

## National Perspectives of European Countries in Deterring Russia<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

*Since Russia's annexation of Crimea and the start of the military conflict in Ukraine's Donbass region in 2014, states in Europe's east and north have revised their assessments of Russia's policies and intentions. The approach chosen by Russia in Ukraine, however, has rendered lessons learned from the Cold War deterrence only partially applicable to the recently changing security situation in Europe. The emergence of the cyber realm, a smaller emphasis on nuclear deterrence and increasing importance of non-military threats, are among the key differences between the Cold War and the current security environment. The key focus of the paper is on the defence and military responses of northern and eastern European countries, being in some parts derived from the book project "Deterring Russia in Europe" conducted in 2017/2018 and was published by Routledge October 2018. The countries which were picked as case studies for this paper are Sweden, Finland, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Romania.*

*The selection of the nine cases was done by following three criteria. First, their representation of the Baltic and Black Sea regions, because both regions are problematic for NATO's northern and eastern flanks and for European security generally, considering Russia's military activities and the existing military asymmetry. Second, the perception of Russia as a threat: This is a vitally important factor in explaining shifts in the defence policies or even strategies of the countries picked for the paper. Third, institutional membership: NATO and EU membership differences undermine the deterrence posture of the Baltic Sea region and complicate the building of closer cooperation on defence matters for the countries in the region.*

*Paper provides in-depth analysis of the changing character of deterrence and its practical application by Russia's European neighbours. Its potential contribution to the symposium would be laying out the national perceptions of deterrence concept that on the first glance only seems to be easy to understand. Additionally, to that it would identify particular challenges the countries are facing to balance between NATO deterrence posture and national deterrence efforts, as in the end of the day it all comes back to the resources both personnel and financial that countries are able to allocate for numerous newly launched policies. Lastly, it would also help to formulate national expectations when it comes to the existing NATO's deterrence posture and put forward ideas how to make it more fitting both to the national needs of northern and eastern European countries and Alliance's deterrence posture.*

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since 2014 deterrence has again become an integral part of the security debate in Europe. Although the character of the concept of deterrence has not changed, the practice of deterrence in the current security environment has changed compared to the Cold War period. The goal of deterrence in the current circumstances remains the same, being to convince Russia, not to commence military aggression against NATO member states or any other European country. This goal is not significantly different from the Cold War era. However, there are important differences.

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The first difference is the role of the concept of deterrence in NATO's strategy and for Northern and Eastern European countries. It seems that the alliance itself is struggling with how the deterrence concept should once again be embraced in its strategy. The 2016 Warsaw Summit's communique speaks about a deterrence strategy that rests on three pillars. These are conventional, nuclear and deep strike capabilities. This would indicate that the alliance has the ambition of conducting extended deterrence, with an element of deterrence by punishment, which would follow Cold War practice. But the deeds which follow and the messaging towards Russia are disparate. The deeds relate solely to the conventional element of extended deterrence and are the deployment of a forward presence and adjusting the concepts of reaction and follow-on forces. Considering the scope of the conventional posture, it is very limited and does not provide the necessary counter balance to Russia's military presence in the Baltics.

The deterrence messaging is purely defensive by its nature, repeating continually that NATO will defend its allies, but the lack of reference to nuclear and deep strike capabilities, makes this message less credible. Thus, when compared to Russia's offensive communication style about its conventional, nuclear and missile capabilities, NATO is speaking from defensive positions. On the one hand, this indicates that there is ambiguity within NATO about Russia's intentions and the kind of threat it poses. Is Russia really an adversary in a political and military sense? During the Cold War, there were two mutually conflicting ideological blocks and the intentions of each side were clear. A strong and robust deterrence strategy provided predictability and stability. On the other hand, the aim of the alliance is most likely to have a less robust military deterrence posture so as not to cut all channels of dialogue with Russia and thus to have a less escalatory environment in the Baltic Sea region.

The second difference is the reduced importance of nuclear weapons in deterrence, at least on the NATO side. The purpose of nuclear deterrence is to prevent escalation to the point where a nuclear strike becomes necessary. The ability to control the use of force as a tool of policy within a conflict underwrites the US strategy of extended deterrence, to not only deter conflict, but to also manage it if it starts. This is also the rationale behind the NATO nuclear force structure. Nuclear weapons have been deployed in Europe to provide a regional nuclear deterrent which would enable the control of escalation. However, Russia's approach is to use nuclear weapons for military effect to prevent conventional defeat. That is a fundamental difference, because the purpose of a nuclear strike for NATO is not military, but entirely political. Even accepting the rationale for not messaging deterrence by punishment with reference to the nuclear element, NATO should at least do all the back stage preparatory activities so that it is prepared for possible crisis scenarios. So far, very little has been done. At NATO's strategic headquarters, nuclear forces are still considered distinct from the rest of the alliance's deterrence and defence posture, with nuclear deterrence strategy being considered in isolation.

The third difference in the current situation is the importance of non-military aspects of deterrence. The hybrid nature of warfare nowadays (the widespread usage of cyber, information, electronic and psychological tools) gives an unprecedentedly high significance to non-military means. In order to counter these non-military threats, the model of total defence has experienced a renaissance in some countries. Systemic and societal resilience are considered as preconditions for developing deterrence by denial. This cannot be easily done because of three reasons. First, it requires changes in the mindset politically, that national security is not solely a defence matter, but needs to be approached comprehensively through cross sectoral cooperation. Second, the societal changes that have taken place since the Cold War have made it very challenging to involve individuals in defence or civilian defence to a greater degree. Third, significant investments in infrastructure have to be made that were mostly previously abandoned.

Russia's policies towards Ukraine have been a source of concern for most of the countries neighbouring Russia, these concerns have been further strengthened by Russia's assertive foreign policy and its demonstration of military capabilities all across Europe's Eastern border and in Syria. Specific weaknesses, such as the presence of sizable Russian-speaking minorities, shrinking defence budgets, and a lack of military preparedness were also a source of concern for countries in Russia's vicinity. In short, Russia

needed to be deterred again because of its allegedly aggressive policies and because of the domestic weaknesses of its neighbours. To deter Russia, its neighbours had to develop credible military capabilities. For the past few years, the primary focus of the countries that are close neighbours of Russia has been on increasing defence expenditures, reconfiguring their defence strategies, and working assiduously to improve NATO deterrence vis-à-vis Russia.

The focus of this paper are the developments after Ukraine crisis in the defence sectors in such European countries as Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Baltic countries, Poland, Romania and Germany. These countries not only fundamentally reviewed their defence plans but in most cases were forced to integrate the notion of deterrence in their defence policies. This notion, which seemed to belong to the Cold War period, became a new paradigm for thinking. The objective of this chapter is thus to answer the questions: How did the defence policies of European countries change? What is the evaluation of Russia in the official national discourse and public perception? What is the significance of the notion of deterrence in national defence policies? What are some of the practical defence measures countries have taken? What are the challenges countries face in their attempts to deter Russia? Lastly, paper formulates recommendations for NATO how to meet the challenges that countries are facing.

## 2.0 THREAT PERCEPTION

History and geography is of importance when it comes to the perceptions of Russia among the 9 countries. Countries such as Finland, the Baltic states, Poland and Romania that were historically suppressed and/or had military conflicts with Russia, shared a negative assessment of Russia among the public, even before the 2014 Ukraine crisis. Within policy-making circles, these concerns were muted and were largely confined to the defence sector, and because of this fact were often considered to be “paranoid”. Good or at least constructive economic relations with Russia were seen to be the best possible option. For more geographically distant countries like Germany, Sweden and Norway, which have had a different intensity in their interactions with Russia throughout their history, the perception of Russia was neutral, certainly not as a real threat to national security, and Russia was seen as an economic partner.

The Georgia-Russia war in 2008 was noticed and condemned by all countries. Public opinion polls over the next two years showed an increase in respondents who saw Russia as a national threat. But a palpable impact on defence policy only took place in the case of Estonia, which increased defence expenditures and invested in territorial defence. The main reason for this determination was because of the social unrest and cyber-attacks on Estonia in 2007, which were considered to have been organized by Russia. The annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014 was a game changer for all countries. All countries, without exception, rewrote their defence policy documents. They condemned Russia’s violation of international norms in Ukraine and directly name Russia as a threat to the European security architecture. Russia is named by the Baltic states, Poland and Romania as an existential threat to their national security. It was a blow in the case of Norway, because a lot of political, economic, cultural and personal investment had been made by Norway and Russia to normalize relations in the High North. It also came hard for Germany, considering the mutually beneficial economic relations between both countries. Due to the lack of leadership within Europe, Germany had to reconsider its role on security matters and has expressed readiness to take on “a new responsibility”. Lastly, Sweden has been especially vocal in expressing its concerns about Russia’s aggressive behaviour and has fundamentally reconsidered its defence strategy, unlike Finland which was typically silent in its condemnation of Russia’s activities.

In all countries public opinion of the perception of Russia as a threat increased significantly in the next three years following the 2014 events in Ukraine. Even in Sweden and Germany, almost half of the respondents saw Russia as a threat. The most concerned, naturally, were the neighbouring countries such as Norway, the

Baltic states, Poland, Finland and Romania, who saw Russia as an unreliable, unpredictable, and revisionist country. Thus political and societal preconditions gave the green light for political elites to stop cuts in the defence sector, in the case of Germany and Sweden, and to increase defence expenditures in all countries. Of course, one can observe that over the time (after all it is almost 5 years after the beginning of Ukraine crisis) perception of Russia as a threat will be decreasing in many of these countries, even in the Baltic states and Poland. People tend to simply get accustomed to the threat and Russia still has not, after all, attacked any of these countries. Hence policy-makers, especially those in the defence sector, face the challenge of how to sustain defence spending, as it will directly affect reforms and procurements launched, especially if there is no wide public support, which can eventually result in changes to the political commitment of governments. So far, Russia's aggressive foreign policy in the Middle East and its activities in its Western military district have prevented a marked decline in terms of perceiving Russia as a threat.

### **3.0 INTEGRATING DETERRENCE CONCEPT**

The analysis of how the concept of deterrence has been included in the national deterrence strategies, reveals that deterrence was a forgotten concept for some countries (Germany, Sweden, Finland and Norway) or a different word, "threshold" was used (the Nordic countries), but for most of them (especially, the post-communist countries) the concept of deterrence had never been learned.

In addition, the fact that the year 2014 was not pivotal for these countries in the sense of starting to think in deterrence categories, but was a fundamental shift in their defence strategies, should be acknowledged. For two decades, all of the countries, regardless of whether they were NATO or non-NATO members, were focusing the development of their armed forces on participation in international military operations. In Europe, the "peace dividend" created preconditions for downscaling of territorial defence to the very minimum (personnel and armament cuts) and a focus on participation in out-of-area missions, with Finland as an exception. Finland, while having a strategy of neutrality, has been an active contributor to international missions, especially those of the United Nations, but has never given up its territorial defence model. Moreover, it modernized and transformed its Cold War total defence model into a comprehensive security system, adjusting it in this way to the political and societal changes that had taken place since the 1990s.

By 2015, after considerable discussion between politicians, policy-makers, analytics and academics, it had become clear that deterrence was the way forward for containing Russia. The concept became a buzzword especially after the 2016 Warsaw Summit. For most of the countries, the main connotation is that it is NATO's primary responsibility, because it has the actual capacity to deter Russia. Individual countries have only limited capabilities in this respect. For NATO member states, the perception is that deterrence is provided by the alliance and that this is embedded in the collective defence guarantees (Article 5). The Baltic states rely heavily on the extended deterrence provided by key NATO member states, and have, practically, become a part of the conventional deterrence posture in the Baltic Sea region, with forward force deployment and discussions on reaction and follow-on forces. Norway and Germany are also contributors to NATO's extended deterrence. Poland in turn, is both. It is a contributor through its despatch of a tank company to Latvia and a receiver by hosting the US battalion. Romania has expressed concerns about the existing NATO deterrence posture in the Black Sea region as there are almost no extended deterrence efforts being delivered by the alliance.

As to deterrence by punishment, there is no conviction so far among member states concerning the alliance's political will to conduct it. This is mostly due to NATO's defensive communication style. All of its deterrence efforts are defensive in nature and do not threaten Russia. There is also an obvious reluctance to discuss nuclear policy within NATO. Germany is a country that participates in the alliance's nuclear policy by hosting nuclear weapons on its soil and its pilots train in the delivery of US nuclear warheads. But due to Germany's traditional and historically conditioned normative policy of focusing on disarmament, it is

reluctant to perceive nuclear weapons from a strategic perspective and become seriously involved in debates about nuclear deterrence.

It should also be noted, that countries with NATO membership associate deterrence by punishment foremost with the nuclear element, missile weapons and deep strike capabilities, which can realistically only be pursued by the alliance, or to put it more precisely, by the US. This reliance, in the case of the Baltic states, is very much explainable by the lack of resources and military capabilities of these countries.

Norway is the only NATO member state that relies on NATO's deterrence by punishment, because it would be next to impossible to deploy the alliance's reaction forces in time, and due to political reasons, the option of having a forward presence force on the ground is not viable. If Norway had a certain posture of deterrence by denial during the Cold War, it is not the case nowadays. In those times, Norway had a "base policy" that foresaw a combination of deterrence and reassurance elements, with the aim of convincing the Soviet Union that Norway's territory would not be used to strike against Soviet military objects of strategic importance. As compensation for an absence of allied bases, Norway regularly hosted significant allied trainings and exercises.

NATO non-member countries like Sweden and Finland which cannot formally rely on the extended deterrence provided by NATO, need to find the right combination for their deterrence posture. In the case of Sweden, the conclusion was that it is very vulnerable to hybrid threats due to technological and societal changes. Therefore it has decided to let go of traditional concepts of parrying and of deterrence by denial, and to conduct deterrence by punishment instead, as striking back at the aggressor would be the only effective alternative for a numerically inferior and vulnerable party. Finland, which already has a solid deterrence by denial posture, follows the same logic and will also procure limited deterrence by punishment capabilities, being air, land and potentially sea-based systems with conventional, but accurate warheads that could be used to target strategically important facilities in Russia.

In some cases dialogue is also perceived as an important part of national defence strategies, for both NATO member states and non-NATO countries. Germany is conducting dual-track diplomacy, by actively participating in NATO's deterrence efforts and simultaneously keeping up a dialogue with Russia. The dialogue with Russia is perceived as important in order to address issues of mutual concern, and to maintain a certain crisis stability and predictability in Europe. In 2016, Germany's foreign minister at that time, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, launched an initiative called Structured Dialogue which aimed to open debates on arms control in Europe within the framework of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which has been perceived with great suspicion, sometimes even with distrust, on both sides. Overall, Germany's dual-track approach has not been welcomed by many NATO member states.

In addition, for Norway, which does not consider Russia as a military threat to its national security, it is important to have a combined deterrence and dialogue approach, both bilaterally and within NATO. Norway joined the EU sanctions regime and proactively supports NATO policies to express solidarity with Ukraine and the EU position. At the same time, bilateral cooperation on search and rescue and incidents at sea has continued. Fishery management and the direct hotline between the Russian Northern Fleet and the Norwegian Joint Operational Headquarters have been kept open.

As a NATO non-member country, Finland has a unique approach indeed. It is a sort of "a deterrence by dialogue approach", which foresees that Finland's neighbours have nothing to fear from it, but in the case of war, the country will be able to resist an aggressor. In the post-2014 environment, Finland has adopted an approach that combines supporting calls for peaceful resolutions to the conflict, seeking EU unanimity in condemning Russia's actions and ensuring that the lines of dialogue with Russia remain open.

#### 4.0 REGIONAL COOPERATION AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS

The US is the backbone of NATO's extended deterrence and deterrence by punishment. Regardless of whether a certain country is or is not a member of NATO, strategic partnership with the US is of central importance (except of course, in the case of Belarus).

For non-NATO member countries like Sweden and Finland, which do not, and will not have public and political support for NATO membership in the near future, strategic partnership with the US is a basis for deterrence by punishment. In terms of multilateral and regional cooperation, both countries focus on NATO, the EU and Nordic cooperation under the aegis of Nordic Defence Cooperation. The focus of cooperation with NATO has shifted from crisis management towards collective defence, participating in military exercises that explicitly simulate collective Article 5 based defence.

NATO countries are also intensifying regional cooperation in order to synchronize threat perception and to assist NATO's activities in the region. The Baltic states have intensified their military integration even more, including the synchronization of operational plans and early warning. They are also trying to approach the Nordic countries, but quite unsuccessfully so far due to the fact that Sweden and Finland are not NATO members. The Baltic states are also aiming to utilize the EU platform in two ways. First, to keep sanctions against Russia running. Second, to attract European funds for military mobilization and logistics projects.

Poland in turn, is trying to take up a leading role in the defence of the Baltic Sea region. It is working actively within the Visegrad Group in order to reach the same threat perception among countries. Another multilateral initiative is the Weimar Triangle, being an agreement between Poland, France and Germany, but this initiative has not been pursued due to developments in Poland's domestic politics. Another questionable idea is the 'Intermarium' under Polish leadership, as the Three Seas Initiative could facilitate cooperation between the Central and Eastern Europe nations, supporting unity in political goals.

Romania is trying to enhance regional cooperation among the Black Sea littoral countries, namely Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey. They do not share similar perceptions of threat and there is a lack of consensus among them on how to enhance security in the Black Sea basin. Bulgaria and Turkey regard Russia's maritime activities with concern, but, unlike Romania, they prefer a rather more conciliatory approach towards Moscow, primarily because of their economic and strategic interests. So far Romania is failing in its attempts.

Germany mostly uses multilateral platforms. It has a leading role in debates about sanctions against Russia within the EU. At the same time, it keeps the dialogue track open within the OSCE, discussing options on how to decrease tensions in Europe by reinvigorating discussion on arms control. Belarus is also active within the OSCE on arms control discussions. EU-Belarus relations have been stable with some minor exceptions, which is important for Belarus in the sense of financial assistance. Prior to the *Zapad-2017* military exercise, Belarus approached the US and NATO with the aim of convincing them about the harmless intentions of military activities in the region. Bilaterally, Belarus is trying to develop cooperation with autocratic regimes in Asia, and thus, is trying to find alternative partnerships.

#### 5.0 NATIONAL DETERRENCE EFFORTS: PRACTICAL STEPS

All countries except Germany, are conducting national deterrence efforts at the national level, which are aiming to achieve deterrence by denial and/or deterrence by punishment. None of the countries label these national deterrence efforts to be a part of central deterrence, but they can be qualified as this *per se*. The rise of defence expenditures has given these countries the necessary resources to conduct national deterrence efforts, addressing both military and non-military threats.

The beginning of the Ukraine crisis came as a shock to many within NATO, and led to the realization of how vulnerable the Baltic states were and how much effort needed to be invested by both NATO and the Baltics states in order to provide adequate defence. Addressing military and non-military threats in the Baltic states is of equal importance. In the military realm, all three states are considering options on how to increase manpower (Lithuania even renewed conscription) and boosting their self-defence capabilities. A lot of investment is directed at equipping and training volunteer territorial defence forces. The size of special operation forces has been tripled in order to address hybrid scenarios. The next realm which has received special attention is civil-military cooperation with the aim of providing for full control over the eastern border. The non-military dimension is being considered especially seriously, due to the large Russian-speaking communities in Estonia and Latvia. Russian propaganda needs to be fought and all options weighed on how to increase the resilience of society. Among these options are widespread patriotism campaigns, incorporating a subject on defence in schools (Latvia), issuing manuals about what to do in case of conflict (Lithuania) etc. So far, however, the Baltic states' efforts at creating an effective deterrent against Russia have not reached the ultimate goal of deterrence by denial because the regional ratio of forces is heavily in Russia's favour.

Considering Poland's investments in defence, its goal is to reach deterrence by denial. It also nurtures ambitions of playing a leading role in the defence of the Baltics. Its deterrence capabilities are recognized mostly in the military domain. Poland has three divisions, with one deployed and facing the so-called "Suwalki Gap" and with two armoured battalions having been deployed close to Warsaw. Poland is enhancing the staff of the Multinational Corps North East in Szczecin and has launched another headquarters, the Multinational Division North East in Elblag, which is very close to Kaliningrad. These decisions are aimed at improving command and control systems and an understanding of the joint operational area in north-east Poland by allies. The armed forces are undergoing substantial modernization processes. The expected advanced Raytheon 'Patriot' system will deliver the desired high-altitude defence capabilities. Poland is also looking at territorial volunteer force concepts in other countries and is aiming to develop a territorial defence force that could significantly increase manpower in defence. As to non-military activities, Poland is weighing options to enhance the resilience of society. One of the steps is to include a special subject on Poland's history and national security for younger generations in schools.

Because of NATO's weak extended deterrence posture in the Black Sea, Romania is relying mostly on its own national deterrence efforts and assistance from the US. It has foreseen a long-term militarization plan for the armed forces in four areas – air defence, naval capabilities, the mechanization of land forces and territorial defence capabilities. The modernization plan also provides for the expansion and strengthening of the national defence industry. Just like Poland, Romania will also be purchasing 'Patriot' missiles and air defence systems from the US. Among its non-military activities, Romania aims to build societal resilience, fight against corruption, strengthen its administrative capacity and inter-institutional coordination, enhance the protection of critical infrastructure, promote the diversification of energy resources, tackle cyber threats and fight against radicalization and extremism.

Norway, in turn, is aiming to strengthen NATO's deterrence by punishment. The 52 newly procured F-35 fighting jets can not only boost air power, but also land and sea power, thus increasing Norway's national fighting capacity, and to some extent, its deterrence by denial. As for its navy, Norway will be buying four new HDW 212 and five new P8 Poseidon submarines, increasing both surveillance and anti-submarine warfare capability in this way. The development needs of the land forces have not been addressed so far.

After the Ukraine crisis, Germany had to make titanic shifts in its defence policy, from participation in crisis management to collective defence. Germany could not fulfil its political commitments to NATO assurance and deterrence measures because of the reforms launched in 2011, which foresaw cuts and reductions in the armed forces, in personnel, armament and equipment. The overall picture regarding the state of readiness and

deployability of the armed forces was, and still is, pessimistic. For now, the German armed forces are engaging in a process of relearning collective defence and undergoing reforms in order to have a fighting force for high intensity warfare. This requires considerable investment in terms of equipment, personnel, and training. Because of the delay in the process of forming government, so far only marginal changes to equipment have been decided, being the modernization of 100 main battle tanks by industry and the procurement of five new corvettes. However, these decisions have not been systematically deduced from the Federal Ministry of Defence's new threat assessment. Thus, in the case of Germany, one cannot say that it is undertaking central deterrence steps, but that it is more a case of trying to get back on its feet and thus being able to contribute to NATO's deterrence posture.

Regarding the non-member states of NATO, in the case of Sweden, which also experienced severe cuts in defence for years, just like Germany, the first step was to raise the readiness, availability and combat capabilities of units and systems. Its conscription system was renewed. The next step was to procure new weapon systems, such as Patriot missiles. After the conclusion of modernization and procurement processes, the army should have four brigades plus a battle-group on Gotland, long-range fire, Rangers and territorial units. The air force should have eight squadrons with 120 aircraft, a resilient and expanded basing system, missiles for long-range attack of ground and sea targets, as well as radar-homing missiles. The navy should have 24 surface combatant platforms armed with medium-range anti-aircraft missiles and long-range cruise missiles, six submarines, and four amphibious battalions. Much attention is also being devoted to societal resilience in order to prepare society for short and extended periods of crisis.

Finland is also aiming to acquire limited offensive capabilities that would provide deterrence by punishment. As the country already has sufficient deterrence by denial, the main focus after 2014, has been on improving the reaction time of the armed forces and the Finnish Border Guard and Police. Important changes have been passed in laws regarding decision-making during crisis and intelligence gathering. Unprecedentedly for the Finns, more military exercises are being organized and information about them is being placed in social media, which can be regarded as purposeful deterrence messaging to its eastern neighbour.

## **6.0 CHALLENGES IN PROVIDING CREDIBLE DETERRENCE**

The main hurdles that countries face in conducting their deterrence strategies are political, operational and the lack of resources. The political dimension is the most important one. At a supranational level, countries rely on either extended deterrence provided by NATO, or the US alone. Therefore, the question of political commitment is of great concern, especially, considering the potentially problematic decision-making in the North Atlantic Council in the case of a crisis and the unpredictable leadership style of the US president Donald Trump.

At a regional level, there are various good initiatives and multilateral formats, but they do not provide the necessary input into the deterrence posture. Even the Baltic states, which are considered to be an example of military integration, face various cooperation problems, that weaken the deterrence posture of NATO "on the ground". Romania is a striking example, where a lack of regional consensus among regional countries about the security architecture of the Black Sea has resulted in the absence of a coherent NATO policy for the whole region.

At a national level, the main political challenge is the political support for higher defence expenditures that directly affects the sustainability of launched reforms, policies, and military modernization processes. Political support can be undermined mainly by decreasing public opinion with respect to Russia as a threat and the pressure to return to "business as usual", by emphasising the importance of mutually beneficial economic relations.



The second challenge is an operational hurdle. The unpopular acknowledgment that the Baltic states cannot be defended, because of the conventional and nuclear military asymmetry in the region, are being heard more in public discussions. This undermines NATO's extended deterrence which is conventional *per se* and lacks clear messaging about deterrence by punishment. This places the most vulnerable NATO countries, such as the Baltic states and Poland under severe pressure to boost national deterrence efforts, with the aim of reaching deterrence by denial or even deterrence by punishment.

This leads to the third challenge. Because of a lack of resources, both personnel (in the case of the Baltics) and financial, the Baltic states and Poland are challenged in coming up with a credible deterrence strategy. Five years after the 2014 Ukraine crisis, countries are already witnessing an overstretching of resources, trying to balance between host nation support activities (the strengthening of an extended deterrence posture) and national deterrence efforts (central deterrence with the ambition of being developed into deterrence by denial).

### 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the challenges, the countries face in their deterrence efforts at the NATO level there could be done various steps to assist them and generally strengthen the deterrence posture of the Alliance:

1. NATO should consider strengthening its nuclear dimension of deterrence, integrating nuclear element in its defence planning and military exercises. Additionally, to that NATO should also reconsider its nuclear messaging towards Russia. If there is no political support for it, as some member states might consider it as too provocative to Russia, then at least the Alliance could communicate from time to time its deep strike capabilities. That would give at least a certain response to Russia's aggressive communicating style and give at least "on the surface" more credible deterrence posture.
2. Alliance is obliged to pursue all efforts regarding the speed of the deployment of rapid reaction forces, as that is an essential element for conventional deterrence. It embraces all the initiatives that are dealing with the logistical matters. Thus the EU-NATO cooperation on "military Schengen" which so far is only idea, should be developed into concrete political measures.
3. More regionalized approach is of utmost importance to involve in the Baltic Sea region Sweden and Finland. The Trident Juncture has made a very important contribution in this realm, but there should be more structured cooperation between NATO and the two Scandinavian countries when it comes to the early warning and defence planning. Additionally, the group Poland-Baltic states needs to be strengthened because they are one operational theatre that needs to have clear command and control chain, coordinated defence planning, intensive participation in military exercises and others.
4. In order to meet the challenge of overstretch of resources, what is especially typical in case of the Baltic states, the Alliance should consider developing a fine burden-sharing mechanism. For instance, it is not anymore, a secret that the Alliance is preparing significantly to increase its presence in Afghanistan. Logically, that the Baltics will also participate with their companies-sized forces which will negatively affect the manpower present back home in times when Russia's threat is perceived as highly topical. In return, NATO could assist the Baltics in developing minimal self defence capabilities because they are still falling short when it comes to the air defence, electronical warfare etc.
5. The case studies also showed how important the non-military threats and active counter measures are. They also require a lot of resources, which member states cannot allocate from the defence sector, but they need to convince other sectors to spend on these policies. NATO's existing defence

expenditure mechanism does not allow to include in defence spending non-military threat countering policies. That challenges the Alliance's claimed necessity to raise the resilience of the member states that embrace strengthening the civilian defence and critical infrastructure, conducting propaganda counter measures etc.

6. So far the Alliance has put a great emphasize on military exercises as a crucial element of the deterrence posture. As a result, there are too many exercises which leads to the overstretch of military personnel and reduces possibility to do lessons learned. Just to bring an example, the Armed forces of Latvia in 2016 participated in 67 military exercises. Notwithstanding the importance of the military exercises their number should be decreased and the focus would be on training the military capabilities that are crucial for increasing the credibility of deterrence postures.