with other ministries strategically and effectively.¹³⁴ This strategic C2 centre is the mechanism for exercising President Putin's and the Russian General Staff's consolidated political and military control over the country.

All Russian General Staff ambiguous, conventional, and nuclear war exercises and contingencies are managed by this organization in peacetime, and would be commanded through this organization in crisis and war. This consolidated strategic command and control centre under Putin and the military, with operational-strategic command centres for each military district and one for the North of Russia, constitutes a nation-wide instrument for assessing potential regional conflict and prosecuting war

¹³⁴ Maj-Gen. Igor Sheremet, Chairman of the Scientific-Military Committee, Deputy Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of the RF, "A Unified Organ is Needed", *The Military-Industrial Courier*, Issue No 23 (389), 15th June 2011.

on a strategic level.¹³⁵ The purpose of this organization is to gain significant advantage in speed of decision-making and scale of orchestrated strategic action over Russia's opponents.

Strategic mobility is also fundamental to offsetting perceived vulnerabilities, disadvantages, and surprise by an opponent. In practice, the Russian military cannot be deployed continuously around its almost 60,000 km-long border. Strategic mobility and speed of action are fundamental for the Russian military to reach critical areas around the country and move forces between strategic directions faster than an opponent. At the same time, strategic mobility is inherently applicable to strategic offensive warfare as was the case for the Soviet Army that envisioned movements from within the USSR to Western Europe as part of strategic offensive operations.

In 2014 and 2015, Russian military exercises moved ground forces East and West and North and South at significant distances.¹³⁶ For example, some Russian forces in Vostok 2014 moved over 12,000 kilometres. In many exercises, air forces, airborne forces, strategic aviation, naval, military transport aviation, and ground forces deployed or redeployed to unplanned training areas, regrouped, and executed operations simultaneously in many of these exercises. The Russian General Staff has also exercised differing tasks and missions for various strategic directions in the same strategic command staff exercise, placing enormous demand on the nation-wide strategic mobility and flexibility of the armed forces. This is not new, and not associated with Putin's current policies. During meetings with senior Alliance officials as early as 2002, Chief of the Russian General Staff Kvashnin explained in great detail the demands of strategic mobility for the Russian forces, and stated the first exercises involving strategic movement of forces from the West to the East would start that same year.

While decisive advantage is always sought by the Russian military strategist, perceived vulnerabilities about where and how a war might begin or escalate on Russia's periphery also drives the priority for strong, durable command and control over strategically mobile forces prepared and poised for strategic and operational-level counter-surprise. It is common in the West to look at a potential Russian military action as a deliberate, pre-decided action with a preconceived set of strategic military objectives that will support a set of pre-determined political objectives. This was certainly the case in the Cold War with Soviet and NATO forces lined up on either side of a potential line of contact, and Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces operating with a single understanding that the war would

¹³⁵ Minister of Defense Shoigu and Chief of General Staff Gerasimov outbrief to Putin on the March 2015 operational-strategic command staff exercise for an example of evolving Russian military thinking, 24 March 2015, Moscow, Kremlin.

¹³⁶ Valeriy Gerasimov, "We have a better picture of the status of the army and navy", *Military Industrial Courier*, Issue No 47 (565), 17 December 2014 . <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/23142>

start on the Western strategic direction and the outcome of the war would be determined by the conduct of operations on this strategic direction.

This is not the case in current Russian strategic thinking. Russian writings and exercises suggest that the Russian approach is very flexible and there are multiple variants for war, where they might begin, and how they might evolve.

In their view, Russia's periphery is unstable and unpredictable with multiple actors, all perceived as being capable of triggering a wide range of actions in a specific region that could expand to encompass multiple nations, alliances, and regions. In their view, a future war could begin in the Arctic, Baltic, or Black Seas, or with a specific nation like Turkey or Ukraine for example. Russia's own destabilization campaign against the European security system has not made the General Staff's task of forecasting where and how a future war could start any easier. Their destabilization of Europe and the ongoing transition in the global security system have made it even more difficult to construct a single scripted scenario for war with forces structured and deployed accordingly. At the same time, there are too few Russian forces and too few rubles to replicate the entirety of the Soviet military's approach with extensive force deployments around the country. The modern Russian approach is far more flexible, more multi-variant, than its Soviet predecessor. It is also far more difficult to discern by the West.

Russia's exercises reflect this flexible, multi-variant approach with strategic C2 and mobility key to the posturing of forces for counter-surprise. A nation-wide command staff exercise in 2015 depicted a crisis in the north, triggering a nation-wide activation of the armed forces as a whole, including combat operations in the Baltic and Black Seas. Each strategic direction had a very different military challenge, with correspondingly different Russian aims.¹³⁷ In this strategic command and control exercise, the Russian military tailored campaigns on different strategic directions that were not scripted, but reportedly responded to situations on an hourly basis. A range of tasks were executed including the strategic regrouping of Russian forces after deployments, bastion defence of Russian strategic nuclear submarines in the Barents Sea, the defence of Kaliningrad, the control of the Black Sea and targeting of 'enemy' ships at its western entrance, multi-theatre force management with vertical and geographical escalation, varying tasks by each theatre as well as the integration of tasks and forces in each strategic direction, and the exercising of a newly established of command HQ in the north. The exercise ended with orders being passed to the strategic nuclear submarines in the Northern Fleet. Russian exercises of their respective strategic directions are designed to maximize flexibility, both between strategic directions and within strategic directions, assembling a flexible, nation-wide approach to war built on strategic operations. This

¹³⁷ Minister of Defense Shoigu and Chief of General Staff Gerasimov outbrief to Putin on the March 2015 operational-strategic command staff exercise for an example of evolving Russian military thinking.

exercise vividly illustrates the priority the Russians attach to strategic C2 and mobility required for flexible, multi-variant approaches to war.

The Russians are also using their exercises as rehearsal exercises for regional contingencies, maintaining the traditional practice of rotating exercises among their distinct geographical regions on an annual basis. At the same time, Russia's unscheduled, unannounced February 2016 exercise of the Central and Southern Military Districts appears to suggest that Russia exercises and rehearses new contingencies related to specific events. This exercise involved in the south-western strategic direction involved the generation of combat capabilities from two military districts and the Black Sea Fleet.¹³⁸ This exercise was conducted a few short months following the shoot down of the Russian Su-31, and during heightened tensions with the Turkish government. This large-scale exercise could suggest the Russian General Staff was focusing on a specific contingency for a war originating to her southwest and one that would involve large-scale military operations, large air operations by an opponent, and counter-air space operations by the Russians. This is an example of how the Russian military repackages strategic, operational, and tactical capabilities to align with multiple possibilities in how a potential conflict could arise.

The Russian military also uses their large-scale exercises to rehearse operations. This was confirmed last fall, where the Russian military disclosed that CENTER 2015, the largest exercise of the year, was actually a rehearsal for their future operations in Syria, notably even including the now well-documented Kalibr missile strikes from the Caspian Flotilla.¹³⁹ This is a common feature of the Russian planning and exercise system, a system framed by strategic directions that extend well beyond their borders. As Russia has few bases and commands outside her borders that would mirror a US-type approach of forward-based geographical commands, Russia's military leadership uses their highest strategic and regional commands to look at strategic directions from the interior of Russia to greater tactical, operational, and strategic depths beyond their borders. This 'beyond the borders' framework for Russian strategic planners also is the result of Russia's global interests, a military formula of looking at the totality of Russia's periphery to assess her security, and a military approach that attaches as much strategic importance to an opponent's capabilities at operational and strategic depths as capabilities at tactical depths. For example, the southwest strategic direction reaches the entire Black Sea region, Syria, and the broader Middle East.¹⁴⁰ Russia's firing of

¹³⁸ See Pavel Felgenhauer, "Sudden Massive Snap Exercise and Mobilization of Russian Forces in Black Sea and Caspian Sea Region Appears Aimed at Turkey", *Eurasian Daily Monitor*, Volume 13, Issue 29, February 11, 2016.

¹³⁹ Lt.-Gen. Ivan Buvaltsev, "The Middle East in Southern Ural", *Military-Industrial Courier*, Issue No 608, 04 Nov 2015. <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/27827>

¹⁴⁰ In 2010, Russia's Operational-Strategic HQ staff provided a briefing during a visit on the southwest strategic direction, and included in their assessments the situation inside Russia's northern Caucasus region, Black Sea nations, and the Middle East.

Kalibr missiles from the Caspian Flotilla to Syria in the fall of 2015 is an example of Russian capabilities from the interior of Russia being employed at great distances inside an established strategic direction, but well beyond Russia's borders. The Kalibr missile firing also reflects the flexible approach the Russian military has adopted – an approach that reaches back to the homeland for a broad array of military capabilities to achieve desired effects with the use of force. This flexible, hard to predict employment of a diverse set of homeland-based capabilities that can impact multiple theatres at great distances is a modern-day demonstration of the Russian approach to counter-surprise and shock.

In many ways, this approach to war reflects the much-changed strategic conditions of the 21st century, the capabilities of modern weapon systems, and the limits of post-Soviet Russia. In this very different environment, the Russian military seeks to create flexible strategic options and operational constructs that can be employed in all strategic directions, all preserving Moscow's control of the strategic initiative over an external opponent and internal opposition. Externally, Moscow seeks to control the strategic initiative through escalation dominance options over an opponent. Internally, Moscow seeks to control political and social forces at home. Russia's aims in crisis and war are driven by external threat perceptions and internal security calculations – and their potential interaction in a crisis or conflict.

There is often Western debate about Russia's threat assessments. Are they real or just narrative to justify their own actions? While the use of the Western threat does indeed mask Russian actions or attempt to legitimize them, there is all too often a tendency to dismiss Russian assessments of the threat as *only* being a narrative. This is a mistake – one we learned after the Cold War with the revelations about how the Russians had actually developed plans to act on the threat perceptions of that time that most dismissed as pure propaganda.¹⁴¹ In my experience – from the tactical to the strategic level – the Russian military are seriously convinced by their institutional intelligence and security assessments of potential threats and think, plan, and act in accordance with these threat perceptions.

Threat narratives can be established to legitimize a political aim or even for deception purposes. However, real threat assessments are acted upon and reflected in the structure and behaviour of the Russian Armed Forces. The Russian General Staff builds and calibrates its military strategy against their assessment of the speed, lethality, mobility, and destructiveness of their opponent's ambiguous, conventional, and nuclear arsenal. As a matter of practice, Russian assessments of their opponents' military capabilities are interpreted through their own culture of thought, and how the Russian military would prosecute war against Russia if they possessed these Western

¹⁴¹ See *Planning the Unthinkable: Czechoslovak War Plans, 1950-1990*, Edited by Petr Luna, Dokoran, 27 Aug 2007, and "Poland Opens Secret Warsaw Pact Files ", *Radio Free Europe*, 2005.

capabilities. This last point alone sometimes leads Western observers to dismiss Russian assessments of Western military policy and strategy due to its 'inaccurate' representation in Russian analysis and commentary.

For example, Gerasimov's March 2016 article is an inaccurate characterization of actual Western doctrine and strategy, but simultaneously a clear description of how Russia's military leaders would conduct these operations. However, Russia's real strategy and operational art for war is driven by these threat perceptions, perceptions that we too easily dismiss as being insignificant because they depart from our own understanding of Western doctrine and strategy. This Russian approach to acting on threat perceptions in no way contradicts or undercuts the Russian practice of exaggerating the threat to achieve political aims, both external and internal. The advantage of attaining narrative dominance in an information war, and the posturing of forces, military behaviour, and decisions in crisis coexist – and frame Russia's actions.

Russian assessments of technological inferiority reinforce perceptions of strategic vulnerability in traditional Russian culture, impacting on Russian approaches to war. Technological vulnerability is seen first and foremost as the inability to match the West's revolutionary leaps in technological innovation and rapidly transition the economic base for weapons system development. In their culture, Russia's approaches to war require a different approach, a unique compensatory approach against this perceived Western advantage.

General Gerasimov has written about Russia's vulnerability to strategic surprise, most recently describing what he sees as potent Western capabilities, particularly in the U.S, that are grouped together in what he called "The 21st Century Blitzkrieg".¹⁴² Gerasimov describes the West's "plan" for lightning fast, global, long range strikes, the application of weapons of new physical principles, cyber, and more traditional means of ambiguous warfare – all united to achieve a decisive strategic result in a war's initial period. His characterization of modern warfare suggests the Russians are not convinced that a future war will be preceded by a long mobilization period. In his view, modern conventional and nuclear weaponry simply do not require mobilization to generate the requisite firepower to achieve objectives, and the West has the potential not only to surprise, but to achieve strategic surprise.

There is a train of thought that suggests the Russians perceive the West and Russia as already being in a period of mobilization for war, at least the early stages of intensified, narrow mobilization with the employment of ambiguous means of warfare.¹⁴³ It is clear that the Russian military believes that an ambiguous war with the West for decisive

¹⁴² See above Gerasimov, "Based on the Syrian Experience" (2016)

¹⁴³ See Andrew Monaghan, "Russian State Mobilization Moving the Country on to a War Footing ", *Russia and Eurasia Program, Chatham House*, May 2016.

political aims could escalate into a broader war involving conventional and nuclear means. This assessment of how surprise could be achieved by one of Russia's competitors in the current environment contributes to the rationale behind Russia's practice of "sudden checks of combat readiness exercises" or so-called snap exercises for their conventional and nuclear forces. These exercises are as much designed to assess combat readiness as they align with how the Russian military sees the threat.

The modern Russian approach to war also has integrated internal threat perceptions. There is a long-standing appreciation for revolution in Russia - the Russians know how to export political instability, and they know its impact on their own power at home when it is imported. Their thinking about political change and revolution is a common, dominant, if not constant, feature in their mentality and worldview, one that is difficult for Western mind-set to grasp in principle given the relative stability most North American and European liberal democracies have experienced since the end of the Cold War. There is also a long-standing Russian view that political instability at home will be accompanied by foreign military intervention or exploitation. The experience from Russian Civil War, is commonly cited as an example of Western interference, and even military intervention.

In the modern context, Russia's military sees colour revolutions in the former Soviet space as one model of internal interference with strategic consequence that the Russian military must integrate into their contingency planning for war. In the Russian view, what happened in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, is the direct application of military force to produce political change. The Russians have concluded that this model combined with the employment of advanced weapons could have a similar impact on Russia.

Russia has merged internal and external threats into one framework that would determine their actions to either or both threats. Russia's military doctrine in 2014 formalized this connection of internal and external threats, and the Russians have acted upon this doctrine over the past two years.¹⁴⁴ With this merger, Russian military actions externally can be driven as much by internal political threat perceptions as external military perceptions. As such, any internal threat to Russia's stability may actually spark an internal *and* external move of Russian military power even absent Western military action. Russia's Internal Troops and Armed Forces have a long history of overlapping roles, and Russia's new National Guard is designed to protect the Putin regime and further strengthen the overlap between the military and the country's internal security. For example, one week after the completion of their nation-wide strategic command staff exercise in 2015, Russia's Internal Troops conducted a nation-wide "anti-Maidan" type

¹⁴⁴ Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine, 26 December 2014.
<https://www.offiziere.ch/wp-content/uploads.../Russia-s-2014-Military-Doctrine.pdf>

exercise.¹⁴⁵ Given a centralized national command and control system for the Ministry of Defence and other security institutions, it is not difficult to envision a link between these two exercises. This Russian merger of internal and external security in practical terms is more than a linkage. In this system, General Staff external threat assessments feed Putin's internal threat assessments, and vice versa, likely producing extremely distorted views of political and military reality that are interpreted through the lens of Putin's ambitious system change aims. This merger of assessments likely leads to the Russian military and political leadership linking events and actions in a way that Western observers are not able to anticipate or fully understand.

Perceived vulnerability is a driver of Russian military thinking and decision-making, and the Russian military understands their own vulnerability when they are on the offensive, ambitiously pursuing strategic aims as the Russians are now doing with their effort to support President Putin's aims to reformat the European security system by destabilizing it. In this regard, the Russians suspect the West will not let the regional and global system go easily.¹⁴⁶ Putin's destabilization campaign essentially is punching, literally and figuratively, at the European and global system in every domain of power and influence. Paradoxically, Putin's destabilization campaign of the European security system increases Russian General Staff perceptions of vulnerability, destabilizing as well the Russian military view of their own security and how it could be challenged. Consequently, Russian military planners cannot discount that the West will react with military forces to stop Russia's destabilization campaign. Just as the Soviet Army defended the gains of socialism, the Russian army now sees itself as defending Russia's ambitious system change agenda from potential actions that could be taken by those nations intent on preserving the current security system. Their emerging national strategy reflects the coexistence of strategic uniqueness and strategic vulnerability in their military thought, and their merger into one strategic approach to security and defence of the Russian state in the 21st century that allows Russia to pursue ambitious political aims against the system around Russia, use the military for strategic effect in support of these aims, protect Russia's leadership from internal colour revolutions, and simultaneously protect Russia during an unpredictable, transitional period in global security. How the Russian military operationalizes this single strategic approach is shaped by two other pillars of Russian strategic culture.

¹⁴⁵ For a discussion of the operational-Strategic Exercise "Zaslon 2015" as preparation for Russia's own Maidan see: "The Interior Troops of the RF Interior Ministry conducted exercises under conditions similar to the Maydan", *RIA Novosti*, 09 April 2015. http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20150409/1057475626.html

¹⁴⁶ Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with the Italian magazine *Limes*, February 4, 2016, <https://www.mid.ru>. Lavrov states that "US "exclusiveness" to the objective trend toward the evolution of multipolarity, seeking to preserve the remnants of its hegemony in the world no matter what. Hence its proclivity toward unilateral action and the desire to punish countries that disagree with its policies."

The Decisive Initial Period of War: Setting Russia's Military Posture and Rhythm for Future War in Peacetime

The third element of Russian strategic military culture is its fixation on the decisiveness of a future war's initial period of war and how it impacts the overall outcome of war. How the Russians think about conflicts and wars and how they organize themselves in peacetime is set by their strategic assessments of the initial period of a future war. Therefore, the characteristics of the initial period – the geostrategic political situation in a region, military technical capabilities of weapons likely to be employed, assessed political and military aims of potential opponents – determine how the Russian military postures itself in peacetime, how operational art and tactics are developed, and how forces are orchestrated to achieve military and political objectives in this future war. None of these key elements of Russia's military approach to war are possible without securing control of the strategic initiative in peacetime, in crisis, and in war. In its most basic form, seizing the strategic initiative is achieved through surprise (counter-surprise), suddenness, deception, superiority in military force and firepower, and decisiveness of decision and action.

Recent Russian General Staff writings describe a potential future war with the West as one characterized by lightning fast, hybrid blitzkrieg actions.¹⁴⁷ The Russian military believes that the West, the US specifically, has the ability to employ modern means and weapons to achieve decisive strategic political and military results in a very short period of time with minimum preparations. The Russians military and President Putin himself, have described this form of future war, the weapons involved, and their impact on Russia for years.¹⁴⁸

The destruction experienced by the Soviet Union and its military in the Great Patriotic War led to a fundamental tenet to never fight another war on Russian territory. Simply put, future wars waged by Russia are wars that will be waged on the territory of another state. The Soviet model for forward deployed Groups of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe's was one model for attaining this aim.

However, in the 21st century the Russians understand that buffer zones will not protect Russia from the modern means of non-attributable warfare that erase lines on the battlefield. The Russians also know that advanced high-technology conventional weapons have the effectiveness of small yield nuclear weapons on the battlefield, and the long-range air, maritime, and ground variants of these weapons can mass fires faster than land forces may mass forces. The blurring of offense and defence, conventional and nuclear weapon effects on the battlefield, tactical and strategic levels, forward areas

¹⁹ See above Gerasimov, "Based on the Syrian Experience" (2016)

¹⁴⁸ Vladimir Putin, "Being strong: National security guarantees for Russia", *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, Moscow, 28 February 2012.

and rear areas is dominant in Russian thinking about war without lines, or non-linear warfare. In effect, the Russians believe modern weapons allow forces to move and act at the *speed of light*. Cyber, new weapons built on new physical principles, combined with advanced, long-range high precision weapons and, advanced ground, air, and space-based C4I allow forces to seize the strategic initiative and control a war's initial period.

In their view, Russia currently cannot match the West with these same advanced technologies and weapons. However, the requirement to move and strike quickly to not surrender the strategic initiative in the face of a possible hybrid blitzkrieg remains. The Russian solution today parallels solutions in past situations. In those previous historical experiences, the Russians substituted older weapons and technology for the modern means missing from their inventory, but maintained continuity in the prosecution of the strategy, operational art, and tactics for future war based on the belief that ultimately these compensatory means of warfare would indeed be replaced by capabilities that matched the West.

In the 1960s, Soviet nuclear doctrine and battlefield operational art described a future war dominated by an initial period that involved tactical, operational, and strategic nuclear strikes.¹⁴⁹ Ground forces were to have conducted strategic operations in the form of meeting engagements, effectively mopping up opponent forces that survived the initial nuclear strikes. However, as revealed by Soviet Colonel Penkovskiy in the 1960s, the Russian military did not have sufficient nuclear weapons at the tactical, operational, and strategic level to prosecute the envisioned nuclear battlefield, and Russian compensated for this nuclear weapon shortage with chemical weapons.¹⁵⁰ The Russians fielded an array of chemical weapons, and these chemical weapons played the role of nuclear weapons in their military strategy until the Soviet military developed and fielded the requisite number of nuclear weapons to support their strategy.

In today's context, Russian capabilities may not be able to match a strategic lightning move they see the West currently capable of executing with advanced high-tech weaponry, but Russia can move its conventional and nuclear forces suddenly and swiftly and in large numbers. In their view, the initial period has heightened Russian conventional and nuclear force readiness requirements, and decreased dependence on full mobilization as a prerequisite for readying its armed forces for war. Even Russia's June 2016 nation-wide mobilization exercise operated on timelines for reserve mobilization in hours and days, not weeks and months.¹⁵¹ In their view, there may not be a lengthy military mobilization period in a future war since modern day weapons that

¹⁴⁹ Steven Cymbala, *US Military Strategy and the Cold War Endgame*, Routledge, 2014.

¹⁵⁰ Oleg Penkovsky, *The Penkovskiy Papers: The Russian Who Spied for the West*, Doubleday, New York, 1966.

¹⁵¹ Aleksey Mikhaylov, "The Discovered Reserves", *Military Industrial Courier*, 22 June 2016.

are likely to be used in its initial period do not require long period of time for activation, deployment, and employment. Consequently, the readiness of the Armed Forces to act strategically, and act with speed, is central to Russia's approach to war.

The sudden or snap exercises of Russian conventional and nuclear forces is Russia's asymmetric move to match their Western competitors' capability for lightning strike. While conventional and nuclear forces cannot move at the speed of light, they can have a decisive impact on seizing, re-seizing, and securing the strategic initiative in a war's initial period. The speed and scale of this Russian action, and the asymmetry involved in its execution is by design and a part of Russian approach to deterrence. These snap exercises began in 2013, pre-dating the Russia's Crimean campaign and raise conventional and nuclear forces to full combat readiness – a readiness level for war - in 24-48 hours. These sudden checks of combat readiness are connected directly to Russia's view of the character of future war and the need to seize or re-seize the strategic initiative in its initial period. If Crimea and Donbass are good examples of war starting with ambiguous means, then the Russian snap exercises in 2015 and 2016 are good examples of exercises involving Russia's non-ambiguous conventional and nuclear approach to a war's initial period likely involving nations and Alliances that possess the high-end military capabilities General Gerasimov described in his March 2016 article.

Russian culture's fixation with the initial period of war sets the peacetime posture and military exercise behaviour of the Russian Armed Forces. The initial period of war also frames and places the other three pillars of Russian culture into a tactical, operational, and strategic context. Collectively, the pillars of strategic uniqueness, vulnerability to strategic surprise and counter-surprise measures, and going to war with all of Russia cross, connect, and unite in their assessment of the initial period of war. This, in turn, sets the strategies and priority means the Russian military will use to wage war. Russia's traditional strategic culture, combined with President Putin's worldview, and Russia's geo-strategic situation in the 21st century has significant implications for Europe's security for years to come, whether measured in the short-term, a crisis avoidance context, or a long-term, strategic military balance context.

War with Russia means “War with All of Russia”: Strategic Operations with Extended Forward Lines and Conventional/Nuclear Options

The fourth pillar of Russian strategic culture is one that is central to their thinking on deterrence; namely, *if you go to war with Russia* – even on a local or regional scale - *you go to war with all of Russia*. Russian strategic culture holds that opponents will only be deterred and defeated by nation-wide, force-wide, integrated strategies united through *strategic operations*. No other country in the world accords the priority to thinking and preparing for war holistically at the strategic-level as do the Russians

‘Going to war with all of Russia’ drives the demand for swift force movement across and between regions, speed of decision, concentrating massive fires and forces, and posturing of nuclear forces simultaneously throughout the country. In their view, any other approach risks ceding the strategic initiative to the opponent at the outset of war, and perhaps leading to operational-strategic decapitation of command and control, breakdowns in the offensive or defensive campaign, and attrition of Russian nuclear potential that degrades Russian advantage or unfavourably shifts the strategic nuclear balance in a conflict. All of these outcomes could present to the Russian strategic planner the need to wage war against an opponent on Russian territory. For the Russians, this outcome constitutes failure and must be avoided at all costs.

In the 21st century application of this principle, ‘all of Russia’ means all of Russia’s forces irrespective of their peacetime geographic dispositions. It also means all of Russia’s weaponized ambiguous, non-attributable means of warfare, her conventional weapons across all services, and her nuclear arsenal – tactical, operational, and strategic. Russian strategic planners’ approach to deterrence and defence are based on this principle, and this pillar of strategic thought drives military preparations across the entire spectrum of conflict for any contingency near Russia’s borders or beyond.

All Russian military actions in a single region are supported by a ***national military strategy*** and nation-wide effort from the outset of a crisis and conflict. While Western strategists may look at a local conflict in isolation, and plan for it’s widening over time – Russian strategists do not take the same approach. The Russian military must look at the entirety of Russia’s ground, air, maritime, cyber, and space situation in all four major regions of Russia. Currently, Russia’s General Staff has concluded that the best way to manage their nation-wide strategy for multiple strategic directions simultaneously is through the creation of a strategic framework anchored around four strategic regions – the Arctic, Baltic, Black Seas, and the East.

There is a tendency to see Russia’s regional ‘zones’ in isolation from Russia’s broader conduct of a war on a national scale. However, The Russians do not look at their three European-oriented domes in isolation and the domes of area control and area denial are operational constructs that serve, first and foremost, a national strategy built upon nation-wide orchestration of forces. All three are connected to one another to make up a nation-wide framework for managing strategic military operations.

While similar weaponry may be deployed to these regions or designated within Russia to support these regions, these three domes in the Baltic, Black, and Arctic regions are set on top of three very different geographic, political, and military regions and will execute tasks tailored to these unique regions in accordance with a variety of potential contingencies, all in line with a single national strategy. In this nation-wide strategy, Moscow’s decisions in crisis and war would be based on how the conflict impacts all of

Russia, not one region, and Moscow would bring to bear all of Russia's military capabilities – not only those deployed forward, where, and when necessary to sustain the strategic operations designed to support the political leadership's intent.

While this nation-wide approach is commonly referred to in the West as "A2AD" (Anti-Access and Area Denial), this term is not used in the Russian military. In Russia's approach, A2AD is only a part of a single Russian strategic operation or several strategic operations. Consequently, Russia would not conduct an "A2AD operation", but Russia would conduct a strategic operation or strategic operations that have A2AD, along with cyber, informational warfare, offensive action with air, land, maritime, and conventional missiles – while all the time simultaneously posturing and readying other conventional forces and nuclear forces for employment when necessary. These strategic operations involving A2AD capabilities would be designed to achieve several objectives simultaneously, giving the Russian leadership maximum options, maximum opportunity, minimizing their vulnerability, and simultaneously limiting the options of an opponent. These aims go well beyond the purpose of establishing a defensive buffer zone for Russia to replace the buffer played by the Warsaw Pact in the Soviet period.

The core purpose of Russian strategic operations involving A2AD capabilities is actually best described as *Strategic Area Control – Opponent Options Denial*. The A2AD component of these strategic operations could have multiple purposes, ranging from controlling an area in crisis to extending Russia's forward 'defensive lines' and possibly presenting the risk of military confrontation or escalation if their A2AD extended perimeter lines are crossed. In the context of traditional Russian strategic culture, A2AD domes could delineate clear lines in a complex, blurred operational and strategic situation for Russian planners and political decision-makers. The integrity or non-integrity of these extended lines or zones could also represent decision points for how Moscow will manage war, its escalation or termination.

The "war with all of Russia" pillar in their strategic culture can be seen in the Russian description of a Strategic Air-Space Operation, an operation that is probably at the centre of Russia's strategy for the Baltic and Black Sea regions.¹⁵² This operation involves air and space forces acting in coordination with other branches and services of the Armed Forces in accordance with a single plan and intent on one or several strategic directions. The objectives in this strategic operation can be to stall (repulse) air-space attack by the enemy, achieve air superiority in the strategic zone, inflict destruction on air and ground based elements, break the enemy's governmental and military command and control system, delay enemy strategic and operational deployments, interdict the enemy's inter-

¹⁵² *Russian Military Encyclopedic Dictionary*, 2007, official definition. See also, Speech by Col-Gen. Rudskoy, Chief of the Main Operations Directorate of the RF Armed Forces at 2015 the Moscow Security Conference where he suggests NATO's strategic approach would involve air attacks against Russia's Western territories.

theatre deployments, and decrease the enemy's economic and military potential. This Russian strategic operation would also envision the protection of their key governmental and military strategic. This is a large-scale operation, involving a mix of offensive and defensive actions, to achieve a single objective in a particular strategic direction.

Another type of operation was described in a 2014 Russian article, an operation called "the strategic operation for the destruction of important targets of the enemy (SODMOE).¹⁵³ This type of operation has been studied by the Russian military, examining in particular the integration of air-space defence operations with offensive air and missile strike operations in a single, or multiple strategic directions. This Russian operation could be conducted in anticipation of an attack by the opponent's air and space forces, and is designed to destroy targets in their opponent's depth to weaken and disrupt the planned enemy air assault. Offensive (pre-emptive counter-offensive) actions in this strategic operation are seen as strengthening the Russian defence and protecting of Russia's own key strategic facilities and forces. This strategic operation involves multiple scales of military actions - operations, combat actions, battles, and strikes. The author of this article also indicates that Russia is still experimenting with the right mix of forces and objectives in their development of modern strategic operations – work that could produce other variants and models in the future. In Russian military thinking, this type of strategic operation is defensive even if it is executed pre-emptively and involves offensive strikes. Given President Putin's comments on their intent to neutralize NATO Ballistic Missile Defence capabilities, Russia could decide to use its air and missile systems with conventional warheads against NATO BMD sites even at the outset of a crisis to maintain their nuclear strategic stability by eliminating a perceived threat to that balance.¹⁵⁴ Consequently, escalation in these modern Russian strategic operations would not necessarily be gradual or rung-by-rung, moving from the tactical level to the strategic level as it was in the Cold War. These types of Russian operations put Putin's comments on targeting NATO BMD into a different context, one with strategic military significance along with obvious strategic communications purposes.

Russian strategic culture dictates that these strategic operations must be executed across ground-air-space domains, at tactical-operational-strategic scales, and with ambiguous-conventional-nuclear means is a complicating factor for Europe's security, but fundamental to Russia's security. This approach is further exacerbated by the perceived complexity of this region, in particular with perceived areas of competing

¹⁵³ Andrey Goncharov, "Anti-space operations of the future", *Air-Space Defense Journal*, Issue No 3, 15 June 2014, addressing the questions of forms and means for the employment of troops (forces) of air-space defense in modern conditions.

¹⁵⁴ "Russia says US missile system breaches nuclear INF treaty", *BBC News*, 11 May 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36269734>; "Europe and Putin says Russia will 'neutralise threats' after US opens missile base", *BBC News*, 14 May 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36289155>

encirclement and counter-encirclement that extend well into the North and Atlantic Seas and with Russian and NATO forces capable of operating in the operational and strategic rear areas of each other from the outset of a crisis or conflict. This Russian perception certainly gives new meaning to their approach to non-linear warfare, and its implications for the depth of Russia's strategic operations in their national strategy. In these strategic operations, Russian strategic planners would not solely focus on the relative correlation of forces along Russia's border with neighbours, but examine the tactical, operational, and strategic correlation of forces in the theatre and in other theatres. Consequently, Russian strategic operations are -strategic, not tactical – and by their very nature and method of construction are pre-emptive, offensive, and defensive with forward extended security lines to achieve area control and options denial aims. This emerging emphasis in Russian strategy also may reflect Russia's 21st century approach to war avoidance and nuclear deterrence, with destabilizing and dangerous implications for Europe.

Russian strategic planners will have certainly embraced multiple models and developed multiple approaches for strategic operations in the three regions, exemplified by the strategic exercise conducted in March of 2015.¹⁵⁵ In the Baltic Sea, Russian strategic planners would likely start with a view that Kaliningrad, an integrated part of the Russian homeland defence system, is perceived to be encircled in peacetime by NATO nations and NATO partner nations like Sweden and Finland. In crisis and conflict, Russia's A2AD operational construct in the Kaliningrad region could be designed to counter perceived NATO peacetime encirclement by extending a Russian perimeter well-beyond Kaliningrad's borders into the Baltic Sea, Poland, Sweden, and Finland. These forward extended lines could be sustained by defensive and offensive weapon systems present in the area, reinforced with capabilities generated from within Russia to strengthen and deepen forward-based A2AD capabilities in Kaliningrad and in the Baltic Sea. This would include all of Russia's forward-based or forward deployed area control defensive weapon systems and conventional and nuclear capable weapons systems such as surface-to-surface missiles, operational-tactical aviation, and even strategic nuclear aviation. The extended perimeter could be intended protect maritime and air lines of communication from Russia to Kaliningrad. However, the Baltic region is likely to be perceived as a very complex environment, and the application of these kinds of air-space operations to the Baltic Sea region would likely have a wide range of potential contingencies, going well-beyond an approach to secure air and maritime lines of communication.

Russia's extended forward lines of security and strategic operations effectively would encircle the Baltic States and simultaneously place the Baltic states in the operational rear of Russia's strategic operations. This is a perceived vulnerability for a Russian

¹⁵⁵ See above the outbrief by RF Minister of Defense Shoigu and RF AF Chief of General Staff Gerasimov to President Putin, 10 March 2015, Moscow.

strategic planner, knowing as well the numerous historical examples from WWII for how the Soviet military dealt with military forces in their operational rear area while they continued the conduct of strategic operations. At the same time, in this context, Russia's extended forward lines and reach of a strategic operation(s) effectively aligns Russia's longer-range strike capabilities to NATO's operational rear area, placing NATO's operational rear area at risk. Russia's strategic operations in the Western strategic direction or other strategic directions could be designed to hold at risk Alliance strategic capabilities like Ballistic Missile Defence sites, air fields, logistic centres, command and control centres, countering Russia's perceived vulnerabilities to their own strategic sites, including strategic nuclear forces.

In a defensive context, this approach would counter the perceived risk of NATO forces operating in Russia's operational rear area by placing NATO's operational rear at equal risk. In an offensive context, these same Russian actions and moves concurrent with conventional force mobilization in the Western military district at the outset of a crisis could be used to threaten an invasion of the Baltic States. These strategic operations create options in crisis and war for Russian strategists. The actions required for a durable defence in the 21st century are the very same actions required for a pre-emptive Russian offensive (counter-offensive) under the protection of Russia's domes. This approach is a clear demonstration of the duality of Russian strategic thought and the priority of maintaining multiple options in an unpredictable strategic environment to win the crisis management phase of conflict that may lead to war.

The strategic-level dimension of Russia's emerging strategy plays a fundamental part in modern Russian thinking, and indeed eclipses the tactical, ground dimension where Russia perceives it holds advantage along its borders. General Gerasimov's March 2016 article made it clear that Russia's military operations indeed foresee a strategic dimension of war at its very outset.

Russian military planners have long held that the West's superior economic and technological base would not make a long war one that Russia would seek. At the same time, Soviet and Russian military strategists have long held that any future war with the West, if nuclear weapons were employed, it would be extremely difficult to keep that war from transitioning into a strategic nuclear exchange. War avoidance and seeking short wars have co-existed in Soviet and Russian thinking for decades. In a modern twist of this unique military strategic culture, Russia's strategic operations with operational-strategic domes could be emerging as Moscow's approach to unambiguously stopping a war on their terms at the outset of a crisis, and in so doing, stopping a perceived hybrid, multi-dimensional attack on Russia, stopping the destruction of the Russian homeland and key strategic sites by creating overwhelmingly superior firepower in numbers and firepower at the outset for operational and strategic depths.

In the Russian logic to crisis and war, the establishment of a strategic shield for all of Russia, composed of offensive and defensive actions nested inside operational-strategic domes, could be intended to stop a future crisis short of war on Russia's terms by denying viable options to their opponent at the outset of a crisis. In this Russian approach, the West would be presented with options of capitulation or response, with Russia's '*escalation dominance*' practice in play in the crisis period to maintain Russia's escalatory advantage over the West. This approach would attempt to turn a weak strategic hand into a strong operational-tactical hand, to dissuade any movement to war, let alone allow an opponent to reinforce in crisis.

Moscow's strategic operations involving A2AD capabilities reflect an approach to war with Europe that can integrate ambiguous warfare or not, but one that clearly demonstrates the principle of going to war with all of Russia means in the 21st century. Russia's unique deterrent philosophy is founded on this fundamental element of their strategic culture, one that also appears to have updated its formula for strategic stability to now require a balance – and a balance of risk to each other - strategic nuclear forces, long-rang high precision strike systems, and missile defence capabilities. This new understanding of what constitutes Russia's 21st century understanding of the triad differs substantially from its Cold War predecessor and holds significant implications for how the Russians envision managing a crisis, avoiding war, and waging it.

This Russian approach to deterrence and war avoidance is not mobilizing to demobilize, but attaches priority to the accumulation of combat power from all services and from all parts of the Russian Federation to achieve the decisive conventional advantage needed at a specific point in time and in a specific region. The Russian approach is not escalating to deescalate. It is escalating war decisively and pre-emptively to terminate war decisively on terms advantageous to Russia. This Russian General Staff strategic approach has a risk-taking gambler's character to it, one that aligns closely with Putin's tactics demonstrated thus far in crisis and conflict. In this sense, Putin and the General Staff may be prepared to risk more than an opponent – even holding a worse hand – simply to keep their opponent from taking the same risk. This fundamental element of Russia's strategic culture – going to war with all of Russia – intentionally produces an *unambiguous* military posture in a crisis period, designed to communicate the unambiguous consequences of crossing Russia's decision lines in a crisis or war.

Putin and Russia's Military Strategic Culture

In the 1980s, Gorbachev's reforms wrestled control of the USSR's security policy formulations from the Soviet General Staff by intellectually challenging the pillars of their strategic thought and corresponding assumptions and requirements for war with the West. In the 1990s, Yeltsin defunded, disempowered, and disenfranchised the Russian military – seeing it as a legacy threat from the Soviet era to his democratic course for

Post-Soviet Russia. In the post-Cold War period, Western nations provided extensive opportunities to the Russian Ministry of Defence to learn and apply different models for building security and defence. These Western reform models were rejected.

Over those tumultuous and challenging years, the Russian General Staff never abandoned the most basic precepts of its traditional culture of strategic thought. Few organizations can lose fundamental capabilities like personnel, weapons, infrastructure, defence economy, territory, political support, and political cohesion over more than a decade, yet retain their strategic organizational culture. This is testimony to the deeply rooted nature of the Russian military's traditional culture of strategic thought.

In reality, the West is witnessing a deliberate, strategic recoupling of the military to Russia's core geo-strategic interests and Putin's core political aims. This strategic recoupling represents a traditional remilitarization of Russia's overall security policy, and the end of a post-Soviet process where Russia's leaders sought to rethink how security is built and achieved. President Putin is defining what constitutes security for Russia, and the Russian General Staff is determining how it is achieved – applying fundamental cultural pillars of Russian strategic thought to the current situation. This is a strategic military dilemma for Europe, and a toxic cocktail for Europe's strategic equilibrium for years to come.

Traditional elements of Russian military thought have re-emerged in a modernizing military, supported by a revamped, purpose-driven military system, and fuelled by Putin's worldview, aims, and priorities. In fact, Putin's worldview has set a new purpose and identity for the Russian military, one built on the emotion of humiliation from the end of the Soviet Union and Soviet Army and the perception of subsequent exploitation by the West to Russia's great strategic disadvantage. The Russian military has embraced both the vanguard role in erasing these disadvantages, and setting the competition between Western and Russian visions of European security on differing terms and differing azimuths. This has coincided with Putin's ever-increasing dependency on the military, as one of many instruments of power, to preserve his internal power and achieve his external policy aims.

Over the past three years, Russian writings and exercises constitute a laboratory of experimentation in Russia's approach to modern warfare. This experimentation continues, informed by the further development of theory, strategic exercises, and lessons learned from their military experiences notably in Ukraine and Syria. Moscow's main intent with its military strategy experimentation appears to centre on building operational and strategic flexibility to create as many military options as possible for its security, while simultaneously denying its opponents the same flexibility. This is a fundamental requirement for a Russia that suffers huge disadvantages in the correlation of political, economic, and technological forces at the strategic level. While Strategic

disadvantages may limit Russia's strategic options, disadvantage in Russian strategic culture also drives a requirement for Moscow to dictate the strategic terms of how conflict is waged, where it is waged, and when.

Russia's strategy for hybrid homeland offensive warfare against neighbours requires the operational coupling of ambiguous means of warfare to Russia's conventional and nuclear arsenal for success, taking advantage of the vulnerability of neighbouring states to large-scale military actions while the non-attributable, ambiguous campaign is conducted. The very same Russian conventional and nuclear contingency posturing in such campaigns, as we have seen in Ukraine, are designed to prevent third party involvement if Moscow elected to pursue a military campaign against a neighbouring state. This military strategy aligns with Russia's perceptions of its unique strategic security environment. It also aligns with Putin's aims to dominate Russia's periphery, deter further Western security integration, and stop the strengthening of the European security system.

Russia's emerging 21st century national military strategy is a strategic analogue of the 'pressure and shield' tactics used by Moscow in Ukraine. Russia's nation-wide shield also has a sword, in the same way that defence has offense, and offense has defence. Moscow's strategic approach to offensive actions – ambiguous or non-ambiguous – under the protective strategic shield of its conventional and nuclear power gives Putin choices and options to pursue his grander strategy for security system change, choices that would not be available to Moscow if based solely on objective assessments of Russia's strategic competitiveness. The use of force without recklessly risking Russia's security is clearly one of those options.

Putin's worldview and political aims combined with the traditional culture of strategic military thought are reinforcing a Russian approach to security that is fundamentally asymmetric to the West's approach. Russia's unique, strategically asymmetric approach to her security will be an underlying factor in Europe's future military stability or instability. Moreover, this asymmetry between Russian and Western policy, strategy, posture, priority weapon systems, vulnerabilities, and peacetime practices is likely to be an enduring strategic challenge Russia presents the West in the 21st century. Western approaches and assumptions or weapons capability centric analysis alone, when applied to Russia's approach to modern war, will not capture how Moscow sees future conflict and war, and prepares for conflict and war in peacetime.

Russia's strategy for major war with Europe is not the equivalent of NATO's Cold War strategy of forward defence and flexible response. Russian strategy is not defensive in the sense that it is designed to give away territory in the face of an adversaries' offensive, with geographic lines in the country's interior serving as trip wires for conventional

counter-attacks or nuclear escalation. This Western approach would trade territory for decision space in a crisis or war. This is a trade the Russians will not accept.

Modern Russian military strategy under Putin is inherently both offensive and defensive, involving strategic operations that combine both offensive and defensive actions. These actions would be conducted on a strategic scale, involving multiple strategic directions, with forward deployed forces operating in tandem with forces from Russia's interior – all managed centrally in Moscow by Putin and the General Staff. Moreover, the Russian approach is far more pre-emptive, driven by their conclusions about the character of modern long-range conventional strike systems and the need for tactical, operational, and strategic counter-surprise. Russia's overall weak position in relation to the West and traditional concerns about their competitiveness in a long war actually makes Russian counter-surprise all the more necessary to achieve aims in war, especially in its initial period.

There is a contradiction between the cultural pillars underlying of Russian strategic thought and stated political aims in its military doctrine of 2014 to limit the geography, the weapons used, and prevent escalation to large-scale war. Counter-surprise, sudden movement to war readiness of conventional and nuclear forces, strategic command and control, mobilization, use of shock operations involving long-range maritime, ground, and air-based strike platforms, and posturing Russia's forces internally for strategic operations contradicts the Western approach to crisis management, war avoidance, and war termination. The pillars of Russian strategic thought in the modern context makes it virtually impossible for a Russian strategic planner to be defensive, reactive, and use force in a restricted way as would their Western counterparts. That body of military academic work is missing in Russian writings because it is missing from their strategic culture. In fact, the trend would suggest the opposite is true, and is best reflected in Putin's National Security Council Chairman Patrushev's statement about the early use of nuclear weapons even in a local or regional war.

Surrendering the initiative, trading space for time, limiting the weapons involved, the range of their employment, issuing ultimatums, making clear lines of decision-making is a defensive strategy and one more similar to NATO's strategy in the Cold War. Russia is doing exactly the opposite. This is not a defensive strategy nested in a defensive doctrine. Seizing the initiative, taking space to take away time to resolve a crisis, posturing and readying to use all weapons, deploying them and employing them at strategic distances beyond Russia's borders, establishing lines for their clear decision making that extends well beyond Russia's territory onto the territory of other nations is a destabilizing national military strategy - even absent any intent to execute it. However, this is how the Russians traditionally go to war, and reflects the merger of traditional strategic culture with the modern 21st century context and Putin's political aims toward the world around Russia.

Russia's military strategy for large-scale war is based on the principle of Russia securing herself at the expense of the security of others. The Russians claim to be victimized and reactive to the practice of this principle by the West. Despite concrete Western counter-arguments against Moscow's interpretation of the world around them, the Russian military will think, plan, and act in accordance with this war defining principle - security at the expense of another. This modern way of war reflects the fusion of traditional strategic culture with the modern 21st century context, and Putin's political aims toward the world around Russia.

Russia's military exercise regime in peacetime does not align with national or Alliance exercise practice because modern Russian military strategies break with the strategies of other European nations. Potential Russian military actions in crisis and war will differ as well because of Russia's unique approach to war. Additionally, while the goal of avoiding war in Russian thinking may be the same as Western goals, the Russian approach may be very different. The Russian approach to war avoidance is based on the deployment of force and posturing of forces at the outset of a crisis – not necessarily their employment - to reduce or eliminate the options for an opponent to wage war against Russia. Their assessments of the West's ability to move at the speed of light or in lightning strikes will drive Russia's timings for their unique approach to war avoidance.

Moscow's strategic recoupling of its military to its core geo-strategic interests also suggests the window has closed for now on internal Russian reforms that would create regional balance, strategic equilibrium, and symmetric approaches. Unfortunately, this closed window will be more difficult to open than during the Cold War period. The arms reduction tools that were available to Europe in the 1980s to lower military force balances, diffuse military tensions, and disengage from strategic confrontation with the Soviet Union are not available today to diffuse Russia's new round of strategic competition with Europe. In the late 1980s, mutual arms reductions, mutual reductions in defence spending, geographic separation of NATO and Russian forces, and the willingness to change security and defence postures were the main instruments to attain the military equilibrium and reasonable security Europe experienced over the last two decades.

Russia has altered its security policies, changed military strategies, and is rearming in accordance with the narrowest of internal political objectives and most ambitious external security objectives. There is no common basis for *mutual* arms reduction, between the West and Russia, mutual changes in military strategy, and mutual reductions in defence spending to restore equilibrium and reasonable security. Mutual withdrawals of military forces from common borders is not easily attainable given it would necessitate Russian forces withdrawing from internal borders they would insist on wanting to protect and NATO forces withdrawing from borders into countries that lack any real strategic geographic depth. New approaches will have to be forged with a

Russian leadership not predisposed to compromising on their policy course to restore military equilibrium and military security in Europe.

Managing the duality of Russian thinking on war where they seek strategic advantage and simultaneously seek to counter strategic surprise with surprise is especially complex in the 21st century. This complexity is closely interwoven with Putin's ambitions for *European security system change* while simultaneously holding *regime change* fears. This duality in Russian thinking is shaping Moscow's holistic approach to competition, crisis management and war avoidance, and war. Denying Russia opportunity to exploit her geographic, military, and temporary advantages while not fuelling the military's assessments of strategic vulnerability will need to be a fundamental element of the West's counter-strategy. However, the linkage between Russia's external and internal threat assessments will fuel unrealistic conclusions as Russia's military and political leadership link events and actions in a way that Western observers would not be able to fully understand. This linkage of external and internal security policy is a Gordian knot for the Russian security system that any future reform-minded leader would find difficult, if not, impossible to unwind.

Deeply institutionalized traditional strategic culture and corresponding military approaches are now a central part of Putin's decision-making for securing Russia's highest policy aims. The re-emergence of the Russian military in Moscow's security calculations combined with a large-scale modernization program would indicate that even in a post-Putin period, Russian General Staff assessments, preparations, and actions to secure Russia will continue to be dominant and framed by the cultural pillars of their traditional strategic thought. Aggressive Russian peacetime military practices, more pre-emptive Russian wartime strategies, and sharply Russian divergent perspectives on crises in the 21st century and how they are managed is the consequence of their traditional strategic culture colliding with the realities of the 21st century and unrealities of Putin's world.

Consequently, real strategic asymmetry between Russian and Western military policy and practice will continue. Diverging strategies, posture, priorities accorded to weapon systems, very different perceptions of vulnerability, and sharply different peacetime practices are not a short-term problem linked to a crisis in Ukraine. Russia has embraced a unique path with a unique strategic culture and unique capabilities to achieve security and political aims at a crucial period in its post-Cold War development. This Russian approach will be an enduring, multi-dimensional strategic challenge for the West - one that will challenge Europe's security and sense of well-being for years to come.

The Elements of Russia's Outlook

Mr. James Sherr

Eighty years after Churchill described Russia as a 'riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma', his epigram continues to have a bewildering authority¹⁵⁶. This should not be the case. Russia has been a focus of Western policy since the time of Churchill's quotation, and it also has been an object of academic study. Yet its actions regularly provoke surprise. The worlds of policy-making, business, celebrity and chatter are populated by people who 'know' Russia, yet the subject arouses heated argument. Where orthodoxies do take root, they are often questionable.

At least two such orthodoxies warrant more scrutiny than they receive. The first of these regards Russia's antagonism to the liberal-democratic order as a corrigible aberration rather than a fact of life. For this reason, the descent from post-Cold War partnership to antagonism is explained primarily with reference to the policies and disposition of Vladimir Putin. This personification of Russian policy is often accompanied by a codicil: that Putin's primary 'audience' is domestic, and the essential purpose of his policies is to shore up an inherently flawed and increasingly strained system of governance at home. To those who share this perspective, the departure of Putin and his leadership group promises to remove the greatest obstacle to a diminution, if not resolution, of the differences that have rent the fabric of East-West relations — in menacing form since 2014, but just as visibly, from the time of Ukraine's Orange Revolution in 2004/5.

To be sure, Putin matters. Whatever the underlying causes of our discontents, he has made a malign and potent contribution to them. A supportive and comparatively moderate Russian assessment at the height of Putin's second term sums up the essence of that contribution:

Russia firmly and consistently revised the rules of the game that had been imposed on it in the years of its revolutionary collapse. The revision culminated in Vladimir Putin's Munich speech in 2007 and in Dmitry Medvedev's tough response in August 2008. But even before that, Russian diplomacy ceased to be revisionist and became cynical and pragmatic. And it remains so to this day.¹⁵⁷

But the emphasis on Putin blurs historical memory. Not only does it candy-coat the rising acerbity of the Yeltsin years regarding many of the issues that currently bedevil relations with the West. It also undervalues the conscious and subliminal influence of the Soviet and Tsarist inheritance even upon many Russians who consider themselves liberals and

¹⁵⁶ Winston Churchill, "The Russian Enigma", *BBC Broadcast*, London, 10 October 1939.

¹⁵⁷ Sergey Karaganov, "Lucky Russia", *Russia in Global Affairs*, March 2011. <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru>

democrats. The axiom, 'Russian democracy ends where the question of Ukraine begins' should be a starting point of discussion, not a footnote.¹⁵⁸ More fundamentally, the so-called 'liberal' perspective undervalues the central role that geopolitical interests and Western conduct play in Russia's (and indeed Putin's) view of the world.¹⁵⁹

The second, rigorously 'realist', orthodoxy does not exhibit these shortcomings, and it does not suffer them either. But in its most categorical form, it reduces not only Putin but Russia's history to irrelevance. In this *schéma*, the truth about Russia's policy is a universal truth: the response of an aggrieved great power that has recovered the means to resist a rival 'moving into [its] backyard and threatening its core strategic interests'.¹⁶⁰ In other words, the Russianness of Russian policy is a matter for connoisseurs. It adds colour but no clarity to our predicament.

Yet this 'realist' paradigm, blessed with parsimony, is beset with distortions and weighted down with determinism. Russia's Russianness — its long-standing proclivity to equate its own security with the insecurity of others — is not a nuance, but a material cause of the factors that are deemed to threaten it: the rebuffs of neighbours, the defiance of Georgia and Ukraine, the 'Russophobia' so widely derided and the decision of NATO and the EU to expand their membership at the invitation of others. These proclivities are part of an inheritance. But they are not engraved in stone, and the policies that arise from them are not unchangeable. The 'new thinkers' surrounding Gorbachev set out to change them, and to a considerable, they did. Possibly, this was because they were 'romantics' (as 'old thinkers' charged), but mainly it was because they realised that these policies had become self-defeating. For all this, the greatest failing of 'realism' is its depreciation of the role that ideas play in human affairs. Ideas can produce power, even armies. The conflicts and upheavals that mark our history are inexplicable without them. 'Realism' and reality are two different things.

Russia's 'moves' are not answers to a chess problem. They are the product of an outlook, which arises from a historical experience. We will not appreciate the coherence of 'Putin's' policy and the sense of purpose that drives it unless we understand how he and the establishments that stand behind him have made traditional policy principles fit for purpose in the twenty-first century world. In formulaic terms, these principles are universally acceptable: sovereignty, security and equality. But in substantive terms, they translate into three principles that are not: the transcendental unity of 'Russian

¹⁵⁸ The axiom is widely, but perhaps erroneously attributed to the Russian historian, George Vernadskiy in 1915 (1887-1973).

¹⁵⁹ For a comprehensive overview of Russia's geopolitical perspectives in the present-day context, see Keir Giles, *Moscow Rules* (Chatham House, 2019). For an historical perspective, see John LeDonne, *The Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire, 1650-1831*, (OUP 1981)

¹⁶⁰ John Mearsheimer, 'Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin', *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014.
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>

civilisation', spheres of influence and a right to play a role in the decision-making of other powers and coalitions.

Sovereignty

Lenin famously stated that 'there is no more erroneous or more harmful idea than the separation of foreign from internal policy.'¹⁶¹ The relationship between the two pertains to Russia's understanding of sovereignty in four respects.

First, Putin reconceptualised this relationship by the time the first *National Security Concept* was published under his signature in June 2000. Whereas under Gorbachev and Yeltsin, Russia had sought to create the international conditions necessary, in Eduard Shevardnadze's words, 'to bring about change *inside* the country', Putin reverted to an older pattern established by Stalin. By means of change inside the country – overcoming internal weakness and restoring 'the vertical of power' – Russia would resume its rightful position as a great power. The West, which had been heavily involved in Russia's internal reforms under Yeltsin, was soon to discover that Russia's internal affairs were once again Russia's business. Moreover, the perceived association between this Western involvement and the traumas of the 1990s provided a solid basis of internal support for Putin's course. In little time, this support swelled into an anti-Western narrative that Putin did nothing to discourage.

Second, ever since Muscovy evolved into Russia, the country has been a multi-national entity with few natural frontiers. Sometimes to a disturbing degree, non-Russian subjects have found themselves in the vicinity of Russia's state border and subject to the influence of co-nationals living on the other side of it. By the same token, ethnic Russians have found themselves on the 'wrong' side of these borders, subject to foreign jurisdictions. For this reason, it always has been possible to make the case for a greater Russia or a smaller one. (In the words of HH Munro, the Edwardian British satirist, 'right and wrong, like the Russian Empire, have firm and definite limits, but not always in the same place'). On 26 December 1991, the Russian Federation emerged with European frontiers little different from those it acquired after the conquest of Kazan over 400 years previously. This 'rebirth' of Russia left some 25 million ethnic Russians on the territories of re-established or newly formed states. Not surprisingly, in the 27 years that have passed since that date, borders have been a more problematic issue than at any time since 1945. The entwined linkages and untidy demographics of the 'Russian' North Caucasus and the ex-Soviet South Caucasus are not the only examples of tension in this regard. But they bring out the relationship between Russia's ferocious prosecution of two Chechen wars and its sense of inner vulnerability. Putin's determination to

¹⁶¹ 'The External Policy of the Russian Revolution', in *Collected Works*, Moscow: State Publishing House of Political Literature, Institute of Marx-Engels-Lenin, 1949, p. 67; and Lenin on the external policies of the Russian Revolution. https://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/Внешняя_политика_русской_революции

extirpate the problem following NATO's second intervention in multinational Yugoslavia betrayed a sense of external vulnerability as well. The fear that this vulnerability could be exploited by foreign powers was well expressed by Putin's influential adviser, Vladislav Surkov, in the wake of the September 2004 Beslan tragedy: 'their goal is the destruction of Russia and the filling of its huge area with numerous dysfunctional quasi-state formations'.¹⁶²

Third, Russia and the EU represent distinct, and increasingly opposed normative jurisdictions. During the high point of Yeltsin era 'romanticism', this was neither obvious nor inevitable. The EU was widely seen as a geopolitical foil to *the United States*, which is why Finland's accession in 1995 hardly aroused any concern. But by the time of Putin's accession, Moscow had grasped that, first and foremost, it was a project of integration based on rules, norms and standards at variance from the network-based norms that have continued to mature and mutate in Russia and much of the 'near abroad'. Moscow also grasped that focus of EU integration was not the harmonisation of foreign policies but internal policies. Once these things were understood, little effort was required to realise that the export of the EU's 'civilisational model' to Russia's 'zone of interest', represented a security challenge as much as an economic one. To the Kremlin, it was hardly coincidental that Ukraine's Orange Revolution (November 2004) followed the EU's eastern enlargement within six months. Nine years later, on the eve of Ukraine's 'Revolution of Dignity', the point at issue was no longer NATO membership (which Yanukovich had taken off the table), but the Association Agreement with the EU.

Fourth, the 'civilisational' component of Kremlin policy gives Russian statehood a transnational dimension that calls into question the sovereignty of others. Putin is not exaggerating when he states that, 'since olden times, the concept of the Russian World has exceeded Russia's geographic boundaries and even the boundary of the Russian ethnos'. In Yeltsin's time, the definition of 'compatriots abroad' was as far reaching and inclusive as it is now, and with greater or lesser precision, state documents have expressed a right to 'support' compatriots since the USSR collapsed.¹⁶³ By October 2001, Putin had pledged to provide them with 'comprehensive assistance'.¹⁶⁴ The proposition that Russian civilisation transcends the borders of the Russian Federation is central to the Kremlin's conception of the state. Whereas relations with 'foreign' states are grounded in international law, in this distinctly Russian World, they are 'historically conditioned', or, as then President Medvedev flamboyantly stated in 2008, they are characterised by 'shared common history' and the 'affinity of our souls'.¹⁶⁵ In Putin's

¹⁶² Interview with Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Vladislav Surkov, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 29 September 2004, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 30 September 2004.

¹⁶³ Federal Law on State Policy with Regard to Compatriots Living Abroad, 24 May/1 June 1999. http://www.carim-east.eu/media/legal%20module/natfr/RU_emi2.1.pdf

¹⁶⁴ Vladimir Putin, "Speech to the Congress of Compatriots Residing Abroad", 11-12 October 2001.

¹⁶⁵ Valdai Club, in the author's presence, 12 September 2008.

schéma, the Russian people are the only people in the Russian World with ‘state forming’ characteristics. Their ‘choice... has been confirmed again and again, not by plebiscites or referendums, but by blood’.¹⁶⁶ These propositions accord poorly with a system of international law based on state sovereignty, internationally recognised borders, non-interference in internal affairs and the rights and obligations of citizenship. The restoration of the ‘historical unity’ of Russia or any other state is exactly what this system was designed to prevent. It is for this reason that in March 2014, France’s Permanent Representative to the UN stated that, by its actions in Ukraine, Russia had ‘vetoed the Charter’ of the United Nations.¹⁶⁷

Security

Both the Gorbachev and early Yeltsin years were rent by conflicts between the country’s political and military establishments. The cardinal principles of the former’s ‘new thinking in defence policy’ — the ‘demilitarisation’ of policy, ‘defence conversion’ and ‘defensive defence’ — cut against the grain of Soviet/Russian military science and military-organisational culture. Nevertheless, as SACEUR’s Special Adviser Stephen Covington has noted, that culture has remained intact in the face of political upheaval and economic collapse.¹⁶⁸ Paradoxically, the Yeltsin years reinforced it. The USSR’s collapse left some 600,000 troops deployed outside the Russian Federation, some of whom found themselves in the centre of conflicts that they by turns fell victim to, brokered or instigated. In these conditions, Gorbachev’s ‘defensive defence’ swiftly fell to the ground.

After 25 years of incongruity and tension, Vladimir Putin has brought the military (and security service) perspective into close alignment with the political objectives of the state. There is now an uncommon degree of political-military integration in pursuit of Russia’s objectives, its commitment to state and national mobilization, and its approach to peace, crisis, and war. Traditional geostrategic and military-operational principles have been retooled to meet present day requirements. Much of what strikes the West as new (e.g. ‘hybrid war’) represents the discriminate import of advanced technology and technique into modalities of irregular war pursued on Russia’s periphery since the seventeenth century.

In the main, these principles arise from the geopolitical indeterminacy cited in the discussion of sovereignty above. Russia’s traditional response to the multinational demographic of the state and absence of natural frontiers has been to seek client states and establish firm defence perimeters, which even before the Soviet collapse, invariably

¹⁶⁶ Vladimir Putin, ‘Russia: The National Question’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 January 2012.

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11319.doc.htm>

¹⁶⁸ Stephen R Covington, *The Culture of Strategic Thought behind Russia’s Modern Approaches to Warfare*, October 2016, Belfer Center, Harvard, p. 39.

lay beyond the frontiers of foreign countries. Even in the 1990s it was axiomatic to Boris Yeltsin and the General Staff that RF Border Troops should be deployed on the external borders of the CIS. Thus, in contrast to those in Western military establishments who define threat in terms of capability and intention, Russia's political-military leadership emphasises proximity. Security is connected to the control of space, irrespective of the views of those who inhabit it or the reason foreign military forces might want access to it. The first *Concepts of Foreign Policy* document (December 1992) stated that Russia would 'vigorously oppose the politico-military presence of third countries in the states adjoining Russia'.¹⁶⁹ It also legitimised the use of force ('in extreme cases') to uphold 'firm good neighbourliness'. Strong defence perimeters, spheres of influence and buffer zones (preferably, recognised by other powers) are staple to the grammar of security. Russia's insistence on the West's recognition of its 'zone of privileged interest' is the political complement to these geostrategic principles.

This perspective has furnished Russia with a set of security 'needs' out of kilter with those of most other European powers. On the one hand, the sheer scale of Russia poses a problem to those who find themselves in the vicinity of it. The fact that the borders of the former USSR continue to define vicinity makes the Russian Federation's truncated borders less pertinent than might be supposed. (During the Kosovo conflict, it was customary to refer to Yugoslavia as a country 'in the vicinity of Russia's borders,' despite the fact that the nearest Russian city, Novorossiysk, was 1,000 km away). Moreover, the 'civilisational' factor, so strongly emphasised today, also has featured prominently in the Russian concept of *geopolitika*, which encompasses not only the 'spatial' but ethno-national, confessional and values-based dimensions of geopolitical rivalry. Whereas Russia once dismissed the role of values in NATO, it now accuses the Alliance of perpetuating a 'civilizational schism' in Europe. Taken in the round, these perspectives encourage deterministic thinking and worst-case assessments. This has been most evident in Russian assessments of NATO enlargement. Because NATO was founded as an anti-Soviet alliance *ab initio*, its survival after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact was regarded during the Yeltsin years with misgiving if not foreboding. Two waves of enlargement and a network of 'partnerships' have revived the conviction that it is aggressive in character and anti-Russian in essence.

It is invariably futile to explain that many of the issues addressed between NATO and its partners — civil-democratic control of defence and security structures, professionalization, transparency in budgeting, control of dangerous technologies and weapons stocks — would have an intrinsic importance even if Russia did not exist. Not even handfuls of people in Russia are aware that in the Cold War itself, NATO served additional purposes: resolving the 'German problem', overcoming national rivalries in

¹⁶⁹ *Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation* [*Kontseptsiya Vneshney Politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii*], December 1992, pp 2 & 4.

(Western) Europe, integrating defence and security cultures, embedding the United States into a multilateral structure and curbing its isolationist/unilateralist impulses. Mere handfuls of people in Russia give credence to NATO's post-Cold War transformation. Today, virtually no one recalls that Germany, one of the key architects of post-Cold War partnership with Russia, was also an avid proponent of NATO's first post-Cold War enlargement. The fact that the expansion of NATO's 'zone' has come at the invitation of others—and that Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan have no wish to be part of Russia's 'zone of special interests'—is seen as immaterial. The fact that, prior to the Russia-Georgia War, NATO's model of defence reform in new member states did not emphasise territorial defence but expeditionary capabilities far from Europe has hardly been noticed.

The correspondence between NATO's intervention in Kosovo and the first wave of its eastern enlargement, and then between Ukraine's Orange Revolution and the second wave has removed nearly all scope for constructive debate inside Russia about NATO's aims and intentions. In much the same way, the apparently reinforcing waves of NATO and EU enlargement have disposed of earlier hopes that the latter would act as a counterbalance to the former. By the time of Ukraine's 2013–14 Revolution of Dignity, NATO/EU enlargement, democracy promotion, 'colour revolutions,' regime change, and Western military intervention had been integrated into one overarching threat assessment. Chief of General Staff Valeriy Gerasimov states that 'in essence, 'colour revolution' is a state coup *organised from abroad*.'¹⁷⁰ To an American, the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine are decidedly different, as is U.S. policy with respect to the two. But to the Russian General Staff, the conflicts and their 'internationalization' follow similar dynamics. Russian defence minister Sergei Shoigu regards the "crushing" of Assad's opposition as a reversal for colour revolutions everywhere else.¹⁷¹ Today, attributions of Western malevolence no longer require detailed justification.

Equality

Unprecedented as it was in impact and scale, the collapse of the USSR never displaced the conviction amongst the governing class of the 'new Russia' that Russia had an existential importance in world affairs. With respect to nuclear arsenals, the *ultima ratio* of power, the Russian Federation's superpower status was unquestioned by others. But in more general terms, Russia continued to regard the United States as its 'significant other'. Equality with other major global players was treated as an entitlement and pre-eminence in the former USSR as a necessity. These bedrock convictions were no longer

¹⁷⁰ Valeriy Gerasimov, "Considerations on the Experience of Syria" [*Po opytu Sirii*], in *Military-Industrial Courier* [*Voенно- promyshlenniy Kur'er*], March 9, 2016, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/29579>

¹⁷¹ Pavel Felgengauer, "Defense Minister Shoigu Promotes Russian Cyber Warfare Troops and Declares Victory in Syria," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 23 February 2017, Vol 14, Issue 23 (Jamestown Foundation, Washington).

in accordance with political reality. In the 1990s, Russia ceased to be a rule-setter in global affairs and even in much of its own neighbourhood. For the West, it was no longer a threat but had yet to become an ally. What it became was a 'concern', defined by the poorly anticipated and scarcely understood dynamics of dissolution that Yeltsin boldly called a 'rebirth' and his Western counterparts, for want of a better term, called 'transition'.

For Western governing circles, the question was how long it would take Russia to adjust to membership of an international order built on the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and, *de facto*, those of the West. But for the 'new thinkers' who had coalesced around Gorbachev and Yeltsin, the question was how long it would take the West to adjust to the monumental changes for which they claimed credit: the repudiation of Marxism-Leninism, the liquidation of the Warsaw Pact and the dissolution of the USSR. They had been bold, and they expected similar boldness. When they spoke of integration, they meant merger. What they got instead was 'partnership' and assistance. In their own terms, they were substantial. Neither in spirit nor substance did they amount to policy of 'humiliating Russia', as its former Foreign Minister, Andrey Kozyrev has recently reminded us:

Russia was provided with assistance...since the very beginning of its democratic reforms, even under Gorbachev. And especially during the hard times in 1991-92. When the Soviet economy came to a complete standstill, when there were barely any medicines, and in some areas even food, we were handed help, provided with substantial humanitarian aid. Moreover, the U.S. helped us preserve our status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, to remain the only nuclear state in the territory of the former Soviet Union, and then to remove nuclear weapons from the territory of other former Soviet states. They helped us join the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other organizations. This all happened at a seminal moment when Russia could have lost everything—both its statehood and international status.¹⁷²

That policy bore no resemblance to the policy of punishment meted out to Weimar Germany. But it stopped short of the policy that the West adopted towards Adenauer's Germany. The latter policy, including Marshall Plan aid and FRG admission into NATO, did not emerge out of pure magnanimity; it was a response to the division of Europe. After 1991, Allies did not believe that NATO's survival would lead to a new division of Europe, that 'transformation' should diminish NATO's autonomy, or that Russian

¹⁷² Andrei Kozyrev: 'Democracy Needs to be Fought for Every Day', interview with Olga Kovstunova, Institute of Modern Russia, 18 July 2019, <https://imrussia.org/en/opinions/2971-andrei-kozyrev-democracy-needs-to-be-fought-for-every-day>?fbclid=IwAR3LqyfVVBb0AHvya73Dg8ua5jQDw6oPs0UnDYclwQi-Yn8xLy6ADFuntac.

membership would soon be a realistic prospect. They also understood what 'equality' was *not*. As set out in NATO-Russia Founding Act of May 1997, its provisions:

do not provide NATO or Russia, in any way, with a right of veto over the actions of the other nor do they infringe upon or restrict the rights of NATO or Russia to independent decision-making and action.

But NATO's interlocutors in Russia had come to different conclusions. To survive with Russia's blessing, NATO would have to lose much of its cherished autonomy and become something else. Whether by means of its subordination to the OSCE, the creation of a new, inclusive Pan-European security structure or Russia's admission to NATO itself, Russia expected a seat at the top table and nothing less. In February 1994, Yeltsin's press secretary put down a firm marker: 'Russian interests will no longer dissolve in the interests of European diplomacy. Russia increasingly sees itself as a Great Power, and it has started saying this loudly'.¹⁷³ Yet Russia's grievances in the Yeltsin era were different from today's in one respect. In the 1990s Russia sought equality within an inclusive international security system. Even Yeltsin's appeal to the 'UN and other leading states' to 'grant Russia special powers as guarantor of peace and stability' in the former USSR was pitched in these terms.¹⁷⁴ Today's claim to a 'sphere of privileged interest' is not. From the time Yevgeniy Primakov replaced Kozyrev as Foreign Minister (January 2006), the emphasis shifted from inclusion to multipolarity. In the words of the current foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov:

*The moment he took over, the Russian Foreign Ministry heralded a dramatic turn of Russia's foreign policy. Russia left the path our western partners had tried to make it follow after the breakup of the Soviet Union and embarked on a track of its own.*¹⁷⁵

As a respected Arabist, former head of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences, Director of the SVR (1991-6) and one of the 'curators' of Third World revolutionary movements going back to the 1960s, Primakov brought an impressive pedigree to his new calling. What Ariel Cohen termed the Primakov Doctrine was 'designed primarily to dilute America's strength and influence while increasing Russia's influence and position in the Middle East and Eurasia'.¹⁷⁶ The precursor to BRICS, the RIC (Russia-India-China) Strategic Triangle was his brainchild and obsession. Yet this 'balanced' policy (which Yeltsin had called for as early as October 1992) had three components, as Primakov set out in his first press conference as minister. The first was to strengthen the security, cohesion and well-being of the 'multi-national' Russian

¹⁷³ Vyacheslav Kostikov, *Trud*, 22 February, 1994

¹⁷⁴ Speech to the Civic Union, 28 February 1993.

¹⁷⁵ Cited in Rakesh Krishnan Simha, 'Primakov: The Man Who Created Multipolarity'

¹⁷⁶ Ariel Cohen, 'The Primakov Doctrine: Russia's Zero-Sum Game with the United States' (Heritage Foundation, Washington DC, 1997).

Federation (in which priority, the West was conspicuous by its absence). The second was the 'strengthening of centripetal processes' in the former USSR (which, he had only recently described as the highest priority of his former service, despite the fact that SVR activity in the former USSR was proscribed by law).¹⁷⁷ The third was the re-establishment and strengthening of relations with other leading powers of the world.¹⁷⁸ In rhetorical terms, the demotion of the West in Russia's scale of priorities was dramatic. But in practical terms, Primakov's policy required a material capability that Russia did not then possess.

For this reason, it was the 'pragmatism' of the early Putin years that was dramatic. This did not mean gracious acceptance of Western hegemony. To the contrary, in the wake of the war in Kosovo and the first wave of NATO's eastern enlargement, it meant a more severe evaluation of Western intentions, the rebuilding of the 'administrative vertical' of the Russian state, and the 'strict promotion of Russia's national interests' in accordance with the 'general capabilities and resources of the country'. The new leadership's assessments were unforgiving.¹⁷⁹ When it came to those whose 'capabilities and resources' were stronger, notably the West, the new rhetoric was conciliatory; towards those who were weaker, notably Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, rhetoric and policy became 'cold', 'more aggressive' and 'far tougher'.¹⁸⁰ When the doctrine of multipolarity finally emerged from its slumbers, it did not do so in the form of a new 'Primakov doctrine' but as part of a more sweeping indictment of the 'system of *diktat*' that had emerged after the Cold War. By the time of Putin's celebrated Munich speech in February 2007, Russia had experienced over five years of unprecedented economic growth, business had been brought to heel, the state again controlled the 'commanding heights' of the economy, the United States had found itself over-extended in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Ukraine's Orange Revolution was unravelling. Moreover, global trends were adding to Russia's confidence. When Primakov's successor but one, Sergey Lavrov, spoke about multipolarity, he did so in an almost ecumenical tone:

The end of the Cold War marked the end of a longer stage in global development, which lasted for 400 to 500 years and when the world was dominated by European civilization. This domination was consistently led by the

¹⁷⁷ *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, 26 December, 1995.

¹⁷⁸ Transcript of press conference ['*Zapis' Press-Konferentsii Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii E.M. Primakova*'] 12 January, 1996.

¹⁷⁹ *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*, approved by Putin 28 June 2000, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, in English, 7 July 2000.

¹⁸⁰ Russian commentary on the 2000 *Foreign Policy Concept*, from James Sherr, 'A New Regime, A New Russia', in Anne Aldis, ed., *The Second Chechen War* (Conflict Studies Research Centre, RMA Sandhurst, 2000)

*historical West. Now competition is becoming truly global and acquiring a civilizational dimension.*¹⁸¹

In blunt terms, ‘the West was losing its monopoly of the globalisation process’.¹⁸² It was being constrained to accept not only a multi-polar world, but a world of ‘multiple values centres’ as well. In this new context Russia could no longer be ‘simply written off as material for a new territorial and political repartition of the world’.¹⁸³ Instead, as we wrote seven months before the outbreak of the Russia-Georgia war:

*A powerful Russia is once again a fact of life, and Russians know it. They are no longer seeking our approval. They have recovered pride in their own traditions and are determined to advance their own interests. The post-Cold War partnership, founded at a time of Russian disorientation and weakness, is over.*¹⁸⁴

In operational terms, Russia’s attack upon Georgia in August 2008 was a model example of reflexive control. In military-political terms, it marked the start of a strategic counter-offensive against twenty-five years of Western dominance. Yet only after annexing Crimea was the challenge to the West posed in categorical, almost Manichean terms: ‘new rules or no rules’; or in the words of the then Speaker of the State Duma, ‘learn the lessons of Yalta or risk war’.¹⁸⁵ Five years after the widening of Russia’s offensive from Georgia to Ukraine (and four years after its intervention in Syria), some would say that it has stalled. Others would say that it merely has mutated from the kinetic realm to less sanguinary and familiar ones, but at the same time from the periphery of NATO to the heart of the West. In terms of material impact, the poisoning of Sergey Skripal is modest compared to the carnage of Ilovaysk and Debaltseve, not to say Aleppo. But the psychological impact of that ‘wet affair’, along with Russia’s multiple intrusions into Western electoral systems, communications networks and financial institutions has reinforced the conviction of most Western governments that Russia is no longer a partner, difficult or otherwise.

For How Long?

The term *protivoborstvo* is well understood in Russian military circles to apply to a state of antagonism or confrontation. It is within the bounds of this ambiguity that our relationship with Russia is likely to unfold for some time. In civilian terms, which were

¹⁸¹ Sergey Lavrov, ‘Russia and the World in the Twenty-First Century’, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 9 August 2008. https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_11291

¹⁸² Sergey Lavrov, ‘The Present and the Future of Global Politics’, *Russia in Global Affairs*, 13 May 2007.

¹⁸³ Lavrov, *op.cit.*, August 2008.

¹⁸⁴ James Sherr, *Russia and the West: A Reassessment* (Shrivenham Papers No 6, UK Defence Academy, January 2008), p 5.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Dialogue rather than War: Sergey Naryshkin calls upon Western leaders to study the “lessons of Yalta”’. [*Dialogue a ne voyna: Sergey Naryshkin prizva liderov Zapada učit’ “uroki Yalty”*] *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*

also Lenin's we might think of it as a relationship of 'neither war nor peace'. But how long can this relationship sustain itself without developing into war or peace? The prognosis of Andrey Kozyrev warrants consideration:

Russian foreign policy will change only if there is real regime change and there is a real shift in the country's domestic development. It's not about Putin. Changes in the regime's personnel or leadership are a different thing. If that happens, a policy adjustment might take place—not a change of course. Such excesses as the annexation of Crimea or war in eastern Ukraine or Syria can be eliminated. This won't be a different foreign policy, but it will be less adventurous, less aggressive, and less damaging for Russia in general. But whereas an adjustment is possible, a change in the course, or vector, of foreign policy is largely impossible without fundamental democratic reforms [author's emphasis].

To those who believe that our problems are 'about Putin' and 'the regime's personnel or leadership', Kozyrev's prognosis is sobering. But just how sobering it is depends on one's own expectations, or in practical political terms, those of the West. A majority of NATO Allies might well decide that the elimination of the current policy's 'excesses' removed our primary disputes with Russia and the principal security problems we now face. It was not the 'less adventurous, less aggressive' policy before 2014 that produced sanctions or the rearmament of NATO. Even Russia's attack on Georgia 'suspended' cooperation for only a few months. Just how many excesses would have to be removed before 'normalisation' began? Possibly not many. In the unlikely event that Russia removed everyone and everything from Ukraine that it has placed there, would its scheme of deployment in the Western and Southern Military Districts, its SVR, FSB and GRU *agenturiy*, its 'humanitarian' foundations, cyber operations and 'network diplomacy' still arouse concern? Enough of one to prevent a return to 'business as usual'? It would be astonishing if 'the regime's personnel or leadership' were not asking these questions. On the other hand, Kozyrev's prognosis in the event 'real regime change' and 'fundamental democratic reforms' do take place might not be sobering enough. The conviction that 'Russia must be leader of stability and security on the entire territory of the former USSR' was held by some of the most democratic (and principled) ideologists of the 'new Russia'.¹⁸⁶ Amongst these circles, the imperial impulse is the sin that dare not speak its name. As long as that impulse survives, Russia will neither be trusted by its neighbours nor at ease with itself. The past twenty-five years ought to have provided an education in these matters. There is little sign that it has.

¹⁸⁶ Deputy Foreign Minister Fedor Shelov-Kovedyayev, *Strategiya i taktika vneshney politiki Rossii v novom zarubezh'ye* [Strategy and Tactics of Russian Foreign Policy in the New Abroad], pp 2

The EU and Russia: Handling the Clash of Worldviews

Ambassador Vygaudas Ušackas

For a fifth year now, we are facing the hybrid war launched by Kremlin against the Western liberal democracies from the outside and from within. We have seen for some time the Kremlin's resolve to use military means to forward its political goals in Ukraine, Georgia and Syria. It is illustrated by the Crimea illegal annexation, the War in Donbas, meddling into the elections from the US to Germany, UK and Eastern Europe to fake "Lisa" story, cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns and poisoning of Skripal on the streets of Great Britain. With the view to be better prepared to respond and pre-empt Kremlin's aggressive policies, we should try understand what really lies at the heart of President Putin's strategy and his strategic interests.

Having followed the developments in Russia and being engaged directly in managing the EU-Russia confrontation for a considerable time, I would argue that at the heart of strategic consideration lies a very material interest to defend and safeguard the Kleptocracy regime created by and for the Kremlin and prepare for a secure and smooth leadership transition in 2024. At this stage no one can predict what will that entail. However, due to the existing constitutional provisions and increasing fatigue over current leadership by different layers of Russian society, considerable changes in 2024 should be anticipated.

Second, through cyberattacks, brainwash and information warfare Putin aims to disrupt and discredit liberal democracies, especially the EU, so as to make the West seen non-attractive economic, social and political model in the eyes of the ordinary Russians. As opinion polls show, President Putin has also been successful to mobilize the Russian population against the perceived threat from the West.

Third, Vladimir Putin tries to drive the wedge between the US and EU and among the EU member states. Recent trade wars and political disagreements across Atlantic, facilitate this task even without an external effort.

Fourth, to return Russia to the negotiating table with the key adversary- the US. He still expects that "contractual relationship" with Donald Trump would finally work out. This would help Putin as the consequence of wars in Ukraine and Syria to legitimize the spheres/zones of interests as key element of a "new security order" with no more enlargement of the EU and NATO to the East.

Fifth, while keeping the "Golden share of Ukraine" through a control over Donbas to prevent Ukraine from modernization and integration with the West. At the end of the day

majority in Kremlin misleadingly still believe that if not in 2019, then in 5 years Ukrainians will vote back for a pro-Russian president and things get back to “normal”.

Sixth, last, but not least: To advance multilateral world through “pivot to Asia”¹⁸⁷ and BRICS financial and development instruments with the view to balance an outgoing “Pan Americana” world.

Hence, we should acknowledge facing a long-term clash of the Worldviews between the West and Russia. At the heart of this clash are fundamental differences not only over the future of Ukraine and Georgia, and their right to choose their own alliances. This clash is also about core European values of freedom, democracy and international rules-based system. The EU and Russia have become locked in an open battle over the norms of international order. Moscow is attempting to erode the Western liberal consensus from within. Donald Trump’s abrupt unilateral decisions, which undermine multilateral diplomacy and free trade, further exacerbate problems for the EU and historically important Transatlantic community of shared values. The good news is that over recent years, EU member states have become remarkably united in their assessment of Russia, but they still need to translate this unity into a political strategy that reflects not just European values, but also Russian realities. The path of winning the overall normative war will not go as much through countering Russia directly as through improving Europe’s resilience and reinvigorating the Western model.

For the European Union, first, we need to put our house in order by successfully copying with Brexit and its fallout, ensure growth, manage migration crisis, invest in defence and to shore up support for the EU project and its institutions. Something French President Macron is trying to advance through reinvigorated “Multi Speed/ Flexible EU”. All of this may seem self-evident, but it’s precisely our internal problems and deficiencies that the current Russian regime is instrumentalising to discredit the EU/Western democratic model among ordinary Russians, in our common neighbourhood and within the EU countries themselves.

Secondly, our strengths lie in unity, consistency and resilience. We must counter Russia’s comprehensive approach in meddling. This includes further efforts to counter Russian propaganda and disinformation. Something the Baltic states, in particular, with the support of allies have been managing rather successfully. It is also critical to deprive Russia of opportunities to use business interests to split and weaken the EU. The North Stream II project serves as the worst example. It does not comply to the objectives of the EU Energy Union and should not be supported by the Member-State governments.

Thirdly, reassurance, deterrence and military defence provided by other NATO member states to the Baltics, Poland and other allies are of critical importance. Partly thanks to

¹⁸⁷ Janan Ganesh, *US shift to Asia is more than a short-term pivot*, The Financial Times 20 February 2019.

President Donald Trump's urge, a number of European member states have increased the defence expenditures and intensified military exercises. Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians are grateful to the UK, Canada, Germany and other allies for sending their soldiers to the Baltics as a reassurance and reinforcement effort. A permanent presence of NATO, especially American troops on the ground, would be credible act of deterrence and most visible demonstration to Kremlin of a resolute support to defend NATO members' state territorial integrity. The presence of NATO troops in the Baltics could also be accompanied by the military CBMS with Russia to ease the tensions, avoid misunderstandings and demonstrate the willingness to talk.

Fourth, the EU should stand the ground in supporting the international rules-based system. From the UN Charter, through the WTO rules, to the Helsinki Act¹⁸⁸ and different Council of Europe conventions and protocols. In the event the Trump administration shall continue unilateral "America alone" policies, instead of promoting global governance and international rules-based system, it will have a very serious effects whenever and whatever we try to do around the World together as the "West". While the US is seen by many in Central and Eastern Europe as indispensable guarantor for their security and defence, in France and Germany the idea of European strategic autonomy and steps toward European defence integration are gaining support. In a rapidly changing world, it will be of critical importance to ensure complementarity between the legitimate initiatives of the EU to create strategic capacities for defence, on the one hand, and NATO- the bedrock of Trans-Atlantic security, on the other.

Fifth, we need to provide a greater support to Ukraine: economically, politically and militarily. Ukrainians have demonstrated an incredible sense of resilience by withstanding the military aggression and advancing the reforms agenda as well as implementation of the DCFTA with the EU.

However, uncertainty and ambiguity about Ukraine's geopolitical place in response to the legitimate European aspirations of its people will leave the country exposed to further destabilisation, which Russia will try to use and in turn can only negatively affect the EU-Russia relations. In light of the development of flexible and multi-speed European Union and with the formation of a new European Parliament and European Commission this autumn, it would be appropriate to reinvigorate the EU's "Eastern Partnership program" and relaunch political discussions with the view to offer membership perspective for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. We know from our experience that such a perspective works as a major stimulus for modernization efforts and reforms, no matter how difficult they may be. A successful and fully anchored into the EU Ukraine will contribute to the

¹⁸⁸ For details see: *Helsinki Final Act*, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 01 August 1975.

stability in the European Eastern neighbourhood and will represent a powerful example of democracy for the Russian people.

Sixth, in the meantime without the solution to the Ukrainian conflict, it will be difficult to normalize relations with Russia. There is a need for a greater, more visible and more comprehensive involvement of the EU in the Normandy format, which can only happen with Germany and France agreeing to reduce their respective individual roles and empower the EU to represent us all. Albeit belatedly, the EU following the US example should appoint the EU Special Representative for Ukraine to interface with Kyiv, Moscow and Washington D.C. in advancing and monitoring the implementation of Minsk accords.

Seventh, there will continue to be major issues of contention and disagreement, as in the case of Ukraine, while the EU shall continue selectively interact with Russia where it corresponds to our interests (over Syria, Afghanistan, North Korea and Iran nuclear deal and etc.). Practical cross border cooperation continues from Finnish to Polish EU's borders with the Russian local counties despite major geopolitical disagreements. The EU business continues to trade and invest in those areas, which are not affected by sanctions and anti-sanctions, while fully assuming considerable political risks.

Eight, we should also invest into the "post Putin's Russia" by continuing to expand 'people to people' contacts, educational exchanges, cross border cooperation and extend support to the human right defenders and political activists. The West should not self-restrain and should continue to challenge Putin's regime publicly when abuses and violations of freedoms and human rights occur.

Ninth, we must understand that there are no quick fixes neither in the resolution of the Donbas crisis nor in the internal developments of Russia. It will be of critical importance for the EU and its allies to demonstrate staying power of current policies of sanctions and selective engagement. A consistent and united approach must remain the cornerstone of the EU policy toward Russia.

Last but not least, if after 2024, or even before Russian citizens decide to return for the European way, we should draw the lessons from the past and provide a credible roadmap for reengagement – but firmly on the grounds of international rules and European values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

However, it must be very clear for Kremlin leadership and Russian citizens that the road to Europe goes via Kyiv, respect of Ukraine's European choice and respect of its territorial integrity.

The Annexation of the Sea of Azov: Russian Strategic Behaviour and the Role of Cross-Domain Coercion

Professor Graeme P Herd¹⁸⁹

Introduction

The Strait of Kerch connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Azov and the coasts of Crimea with that of the Russian Federation's Taman peninsula. On 25 November 2018 three Ukrainian Navy vessels attempted to navigate through the straits. A large Russian cargo container blocked the passage under the Kerch Strait bridge (opened 15 May 2018). After an eight hour stand-off in which the Russian 'Don' then rammed the Ukrainian harbour tug 'Yany Kapu' at least four times¹⁹⁰, the Ukraine Navy Gyrusa-M-class armoured artillery boats 'Berdyansk' and 'Nikopol' attempted to return to their home port of Odessa. They were pursued, fired upon and boarded by Russian Coast Guard vessels Izmurud and Don at 1800 outside the 12 nautical mile zone that extends off the coast of Crimea. In the violent clash, Ukrainian crewmen were injured (Russia claims three, Ukraine six) and all 24 Ukrainian sailors arrested and transferred to Moscow. The wounded are incarcerated at the infirmary at the Matrosskaya Tishina detention centre, the others at the Lefortovo detention centre.¹⁹¹ Criminal trial is set for 25 January 2019.¹⁹²

It is tempting to view this action through the prism of 'hybrid' or 'New Generation Warfare'. The seizure of the Ukrainian vessels took place at a location bereft of "red lines", OSCE monitoring missions, and fortified defence infrastructure. The document declaring martial law, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine declares

¹⁸⁹ Disclaimer: This article reflects the views of the author and not those of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the US Department of Defense or German Ministry of Defence.

¹⁹⁰ Michael Cruickshank, 'Investigating the Kerch Strait Incident', Leicester, *Bellingcat*, 30 November 2018: <https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2018/11/30/investigating-the-kerch-strait-incident/>

¹⁹¹ 'Poroshenko calls arrested sailors POWs, says Russia can't try them', Moscow *Interfax*, 4 December 2018. Unless otherwise referenced, all media sources were accessed through the Open Source Enterprise database (<https://www.opensource.gov>), available to all US Federal government employees.

¹⁹² Konstantin Dobrynin, a senior partner and attorney with Pen & Paper law firm and former Federation Council senator, has questioned the legality of the detention and arrest of Ukrainian military personnel in Crimea, and criticized Russia's disproportionate use of force. Unattributed report, 'Russian Lawyer: Detention and Arrest of Ukrainian Sailors Illegal', Saint Petersburg, *Fontanka.ru*, in Russian, 28 November 2018.

Russia's action against Ukraine Navy ships as "a crime of hybrid aggression".¹⁹³ In the case of Crimea in February 2014, for example, Russia's mobilization of its Special Forces and marines on the peninsula (dubbed "polite little green men") was not just unacknowledged but outright denied by the Russian Federation, from President Putin downwards. Russia's conventional military support for subversion in Donbas through the Spring of 2014 onwards, was camouflaged by Russian disinformation narratives claiming that spontaneously formed 'patriotic local militias' (comprised of tractor drivers and miners) were able to leverage their conscript level military experience and deploy liberated Soviet legacy equipment in defence of 'Novosrossiya' - the 'Peoples' Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk'. By contrast, with regards to the Kerch clash in 2018, Russia did *not* integrate the *threat* of the use of conventional military force combined with the actual mobilization of diplomatic, economic and cultural capabilities alongside sub-conventional proxy assets to achieve its strategic goals. The incident in the Kerch Straits represented the first ever publicly declared, officially reported and acknowledged direct conventional military clash between Russia and Ukraine.¹⁹⁴ It marks a qualitatively new phase in Russian strategic behaviour.

Gradualist, cross-domain and multi-dimensional coercion is an asymmetric tactic used by Russia to avoid direct military confrontation against an adversary whose military power projection capabilities are superior.¹⁹⁵ Coercion is holistic in that it merges and so unites "military and non-military forms of influence across nuclear, conventional and informational (cyber) domains."¹⁹⁶ It involves the threat of the use of conventional force combined with the actual use of sub-conventional force to influence the strategic choices of an adversary. It employs systematic pressure across 5Ds (disinformation, destabilization, disruption, deception and implied destruction) "to systematically undermine the command authority and the political and social cohesion of adversary states and institutions."¹⁹⁷ Azov illustrates the relationship between Russia's use of military force and legal, societal (through PSYOPS and public opinion manipulation), the politico-diplomatic and economic domains. Russian coercion seeks to narrow, limit and restrict the West's responses to a binary choice: unacceptably risky escalation or compromise through acquiescence in the form of accommodation or conciliation: "If all

¹⁹³ 'Resolution by the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine of 26 November 2018 on extraordinary measures to ensure Ukraine's state sovereignty and independence and declare martial law in Ukraine', Kyiv National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, in Ukrainian, 26 November 2018.

¹⁹⁴ Arnas Mazetis and Dalia Plikune, 'Army Chief on Situation in Ukraine: Certain Lines Cannot Be Crossed', Vilnius *Delfi*, in Lithuanian, 28 November 2018; Eerik-Niiles Kross, 'Kerch crisis is more serious than Crimea crisis', Tallinn, *Postimees*, in Estonian, 28 November 2018.

¹⁹⁵ Dmitry (Dima) Adamsky, 'From Moscow with coercion: Russian deterrence theory and strategic culture', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41:1-2, 2018, 33-60; William G. Pierce, Douglas G. Douds, and Michael A. Marra, 'Understanding Coercive Gradualism,' *Parameters* 45, no. 3, 2015: 51-61.

¹⁹⁶ Adamsky, 'From Moscow with coercion', p. 33.

¹⁹⁷ Julian Lindley-French, 'Briefing: Complex Strategic Coercion and Russian Military Modernisation', 9 January 2019: <http://lindleyfrench.blogspot.com/2019/01/briefing-complex-strategic-coercion-and.html>

of the possible sanctions had already been used because of the incident in the Kerch Strait, the result would be that whatever is done, things will not be any worse for Russia, so it would be possible to think about military operations of a different scale as well, from Kharkov and Kyiv to Odesa. Is NATO prepared for a nuclear war in order to stop this? I hope that this question will remain rhetorical.”¹⁹⁸ Coercion is achieved when it triggers an acquiescent rather than escalatory response.

Russian action demonstrates both the limits of hybrid war conceptualization and the continued relevance and evolution of cross-domain coercion in Russian strategic thinking and practice. This paper applies the concept of cross-domain coercion to the Azov incident and assesses what the incident tells us about president Putin’s operational code, the philosophical and instrumental belief systems that guide Russian strategic calculus and account for the evolution of Russian strategic behaviour. The conclusions address the possibility of the application of coercive force by Russia to achieve its preferred outcomes and the potential implications of this for the West in terms of cross domain deterrence.

Cross-Domain Coercion and Azov

Russia argued that the Ukrainian navy illegally crossed Russian territorial waters and violated Russian state borders and that Ukraine neither requested nor notified Russia of the passage. Shipping in the Kerch Strait and Sea of Azov is regulated by the ‘Treaty between the Russian Federation and Ukraine on Cooperation in the Use of the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait’ (signed on 24 December 2003 and ratified by Russia in 2004). Article 2, Point 1, of the treaty declares: “Commercial vessels and warships, as well as other state vessels flying the flag of the Russian Federation or of Ukraine and being used for non-commercial purposes, enjoy freedom of shipping in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait.”¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, on 23 September the Ukrainian command ship Donbas together with the tug Korets passed through the Kerch Strait into the Sea of Azov *en route* to the port of Berdyans’k without notifying Russia or requesting passage and were unmolested.²⁰⁰

Russia’s actions indicate that although formally Russia has yet to renounce it has now unilaterally ceased to abide the treat and was prepared to directly assert by force its own rules.²⁰¹ On 21 November 2018, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement that

¹⁹⁸ Sergey Dubinin, ‘Not the Time for Tough Sanctions’, Moscow, *Vedomosti Online*, in Russian, 26 December 2018.

¹⁹⁹ Andrey Riskin, ‘Russia Falls Into Trap in Area of Crimean Bridge. To All Appearances, Ukrainian Special Operation in Black Sea and Kerch Strait Has Ended Successfully for Kyiv’, Moscow, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, in Russian, 26 November 2018.

²⁰⁰ Dmitriy Boltenkov, ‘It Protected The Shore -- Why the Black Sea Fleet Did Not Take Part in Halting the Ukrainian Act of Provocation’, Moscow, *Izvestiya Online*, in Russian, 27 November 2018.

²⁰¹ Fyodor Lukyanov, ‘Playing War’, Moscow, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, in Russian, 27 November 2018.

that reaffirmed Crimea was an integral part of the Russian Federation. In line with international law, Russia therefore exercises its sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction in the maritime spaces adjacent to the Crimean peninsula. The statement emphasized that the Kerch Strait has never been and is not international and that requirements relating to the right of transit or innocent passage for foreign ships are not applicable to Russia.²⁰² A classical security dilemma now intersected with a Catch-22: for Russia to permit Ukrainian ships to enter the territorial waters would *de facto* recognize Crimea is Ukrainian, for Ukraine to seek permission to conduct a freedom of navigation exercise would recognize Crimea as *de jure* Russian territory. As a result of the clash, the Sea of Azov is *de facto* now considered by Russia as exclusively Russian "territorial waters" (an internal lake) and the status of Crimea as *de jure* Russian territory is reinforced, at least from Moscow's perspective.

Ukraine also argues that its vessels moved "in accordance with the provisions of all effective multilateral and bilateral international treaties and navigation rules", not least the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which states: "All ships, including foreign warships, enjoy the right of "innocent passage" within another state's territorial sea under international law."²⁰³ Citing Rule 54 of the European Court of Human Rights, Ukraine presses Russia for information regarding the captured Ukrainian sailors (legal grounds for their detention; place of detention; injuries and provided medical assistance). In addition, Ukraine claims Russia violates a number of agreements, including: UN Charter Art 2 which clearly states that the territory of a State cannot be acquired by another State resulting from the threat or use of force; the Helsinki Final Act because as a signatory Russia declared its intention to respect the inviolability of frontiers and territorial integrity; and the Budapest Memorandum. Ukraine further argues that Russian assertion of territorial waters lacks international recognition: a UN General Assembly Resolution condemned Russia's illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, with 100 UN member states supporting and 10 opposing.²⁰⁴

The clash in the Kerch straits and the subsequent battle of narratives highlights Russia's messaging to its own population, the West, Black Sea region and Ukraine. The incident is presented as short victorious war in Russian information space and presumably boosts or at least helps stabilize Putin's ratings at a time when they are falling back to pre-Crimea levels. Russian aggression further advances the notion that as Ukraine is

²⁰² Yevgeniy Pudovkin, Aleksandr Atasuntsev, and Dmitriy Serkov, 'Conflict Bursts Its Banks: What Interests of Russia and Ukraine Clashed in Kerch Strait', Moscow, *RBK*, in Russian, 26 November 2018.

²⁰³ Dmitry Gorenburg, 'The Kerch Strait skirmish: a Law of the Sea perspective', 4 January 2019: <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/publications/strategic-analysis-december-2018-the-kerch-strait-skirmish-a-law-of-the-sea-perspective/>

²⁰⁴ 'Territorial integrity of Ukraine', UNGA Resolution 68/262, 27 March 2014: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11493.doc.htm>

unable to uphold its territorial integrity and sovereignty (statehood) – that it is in fact a helpless failed state, poorly led by a “war president”, having adopted a dysfunctional, decadent and destabilized Western governance paradigm. In other words, authoritarian stability, strong leadership and adherence to traditional values – Russia’s path under Putin – is vindicated.²⁰⁵ In the context of the clash, Russia has continued to militarize the Crimean peninsula with a fourth S-400 Triumf air defence missile system added.²⁰⁶ Ukraine’s military impotence is underscored by the arrest of its sailors, forced confessions and the humiliating spectacle of ‘criminal’ trials for its sailors. Russia demonstrates it can act at will and with aggression as it holds absolute local escalation dominance. “Allies” do not come to Ukraine’s defence as Ukraine is isolated and marginal, located on Europe’s periphery and accounting for less than 1 per cent of the EU’s total trade. Russian disinformation narratives aim to distort, distract, dismiss and dismay. For example, RT stories distort by claiming “Ukrainian ships entered Russian waters in the Black Sea illegally”; that this was a deliberate “sea provocation” unleashed by the Ukrainian authorities but “incited” by Washington, to create a “diplomatic row” to “thwart the Putin-Trump meeting” and allow Poroshenko to use the “Kerch provocation for a coup d’état”.²⁰⁷ Russian disinformation seeks to demonstrate that Ukraine is the aggressor, acting on behalf of Western “provocations”: “The West hoped to paint the Azov Sea with the blood of Ukrainian citizens”; “children in Mariupol are forced to dig trenches for soldiers.”²⁰⁸ Furthermore, Ukraine is accused of using military drones to deliver chemical attacks²⁰⁹, and MI6 (albeit hardly confirming to the British penchant for understatement) alongside Ukraine’s secret services are accused of transporting a portable nuclear device to explode under the Kerch strait bridge.²¹⁰

Control of the Kerch strait prevents Ukrainian vessels in the Sea of Azov from accessing the Black Sea and creates an effective economic blockade, strangling Ukrainian trade. Yuriy Syrotyuk, representative of the *Svoboda* [Freedom] political party, states that: “I think that the RF will continue to take steps to blockade Ukraine's entire seacoast. Russia has accumulated sufficient military assets at sea to blockade not just Mariupol but also to put up significant obstacles to other Ukrainian ports. In this way, Russia has demonstrated a total superiority at sea and, on the other hand, Ukraine's inability to

²⁰⁵ Crisis may be good politics for Russia but it is also bad economics. Vitaliy Gaydayev, ‘Sea Drowns The Market. Investors Remind Russia of All Geopolitical Risks’, Moscow, *Kommersant Online*, in Russian, 27 November 2018; Vitaliy Gaydayev, ‘Investors Prepare for Sanctions: Investments in Russian Market Shrink to July Levels’, Moscow, *Kommersant Online*, in Russian, 3 December 2018.

²⁰⁶ Pavel Zavolokin, ‘The Crimean Skies Are Fully Protected’, Moscow, *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, in Russian, 3 December 2018; Michael Petersen, ‘The Naval Power Shift in the Black Sea’, *War on the Rocks*, 9 January 2019: <https://warontherocks.com/2019/01/the-naval-power-shift-in-the-black-sea/>

²⁰⁷ ‘Russian Disinformation Review’, Brussels, *EU vs Disinformation*, 29 November 2018; Yelena Zemskova, ‘Scenario Is to Trigger War’ – Rosbalt’, Saint Petersburg, *Rosbalt*, in Russian, 4 December 2018.

²⁰⁸ ‘Russian Disinformation Review’, Brussels, *EU vs Disinformation*, 29 November 2018.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

oppose it. The RF is putting pressure on Ukraine's economy because the ports of Mariupol and Berdyansk have played a quite important role in commercial shipping. This may result in certain economic losses for our country.”²¹¹ The industrial, commercial and transport hub of Mariupol and port of Berdyansk and critical to the functioning of the Donetsk-Dnieper economic region. Mariupol straddles Ukraine’s maritime, rail and river junctions, and lies on the road to Crimea.²¹² Both ports account for Ukraine's foreign currency revenues from wheat grain and the export of metals (25% exported in 2017) and both are economically blockaded, with port revenue losses calculated at 6bn *hryvnyas* (about 220m dollars). According to the data provided by the monitoring group Maidan of Foreign Affairs (NGO) and the Black Sea Strategic Studies Institute, since April 2018 Russia has stopped 110 vessels at sea, 316 in the Kerch Strait and 301 at a roadstead on the Sea of Azov near the entrance to the Black Sea: “In total, we have 727 cases of preventing free shipping by Russia's law enforcers who use the territory of the occupied Crimean peninsula and the seized state company of Ukraine called Kerch Sea Commercial Port, which deals with traffic in the strait.”²¹³

On 25 November the *Verkhovna Rada* voted to enact martial law (the bill was supported by 276 deputies in the 450-seat parliament) for 30 days in ten regions adjacent to Russia’s borders, the coasts of the Azov Sea and the Black Sea, and the borders with separatist Transnistria (the Vinnytsia, Odessa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Zaporizhia, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Sumy and Chernihiv *oblasts*). This was signed by president Poroshenko on 26 November 2018.²¹⁴ Martial law posits Poroshenko as “defender of the nation” resonates with his electoral slogan of “Army, Faith, Language” and undercuts the Opposition Bloc.²¹⁵ As President Poroshenko stood at the time of the attack at 10% in Ukraine’s presidential race opinion polls, martial law will likely suppress turnout in eastern Ukraine where the former pro-Yanukovich Party of Regions dominates, giving

²¹¹ Yuriy Syrotyuk, ‘RF Will Continue Moving Toward Blockade of All Ukrainian Coast’, Kyiv, *From-ua.com*, in Russian, 27 November 2018.

²¹² Oleksiy Kushch, ‘What Ukraine could do to keep its Azov ports’, Kyiv, *Delovaya Stolitsa Online*, in Russian, 10 December 2018.

²¹³ Mykola Topalov, ‘The ‘dead’ sea: how Russia destroys shipping in the Sea of Azov’, Kyiv, *Ukrayinska Pravda*, in Russian, Ukrainian, 4 December 2018. Russia officially denies the allegation of blockade. Alexei Volsky, the first deputy head of the Coastguard Department of the Russian FSB Border Guard Service, noted that a total of 18,783 vessels have crossed the Kerch-Yenikale Canal from 1 April 1 to 1 December 2018, and 2,052 vessels were inspected before crossing the canal, 1,183 of them were en route to the Russian ports of the Sea of Azov and 869 to the Ukrainian ports: “It means that a far larger number of Russian vessels were examined. There is no such thing as the blockade.” ‘FSB Border Guard Service's coastguard denies accusations of blocking Ukrainian ports in Sea of Azov’, Moscow, *Interfax*, 10 December 2018.

²¹⁴ ‘Resolution by the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine’, 26 November 2018. See also: Artur Hor, ‘Martial Law as Strategy: Why Does Danger of Disrupting Election Persist in Ukraine?’, Kyiv, *Apostrof*, in Ukrainian, 10 December 2018.

²¹⁵ Konstantin Skorkin, ‘Martial Law In Ukraine: A Presidential Pyrrhic Victory?’, Moscow, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 30 November 2018: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/77814> (Accessed 21.04.2019)

Poroshenko electoral advantage in the 31 March 2019 presidential election.²¹⁶ In addition, martial law facilitates the symbolic and spiritual dimension of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict as it plays out in the division of property belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarch, particularly the principal monasteries or Lavras – such as the Pechersk Lavra. The law terminating the ‘Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership with Russia’ on 1 April 2019 came into effect on 12 December 2018 (with 220 deputies voting for, 20 against, with 100 not voting), though the consequences regarding trade between Russia and Ukraine are unclear.²¹⁷

Though Bolivia, Kazakhstan, and China backed Russia at the UNSC, Russia’s blockade of the Sea of Azov and military actions were diplomatically condemned by NATO states and other democracies. Italy’s Kremlin-friendly government watered down an EU statement, removing explicit references to new sanctions: “The European Union will continue to follow closely the situation and is determined to act appropriately, in close coordination with its international partners.”²¹⁸ The OSCE Trilateral Contact Group and OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine urge “restraint”, “de-escalation” and the resolution of differences through diplomatic and political means. An emergency session of the Ukraine-NATO Commission discussed new options for cooperation in the Black Sea. The incident raised questions about the effectiveness of western efforts to shape Russian strategic behaviour: “America's current strategy toward Russia, simply put, is not working; it is instead tying our hands. It's making Russia more aggressive externally and less democratic internally.”²¹⁹

Germany’s size and importance shape the political weather in Europe and so influencing German elite attitude and policy decision-making is critical. Andriy Melnyk, the Ukrainian Ambassador to Germany, called on Germany and the West to impose severe new sanctions on Russia, such as a ban on oil and gas imports: “Germany needs to finally . . . draw the line, find very, very clear words, and simply put Putin in his place. The West and Germany have many, many options at their disposal”, including the “bludgeon of sanctions”.²²⁰ Although legitimate commercial navigation around Ukrainian ports in the

²¹⁶ Leonid Ragozin, ‘Wag the dog in Ukraine?’, Doha, *Al Jazeera Online*, 5 December 2018; Leonid Radzikhovskiy, ‘Zugzwang’, Moscow, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, in Russian, 3 December 2018; Serhiy Rakhmanin, ‘Collaptoid [Russian: kollaptoidnoye] martial law’, Kyiv, *Zerkalo Nedeli*, in Russian, 1 December 2018.

²¹⁷ Valentin Korzh, ‘Russian Federation and Ukraine: Is This Complete Rift or Does Game Continue? Rada's Decision to Renounce Friendship Treaty with Russia Has Come into Force. However, Neither Ordinary Citizens Nor Experts Have Been Able To Understand So Far What Will Happen Next’, Saint Petersburg, *Rosbalt*, in Russian, 12 December 2018.

²¹⁸ Alberto D'Argenio, ‘The European Union Condemns the Kremlin in the End, but Italy Pulls the Handbrake on Sanctions’, Rome, *La Repubblica*, in Italian, 29 November 2018, p. 16.

²¹⁹ Nikolas K. Gvosdev, ‘Is Russia a U.S. ‘Adversary’ or Just a ‘Competitor’?’, *The National Interest*, 9 December 2018: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/russia-us-adversary-or-just-competitor-38132> (Accessed 22.04.2019)

²²⁰ Unattributed report: ‘Ukraine-Russia Conflict: ‘Deploying the German Navy off the Crimean Peninsula Could Stop Russia’s Brutality’, Berlin, *Welt Online*, in German, 28 November 2018.

Sea of Azov is now frozen, with consequent economic crisis in Ukraine's Azov Sea ports if they cannot operate, Germany's CDU/CSU-SPD coalition appears increasingly split over political support for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. Juergen Hardt, the CDU/CSU faction's foreign policy spokesman in the Bundestag, stated that Germany and the EU act resolutely toward Russia: "They need to send a clear message. If Russia does not give in, then the West and Europe will also need to increase pressure with economic sanctions."²²¹ The SPD foreign Minister publically supports it, while all three candidates (CDU General Secretary Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Health Minister Jens Spahn and CDU candidate Friedrich Merz) running for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) chair to replace Angela Merkel voiced criticism of Nord Stream 2. Kramp-Karrenbauer, elected to CDU Party chair, raised the prospect of whether to impose a maritime blockade in the EU on Russian ships stationed in the Sea of Azov and opposes Russia's return to G8 as long as Russia continues its military operation in Ukraine.²²² The Green Party called on the Federal Government to withdraw its political backing for the pipeline project.²²³

Putin's Operational Code

Russia's calibrated and deliberate use of military force against Ukraine provides further evidence of the core characteristics of President Putin's operational code. An 'operational code' can be defined as the rules, causal relationships, philosophical and instrumental sets of beliefs and fundamental assumptions necessary for effective action. Philosophical beliefs are attributional. They relate to the attributes Putin assigns to people, events and situations, to how fundamentally hostile or benign he understands the world to be and how much control he perceives to have over our environment. These beliefs both reflects and shapes Putin's national security team's understanding of national interest and broad foreign policy goals. Instrumental beliefs are prognostic in that they relate to what Putin and his team understand needs to be done – in terms of cooperative or conflictual means - to achieve his preferred policy outcomes.²²⁴ Five decision-making characteristics can be highlighted.

First, though Putin can foresee the military-operational cause-and-effect relationships at least several moves ahead, his initial strategic calculation is based on poor threat analysis and understanding of the strategic environment. As Ivan Kurilla notes: "the country's leaders currently do not have so many options in store. You cannot annex

²²¹ Unattributed report: 'Ukraine-Russia Conflict'.

²²² Anna Kwiatkowska-Drożdż, 'Kramp-Karrenbauer to lead the CDU', OSW, 7 December 2018: <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2018-12-07/kramp-karrenbauer-to-lead-cdu> (Accessed 21.04.2019); Helene Bubrowski and Hendrik Kafsack, 'International Law Not Consulted; Could Nord Stream 2 Still Be Stopped?' Frankfurt/Main, *Frankfurter Allgemeine (Electronic Edition)*, in German, 6 December 2018.

²²³ Unattributed report: 'Ukraine Conflict – Federal Government: Putin's Remarks Disconcerting', Frankfurt/Main, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, in German, 4 December 2018.

²²⁴ Graeme P. Herd, 'Putin's Operational Code and Strategic Decision-Making in Russia', in Roger E. Kanet (ed.), *Routledge Russian Security Handbook*. (Routledge, forthcoming 2019), pp. 17-29.

Crimea twice, and it is hardly a guarantee that such actions will have the same effect as in 2014.”²²⁵ Because Putin views Ukraine as a western puppet regime, from a Russian perspective the clash was between the Ukrainian navy and Russian border guards and concerned a breach of Russian territorial integrity. According to the “We did not start it!” rhetoric championed by Dmitry Peskov and Marina Zakharova, in concerted efforts to disorientate hostile western public opinion, demoralize western political elites and demonize Poroshenko, Ukraine used violence to provoke Russia.²²⁶ The myth of ‘Russian victimhood’ justifies further ‘defensive reactive’ and potentially preventative or pre-emptive annexation or occupation strategic responses. Military force has asserted Russian claims to *de jure* and reinforced its *de facto* control over the access to the Sea of Azov. This in turn either provokes the declaration of martial law by president Poroshenko or illustrates his weakness and unsuitability as President, making his re-election even less likely than polls suggest.

Second, Putin’s understanding of risk, perception of costs/benefits and tipping points between capitulation or further confrontation determine when decisions are made and define the intent of the decisions. Hitherto, Russian plausibly-deniable sub-threshold activities have encouraged NATO acquiescence and deterred NATO escalation. From at least the Montenegro coup (16 October 2016) attempt onwards, the effectiveness of such destabilization activities has decreased with higher costs imposed on Russia for less and less benefits. In the case of the Wagner Group debacle in Syria, the US pretended to believe Russia’s denial that the Wagner Group represented a non-Russian albeit pro-Assad force, before proceeding to ‘annihilate’, in the words of US Secretary of Defence Mattis, a detached battalion in February 2018. The UK’s attribution of Russia’s involvement in the attempted assassination of the Skripals - there was “no other plausible explanation” with regards to “means, motive and record” – has been subsequently vindicated, with the image of GRU professionalism tarnished in the process. Russia’s use of ‘plausible deniability’ has become a strategic vulnerability turned against itself and as a tactic appears to have passed its sell-by date.

Azov suggests that Russia’s perception of the utility of ‘deniability’ has shifted – on balance, culpability achieves more, and ‘implausible culpability’ – plausible deniability’s polar opposite – has the power to distract, disorientate and demoralize. Russia will likely place greater emphasis on the use its conventional military directly against Ukrainian forces, putting aside the need for ambiguity, uncertainty and doubt as to the identity and

²²⁵ Tatyana Khruleva, ‘You Cannot Annex Crimea Twice’, Saint Petersburg, *Rosbalt*, in Russian, 4 January 2019.

²²⁶ Text of speech by Ambassador Jonathan Allen, UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council Briefing on Ukraine, in New York, on 26 November, ‘Condemning Russia’s Use of Force on Ukrainian Vessels’, London, *Foreign & Commonwealth Office*, 26 November 2018: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/condemning-russias-use-of-force-on-ukrainian-vessels> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

attribution of Russian forces. Russia's focused escalation represents a change in its risk calculus. It suggests that the value Russia attaches to achieving its strategic goals in Ukraine outweighs the value it attaches to relations with the West. It highlights the extent to which Russia is prepared to challenge the status quo, which in turn indicates its perception of its own vulnerability to Western deterrence and the will of the West to deter Russia. It suggests that Russia believes that the West will acquiesce in the face of this escalation: "Russia's tactics are causing confusion among the Western countries which are still thinking according to the categories of anti-crisis management. For example, trying to persuade Russia to ensure reliable deliveries of gas bypassing Ukraine, certain Western countries, including Germany, are ignoring the fact that direct deliveries of gas to Europe are part of Russia's aggressive policy toward Ukraine."²²⁷ Indeed, Russia may calculate that western acquiescence response will be sufficiently weak to enable more ambitious Russian coercion and compulsion efforts short of a land corridor to Crimea. As Putin foreign policy doctrine crosses a threshold from sub-conventional to conventional then this indicates that, ultimately, Russia is prepared to accept international pariah status in order to remain strategically relevant.

Third, strategic decisions are tactical, improvised responses to changing circumstances, taking place in small groups operating outside formal structures, with few if any formal checks and balances. According to the FSB in a report published by Interfax news agency at 1100 hours Moscow time on 25 November, Ukraine was to blame for the clash: "At around 0700 hours Moscow time [0700 GMT], in violation of Articles 19 and 21 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea stipulating the right of the coastal state to protect the security of the maritime space, three Ukrainian Navy ships crossed the Russian Federation state border and unlawfully entered a temporarily closed area of the Russian Federation's territorial waters."²²⁸ Vladimir Frolov asks: "Who authorized the "boarding"? At what level was the decision made and were its broader international implications, including the already agreed meeting between Putin and Trump, considered at all? (Did they take interest in the views of [Russian Foreign Minister Sergey] Lavrov and [Putin aide Yuriy] Ushakov? There was enough time for that.) How is all of this generally evaluated and analysed, and, most importantly, reported to the decision maker?"²²⁹ Had an official Russian inter-agency process legal analysis been made prior to the order to attack and seize the Ukrainian naval vessels? Rather than a pre-planned and orchestrated attempt to provoke an overreaction from Kyiv, did the Russian leadership react quickly to a local incident instigated by the local Russian

²²⁷ John Lough, 'Not Resisting Moscow With Violence. Why West Has Reacted So Weakly to Incident in Sea of Azov', Kyiv, *The Insider*, in English, Russian, 2 December 2018.

²²⁸ Vladimir Solovyev, Kirill Krivosheyev, and Yanina Sokolovskaya, 'Last Straw at Sea. Ukraine Pushes Russia Into Retaliatory Action in Kerch Strait', Moscow, *Kommersant Online*, in Russian, 26 November 2018.

²²⁹ Vladimir Frolov, 'Don't Cry for Me Argentina: Why Trump Canceled Meeting with Putin in Buenos Aires', Moscow, *Republic*, in Russian, 30 November 2018.

commander, with Putin ordering the seizure of Ukrainian vessels off the coast of Crimea as they travelled away from the Strait on their way back to their home port of Odessa? Or, alternatively, and going with the preponderance of evidence, was the clash orchestrated and deliberate? At least four Russian Ka-52 attack helicopters and Su-25 attack aircraft, Russian special forces, regular Russian naval vessels were in support, cyber-attacks against the Ukraine MoD occurred simultaneously, and, as the EU's security commissioner Julian King noted, a Russia's disinformation campaign began "more than a year ago, when Russian media started pushing claims that the authorities in Kiev were dredging the seabed in the Sea of Azov in preparation for a NATO fleet to take up residence."²³⁰ The immediate objective being to entrapment President Poroshenko through over reaction, which implies firing back at Russian vessels (akin to President Saakashvili's 7 August 2008 overreaction in in South Ossetia). This would muddy the issue of attribution for the use of force, neutralize international responses and isolate Ukraine.

Fourth, a 'style of indirect interpretation' and ambiguity characterizes the communication of decisions. In the event of martial law, Russia potentially disrupts a peaceful and democratic handover of power in Ukraine, which would set a damaging example for Putin.²³¹ Russia also argues that Ukraine carries out a series of provocations against Russia: Ukraine masses military forces in the east; the rights of Russian speakers and ethnic Russians in the East are suppressed; property of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarch are forcibly seized; and, children are forced to dig trenches with their hands. In fact, an undeclared economic blockade of Azov exploits the psychological vulnerability of the civil population to turn it against Kyiv and allows Russian forces to mobilize.²³² In terms of goals, at a minimum Russia can use this form of cross-domain coercion to compel Ukraine to restore power and water supplies to Crimea and extract concessions when negotiating the final status of Donbas. Ultimately, if asserting maximalist goals, Russia would argue that it undertakes a defensive reactive land campaign of liberation from suppression – instrumentalising 'responsibility to protect' discourse – to cloak and mask the real Russian objective: the establishment of a 'land bridge' to Crimea. The storming of Mariupol would be bloody (akin to Aleppo)

²³⁰ 'Is/cmk', 'Angela Merkel Urges Vladimir Putin To Release Ukrainian Sailors', Bonn, *DW*, 11 December 2018.

²³¹ Eerik-Niiles Kross, 'Kerch crisis is more serious than Crimea crisis', Tallinn, *Postimees*, in Estonian, 28 November 2018.

²³² Kirill Gulov, Dmitriy Laru, Nataliya Portyakova, Yekaterina Postnikova, and Sergey Izomov, 'Divided by Sea: Introduction of Martial Law Effectively Splits Ukraine. It Has Created Disenfranchised 'Second-Class' Citizens in Country', Moscow, *Izvestiya Online*, in Russian, 28 November 2018; Maksim Makarychev, 'Why Kyiv Has Resorted to Conflict and Introduced Martial Law', Moscow, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, in Russian, 26 November 2018; Konstantin Skorkin, 'Martial Law In Ukraine: A Presidential Pyrrhic Victory?', Moscow, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 30 November 2018: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/77814>

and pose major strategic communication challenges for Russia, particularly regarding the populations of Ukraine and the West.²³³

Fifth, in so far as rules and norms were broken, Russia understands this as symbolizing Russia's great power status, according to the logic: great powers break the rules. In this sense the US rather than China is Russia's strategic benchmark. Rhetorically, China and Russia increasingly share strategic conceptions of how best to mitigate US containment efforts in the Indo-Pacific, the Arctic (where Russia increasingly cooperates with China), the North Atlantic, through the Baltic to the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean. Chinese naval responses against US freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea/Taiwan Strait are relevant for Russia given the US will presumably seek to uphold the principle, whether it be navigation in Peter the Great Bay (USS McCampbell) opposite Russia's Pacific Fleet harboured in Vladivostok, or in the Kerch Strait and Black Sea.²³⁴ In reality, though, Azov highlights the growing differences between China's "Three Warfares"²³⁵ (*san zhong zhanfa*) approach – which adheres to Sun Tzu's precept of breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting – and Russia's evolving strategic behaviour. China does not recognise the Russian status of Crimea, the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and Chinese state-owned companies *de facto* implement the West's anti-Russian economic sanctions. In 2018 the *Vostok* strategic exercises included a Chinese PLA brigade and a Mongolian platoon, which provided the Chinese the opportunity to study the Transbaikal military theatre, Russian combined-arms combat, and gauge Russian military learning from Syria, even though the exercised was in reality predicated on an anti-Chinese scenario.²³⁶

²³³ Pavel Felgengauer, 'First Blood of Possible Winter War. Military Expert: Construction of Ukrainian Naval Base at Berdyans'k Was Cause of Extremely Dangerous Conflict', Moscow, *Novaya Gazeta Online*, in Russian, 27 November 2018.

²³⁴ Vladimir Frolov, 'Don't Cry for Me Argentina: Why Trump Canceled Meeting with Putin in Buenos Aires', Moscow, *Republic*, in Russian, 30 November 2018; Ivan Preobrazhenskiy, 'War of Nerves Near Crimean Coast. United States Is Threatening to Send New Combat Ships to Black Sea Region. What Other Consequences Is Shooting in Kerch Strait Likely to Have?' Saint Petersburg, *Rosbalt*, in Russian, 6 December 2018.

²³⁵ In 2003 the 'Political Work Guidelines for the People Liberation Army' (PLA) introduced the concept of 'Three Warfares'. Updated in 2010, this approach combines: 1) the coordinated use of strategic psychological operations; (2) influencing public opinion through overt and covert media manipulation; and (3) the exploitation and leveraging of national and international legal systems and processes to constrain adversary behavior, confuse legal precedent, and maximize advantage. Peter Mattis, 'China's 'Three Warfares' in Perspective', *War on the Rocks*, 30 January 2018: <https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/chinas-three-warfares-perspective/>; Doug Livermore, 'China's "Three Warfares" In Theory and Practice in the South China Sea', *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, 25 March 2018: <http://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2018/03/25/chinas-three-warfares-in-theory-and-practice-in-the-south-china-sea/>

²³⁶ In addition, the *Morskoe Vzaimodeystviye* 2018 joint naval exercises were, despite being announced, was not held. Aleksandr Anatolyevich Khranchikhin, 'Moscow at the Geopolitical Crossroads. Can the Russian Leadership Overcome the Centuries-Old National Stereotypes in Foreign Policy?', Moscow, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, in Russian, 28 December 2018.

Conclusions

Anatol Lieven argues that Russia and NATO relations highlight the paradoxically stabilizing utility of a “safe enemy”: “it is understood that NATO will not defend any country that Russia might attack, and that Russia will not attack any country that NATO might defend. This leaves both sides – unlike the great powers before 1914 – free to employ the rhetoric of confrontation without running the risk of actual catastrophic war.”²³⁷ Acceptance of this unwritten compact, which privileges NATO vital interests (defending members) against its secondary interests (defending the statehood of non-members – “What happens in Tskhinvali or Donetsk is far less important.”) is in fact more destabilizing than rejecting it. The compact both incentivizes non-NATO members to prematurely seek to secure NATO membership, before standards are met and societies ready, and provides a powerful external strategic rationale, even imperative, for Russia to use all means, including conventional force, to prevent NATO membership. This institutionalizes a paradox of Russian governance in the late Putin period: initiating and exploiting the instability of regimes in its neighbourhood is the only and last guarantee of regime stability in Russia. Azov demonstrates a new Goldilocks principle in operation at the heart of the Putin doctrine. Now that plausibly deniable proxy forces no longer secure Russian interests, Russia seeks to apply just enough conventional force to achieve the same ends, while not so much as to make Western acquiescence politically untenable. Russia thereby avoids financial-economic escalation which would seriously undercut Russian foreign-exchange earnings, state revenues and GDP production, risk regime stability and render all out catastrophic nuclear war more likely.

Rather than circling the wagons in the name of vital interests and explaining away the sovereignty slicing effects of Russian cross domain coercion in the name of securing vital interests, NATO has to improve its ability to deliver cross domain deterrence to shape Russian strategic behaviour. Cross domain coercion should be guided by three ‘needs’: 1) mitigating escalation of confrontation with Russia; 2) protecting vital national interests of NATO member states; and, 3) upholding the integrity of international laws, norms, principles and institutions – to safeguard and protect the international system. The de facto abandonment of the principle that sovereign right of states to identify and determine their own strategic choice is in fact a rejection of statehood and so the current state-based international order.²³⁸ If in the face of a Russia coercive *droit de regard*, NATO abandons collective security and crisis management roles as the price for never exercising collective defence, then NATO ceases to be a viable entity. If it serves an empty function, it ceases to be viable and collapses. Former NATO members, starting

²³⁷ Anatol Lieven, ‘The Dance of the Ghosts: A New Cold War with Russia Will Not Serve Western Interests’, *Survival*, 60:5, 2018, p. 127.

²³⁸ Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, the South Caucasus states and Central Asia, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Switzerland, Austria, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo are all in the firing line.

with the Baltic States, are then, presumably, ripe candidates for further Russian coercion.

Given this suggested framework of action, it is interesting to the sets of possible additional responses that would constitute effective cross domain deterrence of Russia?²³⁹ Here the tool box is far from empty. New military aid packages for Ukraine (e.g. anti-ship missiles) could be made available and the West could increase the economic, military and reputational costs for Russia over time, not least through highlighting disinformation campaigns. Denmark could temporarily close the Danish Straits to Russia's Baltic fleet, and/or Turkey the Bosphorus to Russia's Black Sea fleet, in line with Russian logic regarding control of both sides of the Kerch strait. Ukraine could threaten to reconstitute nuclear weapons.²⁴⁰ The West could threaten a total embargo on Russian oil and gas exports, ban Russian ships from Western harbours and its planes from Western airspace until Russia re-establishes freedom of navigation through the Kerch Strait and Sea of Azov. Russia could be excluded from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) international banking system (causing disruptions to Visa and MasterCard payment) and assets of one or more of leading Russian banks (e.g. VEB, Promsvyazbank, and Gazprombank) could be seized.²⁴¹

For these types cross domain deterrence policies to be enacted, an escalatory threshold trigger for the West would have had to be crossed. What additional Russian use of coercion might constitute this threshold? In public speeches, President Poroshenko has argued that Ukraine was on the verge of the large-scale Russian aggression. He calculates 80,000 Russian soldiers are present at Ukraine's borders and the Russian-annexed Crimean Peninsula, as well as the rebel-held regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, as well as 400 artillery and rocket systems, 900 tanks, 2,300 armoured combat vehicles, more than 500 military planes and 300 helicopters, with 80 Russian military ships and eight submarines in the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Aegean Sea.²⁴² Such a

²³⁹ King Mallory, 'New Challenges in Cross Domain Deterrence', *RAND Perspectives*, 2018:

<https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE259.html>

²⁴⁰ Theoretically, "Ukraine has sufficient scientific and industrial potential to make nuclear weapons and means for their delivery though this, of course, would require enormous efforts. The country has on its territory necessary reserves of uranium, reactors to reprocess it into weapons grade plutonium, and plants capable of producing intercontinental missiles and heavy aircraft. However, there is no need for intercontinental missiles to deliver anything from Kyiv to Moscow. Thus Ukraine, by making certain efforts, can create a situation when it will be capable of inflicting unacceptable damage to Russia." Vladimir Pastukhov, 'When Will Ukraine Reinstat Status of Nuclear Power?' Moscow, *Ekho Moskvyy Radio*, in Russian, 28 November 2018.

²⁴¹ Ivan Preobrazhenskiy, 'Anatomy of Rumors: Itching in Anticipation of Sanctions. Russian Authorities Are Preparing for Country's Shutoff from International Systems and Regional Revolts in Spring', Saint Petersburg, *Rosbalt*, in Russian, 14 December 2018.

²⁴² Russia inherited 82.5% of the Black Sea fleet after the collapse of the Soviet Union, including guided anti-ship missiles, has submarines, missile systems and air defence and has updated these assets and degraded those of Ukraine. It therefore has a clear qualitative and quantitative naval advantage over Ukraine. However, according to Mykola Byelyeskov, deputy director of Ukraine's Institute of World

'Winter War' would aim to establish by force a land bridge across the western shore of the Sea of Azov to connect Crimea to Russian-controlled Donetsk and Luhansk and the Russian Federation itself. Igor Koziy, a military expert at the Institute for Euro-Atlantic Cooperation, notes that: "The possibility of the Russian invasion at the moment is between 70 to 80 percent, especially during the upcoming holiday season. For three to five days, nobody in the world would care about what is going on". He argues that President Vladimir Putin: "is still not ready for a very open traditional method because there is no psychological readiness for it inside the Russian army, but it is still on the table."²⁴³ Norbert Rottgen, chairman of the foreign affairs committee of the German Bundestag, concurs, stating that: "We can no longer rule out further Russian aggression, for example on the coastline of the Sea of Azov, designed to open a land route to the Crimean peninsula."²⁴⁴ Indeed, following Russian intensified diplomatic efforts to extend bilateral Russian-Belarusian integration, anxiety in Minsk reflects the fear that Belarus could also be a target for annexation, following the logic: "If Crimea belongs to us, why cannot Vitsyebsk or Mahilyow become ours too?"²⁴⁵

For effective and meaningful cross domain deterrence (by denial and punishment) to be enacted, in practice this would mean that Germany and the US – which constitute the operational centre of gravity in the political West - had reached a common strategic conclusion based on a shared risk calculus: the immediate known practical costs of Russian deliberately destabilizing the international order and the principles that uphold it would now outweigh the risks of the collapse of the Russian economy, and with it the unknowns associated with regime destabilization and the unpredictability of Russian strategic behaviour. Part of the calculation would also concern China's acquiescent response to western escalation through effective cross domain deterrence. This perception would be based on a recognition that China exhibits a more deliberative, cautious and risk averse approach to strategic decision-making than Russia, is less willing to be labelled a pariah state and, for now at least, benefits more from continuity than radical change.

Policy, despite such advantages, Russia is unable to mount a full blockade of Ukraine's port of Odessa. Mykola Byelyeskov, 'A sea battle. What does Ukraine have to counter the Russian Fleet with?', Kyiv, *Glavkom*, in Russian, Ukrainian, 27 November 2018.

²⁴³ Tamila Varshalomidze, 'Poroshenko: Over 80,000 Russian troops in and around Ukraine', Doha, *Al Jazeera Online*, 1 December 2018: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/poroshenko-80000-russian-troops-ukraine-181201164222788.html>

²⁴⁴ Norbert Rottgen, 'The EU's Response To Russia Must Be Bold and Unanimous', London, *The Guardian Online*, 12 December 2018: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/12/eu-response-russia-bold-unanimous-ukraine>

²⁴⁵ Oleg Kashin, 'Minsk Is Ours. Rumors Regarding Russian Annexation of Belarus Are Advantageous for Everyone. Game of Annexation Threat, Like Game of Integration in Past, Will Make It Possible for Moscow and Minsk To Attain Any of Their Respective Objectives', Moscow, *Republic*, in Russian, 17 December 2018. See also: Vladimir Mukhin, 'Russian Federation Defense Ministry Fears New Act of Provocation From Kyiv: Black Sea Fleet and Southern Military District Subunits Prepare For Possible Ukrainian Army Attack', Moscow, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, in Russian, 4 December 2018.

Trying to Break NATO Apart: The Baltic Sea Region in Soviet and Russian Military Strategy

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Europe has entered a new strategic era marked by much greater unpredictability and risk.²⁴⁶ While hostilities in various parts of the Middle East have contributed to a deterioration of Europe's security environment, the single greatest source of uncertainty today are Russia's policies of distancing herself from the West and, concurrently, exerting growing assertiveness along her Western periphery, from the High North down to the eastern Mediterranean. In pursuing these twin goals, Russia relies on a well-tested combination of ideological belligerence; economic subversion; overt and covert disinformation activities; large-scale readiness and training exercises; and strengthened conventional, nuclear, and dual-capable forces.²⁴⁷

At the same time, the character of war and the content of strategic competitions are changing markedly in ways that could affect the calculus of deterrence adversely. Delivery systems are acquiring performance characteristics that give them much greater geographic reach, accuracy, and operational impact, thanks to steady advances in air-breathing, ballistic, hypersonic, surveillance, targeting, navigation, command and control, and communications technologies, challenging earlier notions of strategic stability.²⁴⁸ Offensive electronic and cyber warfare capabilities form an unprecedented source of disruption, with, potentially, adverse implications for crisis stability. Russian "information confrontation" techniques shroud peacetime disinformation operations and military deployments behind a veil of secrecy and deception and lay the ground for the use of intimidation and coercion in a crisis and for the blurring of the peace/war distinction.

In this emerging strategic situation, the Baltic Sea region is for Russia the central battleground of its contest over Europe with the West. It is in this region where

²⁴⁶ Donald Boffey, "NATO chief: world is at its most dangerous point in a generation", *The Guardian*, 8 September 2017.

²⁴⁷ Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, *Back to the future: Russia's Hybrid Warfare, Revolutions in Military Affairs and Cold War Comparisons*, Research Paper 120, NATO Defense College, Rome, October 2015. On Soviet Cold War deception practices, see Cynthia M. Grabo, *Soviet Deception in the Czechoslovak Crisis*, Studies in Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), classified Secret, spring 1970, Freedom of Information Act Electronic Library (FOIA EL), declassified and released to the public on 22 September 1993; and James H. Hansen, *Soviet Deception in the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Studies in Intelligence, CIA, classified Secret, 2002, FOIA EL, declassified and released to the public in April 2007.

²⁴⁸ Alexander Velez-Green, "The Collapsing Battlespace: NATO-Russian Nuclear Stability in an Era of Technological Upheaval", *The 2017 UK PONI Papers*, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, London, 2017.

geography, technology and ideology overlap in unique ways, because of its geographic proximity to western Russia and the access it affords to the countries of Eastern and Western Europe.²⁴⁹ In Russia's contemporary strategy, the Baltic Sea region has resumed the privileged position it enjoyed in Soviet times, as a springboard for competing with and weakening the Allies' resolve in peacetime and, if necessary, for breaking NATO apart in wartime.²⁵⁰

For NATO, the Baltic Sea region played a central role during the Cold War, as the pivot linking Allies across northwest Europe. Against a rising Soviet threat, the strength of NATO's deterrence posture in the 1970s and 1980s rested, in large part, on a web of mutual defence arrangements among the Allies that responded to a single, theatre-wide construct. An ambitious reinforcement plan and a robust exercise programme underpinned these arrangements.²⁵¹ This resolute approach was designed to counter any Soviet attempt to isolate an Ally, or several Allies, geographically from the rest of the Alliance. It also aimed at turning the wide dispersion of member nations across the vast expanse of the North Atlantic Treaty area into a source of strength, by confronting the USSR with the prospect of a war on a large scale and on multiple directions. In this undertaking, the United Kingdom played a singular, lead role in northwest Europe, by helping federate Allied efforts.²⁵²

After the end of the Cold War, NATO's enlargement to Poland and to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania gave the Baltic Sea basin a new role in Europe's "strategic geography", focused on cooperation with the Alliance's non-NATO partners in the region. The ever-stronger partnership with Finland and Sweden is reflected in the consultations on security in the Baltic Sea region held regularly with these two close partners, as well as by their participation in NATO exercises and other activities. The Baltic Sea was also an important geographic locus of the military partnership with the Russian Federation, following the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002, symbolized by the participation of Russian Navy ships in the U.S.-led maritime exercise *Baltic Operations*

²⁴⁹ The overlap results from the application, in a synergistic way, of civilian technologies, such as cyber, and advanced military means, such as missile deployments in Kaliningrad, for the purposes of disinformation and intimidation.

²⁵⁰ Christopher N. Donnelly, "Soviet strategists target Denmark", *International Defense Review*, August 1986, pp. 1046-1051.

²⁵¹ Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, "Military Exercises and Strategic Intent through the prism of NATO's *Autumn Forge* exercise series, 1975-1989", in Beatrice Heuser, Tormod Heier and Guillaume Lasconjaris (editors), *Military Exercises: Political Messaging and Strategic Impact*, Forum Paper 26, NATO Defense College, Rome, April 2018, pp. 65-91.

²⁵² The United Kingdom contributed to NATO the British Army of the Rhine, the UK Mobile Force, the British component of the UK-Netherlands Amphibious Force, and the vast majority of the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy's assets. British admirals and generals exercised NATO command over Allied forces in northwest Europe from Rheindahlen (NORTHAG), West Germany; Kolsaas (AFNORTH), Norway; and High Wycombe (UKAIR) and Northwood (ACCHAN) in the UK.

prior to Russia's illegal occupation and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.²⁵³ NATO responded resolutely to the changed strategic circumstances ushered by Russia's belligerence, by initiating the most far-reaching adaptation of its deterrence and defence posture since the end of the Cold War. A central tenet of this transformation is the reaffirmed commitment to deter and to defend Allies on a 360-degree basis. Honouring this pledge in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland has included deploying multinational battle groups, air policing fighter squadrons and standing naval forces forward, on a rotational, but persistent basis²⁵⁴, in particular to prevent a *fait accompli*, as well as strengthening the responsiveness of external reinforcements. Accordingly, forward presence and rapid reinforcement have regained the standing they enjoyed during the Cold War as reliable instruments of effective assurance, deterrence and defence. In today's changed security environment, the Baltic Sea region has recovered a strategic role as an anchor and a mirror of NATO's collective resolve and broader adaptation.²⁵⁵

Against this background, this chapter revisits the central role that the Baltic Sea region played in Soviet planning against NATO during the Cold War, in order to shed light on applicable lessons to today's security challenges in the region in a vastly different strategic setting. To this end, the chapter first describes NATO's Cold War approach to deterrence and defence in northwest Europe, as a means to set the stage for addressing subsequently how the Soviets sought to optimize their strategy and operational art to target vulnerabilities in NATO's posture. The chapter concludes with reflections on time-tested NATO practices that are still applicable today to effective deterrence and defence.

The Baltic Sea region in NATO's Cold War planning

During the Cold War, the Baltic Sea region became a key component of NATO's broader Forward Defence strategy. The Baltic Sea, Denmark, West Germany's northern half, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium and the North Sea formed a *single strategic*

²⁵³ Ryan W. French and Peter Dombrowski, "Exercise BALTOPS: Reassurance and Deterrence in a Contested Littoral", in *Military Exercises: Political Messaging and Strategic Impact*, op. cit, pp. 187-210.

²⁵⁴ NATO's *Enhanced Forward Presence*, Factsheet, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Brussels, June 2018.

²⁵⁵ An early demonstration of the Alliance's post-Cold War adaptation in northeast Europe involved the relocation in 1999 of the former LANDJUT Allied Corps headquarters from Rendsburg in Germany to Szczecin, in western Poland, under its new name of Multinational Corps Northeast. *Multinational Corps Northeast Information Booklet*, Szczecin, Poland, June 2000, page 3. At the same time, it is worth noting that NATO has refrained from establishing a large command and control footprint on the territory of new Allies, in accordance with its policy of restraint vis-à-vis Russia. For assessments of the adaptation of NATO's deterrence and defence posture in northeast Europe, see Artur Kacprzyk and Karsten Friss, *Adapting NATO's Conventional Force Posture in the Nordic-Baltic Region*, Policy Paper 156, Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), Warsaw, Poland, August 2017; and Artur Kacprzyk, *Perspectives on NATO's Deterrence and Defence on the Eastern Flank*, Bulletin No. 125, PISM, Warsaw, 12 September 2018.

entity – the essential hinge upon which the defence of Western Europe, from Norway to the Alps, rested. It is no coincidence that the Forward Defence concept for Central Europe and NATO's command arrangements for defending Denmark and West Germany's state of Schleswig-Holstein were both implemented in 1962-1963.²⁵⁶



Figure 1: **Corps Sectors of Military Responsibility in NATO's Central region.**

Source: Cold War NATO Army Groups, Global Security, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/int/nato-ag.htm> (accessed 12.01.2019).

This overlap between defence of the Danish Straits and the wider defence of Western Europe reflected a widely shared view that countering a Warsaw Pact occupation of Denmark in a general war would have contributed directly to preventing:

- (i) A strategic envelopment of West Germany and The Netherlands through Denmark and the North Sea, which, if successful, could have compromised irretrievably an effective defence of NATO's Central Region;

²⁵⁶ "Implementation of Full Forward Defence", *History for 1963*, 3340/CE/AG/1149/64, classified NATO Secret, dated 16 October 1964, HQ Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT), Fontainebleau, France, declassified and disclosed to the public by the History Office, SHAPE, Mons, Belgium, July 2013, page 8.

- (ii) A complementary envelopment of Norway from the Danish Straits northwards that would have isolated the country geographically and made NATO's sea control of the Norwegian Sea very challenging; and
- (iii) The loss of NATO's sea control of the North Sea, thereby compromising the flow of sea-bound reinforcements from the United Kingdom and the United States through harbours in Belgium and The Netherlands.

Preventing the strategic isolation of an Ally or several Allies from the rest of the Alliance has been a core principle of NATO's deterrence and defence posture and planning.

Initial shortfalls

During NATO's first decade, military arrangements for defending northwest Europe were unsatisfactory. Sound political considerations had driven the Alliance to keep together and integrate Denmark and Norway into a separate Northern Region, and to establish the operational boundary between the Allied Forces Northern Europe (AFNORTH) and Central Europe (AFCENT) commands along the southern bank of the Elbe River.²⁵⁷ This resulted, however, in the operational isolation of Denmark from the defence of Central Europe. The unsatisfactory nature of this command arrangement was compounded by the absence of West German land forces, until the first divisions of the new *Bundeswehr* were activated in 1957. In a spring 1960 appraisal of the Alliance's posture, NATO's Military Committee informed the North Atlantic Council that an insufficient provision of resources by Allies would result, among other implications, in NATO being unable to exercise control in wartime over the exits from the Baltic Sea into the North Sea.²⁵⁸

Forward Defence's turning point

This unfavourable situation, with large tracks of allied territory exposed to infiltration or attack by an adversary, began to improve in the early 1960s. The Allied Mobile Force (AMF) – a multinational task force composed of seven infantry battalions and seven fighter and reconnaissance squadrons – was activated in 1960, with a deployment option

²⁵⁷ SACEUR's first Emergency Defence Plan (EDP) for the defence of Western Europe was published on 1 December 1951, only eight months after the creation of NATO's Integrated Military Structure and the activation in Paris of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Powers, Europe (SHAPE). EDP 1-52 set out that the mission of CINCNORTH was to "utilize all possible means to defend the land areas of the nations in the Northern European Command, to close the Baltic exits and to dominate the adjacent sea areas of strategic importance". *SHAPE Emergency Defence Plan*, classified Cosmic Top Secret, dated 1 December 1951, declassified and disclosed by the History Section, SHAPE, Belgium, November 1994, page 7.

²⁵⁸ *An Overall Evaluation of the MC 70 Country Studies*, MC 92(Revised), A Report by the Military Committee to the North Atlantic Council, classified Cosmic Top Secret, dated 21 April 1960, NATO, Brussels, declassified and disclosed to the public in 1999, page. 11.

to Zealand. The AMF was not, strictly-speaking, a reinforcing force. Instead, it was designed as a “trip-wire” formation that would be deployed early in an escalating crisis for deterrence purposes. The AMF, however, could only be deployed to a single location at once, and there were deployment options to Norway, Italy, Greece and Turkey, in addition to Denmark.²⁵⁹ The decision taken also in 1960 to station a Royal Netherlands Army manoeuvre brigade in northern West Germany in peacetime was important politically, but it improved the mal-deployment of NATO forces only marginally.²⁶⁰ Lastly, the gradual expansion of the new West German navy, with the entry into service of submarines, fast patrol boats, maritime patrol aircraft, and fighter-bombers equipped with anti-ship missiles, contributed to contesting the Soviet naval superiority in the Baltic Sea.

As the *Bundeswehr* continued its build-up, command arrangements were revised to enable much greater cooperation between Danish and German forces. A joint, multinational Baltic Approaches (BALTAP) command was activated in Denmark in 1962.²⁶¹ However, the complexity of NATO’s command arrangements in the Baltic Sea region could have given the Soviets in a war an important asymmetric advantage.²⁶²

A post-Vietnam operational renaissance

The adoption by NATO of the “Flexible Response” strategy in 1967 gave a new impetus to efforts to improve the Alliance’s conventional defence posture.²⁶³ These were accelerated following the completion of the United States’ military engagement in Southeast Asia in 1973. By the mid-1970s, NATO’s defence plans on both sides of the AFNORTH-AFCENT boundary were revised and strengthened. South of the boundary, arrangements were set in place to allow the 1st German Corps, in an emergency, to cover, with part of its forces, the adjacent Dutch sector extending to the Elbe River, until the 1st Netherlands Corps had completed its own forward deployment from The Netherlands to defence positions in West Germany over a distance of some 350 kilometres (see *Figure 1 above*).²⁶⁴ In the 1980s, NATO’s defence plans were adapted

²⁵⁹ Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, « From AMF to NRF: The roles of Rapid Reactions Forces in deterrence, defence and crisis response, 1960-2009 », *NATO Review*, spring 2009, pp. 32-37; and Bernd Lemke, *Die Allied Mobile Force 1961 bis 2002* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2015).

²⁶⁰ *History for 1961*, 3340-CE-AG-138-63, classified NATO Secret, dated 14 February 1963, HQ AFCENT, France, declassified and disclosed to the public by the History Office, SHAPE, Belgium, July 2013, page 12.

²⁶¹ “Establishment of the Baltic Command”, *Brief History of SHAPE, November 1956-December 1962*, op. cit., p 75.

²⁶² John G. Hines and Phillip A. Petersen, “Is NATO thinking too small? A comparison of command structures”, *International Defense Review*, May 1986, pp. 563-572.

²⁶³ Walter S. Poole, “Flexible Response’ for NATO: Reality or Mirage?”, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, Volume IX: 1965-1968*, Part I, Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C., 2012, pp. 111-127.

²⁶⁴ On the role of the Royal Netherlands Army in West Germany’s defence, see Jan Hoffenaar, “The Dutch Contribution to the Defense of the Central Sector”, in Jan Hoffenaar and Dieter Kruger,

further to enable the U.S. Army's III Corps, deploying from Texas, to conduct an operational-level counter-attack against advancing Warsaw Pact forces from inside the 1st German Corps sector into the 1st Netherlands Corps sector. Such a counter-attack, involving three divisions that had their equipment prepositioned at dedicated storage sites in Europe, was designed to halt and defeat a conventional Soviet offensive. The execution of this plan was rehearsed on a large scale in autumn 1987 during exercise REFORGER 87, giving NATO's Forward Defence strategy in northwest Europe unprecedented operational credibility.²⁶⁵

North of the boundary, BALTAP implemented an ambitious exercise programme culminating in the joint *Bold Game/Grouse/Guard* series.²⁶⁶ Every four years, *Bold Guard* was scheduled to coincide with a large maritime exercise in the North Sea, nicknamed *Northern Wedding*, in order to test coordination of allied operations on both sides of the Danish Straits.²⁶⁷ In the 1980s, the air-land-sea interface in northwest Europe was enhanced further by the adoption of a NATO Concept of Maritime Operations, the conclusion of a mutual support agreement among adjacent allied commands - aptly nicknamed *Fence Breaker*²⁶⁸-- and the execution of offensive air support sorties from U.S. Navy aircraft-carriers sailing in the North Sea during regular *Magic Sword* exercises.²⁶⁹

The initiative by General Alexander M. Haig Jr., who was the SACEUR between 1974 and 1979, to consolidate disparate reinforcement plans into an over-arching Rapid Reinforcement Plan also led to the nomination of dedicated external reinforcements for Denmark for the first time, in the form of the United Kingdom Mobile Force (UKMF) and the U.S. Army's 9th Infantry Division (Motorized).²⁷⁰ The UKMF was a joint British Army-Royal Air Force formation that included its organic complement of fighter squadrons for the provision of close-air-support.²⁷¹ The 9th Infantry Division was a "Light Division" in the U.S. Army's post-Vietnam nomenclature that had been re-equipped exclusively with wheeled armoured vehicles, as part of a high-technology experiment. Fast-moving

Blueprints for Battle: Planning for War in Central Europe, 1948-1968 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), pp. 217-237.

²⁶⁵ Walter Bohm and Diego Ruiz Palmer, *REFORGER 87 – Certain Strike*, Tankograd Publishing, Erlangen, 2017.

²⁶⁶ See, for example, "Die Manover 'Bold Gannet 1984'", *Osterreichische Militaerische Zeitschrift*, 1/1985, pp. 64-67.

²⁶⁷ Horst Wissler, "Bold Guard'78: Hier haben die Ledernacken gebualdet", *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 5 October 1978.

²⁶⁸ Commander F.U. Kupferschmidt, "A German View", in Geoffrey Till (editor), *Britain and NATO's Northern Flank* (New York, NY: Saint Martin's Press, 1988), page 106.

²⁶⁹ Bruno Thoss, *Vom Kalten Krieg Zur deutschen Einheit* (Munich, Germany: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 1995), pp. 608-609; and Roald Gjelsten, "The Role of Naval Forces in Northern Waters at the Beginning of a New Century", in Rolf Hobson and Tom Kristiansen (editors), *NAVIES in Northern Waters, 1721-2000* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), page 279.

²⁷⁰ Clifton Berry, "The U.S. Army's 9th Infantry Division", *International Defense Review*, September 1984, pp. 1224-1229.

²⁷¹ David Miller, *The Cold War: A Military History* (John Murray, London, 1998), page 235.

motorized formations, such as the UKMF and the 9th Infantry Division, were well tailored to Denmark's dense road network. The U.S. Air Force also had fuel and ammunition prepositioning agreements in place with both Denmark and the FRG to be able to forward-deploy fighter squadrons from air bases in the United States in times of tension or war. This effort was underpinned by a tacit agreement between "front-line" Allies, such as Denmark and The Netherlands, and reinforcing nations, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, that the latter would only be able to reinforce to good effect if the former had taken all necessary measures to ensure a successful forward defence, in such a way as to prevent either a localized *fait accompli* or a wider-scale attack.

Notwithstanding enduring constraints associated with a relatively low level of defence spending in Denmark and The Netherlands and questionable force readiness, NATO's conventional defence posture in northwest Europe had improved markedly over the two decades since the adoption of Flexible Response in 1967. In particular, the degree of multinational synergy achieved on a joint basis between American, British, Danish, Dutch and German forces was unprecedented.²⁷²

The Soviet target: breaking NATO apart in peace and wartime

The Soviet Union recognised the centrality of the Baltic Sea region to NATO's defence and made its conquest and occupation in wartime the centre of gravity of its war plans in the wake of the 1961 Berlin crisis.²⁷³ As the concept of a "theatre strategic operation" of unprecedented ambition and scale matured in Soviet operational art in the 1970s and 1980s, Warsaw Pact force deployments and capabilities were adapted and strengthened accordingly. They aimed at delivering a "knock-out" blow to NATO's forward defences in the area extending from the harbour of Hamburg to that of Rotterdam, thereby breaking NATO apart operationally, as well as politically.²⁷⁴ If Danish, Dutch and Belgian forces deployed in Denmark and West Germany's northern half could be defeated piecemeal, the capacity of West German, British, United States, French and Canadian forces fighting in central and southern West Germany to hold their ground and maintain a cohesive forward defence would have been greatly diminished, if not eliminated irretrievably. Furthermore, the strategy of advancing rapidly into more vulnerable allied defence sectors, while avoiding decisive engagements in the stronger sectors, would have been expected to make a recourse by NATO to the first use of nuclear weapons

²⁷² This Cold War practice of cooperation and interoperability extends today in the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, the 1st German-Netherlands Corps, the Multinational Corps Northeast, and the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force. See Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, *The Framework Nations' Concept and NATO: Game-Changer or Missed Opportunity?*, Research Paper 132, NATO Defense College, Rome, July 2016.

²⁷³ Matthias Uhl, "Storming onto Paris: the 1961 *Burja* exercise and the planned solution of the Berlin crisis", in Wojtech Mastny, Sven G. Holtsmark and Andreas Wenger (editors), *War Plans and Alliances in the Cold War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 46-71.

²⁷⁴ Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, *Theatre Operations, High Commands and Large-Scale Exercises in Soviet and Russian Military Practice: Insights and Implications*, Fellowship Monograph 12, NATO Defense College, Rome, May 2018) pp. 7-15.

operationally unattractive, if not impossible. In such circumstances, it would not have been necessary for advancing Warsaw Pact forces to pursue offensive operations into France and the United Kingdom, thereby avoiding risking a nuclear response, if one had been successfully averted until then through cunning Soviet use of nuclear intimidation.



Figure 2: Polish map of 1970 describing the concept of operations for the Warsaw Pact's "Coastal Front".

Source: *Pamięć mapa – dodatek*, Biuro Badań Historycznych IPN, Warsaw, https://pamiec.pl/ftp/ilustracje/Pamiec_mapa_dodatek.pdf (accessed 12.01.2019).

With these goals in mind, the Soviets organised Pact forces into a three *Front*-strong first strategic echelon, arrayed in a Western direction across the German Democratic Republic, Poland and, following the 1968 invasion and occupation, Czechoslovakia:

- (i) A "Coastal" *Front* was tasked, as a priority mission, to advance into the northern half of The Netherlands, towards Rotterdam, and, as a complement, to overrun and occupy Denmark. The "Coastal" *Front*'s advance into Jutland would have been supported by a large amphibious landing operation against Denmark's Zealand islands conducted by a combined Warsaw Pact Baltic Fleet.²⁷⁵ The attack on Zealand, however, would have been initiated only on

²⁷⁵ The map of the operations plan for the engagement of the Coastal Front Plan [Operacji Zaczepnej Frontu Nadmorskiego] was declassified and published in Poland in 2005. It was dated 25 February 1970 and wore the signature of the Polish Minister of Defence at the time, General Wojciech Jaruzelski. https://pamiec.pl/ftp/ilustracje/Pamiec_mapa_dodatek.pdf (Accessed 21.04.2019)

the fifth day of the general offensive against NATO, on account of the need that would have arisen beforehand to weaken NATO forces in Schleswig-Holstein and Jutland in an irreversible way²⁷⁶;

- (ii) A “Central” *Front* had, as its twin missions, on the one hand, encircling Dutch forces by driving a wedge between them and adjacent West German forces deployed to their south, and, on the other hand, encircling strong British forces by defeating adjacent Belgian forces deployed to their south; and
- (iii) A “South-western” *Front* tasked with encircling U.S. forces deployed in Hessen and Bavaria, through a pincer movement across the sectors defended by West German forces to their north and south.

These operations would have been supported by a large-scale, air and anti-air operation, involving multiple massed air raids against NATO’s ground-based air defences, command posts, and, importantly, non-strategic nuclear delivery systems.²⁷⁷

Before the outset of conflict, Soviet “active measures” would have sought to prepare the “battle space” in favour of the Warsaw Pact, by targeting West European public opinion, as well as governments, and weakening the latter’s resolve to modernize NATO conventional and nuclear capabilities and to declare alert measures and activate and deploy their forward defence forces.²⁷⁸

Delivering the stroke: the early 1980s’ Soviet “master plan” to break NATO apart

By the early 1980s, all the components of the Soviet master plan to break NATO apart in a war in northwest Europe were falling into place:

- (i) Nuclear-armed, short- (SS-21 *Scarab*) and intermediate-range (SS-20 *Saber*) ballistic missiles to intimidate NATO and place the burden of nuclear escalation on the Alliance in an asymmetric way, as a means to keep a conflict at the conventional level, while retaining the option of a devastating pre-

²⁷⁶ The operations concept portrayed in that map seems to have remained essentially unchanged until the end of the Cold War. See *Warsaw Pact: Planning for Operations Against Denmark*, A Research Paper, SOV89-10030CX, classified Top Secret, dated April 1989, CIA FOIA EL, declassified and released to the public on 18 July 2012, page 1.

²⁷⁷ Phillip A. Petersen and Major John R. Clark, “Soviet Air and Antiair Operations”, *Air University Review*, Volume 36, no. 3, March-April 1985, pp. 36-54.

²⁷⁸ During the Cold War, the USSR conducted targeted disinformation and destabilisation campaigns. Soviet “active measures” are addressed in: *Soviet “Active Measures”: Forgery, Disinformation, Political Operations*, Special Report No. 88, Department of State, Washington, D.C., October 1981; *Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986-87*, Department of State, Washington, D.C., August 1987; Jolanta Darczewska and Piotr Zochowski, *Active Measures: Russia’s Key Export*, Point of View no. 64, OSW, Warsaw, Poland, June 2017, pp. 13-27; and Nicholas J. Cull, Vasily Gatov, Peter Pömerantsev, Anne Applebaum, Alistair Shawcross, *Soviet Subversion, Disinformation and Propaganda: How the West Fought Against It*, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, October 2017.

emptive nuclear strike if NATO had been assessed as preparing to employ nuclear weapons first²⁷⁹;

- (ii) Major conventional improvements in artillery, armour and army aviation; and
- (iii) A revised force posture that favoured high readiness and a capacity to “front-load” the theatre strategic operation at the *Front* and TVD levels.

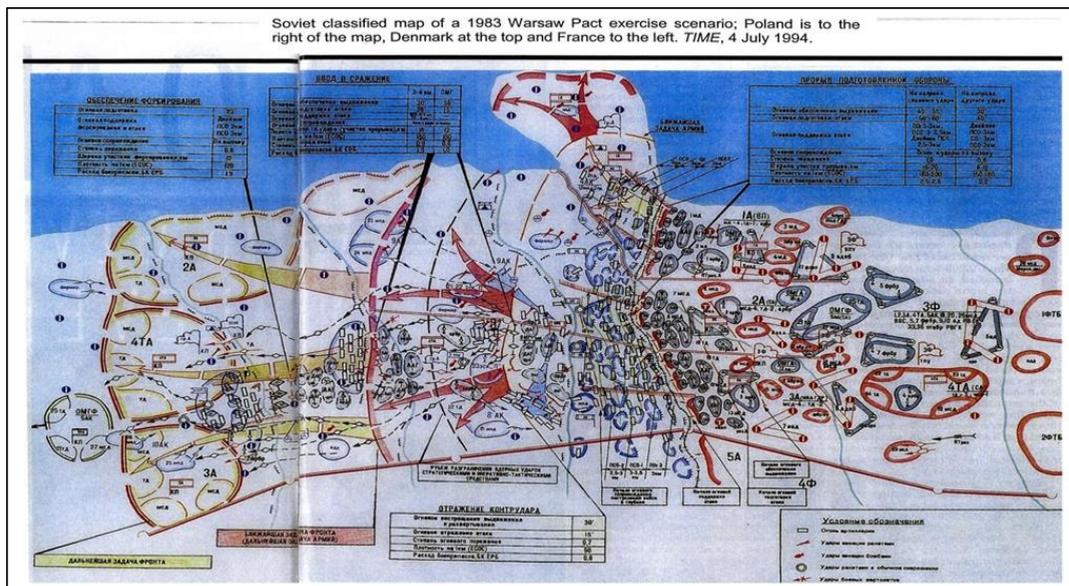


Figure 3: Soviet map of a 1983 Warsaw Pact exercise scenario.

Source: Time magazine, 4 July 1994.

A key element in the Soviet concept of deep operations was the capacity to overwhelm NATO's forward defences through the applications of massed fires, delivered by long-range multiple rocket launchers and short-range ballistic missiles equipped with improved conventional munitions.²⁸⁰ These massed fires would have aimed at opening

²⁷⁹ Since the late 1960s, available evidence pointed strongly to a growing Soviet preference for a war with NATO to remain conventional, without escalation to the first use of nuclear weapons by either side. *The CIA Study: Soviet Concepts of War in Europe*, National Security Council Memorandum, classified Top Secret, dated 7 June 1971, CIA FOIA EL, declassified and released to the public on 18 July 2012; and *Warsaw Pact Forces Opposite NATO*, National Intelligence Estimate NIE-11-14-81, classified Top Secret, dated 7 July 1981, CIA FOIA EL, declassified and released to the public on: no date, page 5. Post-Cold War Western assessments of previously classified East German documents mistakenly interpreted regular rehearsal of *pre-emptive nuclear use* during Warsaw Pact exercises as an indication of a Soviet preference for *nuclear first use*. See Julian Isherwood, “Warsaw Pact Planned to Nuke Its Way Across Europe”, *Armed Forces Journal International*, June 1993, page 15; and Harald Nielsen, *The East German Armed Forces in Warsaw Pact Nuclear Operations*, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Ebenhausen, Germany, July 1993.

²⁸⁰ Kerry L. Hines, “Soviet Short-Range Ballistic Missiles: now a conventional deep strike mission”, *International Defense Review*, December 1985, pp. 1909-1914.

“corridors” into NATO’s defending forces, to allow the forward movement of fast-paced raiding forces, in the form of purpose-built Operational Manoeuvre Groups (OMG). While much attention was paid in the West to the Soviet Army’s large armoured forces, it was the Soviets’ emphasis on developing a deep fire capability, through the development of “reconnaissance-strike complexes”, that was the real “force multiplier”. To ensure that OMGs would be able to move promptly into the break-through “corridors” and spearhead dangerous encirclement operations, Soviet forces were equipped with high-mobility wheeled vehicles with multiple axles that could take advantage of West Germany’s dense road network. These included the SA-8 *Gecko* surface-to-air missile system, the BM-27 *Uragan* multiple rocket launcher and the SS-21 *Scarab* surface-to-surface missile.²⁸¹

Furthermore, in 1983 the Soviet Army undertook to enhance the readiness of its forces stationed in East Germany markedly. In addition, Soviet formations garrisoned in the GDR’s northern half were restructured to expand their motorized infantry and field artillery strength, and enhance their mobility in the OMG “corridors”, while the armour strength of those garrisoned in the GDR’s southern half was increased to “fix” opposing NATO armoured formations.²⁸² This extensive reorganisation resulted in Soviet forces being geographically “front-loaded”, to shorten the distance from garrisons to initial attack positions along the GDR’s border with the FRG. Other forces stationed in the vicinity of Berlin were prepared to attack the allied garrisons in West Berlin as a diversionary operation, to distract NATO from the main thrust towards Rotterdam.²⁸³ The Soviet Army also strengthened the capacity of its second strategic echelon units garrisoned in the western USSR to deploy forward into Eastern Europe before the start of hostilities, “front-loading” further the Theatre Strategic Operation.²⁸⁴ Lastly, the capping event was the activation in September 1984 of the Western TVD high command, with a standing headquarters and a wartime bunker, under the leadership of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov.²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ Donald L. Madill, “The Continuing Evolution of the Soviet Ground Forces”, *Military Review*, August 1982, pp. 62-64.

²⁸² *Reorganization of the Soviet Ground Forces in East Germany* (U), Intelligence Assessment SOV 83-10126, classified Secret, dated August 1983, CIA FOIA EL, declassified and released to the public on 18 June 2012.

²⁸³ Michael M. Boll, “By Blood, Not Ballots: German Unification Communist Style”, *Parameters*, spring 1994; and Dr. Otto Wenzel, “East German Plans for the Conquest and Occupation of West Berlin”, *Armor*, November-December 1994.

²⁸⁴ *Soviet Readiness in the Western Theater and Its Impact on Operations* (U), DDB-1100-476-85, classified Secret, dated February 1985, Defense Intelligence Agency, declassified and released to the public: no date, page 23.

²⁸⁵ Marshal Ogarkov had been until that time Chief of the Soviet General Staff and the architect of the Theatre Strategic Operation. The Western TVD headquarters was located at Legnica in western Poland. Diego Ruiz Palmer, *Theatre Operations, High Commands and Large-Scale Exercises*, op. cit., pp.9-11.

These reforms brought the Soviets several benefits: they shortened markedly their forces' peace-to-war transition time and, correspondingly, NATO's early warning, while also reducing their vulnerability to attack during their forward movement.²⁸⁶ They probably reflected an assessment that improvements in NATO's anti-armour, deep interdiction, and rapid reinforcement capabilities could not be offset with force improvements alone and required more daring attack plans. As a result, Soviet operations planning in the Western TVD contemplated that Warsaw Pact forces would reach the German-Dutch border no later than the seventh day of an offensive.²⁸⁷

This late Cold War Soviet master plan to defeat and break NATO apart in a war was the main theme of the *Soyuz 83* command post exercise held in spring 1983. This exercise rehearsed the employment of a three-division-strong raiding force, as a *Front*-level OMG, to exploit a breakthrough into the 1st Netherlands Corps sector (**see Figure 2**). *Soyuz 83* involved practicing the planning and command and control of a *Front*-scale operation involving three combined-arms armies as the assault echelon, a tank army as the break-through force, and the *Front*-level OMG as the exploitation force.²⁸⁸ *Soyuz 83* was part of a pattern of intensified Warsaw Pact exercise activity that also included field training and command post exercises *Zapad 81*, *83* and *84*, *Yug 81*, *Shchit 82* and *Soyuz 84*, as well as, in spring 1984, the largest Soviet Cold War maritime exercise ever held in the North Atlantic.²⁸⁹ These exercises probably marked a high water mark in the development of late Cold War Soviet operational art for breaking NATO apart. By the mid-1980s, however, NATO's resolve to stand-up to a growing Soviet threat with a major strengthening of allied forces' fighting capacity and responsiveness that included wholesale force modernisation of forward defences, large-scale equipment prepositioning for rapid reinforcement and a demanding exercise programme had turned the table on the USSR, making its policy of military intimidation towards Western Europe futile and obsolete.

²⁸⁶ The theme of achieving surprise is addressed in C.J. Dick, "Catching NATO Unawares: Soviet Army surprise and deception techniques", *International Defense Review*, January 1986, pp. 21-26.

²⁸⁷ Burkhard Ewert, "3. Weltkrieg, Tag 5: Einmarsch in Osnabruck", *Neue Osnabrucker Zeitung*, 29 August 2013.

²⁸⁸ Exercise *Soyuz 83* is the only Warsaw Pact exercise for which almost the entire documentation was recovered from East German military archives by the West German Ministry of Defence, following Germany's reunification. See *Militarische Planungen des Warschauer Paktes in Zentraleuropa*, Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Bonn, January 1992; and Otto Wenzel, "Honeckers Krieg", *Das Ostpreussenblatt*, 26 September 1998. A Russian language map used during exercise *Soyuz 83* was published on pp. 16-17 of the 4 July 1994 issue of *TIME* magazine.

²⁸⁹ This exercise was conducted in April 1984 and aimed at contesting NATO control of the Norwegian Sea and at isolating Norway from other Allies. See R.W. Apple, "Soviet is Holding Big Naval Games", *The New York Times*, 4 April 1984; and John Lehman, *Oceans Ventured: Winning the Cold War at Sea* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Cy, 2018, page 133.

Following the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in 1985 and the adoption of a defence posture of sufficiency, through the reduction and reorientation of Soviet military forces as well as arms control agreements, the Soviet threat of invasion receded gradually.²⁹⁰

Cold War reflections to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture

The persistent Russian end game against the Alliance

Recognising that NATO's strength resides in its superior aggregate military capacity and mobilization potential, Soviet and Russian military strategy and operational art have aimed persistently at attaining a favourable "correlation of forces" in the early stages of a conflict, as the necessary condition for winning a war quickly and irretrievably. In the Soviet and now Russian view, if NATO's operational coherence were to be compromised irreversibly in a conflict, the Alliance's political cohesion could be expected to break-down. In effect, in this view, the mutual operational dependency among Allies established by the North Atlantic Treaty creates an opportunity to turn that dependency into a strategic vulnerability, by triggering a fatal chain reaction of military defeat and political dislocation.

To this end, the evolving Soviet and Russian concept of *deep operations* has focused on enveloping and isolating Allies from one another geographically and operationally, defeating allied forces piecemeal, and provoking the withdrawal of defeated Allies from the war.²⁹¹ This concept foresees the execution of operational-strategic-scale encirclement operations, from behind the shield formed by powerful anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) defence systems by a combination of air assault, airborne, amphibious landing, deep fire and mechanized raiding forces, supported by offensive electronic warfare and a diversified arsenal of dual-capable missile forces.²⁹² The scale and geographic footprint of these operations would be significantly smaller than during the Cold War, because of much lower force levels today, but not their tempo and intensity. This explains the growing Russian emphasis on "no-contact" warfare and the preference given to developing dense, precise and effective deep *fires* over unaffordable large *forces*.

In the light of Russia's current belligerent stance, the risk to guard against is that it could be tempted by the speculative prospect of achieving, in a conflict, an operational fragmentation of NATO that would precipitate the Alliance's political collapse. Such an outcome would entail keeping a confrontation with NATO in northeast Europe circumscribed geographically, operationally and politically, through the application of

²⁹⁰ John G. Hines and Daniel Mahoney, *Defense and Counteroffensive under the New Soviet Military Doctrine*, R-8992-USDP (Santa Monica, California: The Rand Corporation, 1991).

²⁹¹ Donnelly, "Soviet strategists target Denmark", op. cit., pp. 1046-1051.

²⁹² Jonas Kjellen, *Russian Electronic Warfare*, FOI-R-4625—SE, FOI, Stockholm, Sweden, September 2018.

local conventional superiority and nuclear intimidation, as a means to deter the Alliance from raising the stakes of the conflict by expanding the range of risks to Russia. Russian military operations would aim to target smaller Allies, while intimidating and deterring larger Allies, with the expectation that the dislocation of forward forces would lead rapidly to the Alliance breaking apart, before NATO's follow-on forces had had the time and operational wherewithal to prevent or defeat such an attempt. Russia's illegal occupation and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and continued belligerence towards Ukraine, as well as the *Zapad/Vostok/Tsentri/Kavkaz* exercise series, have underscored how it can manage effectively the time/space/force volume relationships to its advantage.

Lastly, Russia's hybrid warfare methods would aim at preparing and shaping such a hypothetical confrontation. While Russia's use of hybrid warfare tools in peacetime can be an attractive alternative to the use of force, aimed at breaking NATO apart, without war, it can also be the concealed precursor to a conflict. Either way, the Soviet and Russian pursuit of the Alliance's breakdown and demise has remained intact.

An inescapable lesson from the Cold War: unified NATO resolve and deterrence work

Since 2014, NATO has pursued a broad response strategy across the deterrence and defence spectrum, from diplomatic alertness, through civil resilience, to military responsiveness. This broad-based strategy has aimed at strengthening the military coherence of the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture, as well as NATO's capacity to act in crisis circumstances characterised by endemic ambiguity and uncertainty.

Assuring Allies in northeast Europe in the context of a rising crisis and, if deterrence failed, in the early stages of a wider conflict, would be a prerequisite for preserving NATO's strategic unity and freedom of action, wresting the initiative from an adversary, and conducting a successful defence of the Alliance as a whole. Effective deterrence here is a down payment on effective deterrence elsewhere. Operationally, the Baltic Sea helps give NATO's defence of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland the depth necessary to ensure an effective forward presence in peacetime and rapid reinforcement in a crisis, by providing the space required for air and sea manoeuvre. The flip side of this operational benefit, however, is that depth is only an advantage if NATO plans for and is able to execute a firm defence forward. In this sense, the operational imperative for a defensive alliance of defending forward -- not ceding terrain to an invader and reinforcing quickly, in order to deny an adversary the self-confidence that derives from conquering Allied territory -- has not changed from the Cold War.²⁹³ Hence, the operational

²⁹³ Following the adoption of a Forward Defence concept for defending West Germany, the then SACEUR, General Lauris Norstad, issued a directive to his subordinate commanders that, in wartime,

requirements for successful deterrence and defence in *northeast* Europe are not appreciably different from those that applied to *northwest* Europe four decades ago.

NATO's record of successful deterrence during the Cold War points to several other lessons that have renewed applicability in today's changed strategic setting:

- (i) The enduring logic of multilateral military arrangements that cement solidarity among Allies in peacetime and underpin collective military responses in crisis in ways that leave as little room as possible to chance;
- (ii) The desirability of embedding these military arrangements into an "Alliance-in-being" operational posture that is robust and visible in peacetime, and of sufficient scope to produce tangible deterrence effects on a day-to-day basis; and
- (iii) The relevance of framework nation roles for the larger Allies, as a means to leverage their often unique military capabilities, as well as their distinct capacity to lead and to help generate and optimise the contributions of smaller Allies.²⁹⁴

The stronger NATO's posture is in peacetime, the lesser the risk, in a rising crisis, that NATO would need to undertake large-scale and complex peace-to-crisis transition processes could be seen by a potential adversary as provocative and escalatory.

During, as well as since the end of the Cold War, the Baltic Sea region was and is, in effect, NATO's bulwark and alarm bell against coercion and aggression. This is the area where a failure of deterrence could quickly give way to large-scale hostilities. Keeping the Baltic Sea region stable and secure, including through the pursuit, where possible, of reciprocal and reliable military transparency and confidence-building measures with Russia, is, therefore, an essential, enduring dimension of assuring the Allies' security and Europe's wider strategic stability. As this chapter has endeavoured to demonstrate, several Cold War practices hold relevant lessons for today's NATO in relation to the critical importance of political cohesion and mutual trust and support among larger and smaller Allies; the symbiotic complementarity between forward forces and external reinforcements; and the value of conceptual and operational innovation – in effect, planning and exercising "NATO smart".

they would be authorized to cede terrain to an advancing enemy only upon receiving his personal authorisation. "Forward Strategy in the Central Region", *Brief History of SHAPE, November 1956-December 1962*, classified Cosmic Top Secret, dated 20 May 1963, declassified and disclosed by the History Section, SHAPE, Belgium, 2017, page 112.

²⁹⁴ Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, *The Framework Nations' Concept and NATO: Game-Changer or Missed Opportunity?* op. cit.

The Soviet Union – Russia: Break or Continuity?

Ambassador Baron Thierry de Gruben

The goal of this paper is to attempt to find a definition of the old Soviet policies and methods of governance, and their re-emergence in Putin's Russia. This endeavour requires, first and foremost, trying to sort out what part of the Soviet mind set is still present in contemporary Russia, and conversely, what part of the Russian mind set was present in the Soviet system.

The collapse of the Soviet Union covered, in fact, two distinct phenomena: the abandoning of Marxism-Leninism as a political and economic system on the one hand and the braking up of the Soviet Empire on the other.

Clearly, present-day Russia is very different from the Soviet Union that I have known. The monopoly of the Communist Party is gone, as well as the so-called "dictatorship of the proletariat". Marxism-Leninism as the ruling ideology is gone, it has been relegated to a vestigial and oppositional role. Although the Russian Federation has declared itself a democracy and a multi-party system in the Constitution was adopted by referendum on the 12th of December 1993, the political system of today's Russia can best be described as a "managed democracy"

The economic system has also changed radically, morphing from a command economy and central planning towards a market economy, from a non-convertible and non-transferable ruble to a money-based economy, from communism to "managed capitalism" (or crony capitalism).

The breakup of the Soviet Union has led to substantial changes in the relationship with the former Republics. Moscow has developed a new "near abroad policy". Where previously that policy concerned the countries immediately outside of the communist sphere, it now concerns the countries immediately outside of Russia's State borders.

However, even if these changes were deep and radical, not to say traumatic at times, a lot has remained the same: a multinational population, a historical and cultural continuity, a specific geographical position on the world map, a form of relation between Power and society and last but by far not least, a strong identity that is defined by the word "nash", "ours". Indeed, it has always been difficult to define exactly what is a Russian: there are Tatars, Udmurtsians, Marians, Komyaks, etc., who called themselves "Russian". So, ethnicity is not a defining factor, nor is religion. It is more like a team spirit: "On whose side are you - ours or theirs Thus, there has always been a sense of belonging in that concept.

There are three elements that form the continuum from Tsarist Russia through the Soviet period, to present day: territorial expansion, verticality of the power structure and Moscow's policy towards neighbouring countries.

Russia is not the only country that has increased its territory over the course of history but that is another debate and today we are asked to consider the policies of Putin's Russia and the potential threat they pose. Geography is destiny, as Napoleon is reported to have said. In the case of Russia, I believe it is true. I read somewhere - but did not verify - that between the end of the XV century and the end of the XIX, Russia increased its territory by the size of Holland on average every year! That is quite a unique rate of expansion.



Figure 1: **Moscow territorial expansion 1390-1525.**

Source: Source: David Liuzzo, (accessed 12.01.2019). https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/2d/Muscovy_1390_1525.png

What were the drivers of this impressive expansion? There are three main ones: the quest for natural resources, from furs to minerals and other commodities, the drive towards the open seas and last but not at all least, the need for security.

The first one is, of course, not specific to Russia. It has been a constant motivation throughout history and continents and has fuelled colonialism among other adventures. (Whether Siberia and Central Asia were colonies or not is a long debate that I will not get into).

The second one, on the other hand, is more specific. Russia is a landlocked country and has therefore, through its history, attempted to reach and master the open seas. To illustrate that point, I would like to give the floor to none other than Ivan the Terrible in the marvellous eponymic movie of Sergei Eisenstein. That movie was shot in 1944, during the war, under Stalin. Ivan's throne speech encapsulates not only what was his policy in 1547 but also Stalin's policy and indeed Russia's constant policy. To quote Ivan Vassilievich²⁹⁵:

"Today, for the first time the Archduke of Moscow wears the crown of Tsar of all the Russians. He thereby puts an end to the pernicious power of the boyars (read: the opposition, today) From now on, all the Russians will form a single State but to maintain Russia as a single State we have to be strong. That is why today I am founding a regular army – well-equipped, militant, permanent. And whoever doesn't fight in this army will contribute to its upkeep (Similarly the holy monasteries, with all their wealth, will make their contribution for their funds pile up without any advantage to the Russian land). We shall need a strong and undivided State if we are going to crush those who oppose the unity of the Russian land. Only a State strong and unified within its frontiers can defend itself beyond them. Our native land is no more than a trunk whose limbs have been hacked off. The sources of our waterways and rivers Volga, Dvina, Volkhov are ours but the ports at their mouths are under foreign control. Our ancestral lands have been torn from us. That is why, this coronation day we are going to set about retaking occupied Russian territory. Two Romes have fallen. Moscow is the third. There will be no fourth, for I am absolute master of this third Rome, the Muscovite State".¹

It is well-known that Putin annexed Crimea when Ukraine threatened to go "westward". His main aim was to retake Sevastopol. Sevastopol commands the Black Sea. However, holding onto Sevastopol doesn't make a lot of sense if you don't have access to the Mediterranean. Russia had lost all the bases and ports the Soviet Union had in the Mediterranean, except for two: Tartus and Lattakieh, in Syria, hence the Russian involvement in that country.

The third main driver of Russian expansionism is security or, rather, Russia's deep feeling of insecurity. Russia, in the mind of its own people, is "the country without limits".

²⁹⁵ Sergei M. Eisenstein, *Ivan the Terrible* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 34.

Indeed, and unlike countries like France, England or Spain, it has no natural borders nor even an easily identifiable national space. All along its history, Russia has expanded or shrunk depending on its conquests or invasions, of its victories or defeats. Furthermore, before it even became an independent state, it was an Empire (look at the first map above). Before the Tatar invasion, the Kievan Rus was more of an amalgamation of semi-independent principalities, (or City-States) not unlike Italy of the Renaissance. After throwing off the Mongol yoke, Ivan the Terrible crowned himself as “the Tsar of all Russias”, having re-conquered former Russian lands, to which he added several new conquests, like Kazan and Astrakhan. Since then, the Empire has not ceased to grow, despite some temporary setbacks. “Russia is where the Russians are”. Russia defines itself in terms of time more than space.



Figure 2: **Russian Empire in 1913.**

Source: Edward W. Walker, *Eurasian Geopolitics*, UC Berkeley, 17 March 2015.

<https://eurasiangeopolitics.com/baltic-maps/russian-empire-in-1913/> (accessed 18.01.2019).

However, space is an essential element of the Russian notion of security. The absence of natural obstacles, even the absence of well defined national borders have made Russia vulnerable to all invasions. Even if the Tatar invasion was the longest and most brutal, it was far from the only one, not by a long stretch! If we consider only threats and invaders from the West, we can think of Sweden, Poland, Germany, France, and Turkey.

This permanent vulnerability has given to the Russian understanding of the security concept an absolute and uncompromising meaning. The Russian word for “security” is “bezopasnost”, which means - literally - “absence of danger”. Thus, total security can only be insured by a total absence of danger, which is not quite the same thing as living in peace with your neighbours, whether close or distant. This “absence of danger” can be achieved by the control of a strategic space - whereby any foreign threat, even potential, can be pushed back as far away from the heart of the Empire, meaning from the centre of Power - as well as by permanent military preparation, but also by the suppression of any form of hostility at the periphery by a system of Alliances or, even better, by subjugation. This deep-seated feeling of insecurity and encirclement also explains the considerable emphasis the Russians have always put on their security services and their obsession of control. “Laissez faire” is not their motto!



Figure 3: **Russian Expansion in Asia.**

Source: Russian Expansion in Asia, Pinterest,

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/15692298681134260/> (accessed 18.01.2019).

The Soviet Union had built, after the trauma of the Second World War, a security architecture of degressive lines of defence (“glacis dégressifs”). In the centre was Russia (then, the RSFSR), the seat of power, the keep of the castle. Around it, as an inner line of fortification, were the 14 Republics, controlled out of Moscow by the Communist Party of the USSR. Further out were the so-called satellite countries, controlled by proxy communist parties. Then a line of Neutrals. Beyond that was the “opasnost”, the danger, the potential enemy.

When the Soviet Union collapsed and the 14 inner Republics proclaimed their independence, this security construction collapsed with it. The more so when the former

“satellite” countries joined Western institutions and NATO. When some of the former Republics also joined the EU and NATO, the security alarm bells of Russia started to ring loudly. We know what happened when Ukraine started to shift in the same direction.

If one wonders what Russia’s new “Near Abroad” policy is, it would be enough to look at what happened to Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Georgia, Moldova and Transnistria, Eastern Ukraine, Central Asia, even Belarus. There is clearly a policy of “Reconquista” at work here, except, maybe, that in the case of Central Asia where China seems to have made bigger inroads (no pun intended) than Russia. The Chinese penetration of Siberia is definitely something to keep an eye on.

The second thread of continuity is related to the power structures. If there is one constant in the Russian power structure, from Ivan the Terrible to Putin, from autocracy to the “dictatorship of law”, it is its top-down verticality. Even if today’s Russia defines itself as a democracy, we know it is not. Putin crushes his opposition just like Ivan Vasilievich crushed the boyars in his time, just with different methods.

Law and power do not always coexist comfortably, or even peacefully, on the contrary, they always tend to vie for predominance in any type of society. If one is to grossly oversimplify, one could say that there are two basic archetypes of political systems in that respect: one where power prevails over the law and another one where the opposite is true. Unfortunately (or, maybe, fortunately) things are never as clear-cut and most political systems are a working compromise between these two tendencies. In the case of Russia, there is somewhat of an ambiguity.

Russia, for historical as well as practical reasons, has been a country where Power prevails over Law, where law is only the written word of Power. The practical reasons have been clearly spelled out by Ivan in his throne speech: “to maintain Russia as a single state we must be strong”. Indeed, after the collapse of the Soviet system the USSR broke up in a multitude of little pieces, like a smashed crystal vase. It was well-rendered in a caricature in the New York Herald Tribune in the early 1990s of a peasant, fork in hand, and his wife standing in front of their *isba*; behind them, on a gate, was an inscription: “Independent Republic of Ivan and Olga”. Given the adverse nature of those centrifugal days, it is no surprise that Putin has made Ivan’s words his own.

The historical reasons go much further down, deep in Russia’s past. One can go to the byzantine roots of the Kievan Rus (again, as Ivan Vasilievich pointed out) and beyond that to the Hellenistic civilisation and to its founder, Alexander the Great. When establishing his Empire, Alexander took over the ways of the East, of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Babylon and Persia, not of Athens. He ruled as an absolute, divine autocrat and so did his successors, the “diadochs” - The Ptolemaids, the Seleucids, the Lagids - after him. The Byzantine Empire was not a democracy; the Basileus was an

autocrat - and so was the Tsar. In such a system, Law is an executive instrument, an instrument of political rule. Law serves the power, not the people.

By contrast, we must remember that in ancient Rome the laws were passed by the Senate and the assemblies, as they were inscribed on copper tablets and given for sacred safekeeping in the Temple of Saturn. So, where the gods are the source of power “of Divine Right” in one instance, they are the keepers and protectors of the laws in the other.

It may be of anecdotal interest to note that the Russian word for Power, “vlast”, has no plural. Grammatically, you can say “vlasti”, but it refers to the people in power. One cannot say in Russian: “the separation of powers”, but rather, “the branches of power”, like the trunk and the various branches growing out of it.

In conclusion, is Russia today a threat to the West? Undoubtedly it is, for three of the afore-mentioned reasons: historical expansionism, the drive to gain access to open seas (the Mediterranean, as well as the Baltic), and a political system that is antagonistic to the West. Russia feels threatened. Whether that is a reality or paranoia is irrelevant. It is a perception and we have to admit that. Russia has always felt threatened, even at the height of Soviet Power; remember “bezopasnost”? Appeasement, I fear, will not work. Yes, we must engage with Russia, but engage on our terms, from a position of strength and determination. We must cooperate wherever and whenever possible, as we did with the Soviet Union. There are many things we can do together.

What kind of threat(s) are we facing? There is, of course, the classical military invasion but I'll leave it to our military experts to tell us how likely that is and if we are in a position to face it. But let us remember here that “first use” of tactical nuclear weapons was part of Soviet military doctrine and is more than likely still part of the Russian military doctrine. Besides, Putin has repeatedly threatened the use of nuclear weapons in a European conflict. How do we answer that? Locally or globally? Do we retaliate with strategic strikes? This situation is reminiscent of a similar issue from the early 1980s: the Euromissile crisis, triggered by the fact that the USSR had deployed a new family of intermediate range missiles, the SS-20 that could target the European continent but not the territory of the USA, in effect, achieving a potential decoupling of the security of Europe and America. NATO's answer was the double-track decision of 12 December 1979, whereby either the Soviet Union started negotiations on the reduction of that type of missiles, or NATO would deploy similar weapons on European soil. We know that nuclear confrontation was reduced by the INF treaty, but unfortunately, that achievement now has been undone. We are seeing a new attempt by Russia to decouple European security - and in particular Baltic security - from US security.

Another possible scenario is that of an unconventional infiltration or take-over, the like of which we have witnessed in Crimea. A third scenario, which is the most likely, is the

use of “agents of influence” combined with disinformation campaigns on social media and other media. The use of agents of influence is a very old Soviet practice and so is the strategy of destabilisation. This is what the KGB used to call “the iron wire tactic”: if you take a length of iron wire in your hands, you cannot break it but if you bend it, first one way then another way, it will break by itself after a while, otherwise known as the “push and shove until you fall” method.

A possible answer to these threats is a credible European Defence. It must be stressed out that ESDP had to be developed in coordination with NATO, not independently of it. All our European forces are committed to NATO, they are all “in area”, in application of Art. 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. At the same time, not all US forces are so committed, as many operate “out of area”, in various regions of the world. Therefore, a European defence system should also be strongly committed to NATO. This also touches on the question of burden-sharing, which is a legitimate question that should be addressed seriously.

What can NATO do, then? Containment can and will work if we put the necessary means and determination into it. However, those means and determination must be credible, otherwise they will fail. NATO has done its job for nearly 70 years and has done it well. We must also be ready to live up to our commitments. Today, the value of NATO seems to be put into question by some of the Allies, which is, of course, a very dangerous message to send over to Putin, as perceptions matter tremendously in international affairs.

Complex Strategic Coercion and the Defence of Europe

Professor Julian Lindley-French²⁹⁶

“A transition from sequential and concentrated actions to continuous and distributed ones, conducted simultaneously in all spheres of confrontation, and also in distant theatres of military operations is occurring”

General Valery Gerasimov, before the Russian Academy of
Military Sciences, 24 March 2018

With the December 2018 announcement by President Vladimir Putin of his decision to deploy a new nuclear-tipped missile system (*Avangard*) purportedly capable of evading all US defences, and with the British-led *Joint Expeditionary Force* (JEF) about to conduct a major Arctic exercise, the purpose of this short briefing paper is to consider the capability and utility of contemporary Russian forces in relation to the strategic goals set by President Putin. Specifically, the critical role played by Russia’s ‘New Look’ military force in the realisation of Moscow’s political goals via complex strategic coercion.

Complex strategic coercion is the use of all national means and beyond by a ‘securitised’ state such as Russia to systematically undermine the command authority and the political and social cohesion of adversary states and institutions. This end is achieved by creating and exploiting divisions within diverse societies, interfering in national political processes and exacerbating tensions between democracies. Complex strategic coercion is underpinned by the threat of overwhelming conventional military power against weaker states at a time and place of the aggressor’s choosing, allied to the implicit threat of nuclear and other means of mass destruction to confirm the changed facts on the ground by preventing strategic peer competitors from mounting a successful rescue campaign.

Core Message

Western strategists increasingly confuse strategy, capability and technology thus undermining deterrence and defence efforts. It is precisely the fusion of the three elements of warfare that the Russian Chief of the General Staff General Valery Gerasimov has been pioneering for a decade. The modernisation of Russia’s armed forces must thus be seen in the context of a new form of complex strategic coercion that

²⁹⁶ This chapter is based on an article originally published by the Canadian Global Affairs Institute in January 2019 under the title *Complex Strategic Coercion and Russian Military Modernization*.

employs systematic pressure across 5Ds: disinformation, destabilisation, disruption, deception and implied destruction. Russia's strategic goal is to conduct a continuous low-level war at the seams of democratic societies, and on the margins of both EU and NATO, to create implicit spheres of influence where little or no such influence should exist. In the worst case, complex strategic coercion would be used to mask Russian force concentrations prior to any attack on NATO and EU states from above the Arctic Circle and Norway's North Cape in the north, through the Baltic States and Black Sea region and into the south-eastern Mediterranean. The enduring method of the strategy is to use the implicit threat of force to keep the Western allies permanently strategically, politically and militarily off-balance and thus to offset any innate advantages afforded Western leaders by either their forces or resources. If the Alliance concept of deterrence and defence is to remain credible an entirely new and innovative concept of protection and projection must be considered as a matter of urgency.

Why Complex Russian Strategic Coercion?

There are three elements to Russian strategy which provide the all-important strategic rationale for Russia's military modernisation: intent, opportunity and capability. The intent of Moscow's complex coercive strategy is driven by a world-view that combines a very particular view of Russian history with the political culture of the Kremlin that is little different from that of Russia prior to the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. For Russia, the end of the Cold War was a humiliating defeat which saw power in Europe move decisively away from Moscow to Berlin and Brussels. For Moscow the loss of all-important prestige was compounded by NATO and EU enlargement as proof of the designs of an insidious West to destroy what Russians see as the 'legitimate' legacy of the Great Patriotic War and with it the Russian influence in Europe.

The 2014 EU Association Agreement with Ukraine²⁹⁷ reinforced the Kremlin's paranoia that Russia's voice no longer mattered. The traditional Russian reliance on force as a key component of Russian influence reinforced the tendency of the Putin regime to imagine (and to some extent manufacture for domestic consumption) a new threat to Russia from the West. Threat of force has thus again come to be seen by the increasingly 'securitised' Russian state as a key and again legitimate component of Russian 'defence', albeit more hammer and nail than hammer and sickle. Hard though it is for many Western observers to admit it is also not hard to see how Russia, with its particular history, and Putin's Kremlin with its very particular world-view, has come again to this viewpoint. The mistake for the West would be to believe that such a world-view is not actually believed at the pinnacle of power in Russia. It is.

²⁹⁷ Read in: *Association Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part*, Official Journal of the European Union 29 May 2014, https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2016/november/tradoc_155103.pdf (Accessed 12.01.2019)

The opportunity for Moscow's complex coercive strategy is afforded by an under-defended Europe, a fractured transatlantic relationship and an over-stretched America faced with the rise of regionally-aggressive China. Brexit has also reinforced Russian prejudices about the EU. From the Russian perspective the supine British political and bureaucratic elite are an example of what happens to an old Power that tries to negotiate 'constructively' with a German-centric European Commission that sees itself on an historic mission to unite all the peoples of Europe via the aggregation of state power into some form of superpower organised around and for Berlin. For the Kremlin there is no such thing as 'community' in international relations, only power, the balance or otherwise thereof and the zero-sum reality of winners and losers.

Military-strategic analysis

Russia's military modernisation began with the ten-year State Armament Programme of 2010 and the so-called 'New Look' reforms. The main elements have been, as follows:

Russian Aerospace Forces: Strategic communications are central to Moscow's method of coercion, particularly for an aggressive but weaker power in competition with stronger, albeit more diverse and passive powers. The Russian Aerospace Forces are thus a vital component in Moscow's complex strategic coercion and act as a 'showroom' to the West of Russian military capability. Together with the development of highly-deployable airborne forces the Russian Air Force and air defence has received the biggest tranche of funding in the 2011-2020 Strategic Armaments Programme²⁹⁸. Since 2014, the air force has acquired more than 1000 aircraft – both fixed and rotary wing. Much investment has been made in new hypersonic missile systems such as the *Avangard*, *Kinzhal* and *Zircon* systems. A new intercontinental ballistic missile, SR28, has been deployed together with further deployments of mobile systems such as TOPOL M, as well as a raft of short and (controversially) intermediate-range systems, such as *Novator*. The latter breaches the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and once again raises the prospect of the US strategic arsenal being 'de-coupled' from the defence of NATO Europe. Nuclear torpedoes have also been tested as well as new ship-busting systems, such as the nuclear-capable *SS-N-X18*. Russia's air defence forces have been markedly upgraded to form a multi-layered air defence with the creation of 44 new missile battalions armed with the advanced S-400 surface-to-air missile and other systems. Russia's space-based systems are also being modernised with 85 military satellites, 21 of which offer high resolution imagery and high-speed data transfer.

Russia is also seeking to better exploit unmanned and robotic systems, with a particular emphasis on the use of drones to enhance tactical and operational reconnaissance.

²⁹⁸ Tomas Malmjöf, *Russia's New Armament Programme - Leaner and Meaner*, Swedish Defence Research Agency, Stockholm March 2018.

However, whilst Moscow is keen to develop a heavy reconnaissance and strike drone its programmes are still some way from being completed.

Strategic Command and Control: The National Defence Management Centre (NDMC) acts as the brains of the force charged with considering the utility and application of force in line with presidential strategy. The NDMC balances centralisation of strategic command with decentralisation of operational command. Four smaller versions of the NDMC have been recreated in the four military oblasts (districts).

Critically, the NDMC has overseen a radical root and branch reform of Russia's strategic, operational and tactical command and control allied to the creation of new joint forces (with a particular emphasis on new airborne forces that combine airborne units, naval infantry (marines) and special operating forces (Spetsnaz)) and the deployment of high-tech capabilities that enhance battlefield mobility and offensive and defensive performance. Particular improvements are apparent in the situational awareness of commanders and communications between the supreme political authority and operational commanders. The flexibility of the force has been further enhanced by the adoption of a new joint battlespace information system. Live streaming for commanders has also been introduced to improve real-time operational command and decision-making.

Personnel: The design aim of the Russian future force is to improve the strategic and political utility and flexibility of Russia's future force. The creation of a core professional force is central to that ambition with a large augmentation force, built mainly around conscripts, reinforced, in turn, by significant reserves. The shift in the balance of personnel between conscripted personnel and professional effectives aims to achieve a 4:5 ratio. A particular emphasis has been placed on making all cadres of non-commissioned officers (NCOs) professional to improve the junior leadership qualities of the force. Achieving such a change has been complicated by a decline in the attractiveness of military contracts since 2010 compared with civilian alternatives, but significant progress is apparent.

Russian Army: The Russian Army has proved to be the most resistant to the changes General Gerasimov has been driving in his now long-tenure as Chief of the General Staff. The central effort to modernise the force has been focussed on upgrades of artillery and armoured systems and formations, albeit with mixed success. Much has been made of the new *T-90M* main battle tank and its enhanced active armour protection. However, tests of the *T-90M* are unlikely to be completed before 2020 at the earliest. A sustained effort has also been made to improve the fires and counter-fires capability of the Army as the use of mass artillery still remains central to Russian land doctrine. New multi-launch rocket systems (MLRS) have been deployed, together with heavy-guided artillery munitions reinforced by the increased and increasing use of

drones to enhance the battlefield intelligence of artillery regiments. Russia's missile brigades are also capable of operating at a greater range than hitherto with double the number of launchers compared with 2010. They are also equipped with new short-range systems, such as *Iskander M*, with ranges up to 500km.

Russian Navy: The Russian Navy has least benefitted of all the services from the reform programme, even though a massive new missile arsenal is nearing completion on the Kola Peninsula close to the base of the Russian Northern Fleet, Moscow's principal naval force. Whilst significant enhances have been made to the fleets of Russian nuclear ballistic submarines with the (eventual) deployment of the four *Borei*-class boats (three of which are under construction) it is the development and deployment of the eight boats of the advanced hunter-killer *Yasen* class that are of much concern to Western navies. Russia has also deployed 11 boats of the effective *Akula* class and some very 'quiet' conventional submarines of the improved Kilo class, as well as the new *Varshavyanka* and *Lada* classes. The ability of Russian submarines to fire a range of munitions, including cruise missiles and nuclear-tipped torpedoes, makes them potentially highly-effective ship-busters.

However, the surface fleet has not fared so well with the shipbuilding yards unable to meet the demand of the Navy to replace principal surface craft with budgets for such construction in any case reduced in recent years. The much-lauded (propaganda) 30-year old aircraft carrier, *Admiral Kuznetsov*, is undergoing a problematic extended refit following its return from operations in the Mediterranean in 2017 and 2018.

Lacunae: Russia's military lacunae confirm the nature, scope and ambition of Moscow's complex strategic coercion because they emphasise the ability of Russian forces to potentially do a lot of damage around Russia's self-declared 'near abroad', but with limited strategic effect beyond without resorting to the use of nuclear weapons. Specifically, Russian forces lack strategic manoeuvre and strategic lift which limits the range of likely conventional action from Russia's borders. The blocking of the two French-built *Mistral*-class amphibious ships was a particular blow. The Russian Air Force also lacks precision guided munitions, although steps are being taken to close that gap in the arsenal, and the development of so-called smart munitions is a priority. Russia's strategic bomber fleet is also very old, even though systems such as the *Tu-22M* and the latest variants of the *Tu-95* are still capable of providing platforms for the launch of new long-range, stand-off hypersonic missile systems.

Assessment

The modernisation of the Russian Armed Forces since 2010 has been impressive. However, the impression of an irresistible force President Putin likes to portray is still someway from the truth. The specific threat from the force comes in its role within and relationship to other forms of warfare Russia could wage, particularly on European

democracies close to its borders. The Russian Armed Forces of today are certainly capable of undertaking a lightning thirty-day conventional war at the margins of NATO and the EU that would enable them to seize strategic, albeit limited, objectives. Russia's nuclear forces are being modernised at pace (see the 2019 deployment of the *Avangard* system) with the objective to deter and prevent the major Western powers from intervening in sufficient force until a *fait accompli* land grab would be completed. As such, Russian grand strategy and military strategy are closely aligned either through the threat of force or, in extremis, the actual use of force. Why Russia would actually use such force is harder to discern, although the Kremlin's failure to reform either the Russian economy or society could create the conditions in which a desperate regime felt compelled to resort to extreme measures.

There are also significant constraints on the Russian defence budget and the slowdown in investment planned in the 2021-2030 Strategic Armaments Programme suggest that President Putin's original level of military-strategic ambition might also be somewhat reduced in the coming years. Much will depend on foreign-generated income from oil and gas sales and the extent to which Russian civil society is willing to accept the cost of the onerous burden of the Russian security state (civil and military). Whilst no democrat President Putin has shown himself sensitive to the public mood, if not to the public voice.

Strategic welfare and countering complex strategic coercion

Europe is awakening from a thirty-year strategic slumber. As with all such moments the awakening is marked by an explosion in concepts that tend to create more heat than light for leaders and the policy and strategy choices they must make. Definition at such moments is thus vital for defence, particularly when it concerns the need to understand adversaries and their strategic aims. The future defence of Europe must thus be seen in the context of two main drivers. First, an offensive Russian strategy based on the systematic identification by Moscow of the coercive strategic effects the Kremlin seeks to generate and the role of both implied and actual force in the creation of such effects. Second, a revolution in military technology that is ever more apparent as the prospect of hyperwar-driven Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing and machine-learning, Nano-technologies, drone and other semi or fully autonomous delivery systems start to appear in an increasingly singular battlespace that now stretches from the depths of the oceans to outer-space, across all landmasses and within and between changing societies and communities.

The mistake the Americans have traditionally made at such moments is to see technology as strategy. General Gerasimov and his Staff have adopted a very different approach. They have considered the strategic and political objectives that President Putin has set for them and the ends, ways and means (including technology) available

to Russia to realise those goals. American concepts such as the technology-led cross-domain warfare in which the battlespace become an integrated air, sea, land, space, cyber, information (including electronic warfare) and knowledge super-domain for the conduct of operations are vital, but to the Russians of secondary important to strategy – a means to an end. Indeed, cross-domain warfare is seen by General Gerasimov and his Staff as an outcome and a consequence, as well as a realiser of strategy. Europeans appear to embrace neither strategy nor technology in any meaningful and systematic way, rather seeing defence as what can be afforded after the costs of social welfare have been expended.

Russia's military modernisation must thus be seen first and foremost as the foundation instrument for the application of complex strategic coercion across 5D continuous warfare - disinformation, destabilisation, disruption, deception and implied destruction - in pursuit of the greatest influence at the least warfighting cost to the Russian Federation. In other words, for Moscow the utility of the Russian future force as a political extortion racket - the ultimate tool of strategic blackmail – aimed primarily at the states around Russia's western and southern borders, with a particular focus on what the Kremlin would call the old Soviet Empire.

The logic of such a strategy is created by Europe's leaders, too many of whom continue to be in denial of the strategic ambition implicit in Russia's force modernisation and the need to counter it. If Europeans and their allies are to successfully counter Russian strategy, they need to see a 5D defence as strategic welfare and organise accordingly. To that end, new partnerships are needed between institutions, states and peoples to harden both systems and populations in addition to deterring Russia's implied use of force. Back in 1967 Pierre Harmel called for a dual track approach to the then Soviet Union – defence and dialogue. Dialogue with Russia remains vital to convince Moscow that the aggressive narrative about the 'West' is not only wrong, but it will eventually be self-defeating. At the same time, if Europeans are to successfully demonstrate the errors in the assumptions that underpin Russian strategy the defence of Europe will need to be recast with forces and resources applied systematically across the 5Ds and seven domains of twenty-first-century warfare. Such a strategy presupposes a strong albeit adapted transatlantic relationship, and a 'Europe' finally that pursues strategic unity of effort and purpose. The need is great. As Russia has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate in and around Ukraine and elsewhere 5D warfare is already a reality.

Misperceptions in Deterring Russia: What is the West Doing Wrong?

Dr. Viljar Veebel

Introduction:

Why are the Russians not deterred despite systematic Western efforts?

Russia's systematic confrontation with Western countries since Crimean annexation has lasted for five years already, with variable intensity. During that time, Russia has not shown any signs of regret or deterrence despite the efforts of the West, including economic sanctions, international condemnation, political isolation and stigmatization of Russia and Russian political elite. This is something that the Western countries have difficulty in understanding. Why do Russians not beg for forgiveness for their actions in Ukraine, Georgia, and Syria? Why do they not get the message that they should be deterred? Why does the country not understand that it is not going to be one of the global great powers, and why they do not seek compromise with the West? Finally, why do Russians not remove Vladimir Putin from power?

This confusion of Western politicians and analysts arises from the rationale that "Russia should be deterred because we would be deterred if we were in their place." This misconception is directly linked to the Western approach, which expects the psychological behavioural patterns of the West and Russia to overlap at least in most crucial aspects. In this way, Russia is expected to adopt Western normative values and to accept the widely prevalent postmodern security narrative prioritizing political and social stability, economic welfare, peaceful solutions to conflicts, and a rules-based global order. The extension of Western normative values and fears of the Russian political elite is, for example, reflected in the statements of many former and current high-level politicians of the EU institutions.²⁹⁹ Moreover, the Western deterrence model is often based on the constructivist approach where certain issues are socially constructed as security threats.³⁰⁰ In practical terms, these issues are just primarily associated with topics that people are more informed about or that engage more with the public in terms of values and norms. In this way, the recent efforts of the Western countries to deter

²⁹⁹ For example, see the statements of Jean-Claude Juncker, Federica Mogherini, Catherine Ashton, etc. referred in Viljar Veebel, "The European Union as a normative power in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict", *International Politics*, 2018, May, pp. 1–16.

³⁰⁰ About the theory of securitization and the Copenhagen school, see, e.g. Vilekiene, Egle; Janušauskiene, Dovile. "Subjective security in a volatile geopolitical situation", *Journal on Baltic Security*, 2016 Vol. 2, Issue 2, pp. 109-143, <http://www.baltdefcol.org/files/files/JOBS/JOBS.02.2.pdf> (accessed 21.04.2019)

Russians have not caused any actual fear in the opponent but have served mostly as a sign of assurance or resilience for the Western countries themselves.

This article aims to critically assess the reasons why the Western deterrence model has not caused any actual fear in Russia. To quote Rebecca Hersman, “deterrence is, at its core, a dialogue — and, as such, rests on three questions: Can we be heard? Are we listening? And are we understood?”³⁰¹. In this respect, the focus of this article is on the following questions: Do Russians understand the meaning of deterrence at all? What are they not afraid of? Does the country have any “red lines” and “glass floors”? And what could actually deter Russia and Russian political elite?

Therefore, the main contribution of the article lies in a comprehensive analysis of what are the fundamental misperceptions of the Western countries when trying to deter Russia. Until now, both the EU’s political elite and the transatlantic military community have avoided any direct criticism concerning the shortcomings of the current security approach of the Western countries. Instead of this, a view has been taken that the West’s current security model is the best possible way of deterring Russia, as well as that the more quantitative resources are allocated, the more effective deterrence will be. Furthermore, those who have dared to question the effectiveness of the current security approach of the West were sometimes labelled as being supporter of Russia. However, a critical view on the shortcomings of the Western deterrence model could help to take control over the security situation in Europe again.

Should we expect the behavioural patterns of Western countries and that of Russia to overlap?

The vision, that Russia is interested in the adoption of Western normative values is directly linked with the self-image of NATO and EU member states as normative power implementers. Russia as many other countries are in this model seen as target countries to be forced or persuaded for the export of certain norms, rules, and practices such as democracy, social justice, commitment to human rights, and fundamental freedoms to other countries. Changing “the other” is essential aim of the normative power.³⁰²

Normative power concept based on neo-imperial motivations dates back to the 1930s. However, the idea about the “unique” power of the EU and NATO has received particular attention since the late 1990s and successful transition of former Soviet bloc states to

³⁰¹ Rebecca Hersman, *The Deterrence and Assurance Conversation*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2017. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/deterrence-and-assurance-conversation> (accessed 21.04.2019)

³⁰² Andre Gerrits, Normative Power Europe in a Changing World: A Discussion. In *Introductory Observations on a Controversial Notion*. 2009, *Netherlands Institute of International Relations*. https://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20091200_cesp_paper_gerrits.pdf (accessed 21.04.2019).

Western value space. Ukraine and Russia in this model are seen nothing more specific than the rest of former Soviet republics.

Ian Manners describes that the norm diffusion is shaped by six channels, including contagion (unintentional diffusion), informational factor (strategic and declaratory communications), procedural factor (institutionalization of relationship by the EU or NATO), transference (exchange of benefits by imposer and the third parties), overt (physical presence in the third countries or international organizations), and cultural filters (cultural diffusion and political learning in the third countries and organizations).³⁰³ Based on that ground, both the European Union and NATO are expected to have power to change or protect the norms of international relations.

The diffusion of Western norms is also closely related to the theory of external governance, which operates as a form of interdependence in which internal rules are extended beyond the formal membership.³⁰⁴ The theory has become one of the main explanations for integration of other countries into the system of European rules and regulations. Whereas in earlier studies from late 1990s external governance has been related to the Central and Eastern European countries and the EU Eastern Enlargement only³⁰⁵, later studies have associated it with all of the countries participating in the European neighbourhood policy³⁰⁶. Although Russia is not a part of the European neighbourhood policy (ENP) as such, the country takes part in cross-border cooperation activities under the ENP³⁰⁷. To sum up, it is expected that through various channels and wide-ranging contacts the EU succeeds to promote European norms and values in many countries, including Russia.

At the transatlantic level, credible deterrence is expected to act as a guarantee for stability and peace in the Euro-Atlantic region. According to the NATO Alliance's strategy, "no one should doubt NATO's resolve if the security of any of its members were to be threatened"³⁰⁸. It is expected that the combination of the Alliance's nuclear and

³⁰³ Ian Manners, Normative Power Europe: The International Role of the EU. 2001. In *European Community Studies Association, Biennial Conference*. http://aei.pitt.edu/7263/1/002188_1.PDF. (accessed 21.04.2019).

³⁰⁴ Viljar Veebel, Liina Kulu and Annika Tartes, Conceptual factors behind the poor performance of the European Neighbourhood policy. *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 31, 2014, pp. 85–102.

³⁰⁵ For example, Lykke Friis and Anna Murphy, The European Union and Central and Eastern Europe: Governance and Boundaries. *Journal of Common Market Studies* 37(2), 1999 pp. 211–232.

³⁰⁶ See, e.g. Sandra Lavenex, EU external governance in 'wider Europe', *Journal of European Public Policy* 11(4), pp. 680–700.

³⁰⁷ European Commission (2019). EU Neighbourhood region and Russia: International Cooperation and Development. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/eu-neighbourhood-region-and-russia_en (accessed 19.04.2019).

³⁰⁸ *Active engagement, modern defence*, NATO, 2012). https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official_texts_68580.htm (accessed 12.04.2019).

conventional capabilities would persuade the opponents that aggression causes costs that are higher than potential gains³⁰⁹.

To conclude, Western countries have systematically developed multilateral international order, which is not only based on their values but is also expected to project those values to other countries by using “stick and carrot” approach. Additionally, it is seen as irrational for neighbouring powers to not accept this model, even when Russia is not the only one openly rejecting all the elements of normative power and external governance and seeing itself as regional power-centre and source of external governance. Recent Russian attempts to challenge the current international security order have not demonstrated discouragement and deterrence. Without any overt fear of retaliation, we have seen Russia’s aggression against its neighbours that were planned and executed with great decisiveness, sophistication, initiative, and agility. This brings us to the question of whether Russians understand the meaning of deterrence at all.

Do Russians understand the meaning of deterrence?

A broader understanding of how deterrence could or is expected to work in Russia has a lot to do with what Russians understand by *deterrence*, as well as how things are translated in the Russian language and how society is ready to accept certain non-native thinking concepts. Scholars have identified three stages in the evolution of Russian post-Cold War deterrence thinking. In the first stage, the theory of de-escalation emerged in 1999 with a focus on how to make use of nuclear capabilities in the most efficient way possible against a conventionally superior adversary. In the second stage in the 2000s, the focus of the concept shifted towards strategic deterrence, referring to the question of how nuclear and conventional capabilities could be combined to deter both conventional and nuclear threats. In the third stage since 2010s, the idea behind strategic deterrence has been expanded, including also non-nuclear and non-military components.³¹⁰

In this light, initially the term *deterrence* was associated with nuclear assets in Russia. However, some doubts about the country’s nuclear capabilities have contributed to the development of a more comprehensive approach to deterrence in Russia in the following decades with the aim of offering Russia other tools next to nuclear capabilities to prevent and shape conflict.³¹¹ For example, already in 2010, the Russian Military Doctrine placed more emphasis on conventional forces, communication, and command and control

³⁰⁹ NATO’s nuclear deterrence policy and forces, NATO, 2015.

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50068.htm (accessed 21.04.2019); Strategic concepts, NATO (2017). https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm (accessed 19.04.2019).

³¹⁰ Kristin Ven Bruusgaard. „Russian Strategic Deterrence“, *Survival*, Vol. 58, No. 4 August-September 2016, pp. 7-26. <https://toinformistoinfluence.com/2016/07/21/russian-strategic-deterrence/> (accessed 19.04.2019).

³¹¹ Ibid.

systems.³¹² Intriguingly, it has been argued that Russia learned to use non-military capabilities from observing Western activities since the end of the Cold War, e.g., in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.³¹³ Further doctrinal documents from 2015 onward have only confirmed this approach, describing a large variety of non-military, non-nuclear, and nuclear capabilities in Russia to deter adversaries.³¹⁴ However, despite this the strategic deterrence of Russia is still a strategy which is to a large extent based on convincing an opponent of a credible threat of using military force.³¹⁵ To quote the Russian National Security Strategy, “Interrelated political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic, informational, and other measures are being developed and implemented in order to ensure strategic deterrence and the prevention of armed conflicts. These measures are intended to prevent the use of armed force against Russia and to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Strategic deterrence and the prevention of armed conflicts are achieved by maintaining the capacity for nuclear deterrence at a sufficient level, and the Russian Federation Armed Forces, other troops, and military formations and bodies at the requisite level of combat readiness”.³¹⁶ It should be also highlighted that Russian military analysts differentiate between *regional* and *global* deterrence. Regional deterrence aims to deter localised interstate conflict with Russia or its allies. Global deterrence is aimed to deter possibly existential conflict between great powers.³¹⁷

Thus, in principle, Russia should understand the essence of deterrence in a similar way as the Western countries do because the deterrence models of both adversaries include military and non-military, nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities as a response to potential threats. However, there might be some confusion in Russia, as regards precise terms are to be considered. The term *deterrence* in Russian, *sderzivanie*, does not exactly include all components of deterrence but covers mostly *deterrence by denial* in

³¹² Nikolai Sokov, N. *The New 2010 Russian Military Doctrine: The Nuclear Angle*. Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey 2010. <https://www.nonproliferation.org/new-2010-russian-military-doctrine/> (accessed 20.04.2019).

³¹³ Anna Loukianova Fink, The Evolving Russian Concept of Strategic Deterrence: Risks and Responses. *Arms Control Association*. July/August 2017. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2017-07/features/evolving-russian-concept-strategic-deterrence-risks-responses> (accessed 21.04.2019).

³¹⁴ See, for example, Russian National Security Strategy (2015), translation: <http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf> (accessed 23.04.2019).

³¹⁵ Anna Loukianova Fink, The Evolving Russian Concept of Strategic Deterrence: Risks and Responses. *Arms Control Association*. July/August 2017. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2017-07/features/evolving-russian-concept-strategic-deterrence-risks-responses> (accessed 21.04.2019).

³¹⁶ Russian National Security Strategy, 2015, translation: <http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf> (accessed 12.04.2019).

³¹⁷ Thomas Frear, Lukasz Kulesa and Denitsa Raynova. “Russia and NATO: How to overcome deterrence instability?”, *Euro-Atlantic Security Report*. European Leadership Network. April 2018. <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/26042018-Deterrence-Russia-NATO-Thomas-Frear-Lukasz-Kulesa-Denitsa-Raynova.pdf> (accessed 21.04.2019).

combination with *resilience*. The aspects related to *deterrence by punishment* or *deterrence by lack of ambitions* are, however, missing. Furthermore, in the Russian language, *deterrence* is a purely reactive concept which is historically associated with Russia's fight against Napoleon or Hitler because in the past *sderzivanie* has been used to refer to the idea that the opponent is forced to step out of the conflict after it has suffered heavy losses. *Coercion* as an alternative term to *deterrence by punishment* is not used in Russian military language at all. Russians, however, use the term *prinuzhdenie* which more or less reflects the meaning of *compulsion* and is understood as a forceful proactive action to indicate change.³¹⁸ All this brings us to the next question of why are Russians not afraid, assuming that despite some language specificities, they still understand the basic essence of deterrence in a similar way to the Western countries. The answer could be found in unrealistic expectations of the Western countries, concerning that of which Russia is afraid.

Misperceptions about Russian fears

In principle, there are two fundamental misperceptions that the Western countries have, when trying to deter Russia. First, Russia is expected to be afraid of losing the rule-based world security order, and second, Russia is expected to demonstrate good will and cooperative mentality to improve the relations with the West.

The first expectation that Russia is afraid of losing the rules-based world security order is misleading in the way that the Russian leadership seems not to put their stakes in peaceful coexistence, and acceptance of Western values. On the one hand, since the outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict, the Russian political elite has constantly sent signals to the international community that the country does not violate the fundamental principles of international law but instead that Crimea and Russia share a common history and pride. Furthermore, Vladimir Putin argues that Crimea has always been an inseparable part of Russia (to quote Vladimir Putin, "large sections of historical South of Russia"), and that "this conviction is based on truth and justice and was passed from generation to generation, over time, under any circumstances, despite all the dramatic changes our country went through during the entire 20th century".³¹⁹ On the other hand, while actively testing the low-intensity options for hybrid destabilization of the region, Russia has simultaneously blamed Western countries for interfering in home affairs of other countries as well as for the abuse of the normative power in the international arena, referring to the "attempts to maintain the dominance of the US and its allies in global affairs by carrying out a policy of containment of Russia," as stated in the Russia's

³¹⁸ Dima Adamsky, From Moscow with coercion: Russian deterrence theory and strategic culture. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 41, Issue 1–2, 2017, pp. 33–60.

³¹⁹ Vladimir Putin, Address by President of the Russian Federation (2014). The Kremlin, Moscow, 18 March 2014. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603> (accessed 13.04.2019).

national security strategy.³²⁰ This strategy document also points to the United States of America and the European Union as supporters for the anti-constitutional *coup d'état* in Ukraine.³²¹ Similarly, “colour revolutions” in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan in 2003–2005 and the Arab Spring in 2010–2012 have been described in Russia as examples of disruptive Western policy.³²² Moreover, already in 2007 in the Munich Security Conference, Vladimir Putin stressed the failure of the unipolar world order and pointed to double standards of the Western democracies while dictating Russia towards democratic transition.³²³

Next to that, from Russia’s perspective, all more or less peaceful attempts the country has made in 2015–2017 have been rejected by the West with a reference to Russia’s aggressive behaviour in the past “until further compliance is witnessed.” Otherwise, in those cases where Russia has visibly used military forces like in Syria, the country has been “taken into the club” again by the international community. This speaks in favour of the use of “escalate to de-escalate” strategy, meaning that the international community should actually not be surprised about Russia’s tactics to constantly plan new scenarios of conflict escalation both in existing conflict zones and in new areas. Furthermore, Russia has not been properly punished for using the “escalate to de-escalate” model, so most likely they will continue to use it. The models of the OSCE and UN also support this view. In case of Ukraine and Syria, Russia clearly turned into a proactive hybrid actor.

In this respect, it is interesting that the Russian discourse often uses the term *struggle* (bor’ba) to refer to various forms of strategic interactions. For example, their military dictionary includes terms like *informational struggle*, *radio-electronic struggle*, *diplomatic struggle*, *ideological struggle*, *economic struggle*, or *armed struggle*.³²⁴ Thus, it seems that for Russians a desirable positive situation is a dynamic and agile *struggle* rather than a static comfort zone hoping that world is and will be peaceful.

Seen in this light, there is actually no reason to expect that current Russian leadership would change their mind and be interested in maintaining the current rule-based world security order. Russia is by no means interested in compliance with Western demands

³²⁰ Russian National Security Strategy, 2015, translation: <http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf> (accessed 13.04.2019).

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Thomas Frear, Lukasz Kulesa and Denitsa Raynova. “Russia and NATO: How to overcome deterrence instability?”, *Euro-Atlantic Security Report*. European Leadership Network. April 2018. <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/26042018-Deterrence-Russia-NATO-Thomas-Frear-Lukasz-Kulesa-Denitsa-Raynova.pdf> (accessed 15.04.2019).

³²³ Shahzada Rahim, Revisiting Putin’s 2007 Munich Security Conference Speech – Op-Ed. Eurasia Review: News & Analysis. 11 September 2018. <https://www.eurasiareview.com/11092018-revisiting-putins-2007-munich-security-conference-speech-oped/> (accessed 16.04.2019).

³²⁴ Dmitri Rogozin, *Voina i Mir v Terminakh*. Moscow: Vetche, 2011.

and in maintaining the current international security order. At the same time, when Western countries make calculations, they somehow sum up those two minuses and get one plus. For example, while the West considers political embargo as a last warning for Russia, then Russia interprets it as *carte blanche* for things that the country needed to do.

The second presumption that Russia is expected to demonstrate good will to improve the relations with the West is also misleading in many ways. There seems to be an overall misperception that Russian political elite is ready to make an offer of good will first to seek for forgiveness by the international community, without expecting anything in return other than Western patronizing statements that “it takes more to be taken back to the club”.³²⁵ In practice, such an expectation has only very little historical proof. On the contrary, one of the key principles of the foreign policy of the former Soviet Union was to reject all kind of offers of compromise or good will, especially in regards to territorial or border disputes. Thus, at least based on historic traditions, there is no reason to believe that normalization of mutual relations between Russia and the West with “one-sided gifts” could take place. Furthermore, there is a popular expression that Russians have, referring to the statement of Mr. Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Union’s Minister of Foreign Affairs during the Cold War during the disputes with the members of the Japanese delegation over the Kuril Islands, “we are as big as we are because we never return any territories if not forced.” However, Russia’s good will could appear if potential increase in reverence and respect is included in the formula: accordingly, Russians could potentially be ready to make “gifts,” should they potentially gain more respect because of this step. However, nothing like this is unlikely to happen under pressure to be degraded.³²⁶

In principle, Russia’s good will to improve relations with the West could potentially arise also due to country’s desire to avoid political isolation or economic recession. However, this assumption too is mostly unrealistic. The first part of this assumption would suggest that Russia is ready to sacrifice its sovereignty to get higher diplomatic influence and inclusion. However, this assumption simply does not take into account the fact that Western countries are only one potential partner out of many in the Russian diplomatic and political landscape. In real terms, Russia has numerous “client states” located both in its neighbourhood (like Belarus and Armenia) as well as in Latin America (like Venezuela). Furthermore, Russia has big economic partners at their border (China) or a bit further away (India). Should, e.g., the President of the United States or the

³²⁵ Detelin Elenkov, Can American management concepts work in Russia? A cross-cultural comparative study. *California Management Review*, Vol. 40(4), 1998, pp. 133–156.

³²⁶ For further discussion, see Ivan Timofeev, I. “Russia and NATO in the Baltic”, *The Baltic Sea Region: Hard and Soft Security Reconsidered*. 2016, Latvian Institute of International Affairs. <http://liia.lv/en/publications/the-baltic-sea-region-hard-and-soft-security-reconsidered-558> (accessed 19.04.2019).

Chancellor of Germany reject to meet Vladimir Putin, there are other options for the Russian President to boost his ego. Furthermore, several recent developments such as those in Syria and Venezuela have clearly shown that Russia dictates the political agenda of the international community because it is Russia who fuels the conflicts and later on rushes straight in to solve it under the noses of Western countries. This is most likely also the reason why, for example, both Donald Trump and Angela Merkel have recently found time and motivation for several bilateral meetings with Vladimir Putin. Thus, even if Russia is officially banned “from the negotiating table,” unofficially, everyone still counts on Russia.

The second part of this expectation suggesting that Russia’s political elite does not want to drag the country into deep economic recession and to increase poverty in Russia seems to be overestimated, too. It is expected that Russia is willing to trade its sovereignty and to lose control over its territories for the non-application of economic sanctions. The economic sanctions the West has imposed on Russia from 2014 on after the annexation of Crimea prove otherwise. The Russian economy has already faced economic recession, weaker direct investment, the rouble losing its value, soaring capital flight, and high inflation rates for some period because of a combination of economic sanctions, a trend of global stagnation, and oil price dynamics. However, despite this economic pressure, no success has been achieved internationally in solving the conflict in Ukraine. This means that the Russian political elite is not even considering trading sovereignty for economic benefits but only economic benefits for more political influence. Furthermore, about 22 percent of the Russian population is currently living in poverty anyway³²⁷, meaning that one cannot be afraid of losing something what one has never experienced, such as economic welfare and security. Russians have already felt difficult times in 2015-2017, as one-quarter of Russian companies cut wages or even skipped payments to the employees, the average wage has dropped and so on³²⁸, but Vladimir Putin was still elected as a Russian President in 2018 for fourth term with more than 76 percent of the vote³²⁹.

The latter also confirms that, contrary to the West, Russia does not need reason or justification for the use of force. Whereas, in principle, the West tries to avoid any unprovoked use of force with the purpose of avoiding the loss of a moral “upper hand,” legitimacy, and public support, Russians consider a successful domination over its

³²⁷ One-fifth of Russians live in Poverty, 36 percent in “risk zone”, according to a study quoted by Radio Free Europe, 21 November 2018. <https://www.rferl.org/a/study-22-percent-of-russians-live-in-poverty-36-percent-in-risk-zone-/29613059.html> (accessed 16.04.2019).

³²⁸ Opinion: Russia is a mess – the poverty rate is soaring and only 10 of 85 regions are financially stable. WSJ Opinion, 31 January 2017. <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/russia-is-a-mess-the-poverty-rate-is-soaring-and-only-10-of-85-regions-are-financially-stable-2017-01-31> (accessed 15.04.2019).

³²⁹ BBC. Putin is inaugurated for fourth terms as Russian president. News, 7 May 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44024184> (accessed 15.04.2019).

neighbours as something that is self-justifying and self-legitimizing, based on vital national interests. Russia is fully based on the concept of *raison d'état*, where vital national interests do not need any additional justification. Furthermore, a strategy of an unforeseen and sudden escalation belongs to the traditional success models of the Russian society, as well as readiness to escalate without any reason is considered as a sign of strength and agility. Being pre-emptive and pro-active constitutes a normal feature of the Russian foreign policy and this approach is used systematically. Since there seems to be no socio-political comfort zone to maintain, no economic welfare to lose, and no rules-based global order to preserve in Russia today, a threat to take away the cornerstones of a Western welfare state clearly does not work for deterring Russia. All this brings us to the question of whether the country has any “red lines” and “glass floors,” which could cause the country to step off the confrontation with the West.

Does Putin’s Russia have “red lines” and “glass floors” in its confrontation with the West?

There seems to be an expectation in both security discourse and public relations discourse of Western countries that the Russian leadership behaves impulsively or sometimes even psychopathically without understandable rational calculations: it’s like they do not realize the supremacy of NATO and the European Union in each possible category. However, in international politics, both the balance of powers and supremacy depend on the characteristics that are under consideration. For example, as regards full combat readiness of conventional units during 72 hours in the Central and Eastern European region, Russian experts are convinced that Russia has an advantage, even when Poland is included in the calculation. Should also both Russia’s ability to cover huge areas in Central and Eastern Europe by the A2AD-bubble from its own territory and the country’s ability to use strategic depth for manoeuvres taken into account, there is very little reasons to expect that Russian military planners could be deterred. The same applies to the economic situation. In 2018, after four years of the implementation of sanction the Russian economy has grown faster (1.5 percent) than that of Germany (1.1 percent), Italy (0.7 percent) or France (1.4 percent). Furthermore, it does not help that news articles are published revealing that the ninth tank brigade of the German Bundeswehr located in Münster has only nine operational Leopard 2 type of tanks, even though it was promised to have 44 tanks ready for the VJTF, and three Marder armoured infantry vehicles instead of 14, as has been promised³³⁰. In this respect, Russians seem to be convinced that they have nothing to fear and by gradual escalation actually make very reasonable choices, no matter how unpleasant and uncomfortable that may be for the West.

³³⁰ See, Deutsche Welle. *German military short on tanks for NATO mission*. 2018 <https://www.dw.com/en/german-military-short-on-tanks-for-nato-mission/a-42603112>, (accessed 15.04.2019).

Current expectations of Western countries about the “red lines” and “glass roofs” of the Russian political and military elite do not have much reference in the Russian society. For example, it is expected that because the United States has restricted the use of nuclear assets only on retaliatory and strategic purposes, Russia would do the same and will not look for useful practical combinations for tactical use of nuclear assets or for threatening purposes. There is no official doctrine of the regional or tactical use of nuclear assets, however, there could be a regional strategic scenario, e.g., to signal readiness to do so.

At the same time, Russian political and military elite do not find any benefit of the Western definitions for “red lines” or “glass roofs”, just revealing to your opponents, where your limits are and making it easier to outplay you. What is a proper action is clearly seen differently by the adversaries. For example, whereas Western countries consider it immoral to attack small and vulnerable neighbours (like the Baltic countries, in case of Russia), the Russian military and political leadership sees it purely as an opportunity to gain advantage in the “contest” of regional or even global domination. Russia’s recent “wars” or displays of force have been justified using the Soviet-era logic of waging war in order to avoid war.³³¹ Furthermore, Russian experts have admitted that conflict escalation in the Baltics would be most likely happening not for local reasons but only then when it should be sufficiently beneficial and influential to challenge the global rule-based security order.

The more and more extensive Zapad-exercises have currently been the direct outcome of how Russia understands the actions what the country needs to do to deter the West. This is something what Russia calls “forceful measures” of strategic deterrence: a system of interlinked measures of both forceful, i.e. nuclear and non-nuclear, and non-forceful character. This type of deterrence may include a display of power to prevent escalation or the limited use of force as a radical measure for de-escalating hostilities. Next to that, threats of financial and economic disruptions are activated in conjunction with the military component of coercion, such as special operations forces.

For Russia, the destabilization factor is clearly more important than destruction. Currently, Russia seems to believe that conflict escalation in the Baltic countries is just a matter of time.³³² The possibility of a conflict escalation in the Baltic countries and

³³¹ Andrei Kolesnikov, *Do Russians want war?* Carnegie Moscow Center, June 2016.

https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Article_Kolesnikov_2016_Eng-2.pdf (accessed 21.04.2019).

³³² For further discussion, see, e.g. Henrik Praks, *Hybrid or Not: Deterring and Defeating Russia's Ways of Warfare in the Baltics – the Case of Estonia*. Research Paper, Research Division – NATO Defense College, Rome, No 124. https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/Henrik_Praks_Deterring_and_Defeating_Russia_s_Ways_of_Warfare_in_the_Baltics.pdf (accessed 21.04.2019).

or Kalev Stoicescu, *The Russian Threat to Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, ICDS Briefing Paper, 2018 https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/2014/Kalev_Stoicescu_-_The_Russian_Threat_to_Security_in_the_Baltic_Sea_Region.pdf (accessed 21.04.2019).

Poland is very attractive for Russia, as far as the related costs and possible gains are compared. The development of NATO ballistic missile defence (BMD) from 2005 on and developments regarding the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) have given Russia additional self-justification to feel that they can make the first move next time. As there seem to be only very limited scenarios to deter Russia from conflict escalation in the Baltic countries, Russia is most likely busy with calculating the costs and gains of the conflict with absolute precision. For Russia, it is important who runs out of assets or moves in the chessboard, not the belief of what is right or wrong. The West seems not to be able to respond in a sufficiently comprehensive way because political control is weaker.

What would most likely convince Russia to stop destabilizing global security order is a situation where the West would respond to the same extent as the United States did after the 9/11 attacks. However, this would not be in accordance with the principles how the West would like to solve the conflict assuming the normative power of the European Union as well as the signals the NATO Alliance has until now sent out, stating that Russia is not considered as a threat. Although the Alliance has taken collective defence measures, for instance, in response to the situation in Syria and at the early stages of the Ukrainian conflict, those collective defence activities do not reach the measures the United States adopted after the 9/11 attacks.

Intriguingly, one of the potential “glass floors” for Russia seems to be everything that relates to the image and reputation of the Russian political and military elite in Russia. On the one hand, as studies have shown the popularity of Russian political leaders increases as soon as the conflict breaks out. For example, immediately after the Georgian war, Putin’s approval rating soared to 88 percent and slowly declined in the years that followed, during the period that lacked of aggressive, overwrought patriotism, and artificially motivated isolationist sentiment. Putin’s approval rating remained low (about 63-65 percent) for several years and has increased only after tensions break out in Ukraine and reached high levels (about 80-86 percent) after Russian military moves on the Crimean Peninsula. In the following two years since then, Putin has maintained an approval rating of more than 80 percent, spiking at 89 percent in June 2015 and at 88 percent in October 2015 after the start of the Syria operation.³³³ On the other hand, any weakness of the Russian political leadership in terms of openly admitting that they are deterred by the West – if something like this should happen at some point – could constitute a turning point of the confrontation between Russia and the West. In more detail, there are historical examples where the rulers of Russia have been removed from power after “selling the fatherland for dimes.” There are only some exceptions, e.g., in the times of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, when they both openly admitted

³³³ Andrei Kolesnikov, Do Russians want war? Carnegie Moscow Center, June 2016. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Article_Kolesnikov_2016_Eng-2.pdf (accessed 21.04.2019).

Western supremacy and the need to comply with Western values and both remained in power. Thus, should the Russian leaders show any signs publicly that they are afraid and deterred, it could trigger the situation where the political elite of Russia cannot be trusted by Russians anymore. As a next step, this could potentially weaken the country and make it more confused, which would again make it more flexible in terms of finding compromise with the West. However, today this is rather a misperception to expect that Russian current leaders would do something like this because even if the Western military leaders could potentially find it benefit under certain circumstances to be deterred, the Russian leaders are mostly out of the game after they express first signs of hesitation. Whereas for the Western countries it seems to be more important to show themselves as moral victims suffering for the sake of common rules and even to ask forgiveness or show regret, then for Russia, it seems to be important to present itself as a winner, never to regret, and never to ask for forgiveness without any moral hesitations, if necessary.

Conclusion: What improvements are needed?

Today, the policy-making discourses of both Moscow and the capitals of Western countries are full of mutual misperceptions, mirror imaging, and attribution of non-existent intentions and capabilities. Although the concepts of deterrence of Western countries and Russia partially overlap, there is also a huge area where they operate in “parallel universes.” Furthermore, a lot of strategic culture in association with deterrence is produced not for operational or functional purposes, but to please local political or military elite.

To answer the question which improvements are needed in the future to actually deter Russia and to avoid further aggression on the Russian side, first, Russia can be deterred only in the language they understand: Russia needs to understand the threat, and it needs to have a meaning for them. Contemporary Russian strategic theory lacks any typology and classification of strategic gestures and their arrangements according to the logic of the escalation ladder, which, under some circumstances, may evolve into a dangerous political-military crisis. Russian political scientists hardly deal with these questions either. Furthermore, Russian strategic planners lack a codified procedure to estimate the conditions under which they would recommend to the senior leadership de-escalation by nuclear means. Russian experts have also argued that until recently they lacked methodology for calculating an unacceptable level of damage above which the nuclear threshold would be crossed.

Second, signalling seems to be highly important. Signalling goes mostly wrong for psychological reasons; instead of deterring them, we mobilize the opponent. In this respect, any possible “red lines” should be crossed without insulting the opponent. Moscow repeatedly expresses genuine frustration that the West attributes to Russia

non-existent strategic intentions in the Baltics, in Ukraine, and in Syria that the country actually does not have. Western responses following the Russian acts of coercion ran against Moscow's expectations and desired end result. The Russian approach presumes signalling, including intensified pressure across all domains, to communicate both the ability and capability of Russia to resolve. However, the question remains, to quote Kristin Ven Bruusgaard, "whether the adversary will understand the message of deterrence the way the Russian concept prescribes it".³³⁴ Amateurs can be found in both sides of the conflict. The current corpus of the Russian military literature does not thoroughly explore the subject of inadvertent escalation resulting from the misinterpretation of signalling. This neglect may delude Russian leaders about the effectiveness of cross-domain coercion as an effective tool against a range of challenges and place them on the brink of an apocalypse without their knowing it.

Moscow, similarly to the strategic communities elsewhere, seeks to signal or act coercively strongly enough to maintain, restore, or establish new norms of the opponent's strategic behaviour, but without conflict escalation. In strategic theory, this is defined as a point of culmination, a situation in which the use of force has "reached its strongest possible position" and where strategists consider the termination of warfare to consolidate gains.

The concept of the so-called tailored deterrence strategy that is adapted to the nature of the specific actor is already a common wisdom. This study has shown that the understanding of deterrence strategies of different actors should be tailored as well. Emerging in a specific cultural context, the conceptualization of deterrence is not universal, but varies across strategic communities. Overall, this conclusion is in accordance with earlier theoretical findings suggesting that coercion, "theories of victory" and operational art are social constructions. Consequently, their conceptualization has national characteristics and may differ from Western strategic theory.

Western experts, when planning the long-term strategy, should take into account that Russians have basically two options when choosing between deterrence and strategic competition struggle: to follow Western paradigm that would mean playing by the rules of the West or to find an alternative model that might be not as sophisticated but that they could use with confidence and initiative. Understanding Russian strategic intentions is most vital.³³⁵ The current Western rhetoric of "punishing Putin and the Kremlin and forcing them to respect Western demands" only unites Russian society to rally around the flag while also motivating Putin to maintain his current political line

³³⁴ Kristin Ven Bruusgaard, Russian Strategic Deterrence, *Survival*, Vol. 58, No. 4 August-September 2016, pp. 7-26. <https://toinformistoinfluence.com/2016/07/21/russian-strategic-deterrence/> (accessed 21.04.2019).

³³⁵ Dima Adamsky, From Moscow with coercion: Russian deterrence theory and strategic culture. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 41, Issue 1–2, 2017, pp. 33–60.

because of broad public support. The concepts of external governance or normative power have missed its own patronizing, neo-colonial nature in respect to Russian values and culture, while the aim to dominate over the Russian values and Russia in general is clearly visible.

Assuming that Western countries would like to succeed in their actions and induce political and social changes in Russia, they need first to understand that national glory is one of the few virtues shared by the majority of the Russian population in all age and income groups. The process which is considered to be an “enlightenment” of Russia from the perspective of Western countries is today seen as a crusade of the West encroaching into Russia. Intriguingly, Russians are much less worried about the economic power of China mainly because it does not “attack” the Russian culture but are seriously worried about Western external governance and the doctrine of normative power in which Russia is a constantly targeted country that needs changes to become more civilized.

The Growing Importance of Belarus on NATO's Baltic Flank

Mr. Glen E. Howard

No country stands to transform the military strategic balance in the Baltic than Belarus. Rarely considered in discussions about NATO's Baltic flank, Belarus is occupying a growing strategic importance in light of US military basing discussions in Poland and the pressure this will place on Minsk to allow a permanent forward deployed Russian military presence inside Belarus, particularly on the Lithuanian-Polish border.³³⁶

A variety of strategic issues explain why Belarus matters to NATO and more specifically to the United States. First and foremost, Belarus is a strategically important neighbour of Ukraine, in no small part due to its unique geography bordering Russia and several NATO member states in the Baltic. As analyst Vladimir Socor has noted:

*...“De facto, the territory of Belarus shields Latvia and Lithuania from the south, Poland from the east, and Ukraine from the northwest, practically securing Ukraine's rear from that direction. It is a shared interest of Belarus, its neighbours, and the neighbours' Western allies, to uphold Belarus's de facto neutrality against any further erosion.”*³³⁷

The Russian annexation of Crimea in February 2014, and the invasion of eastern Ukraine in August 2014, has dramatically altered how Belarus and Russia interact with one another. President Lukashenka has supported the Minsk peace process ceasefire and, publicly criticized the Russian annexation of Crimea, and refused to recognize Crimea as part of Russia. Since 2008 the Belarus leader also has refused to recognize the Russian annexation of Georgia's provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.³³⁸ Since the Crimea invasion of February 2014, Lukashenka also publicly has stated that Belarus will never become an invasion corridor for invading Ukraine. In fact, Lukashenka has gone further and even indirectly voiced his support for Ukraine to join NATO, stating on June 1, 2018 that he would prefer Ukraine to join NATO than see it taken over by

³³⁶ As a note of clarification, while there are no permanent Russian military bases in Belarus, there are two long-standing Russian military facilities or listening posts inside the country. One of which is a radar station and the other is a naval communications facility. The radar station is located in Hantsavichy (which is near Baranovich) that was constructed in the 1980s and became operational in 2002. This radar facility plays an important role in the Russian early warning system to detect potential ballistic missiles launched in areas of the North Atlantic and Europe. The other facility is the Naval Communication Center in Vileyka, which plays an important role in maintaining communication with Russian nuclear submarines operating in the North Atlantic. The Naval Communications Center at Vileyka has operated since 1964. This facility was leased to Russia cost free for 25 years as part of an agreement signed in 1995 and expires in 2020.

³³⁷ Vladimir Socor, "Bringing Belarus Back in from the Cold," (Part 3) *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, June 15, 2015. <https://jamestown.org/program/bringing-belarus-back-in-from-the-cold-part-three/>,

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

nationalism and turn into a “bandit state where of everyone against everyone rages.”³³⁹ These statements reflect a strong level of defiance in how Minsk interacts with Moscow and complicates Russian decision-making in terms of how it views Belarus as a regional ally.

Belarus in the Baltic Balance of Power

Belarus’s growing geographic importance has an important role in the balance of power in the Baltic and remains a key, if not pivotal NATO borderland. Belarus lies along an important historic invasion corridor that was the path of invasion and retreat for Napoleon in 1812. Moreover, it was the launching point for the Soviet conquest of the Baltic States in 1944 known as *Operation Bagration*, which followed the Red Army’s destruction of Hitler’s Army Group Center in Belorussia -- a defeat that the British historian Paul Adair regards as more devastating than the German defeat at Stalingrad.³⁴⁰ In October 2015, Belarus reminded western policymakers of its strategic importance when President Lukashenka rejected President Putin’s announcement that it would establish an airbase in Belarus. Virtually overnight Belarus was thrust into the spotlight as an important strategic buffer state between NATO and Russia.

Central to understanding Belarus is the fact that President Aleksandr Lukashenka refuses to align against Russia or NATO, preferring to play the role of being non-aligned and even took the step of joining the non-aligned movement in 1998. In many ways Belarus is seeking to play the role of strategic buffer in an East European version of the role played by Belgium. The struggle between France and Spain over the low-countries resulted in the emergence of Belgium as a strategic buffer between Spain and France in 1839. Belarus occupies a similar role as a strategic buffer and some experts have even referred to it as a Slavic Switzerland in terms of its aspiration to be a neutral bridge between and east and west.

Eager to maintain a neutral role, Lukashenka has in his own style stood up to Russian demands and even taken unprecedented steps to curtail the size of Russian military exercises during the September 2017 Zapad exercises when he rejected a last-minute request by Moscow to bring in additional Russian forces to participate. Without warning on the first day of the exercises Moscow announced that it would bring in more forces to participate in the exercise in Belarus. These were not additional forces but an entire tank formation that some Belarus experts believed to have been the elite Kantemirovskaya 4th Tank Guards division.³⁴¹ What makes this move by the Kremlin even more interesting is that prior to the exercise President Lukashenka placed a limit

³³⁹ Siarhei Bohdan, *Belarus Security Digest*, June 13, 2018

³⁴⁰ For an excellent account of the massive defeat of Army Group Centre in Belarus in June 1944 see: Paul Adair, *Hitler’s Greatest Defeat: the Collapse of Army Group Centre, June 1944*, Arms and Armour Press: London, United Kingdom, 1994, pp.69-80.

³⁴¹ https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12142236%40egNews

on the size of the participating Russian forces at 3,000 men in order to comply with the Conventional Forces Europe (CFE) agreement. His decision so irritated President Putin that the Russian leader and his Minister of Defence Sergei Shoigu shunned the exercise in Belarus as originally agreed. Moreover, Russian forces which participated in the exercise also cancelled their participation in the customary dinner held between the two sides upon the conclusion of the exercise, something unheard of in Belarus-Russian defence cooperation.³⁴²

Further indications of tension between the two countries occurred when President Lukashenka watched the exercises independently and separately from Putin who watched the exercises by himself in St. Petersburg, unlike in 2013.³⁴³ In a truly Lukashenka way of doing things, the Belarus leader even went so far as to downplay his failure to watch the exercises with Putin and publicly noted that this had been agreed upon beforehand by both leaders to watch the exercises separately. Since the Zapad exercises were revived in 2009, and again held in 2013, both leaders had watched the exercises jointly, a clear reflection of the tense state of relations.³⁴⁴

President Lukashenka further irritated Moscow by announcing Belarus would abide by the 2011 Vienna Document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on Confidence and Security Building Measures in which Belarus was a signatory.³⁴⁵ During the exercises from September 14 to 20, Minsk adhered to the agreement requirements and requests by inviting military observers from seven countries, five of them NATO-member states of Lithuania, Poland and Latvia to monitor the Zapad 2017 exercises.³⁴⁶ According to a statement from the Belarus Ministry of Defence, seven countries were invited: Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Sweden, and Norway. These realities underscored the growing strategic importance that tiny Belarus was starting to play in the great power competition in the Baltic.

Tension with Moscow has been on the rise since the Russian invasion of Crimea in February 2014. Immediately following the Crimea invasion President Lukashenka has rejected continuously Russian requests to establish airbases in Belarus, after which Moscow apparently has suspended these requests despite the fact that under the Union Treaty with Russia Moscow has permission to rotate its air force planes in and out of Belarus for exercises, but does not have the right to keep these planes in Belarus longer than 24 hours. This technical detail in relations also is a source of irritation to the Kremlin

³⁴² Grigory Ioffe, "What are the Limits of Belarus Sovereignty," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, October 4, 2017. <https://jamestown.org/program/limits-belaruss-sovereignty/>

³⁴³ *Baltic Defense Review* 39/2017, September 20–26, 2017.

³⁴⁴ Originally cited by Interfax, September 20, 2017.

³⁴⁵ Alex Tiersky, "Witness to Zapad", *Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe*, 02 October 2017. <https://www.csce.gov/international-impact/publications/witness-zapad>

³⁴⁶ *Interfax*, August 22, 2017.

as it must constantly rotate its aircraft in and out of Belarus for short periods of time, something that certainly complicates Russian operational planning.³⁴⁷

Unable to get its way with Belarus due to Minsk's insistence that Moscow respect its sovereignty, the Kremlin has intensified its campaign of psychological warfare used against Belarus in the past two years, all of which significantly increased after Lukashenska's refusal to grant Moscow its request for an airbase. Questions over a permanent airbase in Belarus are only the tip of the iceberg as much of this feuding is not public. Prior to the Zapad 2017 exercises, for example, The Russian Ministry of Defence announced that it would be procuring as many as 4,162 train cars to move military equipment to Belarus as part of the September 2017 exercises. The train car announcement sparked outrage in the Baltic states as Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė characterized the Russian statement as preparations for a future war against the West.³⁴⁸

The Russian statement was viewed equally with alarm by officials in Minsk but in a different way. From their vantage point the announcement was not a suggestion about invading the Baltic but instead it had all the hallmarks of a preparatory move for the massive movement of Russian men, arms and equipment to Belarus that would be tantamount to the 1968 Czechoslovak invasion. Belarus officials were stunned by the announcement, which first appeared in the form of a Russian newspaper article. Afterward post-Zapad analysis by some Belarus experts determined that the article was deliberately planted and was nothing more than a Russian dis-information operation aimed at causing alarm in the West that was also designed to intimidate Belarus. No doubt in reaction to the train car announcement Belarus took the precautionary move of countering Russian behaviour by inviting Western military experts from neighbouring Poland and the Baltic States, as well as representatives from the OSCE, to monitor the joint Russian-Belarusian military exercises on its territory. This move by Minsk was a major effort to be transparent with the West.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ A recent Polish military assessment of the role of Belarus perhaps sums it up the best. "From the Russian point of view, Belarus is a valuable military ally. Thanks to the latter's geographical position, Russia can presume its western defenses are 540 km farther away from its own borders. Since the Russians treat Belarus as a zone of privileged interests, their military presence on the Belarusian territory limits its independence in foreign and security policy."

³⁴⁸ For an excellent analysis of the train wagon debate caused by this article see: Ihor Kabanenko, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, February 27, 2017. <https://jamestown.org/program/rekindled-train-wagon-debate-calls-question-planned-size-zapad-2017-exercise/>

³⁴⁹ Grigory Joffe, "What Are the Limits to Belarus's Sovereignty?", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 14 Issue: 123, 04 October 2017. <https://jamestown.org/program/limits-belarus-sovereignty/>

The Belarus Enigma

Among American and European military experts, Belarus is largely an unknown entity in terms of understanding the country as the issue of human rights and democracy promotion often have simplified Belarus to being nothing more than a close ally of Russia with little or no sovereignty. Profuse funding for the Belarus opposition movement by US and European NGOs have created a cottage industry of experts who do nothing more than cloud western understanding of Belarus. For example, the US NGO Freedom House had as many as 50 persons working in its Vilnius office whose sole responsibility was to promote democracy in Belarus. One of the major sources of information on Belarus is the opposition operated Charter97 website based in Poland that often posts misleading information about Belarus and the wrongdoings of the government in Minsk. For more than a decade this website has been the chief source of western information about events in Belarus that has been nothing more than a major irritant in Belarus-Polish relations. In February 2019, the Polish government announced it would reduce its funding for Charter97 by up to 80 percent after the visit to Poland by the Belarusian parliamentary speaker of Belarus Alyaksandr Myasnikovich to Poland from 12-13 February.³⁵⁰ In fact, opposition groups in the West coined the term “the Last Dictator of Europe” placed on Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenka. While Lukashenka is certainly no model for a progressive leader, and has been likened to North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, he has demonstrated a pragmatic side that is willing to work with the West. Known for his sense of humour, even Lukashenka mocked Putin by referring to himself as the “next to last” dictator in Europe in reference to the Russian leader.

For policymakers in NATO this can be a detriment to understanding Belarus in the face of the changing strategic environment along its Baltic flank as perhaps no country after Ukraine has become so important to NATO planning. Following the Russian invasion of Crimea and Donbas in 2014 Belarus overnight started to become an area that intrigued US policy planners, especially after President Lukashenka announced that Belarus would not serve as a corridor for invading Ukraine. Western strategic thinking about Belarus began to change in September 2015 when President Lukashenka rejected Putin’s announcement that he had ordered the Russian Ministry of Defence to create a new airbase in Belarus, a flagrant violation of the country’s sovereignty. From this point onward western experts began to take Belarus more seriously as it sought to avoid becoming a Russian *platzdarm* [beachhead] of offensive operations against NATO.

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe Wess Mitchell accelerated this change in US strategic thinking when he took office at the State Department and publicly placed Belarus in the same category as Ukraine and Moldova as “bulwarks against Russian neo-imperialism.”³⁵¹ Mitchell made the comments during a major speech on

³⁵⁰ BBC Newline Global Monitoring Former Soviet Union Political, BBC Monitoring, February 22, 2019.

³⁵¹ For a full copy of his remarks, see: <https://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2018/>

Eastern Europe at the Atlantic Council on October 18, 2018. Mitchell's speech squarely placed Belarus as one of three frontline states against Russia in a new geopolitical formulation created by the Trump Administration, something that was long overdue and reflects the rising geopolitical importance of Belarus.³⁵²

The Role of Belarus in Strategic Geography

Until recently Belarus failed to register in the geopolitical thinking of western experts on Europe and Eurasia. The first western analyst to point out the strategic importance of Belarus was Paul Goble, who noted that the shortest distance between Berlin and Moscow lies through Belarus. Indeed, when one examines closer the history of Belarus it becomes clearer that the country has been a major invasion corridor between East and West for centuries. Belarus lies along a major invasion corridor on the path to and from Moscow via the Smolensk Gates. From Napoleon's epic march on Tsarist Moscow to Hitler's Operation Barbarossa in 1941, Belarus has been a key invasion corridor throughout its history. The Berezina River in Belarus, for example, was the site of Napoleon's great escape during his epic retreat from Moscow when Napoleon's forces constructed a bridge overnight in the frigid waters of the Berezina allowing Napoleon's army of 25,000 men to escape from the clutches of the Russian army. In a major deception operation launched to outwit Kutuzov and the Russian Admiral Vasili Chichagov defending the Berezina, Napoleon dispatched Marshal Oudinot with a force of cavalry twenty miles upstream away from his route of retreat making the Russian Admiral believe that he would cross the Berezina in a completely different location. This enabled Napoleon with the assistance of his Dutch engineers under the command of Jean Baptiste Eblé to build the bridges on the Berezina that allowed the remnants of the Grande Armée to escape. Napoleon's miracle on the Berezina, while tragic, also allowed the French General to retreat to Vilnius with the most elite units of his army to regroup and fight another day.³⁵³

As an invasion corridor the Smolensk Gates is frequently referred to as a "land bridge" from Central Europe into the heart of Russia on the way to Moscow and equally served that role from the other direction as an invasion corridor for invading armies. The Smolensk Gates is a 45-mile wide neck of land between the headwaters of the Dvina and Dnepr rivers. The Smolensk invasion route had been taken in the 17th century by the Polish Army in its invasion of Russia that led to its capture and a century later by Napoleon in 1812 in the battle of Smolensk that led to the city being burned to the ground. All but forgotten in history, the Smolensk Gates is regarded by one Belarusian analyst to be one of three major invasion corridors into the European heartland. The first invasion corridor being through Iran and Asia Minor into the Balkans. The second route

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Alexander Mikaberidze, *The Battle of the Berezina: Napoleon's Great Escape*, Pen and Sword, 2010.

was through the Black Sea steppes. The third route was through the gates of Smolensk. The analyst noted: “we know from history that once the Russian empire crossed the border of the Dnepr, its next stop was the Carpathians and the Vistulate, or even the Elbe and Danube.”

The geopolitical importance of Belarus is that it lies right in the middle of the Smolensk Gates and once played a major role as part of the Polatsk Principality and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The territory that makes up the Smolensk Gates is the area between the rivers of the Western Dvina and the Dnepr. The national symbol of Belarus is the coat of arms of Mahiliou who is regarded as the guardian of the gates and above his image is the coat of arms and the pursuit (pahonya). Instead of being a crossroads between East and West, Belarus should be considered as the last frontier of Europe, a claim that would imply strategically that it is a buffer. Moreover, instead of being an outpost of empire, Belarus should be considered as the forward outpost of the frontier of Europe. It is only when its role as a buffer collapses, that Europe’s problems begin. Ironically, once Russia is repelled from using this corridor via the Smolensk Gates, Muscovy simply turned its focus of expansion to other geographic areas. For example, when the King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania Stephen Bathory in the 16th century fought off the invasion of Ivan the Terrible and deterred Russian forces at the Smolensk Gates this caused the Russian ruler to turn his expansionist policies toward the Urals and Siberia halting Russian expansion for 75 years.³⁵⁴

Western policymakers increasingly have started to grasp the strategic importance of Belarus as an east-west invasion corridor and possible springboard for a possible Russian attack on Poland and the Baltic States. Belarus also sits astride the eastern edge of the Suwalki gap, the narrow 60-mile stretch of territory connecting Poland and Lithuania that is flanked by Russia’s highly militarized Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad. Since the Russian “hybrid” invasion of Crimea in February 2014, followed by the Russian invasion of Donbas in April 2014, Belarus has risen increasingly in strategic importance to NATO and is rapidly becoming a strategic buffer between the North Atlantic Alliance and Russia.

Wedged between the Baltic States, Poland, Ukraine and Russia, Belarus has also increasingly become the subject of Kremlin attention. Although Belarus is in a Union State with Russia, and maintains close economic and political relations with its large eastern neighbour, it has been careful to avoid becoming dominated militarily and has tried to maintain a careful distance from Moscow by seeking strong economic relations with the European Union. Meanwhile, Russia has sought to punish Belarus for not allowing permanent Russian bases on its territory by failing to provide Belarus with new

³⁵⁴ “Russia-EU: The Battle for the Smolensk Gate”, Interview with Zmitser Bandarenka, 3/7/2015.
<https://charter97.org/en/news/2015/7/3/158238/>

jet fighters and other forms of sophisticated military equipment that Minsk has sought from Moscow.

Wary of both Moscow and Brussels, Minsk has attempted to balance its ties with Russia by developing closer military relations with China and even has gone so far as to develop a joint weapons system with the Chinese known as the Polonez (Polonaise), or Pole. The Polonez is a multiple-Launch Rocket System (MLRS) developed with the assistance of Chinese technicians that is built on the chassis of a Belarusian tractor. It has a 200-kilometer range that is being expanded and tested to a range of 500 kilometers. The new extended range of the Polonez would enable Belarus to have a long-range rocket system capable of striking the suburbs of Moscow from Vitebsk. The fact that China would help Belarus develop a long range MLRS speaks volumes about its mistrust of Moscow despite the fact that the system is called the “Pole” and that Polish officials have said the system is in fact directed at Warsaw. To bolster its export capacity, according to the Russian newspaper *Kommersant* Belarus has sold ten of the systems to Azerbaijan in 2018 in an effort to develop its weapons export revenue for the Chinese designed system. Although Belarus is a member of the CSTO, it sold the system to a country (Azerbaijan) that will likely use the Chinese-built MLRS against fellow CSTO member, Armenia.³⁵⁵

Baltic Awakenings

Belarus’s Baltic neighbours slowly have begun to recognize the importance of Lukashenka as a barrier to Russian expansion despite the past twenty years of poor to modest relations with Minsk. A noticeable warming trend in relations between Belarus and the Baltic states has started to emerge since the Russian invasion of Crimea. Ties between Poland and Belarus have increasingly warmed since the Polish government changed hands with the rise of the Law and Justice party in 2015. Relations with Lithuania, on the other hand, remain problematic, particularly over questions of their shared historical legacy and, more immediately, Belarus’s decision to build a nuclear power plant (with Russian assistance) less than 50 km from the Lithuanian border. Lithuania is fearful of the environmental threat it could pose, and the fact that the nuclear plant is located approximately 32 kilometers from the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius. Any potential stationing of Russian armoured forces to Belarus near the border with Lithuania would alter NATO defence planning in the Baltic and likely evoke calls for a permanent US military base in Lithuania to augment the forward-deployed Enhanced Forward Presence multinational NATO battle groups that are operating in each Baltic State.

³⁵⁵Arshalyus Mgdesyanyan, “Belarus sells its Polonezes to Azerbaijan: how will Armenia react?”, *Eurasia Daily*, 19 April 2018. <https://eadaily.com/en/news/2018/04/19/belarus-sells-its-polonezes-to-azerbaijan-how-will-armenia-react>

Meanwhile, relations with Latvia and Estonia rank among the best ties Belarus maintains with the Baltic states, while relations with Poland continue to improve following decades of extremely poor relations. Riga, specifically, has championed closer security ties with Minsk in NATO circles. For example, in September 2018 the Chief of the General Staff of Belarus travelled to Riga to hold high level meetings with his counterpart in Latvia and only the month before a delegation of the Polish Ministry of Defence headed by Colonel Tomas Kowalik travelled to Belarus to hold two days of talks with officials from the Belarus Ministry of Defence on “planned military cooperation with Poland.” The two-day meeting took place in Brest and followed an earlier meeting held the year before in 2017 were unparalleled in Polish-Belarus military contacts. Ironically, news of the meeting was released by the Belarus Ministry of Defence on their website first and later appeared in the Polish press. This was the second consultation of defence ministry officials as the first meeting occurred in July 2017, according to the Polish newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*. The talks concerned, among other topics, the exchange of military observers deployed for military exercises as well as historical matters but a disclaimer was later issued that no talks on military cooperation were discussed.

Sovereignty before Airbases

In October 2015 a major controversy erupted between Russia and Belarus that was sparked by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s announcement that Moscow would create a new airbase in Belarus. A week before the former Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev had made a similar statement. These neo-imperial proclamations followed a carefully orchestrated Russian drumbeat of reports that sought to pressure and intimidate Belarus into adhering to Kremlin demands. Putin’s call for an airbase in Belarus was not something new in Belarus-Russian relations. Talks with Moscow over an airbase has been something under discussion for quite some time as talks have revolved around negotiations for Belarus to obtain new fighter aircraft for its aging post-Soviet era air force. On August 1, 2014, the Russian air force commander Viktor Bondarev announced that Russia would open a base at Baranavichy after Moscow had signed an intergovernmental agreement with Belarus. Later at a meeting of the Russian and Belarus defence ministers from December 23-24 Belarusian officials refused to legally formalize the creation of a Russian air base after Russian officials demanded that Minsk allow more Russian aircraft to be based inside Belarus.

Under the terms of its Union state agreement with Moscow Belarus does not allow Russian aircraft to stay in Belarus longer than 24 hours before they must return to Moscow. In other words, the Russian air force must constantly rotate its airplanes in and out of the Republic. This restriction complicates Moscow ability to keep its planes permanently in Belarus and guarantees a level of sovereignty in Belarus decision-making that extends to other areas, such as the 2009 Joint Air Defence Agreement between the two countries whereby Belarus retains the ultimate authority to decide on

whether to use forces against any foreign intruder.³⁵⁶ Officials in Moscow do not have the final say in whether Belarus air defence reacts and fires on a foreign intruder as Belarus simply consults with Moscow. This nuance in their decision-making is not well understood in NATO or US defence circles based upon conversations with western defence officials by the author. President Putin has been asking the Russian parliament to amend the 2009 agreement with Belarus that would allow Moscow to position air defence weaponry on the border with EU, meaning the Polish-Lithuanian border. However, Belarus has refused to agree to this new modification agreement.³⁵⁷

Russian demands for a new air base in Belarus and the Belarus rejection of those requests are closely tied, but not entirely dependent upon, the ongoing tension between Minsk and Moscow over Russia's reluctance to strengthen the Belarus air force. Belarus security analyst Siarhei Bohdan has indicated that part of the dispute over the airbase is related to whether Russia would provide Belarus with new fighter aircraft and that before there can be any discussion on a new air base in Belarus Moscow must agree to this condition. Bohdan wrote that Belarus has been awaiting delivery of over 20 new aircraft from Moscow and that since 1991 it has not added any new aircraft to its air force. Prior to the 2014 Ice Hockey Championships in Belarus Lukashenka asked Russia to "give" 12 new aircraft as a gift to Belarus and Moscow then reportedly agreed to give 3 or 4 aircraft in an effort fulfil this request.³⁵⁸

When these requests went unfilled by Moscow, President Lukashenka started asking Moscow to overhaul and upgrade the dozen Mig-29 aircraft after noting his request for new aircraft from Russia had been refused. Currently Belarus has about 29 operating Mig-29s and several aging Su-25s. Fuel shortages in the Belarus air force plagued Belarus in the past up to 2011 as Belarus pilots obtained anywhere between two to five hours a year in flight training, which would be on the same level as Ukrainian pilots today, if not slightly higher. In 2011 Belarus increased the number of hours for pilots to 100 hours a year per pilot as they raised the level of training hours. More importantly, according to Siarhei Bohdan - one of Europe's leading defence analysts on Belarus - the key issue for Moscow and its repeated demands for an airbase underscore the point that there is a glaring hole in Russia's air defence network posed by the absence of airbases in Belarus. Bohdan argues that by refusing to give new planes to Belarus Moscow is

³⁵⁶ Another well-known Belarus military analyst Alexander Alesin has pointed out this nuance in the 2009 agreement as many parts of the agreement are not exactly clear as to which side has authority to make the final decision in regard to air intrusions. Prior to the Zapad 2017 exercises Putin announced that Russia would place air defense weaponry in Belarus on the border of Poland, something officials in Minsk refused to comment on. Alesin's comments and views on the air defense agreement are cited here:

<https://apostrophe.ua/news/society/accidents/2017-08-11/razmeschenie-putinyim-pvo-na-belorusko-ukrainskoy-granitse-v-belarusi-sdelali-vajnyie-utochneniya/103919>

³⁵⁷ "Putin seeks joint air defense with Belarus", *UNIAN Info*, 11 August 2017.

<https://www.unian.info/politics/2077109-putin-seeks-joint-air-defense-with-belarus.html>

³⁵⁸ Siarhei Bohdan, *Belarus Security Digest*, August 20, 2015

actually weakening its own air defence capabilities to defend the Russian capitol. Until this hole is filled, he argues, Moscow will continue to feel vulnerable in defending the Russian capitol in the event of any potential NATO attack.³⁵⁹ As Bohdan noted, if Belarus were in fact a valued military ally then Moscow would bestow all its latest and most sophisticated weaponry on Belarus in an effort to improve its defences against a NATO attack. The Islamic Republic of Iran, he noted, receives more sophisticated weaponry from Russia than Belarus and has received more up to date S300s than Belarus, which continues to receive second hand military equipment from Moscow. Belarus operates the older S300PS while Iran operates the more sophisticated S300PMU, which is a much newer variant.³⁶⁰ According to an analyst at the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Moscow may have given up on its efforts to obtain an air base in Belarus and instead opted to reactivate the 689th aviation regime in Kaliningrad Oblast to enhance Russia's forward air defence against NATO.³⁶¹

Discussions on Russian access to an airbase in Belarus first began in 2013, when Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told the media, after his meeting with the president of Belarus, that a Russian airbase would be established on Belarusian territory within two years. Several days later Lukashenka carefully denounced the statement, saying that the discussion was about supplementing the Belarusian army with Russian fighter jets rather than opening a full-fledged airbase. Those interpretations caused an immediate wave of resentment in the Russian media; but the issue later disappeared from the headlines. However, from time to time it has reappeared, with new, often controversial details, which pointed to an uneasy negotiation process occurring behind closed doors.³⁶² In response to the statement made by Putin about airbases in Belarus, President Lukashenka said that: "We do not need a base these days, especially military air forces. What we need are certain types of weapons. This is what I told [Russian President Vladimir] Putin and, before that, [Prime Minister Dmitry] Medvedev," said Lukashenka. He explained: "We need aircraft, not bases. We have great pilots and excellent schools of military and civil aviation. Why would I want to create a base? Why would I want to bring foreign aircraft and pilots here? What would ours do then?"³⁶³

Preparing for Hybrid Warfare

On January 22, 2016, Belarus took perhaps one of its largest steps ever made in its post-Soviet independence by redesigning its military doctrine to adapt to threat of colour revolution and hybrid threats after a thorough examination of its external threats. The new doctrine was the first radical change in Belarus military doctrine since the country

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Siarhei Bohdan, *Belarus Security Digest*, February 3, 2016.

³⁶¹ https://www.pism.pl/publications/bulletin/no-11-1082#_ftn1

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Yauheni Preiherman, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, October 7, 2015. <https://jamestown.org/program/minsk-breaks-silence-on-russian-airbase-issue/>

gained independence in 1991, a clear indication that colour revolutions in Libya, Egypt, and Syria failed to have an impact but the events in Ukraine apparently did. Most importantly, what the new doctrine revealed was a change in the mind set of officials in Belarus in how it viewed possible Russian intervention in Belarus as the threat of “hybrid warfare” and “colour revolutions” dominated the country’s security thinking.³⁶⁴ Those who doubt the Russian factor in the new doctrine need to look no further at the mention of the term hybrid warfare, a term borne out of the war in Ukraine.

In a true zig-zagging Belarus fashion, Belarus Minister of defence Andrei Raukou stated that Belarus did not consider any foreign state an enemy, but added: “But we of course will not concede our territory and will use any forces and means, including military to avoid that.”³⁶⁵ On July 20, 2016, Belarus officially adopted its new military doctrine that referred to the threat posed by hybrid warfare, a clear, albeit unstated, reference to the threat posed by Russia and its use of non-linear warfare. The adoption of the new Belarus military doctrine reflected a true Belarusian style to how it balances ties with Russia, despite being a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Membership in the CSTO squarely places Belarus in a collective security alliance with Russia on the one hand, but on the other, Belarus has adopted a new military concept that is obviously oriented against the country that it is aligned with. Combatting the dual threats posed by either a coloured revolution or a hybrid threat conveniently masks the Russian threat for Minsk.

On October 30, 2018, speaking before the military leadership of the Belarus national armed forces Lukashenka said: “having allies is an important factor in ensuring our military security. Nonetheless, we shall build the mechanism of collective protection in accordance with our national interests.”³⁶⁶ Indeed, by balancing the two threats, both viewed as internal, Lukashenka has demonstrated how closely he walks the Russia tightrope, even in his security relations with Moscow that never openly identify Russia as a threat. Belarus simply uses the two perceptions of the threat to adapt to the new regional security environment to legitimize its preparation for a hybrid threat to the country, a clear sign that the events in Crimea and Donbas, i.e., Ukraine, were viewed by Belarus as an existential threat to its survival.

Even in his analysis of the country’s military challenges, Lukashenka has hinted at the urgency of the need to combat a hybrid, or non-linear threat. For example, in September 2017 he laid out a military vision for the country’s defence needs that goes beyond conventional deterrence where he emphasized his country’s need to prepare for a new form of warfare that focuses on greater mobility for the Belarus armed forces. Lukashenka outlined this concept when he noted that: “there will be no war between

³⁶⁴ Sjarhei Bohdan, *Belarus Security Digest*, February 3, 2016.

³⁶⁵ Sjarhei Bohdan, *Belarus Security Digest*, February 3, 2016.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

fronts. Instead, the fighting will be local. We need highly mobile forces for defence, and wars fought around the world recently suggest we should have mobile units."³⁶⁷

Zapad 2017: The Bear versus the Bison

The Zapad 2017 military exercises held from September 14-20, proved to be a watershed in Belarus-Russian relations that could be a turning point in ties that shows the limitations of Moscow's ability to bully and intimidate Belarus. On the one hand, the exercises were supposed to highlight the joint preparation of the two countries in rebuffing a military threat posed by a NATO-like force. On the other hand, however, the exercises demonstrated the new limitations in defence cooperation between the two countries since the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea. Since the Zapad military exercises were renewed in 2009 the event has been the premier showcase for Belarus to demonstrate its military solidarity with Russia. Zapad 2017, however, quickly descended into a major display of outright caution as to how careful Belarus would react to any effort by Moscow to diminish Belarus sovereignty.

With the approach of the September 2017 exercises the Belarusian government uncharacteristically began to flex its diplomatic muscles by announcing that it would limit the number of Russian troops being deployed to Belarus for the duration of the Zapad exercises. Compared to previous years, Belarus officials also reiterated publicly that all Russian forces deployed to Belarus would return to their bases after the completion of the exercise. In a highly unusual move, Belarus announced it would comply with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) restrictions capping the number of troops that would participate in the exercise in Belarus and subsequently notified OSCE officials in Vienna that it would limit the number of Russian troops taking part in Zapad.³⁶⁸

Minsk announced to the OSCE that it would limit the number of troops that could participate in the exercise on Belarusian soil to a total of 10,200 men, a move that would be in full compliance with OSCE requirements, whereas the entire number of participants in the non-Belarusian portion of the Zapad exercise ranged from 75,000 to 100,000 men. According to Belarus data breaking down the number of forces involved in their segment of the exercise, the number of men from Belarus who participated were slightly more than 7,000 men, while the number of Russian forces were limited to just 3,000.³⁶⁹ This announced cap on Russian forces appears to have irritated Moscow and caused President Putin to cancel his visit to Belarus to watch the conclusion of the exercise. By comparison to the transparency showed by Minsk, Moscow prevented OSCE observers

³⁶⁷ Baltic News Service (BNS), September 21, 2017. <http://www.bns.ee/en/>

³⁶⁸ *Baltic Defense Review*, September 20 – 26, 2017.

³⁶⁹ For a thorough breakdown of the Russian and Belarusian forces who participated in Zapad 2017 see: "Zapad-2017 is an exercise of defensive nature", Belarusian Ministry of Defense, 29.08.2017. <https://www.mil.by/ru/news/66967>

from even traveling to Russia to watch the Zapad exercises. In fact, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg openly criticized Russia for not allowing NATO observers to monitor the military exercises in Russia, whereas foreign ministry officials in Minsk gave the green light to NATO officials to send monitors to observe the exercises despite the fact that Moscow had already publicly said no to the idea. To further embarrass Moscow, Belarus sent out invitations to NATO member states Poland, Lithuania and Latvia to watch the Zapad 2017 exercise.³⁷⁰ These examples outlined above strongly reflects the extreme nuances in which Belarus operates in its security relations with Moscow as it balances that relationship with its relations with the West while maintaining a distance from Moscow in an effort to maintain an image of military transparency.

The Belarus Conundrum

Throughout its entire period of independence, the greatest impediment to Belarus interactions with the West is its economic interconnectedness with Russia, something that until 2014 Minsk had made no urgent effort to move away from, although in a January 2013 meeting with the Belarus leader he proudly told a delegation from Jamestown that for the first time in his country's history trade with the European Union had surpassed that of Russia. Today, 50 percent of Belarusian trade still remains dependent on Russia, but trade with European Union member countries has been growing and now accounts for the other half of its trade flow. The Belarus leadership understands the need to diversify its relations and lessens its dependency on Russia. However, Western policymakers needs to understand that Belarus will not take the Baltic nationalist path and go for a clean break in relations with Moscow but will adhere to a distinct Belarus path in its ties to Moscow unless Putin forces the issues and demands that Minsk take an either "you are with us or against us" approach. Critics of Belarus also fail to take note of on an intense period of Belarusization of the use of its national language in national education and public forums and its sovereignty while it balances close ties with Moscow that has gathered intensity since 2014. These nuances in Belarus's security ties with Russia are not well known among Western policy analysts, and account for the rising level of nationalism emanating from Belarus.

When it comes to the country's independence, President Lukashenka remains adamant and unyielding. At the same time the Belarus leader will not take overly antagonistic steps to irritate Moscow and recently failed to attend the 2019 Munich Security forum for this very reason as Lukashenka declines offers to even visit Brussels at the invitation of the European Union – a move that is calculated and intentional.³⁷¹ Public opinion inside Belarus, unlike the Baltic states, is not motivated by seeking closer ties to the EU.

³⁷⁰ *Baltic News Service*, August 2, 2017. <http://www.bns.ee/en/>

³⁷¹ "Belarusian Leader Skips Munich Conference Because Of Talks With Russia's Putin", *Radio Free Europe*, 15 February 2019. <https://www.rferl.org/a/belarusian-leader-skips-munich-conference-because-of-talks-with-russia-s-putin/29772181.html>

Instead the Belarus leader prefers to travel to Moscow to meet Putin and there try to resolve bilateral issues with Russia and even skis with Putin after meetings in Sochi. The Putin-Lukashenka relationship is one that follows a pattern similar to that of Russia's neighbours - Azerbaijan or Kazakhstan. Like Belarus, both countries pursue a multi-vector diplomacy with the West while maintaining a high level of sovereignty and independence. Losing Belarus as a strategic ally, however, would be a major blow to Moscow at a time when Russia has fewer allies to rely upon among its neighbours. Ultimately, Russian efforts to establish an air base or force other forms of political-military coercion on Belarus will backfire as sovereignty remains the one key issue that Lukashenka will not trade with Moscow.

Belarus is not Ukraine

Domestically, politics inside Belarus is not a Lithuania or Ukraine, it is not a country seeking NATO membership where the majority of the population consistently voices support for NATO or harbours strong anti-Russian sentiment. It is developing closer economic ties to the European Union as the more westward leaning part of Belarus uses its close ties to Poland and Lithuania to integrate itself economically with the Baltic. Long-standing ties with Russia and its relative infancy in terms of being a nation-state, enable Belarus to become a unique bridge between East and West. Vladimir Socor, a noted expert on Belarus points to the fact that is a mere accident of history and a gift to the West in the shape of a strategic buffer between the Baltic states and Russia. Belarus as a state was born out of the Brest-Litovsk agreement in signed in present-day Belarus on March 3, 1918.

Out of this agreement Belarus experienced a period of short-lived independence from 1918 to 1920 in a country that until independence had been largely dominated by the landowning Polish gentry who spearheaded resistance in Belarus to Soviet rule. During this time ethnic Belarusians were treated as second-class citizens by the Polish landowning class that led to common cause with the Bolsheviks who rewarded the Belarusians for their loyalty by creating a new social class. "Liberation" by the Soviets enabled ethnic Belarusians to assume senior level positions in government and alter society in a way that became a defining moment under Soviet rule as most of the landowning Polish minority relocated to Poland. Socor also emphasizes that the Second World and Belarus resistance against Nazi occupation that resulted in 80 percent of the country being destroyed were also defining moments in Belarus state identity, especially Belarus resistance to Nazi rule that fostered one of the most concentrated partisan movements in German occupied areas of the Soviet Union.³⁷² As the British historian Paul Adair has noted: "by the summer of 1944 the partisan movement had reached its

³⁷² For an account of the role that Soviet partisans played in Belarus in the massive defeat of Army Group Centre in June 1944 see: Paul Adair, *Hitler's Greatest Defeat: the Collapse of Army Group Centre, June 1944*, Arms and Armour Press: London, United Kingdom, 1994, pp.69-80.

peak of development and efficiency. Post-war accounts state that Belorussia there were 374,000 partisans divided among 199 brigades and that they had 400,000 reserves to call upon.”³⁷³ The partisan legacy and achievements against the Germans lives on Belarus today. Indeed, the reputation of Belarus as the ‘*partizanski respublik*’ is something that deeply resonates in modern-day Belarus society as part of its national conscious and post-Soviet identity as a young nation state. It is also one that President Lukashenka has cultivated, if not significantly nurtured since the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea.

US-Belarus Relations

US-Belarus relations have been largely estranged for nearly a decade. Ties plummeted following the ill-fated decision by Belarus to withdraw its Ambassador to the United States in December 2010 in response to the western denunciation of its crackdown on demonstrators in Minsk after a group of Belarus anarchists threw Molotov cocktails at the Russian embassy in Minsk that resulted in the imprisonment of five of these demonstrators. Lukashenka was walking a tight rope in ties with Moscow over how it handled this display of anti-Russian sentiment. Aside from this outburst, the majority of these demonstrations were peaceful. The United States reacted harshly to the crackdown that followed and reciprocated by withdrawing its ambassador to Belarus and ties plummeted as a cold chill enveloped the relations between the two countries.

Owing to these developments, no US Ambassador has been stationed at the US Embassy in Belarus since December 2010. The chain of strategic indifference to Belarus by the United States continued until the March 28, 2016 visit to Minsk by former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Russia and Eurasia Michael Carpenter. Carpenter reversed a US security policy of ignoring Belarus and singlehandedly revived bilateral military-to-military relations in an effort to improve virtually non-existent US security ties with Belarus. Carpenter’s visit was the first US Department of Defence led visit to Minsk by a senior level DOD official in over ten years as previous visits by US officials were always part of a multi-member State Department led group where democracy promotion and human rights issues dominated the bilateral agenda and the representative of the US Department of Defence participated only as just another member of the State Department led-delegation.³⁷⁴

Despite the lengthy chill in US-Belarus relations, the government of Belarus has made significant efforts to engage the United States and even dropped its precondition that there would be no return of a US Ambassador to Belarus unless US sanctions were

³⁷³ Paul Adair, *Hitler’s Greatest Defeat*, op cit., p. 76.

³⁷⁴ On September 10, 2014, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia and Eurasia Evelyn Farkas visited Minsk as part of a US governmental delegation consisting of US State Department officials from various regional bureaus.

removed. In early 2012 Belarus made its first overture to the United States. President Lukashenka began to allow the transit of non-lethal military equipment through Belarus as part of the reverse transit of American materiel via the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) from 2012 to 2014 when the military drawdown by the United States from Afghanistan was launched by the Obama Administration. Belarus's participation in the program was a discreet, but conscious pro-active level of support for the United States, and NATO, even though Belarus was under the weight of US sanctions.³⁷⁵

In another move of transparency that defies the image of Lukashenka being a North Korean style dictator who seeks isolation from the West, Minsk introduced visa free travel to Belarus in January 2017 for up to 80 countries, including the United States and most of its NATO-ally member states in the European Union. The move was a major step forward to allow greater trade and tourism for Belarus as it sought to balance its ties with the West and encourage western tourism. Moreover, the visa free travel announcement simultaneously created tension with Moscow that only has been recently resolved as Belarus and Russia have their own visa free travel policy. When Belarus made its announcement in January 2017 Russian authorities were caught by surprise fearing overland travel by westerners to Russia via Belarus as there are little or no border posts safeguarding the border. Significant tension erupted with Moscow behind the scenes over this move as Russian officials reacted to this move ³⁷⁶

For the past ten years, US-Belarus relations remained frozen. No US Ambassador has been assigned to Belarus for over a decade and, until recently, there has been no US military attaché based in the country to give Washington a better understanding, despite the periodic large-scale Zapad and Union Shield Russian-Belarusian military exercises. This has affected US understanding about the country and its delicate relations with Russia. Assistant Secretary of State A. Wess Mitchell's visit to Minsk, in November 5, 2018, however, have led to major change in relations between the two countries. Briefed by Jamestown analysts and experts about Belarus before embarking on his trip, Mitchell has sought to develop a roadmap for building closer US relations with Minsk for the strategic purpose of signalling to Putin that the US is no longer going to ignore Belarus. In a speech on October 19, 2018, at the Atlantic Council, two weeks prior to his November visit to Belarus, Mitchell lauded "Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus as bulwarks against Russian neo-imperialism."³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ For a rare analysis of Belarus defense cooperation with the United States compiled from discussions with Belarus officials, see the two-part series by Vladimir Socor: "NATO's Silent Partner in the East," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, August 8, 2013.

³⁷⁶ Grigory Ioffe, "Visa Free Travel to Belarus and the Dawn of a New Era in (Dis)Information Wars," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, January 18, 2017. <https://jamestown.org/program/visa-free-travel-belarus-dawn-new-era-disinformation-wars>

³⁷⁷ David Wemer, "State Department Official Sounds Warning on Russian, Chinese Influence in Central and Eastern Europe", *Atlantic Council*, 19 October 2018. <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new->

Repercussions for NATO

Alarmed by the warming relations between Washington and Minsk - as evidenced by the Mitchell visit to Belarus in November 2018 - Moscow is desperately seeking ways to keep Belarus in its strategic orbit. In recent months Moscow also has heavily intensified the information war component of its campaign to bully Minsk and pressure will only grow if the United States decides to create a new military base in Poland. By March 2018 the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark A. Milley is expected to announce the results of a study conducted by the US Army on whether it will accept Poland's offer to create a new \$2 billion military base. Pressure on Minsk will undoubtedly grow economically and militarily after this decision. Moscow will likely renew its calls to allow a permanent Russian airbase on Belarus soil or possibly or go so far as demand the forward deployment of a Russian Motorized Rifle Division (MRD) or Motorized Rifle regiment in Belarus. Recently Russian efforts to pressure Belarus have come in the form of an oil tax for the petroleum that Belarus refines from Russia. Moscow could take the extreme step in suspending its oil deliveries to Belarus, which are strategically important to the country and difficult to replace. Refined oil from Belarus is also strategically vital to Ukraine as nearly 40 percent of Ukrainian oil imports come from the refined oil produced by Belarusian refineries and any suspension of Russian oil shipments would have a detrimental impact on the Ukrainian economy.

The possibility of a Russian military demand to allow the basing of forward deployed armoured forces in Belarus in reaction to the US basing decision is real. As to whether Lukashenka would buckle on this demand is unclear, but also unlikely. To date, Belarus has refused to comply with these requests and limited Russian deployments and exercises in order to maintain its sovereignty and independence to short term durations as Lukashenka noted after the completion of Zapad that all Russian forces would return to their bases. But should Moscow intensify its economic pressure on the Belarusian government Minsk could be compelled to drop its opposition. In such an event this development would significantly affect NATO's military strategy in how it defends the Baltic States. A major Russian military presence in Belarus would revive fears of another *Operation Bagration* when Soviet forces burst into the Baltic in 1944. The Lithuanian capital of Vilnius is particularly vulnerable. It is only 32 kilometers from the Belarusian border and the Lithuanian military has no tank forces to deter such a force, except for the 1,000 man German led Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) units based in Lithuania that have no encrypted radios among its units.³⁷⁸ Any major Russian

[atlanticist/state-department-official-sounds-warning-on-russian-chinese-influence-in-central-and-eastern-europe](#)

³⁷⁸ To learn more about the sad state of the Wehrmacht, see: Matthew Karnitschnik, "Germany's Soldiers of Misfortune", *Politico*, 15 February 2019.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-biggest-enemy-threadbare-army-bundeswehr/>

armoured deployment along that border would likely force NATO and US policymakers to reconsider the current NATO posture in the Baltic, and force the United States to move beyond the idea of rotational military deployments to a permanent forward presence similar to its efforts to defend the Fulda Gap, in this case it would be to defend the Suwalki Gap.

From every perspective one looks at the Baltic rising tension between Belarus and Russia has important repercussions for NATO's eastern flank. Belarus has had a short history as an independent state, and since gaining independence in 1991 it has followed a path of developing close economic and military relations with Russia based upon the concept of Moscow's acceptance of Belarus sovereignty. Following the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014, Belarus has increasingly distanced itself from this relationship in its own nuanced way. Minsk is weary of a repeat of the Donbas scenario that led to the splintering of eastern Ukraine and will continue to insist on maintaining a high level of sovereignty in its relations with Russia, enabling Lukashenka's Belarus to remain free of permanent Russian military bases unlike Moscow's quasi-ally Kyrgyzstan. When one compares the military ties between Moscow and Bishkek, both maintain a similarly close security relationship that allows the Kremlin to maintain a fully functioning Russian operated airbase at the Kant airbase in Kyrgyzstan. Both countries have close economic and security ties with Russia but Belarus, unlike Kyrgyzstan, refuses to bend to Russian demands for a permanent airbase despite its close ties with Russia.

Meanwhile, Moscow continues to increase its military pressure on Belarus in the form of its two new military deployments (bases) along the Belarus border. These developments highlight the growing concern in Minsk about a Donbas scenario being considered by Moscow against Belarus. This concerns the formation and deployment of two new Russian motorized regiments: one at Yelnia near Smolensk, and the other at Klinty, both formations are near the Belarus border and adjacent to strategic railheads -- as Yelnia is near the Belarus city of Gomel. It is important to note that both Russian motorized regiments were deployed along the border following Lukashenka's 2015 refusal to allow Moscow to create a new airbase. Writing about the new military bases near Belarus, American military analyst Michael Kofman pointed out in his blog on January 12, 2016, that Minister of Defence Sergei Shoigu had announced the formation of three new divisions and neither of these is in response to US deployments in Europe, NATO exercises or the prospect of new multi-national battalions being deployed in the Baltic states. According to Kofman, "the thinking in the Russian General Staff is more about a Ukraine and Belarusian contingency or perhaps a colour revolution in Belarus."³⁷⁹ Consequently, it is no accident of geography that Yelnia is on the Belarus

³⁷⁹See the commentary by Michael Kofman on the formation of this new division at: "Russia's New Divisions in the West", *Russia Military Analysis*, 7 May 2016.

<https://russianmilitaryanalysis.wordpress.com/2016/05/07/russias-new-divisions-in-the-west/>

border and is directly adjacent to the Smolensk Gate, which has been described by one retired US Air Force officer as a “tank superhighway.”³⁸⁰

Finally, one of the reoccurring themes in this paper has been the focus on Belarus representing a strategic buffer between Russia and NATO’s Baltic flank. *The inherent value to NATO is a Belarus that remains free of Russian ground troops, and new Russian air bases that will severely reduce the readiness and warning time for NATO forces deployed in the Baltic.* Whether Belarus is militarily aligned with Russia is beside the point as Belarus serves NATO interests by being neutral and non-aligned. For this reason, NATO and the United States should intensify their contacts with Belarus to make up for twenty years of lost engagement that reflects the new geopolitical realities of the role that Belarus plays in Baltic security.

Engagement between Brussels and Minsk to date have been limited by Lithuania, which harbours deep resentment against Belarus that has obstructed any opportunity for Belarus to even develop a relationship with NATO. This ill-advised approach has done nothing but limit Minsk’s ability to interact with NATO. Lithuania’s opposition to Belarus revolves around the construction of a Russian nuclear power plant in Belarus at Astravets, which is less than 50 kilometers from the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius. The nuclear power plant will be finished and coming online by the end of 2019 and Lithuanian efforts to block its construction will have amounted to nothing. Lithuania has used the nuclear power plant as a rationale to impede the ability of Belarus to interact with NATO. Belarus joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program in 1995, but has been prevented from signing the NATO Agreement on the Security of Information, which is the fundamental starting point for any non-NATO member to develop a more formal relationship with Brussels.³⁸¹ To add embarrassment to Lithuania’s unyielding position, the Belarus nuclear power plant was recently certified as safe and secure by an EU inspection team in July 2018. This team went so far as to use a new nuclear safeguard check list developed after an earthquake ripped through the 2011 Fukushima reactor in Japan. The Belarus nuclear reactor passed the EU test, noted Radio Free Europe in a report on the visit. Aside from Lithuania, no other EU member country has voiced its opposition to the plant.³⁸² Reconciliation between Lithuania and Belarus is important and Vilnius needs to move beyond its opposition to NATO-Belarus cooperation and interaction.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Anna Maria Dyer, “Challenges for Belarusian Security Policy”, *Bulletin of The Polish Institute of International Affairs*, No 11, 23 January 2018. https://www.pism.pl/publications/bulletin/no-11-1082#_ftn1

³⁸² Rikard Jozwiak, “Planned Belarusian Nuclear Plant Passes 'Stress Test,' Neighboring Lithuania Still Worried”, *Radio Free Europe*, 03 July 2018. <https://www.rferl.org/a/planned-belarusian-nuclear-plant-passes-stress-test-neighboring-lithuania-still-worried/29336314.html>

A Belarusian Tito?

Geopolitically, Belarus in many ways resembles the Yugoslavia of the late 1940s before Tito's break with Moscow in 1948. Yugoslavia played a pivotal geographical position in the Balkans and became a bulwark against Soviet expansion into Greece at the outset of the Cold War. The rupture in relations between Tito and Stalin in 1948 ended up allowing the West to resist Soviet efforts to expand into the Adriatic and Mediterranean. Belarus can occupy a similar position in regard to the Baltic and its strategic position in front of the 'Smolensk Gates'. For this reason, President Lukashenka increasingly has assumed the characteristics of the former Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito who broke with Stalin over the issue of sovereignty and Yugoslav independence. Given the rise in tensions between Minsk and Moscow, Lukashenka could very well surprise his critics in the West by becoming another Tito if Putin insists on treating Belarus as a subordinate country and refuses to honour its sovereignty. On several occasions President Lukashenka has publicly rebuked Russia's request to create a new air base in Belarus that started in 2015 and continue to the present. Two weeks after the 2015 announcement went public, demonstrations erupted in Minsk of up to 1,000 demonstrators voicing their opposition to the base, a rare public outburst and a strategic tool that Lukashenka can utilize to justify his refusal to grant Russia further basing privileges.

In a meeting with a Jamestown delegation visit to Belarus on November 3, led by former US Commanding General US Army Europe, Ben Hodges, Lukashenka reiterated this point by stating: "why does Russia need an air base in Belarus? Russia is only five minutes flying time from Belarus" and he underscored the point that Belarus can ensure the security of its own airspace. Moreover, in a cryptic nuanced Lukashenka-esque style statement, the Belarus leader went on to say that "while Belarus and Russia remain military partners and are allies, we also have a budding defence relationship with China and the Chinese will do things with Belarus militarily that Russia would never even consider doing," in an obvious jab at Moscow that underscores the limits Moscow goes in cooperating with Belarus despite the fact that the two countries are de-facto allies.

By remaining free of Russian ground troops Belarus enhances the security of Poland and Lithuania and allows NATO to adequately defend the Suwalki gap by giving the Alliance greater strategic depth along its Baltic periphery. As long as Belarus remains free of a permanent forward deployed Russian ground force on its territory and remains non-aligned it can serve NATO purposes without even joining the Euro-Atlantic Alliance. Recently at an event on Belarus organized by the US based Atlantic Council, Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus Oleg Kravchenko said that: "we want to be friends with

everybody, including NATO”.³⁸³ By engaging Belarus NATO actually can help this small country become the bulwark against Russian neo-imperialism envisaged by Wess Mitchell during his October 2018 speech. However, Belarus should not be forced into the position of choosing sides. Once the United States develops a new military base in Poland it is certain that all eyes will be on Minsk as the pressure on Belarus will become even greater as the country’s geopolitical importance will loom even larger and its leadership continues its delicate walk across the Russian tightrope.

³⁸³ Grigory Ioffe, “Beyond Lies: A New Stage in the Belarus-Russia Information War,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, February 14, 2018. <https://jamestown.org/program/beyond-lies-a-new-stage-in-the-belarus-russia-information-war>

CHAPTER FOUR

RUSSIA'S HYBRID WARFARE TOOLBOX AND NATO'S RESPONSES

The Whole Story: Towards a Dynamic and Comprehensive Analysis of Russian Influence Operations

Mr. Edward Lucas

We rarely get the whole story. Indeed, we flinch from it. It is a human weakness to focus on visible dangers rather than unknown, mutable ones, and to approach them with the tools we have on hand rather than try to acquire the ones we actually need.

These and other failures are visible in the Western approach to Russian (and other hostile-state) influence operations. One mistake is to boil these down to information operations, sometimes known under the misleading label of “fake news”. Another is to treat them as a new problem; a third is to assume they are of a static nature. The solutions tend to be unimaginative, heavy-handed—and ineffective.

The first and most important point for Western decision-makers and analysts coming to grips with Russian influence operations is to understand their development in scope, in reach and over time. The roots lie in the Soviet past—the Communist lexicon coined terms such as *agitprop*, *aktivniye meropriyatiya* [*Active Measures*] and *dezinformatsiya* which are still in use today. Immediately after the collapse of communism, the Kremlin was using money, soft power, propaganda and intimidation to destabilise and pressurize parts of the former Soviet empire, notably the Baltic states, in the early and mid-1990s, at a time when east-west relations were regarded in most of the world as exceptionally harmonious. It is worth noting that these operations took place in what would now count as a pre-digital age, before the advent of social media platforms and widespread internet penetration.

Examples of this activity, largely unnoticed in the “Western” policy community, included the wrangling over the withdrawal of the remaining Soviet occupation forces from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Russian attempts (in the first two of these three countries) to link the removal of these illegally stationed troops to changes in local language and citizenship laws. Another example was the use of energy exports to apply political pressure, in the Baltic states, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and elsewhere. This included the use of actual or threatened interruptions in energy supplies (such as oil pipeline and rail deliveries to the Latvian port of Ventspils, and pipeline supplies to the

Lithuanian refinery at Mažeikiai), differential pricing (offering cheap gas in exchange for political pliancy) and acquiring equity stakes in critical national infrastructure in order to apply political pressure. The main reason that Latvia's gas industry, for example, failed to liberalise following that country's accession to the EU was because of the 50% stake acquired by Gazprom in 1997, which gave the Russian gas giant a 20-year contract for gas supplies, and an effective veto over new entrants to the market.

Meanwhile the Russian state television outlet PBK (*Pervyi Baltiiski Kanal*) was fomenting discontent among Russia-speakers in the Baltic states, and promoting a misleading and demoralising narrative of economic, political and social failure following the restoration of independence. On the diplomatic front, Russian officials in international forums and organisations ranging from the UN General Assembly to the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe tried to discredit and marginalise Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. On the military front, Russian warplanes repeatedly violated Baltic airspace, which prior to NATO membership in 2004 was not policed or defended.

It is worth noting that the Baltic states and other countries repeatedly warned their Western friends and allies of the danger of Russian influence operations. The then Estonian president Lennart Meri, speaking in Hamburg in 1994, said that a failure to stand up to Russian meddling in the Baltic states made outsiders unwitting accomplices of “imperialist forces in Russia who believe that they can solve their country's immense problems by outward expansion and by threatening their neighbours.” He told his German hosts that “either the neo-imperialist policy of a great eastern power will be tolerated, financed, and in the short term, possibly even profited from”, or else their country should choose to spread democracy, freedom, responsibility and peace from the Baltic to the Pacific – in which case it should resolutely contribute to the stability and security of the region threatened by Russia.³⁸⁴

Any comprehensive analysis of contemporary Russian influence operations by Western analysts or for a Western audience must therefore start from a position of humility: we were warned of the danger, and we chose not to take the warnings seriously. Indeed, in many cases our experts, decision-makers and others patronised and belittled the friends who were trying to deliver this uncomfortable but prescient message: Russia is a problem for us right now; it will sooner or later be a problem for you too.

Several inflexion points are visible in the years since the 1990s. Russia's use of the energy weapon intensified (as laid out in the Energy Strategy 2003, which described “significant energy resources and powerful fuel-energy complex” as an “instrument for

³⁸⁴Address by H.E. Lennart Meri, President of the Republic of Estonia, at a Matthiae-Supper in Hamburg on February 25, 1994. <https://vp1992-2001.president.ee/eng/k6ned/K6ne.asp?ID=9401> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

conducting domestic and foreign policy”. More broadly, Russia’s stance on what policymakers in Moscow call the “near abroad” meaning former Soviet republics and occupied territories softened somewhat in the years of NATO enlargement. Contrary to the modern Kremlin narrative, depicting new members’ joining the western alliance as a bitterly contested act of geopolitical aggression, the response at the time was mild. Russia was offered substantial concessions by NATO, including the establishment of the NATO-Russia council, giving Russia guaranteed close cooperation with the alliance at the highest level. The real bone of contention at the time was not the expansion of the alliance, but its involvement in the war in former Yugoslavia in 1998 (Kosovo) and 1999 (bombing Serbia), seen by Russia as an unprecedented and unjustified act of aggression.

The first “wake-up call” widely noticed by the West came in Vladimir Putin’s speech to the Munich Security Conference in 2007, when he lambasted NATO expansion as a “serious provocation” and blamed the West for “trying to transform the OSCE into a vulgar instrument designed to promote the foreign policy interests of one or a group of countries.” This rhetorical breach was followed later in the year by the “Bronze Soldier” events in Estonia, in which a distributed denial of service (DDoS) cyber-attack temporarily disabled that country’s internet-based public services. Estonia also experienced intense diplomatic and political pressure, and unruly street protests outside its embassy in Moscow. A further inflection point was the war in Georgia in 2008, in which the Kremlin successfully provoked the Georgian leadership into an armed conflict which ended in major territorial gains for Russian-backed separatists. The most important of these “wake-up calls” was the war in Ukraine, in which Russian special forces operating without uniform helped seize Crimea, and promoted insurgencies in the eastern districts of Donetsk and Lugansk. None of these inflexion points has led to a fundamental reassessment of Western strategy and tactics with regard to Russia. More such “wake-up calls” can therefore be expected.

Russia’s strategic aim is to divide the West and weaken its decision-making so that it cannot exert united economic, political or military pressure on Russia. The means to this end is often called “hybrid warfare”, but is better termed influence operations: a complex mixture of tactics, often but not always coordinated by the intelligence services, which are particularly potent against open societies.

Money, propaganda and force are the most salient features of the Russian approach. But there are many more. A non-exhaustive inventory includes:

- the targeted use of **corruption**;
- **covert** information operations such as hacking and leaking attacks’
- **cyber-warfare**;
- **diplomatic** divide-and-rule gambits;

- the exploitation of economic, ethnic, linguistic, regional, social and other **divisions**;
- **economic** sanctions such as import curbs and restrictions on exports and transit; energy blackmail;
- stoking **financial** panics;
- weaponizing **history** to besmirch the reputation of a target country and distract attention from Soviet-era atrocities and abuses;
- **lawfare** (the abuse of local and international legal procedures, such as issuing Interpol Red Notices to critics, mounting libel actions and vexatious lawsuits);
- the use of **organized crime** networks to demoralize and intimidate;
- the exploitation of **religious** sentiment, especially among Orthodox believers
- **subversion** of social norms, public confidence and state institutions; and
- **violent** anti-social behaviour including sabotage and vandalism

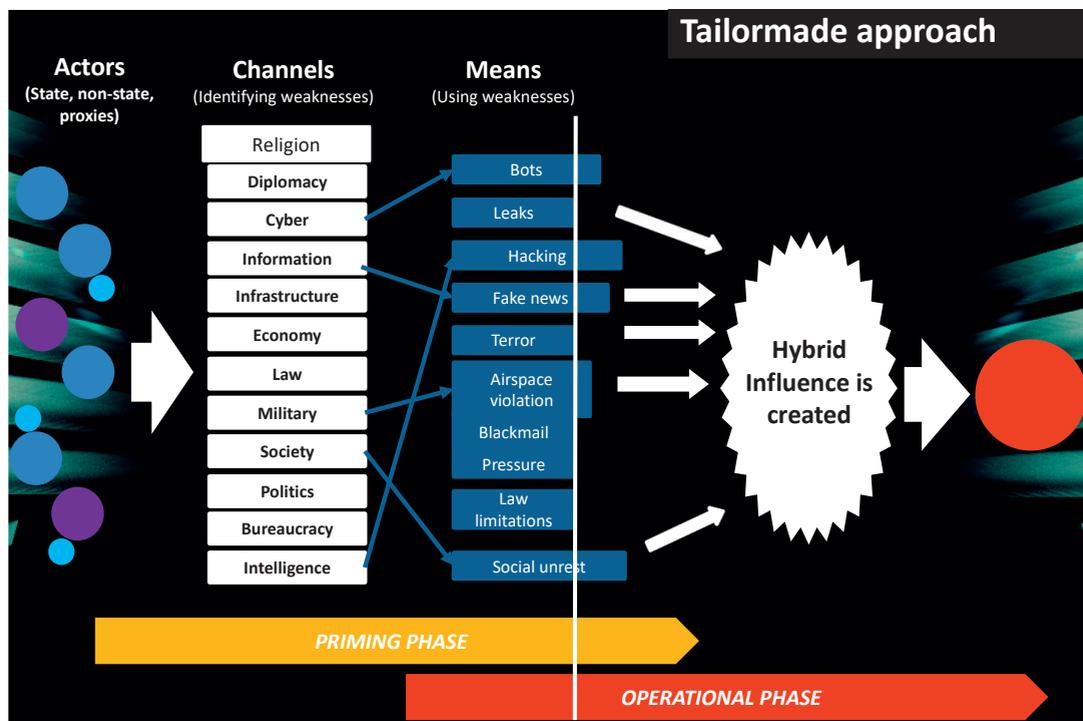


Figure1. Influence operations: a brief taxonomy

Source: EU Hybrid Centre of Excellence, Helsinki, Finland, <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/>

This approach is often referred to as the Gerasimov Doctrine, in reference to a speech, later an article, by the Russian general Valery Gerasimov, published in 2013.³⁸⁵ This depicted modern conflict between nations as happening mostly outside the realm of warfare as traditionally understood. It highlighted the use of propaganda and subversion as a means of weakening willpower, corroding public confidence and creating chaos which could be exploited by an adversary.

This “doctrine” has become short-hand for Russia’s approach to its neighbours, particularly evidenced by the mixture of military and non-military tactics used against Ukraine from 2014 onwards (these include armed force, cyber-attacks, psychological destabilisation and many others). There is however a serious problem in using “Gerasimov” and “doctrine” in this context. First of all, General Gerasimov was not advocating (at least in his original formulation of his ideas) an approach that should be adopted by Russia. He was describing how (in Russia’s view) the West subverts and destabilises its adversaries. His remarks were made chiefly with the “colour revolutions” of the early 2000s, and the Arab Spring a few years later, in mind. Far from implementing such tactics, Gerasimov was worrying about how to forestall them.

A second problem is that “doctrine” implies a structured and developed approach, with rules, decision-making processes, established priorities and feedback loops. Although it is possible that Russia will develop such a formal doctrine for its hybrid operations, there is no sign of this yet. As Mark Galeotti, the British security-policy analyst who first highlighted Gerasimov’s thinking, points out, Russia’s campaign:

is dangerous precisely because it has no single organizing principle, let alone controlling agency. There is a broad political objective — to distract, divide, and demoralize — but otherwise it is largely opportunistic, fragmented, even sometimes contradictory. Some major operations are coordinated, largely through the presidential administration, but most are not. Rather, operations are conceived and generally carried out by a bewildering array of “political entrepreneurs” hoping that their success will win them the Kremlin’s favour: diplomats and spies, criminals and think-tankers, oligarchs and journalists.

As mentioned earlier, another conceptual mistake often made by analysts is to focus too much on the information side of influence operations. Information directed at the public by its nature tends to be conspicuous. It is easy to monitor Russian broadcasts, especially those in English, to read websites with Russian connections, and to analyse social media accounts that promote Kremlin-backed themes. All this may well be important. But it would be rash to assume, without strong supporting evidence, that the visible bit of the threat is necessarily its most important component. It does not appear

³⁸⁵ Valery Gerasimov, “The Value of Science is in Foresight”, *Military-Industrial Courier*, 28 February 2013.

that RT, the Kremlin-financed TV channel, has made much headway in achieving mass audiences in Western countries. In the UK, for example, it had 0.02% market share in December 2018.

This is no reason to discount its role automatically—RT might have achieved significant penetration in certain sections of the population, or where particular messaging is concerned. Live streaming on the internet is only one way of reaching an audience; clips posted on YouTube and shared via social media may have much more impact in the long run. Such questions deserve (and rarely get) empirical investigation. But in comparison with other less conspicuous influence vectors, such as covert information operations (using encrypted, peer-to-peer networks for example), or those not involving information such as bribing politicians, acquiring media assets, establishing economic bridgeheads and so on, the actual importance of information operations may be less than commonly assumed.

The difficulty here is that it is hard to assess the effect of these other tactics. Journalists, NGOs, academics and other non-government actors quickly run into obstacles relating to privacy, commercial confidentiality and encryption. Twitter is easy to monitor. Private user groups on Facebook, less so. Gaining insight into groups messaging each other peer-to-peer platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal and the like is a challenge even for a nation-state's security service. Gaining the full picture of corruption and bribery is a daunting task, even for criminal justice authorities with the full force of law behind them. Other economic and business regulators – for example in energy, telecoms or broadcasting – may be the only bodies with easy access to data about Russian activity in those fields. They may fail to appreciate the political and security significance of what may at first sight seem like a minor issue. Intelligence services in theory can use their sources and methods to gather material about any field of Russian activity, but these agencies have many competing priorities. In particular they may be unwilling to devote their investigative resources to activities that do not normally form part of the national security agenda.

“Follow the money” is a good adage in investigative journalism, and anyone looking at Russian influence operations should start there. The easiest tactic for Russia might be described as “business as usual” – commercially viable and justifiable trade and investment that happens to bring political benefits. The easiest way of achieving this is to bolster commercial and financial interests in the target country. So long as these profit from doing business with Russia they will fear and resist any cooling in political ties. These lobbies, typically in energy, in industries exporting to Russia, and in the parts of the financial sector that provides lucrative services to Russian clients, constrain Western responses to Russian revisionism.

A related form of overt investment is buying media assets. These may or may not be

profitable, but ownership immediately creates incentives and constraints. Journalists do not bite the hand that feeds them, and the editor of a paper owned by a Russian is unlikely to commission freely where the owner's interests are concerned. Editorial standards on other fronts may be high, making it difficult—particularly in smaller media markets—for independent media to compete.

It is also possible to donate money quite legally in ways that promote Russian influence. Such donations can be made to political parties, think tanks, non-profit media outlets and academic institutions. Where rules exist to prevent direct donation by foreigners, these can be sidestepped. Russian donors can acquire the citizenship of the country concerned, or enrich a local business partner who then makes the donation.

The use of money by adversaries raises uncomfortable questions for open societies. Campaign finance is notoriously hard to reform. Rich people, in many eyes, already get more than their fair share of political influence, perhaps inevitably. Is the aim to devise a system in which only rich Russians are excluded, or all rich foreigners, or all rich people regardless of national origin? For countries with well-developed financial services industries, particularly with offshore clients, dealing with foreign money is a vital part of the national economy. The simplest reforms are the most sweeping—for example to ban shell companies, to mandate public registries of beneficial ownership, to place severe legal requirements on registration agents, to enforce transparency on trusts of all kinds. But such reforms run into opposition from well-entrenched lobbies, far bigger than those merely concerned with Russia. In short, any legislative “silver bullet” which would deal with Kremlin economic power will have many other casualties too. But any more selective and partial approach risks breaching well-established normative and legal protection against discrimination on grounds of national origin.

There is still some scope for action when it comes to punitive sanctions, evidenced by the Magnitsky acts promoted by the America-born financier Bill Browder. These aim to punish Russian officials involved in a \$230m fraud against the taxpayer, uncovered by Sergei Magnitsky, an auditor at a law firm, who was then arrested on spurious charges and beaten to death after nearly a year in pre-trial detention. These sanctions against named individuals involve asset freezes and visa bans. They could be extended as a deterrence method against influence operations. But it is hard to see them being applied directly. Britain's “Unexplained Wealth Orders” for example can be used to freeze assets of rich people thought to be involved in human-rights abuses and other bad behaviour. But in the case of most influential Russians in Britain, their wealth is anything but unexplained. A couple of decades owning and running a big natural-resources company or a bank gives plenty of scope for making a fortune.

Russia also practises information operations with increasing sophistication, and with an intensity not seen even during the Cold War. As explained above, the tactic is not new.

But the technology is. Soviet-era overt information operations mostly involved short-wave radio and print media. These were expensive and conspicuous. Clandestine KGB-run disinformation operations required patience and planning. They typically involved carefully placing a false news item in an obscure newspaper, and then using other media assets to form and propagate the narrative. A classic example of this is the story that the CIA had invented the AIDS virus. Planted in the Indian Patriot newspaper in 1983, the story was backed up by a pseudo-scientific research paper published in East Germany (the Soviet-occupied “German Democratic Republic”). The story received coverage in over 80 countries in more than 30 languages, and eventually attracted attention in mainstream Western media.

This took four years. The same sort of operation is now, in effect, immediate, now takes only a few hours to set up a website, post content and then propagate it via social media. All this can be done anonymously (using prepaid debit cards or untraceable electronic money). The result is ubiquitous—it can be read or watched on in almost any country, on any continent, free of charge on any digital device. Kremlin broadcasters such as RT do not need big transmission towers. They simply stream their content on the internet, with the best bits viewable forever on YouTube. Examples of information operations abound. They include the use of social-media messaging and targeted online advertising to stoke ethnic, religious, political and other divisions. Another well-established tactic is “hacking and leaking”, involving the theft of private material (conversations taped illegally, or e-mails stolen from a database). These materials are then published, either through an anonymous website (DCleaks.com in the case of the attack on the US political system in 2016) or via a proxy such as WikiLeaks or Anonymous (in the case of the attack on the Institute of Statecraft in the UK in early 2019).

An important question for analysts of these operations is their half-life. Influence operations work best when they take the adversary by surprise, or at least find him unprepared. The history of the past 30 years shows that Russian influence operations do lose their effectiveness over time. For example, the mandatory unbundling (demonopolisation) in the EU’s Third Energy Package, and a wide-ranging programme of infrastructure improvements such as interconnecting pipelines and power lines, and the Liquefied Natural Gas terminal in Lithuania, have transformed the energy security of the Baltic states.

The job is not done yet (Latvia has yet to liberalise its gas industry, there are worries about the possibility of cheap electricity dumped on the market from a new power plant in Belarus, and Russia’s new Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline will weaken Ukraine’s role as a transit country). But it is fair to say that most of these reforms would not have happened without the political impetus caused by Russian use of its market power. In other words, Russia repeatedly achieved short-term tactical gains by flexing its energy muscles, but has on the whole suffered a long-term strategic defeat. Europe has become more

resilient in the years since 2006 (when gas supply interruptions via Ukraine sparked widespread alarm). Policy-makers are more aware of the political context, and investment calculations are no longer made on the narrowest commercial grounds.

It is a similar story with another aspect of influence operations: military sabre-rattling. These tactics include air-space violations, aggressive military drills and exercises, maritime harassment of and “near-miss” episodes at sea and in the air. The aim is to intimidate, displaying Russia’s strength and the targeted country’s weakness. Examples abound. One is the “Good Friday” incident in April 2013, when Russian warplanes conducted a simulated attack on two strategically important targets in Sweden, a non-NATO country. Another is the Zapad-09/Ladoga military exercises in 2009, which were an unprecedentedly large, secretive and aggressive demonstration of Russian military capabilities, directed against the Baltic states and Poland. The exercise scenario involved the invasion of the Baltic states, their isolation from Poland, and the occupation of a strip of border territory. The exercise concluded with a simulated nuclear attack on Warsaw.

The presumed aim of these and other episodes was to underline Russia’s regional military superiority, to taunt the target countries for their military weakness, and to underline their dependence on foreign military assistance. Such a narrative of “indefensibility” fits closely into the narrative of Russia’s information operations towards the Baltic states: these countries are friendless failures; they cannot defend themselves and nobody will come to their aid.

These episodes of military intimidation did have some effect, in sowing alarm and despondency (in Sweden it turned out, humiliatingly, that the air force had been given the Easter weekend off, leaving the country in effect defenceless had the attack been real). But the long-term effect was the opposite. NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic states and Poland has transformed those country’s defence and the alliance’s deterrence. Sweden (and non-NATO Finland) have raised defence spending and restored a robust posture on national territorial defence. The military balance in the Baltic Sea region is more unfavourable to Russia than at any time since the 1980s, for which is hardly the result that Kremlin policy planners would have hoped for.

Albeit belatedly and partially, similar reactions can be seen in response to many, even most aspects of Russian influence operations. Countries such as Britain and the US are tightening their rules on shell companies and offshore money flowing into the real-estate market. Britain has reformed its libel laws in order to prevent Russian and Ukrainian tycoons “forum shopping” – exploiting the tough English libel law to intimidate critical media in other countries. The success of the hacking-and-leaking attack on the US political system was not matched by similar results in France, where the local media decided not to treat the “Macronleaks” stolen data as a sensational source of news.

Media regulators are warning, and in some cases banning Russian propaganda outlets from the regulated media landscape (broadcast and cable television). The Kremlin's exploitation of the dominant role of the Moscow Patriarchate has led to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church switching its canonical allegiance and establishing a direct relationship with the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople (Istanbul).

Few of these responses should be characterised as a definitive victory. In many cases Russia responds to setbacks by refining its tactics, or (as will be described below) developing new ones. But it is already clear that Western responses are overly reliant on legal and regulatory measures, and insufficiently based on normative and cultural changes. It is impossible for an open society to counter information operations solely, or indeed chiefly, through legislation. Decisions to ban content because of its offensive or dangerous nature are subjective and inherently difficult. They are best taken by courts or other independent tribunals, almost always after publication. These decisions need to be made publicly and contestably. The victims of a ban or other reprimand should be able to make their case freely, with their own legal representation, and with the right of appeal against a flawed decision. The prospect of a fine or imprisonment acts as something of a deterrent for reckless publication of secret, obscene or inflammatory material. But these safeguards mean that legal sanction will be at best a back-stop. Used widely, it risks making an open society look no better than its enemies.

A similar pitfall arises with counter-messaging. It is tempting to drown out the adversary's "fake news" with "real news". Certainly, there is a role for publicly and philanthropically financed media initiatives, especially in countries where the reader and advertising base is too small to support much quality independent journalism. But sponsored journalism, especially government-sponsored journalism, may lack credibility, and give ammunition to outside critics who claim that media independence is a fiction. Secret attempts to create networks of sympathetic journalists and experts also risk doing more harm than good once they come into an unsympathetic public gaze. "Debunking" websites play a useful role in rallying opposition to false narratives and invented stories. But they appeal mainly to those whose minds are open; the target audience for information operations may be those who are already suspicious, alienated or outright hostile to what they see as the establishment.

A better approach to countering information operations is a normative one, based on education and other incentives. Media literacy in schools helps develop critical thinking towards all kinds of news. Commentators and other "talking heads" can choose not to give interviews to propaganda outlets. If working for a disinformation front masquerading as a media organisation becomes seen as a career-killing move, then fewer young would-be journalists will contemplate it. If no reputable advertiser wishes to see their products advertised alongside disinformation, then the burden of supporting these efforts falls wholly on the state concerned, and the credibility of the channel is eroded.

Another productive approach would be to highlight the difference between anonymously produced news-like content and the real thing. A simple browser plug-in could warn readers that the site they are visiting has no street address, no phone number, and no other real-world credentials. Voluntary journalistic ethics codes, with kitemarks (seals) awarded to those who sign up for and abide by them, would also underline the difference. News organisations like the BBC, the New York Times and Der Spiegel make mistakes, but they pride themselves on correcting mistakes promptly and apologising for them conspicuously. That is not true of sites such as RT and Sputnik.

The same approach could usefully be employed in dealing with other influence operations. It is hard to legislate against rich people making political donations. But if the parties and politicians concerned refuse to accept the money, for ethical or self-interested reputational reasons, then the weapon has become unusable. Compliance departments are expert in finding reasons why a bank or other financial institution can make a deal or take on a customer. But if the board decides that the transaction or individual concerned does not pass the “smell test”, then the kleptocrat must look elsewhere. If enough institutions adopt this code, then the whole country is closed for business as far as hostile-state money is concerned.

In short, defence against Russian influence operations must be more than the fashionable “whole of government” response; it must be “whole of society” too. A strong, instinctive security culture, spanning public and private sectors, inside and outside the artificial boundaries of government, secrecy classification and chains of command, offers the best resilience to influence operations—and thus also the best deterrent to them.

The final point is to avoid a static analysis of the threat. We are becoming increasingly good at dealing with yesterday’s problems. We are not yet good at dealing with tomorrows. Three topics in particular merit brief consideration. One is the use of “deep fakes” – audio and video material created by software which depicts real-life people saying and doing things that they have never done or said. This is an extension of the previously costly and time-consuming CGI techniques employed in cinema and television. These tools are now cheap and quick. They could be used to make a politician seem ridiculous or reprehensible—or to issue an order to surrender. Authenticating the “realness” of such material is a manageable technical problem. It could involve cryptographic signing by the participants in a recording, and by the broadcaster or other news outlet concerned. These signatures could easily be checked by the consumer, who would then know if the material was authentic, or had been tampered, perhaps innocently for the purpose of satire, or malevolently for political reasons. But such solutions have not yet been designed, let alone implemented.

A second related danger is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning to create lifelike electronic interactions, such as phone calls, chat messages and so forth,

which could be used for political or hostile purposes. Such efforts can be launched anonymously and from other countries over the internet. If targeted political advertising is effective, it is easy to imagine how much more effective targeted political canvassing could be. A deluge of lifelike phone calls, texts, WhatsApp messages, Tweets and Facebook messages could prove decisive in dismaying, distracting voters, or in shaping their opinions. The answer here will lie in much tougher identity assurance on electronic platforms: a phone call made from a computer should not have the same status as one made from a landline or mobile that belongs to a discrete, identifiable individual. Authentication of e-mail account holders will need to be tougher; so too will the procedure for signing up for social media platforms. Anonymity will have its uses, but it should not be possible to exploit it on a mass scale. A second element in this response will be normative: voters should treat electronic messages warily until they are sure of their origins and the motives of those propagating them.

A third new tactic is “super-doxxing” – the use of online intimidation to silence critics. This could take the form of leaking private information, exploiting weaknesses or potential embarrassments in the individual’s personal life. The same techniques can be applied to family members. Doxxing is not new, but the resources of a nation-state’s human and electronic intelligence service could make it far more unpleasant and effective. It could be combined with Deepfakes and AI-enabled online messaging.

The final tactic to watch out for is the use of alienated social groups. As social trust and public confidence wane in western societies, the potential for division and upheaval grows. Russian links with gun clubs, vigilante groups, veterans’ organisations, biker gangs, military re-enactment societies and even paintballing enthusiasts have been observed in a number of European countries. Not all these groups are socially alienated, but it is reasonable to assume that Russian intelligence officers have identified a potential in these groups, whether in politicisation, help in intelligence activities such as cover-creation, money-transfer or errand-running, or for outright subversion and insurrection. The rapid rise of the “Yellow Vest” movement in France has prompted that country’s counter-intelligence agency to investigate potential Russian links. The revelation that a former sniper involved in the Russian -backed insurrection in eastern Ukraine is now senior figure in the group’s security organisation has stoked suspicion.

In summary, Russian influence operations rely on tactics that are not applied in a static or even linear formation. Russia’s spymasters develop new approaches, especially new combinations and sequences of tactics, tweaking them based on results. We may think we are looking at a picture; our adversaries are writing a screenplay, with elements of comedy, drama—and tragedy.

Putin's Dark Ecosystem: Graft, Gangsters, and Active Measures

Mr. Brian Whitmore

All political warfare is not created equal. Vladimir Putin's political shenanigans work better in some places than others. Russian active measures seem to be more successful in Latvia than in Estonia or in Lithuania. Kremlin disinformation campaigns appear to gain more traction in Hungary and Slovakia than in the Czech Republic and Poland. Moscow's malign influence gains more traction in Bulgaria than in Romania.

But why is this the case? What accounts for the relative success of the Putin regime's political warfare in some places and not in others? Russian malign influence does not operate in a vacuum. Moscow's efforts to meddle in elections, peddle disinformation, sow discord and confusion, and poison political discourse tend to flourish within a broader context and environment -- one that facilitates and enables the disruption of normal democratic governance. Putin's brand of political warfare tends to thrive in a dark ecosystem amidst networks of influence that support such activity.

Two of the critical parts of Putin's dark ecosystem are corruption and organized crime. One way to think about this is applying James Q. Wilson and George Kelling's "Broken Windows" criminology theory, which posits that disorder and incivility in neighbourhoods create an atmosphere where serious crime can flourish, to international politics.³⁸⁶ In this sense, countries more prone to graft and gangsterism are also more likely to have weak institutions and succumb to malign political influence. However, beyond the atmospherics that corruption and organized crime generate, the Putin regime has also explicitly weaponized these things in order to achieve political objectives. Russia's influence campaigns tend to rely on a tangled web of opaque front corporations, murky energy deals, and complex money-laundering schemes to ensnare foreign elites and form ready-made Kremlin lobbies.

In a 2012 report for Chatham House, James Greene explained how Putin has weaponized graft, using "the corrupt transnational schemes that flowed seamlessly from Russia into the rest of the former Soviet space – and oozed beyond it" in order to "extend his shadow influence beyond Russia's borders and develop a natural, 'captured' constituency."³⁸⁷ _Corruption isn't just corruption. It is the new Communism. And the

³⁸⁶ George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson, "Broken Windows: Police and Neighborhood Safety," *The Atlantic*, March 1982. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

³⁸⁷ James Greene, "Russian Responses to NATO and EU Enlargement and Outreach," Chatham House Briefing Paper in The Means and Ends of Russian Influence Abroad Series, June 2012

Kremlin's black cash isn't just dirty money. It is the new Red Menace.³⁸⁸ And corruption's handmaiden in Putin's dark ecosystem is organized crime. Putin's Kremlin uses organized crime to carry out the tasks it wants to keep its fingerprints off, be it arms smuggling, assassinations, raising funds for black ops and influence operations, or stirring up trouble in the former Soviet space or the West.³⁸⁹

Spanish prosecutor Jose Grinda, who made his name combating Russian mobsters, briefed U.S. officials in Madrid in 2010, saying the Kremlin used "organized crime groups to do whatever the government of Russia cannot acceptably do as a government."³⁹⁰ Likewise, Mark Galeotti, author of the book *The Vory: Russia's Super Mafia*, has noted, Russia is less mafia state than a state with a nationalized mafia: "Russian-based organized crime groups in Europe have been used for a variety of purposes, including as sources of 'black cash', to launch cyber-attacks, to wield political influence, to traffic people and goods, and even to carry out targeted assassinations on behalf of the Kremlin," Galeotti noted in a recent report for the European Council on Foreign Relations.³⁹¹

A Gangster's Paradise

Putin's dark ecosystem was born in Russia. Before the Kremlin weaponized corruption and organized crime and unleashed them on an unsuspecting world, these were central tools in Russia's domestic political battles. In order to understand Putin's current assault on the West, it is instructive to briefly revisit the Wild East. Because in addition to Soviet military doctrine and KGB tradecraft, the roots of what we now call hybrid warfare can also be found in the domestic politics of Russia in the 1990s. The Russia of the 1990s was a chaotic world in which political clans deployed fake news, kompromat, deception, and subterfuge against each other with reckless abandon; targeted assassinations were commonplace; and corruption and organized crime were weaponized tools of political struggle. In her widely acclaimed book *Putin's Kleptocracy*, the late scholar Karen Dawisha called the Russia of the 1990s "a gangster's paradise."³⁹² This is where Putin cut his political teeth. As veteran Kremlin-watcher James Sherr has written, Putin may be a product of the Soviet KGB in "genealogical terms," but "in sociological terms, he is

https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0612bp_green.pdf (Accessed 21.04.2019).

³⁸⁸ Brian Whitmore, "Corruption is the New Communism," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, April 12, 2016 <https://www.rferl.org/a/corruption-is-the-new-communism/27669638.html> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

³⁸⁹ Brian Whitmore, "Putinfellas," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, May 3, 2016 <https://www.rferl.org/a/putinfellas-russia-putin-mafia/27713771.html> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

³⁹⁰ Luke Harding, "Wikileaks Cables: Russian Government 'Using Mafia For Its Dirty Work,'" *The Guardian*, December 1, 2010 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/01/wikileaks-cable-spain-russian-mafia> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

³⁹¹ Mark Galeotti, "Crimintern: How the Kremlin Uses Russian Criminal Networks in Europe," European Council on Foreign Relations, April 18, 2017.

³⁹² Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), p. 37.

the product of the new class that emerged in the Darwinian conditions of the 1990s: business-minded, ambitious, nationalistic, and coldly utilitarian about norms and rules."³⁹³ In other words, Putin's political DNA may have been formed by Lubyanka. But his political socialization took place amidst the gangster capitalism that marked Russia's first post-Soviet decade.

When Putin served as deputy mayor of St. Petersburg in the 1990s, for example, he spent a lot of time with mobsters. His formal job title was Chairman of St. Petersburg's Foreign Liaison Committee, where he oversaw foreign investment. But Putin also served as a political fixer for his boss and former law professor, Anatoly Sobchak, the city's first democratically elected mayor. And as Sobchak's fixer and heavy, Putin was also the city government's main liaison with the organized crime groups that de facto ruled the city.³⁹⁴

As Dawisha wrote, Putin soon became acquainted with Gennady Petrov and Vladimir Kumarin, the two key figures in the infamous Tambov gang, as well as with Aleksandr Malyshev, who led the organized crime group that bears his name. Putin collaborated with the Tambov and Malyshev organized crime groups to help them gain control of St. Petersburg's gambling industry. He used his office to help launder mafia money and to arrange foreign travel for known mobsters. And security for the Ozero dacha cooperative he co-founded with some of his ex-KGB pals was provided by a company run by the Tambov gang, which Putin also helped secure a monopoly over the city's fuel distribution network.³⁹⁵ "St. Petersburg in the 1990s provides a strikingly clear example of how the values of the CPSU, the KGB, and criminal gangs were blended together in pursuit of power," Ilya Zaslavskiy of the Free Russia Foundation wrote in a September 2017 report.³⁹⁶ Zaslavskiy noted that Putin and his cronies "created a number of well protected entities that monopolized a large chunk of the fuel trade, gambling, and other businesses in the city of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region. Some government bodies tried to counter this activity but failed, as Putin's team was aided by the St. Petersburg FSB, organized crime groups, and powerful protectors in Moscow. Throughout his career, Putin has successfully employed methods from his KGB past and from the criminal world in order to stay in power."³⁹⁷

³⁹³ James Sherr, "The New East-West Discord: Russian Objectives, Western Interests," Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, December 2015. http://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/The_New_East-West_Discord_JSherr.pdf (Accessed 21.04.2019).

³⁹⁴ See Dawisha.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ilya Zaslavskiy, "How Non-State Actors Export Kleptocratic Norms to the West," Hudson Institute Briefing Paper, September 2017, p. 10.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

The St. Petersburg of the 1990s was a Darwinian jungle where, duplicity was a legitimate tactic, rules are for sissies, and only might makes right. It was a world where a deputy governor, Mikhail Manevich, was assassinated during morning rush hour on the city's main thoroughfare, Nevsky Prospekt, by a rooftop sniper; where a State Duma deputy and human rights activist, Galina Starovoitova, was gunned down in the stairwell of her downtown apartment; where the deputy speaker of the city's legislature, Viktor Novosyolov, was decapitated by a bomb placed on the roof of his car; and where an oil executive, Pavel Kapysh, was killed by a rocket-propelled grenade on the city's University Embankment. It was a world where only the strong survived, and Putin not only survived, but thrived. He thrived by being ruthless, nihilistic, amoral, and coldly pragmatic. And he learned that if you had the right connections and power, you can control people by corrupting them. These were lessons that Putin took with him to Moscow, where he rose quickly, from a Kremlin functionary, to deputy Kremlin chief of staff, to FSB director, and ultimately to prime minister and president.

One incident in the midst of Putin's meteoric rise is particularly revealing. When Russia's Prosecutor-General Yury Skuratov opened corruption investigations into cronies of President Boris Yeltsin in the beginning of 1999, it was Putin who was instrumental in destroying him – with a honey trap. In March 1999, a video appeared on Russian television with a “man resembling the prosecutor-general” frolicking in bed with a prostitute. The video gained so much traction, and became such a pop culture hit, that the Russian phrase *chelovek kotorii pohoazhe na Skuratova* – a person resembling Skuratov – quickly became a popular buzz phrase. And how did the tape fall into the hands of one of Russia's largest television stations? Writing in *The Atlantic*, Julia Ioffe playfully noted that “the tape is rumoured to have been delivered personally to the head of RTR by ‘a man who looked like the head of the FSB,’ who at the time was none other than Vladimir Putin.”³⁹⁸ The following month, Putin went on television to confirm that the man in the video was indeed Skuratov – and called for his resignation and a criminal investigation. The incident is widely believed to have been a key factor in Yeltsin's decision to name Putin as his designated successor.

Spreading ‘Sistema’

Despite his close links to organized crime, Putin rose to the Kremlin with a pledge to end the crime, corruption, and chaos of the 1990s and impose a “dictatorship of law.” What he did, in practice, was to centralize it and use it to help facilitate his consolidation of power. “Many criminals at the time feared that Putin was serious in his tough law-and-order rhetoric, but it soon became clear that he was simply offering (imposing) a new social contract with the underworld,” Galeotti wrote. “Word went out that gangsters could

³⁹⁸ Julia Ioffe, “How Kompromat Works,” *The Atlantic*, January 11, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/kompromat-trump-dossier/512891/> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

continue to be gangsters without fearing the kind of systematic crack-down they had feared – but only so long as they understood that the state was the biggest gang in town and they did nothing to directly challenge it. The underworld complied.”³⁹⁹ However, as Galeotti noted, there was an additional clause in this offer that the gangsters couldn’t refuse: “This was not just a process of setting new boundaries for the criminals; it also led to a restructuring of connections between the underworld and the ‘upperworld’, to the benefit of the latter. Connections between these groups and the state security apparatus grew, and the two became closer to each other. The result was not simply institutionalization of corruption and further blurring of the boundaries between licit and illicit; but the emergence of a conditional understanding that Russia now had a ‘nationalized underworld’. In short, when the state wanted something from the criminals, they were expected to comply.”⁴⁰⁰ A similar dynamic took place regarding corruption. Putin didn’t end it, he centralized it centralized it and nationalized it. Under Putin, corruption became a de facto tool of statecraft. Officials were given license to seek rents and monetize their positions, with the understanding that even the suspicion of disloyalty would result in prosecution. It was a carrot and a stick that has kept the elite docile, servile, and pliant. When everybody is corrupt, everybody is vulnerable. And when everybody is vulnerable, everybody is loyal. In this sense, Putinism became just the latest version of what the political scientist Alena Ledeneva calls “Sistema,” the web of corruption, patronage networks, and informal rules that have long defined Russian politics.⁴⁰¹

Having used corruption and organized crime to consolidate and maintain power at home, Putin then turned these tools outward as tools to expand Russia’s influence abroad. The result is an East-West conflict that is different from the Cold War. According to Sherr, “Russia is not an ‘existential enemy,’ but it is an antagonist, and its self-declared interests in Europe diverge from those of the vast majority of European states.” He added that “two normative systems” have emerged on the Eurasian land mass, “the first based on rights and rules, the second on connections, clientelism, and the subordination of law to power.”⁴⁰² Vladimir Putin’s regime, he added, “is applying its tools of influence to circumvent the European normative system and undermine it.” Toward this end, the Kremlin has taken advantage of Russia’s integration into the global economy to undermine the West’s institutions. In effect, it has weaponized globalization. The result

³⁹⁹ Mark Galeotti, “Crimintern: How the Kremlin Uses Russian Criminal Networks in Europe,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, April 18, 2017.

⁴⁰⁰ Mark Galeotti, “Crimintern: How the Kremlin Uses Russian Criminal Networks in Europe,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, April 18, 2017.

⁴⁰¹ Alena Ledeneva, *Can Russia Modernize: Sistema, Power Networks, and Informal Governance* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁴⁰² James Sherr, “The New East-West Discord: Russian Objectives, Western Interests,” *Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael*, December 2015
http://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/The_New_East-West_Discord_JSherr.pdf (Accessed 21.04.2019).

has turned the optimistic assumption many held in the 1990s -- that Russia's integration with the West would lead it to adopt Western norms -- on its head. In fact, the opposite has happened. "The truth is that the West has largely failed to export its democratic norms and is instead witnessing an increasingly coordinated assault on its own value system," Zaslavskiy wrote.⁴⁰³ He added that, "the flow of dictators and oligarchs to the West—along with their corrupt values and corrosive practices—has become a defining feature of globalization. In the past two decades, geopolitics and graft have become intertwined to an unprecedented degree. Kleptocratic states have become adept at using corrupt businessmen as proxies to advance their political goals, while the latter jump at the chance to pursue their private ambitions with state backing. The bipolar power structure of the Cold War provided clearer boundaries, not only ideologically, but also in commerce. Business interactions between each side could be carefully inspected, vetted, and limited. The porous borders, technological advances, and empowered transnational corporations unleashed by the end of the Cold War make this all but impossible today." The Kremlin's natural targets in these efforts are the former Communist states of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact that are now members of NATO and the European Union. The Putin regime's ability to regain a foothold in the three Baltic states, the Visegrad four, and in Black Sea littoral states like Romania and Bulgaria is, to a large degree, related to the Kremlin's ability to corrupt these countries.

The Baltic Front

There is a lack of consensus among Kremlin-watchers and security experts about the relative success of Russian active measures -- and even about how to measure success. If success means enabling the victory of pro-Kremlin candidates and the adoption of pro-Kremlin policies, then the Putin regime's record is mixed at best. But if success is measured in Moscow's ability to sow discord, doubt, and confusion with the aim of disrupting the democratic process and undermining institutions, then Russia's record looks considerably stronger. The Baltic states are widely considered to be among the most resilient in Europe in resisting the Kremlin's malign influence campaigns. But among them, at least on the surface, there appears to be a strong interrelationship between corruption and organized crime on one hand and the relative success of Russian measures on the other.

Let's consider Estonia and Latvia. On the surface, they have a lot in common. The Baltic neighbours share a similar history of interwar independence and Soviet occupation. Both have successfully navigated themselves into the European Union and NATO. Each has an ethnic-Russian minority that makes up about a quarter of the population (25.4 percent in Latvia and 26 percent in Estonia). One way they differ sharply is the level of corruption. On Transparency International's Corruption Perception index, which assigns

⁴⁰³ Zaslavskiy, p. 10

countries a score from zero to 100 -- with zero being highly corrupt and 100 very clean -- Estonia scored a 71, making it the least corrupt former Communist country. Overall, the tiny Baltic state ranked it 21st in the world in terms of clean governance, slightly behind Japan and slightly ahead of France.⁴⁰⁴ Latvia, in contrast, earned a score of 58, ranking it 40th in the world. To be sure, Latvia has made great strides in fighting corruption, particularly in the area of money laundering, and its corruption perception score on the Transparency index has been steadily improving. Still, compared to its northern neighbour, corruption in Latvia remains a problem -- and a security risk. And corruption isn't the only way the two Baltic states differ.

The World Economic Forum's annual Global Competitiveness Index scores countries from one to seven on the cost imposed on business from organized crime -- with one indicating high costs and seven meaning negligible costs.⁴⁰⁵ Estonia scored a 6.2, making it the tenth least organized crime infested country in the world -- on par with Luxemburg. Latvia ranked 33rd in the world with a score of 5.5. Taken together, the relative prevalence of corruption and organized crime may explain why Latvia's general elections in October 2018 caused more concern than Estonia's in March 2019. According to recent research by the Tallinn-based International Centre for Defence and Security, the Warsaw-based EAST Research Centre, and the Riga-based Security Centre for East European Policy Studies, "Estonia [has] developed noticeably higher quality of systemic responses to disinformation campaigns than the other Baltic States." Conversely, according to the study, "Latvia does relatively worse than the other two neighbours in withstanding the information threats."⁴⁰⁶

The Visegrad Gap

A similar dynamic is visible among the Visegrad states, one that is starkly illustrated by comparing the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Not only were they both once part of the Warsaw Pact, they were once part of the same country. However, there is a noticeable gap between them when it comes to corruption and organized crime. According to the 2017 Transparency International Corruption perception index, the Czech ranked 42nd in the world in terms of clean governance with a score of 57. The Slovaks, in contrast, ranked 54th with a score of 50. The gap is starker with organized crime. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index, the Czechs ranked the 16th least crime infested country in the world -- three places higher than neighbouring Austria.

⁴⁰⁴ Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2017, February 21, 2018. https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017?qclid=CjwKCAjwwJrbBRAoEiwAGA1B_d6VLVf0S5QZSD9ZHhfrQ84UaDoTRcT-7E2uVSIq_JsnJ1y12M241hoCtXyQAvD_BwE

⁴⁰⁵ World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index 2017-2018 <http://reports.weforum.org/global-competitiveness-index-2017-2018/competitiveness-rankings/#series=EOSQ035>

⁴⁰⁶ Disinformation Resilience Index: The Baltic States, International Center for Defense and Security, December 7, 2017. <https://icds.ee/disinformation-resilience-index-the-baltic-states/>

Slovakia, in contrast, ranked 64th in the world, roughly on par with Tajikistan, Armenia, and Kazakhstan. And not surprisingly, the Slovaks appear much more receptive to Moscow's narratives than the Czechs. According to GLOBSEC's 2018 Trends Report, 65 percent of Czechs have a positive attitude toward NATO compared to 37 percent of Slovaks. Some 41 percent of Slovaks agree with Putin compared to 32 percent of Czechs.⁴⁰⁷

Organized crime and corruption also appear to powerful explanatory variables when looking at the Visegrad Four as a whole. The Prague-based European Values think tank produced a study in May 2017 ranking the ability of the European Union's 28 member states to detect and respond to Russian malign influence operations.⁴⁰⁸ The study assigned scores from zero to fifteen to assess each countries perception of the threat, countermeasures, and counter intelligence activities. It then broke the EU-28 down into six groups from the weakest to the strongest: Kremlin-collaborators, the ignorant, the hesitant, the mildly concerned, the cognizant, and the full-scale defenders. Poland and the Czech Republic fell into the second-strongest category, the cognizant, with scores of 12 and 11 respectively. Slovakia and Hungary were in the second weakest category, the ignorant, with scores of three and two respectively. On both Transparency International's corruption index and the World Economic Forum's organized crime rankings, the Czech Republic and Poland score better than Slovakia and Hungary.

The Black Sea Balance

A similar dynamic is present comparing Romania and Bulgaria, two neighbouring former Warsaw Pact countries now embedded in the EU and NATO. Romania scores higher than Hungary on both Transparency International's corruption index and the World Economic Forum's organized crime rankings. On corruption, the Romanians ranked 59th in the world in terms of clean governance, while the Bulgarians ranked 71st. On organized crime, the gap was more pronounced. Of the 137 countries surveyed, Romania was in the middle of the pack as the 71st least infested with organized crime. Bulgaria, on the other hand, was near the bottom of the rankings at 113th. And Romania has proven more resilient than Hungary in resisting Russian malign influence and pro-Kremlin narratives. According to GLOBSEC's Trends 2017 report, their last study to include both countries, just 42 percent of Bulgarians say they consider themselves part

⁴⁰⁷ Central Europe: One Region, Different Perspectives, Globsec Trends 2018 (<https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/GLOBSEC-Trends-2018.pdf>)

⁴⁰⁸ "Overview of Countermeasures by the EU28 to the Kremlin's subversion operations", *European Values Kremlin Watch Report*, May 16, 2017. https://www.europeanvalues.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Overview-of-countermeasures-by-the-EU28-to-the-Kremlin%E2%80%99s-subversion-operations.pdf?&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=kremlin_watch_briefing_new_ranking_of_countermeasures_by_the_eu28_to_the_kremlins_subversion_operations&utm_term=2018-08-17 (Accessed 22.04.2019).

of the West, compared to 50 percent of Romanians.⁴⁰⁹ And although both countries show strong support for the EU and NATO, backing for both Western organizations is higher in Romania. Just seven percent of Romanians say they would favour leaving the EU. In Bulgaria, the figure is 15 percent. Strong majorities in both countries say NATO is important for their security. But in Romania the figure is 87 percent and in Bulgaria it is 66 percent. Moreover, while 81 percent of Romanians say they are prepared to defend other NATO allies in the event of an attack, as compared to just 47 percent of Bulgarians.

Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, 60 percent of Romanians say liberal democracy is the best political system for their country as compared to 37 percent in Bulgaria. "Taking into consideration that every third Bulgarian believes disinformation and conspiracy theories and 70 percent of Bulgarians find Vladimir Putin likeable, this is quite an alarming finding for and EU and NATO member country," GLOBSEC wrote in the report. This observation is buttressed by the findings of the European Values think tank. In that study, Romania was ranked in the second strongest group, "the cognizant," with a score of nine. Bulgaria, in contrast, ranked in the third weakest group, with a score of five. The report notes that Bulgaria is "a key target for Russian intelligence operations, 21 which is not reflected in the activities of the Bulgarian intelligence services." This is largely due to "deep penetration of Russian interests in the economy, combined with domestic corruption, Bulgaria must also contend with powerful Russian efforts to influence policy. This situation of 'state capture' further complicates Bulgaria's response to malign Russian influence."⁴¹⁰

From Broken Windows to Hybrid Containment

The Putin regime behaves a lot like a crime syndicate masquerading as a state. And in devising a strategy to combat and contain it, the West needs to rely on criminology as much as on theories of geopolitics. In their influential article on Broken Windows policing, Kelling and Wilson posited that disorder and incivility in neighbourhoods created an atmosphere where serious crime can flourish. One policy resulting from the article was the implementation of policing methods that were more vigilant about targeting minor offenses like vandalism and public drunkenness as part of an effort to combat more

⁴⁰⁹ "Mixed Messages and Signs of Hope from Central & Eastern Europe", *GLOBSEC Trends 2017* https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/globsec_trends_2017.pdf (Accessed 22.04.2019).

⁴¹⁰ "Overview of Countermeasures by the EU28 to the Kremlin's subversion operations", *European Values Kremlin Watch Report*, May 16, 2017. https://www.europeanvalues.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Overview-of-countermeasures-by-the-EU28-to-the-Kremlin%E2%80%99s-subversion-operations.pdf?&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=kremlin_watch_briefing_new_ranking_of_countermeasures_by_the_eu28_to_the_kremlins_subversion_operations&utm_term=2018-08-17 (Accessed 22.04.2019).

serious crimes. A second was CompStat, a system that identified spikes in crime using comparative statistics and responded to them through targeted enforcement.

Containing Putin's dark ecosystem should employ a similar approach. Putin is waging a "hybrid war" on the West, deploying non-kinetic tools to undermine public trust and democratic institutions. But rather than simply being reactive, the West needs to be proactive; it needs a coherent, coordinated, systematic, and multilateral policy to deal with the Putin regime's non-kinetic aggression. If we are targets of a hybrid war, it stands to reason that we should respond with something I call "Hybrid Containment." It means greater vigilance about graft. Targeting minor offenses e.g. vandalism will make region safer from violent crime, targeting corruption will enhance national security. While Putin didn't invent offshore corporations, shell companies, or money laundering, he sure is using them all to advance Russia's revanchist goals. Corruption, therefore, needs to be looked at like a national security issue. Laundering the Kremlin's dirty money needs to be looked at as a form of espionage. Because the Putin regime is effectively holding up a magnifying glass to our own weaknesses and shortcomings. And the good news here is that this is something we can address ourselves. Likewise, the hybrid containment of Putin's dark ecosystem would require something similar to CompStat, a system that would identify non-kinetic threats in advance. Just as the U.S. armed forces uses the Defense Readiness Condition, or DefCon, to determine alert levels for kinetic threats all the way up to nuclear war, new updated system of alert levels need to be established for Putin's non-kinetic warfare.

This chapter does not claim to be comprehensive or conclusive – but it does suggest that more research is needed into the dark ecosystem that makes Russian malign influence possible. What it also suggests is that combatting Russian malign influence needs to move beyond the current reactive whack-a-mole approach. This battle is about more than countering disinformation, protecting electoral infrastructure, or regulating social media. It requires a holistic approach that contains the entire gestalt of Putin's political war on the West. And a prerequisite for such an approach is understanding the ecosystem that makes the Kremlin's malign influence campaigns work. Corruption and organized crime are not the only elements in Putin's dark ecosystem. Levels of Russian direct foreign investment that is above board as well as dependence on Russian energy are also important. For the Kremlin, business -- whether legitimate or in the shadows -- is never just business, but a tool of influence. The degree of political polarization likewise provides an atmosphere that Kremlin-sponsored disinformation campaigns and efforts at malign influence can exploit. But what is clear from a quick look at the data is that corruption and organized crime need to be key variables on any index measuring vulnerability to Russian active measures campaigns.

They're not just matters of good governance and law and order anymore. They are issues of national security -- and should be treated as such.

The Strength to Win a Different Kind of War

Mr. Mark Laity

This is a remarkable time to be involved in Strategic Communications (StratCom). Ever since the Russia intervened in Ukraine StratCom has been central to the NATO debate about how to best respond at the Grand Strategic level. In confronting so-called Hybrid Warfare, operating in the grey zone short of war, effective StratCom is fundamental to how we do business. I would go further and say effective StratCom is a necessity for the Alliance's future and the security of NATO's nations. Hybrid Warfare is not a term I especially like for, as the old saying goes, there is nothing new under the sun, but in 2014 the Russian Federation certainly surprised us and did appear to pose a new challenge. Supposed certainties about the new European space that had been put in place at the end of the Cold War were swept aside by Russia, using a mix of techniques with a level of imagination and competence that required a rethink on our part.

The ensuing debate about Hybrid Warfare, and especially how new it really is, is not just academic for it conditions our response. New wine in old bottles that requires some variations (big or small) on existing themes, or do we need some radical responses to a radical change. Perhaps inevitably the answer is somewhere in between.

In a publication reflecting on 70 years of NATO it is even more appropriate to look back and see what our history tells us. And it tells us a lot, and even if the information age gives us new challenges and technologies many of the key principles and problems still hold from NATO's early days. This includes what's commonly called the struggle for hearts and minds, so note this remark from a Joint US Congressional report in 1947, "Europe today has again become a vast battlefield of ideologies in which words have replaced armaments as the active elements of attack and defence. The USSR and its obedient Communist parties throughout Europe have taken the initiative in this war of words against the western democracies." Four years later in 1951 the US Senate passed Resolution 74 which opened stating, "Whereas the first weapon of aggression by the Kremlin is propaganda designed to subvert, to confuse and to divide the free world, and to inflame the Russian and satellite peoples with hatred for our free institutions..."⁴¹¹

You don't have to agree with the tone of those statements to agree that it does highlight that today's information battle is not so new. Even the Marshall Plan, the effective bailing out by the US of impoverished Western European nations was recognised by its

⁴¹¹ I strongly recommend this superb article by Matt Armstrong, "The Past, Present, and Future of the War for Public Opinion", *The War on the Rocks*, 22 January 2017. <https://warontherocks.com/2017/01/the-past-present-and-future-of-the-war-for-public-opinion/> (Accessed 22.04.2019).

architects as also about what today we would call StratCom - as noted in 1947 by George Kennan (best known for articulating the containment doctrine), "...we must recognize that much of the value of a European recovery program will lie not so much in its direct economic effects, which are difficult to calculate with any degree of accuracy, as in its psychological political by-products."⁴¹² Indeed, one of those who recognised this most was NATO's first SACEUR, General 'Ike' Eisenhower. As candidate for US president in 1952 he got to the heart of StratCom when he argued, "As a nation everything we say, everything we do and everything we fail to say or do, will have its impact in other lands."⁴¹³

Few people in such high office have more succinctly recognised that communication is about say/do, not just say/say. Then the term Psychological Operations, PSYOPS, did not have the somewhat negative connotations it does today and Eisenhower said in the same speech, 'Don't be afraid of that term just because it's a five-dollar, five syllable term. Psychological Warfare is the struggle for the minds and wills of men.'⁴¹⁴ Reading his statements as both general and US President, what he called Psychological Warfare would be called StratCom today. He also had a shrewd understanding of what motivates people and the limitations of argument, noting the 'basic truth' that, "...humans are spiritual beings; they respond to sentiment & emotions as well as to statistics & logic." In our age of populism, post truth and emotive narratives, this rings even truer and figures from philosopher Aristotle to behavioural psychologist Daniel Kahneman would approve

Those beliefs in the power of StratCom he carried into office as US president, most obviously through the creation of the US Information Agency, although this was but one more of the more visible symbols of a sustained effort by his administration. For instance, his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles noted the US needed to change policy on nuclear disarmament on communication grounds, "We must recognise that we can lose the whole struggle with the Soviets if we fail to take into account such imponderables as world opinion, and it is in this area that we have been taking a beating."⁴¹⁵ But most notable for me was Eisenhower's recognition of the world where traditional definitions of war needed revisiting in a different kind of struggle. In his 1958 State of the Union address he confronted it head-on stating that military power was essential but not enough on its own, "Up to this point, I have talked solely about our military strength to deter a possible future war. I now want to talk about the strength we need to win a different kind of war—one that has already been launched against us."

⁴¹² "Certain Aspects of the European Recovery Problem from the U.S. Standpoint", *Mountain Runner*, 22 April 2015. <https://mountainrunner.us/2015/04/hierhelfen/> (Accessed 22.04.2019).

⁴¹³ Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War*, p.47, University Press of Kansas, 2006.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.46

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.205

He was referring to activities short of war, saying, “The Soviets are, in short, waging total cold war. The only answer to a regime that wages total cold war is to wage total peace. This means bringing to bear every asset of our personal and national lives upon the task of building the conditions in which security and peace can grow.”⁴¹⁶ Again, even if the Cold War tone may grate with some, the analysis has obvious resonance with today. Whether it is called ‘hybrid’, ‘grey zone operations’, ‘new generation warfare’ or ‘political warfare’ then the principles have already been laid out. Of course, the US was not the only NATO nation involved, the British especially, all recognising challenges and principles that resonate today. What of NATO as an organisation? While NATO nations often acted individually there was very mixed approach to NATO’s role and the NATO Information Service (NATIS) was often limited by nations in its activities during the height of the Cold War.⁴¹⁷ Nevertheless, some useful insights emerged, for instance the close co-operation with intelligence services in terms of analysis & assessment. Also, a more explicit recognition that NATIS was in a contest for influence with the Soviet Union. The seminal Harmel Report in the late sixties led to a more explicit recognition of the need for more NATO activity to explain itself.

The NATIS Director, John Price, appointed after this was blunt, “...we have not hitherto paid enough attention to the whole question of the role of public opinion & its effects on the deterrent value of the alliance’s military force. To the larger masses of unqualified opinion the word NATO means nothing. It is no good have the best equipped & trained military forces in the world if a large section of the civilian population could, when the time comes, show itself – perhaps by open demonstration – as resolutely opposed to the use of these forces in any circumstances.”⁴¹⁸ NATIS also sought to ensure a sophisticated understanding of Soviet narratives in order to counter them, working with individual nations. Another noteworthy point is to see West Germany, a country most sensitive to suggestions of propaganda, raising in 1960 their desire to allow NATO to engage in PSYOPS in peace as well as war. Currently, active PSYOPS output is restricted to actual operations following North Atlantic Council authorisation, but the Germans wanted peacetime PSYOPS. Then West German Defence Minister Franz Josef Strauss argued, “The psychological warfare carried out by the Soviet bloc has military implications in that its aim was to weaken the western nations’ will to defend themselves so that a military effort would no longer be required...”⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ Dwight Eisenhower, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union”, January 9, 1958. *The Eisenhower Archives*.

https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/speeches/1958_state_of_the_union.pdf (Accessed 22.04.2019).

⁴¹⁷ Linda Risso, *Propaganda & Intelligence in the Cold War, The NATO Information Service*, Routledge, 2014. This valuable book provides an authoritative study into a little-known area.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid* p.111

⁴¹⁹ Risso, 2014, p.94

Germany also noted the ferocious Soviet narrative against West German, portraying its government as a warmonger, NATO as imperialist and saying NATO bases on German soil merely making Germans the first targets in any war.⁴²⁰ That latter narrative, of nations making themselves targets, was also prominent during the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces debate in the late 80s and is already being used by Russia to try to influence the debate over its breach of the 1987 treaty.

So again, there are lessons to be identified and adapted to today's challenges. It has become something of a kneejerk statement to say there will be no return to the Cold War, and to be called a Cold War Warrior is an epithet to be avoided. I am confident the Russians, who are quick to use the term as a criticism about others, have no such qualms about digging into their own archives for lessons. Looking at their approach it is hard not to see a Cold War element in so much of what they do.

The Struggle for Modern StratCom

Moving to today's StratCom, it has to be noted it was far from easy. It was the culmination of a 10-year debate, where special interests, principles, traditional thinking, old habits, and new challenges had clashed over what StratCom was, should be, how to do it – and even whether it should exist. And while the internal battle raged, externally the information world kept changing and our adversaries kept moving forward. Therein lies the vital importance of MC0628, the new military policy on StratCom approved by the Military Committee in 2017. It resolved the debate enabling the Alliance to better deal with a tool and concept – information & influence – that may be as old as Sun Tzu, but one that has been supercharged and transformed by cultural change and revolutionary technology.

Before 0628 our efforts were too often improvised or the product of unresolved conflicts between the communication disciplines. There has been no lack of effort, and at times success, but the basis for sustained progress within the military structure had not been there. So often in NATO HQs the annual staff rotation has seen massive spikes or dips in effectiveness due to variations in training, knowledge or willingness to cooperate within the communication disciplines. Most of the time though those in StratCom positions simply wanted consistent, clear, guidance and we could not easily give it to them.

It must be emphasised again, much good work was done by many good people, and also progress made in pushing StratCom forward. Nevertheless, the lack of a baseline document and common principles and processes held us back. We were too often distracted by yesterday's issues instead of coping with today's problems and preparing for tomorrow's challenges. In the end it was the Russian aggression in Ukraine that made

⁴²⁰ Risso, 2014, p. 94

the difference. In the 2014 summit communiqué NATO's leaders stated, "We will ensure that NATO is able to effectively address the specific challenges posed by hybrid warfare threats.... This will also include enhancing Strategic Communications." In the face of the Russian's brutally effective use of Information Confrontation the need was clear, resulting in the Military Committee tasking of 2015 that ultimately led to 2017's approved MC0628. However, a critical component of today's StratCom was another conflict on another continent. The actual passage of MC0628 may have been a consequence of the urgent need to respond to what Russia did in Ukraine. But the basis to write document, the operational experience that we could draw on, came from Afghanistan, where again an adversary exposed the inadequacies of our current information effort. Here again the dedication of our communication teams could not be faulted, but the results rarely matched the effort.

I was a part of all this with three Afghan tours between 2006 & 2010. It means I can criticise without accusations of hindsight or backseat driving precisely because I was a part of it – the successes, the failures, and the learning. It was Bob Gates who summed up much of the frustration when he blurted out, "Are we organized properly ... when we're being out-communicated by a guy in a cave?" That wasn't always so, but sometimes it was. It was my first Afghan tour, in 2006-7, that in many respects pointed the way, both in highlighting the problems and the solutions. The ARRC-led ISAF IX of 2006 understood the communication challenge and sought to face up to it, but never fully achieved the outcomes their insight deserved. By the time I returned I knew we were not fit for the communication fight. Our structures divided not united, our policies, doctrines and processes tended to marginalise communications both within the disciplines and from the wider headquarters. Our training was woeful with, too often, good people thrown in to learn on the job, trying to pick up skills unrelated to the common experience of most military officers.

Concepts such as strategic narrative were little appreciated, our ability to understand cultures and how to speak to them even less so. The requirement for information effects (the StratCom term was little used then) could vary wildly from being a belated afterthought to unrealistic expectations of quickly influencing unpalatable effects on the ground – what some wearily called 'sprinkling more information fairy dust.' When I went to Kabul, I had been SHAPE's Chief of Public Affairs, the first civilian to hold the post, but within a few months of my return, I was SHAPE's Chief Strategic Communications, the first StratCom position anywhere in NATO. The process was messy, but the timing was right and the need for change was clear. And not just to me. I am proud to have played a part in advancing StratCom within NATO, but it was as part of a team seeking change often as a result of their Afghan experience. Corps like the ARRC and the German Netherlands Corp and other individuals all came together to work out the best way forward.

At more or less the same time ISAF was also undergoing radical change. The crisis in ISAF's fortunes in 2008-9 ultimately brought in General Stan McChrystal and amongst his changes was the creation of a Communication Directorate under a 2* officer charged to 'Plan, coordinate, execute, and assess all strategic communication efforts, including public affairs, information operations and psychological operations throughout the Combined Joint Area of Operations.' In effect then most of the key principles and features of MC0628 were already a strong trend at the operational level in 2010. But there was no such agreement at the strategic and political/military level. Most knew there was a problem but there was no agreement about the solution. Until 2014 that is. As outlined earlier the Russian's effective use of information warfare gave NATO the same shock at the political-military level as a decade earlier the Taliban had shocked ISAF at the operational level. Reality bites, and the debate after Russia's aggression in Crimea and then Eastern Ukraine took on a very different tone.

It quickly became evident the Russian were using the information line of effort (LoE) to disrupt, deceive, delay and dismay. It could be trolling; disinformation; information smokescreens and lies about Spetsnaz, false narratives to scare, mislead or control, taking down or controlling cell net towers. What was also clear was that the Russian use of information was not some add-on or improvised effort but a fully integrated part of their overall strategy. If we had needed evidence we were in a new world, we had it. Now we are learning to live with the consequences. MC0628 is one piece – but only one piece, however essential – of the puzzle we now must solve to ensure StratCom reaches its full potential to help the Alliance.

The 21st Century Information Age and Security

It is both true and a cliché to say that the principles of war are enduring in their application. However, if the principles still apply then the circumstances of their application do change, oftentimes to transformative effect. Thus, the bow & arrow, howitzers and fighter-bombers are all forms of indirect fires but of course were also all revolutionary technologies that changed the nature of warfare.

The same applies to information technology. It was Napoleon who is reputed to have said, 'Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.' How much more to 'be feared' is the omnipresent smartphone? The doyen of communication theorists, the Canadian, Marshall McLuhan, is best known for predicting the nature of the media age when he said 'the medium is the message', but more relevantly for this article he said in 1970, 'World War III is a guerrilla information war with no division between military and civilian participation.' He was thinking more about Vietnam but I would suggest the technology of the internet has brought such statements to maturity.

The traditional view of the Russian military is as unimaginative and stolid, but this stereotype has always been something of a caricature that disguises some deep thinking

about the art of war. I think this applies to their thinking about the nature of modern conflict and in this context the role of information as integral to the overall strategy. Of course, the Russians are not alone in recognising this, at least theoretically, and in the West most of us are familiar with DIME: Diplomatic; Information; Military; Economic, and PMESII: Political; Military; Economic; Social; Information; Infrastructure. However too often that theoretical acknowledgement has been more lip service. What we saw in Crimea in 2014 was such thinking being implemented, especially in the information environment – what the Russians call Information Confrontation.

Thus, when the Russians inserted their special forces into Crimea they disguised their entry with what Churchill might have called a ‘bodyguard of lies’. They isolated Crimeans from outside information sources while at the same scaring them with lies about the imminent arrival of Ukrainian fascists, cleverly playing upon old narratives of the Patriotic War. The Russians saturated the internet with disinformation and the ultimate effect and intent was, in military terminology, to get inside our decision-making cycle so that by the time we really knew and agreed on what was happening it was too late, and the Kremlin was in full control of Crimea. The same tactics were tried to initial good effect in Eastern Ukraine, but the shock effect had worn off and the response of both other countries and Ukraine also showed that the Information Line of Effort is not enough on its own if the other objective circumstances aren’t sufficiently aligned. Critically they underestimated Ukraine, the same narratives and desires that had driven the EuroMaiden – itself an information warfare battleground – produced an upsurge of determination and courage that allowed Ukrainians to improvise an effective response to the Russian-supported rebels in the East.

The aftermath of Russia’s aggression in Ukraine not only accelerated the development of StratCom within NATO it also belatedly focussed attention on Russia’s defence policies and thinking. What it showed was that we should have been less surprised than we were because what the Russians did, they had been talking about for years. Much of the public Western discussion has had as its starting point the so-called Gerasimov slide. Gerasimov, the current Russian Chief of the General Staff wrote an article in the Military-Industrial Courier of February 2013 in which he stated among other things, "new means of conducting military operations have appeared that cannot be considered purely military." The article was illustrated with the now famous slide showing the six phases of conflict from covert beginnings to a victorious peace. For our purposes, of most interest is the box labelled ‘Information Confrontation’. It is the only box which covers all six phases of conflict and also straddles both non-military and military measures. In other words, it is omnipresent.

It would be a mistake to regard the much-debated article as laying out how the Russians planned to conduct what we call hybrid conflict. Rather it was looking ahead and providing an analysis of the trends for future warfare – in other words how warfare would

be conducted by everyone, including us. But if this is how future conflict will unfold then those implementing it will of course include Russia. The article is in many, but not all, respects something of a tick-box for what actually happened in Ukraine and is going on elsewhere. The article's content is also far from an outlier and is mirrored in multiple articles in other Russian journals, and also reflected in Russia's 2014 military doctrine. The pre-eminence of Information Confrontation in Russian thinking for future conflict was further highlighted by General Gerasimov in March 2018 when he stated, "The army operating concepts of the leading states postulate that achieving **information dominance is an indispensable pre-requisite of combat actions** (*my highlighting*). The means of mass media and social networks are used to perform the set tasks."

Of course, Sun Tzu, highlighting that means may change but principles endure, has something relevant to say, noting, "Thus it is that in war the victorious strategist only seeks battle after the victory has been won, whereas he who is destined to defeat first fights and afterwards looks for victory." Indeed, one of the current discussions is whether the effective use of non-military measures may not just make victory in conflict inevitable but render actual fighting unnecessary in order to achieve your aims. What is increasingly clear is that the old paradigm of peace or war does not work as it used to. The Russians, and indeed the Chinese are highlighting differing paths to power which are not military – seeking to achieve their grand strategic aims without fighting or shaping operations that make any conflict short and limited. As some NATO nation leaderships are suggesting, we live in a state of constant competition.

Looking at the history of the Soviet Union perhaps helps explain their ability to think about future conflict this way. Communism may no longer be the driving force of Russia but at its core communism was about what we would call political warfare – the means of spreading communism were developed and practiced over a hundred years and those techniques are well suited to today's so-called hybrid conflict. So, in the Cold War information activities were an intrinsic part of Soviet 'Active Measures' which covered a range of activities from disinformation through subversion to political assassinations, political warfare, media manipulation, foreign election-rigging and '*special actions*' involving various degrees of violence. The aim of Active Measures included creating disruption and discord among NATO & its allies. It was taught at the KGB's Andropov Institute near Moscow, one of whose graduates was, as a young KGB officer, President Putin. Compared to television, radio and newspapers, social media and internet naturally enhance the features of Russian-style Information Confrontation. For instance, it's easier to stay covert; the cost of information technology has plummeted enabling saturation tactics; it's possible to bypass intermediaries to go direct to your target audience; Smartphones are omnipresent making information activities far more powerful, and in an era of distrust then disruptive narratives are far more potent.

However, while the Kremlin has updated its Cold War playbook what has changed is that the Cold War was a clash of ideologies, between communism and liberal democracy, with their concurrent narratives. The modern Russia has no such positive-sounding narrative to offer, but is more the disruptor, to create and exploit the differences and discords within the West. It would be a mistake though not to understand that the conduct of Russia's Information Confrontation is in support of an overall grand strategy to upset the current international order and reintroduce spheres of interest which would inevitably favour them within Europe. It's also worth noting that Russia is not the only body that is exploiting the new information environment. China, typically taking the long view, approved in 2003 its 'Three Warfares', comprising Strategic Psychological Warfare, Media Warfare and Legal Warfare. In a different league, and a direct enemy of NATO, are terrorists such as ISIS, who in practising asymmetric warfare regard information as a critical tool. Their strength has been exploitation of social media and in particular their understanding of culture and narrative for their target audiences.

Managing the New Information Environment

As outlined above we face a formidable challenge to compete in this arena. There is no doubt we in NATO are now taking StratCom with a level of seriousness significantly greater than before. For instance, one major step forward was the creation of the StratCom Centre of Excellence in Latvia, variously as a centre of thinking, expertise, mentoring and promotion, while also further linking us to the wider communication community outside the military. As noted in the first section MC0628 also gives us a clear roadmap, and importantly ends some of the internal disputes that distracted us from our external challenge. But is it enough? If as General Gerasimov posits 'information dominance is an indispensable pre-requisite of combat actions' then the level of resources required, whether in training, organization and thinking, is significant. Having just declared Cyber as a domain of operations then arguably information should also be one. Interestingly Russia sees cyber more as a tool of its wider Information Confrontation. In looking at rising to this challenge then certain principles stand out.

One is to recognise that NATO and its military can only do so much. Success in the information battle is part of an overall effort of which the military provide some but not all of the tools. There are many elements contributing to success in the current security environment, most of them outside the Alliance's control. They also require action well before the immediate run-up to actual fighting that is NATO's forte. The line between conflict and peace is very blurred. In this context then NATO must be an integral part of a wider team, partnering not just with NATO's nations but institutions like the EU.

That net also needs to go wider still. One lesson of the last few years has been the effectiveness and impact of civil society. It's no exaggeration to say that at the height of their crisis it was groups like the Ukraine Crisis Media Centre and StopFake that

brilliantly carried the main burden of Ukraine's communication effort. But we, with all our resources, have hugely benefitted from the independent efforts of groups like Bellingcat and the Atlantic Council as well as individual experts.

Not only did they bring expertise they also brought credibility. Whether deserved or not, we live in an age of distrust of institutions and they are more trusted than we. In a very real sense they are ambassadors for what we stand for and we need to work together. Those values are at the heart of successful StratCom, and indeed the key section of MC0628 is the list of StratCom principles and the first is, 'All activity is founded on NATO's values.' This is no mere political statement because relying on our values as a start point produces a cascade of critical StratCom activity. Those values for instance enable the generation of our narratives, and narratives are what drive both individuals and groups. As Daniel Kahneman, a Nobel Prize winner for behavioural psychology & author of 'Thinking Fast & Slow' stated, "No-one ever made a decision because of a number. They need a story."

So, what is a narrative? In part of course it is a story, and stories are powerful things. They are how our ancestors sitting around the fire explained things, how they entertained, how they made events memorable and passed them on, how in the telling and re-telling they created a common history and identity. The fireside may have gone and the storyteller may now be a filmmaker and the like, but the importance of the story has not. A narrative is not just a story but more besides. Maybe a story of stories, but in this context, it is an explanation of events in line with an ideology, theory or belief, and one that points the way to future actions. People – that's you and me, all of us – like stories like this, that make sense of the world, puts things in their place according to our experience and instincts and then says what we should do about it. So, a narrative is also an organizational scheme expressed in story form and stories are often the basis for community identity as well as strategies and actions.

Developing a narrative is no easy task. Notably to develop a story requires an understanding of the audience and the information environment, and this has been one of our weaknesses. In many of our conflicts our grasp of culture, understanding of the audience and general awareness of the environment has been lacking, and we have paid the price in our inadequacies in gaining and maintaining support.

But if the story's so central then that narrative must be integrally linked to our strategy, which in turn must align words and actions to sustain the credibility that makes our audiences take notice. Having values that resonate – speaking to the heart as well as the head – with audiences are essential to the credibility that is needed to make others listen, engage and ultimately support. That support must then be sustained. That mutually supporting triangle of values, narrative and credibility is the basis for successful StratCom.

In the face of the trolling, disinformation and lies of our adversaries and rivals it is all too easy to get distracted from the basics, go tactical, and to spend our time reacting. However, over-focussing on this by definition gives them the initiative. Further, while in the Cold War Russian disinformation operations were often elaborately planned, now they mostly rely on quantity not quality. As shown by the multiplicity of false stories put out by the Russians to hide their responsibility for the shooting down of the MH17 airliner over Ukraine. If you knock down one story another will quickly follow. The Skripal poisoning is another example, muddying the waters with many, often ridiculous stories.

In the end StratCom success is based on gaining support for our story, not knocking down theirs or getting immersed in essentially tactical action. This alignment of strategy, action & communication is central to achieving success. It is noticeable that for all the apparent randomness and outpouring of disinformation the Russian information effort is focussed. Sometimes where it appears the West is losing the StratCom struggle it is not tactics, techniques and procedures that are the problem but a lack of certainty about what we want or a lack of unity about our aims. Without a clear story or strategy, we are vulnerable and will find it hard to set, let alone achieve, desired communication effects and outcomes.

We have also found it hard to truly empower our people. If one thing is clear about our information age it is that everyone is now a communicator and want to engage with their peer groups not listen to people outside them. It means our best communicators our often not formal spokespeople but our soldiers, sailors and airmen and women who have a credibility more senior people do not. Indeed, this reflects the central aim of StratCom, which is to create the mind set where we recognise that we are all communicators in some form, representing our Alliance. The role of information in our security has never been more important than now and the challenges to NATO and its values are crystal clear. We have a big job, but in the end, we will succeed because our story – the NATO story – is better and for 70 years we have successfully adapted to change to defend our people, homes & values.

Russian Lawfare – Russia’s Weaponization of International and Domestic Law: Implications for NATO and Policy Recommendations

Mr. Mark Voyger⁴²¹

What is Lawfare?

The attempts by Russia under President Putin to assert its hegemonic ambitions against Ukraine and the other countries in what Russia perceives as its “Near Abroad”, have posed serious challenges not only to the security of the region, but to the international order of the 21st century. During its ongoing aggression against Ukraine, the Kremlin has employed a full range of measures in a comprehensive hybrid warfare campaign comprising non-military tools (political, diplomatic, economic, information, cyber), and military ones – conventional and covert. Given the prominent role of Russia’s information and cyber warfare, those two hybrid warfare domains have received most of the public attention and analytical effort so far. However, there is a third pivotal element of Russia’s hybrid toolbox - “Lawfare” (legal warfare), which is critically important and equally dangerous, but that has remained under-studied by the analytical community and is effectively still unknown to the general public. Given Lawfare’s central role in Russia’s comprehensive strategy, Russia’s neighbours, NATO and the West, in general, must develop a deeper understanding of this Russian hybrid warfare domain, and design a unified strategy to counter this major challenge to the European security architecture and the entire world order.

The goal of this article is to provide a working definition and an overview of this peculiar hybrid domain, propose a model for mapping its techniques as employed primarily against Ukraine and the Baltic States, and based on those examples — offer policy recommendations on how it could be tracked and successfully countered.

Definitions of Lawfare

The term ‘Lawfare’ was first coined by Major General (ret.) Charles Dunlap, former US Judge Advocate General, and Professor of International Law at Duke University. In his 2009 paper “Lawfare: A Decisive Element of 21st-Century Conflicts?”⁴²² he defined

⁴²¹ An earlier version of this article was originally published in *Security of the Baltic Sea Region Revisited amid the Baltic Centenary: The Riga Conference Papers 2018*, pp. 146-164. <http://www.liia.lv/en/publications/security-of-the-baltic-sea-region-revisited-amid-the-baltic-centenary-the-riga-conference-papers-2018-741> (Accessed 22.04.2019).

⁴²² Charles J. Dunlap Jr. “Lawfare: A Decisive Element of 21st-Century Conflicts?” *54 Joint Force Quarterly*, 34-39, 2009

'lawfare' as "a method of warfare where law is used as a means of realising a military objective". He broadened the definition in 2017 to include "using law as a form of asymmetrical warfare"⁴²³. Those original definitions focus on the exploitation of the law primarily for military purposes, which is understandable given that the term "hybrid warfare" did not enter the Western political parlance until the summer of 2014 with its official adoption by NATO. Given the prevalence of non-military over military means (not only in an asymmetric military sense) in Gerasimov's hybrid warfare model presented in February 2013, it is necessary to re-visit and broaden the original definition of 'Lawfare' in a holistic fashion in order to place Russian lawfare in its proper context as one of the pivotal domains of Russian hybrid warfare.

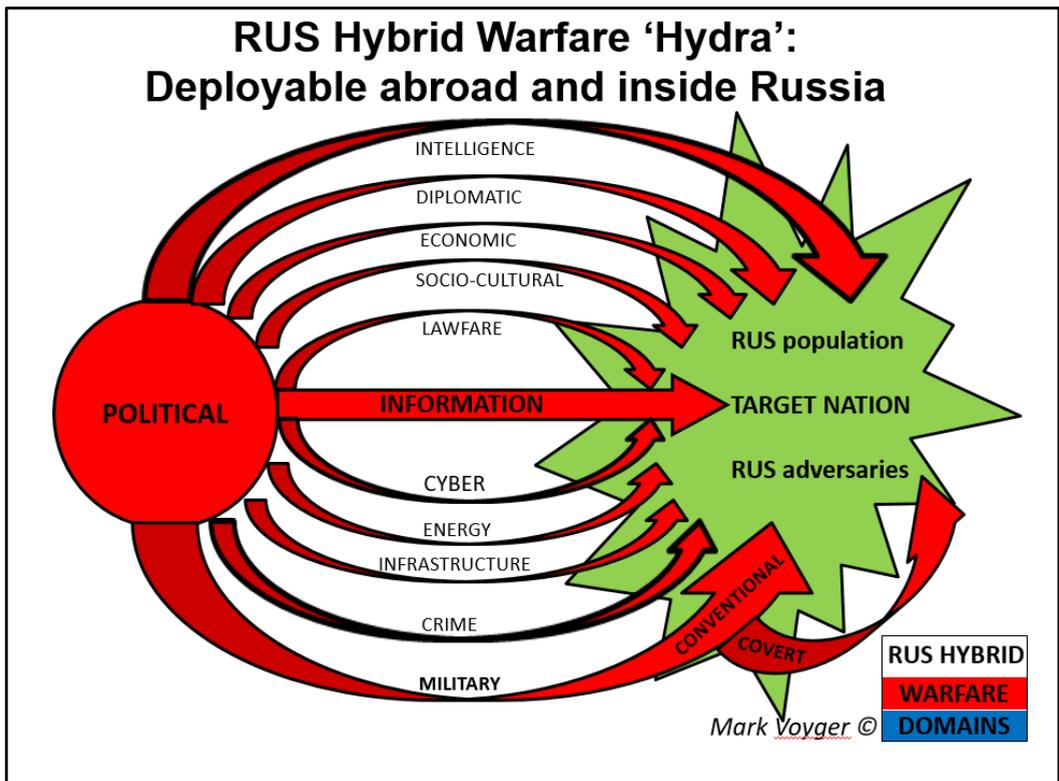


Figure 1: **Russian Lawfare among the Russian Hybrid Warfare Domain.**

Source: Developed by the Author.

In his 2016 update to his original model, Gerasimov stated that, "Hybrid Warfare requires high-tech weapons and scientific substantiation"⁴²⁴. In that regard, Russian lawfare's

⁴²³ Charles J. Dunlap Jr. "Lawfare 101: A Primer," 97 *Military Review*, 8-17, May-June 2017

⁴²⁴ Valery Gerasimov, "Based on the Experience of Syria", *Military-Industrial Courier*, Issue No 9, 8 March 2016.

primary function is to underpin those efforts by providing their legal foundation and justification. To be precise, the term 'lawfare' itself does not exist in Russian, but the 2014 Russian military doctrine recognises the use of legal means among other non-military tools for defending Russia's interests.⁴²⁵ As this paper will demonstrate, Russia has been using international law as a weapon since at least the 18th century.

Russian Lawfare is the domain that intertwines with, and supports Russian information warfare, thus providing the (quasi) legal justification for Russia's propaganda claims and aggressive actions. To provide further granularity, the legal domain of Russian hybrid warfare can be understood in its entirety only through the comprehensive analysis of the intersection of the areas of the law, with the various other domains of hybrid warfare of military and non-military nature.

The Imperial Origins of Russian Lawfare

The roots of this type of Russian conduct should be sought in the history of the Russian and Soviet interactions with the international system of nation-states known as "the Westphalian order". At various times in its history Russia has either been invited to the European Concert of Powers, or invaded by some of those Powers. In its formative centuries the nascent Russian empire did not deal with its neighbouring states as equals, but took part in their partition (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), and the division of Eastern Europe into spheres of influence. It also regularly acted to suppress ethnic nationalism within its own territories, while at the same time encouraging Balkan nationalisms and exploiting the ethno-religious rifts within the Ottoman Empire throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. International law was pivotal for Russia's expansionist agenda, as it claimed that the 1774 Treaty of Kucuk-Kaynarca with the Ottomans had granted it the right to intervene diplomatically and militarily in the Balkans as the sole protector of the Orthodox Christians.⁴²⁶ Based on that fact, 1774 should be regarded as the year of birth of Russian Lawfare. This method for justifying imperial expansionism thrived also during the Soviet era as the USSR partitioned states, annexed territories and launched overt aggressions and clandestine infiltrations across national borders, in the name of protecting and liberating international workers, or in order to impose its limited sovereignty doctrine on its satellite-states.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ "The Military Doctrine reflects the attachment of the RF to the use of military means to defend its interests and those of its allies only after having applied political, diplomatic, legal, economic, information and other instruments of non-violent nature." *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, Provision 5*, 26 December 2014. Russian language original from: <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf> (Accessed 22.04.2019).

⁴²⁶ Roderic H. Davison, "The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Sep., 1976), pp. 463-483.

⁴²⁷ For a detailed overview of the history of Russia's interaction with the European legal system, see Lauri Mälksoo, "Russian Approaches to International Law," *Oxford University Press*, Oxford: 2015.

The twisting and permissive reinterpretation of history in support of Russian Lawfare to justify *ex post ante* Russia's acts of aggression against its neighbours was codified on 24 July 2018 when the Russian Duma adopted a law recognising officially 19 April 1783 as the day of Crimea's "accession" to the Russian Empire. Catherine the Great's Manifesto proclaiming the annexation of Crimea is a diplomatic document that had an impact far beyond the borders of Russia and throughout the centuries that followed, and it has regained new relevance in present-day Russian strategy. It is unique also in that Empress Catherine II employed arguments from all domains of what we nowadays refer to as "hybrid warfare" — political, diplomatic, legal, information, socio-cultural, economic, infrastructure, intelligence, as well as military (both conventional and clandestine) — to convince the other Great Powers of Europe using the 18th century version of strategic communications, that Russia had been compelled to step in to protect the local populations in Crimea.⁴²⁸ In that regard, April 19, 1783, can be regarded as the official birthdate of Russian hybrid warfare, in its comprehensive, albeit initial form, enriched later by the Soviet traditions of clandestine operations, political warfare and quasi-legal justifications of territorial expansionism. It is noteworthy that the Russian word "принятия" [prinyatiya] used in the text literally means "to accept", and not to annex or incorporate. The authors of the law expressed their confidence that the setting of this new commemoration date for Russia affirms the continuity of the existence of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as part of the Russian state.⁴²⁹ This legal reasoning contravenes the fact that in territorial terms the Russian Federation of today is the successor of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) as a constituent of the USSR, and not of the Russian Empire, and that the RSFSR only incorporated Crimea from 1922 until 1954.

After the Soviet collapse, the use of lawfare allowed Russia to justify its involvement in Moldova that created Transnistria in 1992, the 2008 and 2014 invasions of Georgia and Ukraine, and the 2014 annexation of Crimea, including the 2016 Russian involvement in Syria, as these were all presented as essentially humanitarian peace-making efforts. In all of those cases, Russia has claimed that friendly local populations or governments have turned to Russia for help, as Russia had felt compelled to answer that call and take those populations under its "protection", thus also assuming control over their ethnic territories and domestic politics. The successful operationalisation of this lawfare tool

⁴²⁸ "Manifesto of Catherine the Great on the Accession of Crimea", 19 April 1783, *Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire*, Vol. XXI, The RF Presidential Library.

<https://www.prlib.ru/en/node/358615>

⁴²⁹ RF Duma communique "The day of accession of Crimea into the Russian Federation has become a new notable date," ["Den' prinyatiya Kryma v sostav Rossijskoj Imperii stal novej pamjatnoj datoj"], *State Duma of the Russian Federation State Assembly*, July 24, 2018, <http://duma.gov.ru/news/27704> (Accessed 22.04.2019).; the Russian original of the law is available from: "Draft Law № 495245-7," ["Zakonoproekt № 495245-7,"] *Sozd Beta*, 2018, <http://sozd.parliament.gov.ru/bill/495245-7> (Accessed 22.04.2019).

poses serious future dangers for all of Russia's neighbours, as it codifies a quasi-legal justification of Russia's "peace-making operations" that no longer requires only the presence of ethnic Russians or Russian speakers for the Russian state to intervene — it can also be employed to 'protect' any population declared Russia-friendly, regardless of its ethnic origin. All those examples clearly demonstrate how Russia has been trying to amalgamate international and domestic law with categories often as vague and contested as history and culture, for the purposes of implementing the Russian hybrid expansionist agenda. While these are nothing more than elaborately fabricated pretexts for Russian aggression, the fact that they are allowed to stand *de facto* enables Russia to continue employing them against its various nation-state targets.

The Kremlin Regime's Perception of 'Colour Revolutions': A 'Kronos Syndrome'?

When it comes to international law, the dominant views within the ranks of the Russian regime members is that Russia is a target of Western hybrid offensive, with international humanitarian and other legal norms applied selectively against Russia in the form of Western 'Lawfare', in particular to foment and trigger the so-called 'Colour Revolution' aimed at disrupting the Russian constitutional order and toppling the regime from within. This threat perception of the ruling elite in Russia of the so-called '

Colour Revolution' can be dubbed "Kronos Syndrome" (after the ancient Greek god Kronos/Cronus who feared that his children, the gods of Olympus, would overthrow him). It can be defined as the pre-emptive fear of violent regime-change among elites in countries that are historically prone to revolutions and coups. This fundamental insecurity results in the regime's attempts to stifle and suppress the societal forces its policies have generated (for example, the demands for political change and democratization of the Russian middle class and the youth). These Russian threat perceptions have been reflected clearly on numerous occasions. For example, reflected clearly during the Moscow Security Conference of 27 Apr 2016 where 'Colour Revolutions' were portrayed as tools of 'Western hybrid warfare' aimed at the regional destabilization of Russia, Eurasia and the Middle East. Earlier, in December 2014 and 2015, the Russian security strategy and the military doctrine effectively presented Russia itself as the target of Western hybrid efforts to destabilize it.

Russia's Use of Lawfare in the 21st Century: The Challenges

International law dealing with conflict between states has evolved in order to prevent war through negotiations and agreements; regulate the right to go to war and set the rules of engagement; and normalise post-war relations through ceasefires, armistices and peace treaties. International law in its modern interpretation was not intended to sanction and justify the invasion and annexation of territories, the way it is used by Russia in ongoing aggression against Ukraine. The main systemic challenge that Russian Lawfare

poses is that customary international law is not carved in stone, as it also derives from the practices of states, and thus, in many ways it is ultimately what states make of it. This fluid, interpretative aspect of international law is being used by Russia extensively and in the most creative ways to assert its numerous territorial, political, economic and humanitarian claims against Ukraine, as well as to harass its neighbours in the regions that it perceives as its post-Soviet “Near Abroad”. So far, the existing international system based on treaties and international institutions has failed to shield Ukraine from the aggressive resurgence of Russian hegemony. It has submitted claims against Russia at the International Court of Justice on the grounds that Russia’s activities in Donbas and Crimea support terrorism and constitute racial discrimination, but it has not been able to challenge Russia on the fundamental issues of Crimea’s occupation and illegal annexation, and the invasion of Donbas.

While Russia does not have full control over the international legal system, and thus is not capable of changing its rules *de jure*, it is definitely trying to erode many of its fundamental principles *de facto*. The primary one is the inviolability of national borders in Europe that were set after WWII, codified at Helsinki in 1975, and recognized after the end of the Cold War, including by the Russian Federation. Another legal principle that Russian lawfare severely challenges is the obligation to adhere to international treaties, *pacta sunt servanda*, although the Russian leadership constantly pays lip service to it, and regularly accuses other signatories of international treaties and agreements (the US, Ukraine) of violations or non-compliance. The full domestic and international sovereignty of nation-states that is the cornerstone of the existing international system based on Westphalian principles is yet another fundamental principle eroded by Russia’s actions. To compound things, the universally recognized right of self-determination is used by Russia to subvert Ukraine’s unity as a nation-state by elevating the status of the Russian ethnic and Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizens in Crimea, Donbas and elsewhere, to that of separate ‘peoples’.

The Russian lawfare actions range from strategic down to tactical, depending on the specific Russian objectives at every point in time. Some specific examples since the beginning of the aggression against Ukraine have included, among others, a draft amendment to the law on the admission of territories into the RF that claimed to allow Russia to legally incorporate regions of neighbouring states following controlled and manipulated local referenda.⁴³⁰ This particular draft law was removed from the Duma agenda on 20 March 2014 by request of its authors following the Crimea referendum of

⁴³⁰ Opinion on “Whether draft federal law No. 462741-6 on amending the federal constitutional law of the Russian Federation on the procedure of admission to the Russian Federation and creation of a new subject within the Russian Federation is compatible with international law”, Venice Commission, 98th Plenary Session, 21-22 March 2014.
<http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD%282014%29004-e>
(Accessed 22.04.2019).

16 March 2014. Nevertheless, the fact that it was submitted to the Russian Duma on Friday, February 28, 2014, barely a day before the overt appearance of “little green men” in Crimea and its subsequent occupation, is indicative of the high level of coordination between the military and non-military elements of Russian hybrid efforts, especially in the lawfare and information domains.

The legislative onslaught continued in April 2014 with a draft amendment proposing to grant Russian citizenship based on residency claims dating back to the USSR and the Russian Empire, as it was targeting primarily Ukrainians. The annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Eastern Ukraine in the spring of 2014 enabled Russia to expand another subversive practice — the giving away of Russian passports in order to boost the number of Russian citizens in neighbouring states (aka “passportization”). This lawfare technique was used against Georgia in order to portray the occupations and forced secession of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a legitimate action in response to the will of the local “Russian citizens”, coupled with the newly re-defined Russian right of ‘responsibility to protect’. The scope and definitions of that particular right have proven to be extremely flexible since it was proclaimed in the “Medvedev Doctrine” of 2008. The initial intent to protect Russian citizens “abroad” later expanded to include the protection of ethnic Russians in Crimea, and then of Russian speakers in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, until in June 2014 Vladimir Putin postulated the concept of the “Russian World” (“*Ruskiy Mir*”) — a supra-national continuum comprising of people outside the borders of Russia who are to be bound to it not only by legal and ethnic links, but cultural ones, too. Thus, Russia proclaimed its right to tie the affinity for the Russian culture writ large (Russian poetry, for example) of any category of people to their right to legal protection by the Russian state understood as Russian military presence.

In the military sphere, the exploitation of loopholes within the existing verification regime set by the OSCE Vienna Document of 2011 has proven to be particularly advantageous for Russia and difficult for NATO to counter effectively. The most notorious lawfare technique that Russia has been applying since 2014 is the launching of no-notice readiness checks (“snap exercises”) involving tens of thousands of Russian troops. Such Russian military activities obviate the Vienna Document and run contrary to its spirit and the intent to increase transparency and reduce tensions in Europe. Paradoxically, this is made possible by the loophole contained in Provision 41, which stipulates that, “Notifiable military activities carried out without advance notice to the troops involved are exceptions to the requirement for prior notification to be made 42 days in advance.”⁴³¹ In this case the Russian modus operandi involves having a major Russian news agency issue a communique on the very morning of the exercise stating that President Putin had called the Minister of Defence Sergei Shoygu in the early hours of that morning to

⁴³¹ *Vienna Document 2011*, Provisions 41 and 58, pp. 21 and 26. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 22 December 2011. <https://www.osce.org/fsc/86597> (Accessed 22.04.2019).

order him to put the Russian troops on full combat alert – a simple but very powerful technique combining lawfare with information warfare. Russia has also been circumventing the requirement to invite observers to large exercises by reporting lower numbers than the observation threshold of 13,000 troops (the number it provides to the OSCE always miraculously revolves around 12,700) or by referring to Provision 58 that allows the participating states to not invite observers to notifiable military activities which are carried out without advance notice to the troops involved unless these notifiable activities have a duration of more than 72 hours. In that case, when it comes to reporting those, Russia simply breaks down the larger exercises into separate smaller ones with shorter duration.

Russia has also long been exploiting international law through organisations, such as the UN and the OSCE, for a range of purposes, such as blocking adverse UN resolutions through its veto power; garnering international support for its actions, or portraying itself as a force of stability and a peacemaker in Ukraine and the Middle East. Russia also reported uses those structures for influence operations or for intelligence gathering, for example by having the Russian observers in the OSCE provide reconnaissance of the Ukrainian military's disposition in the Donbas. Other examples include the Russian attempts in 2014 to use the UN SC to sanction the opening of "humanitarian corridors" in the Donbas; the use of the cases of Kosovo and Libya as legal precedents for Russian actions; the sentencing of high-ranking Ukrainian officials *in absentia* by Russian courts; and the multiple Russian allegations that the Ukrainian authorities have triggered a humanitarian catastrophe in the Donbas, in attempt to justify the overt deployment of Russian troops under the guise of "peacekeepers".

The Russian Leadership and Russian Lawfare

All those historical patterns are clearly manifested in the policies employed by Russian vis-à-vis its neighbours nowadays. The power of historical tradition is boosted by the mere fact that many of Russia's key decision-makers, to begin with President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev, have an educational background in the legal disciplines, thus proving true the maxim that "in the eyes of the hammer all problems look like nails". Thus, 'making it all legal' is of primary concern to President Putin, and the Russian government and legislature that essentially serve to rubberstamp the Presidential policies, especially in the field of national security and defence. An important role is also played by the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as it adds its diplomatic weight and network of contacts and institutional representation overseas to promote the expanded use of Russian compatriots abroad, or to put diplomatic pressure on countries viewed as hostile to Russia, such as Ukraine or the Baltic States, at various international organizations, be it by accusing them of being pro-Nazi and pro-Fascist, or of discriminating against their ethnic Russian minorities.

On the domestic lawfare front, the regime's top legal team features Aleksander Bastrykin, the Chairman of the RF Investigative Committee, who in 2015 postulated the inherent supremacy of the Russian constitution over the norms of international law, and promoted the views of international law as tool of Western hybrid warfare that needs to be countered, including by tightening the social, information and financial control. Yuriy Chayka, the RF General Prosecutor has also been instrumental in those reverse accusations, by claiming that the Ukrainian 'Right Sector' movement was attempting to organize a coup in RUS, and by advocating the prevention of social unrest by blocking social media. Last, but not least, the RF Ombudsman, Maj-Gen. Moskalkovska, the RF Ombudsman, who previously served as the Head of the Legal Department of the Russian Ministry of the Interior has stated that human rights is a theme exploited by the West to destabilize Russia, that Russia should respond by expanding the protection of Russian compatriots abroad, and that the RF Ombudsman objective is to protect not only the individual, but mostly the system of values in Russia.

Russian Lawfare: Vulnerable Areas and Relevant Responses

The areas that continue to be vulnerable to the effects of Russian Lawfare are primarily the territories in Ukraine under Russian occupation, such as Crimea and Donbas, but also the so-called 'frozen conflicts' in Transnistria, Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. They all contain multiple intertwined and often mutually exclusive historical narratives based on complex socio-cultural realities that provide fertile ground for Russia's presence and involvement under the quasi-legal pretext of stabilisation efforts.

Ukraine has also recognized the power of historical narratives as a counter-lawfare tool. According to a recent poll of Ukrainian public opinion, more than 70% of Ukrainians stated that Ukraine, and not Russia is the rightful successor of Kievan Rus.⁴³² The Ukrainian state must capitalise on those social trends and leverage them to develop a coherent strategy targeting the domestic and international audiences and institutions, in order to counter the malicious exploitation of its history by Russia for the purposes of disinformation and lawfare-based expansionism.

Similar cultural claims have been used as pretexts by RUS to put pressure even on its traditional allies such as Belarus. The 2014 Russian military doctrine refers to it as "Belorussia", its Russian and Soviet imperial name, and the Russian military has been pushing to expand their presence in Belarus by requesting additional bases on its territory. The majority of the population in Belarus uses the Russian language for daily interactions and communication, and in the age of Russian hybrid warfare when culture

⁴³² "The dynamic of patriotic sentiment among Ukrainians: August 2018," ["Dinamika patriotichnyh nastroy ukrainciv: serpen' 2018"] Rejting, August 21, 2018. http://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/dinamika_patrioticheskikh_nastroeniy_ukraincev_avgust_2018.html (Accessed 21.04.2019).

is used to fabricate legal pretexts, the Belarusian leadership has recognized that very real threat, and is taking steps to improve its population's cultural awareness and language skills.

Unresolved border disputes with Russia also pose potential threats, as those can be exploited by Russia for infiltrating NATO territory, or for claiming that NATO troops are provocatively close to Russian territories. Russia has been using border negotiations as tools of influence against its neighbours, in particular Estonia, whose attempts to sign a border treaty with Russia extend over two decades. On 18 February 2014 the Russian Duma announced that it would ratify the bilateral treaty after negotiations lasting since 1994, a move came less than two weeks before the infiltration and occupation of Crimea by Russian forces, and was likely an attempt by Russia to secure its Western borders with NATO prior to launching its operation in Ukraine. As recently as the summer of 2018, the issue of the Russian-Estonia border has again been raised as Russia reneged on its commitment to ratify the treaty explaining it as a result of the "anti-Russian" attitudes of Estonia.

Russia, of course, does not enjoy free reign in the sphere of international law, and it can prove to be a double-edged sword when the targets of Russian Lawfare, in particular the Baltic States and Ukraine, decide to use it proactively to defend themselves with legal arguments of their own. The recent announcement by the Ministers of Justice of both Estonia and Latvia that they are exploring the legal options to demand compensations from Russia as the legal successor of the USSR for the Soviet occupation damages comes as a timely example of how this internationally recognized Russian legal status can also be leveraged for counterclaims by its affected neighbours.⁴³³

Apart from history and culture, Russian lawfare has also integrated and used skilfully the domain of science, in particular geology, chemistry and oceanography, in the area of the Arctic and the High North. The 2014 Russian military doctrine clearly identifies "securing the Russian national interests in the Arctic" as one of the main tasks of the Russian Armed Forces in peacetime. After ratifying the International Convention of the Law of the Sea in 1997, Russia began to exploit proactively the loophole provided by Article 76 to push for the expansion of the Russia exclusive economic zone from 200 to 350 nautical miles based on the claim that the Lomonosov Ridge that stretches for 1,800 km under the Arctic Ocean is a natural extension of Russia's continental shelf. The legal and scientific debates over the geological definition and chemical composition of that shelf threaten to have huge ramifications, as if the Russian claim ultimately succeeds, it would

⁴³³ "The Estonian and Latvian Ministers of Justice underscore the importance of obtaining the compensation for Soviet occupation from Russia," ["Minjusty Estonii i Latvii podcherknuli vazhnost' vzyskanija s Rossii usherba za sovetSKUju okkupaciju,"] Err.ee, August 21, 2018, <https://rus.err.ee/855366/minjusty-jestonii-i-latvii-podcherknuli-vazhnost-vzyskanija-s-rossii-uwerba-za-sovetSKUju-okkupaciju> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

result in the accession of an area of more than 1.2 million square kilometres with its vast hydrocarbon deposits to Russian Arctic sovereignty.⁴³⁴ While waiting for the legal case to be adjudicated by the UN Russia has been gradually expanding its military presence in the Arctic in a clear attempt to combine legal with lethal arguments in its ongoing quest to dominate this strategic region of the world as the effects of global warming open its routes for global navigation.

The Utility of Tracking Russian Lawfare

Lawfare provides numerous advantages to Russia, as so far it has proven to be less recognizable than its counterparts in the information and cyber domains, it successfully exploits the loopholes of international legal regimes, it uses diplomatic negotiations as a delay tactic, and it is capable of creating dissent and confusion among allies by exploiting legal ambiguities. On the other hand, observing the patterns of Russia's weaponization of the law as an element of its comprehensive hybrid strategy against target-nations, such as Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, can help NATO identify early signs of similar actions aimed against other countries in its neighbourhood, in particular its Baltic member-states. The primary utility of tracking and analysing Russian legal developments is that lawfare moves, by default, cannot remain completely secret. They are meant first and foremost to justify Russia's actions on the international arena, and therefore, they must be employed overtly — either as a Russian legal claim, as a new law promulgated by the Russian Parliament, as a decree issued by the Russian presidency, or as troop deployment request approved by the Russian Senate.

While such inevitable overtness may appear paradoxical for a society, such as the Russian one, where secrecy and conspiracies have traditionally substituted public policy-making, the fact is that when it comes to the 'legal preparation of the battlespace', secret laws cannot serve the Russian leadership in defending their aggressive moves internationally, or in mobilising domestic support. In addition, since the preparation of those highly creative legal interpretations and pushing draft bills through the Russian legislation requires certain technological time and procedural efforts, if identified sufficiently early, the whole process can serve as an advance warning indicating the direction of the future political or military steps to be made by the Russian leadership, both domestically and internationally. To achieve this, the Western analytical community would have to clearly recognise lawfare as a domain of Russian hybrid warfare, and track and analyse Russian legal developments on a continuous basis. The expansion of the original DIME model, comprising the Diplomatic-Information-Military-Economic elements of national power, to DIMEFIL by adding Financial, Intelligence and Legal, is

⁴³⁴ Eric Hannes, "Russia's Arctic Ambitions: Russia is making moves to expand in the Arctic, and it could soon have the force of international law behind it", *US News and World Report*, 14 March 2017. <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/world-report/articles/2017-03-14/russia-is-making-a-land-and-resource-grab-in-the-arctic> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

definitely a step in the right direction, but “L” also has to be added to the PMESII analytical framework that describes the effects of the comprehensive preparation of the environment/battlefield through DIMEFIL actions.

Defending against Russian lawfare, of course, is not solely the task of analysts, as a comprehensive strategy to counter its tools and impact can only be elaborated and applied successfully by the coordinated efforts of political and military leaders, legal and academic experts, and the institutions they represent across borders and multiple domains. This would require constant and firm emphasis to be placed on upholding and strengthening the peremptory norms of international law at all levels — from the UN level through the international courts system to the various universities’ law departments. The political leadership and the media organizations of the NATO and partner-nations must constantly seek to expose proactively (hand in hand with the experts in countering Russian information warfare) the ulterior motives and aggressive purposes behind Russia’s ‘peace-making’ campaigns, vehemently oppose Russia’s claim to its own ‘responsibility to protect’ in its self-perceived sphere of interests, incessantly seek opportunities to close existing loopholes in international agreements exploited by Russia, and as a rule of thumb always approach negotiations with Russia as a multi-dimensional chess game that requires constant awareness that Russia’s moves involve many steps ahead across all domains.

The Lawfare Defense Network: Countering Russian Lawfare in Theory and Practice

Given that Lawfare is a pivotal element of the overall Russian hybrid warfare against Ukraine and the West, the response to it must be holistic and comprehensive in nature, too. It would require the building of a network of lawfare study programs (the “Lawfare Defense Network”) at various universities and think tanks – first and foremost in Ukraine, but also throughout Eastern, Central and Southern Europe – Estonia, Latvia, Czechia, Serbia, Georgia, as well as in the US and the UK. This network’s ultimate goal would be to generate interest and support among the NATO and EU member-states’ legislators, political leadership and the public to establish a Lawfare Center of Excellence (COE), just like the ones dealing with Strategic Communication (Riga), Cyber Defense (Tallinn), Energy Security (Vilnius), etc. It could be based in a NATO or EU member-state or in an aspirant country, such as Ukraine. Regardless of its exact future location, Ukraine and the Baltic States must be at the forefront of this initiative – morally, given the fact that they have been the primary target of Russian lawfare for many centuries, and practically - by performing the main body of research and analysis of the ongoing Russian lawfare activities. Once all those programs are established and fully operational at various think tanks and universities, they can focus on their specific country’s lawfare challenges, in order to better leverage their national capabilities. The future Lawfare Center of

Excellence will then compile and analyse all that national input and provide practical feasible recommendations to the national governments and NATO, as a whole.

Conclusion

The continuous evolution of Russian lawfare is a proof to Russia's legal creativity in bending and reinterpreting international law in order to achieve its strategic objectives. While Russia has publicly been demonstrating ostentatious respect of international law, it has undoubtedly espoused a revisionist view of international law based on the concept of Great Powers' spheres of influence and a self-proclaimed right of intervention that challenge the main tenets of the security arrangements in Europe and beyond. If its lawfare activities continue unchecked, Russia will be emboldened to continue applying those methods to justify its expansionist and interventionist policies in all areas that it regards as legitimate spheres of interest. Quite inevitably, other great and regional powers have already followed suit and are resorting to lawfare tools to lay claims on contested areas by (China), or justify their presence in volatile regions (Iran). The Middle East, Africa and Asia, of course, are particularly vulnerable to the application of lawfare, given the disputed, even arbitrary nature of many state borders there, but some NATO members are also not immune, especially those with sizeable Russian-speaking populations, or unresolved border disputes with Russia. Russia's use of lawfare as a primary domain of its comprehensive hybrid warfare strategy poses structural challenges to the stability of the international security system and the foundations of the international legal order as a whole, and therefore a cohesive Western response is needed to successfully counter it.

Annex 1.

Hybrid Warfare Domains:	Political	Diplomatic	Socio-Cultural	Information
LAW AREAS:				
Legal Theory	Uphold ethnic self-determination over state sovereignty in target states	Assert RUS right to 'spheres of interest'; blur boundaries between peace and war	Use history to legalize interventions and annexations	Claim RUS status as USSR legal successor when beneficial
Customary International Law	Emphasize the fluidity of international law over peremptory legal norms	De-recognize neighbouring states' governments to justify RUS invasions and annexations	Assert RUS 'cultural values' over individual rights	Portray existing international order as West-centric and unfair toward RUS
Humanitarian Law	Assert RUS 'responsibility to protect' its compatriots in "Near Abroad"	Create new ethnic realities on the ground through RUS passports	Provide RUS citizenship on historical grounds	Claim RUS minorities oppression and violation of language rights
Constitutional Law	Assert supremacy of RUS constitution over international law	Claim the transfer of Crimea to UKR contradicted Soviet constitution	Close ethnic minorities institutions accusing them of separatist propaganda	Claim USSR dissolution was 'unconstitutional' under Soviet law
Criminal Law	Justify domestic repressions to preempt "Colour Revolutions"	Abuse Interpol arrest warrants to target critics sentence foreign "war criminals"	Criminalize the offense of religious feelings of believers	Force hostages to admit to 'terrorist' activities
Maritime Law	Cancel UKR state licenses to expropriate natural shelf resources in the Black and Azov Seas	Oppose the presence of US navy in the Black Sea	Exploit history to assert warm ports access	Portray Azov and Black Seas as "Russian Seas"
International Organizations	Abuse UN SC veto to obstruct UN resolutions	Create RUS-dominated regional organizations	Accuse neighbours of 'Nazism' at UN bodies	Portray RUS international organizations membership as stabilizing
International Treaties	Uphold the principle of 'Rebus sic stantibus' over 'Pacta sunt servanda'	Use ceasefire negotiations to delay response and divide public opinion	Use zero-sum game culture while negotiating treaties	Exploit legal loopholes to claim non-performance of other signatories
Law of Armed Conflict	Assert that RUS aggression against UKR is "civil war within UKR"	Sign SOFA with Syria assuming no liability for war crimes	Use RUS fears of encirclement by NATO	Accuse UKR and West of war crimes in Donbas and Syria

Economic/ Financial	Energy/ Infrastructure	Cyber	Intelligence	Military
Set the legal groundwork to dominate Eurasian economic integration	Assert RUS state sovereignty over energy resources	Assert RUS state sovereignty over the cyber domain	Define Western legal concepts as foreign and subversive to RUS	Assert the RUS right of pre-emptive actions abroad
Expropriate foreign assets to compensate for assets frozen by the West	Oppose Western sanctions against RUS energy infrastructure	Oppose US sanctions for meddling in US elections	Oppose Western sanctions for chemical attacks on UK soil	Assert right to military exercises within RUS borders
Exert pressure on EU through migration flows	Destroy energy infrastructure to justify humanitarian convoys	Target Western humanitarian organizations	Collect intelligence during reconciliation campaigns	Target civilians to trigger humanitarian crises
Subject economic entities to state interests in wartime	Vest the RUS National Guard with the rights to protect infrastructure	Launch cyber attacks on Western electoral systems	Legalize the supremacy of RUS security apparatus over individuals rights	Define RUS military as a pillar of RUS domestic order
Tax evasion charges against opposition leaders	Fabricating infrastructure attack plots to arrest foreign citizens	Criminalize Internet criticism as 'terrorism' and 'extremism'	Legalize intelligence services control over the Internet	Define 'Colour Revolutions' as a domestic military threat
Impede maritime traffic to UKR ports	Obstruct access to UKR by building the Kerch bridge	Use cyber tools to target Western ports or naval assets	Compromise Western underwater cables claiming 'research' activities	Support extended RUS claims on Arctic shelf by more bases
Leverage RUS membership in WTO	Oppose EU energy infrastructure rules in Europe	Use cyber to target international organizations	Exploit international organizations to collect intelligence	Use RUS OSCE observers for intel on UKR military
Use RUS loans to keep neighbouring states within RUS orbit	Use RUS infrastructure 'hardwire' countries to RUS energy supplies	Enlist international support for greater Internet control	Collect intelligence during treaty negotiations	Abuse 'snap' exercises by exploiting the Vienna Document's loopholes
Hire private military companies to fight overseas	Destroy civilian infrastructure to justify humanitarian intervention	Oppose NATO attempts to define cyber attacks as Art. 5 events	Use cyber for intelligence acquisition and influence operations	Claim that RUS military in UKR are on leave or retired

Russian Power Projection amid Economic Stagnation

Dr. Chris Miller

In early 2019, the Russian government's statistical agency released data showing that Russians' inflation-adjusted disposable household incomes fell in 2018 for a fifth consecutive year. Rosstat, the statistical agency, is occasionally accused by economists at home and abroad for cooking Russia's books to make the government's economic performance look better than it really is. Yet even if the government rounds up its data by a couple tenths of a percentage point, the new reality is impossible to obscure: Russia has sunk into a new era of economic stagnation.

The IMF now projects that Russia will grow by only 1.8% in 2019, with growth declining to 1.2% by 2023. The Russian government's own predictions are scarcely better. Russia's Central Bank foresees similar growth rates for 2019, with growth potentially rising to 2-3% by 2021—but only if “the Government implements its structural reforms,” reforms that everyone knows are unlikely, as they have been promised on a regular basis since the mid-2000s, yet almost never delivered. Russia's Ministry of Economic Development is forced to be more optimistic because its job is to produce economic growth. Yet even with its optimistic assumptions, the best it can predict by the early 2020s is 3% per year. Almost no private sector forecaster believes such a prediction is realistic.

In Vladimir Putin's first decade in power, Russia's economy regularly grew at a rapid clip, at times exceeding 5% a year. During that decade, Russia made progress at closing the gap with Europe. No longer. For a variety of reasons, Russia's potential growth rate has slowed markedly. Demographics mean that the workforce is set to shrink. Western economic sanctions depress long-term investment. So, too, do Russian government policies, which are so anti-business that even Kremlin-friendly oligarchs often prefer to invest abroad.

True, the main determinant of Russia's economy remains oil, the price of which can be expected to rise and fall with little predictability. As this essay is written, oil trades for \$60 per barrel. Its price could conceivably be 50% lower or 50% higher in a year. Yet even in the most bullish scenario for oil prices—U.S. shale production stalls, even as conflict engulfs the Persian Gulf and drives down the region's output—the price change would provide Russia with at most a short-term boost. And it is equally plausible that as China's economy slows, U.S. shale remains robust, and electric vehicle technology accelerates, oil prices will lower rather than go higher. Stagnation, in other words, is here to stay, at least until Russia reforms its economy. And don't bet on that so long as Putin remains in power.

What does economic stagnation mean for Russian power projection? This essay will examine how Russia's weak and stationary economy will affect the Kremlin's foreign policy decisions. The essay focuses on four key variables: military spending, soft power, non-military tactics, and regime stability, illustrating how each will be shaped by Russia's dismal economic outlook.

Military Spending

Will economic stagnation limit Russian military spending? At some level, the answer is obviously yes: if Russia's economy was significantly larger, allocating more resources to the military would impose fewer trade-offs with other types of spending. But a simple "guns vs. butter" framework is unlikely to prove an accurate guide to Russian foreign policy. After Russia annexed Crimea, it was easy to find Western pundits predicting that the economic costs of sanctions would prove too large to sustain. After Russia entered the war in Syria, there were widespread predictions that Russia would struggle to finance two simultaneous wars. Yet Russia is still in Ukraine and Syria, and economic considerations do not appear to have played a major role in Russian decision making. Over the next five years, economic stagnation is unlikely to impose major (or even minor) reductions in military spending. Of course, faster economic growth might have enabled additional military spending. But as things currently stand, Russia's government faces little financial pressure over all, and Russia's military faces no great pressure to cut costs.

Start with the overall financial picture of Russia's government. In 2019, the Russian government is forecast by the IMF to run a surplus of 2.9% of GDP. Rare is a government able to run a surplus, but Russia has repeatedly done so. Even if oil prices fall, dragging the government into a deficit, Russia has a very low debt load. The official government debt burden is 15.4% of GDP, according to the IMF. This number obscures several obligations, including the debts of regional governments, which have grown rapidly and for which Russia's central government may eventually have to foot part of the bill.⁴³⁵ A further worry for Russia's government is that the U.S. Congress might sanction the issuance of new sovereign debt, which would force Russia to borrow more from domestic markets, which would drive up borrowing costs. Ultimately, though, Russia's government has plenty of resources to fund its current obligations. The budget is set to balance with oil at \$40 per barrel in 2019.⁴³⁶ Russia has been adding money to its

⁴³⁵ Chris Jarmas, "Debt and Discontent: The Collapse of the Putin Consensus?" *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, Nov. 14, 2018. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/11/debt-and-discontent-the-collapse-of-the-putin-consensus/> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴³⁶ "Siluanov: The Russian budget in 2019 will become balanced at oil prices of 40 USD", *Kommersant*, 18 October, 2018. Last modified: October 18, 2018. (Accessed 17.01 2019). <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3745037> (Accessed 21.01.2019).

reserve funds since 2017.⁴³⁷ Military spending of around 3-4% of GDP, as Russia has done for the past decade, is unquestionably affordable.

What if Russia is forced into a new arms race? The impending collapse of the INF Treaty could result in a new nuclear arms race in Europe. Already, Russia fears it is falling behind in nuclear and missile technologies that might give the U.S. a major edge.⁴³⁸ One could envision a scenario in which the U.S. and Russia return to a 1980s-style military build-up—an arms race that ended very poorly for Moscow. Yet this currently remains only a possibility, not a guarantee. If an arms race breaks out in Europe in the next decade, there is little reason to think it would begin consuming the scale of resources needed to seriously stress Russia's budget. Over the next 5 years, at least, there is no basis for hoping that economic stagnation will significantly constrain Russian military spending.

Russian Soft Power

It is often remarked that a key difference between the Cold War and the present-day confrontation between Russia and the West is that the Cold War involved ideological competition, whereas today's clash does not. This is only partially true. Putin's Russia lacks an official ideology along the lines of Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union. But today's Russia does offer a different model from the West, and though it is less potent than was revolutionary Marxism at the peak of its influence, the relevance of Russia's 'model' should not be understated. Putin's influence at home and abroad is undergirded by the claim that, while his methods may be harsh, they are successful at providing "stability" in an unstable world. The concept of '*stabilnost*' is core to Putin's social contract at home, as many analysts have noted. Yet it is also deployed abroad, with Russian-language media in Belarus, Moldova, the Caucasus, and Central Asia contrasting 'stability' in Russia with 'instability' in Ukraine.

This rhetoric is not particularly potent in countries in the European Union, which already are stable, and where politics focuses on other questions. In many of the countries that

⁴³⁷ Feinberg, Anton, "The Rule of 4 Trillion Rubles: How the currency purchases has impacted the Russian economy?", *Russian Business Courier*, Last modified December 5, 2018. Accessed January 17, 2019. <https://www.rbc.ru/economics/05/12/2018/5c07e7ef9a7947152876d00f> (Accessed 21.01.2019).

⁴³⁸ Kuhn, Ulrich, "Nuclear Arms Control Shaken By New Instability," *International Politics and Society*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.ips-journal.eu/regions/global/article/show/nuclear-arms-control-shaken-by-new-instability-2786/> (Accessed 21.04.2019).; Holly Ellyat, "Putin reveals new Russian missile that can 'reach any point in the world', *CNBC*, Last modified March 1, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/01/putin-new-russia-missile-nuclear.html> (Accessed 21.04.2019).; Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Washington, D.C. and The Institute for USA and Canadian Studies (ISKRAN), "From Mutual Assured Destruction to Mutual Assured Stability Exploring a New Comprehensive Framework for U.S. and Russian Nuclear Arms Reductions," Natural Resources Defense Council, 2013, <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/NRDC-ISKRAN-Nuclear-Security-Report-March2013.pdf> (Accessed 12.01.2019).

emerged from the Soviet Union, however, the past quarter-century has not been particularly stable—and many in the region treat at least a significant portion of the instability as something profoundly negative, bringing economic hardship or even opening the door to political violence. In this context, the provision of ‘stability’ is a core political goal, and a system that can effectively provide stability is guaranteed to attract at least some support.

Russian media have propagated across the post-Soviet space a narrative that Putin has stabilized Russia. The narrative was easy to propagate because it is at least partly true. Some of the stability, especially on the economic side, was due in part to structural changes or policies enacted before he became president. Nevertheless, under his presidency Russia has experienced neither hyperinflation nor mass unemployment. In a political sense, the ‘stability’ Putin has provided is less appealing to Western eyes, though it certainly has avoided any revolutions, with their risk of resultant political violence.

Yet as Russia’s economic stagnation drags on, this narrative will become harder to sustain. Russia will look less like an economic model. It will attract fewer workers and fewer students from post-Soviet countries. The contrast between Europe and Russia will grow ever starker. To many in the post-Soviet space, the stability narrative appeals because stability is something they either lack, or they fear is precarious. Yet Russia will increasingly become associated with something with which many residents of the post-Soviet space are already familiar: stalled growth, falling incomes, and broken promises from the government. Ukraine’s revolution in 2014 was so contentious in part because a portion of the population believed that Russia had a genuinely appealing model. Even today, a not insignificant minority of Ukrainians would like to join the Eurasian Economic Union. As Russia sinks into stagnation, and as it becomes increasingly clear that Russia does not offer an appealing model, elites and populaces in the post-Soviet space will find integration less attractive. Russian power projection through soft power will continue its long decline.

Political Interference

If we presume that the conflict between Russia and the West will continue, the Kremlin will continue seeking tools to gain the upper hand. As in the past three decades, Russia will lag far behind aggregate Western capabilities. Economic stagnation in Russia means that the resource gap between Russia and the West is only growing. The Kremlin will therefore face growing incentives to find inexpensive means of securing its goals. The past several years have seen greater focus in Russia on using political influence methods to shape other countries’ politics and achieve Russian foreign policy goals. So long as Russia is unable to compete in other spheres—a trend likely to increase - the Kremlin is likely to continue to rely on such tactics.

Buying ads on Facebook and other social media outlets is cheap, easy, and may exacerbate divisions in Western democracies. Helping to leak emails, as GRU agents are thought to have done with U.S. Democratic Party emails during the 2016 presidential race, is only marginally more difficult. Using RT and other media outlets to bolster fringe narratives or conspiracy theories is equally cheap, even if it isn't always clear what benefits such efforts bring to Russian foreign policy. So long as the West is tied up with domestic debates, the logic goes, Western leaders will have less bandwidth for dealing with Russia. The Kremlin seems thus far unconcerned about the anti-Russian backlash that such political meddling efforts create, writing off Western anger as evidence of deeply ingrained "Russophobia" rather than discontent with specific Russian foreign policy practices.

The mainstream view among Russia's foreign policy elite appears to be that political warfare is working. Russia's Defence Ministry, for example, has publicly expanded its information warfare and propaganda capabilities, with Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu arguing that "propaganda must be smart, competent, and effective." To be sure, there is evidence of some debate on the subject, with dissenting voices occasionally present. It is also probably the case that the Kremlin lacks an overall "political warfare" strategy, and instead relies on a series of ad hoc measures promoted by different actors in the security services bureaucracy and among the presidential hangers-on who have accumulated growing influence in recent years. Nevertheless, the ability of Russian political warfare techniques to have "an effect", even if that effect does not to achieve Russian objectives such as the lifting of sanctions, has been as striking to Russian elites as to Western elites, and will encourage Russia to use such methods in the future.

Domestic Discontent

The most important question facing Russia is how long the population will tolerate stagnation. For now, five years of falling real disposable incomes have been painful, but they have not induced many Russians to demand political changes. In 2014-2015, the Kremlin correctly noted that oil prices were the primary cause of the country's downturn. Afterward, Russian elites blamed Western sanctions and a broader Western effort to "keep Russia down." At the same time the Kremlin tightened the screws on dissent, ensuring that everyone knows that protests bring negative consequences. Putin won re-election in 2018 in his usual landslide. While several gubernatorial elections have proven more competitive, none of this threatens Putin's hold on power. And protest activity remains relatively muted. The elite knows that stagnation is largely a political choice—driven both by the country's foreign and economic policies, but has decided that the risks of change outweigh the benefits of ending stagnation. Thus, there is not much immediate evidence that economic stagnation is changing the political calculus—nor placing any constraints on Russian power projection.

What could change this calculus? Because Russian elections are not real, there is little chance that electoral results could force a policy shift. However, protests could. The Kremlin wants Russians to believe it has the capacity to use significant violence against the population to crush dissent, yet its ability to put down protests with substantial violence has not yet been tested. Ukraine's President Yanukovich found—to his surprise, and to the surprise of many observers—that he was less able to use violence than he first expected. Faced with large scale protests, Russia's elite would likely offer concessions to avoid having to test the durability of its authority.

Where could protests come from? Russia's urban, upper middle classes have provided a reliable voter base for anti-Putin parties, but not since 2011-2012 have they taken to the streets in large numbers. Russia's working classes, by contrast, have not constituted effective political protest forces since 1917. In post-Soviet Russia, protests at individual factory towns have won concessions on layoffs or salary issues. But these have rarely spread beyond one town, or united factory workers with other social groups.

The 2011-2012 coalition that brought Moscow to a standstill remains viable, if currently quiescent. If it re-emerges, it would constitute a major threat to Russia's projection of power abroad, because it would demand changes at home that would limit Kremlin's scope for foreign policy manoeuvre. Addressing the discontent of these classes in the long run requires lifting sanctions and attracting foreign investment. Yet, for now, the Kremlin appears to have effectively neutralized these groups by selectively buying them off and increasing the cost of dissent. Until that changes, economic stagnation will likely encourage domestic unhappiness, but will impose few limits on Russian power projection capabilities.

The Brezhnev Analogy and Ramifications for the West

An aging leader without a succession plan; a confrontation with the West via multiple proxy wars and a clash over intermediate range missiles in Europe; an economy sinking into stagnation with no end in sight; a ruling class wilfully out of touch with the interests of its populace—all this sounds rather familiar to those acquainted with the history of Leonid Brezhnev. The longest serving Soviet leader save Stalin, Brezhnev came to power when the Soviet Union was at the height of its international influence, and presided over two decades, from the mid-1960s to mid-1980s, that are now known in Russian by one word: *zastoi*, or stagnation. Surely Putin is headed down a similar path? If so, will the end of the Putin era differ from the end of the Brezhnev era—which, after several brief years in which the USSR was governed by Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, produced Mikhail Gorbachev, who transformed Soviet foreign policy and ultimately destroyed the USSR?

Perhaps so—it took a decade for Brezhnev's stagnation to produce Gorbachev. Only by the mid-1970s was it clear that the Soviet economy had decisively slowed and that the

political system was entering a deep freeze. The subsequent decade produced worse, not better, relations between the USSR and the West. The USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979 at the depths of its stagnation, with almost zero consideration of the economic ramifications or concern about resource constraints. It continued funding an array of proxy militias, especially in Africa, through the late 1980s, again with only little concern about cost. The arms race with the United States during the 1980s produced more budgetary anxiety, but the USSR competed for years nevertheless, despite increasing military spending above 15% of GDP (compared with 4.3% in 2017.)⁴³⁹ Until very late, perhaps 1988, the Soviet Union's power projection capabilities were not noticeably weakened by economic stagnation. The guns versus butter trade off was relevant in Brezhnev-era stagnation, but only in the long run.

In the short run, the guns versus butter trade off can even run in the opposite direction. Economic stress need not immediately cause reductions in foreign policy expenditures. Governments may decide to invest further in guns in order to win foreign policy successes that distract the population from the lack of butter. None of the Brezhnev-era foreign policy adventures were primarily intended with domestic politics in mind, but many expensive foreign policy ventures were maintained, year after year, in part on the grounds that the party and the populace would lose faith if the government was not seen to be successful on the foreign front.

For today's Russia, similarly, economic stagnation is unlikely to drive immediate policy changes. It will be transformative in the long run—but the long run may be some ways off. Until then, Russia has all the funds it needs to continue investing in its military. It will continue to be the primary concern of NATO defence planners. Stagnation will reduce, however, the appeal of Russia's 'model', especially in the post-Soviet states, which will raise the cost to Russia of retaining influence in the countries that it borders. The increasing realization that Russia has no hope of competition with the West in traditional terms will encourage the Kremlin's ongoing search for new, inexpensive, asymmetric tools to influence and destabilize Western politics. And the Kremlin will remain paranoid that the West is seeking to destabilize Russian politics. Indeed, Russia's government accurately understands that the greatest risk to its power projection capabilities is its own population. Once Russians begin to demand an end to stagnating wages and living standards, the Kremlin's ability to sustain foreign wars and to tolerate economic sanctions will disappear.

For now, the Russian populace and elite remains quiescent, as both have been since 2014. There is no reason to expect this to change soon. Yet this could change rapidly.

⁴³⁹ Rick Noack, "Even as fear of Russia is rising, its military spending is actually decreasing," *Washington Post*, May 2, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/world/wp/2018/05/02/even-as-fear-of-russia-is-rising-its-military-spending-is-actually-decreasing/?utm_term=.75fd63c59c9c (Accessed 21.04.2019).

Putin's *stabilnost* may follow in Brezhnev's *zastoi's* footsteps: domestic discontent with stagnation could reshape Russian politics and bring forth a Gorbachev. Amid Brezhnev-era stagnation 40 years ago, almost no one, in the Soviet Union or in the West, predicted the Gorbachev shock with any accuracy. But it is impossible to predict when popular frustrations will boil over and become a political force. In the medium-term, unhappiness with economic stagnation could reshape Russian politics. Until then, the Kremlin has plenty of room for manoeuvre.

Reversing Moscow's Offensive: A Strategy for Winning the Shadow War with Putin's Russia

Dr. Janusz Bugajski

Western governments have tried and failed in applying various remedies to curtail Moscow's neo-imperialist ambitions. Containment, appeasement, and engagement have not cured Russia from its imperial designs. Indeed, each approach has simply reinforced Kremlin perceptions that the West is weak, divided, and incapable of preventing Russia's restoration as a major global power. The absence of a coherent, dynamic, and offensive Western strategy has encouraged Moscow to intensify its anti-Western Shadow War to dismantle the NATO alliance, limit American influence in Europe, and further fracture the European Union.

But despite its escalating anti-Atlanticist offensive, Russia is facing growing domestic problems on several fronts: economic, demographic, social, regional, and ethnic. This provides Western governments with a unique opportunity not only to defend against Moscow's attacks but also to devise a strategy that reinforces Russia's decline while managing the international consequences of its prospective dissolution. Such a strategy needs to be multi-dimensional, combining the informational, cyber, economic, diplomatic, and military domains. Russia pursues a strategy that integrates all elements of state power, from "hard" military campaigns to "soft" psychological operations. Washington and its NATO allies will also need to adopt a comprehensive approach to capitalize on Russia's vulnerabilities.⁴⁴⁰

Decline Wrapped in Aggression inside a Crisis

To adapt Winston Churchill's memorable insight at the outset of World War Two - that Russia's actions are "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" – Vladimir Putin's Russia is a declining state, donning the camouflage of external aggression to disguise its increasing fragility. Nonetheless, a declining Russian state can prove more threatening than a rising power because its leaders calculate that time is working against them and may take more risks to pursue their objectives. Moscow disguises its decline by projecting itself as the key power in Eurasia, mobilizing imperial sentiments among its citizens, and engaging in external revisionist offensives against its neighbours. The Kremlin's strategic objective necessitates undermining NATO's security posture

⁴⁴⁰ *Providing for the Common Defense: The Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission*, Washington DC, November 2018, available from: <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/providing-for-the-common-defense.pdf> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

throughout Europe, fracturing the EU, splitting the US from its European allies, and eroding America's global influence by undermining its political system and discrediting its leadership role.

Russia's external offensives cloak its internal infirmities. Through a combination of low fossil fuel prices, failed economic diversification, infrastructural decay, pervasive corruption, and Western financial sanctions, state revenues are declining, living standards falling, social program diminishing, incomes contracting, social conflicts intensifying, and regional disquiet mounting. Russia's economy is stagnating. According to World Bank statistics in 2017, its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita ranks 60th in the world.⁴⁴¹ The poverty rate is rising sharply and a growing numbers of citizens face destitution. Increased defence spending to project Russia's power has come at the expense of education, health care, and infrastructure. But even military expansion is slowing down as the defence budget is shrinking and over the coming decade Russia's armed forces will fall further behind that of the US and China. According to data from 2017, Russia's military spending is almost one quarter that of China's and only a tenth of the US military budget.⁴⁴²

Russia's longer-term prospects look even bleaker. Demographic indicators underscore a shrinking population with high mortality, low fertility, and rising emigration of the best educated. Russia's population has dipped from about 148 million after the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s to only 144 million in 2018. Various agencies estimate that this total will fall to around 128 million by 2050 and a steadily increasing percentage will be neither ethnic Russian nor Orthodox Christian.⁴⁴³ Life expectancy among Russian males stands at about 60 years, or 15 years less than the norm in industrialized states and lower than in many African countries.

Russia's economic performance alone is insufficient to measure susceptibility to decline and potential fracture, as evident in the collapse of the Soviet Union nearly three decades ago. Numerous additional factors must be examined, particularly the extent of social, ethnic, and regional tensions. The unwieldy Russian Federation consists of 85 "federal subjects," of which 22 are republics representing non-Russian ethnicities and numerous regions with distinct identities that are becoming increasingly estranged from Moscow. Instead of pursuing decentralization to accommodate their aspirations, the

⁴⁴¹ World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?year_high_desc=true (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁴² Nan Tian, Aude Fleurant, Alexandra Kuimova, Pieter D. Wezeman, and T. Siemon, "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2017," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, May 2018, https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2018-04/sipri_fs_1805_milex_2017.pdf (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁴³ For a valuable synopsis with detailed statistics see the *World Population Review*, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/russia-population/> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

Also check <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/russian-demographics-perfect-storm> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

Russian government is downgrading their autonomy. This is evident in the recently introduced language law designed to promote Russification and plans to merge and eliminate several autonomous regions and republics.⁴⁴⁴ Pressure is mounting across the country, with growing public anger at local governors appointed by the Kremlin and resentment that Moscow appropriates regional resources but cannot guarantee stable living standards.

To compensate for its military inferiority and economic weakness vis-à-vis the West, Moscow deploys a wide assortment of both open and clandestine political, financial, economic, cyber, and propaganda tools to achieve its objectives. It capitalizes on the vulnerabilities of targeted countries, whether through cyberattacks, psychological offensives, energy dominance, state corruption, political blackmail, or numerous other “soft power” tools.

For the West, a reactive defence toward a declining Russia is insufficient to deter Moscow’s ambitions. Instead, a broad offense is needed to divert Moscow’s attention away from external aggression and toward its own internal protection. While the Kremlin has opened several fronts in Europe and the US, Russia itself is afflicted by many more economic, social, political, cyber, ethnic, religious, and regional vulnerabilities than its adversaries. These deficiencies and potential pressure points need to be thoroughly assessed and exploited.

The new US National Security Strategy issued in 2017 affirms that Russia is a rival and competitor that aims to weaken Washington’s international influence and divide the US from its allies and partners.⁴⁴⁵ Given this astute geopolitical assessment, policies need to be developed to capitalize on Moscow’s weaknesses. The minimum Western objective would be to curtail Moscow’s subversive assault against the US and its allies. The intermediate objective would be to deflect Russia’s external aggression into internal turmoil that the Kremlin becomes increasingly focused on pacifying. The maximum and long-term objective would be to fracture the Russian Federation and manage the country’s dissolution, thus significantly curtailing if not fully eliminating Moscow’s geopolitical ambitions. A wide assortment of tools can be deployed to achieve this range of goals.

⁴⁴⁴ Paul Goble, “Putin’s Language Law Radicalizing Russians and Non-Russians,” Window on Eurasia – New Series, August 1, 2018, <http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2018/08/putins-language-law-radicalizing.html> (Accessed 21.04.2019) and Neil Hauer, “Putin’s Plan to Russify the Caucasus: How Russia’s New Language Law Could Backfire,” August 1, 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2018-08-01/putins-plan-russify-caucasus> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁴⁵ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905-2.pdf> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

Exposing Influence Operations

The Russian state is engaged in systematic informational warfare to undermine Western cohesion and promote Moscow's expansionist enterprise. This informational subversion is designed to steer the Western media, implant the Kremlin narrative, infect public opinion, and influence decision-makers. Moscow's espionage penetration and media disinformation networks are supplemented by modern-day "fellow travellers," whether duped, manipulated, or complicit, including politicians, businessmen, diplomats, academics, lobbyists, and policy analysts.⁴⁴⁶ These human assets fall into several categories, including those working for the Kremlin but who do not make their affiliations public, those who are avowedly independent but support Russia's foreign policies, and those who become co-opted and obligated through financial and other payments from sources tied to the Putin administration and become a conduit for Kremlin disinformation.

A number of initiatives could bring significant success in combating Moscow's penetration of American and European societies. Law enforcement bodies and investigative journalists need to probe and expose the wide array of Russian state influence operations. In the US, this would include several former members of Congress and the administration, lobbyists, public relations firms, policy institutes, and various NGOs receiving funding directly or indirectly from Kremlin sources or from oligarchs and foundations working on behalf of the Russian government, such as *Russkiy Mir* and Gorchakov. In the US, campaign-financing laws are inadequate to stymie the flow of foreign donations designed to influence national policy.⁴⁴⁷ Urgently needed is anti-money laundering (AML) legislation so that hostile actors identified by intelligence services or law-enforcement can be blocked or apprehended. At the same time, politicians and major funders must be required to make full disclosures regarding the source of their revenues and assets as well as tax returns and other financial documents.

In the US, lax regulations enable lobbyists to operate on Moscow's behalf and the Foreign Agent's Registration Act (FARA) is insufficiently enforced. The focus must also encompass Putin's supporters in the media and academia who receive finances or favours from the Russian state. Funding sources, often channelled through shell companies or third parties, should also be investigated for potential US sanctions busting or financial crimes such as money laundering and tax avoidance. To retain credibility,

⁴⁴⁶ Kateryna Smagliy, *Hybrid Analytica: Pro-Kremlin Expert Propaganda in Moscow, Europe, and the US: A Case Study on Think Tanks and Universities*, Research Paper, October 2018, Institute of Modern Russia, <https://imrussia.org>. (Accessed 21.04.2019). Kremlin-sponsored foundations have established several centers of Russian studies at European and American universities to broaden the network of Kremlin sympathizers within Western academia.

⁴⁴⁷ Neil Barnett and Alastair Sloan, *Democracy in the Crosshairs: How Political Money Laundering Threatens the Democratic Process*, Atlantic Council, Eurasia Center, September 2018, https://issuu.com/atlanticcouncil/docs/democracy_in_the_crosshairs (Accessed 21.04.2019).

universities and NGOs in the West need to screen and investigate their funding sources and whether these are connected with Kremlin influence operations or with financial crimes perpetrated by Putin's oligarchs. PR campaigns by lobbyists seeking to lift sanctions against Russian oligarchs and business entities engaged in implementing the Kremlin's revisionist foreign policy need to be exposed, particularly those individuals and entities already sanctioned by the US and the EU. One recent example has been the attempt by lobbyists to influence the US Justice Department in easing sanctions against Oleg Deripaska, one of President Putin's key oligarchic accomplices.

Benefiting from the extensive evidence unearthed by US Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation, the FBI needs to conduct probes of all Kremlin-connected business deals and bank use in the US. As of December 2018, Mueller has issued indictments against 29 Russian entities and extracted six guilty pleas and a conviction. The findings of the Mueller probe, once it discloses all the connections between Kremlin agencies, Russian oligarchs, Western businessmen, social networks, and American collaborators during Moscow's attack on the 2016 US elections, would be a victory in defence of American democracy and sovereignty. This would send an important signal to the Kremlin that any future penetration would be more effectively combated.

Countering Informational Offensives

Information warfare is a systematic attempt to weaken and defeat the morale and resistance of one's adversary. State-sponsored information offensives are designed to undermine governments, divide societies, debilitate decision makers, weaken national security, and strengthen the position of the aggressor state. Compared to its Soviet predecessor, the contemporary Russian disinformation offensive directed at Western states and societies transmits a broader diversity of messages and employs a wider assortment of methods.

Although Moscow's overriding strategic objective is similar to Soviet times – to defeat the West - it has several supplementary goals: to confuse and frighten citizens in Europe and America, to delegitimize and disrupt Western democracies, to corrupt and corrode state institutions, to undermine the credibility of legitimate news sources, and to strengthen nationalists and populists who may favour Russia's policies. Kremlin disinformation focuses on gullible sectors of the Western public to depict Russia as a fully independent state founded on traditional values. Such a message has appeal across the political and social spectrum in the West – from leftist and rightist anti-American Europeans to American nationalists, conservatives, and evangelicals.

Regarding the means of attack, modern disinformation has a much wider and faster assortment of channels for distribution than during Soviet times. In addition to standard media outlets, fabricated stories can be disseminated through social internet platforms and rapidly reach millions of consumers. As with village gossip, many people fail to check

the source before further spreading fabricated stories. Repetitive electronic methods increase the reach of disinformation and even infect the more credible mass media with bogus items. To win the information war against the Kremlin a multi-national counter-propaganda strategy is needed containing several defensive and offensive elements.

On the defensive front, social internet companies must provide greater transparency and data protection from Russian trolls spreading disinformation among American and European citizens.⁴⁴⁸ These companies can intensify their efforts to eliminate fake accounts that spread propaganda. Twitter and Facebook purges of Russian-linked accounts have reduced the effectiveness of Moscow's disinformation. However, the US Congress should pass the Honest Ads Act, requiring political advertising on social channels to have the same level of transparency as on television and radio by revealing the funding sources of sponsored content. Tech companies must also do more to protect the private data of users, as this can be exploited to manipulate public opinion or even blackmail and recruit foreign agents.

Russia's state or oligarch-funded media outlets, including television, radio, internet, and print media should not be presented as legitimate media sources but as propaganda arms of the Kremlin. This does not mean that they should be outlawed or banned but closely monitored, exposed for the most egregious falsehoods, and where possible labelled as spreading fabricated news or propaganda. Simultaneously, media literacy among Western publics has to be enhanced, or at least the capability to distinguish between credible and fraudulent media sources.

Anti-disinformation initiatives can be more substantially funded and expanded both in the US and Europe. The Polygraph initiative launched by Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty serves as a valuable means to verify the increasing volume of disinformation.⁴⁴⁹ In order to expose the most blatant political fabrications, VOA and RFE/RL journalists research and analyse statements and reports distributed by government officials, government-sponsored media, and other high-profile individuals.

In Europe, an EU team StratCom East documents disinformation originating from Russian sources and issues a weekly bulletin highlighting numerous distortions, as well as a Twitter feed called EU Mythbusters. Ukraine's StopFake is a valuable resource reporting on Moscow's disinformation tactics. MythDetector tracks and debunks anti-Western disinformation. Digital Sherlocks expose and explain disinformation at the

⁴⁴⁸ James Lamond, "The Origins of Russia's Broad Political Assault on the United States," Center for American Progress, www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2018/10/03/458841/origins-russias-broad-political-assault-united-states (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁴⁹ Polygraph Info. About. <https://www.polygraph.info/p/5981.html> (Accessed 22.04.2019).

Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic. Prague has established a specialist unit dealing with fake news spread by websites supported by Moscow. The Czech Interior Ministry Centre Against Terrorism and Hybrid Threats scrutinizes disinformation and counters it via social internet platforms. An informal internet army of Lithuanians "elves" counters hate speech and pro-Moscow propaganda. They patrol social platforms, coordinate their actions through Facebook and Skype to expose fake accounts, and post blogs to discredit conspiracy theories. At the same time, the European Commission has called upon social platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Mozilla, to do more to block Russian trolls from disrupting European elections.

Exposure of Russian disinformation is vital, but to be more effective in countering disruptive attacks Western governments and NGOs need to undertake an informational offensive targeted at public and political opinion inside Russia. Such a psychological operation should be geared toward two core objectives: alienating the Russian public from the regime and provoking power struggles inside the ruling stratum. Detailed revelations about financial abuse among officials while living standards for the masses continue to plunge can help fuel social, ethnic, regional, and religious unrest. Western sources can disseminate poignant information for Russian citizens that is avoided by the state media, including economic decline due to government corruption; the country's neglected and crumbling infrastructure; Russia's looming demographic catastrophe; and growing regional unrest.

Western intelligence services can acquire, leak, and dump *kompromat* material about Putin and his inner circle. A key component would be to disseminate official Russian communications, with a focus on the Kremlin, government ministries, parliament, key businesses, and subservient political parties, as well as private correspondence between officials, particularly at local level, which negatively affect the lives of ordinary citizens. Potentially incendiary information can be circulated through the internet and various social platforms.

The objective would be to disclose the most provocative scandals of Russia's state and local officials and the extent of their corrupt governance, opulent lifestyles, public lies, and contempt for ordinary citizens. Especially valuable would be messages that reveal the willingness of state officials, oligarchs, and bureaucrats to betray the country for personal gain from the Russian budget. Humour, irony, and satire are also valuable assets in addressing Kremlin propaganda and the nature of the Putinist system.

Disclosures about conflicts within the ruling elite can generate uncertainty and anxiety in government circles and expose the regime's political vulnerabilities. The promotion of internal power struggles may not precipitate Putin's downfall, but it can help divert the Kremlin from its unchallenged information war against Western democracies. By spreading suspicion and distrust between officials and raising fears of political purges or

state expropriation of oligarchs, factional infighting can be aggravated to endanger Putin's presidency.

Participation in social internet platforms has soared among Russia's younger generation in recent years. The West needs to target sectors of Russian society, including young people, the unemployed, nationalists, ethnic and religious minorities, regionalists, separatists, and numerous other groups to help sow discord and inspire the emergence of anti-Kremlin movements. Russia itself may not be immune from the anti-establishment populism that has swept through Europe and the US in recent years and from which the Kremlin has tried to benefit in disassembling the West.⁴⁵⁰ This populist boomerang, outraged by failing living standards, the yawning gap between rich and poor, and rampant official corruption, may be manifest in street protests and even violent acts against state property or government officials, as there is no effective political outlet for mass grievances.

Some Western policy makers will caution that informational offensives against Moscow would be too provocative and could escalate bilateral disputes. However, from the Kremlin's perspective, the lack of an effective US response to its own interference in Western societies is perceived as a major vulnerability that invites further intervention. The attacks continue primarily because Moscow faces an inadequate defence and a tepid counter-attack. Although the EU's East StratCom, NATO's StratCom, and the newly established national StratComs in Europe can be effective tools, they still lack sufficient resources and coordination to combat and counter Kremlin-directed disinformation.⁴⁵¹ Since officials in Moscow will in any case accuse the US of interfering in its domestic affairs, Washington together with its allies should make sure that their involvement is politically consequential.

Cyber Defence and Counter-Attack

Cyberattacks on the West can include systematic assaults and denial of service attacks on government sites by Kremlin agencies or hired hackers. It can also entail the monitoring of telecommunications, infecting targeted networks with viruses, or disabling entire systems. Such attacks can affect critical infrastructure and the defence industrial base, including power stations and grids, transportation and telecommunication networks, banking and financial services, as well as law enforcement and national security systems. An internal US Department of Defence report released in December 2018 enumerated various gaps in cyber security, including failure to encrypt classified

⁴⁵⁰ Paul Goble, "Anti-Establishment Wave like Those in UK and US May Engulf Russia, Minchenko Consulting Says," *Windows on Eurasia – New Series*, October 26, 2018, <https://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2018/10/anti-establishment-wave-like-those-in.html> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁵¹ Donald N. Jensen and Peter B. Doran, *Chaos as a Strategy: Putin's "Promethean" Gamble*, Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), November 2018, <https://www.cepa.org/chaos-as-a-strategy>

flash drives or place physical locks on critical computer servers, that have left the country vulnerable to missile attacks.⁴⁵²

Measures must be taken to better protect vital infrastructure, including national defence systems, in case Moscow escalates its cyber probing into an actual attack. Lessons learned from European countries that have been targeted by the Kremlin must also be incorporated in the US response, including Ukraine where a major Russian attack (NotPetya) in June 2017 disabled about 10% of all computer systems and affected airports, banks, electrical networks, and communications services. Critical infrastructure among NATO allies needs better protection from cyberattacks.⁴⁵³ Key measures should include state funding of public utilities and commercial providers to upgrade their systems; contingency plans to ensure a rapid response and coordination among NATO members; better public information and preparation for cyber-related disruptions of vital supplies; and modernization of emergency services to handle large-scale emergencies.

Stricter sanctioning against cyber attackers needs to be pursued. In June 2018, the US Treasury imposed sanctions on five Russian entities and three individuals, including a firm that is controlled by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB), in response to Russian cyberattacks on the US and its allies, including the NotPetya cyberattack and cyber intrusions of America's energy grid. The US Cyber Command, established in 2009, has targeted Russian operatives to deter them from spreading disinformation in US elections.⁴⁵⁴ American operatives inform them they have been identified, that their work is being monitored, and they could be indicted or sanctioned. This is a useful first step but may not dissuade the broad array of Kremlin-affiliated hackers and trolls. To pursue a more potent offensive, an example should be made by releasing personal information about pro-Moscow cyber offenders and pursuing ways to neutralize their online operations.

The US Cyber Command defends military networks but has also developed offensive capabilities. In September 2018, the Pentagon issued a comprehensive cyber strategy document focusing on Russia and China as the chief adversaries and calling for "confronting threats before they reach U.S. networks."⁴⁵⁵ U.S. Cyber Command has been tasked with defending the country against attacks. However, this approach needs to be more assertive and extensive, particularly as there is consensus that lower-level malicious campaigns pose a major, cumulative risk to the US. The strategy also makes

⁴⁵² <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/cybersecurity-failures-raise-threat-deadly-missile-attacks-pentagon-watchdog-says-n949176> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁵³ *Central European Futures: Five Scenarios for 2025*, Visegrad Insight, Special Edition 1(12)/2018, <https://visegradinsight.eu> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁵⁴ Julian E. Barnes, "U.S. Begins First Cyberoperation Against Russia Aimed at Protecting Elections," *The New York Times*, October 23, 2018.

⁴⁵⁵ Department of Defense, *Cyber Strategy 2018*, https://media.defense.gov/2018/Sep/18/2002041658/-1/-1/1/CYBER_STRATEGY_SUMMARY_FINAL.PDF (Accessed 21.04.2019).

more explicit the Defence Department's role in deterring or defeating cyber operations targeting US critical infrastructure that is likely to cause a significant "cyber incident."

The US and its allies need to develop and deploy its offensive cyber capabilities to deter and attack aggressors. In September 2018, President Trump signed the National Security Presidential Memorandum 13, a directive that enables offensive U.S. cyber operations.⁴⁵⁶ It allows the military and other US agencies to undertake cyber operations intended to protect their systems and the country's critical networks. Washington must make it clear that it is prepared to use all available tools, including cyber offensives, against state-sponsored assailants. In deterring and defeating cyber adversaries, a Cyber Force should also be established that can work more closely with allies and partners.⁴⁵⁷ Moscow's reaction to a US cyberattack will prove instructive, given that America has superior electronic capabilities and can take down critical infrastructure in Russia itself. As a warning, Washington could demonstrate its cyber capabilities vis-à-vis third parties that have attacked US systems. A resolute action is more likely to deter Moscow's attacks than repetitive warnings and fruitless admonitions.

Economic and Financial Penalties

The Kremlin uses a number of economic tools to enmesh specific states in a web of financial ties that buttress its political penetration. It tries to influence European governments through ownership of strategic economic sectors, particularly in energy, banking, and telecommunications. Russian company ownership of key energy infrastructure, such as pipelines, refineries, and storage sites, enables Moscow to exert political leverage. The supply of energy and other strategic resources can be decreased or severed at important junctures to exert pressure on particular capitals, or their price can be lowered or raised to gain political concessions. Russia's business penetration also fosters corruption, non-transparency, money laundering, tax evasion, and links with international organized crime.

To undercut Moscow's financial offensive several initiatives can prove beneficial. Financial sanctions should be extended on Russian government officials and Kremlin connected oligarchs, including freezing their international bank accounts, investment funds, and safe deposit boxes, denying access to credit cards and the SWIFT banking network, and seizing their real estate, investment funds, planes, cars, boats, and other properties in the West. Putin himself can be included in the expanded list of targets,

⁴⁵⁶ *The Washington Post*, 20 September 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-authorizes-offensive-cyber-operations-to-deter-foreign-adversaries-bolton-says/2018/09/20/b5880578-bd0b-11e8-b7d2-0773aa1e33da_story.html?utm_term=.72cb3af80304 (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁵⁷ Seth G. Jones, "Going on the Offensive: A U.S. Strategy to Combat Russian Information Warfare, CSIS Briefs," October 1, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/going-offensive-us-strategy-combat-russian-information-warfare> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

together with major energy companies and other Kremlin-linked businesses. Thus far the “sectoral sanctions” imposed on Russian companies have had a limited impact. To be more effective “blocking sanctions” are needed that freeze all Russian transactions via the US financial system.⁴⁵⁸ This could be replicated in Europe’s financial system. An asset freeze on Russian banks can be combined with a suspension of any new trade and investment with Moscow.

Current money laundering regulations in Western countries are inadequate and insufficiently enforced; they must be significantly tightened and the sources of cash flows investigated. The bi-partisan 2018 Defending American Security from Kremlin Aggression Act needs to be passed and implemented by Congress.⁴⁵⁹ This legislation expands financial sanctions on new Russian sovereign debt, against investment in state-owned energy projects, and on key political and business figures who facilitate the Kremlin’s subversive activities.

Additional measures can be taken to reverse Russian state penetration of Western economies. This can include counter-intelligence and law enforcement investigations of all Kremlin-connected business and banking deals; bans on purchases of Russian sovereign and state corporation bonds; embargos on the transfer of dual use technologies; countering Russia’s monopolistic energy schemes by suspending support and financing for the Nord Stream II natural gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea as well as Moscow’s other politically-motivated energy projects; and the imposition of sanctions on all companies investing in Russian-controlled infrastructure and which contribute to undermining Western democracies and alliances.

Military and Security Instruments

Russia's new military doctrine signed by President Vladimir Putin in December 2014 describes an increasingly threatening international environment that can generate problems at home.⁴⁶⁰ It claims that intensifying “global competition” from NATO and the US in particular constitutes a direct threat to Russia. In disguising its own neo-imperial aspirations, Moscow asserts that it will counter Western attempts to gain strategic superiority by deploying strategic missile defence systems.⁴⁶¹ It also reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear or other weapons of mass

⁴⁵⁸ Michael Carpenter, “How to Make Sanctions on Russia Work,” *The American Interest*, December 18, 2018, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/12/18/how-to-make-sanctions-on-russia-work/>

⁴⁵⁹ <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s3336/text> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁶⁰ Paul Goble, “Putin’s New Military Doctrine Says Russia Faces More Threats Abroad -- and at Home,” *Windows on Eurasia – New Series*, December 27, 2014, <http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2014/12/window-on-eurasia-putins-new-military.html>; and news.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁶¹ Pavel Podvig, “New Version of the Military Doctrine,” Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces, December 26, 2014, http://russianforces.org/blog/2014/12/new_version_of_the_military_do.shtml (Accessed 21.04.2019).

destruction against Russia or its allies, and even in case of an “aggression” against Russia with conventional weapons that would endanger the existence of the state. The threat of nuclear strikes against NATO members is intended to terrorize citizens and convince Western governments that they need to negotiate and acquiesce to Moscow’s demands.

The Kremlin employs an assortment of tools to undermine the security of its neighbours and prevent them from acting in unison to defend their national interests. These include persistent military threats, dangerous military encounters and other provocations, intimidating exercises, nuclear blackmail, unconventional offensives, proxy wars, sponsorship and funding of separatist militias, conventional military intervention, territorial fragmentation, and the creation and manipulation of “frozen” or unresolved conflicts.

Western states and NATO can pursue a number of counter-measures to impair Russia’s offensives and dent its ambitions. All aspirant states in the Western Balkans should gain membership in NATO in the quickest possible time once they fulfil basic conditions for accession, particularly Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Membership Action Plans (MAPs) on route to NATO entry should be provided to Ukraine and Georgia. MAPs should also be offered to Serbia, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and whichever NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries request accession and commit themselves to qualifying for membership.

Ukraine, Georgia, and other countries facing a direct Russian armed assault must be effectively armed with whatever weapons they need to inflict heavy losses on invading Russian forces and their proxies. In the Black Sea and Azov Sea the US and NATO need to dispatch naval vessels to Ukrainian ports to demonstrate the validity of Freedom of Navigation Operations and underscore that these are not Moscow’s lakes. This will also highlight the fact that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has positively intensified NATO-Ukraine relations – precisely the outcome that the Kremlin aimed to prevent.⁴⁶² NATO members along the eastern flank from the Baltic to the Black Sea regions confronting an assertive Russia must be more intensively assisted in developing their maritime and territorial defensive capabilities.

NATO military drills should be regularly staged in different zones close to Russia’s borders with minimal prior warning. All states neighbouring NATO should be invited to participate in such exercises, including Belarus and Moldova. Numerous scenarios can be simulated in the drills, including repulsing indirect or direct military invasions and

⁴⁶² Stephen Blank, “Why is the Sea of Azov so Important?” Atlantic Council, November 6, 2018, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/why-is-the-sea-of-azov-so-important> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

territorial seizure by foreign forces. Such manoeuvres could help disrupt Moscow's military planning and disperse Russian forces along its long borders with NATO states.

NATO planners also need to prepare contingences for opening alternative fronts and conflict zones for Moscow in the event of a Russian military attack on any part of NATO territory. The aim would be to convince the Kremlin that the Western alliance is capable of creating and exploiting potentially destabilizing scenarios inside Russia and along its borders if Moscow intervenes in a NATO state. In addition to strengthening conventional military forces to deter a Russian assault, NATO can also prepare plans for special operations on Russian territory or missions whereby it can draw Moscow into internal or external conflicts that backfire politically. Such moves are more likely to place the Kremlin on the defensive rather than allowing it to maintain the initiative in its attacks on the West.

Managing Russia's Dissolution

The US and NATO need to return to core principles in dealing with Putin's Russia by applying and adapting policies that hastened the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This should be anchored in supporting political pluralism, minority rights, genuine federalism, administrative decentralization, and self-determination among Russia's disparate regions and numerous ethnic groups. The impending fragmentation of the Russian Federation may not be as peaceful as the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the West needs to start planning for a range of scenarios that will affect several of Russia's European neighbours, NATO allies, and EU members. The basis for such a strategy would be a comprehensive assessment of each federal unit, ethnic group, and regional identity to reveal all of Russia's vulnerabilities and determine the opportunities for resistance, protest, sovereignty, and secession.

Russia has failed to develop into a nation state with a distinct ethnic or civic identity but remains an essentially imperial construct. In order to retain its state integrity, Russia needs to operate along more inclusive lines to manage disparate domestic interests. The country's increasingly stifling authoritarianism, much like Soviet communism, will eventually fragment the country. Russia's numerous nationalities are in effect trapped within a colonial federation that only benefits a narrow elite of security personnel, bureaucrats, oligarchs, and politicians tied to the Kremlin. Moscow extracts maximum resources from the federal regions while disbursing and investing as little as possible. Without local self-determination and regional autonomy, the federal structure will become increasingly unmanageable with the prospect of violent collapse.

While Moscow seeks to divide the West and fracture the EU and NATO by supporting nationalist, populist, separatist, anti-American, and anti-EU parties throughout Europe, Washington and its Allies can counteract by promoting regional and ethnic autonomy

inside the Russian Federation and eventual independence from Moscow.⁴⁶³ The rationale for such a strategy should be logically framed: in order to survive Russia needs a federal democracy and a robust economy; with no democratization on the horizon and economic conditions deteriorating the federal structure will become increasingly ungovernable; to manage the process of dissolution and lessen the likelihood of conflict that spills over state borders the West needs to establish links with Russia's diverse regions and promote their efforts for a peaceful transition toward statehood.

In the West's information offensive against the Putin regime, Russia's fake federalism should be contrasted with the genuine federalism of the US system and other federal states in Europe and elsewhere. Western governments can diplomatically support self-determination and federalization inside Russia in key international institutions. As during the Cold War, when Washington backed the "captive nations," including Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Estonians, and Latvians, Western services can both openly or covertly assist autonomist and independence movements throughout the Russian Federation -- from Kaliningrad and Karelia, through the Middle Volga and the North Caucasus to Tuva and Sakha in Siberia and the Far East. Indeed, Western leaders need to underscore that regions such as Sakha and Magadan, with their substantial mineral wealth, could develop into successful independent states without Moscow's political control and economic exploitation.

Governors of Russia's federal units appointed by the Kremlin may be faced with a stark choice as public disaffection mounts. They can either continue to implement Moscow's repressive and exploitative policies and face growing domestic opposition and even violent revolt, or they can transform themselves into genuine leaders pushing for the interests of their republics and resist pressures from the Kremlin. Recent public protests in Ingushetia against a land exchange deal with Chechnya that favours Grozny and was backed by the Kremlin indicates that the power and policies of local governors will come under increasing question at the same time that Moscow has diminishing financial resources to support the poorest republics.⁴⁶⁴

Demands for authentic autonomy among Russia's diverse regions can be boosted through foreign economic connections. Local populations in several regions will benefit from forging closer trading contacts with neighbouring states rather than depending on

⁴⁶³ The argument that Russia must be kept intact because it possesses nuclear weapons is flawed; similar assertions were made about the Soviet Union before its collapse. Any emerging Muscovite state ruled from the Kremlin will inherit the nuclear arsenal just as Russia inherited that of the Soviet Union.

⁴⁶⁴ Tony Wesolowski, "Land Grab? Why the Ingush are Furious with Chechnya," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 10, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/explainer-ingush-chechen-land-swap/29536507.html> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

Moscow, whose federal budget is drastically shrinking. The Russian government has been calling for the richer regions to help subsidize the poorer ones, thus further aggravating their relations with the Center. Collapsing infrastructure means that residents of enormous regions such as Siberia and the Russian Far East will become even more separated from Moscow and European Russia, a trend that encourages regionalist or even independence movements. Siberia has also been hit particularly hard by international financial sanctions, as some of the major sanctioned oligarchs operate large enterprises in the region employing tens of thousands of workers.

It will be important to base Western policy on the calculation that the Russian Federation may not disintegrate simply along ethnic lines, as regional identities and grievances are growing even among Russian ethnics in Siberia and the Far East who may favour separation and statehood. Simultaneously, separatist sentiments among non-Russians can be encouraged through an information campaign underscoring Kremlin plans to downgrade the distinctiveness of ethnic republics, absorbing them into Russian-majority regions, or eliminating them altogether. This is evident in Moscow's plans to amalgamate and reduce the number of federal units, as well as the recently enacted language law designed to promote Russification and curtail native languages.⁴⁶⁵

Support for autonomist and independence movements will also send a strong signal that the West can react to Moscow's aggression against NATO states by intensifying its backing for Russia's rupture. Indeed, NATO should prepare contingencies for both the dangers and the opportunities that Russia's fragmentation may present. This would involve a twin-track approach. First, Russia's European neighbours must be provided with sufficient security in terms of weapons systems and NATO military support to shield themselves from the most destabilizing scenarios emanating from Russia's dissolution. Plans can also be drawn up for handling refugee outflows, cross-border military spillovers, and other incidents that can negatively impact on nearby states.

Second, detailed plans should be drafted for engaging with the new entities emerging from a splintering Russian federation. New aspiring states may not necessarily be based on ethnic principles but on regional multi-ethnic identities amidst increasing local estrangement from Moscow even among Russian populations. Some regions could join existing countries such as Finland, Ukraine, China, and Japan, from whom Moscow has forcefully appropriated territories in the past. Other republics and territories in the North Caucasus, Middle Volga, Siberia, and the Far East could become fully independent states and forge bilateral relations with China, Japan, the US, and Europe.

⁴⁶⁵ Paul Goble, "Putin's Language Policies 'a Bomb Under the Russian Federation,' Experts Say," *Windows on Eurasia*, December 22, 2018, <https://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2018/12/putins-language-policies-bomb-under.html> (Accessed 21.04.2019), and "Declining Trust in Government at All Levels Becoming Problem in Majority of Federal Subjects, Grashchenkov Says," December 23, 2018, *Windows on Eurasia*, December 23, 2018

Russia's Escalating Failures

Russia is infected with terminal maladies that will have widespread domestic reverberations and impact on US and Allied interests from Europe to East Asia. Instead of assuming that Russia will transform itself into a stable and internationally constructive polity, it is time to acknowledge that the Russian Federation has failed to develop into a national state with a binding ethnic or civic identity and into a regional power without neo-imperial ambitions. Under the Putinist system, Russia has become a brittle centralized federation that will only become post-imperial through its dissolution.

Neglecting Russia's impending fragmentation may prove more damaging to Western interests than making preparations to manage its international repercussions. To avoid sudden geopolitical jolts and possible military confrontations, Washington and its European allies need to monitor and encourage a peaceful rupture and establish links with the entities that emerge from Russia's convulsions. The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union should serve as a lesson that far-reaching transformations occur regardless of the Kremlin's disinformation campaigns or the West's short-sighted adherence to a transient status quo.

Russian Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Policy Recommendations

Ambassador Eitvydas Bajarūnas

Introduction

The notion of “hybrid” attracts more and more attention of both practitioners and political analysts. Albeit still continuous differences on conceptual approach vis-a-vis Putin’s Russia, consensus is emerging on hybrid warfare as such. An offensive against Western democracy, our institutions, human rights, diversity, market driven economic life, freedom of speech, free media, and rule of law. This is what in essence Russian hybrid warfare is about.

While Russia pursuing an aggressive policy against the Western democracy – continuous aggression in Eastern Ukraine, meddling into national elections and referendums, the attempt to poison of the Skripal family, or supporting radical and anti-Western political parties - the Baltic States are often cited (rightly or wrongly) as a primary potential target of Russia’s hybrid actions. For them, the term “hybrid” has become applicable, not only at a theoretical but also at a practical level.

However, with its malign operations Russia not only is striking right to the heart of their democratic way of life, but also threatening sovereignty of the Baltic States. Hybrid measures align with Russia’s overall strategic-military goals to change the global power balance, to enhance its military posture, to divide the transatlantic community, to dominate within its perceived zone of interests, including the Baltic Sea Region, and to sow ambiguity in order to exploit weaknesses.

Why do Russia’s actions cause concern for the Baltic States? Throughout the history, Russia has never stopped treating the Baltic States as being in its exceptional influence zone and has long been using political, economic, energy resources, propaganda, cyber, informational and other coercive, overt and covert means in order to make countries vulnerable and weak. Those measures, even comparing them to escalation of Russia’s military potential, kept only growing during the recent years.

This article starts with very general questions as to what constitute Russia’s hybrid strategy, what’s its origin? Without understanding of the true nature of Russia’s intent, it would be difficult to identify Russia’s hybrid strategy applied in the Baltic States. Furthermore, article describes specific cases of Russia’s influence in the Baltic States. Finally, article provides policy recommendations on how to counter hybrid threats at both national and international levels.

Origin of Russia's Hybrid Threats Strategy

Many international experts nowadays do agree that hybrid methods are neither new, nor are applied for the first time. However, over the last decade we witness a clear shift of Russia's strategic thought towards a major use of non-military methods. Russia's move in favour of non-military methods is confirmed by Russia's foreign policy concept⁴⁶⁶, which emphasising "soft power", i.e. protection of the rights of the citizens of Russia and its compatriots abroad, and by the new Russia's information security concept⁴⁶⁷.

If hybrid influence measures employed by Russia are claimed to constitute old methods, why this term became relevant especially now? At least two characteristics of what we conceptualize as Russia's hybrid warfare make it possible to speak about the "novelty" of this type of warfare.

First, while carrying out hybrid activities, Russia successfully exploits, for its own purposes, the rights to openness and freedom of speech, granted by the democratic state systems of Western states (i.e., representatives of Russia can freely operate and invest in Western countries), as well as globalization, modern information technologies (the impact through social networks is rather cheap yet global). It is only at present that the world begins to realize what changes have been introduced by practically total accessibility to huge-scope data and possibility to use them by both governmental and non-governmental actors.

Another important aspect is the fact that in case of Russia we see great level of coordination. Establishment under the name "National Defence Management Center" controls and coordinates the entire military and non-military spectrum of activities concerning the use of force in Russia's region and abroad. This new coordination centre comprises over 50 other "force" institutions, over a thousand officials and military personnel operating "24/7"⁴⁶⁸. This is particularly important in analysing hybrid warfare and the employment of all aspects – military, intelligence, economic energy-related, etc.

Russia, by employing hybrid warfare, exploits certain weaknesses of Western societies. For example, the spreading of propaganda became possible due to the decrease in the confidence in democratic institutions, mass media. Both in the neighbourhood and in Western states – the Kremlin makes use of the fundamental principles of liberal

⁴⁶⁶ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, „Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation“, 1 December 2016, http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6B6Z29/content/id/2542248, (Accessed on 15 November 2017).

⁴⁶⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, „Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation“, December 5, 2016, http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptlCk6B6Z29/content/id/2563163 (Accessed on 15 November 2017)

⁴⁶⁸ Gavrilov Y., „National Defence Management Centre established in Moscow“, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 04 11 2014. https://www.rbth.com/economics/2014/10/31/national_defence_management_centre_established_in_moscow_39483, (Accessed on 20 November 2017).

democracy and presents lies and propaganda as an alternative position. Supporting European extremist groups and radical forces financially and in other ways in spite of their ideological direction, destabilizing state societies from the inside, cyber activities, employing of “proxy groups” (pseudo-NGO, youth organizations, think-tanks, expert groups, motorcycle clubs), using cultural diplomacy, fostering of Russian culture abroad (it was for this purpose that the organization „Rossotrudnichestvo“ (Russian: *Россотрудничество*) was created. These are just the better known cases of Russia’s measures of hybrid influence.

Russia’s Actions towards the Baltic States

How specifically Russia employs hybrid, asymmetric or non-military methods in case of the Baltic States?

There are several major elements that constitute hybrid security environment of Lithuania, describing them as the biggest “blocks” of Russia’s hybrid threats in the Baltics⁴⁶⁹:

- ✓ Informational threats (particularly operating through Russian-speaking citizens);
- ✓ Threats to the cyber space;
- ✓ Influencing elections and political system;
- ✓ Threats through the potentially poorly guarded state borders (in case of Ukraine, the “green little men” did not emerge from nowhere – they had to cross the state border physically);
- ✓ Negative impact on critical infrastructure (this would comprise energy – assurance of supply and diversification; transport – the significance of Klaipėda seaport for the Lithuanian supply and in general the importance of the Baltic Sea for the Lithuanian economy; communications – the only Lithuanian fibre line to the West, lying on the bottom of the Baltic Sea, leads to Sweden; therefore, there are great possibilities to disrupt it);
- ✓ Traditional military measures supported by the subversive activity, escalation of fear by coordinating known measures with new ones;
- ✓ Covert violent actions;
- ✓ Actions aimed at vulnerable society areas, non-violent subversive activity by employing wider military, political, economic, civilian and informational methods;

⁴⁶⁹ Bajarūnas E., Keršanskas V. „Hybrid threats: Analysis of Their Content, Challenges Posed and Measures to Overcome”, *Lithuanian annual strategic review*, 2017-2018, Volume 16, Vilnius 2019

- ✓ The Ostrovets atomic power station now under construction in Belarus next to Vilnius and the possibility to use it for hybrid actions could also be treated as a threat in the hybrid context.

Indeed, despite increasing nature of hybrid threats, in case of the Baltic States, the dominating factor creating geopolitical background of Baltics is conventional military dimension. It is the symbiosis of conventional and hybrid threats that makes the basis of the concept of the Baltic States' security challenges. According to the National security concept,⁴⁷⁰ Lithuania clearly interprets (and rightly so) as the threat of high priority conventional military threats caused by Russia's capacity and will to use military force in order to achieve its objectives, concentration and development of its military capabilities in the neighbourhood of Lithuania as well as military activities lacking transparency and demonstrating power at the borders of Lithuania and other NATO member countries.

Research on hybrid signals of Vilnius-based Eastern Europe Studies Centre (EESC), the aim of which was to compile a register of various actions carried out by Russia and attributable to hybrid threats, indicated these threat sources⁴⁷¹. First, cyber-attacks against Estonia in 2017 or against Lithuania in 2014–2015. These hackings were aimed at demonstrating the vulnerability of the institutions and influence groups of the country and simultaneously implementing narratives favourable to Russia (e.g. the myth of the Bronze soldier as the liberator), splitting of country's groups, discrediting of persons, compromising of the position. Another example: in June 2015, the members of the Russian parliament Yevgeny Fyodorov and Anton Ramonov, who are representatives of the ruling party "United Russia", appealed to the Procurator General and submitted a complaint that the State Council of the USSR illegitimately recognized Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Estonia in 1991. By submitting such complaints, they questioned the legitimacy of the Baltic States and "provoked" in a peculiar way the authorities and society of the countries, indicating that the Baltics' dependence on Russia. Then, in December 2016, inhabitants of some Vilnius quarters received informational brochures in Russian. These brochures invited Russian-nationality people to participate in the program that supports the transfer of Russians (and not only them) from Lithuania to Russia. Thus, ungrounded attempts were made to cause discontent with the socio-economic situation in Lithuania, erroneously illustrate that the level of living in Russia is higher. More generally hybrid threats in case of Baltics could for the sake of understanding be divided into several big categories.

⁴⁷⁰ "National Security Strategy", approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, accessed 17 January, 2017

⁴⁷¹ Buinauskas D. *et al*, „Information signals of hybrid warfare: the case of Russia“, *EESC Report*, October 2016.

- *Disinformation*

The Annual Assessment of Threats to the National Security identifies⁴⁷² that Russia operates against Lithuania, first of all, by pursuing aggressive informational and ideological policy, developing history policy projects. Indeed, Russia's attention of propaganda mass media towards Lithuania kept only growing. While preparing reportages about Lithuania, Russian propagandists disguised genuine motives of the activity, would come to Lithuania using business or tourist visas, issued in some West European state. Through the informational space, social networks Russia sought to spread anti-Western sentiments and form public opinion favourable to Russia.

In case of Lithuania Russia's disinformation has the objective to affect societies, cause doubts as to the historical memory, current social economic situation, involve separate groups into favourable for Russia narratives, escalate the feeling of soviet nostalgia, create a sense of insecurity, etc. Propaganda is always constructed purposefully, i.e. a specific message targets a certain community group that can be affected the most. Attempts are made to instigate and set one part of society against the remaining part (by making use of purposefully false, fabricated sensitive information) while turning another group into a passive "grey mass" taking no interest in social political matters ("why should we resist at all if Russia is so powerful"). Russia has never stopped investing in mass media means – primarily in the neighbouring states with large Russian-speaking communities of the population and later on creating global projects in different world languages ("Russia Today", "Sputnik", etc.).

The main targets of adverse informational operations in Lithuania are the history of Lithuania and the Lithuanian Armed Forces, encouragement of nihilistic dispositions, instigation of ethnic discord, discrediting of NATO and the European Union. Relations between Lithuania and Poland, sensitive topics referring to the participation of Lithuanians in the Holocaust are also attributable to Russia's disinformation targets.

Among the most easily affected and thus attracting the greatest attention from Russia society groups are national communities, people still living in soviet nostalgia, persons of the lowest social stratum as well as conservative layers of society. Orientated particularly towards these groups, the Kremlin designs its propaganda in the way to meet their expectations in mass media: an entertaining content frequently smacking of soviet times intertwined with informational nature messages directed towards a specific audience.

⁴⁷² Valstybės saugumo departamento ir Antrojo operatyvinių tarnybų departamento prie KAM, „Grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinimas“, 2018, <https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LTU.pdf>, (Accessed on 26 March 2017)

The study carried out by the same EESC⁴⁷³ showed that the main factors of Russia's influence are soviet nostalgia and the assessment of functioning of democracy in Lithuania. It is possible to discern both positive and negative tendencies. The part of society that assessed soviet times positively considerably decreased after 2014 and is particularly obvious among young people (only 8.5 percent of the age group 18–29 estimated soviet times positively; for comparison, in the age group of 60 and over – 40.2 percent). Thus, one can state that this factor will eventually stop being as important. However, the assessment of the second factor, i.e. democracy operation, is very striking because as many as 42 percent of respondents estimated the functioning of democracy negatively or very negatively, while 28 percent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Experts from Riga-based NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence have identified these key Russian instruments in the Nordic and Baltic regions: Russia's domestic and international media system; the Internet and social media; government-organized nongovernmental organizations (GONGOs); Russia's compatriot policy; pipeline diplomacy; economic interdependency; the encouragement of political radicalization and polarization of Western societies; intelligence operations; and demonstrations of military force⁴⁷⁴.

- Societal weaknesses

With its malign operations, Russia is striking right to the heart of our democratic way of life, targeting our civil societies.

Military forces, and especially deployed troops in times of war, depend on the civilian sector for transport, communications or basic supplies such as food and water, to fulfil their missions. Military efforts to defend Alliance territory and populations, therefore, need to be complemented by robust civil preparedness. However, civil assets can be vulnerable to external attack and internal disruption in times of peace and of war. By reducing these vulnerabilities, reduces the risk of a potential attack, reinforcing its deterrence. A high level of civilian resilience is, therefore, an essential component of a credible deterrence.

As a rule hybrid strategies focus on societal vulnerabilities - weak/failed state, internal conflicts, divided society, lack of political consent about the future of the society, corruption, inefficient law enforcement, lack of natural resources and dependency

⁴⁷³ Vaišnys A. *et al*, „Rusijos propaganda: analizė, įvertinimas, rekomendacijos“, *Rytų Europos studijų centras*, 2017, http://www.eesc.lt/uploads/news/id987/RESC%20monografija_propaganda.pdf, (Accessed 6 December 2017)

⁴⁷⁴ „Russia's footprint in the Nordic-Baltic information environment“, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Report 2016/2017, p. 8, <https://www.stratcomcoe.org/russias-footprint-nordic-baltic-information-environment-0>, p. 7, (Accessed on 30 November 2017)

of foreign states, etc. None of the states, including – Lithuania are not immune from these problems and Russia could easily exploit them.

- *Influencing elections*

Aforementioned Annual Assessment makes strong case of elections interference and identifies that Russian intelligence services are particularly interested in the Lithuanian presidential elections in 2019⁴⁷⁵.

According to Andrius Kubilius⁴⁷⁶, speaking about Lithuania's experience and the current legal and political situation, one can distinguish the following types of hybrid threats: impact on public opinion, using agents influencing opinion leaders, public organizations; "co-branding" when the images of election commissions, political movements or emerging political parties are created by uncontrolled business funds; officially unpaid, shadow funding for political campaigns; pooling of shadow money and influence groups, using the Kremlin pressure on businesses related to Russia and their owners involved in Lithuanian politics, creating parties or otherwise trying to influence the political system; the weakening of the political system, in support of anti-system, populist, pro-Kremlin political forces; the weakening of the institutions, interference with the operation of the infrastructure through the use of cyberattacks, the introduction of intelligence gadgets; pressure on politicians and influence on public opinion by manipulating supply disruptions of energy supply, their prices, etc. It is concluded that in 2019 during the presidential elections, Lithuania will face a giant and effective Kremlin hybrid attack campaign.

Lithuanian expert Marius Laurinavičius went deeper in analysing Russia's influence in elections. In his recent publication,⁴⁷⁷ he took a "stock-taking" approach on Russia's meddling in Western elections, referendums or even politics in general. Along with creating a list of tools and techniques of malign activities, used by the Kremlin in different places and in multiple cases, he also analysed possible implications of the phenomenon of Russian meddling in political processes of the West in recent times. But, and that is most important, plenty of Lithuania's and Baltic States specific examples (strong Russia's traces during the elections in 2003 of afterwards impeached President of Lithuania Paksas, the case of also impeached former Deputy Speaker of Parliament Bastys in 2018 which revealed how Russia's influence can be intertwined into a network

⁴⁷⁵ Valstybės saugumo departamento ir Antrojo operatyvinių tarnybų departamento prie KAM, „Grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinimas“, 2018, <https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LTU.pdf>, (Accessed on 26 March 2017).

⁴⁷⁶ Kubilius A, "Demokratijos apsaugos nuo hibridinių grėsmių strategija", <https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/politics/andrius-kubilius-demokratijos-apsaugos-nuo-hibridiniu-gresmiu-strategija.d?id=77961877> (Accessed 21.04.2019).

⁴⁷⁷ Laurinavičius M., "A Guide to the Russian Tool Box of Election Meddling: a Platform to Analyse the Long Term Comprehensive Kremlin Strategy of Malign Influence, *International Elections Study Center*, 2018, http://iesc.lt/app/uploads/2018/10/IESC_Guide_ToolBox_2018_FINAL.pdf

of interests of the Russian nuclear power giant Rosatom and personal ties with former officers of the Russian security services, the case of money transferred into Latvian banks that may have been used for political manipulation in foreign countries) confirms important of this tool of Russia's influence.

- *Cyber*

Again, Annual Assessment describes that the major part of hostile activity in the cyber space pertains to Russia⁴⁷⁸. Although the cyber security situation in Lithuania is improving (e.g. Lithuanian authorities managed to block some of the most damaging global attacks as WannaCry, NotPetya, Reaper and others), the number of targeted cyber-attacks is forecasted to grow. Indeed, the amount of cyber incidents is increasing all over the world and Lithuania is not an exception - from cases of primitive hooliganism to spying and criminal offenses involving money. Lithuanian experts observing a growing number of cyber incidents - malware-based software was distributed, mostly using cyber-attacks based on social engineering principles against human factors. The spread of harmful software has increased in the areas of public security and legislation, foreign affairs and security policy. The spread of harmful software in the energy sector remains high. The total number of incidents processed by the cyber incident investigation units was around 55.000 in 2017, both in the public sector and in the private sector in general. Statistics on such incidents signalize a major challenge to cyber security in the Lithuanian electronic environment, citizens, the public sector and business. After evaluating the vulnerability of the Lithuanian public sector websites, it was found that in the year 2017 the number of vulnerable websites that could be breached by only exploiting the already known vulnerabilities has increased. Organizations continue to avoid updating their software (used for the websites) on time; purchase of website support and administration services generally does not include cyber security obligation in the contracts.⁴⁷⁹

- *Energy*

Yet again referring to the Annual Assessment, Russia continues to strive for dominance in the energy market of the region and hinder its integration into the West European energy system. Belarus in concert with the Russian corporation "Rosatom" accelerated the construction of Ostrovets atomic power plant in proximity of Vilnius.⁴⁸⁰ There many more links of energy security and hybrid threats: possible disruption of energy supply

⁴⁷⁸ Valstybės saugumo departamento ir Antrojo operatyvinių tarnybų departamento prie KAM, „Grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinimas“, 2018, <https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LTU.pdf>, 2017 03 26.

⁴⁷⁹ "National Cyber Security Status Report for the Year 2017", Vilnius, 2018, https://www.nksc.lt/doc/en/NKSC_2017_EN.pdf

⁴⁸⁰ Valstybės saugumo departamento ir Antrojo operatyvinių tarnybų departamento prie KAM, „Grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinimas“, 2018, <https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LTU.pdf>, 2017 03 26.

from safe and reliable sources, dependence on the dominant energy suppliers, lack of diversification and competition of energy sources, political pressure, corruption associated with “grey” energy schemes, etc. National security concept clearly enumerates energy vulnerabilities,⁴⁸¹ i.e. operation of the Baltic States' electricity system in the synchronous transmission grid of the IPS/UPS hindering the management of the electrical system of Lithuania and electricity flows through connectors with Russia and Belarus. Also, monopolization of the import of energy sources.

Julijus Grubliauskas and Michael Rühle argue that Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and actions against Ukraine have added the linkage between energy and hybrid threats: Russia had increased the gas price, supported separatists with energy deliveries and expropriated Ukrainian energy assets in and around Crimea.⁴⁸² Many similar actions, of course, in different context could be applied in case of Lithuania. According to Tadas Jakštas⁴⁸³, since economic cooperation in the Baltic Sea region takes place mainly through maritime links (the Baltic Sea routes are used for exports as well as oil and gas supply diversification), it clearly shows yet another link between energy security and hybrid threats. The security of energy supplies could be disrupted by grey zone operations, including military activities, in the maritime domain due to the fact that the Baltic Sea hosts some of the important regional energy infrastructure, including submarine cables (e.g. NordBalt, Estlink, LNG terminals).

- Subversion, covert violent action and conventional aggression

In a study on Russia's hybrid threats, Andrew Radin highlighted three main types of activities that Russia can use for the Baltic States⁴⁸⁴: (1) nonviolent subversion; (2) covert violent action; and (3) conventional aggression supported by political subversion. According to A. Radin, in the case of non-violent subversion, Russia's chances of destabilizing the situation in the Baltic States are not high. The analysis of recent years confirms that using this type of activity measures Russia's ability to destabilize the domestic situation in Lithuania remains, but adequate government measures and the reaction of civil society help to minimize it. However, these hybrid Russian measures must be analysed and evaluated. Again, in the case of covert violent actions, the chances are also small, especially given the fact that the countries of the region have learned from the scenario used by Russia and have measures against the “little green

⁴⁸¹ “National Security Strategy”, approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2017 01 17

⁴⁸² Grubliauskas J., Rühle M., “Energy security: a critical concern for Allies and partners”, *NATO Review*, 2018 07 26, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2018/also-in-2018/energy-security-a-critical-concern-for-allies-and-partners/EN/index.htm>

⁴⁸³ Jakštas T., “Maritime threats to energy security in the Baltic Sea region”, *Baltic Rim Economies*, ISSUE # 3, 2018 10 31

⁴⁸⁴ Radin A., „Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics. Threats and Potential Responses“, *RAND Corporation*, 2017, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1500/RR1577/RAND_RR1577.pdf, 2017 12 06.

men". Nevertheless, these hybrid Russian measures must be analysed and evaluated. Finally, according to A. Radin, traditional military measures, especially those supported by subversion practices, pose the greatest risk to the Baltic States, as Russia has a strong conventional domination and will quickly overcome resistance. Therefore, the conventional war in combination with hybrid measures remains the top priority for Lithuania as well.

How to Counter Hybrid Threats?

Modern literature provides solid background for the ways to counter hybrid threats. Starting from a firm political mandate and comprehensive security concept, continuing with a well-functioning coordination of various institutions at the Government level, legal base, civilian-military cooperation, and finishing with underlying necessity of constant preparation, training, and exercises.⁴⁸⁵ What we basically talking here in case of countering hybrid threats is building resilience protecting democratic values and fixing vulnerabilities (admitting that all we have vulnerabilities). After Russia's actions in Ukraine, Lithuania made huge steps in countering hybrid threats.

Just key elements what Lithuania does:

- Has a strong political mandate and a comprehensive security concept. The Lithuanian National Security Strategy (newest version, updated in 2017) uses comprehensive approach to security. Robust political commitment from the highest level – President, Prime Minister, political elite – on the need to counter foreign influence and strengthen resilience was needed.
- Develops a system for understanding hybrid threats. Since 2014, the Lithuanian authorities - the MoD, army, intelligence, police, and border guard services (listing only a few) have taken specific actions against the hybrid threats.
- Coordinates various institutions at the Government level and have a crisis management mechanism, prepare and work the procedures of various institutions (“whole-of-government” approach). On June 2017 National Security Commission of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania was formed. Several sittings of this Commission which became focal place of coordination of counter-hybrid threats actions of the Government, have already taken place. In summer 2017 Crisis prevention and threats management bureau under the Government Office started functioning.
- Has a common understanding of the situation, a common threat and risk assessment, and planning and training processes by key stakeholders. The key decision was to increase the defence budget so that it would even exceed the 2 per cent of GDP.

⁴⁸⁵ For a good overview of the experts' debates on this issue, see Bajarūnas E., Keršanskas V., *ibid.*

- Restores the conscription system.
- Establishes of a rapid reaction force. Since in reacting to hybrid threats it is necessary to act as fast as possible in order to prevent the deepening of the crisis, readiness of these forces is particularly high – the ability to react within 2–24 hours with clear structure: two battalion-size groups, supported by Special Forces, logistics and other capabilities of the armed forces.
- Exercises with hybrid scenarios, employing structures of the national defence and internal affairs as well as institutions of local authorities came to the start.
- Sets up cyber defence system focusing on the protection of critical information infrastructure, the public sector, increased resilience and response capability.
- Implements counter disinformation steps, i.e. strengthening strategic communication; raising public awareness of information wars and propaganda; suspension of the propaganda of war and hatred. Providing social media literacy skills and other training to officials, politicians, the media and society has become an important issue in the fight against information threats. These educational endeavours are an active way to identify lies, deconstruct them and focus on developing the message and narratives on and of Lithuania. To this end, a group of independent fighters against propaganda, titled the ‘Lithuanian Elves’, was set up. ‘Lithuanian Elves’ are also part of informal consortium with major Lithuania media outlets establishing “Debunk.eu” platform which also uses AI elements to counter disinformation.
- Sets up national integration and development of regional policy.
- Amends legal acts to respond to hybrid warfare. I.e, in December 2014, the Seimas approved legal acts that grant a legal basis to react to hybrid threats by using armed forces in peacetime. For example, if local armed incidents are carried out or border violations (an analogy with the scenario of “little green men” of Ukraine) that do not reach the level of aggression (i.e. peacetime laws are still valid), the President of the Republic may take the decision to directly employ armed forces (the decision must be also approved by the Parliament). This decision should have a clear mandate, fixed time and territory in which certain civilian functions will be further conducted.
- Strengthens of borders is attributed to the reaction to hybrid threats as well. The security of borders starts with the awareness of the situation and the ability to observe.
- Makes a breakthrough in assuring energy independence. In order to guarantee energy supply independence and decrease Russia’s manipulation possibilities, a liquefied gas terminal was built in Klaipėda. Besides, electricity links with Sweden and Poland granted Lithuania a possibility not to buy electricity from Russia or Belarus. Influencing the construction by Russia and Belarus of the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets.

Even if both NATO and EU specify that countering hybrid threats is national responsibility, international cooperation, particularly through the NATO and EU, but also using regional and multilateral initiatives such as Nordic-Baltic-Polish cooperation, European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, can offer much on the political, economic and military fields. Multilateral framework enables to unite separate, scattered national resources in solving issues of a broader international agenda.

Many recent achievements of NATO could be noted:

- At the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016 decision was made on NATO's seven baseline resilience requirements: (1) guaranteed continuity of government and critical state services; (2) sustainable energy sources; (3) ability to effectively fight uncontrolled population movements; (4) sustainable food and water resources; (5) ability to fight mass casualties; (6) sustainable civil communications systems; and (7) sustainable civil transport systems. These baseline resilience requirements starting from 2018 were completely incorporated into NATO defence planning.
- Another important decision - NATO's recent decision on Counter Hybrid Support Teams.
- While responding to Russia's informational attacks Alliance enhanced strategic communication capabilities at NATO headquarters and in Riga, NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence was established.
- Apart from these strategic NATO decisions in countering hybrid threats, regular exercises with hybrid scenarios continue to take place. For example, NATO Crisis Management Exercises (CMX) began to include hybrid scenarios, comprising disinformation, threats to critical infrastructure, "grey zone" situations.
- Reporting about hybrid incidents from members of the Alliance and NATO forces was also strengthened.
- NATO also participates in the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.
- NATO reviews its management structure taking into consideration hybrid elements.

At the EU level:

- In April 2016, the EU communication on the establishment of the Security Union recognized that it is necessary to fight against hybrid threats and that it is important to assure a greater consistency of internal and external actions in the security area.
- In July 2016, in Warsaw, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of the NATO signed a joint declaration which defence seven specific areas including fighting against hybrid threats: early

warning/situational awareness; strategic communication; cyber security; civil–military preparedness and response⁴⁸⁶.

- In the aftermath of the *European Defence Action Plan*, in June 2017, the European Council established the European Defence Fund with the proposed financing of 600 million euros until 2020 and after 2020, 1.5 billion euros annually. Hybrid threats are among the areas that can lay claim to the financing.

- EU continues to implement 22 specific provisions of a Joint communication for Countering Hybrid Threats agreed in 2016.

- Over the last year, let alone, strategic decisions were made: establishment of EastStratcom Task Force and Hybrid Fusion Cell, an agreement on Cyber strategy, recent agreement on Action Plan for disinformation, with Rapid Alert System and enhanced Strategic Communications teams, last year's Commission's proposal on election protection, to name just a few. Both Action Plan for disinformation and Commission's proposals on election protection already demonstrated strong shift towards internal security: Fact-Checkers network, support of election cooperation networks, protection against cybersecurity incidents, unlawful data manipulation, fighting disinformation campaigns, and tightening the rules on European political party funding.

- Decision to offer one of the Members States to establish in the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats was implemented with the Centre established by signing MOU by 9 EU and NATO states in April 2017. Currently Centre's membership reached 21.

Conclusions

Some key policy conclusions can be drawn from the Baltic perspectives on the way ahead in countering Russian hybrid warfare. These recommendations could be split in to national and international – EU and NATO – level of actions. Starting from national responsibility, it's obvious unpredictability and uncertainty make hybrid threats more difficult to identify. Therefore, the elite and the media have the important, yet difficult, task to clarify these threats so that our societies remain vigilant and resilient. There is a need to support information pluralism, invest in civic awareness through education and maintain an independent press that responds swiftly to any disinformation. Hybrid defence is neither static nor conventional – we need to deepen our knowledge of new methods and tools in order to rise to the challenge.

Russia-caused hybrid threats are a relevant security challenge calling for complex decisions. The enhancement of coordination must be continued at the national level. It

⁴⁸⁶ NATO, „Joint declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization“, December 05, 2016, https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm, 2017 12 20.

would be worthwhile to take over the experience of other states that pay much attention to the management of informational threats and seek to provide for countering them in strategic documents. The Government of Lithuania needs to further strengthen its preparedness to counter hybrid threats, adjust the crisis management system to new realities, so that it could also comprise hybrid scenarios, coordinate the activity of all the institutions without exception, enhance the involvement of society in responding to hybrid threats and strengthen efforts of Lithuanian institutions on the informational front. Challenges awaiting Lithuania force the country to strengthen the backbone of the state and preclude from thinking that this is temporary and will somehow pass. Appropriate instruments are needed to successfully combat hybrid warfare. Coordination is very important, but it is not enough – the enemy is ingenious and has the advantage of the initiative, so the “old toolbox” will not always help. In all areas of security, bold actions and new tools are needed.

An important aspect is the protection of elections and the political system. The situation in Lithuania is not unique here. More and more countries are aware that losing the battle for the protection of democracy itself, without ensuring the essence of the democratic system - the free choice of people, will in future be more difficult to think about protecting against hybrid threats more widely. Another important aspect is the involvement of society. Unpredictability, ambiguity make hybrid threats more complicated for ordinary citizens to identify. Therefore, the state elite as well as mass media face a complex task to explain them as clearly as possible in order to strengthen society's resilience to them. It is necessary to support informational pluralism, invest in enhancing civil consciousness through education and culture (free, curious and educated society will not swallow such an easily recognizable “bait”; a self-aware community will manage to critically treat the operation of hostile forces), encourage fighting against corruption, energy diversification, invest in rapid reaction any disseminated disinformation.

The on-going debates on the content of hybrid warfare and threats are important in making the (non-)security situation in Europe relevant anew as well as developing capabilities to identify hybrid threats and, particularly, searching for practical means to defend from them (to become resilient) at both the national and beyond national level. Taking into consideration the nature of hybrid threats, national defence efforts should inevitably be strengthened by an international component. International cooperation, particularly through the EU and NATO, can offer much on the political, economic and military fields; besides, this helps “cover” some missing national capabilities or render support in developing these capabilities in the areas in which they are not sufficiently developed. International cooperation enables to unite separate, scattered national resources in solving issues of a broader international agenda.

Responding to hybrid threats, both EU and NATO have essentially taken and are further taking slow but consistent steps in increasing the resilience of both the organizations

themselves and their individual members. In case of actions of Western countries, most important element is determination, i.e. while discussing hybrid threats and clarifying what they are is important, it is even more imperative to pursue concrete actions to fight these threats, both domestically and through multilateral actions, for example by “blacklisting” Russian diplomats. Security experts and political leaders have an increased understanding of Russia’s hybrid activities. However, this is not enough: we have to constantly seek for more information and exchange experiences on the issue of EU and NATO countries.

Understanding between the EU and NATO countries about Russia’s hybrid actions keeps growing, more and more decision makers acknowledge the existence of hybrid threats phenomenon. Yet, in spite of the growing awareness of Russia’s actions, there is no joint top political commitment of the EU and NATO to fight against them in earnest. This issue should top the priorities on agendas. However, apart from the political support, awareness is important. It is necessary to invest in effective technical and intellectual means meant for watching hybrid threats, analyse them, refute lies and disinformation in case of informational attacks, design critical strategies for countering hybrid threats. In case of the EU the forthcoming Finish EU Presidency already signalled that it will make hybrid threats its priority. We need to mobilize hybrid work inside the EU and keep this topic visible. It is important that the fight against hybrid threats and resistance become part of the future European Commission’s strategic agenda. A separate Commissioner for Resilience would be very helpful in this respect. The EU also needs to establish a permanent Council working group on hybrid threats/resilience over time. This particular group would see a wide picture and link the work of all other EU strands. Of course, continuous implementation of the EU disinformation action plan is critical. By the way, NATO could also consider nominate single coordinator of countering hybrid threats and establish NATO working group on hybrid threats/resilience over time. We need holistic and comprehensive view of both EU and NATO on countering hybrid threats. Coordinated EU and NATO countermeasures are necessary. Meetings of the EU and NATO officials, sharing of narratives, etc. do take place; however, this should be done more systematically. In an ideal case, at least an informal coordinating community of the EU and NATO experts constantly exchanging information and experience could be formed. The EU and NATO should provide concerted support to the activities of European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.

CONCLUSION

NATO, THE BALTIC REGION AND EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY IN THE 21st CENTURY: THE WAY AHEAD

Strategic Challenges for NATO and the West in the 21st Century

General (ret.) Knud Bartels

As 2019 dawns upon us, it might be useful to pay attention to the military/security challenges facing the Western World at large. The Western World being NATO and EU members as well as countries sharing their ideal of a rule based liberal world. In this rule based liberal world governments are accountable to their people and fundamental rights are respected, be they human rights, freedom of speech and writing, independent judiciaries as well as a minimum of social security for all citizens regardless of creed, ethnicity or gender.

The NATO Allies and EU Nations are fundamentally facing four distinct strategic challenges of which three relate to military dimensions:

1. A resurgent Russia, which also happens to be a neighbour of Europe and a trading partner.
2. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to include the Sahel with its common history with former colonial powers from primarily Western Europe.
3. The High North evolving with climate change as well as the North Atlantic, the lifeline of NATO and partly the EU.

The fourth strategic challenge is a mixture of rebirth of nationalism and partly xenophobia as well as a “me first” mentality across the Western World as it struggles with its declining power, globalization and conflict of interests. When we look at Russia as a military threat, as perceived by a substantial number of Allies in NATO and EU members, we need to look at Russia’s history during the 20th Century.

The first great political/military earthquake came with the Russo-Japanese war of 1905, where Russia was humiliated and suffered the first real uprising against the autocratic/totalitarian rule of the tsar. A modicum of democratic reforms took place and some will argue that a peaceful modernization of Russia was within reach. This positive development, credible or not, did not survive the outbreak of World War 1.

The two World Wars led to catastrophic events on Russian soil, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the merciless German operations on the Eastern Front in 1941-1945. Soviet rulers, such as Lenin and Stalin, further enhanced the miseries created by the World Wars driven as they were by a pitiless ideology where individual life was of no consequence. An outcome of World War 2 was the creation of Eastern European buffer zone of states controlled by Communist parties and later enrolled in the Warsaw Pact. Thus, the Soviet Union felt it could protect itself against a possible new Western attempt of invasion. It did not hesitate to use force to maintain its position, be it Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968.

As the Communist dictatorships imploded under the inept political and economic dimensions of the Communist ideology, a new situation was slowly emerging, the first dramatic sign of a new era being the Fall of the Wall in Berlin on 9 November 1989. The dissolution of the Soviet Union on 26 December 1991 marked the end of the Cold War and a new era started. The hopes of this new era, described in *The End of History and the Last Man* by Francis Fukuyama published in 1992, proved unfortunately utopian.

In the aftermath of the Cold War there was, in the Western World, an unjustified cry of "We won!" combined with an ignorance of the plight of Russia as the Soviet Union disintegrated. The lessons of the Battle of Caudine Forks in 321BC seemed forgotten and the Western World, for good or bad reasons, never succeeded in creating a constructive dialogue with a Russia feeling humiliated. Russia was a "fixed" problem and was expected, in due time, to become a more or less integrated nation of the Western World.

After years of internal chaos and a growing perception of an encroaching Western World, as NATO and the EU expanded towards the East, Russia moved towards more nationalistic and populistic political structures. Russia became an irritating member of the International Community but it was only after the Russian-Georgian Crisis in 2008, whatever its reasons, that a real understanding of what was going on took place. Events unfolding in Crimea and Ukraine in 2014 and 2015 led to a rediscovery of history and thereby some of the legacies of the two World Wars relating to borders and historical perceptions of right or wrong. It also led to NATO and EU waking up to what was unfolding on their Eastern borders and the potential military threats to countries like the Baltic States particularly fragile as former Russian possessions and Soviet Republics. Both NATO and the EU have reacted. While the situation seems stabilized in the short and medium term, there seems no answer at this stage to the fundamental issue of relations between the Western World and Russia.

A Russia much aware of its history as well of the losses it suffered at the hands of Western Powers might have a deep-set suspicion as to what to expect from the West, particularly its two powerful institutions NATO and the EU. On the other hand, the

ruthless character of communist regimes imposed for about 40/45 years on a number of nations in Eastern Europe have also left profound scars and a deep suspicion as to the intentions of modern Russia. Further, it can be very difficult for a “great” nation to understand the views of a small nation or a group of small nations. The intricacies of geography and history leave profound marks in the strategic culture of nations regardless of their sizes. Is there a way out of this impasse as it stands today?

The fundamental point of departure should be the famous view formulated by President Theodor Roosevelt on January 26, 1900 as Governor of New York: “Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far”. This implies having members of NATO and the EU feeling military secure and thereby in a position to engage in a constructive dialogue with Russia, a dialogue which should, over time, lead to win-win situations and not winner takes all outcomes. As much as one may disapprove of Russia’s behaviour in Georgia, Crimea, Eastern Ukraine and Syria or in trying to exploit nationalistic/populist movements in the Western World, it cannot change the fundamental fact that Russia is Europe’s main neighbour on its eastern borders. Our fates are linked, be it by geography, history or common interests, even more as Russia is in economic and social decline, hampered by corruption and a profound disregard by its leadership for the aspirations for a better life by its people. A stable Russia, confident of its role in the world, having good relations with all its European neighbours and having a solid foot in the Western World is a win-win situation. This outcome is only possible if NATO and the EU stand together, formulate a coherent and constructive strategy towards Russia and have the strategic patience to implement and sustain it and maintain solidarity under all circumstances. The ball is in the Western Camp.

Turning to the Middle East and North Africa, the challenges are very different. Both regions have a number of common traits. One is the disparity of wealth. A number of nations such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and alike are extremely wealthy on the short and medium term thanks to their substantial oil and gas reserves. On the other hand, countries like Jordan and Tunisia with limited natural resources are in a very different situation and have great difficulties in balancing budgets and guarding themselves against the many destabilizing threats of the region. This disparity in wealth is bound to unleash uprisings and movements of despair, which might destabilize parts of or the whole region. Another common trait is the question of legitimacy of states. The best examples hereof are Syria and Iraq, both embroiled in bloody civil wars. They stem from the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 16 May 1916 carving up the Ottoman Empire between the future victorious powers of the Triple Entente. Often forgotten is the planned handover to Russia of Constantinople (named so until 1930 when it became Istanbul), the Turkish Straits and Armenia. The new Bolshevik government of Russia revealed the agreement, until then secret, to the world on 23 November 1917. Its later implementation by France and Great Britain, led to the creation of Syria and Iraq of today.

A further dimension is the Shia-Sunni conflict, pitting primarily Iran against many Arab nations. This conflict fuels the war in Yemen as well as tensions in Iraq and partly the war in Syria, each of these three conflicts having its own specificities. Not be forgotten, although less visible today, is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in no way close to a solution or a more peaceful future.

Combined with governments of limited legitimacy, if any, corruption, military dictatorships etc., foreign powers intervention, not the least the former colonial powers, and the strategic importance of oil production, MENA is a breeding ground for terrorism and migration affecting the security of primarily Europe at large. While little can be done militarily apart from helping stabilizing reasonably decent governments and guarding borders of NATO and the EU; much is needed in the shape of social development, accountability of governments, combatting corruption and establishing a respected judiciary and law enforcement.

It is difficult if not impossible to predict how MENA can evolve in the future, considering the length of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the extensive poverty and destruction. To exclude a direct military threat is unwise, be it in the shape of a resurgent IS/DAESH or a direct threat by existing states. This is further complicated by the various “politics” being pursued by the former colonial powers, leading to an inability to have a coherent strategy towards MENA with various strands adapted to the Middle East and North Africa as well as the Sahel.

Very different is the situation in the High North and the North Atlantic. They are, at least for now, mostly stable regions. But the potential for conflict(s) is very much present. The High North, as climate change takes its toll, will be open for exploitation of untapped natural resources and new sea-lines of communication, creating a competition for access among all major powers including China. This might very well lead to a militarisation of the High North particularly as the local populations are very limited in numbers, about 55.000 in Greenland being a point in case, and economic zones in the seas not yet fully defined. Russia, Canada and the US are major players as well as Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden having important stakes in the region. These nations are the members of the Arctic Council.

The North Atlantic is the lifeline of NATO and indirectly the EU. A military threat against it, primarily stemming from Russia, will need to be encountered so as not to undermine the solidarity of the Western World. The future of the High North as well as the North Atlantic requires vigilance and readiness to act as necessary. Particularly the High North requires specific military capabilities capable of operating efficiently under extreme and harsh weather conditions and long distances.

Outside the scope of military threats is the self-destruction of the Western World as it struggles to cope with migration from primarily MENA, so called hybrid threats from

Russia and a general loss of trust in the elites of the Western World combined with economic challenges from globalization as well as China.

The resurgence in many western countries of nationalism, populism as a solution to complex problems, xenophobia because of migration are at best weakening the Western World's ability to have coherent strategies and thereby making the necessary decisions. They might end up by paralyzing the Western World to the great advantage of those not wishing us well. NATO and the EU are not in a crisis, the nations of the Western World are in a crisis and will need to address challenges together, be they military or non-military threats. How much time do we still have?

A Visionary Approach to Baltic Security: The Next 20 Years

Mr Jüri Luik

Since the very beginning of their regained independence, the three Baltic states faced a difficult challenge building up their militaries that were dissolved with the rest of the key state attributes by the Soviet Union. Due to the size of the nations' population and economy, it was considered wise, prudent and perhaps even the only viable option to pool resources and collaborate. This pertains to the three main service branches plus military education with the overarching goal of speeding up the development in the defence sphere. The community of friendly and likeminded nations (BALTSEA) in the West was summoned in order to supervise, assist and often prod the Baltic states to establish common structures for training, exercising and co-operating. Those who were more closely involved in this framework saw it as a test-bed to measure the NATO-readiness way before the door of the Alliance itself opened for the three Baltic nations.

The inauguration of the Baltic Defence College in February 25th 1999 attracted high-level attention with the Presidents of the Baltic states, Ministers of Defence and NATO Secretary General Lord Robertson present. In his opening remarks, President Lennart Meri of Estonia pointed out that: "Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have the task to ensure, to the best of their ability, the security of the Baltic region, which is a necessary precondition to stability in Europe. Such future can be shaped in co-operation with our neighbours, provided that we have the will to do it."

The war in Kosovo was ongoing, the whole of the Western Balkans felt terribly fragile, 9/11 and its aftermaths were still to come and the narrow window of opportunity for the Baltic states to enter the Allied security space was still considered unlikely by many in the West and, fortunately for us, in the East, too.

Fast forward twenty years and we see the Baltic countries as the most integrated corner of Europe. All three are part of NATO, the European Union, the Eurozone and the Schengen area. Despite the success and progress made in past two decades, it is a fair conclusion that we are still worried about our security and this concern is widely shared among our friends and allies.

In the face of growing uncertainty, there is hope that certain things remain unchanged, especially with regard to the Trans-Atlantic link and US interests in Europe. At the same time there are also expectations or rather non-expectations vis-à-vis Russia's behaviour that will most likely follow the same imperialist pattern and not change remarkably.

I believe that the people living in the region today and in 20 years from now would like to see it as a peaceful and even boring corner of Europe where security risks are low

and managed daily by seasoned diplomats in pin-stripe suits attending meetings and conferences. It is a legitimate expectation because the overall perspective for the broader Baltic Sea region is in my estimation promising and prosperous. Most of the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea from East to West are economically sound stable democracies and hold high positions in different lists that measure everything from happiness to corruption perception. Even in the easternmost corner of the Region, we have Saint Petersburg and the highly industrialised Leningrad Oblast, perhaps the most developed areas in all Russia.

As pointed out earlier, from the security and defence perspective there will be no threat more imminent to the whole region than Russia. We will definitely not see a responsible, treaty-following and friendly Russia selflessly involved in the European security architecture in 20 years. Levelheadedness and common sense must prevail when dealing with Russia. We are and will be living next to a gargantuan and unpredictable country that recognises power and force above all things. Harsh declarations and precautionary slogans do not work; Russia understands and acknowledges tanks and fighter jets better than words.

It is also very much obvious that any potential attack against any of the states in the region poses a security threat against all countries in the region and beyond. We must understand that Russia's ability to attack with its missile arsenal exceeds the regional dimension and covers whole Europe from Portugal to Iceland while its cyber arsenal recognizes no national borders at all.

Kaliningrad will remain an exclave armed to the teeth and surrounded by NATO and the EU. It is a challenge for the countries in the region and it is therefore necessary to keep the door open for the increase of the presence of NATO armed capabilities in the area. One of the most important aspects while planning the defence of the region is to create the knowledge base – something that the eFP battlegroups are doing today, the understanding of the terrain and the people are among the most critical factors to build the defence. The Baltic Sea was long considered as the Mare Nostrum for the Soviet Union and it often seems that this notion is still valid and very much alive. This thought exercise belongs in the past: there is no plausible explanation why NATO should not be more active and visible in the Baltic Sea. The challenges in the Air and Maritime domain should be dealt in close co-operation with our Finnish and Swedish friends who play an important role in the overall recognition of the Air and Sea picture as well as possess the infrastructure that would have a vital role in the times of crises.

Regional defence co-operation between Scandinavian and Baltic states also has strong perspective; similarly to the economic ties the links have grown strong. There is a perceivable trust between the countries, including between the defence establishments of the region that can only grow further. The three Baltic states have grown from being

considered a vulnerability 20 years ago to partners and contributors to the regional stability. The wish that President Meri rightly emphasised in his inaugural speech.

The debate over Finland and Sweden joining the Alliance will most likely re-appear every now and then because it is natural to measure the willingness of their societies to take the step towards the collective defence. At the same time, it is also clear that any attempts to aspire for quick membership in the light of a potential crisis is clearly self-deceptive. The moment that the three Baltic countries managed to seize 15 years ago was therefore unique and not easy to repeat.

For the Baltic neighbours it would clearly be desirable to have both countries under the NATO flag as it would considerably change the balance in the region. The role of the EU in defence field has a potential to complement and enable NATO as well as co-ordinate various areas where its expertise and resources can make a difference.

One of the vehicles to drive the regional defence co-operation is innovation and adoption of new technologies in the military field. The countries of the region are highly developed technology-wise and by using proper co-operation mechanisms can really punch above their weight. Co-operation within defence industry, which includes the private sector that has the flexibility and speed in introducing new technologies is really needed. It would also allow the countries in the region to look a little deeper into the options of common defence procurement. Education, training, research and development are obviously at the heart of innovation. They create both opportunities and challenges for the institutions responsible for regenerating the knowledge and skills.

Baltic Defence College has played a crucial role in shaping the quality of our people. The first 20 years were a slow train compared to what is coming. What makes BALTDEFCOL competitive is the flexibility and ability to adapt with the needs of tomorrow. The College has shown this quality in the past and most definitely will do so in the future as well.

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Siim Alatalu joined the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in January 2015. In 2018 he joined the Centre's Strategy Branch, being in charge of cyber strategy and policy research and training related to NATO and the European Union, as well as providing subject matter expertise to the Centre's other flagship projects. Between 2008-2011 he served as a diplomat at the Estonian Delegation to NATO in Brussels, Belgium. Siim Alatalu is a graduate of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University (Master of Arts in International Relations in 2006, as a Fulbright fellow), as well as of the Baltic Defence College (Higher Command Studies Course 2011) and the University of Tartu (B.A. in history in 2001). He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. at the Tallinn University of Technology.

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Knud Bartels, General (ret.), was born in 1952 and joined the Danish Army in 1972 as a private. He attended the Royal Danish Military Academy, the Royal Danish Defence College, l'Ecole Superieure de Guerre in Paris and the U.S. Army War College. He has commanded company, battalion, brigade and division-level units and formations, and has served in higher national and NATO staff positions. He was the Chief of Defence of Denmark between 2009 and 2011, and the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee from 2011 to 2015.

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Major General Andis Dilans is the Commandant of the Baltic Defence College. He entered the Latvian National Armed Forces as a cadet and graduated with distinction a platoon leader course in 1992. He earned a bachelor’s degree in pedagogy from the National Defence Academy, Riga, Latvia, in 1995. He is a graduate of the Latvian University, Riga, Latvia and has the Second-Level Professional Education Diploma of Manager of External Relations Division from the Institute of International Relations. He is also a graduate with distinction of the Baltic Defence College, and the National Defence University’s National War College, Washington D.C., from where he holds a master’s degree in National Security Strategy Science (2011). Major General Dilāns’ command and troop leadership positions include the position of Deputy Chief of Defence, the Chief of Joint Staff, Latvian National Armed Forces (LNAF) and the Director of the Higher Command and Staff Course in the Baltic Defence College, Tartu, Estonia. His staff positions include: Military Representative of Latvia to NATO in 2013; Chief of Joint Staff, Latvian National Armed Forces, where he was co-chairing Latvian defence system reform group in 2009; Chief, Operations Planning (J3) Department, LNAF Staff, in this position he led a military planning group for first deployments of Latvian troops to Afghanistan and Iraq in 2003; Chief, Operation Branch, Operations Planning (J3) Department, LNAF Staff; Chief, Military Co-operation Branch, International Relation and Military Co-operation (J7) Department, LNAF Staff; and Senior Staff Officer, Combat Support Branch, Operations Planning (J3) Department, LNAF Staff.

Baron Thierry de Gruben is the former Ambassador from the Kingdom of Belgium to the United Kingdom. He joined the Belgian diplomatic service in 1969 after studying law at the University of Leuven, being assigned to the NATO headquarters in Brussels, and then to the press department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 1971 to 1976 he was posted to Moscow, then from 1976 to 1980 to London, where he rose to the rank of First Secretary. From 1980 to 1982 he was consul-general in Bombay; after a few years in Brussels as an assistant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he took up his first ambassadorial post in 1985, becoming the Ambassador to Poland. He moved to Moscow in 1990, becoming the Ambassador to the Soviet Union and then to the Russian Federation. In 1995 he left this post to become Special Envoy for Eastern Slavonia during its reintegration into Croatia, leaving in 1997. From 1997 to 2002 he was the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Belgium to NATO, and in 2002 became the Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s.

Graeme P. Herd is the Professor of Transnational Security Studies at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, which he joined in January 2015, and

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Frederick “Ben” Hodges. Lieutenant General (Ret.) Hodges holds the Pershing Chair in Strategic Studies at the Center for European Policy Analysis. He graduated from the United States Military Academy in May 1980, and has served in various positions in the US, Germany, Iraq, Afghanistan and Turkey over a military career of 41 years, including as Chief of Staff, XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg; Director of the Pakistan Afghanistan Coordination Cell on the Joint Staff; Chief of Legislative Liaison for the United States Army; Commander, NATO Allied Land Command (2012 – 2014); and Commander, United States Army Europe (2014 - 2017).

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Ambassador Grzegorz Kozłowski, PhD, is a lawyer, economist and career diplomat graduated from the University of Białystok and from the Warsaw School of Economics where he also received his Ph.D. His professional career started at the Ministry of Finance, where he was dealing with financial aspects of Poland’s accession to NATO. Next, he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and was assigned to the Permanent Delegation of Poland to NATO and WEU. When working at the Security Policy Department at the MFA, he was engaged – among other duties – in Polish-US missile defence negotiations. As the head of economic section at the Polish Embassy in Washington, Ambassador Kozłowski contributed towards strengthening bilateral energy cooperation with U.S. and economic promotion of Poland. The experiences and professional background led him to be the deputy director of the Economic Cooperation Department and later the director of the America’s Department. On 14 February, 2018, Ambassador Kozłowski presented his Credentials to the President of the Republic of Estonia Kersti Kaljulaid, inaugurating his mission to Estonia.

Mark Laity the Director of the new Communications Division at SHAPE, created in 2017. Previously, from 2007, he had been the first Chief Strategic Communications (StratCom) at SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers in Europe), and the leading figure in first establishing and then developing StratCom within NATO, especially the military. His office led in the creation of NATO’s innovative Military StratCom policy and now

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Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga served as the sixth President of Latvia and the first female President of Latvia (1999 – 2007). Dr. Vaira Freiberga is a professor and interdisciplinary scholar, having published eleven books and numerous articles, essays and book chapters in addition to her extensive speaking engagements. As President of the Republic of Latvia 1999–2007, she was instrumental in achieving membership in the European Union and NATO for her country. She is active in international politics, was

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About the Baltic Defence College:

The Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL) is the multinational professional military education institution of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania established in 1999. The College provides education to the civilian and military leaders from the Framework Nations, allies and partners at the operational and strategic level. BALTDEFCOL promotes international cooperation and networking and contributes to research in security and defence policy.

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Review by Major General (ret.) Gordon B. "Skip" Davis Jr., NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment:

"The product of a timely, lively and superbly-structured conference on Russia, NATO, and Baltic security, this anthology is an impressive tour d'horizon, designed to commemorate NATO's 70th anniversary and the Baltic Defence College's 20th anniversary. The editor, Mr. Mark Voyger, has brought together some of Europe's and North America's foremost authorities and thinkers in the field of Euro-Atlantic security, in general, and the Baltic nations and Russia, in particular. The contributions of these political and military leaders, scholars and analysts are historically informed, sober, and pragmatic; their combined recommendations are clear-eyed, and offer the perfect mix of the "art of the possible" and the "conceivable" in addressing the non-linear challenges from a resurgent Russia in the 21st century. Their articles are written to the highest academic standards, covering wide-ranging and diverse topics, and are packed with solid assessments and actionable proposals on NATO's strategy, policy, and capabilities. While being relevant to the "here and now," they also offer a glance beyond the horizon to the next couple of decades. A must-read for practitioners and policy-makers alike!"