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Deterrence and Engagement – NATO's Interaction with Russia in a New World

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Abstract

Following a decade of cooperation between East and West, Russia has now reappeared as the most important threat to members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Russia possesses significant military capabilities, including nuclear weapons and this, combined with a demonstrated intent to use military force against its neighbors, makes interaction with Russia a very challenging task for NATO. This paper discusses key security policy theories and terms, analyzes NATO's current strategy and the Russian threat, and discusses how NATO can best deter Russia while also engaging in dialogue. This paper argues that NATO must combine credible deterrence with active engagement to address a re-emerging Russia with great power ambitions. Thus, NATO must focus on fundamentals such as transatlantic cohesion, unity, deterrence and collective security. Active engagement with Russia must supplement this deterrent approach to reduce the risk of escalation and conflict.

Deterrence and Engagement – NATO’s Interaction with Russia in a New World

...as part of the Alliance's overall approach to providing security for NATO populations and territory, deterrence has to be complemented by meaningful dialogue and engagement with Russia...

—NATO¹

Following a decade of cooperation between East and West, Russia has now reappeared as the greatest threat to the West. During the Cold War, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) policy towards the Soviet Union was based on deterrence and collective defense. Other instruments of security policy, such as compellence and engagement, supplemented this strategy. To prevent armed conflict with a re-emerging Russia, NATO must combine credible deterrence with active engagement. This paper provides a theoretical background regarding key terms and theories in security policy, analyzes NATO’s current policy and strategy, and assesses the new Russian threat. The paper then examines which strategies the Alliance can use to deter Russian aggression at the same time as it seeks cooperation, and concludes with recommendations for how NATO can combine deterrence and engagement.

Theoretical Foundation

The purpose of theory is, in the words of Carl von Clausewitz, “...to clarify concepts and ideas that have become, as it were, confused and entangled.”² Strategic theory provides a framework for the development of strategic practice based on history.³ Strategic theorists like Clausewitz and Liddell Hart reserve strategy for how to utilize military means to achieve policy objectives, but the contemporary understanding of strategy incorporates all means available.

Deterrence is a strategy for countering an opponent and avoiding war based on a calculation that an enemy will not attack if he knows that the defender can respond

forcefully.⁴ Deterrence has always been a part of human interaction, but comprehensive deterrence theories are relatively new. Thomas C. Schelling offers one of the most comprehensive analyses in *Arms and Influence*. He argues that to convince an opponent not to attack, one has to present a credible ability to hurt the opponent to such a degree that an attack is not an attractive option.⁵ Schelling states that the deterrent threat is passive, as the decision to do something is left to the adversary and that it might be indefinite in its timing.⁶

Although a passive strategy, deterrence is not without risks. Schelling warns that there is a danger that in trying to deter one might become engaged in actions that eventually result in armed conflict. He identifies limited wars and vulnerabilities that might promote a first strike as elements that increase such risks.⁷ The potential for unwanted escalation is nothing new. Thucydides describes this concept in *The Peloponnesian War*, where tension between Athens and Sparta gradually increased and finally resulted in a conflict neither wanted.⁸ The risk associated with escalation increased significantly with the introduction of nuclear weapons.

The American military strategist Bernard Brodie was one of the first to publish his ideas regarding how deterrence could be achieved with nuclear weapons in his book *Strategy in the Missile Age*. He argues that the essence of deterrence in the nuclear age comes from the existence of nuclear weapons combined with the ability to retaliate after a nuclear attack.⁹ As the Cold War progressed, this focus on nuclear deterrence through mutually assured destruction was discussed and criticized. In 1983, the British historian Michael Howard argued that NATO could not rely solely on nuclear weapons for deterrence of the Soviet Union, as the cost of using nuclear weapons would be

totally out of proportion to the potential gains.¹⁰ According to Howard, NATO's deterrence of the Soviet Union needed to be based on a reliable conventional and unconventional defense, combined with a credible nuclear capability.¹¹ When comparing these theories with what happened during the Cold War, it is clear that the ideas influenced strategy. Examples of this influence are the emphasis on nuclear weapons as a deterrent and the development of second-strike capabilities based on submarines during the Cold War.¹² The major buildup of conventional forces initiated by President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s is another example.¹³ As the Cold War ended, many hoped that deterrence would be less important and that future efforts could focus on promoting global peace and prosperity.¹⁴

Some former European leaders who supported nuclear deterrence during the Cold War, now argue for non-proliferation and removal of nuclear weapons, based on an assessment that the risk is greater than the benefit.¹⁵ Others argue that the growth of China's economic and military strength, combined with the reemergence of Russia as a possible opponent to the West, makes nuclear deterrence as relevant as ever before. One of the more interesting current theories states that a deterrence strategy must have elements that focus on denial to complement the traditional emphasis on punishment.¹⁶ Modern conflicts leave plenty of room for ambiguity, and it is very hard to assess when the red line for punishment is crossed. Therefore, in exposed areas like the Baltics, sufficient conventional defensive capabilities are required to make it costly or even impossible for an opponent to gain territory.¹⁷

Unlike deterrence, engagement is not an explicitly defined security policy term. The purpose of engagement in this context is to reduce the risk of armed conflict by

keeping communication channels open, building trust, and preventing misunderstandings. The United States (U.S.) engagement policy towards Iraq in the 1980s that combined military support, diplomatic intercourse, and economic support is an example of this.¹⁸ Engagement has a theoretical foundation in international relations theory. Liberalism argues that opponents can learn how to cooperate and through this reduce the risk of conflict. The arms control agreements made between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War is an example often used by liberals to demonstrate that it is possible to gradually build trust between opponents.¹⁹ Constructivism is another perspective in international relations theory and it argues that interaction between leaders can result in increased cooperation.²⁰ An example of this is the development of the U.S. – Soviet relationship during the second half of Reagan’s presidency. A series of summits and top leader engagements with Mikael Gorbachev resulted in significant arms treaties in the years that followed.²¹

NATO

NATO’s overall purpose has not changed since it was established in 1949: to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means.²² The New Strategic Concept from 2010, “Active Engagement, Modern Defence,” states that the Alliance’s three core tasks are *collective defense*, *crisis management*, and *cooperative security*.²³ It was further operationalized in a 2012-review where NATO declared that it will continue to have a mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defense capabilities. The review concluded that the Alliance supported existing conventional arms control treaties and encouraged the U.S. and Russia to reduce their nuclear weapons.²⁴

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has launched several initiatives to create a good relationship with Russia, and in 2002 the NATO – Russia Council (NRC) was established. The NRC was to serve as an arena for confidence building and cooperation to promote common interests.²⁵ It worked well in its early years, but after the Russian military action in Georgia in 2008, cooperation weakened despite some success in collaboration with equipping the Afghan Army and joint search-and-rescue exercises.²⁶ The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 resulted in NATO suspending all practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia.²⁷ Political and military channels of communication, however, remain open to reduce the risk of military incidents.²⁸ It nevertheless marked a change from viewing Russia as a strategic partner to a source of instability and insecurity.²⁹ The Warsaw Summit in 2016 is even more explicit and describes Russia as a reemerging threat to regional stability and peace in Europe.³⁰

NATO's current deterrence strategy to deal with the Russian threat is to a large extent in accordance with Howard's theory from the 1980s of an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional and ballistic missile defense capabilities. Also, NATO has identified civil preparedness as a critical enabler.³¹ Furthermore, there are elements of deterrence by punishment where the nuclear weapons are the primary effector and deterrence by denial where conventional weapons and ballistic missile defense are most important. NATO still signals that it is ready for political dialogue and encourages Russia to use all lines of communication, but after more than two decades of cooperation, NATO is adapting to "a new normal" that may look like a replay of the Cold War.

The Russian Threat

Although both NATO and the U.S. consider the Kremlin a threat, the Russia of 2016 is quite different from the Soviet Union of the 1980s, with significantly reduced population and military capacity.³² In analyzing the current situation, “threat” should be seen as a combination of intent and capability to use military means to achieve political objectives.³³ Russia’s military incursion into Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the on-going support to and involvement with the separatists in Eastern Ukraine demonstrate Moscow’s hostile intent. However, by examining Russia’s core interests related to the countries that make up NATO, one gets a more nuanced picture. The Russian economy relies heavily on the sale of hydrocarbons to Europe, western investments, and loans, which ought to promote cooperation.³⁴ But the Kremlin also has a clear ambition of limiting Western expansion into its neighboring states and preventing Western influence inside Russia.³⁵ Many Western academics’ view is that the current Russian political and military leadership think that the West is trying to shrink Russia’s influence with a long-term goal of toppling the regime.³⁶ Some are even more explicit in their assessment and argue that Russian leaders perceive NATO expansion as a strategy of encirclement and that they fear Western attacks.³⁷

Furthermore, the Russian leadership’s frequent use of the term “Russian World” signals that the ambition is to influence, and if necessary, determine developments in areas well outside its geographical borders.³⁸ President Vladimir Putin made it very clear that the West had crossed a red line with Ukraine in his speech to the Russian parliament on March 18, 2014.³⁹ The Russian overall strategic objective appears to be to re-establish itself as a great regional and global power, partially motivated by a desire to have the same level of respect many Russians felt the Soviet Union had during the

Cold War.⁴⁰ The belief in a Great Russia is also part of the Russian identity and thus a part of the Russian culture. One of the most important instruments of power utilized to achieve this is military power. The substantial resources allocated to the modernization of the Russian military capabilities, including the nuclear forces, reflect this belief in the importance of the military.⁴¹

Nuclear weapons are still the backbone of the Russian armed forces, and Moscow continues to rely on nuclear deterrence.⁴² The Russian modernization program reflects the importance of nuclear weapons and has given them top priority.⁴³ Russia is maintaining a stockpile with about 4500 strategic and tactical nuclear warheads.⁴⁴ However, American conventional capabilities for global strike have led Russia to conclude that it can no longer rely solely on nuclear deterrence. The modernization program, therefore, includes a broad range of conventional weapons as well.⁴⁵ The individual soldier is equipped with new and modern equipment, and overall the modernization seems to have led to an increase in the standing and confidence of Russian troops reflected by the fact that “they look good.”⁴⁶

In addition to modernizing hardware, the Russians are updating their doctrine with the most significant new element being an emphasis on “non-linear warfare.”⁴⁷ This doctrine, often termed ‘hybrid warfare’ in the West, emphasizes the integrated use of conventional and non-conventional military force combined with political, informational, and other non-military means.⁴⁸ Assessments indicate that the use of non-conventional warfare worked better than the Russians had expected when they first used it in Crimea. But, in Ukraine, the fight quickly became a conventional fight emphasizing typical Russian priorities like extensive use of indirect fires and mechanized warfare.⁴⁹

Another new doctrinal element being discussed in Russia is nuclear “de-escalation;” the use of low-yield nuclear weapons early to end a conventional conflict.⁵⁰ Just like unconventional warfare, this is not new and a similar strategy, “Flexible Response,” was NATO’s strategy during parts of the Cold War.⁵¹ Nuclear de-escalation has yet to appear in official Russian doctrine, and it is not clear if this is an official strategy. One school of thought argues that there is not sufficient evidence to confirm that this is part of the official policy and that this most probably is an attempt to leverage the Russian status as a nuclear power.⁵² Others argue that there are clear indications that nuclear de-escalation is a part of official policy, even though it has not yet been published as doctrine, and that NATO must act accordingly.⁵³

Finally, Russia has demonstrated increased ability and will to execute military operations outside its territory. Operations in Ukraine and Syria combined with numerous exercises show clearly that the Russian military is capable of fast strategic movement, rapid concentration, and fielding of very competent conventional forces.⁵⁴ In areas like the Baltics, the Arctic, and the Black Sea, the Russian capacity in the first days and maybe weeks exceeds NATO’s military capacity.⁵⁵ Russian military forces are going through a major modernization and this, combined with new doctrine and improved ability to project power, have significantly increased their military capability. NATO must, therefore, deal with a Russian threat consisting of demonstrated intent to use military means against its neighbors and significantly increased military capabilities.

NATO’s Future Deterrence Strategy

NATO’s official deterrence strategy from 2012 states that its existing mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defense capabilities provide an effective deterrent.⁵⁶ To evaluate whether deterrence towards Russia is effective, NATO must continuously

assess Russia's political intent and military capabilities. History is full of examples of strategic miscalculations of the adversary's intent or capabilities. An example of this is the lead-up to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 where the U.S. underestimated the Iraqi leader's intent and willingness to use military power against his neighbors.⁵⁷ Understanding how Russia perceives NATO's decisions and actions is also essential to be able to forecast possible reaction.⁵⁸ This requires a drive to know more about Russia, as George Kennan stated in his famous long telegram; "We must study it with the same courage, detachment, objectivity, and same determination not to be emotionally provoked or unseated by it, with which a doctor studies an unruly and unreasonable individual."⁵⁹ The Strategic Empathy concept is helpful in this regard: it relies on knowledge about the involved actors, but also emphasizes active attempts to consider an issue from perspectives other than one's own.⁶⁰ In many ways, this is similar to when Sun Tzu stressed the importance of knowing your enemy in his classic *The Art of War*.⁶¹ For NATO, increased understanding of the Russian history, culture and mindset will help forecast reactions and reduce the risk of strategic mistakes based on false assumptions or miscalculations.

Understanding based on knowledge, combined with deterrence theory, provides a useful basis for developing a comprehensive and suitable NATO deterrence strategy. As the Russian threat is multifaceted, NATO's response must combine a credible ability to deter by punishment and denial, ensure cohesion and prepare the Alliance for future challenges. At the Warsaw summit last summer, NATO reconfirmed that nuclear weapons are the supreme guarantee of the security of the Alliance and thus an essential component of NATO's strategy.⁶² This sends a clear message to Russia that

the employment of nuclear weapons, even if they are tactical nuclear weapons, would fundamentally change the nature of a potential conflict.⁶³ Recent U.S. plans to update and modernize its nuclear arsenal also illustrate the importance of such weapons.⁶⁴ Some experts argue that modernization should include the development of a broader variety of lower-yield weapons and more tailored options as a way to effectively respond to the Russian modernization of weapons and doctrine.⁶⁵ Others criticize this approach and argue that the U.S. and NATO ought to focus on conventional capacities as this is what the Russians fear most, instead of using vast sums of money for modernizing nuclear weapons, including developing low-yield weapons..⁶⁶

It is too early for NATO to move away from nuclear weapons as the ultimate deterrent with superior ability to “hurt.” However, there are conventional weapons in NATO’s arsenal capable of inflicting significant damage to Russia, and hence these are very useful in a gradual escalation. NATO’s deterrence by punishment thus relies on both nuclear and conventional weapons. However, nuclear weapons and the most potent conventional weapons will have a high threshold for use and approval of use could be challenging for a consensus-based organization like NATO.⁶⁷ Therefore, NATO must also be able to deter by denial.

Deterrence by denial is based on making it costly or even impossible for an adversary to gain territory.⁶⁸ Since the Russian annexation of Crimea, many academics have argued that NATO must be able to prevent Russia from creating *fait accompli* situations by seizing NATO territory unopposed or with minimal opposition.⁶⁹ NATO’s initial response to this challenge was to establish new high-readiness forces, the Very-High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) and to triple the size of the remaining NATO

Response Forces (NRF).⁷⁰ NATO furthermore decided at the Warsaw summit to establish enhanced forward presence in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland with four multinational battalion-sized battlegroups.⁷¹ Critics have claimed that these battalion-sized battlegroups would not be enough to make a Russian attack sufficiently difficult and have therefore argued for a brigade-sized element in each of the three Baltic States.⁷² Others claim that a heavy forward ground presence might make conflict with Russia a self-fulfilling prophecy, would be too vulnerable to Russian strike capabilities and argue that NATO ought to focus on long-range strike capabilities based on air and sea platforms.⁷³

A military assessment of what force ratio is required to deny Russia access to the Baltics indicates that a brigade-sized formation is needed in each country.⁷⁴ However, when deciding strategy, aspects other than the military are important. First of all, the fact that the ground forces already allocated to the Baltics are multinational battalion-sized battlegroups means that an attack against one member of NATO is an attack on all. Thus the deterrence effect of these units is larger than the size indicates. Secondly, a large NATO ground force in the Baltics would be very close to Russia's second largest city St. Petersburg and might be perceived as a significant threat.⁷⁵ A NATO presence in the Baltics with three brigades might, therefore, be unnecessarily large to deter and could even have the opposite effect and provoke a Russian attack. The alternative approach with a small ground force and emphasis on long-range strike capabilities would not have the same potential negative effects. However, it does neglect the fact that the size of the ground force is important to have a credible deterrence by denial.⁷⁶ Focus on long-range fires from air and sea platforms fits very well into the Russian

hybrid warfare playbook where ambiguity in regards to what is happening is the desired effect. Difficulties associated with determining what is happening and risks of collateral damage make this an ill-suited approach for NATO.

All things considered, NATO's decision to deter by denial with four battalion-sized battlegroups in the Baltics and Poland seems to be a wise approach. Having said that, this rather small military force must be made up of high-quality combined arms units to have the required denial capability. Furthermore, it must be backed by additional high readiness and follow on forces with updated advanced plans and training.⁷⁷ But, NATO faces the challenge to deter by denial Russian aggression in other areas than the Baltics.



Figure 1. NATO - Russia⁷⁸

Russia and NATO share borders in the Arctic with the Norwegian – Russian border.⁷⁹ The North Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic are of considerable economic and strategic military importance to Russia with its significant natural resources and important naval bases.⁸⁰ Ballistic missile submarines are essential components in Russian deterrence, and therefore a tense situation or a conflict anywhere in the world involving Russia would probably lead to the initiation of the Bastion Defense concept.⁸¹



Figure 2. The Russian Bastion Defense.⁸²

For NATO this presents several challenges. Under the Bastion Defense concept, the Russian military will deploy forward from its bases in the Arctic to deny others

access to the area and thereby protect their nuclear second-strike capacity. The Bastion Defense might include a broad range of activities like naval operations to disrupt or stop Western navies' operations in the North Atlantic and the transatlantic supply routes, the occupation of territories in areas like the northern parts of Norway and even strategic cruise missile strikes against the U.S. homeland.⁸³ The Russian threat towards NATO in the Arctic and the Atlantic Ocean is different than the one the Alliance faces in the Baltics and thus requires a different strategy.

First of all, it requires NATO to step up its maritime presence and capabilities to deter the Russians and secure the transatlantic sea lines of communication. Increased emphasis on naval presence and capabilities will supplement the land focused response and is in accordance with the decisions at the Warsaw summit.⁸⁴ Furthermore, as these activities are in international waters and airspace, they should not provoke Russia.⁸⁵ However, the available resources would determine if an ambition of deterrence by denial is achievable in the North Atlantic or if a lesser ambition will have to suffice.⁸⁶ As with the Baltic States, there is also a requirement for ground forces in northern Norway that can physically resist any attempts to seize and take control of territory. Much like during the Cold War, Norway is doing this with its ground forces, but as these are limited, NATO reinforcements might be required early in a crisis.⁸⁷ Regular exercises in Norway and forward deployment of equipment is therefore required to reinforce deterrence.⁸⁸



Figure 3. Conflicts in the Black Sea Region⁸⁹

The Black Sea region is another area of strategic importance for NATO as it has important transit routes for energy and several frozen conflicts.⁹⁰ The annexation of Crimea in 2014 demonstrated that this is an important region for Russia as well. The Russian military has increased its capabilities in the Black Sea region to include anti-access area-denial capabilities.⁹¹ Following a similar strategy as in the Arctic, NATO's strategy to deter by denial in this region area ought to prioritize naval and air assets capable of operating in international waters and airspace.⁹² Due to legal limitations, the naval presence in the Black Sea will require careful coordination to ensure that it is effective without violating international regulations.⁹³ NATO's decision during the Defense Minister meeting in February 2017 to increase naval presence and coordination in the Black Sea region will, at least partially, improve the Alliance's ability

to deter by denial in this critical region.⁹⁴ Furthermore, NATO ought to continue with exercises and other activities for ground forces to boost the Alliance's capabilities in the Black Sea region through the "tailored forward presence" initiative.⁹⁵

How NATO uses its military assets to deter by denial or punishment is significant, but efforts to ensure that the Alliance remains a cohesive and renowned organization by its members and potential adversaries is equally important. Several initiatives contribute to this, such as the decision to increase the size of NATO's high readiness forces and the ability to find political agreements that clearly state that Russian aggression is not acceptable. However, at the end of the day, NATO's credibility as a military alliance relies on having robust and responsive military capabilities. The U.S, by far the most militarily capable member of NATO, has significantly increased funding for forward military presence, exercises, and prepositioning of equipment in Europe which clearly demonstrates the U.S. commitment to the Alliance.⁹⁶ To realize the required capabilities for additional follow-on-forces or reinforcements, the European members must step up their military commitments with special emphasis on increasing defense spending to 2% within a decade.⁹⁷ Increased defense spending would increase the military capability of the Alliance and signal that the European countries are willing to pay their share for their security, which is imperative to maintain a strong transatlantic link and the cohesion of the Alliance.⁹⁸ NATO's members must also increase the resilience and robustness of the civilian society member countries, including protection of key capabilities such as power supply, water sources, and communication networks.⁹⁹

Finally, NATO's deterrence strategy must not only address the issues facing the Alliance today, but it must also prepare for future challenges. As with current priorities,

these efforts must contribute to NATO's deterrence and the resilience of the Alliance and its members. Examples of areas NATO ought to prioritize are cruise missile defense systems, space, and cyber capabilities. Today many of these capacities are under strict national control, but to prepare for the future NATO must attempt to integrate such capabilities.¹⁰⁰

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of both existing and future deterrence efforts, the three C's – clarity, capability, and credibility – are a useful tool.¹⁰¹ Clarity about red lines is essential for deterrence and NATO made this very clear at the Warsaw summit. Capability to respond in a way that will make the cost higher than the gains for an aggressor is also important to deter, and NATO must increase defense spending, readiness, and military capabilities to make sure that this is the case related to Russia. Credibility links to the obligation to fulfill one's commitments and NATO can ensure this by a combination of increased defense spending, forward military presence and demonstrated readiness and cohesion. In summary, the status of NATO's deterrence is rather good and by realizing the decisions from the summits in Wales and Warsaw that can continue to be the case. However, like during the Cold War, deterrence alone is not sufficient, NATO must also engage Russia through dialogue and other means.

Engagement

Critics of NATO's decision to combine deterrence with dialogue argue that active engagement will lead to continued aggression as the Russians would perceive this as weakness and acceptance of their claims. The unsuccessful British attempts to placate Hitler by offering him territorial and political concessions to avoid armed conflict in the lead up to the outbreak of the Second World War are often used to argue against this

approach.¹⁰² Opposing this view is the perspective that engagement, combined with firm deterrence, is the best way to minimize the chance of an armed conflict. While deterrence motivates the adversary to refrain from armed conflict, engagement provides arenas for peaceful and constructive cooperation thus avoiding a situation where the opponent feels forced into using armed force to achieve his goals. The academic Robert Jervis has studied the reasons for armed conflict and concludes that a country is especially likely to strike when it feels it can win a war now, while the chances of a diplomatic settlement are small and the military situation and balance is likely to deteriorate.¹⁰³ For NATO this implies that even though military strength continues to be essential to deal with the Russian threat, it must be combined with diplomatic and other efforts to ensure that there are other options available than the military option.

NATO's decision on a dual strategy of deterrence and dialogue was first of all necessary to achieve consensus among its members. Expanding this to include other forms of engagement is in accordance with NATO's Cold War strategy, the 1979 Double-Track Decision.¹⁰⁴ Another example is the Obama administration's approach to China from 2009 where engagement was used actively to reinforce areas of common interests and address sources of mistrust thus reducing the chance of conflict.¹⁰⁵ Adding to this argument is the assumption that regular dialogue and personal relationships built over time are crucial to avoid misunderstanding in a crisis.¹⁰⁶

The most significant effect NATO wants from engaging Russia is to reduce the chance of confrontation. Therefore, dialogue with Russia is the priority as it lays the foundation for increased cooperation, reduces suspicion and builds trust.¹⁰⁷ The principal structure for this dialogue ought to be the NRC.¹⁰⁸ This dialogue does not mean

that NATO accepts Russian actions in Ukraine and Crimea, but signals that NATO believes dialogue is necessary. This political dialogue ought to focus on common interests like the situation in Afghanistan, Syria, WMD proliferation, and counter-terrorism.

Dialogue is also useful to reduce the risk associated with close encounters between military forces from NATO and Russia as these might result in accidents or unnecessary escalation.¹⁰⁹ To address this issue, NATO ought to reinstate the suspended strategic military dialogue with Russia with emphasis on reducing the risk associated with such encounters. To stimulate this dialogue and to build trust, NATO and its members should continue to notify Russia about military exercises even if Russia is not doing the same.¹¹⁰

Renewed dialogue is the foundation for more engagement and one of the areas NATO ought to pursue is arms control as it did during the Cold War. The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) from 1990 is an example of fruitful cooperation in conventional arms control between NATO and Russia. However, this cooperation gradually broke down from 2007, and in 2015 Russia suspended all activities related to this treaty.¹¹¹ The utility of conventional arms control is larger than ever with both NATO and Russia increasing their deployed conventional forces in border areas like the Baltics. For Russia, this could present an opportunity to reduce NATO's footprint on their doorstep, and for NATO this represents an opportunity to lessen the threat of a Russian surprise attack.¹¹² By initiating new efforts to establish a conventional arms control agreement with Russia, NATO signals a willingness to

engage in constructive efforts to reduce the risk of a crisis or armed conflict to both domestic and international audiences.

Renewed discussions on conventional arms control could also open up for renewed dialogue about nuclear weapons control as Russia has stated that lack of an agreement that limits conventional armed forces in Europe is among the reasons for refusing to proceed with nuclear weapons control negotiations. However, as the U.S. is in possession of most of these weapons and because previous agreements in this area have been bilateral between the U.S. and Russia, these negotiations will be of a different character than the talks about conventional arms control. The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) from 2011 shows that this is possible even if Russia so far has shown little interest due to trepidations about NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense program and U.S. conventional strike capability.¹¹³ As with conventional arms discussions, renewed initiatives in this area by NATO and the U.S. will demonstrate a willingness to find ways to reduce the tension and risk of armed conflict with Russia.

Arms control and dialogue are both important dimensions in a NATO policy to engage Russia, but additional areas of cooperation ought to be explored. In the period before the Russian annexation of Crimea, NATO and Russia cooperated closely in military exercises, security assistance, and operations.¹¹⁴ Renewed attempts to cooperate ought to be focused on areas like search and rescue in desolate regions such as the Arctic, counter-terrorism information exchange, and mechanisms to deconflict military activity and exercises. Additionally, NATO ought to promote military bi- or multilateral cooperation between its members and Russia where this is relevant. An example of such cooperation is the newly established Arctic Coast Guard Forum

where officials from NATO-countries like the U.S, Norway, and Canada meet their Russian counterparts.¹¹⁵

The dialogue and cooperation listed above can be adjusted based on Russian reactions and their willingness to engage positively with NATO. NATO will by these initiatives signal that it is willing to engage Russia in a broad range of areas, but this does not mean that NATO is prepared to compromise on all issues. An example of where NATO ought to stand firm is the question about ballistic missile defense and Russian requirements that missile defense must be constrained in a legally binding manner.¹¹⁶ These conditions might lead to a situation where the ballistic missile defense systems are so restricted that they will not be able to execute their mission properly. However, NATO must be willing to discuss mechanisms for transparency and also limitations to the number of systems. Another example where disagreement is likely is the question about NATO expansion. NATO must make it very clear that only the applicant nation and the existing members decide the question of NATO membership. Furthermore, most important for NATO's decision in regards to new members is the influence further enlargement of NATO would have on the alliance's ability to execute a credible deterrence and if necessary collective defense.

Conclusion and Recommendations

NATO is facing several challenges, and the Russian threat is the most important due to the combination of significant military capabilities, including nuclear weapons, and demonstrated intent to use military force against its neighbors. To address this broad range of challenges and threats, NATO must return to basics with an emphasis on transatlantic cohesion, unity, deterrence and collective security. This paper

concludes that NATO's approach to the new Russia is to balance clear and credible *deterrence* with constructive and realistic *engagement*.

This is in many ways similar to the approach attempted during the Cold War, but as NATO has increased from 16 to 28 (soon to be 29) member nations, and because Russia is very different from the Soviet Union, NATO must do more than copy or seek a replay of Cold War strategies. NATO must modernize and update its deterrence strategy and expand from dialogue to a more active and comprehensive engagement strategy. Based on the analysis provided, the following recommendations ought to be considered as NATO moves forward to address the Russian threat:

- NATO must deter Russia as much as required and at the same time engage as much as possible.
- NATO must combine deterrence with engagement to avoid an armed confrontation with Russia. NATO is in military terms far superior to Russia, and active attempts to find peaceful solutions will be a sign of strength, not weakness.
- NATO must strengthen its collective ability to assess Russian military capabilities and political intent to avoid strategic miscalculations through the concept of Strategic Empathy.
- NATO's deterrence strategy must consist of a credible ability to both deter by punishment and denial. NATO's deterrence by punishment is based on modern nuclear weapons, supplemented by capable conventional weapons.
- NATO's deterrence by denial has mainly been based on ground forces, supported by other capacities including ballistic missile defense. NATO's

posture to deter by denial in the Baltics and Poland is wise, and ought to be expanded with increased presence of naval forces on NATO's flanks to ensure sufficient military capabilities.

- NATO's standing as a military alliance relies on it having credible military capabilities and a strong transatlantic link. To ensure this, the European members must pay their share and increase their high-end military capabilities and resilience.
- Active political and military engagement with Russia is important if NATO wants to reduce the risk of unwanted escalation that ends in an armed conflict. This engagement must include political and military dialogue, attempts to revive conventional and nuclear arms control negotiation and renewed military cooperation.

Endnotes

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¹⁸ Douglas A. Borer, "Problems of Economic Statecraft: Rethinking Engagement," in *Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy*, ed. J. Boone Bartolomees Jr. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, July 2004), 165-166, <https://books.google.com/books?id=co9TJrTjqrIC&pg=PA165&lpg=PA165&dq=engagement+security+policy&source=bl&ots=jvN8O3V0jq&sig=QaQFYZRRXmgNNTSLHCZYySptCN4&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiq47z12unPAhWKz4MKHePLCJoQ6AEIbzAJ#v=onepage&q=engagement%20security%20policy&f=false> (accessed October 20, 2016).

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⁴⁸ Timothy Thomas, "The Evolution of Russian Military Thought: Integrating Hybrid, New-Generation, and New-Type Thinking," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, no. 4 (2016): <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13518046.2016.1232541?journalCode=fslv20> (accessed January 19, 2017)

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⁵⁰ Pifer, "Pay Attention, America: Russia Is Upgrading Its Military."

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⁶⁵ Elbridge Colby, the Robert M. Gates Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), interview by author, Washington DC, October 3, 2016.

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⁶⁷ Michael Petersen, "The Perils of Conventional Deterrence by Punishment," *War on the Rocks*, November 11, 2016, <http://warontherocks.com/2016/11/the-perils-of-conventional-deterrence-by-punishment/> (accessed November 28, 2016).

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The new VJTF is to deploy immediately as a crisis emerges to act as a deterrent. For more details about NATO's response see Khalid Mahdi, "Adaptation and Assurance: NATO's Response to the 21st Century Security Environment," *The NATO Association of Canada*, April 3, 2016, <http://natoassociation.ca/adaptation-and-assurance-natos-response-to-the-21st-century-security-environment/> (accessed November 29, 2016).

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⁷⁴ Russian forces in the Western Military District, the area opposing the Baltic States, are assessed to be about 22 battalion-sized task forces. The general principle in military planning states that a defending force have a fair chance of stopping an attack when the force ratio is 1:3. This would imply that NATO would require a force of about 7-8 battalion task forces and this would in large equal three brigades.

For more see Kathleen Hicks et al., *Evaluating Future U.S. Army Force Posture in Europe: Phase I Report* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 2016), 2, 11, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/160203_Hicks_ArmyForcePosture_Web.pdf (accessed August 2, 2016).

⁷⁵ There is a major difference in regards to the possible Russian perception of threat from the Berlin brigades during the Cold War and three NATO brigades in the Baltics. The distance from Berlin to Russia's second largest city St. Petersburg is 1745 km and the ground forces in Berlin did not present a threat to Russian territory. For NATO forces stationed in the Baltics the situation is quite different with the distance between the Estonian city of Narva and St. Petersburg being only 158 km. Three NATO battalions do not have the ability to threaten Russian territory, but three brigades would at least make a NATO attack on St. Petersburg more possible.

⁷⁶ The ground-force's role is to present a physical resistance to any attempts to take control of territory. If the ground force is too small an adversary might by-pass or quickly neutralize the ground forces thus removing the deterrence.

For more details see Hicks et al., *Evaluating Future U.S. Army Force Posture in Europe: Phase I Report*.

⁷⁷ NATO has agreed to a new concept of detailed advance planning, the Graduated Response Plans to ensure sufficient speed in its response to crisis.

For more see Klaus Olshausen, *NATO's Readiness Action Plan for Assurance and Deterrence – Progress & Challenges on the Road from Wales to Warsaw*, no. 402 (Berlin: Institut für Strategie- Politik- Sicherheits- und Wirtschaftsberatung, January 2016), 3, http://www.ispsw.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/402_Olshausen.pdf (accessed December 22, 2016).

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⁸¹ Expert Commission on Norwegian Security and Defense Policy, *Unified Effort*, 20-22.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 20-22.

Kathleen H. Hicks et al., *Undersea Warfare in Northern Europe* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2016), 6-7.

⁸⁴ The Warsaw Summit Communique states clearly that the Alliance will increase its maritime posture in the North Atlantic. For more information see NATO, *NATO, Warsaw Summit Communiqué*.

The requirement for NATO to respond to the Russian military build-up in the Atlantic is the theme for a recent Whitepaper from RUSI. For more details see John Andreas Olsen, ed., *NATO and the North Atlantic: Revitalising Collective Defence* (London: RUSI Publications, March 6, 2017), <https://rusi.org/publication/whitehall-papers/nato-and-north-atlantic-revitalising-collective-defence> (accessed March 7, 2017).

⁸⁵ Ine Eriksen Søreide, "NATO and the North Atlantic, Revitalizing Collective Defense and the Maritime Domain," *PRISM* 6, no. 2 (July 18, 2016): 51.

⁸⁶ NATO's maritime capacities in the North Atlantic are currently limited which is illustrated by the disposition of U.S. naval assets. Currently the US 6th Fleet, the main U.S. navy formation in Europe with responsibility for most of the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the B, has assigned 5 ships. The US 7th Fleet that operates in the Indo-Asia Pacific area has assigned between 70 and 80 ships. For more details see U.S. Navy, "U.S. 7th Fleet," <http://www.public.navy.mil/surfor/pages/SeventhFleet.aspx> (accessed November 10, 2016); U.S. Navy, "Organization," <http://www.c6f.navy.mil/organization> (accessed November 10, 2016).

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⁸⁹ Mitat Çelikpala, *Security in the Black Sea Region, Policy Report II* (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010), 9, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/115942/2010_PolicyReport-2.pdf (accessed December 22, 2016).

⁹⁰ NATO, *NATO, Warsaw Summit Communiqué*. These frozen conflicts are separatist disputes such as Transnistria in eastern Moldova and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. Russia is involved with military assets in all these conflicts. For more details see Steven Horrell, *A NATO Strategy for Security in the Black Sea Region* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, October 2016), 2-3, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/NATO_Strategy_Black_Sea_Region_web_10_04.pdf (accessed December 7, 2016).

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⁹² This presence includes exercises like the annual Sea Breeze exercise. For more details see NATO, "NATO Ships Take Part in Multinational 'Sea Breeze' Exercise in Black Sea," September 4, 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_112997.htm?selectedLocale=en (accessed December 7, 2016).

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NATO, "Boosting NATO's Presence in the East and Southeast," October 27, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm (accessed December 22, 2016).

⁹⁶ Mark F. Cancian and Lisa Sawyer Samp, "The European Reassurance Initiative," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, February 9, 2016, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/european-reassurance-initiative-0> (accessed October 20, 2016).

⁹⁷ The European members of NATO ought to prioritize increased readiness for both high readiness forces and regular conventional forces. Furthermore, the war-fighting capabilities of the conventional forces should be increased by acquiring equipment and logistics and by increasing training and exercises. For more details on the 2% ambition, see NATO, *Wales Summit Declaration*.

⁹⁸ NATO, *Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2009-2016)* (Brussels, Belgium: NATO, July 4, 2016), http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160704_160704-pr2016-116.pdf (accessed December 7, 2016).

⁹⁹ For a good discussion about some of the actions that ought to be prioritized in order to increase resilience and robustness of the whole society see Jamie Shea, "Resilience: A Core Element of Collective Defence," <http://www.nato.int/docu/Review/2016/Also-in-2016/nato-defence-cyber-resilience/EN/index.htm> (accessed December 7, 2016).

¹⁰⁰ As an example of how NATO successfully is attempting to address this types of issues is that the importance of the Cyber domain was especially addressed at the Warsaw Summit, resulting in establishing cyber as its own domain, and in a cyber defense pledge. For more information see NATO, "Cyber Defence Pledge," July 8, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133177.htm (accessed December 22, 2016).

¹⁰¹ Graham Allison and Dimitri K. Simes, "Russia and America: Stumbling to War," *The National Interest*, May-June 2015, 8.

¹⁰² Mark L. Hass, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789-1989* (London: Cornell University Press, 2005), 111.

¹⁰³ Robert Jervis, "War and Misperception," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* XVIII, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 676.

¹⁰⁴ Corvaja, "Beyond Deterrence: NATO's Agenda after Warsaw."

¹⁰⁵ Mr. James Steinberger, Deputy Secretary of State, gave a keynote address at the Center for a New American Security on September 24, 2009 and in this speech he used the term "strategic reassurance". This paper uses the term engagement instead of "reassurance" as

this term is closely linked to NATO's numerous defensive measures on land, sea, and air that was initiated after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014.

For more details about the Obama administration's China policy from 2009 see; James B. Steinberg, "Administration's Vision of the U.S.-China Relationship," September 24, 2009, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/former/steinberg/remarks/2009/169332.htm> (accessed December 13, 2016).

¹⁰⁶ Julian Smith, *A Transatlantic Strategy for Russia* (Washington, DC: Carnegie, August 29, 2016), http://carnegieendowment.org/files/8-10-16_Smith_Transatlantic_clean.pdf (accessed October 12, 2016).

¹⁰⁷ Banning Garrett, "The Need for Strategic Reassurance in the 21st Century," *Arms Control Association*, March 1, 2001, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2001_03/garrett (accessed December 15, 2016).

¹⁰⁸ NATO, "NATO-Russia Council."

¹⁰⁹ One example of a close encounter was the Russian Sukhoi Su-24 attack aircraft performance of multiple low-level passes over the USS Donald Cook in Baltic Sea on April 12, 2016. For more information see Sam LaGrone, "Video: Russian Fighters Buzz USS Donald Cook in Baltic Sea," *U.S. Naval Institute*, April 25, 2016, <https://news.usni.org/2016/04/13/video-russian-fighters-buzz-uss-donald-cook-in-baltic-sea> (accessed December 15, 2016).

¹¹⁰ Regulations for notification and inspection of military exercises in Europe are described in the Vienna Document 2011 that is managed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. For more details see U.S. Department of State, "Overview of Vienna Document 2011," <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/cca/c43837.htm> (accessed December 15, 2016).

¹¹¹ Kingston Reif, "Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty," *Arms Control Association*, April 2015, <https://www.armscontrol.org/taxonomy/term/29> (accessed December 15, 2016).

¹¹² Elbridge Colby, "Step Up to Stand Down," *Foreign Affairs*, August 13, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/poland/2015-08-13/step-stand-down> (accessed December 15, 2016).

¹¹³ Steven Pifer, "The Future of U.S.-Russian Arms Control," *Brookings*, February 26, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-future-of-u-s-russian-arms-control/> (accessed December 15, 2016).

¹¹⁴ Examples of areas where there were close cooperation between NATO and Russia are search and rescue at sea, counter-terrorism exercises, and in training and equipping the Afghan Air Force with helicopters. In 2006 and 2007 Russia actively supported NATO's operation Active Endeavour with frigates. After NATO suspended all military cooperation with Russia on April 1, 2014 there has been no cooperation. For more details see NATO, "Relations with Russia."

¹¹⁵ The Arctic Coast Guard Forum was established in October 2015 and has developed a plan to share information, highlight best practices, identify training exercises, and on-the-water combined operations to achieve safe, secure and environmentally-responsible maritime activity

in the Arctic.

For more information see Connie Terrell, "Arctic Stakeholders Gain Momentum through Historic Forum," *Coast Guard Compass*, June 10, 2016, <http://coastguard.dodlive.mil/2016/06/arctic-stakeholders-gain-momentum-through-historic-forum/> (accessed December 16, 2016).

¹¹⁶ Pifer, "The Future of U.S.-Russian Arms Control."