

**Conflicting Conceptions of Security in NATO:
The Baltic Stance on Tactical Nuclear Weapons Reductions
and its Impact on Alliance Cohesion and Strategy**

Sarah Jacqueline Scott
6689951

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Graduate School for Public and International Affairs
University of Ottawa
Supervisor: Dr. Michael Williams

Abstract

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania conceptualize security in a way that is inconsistent with the view articulated by the greater North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These perceptions have impacted the way in which these parties have formulated their policies toward the forward deployment of American tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) in Europe. Through discussions of their actions and interactions with one another, this paper analyzes the Baltic and NATO perceptions of security, and the impact of these differences on the future of NATO's deterrence strategy and the role of TNWs in it.

In addition, it is argued that these divergences do and will impact the formulation of NATO's greater future strategic orientation. Without a homogenous perspective on what constitutes threats to the security of NATO members, it will be difficult for the alliance to develop strategies to ensure that security is maintained. In the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which has negatively impacted NATO's relationship with the Russian Federation, such discussions have become increasingly important.

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List of Abbreviations

AWACS – airborne warning and control system

BALTAP – Baltic Air Policing Mission

BALTBAT – Baltic Battalion

BMD – ballistic missile defence

DCA – dual-capable aircraft

DDPR – Deterrence and Defence Posture Review

EPAA – European Phased Adaptive Approach

EU – European Union

GDP – gross domestic product

ISAF – International Security Assistance Force (Afghanistan)

KFOR – Kosovo Force

LEP – Life Extension Program

MAD – mutually assured destruction

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NNSA – National Nuclear Security Administration

NPT – Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

NRF – NATO Response Force

OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PfP – Partnership for Peace

PNIs – Presidential Nuclear Initiatives

SNWs – strategic nuclear weapons

SRAM – short-range attack missile

TNWs – tactical nuclear weapons

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

US – United States of America

USD – United States dollar

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Chapter I: Introducing the Security Perspectives of the Baltic States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Introduction

The role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in ensuring the security of its member states has evolved significantly since its creation over 60 years ago. This evolution has changed NATO from a solely military alliance, to one that has also embraced a political leaning, as the international landscape has changed, and the alliance has taken on more roles and expanded to incorporate new member states. Each member state brings unique perspectives to NATO, but in the case of the Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – their perceptions of security have been especially divergent from those of the alliance as a whole. Recently, this divergence has become increasingly evident in the case of NATO's tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) stocks, which have remained a priority to the Baltic countries, but have become decreasingly important to the alliance since the end of the Cold War.

With NATO's TNWs and related equipment aged nearly to the point of obsolescence, the debate over whether or not the alliance should continue to deploy American TNWs has become increasingly urgent. Whereas NATO has published statements claiming an intent to reduce the alliance's reliance on nuclear weapons, both tactical and strategic, the Baltic States remain opposed to reductions, due to their continued reliance on NATO as a military deterrent, and thereby a credible guarantor of their security.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the interpretations of security by NATO and the Baltic States and how these perspectives affect the positions of these actors regarding the future of American TNWs in NATO member states. This paper will thus serve to illustrate the effect of the intra-alliance tensions within NATO that have developed over the issue of TNWs, and how this impacts NATO's larger strategic goals. These intra-alliance tensions will impact the current and future character of the

ever-changing alliance, and thus its position on the international stage.

In building its arguments, this paper will also offer insight regarding the value of TNWs in NATO's current and future nuclear deterrence strategy. Considering that the strength and credibility of TNWs as a deterrent is necessary to understand the importance of TNWs in the context of NATO's and the Baltic States' strategic visions, as well as the role that TNWs play in NATO's greater extended deterrence posture.

The issues to be raised in this paper are highly relevant, given the recent uprisings in Ukraine and the subsequent involvement of Russia in supporting separatist movements there. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 was an especially problematic development. A conflict of this magnitude on NATO's border has given the alliance a new relevance, particularly in terms of its military capability.

Since the end of the Cold War, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova have acted as a buffer zone between NATO and Russia. This “no man's land” served to prevent the escalation of conventional conflicts, and thus reduce the need for the continuous reinforcement of NATO's nuclear deterrent, thereby lessening the need for extended deterrence. However, the conflict in Ukraine has violated this buffer zone, and the strategic value of nuclear weapons has regained importance as a result. The Baltic States, particularly, have become increasingly concerned about the willingness of NATO to protect their security, as is promised under Article V of the *North Atlantic Treaty*. The Baltic States view a resurgent Russia as an especially critical threat to their security and sovereignty.

Chapter outline

Chapter I of this paper introduces the debate by establishing its context, introducing the relevant actors, and describing the methodology used. It also summarizes the historical role of TNWs in NATO's

greater deterrence strategy.

Chapter II focuses on the concept of “security.” It defines the term, “security,” discusses how it is viewed by NATO as a whole, and analyzes how this understanding impacts the way NATO functions. The concept of NATO as a “security community” is introduced, and the role of nuclear weapons in the construction of “security” is analyzed.

Chapter III discusses the historic role of nuclear weapons in deterrence as part of NATO's security posture, the history of NATO's TNW deployments, and NATO's current policies concerning nuclear weapons. These discussions establish the role that TNWs play in NATO's current deterrence strategy, and the role they might play in the future.

In Chapter IV, the Baltic States' perspectives on security are clarified, focusing on their position on the debate within NATO on TNWs. Emphasis is placed on the Baltic-Russian and Baltic-Soviet relationships, and how these have influenced the collective Baltic view of security, and thus the ambitions of the Baltic States to establish independent militaries and join NATO following the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Chapter V discusses the problem of intra-alliance tensions in NATO due to competing strategic visions on how to attain security, as evidenced by the Baltic position vis-à-vis the larger NATO posture concerning TNWs. It suggests that these divergences have greater significance than simply the future of NATO's policies on US TNWs, but also affects the greater strategic vision and direction of the alliance. Given the current conflict that has erupted in Ukraine, alliance cohesion and collective strategic vision for nuclear deterrence have become increasingly more important; however, such unity in NATO will not be possible without a collective, agreed-upon understanding of security.

Literature review and research methods

The research for this study involved several types of sources, including books, academic journal articles, treaties, news sources, and strategies. These sources provided historical analyses, debates over the concept of “security,” and clear outlines in terms of NATO's planned strategic direction.

Books written before the release of NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept and 2012 Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR) are useful in terms of the historical perspective they offer, rather than their analysis of NATO and the Baltic States' current stance on TNWs, due to the fact that they do not yet take these documents into consideration. However, a small sampling of books published in 2013 do take these documents into account, and were consulted as part of this study.

Recent peer-reviewed journal articles provided the majority of the information regarding the current stances of those actors described. These academic articles both serve in developing the concept of security and in predicting NATO's future courses of action in developing security assurances for its member states.

News sources make limited but important contributions as well, by providing information on developing issues, which authors of peer-reviewed articles may not have yet had time to respond to. However, they do not provide the depth or peer-review process necessary to make a large offering to the research.

Finally, strategies released directly by NATO are very valuable, because they credit the intended goals of the alliance, as articulated by NATO itself, as opposed to how they might be interpreted. The most notable for the purpose of this research are the Strategic Concepts for 1991, 1999, and 2010; the 2010 Tallinn Principles, the 2010 NATO Group of Experts report, and the 2012 DDPR. These documents show NATO's intent concerning its future strategic aspirations.

The evolving international context

The shift in NATO's position on TNWs, as well as the consistency of the Baltic perspective, must be considered in the context of the evolving international system, in order to be properly understood. First, the changing international strategic environment has had significant impact on international policy, particularly the transformation that took place as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Second, the varying interpretations of the nature of the international system by NATO and the Baltic States means that they conceptualize security – and thus, NATO's role in preserving the security of its member states – differently.

The current global security environment differs significantly from the bipolar world of the Cold War. NATO was founded as a deterrent to the Warsaw Pact. Due to the adversarial nature of the NATO-Warsaw Pact relationship, and the military power of the USSR, NATO members emphasized the military dimension of the alliance during the Cold War in order to establish a credible deterrent. Central to this deterrent strategy were nuclear weapons.

When the Soviet Union dissolved, and the bipolar international order of the Cold War period ended, NATO lost its original *raison d'être*: countering an antagonistic Soviet Union. In order to remain relevant post-Cold War, NATO has had to re-assess and prioritize new security concerns, reform its military and institutional capabilities, expand its membership, and create new partnerships with external countries. Although the protection of NATO-member territories and populations remains NATO's priority, it has also become increasingly more engaged in countries external to the alliance, through diplomatic as well as military means.

As a result of the changing international context, debates have arisen in NATO regarding the operational future of the alliance's TNWs deployments. In NATO's Strategic Concept of 1991, the possibility of any nuclear weapons being used by the alliance was described as “remote.”¹ As a

consequence, NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons began to decline. By the Strategic Concept of 2010, the possibility of NATO facing circumstances requiring the use of nuclear weapons became “extremely remote.”² In the 2010 Strategic Concept, NATO also voiced a commitment to creating the conditions for a “world without nuclear weapons.”³ These points were echoed in the 2012 DDPR.

The Baltic States and NATO as a whole differ in their view of the character of the international system. The Baltic perspective on security is a realist one: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania tend to view security predominantly in terms of *military* security, and see NATO as a means through which this brand of security can be achieved and preserved. Classical realism was the dominant theoretical tradition of international relations during the Cold War.⁴ Realist theories characterize international affairs as a constant struggle for power between self-interested states in a chaotic world.⁵

As a result, realist theorists see alliances as a method through which states can construe the balance of power to their benefit, and thus guarantee their continued survival. A state's power is based on the material and latent components that it controls; that is, tangible military assets, and socio-economic ingredients that can be converted into military assets, respectively.⁶ In joining NATO, the Baltic States ensured that they would have access to NATO's military prowess, in order to make up for the relatively small size and limited capabilities of their own militaries.

NATO, on the other hand, currently takes an alliance-centred view of the international system. Alliances involve the engagement of states in formal and contractual obligations to cooperate on security matters.⁷ When an alliance performs effectively, it provides net benefits to its allies by satisfactorily serving their interests. According to the balance of threat theory, articulated by Stephen Walt in 1985, states form alliances in order to balance against threats.⁸ Doing so, however, does not mean a solely military-centred approach; while NATO emphasized military power during the Cold War, its definition of security has since expanded to include the ability to address other causes of insecurity,

such as terrorism, trans-national crime, cyber attacks, and environmental and resource degradation.⁹

Thus, instead of simply being concerned with the military side of security, NATO has also begun to offer support for peace operations, crisis management, disaster response, gender rights promotion, and political consultations. In addition, many of these new tasks are carried out by civilians, as well as by members of the military. NATO's approach to security has evolved to become increasingly multi-faceted, whereas the Baltic approach has retained a focus on the military side of security, as was practised under the Soviet Union.

This paper argues that these divergent views have larger implications than simply the future of TNWs in Europe. This lack of cohesion impacts the question of future NATO enlargement, and has left discussions over future strategies with regard to nuclear deterrence ambiguous to the point of near incoherence. Especially given the current crisis in Ukraine, a united NATO is necessary if the alliance wants to remain a relevant and effective international actor.

Defining concepts

Before proceeding to the core arguments, it is necessary to define some of the terms that are central to the analysis. First, the term, *tactical nuclear weapons* is often referred to interchangeably with other synonyms, such as sub-strategic, non-strategic, short range, or battlefield nuclear weapons.¹⁰ In terms of their physical characteristics and capabilities, they are best defined in contrast to strategic nuclear weapons (SNWs), using two key factors: function and range. In terms of the function of these weapons, the purpose of SNWs is to target an enemy's "warmaking capacity and will" through the destruction of manufacturing and communications facilities, stockpiles, sources of raw materials, and other necessary infrastructure.

Nuclear weapons that are "tactical" can be defined as weapons used "by land, sea, or air forces

against opposing forces ... in support of operations that contribute to the accomplishment of a military mission of limited scope, or in support of the military commander's scheme of manoeuvre, usually limited to the area of military operations.”¹¹ TNWs are directly involved in conventional military operations.¹² They are to be used selectively to determine the outcomes of battles, not end wars.

In addition, the range of TNWs is usually defined as “short,” meaning land-based missiles with a range of less than 500 km, and air- and sea-launched missiles that reach up to 600 km.¹³ SNWs have a longer range.

Another key distinction that can be made between TNWs and SNWs is their role in deterrence. Traditionally, SNWs have been tied to the concept of mutually assured destruction (MAD), in which the possession of nuclear weapons by one state is used to deter other states from acts of aggression, because the use of a nuclear weapon by one will mean a nuclear response from the other, resulting in severe damage to both parties. TNWs, on the other hand, are for warmaking, meaning that if used, they would theoretically be paired with conventional means.

NATO's theatre nuclear weapons have a crucial political value, in that they signal American commitment to the defence of Europe, NATO's resolve to respond should a crisis arise, and the importance of burden sharing and alliance cohesion. However, across much of Europe, the resolve to actually contemplate instances wherein nuclear weapons might be used has essentially disappeared since the end of the Cold War, weakening the credibility of the alliance's nuclear deterrence strategy.¹⁴ The deterrent value of TNWs in the present day is debatable, as will be discussed later in the paper.

The *Baltic States* refers collectively to the countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. This unitary term is not simply applied for convenience; it is justified due to the similar historical contexts that gave rise to the three countries, and – of particular importance to this study – their parallel foreign and security policy orientations. Tireless redundancies would quickly become apparent if these

countries were independently analyzed in this context. However, differentiations will be made where they are necessary. The Baltic States all gained independence from the USSR within months of one another, and joined NATO together on 29 March 2004.¹⁵

On 29 March 2014, the Baltic States celebrated ten years as members of NATO. It is a timely moment, then, for a reflection on the Baltic perspective on security, and the ways in which it does and does not parallel that of the greater alliance. In addition, the current upheaval in Ukraine has raised important questions about the future of NATO-Russia relations, and the very nature of NATO.

Through discussions of their actions and interactions with one another, and particularly Baltic support for TNWs development on the part of NATO, this paper will analyze the perceptions of “security,” as they are expressed by both NATO and the Baltic States. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine will also be addressed, given the impact that it has had on NATO's relationship with Russia, and the way in which it has led to a new emphasis on military posture as a deterrent to Russian aggression. Such discussions will impact the intra-alliance tensions that exist in NATO as a result of the differing motivations and perceptions of its member states, and thereby shed light on the future character of NATO's strategic orientation.

Chapter II: Understanding Security

The concept and definition of “security” is highly contested and debated, as is its applicability in international relations. The concept of security is thus interpreted differently between nation-states, as a result of their varied historical, cultural, and social backgrounds. Because of these differences, it is important to establish a common idea of security, in order to better understand the perspectives of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, as well as that of the unitary NATO alliance.

In addition, the concept of security – as perceived by NATO – directly impacts how the alliance articulates its nuclear deterrence posture. In particular, it affects the strategy that governs the potential use of TNWs and SNWs by NATO, by defining what constitutes a threat to the alliance and its members. The way in which NATO understands security is also tantamount to ensuring its nuclear deterrence strategy is viewed as credible by its members and its possible adversaries.

Defining security

During the Cold War, the widely accepted definition of security was that championed by realist theorists; namely, a focus on military action as the central tenet of any definition of the concept. During the Cold War both NATO and the Warsaw Pact relied on military strength as a deterrent to conflict, and both of these institutions were, first and foremost, military alliances. According to these views, security is limited to the absence of a military threat, or with the protection of a state from attack or external overthrow.¹⁶ Therefore, in the context of the Cold War, international relations was concerned mainly with the use of force, or the prevention of it. The nation-state was the referent object of security and security policy.¹⁷

Figure 2.1



Cold War Divisions Up to 1990 (Stratfor)

However, since the fall of the Soviet Union, the nature of security has been widely debated. The loss of that bipolar international system, where a shallow, military-centric understanding of security prevailed, led to an overhaul of the definition of security. Critics of realist ideologies rose to greater prominence as a result. These new theoretical investigations into the concept of security have explored

the possibility of its decoupling from the conventional focus on the comparative military strengths of nation-states. As a result, the concept of security and what constitutes a threat to it has widened considerably since the early 1990s.

Initially, security was conceptualized within a framework wherein the state is assumed to be the primary unit of analysis, and therefore, it was concerned wholly on the interest of state survival. However, the concept of security has expanded to include implications for individuals and societies separate from the nation-state. In *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problems in International Relations*, Barry Buzan argues that the concept of security as it was understood by academics during the Cold War was underdeveloped, despite its wide use and acceptance.¹⁸ This lack of development led to the prominence of an “excessively narrow, hollow and militarised interpretation of security.”¹⁹

Buzan cites a perceived overlap between the ideas of security and power as a reason for this lack of complexity in common perceptions of security.²⁰ According to realist ideologies, power dominates as both a necessary means and an end for nation-states; security, on the other hand, conceptually shrank to the point that its purpose became explaining the levels of success achieved as a particular state or alliance in terms of their struggle for power, or how stable the overall international balance of power was.

According to Ole Wæver, despite this broadening of the security agenda, many of the specific qualities that have historically characterized security problems do remain: the urgency of action, state power claiming the legitimate use of extraordinary means to address threats, and threats seen as potentially infringing on sovereignty.²¹ Theoretically, these descriptors could describe a spectrum of concerns, but conventionally, the military sector has been the most important to their address.²²

Buzan understands security as being affected by five factors: military, political, economic,

societal, and environmental. Military security encompasses the traditional realist understanding of security; it generally concerns the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states, as well as perceptions of the intentions of states. Political security describes the organizational stability of states, their systems of government, and the ideologies that legitimate them. Economic security refers to levels of access to those resources necessary to achieve acceptable levels of welfare and state power. Societal security concerns the sustainability of cultures. Environmental security refers to the maintenance of the biosphere.²³

A basic definition of a security problem, as it follows from both Buzan and Wæver's analyses, is something that can “undercut political order” and thereby “affect the self-determination and sovereignty” of a unit, be it at the international, national, or individual level.²⁴ Security is about survival: of the state, societies, and the individual. Thus, as stated, “security” encompasses a range of different concerns.

In addition, security issues vary across time and over different actors; security policy “mirrors change and continuity in perceptions and misperceptions, beliefs and disbeliefs, learning and unlearning.”²⁵ Security policies, thus, are characterized by changes in perception of one's own and others' interests and capabilities, as well as perceived interests and capabilities. For this reason, the concept of security can be understood in different ways by different actors, as will be evidenced by the three Baltic States, when compared to the NATO alliance as a whole.

Security – the NATO perspective

The end of the Cold War resulted in a push for a further “rethinking” of the concept of security. Absent a powerful antagonistic entity, the Soviet Union, NATO's role and identity had to be reformulated, and its relationship with Russia and the post-Soviet states reconceived. NATO's role was

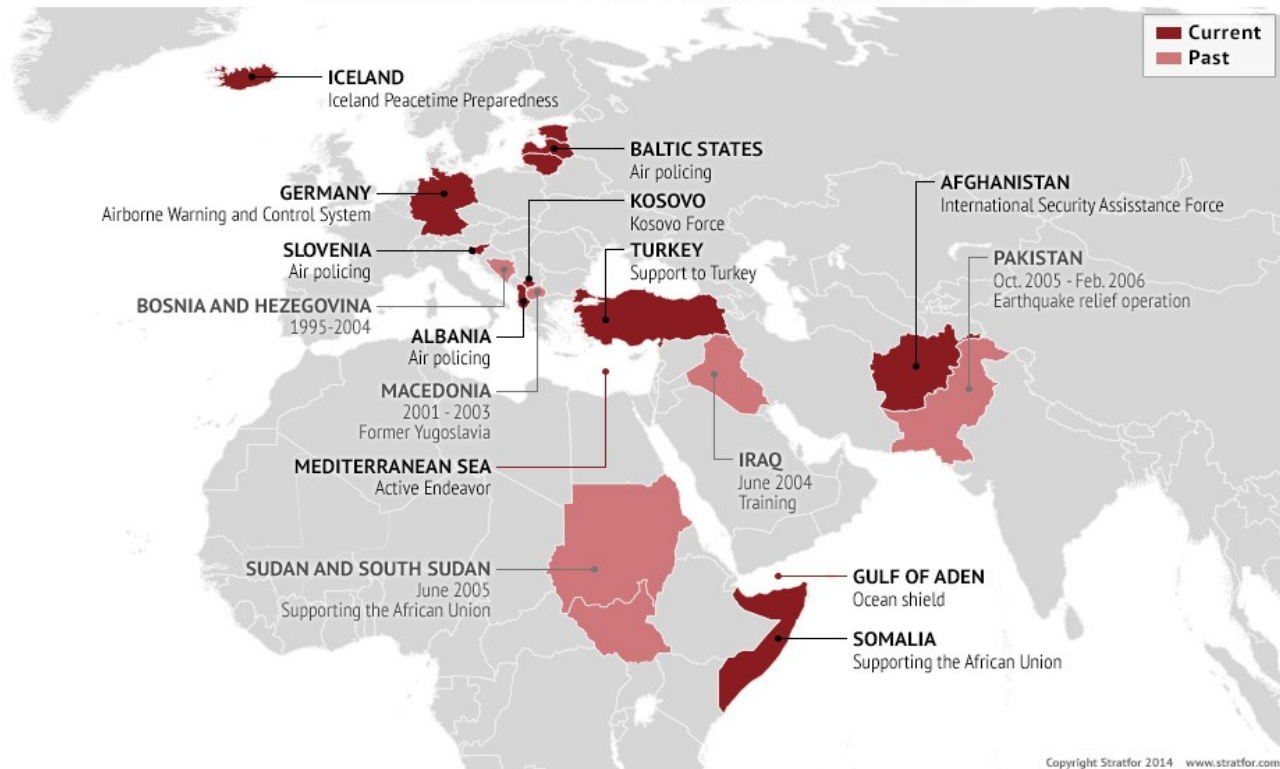
expanded to incorporate new threats, and ensure the alliance's continued relevance.¹ In the 1991 Strategic Concept, the NATO members agreed that the risks to their security were now more likely to come from instabilities associated with economic, social, and political difficulties – such as the ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes between the newly independent states in eastern Europe – rather than from military conflict.²⁶

As a result, NATO began to focus more closely on its crisis management and prevention capabilities. For the first time, the alliance began to intervene to manage crises beyond its borders, and to accept peacekeeping roles.²⁷ Important to the decision-making process within NATO was acceptance of the notion that the security of alliance members was intertwined with that of other European nations. This profound transition in NATO was illustrated by the alliance's decision to intervene in Bosnia in 1995. This intervention was justified by NATO and the UN as necessary to the preservation of European security, but in reality, the deployment of NATO personnel had more to do with the human rights violations to which the Bosnian people were being subjected.²⁸ A similar intervention in Kosovo in 1999 further underscored the importance of NATO's new role.

¹ For a constructivist analysis of NATO's evolution, see Gheciu, Alexandra, *Securing Civilization? The EU, NATO and the OSCE in the Post-9/11 World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2008) and Gheciu, Alexandra, *NATO in the "New Europe": The Politics of International Socialization After the Cold War*, California: Stanford University Press (2005).

Figure 2.2

CURRENT AND PAST NATO MISSIONS



Current and Past NATO Missions (Stratfor)

Following the end of the Cold War, NATO also increasingly began to focus on cooperative links with states outside the alliance framework, through such initiatives as Partnership for Peace (PfP), the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, the NATO-Ukraine Commission, and the Mediterranean Dialogue.²⁹ Some priorities of this cooperation include democracy promotion, confidence-building, capability and capacity building, education and training, energy security, and civil emergency planning.³⁰ This multifaceted approach to emerging security issues suggests a complex understanding of security: one that goes beyond a focus on military responses. To better address these multifaceted threats to security, NATO has assembled itself as a “security community.”

The NATO security community

NATO could be characterized as a “security community.” A security community is a group

composed of multiple states which are functioning under similar conditions, have the expectation of lasting peace between them, and are structurally linked to one another in order to better ensure the continued reproduction of these conditions.³¹ Security communities are characterized by peaceful change and conflict resolution without the use of violence.³² In order for a security community to function, its members must hold similar sets of values and expectations for the community.

Membership in a security community is a method through which states can address the security dilemma. The security dilemma describes how, due to a lack of an overarching authority in the international system, as well as the system's character of “self-help,” states strive to develop and maintain offensive capabilities in order to protect themselves from attack.³³ Because of this resulting build-up of arms, states will perceive others as having aggressive intentions, even if these capabilities are meant for self-defence.³⁴ These escalating misconceptions leading to action and reaction can result in arms races.

By integrating into a security community, states are able to escape the bounds of the security dilemma, because it means they will no longer perceive the security policies of other states in this community as threatening. Instead, they will see these advances as beneficial to themselves and the alliance as a whole, due to the fact that allies are expected to defend others in the security community if necessary. The defeat of the security dilemma through security community building is especially relevant to the role of nuclear weapons in security perceptions.

The role of nuclear weapons in security perceptions

The security dilemma is important to understanding nuclear proliferation, due to the military advantage that nuclear weapons development gives states, and the strategic dilemmas they engender. The development of a nuclear weapon capability offers the ultimate assurance of survival. However,

states without this capability tend to feel disadvantaged, and thus often interpret their security as threatened by those who develop it.³⁵

As a result, these states might also pursue nuclear weapons, as was seen during the US-USSR arms race during the Cold War. However, it is worth noting that the value of TNWs for extended deterrence is questionable, particularly when compared to SNWs. The TNWs currently stationed in Europe for NATO's use are leftovers from a much wider spectrum of nuclear weapons of various types and ranges that were once deployed in large numbers in several NATO countries. During the Cold War, TNWs were intended as a step between conventional fighting and nuclear warfare, utilizing SNWs.

The development of nuclear weapons increases a state's bargaining power through the establishment of a deterrence capability.³⁶ Classical theorists on deterrence argue that the potential costs of a nuclear attack are so great that they produce restraint from nuclear possessors; this idea is articulated through the concept of MAD. However, nuclear weapons development can also be a destabilizing factor in the international system. First, other states might take preventive action if they believe a state that they are adversarial to is developing a nuclear capability, as outlined by the security dilemma concept.³⁷ Second, in the event that a state is known to be developing a nuclear weapon capability, other states might want to extract concessions from that state before the capability is achieved, because they suspect it will no longer be feasible following the completion of these weapons.³⁸ Third is the issue of extended deterrence, wherein the nuclear weapons possessed by one country are intended to also protect other states, and thus can be perceived as being intended to target a state that the first nation might not normally have adverse relations with.

In sum, when a state begins to seek a nuclear weapon capability, even if the purpose of this capability is to deter threats to the state's security, that state can be perceived as threatening to others, as is described in the security dilemma. The threat from nuclear weapons, furthermore, is greater than that

of conventional weapons in terms of the extent of the destruction they can wreak.

Two important points become clear from this discussion: first, that NATO's character as a security community can be used to neutralize the threat of the security dilemma amongst members of the alliance; second, that as an actor with nuclear capabilities, NATO does practice deterrence. However, should NATO lose this capability, and then decide to develop it again, it may provoke destabilization in the international system, because other states and alliances might question NATO's motivations.

NATO has had to adapt to the new environment created by the conceptual expansion of security in the 21st century. However, though NATO has relied on nuclear weapons less since the end of the Cold War, the concepts of nuclear deterrence and the security dilemma remain relevant and enduring facets of the international system. The next chapter will look more closely at how the expansion of the concept of security has impacted the nuclear dimension of NATO. It will also look specifically at the role of TNWs in NATO's deterrence strategy. This discussion will be necessary in preparation for deeper discussions of the Baltic perspective on security, and the ways in which it is contrasted to that of the larger alliance, and thus affects NATO's strategic posture on nuclear weapons.

Chapter III: Changing Perspectives on Security and NATO's Nuclear Dimension

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has seen a shift in the strategic context in which it operates, from a primarily military focus to a political one. NATO's wider concept of security has broadened the security agenda to include non-military threats. As a result, the very nature of the alliance has evolved from a military alliance to one with a chiefly political bent.

Due to this shift in perspective, NATO's nuclear dimension has also changed over the past several decades. NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons has slowly diminished, although they still remain an important part of the alliance's defence and deterrence policies. However, due to conflicting views within NATO regarding the continued deployment of TNWs, NATO's policies toward these weapons have become increasingly vague, in order to ensure continued alliance cohesion. NATO's TNW policy is also intended to aid in the management of strategic relations with Russia, to ensure it is not depicted as an enemy, and that cooperative relations are encouraged.

NATO's ambiguity regarding the future of TNWs, as well as over questions of NATO's greater strategic direction, are further reinforced by the necessity of consensus for the alliance's decision-making. In order to ensure consensus is reached on issues, compromise between the member states is often necessary, which can lead to overall weaker stances being taken in order to ensure agreement.

Brief history: NATO's deployment of TNWs

From the day of its inception in 1949, NATO was a nuclear alliance. The US, a founding member of NATO, detonated the world's first atomic bomb in a test at the Trinity bomb site in New Mexico on July 16, 1945. US SNWs were first deployed to Europe in 1954, and were placed in the

Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). Within 10 years, these weapons had spread to Belgium, France, Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (UK).³⁹ Ground-, air-, and sea-based TNWs were introduced in Europe through the 1950s, in order to strengthen the alliance's deterrent capability against the superior conventional forces of the Warsaw Pact.⁴⁰ In this way, TNWs represented an American commitment to ensuring the security of its European allies through a focus on nuclear deterrence.

Into the 1960s, TNWs also became a critical piece of Western efforts to control the further proliferation of nuclear weapons, even among its allies. Those NATO member states that hosted American TNWs were expected to participate only through the use of designated delivery systems and hosted bases, and the weapons remained strictly under US control.⁴¹ However, US allies were able to participate in planning for the possible use of these weapons, through NATO institutions such as the Nuclear Planning Group.⁴² The 1960s were the peak years of the US TNW arsenal, totalling approximately 7,000 warheads.⁴³

In 1971, there were an estimated 7,300 nuclear weapons deployed in Europe, including a variety of TNWs: nuclear landmines (atomic demolition munitions); atomic bazookas; nuclear artillery shells; various types of gravity bombs; air-to-air missiles; air-to-surface missiles; short- and intermediate-range missiles; land-, air-, and sea-based cruise missiles; and antisubmarine warfare munitions.⁴⁴ By the end of the 1970s, however, the US began to reduce the overall quantities of these weapons, as part of a modernization programme that would ensure the retention of a deterrence capability through the introduction of smaller, more effective weaponry.⁴⁵

In 1987, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was signed by the US and USSR, which specified that the two nations would eliminate all ground-based missiles with a range between 500 and 5,500 km, and accept intrusive military installation inspections.⁴⁶ In the autumn of 1991, US President

George H. W. Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev announced two unilateral initiatives, the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs), which resulted in substantial limitations and the removal of many TNWs from the European theatre. Boris Yeltsin, the first President of the Russian Federation, promised to continue the reductions begun by Gorbachev.⁴⁷

As part of the PNIs, the US pledged to withdraw, dismantle, and destroy all its ground-launched short-range weapons deployed outside US territory; to eliminate all TNWs from its naval surface ships, submarines, and the depth charges of the naval air force; and to discontinue the development of short-range attack missile (SRAM) T-type, designed to arm tactical strike aircraft.⁴⁸ Following the implementation of the PNIs, only one type of TNW was left deployed in Europe by the US: the B-61 free-fall nuclear bomb. The Soviet Union promised to destroy all of its nuclear artillery munitions, nuclear landmines, and warheads for tactical use.⁴⁹ Russia, however, did not fully meet the commitments pledged through the PNIs.⁵⁰

Despite the fact that the PNIs were not legally binding and included no provisions for the verification of weapons reductions, they led to a dramatic curtailment of American and Soviet/Russian TNW capabilities. By the time the Cold War drew to a close in the early 1990s, TNWs had become less important to NATO's deterrence strategy, as the threat of a conventional attack against Europe declined substantially. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved, the Soviet Union collapsed, and NATO and the new Russian Federation cut their conventional forces and destroyed thousands of TNWs.⁵¹ In 1991, approximately 2,480 TNWs were stationed in Europe by NATO; by 2012, that number had fallen to between 150 and 200 weapons.⁵²

To reflect the new security environment that followed the Cold War's end, NATO released a new Strategic Concept in 1991. The purpose of NATO, according to this document, remained to “safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means.”⁵³ The 1991 Strategic

Concept identified NATO's new security challenges and risks in light of the fact that the threat of a “simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO's European fronts ha[d] effectively been removed and thus no longer provide[d] the focus for Allied strategy.”⁵⁴ As a result, the 1991 Strategic Concept asserted that opportunities for “achieving Alliance objectives through political means are greater than ever before.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, the document directly identifies the political, economic, social, and environmental elements of security, in addition to the defence dimension.⁵⁶

While the 1991 Strategic Concept made no direct mention of TNW development or reductions, it did state that the presence of US nuclear forces in Europe remained vital,⁵⁷ as nuclear weapons render “the risks of any aggression incalculable and unacceptable.”⁵⁸ Thus, despite the reduction of TNW numbers during this time, TNWs remained at the forefront of NATO's deterrent capability directly following the fall of the Soviet Union.

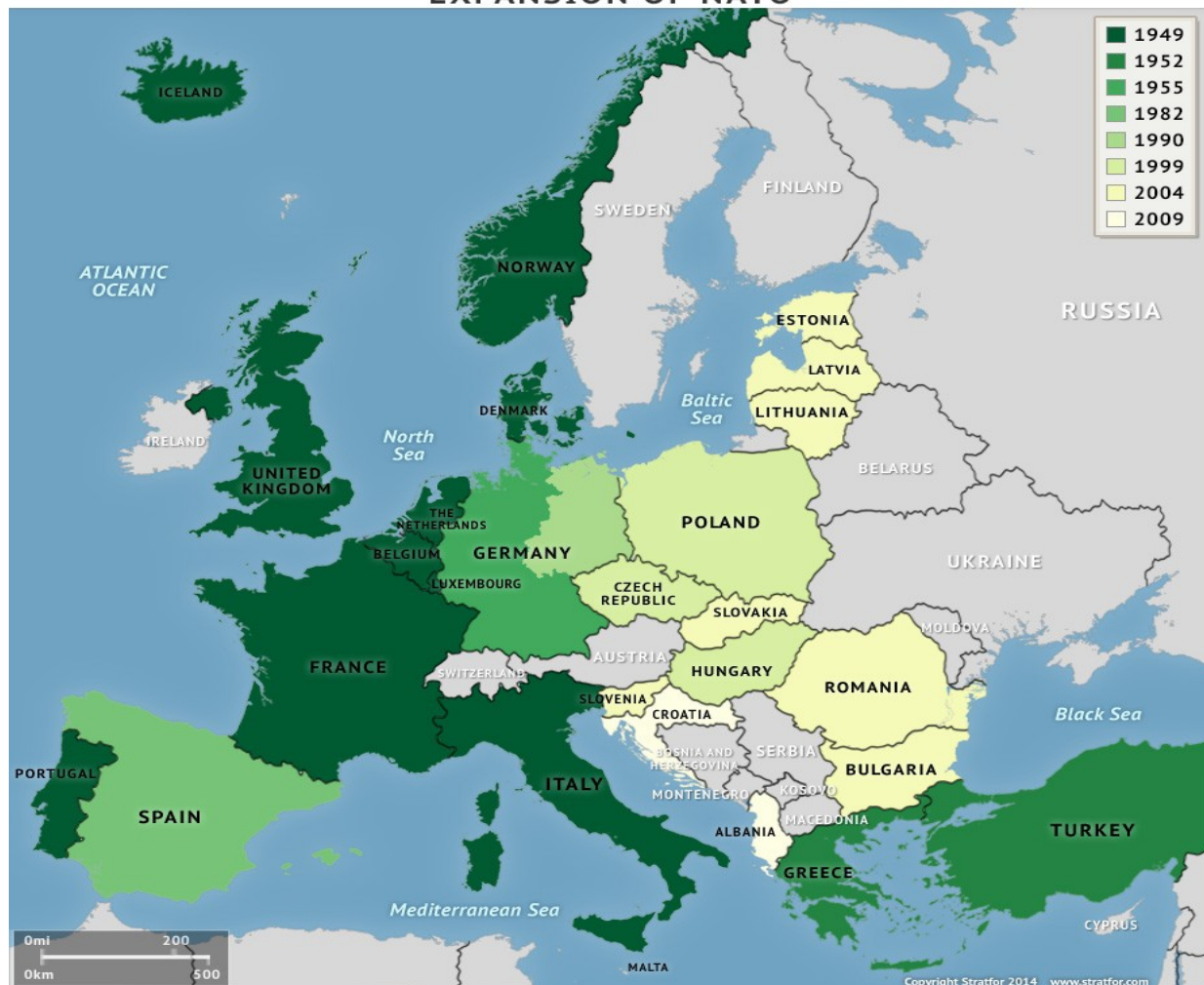
By 1999, when NATO produced another Strategic Concept, the alliance's reliance on nuclear weapons had begun to decline significantly. Throughout the 1990s, NATO significantly relaxed the readiness criteria of its nuclear forces and terminated its standing peacetime nuclear contingency plans.⁵⁹ Under the presidency of Bill Clinton, the US denuclearized its naval surface fleet.⁶⁰ Following the ascension of George W. Bush to the presidency in 2000, TNWs were withdrawn from Greece, the UK, and the US Air Force base in Ramstein, Germany.⁶¹

Nevertheless, the 1999 Strategic Concept identified the presence of American conventional and nuclear forces in Europe as continuing to be vital to security.⁶² As a result of their necessity, the document pledged to maintain nuclear capabilities in Europe, albeit at a “minimum sufficient level,” in order to ensure the preservation of peace.⁶³ Thus, while nuclear weapons theoretically still remained a central part of NATO's security doctrine, NATO began to look at ways in which it could reduce its reliance on these weapons, whilst still ensuring the security of its members.

NATO's current policy on TNWs: the 2010 Tallinn Principles and 2010 Strategic Concept

Following the 1999 Strategic Concept, NATO did not develop another such plan for over a decade. The 2010 Strategic Concept included former members of the USSR and Warsaw Pact, who were integrated into the alliance in 1999, 2004, and 2010 (See Figure 3.2).⁶⁴ The 2010 Strategic Concept therefore includes their perspectives, and was shaped by intra-alliance negotiations with these new members.

Figure 3.1
EXPANSION OF NATO



The Expansion of NATO (Stratfor)

Since the development of NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept, the debates surrounding the continued deployment of TNWs in Europe by NATO have become more prominent. While the 2010 Strategic Concept does state that as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, NATO must remain a nuclear alliance, it is the first time that one of NATO's strategic concepts spoke to a goal of eventual disarmament, and a world free of nuclear weapons.

At a ministerial meeting in Tallinn, Estonia in April 2010, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton suggested five principles to guide future NATO policy on nuclear weapons, and particularly the alliance's new Strategic Concept. The following principles were agreed upon by the ministers of NATO's member states:

- 1. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance;*
- 2. As a nuclear alliance, widely sharing nuclear risks and responsibilities is fundamental;*
- 3. The broader goal of the alliance must be to reduce the number and role of nuclear weapons and recognize that NATO has already dramatically reduced its reliance on nuclear weapons;*
- 4. The alliance must broaden deterrence against 21st century threats, including missile defence, strengthen Article V training and exercises, and draft additional contingency plans to counter new threats;*
- 5. In any future reductions NATO's aim 'should be to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, relocate these weapons away from the territory of NATO members, and include non-strategic nuclear weapons in the next round of US-Russian arms control discussions alongside strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons.'*⁶⁵

During this time, the NATO Group of Experts, chaired by another former US Secretary of State,

Madeleine Albright, released a report in May 2010 that concluded that “as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO should continue to maintain secure and reliable nuclear forces, with widely shared responsibilities for deployment and operational support, at the minimum level required by the prevailing security environment.”⁶⁶ The report called for the “possible eventual elimination” of TNWs, but suggested the retention of some forward-deployed US TNWs on European territory to ensure the continued existence of a nuclear guarantee, and therefore a deterrent.⁶⁷

The Tallinn Principles and the report by the NATO Group of Experts became the basis for the nuclear formula described in the 2010 Strategic Concept.⁶⁸ The 2010 Strategic Concept was adopted by the alliance members at the NATO Summit in Lisbon on 19 and 20 November 2010. The subject of the forward deployment of TNWs was a subject of contention during the development of the 2010 Strategic Concept, and as a result, consensus was not reached, and the document's policies toward TNWs are ambiguous.

Paragraph 17 of the 2010 Strategic Concept identifies deterrence through conventional and nuclear weapons to be a core part of NATO's overall strategy. While it states that the occurrence of circumstances that might warrant the use of nuclear weapons are very remote, as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO retains the right to possess them.⁶⁹ At the same time, however, NATO outlines an intent to emphasize non-proliferation and disarmament (Paragraph 26), through the promotion of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the creation of the necessary conditions for nuclear weapons reductions, and the encouragement of the relocation of Russian nuclear weapons away from the territories of NATO member states.⁷⁰

The priorities emphasized in NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept are ambiguous on several key nuclear themes – including TNWs – leaving much for the 2012 DDPR to clarify. Furthermore, some of the most fundamental elements of NATO's nuclear policies remained unchanged by the Strategic

Concept. For example, NATO's policy of first-use, even against non-nuclear attack, and the basing of TNWs on the territories of non-nuclear alliance members.⁷¹

The Chicago Summit and NATO Deterrence and Defence Posture Review 2012

In 2012, NATO further clarified its position concerning the future of TNWs through its DDPR. During the negotiations for the DDPR, any dissenting views were presented by the member states. The eastern European member states – and especially the Baltic States – resisted the possibility of the withdrawal of the bombs from Europe. The views of the Baltic States were supported by France, one of the three nuclear members of NATO. Germany actively promoted the removal of these weapons, and the other member states held positions in-between these stances.⁷²

The document is thus the product of compromise between actors holding significantly different views. A priority of NATO, according to the DDPR, is to encourage the creation of the “conditions for a world without nuclear weapons,” and in so doing, promote international security.⁷³ The DDPR speaks specifically on NATO's and Russia's responsibilities regarding TNW deployments.

In the DDPR, NATO also states its intent to create the conditions for further reductions in TNWs, while at the same time ensuring that the alliance's nuclear deterrent remains secure and effective.⁷⁴ In terms of Russia-NATO relations, the DDPR identifies transparency and confidence-building measures as key, with an eventual goal of increasing the mutual understanding of NATO's and Russia's TNW force postures in Europe.⁷⁵ It states a willingness to reduce its TNW presence, should Russia take reciprocal steps.⁷⁶

However, such reciprocity is not simple to achieve: even creating the conditions within NATO to establish a strategy for reductions is difficult. The NATO member states have competing views on what such reciprocity would entail: some insist that Russia ought to match every NATO TNW

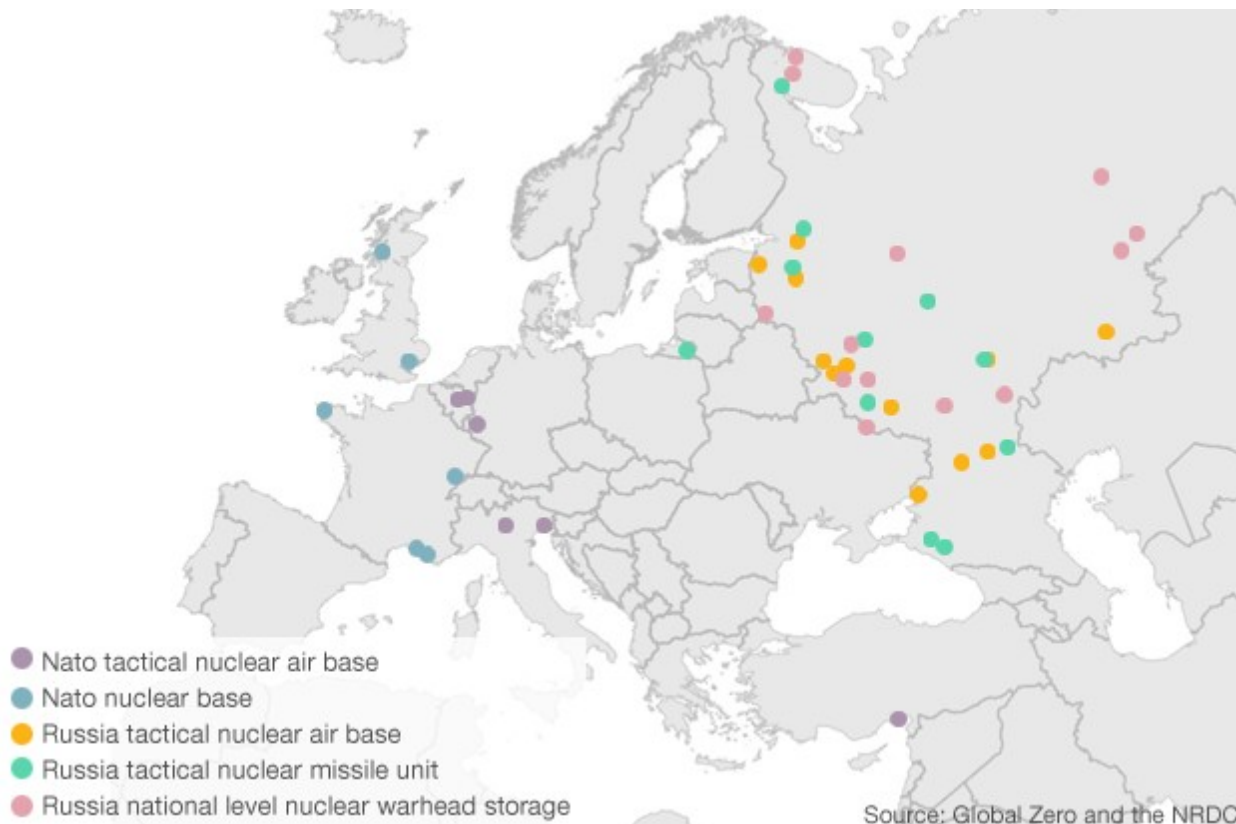
reduction, while others believe that NATO should preemptively take the lead in such reductions, in order to encourage Russia to do the same.⁷⁷ Such debates have served to deepen the tensions between the NATO alliance members over the question of whether or not to retain a TNW capability in the future.

Current and future status of US TNWs in Europe

Specifics of TNW deployments

TNWs continue to play a role in NATO's nuclear deterrence strategy. Currently NATO possesses an estimated 150 to 200 TNWs deployed to six bases in five European countries: Belgium (Kleine Brogel), Germany (Buchel), Italy (Aviano and Ghedi Torre), the Netherlands (Volkel), and Turkey (Incirlik).⁷⁸ These weapons are all variations of the B-61 free-fall nuclear bomb: the B-61-3, B-61-4, and B-61-10.⁷⁹ These bombs were constructed between 1979 and 1989, and feature yields ranging between 0.3 and 170 kilotons. Several aircraft used by NATO members are equipped to transport these bombs, including the American F-15E and F-16C/D; the Belgian, Dutch, and Turkish F-16s; and the Italian and German Tornados.⁸⁰

Figure 3.2



Current Nuclear Weapons Sites in Europe (BBC)

The US TNWs in Europe are funded by the US, and stockpiled under American supervision. Of the six European bases hosting TNWs, two utilize US dual-capable aircraft (DCA) for delivery (Aviano and Incirlik), and four rely on non-US DCAs (Buchel, Ghedi Torre, Kleine Brogel, and Volkel).⁸¹

Currently, the US National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) is preparing to undertake an approximately \$10 billion (\$25 million per bomb, including those deployed in Europe and on American soil) B-61 Life Extension Program (LEP), in order to expand the lives of its B-61 bombs for a further 20 to 30 years.^{82 83} Four B-61 variants – the B-61-3, 4, 7, and 10 – will be consolidated to create the B-61-12, which will use newer and fewer components.⁸⁴ The new B-61-12 will replace the bombs' tail sections with a new guided tail kit, intended to increase accuracy. It will also improve the bomb's targeting capability, allowing for lower-yield strikes against targets that would have previously

required higher-yield weapons.⁸⁵ The first version of the B-61-12 is due to be completed by 2020, with a goal of converting all bombs by 2024.⁸⁶ If this LEP fails or takes longer than intended, a gap may be created, during which there will be no US B-61s deployed in Europe.

However, should the European members of the alliance currently hosting TNWs wish to continue their operational involvement, they will need to replace or modernize the DCAs needed to deploy conventional or nuclear weapons within the next ten to fifteen years.⁸⁷

Intra-NATO debates on TNWs

NATO is not a monolithic entity, but is a heterogeneous collection of states, each with their own perspectives and positions on security issues. In negotiating the DDPR, many views had to be considered, from demands to eliminate TNW deployments in certain countries (for example, Germany),⁸⁸ to calls to deploy more TNWs, and particularly to eastern Europe (the Baltic States). For this reason, the claims made in the DDPR, as in the 2010 Strategic Concept, remain vague and ambiguous.

For example, though the DDPR outlines a goal of eradicating nuclear weapons, no timeline is given, and it is made abundantly clear that no such disarmament will occur without reciprocal measures being taken by the rest of the international community. In addition, the alliance retains a focus on “international security,” as to quell the fears of members such as the Baltic States. However, even the idea of what “international security” means varies across the alliance, and is particularly divergent in terms of the understanding of the three Baltic States, and that of the greater NATO.

In addition, there is a disparity in the alliance between the more “established” NATO members and the newer, smaller members, which has resulted in the formulation of two distinct camps within the alliance: “security providers” and “security consumers.”⁸⁹ In terms of combat power, the contributions

of these new member states, including the Baltic States, are generally less than that of the larger, older members.⁹⁰ These members do, however, contribute strategic depth to the alliance, but absent the Soviet threat, NATO members have not been able to consolidate their threat perceptions. It is this conflict of opinions, coupled with a decision-making structure that requires unanimity, that has resulted in the ambiguity of NATO's general strategic direction, and specifically consensus over TNWs.

In sum, in order to establish and maintain intra-alliance consensus on TNWs, as written in the DDPR, a low level of ambition on the part of the alliance members is necessary.⁹¹ The “goals” outlined in the DDPR are sufficiently ambiguous as to ensure basic agreement from all members. As a result, continued maintenance of the status quo has become NATO's default option, and as such, no clear decision has been made either way. NATO member states continue to pursue individual policies on the subject of TNWs, as opposed to establishing and following a unitary point of view.

TNWs and the deterrence debate

The value of TNWs as a deterrent is debatable; however, two important functions are clear. First, they represent NATO's resolve to respond militarily to crises, and therefore lend credibility to the alliance. Second, they contribute to lengthening NATO's “ladder of escalation,” again lending credibility to the alliance, while at the same time, making it less likely that NATO might have to resort to all-out nuclear war. These functions were true during the Cold War, and continue to hold relevance, particularly as the military relevance of NATO is increased in light of the crisis in Ukraine.

In order to ensure the credibility of deterrence through the concept of MAD, NATO needed to establish a number of nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities to respond to threats. Should the Soviet Union have launched an attack despite the existence of a NATO nuclear deterrent, NATO's nuclear capability was intended to continue to have a role as a tool of deliberate escalation that would signal

NATO's resolve and convince the adversary to seek a ceasefire at the lowest possible level of destruction.⁹² Even in a situation of war, the purpose of NATO's nuclear weapons was war termination, not battlefield victory.

TNWs, then, were only “one link in a long chain of nuclear forces.”⁹³ NATO deployed a mix of weapons of various types and ranges, all of which were considered usable; this was intended to signal flexibility, and thus further strengthen their value as a deterrent. In an emergency situation, TNWs could be moved closer to the region in crisis, in order to reassure the NATO members. By having a TNW capability, NATO secured a chain of events ranging in severity from conventional weapons to SNWs, thereby illustrating the conditions under which SNWs could theoretically be used. Thus the greatest value of TNWs was understood as increasing the credibility of NATO's greater nuclear posture by validating the concept of SNW use by the alliance.

TNWs also help ensure that there a ladder of escalation is available to NATO, so that every threat to the security of their members does not merit the use of SNWs in response. The concept of an “escalation ladder” was first articulated by Herman Kahn, and describes how a nuclear state or alliance might ensure a war is limited, while at the same time, maintaining the threat of a nuclear war.⁹⁴ It does so by moving from the bottom of the ladder – “subcrisis management” – to the top – “spasm or insensate war” – through incremental steps up the 44 rungs, in order to “test the water” while not committing to all-out nuclear war.⁹⁵ TNWs are thus tightly bound to NATO's greater strategic deterrence strategy; without them, the alliance's escalation ladder is shortened, meaning that the chances of a conflict spiralling into an all-out nuclear offensive is increased.

As stated, in order to ensure the credibility of NATO's nuclear posture, TNWs must be tied to the strategic level of NATO's deterrence strategy. However, doing so serves to bind TNWs to structures outside of the control of the alliance; namely, it obligates NATO to come to the defence of its allies. In

such a context, the Baltic States could theoretically hold significant power. Should the security of any of the Baltic States be threatened, NATO would be obligated to respond to the threat, as is promised in Article V of the *North Atlantic Treaty*.

Politically, the continued deployment of nuclear weapons by NATO gives the Baltic States an inordinate amount of power compared to their relatively small sizes. In order to signal its capability and credibility, NATO would have to respond to any military intervention in the Baltic States; the Baltic States thus theoretically hold a *carte blanche*, in that NATO would risk its reputation as a security community if it did not respond to risks to the security of the Baltic States.

Therefore, while the continued deployment of TNWs – as well as other nuclear weapons capabilities – serves to create a deterrent to aggression from outside the alliance, it also can feed into instability, given the obligation that NATO has to defend its members. The way in which NATO and its individual member states frame threats to their security is thus very important, as is the methods that the alliance employs to ensure the security of its members.

NATO's wider concept of security has broadened the security agenda since the end of the Cold War. As a result, the nature of NATO alliance has evolved to meet this shifting agenda, and has thus shifted from a military alliance to one with an important political dimension. However, the recent crisis in Ukraine has served to underscore the continued importance of NATO's military capabilities and credibility. While NATO has worked to engage with Russia on a diplomatic level since the start of the crisis, the alliance has also taken steps to increase its military credibility.

In March 2014, Latvia and Lithuania both announced plans to more than double their annual defence spending, in order to meet NATO's target of two percent of total GDP.⁹⁶ On In June 2014, President Obama proposed an additional one billion US dollars to increase the US military presence in

eastern Europe. This money will cover ongoing land, sea, and air deployments in Eastern Europe; the movement of existing resources closer to the Russian border; and additional aid to Ukraine and Georgia.⁹⁷

As a result of these shifts, NATO's nuclear dimension has also changed. However, though NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons – and TNWs specifically – has slowly diminished, they remain an important part of the alliance's defence and deterrence policies, as part of the ladder of escalation concept. A challenge, however, has been the lack of cohesion within the alliance on the future of these weapons. This lack of cohesion is steeped in diverging understandings of security, and the purpose NATO serves in providing security to its member states.

Chapter IV: Baltic Security Perspectives

The Baltic perspective on security has been shaped by the history, capabilities, and geostrategic location of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. For the Baltic States, the primary purpose of NATO has always been collective defence, as promised in Article V of the *North Atlantic Treaty*. The continued maintenance of NATO's defence and deterrence capabilities is, as a result, the primary focus of the Baltic States' participation in the alliance.⁹⁸

The lasting legacy of the Soviet Union has ensured that the security concerns of the Baltic States are dominated by their relations with Russia. Though the Baltic States achieved independence over two decades ago, the preservation of their state sovereignty and territorial integrity remain key drivers in their interpretation of security.⁹⁹ It is because of this legacy that the Baltic States view security – and particularly, how security is guaranteed through NATO – in terms of military capability. This perspective was emphasized under Soviet rule, and was reinforced by their experiences and relations with Russia post-USSR.

The Baltic States under the USSR

Following the end of World War II, the Baltic States were occupied by the Soviet Union for nearly 50 years. During the Cold War, the prevailing understanding of “security” was simple and stable: security was equated with military power, and thus states were concerned mainly with the use of force, or prevention of the use of force. In other words, a realist understanding of international relations prevailed, wherein the greatest threat to the USSR was NATO's military capability.

As Soviet republics, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were ruled centrally from Moscow. By the final years of the USSR, the Soviet military had a strong foothold in the Baltic States: at the end of

1990, the Soviet Union had stationed two motor rifle divisions and one airborne division in Lithuania, one tank division in Latvia, and one motor rifle division in Estonia.¹⁰⁰ Lithuania hosted three air force bases and one naval base, Latvia housed five air force bases and two naval bases, and Estonia had five air force bases and two naval bases.¹⁰¹ The quantity of Soviet troops stationed in the Baltic republics in the final years of the USSR was staggering. For example, at the end of the 1980s, approximately 125,000 Soviet troops were stationed in Estonia alone – roughly 10 percent of the country's total population.¹⁰²

On 11 March 1990, Lithuania declared itself to be an independent state, which provoked Moscow to impose economic sanctions on the republic, and eventually resort to military force. On 11 January 1991, Soviet troops opened fire on a crowd in Vilnius, killing 14 people. Five days later, similar violence in Riga, Latvia left five dead. However, political and economic mayhem across the USSR meant that by August 1991, the Soviet Union had neither the will nor the means to prevent the Baltic States from breaking away; Estonia and Latvia joined Lithuania in declaring independence.

Russia-Baltic tensions since the dissolution of the USSR

The Russian military in independent Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania

In independent Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, nation-building focused on the complete negation of the Soviet past.¹⁰³ The Russian Federation – the legal successor state of the USSR – continued to be perceived by the Baltic States as a security threat. The regime of Boris Yeltsin, Russia's first president post-USSR, not only refused to apologize for the Soviet crimes, but was also slow to withdraw Russian troops from the Baltic States, thereby planting early seeds of suspicion.¹⁰⁴ At independence, approximately 130,000 Soviet – later Russian – troops remained stationed in naval, air, and land forces bases across the Baltic States.¹⁰⁵ In Estonia, the Soviets continued to operate the

Paldiski nuclear submarine training centre, the largest facility in the former Soviet Union, and only one of its kind.¹⁰⁶

The withdrawal of the former Soviet military from the Baltic States became a primary objective for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, but despite their willingness to begin immediate negotiations, the Russian Ministry of Defence refused to name a start date for such discussions, and stated that such withdrawals would not begin until at least 1994, were unlikely to be completed before 2000, and would be conditional on the three Baltic governments agreeing to pay for the construction of housing for the soldiers withdrawing to Russia.¹⁰⁷ Even two months after the USSR officially recognized the independence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, not only had the withdrawal of forces not begun, but the Soviet army continued to bring additional troops into the all three countries and conduct exercises.¹⁰⁸ These actions were of particular concern to Estonia, because Soviet paratroopers were stationed only 45 minutes from the Riigikogu (parliament) in Tallinn; for this reason, the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested that United Nations (UN) peacekeepers be deployed until the Soviet military had been withdrawn.¹⁰⁹

On 25 December 1991, the Soviet Army transitioned into the Russian Army, but the same problems remained in terms of troop withdrawals. In fact, the act of withdrawing Russia's forces was further complicated by the large presence of ethnic Russians that had moved to the Baltic States during the Soviet era, particularly in Estonia and Latvia. In Estonia, between 1934 and 1989, the number of Russian speakers climbed from 8.2 percent to 30.3 percent,¹¹⁰ and in Latvia, 34 percent of the population was ethnic Russian when the Soviet Union fell.¹¹¹ In Lithuania, the ethnic Russian population at the end of the USSR was quite a bit less, at 9.4 percent. This was because Lithuania had a much larger population and available workforce than Estonia and Latvia, and during the Soviet era the demand for Russian workers was much lower.¹¹²

Post-independence, the rights and status of the ethnic Russian minorities living in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania came into question. From the perspective of the Baltic States, the ethnic Russian populations provided a justification for Russia's continued interference and troop presence in their territories. In 1992, Russian President Boris Yeltsin issued a decree that suspended the withdrawal of Russian troops due to his “profound concern” over the treatment of the Russian speaking minority in the Baltic States.¹¹³

In this context, Yeltsin attempted to establish these Russian troops as “peacekeepers,” and the situation reached such a degree of intensity that European Union (EU) and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring missions were established in Estonia and Latvia.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, during the early 1990s, Russian violations of Lithuanian airspace occurred regularly; in April and May 1994 alone, 194 airspace violations were reported along the Russia-Lithuanian border.¹¹⁵

Russian military withdrawals were not completed until 31 August 1994,¹¹⁶ and the base at Paldiski was not decommissioned until 30 September 1995.¹¹⁷ The final Russian military installation in the Baltic States, the Skrunda radar facility in Latvia, was formally handed over to Latvia on 22 October 1999. The system was a key component of Russia's air-defence network between 1971 and 1998, and Latvian officials were not allowed on the base at any time during the 1990s until the hand-over took place.¹¹⁸

This period complicated the post-Soviet relationships between each Baltic State and Russia, affected their perceptions of security and sovereignty, and resulted in a deep distrust of Russia. Following the completion of the withdrawal of the Russian military, this mistrust continued to persevere.

During the 1990s, Russia performed several military operations in proximity to the Baltic States. In one such operation, in June 1999, Russia simulated a conventional Western attack on the

Kaliningrad enclave. When the Russian military “failed” to repel the attack, it “defeated” the virtual aggressor with nuclear weapons.¹¹⁹

Between 2003 and 2005, the military activity of Russia's Baltic Fleet increased substantially, including large scale exercises and equipment modernization.¹²⁰ Furthermore, since 2003, the activities of the Russia-Belarus military grouping along the Baltic borders have intensified. For example, a common air defence system was created, programmes for weapons modernization were established, and several joint exercises have taken place.¹²¹

Partly as a result of continued Russian military pressure, and their perception of Russia as a security threat, all three Baltic States voiced their intentions to join NATO shortly after gaining independence. They began actively working toward this goal through the 1990s and into the early 2000s.

The Baltic States in NATO

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania became members of NATO on 29 March 2004.¹²² However, despite their membership in the alliance, the Baltic States have continued to perceive Russia as a direct military threat to their sovereignty.

Following the Soviet collapse, Russia adjusted the old Soviet nuclear strategy to fit its new circumstances. In 1993, it explicitly rejected the USSR's no-first-use pledge, thereby indicating that it viewed nuclear weapons as a central facet of its military and security strategy.¹²³ Russia has revised its national security and military strategy several times over the past 20 years, and each successive version has placed a greater reliance on nuclear weapons as both a deterrent and a tool of retaliation.¹²⁴

Even following the Baltic States accession to NATO, Russian military exercises and troop presence near the borders remained a concern. In 2009, the Russian military conducted the largest

military exercises to be conducted near NATO borders since the Cold War: *Zapad-2009* and *Ladoga-2009*. At least 30,000 soldiers participated in the exercises, which stretched along the entire Russian border with the three Baltic States and Finland.¹²⁵ The *Zapad-2009* exercise ended with a simulated first-use nuclear attack on Poland following the hypothetical failure of Russia's conventional defences against NATO forces.¹²⁶

In November 2011, then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev announced that he intended to deploy nuclear-capable 9K720 Iskander short-range ballistic missiles to the Kaliningrad oblast, in order to counter – if necessary – NATO's planned ballistic missile defence (BMD) shield in Europe.¹²⁷ Kaliningrad borders directly on Lithuania, and the 500-km range of these missiles is more than enough to reach Estonia and Latvia as well.¹²⁸

Russia's most recent security strategy is its 2010 Military Doctrine. This document specifically states that the preeminent external military danger to Russia is “the desire to endow the force potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with global functions carried out in international law and to move the military infrastructure of NATO member countries close to the Russian Federation, including by expanding the bloc.”¹²⁹ In addition, it claims that the deployment of troops from foreign states to territories contiguous with Russia or its allies is another serious threat to Russia.¹³⁰ Russia thus still views NATO as a direct military threat, and retains the right to use nuclear weapons in response to NATO actions.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Soviet Union deployed an estimated 15,000 to 25,000 TNWs.¹³¹ During the 1990s, Russian officials publicly claimed to be eliminating its warheads at a rate of approximately 2,000 per year, as part of the PNIs. However, many experts doubt the truth of this, arguing that Russia lacked the financial and technical means – not to mention the political will – for such a swift disarmament.¹³²

Currently, Russia is believed to deploy between 2,000 and 4,000 operational TNWs, and has an unknown number of additional TNWs in reserve.^{133 134} It is believed that this includes warheads for tactical aviation, naval nuclear-tipped cruise missiles, air defence missiles, and minimal ground forces capabilities.^{135 136} In addition, the Iskander missiles have a nuclear capability, and Russia continues to increase their numbers,¹³⁷ including deploying some to the Kaliningrad oblast, which borders on Lithuania and Poland.

Though NATO's conventional forces are considered superior to those of Russia – both in terms of numbers and overall quality – the small size of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania means that Russia would be advantaged in terms of its ability to deploy quickly to the Baltic region.¹³⁸ Thus the ability of NATO to provide reinforcements, and the credibility of NATO's support, is extremely important to the Baltic States, given their continued conception of Russia as a security threat.

In addition to military exercises and the deployment of missiles near the Baltic States, Russia has taken several other actions perceived as threatening to the sovereignty of the Baltic States.

1. Status of ethnic Russians in the Baltic States

The status of ethnic Russians – particularly in Estonia and Latvia – remains a point of contention for Russia. Both Latvia and Estonia have been criticized by the OSCE and the Council of Europe for being too rigorous in their citizenship requirements, and employing restrictive language and education policies that exclude and disadvantage ethnic Russians.¹³⁹

Many ethnic Russians have not naturalized according to those procedures required by the Latvian government, and as a result, there are approximately 300,000 “non-citizens,” out of a total Latvian population of only two million people.¹⁴⁰ In Estonia, 25 percent of the population is ethnically Russian. In 2012, the Estonian government rejected a proposal that would have allowed for those children born in Estonia to non-citizens to be granted citizenship.¹⁴¹

Figure 4.1



Russian Minorities in the Baltic Countries (Stratfor)

2. Russian support for Baltic political parties

Moscow directly supports pro-Russian political parties in the Baltic States; these parties have seen considerable success in Latvia, and to a lesser extent in Estonia. In Latvia, the pro-Russian Harmony Centre party won more seats in the Latvian Saeima (parliament) than any other in the national elections on 17 September 2011: a total of 31 out of 100 seats.¹⁴² As a result, most of the other parties formed a coalition to exclude Harmony Centre from power. Harmony Centre has a co-operation agreement with Putin's party, United Russia.¹⁴³ In Estonia, similar links have been identified between the Russian government and the pro-Russian Centre Party, which currently has 21 seats of 101 in the Riigikogu.¹⁴⁴

In Lithuania in 2003, elements of Russia's intelligence services and organized crime syndicates infiltrated the electoral campaign of a candidate for presidency, Rolandas Paksas, as well as his staff once he was elected president. After months of political turmoil, the Lithuanian government managed to impeach President Paksas in 2004.¹⁴⁵

3. Tension over historical events and symbols

In recent years, tensions have returned or escalated between Russia and the Baltic States over contested historical events and symbols. For example, in April 2007, plans to relocate a Soviet memorial in Tallinn, Estonia led to riots in Tallinn and assaults against Estonian and Swedish diplomats in Moscow.¹⁴⁶ The movement of the “Bronze Soldier” from the centre of Tallinn to a military cemetery on the outskirts of the city was viewed entirely differently by ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians: to Estonians, the statue represented oppression by the Soviet Union, while to the Russian minority – and Russia itself – it was a commemoration of fallen Soviet war heroes and a celebration of the defeat of Nazi Germany in the Second World War.¹⁴⁷

On the day the Bronze Soldier incident began, a three-week wave of cyber attacks hit Estonia, in the first known incidence of such an assault on a nation-state.¹⁴⁸ The attacks are widely believed to have originated in Russia, though whether or not they were sanctioned by the Russian government is unknown; the Russian government denies any involvement.¹⁴⁹ The cyber attacks lasted from 25 April 2007 until 04 May 2007, and resulted in several websites being made inaccessible, including the Estonian presidency and Riigikogu, nearly all Estonian government ministries, several national political parties, three of Estonia's six big news organizations, and two of Estonia's largest banks.¹⁵⁰

Lithuania was also the target of a major cyber attack in June 2008, three days after legislation was passed by the Lithuanian Seimas (parliament) banning the display of Soviet symbols.¹⁵¹ In this attack, over 300 websites were assaulted using methods similar to those used in the attack on Estonia a

year earlier. Some websites were also vandalized through the use of Soviet hammer and sickle images.¹⁵²

In response to the cyber attack against Estonia and Lithuania, NATO has taken precautionary steps to prevent future damage to its members and the greater alliance. Both the 2010 Strategic Concept and the 2012 Chicago Summit Declaration recognize the need to better protect the NATO's information and communications systems. In 2008, the NATO Co-operative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence was established in Tallinn.¹⁵³ In June 2011, NATO adopted a cyber defence policy and associated Action Plan, which offers a clear vision of alliance plans to improve its cyber defence capabilities.¹⁵⁴

4. Coercion through the energy sector

All three Baltic States are closely integrated into the Russian energy infrastructure, and Russia has used this connection to coerce them through a variety of means. Russia has engaged in the coercive use of energy supplies as a tool for geopolitical influence in many of the countries of eastern Europe. Between 2000 and 2006, Russia cut off energy exports on approximately 40 occasions: most often, to former Soviet republics.¹⁵⁵

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are exceedingly reliant on Russian energy: they each depend on Russia for approximately 90 percent of their oil and 100 percent of their gas.¹⁵⁶ They remain heavily dependent on Russian energy because of a lack of domestic resources within their territories, and due to the legacy of the Soviet-era infrastructure of pipelines, electricity, and gas grids, all of which remain connected to Russia.¹⁵⁷

The most recent incidents in the Baltic oil industry include the halting of oil supplies to the Latvian port operator Ventspils Nafta in 2003 and to the Lithuanian oil refinery Mažeikiu Nafta in 2006, as well as interruptions to oil supplies intended for Estonia by rail in May 2007.¹⁵⁸ In the case of Ventspils Nafta and Mažeikiu Nafta, at the time of writing, the oil supply has not been restarted.

The causes of these actions by Russia came as a result of the choices of the Baltic States to pursue policies at odds with Russian interests. The halting of oil supplies to Ventspils Nafta and Mažeikiu Nafta both came as a result of refusal by the Latvian and Lithuanian governments to allow Russian investment in the companies.¹⁵⁹ The interruption of Estonia's energy supply followed the “Bronze Soldier” incident.

Russia has had considerably more success influencing the Baltic States through the gas sector than the oil sector for two reasons. First, oil is traded internationally, and all three Baltic States have the capacity to import non-Russian oil through their terminals on the Baltic Sea, while Baltic gas import infrastructure is limited entirely to Soviet era pipelines and is wholly dependent on Russia. Second, Russia does not rely on the Baltic States as transit-ways to foreign markets, and as a result gas supply can be cut to the Baltic States without any interruption to supplies to western or central European countries.¹⁶⁰

However, despite these factors, the Baltic States have never engaged in a “gas war” with Russia like Belarus and Ukraine have.¹⁶¹ This is likely because Russia's state-owned oil giant, Gazprom, owns controlling shares in all three Baltic national gas companies – Eesti Gaas, Latvijas Gaze, and Lietuvos Dujos – and thus is able to influence them quite directly.¹⁶² The 2004 Russian-Belorussian gas dispute did adversely affect Lithuania, however, as nearly all of Lithuania's gas supply from Russia transits Belarus.

5. Russian intelligence collection

Russian intelligence services are reportedly very active in all three Baltic States.¹⁶³ Nearly every year, Russian 'diplomats' are expelled from Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius on charges of spying; the Baltic States, to Russia, are the simplest way to gain insight into the activities of NATO and the EU, and Russia has been fairly successful at infiltrating the Baltic intelligence apparatuses.¹⁶⁴

In September 2008, for example, Estonian citizen Herman Simm was arrested for passing highly classified NATO information on cyber security and BMD to the Russians. At the time, Simm was the head of the Estonian state secret protection office, and he is alleged to have started working for the Russians in 1995. He was found guilty of treason in February 2009. It is still unknown how much data was shared by Simm, but it is certainly one of the largest NATO security breaches since the Cold War.¹⁶⁵

6. Russian military intervention in other former Soviet republics

Possibly the largest causes for concern from the perspective of the Baltic States are the direct Russian military interventions into the sovereign territories of other former Soviet Republics. The Russian military incursion into Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 were interpreted by the Baltic States as “evidence of a bellicose Russian approach to its neighbours,” in which Russia was willing to use hard power tactics to achieve political objectives, using the rights of ethnic Russians as a pretext.¹⁶⁶

In August 2008, the Georgian armed forces responded to attacks by secessionists from its breakaway region of South Ossetia. In retaliation, Russia – who had peacekeepers deployed in the region – retaliated with a full-scale invasion into South Ossetia, as well as an increased military presence in Abkhazia, another secessionist province of Georgia, in order to protect its soldiers.¹⁶⁷ The Russia-Georgia War (also known as the Five-Day War) resulted in the deaths of hundreds, created thousands of refugees, and injured relations between Russia and NATO.¹⁶⁸ Russia still maintains a military presence in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and has recognized both provinces as independent states, despite minimal support from members of the international community.¹⁶⁹

In November 2013, the abrupt decision of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich to pull out of a proposed association deal with the EU led to street protests across Ukraine, and to Yanukovich's eventual downfall. Continued unrest in the country, particularly in the east, gave Russia a

pretext to annex the Ukrainian region of Crimea in March 2014.¹⁷⁰ The current security situation in Ukraine at the time of writing remains volatile: pro-Russian separatists have taken key infrastructure in the provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk including police stations, city halls, and security service headquarters. Clashes between the Ukrainian military and separatists continue to be commonplace across the south and east of Ukraine. Russia retains a significant amount of troops on its border with Ukraine, and is arming separatists in Ukraine.

Due to these ongoing tensions, the general Baltic mindset toward Russia is one of ongoing insecurity. As the security strategies of the Baltic States thus take into account these concerns over Russia, their positions are relevant to NATO's internal debates over the continued future deployment of TNWs in Europe, and NATO's greater future security perspectives.

The construction of security in the newly independent Baltic States

As a result of their history as part of the Soviet Union, their continued tense relations with Russia, and ethnic tensions that have impacted their domestic politics, the security policies of the Baltic States have evolved to include their continued support for the deployment of TNWs by NATO in Europe. The way in which Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania conceptualize security was developed around a military understanding of security that emphasized two main elements: the build-up of national armed forces and integration into a military alliance, NATO.¹⁷¹

Thus, throughout the 1990s, discussions of Baltic security issues were made predominantly in light of the development of national armed forces and their aspirations to join NATO, and focused almost entirely on military security as both the cause and strategy of addressing insecurity.

The creation of the Baltic national armed forces

At the time of the Soviet Union's dissolution, the newly established Baltic States had little in terms of military assets. Each had at their disposal only limited militia forces, parliamentary guards, border guards, and voluntary forces that were not professionally armed.¹⁷² Following the establishment of Baltic independence, the creation of national armed forces were deemed necessary by all three governments, and was seriously prioritized.

Though there were debates in all three nations regarding the possibility of refraining from developing national armed forces, this concept was rejected by all three for several reasons. First, though these national armed forces would be incapable of defending Baltic sovereignty, they could be used to address other external threats, such as civil unrest in neighbouring countries. Second, the very existence of Baltic armed forces could help to facilitate closer coordination and even integration into Western security structures. Third, the armed forces of all three Baltic States could be combined in the case of a security threat, making them more capable of addressing said threat. Fourth, the lack of a military and defence strategy could signal vulnerability to other countries. Fifth, armed forces could be used to address internal problem, such as organized crime, political instability, or natural disasters. Sixth, armed forces are widely viewed as one of the “symbolic and functional cores of the nation-state,” and thus an important element of the reconstructed, independent Baltic States.¹⁷³

Among the populations of the Baltic States, trust in the new armed forces was limited, particularly in Latvia and Lithuania.¹⁷⁴ Conscription was introduced in all three countries in order to ensure militaries of adequate size were formed, but many would-be conscripts resisted entering the armed forces, resulting in an alarmingly high number of deserters. Though effective conscription methods existed in the Baltic States during the Soviet era, they collapsed with the greater USSR. Post-independence, none of the Baltic States had the strong executive power and enforcement

capabilities necessary to ensure the principles of conscription were followed.¹⁷⁵ To illustrate, in the autumn of 1992, Lithuania issued 17,034 draft notices, of which 11,517 were avoided;¹⁷⁶ in Latvia in 1996, 78 percent of potential recruits reportedly managed to avoid the draft.¹⁷⁷

The construction and early functioning of the Baltic militaries had a distinctly “Soviet” feel, and many Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian citizens, as well as external observers, saw it as simply a continuation of the ethical systems and abuses practised by the Soviet military.¹⁷⁸ Not only did these new militaries rely on conscription as the USSR had, but they also retained a specifically Soviet mindset.

Col. (ret.) Gundars Zalkalns (US army), former defence adviser to Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis, argues that following the end of the Soviet Union, all three Baltic States suffered from what he calls the “Post-communist mindset.”¹⁷⁹ The influence of this thinking was pervasive in the creation of the armed forces of these countries. Key elements of the Post-communist mindset observed in the new Baltic militaries included deliberate short-sightedness in planning; the avoidance of administrative systems and structures that encourage accountability but limit manoeuvrability; decision-making without proper regard for the feasibility of implementation; unnecessary crisis management; the illusion of situational control; a chronic avoidance of coordination and information exchange; a limited understanding of the value of public relations; administrative rigidity at the expense of results; and process-oriented management over a results-based focus.¹⁸⁰

In addition, members of the new Baltic militaries practised rituals of harassment that had been typical of the Soviet Army. For example, *dedovshchina* – violence against first year conscripts by those in their second year of service – was reportedly commonplace.¹⁸¹ *Grupповshchina* – harassment based on nationality – was also reported in the new national forces of the Baltic States, though not to the same extent as it was seen in the Soviet era.¹⁸² The new Baltic militaries, however, were more ethnically

homogenous than that of the Soviet Union.

During the early 1990s, there were temporarily three types of armed forces present in the Baltic States at the same time: the regular forces, volunteer forces, and Russian armed forces.¹⁸³ In addition, for a short period in May 1991, a temporary pro-Polish militia was erected as part of an attempt to create a Polish Autonomous Territorial Region within Lithuania.¹⁸⁴

In all three countries, tensions between the volunteer and regular armed forces reigned, and these rivalries were facilitated and even encouraged by the Baltic governments. Volunteer forces saw themselves as the guardians of independence, and the true representatives of the national values of their countries.¹⁸⁵ Many of the regular forces members were formerly officers in the Soviet military, and thus they were not entirely trusted by the volunteer forces or general populations. Further, the regular forces generally were disdainful of the volunteers, who they viewed as “hobby soldiers.”¹⁸⁶ The politicization of these different forces was outlined through their assigned functions, but was not solidified in law, which led to further confusion and conflict.¹⁸⁷ Initially, little legislative or civilian oversight existed over the militaries of any of the Baltic States.¹⁸⁸ For these reasons, during the 1990s, the armed forces of the Baltic States were more frequently a source of insecurity than security.

The way in which the national armed forces were designed and implemented in all three Baltic States illustrates a conception of security of the state as directly linked to the military. The creation of armed forces for these countries was depicted from their inception as “necessary” and “natural” components of nation-state security.¹⁸⁹ The new Baltic armed forces also followed many of the same implementation features as were used by the Soviet military. These ideas of security are no longer compatible with that of the greater NATO alliance.

The NATO ambitions of the Baltic States

The ways in which the national armed forces of Baltic States evolved through the 1990s and into the early 2000s were based on their intent to one day join NATO. However, despite the Baltic ambitions for NATO membership, their views regarding NATO's purpose differed from that of the greater alliance.

Throughout the 1990s, the relationship between NATO and the Baltic States could be described as contradictory in a number of ways. First, following the release of the 1999 Strategic Concept, NATO began to market itself as a political organization; the Baltic States, however, valued NATO as a military alliance, and sought to join it as a way to guarantee their security through Article V. Second, NATO saw its security role as extending across Europe, the Atlantic, and beyond; the Baltic States saw the alliance primarily as a means to collectively defend its members from outsiders; in their case, namely Russia. Third, NATO saw the 1994 PfP initiative as a way to stave off further NATO enlargement, while the Baltic States viewed it as a direct path to NATO membership. Lastly, NATO intended to establish security with Russia, while the Baltic States hoped to use NATO as a means to increase its security against Russia.¹⁹⁰

Consequently, the Baltic States joined the PfP programme in 1994 and committed fully to meeting the necessary requirements for eventual membership in NATO.¹⁹¹ In the years leading up to their accession to the alliance, military spending increased considerably in all three countries. Between 1996 and 2000, for example, military expenditures more than doubled in Estonia and more than tripled in Lithuania.¹⁹² The Baltic States committed to increasing their military spending to the two percent target set by NATO. At the time of writing, however, only Estonia has succeeded in meeting this target.¹⁹³

Since becoming members of NATO in 2004, the Baltic States have sought to both contribute to

and benefit from the military dimension of the alliance. NATO's requirements for force interoperability helped the armed forces to evolve out of the Soviet legacy. For example, the Baltic navies have all focused on developing mine countermeasures and monitoring capabilities, and their air forces have focused on surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities for enhanced air and land defence potential.¹⁹⁴

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania all took part in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations in Afghanistan and its Kosovo Force (KFOR) mission. From June 2012 onwards, they began contributing to a joint unit within the NATO Response Force (NRF): the Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT) is a single infantry battalion with 800 service personnel from the three countries.¹⁹⁵

In terms of NATO's direct contributions to Baltic security, the most visible is the Baltic Air Policing Mission (BALTAP). This task has been carried out by other NATO allies on a rotational basis since 2004, and is intended to protect the sovereign territory and airspace of the Baltic States.¹⁹⁶

BALTAP is considered vital to the security of the Baltic States, as none of the three countries possess fighter jets of their own.

The NRF is also viewed by the Baltic States as of significant importance to the Article V commitments. Because of its geographic location and limited armed forces, the availability of a rapid reinforcement capability is perceived as necessary. Since joining NATO, Baltic officials have persistently requested reassurances from NATO through contingency planning and military exercises.¹⁹⁷ Given the recent history of cyber attacks against the Baltic States, co-operation with NATO on cyber security has also become a priority.

The current Baltic perspective on TNWs

For the Baltic States, the primary purpose of NATO is collective defence through a commitment to Article V. A priority of the Baltic States, then, is the continued credibility of NATO's nuclear

deterrent. They are therefore wary of any alliance policies that might weaken this deterrent.

The Baltic States advocate for the NATO's continued reliance on nuclear weapons for two major reasons. First, they see nuclear weapons as a method of offsetting the weight of potential Russian intimidation. Second, they view nuclear weapons as a symbolic representation of the US and NATO's commitment to use the full range of their military strength to defend alliance members, and underscores a positive relationship with the US. Both of these reasons relate back to the Baltic perception of security as linked solely to the military, and their perception of TNWs as an assurance of NATO's strategic commitment to collective defence.

As stated, there are a number of different ways through which the Baltic States continue to view Russia as a threat to their security, and the majority of these fears are based in a military understanding of security. The continued classification of NATO as a defence alliance for the protection of their territory is thus of utmost importance to the Baltic States¹⁹⁸ Speaking to the Parliament of Canada's Standing Committee on National Defence on 17 May 2012, Rasa Juknevičienė, then Minister of National Defence for Lithuania, stated that her country's main concern is “Russia's intention to dominate the region and the Baltic States.”¹⁹⁹

Two important caveats limit the participation of the Baltic States in the formulation of NATO's nuclear policy. First, the Baltic States are covered by the “Three No's” policy, a commitment made to Russia by NATO in 1997 not to base any nuclear weapons on the territories of the former Warsaw Pact countries.²⁰⁰ Second, none of the Baltic States have adequate air force capabilities to accompany and facilitate the hypothetical use of nuclear weapons.²⁰¹ Currently, the Baltic States rely on BALTAP to preserve the sovereignty of their airspace.

However, though these caveats once were followed by NATO, and thus the Baltic perspective on TNW deployments was controlled, current developments in the relationship between Russia and

Ukraine have led NATO to reassess its position on increased military involvement in and with the Baltic States, and may even lead to a shift in the perspective of the greater alliance toward retaining these capabilities, as part of a larger strategic shift within the alliance on NATO's military role, and the place of nuclear deterrence.

The Baltic States support for NATO's continued reliance on TNWs is based in a continued belief in a military threat from Russia, and the need, therefore, for NATO to retain a credible deterrent and operational capability to address Russian aggression. The fear of Russian aggression, as perceived by the Baltic States, also feeds into a continued characterization of security as solely related to the military, which has advised the Baltic States' perspectives on NATO's greater strategic role in the international system.

Chapter V: TNWs, Intra-alliance politics, and NATO's competing strategic visions

NATO is in the midst of a serious strategic culture clash regarding how security for the alliance can be best achieved: through military or political means. Among alliance member states, there are differing views regarding the strategic vision for NATO's future role in the world, and subsequently, the necessity of continuing to deploy American TNWs in Europe. The divergence within the alliance on NATO's strategic vision is plainly illustrated by the intra-alliance tensions that exist regarding TNWs. These divergences have meant that NATO has been forced to take a generally ambivalent position concerning TNW deployments, and thus has opted to retain the status quo, despite the fact that these weapons and their delivery systems are ageing to the point of obsolescence.

In addition, current developments in Ukraine, and Russia's involvement in this crisis, have led to increased calls from alliance members for NATO to make more credible military guarantees in eastern Europe, in order to reassure its members from central and eastern Europe, and especially the Baltic States. NATO has responded to the concerns of these members in several ways, most notably by increasing its military presence in the Baltic States.

Though NATO has thus far been silent concerning any plans to deploy more TNWs in Europe, it is possible that the current crisis in Ukraine might lead to the resurrection and intensification of this debate. However, while this crisis has led to a greater emphasis on NATO's military strength, it is likely that future military initiatives will focus on other methods of deterrence, such as BMD. Nevertheless, without a common understanding of security, and NATO's role in ensuring it for its members, the alliance will be unable to articulate a clear position on TNWs, or its greater strategic outlook. Thus the status quo will simply continue, and NATO will be paralysed in indecision.

Alliance ambiguity on TNWs

The Baltic States value TNWs as a deterrent to possible Russian aggression, which they still view as a threat. While NATO has transitioned into a political alliance, the Baltic States continue to emphasize and value the military component of the alliance over other facets.

In the case of TNWs, NATO's member states have differing views regarding the continued deployment of these weapons in Europe; of particular note are the views of the Baltic States, who vehemently prefer to continue the inclusion of these weapons as part of NATO's defence strategy. The alliance's current collective position on TNWs is outlined in several recent documents and decisions: the 2010 Tallinn Principles, the 2010 NATO Group of Experts report, 2010 Strategic Concept, and 2012 DDPR. However, because NATO decision-making requires consensus, these policies are ambiguous in terms of their intent concerning the future of the deployment of American TNWs in Europe. Due to the ambiguity of NATO's position on TNWs, the alliance has weakened: therein is the danger of NATO's lack of cohesion.

The competing views in NATO regarding American TNWs in Europe indicates a lack of fit between the security perspectives of the Baltic States and the NATO alliance as a whole. Such a cleavage within NATO suggests an overall lack of unity in the alliance, and particularly concerning the future purpose and priorities of NATO.

Competing strategic visions for the NATO alliance

Within NATO there exists a strategic culture clash on how to achieve security, wherein there are competing visions within the alliance on this subject, as evidenced by the Baltic nuclear case study. These divergences and competing strategic visions have forced NATO as a whole to take a generally ambiguous stance on TNWs, in order to appease all members of the alliance.

During the Cold War, the concept of security was very stable: security was viewed primarily in terms of military prowess. In the Baltic States, this thinking perseveres 25 years later. It was illustrated early in the Baltic independence, initially in these countries' focus on the swift build-up of troops, and next in terms of their goals regarding NATO membership.

Simultaneous to the Baltic States' continued focus on the military dimension of security, following the end of the Cold War, NATO began to transition into a political alliance, rather than a solely military structure. Due to a lack of focus on the upkeep of NATO's conventional authority on the part of its member states, and because of the alliance's intent to reduce nuclear weapons, it became necessary for NATO to embrace political authority.

Despite this transition, external factors – namely, the ongoing crisis in Ukraine – have given NATO new cause to increase focus on its military dimension, and particularly how it relates to the Baltic States. This new focus may lead to new debates regarding the deployment of American TNWs in Europe.

NATO's Response to the 2014 Crisis in Ukraine

The current crisis in Ukraine has incited pre-existing tensions within NATO regarding the strategic focus of the alliance. NATO's post-Cold War transformation into an international crisis management actor was predicated largely on the perception that Russia no longer posed a threat to the alliance's member states.²⁰² However, recent developments in NATO's eastern neighbourhood have led to many members to call for an increased focus on collective defence, as it is enshrined in Article V of the *North Atlantic Treaty*.²⁰³

In response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in Ukraine – what NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has dubbed, “the most serious crisis in Europe since

the fall of the Berlin Wall”²⁰⁴ – NATO has significantly bolstered its presence in its eastern European member states, and particularly in the Baltic States. Though it has not yet made moves to increase its TNW presence, other actions taken by the alliance indicate that it is unlikely that NATO's European TNWs will be decommissioned anytime soon.

NATO has taken many military actions to reassure its members and allies, as well as to rebuke Russia. First, NATO has strengthened its military and political cooperation with Ukraine, including providing military trainers and aiding in modernization efforts.²⁰⁵ Though no promises have been made regarding the potential for the enlargement of NATO to include Ukraine, NATO has been openly supportive of the new Ukrainian government.

Second, the BALTAP mission has been boosted from four fighter jets to 12.²⁰⁶ When the Polish Air Force took over the mission in May with four MiG-29 'Fulcrum' fighters, it was joined by four Eurofighter Typhoons from the UK and four F-16 Fighting Falcons from Denmark.²⁰⁷ In addition, on 10 July 2014, the Government of Canada announced that in September 2014 it would begin sending CF-18s to patrol as part of BALTAP.²⁰⁸ As part of BALTAP, NATO member fighter jets have reportedly been forced to scramble several times in May and June 2014, in response to the presence of Russian aircraft along the borders of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.²⁰⁹

Third, since March 2014, NATO's airborne warning and control system (AWACS) surveillance aircraft have been conducting twice daily monitoring flights; one over Poland and one over Romania.²¹⁰ Fourth, NATO has suspended all “practical” civilian and military cooperation with Russia in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council.²¹¹ Fifth, the alliance sent part of its naval rapid reaction force to the Baltic Sea, including four minesweepers and a support vessel.²¹²

In addition, some NATO allies have individually provided non-lethal aid to Ukraine, and also taken part in joint military exercises, though not under the banner of NATO. The crisis in Ukraine has

led to renewed discussions over NATO's military role in Europe and internationally. At the time of writing, Ukraine is deeply entrenched in a civil war, and it is unlikely that the conflict will see a quick resolution.

The future of NATO's TNW deployments

The crisis in Ukraine has renewed focus on the strength of the US commitment to European security. Despite significant reductions in US troops stationed in Europe since the Cold War, the administration of President Barack Obama has asserted that the US remains committed to the defence of its fellow NATO member states.²¹³ The cornerstone of this commitment is not TNWs, but the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA), a BMD programme.²¹⁴ The US has missile defence ships stationed in the Mediterranean and a US radar in Turkey. Interceptor sites are planned to be deployed in Romania in 2015 and Poland in 2018.²¹⁵

Because Ukraine is not a member of NATO, the alliance is under no obligation to respond to threats to its sovereignty. However, the recent crisis in Ukraine has meant that NATO is under increased pressure to ensure that its member states – particularly those in geographic proximity to Russia – are reassured about their continued security. This has led to an increase in NATO's military presence in the east, and particularly in Poland and the Baltic States.

However, while the crisis in Ukraine has led to renewed discussions about NATO's military role in Europe, it is unlikely to do more than simply draw attention away from the TNW debate. Instead, NATO will continue to focus on an increased air policing presence, and the development of improved BMD capabilities. NATO wants to deter Russian aggression, but has so far preferred to achieve this result through conventional warfare postures.

Opponents of the withdrawal of the B-61 bombs from Europe insist that Russia's invasion of

Crimea and provocations in Ukraine proper prove that the Cold War threat has not abetted, and that in fact NATO must ensure Russia is contained and deterred.²¹⁶ Such a deterrent, as NATO has traditionally postured it, includes a nuclear component. According to Kahn's escalation ladder concept, the deterrent value of TNWs is attached to its position in limiting the ease in which a conflict can escalate into all-out nuclear war. TNWs extend the ladder of escalation by providing additional steps that NATO could theoretically utilize in a crisis situation.

However, the crisis in Ukraine has also called into question the deterrent capability of TNWs. The argument for the continued deployment of TNWs as a reassurance measure for the Baltic States relies on the place of TNWs in the ladder of escalation. Russia has not been dissuaded from pursuing interests in Ukraine, and NATO has relied on conventional means in an attempt to ease the fears of the Baltic States. Yet, Baltic security has not been threatened, and NATO has not threatened the use of TNWs.

NATO's Article V guarantees have increased the political authority of the Baltic States; should their security be threatened, NATO will have no choice to come to their aid, or risk losing credibility. However, NATO has treated the Ukrainian crisis very gently, walking a fine line between supporting the Ukrainian government, working to reassure its eastern members, and trying to avoid conflict with Russia. Given the current state of NATO-Russia relations, and the political authority that Article V grants NATO members, it is likely that NATO will not pursue enlargement in the near future; extending membership to countries such as Moldova, Georgia, or Ukraine risks inciting confrontation with Russia.

On 19 May 2014, Secretary-General Rasmussen stated that NATO would continue to respect the promises made in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, and thus the alliance has no intention of basing nuclear weapons in the newer member states in eastern Europe, or permanently basing

additional “substantial combat forces” there.²¹⁷ Nevertheless, it is possible that the issue will be further debated when NATO leaders meet for a conference in Wales in September 2014.

The current situation in Ukraine has impacted the way that NATO interacts with Russia, and has, in some ways, validated the concerns of the Baltic States. As a result of the crisis, NATO has suspended all military cooperation with Russia, and also strengthened its military presence in the Baltic States. So far, however, this increased presence has not extended to establishing additional TNW deployments in Europe. Nor, in fact, have these developments led to heightened debates in NATO over TNWs specifically. They have, however, resulted in an increased emphasis by NATO on its general military capabilities, particularly in eastern Europe.

It is likely that the continued crisis will turn the pendulum back toward a greater military role for NATO in its neighbourhood. However, NATO will have to decide the most efficient and effective way to focus this role, and it is unlikely that TNWs will provide the security counterbalance necessary to reassure the Baltic States and others entirely. Given the lack of support amongst many alliance members for TNWs when compared to other defence apparatuses, it is unlikely that TNWs will be fully embraced by the alliance, and instead the status quo will continue to prevail, and NATO will accept “indecision” as a strategy for the future of American TNW deployments in Europe. Meanwhile, these weapons and their delivery systems will continue to age, and the need to have discussions on their retirement, refurbishment, or replacement will become more and more necessary.

For the Baltic States, the current crisis in Ukraine has reinforced their pre-existing views on security, and specifically their feeling that a strong military capability is necessary to NATO, in order to protect against Russian aggression. Regardless of whether or not this view is justified, it can only become more entrenched, given the way in which the NATO-Russia relationship has dissolved since

the beginning of 2014. Whether it is through a focus on TNWs or another form of military deterrence, it seems certain that the Baltic States will continue to focus and rely on the military aspects of NATO's security strategy. This will, in turn, affect the overall posture of NATO, which relies on consensus and compromise in the formation of its policies.

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- ²¹⁶ Sauer.
- ²¹⁷ *Reuters* Staff, "NATO Does Not Plan to Put Nuclear Arms, New Troops in Eastern Europe," *Reuters* (19 May 2014).