Conference Paper

NATO's Post 2014 Transition: The Rebuilding of an Effective Deterrence Strategy

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This paper will analyse some of the innovative military postures NATO has adopted to deal with a heightened Russian threat over the last year. For the last 25 years, NATO has been involved in a variety of expeditionary missions in the Western Balkans, Afghanistan and off the coastline of Somalia. These operations represented the Alliance's ability to adapt to the ever-changing European and, later, global security order in the two decades after 1989. In the words of the former Republican Senator, Richard Lugar, NATO had to go 'out of area or out of business'. However, the outbreak of conflict in the Ukraine, along with the precarious security situation in the Alliance's eastern zone, has led to a reassessment of this strategy. The Alliance is now faced with providing an effective defence of its members in its eastern flank as a result of the ongoing hostilities between Moscow and Kiev. The reformulation of these military plans do not just relate to conventional means of defence but also to issues of air policing patrols and cyber security issues.

A number of different perspectives will be addressed in this paper. Firstly, there will be a brief discussion of NATO's functions from 1990 to 2014. The paper will then analyse the political situations in the Baltic States, Visegrád Group and in the alliance's south-eastern flank. Do the attitudes of these states to Russia differ and how does this impact on official alliance policy? The next part of this paper will address the strategies NATO has developed in defending these states. Key to this will be an analysis of the recently-created *Spearhead Force* and enhanced *NATO Response Force*. How have these strategies worked out in practice, in terms of NATO exercises on the land, sea and air? Finally, what are NATO's long term plans? Does the alliance envisage having permanent NATO bases in Poland and the Baltic States' and is it time to acknowledge that the NATO-Russia Founding Act has now ceased to exist with this current security situation? This will be dealt with in the concluding part of the paper.

1.1   NATO's expeditionary phase of operations (1990-2014)

In the quarter of a century since the end of the Cold War, NATO has initiated and concluded a number of out-of-area missions in the Western Balkans, Afghanistan and in the volatile Gulf of Aden region.   When the Berlin Wall fell on the 9th November 1989, NATO's continued function as a collective defence organization began to be debated.   The disappearance of the threat posed by the Soviet Union, along with its sister allies in the Warsaw Pact, could have spelled the end for NATO as a security organisation.   Facing these criticisms, the Alliance had the foresight to admit that it had to modify its raison d'être and face up to the evolving challenges, initially in the changing European security order of the 1990s.   Dr. Jamie Shea, NATO's spokesperson in the early 1990s, has spoken of this precarious period.   Looking firstly at the position of the NATO Secretary-General, Dr. Shea has noted that in the first years of uncertainty after 1989, a number of NATO officials and employees had met with Dr. Manfred Wörner, the then NATO Secretary-General, asking him if their jobs were still secure now that NATO had no real prescribed military and security functions.   Throughout this time, Dr Wörner was certain in his convictions, assuring them that they had no need to worry about the future survival of NATO as long as he was in charge of the Alliance.[1]   It was Wörner's leadership during this period of transition that gave NATO the impetus to eventually intervene in a variety of conflicts which engulfed the territory of the former Yugoslavia after 1991.

NATO was gradually drawn into the international response to the wars in Slovenia, Croatia and later in Bosnia.   This was due to a division between the US and European allies on using durable military force against the Serbs in Bosnia.   Neither the George H.W. Bush administration nor the Clinton administration, in its first years in office, was prepared to undertake airstrikes or commit troops to the region.   These policies of appeasement led to the Srebrenica Massacre of July 1995.   The controversy associated with Europe's worst single atrocity since World War 2 led to a more rapid military response to the conflict which later engulfed Kosovo in the 1998/99 period and other instabilities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2001.   Commenting on the international response to Kosovo, the former US Secretary of State, Dr. Madeleine Albright, has repeated the significant statement she made during a meeting of foreign ministers on the crisis in March 1998.   At that time she stated: 'Gentlemen remember that history is watching us and our predecessors sat in this

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[1] NATO Official Videos, *NATO's Transformation: Special Video Lecture Series with Jamie Shea*, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, (October 2003-March 2004).
  <http://www.nato.int/multi/video/lectures/index.html> [cited on the 09/09/15]

room and watched Bosnia burn'.[2] NATO's military interventions in Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999 were followed by a number of Allied peace enforcement missions in the Western Balkans. These various operations, in the cases of Bosnia, Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, were important in trying to stabilise these post conflict situations, but equally were significant in setting a precedent for other expeditionary missions.

The ISAF mission in Afghanistan was one of NATO's most testing missions in its recent history. In the decade-long existence of this operation, NATO was tasked with the stabilisation of the country after decades of war and conflict. The key to the strategies adopted in the period between 2003 and 2014 was the building up of effective Afghan National Security Forces to deal with the residual threat of insurgent elements. Outside of this area, NATO's functions also extended to other civil-military roles such as reconstruction and development.[3] ISAF had to deal with many challenges, particularly in the 2007/2008 period, when it faced a more determined insurgency. As a result of such developments, NATO and its partner countries boosted ISAF forces with an extra 40,000 troops being deployed in 2009.[4] In the final three years of ISAF, NATO began to draw down their force elements. From 2011 onwards, Afghan National Security Forces began to undertake operations independently, with ISAF transitioning from a combat centric role to one of advising, training and assisting. The NATO Resolute Support Mission succeeded ISAF at the beginning of 2015. This much reduced force is composed of approximately 12,000 personnel. While this mission's key task relates to the continued training, advice and assistance for Afghan National Security Forces, the Resolute Support Mission is also engaged in the long-term financial sustainment of these forces.[5] This will be necessary as the insurgency is again gaining a foothold. Since 2008, NATO has also deployed a number of counter-piracy operations to the volatile Gulf of Aden region to secure shipping lanes and the delivery of humanitarian aid to Somalia. The current NATO mission, *Ocean Shield*, has been operating for the last 6 years and has been successful, along with the EU and US led

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[2] Percy Norma, MacQueen Angus, Mitchell Paul, *The Fall of Milosevic*, Brook Lapping Productions, London, (2002).

[3] NATO Official Documents, *ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (Archived)*, pp.1-7. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.hm> [cited on the 12/09/15].

[4] NATO Official Documents, *ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (Archived)*, p.2.

[5] NATO Official Documents, *Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan*, pp. 1-2. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_113694.htm> [cited on the 12/09/15].

CTF-151 operations, in reducing the threat of piracy.[6] It is hoped that NATO's counter piracy mission will be concluded in the next number of years.

1.2   The Attitudes of the Political Elites towards Russia in NATO's Eastern Zone

This section will analyse the varying attitudes present within the states that joined NATO in the 1990s and early 2000s. While one would assume at the outset that these states should have similar policies and agendas with regard to Russia's aggressive behaviour in the Ukraine, the reality suggests differently. Vladimir Putin has been somewhat successful in undermining the unity amongst the nations that make up the Visegrád Group, Baltic States, and in the South Eastern European region. Many of these states are reliant on Russian Gas and have elites who, in some cases, adopt a neutral stance with regard to the current conflict in the Ukraine.

In the case of some members of the Visegrád Group, like the Czech Republic and particularly Hungary, they have, over the last year, continued to maintain close ties with Moscow. Miloš Zeman, a former member of the Czechoslovak communist party, became Czech president in 2013. Controversially, his presidential campaign was funded by a generous donation from the Czech subsidary of the Russian oil company, Lukoil.[7] The analyst, Riikka Nisonen, has noted that: 'Zeman's presidential campaign received money from the head of Lukoil's Czech office. Zeman claims the money was a personal donation'.[8] At the NATO Summit in Wales in September 2014, Zeman himself strongly resisted sanctions being imposed against Moscow, even suggesting that there was no 'clear proof' of Russian intervention in the Ukraine.[9] Zeman continued this maverick stance by being one of the very few European leaders to meet President Putin on the sidelines of the country's Victory Day parade in May 2015.[10] In Zeman's analogy, the continuation of close economic ties with Russia are as important as the country's response to the crisis in the Ukraine. Where the political situation in Hungary is concerned, the current Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, is a great admirer of Putin. The initial victory of his centre right party, Fidesz, in 2010 was primarily motivated by an internal dissatisfaction over the economic mismanagement and corruption of the

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[6] NATO Official Documents, *Counter-piracy operations*, pp.1-9.
  <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_48815.htm> [cited on the 12/09/15].
[7] Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).
[8] Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy*, p.108.
[9] Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy*, p.109.
[10] Prague Post, *President Zeman meets Putin in Moscow*, 09th May 2015, pp.1-3.
  <http://www.praguepost.com/world-news/47693-president-zeman-meets-putin-in-moscow>
  [cited on the 12/09/15].

previous centre-left government. Orbán's party was again re-elected in 2014. After coming to power in 2010 with an exorbitant majority, he immediately established a council to rewrite the constitution. The new government also stripped some of the powers of Hungary's Supreme Court. Another council was then created to control the output of the Hungarian media. Putin's authoritarian rule clearly appeals to Orbán. This was shown in the summer of 2014, when he stated that he would like Hungary to move towards becoming an 'illiberal state'. Orbán himself bases this model on the current political systems in existence in Russia and Turkey. Protests also broke out in October 2014 over the proposed introduction of an internet tax.[11] The two leaders have met on a number of occasions, with the most recent being February 2015, when the Russian President was warmly welcomed to Budapest.[12]

In contrast, Poland and their allies in the Baltic States have played more pro-active roles in a variety of NATO exercises and also in the deepening of their individual military relationships with the US. For the last year, the US has intensified its military exercises in Poland and the Baltic States through *Operation Atlantic Resolve*.[13] Interoperability has been a key component of these exercises. Poland and the Baltic States have also recently agreed to the storing of US heavy military equipment from 2016 onwards. There will be at least two major sites in Poland, with other sites located in the three Baltic nations.[14] According to the Pentagon, these sites will compose of battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and other heavy vehicles to support approximately 5,000 US troops in the region.[15] The political personalities in this geographical area also have a more negative perception of President Putin. Individuals like the former Polish foreign minister, Radosław Sikorski, the current President of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, and the current President of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, have come out on numerous occasions criticising Russian aggression in the Ukraine. The cyber attack on Estonia in 2007 gave the government the impetus to call for the establishment of an allied cyber defence centre to deal with any cyber attack on the treaty area. This led to the establishment of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in 2008.[16] The Baltic States also face the ongoing threat of Russian special-forces operatives.

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[11] Niall Mulchinock, 'Hungary's Gradual Embrace of Putinism', *Atlantic Community*, 06th November 2014, pp.1-4..
<http://www.atlantic-community.org/-/hungary-s-gradual-embrace-of-putinism> [cited on the 12/09/15].

[12] The Daily Telegraph, *Vladimir Putin receives a warm welcome from Hungarian PM Viktor Orban*, 17th February 2015, pp.1-2.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/vladimir-putin/11418959/Vladimir-Putin-receive-a-warm welcome-from-Hungarian-PM-Viktor-Orban> [cited on the 12/09/15].

[13] US European Command Official Documents, *Operation Atlantic Resolve (2014)*, pp.1-12.
<http://www.defence.gov/Portals/1/features/2014/0514_atlanticresolve/Operation_Atlantic_Resolve_ Fact_Sheet_2014.pdf> [cited on the 12/09/15].

[14] Voice of America, *Report: Poland to Store US Military Equipment From Mid-2016*, 27th August 2015, pp.1-2.
<http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-poland-nato-us-military-equipment/2934474.html> [cited on the 12/09/15].

[15] Voice of America, *Report: Poland to Store US Military Equipment From Mid-2016*, 27th August 2015, p.1.

[16] NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence Official Document, *About Us: History*, pp.1-2.
<https://ccdcoe.org/history.html> [cited on the 12/09/15].

Romania and Bulgaria are the closest NATO allies to the instabilities in the Crimea. Both countries have committed themselves to a number of NATO exercises over the last number of months. For these two states in particular, there is the innate fear that the ongoing conflict in the Ukraine could affect other frozen conflicts such as in Transnistria. This is a synopsis of the political situations in NATO's eastern zone.

1.3 The Implementation of Alliance Deterrence Strategies in its Eastern Zone (2014-15)

As we have seen in the previous section, the implementation of NATO strategy in the defence of its allies in the Visegrád Group, Baltic States and south-eastern Europe has been influenced by the political, domestic and geographical circumstances of its members in this area. The response to Russia's aggressive behaviour in the Ukraine has also come at a time of low defence budgets across the entire NATO treaty area. These issues have influenced the Alliance in the planning and orchestrating of a number of exercises that have been undertaken by the recently-created *Spearhead Force* or *Very High Readiness Joint Task Force*, along with other NATO activities in the air and sea in Central and Eastern Europe.

To begin, the Wales summit of September 2014 was one of the most important meetings of NATO heads of state since the end of the Cold War. NATO leaders were meeting at a time when European security was going through a major transition. The Russian annexation of the Crimea in the spring of 2014, along with the involvement of Russian special-forces in the conflict in eastern Ukraine, represented a blatant foreign intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. NATO, therefore, made a number of solemn commitments at the Wales summit. The first of these was a recognition that the security of its allies, located close to this conflict zone, needed to be reinforced. The *Readiness Action Plan* was, therefore, agreed at this summit meeting. One of the major hallmarks of this plan was an enhanced *NATO Response Force*. The NRF had been created a decade earlier at the Prague Summit of NATO leaders in 2002. Explaining the purpose for the creation of this force, the then Supreme Allied Commander, General James L. Jones, stated in the early 2000s: 'NATO will no longer have the large, massed units that were necessary for the Cold War, but will have agile and capable forces at Graduated Readiness levels that will better prepare the Alliance to meet any threat that it is likely to face in the 21st century'.[17] The force can respond to any security eventuality such as a crisis management situation to collective defence issues. It is made up of land, air, maritime and Special Operations Forces

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[17] NATO Official Documents, *NATO Response Force*, pp.1-6.
<http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49755.htm> [cited on the 14/09/15].

components that the alliance can deploy rapidly. At the June 2015 meeting of NATO defence ministers, it was agreed that the various components of the enhanced NRF would number some 40,000 personnel.[18] For the member states in NATO's eastern zone, the most significant aspect of the *Readiness Action Plan* was the creation of the *Spearhead Force* or *Very High Readiness Joint Task Force* of 5,000 troops that could deploy within 48 hours of a crisis developing and rely on air, maritime and Special Operations Forces.[19] The composition of troops that would make up the VJTF was formally approved at a meeting of NATO defence ministers in February 2015.[20] It was also agreed that the leadership and membership of the NRF and VJTF would rotate between the various NATO powers on an annual basis. To further buttress the security of states in its eastern zone, the Alliance has begun the process of establishing command and control posts in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania Poland and Romania. These so-called *NATO Force Integration Units* have been operational since the 1st September 2015 and are manned by both NATO and national personnel. It was agreed that, in each of the Force Integration Unit headquarters, there would be 20 national staff and 20 NATO staff that the Alliance would deploy on a rotational basis.[21] With these new military structures in place, the *Spearhead Force* conducted its first major exercise, *Noble Jump*, in April and June 2015. The June exercises took place in Zagan, Poland from the 9th to 18th of that month and involved 2,100 troops from nine NATO countries.[22] The key purpose of this exercise was to test the capability of the *Spearhead Force* through the conduction of a number of training manoeuvres by military forces.[23] Romania and Bulgaria were also chosen as host nations for the NATO exercise, *Trident Joust*, also in June 2015.[24]

Outside of the land-based exercises, the Alliance has also begun to focus on the defence of the airspace and coastline in the vicinity of the Baltic States. In the year 2014

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[18] NATO Official Documents, *NATO Response Force*, p.1.

[19] NATO Official Documents, *NATO's Readiness Action Plan*, Fact Sheet, May 2015, pp.1-2.
<http://www.nato.int/nato_static-fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_05/20150508_1505-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf>
[cited on the 14/09/15].

[20] NATO Official Documents, *NATO Response Force*, p.5.

[21] NATO Official Documents, *NATO Force Integration Units*, Fact Sheet, September 2015, pp.1-2.
<http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_09/20150901_150901-factsheet-
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[22] NATO/ACO Official Documents, *NATO Spearhead Demonstrates Capability During EX NOBLE JUMP*, pp.1-6.
<http://www.aco.nato.int/nato-spearhead-demonstrates-capability-during-ex-noble-jump.aspx>
[cited on the 14/09/15].

[23] NATO/ACO Official Documents, *NATO Spearhead Demonstrates Capability During EX NOBLE JUMP*, p.1.

[24] NATO/ACO Official Documents, Exercise TRIDENT JOUST 2015 to begin in Romania and Bulgaria, pp. 1-4.
<http://www.aco.nato.int/xercise-trident-joust-2015-to-begin-in-romania-and-bulgaria.aspx>
[cited on the 14/09/15].

alone there were approximately 150 scrambles against Russian aircraft in the Baltic region.[25] This, along with the deteriorating situation in the Ukraine, gave the Alliance the impetus to increase the number of air patrols over the airspace of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In the 2014-15 period, NATO upped the number of aircraft in the Baltic Air Policing Mission to 16 jets. Four NATO powers took the role of monitoring this airspace on a rotational basis. In September 2015, this was reduced to two nations, Germany and Hungary, with eight aircraft in total.[26] While NATO defended this reduction in aircraft, the overarching issue of dwindling defence budgets may have played a role in the reduction of the number of aircraft. In terms of Naval exercises, the *Baltops* Exercise in June 2015 was one of the alliance's largest naval and amphibious exercise in the post 2014 period, involving 5,600 personnel. This exercise lasted from the 5th to 20th June, involving both NATO and partner countries.[27] It was again focused in the Baltic Sea region and, according to the British Royal Navy website, it was launched: 'to improve maritime security in the Baltic Sea through partnership and the sharing of resources, enhancing coordination and cooperation among Baltic Sea countries'.[28] In May 2015, the Alliance also initiated anti-submarine exercises off the Norwegian coastline. This was referred to as *Dynamic Mongoose* and took place from the 4th-15th May.[29] Through these various exercises over the last year, NATO has developed both assurance and adaptation measures in the defence of its eastern zone.[30] In the concluding section of this paper we will analyse some of NATO's future plans.

1.4 Conclusion: NATO's Future Plans

This paper has dealt with the strategies that the Alliance has adopted to deal with a heightened Russian threat over the last year. In this final section, NATO's long term plans will be analysed. This will be looked at from the perspectives of possible permanent NATO headquarters being located in the Alliance's eastern flank, along with the ongoing threat posed by Russia's use of hybrid warfare.

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[25] BBC News, *Nato to halve number of aircraft in Baltic air patrols*, 5th August 2015, pp.1-7.
   <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33792022> [cited on the 14/09/15].
[26] IHS Jane's Defence Weekly, *NATO Rotates Baltic Air Policing Mission*, 26th August 2015, pp.1-4.
   <http://www.janes.com/article/53856/nato-rotates-baltic-air-policing-mission> [cited on the 14/09/15].
[27] NATO Official Documents, *NATO Allies begin naval exercise BALTOPS in the Baltic Sea*, pp.1-2.
   <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_120407.htm> [cited on the 15/09/15].
[28] Royal Navy Official Documents, *Exercise Baltops/Royal Navy*, pp.1-3.
   <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/operations/arctic-and-northern-european-
    waters/exercise-baltops> [cited on the 15/09/15].
[29] NATO Official Documents, *NATO's Readiness Action Plan*, Fact Sheet, May 2015, p.2.
[30] NATO Official Documents, *NATO's Readiness Action Plan*, Fact Sheet, May 2015, p.1.

If we deal with the issue of NATO bases, the Alliance clearly has to rethink the agreements that it signed with Russia in the 1990s. The *Russia-NATO Founding Act*, which was signed nearly two decades ago in May 1997, does not reflect the current European security environment. It is in fact an archaic document. One of the key principles of the Founding Act was that NATO would not create permanent headquarters in the new states that joined the Alliance at the end of the 1990s to counter Russian fears.[31] The Russian Federation has now become a revisionist power. Within this context, the Allies in the various regional zones of NATO's eastern flank have continuously called for the establishment of permanent NATO headquarters and bases on their respective territories. What has occurred over the last six months with regard to the various NATO exercises will, in the longer term, have set a precedent for a permanent NATO presence, which could lead to the creation of larger NATO headquarters and military bases in these regional zones.

Russia has also excelled at the strategy of hybrid warfare in the Ukrainian conflict. There are a variety of definitions of this strategy but, according to the current NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg: 'hybrid warfare combines different types of threats, including conventional, subversion and cyber'.[32] Stoltenberg stated that the key to dealing with any future hybrid warfare episode is to deepen the security partnership with the EU.[33] In the Secretary General's view, the EU and NATO: 'can work together quickly and effectively in the case of a hybrid threat against any of our members'.[34] These are the security challenges that NATO will have to deal with in the future.

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[31] Niall Mulchinock, 'NATO: Three Integral Discussions to Take Place During This Week's Summit', *Atlantic Community*, 03rd September 2014, pp.1-4.
<http://www.atlantic-community/-/nato-three-integral-discussions-to-take-place-during-this-week-s-summit> [cited on the 16/09/15].

[32] BBC News, *Nato to counter 'hybrid warfare' from Russia*, 14th May 2015, pp. 1-9.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32741688> [cited on the 16/09/15].

[33] BBC News, *Nato to counter 'hybrid warfare' from Russia*, 14th May 2015, p.2.

[34] BBC News, *Nato to counter 'hybrid warfare' from Russia*, 14th May 2015, p.3.

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  <http://www.nato.int/nato_static-fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_05/20150508_1505-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf>

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  <http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_09/20150901_150901-factsheet-nfiu_en.pdf>

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