



Adapting NATO's Conventional Force Posture in the Nordic-Baltic Region¹

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The security of NATO members in the Nordic-Baltic region is interconnected by such factors as the possibility of geographical escalation, the importance of securing the North Atlantic for U.S. reinforcement of Europe, and the key role of cooperation with NATO partners Sweden and Finland. NATO must consider these interconnections as it continues to adapt to the challenge posed by Russia. NATO's further adaptation should fill in the gaps in Allied force posture and be guided by an overarching principle of ensuring coherence between its existing elements and new ones. Given Poland and Norway's close views on NATO and transatlantic relations, as well as their credibility rooted in their various contributions to the Alliance, the countries should jointly advocate a coherent process in the Nordic-Baltic region.

Nordic-Baltic Security and the Challenge of Russia

Adequate adaptation of NATO's deterrence and defence posture to the challenge posed by Russia in the Nordic-Baltic region is of key importance to the security and credibility of the whole Alliance. Poland, Norway, and other NATO members in the area have grown increasingly concerned about a potential conflict with Russia because of its hostile actions against its neighbours, aggressive stance towards the West, and hardening of military posture on the Alliance's Eastern and Northern flanks. Russia's aggression against Ukraine since 2014 has showcased its readiness to use force in its neighbourhood and to violate international law in pursuit of illegitimate strategic interests. Because Russia's the intervention was aimed chiefly at preventing Ukraine's integration with the West, it reflected its interest in a security order based on "spheres of influence" as well as a general hostility towards NATO and the EU because they apparently constrain Russia's ambitions. Before and after 2014, the Nordic and Baltic members of both NATO and the EU have been the targets of various Russian threats, especially when they seek closer ties to the Alliance and the U.S.²

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² See, e.g.: D. Sharkov, "Putin Vows Military Response to 'Eliminate NATO Threat' if Sweden Joins U.S.-Led Alliance," *Newsweek*, 2 June 2017, www.newsweek.com; A.E. Kramer, "Russian General Makes Threat on Missile-Defense Sites," *The New York Times*, 3 May 2012, www.nytimes.com.

These developments confirmed alarming trends in Russian policy that were seen as early as in 2008 in its war with Georgia, which then prompted many voices of concern about the future of Russian relations with the West, yet they mostly were ignored.

In military terms, regional security is largely defined by Russian local superiority, which was enhanced in the past decade.³ Russia has been widely modernising its armed forces, increasing their readiness, and beefing up its presence along NATO borders. It has conducted a number of large exercises involving tens of thousands of troops in the Nordic-Baltic area and others of up to around 155,000 troops elsewhere. Especially destabilising to the security order are unannounced (“snap”) exercises, which rapidly mobilise and concentrate vast forces, since such “drills” accompanied invasions of Georgia and Ukraine. In the Baltic area, Russian planes have also violated national airspace and performed dangerous manoeuvres near aircraft and ships of NATO members and partners, thus heightening the risk of accidents and inadvertent escalation.

Russia’s actions have raised fears that it might try to undermine NATO credibility through direct military action, and, if successful, that would radically reshape the Euro-Atlantic security landscape. If Russia were to try to do so, it would most likely target the three small Baltic states, the most vulnerable Alliance members. The presence of Russian minorities, especially large ones in Latvia and Estonia (around 25% of their populations), could be exploited by Russia to stage a crisis through hybrid warfare.⁴ All three Baltic states can easily be cut off from the rest of the Alliance by seizing the so-called Suwałki Gap, a narrow strip of land on the Polish-Lithuanian border between Kaliningrad Oblast and Russian ally Belarus. Reinforcement of the Eastern Flank also could be impeded by the extensive, multi-domain anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) systems.⁵ Present in the Russian Western Military District on NATO’s Eastern Flank, these systems have the potential to cover the Baltic states and large swaths of the Baltic sea and Polish territory. For Poland, this means that it is likely to be targeted by Russia by air, land, sea, and cyberspace early in any clash in the region.

Given the most probable crisis scenarios, the Nordic-Baltic region should be considered a single operational space. Any conflict in the Baltics would likely escalate geographically (horizontally) to NATO’s Northern Flank, where Russia has enhanced its A2/AD capabilities as well. Russia would most likely establish a denial zone over the Norwegian Sea, perhaps all the way down to Iceland, to protect its strategic nuclear submarines based on the Kola Peninsula. Russian attack submarines and aircraft might also be used to harass sea lines of communication in the North Atlantic and impede U.S. reinforcement of Europe. The security of the NATO allies on the Northern and Eastern flanks is also interconnected with relations with Nordic Alliance partners Sweden and Finland. The use of Swedish territory, especially the island of Gotland, would greatly facilitate reinforcement of the Baltics. Conversely, the seizure of Gotland by Russia would strengthen its A2/AD advantage. The same applies to Finland and its Åland Islands. In a crisis, the decisions made by both partners would impact NATO’s strategic situation, since the choices could facilitate or impede Allied operations in the north. Moreover, as with the NATO members in the area, Sweden and Finland are within range of Russia’s various strike capabilities, including cruise missiles, which could be used for both nuclear and conventional attacks with close to no warning time.

NATO Response

Following Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, NATO has brought collective defence back into its focus after years of concentration on out-of-area crisis-management operations. At the 2014 summit in Wales, NATO adopted the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) to improve its rapid-response capabilities and embarked on a series

³ See: M. Terlikowski (ed.), “Trends in Force Posture in Europe,” *PISM Strategic File*, no. 1 (85), June 2017, www.pism.pl.

⁴ See: M.A. Piotrowski, K. Raś, “Russian Hybrid Threats to the Baltic States,” *PISM Bulletin*, no. 67 (1007), 13 July 2017, www.pism.pl.

⁵ Including anti-ship missiles, land-attack cruise and short-range ballistic missiles, long-range air defences, cyber- and electronic-warfare capabilities.

of measures to reassure the Allies. The 2016 Warsaw summit decisions continued the adaptation process and put a stronger emphasis on deterrence.⁶

In terms of NATO-wide actions, RAP tripled the size of the NATO Response Force (NRF) to around 40,000 troops, including three land brigades (each with around 5,000 troops). A brigade attached to the newly established Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), the NRF “spearhead,” is deployable within 5–7 days while two other NRF brigades (Initial Follow-on Forces Group, or IFFG) can deploy within 30 and 45 days, respectively. NRF’s certification exercise *Trident Juncture 2015* in Spain and Italy involved around 36,000 troops and was NATO’s largest drill since 2002. The overall number of NATO-led and linked exercises rose from around 80 initially planned for 2014 to 246 in 2016, and a bigger emphasis was placed on Article 5 and high-end warfare scenarios.⁷ In line with the pledge from the Wales summit, NATO members have begun to reverse years-long cuts in defence spending, which is now growing—in Europe and Canada by 1.8% in 2015, 3.3% in 2016, and 4.3% in 2017 (altogether by around \$45 billion). The 2% of GDP spending goal is expected to be met, however, by only six countries in 2017.⁸

Joint NATO actions have been complemented by the initiatives of individual Allies. The biggest contribution has come from the U.S., which often preceded actions of the whole Alliance. Under the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), the U.S. has been rebuilding its war-fighting capabilities in Europe, reversing some earlier personnel reductions, and enhancing the capacity of the Allies and its partners. ERI funding rose from almost \$1 billion in 2015 to \$3.4 billion in 2017, while the Trump administration seeks to further increase it to \$4.8 billion in 2018. By funding the rotational presence of a full armoured brigade combat team (ABCT) from 2017 onwards, ERI brings the number of American operational brigades in Europe up from two to three. The U.S. Army is also building up its prepositioned equipment, which is planned to grow to an amount fit for an armoured division.

NATO Adaptation in the Baltic

In June 2017, NATO finalised the first-ever deployment of combat forces to the Baltic states and Poland in the form of four rotational battalion-size battlegroups, totalling around 4,500 troops. This enhanced forward presence (EFP) signals to Russia that it would not be able to achieve a *fait accompli* quickly without engaging the Allies and triggering a costly conflict with NATO. In operational terms, EFP marks a steep change from rotations of smaller units for training purposes since 2014. Altogether 15 NATO members are involved in the EFP deployment in 2017, with four leading states: the U.S. in Poland, Germany in Lithuania, Canada in Latvia, and the UK in Estonia. Additionally, the American ABCT (along with aviation support) rotates through Central and Eastern Europe for exercises, with Poland serving as a hub for the unit and the location of its headquarters. The U.S. Army also intends to preposition equipment for another ABCT in Poland by 2021, in addition to similar existing sites in Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands.⁹ NATO has increased the size of the Baltic Air Policing (BAP) mission from four to eight fighters aircraft (initially, the number was raised to 16 in 2014–2015), while other Allies also periodically rotate in aircraft for training. The Baltic Sea has been the scene of intensified visits by Allied ships, including NATO Standing Maritime Groups and Standing Mine Countermeasures Groups. Exercises on the Eastern Flank have become very frequent and have been growing in scale, although they remain modest in most cases in comparison to the Russian drills. The biggest Allied exercise on the Eastern Flank was the Polish-led *Anakonda 2016*, which involved 31,000 troops.

To facilitate Allied exercises or a contingency deployment of the NRF, four NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) have been set up in the Baltic states and Poland, each with 40 personnel. These cells, together with NFIUs from Slovakia and Hungary, are coordinated by the Headquarters Multinational Corps North-East (HQ MNC NE), located in Szczecin, Poland. It has been raised to high readiness status, allowing the unit to take the

⁶ K. Friis (ed.), *NATO and Collective Defence in the 21st Century: An Assessment of the Warsaw Summit*, Routledge, 2017.

⁷ Numbers based on data from the NATO website and the NATO Secretary General’s annual reports, 2014–2016.

⁸ Greece, Estonia, Poland, Romania (as of 2017), the UK, and the U.S. See: “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010-2017),” NATO, 29 June 2017, www.nato.int.

⁹ D. Stoutamire, “Army to move brigade’s worth of firepower into Poland,” *Stars and Stripes*, 26 April 2017, www.stripes.com.

lead in combat operations across the Northeastern Flank of NATO as a land component command, as well as to plan, organise, and coordinate land operations within a joint operations area.¹⁰ The separate headquarters, *Multinational Division Northeast* (MND NE), has been formed based on the existing Polish division-level command in Elbląg, Poland. In a crisis, it would offer an additional element of the EFP command chain at a level between HQ MNC NE and the headquarters of host-nation brigades into which Allied battlegroups are being integrated. In peacetime, MND NE will be tasked with coordination of EFP training and maintaining situational awareness. In 2017, the U.S. also moved its divisional-level command element to Poland.

NATO Adaptation in the Nordic Region

The Allied presence in Norway remained limited after 2014, thus corresponding to the Norwegian ministry of defence's typical declaration that "Norway is NATO in the North." In early 2017, around 330 U.S. Marines began training rotations at a Norwegian base in central Norway to boost interoperability and signal the American commitment. These forces are stationed in the vicinity of U.S. storage sites that date back to the 1980s and contain equipment (including tanks and other heavy assets). Since 2012, these stocks have been refilled and modernised to enable the deployment of at least 4,500 Marines.¹¹ Apart from that, the Allied presence in Norway remains limited to exercises, although they are much less frequent in comparison to the Eastern Flank. In 2018, however, Norway will host the next iteration of NATO's high-visibility exercise *Trident Juncture* with about 36,000 troops and focused on defence of the Northern Flank. So far, the largest exercise has been the biannual Norwegian-led *Cold Response* drills, which involved 15,000 troops in 2016, including 3,000 U.S. personnel. Another important event was NATO's *Dynamic Mongoose*, an anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercise that takes place annually in the Norwegian Sea or North Atlantic. Under ERI, the U.S. is to periodically rotate P-8 maritime patrol aircraft to Iceland and the UK. NATO's ASW capabilities in the north also will be enhanced by the procurement of P-8s by Norway and the UK.

NATO has substantially strengthened its ties with Sweden and Finland. In 2014, both countries joined NATO's new partnership format, the Enhanced Opportunity Programme. They also signed host nation-support agreements with the Alliance, opening the possibility their territory could be used by NATO troops for exercises and operations. Sweden and Finland are involved in regular consultations with NATO, including at a special session of heads of state and government at the 2016 Warsaw summit. They also contribute forces to NRF (but not VJTF)¹² and officers to NATO commands, e.g., to HQ MNC NE in Szczecin.

Participation in various exercise formats are another vehicle for the closer cooperation of both countries with NATO and its members, leading to improved interoperability and NATO standardisation of the Swedish and Finnish forces. They have been cooperating intensively with Norway, for example through weekly joint training in the airspace covering all three countries (Cross Border Training, or CBT). There is also growing cooperation between Finland, Sweden, and the U.S., which has regarded the Nordic area as one space for some time already and has pushed for a more coherent defence and security posture in the region. For example, American and Allied marine units rehearsed amphibious landings in Sweden (in 2015) and Finland (in 2016) during the annual *BALTOPS* drills, and the U.S. has been substantially involved in air exercises with both partners, also in the north.¹³ U.S. Marines stationed in Norway also exercise in Sweden. At the large Swedish exercise *Aurora* in September 2017, the U.S. will contribute 1,435 troops (along with tanks, Apache helicopters, and Patriot air-defence systems) making it the biggest American participation in a Swedish exercise ever. It will include deployments of U.S. forces to Gotland.¹⁴

¹⁰ "LANDCOM certifies Multinational Corps Northeast as High-Readiness Force Headquarters," Allied Land Command, 15 June 2017, www.lc.nato.int.

¹¹ See: U.S. GAO, "Prepositioned Stocks: Marine Corps Needs to Improve Cost Estimate Reliability and Oversight of Inventory Systems for Equipment in Norway," Report to the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, Washington D.C., September 2015.

¹² In June 2017, Sweden and Finland also joined the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), which can participate in NATO operations.

¹³ See: J. Gotkowska, P. Szymański, "Pro-American non-alignment: Sweden and Finland develop closer military co-operation with the United States," *OSW Commentary*, 1 April 2016.

¹⁴ "No island as important as Gotland, says US military chief," *The Local*, 24 July 2017, www.thelocal.se.

Polish and Norwegian Contributions

Poland and Norway have contributed in various ways to strengthening Alliance security in their neighbourhoods, as well as in other regions. Since 2015, Poland has been meeting the 2% of GDP spending goal and, under the 2017 Concept of Defence, intends to increase expenditures to 2.5% of GDP by 2030. The Polish armed forces are to be enlarged from around 100,000 to 200,000 by 2022 (including the newly established “territorial defence units,” a national guard-type formation). Under a wide-ranging modernisation programme, Poland eyes the procurement of, among other capabilities, medium-range air and missile defences, four submarines, rocket artillery, attack helicopters, and fifth-generation fighter aircraft. Norway currently spends around 1.6% of GDP on defence and is also increasing its spending and investing in high-end assets, including 52 F-35 multirole fighters, five P-8 maritime patrol aircraft, and four submarines. Poland and Norway have also contributed to the Alliance by hosting Allied troops and facilities, regular involvement in NRF and NATO standing naval forces, participation in BAP (three Polish rotations in 2014–2017, one Norwegian in 2015), as well as taking part in new NATO initiatives. Poland will take the lead of the VJTF in 2020, the role Norway played together with Germany and Netherlands in 2015 and will do so again in 2019. Besides hosting a battlegroup and command of EFP, Poland is providing troops to the EFP unit in Latvia (170 troops), as well as to NATO’s tailored forward presence (TFP) in Romania (220 troops), while Norway has dispatched around 200 troops to the EFP in Lithuania. Poland and Norway also participate in NATO’s *Resolute Support Mission* in Afghanistan (with around 200 and 50 troops in the first half of 2017, respectively) and the international coalition against ISIS. Norway has deployed 60 troops to Iraq in a training and advisory role and another 60 are based in Jordan to provide training, advice, and operational support to Syrian groups fighting ISIS. Four Polish F-16 fighters conduct reconnaissance flights from Kuwait while up to 60 troops are in Iraq on a training mission.

While these contributions have been individual and not coordinated bilaterally by the countries, they showcase the similarities of the Polish and Norwegian commitment to common security through NATO. Poland and Norway also hold similar positions on the need for comprehensive, consistent, and long-term adaptation of NATO’s deterrence and defence posture, even though Poland focuses primarily on land and Norway on maritime areas.¹⁵ They have also emphasised the importance of a strong transatlantic link and NATO’s closer cooperation with Nordic partners.

Towards a Coherent NATO Deterrence and Defence Posture

After three years of adaptation, the key challenge for NATO now is to ensure coherence between all reassurance and deterrence initiatives launched in recent years. This includes making sure that there are no gaps in NATO’s posture and that its elements are linked properly, can act in a coordinated and mutually reinforcing way, and thus send a clear deterrence signal. Key aspects of coherence are also of a financial and geographical nature. First, adequate financing is necessary to avoid harmful competition for resources between various initiatives (regarding capabilities, deployments, and structures), and different members of the Alliance, who face an array of threats (including terrorism and instability on the Southern Flank). Second, a coherent force posture must take into account the military and political dynamics between the interconnected areas, as exemplified by the case of the Nordic-Baltic region.

Forward Presence

While the ability to reinforce its members remains at the core of NATO’s strategy, recent deployments in the Nordic-Baltic region showcase the importance of the Allied forward presence to frontline states. Both the rotations of U.S. Marines to Norway and EFP and U.S. deployments to the Baltic states and Poland share the

¹⁵ See: T. Szatkowski, “How to Enhance the Security of Poland and NATO, Post-Warsaw Summit,” *PPD*, 2017, www.ppd.pism.pl; I. Eriksen Søreide, “NATO and the North Atlantic: Revitalizing Collective Defense and the Maritime Domain,” *PRISM*, vol. 6, no. 2, 18 July 2017.

key function of sending a political signal about the Allied commitment, but are also relatively modest to limit the risk of an escalation of tensions with Russia. The modalities of forward deployments in the north and east differ, however, as Norway, on one hand, and Poland and the Baltic states, on the other, see the threat posed by Russia to their territories in varying ways.

Norway has never sought larger, forward-deployed and combat-ready units like the EFP and is highly unlikely to do so. The traditional Norwegian policy of balancing deterrence with restrained military activity close to the Russian border has remained in place since the Cold War. The northernmost county, Finnmark, covering an area comparable to the size Denmark, is largely demilitarised. The point is to avoid being regarded originally by the Soviet Union and then later by Russia as a potential launch area for Western attacks on the strategically important bases on Kola and—in effect—becoming a target for pre-emptive strikes. An EFP-like deployment could alter this traditional reassurance gesture towards Russia. Moreover, the chances of a bilateral crisis with Russia in the High North is regarded as very low. Norway and Russia have no major historical conflicts and the military activity at the Kola bases are conducted in a routine manner. While Norway recently was a target of Russian threats (regarding the deployment of U.S. Marines and the potential involvement in NATO's ballistic missile defence system),¹⁶ there have not been any violations of Norwegian airspace or other provocative behaviour by the Russian military. The Arctic Council operates more or less as before. In short, Norway is concerned chiefly with the possible escalation of a conflict into its territory from other regions. The country, which possesses a relatively small number of armed forces,¹⁷ relies on deterrence by punishment through a NATO response that would inflict high costs upon an aggressor rather than on deterrence by denial at the very border.

In turn, the Baltic states and Poland perceive Russian aggression against them as much more likely, although not unavoidable. Hence, they advocated for a combat-ready EFP that would involve the Allies from the onset of hostilities, increasing the escalation risks for Russia. With EFP already in place, NATO needs to work on the deployment's longer-term sustainability, possibly by developing a schedule of rotations within the battlegroups (as in the case of the VJTF). This would help the Allies, including Norway, to coordinate their involvement in the EFP with contributions to other initiatives (e.g., rotations in the NRF) so there are no personnel gaps in the EFP. Poland is focused on ensuring the durable character of the ongoing U.S. and NATO deployments, but calls to strengthen such a presence might intensify as well. In fact, the Baltic states already advocate for the persistent presence of U.S. forces, in addition to non-U.S. EFP deployments there, to boost the tripwire effect through the inclusion of the forces of the most capable ally.¹⁸ Moreover, Poland and the Baltic states value forward presence not only in symbolic but also in military terms.¹⁹ Ideally, they would see a balance between forward presence and reinforcement that would enable deterrence by denial to set the bar for the aggressor very high. Under NATO's current deterrence concept, it seems viable, although not easy, in the case of Poland, but is at best questionable in the case of the Baltic states, which have much smaller national home defence forces and a much more adverse geographic location. A substantial increase in forward deployed troops does not seem to dominate the Polish and Baltic security agenda right now, but this might change depending on the effectiveness of the adaptation of NATO's reinforcement capabilities and evolution of the Russian posture. Russia's increasing abilities to deploy a massive force at NATO's doorstep are likely to be demonstrated during *Zapad 2017*, a joint exercise with Belarus. While Russia states that there will be fewer than 13,000 troops involved, the actual number in the area might reach 100,000, since there will be other, coordinated Russian drills in the region at the same time.²⁰

¹⁶ "Russia Threatens Norway to Stay Out of NATO Missile Defense," *NATOSource*, 21 March 2017, www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/; "Norway will suffer": Russia makes nuclear threat over US Marines," *The Local*, 31 October 2016, www.thelocal.no.

¹⁷ In case of the Army, there is only one brigade consisting of three manoeuvre battalions and support units.

¹⁸ "Baltic states urge strong U.S. defense commitment to region," *Reuters*, 14 December 2016.

¹⁹ See, e.g.: J.E. Barnes, "Lithuania Calls for Permanent U.S. Military Presence Amid Russia Tensions," *The Wall Street Journal*, 11 May 2017, www.wsj.com; R. Grammer, "With Russia Threat Looming, Poland Pins Cautious Hopes on a Trump Administration," *The Cable—Foreign Policy*, 6 January 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com>.

²⁰ "Minister: Estonia, NATO expect greater transparency from Russia, Belarus," *ERR*, 26 August 2017, <http://news.err.ee>.

Reinforcement

Although RAP improved NATO's rapid-response capabilities, an enlarged NRF alone might be insufficient to provide adequate and timely reinforcement. NRF's elements other than the VJTF would be too slow to counter a rapid incursion while even the whole NRF would be too small to react to a massive Russian conventional attack. Its size also precludes a simultaneous response to contingencies in other locations during a conflict with Russia (High North, Baltic, and Black seas), in addition to possible out-of-area crises. Similar limitations apply to NATO Standing Naval Forces. In effect, NATO might find its forces overstretched in a major crisis.

Therefore, NATO would be highly dependent on the availability of national assets, either as follow-on forces or first responders, were the NRF engaged elsewhere. After the Cold War, however, such capabilities have been either reduced in Europe or not maintained at sufficient readiness. While this situation has begun to change in the last three years, much more investment is necessary to fulfil the commitments from the Warsaw Summit Communiqué (para 45) on "delivering heavier and more high-end forces and capabilities, as well as more forces at higher readiness."

Since such efforts require a substantial period of time to materialise, Europe will remain largely dependent on reinforcement by the U.S. for years to come. In that context, the utmost importance should be attached to securing the lines of communication in the North Atlantic, which was not a focus of NATO in the last three decades.²¹ In addition to the ongoing reinvigoration of maritime patrol aircraft capabilities, this will require an enhanced allied maritime presence in the North Atlantic to further increase situational awareness and the capability to promptly counter mounting threats. As evidenced during recent exercises in Central and Eastern Europe, effective reinforcement also requires further NATO and national efforts to preposition supplies and ammunition, as well as enhancing logistics and freedom of movement. The latter includes eliminating legal obstacles to the cross-border movement of troops and equipment, providing more means of transport, and improving reception infrastructure and transportation networks.²² Improved coverage of the whole Nordic-Baltic region in terms of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) is also necessary to allow NATO to anticipate crises, alert forces in advance, and avoid miscalculation. Although NATO and its members have taken precautions (such as additional deployments of U.S. forces) before the upcoming *Zapad 17* exercise, such a warning might not be available in the event of unannounced drills.

Countering A2/AD

Even with improved reinforcement capabilities, NATO will not be able to defend the Nordic-Baltic region if it cannot overcome the Russian A2/AD systems. In the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, the Allies declared they will not accept such constraints (para 44), and now NATO needs to back up those words with action by developing a comprehensive counter-A2/AD strategy along with a related mix of offensive and defensive capabilities. The A2/AD challenge also calls for careful military planning and political signalling, since strikes against land-based systems in Russian territory would entail a heightened risk of escalation, possibly even to the nuclear level. This also underscores how interconnected the various dimensions of NATO's deterrence are, including both the conventional and nuclear aspects.

A key role in countering Russia's A2/AD systems would be played by the most capable allies (especially the U.S., but also the UK, France, and Germany) and their ability to project force in a crisis. But frontline states should and could contribute, too, as proven by the Norwegian and Polish plans to purchase high-end assets, with some of these capabilities already in place (e.g., JASSM air-launched cruise missiles, or naval strike missiles in Poland's case). However, other Allies should also consider filling the gaps in key aspects of force posture (e.g., air defence on the Eastern Flank) by forward-deploying some assets, at least for the short term. This need stems from the scale of the threat, the long amount of time needed to field capabilities procured by countries in the region, or their limited financial resources (especially in the case of the Baltic states). There is

²¹ J. A. Olsen (ed.), "NATO and the North Atlantic: Revitalising Collective Defence," RUSI, *Whitehall Paper 87*, 2017.

²² J. Judson, "US Army Europe chief: NATO allies should bolster infrastructure," *Defense News*, 20 June 2017, www.defensenews.com.

also a need to re-think NATO's role in the maritime dimension, from combat to reinforcement and logistics in an A2/AD environment. This is crucial for Allied security in the Baltic Sea as well as the North Atlantic. The maritime response to Russia has been relatively modest compared to the efforts on the ground and in the air, partly due to limited resources.

Command Structure, Planning, and Exercises

As a result of the post-Cold War transformation, the NATO command structure (NCS) was reshaped mainly to fulfil the task of out-of-area crisis management, whereas today the Alliance needs to be able to command multiple high-intensity operations in Europe and the North Atlantic at the same time in addition to expeditionary missions. In declaratory terms, NATO aimed at being able to conduct two large and six small operations long before 2014, but its command-and-control capabilities—especially for land-heavy and maritime-heavy operations—were significantly downsized. In 2017, the scenario of a “major joint operation plus” (MJO+, involving up to three corps or around 100,000 troops) will be exercised for the first time in almost 20 years, during *Trident Javelin 2017*, a command exercise preceding the *Trident Juncture 2018* drills.²³ Hence, NCS is undergoing a functional assessment after the Warsaw Summit. It should lead to a more regional focus of the NCS to enhance its capability to command and plan operations in various areas. It should also enhance links between the NCS, the NATO Force Structure (NFS),²⁴ and national commands to provide clarity during a crisis and enable the deployment and control of needed forces. Changes such as the deployment of the NFIUs were a step in the right direction, but do not fully correspond on their own to the scale of possible contingencies in the region requiring a large number of follow-on forces to the NRF. Adaptation of the NCS will require striking an operational, financial, and political balance between the steps, such as changing the current geographical footprint of the NCS, more staffing at existing headquarters, and double-hatting national commands (such as the transformation of the Polish divisional command in Elbląg into a multinational role).

Another issue where NATO has yet to achieve greater coherence is in its operational planning. Since 2014, NATO has developed Graduated Response Plans (GRPs), each dedicated to one geographic area.²⁵ The plans for Norway and Poland and the Baltic states should be integrated as closely as possible, given the interconnections between the Eastern and Northern Flanks. In terms of exercises, NATO already has made great progress, but it now needs to focus more on the A2/AD challenges as well as reinforcement beyond the rapid-response units. Important scenarios to practice include the reinforcement of Europe through the North Atlantic in a contested environment, and reinforcement of the EFP with the NRF and follow-on forces. The exercises should also consider the dynamics between distant geographical areas to the fullest possible extent, including those present in the Nordic-Baltic region.

Cooperation with Sweden and Finland

NATO's close ties to Sweden and Finland are of the utmost importance for the security of the Nordic-Baltic region. Neither NATO partner is likely to stay neutral in a conflict with Russia, irrespective of formal NATO membership (which remains improbable). Since both countries are members of the EU, they can also invoke or be requested to respond to an invocation of EU defence and solidarity pledges (Art 42.7 TEU), which would affect most NATO members. However, non-membership of the Alliance bears some limitations and uncertainties for Sweden and Finland. First, membership would help clarify whether they can count on NATO Article 5 guarantees and vice-versa, thus strengthening the deterrent effect. Second, “red lines” for cooperation still exist—albeit they are not clear—and that might limit the scope of collaboration in areas such as intelligence-sharing or contingency planning. It also cannot be excluded that some NATO members might oppose creating a kind of “semi-membership” status. At the same time, both NATO and its partners could mutually gain from closer collaboration with these partners in situational awareness and interoperability-building and capability development. Both countries possess some important capabilities (e.g., maritime and

²³ *Trident Javelin 2017*, NATO Command and Control Centre of Excellence, <https://c2coe.org>.

²⁴ National and multinational forces and headquarters placed at the Alliance's disposal.

²⁵ J. Ringsmose, S. Rynning, “Now for the Hard Part: NATO's Strategic Adaptation to Russia,” *Survival*, vol. 59, no. 3, 2017, p. 134.

air assets as well as Finnish JASSM missiles) or plan to acquire them (e.g., Sweden eyes a new medium-range air-defence system).

Conclusions: Poland and Norway as Advocates of NATO Coherent Adaptation

In the last three years, NATO has made great progress in responding to the changed security environment, but the adaptation process is far from over. The need for further changes results from years of neglect of collective defence in NATO, on the one hand, and Russia's continuous strengthening of its force posture, on the other. Hence, the Alliance needs to continue its adaptation to the challenge posed by Russia, as well as to other threats. And it has to do it in a coherent manner.

The Alliance and its members should deliver on all pledges made at the Wales and Warsaw summits and integrate the results of those efforts into a coherent posture by ensuring close links and coordination between various initiatives. Political-military dynamics in the Nordic-Baltic region prove how interconnected Allied security can be, even in the case of geographically separated allies, and is an excellent example of the need for coherence in fostering NATO adaptation. For Poland and the Baltic states to be secure, NATO needs to ensure the flow of reinforcements and supplies in the North Atlantic. In turn, the security of Norway depends largely on the credibility NATO deterrence in the Baltic, since failure there would likely result in an escalation of conflict to the north.

Poland and Norway are in a good position to promote coherent NATO adaptation, especially in the Nordic-Baltic region, which should lead to a sustained forward presence, enhanced maritime capabilities, improved reinforcement capabilities, a counter-A2/AD strategy, and closer cooperation with NATO's Nordic partners—all brought together under a reformed NATO command structure. Poland and Norway have proven credible Alliance members that not only gain from but also contribute to NATO. They can advance a coherent evolution of the Alliance by combining their different areas of primary focus and expertise (land and maritime dimensions), as well as different geographic perspectives. NATO's conventional posture could be a starting point. Poland and Norway should jointly play a leading role in the discussion on countering A2/AD since both countries are in range of such systems and now are procuring the capabilities to counter them. Given the importance of naval forces to Allied operations in the Baltic area and the Northern Flank, Poland and Norway should also promote a revision of the NATO Maritime Strategy. Major exercises led by both countries (*Anakonda*, *Cold Response*) should be expanded on to fully take into account the A2/AD challenges and the various aspects of reinforcement, including the deployment of follow-on forces. NATO and its members should participate in these drills to the broadest possible extent.

Such efforts should be underpinned by close bilateral cooperation between Poland and Norway. Their ongoing military modernisation programmes will open new possibilities in the operational and industrial dimensions (e.g., submarines, air and missile defence, precision-guided munitions, and, potentially, fifth-generation aircraft). Both countries can already gain from exchanging expertise and experience in areas of common interest (such as prepositioning U.S. heavy assets, a relatively new area for Poland). They could also jointly advance cooperation with Nordic partners Sweden and Finland, not only in NATO but also in other security-related formats.

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