

# Ensuring Deterrence against Russia: The View from NATO's Front-Line States



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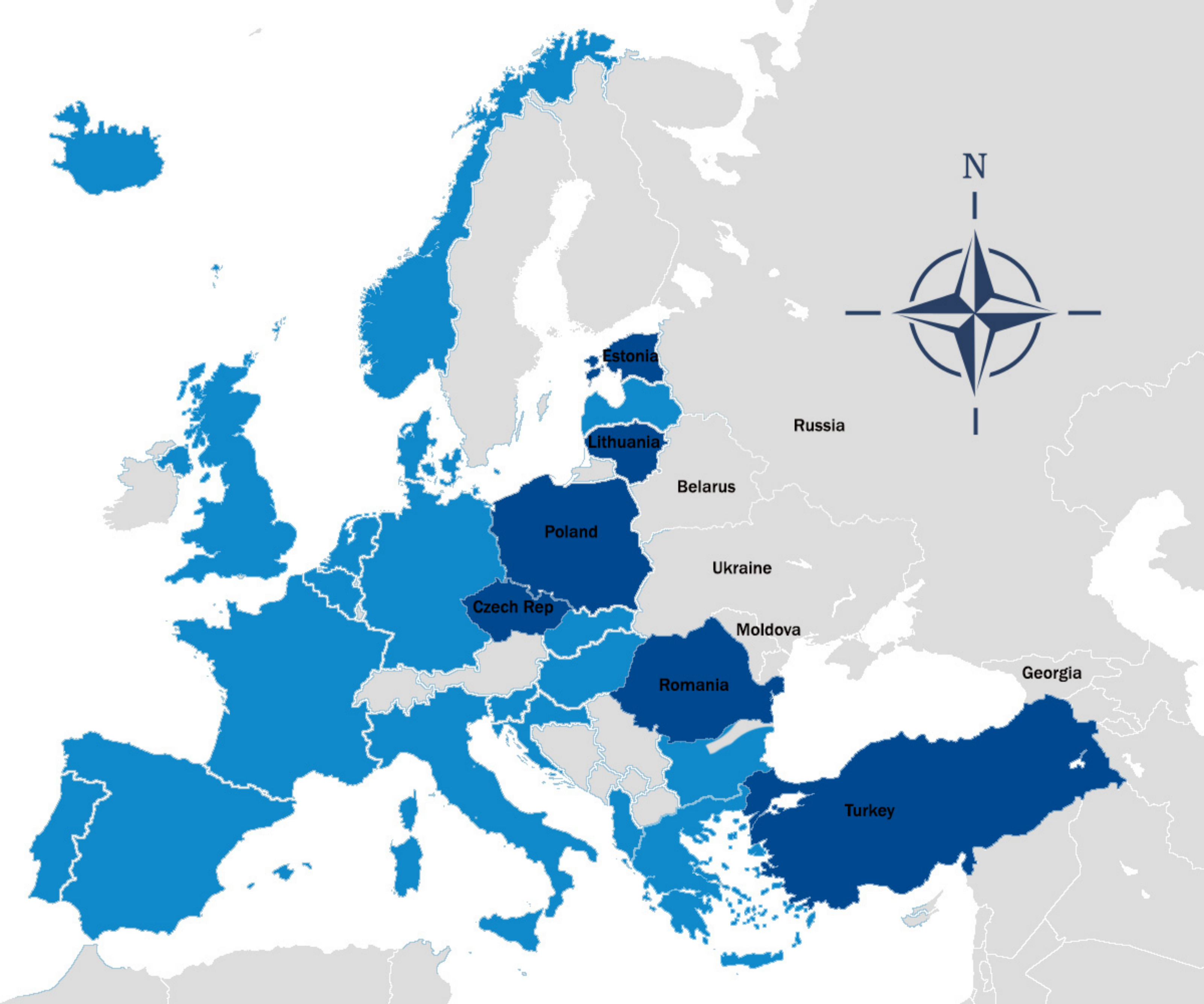
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Estonia

Lithuania

Russia

Belarus

Poland

Ukraine

Czech Rep

Moldova

Romania

Georgia

Turkey

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Russia's military actions in 2014 and 2015, particularly in Crimea, Ukraine, and Syria, have upended expectations among NATO members about their security and the future course of NATO-Russian relations. In response, many of the NATO states bordering Russia have argued for reinvigorating NATO's deterrent capabilities after two decades of drawing down conventional and nuclear forces in the immediate post-Cold War era.

At its 2014 summit in Wales, NATO agreed to a number of short-term measures to bolster the alliance's conventional deterrent, dubbed the Readiness Action Plan. But as the standoff with Russia has continued, some analysts—particularly in the United States—have argued for additional deterrence measures, including in the nuclear realm.

In response, researchers from the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies of the Middlebury Institute for International Studies at Monterey travelled to the NATO front-line states of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Turkey to assess the perceptions of governmental and nongovernmental experts regarding how NATO should respond to Russian actions, with an emphasis on how nuclear issues should be addressed. Our research also included meetings with experts in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as a thorough review of existing literature in the field on issues such as Russia's new military approach and US nuclear weapon policies—past, present, and future. It was conducted with the aim of providing analysis and recommendations to NATO states in advance of the July 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw. The following report highlights the key findings of this research, provides analysis on a country-by-country basis, and concludes with recommendations for consideration in Warsaw.

The research was made possible by the financial support of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS) North America. Other HBS offices also supported this work by convening roundtables of experts: HBS Warsaw and the Euro-Atlantic Association (SEA) brought together experts in Poland; HBS Prague organized a similar meeting with the Institute of International Relations (IIR) in the Czech Republic; and HBS headquarters held a meeting of German experts at its office in Berlin. Also helpful in forming this research were meetings at Wilton Park in the United Kingdom in June 2015 and a meeting at the Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM) in Istanbul.

### Key Findings

Our research found that the US debate over nuclear weapon policy is far removed from the concerns of most respondents in Europe. Even in those Central and Eastern European states that perceive the greatest threat from Russia, there is little appetite for deploying new types of nuclear weapons or hosting US nuclear weapons. Indeed, there is little thinking about nuclear weapon policy among European security elites, particularly the newer members, since many of them have little experience or knowledge in this area and are content to leave such matters to the United States and the United Kingdom (and to France, which, while part of NATO, maintains its nuclear weapons independent of the alliance). Instead, security elites in these states have welcomed pledges at the 2014 Wales Summit to strengthen NATO's conventional deterrent as a long-overdue adjustment to the alliance's strategic reality. They argue that these steps have already significantly enhanced their

security, and they call for the Wales pledges to be fully implemented and perhaps extended at the 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw.

In particular:

— *Russia can be deterred with small changes.* While threat perceptions and escalation scenarios vary across the alliance, those in states considered most at risk indicate that, while all additional steps would be welcomed, fairly small changes to NATO's posture and policy should suffice for the time being.

— *Support for the nuclear status quo: hosting US gravity bombs.* While some analysts in the United States and a few politicians like former Polish President Lech Walesa have supported basing nuclear weapons in new NATO member states, elites interviewed in those states rejected such an approach. They see such a move as heightening their risk of being involved in a nuclear conflict with little positive payoff. Indeed, they prefer the weapons remain at their current bases in Western European states as a means of displaying support for the alliance.

— *Support for the nuclear status quo: types of nuclear weapons.* Similarly, European security experts see any attempt to introduce new nuclear weapons to Europe as counterproductive. Such a move, they argue, would play to Russia's strengths by implying that the threshold for nuclear use is being lowered, and efforts to introduce new weapons could divide the alliance along East-West lines. Their emphasis is on retaining current capabilities and they fret, in particular, about the ongoing turmoil and debate in the United Kingdom about the future of its nuclear arsenal.<sup>1</sup> They also point out that many of the military aims for proposed new weapons—such as ground-launched cruise missiles (so-called "Pershing IIIs")—can be achieved with less public uproar by continuing with the planned replacement and modernization of the B-61 gravity bombs now in Europe and continuing to signal US and other nuclear weapon states' willingness to use strategic weapons to defend the alliance.

To be sure, some of these debates reflect a lack of strategic thinking about nuclear weapons in many European capitals, particularly among the newer NATO members and Turkey.<sup>2</sup> During the Cold War, Moscow kept a tight hold on nuclear weapon strategy, ensuring that, after the breakup of the Soviet Union, these states were left without expertise in nuclear weapon policy. This shortfall has not been rectified by the entry of these states into NATO, while expertise elsewhere in Europe has atrophied after the end of Cold War. The result has been a tendency within the alliance to leave nuclear strategy questions almost exclusively to the nuclear weapon states, particularly the United States, and often emptying the public debate of anything more substantive than political argumentation.

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<sup>1</sup> "SNP and Labour unite to pass anti-Trident motion," *The Scotsman*, November 3, 2015, [www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/snp-and-labour-unite-to-pass-anti-trident-motion-1-3935626](http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/snp-and-labour-unite-to-pass-anti-trident-motion-1-3935626); BBC, "Trident renewal: Labour figures play down Scottish vote," November 3, 2015, [www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-34698283](http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-34698283). See also William Walker, "Trident's Replacement and the Survival of the United Kingdom," *Survival* 57 (September 2015) pp.

<sup>2</sup> Walker, "Trident's Replacement and the Survival of the United Kingdom."



This vacuum was evident in our interviews when participants were asked for appropriate responses to Russia's alleged violations of the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. While there was little disagreement that Russia had, in fact, violated the treaty (among those who were aware of its existence), this was not seen as a matter where these states should stake out a political stance. Few in Turkish policy circles had ever heard of the INF Treaty, and those who had felt it had nothing to do with NATO. Those hailing from states that border Russia stated that Russian tactical missiles already threatened them and that longer-range missiles should be seen as more of a threat to Western Europe. They also pointed out that, legally, they were not a party to the INF Treaty, since it is a bilateral pact between the United States and Russia.

Yet even those in Western Europe, such as Germany, did not seem attuned to this threat. Indeed, despite government support in some states, the public willingness to expend blood or treasure to defend newer members has been weak. For example, the Pew Research Center found, in a June 2015 poll, that more than half of Germans, French, and Italians said their country should not use military force to defend a NATO ally if attacked by Russia.<sup>3</sup>

Many Western Europeans view reports of the resurgent danger from Russia as unnecessary alarmism. While Eastern European states credit Germany's Angela Merkel government with surprisingly strong support, German public support for NATO has declined since the beginning of the Barack Obama administration, despite the renewed threat from Russia.<sup>4</sup> One workshop participant noted "There is a disjunction between new threats and old responses and a difference between elite discussions and public ones." Yet even among elite discussions, there are tensions between the German foreign and defense ministries.<sup>5</sup>

As Ulrich Kahn of the University of Hamburg's Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy wrote recently, "Germans prefer a balancing middle-position between the West and Russia more than a strong position within NATO (49 to 45 percent according to a survey from April 2014)."<sup>6</sup> At the same time, workshop participants said this may reflect less a tendency toward impartiality than an eagerness to avoid involvement in military conflict, particularly one that may lead to nuclear war. As one workshop participant put it: "the German public debate seems to be over how not to provoke Russia." Kuhn noted that public opinion polls indicate "81 percent of Germans do not trust Russia and 68

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<sup>3</sup> By Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes, and Jacob Poushter, "NATO Publics Blame Russia for Ukrainian Crisis, but Reluctant to Provide Military Aid," Pew Research Center, June 10, 2015, <[www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/10/nato-publics-blame-russia-for-ukrainian-crisis-but-reluctant-to-provide-military-aid/](http://www.pewglobal.org/2015/06/10/nato-publics-blame-russia-for-ukrainian-crisis-but-reluctant-to-provide-military-aid/)>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. According to the Pew poll, the percentage of Germans holding a favorable view of NATO has declined from 73 percent in 2009 to 55 percent in 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Ulrich Kuhn notes that the former head of planning staff in the Federal Foreign Office, Frank Elbe, warned in 2014 of the nuclear risks associated with the new West-Russian clash, arguing for diplomatic efforts to strengthen nuclear arms control and asserting that NATO contributed to the escalation of the crisis. In contrast, he cites a recent op-ed by the current head of energy security at NATO, Michael Rühle, who called for "rediscovering the concept of nuclear deterrence" and pointed out that "almost no one in Washington speaks of 'global zero' anymore." Ulrich Kuhn, "With or Without You," War on the Rocks, November 4, 2015, <<http://warontherocks.com/2015/11/with-or-without-you-germany-and-nato/>>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

percent of Germans believe that Washington would come to the defense of NATO allies if push came to shove.”<sup>7</sup>

Moscow seeks—and could continue to seek—to exploit tensions between Berlin and Washington. As Kuhn put it, “If the Kremlin plays it well the dynamics between U.S. modernization plans and continued Russian nuclear intimidations could cause a lot of trouble for Germany and NATO in the upcoming years.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, a major news spike in Germany occurred when Russia raised the specter of withdrawing from the INF “in response” to a long-planned modernization of US B-61 bombs in the country.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the United Kingdom, one of two states with nuclear weapons formally dedicated to NATO’s defense, is embroiled in a fierce internal debate on whether it will retain a nuclear arsenal.<sup>10</sup>

Nor did participants raise concern about other new Russian deployments such as a new generation of submarine-launched cruise missiles that may not violate the INF but could be destabilizing. In part, this may reflect the fact that the Obama administration, while noting the violations, has eschewed a significant public diplomacy effort on the matter, preferring to handle it largely behind closed doors, presumably to encourage Russia not to actually deploy the weapons and to provide itself with a greater range of options for a response.

When it came to reshaping conventional deterrence, however, participants from most states supported steps that they argued they would severely limit the likelihood that a crisis would escalate to the nuclear level. Many of these involved completing and extending the Readiness Action Plan to shorten the time and shrink the space in which Russia might obtain a foothold on NATO territory before NATO could counterattack. Eastern and Central European participants urged the alliance to consider additional steps to increase the scale of exercises and persistent deployments; improve logistics for reinforcements; conduct larger-scale military exercises; and predelegate authority from the North Atlantic Council to NATO’s supreme commander to act quickly in an emergency. Opinions varied—especially between Poland and other states—on the necessity of having permanent bases in the new members as opposed to persistent deployments, although such disputes appeared manageable and had as much to do with the costs of such deployments as their military utility or the perceived Russian reaction. In any event, there appears to be a consensus within the alliance that any deployments should fall short of the 1997 Founding Act restrictions on substantial numbers of combat troops.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Sputnik News, “Russia Could Scrap INF Treaty if US Deploys New Nuclear Bombs to Germany,” <<http://sputniknews.com/russia/20150923/1027407398.html>>. The US Congress approved \$10 billion in funding for the program in 2014, but the new weapons are not supposed to be deployed until the end of the decade.

<sup>10</sup> “SNP and Labour unite to pass anti-Trident motion;” BBC, “Trident renewal: Labour figures play down Scottish vote.”

<sup>11</sup> According to the *Wall Street Journal*’s Julian Barnes, “NATO has never defined what a substantial force would be. In negotiations over the accord, Russian officials suggested defining substantial as a brigade-size force, usually between 3,000 and 5,000 troops. NATO officials in the early 1990s insisted on keeping the language vague.” Julian Barnes, “NATO Looks at Stationing More Troops Along Eastern Flank,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 28, 2015, <[www.wsj.com/articles/nato-looks-at-stationing-more-troops-along-eastern-flank-1446050987](http://www.wsj.com/articles/nato-looks-at-stationing-more-troops-along-eastern-flank-1446050987)>.

## BACKGROUND

### From the Cold War to 2012

After the end of the Cold War, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) substantially reduced both its conventional and nuclear forces in Europe. Between 1990 and 1993, the number of US soldiers in Europe decreased from 213,000 to 122,000. The only remaining US nuclear weapons in Europe are shorter-range, nonstrategic nuclear weapons (NSNW). The number of such warheads peaked in 1971 at more than 7,000.<sup>12</sup> Today, there are only about 150-200 US NSNW deployed in five European states: Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union's breakup, and Russia's subsequent economic woes led to the drastic reduction of Russian military capabilities. That period also produced a number of arms control agreements—from the INF Treaty to the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives and the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty—that contributed to stability on the continent.<sup>14</sup>

A capstone of this era was the 1997 "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation," (commonly known as the NATO-Russia Founding Act) which was designed to reassure Russia that stability would not be undermined as NATO admitted new members from the defunct Warsaw Pact. In it, NATO made several pledges to reinforce the moves toward stability on the continent.<sup>15</sup> One involved a policy on nuclear forces tied to the invitations to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to join NATO at that time:

The member States of NATO reiterate that they have no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members, nor any need to change any aspect of NATO's nuclear posture or nuclear policy - and do not foresee any future need to do so.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Toward a Nuclear Peace: The Future of Nuclear Weapons in U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy*, Report of the CSIS Nuclear Strategy Study Group, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1993, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> Hans M. Kristensen, *Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons*, Federation of American Scientists, Special Report No. 3, Washington, DC, May 2012, p. 16, <[www.fas.org/docs/Non\\_Strategic\\_Nuclear\\_Weapons.pdf](http://www.fas.org/docs/Non_Strategic_Nuclear_Weapons.pdf)>.

<sup>14</sup> The Conventional Armed Forces In Europe (CFE) Treaty, signed in 1990, eliminated the Soviet Union's overwhelming quantitative advantage in conventional weapons in Europe by setting equal limits on the amount of tanks, armored combat vehicles (ACVs), heavy artillery, combat aircraft, and attack helicopters that NATO and the Warsaw Pact could deploy between the Atlantic Ocean and the Ural Mountains. Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, <[www.osce.org/library/14087?download=true](http://www.osce.org/library/14087?download=true)>; Tom Collina, "The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and the Adapted CFE Treaty at a Glance," Arms Control Association, August 2012, <[www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/cfe](http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/cfe)>.

<sup>15</sup> Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, Signed Paris, May 27, 1997, <[www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm)>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Another pledge involved conventional forces:

NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by *additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces*. [...] Russia will exercise similar restraint in its conventional force deployments in Europe.<sup>17</sup>

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, former Warsaw Pact members and other Central and Eastern European states were keen to join the alliance, particularly Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania which, like new NATO member Poland, bordered Russia. The result was that these states faced a severe short-term strategic imbalance vis-à-vis their much larger Russian neighbor until such a time that NATO reinforcements could arrive from elsewhere. Still, given the improvement in relations with Russia and Russia's military decline, NATO states felt comfortable reducing military spending and tackling issues outside alliance territory, beginning with the crisis in the Balkans in the 1990s. This out-of-area focus grew larger after 9/11, as the United States and other members focused on areas such as Afghanistan and the Middle East. At the same time, the US decision to pull out of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and pursue a national missile defense system—including a European component—became a sore point with Moscow.

Meanwhile, Russia began to restore some of its military capabilities and exercise an increasingly aggressive policy in its neighborhood. Still, even after the Russian conflict with Georgia in 2008, the incoming Obama administration pursued a “reset strategy” to reduce remaining tensions with Moscow,<sup>18</sup> and sought to “pivot” security forces focusing away from Europe and the Middle East to Asia.<sup>19</sup> The new administration restructured the missile defense system in a manner intended to make it less threatening to Russia, negotiated and ratified a new strategic arms treaty with Moscow, and reduced US conventional forces on the continent, including the removal of two armored brigades, support forces, and aviation assets.

Moreover, President Obama's 2009 speech in Prague calling for a “world free of nuclear weapons” encouraged some NATO governments, led by Germany, to push for the removal of the last, forward-deployed US weapons in Europe. Newer NATO members resisted this move, viewing it as a weakening of the North Atlantic Treaty's Article V commitment.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>18</sup> The 2009 episode where Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attempted to hand a giant “reset” button to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is reported in Mark Landler, “Lost in Translation: A U.S. Gift to Russia,” *New York Times*, March 6, 2009, <[www.nytimes.com/2009/03/07/world/europe/07diplo.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/07/world/europe/07diplo.html)>.

<sup>19</sup> “The pivot to Asia” was a catchphrase for officials during President Obama's first term. See for example, Hillary Clinton, “The Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>>.

<sup>20</sup> Article V of NATO's founding 1949 Treaty is the bedrock of the alliance. Under it, member states “agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all,” and that they will come to each other's assistance, including with military force. <[www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)>; NATO, “The

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton put forward a compromise in April 2010, which was subsequently endorsed by the alliance in its 2010 Strategic Concept and again in its 2012 Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR).<sup>21</sup> The compromise expressed a willingness to move toward further reduction of US NSNW in Europe, provided it met with reciprocal actions by Russia.<sup>22</sup>

However, once Vladimir Putin returned to Russia's presidency in 2012, it was clear that further arms control efforts and the "restart" were endangered. Moscow rebuffed a 2013 US offer to make further strategic cuts in response to reciprocal moves by Russia, and longstanding cooperation to secure Russian nuclear materials and facilities was brought to a close. Meanwhile, the United States has moved forward with modernizing the one remaining nuclear weapon deployed in Europe, the B61 gravity bomb, with a more accurate version set to be deployed on next generation and more stealthy F-35s in some NATO member states later this decade (in Germany it is to be deployed on current Tornado aircraft). The relationship further disintegrated with subsequent events, discussed below.

### **Russian Policies since 2012: Real and Perceived Challenges**

In early 2012, Vladimir Putin was elected to his third term as president, replacing Dmitri Medvedev, who had appeared to pursue a somewhat more cooperative policy toward the West. At the end of the same year, Barack Obama was re-elected to his second and last term with his reset policy having produced few visible results, with the exception of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START). Thus, by 2013, the main fault lines of conflicts between Russia and NATO had been set.

The turning point for Russia, however, took place earlier—in 2011, when Moscow was persuaded to abstain from a vote at the UN Security Council on a no-fly zone in Libya. In Russia's view, NATO wrongly interpreted Moscow's abstention as acquiescence to a large-scale military operation to remove the Muammar Qaddafi regime. In a rare display of internal conflict, Putin, then-prime minister, publicly disagreed with Medvedev, warning precisely about that course of events. Conflict in Libya helped solidify the pre-existing perception of the Russian elite that the West—the United States and NATO as a whole—uses democratization simply as a pretext to overthrow, sometimes violently, regimes they do not like (the 2003 war in Iraq, as well as the "colored revolutions" in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004 helped generate that perception). That conviction set the stage for the 2013 events in Ukraine.

Russian reaction to the ouster of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014 was swift and unpredictable. Russian special forces, predeployed in Sevastopol under a

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Consultation Process and Article IV," July 28, 2015, <[www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49187.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49187.htm)>.

<sup>21</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Deterrence and Defense Posture Review," May 21, 2012, <[www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_87597.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm)>.

<sup>22</sup> For more information, see Miles A. Pomper, "The United States," in Paolo Foradori ed. *Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Euro-Atlantic Security: The Future of NATO* (Routledge, New York, 2013), pp. 125-41.

Russian-Ukrainian agreement on the basing of the Russian Black Sea fleet, quickly and efficiently took control of Crimea and neutralized Ukrainian troops (most surrendered, some left for the Ukrainian mainland). A subsequent two-stage referendum transferred Crimea to Russia. Following the annexation of Crimea, Russian secret services fermented unrest in several regions in Eastern Ukraine and ultimately succeeded in creating two pro-Russian quasi-states of Lukansk and Donensk, indicating that Moscow's original plans were more ambitious, involving Russian-supported actions in at least two additional regions of Eastern Ukraine. When the new Ukrainian government sent troops to quash the rebellion, Moscow supported the insurrection with its regular army without ever acknowledging it; the true extent of the Russian involvement is still unclear.<sup>23</sup>

Russian actions in Ukraine represented a major challenge at two interrelated levels—systemic and operational:

Systemically, it was a clear-cut challenge to the international system as it exists today, understood simply as an attempt to safeguard a sphere of influence. At a deeper level, it demonstrated Russia's views of the United States as an "inept" hegemon, unable to adequately lead the international community and manage events and their consequences. Although the challenge is largely destructive in nature—in that it is primarily intended to destroy the existing system—it also has a positive, constructive agenda. Russia's actions promote the two decades-old concept of a multipolar world, which sought, from the time it was first proposed by then-Foreign Minister Yevgeni Primakov, to establish a "concert" arrangement, similar to the Holy Alliance established by the Congress of Vienna in 1814.<sup>24</sup>

At the operational level, Russia demonstrated in Ukraine that Moscow has the capability to mount that challenge. With very few and limited exceptions, Russia had refrained from action expressing its dissatisfaction with US leadership, the nature of the international system, and its place in it for a long time. The most recent demonstration of Russian military action was in the 2008 war with Georgia: Russian forces' poor performance there demonstrated inadequate troop training, communications systems, weapons, and other shortcomings of the Russian military.

Eight years later, Russia's military looked very different. Its personnel were well trained and highly disciplined; command and control were efficient (the speed and efficacy with which they took control of Crimea is a case in point); military involvement in Eastern Ukraine was well planned and executed to the extent that the Ukrainian government failed to present incontrovertible proof that large-scale involvement actually took place; communications were not intercepted, contributing to the surprise factor; and tanks and artillery—though they hadn't changed since 2003—were employed much more efficiently. In short, the Russian army demonstrated that the recent attempt at military reform succeeded, and it had once again become a genuine fighting power.

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<sup>23</sup> See Anthony Cordesman, *Russia and the Color Revolution: Russian View of the World Destabilized by the US and the West* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> For an analysis of the Russian concept of the "multipolar world" and the methodological mistakes made by Russian leaders and analysts, see Nikolai Sokov, "Mnogopoluysnyi Mir v Zerkale Teorii Mezhdunarodnykh Otnoshenii [The Multipolar World Reflected in the Mirror of International Relations Theories]," *SShA: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiya [Journal of the Institute of USA and Canada Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences]* 7 (1998), pp. 19-31.

Moreover—and worse from NATO’s point of view—operations in Crimea were not strictly a military campaign. They were combined with a massive political and propaganda campaign, which used advanced instruments to help shape public opinion and mobilize a significant part of the population. That campaign was apparently combined with more traditional mobilization techniques led by agents on the ground. Furthermore, these operations were placed in an appropriate ideological context (the “Russian world” and protection of Russian-speakers abroad), which appealed both to the Russian public and to a significant share of the public in target areas. The campaign, which preceded and accompanied operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, was not totally successful: clearly, it intended to foment separatism in a much larger region (including, at the very least, the Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk regions of Ukraine), but it was not a complete failure, either.

No wonder that the campaign stirred serious concerns in neighboring states, particularly those with a significant Russian-speaking population. While in some (Kazakhstan and Belarus), that concern remains muted, in others (the Baltic states in particular) it became highly vocal and triggered public statements and actions, including calls on NATO to provide protection from what came to be seen as an immediate Russian threat. Although a Russian campaign to protect the rights of the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic states had been underway since at least early 1990s, in 2014, Moscow appeared, for the first time, to possess the capability to support its political statements with action.

One fundamental (and rarely mentioned and even less frequently analyzed) reason for NATO concern is that Moscow did not fully utilize its nuclear status during the Ukraine crisis. While Russian leaders have made many more—and often more threatening—statements invoking their nuclear weapons, no major elements of the Russian nuclear posture changed: the rate of production, deployment plans, and even the number of test and training launches of strategic and nonstrategic systems remained essentially the same as before the crisis. The only change was a significant enhancement of air patrols by strategic and medium bombers—the only thing that could be done “on the cheap,” without investing significantly additional resources. Moreover, there are reasons to believe that Russia’s saber-rattling statements were intended primarily for domestic consumption: it was important to counteract concerns among the public about a possible military response by the West to Russian actions.<sup>25</sup>

Obviously, nuclear weapons did play a certain role in Russian operations in Ukraine—the same role that was touted to the Russian public. Their very existence protects Russia from a more forceful response by the West and limits NATO’s options to those that do not risk escalation. There is little new about that role of nuclear weapons, however, and of greater pertinence is that Russia chose not to escalate conflict with the West, leaving nuclear weapons mostly on the margins of its strategy.

That Russia engaged in a proactive foreign policy supported by military power without fully utilizing its nuclear capability should be a matter of concern for NATO. In the end,

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<sup>25</sup> Nikolai Sokov, “Russian Perspective on Nuclear Disarmament and the Post-Nuclear World,” in Nik Hynek and Michal Smetana, eds. *Global Nuclear Disarmament: Strategic, Political, and Regional Perspectives* (Routledge, forthcoming).

nuclear weapons are only good for deterrence; they are poorly usable in an offensive. For more than two decades, nuclear weapons remained the cornerstone of Russia's security policy, which also meant that its foreign policy had to be, by and large, defensive. The ability to go on an offensive, demonstrated by operations in Ukraine, suggests that period of Russian foreign policy is probably over.

In the West, the Russian actions in Eastern Ukraine came to be known as "hybrid warfare"—a notion intended to convey a combination of conventional, sub-conventional, and informational, as well as possibly non-conventional instruments (e.g., threats of nuclear use to deter countermeasures by the international community and/or friends and allies of the target).<sup>26</sup> Elements of hybrid warfare can be found in a number of military operations not limited to Russia.<sup>27</sup>

Russian theoreticians, however, use a different term and a different concept: New Generation Warfare, which they regard as distinct from the Western concept of "hybrid warfare."<sup>28</sup> In their view, New Generation Warfare represents a seamless combination of political, diplomatic, economic, and military tools, in which the relative weight of the latter should be no more than a quarter of the entire effort.<sup>29</sup> Among other elements, New Generation Warfare entails the start of military operations without formal announcement of war, a strong component of informational warfare, employment of asymmetric methods, large-scale employment of Special Forces, as well as large-scale use of modern conventional munitions throughout the entire depth of the enemy territory.

Operations in Ukraine appear to closely fit the elements and sequences of New Generation Warfare as Russian analysts described it. It is no wonder that some members of NATO, the Baltic states in particular, paid close attention to what they began to see as Russian informational warfare, regarding it as a prelude to open aggression. A close look suggests that little changed in Russian behavior toward the Baltic states or others in the vicinity of Russia, whether members of NATO or not. Rather, a well-established pattern of Russian behavior came to be perceived in a very different light since the annexation of Crimea, and separatism in Eastern Ukraine appeared to demonstrate that Moscow's words could be easily followed by action.

At the time of operations in Ukraine, Russia appeared to lack one important element on the list of New Generation Warfare features: a long-range, conventional, precision-strike capability, and thus the Russian threat remained, by and large, traditional. In spite of

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<sup>26</sup> Frank Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 52 (2009); David Johnson, *Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israeli Defense Forces in Lebanon and in Gaza*, (Santa Monica, CA, RAND, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Indeed, some scholars note that hybrid warfare has been practiced throughout the ages. See, for instance, Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, eds., *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Benjamin David Baker, "Hybrid Warfare with Chinese Characteristics," *Diplomat*, September 23, 2015, <<http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/hybrid-warfare-with-chinese-characteristics/>>.

<sup>28</sup> For excellent analysis of New Generation Warfare, see Dmitry Adamski, *Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy*, (Paris: IFRI, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Valerii Gerasimov, "Tsennost' Nauki v Predvidinii [The Value of Science for Prediction]," *Voyenno-Promyshlennyi Kurier*, no. 8 (476), February 27, 2013.



Russia's increasingly complex strategy, its military appeared to be capable of conducting operations only in its immediate vicinity. This allowed for traditional, and relatively low-level, responses by NATO.

The situation changed once again in the fall of 2015—in October, the Russian Navy conducted a launch of a significant number of long-range conventionally armed sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) from the Caspian Sea at targets deep in Syria. In November, the Russian military mounted an even larger-scale operation that involved long-range conventionally armed air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) and long-range medium bombers with short-range weapons; there were also unconfirmed reports about a new barrage of SLCMs from a diesel-powered submarine in the Eastern Mediterranean, which it reportedly conducted en route to the place of permanent basing in the Black Sea. Some of the aircraft that operate from Syrian territory also use guided bombs.

There can be little doubt that the Russian military operation in Syria is being used to demonstrate that Moscow has at its disposal a capability, which, until very recently, only the United States and its allies possessed—the capability to launch precision strikes, which combine high-probability destruction of targets with low collateral damage, from long distances. It is only natural to assume that open demonstration of that capability is intended as a not-so-transparent hint to many states, including members of NATO.

The long-range conventional Russian strike capability is probably not fully operational, in spite of a seemingly impressive performance in Syria: the new weapons still need to be produced in sufficient numbers for a large-scale campaign; delivery vehicles are still relatively few; the intelligence and targeting capability appears to be limited. Russia probably needs at least five to seven years (maybe longer given the impact of Western and, to an extent, Ukrainian sanctions), but there can now be little doubt that sooner or later it will be capable of conducting large-scale campaigns comparable to the 2003 Iraq War. For years, Western politicians and military planners tended to disregard Russian efforts to develop such a capability: the 2008 war with Georgia and several failed attempts at military reform seemed convenient proof of the futility of Russia's efforts. Now, NATO must grapple with a new reality.

## **Understanding Russia's Capability**

Broadly speaking, the emerging Russian capability is similar to what the United States has had for more than two decades. It represents a combination of tactical and long-range aircraft with guided bombs, ALCMs, and SLCMs (launched from submarines and surface ships). There are, however, significant differences, which, to a large extent, are determined by Russia's geographical location and the traditions of its defense industry:

- The majority of target areas are located closer to Russia than to the United States (Europe and the Middle East in particular); hence, Moscow has less interest in strategic-range systems and appears to emphasize, instead, theater-range capability (for example, the United States needs to use strategic bombers to deliver guided bombs and other short-range munitions, as it did in Afghanistan, when B-2s had to fly all the way from the United States to deliver their payloads, whereas Russia has demonstrated that it can use medium bombers for similar missions);

- For the same reason, many missions can be carried from Russian territory or its territorial waters; as a result, it needs less time to engage and can mobilize for limited-scale engagement clandestinely, without giving telltale signs, such as prepositioning of aircraft carriers;
- Russia does not possess aircraft carriers, hence its tactical aircraft need to operate from forward bases, as it does in Syria; this could significantly complicate forward deployment and make it more vulnerable to disruption by hostilities (the Russian Air Force could operate from Syria only because its logistical lines do not encounter resistance from Turkey);
- The close vicinity of many potential target areas allows Moscow to rely on short-range assets to a greater extent: for example, the Iskander short-range missiles, if deployed in Kalinigrad Oblast, can reach any targets in Baltic states as well as targets almost anywhere in Poland or, if its range is longer (about 700 km, in the entire Poland and part of Germany);<sup>30</sup>
- Where Europe is concerned, naval platforms appear to yield the most opportunities for long-range conventional weapons. The Russian Navy appears to emphasize nuclear-powered attack submarines, equipped with SLCMs—these can reach most areas in Europe from the north and the west; Southeastern and Central Europe are reachable from the Black Sea, where Moscow is deploying six diesel-powered submarines with SLCMs;
- The historic trend in the Soviet Union and now Russia to favor missiles rather than aircraft continues. Today, the emphasis is on cruise missiles, but Russia is also deploying a short-range ballistic missile Iskander (which can also launch cruise missiles). In the future, it plans to deploy a strategic missile intended to primarily carry a conventional payload (the first tests will begin as early as next year). These trends will likely continue in the foreseeable future. The United States looked at similar missile options (conventionalizing ICBMs or SLBMs) for “Global Strike” systems in the past, but abandoned them out of concern that a launch of such a system could be mistaken for a nuclear attack on Russia or China, prompting a nuclear response. In this case, geography plays into the Russian hands: whereas any likely launch of US strategic systems would be either in the direction of Russia and/or China, Russian launches of conventional strategic systems will not be in the direction of the United States, hence their use should not trigger false alarms.
- In contrast to the United States, which has withdrawn from service nuclear warheads for SLCMs, Moscow continues to develop all relevant delivery vehicles with a dual (conventional *or* nuclear) payload capability. It is publicly admitted that the Kalibr SLCMs can carry nuclear warheads, resulting in an extended range capability: well above 2,000 km as opposed to 1,500 with a conventional

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<sup>30</sup> Stefan Forss, “The Russian Operational-Tactical Iskander Missile System,” National Defence University, Working Paper 42 (Helsinki: 2012), [www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/84362/StratL4\\_42w.pdf](http://www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/84362/StratL4_42w.pdf), p. 15.

warhead; the new Kh-101 ALCM has a Kh-102 modification designed specially to carry a nuclear warhead as well. While there is no reliable data about the nuclear capability of Iskander, there is little doubt that the system is also dual-capable. This trend demonstrates that Moscow assigns a significantly greater value to its nuclear capability, including for precision-guided, low-yield, limited-use missions. That trend is likely to continue in the foreseeable future as well.

US allegations about Russian violations of the 1987 INF Treaty fit neatly into these patterns. In 2014, the State Department, in its treaty compliance report, stated that “the Russian Federation is in violation of its obligations under the INF Treaty not to possess, produce, or flight-test a ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) with a range capability of 500 km to 5,500 km, or to possess or produce launchers of such missiles.”<sup>31</sup> That finding was repeated in the 2015 report, which said that “The United States determined the cruise missile developed by the Russian Federation meets the INF Treaty definition of a ground-launched cruise missile with a range capability of 500 km to 5,500 km, and as such, all missiles of that type, and all launchers of the type used to launch such a missile, are prohibited under the provisions of the INF Treaty.”<sup>32</sup>

Although few specific details have been made public, there is little reason to question the seriousness of that finding. The scarcity of information about the alleged long-range GLCM tests has generated a number of hypotheses, the most popular among them that the United States detected improperly organized tests of a Kalibr SLCM: the INF Treaty allows testing SLCMs from land launchers subject to certain conditions.<sup>33</sup> Such a mistake seemed feasible because the same design bureau (*Raduga*) designed long-range Kalibr SLCMs and short-range GLCMs for Iskander. Yet US officials, both publicly and privately, confirmed that no such mistake had been made and that Russia was, indeed, testing a long-range GLCM. Thus, at least until the matter has been resolved between the United States and Russia in a satisfactory manner, it would be prudent to assume that a long-range GLCM could soon enter service, completing a multi-based family of cruise missiles.

Deployment of a long-range GLCM in the Western part of Russia could further enhance the capability to reach targets deep in NATO territory. Effectively, the entire European territory of the alliance would be within reach of its conventional strike assets, while US territory will be within reach of nuclear submarine-based SLCMs and, eventually, of conventionally armed ICBMs. This capability has two interrelated implications for the security of NATO.

First, Russia can strike almost anywhere in NATO territory without crossing borders. This might mean that the scenario currently of greatest concern to Russia’s neighbors—that Russia would undertake an operation similar to that which transpired in Ukraine—is not the only one that should preoccupy political leaders and military planners of the alliance.

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<sup>31</sup> “Adherence to and Compliance With Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments,” US Department of State, July 2014.

<sup>32</sup> “2015 Report on Adherence to and Compliance With Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments,” US Department of State, June 5, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> The INF Treaty prohibits GLCMs with ranges of 500-5,500 kilometers and tests of related launchers, but does not prohibit similar sea- or air-launched cruise missiles or tests using associated launchers.

Second, in the case of overt Russian aggression against NATO members adjacent to its borders, Moscow could theoretically deny or disrupt any NATO effort to send reinforcements. Disruption of decision-making procedures, which could result from a potential threat of strikes deep inside NATO, might be particularly tangible at an early stage of aggression, if it begins with an information warfare campaign, as it did in Ukraine. Even if this proves not to be true, “border states” of NATO will likely begin to doubt the alliance’s assurances more than is the case today.

Furthermore, the focus on alleged past and potential future violations of the INF Treaty has obscured a more inconvenient fact for NATO. Even if Russia refrains from deploying GLCMs in violation of these treaties, other new Russian weapons will be largely unconstrained by arms control regimes (there would still be indirect limits on ALCMs, which can only be carried on strategic bombers, and on any future conventional ICBM, which would still be subject to START accounting rules). They would not face numerical or geographical limitations, nor would Moscow be expected to provide reassurance through transparency or confidence-building mechanisms. Thus, Russia will have complete freedom to deploy these assets anywhere in its territory or in waters around Europe or the United States in any numbers limited only by production capacity. One must admit that this unfortunate state of affairs has resulted from a long-standing US policy—embedded in the INF and START treaties—of avoiding any limitations on SLCMs and keeping only indirect limits on ALCMs; that policy started in the 1980s and has continued without much change.

Operations in Ukraine and Syria in 2014-15 demonstrate that the role of nuclear weapons in Russia’s national security policy is declining: not in absolute, but in relative terms. Nuclear weapons will remain a mainstay of national security, nuclear posture will remain robust, and nuclear strategy will most likely remain unchanged as well.<sup>34</sup> In addition, Russia is developing new, more usable non-nuclear military options—both traditional armed forces and new-generation long-range precision-guided strike assets. This transition is clearly seen in the most recent edition of the Military Doctrine, adopted at the end of 2014.<sup>35</sup> The “nuclear” part of the doctrine remained the same as in the previous, 2010 edition; the only major innovation was the introduction of a new notion—that of “non-nuclear deterrence.” This means that Russian leaders will have more options at their disposal and perhaps also that nuclear weapons will likely be eventually relegated to the background (roughly in the same way it has been done in the United States).

## **NATO’s Response**

The shift in Russian policy since 2013—followed by Russian actions in 2014 and 2015—raised fears among the new NATO members—particularly those in the Baltics—that they could face similar aggression with little means to deter or repel such an attack before the

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<sup>34</sup> For a description of the Russian nuclear strategy, including the “de-escalation” (or limited use) options, see Nikolai Sokov, “Why Russia Calls a Limited Nuclear Strike ‘De-Escalation’,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 13, 2014, <<http://thebulletin.org/why-russia-calls-limited-nuclear-strike-de-escalation>>.

<sup>35</sup> *Voyennaya Doktrina Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, December 26, 2014, <<http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf>>.

crisis escalated.<sup>36</sup> Defense establishments posited a range of scenarios, from snap military exercises turning into an actual attack to the use of “little green men” instead of uniformed soldiers.<sup>37</sup>

As a result, at the September 2014 Wales Summit, alliance members approved a Readiness Action Plan, which sought to expedite the arrival of NATO reinforcements to states under attack from Russia.<sup>38</sup> Elements included:

- Doubling the size of the NATO Response Force (NRF) to about 30,000 troops and holding them at a much higher state of readiness;
- Establishing a spearhead Very High Joint Readiness Task Force within the NRF, able to deploy 5,000 troops to front-line states within a few days, and establishing related command-and-control facilities in those states along with a multinational corps headquarters in Poland;<sup>39</sup>
- Preparing infrastructure to permit such reinforcements;
- Prepositioning equipment;
- Improved intelligence and situational awareness;
- Enhanced exercises for both the new capabilities and existing ones;
- Calling on all alliance members to spend at least 2 percent of their GDP on defense and at least 20 percent of their defense budgets on major new equipment.

A close look at NATO’s decisions suggests that these represented, by and large, a tripwire—enough to stop infiltration by Russian “little green men” or, in case of a large-scale aggression, a guarantee that NATO would mobilize and come to help. That policy reproduces, on a smaller scale, the role US troops in Europe played during the Cold War: although these were not expected to defeat the Soviet Union, their loss was expected to ensure full-scale involvement of the United States in a hypothetical, large-scale war.

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<sup>36</sup> These fears appear to have been confirmed in a series of tabletop exercises run by RAND on behalf of the Pentagon. See Julia Ioffe, “Exclusive: The Pentagon is Preparing New War Plans for Baltic Battle against Russia,” *Foreign Policy*, September 18, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> “Little green men” is a term used by Ukrainians to describe camouflage-dressed, pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea who some suspected were actually Russian soldiers or Russian-directed. See for example, Neil Buckley, Roman Olearchyk, Andrew Jack, and Kathrin Hille, “Ukraine’s ‘little green men’ carefully mask their identity” *Financial Times*, April 16, 2014, <[www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/05e1d8ca-c57a-11e3-a7d4-00144feabdc0.html](http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/05e1d8ca-c57a-11e3-a7d4-00144feabdc0.html)>.

<sup>38</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Wales Summit Declaration, September 5, 2014, <[www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm)>. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “NATO’s Readiness Action Plan,” *Fact Sheet*, May 2015, <[www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2015\\_05/20150508\\_1505-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_05/20150508_1505-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf)>.

<sup>39</sup> Multinational NATO command-and-control posts (NATO Force Integration Units) have been established on the territories of the eastern allies (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania), manned on a rotational basis. They are staffed by national and NATO specialists and tasked with improving cooperation and coordination between NATO and national forces, and preparing and supporting exercises and any necessary deployments. NATO also raised the readiness and capabilities of the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin, Poland, and enhanced its role as a hub for regional cooperation.

By the time of our interviews in April-July 2015, several elements of the Readiness Action Plan had already been implemented. These included dozens of air, sea, and land exercises, including persistent deployments of companies of US troops in the Baltic states and Poland; the establishment of command-and-control facilities in those states; and commitments by those countries to their own defense, including greater defense spending and enlistment of domestic forces. We arrived on the eve of a June 2015 defense ministerial meeting, where commitments on prepositioning of equipment were detailed. NATO had also taken steps in the nuclear realm. In the short term, Russia's moves have prompted the United States to reassure allies with some small visual and unusual displays of US nuclear weapons. For example, three B-52H and two B-2 strategic bombers were deployed to Europe in June 2014 on a "training mission" that, according to US Strategic Command, was to "demonstrate to our nation's leaders and our allies that we have the right mix of aircraft and expertise to respond to a variety of potential threats and situations."<sup>40</sup>

US officials also warned that if Russia deploys the INF-prohibited missiles, it would respond with economic sanctions and military measures. The military measures could include cruise missile defense, counterforce capabilities to prevent the missiles from being launched, or strike capabilities that would seek to offset any advantage Russia gained from the deployment. These options were endorsed by the US Congress in 2015 defense legislation that also emphasized responding with systems that could be deployed within two years.<sup>41</sup> However, the US government has yet to come to a decision on its exact response and, absent such a decision, has opted not to limit its options by subjecting them to debates within NATO and/or the European public.<sup>42</sup>

Many elements of NATO's longer-term response continued to be debated, such as the size and permanence of troop deployments to the front-line states and changes in nuclear policy.

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<sup>40</sup> Strategic bombers deploy to Europe to train, exercise capabilities," US Strategic Command Public Affairs, June 3, 2014, <[www.afgsc.af.mil](http://www.afgsc.af.mil)>; Lucasz Kulesa, "Careful What You Wish For: Nuclear Reductions and Conventional Deterrence in Europe after Crimea," PISM Bulletin No. 15 (51), Strategic File, August 2014, <[www.pism.pl/files/?id\\_plik=17896](http://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=17896)>.

<sup>41</sup> Kingston Reif, "Hill Urges Military Response on INF Pact," *Arms Control Today*, November 2015, <[www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2015\\_11/News/Hill-Urges-Military-Response-on-INF-Pact](http://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2015_11/News/Hill-Urges-Military-Response-on-INF-Pact)>.

<sup>42</sup> M. Pomper interview with senior US official; Jacek Durkalec, "Scenarios for Russia's Withdrawal from the INF Treaty," *PISM Bulletin*, No. 97 (829), October 30, 2015.

## The US Nuclear Debate

It is clear that Moscow's actions have shifted the conversation within NATO from one focused on the appropriate pace of conventional and nuclear disarmament in Europe and coexistence with Russia to one aimed at shoring up the alliance's deterrent against potential Russian aggression. In one sign of the new conventional wisdom, a respected bipartisan blue-ribbon panel wrote in July 2014 that "the U.S. must lead a discussion inside NATO about the continued relevance of the limitations on NATO forces, both nuclear and conventional, that the Alliance took upon itself at the time of NATO's first round of enlargement in 1997."<sup>43</sup>

Some in the United States have claimed this shift requires NATO to significantly harden its nuclear posture and be prepared and structured to fight a limited nuclear war—a stance that NATO largely abandoned at the end of the Cold War. Matthew Kroenig of the Atlantic Council wrote in *Survival* in early 2015 that "Russian planning assumes that NATO does not have the stomach for nuclear war with Russia and that the threat of nuclear attack, or, if necessary, the battle-field use of tactical nuclear weapons, would be enough to convince the West to sue for peace even if Russia were to initiate conventional or hybrid warfare."<sup>44</sup>

Elbridge Colby of the Center for New American Security posits a scenario in which a counterattack to eject Russia from NATO territory would require suppression of "more sophisticated forces across the border in sovereign Russian territory" that Moscow would use to

provide a range of crucial missions such as air defense, long-range strike and attacks on U.S. space assets. ... Yet, seeking to manipulate the logic of limited war, Moscow could demand that the homelands of the major powers be considered sanctuary and that the conflict be confined to the territory and airspace of the Baltic states. Or it might declare that only a narrow band of Russian territory abutting the invaded Baltic states should be considered legitimate territory for combat. And Moscow could threaten to enforce those limitations with its strategic capabilities, including its large and variegated arsenal of nuclear weapons.<sup>45</sup>

Given such scenarios, Kroenig says, NATO should "consider the deployment to Europe of any tactical system that could prove useful on the battlefield, with a posture that in combination provides flexibility, survivability, reliability and accuracy. This could include warheads with adjustable yields, nuclear-armed sea and air-launched cruise missiles, and the

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<sup>43</sup> William J. Perry and John P. Abizaid, co-chairs, "Ensuring A Strong U.S. Defense for the Future: US National Defense Panel Review of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review," United States Institute of Peace, July 2014, p. 42, <[www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Ensuring-a-Strong-U.S.-Defense-for-the-Future-NDP-Review-of-the-QDR.pdf](http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Ensuring-a-Strong-U.S.-Defense-for-the-Future-NDP-Review-of-the-QDR.pdf)>.

<sup>44</sup> Matthew Kroenig, "Facing Reality: Getting NATO Ready for a New Cold War," *Survival* 57 (February-March 2015), pp. 49-70.

<sup>45</sup> Elbridge Colby, "Preparing for Limited Nuclear War," *National Interest*, October 21, 2015, <<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-must-prepare-limited-war-14104>>.

possible redeployment of gravity bombs with dual-key arrangements to Eastern European states” such as Poland.<sup>46</sup> Some senior Republican US lawmakers have also called for the Pentagon to seriously consider basing US nuclear weapons in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>47</sup>

Opponents, however, argue such developments and deployments would be destabilizing and counterproductive.

Steven Pifer of the Brookings Institution wrote in *Survival* that “Kroenig’s proposal to locate dual-capable aircraft and nuclear weapons in Poland seems particularly problematic,” noting that “basing dual-capable aircraft and nuclear weapons in Poland would make them much more vulnerable to a Russian pre-emptive strike,” and “would encounter significant opposition within NATO.”<sup>48</sup>

A related debate concerns the usefulness of a planned new nuclear air-launched cruise missile called the Long-Range Standoff weapon, envisaged to be more flexible than the current system it is meant to replace. Former US Secretary of Defense William Perry recently co-authored an op-ed calling for the United States to abandon plans for the new missile, given that such systems may be indistinguishable from conventional ones and that a combination of new stealth bombers (the so-called B-3) and modernized US B-61 gravity bombs already in development could accomplish many of the same missions.

Others have suggested the potential development of a shorter-range ALCM that, like the B-61, could be deployed on dual-use F-35s. While Perry advocates for US restraint to develop the ALCM as a way to generate support for a global ban on such weapons,<sup>49</sup> advocates portray the ALCM as filling a missing rung on the escalation ladder and preserving US strike options against strengthening Russian air defenses:

“Specifically, in cases of limited nuclear escalation scenarios, adversaries might believe that the U.S. government has no realistic course of action if limited to those weapon systems,” wrote Mel Deaile and Al Mauroni of the US Air Force Center for Unconventional

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<sup>46</sup> Kroenig, “Facing Reality,” p. 64. Kroenig is far from alone. Other writers with similar views include Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, “Coercive Nuclear Campaigns in the 21st Century: Understanding Adversary Incentives and Options for Nuclear Escalation,” March 2013, Report Number 2013-001, Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (PASCC); Clark Murdock, “Executive Summary,” Project Atom: A Competitive Strategies Approach to Defining U.S. Nuclear Strategy and Posture for 2025–2050, Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 2015, <[http://csis.org/files/publication/150716\\_Murdock\\_ProjectAtom\\_Web\\_Rev2.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/150716_Murdock_ProjectAtom_Web_Rev2.pdf)>; Edward Lucas, A. Wess Mitchell et al. “The Case for Strengthening NATO’s Eastern Defenses,” Center for European Policy Analysis, Report No. 35, March 25, 2014, p. 8); and Elbridge Colby, “A Nuclear Strategy and Posture for 2030,” Center for a New American Security, October 2015, <[www.cnas.org/Nuclear-Strategy-and-Posture-2030](http://www.cnas.org/Nuclear-Strategy-and-Posture-2030)>.

<sup>47</sup> Letter to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and Secretary of State John Kerry from Mike Rogers and Mike Turner, Chairmen of the House Armed Services Tactical Land and Forces and Strategic Forces Subcommittees, January 22, 2015, <<https://turner.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/turner-rogers-the-us-must-take-immediate-action-to-change-putin-s>>.

<sup>48</sup> Steven Pifer, “Forum: NATO and Russia,” *Survival* 57 (March 2015), pp. 123.

<sup>49</sup> William J Perry and Andy Weber, “Mr. President: Kill the New Cruise Missile,” *Washington Post*, October 15, 2015, <<https://goo.gl/39ia7w>>.



Warfare Studies. "It defies logic to claim, as Perry and Weber do, that our current bombers and missiles offer sufficient penetrating capabilities."<sup>50</sup>

Another advocate, former principal Deputy Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs John Harvey points out that the B3 is unlikely to be deployed before 2030. Harvey claims that would leave a "window of vulnerability" because of the inability to penetrate improving Russian air bases if the new ALCM is not deployed by the planned date of 2022-23.<sup>51</sup>

In any case, it is clear that the deployment of the new systems would not constitute a short- or medium-term response to the Russian threat. As a result, the willingness of the United States to spend the tens of billions of dollars needed to build and deploy both the B-61 and a new ALCM alongside modernizing other elements of the US nuclear triad may prove as important as these military calculations.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Mel Deaile and Al Mauroni, "Why We Still Need a Nuclear-Armed Cruise Missile," *War on the Rocks*, October 26, 2015, <<http://warontherocks.com/2015/10/why-we-still-need-a-nuclear-armed-cruise-missile/>>. A number of Obama administration officials have made similar statements. For a summary, see Hans M. Kristensen, "LRSO: the Nuclear Cruise Missile Mission," Strategic Security Blog, Federation of American Scientists, October 21, 2015, <<http://fas.org/blogs/security/2015/10/lrso-mission/>>.

<sup>51</sup> Discussion at James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Washington, DC, October 28, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> For the budget realities facing the US nuclear weapon modernization program, see Jon B. Wolfsthal, Jeffrey Lewis, and Marc Quint, "The Trillion Dollar Nuclear Triad," James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, January 2014, <[www.nonproliferation.org/us-trillion-dollar-nuclear-triad/](http://www.nonproliferation.org/us-trillion-dollar-nuclear-triad/)>.

## COUNTRY PROFILES

### ESTONIA



Security professionals interviewed in Tallinn did not view Russian military intervention as an imminent or even highly probable threat. Nevertheless, most experts have pointed out that low intensity conflict and intimidation by Russian-backed and pro-Russian elements have been happening in Estonia for years; some even suggested it has never stopped since the country regained its independence in 1991. This includes cyber incidents, intimidation in the air space (aircraft approaches with transponders off), a media propaganda campaign aimed at inciting the Estonian Russian population, and the latest incident—abducting an Estonian security officer shortly after President Obama’s 2014 visit to Tallinn.<sup>53</sup>

There seemed to be a consensus that, in this manner, Russia is constantly testing the resolve, readiness, and responses by Estonian and NATO authorities and public. Therefore, rather than escalating the threat, there was a perceived need to maintain calm and avoid unnecessary confrontation while at the same time demonstrating resolve. Some have subsequently claimed that the new “normal” for the state of peace has come to mean such intense confrontation, that a small-scale incident (e.g. individual clashes, an incursion of

<sup>53</sup> Andrew Roth, “Russia’s summer of intrigue: Political trials take center stage,” *Washington Post*, August 19, 2015, <[www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/kidnapped-estonian-security-officer-sentenced-in-russia-over-spy-claims/2015/08/19/3d8f51f7-11bf-4c57-81df-e6c32eebad6\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/kidnapped-estonian-security-officer-sentenced-in-russia-over-spy-claims/2015/08/19/3d8f51f7-11bf-4c57-81df-e6c32eebad6_story.html)>.

armed contractors without insignia, or an insurgency) might no longer provoke substantial outrage from the West. However, others have drawn a clear line at physical military confrontation, arguing it would be cause for NATO forces to respond.

The interviewees emphasized the need to focus on strengthening NATO's deterrence posture, with lesser need for separate explicit security assurances for the Baltic states. Respondents clearly prioritized preparedness for a conflict involving conventional forces, deployments of troops and equipment, stressing the need to understand the Russian way of thinking and calibrate deterrent signals accordingly. There was consensus that NATO had to be seen taking action, but there was no need to match Russian forces or equipment. The political symbolism of taking action was rated significantly higher than the exact nature and strategic or tactical implications of such actions.

Indeed, the technical composition of NATO deployments in Europe seemed somewhat irrelevant, although there was a strong preference for stationing a larger contingent of US troops (battalion) and heavy equipment (though what type or where was never specified). Meanwhile, deployments of other forces from Western Europe—such as Germany—were seen as potentially helpful politically, but somewhat less crucial. In a similar manner, discussions regarding conventional missile defense systems' deployment in Poland were seen as a "bilateral solidarity project," rather than a contribution to regional security in the context above. Nevertheless, officials noted that they had been pleasantly surprised by the actions taken by the Angela Merkel government in Germany, despite public resistance to Article V deployments identified in a recent Pew poll.<sup>54</sup>

Regarding Estonians (along with those in other Baltic states) consistently pushing for greater NATO physical presence in the region, it is worth noting a clear effort by respondents to downplay the likelihood of hybrid war scenarios involving Russian minorities and to emphasize the Russian conventional threat. This appeared aimed, in part, at forestalling opposition to NATO deployments from those worried about being drawn into an internal conflict. Most interviewees emphasized the differences between the situation in the Baltics and that in Ukraine, discouraging any analogous threat assessments and pointing to superior border security, established and stable state institutions, and different historical context. Nevertheless, there was a shared appreciation for Western attention to regional security concerns that the Ukraine crisis had attracted. Furthermore, experts noted that the heightened urgency of the regional security situation has incentivized Sweden and Finland to get more involved in collective defense planning, with some even expressing hopes of potentially consider joining NATO at some future stage.

In assessing the potential threat scenarios, Estonians seemed most concerned about a Russian-backed, *blitzkrieg*-type operation aimed at quickly seizing a foothold in NATO territory, most likely as leverage in a conflict elsewhere, and splitting the alliance regarding the region's subsequent defensibility. Forward-deployed forces, pre-positioned equipment, and greater force preparedness for a fast response were promoted as a way of thwarting such a scenario. Experts believed such a strategy would help buy "time and space" for

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<sup>54</sup> Michael Birnbaum, "Survey: Western Europe Wary of Supporting Russia's NATO Neighbors," *Washington Post*, June 10, 2015, <[www.washingtonpost.com/world/survey-western-europe-wary-of-supporting-russias-nato-neighbors/2015/06/09/8251602c-0df6-11e5-a0fe-dccfea4653ee\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/survey-western-europe-wary-of-supporting-russias-nato-neighbors/2015/06/09/8251602c-0df6-11e5-a0fe-dccfea4653ee_story.html)>.

NATO's overall conventional superiority (as opposed to its conventional inferiority in the subregional theater) to be brought to bear.

Meanwhile, Russian nuclear posturing was viewed as mostly empty rhetoric aimed at the public, both domestically and abroad, a reinforcement of Russia's only claim to superpower status, and a way to compensate for its conventional force inferiority. The interviewees cautioned against falling back to Cold War nuclear saber rattling. NATO's nuclear weapons were seen as a strategic deterrent, which preferably should be kept at the present level, but questions regarding their deployments, modernization, or introduction of tactical nuclear weapons were not part of the current security debate vis-à-vis the Russian threat. Some pointed to the NATO policy of the "Three No's"<sup>55</sup> as the cause of this "nuclear disengagement mentality" in the Baltics, as well as the recognition that it would be their territory that might become the nuclear battlefield if tactical nuclear weapons came into play.

The academics interviewed also pointed out the pacifist leanings of Estonian society and—even more so—of Western leaders, most of whom have grown up without experiencing active armed conflict. The interviewed policy makers appeared quite cognizant of potential internal NATO divisions that substantive engagement on changes to nuclear weapon policy or INF Treaty violations could bring about, and seemed to decisively avoid anything that could distract the Western partners from more immediate collective regional security goals. Similarly, officials were careful to point to the need for the alliance to tackle issues of interest to Southern members of the alliance, such as the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) and the refugee crisis.

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<sup>55</sup> This refers to the commitment in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, stating that NATO Allies "have no intention, no plan, and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members." <[www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm)>.

## LITHUANIA



Among the security professionals interviewed in Vilnius, assessments of the regional security environment spanned the entire spectrum, with some seeing it as better (due to greater Western attention and presence), others viewing it as largely unchanged (mostly referring to actual level of threats and provocations), and still others perceiving it as worse (with hybrid warfare discourse distracting from actual dangers of conventional conflict). The overall assessment of NATO's response to date was very positive, with allied support for the Baltic states judged to be adequate and sufficient. There was a desire to see a greater presence of NATO (specifically US) troops on the ground, but political signaling was deemed of utmost importance, with any military deployments only serving to back it up. Somewhat curiously, discussions related to nuclear weapons and NATO policy and posture in this regard made the interviewees visibly uncomfortable; questions regarding the role and utility of such weapons, both strategic and tactical, were perceived as harkening back to the Cold War mentality and were avoided by interviewees, lest they appear to be challenging Lithuania's non-nuclear weapon state status.

In terms of perceptions of the nature and urgency of a direct military threat from Russia, most interviewees considered an actual armed attack against any Baltic territories highly unlikely. Boggled down in the conflict in Ukraine, Russia was seen as presently incapable of expanding its pursuit of territorial conquests. In further assessing low-probability but potentially high-impact scenarios, Kaliningrad (and transit routes to it) was seen as the most likely target of a potential Russian intervention. Several respondents also noted that Kaliningrad was the principle theater for Russian-NATO forces posturing and signaling, with deployments and exercises in this region being particularly sensitive.

Furthermore, Lithuanian experts emphasized the importance of credible NATO signaling, including steps to dissuade Russia from attempts to overrun the Baltics in a *blitzkrieg*, demonstrating the costly and non-localized nature of such a conflict. US troops on the ground and American statements of support and commitment to NATO defense were near-unanimously viewed as key to deterring Russia. Similar support from European allies was viewed more as a useful complement to US efforts; while some noted positive developments in German and Portuguese engagement, others suggested that expecting more than the present European contribution would be futile, given the present economic and political environment in the continent. It is worth noting the somewhat paradoxical nature of these perceptions: greater commitment from presently less engaged European allies would arguably send a stronger signal of NATO unity and readiness for concerted action, yet the Baltics continue to view the United States as the principal underwriter of Baltic security.

Still, doubts and concerns were expressed as to whether NATO countries would be able to act in a timely and concerted manner using Article V to send troops in defense of the Baltic states if needed. Several policy makers noted efforts to impress Lithuania's security concerns upon Western European partners in international institutions and forums using a personal approach, as well as offering Lithuania's support when the time came to vote on issues that, e.g., France or Germany cared deeply about. The interviewed civil servants emphasized the importance of "selling" the Ukraine crisis as a global rather than regional problem, with an insufficiently strong Western response inviting further Russian aggression across a broader geographic range, although it was not immediately clear to what extent their NATO and EU counterparts signed on this logic.

Meanwhile, several policy makers expressed the view of security as a broader concept involving not solely collective defense in the context of NATO, but encompassing trade and development connections fostered through EU structures. They saw Lithuania's work on these issues, along with playing an active role in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative<sup>56</sup> and engaging on issues particularly contentious for Western states (such as immigrant quota issues or ISIS threat), as the best way to entice Western partners to engage in preventing Russian aggression.

It is also worth noting the gradually increasing Lithuanian public support for more active engagement in national security matters, and for an increase in defense spending after years of budget cuts. In an essentially pacifist society that has practically delegated defense matters to NATO partners since its accession to the alliance, the initial controversy regarding the reintroduction of the military draft in 2015 had begun to recede, and a large number of volunteers were enlisting.

Finally, in terms of public opinion and social cohesion challenges, Lithuania differed from the other two Baltic states, Estonia and Latvia, in that it only has a small Russian population, with the largest minority being Polish (around 6 percent of the population).

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<sup>56</sup> The Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative was launched in 2009 as part of the European Neighbourhood policy, promoting political association and economic integration between the EU and six partner countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. For more information about the EaP, see European Council <[www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/)> and Eastern Partnership <<http://eap-csf.eu/en/about-eap-csf/eap/>>; for more information on Lithuania's involvement, see the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Eastern Partnership <[www.urm.lt/default/en/eastern-partnership](http://www.urm.lt/default/en/eastern-partnership)>.

Acknowledging the potential dangers of pro-Russian elements inciting minorities in the Baltic region against their home states, the integration of Poles in Lithuania was assessed in positive terms, although parliamentarians recognized the simmering political skirmishes (e.g., over the spelling of Polish names and street names) regularly stirred up by more radical representatives. With Poland recognized as a key regional ally and strategic partner in Lithuania's defense planning, they also noted that Russia would only be too happy to see Lithuanian-Polish relations sour.

## POLAND



As the most militarily important Central and Eastern European NATO ally bordering Russia, Poland has played and will continue to play a significant role in setting alliance policy toward Russia. The increasing importance of Poland within the alliance can be seen in the pre-positioning of heavy equipment and a multinational corps headquarters on Polish territory, the planned 2018 deployment there of ballistic missile defense interceptors against long-range ballistic missiles, and the decision to hold the 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw.

However, Poland has touched off controversy within the alliance by pressing hard for the establishment of permanent NATO bases on Polish territory. Since taking office in 2015, President Andrzej Duda has said that his country should no longer be treated like a “buffer zone.” Western European countries, such as Germany, have resisted the move, in part because they worry it would be seen by Moscow as provocative. In addition, such deployments have raised concerns in Washington and elsewhere because they would



require a greater financial commitment, given the need to construct permanent housing and other facilities.

At a Boell workshop in Warsaw in June 2015, a number of experts shared Duda's view on the need for a permanent NATO presence on Polish soil. But they also stressed that such a deployment should be quite limited in size. One expert said "we need a limited, cautious NATO presence on Polish ground that is not threatening or offensive in nature. To apply the necessary cautiousness, a brigade might already be too much."

Conventional threats that they said the alliance should be prepared to counter include a "creeping invasion" of the Baltics and "one-off air raids or missile attacks by Russia to test our resolve or to reduce certain capabilities, for example oil refineries." They urged that the scale of current NATO exercises be increased and that NATO's deterrent be strengthened to respond more quickly and cohesively to any attack.

Viewing the challenge from Moscow as primarily requiring NATO to enhance its conventional deterrent, the experts said that the United States should maintain its current deployment (and planned modernization) of NSNW in Europe as long as Russia maintains its NSNW current arsenal. One official identified a 2008 Russian military exercise, in which Russian NSNW were used to attack Poland as a "de-escalation" tactic, as a turning point in Polish thinking. Another noted the importance of the US presence in this regard. "Credible guarantees means American guarantees—not French or UK guarantees."

They urged the alliance to be more willing to demonstrate its nuclear capabilities, such as through exercises, and to rethink its nuclear posture in the wake of Russian actions. However, they saw no need for the alliance to introduce new nuclear weapons to the theater or to move the weapons from their current bases in Western Europe to Poland or other countries.<sup>57</sup>

At the same time, they called upon the alliance to seek agreement with Moscow on transparency and confidence-building measures concerning NSNW. Since 2010, Poland has championed such measures but little progress has been made within the alliance or with Russia in advancing them.

Given that Poland is already threatened by Russian NSNW, Russia's apparent violation of the INF Treaty was viewed of as of greater concern for the United States and for Western European states who would find themselves newly threatened by any deployment of medium or intermediate-range weapons.

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<sup>57</sup> To be sure, there are some voices in Poland calling for Warsaw to consider a stronger nuclear role. In a December interview with Polish broadcaster Polsat, Deputy Defense Minister Tomasz Szatkowski said Poland was considering asking to participate in NATO's nuclear-sharing arrangements. See "Poland considering asking for access to nuclear weapons under Nato program," *Guardian*, December 6, 2015, <<http://tinyurl.com/pqojqzr>>. However, this trial balloon by a longtime hawk was soon shot down by a statement from the defense ministry that said "the Ministry currently does not conduct any work on the issue of joining the NATO Nuclear Sharing arrangements,' but the Deputy Minister signalled there are different 'options which might be considered, including some form of Polish engagement' in the program." <<http://mon.gov.pl/aktualnosci/artykul/najnowsze/2015-12-05-oswiadczenie-mon/>>.

## CZECH REPUBLIC



Prague perceives Russia as less of a threat than do those states with shared Russian borders, and this threat perception is reflected in the Czech Republic's defense budget. Czech spending was half of NATO's standard of 2 percent of GDP in 2014. An agreement formed by President Milos Zeman among the major parties that year calls for spending to inch up to 1.4 percent of GDP by 2020.<sup>58</sup> Prague's lesser commitment has been manifested in other ways as well, including a controversial visit by Zeman to Moscow in 2015 to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II.

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<sup>58</sup> "Czech Republic-Military Spending," Globalsecurity.org, <[www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/cz-budget.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/cz-budget.htm)>.

Nonetheless, Czech experts did not significantly demur from the Central and Eastern European consensus that more needed to be done to beef up NATO's conventional deterrent. They favored steps that would dissuade Russia from acting in the first place. "Don't get into the trap of what is the Article V threshold. The beauty of deterrence is for it not to be used," one stated.

Should deterrence fail, they said, it was necessary to cut the time NATO would need to respond to a Russian provocation, such as prepositioning equipment in border states, improving military infrastructure, and providing NATO's supreme commander with greater authority to respond to a Russian military provocation without waiting for approval from the North Atlantic Council. They also suggested that NATO make clear that it was no longer bound by the NATO-Russia Founding Act, given Russian actions. Russia, they said chose to invade Ukraine because it was an easy target, but Moscow could be deterred if the alliance demonstrated that it was willing to counter any Russian "hybrid" actions to the point of escalating to a conventional conflict—and beyond.

US commitment was crucial to such a strategy, they said, and complained that President Obama's "reset" strategy with Russia had sent the wrong signal to Moscow, terming it a "childish mistake." "Support from Europe was not adequate for deterrence," they argued, complaining that there was no European power they could count on, given France's non-participation in NATO's nuclear command and questions about how long the United Kingdom, Europe's other nuclear power, would stay engaged in Europe.

Czech experts urged a continuation of NATO's current nuclear plans rather than changes in the posture, saying their main value was in "keeping the US and Europe together to prevent 'decoupling'." For example, they saw little benefit in deploying US nuclear weapons closer to Russia, saying that "Some countries in geopolitically beneficial circumstances should keep the burden of DCAs [dual-capable aircraft]." On the other hand, one welcomed the planned modernization of the B-61 gravity bombs already based in Western Europe, saying "these were modernized without the pretext of an arms race and they provide for some of the substance of cruise missiles such as signaling without escalating tensions with Moscow."

As the host of President Obama's 2009 speech calling for "a world free of nuclear weapons," the Czech indicated that efforts to deploy new types of US nuclear weapons in Europe would be immensely difficult politically. "Any reconfiguration of nuclear forces in Europe would end up shaking up public opinion, generating a protest movement," said one. "Politically, the easiest way is the status quo."

## ROMANIA



Romanian experts worry that Putin's next target could be neighboring Moldova, where pro-Russian separatists have long held sway in the region of Transnistria, and where Turkic-speaking inhabitants in Gagauzia are increasingly seen as having pro-Russian sympathies. They also fret that Russia's seizure of Crimea could give Moscow greater control over the Black Sea, which borders their country. Nonetheless, they expressed satisfaction with the steps that NATO and the United States have taken to bolster their conventional presence on Romanian territory and expressed little need for changes in NATO nuclear policy. There appears to be a significant consensus among Romanian elites on security policy, with all parties supporting a boost in defense spending to bring Romanian spending policies in line with NATO goals. However, public support for such efforts appears somewhat shallow.

As NATO officials and outside experts tried to predict Russian actions after the intervention in Ukraine, some expressed concern that Moscow would seek to unite Moldova's Transnistria with separatist regions in Ukraine and Russia, and potentially bring Gagauzia into this orbit. Moldova not only borders Romania, but at times had been part of the country, so Russian actions stir both nationalist and security concerns. Romanian experts noted that Russia's anger when Moldova signed an association agreement with the

European Union in 2014, retaliating economically by boycotting imports and blocking Moldovan migrant laborers from working in Russia. It also relied heavily propaganda tools as a means of exerting influence. This effort helped boost the rise of pro-Russian political parties. Romanian experts said that both the European Union and NATO had to remain steadfast in the face of this Russian pressure in order to keep Moldova on a pro-Western path, including strong partnerships with the alliance there and in Ukraine and Georgia, and maintaining a strong conventional deterrent in Romania.

They also fretted that Russia's occupation of Crimea is leading to the increasing militarization of the Black Sea region. They expressed concern that, under the circumstances, Russia could take advantage of the 1936 Montreaux Convention. That treaty limits the water access for non-Black Sea states, through the Turkish straits of the Dardenelles and Bosphorus, and they feared that Russia would use its provisions to gain naval and air superiority in the region with little opposition from NATO.

Nonetheless, on the whole, they said, NATO, and particularly the United States, had responded appropriately to Russian actions, viewing the measures approved at the Wales Summit as largely adequate, but requiring full implementation. Indeed, Romania was viewed as "the most secure it has been in its history" and the beneficiary of many of these recent steps, including hosting regular air, land, and sea exercises, a command-and-control facility, and prepositioned heavy equipment. Moreover, even before the Ukraine crisis, Romania had been slated for several years to host a battery of NATO missile defense interceptors, the construction of which began in 2013 at Deveselu. Nonetheless, Romanian officials said their scheduled deployment in 2015 accompanied by as many as 500 US troops provided an additional means of reassurance amid the standoff. The "long-term presence of the US in Romania will guarantee that Romania will not be transferred into a different zone of influence," Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu said in August 2015.<sup>59</sup>

Aside from the United States, however, Romanians expressed concern about the cohesion of the alliance and the dedication of some of the alliance's economically struggling countries, such as Greece and Hungary, to stated goals.

Until recently, Romanian defense spending had demonstrated little concern about the Russian threat: Bucharest had been spending only about 1.3 percent of its GDP on defense, far short of NATO's target of 2 percent. In 2015, that figure is set to increase to 1.7 percent. Moreover, in January 2015, Romanian President Klaus Iohann won support from all Romanian political parties to increase defense spending to 2 percent GDP by 2017 and maintain it at that level for at least another decade. Bucharest also pledged to spend more money on procurement and research and development—another goal of the alliance.

Still, Romanian experts saw little need for significant changes to the alliance's nuclear posture. "We don't want to emphasize nuclear, raise the nuclear stakes," said one. However, they endorsed short-term moves to signal concern about Russia's violations of the INF Treaty and nuclear saber rattling. They also supported changes to NATO's strategic concept as a response to changes in Russian behavior.

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<sup>59</sup> Jaroslaw Adamowski, "Poland, Romania Lead E. Europe Missile Defense Efforts," *Defense News*, August 9, 2015, <[www.defensenews.com/story/defense/air-space/space/2015/08/09/poland-romania-lead-e-europe-missile-defense-efforts/31057643/](http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/air-space/space/2015/08/09/poland-romania-lead-e-europe-missile-defense-efforts/31057643/)>.

## TURKEY



While Turkish respondents were asked most of the same Russia-related questions as other countries in the study, they were additionally requested to comment on US/NATO credibility vis-à-vis the Southern Flank challenges most pressing to Turkey (i.e., chaos in neighboring Syria and Iraq, the threat from ISIS, and the associated refugee crisis). Five months since the interviews were conducted, the facts on the ground have changed dramatically for Turkey and the alliance, particularly vis-à-vis Turkey's southeast. In addition to summarizing the interviews, this section attempts to draw parallels where possible between beliefs expressed in the interviews about the future and what has actually played out in the region.

Turkey sees the threats to its security as emanating almost entirely from the southeast. Instability in Syria and Iraq continues to spill over into Turkish territory in the form of a refugee crisis (as of summer 2015, Turkey had registered nearly two million Syrian refugees), and in escalating terrorist attacks by both ISIS and the Kurdish terrorist organization, the PKK. (Turkey believes ISIS is behind the deadliest terrorist attack in its history, which occurred in Ankara in October). As one interviewee put it: "In the hierarchy of threats, the Southeast border is the highest," and Russia's behavior is "problematic but not urgent."

Many respondents thought that Russia's behavior in Ukraine was reprehensible and NATO should continue to reassure Eastern member states that it will protect them from Russian aggression. Most believed that NATO's current response is appropriate and should not be augmented, though one person disagreed vehemently, arguing NATO's response is "not anywhere near satisfactory." This individual also indicated Turkey would be deeply concerned about any changes to the naval military balance in the Black Sea. On most Russia-centric questions, such as alleged INF Treaty violations, respondents were either completely uninformed or disinterested. Few had heard of the INF Treaty, and most who knew anything about it felt it was an issue for US-Russian bilateral relations rather than for NATO.

In early summer 2015, Turkish respondents did not feel there was any direct Russian threat to the country's security, as the two states enjoyed extensive bilateral cooperation, particularly on the economic front, and Turkey feared jeopardizing relations with its largest single-country trading partner over Ukraine. Most respondents thought that the Baltic and Eastern European states might need greater reassurances from NATO, and indicated that, while Turkey would not be enthusiastic about more assertive actions toward Russia, it would support alliance decisions. At the time, while respondents acknowledged Russia's and Turkey's competing interests in Syria were placing some strain on the relationship, they did not envision the conflict spilling over into other areas of the bilateral relationship.

However, since the end of September 2015, Russian boots on the ground and aircraft in the skies over Syria have bolstered the Bashar al-Assad regime, dramatically increasing the risk of a direct confrontation between NATO and Russia, whether in Syria, the Eastern Mediterranean, or allied airspace. Russia has aggressively tested NATO's red line recently on numerous fronts, in particular through its repeated violations of Turkey's airspace. Most recently, on November 24, 2015, this resulted in Turkey shooting down a Russian Su-24. While it is too soon to know the full consequences of this incident, and diplomatic damage control appears likely to prevail, it is the most dangerous example to-date of how easily Russia-NATO games of chicken could escalate out of control.

Turkish respondents expressed strong support for and belief in NATO, particularly vis-à-vis the Cold War-esque threats the alliance was originally designed to counter. No one interviewed believed that NATO would fail to act if a state attacked Turkey—whether Russia or a Middle Eastern neighbor. Precisely because of their belief in NATO, interviewees felt such an attack was all but unthinkable, because NATO would effectively deter it from happening. Respondents were also generally happy with the level of NATO's response to threats on Turkey's borders. While many believed more should be done by the United Nations to resolve the Syrian War, they felt NATO should remain focused on the territorial defense of its member states—as it was doing by deploying Patriot batteries in Turkey. Many feared a loss of NATO unity if it were to pursue more extensive, out-of-area operations.

After sharply declining with the 2003 Iraq War, Turkish perceptions of NATO have steadily improved in recent years, as demonstrated both colloquially and by the German Marshall Fund of the United States' Transatlantic Trends survey, which found in 2014 that "Forty-nine percent of Turks said NATO was still essential for their country's security, a ten percentage point increase from 2013."<sup>60</sup> Interviewees for this project universally indicated that, for better or worse, elites and the general public see NATO and the United States as one and the same. One offered as proof that "People in Turkey hold NATO responsible for the 2003 Iraq War even though NATO had nothing to do with it." The negative side of this is that NATO is often perceived as a "toolbox of the United States," and Turkey often feels like a "strategic asset" rather than a "strategic partner." Another respondent complained that NATO is "too much an instrument of US national interests," and that the United States uses NATO and Turkey to enable it to intervene in the Middle East.

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<sup>60</sup> "Country Profiles: Turkey 2014," Transatlantic Trends 2014, German Marshall Fund of the United States, <<http://trends.gmfus.org/transatlantic-trends/country-profiles-2014/country-profiles-turkey-2014/>>.

Opinions were mixed concerning whether Turkey would formally request consultation or assistance from its NATO partners in specific scenarios. In June 2015, most respondents did not believe Turkey would make either an Article IV or Article V request if attacked by ISIS, preferring to respond to any attack autonomously.<sup>61</sup> Some concern was expressed as to whether certain types of Article IV or V requests would be honored, since NATO decision making is viewed as “very political.” For example, when Turkey has faced what it has perceived as existential threats from Kurdish terrorism in the past, respondents indicated their government was informally advised by other NATO members that the threat would not be viewed as a NATO concern.

Yet, the Turkish government ended up making an Article IV request following the July 20 terrorist attacks attributed to ISIS. Our assessment is that prior analyses proved incorrect because of shifts in Turkish domestic politics. After losing the majority in June elections, the ruling AK Party failed to form a governing coalition with the opposition, but remained largely in charge in the run-up to new November 2015 elections. The ISIS attacks overlapped with renewed violence by the PKK, and the Turkish military struck both ISIS and Kurdish targets after joining the anti-ISIS fight, suggesting Turkey may have used its Western allies as a mandate to conduct the cross-border operations it perceived as vital to its own security agenda. This would be entirely consistent with concerns by interviewees in early July that the caretaker government might overstep its “lame duck” authority by initiating unilateral military intervention in Syria to create the “buffer zone” it had wanted for years. Although public outcry forced the government to back off from threats of unilateral military action in Syria in early July, subsequent terrorist attacks soon gave it an opportunity to seek NATO cover to pursue essentially the same goals.

Universally, respondents saw NATO’s 2012 decision to deploy Patriot batteries on Turkey’s Syrian border as proof—symbolically and/or materially—of US and NATO commitments to Turkey’s security. Many were pleasantly surprised by NATO’s positive response to Turkey’s request for Patriots, and indicated that even members of the general public who don’t understand foreign policy have a more positive perception of NATO and the United States because of the way the Patriots have been discussed in the Turkish news. This suggests there could be significant public diplomacy fallout for the alliance in Turkey over removal of the Patriots. In August 2015, the United States and subsequently Germany decided to withdraw Patriot batteries from Turkey, in October 2015 and January 2016 respectively, citing the absence of a Syrian ballistic missile threat to Turkey. That the decision was publicized only after Turkey had opened its bases for airstrikes on ISIS may tend to reinforce what one interviewee labeled the “Muslim Outlier Perception of NATO,” whose adherents believe “Turkey works for NATO, but NATO won’t help us because they don’t like us.” Experts understand the systems would have limited military value in only the narrowest of contingencies. However, the symbolic value of the deployments remained extremely high in Turkey at the time of this study, suggesting their withdrawal could

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<sup>61</sup> Article IV of NATO’s founding treaty states: “The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened.” <[www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm)>. Its emphasis on threats and consultation in response means it is viewed as a lesser and perhaps earlier response to a conflict than Article V, which binds NATO states to come to each other’s assistance in the case of an armed attack. NATO, “The Consultation Process and Article IV,” July 28, 2015, <[www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_49187.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49187.htm)>.



become a major source of decreased Turkish faith in NATO. The United States has indicated it will provide continuous missile defense to Turkey through increased presence of Aegis-equipped destroyers in the region; while these may be militarily equivalent, it is unclear whether such capabilities, far from Turkish soil, will be as visible a symbol of NATO's commitment.

Unlike in other NATO member states, there is little public awareness of or interest in the tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Turkey. According to respondents, nuclear weapons are a "non-issue" for most in Turkey, and at most "a topic of the elite." Questions of modernization, arms control, and nuclear posturing were too sophisticated even for elite debate, which is also basically nonexistent. When pressed for an opinion about keeping the weapons, respondents were fairly evenly divided into "yes/no/maybe" groups, with "no" representing the smallest group and "maybe" the largest. Those opposed to the weapons felt keeping them sent the wrong nonproliferation message to neighbors considering nuclear weapon programs and undermined global disarmament efforts. Many in both the "yes" and "maybe" groups saw the weapons as affording Turkey "the luxury to ignore any Iranian threat." The "yes" group primarily saw the weapons as a symbolically vital "security blanket," and felt their removal would be a replay of the 1962 Jupiter missile withdrawal, demonstrating the United States' declining commitment to Turkey.<sup>62</sup> No one in the "yes" group felt that US strategic nuclear weapons would be a credible substitute for the tactical nuclear weapons on Turkey's territory, since military utility is not the source of their value to Turkey.

Overall, respondents supported Turkey's involvement in NATO missile defense, but none saw missile defense as a substitute for nuclear deterrence. Several called the two "complimentary," while others noted that missile defense is of limited utility since it will not protect all of Turkey's territory from an attack. There was a widespread view, among both people who strongly supported missile defense and those more ambivalent about it, that Turkey's participation in NATO missile defense is more a favor it is doing for NATO than the reverse. As one person put it, Turkey's decision to host the radars was its way of "showing it chooses NATO" over other strategic alignments.

November 2015 elections swept the AK Party back into single-party rule, potentially restoring a "business-as-usual" approach to foreign and security policy, particularly as concerns NATO. However, tensions remain high between Turkey and Russia, and ISIS attacks in France, Turkey, and other NATO countries are on the rise, indicating NATO may have a unique window of opportunity to bring members, including Turkey, together in greater solidarity against common threats.

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<sup>62</sup> US-Turkey tensions developed after the United States secretly pledged to withdraw Jupiter missiles as part of the grand bargain ending the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

## CONCLUSION

The emphasis in our interviews on conventional deterrence is salutary: clearly the Achilles's heel for the alliance is its relative conventional inferiority in certain subregions, such as the Baltic states, despite its perceived overall conventional superiority. Recent Russian military operations indicate that this perceived conventional superiority is diminishing rapidly. The argument for introducing additional US nuclear weapons to the European theater or moving current ones to new bases at this time appears both strategically unwise and politically impossible. Additionally, while nuclear deterrence may be effective in preventing or countering Russian territorial aggression, it can do little to mitigate the possibility of inadvertent escalation. This can be clearly seen on the alliance's southeastern borders, where existing NSNW deployments in Turkey have done nothing to prevent Russia from taking highly destabilizing actions in the region. These include regularly violating Turkey's air space and initiating a massive naval buildup in the Black Sea and eastern Mediterranean that could give Russia Anti-Access/Area Denial capabilities vis-à-vis NATO.<sup>63</sup> Tensions over these actions—and conflicts between Turkey and Russia over Syria—helped lead to the November 24, 2015, Turkish shoot-down of a Russian bomber.

NATO would be wise to couple a willingness—particularly on the part of the United States—to buttress its conventional deterrent with an openness to Russia's desire for a more integrated approach to arms control. Such an approach would not only involve nuclear arms control but also an effort to restore conventional arms control in Europe and examine related issues like conventional global strike systems and missile defense.<sup>64</sup>

Nonetheless, in the absence of progress on arms control, the belief in simply buttressing the conventional deterrent is misguided: the whole thrust of "hybrid warfare" is to avoid traditional conventional military conflict and use other, asymmetrical means to achieve political objectives. For Russia, one element of such warfare appears to be a greater willingness to use nuclear rhetoric and patrols by strategic and medium bombers to reinforce the credibility of its nuclear deterrent, should NATO choose to engage in a conventional confrontation. At the same time, while more conservative US critics are right about the need to sharpen NATO's ability to deter Russia from a conventional conflict,

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<sup>63</sup> Russia enjoys a maritime advantage over the United States in the Black Sea and associated Turkish Straits particularly; as a Black Sea nation, its military can operate more freely in both under the terms of the 1936 Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits Signed at Montreaux. "NATO Chief Says Alliance Must Counter Russia Military Build-Up," Agence France-Press, November 5, 2015, <[www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/11/05/nato-chief-says-alliance-must-counter-russia-military-build/75229052/](http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/11/05/nato-chief-says-alliance-must-counter-russia-military-build/75229052/)>.

<sup>64</sup> The conventional arms control regime in Europe broke down in the late 1990s amid efforts to update the regime with a new treaty that would account for the accession of several former Warsaw Pact members to NATO. The crisis in the regime deepened over the next decade, as Russia threatened to suspend implementation of the original CFE Treaty, including cooperation in treaty data exchanges, notifications, or inspections or abide by treaty limitations. The United States retaliated in 2011 by taking similar steps on military data and inspections. See Collina, "The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and the Adapted CFE Treaty at a Glance."

they are wrong about the kind of changes that are needed in the nuclear arena. What are needed are not changes in NATO's nuclear hardware, but rather in the software of nuclear signaling, crisis management, exercises, and policy.<sup>65</sup>

With a few notable exceptions, for instance, NATO and its non-US members have not sufficiently used strategic communications tools or international fora to chasten Moscow.<sup>66</sup> As Jacek Durkalec of the Polish Institute of International Affairs notes, NATO allies failed to take advantage of the 2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to shine an international spotlight on Russia's INF violations or other nuclear misdeeds. "Many nations sought to put pressure on NATO to continue to disarm or change its nuclear policy," Durkalec said. Very little attention was paid to the complete modernization of Russia's nuclear arsenal, the increased role of nuclear weapons in Russia's defense policy and war planning, or Russia's dangerous nuclear messaging.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, the lack of allies' involvement in nuclear matters could hurt prospects for achieving a consensus within NATO on appropriate nuclear policies in the lead-up to the Warsaw summit and beyond.

Similarly, NATO's response to Russian nuclear saber rattling has largely relied on unilateral US steps or bilateral measures, rather than alliance-wide activities. Such steps give the United States greater freedom of movement but also perhaps give Russia unjustified confidence that other allies may hesitate in supporting a US response.<sup>68</sup>

However, there does seem to be some recent evolution on the issue of exercises involving nuclear forces. Adam Thomson, the UK permanent representative to NATO, said that, since the end of the Cold War, the alliance "has done conventional exercising and nuclear exercising" but has not conducted exercises on "the transition from one to the other." "That is a recommendation that is being looked at" within the alliance, he said.<sup>69</sup>

More thinking is also needed about how to respond to Russia's planned deployments of dual-capable SLCMs permitted under the INF Treaty and potential deployments of INF-prohibited GLCMs.

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<sup>65</sup> See Jacek Durkalec, "Nuclear-Backed 'Little Green Men': Nuclear Messaging in the Ukraine Crisis," Polish Institute of International Affairs, July 2015, p. 28-38; Jacek Durkalec, "NATO must adapt to address Russia's nuclear brinkmanship, European Leadership Network," October 30, 2015, <[www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/nato-must-adapt-to-address-russias-nuclear-brinkmanship\\_3263.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/nato-must-adapt-to-address-russias-nuclear-brinkmanship_3263.html)>.

<sup>66</sup> One notable exception is the May 2015 remark by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in which he said "Russia's recent use of nuclear rhetoric, exercises, and operations are deeply troubling ... . Russia's nuclear saber rattling is unjustified, destabilizing and dangerous." Tellingly, perhaps, the remarks was delivered at a Washington, DC, think tank.

<sup>67</sup> Durkalec, "Nuclear-Backed 'Little Green Men'."

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p. 29

<sup>69</sup> Kingston Reif, "NATO Weighs Nuclear Exercises," *Arms Control Today*, November 2015, <[www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2015\\_11/News/NATO-Weighs-Nuclear-Exercises](http://www.armscontrol.org/ACT/2015_11/News/NATO-Weighs-Nuclear-Exercises)>. See also Katarzyna Kubiak and Oliver Meier, "Updating NATO's Nuclear Posture: Necessary? Feasible? Desirable?" European Leadership Network, November 12, 2015, <[www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/updates-natos-nuclear-posture-necessary-feasible-desirable\\_3312.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/updates-natos-nuclear-posture-necessary-feasible-desirable_3312.html)>.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Strengthen conventional deterrence to prevent Russian pressure, potential hybrid attacks, and escalation to the nuclear level.

- Complete and expand the Readiness Action Plan. Increase the scale of conventional deployments to the states bordering Russia from a company (150-200 soldiers) in each country to a battalion (800-1,000 soldiers). Given potential budget expenses and Russian reaction, such deployments should be persistent but not permanent, short of further Russian escalation in Ukraine or pressure on NATO.<sup>69</sup>
- Reinforce conventional deterrence on NATO's southeastern land and maritime borders. Increases to US 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet presence in the eastern Mediterranean should be maintained. NATO should ensure military exercises and strategic planning give adequate focus to all potential areas of escalation in the NATO-Russia relationship, including the Turkish and southeast maritime borders.
- Evaluate whether Aegis destroyer-based platforms provide adequate deterrence and reassurance value to allies such as Turkey. Examine whether allies view these platforms as interchangeable with the land-based Patriot systems.

### 2. Continue development and potential deployment of cruise missile defenses to counter Russia's deployment of long-range sea-launched missiles and potential deployment of ground-launched systems.

**3. Revise the alliance's 2010 Strategic Concept and consider revisiting the 2012 DDPR. The DDPR, as noted by Simon Lunn, former Secretary-General of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, was "not the thorough review some had hoped for."<sup>70</sup> It did, however, note the need for "planning guidance aligned with 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements." This need for "new guidelines to replace or reinforce the existing provisional guidelines that date from the Cold War period," has become even more pressing given the standoff with Russia. These documents could:**

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<sup>69</sup> News reports indicate that the United States is supporting persistent but not permanent deployments of a battalion in each country and placing the troops under NATO command, but that Germany is resisting the larger numbers. Julian Barnes, "NATO Looks at Stationing More Troops Along Eastern Flank," *Wall Street Journal*, Oct 28, 2015, <[www.wsj.com/articles/nato-looks-at-stationing-more-troops-along-eastern-flank-1446050987](http://www.wsj.com/articles/nato-looks-at-stationing-more-troops-along-eastern-flank-1446050987)>.

<sup>70</sup> Simon Lunn, "NATO," in Paolo Foradori ed., *Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Euro-Atlantic Security: The Future of NATO* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 107-24.

- Make clear that the alliance views Russia as having violated the conditions required for NATO to maintain the three “No’s” under the NATO-Russia Founding Act, leaving the alliance free to carry out changes in policy such as establishing permanent bases in states bordering Russia at a time of its choosing. However, pending additional Russian provocations, the alliance should make clear that it will continue adhering the Act’s terms for the time being, in hopes that Russia will return to the fold.
- Strengthen declaratory policy to further clarify the alliance’s willingness to use or threaten nuclear weapons in response to Russian nuclear attacks or threats.
- Condemn Russia’s violations of the INF Treaty publicly and in relevant diplomatic fora. Consult with NATO members and planned US responses should Russia deploy prohibited missiles and/or withdraw from the treaty. Publicize these discussions as a means of discouraging Russia from taking these steps.

#### 4. Continue reaching out to Russia on arms control.

- Attempt to initiate talks on arms control, confidence-building, and transparency measures, including those related to tactical nuclear weapons and nuclear-armed cruised missiles.<sup>71</sup> In the wake of the apparent ISIS downing of a Russian commercial aircraft on October 31, 2015, examine whether opportunities exist for improving communication and instituting confidence-building measures vis-à-vis anti-ISIS strikes in Syria. Recognize that, as Russia’s conventional capabilities improve, Moscow may become more open to a discussion of nuclear reductions both strategic and non-strategic. Keep the door open to such discussions.
- Recognize that Russia’s emerging conventional capability is potentially a greater threat to NATO than its nuclear assets and take advantage of a small window of five to seven years to revisit the notion of conventional arms control in Europe, starting with an expansion of confidence-building measures among members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which brings together 57 states including all the members of NATO and Russia.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> One early preparatory step toward building a transparency and monitoring regime is for the United States to pressure Russia to resume the exchange of data on nuclear-armed SLCMs that occurred under START I. Kingston Reif, “The Case Against a New Nuclear-Armed Cruise Missile,” *Issue Briefs*, Vol. 7, Issue 13 Arms Control Association, <[www.armscontrol.org/Issue-Briefs/2015-10-19/Overkill-The-Case-Against-a-New-Nuclear-Air-Launched-Cruise-Missile](http://www.armscontrol.org/Issue-Briefs/2015-10-19/Overkill-The-Case-Against-a-New-Nuclear-Air-Launched-Cruise-Missile)>.

<sup>72</sup> Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence and Security-Building Measures, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, November 30, 2011, <[www.osce.org/fsc/86597?download=true](http://www.osce.org/fsc/86597?download=true)>; Ariana Rowberry, “The Vienna Document, the Open

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- Absent such discussions at the official level, seek track-one-and-a-half or track-two discussions that could tee up a new US-Russian arms control dialogue after a new US president takes office in 2017.

### **5. Improve NATO messaging to Russia and to the international community about NATO policy and Russia's actions.**

- Use international fora such as the preparatory meetings for the 2020 NPT review conference to put Russia on notice about its nuclear behavior.

### **6. When appropriate, exercise more with nuclear scenarios in mind and contemplate additional nuclear shows of force, like the B52 overflights, to respond to Russian actions. Reinvigorate the Nuclear Planning Group, the senior body on nuclear matters in the alliance.<sup>73</sup>**

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Skies Treaty and the Ukraine Crisis," The Brookings Institution, April 10, 2014, <[www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/04/10-vienna-document-open-skies-ukraine-crisis-rowberry](http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/04/10-vienna-document-open-skies-ukraine-crisis-rowberry)>.

<sup>73</sup> While the North Atlantic Council is the ultimate authority within NATO, the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) acts as the senior body on nuclear matters within the alliance. The NPG discusses specific policy issues associated with nuclear forces and wider issues such as nuclear arms control and nuclear proliferation. All members, with the exception of France—which decided not to participate—are part of the NPG, irrespective of whether or not they maintain nuclear weapons.

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