

BALTIC RIM ECONOMIES
SPECIAL ISSUE ON NATO

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2

**ARTIS
PABRIKS**
In defence of
freedom



JIM TOWNSEND
A somber 75th
anniversary
celebration at
NATO's summit
in Washington



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VANDENKENDELAERE**
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final wake-up call?



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BALTIC RIM ECONOMIES

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Academia, as well as several other experts
contribute to the discussion.**

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ANTTI KAIKKONEN

Finland, NATO, and the Baltic Sea security

Expert article • 3598

Changed security environment

A significant change occurred in the security and operational environment of Finland, the Nordic countries, and Europe when Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

The war in Ukraine continues, and there are no indications of rapid changes in the current situation. The front lines may fluctuate, but Russia poses a long-term threat to Europe. Finland has delivered 23 defence aid shipments to Ukraine, totaling nearly two billion euros in value.

The European Union must continue to support Ukraine and its people for as long as necessary through political, financial, humanitarian, military, and diplomatic means. The EU has allocated a support package of 50 billion euros for Ukraine for the years 2024-2027, including 17 billion euros in grant assistance and 33 billion euros in loan assistance. This support aims to aid the country's recovery, reconstruction, and integration into the Union.

Ukraine needs the continued strong support of the European Union, its member states, and the United States. If the support is not sufficiently robust, the consequences will be visible on the battlefield.

The implications of the changed security situation are continuously assessed in Finland as well. Preparedness is being strengthened according to the comprehensive security model, requiring investment in crisis resilience, security of supply, internal security, cyber security, countering hybrid influence, and securing critical infrastructure.

Finland's national defence

In March 2024, I visited the Nordic Response exercise in Northern Finland and Northern Norway. Sweden and the United States also participated in the exercise. Intensive training with our allies is part of our normal operations. Through this, we strengthen our deterrence and security. During the exercise, Sweden's NATO membership was also confirmed. It was great to see firsthand how well our cooperation functions. I was also pleased with the high motivation of our reservists and conscripts.

Finland's national defence will continue to be the foundation of Finland's defence. This includes general conscription, a trained reserve, defending the entire country, and a high national defence spirit. Finland has up-to-date equipment and skilled defence personnel. Defence resources have also been strengthened in recent years. In terms of maritime defence, the Squadron 2020 project is constructing four Pohjanmaa-class multipurpose corvettes by 2028. These vessels will be used for year-round and long-term presence at sea in all Baltic Sea weather conditions – including all ice conditions. The Air Force is leading the introduction of F-35 multi-role fighters.

Maritime surveillance capabilities have been and will continue to be strengthened. The sabotage targeting the critical infrastructure of the Baltic Sea is a good example of the need for adequate monitoring of underwater activities as well. This decade will also see the introduction of a new surface-to-surface missile system, torpedoes enhancing underwater warfare capabilities, and modernized mines. In addition to a strong national defence capability, Finland has strengthened its security through diverse international cooperation.

Finland becomes a Nato member state

Since 1994, Finland has participated in the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) Partnership for Peace program and, since 2014, in the Enhanced Partnership in line with NATO's closest partners. From the perspective of military cooperation, diplomatic rapprochement, and our own national defence capability, the prerequisites for Finland's full NATO membership were strong.

Because of Russia's attack on Ukraine, the process of Finland's full NATO membership began. The Finnish government presented a report to the parliament on the change in the security environment, and thus, the parliament committed to Finland's path towards NATO membership. At the same time, Finland laid the groundwork for membership through discussions with alliance member states to ensure support for Finland's membership.

Shortly after the start of the war in Ukraine in March 2022, the President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, and the President of the United States, Joe Biden, agreed to deepen Finland's defence cooperation with the United States. As Minister of Defence, I visited the United States a week later. I continued negotiations on the same topic with Defence Minister Lloyd Austin at the Pentagon. Our cooperation has deepened since then, and the parliament will soon approve the bilateral DCA defence cooperation agreement between our countries.

The Finnish parliament voted on Finland's application for NATO membership on May 16, 2022, with a vote of 188-8. Membership came into effect on April 4, 2023.

Finland as a Nato member state

As part of NATO's arrangements for Northern European defence both the Baltic Sea region and the Arctic region must be considered. In its first year of membership, Finland has integrated into NATO structures, defence planning, and alliance training activities. Finland is committed to the security of the entire alliance and participates in NATO's peacetime tasks.

These tasks also enhance Finland's interoperability with allies. Finland will participate in NATO's standing mine countermeasure task in the Baltic Sea with the Katanpää-class vessel with a maximum of 40 personnel in April and May. Finland will also participate in air surveillance tasks in the Black Sea in the summer with an eight-aircraft squadron and a maximum of 100 personnel.

In the future, Finland should consider participating in NATO's peacetime tasks with Land Forces. Finland already has strong national land forces. Finland and Norway are the only eastern NATO countries without NATO Forward Land Forces. The development of the security environment must be closely monitored, and Finland must be prepared, if necessary, to host NATO Land Forces in peacetime conditions.

Finland's NATO membership doubled the alliance's border with Russia. Russia is now targeting Finland with hybrid influence through instrumentalized migration. Ensuring security along the eastern border is a shared concern of Finland, the European Union, and NATO.

The northern and Arctic regions are important focal points for Russia. Russia has significant military capabilities on the Kola Peninsula, and we are likely to see further investments in the future. The military-political significance of the Arctic region is growing.



Deepening cooperation in the Baltic Sea region

The Baltic Sea region is critical for the security of the Nordic countries. With Sweden's NATO membership, all Nordic countries are now NATO members, deepening Nordic defence cooperation and strengthening stability in Northern Europe. From a defence planning perspective and with the growing significance of the Arctic region, it is natural that all Nordic countries are integrated into NATO's Norfolk command structure.

Sweden is one of Finland's most significant partners. With both countries as a NATO member, cooperation is deepening further. With Finland and Sweden's NATO membership, comprehensive cooperation covering all Nordic countries within the alliance also strengthens the position of the Nordic countries as NATO members. The trilateral defence cooperation initiated in 2018 between Finland, Sweden, and the United States complements the promotion of security in the Baltic Sea region. Central to this is the development of defence policy dialogue, information exchange, and interoperability.

The United States is the most significant external actor in Northern Europe. The DCA agreement between Finland and the United States is a continuation of the previous good cooperation with the United States. The DCA agreement between Finland and the United States provides the framework and legal basis for regular defence cooperation between the two countries. The agreement also creates conditions for intensifying cooperation if the security situation requires it. The United States is an important and close ally for Finland. Defence cooperation with the United States enhances Finland's defence capability.

The security environment continues to deteriorate. This requires all EU and NATO member states to invest in defence with at least a 2% share.

It is also possible that military tensions will become more evident in the Baltic Sea region. Russia may increase its various activities in the area. Our cooperation with the Baltic countries and other NATO countries in the Baltic Sea region must be seamless so that we can face the challenges of the future. ■



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ARTIS PABRIKS

In defence of freedom

Expert article • 3599

In the summer of 2022, Madrid hosted a NATO summit to discuss the new realities in the European security environment. Already five months have passed since Russia initiated a full-scale invasion in neighboring Ukraine. It was a war whose violence, crimes against civilians, number of casualties, and number of refugees reminded of the Second World War. The consequences of this war, whenever it will end or expand, would have a dramatic impact on European and world security comparable to WW2. This war is not about Ukraine only, it is about the existing world order, Western value system, and the future of the Western alliance, including the transatlantic alliance.

In 2022, most of the member countries of the EU and NATO Alliance did not expect and were not prepared to face such a war in their close proximity. Militarily, during the last decades, most Western countries have been efficiently disarming, dismantling their armies, and closing many production lines of military equipment. Their warehouses were left half-empty. It was broadly assumed that the main Western challenge is international terrorism, and military engagement was expected to be mainly expeditionary. As a result, in 2022, formerly well-trained and armed Western armies were only a meager shadow compared to those of the Cold War era. Western public views were focused on culture wars and discussing the consequences of global warming but neglected threats to their fundamental freedoms challenged by the growing Russian totalitarian threat and rising alliance of authoritarian regimes around the globe.

Despite the fact that territorial defense was always on our minds, also Latvia, after joining NATO in 2004, somehow started to follow this widespread pattern. General assumptions of Allied priorities and analysis slowly eroded our alertness to danger as well. Compulsory military service was abolished, and we started to rely on professional troops and voluntary National Guard service.

Latvia intensively prepared its military for international missions. The military budget was slowly giving in to other national needs of the country in transition, like health, road infrastructure, education, and social affairs. As a result, in 2010, Latvian military spending was only about 1% of GDP. It was very difficult to argue in favor of larger military spending when most of our allies, further to the West, simply disregarded any possibility of military conflict on European soil. Also, the financial crisis took its toll on military spending in NATO despite our warnings that Russia continues to invest in its military and could potentially pose a danger to Europe. At large, the mainstream West did not see and did not want to see Russia as a threat despite these warnings from mainly Eastern European and Baltic analysts, who were frequently labeled by their Western colleagues as warmongers and troublemakers, among others, undermining lucrative Western business with Russia.

As Wesley Clark puts it in his brilliant CSIS interview, the misreading of Russia was huge, with disastrous consequences. The West, for years, was concerned about Putin's red lines, not about the Western red lines, which were either not defined or allowed to be crossed without any consequences, and it happened for years, encouraging Russian aggression against neighboring countries.

The Madrid Summit of NATO was an attempt to change it. Among other things, it envisaged additional troop stationing along the eastern borders of the Alliance. Finland and Sweden applied to NATO seeking a security umbrella against future threats from Russia, thus abolishing their long-established policies. NATO declared it would support Ukraine in its

rightful defense and provide it with additional military equipment and humanitarian aid. Later on, it became a slogan "to stand with Ukraine as long as it takes." Within the Alliance, as far as Baltic requests were taken into account, promises were made to station allied troops of brigade size in each of the three Baltic states, and there was a political promise to defend their territories from the first centimeter, inch, or meter. It was a change of NATO posture, since previously it was frequently argued that Baltic states are difficult to defend, and in the event of an unlikely Russian invasion, some territories would be lost to invaders and to be liberated later. In Madrid, this attitude changed, which has meant that its military and defense planning should be adjusted accordingly.

Changes happened also in the Baltic countries, which increased their military readiness and spending already since the 2014 Russian invasion in Ukraine and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Lithuania and later Latvia revived compulsory military service, military spending was aimed at 3% of GDP, new purchases of equipment were ordered, industry adapted to military needs, and volunteers were joining National Guard formations. In January 2024, defense ministers of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania agreed to coordinate their activities and strengthen their respective borders with Russia militarily. There were public requests by the author of these lines to construct a modern Mannerheim Defense Line stretching from the north of Finland to the south of Poland in order to safeguard independence from uninvited Russian intruders.

Baltic observers were carefully analyzing the Russian invasion in Ukraine and faced quite a bleak picture. Russians followed their historic tradition, and just like in previous wars, they were ready to sacrifice great numbers of their soldiers in order to achieve even relatively small gains. Russian society was under massive information control of the regime, and there were no signs of unrest that could threaten the totalitarian rule of the Kremlin. During the last two years, the Russian economy was put on a military footing, while the Western economy was not. Western support to Ukraine was decreasing due to internal quarrels in member states and among member states, thus forcing Ukrainian troops to save ammunition and adopt defensive strategies. Even in 2024, there is still murmuring in some countries further to the West from the Baltics about supporting Ukraine, but few want to admit that support is not sufficient and it comes too late. Politically, there is not yet a clear message that Ukraine must win and Russia must lose this war; rather, reality can be described by political strategy which does not make Ukraine lose and Russia win.

I would argue it is a defeatist strategy, a naked blindness that encourages Moscow for new wars, challenges Western unity by eroding trust of mutual military assistance, weakens Transatlantic unity, and encourages authoritarian regimes across the globe to unite against Western liberal democracies and, first of all, against the USA.

Looking from the Baltic perspective which, if common sense would prevail, in fact should be the Western perspective, Ukrainian victory is crucial for the future peace and security of Europe.

At this moment, countries at the Russian border are fed with promises that if one of NATO "houses" is put on fire, others will immediately come and extinguish it. However, currently, we are letting the arsonist run around the village and burn another house without proper response. With every day, this arsonist becomes more self-confident, more willing to try to burn one more house, including a NATO member country. His target is to challenge the status quo, restore the Russian Empire, and dismantle NATO.



The right deterrence would be to stop him from running around with matches now, but this is not what happens due to continuous and deep misinterpretation of Russian policies in many capitals of our Alliance. During the last years among the Western leadership, there were a number of false claims that too large assistance to Ukraine would lead to escalation. As a result, fear of escalation has led to the failure of credible deterrence, including nuclear deterrence, since more and more observers doubt that in the event of a Russian attack on a NATO member state, the USA would risk a nuclear response. The outcome of doubting deterrence is obvious, namely, the arsonist is getting closer to the Alliance. If the USA and other nuclear allies are not willing and ready to risk nuclear war to deter Russian invasion in the Baltics, it has to win the war against Russia in Ukraine now. We also must calm our fear about possible internal upheaval inside Russia which leads to another fear that if Russia perceives its war in Ukraine as lost, it might have regime changes in Moscow and destabilize the monster. Such a scenario is much less dangerous than Ukrainians losing the war because we give in and appease totalitarian claims.

Due to these political inconsistencies, the Baltic states and other countries in the region feel an increasing existential threat to their freedom and are ready to do what it takes not to let the history of 1939/1941 repeat. Therefore, the Mannerheim Line at the Eastern border with Russia, comprised of defense fortifications, roadblocks, bunkers, minefields, and a number of modern 21st-century installations, should be built in the nearest time. There is a search for deeper military cooperation with new NATO members Finland and Sweden, as well as Poland, and in fact with any ally ready to join the coalition of willing to defend values and freedoms on which our countries are built. Of course, it happens along with persistent assistance to Ukraine, which is the last bastion separating the rest of Europe from a new war.

The alternative is not an option, and the sooner other Western leaderships will understand it, the better. The alternative would include not only the loss of independence for some countries bordering Russia but also the failure of the whole Western system and their values, possible dismantling of NATO with subsequent threats of new global wars in Europe and the Pacific. Therefore, the arsonist must be stopped in Ukraine if we are not willing to face fire at our home. ■



Artis Pabriks

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ANDREI SANNIKOV

NATO's challenge in Eastern Europe

Expert article • 3600

Speaking at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in February 2024, former President of Poland Lech Walesa confessed to feeling guilty for not securing NATO membership for Ukraine and Belarus during his tenure, confining his efforts to Poland alone.

While Walesa's sentiments are aspirational, they reflect a poignant truth. In the early 1990s, greater efforts by both the democratic world and emerging democracies to foster democracy in Eastern European regions of the former Soviet Union could have bolstered security in Europe and globally. However, the democratic world seemed more preoccupied with exploiting market opportunities following the USSR's demise than with fortifying the independence of newly emerged states.

Poland, alongside other Central and Eastern European nations, swiftly opted to join NATO following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the so-called "socialist camp." Their accession unfolded from the latter half of the 1990s through the millennium years. This period coincided with the rise of neo-totalitarianism in Belarus and Russia, marked by the ascendancy to power of Lukashenko and subsequently Putin. The deteriorating situation with democracy in the European segment of the former Soviet Union proved instrumental in advancing NATO membership for the former "socialist" states west of Belarus. This backdrop also facilitated the NATO accession process for the Baltic states, leveraging the looming threat from Russia, as was demonstrated by Belarus under Lukashenko, at their borders. While serving the immediate interests of future NATO members, this approach adversely impacted long-term security dynamics in Europe.

Belarus, particularly under Lukashenko's regime, was primarily viewed not as a security threat but rather as a perpetrator of gross human rights violations and democratic infringements. This perception persisted until 2022 when Belarus became a springboard for Russia's full-scale assault on Ukraine. A critical yet overlooked factor precipitating Russia's invasion of Ukraine was Belarus's geopolitical significance.

Geopolitical significance of Belarus

Belarus occupies a pivotal position in Europe for several reasons. Its geostrategic importance stems from two adjoining geographical regions: the Smolensk Gate and the Suwalki Corridor. The Smolensk Gate, situated between the Western Dvina and Dnieper rivers, serves as a vital strategic corridor for cross-border trade between East and West, crucial not only for Russia but also for the world's second-largest economy, China. Historically, the Belarusian Smolensk Gate has been the route through which the Russian Empire repeatedly invaded Europe, a legacy perpetuated when the Russian Federation attacked Ukraine with intentions to seize Kyiv. Consequently, Belarus emerged as a crucial geopolitical terrain with far-reaching implications for European security.

The Suwalki Corridor, another strategically significant area, gained prominence following the collapse of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. This corridor holds immense importance for Baltic region security as it separates Russian ally Lukashenko's Belarus from the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. Serving as the sole road and rail link between Central Europe, Poland, and the Baltic countries, any invasion threatening this corridor would isolate the Baltic states from continental Europe. Some experts even dub the Suwalki corridor "NATO's Achilles heel." During periods of heightened tension between Russia and the West, Belarus assumes a pivotal geopolitical role, with its policy orientation influencing the potential escalation or détente in the region.

The anticipated unforeseen war

Russia's initiation of a bloody conflict in Europe stemmed not only from the Kremlin's aggressive agenda but also from a series of missteps by the West, which chronically underestimated the gravity of developments in post-Soviet states. The West's delayed and misjudged responses to unfolding events granted the aggressor the strategic initiative. To safeguard European and international security, addressing the entire network of dictatorships under Putin's leadership, entrenched in the former USSR territories, is imperative. An accurate and comprehensive analysis of the situation is vital to formulate effective strategies for dealing with the Putin and Lukashenko regimes, especially in light of the evolving hybrid warfare.

The misjudgments made by the West proved costly, especially at the onset of the conflict, where accurate information about the invasion coexisted with a prevailing narrative of Ukraine's imminent fall to Russian forces. Similar erroneous presumptions were made regarding Belarus, despite the well-known nature of the Lukashenko regime. The reluctance to perceive Lukashenko's regime as a threat to international security allowed it to become an active participant in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, enabling Putin to exert control over Belarusian territory and escalate military aggression against Ukraine.

Following the initial weeks of warfare, during which Ukraine endured significant sacrifices and urgently required substantial support, the West persisted in diplomatic negotiations with Putin and Lukashenko, urging Ukrainians to engage in dialogue. Ukraine's resilience thwarted Russia's designs and challenged the West's assumptions, highlighting the failure to adapt to the realities of contemporary warfare.

Challenge for NATO

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Kremlin aggressors unequivocally exposed security vulnerabilities in Europe, dispelling any lingering doubts regarding Russia's expansionist ambitions. Efforts to establish a robust European security framework founded on international law and agreements with Russia proved futile. The failure to address authoritarian regimes on the EU's borders transformed the issue into a pressing concern for NATO.

Ukraine's pursuit of security guarantees highlights the crucial role of Belarus within the broader European security framework. Put differently, ensuring the security of Ukraine and Europe as a whole necessitates the renewed free and democratic Belarus.

Securing future NATO membership for both Ukraine and Belarus is imperative to fortify Europe's borders and uphold regional stability. ■



Andrei Sannikov

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RAIMUNDAS KAROBLIS

NATO's collective defence in the new security environment

Expert article • 3601

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has dramatically altered the security landscape in Europe. With Putin's imperial ambitions on full display, a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia is no longer unthinkable. This calls for a renewed focus on bolstering the Alliance's preparedness for collective defence.

As a starting point, one should recognise that one of the causes of the ongoing war in Ukraine is Western naiveté, complacency, and political divisions vis-a-vis Putin's Russia. The invasion of Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea, and the aggression in Donbas should have served as wake-up calls. Instead, even today, after two years of Russia's endless war crimes and atrocities, there are voices in the West calling for a show of restraint in providing military support to Ukraine (because it could be "too provocative"). For the Kremlin, this is a clear sign of weakness, which will only invite further escalation.

NATO's military preparedness for collective defence is key for curtailing Moscow's revisionist ambitions. Since 2014, the Alliance has taken important steps to bolster its Eastern flank. NATO has revised its regional defence plans and increased its presence in the Baltic states and Poland by forward deploying allied battle groups and strengthening the Baltic Air Policing mission. The Alliance also established the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) to rapidly reinforce the region in case of attack. These adjustments involved a limited number of the allied forces yet they signalled NATO's determination to defend every ally from day one.

The war in Ukraine has provided a reality check for NATO by exposing substantial shortfalls in the Allied readiness for a major conflict. In particular, the hardware and ammunition stocks in the NATO countries turned out to be woefully inadequate, leaving Ukraine comprehensively outgunned on the battlefield. Furthermore, the Western defence industry was unable to keep up with the demands of a high-intensity war. After two years of war, Russia keeps outproducing the collective West in the critical areas of artillery munitions, missiles, and equipment despite having a much smaller economy than that of the combined NATO.

Another element of concern for the Alliance should be the new technics and technologies that increasingly dominate in this war. With the help of China and others, Russia is actively integrating unmanned systems and artificial intelligence into their forces, with a transformative impact on the battlefield. These developments may reduce or negate the technological advantages that Western militaries held over Russia.

None of this suggests that Putin is winning. Far from it. Ukraine's heroic resistance has denied the Kremlin victory in its *blitzkrieg* attempt of February 2022. Over the past two years, Russia's military has suffered colossal losses in terms of men and equipment, was forced to retreat from swathes of occupied Ukrainian territory, and the remnants of its Black Sea fleet were pushed out from Crimea. Finally, the recent accession by Finland and Sweden to NATO is another symbol of Putin's strategic failure in starting the war.

Looking ahead, the collective West should intensify its work on both tracks: assisting Ukraine's military resistance and preparing itself for collective defence. Putin's geopolitical folly should not be underestimated. Ever an opportunist, he will be looking to exploit the West's weaknesses and divisions. Therefore, NATO's readiness for a full-scale war is also the most effective way to prevent it from happening.

In this context, the action plan for the NATO allies seems pretty straightforward.

- Increase defence spending. Resources are critical for developing defensive capabilities. Unfortunately, there are allies still spending below NATO's minimal 2 percent target.
- Enlarge the pool of forces capable of high-intensity warfare. The war in Ukraine has shown that numbers matter, particularly when the frontline extends over thousands of kilometers.
- Address short-notice aggression scenarios. NATO should invest in the forward defence of the most vulnerable regions rather than rely on arriving reinforcements. Indeed, another lesson from Ukraine is that holding prepared defensive lines is considerably less costly than recapturing territory.
- Strengthen the defence industry. In the new security environment, revamping the European defence industry is the highest priority task. This is a natural area for the European Union to take the lead.
- Invest in air defence. With Russia increasingly reliant on missiles and drones in Ukraine and continuously ramping up its production capacity, bolstering NATO's air defence capabilities should be another immediate priority.

With Putin's Russia on the revisionist path, the likelihood of a direct military confrontation with NATO has increased, particularly in the mid-term perspective. Avoiding this worst-case scenario calls for a considerable boost of military assistance to Ukraine and a clear focus on ramping up NATO's collective defence capabilities. ■



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EU ambassador to Tajikistan,
Former Minister of Defence of Lithuania



JIM TOWNSEND

A somber 75th anniversary celebration at NATO's summit in Washington

Expert article • 3602

All eyes will be on Washington DC on July 9th 2024 as the now 32 member NATO alliance will come together to celebrate NATO's 75th anniversary. As alliances go, this 75th anniversary is remarkable in that rarely do alliances stay together, if not enlarge, once the threat that pulled them together dissipates. As the Cold War ended and NATO decided to remain together despite the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, it wasn't a sure thing that NATO would remain around for its 75th anniversary. But it survived and is on track to celebrate a 100th anniversary as well.

Like the 50th anniversary, the summit will take place during a time of conflict in Europe. The 50th anniversary, also celebrated in Washington, witnessed war in the Balkans as NATO launched an air campaign to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. However, the conflict for the 75th anniversary takes place on a much larger scale both in terms of violence and geopolitical impact. Russian President Putin's second invasion of Ukraine has sparked the worst fighting in Europe since World War II. While not a combatant like in Kosovo, NATO and the allies themselves have rushed to the support of Ukraine. Ukraine is not in NATO but allies agree that Ukraine has the right to defend its sovereignty and the rules-based international order developed by the West after World War II needs to be protected. Towards that end, billions in assistance both military and economic have poured into Ukraine.

The war in Ukraine makes this summit, while a celebration, a very somber one. A successful summit will send a message to many audiences. The most important audience is Ukraine, and the message must be one of strong, long-term support by NATO for the people of Ukraine, no matter how dark the day may be. The second audience is President Putin, who must see in the summit a unified NATO both now and into the future. Any assumption Putin has made that he should be patient and wait for the West to succumb to fatigue must be dispelled and replaced with the understanding that support for Ukraine by the West is steadfast no matter the political rhetoric sometimes heard coming from NATO capitals. Another audience is the American people, who should see what a critical role NATO plays in their national security and how American security rests in the success of Ukraine's fight against Russia. And finally, Beijing has an audience of one for the summit. If President Xi concludes from a failed summit that the West is in decline and the US is overstretched, he may take risks in the Indo-Pacific based on a misreading of US resolve. There is much riding on the success of this summit and the right message reaching a multitude of audiences who will be watching closely.

This summit will occur just days before the Republican national convention, which will anoint the Republican challenger to run against Joe Biden for President. At this writing, that challenger will likely be former President Donald Trump. The former President has been quite vocal about his disregard for NATO, about some of the allies in it, and has questioned

whether NATO is still relevant. Former Trump aides have said that he seriously considered withdrawing the US from NATO during his term in office. The summit in Washington will make an attractive target for Trump as he stirs up his core supporters against "globalists" and especially against allies who he sees as taking advantage of the US. He will demand more loudly that European allies "pay up" what he wrongly assumes are dues owed to NATO. The alliance will need to have a strong public presence and media dominance to overshadow US political rhetoric coming from the hotly contested presidential race. This is not a US summit...it is a NATO summit, showcasing the Alliance, not US presidential candidates. NATO needs to strive to keep the summit above US politics and focused instead on the seriousness of the climate of war in Europe and the threat to the alliance, including the US, of an emboldened and aggressive Vladimir Putin.

While NATO may have its own ideas for what the agenda will be, the issue of Ukraine membership in NATO will attract the most attention. The alliance has agonized over this issue beginning in 2008 with the contentious Bucharest summit where the most the alliance could agree on was stating that Georgia and Ukraine will be in NATO, but could not agree to a timetable. NATO and allied nations have worked closely with Ukraine since then to help it overcome obstacles to membership, such as corruption, and to modernize its military forces. As Ukraine progressed towards NATO and EU membership and the idea of membership grew more popular among the Ukrainian people, Putin became concerned that Russia would lose influence in Kiev. His two invasions of Ukraine were meant to fix that problem. The urgency of protecting Ukraine under the NATO flag grew; but giving Ukraine membership before they were ready and while they were at war with Russia made it hard to reach consensus on forward movement towards membership. As the battleground in Ukraine shifts in the coming months, what to do about membership and extending alliance protection over Ukraine will become acute. NATO will need to have a credible plan about NATO membership at the Washington summit that gives confidence to Ukraine that membership is at hand, while warning Moscow that NATO is not walking away.

For Americans watching the summit, especially the political class, there will be expectations that NATO will announce significant increases in defense spending by NATO nations. Burdensharing has always been the top complaint from the US for many years and from all political parties and administrations. Donald Trump raised the US complaint to a new level, fixing the perception in the public mind that Allies were taking advantage of the US, even going so far as saying the US should not protect allies who do not "pay up" and that he did not care what may happen to those allies who are in arrears. Obviously ignorant about the detail of the burdensharing issue, he nonetheless continues to spread the false impression that Allies are free-riders. The data says something else in



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terms of the number of Allies reaching the 2% of GDP defense spending goal this year and expectations for the years to come. An aggressive President Putin can be thanked for the increases in defense spending, not Donald Trump, but however funding is being put into military coffers, the summit needs to highlight that Allies will buy the equipment and troop readiness to fulfill what NATO planners say they need to fill out the new regional defense plans. Ensuring the defense plans are not hollow due to Allies not contributing their fair share of well-equipped forces must be the top priority for NATO and a message received loud and clear by Americans during the summit.

Finally, after a torturous year of waiting, the summit will welcome Sweden into NATO. This is no small matter. With Sweden joining Finland in NATO, the Nordic/Baltic area - NATO's northern flank - is solidly in the Alliance. A geopolitical and military disaster for Putin, this is but one example of the negative consequences resulting from his brutal invasion of Ukraine. Sweden will bring a top class military to NATO, as well as skilled diplomats, civil servants and military officials to help NATO deal with the challenges that are piling up in the North Atlantic Council. Swedish submarines will patrol the Baltic, its Gripen fighters will patrol the skies and its land forces will take their place along the ramparts on the Baltic frontier. Equally important are Swedish defense industries that will churn out weaponry to help refill European arsenals.

Thanks to President Putin, the Russian military planners now have a problem. The critical Russian Northern fleet area in the Kola Peninsula, home to Russia's SLBM submarines, surface combatants and strategic air forces now has two new NATO neighbors. The famous Russian bastion will come under pressure as the two formerly non-aligned nations that in the past Russian planners could assume would stay out of any regional conflict are no longer sitting on the sidelines, but now have completed a defensive NATO wall against Russian aggression in the High North.

NATO's 75th anniversary will be like no other anniversary. Not since World War II have the nations of Europe faced the possibility of a broader war breaking out in Europe. The United States faces a challenge as well: will the US commitment to NATO and to European defense remain solid and fulfill the promises made since 1949 to stand with its allies in a time of war? Or will the US commitment prove to be hollow, undermined by fractious political division and isolationism at home? The answer will come in November when US voters will be faced with two competing visions of America's future. Only one of those visions will include a strong transatlantic alliance, and that vision was forcefully outlined in President Biden's State of the Union address in March. It is that vision that will give NATO a 100th anniversary to celebrate:

"In January 1941, Franklin Roosevelt came to this chamber to speak to the nation. And he said, 'I address you at a moment unprecedented in the history of the Union'. Hitler was on the march. War was raging in Europe. President Roosevelt's purpose was to wake up Congress and alert the American people that this was no ordinary time. Freedom and democracy were under assault in the world.

Tonight, I come to the same chamber to address the nation. Now it's we who face an unprecedented moment in the history of the Union. And, yes, my purpose tonight is to wake up the Congress and alert the American people that this is no ordinary moment either. Not since President Lincoln and the Civil War have freedom and democracy been under assault at home as they are today. What makes our moment rare is that freedom and democracy are under attack at — both at home and overseas at the very same time.

Overseas, Putin of Russia is on the march, invading Ukraine and sowing chaos throughout Europe and beyond. If anybody in this room thinks Putin will stop at Ukraine, I assure you: He will not. ...America is a founding member of NATO, the military alliance of democratic nations created after World War Two prevent — to prevent war and keep the peace. And today, we've made NATO stronger than ever...If the United States walks away, it will put Ukraine at risk. Europe is at risk. The free world will be at risk, emboldening others to do what they wish to do us harm. My message to President Putin, who I've known for a long time, is simple: We will not walk away. We will not bow down. I will not bow down." ■



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What priorities for the 2024 NATO Summit?

Expert article • 3603

In 2024, NATO entered its seventy-fifth year as an organization committed to safeguarding transatlantic security, freedom, and democracy. Yet, the 2024 NATO Summit in Washington, D.C., will be far more than just a celebratory event. In 2024, NATO will have to prove it has successfully embarked on the biggest adaptation since the end of the Cold War. The Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) will play a crucial role in this process, as NATO's political and military centre of gravity has been shifting towards the Eastern Flank.

There are three main objectives for CEE in the context of the upcoming 2024 NATO Summit. First, bringing Ukraine closer to NATO. In fact, Ukraine's membership in the Alliance is the cheapest and most credible deterrence option against Russia. As James Goldgeier notes, "without NATO membership for Ukraine, the Russian threat against the country will continue, as will the need for the West to respond to Moscow's aggression. The only way to take care of that threat over the long term is to bring Ukraine into NATO and deter a future Russian invasion." Moreover, CEE Allies should promote practical long-term military projects with Ukraine. These projects should enhance sustainability of NATO's support to Ukraine, boost Ukraine's interoperability with NATO and offer the Alliance unique insights into Ukraine's methods of fighting Russia. In this context, CEE Allies should lead the process of both enhancing NATO's coordination role with regards to military support to Ukraine as well as establishing a NATO-Ukraine Joint Analysis, Training, and Education Centre (JATEC) in Poland. In fact, JATEC will become the first ever NATO-Ukraine military structure, with a goal of applying lessons that the Ukrainian military is learning in operations against Russian forces to NATO defence plans and training.

Second, continue to enhance NATO's deterrence and defence posture, including by increasing defence spending and procuring new military equipment. Indeed, it requires years of sustained effort to rebuild forces that in many instances had become quite hollow. The substantial increases underway allow CEE Allies to pursue three equally important objectives: to rebuild forces at the right level of readiness and military effectiveness; to address capability shortfalls in domains that had been neglected and focus on rebuilding industrial capacity; and to better prepare for the future by developing the next generation of equipment and enablers as well as ensuring that NATO stays competitive in new domains of operations such as space or cyberspace.

Third, help NATO to be ready for a long-term strategic competition with Russia and China. To achieve this goal, CEE Allies should continue to invest in national and collective resilience, which are an essential basis for credible deterrence and defence and the effective fulfilment of the Alliance's core tasks. CEE Allies should lead by example by developing national resilience goals and implementation plans, which will help to identify and mitigate strategic vulnerabilities and dependencies, including with respect to critical infrastructure, supply chains and energy systems. A lack of appropriate urgency in bolstering collective resilience in Europe will imperil the Alliance's ability to effectively address the looming threats. At the same time, CEE Allies should actively engage in the works of the civil-military Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA)

and the NATO Innovation Fund (NIF) to boost their technological edge. DIANA will work directly with top entrepreneurs, from early-stage start-ups to more mature companies, to solve critical problems in defence and security through deep technologies. NIF is a EUR 1 billion venture capital fund which will provide strategic investments in start-ups developing dual-use technologies. NIF will have three strategic objectives: seek out cutting-edge technological solutions that solve the Alliance's defence and security challenges; bolster deep-tech innovation ecosystems across the Alliance; and support the commercial success of its deep-tech start-up portfolio. The recent decisions to establish the NIF Regional Office in Warsaw as well as to launch the Krakow DIANA Accelerator confirm that CEE Allies have an important role to play in NATO's technological efforts. In fact, both DIANA and NIF can have a transformative effect on the CEE civil-military technological ecosystem as they provide the right framework to prepare for technological strategic competition. In this broader resilience-technology context, the CEE Allies should lead the discussion on economic deterrence in NATO. Indeed, it would be appropriate for NATO to develop its own economic deterrence agenda to be agreed as part of the 2024 NATO Summit deliverables. ■



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Finland – Guardian of Nato’s Eastern Flank

Expert article • 3604

Finland punches above its weight in the alliance

Russia’s unprovoked attack on Ukraine in February 2022 had an immediate effect on the Finnish foreign and security policy. President Sauli Niinistö stated this very clearly: The masks have been taken off, showing only the cold face of war.

Views on Nato membership changed very quickly in Finland. According to different polls, 80 % of Finns support Nato membership. The change has been drastic: before Russia’s unprovoked attack on Ukraine, approximately 20-25 % of Finns were supporting the membership.

Finland is happy to be in the Alliance, and the Alliance should be happy to have us. Why? Because Finland is a serious military player. We have general conscription, and the wartime strength of the Finnish Defense Forces is 280 000 soldiers. Total size of the reserve is approximately 900 000 soldiers. Nato members pledge to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense, and Finland reaches this goal and is committed to maintaining this 2 % level in the coming years.

Finland has the largest artillery capability in Western Europe along with Poland (over 1 500 artillery pieces). We also have long range precision-guided weapons for all services. Besides the Army, our Air Force and Navy are very capable. In December 2021, Finland decided to buy 64 F-35 fighters to replace our aging Hornet Fleet. Our Navy is acquiring 4 multipurpose corvettes by the end of this decade.

It goes without saying that credible defense requires strong will to defend the nation – Ukraine has once again demonstrated what this means. The polls show that over 80 percent of Finns are ready to militarily defend the nation, should we face an armed aggression. This is the highest number in Western Europe.

Finland intends to be a Nato member, who continues to invest in a strong national defense capability and brings significant added value to alliance’s collective defense. Our accession to Nato strengthens the security and stability of the Baltic Sea region and Northern Europe.

Not just the military but the whole Finnish society is well prepared for any crisis. This is based on the concept of comprehensive security, which is the cooperation model, where vital societal functions are handled together by authorities, businesses, NGOs and citizens. The aim is that during whichever type of crisis, the entirety of Finnish Society can rapidly mobilize resources where needed, recover quickly, and adapt its functions.

Ukraine fights for all of us

Supporting Ukraine in their fight is a common goal of the democratic world. Finland has given 1,8 billion euros worth of military assistance to Ukraine, and there is a very strong political will to continue this support, no party in the Finnish parliament opposes this policy line.

Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has succeeded in uniting the democratic world to a degree not seen in decades, but its response to the war continues to be hampered by excessive fear of provoking Putin. Moscow is openly preparing for a long war and Western leaders have so far failed to convince Putin that he has no hope of success in Ukraine. Until this changes, the war is likely to continue. The reluctance to declare that Ukrainian victory is the ultimate objective of Western policy is striking. This encourages Moscow to draw out the war and leaves room for dubious “peace” negotiations or other compromises with the Kremlin.

Ramping up defence material production

In the early 1990s Nato countries capitalized on the so-called peace dividend. They cut defense budgets in the belief that a major land war on the continent was no longer plausible. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine ended that illusion. Now, governments across Europe have committed to significantly increasing military spending to prepare themselves to a prolonged, high-intensity conflict. The results so far are raising the questions of whether Europe will be ready for future security challenges.

The war in Ukraine show that industrial warfare is back. So called experts around the West were certain that Russia’s small economy could not endure a drawn-out conflict. Russia would run out of missiles, and then it would run out of shells, and then eventually everything else. Recent information reveals us, that Russia can produce more than ever ammunition, missiles and other material.

GDP in unadjusted dollar terms matters for nothing when it comes to making war, because artillery shells are made of steel, not paper money. Thus, having the steel industry and factories but no money counts for quite a lot, while having money but no steel industry and no artillery factories counts for little. For example, US, the world’s largest economy is nearly out of conventional ammunition to send to Ukraine. Same goes with European nations: we haven’t been able to fulfil our promises to Ukraine. Is this is really the best that Europe can do?

Many US administrations have complained that the burden-sharing is not fair when it comes to defense spending among allies. They have a point. European Nato allies must show that they are taking defense issues seriously, and thus weakening the argument that Europeans are free riders when it comes defense spending. Positive steps have already been taken and Sweden is the 19th country in the Alliance reaching the 2 % GDP level. EU has many initiatives and projects which try to boost defense materiel production, and especially the production of 155 mm shells. But more needs to be done, and quicker. It is our moral obligation towards Ukraine to guarantee that they are successful in their legitimate and just war against Moscow. ■



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Is this Europe's final wake-up call?

Expert article • 3605

Our history of European integration in the field of security and defense is marked by slow but steady progress with crises serving as impulses to move forward with smaller and bigger steps.

In recent years, Europe has realized that we are far too dependent on others and far too unable to stand on our own feet. Russia's annexation of Crimea back in 2014 served as a strong wake-up call. As did Trump's 'America first' policy and the overnight retreat from Kabul.

Decision-making processes were initiated in the EU and NATO to demonstrate a growing awareness of threatening geopolitical developments. These security challenges have led to new commitments and strategies. The still young EU Strategic Compass and the updated NATO Strategic Concept created necessary momentum to substantially strengthen political support for more and better European security and defense policy.

Unfortunately, however, it took a full-scale invasion in Ukraine in 2022 to really change the rules of the game. It made threats in Europe much stronger and the impact on our society much more tangible. The ensuing energy crisis putting the supply and affordability of energy at peril, and energy infrastructure at risk after the attacks on Nordstream, but also the global impact on food security for example were felt by citizens and business alike.

Under this persistent external pressure, the political will for much stronger integration in the field of security and defense policy has never been so effective, as evidenced by debates and decisions at the level of European leaders. At the same time, the challenges are enormous and constantly increasing in a way that urges us to drastically strengthen our security and defense policy by making European decision-making more flexible in this field, in the first place on the basis of a contemporary, more dynamic and result-oriented understanding of national sovereignty in defense matters - if major challenges are common, then the way to tackle them must be common too. We just need to look at the alarming rise of hybrid warfare, new technological developments in the military field, years of neglect of our own defense industry, budgetary problems in the field of defense, fragmentation of defense capabilities with disturbing and even irresponsible overlaps and gaps between Member States.

Political will is a crucial factor, but maintaining unity even more so. Also, this has been an ongoing challenge. Add to this the acceleration of political decision-making, so that policy becomes much more operational on the ground. The EU Strategic Compass distinguishes itself by formulating ambitious but achievable objectives with concrete initiatives, measures and timelines. Above all, it has the full support of all EU heads of state and government. This is a basic strategy that we must continue to support actively. It is now all about timely and decisive implementation as much as continuous updating and further elaboration, as with the recently presented European Defense Industry Strategy.

One of the pillars of the strategy is strengthening our partnerships, primarily with NATO. We need more, wider and deeper EU-NATO cooperation which has already shown reciprocal added value - think of the EU-NATO task force on the resilience of critical infrastructure, which 14 recommendations are now being implemented. But we also need to strengthen our own EU defense that is complementary to NATO's ambitions. My conviction is clear: the policy choice is not 'either EU or NATO'; but a strong EU for a strong NATO and vice versa. The expansion of

NATO with Finland and Sweden is historical and a good thing for Europe. Let us hope this also is a trigger to definitively change discussions in European member states about the future of NATO and our budgetary contributions to it.

Of course we also need to take a look at transatlantic security relations. In the US, Ukraine fatigue is growing in public opinion. This trend is also becoming visible in Europe, but less so for the time being. With the recently concluded €50 billion support package for Ukraine, Europe is showing that it is not giving up on Ukraine in the years to come. But the American conviction that Europe has benefited too much from them for too long and still takes insufficient responsibility towards Ukraine and other security challenges in general, is - alas but understandably - a deep-rooted one that is shared across the congress aisle. A possible Trump comeback risks severely jeopardising trust between the US and its European partners, precisely on the basis of that deep-rooted conviction.

In the light of Russia's war of aggression, it is evident that we must substantially upgrade our common security and defense policy. It is not yet clear how this architecture will look like in the end, but in all scenarios two principles will turn out to be nothing less than imperative: (1) the EU has to urgently and adequately continue to invest in reducing its dependencies from third countries in all strategic areas, and in reinforcing its resilience in its multiple relevant aspects, and (2) NATO has to continue to play a key role in meeting the security needs of the EU, with the EU-NATO partnership continuously being updated and upgraded accordingly. ■



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LEONĪDS KALNIŅŠ

Objectives and reasons for the renewal of compulsory service in Latvia

Expert article • 3606

The rather long discussion which perhaps previously had remained largely unnoticed in the public – since exchange of views took place mainly on the platform between political parties and military experts mostly representing the leadership of the National Armed forces, in 2022 resulted in a decision being made by the Parliament of Latvia – to restore compulsory service.

What were the main reasons for the restoration of compulsory service? To begin with, a significant driving force was consistent increase in Russia's aggression, which was clearly manifested by Russia's full-scale brutal attack on Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Next, the sharp increase of Latvia's defense capabilities required a much larger number of personnel. In addition, a significant reason was the modernization of the system of reserve soldiers, considering them as an essential aspect of combat readiness and an integral part of the comprehensive national defense system.

Obviously, there are some other secondary reasons, such as the considerable number of vacancies in the National Armed Forces for whose it has not been possible to draft enough soldiers for five-year contract. Besides, the unsatisfactory volume of recruitment in Latvia is affected by the poor demographic situation, strong competition between other state bodies – especially between the Ministry of the Interior and the National Armed Forces. Also, private sector is highly competitive offering much higher salary than the military service is even able to do, and much greater freedom and flexibility – allowing to employees achieve better work-life balance.

A broad discussion was on the cost of setting up the conscript service and the provision of human resources. There was an opinion that the new type of service could be created without providing additional funds but then, as a result, the analysis showed that significant financial and personnel resources would be needed for the conscript service to be rationally implemented, able to function optimally and not to lose society support. Thus, it was necessary drastically increase the number of junior officers and noncommission officers. So that they would not be removed from professional units for, conscript service needs. Lack of the infrastructure for this task required a reorientation of priorities in the construction plan. The increase in funding is related to the creation of new structures for the management of conscript service, the contracting of medical institutions for the selection process and the provision of social contributions. The measures mentioned above also phased the implementation of the conscript service with a set number of four-year intervals. According to the idea, Latvia plans to reach the optimal number of conscripts to 4000 in 2028. To what extent it will succeed depends on the potential recruitment volume taking into the consideration demographic impact, available resources, and society support.

In order not to raise negative associations with the previously abolished mandatory service that existed until 2007, new term – *State Defense Service* – was developed. Moreover, the new type of service was created from "0". Thus, a radically new approach was achieved with minimized exceptions, for instance, health restrictions and non-acceptance of criminal records, simultaneously offering a fair and comprehensive motivational package to encourage youth to apply voluntarily for the new Service. Meanwhile, a wide range of options including a variety of choices was established for the citizens who might choose one of them, as follows:

- Serving 11 months in the Regular Forces, for instance, Mechanized Infantry Brigade, Air Force, Navy etc.
- Applying for five-year's service in the territorial units of National Guard that determine at least 28 days a year active participation in military training and exercises.
- Completing an officer's training course during studies at a university.

As the reader of this article might guess, a great emphasis in the new type of military service is placed exactly on the voluntary principle. For instance, if a citizen applies voluntarily for the service, he receives compensation 600 EUR a month – twice as much as a conscript who will be recruited by the system and will be paid 300 EUR. However, if not enough young people have volunteered, the missing quantity shall be filled by organizing a random selection from the general population register. Male citizens (women can apply voluntarily) between the ages of 18 to 27 are subject to compulsory service. Taking into the consideration information mentioned above, the first two conscriptions have been fully based on the application of the voluntary principle. Meanwhile, the third conscription falls short of meeting the required number of soldiers on a voluntary basis, enlisting only 330 out of 480 needed. To address this, a randomized selection process was implemented, utilizing a specialized computer program to choose conscripts from the citizen register. This poses a new challenge: devising a strategy to prevent potential divisions between volunteer and non-volunteer conscripts in the future.

To determine the optimal length of the new type of service, from the perspective of National Armed Forces it was of utmost importance to balance two aspects – desire of the armed forces and desire of youth:

1. Making mandatory service to young people as attractive as possible, because the desire of the armed forces is to obtain a certain number of soldiers for a certain period – as long as possible.
2. The desire of young people that is to lose as little time as possible from their lives while fulfilling their mandatory duty to the country.



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As a result, the duration of the service was set 11 months. This time includes basic training and specialty training that is four and a half up to five months. The rest of the time is service in the unit - in exact military specialty and participation in various collective exercises. After completing boot camp, a conscript if he has joined to the State Defense Service voluntarily, in principle, receives equivalent compensation as a professional soldier and is provided with identical conditions, daily routine, and must meet the same requirements. The only difference is the length of service – professional soldier has a five-year contract, while conscript has to serve 11 months. In addition, it must be recognized that conscripts in the units fulfil positions and perform such specialties, the value of whose is not prohibitively expensive, and which will not require investing a lot of time and financial resources in terms of renewing the personnel.

To conclude, it is important to highlight that by introducing (not renewing but creating a new type) compulsory military service in the defense system, Latvia has not changed the concept of National Defense. The structure of the National Armed Forces will not be radically changed moving from a professional armed force to a mandatory service/reserve army structure. Still, it will be based on the regular forces with the dominance of the professional component. The compulsory service will be an auxiliary part of the armed forces and by the regulation; the number will not exceed more than 30% of the regular unit's composition. When conscript soldiers complete the 11 months service, they will be included in the reserve units, thereby providing a high-readiness reserve in the defense system. ■

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ROBERT BRIEGER

EU-NATO cooperation

Expert article • 3607

The EU-NATO cooperation in the new world order is of paramount importance given the evolving geopolitical landscape and security challenges facing the international community. Both, EU and NATO share common interests in promoting peace, stability, security, and prosperity in Europe and beyond. In the face of emerging threats such as cyber-attacks, terrorism, hybrid warfare, conventional threats and geopolitical tensions, collaboration between the both organizations has become increasingly vital in order to show our strength together towards other geopolitical actors.

However, what does an honest inventory look like? And, how can we synergistically foster the development of the EU within NATO? In any case the war in Ukraine, which has entered its third year, really brought EU and NATO closer together!

One of the dogmas we have to take for granted is that EU and NATO are and remain inherently different, in nature. There are good and solid reasons for that, not least the conditions and intentions that were behind their establishment. When NATO is a clear military and defence alliance the EU is first and foremost a political and economic institution. Only since 20 years the EU became a credible actor in the security architecture. Many, though, say that this has caused an unnecessary rivalry, when they deal with the same or similar matters. Truth is that both organizations can support each other, especially since many Allies and Member States have started to develop a common threat perception.

However, the EU should appear more complementary to NATO, but at the same time it should clearly express its own interests. There is a need for EU strategic autonomy in defence, where Europeans should address military capability gaps within the EU and in NATO. It is important to avoid duplication and to seek for synergy. With the many force requirements both in EU and in NATO context, we need to allocate the single set of forces in a smart way and show flexibility.

To set accents, Europe must reinforce the European component of NATO, primarily through EU structures. Strengthening the already-launched European Defence Fund (EDF), Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) initiatives. Backing the European Sovereignty Fund is necessary, given their potential to boost Europe's armament industry and make the EU able to provide for itself.

The EU has a crucial role to play in enabling defence investment and encouraging EU Member States to cooperate more in defence research, development and procurement. Something that NATO would also benefit from. The EU is especially well placed to deal with those security issues that do not need a conventional military element – for instance relating to regulations or economic sanctions. NATO's Strategic Concept and the EU's Strategic Compass talk about strengthening EU-NATO partnership. However, the Strategic Compass emphasizes cooperation with NATO more than the other way around.

Looking at it from a political and strategic angle, the EU should be the framework for defining political and strategic interests of the European nations. EU-NATO cooperation is then a mechanism for implementing common interests. We therefore have to clearly define what we want and see how we can best implement it.

In summary, it can therefore be stated that EU-NATO cooperation serves as a cornerstone of regional and global security architecture, fostering stability, resilience, and effective response to emerging threats. Strengthening this core partnership is essential for addressing the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century. ■



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VESA VIRTANEN

On changing mentality after Finland's NATO accession

Expert article • 3608

The finalization of the Finnish NATO accession was symbolically celebrated with flag raising ceremonies in key NATO headquarters and Finnish military installations on 4 April 2023. This day ended a long era of neutrality and what in the post-Cold War years evolved into a policy of military non-alignment. Despite the approach of not relying on foreign assistance in national security, Finland has decades of experience in international defence co-operation. Starting from the 1950s, various peacekeeping operations have familiarized us with working side-by-side with other nations. In the 1990s, the scope broadened further when Finland joined the NATO Partnership for Peace programme and actively took part in international crisis management as well as in multinational exercises. Worth noting is also the long-lasting systematic policy of procuring interoperable western military equipment.

All the aforementioned means that nearly the whole Finnish active-duty military cadre have served their whole career in an environment where international co-operation in various forms has been the norm. Thus, NATO membership can be seen more as a continuum of leaning westwards that has long been ongoing.

Prior to the NATO membership, the Finnish military ethos has strongly emphasized the national defence of our own borders and doing this solely with our own resources. Partner nation assistance has been regarded as an add on that has been prepared for, but not relied on in any way. This sets the foundation of what Finland brings to the Alliance – a solid and comprehensive defence plan that is based on existing capabilities and well trained, sufficiently resourced and mainly reserve-based troops. As NATO Article 3 requires, Finland has through the years maintained an independent capacity to resist an armed attack.

Finland's accession to NATO sets a requirement for a new mindset for Finnish military thinking. We are no longer preparing to fight alone, but together with our Allies. Finland's eastern border stands for approximately half of NATO's border with Russia. Thus, it is undoubtedly also in the interest of all the allied countries that Finland concentrates first and foremost on the defence of its own territory. Simultaneously, there is a need to ensure our capability, willingness and commitment to defend the whole Alliance in accordance with NATO's 360-degree approach to security.

On a larger scale, the Finnish NATO accession can be described as plug-and-play. The message heard from the NATO military leadership has been "come as you are" all the way. We are irrefutably interoperable with NATO. Underneath this surface, there are naturally countless bigger and smaller adjustments to be made. Some of these are more urgent actions, but mostly it is a question of long-term development. The guiding principle to determine all necessary changes has been and will be to proceed within the limits of the carrying capacity of our organization. The current security environment does not entail jeopardizing force readiness. Any risk of overwhelming changes has to be mitigated to constantly ensure our ability to regulate our posture according to need and, if necessary, fight here and now.

The shorter-term changes of joining the Alliance are more of a technical nature. The harmonization of operational plans, as well as ensuring proper command and control capabilities are examples of functions that started immediately after the membership application. These were actually already finished to a large extent, or at least in good progress, when the accession was finalized.

There are a number of legislative adjustments that have been initiated to ensure our ability to participate in the deterrence and defence of the Alliance. These include, among others, revising the Finnish Defence Forces' tasks, as well as clarifying the legal framework for receiving and sending out units, capabilities and personnel.

In the longer term, there are several lines of efforts to work on. The NATO Defence Planning Process sets requirements on member nations that have to be considered in the mid- and longer-term development of capabilities. Assigning personnel into NATO command structure positions is vital on one hand to fulfill our obligations, but also to build a broader understanding within our personnel of working in the Alliance. The estimated amount of 100+ officers and NCOs will temporarily stretch our resources, but in the long run serving in various NATO structures will be an integral part of the career paths for people in uniform.

Finland's NATO accession does not require a total defence reform. The foundations for defending Finnish territory according to NATO Article 3 are in place. There is a strong commitment to ensure our ability to also fulfill Article 5 requirements. Step by step, we will gather experience and develop our interoperability accordingly. The further integration should not be looked at as a project, but rather a process. We are NATO and we are stronger together! ■



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HEINRICH BRAUSS

NATO 75 – Bolstering deterrence and defence

Expert article • 3609

On 4 April 2024, NATO will commemorate its 75th anniversary. It will not be a happy celebration. Times are tough. Russia's war against Ukraine and President Putin's revisionist objectives have smashed the European security order. Ukraine is fighting for its existence. Russia is "the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area" (NATO Strategic Concept). NATO Allies therefore face two concurrent major challenges: maintaining substantial military support for Ukraine so that she can hold out and eventually prevail; and significantly strengthening NATO's own deterrence and defence posture against Russia.

NATO embodies the unique security partnership between North America and Europe. Over 75 years, it has experienced several strategic eras: the Cold War; after its end, focusing on international crisis management; opening to new members from Central Eastern Europe and partnership with Russia and Ukraine; and since Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea and the war in the Donbas, rebuilding deterrence and defence.

Deterrence happens in the mind of the adversary. If considering an attack, the Russian leadership in its risk analysis must always come to the conclusion that it either cannot win, that military success would at least be doubtful and the likely costs would be higher than the desired gains and, in extremis, i.e., in the event nuclear weapons are used, an attack could result in an unacceptably high damage for Russia itself. If NATO's deterrence succeeds, war will be prevented, thus, attempts at coercion in a crisis be thwarted and Allies' freedom of action preserved.

To this end, NATO's Deterrence and Defence Posture must provide a broad spectrum of conventional forces and nuclear capabilities that offer NATO a variety of options for deterring Russia from aggression. In doing so, NATO leaves it uncertain, which option would be selected in which scenario. Russia should not be able to calculate and possibly control the risk associated with a threat of force. Yet, it should conclude at any time that an attack, wherever and however launched, would immediately be encountered by NATO as a whole, including the U.S. – for Russia cannot prevail against the American potential, and confrontation with the U.S. carries the risk of nuclear escalation and thus, in the worst case, Russia's self-destruction. For this reason, the U.S. is present in Europe with strong armed forces and nuclear weapons, and all European Allies enjoy the protection of America's extended nuclear deterrence.

NATO's focus would obviously be on the ability and will to repel a possible aggression through collective defence with conventional forces and to end any war as quickly as possible. One example: NATO's "enhanced Forward Presence" of multinational battlegroups in the Baltic states and Poland, i.e., the most exposed region, reinforcing the national defence forces, signals to Moscow that even a limited incursion would immediately lead to war with NATO in its entirety, as 20 nations are providing troops, including the U.S. However, given Putin's imperialist goals, his brutal war against a neighbour and the war crimes committed by his army, "enhanced Forward Presence" is no longer sufficient. It must evolve into "enhanced

Forward Defence". The battlegroups must therefore be able to grow into armoured brigades, divisions and army corps within a short period of time. For example, Germany will permanently station a combat brigade of some 5,000 troops in Lithuania, once the required infrastructure has been built.

Also, NATO must gain the ability rapidly to reinforce Allies located along NATO's entire eastern flank. To this end, it is building up 300,000 forces at high or very high readiness. Yet, there is still a long way to go, as many Allies have significantly reduced their armed forces over the past 25 years, constantly underfunded and restructured them for crisis management missions with light, multinational contingents. Today, they once again need large, mechanised units with state-of-the-art equipment and technology for large-scale defence operations. All Allies spending at least two percent of their GDP on defence and meeting NATO's capability targets as quickly as possible will also strengthen the credibility of NATO's deterrence and defence posture.

In this context, Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO is a strategic win-win. During the Cold War, NATO consisted of 12 nations, today there are 32. The Alliance is getting bigger and stronger. Both new Allies contribute significantly to the Alliance's deterrence and defence with modern forces and military capabilities. The entire Nordic-Baltic area, including the Baltic Sea, is now a coherent major region virtually under NATO control. Finland's and Sweden's accession is further proof of NATO's credibility, value, and trustworthiness as the world's largest and strongest politico-military alliance. ■



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NICK CHILDS

NATO/EU: room for maritime manoeuvre in the Baltic?

Expert article • 3610

On Monday 11 March Sweden's flag was raised for the first time at NATO headquarters in Brussels following the country's accession four days earlier as the Alliance's 32nd member state. Coming on the heels of Finland's accession in April 2023, the development makes it even more tempting to describe the Baltic Sea now as a 'NATO lake'. But the character of the Baltic as a maritime domain and the potential threats to maritime security in the region mean it remains more complicated than that. In fact, the latest developments may help clear the way to greater co-operation between NATO and the European Union on security challenges in these waters.

Nobody's lake

With the new accessions, all the Baltic rim and Nordic states (except Russia) are now NATO members, while all but Norway belong to the EU. What is more, most are engaged in programmes to enhance their naval capabilities. Sweden aims to grow its navy with a new generation of larger and more capable surface warships and new submarines. So too, to a lesser extent, does Finland. Poland has an ambitious naval development programme including sophisticated new frigates. And Germany's navy should also see its capabilities boosted under its 2035+ fleet plan, while the Baltic states are taking steps to bolster their coastal anti-ship missile batteries.

All this increases the strategic headaches for Russia and the pressure on its positions in the Kaliningrad exclave and around St Petersburg. Its Baltic Sea Fleet, which for a long time has been less than imposing in a conventional sense, looks even more exposed now.

However, Moscow still has formidable offensive capabilities invested in Kaliningrad, as well as the ability to pose severe unconventional threats in the murky waters of the Baltic Sea with its criss-cross of shipping routes and undersea cables and pipelines. In addition, the incidents with the Nord Stream pipelines in September 2022 shone a glaring spotlight on the West's deficits in being able to counter threats to such infrastructure. Exactly who was behind these incidents remains shrouded in uncertainty. But Moscow's investments in the capabilities of seabed warfare are well known.

A NATO/EU opportunity

Hence the hesitation of many still in using the term 'NATO lake'. Moreover, while the NATO position may have been reinforced, the different security priorities and perspectives of both the new and established NATO members in the region – which include not just the Baltic but also the Arctic and the High North and the North-East Atlantic – will mean the Alliance will have its hands full satisfying everybody. So, paradoxically, the fact that NATO's primacy as the main hard-power defence provider has been reinforced may help overcome the scepticism of some – not least the Baltic states – that others such as the EU can play a role in filling some of the security gaps that will remain below the threshold of armed conflict and Article 5. Indeed, the same impulse of Russia's renewed aggression against Ukraine which drove Finland and Sweden into the arms of NATO also was the spur behind Denmark ending its opt-out of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.

The EU has itself been evolving its CSDP to account both for the more urgent security agenda and a broadening view of what constitutes security, although not in the view of some critics far or fast enough. And, while there is an increased emphasis placed in its updated maritime security strategy on the challenges in many areas, it was perhaps a missed opportunity not focusing more specifically on key maritime arenas, not least the Baltic. It barely gets a mention in the EU's Strategic Compass.

Nevertheless, it would surely count as an obvious area of priority. In fact, there may be room for a tapestry of different frameworks to cover what is now acknowledged as a more complex set of security threats ranging from below the threshold of armed conflict. As well as the EU potentially playing an enhanced security role now in the region, there may be more life in an enhanced framework of co-operation between the Nordic states, and the same for the Baltic states. Also, the Joint Expeditionary Force grouping led by the United Kingdom seems to be carving itself out a 'grey zone' role in the region, including seeing it activated in January 2024 to carry out a security operation focused on critical undersea infrastructure.

It is in this area where there is perhaps the greatest opportunity for the EU to fashion a complementary role with NATO. Indeed, the Alliance and the EU established a joint task force on the resilience of critical infrastructure which made a number of recommendations for enhanced co-operation, including through more information exchanges; work to identify alternate transport routes for civilian and military mobility; and closer ties in security research.

Specifically in the maritime domain, NATO has set up a Critical Undersea Infrastructure Cell at its headquarters and has also announced the creation of a centre focused on this issue at Allied Maritime Command at Northwood in London. These are spawning multiple other activities within the NATO framework. But governments and international organisations are still only just getting to grips with the international and inter-agency complexities of the challenges in this area, the critical capabilities required, and the need to involve industry. It seems a ripe area for NATO/EU co-operation as the EU too explores its potential, including in the broader but related context of general maritime situational awareness under the Common Information Sharing Environment initiative. In all of this, the Baltic Sea would seem to offer a highly suitable arena in which to test the waters of collaboration and division of labour. ■



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KAARLE WIKSTRÖM

Defence courses keep up with the times

Expert article • 3611

Defence courses were established 63 years ago to improve Finnish society's crisis readiness, awareness of and will for national defence. The long, total war that shook the entire society from 1939 to 1945 required a total defence for the nation to survive. After the war, society adapted to a new situation and circumstances, still keeping in mind the experiences of difficult world war II years. It was on this basis that the planning for Defence Courses began in the late 1950s.

Looking at today's courses, it's astonishing how the fundamentals and objectives set for the planning and implementation of the national and regional defence courses, remain relevant over sixty years later. The current security situation in Europe and the ongoing shift in the international order make these courses more relevant than ever.

The following focuses on the three-and-a-half-week-long National Defence Course. The week-long regional courses are implemented following the same principles. For our small team of five, whom organises the national courses, the most important consideration are the 50 participants invited from various sectors of society and the high-level experts who speak to the participants with the latest information. While organising four courses a year, the aim is to achieve the following set for the courses.

Since the birth of the courses, the entire society in Finland has been involved in crisis preparedness. Over the decades, the concept of total defence has evolved into comprehensive security, providing a framework for the course content. A comprehensive view of Finnish foreign, security, and defence policy, both nationally and within the European Union, as well as as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is a key topic of our syllabus. The goal is to familiarize participants with the tasks of comprehensive security in various fields in our society, their implementation possibilities, as well as their interrelationships and interconnectedness in society's normal, emergency, and crises situations. However, the course has the most lasting impact by promoting the interaction among participants who come from a various sector of society. The teaching, conducted in a versatile and pedagogically diverse manner, addresses security policy and defence, as well as border and internal security, macro- and microeconomics, security of supply, social and healthcare, educational and cultural matters, cyber, information, and hybrid influence, as well as climate change and its economic and security implications, without forgetting the importance of psychological resilience. This provides participants with a comprehensive outlook of the importance of security, stability, and prosperity of a nation. The days are long, starting at 8 am in the morning and generally ending at 8 pm in the evening. Presentations, panel discussions, excursions, table top exercise, conducted as group work during first three weeks, and a three-day visit to a military base are included in the syllabus. The visit exemplifies the significance of defence and ensures the course spirit and fellowship.

What makes the course particularly special, however, is its participants. Based on a Government Decree, a broad-based Advisory Committee for National Defence Education selects the participants based on proposals

from society. We aim for a diverse participant group. Forty percent of the participants are women and sixty percent are men. Participants who receive personal invitations to the course represent various sectors such as economy, infrastructure, and services, different branches of government, media, third sector, church congregation, as well as science, universities, and cultural figures who are influential in their respective fields. All members of parliament are offered the opportunity to attend the course. Together with the smallest group, representatives of the armed forces, an exceptionally wide-ranging group of expertise is gathered together. The course selects its own trustees, who are responsible for the esprit de corps and re-unions. Participants from various sectors of society provide a network that can keep each other up to date on events in Finland and around the world.

After the intensive course, participants are also offered the opportunity to become a member of the Defence Course Association. Alumni activities focus on deepening knowledge of security policy and participating in societal discussions. The association organises seminars and discussion events and publishes a high-quality Defence magazine four times a year. Course participants are invited to advanced and refresher courses five and again ten years later, which last from one to two days. This offers participants the opportunity to update their knowledge on comprehensive security, security policy, and defence matters.

What motivates individuals in leading positions and in key expert roles in Finnish society to clear their calendars for almost four weeks to voluntarily participate in National Defence Course? In Finland, defence is perceived as a concern for the entire society. Through compulsory military service for men and voluntary military service for women, most citizens, families, and communities have a connection to concrete national defence. When personal invitation arrives, individuals almost invariably respond affirmatively. Courses are prestigious in Finnish society. Based on feedback, the course is perceived to offer comprehensive and up-to-date content in an interestingly organized manner. The extensive network provided by the courses is also considered valuable. Yet, only through continuous improvement can the reputation be maintained. Defence courses keep up with the times. ■



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Professional military education in the Baltic States

Expert article • 3612

The current year holds significant historical resonance for the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, marked by two notable anniversaries. Internationally, it commemorates their accession to the European Union and NATO in 2004. It was a pivotal achievement in their foreign policy objectives. Regionally, this year marked the Baltic Defence College's 25th anniversary, a milestone underscoring the collaborative decision made by the Baltic nations in 1999 to merge their efforts to create a unique tri-national Professional Military Education (PME) institution, which aimed not only to meet modern educational standards but also to prepare officers to facilitate their nations' accession NATO, constituting another critical foreign policy objective. Beyond delivering high quality education at the operational and strategic levels, the College has played a key role in facilitating the alignment of the respective armed forces with Western models. The College is an integral constituent of the PME system of the Baltic nations in which the tactical-level education and training are delivered nationally by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania including joint intermediate specialized courses.

The twenty-five-year milestone not only represents the growth of the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL) but also reflects maturity and stability. Recognized as the most successful defence related joint project of the Baltic nations, BALTDEFCOL boasts a distinguished alumni network occupying various prominent civilian and military positions, thereby contributing to regional security awareness and bolstering the security of NATO's eastern flank. The College's commitment to advancing the quality of education is evidenced by its alignment with the ambitious goals of the Framework Nations – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. This commitment is further underscored by the expansion of course offerings and student enrolment to address regional imperatives, while also encouraging NATO member states and partners to contribute to education by deploying faculty and sending students. The international ethos of BALTDEFCOL is a defining attribute, fostering an environment of mutual comprehension and cooperation conducive to the effective problem-solving and innovative thinking essential for addressing multifaceted security challenges. Noteworthy is the recent agreement signed by the Finnish National Defence University expressing its intent to participate in the BALTDEFCOL-led Combined Joint Staff Exercise, while the Swedish Defence University has also expressed a keen interest in future involvement. This exercise, conducted in collaboration with Poland's War Studies University, represents a significant stride towards harmonizing education with NATO standards and signifies trust in the BALTDEFCOL as a premier institution for professional military education.

In Tartu, there exist distinctive and innovative educational opportunities, such as the Command Senior Enlisted Leader's Course and the Civil Servants Course, which are pioneering initiatives in their respective fields. The College remains committed to enhancing the quality of education in response to the evolving landscape of military affairs and contemporary educational standards. Recognized in the Allied Command Transformation's Education and Training Opportunities Catalogue, the courses offered by the College have met stringent criteria, contributing to its attainment of unconditional institutional accreditation status in July 2022. This accreditation, valid for six years, represents a significant

milestone in affirming BALTDEFCOL's commitment to delivering high-quality education and its relevance to NATO. While this accreditation underscores the College's status as a premier PME institution, it also necessitates continued efforts to meet the expectations of the Framework Nations, NATO, and partner institutions.

The College's commitment to excellence in education has garnered widespread recognition. One of its key priorities involves actively assisting in the development of the Ukrainian Professional Military Education system, achieved through close collaboration with the National Defence University of Ukraine. Concurrently, the College is engaged in educating Ukrainian officers and NCOs. Recognized by Ukrainian partners as a model of successful cooperation spanning over 25 years, the College plays a pivotal role in these endeavours, contributing to Ukraine's pursuit of sovereignty and freedom. This ongoing partnership operates in tandem with the NATO Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP), ensuring coordinated efforts towards shared objectives.

The mission of the College, as outlined by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, imposes a significant responsibility to uphold rigorous standards and align with NATO's evolving strategies, ensuring that graduates are equipped with information founded on verifiable truths. This mission is inherently challenging, given the dynamic nature of the contemporary battlefield, which necessitates providing students with a deeper understanding of Multi-Domain Operations, cutting-edge technologies, AI, and digitalization within the realms of operational planning and execution. Insights drawn from Russia's aggression against Ukraine have already been integrated to adapt to the realities of modern warfare. These adaptations are further reinforced within an international setting, creating an environment where students acquire the knowledge and analytical tools necessary to make informed decisions in both domestic and international contexts.

Lennart Meri, during a speech on the opening the Baltic Defence College in February 1999 recognized it as an "example of our will of defence... to secure our national sovereignty and regional stability and make our contribution to the strengthening of global security"¹. This contribution is embraced and implemented at the Baltic Defence College, representing the Framework Nations' commitment to regional and European security amidst the backdrop of Russia's imperialistic ambitions.

¹ *Speeches of the President of the Republic 1092-2001, Eesti Vabariigi Presidient 1992-2001*, <https://vp1992-2001.president.ee/eng/k6ned/K6ne.asp?ID=4315> (Accessed: 03 March 2024).



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Vilnius NATO Summit: Success for the Eastern Flank

Expert article • 3613

On 11-12 July 2023, the NATO Summit took place in Vilnius, Lithuania. Was it just another big gathering of Alliance leaders or a turning point in the Alliance's history? Let's try to find the answer.

A year before Vilnius, at NATO's Madrid Summit, the Allies recognized that Europe was no longer at peace. Russia attacked a sovereign country – Ukraine. The war was being fought on the European soil, in the vicinity of NATO. It was clear that further adaptation of the Alliance was urgently needed to counter the Russian threat – as well as other growing challenges.

It was not by chance that NATO leaders gathered in Lithuania. The Eastern Flank and particularly the Baltic countries are the most exposed region of NATO. Placed between the heavily militarized Kaliningrad region and Belarus they are linked to the rest of the Alliance through a very narrow Suwalki corridor. As a deterrence measure, NATO has deployed the Enhanced Forward Presence in these countries since 2017 alongside with the already existing Baltic Air Policing. Was it enough for the Baltics? Was it enough for the Eastern Flank?

Meanwhile, the military integration of Russia with Belarus has been steadily growing. The public announcement of stationing nuclear weapons in Belarus territory was yet another step of many already undertaken. The arrival of Russian Wagner mercenaries to Belarus – so close to NATO borders was yet another important factor to add.

It was vivid proof of yet another violation by Russia of the NATO-Russia Founding Act. Consequently, the Founding Act could no longer define or in any way restrict the Alliance's actions aimed to ensure NATO's security and defense.

Just before the Vilnius Summit, NATO approved new regional defense plans. It was a crucial element boosting NATO's readiness to defend every inch of Allied territory.

However, these plans would mean little if not resourced properly. Allies need to pull their efforts together and make them fully executable. NATO needs to have assigned forces and capabilities. Allies have to ensure the prepositioning of ammunition and armaments on the Eastern Flank. Allies must make a push for military mobility, making it a true flagman and a real success of NATO-EU cooperation.

The war in Ukraine once again proved the importance of air defense. The Vilnius Summit endorsed a rotational air defense model which was the first step in building up NATO's Air Defense Shield. Allies understood that they have to invest in the much-needed air defense systems – and in deep precision strike capabilities, too.

All these efforts required appropriate financing. Allies welcomed the renewed Defense Investment Pledge (DIP) with 2% of GDP for defense as a new minimum. It went down in history as the V-DIP (Vilnius – DIP).

NATO leaders underlined the need to invest even more to ensure 360-degree security. They discussed new incentives to boost defense industries. Allied support for Ukraine cannot be late or insufficient. Allies' own stocks cannot stay depleted, and gaps in their own defenses unfilled. It remains a big task even now, one year later.

The Vilnius NATO Summit welcomed Finland to its first summit. A day before the start of the Summit, a long-awaited meeting between Türkiye and Sweden took place. Türkiye assured it has no more objection to Sweden's membership in the Alliance though it took another few months to complete the necessary ratification procedure. At the time of writing this article, NATO has 32 members. The Baltic Sea is secure as never before.

A big step forward was taken towards Ukraine on its path to join the transatlantic family. Establishing the NATO-Ukraine Council (NUC) and removing the Membership Action Plan (MAP) requirement were concrete deliverables of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration. The first NUC meeting at the level of Heads of State/Government took place on July 12, immediately after the NATO Summit. From then on, Ukraine has been sitting at the table with the Allies as an equal and very valuable partner.

To bridge the gap towards full NATO membership, the G7 countries offered to sign security assurances for Ukraine. The G7 initiative was joined by many Allies and is in the process of concluding bilateral agreements.

Last but not least, the Vilnius Summit welcomed four NATO partners from the Indo-Pacific region. Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea had the opportunity to exchange views with the Allies on global challenges. The Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific areas are both on the geopolitical frontlines. Their security is closely intertwined. China's increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region and North Korea's nuclear saber-rattling are challenging the rules-based international order. The united response across the globe would be much stronger.

To conclude, the Vilnius NATO Summit was a great success for the Alliance and especially for its Eastern Flank. Concrete steps were taken to strengthen deterrence and defense. Allies once again affirmed their unity. These are the strongest messages to all adversaries. NATO will defend every inch of Allied territory.

All for one and one for all! ■



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TEIJA TIILIKAINEN

NATO's role in countering hybrid threats

Expert article • 3614

Ever since its establishment, NATO has demonstrated a strong ability to adapt to the changing security environment. In the aftermath of the Cold War, its strategic concept was amended to include elements of cooperative security as well as a capacity to engage in out-of-area operations. Both developments decisively changed the Alliance's strategic approach.

The current growing confrontation between Russia and the West has redirected NATO's focus towards concrete tasks of territorial defence and deterrence. In parallel with this shift, NATO has undergone multiple rounds of enlargement, which have changed its geopolitical form. The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO means that an overwhelming majority of EU members, 23 out of 27, are now also members of NATO.

As the geopolitical confrontation deepens, the conflict between Western democracies and their challengers is taking on more comprehensive forms. The traditional tools of power projection against the West are increasingly being supplemented with unconventional instruments. The notion of hybrid threats has consequently become part of the security strategies and policies of both the EU and NATO and their members.

In this context of an ever-deepening conflict, NATO has also had to define its own role and responsibility in protecting its Allies. It has also had to ensure that its own collective defence system cannot be paralysed by the use of broader threat instruments. Using hybrid threat instruments against NATO could mean, for instance, attacking or disrupting its key military infrastructure. It could also involve attempts to hamper NATO's consensus-based decision-making by systematically undermining the commitment to or trust in NATO's collective defence among one or more Allies. NATO's efficiency could also be weakened by the deliberate conduct of operations which, for political or legislative reasons, make it difficult or even impossible to use NATO's common tools.

For the past ten years, NATO has increasingly addressed hybrid threats by developing its policies and preparedness. NATO's tools in countering hybrid threats can be divided into those aimed at enhancing resilience and those seeking to deter hostile action. NATO's resilience to hybrid threats has been strengthened by enhancing its intelligence capabilities and restructuring them to meet the needs of the new threat environment. The Alliance has also set baseline resilience requirements for its Allies in strategic sectors, which serve as yardsticks for national self-assessment. These requirements cover the continuity of government and governmental services, communications and transport systems, as well as the resilience of critical commodities such as energy, food and clean water. More recently, NATO's resilience work has been further strengthened, both through some institutional reforms and through more specific objectives set in 2023 for collective and national resilience work. Strengthened cooperation with the EU in countering hybrid threats is another policy tool in enhancing resilience against such threats. Cooperation and joint exercises conducted at many levels will facilitate the preparedness of both organisations to deal with the new threat environment. NATO can also deploy counter-hybrid support teams to support an Ally in enhancing its resilience.

Apart from resilience, NATO has also created a set of deterrence tools to counter hybrid threats. The most powerful of these has been the interpretation and communication since 2016 regarding NATO's readiness to invoke collective defence in response to a hybrid threat operation. This policy is in line with NATO's earlier decision to make cyber defence a recognized part of its collective defence. To ensure the credibility of its deterrence, NATO has not specified the character or scale of a hybrid threat operation that would be serious enough to warrant invoking Article 5. Its deterrence has been supported by the active inclusion of hybrid threat-related scenarios in NATO exercises and other measures to enhance preparedness. Strengthened cooperation with NATO's partner countries in Europe as well as in the Indo-Pacific region can also be seen as serving NATO's deterrent function. The greater the support NATO receives from partners and like-minded countries for its policies and instruments in countering hybrid threats, the more perpetrators of hostile activities will need to factor in serious countermeasures.

Ever since its establishment, NATO has proved to be a highly versatile tool for addressing the security needs of its Allies. The current security environment is once again testing the consensus among Allies regarding the extent to which the collective defence obligation can be broadened without compromising its credibility. ■

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MEELIS OIDSALU

Estonia's two decades in NATO

Expert article • 3615

Hi, my name is Donald Rumsfeld, how are you?" said a man who held out his hand and stepped on the balcony where I was just about to finish my pre-meeting cigarette and chatted with desk officers from other Baltic and Nordic countries. It was August 2001, we were in Copenhagen where the meeting of Baltic, Nordic and U.S. defense ministers was about to start. Mr Rumsfeld had no clue that the event that changed the way his country thinks about security and global politics was only a month away.

Defense secretary Rumsfeld made an honest mistake presenting himself to a 25-year old junior official, as the real head of the Estonian delegation, minister of defense Jüri Luik was not much older, only 35. At that age, Mr Luik was already a veteran diplomat. In 1994, aged only 24, he had successfully led the Estonian delegation during bilateral negotiations with the Russian Federation on the departure of Russian troops from Estonia. Now he was about to ask Donald Rumsfeld to exploit the historic window of opportunity for NATO's enlargement to the Baltic "peninsula". Of course, in reality, NATO does not enlarge. Nations can apply to join NATO once they have proven to be worthy of the North Atlantic Treaty.

9/11 provided Estonia and other Baltic nations with the opportunity to prove their military vigor to their future Allies. Operation Iraqi Freedom was Estonia's first military operation since the end of the Soviet Union. Unlike many other allied countries, the Estonian Parliament had not set any restrictions on Estonian "crusaders". The medical reports show that the first military operation was a "real thing" – eight men from the Estonian infantry platoon, which was the first to arrive in Iraq, were wounded - as much as a quarter of the unit. The Estonian state blindly trusted its warlords and those allied units under whose command the Estonian infantry group was placed. The trust paid off. In March 2004 Estonia together with six other Eastern European countries became NATO member states.

What have we learned about NATO and ourselves as an Ally during the following years? First of and foremost — that collective deterrence really works. After the 2008 war with Georgia Russian Federation has been periodically projecting military power in the vicinity of its borders with the Baltic and the Nordic neighbours conducting massive exercises "Zapad" imitating direct blatant military attacks. Russia has, nevertheless, not once really dared to test Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Second big lesson from two last decades is that NATO is an immense Alliance, and not only in terms of military strength its member states possess, but also in terms of inertness – the inevitable feature of its immensity. Civilians tend to look at military organizations as clean cut, efficient, fast, proactive structures. But military bureaucracy can be the worst kind of bureaucracy. This inherent problem gets even worse when there are thirty two countries trying to coordinate differing political interests. And all this happens simultaneously on two levels of NATO - the diplomatic and the military.

One could say that In theory NATO should not be functioning, it is far too complex. In practice, none of this matters. It may sound like naive hippie-talk, but it is not the formal structure that makes NATO work, but rather the myriad of informal networks and personal relationships forged between diplomats, defense officials and military personnel of different member states.

NATO was established because in the last century Europe was a scarefully messy place. Our ancestors witnessed two industrial scale mass wars with tens of millions of casualties. For Europe NATO was the only feasible way of survival on the continent where Stalin led Soviet Russia had very clearly established its intention to go all the way with the democratic West. For some time after 9/11 NATO focused on out-of-area operations and forgot about its original mission of collective defense against ever expansionist Russia. This changed in 2014 after the occupation of Crimea. Even Germany, for the first time since the Second World War, established a permanent military presence in a foreign country (NATO Battle Group in Lithuania).

After two decades the refurbishment of collective defense has not been finally resolved. Things got a bit ugly before the NATO Madrid Summit of 2021, when Estonia's Prime Minister Kaja Kallas told Financial Times that our country would be wiped from the map under existing NATO plans.

The response was quick, plans were redesigned and additional forces were assigned to reinforce NATO's Eastern Flank. NATO's collective defense is – nevertheless – still a work in progress. Two years after the start of the biggest war in Europe since the Second World War only 18 of 32 member states spent the agreed minimum of 2% of GDP on defense. We can and must do much better. And we most certainly will, because despite all, NATO has proven extremely effective in delivering its main promise – preserving peace to allow Western democracies and economies to flourish. ■

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PIRITTA ASUNMAA

Deterrence and defence in the Baltic Sea region: One year of Finnish NATO membership

Expert article • 3616

When Finland became a NATO Ally one year ago, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that “Finland’s membership will make Finland safer and NATO stronger”. This was well said, but what does membership in NATO mean for Finland?

On one hand, it can be seen as a big step that the country has taken. Finland had previously only relied on its own defence, but is now part of the most successful military alliance, with all its benefits as well as responsibilities. On the other hand, it is fair to say that joining NATO was only a small and logical step for Finland. We have now completed our Western integration, which started with membership in the European Union after the end of the Cold War.

However, in my view, the more interesting question is what kind of a NATO did Finland and Sweden join?

Transformation of NATO and changes in Finnish security and defence thinking had already started in 2014 when Russia attacked Ukraine. First, in this new security environment, the Baltic Sea countries understood that they were now the frontline of confrontation between the West and Russia. During the Cold War, this frontline had been located in Central Europe and the Baltic Sea region had only been a side stage. Second, it was clear that no one could look at the Baltic Sea region in isolation. The Baltic Sea was now part of a frontline that started from the North Atlantic and continued via the Baltic and Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Lastly, both NATO and Finland understood that neither could plan nor defend their own area effectively unless we knew what each party was doing. These developments lead to the deepening and widening of defence cooperation based on mutual interests, even though legally binding treaty obligations and guarantees were missing.

Based on these realizations, the Finnish and Swedish decision to apply for NATO membership seemed like a logical step. At the Madrid Summit, NATO decided to invite Finland and Sweden to become members of the Alliance. The Summit was also an important milestone for NATO. In Madrid, the Allied heads of state and government approved the new Security Concept for the Alliance, which clearly states that “Russia is the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area”. Because NATO’s decision-making is based on consensus, it is important what the official documents state as they direct further planning and action. In this case, the wording meant that NATO started to develop new plans on how to defend its own area. New plans also meant that NATO had to re-evaluate what kind of command and control structures it needs, what kind of troops are needed to execute the plans and what kind of authority should be given to the SACEUR to carry out the plans.

The first opportunity to evaluate progress on NATO’s new baseline for deterrence and defence came at the Vilnius Summit a year later. For Finland, the Vilnius Summit was even more important because it was the first time Finland was able to participate as a full Ally. Because Finnish accession had happened only months before the Summit, Vilnius became a starting point for the integration of Finland into NATO. This was something that was also clearly stated in the Summit Communiqué.

Today, we can see the first examples of what Finland’s integration into NATO means in practice. In February, Finland stated that it is willing to participate in NATO’s peacetime collective defence activities. This summer, the Finnish Navy will participate in the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group One in the Baltic Sea and the Finnish Air Force will participate in NATO’s Air Shielding Mission in Romania, Bulgaria and the Black Sea region. These actions show that Finland is willing to participate in burden sharing according to NATO’s 360-degree principle. In February, Finland also made some proposals on how NATO could contribute to the collective defence of Finland. First, Finland declared willingness to host a multinational headquarter that could help in the command and control of NATO land forces in the northeast of Europe. Second, Finland proposed that NATO forces could increase their presence in the country through training and exercise activities. This will require further investments in Finland’s host nation support capabilities. The last of the Finnish proposals concerned Finland’s willingness to support NATO’s intelligence and surveillance activities to improve situational awareness in the northeast of Europe.

Swedish accession to NATO took place in March 2024. Like Finnish membership, Swedish membership will make Sweden safer and NATO stronger. Swedish membership also allows Finland and Sweden to deepen and widen their bilateral defence cooperation even further. NATO and collective defence sets a new framework for that cooperation.

The next key event for NATO, Sweden and Finland will be the Summit in Washington DC this July. For NATO, the Summit is an opportunity to further evaluate progress towards achieving the new baseline for deterrence and defence. For Sweden, the Summit will be a starting point and a first chance to give guidance on how Sweden wants to be integrated into NATO’s deterrence and defence. In the case of Finland, we can expect first reporting on the work done to integrate Finland into the Alliance.

The agenda for the Summit is set in cooperation with all the Allies, but in addition, the host nation always plays a special role. Therefore, we can expect that defence investments, NATO’s unwavering support to and strengthened relationship with Ukraine as well as NATO’s partnerships with the so-called IP4 countries (Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea



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and New Zealand) will be high on the agenda. Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine is of particular importance to Finland and Europe. Finland, as a new member in NATO, works to advance Ukraine becoming a member of the Alliance, as reaffirmed in the Vilnius Summit.

After the Washington DC Summit, NATO will set its sights on the next Summit in the Netherlands in 2025. Strengthening NATO's deterrence and defence against Russia will remain a priority but NATO needs to also keep an eye on long-term trends and developments. How should NATO prepare itself for the era of strategic competition? How will developments in the Indo-Pacific region influence the security of the Euro-Atlantic region? How can we boost our defence industry and how can we make sure future technologies can be used to enhance our defence capabilities? Day by day, NATO is better prepared to the threat posed by Russia, but how should NATO react to instability in the regions surrounding Europe?

Thanks to our strong defence capabilities and strong bilateral defence relationships, Finland has a chance to punch above its weight in the Alliance. This can be achieved with active foreign and defence policy and an active participation in NATO activities. At some point, Finland should consider whether it wants to host a NATO Summit. This would allow Finland to further NATO's common agenda and Finland's national interest, which go hand in hand from now on. ■



Photo Joona Suni.

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IMANTS LIEĢIS

From dream to reality to nightmare

Expert article • 3617

In the lead up to Latvia joining NATO in 2004, there were sceptics in the country who considered that our being part of the world's strongest military Alliance will remain an unfulfilled dream. As Latvia's NATO Ambassador at the time, I tried to convince them that this was a reality within our reach. With the unprecedented turmoil in international relations that has evolved over the last years as a result of, amongst other things, Russia's imperialistic aggression in Ukraine and elsewhere, the reality of NATO membership for the past two decades is that it is more demanding today than it has been in the past.

Latvia joined NATO 13 years after regaining freedom and with half a century of Soviet occupation as a legacy. Post-Soviet troops left Latvia in 1994, with the final military installation – a radar base – being blown up one year later. The compromise for this agreement with Russia was that “retired” troops and their families were allowed to continue living in Latvia. Some 80,000 in total. Latvia's border with Russia was finally agreed after we joined NATO, with the country also ceding part of its pre-occupation eastern territory to Russia. Astute political leadership and determination guided Latvia's path to NATO. This was based on a strong desire to “return to Europe” and to engage the United States, Europe and other allies in militarily guaranteeing our security.

Persuading existing NATO members that we had something to contribute to the Alliance and that we would not be “free-riders”, was also important. It was never a given that events would turn out in our favour. A leading US diplomat in around 2000 suggested to me at one time that Estonia could join the EU and Lithuania NATO. “Leaving Latvia to Russia?” was my rhetorical response. In the event, President Putin's attempts to have a veto over NATO enlargement was defeated by allies uniting to invite seven new members in 2002, with their accession taking place two years later.

Twenty years ago, NATO was preoccupied with out of area operations. “Out of area or out of business”, was the mantra. Terrorism was the major threat to global security following the attacks on the United States on 11th September 2001. The following day, for the first and only time in NATO's history, article 5 of the Washington Treaty was activated. Latvia contributed with troops to operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, suffering loss of life along with our allies. Just before the twentieth anniversary of 9/11, in August 2021, NATO troops withdrew from Afghanistan. By then the main threat to the Alliance was clearly identified as coming from Russia. Hence NATO's focus since the start of Russia's war against Ukraine in 2014 has moved from the war on terror, to the defence of Allied territory, in particular the defence of those allies on the front line with Russia.

The nightmare being experienced by the people of Ukraine since Russia's full-scale war on 24th February 2022 has created instability to the European and global security order. Existing international and rule-based norms have been trampled on and rejected by Russia. Further instability emerged on 7th October 2023 with the brutal terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel. A wider Middle East war still remains a possibility, compounded by attacks on shipping in the Red Sea. A potential conflict in the Asia- Pacific region as a result of China's increasing assertiveness cannot be ruled out.

NATO is not a global policeman, but the Alliance is undeniably affected by the global instability that confronts us today. From a Latvian perspective, the response taken together with the Alliance has met our immediate security concerns about collective defence. Today, we focus on NATO's regional military plans being fulfilled. This is being done both through or own and allies' efforts. Latvia has a budget already at around 3% this year enabling procurements covering air, sea and territorial defence needs. A large new training base is being constructed. We are increasing the number of our armed forces. Meanwhile, the Canadian led NATO enhanced Forward Presence of allied troops and infrastructure in Latvia is enlarging to brigade level. With Finland and Sweden now in NATO, strategic depth has been given to our regional defence. Sweden will send some 600 troops to Latvia.

The most immediate challenge is to ensure Ukraine's victory against Russia's brutal attempt to wipe the country off the map of Europe. Ammunition, equipment, drones and other needs of Ukraine must be supplied urgently to stop the revisionist imperialistic ambitions of Russia, which are a threat to NATO.

On our 20th anniversary in NATO, Latvia will continue to be in the forefront in supporting Ukraine and contributing to the crucial collective defence of the world's greatest military Alliance. ■



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The presence of NATO troops in the Baltic States

Expert article • 3618

In 2024 the Baltic States celebrate the historical moment – twenty years of being members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Upon joining the alliance, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania sought security guarantees outlined in paragraph 5 of the Washington Treaty. From the outset of their membership, the Baltic States consistently emphasized the potential threats posed by Russia, in terms of its ambitions and intentions. The Balts constantly encouraged their partners to invest in the strengthening of NATO's eastern border.

A decade passed before Western partners acknowledged that the threat was not merely a matter of perception but implementation of Russia's foreign and security policy aims, as outlined in numerous documents and official statements. Events such as the occupation of Crimea, the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, and the subsequent brutal war against Ukraine in 2022 significantly altered the security landscape in the Baltics and NATO's eastern flank. This in turn, prompted an increase in NATO presence.

Following accession to the alliance in 2004, NATO's presence in the Baltics was substantiated by assuming responsibility for air-policing of the Baltic States on a rotational basis. NATO's commitment to the Baltic States was manifested in investments in infrastructure, regular training, exercises, and joint projects. Participation in international operations, including Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo with other Allies, formed a substantial part of Estonia's, Latvia's, and Lithuania's security and defence policies.

To bolster NATO's capacity to respond to emerging threats, three centers of excellence were established in the Baltic States. Estonia hosts the NATO Cooperative Cyber Security Center of Excellence, Lithuania launched the NATO Energy Security Center of Excellence, and Latvia manages the NATO Strategic Communication Center of Excellence. These structures have become vital sources of knowledge and expertise, particularly in the aftermath of Russia's war against Ukraine, which included elements of cyber, energy, information, and hybrid threats.

In response to Russia's interference in Ukraine's domestic affairs and provocations of violent conflict in Eastern Ukraine, NATO made decisive decisions during the Wales and Warsaw summits. This resulted in the formation of Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) military forces stationed in the Baltic States. Estonia became a host nation for France and Iceland, with the UK as a framework Albania, Czech nation, while Latvia's list of contributing nations included, Iceland, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain, with Canada as a framework nation. The composition of eFP is based on collaboration with Belgium, Czech, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United States, with Germany acting as the framework nation.

Since 2014, NATO has consistently responded to security threats on its eastern border. The Madrid Summit approved a decision envisioning a greater number of rapidly deployable high-readiness units. Allies agreed to establish four additional multinational divisions in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia, increasing the total number to eight. This effectively doubled the Alliance's presence from the Baltic Sea in

the north to the Black Sea in the south, fortifying NATO's eastern border. Decisions made during the Madrid Summit to strengthen alliance defence capabilities were supplemented at the Vilnius Summit in 2023, announcing the development of new regional defence plans and an agreement on providing the necessary resources for their implementation when and if needed.

NATO's presence in the Baltic Sea region received a significant boost with the incorporation of Finland and Sweden. Both countries, as NATO members will be a substantial contribution to both the Baltic Sea region and transatlantic security, given their impressive military capabilities in terms of equipment, technology, defence industry, and international engagement.

In the twenty years since the Baltic States became NATO member states, their defence capabilities have been consistently developed and strengthened in close cooperation with their allies. The growth of defence capabilities is based on an annual budget increase, allowing investments in personnel, weaponry, and infrastructure. Allies are committed to reaching defence expenditure targets of up to 2% of GDP. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are among the countries not only to have reached this threshold but have even more ambitious plans in the next few years. Overall they have become contributing nations to the defence of the transatlantic community. ■

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Hedgehogs and Foxes

Expert article • 3619

The political philosopher Isaiah Berlin quotes the Greek poet Archilochus for the comment that the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing. 'There exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision,' Berlin writes, 'and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory.' While Berlin spend his working life in Oxford, his family came from Latvia. Perhaps it is fitting, therefore, to use Berlin's distinction between single-minded foxes and wide-ranging hedgehogs to describe the new conditions in Baltic security after the accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO.

History and geography have made Sweden and Finland military hedgehogs. Their defence policy has been focused on one big thing: defence against Russia. Sweden and Finland have organized their armed forces for territorial defence. While the rest of Europe transformed their armed forces after the end of the Cold War, the armed forces of Finland and Sweden remained based on the mobilization of conscript forces for national defence. Finland remained truer to the concept of national defence than Sweden which in practice abandoned conscription and reduced the national defence budget to the point where the Swedish Chief of Defence shocked the nation when he admitted that *försvarsmakten* could not defend Swedish territory without help from NATO.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Finland and Sweden was thus confronted with the question of whether their armed forces would be able to withstand a Russian attack. While other European countries discussed, and continues to discuss, whether the Ukrainian war in fact means a direct threat to national security, Finland and Sweden had settled that question already by not changing the purpose and nature of their armed forces. The Russian invasion of Ukraine was a change in the quantity of the threat – not the quality. Since Finland and Sweden was quite aware that their defence forces did not have the quantities to withstand a Russian attack, the increased likelihood of Russian aggression made NATO membership the only way to regain a sense of national security.

Collective defence is thus the one thing Sweden and Finland want from NATO. They are hedgehogs in the same way Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are defence hedgehogs: their geography and history tell them the same thing – they need allies to defend them against Russia.

The Norwegian and Danish experience is different. Although Norway also shares a border with Russia, the two countries are defence foxes. They do not have a single central vision for their defence policy, but several different commitments. As founding members of the Alliance, Norway and Denmark have experienced how NATO redefined itself from a defensive alliance focused on organising the military defence of Western Europe to an organisation for managing the risks of the post-Cold War World. Both countries argued for Baltic membership of the Alliance in the belief that this would create stability in Eastern Europe and the Baltic Rim Area. This was not done in the belief that NATO was to deter or to come in conflict with Russia. On the contrary, Norway and, especially, Denmark focused resources on operating in NATO's international missions as well as in the Arctic which plays a significant role in the defence policy of both countries.

Even as the Baltic countries remained focused on the need to defend themselves against Russia, they joined the Alliance at a time when this was neither a top priority nor a publicly valid argument for their joining. On the contrary, the 'membership action plans' by which they joined the Alliance stressed that they were not to constitute a security problem. In other words, NATO did not want to import a commitment to a conflict with Russia, so the Baltic countries did their best to downplay such scenarios and adopted policies towards their Russian minorities that gave the minorities more rights than a state suspect of their loyalties and fearing subversive activities would otherwise have been inclined to give.

The hedgehogs Sweden and Finland are thus joining an alliance which has been 'foxy' for years, but which is now becoming more focused on deterring Russia. In joining NATO, the two countries make the Nordic, Baltic region a larger factor in the Alliance. The fact that some of the existing NATO-members in that region are defence foxes with a broader focus and that other of the existing members have also been socialised into more fox-like behaviour even if they are fundamentally hedgehogs focused on the threat from Russia means that the Nordic, Baltic region is far from coherent and unlikely to talk with one voice at the ambassadors' table in NATO HQ in Brussels. As the Baltic states, Sweden and Finland will need to adapt their policy to an alliance where the security issues of the Mediterranean are also relevant and where Sweden and Finland will be expected to contribute. ■



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Sweden in NATO - the end of non-alignment

Expert article • 3620

On March 11 2024, the Swedish flag was raised outside the Nato Headquarters in Brussels. Sweden had become the Alliance's 32nd member. The decision of Sweden and Finland to apply for membership of NATO took place within the space of a few weeks in the spring of 2022 after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. However while Finland's membership was ratified as early as April 4th 2023, it took almost a whole year more before Sweden was welcomed into NATO. Turkey and Hungary took the opportunity to put pressure on Sweden which delayed Sweden's entry into the alliance.

Membership of NATO represents a paradigm shift in Sweden's foreign policy. The previous Swedish doctrine of "nonallied in peace aiming for neutrality in war" is now a thing of the past. It had wide public support, even if individual commentators and recently several political parties argued in favour of joining NATO. This security and defence doctrine may be said to constitute a substantial element in Sweden's self-image. Not least since Sweden's two hundred year history of peace was considered a success. It is generally considered to have "served Sweden well"

Behind this change in the doctrine of security policy lies a long-term concern about developments in Russia and Sweden's vulnerable geopolitical situation. Finland declared its intention to join NATO at an early stage. There was also political pressure in Sweden to also do so. A report from the "European council on Foreign relations" reveals that Sweden is one of the countries where support for Ukraine is greatest.

This is in fact a new chapter in Swedish – and in Nordic – history. Now all the Scandinavian countries are members of the same defence alliance, extending from the Baltic Sea to large tracts of the Arctic region, the strategic importance of which has increased and where Russia has been building up its military presence. Sweden's security has been enhanced by its membership of NATO. Thanks to Nato Sweden and Finland are protected by a high threshold for Russia to step over, a protection which Ukraine did not have. All the indications are that Russia's conflict with the west will continue for the foreseeable future which is an important reason why Sweden has revised its doctrine on security policy.

Sweden's non-alignment status dates back to the beginning of the 19th century when Karl Johan XIV declared that Sweden had no intention of retaking Finland which had been integrated into the Russian Empire in 1809. During World War I a non-socialist government declared Sweden neutral, a decision supported by the Social Democrats. Sweden also kept out of World War II. But its actions during the war have been the object of constant discussion and criticism subsequently. German troops were, for example, allowed to pass through Sweden and the export of iron ore to Nazi Germany continued throughout the war.

After World War II Sweden was in favour of and hoped for a Nordic defensive alliance. However Denmark and Norway which had both been occupied by Germany decided to join NATO. Sweden was unwilling to follow suit and Finland was not able to join NATO. The two countries have strong historical ties. Particularly during recent years, the Swedish and Finnish defence cooperation have developed. When Finland announced its intention to join NATO, an essential pillar in the Swedish defence strategy disappeared.

After 1945 Finland was subjected to considerable pressure from the Soviet Union. But Sweden's relationship with the Soviet Union was complicated and characterised by caution notwithstanding recurrent conflicts. For example, in 1981 a submarine armed with nuclear weapons ran aground in Gåsefjärden off Karlskrona, in a restricted military area.

Sweden's security strategy before the fall of the Berlin Wall continued to be based on nonalignment and neutrality. Sweden had built a formidable defence capability, with a particularly strong air defence and a well developed naval capacity. Sweden had also developed its own defence industry to a high technological level. After the end of the Cold War, Sweden disarmed and abandoned conscription. This was a period of détente and disarmament throughout Europe. In recent years Sweden has begun to rearm and call up more citizens to military training. After the outbreak of war in 2022, Sweden decided to increase defence spending to 2% of GNP.

After the end of the Cold War and in response to the era of globalisation, Sweden's relations with the wider world changed. The policy of strict non-alliance and neutrality was step by step revised. One major change was of course Sweden's entry into the European Union in 1995. Moreover Sweden participated in several international military operations, as for example, in Afghanistan. Sweden also participated in NATO's "Partnership for Peace" and has deepened its cooperation with NATO in other ways. It has also initiated military cooperation with the other Nordic countries and in particular with Finland.

The fact that membership of NATO may be described as one of several steps in a series of repositioning moves does not diminish the enormous significance of Sweden's membership of NATO. Sweden is no longer nonaligned and neutral, it is – quite simply – a member in the defensive alliance NATO. ■



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GUNILLA HEROLF

Accession in a time of challenges

Expert article • 3621

No accession to NATO has been like the Swedish, and to a degree, the Finnish one. The two of them were unique in that their accessions took place against the backdrop of war in Europe. Finland was admitted to NATO in April 2023, and as Sweden joined, one year later, the situation has again changed dramatically.

A major concern now is that the Russian war against Ukraine may spread to other countries, primarily Georgia and Moldova, which are already partly controlled by Russia and the objects of Russian attempts of infiltration. Another cause for anxiety has been the statements by Donald Trump on restricting the validity of NATO's Article 5 to those member states who devote a minimum of 2 percent to their defence. Such statements, by a person who may become the next president of the United States, is seen to damage the credibility of NATO. And if the United States would leave NATO, something that cannot be excluded, the situation in Europe will be extremely dangerous.

The uncertainty that Trump's statements have created is serious even if none of his statements will lead to a new American policy, and the possibility that Russia becomes tempted to test whether Article 5 is valid for all cannot be ignored.

Effects on Sweden

Unavoidably, these dramatic events, including the awareness that Sweden might be at war within a few years, have affected the discussion in Sweden. While the major motive for joining NATO was to be protected by the alliance, now it is also about the Swedish contributions in crisis and war.

Several types of roles, like the participation in NATO Air Policing, NATO's Standing Naval Forces and NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence are since long foreseen, planned and talked about.

Another role, has, however, become even more prominent, due to the increasingly serious situation. This is the wartime role of Swedish territory enabling reinforcements to reach Europe from North America as well as serving as a staging and base area for allied ground, sea, and air combat forces. An example of Sweden's role is the ongoing Steadfast Defender exercise, comprising a total of 90 000 soldiers, in which one of the Swedish roles is to serve as a transit country for troops passing via Norway and Sweden towards frontline countries further east under attack.

New policies in Europe

As Sweden and Finland are adjusting to the new situation of becoming NATO members while facing a future fraught with dangers, other European countries are changing too. Several leaders, like Olaf Scholz and Emmanuel Macron, now express their fears that within a few years NATO may find itself at war with Russia. Their views on how to contribute to Ukraine's defence often tend to differ, but the views on Russia and the possibilities to come to terms with this country have changed considerably in both Germany and France.

The French policy change is more profound than that of any of the others. President Macron's vision of the future has for a long time been that of a European pillar that will include a reformed Russia while keeping the United States at some distance. In the light of a prolonged Russian aggression those illusions are now gone. His ambitions are instead focusing on the European Political Community, including a large number of countries, i a Ukraine and the United Kingdom but not Russia.

Another major change on the European scene is the return of Poland to the western fold, symbolized by the revival of the Weimar triangle, of France, Germany and Poland. Together with the changes described above, this means a shift in Europe towards the views that have been held by eastern and northern countries all along.

The impact of European rifts

These changes do not mean that unanimity in Europe is total. There are still considerable differences among political parties and people and a few countries hold views that others label pro-Russian. The fact that all do not see Russia in the same way was illustrated when some dismissed the idea of a Baltic successor to Jens Stoltenberg on the grounds of likely being "too anti-Russian". This is the region which timely and correctly warned of the Russian attack that others did not see.

It should, however, not be forgotten that Europe has other challenges, prominent among them the war between Israel and Hamas. Again, however, Europeans are divided in their views and both the EU and NATO have little leverage in the area.

Two years ago, after the Russian attack on Ukraine, the western world surprised both themselves and others by their firm support for Ukraine and still new rounds of sanctions are decided on. But the lack of military success for Ukraine has dampened the enthusiasm in Europe and the stalemate in the US Congress which has stopped American support to Ukraine has made the frailty of Western unity clear. As a Trump victory this autumn becomes more probable, the need for cohesion in Europe is crucial and somehow the rifts need to be healed. The stakes could not be higher. ■

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Finland and Sweden in NATO - Bridging the gap between hard and soft security in the Baltic Sea region

Expert article • 3622

The risk of a confrontation between the allied West and Russia has increased in the Baltic Sea region since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and unprovoked war in Ukraine in 2022. From the point of view of security in the Baltic Sea region, Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership is a much-welcomed beam of light both from a hard and a wider security perspective.

Starting with hard security, Finland's and Sweden's NATO memberships will significantly contribute to the defense and deterrence in the wider Euro-Atlantic region. As part of NATO's Concept for Deterrence and Defence for the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA), the entire Nordic-Baltic region is tied to NATO's new regional defence plans. Some even suggest, that a deterrence by denial bubble will be created, increasing the costs of potential attack by an adversary. More precisely, this could be achieved by joint coordination of allied air and missile defense capabilities, airspace and subwater dominance, shared intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) information in the region, as well as developing readiness through operations and exercises in the region.

As NATO members, Finland and Sweden will bring a considerable reinforcement to NATO's conventional capability with their fleets of vessels, mine-laying, hunting, and clearing, submarine and anti-submarine capabilities, as well as the coastal defence expertise to defend the Baltic Sea area. However, it is not only Finnish-Swedish naval power that strengthens the collective defence of the Baltic Sea region. Finland's and Sweden's NATO memberships should be viewed from a wider, 360-degree perspective, encompassing all different operational areas, including, air, land, and cyber, in addition to the traditional maritime domain.

Consider for instance, the combined air power capabilities in the Baltic Sea region with the Finnish and Swedish reinforcements in NATO. The combined total number of technologically advanced fighter aircrafts of the four Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden will figure close to some 300 by 2030s, which is more than some of the larger and more capable European regional powers have. Or the types of possibilities open for the land forces, to use the land and the archipelagic areas in the Baltic Sea region, as staging areas for troops or as exercise domains.

NATO's peace-time operations in the Baltic Sea region are another indication of enhanced response in the region to Russia's imminent threat. Sweden has already announced its intentions to send a considerable enforcement to the Canadian-led NATO Forward Land Forces (FLF) in Latvia, and Finland is reportedly contemplating force contributions in the British-led contingency in Tapa, Estonia, in addition to possible future contributions to NATO's air-policing missions of the Baltic. Furthermore, both Finland and Sweden are expected to contribute to NATO's force posture in times of crisis.

Hard security, however, really becomes a force multiplier when it enables and advances societal resilience in the region. Finland's and Sweden's NATO membership will further improve security of supply and national resilience in the region, as the two countries will be able to participate fully in NATO's civil emergency planning, benefit from NATO's common resources, situational awareness, and capabilities, and deepen cooperation with the key allies in region. For Finland securing sea transport is an existential question of security of supply, as more than 90% of the Finnish imports and exports are transported by sea. While Finland remains vulnerable to maritime traffic disturbances, NATO membership may alleviate the concern of maintaining safer maritime transport routes in the Baltic Sea region.

From a wider security perspective, one major security concern relates to environmental impact of a potential military conflict or hybrid operation in the region. While NATO might not be in position to stop such a disaster from happening, it can ensure that all key players in the region are prepared to act in unison if it does. To better prepare for such circumstances, other unilateral formats of security cooperation, such as the Northern Group between Baltic and North Sea states, or the Council of the Baltic States, should continue to work towards a common goal, developing strategies and tools to better prepare for tackling wider security threats.

Finally, by bringing their strong societal resilience and educational models to NATO, Finland and Sweden should demonstrate, how hard security and soft security are in fact, interconnected and how the gap between the two can be bridged. A beginning for such a dialogue could be an annual tabletop exercise engaging key civilian and military stakeholders from all allied countries in the Baltic Sea region. ■

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NATO's northern enlargement – consequences for Denmark

Expert article • 3623

On March 7, 2024, Sweden formally – and finally – became NATO's 32nd member. Together with Finnish membership, NATO's northern enlargement fundamentally change the security geography of the Baltic Sea region and the Arctic region. With new and capable Nordic members, the Baltic Sea is by many commentators heralded as a 'NATO lake', and integrating Swedish and Finnish territory in the Alliance makes the North Cape a seamless NATO operating space. NATO's northern enlargement undoubtedly strengthens NATO – politically as well as from a military planning perspective.

But what are the consequences from a Danish perspective? Across the board, NATO's northern enlargement is seen as a good thing by Danish decision makers and the Danish security policy commentariat. In addition to a shift in the regional balance of power, the enlargement opens new possibilities for further Nordic defense cooperation – a popular political option in Denmark. And indeed, the Nordics have been quick to initiate even closer operational defense cooperation, including prominently in the air domain. Still, NATO's northern enlargement also brings with it new choices and pose new challenges for Danish defense and security policy.

First, and by clear geographical dictate, Denmark stands out compared to the three other European Nordics and risks some marginalization within that group. Finland, Norway, and Sweden share either a land border or close proximity to Russia. From an air and land perspective, close cooperation between the three makes sense operationally, especially around the North Cape. Denmark's immediate utility in this military theater is low. Indeed, military geography indicates a potentially wider division of labor within the Baltic Sea Region with Denmark's responsibilities centered on maintaining allied control of the Danish Straits and functioning as a staging area for allied troops moving into the Baltic Sea Region. This, to a certain extent, would be tasks shared with Norway and Sweden, which underlines that increased Danish cooperation with the other Nordics is not an either/or-question, but about the countries flexibly coming together in different settings.

Another challenge follows from the political and diplomatic dynamics and workings of NATO HQ in Brussels. What individual allies bring to the table are key to determining their status. Military capabilities are evidently the most important currency in this status game, but other more intangibles ones also count. Especially Finland has arrived in NATO with high status. On the intangible end of the scale, Finland is widely seen as having new and valuable experience with and knowledge about Russia. Finland being 'in the know' about Russia is manifest both in the force structure of the Finnish armed forces and in the resilience of wider Finnish society. Both are attuned to the threat from Russia. That is not the case in Denmark where the armed forces have been fundamentally re-structured to conduct stabilization operations in the Global South. Finnish and Swedish membership inevitably leads to a relative Danish status loss. In general terms, the Nordics are often seen as a group, and thus easily compared. With all the Nordics in NATO, a certain amount of intra-Nordic beauty contest is to be expected, with each country jockeying for status and influence.

The very Nordic togetherness that is generally seen as a major strength, both inside and outside the region, may thereby also come with risks – it may be too much of a good thing. On the one hand, solidarity is a strong norm in NATO. Security is supposed to be a shared collective good within the alliance, and NATO is historically allergic to regionalization. On the other hand, there are high expectations that one of the things the Nordics bring to NATO is the ability to work closely together. The Nordics need to jointly handle this paradox. In the same vein, relations to neighboring countries and regions also need to be taken into consideration. Not least the Baltic states' individual and collective defense and security relations to the Nordics and the Nordic region are in flux. With increased Nordic cooperation comes risks to other valued and long-held Danish relations.

The analyzed challenges and choices do not fundamentally alter the bottom-line: NATO's northern enlargement is a positive development for Denmark. It marginalizes Russia regionally in Denmark's "near abroad", and it creates a new impetus for increased Nordic defense cooperation. In terms of both geography and like-mindedness, NATO's center of gravity moves closer to Denmark. Yet, even positive international developments need to be managed if states are to realize their full potential. ■



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TOMAS JANELIŪNAS

A steely gaze, not panic: NATO's response to rising anxieties

Expert article • 3624

The echoes of Russia's advance in the Ukrainian war rumble across Europe, particularly in the Baltic states, where anxiety is clearly on the rise. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Gabrielius Landsbergis, addressing the UN Security Council in February 2024, summarised the dominant concern: "If we fail, the rules-based order will crumble. Ukraine's sovereignty, Europe's security, as well as the success of global efforts for human rights, accountability, food security and nuclear safety - will all be in the hands of those who benefit from disruption and chaos ... Hedging our bets earns us nothing but more war. Russia is being emboldened by our cautious response".

While acknowledging these legitimate concerns, avoiding succumbing to alarmism is imperative. Instead, we must wield a steely gaze guided by reason and proactive deterrence. Fear and anxiety must not paralyse our societies or decision-making. On both sides of the Atlantic, NATO countries' leaders must seize this moment to reassess their defence postures. Increased investment in conventional and nuclear deterrence and bolstered military capabilities is a proactive, not panicked, response to change.

Amidst all challenges related to different modes of civil and military planning (in Lithuania, we are already in a "pre-war" mode, but only in rhetoric), we must not lose sight of the fundamental differences between the Ukraine war and a hypothetical Russia's confrontation with NATO. Russia, depleted in equipment and personnel, is unlikely to challenge the alliance militarily. Kremlin's true power lies in sowing discord, exploiting societal vulnerabilities, and weakening resolve in democracies. We must not fall prey to this tactic.

The upcoming NATO Summit in Washington will be watched, seeking a sign that the resolve in the US and Europe to deter Russia is on increase, supplemented by clear commitments to solidify military means and political will. This is why NATO must ensure a solid outcome regarding Ukraine at the Washington summit. The mere survival of Ukraine is not enough. Ukraine must be equipped properly to win the war and provide a clear path to NATO membership. Therefore, a key to the success of deterring Russia lies in extending an invitation for Ukrainian membership already this July, with the final date of accession contingent upon securing a stable security environment within the country. An invitation to join NATO does not mean immediate membership. It could signify a long-term commitment and serve as a powerful message of solidarity, deterring further Russian aggression.

Luke Coffey, the senior fellow at the Hudson Institute (Washington DC), in his testimony for the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation of the United States Senate, in February 2024, even provided the specific wording that could be included in the NATO communique:

"We fully support Ukraine's right to choose its own security arrangements. We reaffirm the commitment made at the 2008 summit in Bucharest that Ukraine will become a member of NATO. We reaffirm the commitment made at the 2023 summit in Vilnius that Ukraine's future is in NATO. Today we extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the alliance with the final date of membership to be determined when Allies agree that the security environment inside the country is satisfactory. Ukraine has become increasingly interoperable and politically integrated with the alliance and has made substantial progress on its reform path. We reaffirm the decision made at the 2023 summit in Vilnius that Ukraine's path to full Euro-Atlantic integration has moved beyond the need for the Membership Action Plan. NATO's commitment made at the 2008 summit in Bucharest, Ukraine's reforms in the defense and security sectors since 2014, its candidacy status for EU membership in June 2022, the official commencement of accession talks for EU membership in December 2023, noting that the EU has a mutual defense clause (Article 42.7 TEU) based on the ideas of NATO's Article 5, the G7's Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine in July 2023, and the United Kingdom's Agreement on Security Co-operation with Ukraine in January 2024, all underpin our decision to extend an invitation to Ukraine today."

This proposition aligns with what Ukraine and the Baltic states are waiting for – a resolved confirmation that NATO is ready to get on counter-offence vs Russia, at least in a political way. Let us channel our anxieties into a renewed commitment to proactive deterrence and unwavering support for Ukraine. With unwavering resolve and strategic action, we can effectively deter Russia, secure Ukraine's future, and ensure Europe's stability. ■



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HANNA WASS & S.M. AMADAE

Security and defense policies need dynamic democratic support

Expert article • 3625

Finland's security and defense policy environment has changed significantly over the past two years. After Russia began its large-scale attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, it quickly became clear that it was necessary to re-evaluate our security and defense policy choices. Finns interpreted NATO membership as providing Finland with a necessary and viable military deterrent against Russia. After an intense chain of events and a period of waiting for ratification by Turkey and Hungary, Finland was accepted as a member of the defense alliance on April 4, 2023.

Whereas the 2023 Finnish parliamentary elections were strongly focused on national economic policy, the presidential elections held at the beginning of this year placed the role of NATO-Finland within the reach of citizens' democratic control. Untypically to Finnish political culture in defense and security issues, the presidential candidates openly debated the opportunities and obligations that Finland's NATO membership entail. Of the two candidates in the second round, Alexander Stubb campaigned for a strong NATO, more NATO in Finland, and more Finland in NATO, including participation in its nuclear deterrence. Pekka Haavisto, in turn, represented a diplomacy-orientated standpoint by emphasizing a multipolar defense collaboration and perceiving nuclear weapons as a mechanism for crisis escalation rather than a peace guarantee.

In the rapidly changing geopolitical and economic environment, new national security and defense issues have appeared. Continuation of military and financial support for Ukraine, deepening lines of division between the Global South and the Global North, the strained relations between China and the United States as well as the accelerating conflict in the Middle East require active engagement. Tensions in world politics strengthen the paradigm of comprehensive security, incorporating a broad conceptualization of security from military to climate, pandemic, terrorism, resource scarcity, and migration. It also expands the spectrum of actors involved in crisis management to include, for example, national central banks, which played a significant role in handling the Covid-19 pandemic.

The contemporary political context activates all sorts of security needs among citizens. Citizens' expectations change dynamically as a response to security and defense policy decisions as well as to the frames through which politics are interpreted. To strengthen legitimacy and ensure democratic input in decision-making on security and defense issues, it is essential to take into account the adapting character of public opinion.

In our "Dynamic Support for Security and Defense Policy (NATOpoll)" research project, we interview the same respondents every six months. The findings show that Finns' support for NATO remains high: 82 percent were in favor of membership in our latest survey round, conducted in November 2023 (n=2,038). In line with the newly appointed President Stubb, citizens support a strong NATO, consider Finland's active role in the defense alliance important, and are willing to invest in meeting the expectations that come with membership.

While the majority still view nuclear weapons critically as part of NATO membership, there has been a notable shift of attitudes. In a measurement in June, only 27 percent were willing to allow the transportation of nuclear weapons through Finland, but this has increased to 38 percent in five

months. A majority of the voters for the leading government party, the National Coalition, are already in favor. Similarly, one-fifth are willing to have nuclear weapons deployed on Finnish territory, which is almost double the proportion reported in summer 2023. This can be seen as a clear indication of dynamically developing public opinion within the general security environment.

Alongside NATO commitments, citizens support increasing cooperation in EU-level defense as well as maintaining a strong national defense. Certain themes divide citizens especially along the left-right dimension, such as the demilitarization of Åland, anti-personnel landmines, and nuclear weapons. However, disagreement appears to be a question of pluralism and dispersion of views instead of sharp polarization with clearly opposing opinions. Overall, there is a notable consensus on Finland's broadly construed security interests. The same applies to the policy-makers, as all central actors formulating Finland's security and foreign policy currently represent the same party.

Consensus is a considerable strength for a small nation especially in a turbulent international security environment. At the same time, it increases the risks of certain political frameworks becoming overemphasized while important contradictory perspectives are neglected. A largely shared understanding of the status quo may lead to narrow scenarios and a lack of vision. Listening to opposing voices and constantly monitoring dynamic citizen perspectives will ensure that the security decisions made now will remain sustainable in the future. ■



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ALBERT WECKMAN

The formation of security policy attitudes in Finland

Expert article • 3626

Finland's choice to join NATO highlights the significant role public opinion can play in shaping national foreign and security policy decisions. It's reasonable to suggest that the swift endorsement from the political elite for Finland's accession to the alliance, might not have occurred without a substantial shift in public support in 2022. It's even plausible to consider that, without the robust backing reflected in public opinion polls, the decision to join NATO might not have been made at all.

Given the evident attention the political elite pays to public opinion, understanding it becomes a priority. Despite decades of surveying the Finnish public on foreign- and security policy issues, the underlying mechanisms of these attitudes remain largely unknown. My research aims to shed light on how security policy attitudes are developed and what influences them. It's clear that these security attitudes are highly responsive to significant changes in the external security environment. For instance, support for NATO membership in Finland has over the years notably shifted in the wake of aggressive actions by Russia, especially in 2014 and 2022. The sensitivity of public opinion to security shocks aligns with findings from previous research in other parts of the world in various global contexts.

As the security landscape deteriorates, certain security concerns become more crucial, notably citizens' willingness to defend their nation. Finland, much like Ukraine, relies on a substantial military reserve as the cornerstone of its national defense. This reliance highlights how important it is with a robust desire among citizens to protect their country against foreign aggression, a sentiment also clearly demonstrated in Ukraine's defense efforts. Despite a generally high readiness to counter foreign aggression in Finland, clear socioeconomic differences exist among its citizens. Our recent research findings reveal a significant correlation, or link, between individuals' personal wealth and their determination to resist foreign military aggression. In other words, the more personal assets you have, the more willing you are to personally defend Finland against any potential threats.

Beyond its national defense, Finland has now integrated into NATO's collective defense, often referred to as the "musketeer's clause". This clause not only provides defense guarantees but also requires Finland's support for allies in times of need. This means that Finland needs to formulate new policies on how to assist allies if they are attacked. Sentiments among Finnish citizens show strong support for providing military aid in form of weapons and equipment to defend an ally, though there is more hesitation regarding the dispatch of military reservists. This perspective is based on data from surveys conducted in November 2023 by the NATOpoll research project. Delving deeper into the factors that cultivate a strong sense of alliance solidarity, my preliminary research indicates that individuals with a strong attachment to Europe are significantly more supportive of Finland aiding its NATO allies during conflicts. This suggests that as long as Finns feel a strong European attachment, they are likely to view supporting their allies as crucial also in the future. Conversely, a weakening sense of European attachment could negatively affect the commitment to NATO's collective defense strategy.

Since public opinion will continue to influence national policy makers, it's important to acknowledge that a current strong public support for a certain policy does not guarantee that its permanent. Security policy attitudes are deeply influenced by the context and can rapidly change in response to shifts in the security landscape. It's likely that the consensus in Finland regarding security issues will fluctuate over time. Public opinion surveys offer important insights but require careful interpretation, particularly when applied to complex matters like national security—areas that are challenging for individuals to fully comprehend or understand. Therefore, it's important to bear in mind that a significant surge in opinion is often followed by a decline. Eventually, public attitudes tend to stabilize and reverse. However, predicting when and to what extent this will occur is, of course, difficult so say. ■

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STEN RYNNING

Will Europe return to balance of power politics?

Expert article • 3627

After 75 years of respite, Europe may be returning to balance of power politics. The cause hereof is Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine but most notably the inadequacy of the Western response to it.

NATO, turning 75 in April 2024, was never primarily about the balance of power. NATO was designed by the United States—which responded to the prodding of British and other leaders—to solve Europe's balance of power problem once and for all. The United States entered into a peacetime military commitment to overcome, not participate in balance of power politics.

Readers will be familiar with the Marshall aid of 1947 that offered Europeans much needed financial recovery aid in return for a commitment to unite. In many ways, the Marshall aid program was the starting shot of European integration. By thus tying Europeans to the mast of permanent and institutionalized cooperation, the United States sought to prevent the return of balance of power politics.

NATO has in this regard received less attention as a transformational initiative. After all, it was a political-military alliance to balance Soviet power. However, NATO was the security piece of the transformational design of US policy: bringing security to Europeans was meant to enable political transformation. Yes, NATO should keep 'the Russians out,' but the Alliance's primary purpose was to encourage confidence and cooperation in a Europe protected by an American security umbrella.

NATO's treaty therefore speaks of no evil. It speaks instead of community building, referring to the UN Charter and peace among its members. The treaty envisages this peace as durable, for as long as it is protected. Thus, Senator Vandenberg, who did so much to enable American entry into its first overseas peacetime alliance, and who negotiated the UN Charter's collective security clause, was adamant: NATO was a facet of collective security, not a return to some European-style balance of power politics.

This history matters tremendously to the Atlantic Alliance that today struggles to fashion an adequate response to Russia's war on Ukraine. As I lay out in my book, *NATO: From Cold War to Ukraine, A History of the World's Most Powerful Alliance* (Yale UP, 2024), NATO is in fact struggling to maintain its core function as a peace community within which security competition between its members is unthinkable.

How did it get to this point? Three factors have conspired to drive NATO into its state of doubt. The first is geopolitical shortsightedness. NATO allies have never fully resolved the tension between their promise to make Europe free for all and then their tendency to reduce conflicts on Russia's borders and neighboring regions to post-Soviet affairs. In 2008, NATO allies promised Ukraine and Georgia a future inside NATO but then drew back. The result has been to whet Russia's appetite for geopolitical revision and enhance its ability to use the Eastern European space as a testing bed for its revisionist policy.

The second is defense fatigue. NATO's treaty specifies in its Article 3 that defense first and foremost is a national responsibility, adding that collective will is important too. Since the retreat from the Afghan combat mission in 2011-2012, allies have mostly wanted to forget about this

national responsibility. In effect, they went on a defense-free vacation. NATO allies did respond in modest ways to the Russian seizure of Crimea, but the build-up of trip wires and 'enhanced forward presence' was limited. Today we know that it failed to impress Russia, which in 2022 returned Europe to major war.

The final factor is respect for Russia as a major nuclear power inside Europe. Thirty years of belief in progress tempt the idea that Europe's future stability must somehow include peace diplomacy with Russia—perhaps when the war in Ukraine freezes and when East-West diplomacy gains better scope. A Europe whole and free, is the underlying sense, must involve Russia.

These three factors combine into a cocktail of geopolitical laxism. Defense fatigue, political divisions, and Russia politics drive the idea that sooner or later, NATO allies must talk to Russia and strike a continental deal. The idea is still not dominant. But it is wedging itself into a reality where US leadership is waning and where European allies struggle to cohere and make an impact to the benefit for Ukraine. Negotiation with Russia will be dressed up as reasonable: a measure to deal with the cost of the war and to get on with other business.

However, no one should be in doubt that when negotiation with Russia takes precedence over self-sufficiency in terms of collective defense, NATO will have parted company with its legacy. This NATO, adapting to the balance of power and to Russia's dominance of its near abroad, will no longer suffice to create peace in Europe. It is not yet NATO's course, but it is something everyone vested in NATO's peace should be concerned about and actively seek to counter. ■



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TORMOD HEIER

Does NATO prepare for the right war?

Expert article • 3628

From January to May 2024, NATO conducts its largest exercise since the Cold War, *Steadfast Defender 2024*. Approximately 90,000 troops from 32 member-states participate in a scenario where Russia is contained, deterred, and eventually defeated. Not only in Central-Europe, in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania but along a 2700-kilometer-long front. From the Kola Peninsula in the Arctic to Kaliningrad in the Baltic Sea, Russia's newly restored Leningrad and Moscow Military Districts are put to the test.

The world's most powerful alliance should have a fair chance of success. The NATO-members account for more than 50 percent of the world's total expenditure on military hardware. They are thus accountable for more than half of the world's total Gross Domestic Production (GDP). Together, the 966 million citizens from many of the world's most prosperous countries can mobilize over 3,6 million troops, 20,000 aircrafts and 1200 navy vessels. And almost as many nuclear weapons as Russia's 5889. Russia's 143 million citizens, with a GDP at the size of Texas, can mobilize 1,4 million soldiers, 4000 aircrafts and just below 600 navy vessels. Russia's ground forces are for years to come bogged down in Europe's second largest state, Ukraine. As Europe enters 2025, Russia's ground force will likely have suffered over half a million casualties; all 170 tactical battalion groups decimated.

The numbers are uncertain. But they indicate one thing: Russia is militarily dwarfed compared to NATO. Since the 2022-invasion, the Alliance has become more cohesive, more agile, and more credible in deterring Russian aggression. The contrast to NATO's indecisiveness after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea is stark. Ten years ago, the Alliance spent over six months discussing whether to deploy reinforcements into Baltic and Polish territories. It was only in 2017 that the first four multinational battlegroups were deployed to Poland and the Baltics. As Russia launched its 2022-invasion, NATO had more than 40,000 troops under its command in May.

Is *Steadfast Defender 2024* therefore the appropriate answer? Is it likely that Russia, despite its' political, military, and economic inferiority, will pose a credible military threat to Northern-European NATO-members anytime soon? A full-scale war with Russia is definitively a worst-case scenario, but is it likely?

On the one hand, a diverse and fragmented NATO must always improve interoperability. As "culture eats strategy for breakfast", joint exercises inside a multinational chain-of-command are key to overcome incompatible and competing procedures, techniques, and tactics. On the other hand, is it likely that Russia will wage war on Western premises, in accordance with NATO's conventional plans, doctrines, and procedures? Russia is more likely to follow the perennial logic of China's general and philosopher Sun Tzu. Codifying common sense 2500 years ago, his *Art of War*-doctrine argues that inferior forces will always avoid the opponent's stronger side. Focus should be on adversary vulnerabilities.

It is therefore unlikely that Russia will launch a conventional campaign against NATO's strength. Russia's lines of operation unfold below the threshold of war. Russian troops will only have a supporting role, confined to snap exercises, aggressive signaling, and coercive diplomacy. The supported element, Russia's key players, are the secret services: the FSB-disinformation agents, the GRU-assassination teams, and the SVR-affiliated *Cozy Bear* hacker groups. Being inferior to NATO's unprecedented force, Russia's most likely course of action will unfold within the NATO-member' local communities and municipalities: liberal, transparent, and vulnerable cities that – as seen from the Kremlin – are perceived as favorable grey zones. For instance, in operations that blur the ambiguous interface between war and peace, between state security and public safety, or within the fragmented sector-oriented, state-driven Western bureaucracy. This is a frontline where delegation of governmental roles and responsibilities make NATO-member states tardy, fragmented, and inefficient. Particularly against more flexible and neatly coordinated Russian competitors.

As NATO prepare for a worst-case scenario: Could it be that the world's mightiest alliance prepares for the wrong war? Should *Steadfast Defender 2024* instead have trained the myriad of prime ministers, presidents, mayors, police chiefs, voluntary NGOs, and home guard commanders? For the next decade, these civilian and semi-civilian actors will be NATO's first line of defence. Maybe it is time to think more rationally about Russian threat perceptions: neatly orchestrated operations with malign intents; not against NATO's strong points, but against liberal democracies' critical vulnerability: the social fabric that rests upon public confidence, national cohesion, and trust. Russia's target-list is not NATO but the feeble web of social interaction that binds citizens and their governments together as one coherent and resilient actor. ■



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TRINE FLOCKHART

Is NATO ready for the multi-order world?

Expert article • 3629

NATO celebrates its 75th birthday on the 4th of April 2024. Yet, despite advancing age, NATO is not heading for retirement but is playing an active role in a European security environment that is now dominated by Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. Indeed, if Putin's aim was to weaken NATO by invading Ukraine, he was gravely mistaken as the war appears to have turned NATO from a rather sluggish - by Macron's account "brain dead" alliance, into a dynamic, stronger, and bigger alliance that has taken decisions about its present and future role no one would have dreamt possible before February 2022.

Yet, despite the many positive developments such as the admission of Finland and Sweden and the important decisions at the summits in Madrid in 2022 and Vilnius in 2023 to strengthen NATO's capacity to defend its member states, the birthday celebrations will take place in the shadow of a rapidly worsening European security environment, continued transformation of the global rules-based order, widespread contestations against the value foundations of the liberal international order, and growing nervousness about the status of the Alliance under a possible Trump presidency.

This brief article argues that whilst NATO certainly should be applauded for the swift reactions to the worsening security environment in Europe, NATO has been less successful in addressing persistent contestations against its value base and to plan policies in accordance to the emerging international system that can now be characterized as multi-order rather than multipolar.

What is a multi-order world?

Security practitioners seem convinced that the world is changing from unipolarity to multipolarity. However, the characterization of the global system as multipolarity is a view that is anchored in Eurocentric/Western understandings of the international system with an exaggerated emphasis on shifting power and without fully capturing the complexity of the current transformation and that the structure of global relations increasingly is fragmented into different clusters - or international orders.

To fully understand the challenges ahead for NATO, it is necessary to look beyond the impact in the European security environment of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and to consider the ongoing war as an integral part of the transformation into a multi-order system, consisting of several international orders, including the American-led liberal international order, the Russian-led Eurasian order and the Chinese-led Belt and Road order. More orders of either a regional or faith-based nature may well be in the making, which inevitably will produce a highly pluralistic global ordering architecture. Within this context, it is important to be clear about the increasing need for NATO to not only maintain its capacity to defend against threats to NATO members' security, but also that NATO should prepare policies that can sustain the liberal international order's position within the new multi-order world.

A multi-order global architecture constitutes a major change because the relational dynamics will be *within* and *between* different international orders, rather than between sovereign states. Such a change will require extensive rethinking about NATO's roles in the future as NATO will have to manage relationships *within* the liberal international order and relationships *between* international orders – most notably between the liberal international order and the Russian-led and the Chinese-led orders. It is still uncertain if the multi-order world will be cooperative, competitive or conflictual, but it seems certain that NATO as the main security institution *within* the liberal international order, will have a significant

role to play in ensuring constructive relationships between the orders of the multi-order world. In contemplating NATO's future, it is therefore important to fully acknowledge NATO's role within the multi-order world rather than to continue being fixated on past versions of polarity as the foundation for NATO's future.

A continued adherence to the assumption of a return to multipolarity reflects anchoring in the past that is likely to be damaging for the future.

Between the pull of adapting to the future or going back to the past

The problem is that whilst NATO has been busy getting ready militarily for the new European security challenges, it appears to have overlooked the need to adapt to the changing global environment. Because NATO interprets the current order transformation as a move towards multipolarity rather than multi-order, it has failed to distinguish between NATO's role *within* the liberal international order and NATO's (more limited) role in forging constructive relations *between* the different international orders that are now part of the global rules-based order. This is a problem because the two require quite different policies. Policies *within* the liberal international order must be anchored in liberal values such as democracy, the rule of law, economic and political freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of religion. Policies *between* different international orders, on the other hand, will be less focused on individual (human) rights, prioritizing instead state centric principles such as sovereignty and the principle of equality with more space for cultural and political diversity. In the context of assessing NATO's role going forward, the distinction between the two is important to incorporate into policymaking in a way so that liberal values can be the foundation of policy and practice *within* the liberal international order, whilst thinner and more universally accepted values will be the best that can be hoped for in policy *between* different orders.

Today, NATO needs to urgently distinguish between the two and to take strategic decisions with the understanding that liberal policies will have little sway in the global rules-based order but are crucial for sustaining the liberal international order. Given the rapid and extensive deterioration of the European security environment and the potential for a dramatic change in the transatlantic relations underpinning NATO, it is understandable that NATO is overtly focused on its military preparedness. Yet, if NATO is to maintain a constructive role within the new global ordering architecture, it is imperative to proceed in a way that clearly distinguishes between policies within NATO and the liberal international order and policies that are geared towards the complexity of the multi-order world. ■

The argument briefly presented here can be found in more detail in the article 'NATO in the Multi-Order World' in the Special Issue of *International Affairs* for March 2024.



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LUDWIG DECAMPS

NATO's digital transformation: Evolution, assessment and opportunities in the Baltic region

Expert article • 3630

On the 4th of April, 75 years ago, 12 countries gathered at the Departmental Auditorium in Washington D.C. in a historic ceremony that would shape the future of international relations. The North Atlantic Treaty was signed and NATO was born.

President Truman's address on that day emphasized the importance of nations "so deeply conscious of their common interests" coming together to preserve peace and to protect it in the future.

His words still resonate today. The accession of Finland in April 2023 and the recent membership of Sweden as the 32nd Ally, attests to the enduring commitment from like-minded nations to safeguard our collective security now, and in the future.

12 founding members then, 32 today, a stronger Alliance, and a shift in focus. The proliferation of cyber threats and the integration of technology in all aspects and domains of modern warfare have triggered a profound adaptation towards digitalisation which reflects on the Alliance's commitment to staying relevant in today's strategic environment.

For 75 years, NATO has been the bedrock of transatlantic peace, stability and security, whether on land, at sea, or in the air, and now in cyber and space. Today, in a more complex and unpredictable world, the Alliance's continued political and military success and its ability to fulfil its tasks will rely on its capacity to adopt technologies to conduct multi-domain operations in a robust, resilient, and interoperable manner.

For this, an enhanced situation awareness, data-driven decision-making and strengthened collaboration with the private sector, civil society and academia are essential. A secure digital enterprise will be key enablers to maintain the technological edge of our armed forces and civil societies.

A shift in focus

The NATO 2030 initiative sets out an ambitious agenda for the next decade, with clear guidelines for further adaptation to address existing, new and future threats, including in cyber space, and a focus on resilience and innovation.

The NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCI Agency), NATO's technology and cyber hub, is an enabler in delivering NATO's 2030 ambitions and driving the digital transformation.

Born from a merger of several NATO entities in 2012, our Agency has a 68-year legacy of supporting the Alliance. From its roots in providing technical advice and software to the operational community in the 1950s, the Agency has evolved in line with NATO's purpose and ambitions over the last decades. Just like the Alliance's values have endured, supporting our forces remains at the heart of our mission. However, our operating environment has drastically changed with the rise of hybrid threats and 'grey zone' operations that fall below the threshold of traditional armed conflict.

The pace of technological change has never been higher, unlocking new opportunities and risks and reshaping our operational strategies. Our mission today reinforces NATO's ability to adapt to an increase in interconnectedness and emerging challenges by embracing and integrating these new technologies to ensure secure, reliable, resilient and efficient collaboration within NATO and enhancing interoperability across the Alliance.

Maximising the value of data through exploitation and sharing within the Alliance will allow us to achieve cognitive and decision superiority. For this, our experts work in cooperation with industry, academia, Allies and Partners, to keep pace of innovation and digital advances and help NATO remain a competitive and leading force in the current uncertain security environment.

The Baltics: NATO digital frontrunners

This renewed sense of threat is perhaps most acute among the three Baltic members, which have long been vulnerable to Russian aggression.

Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia have made use of digitalisation as a powerful tool to rebuild their societies and bolster their resilience since they regained their independence in 1991. Their digitalisation efforts in the adoption of emerging technologies, their enhanced focus on cyber resilience and a flourishing innovation-driven private sector attest their digital maturity.

Estonia's experience in handling the cyber-attacks of 2007 has placed the country as a recognised leader in cybersecurity. Annual exercises such as Cyber Coalition or Locked Shields serve as vital platforms to test resilience to cyber threats and conducting operations. Both of them are organised by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, founded in Tallinn the year of the attacks. The Agency supports the planning and execution of the exercises year in, year out. This year our experts will team up with Latvia to participate in Locked Shields and train together to enhance their skills.

In Latvia, the Agency is also immersed in a 5G project, harnessing the use of this technology to facilitate interoperability in multinational scenarios. Finally, late last year, the Agency extended connectivity for NATO digital networks to support the temporary deployment of NATO AWACS jets to Lithuania, extending the surveillance coverage to monitor Russian military activity near the Alliance's borders in the Baltic region.

The changing nature of conflict and hybridisation of warfare demands the adoption of new technologies like 5G, Artificial Intelligence or cloud. Cognizant of that, Allies have committed an unprecedented increase in defence investment. In 2024, Allies in Europe will invest a combined total of 380 billion US dollars in defence, with 20% earmarked for higher-end and new equipment, as well as for new technologies.



Expert article • 3630

The Baltic countries possess a strong, innovative, research-oriented and globally competitive industry, and a digital-ready workforce, covering many of the areas where the Agency is focusing its efforts. This brings collaboration opportunities for Baltic nationals and private sector to contribute to the Agency's mission and enhance NATO's digital transformation.

Industry is essential in shaping digital interoperability across the Alliance. Conscious of this strategic imperative, the Agency has launched a new outsourcing strategy to support NATO's ambitions and deliver the most effective and efficient solutions against the NATO 2030 priorities. From the development of cyber security solutions, to the supply of advanced communications and information equipment, or the research and development of emerging technologies, the new strategy underscores a growing demand signal. Driven by the NATO 2030 commitments, NATO-wide collective budgets will increase by some 200% over the next six years, bringing new business opportunities for industry to tap in.

Eight months ago, on the shores of the Baltic Sea, we engaged with industry to explore NATO's vision for its future defence capabilities at the NATO Industry Forum. This 2024, as we mark NATO's 75th anniversary, the Agency crosses the Atlantic to launch the second edition of our flagship event. NATO Edge 2024 will take place in Tampa, Florida from 3-5 December, strengthening the transatlantic bond between decision-makers, industry and academia to discuss the technology, collaboration and partnerships required to future-proof the Alliance.

Industry makes NATO stronger. Only by leveraging our partnerships with industry, we will ensure the success of the most enduring alliance in history, and safeguard peace and stability for our future generations. ■



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NEVILLE BOLT

The dilemma of strategic communications

Expert article • 3631

War is an act of communication—an intention to influence through force when all persuasion is abandoned. In the global turbulence of the early 21st century, geopolitics defies easy understanding, shunning the shorthand metaphors of the Cold War. As three major conflicts become increasingly triangulated—the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Gaza tragedy, and China's irredentist claims to Taiwan—making sense of developments eludes the sharpest minds.

NATO's 2030 Reflection Group recently identified a perplexing array of threats in today's world: Russia, China, disruptive technologies, and terrorism, to climate change, pandemics, and hybrid and cyber threats. How should the world's largest security alliance communicate across these primary but predominantly secondary and tertiary fields of effects? What could be the *Leitmotif*? As NATO reaches its 75th anniversary, confronting an existential moment in the history of democracy, it seems appropriate to weigh a key tension inside Western geopolitical communications.

Strategic communications is the new buzzword in the corridors of power, an instant panacea to the world's woes. Its claim to 'see over the horizon' captures 'a holistic approach to communication based on values and interests that encompasses everything an actor does to achieve objectives in a contested environment'. So concluded NATO StratCom's Terminology Working Group. But this concept has struggled in its brief lifetime in geopolitics. Since the late 1990s when a new Secretary General, Kofi Annan, sought to restore confidence in a failing United Nations, making it less preachy and more sensitive to communities' needs around the world, strategic communications has struggled to find its soul.

NATO members have since played host to debates around two competing strands of thought. The empirical and would-be scientific—'messaging' campaigns to change how people think, tactically targeted, adjusted and measured for effect. And by contrast, the long-term, less tangible vision to shape enduring discourses in societies. The first pursued through government spending with short attention spans and short-term changes of direction; the second, a leap of faith, demanding long-term commitment to communities culturally and geographically distant. Instrumentalist tactics versus normative belief. The problem rests on the need for political communicators to deliver tangible outcomes so that political masters can account to taxpayers and voters, while open-ended commitments to change may be condemned as a bottomless spending pit.

Time is the enemy of democratic governance. Four-year cycles for electing politicians militate against long-term planning and meaningful change. Autocracies enjoy the luxury of surviving decades in office, employing guile and force.

This dilemma resonates at a time when Russia's invasion is intent on destroying the state and people of Ukraine. Or, as an icy wind blows from further east where China's President Xi has declared democracy unfit to administer complex societies and their economies. If today's menace from Moscow recalls the dark days of the Berlin airlift and Marshall Plan, it is no surprise that NATO's strategic communicators are reasserting the Alliance's founding values. In the 1940s, these were to be consistent with the United

Nations Charter, safeguarding the security and freedoms of Europe's citizens. Franklin Roosevelt had famously declared the four freedoms in 1941. And NATO's Washington Treaty in 1949 had captured the same spirit, bookending a decade of world war. Today the same freedoms are under threat. And citizens stand in the line of fire.

In 2022, Western governments sought to win support for their democracy-versus-autocracy framing of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The existential claim fell largely on deaf ears across the African continent, reflected in how its leaders subsequently voted at the United Nations. Neither was it their war, nor was democracy their concern. Russia's systematic disinformation and hybrid campaigns continue on an industrial scale, aimed at repositioning the perception of this aggression while fuelling fragmentation and uncertainty in Western societies. All in an unprecedented election year in democracies and electoral autocracies when half the world's population is going to the polls. Exploring democracy's inevitable differences and diversity is democracy's glass half-full; exploiting its cracks and divisions also reveals a glass half-empty.

Ask communications practitioners in the private sector whether freedoms drive their motivation. Their answer rarely exceeds the ambition to deliver efficacy to client governments and value for money. Which begs another question—whether at certain times in history all are forced to choose. Particularly given geopolitics' rush towards transactional dealmaking, which may be further accelerated by this year's newly elected leaders. But at a time of existential survival for many, should strategic communicators not aspire to a higher vision consistent with liberal values that respect individual freedoms and preserve a law-based global order?

The opinions expressed are entirely the author's.



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BEN O'LOUGHLIN

The role of communication in NATO's influence

Expert article • 3632

Let's be clear: In a world politics of multipolarity and the sheer diversity of perspectives humans create, there is no "the" narrative. However, the perception of "a" narrative being convincing to some can shape the policy agendas and spending decisions of states and multilateral organisations. This is why the perception of a narrative performing well relates to influence. That perception affects processes and concrete outcomes. As I write in February 2024, there is evidently no shared narrative at the Munich Security Conference, let alone the UN Security Council. It is not just Nato that cannot set "the" narrative. But it can produce a narrative that a majority of its members can promote as a consensus.

There are many reasons Nato finds influence hard to achieve through communication. The result is that Nato's task is to manage messiness, manage discord, manage opposition. Total autonomy and total clarity are impossible. I will set out four dimensions of this dilemma. They help us plot a pragmatic course for Nato and its communication.

First, this is not a new situation. At an event I attended at Nato Brussels in 2015 even Nato officials identified uncertainty about whether Nato's narrative on Afghanistan was to defeat the Taliban or contain them, or whether this fitted a wider narrative of global security or security for Nato members. Each Nato member had a caveat about what Nato's narrative should be. Some national leaders set their policy through reflex and immediate moral indignation, not long-term strategy coordinated with other Nato members. Nato had to coordinate its own communication with other international organisations. Nato focused their communication around on-the-ground operations, but the UN and EU did not. The result was uncertainty within Nato and about Nato.

Second, diversity of interests continue in Nato. Whether the US or European countries buy oil from Russia or Gulf states, or aspire to energy independence, has been a dilemma even since before the 1973 oil crisis. Colliding interests about Iran compound this. By the late 2010s some European countries still wanted the 2015 Iran nuclear deal restored and viewed Iran at least slightly favourably, while others and US allies were more concerned about a developing Iran-China-Russia relationship.

The Russia-Ukraine war has exposed the intensity of these pressures. Germany finally decided to lower its Russian energy imports. However, Russia is still a huge exporter. Not only does that challenge any notion of a global opposition to Russia. It indicates the US does not control the market, pointing to limits of US power. Market activity disrupts Nato's security narrative.

Third, Nato must navigate how it is narrated by others, not just how it views itself. Nato fits within plots held by states and societies around the world. It is characterised and contextualised based on understandings of its member states, not just its own history. Nato's narrative on Ukraine will not be accepted by many in the global south. I analysed mainstream news from many countries about the Russian invasion through 2022-23, and found very divergent perspectives. This has implications for considering who might offer even tacit support to Nato.

In Malaysia, news reported that Nato wants a second Cold War to justify its own existence. Russia finds Nato eastward expansion 'an existential threat', reported one as an empirical fact in the record of history. Nato members want a long war, not Russia or Ukraine. War makes Nato members' politicians and arms company shareholders richer. Seven of the largest ten arms companies in the world are Western -- six US, one UK. The only bright spot for Nato was Malaysian journalists' sense that China is doing nothing to make peace in Ukraine more likely.

South African reporting was more ambiguous. 'Despite the double standards, lies and hypocrisy of the US, EU, UK, United Nations Security Council and Nato axis,' one wrote, 'Russia's military invasion of Ukraine must be denounced and condemned'. Journalists reported Africa as a continent divided on the war. Some countries voted for the UN resolutions, some against. This indicated some supported international law, some did not -- 'tantamount to endorsing global anarchy', one wrote. The concern was that such anarchy will affect all humankind. That is South Africa's security priority.

In Indian news, I found Nato rarely mentioned. For Indian journalists, world politics involves great powers but not institutional alliances. Should that itself be a concern to Nato?

Fourth, Nato must accept that members -- or potential members -- will try to use Nato for particular ends. This must be acceptable to all members. By defying Russian threats by holding to a willingness to join Nato one day, Ukraine took a calculated gamble: if Russia responded militarily, Nato would respond. And it has. Ukraine's government assessed the insecurity any Russian advance would pose in Central and Eastern Europe. Eventual military victory would depend on using communication to persuade allies to commit resources and will -- because of a shared goal.

Recall the concept "ontological security", the proposition that all actors want a secure identity grounded in a stable environment. Zelensky could exploit vulnerabilities in the West's ontological security. Post-Cold War, a rules-based international order seemed likely to expand inexorably. By 2022 a multipolar order in which Russia can break some rules, and so too some Nato members, exposed a challenge to a sense of self in the West and across Nato. Yet Nato cannot do nothing. It cannot shrink back. It must act. Ukraine would have support. Nato has managed this relatively well, but internal dissent is not unnoticed. There remains the issue too, as described above, of how the rest of the world perceives Nato's actions. ■



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CLAIRE WARDLE

Mitigating misinformation - Baltic Rim

Expert article • 3633

As this is a column about misinformation, most people probably expect a deep dive into the perils of Generative AI or the chaos that might happen in one of the many elections scheduled to take place this year because of disinformation.

But as I sit at my laptop preparing to write this column my eyes are drawn to X, and an example of disinformation that has just appeared on my feed. It is a video, which opens with an image of President Zelensky in army fatigues. The image looks identical to a BBC News report with the same font, graphics and official BBC logo. The video claims that Zelensky received a severance package of \$53million to become UK ambassador. It's not a deepfake. It's a cheap fake that uses the tried and tested method we call 'imposter content', the use of a known logo or name, to by-pass someone's training to 'investigate the source'.

It's an important reminder that for all the discussion of generative AI and election-related disinformation, every day there is a continuous stream of falsehoods, much of it not very sophisticated. It is cheaply made and disseminated and all of it polluting our information ecosystem. While it's tempting to focus on what's new and shiny, we cannot forget the harm caused by the most simple techniques that still have the potential to impact the way people think about almost any issue a society is concerned about.

I use this Zelensky example to underscore that while AI technology is evolving at a worrying speed - the new OpenAI tool Sora that launched last month showcasing how easy it is to create very realistic 60 seconds video from a one sentence prompt - the biggest challenge remains our psychological biases. For those pro-Kremlin supporters who desperately want to believe Zelensky might be soon out of the picture, this rumor does what it needs to do. Almost a decade after the issue of misinformation became a global talking point, it is still causing harm, because we haven't sufficiently invested in cradle-to-grave education programs to help people understand how their brains are being targeted and how vulnerable we all are.

So while we absolutely need to be prepared for the impact of generative AI tools, we need to remember how easy it is to cause harm with little if no technology. Back in 2019 a political operative created a 24-hour news cycle after he took a video of the then US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, slowed down the video slightly to make it appear that she was drunk and slurring her words. In 2018, an impersonator that sounded identical to the then Brazilian Presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro, recorded what sounded like a voice note from his hospital bed (he'd just been stabbed on the campaign trail) and it took three days for audio forensics specialists to figure out it wasn't him. This past week an image of Donald Trump surrounded by a small group of Black supporters was being shared. It turned out it had been created by Generative AI but the same result could have been achieved using photoshop.

So when it comes to mitigating misinformation, the aim shouldn't be waiting for fancy new tools to detect AI, or new election related misinformation initiatives. We have to continue pumping resources into educational initiatives, on a continuous basis, not just when there's an upcoming election. The only way we build resilience in communities is by teaching people not only the tactics and techniques that might get used against them, but teaching them how our brains are too often working against us. We need people to be much more aware of their own biases, and the power of existing world views to shape the way they see any new information. We need to teach people that disinformation is rarely about persuading people to change their mind, it's about strengthening their pre-existing beliefs with the hope of widening existing divisions within society. Chaos, confusion and division is always the goal.

As many countries see increased levels of polarization, it's easier for disinformation actors to cause harm. When the goal is to widen existing divisions, growing distrust and even hatred for the 'other side' provides ripe conditions for disinformation campaigns to be effective. Instead we need to educate people that all of us are vulnerable to believing information that reinforces our world view. Educational initiatives, aimed at under 10s and over 70s should focus on how our brains are being hi-jacked, not how to better google a headline or whether or not to trust wikipedia.

The technologies will continue to get smarter but we all need to understand our brains won't. We'll always be hardwired to connect with others in our 'in-group' over those in the 'out-group'. Understanding that is the only way we build resilience against whatever the latest tool makes possible. ■

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FLEMMING SPLIDSBOEL HANSEN

The ever-increasing threat from disinformation

Expert article • 3634

The 2024 Global Risks Report by the World Economic Forum points to misinformation and disinformation as the most severe threat facing the world in a short term perspective.¹ Behind this lies a recognition of the destabilizing potential of disinformation as malicious actors continue to refine their skills, and technological developments continue to offer still more opportunities for still more advanced and penetrating operations.²

It is by now “the new normal”. All liberal democratic states have long understood that a digitalized media ecosystem, with its overwhelming number of platforms and highly anarchic structure, poses a particular challenge. This challenge has to be mitigated through a variety of approaches, some of which focus on the malicious actors, some on the technology and the platforms, and still others on the intrinsic cognitive resilience of the target populations. There is no silver bullet to end it all, and we should of course all proceed from the shared understanding that this challenge will never go away. In fact, everything suggests that the threat from disinformation is ever-increasing, and we need to remain alert to changes to any of the elements mentioned.

Most readers of these lines were probably equally shocked and fascinated by OpenAIs’ ChatGPT as it gained widespread circulation in 2023. One commentator introduced it with the words, “Picture an AI [Artificial Intelligence] that truly speaks your language — and not just your words and syntax. Imagine an AI that understands context, nuance, and even humor.”³ This was followed, in early 2024, by the OpenAI Sora, an AI-video generator, the mind-blowing features of which led one technology expert to proclaim that “generative video has gone from zero to Sora in just 18 months”⁴

While these are early stage breakthroughs, and users have been quick to point to inaccuracies and glitches, from a disinformation perspective it is easy to see just how powerful and disturbing this is and will be. Even now, these tools may be used to create texts and video of a high quality and complexity and all at the push of a button on a keyboard. Future models will undoubtedly be vastly superior to what is available now. With this in hand, malicious actors may create targeted and more convincing texts devoid of some of the errors in syntax and grammar often seen (for instance inaccuracies stemming from the lack of the definite article “the” in the Russian language) as well as targeted and hyper realistic videos, which will essentially, at least to ordinary viewers, be indistinguishable

from authentic footage. Malicious actors may for instance create countless versions of the same video, changing it to appease or antagonize different demographics (for instance ethnicity, gender, political preferences etc.). It may all be done at infinitesimal costs.

Relevant technologies will obviously continue to develop, and malicious actors will be quick to make use of them and to bring them onto all the platforms available. It will be very hard, if not impossible, to restrict the access of malicious actors to these technologies. This is particularly so if the malicious actor is a state. Technologies used for the creation of disinformation may often be employed reversely, that is, to detect disinformation, which may then be flagged alongside the accounts and platforms on which it appears. However, even if fully automated, there is delay in the monitoring and verification processes, causing disinformation to slip through. It is an illusion to think that we may be able to detect everything, to warn about it or to have it removed and to protect consumers from it. Members of the target population will be exposed to still more sophisticated pieces of disinformation designed to shape their political preferences, undermine their trust in public institutions, radicalize them to go against other groups within society etc.

Cognitive resilience therefore remains of the essence. It includes a firmly held belief in core political norms found within liberal democratic states – these norms should not be easily questioned – and an ability to critically reflect upon the overwhelming flows of information. Luckily, NATO member states are generally well-prepared for the expected wave of still more sophisticated disinformation. However, there is no room for complacency. It is important to continue to share best practices, to learn both individually and collectively and to face this threat together. ■

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1 World Economic Forum, *The Global Risks Report 2024* (2024); available at https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2024.pdf.

2 I define disinformation as information known to be untrue or even deliberately fabricated to achieve certain effects. It is intentionally false. If this information is subsequently spread by someone who is unaware of its false nature, it is reduced to misinformation.

3 Bernard Marr, “A Short History of ChatGPT: How We Got To Where We Are Today”, *Forbes* (19 May 2023).

4 In Will Douglas Heaven, “OpenAI teases an amazing new generative video model called Sora”, *MIT Technology Review* (15 February 2024).



KATE HANSEN BUNDT

Russian imperialism and NATO enlargement

Expert article • 3635

April 4th NATO will commemorate its 75th anniversary. Russia's brutal war on Ukraine proves the continued necessity and relevance of what has been called "the most successful military Alliance in history". However, President Vladimir Putin, blames the West and NATO for the current war in Ukraine. It might be useful to recall some historical facts.

December 17th, 2021, two months before Russia launched its full-scale war on Ukraine, Kremlin sent an ultimatum to NATO and Washington with demands, that if accepted, would have altered the security architecture of Europe significantly. Firstly, NATO had to guarantee that Ukraine or any other state never would become NATO Members; that means ending NATO's "open door" policy anchored in the 1949 Washington Treaty. Secondly, they demanded that NATO withdraw military infrastructure placed in Eastern Europe after 1997; that is before the first eastern enlargement. And thirdly, it proposed that the US should end all its nuclear deployments in Europe. That would leave Russia with a monopoly of nuclear weapons on European soil.

These proposals would have given Russia a veto over NATO policy and was not acceptable to the Alliance. Although, some allies bought the Russian narrative of a NATO threatening Russian security. This was the old tune from Moscow on how Russia was excluded from cooperative security structures after the Cold War and that NATO enlargement had turned NATO into an offensive military alliance creeping up to Russia's borders and posing a grave threat to Russian security.

Russia was never excluded from the new post-cold-war European security order. Already during the German reunification process in 1990 NATO declared that "our previous adversaries are our new partners". Later that year the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), invited all members to celebrate the end of the East-West divide and called for a Europe "whole and free", as it was coined in the Charter of Paris. When the Soviet Union was dissolved, Russia was accepted as the succession veto power in the UN Security Council. Independent Ukraine on its side was in 1994 guaranteed its territorial integrity and national sovereignty through the Budapest memorandum signed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin, in exchange for its nuclear war heads.

The first NATO-enlargement came as late as 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when sovereign Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic became members. The main argument for eastern enlargement was not military, but due to political and stability concerns. The common understanding in NATO was that the new post-cold-war security order had to overcome the old distrust and animosity in Europe by offering dialogue and cooperation in place of confrontation, also with Russia. In 1997 NATO and Russia signed the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security, creating "The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council". In 2002 this was upgraded, and the NATO-Russia Council was established and signed by President Vladimir Putin who welcomed the new era of cooperation between Russia and NATO.

Three years later Putin held a speech claiming that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th Century. In 2007 he held his thunderous speech at the Munich Security Conference where he called out the US as Russia's main enemy and accused the US and NATO of breaking their promise on no future NATO enlargement. The alleged guarantee against NATO enlargement is said to have been given by US Secretary of State James Baker during the discussions on German reunification. No documents have been found where a NATO expansion is ruled out. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbatsjov himself repeatedly refuted such a deal. In fact, the idea of NATO expansion beyond Eastern Germany could not have been on the agenda in 1990, particularly as the Warsaw Pact still existed. To argue that NATO's enlargements is responsible for Russia's two invasions of Ukraine does simply not hold true. NATO is a defensive Alliance with no intention of conquering Russian territory.

Before Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, there were no Allied troops in the eastern part of the Alliance. During the 1990's US forces left Europe in large numbers and European allies reduced their defence budgets to a minimum based on the idea of the so-called "peace dividend". The main understanding in most allied countries, was that a major war in Europe was unthinkable in the 21st century.

In NATO's strategic concept from 2010 Russia was named a "strategic partner". That was changed in 2022, when NATO calls Russia "...the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area." Vladimir Putin's nuclear sable rattling and latest state of the Union speech leaves few hopes for change. As the late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny wrote in Washington Post September 2022, the only way to stop Russia's "...endless cycle of imperial authoritarianism" is to "... ensure that Russia and its government naturally, without, coercion, do not want to start wars and do not find them attractive". Russia must become a true parliamentary republic, with a radical reduction of power in the hands of one person. This is not a job for the West, but for the citizens of Russia. It will not happen tomorrow, next year or even in a decade. And it will, as Navalny knew, require courage and huge sacrifices.

That's why, NATO 75 years ago "... founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law", is as relevant and needed as ever! ■



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MARIA STENROOS

If Putin called you... Finland's new rhetoric a search for identity

Expert article • 3636

If Putin called you to congratulate you on winning the presidential elections, would you answer the call?

This is a question sent from the audience to the two main candidates in February's presidential elections in tv-broadcaster YLE's final tv debate. The winning candidate Alexander Stubb answered: "No, I wouldn't answer."

Over the last two years, Finland has made a huge turn in its foreign and security policy.

In one night, when Russia attacked Ukraine, the cornerstones of the Finnish foreign and security policy collapsed and had to be built again. Finland turned from a neutral, militarily non-allied country into a Nato member and a close partner of the United States.

The question and the answer to an imaginary call from the president of Russia is extremely interesting as it reflects the extent of how totally Finland's rhetoric and attitude towards Russia have changed.

Before, Finland identified itself as part of the Western bloc but was careful not to irritate Russia. This came to an end when Finland asked for Nato membership in 2022 and joined the military alliance in 2023.

During the 2024 presidential election debates, there seemed to be a race between certain candidates, how hawkish their rhetoric on Russia could be and how militarist attitude Finland should take. There was demand for this from the voters.

It is not only the way of talking. The new era demands a lot: both practical military decisions and a massive political line drawing in security and defense.

One example of the new political debate and decision making is the nuclear policy: if Finland should change the legislation on nuclear energy to accept transiting nuclear weapons in the area.

The question of nuclear weapons is at the same time theoretical and very symbolic to the new thinking: if we have the nuclear deterrence of Nato, shouldn't we be ready to host the weapons here on our territory temporarily?

Before, Finland had a common line with other Nordic countries of a non nuclear area.

Finland joined Nato because of the fear of aggression from Russia. The pace of joining was record-breaking. But once let in in the military alliance, what next? It was not discussed until recently, what the new status means in practice.

During the first months of Nato membership it was hard to define what the political will of Finland's role in Nato was. In the Vilnius summit in July 2023, there was only the message of the need to get Sweden to Nato and keep the alliance united. There was no articulation of what Finland wanted from the alliance. That was only starting to be prepared behind the scenes.

Nato membership almost disappeared from the news the months after Vilnius. The topic was swiftly replaced by the new bilateral defense cooperation agreement (DCA) made with the United States, praised by the politicians. In the public debate, DCA even seemed to be more concrete and important than Nato, although the agreement in reality is a technical consequence of the alliance.

Now, a year after the association, the first bigger line drawings are finally visible. Finland will participate in the peacetime posture of Nato air policing and maritime operations, in a moderate scale. In the command structure, Finland wants to be under Norfolk command together with the other Nordic countries. Finland is willing to host the nordic landforce command, to secure the Eastern border.

In Finland there still exists the myth of the Winter War, where Finland survived "alone". In reality, during crises, Finland has always received help from other countries. Now, Finland studies how to make the defense plans together with other allies and how to have the identity of an allied state, which is not alone.

The public debate and political rhetoric on how we speak about Russia seems to have changed permanently. In the media and in politics, the discourse is straightforward.

Russia is named a totalitarian state with an evil leader, ready for cruel warfare.

During the first months of Russian aggression the Finns loved reading news on how bad tactics, morality, logistics and weapons the Russians had. The Ukrainians were heroic.

But the war continued and the dynamics on the frontline changed. Russia seemed to learn fighting and succeeded better. It was not scared of losses of lives of its own soldiers or civil victims. The tone in the public debate became more pessimistic: Ukraine could lose the war.

When the war in Ukraine one day is over, Russia will again shape up, rebuild its army and possibly still have an aggressive stance. The scenarios of Russia attacking Nato countries in some time frame are discussed. In Finland there is very little political questioning on the growing defense budget or new armament.

Though there are the new tough words in political and public rhetoric and though Finns now have both Nato and the DCA, the fear of Russia is still there. ■



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SARAH WIEDEMAR

NATO Article 5 - Collective defense in cyberspace

Expert article • 3637

On February 25, only one day after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg [underscored](#) NATO's commitment to collective defense in cyberspace. A cyberattack against one or more member states can lead to the invocation of Article 5, the cornerstone of the North Atlantic Treaty. Yet, he clarified that NATO would not weaken its position by giving a potential adversary the privilege of defining its red lines and response measures in cyberspace. Instead, the invocation of the right to individual or collective self-defense enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter would depend on a case-by-case assessment whether the cyberattack in question crosses the threshold of an "armed attack".

Cyber defense has been on NATO's political agenda since 2002, but it was not until the unprecedented Distributed Denial of Service campaign against its member state Estonia in 2007 that the Alliance was confronted with the potential impact of cyberattacks on national security. For 22 days, Russian hackers targeted Estonia's public and private networks, including its e-government system, banks, and media outlets. This politically motivated cyber campaign was sparked by the Estonian government's decision to relocate the "Bronze Soldier of Tallinn," a World War II statue, from the city center. The Estonian request for assistance in the wake of the cyberattacks was a wake-up call for the Alliance. For the first time, discussions were held regarding the extension of Article 5 to cyberspace. This deliberation turned into action at the [NATO Summit in Wales](#) in 2014, when member states declared cyber defense to be part of NATO's core task of collective defense. The Allies recognize that cyberattacks can reach a threshold that threatens the prosperity, security, and stability of the Euro-Atlantic region. Two years later, at the NATO Warsaw Summit, the Alliance strengthened this commitment by designating cyberspace as a new operational combat area alongside air, land, and naval warfare. In 2021, NATO went a step further. The [Brussels Summit Communiqué 2021](#) acknowledged that the impact of cumulative cyber activities might, under certain circumstances, amount to an armed attack. This shift came after a series of ransomware activities that affected nearly all critical infrastructure sectors in the United States and other NATO member states and indicates the growing awareness of how damaging cumulative cyber activities can be.

In the past, malicious cyber campaigns targeting or affecting NATO members have not triggered major public discussions on Article 5, with one exception. In July and September 2022, NATO member Albania was the target of an unprecedented malicious cyber campaign on its state and private networks. Investigators traced the destructive activities to four different advanced persistent threat (APT) actors linked to the Iranian government. The APTs aimed at the exfiltration, encryption, and destruction of data to maximize the disruptive effect. In parallel, the attackers carried out an information campaign that aimed at discrediting the Albanian government and the Iranian opposition group based in Albania. The offensive cyber operation took Albania by surprise and impacted daily life as it rendered government websites and public services

unavailable. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama [compared](#) the assaults with the bombing of a country. In the wake of the attacks, the Albanian government considered invoking Article 5. While the Albania's Prime Minister refrained from doing so, the incident spurred the discussion on Article 5 in cyberspace amid rising geopolitical tensions. Will a cyberattack ever be significant enough to trigger a full-scale NATO collective defense response? And if so, what measures would NATO take in response?

In practice, cyberspace involves an additional layer of complexity that exacerbates NATO's strategic ambiguity with respect to Article 5. Determining the threshold for an armed attack in cyberspace and a proportionate response measure is less straightforward compared to a kinetic attack, especially since cumulative malicious cyber activities are included in the Alliance's assessment. Further, the ambiguity remains whether the attribution of cyberattacks to a state would reach the level of certainty to justify a political or even military response. Above all, the Alliance must find the necessary consensus within the North Atlantic Council to invoke Article 5.

Cyberspace continues to be a realm in which the threshold of Article 5 can be exploited, as attacks in cyberspace offer the possibility of deniability and often remain below the threshold of an armed attack. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, NATO members are more exposed than ever to cyber threats. Therefore, it [remains](#) an open question whether, and under what circumstances, NATO would be willing to set a precedent and trigger Article 5 in response to malicious cyber operations.

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STEFAN FORSS

US and NATO nuclear policy - a Finnish perspective

Expert article • 3638

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, changed Finland's security environment dramatically. As [Russia's "mask came off"](#), wording used by President Sauli Niinistö, Finland changed course and aimed instantly for the enhanced security provided by NATO. The application for membership in the Atlantic Alliance was swiftly drafted together with Sweden, which initially was more doubtful about abandoning two centuries of neutrality and non-alignment. Both countries got invitations to join NATO. Finland joined on April 4, 2023, and Sweden after prolonged obstruction by Türkiye and Hungary, on March 7, 2024.

Maximum security sought by a clear majority of the Finnish people obviously includes NATO's nuclear "umbrella", i.e. protection against nuclear threats and extortion, and is provided primarily by the United States. Nuclear weapons are a core component of NATO's overall capabilities for deterrence and defence, alongside conventional and missile defence forces. That said, NATO is committed to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, but as long as nuclear weapons exist, it will remain a nuclear alliance.

Today there are about 100 U.S. tactical nuclear bombs at six bases in five NATO member countries, as part of "nuclear sharing" agreements between the U.S. and these NATO member states (Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Türkiye). The UK and France have their own nuclear forces. Nuclear weapons storage refurbishment is under way [at RAF Lakenheath Air Force Base](#) in Britain which is operated by US Air Force and makes reintroduction of U.S. nuclear weapons possible in UK too, more precisely B61-12 nuclear bombs to be carried by US Air Force dual-capable F-35 A Lightning II stealth fighters. The aircraft was recently certified for operational nuclear role.

When discussing NATO and US nuclear policy it is prudent to keep in mind – as stated in [NATO's Strategic Concept 2022](#) – that the *strategic nuclear forces* of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States, are the supreme guarantee of the security of the Alliance.

This reflects the US attitude towards nuclear weapons in general as describing them as strategic or non-strategic has become increasingly irrelevant.

The U.S. – Soviet/Russian Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) ceased to exist in August 2019. The last remaining bilateral nuclear arms control treaty in force between the USA and Russia is the New START Treaty, which covers long-range strategic forces. It expires on February 5, 2026, and as the treaty is unlikely to be extended, definitions of nuclear weapons by range seem to become irrelevant.

"I really don't like it when people call them battlefield weapons or tactical weapons. They're not. They *are strategic weapons* (italics added), and the United States will always *look at the employment of a nuclear weapon as a strategic attack*" (italics added), Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John E. Hyten said in February 2020 (<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/02/25/politics/us-new-nuclear-weapons/index.html>).

For NATO, the independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France have a deterrent role of their own and contribute significantly to the overall security of the Alliance. France, however, doesn't participate in NATO's nuclear planning and hence a possible decision to provide NATO allied countries with French nuclear support is taken by France alone.

NATO's nuclear deterrence posture also relies on the United States' *nuclear weapons forward deployed in Europe* and the contributions of Allies concerned. National contributions of dual-capable aircraft to NATO's nuclear deterrence mission remain central to this effort.

To sum up, while the U.S. strategic nuclear forces remain solely under U.S. command, they play a far more important role for the deterrence of the Alliance than the rather small amount of free-falling U.S. nuclear gravity bombs deployed in Europe.

When the new U.S. strategic dual-capable stealth bomber B-21 Raider enters service in the late 2020s, it will boost conventional and nuclear deterrence significantly. B-21 can carry long range nuclear and conventional cruise missiles as well as bombs, which upsets the adversaries' defenses as they can't know from what direction to expect an attack. In addition, "low-yield" submarine-launched Trident D5 missiles contribute to the Allied deterrence effort and these strategic weapons offset the almost tenfold Russian numerical superiority in non-strategic nuclear weapons. There is also a possibility that U.S. nuclear attack submarines may get new nuclear-tipped long range cruise missiles. The U.S. Congress supports it, while the Biden administration does not.

It is, however, also important to understand that the USA has no plans to reintroduce ground-based nuclear weapons. During the end of President Gorbachev's era and the beginning of President Yeltsin's era President George H.W. Bush's administration undertook massive mutual nuclear weapons reductions, including unilateral non-strategic weapons reductions on a legally non-binding basis.

Expectations were high and the assumption was that USA and Russia would proceed in parallel. In the end, non-strategic nuclear weapons were eliminated altogether from all US services, except for the US Air Force. It is important to understand that US Army has been non-nuclear for more than a generation and that there are no plans to change that status.

Unfortunately, this promising development ended abruptly as Vladimir Putin came to power in Russia at the turn of the century. Russia embarked aggressively on a path to take back what was lost in the nuclear field, strengthening all services as nuclear-capable and nullifying the INF Treaty. Russia shaped its nuclear forces into a powerful political tool to advance its political agenda of restoration of the lost Russian empire.

Nuclear weapons scholars soon discovered what was going on in Russia, but western leaders, still intoxicated by the peace dividend after the end of the Cold War, didn't listen. The US continued to de-emphasize the reliance on nuclear weapons with implications for its own security and that of its allies.



Russian military thought and doctrine related to Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons is very professionally described in IISS nuclear expert William Alberque's recent report (<https://www.iiss.org/research-paper/2024/01/russian-military-thought-and-doctrine-related-to-nonstrategic-nuclear-weapons/>). It is highly recommended. Likewise, Dr. Ian Anthony at the Swedish Defence Research Agency FOI recently published an important paper about the nuclear dimension of strengthening deterrence (https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI_Memo_8432). Its focus is on the United States.

After Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, NATO now struggles to get its act together. Former Swedish Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Carl Bildt's gave a blunt assessment of the state of the Alliance at the Lennart Meri Conference in Tallinn in August 2021 (<https://lmc.icds.ee/lennart-meri-lecture/>). "NATO will hopefully survive Afghanistan – *out of area has suddenly got out of business*" [italics added], Mr. Bildt said with a reference to NATO's sudden, chaotic retreat from Afghanistan. It was also a reminder of NATO's choice after the Cold War to focus on crisis management or to become irrelevant. Given former US President Donald Trump's negative attitude towards NATO, the future of the Alliance is uncertain at least for now.

NATO will have to deal with multiple very hard challenges in the coming years, including in the nuclear domain. Concerns about the credibility of the ultimate U.S. protection of its allies has triggered a debate about the possible need for a more robust European nuclear capability to deal with Russia's nuclear threat. The scene has changed abruptly, as a former NATO Supreme Commander said not many years ago that the best way of ending a meeting in Brussels was to bring up the subject of nuclear weapons.

As new members in the very secretive NATO Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) Finland and Sweden could play the role of new members with a legitimate right to know. NATO needs a serious discussion and the first basic question to ask could be the following: "Could you tell us under what conditions NATO would use nuclear weapons?"

Finland and Sweden joined NATO, including its nuclear dimension, without preconditions. Both countries are expected to participate actively in NATO nuclear planning and exercises in a supportive non-nuclear role. The question of placing nuclear weapons on Finnish soil as well as their transit through Finland has, however, been debated in Finland. The current Finnish law on nuclear energy from 1987 simply prohibits that and the law which will be updated may have to be revised with regard to nuclear weapons. The current law differs on this account from that of other Nordic countries.

What has been lost in the internal Finnish debate is the motive for the wording in the 1987 law. It was to establish a legal barrier against introduction of Soviet nuclear weapons on Finnish soil. Not surprisingly, Russia's foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova, expressed a direct warning and threat to Finland, should this legislation now be revised (<https://x.com/NatalkaKyiv/status/1765487992582312371>).

Sweden (FOI) never abandoned serious nuclear weapons related research. It is a very useful asset for NATO as well as for Finland, which will have to resuscitate research in this field to be able to make a difference. ■



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CAROLINE KENNEDY-PIPE

The impact of IEDs on warfare

Expert article • 3639

It seems a long time ago now: so much has happened in global politics, but in the late 1990s, politicians and scholars were optimistic that war had changed its shape. The RMA and the resounding technical victory over Kosovo demonstrated that it was possible to achieve military and political objectives without placing a considerable number of boots on the ground. Of note was the fact that NATO suffered not a single combat fatality in that campaign. Serbian forces were pummeled into submission from the skies above. The illusion (or delusion) of so-called Cost-Free War, Virtual War or War at a distance (there was an abundance of such labels) did not endure. The US invasion of Iraq and the long war in Afghanistan ended in abject failure: technological superiority proved no guarantee of victory. Amongst the dissection of those wars, the sobering stories of political hubris, military incompetence, and indefatigable enemies, one constant thread was the fact that IEDs had dented Western morale and resolve. IEDs were, in Afghanistan, Iraq and in the follow-on war in Syria the weapon of choice for the groups opposing Western intervention. We in the UK had become all too familiar with these devices during the Irish 'Troubles' as terrorists wrecked mayhem on soldiers and civilians alike, but the IEDs of the Middle East were a novel and insidious threat to those tasked with countering insurgents as well as reshaping state and society.

IEDs are explosive devices fashioned (that is improvised) out of a variety of materials to disrupt, maim and kill. In 2003 in Iraq, IEDs were initially unsophisticated, made from old ordnance such as artillery shells, mines, and metal parts. These were detonated by short range electronic devices, by cordless phones, by wireless doorbells, and a raft of ingenious mechanisms. These were fashioned as roadside bombs, animal borne IEDs, vehicle borne IEDs and in an even more sinister development human IEDs, with devices strapped on to suicide bombers. The detonation of the human borne IED at check points or in crowded places raised a raft of questions about the motivations, the ideology, the training of those utilizing IEDs as well as how to defend against these rudimentary weapons. Jason Shell, one of the most experienced commentators on IEDs concluded that sixty% of all American fatalities in Iraq and half of deaths in Afghanistan (over 3.500) were the result of such devices: 30,000 US personnel had been wounded, suffering single or multiple amputations. While improvements in medicine, battlefield care and evacuation to highly equipped medical facilities did improve, IEDs had profound and understandable effects on morale. The US sought solutions. In 2006, the DOD established JIEDDO (Joint IED Defeat Organization) The mission was to defeat the IED. In addition to technical countermeasures such as enhanced protection and electronic counter measures (ECM) considerable time was spent comprehending the society in which bombs were invented, manufactured, distributed, and then used: in a pithy phrase to 'understand the bombmaker and not the bomb.'

But as Western appetite faded for both wars, the knowledge and training to counter IEDs while not disappearing weakened. The Ukraine conflict has though refocused attention on the IED. We see in Ukraine the adaption of tactics associated with insurgents: ambushes, deception, small unit tactics and IEDs. Since the stalling of the counter-offensive against Russia, IEDs litter the landscape. What started with manoeuvre warfare but has become a competition of military slog with the human costs which inevitably accompany attrition, siege, and the creation of vast swathes of minefields. Thirty percent of Ukrainian territory is littered with

landmines. Even if, when, the war ends, mines will remain in their deadly form. There is no cartography of the IEDs, buried as they are alongside roads, tracks, in forests, fields, and in buildings. The dangers lie hidden. This has not happened by accident. The Russians have deployed classic IED tactics such as packing old tanks with explosives and then setting them off to detonate, but proxy IEDs such as this are not new: they have formed part of every conflict.

Yet now the IED is not just 'ad hoc' or improvised, these weapons are part of a combined arms strategy. (Technology has played a huge part in transforming the utility of the IED through for example 3D printing). While it is correct that there are still the amateurs who improvise weapons such as anti-personnel bombs, or the proliferation of hobbyist drones loaded with ammunition, the IED is a vital part of the state arsenal both on land and at sea. ■

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ZBIGNIEW KORZEB & PAWEŁ NIEDZIÓŁKA

The importance of natural gas supply security for NATO countries

Expert article • 3640

Although the importance of gas is expected to decline (REPowerEU programme), it still represents approx. 22% of EU's primary energy consumption. In the wake of Russia's aggression in Ukraine, Western European and CEE countries have been faced with the challenges of replacing gas supplies from Russia with deliveries from other directions and protecting the technical and IT gas infrastructure. These problems particularly concern the European NATO countries, as they support Ukraine militarily, economically and politically, and in recent months the increasingly real possibility of an escalation of the conflict between Russia and NATO has been indicated both in Germany and Sweden.

An alternative to Russian gas is LNG. First The LNG terminal in Poland (Świnoujście) commenced operation in 2015. It is currently in the process of being expanded. In addition, infrastructure for 2 FSRUs is under construction in Gdansk. In Germany, the creation of infrastructure for LNG required the adoption of a special law (May 2022). The first terminal was built in Wilhelmshaven, followed by Brunsbuettel and Lubmin. Terminals in Wilhelmshaven (II), Stade and Rügen are under construction. These projects will cover approx. 40% of Germany's gas consumption. Due to climate policy, the law set a deadline for the end of LNG imports and from 2044 only carbon-neutral energy carriers are to be brought to the gas terminals. Finland has LNG terminals at Pori, Tornio, Hamina (2022) and Inkoo (2023). Only the latter two have the potential to inject gas into the transmission system. In 2023 Finland imported gas from the USA and Norway (76% in total). Supplies from Russia amounted to about 10%. The Finnish government plans to stop such supplies from 2025. In the Baltic States, there is only one LNG terminal (FSRU) in Klaipeda (Lithuania) which came into operation in 2014. At the end of December 2023 an Open Season procedure was announced to test interest in additional terminal capacity. The failure of the Balticconnector pipeline in October 2023 connecting Finland and Estonia meant that the Baltic States (mainly Estonia) had to increase import through the Lithuanian terminal, whose capacity had not previously been fully utilised. The construction of LNG terminals is also planned in other NATO countries (Italy, France, Greece, Netherlands and Croatia). The expansion of infrastructure is accompanied by new gas supply contracts. However, the 2023 contracts signed by Qatar with Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and France for the period up to 2050 raise objections from environmental activists.

An important initiative for independence from Russian gas supplies is the construction of international gas pipeline connections. An example is the Gas Interconnection Poland-Lithuania launched in 2022 connecting the Baltic States and indirectly Finland to the Central Europe. Also in 2022 the gas systems of Poland and Slovakia were interconnected thus reducing Slovakia's dependence on Russia. A similar objective was pursued by Bulgaria, which connected its natural gas network to Greece. Bulgaria also signed a long-term gas supply contract with Turkey. The Baltic Pipe pipeline between Norway and Poland opened in October 2022. Given the above, its own gas production, and the capacity of LNG terminals, Poland is already independent of Russian gas, but the country is set to become a gas hub for CEE, hence the plans for infrastructure development.

At the same time, European NATO countries (Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Poland, among others) have announced plans to expand their natural gas storage facilities. The level of their utilisation grew significantly (to around 90%) following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

While similar attacks on gas infrastructure as the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines in September 2022 or attempts to disrupt supply using LNG carriers cannot be ruled out in the future, it seems that cyber attacks will become increasingly important. They did not start with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. For example in December 2015, an attack was carried out which resulted in approximately 700,000 households in the Ivano-Frankivsk region experiencing a blackout. A year later (also in December), around 20 per cent of the population of Kiev was left without access to electricity. Cyber attacks on critical infrastructure were found also in several NATO member states (US, UK, Poland and Türkiye).

It is therefore essential to monitor any disruption of the entire energy system, and any incidents (e.g. installation of physical equipment (hardware) within critical infrastructure (5G/Huawei) or the massive GPS disruption in the Baltic region in December 2023), should be identified early, carefully explained, and the infrastructure should be given special protection. Indeed, gas supply disruptions or gas price increases have important implications not only for the economy, but also for the political situation and the production capacity of the defence industry in NATO countries. Indeed, a growth of gas prices, which is also due to a reduction in its availability, contributes to a weakening of economic growth, which is a favourable environment for the rise of populist parties and a surge in the operating costs of the defence industry. In conclusion, the recommendation for NATO countries boils down to a focus on reducing the energy intensity of the economy, building infrastructure for gas import, transmission and storage, taking steps towards joint gas purchases and intensifying physical infrastructure protection and cybersecurity. ■



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KADRI LIIK

Russia and NATO enlargement

Expert article • 3641

In the late 1990s, when I was working as a journalist in Moscow, and NATO enlargement was top of the agenda, I was often asked when Estonia actually decided it needed to join NATO. Had Russia been a friendlier neighbour, the reasoning went, maybe Estonia would have been happy to stay outside?

I always replied that the decision was essentially made in 1939. The experience of being squeezed between two totalitarian states, losing statehood and freedom for decades, pushed the Estonian elite from then on to embed itself as strongly as possible with democracies, especially on matters of security. All the rest – and that includes the creation of NATO in 1949 – was in a way a technicality. And there was surely absolutely nothing that the independent Russia of the 1990s, even if democratic and friendly, could have done to change Estonia's mind.

Russia decided early on that it did not like NATO enlargement. The analysis written in 1993 by the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, headed at the time by Yevgeny Primakov – the strategic mind behind many of Russia's foreign policy decisions – outlined the concerns quite clearly. The expansion of a military organisation was bound to have implications for Russia's force posture, and that in turn would divert much-needed resources from the social sphere. Also, with all focus on NATO expansion, the creation of a pan-European security system that involves all was bound to become a secondary issue.

That said, among the Russian elite of the 1990s there was some grudging acceptance of the moral case for NATO enlargement. One could catch that sentiment in the Moscow meeting rooms and reception halls of the time. Russian politicians did not like NATO expansion, but deep down, many of them understood why the east Europeans wanted to join; and they realised that it was not quite fitting of Russia to try to resist it.

I think I benefitted from that mood back then. In 1997, when the first round of NATO enlargement and the NATO-Russia act were being negotiated, I often attended the post-meeting press conferences of Primakov and visiting dignitaries: Madeleine Albright, Strobe Talbott, Javier Solana, Klaus Kinkel... By press-conference standards, these were huge events, managed by the Russian foreign ministry's press office, with the bulk of the major world news organisations present. I was a young journalist from a small Baltic news organisation with highly inconvenient questions – yet I was always given a chance to ask them, often at the expense of more prominent colleagues. I do not exactly know why, but I assume that on some level the Russian diplomats in charge of the proceedings accepted that for the Baltic states the matter of NATO was existential, and they had the right to be present and ask questions.

In the years that followed I have often asked myself if things could have turned out differently. Could this reluctant acceptance of smaller neighbours' right to make their own choices have grown and become a proper part of Russia's political psyche? Could NATO membership have become a non-issue, something that was not viewed as existential?

Much of it boils down to Russia's path of political development. Had Russia become a full-fledged democracy, a lot would have been possible. The post-Cold War OSCE-based European order had a highly normative nature: it was built on the assumption that the countries on the continent shared the same norms and values. It privileged democracies – which meant that the shorter Russia fell of democratic standards, the stronger its feeling became of being a second-order country in the international system that was designed to promote democracy.

This may also have spelled the end of OSCE as a truly efficient pan-European security organisation. Russia's domestic democratic deficiencies prompted Moscow to shun OSCE as an election watchdog and human rights organisation, and this built-in conflict meant that OSCE never became truly efficient as a hard security tool.

Also, a democratic Russia would likely have been more attractive to its neighbours, including in the former Soviet Union. In the 1990s, their centrifugal drive to move away from Russia was probably inevitable. But later on, Russia could have relied on its genuine attractiveness and soft power in building relations with neighbours, without needing to "force them to friendship" – which of course could only have the opposite effect.

However, one can assign some blame also to the Western side. This is inconvenient to discuss these days, because nothing that the West may have done or not done explains, even less justifies, Russia's war against Ukraine. But it remains a fact that the wars in Kosovo and Iraq – different in nature as they were – helped to cement the image of NATO as an adversary among the Russian public as well as politicians. Also, after the first successful rounds of enlargement, the West may have started taking Russia's acquiescence for granted. I often remember what one smart Russian expert told me: the first rounds of enlargements were discussed with Russia. Russia may not have liked it, but it had accepted a deal, and it knew it had accepted it. In 2008, by contrast, on the eve of the (generally ill-prepared) Bucharest summit, Russia was not approached.

In retrospect, these negotiation rounds that I followed as a journalist in 1997, were not for nothing. The idea that enlargement is a question between NATO and a prospective member state was formally true, but in practice, Russia retained a lot of disruptive power in countries like Georgia and Ukraine. It is questionable if one could have bought Russia's acquiescence once again in 2008, but to fail to understand the sensitivity and seriousness of the question – and to devise any policy to address it – remains a Western failure.

Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia aimed to stop NATO enlargement – and as such, it succeeded. But Russia's other regional war – the war in Ukraine – was not motivated by NATO. NATO enlargement to include Ukraine was not on the agenda in 2022; and that was clear to everyone concerned. The invasion of Ukraine – likely motivated by the Russian president's irrational history-related passions (though we'll only know for sure once the archives open) – brought about another round of NATO enlargement.

Finland and Sweden joined the alliance 19 and 20 years after Estonia. While Russia may not have been able to do anything to change Estonia's mind about NATO membership, it is quite clear how Russia could have affected the calculations of Finland and Sweden: by not issuing ultimatums and by not invading Ukraine. ■



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KARI LIUHTO

NATO accession harmful for national military spending-GDP ratio before war in Ukraine

Expert article • 3642

The ratio of military spending to gross domestic product (GDP) is perhaps the best internationally-comparable and time-resistant measure that indicates the investment of an individual country in its national defence. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI](#), a country's accession to NATO did not lead to an increase in the military spending share in the country's GDP prior to the war in Ukraine – on the contrary.

When comparing the year before each NATO country joined the alliance and the year before the war began in Ukraine (2013), only in Estonia has the share of the military budget in the GDP increased. For all others, the share has decreased. One reason for the decline is that 16 countries joined NATO before the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the investment in the military budget was significantly higher than after its collapse. The disintegration of the Soviet Union can be seen in the GDP share decrease of the NATO countries' military budget. Only the Baltic States that broke away from the Soviet Union increased the share of military spending in their GDP after the collapse of the Soviet empire.

The share of the military budget in NATO countries' GDP did not increase between the year 2009 and the year 2013, except in Estonia. In Poland and Romania, the defence budget share no longer dropped after Russia's war in Georgia, but in all other NATO countries the decline continued. In other words, Russia's blitzkrieg in Georgia in August 2008 did not alarm the military-political leadership of the NATO countries. However, the Ukrainian war that began in February 2014 started to open eyes.

When comparing the years 2014 and 2023, it can be seen that the military budget share in GDP increased in all NATO member states, excluding Croatia, Türkiye, the UK and the USA. In the case of the UK and the USA, however, it is worth noting that the 2023 military spending to GDP ratio in these two countries was 2.1 per cent and 3.5 per cent, respectively.

In 2023, the following 20 NATO members did not meet the two per cent threshold: Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, (Iceland), France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Türkiye. In other words, only 11 NATO members met the two per cent threshold in 2023. In Sweden, which joined the NATO in March 2024, the military expenditure GDP ratio will exceed the two per cent threshold in 2024. The [NATO](#) estimates that in 2024 the NATO Europe as a whole will use two per cent of its GDP to its military. A year earlier the share was 1.85 per cent.

Despite Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a defence expenditure-GDP ratio decline has taken place in several NATO countries. In Croatia, France (a symbolic decline of 0.01 percentage point), Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Türkiye and the UK the ratio declined between 2021 and 2023. In several countries the decline was due to the fact that the GDP grew faster than the defence budget. However, in three NATO countries, namely in

Greece, Italy, and the UK, did the defence budget decrease when looking at the 2021 and 2023 military budgets in US dollars. Here, we should not forget that out of these three aforementioned countries, only Italy spent less than two per cent of its GDP to its defence in 2023.

To conclude, I have followed Russia's development for more than three decades at a Finnish university, and I have come to the conclusion that Russia is trying to use political measures to keep its neighbourhood weak militarily and dependent on Russia economically. Second, it has become apparent that under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has ruthlessly used military force to prevent countries in its earlier sphere of influence from joining Western security structures. Moreover, the war in Ukraine has also revealed the weakness of the Russian army and the indifference of the country's leadership to the magnitude of human casualties. Stalin's indifference to the value of human life has not disappeared.

The first US President George Washington stated in his first annual address to Congress on January 8th, 1790 as follows: "To be prepared for war is one of the most effective means of preserving peace". Washington's idea should be understood by every Western decision-maker today, because if the West is not militarily strong and united enough, the likelihood of war with Russia increases.

I wish that the NATO will maintain its position as a transatlantic defence alliance during the future presidents of the United States as well. Even though Donald Trump's [statement](#) may have contained rhetoric, I think Europe should also be prepared for the fact that the future is not an automatic continuation of the past. The European Union must prepare to be ready to defend itself alone, if needed. For this task, the EU needs a strong defence industry. If we do not soon wake up to this need, we are playing Russian roulette with the future of our children and grandchildren. The time for conclusions was already in 2008 after the Russo-Georgian War. Now our decision-makers have the last moment to make the necessary decisions or else they must be ready to be condemned by future historians.

The Centrum Balticum Foundation organises the 16th annual Baltic Sea Forum of Finland on May 20th. This year, the forum deals with Arctic security, a future of transatlantic relations and a role of media in contributing to security. [Welcome.](#)



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