# Resolved: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization should substantially increase its defense commitments to the Baltic states.

#### Overview

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a defense alliance between many European countries, Canada, and The United States. Since its founding during the Cold War, its principle concern has been Russia. Russia continues to be perceived as a military threat in many European countries today.

The Baltic States, which are Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, border Russia and Belarus. Many scholars on international relations believe that if Russia launches new military aggressions against any European state, the Baltics are the likely target. Policymakers in the Baltic states are also concerned about a potential Russian threat. Due to the Russian annexation of Crimea and Russia’s ongoing involvement in Ukraine, the Baltics are concerned that Russia will use the same tactics against them. Russia is also increasing its influence in neighboring Belarus, and many policymakers in the Baltics believe that if military conflict breaks out with Russia, Belarus is now a wild card.

To counter the potential for Russian aggression, NATO has stationed rotating troops in the Baltics. However, Russia’s forces are much larger and stronger, and multiple studies have estimated that if Russia attacks the Baltics, it will quickly overpower NATO defenses. This comparison has led some analysts to call for more NATO defense commitments in these countries.

On the other hand, Russia feels threatened by increasing NATO presence along its border. It vehemently opposed NATO expansion, which occurred a few years ago when NATO added many ex-Soviet members. Putin and his government have repeatedly spoken out against NATO’s role in the Baltics. There are also some analysts that question whether Russia truly poses a military threat to the Baltic states.

#### Additional Sources

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# Pro

#### We stand in affirmation of the following:

Resolved: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization should substantially increase its defense commitments to the Baltic states.

### Definitions

#### The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Masters 21

Jonathan Masters (Deputy Managing Editor for Council on Foreign Relations), Council on Foreign Relations, “The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)”, 5/6/2021, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/north-atlantic-treaty-organization-nato

Founded in 1949 as a bulwark against Soviet aggression, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) remains the pillar of U.S.-European military cooperation. An expanding bloc of NATO allies has taken on a broad range of missions since the close of the Cold War, many well beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. President Joe Biden has sought to recommit the United States to NATO and mend transatlantic ties that became strained under the Donald Trump administration. In 2021, NATO remains focused on deterring Russian aggression in Eastern Europe and is continuing a full withdrawal of its security forces from Afghanistan. Meanwhile, alliance members carry out several operations: peacekeeping in Kosovo, patrolling the Mediterranean, training Iraqi security forces, supporting African Union forces in Somalia, and policing the skies over Eastern Europe.

#### Defense commitments to the Baltic states

Masters 21

Jonathan Masters (Deputy Managing Editor for Council on Foreign Relations), Council on Foreign Relations, “The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)”, 5/6/2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/north-atlantic-treaty-organization-nato>

#### Fears of Russian aggression have prompted alliance leaders to reinforce defenses on NATO’s eastern flank. Since its Wales summit in 2014, NATO has ramped up military exercises and opened new command centers in eight member states: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. The modestly staffed outposts are intended to support a new rapid reaction force of about twenty thousand, including five thousand ground troops. NATO military planners say that a multinational force of about forty thousand could be marshaled in a major crisis. In 2017, NATO began rotating four multinational battle groups—about 4,500 troops total—through the Baltic states and Poland. The alliance has also bolstered defenses in the Black Sea region, creating a new multinational force of several thousand in Romania. The U.S. Army added another rotational armored brigade to the two it has in the region, under its European Reassurance Initiative. Meanwhile, NATO has increased air patrols over the Baltics, Montenegro (the newest alliance member), and Poland. NATO routinely scrambles jets to intercept Russian warplanes violating allied airspace.

#### Substantially Increase defense commitments

O’Hanlon & Skaluba 19

Micheal E. O’Hanlon (Director of Research on foreign policy for Brookings), Christopher Skaluba (Director at the Atlantic Council and Lecturer), Brookings, “A report from NATO’s front lines”, 6/13/2019, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/06/13/a-report-from-natos-front-lines/

For its part, NATO more generally has stationed the eFP forces but has not tied them into a truly integrated combat force; nor has it deployed many helicopters or air defense systems into the Baltic states. It certainly has not prestationed the seven brigades of capability that a 2016 RAND Corporation simulation estimated as necessary to constitute a viable forward defense position. The current level of effort, vigilant but tempered, strikes us as roughly appropriate to the circumstances at hand. While there are still conflict scenarios that can be imagined, it is hard to think that President Putin believes he could really get away with naked aggression against any NATO member, including those in the Baltic region. Even if NATO does not have an adequate forward defense in place against hypothetical Russian aggression, it does have a rather robust forward tripwire, combined with increasingly credible ways of rapidly reinforcing that tripwire in a crisis. Still, there are three additional lines of effort that Washington and other NATO capitals should pursue in the interest of greater deterrence, stability, and predictability in eastern Europe. First, as a recent Atlantic Council report, “Permanent Deterrence,” underscored, NATO should strengthen key pieces of its modest military presence in Poland and the Baltic states. Much of this can happen in the Polish/American sector, but elements of it should extend to the Baltics as well. It makes good sense to combine greater combat engineering capability for military mobility, so as to better move reinforcements into the east in the face of possible Russian opposition, together with plugging gaps in areas such as combat aviation and air defense, and pre-stocking certain equipment. Moscow may complain, but it cannot credibly view such additions as major NATO additions or provocations, especially because they are modest, and because Russian actions have necessitated them.

### Framework

#### Cost benefit analysis

The framing for today’s round ought to be cost benefit analysis. If we demonstrate that increasing NATO defense commitments to the Baltic states would do more good than harm, we should win the round.

### Contention 1: Outnumbered

#### Russia poses a threat to the Baltics

Defense News 21

Defense News, “Baltic states vow to tighten defense ties with an eye on Russia”, 5/24/2021, https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2021/05/24/baltic-states-vow-to-tighten-their-defense-ties-with-an-eye-on-russia/

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, formerly part of the Soviet Union, encompass a key strategic area on NATO’s eastern flank. Russia’s annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 stirred fears in the three nations that Russia could use tactics employed during that operation in a surprise move against the Baltics. The countries’ joint declaration makes clear they perceive the simmering conflict in eastern Ukraine with a sense of foreboding. They call for an uptick in international military assistance to Ukraine and Georgia, with the idea of strengthening their defense and resilience while enhancing interoperability with NATO nations. The three governments welcomed “consultations” between the United States and allies about the Pentagon’s ongoing global force posture review, highlighting American troops on NATO’s eastern flank as “one of the main and most viable means of defense against aggressive and revisionist Russia.”

#### NATO’s military presence in the Balkans is currently much weaker than Russia’s

Tanner 20

Jari Tanner (Reporter for the Associated Press), AP News, “Estonia: Russia attack not likely but Baltics under threat”, 2/12/2020, <https://apnews.com/article/europe-russia-estonia-moscow-latvia-4c93bbb92085e3350a19bcdb5e04122e>

The 79-page report said Moscow’s increasing deployment of weapons along the borders of Estonia and its neighbors Latvia and Lithuania, Moscow’s “covert influence operations” and its Cold War-style military maneuvers are destabilizing the Baltic Sea region. The region is home to nine European nations. The Russian armed forces have deployed short-range ballistic Iskander missiles some 120 kilometers (75 miles) from its Estonian border and a mere 45 kilometers (27 miles) from its Lithuanian border, the agency noted. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have all been NATO members since 2004. Some 18,000 Russian ground and airborne troops are currently stationed close to the border areas with Estonia and Latvia complete with a substantial amount of offensive equipment that brings “absolute supremacy” to Russia in military terms against NATO forces in the Baltic region, according to estimates by the agency.

#### If Russia invades the Baltics, its stronger military position ensures a quick NATO loss

Kuczyński 21

Grzegorz Kuczyński (Director of Eurasia Program at the Warsaw Institute), The Warsaw Institute Review, “Russia vs. NATO’s Eastern Flank: Not Only Military Threat”, 8/30/21, https://warsawinstitute.review/news-en/russia-vs-natos-eastern-flank-not-only-military-threat/

A massive military buildup started westwards shortly after Russia had aggressed Ukraine. Furthermore, Moscow urged to intensify flights over the Baltic Sea while tensions went up in this part of Europe. In response, at the July 2016 summit in Warsaw, NATO allies pledged to strengthen the bloc’s eastern flank. Since then, they have been committed to pursuing the policy of deterrence while remaining open to dialogue with Russia. Yet Moscow rebuffs the idea of talks and is now beefing up its military potential in the Western Military District that Russian military strategists consider pivotal in a potential clash with the North Atlantic Alliance. The Western Military District is now the most powerful of Russia’s five military districts. It is seeing constant updates to its stockpile; not only is the Russian military struggling to make some additions to the existing armies, corps, and divisions, but also it is creating new ones. In May 2021, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said the Russian military would form 20 new units in the country’s west. “In total, the offensive potential of the Russian Army’s Land Forces in the western strategic direction was increased by over 50 percent in 2015–2020,” according to analysts from the Poland-based Center for Eastern Studies. Interestingly, Russia is adding more firepower to its Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad. Its location and reported Russian efforts to bolster both its defensive and offensive potential (by adding more tanks) raises concerns of a deteriorating position of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland––albeit to a lesser extent––when confronted with a potential attack from Russia. Military capabilities of the bloc had earlier been known to be too modest to beat off possible aggression in the Baltic states. Some analytical models show that the Russian military––along with its multiple advantages over the region––could occupy this part of the Alliance with several dozen hours. First, this is due to the military weakness of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and secondly, to their location, along with a lengthy frontline with Russia, the Baltic Sea behind, and its isolation from fellow NATO members. There is just one bridge between NATO allies and it runs through the Suwałki Gap, a narrow piece of land connecting member states. Military buildup in Russia’s strategic Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad and the volatile situation in Belarus bring a more serious threat to the only strip of land linking the Baltic states to the rest of their allies. With its missile systems deployed to the exclave and the Baltic Fleet stationed there, Russia could easily cut off the Baltic states on land and discourage any relief missions at sea in the event of war.

#### NATO must strengthen its forces in the Baltics to respond to a potential Russian attack

O’Hanlon & Skaluba 19

Micheal E. O’Hanlon (Director of Research on foreign policy for Brookings), Christopher Skaluba (Director at the Atlantic Council and Lecturer), Brookings, “A report from NATO’s front lines”, 6/13/2019, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/06/13/a-report-from-natos-front-lines/

The current level of effort, vigilant but tempered, strikes us as roughly appropriate to the circumstances at hand. While there are still conflict scenarios that can be imagined, it is hard to think that President Putin believes he could really get away with naked aggression against any NATO member, including those in the Baltic region. Even if NATO does not have an adequate forward defense in place against hypothetical Russian aggression, it does have a rather robust forward tripwire, combined with increasingly credible ways of rapidly reinforcing that tripwire in a crisis. Still, there are three additional lines of effort that Washington and other NATO capitals should pursue in the interest of greater deterrence, stability, and predictability in eastern Europe. First, as a recent Atlantic Council report, “Permanent Deterrence,” underscored, NATO should strengthen key pieces of its modest military presence in Poland and the Baltic states. Much of this can happen in the Polish/American sector, but elements of it should extend to the Baltics as well. It makes good sense to combine greater combat engineering capability for military mobility, so as to better move reinforcements into the east in the face of possible Russian opposition, together with plugging gaps in areas such as combat aviation and air defense, and pre-stocking certain equipment. Moscow may complain, but it cannot credibly view such additions as major NATO additions or provocations, especially because they are modest, and because Russian actions have necessitated them.

### Contention 2: Deterrence

#### Russia may act aggressively against the Baltic states due to their high Russian population

Cesare 20

Matt Cesare (intern at Foreign Policy Research Institute with a bachelor’s degree in world politics and economics), Foreign Policy Research Institute, “Russian Encroachment in the Baltics: The Role of Russian Media and Military”, 12/14/2020, https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/12/russian-encroachment-in-the-baltics-the-role-of-russian-media-and-military-2/

Sowing discontent and disruption is a tactic that the West has accustomed itself to when dealing with the Kremlin. The Baltic states are in a unique position in the face of these threats. Estonia and Latvia, specifically, have significant Russian-speaking minority populations that the Russian media can attempt to manipulate. Many of these people are stateless, having refused to go through the citizenship process after the fall of the Soviet Union. The presence of the Russian military in Kaliningrad and on the eastern borders of Latvia and Estonia are contributing to the growing fear inside Baltic governments of the possibility of a Russian destabilization operation. Deciphering the validity of the Baltics’ fear and the likelihood of a Russian operation of some sort is important for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s regional security strategy. It has been about three decades since the end of communism in the Baltic region. In the years after, the Baltic states trailblazed a new, rapid course towards integration with the West. Within 15 years of regaining independence, all three of the Baltic states joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. The rise of a more aggressive Russia over the course of the last decade, however, has raised fears amongst the Baltic states and their new allies in the West about their relative security. Each of the Baltic states has significant Russian-speaking ethnic minority populations, especially so in Latvia and Estonia, where the number is at least 25%. The Kremlin looks for ways to interact with and support Russian populations in foreign lands as way to build its own power. Moscow used this tactic in its ongoing involvement in the Donbas conflict and for its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. NATO, in response, has stepped up its defense apparatus considerably since 2014 with an enhanced forward presence of Alliance troops in the Baltics and Poland. On the other hand, Russia has increased its troop presence in Kaliningrad and Belarus. Russian President Vladimir Putin has not shied away from acting aggressively towards former Soviet republics that house significant Russian populations.

#### Deterrence makes a Russian attack less likely by increasing potential costs

Klein et al. 19

Robert M. Klein et al. (Retired Colonel in the US army and senior military fellow in the Center for Strategic Research), Institute for National Strategic Studies, “Baltics Left of Bang: The Role of NATO with Partners in Denial-Based Deterrence”, November 2019, <https://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-301.pdf?ver=2019-07-23-142433-990>

A more flexible approach to defend the Baltics would be to augment denial-based deterrent strategies with threats of punishment. Denial-based deterrent strategies discourage enemy action by making it physically difficult for an adversary to coerce or attack. To execute deter by denial, the defender must demonstrate that enemy leaders cannot achieve their aims at acceptable costs. Although no concept of defense in the Baltics can eliminate the risks of escalation with absolute certainty, denial-based deterrence offers a way to mitigate them. Area denial is often thought of as an operational concept used by U.S. adversaries to prevent freedom of action in a geographical zone under the enemy’s direct control. However, area denial can work both ways. To best protect its Baltic partners, NATO should use strategic depth to its advantage by establishing its own A2/AD bubble over the region. A denial-based deterrence strategy in the Baltic region would encompass a wide range of capabilities: deploying integrated air and missile defenses, establishing sea denial, and investment in popular mobilization leveraging creative and cost-effective approaches to attrit the elements of any Russian military advance. Carl von Clausewitz recognized that the aim of defeating the enemy “can, in practice, be replaced by two other grounds for making peace: the first is the improbability of victory; the second is its unacceptable costs.”17 He also reasoned that “the defense is the stronger form of waging war. . . . [I]f attack were the stronger form, there would be no case for using the defense.” 18 In Clausewitz’s mind, the purpose of defense was preservation of combat power. The defender also had the advantage of position. Area denial for the Baltics would have NATO blunt the strategic effectiveness of Russian attacks. Demonstrating the capability to impose costs and make the victory seem improbable could shift Russia’s cost-benefit analysis enough to deter attack. If not, the escalating costs of continued Russian military action in a prestructured and in-depth NATO Baltics A2/ AD complex could increase the improbability of achieving Moscow’s main political aims and open the political space for negotiation. NATO enjoys several natural geographic advantages that enable a denial-based deterrent strategy based on an AD operational concept. In particular, the geography of the Baltic Sea favors a defensive operational concept because of its relatively small size and shallow depth, with only a few navigable passageways and numerous chokepoints. Approximately half of Russia’s maritime cargo transits through the Baltic Sea, thereby providing NATO and its partners economic leverage in a potential crisis. By extension, NATO should plan to deny Russia access to the North Atlantic via the GIUK (Greenland–Iceland– United Kingdom) Gap and further afield to the Barents Sea between Svalbard and Norway’s northern coastline. As mentioned, Russian forces stationed in the Kaliningrad exclave pose a particular predicament to NATO and its partners. Nevertheless, despite its menacing appearance, Kaliningrad may actually be a Russian vulnerability rather than a strength. Viewed as an encircled area, with the sea to the west and NATO surrounding the territory on the other three sides, Kaliningrad sits in a precariously vulnerable position, particularly given the array of A2/AD capabilities and strike capabilities that the Alliance and its partners could deploy against it. Therefore, a part of their deterrence strategy, NATO and its partners should demonstrate to the Russians their willingness and capability to neutralize and ultimately isolate Kaliningrad militarily in the event of a hot war scenario. Finally, the Alliance should be prepared to deny the airspace over the Baltics to Russian aircraft. One 2017 RAND study concluded, “From just two launch points, one in northeastern Poland and the other on one of the islands off the coast of Estonia, NATO forces could cover nearly the whole of the Baltic states, much of western Belarus, and all of Kaliningrad with suppression of enemy air defenses or counterbattery fires.” Given the above, even if Russia were to launch an invasion of Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania, NATO’s goal would be to impose high costs and, should that fail, render any subsequent Russian occupation untenable. The ability of NATO to maintain a Baltics defense coalition hinges on perceptions of Russia’s aggressive behavior, and Russia is more likely to be deterred if it perceives that NATO solidarity and the preponderance of international opinion and support siding with the Alliance. Area denial as an operational concept compares favorably to the alternatives if preservation of the NATO structure forms the basis for resolve. Foremost, it is a defensive concept that seeks to preserve the status quo, thereby allowing NATO to dominate the strategic narrative by playing to international perceptions of legitimacy based on the right to self-defense and freedom of the global commons. Because area denial is defensive in nature, it is more palatable to NATO and its partners than offensive-minded concepts, particularly when compared to provocative and expansive actions that could horizontally expand military operations deep into Russian territory or to other geographic regions. The same technologies that enable Russia’s A2/ AD capability are proliferating to Russia’s NATO and NATO-aligned neighbors, making area denial extremely attractive from a practical standpoint. Several states in the region—including Sweden and Poland—already possess high-end A2/AD capabilities and are either affiliated with NATO or members of the Alliance. These capabilities include long-range precision-strike systems, such as GPS-guided cruise and ballistic missiles; littoral anti-ship capabilities (high-quality nonnuclear submarines, fast missile-armed surface craft, and smart coastal and shallow-water mines); both long- and short-range air defenses; long-range precision-guided artillery and rocket systems; and cyber and electronic warfare capabilities. Militarily, the combination of NATO AD capabilities should provide its own deterrent effect, just as NATO forces did in Western Europe during the Cold War. Unfortunately, NATO and partner nations currently are “almost completely dependent on airpower” to counter Russia’s extensive array of A2/AD capabilities, according to General Philip Breedlove, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, in a 2016 speech. Notably, the use of fighters such as the F-35 would be problematic in a Baltics scenario given its short range and the F-35’s dependence on air refueling. The NATO goal should be to knit partners together in a networked system of advanced command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR), targeting, precision-guided munitions, airborne early warning capabilities, integrated air defenses, maritime domain awareness, undersea surveillance, and standoff capabilities such as cruise and ballistic missiles. This networked system-of-systems approach has come to define the contemporary revolution in military affairs. Policy analysts James Thomas and Evan Montgomery have dubbed these “mini A2/ AD complexes.” The current willingness of key Allies and partners—particularly those in the Baltic region—to modernize their militaries makes it a favorable time for NATO to implement such a defensive concept. Therefore, providing partners with additional enabling capabilities to round out their defensive formations may prove critical. To enhance area denial, NATO needs additional mobile and survivable long-range precision-strike capabilities such as the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) and Highly Mobile Artillery Rocket System. The Army is currently developing DeepStrike, a next-generation missile for these systems that doubles the firepower and can engage targets at distances up to 499 km, including the ability to hit moving targets on land and at sea. To counter Russian tactical missiles, cruise missiles, drones, and advanced aircraft, additional NATO and partner countries should procure the Patriot and other surface-to-air missile defense systems.

#### NATO must strengthen its military presence in the Baltic states to deter Russian aggression

Kuhn 18

Ulrich Kuhn (Nonresident Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace with a PhD in Political Science), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “Preventing Escalation in the Baltics”, 3/28/2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/03/28/nato-s-options-pub-75883>

If NATO wants to deny Russia the ability to successfully attack one or more Baltic states, it has little choice but to deploy forces on a much larger scale than it currently does. Such forces could be deployed gradually to avoid giving Russia a casus belli and to make such deployments more palatable to skeptical NATO members. The 2017 RAND study proposed deployments of around 35,000 personnel, with an additional reinforcement capability of up to about 70,000 personnel; this would certainly prevent a Russian military fait accompli and force Moscow to fight a bloody and drawn-out conventional war, should it attack. These deployments would also, perhaps, eliminate most of the difficulties—and some of the resulting escalation pathways—that stem from the alliance’s current need to reinforce troops rapidly and on a large scale in a crisis. In addition, these troop deployments would raise the costs to Moscow of deliberately forcing a military crisis with NATO.

### Contention 3: Further NATO Integration

#### The initial deployment of NATO troops to the Baltics demonstrated increasing political and defense cohesion

Maguire 19

Steven Maguire (writer for the Strategy Bridge), The Strategy Bridge, “The Positive Impact of NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence”, 9/3/2019, https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2019/9/3/the-positive-impact-of-natos-enhanced-forward-presence

There is certainly an argument that NATO needs to do more to deter Russia. For example, John Deni argues the deployment is “not sufficient” since any crises will fall below the threshold of Article 5 and unattributable cyberattacks or ethno-political discord present greater risks. For example, wider cyber and disinformation attacks risk undermining domestic politics and are the threat which NATO should be focusing on. This argument does not fully consider the softer, less measurable improvements that result from the Enhanced Forward Presence deployment. The deployment was a significant political statement that posed a challenge to Russia’s freedom of action in the region. The 2016 Warsaw communique, announcing the deployment, made the purpose of strategic deterrence clear and the NATO allies agreed to a renewed focused on deterrence. Military integration goes hand in hand with political integration. That NATO’s forward presence has had a significant impact on political cohesion is not in doubt, but it has taken some time for the benefits to materialize. The mission marked the start of a growing determination to counter the type of aggression highlighted by Deni. The battlegroups, and the associated political deployments, are a driving force binding together political interests and are having a disproportionate impact for the small outlay. The role of Canada is one example of this. Despite having a strong tradition of involvement in Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe missions, Canada is not routinely considered a country with enough strategic interest in Eastern Europe to deploy combat forces. By becoming the framework country for Latvia they have restated their determination to both deter Russia and uphold their treaty commitments. Most NATO countries have increased their involvement from purely civil and political engagement to the deployment of ground combat forces. This was a major change in both military and political posture, a move towards active deterrence made possible by the Enhanced Forward Presence deployment.

#### Putin may use aggressions against the Baltics to break up NATO solidarity

Stavridis 19

James Stavridis (16th Supreme Allied Commander at NATO, retired military admiral, and TIME contributing editor), TIME, “Why NATO Is Essential For World Peace, According to Its Former Commander”, 4/4/2019, https://time.com/5564171/why-nato-is-essential-world-peace/

Unlikely, but possible. And that threat only gets more difficult to counter with the advent of advanced military technology. As the tools of offensive cyberwarfare continue to grow–making definitive attribution of an attack difficult to achieve–Russia might be tempted to subvert smaller NATO allies in the Baltics or the Balkans. Doing so, Moscow might calculate, could create fissures in the alliance as the larger nations debate their willingness to fight for a tiny ally. Over time such a strategy could cleverly apply pressure to the real Achilles’ heel of NATO, its already shaky political will. It would be a smart tactical move by Putin, who seems increasingly prepared to bet that the answer to the foundational question–Would you die for NATO?–is, for many, no.

#### Sending battlegroups to the Baltics shows NATO unity, asserting continued integration against a Russian threat

North Atlantic Treaty Organization 21

North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Boosting NATO’s presence in the east and southeast”, 4/26/21, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\_136388.htm

NATO has enhanced its forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance, with four multinational battalion-size battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, on a rotational basis. These battlegroups, led by the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and the United States respectively, are robust and combat-ready forces. They demonstrate the strength of the transatlantic bond and make clear that an attack on one Ally would be considered an attack on the whole Alliance. NATO has also a forward presence tailored to the southeast of Alliance territory. Allies are contributing forces and capabilities on land, at sea and in the air. The land element in the southeast of the Alliance is built around a multinational brigade, under Multinational Division Southeast in Romania. At sea, NATO has deployed more ships and has conducted more naval exercises. In the air, Allies have intensified their training, which contributed to improved situational awareness and enhanced readiness. NATO’s forward presence is part of the biggest reinforcement of Alliance collective defense in a generation. Forward presence can be rapidly reinforced by additional forces and capabilities.

#### Integration, through NATO unity, reduces Russian soft power in the Baltics

Bergmane 20

Una Bergmane (Baltic Sea Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and Teaching Fellow at the London School of Economics), Orbis, “Fading Russian Influence in the Baltic States”, 7/1/2020, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7329289/

Since the beginning of Putin's rule in Russia 20 years ago, Russia has lost much of the leverage that it previously enjoyed in the Baltics. Russia has antagonized the Baltic states through its actions against Georgia and Ukraine, and its deeper integration into the EU and NATO and changes in political culture have reduced Russian soft power. While it is highly unlikely that Baltic-Russian relations will become friendly as long as Vladimir Putin is the President of the Russian Federation, they can be constructive and pragmatic if Russia continues to abstain from interference in Baltic domestic affairs. Russia still is the first trading partner to Lithuania, the second to Estonia, and the fourth to Latvia. At the same time, Russian and Baltic relations increasingly depend on overall Russian relations with the West in general, and with Europe in particular.

### Extra Cards

#### NATO is necessary for continuing peace within Europe

Stavridis 19

James Stavridis (16th Supreme Allied Commander at NATO, retired military admiral, and TIME contributing editor), TIME, “Why NATO Is Essential For World Peace, According to Its Former Commander”, 4/4/2019, https://time.com/5564171/why-nato-is-essential-world-peace/

Moreover, despite all the frustrations of coalition warfare, most observers would agree with Winston Churchill that “there is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them.” The greatest single advantage the U.S. has on the global stage is our network of allies, partners and friends. That network is under deliberate pressure: from China, with its “One Belt, One Road” competitive strategy, and from Russia, with its relentless attacks on coalition unity. A strong NATO means not only having allies in a fight, should it come to that, but also a powerful deterrent to the aggression of ambitious adversaries. Perhaps NATO’s greatest accomplishment is not even its unblemished record of deterring attack against its members but rather the fact that no alliance nation has ever attacked another. NATO’s most fundamental deliverable has been peace among Europe’s major powers for 70 years after two millennia of unhesitating slaughter on the continent. The disasters of the 20th century alone pulled the U.S. into two world wars that killed more than half a million Americans. History provides few achievements that compare to those seven decades of peace. They were built not on the ambitions of cold-eyed leaders but something more noble. NATO is a pool of partners who, despite some egregious outliers, by and large share fundamental values–democracy, liberty, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, gender equality, and racial equality. Admittedly we execute those values imperfectly, and they are stronger in some NATO countries than in others. But they are the right values, and there is no other place on earth where the U.S. could find such a significant number of like-minded nations that are willing to bind themselves with us in a defensive military treaty.

#### Russia may retaliate against the Baltics soon for actions they took in solidarity with NATO members

Sytas 21

Andrius Sytas et al (reporter for Reuters), Reuters, “Baltic states join NATO allies in kicking out Russians for spying”, 4/23/2021, https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/baltic-states-join-nato-allies-kicking-out-russians-spying-2021-04-23/

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia on Friday joined a fast-growing list of NATO and EU members demanding the removal of Russian diplomats for alleged spying, in actions that have infuriated Moscow and look certain to provoke further retaliation. A spate of tit-for-tat expulsions has plunged ties between Russia and countries of the former Soviet bloc to their lowest point since the fall of Communism, prompting Moscow to accuse at least two of them of deliberately wrecking relations. Lithuania said it was sending two diplomats home and Latvia and Estonia one each. "The EU should have less undercover Russian spies," Lithuanian foreign affairs minister Gabrielius Landsbergis told reporters. Three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow maintains imposing and generously staffed embassies across central and eastern Europe, which the host countries say provide convenient cover for espionage. The Baltic states - together with Slovakia, which ordered out three Russians on Thursday - appeared to be responding to an appeal this week from the Czech Republic for European Union and NATO allies to show solidarity in removing Russian spies.

#### Russia’s cooperation with Belarus presents another threat to the Baltics and NATO

Reuters 21

Reuters, “Russia and Belarus formally open huge war games, worrying NATO”, 9/9/2021, https://www.reuters.com/world/russia-belarus-formally-open-huge-war-games-worrying-nato-2021-09-09/

Russia and Belarus formally opened vast joint military drills on Thursday, a week-long exercise across the territory of both countries and in the Baltic Sea that has alarmed some NATO countries. Top military leaders from the two countries attended the opening ceremony of the war games, called "Zapad-2021", in western Russia where flags were raised and speeches given. The active part of the exercise, which comes at a time of heightened tensions between the West and Belarus due to a crackdown on the opposition there, begins on Friday and will run until Sept. 16. The Russian defence ministry said up to 200,000 military personnel, some 80 aircraft and helicopters, up to 15 ships and nearly 300 tanks would take part. The drills will involve live fire and mark the culmination of a bigger three-month exercise. Military personnel from Armenia, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia will participate too, the Russian defence ministry said. NATO officials have warned that the drills, which follow a huge Russian military buildup on Ukraine's borders earlier this year, increase the risk of an accident or miscalculation that could touch off a crisis. Russian Deputy Defence Minister Nikolai Pankov said the drills were purely defensive in nature and would give Moscow and Minsk a chance to improve the way their respective militaries work together. Analysts say Minsk's involvement highlights increasingly close ties between it and Moscow. The Kremlin has proved a vital ally for Belarus after the West imposed sanctions on Minsk over a violent crackdown that followed a contested election which gave President Alexander Lukashenko his sixth term in office.

#### NATO is experiencing increased funding from a range of states

North Atlantic Treaty Organization 21

North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “Funding NATO”, August 13, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\_67655.htm

While the 2% of GDP guideline alone is no guarantee that money will be spent in the most effective and efficient way to acquire and deploy modern capabilities, it remains, nonetheless, an important indicator of the political resolve of individual Allies to devote to defence a relatively small but still significant level of resources. In 2014, three Allies spent 2% of GDP or more on defence; this went up to 11 Allies in 2020 and a majority of Allies have national plans in place to meet this target by 2024.

#### Russia poses a cybersecurity threat to the Baltics

Congressional Research Service 20

Congressional Research Service, “Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania: Background and U.S.-Baltic Relations”, 1/2/2020, https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R46139.html

Vulnerability to potential cyberattacks is a primary concern for the Baltic states. Following a period of heightened tensions with Russia in 2007, Estonia's internet infrastructure came under heavy attack from hackers. Estonian officials said some assaults came from Russian government web servers, although many others came from all over the world. According to analysts, what appeared as a series of smaller, individual distributed denial-of-service attacks was most likely a coordinated, large-scale effort. The attacks did little long-term damage, and they gave Estonia experience in facing such incidents and prompted the country to strengthen its cyber defenses. Estonia hosts the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence, which opened in 2008. The center fosters cooperation and information sharing on cybersecurity between NATO countries, conducts cyberwarfare research and training, and organizes exercises and conferences preparing NATO countries to detect and fight cyberattacks. In 2018, Lithuania adopted a national Cyber Security Strategy and integrated several government agencies into the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) under the Ministry of Defense. Lithuania's NCSC registered more than 53,000 cybersecurity incidents in 2018. The International Telecommunication Union's Global Cybersecurity Index 2018 ranked Lithuania fourth and Estonia fifth in the world based on measurements of legal, technical, organizational, capacity building, and cooperation measures related to cybersecurity. (The UK was ranked first, United States second, and France third.)

#### The Baltics are vulnerable to Russia’s powerful air force

Peck 21

Michael Peck (contributing writer for the national interest), The National Interest, “NATO's Greatest Fear: Russia’s Air Force Could Easily Overrun the Baltics”, 5/22/21, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/natos-greatest-fear-russia%E2%80%99s-air-force-could-easily-overrun-baltics-176408

Russia has about twenty-seven combat air squadrons in its Western Military District which borders the Baltic States, plus additional aircraft based in adjacent regions that could boost Russian air strength in the Baltic region to several hundred aircraft. To stop them, the Baltic States have a miscellany of European and American surface-to-air missiles and air defense radars, including Swedish RBS-70 and U.S. Stinger short-range anti-aircraft missiles. Lithuania is buying Norwegian medium-range NASAMS missiles, while Estonia still fields old Soviet-era ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft guns. The Baltic states do belong to the NATO-wide NATINAMDS air defense command network and they have set up their own Baltic Air Surveillance Network. Because the Baltic States don’t have much in the way of air forces, and no jet fighters, NATO provides the Baltic Air Policing initiative, which bases four to eight fighters on Baltic airfields. Nonetheless, that’s a pretty thin shield against Russian airpower. “The air defense capabilities of the three Baltic states are acutely lacking,” the study concludes with remarkable understatement. In particular, researchers pointed to lack of medium- and long-range anti-aircraft missiles, insufficient stockpiles of missiles, lack of integration of missiles with battle command systems, gaps in low-level radar coverage and interoperability issues between BALTNET and NATO systems. Interestingly, the study notes a lack of connectivity between the Baltic States and Swedish and Finnish air operations centers, indicating the importance of neutral—but increasingly NATO-leading—Sweden and Finland to any relief of the Baltic nations against invasion.

#### Russia targets the Baltics as part of a larger conflict with NATO and the west

Galeotti 19

Mark Galeotti (Honorary Professor at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies and a Senior Associate Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute), George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, “The Baltic States as Targets and Levers: The Role of the Region in Russian Strategy “, April 2019, https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/baltic-states-targets-and-levers-role-region-russian-strategy-0

The Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) are coming under constant, multi-vector Russian pressure, yet, rather than a prelude to kinetic operations, this pressure is part of Moscow’s wider “political war” with the West. The Baltic states are considered targets not because the Russians believe that these states can be returned to Russia’s sphere of influence—indeed, Russians lost that belief long ago. Rather, Russia uses the Baltic states to exert leverage against a variety of other actors, including the United States, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), the neutral Nordic states (e.g., Sweden), and even Belarus. Russia considers the independence of the Baltic states and their active role in NATO and the EU as threats to Russia’s security, sovereignty, and autonomy. The Vladimir Putin regime’s operational code inclines it to respond with multiple, varied, and often independent covert political means.

#### Recent talks between Baltic states demonstrate Russia’s threat

Radio Free Europe 21

Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, “Poland, Baltic States Discuss Security Against Backdrop Of Russian-Belarusian Military Drills”, 9/13/2021, https://www.rferl.org/a/poland-baltic-states-zapad-exercises/31458464.html

The foreign and defense ministers of the Baltic states and Poland have gathered to discuss a joint response to conventional and hybrid threats as Russia and Belarus staged large-scale military exercises. At a meeting in the Latvian capital, Riga, the four countries on September 13 called for EU and NATO unity against the Zapad-2021 military drills and what they say is Belarus’s weaponization of illegal migrants along their borders. Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania have witnessed a major influx of migrants this summer from neighboring Belarus that they and the EU say are orchestrated by strongman Alyaksandr Lukashenka to exact revenge for sanctions and support for the opposition to his authoritarian rule. Most of the migrants are from the Middle East, particularly Iraq. "What is worrisome is the fact that the Belarusian regime is not going to give up these tactics, so we are ready to face even more immigratory pressure. Nevertheless, we are aware that we are defending not only our national border but also the border of the European Union,” Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniev Rau said at the meeting, adding the countries expect support from the European Union. Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics reiterated Belarus is engaged in hybrid warfare using migrants. "It is pretty obvious that this is not a conventional threat," he said. "Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland are handling the situation rather well," and do not need help from NATO at the moment, he said. Estonia's Foreign Minister Eva-Maria Liimets said that although her country doesn’t border Belarus, it stood in solidarity over the migrant issue. She also referred to the Russian-Belarusian military drills Zapad, which are causing "serious security concerns in the region.” "The Russian Federation has not been transparent about these exercises in the past," she said. The massive live-fire military exercises run from September 9 until September 16, involving some 200,000 military personnel and other hardware at multiple sites in Russia and Belarus. NATO said it was watching the drills, which have caused concern in neighboring NATO members and Ukraine. On September 13, Russian President Vladimir Putin oversaw the drills in the Nizhny Novgorod region east of Moscow. Russia says the drills are not directed against any foreign country and has called them a necessary response to increased NATO activity near Russia's borders and those of its allies. "While each country has the right to conduct military exercises, limited transparency, wider context of the maneuvers, and the accompanying hybrid activities raise our concerns," Polish Foreign Minister Rau said. He also pointed to a Russian troop build-up near Ukraine earlier this year that raised concern in Kyiv and the West over Russia’s intentions.

#### NATO must strengthen its defense commitments to the Baltics to avoid a nuclear conflict with Russia

Brands 19

Hal Brands (Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute), American Enterprise Institute, “How Russia could force a nuclear war in the Baltics”, 11/7/2019, https://www.aei.org/op-eds/how-russia-could-force-a-nuclear-war-in-the-baltics/

Would the US fight a nuclear war to save Estonia? The question would probably strike most Americans as absurd. Certainly, almost no one was thinking about such a prospect when NATO expanded to include the Baltic states back in 2004. Yet a series of reports by the nonpartisan RAND Corporation shows that the possibility of nuclear escalation in a conflict between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Russia over the Baltic region is higher than one might imagine. The best way of averting it? Invest more in the alliance’s conventional defense. There was a time when it seemed quite normal to risk nuclear war over the sanctity of European frontiers. During the Cold War, NATO was outnumbered by Warsaw Pact forces, and it would have had great difficulty stopping a Soviet attack with conventional weapons. From the moment it was formed, NATO relied on the threat of nuclear escalation — whether rapid and spasmodic, or gradual and controlled — to maintain deterrence. American thinkers developed elaborate models and theories of deterrence. US and NATO forces regularly carried out exercises simulating the resort to nuclear weapons to make this strategy credible. After the Cold War ended, the US and its allies had the luxury of thinking less about nuclear deterrence and war-fighting. Tensions with Russia receded and nuclear strategy came to seem like a relic of a bygone era. Yet today, with Russia rising again as a military threat, the grim logic of nuclear statecraft is returning. The spike in tensions between Russia and the West over the past half-decade has revealed a basic problem: NATO doesn’t have the capability to prevent Russian forces from quickly overrunning Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Russian invaders would be at the gates of the Baltic capitals in two to three days; existing NATO forces in the region would be destroyed or swept aside. NATO could respond by mobilizing for a longer war to liberate the Baltic countries, but this would require a bloody, dangerous military campaign. Critically, that campaign would require striking targets — such as air defense systems — located within Russia itself, as well as suppressing Russian artillery, short-range missiles and other capabilities within the Kaliningrad enclave, which is situated behind NATO’s front lines. Moreover, this sort of NATO counteroffensive is precisely the situation Russian nuclear doctrine seems meant to avert. Russian officials understand that their country would lose a long war against NATO. They are particularly alarmed at the possibility of NATO using its unmatched military capabilities to conduct conventional strikes within Russian borders. So the Kremlin has signaled that it might carry out limited nuclear strikes — perhaps a “demonstration strike” somewhere in the Atlantic, or against NATO forces in the theater — to force the alliance to make peace on Moscow’s terms. This concept is known as “escalate to de-escalate,” and there is a growing body of evidence that the Russians are serious about it. A NATO-Russia war could thus go nuclear if Russia “escalates” to preserve the gains it has won early in the conflict. It could also go nuclear in a second, if somewhat less likely, way: If the U.S. and NATO initiate their own limited nuclear strikes against Russian forces to prevent Moscow from overrunning the Baltic allies in the first place. And even the limited use of nuclear weapons raises the question of further escalation: Would crossing the nuclear threshold lead, through deliberate choice or miscalculation, to a general nuclear war involving intercontinental ballistic missiles, strategic bombers and apocalyptic destruction? So what to do? One option would be for the West to pull back — to conclude that any game that involves risking nuclear war over the Baltic states is not worth the candle. The logic here is superficially compelling. After all, the US could survive and thrive in a world where Russia dominated Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, just as it survived and thrived during the Cold War, when those countries were part of the Soviet Union. The problem is that failing to defend the Baltic states would devalue the Article 5 guarantee on which NATO rests: the principle that an attack on one is an attack on all. And given that one could raise similar questions about so many US commitments — would declining to meet a Chinese attack on the Philippines really endanger America’s existence? — this failure could undermine the broader alliance system that has delivered peace and stability for so many decades. A second option, emphasized by the Pentagon’s 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, would be to devise new limited nuclear options as a way of strengthening deterrence and dissuading Russia from pursuing a strategy of escalate to de-escalate. For example, the US might develop low-yield nuclear weapons that could be used, in a relatively limited fashion, against a Russian invasion force or the units supporting it. This approach is probably worthwhile, because it would help fill in missing steps on the escalatory ladder between conventional conflict and general nuclear war. The knowledge that the US has its own “tactical” nuclear options might inject greater caution into the calculations of Russian planners. It is possible, RAND analysts note, that limited nuclear strikes early in a Baltic conflict could convince the Kremlin that the risks of proceeding are unacceptable. The dangers here are, well, obvious and drastic. There is always some possibility — although informed analysts debate how much of a possibility — that Russia might mistake a limited strike against military targets in the Baltics for part of a larger or more dangerous nuclear strike against Russia itself. And if the plan is to use limited nuclear strikes against Russian military assets involved in an invasion of the Baltic states, the implication is that NATO would be using nuclear weapons on the territory of its own members. A third, and best, option is to strengthen the weak conventional posture that threatens to bring nuclear options into play. The root of NATO’s nuclear dilemma in the Baltics is that the forces it currently has stationed there cannot put up a credible defense. Yet as earlier studies have noted, the US and its allies could make a Russian campaign far harder and costlier — with a much-diminished chance of rapid success — by deploying an enhanced NATO force of seven to eight brigade combat teams, some 30,000 troops. That force would include three or four armored brigade combat teams (as opposed to the one NATO periodically deploys to Eastern Europe now), along with enhanced mobile air defenses and other critical capabilities.

#### The Baltics have weak militaries that need NATO support

Blachford & Ti 20

Kevin Blachford (writer for Texas National Security Review), Ronald Ti (writer for Texas National Security Review), Texas National Security Review, “FOR BALTIC DEFENSE, FORGET THE ‘FOREST BROTHERS’”, 10/16/2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/10/for-baltic-defense-forget-the-forest-brothers/

Dwarfed by their larger Russian neighbor, the three Baltic nations are on NATO’s frontline with Russia. Russia’s ambitions to restore its influence within its near-abroad, and in post-Soviet states in particular, offers a distinct threat to the sovereignty of the Baltics. These states were described by a 2017 RAND report on NATO’s flank as the “most strategically vulnerable” to Russian revanchism. Since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the security of these three small nations has depended on deterrence and integration within the European Union and NATO alliances. With small budgets and limited capabilities, the domestic defenses of the Baltic states rest on the ability of their armed forces to continue the struggle for survival until NATO partners can assemble and intervene. It is generally accepted that NATO troops based in the Baltic states, in the form of the Enhanced Forward Presence, are essentially a tripwire element, forming a NATO statement of intent, rather than a substantial military deterrent. Each Enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup is little more than a light infantry battalion augmented by small numbers of armored fighting vehicles. The relatively meager strength of the Enhanced Forward Presence pales in comparison to the combat power of a Russian air assault division or conventional mechanized brigade, both of which are regarded as the most likely Russian entry forces. Some commentators have raised significant doubts about the ability of an incipient NATO Response Force to mobilize and deploy in a timely manner. The challenge writ large is not the correlation of forces itself — in a hot war, the Enhanced Forward Presence elements would likely be quickly destroyed. The substantial challenge is mobilizing the NATO Response Force and moving it effectively into the Baltics.

# Con

#### We Stand in negation of the following:

Resolved: The North Atlantic Treaty Organization should substantially increase its defense commitments to the Baltic states.

### Definitions

#### The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Masters 21

Jonathan Masters (Deputy Managing Editor for Council on Foreign Relations), Council on Foreign Relations, “The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)”, 5/6/2021, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/north-atlantic-treaty-organization-nato

Founded in 1949 as a bulwark against Soviet aggression, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) remains the pillar of U.S.-European military cooperation. An expanding bloc of NATO allies has taken on a broad range of missions since the close of the Cold War, many well beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. President Joe Biden has sought to recommit the United States to NATO and mend transatlantic ties that became strained under the Donald Trump administration. In 2021, NATO remains focused on deterring Russian aggression in Eastern Europe and is continuing a full withdrawal of its security forces from Afghanistan. Meanwhile, alliance members carry out several operations: peacekeeping in Kosovo, patrolling the Mediterranean, training Iraqi security forces, supporting African Union forces in Somalia, and policing the skies over Eastern Europe.

#### Defense commitments to the Baltic states

Masters 21

Jonathan Masters (Deputy Managing Editor for Council on Foreign Relations), Council on Foreign Relations, “The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)”, 5/6/2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/north-atlantic-treaty-organization-nato>

#### Fears of Russian aggression have prompted alliance leaders to reinforce defenses on NATO’s eastern flank. Since its Wales summit in 2014, NATO has ramped up military exercises and opened new command centers in eight member states: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. The modestly staffed outposts are intended to support a new rapid reaction force of about twenty thousand, including five thousand ground troops. NATO military planners say that a multinational force of about forty thousand could be marshaled in a major crisis. In 2017, NATO began rotating four multinational battle groups—about 4,500 troops total—through the Baltic states and Poland. The alliance has also bolstered defenses in the Black Sea region, creating a new multinational force of several thousand in Romania. The U.S. Army added another rotational armored brigade to the two it has in the region, under its European Reassurance Initiative. Meanwhile, NATO has increased air patrols over the Baltics, Montenegro (the newest alliance member), and Poland. NATO routinely scrambles jets to intercept Russian warplanes violating allied airspace.

#### Substantially increase its defense commitments

Kuhn 18

Ulrich Kuhn (Nonresident Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace with a PhD in Political Science), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “Preventing Escalation in the Baltics”, 3/28/2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/03/28/nato-s-options-pub-75883>

If NATO wants to deny Russia the ability to successfully attack one or more Baltic states, it has little choice but to deploy forces on a much larger scale than it currently does. Such forces could be deployed gradually to avoid giving Russia a casus belli and to make such deployments more palatable to skeptical NATO members. The 2017 RAND study proposed deployments of around 35,000 personnel, with an additional reinforcement capability of up to about 70,000 personnel; this would certainly prevent a Russian military fait accompli and force Moscow to fight a bloody and drawn-out conventional war, should it attack. These deployments would also, perhaps, eliminate most of the difficulties—and some of the resulting escalation pathways—that stem from the alliance’s current need to reinforce troops rapidly and on a large scale in a crisis. In addition, these troop deployments would raise the costs to Moscow of deliberately forcing a military crisis with NATO.

### Framework

#### Cost benefit analysis

The framing for today’s round ought to be cost benefit analysis. If we demonstrate that increasing NATO defense commitments to the Baltic states would do more harm than good, we should win the round.

### Contention 1: Deteriorating Relations with Russia

#### Russia uses NATO’s military build-up in Eastern Europe to justify increasing military spending

Bodner 18

Matthew Bodner (Russia correspondent for Defense News), Defense News, “Russia, the victim? Opposite NATO’s eastern flank, it’s an expansionist West causing anxiety”, 8/27/2018, https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2018/08/27/russia-the-victim-opposite-natos-eastern-flank-its-an-expansionist-west-causing-anxiety/

This shift in dynamics has caused increased anxiety among policymakers and analysts in Moscow. The hope once felt in Russia for a detente under Trump is fading, and prolonged confrontation is assumed. State media channels, themselves in wartime footing since 2014, routinely warn Russian citizens of war with an intransigent, expansionist West. Adding to those anxieties are NATO’s ongoing efforts to modernize and expand military capabilities in central and eastern Europe. “We don’t like the picture we are seeing,” said Vladimir Frolov, an independent political analyst in Moscow. “NATO is getting serious about its combat capabilities and readiness levels. Trump may trash NATO and his European allies,” Frolov added, “but it is the capabilities that matter, and those have been growing under Trump.” NATO has long been Russian President Vladimir Putin’s favorite foreign boogeyman and, as far as political footballs go, this one has been easy and fruitful to kick around at home. Most of Putin’s legitimacy in recent years has been rooted in a well-designed domestic narrative of Fortress Russia under siege from foreign powers — with NATO being the focus of concern. From the perspective of Russian military planners, tasked with devising a national defense for the world’s largest land power, NATO is more than a useful rhetorical scarecrow at home — though this helps secure funding for modernization and new hardware. NATO is one of Russia’s primary potential opponents, and therefore a focus of Russian military thinking. And from that perspective, the situation looks concerning: NATO troops and hardware are being forward deployed to former Soviet satellites in eastern Europe; in June, the alliance unveiled a new initiative — dubbed the “Four 30s” — that will see a significant expansion of NATO’s rapid deployment capabilities; and Germany is considering rearming with an eye on Russia. “Even the shouting match over the 2 percent spending, not to mention Trump’s lunatic call for 4.5 percent, is a significant concern for Moscow,” Frolov said. “Were Germany to start remilitarizing, approaching the capabilities level of the Cold War, we should be worried. And we would hate to see Poland emerge as the new Germany for U.S. forward basing and positioning.” NATO has its own reasons for pursuing all of these initiatives: Russia. Many of the alliance’s members, particularly the newer ones on Russia’s borders in eastern Europe, were rattled by Moscow’s brazen annexation of Crimea and have spent the past four years calling for greater collective action to deter possible Russian moves on former Soviet states now in NATO. Russia, in turn and for a variety of reasons — political expediency and military prudence — has seized on NATO’s efforts to bolster its own defense and spun that into rationale for sustained military expenditures amid economic recession. Actors on all sides — Trump, NATO and the Kremlin — hold irreconcilable positions that sometimes feed into misunderstanding, mistrust and military bolstering.

#### Russia may interpret these measures to strengthen the defense of the Baltics as a security threat, increasing tensions and military spending

Kuhn 18

Ulrich Kuhn (Nonresident Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace with a PhD in Political Science), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “Consequences for NATO”, 3/28/2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/03/28/nato-s-options-pub-75883>

This general disagreement about current and projected Russian intentions and interests is important because it exacerbates the potential for escalation for two quite different reasons. First, if NATO underestimates the threat from Russia, that may give Moscow reason to test the alliance’s resolve—maybe even by escalating to the use of military force against NATO’s weakest link, the Baltic states. In this case, an incorrect threat assessment by NATO could invite Moscow to deliberately escalate the already simmering general tensions with NATO and go a significant step further, perhaps by invading one of the Baltic states. Second, and conversely, if NATO overestimates the threat from Russia, its well-intentioned defensive measures may reinforce legitimate, as well as imagined, Russian security concerns. In this case, misreading the threat could lead NATO to create additional pressure on Moscow to up the ante, which could lead to both arms races and increased tensions—making escalation more likely. These two potential risks—of NATO doing too little and doing too much—create very specific escalation risks in the Baltic region, in both the conventional and nuclear realms.

### Contention 2: Overwhelming infrastructure

#### The Baltic states do not have the infrastructure necessary to host more troops and resources

Vershbow & Breedlove 19

Alexander R. Vershbow (Retired ambassador), Philip M. Breedlove (retired US Air Force General), Atlantic Council, “Permanent deterrence: Enhancements to the US military presence in North Central Europe”, 2/7/2019, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/permanent-deterrence/

One significant question is whether Poland should be the central host nation of an enhanced US presence designed to strengthen NATO’s eastern flank. Some argue that the United States should be postured forward, in the Baltic States, to deter Moscow from attempting a fait accompli on NATO’s eastern frontier. This is based on the premise that the Kremlin would not engage in such an attack on or so close to US forces, as it would provoke a swift and decisive US response that would be extremely costly for Russia. However, such a posture would mean a shift away from the current allied strategy of deterrence by rapid reinforcement toward forward defense, and could create divisions within the Alliance. Furthermore, in addition to lacking the geographic space needed to help minimize the vulnerability of deployed forces to Russian strikes, the Baltic States do not have the required infrastructure or space to support such an enhanced presence. Previous rotations of US forces have needed to travel back to US facilities in Grafenwöhr in order to mass, train, and exercise effectively, and to maintain readiness, which is demanding and costly. Yet, building sufficient infrastructure in the Baltics would take a great amount of time and resources, and space remains limited.

#### Stationing more troops and resources in Baltics would incentivize Russian aggression due to lacking infrastructure

Blachford 20

Kevin Blachford (journalist for the National Interest and War on the Rocks), The National Interest, “Can NATO and The EU Really Defend the Baltic States Against Russia?”, 2/7/2020, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/can-nato-and-eu-really-defend-baltic-states-against-russia-121711

The history of the Cold War provides clues to how deterrence could be increased in the Baltic region today. The defense and deterrence capability of West Germany revolved not just around the nuclear deterrent, but on the ability of the United States and its allies to deploy forces quickly. This related to the logistic capabilities to move forces quickly to the border with East Germany. An important part of NATO strategy therefore relied on the West German autobahns as a way to move both goods and people. Today, the Baltic region lacks any meaningful infrastructure in which reinforcements could be moved quickly to the region. Train lines are outdated and travel between the Baltics to Poland or further to Germany is painstakingly slow. The Baltic states also do not have any significant capabilities to host allied forces in large scale numbers, particularly as access to the area in a conflict scenario would be limited due to Russian air superiority and anti-access, area-denial capabilities. The large placement of U.S. forces in this sensitive area would no doubt invite reprisals and escalation from Russia. But showing the capabilities to quickly respond to a crisis by having the capacity to move resources to the region would enhance NATO’s deterrence in the long term. NATO should therefore consider developing its forces in Germany and even Poland, but with the added caveat of being able to move these forces quickly to where they are needed in the Baltics.

### Contention 3: NATO struggles with funding

#### Strengthening defense comittments in the Baltics is incredibly expensive

Brands 19

Hal Brands (Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute), American Enterprise Institute, “How Russia could force a nuclear war in the Baltics”, 11/7/2019, <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/how-russia-could-force-a-nuclear-war-in-the-baltics/>

Developing this stronger conventional deterrent in the Baltics would not be cheap: Estimates run from $8 billion to $14 billion in initial costs, plus $3 billion to $5 billion in annual operating expenses. Yet neither would it be prohibitive for the richest alliance in the world. The best way of reducing the danger of a nuclear war in the Baltics is to ensure that NATO won’t immediately lose a conventional one.

#### The pandemic has harmed NATO’s financial capabilities, making an increase in spending on the Baltics difficult to achieve

Bermann & Cicarelli 21

Max Bergmann(senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and served in the Department of State from 2011-2017), Siena Cicarelli (program associate for American Progress and previously interned for the Department of State), Center for American Progress, “NATO’s Financing Gap”, 1/13/2021, https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2021/01/13/494605/natos-financing-gap/

Since the summit, some progress has been made in strengthening the alliance. NATO members have increased defense spending, deployed forces in Central and Eastern Europe, and begun investing in needed capabilities. In 2019, almost all NATO allies increased their defense spending, with nine countries hitting the 2 percent goal. Most allies have put plans in place to substantially increase defense spending by 2024. The alliance is stronger and better prepared to deter Russia than it was six years ago, despite the divisive approach of President Donald Trump, but significant gaps remain. Marginal spending increases by various NATO members were inherently fragmented and often yielded few new major capabilities or failed to address some of NATO’s serious shortfalls. Meanwhile, many member states still have yet to adequately invest in their forces, leading to very low states of readiness and operational strain. Lack of progress toward the 2 percent benchmark has also caused major diplomatic tension within the alliance between the countries meeting their commitments and those that are not. Now, with the COVID-19 crisis hammering the balance sheets of all NATO members, the prospect for European defense spending looks bleak. It seems unlikely that there will be significant new investment to address some of NATO’s critical capability gaps. Indeed, the European Union—which had planned to increase funding to upgrade the dual-use infrastructure critical to moving NATO forces—has reduced its planned allocations in its recent budget. NATO members seeking to keep their economies alive are unlikely to prioritize defense.

#### Debates over funding make NATO less effective

Cook 21

Lorne Cook (Reporter for Associated Press), US News and World Report, “NATO Chief Urges Joint Spending as Budget Debate Rolls On”, 2/17/2021, https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2021-02-17/nato-chief-urges-joint-spending-as-budget-debate-rolls-on

There is also concern that certain countries might see it as a bailout when they should just be spending more, or that NATO’s ability to act might be slowed by more arguments over money. Some think it’s an ill-conceived plan, proposed without proper consultation and meant to mollify the United States.

### Extra Cards:

#### Putin is not intimidated by NATO, so deterrence is unlikely to succeed.

Cesare 20

Matt Cesare (intern at Foreign Policy Research Institute with a bachelor’s degree in world politics and economics), Foreign Policy Research Institute, “Russian Encroachment in the Baltics: The Role of Russian Media and Military”, 12/14/2020, https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/12/russian-encroachment-in-the-baltics-the-role-of-russian-media-and-military-2/

Putin, at least on the outside, is not intimidated by NATO and is more than willing to push the envelope with the Alliance to get an increase of Russian influence. Invading a prospective NATO member like Ukraine is a clear example. Taking into account Putin’s statements on Russians abroad, his desire for regaining influence over the region, and the strategic placement of military forces, the Kremlin can make the Baltic region a delicate one, if it is not already. NATO has responded starkly so far by stationing troops there, but the potential for conflict in the Baltic region between NATO and Russia will still require attention going forward. The Baltic states have been a shining example of former Soviet republics in achieving full democratic transition—that progress should be honored and protected.

#### Unlike in Ukraine, Russia does not demonstrate an interest in invading the Baltics, making a threat unlikely

Radin 17

Andrew Radin (Ph.D. in political science from MIT), The Rand Corporation, “How NATO Could Accidentally Trigger a War with Russia”, 11/13/17, https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/11/how-nato-could-accidentally-trigger-a-war-with-russia.html

The Russian discourse on Ukraine highlights the limited importance of the Baltics for Russian foreign policy. Russians appear to view Ukraine as an extension of Russia: by some accounts as “little Russia,” or as Putin explained to President Bush in 2008, “not even a real country,” given the close relationship between Russia and parts of Ukraine. By contrast, the Baltic states are where movies staged in the West were filmed during the Soviet Union. Ukraine is front and center in the major Russian strategic documents, such as the Foreign Policy Concept or National Security Strategy, but the Baltic states do not appear. Russian media and other public discourse see a coordinated and intentional Western effort to undermine Russia's position in Ukraine. By contrast, they cannot imagine that Western concerns about Russian military action in the Baltics are legitimate, and tend to see them either as manipulation by the Baltic states or the U.S. military-industrial complex. Russia might not broadcast a plan to invade the Baltics, but its public description of the importance of Baltics is inconsistent with Russia launching an offensive military operation against them.

#### The US disproportionately funds NATO

Reality Check Team 21

Reality Check team, BBC News, “Nato summit: What does the US contribute?”, 6/14/21, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-44717074

In 2020, it's estimated that the US spent just over 3.7% of its GDP on defense, while the average for NATO’s European members (and Canada) was 1.77% of GDP. But the US is a global superpower, with military commitments around the world, not just to NATO, and it also accounted for more than half of the combined GDP of all NATO members in 2020. Defense spending by European NATO members and Canada has been increasing in recent years. Despite the impact of the pandemic, these countries increased spending on defense in 2020 for the sixth year running. Despite the impact of the pandemic, these countries increased spending on defense in 2020 for the sixth year running. The rest (including Germany, Italy and Spain) spent below that in 2020, even though they've all increased their spending as a percentage of GDP since 2014 (when the 2% target was agreed). Germany indicated in 2019 that it wouldn't reach the 2% target until 2031. NATO members also pledged that by 2024 at least 20% of their defense expenditure should go on acquiring and developing equipment. On this measure, most NATO members in 2020 spent at least that proportion or more on equipment, although Germany and Canada still spent less than 20%. And last year, European NATO members and Canada increased their major equipment expenditure by an average of more than 11% on the amount spent in 2019. What about the cost of running NATO? NATO’s annual budget and programmes come to about €2.5bn (£2.1bn; $3bn) overall, and there's an agreed cost sharing formula to pay for the running of things such as: civilian staff and administrative costs of NATO headquarters joint operations, strategic commands, radar and early warning systems, training and liaison defense communications systems, airfields, harbors and fuel supplies The cost sharing is based on national income. For the period from 2021-2024, the biggest two contributors to this will be the US and Germany, each paying just over 16%.

#### Using NATO resources increases reliance on the US for defense, instead of strictly Europe

Bergmann 21

Max Bergmann et al. (senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and served in the State Department from 2011-2017), Center for American Progress, “The Case for EU Defense”, 6/1/2021, https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2021/06/01/500099/case-eu-defense/

Europe’s dependence on the United States for its security means that the United States possesses a de facto veto on the direction of European defense. Since the 1990s, the United States has typically used its effective veto power to block the defense ambitions of the European Union. This has frequently resulted in an absurd situation where Washington loudly insists that Europe do more on defense but then strongly objects when Europe’s political union—the European Union—tries to answer the call. This policy approach has been a grand strategic error—one that has weakened NATO militarily, strained the trans-Atlantic alliance, and contributed to the relative decline in Europe’s global clout. As a result, one of America’s closest partners and allies of first resort is not nearly as powerful as it could be. European militaries have now experienced decades of decline. Today, much of Europe’s military hardware is in a shocking state of disrepair. Too many of Europe’s forces aren’t ready to fight. Its fighter jets and helicopters aren’t ready to fly; its ships and submarines aren’t ready to sail; and its vehicles and tanks aren’t ready to roll. Europe lacks the critical capabilities for modern warfare, including so-called enabling capabilities—such as air-refueling to support fighter jets, transport aircraft to move troops to the fight, and the high-end reconnaissance and surveillance drones essential for modern combat. European forces aren’t ready to fight with the equipment they have, and the equipment they have isn’t good enough.

#### Strengthening NATO’s presence in the Baltics could lead to rifts with member states

Kuhn 18

Ulrich Kuhn (Nonresident Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace with a PhD in Political Science), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “Preventing Escalation in the Baltics”, 3/28/2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/03/28/nato-s-options-pub-75883>

While such measures might mitigate the short-term risk of deliberate Russian escalation, they would create a number of severe political trade-offs. First, a deterrence-by-denial approach would risk overstretching the delicate political consensus among NATO members about conventional deterrence and assurance. A number of member states, perhaps led by Germany and France, would not support such a policy and would seek to block it. Even more importantly, perhaps, not even the Baltic states are supportive of such a maximalist approach. While many Baltic officials and experts would like to see greater U.S. military engagement in the region, some of them are highly skeptical of the assumptions underlying the RAND war games and think that they are too pessimistic about Baltic defenses. While they would like to see a strong, unified allied response to the growing threat from Russia, they also recognize the need to avoid unnecessarily escalating general tensions with Russia. Also, against the background of often contentious debates within NATO about financial and military burden sharing, it would not be clear at all who would provide the necessary funds and forces for such a large military footprint. Neither the United States nor most other allies currently seem to be both willing and capable.

#### The Baltics are incredibly vulnerable, making them a bad place to station valuable resources

Clem 16

Ralph S. Clem (retired US Major General), Texas National Security Institute, “FORWARD BASING NATO AIRPOWER IN THE BALTICS IS A BAD IDEA”, 4/18/2016, https://warontherocks.com/2016/04/forward-basing-nato-airpower-in-the-baltics-is-a-bad-idea/

Given NATO’s imperative to reassure the Baltics and deter Russia, the next task is to evaluate the alliance’s prospects against a determined Russian attack. Unsurprisingly, given the respective orders of battle and realities of military geography, that assessment demonstrates that the Baltic region is essentially un-defendable, at least in the early stages of a war (although some contest that point). This is the result of the region’s very small size (roughly the area of Missouri), its location immediately adjacent to Russia proper, and — of particular import — Russia’s heavily defended Kaliningrad exclave along the Baltic Sea littoral between NATO members Poland and Lithuania. To bring the problem of defending the Baltics further into focus, add into this calculation the fact that most of the region is within range of Russian mobile surface-to-air, surface-to-surface, and air attack threats launched from inside Russian territory. Finally, pro-Moscow Belarus, which borders Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, is a wild card which could significantly complicate NATO’s defense of its eastern flank should it side with Russia in a conflict. With that geographic reality in mind, a crucial question is where NATO ought to base its high-value airpower assets that are such an important part of its deterrent impact and its actual combat power. The United States and NATO attempt to dodge the charge that they are provoking the Russians by basing forces in the Baltics by couching this forward presence as “rotational” or “persistent.” But beneath the rhetoric is a pattern of spending within the ERI budget that suggests otherwise and raises some concerns about the military efficacy of the entire venture, at least insofar as it relates to the role of airpower in the Baltic region. These concerns stem from a reading of line items in the ERI component of the defense budget, which provides insights into the administration’s thinking about where and for what purpose these supplementary funds ought to go, which in turn tells us about their strategic planning for a possible conflict with Russia in eastern Europe. The U.S. Army garnered the lion’s share of the ERI budget for building up an armored brigade combat team and other forces. The U.S. Air Force’s 17% share of ERI funding contains several elements that make good sense. Particularly wise investments include the retention of a squadron of F-15C air superiority fighters in the United Kingdom that had been scheduled for drawdown (about a third of the Air Force ERI budget) and the planned upgrade of facilities at a base in western Germany to accommodate F-22 air superiority fighters. Exercises that stress interoperability with allied air forces and other components provide good training opportunities, and those should be continued apace. Prepositioning of airfield support equipment at existing bases is also a good idea, but the financial support provided for this to date is clearly inadequate at a mere 7 percent of the Air Force’s 2017 ERI funding. Part of the Air Force’s infrastructure investment tied to NATO’s northern flank has been slated for air bases in the Baltics and eastern Poland, all of which are highly exposed to Russian threats. For example, Ämari air base in Estonia, although useful as a base for a small fighter detachment for the air policing mission, is only about 150 miles from the Russian border. Flying at speed and low altitude to avoid radar detection, a Russian Air Force fighter-bomber would be overhead Ämari just 10 minutes after crossing the Russo-Estonian border. Yet U.S. Air Force deployments to this base included A-10 close air support aircraft, accompanied by considerable fanfare. Such deployments makes one wonder if the Air Force is really thinking about sending the Warthog into the teeth of the Russian military’s lethal air defenses from a base that would almost certainly be destroyed in the opening hours of a war. Or is this just for show? What would make better sense in terms of spending the Air Force’s ERI funding? The answer is to fund greater capacity (including much more prepositioned munitions and fuel) to operate from permanent or temporary air bases in places further removed from the Russian threat, such as in the United Kingdom, western Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands. These bases would receive active, Guard, and Reserve squadrons deploying from the United States to provide the mix of aircraft needed for this fight. From these arriving assets, U.S. Air Forces Europe could generate air superiority, suppression of enemy air defenses, and interdiction missions dedicated to a counter-attack against invading Russian forces in the Baltics, together with air refueling, electronic warfare, and airborne surveillance support from the relative safety of hardened rear area bases. Dozens of other airfields in relatively secure areas could be pressed into service through the Air Force’s innovative Forward Arming and Refueling Points concept. It has always been the case that there is a tradeoff between sortie generation (flying longer missions reduces the sortie rate) and the protection of one’s assets. When the choice is made about from where to fight, one ought to err on the side of caution; zero sorties can be generated from aircraft destroyed on their bases. In the present circumstances on NATO’s northeastern flank, to push airpower basing too far forward to satisfy political requirements is an unnecessarily risky move.

#### Russia’s current hybrid warfare strategy seeks to avoid direct military confrontation with NATO, making more defense in the Baltics irrelevant

Boulègue & Polyakova 21

Mathieu Boulègue (research fellow at Chatham House), Alina Polyakova (Ph.D. in Sociology and the President and CEO of the Center for European Policy Analysis), Center for European Policy Analysis, “The Evolution of Russian Hybrid Warfare: Executive Summary”, 1/29/2021, https://cepa.org/the-evolution-of-russian-hybrid-warfare-introduction/

In 2018, CEPA examined Russia’s approach to nonlinear competition in its well-received report “Chaos as a Strategy: Putin’s ‘Promethean’ Gamble.” The report’s initial assessment was that Kremlin leaders were applying military and nonmilitary means as one in the same, that they were strategic in intention and opportunistic in their use of chaos, and that they were succeeding by effectively managing two of the most essential variables in their strategy: time and risk. The result is a form of strategic competition whereby Russia sows chaos to achieve its agenda beyond its borders by deploying an array of hybrid warfare tools. This “chaos strategy” calculates that a relatively weakened Kremlin can avoid direct competition with the West to still successfully compete by splintering its opponents’ alliances, dividing them internally, and undermining their political systems, and by doing so ensure long-term regime survival. From the Kremlin’s perspective, hybrid warfare is a tactical application of the chaos strategy. It is full spectrum warfare that deploys a blend of conventional and nonconventional means aimed at affecting on the ground changes in target while seeking to avoid direct military confrontation with Western states. Hybrid warfare is employed in a tailored way to sow chaos in target countries. Such efforts generally include irregular warfare, active measures, and special operations. Unable to compete in direct confrontation, the Kremlin’s use of hybrid warfare is a means to compensate for its weaknesses vis-à-vis the United States and NATO.

#### Russia and the Baltics need to communication in order to avoid military confrontation

Ušackas 20

Vygaudas Ušackas (former foreign minister and Lithuanian ambassador to the U.S., Mexico, and the UK and EU ambassador to Afghanistan and Russia), Carnegie Moscow Center, “Managing Adversity: Russia and the Baltics”, 12/17/2020, https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/83478

That said, the Baltic countries also need to talk to Russia. Our interests coincide when it comes to avoiding unintended military incidents. A lack of communication and the absence of basic military-to-military contacts could escalate such incidents and lead to a real military confrontation. In this regard, dialogue on military risk reduction with Russia and Belarus is crucial. Recently, various think tanks and expert forums have engaged in intense discussions of confidence- and security-building measures. A comprehensive menu of such measures is contained in the Recommendations of the Participants of the Expert Dialogue on NATO-Russia Military Risk Reduction in Europe, which was signed by a number of prominent former senior officials from both sides, including sixteen former foreign and defense ministers, and released on December 7, 2020. The Baltic states, Russia, and Belarus should focus on three measures. The first is the full and unrestricted implementation of previously agreed commitments enshrined in the 2011 Vienna Document on confidence- and security-building measures and the Open Skies Treaty. The second step is additional voluntary restraint and transparency measures, such as exchange of information on the size and scope of military activities in contiguous areas, which go beyond what is required under the Vienna Document. The third and final step is the reopening or establishment of hotlines between relevant military commanders and headquarters. Political will is sorely needed to start implementing these recommendations before it is too late. Realistically, this can be done within the framework of NATO-Russia military relations. A modicum of success at that level could create an atmosphere conducive to political dialogue leading to an arrangement providing for a more secure and predictable environment in the Baltic Sea region. In my previous career as a Lithuanian diplomat and politician, I devoted considerable time to supporting and facilitating cross-border cooperation with Russia’s Kaliningrad region. I saw that as a critically important “soft security” engagement to maintain people-to-people contacts, implement environmental projects, and foster educational exchanges with our immediate neighbor. This is particularly relevant because mutual distrust, a sense of insecurity, and a clash of worldviews remain deeply ingrained in the minds of policymakers in the Baltics and in Russia. While basic policies in Moscow and the Baltic capitals will probably remain unchanged for the foreseeable future, experts and analysts from the Baltic countries and Russia could resume a Track II (unofficial) dialogue of their own, aimed at better understanding the risks, concerns, opportunities, and limitations of the difficult relationships. When experiencing acute adversity, as we are now, we need to learn to manage it better.

#### The Pandemic has caused recessions in the Eurozone

Walker 21

Andrew Walker (BBC World Service economics correspondent), BBC, “Eurozone suffers double-dip recession as pandemic impact continues”, 4/30/2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/business-56940720

Europe's economies have been set back by a renewed surge in infections this year and Covid-related restrictions. The eurozone shrank by 0.6% in the January-to-March period - the second consecutive contraction, which is a widely-used definition of a recession. It is the second such episode, a so-called double-dip recession, since the onset of the pandemic.

#### NATO struggles with a lack of readiness

Herszenhorn 21

David M. Herszenhorn (chief Brussels correspondent of Politico and formerly a foreign correspondent based in Moscow), Politico, “Biden embraces NATO, but European allies are weak”, 6/14/2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/us-president-joe-biden-embraces-nato-but-european-allies-are-weak/

The report said that after decades of decline, “much of Europe’s military hardware is in a shocking state of disrepair. Too many of Europe’s forces aren’t ready to fight. Its fighter jets and helicopters aren’t ready to fly, its ships and submarines aren’t ready to sail, and its vehicles and tanks aren’t ready to roll.” And more crucially, for operations far away, Europe lacks capabilities like air-refueling for fighter jets, transport aircraft for troops, and high-end reconnaissance and surveillance drones. Even with Biden robustly proclaiming his commitment to NATO, the harsh reality of Europe’s unreadiness could create tensions within the alliance that are even more difficult to smooth over than Trump’s badgering of allies to increase their military spending — something they had all pledged to do at a leaders’ summit in Wales in 2014. But if the threat is in Asia, a real question may emerge about the relevance of allies that can barely act on their own home turf.