

A light gray outline map of the world is in the background. A red square highlights the location of Riga, Latvia, in the Baltic region of Europe. A horizontal line is drawn across the map, passing through the highlighted area.

# Creating an effective deterrent against Russia in Europe:

## military and non-military aspects of deterrence

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- Deterrence is formed and reinforced by various elements, some of which are military and others non-military. The most important of those, the ones that help to provide peace and stability in the Baltic Sea region, are Russia's relatively low-level interest in the Baltic countries, the efforts by the Baltic countries and Poland to develop their self-defence capability, the collective efforts by NATO to provide military presence in this region, and the lack of clarity regarding Russia's ability to control the escalation of the potential conflict. This last element of deterrence seems to deserve to be explored in some depth since, for the moment, its impact on Russian behaviour has not been given its due.
- The NATO collective deterrence strategy is fully defensive and can largely be interpreted as defence by denial, while the deterrence strategies of individual countries of the Baltic Sea region also include elements of deterrence by punishment. Such a choice is not easy, therefore the inclusion of deterrence by punishment elements in deterrence strategies are an indication that some countries do not fully trust the deterrence by denial strategy and think that it is necessary to supplement it with offensive elements.
- The ability of countries to co-operate within one region has played a decisive role in providing for a larger presence of NATO in the Baltic Sea region, whereas the attempts by Romania to enlarge the presence of NATO in the Black Sea region have been for the most part unsuccessful, for there are sharp differences between the attitudes and priorities of the countries of this region.
- The potential of arms control as an element that would supplement the deterrent strategy has not been fully used. The Baltic countries and Poland understandably see the current situation as an historic opportunity to secure the presence of NATO in their territories, therefore they are unwilling to review the possibility of guaranteeing peace and stability in the region with the help of arms control mechanisms. Although this attitude is understandable, it would be desirable in the long term to supplement the current deterrence efforts with other mechanisms and involve Russia if the opportunity arose.

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## Introduction

The concept of deterrence in recent years has become an indispensable part of discussions on European and international security. A positive development is that the discussions already focus on specific aspects of deterrence, e.g., the size of NATO presence in the Baltic countries and Poland; the need (or lack thereof) to deploy a larger number of US troops and military equipment; the nature of the threat from Russia; the most likely scenario of a future military conflict with Russian involvement; the air defence capability of the Baltic countries, Poland and other Baltic Sea region countries in order to deter Russia from military aggression, etc. Discussions on European security indicate that the initial shock caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine has passed and discussions are gradually taking a more constructive turn.

This paper is intended as a contribution to the discussion about various aspects of Russian deterrence. More specifically, this paper looks at three interrelated issues with respect to deterrence. Firstly, four factors are reviewed, which largely decide the result of the deterrence efforts: the relatively low level interest by Russia in the Baltic countries and Poland; the individual measures countries take with the aim of deterring Russia; the collective efforts of NATO to deter Russia with the help of increased military presence in European frontline states and the specific character of the escalation of the potential military conflict, which could benefit NATO. Even though in recent years the focus has been on the presence of NATO multinational battalions in the Baltic countries and Poland, more attention should be paid to other aspects of deterrence as well. It is particularly the case with the issue of conflict escalation, which hitherto has been discussed relatively little. Secondly, the paper addresses the experiences of a number of European countries in implementing deterrence strategy vis-à-vis Russia. Deterrence is not a strategy exclusive to NATO, for, to a degree, it is also used by Sweden, Finland, and even Belarus. Exploring the experiences of other countries is very important even if done for purposes of exchange instead of taking away the best. Thirdly, deterrence has been largely interpreted as a sepa-

rate strategy carried out by NATO collectively and countries individually, yet at the same time deterrence is also a potentially problematic strategy because it can encapsulate adverse relationships between countries, thus reducing the prospects for decreased tensions and resolving conflicts. With this in mind, this paper discusses the issues related to arms control and their potential contribution to the security of the Baltic Sea region. A number of NATO member states have focused on an expanded NATO presence, interpreting the current problems of European security as an historic opportunity of securing a greater presence of NATO and particularly the United States in Northern Europe. Such an approach is understandable, but it would be desirable to review possibilities for reducing tensions, which could perhaps be accomplished with the help of arms control negotiations and mechanisms.

In this paper, we reach the conclusion that since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis the deterrence concept has undergone a kind of renaissance, but its embracement by NATO is still in its initial stages. So far, deterrence has been fundamentally different from the Cold War, maintaining emphasis exclusively on conventional capabilities and thus Russia's military superiority in the Baltic Sea and Black Sea regions remains to be addressed. Ironically, the relatively weak NATO deterrence posture does not provide for more space for dialogue on arms control. The frictions within the arms control realm that began in the 2000s have only deepened since 2014 and there is no political will to resolve them. Obvious reluctance is shown by both sides. Russia is pursuing a more assertive foreign policy, thereby keeping alive its perceived threat. Within NATO, there are strong voices arguing for maintaining a hard-line policy towards Russia. As a result, we witness a growing militarization of the Baltic Sea and Black Sea regions, raising concerns about the future of the European security order.

### 1. NATO deterrence strategy elements and problems

The behaviour of NATO vis-à-vis Russia since 2014 is well known and has been thoroughly

researched. A much greater importance in NATO's relationship with Russia has been assigned to deterrence. The main measures designed to deter Russia comprise the determination of individual countries to pay much more attention to develop their defence potential; for example, Lithuania and Latvia have doubled the financing allotted for defence in just a few years' time. Other countries as well have increased their defence spending. At the same time, NATO's collective attempts to reinforce Russian deterrence are of utmost importance, because only the alliance, and not the individual members, can deter the Russian threat. For the alliance at large, it is important to communicate its readiness to defend its members in case of a military conflict and take the preliminary measures to be able to defend allies in case deterrence should prove unsuccessful. It means increasing the number of military exercises, developing scenarios for military exercises, deploying troops and equipment in the countries most at risk (NATO EFP – Enhanced Forward Presence), searching for political and logistical solutions to be able to move a great number of troops and equipment to the place of potential military conflict. Deterrence measures may also have other beneficial results, for they can reduce the sense of threat in countries against which the adversary could direct its military aggression and reinforce the belief in solidarity measures on the part of allies.

### 1.1. The principal elements in NATO's deterrence strategy

When looking at the measures directed at the deterrence of Russia's potential military aggression, it may be worthwhile to highlight several elements in the deterrence strategy that may help to reduce the possibility of a military conflict. Most of them are designed specifically for deterrence, yet several point to a wider set of circumstances that could help to decrease the possibility for a conflict breaking out. These elements characterize NATO's overall approach to deterrence, which is to foster the security of the countries in Russia's geographical proximity. Firstly, NATO's deterrence is based on Russia being much less interested in the Baltic countries than in Ukraine and Georgia.

In the latter two countries, Russia used its 'iron fist' in order to put a stop to NATO expansion. Albeit many are reluctant to recognize this, Russia has in fact achieved this goal. Russian interests in Ukraine also involved other issues, for instance, the transit of gas to Europe and the Russian Black Sea naval base in the Crimean Peninsula. Russia's interest in the Baltic countries, on the other hand, is minimal: they represent neither an important transit route for energy resources, nor a politically, economically or militarily important region. Two separate issues should not be confused: disagreement on a number of politically important questions and the political importance of the region. Disagreement between the Baltic countries and Russia is an undeniable fact as regards questions concerning the entry of the Baltic countries into the Soviet Union in 1940; the results of the Second World War for the Baltic countries; deportations of the Baltic population; Soviet-fostered migration to the Baltics, as well as the political rights of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia and Estonia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet the fact of the disagreements does not in itself mean that they are to be considered crucial from the Russian point of view. Starting in the 1990s, Russian interest in the Baltic countries has been minimal, which serves to bolster deterrence.

Up to now, when Russia has used force in its own territory or against other countries, it has been in the name of protecting important interests. In the case of the war in Chechnya, it was the territorial integrity of the country. Regarding Georgia and Ukraine, Russia wanted to prevent the expansion of NATO, and in Syria it was to extend help to an important ally and affirmation of Russia's return on the world stage as a player with a global reach (Lukyanov 2016). None of this is the case with the Baltic countries. They have long since become EU and NATO member states, and it is important to remember that in international politics it is easier to prevent something from happening than to undo a done deal. With regard to the question of protecting the rights of Russian speakers, both Russia's intentions to resolve the issue in keeping with its interests and the legitimacy of putting pressure on the Baltic countries from the point of view of the current context of international rules

and regulations are doubtful. In other words, the Baltic countries are accorded such an insignificant space in Russia's foreign policy that it is difficult to imagine a reason that would be important enough to use military force against them. Since the results of using force usually come at a cost, it is difficult to find arguments for launching such an aggression, for the gains would be unlikely to counterbalance the costs. Authors who have been writing about Russian foreign policy and have tried to explain it in recent years are therefore quite certain that the Baltic countries have little reason to be concerned about their security. Dmitry Trenin writes that 'Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland are safe, however, even if they do not feel that way: the Kremlin has no interest in risking nuclear war by attacking a NATO member state, and the sphere of Russian control to which Putin aspires certainly excludes these countries' (Trenin 2016, 29). Stephen Kotkin is of a similar opinion: he thinks that Russia's interest in its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space does not include the Baltic countries (Kotkin 2016, 8). Researchers are not always right, yet in this case their opinions clearly point to Russia having no serious interests vis-à-vis the Baltic region. Since countries usually use force to protect important interests, the non-existence of such interests in the Baltic region allows us to speculate that a military conflict in this region is unlikely. Russia is deterred by its lack of significant interests in the Baltic region.

Before we analyse other elements of deterrence it is worth looking at one argument in favour of Russia's threat to the Baltic countries turning out to be rather important after all. The idea is that Russia may want to do to the West what it experienced at the beginning of the 1990s, when the collapse of the Soviet Union turned the hitherto bipolar world into a unipolar one. In the current situation, where Europe has become bipolar, Russia may attempt to split the NATO alliance, thus becoming the ruling country in the European security system and reclaiming its sphere of influence that was lost when the USSR collapsed. In this scenario the Baltic countries would be accorded an important role, whereas Russian actions would be based on the assumption that NATO is nothing but a 'paper tiger', i.e. it looks dangerous

but will collapse like a house of cards if Russia is to act quickly and decisively. Russia might try to split NATO if it were to assume that the military preparations of alliance members is inadequate to extend a helping hand if one were needed by one or more member states. In such a case an attack on the Baltic countries would exacerbate the existing disagreements among NATO members, cause lack of unanimity, delay decision making and make timely arrival of help impossible. Russia would thus kill two birds with one stone: it would destroy NATO (for there would be no point in its existence if the members cannot help each other when facing dangerous threats) and reclaim the Baltic countries, which were lost with the collapse of the USSR. NATO would cease to exist because for the first time in its history, as a member faced an existential threat, the alliance would prove ineffective and incapable of providing the necessary help. The other member states would conclude that there is no point to NATO and consequently NATO would cease to exist.

On the one hand, such an argument seems convincing, because the essence of defensive alliances is to make a positive contribution to the security of member states. If it's not done, then other countries have to reckon with the possibility that they will not receive help if the need arises. By joining an alliance, countries have made the decision that they will generate only a part of the necessary military capability because the other members will take care of the rest. If other allies cannot be trusted, then the point of the existence of the alliance is lost and countries must generate the lacking military capability themselves or change their relationship to the adversary, i.e., bandwagon with the source of threat. Mutual distrust and differing interests can thus bring the alliance to collapse. On the other hand, the argument that alliances unravel when facing decisive action on the part of the adversary does not seem convincing. Aggressive behaviour by the adversary undoubtedly increases the feeling of threat, thus it is equally possible that countries will try to deepen their cooperation when external threat is on the rise. With the level of threat rising in the international system, countries will try to find collective solutions. Under such circumstances, cooperation will be possible

not only among countries which are already on friendly terms, but also countries whose relations have been neutral or even hostile. The alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States (and Great Britain) during the Second World War is evidence that, when facing an external threat, cooperation between countries increases and not vice versa. Thus Russia has to realize that in case it engages in military aggression against the Baltic countries, the threat it represents will only act to consolidate the ranks of the NATO member states and heighten US interest in strengthening European security. NATO has taken steps to deepen the cooperation, both after the Russian-Georgian war and after Russia's military aggression against Ukraine in 2014, supporting the argument that the increase in the intensity of external threat causes balancing attempts on the part of the countries under threat (Walt 1990). It can be concluded that the possibility of military aggression on the part of Russia is diminished both by its lack of interest in the Baltic countries and by its disinclination to consolidate NATO even more by launching an aggression against one of the alliance members.

The second element in the NATO deterrence strategy, which to a great extent determines the result of this strategy, is the individual efforts by countries to strengthen their own defence potential. This is a crucial factor, for it is the individual military potential of countries that may be used in the initial stages of the conflict. In the case of Russian military aggression, the main task of the defence forces of the Baltic countries would be to forestall the adversary as long as possible, thereby giving the allies enough time to provide help. In this respect, several NATO member states have taken significant steps in recent years and the alliance's overall indicators have slightly improved. Data at NATO's disposal indicate that the defence expenditure of alliance members had a tendency to diminish before the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, whereas it has increased substantially since 2015. Thus, in 2015, NATO European and Canadian defence expenditure grew by 1.83%, in 2016 by 3.14%, in 2017 by 5.28% and in 2018 by 3.78% (NATO, 2018). The defence budgets of Latvia and Lithuania have doubled in a few years and defence expenditure by Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Norway, Germany,

Estonia and several other countries has also risen. It must be noted, however, that the perception of threat varies across NATO members, and thus there are countries which, in a short period of time, have tried to reach the 2% of GDP for defence expenditure recommended by NATO, whereas in others the increase in expenditure has been more moderate. In 15 NATO members, less than 1.5% of GDP is spent on defence. This is reflected in the average indicators of defence expenditure: in the alliance overall, the rate is 2.4% of GDP, but it is so high primarily because the US accounts for about two thirds of the alliance's total defence expenditure. According to NATO, the US defence budget reached 623 billion dollars in 2018, whereas the European and Canadian members of NATO together accounted for 312 billion US dollars. Even though the European and Canadian members of NATO are on an upward trend in terms of in defence spending, their defence budgets are still only 1.57% of GDP, whereas the US spends 3.5% of GDP (NATO 2018a).

The changes in total defence expenditure are only a part of the changes that have taken part in recent years. Within the alliance, crucial changes have taken place in thinking regarding conflicts in which NATO troops participate. The idea was that such conflicts would for the most part take place in African countries, Afghanistan and Iraq. Nowadays NATO member states must realize that the worst case scenario, a military conflict with Russia, is possible and in this case it concerns high intensity hostilities for which most of the allies are not ready. Of course, in recent years, NATO members have paid more attention to purchasing military equipment and currently 15 of them meet the relevant requirement, i.e. to allot at least 20% of defence spending for purchasing and modernization of military equipment. In this respect, positive changes have taken place in almost all NATO countries but particularly in Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy and Hungary (NATO 2018). Yet the process of military modernization should continue. For instance, Baltic air defence capacity is inadequate; there are shortages in terms of the number of troops and equipment. Still a big problem for the militarily stronger countries is their ability to generate units

of soldiers in a short amount of time and deploy them to conflict zones. Analysis of the military capability of the United Kingdom, France and Germany indicates that it would take almost a month for these countries to raise a mechanized combat brigade for participating in hostilities taking place in the Baltic countries (the UK would in fact need more than a month), whereas a battalion-size combat unit could be sent to the Baltic countries approximately within a week (Shurkin 2017). In the coming years, however, an emphasis on high intensity military conflict and preparations for such a scenario could be among the main directions of NATO activities, as the Trident Juncture 2018 military exercise, with the participation of about 50,000 NATO troops, clearly testifies. Thus it can be predicted that in the near future NATO's readiness for a military conflict with a country such as Russia will improve and less emphasis will be placed on stability operations in countries such as Afghanistan.

The third element in the deterrence strategy, which may help to reduce the possibility of a military conflict, is the common efforts of NATO member states to strengthen deterrence by deploying multinational military units in the potential place of conflict. Since the beginning of the military conflict in Ukraine, the military presence of NATO in the Baltic countries and Poland has substantially increased. This has happened despite objections on the part of some authors (Kiesewetter, Zielke 2016) and Russian protests. As Janusz Bugajski remarks, there is no alternative to the NATO security umbrella (Bugajski 2016). Not long after the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, the Baltic Air patrol mission was strengthened and small military units from other NATO member states have been rotated through the Baltic countries. With scale military conflict in Europe becoming more likely, many hitherto ignored issues appeared on the agenda of researchers and decision makers. Realizing that the relationship with Russia will to a great extent be based on deterrence, it became necessary to allow the possibility of protecting allies that were in direct proximity to Russia. It is a complicated task, particularly because of the geographic location of the region (Mettelaer 2018; Clark, Luik, Ramms, Shirreff 2016; Myers and Pe-

tersen 2017) and the previously existing misbalance of forces, which undoubtedly was in Russia's favour. Stability of deterrence is determined both by the military balance and the political and diplomatic strategies of the parties involved. A rapid increase in the NATO presence in the Baltic region could strengthen the military aspects of deterrence, yet it could turn out to be politically and diplomatically destabilizing (Huth 1988) and, under the current circumstances, a rapid increase in the forces does not seem plausible. It would be too much of a burden, both on the countries sending their troops and armour and the recipient countries which would be obliged to provide the infrastructure – a costly and time consuming project.

NATO's approach to Russian deterrence is based on minimal continuous presence in the Baltic countries and Poland as well as on the ability to move a substantial number of troops and armour to the conflict location in a short period of time. Here we should mention the results of the NATO summits in Wales (2014), Warsaw (2016) and Brussels (2018b), which laid the groundwork for deterrence measures aimed at supporting countries neighbouring Russia. The most prominent of those was the decision made at the Warsaw summit to deploy multinational battalions in the Baltic countries and Poland. Since the summer of 2017 the number of countries whose soldiers are represented in these battalions has increased. Numerically, these are small units that would not be able to present substantial resistance in case of a sudden and massive Russian attack, yet they serve as a crucial element of political deterrence because, in case of a conflict, troops from most NATO member countries would find themselves at its location and would be involved in the hostilities from the very beginning (Zapfe 2017). That would guarantee the interest of the relevant countries and their political involvement in the conflict. Thus the possibility that Russia would manage to isolate the Baltic countries from their NATO allies is reduced.

As Martin Zapfe and Nora Vanaga argue, this can be considered political deterrence carried out by means of reputation, i.e. albeit the NATO forces on the ground are inadequate to beat back an attack,

NATO's reputation is at stake, therefore the alliance members will do everything within their power to prevent the aggressor from reaching its political and military aims, even if it initially should possess a substantial advantage (Zapfe and Vanaga 2018). Even though there are different arguments in favour of such a deterrence strategy, it is risky, for it is subject to the interaction of many difficult to predict factors. The most important among those are political ones and the ones related to logistics and the adversary's actions. The political risk factors have to do with decision making within NATO and logistical challenges stemming from the deployment of NATO units to the place of hostilities in a minimum amount of time. The main factor related to actions of the adversary is its potential ambition to prevent the arrival of NATO units, impeding their movement on land, by sea and by air. It is likely that, in case of a conflict, it would be possible to guarantee access to the Baltic countries, yet the price might be high (Zapfe and Haas 2016). Since the Warsaw summit, much has been accomplished to ensure NATO access to the Baltic region, but by no means everything has been done for the alliance to be able to provide help to its members in terms of the availability of its military potential, equipment and logistics, should the need arise. The decisions made at the Brussels summit regarding further development of military potential and strengthening cooperation with the EU are a step in the right direction, yet much remains to be done. Should prevention turn out to not be enough and the adversary decides to launch an aggression after all, then the availability of an adequate military potential and logistical solutions would render providing assistance more likely. If, on the other hand, the alliance should lack practical solutions for support to be provided to allies, it would face a conundrum: it cannot help but come to the aid of a member, yet it is practically impossible. Therefore, the processes currently taking place within the alliance foster not only deterrence but also defence.

The fourth element of deterrence strategy follows from uncertainties the potential aggressor would face, should it have to decide on launching an aggression against one or more NATO member states. Given that Russia is a region-

al power whose ability to start an aggression is largely limited to its neighbouring countries, in the paragraphs below we will discuss scenarios for an aggression against the Baltic countries. To do this it is necessary to review potential aggression scenarios and the Baltic and NATO responses. Martin Zapfe writes that the two most likely military aggression scenarios against the Baltic countries are subversion or *fait accompli* (Zapfe 2017). Andrew Radin is of a similar view, adding to these scenarios nonviolent measures directed at weakening state power (Radin 2017). Yet two of the most significant scenarios would be a Russian attack meant to surprise NATO with an unexpected action that would allow the achievement of political and military goals before NATO had time to react and provide aid or a gradual whittling away at state power, including the use of violence that in itself would not constitute enough reason for NATO to increase its military presence in the Baltic countries. In the first scenario, the intensity of violence is great, therefore NATO help should be provided as quickly as possible, whereas in the second scenario it is low, and the Baltic countries could try to deal with the hybrid war launched by Russia on their own accord. In the first scenario time is of essence, whereas in the second scenario enough time would be at the disposal of the countries under threat to react to the measures directed at weakening the power of the state. The main reasons why Russia could carry out the hybrid war scenario against Ukraine were a crisis situation in Ukraine, which meant a weakened state power, and the use of military threat (gathering troops at the Ukrainian border under the guise of military exercises), so that the victim of the aggression would be afraid to resist and would not attempt to renew control over the territory where the hostilities are taking place. The situation in the Baltics is different. Even though these countries are much weaker than Russia, it would be very difficult to paralyze their activities both because of the Ukrainian precedent and their reliance on NATO assistance in case of a crisis.

Even though the possibility of the hybrid war scenario cannot be completely excluded, the absence of surprise, presence of allies in the Baltic countries and the efforts of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia



to strengthen their defence capabilities make it less likely. It means that deterrence measures reduce the potential for a particular military conflict, thus pushing the potential adversary in the direction of other scenarios. At the same time, different scenarios can have different gain to loss ratios. The realization of a hybrid war scenario could mean smaller potential loss but, with the military preparedness of the Baltic countries on the rise, gains from carrying out this scenario would also be reduced. Launching a quick and decisive attack on one or more Baltic countries could bring greater gain to the potential aggressor, at the same time increasing potential military and other costs, for it is unlikely that NATO member states would not try to punish Russia for such an attack. Thus, as military preparedness and presence of allies grows in the Baltic countries, a greater force would be required to launch a successful military attack. At the same time, military aggression would be more obvious and more difficult to explain and justify. Deterrence thus makes some forms of military aggression less possible and likely (hybrid war scenario) while other forms of aggression would potentially bring more gain, but also more risks, since the use of military power would be more obvious. The ability of the potential aggressor to control the escalation of the military conflict with NATO would likewise be reduced, therefore it seems worthwhile to give a more detailed treatment to issues related to escalation.

An essential difference between deterrence during the Cold War and nowadays is that an aggression in Europe launched by one side during the Cold War would have inevitably led to an escalation of the conflict. Under such circumstances, the probability that nuclear weapons would be used was also high. In other words, the conflict would escalate quickly and both the USSR and the US knew it. If a military conflict broke out in Europe it would be difficult, if not impossible, to avoid its escalation. At the same time, the escalation phenomenon was thoroughly researched, because political leaders wanted to gain a better understanding about the stages of escalation and to what extent the process can be controlled. Hermann Kahn, for instance, identified 44 stages in the escalation of conflict in the relationship between nuclear pow-

ers (Kahn 2012). The situation in today's Europe is radically different. Conflicts in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria in which Russia has been involved have been limited in character, therefore it can be assumed that the next conflict with the involvement of Russia could also be limited. Russia is no Soviet Union and its military potential is not such as to pose a threat to the security of Europe as a whole. In case Russia were to carry out revisionist politics, its goals would be limited. Russia's military involvement would thus be directed not only at achieving its political and military goals but also at preventing the conflict from escalating. Russia possesses military superiority in its relationship with its closest neighbours but, from a wider perspective, the distribution of military power between Russia and NATO favours the Western alliance. A conflict escalation that would threaten NATO involvement would be dangerous to Russia, for in the course of the escalation it would gradually lose the advantages stemming from its local military superiority. With the conflict escalating (and escalation here means a more active military involvement of NATO), Russia's adversary would gradually gain in strength with Russia at the same time losing the initial advantages it possessed when dealing with weaker opponents. From this perspective, it is in Russia's interests to carry out limited wars and avoid an escalation in the conflict, as in its course it would gradually begin to confront a much more powerful adversary.

Russian advantages under the conditions of a limited military conflict and the problems it would face in case of a further escalation of the conflict have a special significance in the context of NATO deterrence policy. NATO deterrence can be strengthened if the potential adversary is sent credible signals that it will not be able to control the escalation and, in the course of the conflict, the collective economic and military superiority of NATO countries over Russia will become increasingly pronounced. Here we should also keep in mind that both sides are in possession of nuclear arms and thus escalation of the conflict is dangerous for Russia, not only because NATO would have an advantage in terms of military potential but also because, as the conflict develops, the sides could find themselves in diminished control

over it (this of course applies both to Russia and NATO). NATO's signals sent for purposes of deterrence should apply equally to situations where NATO forces in the Baltic countries manage to successfully impede the adversary and to those where Russia is successful to achieve *fait accompli* in the early stages of the conflict. The task before NATO members would be to demonstrate their preparedness to not accept initial losses and continue the conflict despite Russian measures to reinforce the new status quo and de-escalate. In other words, an essential element in NATO's deterrence policy is a manifest readiness to enter a conflict if Russia seriously threatens the security of a NATO member and to stay in the conflict until status quo ante is achieved. If the adversary is made to understand that it won't be able to stop the escalation of the conflict and that its attempts to de-escalate the conflict after the initial goals have been achieved fully or in part will be unsuccessful, then deterrence is thereby strengthened.

### 1.2. Problems with the deterrence strategy

It is worthwhile to consider several factors that could potentially reduce the effectiveness of NATO deterrence. Carrying out deterrence involves a keen competition with the opponent, which will try to render deterrence measures ineffective or find innovative ways of getting around them. Below we will discuss several ways in which deterrence measures may prove to be insufficiently effective. Firstly, it can happen if the adversary finds a way of carrying out a quick military attack, involving an element of surprise. The goal of the forces deployed in the Baltic countries and Poland is to prevent the possibility of such an attack, i.e. to prevent the adversary from achieving a *fait accompli* in a short period of time and before someone can show much resistance. The task of NATO fast response forces – the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and NATO Response Force – is likewise to signal to the adversary that it will not be possible to achieve its political and military goals in a short period of time. The adversary, however, can look for and find ways to get around the deterrence measures. It could, for instance, successfully choose an opportune moment for an attack

or a window of opportunity could open during a political crisis in a country or within the alliance or disagreements among the allies. The adversary might also make use even of something as trivial as the vacation season, an important sporting event taking place simultaneously or a great crisis in another part of the world. In short, prevention of a surprise attack is one of NATO's essential goals, and the measures taken by the alliance should convince the adversary that aggression would not be successful, yet there is the chance that the adversary might find innovative solutions to keep NATO from carrying out its deterrence. A surprise attack, however, is only one of the choices at the adversary's disposal, so in the next paragraphs three more scenarios whereby the adversary might seek to neutralize the NATO forces deployed in the Baltic countries and Poland will be considered (Zapfe 2017, Zapfe and Vanaga 2018).

Secondly, the adversary can avail itself of the possibility of discrediting NATO troops either by using real incidents where locals have come to harm or by resorting to fabrications. For example, a few weeks after German troops were deployed to Lithuania, mass media reported that German soldiers had allegedly raped a 15-year-old Lithuanian girl. The news item had no basis in fact, but there is a chance that, under other circumstances, disseminating fake news could yield the results desired by the adversary. In addition, the adversary may itself try to actively create incidents via proxy. In such a case agents dispatched by the adversary would probably try to provoke NATO troops to rash or illegitimate behaviour, at the same time obtaining evidence for such behaviour. Given the fact that as NATO troops are rotated in the Baltic countries and Poland, they are interacting with the locals and, over time, misunderstandings and incidents are almost inevitable and can be used by the adversary.

Thirdly, it must be kept in mind, that under certain circumstances, demonstrations could take place against NATO units and civilians might try to block their military bases. The military's capacity to act could thereby be compromised and effectively neutralized. Protests by local residents, particularly those where mostly the Russian minority would

take part, could prove to be particularly dangerous because they would be accompanied by worries about Russian response. Even though the worst possible scenario, involving a confrontation between civilians and soldiers is rather unlikely, it should be reckoned with to some degree. In addition, protests by local civilians could also serve as pretext for some NATO member states to review their participation in NATO EFP. The internal situation where the decisions about participation in NATO EFP were made can change over time and protests by locals can precipitate the course of events.

Fourthly, NATO troops could be targeted by groups which are openly hostile to the presence of NATO in the Baltic countries and Poland. Within the year and a half since NATO EFP units were deployed in countries that are Russia's neighbours there have been no such incidents, but that does not mean that they are impossible. Should Russia decide to take active measures to force the countries involved to recall their troops from the Baltic countries and Poland, violence against NATO soldiers that would take place simultaneously with a wide-scale Russian disinformation campaign would represent the greatest threat to NATO's political unity. It would be the host countries that would have to bear the brunt of responsibility for attacks on NATO soldiers and terrorist acts and would be called on to act decisively to find and punish the culprits. Public support in the dispatching countries would also diminish.

Overall, we can conclude that the deterrence measures taken by NATO since 2014 have been mostly directed toward strengthening the political aspects of deterrence, whereas militarily deterrence measures have been less intensive. We have to agree with Martin Zapfe, who has called the measures carried out by NATO 'deterrence by reputation'. This should be understood as the determination of NATO members to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any member state regardless of whether all the conditions are in place for the alliance to react immediately and prevent the threat. On the one hand NATO members are really united and there is no doubt that the alliance is determined to strengthen the

security of its member states. On the other hand political deterrence that is not supported by an adequate military capability can tempt the potential aggressor to test the readiness of the members to protect their allies. In all likelihood NATO will have to continue to work precisely on strengthening the military aspects of deterrence, and to a great extent it will be based on the measures taken by individual countries to bolster their self-defence potential, which is the topic of the following chapter.

## 2. Prospects for national deterrence by European countries

It would be impossible to discuss developments in the defence sectors of all Russian neighbouring countries, so we will focus on the reaction of a number of European countries – Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Baltic countries, Belarus, Poland, Romania and Germany – to the Ukrainian crisis. These countries not only fundamentally reviewed their defence plans but in most cases were forced to integrate the notion of deterrence in their defence policies. This notion, which seemed to belong to the Cold War period, became a new paradigm for thinking. The objective of this chapter is thus to answer the questions: How did the defence policies of European countries change? What is the evaluation of Russia in the official national discourse and public perception? What is the significance of the notion of deterrence in national defence policies? What are some of the practical defence measures countries have taken? What are the challenges countries face in their attempts to deter Russia?

### 2.1. Turning point in the defence policies of European countries

The Ukrainian crisis brought fundamental change to the defence policies of European countries; for over a decade before the main focus of defence strategy was participation in out-of-area operations led by NATO, EU or the US in Afghanistan, Iraq and African countries. Instead of traditional territorial defence, it was counter-insurgency tactics on which military strategy was based. It was no longer a state actor, but non-governmental

terrorist groups that were the opponent. NATO was rather insistent in its view that national armed forces of member states should be small, professional and focused on particular niche capabilities. Many countries yielded to the pressure and abolished mandatory military service; Estonia was an exception.

After the financial crash of 2008, initiatives such as smart defence and pooling and sharing arose within the frameworks of NATO and the EU, which were directed toward greater cooperation among countries in developing and maintaining their missing capabilities. Eventually these processes led to the restructuring and reforming of the defence sectors in order to make them more efficient and save financial resources. The negative side of all these reforms was substantial reductions in armed forces and abandoning plans for modernizing military equipment. The only exception here was Finland, whose defence model modernization measures in the aughts did not result in substantial downsizing of the defence sector, because the Russian threat, albeit not publicly recognized as such, retained its topicality.

After the Russian aggression in Ukraine, given Russia's advantages in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, border states such as the Baltic countries, Poland and Romania felt very threatened because of the missing self-defence capabilities, small human resources in the armed forces and NATO's lack of preparedness to react to high intensity conventional military threats. Germany, Sweden and Norway were also forced to admit that if they were drawn into a conflict with Russia their armed forces, after having been substantially downsized over many years, could not put up an adequate defence. Countries thus had to return to the territorial defence model and begin to invest in the area of defence.

Belarus's defence policy is very tightly interwoven with its foreign policy and Alexander Lukashenko, who enjoyed a good mutual relationship with Ukraine, was in a very uncomfortable position. The long dependence on Russia did not allow him to openly criticize the situation and show solidarity to Ukraine. At the same time measures taken in

defence and domestic policies indicate that Belarus is trying to strengthen its outdated territorial defence model and thus demonstrate to its neighbour that a scenario resembling the one played out in Ukraine would not be possible in Belarus.

## 2.2. Assessment of Russia

History and geographical location have a direct impact on national perceptions of Russia. Bordering countries, such as Finland, the Baltic countries, Poland and Romania, which have been either subjugated by or in conflict with Russia, have always retained caution and distrust of the intentions of their big neighbour. Yet up until the Ukrainian crisis such an open distrust remained within the defence sector because official discourse called for a constructive relationship with Russia. Good neighbourly relations were considered a precondition for economic development. Geographically more distant countries, such as Germany, Sweden and Norway took a more neutral or friendly stance towards Russia, fostered by a mutually productive economic relationship. Yet Belarus was and is the one with the closest relationship with Russia and, with Alexander Lukashenko's assuming the post of president, began a wholesale integration with Russia. After a purposeful integration with Russia in the social area, economy and defence, the sovereignty and autonomy of Belarus have been substantially curtailed.

The annexation of Crimea changed the perception of Russia across the board. With the exception of Belarus, governments condemned Russia for a breach of international norms and considered it a threat to the European security architecture. The Baltic countries, Poland and Romania have admitted that Russia is the main threat to their national security also because of the increased militarization of the Russian Western Military District and Kaliningrad. Romanian worries grew when Russia adopted its new Naval Forces doctrine in 2015, recognizing the strategic importance of the Black Sea for its national security interests and setting military modernization plans for the Black Sea navy dislocated in Sevastopol. The plans provide for purchasing new, modern seagoing ships and

submarines capable of transporting winged rockets, and integrating airborne and naval defence capabilities. The Crimean peninsula meanwhile will be militarized with the goal of guaranteeing a full range A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) capability. Summing up these activities, it can be concluded that the military balance in the Black Sea has shifted in favour of Russia. It is only logical that Romania should see Russia's A2/AD capability as a direct threat to its national security.

Finland has its own individual style of political communication, refraining from openly calling Russia a threat and emphasizing the need for dialogue. Measures purposefully taken by the Finnish government in the areas of domestic affairs and defence, however, indicate that they are directed at deterring Russia. Sweden has taken a diametrically opposite attitude: loudly criticizing Russia as part of its political communication. To be honest, however, this position is taken by the political elite, for the public is not united in its assessment of Russia as a threat. Norway and Germany also had to recognize the seriousness of the threat to European security posed by Russia and show solidarity with countries which argue for expressing strict condemnation of Russia's actions. Russia is considered a threat to the collective security and, in case of an escalation, these countries would inevitably be drawn into the conflict. With Chancellor Angela Merkel at the helm, Germany has assumed leadership both in extending economic sanctions against Russia and in guaranteeing collective security in Europe.

Belarus is distinguished by its ruling elite, realizing that Russia's impunity is a potential threat to its national security. Yet in the public's assessment, which is wholly based on the propaganda version of the events in Ukraine, Russia is still Belarus's most important strategic partner. Thus Lukashenko lacks public support for increasing defence spending while the situation is the exact opposite in other countries where Russia's aggressive foreign policy has allowed defence policy decision makers to convince both the political elites and the public of the necessity to increase defence expenditure as a precondition for any deterrence initiatives.

### 2.3. Efforts to integrate deterrence in defence policies

A lack of united, consolidated deterrence strategy is characteristic of all countries; instead they have a multi-layered defence strategy that includes international, regional, and national aspects. The concept of deterrence entered political discourse only after the 2016 NATO Warsaw summit when, for the first time since the Cold War, the alliance included it in its strategy. Analysing how the deterrence concept is reflected on the national level, then practically all countries are aware that only NATO can credibly deter Russia. The United States, which possesses the necessary military capabilities – long-range high-precision rockets and nuclear weapons, plays a special role here, which is particularly important if deterrence by punishment is considered.

The exception is two non-NATO members, Sweden and Finland, which cannot rely on support from the alliance and have therefore decided to develop their offensive military capabilities to ensure at least minimal deterrence by punishment. Sweden made its choice based on the realization that the postmodern society is no longer suitable for a restoration of the total defence model and should therefore look to acquiring relatively expensive high technology weapons.

As far as NATO member states are concerned, they primarily rely on the extended deterrence ensured by the alliance, while at the same time taking deterrence measures on the national level. Yet because of geographical limitations and lack of resources (personnel and finances) they face challenges to provide the credibility of deterrence. The normative goal for each and every country would be carrying out deterrence by denial but, for instance, the Baltic countries and Norway, because of geographical realities and lack of personnel resources, would not be able to impede the movement of Russian troops. For this reason they are limited to measures of central deterrence directed at strengthening the defence sector (development of self-defence capabilities, purchasing of arms, raising resilience, etc.), but from the point of view of Russia, these measures are not deterrent.

Because of historical and political reasons an additional element in the defence strategies of Germany, Norway, Finland and Belarus is dialogue. These countries argue for developing and maintaining a dialogue with Russia. Deterrence and dialogue are not considered to be mutually exclusive but as two parallel processes that supplement each other. That is, these countries actively arm themselves and support NATO initiatives while at the same time looking for ways of reducing tensions between the West and Russia.

In this respect Germany is a special case. After the modernization reforms of its armed forces, launched in 2011, the *Bundeswehr* experienced drastic reductions in personnel and halted its modernization plans. Despite ambitions delineated in its White Paper (2016) about increasing the armed forces, modernizing the existing military capabilities and developing new ones, the condition of the *Bundeswehr* is assessed to be very critical. Even now, in 2018, Germany is not capable of making a full contribution to the collective security. It fares slightly better in conducting a dialogue with Russia, having initiated the OSCE Structured Dialogue in an attempt to find common ground between the West and Russia. This initiative will be analysed in more detail in the next section.

Belarus is trying to play the role of mediator between the conflicting parties, organizing and hosting negotiations for resolving the Ukrainian crisis. Belarus is thus trying to demonstrate its usefulness in the eyes of Russia and signal its neutrality to the West. Practice indicates, however, that Belarus is failing in achieving either of its goals. Russia has grown more demanding regarding Belarus and its economic obligations and the West simply does not believe in Belarusian neutrality, given its dependence on Russia.

Paradoxically, case analyses show that irrespective of whether or not a country is a NATO member, with the sole exception of Belarus, all rely on the US to ensure deterrence by punishment. That is, they understand that only the US can provide a credible strategic deterrence that would affect Russia. Measures carried out on national and regional levels are essential to demonstrate the

readiness of countries to resist at a time of crisis, but are inadequate to ensure credible deterrence. Thus the US takes the central role in any discussion and calculation involving deterrence. Belarus, on the other hand, has limited financial resources, so Lukashenko is taking weak central deterrence measures, which Russia regards as a slight annoyance instead of credible deterrence.

Finally, given Russian military superiority in the region and the limited financial resources at the disposal of national states, most countries emphasize the significance of regional cooperation. Non-NATO members such as Sweden and Finland have increased their mutual cooperation and are trying to steer the platform of Nordic Defence Cooperation in a direction that would match the current geopolitical situation. Both countries take an active part in NATO military exercises in the Baltic Sea region. The extensive NATO Trident Juncture 2018 is a telling example, showcasing the interest of both countries to actively participate in collective security exercises where the scenarios for triggering Article 5 are played out.

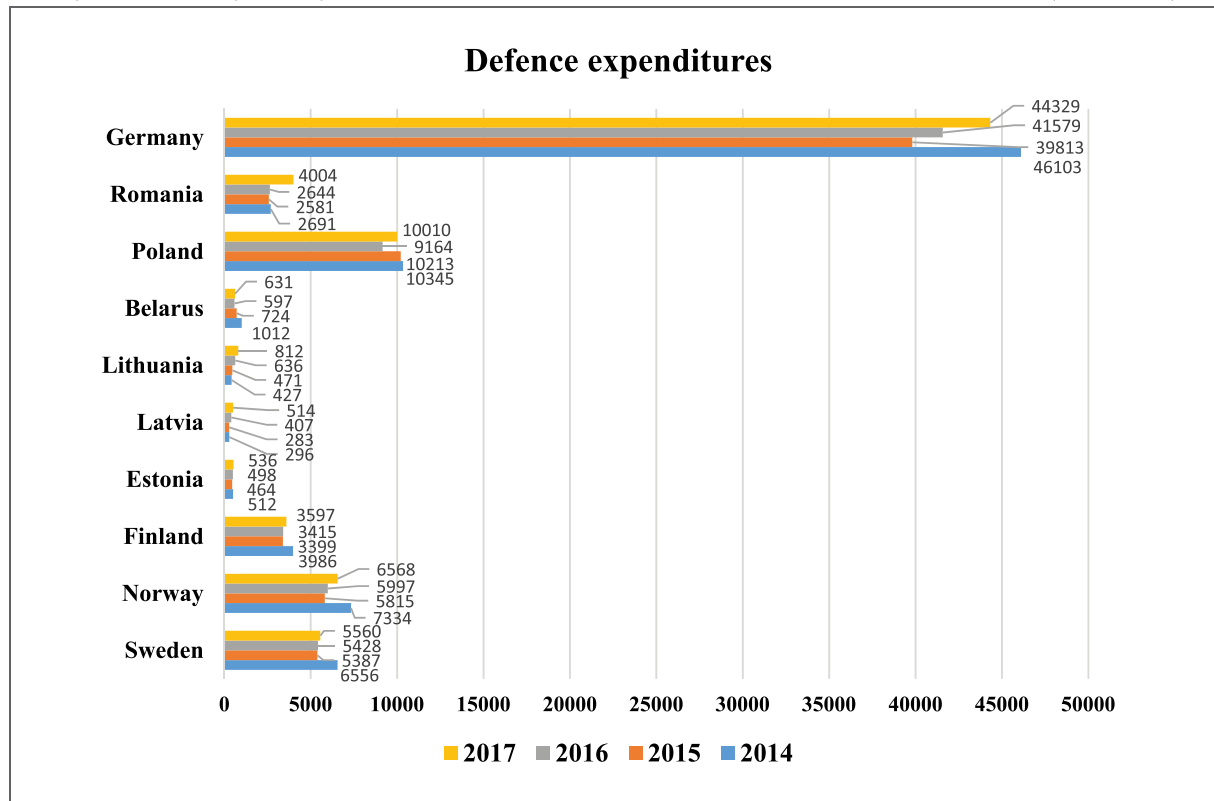
NATO members, including the Baltic countries, Poland and Germany are working on increasing the mutual compatibility of their existing forces and are making a maximum effort to reduce obstacles to a fast deployment of reaction forces in a crisis. A fundamentally important issue is the improvement in the NATO chain of command and control, adapting it to the operational needs of the region. Germany is also actively working within OSCE to find a common ground between the West and Russia. Finally, Romania is a special case. It is desperately trying to develop cooperation with the Black Sea states of Bulgaria and Turkey, for only in case of a united position would it be possible to achieve greater NATO involvement in the region.

#### 2.4. Practical measures

On the national level, countries are focused on strengthening the defence sector which, over the last decade, experienced very important downsizing. The first crucial step was to increase defence

Figure 1.

Military expenditure by country, in millions of USD at current prices and exchange rates, 2014 -2017 (SIPRI 2018).



spending (see Graph 1). At the 2014 Wales summit NATO member states resolved to no longer reduce defence spending and to put a stop to radical reforms in the armed forces. At the next summit, in Warsaw, member states pledged to increase their defence expenditure to 2 per cent of gross domestic product in the medium term. Germany, of course, is an exception because it cannot garner domestic support for such a fast budget increase and, given the economic indicators, the defence sector could not absorb this money in such a short period of time. Countries which are not NATO members are also in favour of gradually increasing their defence spending. Belarus is in the toughest position in this regard because its economic situation does not permit it to do so to the necessary extent.

The second step was to review the lists of military capabilities and to begin the necessary procurements. In addition, because of the hybrid nature of modern warfare, countries had to conclude that they had to resolve various threats that were non-military in nature, for example cyber-threats

and propaganda. Countries with limited military resources mostly invest in their defence sectors that serve the purposes of central deterrence. The desirable end goal, however, would be to implement deterrence by denial.

The Baltics are among the countries which have to pay equal attention to military and non-military threats. In the military area, all three countries are developing their self-defence capabilities and are substantially increasing the number of their military. Lithuania, for one, resumed mandatory military service. Latvia is allocating substantial resources to its territorial force, the National Guard. It is paying particular attention to augmenting and strengthening its Special Operation Force, thus setting up barriers for potential scenarios involving 'little green men'. Cooperation between the interior and defence sectors is strengthened to ensure strong civilian-military cooperation, particularly in the area of border control. Because of the popularity of the Russian-language mass media and large numbers of Russian speakers, particularly in Estonia and Latvia, the Baltic countries have set

the fight against propaganda as one of its national security priorities. Among the implemented measures are national-scale patriotic campaigns and various initiatives in debunking fake news. Estonia has allotted the greatest resources for fighting propaganda by setting up a special Russian-language television channel. Lithuania has published a manual for what the public should do in case of war.

Of all the countries considered, Poland has the greatest ambitions and it wants to lead the Baltic defence. The country is not only arming itself to carry out deterrence by denial but also actively participating in NATO's extended deterrence efforts, for instance deploying its tank unit with the Canada-led multinational battalion in Latvia. Poland has mainly focused on resolving the military threat, sizeably modernizing and reforming its armed forces. It has three divisions, one of which is deployed near Kaliningrad Oblast, and two armed battalions near Warsaw. After the Ukrainian crisis the Multinational Corps North East has transformed its territory from a remote regional headquarters into a vitally important link in NATO's chain of command, overseeing the multinational division headquarters North East in Elblag, Poland and North in Ādaži, Latvia. The multinational battalions deployed in the Baltic countries and Poland would be subordinate to the above and thus Poland plays a central role in any defence planning for the Baltic countries. Poland is also taking purposeful steps to develop a voluntary territorial force, which would foster greater participation of the public in the country's defence.

To compensate for NATO's inadequate presence in the Black Sea region Romania, on the other hand, has decided to strengthen its self-defence capabilities, focusing on A2/AD and naval forces. The priorities set in plans for military modernization are long- and short-range air defence systems, coastal defence systems, multifunctional corvettes, command guidance systems, infantry combat vehicles and armoured personnel carriers. The modernization of naval forces includes developing capabilities such as anti-submarine warfare, anti-vessel rockets, anti-aircraft rockets, anti-aircraft rocket systems on ships and modernization

of multifunctional frigates, which are already part of the armaments. To improve its air force capabilities, Romania is planning to purchase 5 Lockheed Martin F-16 aircraft and an additional 36 F-16 aircraft, possibly from the United States, Greece and Israel (Janes 2018). Among the priorities are also airspace observation and anti-aircraft defence capabilities. Just as Poland, Romania is also buying Patriot missile systems from the United States.

The latest evaluations of German defence potential suggest that the country is not fully capable of ensuring its contribution to the collective security, for instance, only 30 per cent of its aircraft are operational. Since 2011, when drastic reforms were launched in the German armed forces, they were downsized to the extent of leaving only a minimum to ensure participation in peace keeping operations. As a result the Bundeswehr must now make substantial investments in the modernization of its armaments and personnel resources in order to fulfil its role in the collective security of NATO and take a leadership role in the security of the Baltic Sea region, expected by many of the countries in the region.

Countries such as Norway, Finland, and Sweden have expressed their ambitions to carry out limited deterrence by punishment. The latter two are planning to procure rocket systems that would be able to reach strategic objects in Russia. Norway is planning to renovate its air force by purchasing 52 F-35s, which because of Norway's geographical situation is a serious addition to NATO's ability to carry out deterrence by punishment. Interestingly, Russia does not view these actions as provocative, which serves to confirm the thesis that small countries can develop their offensive capabilities because the potential aggressor will not perceive them as really threatening because of their limited effect. The problem is that such offensive capability is very expensive to develop even to a limited extent and, in the case of the Baltic countries, it would not be feasible.

Sweden renewed compulsory military service, adopted plans for modernizing its armed forces, including deploying four brigades and a combat group in Gotland, long-range missiles and territorial units.



For Finland the main identified weakness was inadequate readiness of the armed forces, therefore all efforts are directed at sectoral cooperation and improvement in unit reaction time. Unlike Sweden, the societal resilience is not topical for Finland, since its modernized total defence model ensures public involvement in defending the country in case hostilities break out.

Finally, Belarus is carrying out some limited national-level deterrence measures in order to somewhat increase its autonomy from Russia in the area of defence. One of the first steps was to increase salaries of domestic employees, particularly those responsible for guarding the borders. Putting military personnel who have not received their education and training in Russia in high posts points to Lukashenko's desire to lessen Russia's influence on Belarusian armed forces. In addition, other strategic partners and export markets for the Belarusian military industry are being sought in Asia (China, Vietnam, India, Azerbaijan, and Pakistan).

#### 2.5. Problems for the implementation of credible deterrence

In their attempts to deter Russia countries face a few very important challenges. Despite the widespread consensus regarding the Russian threat and general support for quickly raising defence expenditure, countries lack resources to fully implement all formulated or already launched initiatives. Even though it might seem that the Baltic countries feel the safest because they are at NATO's centre of attention, they particularly lack personnel and financial resources. Defence policy makers face a constant dilemma, trying to decide when to allocate resources to the development of their national self-defence capabilities and when to allocate them to host nation support. The functions of a host country are very much time- and resource-consuming. In order not to look ungrateful and unsupportive for the extended deterrence measures carried out by NATO, the Baltic countries are forced to spend money on infrastructure objects and often postpone their planned procurements until later.

The rich Nordic countries of Norway and Sweden face only a lack of human resources, i.e. they have postmodern societies which do not envision for themselves a direct role in defending the country. The Finnish comprehensive defence model provides for the entire society to be prepared to participate in the defence of the country, albeit 5.5 million people against the numerically superior Russia is inadequate. These countries have therefore expressed their wish to purchase a limited amount of offensive military capabilities. We should note, however, that in contrast to Finland and Norway, Sweden has resorted only to loud rhetoric and little practical work in this regard.

In the case of Belarus, there is no public support for increasing the Belarusian defence expenditure, for Russia is not considered a threat. The political elite therefore lacks a mandate to increase defence expenditure. Most of all the countries considered, Belarus faces the greatest lack of finances for the defence sector, caused by the overall negative performance of the economy. At the same time the direction chosen in the early 1990s and Lukashenko's view of Russia and Belarus as blood brothers has placed the defence sector in a position dependent on Russia, which over the years has destroyed Belarusian sovereignty. The military industrial complex, which is relatively competitive in the arms market, provides some glimmer of hope that financing for defence can increase. Yet in recent years it faces a threat from Russian enterprises, which try to exclude Belarusian imports. Lukashenko is attempting to compensate for these changes by developing new partnerships with conservative regimes in Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

In addition to resource issues, countries face operational challenges. The military asymmetry both in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea is an undeniable fact. Because of geographical considerations, Baltic countries cannot be defended by conventional means. Russian military might is superior both numerically and in terms of military technologies. The capacity of the military personnel of the Baltic countries is minimal and the movements of NATO

rapid reaction forces are too slow. Despite Romania's ambitious military modernization plans, it cannot single-handedly stand up to Russia's superiority in the Black Sea. At the very least it should have support from Turkey and Bulgaria.

Romania is not receiving such support because it faces regional political challenges: Bulgaria and Turkey do not perceive Russia as a threat. Even though both have expressed concern over Russia's increasing military superiority in the region, for various political and economic considerations they do not view it as a real threat and do not wish to worsen their relationship with the Kremlin. The inability of all three countries to agree on a common regional stance has meant that all the Romanian efforts to achieve a greater alliance presence in its territory have hitherto proved unsuccessful. In the Baltic Sea region there exists a superficially united perception of threat and a common stance regarding the measures to be taken among NATO and non-NATO countries, which has let the alliance implement its course of action in a very short period of time. At the same time there are various political, legal and operational micro-level obstacles which impede non-NATO countries' cooperation with the alliance members. An example is the exchange of information by intelligence services. Thus regional political considerations are a crucial obstacle faced by countries both in the Baltic and Black Sea regions.

On the national level there is only one political challenge: to keep the political elite's determination to maintain or even increase defence spending at least in the medium term. As part of the normal democratic process the political elite renews itself once every four years, yet it is significant to maintain political succession. It is very important in the case of Romania, where corruption on the political level is a problem of national scale. Finally, there are political obstacles on the strategic level as well. Even though NATO is an organization for military cooperation, its activities are politicized, i.e. every practical policy requires a consensus of political support. That throws into doubt the effectiveness and speed of North Atlantic Council decision making in case of a crisis.

### 3. Arms control as an element supplementing deterrence strategy

If the notion of deterrence is to stay in the relationship between Western countries and Russia, then it is necessary to look for solutions to prevent the situation from deteriorating any further in the Baltic and Black Seas, where militarization is currently on the rise. One of the instruments that was often used as a parallel process to deterrence strategy during the Cold War was arms control. NATO had a clear and robust defence strategy, but it did not prevent the West from negotiating with the Soviet Union on arms control.

#### 3.1. Definition and historical perspective of arms control

Before analyzing how arms control interacts with the concept of deterrence and how it can help to check the exacerbation of the situation, it is necessary to provide an insight in the essence of this concept. There are several ways of defining arms control. The main difference stems from whether this concept is viewed in the narrow or wider sense. The narrow sense arose in the 20th century, when arms control was exclusively attributed to limiting the development, proliferation and use of nuclear weapons in the 1940s and 1950s. All other attempts to restrict countries from arming themselves were included in the concept of disarmament (Larsen and Smith 2005:3).

According to Hedley Bull, the main difference between arms control and disarmament is as follows: arms control provides for the reduction of or ban on arms, or sometimes for an internationally generated agreement on the number, kind, development and use of weapons. It is his view that arms control involves all those actions in the military area where mutually conflicting countries are ready to cooperate, guided by common interest, while maintaining an active conflict in other areas (Bull 1961:xiv). Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin, on the other hand, define arms control as an awareness by two mutually conflicting countries that aside from disagreements they also have a common interest:

to avoid real hostilities which neither of the sides desires (Schelling and Halperin 1961:1).

The criticism most often levelled at the notion of disarmament is that the implemented policies are vague and naive because a complete ban on countries arming themselves cannot be implemented because of sovereign will to carry out national defence according to their interests and vision. There are also no mechanisms in place to actually ascertain that the countries no longer arm themselves. The essence of arms control is to accept the realities of the international system that most countries have historically armed themselves, and there is no reason to think that suddenly someone might force them to stop doing so. Therefore, common ground should be found with regard to those categories of armaments that, in the countries' view, represent a threat to international or regional security. They must agree on the specific regulation that would be binding to the parties involved, as well as on the institution which would be charged with the responsibility of controlling the observation of the terms of the agreement. Only under such conditions, particularly effective control and transparency, can a relative trust among the parties involved be achieved, thus guaranteeing that all sides will observe it.

Stuart Croft argues for a wider interpretation of arms control, indicating that the concept of disarmament is only one part of arms control. He analyses arms control from the historical perspective, down to ancient Greece, and defines it as a mutual agreement among political entities which provides for the production, procurement and use of certain types of armaments (Croft 1996: 14). Analysing historical cases of arms control, he separates out five different kinds: (1) arms control which results from a conflict ending; for instance, prohibition for Germany to arm itself after the First World War; (2) arms control aimed at maintaining strategic stability; (3) arms control to restrict proliferation of arms; (4) arms control to create certain norms of behaviour; and (5) arms control carried out by international organizations (Croft 1961: 15). Thus, for Stuart, the notion of arms control includes any kind of form of cooperation – bilateral or multilat-

eral – among governmental or nongovernmental actors with the aim of restricting the development, proliferation and use of particular types of armament. The overreaching goal for such an agreement is to prevent the escalation of the situation and the breaking out of hostilities.

Hedley Bull also indicates that the main reasons why arms control is attractive to two mutually conflicting sides are related to efforts to prevent real hostilities from breaking out or at least to limit them. Among other rational motives for this is the reluctance to suffer economic loss by wasting resources on an arms race and to militarize the public (Bull 1961: 3-4). The explanation of realists on how countries can simultaneously arm themselves and discuss arms control, which can even lead an international agreement on control which may eventually restrict their ability to arm, highlights the security dilemma countries face. As Robert Jervis indicates, countries guarantee their own safety in the international system by developing their military capabilities and keeping the peace with other countries and particularly their potential opponents. Since it is difficult to distinguish the offensive from defensive military capabilities, it is in the states' interests to follow and predict development trends regarding arms in other countries in order to review their own national threat assessment accordingly (Jervis 1978).

Thus the strong suit of arms control is guaranteeing of monitoring and control mechanisms. In addition, it can persist not only under the conditions of conflict but also in peacetime, when countries no longer consider each other opponents and the relationship between them has become constructive. Where it is weak is the effectiveness of verifying mechanisms and the resulting mutual trust between countries about the veracity of the information granted. Under conditions of distrust it is very difficult for the conflicting sides to truly negotiate and enter into any agreements on and mechanisms for arms control. Realizing how fundamentally important the trust factor is, arms control also guarantees various transparency and confidence building measures, which is a precondition for mutual trust to develop.

Drawing parallels between the concepts of deterrence and arms control we can conclude that they have a common goal, i.e. to prevent conflict or, if it has already broken out, to mitigate its destructiveness and hinder its further escalation. Deterrence is a conservative strategy, characterised by clear and rather hostile communication on the part of the conflicting sides regarding which side feels threatened, which one is performing deterrence and against which the deterrence is directed. Thus it involves a certain amount of predictability and a defined status quo, which is the positive side of deterrence. The negative side is that this chilly relationship leaves few openings for a parallel dialogue. Neither of the sides is interested in escalating the situation, therefore it is crucial for both to talk to each other. Arms control, with several of its instruments for alleviating tensions, can serve as a significant additional element to the deterrence strategy. This could be observed during the Cold War when both elements, both deterrence and arms control, were present in the foreign policies of both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Discussions on the need for arms control began in the 1950s, where the main focus was to prohibit nuclear arms testing. The International Atomic Energy Agency was established in 1956 in Vienna. To prevent the proliferation of nuclear arms and their technologies, in 1968 the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was signed. In the 1960s, the first discussions between Western powers and the Soviet Union took place on the limitation of strategic arms. Consequently, the 1970s and 1980s were spent discussing how to limit anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems and intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF). A parallel debate was launched on conventional arms control in Europe. The first step was to establish the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 1973, which spent the following two decades in heavy diplomatic battles to form a functioning arms control regime in Europe. Among the most significant agreements, which foster transparency and confidence building measures, are the Vienna Document of 1992, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) of 1990, and the Open Skies Treaty of 2001.

Thus we can conclude that alongside a clear and robust deterrence strategy, arms control issues worked as crucial contact points between two conflicting sides, the West and the Soviet Union. In the current geopolitical situation, however, the notion of deterrence has changed as has the arms control situation in Europe. These changes, however, do not automatically exclude arms control as one of the possible resolutions of state security problems.

### 3.2. The potential contribution of arms control to reducing tensions in the current geopolitical situation in Europe

Annexation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine not only worsened the relationship between the West and Russia but also revealed the crisis in the area of arms control that had already existed for several years. It started in 2002 when US President George W. Bush announced that the United States was withdrawing from the ABM Treaty because it was interfering with the US national security interests in developing ballistic missile defence systems (Congressional Research Service 2018: 6-7). The 2007 American decision to place a missile defence radar in the Czech Republic and interceptor missiles in Poland met with sharp criticism by Russia. Soon thereafter Russia began to violate the INF Treaty by testing and developing new ground-launched cruise missiles (Congressional Research Service 2018:8). Russia has never admitted to this, quite the opposite: after Donald Trump announced in October 2018 that the United States was withdrawing from the INF Treaty, it reacted with vociferous condemnation for the new nuclear competition that the US had ostensibly started with Russia. In fact, the situation has neither worsened nor improved; it is as grim as before. The Treaty has not been working since the US discovered Russian violations and arms control experts voiced their concern that the Treaty was essentially 'dead'.

Another very important treaty whose future is unclear is the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START 2011), signed by US President Barack Obama. It is supposed to remain in effect

until February 2021, but there have been no discussions about it between the United States and Russia. During the summit between the United States and Russia in Helsinki in the summer of 2018 it was expected that the two presidents would at least begin negotiations about the new START Treaty, yet nothing concrete was discussed. As a result arms control experts are worried that unless the Treaty is extended (it can be done by the presidents of both countries without parliamentary approval), a situation will arise for the first time since 1972 where there is no binding regulation with respect to strategic nuclear arms (Countryman, Reif and Kimball, 2018).

As far as conventional arms control in Europe, OSCE is fighting desperately for the CFE Treaty to remain in effect. The authority of the Treaty suffered serious damage when, in 2007, Russia announced its withdrawal. Since then Russia has insisted on a new regulation. The OSCE Western bloc does not agree, indicating that Russia has violated international norms by the annexation of the Crimea and conducting warfare in Ukraine, so there are no political preconditions for negotiating a new treaty. OSCE does admit, however, that both the CFE Treaty and the Vienna Document should be revised, adapting them to modern military technologies. The modern version of the Vienna Document would provide for limiting military activities, particularly those conducted near state borders. Timely information on the goal and extent of military activities (mostly it applies to military exercises) could prevent misunderstandings and rash decisions. Specific suggestions include: (1) lowering the threshold (currently 9000 military) for military activities to be announced; (2) increasing the number of observers from the current three and extend their presence past the current one day; (3) lowering the threshold for observance from the current 13,000 military personnel (Gremminger 2018). The adoption of these amendments would help to ensure greater transparency, which would lead to greater mutual trust. At the moment Russia demonstratively ignores these discussions and shows no intention to support these amendments.

In order to avoid a complete dysfunction of OSCE because of internal contradictions, Germany

made use of its role as the presiding OSCE country and, under Frank-Walter Steinmeier, initiated developing a Structured Dialogue with Russia. As mentioned above, the dialogue is part of Germany's dual-track diplomacy vis-à-vis Russia. One track involves consistently extending sanctions against Russia because of its non-observance of the Minsk II Agreement. The other track involves developing a dialogue with Russia to return to a normal and constructive relationship and avoid tension between the two sides. This may eventually lead to a resolution of the Ukrainian crisis. One source of tension, often mentioned within the OSCE, is the Baltic region, with both sides expressing concern over its militarization. The German initiative was joined by 15 other OSCE members – France, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Portugal.

The first step within the framework of the Structured Dialogue was to survey and compare the threat perceptions among member states. It was continued by Austria, the presiding country of OSCE in 2017, but no results were achieved. Each country presented its national military doctrine, and it became clear that part of Eastern Europe sees Russia as a national threat, whereas Russia pointed to NATO activities in the region as a growing threat to its national security. NATO also takes part in these discussions which, however, tend to end in levelling mutual accusations about lying. Russia has indicated that NATO is violating the NATO-Russia Founding Act (1997) by deploying multinational battalions, which Russia views as a 'substantial combat force', in the Baltic countries and Poland. NATO, for its part, enumerates a long list of Russian violations. One example is the regular Zapad military exercise, where information provided by Russia about the number of troops differs from estimates made by independent observers.

The next step was to begin discussions on reviewing existing arms control agreements. The conference, held in Berlin on German initiative just before the German parliamentary elections in September 2017, ended with the conclusion that the existing agreements are in fact adequate and both sides,

particularly Russia, should simply observe them, which would lead to easing of tensions. The single Structured Dialogue initiative that is currently functional is the mapping exercise, which provides for each side to reveal the location and size of its units, military bases, etc. Even though this is considered to be at least some progress, OSCE representatives complain that only some countries support it and, because of the prevailing distrust, no one really believes that the provided facts and numbers match reality.

Finally, the most controversial initiative concerns applying a special sub-regional conventional arms control regulation to the Baltic region, with a view to lessen the militarization of and tensions in the region. Historically such regional control regulations have been applied to the Southern Caucasus region, the Balkans, and Georgia. In the case of the Baltic region, it could mean restriction to the deployment of military units and other military activities near the borders. Given the military asymmetry in the region, the Baltic countries could hypothetically support such an initiative because Russia would then have to substantially reduce its presence in the region.

Although this initiative has been discussed within OSCE expert community for three years, there is next to no information about what kind of arms control restrictions it would mean for the Baltic region. Wolfgang Richter, one of the most prominent German arms control experts, is among the few who has formulated his view of what sub-regional arms control for the Baltic region should look like. First, following the NATO-Russia Founding Act both sides – countries of the Baltic region and Russia – should confirm their commitment not to station substantial combat forces in the Baltic countries and the Kaliningrad and Pskov Oblasts. It is important to emphasize that existing NATO deployments of multinational battalions, according to arms control experts, is not perceived as a 'substantial combat force' and therefore not in violation of the Founding Act. At the same time, both sides should not be prevented from improving their rapid reaction capability forces and from conducting military exercises. (Richter 2016)

Second, such an agreement would also foresee that exercises in the region, primarily those close to the border, are conducted under strict transparency through early notification and observation. Third, observation flights under The Open Skies Treaty should be increased in the region and, if necessary, given additional flight quotas, thus increasing transparency. Fourth, it is highly relevant to establish Incident and Response Mechanisms to avoid miscalculations and escalation. Direct military-to-military communication in this context is highly necessary. For patrol flights, a five-mile distance from international borders in the Baltic region and beyond should be maintained and mutually agreed upon. Fifth, considering the reason for the militarization of the Baltic region, Russia should address fears of the Baltic countries by convincing that it has no intention to interfere in their internal affairs (Richter 2016).

Even a quick glance at these proposals reveals that it would be in the interests of the Baltic countries to have such a sub-regional regime because it would restrict Russia's military build-up in its Western Military District and open it for unprecedented transparency. Ironically, it is not Russia who objects to the idea of the sub-regional regime, but the Baltic countries. The main reason is the lack of understanding that arms control can function as a stabilizing instrument, decrease unintended escalation and even strengthen their national security by restricting Russia's military build-up and activities in the region. In addition, there is such a high political distrust between the Baltic countries and Russia that it makes it impossible to have any constructive communication, both at the political and military levels, to negotiate anything.

Although the above initiatives have not come to fruition, it is also clear that other mechanisms for dialogue and the defusing of tensions have been badly damaged by the deterioration of relations between Russia and the West in the past few years. The NATO-Russia Council meetings (three times per year since 2016, on average, per year) have a very formal character, where both sides exchange their views of the current security environment and the situation in Ukraine. Other civilian and military cooperation is non-existent. Initiatives

stemming from the OSCE on how to decrease tensions in the Baltic region are not reaching policy makers in the NATO member states.

Reasons for this are purely political, with a strong lobby among the conservative member states to keep a tough strategy against Russia. The Baltic countries are logically among those member states which perceive Russia to be an existential threat and are working on the strengthening of NATO's extended deterrence policies and arming themselves nationally as much as their defence budgets allow. The concerns of the Baltics have been met with considerable empathy within NATO because of the obvious military calculus that this region would be very difficult, if not to say impossible, to defend if Russia were to decide to use military force. The other two member states which are advocating for the maintenance of a hard-line position in relation to Russia are Poland and the United Kingdom. Poland perceives Russia to be a direct national security threat and has launched vast military modernization programmes, as well as seeking a much bigger US troop presence on its territory. For the United Kingdom, Russia repre-

sents a threat to European security, and Theresa May's government is pursuing very critical diplomacy against Russia. Naturally, the US has a vital role in NATO's deterrence strategy against Russia. Despite the frequently contradictory statements by US president Donald Trump and his government, policies implemented in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea regions demonstrate a hard-line policy against Russia.

As a result, this internally ambiguous environment within NATO does not allow for the gaining of support for those initiatives (for example, the Structured Dialogue launched by Germany) that are in favour of dialogue. Russia is not helpful either. Its continuing aggression in Ukraine and Syria and its usage of indirect non-military methods of information and cyber warfare across the Western states keeps the Russian threat permanently alive. Deterrence strategy is not, therefore, blocking discussions on how to decrease tensions by involving arms control instruments. It is being hampered by both policy makers in the national capitals of particular NATO member states and by Russia's assertive behaviour.

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- promoting a fair and sustainable development of economic and social policies in the Baltic States and in the EU

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