

# NATO, the U.S. and Baltic Sea Security

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## Executive summary

In times of tension with Russia, security for the other Baltic Sea states is highly dependent on external allies. There is a tendency to highlight the importance of the United States in this regard. There is also a tendency to blur the distinction between the U.S. and NATO, hence obscuring the roles that each actor actually plays in the security of the region.

The overall purpose of this report is twofold; first it describes and analyzes how the developments of NATO, and the U.S. within NATO, affect the security of the Baltic Sea region. Secondly, the report seeks to provide a deeper understanding of respective roles and the dynamics between NATO and the United States as different sovereign bodies, still interlinked and dependent upon each other in providing security.

Since the end of the Cold War, the enlargement of NATO with the Baltic States and Poland, has raised its interest, role and stake in the Baltic Sea region. For the Alliance, having several members in the region, its security and stability is ultimately about the credibility of collective defense. NATO has also developed strong partnerships and interoperability with Sweden and Finland. Not only do these conditions imply that NATO will act in case of a threatening situation, but the Alliance, as a mainly regional organization, could also be expected to take on a more long-term and strategic approach to the challenges of the region.

By the time of the Russian aggression towards Ukraine, NATO was taken by surprise, and shaken at its fundamentals. Some strategic initiatives on how to view the Baltic Sea region as one military playing field have since then been taken by NATO, using the Enhanced Opportunities Program (EOP) with Sweden and Finland. It is suggested in this paper that these initiatives could be strengthened by the establishment of a Baltic Sea Commission as a framework for cooperation between NATO, Sweden and Finland.

For the United States, responding towards security threats in the Baltic Sea region is ultimately about the credibility of its global foreign policy and position as a superpower, in which NATO and its obligations is one of several American commitments around the world. Can the Baltic Sea region count on the United States in the future? Yes, the U.S. is not likely to opt out of the Baltics. However, due to its global agenda, the response is likely to be temporary and scalable in character.

The options of unilateral American or multilateral response in the region will continue to exist in parallel, as they have done in the past, but it is important to understand their fundamental inter-linkage. Nowadays, the U.S. is used to act fast, leaving slow starters behind if necessary, confident that they will come around. NATO has the infrastructure and processes to carry out operations for long.

With strained resources and broader global commitments, the United States would have to calculate its response carefully, and expectations on follow-up support from European allies would be substantial, in case of unilateral action at first.

American leadership within NATO is still obvious on the military side, but less apparent on the political. The Americans are less visible and do not lead the discussions in NATO's committees the firm way they used to during the Cold War. There is a widespread perception that America lacks a strategy on the European scale. This in turn implies that it would be too much to expect the U.S. to develop a strategic outlook for the sub-region of the Baltics. This clearly has to be driven by the regional actors themselves within the NATO framework. Despite the current threat level, the United States will need to be continuously alerted on the importance of its engagement in the area. If it is, American support could be expected.

## **About the author**

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## **Keywords**

NATO, the U.S., Baltic states, Baltic Sea, Baltics, security, defence, Russia, the EOP, Sweden, Finland, partnership

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## Introduction\*

In times of tension with Russia, security for the other Baltic Sea states is highly dependent on external allies. There is a tendency to highlight the importance of the United States in this regard. There is also a tendency to blur the distinction between the U.S. and NATO, hence obscuring the roles that each actor actually plays in the security of the region.

“I have got the word from the U.S. president so I can be sure”, Estonia’s Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas said at a conference in Tallinn in April 2015, responding to a question on whether NATO would evoke article 5 in the defense of the Baltics.<sup>1</sup>

In Sweden, the Social Democratic-Green government in the summer of 2015 took an initiative to deepen and increase defense cooperation with the United States, based partly on an assumption among leading Social Democrats that NATO will be (too) slow to act in case of a crisis in the Baltic Sea region, and that bilateral arrangements with the United States are the most crucial for Sweden’s security.<sup>2</sup>

The Russian annexation of Crimea in early March 2014 happened after a period in which the American interest and involvement in Europe had been decreasing for some years due to the war on terror and the growing importance of Asia. NATO had after the Cold War been confronted with the option of either ‘go out of area or go out of business’ and had settled for the former, transforming itself and its force structure to expeditionary missions far away from NATO territory, while European members took the opportunity to further reduce defense spending in what appeared as peaceful times on the continent. Lately, questions marks have been raised with regard to the strength both of the U.S. and NATO. Geopolitical scholars such as George Friedman have argued that Russia is strong, because the U.S. and Europe are weak.

The overall purpose of this report is twofold; first it describes and analyzes how the developments of NATO, and the U.S. within NATO, affect the security of the Baltic Sea region. The starting point for the analysis is the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and how the actors have responded to the Russian threat. Secondly, the report seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the respective roles and dynamics between NATO and the United States as different sovereign bodies, still interlinked and dependent upon each other in providing security.

The report consists of four parts which all feed into the concluding remarks and some reflections from a Swedish perspective. The first part gives an overview of the engagement of NATO and the United States in the Baltic Sea region. The second part examines the development of NATO since the end of the Cold War, while the third part takes a closer look at the United States, its resources and mostly, its leadership within the Alliance. The fourth

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part consists of case study, mapping the response of NATO and the U.S. to the Russian threat which arose in 2014.

In order to provide the above descriptions and analysis, the author relies upon a combination of interviews conducted in Belgium and the United Kingdom during 2015 with NATO officials, both political and military, and NATO diplomats from various countries, as well as official documentation and reports, research analyses and newspaper articles. Lectures given during the Georgetown Leadership Seminar in Washington D.C. in October 2015 also gave valuable insights. The author is grateful to the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm for the nomination and financial support to attend the seminar.

## **The security in the Baltic Sea Region**

NATO can be understood in two ways in the Baltic Sea context: as a political and military multilateral actor in itself, and as the framework for cooperation that the superpower United States uses as a platform for involvement in the region. In the former case, NATO, before the illegal annexation of Crimea, did not focus on the Baltic Sea region as a strategic military area, but it did pay attention when incidents occurred that affected its allies, such as the Russian cyber-attack on Estonia in 2007.<sup>3</sup> In the latter case, there is a direct link between the Alliance and the role of the U.S. in the world:

Even if the Baltic Sea region has never been a high-priority area in U.S. geo-strategy, the superstructure of NATO ties the U.S. to its stability to such a large degree that, should the U.S. fail to protect its allies in the area, the whole credibility of its foreign policy and strategy would collapse. Even if the Baltic Sea region is not of direct importance to the U.S., it cannot afford to stand on the sidelines.<sup>4</sup>

The U.S. policy toward the Baltic region during the Cold War days was built on containment of Soviet power, by strengthening allies and neutral countries such as Sweden and Finland, both openly and behind the scenes.<sup>5</sup> In the Reagan era, the focus was not on the Baltic region per se, but rather on the countries along the borders of the Eastern Bloc.<sup>6</sup> After the fall of the Berlin wall and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in 1993-1994, the U.S. was eager to increase its own influence, if not actual presence, in the Baltic region. Instead, the NATO framework was used. The Partnership for Peace (PfP) program was introduced as a first step towards membership in the Alliance. President Clinton stated that no democracy “in the region should ever be consigned to a grey area or a buffer zone.”<sup>7</sup>

After the Baltic states joined NATO in 2004 and the war on terrorism intensified in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Baltic region was considered one of the most peaceful spots of the world and, in practice, left alone by the U.S., as part of its general pattern towards the region, in which the scale of engagement can vary greatly. The NATO exercise Steadfast Jazz in fall 2013, which was to signal strategic reassurance to the Baltic States and Poland and shed light on the new NATO Response Force (NRF), only attracted an American participation with 160 troops, compared to France 1,200 and Poland 1,040. It was a sign not only of Washington’s reduced defense budget, but also of its assessment of low tensions in the region.<sup>8</sup>

In times of tension, the Baltic Sea region is spotlighted by the United States, but only temporarily. While the region is too small for the global superpower to focus fully on, it never completely leaves it either. As Russia now seems determined to undermine the global role of the United States and the unipolar system by exploiting weaknesses and deepening the split among the democracies of the West, the Baltic Sea region becomes central in a larger strategic contest.<sup>9</sup> However, the drastic change of scene and American presence in the region following Crimea has not altered the fact that the overall U.S. defense and security policy toward the region tends to be ad-hoc.<sup>10</sup>

For NATO, as mainly a regional trans-Atlantic organization, expectations of a security strategy for the area would seem more likely and appropriate. Up until the annexation of Crimea, NATO's involvement during the past decade had focused on transparency and confidence building activities in the Baltic Sea region, including submarine search and rescue exercises open to all NATO partners, as well as scientific research on mine disposal and handling of dangerous chemicals in the sea. In the period immediately prior to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, NATO was negotiating a large program with Russia to destroy outdated and unstable munitions in Kaliningrad.<sup>11</sup>

## **The development of NATO - strengths and weaknesses**

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO focused on enlargement, on international peace missions and on building partnerships with non-member states, shaping what was often called the "new" NATO. The result of the "new" NATO is of interest to the Baltic Sea region from all these perspectives.

**Enlargement.** The Alliance grew with twelve new members, including the Baltic States and Poland. This contributed to its strength in terms of troops and capabilities, by removing the risk of security vacuums in parts of Europe and widening the scope of the transatlantic security community. On the other hand, the new members, once part of the Eastern bloc, are now the countries who perceive themselves as most vulnerable with regard to Russia, which constitutes a dilemma for the Alliance. On the territory of new members there are no NATO structures established until recently, nor any permanent troops or nuclear weapons, in accordance with the NATO-Russian Founding Act of 1997.<sup>12</sup> How to strengthen NATO presence in the new members is a major issue for the next NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016.

**International peace missions.** After the Cold War, NATO gradually became more operative. Through international out-of-area missions in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Libya, NATO tested its planning, decision-making, command and control, troops and interoperability in real combat situations. On a tactical and operational level this most certainly improved NATO military's ability to fight alongside each other. In addition, compared to Russia, NATO is by far superior when it comes to conventional forces. Nevertheless, as the decisions on the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) are being transformed into

military planning, it has become increasingly apparent that the re-structuring and experience of expeditionary forces in peace missions has limited value for territorial defense. Different planning, capabilities, force structure and more soldiers are needed. Readiness requirements are challenged by hurdles such as legislative green light to move troops and arms fast across territorial borders, and delegated authority to the military in order to act fast. Additional issues include how to connect conventional with nuclear forces, and how to respond to hybrid threats, including information warfare and cyber-attacks. Last but not least, the build-up of Russian anti access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities in Kaliningrad, Crimea, the Arctic and Eastern Mediterranean have lately altered NATO's view on both permanent troops and pre-position of heavy equipment in the Eastern flank.<sup>13</sup>

**Partnerships.** NATO forged a broad network of partnerships with countries to conduct peace operations, support reform and stabilization, and provide the forum for consultations to build trust and meet common challenges together.<sup>14</sup> In this light, Sweden and Finland became gold partners and as interoperable as most alliance members. In the past year, cooperation between NATO, Sweden and Finland has developed substantially with a focus on the Baltic Sea region within the Enhanced Opportunity Program (EOP). As for the value of partnerships, a main question ahead is whether there is a role for partners in collective defense, and if yes, how to develop a concept of 'plug in, but no guarantees', that fits both the structure of the Alliance, and the national structures of partners, and serves the interest of both.

### **Defense spending causes transatlantic cleavage**

With the worsened security situation in Europe caused by the Russian annexation of Crimea, NATO has started its largest adaptation process since the end of the Cold War. The core challenge in which NATO's strength is measured has once again turned towards collective defense and to deter Russia, a task that it had not paid attention to for many years when the Ukraine war started. As a senior NATO official put it after the Wales Summit: "NATO has muscle memory and is back at the gym". Nevertheless, in order to build muscles, both time and resources must be invested.

In recent years, there has been an ongoing debate on the strength of NATO in which its vocal military critics have argued that NATO is "unwilling, unable and unready".<sup>15</sup> A fundamental challenge to the Alliance is that European military manpower, defense spending and investment are lagging behind due to post -cold war priorities to other sectors and the financial crisis. In 2011, outgoing Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned:

If current trends in the decline of European defense capabilities are not halted and reversed, future U.S. political leaders...may not consider the return of America's investment in NATO worth the cost.<sup>16</sup>

By 2013, the traditional burden sharing of approximately 50-50 between the U.S. on one hand, and European allies and Canada on the other, had shifted to 73-27.<sup>17</sup>



Some signs of increasing European commitment are there. In creating the new spearhead force, the so called VJTF (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force), seven European nations (Germany, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy, Poland and Turkey) have raised their hands to assume rotational responsibility and leadership for the brigade-size unit, while the United States will provide ‘enabling resources’ such as strategic airlift. Four nations would have been enough to keep the VJTF concept going, which implies a political will among European allies to contribute. The U.S. policy has been to wait in order to encourage other members to ramp up their efforts, hence not confirming enabling resources until a solid commitment was there from European allies, and similarly, coming forward with pre-positioning of heavy equipment in the Eastern flank only after Europe had made progress on the VJTF.<sup>18</sup>

During 2015, several governments, not least Germany, decided to stop decreasing defense expenditure and are now starting to turn the curve upwards. At the NATO summit in Wales in September 2014, members agreed to commit 2% of GDP on defense spending by 2024. But the appetite to invest in defense is still limited among the Europeans.<sup>19</sup> It will be considered a success if the trend of decreasing defense spending is stopped and starting to reverse by the next NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016.

## **The role of the United States in NATO**

The role of the United States in NATO is vital in examining the strength of the Alliance, both in terms of resources and leadership. The transatlantic community was formed on the premise that American and European security is indivisible. The U.S. as the guarantor for European security has been the backbone, while NATO has been the concrete expression, for that premise since its foundation in 1949.

For the United States, NATO is a central component to pursue the U.S.-led international order based on universal values and free trade, aiming at promoting peace, security and opportunity while preserving the status of the United States as the superpower of the world. On a more practical level, NATO is an instrument to deal efficiently with European Affairs, always shadowed by the question once posed by the American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in the 1970’s: Who do I call if I want to call Europe?

In the latest National Security Strategy from 2015, the Obama administration describes NATO as “the world’s preeminent multilateral alliance, reinforced by the historic close ties we have with the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, and Canada.” Furthermore, NATO “is the hub of an expanding global security network.” The document also clearly signals the American will to resolve, perhaps as a reaction to the on-going debate on the subject:

Our Article 5 commitment to the collective defense of all NATO Members is ironclad, as is our commitment to ensuring the Alliance remains ready and capable for crisis response and cooperative security.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the tendency is downwards both when it comes to American military resources and political leadership in NATO.

While the United States has been taking on a larger share of NATO defense budget, America too has made cuts in its own, and does not have the same military outreach capability as before, making the need to prioritize more urgent.<sup>21</sup> Permanent American manpower and bases in Europe have been drastically reduced and resources have to some extent also been shifted from Europe to Asia.<sup>22</sup> Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, commanding general of United States Army Europe, has repeatedly described the current situation as follows:

We used to have 300,000 Soldiers in Europe and the mission then was to deter the Soviet Union. We have 30,000 Soldiers in Europe now and the mission is to deter Russia -- ten times more space, but with about 10 percent of the troops. So, our task is to make 30,000 look and feel like 300,000.<sup>23</sup>

On leadership, it is clear that the U.S. role is shifting in world politics. America is still the only superpower, but generally described as to be in decline: economically, military and influentially. Its hesitation to act in Syria, where the 'red line' president Obama had drawn was crossed without retaliation, was perceived a sign of a less self confident hegemon, that has to deal with rising state rivals such as China and Russia, and non-state actors such as ISIS/Daesh and Al-Qaida; actors who resent the Western values and balance of power upon which the present global order has been built. As this order constitutes a core American power instrument, it causes problems for NATO as well, not least when it comes to leadership. The importance of American leadership continues to be underlined by the Obama administration:

Any successful strategy to ensure the safety of the American people and advance our national security interests must begin with an undeniable truth—America must lead. (...) The question is never whether America should lead, but how we lead.<sup>24</sup>

However, the leadership is increasingly met with suspicion, and even rejection, on the international arena. There is a growing feeling in American diplomacy that the U.S. needs to engage in new ways.<sup>25</sup> America "has lost a lot of popularity", as a senior U.S. diplomat puts it.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. is applying methods that do not succeed, or giving proposals to smaller actors that are rejected in favor of others made by powers such as Russia or China.<sup>27</sup>

According to former Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, the United States tends to be unilateral in its action and thinking, in a time when it cannot dictate the rules. Instead, the U.S. could spend more time on building coalitions of common interests in the few areas where there is potential for constructive cooperation.<sup>28</sup> As another senior U.S. diplomat points out: "In the Cold War, we spent more time talking to allies where we wanted to go, which was helpful to avoid making mistakes."<sup>29</sup>

The strong wording on the importance of NATO in the National Security Strategy is not quite matched by actual behavior. As Europe has not been at the top of President Obama's international agenda during his presidency, it has been argued that United States has become

“more of a partner than a power” in Europe.<sup>30</sup> In NATO, it seems apparent that the American political role in the past years has been less articulate and decisive than what the organization has been traditionally used to.<sup>31</sup>

As a matter of fact, not even the Russian aggression in Ukraine changed the feeling within NATO Headquarters that the U.S. NATO delegation had to work hard to get high-level attention for the issues in Washington DC. That President Obama did not meet with the new Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, at his first visit to the U.S. in March 2015, despite being in town at the time, was seen as symptomatic by NATO diplomats from other nations.

According to both NATO officials and NATO member diplomats, the Americans do not lead the discussions in NATO’s committees the firm way they used to during the Cold War. Some regard it as fair, since NATO has grown so much and the Americans still deliver military result such as in Afghanistan, on RAP and on assurance measures in the Baltics, while others call for an American political agenda and engagement. One NATO member diplomat wishes for more and deeper committee discussions and describes how the Americans do not seem to have the patience to pursue a dialogue among the members. Instead, they act unilaterally and then try to fit actions into the NATO framework, which makes the Alliance’s approach more fragmented. Germany and France are mentioned as more of multilateral driving forces these days than the U.S..<sup>32</sup>

An American diplomat describes the American approach by using the response to the Russian aggression in Ukraine as a reference:

We understood that we have to go first. We have this role to play and we do not want to give it up. We are leaders and we have the resources. That is not a big frustration with us. Get something there and the Alliance will follow.<sup>33</sup>

On the political agenda, the U.S. seems to be supportive rather than a prime driver, as for instance the enlargement of the Alliance with Montenegro, in contrast to the earlier enlargements rounds that were driven by the Americans. As for Baltic Sea security and the involvement of Sweden and Finland in this regard, the Americans are engaged and put priority into the issue, but concrete proposals for deeper collaboration come from other countries.

## **NATO and U.S. action after the Russian annexation of Crimea**

In order to shed light over the interest, response and resolve of NATO and the U.S. respectively, to possible security threats in the Baltic Sea region, it is of interest to study how they acted with regard to Russia in 2014. Even though the annexation of Crimea did not spur article 5, it did start a broad range of collective defense measures. Using the Russian annexation of Crimea as a starting point for a case study, the military and political responses to the Russian threat by NATO and the U.S. will therefore be examined.

The course of events of the Russian annexation of Crimea went very fast. Vladimir Putin has claimed that he ordered work on "returning Crimea" to begin at an all-night meeting on 22 February 2014.<sup>34</sup> On February 27, unidentified troops seized the building of the Supreme Council of Crimea and the government building in Simferopol. By March 2, Russian troops exercised complete control over the Crimean Peninsula, though President Putin denied the nationality of the troops until April 17, 2014. By March 6, the Supreme Council of Crimea set the 'referendum' date to March 16, while the EU and the U.S. threatened with sanctions if Russia would pursue to carry it through.

### **Short-term military response**

NATO was taken by surprise by the Russian ability to quickly mobilize troops for the vast 'exercise' that preceded the invasion of Ukraine. Two dimensions had to be considered: what to do to support Ukraine, and what to do to assure the security of members by the Eastern border. Military, NATO clearly prioritized the latter, as the 'red line' between membership and non-membership in the Alliance became brutally clear for Ukraine. Defence measures did not apply to partners, not even close ones. Instead, in the balance between resolve and not increasing tensions, the Alliance settled for some rather modest deterrence measures and show of force on its territory.

The United States acted first. On March 6, the U.S. announced that it would send six additional F-15 fighter jets to step up NATO's Air Police Mission over the Baltic States, which it had assumed responsibility for on a rotational basis in January. To reach out to the Poles, the U.S. decided on March 11 to expand aviation training in Poland with a dozen F-16, 300 service personnel and three transport planes.<sup>35</sup> In the beginning of April, as the Russian aggression in Ukraine had moved on to the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, the U.S. sent a guided-missile destroyer, the USS Donald-Cook, into the Black Sea.<sup>36</sup> The next qualitative step in American support came a couple of weeks later, when the Pentagon announced that it would deploy about 600 troops in Poland and the Baltics on a series of exercises due to last "at least through the end of the year".<sup>37</sup>

France and United Kingdom followed the United States. On March 21, France offered to send four fighter jets to the Baltics and Poland, and to ensure AWACS patrols from France around twice a week if asked by NATO.<sup>38</sup> The fighter jets landed in Malbork, Poland on April 28, from where they would help guard Baltic airspace, while at the same time, United Kingdom, who had participated as part of the NATO AWACS force since March 10, sent four British Typhoon jets to Lithuania, also as part of the Baltic Air police Mission.

Another ally at the forefront of strengthening Baltic security was Denmark, who on March 26 decided to send six fighter jets to help patrol the Baltic airspace. The engagement of Denmark is noteworthy. Since the Russian aggression in Ukraine, Denmark has played a key role in Baltic Sea security.<sup>39</sup> Germany followed shortly after, stating on March 29 that it was ready to send up to six air force planes and a navy vessel to the Baltics.<sup>40</sup>

NATO has few forces of its own at hand, but one is the AWACS force, which was activated as a first measure by the NAC on March 10, to overfly Poland and Romania as part of its efforts to monitor the crisis in neighboring Ukraine.<sup>41</sup> On April, 1, NATO foreign ministers directed SACEUR General Breedlove to develop a plan to strengthen the Alliance's military ties with its Eastern European members by mid-April. Since the general is double-hatted, Breedlove simultaneously got the task to do the bilateral planning for the U.S..<sup>42</sup>

On 16 April 2014, the NAC agreed on further military measures to reinforce collective defense, including tripling NATO's Air Policing posture in the Baltic region with allied contributions from the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Poland and further offers from Germany and Canada; enhancing maritime situational awareness by deploying allied warships to the Baltic Sea from Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium and Estonia, as well as daily AWACS surveillance missions over Poland and Romania. In addition, soldiers from individual allied countries would train and exercise together in the region, in order to enhance readiness and show their commitment. NATO defense plans would be "reviewed and reinforced".<sup>43</sup>

### **Assurance and adaptation measures**

NATO has divided its measures after the Russian aggression in Ukraine into assurance and adaptation measures. The foundation of the adaptation measures, aimed at increasing NATO's responsiveness and readiness to the new security situation in Europe, was laid at the Wales summit in September 2014 with the RAP and further refined by a range of decisions at the defense ministerial meeting in February 2015. For Baltic Sea security, the most obvious permanent shift has been the establishment of NATO infrastructure in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland through the multinational command and control elements – the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs). Their tasks are to facilitate the rapid deployment of allied forces to the region; support collective defense planning; and assist in the coordination of multinational training and exercises.

The U.S. commitment to reassure European allies and bolster capacity of partners comes under the umbrella of Operation Atlantic Resolve, including the European Reassurance Initiative which provides and extra funding of \$1 billion to the European command, as well as a continuous exercising of rotational troops not only in the Baltics and Poland, but lately also expanded to Rumania and Bulgaria. As one of his first initiatives after taking office, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter announced in the summer of 2015 plans to pre-position tanks, artillery and other military equipment. Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, as well as Bulgaria, Romania and Poland, had agreed to host the arms and heavy equipment. Some of the weaponry would also be located in Germany.<sup>44</sup>

By fall 2015, NATO staff on both the political and military side of the organization tended to agree that the U.S. had delivered substantial military results, though there was room to improve coordination with the NATO military structure, both with regard to resources and

exercises.<sup>45</sup> In the longer term though, question marks remained regarding American adaptation measures to re-engage in Europe. Congress was reluctant to put even more resources on the European continent while the Europeans themselves do so little. The recent request by the Pentagon to support the European Reassurance Initiative with \$3.4 billion in 2017, quadrupling the fiscal 2016 amount, is therefore central for the future direction. The increase aims to fund more rotational U.S. forces in Europe, more training and exercising with allies, and more prepositioned fighting gear and supporting infrastructure.<sup>46</sup>

### **The Baltic Sea as one military strategic area**

The American rotational troops in the Baltics will be there “for as long as necessary”, but within NATO there is a growing realization that assurance measures are not equivalent to sufficient long-term deterrence measures.

NATO has realized that the Baltic Sea region must be viewed as one military strategic area. With the short distances involved, in combination with the long range of today's weapons systems, and modern society's vulnerability, not least in terms of IT systems and energy flows, mutual dependency is great. To these considerations, the speed by which modern crises and wars occur must be added, as well as the complications provided by hybrid warfare in assessing threats and identifying aggressors.<sup>47</sup>

In the Baltic Sea region, the challenge to NATO is quite extensive. Russia has local military superiority of conventional forces, and has, through exercises and the war in Ukraine, illustrated its capacity to quickly mobilize vast troops. In contrast to NATO allies, Russia has also modernized its tactical nuclear weapons and integrated them into the Russian concept of warfare, exercising their use in scenarios towards Warsaw and indicating, but not confirming, their existence in Kaliningrad.<sup>48</sup> In the past year, NATO has come to realize that Russia successfully has built anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities in the region.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, the risk of hybrid warfare below the article 5 threshold remains high, since it would enable Russia to provoke and challenge the Alliance without having to face a full scale war. NATO responses to hybrid threats when it comes to capabilities, procedures, standards and interoperability are still rudimentary, as the hybrid strategy adopted by Foreign Ministers in December 2015 has not yet been implemented, and the necessary coordination with the EU is lagging behind.

The question of permanent troops - and the size of those troops - in the Baltic States is central in this regard. While SACEUR already in spring 2014 opened up for the possibility of permanent NATO military presence in allied countries bordering Russia, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel was at that time, and has remained, firmly against, arguing that it would be a “huge mistake”.<sup>50</sup> There are a number of reasons for this, including wariness of escalating tensions with Russia to much, not risking cohesion in NATO where some countries still see permanent troops as incompatible with the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, budgetary constraints and the growing demand for U.S. forces in other regions of the world, as well as the unwillingness of European states to invest in defense, which tends to ‘de-motivate’

Congress. Hence, the U.S. has so far been reluctant to push for a new agreement on permanent forces in the Eastern flank.<sup>51</sup>

The quick reinforcement of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania by the United States after Crimea were much appreciated by the Baltic States. It was important not least for the public opinion in the countries; to support a belief that they would be defended by allies if necessary; that this time, in contrast to World War II, they would be “on the right side of history”.<sup>52</sup> But as time passed, the feeling grew that the deterrence response had to be more rational and based on facts on the ground, rather than symbolic action.

In May 2015, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania sent a letter to SACEUR formally asking NATO to deploy a brigade-size unit so that every Baltic nation would have a battalion. The Baltic States were to seek "permanent rotational NATO forces" as a "deterrence measure given the security situation in the region".<sup>53</sup>

Since the decision at the Wales Summit to settle for rotational troop presence, the Russian response has been to increase its A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad to the extent that NATO now has to review its strategy. Secretary Jens Stoltenberg, during a visit to Sweden in November 2015, expressed concern about the Russian build up in Kaliningrad with heavy weapon systems including advanced missiles, air defense, and submarines, aimed at stopping NATO from sending reinforcements to the Baltics Sea region.<sup>54</sup>

In October 2015, the United Kingdom announced that it would send 100 troops to the Baltics as part of the rotational presence there alongside the Americans.<sup>55</sup>

Currently, planning is proceeding in NATO to redefine the concept of ‘permanent’ troops, to put the troops under NATO command and to increase the size of each unit. Under one plan, NATO would have a battalion in Poland and each of the three Baltic states—roughly 800 to 1,000 soldiers in each unit.<sup>56</sup> As the defense ministers on February 10 2016 agreed upon a “multinational, rotational, enhanced forward presence” in the eastern part of the Alliance, it remains for the military authorities to suggest size and composition of such a presence in time for the Warsaw summit.<sup>57</sup> In parallel, the Pentagon is reviewing and updating its contingency plans in the Baltics, including options to act with NATO or unilaterally, concerned about the fact that during the war games conducted on the area, the U.S. is losing to Russia.<sup>58</sup>

## **Political responses to the Russian aggression in Ukraine**

When Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, Poland felt the need to underline the seriousness of the situation by calling for article 4 consultations, sensing that other European allies were not as concerned about what happened as they ought to be. At the meeting in the NAC on March 2, some members were questioning whether those little green men actually were Russians.<sup>59</sup> AFP reported that an anonymous diplomat from one of the larger members said; “No one seriously believes there will be a military response”.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, that did not prevent NATO from taking action on its relationship with Russia. On March 5, NATO met with Russia in the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) to discuss the crisis, but the continued escalation by Russia put an end to further meetings. On 16 March, the Alliance took immediate steps in terms of its relations with Russia, as a consequence of the illegal referendum on Crimea. NATO suspended the planning for its first NATO-Russia joint mission in Syria and put the entire range of NATO-Russia cooperation under review.

The United States acted unilaterally before NATO on its military relation with Russia. Already by March 3, the United States had suspended all military cooperation with Russia in protest over events in Ukraine, calling off planned exercises, training and exchanges.<sup>61</sup>

On April 1, NATO foreign ministers decided to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia, but to maintain political contacts at the level of ambassadors and above, to allow NATO and Russia to exchange views, first and foremost on the crisis.<sup>62</sup> One NATO member diplomat reflected that when NATO suspended its military cooperation, it was the first time for many countries to realize the broad and deep extent of the cooperation with Russia that NATO had developed within the context of “strategic partnership”.<sup>63</sup>

Starting with the Wales Summit in September 2014, NATO has furthermore managed to agree on a range of major decisions to prepare the Alliance for collective defense and hybrid warfare aimed at meeting a potential threat from Russia; measures that will fundamentally transform the alliance in the years ahead.

### **How to deal with the Russian threat?**

The issue of Russia poses a big challenge to the Alliance. The enlargement of NATO has made the group of members not only bigger, but more dispersed in terms of geography, history and vulnerabilities. While the practical, and most of the political, cooperation with Russia remains “in the freezer”<sup>64</sup>, there are still big differences among members on how to assess the Russian threat, and on what measures should be taken to deal with it. Is the Russian aggression temporary or is it a strategic shift? How should NATO proceed with communication channels with Russia? Does NATO risk provoking Russia and making the situation worse by placing permanent troops near its borders? Is not the real threat coming from the South, with ISIS/Daesh, terrorism, migration and failing states?<sup>65</sup>

The United States is not coming out as a leader in these discussions, through the interviews conducted for this study. Rather Poland, in its role as host for the next NATO summit in July 2016, has been pushing and gotten support for a two step-process in which first the Russian behavior would be assessed, and then, the appropriate response to this behavior would be discussed. To spark off the discussion in the political committee, the United Kingdom initiated a get-away-day with researchers in September 2015. By the foreign ministerial meeting in December, a report had been drafted regarding the assessment of Russia, but no decisions were taken on the issue.<sup>66</sup>



As the discussion rages, Russia is actively using its propaganda machinery to fragment allies and sow seeds of hesitation. Russian speaking minorities in former Soviet Union countries or satellite states are particular targets of such attempts. But Russia is also reaching out to political parties on the extreme right side, such as Front National in France, and to anti-American forces on the left in Europe, which also can pose a threat to European coherence on how to respond to Russian behavior in the future.<sup>67</sup>

There is an often repeated worry among both scholars and practitioners that if put to test, NATO would lack the consensus needed in order to react to a threat, especially if it were below the article 5 threshold. Others argue that this is a theoretical discussion which was alive already during the Cold War, and that it has more to do with an open debate climate among democracies, rather than the actual will to stand up for an ally in case of a real crisis.

An American diplomat assesses that since the Russian annexation of Crimea, there is a shared commitment present in the NAC, despite quite different views among the European members on how to deal with Russia. During this time there has been no real undermining of coherence. In all, resilience seems to be “pretty strong” among allies.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusions

Since the end of the Cold War, the enlargement of NATO with the Baltic States and Poland has raised its interest, role and stake in the Baltic Sea region. For NATO, having several members in the region, its security and stability is ultimately about the credibility of collective defense and article 5. Not only does it imply that NATO will act in case of a threatening situation, but the Alliance could also be expected to take on a more long-term and strategic approach to the challenges of the region.

However, the long-lasting peaceful setting left the region out of focus for NATO and halted a strategic overview, despite the fact that the Baltic States gained contingency plans in 2011.<sup>69</sup> By the time of the Russian aggression towards Ukraine, NATO was taken by surprise, and shaken at its fundamentals. Although NATO reacted quickly both with military and political means, it took the Alliance more than half a year to take a strategic grip on the Baltic Sea region and to face the ‘new normal’ of increased Russian assertiveness and military activities.

In adapting to the Russian threat, NATO is in a situation when a broader group of members with different interests need to agree than during the Cold War, while the United States is exerting less of visible political leadership than before. It slows NATO down in three main ways: it makes it more difficult to agree on the strategic compass, it decreases the pace of military and hybrid transformation aiming at making NATO able to “respond with great speed and tremendous power to any kind of attack”<sup>70</sup> and it prolongs the political decision making process, in an era where developments tend to proceed extremely fast. Given these difficulties, NATO is still showing political cohesion enough to move forward.

With a new NATO-Russia strategy that can guide the military and political action in a coherent manner and a continued focus on the region in coming years, there will eventually be solid NATO structures, covering both conventional and hybrid warfare, which would contribute to the security of the Baltic Sea states. The dilemma is that while NATO is likely to improve to a sufficient level in the long term, a revisionist and externally aggressive Russia, poses a short-term threat to the Alliance.

The partnerships that were a pillar of the “new” NATO developed in the post-Cold War era for cooperation in international peace missions, are of particular interest in the region as well, where Sweden and Finland are as interoperable as most NATO members. Some strategic initiatives on how to view the Baltic Sea region as one military playing field, given ‘a new normal’, have been taken within the EOP with Sweden and Finland, looking at areas of cooperation such as the exchange of situational awareness in the region, the exchange of information about hybrid warfare, connection with NRF and coordination of training and exercises in the region.<sup>71</sup> To maintain and further develop military and political interoperability, in combination with the Host Nation Support agreements signed between NATO and Sweden and Finland respectively, is obviously of value for security cooperation and the combined threshold level in the region.

For the United States, responding towards security threats in the Baltic Sea region is ultimately about the credibility of its global foreign policy and position as a superpower, in which NATO and its obligations is one of several American commitments around the world.

As illustrated by the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea, the United States will act for the sake of its allies in the region. The degree of engagement can be expected to depend upon the perceived threat level, and last for as long as necessary given the ultimate objective.

Nowadays, the U.S. is used to act fast, leaving slow starters behind if necessary, confident that they will come around.<sup>72</sup> That is exactly what happened in March 2014 in response to Crimea. On supporting security in the Baltics, the U.S. was the first to act, and it did it on its own, rather than to wait for NATO allies to come along.

American leadership within NATO is still obvious on the military side, not least on assurance measures. American military response to the increased threat perception on the European continent has been substantial. At the same time, while the quick response was much appreciated by the Baltic States, the United States has so far resented their quest for permanent troops on their ground. As suggested by SACEUR, more could have been done early on, but the Obama administration tended to be precautious in its response.

“We are reconnecting to Europe”, as a senior American diplomat put it.<sup>73</sup> However, it is obvious that there is a clear difference between military and political engagement. The Americans do not lead the discussions in NATO’s committees the firm way they used to during the Cold War. There is a lack of American strategy of how the “reconnecting” should evolve and how it fits into the bigger picture of restructuring European security to encompass

the new circumstances of instability and unpredictability.

When it comes to Baltic Sea security and the involvement of Sweden and Finland in this regard, the Americans are committed and engaged and apparently willing to put priority into the issue. Hence, the vagueness that characterizes American political direction in NATO is less noticeable in the regional perspective. At the same time, the lack of strategy on the European scale implies that it would be too much to expect the Americans to develop a strategic outlook for the sub-region of the Baltics. This clearly has to be driven by the regional actors themselves within the NATO framework. Despite the current threat level the United States will need to be continuously alerted on the importance of its engagement in the area. If it is, continued American support could be expected.

Can the Baltic Sea region count on the United States in the future? Yes, the U.S. is not likely to opt out of the Baltics. While the region is too small for the global superpower to focus fully on, it never completely leaves it either.

However, due to its global agenda, the response is likely to be temporary and scalable in character. In addition, with strained resources and broader global commitments than before, the United States would have to calculate its response carefully, and expectations on follow-up support from European allies would be substantial, in case of unilateral action at first.

## **Reflections from a Swedish perspective**

Among the Swedish public the belief in and support for fast external assistance in case of an armed attack against Sweden is still strong, despite the fact that the Americans have been very clear that there is no such planning, nor preparations anymore, as did exist during the Cold War.<sup>74</sup>

When it comes to assistance, the global scope of the United States must be taken into account. The “superstructure” of NATO ties the U.S. to its stability to such a large degree that, should the U.S. fail to protect its allies in the area, the whole credibility of its foreign policy and strategy would collapse. It would send a signal of doubt to other allies, in other parts of the world, that their American security guarantees lack credibility, hence increasing the risk of a military build-up to compensate for the perceived security deficit. Since Finland or Sweden are military non-aligned, their protection is not a matter of credibility in this regard, and therefore not of ultimate importance to the United States.

An often repeated message from diplomats around the Baltic Sea is that non-members will not have priority over allies in a situation of crisis or war.<sup>75</sup> This does not exclude the possibility that Sweden would be assisted in such a situation anyway. However, the considerations by the U.S. or NATO would rather be made for Sweden as part of a bigger playing field in the defense of the Alliance, than for Sweden as such.

A number of allies in the region have bilateral reassurance arrangements with the United States, such as Norway and Poland. Those are added on the commitments implied by the Alliance, using NATO as the fundamental “platform”. There have been positive signals in Washington D.C. on the so called “Hultqvist doctrine”, in which Sweden also seeks deepened American cooperation as part of reassurance measures, while remaining outside of NATO, while in the NATO Headquarters, the American message has rather been, that “if you want to deepen relations with the U.S., develop your ties to NATO”.<sup>76</sup>

The recent realization by the U.S. and NATO on the difficulty of defending the Baltic States given the Russian A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad, makes the access to Swedish territory, not least airspace, interesting. Though Swedish-American cooperation is on its way to be extended in a range of areas, there are limitations to what it could embrace. Crisis planning that involves Sweden is likely to be possible, while guaranteed reassurance is not, as emphasized by both NATO and U.S. officials at various occasions.<sup>77</sup>

The case study of Crimea in the previous part illustrates that the U.S. is likely to go first. Hence, there is some evidence to the political assumption expressed by leading Swedish social democrats that it all depends on the United States in the beginning of a crisis anyway. The ongoing discussion within NATO on the need for more authorization to SACEUR in order to move troops more rapidly is based on the same realization.

However, that is not to say that NATO will not be important or have a role to play. It will not be either or. The case study also shows that there will be bilateral and multilateral consultations in parallel, involving different parts and time perspectives of political and military response, both from the U.S. and other allies. The options of unilateral or multilateral response will exist in parallel, and they are closely interlinked. As a senior NATO official put it: “There is an old saying, ‘if you want to move fast, move alone, if you want to move for long, move in a group’. NATO has the infrastructure and processes to carry out operations for long.”<sup>78</sup>

The challenge of short distances and the likelihood of speedy developments underlines the importance of being well-prepared in case of a crisis in the Baltic Sea region. For Sweden and Finland, consultations would most likely be necessary not only with the United States, but with NATO as well. The political consultation mechanisms that the EOP cooperation provides could prove useful in this context. Once developed to give partners increased influence in international peace operations, the decision-shaping mechanism in the Political Military Framework for Partner Involvement in NATO-led operations could be applied also in the regional context.

In order to be better prepared and have the structure in place would a crisis occur, a Baltic Sea Commission, similar to the NATO-Ukraine Commission could be established. Following Russia’s military escalation in Crimea and with its independence and territorial integrity under threat, Ukraine invoked Article 15 of the NATO-Ukraine Charter, and requested a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, which took place already on March 2, 2014.

A Baltic Sea Commission, consisting of NATO and Sweden and Finland, could also be useful in broader sense. It would keep Baltic Sea security high on the alliance's agenda beyond 2016, in competition with the ravages of the Islamic State, terrorism, enormous flows of migrants as well as the continuing tense position in East Asia. In addition, a Commission could serve to build deeper forms of security cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, by providing a continued political dialogue, help shape a common understanding of problems and provide a solid structure for the security issues of the region and beyond, since the Russian action in the region is part of its overall strategy, which also involves other flanks of the Alliance such as the Black Sea and the South.

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- <sup>2</sup> Lindestam and Thorell 2015-08-17: "The Conservative Party knows well that in a crisis situation in our vicinity, NATO would not matter in the first critical phase. The bureaucracy and decision-making processes that govern NATO and regulate the formats for its operations hinder an immediate military action. Instead, in a crisis situation in our vicinity, it is the established bilateral collaborations, which will be decisive. In light of the security situation, the government now deepens cooperation with Finland, Denmark, the Baltic States and the United States."
- Hultqvist 2015-08-31
- <sup>3</sup> Interview with NATO official, November 2014
- <sup>4</sup> Hanska 2015:15
- <sup>5</sup> Michel 2011:22
- <sup>6</sup> Hanska 2015:8
- <sup>7</sup> Hanska 2015:15
- <sup>8</sup> U.S. defense expenditure decreased from 711 338 m \$US (2011) to 609 914 m \$US (2014), according to the SIPRI Database on military expenditure.
- <sup>9</sup> Dahl 2016:8
- <sup>10</sup> Conley and Rohloff 2014:101-103. Writers also argue that "The current US policy is tactical and reactive to events rather than strategic, and a long-term and clear-eyed strategy about potential Russian destabilizing actions in the region is necessary."
- <sup>11</sup> Mackey 2016:20
- <sup>12</sup> At the Defense Ministerial in February 2015, NATO decided on the immediate establishment of the first six multinational command and control elements – the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) – on the territories of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania initially. They will facilitate the rapid deployment of Allied forces to the region; support collective defense planning; and assist in the coordination of multinational training and exercises.
- <sup>13</sup> Interview with NATO official, December 2015.
- <sup>14</sup> Appathurai 2014:46
- <sup>15</sup> Steward 2014-03-28
- <sup>16</sup> Michel 2011:22
- <sup>17</sup> Washington Post 2014-03-26, NATO Information on Defence Expenditures, online at [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49198.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49198.htm). See also <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/int/nato-spending.htm>.
- <sup>18</sup> Kacprzyk 2015:7
- <sup>19</sup> Raynova and Kearns 2015:1
- <sup>20</sup> National Security Strategy 2015:25
- <sup>21</sup> Svenska Dagbladet 2010-02-01. In 2010, the ambition to be able to fight two regional wars at the same time was abandoned in the New Defense Strategic Concept.

- <sup>22</sup> With regard to capabilities in Europe, the decision on a pivot to Asia from 2011 is now being implemented, resulting in a shut down of 50 bases in Europe and moving Apache helicopters from Europe to Alaska.
- <sup>23</sup> Address to students at Fort Leavenworth, September 17, 2015, online at <http://www.army.mil/article/155609/>.
- <sup>24</sup> National Security Strategy 2015: Introduction
- <sup>25</sup> Hagel 2015-10-26, Norland 2015-10-26, Pickering 2015-10-28
- <sup>26</sup> Pickering 2015-10-28
- <sup>27</sup> Norland 2015-10-26
- <sup>28</sup> Hagel 2015-10-26
- <sup>29</sup> Pickering 2015-10-26
- <sup>30</sup> Keller 2015-11-06
- <sup>31</sup> Interviews with NATO member diplomats, September 2015
- <sup>32</sup> Interviews with NATO officials and NATO member diplomats, September 2015
- <sup>33</sup> Interview, September 2015
- <sup>34</sup> BBC 2015-03-09
- <sup>35</sup> AFP 2014-03-06, U.S. Mission to Warsaw 2014-03-14
- <sup>36</sup> AFP 2014-04-08
- <sup>37</sup> AFP 2014-04-22
- <sup>38</sup> AFP 2014-03-21
- <sup>39</sup> Wieslander 2015:2
- <sup>40</sup> AFP 2014-03-26 and 2014-03-29
- <sup>41</sup> 2014-03-11
- <sup>42</sup> NYT 2014-04-02, The Daily Beast, 2014-04-11
- <sup>43</sup> NATO News 2014-04-28, AFP 2014-04-16
- <sup>44</sup> Reuters 2015-06-23. This includes 250 tanks, Bradley infantry fighting vehicles and self-propelled howitzers. The equipment temporarily stored in each country would be enough to supply either a company, so enough for about 150 soldiers, or a battalion, or about 750 soldiers. Carter said the equipment would move around as needed, to support exercises in Europe.
- <sup>45</sup> Interviews with NATO officials, September 2015.
- <sup>46</sup> Pelleryn 2016
- <sup>47</sup> Wieslander 2015:1, Fö 2013:B, p 45. For a valuable and extensive analysis of the Baltic Sea region as a security complex, see Ljung/ MalmLöf/Neretnieks/Winnerstig (ed):2012.
- <sup>48</sup> Oldberg 2015:8-9, Persson 2015, Kroenig, 2015:53-57.
- <sup>49</sup> For an early assessment of this risk, see Ljung/ MalmLöf/Neretnieks/Winnerstig (ed):2012, Chapter 4.
- <sup>50</sup> AFP 2014-05-07, Hagel 2015-10-26.
- <sup>51</sup> Kacprzyk 2105:5, 17
- <sup>52</sup> Interview with NATO member diplomat, September 2015
- <sup>53</sup> Defence News 2015-05-14
- <sup>54</sup> Dagens Nyheter 2015-11-10
- <sup>55</sup> BBC 2015-10-08

- <sup>56</sup> WSJ 2015-10-28
- <sup>57</sup> NATO News 2016-02-10
- <sup>58</sup> Ioffe 2015-09-18
- <sup>59</sup> Interview with NATO member diplomat, March 2015
- <sup>60</sup> AFP 2014-03-02
- <sup>61</sup> Reuters 2015-03-05, AFP 2014-03-06, U.S. Mission to Warsaw 2014-03-12
- <sup>62</sup> Statement by NATO Foreign Ministers April 1 2014
- <sup>63</sup> Interview with NATO member diplomat, September 2015
- <sup>64</sup> Interview with NATO member diplomat, October 2015
- <sup>65</sup> This is a discussion that has been ongoing in NATO since Moscow’s cyber attacks in Estonia 2007, Russian war in Georgia 2008, in combination with menacing statements of intent such as president Medvedev’s vow “to protect the life and dignity and [Russian citizens, wherever they are]. Refocus on collective defense role but decisive shift came with the Russian annexation of Crimea. Baltic States and Poland have required updated threat assessment, contingency planning and increased exercises relevant to deterring and if necessary responding to Russian military action (Michel 2011:23)
- <sup>66</sup> Interview with NATO official, December 2015
- <sup>67</sup> Applebaum and Lucas 2015-08-11, see also Simons, G: ”Putin's International Supporters” UI Brief no. 3, December 2014.
- <sup>68</sup> Interview, Brussels, September 2015.
- <sup>69</sup> For an assessment on NATO measures towards the Baltic States prior to the annexation of Crimea, see Lucas, Edward: ”The Coming Storm: Baltic Sea Security Report”, pp 7-8, CEPA, June 2015.
- <sup>70</sup> Vershbow 2015-11-17
- <sup>71</sup> Wieslander 2015:3
- <sup>72</sup> Interview, September, 2015
- <sup>73</sup> Interview, September, 2015
- <sup>74</sup> ”MSB Opinioner 2014” on the question: ”Do you believe that Sweden would get quick and efficient assistance from other countries in case of a military attack on our country? 66% answer yes. Svenska Dagbladet: ”Sverige bör gå med i NATO” 2014-04-28.
- <sup>75</sup> Interview with NATO member diplomat, September 2015
- <sup>76</sup> Interview, September, 2015, Interview with Swedish diplomat, Washington D.C., October 2015.
- <sup>77</sup> SvD 2013-01-14
- <sup>78</sup> Interview with NATO official, September 2015



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