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**NEWPORT—WARSAW—BRUSSELS:  
NATO IN DEFENCE OF PEACE IN EUROPE**

Editor

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This report analyses the process of the adaptation of the North Atlantic Alliance to revolutionary changes in its security environment that has taken place between 2014 and 2018. The deep changes in NATO initiated by the summits in the Welsh city of Newport in September 2014 and in Warsaw in July 2016 were confirmed at the special meeting of NATO Heads of State and Government in Brussels in May 2017. The summit in Brussels on 11–12 July 2018 consolidated the general direction of NATO’s adaptation, which is based on the “360-degree principle” of building NATO’s capacity to effectively address the full spectrum of threats coming from both main strategic directions—the Eastern and Southern Flanks. In the East, the threats are of a political and military character and stem from Russia’s foreign and defence policy, mainly its offensive force posture towards NATO, which includes hybrid warfare tools such as cyberattack and disinformation/propaganda as well as state-of-the-art missile capabilities. In the South, NATO has to address asymmetric and non-military threats: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, uncontrolled migration, and organised international crime. One could not think of two more different sets of threats to cope with, and yet NATO is adapting to both in the east and south, so the three summits—in Newport, in Warsaw, and in Brussels—stand a good chance together to rewrite the foundations of the Alliance’s political and military strategy for the next decade or so.

The sheer scale of the change is illustrated best by the fact that up to 2014, NATO had recognised Russia as a partner. Further, out of the Alliance’s three core tasks introduced by the 2010 NATO New Strategic Concept—territorial defence, crisis-management, and cooperative security—the second was considered the most important<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, the Alliance was preparing to engage in expeditionary operations and had even tested options for engagement in arms control and disarmament talks with Russia while territorial defence capacity was deteriorating.

Between 2014 and 2018, however, NATO was able to quickly respond to the growing threat on the Eastern Flank. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, NATO established tools to deter Russia, with the landmark decision taken at the Warsaw summit to deploy multinational forces to Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. To better address the threats coming from both the east and south, NATO engaged in close cooperation with the EU, something long considered unthinkable due to a political stalemate regarding membership. It launched naval operations to address trafficking of humans through the Mediterranean. It developed cyberspace capabilities and started work on countering disinformation and propaganda. Such a distant departure from the strategic framework that had shaped the Alliance throughout the post-Cold War period would not have been possible without the broad support of the NATO members. Despite diverging threat perceptions and strategic interests, acting in the name of indivisibility of Allied security and with the aim of maintaining solidarity and cohesion in NATO, the Allies proved capable of taking ambitious joint actions that several years earlier would have been surely assessed as unthinkable.

When trying to identify the sources of consensus that resulted in NATO making these and other milestone decisions, it is worth a look beyond the summit decisions and to include the policies of the individual NATO members towards the adaptation agenda. Therefore, the bulk

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<sup>1</sup> For background reading on the assumptions that underpinned the security policies and approaches of NATO member states to the seminal issues facing the Alliance in the pre-Crimea security environment, please see: B. Górka-Winter, M. Madej (eds.), *NATO Member States and the New Strategic Concept*, PISM Report, May 2010.

of this report is individual profiles of the 29 NATO members in which the approach of a given country to the pivotal issues on the Alliance's agenda is analysed for the period between 2014 and 2018.<sup>2</sup> These are:

- The philosophy of the NATO response to the growing threat from Russia, including the issue of the forward military presence on the Eastern Flank;
- The NATO-Russia dialogue as part of cooperative security building and a complement to NATO deterrence towards Russia;
- Principles, objectives, and forms of NATO involvement in the stabilisation of the Southern Flank, including countering terrorist threats and addressing the effects of uncontrolled migration on European security;
- Increasing European Allies' defence spending and improving its effectiveness;
- The form and role of NATO cooperation with the European Union;
- The role of partnerships with Finland and Sweden, including the Alliance's role in building security outside the transatlantic area; and,
- The enlargement of NATO, including cooperation with Ukraine, Georgia, and the Western Balkan countries that remain outside the Alliance.

The opening chapter of this report supplements the analysis of the individual countries with a holistic view of the NATO adaptation process in 2014–2018. It depicts a broader background of changes in the security environment, which were the impulse for NATO adaptation, main challenges to that process and chief decisions of the summits in Newport in 2014, Warsaw in 2016 and Brussels in 2018.<sup>3</sup>

## NATO ADAPTATION—TWO FLANKS, SECURITY FOR ALL

Almost three years after the historic Warsaw summit of 8–9 July 2016, NATO follows a path of change and aims to increase its ability to respond to the full spectrum of threats—politico-military, asymmetric, non-military—coming from any geographical direction. The decisions taken in Warsaw are being swiftly implemented—as confirmed by the subsequent summit in Brussels of 11-12 July 2018—and NATO is undergoing a sea change in all its key dimensions: its overall military capacity (NATO Command Structure, development of military capabilities), readiness to respond quickly to threats (operational planning, exercises), policy of support of partner countries, and cooperation with the EU.

Both the scale and scope of these processes allow the argument that a breakthrough has occurred in NATO. Indeed, the Alliance has moved away from some fundamental political and doctrinal (military) assumptions that has shaped its policies and actions since the end of the Cold War and replaced them with concepts better suited to the changed security environment.

<sup>2</sup> This report is based exclusively on open sources. These are mostly, though not only: statements of officials, representing NATO members; press communiques of governments and NATO representatives; scientific articles; analytical papers; media reports; recognized databases (NATO data on defence expenditures, Military Balance yearbook data on capabilities); authors' own materials, resulting from their informal consultations and discussions in PISM and other research institutes in Europe and the U.S.

<sup>3</sup> The authors wish to express their special thanks to Jacek Durkalec, Kacper Rękawek, and Andrzej Dąbrowski, who were engaged in research supporting this report.

## DIFFERENT, BUT EQUALLY IMPORTANT: THREATS FROM THE EAST AND SOUTH

The swift and deep adaptation process was forced by the rapidly increasing and evolving threats that almost simultaneously appeared on the Eastern and Southern Flanks of the Alliance.

In March 2014, Russia annexed Crimea and in the following months triggered—and became heavily involved in—the conflict in the southeastern regions of Ukraine. The Russian aggression was accompanied by unprecedented military activities: intensive exercises at NATO borders, military provocations such as violations of NATO members' airspace, and even rhetorical threats—including nuclear ones—directed at some Allies. After Russia's annexation of Crimea, regardless of the Minsk process, which task was to first bring a ceasefire to eastern Ukraine and then develop the conditions for a political solution to the conflict, Russia further intensified its destabilising activities towards NATO. Among others, it increased the number of unannounced—so-called “snap”—exercises at the Alliance borders and began both militarisation of the annexed Crimean Peninsula and strengthening Russia's military capabilities in a western strategic direction, particularly in Kaliningrad Oblast.

Through its actions, Russia broke basic principles of international law and fundamental rules of political cooperation in Europe, namely refraining from the use of force or threat thereof, the inviolability of borders, and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of other states. Russia questioned the foundations of the European security system established after the end of the Cold War and expressed in the Paris Charter of New Europe in 1990. This document was accepted by all Participating States of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), including Russia.

From the NATO perspective, the aggression on Ukraine was the ultimate confirmation of Russia's determination to use force in pursuit of its strategic goals, sought over the years through its proposal to build a new security architecture in Europe. In general terms, its concept boils down to the creation of a zone of privileged political, economic, and military interests of Russia in the post-Soviet space while reducing NATO—and even more importantly, the U.S.—military presence in the former Warsaw Pact countries. By annexing Crimea and fomenting the conflict in the east of Ukraine, Russia therefore confirmed it actually wants the right to interfere in the sovereign decisions of an entire group of countries in its direct and extended neighbourhood.

Moreover, Russia's actions in Ukraine, as well as changes in its force posture, including the scale and scenarios of its exercises after the annexation of Crimea, have gradually reinforced NATO's conviction that Russia has the capacity to ignite a regional conflict in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), especially the Baltic States, and achieve its desired military goals, in particular, the potential to occupy a portion of NATO territory before the Alliance can effectively react. NATO had to face an existential threat: the possibility Russia could effectively undermine the guarantees of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The core of the challenge became Russia's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capacity in its Western Military District, including Kaliningrad Oblast. Through the deployment of numerous systems: like Bastion anti-ship missiles, S-300 and S-400 air and missile defence systems, nuclear-capable Iskander ballistic missiles, and ship-based Kalibr cruise missiles, all able to reach targets deep within NATO territory, Russia has quickly built up its capacity to prevent access by NATO forces to the CEE in a crisis, requiring extra troops to arrive in the region from the U.S. and Western European states.

At the same time NATO had to face a sharp deterioration in security in the Middle East and North Africa: roughly the Southern Flank of NATO. Since 2011, the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, the civil war in Syria, and the destabilisation of Libya after the overthrow of

Muammar Gaddafi created favourable conditions for the growth of Islamic terrorist groups. The strongest of them turned out to be the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, (hereinafter: ISIS), which gradually took control over parts of Syria and Iraq. In 2014, it captured the Iraqi cities of Falluja and Mosul, among others, and strengthened its presence in Libya. To stop the jihadists' offensive, U.S. President Barack Obama launched in September 2014 the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. This put pressure on the European allies to support the U.S. operations in their south, while reassurance measures were also needed in the east in response to Russia's aggression on Ukraine and its increasingly provocative force posture. It was Russia that made NATO approach both flanks as one: the Russian military intervention in Syria started in 2015 to defend the flailing regime of Bashar al-Assad. For Russia, its involvement in Syria provided it the direct ability to influence the course of the conflict, obstruct the actions of the U.S.-led Global Coalition and thereby put pressure on the Western countries in an additional theatre. For NATO, it meant that Russia was directly undermining Alliance security, not only in the east but also in the south.

The continuing security crisis in the MENA region increased the terrorism threat and contributed to mass, uncontrolled migration, the effects of which were mainly felt from 2015 on in the southern European countries but then also in Germany, France, and the Nordic states. The threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction also increased, epitomised by the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The direct result of the war in Syria, Iraq, and the breakdown of statehood in Libya was unprecedented migration. In 2014, irregular EU border crossings—mainly through the central and eastern Mediterranean Sea, including Turkey and the Western Balkans—numbered about 280,000 people. In 2015, that jumped to more than 1.8 million, falling in 2016 after an agreement with Turkey to about half a million, and then in 2017 to about 200,000. The migrants were not only refugees from Syria but also citizens of Central African and Sahel states, smuggled by networks of human traffickers, benefiting from the security vacuum in Libya. Such a large influx of migrants became a direct challenge to the security of NATO countries from southern Europe—Greece, Italy, Spain, Turkey—although mainly in the internal dimension (border security, migration management, etc.).

The rise of ISIS, including its territorial expansion, also increased the scale of the direct terrorist threat to NATO members. In 2014–2018, ISIS prepared or inspired terrorist attacks in Paris (November 2015), Brussels (March 2016), Nice (July 2016), Berlin (December 2016), Manchester (May 2017), London (June 2017), Barcelona (August 2017), London again (September 2017), and Carcassonne and Trèbes (March 2018). In total, more than 300 people were killed and more than 1,000 injured. In the societies targeted by the attacks, terrorism became the most serious threat affecting everyday life.

Facing the rapid deterioration of the security environment, NATO struggled over the last four years to maintain a balance between its efforts to address two very different types of threats: political-military on the Eastern Flank, originating from Russian policy and force posture, and asymmetric and non-military threats on the Southern Flank, generated mainly by non-state actors like ISIS. The approach adopted by the Alliance was epitomised by the "360 degree" principle, which meant that NATO takes into account the threat perceptions and strategic interests of all its members. Consequently, all steps taken since spring 2014 were aimed at an adequate and simultaneous response to both the Russian actions on the Eastern Flank and the increased terrorist threat, uncontrolled migration and trafficking of people, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction on the Southern Flank. Despite the obvious differences in the perception of the scale and gravity of the threats in both geostrategic directions, NATO members



were able to reach solid consensus at the Newport and Warsaw summits and—despite tensions around defence expenditure and burden sharing—also in Brussels in July 2018, underlining the indivisibility of security within the Alliance.

## THE RETURN OF REVISIONIST RUSSIA: NATO'S CHALLENGE ON THE EASTERN FLANK

Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 surprised the Alliance and found it largely unprepared, both militarily and politically, to respond to the growing Russian threat. The Alliance's flank states, Poland, the Baltic states, Romania, Bulgaria and Norway, felt directly threatened. In March 2014, Poland used the mechanism of Article 4 of the Washington Treaty to convene consultations in the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and asked the Allies to take a coordinated response to the Russian actions. In effect, the NATO members before the summit in Newport, which took place on 4–5 September 2014, increased their military presence on the Eastern Flank through so-called "interim reassurance" measures. The airspace over CEE countries began to be monitored by Allied Early Warning System (AWACS) aircraft. Launched in 2004, and usually comprising four aircraft, the air policing mission over Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia (Baltic Air Policing, BAP) was strengthened with additional aircraft. Also, NATO permanent, countermine naval forces dedicated to the Baltic Sea region was reinforced. A large number of Allies have sent military units to the Eastern Flank to participate in both national and multinational exercises, including those organised within NATO. These activities facilitated the detection of potential threats and increased the Alliance's visibility in the region, which signalled both to NATO members and Russia that the Alliance's Article 5 guarantees are valid.

However, NATO's ability to quickly undertake a collective-defence operation on the territory of the flank states remained severely limited due to years of reduction in military capabilities and the focus on crisis-management operations (see below). Therefore, in June 2014, NATO defence ministers decided to start work on the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), which was designed to speed up the reaction time in case of a potential crisis. Approved by way of broad consensus at the Newport summit, RAP proposed a set of actions aimed at strengthening the sense of security among the allies (reassurance measures) and the adaptation of the NATO command and force structures to the possible threats (adaptation measures).

The reassurance measures were related mostly to ensuring the strengthened presence of multinational forces on the Eastern Flank, mainly through more frequent and coordinated exercises. Adaptation, in turn, covered a beefed-up NATO Response Force (NRF) to around 40,000 soldiers and the establishment of a multinational brigade within this force (about 5,000 soldiers) as the Combined Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The VJTF forces, called the "spearhead," can be deployed within 5–7 days on a NAC decision, and the other two NRF brigades (as part of Initial Follow-on Forces Group, IFFG) within 30 and 45 days, respectively. The summit also decided to establish small command elements known as NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) in Estonia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, and Poland (and later also in Hungary and Slovakia), tasked with coordinating the arrival of the VJTF during a crisis. Another important decision was to increase the readiness of the Multinational Corps North-East Headquarters (MNC NE HQ) in Szczecin (one of nine tactical commands at NATO's disposal) and to adapt it to command a land operation involving several divisions in the region.

In response to the increasing problem of burden-sharing in NATO, namely the disproportion between the U.S. and European contributions to the Alliance's overall military expenditure,

the Allies adopted in Newport a special declaration on increasing their defence budgets. The so-called defence spending pledge set forth that NATO members will seek to increase their annual defence expenditure to at least 2% of GDP (by state) by the end of the following decade (so, by 2024), and further, to allocate at least 20% of this sum for investments in new military equipment and infrastructure (technical modernisation of armed forces).

However, the decisions from Newport summit did not solve the fundamental problem—the threat to the credibility of NATO’s security guarantees in a scenario in which Russia ignited a conflict in the Baltic states. NATO’s capacity to respond to a crisis—in the military dimension—on the Eastern Flank remained based exclusively on forces coming to the region from the U.S. and Western European countries. This could still be effectively hampered—if not prevented—by Russia thanks to its A2/AD capabilities (anti-access/area denial) deployed in Kaliningrad Oblast and the larger Western Military District. Therefore, the Allies agreed six months before the summit in Warsaw, at the meeting of defence ministers in February 2016, that further adaptation to the Russian threat was necessary and must involve deeper changes in NATO’s military strategy so the credibility of NATO deterrence and defence policy towards Russia would be further reinforced.

As expected, at the Warsaw NATO summit in July 2016, the Alliance sealed a new concept of a military response to the Russian threat. Instead of relying solely on the movement of forces to the Eastern Flank in the event of a crisis (VJTF and the remaining parts of the NRF, followed by national forces; altogether, “reinforcements”), NATO decided to deploy multinational combat forces in the region for the first time in history, though in the form of continuous rotations rather than permanent stationing, thus establishing an Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) on the Eastern Flank. Battalion-size battlegroups in Poland and the Baltic states (numbering about 1,000 soldiers each) strengthened NATO’s ability to deter Russia, hindering the potential to undermine the territorial integrity of NATO flank states and increasing the likelihood of an Alliance joint reaction to Russian aggression (the so-called tripwire function). The role of the framework states for the battlegroups (providing the largest part of the force and command elements) in Poland was assumed by the U.S.; in Lithuania, by Germany; in Latvia, by Canada; and, in Estonia, by the UK. At the summit in Warsaw, 10 other NATO Allies (Albania, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovenia and Spain) decided to contribute to the battlegroups, and several others made the decision in the following months. The broad support for the EFP was an expression of the Allied consensus on the need to significantly strengthen NATO’s deterrence and defence capacity on the Eastern Flank.

In this way, NATO sent Russia the signal that it can’t count on achieving its political goals of dividing the Alliance and undermining the credibility of the Article 5 security guarantees by provoking a small-scale regional conflict and hampering—or preventing—an Alliance military response through its regional military advantage, including the A2/AD capabilities. The size of the forces deployed on the Eastern Flank was set, following political and military calculations, based on a compromise between military efficiency and the desire to avoid the further escalation of tensions between the Alliance and Russia (which many NATO members feared). Simultaneously, the Alliance noted that EFP on the Eastern Flank did not break the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, which, *inter alia*, included NATO’s commitment to refrain from permanently deploying “substantial combat forces” on the territory of any new NATO members (however, the term was not defined in a binding way, either by Russia or by NATO). Therefore, the battalion-size battlegroups have a real—albeit limited—capacity to defend the area where they are deployed and, at the same time, are only the first—and the smallest—component of NATO forces that can be used to respond to an unfolding crisis on the Eastern Flank.

Emphasising that its strategy towards Russia is based on two pillars, the Alliance expressed its readiness for dialogue with Russia (in the NATO-Russia Council) on the conflict in Ukraine, situation in Afghanistan, asymmetric threats, including hybrid warfare, prevention of military incidents and increasing predictability in the military sphere. NATO stressed, however, that a return to partnership and practical cooperation (involving experts and the military) would be impossible as long as Russia continues to break international law, including the occupation of Crimea and destabilisation of eastern Ukraine.

Countering the Russian hybrid warfare tools demonstrated during its aggression on Ukraine became a further element of strengthening NATO's ability to respond to the threat on the Eastern Flank. By waging hybrid warfare against any NATO state, Russia could continue to act below the threshold of open armed aggression while forcing the Alliance to discuss how to interpret its actions, making it difficult to classify as Article 5 triggers. Thereby, Russia could effectively delay the political and military reaction of the Alliance and further undermine its credibility in a potential crisis. Therefore, in December 2015, NATO adopted a strategy to combat hybrid threats.

Another urgent issue, and one closely related to hybrid warfare, became the need for improvement of the practical cooperation mechanisms between NATO and the EU, mostly, although not exclusively, in the fields of cybersecurity, the protection of critical infrastructure, and combating Russian propaganda. Therefore, at the summit in Warsaw in 2016, NATO and the EU signed a joint declaration on strengthening cooperation, among others, in joint activities to combat hybrid threats, cyberattack, and disinformation/propaganda. In December 2016, the Alliance and the Union simultaneously adopted a list of 42 joint actions—initiatives and projects to move the practical cooperation of both organisations (staff-to-staff contacts) to a new level. Over 30 new activities were agreed in the beginning of 2018.

NATO's actions on the Eastern Flank were supported most by the U.S., both within the Alliance and on a bilateral basis. The U.S. strengthened its bilateral cooperation with the individual countries of the Eastern Flank and reacted faster to the growing threat from Russia than NATO, without waiting for Allied consensus. Already in June 2014, President Barack Obama announced in Warsaw the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), which enabled the transfer of additional funds to strengthen the American military presence in Europe. The ERI involved actions in five main areas: increasing the rotational presence of U.S. forces; additional exercises within the Alliance and on a bilateral basis; expanding equipment stocks; updating infrastructure enabling the movement of forces to the CEE; and strengthening the overall military capacity of Eastern Flank Allies. The first U.S. decisions in 2014 included an increase in the presence of U.S. ground troops, aviation, and navy in Eastern Flank countries, mainly for exercises. After the summit in Newport, the U.S. announced the re-deployment of new equipment for land forces in Europe, including heavy capabilities (armoured vehicles, artillery, etc.). Before the summit in Warsaw, the U.S. announced that to strengthen the deterrence of Russia in Europe, a complete Armoured Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) would be based on the rotation principle on the Eastern Flank, along with elements of support in the form of, among others, combat aviation and artillery. To ensure funding for these actions, the U.S. significantly increased the ERI budget from \$789 million in 2016 to \$3.4 billion in 2017, and then to \$4.8 billion in 2018. To stress the deterrence dimension of the American actions, the ERI was also renamed the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI). The requested EDI budget for 2019 stood at \$6.5 billion, though by July 2018, Congress still had not addressed this request.

In 2017, the process of implementing the provisions of the Warsaw summit as regards the Allied military presence on the Eastern Flank gained momentum. The deployment of battalion-

size battlegroups went swiftly: By the end of August 2017, all four reached operational readiness, meaning they were complete and their individual elements trained to operate together. At the same time, the very first components of the American ABCT began to deploy in Poland, along with some elements of the U.S. division-level HQ, deployed in Poznan, so that they could take over the command of the U.S. forces in the region should a crisis unfold. At the same time, 300 U.S. Marines (USMC) were also deployed on a rotational basis in Norway.

A special meeting of NATO Heads of State and/or Government on 25 May 2017, in Brussels confirmed the implementation of the Eastern Flank agenda, as set out by the provisions of the Warsaw summit. However, NATO's attention was focused primarily on the problem of the non-implementation of the defence spending pledge agreed at the Newport summit. The other crucial point on the agenda was NATO's humble commitment to combating terrorism, ISIS in particular. These two issues, though not new, gained political significance with the change of the American administration. President Donald Trump spoke critically of NATO on the campaign trail in 2016 and seemed to suggest conditionality of the U.S. obligations under Article 5 and to link them to the level of defence expenditure of each European NATO member, as well as their contribution to the fight against ISIS. This stance led to growing tensions in NATO, particularly that once in power, Trump began openly criticising the European Allies for their approach to defence expenditure and fighting terrorism.

In response to the American calls, an agreement was adopted at the Special Meeting in May, according to which NATO members would present individual schedules for reaching the 2% of GDP defence spending threshold. What is more, it was agreed that the assessment of the political contribution of the common security within the Alliance would also consider military capabilities made available to NATO by individual nations and their contribution to operations. This concept was referred to as "3C," for "Cash, Capabilities, Commitments."

Regardless of the smooth implementation of EFP and the U.S. plans under ERI/EDI, in mid-2018, the NATO potential on the Eastern Flank was still clearly inferior to Russia's. As a result of a gradual, but consistent build-up of forces in its Western and Southern Military Districts, Russia reinforced its regional advantage over the NATO flank states. Russia's advantage over its neighbours is most visible in the land forces and remains regardless of the breakthrough decisions of the Warsaw summit. Even when reinforced by both the four battalion-size battlegroups and American units deployed to the region, first the ABCT, the NATO Eastern Flank countries are still at a 1-to-3 disadvantage to Russia in land forces. The offence potential of Russia on the Eastern Flank is further confirmed by the saturation of its European part with special operations forces, airborne and armoured units, and the notorious A2/AD capabilities. Also important, the Western part of Russia is where the most deeply modernised forces are deployed. Ever since 2013, changes in the organisation and equipment of units in the Western Military District, and in the Arctic, have been clearly aiming to reinforce a regional and local advantage over NATO. Both in the Western and in the Southern Military Districts (which underwent prompt changes to enable the operational engagement of Russia in the conflict in eastern Ukraine), all branches of the Russian armed forces were reorganised and strengthened. Among others, new armoured and motorised infantry units were established and the existing ones beefed-up (for instance, brigades were transformed into divisions and a new 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Army was set up). The 6<sup>th</sup> Air Force and Air Defence Army was provided with state-of-the art S-400 air- and missile-defence systems (first deployed to Kaliningrad Oblast). Russia has been strengthening its force posture in occupied Crimea by deploying additional naval infantry units, coastline defence systems, artillery and reconnaissance, S-300 anti-aircraft batteries and Bastion and Bal anti-ship missile



systems. All these capabilities may severely complicate the Allied reaction to a potential crisis including the southern part of NATO's Eastern Flank, namely the Black Sea region.

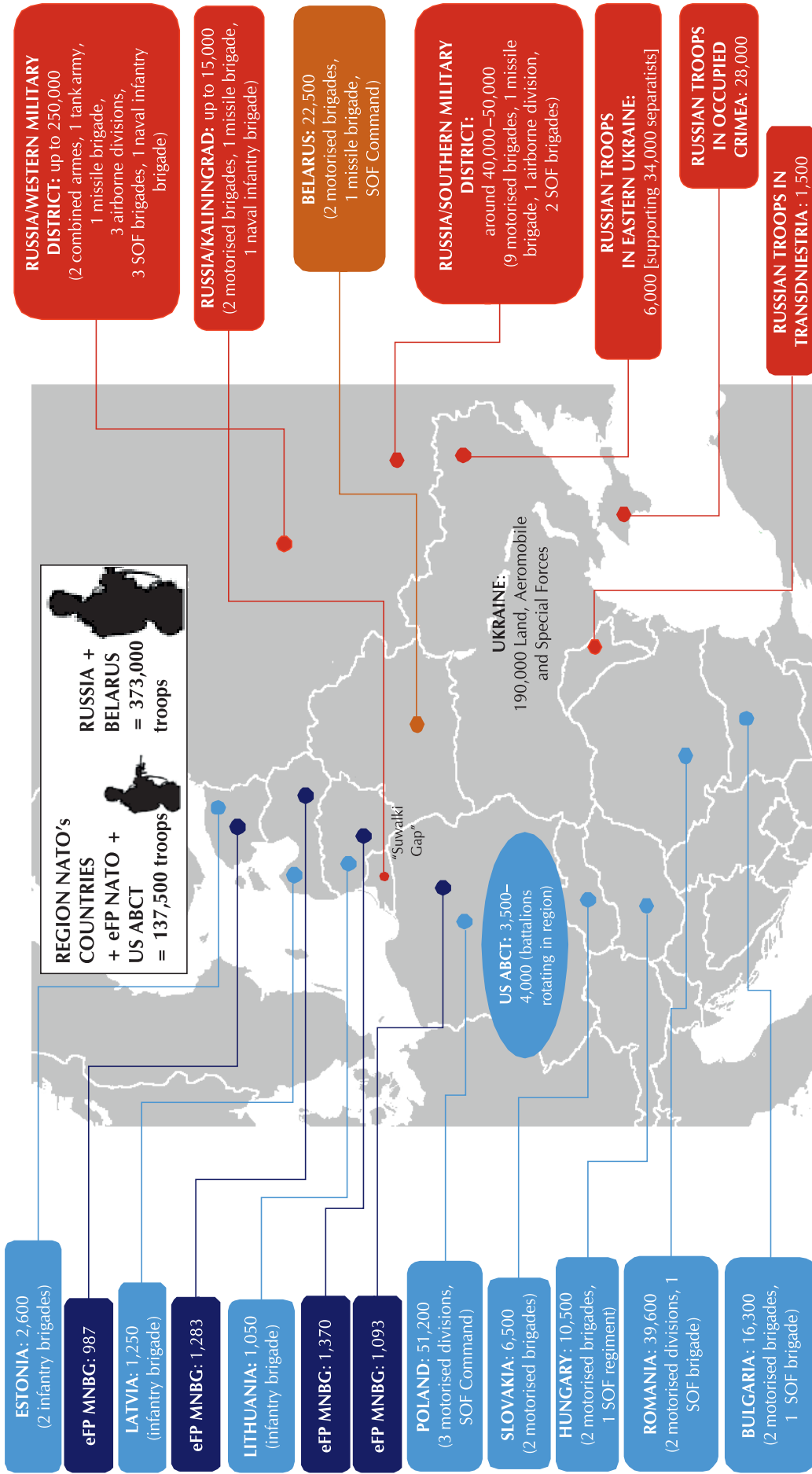
Tailored Forward Presence (TFP) was established by NATO at the Warsaw summit to alleviate the concerns of Romania and Bulgaria about a lack of Allied assets in the region that could reinforce the NATO deterrence capacity towards Russia in the Black Sea. TFP mostly assumes Allied troop rotations to a Romania-led multinational brigade and a joint NATO effort to reinforce Romanian and Bulgarian air policing (both countries still have insufficient capacity in this regard). Yet, these are hardly game-changers in the force balance in the Black Sea region, which remains under almost full Russian military control.

Trends in Russian exercises involving large-scale and snap drills, including nuclear-capable platforms and—much too often unnoticed—developments within the Belarusian army, which remains largely integrated with the Russian armed forces, follow the very same pattern. The overall result is a clearly offensive force posture located just to the east of NATO and in the heart of both the Baltic and Black Sea regions (see Fig. 1).

In the period between the special meeting in May 2017 and mid-2018, the Alliance focused primarily on reform of the NATO Command Structure (NCS) and the discussion on the so-called viable reinforcement strategy. Changes in the NCS following years of cutting the number and staffing of various HQs and command elements have been recognised by the Allies as a condition for increasing the effectiveness of NATO's response to the rapidly changing threats, especially from Russia. Consequently, in the first half of 2018, a decision was made to create two new Allied commands: a maritime one, Joint Force Command for the Atlantic (JFC), crucial for the freedom of movement of U.S. reinforcements to Europe in a crisis, and a logistic one, the Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC), tasked with planning and supporting operations requiring the deployment of a larger force to the Eastern Flank. The debate on the reinforcement strategy revolves around the question how to strengthen the overall capacity of NATO to quickly generate additional forces, which would constitute a follow-on force with regards to the NRF in a larger, or geographically escalating, crisis. On the eve of the Brussels summit in June 2018, and partly responding to the problem of a lack of a sufficient number of high-readiness forces with heavier capabilities, the Alliance adopted NATO Readiness Initiative, also known under the "4x30" name. The plan, proposed by the U.S., aims to have the Alliance capable of deploying 30 mechanised battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 warships in less than 30 days. At the same time, in coordination with the EU, a number of measures have been taken to improve military mobility, mainly by lifting legal and infrastructural barriers to the movement of forces within the Alliance.

The summit in Brussels in July 2018 confirmed all these decisions, regardless of tensions around defence expenditure and burden sharing. These arose again following the U.S. President Donald Trump's harsh criticism of some Allies for not living up to the Wales defence spending pledge and making an impression, that American commitment to NATO might be conditional. Yet, the overall assessment of the summit was that it consolidated the NATO adaptation effort to better deter Russia in the Eastern Flank.

**Map 1. Land Forces in the Central and Eastern Europe**  
 Data from IISS „Military Balance”, IHS Jane’s databases and NATO (2017, 2018)



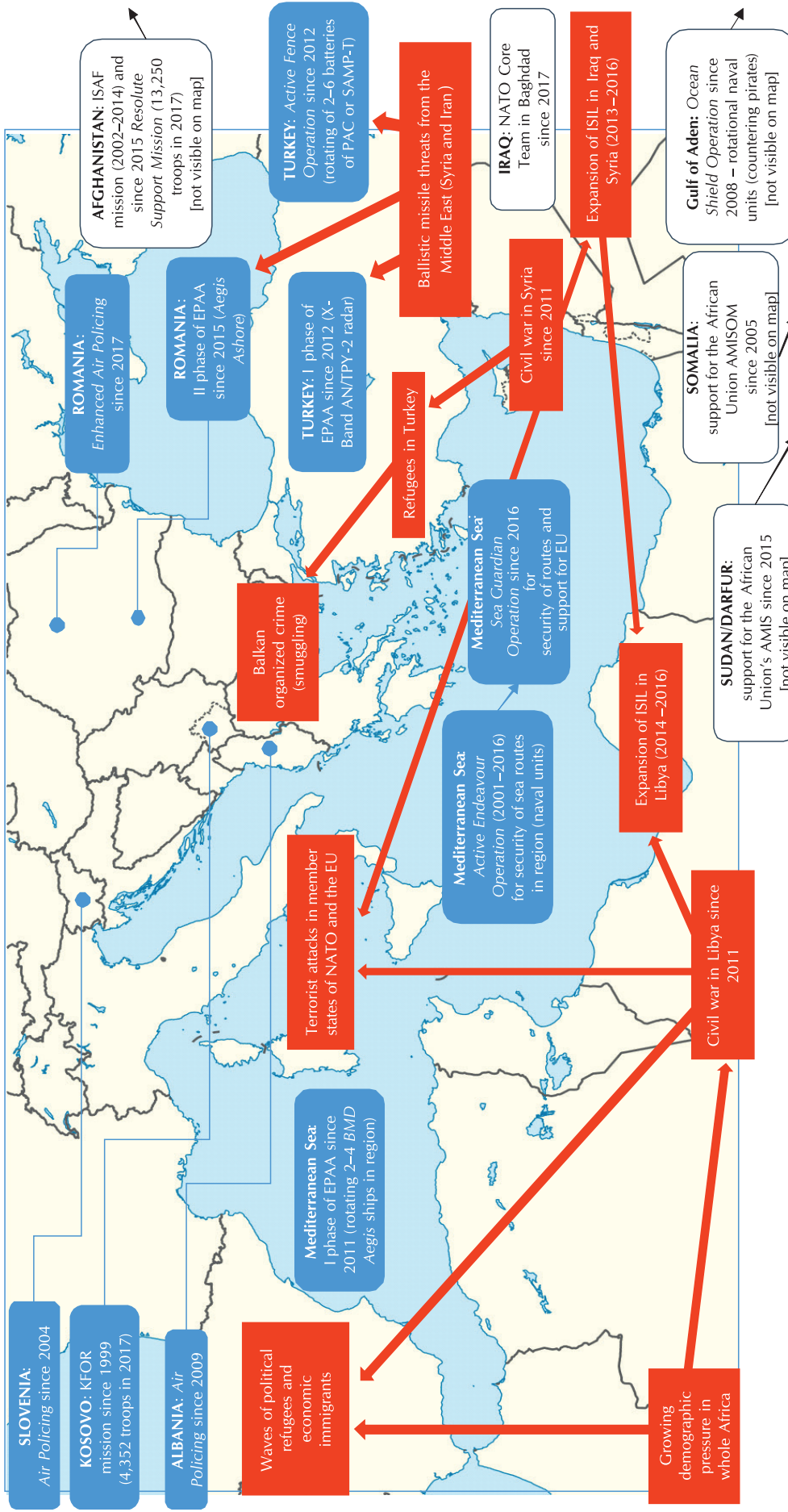
## CIVIL WARS, FALLEN STATES AND TERRORISM: NATO AND THE SOUTHERN FLANK

Between 2014 and 2018, NATO has been adapting to threats coming from the Southern Flank (see Fig. 2). The first NATO reaction to the increasing instability in the South involved support for Turkey, exposed to the potential spillover of the conflict in Syria onto Turkish territory. Within the operation *Active Fence*, established in 2013, the NATO members with the appropriate capabilities have been deploying air and missile defence systems on the Turkish border to prevent potential missile and air attacks originating from Syrian territory, with the primary concern the potential for chemical weapons. The Russian intervention in the defence of the Assad regime resulted in new threats to Turkey and NATO on the Southern Flank. In November 2015, following a series of violations of Turkish airspace by the Russian Air Force, Turkey shot down a Russian combat aircraft that had violated its airspace. What followed was a diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Russia, threatening a further increase of tensions between NATO and Russia. The response of the Alliance involved further support of Turkish air defence capabilities on land, water, and in the air through the deployment of additional ships, aircraft, and air defence batteries.

However, the crisis on the Southern Flank was largely different from the politico-military threat from the Russian policy and force posture on the Eastern Flank. Consequently, the actions of the Alliance in the South were primarily aimed—apart from reinforcing the capacity of Turkey to defend its territory—at reducing the ability of terrorist organisations to abuse the security vacuum created by the conflicts. Following the decrease in the level of the threat posed by Al-Qaeda, and thanks to the expansion of the Afghan army and police (Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, ANDSF), the ISAF operation ended in December 2014. It was replaced in January 2015 with the *Resolute Support Mission (RSM)*, a more modest undertaking aimed at advising and training. Yet, NATO remained the main sponsor, financing the operations, armaments, and equipment of the ANDSF. *RSM* was supported by troop contributions from 39 countries, 27 NATO members, and 12 partners of the Alliance. After reducing NATO's military presence in Afghanistan and changing the character of its mission, the Taliban intensified fighting again, causing significant losses to ANSDF and taking control of parts of Afghan territory.

With Al-Qaeda weakened, its place as the terrorist organisation posing the greatest threat to European countries and the U.S. was taken over by ISIS. Not only did ISIS take control of much territory in Syria and Iraq but it also began to effectively inspire extremists around the world to carry out terrorist attacks in their home countries. Almost all NATO members (26) engaged in various ways and scales with the U.S.-led Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. However only Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Turkey and the UK took part in air strikes, which indicated that only a few NATO members had both sufficient military capabilities and the will to use them outside their own territory. After the summit in Warsaw, NATO deployed AWACS airplanes to support air operations against IS. The Alliance and some of its members also increased their assistance to the Iraqi and Jordanian authorities (providing training, equipment, and armaments), both states directly threatened by the territorial expansion of ISIS. However, NATO had not formally joined the U.S.-led coalition, fearing that involvement could be used by extremist propaganda and make it difficult for Arab states to keep their support. The decision on formal involvement was made only in May 2017 at the Special Meeting. Again, it was mostly a result of U.S. pressure: president, Trump, questioned the usefulness of NATO, both primarily in the context of what he described as a lack of defence spending by the European Allies and members' lacklustre approach to fighting terrorism. In response, the Alliance not only formally joined the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS but also agreed to establish a special

**Map 2. Alliance's Missions and Asymmetric Threats on the Southern Flank of the NATO**  
Based on the PISM and NATO's publications (2014–2017)





Terrorism Intelligence Cell to exchange information on ISIS fighters returning to their home countries (foreign fighters), and appointed a new post of Coordinator, tasked to oversee all NATO efforts in the fight against terrorism. Even before the Special Meeting, a Regional Hub for the South had been set up within the structures of the Joint Command in Naples and tasked to monitor and investigate the evolution of the terrorist threat.

Over the past three years, NATO has changed the character of its naval missions on the Southern Flank to make the most out of the available naval assets and the potential cooperation with the EU. *Operation Active Endeavor (OAE)*, launched in 2001 in the Mediterranean Sea, has over the years moved away from tasks related to the terrorist threat to civilian and military vessels in the region. Facing an urgent humanitarian and political challenge, the unregulated mass-migration to Europe through the Mediterranean that began to pose a threat in 2015, the Alliance decided at the Warsaw summit to turn *OAE* into the *Operation Sea Guardian (SGO)*. The mandate of the new mission included not only ensuring maritime safety but also support for the mission of the EU agency Frontex (*EUNAVFOR MED "Sophia"*), which aimed, among others, to stop the trafficking of people through the Mediterranean. Earlier, in the beginning of 2016, NATO also deployed ships to the Aegean Sea to support the maritime operations of Greece and Turkey related to the migration crisis. In view of the uncontrolled flow of migrants and their trafficking by organised crime groups in the Balkans, NATO also sustained a significant military presence in Kosovo within the *KFOR* operation.

The Alliance has continued its advisory and logistical support for operations conducted by the African Union in Somalia since 2005 (*AMISOM*) and in Darfur since 2015 (*AMIS*). Allied warships also maintained their contribution to countering piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia, as part of the *Ocean Shield* operation, active since 2008. NATO also declared its readiness to support a potential training and advisory mission in Libya, although contingent on the stabilisation of the security and internal political situations there. In the future, this mission may be instrumental both in reducing the flow of migrants to Europe through the Mediterranean and the freedom of terrorist groups to manoeuvre. The Alliance also strengthened the partnership with 10 Arab partner countries under the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD, since 1994) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI, since 2004).

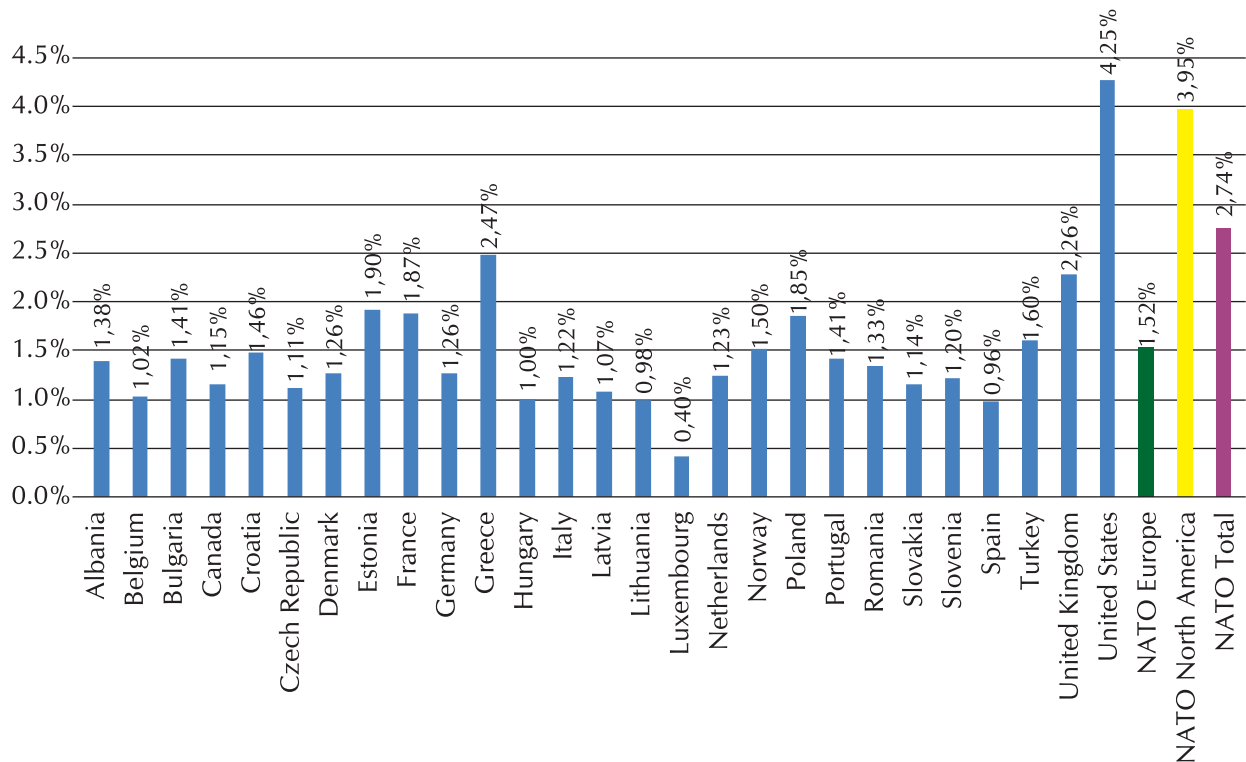
Conflicts in Europe's southern neighbourhood confirmed the importance of the Ballistic Missile Defence system (BMD) built by NATO since 2001 and tasked to protect European Allies from missile attack by short or medium or longer-range ballistic missiles launched from the Middle East. The main elements of the system include 4 U.S. *Aegis*-class destroyers, equipped with missile defence systems and based at the Rota base in Spain; a radar in Kürecik, Turkey; and an *Aegis Ashore* base at Deveselu, Romania, which reached initial operational readiness in 2015. The next element of the NATO BMD system is a second *Aegis Ashore* base in Redzikowo, Poland, planned for 2018, but delayed for technical reasons. The U.S., which contributes the most to the system, and other NATO members assumed that despite limiting Iran's nuclear programme in line with the Joint and Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) from 2015, the Iranian regime is still developing its short- and medium-range missile capability (and potentially aiming to deploy missiles of intercontinental range). The U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018 adds even more weight to the BMD system as a key NATO asset preventing military threats to the Allies originating on the Southern Flank.

## RESTRICTIONS TO ADAPTATION: OVERCOMING THE CRISIS OF DEFENCE BUDGETS AND MILITARY CAPABILITIES

Even a glimpse at the above graphics (Figs. 1, 2), which roughly illustrate the situation on the Eastern and Southern flanks, shows that further NATO adaptation is a must if the Alliance wants to strengthen the credibility of its deterrence and defence policy. The reform of the NATO Command Structure (NCS) and the “4x30” plan, both being main deliverables of the 2018 Brussels summit, are only two of many elements of the adaptation process that need to be properly addressed. The key part of adaptation remains the development of high-readiness forces and heavier capabilities, largely lacking in the European part of the Alliance. If the reinforcement strategy currently discussed in NATO is eventually to be implemented, new capabilities are simply a precondition. Yet, they can be developed only if the appropriate level of defence expenditure is sustained.

That is why the issue of defence spending became a NATO priority in 2017. Over the last decade, the vast majority of NATO members spent far less on defence than the 2% of GDP target indicated in the defence spending pledge adopted at the Newport summit. In the period between 2009 and 2016, only two European NATO countries spent on average more than 2% of GDP annually on defence—Greece, about 2.5%, and the UK, about 2.2%. Estonia, France and Poland were close to the 2% threshold. Total spending by all European NATO members was 1.5%, but as many as six countries stood at around 1% of GDP or below. At the same time, the U.S. spent an average 4.2% a year (Fig. 3).

**Figure 3. Average annual defence expenditure of NATO members for the period 2009–2016. Calculated in U.S. dollars, constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. The years 2017 and 2018 were not covered on purpose, since NATO data for that period are estimates only. Data does not include Montenegro and Iceland**

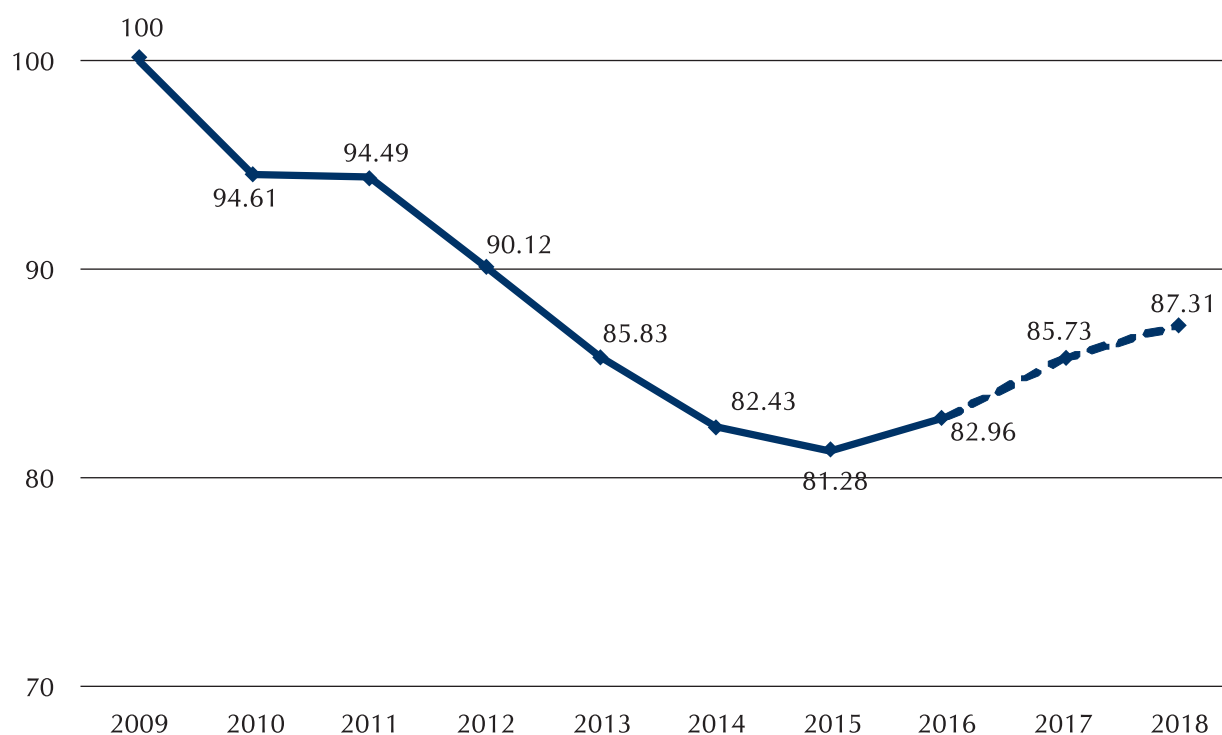


Source: own calculations based on NATO data: “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2009–2016),” NATO, 13 March 2017 and “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2018),” NATO, 10 July 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

Although NATO calculates defence expenditure in relation to GDP for each year separately, the calculation of this indicator as an average for the whole 2009–2017 period, as shown in Fig. 3, is meant to show the structural limitations of increases. Namely, it is very difficult for states to rapidly and significantly increase their defence spending, much less double it, as would be the case for the eight countries at about 1% of GDP. This is not only because of the imperative to balance the overall state budget but also because it may be difficult to spend the additional funds quickly and effectively. Armament investment programmes or structural reforms of the armed forces (such as increasing the number of troops) require time while acquisition procedures are often clumsy. Even with political will in place, the military apparatus may not be physically able to effectively spend all the appropriations earmarked for defence in a given year. Therefore, only gradual increases in the defence expenditure of European NATO members are possible. Consequently, a good number of NATO European members is unlikely to meet the 2% of GDP threshold by 2024, as specified in the defence spending pledge of the Newport summit.

For these reasons, in 2017 and 2018, NATO focused on ensuring positive dynamics in defence expenditure. The emphasis was put on maintaining growth, not on reaching absolute numbers. This is important, because one year after the Warsaw summit, the trend of cuts in the defence budgets of NATO countries finally stopped and reversed (Fig. 4), although the scale of the cuts that have taken place since 2008, when NATO last saw an increase in defence expenditure, remains significant.

**Figure 4. Dynamics of NATO total defence expenditure, indexed, 2009 = 100. Data for 2017 and 2018 estimated**



Source: own calculations based on NATO data: “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2009–2016),” NATO, 13 March 2017 and “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017),” NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int), “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011–2018),” NATO, 10 July 2018.

The total NATO defence expenditure increased for the first time in 2016. The downward trend has dominated ever since 2009, when the fiscal crisis began to force governments to limit their spending, including on defence. Estimates predict growth also in 2017 and 2018 (see Fig 4). Nevertheless, in 2018, NATO still spent almost 13% less on defence than eight years earlier. In 2018, the total was more than \$935 billion while in 2009, it was more than \$1.07 trillion, or about \$135 billion more (in constant prices and exchange rates, 2010). More importantly however, European NATO members spent in 2018 almost 4% more than eight years earlier while the U.S. and Canada spent 18,5% less (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Defence Expenditure of NATO in 2009 and 2018 (in millions of U.S. dollars, constant 2010 prices and exchange rates). Data for 2018 estimated**

	Defence Expenditure 2009	Defence Expenditure 2018	Difference 2009–2018
NATO—Europe	277,659	288,679	3,97%
NATO—North America	793,820	646,878	-18,51%
NATO—Total	1,071,482	935,557	-12,69%

Source: own calculations based on NATO data: “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2009–2016),” NATO, 13 March 2017 and “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011–2018),” NATO, 10 July 2018.

The growth in 2016, though modest and amounting to only 2% year-on-year, was possible because of the clear increase in the total defence expenditure of European Alliance members (by about 3.6%) and at the same time—for the first time since 2011—of the U.S. defence expenditure (by 1.4%). The large cuts in the U.S. defence budget comprised the main factor behind the decline in total NATO spending in the period 2011–2015. As a result of the “sequestration” mechanism (and the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan), from 2011 onwards, the U.S. has been reducing its defence expenditure at a rate of 5–6% annually. At the same time, the cuts in Europe were clearly smaller and amounted to only 1–2% per year (see Fig. 5), although some European NATO members indeed made very deep cuts. Estimates for 2017 provide for a larger scale of growth, of about 3.3% for total NATO defence expenditure.

Some first NATO estimates, which were released prior to the 2018 summit in Brussels, show that only five Allies likely spent 2% of GDP on defence in 2018: the U.S., UK, Greece, Estonia and Latvia, while three Allies are too close to call before final data arrives: Poland (1,98%), Lithuania (1,96%) and Romania (1,93%).<sup>4</sup> If these figures are confirmed, a modest growth of about 1.8% year-on-year for the total NATO defence expenditure will be recorded in 2018, but defence expenditure of European NATO members would grow by about 4,8% (see Table 2).

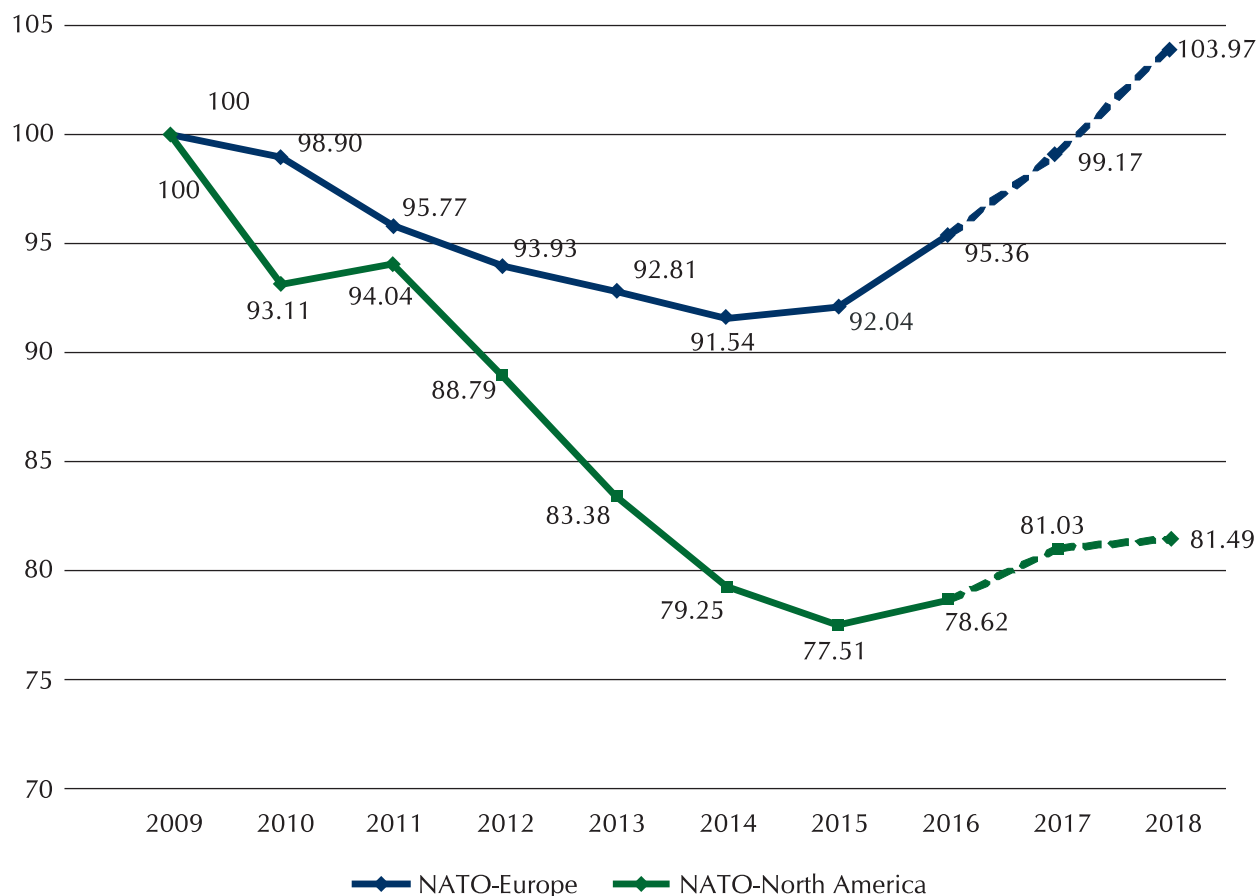
**Table 2. Real change of defence expenditure in NATO, year-on-year. Data for 2017 and 2018 estimated**

	2015	2016	2017	2018
NATO—Europe	0.54%	3.61%	3.99%	4.84%
NATO—North America	-2.19%	1.43%	3.07%	0.56%
NATO—Total	-1.40%	2.07%	3.34%	1.84%

Source: own calculations based on NATO data: “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2009–2016),” NATO, 13 March 2017 and “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017),” NATO, 15 March 2018, www.nato.int, “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011–2018),” NATO, 10 July 2018.

<sup>4</sup> “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011–2018),” NATO, 10 July 2018, www.nato.int.

**Figure 5. Dynamics of the defence expenditure of NATO European and North American members, indexed, 2009=100. Data for 2017 and 2018 estimated**

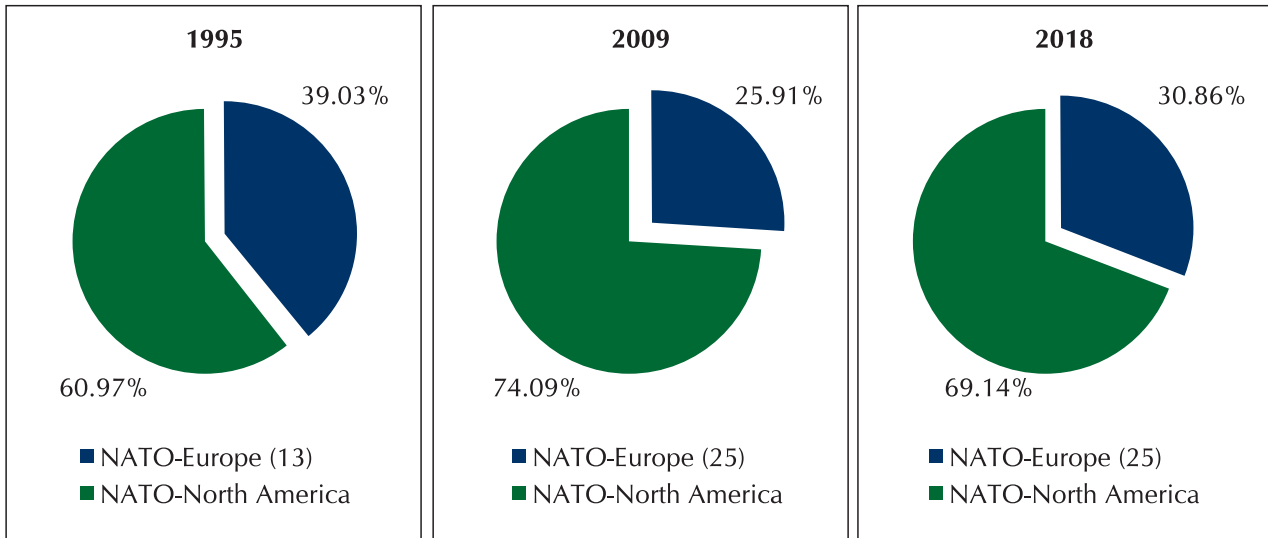


Source: own calculations based on NATO data: “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2009–2016),” NATO, 13 March 2017 and “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017),” NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int), “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011–2018),” NATO, 10 July 2018.

The cuts in the American defence budget resulted in limiting both the U.S. forward presence in many places in the world, including Europe, and American investment in new capabilities. This should be considered a major factor behind the increasing American pressure on Europeans to spend more on defence. It was then also economic reasons why the U.S. faced the prospect of further limiting its global power projection capacity, and consequently, began pressing European Allies to strengthen their defence potential. In other words, the U.S. could less and less afford to get militarily involved in operations and missions in the vicinity of Europe.

As a result of the faster and deeper cuts by the U.S. than the European NATO members, a change came in the share of North America and Europe in the overall NATO defence expenditure. While in 2009 it was 74% for the U.S. and Canada and 26% for the remaining Allies, by 2018 it was already 70% to 30%, respectively (see Fig. 6). For comparison, in 1995, in the Alliance of 15 countries, this proportion was at roughly 60% to 40%. This shows that the European members of NATO, increasingly pressed to stop the reduction of defence expenditure and increase to 2% of GDP, began to deliver: the trend of increasing the U.S. and Canadian share of total NATO expenditure was reversed. To what extent this may become a lasting trend remains unsure, particularly that some Allies openly admit, that the increases they planned will not let them reach 2% GDP in 2024, but later, if at all.

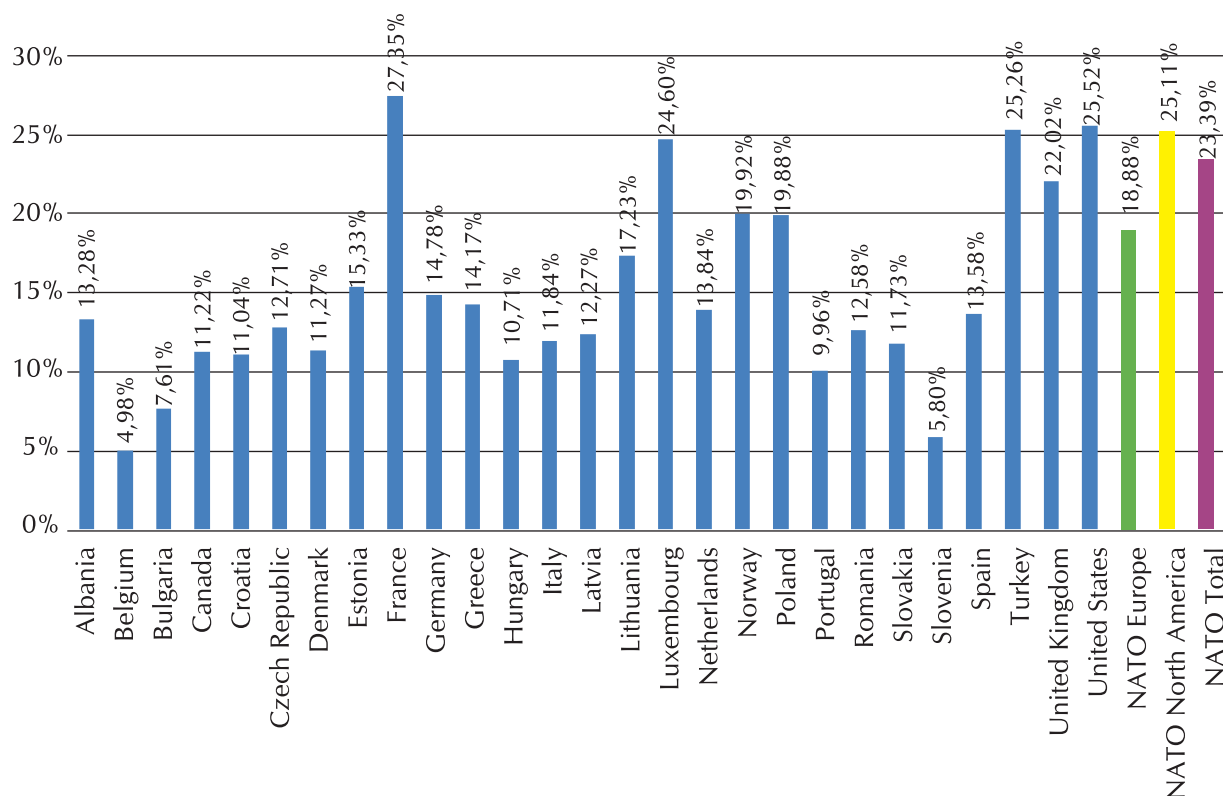


**Figure 6. Share of total NATO defence expenditure, 1995, 2009, and 2018 (data estimated)**

Source: own calculations based on NATO data: “Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence. Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (1985-2009)”, 10 June 2010, “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2009–2016),” NATO, 13 March 2017 and “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011–2018),” NATO, 10 July 2018.

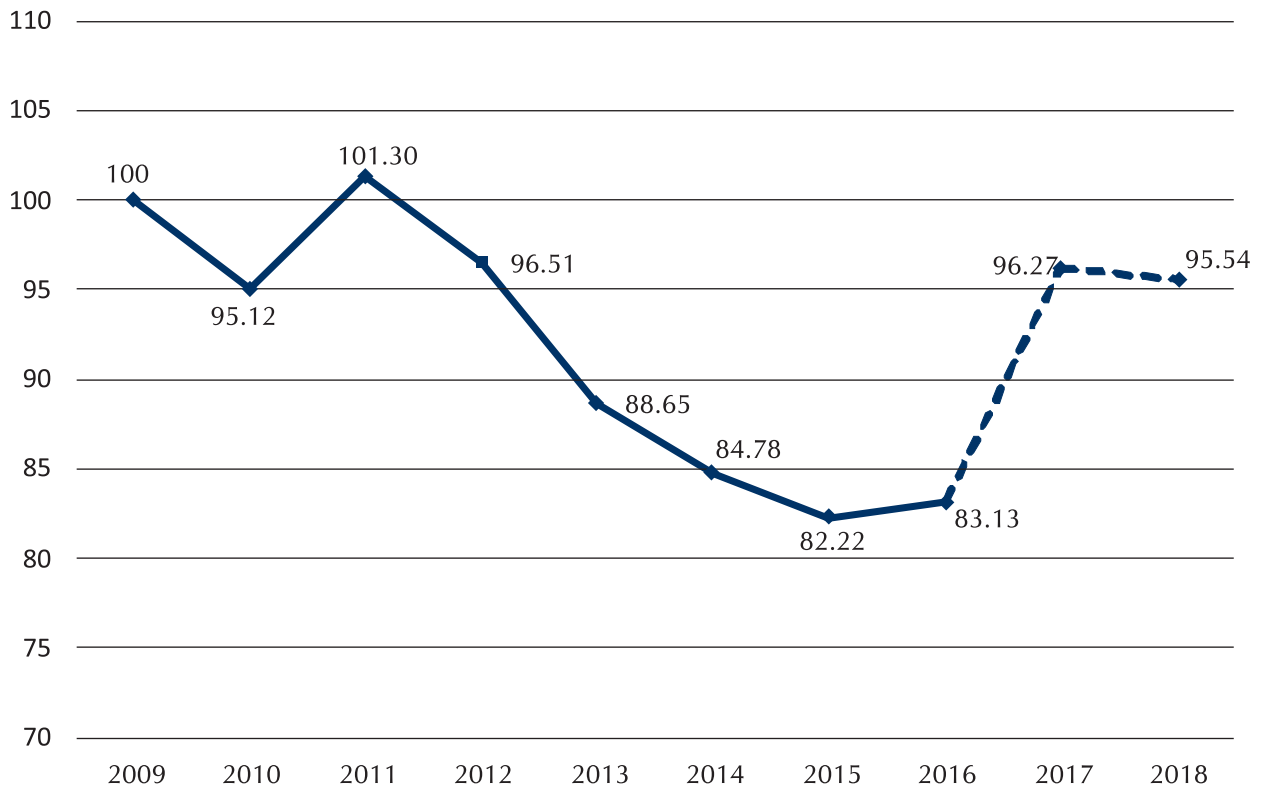
An important indicator addressed in the defence spending pledge from the 2014 summit in Newport is the share of expenditure on equipment (in NATO methodology, that includes the acquisition of weapon systems and military equipment, as well as armament research and development programmes). According to the defence pledge, the target is at least 20% of the total defence budget. In this case, NATO also evaluates the values for a given year; however, the analysis of the average annual figure, calculated for the 2009–2016 period, can help draw important conclusions. According to these calculations, only seven countries (France, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Turkey, U.K., the U.S.) on average exceeded or remained close to this level. At the same time, 5 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Portugal, Slovenia) spent about 10% or less, half of the target. The ability of states to quickly make up for these gaps is even more limited than in the case of the total defence expenditure. This is because investments in new weapon systems and equipment are the result of a strategic defence review process and are informed by defence doctrine—again, these processes require time. What is more, when acquiring new capabilities, defence industrial considerations are an additional factor, complicating and delaying the processes. All this boils down to the conclusion that there is a strong chance that a significant number of NATO members will not reach the level of 20% of defence expenditure for investments by 2024. However, since the adoption of the defence spending pledge in 2014, a rising trend in the investment expenditure of NATO members has been clearly visible (see Fig. 8). According to the data released prior to the Brussels summit, in 2018 15 members of the Alliance were estimated to spend 20% or more of their defence expenditure on equipment (yet, these figures need to be confirmed).

**Figure 7. Average annual defence equipment expenditure of NATO members for the period 2009–2016. Calculated in U.S. dollars, constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. The years 2017 and 2018 were not covered on purpose, since NATO data for that period are estimates only. Data does not include Montenegro and Iceland.**



Source: own calculations based on NATO data: “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2009–2016),” NATO, 13 March 2017 and “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011–2018),” NATO, 10 July 2018.

Regarding defence economics, NATO follows a path of growth and seems to have broken for good the negative trend that started in 2009 with the fiscal crisis. The sustainability of the rising trend is an open question. It can be assumed, though, that not all the Allies will reach the target of 2% of GDP on defence and 20% for investment by 2024. This is due to structural constraints, which make possible only gradual increases, spread over time, rather than a steep rise. For this reason, the additional criteria of assessing the contribution of individual countries to common security within the Alliance, as set forth by NATO at the Special Meeting in May 2017, will gain importance. These are the development of the most needed, heavy military capabilities and participation in Alliance operations. Whether any developments in these two areas make the U.S. soften its approach to transatlantic burden-sharing is unclear. On the one hand, the U.S. may acknowledge that the mere breaking of the downward trend is enough to prove the growing involvement of the European members in NATO. On the other hand, the 2% of GDP indicator is a straight and easy one to verify, and may remain an attractive—yet already very divisive—measurement of the individual Allies’ contribution to the common defence.

**Figure 8. Dynamics of defence investment expenditure of NATO, indexed, 2009 = 100. Data for 2017 and 2018 estimated**

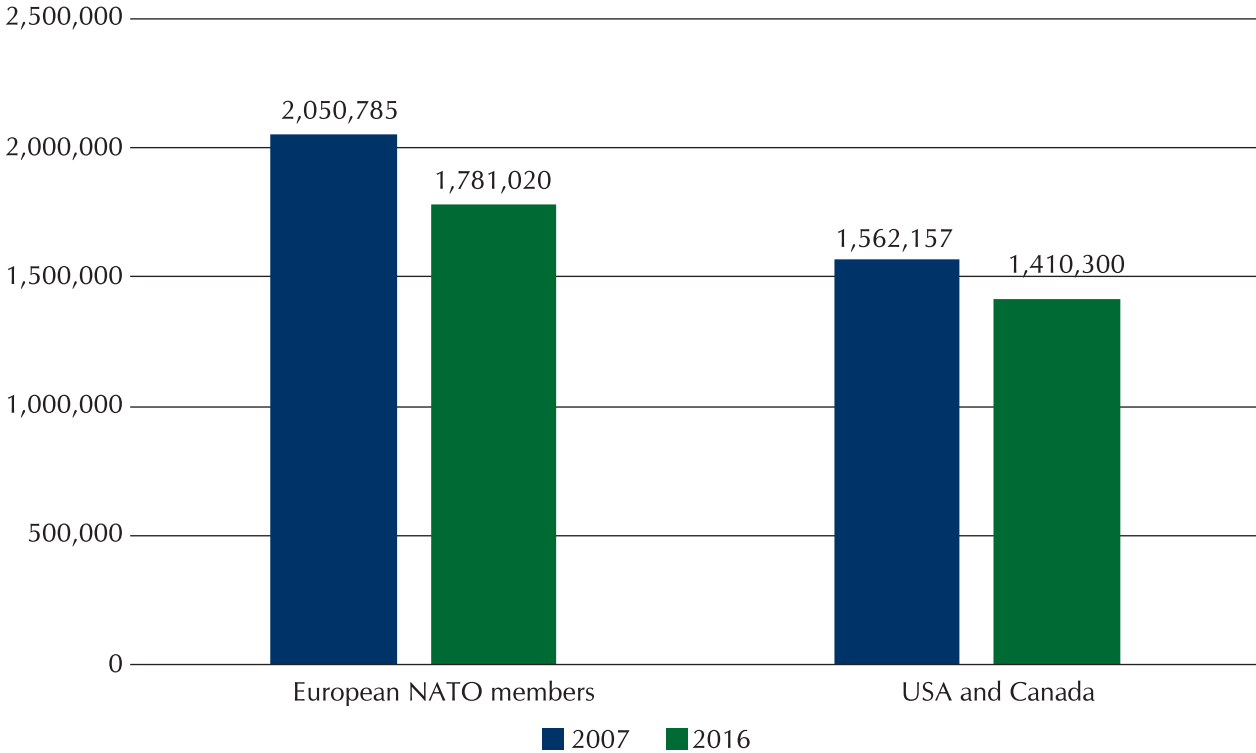
Source: own calculations based on NATO data: “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2009–2016),” NATO, 13 March 2017 and “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011–2018),” NATO, 10 July 2018.

Why this may be the case is suggested not only by President Trump’s seemingly personal attachment to this issue but also by the rather gloomy picture of the European NATO members’ capabilities. The negative trend in defence expenditure of NATO countries sustained for nearly a decade translated into deep cuts in the military capabilities of the Allies. Recovering them will be, again, a long-term effort.

As data from the years 2007–2016 show, the cuts mainly affected the equipment and armaments of land forces. In that time, the number of soldiers in active service in European NATO countries decreased from around 2,050,000 to 1,780,000, or by about 15%, and the number of tanks dropped by as much as half (from 14,000 to 7,000), armoured combat vehicles by one-third (33,000 to 21,000), and artillery by a quarter (from 26,000 to 19,000 units).

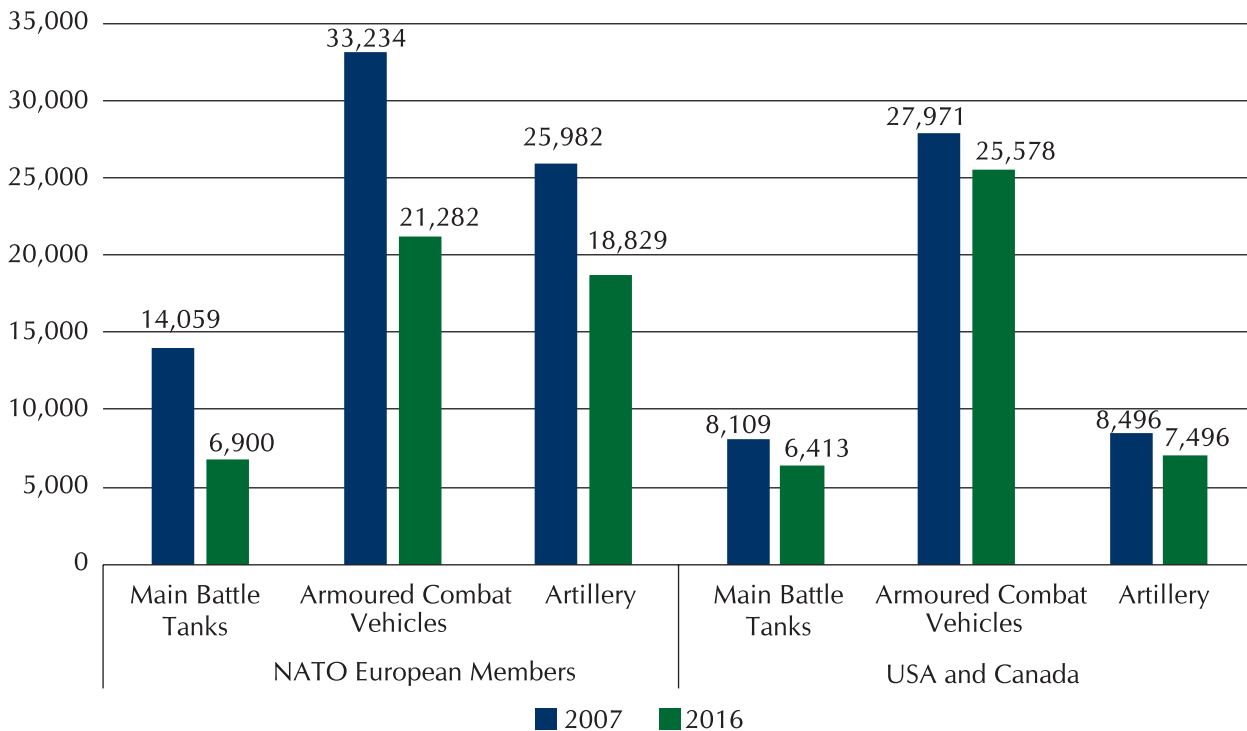


**Figure 9. NATO soldiers on active duty, 2007 and 2016**



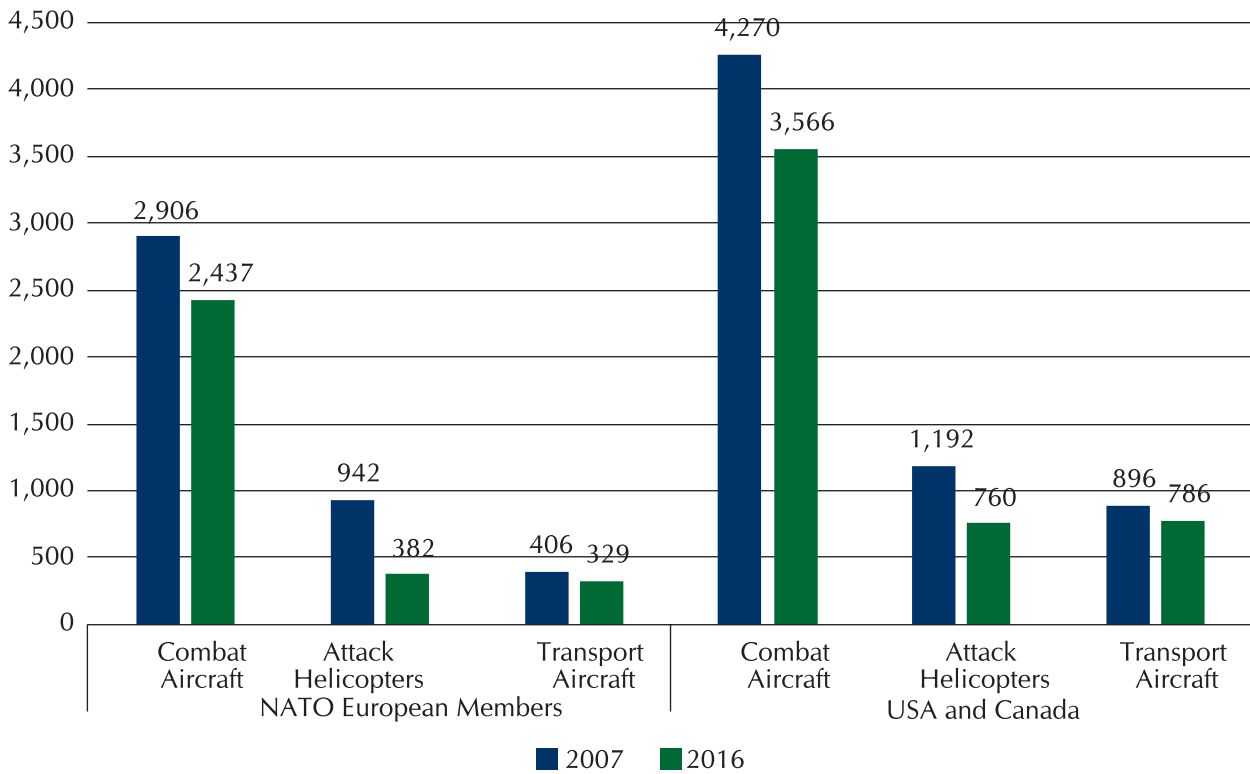
Source: own calculations on the basis of: International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Military Balance," Taylor & Francis, London 2008 and 2017.

**Figure 10. NATO Land Capabilities, 2007 and 2016, no. of units**



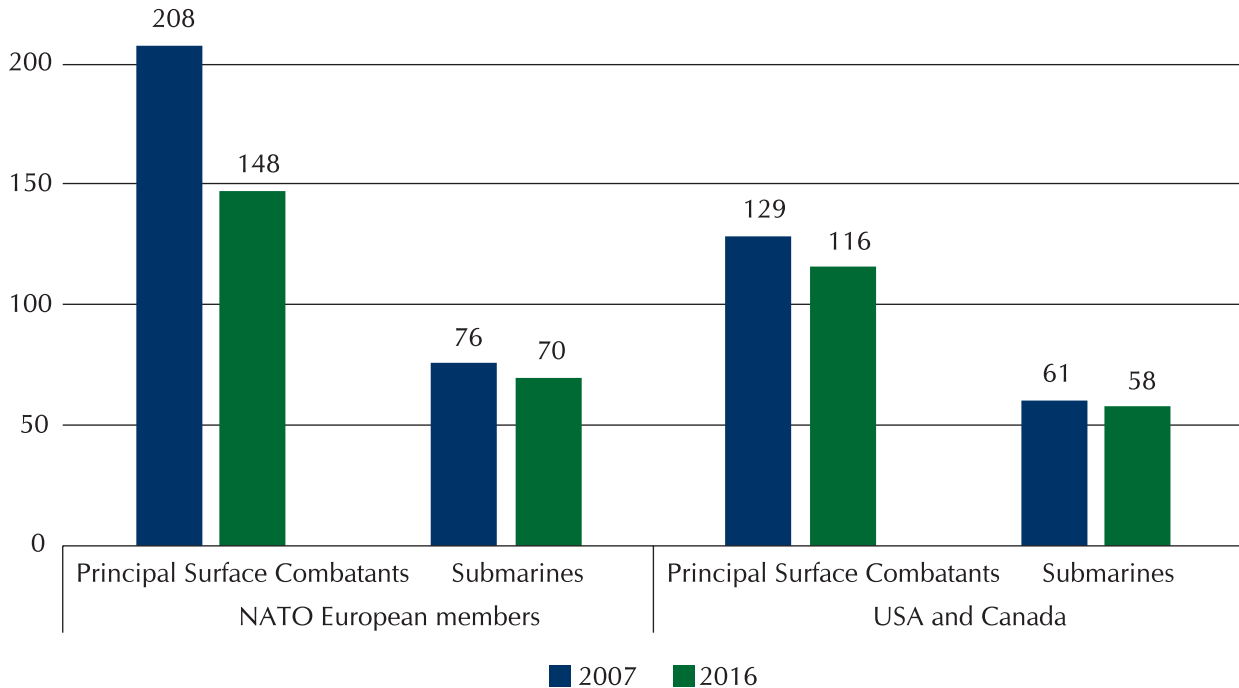
Source: own calculations on the basis of: International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Military Balance," Taylor & Francis, London 2008 and 2017.

**Figure 11. NATO Air Capabilities, 2007 and 2016, no. of units**



Source: own calculations on the basis of: International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Military Balance," Taylor & Francis, London 2008 and 2017.

**Figure 12. NATO Naval Capabilities, 2007 and 2016, no. of units**

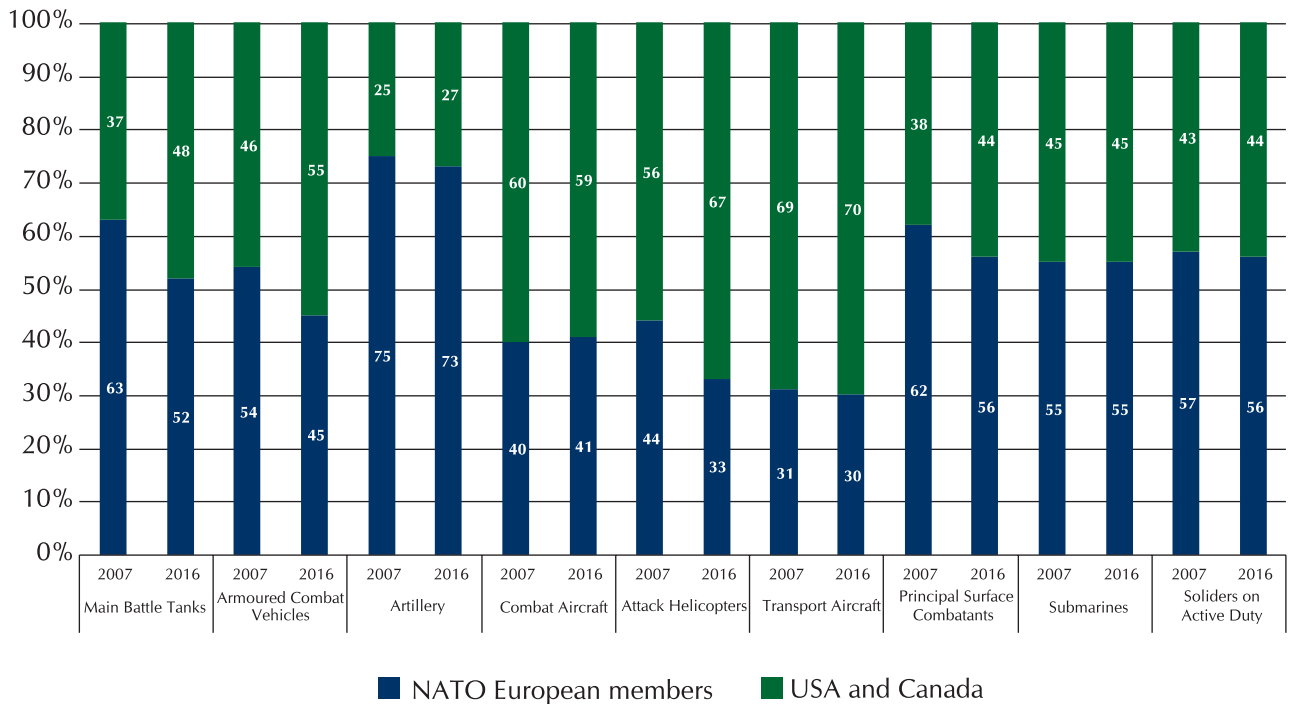


Source: own calculations on the basis of: International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Military Balance," Taylor & Francis, London 2008 and 2017.

The reductions also affected air forces, and in all major categories: combat aircraft, transport aircraft, and attack helicopters. Despite developing a strategy based on the ability to quickly move troops and equipment to a crisis area, as epitomised by the Allied operation in Afghanistan, the number of transport aircraft in NATO decreased. The number of attack helicopters, which provide significant support in expeditionary missions, and are also vital in territorial defence scenarios, decreased by almost 60% (from 940 to 380 units).

Budgetary problems and delays in the implementation of new armament projects have also led to a reduction in NATO naval capabilities. European NATO members reduced by a third the number of large surface vessels. Since the navy plays a key role in securing sea lines of communication, the reduced number of ships means limited European capacity to protect its economic interests, combat trafficking of people and illicit goods, control migration, and—most importantly, given the scale of the threat from Russia—secure the movement of U.S. reinforcements through the North Atlantic.

**Figure 13. Share of the main categories of capabilities, USA and Canada vs. European NATO members, 2007 and 2016. All figures in %.**



Source: own calculations on the basis of: International Institute for Strategic Studies, “Military Balance,” Taylor & Francis, London 2008 and 2017.

**Table 3. Military capabilities of the NATO European members, main categories, 2007 and 2016**

	Main Battle Tanks	Armoured combat vehicles	Artillery	Combat aircraft	Attack helicopters	Transport aircraft	Principal Surface Combatants	Submarines
2007	14,049	33,234	25,982	2,906	942	406	208	76
2016	6,900	21,282	18,829	2,437	382	329	148	70
Change	-51%	-36%	-27.6%	-16.2%	-59.5%	-19%	-29%	-7.9%

Source: own calculations on the basis of: International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Military Balance," Taylor & Francis, London 2008 and 2017.

**Table 4. Military capabilities of Canada, main categories, 2007 and 2016**

	Main Battle Tanks	Armoured combat vehicles	Artillery	Combat aircraft	Attack helicopters	Transport aircraft	Principal Surface Combatants	Submarines
2007	86	1,321	455	107	0	28	15	4
2016	82	1,155	287	95	0	40	13	4
Change	-4.7%	-12.6%	-37%	-11.2%	0	+30%	-13.3%	0

Source: own calculations on the basis of: International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Military Balance," Taylor & Francis, London 2008 and 2017.

**Table 5. Military capabilities of the U.S., main categories, 2007 and 2016**

	Main Battle Tanks	Armoured combat vehicles	Artillery	Combat aircraft	Attack helicopters	Transport aircraft	Principal Surface Combatants	Submarines
2007	8,023	26,650	8,041	4,163	1,192	868	114	57
2016	6,331	24,423	6,833	3,471	760	746	103	54
Change	-21%	-8.4%	-15%	-16.6%	-36.2%	-14.1%	-9.6%	-5.2%

Source: own calculations on the basis of: International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Military Balance," Taylor & Francis, London 2008 and 2017.

**Table 6. Soldiers in active duty 2007 and 2016**

	NATO European members	USA	Canada
2007	2,050,785	1,498,157	64,000
2016	1,781,020	1,347,300	63,000
Change	-15%	-10%	1.5%

Source: own calculations on the basis of: International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Military Balance," Taylor & Francis, London 2008 and 2017.

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The revolutionary changes in the security environment have put NATO under enormous pressure to adapt, probably the greatest since the end of the Cold War. Between 2014 and 2018, however, the Alliance proved that it is able to react to threats in two strategic directions, from the East and the South, including Russia, a nuclear power that openly seeks to undermine the foundation of the Alliance. Russia continues to strengthen its offensive force posture towards NATO and maintains a clear, regional military advantage on the Eastern Flank. This means that regardless of EFP, NATO has to further reinforce its capacity to conduct a collective defence mission. The decisions to reinforce the NATO Command Structure with two new HQ and the U.S.-proposed “4x30” plan are welcome first steps towards developing and implementing a viable reinforcement strategy. To this end, it will be, first and foremost, necessary to strengthen the military potential of NATO members throughout the full spectrum of capabilities and introduce further changes in NATO’s operational planning. A huge challenge in itself, given the economic constraints for the adaptation process and the increasing tensions between the U.S. and some European NATO members.

At the same time, the Alliance’s priority is also to develop the capacity and demonstrate the willingness to conduct crisis-management operations. These will remain the main form of operational response to terrorist and other threats resulting from domestic conflicts and state collapse on NATO’s Southern Flank. The ability and readiness of the Alliance to simultaneously conduct two large missions of two different types (defence of territory and crisis management) will continue to be a condition for allied solidarity and a robust transatlantic link, which in turn are the building blocks of both common defence and credible deterrence.



Albania joined the Alliance together with Croatia in 2009 in a move that was seen—through the prism of transatlantic and European integration—as a continuation of the Western Balkans stabilisation effort. It also effectively confirmed the credibility of the Alliance’s enlargement policy at a time of receding prospects for Ukraine’s and Georgia’s accession in the wake of the Russia-Georgia war of August 2008. For these reasons, Albania is a strong supporter of further integration of the Western Balkans with NATO and perceives itself, now a fresh member, as inspiration for its neighbours and a country that “generates stability in the region.”<sup>1</sup> It also calls on the Alliance to focus more on the Balkans and, for obvious historical, cultural, economic, and social reasons, Albania has been seeking NATO recognition of Kosovo by all of the Allies, lobbying for that during the Warsaw summit.<sup>2</sup> This decision could, in a more distant future, open membership prospects for Kosovo.<sup>3</sup> Albania’s only reservation concerns Macedonia, for which it calls for the full implementation of the 2001 Ohrid agreement to end the local conflict, pointing to what it sees as the still unresolved question of Albanian minority rights.<sup>4</sup>

With Albania bordering countries that are now in the Alliance (Greece, Montenegro), joining it (Macedonia), or attempting to win candidate status (Kosovo), it does not have to focus on territorial defence in its security policy, and hence, the country’s restrained enthusiasm for the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), even though Albania has declared it will contribute towards implementing the Newport summit decisions and will send a company to join the NATO Response Force (NRF) in the 2016–2018 rotation cycle.<sup>5</sup> Albanian units participated in the *Steadfast Jazz* (October 2013) and *Trident Juncture* (November 2015) exercises, and in May 2016 some 120 Albanian troops were dispatched to Poland as part of the Alliance’s *Brilliant Jump* exercises. Albania also supported the implementation of the decision of the Warsaw summit to establish an enhanced forward presence on the Eastern Flank. In 2017, it assigned 18 soldiers to the first and second rotations of the NATO battalion group in Latvia and 21 soldiers to the third rotation.

It maintains a minor presence in the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan and in line with the Warsaw summit decisions, doubled its commitment (to 80 troops).<sup>6</sup> Albania declared it would send military trainers to Iraq as part of the allied Defence Capacity Building Initiative and confirmed the decision taken in June 2016 to deploy one of its ships to the NATO mission in the Aegean Sea.<sup>7</sup> It participates also in the KFOR force in Kosovo (some 10 troops).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Interview of Minister Bushati for CNN International,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, 29 October 2014, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, [www.punetejashtme.gov.al](http://www.punetejashtme.gov.al).

<sup>2</sup> “The expansion of NATO in the Balkans, a strategic investment,” Prime Minister’s Office (Albania), 8 July 2016, [www.kryeministria.al](http://www.kryeministria.al).

<sup>3</sup> “Albania’s position in the Wales Summit: Necessary integration of the region,” Prime Minister’s Office (Albania), [www.kryeministria.al](http://www.kryeministria.al).

<sup>4</sup> “BBC Monitoring European, Albania sets Ohrid implementation as condition for Macedonia’s NATO entry,” 21 May 2015.

<sup>5</sup> “BBC Monitoring European, Albanian defence minister thanks NATO general for air patrols,” 23 December 2015.

<sup>6</sup> “NATO continues its mission in Afghanistan, Albania doubles its troops,” Ministry of Defence of Albania, 9 July 2016, [www.mod.gov.al](http://www.mod.gov.al).

<sup>7</sup> “The expansion of NATO in the Balkans, a strategic investment,” Prime Minister’s Office (Albania), 8 July 2016, [www.kryeministria.al](http://www.kryeministria.al).

<sup>8</sup> *The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2015*, NATO, January 2016, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

In Albania's political debate, Russia is not perceived as a threat, although Russian actions and its political offer are not regarded by Albanian decision-makers as able to compete with the country's European integration path as taken by the West Balkan countries.<sup>9</sup> Albania joined the European Union in condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine and denounced a Russian statement that, in the opinion of Albania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, suggested Albanian co-responsibility for the political crisis in Macedonia in 2015.<sup>10</sup>

Albania is determined to use its NATO membership to increase the potential of its armed forces, which since 2002 have been successively reduced.<sup>11</sup> They are also hugely underfinanced, with Albania's defence spending running at just 1.1% of the country's GDP (\$155 million) and only half the amount reported by Luxembourg (one-fifth the size of Albania), making it the lowest among all the NATO member states.<sup>12</sup> Since 2001, Albania had been cutting its defence spending by a dozen-plus percent a year, only reversing this course and increasing its defence budget, year on year, in 2016 in response to the Newport summit decisions and ahead of the Warsaw summit.<sup>13</sup>

As stated by the Albanian Minister of Defence after the 2018 Brussels summit, the country is committed to achieving the 2% of GDP threshold in defence expenditures by 2024, at the same time underscoring the value of the Albanian contribution to the NATO mission in Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup>

Albania sees its NATO membership in conjunction with what it hopes will be its future membership of the EU: being part of NATO is expected to add credibility to the country in the transatlantic and European community and help it build the political capital needed to integrate with the European Union.<sup>15</sup> To this end, it also tries to make Albania's experience with the fight against terrorism and extremism well-known. In 2014–2015, Albanian police conducted numerous anti-terrorist operations that put an end to foreign fighters' journeys to Syria and Iraq, something appreciated by the country's western Allies. In the opinion of Albania's decision-makers, the religious and political radicalisation that has resulted in increased (especially Islamic) terrorism poses the most serious threat to international security and peace.<sup>16</sup> Albania's growing weight in debates on this threat and in practical measures taken by the Alliance is reflected in the proposal approved by the Allies in May 2016 to set a NATO centre of excellence in Albania to counter radicalisation and the phenomenon of foreign fighters. It will operate along the lines of existing centres, such as one in Estonia dealing with cybersecurity.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "Interview of Minister Bushati for the Voice of America," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, 8 March 2016, [www.punetegashtme.gov.al](http://www.punetegashtme.gov.al).

<sup>10</sup> "MFA summons Ambassador of Russian Federation," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, 27 April 2016, [www.punetegashtme.gov.al](http://www.punetegashtme.gov.al).

<sup>11</sup> T. Hudhra, "Defence Reform and NATO Integration. Lessons Learned from Albania," Atlantic Council, <http://atlantic-council-al.com>.

<sup>12</sup> "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2009–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>13</sup> "Albania, an active part of NATO in keeping peace and fulfilling mutual obligations," press release on the Albanian prime minister's website, 10 December 2015, [www.kryeministria.al](http://www.kryeministria.al).

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Defense Minister Olta Xhaçka, 30 July 2018, [www.mod.gov.al](http://www.mod.gov.al).

<sup>15</sup> See: B.F. Griffard, R.C. Nation, D. Grey, *Strategic Planning in the Albanian Armed Forces*, Center for Strategic Leadership, U.S. Army War College, January 2009, vol. 1, [www.csl.army.mil](http://www.csl.army.mil).

<sup>16</sup> "Remarks of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania Ditmir Bushati at Brookings Institution," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, 1 March 2016, [www.punetegashtme.gov.al](http://www.punetegashtme.gov.al).

<sup>17</sup> "In Tirana is being held the NATO Transformation Synchronization Conference for 2016," press release on the Albania Ministry of Defence website, 1 March 2016, [www.mod.gov.al](http://www.mod.gov.al).



A NATO founding member, Belgium perceives collaboration within the Alliance, as within the European Union, as a key element of its security policy. In recent years, it has pressed NATO to combat threats at their source, outside the Treaty area, and has contributed relatively large contingents (for a national force of some 30,000 personnel) to crisis-management operations. These have included about 600 troops to the ISAF and (at its peak) 200 troops to the KFOR missions.<sup>1</sup> Belgium is also a major promoter of tighter cooperation under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.<sup>2</sup> For a long time, Belgium regarded a conventional threat to NATO's Eastern Flank as remote.

The outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine changed the Belgian thinking about NATO priorities and led to a more balanced perception of threats emanating from both the eastern and southern neighbourhoods. As the Belgian minister of defence, Steven Vandeput, noted in November 2015, the biggest challenge to European security is now posed by the simultaneous occurrence of many such threats.<sup>3</sup> Belgium counts among such threats Russia's growing assertiveness, potential rivalry for Arctic natural resources, and crises and conflicts in the Middle East and in North and sub-Saharan Africa, with their consequences including mass migration and increased terrorist threats from radical Islamic groups.<sup>4</sup> In this context, Belgian politicians constantly speak about the need for the West to engage in dialogue with Russia, including within the framework of the Alliance, and they all see Moscow as an important partner for the European Union.<sup>5</sup>

Seeking to confirm its credibility within NATO, Belgium took perceptible measures to strengthen the Eastern Flank. In 2015–2017, four Belgian F-16AM fighter jets participated (four times) in the enhanced Baltic Air Policing mission, operating out of bases in Malbork, Poland (in January to April, and May to August 2015), and Amari, Estonia (January to April 2016, and September to December 2017). In October 2015, more than 350 Belgian troops took part in the month-long *Black Piranha* exercise in Lithuania, and another 350 participated in 2016. A Belgian minesweeper has regularly contributed to Baltic exercises and other activities of the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group (SNMCMG-1). Belgium has dispatched officers to NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) in Poland and Lithuania (one officer per unit) and is a member of the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE), headquartered in Szczecin. It also contributed to the 2016 to the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), providing 1,000 soldiers, a frigate, a minesweeper, six F-16 fighter jets, four A-109 multipurpose helicopters, and an unspecified number of unmanned aircraft. Belgium has also been ratcheting up its NATO commitment to cyberdefence. In November 2015, the country announced that it would join the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD CoE) in Tallinn and send one of its

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<sup>1</sup> See information on the Belgian foreign ministry website, "Partaking in NATO Operations," <http://diplomatie.belgium.be>.

<sup>2</sup> *Common Security and Defence Policy: strategic aspects*, Kingdom of Belgium, <http://diplomatie.belgium.be>.

<sup>3</sup> M. Banks, "Interview: Belgian Defence Minister Steven Vandeput," *Defense News*, 18 November 2015, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*; also, "Speech by Minister Reynders on the priorities of the Belgian diplomacy," Kingdom of Belgium, 17 January 2015, <http://diplomatie.belgium.be>; *Affaires Etrangères*, Didier Reynders, [www.didierreynders.be](http://www.didierreynders.be). Belgium also points to the impact that climate change has on security, for example, by potentially driving growth in migration from Africa to Europe.

<sup>5</sup> "Speech by Minister Reynders on the priorities ...," *op. cit.*; "Politolog: nie ma mowy o zbliżeniu Rosji z USA," *Polskie Radio*, 14 May 2015, [www.polskieradio.pl](http://www.polskieradio.pl).

experts there.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Belgium is widely believed to be one of five European countries that host American B61 nuclear bombs and provide dual-capable aircraft (DCA) for their delivery under NATO nuclear-sharing arrangements.<sup>7</sup>

But with the country's priority being the fight against terrorism (internally and externally), the focus of Belgian attention is on NATO's Southern Flank. Belgium is among the European states most threatened with acts of terrorism, as tragically confirmed by the attacks in Brussels in March 2016. The high level of this threat is connected with the return of Belgian citizens who took part in Middle East hostilities as "foreign fighters" (an estimated 400–500 left Belgium for Iraq and Syria, translating into the highest per-capita ratio in Europe of some 40 "foreign fighters" per one million citizens<sup>8</sup>). Consequently, Belgium has sought a major improvement in the exchange of intelligence information within NATO and the EU and called for an increase in the Alliance's presence on the Southern Flank.<sup>9</sup> It gave public support to NATO's mission in the Aegean and expressed readiness to participate in the Defence and Related Capacity Building Initiative (DCB).<sup>10</sup> Some 60 Belgian personnel were involved in the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan in 2016–2017.

As Belgium sees it, the response to challenges and threats originating on the Alliance's Southern Flank must not be confined to military instruments but also should include non-military measures and activities in organisations and formats other than NATO. For Belgium, it was therefore important that the Alliance tighten cooperation with the European Union, which has at its disposal a wider set of crisis-reaction instruments, so that each bloc complements the other.<sup>11</sup> Belgium has committed military resources to the international coalition against ISIS. Between October 2014 and July 2015, six Belgian F-16 fighter aircraft attacked targets in Iraq. Operations were re-launched in July 2016 and extended to cover Syria as well. Some 35 Belgian personnel were training Iraqi forces in 2015 and 2016, and the country has declared its readiness to send troops to a potential stabilisation mission once the Syrian conflict ends.<sup>12</sup> There are Belgian contributions to EU and UN missions, and also bilateral operations, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Tunisia, Mauritania, and Senegal. The largest Belgian contingent has been deployed to the European Union Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali. Its presence there was extended by at least a year starting from July 2016, with the numbers increasing from 90 to 175 and Belgium assuming command of the mission.

While Belgium wants to be seen as an active and dependable ally, the present and future scale of its NATO involvement is seriously constrained by severe cuts in defence spending. The country is close to the bottom of the table in terms of defence budget as a proportion of GDP. Belgian defence expenditures amounted to 0.98% of GDP (\$4.89 billion) in 2014 and

<sup>6</sup> *Belgium set to join the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, 20 November 2015, <https://ccdcoe.org>.

<sup>7</sup> H.M. Kristensen, R.S. Norris, "United States nuclear forces, 2016," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2016, pp. 70–71.

<sup>8</sup> *The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the EU—Profiles, Threats & Policies*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, The Hague, April 2016, pp. 3, 25–26.

<sup>9</sup> P. Siuberski, "Belgium urges EU intel sharing after Paris attacks," *Yahoo News*, 16 November 2015, [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com).

<sup>10</sup> "Vandeput niet gekant tegen maritieme NAVO-steun," *HLN.be*, 11 February 2016, [www.hln.be](http://www.hln.be); Speech by the Belgian minister of defence, Steven Vandeput, at the conference Diplomatic Days 2015, Brussels, 5 February 2015.

<sup>11</sup> *Common Security and Defence Policy...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> "Belgium 'Ready' to Send Troops to Syria after Order Is Restored," *Defense News*, 12 September 2015, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

are estimated in 2017 to fall to 0.90% of GDP (\$4.71 billion).<sup>13</sup> Under the 2015 Strategic Defence Plan, they are expected to reach 1.3% of GDP by 2030.<sup>14</sup> Belgium is planning an incremental increase in its defence budget, which was declared during a special meeting of NATO leaders in Brussels in May 2017. Budget growth is to be accompanied by a reduction in military and civilian personnel from 32,000 to 26,000, and an increase in the proportion of the defence budget going to modernisation, from the present 4% to 25% (NATO goal: at least 20%). Another factor restricting the capacity of the Belgian armed forces to conduct operations abroad is the assignment of between several hundred to more than a thousand troops to protect internal security (against terrorist threats).

Seeking to mitigate the impact of budget cuts on its military capabilities, Belgium has been tightening up defence cooperation with its European partners, especially the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and France, as exemplified by the joint command of Belgian and Dutch naval forces (in place since 1996) and the joint policing of Benelux air space (from 2017, under a 2015 agreement).

Belgium has publicly supported Montenegro's accession to the Alliance.<sup>15</sup> There are also Belgian declarations of support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations, even if Brussels' earlier position on Georgian membership of the Alliance was sceptical.<sup>16</sup>

At the summit in Warsaw, Belgium announced its participation in 2017 with one company (around 150–200 troops) in the NATO battalion-sized battlegroup in Lithuania, which was led by Germany with the participation of other Benelux countries. In 2017, within the first and second rotations of this group, Belgium deployed 100 and 600 troops, respectively. During the Warsaw summit, Belgium stressed that enhancement of the deterrence posture on the Eastern Flank should be accompanied by a dialogue with Russia that included the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.<sup>17</sup> In December 2017, using the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presentation of what is known as the Harmel Report (memorable for its dual-track policy to the Soviet Union), the Belgian foreign minister suggested widening and deepening the dialogue between NATO and Russia.<sup>18</sup> Belgium then reduced its presence in the Lithuanian group to two staff officers in summer 2018,<sup>19</sup> but its previous contribution level was fulfilled by troops from the Netherlands.

Apart from the above, the Belgian officials emphasised NATO's growing role in the fight against terrorism, including the decision to establish the post of Assistant Secretary General for Intelligence and Security.<sup>20</sup> At the Warsaw summit, they also highlighted that Belgium is perceived as a reliable ally in light of its plans to reverse the decline in defence spending, the future purchase of new armaments (34 multirole fighter jets and two frigates, among other

<sup>13</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>14</sup> "€9.2 Billion for Defence but Numbers Will Melt," *defense-aerospace.com*, 22 December 2015, [www.defense-aerospace.com](http://www.defense-aerospace.com).

<sup>15</sup> *Belgium pledges commitment to European, Euro Atlantic future of Montenegro and Western Balkan*, Government of Montenegro, 16 February 2015, [www.gov.me](http://www.gov.me).

<sup>16</sup> "Meeting with Defence Minister of Belgium," *Newsday Georgia*, 2 December 2015, <http://newsday.ge>; B. Górká-Winter, M. Madej (eds.), *NATO Member States and the New Strategic Concept: An Overview*, PISM Report, March 2010, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> "The Latest: NATO allies to create joint intel division," *Yahoo News*, 9 July 2016, [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com).

<sup>18</sup> See: D. Reynerds, *Communiqué de presse: 50ème anniversaire du 'Rapport Harmel'*, Egmont Institute, 4 December 2017, [www.didierreyners.be](http://www.didierreyners.be).

<sup>19</sup> NATO, *NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence*, Factsheet, Brussels, August 2018.

<sup>20</sup> A. Verstraete, "Michel: Ook strijd tegen terreur is een taak voor de NAVO," *Deredactie.be*, 9 July 2016, <http://deredactie.be>.

capabilities), and Belgian involvement in NATO missions and operations.<sup>21</sup> In May 2017, Belgium was the official host of a special meeting of NATO leaders in Brussels, intended as the first such wide meeting of Allies with U.S. President Donald Trump. Belgium expressed there its willingness to extend the presence of its troops in Afghanistan to 2018 with 62 military advisors. However, a year later, just before the NATO summit in July 2018, the Belgian head of government was among the leaders of countries to which President Trump sent letters reminding them of their promise to increase military spending. Prime Minister Charles Michel reacted in public that he does not agree with the American criticism and that Belgium has several big purchases coming soon.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> “België zal zich op vlak van defensie moeten bewijzen,” *De Morgen*, 8 July 2016, [www.demorgen.be](http://www.demorgen.be).

<sup>22</sup> M. Torfs, “President Trump sends warning letter to Belgium,” *Flanders News*, 30 June 2018, [www.vrt.be](http://www.vrt.be).

Bulgaria joined NATO in 2004 as part of the “Big Bang” Alliance enlargement of seven countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Three years later, Bulgaria joined the EU. According to the Bulgarian security doctrine, NATO and the EU are the basic guarantee of the sovereignty, integrity, and security of the state. Consequently, the country has emphasised its intention to actively participate in all security-related activities of both blocs.

In the past several years, and especially after Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014, Bulgaria’s attitude towards Russia and its perception of Russian policy in Central and Eastern Europe have undergone a qualitative change. Right after its EU and NATO accession, Bulgaria was seen as sympathetic to the Russian narrative but later found Russia’s post-Crimea concentration of forces in the Black Sea region as one of the biggest threats to its security. This perception was reinforced by direct Russian military provocations, including entering Bulgarian airspace or flying near to it with such frequency as to run out the service life of Bulgaria’s MiG-29 fighter aircraft. Before the Warsaw summit, Bulgaria did not rule out the possible resumption of a constructive NATO-Russia dialogue, but at the same time revised the main tenets of its relationship with that country.

The change in the Bulgarian attitude to Russia in security matters is exemplified by an agreement on MiG-29 engine repairs signed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence with Poland in October 2015 over Russian protests and despite a very good record of collaboration with the Russian defence sector on repair and modernisation of Soviet-era equipment. However, after the presidential elections in 2016 and parliamentary elections in 2017, Bulgaria again changed its approach to the modernisation of the MiG-29 and announced a return to cooperation with Russia. Nevertheless, the country announced that it would no longer order arms from outside NATO and it refused to open its airspace to Russian aircraft flying to join that country’s Syria operation.

Bulgaria’s strategic partner has increasingly been the United States, with the two countries signing a Defence Cooperation Agreement in 2006. Under the agreement, U.S. units may conduct training at the Yambol-Bezemer and Graf Ignatievo air bases and the Novo Selo Range, and can also use the Aitos logistics centre supporting the range. Up to 2,500 U.S. troops may be deployed in the country at one time (or 5,000 during changeover). The bases the Americans may use with no additional permits from the state played a key logistical role in dispatching U.S. military personnel to Afghanistan in 2008–2014. Although less important since the ISAF mission’s completion in 2014, they still constitute relevant U.S. assets in Southeast Europe. A joint Bulgaria-U.S. commission was set up to coordinate activities and there is also a joint working group to increase the partnership’s effectiveness.

The Bulgarian assessment of the Newport summit commitments was that they were adequate and commensurate with the difficult situation in the eastern and southern NATO neighbourhoods. And although Bulgaria sees no conventional threats to NATO member states at present, it believes that in the longer run the security environment on the Eastern and Southern flanks may witness the emergence of lasting unfavourable changes.

The Crisis Management and Disaster Response Centre of Excellence (CMDR COE)<sup>1</sup> was set up in Sofia in September 2014, and a year later, a NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) opened.

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<sup>1</sup> “NATO Crisis Management Center Opens in Bulgaria,” *Novinite.com*, 17 September 2014, [www.novinite.com](http://www.novinite.com).



Bulgaria participates in the Multinational Division South-East Headquarters (MND-SE HQ), based in Bucharest, which was established (with Bulgaria among its co-founders) under the Readiness Action Plan adopted at the Newport summit.<sup>2</sup> Noting that the balance of forces in the Black Sea region has changed in the wake of Russia's annexation of Crimea, Bulgaria opts for intensification of surveillance and intelligence-gathering and reinforcement through early-warning systems. It expects the Alliance to increase its presence in Central and Eastern Europe, including in the Black Sea area, and to conduct military exercises in the region more frequently (even offering its own territory for the purpose). On this question, cooperation with Romania is of special importance.

With regard to the Alliance's strategic adaptation, Bulgaria looks favourably on the initiative to provide a rotational military presence on the Eastern Flank and the prepositioning of equipment and supplies. Politically, the country supports Georgia, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina joining NATO. Bulgaria is also involved in the implementation of the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP), a special form of Alliance military assistance to that country. When it comes to opposing Russian threats in its immediate neighbourhood, Bulgaria's most important goal is that the Allied forces' rotational presence in the Black Sea region is reinforced and that NATO member states intensify military exercises. In this respect, too, bilateral cooperation with the United States is coming to the fore.

Even while noting the growing nuclear threat from Russia and its provocations with the use of nuclear weaponry (exercises, missile tests, strategic bomber flights), some quarters of Bulgaria's elite believe that the deployment of nuclear arms on the territory of European states represents a violation of Articles 1 and 2 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Statements can also be heard demanding abandonment of non-strategic nuclear weapons by NATO.<sup>3</sup>

Bulgaria strongly emphasises the gravity of the threats coming not only from the east but also from the south of Europe.<sup>4</sup> These include cyberthreats, terrorism (especially activities by ISIS), unresolved conflicts in the Western Balkans, conflicts in the Middle East, North Africa, and Afghanistan, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and uncontrolled migration. On the latter, Bulgarians fear an increase in the number of migrants crossing their border. To prevent this, they have sought to strengthen the border, even militarily through NATO or EU border missions. In parallel, Bulgaria supported the European Union's efforts to resolve the mass-migration crisis in collaboration with Turkey.<sup>5</sup>

Bulgaria is among the biggest "net takers" of NATO support. With its very modest military capabilities and low defence budget (a result of a series of major cuts in 2008–2015), the country has no substantial means to support the Alliance in its military operations or in building-up capabilities in other countries. In 2015, it was decided to gradually increase defence spending as a share of GDP to 2.0%. According to estimates for 2017, Bulgaria's budget increased to 1.57% of GDP, which in real terms was 26% higher (\$904 million) than the year before.<sup>6</sup> The country's defence minister stated in 2018 that Bulgaria would be among the NATO countries expected

<sup>2</sup> "Nenchev iska da pravim kontsepsiya za khibridna vojna v ramkite na NATO," *BG-News.ru*, <http://bg-news.ru>.

<sup>3</sup> "Yadrenite sili na NATO v promenlivata sreda za sigurnos," *Geopolitika*, 26 January 2016, <http://geopolitica.eu>.

<sup>4</sup> "Programme for the development of the defence capabilities of the Bulgarian Armed Forces 2020," Ministry of Defence of Republic of Bulgaria, [www.md.government.bg](http://www.md.government.bg).

<sup>5</sup> G. Papakochev, "Koy plashi bulgarite s migrantite?," *Deutsche Welle*, 23 March 2016, [www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com).

<sup>6</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

to meet the 2% of GDP target for defence spending by 2024.<sup>7</sup> In line with its commitments under NATO's defence planning process, Bulgaria has declared it will gradually modernise its armed forces and weaponry to achieve a high level of Allied interoperability, drawing on advanced communications and information systems (CIS), improved mobility of land forces, increased operational capabilities for the navy, aircraft self-defence systems, and intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR) systems.<sup>8</sup>

Bulgaria plans as well to increase its cyberthreat response capability through the formation of a dedicated unit and tighter cooperation within NATO and EU frameworks. Bulgarian Minister of Defence Nikolay Nenchev has backed the idea of setting up a centre at NATO Headquarters to exchange information about hybrid-warfare threats and he has stressed the importance of inter-institutional cooperation and industry-academia collaboration in the development of innovative technological solutions to increase cybersecurity.<sup>9</sup>

During the summit in Warsaw, Bulgaria's main aim was to draw attention to the need to strengthen the NATO presence in the Black Sea region.<sup>10</sup> The Bulgarian delegation stressed that it should take place on the same basis as in the Baltic Sea region, where multinational battalion battlegroups were planned to be established. Bulgaria declared its full support for strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank and the creation of four battalions in the Baltic States and Poland (though Bulgaria has not declared its participation). Nevertheless, Bulgaria decided to send 400 troops to the multinational NATO brigade in Romania. At the same time, though Bulgaria declared its willingness to participate in NATO exercises conducted in the Black Sea, it maintained its opposition to the creation of Alliance permanent naval forces in this region (like those of the existing Standing NATO Maritime Groups). Bulgarians also point out the limitations associated with the growing of this presence because of the limits provided for by the 1936 Montreux Convention.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, after the summit in Warsaw, some Bulgarians called for the demilitarisation of the Black Sea basin. However, this attitude is characteristic of pro-Russian political circles.

Since 2016, NATO members have sent aircraft to Bulgaria as part of Enhanced Air Policing, which was established to augment the Bulgarian air force's limited capabilities. Since 2017, Bulgaria has periodically hosted elements of an American armoured brigade, usually up to battalion size. Together with the U.S., it was one of the main organisers of the *Saber Guardian 2017* exercise, which took place on the territory of Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania with the total participation of about 25,000 troops, including 14,000 from the U.S.

At the summit in Brussels, Bulgaria claimed it was ready to increase defence spending. After it, Bulgarian President Rumen Radev said that every NATO country would have to raise military spending further, thus backing U.S. President Donald Trump's request.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "Defence Minister: Bulgaria Is among NATO Countries Expected to Meet Defence Spending Increase Target," *Bulgarian News Agency*, 15 February 2018, [www.bta.bg](http://www.bta.bg).

<sup>8</sup> "Programme for the development...," *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> "Nenchev iska...," *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> "Prezidentüt: Obshta e otsenkata na süyuznitsite za neobkhodimostta ot zasilvane na prisüstvieto na NATO v Chernomorskiya region," Office of the President (Bulgaria), 9 July 2016, [www.president.bg](http://www.president.bg).

<sup>11</sup> The Montreux Convention restricts the residence time of warships in the Black Sea up to 21 days (art. 18) and their tonnage to 30–45 thousand tonnes (art. 14 and 18). See: "Convention regarding the Regime of the Straits, with Annexes and Protocol. Signed at Montreux, July 20th, 1936," <https://treaties.un.org>.

<sup>12</sup> "President Radev: "NATO Is No Exchange on Which You Can Buy Security," *Bulgarian News Agency*, 11 July 2018, [www.bta.bg/en/c/DF/id/1836119](http://www.bta.bg/en/c/DF/id/1836119).

Another founding member state of NATO, Canada has historical experience in contributing to forward defence in Europe during the Cold War when Canadian units were stationed in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). After the collapse of the USSR, the Canadian land forces were fully withdrawn from Europe. Nevertheless, since the early 1990s, the Canadian government has seen NATO as the key organisation for strengthening the transatlantic bond and global security and it seeks to build the country's position as a reliable ally, most notably through participation in crisis-response missions. Canada had the fifth-largest contingent in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan (where 161 Canadian personnel were killed) and it contributed military capabilities to the 2011 operation *Unified Protector* in Libya. Canadian troops and officers also take part in the KFOR mission and in air policing over Iceland and the Baltic States. Yet, the lesser importance of NATO before 2014 for Canadian security can be traced to the decision to pull out from two of NATO's largest joint programmes: AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) and AGS (Allied Ground Surveillance).

Canada has traditionally seen Russia as a potential threat to its interests in the Arctic, especially given the latter's re-militarisation of the region and its territorial claims.<sup>1</sup> Since at least 2007, Canadian media have been regularly reporting on Russian strategic bombers' increased activity in the High North, violations of Canadian airspace, and even simulated attacks on its territory. In a report released in October 2015, a group of experts contended that Canada and its allies should be prepared for a Russian threat from the northern direction.<sup>2</sup> But the Canadian government has always opposed engaging NATO in the Arctic, fearing it could increase pressure on the international-waters status of the Northern Passage, which it has invariably regarded as its own territorial waters. If Russian activity in the region grows to a level and type requiring a greater NATO response, the Alliance's increased engagement in the High North will largely be contingent on Canada dropping its "veto" of activity in the region.

In the wake of the global financial crisis, Canadian defence spending since 2008 dropped to 0.99% of GDP by 2013 (to about \$18 billion).<sup>3</sup> The cutbacks, coupled with expenses to support the forces stationed in Afghanistan, resulted in delays in its modernisation programme and the loss of some capabilities, such as logistical support for its navy. Under U.S. and NATO pressure, expenditures increased to 1.3% of GDP in 2017 (\$21 billion). While Canada has announced it will increase the defence budget at an annual rate of 3% starting from 2017, it is not prepared to increase spending enough to attain the 2% of GDP goal indicated by the Alliance at the Newport summit in 2014.<sup>4</sup>

Then, Canada's priority was to demonstrate its credibility as a NATO member state, enhance the Alliance's capability to respond to new threats, and develop a shared response to Russia's annexation of Crimea.<sup>5</sup> The tough stance on the last issue and its clear reaction to

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<sup>1</sup> "Stephen Harper raises spectre of Russian threat in Arctic speech to troops," *CBC News*, 26 August 2016, [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca).

<sup>2</sup> "Canada's International Security and Defence Policy," Center for International Policy Studies, 2015, [www.cips-cepi.ca](http://www.cips-cepi.ca).

<sup>3</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>4</sup> "NATO allies unwilling to boost defence spending may soon see compromise," *CBC News*, 2 September 2014, [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca).

<sup>5</sup> "Primer to the Wales NATO Summit: NATO summit agenda, likely results, Canadian interests," Canadian Global Affairs Institute, September 2014, [www.cgai.ca](http://www.cgai.ca).



Russia's actions were greatly influenced by the relatively large Ukrainian minority in Canada, which helped accelerate its decision to provide considerable political, financial, and military support for Ukraine. Canada has channelled \$700 million to Ukraine since 2004, and under bilateral programmes, Canada has provided 200 mentors for training Ukrainian forces.<sup>6</sup>

Canada took steps to demonstrate solidarity with NATO member states in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>7</sup> even before the Newport summit, following the Alliance's decision of 24 April 2014, on temporary reinforcement of the Eastern Flank. The country's deployments in Europe have included six CF-18 Hornet aircraft (serving alternately in Romania and in the Baltic Air Policing mission), an additional 20 officers to the SHAPE command in Belgium, some 200 infantry soldiers to various exercises in Poland and the Baltic States, and the frigate *HMCS Regina* to NATO's permanent naval force in the Mediterranean (SNMG-2). This activity was maintained in 2014 and 2015, including continued participation in the Baltic Air Policing mission, sending troops to Allied exercises, and providing two frigates for use by SNMG-2. As part of RAP (Readiness Action Plan) implementation and adaptation of NATO command structures to new threats, Canada joined the Multinational Corps North-East in Szczecin, Poland, and sent representatives to NATO Force Integration Units in Estonia and Lithuania.

Before the 2016 Warsaw summit, the Canadian authorities were openly opposed to deploying NATO forces permanently on the territory of the new members, although financial considerations rather than NATO's political commitment to Russia were presented as an argument.<sup>8</sup> Talks with Canada were held until the last moment regarding it taking command of one of the multinational battalion battlegroups on the Eastern Flank. During the NATO Warsaw summit, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau officially announced that Canada will be the fourth country (together with the U.S., UK and Germany) to take command as a framework nation of one of the multinational battalion-sized battlegroups deployed on the Eastern Flank. It agreed to lead the battalion in Latvia, contributing 450 troops.<sup>9</sup> It deployed up to six CF-18 aircraft to conduct periodic air surveillance and air-policing missions of Allied airspace and will continue to send a frigate to augment NATO naval forces in the Baltic Sea region. According to Trudeau, the decisions approved at the summit sent a strong signal that NATO is united against illegitimate Russian actions.<sup>10</sup> Canada continued with a framework nation role and rotations to the NATO battlegroup in Latvia with a mechanised battalion and support elements (350 troops) in summer 2018.<sup>11</sup>

The Canadian government takes care to support Allied activities on the Southern Flank, too. In addition to increased engagement in the Mediterranean (SNMG-2), Canada is one of the few countries to have contributed its combat air force to the U.S.-led international mission to fight ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Taking part in the operations have been six CF-18 Hornet aircraft, two CP-140 Aurora reconnaissance aircraft, and an in-flight refuelling aircraft, while an additional 69 special forces were sent to train Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq. Following its victory in the October 2015 election, the Trudeau government announced it would end the air combat mission

<sup>6</sup> *Operation Unifier*, National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, [www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad/op-unifier.page](http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad/op-unifier.page).

<sup>7</sup> *Operation Reassurance*, National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, [www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad/nato-ee.page](http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad/nato-ee.page).

<sup>8</sup> M. Fisher, "Canada commits 1,650 troops to military exercise in Europe as NATO reviews Cold War mission," *The National Post*, 24 June 2015, <http://news.nationalpost.com>.

<sup>9</sup> "Canada makes commitment to NATO defence and deterrence measures," Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau, 8 July 2016, <http://pm.gc.ca>.

<sup>10</sup> M. Fisher, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> NATO, "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *Factsheet*, Brussels, August 2018.

but simultaneously tripled the number of special forces training Iraqi and Kurdish troops fighting ISIS.<sup>12</sup> As part of NATO activities, Canada decided to contribute to anti-improvised explosives device (anti-IED) training in Iraq and announced a financial package worth \$465 million in security support and development assistance for Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup>

Canadian security policy remains strongly dependent on the country's relations with the United States. As a key country in the U.S. defence against an attack from the north, Canada participates in the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). But a 2005 decision by the liberal Paul Martin government not to join the U.S. missile defence project, designed to protect North American territory, caused tensions in mutual relations. According to an expert report, joining the project should become a priority for the Trudeau government, which has been sending signals that this may indeed take place soon.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, diplomatic tensions between the U.S. and Canada quite tense due to personal animosity between President Trump and Prime Minister Trudeau, as visible in public during summits of the G7 in La Malbaie in June and of NATO in Brussels in July 2018. These bilateral tensions have not affected Canada's full commitment to ongoing missions and operations, its renewed support for the NATO AWACS programme, and interest in reform of Allied command structures.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> "ISIS air strikes to end by Feb. 22, training forces to triple," *CBC News*, 9 February 2016, [www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca).

<sup>13</sup> "Prime Minister Attends NATO Summit in Warsaw," Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau, 9 July 2016, <http://pm.gc.ca>.

<sup>14</sup> D. Pugliese, "Canada Rethinks Joining US Missile Defense Program," *Defense News*, 19 April 2016, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>15</sup> "Prime Minister announces increased support for NATO, Brussels," 12 July 2018, [pm.gc.ca](http://pm.gc.ca).

As one of the newest NATO member states (joining with Albania in 2009), Croatia sees its presence in the Alliance and in the EU as international testimony to its political maturity. Its dual membership also informs the country's security policy, where the risk of external aggression is assumed to be at a low level.<sup>1</sup> In the opinion of Croatian political elites, this sets Croatia apart from those outside NATO, such as Ukraine, where sovereignty alone is not a sufficient guarantee.<sup>2</sup> As a price for these guarantees, Croatia has developed capabilities to help support security and peace globally, with Croatian decision-makers often pointing to their country's contribution of about 100 troops to the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> As part of that mission, Croatia also runs civilian assistance projects.<sup>4</sup> During the Warsaw summit, the Croatian president reaffirmed her country's long-standing commitment to NATO's mission in Afghanistan and declared that it would continue as long as necessary.<sup>5</sup>

Over the past two years, a certain change has been noticed in the discourse on the country's security, with the emphasis now given to threats in the region of Southeast Europe (Western Balkans) from beyond NATO's Eastern and Southern Flanks and related to such events as the economic and political situation in Greece and the refugee crisis.<sup>6</sup> With these threats in mind, Croatia favours NATO's further enlargement in the region.<sup>7</sup> In line with this position, Croatia called at the Warsaw summit for letting in non-NATO members of the Adriatic Charter, through "activation" of the Membership Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the "Bucharest Conclusions" for Macedonia.<sup>8</sup> The aim of this policy is to have a "stable neighbourhood," mostly comprising NATO and EU member states.<sup>9</sup> It has also declared support for the NATO membership aspirations of Georgia.<sup>10</sup>

Croatia's policy towards Russia, just like Slovenia's, is two-pronged. On one hand, Croatian ministers point to Russia's violations of international law, which they find to be "unacceptable" and serious enough to provide new *raison d'être* for NATO, but, on the other hand, they do not rule out "cooperation" and "dialogue."<sup>11</sup> As suggested by then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Vesna Pusić, such dialogue could deal with issues as Middle East developments and especially with stopping the war

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<sup>1</sup> See: "Strategic Defence Review," Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia, 2013, [www.morh.hr](http://www.morh.hr).

<sup>2</sup> "Croatia's top leaders say there is *raison d'être* for NATO," Government of the Republic of Croatia, <https://vlada.gov.hr>.

<sup>3</sup> "The Secretary General's Annual Report 2017," NATO, 2018, p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> "Pusić: Croatia believes in security, civil cooperation in Afghanistan," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, 13 May 2015, [www.mvep.hr](http://www.mvep.hr).

<sup>5</sup> "News: Leaving Afghanistan would be a grave mistake!," President of Croatia, 9 July 2016, <http://predsjednica.hr>.

<sup>6</sup> "A-5 Defence Ministers meeting," Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia, 21 October 2015, [www.morh.hr](http://www.morh.hr).

<sup>7</sup> "FM Kovač: Croatia to be among first to ratify Montenegro's admission to NATO," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, [www.mvep.hr](http://www.mvep.hr).

<sup>8</sup> "Macedonian defence minister visits Croatia to promote NATO bid," BBC Monitoring European, 9 March 2016. See also: "News: NATO must demonstrate strong capability and readiness to fulfil its commitment to collective defence and deterrence," President of Croatia, 8 July 2016, <http://predsjednica.hr>.

<sup>9</sup> "Minister Pusić: Montenegro deserves NATO membership," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, [www.mvep.hr](http://www.mvep.hr).

<sup>10</sup> "Georgia, Croatia step up relations in multiple fields," *TCA Regional News*, 24 February 2015, ProQuest database, document ID: 1657595599.

<sup>11</sup> "Croatia's top leaders ...," *op. cit.*

in Syria.<sup>12</sup> In the minister's opinion, the sanctions on Russia are not an "end in itself" but rather an instrument with which to ensure the implementation of the Minsk agreements.<sup>13</sup>

With such actions, declarations and strategic preferences, the country does not play a major role in discussions about NATO's Eastern Flank, but because it relies on the Alliance as the key element of its European and transatlantic identity, Croatia refrains from blocking decisions agreed by other Allies. The country favours fully implementing the Wales and Warsaw summit decisions. At the Warsaw summit, Croatia declared it would contribute one company to the battalion-sized battlegroup deployed in Lithuania (Germany is the framework nation).<sup>14</sup> This decision was implemented in the second half of 2017 and spring 2018, when Croatia twice deployed to Lithuania a mechanised infantry company (180–187 troops and 15 vehicles),<sup>15</sup> and enlarging its force to as many as 230 troops in 2018.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Croatia, after signing a bilateral agreement with Poland in October 2017, also deployed an artillery rocket battery (70 troops) to a NATO battlegroup led by the U.S. in Orzysz, Poland.<sup>17</sup>

At the 2018 NATO summit in Brussels, Croatia focused on bringing attention to threats on the Southern Flank of the Alliance. It also upheld the intention of modernising its military and continuing efforts towards reaching the 2% of GDP threshold in military spending by 2024.<sup>18</sup> Yet, by 2018 Croatian defence expenditures had reached just 1.33% of GDP.

A national goal for Croatia, which sees itself as part of the Alliance's long-term adaptation plan, is the replacement of Soviet-era weaponry through new acquisitions.<sup>19</sup> Of key importance here are Croatian attempts to acquire new fighter jets to replace its Ukraine-modernised MIG-21s.<sup>20</sup> Other purchases are being made simultaneously (e.g., artillery systems) in accordance with its long-term plan for its armed forces' development in 2015–2024.<sup>21</sup> The president of Croatia stressed during the Warsaw summit only that her country "will aim" to achieve military spending at the level of 2% of GDP.<sup>22</sup> Yet, Croatia has consistently cut its defence spending since 2012 to as little as 1.37% of GDP in 2015 and has continued to decrease it since the beginning of 2017, reaching only 1.26% of GDP (\$787 million).<sup>23</sup> In the long run, this will very likely dampen the capability of its armed forces. In an attempt to respond to the tight budget challenges, the country has joined the Smart Defence Initiative with Bulgaria and Hungary to create joint special-task squads.<sup>24</sup> Another way to increase the visibility of Croatia within NATO, even with a small defence budget, is to open the Allied Special Operations Forces Centre of Excellence.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "Montenegro's future NATO membership contribution to Southeast Europe's stability," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, [www.mvep.hr](http://www.mvep.hr).

<sup>13</sup> "Minister Pusić: Sanctions against Russia not an end in itself," Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, [www.mvep.hr](http://www.mvep.hr).

<sup>14</sup> "Croatian president meets with Lithuanian counterpart in Vilnius," *About Croatia*, 21 July 2016, <https://aboutcroatia.net>.

<sup>15</sup> "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *NATO Factsheet*, February 2018.

<sup>16</sup> "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *NATO Factsheet*, August 2018.

<sup>17</sup> "Macierewicz w Chorwacji o śmigłowcach i wojskach specjalnych," PAP cable, 2 October 2017.

<sup>18</sup> "Croatian President: NATO summit ended in success despite tensions," <https://glashrvatske.hrt.hr/en>.

<sup>19</sup> "Minister Buljević attends NATO Defence Ministerial," Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia, 11 February 2016, [www.morh.hr](http://www.morh.hr).

<sup>20</sup> J. Adamowski, "Croatia Probes Fighter Jet Deal With Ukraine Amid Corruption Claims," *Defense News*, 29 March 2016, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>21</sup> N. de Larrinaga, "Croatia receives first PzH 2000," *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, 29 July 2015.

<sup>22</sup> "New: NATO must demonstrate ...," *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>24</sup> "New: NATO must demonstrate ...," *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>25</sup> "Macierewicz w Chorwacji ...," *op. cit.*



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# CZECH REPUBLIC

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The Czech Republic joined NATO alongside Poland and Hungary in 1999. After its subsequent EU accession, the country found itself bordering member states of one or both of these blocs, including Germany, Poland, Slovakia, and Austria. Enhancing NATO collective defence based on a strong transatlantic bond is the foremost way it provides security for the country, according to its long-term defence strategy and the Czech concept of foreign policy (documents adopted in 2015).<sup>1</sup> The latest defence strategy of the Czech Republic from 2017 confirms that NATO collective defence remains the main mechanism for securing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.<sup>2</sup>

The Czech policy towards Russia (and within the NATO framework) is perceptibly influenced by its political elites' fears that Western activities could isolate Russia and weaken it economically, triggering an increase in threats to the country's Central and Eastern European neighbours.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of a direct border with Russia, the Czech government believes that Czech territory would not be directly threatened if there was an open conflict. This results in the Czech Republic's two-pronged approach to security in its immediate neighbourhood. On the one hand, Czech politicians do realise the potential consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict for the future of Central and Eastern Europe and they strongly denounce Russia's activities in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, in discussions on reinforcing NATO's Eastern Flank, the Czech government has clearly distanced itself from the policies pursued by countries directly bordering Russia and from their demands regarding dislocation of Allied forces and infrastructure. In May 2014, responding to Poland's and the Baltic States' calls for a permanent presence of NATO forces, Czech Minister of Defence Martin Stropnický objected to the deployment of Allied forces on Czech territory, citing negative associations with the stationing of Soviets in the former Czechoslovakia. He said: "We know well how any permanent stationing of troops is still a problem. I belong to the generation that experienced the 80,000 Soviet troops based here during the period of post-1968 'normalisation' and it is still a bit of a psychological problem."<sup>5</sup> But several days later, in an attempt to offset the damaging effect of this statement, the lower house of parliament passed a resolution affirming that membership of NATO is the foundation of Czech security and that the Czech Republic will meet all of its resulting commitments (even though parliament turned down the opposition's request to be able to give advance consent to entry by NATO forces in a crisis situation).

Reflecting this dual approach to Eastern Flank security, the Czech Republic has exhibited unwavering disinterest in hosting NATO infrastructure and units while at the same time contributing to such units in other countries in the region. During the Newport summit, the Czech Republic declared its active support for the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), including a larger presence (of up to 15–20 personnel) at the Szczecin-based Headquarters of the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE HQ), support for the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF, or "spearhead force"), increased involvement in NATO exercises, permission to

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<sup>1</sup> "Concept of the Czech Republic's Foreign Policy," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, [www.mzv.cz](http://www.mzv.cz); "The Long Term Perspective for Defence 2030," [www.army.cz](http://www.army.cz).

<sup>2</sup> "The Defence Strategy of the Czech Republic," Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, Prague, 2017, [www.army.cz](http://www.army.cz).

<sup>3</sup> "A/S Gordon's Meeting with Czech Social Democrat Shadow FM Zaoralek," *Wikileaks*, [https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10PRAGUE31\\_a.html](https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10PRAGUE31_a.html).

<sup>4</sup> "Czech government condemns Russia's intrusion into Ukraine," *Radio Prague*, 3 March 2014, [www.czech.cz](http://www.czech.cz).

<sup>5</sup> "Czech Defense Minister sees no NATO troops stationed on Czech soil," *Reuters*, 12 May 2014, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

use its territory in the event of Art. 5 operations, and raising defence spending.<sup>6</sup> As part of RAP implementation, the Czech Republic did not ask for a NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) to be created on its territory (to support VJTF short-notice deployments to Eastern Flank member states), but it dispatched personnel to such units in Poland, Lithuania, and Slovakia. The country also strengthened its presence (nine new officers) at the MNC NE HQ in Szczecin and confirmed its readiness to contribute a brigade-size force to an Allied Rapid Reaction Corps if there was a decision to mobilise this unit. In June 2015, former Czech Chief-of-Staff General Petr Pavel was appointed chairman of the NATO Military Committee.

Poland's strivings for a persistent presence of NATO forces in the region have received political support from the Czech Republic, as confirmed in February 2016 by its Europe Minister Tomáš Prouza.<sup>7</sup> A fortnight later, Defence Minister Stropnický declared the country's readiness to send a 100-strong company to a multinational brigade that would be formed to improve security on the Eastern Flank.<sup>8</sup> But Czech politicians were keen to avoid phrases suggesting that these measures are aimed to enhance deterrence against Russia.

Still, prior to the Newport summit, the main governing coalition parties jointly declared a gradual increase in the defence budget to 1.4% of GDP in 2020, and then later to the target of 2.0% of GDP, to finance technological modernisation of the armed forces.<sup>9</sup> But in actual fact, funding dropped to 1.05% of GDP in 2017. In absolute terms, however, it has increased by 14% (to \$2.53 billion).<sup>10</sup> The Czech government assured it would meet its commitments to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2024.<sup>11</sup>

Although not directly affected by the destabilisation of the Middle East, the Czech Republic, which borders Hungary, Austria, and Germany, is aware of the potential of uncontrolled migrant inflows. In 2015, at the peak of the mass-migration crisis in Europe, the Defence Minister has announced that up to 2,600 troops could be sent to monitor the 362km-long border with Austria.<sup>12</sup> Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Andrej Babiš, who later became prime minister, suggested that NATO forces, too, should be tasked with external border protection.<sup>13</sup>

With increasing security in areas away from its own territory, a Czech strategic priority, the country is an active participant in NATO missions. Czech JAS Gripen aircraft contribute to Baltic Air Policing (most recently in 2012) and to a similar mission over Iceland, plus there are 236 Czech troops stationed in Afghanistan as part of *Resolute Support Mission*, and 11 personnel in the KFOR mission. Following the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, the Czech military contingent within the EU mission to Mali was increased (to 38 personnel) to relieve the French force and enable its reassignment towards fighting extremists.

<sup>6</sup> "The NATO Summit in Wales: Czech Republic's Perspective," Czech Foreign Ministry, 10 September 2014, [www.mzv.cz](http://www.mzv.cz).

<sup>7</sup> "Stałe bazy NATO w Polsce? Wsparcie z Czech," *Polskie Radio*, 7 February 2016, [www.polskieradio.pl](http://www.polskieradio.pl).

<sup>8</sup> "Czechs to send 100 troops to NATO's eastern flank: defense minister," *Reuters*, 21 February 2016, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>9</sup> "Czech governmental coalition sign agreement on the progressive increase of the defence budget," Czech Defence Ministry, [www.army.cz](http://www.army.cz).

<sup>10</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>11</sup> "Secretary General praises the Czech Republic's commitment to NATO," NATO, 22 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>12</sup> E. Maurice, "Czech Republic advocates use of army to protect borders," *EU Observer*, 25 August 2015, [www.euobserver.com](http://www.euobserver.com).

<sup>13</sup> "Czech minister Babis criticises NATO's stance on refugees," *České Noviny*, 10 September 2015, [www.ceskenoviny.cz](http://www.ceskenoviny.cz).

Czech politicians have been active in discussions on a possible ground operation against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. “If such a land operation were to be launched, it would have to be based on a broad agreement, involving not only the U.S. and Russia, but also Saudi Arabia and Iran,” Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Lubomír Zaorálek said in November 2015.<sup>14</sup> His country has embraced the responsibility to protect, the minister went on, especially in its dimensions of prevention and capacity-building.<sup>15</sup> Although not party to combat operations against ISIS, the Czech Republic has since 2014 sent hundreds of tonnes of munitions to Iraqi and Kurdish forces engaged in this fight.

At a time when NATO was seeking ways to increase its involvement in the region, the Czech Republic has been enhancing its credibility within the Alliance by extending support to Turkey’s territorial defence. Between September 2014 and January 2015, Czech communications battalion personnel took part in *Operation Active Fence*, to bolster airspace defences.

The Czech Republic supports a security system founded on a strong transatlantic bond. Prior to 2009, bilateral cooperation was being focused on the planned Czech-based early warning radar that was part of the U.S. missile defence initiative. However, the Obama administration’s decision to withdraw from those plans exerted an adverse effect on bilateral relations, with the Czech government pulling out of the whole project.<sup>16</sup> The transatlantic bond has since been nurtured by means of joint participation in crisis-management exercises and missions.

Upholding the NATO-EU partnership is one of the Czech Republic’s strategic interests but it argues that cooperation must not lead to the duplication of NATO structures by the EU Common Security and Defence Policy.

During the NATO summit in Warsaw, the Czech delegation stressed the importance of the dialogue with Russia but, at the same time, demonstrated support for deterrence measures.<sup>17</sup> Czech President Miloš Zeman said his country does not ask for the presence of Allied troops but respects the will of the Baltic States and Poland (and possibly Romania), which would like to host multinational units. The Czech Republic declared it would deploy 150 soldiers to the Baltic States as part of a V4 rotational company (as a reassurance measure within the Readiness Action Plan but not part of the Enhanced Forward Presence, however). It also expressed public support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine within internationally recognised borders.

The Czech Republic signalled a change in approach to the issue of the NATO presence on the Eastern Flank at the end of 2017, after the new government of Prime Minister Babiš was sworn in. First of all, the new administration announced in 2018 it would assign one mechanised company (about 200 soldiers) to the NATO battalion-sized battlegroup in Lithuania and an artillery platoon (mortars) to a similar unit in Latvia. The Czech Republic also intends to increase its contribution to NATO’s efforts to stabilise the Southern Flank.

The new government announced that it considered increasing the Czech participation in the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan, as well as support for the Iraqi armed forces with additional instructors and advisors. The total number of Czech soldiers participating in missions and operations outside the country was expected to increase in 2018 from around 400 to almost a thousand.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, [www.mzv.cz](http://www.mzv.cz).

<sup>15</sup> UN News Centre, 27 September 2014, [www.un.org](http://www.un.org).

<sup>16</sup> “Czechs, Disliking Role, Pull Out of US Missile Defense Project,” *The New York Times*, 15 June 2011, [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).

<sup>17</sup> “Zeman says he pushed for NATO’s dialogue with Russia at the summit,” *Prague Daily Monitor*, 11 July 2016, <http://praguemonitor.com>.

During the 2018 NATO Summit in Brussels, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš confirmed that his country would meet its obligations to increase defence budget to 2% GDP by 2024.<sup>18</sup> The Czech Republic highlighted the importance of the agreed decisions with a Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Ministers of Defence.<sup>19</sup> All countries reaffirmed their commitment to increase defence spending, supported NATO enhanced forward presence, out-of-area missions, and closer cooperation with the EU. They also acknowledged the need to improve the military readiness of the Alliance through the implementation of the new NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI).

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<sup>18</sup> “Babiš: No change in defence spending plans after NATO summit,” *Radio Praha*, 12 July 2018, [www.radio.cz](http://www.radio.cz).

<sup>19</sup> “V4 Defence Ministers Adopted a Joint Statement on the Brussels NATO Summit,” Visegrad Group, 13 July 2018, [www.visegradgroup.eu](http://www.visegradgroup.eu).



Denmark is a founding member of NATO and all of its major political parties see membership as crucial to Danish security.<sup>1</sup> Over the past two decades, successive governments in Copenhagen have proved to be firm advocates of the Alliance's transformation towards out-of-area missions and enhancement of its non-military capabilities. Denmark, just like its Nordic neighbours, is aware of adverse changes taking place in NATO's and the EU's security environment since 2014, following the emergence of ISIS and the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The Danish preparations for NATO's Newport summit were being taken amidst controversies over defence spending. Some experts argued that the Russia-Ukraine conflict notwithstanding, the country's security policy should focus on NATO crisis-response missions and EU and UN peace operations.<sup>2</sup> Even though the Danish defence force is among the best trained and best prepared armed forces in the region, the question of their financing is said to have been taken up by the U.S. in the lead-up to the Newport summit. In 2015, a former Danish defence minister harshly criticised the falling spending on the military (then at \$3.80 billion, or 1.12% of GDP) and the emerging risk that the country's position within NATO would deteriorate.<sup>3</sup> These controversies, though, posed no obstacle to Denmark's noticeable participation in the Alliance's response to Russia's military activity, as reflected in its contribution to Baltic Air Policing and exercises in the Baltic States, or to the country's final backing of all of the decisions taken at Newport.<sup>4</sup>

The Danish position on the Warsaw summit agenda reflected both the country's changing assessments of the threats and its capacity to join new Alliance initiatives. Denmark takes a cautious stance on Russia and to reinforcement of NATO's Eastern Flank, seeking to balance the support it gives between further dialogue and enhanced deterrence against Russia. According to Danish intelligence analyses, in the short to medium term, Russia does not pose any major direct military threat, either to Denmark itself or to the Baltic States, which face a Russian military advantage in the region, but that there is a risk of unpredictability during any escalation of a crisis.<sup>5</sup> The previous intelligence report stressed also that an increased risk could be associated with Russia's unconventional activity and psychological pressure measures (hybrid warfare) towards the Baltic States to test NATO's cohesion and credibility.<sup>6</sup>

This perception of Russia, though, does not mean that Denmark has ruled out a resumption of Allied or bilateral dialogue with that country. This has been noticeable in signals sent by the Danish foreign minister about the need for keeping active political contact with Russia,

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<sup>1</sup> Denmark has a tradition of formal government and opposition agreements on defence, which translates into action programmes with the Ministry of Defence. See, for example, the NATO-related part of the current Danish Defence Agreement 2013–2017, Copenhagen, 30 November 2012, pp. 1–2, 7.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: J.A. Jørgsen, "After Ukraine—NATO should stay vigilant on the Middle East," *DIIS Policy Brief*, June 2014; J. Karlsrud et al., "Nordic-Baltic Support to Military and Security Capacity Building?," *DIIS Policy Brief*, December 2014.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example: "US wants Danish defence budget increased," *The Copenhagen Post*, 13 August 2014, <http://cphpost.dk>; P. Tees, "Military experts concerned about Denmark's NATO future," *The Copenhagen Post*, 11 August 2015, <http://cphpost.dk>.

<sup>4</sup> "Danish soldiers to be part of special NATO force to protect western Europe," *The Copenhagen Post*, 2 September 2014, <http://cphpost.dk>; "Danes sign on to NATO Alliance initiatives," *The Copenhagen Post*, 5 September 2014, <http://cphpost.dk>.

<sup>5</sup> "The DDIS Intelligence Risk Assessment 2017," <https://fe-ddis.dk>, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example: "The DDIS Intelligence Risk Assessment 2015," <https://fe-ddis.dk>, pp. 19–20.

including at the highest level.<sup>7</sup> However, during NATO's summit in Warsaw, Denmark did not offer its own initiatives but extended support for the Alliance's declarations on parallel deterrence measures and dialogue in the relations with Russia.

In the coming years, Denmark will continue to take interest in expanding the NATO agenda to incorporate High North (Arctic) issues, such as Greenland's security, Iceland's dependence on the Allies, and the increase in Russian military activities in the region. As Denmark sees it, Russia has been building up its land, sea, air, and air-defence forces oriented in that direction, testing and proving its capabilities in successive war games in 2012–2015.<sup>8</sup> Denmark finds it rather unlikely that its High North border with Russia could be delimited any time soon. Its future policy towards Russia will be influenced by an increase in Russian military activities and capabilities in the Baltic Sea and in the Arctic.<sup>9</sup>

With the new situation on NATO's Eastern Flank, Denmark has committed itself to assisting the Allies and has sent troops to joint exercises with Poland and the Baltic States and has backed the NATO Response Force (NRF), especially its "spearhead" part, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The Danish government has welcomed the initiative to step up the readiness of the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE HQ) in Szczecin, Poland, which involved sending increased numbers of staff officers and planners, taking over coordination of relations with the four new NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) in Bydgoszcz, Vilnius, Riga, and Tallinn (2015), and attaining full operational readiness in 2016. This contribution also translates into raising the level of combat readiness of the Royal Danish Army. Denmark's support for changing the status of the Szczecin Corps command and the four NFIUs was connected with the 2016 launch of a separate NATO initiative to improve the interoperability of the Polish and Baltic States' forces known as Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training (TACET).<sup>10</sup> Also, during the Warsaw summit, Denmark declared its readiness to send in 2017 up to 200 soldiers to the NATO battalion combat group in Estonia under the command of the UK.<sup>11</sup> However, this plan was rescheduled and implemented at the beginning of 2018.

For internal security reasons and because of the country's longstanding global engagement, Denmark is also keenly interested in the security of NATO's Southern Flank, reflecting the awareness of terrorist threats, including those organised, planned, or inspired from the Middle East. Denmark fears attacks similar to those in February 2015 (Copenhagen shootings) and the return of even some of the nearly 120 citizens who have joined armed radicals in Syria and Iraq. These same factors underpin Danish concerns about the growing terrorist threats for the whole of Europe.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Such initiatives and declarations by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, were criticised by former members of the Danish diplomatic service. See, for example: "Regeringen vil genåbne dialog med Rusland," *Jyllands-Posten Indland*, 20 August 2015; "Denmark to reopen dialogue' with Russia," *The Local*, 21 August 2015.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example: The DDIS Intelligence Risk Assessment 2015, pp. 33–34. Following other countries present in the Arctic, Denmark adopted the planning document, *Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands: Kingdom of Denmark Strategy for The Arctic 2011–2020*, Copenhagen, August 2011.

<sup>9</sup> P. Leverig, "Denmark Warns of Renewed Russian Assertiveness in the Arctic," *Bloomberg*, 28 October 2015.

<sup>10</sup> "Denmark part of new NATO Initiative," *The Copenhagen Post*, 11 February 2016, and the joint statement by NATO defence ministers, *Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training (TACET) Initiative*, Brussels, 10 February 2016, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>11</sup> "NATO leaders decide to deploy battalions to Baltic States, Poland," *The Baltic Times*, 9 July 2016.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, two services' information reports and assessments: "The DDIS Intelligence Risk Assessment 2015," pp. 11–15, and "Assessment of the Terror Threat to Denmark 2015," Danish Security and Intelligence Service, Copenhagen, 19 March 2015, pp. 1–8.

NATO's and the EU's awareness of the need to actively counter terrorism was the main motive behind Denmark's participation since summer 2014 in coalition operations against ISIS. Denmark has sent to Iraq seven F-16 multirole fighter aircraft (along with 90 service personnel), humanitarian assistance for the Kurds, and 120 special forces instructors (later increased to 200) to train Kurdish militias and the Iraqi Security Forces.<sup>13</sup> Simultaneously, tighter laws were passed targeting home-bred radicals and seeking to tighten up anti-terrorist collaboration with the member states of NORDEFECO (Nordic Defence Cooperation).<sup>14</sup> Denmark also lends its support to the Alliance's direct involvement in Southern Flank defences. Since 2001, the country has contributed its own naval forces to *Operation Active Endeavour* in the Mediterranean and to the continuation of *Operation Ocean Shield* against Horn of Africa pirates (launched in 2009). The Danish Navy's accumulating experience from these operations has been put to use since spring 2016 in monitoring the Aegean Sea as part of the assistance effort for Turkey and Greece in dealing with migrant smuggling to Europe.<sup>15</sup>

As in previous summits, in Warsaw, Denmark maintained support for NATO as a pillar of transatlantic relations. It will continue showing interest—even if not in the form of firm public declarations—in the U.S. military presence on the continent, including the stationing of U.S. forces on NATO's Eastern Flank. Also, over Russia's protests and occasional threats, the country is backing the enhancement of Allied anti-missile defence capabilities.<sup>16</sup> Prior to the Newport summit, the Danish parliament approved the Ministry of Defence's plans on a contribution to the naval component of the EPAA (European Phased Adaptive Approach) system, in the form of one Iver Huitfeldt-class destroyer (out of three such units deployed over 2014–2015) equipped with sophisticated multifunctional and early-warning radar and VLS launching facilities.<sup>17</sup> These Danish missile-defence capabilities will strengthen NATO, complementing the principal contribution from the U.S. and smaller investments by other Allies.

Like the other NATO member states, Denmark signed on to the summit's declaration to raise defence budgets to 2% of GDP, yet an actual downward trend in its budget has continued to be the case, falling to as low as 1.12% of GDP (\$3.80 billion) in 2015. After the special meeting of NATO leaders in May 2017, the Danish government announced a gradual increase in military spending of up to 1.26% of GDP (\$4.15 billion) that same year,<sup>18</sup> with the aim to

<sup>13</sup> See T. Ripley, "'Coalition of the Willing' Goes into Action in Iraq," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 17 September 2014; "Dania wysłała F-16 i komandosów do walki z Daesh," *Defence24*, 21 April 2016, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl).

<sup>14</sup> Details in: G. O'Dwyer, "Denmark, Sweden Tighten Laws against Jihadist Threats," *Defense News*, 19 October 2015, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com); "Nordic States Push Joint Action against Homeland Threats," *Defense News*, 9 November 2015, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, respectively: "Defence minister takes in anti-piracy action off African coast," *The Copenhagen Post*, 19 October 2015, <http://cphpost.dk>; B. Tigner, "NATO allies approve measures to boost Turkish security," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 2 December 2015; L. Rychla, "Denmark to fight human trafficking in Aegean Sea," *The Copenhagen Post*, 12 February 2016, <http://cphpost.dk>.

<sup>16</sup> In March 2015, the Russian ambassador to Denmark warned the country that its contribution to the Allied EPAA system would mean adding the Danish unit to the list of Russian nuclear targets. See, for example: B. Jones, "Russia threatens Denmark with nukes over support for NATO missile defences," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 25 March 2015; R. Milne, "Kremlin delivers nuclear strike warning over Danish warships—NATO shield," *The Financial Times*, 23 March 2015.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example: "Denmark will join NATO's missile defense system," *The Local*, 22 August 2014. In their pronouncements, Danish government officials only place an emphasis on equipping the destroyers with radar, not on the capabilities provided by the 32 VLS, adjusted to handle SM-2 and SM-3 interceptor missiles.

<sup>18</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

achieve 1.3% of GDP in 2023.<sup>19</sup> Hence, it is highly unlikely that Denmark will raise spending to 2% of GDP by 2024. A major challenge will be posed by the implementation of an ambitious long-term project to re-arm the air force by replacing its 30 F-16 jets with newer-generation units. In summer 2016, Denmark decided that, for strategic and technical reasons, the replacement fighters will be American F-35s (a similar decision was taken earlier by Norway).<sup>20</sup> Because of these costs, Copenhagen may be inclined to steer away from earlier, more ambitious plans for Denmark's long-term contribution to NATO missions or to operations by the EU and the United Nations.<sup>21</sup>

From the viewpoint of Danish interests, the priorities in NATO remain broader military cooperation among the Baltic and Nordic states and in the Arctic. In this respect, Denmark—similar to Iceland and Norway—supports a further deepening of NORDEFECO's collaboration with NATO's Baltic member states (Nordic-Baltic 8, or NB8), and also a tightening of the Alliance's special partnership with Finland and Sweden. The country was an advocate of the Baltic States' accession and a principled promoter of NATO's open-door policy. It continues to support reforms in Ukraine (including through NATO Trust Funds) and closer forms of partnership with Sweden and Finland.<sup>22</sup> Regional interests and Greenland security considerations may lead Denmark to lobby for a more conspicuous NATO presence in the High North, although a more likely scenario in the absence of Allied agreement on this issue will be bilateral military cooperation with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Norway.

During the 2018 NATO Summit in Brussels, Denmark stressed that it was ready to increase its capacity to support NATO missions by 50% in the coming years<sup>23</sup>. It also offered to lead Multinational Division North Headquarters in Latvia, which will be able to command up to a division size unit participating in a collective defence operation.

<sup>19</sup> P. Levering, "Denmark Plans One of Its Biggest Military-Spending Hikes Since the Cold War," Bloomberg, 11 October 2017, [www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com).

<sup>20</sup> In the tender competed the F-18F, F-35A, and Eurofighter Typhoon. See: G. O'Dwyer, "New Danish Gov't Open to Defense Budget Boost," *Defense News*, 31 August 2015, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com); *idem*, "Replacing Denmark's Aging F-16s Could Place Strain on Defense Budget," *Defense News*, 22 January 2016, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com); "Denmark: Investment will strengthen Danish-US ties," *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief*, 2 August 2016.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example: "Danish Defence Agreement..." *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> In early 2016, Denmark signed a bilateral agreement with Sweden on access to both countries' sea and air space and military bases in peace or crisis (but not in open warfare). See: G. O'Dwyer, "Sweden and Denmark Reach Bilateral Defense Agreement," *Defense News*, 21 January 2016, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>23</sup> "The Minister of Defence at NATO summit with strong military contributions," Danish Ministry of Defence, 9 July 2018, [www.fmn.dl](http://www.fmn.dl).



The security of Estonia, which joined the Alliance in 2004, has since independence been influenced by the country's tense relations with Russia over issues that include Estonia's Russian-speaking minority (23% of the population) and a border treaty that has yet to be ratified by the parliaments of either country.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the Newport summit, Estonians were concerned about the Alliance's capacity to reach consensus and its readiness to deter Russia. The Estonian president called for permanent bases and permanently stationed forces and warned against a "two-tier NATO."<sup>2</sup> The adoption of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) and other Newport summit decisions were taken as a success by Estonia and a foretaste of a further enhancement of Allied capabilities and presence on NATO's Eastern Flank.<sup>3</sup> Estonia highly praised the unity shown by the Alliance and the EU in their attitude towards Russia and its aggression against Ukraine.

The period between the Newport and Warsaw summits has seen NATO decisions on the reinforcement of Estonia's security being turned into practice—a very important development for a country of limited military potential and dependent on Allied guarantees. According to the Estonian foreign minister, the Baltic Air Policing mission,<sup>4</sup> the Allies' rotational presence, and the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) represent very important steps along the path of NATO adaptation.<sup>5</sup> Estonia declared support for a persistent Allied military presence on the Eastern Flank and for clear and visible deterrence against Russia while simultaneously announcing that investments in infrastructure needed to host such forces will be continued.<sup>6</sup> While the country welcomed continuous rotations of a U.S. Army company (150 troops, in 2014–2016), in 2015 it called, together with Latvia and Lithuania, for the permanent presence of a brigade-sized unit (composed of a mix of rotational Allied personnel grouped in three battalions, with presumably around 3,000 troops in total) in the three Baltic States.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Estonia received with satisfaction the 2016 decision on deployment of a rotational multinational battalion-sized battlegroup on its territory under NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP).<sup>8</sup> During the Warsaw summit, it was agreed that the battlegroup in Estonia will be set up in 2017 with the United Kingdom as the framework nation, which would deploy 500 troops and be supported by other Allies. In summer 2018, a group was composed of troops from a mechanised battalion from the United Kingdom (800), an infantry company from Denmark (186), and a strategic

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<sup>1</sup> Estonia has the largest Russian-speaking population (Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians) among the three Baltic States and estimated at some 25–27% of the country's total population (at least 320,000 out of 1.3 million inhabitants). The Russian speakers are concentrated in Tallinn and the northeastern part of the country, close to the Russian border.

<sup>2</sup> K. Malkenes Hovland, "Estonian President Calls for Permanent NATO Base in Country, Move Comes Ahead of Visit by U.S. President Barack Obama to Baltic Region," *The Wall Street Journal*, 2 September 2014, [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com).

<sup>3</sup> U. Paet, "Discussion on the Changed Security Situation: A Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs," Riigikogu, Tallinn, 16 October 2014, [www.vm.ee](http://www.vm.ee).

<sup>4</sup> Since April 2014, the Amari air base in Estonia has been one of two locations hosting the Baltic Air Policing mission.

<sup>5</sup> M. Kaljurand, "Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Riigikogu," Tallinn, 11 February 2016, [www.vm.ee](http://www.vm.ee).

<sup>6</sup> See: "Agreement on the Formation of a Government and on the General Principles of the Action Programme of the Government Coalition," Tallinn, 6 April 2015, <https://valitsus.ee>.

<sup>7</sup> See the interview with Minister Sven Mikser: E. Braw, "Estonian Defense Chief: NATO Must 'Neutralize' Putin's Perceived Advantage," *RFE/RL*, 26 June 2015, [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org).

<sup>8</sup> Compare "Hanso: Estonia's Security Strengthened Due to US Activity," Estonian Public Broadcasting, 31 March 2016, <https://news.err.ee>; "Defense committee chair stress importance of Warsaw summit," Estonian Public Broadcasting, 12 July 2016, <https://news.err.ee>.

communications expert from Iceland.<sup>9</sup> In addition to EFP, Estonia has been seeking the constant presence of U.S. troops instead of periodic exercises alone. These calls have included a desire to host an American Patriot air-and-missile-defence system in order to narrow the regional gap in such NATO capabilities.<sup>10</sup> This has been consistent with Estonia's intent to transform the Baltic Air Policing mission into an air defence mission.<sup>11</sup> Estonia has been also advocating for adding air and maritime components to the EFP, as well as for further improvement of NATO's reinforcement abilities.<sup>12</sup> The Russia factor also makes the Estonian government stick to its support for NATO nuclear deterrence, the importance of which had been emphasised already before 2014.<sup>13</sup> Estonia had no official objections to a resumption of dialogue between NATO and the EU and Russia, but such discussions, it noted, should focus on the most difficult issues (e.g., the implementation of the Minsk agreements in Ukraine).<sup>14</sup> In view of the earlier problems in its relations with Russia (riots in Tallinn and cyberattacks in April-May 2007), Estonia has since 2014 become very pessimistic in its assessment of Russia's intentions and policy towards its neighbours. According to public reports by the Estonian intelligence service, Russia will remain hostile towards the West, resorting to aggressive, unpredictable means of pressure to keep its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet area. The Estonian intelligence service believes that another reason why Russia prefers hybrid-warfare methods and lowering the threshold for the use of tactical nuclear weapons is that it has problems with the full modernisation of its conventional forces. The Estonian intelligence service does not rule out a scenario—even if admitting the likelihood is low—in which Russia uses force against the three Baltic countries, Sweden, and Finland. It also assesses that the Russian-Belarusian *Zapad 2017* exercises were used by Russia to check a scenario of a large-scale conflict with NATO, as well as to put psychological pressure on the Baltic States and Poland.<sup>15</sup>

Estonian non-government experts added to this an array of possible scenarios in which Russia takes aggressive actions towards Estonia, in each case taking advantage of its direct proximity and rapidly mobilising its conventional forces and resorting to hybrid-warfare methods. These experts also expressed doubts as to whether the time needed to deploy the "spearhead force" (VJTF) will prove short enough, thus providing an argument for the continuation of the enhanced rotational presence of NATO forces.<sup>16</sup> To Estonia, Russia's potential for aggressive, risky actions below the open-aggression threshold (Article 5) was demonstrated when it captured and sentenced to prison an Estonian counterintelligence officer in September 2014 (who was swapped for a Russian informer a year later).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *NATO Factsheet*, August 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>10</sup> "Estonia calls for deployment of US troops, Patriot missiles," *Euractiv*, 5 April 2018, [www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com).

<sup>11</sup> A. Mehta, "Estonia's defense minister Juri Luik on Russian threats and defending the Baltics," *Defense News*, 17 September 2018, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>12</sup> K. Kaljulaid, "Keynote speech by the President of Estonia at MSC side event 'NATO's Challenges on the Eastern Flank: Enhancing Forward Presence and Maintaining Cohesion'," Munich, 15 February 2018, [www.president.ee](http://www.president.ee).

<sup>13</sup> "NATO Nuclear Policy Symposium held in Tallinn," Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Estonia, 17 October 2016, [www.kmin.ee](http://www.kmin.ee); "Estonia," in: database: A. Kacprzyk (ed.), "The Central and Eastern European Resource Collection on Nuclear Issues," [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>14</sup> M. Kaljurand, *op. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> For more on the changes in the Western Military District and Russia's policy towards NATO, the Baltics, and Ukraine, see: Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, "International Security and Estonia 2016," Tallinn, 2016, pp. 11–22; Estonian Intelligence Service, "International Security and Estonia 2018," Tallinn, 2018, pp. 18–27.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example: H. Praks, "Hybrid or Not: Deterring and Defeating Russia's Ways of Warfare in the Baltics—the Case of Estonia," *NDC Research Paper*, no. 124, December 2015.

<sup>17</sup> The officer was abducted two days after U.S. President Barack Obama's official visit to Tallinn. See, for example: "Kohver Released and Back in Estonia," Estonian Public Broadcasting, 26 September 2015.

Thus, for Estonia, its own and NATO's relations with Russia are not confined to a potential military threat. Actually, the Alliance's adaptation to Russian hybrid threats may very much have to do with Estonia's internal security and maintenance of constitutional order. The Estonian government has emphasised that Russia, through its special services, media (e.g., TV Baltnews), "historical politics," and network of Russian-speaking minority organisations, is creating fertile ground for a hybrid conflict.<sup>18</sup> Since 2014, repeated propaganda campaigns have been seen in Russian-language social media, along with coordinated DDoS (*distributed denial of service*) cyberattacks, attempts to penetrate government web networks, and cyberespionage. Correspondingly, Estonia has been one of the main advocates of closer cooperation on cyberdefence in the Alliance. NATO has been conducting annual cyberdefence exercises "Locked Shields" and "Cyber Coalition" at the NATO's newly established Cyber Range Capability in Tallinn, as well as regular training courses at the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD CoE) in Tallinn. Having reached a high level of digital literacy among the public and in administrative services, Estonia makes a considerable contribution to NATO's preparedness to face cyberthreats while simultaneously integrating its military structures with the voluntary Cyber Defence Unit.<sup>19</sup>

For Estonia, the main security challenge coming from the Southern Flank are the civil wars in Syria and Libya, which fuel the terrorist threat globally and at the European level, including for Estonian citizens, and which also add to the level of mass migration on such a scale that it is potentially dangerous for Estonia. The country is concerned that such developments, as is often the case, may go hand in hand with a rise in the popularity of extreme right-wing movements in many European countries and that Russia may be taking advantage of such groups and such tensions.<sup>20</sup> Estonia's response to these threats include: deployment of up to 10 instructors to train Iraqi forces since mid-2016 as part of *Operation Inherent Resolve*; participation in the NATO *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan, with 40 troops as of September 2018; political support for NATO and EU naval missions in the Mediterranean; and, shipments of arms and munitions to forces fighting ISIS. Estonia also joined the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, which can be used for both collective-defence and crisis-management operations.

Even prior to the 2014 developments in NATO's neighbourhood, and as far back as 2009, Estonia sought to keep its military spending at close to the 2% of GDP goal, which it finally achieved in 2012 (thus standing out from Lithuania and Latvia, which also fell victim to the 2008 financial crisis). Estonia's defence budget equalled 1.92% of GDP (\$405 million) in 2014, 2.01% of GDP (\$430 million) in 2015, and 2.13% of GDP (\$468 million) in 2016. The defence budget in 2017 reached 2.08% of GDP (\$518 million)<sup>21</sup> and it seems likely that a similar level will be preserved in 2018–2022. Increased military spending should allow the implementation of modernisation plans for three armed services (6,600 troops), the voluntary Defence League (16,000 members), and the Border Guard (subordinated to the Ministry of Interior). Priorities are armoured infantry vehicles, and the purchase of FH-70 howitzers and Javelin anti-tank guided missiles.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "Annual Review," Estonian Internal Security Service, 2015, pp. 4–13.

<sup>19</sup> Also, in the autumn of 2014, the government document "Estonia Cyber Security Strategy 2014–2017" was adopted.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example: "International Security..." *op. cit.*, pp. 30–36, 43–44.

<sup>21</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>22</sup> *The Military Balance 2018*, IISS/Routledge, 2018, pp. 98–99.



Estonia is going to continue to closely coordinate its defence policy and related initiatives with the other two Baltic countries. In 1998, the partners established the Baltic Defence College, BALTDEFCOL, and the Baltic Naval Squadron, BALTRON (Estonia withdrew from the latter in 2015 to focus on participation in the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Groups). Another Estonian contribution is a company from the Baltic Force (BALTFOR) battalion, which was part of the NRF in 2016. Along with hosting NFIUs, the Baltic States will also set up a Baltic Combined Joint Staff Element (B-CJSE) and the Baltic Network (BALTNET), to be incorporated into NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence (NATINADS). Estonia is interested in expanding the Baltics' cooperation with the United Kingdom, Denmark and Norway (including within JEF) and with Sweden and Finland (NORDEFKO). For the same reasons, the Estonian government looks favourably at tightening NATO's partnership with Sweden and Finland and contributes to various forms of training assistance to Ukraine and Georgia.

Estonian officials hailed the decisions of the 2018 summit in Brussels, noting that they will strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture through improvement of the readiness of Allied forces, military mobility, and cyber capabilities. Estonia also stressed the importance of projecting stability on the Southern Flank and the need for close NATO-EU cooperation in that regard.<sup>23</sup> During the summit, Estonia, Latvia, and Denmark, as framework nations, signed a declaration on creation of the headquarters of the Multinational Division North, which will be located on Latvian and Danish territory.

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<sup>23</sup> "Ratas in Brussels: NATO to continue to bolster collective capability," *ERR News*, 12 July 2018, <https://news.err.ee>.

France is among NATO's founding members but its policy within the Alliance stands out with an exceptionally strong and clearly articulated desire for strategic autonomy, especially vis-à-vis the largest member, the United States. This stance was manifested, in particular, by the decision to develop an independent nuclear deterrent and French President Charles de Gaulle's 1966 decision to move his country out of NATO's integrated military structures.<sup>1</sup> French military cooperation with the Alliance began to improve gradually in the mid-1990s, as exemplified by its participation in NATO missions in Bosnia, but a formal and full return came only in 2009 under President Nicolas Sarkozy.

France's major motives behind the move, one which sets the tone of the country's membership of the Alliance, were to increase its role in European security policy and to exert stronger influence on the directions of NATO's evolution. That was to be achieved by means of fuller participation in crisis-management missions and other NATO initiatives. France was also dissatisfied with the very slow pace at which the EU's European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was developing, perceived as the pivotal concept of French national security policy (referring to it as "Europe of defence," or *L'Europe de la défense* in French). France also found it important to develop strategic relations with the U.S., relations that had been seriously weakened by French criticism of American intervention in Iraq in 2003.

NATO is now seen in France as basically a mechanism to guarantee territorial defence, but it should also be capable of responding to various kinds of threats. Like the U.S., France argues that Europe must increase its capacity for autonomous operations in the neighbourhood.<sup>2</sup> Since 2016, France promotes the concept of "strategic autonomy of Europe," which moves away from *L'Europe de la défense*, focusing on the EU and CSDP, and assumes a more balanced use of multilateral and bilateral cooperation formats to strengthen the European capacity to respond to security crises. Thus, France perceives NATO as a further useful tool as the need arises (in parallel, for example, with EU instruments and "coalitions of the willing"), which has resulted in its resistance to strengthening the Alliance's institutional role.

Prior to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the French threat perception was focused overwhelmingly on asymmetric threats: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (including Iran's missile and nuclear programmes), terrorism, and rogue states. At the same time, Paris somewhat downplayed the growing military potential of China and Russia—and their attempts to undermine the international order—to a secondary place.<sup>3</sup> The main direct threat to French security was viewed as the instability in Africa and the Middle East, which created opportunities for terrorist activity by, for example, ISIS militants. Since 2014, the number of terrorist attacks on French territory has clearly increased. So far, over a dozen such attacks have been recorded, including the most brutal assault that took place in Paris on 13 November 2015, and left 130 people dead. The Defence And National Security Strategic Review, commissioned by the new president, Emmanuel Macron, and published in October 2017, emphasises the

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<sup>1</sup> But France continued political cooperation and membership of all decision-making bodies, except for the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group.

<sup>2</sup> "La France et l'OTAN—Tribune de Laurent Fabius," *International Herald Tribune*, 5 December 2012; "France Diplomatie," [www.diplomatie.gouv.fr](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

threats posed by Russia: the rapid development of its military capabilities, its policy of creating areas of privileged interests in Europe (thus indicating Russia as a challenge to European security), and its attempts to break unity within EU and NATO.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, France is, along with the United Kingdom, the only European NATO member capable of projecting power away from its territory and pursuing a global security policy with the use of military instruments. In 2017, about 26,000 soldiers served in such missions or operations, and at bases located overseas. The largest anti-terrorist operations were *Barkhane* in the Sahel (4,000), *Chamal* in Syria and Iraq (1,200), and above all, *Sentinelle*, ensuring security in the largest cities of France (7,000), established in early 2015 after the attack on the *Charlie Hebdo* office in Paris. France has maritime and air-transport capabilities to move personnel up to 8,000 kilometres from its territory, turning France into the second most operationally active NATO state after the U.S. This in turn has had a strong influence on the country's approach to the Alliance's adaptation process.

The intensifying threats and growing operational requirements of the French armed forces led President François Hollande (in November 2015) to announce that the defence budget would be increased by €3.8 billion for four consecutive years in total: 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019. In 2017, President Macron unexpectedly cut defence spending by about €850 million; however, the multiannual defence financial framework (LPM) adopted in early 2018 established spending at €198 billion by 2023, which means almost €40 billion a year compared to the €32.4 billion in 2017. This increase is to allow reaching the 2% of GDP spending on defence threshold by 2025.<sup>5</sup> Yet, in real terms and according to NATO methodology, French defence expenditure stood at \$49.6 billion in 2015, \$50.4 billion in 2016, and \$ 51.1 billion in 2017, roughly around 1.8% of GDP.<sup>6</sup> However, additional funds will be allocated to the technical modernisation of French forces (including four Barracuda submarines, eight frigates of various sizes, 28 new Rafale fighters, 12 MRTT transport aircraft, six MQ-9 Reaper drones, and several dozen armoured vehicles), including the launch of the nuclear deterrent modernisation programme, and strengthening offensive cybernetic capabilities (1,000 people) and reconnaissance (an additional 1,500 soldiers).<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, France's policy towards NATO has been clearly influenced by its perception of Russia as a necessary element of a stable common security space in Europe. For this reason, the country steadfastly opposed granting MAP (Membership Action Plan) status to Georgia and Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> France's policy line of widening shared interests with Russia was reflected in, for example, its 2011 decision to sign a €1.2 billion contract for the delivery of two Mistral-class amphibious assault ships and in a tightening up of defence-industry cooperation with Russia by building two other such vessels in collaboration with Russian yards. To prevent an escalation of tensions between Russia and the West, France made a significant contribution to the search for a political solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine within the framework of the Normandy Format (France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine). Consequently, France was

<sup>4</sup> L. Jurczyszyn, M. Terlikowski, "The Future of France's Defence Policy," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 20 (1091), 5 February 2018.

<sup>5</sup> "France to bolster defense spending by \$2 billion. Here's the military equipment already on order," *Defense News*, 26 September 2018, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>6</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>7</sup> "Macron signs French military budget into law. Here's what the armed forces are getting," *Defense News*, 16 July 2018, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>8</sup> "'Old' and 'new' Europe divided at NATO Summit," *EurActiv*, 2 April 2008, [www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com).

among the signatories of the Minsk II agreement of 12 February 2015, imposing a ceasefire and formulating political conditions for stability in the Donbas region.

But the conflict between Russia and Ukraine did produce a change in France's rhetoric towards Moscow. France considered the Russian annexation of Crimea to have revived the spectre of territorial conflict in Europe.<sup>9</sup> In particular, France was worried by Russia's provocative military actions towards NATO, including nuclear threats, and by its attempts to bully the Baltic States. At the same time, France found itself under NATO pressure to suspend the Mistral contract. In 2015 Hollande, even though initially linking the issue to a settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine,<sup>10</sup> cancelled the contract in response to a wave of Allied criticism and after several months of negotiations. Still, French politicians argued that maintaining dialogue with Russia is a must, though this should not be regarded as approval of the Russian activities.<sup>11</sup> In December 2015, France tightened its intelligence cooperation with Russia in combating ISIS.

The operational engagement in other regions did not stop France from contributing noticeably to initiatives aimed at the reinforcement of NATO's Eastern Flank. As early as April 2014, four French Rafale fighter jets were deployed to Malbork, Poland, for the duration of Poland's involvement in the Baltic Air Policing mission. In the same year, France sent an AWACS aircraft to patrol the air space over Poland and Romania, and a minesweeper for a Baltic exercise. The French presence on the Eastern Flank was partly arranged under bilateral agreements. On 30 January 2015, Poland and France adopted a declaration on the strengthening of strategic cooperation,<sup>12</sup> and in May 2015, France sent several dozen VBCI infantry fighting vehicles and 15 Leclerc tanks to Poland for the *Puma 2015* exercises.

As emphasised by French Ambassador to Poland Pierre Buhler, his country's activities reflected France's readiness to meet its commitments under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.<sup>13</sup> As part of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), adopted at the Newport summit in 2014, France consented to play the framework nation role, involving a land force command and an operational battalion, in the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) in 2020. The country also sent officers to the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) in Estonia. Hollande also made an important contribution to the deterrence of Russia, underlining in one his speeches that the French nuclear arsenal might be used to protect vital interests both within the EU and NATO.<sup>14</sup>

Before the 2016 Warsaw summit, Le Drian indicated that France's priority would be to retain NATO's flexibility, so that the Alliance remained capable of responding to various kinds of threats, in line with the 360-degree principle. That was already indicated by France's push for the increased involvement of the Allies (although not necessarily NATO in its entirety) on the Southern Flank, which was quite natural at a time of growing terrorist threats within France itself, and of the country's operational engagement in Africa and the Middle East. At the Newport summit in 2014, France was among the eight Allied states that agreed to back the U.S. in the fight against ISIS. Several days later, the French air force launched a combat mission against ISIS

<sup>9</sup> "M. Le Drian souhaite renforcer la coopération militaire entre la France et les États-Unis," *Zone Militaire*, 7 July 2015, [www.opex360.com](http://www.opex360.com).

<sup>10</sup> F. Perry, "Livraison du Mistral à la Russie: Paris décidera fin octobre," *Le Parisien*, 4 September 2014, [www.leparisien.fr](http://www.leparisien.fr).

<sup>11</sup> P. Cohen, "Laurent Fabius: 'L'Union européenne, c'est la garantie de la paix'," *France Inter*, 5 May 2014, [www.franceinter.fr](http://www.franceinter.fr).

<sup>12</sup> "Deklaracja po polsko-francuskich konsultacjach międzyrządowych," Presidency (France), 30 January 2015, [www.elysee.fr](http://www.elysee.fr).

<sup>13</sup> "Konferencja prasowa nt. francuskich czołgów Leclerc i piechoty w Polsce," French Embassy in Warsaw, 27 April 2015, [www.ambafrance-pl.org](http://www.ambafrance-pl.org).

<sup>14</sup> "Potencjał odstraszenia nuklearnego Francji," 19 February 2015, [www.ambafrance-pl.org](http://www.ambafrance-pl.org).

positions in Iraq, and in September 2015, this mission was expanded to cover Syrian territory. The mission used the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*, with 26 aircraft aboard, plus 12 aircraft stationed at bases in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates.

In the aftermath of the Paris attacks of November 2015, France, for the first time, invoked Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union, which triggers mutual defence in the event of armed aggression, and it turned to its EU partners for help using bilateral channels. In most cases, this was about supporting overstretched French forces in Africa, which would be reassigned to fight ISIS.<sup>15</sup>

The French president also made an attempt to win over the Russian government in a bid to engage Moscow in the fight against ISIS in Syria. Faced with threats on NATO's Southern Flank, France is in favour of tightening cooperation between NATO and the EU. In the opinion of France, both organisations should complement each other, and use their potential to reinforce European security.

During the Warsaw summit, France supported the decision on Enhanced Forward Presence on the Eastern Flank and decided to contribute an armoured company and a tank platoon to the multinational battle group in Estonia in 2017 and another unit to the battalion in Lithuania in 2018.<sup>16</sup> In 2017, the implementation of these plans began—troops were deployed to Estonia and, in the second rotation of NATO forces in 2018, to Lithuania. At the Warsaw summit, Hollande stressed the importance of NATO and French nuclear deterrence and highlighted the role of cyberdefence, which will be one of the French priorities in the coming years. He argued that NATO's adaptation is defensive in nature and that dialogue with Russia is necessary.<sup>17</sup> Other priorities he mentioned included strengthened cooperation between NATO and the EU, both to improve efficiency in combating threats and enhance the role of the Union. Even though the French authorities were not happy with the political control over NATO Missile Defence, which is based mainly on the U.S. elements, they decided to approve the system's Interim Operational Capability.

Before the Brussels summit in July 2018, France consistently built its political position as one of the leaders of the Alliance, using primarily its operational involvement both on the Eastern and Southern flanks and the decision to increase the defence budget to 2% of GDP by 2025, as well as the development of bilateral cooperation with the UK and the U.S. In addition to participating in multinational battlegroups in the Baltic States, France in 2017 and 2018 had a military presence in the Black Sea, regularly sending frigates to take part in exercises there. Nevertheless, the French involvement in Syria was the most visible part of its activity in NATO. In response to the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime, on 13–14 April 2018, France, in coalition with the U.S. and UK and using cruise missiles, struck Syrian facilities related to the production of this type of weapon. With regard to the Alliance's adaptation agenda, France primarily seeks to reduce the costs of reforming NATO's command structure, strengthening the nuclear dimension of Allied deterrence and defence policy, as well as developing Allied capabilities in cyberspace.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Activation of Article 42(7) TEU France's request for assistance and Member States' responses*, European Council Briefing, April 2016, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>.

<sup>16</sup> "Conférence de Presse du Président de La République lors du Sommet de l'OTAN," Presidency (France), 10 July 2016, [www.elysee.fr](http://www.elysee.fr).

<sup>17</sup> "NATO and Russia want dialogue, not a new Cold War," *Deutsche Welle*, 8 July 2016, [www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com).

<sup>18</sup> A. Mehta, "What countries hope to get out of the NATO summit," *Defense News*, 13 June 2018, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).



At the July 2018 Brussels summit, French President Macron tried to tone down the tensions, indicating that apart from U.S. President Donald Trump's harsh comments on the defence spending issue, the discussions went rather smoothly and the package of decisions taken by the Allies was good.<sup>19</sup> Yet, Minister Le Drian suggested that Europe should stand up to the U.S. actions because they may eventually destabilise the European Union.<sup>20</sup> In the aftermath of the summit, in late August, Macron, however, indicated that it is the U.S. unpredictability, among many other factors, that makes Europe seek to build more autonomy in defence, even if it is a long-term project.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "Macron says NATO debates were 'frank and respectful'," *Reuters*, 12 July 2018, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>20</sup> "French official: Europe will stand up to Trump," *New York Post*, 13 July 2018, <https://nypost.com>.

<sup>21</sup> "France's Macron urges Europe to take charge of own defense," *Associated Press*, 28 August 2018, [www.apnews.com](http://www.apnews.com).



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# GERMANY

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The Federal Republic of Germany's accession to NATO in 1955 is widely acknowledged as one of the events that marked the beginning of the Cold War. The country's special position within the Alliance continued until 1990, reflecting both Germany's location on what was then NATO's Eastern Flank and the numerous constraints on German security policy resulting from its loss in World War II. After the end of the Cold War, German security policy has remained founded on NATO membership and close relations with the United States. Yet, the German approach to the transatlantic dimension of European security remained special because of several factors affecting German strategic culture. Among them, the most notable is the deep-rooted conviction among German political elites that long-term security and peace in Europe can be achieved only if Russia is involved and engaged by the West. Others include Germany's considerable restraint in deploying military instruments in its security policy, its preference for the institutionalisation of crisis-management missions within international organisations (such as the UN, the EU, and NATO) and not coalitions of the willing, and its cautious, if not sceptical, approach to American leadership in the Alliance, despite its relatively close cooperation with the U.S.

All these factors had a clear influence on the German approach to the NATO agenda in the period between Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, through the Warsaw summit in 2016, and up to the 2018 July summit in Brussels. Given Germany's political weight in the Alliance, these factors also had an indirect effect on NATO's decision-making. Furthermore, German policy in NATO has for a long time been marked by distinct discord between Chancellor Merkel on the one side and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and then (after the election of Steinmeier as president of Germany in March 2017) Minister Sigmar Gabriel on the other. The latter frequently criticised NATO decisions, which were then accepted and supported by Merkel and implemented by Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen. The reason was the coalition government formed by right-wing CDU/CSU and left-wing SPD, but the result was that the German internal political fight was moved to the international level. And yet, between the spring of 2014 and the summer of 2016, the German position on key items on NATO agenda underwent a considerable evolution towards clear support for initiatives seeking reinforcement of the Eastern Flank.

Importantly, since 2014, Germany also has been increasing its commitment in fighting asymmetric and non-military threats on the Southern Flank of NATO. This reflected the coalition government's concept that Germany must contribute more intensively to international security policy. An outline of this concept was presented at the Munich security conference in January 2014 when President Joachim Gauck announced Germany's increased readiness to participate in crisis-management missions. Further, Germany signalled that its engagement would not be confined to civilian and advisory support, as had been the case before, but may involve contributing troops to expeditionary operations.<sup>1</sup> These announcements were later translated into an active approach to threats on NATO's Southern Flank, especially since mid-2015, when the mass-migration crisis broke out in Europe and hundreds of thousands of migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, North Africa, and the Sahel began flowing into the EU and then into Germany. The German attitude to the threats on the Southern Flank was also affected by the deadly terrorist attacks in France in 2015, in Brussels in the first half of 2016, and—predominately—in Berlin in December 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> "Address by German President Joachim Gauck to the 50th Munich Security Conference," Der Bundespräsident, 31 January 2014, [www.bundespraesident.de](http://www.bundespraesident.de).

Immediately after Russia's annexation of Crimea, and while focusing on the preparations for an increased contribution to crisis-management missions, Germany was unwilling to recognise the long-term implications that the Russian actions had on the security of NATO members. While Germany strongly criticised Russia for violating fundamental principles of international law and the political rules that underlay the post-Cold War order in Europe, Minister Steinmeier simultaneously spoke about the need for dialogue with Russia. He argued that both the Russian interests in Ukraine and the special Russian-Ukrainian relations should be considered in crafting NATO responses. He also expressed hope that German relations with Russia would not deteriorate.<sup>2</sup> Soon afterwards, though, Merkel took a leading role in the process of imposing EU sanctions on Russia. Initial NATO discussion before the summit in Newport about steps to reinforce the security of countries on the Eastern Flank provoked a dispute in the German cabinet, with von der Leyen's proposals for a stronger NATO presence being slammed by the SPD spokesperson as provoking an escalation with Russia.<sup>3</sup> Germany finally declared it would contribute to the interim reassurance measures for the Eastern Flank by sending six Eurofighter aircraft to the Baltic Air Policing mission (starting September 2014) and a counter-mine vessel to operate in the Baltic Sea, a decision confirmed by North Atlantic Council decisions of 16 April 2014.<sup>4</sup>

Close to the Newport summit in September 2014, Germany revealed an outline of its "double-track" approach to Russia and its relations with the Alliance. This was subsequently fleshed out, informing German policy within NATO in the entire period leading up to the Warsaw summit. In summer 2014, at a time of heightened tensions in NATO-Russia relations (following the outbreak of hostilities in Eastern Ukraine and Russian numerous provocations, including the use of nuclear-capable aircraft), and amid calls for Allied forces and assets to be deployed on the Eastern Flank, Germany strongly argued for a conciliatory tone on Russia in the Wales Summit Declaration. At the same time, though, Germany offered a significant contribution to the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) agreed at the summit. In Merkel's words, this was indicative of her country's double-track strategy towards Russia.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, the security of NATO Allies on the Eastern Flank was enhanced, with Germany declaring its readiness to contribute to the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), and agreeing to increase the readiness level of the Szczecin-based Multinational Corps Northeast Headquarters (MNC NE HQ). Since Germany is a framework nation of this unit (along with Denmark and Poland), the number of German officers seconded there has been consequently increased from 60 to 120. On the other hand, Germany pressed for the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 to be stressed in the Declaration as a loophole for future *rapprochement* between Russia and the West and opposed attempts to relativise the Founding Act, as proposed by some leaders from the Eastern Flank NATO members.

In between the summits in Newport and Warsaw, Germany continued with its policy. On the one hand, it attempted to counter calls from some Allies for a substantial strengthening of the Eastern Flank by the deployment of new Allied forces and assets there while continuing to urge more dialogue with Russia. On the other hand, Germany was engaged in some initiatives aimed at reinforcing the Eastern Flank. At the same time, the German leaders argued that Article 5 must not be called into question and that, in the event of conflict, Germany would fulfil its

<sup>2</sup> "Address by F.W. Steinmeier to the Russia-Germany Forum," German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19 March 2014, [www.auswaertiges-amt.de](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de).

<sup>3</sup> F. Gathmann, "Koalition streitet über Nato-Präsenz im Osten," *Spiegel Online*, 23 March 2014.

<sup>4</sup> "NATO verstärkt Streitkräfte an Ostgrenze," *Deutsche Welle*, 16 April 2014, [www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com).

<sup>5</sup> S. Bolzen, T. Jungholt, "Russland provoziert einen neuen Nato-Doppelbeschluss," *Welt.de*, 5 September 2014, [www.welt.de](http://www.welt.de).

obligations towards the Eastern Flank NATO members.<sup>6</sup> In 2015, along with the Netherlands and Norway, Germany provided the main contribution—the land component of the VJTF (in its first rotation). The German contribution amounted to 2,700 troops (more than half of the whole unit) and a command element of the VJTF, whose functions were performed by the headquarters of the German-Dutch Corps. Germany also confirmed its role as the VJTF's framework nation in 2019, as well as sent officers to all NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs), and again contributed to Baltic Air Policing (four fighter aircraft from September to December).<sup>7</sup> Throughout 2015, a total of 4,400 German troops took part in a series of NATO exercises on the Eastern Flank, including “Noble Jump,” “Sabre Strike” and “Baltops.”<sup>8</sup> Between April and December, companies of 150 to 200 soldiers were sent to Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland (one to each country), for three-month training and exercise rotations.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, Germany's leaders kept reiterating proposals to convene the NATO-Russia Council, which they argued could reduce the tension in Europe. In fact, these proposals only stoked an argument within the Alliance itself.<sup>10</sup>

The first breakthrough in the German approach to the Eastern Flank emerged with an agreement on NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), reached at the North Atlantic Council of defence ministers in February 2016. Then came the German decision to assume the framework nation role for the battalion-size battlegroup in Lithuania, announced towards the end of April.<sup>11</sup> However, this came after a number of negative signals as regards the possibility of forward deploying forces to the Eastern Flank<sup>12</sup> and after repeated German attempts to resume the dialogue in the NATO-Russia Council format. It was only in April 2016 that the NRC was finally re-convened following consensus within the Alliance on the topics for discussions, which included the situation in Ukraine in the first place, something Germany did not necessarily see as a precondition, unlike many Eastern Flank NATO members. Differences within the German cabinet also were further aggravated by Steinmeier's comments about “unnecessary” NATO exercises in Poland contributing to an escalation of tensions in Europe.<sup>13</sup>

By mid-2017, Germany deployed in Lithuania a mechanised infantry battalion and a logistical support element (about 450 troops in total). In the second rotation of the battlegroup in Lithuania, in 2018, Germany increased its contribution slightly (to about 580 troops). Further, in the process of the review and update of the NATO Command Structure, Germany declared its willingness to host a proposed logistical support command for the Eastern Flank. In practice, this boiled down to Germany taking responsibility for the organisation of this unit and financing most of its costs. The final decision on this was taken by the Alliance in February 2018, again at a defence ministerial meeting: The Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) was to be established in the German city of Ulm. This is how Germany gradually become a pivotal

<sup>6</sup> “Von der Leyen beschwört im Baltikum Artikel 5,” *Welt.de*, 14 April 2015, [www.welt.de](http://www.welt.de).

<sup>7</sup> “NATO-Speerspitze: Deutschland wird 2019 Rahmennation,” press release on the website of the German Ministry of Defence, 9 October 2015.

<sup>8</sup> C.B. Schlitz, “Nato rüstet im Konflikt mit Russland massiv auf,” *Welt.de*, 25 June 2015, [www.welt.de](http://www.welt.de).

<sup>9</sup> C. Dewitz, “Bundeswehr präsent an der NATO-Ostflanke,” *Bundeswehr-Journal*, 15 August 2015, [www.bundeswehr-journal.de](http://www.bundeswehr-journal.de).

<sup>10</sup> “Einige Staaten sperren sich Berlin will Nato-Russland-Rat beleben,” *N-TV*, 31 July 2015, [www.bundeswehr-journal.de](http://www.bundeswehr-journal.de).

<sup>11</sup> A. Hasse, M. Fischer, “Nato stockt Truppen in Osteuropa auf – Bundeswehr beteiligt,” *Südwest Presse*, 30 April 2016.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the interview with Gen. H.M. Domröse, NATO chief of staff at Brunssum; C.B. Schlitz, “Nato-General besorgt über russische Machtdemonstration,” *Welt.de*, 6 February 2016, [www.welt.de](http://www.welt.de).

<sup>13</sup> A. Meiritz, “Steinmeier provoziert Koalitionskrach,” *Spiegel Online*, 19 July 2016, [www.spiegel.de](http://www.spiegel.de).

country as regards NATO's ability to reinforce the Eastern Flank in a crisis scenario requiring the movement of a larger force of troops to the region from the U.S. and Western Europe.

Simultaneously, Germany continued to press for more dialogue with Russia, aiming to broaden the topical scope of the NATO-Russia Council meetings and discussion format to involve military experts. The key German argument was that without an intensified dialogue and practical military cooperation between the Alliance and Russia, the risk of military incidents was unacceptably high given the proximity of Allied and Russian forces on the Eastern Flank. Facing a lack of consensus within the Alliance to go beyond the parameters of the dialogue with Russia agreed at the summit in Warsaw (periodic, focused, meaningful, and based on the principle of reciprocity), Germany initiated in the beginning of 2017 a Structured Dialogue process within the OSCE. Its launch was marked by Germany expressing the hope that it may lead to negotiating with Russia a framework for a new military transparency-building, if not arms control, regime in Europe. In late-2018, the Structured Dialogue seemed stuck due to the deep differences between Russia and the majority of Western states as regards the sources and effects of the security crisis in Europe.

The dual approach involving deterrence and dialogue can also be found in Germany's position on Alliance nuclear policy. In the few remarks on NATO's nuclear deterrence made in the run-up to the Warsaw summit, German officials pointed to Russia's aggressive nuclear rhetoric, but they also emphasised that the Alliance should not respond in a similar manner and that Germany's policy towards nuclear issues remained valid despite the changed security environment.<sup>14</sup> Germany also argued for a continuation of NATO's efforts towards disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, largely reflecting German society's negative attitude towards nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the white paper published in July 2016 by the German Defence Ministry right after the Warsaw summit reaffirmed and underscored Germany's contribution to the Alliance's nuclear mission through its participation in nuclear sharing arrangements.<sup>15</sup>

In line with the decision to increase its involvement in crisis-management operations, Germany also recognized the need for greater NATO engagement on the Southern Flank. But it simultaneously pointed out that the Alliance's role in addressing the threats and challenges from this region (such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, uncontrolled migration, and human trafficking) is limited because a response to these challenges requires, to a large extent, non-military instruments.<sup>16</sup> Notwithstanding that, Germany did not appear to consider collective-defence scenarios in the region to be entirely unrealistic, as shown by the example of Turkey. Between early 2013 and December 2015, two German Patriot air defence batteries were deployed in that country as part of the Allied Operation *Active Fence*, established in response to the threat of potential missile attacks from Syria. After Turkey shot down a Russian SU-24 aircraft in late 2015, German naval assets and personnel attached to Allied AWACS aircraft (a third of the entire crew pool) contributed to NATO activities in support of Turkish air defences.

Germany perceives stronger support for partner states to be among NATO's key tasks on the Southern Flank, especially within the Defence and Related Security Capacity-Building Initiative (DCBI). It also places great importance on closer NATO cooperation with the EU

<sup>14</sup> Remarks by Patricia Flor, the federal commissioner for arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation, at the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference, Brussels, 12 November 2015, [www.iiss.org](http://www.iiss.org).

<sup>15</sup> "The 2016 White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr," German Ministry of Defence, 13 July 2016, pp. 64, 69.

<sup>16</sup> "From Wales to Warsaw—Adapting NATO's Setup," speech by Ambassador Hans-Dieter Lucas, Brussels, 22 February 2016, pp. 4–5, [www.nato.diplo.de](http://www.nato.diplo.de).



and the UN, which it sees as more suited than the Alliance to take actions countering the consequences of regional instability. In February 2016, deviating partially from this approach, Germany joined Turkey and Greece in requesting NATO send ships to the Aegean Sea to assist the Turkish and Greek coast guards and the EU's Frontex agency in countering human traffickers and rescuing migrants in distress. The mission, in which a German unit served as the flagship, was launched under the aegis of NATO because of the political and operational problems posed by cooperation between the EU and non-member Turkey. Germany made a point that similar actions off the Libyan coast should be continued primarily within the EU operation *Sophia (EUNAVFOR MED)*,<sup>17</sup> in which the German contribution included one or two ships. Since 2014, Germany has sought to transform NATO's *Operation Active Endeavour* in the Mediterranean from a counter-terrorism operation into a wider maritime security operation focused on building situational awareness and cooperation with regional partners, what happened at the Warsaw summit with the decision on the launch of the *Operation Sea Guardian*.<sup>18</sup>

In Germany's opinion, NATO was not the right format for the fight against ISIS. The German government was sceptical about requests to use Allied AWACS aircraft for direct support of the international coalition conducting airstrikes against targets in Syria and Iraq.<sup>19</sup> Germany itself joined the U.S.-led coalition actions in Syria with Bundestag consent in December 2015, with a deployment of 1,200 troops. In 2016, Germany's contribution included six Tornado Recce reconnaissance aircraft, an air refuelling aircraft, staff officers, and a frigate that served as an escort for the French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*. Early in the year, Germany increased the force that had been training the Peshmerga (whom Germany supplied with arms and equipment) in Iraq's Kurdistan from 100 to 150 soldiers.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the limit on involvement in *MINUSMA*, the UN stabilisation mission in Mali, was raised from 150 to 650 troops. Simultaneously, some 200 German military personnel participated in the EU training mission *EUTM*, supporting the Malian armed forces in reaching the capacity to provide security on their own. The increased German involvement in Mali was, however, to a large extent a response to French calls of assistance under Art. 42.7 of the Treaty on the EU, which followed the deadly terrorist attacks in Paris, in November 2015.

Germany also has been strongly engaged in NATO's *Resolute Support Mission (RSM)* in Afghanistan, where it has maintained the second-largest contingent (980 personnel) in 2016. This number grew to 1,300 in mid-2018. This should not come as a surprise, given the country was among the top contributors to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, deploying some 5,300 troops at its peak (although with numerous operational caveats), and taking into account the increasing U.S. calls for more German defence spending and operational involvement in the fight against terrorism.

Germany has also steadfastly sought closer cooperation between the EU and NATO, for example, in cybersecurity and countering hybrid threats.<sup>21</sup> Germany declares support for the continuation of the Alliance's open-door policy and it backed Montenegro's accession to

<sup>17</sup> "Obama leaves Europe with promises of security and cooperation," *Deutsche Welle*, 25 April 2016, [www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com).

<sup>18</sup> Address by Europe Minister Michael Roth to the Bundestag, German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 December 2015, [www.auswaertigesamt.de](http://www.auswaertigesamt.de).

<sup>19</sup> "NATO may take on new air surveillance role in IS fight," *Yahoo News*, 19 May 2016.

<sup>20</sup> K. Frymark, J. Gotkowska, "Germany's engagement in the resolution of the Syrian conflict," *OSW Commentary*, 25 January 2016, [www.osw.waw.pl](http://www.osw.waw.pl).

<sup>21</sup> "From Wales to Warsaw ...," *op. cit.*, p. 5.

NATO.<sup>22</sup> It remains critical of a possible Ukrainian bid to join the Alliance and the acceleration of Georgia's membership. Germany points to and stresses the strengthening of partnerships between NATO and these countries, including support for defence-sector reforms.<sup>23</sup>

The deteriorating security situation on NATO's Eastern and Southern Flanks, coupled with major equipment shortages in the German army<sup>24</sup> and, foremost, the harsh criticism of Germany as a top free-rider in NATO by U.S. President Donald Trump, who many times has pointed to a sustained disproportion between the German defence budget and the size of its economy, have gradually led to a halt in cuts in German defence expenditures. In 2015, in current prices and exchange rates, German defence expenditure stood at about \$39 billion, or close to 1.18% of GDP. In 2016, it increased to about \$41.5 billion, and in 2017 (estimated) to almost \$45 billion. Though in relative numbers (constant prices and exchange rate) the increase was significant, 3.4% in 2016 compared to 2015 and as much as nearly 6% in 2017 compared to 2016, it still stood at roughly 1.2% of GDP. The budget was set to stay at around \$45 billion in 2018, but in 2019, rise again to nearly \$50 billion.<sup>25</sup>

In 2016, the Defence Ministry presented a plan to spend some €130 billion (app. \$138 billion) on equipment purchases by 2030. But, even with all these announcements fulfilled, Germany would still be short of reaching the Newport summit target of at least 2% of GDP spent on defence.<sup>26</sup> Yet, in mid-2018, Chancellor Merkel declared that Germany will increase its defence expenditure more steeply to put the 2% of GDP target in reach, though as an intermediate goal it would stop at 1,5% of GDP in 2025.<sup>27</sup> The additional money will be used to modernise the equipment of the Bundeswehr, which has had serious problems with the availability of key capabilities, such as aircraft, helicopters, or submarines, as well as to increase the size of the army from 178,000 to 198,000 by 2023.<sup>28</sup>

Even though Chancellor Merkel and Minister von der Leyen declared the need to live up to the spending pledge agreed by the Allies in Newport, some other politicians question the rationale of using the ratio of defence spending to GDP as the measure of burden-sharing by NATO members.<sup>29</sup> The then leader of SPD, Martin Schulz, emphasised in 2017 that the efficiency of the investments in military capabilities matters more than the absolute numbers and advocated for an increase in this efficiency by means of closer defence cooperation (including the integration of military units) within the Alliance, the EU's common security and defence policy (CSDP), and collaboration in other formats. Again, the contradictory signals coming from

<sup>22</sup> "Promoting the Western Balkans' Euro-Atlantic future," German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 6 May 2015, [www.auswaertiges-amt.de](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de).

<sup>23</sup> C. Hoffmann, "Steinmeier gegen Nato-Mitgliedschaft der Ukraine," *Spiegel Online*, 23 November 2014; "Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem georgischen Ministerpräsidenten Kvirikashvili," German Federal Government, 15 June 2016; "Steinmeier: Germany supports Georgia's European future," 8 December 2014, <http://agenda.ge>.

<sup>24</sup> "Germany's von der Leyen admits major Bundeswehr shortfalls," *Deutsche Welle*, 27 September 2014, [www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com).

<sup>25</sup> All data according to "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2009–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int); "German leader, defense chief vow boost in military spending," *Reuters*, 4 July 2018, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>26</sup> L. Hoffman, "Spending Hike Reflects Regional Trend," *Defense News*, 24 March 2016, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>27</sup> U. von. Krause, "The 2-Percent Objective and the Bundeswehr Discussion about the German Defence Budget," *Security Policy Working Paper*, no. 23/2018, BAKS, [www.baks.bund.de](http://www.baks.bund.de).

<sup>28</sup> "Germany to expand Bundeswehr to almost 200,000 troops," *Deutsche Welle*, 21 February 2017, [www.dw.com](http://www.dw.com).

<sup>29</sup> "Von der Leyen bewertet Nato-Gipfel positiv," *Spiegel Online*, 13 July 2018, [www.spiegel.de](http://www.spiegel.de).



German political elites has not contributed to the credibility of the German approach to burden-sharing as a pivotal issue on the Allied agenda since 2017.

German defence expenditure and the country's overall commitment to NATO stirred controversy again at the July 2018 summit in Brussels. Germany was among the few NATO members whose leaders received special letters from U.S. President Donald Trump pointing out their failure to present a plan for reaching the 2% of GDP defence spending goal by 2024 and calling on them to live up to this commitment. Ahead of the summit, the U.S. president went far in criticising Germany for increasing its energy dependency on Russia by means of the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline and stressing that this move would also result in extra revenues for Russian state-controlled oil and gas companies.<sup>30</sup> Chancellor Merkel's reply left no doubt that U.S.-German relations remain strained. Yet, Germany fully endorsed the Allied decisions taken at the summit, stressing in particular the importance of the NATO Readiness Initiative, operational engagement in Iraq, and the establishment of the new Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) for the Eastern Flank in Ulm.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "Trump lashes Germany over gas pipeline deal, calls it Russia's 'captive'," *Reuters*, 11 July 2018, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>31</sup> "Von der Leyen zieht nach NATO-Gipfel 'stolze Bilanz'," *BR24*, 13 July 2018, [www.br.de](http://www.br.de).

Greece joined NATO in 1952, but its membership has been of a special nature due to its complex historical relationship with Turkey, the unregulated border with that country in the Aegean Sea, and Greek military support for Cyprus. There can be little doubt that NATO membership has mitigated recurring tensions and even military incidents in Greek-Turkish relations and has helped stabilise the security environment in the Alliance's Southern Flank.<sup>1</sup> This continued even after the end of the Cold War.

The period between the NATO summits in Wales and Warsaw has been exceptionally dramatic for Greece's economy, internal affairs, and European policy. During that time, security policy—including adaptation of the Alliance to new threats—took a back seat to such issues as the country's potential bankruptcy and Grexit, public protests, and change of Cabinet. Interest in NATO among Greek political elites and the public was revived only in 2016 with the launch of NATO's new mission in the Aegean, which was tasked with monitoring the movement of boats that may carry irregular immigrants.

Following the Syriza party's success in the elections in January 2015, Greece found itself at the centre of attention of many NATO countries and western analysts because of the inclusion into the Cabinet of several politicians previously known for their fierce criticism of the Alliance and what they called the "imperialistic" United States. The party's foreign policy programme, released several months prior to the election, actually called for a withdrawal of Greece's troops from NATO and EU military missions, followed by leaving the Alliance itself. During the campaign, Syriza spoke about reversing Greece's traditionally close relations with the U.S. and Israel; the party also declared its opposition to the EU sanctions imposed on Russia and criticised the Ukrainian government for tolerating "neo-Nazi abominations."<sup>2</sup> Numerous opinions could then be heard that Russia was using the Greek economic problems—purposely and systematically—to block decision-making at NATO and the EU, weaken Greece's ties with both blocs, and undermine the organisations.<sup>3</sup>

Even though the Syriza government abandoned its campaign rhetoric after coming to power—one of the first moves by the new defence minister was to assure the NATO partners that his country would continue to have a political and military presence in the Alliance<sup>4</sup>—Greece's attitude to the new security environment on NATO's Eastern Flank is clearly influenced by widespread sympathy towards Russia among both the general public and the elites. Greeks have embraced the concept of keeping very good bilateral relations with Russia, seen as a close country historically and culturally (the Orthodox faith providing the strongest bond).<sup>5</sup> As proof of this, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras visited Moscow in April 2015 and the idea that Greece had

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<sup>1</sup> From spring 2017 to spring 2018, there was a series of dangerous incidents between the air forces of Greece and Turkey. For more, see: H. Smith, "Tensions flare as Greece tells Turkey it is ready to answer any provocation," *The Guardian*, 27 March 2017; P. Kingsley, "Tiny Islands Make for Big Tensions," *The New York Times*, 21 April 2018.

<sup>2</sup> See: J.G. Neuger, E. Chrepa, "Syriza Massages Foreign Policy Goals as It Smells Power," Bloomberg, 15 January 2015, [www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com).

<sup>3</sup> See also, respectively: G. Witte, K. Demirjian, "Moscow-Friendly Greek Government Could Be a Torment to E.U.," *The Washington Post*, 30 January 2015; "A Semi-Guided Missile: Greece and Geopolitics," *The Economist*, 28 February 2015; R. Gramer, R. Rizzo, "5 Reasons NATO Fears a Grexit," *Politico Europe*, 14 July 2015, [www.politico.eu](http://www.politico.eu).

<sup>4</sup> "Greek Defense Minister Reassures NATO over Russia Ties," AFP, 4 February 2015.

<sup>5</sup> "Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Venizelos' Statement on Ukraine, on the Margins of the Meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, 1 April 2014, [ww.mfa.gr/en](http://ww.mfa.gr/en).

very good relations with Russia (even during the crisis in West–Russia contacts) was being sold as an immediate “success” of Syriza foreign policy and alternative to Greece’s “dependence” on Western Europe and the U.S.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding Greece’s internal volatility and foreign-policy indecisiveness, the country shares certain similarities with Bulgaria when it comes to their positions within NATO. This is because the Greek Armed Forces use significant amounts of Russian-made hardware, including BWP-1 armoured vehicles, anti-aircraft systems, and short-range missiles. Here, too, the Syriza government continued the previous line of Greek-Russian collaboration. In early 2016, the Greek parliament finally ratified a bilateral agreement on military cooperation with Russia (signed in 2013).<sup>7</sup>

For these reasons, and also because of the large Greek minority (second-largest minority after Russians) living in Mariupol in eastern Ukraine, the Russia-Ukraine conflict put Greek diplomacy in a difficult position. The Greek response was confined to a general call for the conflict to be speedily resolved and fighting discontinued. At the same time, the political and economic crisis in Greece had the effect of considerably limiting the country’s activity and visibility within NATO. At the Newport summit, Greece did not attempt to block Allied decisions on launching the Readiness Action Plan (RAP). Greece also demonstrated symbolic solidarity with the Allies by announcing in December 2014 its readiness to send an officer to the Multinational Corps North-East Headquarters (MNC NE HQ) and, in March 2015, its support with financial and expert resources for the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD COE) in Tallinn.<sup>8</sup> It also delegated officers to NFIU in Romania. The Greek government, however, did not conceal its scepticism of calls for enhanced forward presence on NATO’s Eastern Flank, but finally supported it in Warsaw. However, during the summit, some confusion accompanied the Greek prime minister’s comments on NATO’s need to “avoid the isolation of Russia.”<sup>9</sup>

Greece’s strategic perception of Russia also underpinned its position on the resumption of the NATO-Russia dialogue. First presented in 2009 in the aftermath of the Russia-Georgia conflict, this position remained unchanged after 2014. Successive Greek Cabinets were fairly consistent in their appeals for the continuation of a top-level dialogue with Russia while simultaneously refraining from sending sophisticated equipment to Ukraine.<sup>10</sup> Even though it is officially in favour of NATO’s open-door policy, Greece takes a selective approach to this question, including in the Balkans context. In the past, Greece backed all successive rounds of NATO enlargement, including for Croatia, Slovenia and Albania. But after the Russia-Ukraine conflict broke out, its position on Ukrainian and Georgian integration with the Alliance turned sceptical, with Greece only wanting Georgia’s status to be slightly raised (in lieu of an invitation).

<sup>6</sup> “Greece: Athens-Moscow Upgrade Need Not Worry West,” *Oxford Research Daily Brief*, 9 April 2015, <https://dailybrief.oxan.com>.

<sup>7</sup> See: “Rosyjskie rakiety S-300 dla Grecji,” *Defense24*, 17 April 2015, [www.defense24.pl](http://www.defense24.pl); “Rosyjskie dostawy wojskowe dla Grecji,” *Defense24*, 14 January 2016, [www.defense24.pl](http://www.defense24.pl).

<sup>8</sup> See also: “Szczecin: pięć nowych państw w korpusie wielonarodowym NATO,” PAP, 15 December 2014; “Finland, Greece, Turkey Join NATO Cyber Defense Centre in Tallinn,” *Estonian Public Broadcasting*, 11 March 2015.

<sup>9</sup> On the margins of the summit in Warsaw, the Greek delegation organised a series of bilateral meetings with the president of the U.S., the minister of defence of Norway, and the ministries of foreign affairs of Albania, FYROM, and Estonia. Comments by Alexis Tsipras during the official dinner met with a reaction by President Barack Obama. Compare S. Jones, “NATO show of unity masks domestic divisions,” *The Financial Times Online*, 10 July 2016, and A. Dimatris, “Tsipras’ NATO ‘Nyet’,” *The National Herald*, 11 July 2016.

<sup>10</sup> See also: M. Birnbaum, “NATO Countries Wary of using Force to Defend against Russia,” *The Washington Post*, 10 June 2015.

On the other hand, the country became a staunch promoter of Montenegro's accession.<sup>11</sup> Here, the Greek position was significant because it went against the expectations of Russia, which not only opposed the open-door policy as such but also verbally criticised the particular plan for Montenegro's integration with NATO. Greece for some time stuck to its overt opposition to letting Macedonia into the Alliance, citing as it did in 2008 a historical dispute over that country's name. The name used officially by the Alliance is the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. However, in June 2018, a bilateral agreement on this issue was reached, according to which the official name "North Macedonia" and the "Armed Forces of North Macedonia" will be used. The agreement opened the way for NATO to invite Macedonia to begin membership talks during the 2018 Brussels summit.

Despite Greece's longstanding economic problems, successive governments did not cut the defence budget—\$5.41 billion in 2014 and \$5.66 billion in 2015 (2.2% and 2.31% of GDP, respectively). This level was maintained in 2016, with \$5.88 billion, and in 2017, with an estimated \$5.84 billion (i.e., 2.41% and 2.36% of GDP, respectively)<sup>12</sup>—and politicians seem to be unwilling to make reductions in the future, at least until 2020. Greece also intends to go on with modernising equipment for the army (MLRS M270 launchers), air force (new equipment for 166 F-16C/D aircraft) and navy (refitting S-70B helicopters and P-3B patrol aircraft). During the economic crisis, investments in new equipment and armaments were scaled down but high spending on military personnel has continued. Greece has considerable military potential in all services of its armed forces (141,000 troops in total).<sup>13</sup> In 2015, the country opted to buy 10 second-hand CH-47D transport helicopters.<sup>14</sup> There can be no doubt, though, that the economic problems have affected Greece's activities within NATO military missions. While continuing to have one of the largest contingents in the KFOR mission (a 112-strong company), Greece made only a very limited contribution compared to the size of its armed forces to the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan (four military advisers). Compared to the 2014–2017 period, there was also a reduction in Greece's contribution to NATO's naval missions (especially *Active Endeavour*). In part, that reflected the growing Aegean Sea requirements in connection with the mass-migration crisis. Jointly with Italy, Greece continued to patrol the airspace of Albania.

Despite the security environment changes on the Alliance's Eastern Flank, Greece has not made any major revision of its previously developed defence and security policy concept. The Ministry of Defence document of late 2014 emphasises Greece's geographical location at the juncture of the Middle East and the Balkans, and of the Mediterranean and Black Sea, and it gives priority to supranational threats (international terrorism, uncontrolled migration, organised crime, cyberattacks, energy security, and piracy).<sup>15</sup> In line with these declarations, Greece has since 2014 been expressing growing interest in security on NATO's Southern Flank but it did not come up with any public initiative to bolster its security and respond to the

<sup>11</sup> "Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Venizelos' Statement on NATO Enlargement Policy," Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, 25 June 2014, [www.mfa.gr/en](http://www.mfa.gr/en).

<sup>12</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>13</sup> See: *The Military Balance 2018*, IISS/Routledge, 2018, pp. 111–114. Greece also has compulsory military service for men.

<sup>14</sup> See also: "188 mln dolarów na wsparcie greckich F-16," *Defence24*, 20 November 2014, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl); Th.L. Varlmas, "Greece Funds CH-47D Buy," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 30 November 2014; *idem*, "Greece Request P-3 Orion MPA Modernisation," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 9 October 2014.

<sup>15</sup> See also: Ministry of National Defence, *White Paper*, Athens, 2014, especially pp. 22–31. The document was produced in 2014, but no changes were made in the meantime to the government paper "Greek National Defence Policy" of March 2011.



successes of ISIS. The theme of military operations against that organisation was shunned by successive Greek Cabinets, which did not come up with any active support for the “coalition of the willing.” The Syriza government also openly opposed any direct commitment of NATO resources to fighting ISIS in Syria, suggesting that the Alliance “doesn’t have the best image in the Arab world.”<sup>16</sup> The main threat, the Syriza government argued, is uncontrolled migration. Greece complained to the EU that in 2015 it found itself within a “triangle of instability” formed by three simultaneously escalating conflicts in Ukraine, North Africa, and the Middle East.<sup>17</sup> The Greek government argued that the uncontrolled refugee flow from Africa and the Middle East had turned into an unprecedented global issue and was no longer a problem just for Greece and the Balkans.<sup>18</sup>

As it is directly affected by mass migration, Greece, along with Turkey, became the main advocate for a new NATO naval mission in the Aegean Sea. In the run-up to the Warsaw summit, in February 2016, NATO took the decision to deploy ships in the Aegean. Part of NATO Maritime Group-2 (SNMG-2), they were tasked to provide reconnaissance and monitoring and thereby support Greek and Turkish coast guard forces. While the NATO presence in the Aegean Sea was not designed to intercept migrant boats, it was meant to deter human traffickers from the mass use of maritime people-smuggling routes.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently, Greece also supported the transformation of the *Active Endeavour Operation* into *Operation Sea Guardian*, which was launched in November 2016 with a broader mandate to support the naval mission of the EU agency FRONTEX (*EUNAVFOR MED Sophia*). Greek ships and submarines regularly contributed to *Operation Sea Guardian*.<sup>20</sup> Yet, increased tensions with Turkey followed some incidents involving Greek and Turkish ships in the area of operation.<sup>21</sup> The relations were further strained when Turkish soldiers applied for asylum in Greece following the attempted coup in 2016 and then again by the detention of two Greek soldiers by Turkey. Greek and Turkish leaders tried to defuse tensions during the meeting on the sidelines of 2018 NATO Brussels Summit.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See: “Highlights of Foreign Minister Kotzias’ Intervention during the Debate Regarding a Proposal from Certain Member States of the North Atlantic Alliance for the Involvement of NATO in Combating ISIS in Syria,” Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, 1 December 2015, [www.mfa.gr](http://www.mfa.gr).

<sup>17</sup> See: “Foreign Minister Kotzias’ Intervention at the EU Foreign Affairs Council’s Extraordinary Meeting on Ukraine,” Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, 30 January 2015, [www.mfa.gr](http://www.mfa.gr).

<sup>18</sup> See: “Foreign Minister Kotzias’ Speech in Parliament during the Debate on the Budget for 2016,” Hellenic Republic MFA, [www.mfa.gr](http://www.mfa.gr).

<sup>19</sup> For more about the context and details of the mission, see: J. Barnes, “NATO, Turkey, Greece Reach Agreement on Migrant Monitoring,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 6 March 2016; T. Brooks, “NATO Agrees Details of Aegean Sea Migration Crisis Mission,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 24 February 2016; G. Witte, “NATO Ships to Combat Migrant-Smuggling Networks in the Aegean Sea,” *The Washington Post*, 12 February 2016.

<sup>20</sup> “NATO’s Operation Sea Guardian ‘Shape Waters’ of Western and Central Mediterranean,” *NATO Maritime Command Communique*, 6 March 2018, [www.mc.nato.int](http://www.mc.nato.int).

<sup>21</sup> “Turkish boat’s collision with Greek warship sparks fears of ‘hot incident’,” *The Guardian*, 4 May 2018, [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com).

<sup>22</sup> K. Kolasa-Sikiaridi, “Greek PM Tsipras from Brussels: ‘Difficult Meeting with Erdogan’,” *Greek Reporter*, 12 July 2018, [www.greekreporter.com](http://www.greekreporter.com).



Having joined NATO in 1999, during the first round of enlargement to the east, Hungary regards the Alliance's collective defence guarantees as the foundation of its security policy.<sup>1</sup> Alongside NATO membership, the main pillar of Hungarian independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security has been the transatlantic bond. But following the constitutional reforms launched by Victor Orbán's cabinet and the announcement that Hungary would steer clear of the liberal democratic model, major tensions emerged in bilateral relations. The U.S. suspended the right of entry to its territory for six Hungarian government officials, whose names have not been made public.

The government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (in office since 2010) tries not to point at Russia as a potential threat to Europe or a direct threat to the country. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea, Hungary clearly downplayed the impact of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine on the security of Central and Eastern Europe and the whole rule-based security order. It often pointed to the weakness of the Ukrainian state, and historical issues, as factors that should be taken into consideration when assessing the causes of the conflict. Also, in May 2014, Hungary took up the question of the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathian Ukraine, demanding special rights for them.<sup>2</sup> In 2015, Hungary played host to Russian President Vladimir Putin, becoming the second EU Member State (after Austria) to receive him in the post-Crimea period. Orbán's reciprocal visit in February 2016 confirmed that the importance of Russian-Hungarian relations transcends energy cooperation (such as the Paks nuclear power plant construction and dependence on gas imports), to which it has often been reduced.<sup>3</sup>

Still, Hungary has committed itself to projects aimed at demonstrating solidarity with NATO members bordering Russia. In 2014, 140 Hungarian troops took part in the *Iron Sword* exercise in Lithuania and stayed there for several months in a joint battalion formed together with Lithuanian and U.S. personnel. In 2015, four Hungarian JAS-39 Gripen combat aircraft served a four-month tour of duty with the Baltic Air Policing mission (another tour was planned for 2019). With a view to reinforcing Alliance's ability to deploy troops to the Eastern Flank countries, Hungary also sent officers to NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) in Estonia and Lithuania. Hungary did not initially ask NATO to form such a unit on its territory, but defence minister Csaba Hende later made such a request (in February 2015). He said that the NFIU would increase Hungary's security while not targeting any state and not violating, either in legal or political terms, the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997.<sup>4</sup> NFIU Hungary was activated in September 2016.

Giving the country's geographical position, Hungary perceives West Balkan stability as key to its security, which has led it to support NATO's open-door policy, seen as a means of bolstering the stability of Europe. Hungarian officials have spoken openly about inviting Macedonia and Georgia to join the Alliance. In their opinion, Georgia is prepared to move to a higher level of collaboration.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Hungary's National Security Strategy 2012," Hungarian Government, <http://2010-2014.kormany.hu>.

<sup>2</sup> A. Sądecki, "Węgry wobec konfliktu ukraińsko-rosyjskiego," *Analizy OSW*, 21 May 2014, [www.osw.waw.pl](http://www.osw.waw.pl).

<sup>3</sup> A. Sądecki, "Orbán w Moskwie: nie tylko energetyka," *Analizy OSW*, 24 February 2016, [www.osw.waw.pl](http://www.osw.waw.pl).

<sup>4</sup> "Hungary to set up 40 strong NATO integration unit in Szekesfehervar," *Hungary Today*, 6 February 2015, <http://hungarytoday.hu>.

<sup>5</sup> "NATO should press ahead with enlargement: Hungarian, Slovak FM's," *Ukraine Today*, 25 February 2016, <http://uatoday.tv>.

Since the mass migration from the Middle East began reaching Hungary's borders in the summer and autumn of 2015, the country has taken a vital interest in fostering NATO and EU capability to stabilise the Southern Flank. The Hungarian authorities decided to deploy the army at the borders and to build a fence on the 170-kilometer stretch of the border with Serbia. They also agreed to increase its contribution to the international coalition against ISIS from 150 to 200 military personnel and supported NATO joining the coalition.<sup>6</sup>

The Hungarian government assessed the results of the NATO summit in Warsaw positively. Orbán highlighted the Alliance's decision to use its naval assets and support the EU in the protection of borders against illegal immigration.<sup>7</sup>

Hungary did not assign troops to the multinational battalions on the Eastern Flank, which are supposed to strengthen NATO's deterrence. Its contribution to the security of the region is based on the Visegrad Group (V4) joint initiative, which is to reassure the Baltic States. Since 2016, Hungary has deployed a company for exercises in the region for three months every year.

Orbán emphasised that NATO's decision to enhance its presence on the Eastern Flank, including with newly established battalion-size battlegroups and permanent NFIUs, does not violate the NATO-Russia Founding Act. He also stressed that his country supported the integration of Ukraine with Euro-Atlantic security structures, but this is not on the agenda due to a lack of consensus among the Allies. Nevertheless, after the adoption by Ukraine in 2017 of a new law on education that limits the right of minorities to learn in their national language, Hungary began blocking NATO-Ukraine meetings at the level of ministers. It also blocked a NATO-Ukraine Commission meeting at the level of heads of states and governments at the NATO Brussels summit in July 2018. Instead, NATO organised a meeting with the leaders of Ukraine and Georgia at the same time.

Hungary's defence spending is among the lowest in the Alliance, having dropped from 1.2% of GDP (almost \$1.7 billion) in 2008 to less than 0.9% of GDP (\$1.2 billion) in 2014.<sup>8</sup> The government has announced that it will raise this to 1.4% by 2022 and reach the 2% target in 2026, two years after the target date agreed by NATO members at the Newport summit.<sup>9</sup> Closer to the 2018 Brussels summit, the Hungarian authorities started to assure its partners that the target would be met by 2024.<sup>10</sup> In real terms, spending for 2017 was planned to increase from \$1.5 billion to \$1.6 billion.<sup>11</sup>

Hungary is ready to make 1,000 troops available for crisis-response missions at any one time, and this level was reached in 2016 (450 in the EU Battle Group, 361 in KFOR, 110 in Iraq, 137 in the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan, and 80 in Baltic Air Policing). This indicates that with the current size of its troop level and funding, Hungary will not be able to increase the capabilities of NATO, the EU, and coalitions of the willing to respond to threats from different directions.

<sup>6</sup> "Hungary supports NATO joining Global Coalition to Counter ISIS," Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 31 March 2017, [www.kormany.hu](http://www.kormany.hu).

<sup>7</sup> "Hungary Hails NATO Decision to Mobilise Capabilities against Illegal Migration," *Hungary Today*, 11 July 2016, <http://hungarytoday.hu>.

<sup>8</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2008–2015)," [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>9</sup> "NATO paves way for Warsaw summit," Ministry of Defence of Hungary, 16 June 2016, [www.kormany.hu](http://www.kormany.hu).

<sup>10</sup> "Hungary supports NATO..." *op. cit.*; "The Hungarian Defence Forces will be set on a path of growth," Ministry of Defence of Hungary, 23 February 2018, [www.kormany.hu](http://www.kormany.hu).

<sup>11</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

Hungary endorsed the decisions agreed at the 2018 NATO summit in Brussels with a Joint Statement of the Visegrád Group Ministers of Defence.<sup>12</sup> All countries reaffirmed their commitment to increase defence spending to 2% GDP by 2024, supported NATO enhanced forward presence, out-of-area missions, and closer cooperation with the EU. They also acknowledged the need to improve the military readiness of the Alliance through the implementation of the new NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI).

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<sup>12</sup> “V4 Defence Ministers Adopted a Joint Statement on the Brussels NATO Summit,” Visegrad Group, 13 July 2018, [www.visegradgropup.eu](http://www.visegradgropup.eu).

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# ICELAND

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A NATO founding member, Iceland's approach to key items on the Alliance's agenda is determined by its geographical location and a lack of regular armed forces. The smallest member state of the Alliance, both in territory and population, Iceland has only a 200-strong Coast Guard and a small Crisis Response Unit, with a limited number of military policy-related functions taken up by the Defence Agency at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The budget for this is 2% of GDP, but in absolute terms is a mere \$40 million.<sup>1</sup>

Iceland's security policy is based on its links with NATO and the United States (under a bilateral agreement from 1951). In recent years, Reykjavik has been speaking about a third priority, namely security and defence cooperation with Nordic countries within NORDEFSCO.<sup>2</sup> In summer 2007, following the pull-out a year earlier of a U.S. Air Force unit that had been permanently stationed at the Keflavik base, NATO decided to launch Allied air patrols over Iceland—the Icelandic Air Policing (IAP) mission. The mission had been carried out as three deployments of 2–3 weeks a year since 2008. In 2014, in reaction to an increase in Russian military activity near the Alliance's borders, the duration of the IAP rotations was extended to 7–9 weeks.<sup>3</sup> A decision was also taken (within the bilateral relationship with the U.S.) to improve the hangars and runway at Keflavik airport to host more Allied fighter jets and P-8 maritime patrol aircraft equipped with an anti-submarine warfare weapon system.<sup>4</sup>

Iceland's government declared its full support for the Wales and Warsaw summit decisions. The main elements of NATO adaptation are not being contested in Iceland, which, like other Allies, is watching the changes in the security environment with concern and has perceived the expansion of ISIS and Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea as having major consequences for all NATO member states.<sup>5</sup> Iceland expressed concerns about the prospect of deterioration in security for the Nordic and Baltic States.<sup>6</sup> It also believes the adverse changes set off by Crimea's annexation have exerted a lasting influence on the country's national security and regional situation.<sup>7</sup> The same considerations underpin Iceland's declaration of full support for NATO's enhanced presence on the territory of the Alliance's Eastern Flank member states.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Military Balance 2018*, IISS/Routledge, 2018, p. 116. The legislation and resolutions passed by the Icelandic parliament and the government's plans of 2014–2016 provide for keeping this figure level in later years, in line with the Wales Summit decisions. See: "Foreign Minister's Report to Althingi, the Parliament of Iceland," Reykjavík, 17 March 2016, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> "Minister for Foreign Affairs Report on Foreign and International Affairs," Reykjavík, 19 March 2015, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Contributing to the mission's previous rotations were air force and ground support contingents from Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal, and the United States. In the U.S.-manned rotation of April 2016, the previous number of six F-15 fighter jets was increased to 12. See also: G. Jennings, "USAF F-15C Fighters Arrive in Iceland," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 5 April 2016.

<sup>4</sup> See: "NATO: GIUK Gap Will Prompt Anti-Sub Procurements," *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief Service*, 29 February 2016. The Icelandic government in 2016 denied Russian media reports about plans to restore permanent USAF and U.S. Navy bases at Keflavik; however, new bilateral documents suggest further strengthening of cooperation with the United States—see: "Joint Declaration between the Department of Defense of the United States of America and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Iceland," 29 June 2016, [www.mfa.is](http://www.mfa.is); N. Montgomery, "No permanent basing for Navy sub hunters in Iceland despite construction projects," *Stars and Stripes*, 9 January 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Unlike in many other NATO member states, the level of the real terrorism threat in Iceland can be described as minute.

<sup>6</sup> See: "Minister for Foreign Affairs Report...", *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> "Foreign Minister's Report...", *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> See: "Minister Sveinsson Meets with NATO Secretary General," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland, 17 April 2015, [www.mfa.is](http://www.mfa.is).

Also, Iceland has backed NATO's open-door policy for countries that share common values and meet membership criteria. In declaring its full support for the Newport summit decisions on the improvement of the Alliance's operational capabilities (Readiness Action Plan), Iceland believes that NATO must have credible defence capabilities to guard its security and transatlantic values.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the country is backing all efforts to enhance NATO's readiness for collective, solidarity-driven defence of the treaty area and the individual member states of the Alliance.<sup>10</sup> These firm declarations can be interpreted as Iceland's support for the U.S. military presence in Europe, strengthening of the NATO Response Force with its VJTF ("spearhead") component, and for further enhancement of the Alliance's missile defence and cyberdefence capabilities. Similar to Denmark and Norway, the government of Iceland supported the decisions to strengthen NATO's forward presence on the Eastern Flank, sending one expert for strategic communications to the battalion-size battlegroup in Estonia. Iceland has also made known its backing for NATO's commitment to non-military aspects of European and global security (non-proliferation, arms control, disarmament).<sup>11</sup> These dimensions of NATO activity were stressed at the 2018 Summit in Brussels by Iceland's prime minister Katrin Jakobsdottir, who pointed to cybersecurity as a special area of concern for the country. Yet, Iceland confirmed it would be increasing its defence expenditure.<sup>12</sup>

Because of limited human and financial resources, Iceland is not able to make a substantial contribution to key NATO missions; for example, its support for the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan is two medical experts and limited financial assistance to the Kabul government.<sup>13</sup>

A special role in Icelandic security policy is given to the Arctic, an area in which Reykjavik believes all Nordic countries—both NATO members and neutral states—should tighten political cooperation.<sup>14</sup> Given Russia's increased assertiveness in the Far North, this may translate into stronger support from Iceland for increasing NATO's focus on the region, including intensified search-and-rescue exercises and patrols along major sea routes and improved anti-submarine warfare capabilities.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "Minister for Foreign Affairs Report...", *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> See: "Iceland and NATO," an MFA of Iceland release, [www.mfa.is/foreign-policy/security/iceland-nato](http://www.mfa.is/foreign-policy/security/iceland-nato).

<sup>12</sup> *A Conversation with Katrin Jakobsdottir: NATO Engages 2018*, Atlantic Council, 13 July 2018, [www.atlanticcouncil.org](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org).

<sup>13</sup> See: "The Secretary General's Annual Report 2017," NATO, 2018, p. 102.

<sup>14</sup> See also: "Foreign Minister's Report..." *op. cit.*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>15</sup> For more about NATO's expected tasks in the Far North and collaboration with the armed forces of Sweden and Finland, see: "Arctic: Russia Tensions May Hinder Governance," *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief Service*, 12 February 2016. Also see about GUIK issues in bilateral Iceland-US cooperation in G. Jennings, "US and Iceland reaffirm defence cooperation with new agreement," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 29 June 2016, and "How the Warsaw NATO summit altered Arctic security," UPI, 19 July 2016.



A founding member of NATO, Italy plays an important role on the Southern Flank because of its considerable military potential, perceptible contribution to the enhancement of the Alliance's capabilities to date, the presence on its territory of Allied infrastructure that can be used for crisis-management missions, and Italy's engagement in many such operations in the past, not only within NATO but also as part of the EU and the United Nations.<sup>1</sup> Italy perceives the Alliance as both a mechanism for collective defence and a pillar of transatlantic relations, fostering the bond between the United States and Canada on the one hand and Europe on the other. The country has traditionally supported expansion of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), including in its military dimension. Consequently, Italy has great influence on debates about the directions of the Alliance's adaptation, including the future of the NATO-Russia relationship.

The strongest factors underpinning Italy's policy towards Russia is the perception of an absence of a direct threat and pro-Russia sympathies among the Italian political elites, including the communists, the Northern League, and the new Five Star Movement. Also emerging as part of this picture is an advanced level of economic and energy cooperation with Russia, which supplies about 30% of the Italian natural gas demand. Consequently, Italy is in the group of countries whose attitude towards the EU's sanctions against Russia is one of reluctance.<sup>2</sup> When Prime Minister Matteo Renzi visited Moscow in March 2015, it did not escape media attention that he was the first leader of an EU Member State to pay an official visit to Russian President Vladimir Putin after the annexation of Crimea.<sup>3</sup> Within NATO, Italy is in favour of reinforcing capabilities to respond to various kinds of threats, including from Russia. At the same time, though, the Italian minister of defence spoke of the need to maintain dialogue with that country, including on Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, and relations with Iran.<sup>4</sup>

In Italy's perception of threats, the dominant theme is the Southern Flank, which Italian strategy documents interpret in a broad sense as encompassing North Africa, the Sahel, the Levant, the Persian Gulf, and the Horn of Africa. It is in this broad area that the main threats to Italy (political instability, international terrorism, organised crime, and irregular migration) originate. These are interlinked developments that only add to the terrorist threat to Italy and the other NATO members and EU Member States. The 2015 white paper prepared by the Italian Ministry of Defence did not note any traditionally understood military threat on the Southern Flank.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, though, Italian military planners expected an increase in threats from non-state hybrid actors, and resulting challenges for the armed forces (including the need to intervene).<sup>6</sup> This approach to threats and challenges strongly affects Italy's less-intense interest in other NATO activities and gave rise to calls for restoration of the Alliance's dialogue with Russia, seen as a potential partner along the Southern Flank.

And yet, Italy has backed the Newport summit decisions, including the package for Eastern Flank Allies. As part of the Allied effort to enhance Baltic Air Policing, Italy took command of

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, detailed data in: *The Military Balance 2018*, IISS/Routledge, 2018, pp. 118–124.

<sup>2</sup> "Italy, Hungary say no automatic renewal of Russia sanctions," Reuters, 14 March 2016, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>3</sup> "Italy's Prime Minister Renzi Meets Putin in Moscow," *Wall Street Journal*, 5 March 2015, [www.wsj.com/articles/italys-prime-minister-renzi-meets-putin-in-moscow-1425576848](http://www.wsj.com/articles/italys-prime-minister-renzi-meets-putin-in-moscow-1425576848).

<sup>4</sup> "Pinotti ai paesi Nato: Il dialogo con la Russia possibile via d'uscita," *La Repubblica*, 14 February 2016, [www.repubblica.it](http://www.repubblica.it).

<sup>5</sup> See: Ministry of Defence, "White Paper for International Security and Defence," Rome, July 2015, pp. 27–31.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

the mission for the first four months of 2015, deploying four Typhoon aircraft, and in the next four months it acted as a supporting member. Italy agreed to play the role of a framework nation, providing the land force command and main battle component to the Very High Readiness Task Force (VJTF), on standby in 2018. It also sent officers to the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) in Lithuania and Poland. As part of the effort to test the readiness and degree of integration of the NATO Response Force (NRF) in the 2016 rotation, Italy (together with Spain and Portugal) was the main organiser of the 2015 exercise *Trident Juncture*, the Alliance's largest war game since 2002 and before the exercises planned to be held in Norway in autumn 2018.

At the Newport summit in 2014 Italy backed the call to raise defence spending, but the country's declaration about aiming to spend 2% of GDP within a decade is not quite credible. The plans for modernisation of the armed forces adopted by the previous government assume a further reduction from the current level of 190,000 to 150,000 soldiers in 2024. In 2014, Italy allocated \$22.13 billion for defence (or 1.08% of GDP), in 2015, \$20.84 (1.01% of GDP), in 2016, \$23.32 billion (1.12% of GDP), and expenditure in 2017 is estimated at \$23.71 billion (i.e., again at 1.12% of GDP).<sup>7</sup> This is a continuation of the trend initiated in 2006 and has the effect of reducing the size of the armed forces, carried out already from 2011 until 2017. In economic forecasts, it is assumed that Italy's defence budget will still amount to 1.12% of GDP in 2018–2019. At the same time, however, important purchases are planned by 2022 and 2025, mainly for the needs of the Air Force and Army Aviation. The defence ministry would like to find funds for, among others, the next tranche of Typhoon multirole aircraft (\$2 billion), 100 F-35 aircraft (\$10 billion), 60 TTH NH-90 helicopters (\$4 billion), and possibly also 16–20 CH-47F helicopters, a FREMM frigate, and 381 VBM combat vehicles.<sup>8</sup>

Italy's credibility within the Alliance rests not only on its military potential, but also on the country's contribution to NATO infrastructure and to the development and maintenance of joint fleets of AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System), strategic transport (C-17) and AGS (Alliance Ground Surveillance) aircraft. As part of the AGS system, NATO reconnaissance drones will be stationed at the Italian base Sigonella. Also, Italy is one of a handful of NATO members that can exercise command of Allied land, sea and air operations. The country is a regular contributor to all NATO Air Policing missions (carried out in Albania, Bulgaria, Iceland, Slovenia and the Baltic States), and it hosts the Allied Joint Force Command Naples, NATO Rapid Deployable Corps Italy at Solbiate Olona, and the Deployable Air Command and Control Centre (DACCC) at Poggio Renatico.

Italy's position within NATO receives an additional boost from its close cooperation with the United States. The country is home to three U.S. military bases of key importance for the Alliance's Southern Flank: the United States Sixth Fleet is headquartered in Naples, a USAF fighter wing is stationed at Aviano, and most of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade is deployed at Vicenza (a total of more than 11,000 troops). Italy is also one of the five European NATO members where, as part of NATO nuclear sharing, U.S. B61 nuclear bombs are stockpiled—with the Italian government, as before, avoiding public pronouncements on any hypothetical revision of the Alliance's nuclear doctrine.

But the importance of Italy in Allied debates held in the lead-up to the Warsaw summit was determined largely by its political and military commitment to NATO's response to threats originating on the Southern Flank and outside the Euro-Atlantic area. In 2017, Italian troops and

<sup>7</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>8</sup> For details, see: "Italy," *Jane's Navigating the International Markets*, May 2018.

military police (Carabinieri) contributed considerably to the NATO *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan (more than 1,000 personnel) and KFOR in Kosovo (542), in addition to providing the core force of the UN mission in Lebanon (1,077), UNIFIL. Since the autumn of 2014, Italy has been engaged in the coalition against ISIS, first sending 120 personnel to Iraq and then in 2017, expanding its forces to 1,220 soldiers and Carabinieri). Italian-trained units of Iraqi police were used to take control of the town of Ramadi after its liberation from the forces of ISIS. As part of this effort, Italy also sent an aircraft unit to Kuwait (four IDS Tornado multipurpose aircraft, two MQ-9 Reaper armed drones and one KC-767 tanker) accompanied by 280 soldiers. The Italian navy has, since 2003, been engaged in NATO's *Active Endeavour* operation in the Mediterranean and, since 2009, in *Operation Ocean Shield* off the coasts of Somalia and other Horn of Africa countries (usually deploying one frigate in each mission).<sup>9</sup> Before the NATO Warsaw summit, Italy was expected to request closer coordination between these two operations, on the one hand, and, on the other, the EU missions present in the region (EUTM in Somalia, a training mission, and *Atalanta*, a maritime operation). Such an arrangement is seen by Italian experts as the optimal model of EU-NATO cooperation.<sup>10</sup>

Italy is among those NATO members particularly interested in the Alliance's contribution to the stabilisation effort in Libya, reflecting the direct threat posed by an uncontrolled flow of migrants, 350,000 of whom have since 2014 fled to Italy via Lampedusa and Sicily, mostly from Libya and other African countries. In 2013, Italy launched the *Mare Nostrum* operation, intended to bolster the control of coastal waters, and since the beginning of the mounting crisis it has appealed for international support to handle the massive migrant traffic by sea routes, including from Libya and Syria.<sup>11</sup> Only in June 2015 did the European Union begin a maritime search and rescue mission, EUNAVFOR MED *Sophia*. And Italy welcomed the establishment of NATO's maritime presence in the Aegean, aimed at enhancing the capability to monitor and control sea routes used by human smugglers. At the Warsaw summit, Italy sought an Allied decision on transforming *Operation Active Endeavour* into the naval mission *Operation Sea Guardian*, targeting human trafficking in the Mediterranean off the coasts of Libya and Italy (along the lines of the Aegean mission).<sup>12</sup>

In addition to bringing irregular migration under control, the Italian government's priority is to stop the expansion of ISIS in Libya, a country engulfed by chaos and plagued by regional divisions. A consolidation of extremist forces there could quickly translate into an increase in terrorist threats in Italy itself, and there is also the question of energy security, Libya being a major supplier of energy resources to Italy.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, the Italian government since 2016 was ready to back the establishment of a NATO training mission for forces loyal to the national unity government in Libya.<sup>14</sup> Italy has already deployed a small special forces unit to Libya. It also declared support for American airstrikes against ISIS in Libya and in early 2016 it made its Sigonella base in Sicily available to U.S. missions using unmanned systems.

Italy will remain one of the NATO members setting the tone of discussions about engagement in Afghanistan, which reflects its substantial contribution to that country's

<sup>9</sup> Data cited from: "Military Balance...", *op. cit.*, p. 121–122.

<sup>10</sup> See recommendations by: F. Monaco, A. Scalia, *NATO towards Warsaw 2016 Summit: Challenges and Opportunities*, Documenti IAI, December 2015, pp. 5–6.

<sup>11</sup> Ministero della Difesa, [www.difesa.it/Primo\\_Piano/Pagine/20160210Pinotti\\_ministeriale\\_nato.aspx](http://www.difesa.it/Primo_Piano/Pagine/20160210Pinotti_ministeriale_nato.aspx).

<sup>12</sup> "NATO should commit more to south Med says Pinotti," ANSA, 10 February 2016, [www.ansa.it](http://www.ansa.it).

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, this interview with the minister of defence, Roberta Pinotti: "Italy, the Crucial Player in NATO's New Strategic Frontier," *The Worldfolio*, 13 May 2016.

<sup>14</sup> See: A. Mackinnon, "Italy Says NATO Three Months from Libya Naval Mission," AFP, 25 April 2016.

stabilisation. Over the past 13 years, Italy earmarked €820 million for supporting Afghanistan, partly in loans and partly in direct subsidies. Within the *Resolute Support Mission*, Italy is maintaining the third biggest force in Afghanistan (just after the U.S. and Germany), numbering 895 troops (as of September 2018) supported by CH-47 and NH90 helicopters. According to the defence minister of the previous government, Italy's support for Afghanistan should be continued.<sup>15</sup> It is unclear whether this mission will remain at such a scale under the populist government of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, who was sworn in in June 2018.

Italy's priority has also been the continuation of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, two projects that it has supported since inception and which it is likely to continue to promote, probably with help from Spain and Turkey. Both of these NATO regional partnership initiatives have been seen as mechanisms not only for consultation with Arab countries and Israel but also as support for the present and expected missions along NATO's Southern Flank.<sup>16</sup> Italy's commitment to the Alliance's open-door policy towards Eastern European countries (Ukraine and Georgia) is much less likely, largely because of Russia's known position on this issue. But Italy vocally backed Montenegro's accession, having supported all rounds of the Alliance's and the European Union's enlargements to include Balkan countries.<sup>17</sup>

Italy's goal during the Warsaw summit was to present itself as a credible ally, who, despite the financial crisis, is ready to invest in common security. In spring 2017, Italy deployed a group of 160 soldiers (a mechanised infantry company) to a NATO battalion-size battlegroup in Latvia as part of the enhanced forward presence on the Eastern Flank. Italy's solidarity with NATO's Eastern Flank was also expressed in 2017 by deploying four Typhoon aircraft to the air mission over Bulgaria. In 2018, Italy was again contributing to the Baltic Air Policing mission over the three Baltic States. The same year, Italy continued its infantry company presence in Latvia at the same level of troops.<sup>18</sup> According to the Italian authorities, strengthening the Eastern Flank does not mean a threat of a return to the Cold War and NATO should conduct a balanced policy focused on dialogue with Russia. Prime Minister Matteo Renzi emphasised that his country is trying to act as a bridge between NATO and Russia. The government of Prime Minister Conte also goes far in declaring the resumption of bilateral and multilateral dialogue with Russia and in supporting the abolition of EU sanctions introduced after 2014. Some Italian experts believe that the new government will have to abandon its election slogans, such as a gradual withdrawal of Italy from the mission in Afghanistan. After the 2018 NATO Summit, Conte stressed publicly that his government will not change Italy's commitments to the Alliance but also that—even in the context of the latest American requests—he is not expecting the country to increase defence spending.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> "Afghanistan, Gentiloni e Pinotti: l'impegno della missione italiana prosegue," *Il Sole 24*, 10 November 2015, [www.ilsole24ore.com](http://www.ilsole24ore.com).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example: *Mediterraneo e Medio Oriente: seminario NATO a Firenze*, Ministero della Difesa, 27 November 2015, [www.difesa.it](http://www.difesa.it).

<sup>17</sup> F.W. Lucioli, "Il Montenegro nella NATO consolida l'integrazione regionale," *Analisi Difesa*, 12 March 2016.

<sup>18</sup> NATO, "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *Factsheet*, Brussels, August 2018.

<sup>19</sup> Compare: T. Kington, "Russian 'advocates': Italy's new government unnerves Western allies," *Defense News*, 7 June 2018; S. Stefanini, "Uncharted waters: the new Italian government's foreign and security policy," *ELN Commentary*, 18 June 2018, and "Italy has pledged no new spending on military: Prime Minister," *Reuters*, 12 July 2018, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).



Having joined NATO in 2004 together with Lithuania and Estonia, Latvia, just like those countries, regards the Alliance as the principal guarantee of its security and independence (which it regained in 1991).<sup>1</sup> This small state (2 million inhabitants) with a significant Russian-speaking minority (25%), has traditionally downplayed a potential Russian threat. This attitude changed with Russia's aggression against Ukraine (which, in turn, confirmed the importance of NATO for Latvia's security). In 2015, the Latvian parliament approved a new National Security Concept, which listed eight challenges to national security.<sup>2</sup> These were external threats, activities by foreign special forces and intelligence services, military threats near the country's border, threats to social cohesion, information-related threats, economic threats, international terrorism and cyberterrorism. The concept assumes, above all, stronger national military capabilities, synchronised with NATO's plans.

Latvia welcomed the decisions of the Newport summit, including on the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), but it emphasised the need for the Alliance's further military adaptation to threats from Russia.<sup>3</sup> The Kremlin's rhetoric about building a "Russian world" (in other words, supporting and integrating post-Soviet states inhabited by Russian-speaking populations and oriented towards Russia) is seen by Latvia as a prelude to the deployment of hybrid-warfare methods against it.<sup>4</sup> Latvia is especially apprehensive of a situation in which its national defence system would prove ineffective in the early stages of a hybrid conflict with Russia, and simultaneously there would be no Allied agreement to invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.<sup>5</sup> Riga wanted the Warsaw summit to produce strategic decisions on NATO's provision of credible deterrence, both conventional and, as Latvian officials have emphasised,<sup>6</sup> nuclear. It also wanted to see decisions on long-term NATO adaptation in the Baltic region.<sup>7</sup> In early 2016, the Latvian foreign minister said the summit should resolve four major issues: the permanent presence of NATO forces in the Baltic States; developing a strategy to counter hybrid threats, deepening the Alliance's cooperation with Finland and Sweden, and confirming the open-door policy.<sup>8</sup> Latvia gave priority to the first issue. In May 2015, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania sent a letter to the NATO secretary general and SACEUR on the need for the permanent deployment of a NATO brigade-sized unit in the Baltic States (composed of a mix of rotational Allied personnel grouped in three battalions, with presumably around 3,000 troops in total). Therefore the Latvian government was fully satisfied with the Warsaw summit decision on deploying in

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<sup>1</sup> On Latvia's defence policy to 2014, see: R. Rublovskis, "Latvian Security and Defense Policy within the Twenty-First Century Security Environment," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, vol. 12, 2014, pp. 173–188.

<sup>2</sup> See: "Saeima Adopts National Security Concept," Latvian Parliament, 26 November 2015, <http://saeima.lv>; The National Security Concept of the Republic of Latvia (2015), Ministry of Defence, [www.mod.gov.lv](http://www.mod.gov.lv).

<sup>3</sup> L. Jeglevicius, "'Vulnerability of the Baltics Is Much Higher' than Elsewhere, Says Expert," *The Baltic Times*, 18 November 2015.

<sup>4</sup> O. Dorell, "Latvia Wants Greater NATO Presence to Offset Russia," *Military Times*, 28 February 2016, [www.militarytimes.com](http://www.militarytimes.com).

<sup>5</sup> For a broader analysis of the issues involved in a potential hybrid conflict with Russia, see: J. Berzins, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defence Policy*, NDAL CSSR Policy Paper No. 2, April 2014.

<sup>6</sup> A.K. Sen, "Nuclear Component Must Be Part of NATO's Deterrence Policy in Europe's East, Says Latvia's Foreign Minister," New Atlanticist blog, 26 February 2016, [www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. "Rozmowy ministrów obrony Polski i Łotwy. Współpraca przemysłowa, wzmocnienie NATO," *Defence24*, 14 March 2016, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl), and O. Dorell, *op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Cf. "Speech by Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics at Annual Foreign Policy Debate in the Latvian Parliament," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 26 January 2016, [www.mfa.gov.lv](http://www.mfa.gov.lv).



2017 a battalion-sized battlegroup in Latvia, with Canada as its framework nation. In summer 2018, the battlegroup was composed of troops from Canada (350), Spain (300), Poland (up to 200), Italy (160), Slovakia (152), Czech Republic (60), Slovenia (up to 50), and Albania (21)<sup>9</sup> Latvia's reaction was also very positive to the announcement in the spring of 2016 that a U.S. armoured brigade combat team would rotate to the Eastern Flank, starting from 2017.<sup>10</sup> Its units exercise periodically in the country, which also hosts a forward element of a rotational U.S. combat aviation brigade at Lielvārde Air Base (around 70 troops and 5 UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters). Ahead of the 2018 Brussels summit, Latvia stressed the need for the persistent presence of U.S. forces in the Baltic States and Poland and further improvements in NATO's deterrence and defence posture in the region, including in the air and maritime domains.<sup>11</sup>

Although the Russian threat makes Latvia less able to contribute to the security of NATO's Southern Flank, during the Latvian presidency of the EU (2015), the country backed EU efforts to resolve the mass-migration crisis and further tighten EU collaboration in fighting terrorism.<sup>12</sup> Given the limited size of its armed forces (3,710 personnel) and its continued contribution to the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan (increased from 23 to 37 troops in 2018), Latvia faced challenges to commit more assets to Allied operations in the south.<sup>13</sup> However, Latvia eventually joined the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), which can be used for both crisis-management and collective-defence operations.<sup>14</sup> Latvia also backed the Warsaw summit decisions on implementing the strategy to combat hybrid threats and developing programmes of NATO's cyberdefence and strategic communication. The latter is particularly important for Latvia, given its significance regarding the current challenges posed by Russia and ISIS, and because Riga hosts the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE).<sup>15</sup>

Latvia has faced the challenge of making up for defence budget cuts and delays and meeting the Newport summit's 2% of GDP commitment, which the country aimed to meet in 2018. Actual spending in this respect stood at 0.93% of GDP (\$257 million) in 2014, and just over 1.04% of GDP (\$295 million) in 2015. For 2016, the figure was 1.46% of GDP (\$422 million) and for 2017, even an estimated 1.75% of GDP (\$530 million).<sup>16</sup> Increased spending should allow maintaining the current level of the armed forces (Latvia, unlike Lithuania, has opted not to reintroduce conscription) or to undergo a thorough rearming of the military. Latvia's

<sup>9</sup> Cf. J.E. Barnes, "Canada to Serve as a NATO Lead Nation for Eastern European Force," *The Wall Street Journal*, 30 June 2016; "Polskie wojska na Łotwie. NATO odpowiada na zagrożenia," *Defence24*, 8 July 2016, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl); "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *NATO Factsheet*, August 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>10</sup> "Defence Minister Welcomes US Troop Surge," LSM, 30 March 2016, <https://eng.lsm.lv>; "U.S. Army to Deploy Armoured Brigade Combat Teams in Eastern Europe," *The Baltic Times*, 30 March 2016, [www.baltictimes.com](http://www.baltictimes.com).

<sup>11</sup> See: "Speech by Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs at the annual Foreign Policy Debate in the Latvian Parliament (Saeima), 25 January 2018," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, [www.mfa.gov.lv](http://www.mfa.gov.lv); "Edgars Rinkēvičs stresses the need to work on a practical plan for the implementation of the US-Baltic Summit Declaration," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 17 May 2018, [www.mfa.gov.lv](http://www.mfa.gov.lv).

<sup>12</sup> See: *Speech by Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> In summer 2016, Latvia declared that it would send a few military advisors to Iraq, together in one team with Lithuania, Estonia, and Denmark. See: M. Rachwalska, "Żołnierze z państw bałtyckich w Iraku," *Defence24*, 30 July 2016, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl).

<sup>14</sup> W. Lorenz, M. Terlikowski, "Strengthening European Crisis Response Capabilities: French and British Initiatives," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 85 (1156), 29 June 2018.

<sup>15</sup> "NATO odeprze wojnę informacyjną na Łotwie," *Defence24*, 20 August 2015, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl).

<sup>16</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

priorities are the purchase of CVR(T) vehicles and M109 howitzers, Carl Gustaf recoilless rifles, Spike-ER guided missiles, and portable Stinger missiles, and a few light multi-role helicopters.<sup>17</sup>

Latvia has declared the 2018 Brussels summit a success.<sup>18</sup> At the meeting, Latvia, Denmark and Estonia announced that they will establish, as framework nations, the headquarters of Multinational Division North. It will be located at the Latvian base in Ādaži and on Danish territory.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The expected purchases include 123 units of CVR(T) combat vehicles, the latest RBS-70 air-defence missiles and four Sentinel AN/MPQ-64 short-range radars. "Latvia Refreshes RBS 70 Missile Stocks," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 23 October 2015; "Łotwa wzmacnia obronę powietrzną. Radary wykryją rosyjskie śmigłowce," *Defence24*, 26 September 2015, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl); "Przeciwlotnicze Stingery dla Łotwy," *Defence24*, 31 July 2015, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl); M. Szopa, "Państwa bałtyckie przed i po 2014 r., cz. 2," *Wojsko i Technika*, no. 5, May 2018.

<sup>18</sup> "The Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs and the United Kingdom's Secretary of State discuss the framework for UK's future relationship with the EU," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 15 August 2018, [www.mfa.gov.lv](http://www.mfa.gov.lv).

<sup>19</sup> "Multinational Division Headquarters North to be established in Latvia and Denmark in 2019," Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, 12 July 2018, [www.mod.gov.lv](http://www.mod.gov.lv).

Having joined NATO in 2004, together with the two other Baltic States (Latvia and Estonia), Lithuania is the largest of the trio in terms of territory and population. It shares with Estonia and Latvia the main elements of their perception of threats and strategic interests in NATO, although in the Lithuanian case the security threats related to the presence of the Russian-speaking minority (5.8% of the population) are less pronounced.<sup>1</sup> The Lithuanian government has been in favour of an increased Allied military presence in the Baltic region since at least 2008, and since 2014 it has been making this case regularly and publicly. For Lithuania, just as for the other Baltic States, the starting point for security policy in its Allied dimension is the assumption that effective defence of national territory would not be possible without support from NATO.

The Lithuanian government welcomed the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), approved at the Newport summit, and especially the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) within the NATO Response Force (NRF), and the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) in countries on the Eastern Flank. The country also welcomed the successive enhanced rotations of the Baltic Air Policing mission, which operate in part from Siauliai base in Lithuania.

Just as other Eastern Flank countries, Lithuania expected the Warsaw summit to confirm NATO's strategic reorientation and adaptation to threats from Russia. Collective defence, along with credible conventional and nuclear deterrence are seen by Lithuania as NATO's main role. In line with Lithuanian calls, NATO Allies decided in Warsaw that the country would host a battalion-sized battlegroup with Germany as a framework nation under NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP).<sup>2</sup> In summer 2018, the NATO forces in Lithuania were composed of troops from Germany (584), France (270), the Netherlands (250–270), Croatia (230), Norway (13), Belgium (2), and Iceland (1).<sup>3</sup>

Lithuania has been advocating also for the development of Allied capabilities to counter non-military threats from Russia, especially Russian hybrid warfare in the Baltic region. It did not officially object to a possible resumption of the NATO-Russia dialogue but cautioned that Russia would regard any attempt to re-launch practical cooperation as a sign of NATO's weakness.<sup>4</sup>

The Lithuanian position on the NATO agenda has been a direct consequence of how the country perceived its security environment. The latest version of the Lithuanian military strategy, passed by the government and parliament in March 2016, says that Russian policies undermine the foundation of Europe's security architecture, and that the rapid modernisation of the Russian armed forces and reform of its command structures increase the risk of incidents and tensions in the Baltic region.<sup>5</sup> Conventional aggression by Russia, warns the document, is

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2011 census, Lithuania has a population of 3 million, of which 7.5% are Russian speakers and 6.6% are Poles.

<sup>2</sup> See comments on the summit in Warsaw in: R. Milne, "Lithuania hails Nato plan for Russia border—military presence," *The Financial Times*, 4 July 2016, <http://ft.com>; "NATO leaders decide to deploy battalions to Baltic States, Poland," *The Baltic Times*, 9 July 2016; "NATO summit: Decisions important for the security of Lithuania and the Baltic region," Press Service of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, 7 July 2016, [www.lrp.lt](http://www.lrp.lt).

<sup>3</sup> "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *NATO Factsheet*, August 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: "Lithuania Questions Russia's Objectives in NATO Talks," *The Baltic Times*, 20 April 2016, [www.baltictimes.com](http://www.baltictimes.com).

<sup>5</sup> See: *The Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania*, Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania, 17 March 2016, pp. 3–5. The wording of the previous version of the document was similar, but more cautiously couched.

no longer a theoretical but a real possibility. It assesses that it is probable that Russia may use irregular forces to destabilise a selected NATO state or test the Allies' cohesion.<sup>6</sup> The strategy paper points to the importance of the Belarusian military potential, as well as its full integration with Russia in the event that an attempt is made to block the so-called Suwałki Gap to cut off the Baltic States from a land corridor linking them with the rest of Allied territory.<sup>7</sup> The strategy argues that hybrid conflict is becoming more likely as a means of undermining Lithuanian security than moves to capitalise on Lithuania's dependence on imports of Russian energy sources, which just several years ago was the focus of Lithuanian attention (Vilnius is home to the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence).<sup>8</sup> Publicly released analyses by the Lithuanian security agencies point to aggressive activities by the Russian and Belarusian intelligence services, a policy of disinformation (largely pursued via the Baltnews website), Russian-language propaganda in social media, efforts to take advantage of tensions related to the Polish minority in the Vilnius region, and attempts to block the construction of an LNG terminal at Klaipėda.<sup>9</sup> The Lithuanian government expects Russian and Belarusian activities of this kind to intensify, as is confirmed by repeated attempts to recruit informers from among Lithuanian conscripts.

In the opinion of Lithuanian security and intelligence services, the problems on NATO's Southern Flank, including terrorism and migration, may draw the attention of the West too much from Russia's aggressive policies and the situation on the Eastern Flank. According to these services, Russian forces could be mobilised for the purpose of aggression against the Baltic States within 24–48 hours. Lithuanian military intelligence assesses also that the deployment of NATO forces in Poland and the Baltic States is decisive in reducing the risk of Russia's conventional aggression in the region.<sup>10</sup>

Despite its limited military potential, which makes it a challenge for Lithuania to participate in NATO new missions or activities in the Southern Flank, the country has been contributing (as of June 2018) 60 military instructors to *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan and 41 troops to the EU and UN missions in Mali.<sup>11</sup> Lithuania also joined the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), which can be used for both collective defence and crisis response.<sup>12</sup> A company of

See: *The Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania*, Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania, 22 November 2012, pp. 3–5.

<sup>6</sup> *The Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania*, *op. cit.*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>7</sup> For more on the Suwałki Gap, see: R. Sisk, "Poland's Suwalki Gap Replaces Germany's Fulda Gap as Top NATO Concern," *Military.com*, 10 December 2015, [www.military.com](http://www.military.com); "U.S. Army Commander Warns of Russian Blocking of Baltic Defence," *The Baltic Times*, 9 November 2015, [www.baltictimes.com](http://www.baltictimes.com).

<sup>8</sup> In an earlier, more general document, the Lithuanian government assumed a higher probability and weight of non-military threats, especially in the field of energy security. See: *National Security Strategy*, Seimas / Government of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012, pp. 4–5.

<sup>9</sup> See: *Annual Threat Assessment 2014*, State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015, pp. 3–15.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: "Grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinim," Lietuvos Respublikos valstybės saugumo departamentas / Antrasis operatyvinių tarnybu departamentas prie Krašto apsaugos ministerijos, 2016, pp. 4–11; "Grėsmių nacionaliniam saugumui vertinim," Lietuvos Respublikos valstybės saugumo departamentas / Antrasis operatyvinių tarnybu departamentas prie Krašto apsaugos ministerijos, 2018, pp. 11–17. According to the second report, Russia tested an offensive scenario and capabilities in the *Zapad-2017* exercises.

<sup>11</sup> "International operations and training missions," Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, 27 June 2018, <https://kam.lt>. For more on the Lithuanian army's first combat mission outside national territory, see: A. Maskaliūnaite, "Learning to Think Big: The Lithuanian Experience of the ISAF," *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2014, pp. 43–60.

<sup>12</sup> W. Lorenz, M. Terlikowski, "Strengthening European Crisis Response Capabilities: French and British Initiatives," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 85 (1156), 29 June 2018, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).



Lithuanians is also part of the BALTBAT battalion, which is composed of forces from the three Baltic States and has participated in the NATO Response Force.<sup>13</sup>

Lithuania supports the open-door policy, and especially NATO's partnerships with Sweden and Finland, and also with Ukraine and Georgia. In the former case, this comes as a natural consequence of Lithuania's vital interests in balancing Russian dominance in the Baltic region.<sup>14</sup> Regarding the latter, Lithuania promises to back a Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Georgia and Ukraine, as soon as NATO offers it, though acknowledges this is not going to happen in the near future.<sup>15</sup> But Lithuania is in favour of presenting both countries with a broader training offer, and has itself taken steps to help reform, arm, and train Ukraine's armed forces. For example, in 2016, the Lithuanian special services began training their Ukrainian counterparts, and in the summer of 2015, a trilateral Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian brigade, LITPOLUKRBRIG, was formed as a force for crisis-management purposes.<sup>16</sup>

Lithuania has traditionally seen U.S. engagement and military presence in Europe as vital for transatlantic security. The Lithuanian government emphasises that the U.S. is its most important military ally, which, even prior to the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), was providing assistance as part of the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and International Military Education and Training (IMET) programmes.<sup>17</sup> As Lithuania has perceived the presence of American forces on its territory as a "game changer," it has been seeking constant U.S. deployments in addition to NATO EFP.<sup>18</sup>

Reversing a long-standing downward trend, Lithuania officially declared at the Newport summit that it would raise defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2020. Later, it revised those plans to meet the goal already in 2018. This spending rose from 0.88% of GDP (\$680 million) in 2014 to an estimated 1.73% of GDP (\$821 million) in 2017.<sup>19</sup> This will enable an increase in the manpower of the Lithuanian armed forces, already the largest among the Baltic States, by another 3,000–3,500 personnel (largely thanks to the re-introduction of conscription in early 2015) and enhancing their capabilities by forming a 2,500-strong Quick Reaction Force deployable on 24 hours' notice. In parallel, Lithuania has been reinforcing its border guard and voluntary force (currently numbering 11,000 functionaries and members).<sup>20</sup> A continuation

<sup>13</sup> "Bałtowie wspólnie w Siłach Odpowiedzi. Amerykańskie haubice na Litwie," *Defence24*, 13 April 2015, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl).

<sup>14</sup> "Lithuanian Defence Minister Attending NB8 Conference in Sweden," *The Baltic Times*, 10 November 2015.

<sup>15</sup> The Lithuanian government is of the opinion that even Russia's capture of Abkhazia and South Ossetia should not pose a barrier to launching MAP and integrating Georgia with the Alliance. See "Lithuania Supports Georgia's NATO Aspirations," *The Baltic Times*, 14 September 2015, [www.baltictimes.com](http://www.baltictimes.com).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example: J. Haszczyński, "Litwa dostarczyła Ukrainie prawdziwą broń," *Rzeczpospolita*, 18 November 2015, [www.rp.pl](http://www.rp.pl); "Litewscy specjaliści będą szkolić Ukraińców," *Defence24*, 11 January 2016, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl); "Polsko-litewsko-ukraińska brygada na ćwiczeniach z Kanadyjczykami," *Defence24*, 8 April 2016, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl); "Brygada polsko-litewsko-ukraińska na ćwiczeniach Anakonda," *Defence24*, 18 April 2016, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl).

<sup>17</sup> Among its major military partners, the Lithuanian Defence Ministry also lists, in this order, Poland, NORDEF countries, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. See its information bulletin: *Bilateral Cooperation*, of 18 February 2016, [www.kam.lt](http://www.kam.lt).

<sup>18</sup> J.E. Barnes, "Lithuania Calls for Permanent U.S. Military Presence Amid Russia Tensions," *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 May 2017, [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com).

<sup>19</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>20</sup> For a broader analysis, see: P. Szymański, "Między kontynuacją a adaptacją: polityka bezpieczeństwa i siły zbrojne państw bałtyckich," *Komentarze OSW*, no. 190, 2015.



of higher-level financing would also make it possible for the Lithuanian army to alleviate equipment shortages.<sup>21</sup>

Lithuania was satisfied with the results of the 2018 NATO summit in Brussels, noting that they will improve NATO's deterrence-and-defence posture with regards to readiness of reinforcements, adaptation of command structures, military mobility, and countering hybrid threats. The country emphasised that by mid-2019, NATO military authorities will present proposals on enhancement of air defence in the Baltic States.<sup>22</sup> Even before the 2016 Warsaw summit, this had been a priority for Lithuania, which has been seeking deployment of advanced Allied air-defence systems (such as Patriot) on its soil, and has promoted closer cooperation between the Baltic States and Poland on a regional integrated air- and missile-defence system.<sup>23</sup> In Brussels, the country also pledged to join the headquarters of a new Multinational Division North, led by Denmark, Estonia, and Latvia, in addition to its continued participation in the headquarters of the Multinational Division North East in Poland.

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<sup>21</sup> There are plans for the replacement of some 300 M-113 armoured personnel carriers, the purchase of an additional 220 Javelin anti-tank missiles and 74 launchers, and 21 PzH 2000 self-propelled howitzer units, by 2019. For details of the procurement plans of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, see also: M. Szopa, "Państwa bałtyckie przed i po 2014 r., cz. 1," *Wojsko i Technika*, no. 4, April 2018; M. Szopa, "Państwa bałtyckie przed i po 2014 r., cz. 2," *Wojsko i Technika*, no. 5, May 2018.

<sup>22</sup> "NATO: more agile and better prepared," Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, 11 July 2018, [www.lrp.lt](http://www.lrp.lt).

<sup>23</sup> S. Jones, "Poland and Baltic States explore anti-aircraft shield," *The Financial Times Online*, 12 June 2016, [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com).

Luxembourg is one of the founding members of NATO, its accession having represented a break from the policy of neutrality pursued from 1867 to 1949. As the smallest member in terms of territory, and with a population exceeding, among the Allies, only that of Iceland, Luxembourg has not played any major role in pre-Warsaw summit discussions on the political and military adaptation of the Alliance. While calling many times for the continuation of EU sanctions against Russia (especially during its presidency of the EU), and emphasising the key role of these sanctions in enforcing the Minsk agreements, Luxembourg also pointed to Russia's role in the fight against international terrorism, which, it argued, necessitates cooperation with Moscow.<sup>1</sup> Xavier Bettel, Luxembourg's prime minister, stressed during NATO's Warsaw summit the need for having a "regular and targeted dialogue with Russia in order to avoid tensions."<sup>2</sup> At the same time, Luxembourg Defence Minister Étienne Schneider underlined that the Warsaw summit cannot be perceived as aimed against Russia and, consequently, all measures taken to strengthen NATO's defence-and-deterrence posture should be accompanied by a dialogue with Russia, as it is required to lower the risk of misunderstanding and incidents.<sup>3</sup> Earlier in 2016, after the 19 February session of the North Atlantic Council, Luxembourg Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean Asselborn firmly ruled out invoking Article 5 in the event of a hypothetical escalation of the conflict between Russia and Turkey on the Syrian border.<sup>4</sup>

Luxembourg's troops are present in NATO missions. There are 23 personnel in KFOR and one officer in the *Resolute Support* mission in Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> A Luxembourg platoon, as part of the Belgian battalion *Bevrijding/5 Ligne*, was deployed to Lithuania between the end of September and early November 2015, in accordance with the Readiness Action Plan.<sup>6</sup> After the Warsaw summit, these troops joined the battalion-size battlegroup deployed in Lithuania and about 20 soldiers remained there until the end of 2017.<sup>7</sup> Luxembourg has confirmed the participation of its soldiers in the 2019 rotation of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF).<sup>8</sup> However, before the NATO summit in July 2018, the Luxembourg authorities signalled they would not send soldiers to Iraq as part of the NATO training mission because it involves too much risk.<sup>9</sup>

The NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA), employing a civilian staff of 1,100 has its offices in Luxembourg, which is also the country in which the fleet of AWACS (Boeing E-3 Sentry) aircraft is registered, under the largest and one of the longest-running Allied programmes, which enhances NATO's ability for joint collective-defence and crisis-management operations. In addition, in a collaborative effort with Belgium, Luxembourg will soon have at

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: D. Vincenti, "Bettel: EU, Russia play a lose-lose game on Ukraine," *EurActiv*, 31 August 2015, [www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com).

<sup>2</sup> "Xavier Bettel et Étienne Schneider au sommet de l'OTAN à Varsovie," 11 July 2016, [www.gouvernement.lu](http://www.gouvernement.lu).

<sup>3</sup> "Étienne Schneider Warns against Warsaw Summit as Attack on Russia at NATO Summit," 16 July 2016, [www.chronicle.lu](http://www.chronicle.lu).

<sup>4</sup> G. Mezzofiore, "NATO warns Turkey it can't count on support in a conflict with Russia as tensions escalate," *Daily Mail*, 19 February 2016, [www.dailymail.co.uk](http://www.dailymail.co.uk).

<sup>5</sup> "NATO—North Atlantic Treaty Organisation," The official portal of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, [www.luxembourg.public.lu](http://www.luxembourg.public.lu).

<sup>6</sup> "Étienne Schneider visite les soldats luxembourgeois en déploiement opérationnel en Lituanie," 22 October 2015, [www.gouvernement.lu](http://www.gouvernement.lu).

<sup>7</sup> "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *NATO Factsheet*, February 2018.

<sup>8</sup> "Étienne Schneider Warns...," *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> J. Bauldry, "Lux Wont's Send Troops to Iraq," *Delano*, 7 June 2018, [www.delano.lu](http://www.delano.lu).

its disposal A400M transport aircraft, enabling it to contribute more perceptibly to the mobility of NATO forces. Luxembourg's defence spending, following a decline in 2008–2012, has been on the rise since 2013, reaching an estimated \$299 million (0.46% of GDP) in 2017.<sup>10</sup> However, as a percentage of GDP it remains the lowest among the NATO members. Heading to the NATO summit in Brussels, Luxembourg's prime Minister Xavier Bettel declared the country will reach the 2% of GDP defence expenditure threshold "within a decade."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>11</sup> "Heading towards 2%: Bettel on Military Spending," *Delano*, 11 July 2018, [www.delano.lu](http://www.delano.lu).

Montenegro is the latest and 29<sup>th</sup> NATO member state, acceding on 5 June 2017, after ratification procedures, with an official ceremony two days later in Brussels. This ceremony was the culmination of a process initiated by Montenegro in 2008 and approved by official NATO invitation in December 2015. Montenegro had since 2006 participated in the Partnership for Peace programme and since 2009 implemented the individual Membership Action Plan (MAP). From the point of view of the government in Podgorica, these were the next steps in becoming independent from Serbia, with which it was formally federated in 2003–2006. From the point of view of NATO, Montenegro's accession also was confirmation of the Allied open-door policy towards the Balkans. It should be stressed that Montenegro joined NATO at a time when some within the Alliance had doubts about the continued validity of the open-door policy and Russia actively tried to counter it. Montenegro brought to NATO the important contribution of stabilisation of the Balkans, still coping with the post-Yugoslavia wars, and countering Serbian revisionism (30% of Montenegro's population is Serbs). Moreover, Montenegro's accession to NATO reveals the wider integration of the Balkan states with the Euro-Atlantic community, in part because of their prospects for membership in the EU.<sup>1</sup> Montenegro's NATO membership is also complemented by close bilateral military cooperation with the U.S., Germany, Poland, Slovenia, and Greece.<sup>2</sup>

Russia had since 2015 protested Montenegro's path towards membership of NATO using broad economic and diplomatic pressure on Podgorica. To this end, Russia also tried to use ethnic and political divisions among Montenegrins and promoted a referendum on NATO. According to Russia, the best alternative to NATO in the Balkans should be cooperation in the "B4" formula, i.e., formally neutral and including nearby Bosnia and Hercegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia. During the debate and voting in the Montenegrin parliament in May 2017, Russia introduced a ban on visits to Moscow by leaders of the centre-left ruling party. At the same time Montenegro's administration was the target of intense Russian cyberattacks.<sup>3</sup> Another aspect of Russian "active measures" against Montenegro was the covert attempt to provoke a *coup d'état* in Podgorica in autumn 2016. It was orchestrated and de facto directed by the former assistant to the Russian defence attaché in Warsaw (expelled from Poland in 2014) with the support of a group of radical nationalists from Serbia. This attempt discredited both Russia and those Montenegrin politicians who had been at the time stronger opponents of their country's membership in NATO.<sup>4</sup> The declaration adopted at the Brussels summit in 2018 reassured Montenegro of the Alliance's support and presented its accession as successful application of NATO's Open Door Policy.

The Montenegro Armed Forces represent a small contribution to all the forces of NATO. With its small population of 600,000, Montenegro only has 1,950 troops, with a core composed of a light infantry battalion. Important auxiliary functions are provided by some paramilitary forces (mainly police), together numbering more than 10,000 officers. Despite this size difference, Montenegro has participated in many UN, OSCE, EU, and NATO missions, and contributed to the *Resolute Support* mission in Afghanistan with 100 troops in 2017 and

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<sup>1</sup> For a good forecast of Russian policy towards Montenegro, see: W. Lorenz, "Drzwi do NATO," *Polska Zbrojna*, no. 1, January 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Compare information on the Ministry of Defence of Montenegro: [www.mod.gov.me](http://www.mod.gov.me).

<sup>3</sup> R. Sendek, "Czarnogóra już w NATO," *Polska Zbrojna*, [www.polska-zbrojna.pl](http://www.polska-zbrojna.pl), 7 June 2017.

<sup>4</sup> For details and the context of the Russian actions in 2016, see: M. Seroka, "Czarnogóra: Rosja oskarżana o próbę zorganizowania zamachu stanu," *Analizy OSW*, 6 March 2017.

18 military advisors in 2018.<sup>5</sup> Most Montenegrin troops have been trained by the Bundeswehr and the subsequent rotations to ISAF and *Resolute Support* were tests of their preparation. The limits of the military potential of the country are reflected in Montenegro's defence budget, which in 2016 was \$66 million (1.42% of GDP) and in 2017, an estimated \$76 million (1.58% of GDP).<sup>6</sup> Despite the economic limits, Montenegro is planning to modernise its military equipment. Among its plans, the country wants by 2025 to purchase new multi-role helicopters, more than a dozen armoured vehicles, as well as short-range radar.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Details on organisation and equipment in: *The Military Balance 2018*, IISS/Routledge, 2018, pp. 128–129.

<sup>6</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>7</sup> J. Adamowski, "Montenegro opts for Bell helos, eyes armored vehicles, radars," *Defense News*, 13 November 2017.



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# THE NETHERLANDS

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The Netherlands perceives NATO as a pillar of its security policy and emphasises the Alliance's role in protecting stability both inside and outside the Euro-Atlantic area. In the Dutch strategy from 2013, the main national interest (alongside protecting the territory of NATO members) is formulated as maintaining the international legal order and economic security.<sup>1</sup> Since the collapse of the USSR, the Netherlands has developed exceptionally strong economic relations with Russia, but the mutual relations became severely strained after the downing of the Malaysian Air passenger plane over Ukraine with almost 300 passengers, two-thirds of whom were Dutch nationals.<sup>2</sup> A Dutch-led investigation concluded that a missile had been fired from territory controlled by Russian-backed separatists from a system deployed from the territory of the Russian Federation.<sup>3</sup>

In the wake of the change in the political and military situations in Europe, stirred by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the Netherlands reiterated its credibility as a NATO ally.<sup>4</sup> But the Alliance, it argued, while pursuing the main task of defending its territory, must not neglect two other priorities: reacting to out-of-area crises and cooperating with partners to build security.<sup>5</sup> The Netherlands saw the need to develop a new model of relations with Russia, in response to the latter's aggression against Ukraine and actions aimed at the Alliance, such as the build-up of Russian military potential on NATO borders or unannounced military exercises. Dutch officials said that the Alliance should reinforce its deterrence and defence posture while at the same time conducting dialogue with Russia. The main purpose of contact, maintained through military and political channels, and of regular sessions of the NATO-Russia Council, should be to avoid escalating tensions. Talks should focus on the prevention of military incidents, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, increasing military transparency, and arms control and disarmament, in both the nuclear and conventional dimensions.<sup>6</sup> Although the Netherlands did not call for a return to a policy based on a partnership with Russia, it recognises that country's importance in addressing threats to European and global security and envisages the possibility of cooperation between Russia and the West in areas such as nuclear non-proliferation, resolving the conflict in Syria, and combating terrorism and international crime.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See: "International Security Strategy. A Secure Netherlands in a Secure World," Government of The Netherlands, June 2013, [www.government.nl](http://www.government.nl).

<sup>2</sup> A. Deutsch, "Dutch review energy ties with Russia after MH17 crash," *Reuters*, 19 August 2014, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>3</sup> "MH17 missile 'came from Russia', Dutch-led investigators say," *BBC News*, 28 September 2016, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>4</sup> "The Netherlands remains loyal NATO ally," Government of the Netherlands, 23 October 2014, [www.government.nl](http://www.government.nl).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*; See also: M. Rutte, "Address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, The Hague, 24 November 2014."

<sup>6</sup> "Koenders: Need for new international balance with Russia," Government of the Netherlands, 13 May 2015, [www.government.nl](http://www.government.nl); B. Koenders, "Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, The Hague, 22 November 2015;" "Koenders discusses strengthening security with NATO Secretary-General," Government of the Netherlands, 16 March 2015, [www.government.nl](http://www.government.nl).

<sup>7</sup> B. Koenders, "Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Helsinki Accords, Amsterdam, 12 September 2015;" M. Rutte, "Address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands at a meeting at American University (School of International Service), Washington, D.C., 31 March 2016."

The importance that the Netherlands attaches to reaffirming collective defence as NATO's chief task is reflected in the country's military engagement on the Eastern Flank. In 2014 and 2017, four F-16 fighter aircraft contributed to the Baltic Air Policing mission during four-month rotations. Dutch KDC-10 in-flight refuelling aircraft supported AWACS flights in the region. In 2015, the Netherlands joined the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE), delegating officers to its Szczecin headquarters. Dutch officers are deployed to NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, and Dutch units participated in numerous exercises on the Eastern Flank. Teaming up with Germany and Norway in 2015, the Netherlands brought the greatest resources to the land component of the interim Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), under the command of the German-Netherlands Corps headquartered in Münster, Germany. The Netherlands' contribution to the VJTF in 2017 included a marines squadron and four f-16 fighters, and in 2019 it will again include units from the German-Netherlands Corps. The Netherlands has also been a regular contributor to the other components of the NATO Response Force (NRF). In 2016, the country provided brigade staff, an airmobile infantry battalion, and an amphibious task force, including a marine combat group, two amphibious transport ships, an air-defence and command frigate, a multi-purpose frigate, two minehunters, a logistics support ship, a hydrographic recording vessel, and three helicopters. Together with Belgium, the Netherlands has formed a Special Operations Maritime Task Group, and it committed itself at the Newport summit to providing troops to the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) formed by the UK for operations led by NATO, the EU, UN, and coalitions of the willing.

In early 2016, during discussions on the Alliance's further military adaptation, the Netherlands recognised the need for the persistent and enhanced forward presence of NATO forces on the Eastern Flank. The Netherlands emphasised the compliance of NATO-planned activities with the NATO-Russia Founding Act, and it stressed that forward presence should take place on a rotational basis.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, in the run-up to the Warsaw summit, the Dutch focused on participation in NRF and its reform. In particular, they have argued for reinforcement of NRF's naval and special operations forces components, the latter playing an important role in countering hybrid threats. The Netherlands has sought an improvement of NATO's political and military decision-making process and regular conduct of tabletop exercises. On the other hand, it has not supported granting NATO military commanders the right to deploy VJTF without first obtaining political permission from the North Atlantic Council. The Dutch have also argued that NATO investment in NRF reception infrastructure should be subsidiary to domestic spending.<sup>9</sup>

The Netherlands reacted positively to the decisions of the Warsaw summit. One Dutch company of infantry soldiers joined the Germany-led NATO battalion-sized battlegroup in Lithuania, starting with the group's deployment in 2017. In line with those announcements, about 220–270 Dutch soldiers equipped with infantry fighting vehicles rotated to Lithuania in 2017 and 2018 as part of a multinational battalion under German command.<sup>10</sup> At the NATO summit in July 2018, the Dutch government was to announce its intention to extend

<sup>8</sup> R. Emmot, "Armed with new U.S. money, NATO to strengthen Russia deterrence," Reuters, 5 February 2016, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com). This position marked a partial shift in the Dutch stance towards NATO's forward presence on the Eastern Flank, because it had opposed the permanent stationing of NATO forces in the region before the Wales Summit. See: B. Waterfield, T. Preston, "Ukraine crisis: Poland asks Nato to station 10,000 troops on its territory," *The Telegraph*, 1 April 2014, [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk).

<sup>9</sup> J.A. Hennis-Plaasschaert, "Aanbiedingsbrief met geannoteerde agenda bijeenkomst Navo-ministers van Defensie op 10 en 11 februari 2016 te Brussel," Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, January 2016, pp. 1–4; B. Koenders, "Aanbiedingsbrief met geannoteerde agenda NAVO-ministeriële bijeenkomst 19–20 mei 2016," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 18 May 2016, pp. 1–2.

<sup>10</sup> "Netherlands to intensify military mission in Afghanistan and end involvement in Mali," Government of the Netherlands, 15 June 2018, [www.government.nl](http://www.government.nl).

its contribution to Enhanced Forward Presence till the end of 2020. Simultaneously, Dutch officials underscored that strengthening deterrence is not intended to be provocative towards Russia and that it is one of two elements of NATO's approach towards Moscow, with dialogue being the other one. In that context, they welcomed convening the NATO-Russia Council soon after the summit.<sup>11</sup>

It is rather the Southern Flank that attracts most of the Netherlands' attention. Mass migration and intensified activity by terrorist groups as a result of instability in the region are seen as directly influencing the country's security, especially given the return of Dutch citizens who had been "foreign fighters" in Syria and Iraq. The Netherlands has called for increased Alliance engagement on the Southern Flank while admitting that an effective response to threats from that direction requires a comprehensive approach involving both military and non-military resources, including development aid and diplomatic instruments. Consequently, the Netherlands wants NATO to engage more closely with regional and institutional partners. It has also called for greater involvement of European states in UN peace missions and activities within the framework of the EU, which it has seen as the only party capable of taking an integrated approach to conflict resolution.<sup>12</sup> The Netherlands' activities on the Southern Flank included the participation of a Dutch frigate in NATO's mission in the Aegean (from March to May 2016). As of June 2018, some 100 Dutch troops served with the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan and an additional 60 were to assist in training Afghan special operations forces over the next few years.<sup>13</sup> Outside the NATO framework, the Netherlands has made a military contribution to the coalition fighting ISIS by sending some 150 personnel to train Iraqi and Kurdish forces and six (initially eight) F-16 fighter aircraft, which took part in airstrikes in Iraq (from October 2014 to June 2016) and later also in Syria (February to June 2016).<sup>14</sup> The operations by Dutch aircraft were resumed at the beginning of 2018.

The Netherlands has argued that further enhancement of NATO activities on the Southern Flank should include, in addition to continued Aegean Sea operations, increased support for states in the region under the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative (DCBI). The country also called for transformation of *Operation Active Endeavour* in the Mediterranean into *Operation Sea Guardian* with an extended mandate.<sup>15</sup> At the Warsaw summit, it decided to dispatch another frigate to the mission in the Aegean Sea and expressed its openness to an extension of the participation of its personnel in the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> But it was sceptical of the idea of NATO, as an organisation, formally joining the coalition against ISIS.<sup>17</sup>

The Netherlands places an emphasis on the key importance of U.S. involvement in Europe and the need to maintain a strong transatlantic bond. Dutch officials noted that burden-sharing within the Alliance was imbalanced and that European defence spending should be increased

<sup>11</sup> "Nederland stuurt klein aantal militairen naar Oost-Europa," TROUW, 8 July 2016, [www.trouw.nl](http://www.trouw.nl).

<sup>12</sup> B. Koenders, "Renewing the European promise," address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Leiden, 30 March 2015; B. Koenders, "Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs...," *op. cit.*; "Koenders: 'NATO is sending a message of unity to Russia'," Government of the Netherlands, 14 May 2015, [www.government.nl](http://www.government.nl).

<sup>13</sup> "Netherlands to intensify military mission in Afghanistan...," *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> In July 2016, the Dutch aircraft were replaced by Belgian fighter jets for a one-year period.

<sup>15</sup> B. Koenders, J.A. Hennis-Plaasschaert, "Kamerbrief met verslag NAVO-top 8 en 9 juli 2016 te Warschau," Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 25 July 2016, pp. 5–6.

<sup>16</sup> B. Koenders, J.A. Hennis-Plaasschaert, "Kamerbrief met verslag NAVO-top ...," *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 7–8.

<sup>17</sup> B. Koenders, "Aanbiedingsbrief met geannoteerde agenda...," *op. cit.*

in line with the 2014 Wales Summit Declaration.<sup>18</sup> But the country's own performance in this respect is wide of the mark of spending 2% of GDP on defence. Following long-standing cutbacks, since Russia's annexation of Crimea, the Dutch defence budget has remained at an average level of 1.15% of GDP (an estimated \$10.6 billion in 2017).<sup>19</sup>

Although the Dutch government has promised to increase defence spending in real terms every year, it seems unlikely that it will reach 2% of GDP in 2024.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the Alliance gives the Netherlands high marks for the quality of equipment and training of its armed forces and for the planned purchases of advanced military capabilities, but it also points to considerable quantitative shortages, especially as regards the land force's insufficient capability to conduct high-intensity operations.<sup>21</sup> These issues were raised by the United States president in his letter to Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte in June as well as in their meeting at the White House ahead of the NATO Summit in July 2018.<sup>22</sup> During the summit in Brussels, the Netherlands reconfirmed its special commitment to the NATO DCBI Trust Fund programmes for Jordan, Tunisia, Iraq, Ukraine, and Georgia (€1 million).<sup>23</sup>

The Netherlands believes that strengthening NATO's military capabilities requires closer defence cooperation among European countries. As a result, it has launched an array of initiatives to integrate its military units with German, Belgian and Luxembourgian forces. It also calls for strengthening the EU's common security and defence policy in a way that is complementary to NATO activities so that Europeans take greater responsibility for their own security, especially in responding to crises outside EU territory.<sup>24</sup> Closer NATO-EU cooperation, in areas such as the exchange of information, strategic communication, cyberdefence, joint exercises, development of military capabilities, maritime operations and support for third countries, is expected to help counter hybrid threats more effectively. As the holder of the EU Council presidency in the first half of 2016, the Netherlands sought a joint declaration on NATO-EU cooperation, to be adopted either at the Warsaw summit or the European Council of June 2016. It has also backed the reinforcement of NATO's cyberdefence policy, and have joined the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD CoE) in 2012.<sup>25</sup>

Aggressive nuclear signalling from Russia have met strong criticism from the Netherlands, which at the same time has been against raising the importance of nuclear deterrence in Allied policy and the hypothetical deployment of nuclear weapons on the territory of NATO's Central and Eastern European members.<sup>26</sup> While it finds nuclear weapons to be a fundamental element of NATO's capabilities, it also argues that the Alliance should avoid escalating tensions and

<sup>18</sup> M. Rutte, "Address by the Prime Minister..." *op. cit.*; J.A. Hennis-Plaasschaert, "Address by the Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the seminar 'More defence for less money. ALDE Roadmap towards an Integrated EU military'," Brussels, 24 June 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>20</sup> J. Pieters, "NATO boss criticizes Netherlands defense spending," *NLTimes*, 19 April 2018, [www.nltimes.nl](http://www.nltimes.nl).

<sup>21</sup> "The Netherlands: Draft Overview," *NATO Defence Planning Capability Review*, 2015/2016.

<sup>22</sup> See J. Hirschfeld Davis, "Trump Warns NATO Allies to Spend More on Defense, or Else," *The New York Times*, 2 July 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Government of the Netherlands, "Netherlands invests in NATO's flank," 12 July 2018, [www.government.nl](http://www.government.nl).

<sup>24</sup> J.A. Hennis-Plaasschaert, "Address by the Minister of Defence of the Kingdom..." *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> J.A. Hennis-Plaasschaert, "Address by the Minister of Defence of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the forum Annual Baltic Conference on Defence (ABCD), Tallinn, 24 September 2015"; B. Koenders, "Geannoteerde agenda..." *op. cit.*; J.A. Hennis-Plaasschaert, "Aanbiedingsbrief met geannoteerde agenda..." *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> "U.S. and European legislators—should nuclear weapons deployment be expanded in Europe?," Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, 12 February 2015, [www.pnnd.org](http://www.pnnd.org); "Netherlands contributes to NATO's deployability and responsiveness," Government of the Netherlands, 26 March 2015, [www.government.nl](http://www.government.nl).



continue efforts towards arms control and disarmament.<sup>27</sup> In this context, the Netherlands is widely believed to be one of five European countries that host American B61 nuclear bombs and provide dual-capable aircraft (DCA) for their delivery under NATO nuclear-sharing arrangements.<sup>28</sup>

The country has publicly declared support for a continuation of NATO's open-door policy, and especially for the Western Balkan countries, an area accorded high importance by the Netherlands, especially in view of the migration crisis.<sup>29</sup> But Dutch consent to accelerating Ukraine's membership of NATO should not be expected anytime soon, given the pronouncements by Prime Minister Mark Rutte in 2016. Rutte said Ukraine should not enter the EU because it would deteriorate relations between Kyiv and Moscow.<sup>30</sup> It is very likely that the Netherlands position on Georgia's membership of the Alliance is based on the same general assumptions because the Dutch government stated that granting a Membership Action Plan (MAP) should be dependent upon both geopolitical conditions and progress in internal reforms.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> B. Koenders, J.A. Hennis-Plaasschaert, "Kamerbrief met verslag NAVO-top...", *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> H.M. Kristensen, R.S. Norris, "United States nuclear forces, 2016," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2016, pp. 70–71.

<sup>29</sup> "DPM Marković, Ambassador Stokvis: Netherlands will continue to strongly support Montenegro's EU, NATO bid," Government of Montenegro, 17 July 2015, [www.gov.me](http://www.gov.me).

<sup>30</sup> J. Pieters, "Netherlands PM against Ukraine joining EU," *NL Times*, 31 March 2016, [www.nltimes.nl](http://www.nltimes.nl).

<sup>31</sup> B. Koenders, J.A. Hennis-Plaasschaert, "Kamerbrief met verslag NAVO-top...", *op. cit.*, pp. 3–4.



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# NORWAY

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Norway is a founding member of NATO, regarding the Alliance as a guarantee of its security, backed by exceptionally close bilateral collaboration with the United States. It has traditionally played a vital role gathering intelligence on Russian submarines and other forms of maritime activities in the Norwegian Sea and Northern Atlantic. Following the end of the Cold War, the Norwegian government not only favoured NATO's transformation towards conducting crisis-management missions, but also—with this goal in mind—reduced its own relatively small armed forces and territorial defence potential. In relations with Russia, Norway attempted to cooperate in the energy sector and, most importantly, sought to resolve the question of delimiting the Russia-Norway maritime border, seen for years as a major liability in bilateral relations. An agreement reached in 2010 made it possible to open up a new stage in two-way contacts.

But that policy was revised following the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and increasing provocative military activities by Russia on NATO's borders (including in the High North, traditionally the area of Norway's strategic interests). The belief took hold among Norwegian elites that Norway and NATO must, post-Newport, further adapt their policies to changes in the security environment.<sup>1</sup>

After the Newport summit, Norway conducted an audit of its perception of military threats and a review of defence strategy. An independent report and a strategic review by the Norwegian chief of defence, both published in 2015, emphasise the role of NATO and of Allied and national capabilities in deterring a potential aggressor.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, both papers differ considerably from Norway's 2012 long-term defence plan, developed largely in response to the terrorist attack by Anders Breivik in July 2011. The two documents, along with pronouncements by Norwegian officials, also provide confirmation of support for the Alliance's adaptation, both on its Eastern and Southern Flank.

The Eastern Flank and, equally strongly, the Arctic are the dominant factors in Norway's perception of threats. As assessed by the Norwegian military intelligence service, the Alliance must, in the medium term, expect that Russia will have at its disposal an increasing inventory of civilian and military instruments to carry out a hybrid war. Since 2012, Russia has been continuously expanding its military presence in the Baltic region and the High North, demonstrating capabilities for the faster mobilisation of its armed forces. Norwegian intelligence also sees continuing unpredictability in Russia's military policy.<sup>3</sup> Reports by non-governmental organisations, too, regard Russia's hostility towards NATO, its pressure on the Baltic States, Sweden, and Finland, and perceptible progress in armed forces modernisation, as posing threats to Norway.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a broader background on Norway's foreign and security policy to 2015, see: J.M. Godzimirski, U. Sverdrup, *Rosja wyzwaniem strategicznym na Północy*, in: M. Terlikowski (ed.), *Polityka bezpieczeństwa Polski i Norwegii w wymiarze narodowym, regionalnym i europejskim*, PISM Report, Warsaw, September 2015, pp. 7–12.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Expert Commission on Norwegian Security and Defence Policy, *Unified Effort*, Norwegian Ministry of Defence, Oslo, April 2015, and H. Bruun-Hanssen, *Norwegian Armed Forces in Transition: Strategic Defence Review by the Norwegian Chief of Defence (Abridged Version)*, Norwegian Armed Forces, Oslo, October 2015.

<sup>3</sup> See: Norwegian Intelligence Service, *Focus 2015: Annual Assessment by the NIS*, Oslo, February 2015, pp. 12–16, 24–25; Norwegian Intelligence Service, *Focus 2017: Annual Assessment by the NIS*, Oslo, February 2017, pp. 10–22.

<sup>4</sup> The expert report for Norway's Ministry of Defence does not rule out a possible conflict in the Arctic involving Russia and its neighbours, but this scenario is regarded as remote. For more, see: Expert Commission on Norwegian Security and Defence Policy, *ibidem*, pp. 16–24.

The major recommendation in the strategic review by the Norwegian chief of defence is to enhance the national and NATO potential for deterrence, to be based on early warning (reconnaissance and intelligence), the national capability for effective resistance and total war, NATO's collective defence, and Norwegian readiness to host Allied reinforcements.<sup>5</sup> Norway consequently supports all NATO initiatives that serve to foster readiness and interoperability, not only the strengthening of the NATO Response Force (NRF) in 2014 with the establishment of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), but also the earlier, British, idea of a Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) in 2012, and Germany's Framework Nation Concept (FNC), as a means of fostering long-term development of Allied capabilities.<sup>6</sup> In early 2016, the Norwegian prime minister listed four NATO priorities as credibility, the maritime domain, balancing deterrence and dialogue in relations with Russia, and strengthening partnerships with non-NATO partners.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the Alliance's adaptation should transcend the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) and involve the "new strategic framework" for change in reconnaissance, command and planning structures and towards increased numbers of national and Allied exercises. Norway in autumn 2018 hosted the *Trident Juncture* exercise, NATO's largest since the Cold War.<sup>8</sup>

Before the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, Norway insisted that the initiatives to withdraw U.S. non-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe should be based on the notion of reciprocity with Russia. Norway also declares support for, and interest in, various elements of NATO ballistic missile defence (BMD), and although it will not host land installations,<sup>9</sup> it may possibly contribute Fridtjof Nansen-class frigates equipped with Aegis radar<sup>10</sup> to the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA).

Faced with the potential Russian threat in the North Atlantic and the Arctic, Norway has been calling for an enhancement of NATO maritime capabilities and the Alliance's engagement in these regions. It counted on Allies to embrace the idea of reinforcing maritime capabilities to provide security for transport routes in the North Atlantic, Baltic Sea, and the Mediterranean,<sup>11</sup> and tried to win broad support for a separate NATO regional command for the High North (backed also by the United States, Denmark, and Iceland).<sup>12</sup> Consequently, Norway welcomed the February 2018 decision of NATO to establish a new Joint Force Command for the Atlantic.<sup>13</sup>

From the Norwegian perspective, the civil wars in Syria and Libya have a destabilising effect on NATO's Southern Flank and foster global terrorism. The situation in the immediate neighbourhood of southern NATO members also affects other aspects of Norway's security. Since 2014, the Norwegian special services have been forecasting a continual increase in

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: H. Bruun-Hanssen, *op. cit.*, pp. 7–9, and Expert Commission on Norwegian Security and Defence Policy, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–70.

<sup>6</sup> B. Brende, *Foreign Policy Address 2015*, The Storting, Oslo, 5 March 2015.

<sup>7</sup> E. Solberg, "Between Reassurance and Reengagement? The Future of NATO," address to Munich Security Conference, 13 February 2016, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no).

<sup>8</sup> "Trident Juncture 2018," The Norwegian Armed Forces, 13 June 2015, <https://forsvaret.no>; "Norway to host 70 vessels, 40,000 personnel for *Trident Juncture*," *Naval Today*, 28 May 2018.

<sup>9</sup> "Norway Role in NATO Missile Grid 'Necessary'," *The Local*, 6 June 2015.

<sup>10</sup> The Royal Norwegian Navy has five such frigates, each armed with eight VLS launchers capable of carrying SM-2 and SM-3 anti-ballistic missiles. Thus, Norway's contribution to EPAA could be one or two ships (just as in the case of Denmark).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example: K. Tringham, "Northern Recomposture: Norway Country Briefing," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 14 October 2015; the interview "Norway's Defence Minister: It's Time To Boost NATO's Maritime Profile," *Defense News*, 4 January 2016, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>12</sup> See: I. Eriksen Søreide, *Security in the High-North—Norwegian Perspective*, Washington, 26 June 2014, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no).

<sup>13</sup> "Norway to remain 'NATO in the North'," NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 10 May 2018, [www.nato-pa.int](http://www.nato-pa.int).

terrorist threats for Europe and for Norway from ISIS. According to estimates from 2016, at least 40 Norwegian citizens were engaged as “foreign fighters” with ISIS, some 30 of whom have returned home. Norway has been actively participating in the anti-ISIS coalition (with 60 advisors training Iraqi forces and 60 advisors in Jordan), and has been providing humanitarian aid on an unprecedented scale (€1 billion), to help handle the flow of Syrian refugees to Southern Europe.<sup>14</sup> Norway has also been contributing to the NATO mission in Afghanistan with 50 military advisors in 2017 and 2018. Norway supports JEF and perceives it as a British/Nordic (and, in the future, also Baltic) contribution to expeditionary forces of NATO and the EU, as well to the Alliance’s Eastern Flank.<sup>15</sup> This thinking was confirmed during the Warsaw summit, where Norway declared a readiness to contribute 200 troops (a motorised infantry company) in 2017 to NATO’s battalion-sized battlegroup in Lithuania. Norway fulfilled this pledge in 2017, and in spring 2018, in the second rotation of NATO forces in Lithuania, there were 30 Norwegian troops.<sup>16</sup>

Norway’s support for NATO adaptation strengthens its interest in the continued maintenance of six cave-based facilities for storing U.S. equipment, which it partly finances to the tune of more than \$6 million a year, and increased rotation of U.S. troops there. The stockpiles in the central region of Trøndelag include arms, munitions and equipment that may be used by a Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) if a crisis breaks out in the Arctic, Europe, or Africa, and during regular exercises in these regions. In spring 2018, the issue of doubling U.S. troop rotations in northern Norway (from 330 to 700 Marines) became the subject of protests and threats from Russia.<sup>17</sup> In addition to this form of direct collaboration with the United States, the NATO Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) has been in operation at Stavanger since 2003 and has been providing training for planning process and staff exercises for the NRF and the entire Alliance. Norway is a NATO pioneer in conducting war games in tough winter and mountainous conditions. Since 2007 the country has played host to the Centre of Excellence for Cold Weather Operations (COE-CWO), which in 2016 was merged with the Norwegian School of Winter Warfare (NSWW), previously a provider of training services for special forces, mainly from the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>18</sup>

Norway’s military budget reached \$6.94 billion in 2014, but a year later it dropped to \$6.83 billion (1.46% of GDP). Still, Norway’s defence spending exceeds the combined figure for Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. In 2016, it rose again to \$7.28 billion (1.54% of GDP), a level that was estimated in 2017 to reach \$7.82 billion (1.62% of GDP).<sup>19</sup> Given the Norwegian armed forces’ modernisation plans, which include replacing the fleet of 55 F-16 aircraft with 52 modern F-35A multirole fighters and purchasing sophisticated submarines, defence spending

<sup>14</sup> B. Brende, *Foreign Policy Address to the Storting 2016*, Oslo, 1 March 2016.

<sup>15</sup> In 2015, Denmark and the Baltic countries declared their readiness to set apart their own units, and Sweden is also giving consideration to this idea. See: K. Malkenes Hovland, “Norway to Contribute Troops to U.K.-Led NATO Force,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 5 September 2014, [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com); G. O’Dwyer, “Sweden Considers Joining UK-Led Joint Expeditionary Force,” *Defense News*, 4 October 2015, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example: “NATO leaders decide to deploy battalions to Baltic States, Poland,” *The Baltic Times*, 9 July 2016; *Norway to contribute to Alliance’s security in the East*, Oslo, 8 July 2016, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no); “Lithuania celebrates 1 year since deployment of NATO battalion,” *The Baltic Times*, 5 February 2018.

<sup>17</sup> For details, see: L. Hudson, “Marines, Norwegians Refresh Gear in Storage to Increase Readiness,” *Inside Defense*, 19 August 2014, and “Norwegian, Marine Planning Effort Epitomizes Cold Response Spirit,” USMC, 23 February 2016, [www.marines.mil](http://www.marines.mil); Sh. Snow, “Russia argues the Marine Corps’ beefed-up presence in Norway is an attack,” *Marine Corps Times*, 18 June 2018.

<sup>18</sup> For more, see: A. White, “Cold Weather Combat: Reshaping Arctic Warfare Training,” *Jane’s International Defense Review*, no. 2, February 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017),” 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

can be expected to approach the 2% of GDP level gradually until 2025, as recommended by the Norwegian chief of defence and government.<sup>20</sup>

The Norwegian government declared strong support for the Warsaw summit decisions on tightening up NATO-EU cooperation.<sup>21</sup> Norway, as with Denmark, is also in favour of deepening Nordic-Baltic military collaboration in the NB8 format, and of drawing Sweden and Finland into the exchange of information on, and development of, NATO-EU cooperation in cyberdefence.<sup>22</sup> The country's attitude to the open-door policy has not changed in principle but in the assessment of what is feasible: Norway has ratcheted up its support for a further consolidation of NATO's special partnership with Finland and Sweden while taking a reluctant position on Georgian and Ukrainian membership in the short term.<sup>23</sup> Regardless of problematic prospects for Georgia's membership of NATO, Norway will be the leading country in funding Georgian security-sector reform, with the goal of achieving greater interoperability with Allies until 2020.<sup>24</sup>

In the run up to the 2018 NATO Brussels summit, Norway was criticised by U.S. President Donald Trump as the only country bordering Russia that lacks a credible plan to spend 2% of GDP on defence by 2024.<sup>25</sup> Norwegian officials stressed their country was going to increase spending in the coming years but avoided declarations on the agreed target. Despite the criticism Norway was satisfied with the deliverables of the summit, which, among others, approved the creation of the command for the Atlantic.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The technical and financial aspects are presented in greater detail in: Norwegian Ministry of Defence, *Future Acquisitions for the Norwegian Defence Sector 2018–2025*, Oslo, March 2017.

<sup>21</sup> B. Brende, *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> See, for example: "Joint Cyber Training Is a New Nordic Priority," *Defense News*, 20 April 2015, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>23</sup> Norway, Denmark and the Baltic States account between them for 10 out of the 25 NATO advisors sent to Georgia, according to: *A Stronger NATO*, Norwegian government press release of 6 February 2015.

<sup>24</sup> *Norway increases support for stabilising NATO's neighbouring areas*, Oslo, 9 July 2016, [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no).

<sup>25</sup> A. Mehta, "Trump's letters to allies mean the NATO Summit could be in trouble before it begins," 27 June 2018, *Defense News*, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>26</sup> Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis' Meeting with Norway Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Søreide, U.S. Department of Defense, 14 July 2018, [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).



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# POLAND

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Poland joined NATO in 1999 and the EU in 2004. With both accessions, it achieved its main strategic goal after the democratic changes initiated in 1989 of integration with the Euro-Atlantic political and security structures. Membership in NATO and the EU, the alliance with the U.S., and its own national military capabilities constitute the main pillars of Poland's security and defence policy.

When Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000, Poland began following with increasing concern the rebuilding of Russia's military potential and its attempts to build a zone of privileged political, economic and security interest in the post-Soviet space, while expanding the ability to exert pressure on the countries of the former Warsaw Pact. The changes taking place in Russia were viewed as negative and prompted the Polish authorities—together with the desire to build its position in NATO as a reliable Ally—to adopt in 2001 a law requiring at least 1.95% of GDP to be earmarked for defence (about \$12 billion in 2017).<sup>1</sup> The bill also provides for reaching the 20% of Polish defence expenditure to cover the costs of the technical modernisation of the armed forces. This allowed Poland to begin replacing some legacy weapon systems with modern equipment, including 48 F16 Block 52+ aircraft, almost 250 Leopard 2A4 and 2A5 main battle tanks, hundreds of Rosomak infantry fighting vehicles, anti-ship and land-attack Naval Strike Missiles (NSM), standoff air-launched cruise missiles (JASSM) and guided anti-tank missiles. Armed Forces Technical Modernisation Plan 2013–2022 included the purchase of medium and short-range air and missile defence systems, multirole and attack helicopters, reconnaissance systems, rocket artillery systems (Multiple Launch Rocket Systems, MLRS), and submarines armed with cruise missiles. However, the plan underwent modifications and some investments prioritised over the others.

Poland is ready to carry out its duties in NATO and support the Alliance's ability to project power outside its own territory. As foreseen in the 2009 strategy on the participation of Poland in the expeditionary operations, the Polish Armed Forces should be capable of maintaining between 3,200 and 3,800 soldiers outside the country.<sup>2</sup> This was in line with NATO's recommendation that Allied forces should be ready to contribute 8% of their land forces to out-of-area missions. The requirements related to participation in missions, the ability to interact with allies, and technical modernisation prompted the government to suspend the conscription and move to a fully professional force, which was completed in 2010. The size of the military was reduced to 100,000 troops and part of the military capabilities adapted to NATO deployment requirements. At the same time, the Ministry of Defence planned to create a reserve force of 20,000 non-professional troops, a plan never fully implemented. After Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the change of government in Poland in 2015, a new Defence Concept of the Republic of Poland was released, stating that Poland would continue to support the Allies in various operations as long as it did not weaken the potential to defend Poland itself.<sup>3</sup> The new strategy also called for the formation of a 53,000-strong (17 brigades) territorial defence force, predominately comprising of volunteers. The ambitious aim was to be achieved by 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>2</sup> "Strategia udziału Sił Zbrojnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w operacjach międzynarodowych (2009)," BBN, [www.bbn.gov.pl](http://www.bbn.gov.pl).

<sup>3</sup> "Koncepcja obronna Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej," Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, May 2017.



Due to Poland's location on the Eastern Flank of NATO, its defence policy has been traditionally focused on strengthening NATO's credibility as a collective-defence alliance. Among other things, thanks to Poland's efforts in developing the New Strategic Concept, adopted at NATO Lisbon summit in 2010, it was stated that the greatest responsibility of the Alliance is to defend its territory.<sup>4</sup>

Poland also has sought to deploy NATO infrastructure on its territory to increase the credibility of the collective-defence mechanisms. Together with Denmark and Germany, Poland established the Headquarters of the Multinational Corps North-East in Szczecin (MNC NE HQ), which could be tasked to command multinational in a collective-defence scenario. To strengthen the Alliance's ability to command and control territorial defence operations, Poland also has been developing national command structures that can be used by NATO during a crisis. It has expanded its capability to command NATO ground operations and special forces operations and developed the ability to take command of naval forces. Under pressure from Poland, the Alliance in 2010 updated the operational plans covering the new Member States, among other things. In 2013, during the *Steadfast Jazz* exercise, NATO for the first time checked its ability to deploy rapid reaction forces (NATO Response Force, or NRF) to Poland and Lithuania.<sup>5</sup>

The Polish air force regularly participates in the Baltic Air Policing mission.<sup>6</sup> It has also been Poland's clear interest to support the development of the NRF, which would be the first element put into action during either a crisis-response or collective-defence scenario. That is why Poland regularly assigns troops to the NRF as well as other common capabilities, such as the standing naval forces (SNMG-1 and SNMCG-1). In 2010, 2013, and 2016, the Polish military also formed EU Battle Groups—rapid reaction units designed to conduct crisis-response missions and forcing states to keep at least a modest pool of fast reaction force (even if the Battle Groups have never been used). To provide the Alliance with the ability to conduct all types of missions, Poland co-finances the Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC), the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS), and Allied Ground Surveillance (AGS) system.

Participation in missions outside NATO territory helps support the modernisation of Polish Armed Forces, deepens political and military cooperation with key allies, and strengthens Poland's position in NATO and the EU. Polish soldiers first took part in a stabilisation mission under the command of NATO in 1996 in Bosnia and Herzegovina (*IFOR*). Over the next two decades, they participated in all NATO missions except in Libya in 2011 and anti-piracy mission *Ocean Shield*. During the largest NATO mission in Afghanistan, Poland took over responsibility for Ghazni province and maintained the seventh-largest contingent, with up to 2,500 soldiers. Polish army and police have supported the most important EU missions, including in Congo (2006), Chad (2008–2009), and the Central African Republic (2014–2015).<sup>7</sup> Poland also took part in the U.S.-led *Operation Iraqi Freedom* in 2003, where it commanded the Multinational Division Central-South and maintained the third-largest contingent after the U.S. and the UK, with up to 2,500 soldiers. In 2009, Poland's growing involvement in NATO and EU missions

<sup>4</sup> "Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," NATO, 19–20 November 2010, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>5</sup> See: W. Lorenz, "Steadfast Jazz 2013: NATO on Course to Strike a Better Balance," PISM Bulletin, no. 63 (516), 11 June 2013, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>6</sup> Poland contributed to BAP in 2005, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2015, and 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Poland also assigned civilian and military personnel to EU missions, e.g., in 2016 to *EUMM* (10 observers), *EUFOR/MTT* in Bosnia and Herzegovina (50 personnel), and the *RCA* (2 soldiers).

influenced the decision on the withdrawal of Polish troops from the UN missions in Lebanon, Golan Heights, and Chad.

Poland was one of the first countries to point to Russia's involvement in the hybrid conflict, that led to the annexation of Crimea and to Russia's aggression against eastern Ukraine. On 4 March 2014, at Poland's request, NATO convened a consultation session under Article 4 of the Washington Treaty and, in response to the developments in its Eastern Flank, decided to enhance the Alliance's visibility there. Then Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski called for NATO troops to be deployed permanently in Poland.<sup>8</sup> In his opinion, Russian aggression towards Ukraine had permanently changed the security environment and required long-term actions that would better adapt NATO to respond to the potential threats from Russia. As part of demonstrating solidarity with the Baltic states, Polish aircraft took part in the enhanced Baltic Air Policing mission in 2014. Parliament also amended the law on the financing of the armed forces and increased the level of defence expenditure to at least 2% of GDP. In 2017 amounted to 1.99% of GDP.<sup>9</sup>

From the Polish perspective, the approval of a Readiness Action Plan (RAP) during the NATO Newport summit was the beginning of the Alliance's long-term adaptation to the new threats. Poland, as one of six members (Turkey joined later as the seventh), agreed to take up the role of framework nation of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) during one of its annual rotations and devote a command and main combat unit to its purposes. It also delegated officers to all newly created command elements (NATO Force Integration Units, NFIUs) in Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, and Bulgaria, which are to facilitate the movement of VJTF and other elements of the NRF maintained at lower readiness. It was extremely important for Poland that NATO approved raising the readiness and staffing (from 200 to 400 people) of the MNC NE HQ in Szczecin, which could take over the command of a corps-size NATO land force during a war. As part of NATO support for Ukraine, Poland, together with the Netherlands, declared it was ready to take over management of one of the Trust Funds for logistics and standardisation, command, control, and communication, as well as support the development of cyberdefence capacity.

After the summit in Newport, Polish authorities increased efforts to consolidate NATO's presence on the Eastern Flank. In 2015, the government presented to the NATO Secretary General the so-called Warsaw Strategic Adaptation Initiative, in which they proposed to adapt the command structure to the new threats and strengthen all NATO forces, not just the rapid reaction, multinational forces.<sup>10</sup>

Before the Warsaw summit, Polish diplomacy focused on persuading the Allies to deploy NATO forces to the Eastern Flank, seeing it as a way to increase the probability of allied involvement in collective defence in case of aggression. According to the Polish authorities, the decisions taken at the Warsaw summit in July 2016 have met Poland's expectations.<sup>11</sup> The country appreciated the Allied decision to establish multinational battalion-size battlegroups in Poland and the Baltic states as part of the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP). Poland declared it would support the battalion in Latvia with a tank company. With other Visegrad Group (V4) countries it also decided to send another infantry company to the Baltic States for exercises.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "Sikorski: Dwie brygady NATO w Polsce i byłbym szczęśliwy," TVN24, 1 April 2014, [www.tvn24.pl](http://www.tvn24.pl).

<sup>9</sup> "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> "Siemoniak zapowiada 'warszawską inicjatywę'. Cel: zmiana NATO," TVN24, 20 May 2015, [www.tvn24.pl](http://www.tvn24.pl).

<sup>11</sup> "Premier Beata Szydło: Szczyt NATO był ogromnym sukcesem Polski," MSZ, 13 July 2016, [www.msz.gov.pl](http://www.msz.gov.pl).

<sup>12</sup> Each country sends a company for a three-month rotation. These troops are not part of EFP.

The Alliance also accepted Polish proposal to create a Multinational Division North East Headquarters in Elbląg (MND NE HQ), which in a crisis could take over the command of NATO battle groups stationed in Poland and Lithuania. As part of the reinforcement of the southern part of the Eastern Flank, Poland assigned a land company (up to 250 soldiers) to the new multinational brigade in Romania.

It was also important for Poland that NATO decided to strengthen its nuclear messaging in the Warsaw Summit Communiqué. Sending a political signal in this matter should lead to more exercises regarding nuclear deterrence missions and encourage Allies to invest in capabilities necessary to perform such a mission (especially dual-capable aircraft).<sup>13</sup> Due to the aggressiveness of Russia towards its neighbours, Poland may also become more interested in changing not only Alliance threat assessments and contingency plans in the region but also in initiating the work on the text of the next NATO strategic concept.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, Poland supported the increased role of NATO in stabilising Europe's southern neighbourhood and strengthening the resilience of the member states to asymmetrical threats, crucial for maintaining Alliance political cohesion. Poland maintained its commitment to NATO's *KFOR* stabilisation mission in Kosovo (300 soldiers) and increased its contribution to the new training and advisory *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan (from 200 to 250 military and civilian advisers). The Polish frigate *ORP Kościuszko* participated in patrols of the Mediterranean Sea as part of the Alliance's permanent naval forces (SNMG-2). Just before the Warsaw NATO Summit, Poland officially decided to participate in a coalition of willing against ISIS and sent four F-16 planes with reconnaissance equipment to Kuwait and personnel to the *Inherent Resolve* command centre in Qatar.<sup>15</sup> At the beginning of 2018, Poland also contributed reconnaissance aircraft and about 100 personnel to the EU mission *EUNAVFOR MED. Sophia*, whose aim was to reduce the smuggling of people to Europe across the Mediterranean.

Poland has consistently demonstrated support for NATO's "open-door" policy. The Polish parliament ratified a bill on the accession of Montenegro to NATO just before the Warsaw summit in July 2016.<sup>16</sup> Poland also supported strengthening NATO's special partnership with Ukraine and Georgia, including an extension of the consultancy and training projects for both countries. It also demonstrated practical support by creating in 2015, together with Lithuania and Ukraine, the tripartite LITPOLUKRBRIG brigade for crisis-response purposes. Additionally, it offered training for the special forces of Ukraine and Georgia. It was also in the strategic interest of Poland to deepen multi-format cooperation with Finland and Sweden, which decided to remain outside NATO but also felt threatened by Russia's actions.

Bilateral military cooperation with the U.S. is of strategic importance for Poland. Since 2013, the bilateral cooperation has been based on regular rotations of American F-16 and C-130 multirole aircraft supported by the permanent presence of about 60 technicians (Aviation Detachment). In accordance with the decisions taken at the Warsaw summit, the U.S. forces took over the command of the NATO battalion-size battlegroup deployed in Orzysz. At the beginning of 2017, the U.S. also began deploying to Poland elements of an armoured brigade and support units, such as combat aviation. The U.S. actions aimed at strengthening deterrence also included moving necessary command elements for division-size forces to Poland, located

<sup>13</sup> For more, see: J. Durkalec, "NATO Adaptation to Russia's Nuclear Challenge," PISM Bulletin, no. 59 (909), 16 September 2016, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>14</sup> Personal assessment of the authors without references to public statements.

<sup>15</sup> The Polish F-16 mission was limited to Iraqi airspace and did not involve operations over Syria. See: "Polscy piloci rozpoczynają misję w Kuwejcie," *Polska Zbrojna*, 4 July 2016, [www.polska-zbrojna.pl](http://www.polska-zbrojna.pl).

<sup>16</sup> "Czarnogóra bliżej NATO. Polski parlament za," *TVN24*, 21 July 2016, [www.tvn24.pl](http://www.tvn24.pl).

in Poznań. The U.S. was involved in augmenting the capacity of the Polish armed forces through enhanced training and by providing equipment for Polish special forces.

One of the pillars of the strategic Polish-American cooperation has been also the development of missile-defence capability, which is supposed to protect Europe against missile attacks from the Middle East (mainly Iran). In 2016, under the so-called European Phased Adaptive Approach, the U.S. started to build an Aegis Ashore base in Polish Redzikowo as part of NATO's Ballistic Missile Defence system (BMD). Completion of the investment was planned for 2018 but has been postponed due to technical problems with subcontractors.<sup>17</sup>

Further prospects for deeper cooperation with the U.S. emerged after Poland decided in March 2018 to acquire American Patriot air- and missile-defence system. These are supposed to provide Poland with the ability to defend some key objects (including the U.S. missile defence base in Redzikowo), as well as and military formations. As the system is movable, it could also be used to defend military contingents participating in missions abroad, increasing the Alliance's ability to conduct all types of missions.

In the run-up to the Brussels summit in July 2018, Poland has been aiming to consolidate the NATO adaptation process along the lines set in Warsaw, two years earlier. Polish priority has been to develop a viable reinforcement strategy. This boils down to increasing the pool of high readiness forces, equipped with heavier capabilities, that could be moved to the Eastern Flank as a follow-on to VJTF and the remaining NRF lower readiness elements, had a crisis with Russia unfold. In line with this, Poland was suggesting it could host an army-level command, which could greatly facilitate the command and control of larger collective-defence operations in the region. The 2018 NATO Summit met most of Poland's expectations. NATO approved changes in command and force structure, which, if implemented, should enhance the credibility of the reinforcement strategy.<sup>18</sup> Poland welcomed the "4x30" plan proposed by the U.S. and the decision to set up the two new commands—the JFC for the Atlantic and the JSEC for the Eastern Flank. Although NATO has not accepted Poland's proposal to set up an army level command, it stated that it was looking forward to establishing the two multi-corps-capable Land Component Commands as soon as possible.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "Minister Jacek Czaputowicz on Polish diplomacy priorities in 2018," Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Poland, 21 March 2018, [www.msz.gov.pl](http://www.msz.gov.pl).

<sup>18</sup> "Szatkowski: Postanowienia szczytu NATO w Brukseli kluczowe dla strategii wzmocnienia," *Defence24.pl*, 17 July 2018, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl).

<sup>19</sup> "Brussels Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels 11–12 July 2018," [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).



Portugal is a founding member of NATO and traditionally sees the Alliance as the mainstay of the country's security, even with the European Union growing in importance. Because of its location on the Iberian Peninsula, the country adds to NATO's capabilities to conduct maritime and air operations in the Atlantic. The bases on Portuguese territory, including the airfield (Lajes Field) in the Azores, may in a time of crisis facilitate sending reinforcements from the U.S. to Europe, and provide control of transport routes from the Atlantic to the Strait of Gibraltar. The Azores base also increases NATO's in-flight refuelling and air-operation capabilities in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The Portuguese authorities perceive Russia as a potential threat to the European rule-based security system.<sup>1</sup> However, given the geographical distance, Russia is not perceived as a direct threat to Portugal, and this assessment has not been changed by the increased activity of Russian aircraft, including strategic bombers, which have intensified flights close to Portuguese air space.<sup>2</sup> Still, the focus of Portugal's attention continues to be on NATO's Southern Flank, and on cyberthreats. Portuguese officials emphasise that both the Eastern and Southern Flanks need reinforcement.<sup>3</sup> In the debate on the future of the Alliance, arguments are being put forward for enhancing energy security by means of protecting sea routes, especially in the South Atlantic, in the pirate-threatened Gulf of Guinea, close to former Portuguese colonies. Portugal also advocates the development of EU strategic autonomy, i.e., the ability of European states to conduct crisis-response missions, which should be treated as complementary to NATO.

Concerns about Portugal's policy towards NATO were caused by the outcome of the November 2015 parliamentary election, which brought to power a coalition of socialists and extreme left-wing parties, including the communists who oppose NATO membership. But a guarantee of continued NATO membership was among the conditions laid down by President Aníbal Cavaco Silva before authorising the socialist leader to form a government.<sup>4</sup>

Portugal's position within the Alliance was also undermined by considerable reductions in defence budget in the wake of the financial crisis which broke out in 2009. Defence spending since 2008 has been maintained at an average level of 1.4% of GDP, but because of the crisis its absolute value dropped from \$3.4 billion in 2008 to \$2.9 billion in 2014, a decline of almost 15%.<sup>5</sup> In search of savings, the country, for example, sold 12 F-16 aircraft to Romania and withdrew from the international NH-90 helicopter programme. Given the constant pressure on stabilisation of public finances, which is a condition for keeping international credit lines open for Portugal, the attainment of the 2% of GDP goal looks fairly unlikely and is not currently envisioned. In 2017, defence expenditures remained at 1.31% of GDP (\$3.1 billion), and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg encouraged the Portuguese authorities to increase

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<sup>1</sup> A. Santos Silva, "The future of Europe in the world, from a Portuguese perspective," Intervention at the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA), Dublin, 9 April 2018, [www.portugal.gov.pt](http://www.portugal.gov.pt).

<sup>2</sup> "Portugal scrambles jets again to intercept Russian bombers," Reuters, 31 October 2014, <http://uk.reuters.com>.

<sup>3</sup> "Ministro da Defesa recusa 'campeonato' sobre flanco mais débil da NATO," *Correio da Manhã*, 10 February 2016, [www.cmjornal.xl.pt](http://www.cmjornal.xl.pt).

<sup>4</sup> E. Zalan, "Portugal president asks left-wingers for EU and Nato pledge," *EUObserver*, 24 November 2015, <https://euobserver.com>.

<sup>5</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2008–2015)," 28 January 2016, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).



spending.<sup>6</sup> At the 2018 NATO summit in Brussels, Prime Minister António Costa informed that Portugal plans to increase its defence spending to 1.66% of GDP by 2024. He added that this number might increase to 1.98% if the country receives requested EU funds, especially from the European Defence Fund and Horizon programme.<sup>7</sup>

Still, Portugal lent support to NATO's operations, demonstrating solidarity with the Eastern Flank countries. In September 2014 it deployed six multi-purpose F-16 aircraft to the enhanced Baltic Air Policing mission (its second contribution to the operation), and in 2016 it sent four aircraft, while taking over mission command from Spain.<sup>8</sup> In 2015, Portuguese troops participated in an artillery exercise in Lithuania, a frigate reinforced NATO's SNMG-1 force, whose operating area includes the Baltic Sea, and four F-16 aircraft took part in Air Policing in Romania (which is in the final stages of purchasing these aircraft from Portugal). In 2018, Portugal for the fourth time contributed F-16 aircraft (four jets) to Baltic Air Policing. While it has periodically rotated a company (100–150 troops) to Lithuania for training, it has not assigned land troops to the multinational battalion-sized battlegroups deployed on the Eastern Flank since 2017.

Responding to the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) and wishing to adjust the command structure to a collective defence mission, Portugal sent representatives to the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) in Lithuania and Poland. In 2015, together with Italy and Spain, Portugal hosted *Trident Juncture 2015*, NATO's biggest exercise since 2002 which involved around 36,000 troops.

Portugal maintains very close relations with the United States, if only because of its 500,000-strong diaspora in that country. The U.S. presence at Lajes Field has for many years provided the backbone of bilateral collaboration. But, as part of cutbacks in Europe, the number of U.S. personnel was reduced from 650 to 150. The Portuguese government has sought intensely to maintain at least a part of the U.S. presence, for example for intelligence purposes. Portugal is participating in the NATO *Resolute Support Mission*, with 193 troops as of September 2018. It is also a member of the U.S.-led international coalition against ISIS and has been deploying around 30 military instructors in Iraq since May 2015.

Cybersecurity is coming into the focus of Portugal's attention. Having participated for several years in various cyberdefence projects, especially smart-defence initiatives, the country began supporting the request for NATO to recognise cyberspace as an operational domain. Following a decision taken in early 2016, Portugal will host the NATO Communications, Information and Cyber Academy in Oeiras, to be established in Lisbon to replace the NATO Communications and Information Systems School, previously based in Italy.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "NATO says Portugal's growth allows for defence spending boost," *The Portugal News Online*, 15 February 2018, [www.theportugalnews.com](http://www.theportugalnews.com); Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>7</sup> "NATO: Portugal vai dedicar 1,66% do PIB à Defesa até 2024," *Jornal de Negócios*, 11 July 2018, [www.jornaldenegocios.pt](http://www.jornaldenegocios.pt).

<sup>8</sup> B. Jones, "British, Portuguese fighters take over Baltic air policing," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 29 April 2016, [www.janes.com](http://www.janes.com).

<sup>9</sup> Portugal is the leader of the Multinational Cyber Defence Education and Training Project, seeking to develop a Cyberdefence Curriculum (to provide the conceptual, doctrinal and didactic framework for NATO officers training in cyberdefence) and a CIS E-learning project. It also contributes to major smart-defence initiatives aimed at cybersecurity: the Netherlands-led Multinational Cyber Defence Capability Development (MN CD2) Project, and the Belgium-led Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP) Project. Cf. The address by the Portuguese defence minister to the NATO cyberdefence conference in Lisbon, 28 April 2016, [www.portugal.gov.pt](http://www.portugal.gov.pt).

From the Portuguese perspective, the NATO summit in Warsaw achieved its main objectives, which included strengthening defence and deterrence in the Eastern Flank and enhancing the projection of stability in the south.<sup>10</sup> Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa stressed after the summit that his country was engaged both in strengthening NATO in the east and the south, but had a special interest in maritime security and would play a major role in integrating the NATO presence in the Mediterranean. He also indicated that Portugal will play a greater role in cyberdefence.

Portugal favours a double-track policy towards Russia, both within NATO and the EU. At the Warsaw summit, Defence Minister José Alberto de Azeredo Lopes claimed that Portugal does not ignore the developments in Ukraine and supports deterrence measures but does not perceive Russia as an enemy and is a strong supporter of dialogue with it.<sup>11</sup>

Speaking after the 2018 NATO summit in Brussels, Minister Azeredo Lopes assessed the meeting as positive. At the same time, he reiterated his call for the development of a new NATO Strategic Concept and further increase in the Alliance's role on the Southern Flank and abilities to counter transnational threats.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Primeiro-ministro português diz que objetivos da cimeira da NATO foram cumpridos," *Portugal Digital*, 10 July 2016, [www.portugaldigital.com.br](http://www.portugaldigital.com.br).

<sup>11</sup> "Para Portugal é claro que 'a Rússia não é um estado inimigo'," *TSF Radio Noticias*, 8 July 2016, [www.tsf.pt](http://www.tsf.pt).

<sup>12</sup> "Azeredo Lopes defende necessidade de "refundar" a NATO," *Sábado*, 20 September 2018, [www.sabado.pt](http://www.sabado.pt); A. Mehta, "Portugal's defense minister targets NATO defense spending goals," *Defense News*, 25 June 2018, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

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# ROMANIA

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One of the NATO members admitted in 2004 as part of the grand enlargement involving seven Central and Eastern European states, Romania has traditionally regarded membership in the Alliance and special relations with the United States as pillars of its security policy while simultaneously being straightforward in pointing out its perceptions of threats from Russia. Bucharest perceives the Russian annexation of Crimea as having led to a drastic deterioration of Romania's strategic position, primarily because the alignment of forces in the Black Sea region has clearly tipped in Russia's favour. The move also resulted in Russian forces getting closer to the Romanian border, augmenting fears about Moscow's aggressive actions against Moldova, which for the past 25 years has been paralysed by the frozen conflict in Transnistria.

For this reason, soon after annexation of Crimea, Romania emphasised the need for the rapid enhancement of NATO's military presence on its territory. Responding to these calls, Canada deployed six CF-18 Hornet fighters and the Alliance began monitoring Romanian airspace using AWACS aircraft. In addition, U.S. ships began regularly patrolling the Black Sea from the port of Constanta, and the U.S. strengthened a Marines contingent at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base, the home station for the Black Sea Rotational Force, a rotational deployment of U.S. Marines to the Black Sea, Balkans, and Caucasus that began in 2010.<sup>1</sup>

NATO's Newport summit is seen in Romania as having been the first step in responding to threats posed by Russian policy. From the Romanian perspective, the key Newport summit decisions regarded bolstering NATO engagement in the Black Sea, creating contingency plans for Romania and Bulgaria, setting up the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), which can be deployed if tensions in the Black Sea escalate, and forming two NATO command elements on Romanian territory. The first element is the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU), which reached operational readiness in September 2015. The second element is the Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast, which opened in December 2015 and became fully operational in 2018.<sup>2</sup> Romania made legislative changes in 2015 to allow Allied forces to station troops and store equipment on its territory.<sup>3</sup> The country is an advocate of enhancing deterrence capabilities against any kind of threat on the Alliance's Eastern Flank, whether in its northeastern or southeastern section.

Romania wants NATO to place an equal emphasis on the response to the diverse challenges on the Eastern and Southern Flanks of the Alliance, and in this context it expressed readiness to support the NATO mission in the Aegean Sea, which monitors people-smuggling routes.<sup>4</sup> But the country has pointed out that the main responsibility for countering irregular migration should rest with the European Union. Romania has also expressed clear fears that too intense a focus on the Southern Flank would draw attention away from threats from the east.

Romania's priority for the Warsaw summit was to create a regular format for joint naval exercises in the Black Sea, which would increase the visibility of the Alliance in the region and shorten the time of reaction to a potential crisis. Bucharest's ambition was to develop

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<sup>1</sup> For more, see: "Black Sea Rotational Force," *Marines*, [www.marforeur.marines.mil](http://www.marforeur.marines.mil).

<sup>2</sup> "Mihnea Motoc a discutat cu Jens Stoltenberg despre pregătirea summit-ului NATO de la Varşovia," *Mediafax*, 21 January 2016, [www.mediafax.ro](http://www.mediafax.ro).

<sup>3</sup> "Simona Halep s-a despartit de cel mai vechi om din echipa sa," *Ziare.com*, 14 June 2016, [www.ziare.com](http://www.ziare.com); "Iohannis a promulgat Legea privind staționarea și tranzitul trupelor străine pe teritoriul României," *Mediafax*, 2 July 2015, [www.mediafax.ro](http://www.mediafax.ro).

<sup>4</sup> A. Moise, "Cioloș: Sperăm ca NATO să-și întărească prezența pe flancul estic și în zona Mării Negre," *Mediafax*, 8 March 2016, [www.mediafax.ro](http://www.mediafax.ro).

cooperation with Bulgaria and Turkey, and then to broaden it through the participation of other Allies, which would give the initiative a NATO dimension. The Romanian initiative was not supported by Bulgaria and Turkey and, consequently, was not reflected in the Warsaw summit's final communiqué.<sup>5</sup> The Allies postponed the decision and stated that they "will continue to support, as appropriate, regional efforts by the Black Sea littoral states aimed at ensuring security and stability" and that they will assess options for a strengthened "NATO maritime presence" in the Black Sea.<sup>6</sup> Despite the setback, the Romanian politicians underlined that Romania would continue to promote the initiative.

Although the Warsaw summit did not bring specific NATO decisions regarding the strengthening of the presence of air forces in the Black Sea region, in 2017, NATO launched the air policing mission over Romania.<sup>7</sup> A concrete result of the Warsaw summit was strengthening the presence of NATO land forces in Romania (tailored forward presence). A multinational brigade (3,000 to 5,000 soldiers) was established based on a functioning Romanian unit and should conduct regular exercises in the region. The brigade was not of a combat character, which was justified by the smaller threat to the NATO countries in the Black Sea region than the countries in the Baltic Sea region. However, it allowed an increase in the number of exercises and visibility of the Alliance and could provide a mechanism to quickly strengthen the NATO presence in a sudden crisis. In 2017, NATO agreed to strengthen the Allied naval forces in the Black Sea.

Romania is one of 16 countries in the Alliance planning to spend at least 2% of GDP per year on defence by 2024. Romanian spending increased from 1.35% of GDP in 2014 to 1.80% in 2017 (from \$2.46 billion to \$3.77 billion).<sup>8</sup> Priority investments include strengthening air-defence capabilities. In 2016–2017, the Romanian air force received 12 F-16 aircraft purchased in 2013 from Portugal. Romania also planned to purchase 40 new F-16 aircraft to have three squadrons (about 16 aircraft each).<sup>9</sup> In 2017, it signed an agreement with the U.S. to purchase seven Patriot firing units (28 launchers).

Bilateral relations with the U.S. are of particular importance for Romania because it is seen as a key element of deterrence towards Russia.<sup>10</sup> Based on an agreement signed in 2005 with the U.S., small U.S. Marine Corps units are stationed in Romania. After the deployment of an American armoured brigade combat team in 2017, its elements were to periodically carry out exercises in Romania as well.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the Romanian air force base in Deveselu hosts U.S. radar and launchers with SM-3 missile interceptors, which are part of the NATO ballistic

<sup>5</sup> V. Socor, "NATO Can Refloat Romania's Black Sea Naval Initiative (Part Two)," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 13, no. 130, 19 July 2016, [www.jamestown.org](http://www.jamestown.org); V. Socor, "NATO Can Refloat Romania's Black Sea Naval Initiative (Part Three)," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 13, no. 133, 22 July 2016, [www.jamestown.org](http://www.jamestown.org).

<sup>6</sup> "Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8–9 July 2016," para. 23, 41, NATO, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>7</sup> *Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meetings of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Heads of State and Government*, 8 June 2016, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int); "Powietrzna misja Polaków nad Bałkanami," *Polska Zbrojna*, 3 June 2016, [www.polska-zbrojna.pl](http://www.polska-zbrojna.pl).

<sup>8</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>9</sup> "Defence Minister: Romania wants to complete the F16 squadron with 4 aircraft, 36 more over longer term," *The Romania Journal*, 20 February 2018, [www.romaniajournal.ro](http://www.romaniajournal.ro).

<sup>10</sup> "U.S. Relations with Romania, Fact Sheet," U.S. State Department–Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, 20 October 2016, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

<sup>11</sup> "Media: US will send a whole armored battalion to Romania," *Romania-Insider*, 8 July 2016, [www.romania-insider.com](http://www.romania-insider.com).

missile defence (BMD) system. Following the achievement of initial operational capability by the BMD system, NATO took command and control over the American installation.<sup>12</sup>

Romania is a supporter of the simultaneous strengthening of NATO's ability to act in all directions to maintain the political cohesion of the Alliance. It contributes to the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan, where it maintains 650 troops and 50 police. After the NATO summit in Warsaw, Romania announced it would send 50 soldiers on a training mission to Iraq as part of the international coalition fighting ISIS. Romania has also contributed to the *Operation Sea Guardian* in the Mediterranean.<sup>13</sup>

Romania supports closer cooperation between NATO and the EU, especially in cyberdefence and the protection of critical infrastructure. These areas are of particular interest to Romania largely because of the increased Russian presence near Romanian oil and gas fields in the Black Sea.<sup>14</sup> Romania also perceives the open-door policy as a pillar of the European security system. Therefore, it consistently supports deeper NATO ties, not only with Ukraine and Georgia but also with Moldova. From the Romanian perspective, the presence of Russian forces in separatist Transnistria might be used to permanently undermine Moldova's territorial integrity, destabilise the country, and exercise military and political pressure on Romania.

According to Romania, it is necessary to work out a balance between strengthening deterrence and engagement with Russia, as it sees no contradiction between these two tracks. However, the basis for the dialogue is the clear message that the Alliance is united, strong, and capable of defending its principles and values.<sup>15</sup>

In the run-up to the 2018 NATO Summit in Brussels, Romania advocated for a more permanent NATO presence on its territory in the framework of multinational brigade. During the summit, it offered to develop a land command for the Corps-sized formation, which could be integrated into a NATO command structure during the crisis.<sup>16</sup> To demonstrate its support for out-of-area missions, it decided to increase its military presence in Afghanistan from 700 to 950 troops.

<sup>12</sup> "Warsaw Summit Communiqué," *op. cit.*, para. 57; "Allied Air Command takes over NATO's first permanent Ballistic Missile Defence resource," Allied Air Command, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, 19 August 2016, [www.airn.nato.int](http://www.airn.nato.int).

<sup>13</sup> *Romanian frigate joins NATO operation Sea Guardian*, "The Naval Today," 6 October 2017, [navaltoday.com](http://navaltoday.com).

<sup>14</sup> "România în NATO: Securitatea energetică," Delegația Permanentă a României la NATO, <http://nato.mae.ro>; "Zacamant important de gaze naturale, descoperit in Marea Neagra," *Ziare.com*, 14 October 2015, [www.ziare.com](http://www.ziare.com); "ExxonMobil si Petrom, un nou pas in vanatoarea pentru resursele din Marea Neagra," *Ziare.com*, 25 June 2013, [www.ziare.com](http://www.ziare.com).

<sup>15</sup> "Discursul lui Iohannis la conferința de la Munchen," *Cotidianul*, 13 July 2016, [www.cotidianul.ro](http://www.cotidianul.ro).

<sup>16</sup> B. Matei, "Decisions at the NATO summit in Brussels," *Radio Romania International*, 13 July 2018, [www.rri.ro](http://www.rri.ro).



Slovakia, which prepared for NATO membership together with Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, joined the Alliance only in the second round of enlargement in 2004 because of delays in democratic reforms in the country. Given its small military potential and population (5 million), Slovakia is unable, on its own, to guarantee its national security, which it sees as resting on NATO membership and Allied commitments.<sup>1</sup> The current governing coalition formed after the March 2016 election, involving the parties Direction-Social Democracy (SMER-SD), the Slovak National Party (SNS), We Are Family, and Most-Híd, emphasises in its manifesto NATO's fundamental importance for the pursuit of Slovak national interests.<sup>2</sup>

For historical and cultural reasons, Slovakia perceives Russia primarily as a friendly country of the same civilisational fabric, rather than as a potential threat. Even after the annexation of Crimea the Slovak government stressed that it did not feel directly threatened by Russia (suggesting possible opposition to EU sanctions) and made a host of political gestures towards Moscow.<sup>3</sup> Despite Slovakia sharing a border with Ukraine, there has been very little information in the Slovak public space about the national security implications of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

The Slovak government initially showed strong opposition from calls from other states for NATO forces to be based permanently on their territory.<sup>4</sup> Prime Minister Robert Fico said that if his government found itself under pressure on the question of hosting Allied bases, it would call a referendum.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Slovakia distanced itself from the first group of NATO members (Poland, the Baltic countries, Romania, and Bulgaria) that asked the Alliance to form NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) on their territories in order to enable the rapid deployment of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). Slovakia requested a NFIU only in February 2015,<sup>6</sup> putting the delay down to the need for such units to be first formed in countries bordering Russia (experts were inclined to see political considerations as the actual motive).<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding this, the authorities positively assessed the findings of the summit in Wales, leading to the credibility of NATO's defence capabilities. Slovakia declared its readiness to establish a logistics base for its forces to store ammunition. The country also provided training grounds for Alliance exercises, decided to increase its contribution to the Headquarters of the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE HQ) in Szczecin and delegated officers to the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) in Lithuania.

As the Warsaw summit drew nearer, the Slovak government argued that, while it did not seek a NATO military presence (similar to the position of the Czech Republic) and did not feel directly threatened, it supported enhanced forward presence on the Eastern Flank.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic," 2005, Ministerstvo Obrany Slovenskej Republiky, [www.mosr.sk](http://www.mosr.sk).

<sup>2</sup> "Government publishes coalition agreement," *The Slovak Spectator*, 13 April 2016, <http://spectator.sme.sk>.

<sup>3</sup> J. Lopatka, M. Santa, "Slovakia nurtures special ties to Russia, despite EU sanctions," Reuters, 22 May 2014, <http://uk.reuters.com>.

<sup>4</sup> "Slovak PM follows Czechs in ruling out foreign NATO troops," Reuters, 4 June 2014, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>5</sup> "Slovak PM to initiate referendum if Slovakia was to host NATO base," *Xinhua*, 13 September 2014.

<sup>6</sup> "Slovakia asks NATO to create special domestic based unit," *The Slovak Spectator*, 11 February 2015, <http://spectator.sme.sk>.

<sup>7</sup> M. Suplata, J. Schneider, M. Majer, "Crisis in Ukraine and the V4's Defence and Military Adaptation," *CEID Strengthening Alliances*, 4 October 2015.

<sup>8</sup> "Lajcak: We Have Full Understanding for Allies Requesting NATO Bases," *News Now*, 22 February 2016, <http://newsnow.tasr.sk>.

From the Slovak perspective, the Warsaw summit should primarily demonstrate NATO's unity. Slovakia also called for dialogue between NATO and Russia to prevent escalation and enable a discussion on Ukraine.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, Slovak authorities demonstrated principled support for NATO's open-door policy, most pronouncedly with respect to the Balkans, but also when it comes to Georgia's transatlantic ambitions.<sup>10</sup>

Slovakia supports the mission in Afghanistan and believes NATO should also engage more strongly in Southern Flank stabilisation, but mostly by means of enhancing the potential of partner states rather than by launching crisis-response operations. Threats from the south, it argues, transcend the military dimension so often as to necessitate an improvement in the Alliance's cooperation with the EU, the United Nations, and the OSCE.<sup>11</sup>

Slovakia's contribution to Allied security is sometimes questioned by its small defence expenditure, further affected by cutbacks after the fiscal crisis. Military expenditures dropped from 1.46% of GDP (\$1.3 billion) in 2008 to 0.99% of GDP (\$964 million) in 2014. By NATO estimates, expenditures rose by 2017 to 1.19% of GDP (\$1.28 billion).<sup>12</sup> This increase was consistent with the Slovak announcement from the Newport summit to stop the cuts in defence spending and increase them to 1.6% of GDP by 2020. In 2017, Slovakia extended these plans to reach 2% of GDP by 2024, to meet the Allied goal from the summit in Wales.<sup>13</sup>

Slovakia's relations with the United States in recent years have been informed by its membership in NATO and participation in Allied missions. The country has contributed about 35 personnel to the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan, with a mandate providing for the possibility of increasing this figure to 66 soldiers. At the end of 2017, Slovakia also sent 25 soldiers to support NATO training activities in Iraq for at least a year. Most importantly, Slovakia began strengthening bilateral relations with the United States through armed forces modernisation projects. In 2015, it decided to purchase nine U.S. UH60M Black Hawk helicopters, worth more than \$260 million, which will replace the long-serving Mi-17s and help break reliance on Russian spare parts. Another way of fostering the partnership with the U.S. is through joint exercises. In 2015, 500 U.S. troops took part in the *Slovak Shield* manoeuvres. In 2018–2019, the U.S. is to invest in two Slovak military airports (in Sliač and Malacky-Kuchyna) to better adapt them to the technical requirements of American aircraft.

At the NATO Warsaw summit, President Andrej Kiska announced that Slovakia together with other Visegrad Group (V4) countries would maintain a rotational presence of about 150 troops in the Baltic States.<sup>14</sup> However, these forces had a training character and were deployed in Latvia in April–June 2017 as part of the NATO Reassurance Measures (adopted in 2014) rather than Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP). Slovakia decided to join EFP only in 2017, and deployed 152 soldiers in 2018 to the NATO battalion-size battlegroup in Latvia. Earlier, from the second half of 2017, two Slovak officers were present in the battalion.

<sup>9</sup> "Slovakia backs calling Russia-NATO Council meeting to discuss Ukraine issue—Slovak foreign minister," Interfax-Ukraine, 2 February 2016, [www.kyivpost.com](http://www.kyivpost.com).

<sup>10</sup> "Slovakian President: We support Georgia's EU, NATO integration," 30 May 2016, <http://agenda.ge>.

<sup>11</sup> "Lajcak: Slovakia to support extension of NATO mission in Afghanistan," [http://195.46.72.16/free/jsp3/search/view/ViewerPure\\_en.jsp?Document=..%2F..%2FInput\\_text%2Fonline%2F15%2F12%2Ftbazc1k585524.dat.1%40Fondy&QueryText=.](http://195.46.72.16/free/jsp3/search/view/ViewerPure_en.jsp?Document=..%2F..%2FInput_text%2Fonline%2F15%2F12%2Ftbazc1k585524.dat.1%40Fondy&QueryText=)

<sup>12</sup> "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>13</sup> "Slovakia plans to meet NATO defence budget target by 2024," *Yahoo News*, 2 September 2017, [www.yahoo.com/news](http://www.yahoo.com/news).

<sup>14</sup> "Kiska presented Slovakia's commitments at the NATO summit," President of the Slovak Republic, 9 July 2016, [www.prezident.sk](http://www.prezident.sk).

In a gesture of support to Ukraine, during the Warsaw summit, Slovakia agreed to lead the NATO Trust Fund for demining and the disposal of unexploded ordnance in Ukraine, to which it contributed €50,000.<sup>15</sup>

In September 2016, the NFIU was activated in Slovakia and the unit reached full readiness in mid-2017. Also in 2017, the NATO Counter Intelligence Centre of Excellence in Kraków opened, established at the joint initiative of Poland and Slovakia.

At the 2018 NATO summit in Brussels, Slovakia reaffirmed its commitment to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2024 and offered greater support for NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> The Slovak delegation underlined the importance of NATO's open-door policy and cooperation with the EU, including on military mobility. In a Joint Statement of the Visegrád Group Ministers of Defence, it also reaffirmed its support for enhanced forward presence and the new NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI), which should improve the military readiness of the Alliance.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Slovakia to lead NATO Demining Trust Fund in Ukraine," *The Slovak Spectator*, 11 July 2016, <http://spectator.sme.sk>.

<sup>16</sup> "SVK delegation to the NATO Summit in Brussels reaffirms Slovakia's commitments and support to NATO's open-door policy and closer NATO-EU cooperation," Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, 11 July 2018, [www.mosr.sk](http://www.mosr.sk).

<sup>17</sup> "V4 Defence Ministers Adopted a Joint Statement on the Brussels NATO Summit," Visegrad Group, 13 July 2018, [www.visegradgropup.eu](http://www.visegradgropup.eu).

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# SLOVENIA

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After gaining independence in 1991, Slovenia set NATO and European Union membership as its priorities. The attainment of these goals in April and May 2004, respectively, ensured state security in terms of territorial defence. This is reflected in Slovenia's military doctrine,<sup>1</sup> the practical implementation of which included, upon accession, assigning the task of policing Slovenian air space to Italy and (since 2013) Hungary, as Slovenia has no combat air force of its own.

Since the start of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, Slovenia has been sending conflicting signals regarding its relations with Russia. On the one hand, Slovenian ministers declared their readiness to maintain trade relations with Russia at an undiminished level<sup>2</sup> and they pronounced themselves in favour of "removing sanctions,"<sup>3</sup> but on the other, they made assurances of continued support for "effective" sanctions<sup>4</sup> and implementation of the Minsk accord, which goes together with the discourse on threats to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>5</sup> At the beginning of August 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin paid an official state visit to Slovenia to commemorate Russian and Red Army soldiers killed during the world wars. Although the trip was short and did not result in political declarations, it was widely perceived as a next step towards the normalisation of relations between European states and Russia.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of defence spending, Slovenia, one of the Alliance's smallest members, lags far behind the leaders. Its defence expenditures are only 70% higher than those of Luxembourg, a country just one-quarter the size of Slovenia. They fell from 1.16% of GDP in 2010 to 0.93% of GDP in 2015 (when it amounted to \$456 million). They then increased and reached 0.98% of GDP in 2017, according to NATO estimates.<sup>7</sup> Under plans adopted by the government in 2018, Slovenian defence expenditures are to rise to 1.1% of GDP in 2023,<sup>8</sup> still well below the NATO defence spending goal of at least 2% of GDP by 2024.

Slovenia is an advocate of close cooperation between NATO and the EU in security and defence, as reflected in its declarations on the development of the armed forces, components of which could take part in operations led by either organisation. In 2018, more than 350 Slovenian personnel served with NATO, EU, and UN missions, including 240 in Kosovo (KFOR).<sup>9</sup> Slovenia contributes to the NATO Response Force (NRF), with a view to supporting the transformation of its armed forces and a further enhancement of "niche" military capabilities,

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<sup>1</sup> B. Furlani et al., *Military Doctrine*, Defensor, 2006, [www.mo.gov.si](http://www.mo.gov.si).

<sup>2</sup> "Slovenia, Russia vow to continue trade cooperation despite tough sanctions," *Xinhua*, 6 May 2015, <http://news.xinhuanet.com>.

<sup>3</sup> "Slovenia for lifting sanctions against Russia, but initiative must come from EU," *Interfax-Ukraine*, 27 July 2015, <http://en.interfax.com.ua>.

<sup>4</sup> "Slovenia supports sanctions against Russia—Slovenian foreign minister in Kyiv," *Interfax-Russia & CIS Diplomatic Panorama*, baza danych ProQuest, 14 July 2015, document ID: 1696250460.

<sup>5</sup> "Address by the Prime Minister Cerar at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly," *KPV*, 30 September 2015, [www.kpv.gov.si](http://www.kpv.gov.si).

<sup>6</sup> D. Stojanovic, "Putin tests West's sanctions resolve on visit to Slovenia," *The Washington Post*, 30 July 2016, [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).

<sup>7</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," *NATO*, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>8</sup> "177<sup>th</sup> regular session of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia," *Government of the Republic of Slovenia*, 19 April 2018, [www.vlada.si](http://www.vlada.si).

<sup>9</sup> "International operations and missions," *Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia*, [www.slovenskavojska.si](http://www.slovenskavojska.si).

such as special operations forces.<sup>10</sup> Such was the motive behind the dispatch of Slovenian contingents to NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) in Belgium, and Slovenia's presence at the *Sabre Strike 15* exercises. The goal of reinforcing Slovenian defence capabilities also underpinned participation in a joint smart-defence initiative, taken together with Bulgaria, Croatia, and Hungary, to further collaboration in the field of Special Operations Forces (SOF) Aviation. At the Warsaw summit, Slovenia declared it would consider participation in one of the battalion-size battlegroups that will be deployed on NATO's Eastern Flank.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, it joined the unit in Latvia and has been contributing around 50 troops since its first rotation and maintaining that number in later rotations. The chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) defence platoon constitutes the core of the Slovenian contribution.

With an eye to its own security, Slovenia has been supporting NATO and EU membership bids by Alliance partners. It has publicly advocated for the accession of Montenegro.<sup>12</sup> Declarations of support for other countries have been less frequent but Slovenia pledged to contribute to the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) at the Warsaw summit.<sup>13</sup> Slovenia emphasises the need to renew partnership commitments and the open-door policy (addressed to NATO's neighbours to the east and the south), which would help the Alliance with adaptation and with finding a response to external threats. It also stresses that NATO should not focus exclusively on threats from a single direction.<sup>14</sup> This approach found reflection in Slovenia's support at the February 2016 meeting of NATO defence ministers for the German-Greek-Turkish proposal to launch a maritime mission in the Aegean Sea, to monitor the movements of boats used by human traffickers to carry migrants.<sup>15</sup>

At the 2018 summit in Brussels, Slovenia focused on the Allied policy to build up the capacity of its partners from the Middle East and North Africa to better deal with regional threats themselves. In this context, Slovenia pointed to the relevance of the Hub for the South, established within JFC Naples, which it supported with a representative.<sup>16</sup> Prime Minister Miro Cerar confirmed also Slovenian plans to increase its defence expenditure by 60% in nominal terms by 2023, yet still far from the 2% of GDP goal in relative numbers.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Annual Report of the Ministry of Defence for 2014," Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Slovenia, [www.mo.gov.si](http://www.mo.gov.si).

<sup>11</sup> "Prime Minister Cerar: NATO Warsaw summit pivotal for a more appropriate response of the alliance to the modern security environment," Communication from the Slovenian Government, 9 July 2016, [www.vlada.si](http://www.vlada.si).

<sup>12</sup> "Slovenia pledges to increase defence spending," *Xinhua*, 13 July 2015, <http://news.xinhuanet.com>.

<sup>13</sup> "Slovenia joins support for Georgia," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, 9 July 2016, [www.mzz.gov.si](http://www.mzz.gov.si).

<sup>14</sup> "Meeting of NATO Defence Ministers," Permanent Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to NATO, <http://bruselj.misija.si>.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> *Minister Erjavec attends NATO Summit in Brussels*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, 11 July 2018, [www.mzz.gov.si](http://www.mzz.gov.si).

<sup>17</sup> *Slovenia's NATO Ambassador: Country Can and Must Raise Defence Spending*, *Total Slovenia News*, 8 June 2018, [www.total-slovenia-news.com](http://www.total-slovenia-news.com).



A NATO member since 1982, Spain was part of the Western security system for most of the Cold War under bilateral agreements with the U.S. that allowed the stationing of American forces in the country. Its path to the Alliance, made possible by the end of Gen. Francisco Franco's rule, was crowned by full entry into NATO's integrated military structures only in 1999. A major determinant of that outcome was the adaptation of the structure to the new realities through cooperation with Russia, NATO enlargement, and strengthening of the European defence identity within the Alliance. Spain also secured greater operational control over NATO activities in the Western Mediterranean and excluded the stationing of nuclear weapons on its territory.

According to its 2017 National Security Strategy, Spain recognises NATO as the foundation of collective defence in Europe and supports a higher profile for the Alliance on its Southern Flank. Spain attaches significant importance to NATO's abilities for crisis-management operations and enhancing security through cooperation with partners. The instability and conflicts in the Mediterranean are seen as the sources of the biggest threats to Spain, mainly in the form of terrorism, as well as other challenges such as uncountable illegal migration flows. Spain also pays attention to the growing threats and challenges for global security, including in maritime areas and cyberspace. According to the 2017 strategy, Spanish security interests are located in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, North America, and Asia-Pacific, and in relations with the EU, the U.S., Canada, and Australia. Although not having any close historical or economic links with the Russian Federation, Spain recognises its importance as a strategic actor and permanent member of the UN Security Council and that the country's participation in solving international problems is essential. The 2017 strategy, however, is much more critical of Russia than the 2013 document, as it points to a deterioration in Europe's security situation due to Russia's actions against Ukraine. It also mentions Russia's enhancement of its military capabilities, which allows it to project power well beyond its borders, including in the Mediterranean. Nonetheless, Spain stresses the need for "critical but constructive" dialogue with Russia based on a common position in the EU and NATO. Spain is also a key supporter of strengthening defence cooperation within the EU, including its ability to perform crisis-management operations, and closer NATO-EU collaboration, for example, in countering hybrid threats.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding the often-sceptical attitudes to the Alliance as revealed in public debates, Spain is among NATO's strongest European members and makes considerable contributions to a whole spectrum of missions, from supporting partner country capabilities, through crisis-response missions, to territorial defence. In reaction to Russia's aggressive actions, Spanish policy highlights solidarity with the more recent members of the Alliance. Spain declared its support for countries on the Eastern Flank even before the Newport summit while also calling for NATO to bolster the Southern Flank.<sup>2</sup> Spain regularly participates in the Baltic Air Policing mission, to which it has sent both Eurofighter aircraft (4 jets in January–April 2015 and 6 jets since May 2018) and EF-18 Hornet fighters (5 jets in May–August 2017). At the end of 2015, Spain also sent a frigate to the Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG-1), which operated in the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea throughout the next year.

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<sup>1</sup> "National Security Strategy 2017," Gobierno de España, 1 December 2017, [www.dsn.gob.es](http://www.dsn.gob.es).

<sup>2</sup> "During his first official visit to Spain Pedro Morenés receives Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR)," Gobierno de España, 2 July 2014, [www.lamoncloa.gob.es](http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es).

After the Newport summit decision to form the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF)—so called “spearhead”—Spain agreed to take command of the unit’s annual rotation in 2016. It then took part in the exercise *Brilliant Jump*, conducted in 2016 in Poland to test the VJTF’s capability to deploy to NATO’s Eastern Flank.<sup>3</sup> Spain, together with Portugal and Italy, hosted the *Trident Juncture 2015* exercise in October 2015, NATO’s largest manoeuvres since 2002, during which the Alliance certified the NATO Response Force (NRF) and demonstrated the ability to conduct a large, high-intensity operation. Spain also sent a representative to the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) in Poland and joined the NFIU in Latvia in 2017.

As part of the Southern Flank strengthening effort, Spain regularly assigns a frigate to the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG-2) and in January 2015, it deployed Patriot air- and missile-defence systems to Turkey and sent 300 troops (later increased to 480 troops) to Iraq to train Iraqi security forces fighting ISIS. Faced with threats from the Middle East and North Africa, the Spanish conservative government expressed its readiness to back an extension of the international fight against ISIS to include the territory of Libya.<sup>4</sup> It also has not ruled out the possibility that future stabilisation measures in Libya could be conducted with NATO participation. Spain symbolically contributes to the NATO *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan (around 10 soldiers in 2015–2017), but at the beginning of 2018, it announced an increase in that contingent to 95 troops. Spain also is to double the number of its soldiers participating in the *EU Training Mission* (EUTM) in Mali to almost 300 and to strengthen its contingent in the United Nations’ *UNIFIL* mission in Lebanon, which amounted to 600 troops in 2017. Spanish ships have been continuously taking part in the EU maritime operations: *EUNAVFOR Atalanta* off the coast of Somalia and, together with maritime aircraft, in *EUNAVFORMED Sophia* in the Mediterranean.

The credibility of Spain’s military capabilities has been adversely affected by the financial crisis, forcing deep cuts in the country’s defence expenditures, which shrank from 1.14% of GDP in 2008 to 0.81% in 2016, when they were at \$11.8 billion. According to NATO estimates, they have grown by more than \$2 billion in 2017 and reached 0.92% of GDP.<sup>5</sup> Also in 2017, Spain announced a further increase to 1.5–1.6% of GDP in 2024, hence, short of the Newport summit target of spending at least 2% of GDP on defence by that year. Such a ratio might be achieved by Spain no sooner than in 2028.<sup>6</sup> However, even these plans could be curtailed, which was signalled by the new Spanish left government that came into office in June 2018. Its new Foreign Minister Josep Borrell, shortly before the NATO summit in July, commenting on a letter from U.S. President Donald Trump, stressed in public that Spaniards spend less but “we use it really well.” It is unclear if the American demand was repeated during the first and short meeting between new Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and the U.S. president during the summit in Brussels.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> M. Górk, “Brilliant Jump 2016: Wojska szpicy NATO są już w Polsce,” *Polska Zbrojna*, 18 May 2016, <http://polska-zbrojna.pl>.

<sup>4</sup> “Spain defense minister eyes international action in Libya,” *Al Arabiya English*, 6 June 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net>.

<sup>5</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. “Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2008–2015),” NATO, 28 January 2016, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int); “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017),” NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>6</sup> M. González, “Spain commits to boosting military spending by 80% up to 2024,” *El País*, 28 December 2017, <https://elpais.com>.

<sup>7</sup> Compare: M. González, “After Trump letter, Spanish PM avoids committing to more military spending,” *El País*, 4 July 2018, <https://elpais.com>; T. Małecka, “Hiszpania: Nowy rząd wyhamuje modernizację armii,” *Defence24*, 24 June 2018, [www.defence24.pl](http://www.defence24.pl); “Spain’s new PM meets Donald Trump for 1st time at the NATO summit in Brussels,” Agencia EFE, 11 July 2018.

Bilateral relations with the United States are both sensitive historically (the NATO membership referendum linked the move to a reduction of the U.S. military presence in Spain) and strategically important (under signed agreements, Spanish territory may be used for the deployment of U.S. reinforcements and to conduct activities in Europe's neighbourhood). An issue of special importance is Spanish support for NATO's ballistic missile defence (BMD) system. Based on arrangements from 2011–2012, four U.S. Aegis destroyers were rebased to Naval Station Rota by 2015. They constitute part of the American contribution to, and the core of, the NATO EPAA missile defense system. Additionally, Spanish F-102 frigates participate in tests and exercises of the EPAA system. In 2015, Spain signed an agreement allowing for an increase in the number of U.S. Marines stationed at Morón de la Frontera airbase from 850 to 3,000. The aim of the arrangement is to enhance the U.S.'s abilities to conduct operations in the Mediterranean and Africa, with the latter a new area of Spanish-American cooperation.

Spain consistently supports NATO enlargement to the Balkans and especially Macedonia, which has met the membership conditions but was blocked for many years by Greece.<sup>8</sup> On Georgia and Ukraine, though, the government tends to speak about support for the European and transatlantic path, avoiding any more definitive declarations.<sup>9</sup> The Spanish priority at the Warsaw summit was to adopt a strategy for the Southern Flank. Spain continuously advocated a greater NATO presence in Iraq and North Africa, including Libya, also during period of 2017–2018.

At the NATO summit in Warsaw, the Spanish delegation stressed that their country is a credible ally demonstrating solidarity with Eastern Flank states. Then Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy indicated that relations between NATO and Russia are based on a combination of deterrence and dialogue. He underlined that Russia is "our most important neighbour and a key player in many international theatres."<sup>10</sup> After the summit, Spain decided to join NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Latvia, to which it has been sending around 300 troops, including a mechanised infantry company with Leopard-2 tanks, since the units' first rotation. Spain continued its presence in Latvia also in summer 2018, when the new government contributed another rotation of a mechanised company with the same level of troops.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "New Turkish, Spanish envoys present credentials to Macedonian president," BBC Monitoring, 13 October 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1610773945/B9025C10FE4340A4PQ/1?accountid=62951>.

<sup>9</sup> T. Svanidze, "Spain's Foreign Minister Says New Embassy to Open in Georgia," *Georgia Today*, 1 March 2016, <http://georgiatoday.ge>.

<sup>10</sup> "Rajoy: De esta cumbre sale una OTAN más unida, más fortalecida y mejor preparada," Gobierno de España, 9 July 2016, [www.lamoncloa.gob.es](http://www.lamoncloa.gob.es).

<sup>11</sup> NATO, "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," *Factsheet*, Brussels, June 2018.

Turkey joined NATO in the first round of enlargement in 1952, and during the Cold War, its geostrategic location made it a key Alliance member, instrumental in restraining Soviet advances in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. After the collapse of the USSR, Turkey remained key, as a member that could help stabilise the Middle East and balance Iranian influence. The change in its strategic position, though, has meant a steady decline in NATO's importance for Turkey, not only as a pillar of national security but also as a mechanism for integrating the country with Western Europe and the United States. After the Justice and Development Party (Adaletve Kalkinma Partisi, AKP) came to power in 2002, Turkey began to search for new ways of influencing its Muslim environment, which also led to a more assertive policy towards the Allies. Tensions arose in relations with NATO over Turkey's opening up to sanctions-hit Iran, its attitude towards plans for deploying Alliance missile-defence assets on Turkish territory, and the decision to purchase air- and missile-defence systems, first from China and later from Russia.<sup>1</sup> Also among some countries of NATO concerns arose about directions of AKP's foreign and internal politics. At the same period, Turkey's relations with Russia were growing more robust, assuming a strategic nature in the field of energy.

With considerable military potential on its own and nuclear security guarantees within NATO, Turkey has been able to balance Russia's military potential in the Black Sea region, even after Russia's annexation of Crimea. For these reasons, Turkey's reaction to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine was fairly restrained and the country steered clear of the sanction route taken by the EU and the United States, despite the fact that the Tatar minority in Crimea, supported by Turkey, has found itself in a difficult situation politically, and that the annexation made it easier for Russia to dominate militarily the Black Sea. The Turkish approach to NATO's adaptation agenda was only galvanised when Russia became involved in the Syrian conflict on the side of the Bashar al-Assad regime, opposed by Turkey. After the downing of a Russian Su-24 bomber violating Turkish air space in October 2015, the relations between the two states deteriorated drastically. In May 2016, Turkey, in a pronouncement by Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, declared Crimea to be part of Ukraine and entered into talks about the Tatar minority on the peninsula. The country also began expanding industrial and defence cooperation with Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> In June 2016, President Recep Erdogan apologised for downing the Russian plane, which opened the way for improvement in bilateral relations.

Still, since 2011, its strategic focus has invariably been on Syria. Turkey has sought to remove President Assad from power, and at the early stages of the conflict in Syria, it considered Syrian military activity to be the main threat. In 2012, Turkey twice requested Art. 4 consultations, after one of its aircraft was downed by Syrian air defences (in June) and after its territory was shelled (in October). Responding to the threat faced by Turkey, NATO decided in 2012 to deploy the Patriot air- and missile-defence system on the Turkey-Syria border, in a mission carried out by the United States, Germany, the Netherlands and (since 2016) also Spain and Italy. Later, the Alliance increased its border-monitoring capabilities, by using AWACS early-warning aircraft and strengthening the presence of its standing maritime group in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> But, in parallel to the growing destabilisation in Syria, Turkey increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> S. Hacaoglu, "Turkey Chooses Russia over NATO for Missile Defense," *Bloomberg*, 13 July 2017, [www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com).

<sup>2</sup> "Turkey, Ukraine boost ties amid growing tension with Russia," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 9 March 2016. [www.hurriyetdailynews.com](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com).

<sup>3</sup> E. Adamczyk, "NATO recommits to defending Turkey's border with Syria," *UPI*, 8 March 2016, [www.upi.com](http://www.upi.com).



saw a threat from the Kurdish activities, which could lead to the takeover of new territories on the Turkish border and a strengthening of separatist tendencies in Turkey itself. The Turkish government initially distanced itself from the fight against ISIS but it changed approach in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in the town of Suruç (July 2015), making its bases available to an international coalition led by the United States. It also began pointing out that Turkey is the only NATO member to border ISIS-occupied territory and that ISIS poses a direct threat to Turkish security.<sup>4</sup> Defeat of ISIS in the region and support for the Iraqi Security Forces were restated and important goals of Turkey also during the NATO Summit in July 2018.<sup>5</sup>

With the Syrian conflict assuming strategic importance for the country, Turkey found in NATO's 2014 Newport summit an opportunity to present its priorities within a broader strategy for Middle Eastern stabilisation. Given the scale of threats from the south and its bilateral relations with Russia, Turkey did not initially contribute to the formation of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), but in May 2015 it joined Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Poland, and Italy, declaring that it would take command of the VJTF and deploy its main land force component in 2021.<sup>6</sup> As part of the effort to enhance response capability on NATO's Eastern Flank, Turkey joined the Multinational Corps Northeast Headquarters (MNC NE HQ) and sent an officer to the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) in Latvia.

In the lead-up to the Warsaw summit, the Turkish government argued that, while NATO should enhance the capabilities to respond to threats from all directions, the priority focus should be on bolstering the Southern Flank. Together with Germany, Turkey sought increased Alliance involvement in containing the refugee flow by means of monitoring the Turkish-Syrian border with AWACS aircraft, and it succeeded in having a new Aegean mission launched.<sup>7</sup> Judging by pronouncements by Turkish officials, in 2015 the country was ready to back a NATO mission in Syria within a broader coalition as part of a long-term strategy for Syrian stabilisation.<sup>8</sup>

During the NATO summit in Warsaw, Turkish leaders indicated that the Alliance should play a greater role in bringing the wars in Syria and Iraq to an end and be more effective in tackling terrorism and the refugee crisis.<sup>9</sup> They also stressed Turkish support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia and Ukraine,<sup>10</sup> and condemned the oppression of Crimean Tatars.<sup>11</sup> Since NATO did not want to be entangled in another conflict in the Middle East, at the beginning of 2018, Turkish troops entered northern Syria to establish a 30-kilometer deep "safe zone" and limit the advancements of Kurdish militants.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "PM Davutoğlu, ISIS at Turkey's doorstep, direct threat to national security," *Daily Sabah*, 13 May 2015, [www.dailysabah.com](http://www.dailysabah.com).

<sup>5</sup> See "Ankara's security concerns to be conveyed at two-day NATO summit," *Daily Sabah*, 10 July 2018, [www.dailysabah.com](http://www.dailysabah.com); S. Erkuş, "NATO vows to protect Turkey's southern border against threats," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 20 May 2015, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com).

<sup>6</sup> "Turkey offers to take a lead in NATO's rapid reaction forces," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 20 May 2015, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com).

<sup>7</sup> "Germany, Turkey want NATO help to police coast," *EUObserver*, 8 February 2016, <https://euobserver.com>.

<sup>8</sup> "Turkey: Syria land operation possible but not alone," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 11 November 2015, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com).

<sup>9</sup> "Turkey's Erdogan calls on NATO to do more on fighting militant attacks," *Reuters*, 8 July 2016, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>10</sup> "Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu accompanied President Erdoğan during the NATO Summit," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, 17 July 2018, [www.mfa.gov.tr](http://www.mfa.gov.tr).

<sup>11</sup> "Erdogan insists on support for Ukraine, condemns oppression of Crimean Tatars," *Unian Information Agency*, 8 July 2016, [www.unian.info](http://www.unian.info).

<sup>12</sup> "Syria: Turkish ground troops enter Afrin enclave," *BBC News*, 21 January 2018, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk).



Turkey also has been pushing for more decisive NATO actions with regard to human traffickers smuggling people via the Mediterranean Sea. It welcomed the transformation of *Operation Active Endeavour* into *Operation Sea Guardian*, which was eventually launched in November 2016. Since then, Turkey has been intensively contributing ships and aircraft to support the operation.<sup>13</sup>

Despite taking a more assertive approach towards the Allies, Turkey retains significant influence within NATO. It did not withdraw from its agreement to host U.S. nuclear weapons, which are part of the Alliance's deterrence capability, widely believed to be based on its territory within NATO-nuclear sharing agreements. Turkey also established the Istanbul-headquartered Rapid Deployable Turkish Corps to meet the requirements of the new military structure and it successfully sought the activation of a new Allied Land Command headquarters in Izmir. There are 560 Turkish personnel in the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan, in charge of Kabul airport security, among other assignments, and the Turkish government was in favour of extending NATO's presence in that country beyond 2016. Nearly 300 Turkish troops serve with the KFOR mission in Kosovo, and Turkish ships support the *Ocean Shield* operation in the Indian Ocean.

The Turkish defence budget has for several years been maintained on average at 1.5% of GDP. In absolute terms, since Russia's annexation of Crimea, Turkish defence spending has decreased from \$13.6 billion in 2014 to around \$12.1 billion in 2017.<sup>14</sup> Achieving the level of 2% of GDP in 2024 would be realistic if Turkey implemented plans to purchase the S-400 air- and missile-defence systems from Russia.<sup>15</sup> Because the Russian systems cannot be integrated into the NATO defence system, such an investment would contribute to strengthening the protection of Turkish territory but would not increase protection of other Allies. The U.S. Senate announced that it will block the sale of F-35 multirole aircraft to Turkey if the Turkish authorities do not abandon their plans to buy the Russian air- and missile-defence system. At the public conference accompanying the NATO Summit in Brussels in July 2018, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu again stressed that the Russian offer was the best, even if there are objections from the U.S. and NATO officials.<sup>16</sup>

Turkey's interests lie in stabilising the Middle East, by teaming up with Gulf States within the framework of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, and the south of Europe, through the Western Balkans' integration with NATO. Turkey consequently supports the open-door policy, especially the membership prospects of Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and admission of Montenegro. It also argues for enhancing NATO's cooperation with Azerbaijan, and in recent years it came out strongly in favour of Georgia as a prospective member.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> "NATO Operation Sea Guardian kicks off in the Mediterranean," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 10 November 2016, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com); "NATO Maps the Pattern of Life in the Med," *Bosphorous Naval News*, 9 February 2017, [turkishnavy.net](http://turkishnavy.net).

<sup>14</sup> Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>15</sup> S. Erkuş, "Turkey pledges to meet NATO's 2 percent defense spending guideline by 2024," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 5 March 2018, [www.hurriyetdailynews.com](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com).

<sup>16</sup> Compare: J. Aitoro, "Raytheon missile defense chief: Turkey Patriot decision 'is all political'," *Defense News*, 17 July 2018, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com); D. Alexe, "U.S. Senate prohibits sale of F35s to Turkey," *New Europe*, 21 June 2018, [www.neweurope.com](http://www.neweurope.com); A. Mehta, "NATO official: Turkey faces 'consequences' if purchase of S-400 completed," *Defense News*, 25 October 2017, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>17</sup> Compare "Turkish Foreign Minister: We will raise Georgia's NATO membership at Warsaw Summit," 17 February 2016, <http://agenda.ge>; and S. Erkuş, *op. cit.*

Even though NATO's cooperation with the EU is rendered more difficult by the dispute between Turkey and Cyprus and the Turkish occupation of the northern part of Cyprus, Turkey was in favour of expanding the strategic partnership between the two organisations, including in the area of combating hybrid threats.

A founding member of the Alliance, the United Kingdom is among the strongest European NATO countries, mostly because of its national nuclear deterrent and force-projection capability. It is one of the few NATO states that spends at least 2% of its GDP (\$59.15 billion in 2017) on defence, earmarking 20% of that for R&D and purchases of armaments and military equipment. This, along with its nuclear arsenal, special relations, and intelligence cooperation with the U.S., further strengthens the British voice in the Alliance.<sup>1</sup>

The UK sees ISIS as a major source of threat for its territory and population. British citizens have been among the victims of terrorist attacks outside UK. With Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and involvement in the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the British government considers Russian policy a major challenge for NATO and for European security. In the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), it stressed that Russia had become more aggressive, authoritarian and nationalist, increasingly defining itself in opposition to the West. The rapid modernisation of the Russian armed forces (including its nuclear arsenal), Russia's military provocations near NATO borders (including in UK airspace and territorial waters), intensification of nuclear exercises, and ramped-up rhetoric about the use of nuclear weapons were found to be causes for concern. As the British government sees it, "Russia's behaviour will continue to be hard to predict, and, though it is highly unlikely, we cannot rule out the possibility that it may feel tempted to act aggressively against NATO Allies."<sup>2</sup> The Review therefore contains an announcement that the UK will work to convince its Allies of a renewed focus on deterrence to address current and future threats.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, the UK considers it necessary to search for ways of collaborating with and engaging Russia in the resolution of global problems, such as those created by ISIS.<sup>4</sup> The British emphasise the importance of open communication channels between NATO and Russia, which would diminish the risk of an undesirable deterioration of Europe's security situation and further destabilisation. Yet, the UK also argues that, as long as Russia remains in breach of international law, there will be no return to business as usual.<sup>5</sup> After Theresa May became prime minister in July 2016, her government tried to "normalise" relations with Russia.<sup>6</sup> However, in March 2018, an unprecedented crisis in bilateral relations was caused by Russia's assassination attempt with the use of an advanced chemical weapon against a former KGB officer and his daughter. After that, Prime Minister May concluded that Russia "respects no borders and it is a threat to our values."<sup>7</sup>

As the host nation of the summit in Newport, the United Kingdom was among those calling for the adoption of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) and it has played an important role in the plan's implementation. Along with France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, and Turkey, the country is in the group of framework nations of the land component of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), which has around 5,000 troops. Its contribution to the

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<sup>1</sup> "National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review," UK government, November 2015, para. 4.37, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

<sup>2</sup> "National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review," *op. cit.*, para. 3.19, 3.20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, para. 4.12–4.14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, para. 3.22.

<sup>5</sup> "Russia: NATO: Written question—35344," UK Parliament, [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk); A. Thomson, "Speech: NATO and unconventional threats, UK Atlantic Council, 11 November 2015," UK Government, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

<sup>6</sup> "Russia-UK relations: May and Putin pledge to improve ties," *BBC News*, 10 August 2016, [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com).

<sup>7</sup> "Russian spy: EU recalls Russia ambassador after nerve agent attack," *BBC News*, 23 March 2018, [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com).

Spanish-led 2016 VJTF consisted of a 1,000-strong battlegroup and support element. When the UK itself led the VJTF in 2017, its contribution increased to 3,000 personnel, a brigade command element, and an auxiliary force in charge of engineering operations and logistics. In 2020, with Poland as the framework nation, the UK will delegate a battlegroup of 1,000 troops. In 2016 and 2017, the British Armed Forces also provided air and naval units to the VJTF, with a contribution consisting of E-3D Sentry early-warning aircraft, tanker/refuelling aircraft, Tornado and/or Typhoon multi-role aircraft, the *HMS Ocean* Helicopter Landing Platform, a frigate, and a minesweeper.<sup>8</sup> Also during the Newport summit, the British government announced a plan to create a Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) for collective defence and crisis-management missions with other troop contributions from Estonia, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Norway. JEF achieved operational readiness in summer 2018, with an additional contribution of troops from Sweden and Finland.<sup>9</sup>

After Russia's annexation of Crimea and the growing sense of threat in Central and Eastern Europe, the UK engaged in exercises in countries of the region. It provided more than 1,300 troops and 400 vehicles to the *Dragon 2015* exercises in Poland. The UK also contributed a similar level of troops to the *Anakonda-16* exercises in June 2016, just before the Warsaw summit. The presence of British air and naval forces on NATO's Eastern Flank has increased, too. In 2014–2016, the UK has taken part in the Baltic Air Policing on three occasions, each time deploying four Typhoon fighter aircraft for four months. In 2017–2018, it has also contributed with two such rotations to the NATO's enhanced Air Policing over the Black Sea. Since 2016, the British E-3D Sentry early warning aircraft was assigned to the Eastern Flank, as part of the Airborne Early Warning and Control Force (NAEW&C Force). Also in 2016, British warships joined NATO's Standing Maritime Group 1 (SNMG-1) for the first time since 2010.<sup>10</sup> And the most recent UK destroyer, *HMS Duncan*, took part in a Black Sea exercise in November 2015.<sup>11</sup>

A stronger British armed forces presence in Central and Eastern Europe is also reflected in the country's contribution to NATO's command structure. As announced by the UK government, British officers were posted to the Headquarters of the Szczecin-based Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE HQ), to Multinational Division Southeast (headquartered in Romania), and to each of the six NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU), responsible for facilitating the deployment of the Alliance's rapid-reaction forces. At the October 2015 meeting of Allied defence ministers, the UK declared it would regularly deploy a company-sized force to the Eastern Flank countries to reassure Allies.<sup>12</sup> After the Warsaw summit, the British presence in the region further increased, as the UK became one of four framework nations playing a key role in providing NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) on the Eastern Flank. Since the first half of 2017, a battalion-sized battlegroup led by the UK has been rotating to Estonia with around 800 British troops (an armoured infantry battalion with supporting forces and command element) and additional forces from Denmark, France, and Iceland. Additionally, the UK has

<sup>8</sup> "NATO: Armed Forces. Written question—35698," UK Parliament, [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

<sup>9</sup> W. Lorenz, M. Terlikowski, "Strengthening European Crisis Response Capabilities: French and British Initiatives," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 85 (1156), 29 June 2018.

<sup>10</sup> "UK to step up NATO maritime commitment," UK Government, 10 February 2016, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

<sup>11</sup> "UK jets and warship to bolster Baltic security," UK Government, 3 April 2016, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

<sup>12</sup> The decision corresponded with the United Kingdom joining the U.S.-Germany initiative to coordinate military exercises in Poland and the Baltic States, Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training (TACET). "UK to step up...", *op. cit.*; "UK Armed Forces lead NATO exercise in the Baltics," UK Government, 10 November 2015, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk); *RAF jets fly on Baltic policing mission*, UK Government, 29 April 2016, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

been deploying a company-size group (130–150 troops) to the U.S.-led battlegroup stationed in Poland.<sup>13</sup>

According to the British government, NATO should be focusing on being “adaptable by design,” so that it is ready to face any new and emerging threats from wherever they come.<sup>14</sup> According to the UK’s official position, NATO adaptation requires not only investments in military capabilities but also in efficient, effective and rapid political decision-making. The Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) should have the authority to get a force out of the barracks and ready to move without a formal decision of the North Atlantic Council.<sup>15</sup> The UK believes this should be underpinned by robust NATO intelligence to monitor and evaluate early warnings of potential threats to Allies.<sup>16</sup> Another British recommendation is to optimise procedures and processes within NATO’s Command Structure, to make it flexible, efficient, and responsive to the security environment.<sup>17</sup> The capability to respond to cyberspace and hybrid threats should be reinforced.<sup>18</sup> In 2017, the UK publicly offered its national offensive cyber-capabilities to support NATO operations.<sup>19</sup>

The British government also favours adaptation of the Alliance’s nuclear policy to Russia’s activities in the field of nuclear weapons.<sup>20</sup> The UK’s special position in the debate on nuclear deterrence reflects that it is one of NATO’s three nuclear powers, alongside the U.S. and France. SDSR 2015 emphasises that the British nuclear capability, comprising submarines armed with Trident II D-5 missiles, might be dedicated to the defence of the Alliance, and would be used in extreme circumstances of self-defence, including the defence of NATO allies.<sup>21</sup>

While contributing to Eastern Flank activities, the United Kingdom is heavily involved on the Southern Flank. Its contribution to the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan increased from 450 personnel in 2016 to 650 in 2018. The British presence in North Africa and the Middle East has become instrumental. Both in the intervention in Libya in 2011 and in the global coalition fighting ISIS since 2014, it was the UK along with France that supported the U.S. military effort the most. As part of the anti-ISIS operations the British military conducted airstrikes and provided reconnaissance data.<sup>22</sup> In April 2018, the UK also took part in US-led missile strikes in reaction to the use of chemical weapons by the Bashar al-Assad regime.

London emphasises the Alliance’s role in helping Middle Eastern and North African countries to build capacity to defend themselves against all threats, including terrorism.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the UK pointed out the Alliance’s importance in the response to the mass-migration

<sup>13</sup> “NATO Warsaw Summit,” House of Lord Hansard, 11 July 2016, vol. 774, <https://hansard.parliament.uk>; “NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence,” NATO Factsheets from May and November 2017, and February, June and August 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>14</sup> “Russia: NATO: Written question—24469,” UK Parliament, [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

<sup>15</sup> M. Fallon, “Speech to the Transatlantic Forum of the Christian Social Union, 6 February 2015,” UK Government, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> “NATO: Written question—33316,” UK Parliament, [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

<sup>18</sup> M. Fallon, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> “Defence Secretary steps up UK commitments to NATO,” GOV.UK, 29 June 2017, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

<sup>20</sup> A. Rettman, “Nato doubles Russia-deterrent, considers nuclear drills,” *EUObserver*, 9 October 2015, <https://euobserver.com>.

<sup>21</sup> “National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review,” *op. cit.*, para. 4.65, 4.68, 4.70.

<sup>22</sup> “Daesh: UK government response (archived),” UK Government, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk); “Update: air strikes against Daesh,” UK Government, 29 January 2016, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

<sup>23</sup> “NATO Summit Wales 2014...,” *op. cit.*



crisis. British naval ships regularly patrol the Aegean Sea, helping multilateral efforts to stem maritime irregular immigrant traffic.<sup>24</sup>

The UK insists that its commitments to NATO, the cornerstone of UK defence policy, will not be negatively affected by the referendum and resulting vote to leave the EU (Brexit).<sup>25</sup> The United Kingdom was traditionally against the development of the military dimension of the EU's common security and defence policy (CSDP), but always supported close cooperation between NATO and the EU. British officials are arguing that there is the necessity of such cooperation in the areas of countering hybrid threats, cyberdefence, maritime operations, and capacity-building with partners of NATO and the EU.<sup>26</sup>

The United Kingdom supported Montenegro's efforts to join NATO and backs the open-door policy and membership aspirations of Georgia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia. The UK stresses that at the same time, these countries' entry to the Alliance should be conditioned on their capabilities to meet the membership commitments and obligations, and that their membership would contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area.<sup>27</sup>

Following the 2018 NATO summit in Brussels, Prime Minister May noted that "the UK played an important role in securing progress" on all three main themes of the meeting: "greater burden sharing, stepping up our collective efforts to meet the threats of today, and enhancing NATO's capability to meet the threats of tomorrow." The UK is to increase its presence in Afghanistan by 440 troops, to around 1,100 in total, and boost involvement in NATO defence capacity-building activities on the Southern Flank, including in Iraq. British forces will also contribute to the NATO Readiness Initiative (so-called "Four Thirties") while the number of UK personnel in the NATO Command Structure (NCS) is to grow by around 100, to more than 1,000 posts.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> "Aegean Sea: Refugees: Written question—30016," UK Parliament, [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk); "PM announces UK deployment for NATO mission in Aegean Sea to tackle migrant crisis," UK Government, 7 March 2016, [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

<sup>25</sup> "NATO Warsaw Summit," House of Lords Hansard, *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> A. Thomson, *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> "NATO Enlargement: Written question—14543," UK Parliament, [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

<sup>28</sup> "NATO Summit," House of Commons Hansard, 16 July 2018, vol. 645, <https://hansard.parliament.uk>.

The mightiest military power on earth, the United States is NATO's most influential member and mainstay, accounting for the bulk of its military potential (in 2016, U.S. defence expenditures amounted to around 68% of the combined defence spending of all NATO countries).<sup>1</sup> The administration of President Barack Obama described NATO as the cornerstone of the Allies' collective defence and the U.S. security policy<sup>2</sup> and perceived Europe as an indispensable partner in tackling global security challenges, promoting prosperity and upholding international norms.<sup>3</sup> The importance of NATO and the need to strengthen the Alliance were also underscored in the National Security Strategy published by the administration of President Donald Trump in December 2017.<sup>4</sup> Underpinning the American commitment to European security are a community of values (human rights and democracy), robust economic ties (trade and investment), historical links, and, most notably, the fundamental importance that a stable European security environment plays in maintaining the global position of the U.S. itself.

Following the end of the Cold War, deterrence and defence against military threats to NATO territory, largely meaning the potential threat from Russia, were not the focus of attention and activity of the U.S., which saw such a scenario as rather unlikely.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the emphasis increasingly was placed on promoting the development of NATO's crisis-management capabilities and on the bloc's political function as a tool strengthening cooperative security via enlargement and cooperation with partners, including Russia. In the early 2010s, the U.S. further reduced its military presence in Europe and grew increasingly vocal about the need for European Allies to strengthen their military potential (by raising defence spending to at least 2% of GDP) and, crucially, to assume greater responsibility for the stabilisation of their neighbourhood, especially North Africa and the Middle East. This was largely dictated by the U.S. strategic "pivot" to Asia and the Pacific, initiated in 2011/2012, cuts in the U.S. defence budget, and the growing criticism of the disparity in burden-sharing.

An increase in European defence spending remains a priority for the U.S., but the Russian aggression against Ukraine has led to a partial revision of the U.S. attitude to NATO and its Allies in Europe. Russia's actions against Ukraine have been seen by the U.S. not only as breaching international law (Russia's annexation of Crimea, military involvement in Donbas) but primarily, and especially when viewed in conjunction with the build-up of Russia's armed forces and its provocative military activities on the Alliance's borders, as a part of wider effort to undermine the credibility and solidarity of NATO and, consequently, to weaken the transatlantic bond and the global credibility and position of the U.S. But for a long time after Crimea's annexation, the U.S., even while calling for strengthening NATO collective defence, refrained

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<sup>1</sup> In 2016, the U.S. spent 3.56% of its GDP on defence, amounting to more than \$603 billion. Figures in constant 2010 prices and exchange rates. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010–2017)," NATO, 15 March 2018, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).

<sup>2</sup> "Remarks by the President and Secretary General Stoltenberg of NATO after Bilateral Meeting," The White House, 4 April 2016, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>3</sup> "National Security Strategy," Washington, February 2015, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> "National Security Strategy of the United States of America," Washington, December 2017, pp. 2, 47–48. See also: M.A. Piotrowski, B. Wiśniewski, "The U.S. National Security Strategy: The Trump Administration's Approach," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 128 (1068), 21 December 2017, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>5</sup> An exception pertained to the European segment of the U.S. ballistic missile-defence system. Work on it started during the George W. Bush presidency and continued under following administrations, although with a changed concept. Its aim is to defend against potential ballistic missile attacks from outside the Euro-Atlantic area, especially from Iran. Hence, the system is neither designed nor capable of countering Russian missile capabilities.

from officially presenting Russia as a strategic, long-term direct threat to its security. It initially regarded sanctions as not only effective but also the main means of pressuring Russia to alter its stance on the conflict with Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> This U.S. attitude began to change in mid-2015, following an increase in Russian military activity targeting NATO and the U.S. itself (including nuclear posturing, as in the case of strategic bomber flights close to U.S. borders and overseas bases) and following Russia's engagement in Syria on the side of the Bashar al-Assad regime.<sup>7</sup> The Obama administration's response to Russia's growing threat to NATO took the form of a "strong and balanced" approach.<sup>8</sup> This two-pronged policy has included the clear strengthening of conventional and nuclear deterrence, on the one hand, and dialogue with Russia, on the other.

The U.S. has underscored that the drastic deterioration of relations with Russia precludes a return to the policy of partnership as long as Russia continues these actions. The U.S. position, however, envisioned the potential cooperation of both countries in areas of common interest, especially in nuclear non-proliferation (such as the talks on Iran's nuclear programme) and in the fight against terrorism, including resolution of the conflict in Syria.<sup>9</sup> To ease the tensions and prevent further escalation and military incidents, the U.S. also has advocated preserving the channels of communication between NATO and Russia.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the Obama administration supported meetings of the NATO-Russia Council and keeping the NATO-Russia Founding Act in force.<sup>11</sup>

The U.S. took a firm lead in reinforcing the security of NATO's Central and Eastern European members, acting both within Allied initiatives and on a bilateral basis.<sup>12</sup> Since the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the U.S. has been strengthening NATO's Eastern Flank more rapidly and on a bigger scale than the other Allies. The overall reductions of the U.S. military presence in Europe were eventually halted and partially reversed.

As part of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) adopted at the NATO summit in Wales, the U.S. stepped up its involvement in Allied exercises, delegated officers to NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) and the headquarters of the new Multinational Division Southeast in Romania, and increased its personnel in the headquarters of the Multinational Corps Northeast in Poland. It also declared support for the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) through transport, reconnaissance and surveillance, aerial refuelling, special forces, naval and air assets, and precision-guided weapons. Even before the Newport summit, the U.S. was the first country to boost its involvement in the Baltic Air Policing (BAP) mission. On 6 March 2014, it increased the number of F-15C fighter jets participating in BAP through April from 4 to 10.

The United States has been engaged in intense bilateral efforts to enhance the Eastern Flank, financed mostly (since 2015) through the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), which was announced by President Obama during his visit to Warsaw in June 2014. ERI financing

<sup>6</sup> "Press Conference with President Obama and Prime Minister Rutte of the Netherlands," The White House, 25 March 2015, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g.: K. Wong, "Pentagon chief: Russia is a 'very significant threat'," *The Hill*, 20 August 2015, <http://thehill.com>; P.D. Shinkman, "Obama Breaks from 2014 Assessment, Calls Russia 'Major Military'," *U.S. News*, 16 February 2016, [www.usnews.com](http://www.usnews.com).

<sup>8</sup> A. Carter, "Remarks at Atlantik Brücke: 'U.S., Germany, & NATO Are Moving Forward Together'," U.S. Department of Defense, 22 June 2015, [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> "Remarks by the President and Secretary General ...," *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> "Ambassador Lute's Pre-Ministerial Press Briefing," U.S. Mission to NATO, 18 May 2016, <https://nato.usmission.gov>.

<sup>12</sup> See: A. Kacprzyk, *U.S. Military Presence in Central and Eastern Europe: Consequences for NATO Strategic Adaptation, Deterrence and Allied Solidarity*, PISM Report, August 2015, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

amounted to \$985 million in 2015 and close to \$800 million in 2016. The U.S. increased its land, air, and naval presence in Europe, and especially in the central and eastern part of the continent, mostly through exercises and training. The U.S. is also the only NATO member that independently maintained a continuous rotational presence of a company-size unit in Poland and each of the Baltic States since the early stages of the Russia-Ukraine conflict until the end of 2016. It increased its rotational presence in Romania and then also in Bulgaria. The ERI also included prepositioning of military equipment. These efforts initially focused on the decision from June 2015 to set up depots in Central and Eastern Europe with vehicles and other gear to equip an armoured brigade combat team (ABCT) and to facilitate training and exercises (European Activity Set, EAS). Temporary sites were placed in Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Romania in addition to existing warehouses in Germany (with equipment for one battalion). The U.S. also launched investments in regional military infrastructure, mainly airfields and training grounds.

In early 2016, the U.S. began to articulate clearly the need for a change in the forms of its own and the Allies' military engagement on the Eastern Flank, moving the emphasis from reassurance towards deterrence.<sup>13</sup> That translated into strengthening the war-fighting capabilities of U.S. forces in Europe, including through an increased forward presence on the Eastern Flank involving combat-ready forces. This meant a reconfiguration of the mechanism of defence of Central and Eastern Europe, which was previously confined exclusively to reinforcement of the region in the event of a crisis or conflict. A key implication of the plan was to quadruple ERI financing to \$3.4 billion in 2017, as announced by the Obama administration in February 2016.<sup>14</sup> The change in the character of the U.S. activity on the Eastern Flank was also reflected by the subsequent renaming of the ERI to the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI). Its major element has been the continuous rotation of one ABCT to Central and Eastern Europe (alongside one mechanised and one airborne brigade already stationed permanently in Germany and Italy, respectively). The U.S. also announced it would preposition combat equipment for another ABCT, support units, and division-level command in Western Europe to facilitate a contingency deployment of such forces from North America (Army Prepositioned Stocks, APS). This meant resignation from the earlier EAS concept, as the heavy gear used for exercises in Central and Eastern Europe at that time was to be withdrawn, modernised and placed in the APS. ABCTs rotating to Europe since 2017 were to arrive with their own equipment. Improving interoperability with Allies and partners enhancing their defence capacity (for example, through exercises and training) remained an important area of U.S. activity. In June 2016, the U.S. sent the biggest contingent (some 14,000 troops out of 31,000 participating) to Poland for the *Anakonda-16* exercise, the largest and most complex military manoeuvres in Central and Eastern Europe since the Cold War.

The announcement of a bolstered U.S. military presence on NATO's Eastern Flank came prior to the Alliance's decision of February 2016 to form new multinational military units that would provide a lasting rotational presence on the Eastern Flank. It was a U.S. signal to the other Allies to increase their involvement in the region as well.<sup>15</sup> Acting in this spirit, the U.S. announced even before the Warsaw summit that it would become the lead nation of one of

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<sup>13</sup> "US General: NATO to Switch 'Assurance to Deterrence' in E. Europe," *Defense News*, 31 March 2016, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com); "Media availability with Secretary Carter en route to Brussels, Belgium," U.S. Department of Defense, 9 February 2016, [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).

<sup>14</sup> "European Reassurance Initiative, Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2017," Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), February 2016.

<sup>15</sup> "Department of Defense Press Conference with Secretary Carter at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium," U.S. Department of Defense, 11 February 2016, [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).



four battalion-sized battlegroups to be deployed in Poland and the Baltic States. Nonetheless, in the discussions on the possible establishment of permanent garrisons on the Eastern Flank, the U.S. clearly pointed to the lack of consensus on permanent bases among the Allies, reflecting the misgivings among some members about a potential breach of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and an escalation of tensions in relations with Russia. In Congress, there were also voices arguing that the construction of new bases would be much costlier compared to rotations of American units through the infrastructure of regional countries.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to enhancing the forward presence on the Eastern Flank, the U.S. also called for the wider adaptation of the overall forces of the Allied nations, going beyond raising the readiness level of units assigned to the VJTF and the NATO Response Force (NRF).<sup>17</sup> Moreover, U.S. military figures spoke publicly about the most worrying aspects of the evolution of Russia's military capabilities, such as the development of systems capable of blocking the movement of NATO forces to a potential conflict area (anti-access/area denial, A2/AD). They also spoke about the need to transform Baltic Air Policing into an air defence mission, and to improve procedures and infrastructure for transporting military equipment in Europe.<sup>18</sup> These calls came in addition to years-long urging by the U.S. of the European Allies to decrease their overreliance on key U.S. capabilities through investments in intelligence, reconnaissance, air refuelling, and strategic transportation. The U.S. also called on the NATO members to improve cyberdefence capabilities, including through exercises. In June 2015, the U.S. announced it would increase its contribution to the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD CoE). NATO members were urged to bolster their resilience to hybrid warfare as well and were offered support in this field.<sup>19</sup> The U.S. also advocated for closer cooperation between NATO and the EU in countering these threats, especially given the prospect of the possible exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Brexit). While the Obama administration supported the EU's common security and defence policy, it argued that the Union should not duplicate existing NATO structures, for example, in terms of command and control.<sup>20</sup>

In the run-up to the Warsaw summit, the U.S. was one of the few NATO members that emphasised the need for adaptation of the Alliance's nuclear deterrence, including through better integration with conventional deterrence.<sup>21</sup> This position was linked to criticism of Russia's aggressive nuclear rhetoric and provocative actions, such as flights by nuclear-capable bombers along NATO borders and exercises involving nuclear escalation during a conventional conflict.<sup>22</sup> In what should be seen as part of the U.S. response to the Russian actions, U.S. nuclear-capable aircraft took part in exercises in Europe on several occasions. Moreover, even before the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the U.S. had announced a thorough modernisation of its nuclear forces, including B61 bombs. An estimated 180 of these bombs

<sup>16</sup> "US backs away from Poland's NATO base push," *Radio Poland*, 22 July 2015, [www.thenews.pl](http://www.thenews.pl); R. Kheel, "Obama hears calls to place US troops in Eastern Europe," *The Hill*, 15 November 2015, <http://thehill.com>.

<sup>17</sup> "Press Conference with Secretary Carter at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium," U.S. Department of Defense, 15 June 2016, [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, "NATO needs to beef up defense of Baltic airspace: top commander," *Reuters*, 29 March 2016, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>19</sup> "Fact Sheet: U.S. Contributions to Enhancing Allied Resilience," The White House, 9 July 2016, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>20</sup> A. Kumar Sen, "Brexit May Strengthen NATO," *The Atlanticist*, Atlantic Council, 7 July 2016, [www.atlanticcouncil.org](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org).

<sup>21</sup> "Press Conference with Secretary Carter at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium," U.S. Department of Defense, 8 October 2015, [www.defense.gov](http://www.defense.gov).

<sup>22</sup> See: "Statement of Robert Scher, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces," Washington, 2 March 2016.



were stationed in bases in Europe in 2016 under NATO nuclear-sharing arrangements.<sup>23</sup> In July 2014, the U.S. also publicly accused Russia of violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty by testing ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCM) with a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres. Initially, it had warned that it would react in case of the deployment of such systems. Eventually, the Obama administration did not take any specific military steps with regard to the violation of the INF treaty, which could have stemmed from a lack of support for such measures from a number of NATO members. Instead, it focused on a broader response to Russia's overall aggressive behaviour.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the American flexibility in adaptation to Russian nuclear posturing, whether at the NATO level or unilaterally, was influenced by the desire to continue the so-called Prague Agenda from 2009. The Obama administration tried to avoid actions that would unduly weaken U.S. credibility in pursuit of the long-term elimination of nuclear weapons and hamper attempts to mobilise the international community to counter proliferation. It also upheld the proposal of further bilateral reductions of nuclear arms with Russia.<sup>25</sup>

While leading the push to strengthen the Eastern Flank, the U.S. also underscored the need for solidarity in countering the threats on the Southern Flank, and other threats, including to the U.S. itself, such as terrorism. The U.S. invariably emphasises the necessity for the Alliance's involvement in crisis management and cooperative security.<sup>26</sup> From the American perspective, NATO should be capable of effectively countering the full spectrum of threats. In the words of Obama, "as today's diffuse threats evolve, our alliance has to evolve."<sup>27</sup>

Consistent with this position, the U.S. constantly sought a greater contribution from the Allies to fight ISIS within a U.S.-led coalition. In the run-up to the Warsaw summit, the U.S. also advocated for support of a coalition from the Alliance as an organisation,<sup>28</sup> although in a limited (non-combat) character, for example, with flights of NATO AWACS aircraft.<sup>29</sup> It also called for an intensification of NATO efforts to support countries in the region (Iraq, Jordan, states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and members of the African Union, including Libya) through the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative (DCBI) and in collaboration with the EU.<sup>30</sup> In June 2016, the U.S. sent a ship to the NATO mission in the Aegean Sea, tasked with monitoring migrant-smuggling vessels. It also backed the Alliance's support for a similar EU operation off the coasts of Libya (*EUNAVFOR MED Sophia*).

The U.S. set much store in the continuation of the Allies' contributions to the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan and the appropriate level of financing to back reform of the Afghan security forces by 2020.<sup>31</sup> The U.S. also helped strengthen Turkish air defences by

<sup>23</sup> H.M. Kristensen, R.S. Norris, "United States Nuclear Forces 2016," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, vol. 72, no. 2, 2016, pp. 70–71.

<sup>24</sup> K. Reif, "U.S. Broadens Response on INF Treaty," *Arms Control Today*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> See: "Statement by National Security Advisor Susan E. Rice on the Five-Year Anniversary of the New START Treaty Entry into Force," The White House, 5 February 2016, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>26</sup> "National Security Strategy," Washington, February 2015, p. 25.

<sup>27</sup> "Remarks by President Obama in Address to the People of Europe, Hannover Messe Fairgrounds, Hannover," The White House, 25 April 2015, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>28</sup> J. Kerry, "Press Availability at NATO Headquarters," U.S. Department of State, 19 May 2016, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

<sup>29</sup> "U.S. asks NATO for surveillance planes in fight against Islamic State," *Reuters*, 28 January 2016, <http://in.reuters.com>.

<sup>30</sup> "Remarks by President Obama and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg after Bilateral Meeting," The White House, 26 May 2015, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>31</sup> "Ambassador Lute's Pre-Ministerial Press Briefing," U.S. Mission to NATO, 13 June 2016, <https://nato.usmission.gov>.

deploying six F-15C fighter aircraft to that country in November and December 2015 following the downing by Turkey of a Russian Su-24 bomber. Previously, in 2013 to 2015, two U.S. batteries of Patriot missiles took part in the Allied mission *Active Fence* to protect Turkey against potential ballistic missile attacks from Syrian territory.

The threat from the Alliance's southern neighbourhood has been linked to the continued pursuit by the U.S. of the European Phased Adaptive Approach to missile defence (EPAA), which is also a contribution to NATO's ballistic missile defence (BMD) system. In 2015, the last of four U.S. ballistic missile defence-capable destroyers was redeployed to the Rota base in Spain. In May 2016, the Aegis Ashore interceptor base at Deveselu, Romania, reached operational readiness, and a day later, ground was broken for a similar installation in Poland, at the Redzikowo base. The U.S. goal for the Warsaw summit was to declare initial operational capability of the NATO BMD system.<sup>32</sup>

The U.S. invariably perceived NATO enlargement as a mechanism enhancing stability in Europe. It has strongly backed the admission of Montenegro and the continuation of the "open-door" policy. The Obama administration officials declared support for the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of Georgia but were vague on Ukraine, noting that the country did not formally apply for NATO membership and would need to put in long-term efforts to meet NATO standards.<sup>33</sup> In April 2016, the U.S. ambassador to NATO said it was highly unlikely that these two countries would be accepted into the Alliance in the near future, citing several members' fears of an escalation of tensions with Russia.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, the U.S. sought to encourage Georgia and Ukraine to continue military reforms and offered assistance in strengthening their defence capacity through, for example, joint exercises. The U.S. has also participated in training the Ukrainian armed forces and delivered military equipment to the country.<sup>35</sup> But the Obama administration did not go so far as to supply weapons, despite calls from a number of members of Congress.<sup>36</sup> Faced with Russia's aggressive policy in the Baltic Sea and the Arctic, the U.S. significantly stepped up cooperation with Finland and Sweden, mostly through joint exercises, and announced a further tightening of contacts on a bilateral basis and in collaboration with NATO.<sup>37</sup>

At the Warsaw summit, the U.S. announced it will lead the NATO battlegroup in Poland and contribute around 1,000 troops to the unit. Additionally, it informed that Poland would host the headquarters of the ABCT.<sup>38</sup> During each ABCT's nine-month rotation, starting in 2017, the unit deploys from the U.S. to Poland and its elements subsequently participate in exercises in other countries of the region. A U.S. Army combat aviation brigade (CAB) also rotates to

<sup>32</sup> "Ambassador Douglas Lute and Assistant Secretary Frank Rose on Romanian BMD Site," U.S. Mission to NATO, 11 May 2016, <https://nato.usmission.gov>.

<sup>33</sup> "Kerry pledges support for Georgia's western aims before NATO summit," *Euronews*, 6 July 2016, [www.euronews.com](http://www.euronews.com); J. Kerry, "Remarks with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko," U.S. Department of State, 7 July 2016, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

<sup>34</sup> "No chance of NATO expansion for years, U.S. ambassador says," *Reuters*, 22 April 2016, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>35</sup> See: "Fact Sheet: U.S. and NATO Efforts in Support of NATO Partners, including Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova," The White House, 9 July 2016, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>36</sup> J. Steinhauer, D.M. Herszenhorn, "Defying Obama, Many in Congress Press to Arm Ukraine," *The New York Times*, 11 June 2015, [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).

<sup>37</sup> "U.S.-Nordic Leaders' Summit Joint Statement," The White House, 13 May 2016, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>38</sup> "Remarks by President Obama and President Duda of Poland after Bilateral Meeting, PGE Narodowy Warsaw, Poland," The White House, 8 July 2016, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

Europe, involving around 2,200 troops with headquarters deployed to Germany and forward elements in Latvia, Poland, and Romania.<sup>39</sup>

The U.S. recognised the decisions of the Warsaw summit as an important step in adaptation of the Alliance. It welcomed the fact that in 2015–2016, the European allies reversed the trend of cuts in defence spending while also stressing the need for further efforts.<sup>40</sup> The unequal burden-sharing within the Alliance was taken up during the U.S. presidential campaign. Donald Trump, the Republican Party candidate, questioned the scale of and rationale for American involvement in NATO. Trump suggested that the U.S. should not fulfil its collective-defence commitment under Article 5 towards Allies that had not met their defence-spending targets. He also derided NATO as “obsolete,” incorrectly stating that it has not been involved in the fight against terrorism.<sup>41</sup> In addition, he presented a conciliatory stance towards Russia and outlined a vision of foreign policy focused on narrowly defined gains rather than the defence of common interests and values together with allies. In light of these developments, Trump’s victory in the presidential elections caused concerns in the Alliance about the future of transatlantic relations.

The first year and a half of Trump’s presidency did not bring radical changes to U.S. policy towards NATO, although concerns about its longer-term shape persisted. The new American administration has strongly signalled that its support for the Alliance would not be unconditional and might be limited if the other members did not increase their contribution to common security.<sup>42</sup> It tried to use the president’s rhetoric to boost pressure on the Allies with regard to issues of longstanding American interest. Trump himself has partially softened his stance towards the Alliance. Initially, he did not confirm the U.S. commitment to Article 5 collective defence during his speech at the special meeting of NATO heads of state and government in Brussels on 25 May 2017, when he harshly criticised the other Allies. He did confirm the Article 5 guarantees, however, at a joint press conference with the president of Romania on 9 June and did so again in a much clearer and broader way during his visit in Warsaw on 6 July.<sup>43</sup> Already in Brussels, NATO members had agreed that by the end of 2017 they would present plans to increase their defence spending to at least 2% of GDP. The Alliance has also increased its involvement in the fight against terrorism (for example, by formally joining the anti-IS coalition) and enhanced force levels for the *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, the Trump administration has not only fully implemented NATO and bilateral initiatives on strengthening deterrence and defence in Europe but also has taken additional steps. EDI financing rose from \$3.4 billion to \$4.8 billion in 2018 and to \$6.5 billion in 2019. As part of these efforts, the U.S. plans to enlarge its APS sites to the level of an armoured division (by 2021) by prepositioning equipment for an additional ABCT, fires brigade, and air-defence units. It is to be located in existing installations in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, and in a planned site in Powidz, Poland.<sup>45</sup> In 2017, the U.S. Army relocated its division-level

<sup>39</sup> See: “Atlantic Resolve Fact Sheet,” U.S. Army Europe, 1 April 2017, [www.eur.army.mil](http://www.eur.army.mil).

<sup>40</sup> “Press Conference by President Obama after NATO Summit...,” *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> A. Rogin, “Donald Trump Gets Bipartisan Condemnation for NATO Comments,” *ABC News*, 21 July 2016, <http://abcnews.go.com>; T. Hains, “Trump: NATO Is Obsolete and Expensive, ‘Doesn’t Have the Right Countries in It for Terrorism’,” *RealClearPolitics*, 27 March 2016, [www.realclearpolitics.com](http://www.realclearpolitics.com).

<sup>42</sup> A. Kacprzyk, “U.S. Policy towards NATO: Continuation with Risk of Change,” *PISM Bulletin*, no. 30 (970), 23 March 2017, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>43</sup> B. Wiśniewski, “President Trump’s Foreign Policy Speech in Warsaw,” *PISM Spotlight*, no. 36/2017, 7 July 2017, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>44</sup> A. Kacprzyk, “NATO Special Meeting in Brussels,” *PISM Spotlight*, no. 16/2017, 26 May 2017, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>45</sup> D. Stoutamire, “Army to move brigade’s worth of firepower into Poland,” *Stars and Stripes*, 26 April 2017, [www.stripes.com](http://www.stripes.com).

mission command element, responsible for command over American land activities on the Eastern Flank, to Poznań, Poland. Moreover, Congress began to consider an increase in the permanent U.S. military footprint in Europe. This could include changing the form of the ABCT presence in Poland from continuous rotations to permanent basing, which might additionally involve combat enablers.<sup>46</sup> In 2018, the U.S. decided to re-establish its Second Fleet, which had been responsible for operations in the North Atlantic before it was disbanded in 2011. Its headquarters will be based in Norfolk, where the U.S. also offered to host a new NATO Joint Force Command that would cover the same geographical area.<sup>47</sup> The new administration continued rotations of P-8 maritime patrol aircraft to Europe, including Iceland. It also continued training rotations of about 330 Marines to Norway and agreed to double that number beginning at the end of 2018. As a result of the U.S. efforts, NATO defence ministers agreed in June 2018 on the Readiness Initiative, under which by 2020 the Allies will be able to provide 30 mechanised battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 combat ships within 30 days.<sup>48</sup>

The Trump administration sharpened the response to Russia's nuclear posturing. The Nuclear Posture Review report from February 2018 provided a sceptical assessment of the current prospects for further progress in disarmament and arms control and put more emphasis on deterrence. The U.S. is not only to continue the thorough modernisation of its nuclear forces but to develop two additional capabilities to broaden the scope of more proportionate options to respond to limited nuclear attacks. These capabilities include a sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM), which was also to serve as a bargaining chip in attempts to pressure Russia to return to compliance with the INF treaty. The latter rationale also guided an earlier decision to begin research and development activities on conventional, intermediate range GLCM, which was advocated by Congress as well.<sup>49</sup> In October, however, Trump announced that the U.S. would withdraw from the INF treaty. On 4 December, American officials confirmed that the U.S. will do so unless Russia returned to compliance with the accord within 60 days.<sup>50</sup>

The Trump administration has upheld political support for Georgia and Ukraine and made new decisions on military assistance for those countries, such as the sale of anti-tank Javelin missiles to Ukraine. It also has been striving to facilitate Macedonia's accession to NATO. The U.S. has continued to support closer defence cooperation within the EU on the condition of non-duplication with NATO. The new administration added that such collaboration should be open to non-EU NATO members and that the developed capabilities be available for use in the Alliance's operations. It also clearly warned against EU protectionism regarding the defence industry.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the overall continuity in U.S. policy towards NATO, uncertainty about future American actions stem from the impulsiveness of Trump, who has repeatedly contradicted

<sup>46</sup> J. Gould, "Should US send Poland its combat enablers? Senators want DoD to weigh in," *Defense News*, 15 June 2018, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).

<sup>47</sup> I. Ali, "With an eye on Russia, U.S. Navy re-establishing its Second Fleet," *Reuters*, 4 May 2018, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>48</sup> R. Emmott, I. Ali, "U.S. pushes NATO to ready more forces to deter Russian threat," *Reuters*, 5 June 2018, [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

<sup>49</sup> "Nuclear Posture Review," Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 2018; "U.S. Response to the Russian Federation's INF Treaty Violation: Integrated Strategy," U.S. Department of State, 8 December 2017, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov); A. Kacprzyk, "Results of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 29 (1100), 16 February 2018, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>50</sup> A. Kacprzyk, "NATO's Stance in the INF Treaty Crisis," *PISM Bulletin*, no. 164 (1235), 6 December 2018, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>51</sup> A. Wess Mitchell, "Remarks at Carnegie Europe," U.S. Department of State, 21 June 2018, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov); A. Mehta, "US warns against 'protectionism' with new EU defense agreement," *Defense News*, 14 February 2018, [www.defensenews.com](http://www.defensenews.com).



representatives of his own administration (for example, Trump demanded “compensation” for U.S. protection of its allies). Apart from defence spending, tensions between the U.S. and countries such as Germany and France has been linked to issues beyond NATO’s scope (including the nuclear deal with Iran, as well as trade, migration, and climate policies).<sup>52</sup>

While the NATO summit in Brussels in July 2018 brought a number of practical decisions advocated by the U.S. (such as the launch of a training mission in Iraq), it was marked by attempts by Trump to boost pressure on the Allies to increase defence spending. He demanded not only quicker fulfilment of the 2% of GDP goal but also a further boost to 4%.<sup>53</sup> Weeks after the summit, Trump confirmed that he had threatened to withdraw the U.S. from NATO at the meeting.<sup>54</sup> Yet, at the conclusion of the Brussels summit, Trump underscored the importance of NATO and took credit for the increases to that point in defence expenditures in the Alliance and stressed that the Allies will intensify such efforts. Concerns about possible changes in U.S. policy also grew following Trump’s meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, which took place shortly after the Brussels summit. Trump’s rhetoric towards Russia was clearly at odds with the much sharper tone of his administration’s strategic policies and documents.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See, e.g.: M. Wąsiński, D. Wnukowski, “The Division Summit—G7 Meeting in Canada,” *PISM Spotlight*, no. 41/2018, 11 June 2018, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>53</sup> See: A. Kacprzyk, “NATO Summit in Brussels,” *PISM Spotlight*, no. 53/2018, 13 July 2018, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).

<sup>54</sup> “Trump Confirms He Threatened to Withdraw from NATO,” NATOSource, 22 August 2018, [www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource).

<sup>55</sup> See: W. Lorenz, “The Impact of the Trump-Putin Meeting on NATO Political Cohesion,” *PISM Bulletin*, no. 102 (1173), 2 August 2018, [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl).