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Policy brief

# Towards a New Equilibrium: Minimising the risks of NATO and Russia's new military postures

Łukasz Kulesa

## Executive Summary

Since the Russian takeover of Crimea in March 2014, the military postures of Russia and NATO in Europe have been significantly altered through doctrinal changes, more frequent and intensive exercising, as well as the deployment of forces and equipment closer to the common border area.

The ELN report describes how, in the coming months and years, new points of contention between Russia and NATO are likely to emerge over specific decisions on deployments and exercises. If unchecked, this action-reaction dynamic could lead to further deterioration of the security situation. There would also be a higher risk of unintended escalation following an incident involving the armed forces of NATO countries and Russia.

**As an alternative to the prolongation of tensions, the report suggests establishing a new set of practical ‘rules of the game’ for managing the NATO-Russia confrontation at lower political and financial costs and with reduced chances of military escalation.**

By adjusting the deployment and exercising policy and introducing relatively straightforward confidence-building mechanisms, a new **political-military equilibrium between NATO and Russia** could be established. Such an equilibrium can be sustained through:

- Introduction of measures increasing the **predictability of military exercises**
- Dialogue on **military doctrines**
- Restraint in **forward conventional military deployments** of Russian and NATO forces
- Refraining from introducing **nuclear weapons** as more central tools of the confrontation
- Mutual understanding on a **sequence of steps** leading to the establishment of new ‘rules of the game’, including the decisions made at the NATO Summit in Warsaw.

The emergence of a new equilibrium would decrease the friction between NATO and Russia, limit the possibilities of military adventurism, reduce the chances of one side misreading the actions of the other side as preparation for aggression, and provide opportunities for contacts between the politicians and militaries of both sides.

With the tensions between NATO and Russia under control, diplomatic space may emerge for charting the way out of the wider Russia-West crisis over Ukraine, and for addressing more effectively common challenges such like terrorism.

# **Towards a New Equilibrium: Minimising the risks of NATO and Russia's new military postures**

**Łukasz Kulesa**

*February 2016*

*With contributions from Joseph Dobbs, Thomas Frear and Denitsa Raynova*

## **Introduction**

Since the Russian takeover of Crimea in March 2014, the military postures of Russia and NATO in Europe have been significantly altered. They now include more frequent and intensive exercises focused on state-on-state warfare, as well as the deployment of forces and equipment closer to the common border area.

These developments have already played a part in raising the level of tensions in Europe. In the coming months and years new points of contention between NATO and Russia will almost certainly emerge over specific policy and doctrinal statements, deployments and exercises. If unchecked, these negative dynamics could lead to further deterioration of the security situation on the continent.

### **Imagine the following scenario:**

- Russia continues its assertive actions in Ukraine, its military build-up and conventional and nuclear exercising in the vicinity of NATO
- The Alliance agrees on more substantial deployments of NATO troops along the Eastern flank
- Russia moves its nuclear warheads and dual-capable delivery systems closer to NATO territory, and starts intensive large-scale exercises with explicit conventional and nuclear scenarios of 'repelling NATO's aggression' and counter-attacking
- Worried about a possible Russian incursion into the Baltic States under the protection of nuclear weapons, NATO deploys more troops and equipment in the flank countries and announces the resumption of planning and exercising for use of its own sub-strategic nuclear weapons

- Russia announces its exit from the INF Treaty, starts production of new types of land-based cruise and ballistic missiles, and announces deployment of additional military units on its side of the border, declaring an intention to re-equip them all with new equipment by 2020
- NATO increases the size and intensity of its own exercises, announces a re-design of its air- and missile-defence architecture to defend against a possible Russian attack, and unveils a massive plan of military investments to counter Russia's anti-access/area denial capabilities in the Baltic and Black Sea areas
- Russia announces that the 'balance of forces' in Europe has been destroyed and it will treat all military bases and command centres of European NATO countries as targets for its nuclear forces, reserving the option of conducting a 'preventive' strike if it felt threatened.

Even if at this point common sense prevails and further escalation is stopped, both sides will have already plunged deeper into confrontation, will have introduced significant additional military assets into the common border area, and will have invested heavily in armaments.

As this scenario unfolds there would be a risk of unintended escalation following an incident or accident involving the armed forces of NATO countries and Russia. There would also be a danger of yet-unforeseen developments putting additional pressure on Russia-NATO relations. One just needs to recall the Russian intervention in Syria and the rise of tensions following the downing by Turkey of the Russian Su-24 bomber in November 2015.

This report is grounded in the observation that the existing crisis management mechanisms and channels of NATO-Russia contacts may not be able to cope effectively with a constant emergence of new tensions. **The report suggests therefore establishing a new set of 'rules of the game' for managing confrontation at lower political and financial costs and with reduced chances of military escalation.**

By adjusting the deployment and exercising policy and introducing relatively straightforward confidence-building mechanisms, a **new political-military equilibrium between NATO and Russia** could be established and sustained. The report suggests that such an equilibrium does not require a parity of military forces in the border areas to be established, but could include the following:

- Measures increasing the **predictability of military exercises**
- Dialogue on **military doctrines**

- Restraint **in forward conventional military deployments** of NATO and Russian forces
- Refraining from introducing **nuclear weapons** as more central tools of confrontation
- Explicit or tacit agreement on **a sequence of steps** leading to the establishment of new 'rules of the game' in NATO-Russia relations.

Such a set of rules should be seen as an emergency stopgap measure to apply until a change of political circumstances allows the emergence of a broader, more positive agenda of NATO-Russia relations. Introducing more military predictability in Europe would also increase the likelihood of fostering cooperation between NATO countries and Russia on common challenges, including fighting the ISIL threat.

**It is important to note that while the report describes and compares the activities of NATO and Russia, it does not equate them.** In the view of the author of the report, the current crisis was initiated by Russia through its illegal actions against Ukraine, which

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constituted a violation of international law and the principles and norms of the European security order. The situation has been aggravated since then by Russia's aggressive anti-Western rhetoric and assertive posturing. Thus, to create a basis for a more stable co-existence with the West, Russia will need to make an effort to adjust its security policy and practices to address the concerns of its NATO neigh-

bours. However, in response, the Alliance should also be willing to show restraint in some of its actions. This report suggests that, ultimately, the necessary steps to establish a new equilibrium need to be taken by both sides: NATO and Russia. If that does not happen, the months and years ahead will see even more tensions.

## Part 1: Developments in Russia

Russia initiated a process of modernisation of its armed forces, including re-armament and a broad-ranging exercise programme, well before the outbreak of the Ukrainian crisis. As the Russian doctrinal documents make clear, **it considered NATO's activity as a source of military danger, even if it simultaneously engaged in dialogue and cooperation with the Alliance** through the NATO-Russia Council. Intervention in Ukraine and subsequent confrontation with the West led to the intensification of Russian military activities in the vicinity of the Alliance, and also to a hardening of the language of the Russian doctrine.

### *1.1 Russia's military modernisation and deployments policy*

Russia does not seem to consider itself committed to "restraint in its conventional force deployments in Europe", as pledged in the 1997 Founding Act,<sup>1</sup> or "due restraint" in the "region which includes the Kaliningrad oblast and the Pskov oblast", as stipulated in 1999 in the context of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) adaptation.<sup>2</sup> Even before the Ukraine crisis, **Russia considered the legal restrictions and political restraint pledges on the deployment of its forces internally, agreed in the 1990s, as discriminatory and unjust.** In 2007 it suspended implementation of the CFE Treaty, putting in limbo the only legal instrument placing limitations on the deployment of specific categories of conventional weapons within its own territory.

Russia presented NATO enlargement and the perspective of the Alliance deploying new forces in the vicinity of Russia's borders as a major driver of its security policy. Its most recent Military Doctrines, published in 2010 and 2014, listed as "military dangers" the consequences of NATO enlargement (and, specifically, the deployment of military infrastructure on the territories of new NATO members), as well as more generally the deployment of foreign troops on the territories of states bordering Russia.<sup>3</sup> **The updated Russian National Security Strategy, issued in December 2015, 'upgraded' the language describing the Alliance, stating that NATO activities constitute "a threat to the national security" of**

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1 Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, Paris, 27 May 1997; available at: [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm). Accessed 14 January 2016.

2 Final Act of the Conference on the State Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, CFE.DOC/2/99, 19 November 1999, Annex 5, <http://www.osce.org/library/14114?download=true>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

3 For an analysis of the Russian doctrinal documents, see P. Sinovets, B. Renz, Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine and beyond: threat perception, capabilities and ambitions, Research Paper No. 117, NATO Defense College, July 2015 and M. Klein, Russia's New Military Doctrine, SWP Comments No. 9, February 2015.

**Russia.**<sup>4</sup> Russian officials had frequently warned that Moscow would react to the changed strategic environment and augment its own military potential in the Western strategic direction as a consequence of NATO's activity in its immediate neighbourhood.<sup>5</sup> Reacting to the development of U.S. Missile Defence in Europe, President Medvedev listed in a November 2011 speech specific military actions which would be taken in response, including deployment of "modern offensive weapon systems [such as Iskander missiles] in the west and south of the country".<sup>6</sup>

Yet, **changes in the Russian military security policy cannot be simply interpreted as a response to the actions of NATO.** The Russian armed forces emerged from the 1990s seriously weakened, and their performance in the 2008 war with Georgia proved that they were ill-prepared to fight even against a weak opponent in the former Soviet Union area. Consequently, the so-called "new look" reform of the Russian military was announced in October 2008, and the ambitious and wide-ranging State Armament Program for 2011-2020 was unveiled in 2010.<sup>7</sup>

While NATO's continued existence has certainly given Russia a justification for overall modernisation, for augmenting its deployments and intensifying exercises, the Russian policy has been driven by broader considerations, characteristic not only of Russia but also of most of other major states. The Russian leadership assigned an important role for the armed forces in supporting Russia's emergence as an independent centre of power, as well as in securing Moscow's influence in the immediate neighbourhood and beyond. In that respect, Russian policy bears resemblance to the Chinese, Iranian, Saudi, or indeed U.S. policy.

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4 Decision of the President of the Russian Federation on the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, 31 December 2015, Paragraph 15, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/ru/l8iXkR8XLAtxeilX7JK3XX-y6Y0AsHD5v.pdf>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

5 See Russia has to react as NATO moves closer to its border – Medvedev, RT, 4 June 2013, <http://rt.com/politics/moves-closer-medvedev-borders-203/>; Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov as quoted in: D. Gorenburg, Moscow Conference on International Security 2014, part 1: the plenary speeches, Russian Military Reform blog, 29 May 2014, <https://russiamil.wordpress.com/2014/05/29/moscow-conference-on-international-security-2014-part-1-the-plenary-speeches/>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

6 Statement of President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev in connection with the situation concerning the NATO countries' missile defence system in Europe, 23 November 2011, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/13637>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

7 For details see: M. Barabanov, K. Makienko, R. Pukhov, Military Reform: Towards the New Look of the Russian Army, Valdai Discussion Club Analytical Report, Moscow, July 2012, [http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/Military\\_reform\\_eng.pdf](http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/Military_reform_eng.pdf). Accessed 14 January 2016.

In terms of defence expenditure, **efforts by the Russian Federation to modernise its armed forces, which required spending significant resources on defence, clearly pre-date the Ukraine crisis.** According to SIPRI data, the Russian defence budget increased by 108% between 2004 and 2013, in the period before NATO started increasing its presence along the Eastern flank.<sup>8</sup>

The in-built logic of the military modernisation effort meant gradual re-arming and increasing the combat readiness of units in the Western and Southern Military Districts. The Russian military has also been keeping significant forces in the Southern Military District in the vicinity of the NATO-protected area to react to possible contingencies in the North and South Caucasus. In addition, there was the need to augment militarily the implementation of the Russian High North policy, which was formulated before the current crisis.

For an outside observer, this provides **an additional challenge in terms of distinguishing between the Russian activities which can be justifiably labelled as ‘adversarial’ or ‘provocative’ and those which have been the part of ‘natural’ processes of military reform.** Modernisation of Russian forces would most likely have proceeded regardless of NATO’s actions along its Eastern flank. However, the Ukraine crisis and the deterioration of relations with NATO has provided the Russian leadership with an additional impulse to implement, and in some instances move beyond, the previously adopted plans. During 2014-15, a number of major decisions on troop movement were also taken specifically to enable efficient military engagement inside Ukraine and to solidify Russia’s control over Crimea. **Major deployment decisions taken by Russia which are relevant or directly linked to the 2014 crisis are presented in Table 1 on page 40.**

### *1.2 Russian Military Exercises*

Even before the start of the Ukraine crisis, Russian military exercises conducted in the vicinity of NATO territory had attracted increased attention because of their size, locations, types of weapons used and scenarios. The Russian-Belorussian West (Zapad) 2009 and Ladoga exercises, which brought together 12,500 troops, focused on the scenario of repelling an attack from NATO territory<sup>9</sup> and included the use of systems capable of delivering nuclear weapons.<sup>10</sup> The West 2013 exercises involved, according to some estimates, up to 70,000

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8 S. Perlo-Freeman, C. Solmirando, Trends in World Military Expenditures, 2013; SIPRI Fact Sheet, April 2014, p. 2, <http://books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1404.pdf>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

9 R. McDermott, Zapad 2009 Rehearses Countering a NATO Attack on Belarus, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 6, Issue 179, 30 September 2009, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=35558#.Vd3b3KSF0Uk](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35558#.Vd3b3KSF0Uk). Accessed 14 January 2016.

10 23.11.2009: NATO-Russia: NAC Discusses Russian Military Exercises, (wikileaks) US Mission to NATO dispatch, published 13 February 2011, <http://www.aftenposten.no/spesial/wikileaksdokumenter/23112009-NATO->



troops.<sup>11</sup> According to one account citing a NATO official, West 2013 exercises simulated the use of tactical nuclear weapons.<sup>12</sup>

**In early 2013 the Russian leadership introduced the practice of conducting exercises for large groups of forces without a prior announcement to the units concerned,** aimed at testing their ability to rapidly mobilise, deploy and complete assigned combat tasks. During 2015, approximately 300,000 troops, 1,100 aircraft and 280 ships took part in snap exercises organised throughout the Russian territory.<sup>13</sup> While these snap exercises had training benefits, their nature and lack of advance information made them especially destabilising during a period of tensions with the West.

**The period since March 2014 has seen the frequency and scale of Russian military exercises west of the Ural Mountains increase.** More exercises have taken place across the entirety of the Russian Federation, encompassing all four military districts in addition to the newly created Northern (Arctic) Command and Russian forces based abroad. **Major Russian exercises conducted since 2014 in its European part and the adjacent areas<sup>14</sup> are listed in Table 2 on page 42.** Apart from the high-visibility large scale exercises, a significant number of smaller-scale exercises in the Western strategic direction, involving airborne troops (VDV), tactical missile units, and air defence units, can also be assumed to be conducted with NATO and its members as the primary potential adversaries.

As highlighted by the European Leadership Network (ELN),<sup>15</sup> **the activity of Russian air forces within the common NATO-Russia neighbourhood, especially in the Baltic Sea area, has become more frequent and more assertive in nature** in 2014 and 2015. According to NATO data, aircraft belonging to its members conducted over 400 interceptions

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RUSSIA-NAC-DISCUSSES-RUSSIAN-MILITARY-EXERCISES-6276946.html. Accessed 14 January 2016.

11 S. Blank, What Do the Zapad 2013 Exercises Reveal? (Part One), Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 10, Issue 177, 4 October 2013, [http://www.jamestown.org/regions/europe/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=41449&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=51&cHash=e521c4aeb4f9cc99f736bed9a7669601#.Vd3dPqSFOUL](http://www.jamestown.org/regions/europe/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=41449&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=51&cHash=e521c4aeb4f9cc99f736bed9a7669601#.Vd3dPqSFOUL). Accessed 14 January 2016.

12 A. Croft, Insight - Russia's nuclear strategy raises concerns in NATO, Reuters, 4 February 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/02/04/uk-ukraine-crisis-russia-nuclear-insight-idUKKBN0L825A20150204>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

13 Slide (in Russian) included in: Combat training building-up, Extended board session of the Russian Defence Ministry, 11 December 2015, <http://eng.itogi2015.mil.ru/combat-training>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

14 The biggest Russian exercise in the analysed period was the September 2014 East 2014 drill in the Eastern Military District, with the announced participation of 155,000 personnel and over 4,000 pieces of equipment.

15 I. Kearns, L. Kulesa, T. Frear, Russia-West Dangerous Brinkmanship Continues, ELN Analysis, 12 March 2015, [http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/russia--west-dangerous-brinkmanship-continues-\\_2529.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/russia--west-dangerous-brinkmanship-continues-_2529.html). Accessed 14 January 2016.

of Russian warplanes in 2014, of which over 150 were done by the Baltic Air Policing Mission. This represents an increase by a factor of four compared to 2013.<sup>16</sup> In 2015, high levels of Russian air activity continued, with over 400 scrambles by NATO aircraft, including 160 flights made by NATO Baltic Air Policing fighters to intercept Russian aircraft.<sup>17</sup> Russia stepped up the flights of its strategic bombers in the vicinity of the NATO-protected area (including North America). In some cases, the air force exercises seemed to simulate attacks against specific targets on the territories of NATO or its partners, for example June 2014 exercises reportedly ‘targeting’ Danish Bornholm.<sup>18</sup> According to the Russian military, it also stepped up the number of submarine patrols by “almost 50%” between January 2014 and March 2015, as compared to the 2013 figures.<sup>19</sup>

**The purpose of the Russian drills, conventional or nuclear, is multi-faceted.** After a long period of disarray and half-hearted restructuring efforts, intensive exercises have been necessary in order to improve the operational readiness of units and **test the progress of the reform.**<sup>20</sup> They also serve to prepare forces for out-of-area operations, primarily in Russia’s immediate neighbourhood – but also in theatres further afield if required.<sup>21</sup> Due to Russia’s geopolitical features and its threat perception, **strategic mobility is a major theme**, with the Russian Minister of Defence declaring the capability to deploy up to 65,000 troops over 3,000 kilometres within 72 hours as a goal.<sup>22</sup>

**In the context of war with Ukraine, Russian exercises have gone beyond a training function and were used to facilitate direct combat engagement** or the provision

16 Enhanced NATO Air Policing Patrols Baltic Airspace, ACO News, 30 January 2015, <http://www.aco.nato.int/enhanced-nato-air-policing-patrols-baltic-airspace-2.aspx>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

17 Lithuania says NATO jets scrambled more often in 2015, Associated Press, 5 January 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/lithuania-says-nato-jets-scrambled-more-often-in-2015/2016/01/05/21b67074-b3b2-11e5-8abc-d09392edc612\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/lithuania-says-nato-jets-scrambled-more-often-in-2015/2016/01/05/21b67074-b3b2-11e5-8abc-d09392edc612_story.html), Accessed 14 January 2016. Russian aircraft have also increased significantly the number of flights in the vicinity of Japanese airspace.

18 Russia simulated an attack on Denmark, “The Local”, 31 October 2014, <http://www.thelocal.dk/20141031/russia-simulated-a-military-attack-on-denmark>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

19 Russian Nuclear Submarines Step Up Patrols Over Past Year – Navy Commander, Sputnik, 19 March 2015, <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20150319/1019714161.html>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

20 For an assessment of the state of the Russian military pre-dating the current crisis, see: J. Hedenskog, C. Vendil Pallin (eds.), *Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective – 2013*, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), December 2013.

21 A. M. Dyner, *Russian Military Exercises: Preparation for Expeditionary Operations*, Bulletin No. 86 (818), Polish Institute of International Affairs, 25 September 2015, [http://www.pism.pl/files/?id\\_plik=20535](http://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=20535). Accessed 14 January 2016.

22 Cited in: D. Johnson, *Russia’s Approach to Conflict – Implications for NATO’s Deterrence and Defence*, Research Paper No. 111, NATO Defense College, April 2015, p. 3.

of support for separatist forces.<sup>23</sup> The exercises also served to reposition Russian troops and materiel for possible aid to the rebels, and also to hinder the optimal deployment of the Ukrainian forces engaging them.<sup>24</sup>

In terms of the external political and informational warfare dimension, the Russian exercises were meant to send a number of signals to NATO and its partners:

Firstly, nuclear-related and large-scale conventional exercises have served to amplify the basic deterrence message: **any attempts to influence Russian foreign or security policy through military coercion, take back Crimea, or interfere with Russia's internal policy-making process, can and will be countered with military means.** Thus, for example, the timing of the massive exercises held in March 2015 coincided with the first anniversary of the "referendum" on the status of Crimea and its subsequent annexation by Russia. This deterrence messaging also explains frequent exercises in areas seen by Russia as most vulnerable, such as Kaliningrad, the High North or Crimea.

Secondly, beyond communicating the Russian red lines, these activities are also supposed to highlight broader points to decision-makers, and the public as a whole, in NATO countries. **They are meant to intimidate, but also to stimulate calls for restraining NATO's Eastern deployments and otherwise seeking accommodation** with the Kremlin. With regards to NATO partners Sweden and Finland, some exercises are most likely supposed to be a warning against seeking NATO membership or closer cooperation with the Alliance. For example, the May 2015 Russian snap air force and air defence exercises, with some training episodes taking place in the north of the country, could be interpreted as a direct response to the Arctic Challenge 2015 drills, co-organised by the Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish air forces.

Thirdly, some exercises may be intended to signal specifically that Moscow has the means and the willingness to use its forces in a military scenario involving Russia and a particular member or group of members of the Alliance. According to Ukrainian accounts, President Putin remarked in a conversation with Ukrainian President Poroshenko in September 2014 that Russian troops can reach not only Kyiv, but also Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, Warsaw and Bucharest "in two days".<sup>25</sup> While this may be an exaggeration, **a number of Russian exercises conducted in the Baltic Sea area were most likely meant to demonstrate to the NATO**

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23 See I. Sutyagin, Russian Forces in Ukraine, RUSI Briefing Paper, March 2015, [https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201503\\_bp\\_russian\\_forces\\_in\\_ukraine.pdf](https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201503_bp_russian_forces_in_ukraine.pdf). Accessed 14 January 2016

24 See H.-J. Schmidt, Verifiable Transparency, 'Security Community. The OSCE magazine', No.1/2014, p. 11.

25 J. Huggler, Putin 'privately threatened to invade Poland, Romania and the Baltic States', 'The Telegraph', 18 September 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11106195/Putin-privately-threatened-to-invade-Poland-Romania-and-the-Baltic-states.html>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

**countries that, during a crisis, a military action by Russia could be faster and more effective than any response** NATO can prepare. When Russia exercised rapid deployment of additional troops to augment its military potential in the Kaliningrad exclave in snap exercises in December 2014 and March 2015, the Russian media gloated that the swiftness of the Russian actions reportedly caught NATO by surprise.

Finally, the exercises play an important unifying role internally, in conjunction with the propaganda about the aggressive intentions of NATO and the United States. Reporting on massive Russian exercises serves to reassure the Russian population that despite the crisis in relations with the West the security of Russia is guaranteed by the strength of the armed forces. **The exercises**, as well as the use of 'green men' in Crimea or air forces in Syria, **are also meant to elicit patriotic euphoria** and pride with the professional performance of the armed forces and their access to modern, domestically produced equipment. The displays of Russian military power during the May parades in Moscow, enhanced in recent years, play a similar role.<sup>26</sup> This new narrative comes after the prolonged period in the 1990s and early 2000s in which the dismal performance of Russian forces in Chechnya and incidents of brutal hazing (*dedovshchina*) had formed a negative image of the army in the population.

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26 Reports on the use of Russian military power in Syria, backed by slick videos of missile launches and air attacks, serve the same purpose. See FIRST VIDEO: Russian warships attack ISIS positions in Syria from Caspian Sea, RT, 7 October 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2TQ0wAfRts>. Accessed 14 January 2016

## Part 2. NATO developments

Relations between NATO and Russia were in bad shape before the beginning of the Ukraine crisis. Aspirations for a 'true strategic partnership', expressed by Alliance leaders in 2010 in the NATO Strategic Concept, differed sharply from the reality of a growing list of conflict areas, including NATO enlargement, Missile Defence, and Russia's assertiveness in the common neighbourhood.

The Russian seizure and annexation of Crimea was a crucial breakpoint regarding NATO's approach towards forward deployment of its forces in the vicinity of Russia and towards its exercising policy. The relative restraint of the previous decade was replaced by a burst of activity, first in an emergency, crisis-management mode meant to reassure the most exposed Allies, but later organised into a more systemic plan. It amounted, in the words of the NATO Secretary General, to "the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence since the end of the Cold War".<sup>27</sup> The biggest challenge in front of the Alliance is to decide how it should proceed from here.

### *2.1 NATO forward deployments in the East before and after Crimea*

The 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act stated that NATO had no plans, "in the current or foreseeable security environment", for the "additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces" on the territories of newly-admitted members.<sup>28</sup> It also underlined that NATO had "no intention, no plan and no reason" to deploy nuclear weapons on their territories or to establish nuclear weapon storage sites there. Russia committed to a "similar restraint in its conventional force deployments in Europe".<sup>29</sup>

Ever since the first round of post-cold war enlargement of the Alliance in 1999, **deployments of NATO Member States' troops, weapons and equipment along the Eastern flank were implemented with this guiding principle of restraint in mind.** No significant land forces units were relocated to the East and no major facilities constructed. Even the Baltic Air Policing mission launched in 2004, which included the rotational deployment of fighter aircraft from different NATO Member States to protect Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, was not a permanent one, and it had to be renewed by a consensus decision of the Allies.

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<sup>27</sup> Keynote speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the opening of the NATO Transformation Seminar, 25 March 2015, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_118435.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_118435.htm). Accessed 14 January 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Founding Act on Mutual Relations..., op.cit. The term "substantial combat forces" was never officially defined by the Alliance.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*

Debate across NATO as to whether or not to permanently deploy troops along the Alliance's eastern flank re-heated in 2014 in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Most of NATO's eastern members have been vocal proponents of such a deployment, arguing that in light of Russia's actions, the Founding Act's restraints must be considered null and void. In advance of the NATO Wales Summit in September 2014, Estonian President Ilves called on the Alliance to place a permanent base in Estonia.<sup>30</sup>

Taking the objections of some of NATO's members, most notably Germany into account, the Wales Summit saw no such commitment to permanent deployments. The Wales Summit Declaration instead committed NATO to "continuous air, land, and maritime presence and meaningful military activity" in the East on a "rotational basis".<sup>31</sup> It approved the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) that focused on implementing the agreed assurance and adaptation measures.<sup>32</sup> The Summit agreed to double the number of troops in the rapid-reaction NATO Response Force (NRF) to 30,000,<sup>33</sup> and also create within the NRF a 4,000-5,000-strong land 'spearhead force' (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, VJTF), with some elements capable of being deployed within hours. **The most important decisions of NATO and its member states on force deployments taken in response to the 2014 crisis are summarised in Table 3 on page 45.**

However, **with each example of Russia's snap exercising and dangerous brinkmanship, the argument that a rotational presence along the Eastern flank was sufficient was increasingly contested from within the Alliance.** In May 2015, the chiefs of defence of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia reportedly requested, in a letter sent to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), the deployment of a brigade-size force, with units divided between the three countries.<sup>34</sup> In Poland, President Andrzej Duda, inaugurated in August 2015, declared that securing a permanent NATO presence in Poland as one of the main foreign policy goals for his term in office and berated the Alliance for treating Poland

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30 Estonia wants NATO base on Russia's doorstep, VOA News, 2 September 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/content/estonia-wants-nato-base-on-russia-doorstep/2436101.html>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

31 Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, Press Release (2014) 120, 5 September 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm). Accessed 14 January 2016.

32 See: NATO's Readiness Action Plan, NATO Fact Sheet, October 2015, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2015\\_12/20151130\\_1512-factsheet\\_rap\\_en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_12/20151130_1512-factsheet_rap_en.pdf). Accessed 14 January 2016.

33 The NRF was augmented to 40,000 in June 2015. Defence Ministers decide to bolster the NATO Response Force, reinforce collective defence, NATO, 24 June 2015, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_120993.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_120993.htm). Accessed 14 January 2016.

34 Baltic military chiefs to call for permanent NATO presence, Reuters, 14 May 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-baltic-russia-idUSKBN0NZOT220150514>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

as a “buffer state”.<sup>35</sup> Poland and other countries from the region expect that **the Warsaw NATO Summit in July 2016 will take strategic decisions on the form of forward deployment of NATO forces along the Eastern flank.**

## *2.2 NATO and NATO-related exercises*

Before the Ukraine crisis, the overwhelming majority of NATO and NATO-related exercises<sup>36</sup> were meant to prepare the armed forces for out-of-area contingencies or for specific missions, for example the ISAF deployment to Afghanistan. In response to the Eastern Allies’ complaints about neglecting NATO’s principle of collective defence, only in November 2013 did the Alliance conduct a major live-fire exercise in the region, Steadfast Jazz 13. It involved approximately 6,000 troops deployed to Poland and the Baltics, training a territorial defence scenario.

After the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, the situation changed significantly. **Major NATO and NATO-related exercises conducted since 2014 in Central Europe and the adjacent areas are listed in Table 4 on page 47.** According to official NATO data, in 2014 162 exercises were conducted under NATO’s Military Training and Exercise Program (twice as many as originally planned), and 40 additional state-led exercises could also be counted as a part of the re-assurance and adaptation drive, even if not all of them were conducted along the Eastern flank.<sup>37</sup> As was highlighted by the NATO Secretary-General, every two days an exercise starts in the NATO SACEUR’s area of responsibility. NATO further increased the tempo of multilateral exercises, as well as national and bilateral training operations, in 2015. Out of approximately 300 such exercises in 2015 “over 100” were conducted in the framework of the implementation of the Reassurance Action Plan.<sup>38</sup>

**Increased exercising along the Eastern flank of the Alliance served a number of purposes.** Firstly, the exercises were supposed to act as **deterrence measures** to signal NATO

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35 H. Foy, NATO treats Poland like a buffer state, says new president, “Financial Times”, 13 August 2015, <http://app.ft.com/cms/d6749156-410e-11e5-b98b-87c7270955cf>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

36 According to NATO, the term “NATO Military Exercise” includes “all exercises for which NATO is the initiating or the joint initiating authority”, whereas NATO states initiate also national or multinational exercises under their own authority. See: Exercises & Training, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), <http://www.aco.nato.int/exercises>. Accessed 14 January 2016. In practice, exercises of the latter type organised along NATO’s Eastern flank during the timeframe covered in the report add to NATO’s deterrence and reassurance. To an outside observer there simply ‘count’ as NATO or NATO-related exercises.

37 The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2014, January 2015, p. 5, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2015\\_01/20150130\\_SG\\_AnnualReport\\_2014\\_en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_01/20150130_SG_AnnualReport_2014_en.pdf). Accessed 14 January 2016.

38 The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2015, January 2016, p. 15, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_01/20160128\\_SG\\_AnnualReport\\_2015\\_en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_01/20160128_SG_AnnualReport_2015_en.pdf). Accessed 29 January 2016.

members' readiness to react jointly to infringement of the sovereignty of any of its members, especially the three Baltic States, which were considered the most likely targets of Russian provocations or coercive diplomacy. Secondly, they were meant to be as visible as possible in the public space of the host countries, to serve as **reassurance measures** and minimise the psychological effect of the large-scale Russian exercises and its assertiveness in Ukraine (which many observers contrasted with NATO's "passivity").<sup>39</sup> Thirdly, and finally, the intensification of exercises with defensive scenarios was meant to facilitate the process of adaptation of the member states and the Alliance military structure to the new security environment, requiring **re-learning of some collective defence skills.**

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39 Perhaps the most glaring examples included the presence of armoured vehicles from the US Army's Second Cavalry Regiment, as well as British, Dutch, Spanish, Lithuanian, and Latvian troops at a military parade commemorating Estonia Independence Day on February 24, 2015. The parade took place in Narva – a town situated on the Estonian-Russian border and, for many, a symbol of the vulnerability of the Baltic States to a surprise attack. See: A. Marszal, US and British army parade 300 yards from Russia border, "The Telegraph", 25 February 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/estonia/11433764/US-and-British-army-parade-300-yards-from-Russia-border.html>. Accessed 14 January 2016.



### Part 3: Future potential sources of tensions in NATO – Russia relations

The coming months and years will almost certainly see a **continuation of the deployment and exercising patterns described in the previous two chapters, as well as the emergence of additional sources of disagreement.** Tensions over deployments and exercises can lead to a further deterioration of the security situation in Europe and even open up the possibility of direct Russia – NATO confrontation.

#### *3.1 Differing narratives on the sources of confrontation*

The narratives of both sides regarding the causes of the current tensions, and thus the responsibility for the deterioration of the relationship differ considerably, with few chances to reconcile them. As a result, **both Russia and NATO have shown considerable determination to continue along current policy trajectories,** despite the risks involved.

According to the Alliance position, NATO's actions along the Eastern flank have been restricted and fall strictly within the confines of the 1990s restraint pledges.<sup>40</sup> Additional bilateral military arrangements between Washington and Central and Eastern European countries were limited in scale and did not pose a military challenge to Russia.<sup>41</sup> Regarding the particularly controversial Missile Defence initiative, the US and NATO maintain that the system is neither designed nor directed against Russia, does not pose a threat to Russia's strategic nuclear forces and thus does not impact the strategic balance between NATO and Moscow. As for the recently increased NATO presence in Eastern Europe, the Alliance states that these decisions were undertaken only in response to Russia's actions, and have been "rotational, defensive, proportional and in line with our international commitments".<sup>42</sup>

From Russia's viewpoint, the starting point of the process of changing the military balance in Europe is not the Ukraine crisis and its aftermath (although it frequently refers to the 2014-15 NATO activities to justify its own actions), but rather the previous rounds of NATO enlargement, the 'threat' of further NATO expansion through the membership of Georgia and Ukraine, and the development of Missile Defence. **In Moscow's narrative, its actions serve to protect the country and its sphere of influence against Western incursions,**

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40 See: NATO-Russia relations: the facts, NATO webpage updated 17 December 2015, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_111767.htm#threat](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_111767.htm#threat). Accessed 14 January 2016.

41 The US concluded agreements with Romania and Bulgaria on the use of their air and naval bases, agreement with Poland on deployment of a small Air Force detachment, and – perhaps most importantly – on deployment of Missile Defence installations: initially in Poland and the Czech Republic, ultimately in Romania and Poland.

42 Statement by NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu on misleading and incorrect Russian statements, posted on NATO webpage, 16 April 2015, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_118761.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_118761.htm) Accessed 14 January 2016.

spearheaded by NATO, with their ultimate aim of subjugating Russia itself. As President Putin put it in his annual press conference in December 2014, “someone will always try to chain [the Russian bear] up... tear out his teeth and claws. [...] Perhaps they will stuff it and that’s all”.<sup>43</sup> The notion of qualitative asymmetry between the Russian and the US and NATO forces, especially the gap in the advanced capabilities of conventional forces, has been one of the major drivers for increased Russian defence expenditures over more than a decade.

Both Russia and NATO see their deployments and increased focus on exercises as necessary development of their previous force postures. **Each side is convinced that its actions are justified by the negative changes of its own security environment caused by the other side.** In the course of the current crisis, Russian officials and experts have maintained that deployment of additional units along its Western flank, introduction of new weapon systems, more frequent exercises and increased activity of the Russian air forces, should be seen as a direct consequence of augmented presence of NATO forces in the border area.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, **each side’s activities continue to fuel worst-case assumptions about its motives, as perceived by the other side.** Inside some NATO countries, there are concerns that Russia can move from testing the Alliance to offensive operations, perhaps using a ‘hybrid’ mix of unconventional means and fast mobilisation of conventional forces, under the aegis of nuclear weapons and its Anti Access/Area Denial capabilities.<sup>45</sup> These concerns are further reinforced by the worries that if the economic situation in Russia continues to deteriorate and Russia goes through a period of internal disturbances, or it suffers a major defeat in foreign policy, the Russian leadership may want to initiate a conflict with a NATO country as a way of consolidating its internal grip on power.<sup>46</sup>

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43 News conference of Vladimir Putin, 18 December 2014, transcript available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47250>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

44 Russia will respond to increased NATO activity near border – top general [Valery Gerasimov], Reuters, 23 May 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/23/us-russia-nato-general-idUSBREA4M04S20140523>; Russia to take necessary measures if NATO military potential comes closer to its borders – envoy, ‘Voice of Russia’, 2 June 2014, [http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014\\_06\\_02/Russia-to-take-necessary-measures-if-NATO-military-potential-comes-closer-to-its-borders-envoy-0363/](http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014_06_02/Russia-to-take-necessary-measures-if-NATO-military-potential-comes-closer-to-its-borders-envoy-0363/). Accessed 14 January 2016.

45 NATO SACEUR noted as worrisome the development of Russian capabilities to conduct offensive and defensive operations deep within NATO-protected using the weapon systems deployed in Kaliningrad and Crimea, see: NATO General Worried About Russian Military Build-up in Syria, Agence France-Presse, 28 September 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/europe/2015/09/28/nato-general-worried-russian-military-build-syria/73002834/>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

46 M. Menkiszak (ed.), Late Putin. The end of growth, the end of stability, Point of View No. 55, Centre for Eastern Studies, Warsaw, October 2015, p. 35, [http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/pw\\_55\\_ang\\_late\\_putin\\_net.pdf](http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/pw_55_ang_late_putin_net.pdf). Accessed 14 January 2016.

Inside Russia, some in the strategic community pose a question as to whether NATO's new deployments and build-up of the infrastructure close to Russia is meant to provide the Alliance with a launch-pad for an intervention in the east. Others maintain that U.S. plans regarding European deployments of refurbished sub-strategic nuclear weapons, missile defence or precision-strike systems closer to Russian territory are not accidental, but a part of a larger strategy of preparing military instruments of coercion against Moscow.

### *3.2 Short-to-medium-term deployments and exercises – Russia*

Russia will most likely continue to present a “creeping increase in NATO's military presence on our frontiers”<sup>47</sup> as a justification for the continuation of force deployments and exercise patterns in the vicinity of the Alliance borders. It cannot be excluded that it has also been preparing a number of surprising moves, involving both conventional and nuclear forces deployment, with details meant to be unveiled in response to particular actions by NATO or its Member States.<sup>48</sup>

**Conventional forces:** The Russian Ministry of Defence scheduled to hold 4,000 military exercises in 2015.<sup>49</sup> The plans for 2016 include the same overall number, with the September Kavkoz-2016 exercises in its Southern European region as the biggest scheduled training event. The requirements of the military intervention in Syria may impact the training programs, as the operation has allegedly been financed from the training budget.

**Russia will most likely continue with the large-scale snap exercises,** since they seem to be regarded by the Russian leadership as a particularly useful training tool.<sup>50</sup> They also do not require pre-notification to other OSCE members, regardless of their size. The importance of snap exercises as an element of Russian information operations applying pressure on NATO and its partners should not be overlooked.

According to the Chief of the Russian General Staff General Gerasimov, in 2015 **Russia focused its attention on reinforcing its military potential in Crimea, Kaliningrad Re-**

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47 As put by the Permanent Representative of Russia to NATO A. Grushko, see: Diplomat: Buildup of NATO's presence near Russian borders has no prospects, INTERFAX, 29 October 2015, [http://rbth.com/international/2015/10/29/diplomat-buildup-of-natos-presence-near-russian-borders-has-no-prospects\\_535227](http://rbth.com/international/2015/10/29/diplomat-buildup-of-natos-presence-near-russian-borders-has-no-prospects_535227). Accessed 14 January 2016.

48 V. Litovkin, Solution for the western border: how will Russia respond to the build-up of NATO bases in Eastern Europe (in Russian), TASS, 14 January 2016, <http://tass.ru/opinions/2586466>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

49 Russian Aerospace Force to Conduct 8 Drills in 2015, Sputnik, 14 April 2015, <http://sputniknews.com/russia/20150412/1020779664.html>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

50 Russian army to focus on air defense tasks in 2016 snap checks – minister, TASS, 12 January 2016, <http://tass.ru/en/defense/848917>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

**gion, and in the Arctic.**<sup>51</sup> The emphasis on strengthening Russian forces in “the western, south-western and Arctic strategic directions” was announced again at the beginning of 2016, together with the decision to create three new army divisions in the western part of the country.<sup>52</sup> The increase of the capabilities of the Russian forces in Crimea is an ongoing process, with apparent implementation of July 2015 announcements about the possibility of deploying the newly created 97th regiment of the 7th Air Assault Division to the peninsula.<sup>53</sup> Regarding Kaliningrad, the 152nd Missile Brigade stationed there will receive the new Iskander short range ballistic and cruise missiles system between 2016 and 2018.<sup>54</sup> This new dual-use (conventional and nuclear) weapons system has increased range, accuracy, and ability to penetrate the enemy’s defences as compared to the previous Tochka missiles.

Even though the re-armament of the missile brigades is done according to a pre-planned schedule, **Russia treats the deployment of Iskanders to Kaliningrad as a political tool.** In the past, Russia threatened to execute this deployment as a way to influence the decisions regarding the construction of Missile Defence installations in Poland. In the autumn of 2015, the prospect of deployment was mentioned by the media in the context of a possible response to U.S. modernisation of the B-61 nuclear bomb deployed in Germany.<sup>55</sup> If the Russian strategy of treating Iskander deployment as a bargaining and intimidation tool fails, the actual re-armament can be presented as a ‘defensive’ response to NATO’s actions.

Other moves to increase the Russian military potential in Kaliningrad and the Baltic Sea region have so far not received similar media coverage. That includes deployment of S-400 air defence systems batteries to the Kaliningrad area, reportedly initiated in 2012, and the introduction of new ships to the Baltic Fleet (four Steregushchy-class corvettes were added to the fleet in recent years) and the Black Sea Fleet.

More generally, the Russian military will continue with a wholesale modernisation. Russia’s strategic nuclear forces have been the priority concern of previous modernisation efforts, but reforms of the conventional military have already begun to have a more visible effect. **It cannot be excluded that the previously planned introduction of new weapons into the units in the Western Military District will be presented as an emergency measure**

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51 Russia to boost military capabilities in Crimea, Kaliningrad, Arctic, RT, 14 January 2015, <http://rt.com/news/222371-russian-defense-plan-2015/>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

52 Russian Armed Forces tasks for 2016, Extended board session of the Russian Defence Ministry, 11 December 2015, <http://eng.itogi2015.mil.ru/tasks2016>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

53 Airborne forces may deploy air assault regiment in Crimea (in Russian), TASS, 20 July 2015.

54 Iskander-M missile systems to be deployed in Kaliningrad region till 2018, TASS, 16 May 2015.

55 M. Bodner, Kremlin Threatens Response to U.S. Bomb Deployment in Germany, The Moscow Times, 23 September 2015, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/kremlin-threatens-response-to-us-nuclear-bomb-deployment-in-germany/535106.html>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

**taken in response to the actions of NATO.** This may include the deployment of new generation of fighters and bombers, further strengthening of coastal, air and missile defence systems with the wide introduction of Pantsir-S1, S-400 and prospectively S-500 systems, and deployment of new surface ships and submarines to the Baltic, Black Sea and Northern fleet. Deliveries of the first mass production batches of the new main battle tank and new armoured fighting vehicles based on the Armata, Kurganets-25 and Bumerang platforms (unveiled with much publicity at the May 2015 victory parade in Moscow), planned for 2016-17, are supposed to start with the units of the Western Military District, namely the newly-formed 1st Tank Army and 20th Guards Army.<sup>56</sup>

**Nuclear weapons:** Russia is not bound by any legal limitations regarding the redeployment on its own territory of the warheads and dual-capable delivery systems for its sub-strategic nuclear weapons. It is unclear if it still abides by the political pledges made in the early 1990s regarding, *inter alia*, elimination of all nuclear warheads for short-range missiles and removal of warheads from ships and multipurpose submarines.<sup>57</sup> Still, **it is thought that Russia exercises some restraint in the sub-strategic nuclear weapons sphere** by keeping the warheads in central storage sites<sup>58</sup> (which have been most likely identified and are presumably monitored by NATO) and not deploying them with combat units.

Until now there has been **no credible information about any change of storage or deployment patterns**, including placement of nuclear weapons in Crimea or their relocation to Kaliningrad. Still, Russia seems to signal that the option is under consideration. On the one hand, in a December 2014 interview, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov highlighted that Russia has full rights to deploy nuclear weapons on all of its territory, now – from the Russian viewpoint – also including Crimea.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, the head of the Russian military unit responsible for handling nuclear warheads announced in January 2015 that there were no nuclear weapons on the peninsula.<sup>60</sup> Any decisions regarding the forward deployment of Russian sub-strategic ('tactical') nuclear weapons in the western direction,

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56 Tank army to be formed near Moscow by wintertime – source, TASS, 29 July 2015, <http://tass.ru/en/russia/811376>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

57 For more details, see: The Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) on Tactical Nuclear Weapons at a Glance, Arms Control Association Fact Sheet, August 2012, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/pniglance>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

58 See: H. Kristensen, R. Norris, Russian Nuclear Forces, 2015, Bulletin of Atomic Scientists 2015, Vol. 71(3), p. 94, <http://bos.sagepub.com/content/71/3/84.full.pdf+html>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

59 Interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov (in Russian), Interfax Agency, 14 December 2014, <http://www.interfax.ru/interview/413188>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

60 D. Telmanov, Nuclear-weapon-free peninsula, Gazeta.ru, 16 January 2015, [http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/01/22\\_a\\_6384621.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/01/22_a_6384621.shtml) Accessed 14 January 2016.

especially if presented as a response to the strengthening of the Alliance's conventional forces, would be seen by NATO as a serious escalation of the crisis.

### *3.3 Short- to mid-term deployments and exercises: NATO*

Provided that no dramatic changes in the global or European strategic environment takes place, **NATO looks poised to carry on with its current policy of deployments and exercises.** Moreover, activation of a Missile Defence installation in Romania and implementation of equipment pre-positioning plans along the Eastern flank is likely to generate further tensions with Russia.

**Conventional forces:** NATO will continue frequent exercising along the Eastern flank and maintain the continuous, rotational presence of small units from the US and other NATO countries in the area. In September 2015 NATO activated small command and planning cells in the six most exposed countries, which should reach full operational status by mid-2016.<sup>61</sup> While some elements of the VJTF (led in 2016 by Spain) can be deployed along NATO's Eastern flank if needed, it is unlikely that such a decision will be made unless a specific threat against a NATO member materialises.

**NATO will also continue with the high pace of its exercise program as required by the RAP,** both to test the defensive and rapid reaction capabilities of the Allied armed forces, and to provide visible assurance to the Allies and signal to Russia. General Jean-Paul Paloméros, Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, stated in May 2015 that about half of the exercises held "under the NATO umbrella" in 2015 were devoted to reassuring the Eastern allies.<sup>62</sup> A similar tempo will likely be sustained in 2016. In addition, NATO has started grouping together the exercises conducted in different regions over a particular timeframe, allowing it to 'beef-up' the numbers of troops and equipment to make them more comparable to the Russian numbers.<sup>63</sup> In 2016, for example, five exercises will be conducted in May-June under the Brilliant Justification framework.

The Alliance, at the time of writing, has not announced any plans to organise in the coming months any new large-scale, high-visibility exercises with an Article 5-related scenario along the borders with Russia. The biggest NATO training event since 2002, **Trident**

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61 NATO Force Integration Units, NATO Fact Sheet, September 2015, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2015\\_09/20150901\\_150901-factsheet-nfiu\\_en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_09/20150901_150901-factsheet-nfiu_en.pdf). Accessed 14 January 2016

62 Joint press conference with Military Committee Chairman General Knud Bartels, SACEUR General Breedlove and SACT General Paloméros, 21 May 2015, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_119868.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_119868.htm). Accessed 14 January 2016.

63 W. Szary NATO looking at beefing up Baltic exercises: top general, Reuters, 13 January 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-breedlove-idUSKBN0KM17020150113>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

**Juncture 2015, conducted in October and November 2015, took place in and around the Iberian Peninsula and Italy.**<sup>64</sup> It brought together circa 36,000 troops and tested the readiness and deployability of the 2016 rotation of the expanded NATO Response Force, including the VJTF element. The deterrence and reassurance value of the exercises for the NATO-Russia context was indirect due to the distance to the eastern flank area, but the exercises were meant to signal 'to whom it may concern' that NATO has the capabilities to rapidly reinforce an Ally.<sup>65</sup> The next major high-visibility exercises, with a collective defence scenario, are supposed to take place in Norway in 2018.<sup>66</sup>

It remains to be seen whether the next 'framework nations' responsible for providing the bulk of forces for the yearly rotations of the 'spearhead' VJTF (the United Kingdom for the 2017 rotation, Italy for 2018, most likely Germany for 2019, France or Poland for 2020, Turkey for 2021) will want to commit forces to major exercises on NATO territory in the vicinity of Russia. **A pattern of regular VJTF training deployments into North and Central Europe may be established for the coming years,** perhaps alternating with exercises in the South.

**Missile Defence:** In December 2015, an "Aegis Shore" Naval Support Facility with SM-3 interceptors and Aegis SPY-1 radar was activated at the Deveselu base in Romania.<sup>67</sup> A similar facility will be built in Redzikowo (Poland) in 2018. The declaration of operational readiness of Deveselu as part of NATO territorial Missile Defence architecture, expected in the first part of 2016, will certainly provoke a reaction from Russia. While **the official position of the Alliance is that the MD capability is not directed against Russia,** and the weapons which are to be deployed in Deveselu and Redzikowo will not have the technical capacity to interdict Russian strategic missiles, the inauguration of permanent U.S. facilities in Romania and (especially) in Poland will be presented by Russia as a hostile move. Russian sources have already indicated that Moscow will place additional offensive weapon

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64 See the dedicated website of the exercise: <http://www.jfcb.nato.int/trident-juncture>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

65 M. Crowley, U.S. drawing a line against Putin in Europe, 'Politico' 1 November 2015, <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/11/united-states-vladimir-putin-europe-russia-215401#ixzz3qMzAuT2L> Accessed 14 January 2016.

66 see: NATO says 'Yes' to major military exercise in Norway in 2018, Ministry of Defence, Norway, press release 9/2015, 6 February 2015, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/nato-sier-ja-til-stor-ovelse-i-norge-i-2018/id2394173/>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

67 Address by Patrick Auroy, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment at the ceremony for the activation of Aegis Ashore Missile Defense Facility at the Deveselu Military Base, 18 December 2015, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_126151.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_126151.htm). Accessed 14 January 2016.

systems in Crimea as a response to the inauguration of operations in Deveselu.<sup>68</sup> Russia also questions the whole rationale for the European Missile Defence project, pointing to the July 2015 agreement on the Iranian nuclear program as a reason to revise US and NATO planning.

**Equipment pre-positioning:** A similar negative reaction by Russia can be expected in the context of the implementation of the U.S. decision on the pre-positioning of weapons and equipment in several locations along the Eastern flank of the Alliance. The execution of the US plans, as unveiled in June 2015, will see **the relocation in particular countries of equipment for a company or battalion size US force**, coupled with the rotational presence of soldiers from different US units, to be engaged in training activities with local forces.<sup>69</sup> **Russia has already presented it as a departure from the previous NATO and US commitments and as an escalatory measure.** In a June 2015 comment, the Russian MFA stated that “the United States is obviously negotiating with its allies to erode the fundamental provision of the Russia-NATO Founding Act [...] The prepositioning of weapons is equivalent to permanent stationing, and the rotation of military personnel is but a detail”.<sup>70</sup> Russia hopes not only to present itself as being forced to take defensive measures against a new military “escalation”, but also to create a split between the US and the flank countries on the one side, and those allies who might prefer to follow a more cautious deployment policy on the other.

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68 Roger McDermott, Blackjacks, Hypersonic Aerial Vehicles and the Defense of Crimea: Russia’s Futuristic Challenge to the West? Jamestown [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=44218&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=27&cHash=4c38d58819ec26e5e446c52652a94c8a#.VcjJlqTbKUK](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=44218&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=27&cHash=4c38d58819ec26e5e446c52652a94c8a#.VcjJlqTbKUK), Accessed 14 January 2016

69 Poland to store U.S. military equipment from mid-2016: PAP agency, Reuters, 27 August 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/08/27/us-usa-military-poland-idUSKCN0QW15L20150827>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

70 Comment by the Information and Press Department on US plans to store military equipment on NATO’s ‘eastern flank’, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 15 June 2015, [http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1443058](http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/1443058). Accessed 14 January 2016.



#### Part 4: Outline of a new political-military equilibrium

On the NATO side, **a number of Allies reason that NATO needs to update its thinking on deterrence and establish clear ‘red lines’ against Russian adventurism** along NATO’s eastern borders. NATO exercises and deployments play an important part in displaying resolve to repel any attack, overt or hybrid. If a credible military potential in border areas can be built up, so the argument runs, Russia would be deterred from initiating aggressive military moves against the NATO-protected area. **On the Russian side, there seems to be an expectation that the displays of its military prowess will not only discourage US and NATO from aggressive actions, but also force NATO to re-consider deployments** of combat forces and new weapons systems in the border area. Moscow hopes that they may even make some Allies more likely to engage diplomatically with Russia and offer unilateral concessions in order to de-escalate tensions.

Each side seems to expect that the other side will at a certain point back away from confrontation and seek accommodation. However, this is unlikely to happen. **The continuation of the current policy virtually guarantees that the European security structure will be characterised in the coming years by a series of bitter and potentially dangerous political clashes** between NATO and Russia, as well as intensification of the regional arms race.

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“Each side seems to expect that the other side will at a certain point back away from confrontation and seek accommodation.”

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**The continuation of the current policy virtually guarantees that the European security structure will be characterised in the coming years by a series of bitter and potentially dangerous political clashes** between NATO and Russia, as well as intensification of the regional arms race.

The **military action-reaction mechanism**, which has been set in motion by the Russian actions against Ukraine, will

be perpetuated through a series of decisions on deployments or exercises triggering a reaction from the other side, to which there will be a pressure to respond. One such possible scenario was described in the introduction.

**Both sides are however not pre-determined to end up with an endless state of political-military crisis.** While assuming that the NATO-Russia relationship will continue to be adversarial, an alternative approach can be implemented to achieve **a sustainable political military equilibrium** in the NATO-Russia relationship. The equilibrium can be understood as **situation in which each side is satisfied that its posture is robust enough to deter a surprise armed attack or an attempt at military coercion by the other side, but each**

**side simultaneously makes an effort to avoid introducing measures that can be interpreted by the other side as provocations** or that can lead to escalation.<sup>71</sup>

Such a state of 'manageable' confrontation, minimising the chances of the relationship sliding into deeper hostility, can be achieved through a combination of restraint on forward military deployments along the NATO-Russia borders, increased communication, more transparency on exercising, and mutually agreed measures increasing the predictability of military actions. In achieving the equilibrium, existing mechanisms such as the NATO-Russia Council, the OSCE procedures, and the Vienna Document should be utilised as much as possible, given the need to act fast to stop the rise of tensions.

#### *4.1 The interests of NATO and Russia and a new equilibrium*

The increase of military activities in the common neighbourhood has been taking place in the broader context of a Russia-West crisis and Russian aggression against Ukraine, which has not stopped. **Russian actions are seen by NATO as a direct challenge to the post-Cold War European security system.** Only a fundamental change of Russian foreign and security policy, including a move away from the present hostility towards NATO and withdrawal from Ukraine, could prompt the Alliance members to reverse the deterrence and reassurance measures along the Eastern flank introduced after 2014. Since such a change is unlikely to happen under the present Russian leadership, an **adversarial relationship between NATO and Moscow will continue for some time.**

Yet, if both sides re-evaluate the costs of continued confrontation and the potential political and military benefits of introducing more stability and predictability, a space may open up for establishing a mutually beneficial restraint regime.

At least on the NATO side, there seems to be **some willingness to show restraint regarding the scale of the measures taken in response to Russia's actions.** A number of Allies are concerned that moving away completely from the 1990s arrangements and towards permanent deployments of NATO combat forces and equipment along the Eastern flank will 'lock' the Alliance in a long-term confrontation with Russia.<sup>72</sup> Politically, that could complicate the diplomatic interactions with Russia on a number of other issues (including on Syria

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<sup>71</sup> In the suggested definition, equilibrium should not be understood as military parity, but rather a situation, in which all the potentially destabilising factors, including regional and global imbalance of forces, are taken into account and neutralised.

<sup>72</sup> Speaking in August 2015, Chancellor Merkel voiced German opposition to permanent stationing of combat troops on the Eastern flank: <https://euobserver.com/foreign/125291>. On the German approach to reinforcing NATO presence in the East, see [http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C16\\_mjr.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2015C16_mjr.pdf) Accessed 14 January 2016.

and ISIL or on resolving the Ukraine crisis), reinforce Russia's hard-line stance towards the West, as well as push tackling other security challenges down the list of priorities. At the implementation level, a number of Allies worry that they would need to devote substantial resources to support larger-scale land force deployments and pre-positioning of weapons, necessitating an adaptation of their armed forces postures and development plans. Taking into account the budget limitations of several Allies and other commitments, they may not have the ability to back up any significant military commitments going beyond the current NATO force goals.

**On the Russian side, no such debate on restraint seems to be taking place** within decision-making circles. On the contrary, the self-confident behaviour of the leadership, the activities of the military, and the propaganda campaign in the media, may suggest that Moscow is happy to perpetuate a confrontational mode of relations with NATO and its partners. 'Heating up' the relationship periodically through increased exercise activity and new deployments may fit Russian goals. Signalling military might strengthens the Russian narrative about restoring Moscow's great power status and the creation of a multipolar system through standing up to the US and NATO. It is also useful in terms of mobilising Russian society.

However, **the political costs for Moscow of the current policy have already been considerable.** The Russian tactic of attempting to intimidate NATO and its partners through deployments and exercising has not been successful in terms of eroding the unity of the Alliance. As long as **Russia is projecting the image of a threatening bully**, members of the Alliance stick to the implementation of the deterrence and reassurance agenda agreed in 2014, even if some of them may be wary of expanding it significantly. Moreover, Russia now faces the possibility of Finland and Sweden putting the question of membership of NATO as a subject for national debate, and possibly referenda – which would constitute a major setback for Russian foreign policy. Furthermore, the ability to sustain further increases of the defence budget to finance the costs of a confrontation with NATO may be put under question as the Russian economy has been hit by the consequences of reduced commodity prices and Western sanctions.<sup>73</sup> The Russian military may not be prepared to sustain the high tempo of exercises,<sup>74</sup> paired with continued engagement in Ukraine and the combat de-

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73 The 2015 defence budget was raised by 0,8% GDP (from 3,4 to 4,2% GDP; 3,3 trillion rubles, approximately 80 billion USD). After the state of the economy deteriorated sharply towards the end of 2014, in January 2015 a 10% cut in military expenditures other than the re-armament program (left intact) was announced. See: Deputy Minister of Defence – current military budget expenses cut by 10%, Interfax-AVH, 28 January 2015, <http://militarynews.ru/story.asp?rid=1&nid=364533>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

74 In June-July 2015, six aircraft including two strategic Tu-95 bombers were lost to accidents. Russian Bomber Crashes in the 6th Military Aircraft Loss in One Month, The Moscow Times, 14 July 2015, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/525584.html>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

ployment to Syria. Finally, Russia seem to underestimate the risk that its current behaviour may result in unintended incident leading to escalation which Moscow may not be able to control and which may damage its interests.

#### *4.2 Measures to increase the predictability of exercises*<sup>75</sup>

As described in this report, both NATO and Russia have been treating the intensification of exercising as a measure necessitated by the changing security situation in Europe. To the extent that the exercises demonstrate the readiness of the armed forces to defend against outside aggression, they may have a positive effect in terms of strengthening deterrence and discouraging adventurism by the other side.

To limit Russia-NATO tensions, **attention should be focused not on exercises as such, but on the specific elements** of one side's exercising patterns which the other one considers as particularly destabilising.

The **frequency, size and scenarios of Russian snap exercises** present one such challenge for NATO. According to the Vienna Document, such exercises are exempted from notification requirements, and there are no political or legal limitations on conducting them. Still, the current Russian practice adds significantly to the tensions in Europe, and its continuation can prompt the Alliance members to conduct similar unannounced exercises on their own in the border area, both at the national level and involving the VJTF and other forces under NATO command. **A decision by Moscow to constrain the number of snap exercises (especially large-scale) conducted in the European part of its territory could be a signal of its willingness to decrease the level of tensions with the West.** According to the Vienna Document, the OSCE members agreed certain limitations regarding the size of notifiable exercises which they can conduct over specified timeframes.<sup>76</sup> **Such scaling down of the frequency and size of large exercises could possibly be applied**

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<sup>75</sup> This section is developing the ideas originally presented in the ELN August 2015 Policy Brief Preparing for the Worst: Are Russian and NATO Military Exercises Making War in Europe More Likely? , available at: <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2015/08/07/ea2b8c22/Preparing%20for%20the%20Worst.pdf>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

<sup>76</sup> For example, no participating State should carry out within three calendar years more than one military activity (subject to prior notification) involving more than 40,000 troops or 900 tanks or 2,000 armoured combat vehicles or 900 artillery pieces, and no participating State should carry out within one calendar year more than six military activities subject to prior notification each one involving more than 13,000 troops or 300 tanks or 500 armoured combat vehicles or 300 self-propelled and towed artillery pieces. See OSCE Vienna Document 2011 On Confidence and Security Building Measures, Chapter VIII, <https://www.osce.org/fsc/86597?download=true>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

**voluntarily by Russia to its non-notifiable snap exercises.** That would demonstrate restraint, but still allow Moscow to conduct some snap drills.

In addition, Russia could offer to facilitate **'snap observations' of snap exercises**, wherein all OSCE states would be invited to send observers as the drills begin. Attendance might be a challenge for some nations, but the most concerned countries should be able to send observers with very little notice or use the military attachés based in Moscow. Other OSCE states could offer reciprocal snap observations of their own unannounced exercises.

**Lack of information on Russian exercises, both scheduled and snap**, is another challenge. Russia should be ready to communicate directly to NATO or act through OSCE channels to voluntarily provide more information on its advance exercise schedule, as well as on scale and scenarios of specific exercises – going beyond the Vienna Document requirements and the 'good will' briefings to the defence attachés in Moscow.<sup>77</sup> As a starting point, and similar to the NATO practice, **a list of major Russian exercises planned for 2016 could be made available** by the Russian Ministry of Defence or the General Staff and regularly updated. Such schedules can be exchanged at the meetings between the relevant Russian officials and the NATO Secretary General and other top NATO officials. The OSCE's Forum for Security Cooperation should also be utilised to provide more information on exercises before and after their conclusion.

Finally, **both Russia and NATO states could begin a more constructive dialogue on addressing the weaknesses in the existing Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs)** meant to increase military predictability in the OSCE area. These mechanisms include exchange of information, prior notification of exercises and invitation of observers (applicable to exercises above a certain threshold), inspections and evaluation visits, regional measures, as well as procedures for dealing with incidents and unusual military activities.<sup>78</sup> There have been, for example, calls to include new categories of weapons in the information exchange and **adjust the thresholds for notification and observation** to the size and the training patterns of the modern armed forces. NATO countries submitted some proposals in late 2015 and will likely submit new ones in the coming months to address these and other weaknesses of the CSBM system. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called in November 2015 explicitly to modernise the Vienna Document to deal better with the current challenges.<sup>79</sup>

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77 See: Russia's military snap check poses no threat to neighbouring states – defense ministry, TASS, 7 September 2015, <http://tass.ru/en/russia/819367> Accessed 14 January 2016.

78 See OSCE Vienna Document 2011 On Confidence and Security Building Measures, op. cit.

79 J. Stoltenberg, Modernizing the rule-book of European security, published in seven European newspapers (Le Figaro, El Pais, La Repubblica, Le Soir, Die Welt, Tages-Anzeiger, and Tribune de Genève), 26 November 2015, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_125177.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_125177.htm). Accessed 14 January 2016.

The changes to the CSBM system, however, cannot be operationalised without the consensus decision of all OSCE members, including Russia. **Moscow will have a choice whether or not to engage constructively** in the work on the CSBMs at the OSCE.<sup>80</sup> It should seize the opportunity, as **development of the CSBMs should not be seen as benefitting only the Western side**. These measures can increase Russia's insight into the military situation and developments in its immediate neighbourhood, including on the NATO side of the common border. This may be especially important given Moscow's self-exclusion from the CFE Treaty's information-exchange and inspection mechanisms. The CSBM mechanisms and procedures also may be updated to be able to dispel the concerns raised by Russia about concentration on NATO forces in border areas, and deployment of nuclear-capable systems there. Russia can also use the CSBMs to show to its partners that its exercises and deployments are indeed defensive and pose no threat to other countries in the Euro-Atlantic area. Engagement on the CSBMs would also be an opportunity for Russia to include its own priorities in the common agenda, such as broadening the scope of the CSBMs to involve naval forces or recently emerged military capabilities such as missile defence or UAVs (drones).

#### *4.3 Dialogue on military doctrines*

Between NATO and Russia, **each side's interpretation of the military doctrines and assumed concepts of operations of the other adds to the current unpredictability** in Europe.

For example, there are **concerns at NATO about the Russian "de-escalatory nuclear strike"** concept. It has not been officially pronounced as an element of the Russian doctrine, but is widely believed by the Western experts to be a part of the Russian approach to deterrence and crisis-management. The notion that Russia may threaten or use its sub-strategic nuclear weapons at an early phase of a crisis with NATO is highly worrisome in itself, but it can also prompt the Alliance to re-emphasise the role of its own nuclear deterrence capabilities.

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“each side's interpretation of the military doctrines and assumed concepts of operations of the other adds to the current unpredictability”

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<sup>80</sup> It should be noted that, according to Andrey Kelin, Director of the European Cooperation Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia would be ready to discuss the modernisation of the Vienna Document only after it concludes military modernisation process and would be able to negotiate “from the position of strength”, See: OSCE finally works how it should be always working. Interview with A. Kelin (in Russian), Indeks Bezopasnosti, No. 3 (11), vol. 21, Autumn 2015, p. 20.

On the Russian side, apart from the fear that **NATO forward-positioned bases may be used for offensive operations against Russia**, there are specific concerns raised about the increased frequency of NATO exercises, the purpose of developing Missile Defence, the possibility of NATO conducting a conventional high-precision disarming strike against Russia, or the involvement of nuclear-capable aircraft from NATO states in Baltic Air Policing.<sup>81</sup>

Regarding the **operations in cyberspace and 'hybrid warfare' tactics**, there seem to also be an extremely dangerous mismatch as to what both sides regard as a red line triggering a response, including military counter-action. The literature on the subject of the Russian hybrid warfare has been growing, yet the actual Russian doctrine specifying the conditions for using force deniably to achieve its policy goals may differ from the interpretations. Russian experts, in turn, characterise the overall Western policy towards Russia and its partners as 'hybrid warfare'.

It is unlikely that all these doctrinal concerns can be addressed (and allegations about the other side's 'true' doctrine convincingly dispelled or confirmed) through official military-to-military exchanges, conferences or expert seminars. Still, **dialogue on military doctrines can lead to a better understanding of the other side's concerns** and cast light on the interpretation of one's own behaviour. It may also be used for signalling to the military officials of the other side which actions or statements will be treated as destabilising or transgressing the 'red lines' and what kind of actions can be taken as a response.

As long as the NATO-Russia Council remains inactive, **the OSCE seems to be the best place for such an exchange**, especially since dialogue on military doctrines has been traditionally a part of the Organization's CSBMs toolbox.<sup>82</sup> Both NATO countries and Russia could utilise opportunities such as the High-Level Military Doctrine Seminar in February 2016, for discussing in detail their concerns relating to the other side's doctrine.<sup>83</sup>

#### *4.4 A restrained forward military presence - NATO*

This can be the crucial and **probably most contentious element of establishing a new equilibrium**. On the NATO side, there will be no return in the foreseeable future to the pre-2014 model of a limited presence along the Eastern flank. NATO has already increased its

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81 NATO destabilising Baltic by stationing nuke-capable aircraft – Moscow, RT, 1 December 2015, <https://www.rt.com/news/210383-nato-baltic-troops-russia/>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

82 See: Defence Planning, Programme for Immediate Action Series No. 4, DOC.FSC/4/96, CSCE Forum for Security Co-operation, Vienna, 25 November 1993.

83 For details see Decision No. 3/15: Holding a High-Level Military Doctrine Seminar, FSC.DCE/3/15, 793rd Plenary Meeting, Forum for Security Co-Operation, 1 July 2015, <http://www.osce.org/fsc/171351?download=true>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

footprint in the East, which the Allies believe is necessary to deter possible Russian offensive actions and reassure exposed allies. These measures can be modified (for example, the Baltic Air Policing mission was scaled down from 16 to 8 fighters from September 2015<sup>84</sup>), but it is difficult to see in the current circumstances how they can be fully reversed.

The question is thus more about the character and scope of a forward military presence, and the message which the Alliance would want to send to Russia. **The presence should be robust enough to support Alliance deterrence policy towards Russia but – as this report suggests – it can also be restrained in a way that increases the chances of stabilising the relationship with Moscow.**

Restraint on the NATO side may be manifested by establishing a posture which cannot be reasonably judged – by an objective outside observer - as a significant military threat to Russia or its allies.

**The following elements** (some of them are already being implemented as a part of the Readiness Action Plan) **could constitute aspects of such a posture:**

- Measures to prepare the speedy deployment of NATO Response Forces and especially the VJTF in the region, including pre-positioning of supplies and non-lethal equipment;
- Measures to prepare the host countries, with NATO assistance, to receive substantial Alliance forces for collective defence tasks, which may include the establishment of multinational NATO-led logistical hubs in the region;
- Regular exercises to test the speedy reaction of NATO to a crisis along the Eastern flank, using pre-positioned equipment;
- Adaptation of the NATO planning and command structure in line with existing plans, including full operationalisation of NATO Force Integration Units;
- Maintaining the Baltic Air Policing (BAP) mission at bases in Lithuania and Estonia, with flexibility allowing the number of aircraft to be augmented or decreased in response to the level of activity of Russian aviation;

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84 NATO Halves Baltic Air Policing Mission, Agence France-Presse, 4 August 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/europe/2015/08/04/nato-halves-baltic-air-policing-mission/31139949/>. Accessed 14 January 2016.



- **Establishment of a “persistent” NATO presence in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia**, with continuous deployment for long-term rotations in each country of company-size U.S. units and a matching contribution of a similarly-sized force from other major NATO states.<sup>85</sup> The UK has already announced that it would be deploying company-size units to the Baltic States and Poland “on a regular basis”.<sup>86</sup> Similar pledges can be made by other states, for example Germany, France and Canada, but also Turkey, Spain, Italy and possibly others – with long rotations scheduled in such a way to assure that there are no gaps in the stationing of forces from multiple NATO countries in the flank states. Such an “upgraded” trip-wire arrangement would address the regional concerns about the sustainability of the RAP arrangements and the willingness of the U.S. and other Western Allies to engage in a conflict along the Eastern flank, at the same time it could not be seen as enabling offensive operations against Russia.
- **Permanent pre-positioning** of weapons and equipment for a U.S. armoured brigade-size unit for storage in selected locations in the Northern and Central part of the Eastern flank, to be used during a crisis (this would be separated from the equipment deployed with units described above or used for exercises);
- Implementation of already announced plans by the flank members to increase their military potential.

#### **As for the nature of NATO’s military restraint:**

- NATO would continue to abide by its pledge regarding no permanent stationing of substantial combat forces, as stipulated in the 1997 Founding Act. NATO could also explicitly state that, with regards to its lasting military footprint in Central and Eastern Europe, it does not intend to move beyond the “persistent” land force presence described above, amounting to up to one brigade - unless the security situation in the region deteriorates further;

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85 Similar proposals were formulated by i.a. by: S. Pifer, Crisis over Ukraine. Contingency Planning Memorandum Update, Council on Foreign Relations, October 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/ukraine/crisis-over-ukraine/p37101> and J. Rathke, Can NATO Deter Russia in View of the Conventional Military Imbalance in the East? Center for Strategic and International Studies, 30 November 2015, <http://csis.org/publication/can-nato-deter-russia-view-conventional-military-imbalance-east>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

86 Defence Secretary announces more support in Baltics and Ukraine, UK Ministry of Defence, 8 October 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-announces-more-support-in-baltics-and-ukraine>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

- The new posture would not include permanent re-deployment of significant numbers of attack aircraft, naval forces, or air- and missile-defence assets in the border area;
- There would be no deployment of U.S. sub-strategic nuclear weapons at new sites closer to Russia, and no changes as regards the absence of storage sites for nuclear weapons in the vicinity of Russia.

**Russia would still maintain local conventional superiority and the capacity to rapidly overcome NATO defences in some areas.** While this vulnerability would continue to be a cause of concern for NATO, the suggested posture along the Eastern flank would make it virtually certain that any hostilities in the region would, from an early phase, involve personnel from the U.S. and a number of major Western NATO allies.<sup>87</sup> That should limit the chances of Russia miscalculating the resolve of the Alliance to activate Article 5 and thus deter it from taking aggressive actions. At the same time, **nothing in the new posture would prohibit NATO from planning and making preparations to send substantial reinforcements** into the crisis area during a crisis.

Alternative proposals, suggesting that NATO should match Russian military potential by a major build-up of forces, including forward deployed units, and adopting a deterrence-by-denial posture<sup>88</sup> are unlikely to be more effective in terms of affecting Russian thinking. The Russian leadership, if ever contemplating an attack against NATO territory, would most likely assess first and foremost the prospects of triggering a unified NATO response and direct U.S. engagement, and thus the likelihood of a conflict spilling out from a limited operation towards a full-scale (and most likely nuclear) war. Also, it would be difficult for NATO to reach a unanimous decision on the implementation of such plans, or to secure the necessary financial contributions from most European allies. Adopting such a course of action would also expose the Alliance to the accusation of escalating the tensions in Europe and provide a handy justification for a Russian response.

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87 See discussion on a similar strategy of resilience and engagement in: O. Olikier, M. McNerney, L. Davis, NATO Needs a Comprehensive Strategy for Russia, RAND Corporation Perspective [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE143/RAND\\_PE143.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE143/RAND_PE143.pdf). Accessed 14 January 2016.

88 See e.g. military recommendations of the report *Frontline Allies: War and Chance in Central Europe*, Center for European Policy Analysis, November 2015, p. 130-131, <http://cepa.org/sites/default/files/SAG%20Report.pdf>, accessed 14 January 2016, or suggestions included in: E. Colby, J. Solomon, *Facing Russia: Conventional Defence and Deterrence in Europe*, 'Survival', Vol. 57, No. 6, December 2015-January 2016, pp.31-40.

#### *4.5 A restrained forward military presence - Russia*

On the Russian side, neither a dramatic u-turn in security policy towards détente with the West nor a comprehensive offer for NATO on mutual restraint can be expected. On the contrary, as mentioned above, the Russian National Security Strategy updated at the end of 2015 contains more negative assessment of the US and NATO policy than the previous documents. Given the importance of military posturing for the Russian regime, it is difficult to imagine that the leadership would openly admit that it fears the military tensions with NATO could get out of hand, and thus is willing to reach out to the Alliance to decrease the crisis. However, **restraint in terms of military presence along its western flank does not need to be initially pronounced at the highest political level or stipulated in documents.** Russia can design and send a series of signals which could be picked up by the Alliance and accepted as an indication that Moscow is ready to establish a new equilibrium, instead of prolonging the tensions.

Regarding **conventional posture**, it is unlikely that Russia will completely halt or reverse its rearmament and the modernisation of units in the vicinity of NATO. Russia can however adjust the tempo and scope of the process. Its recent economic woes can provide it with a handy pretext to scale down its overall level of defence spending, and specifically the plans to prioritise the development of the combat potential of Russian armed forces in the Western and Southern Military Districts. More specifically, possible measures to implement in the coming months can include the following:

- Scaling down the plans to deploy new units in the High North along the Norwegian and Finnish borders;
- Refraining from significantly expanding the existing military potential in the vicinity of NATO states, especially in Kaliningrad, and activating new or relocating major combat forces into the area;
- Refraining from establishing new military bases and 're-activating' previously mothballed facilities;
- Refraining from permanently stationing significant military forces in Belarus. Russian plans to move from a small quick-reaction aircraft presence<sup>89</sup> into establishing a large military airbase cannot be justified by an increased presence of NATO air forces (especially as the Alliance recently decided to reduce the size of

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<sup>89</sup> Belarus already hosts two other major Russian installations: a radar used as part of Russian early warning system and a communication facility for Russian strategic submarine forces.

the Baltic Air Policing mission), and seem to be resisted by the Belarusian side.<sup>90</sup> It should be possible for the Russian and Belarusian leadership to permanently drop plans for this particular deployment and also to refrain from introducing other Russian weapon systems into Belarusian territory.

**In the nuclear domain,** the following measures could signal Russian restraint:

- Refraining from deploying warheads for sub-strategic nuclear weapons in any new locations closer to Alliance territory, especially in occupied Crimea, in the Kaliningrad region or in any new storage sites in the Western Military District. This could be reinforced through statements of lower-level officials, experts or 'leaks' to the Russian media about the absence of sub-strategic nuclear weapons there.
- Abstaining from clandestine testing or deployment of land-based ballistic or cruise missile systems which violate the obligations of the INF Treaty. An initiative by Russia to resolve the INF non-compliance allegations (without necessarily acknowledging any violations) would be a clear signal that Moscow wishes to step back from confrontation.<sup>91</sup>
- Abstaining from stationing additional nuclear-capable delivery systems in the vicinity of the Alliance. For example, Russia may choose to announce that the permanent deployment of Tu-22M3 bombers to Crimea is not needed after all. Similarly, Russia may proclaim that the 'scheduled' rearmament of the Kaliningrad missile brigade with Iskander systems can take place in 2018 or later, rather than in 2016.

#### *4.6 The challenge of Missile Defence*

The development of the U.S./NATO territorial Missile Defence deployments in Europe and Russian counteractions represent a distinct challenge. In the context of NATO-Russia relations, the actual characteristics of the system and its link with the ballistic missile threat from the Middle East area seems to be of secondary importance. Russia presents Missile Defence as a symbol of Western attempts to upset strategic stability and tip the balance

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90 See: S. Bohdan, Belarus-Russia Military Cooperation: Can the Kremlin Dictate the Terms?, *Belarus Digest*, 26 November 2015, <http://belarusdigest.com/story/belarus-russia-military-cooperation-can-kremlin-dictate-terms-23814>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

91 On the other hand, Russia's withdrawal from the treaty 'in response' to any US or NATO actions, and announcement of development of the INF-prohibited system, would be seen as an escalatory and disproportional move, requiring a forceful response.

of forces. Most recently, Russia has even more forcefully demanded a reversal of the MD deployment plans, on account of the conclusion of the nuclear agreement with Iran, accusing the U.S. of “lying” about the link between the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and its MD plans.<sup>92</sup> The U.S. and NATO reject the Russian interpretation of Missile Defence as a threat to Moscow, and also point to the fact that the Iranian ballistic missile program is not covered by the Iran agreement and thus still constitutes a threat. More generally, NATO states refuse to examine the MD deployment decisions under pressure from Moscow.

In the current atmosphere of tensions and mistrust, **it is unlikely that any of the sides would alter their positions, even if such review may be warranted.** The conclusion of the Iran nuclear deal, together with the removal of chemical weapons from Syria certainly diminished the threat from WMD-armed ballistic missiles for the NATO area. Even if it does not completely nullify the rationale of constructing of a defence system aimed at countering conventional ballistic missiles strikes, especially against population centres, the new developments should have an impact on U.S. and NATO threat assessments, with possible consequences for the scope of the program and its prioritisation. Russia would still find it difficult to make a technically justified case that the planned scope of the MD program constitutes a threat to its strategic deterrent. It would also most likely gain more in relations with the U.S. and NATO by replacing its total critique of Missile Defence with a more nuanced approach. Nonetheless, the two sides are deeply entrenched in their positions. **It seems that only if new momentum in the U.S.-Russia relationship emerges after the 2016 U.S. Presidential elections can the question of developing new approaches to tackling the Missile Defence controversy return to the table.**

#### *4.7 Sequencing the actions*

With regards to the sequencing of actions, in the coming months **it is primarily up to Russia to signal that it is interested in stabilising the relationship with the Alliance.** NATO has repeatedly pointed out that it previously initiated some transparency measures towards Russia (for example shared information on the Steadfast Jazz 2013 exercises), provided Russia with updated information on its future exercises schedule,<sup>93</sup> and announced publicly and in advance the scope of the measures taken in the framework of the Readiness Action Plan.

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92 Vladimir Putin meets with members of the Valdai Discussion Club, Transcript of the final Plenary Session of the 12th Annual Meeting, 22 October 2015, Sochi, <http://valdaiclub.com/opinion/highlights/vladimir-putin-meets-with-members-of-the-valdai-discussion-club-transcript-of-the-final-plenary-sess/>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

93 Information on major NATO and NATO-related exercises is available and updated periodically also on the NATO website <https://www.aco.nato.int/exercises>.

**Russia**, on the other hand, **has not come up with similar signals or measures which could have increased transparency** or the predictability of its military actions. Notably, in May 2014 Russia suspended the 2001 bilateral agreement with Lithuania on additional confidence and security building measures, which originally involved an exchange of information on conventional forces deployed in Lithuania and the Kaliningrad region and allowed for an additional evaluation visit per year by each side.<sup>94</sup> It has been also alleged that the number given by Russia in the past regarding the size of the exercises has been deflated to avoid exceeding the notification and observation thresholds of the Vienna Document,<sup>95</sup> and to keep the Russian actions within the provisions on the frequency of organising large-scale exercises. For the same reason, some past exercises were divided into separate parts.<sup>96</sup> Also, while highlighting its strict adherence to the confidence-building provisions regarding activities of conventional forces included in the Vienna Document, Russia has made a frequent use of the clause waving the requirement of prior notification and observation for activities carried out “without advance notice to the troops involved”<sup>97</sup> (snap exercises), which NATO treats as a breach of the spirit of the confidence-building Vienna Document obligations.

Taking this past experience into account, **NATO is unlikely to agree to offer to restrain its actions unilaterally without some indication of a change in Russia’s behaviour.** External developments such as the recent terrorist attacks against European and Russian citizens and the emergence of a shared agenda with Russia in terms of fighting ISIL may have an impact on the thinking of NATO leaders. Still, decisions on the ‘Eastern’ deterrence posture at the July 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw will be primarily influenced by Russian actions in the common border region, the assessment of its doctrine, exercise patterns and deployments of its military units and equipment, especially during the period of 2014-16.<sup>98</sup> If no significant positive changes occur by the time of the summit, the deployment restraints of the 1997 Founding Act may give way to a much more assertive NATO posture in the East.

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94 The information exchange part of the agreement was suspended by Russia in 2008 as linked to the CFE, see: Lithuania regrets Russia’s decision which reduces transparency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 5 May 2014, <https://md.mfa.lt/default/en/news/lithuania-regrets-russias-decision-which-reduces-transparency>. Accessed 14 January 2016.

95 Regarding the April 2014 exercises along the Ukrainian border, see On Russian Military Activities Nclear Ukraine’s Border, Statement by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer to the special joint session of the Forum for Security Cooperation and Permanent Council, UN Mission to the OSCE, 30 April 2015, Vienna, [http://osce.usmission.gov/apr\\_30\\_14\\_ukrainefscpc.html](http://osce.usmission.gov/apr_30_14_ukrainefscpc.html). Accessed 14 January 2016.

96 23.11.2009: NATO-Russia: NAC Discusses Russian Military Exercises, op. cit.

97 OSCE Vienna Document 2011, op. cit., clauses 41 and 58.

98 Russia’s policy towards Ukraine, its attitude towards the Minsk process, and its actions in Syria will also obviously be assessed by the Alliance leaders.

**If, however, some of the changes and adjustments to the Russian military posture suggested above are introduced, the leaders gathered at the Warsaw summit might be more likely to agree on a more restrained package of deterrence/reassurance measures.** They will also be much more likely to agree that there is a need for Western diplomatic engagement with Russia to discuss military restraint, as well as explore any additional confidence-building instruments. The final declaration will, inevitably, include a condemnation of Russian actions in Ukraine and renewed emphasis on deterrence. It still seems an open question whether it could also include some political ‘openings’ to signal to Russia NATO’s willingness to move towards establishing a new equilibrium.

Looking beyond July 2016, it will be up to Russia to accept the results of the Warsaw summit as a basis for working on a new equilibrium and refrain from steps which might aggravate the crisis. Alternatively it can unveil an ‘adequate military response’ and initiate the next round of tensions. If Moscow chooses the former option, NATO-Russia relations can start moving towards an uneasy coexistence rather than deeper confrontation.

**Once some initial progress is achieved, it would be useful to prepare a plan of meetings of the NATO-Russia Council at the Ambassadorial level,** focused on the agenda of establishing a new military equilibrium, and later on the way to strengthen it through politically-binding declarations or preparation of additional confidence-building or arms control instruments. It may also be useful to re-activate and adjust the mandate of the relevant Working Groups of the NATO-Russia Council dealing with arms control, transparency and military doctrines.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> For a diagram of joint bodies established before the crisis, see: Structure of NATO-Russia Council, [http://www.nato.int/nrc-website/media/65228/nrc\\_structure-external.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nrc-website/media/65228/nrc_structure-external.pdf). Accessed 14 January 2016.

## Conclusions

The Russian annexation of Crimea and the subsequent deterioration of NATO-Russia relations have led to an intensification of military exercising in the common border area and its vicinity unprecedented in the post-Cold War period. It has also prompted both sides to deploy additional forces into the area. Describing the situation as a 'new Cold War' or a 'new arms race' can be misleading. Yet, quite unexpectedly for Western audiences, pictures of military hardware and troops exercising in Central Europe have started to make regular appearances in the evening news. In their own media, Russian viewers have seen an intensification of anti-NATO propaganda and even more images of mass drills and parades of modern Russian weaponry.

In the coming months and years, **an even more dangerous military reality may emerge on the both sides of the NATO-Russia border.** It may include the deployment of additional military forces into the area, the relocation of new categories of weapons – potentially also nuclear warheads – and more frequent and more menacing exercises. There will be also increased chances of NATO-Russia tensions spiralling rapidly and unpredictably into an even more serious crisis.

This report has described the wide range of deployment and exercising activities already initiated and implemented by Russia and NATO. It assumes that it is unrealistic to propose that both sides fully reverse their decisions and return to the military status quo ante. Most of the processes set in motion after March 2014 by the leadership of Russia and of NATO states are difficult to reverse.

Yet, as described above, **there is still time to steer the Russia-NATO confrontation into calmer and less dangerous waters.** A combination of modest restraints on exercising, mutually implemented measures increasing the predictability of military doctrines, activities and deployments, and limitations on the forward military presence along NATO-Russia borders can create a new military equilibrium acceptable to both sides.

Such a development would decrease the friction between NATO and Russia, limit the possibilities of military adventurism, reduce the chances of one side misreading the actions of the other side as preparation for aggression, and provide opportunities for contacts between the politicians, bureaucracies and militaries of both sides. It could also offer some perspective of reducing the financial costs connected with the development and maintenance of stronger defence postures. Finally, with the military tensions between Russia and NATO reduced and put under control, diplomatic space may emerge for addressing more effectively common challenges like terrorism, or for charting the way out of the wider Russia-West crisis.



At the same time, unfortunately, the measures proposed in this report would neither address the underlying causes of the crisis in the security relationship between the West and Russia nor automatically lead to resolving the existing conflicts in the common Russia-NATO neighbourhood, first and foremost in Ukraine. The main benefit of a new equilibrium would be to reduce the most dangerous symptoms of the malady of the European security order. But it will not be a cure.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> The authors would like to thank Simon Lunn, Ulrich Kühn and William Alberque for their valuable comments on the draft of this paper.

**Table 1: Major deployment decisions taken by Russia, directly linked to or relevant in the context of the 2014 crisis**

<p>Deployment of forces for <b>operations against Ukraine</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concentration of forces in its Western and Central Military Districts in February-March 2014 (presented as snap exercises) which enabled the deployment of Russian forces to Crimea and intimidation of Ukraine during the early stages of crisis</li> <li>- Maintenance of additional forces in the vicinity of the Ukrainian border,<sup>101</sup> with the total numbers assessed by RUSI at between 50,000 and 90,000 troops in April 2014<sup>102</sup></li> <li>- Deployment of troops into Eastern Ukraine. In August 2014 major elements of regular Russian units reportedly entered Eastern Ukraine in support of the separatist forces, in January-February 2015 they took part in a new offensive against Ukrainian forces.<sup>103</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Deployment of forces to <b>Crimea</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deployment of additional land, air, coastal defence and combat support units to the peninsula,<sup>104</sup> with the number of Russian troops in Crimea planned to be increased from approximately 25,000 to 40,000 troops<sup>105</sup></li> <li>- Further strengthening of the Black Sea Fleet with a number of new submarine and surface ships, including six improved Kilo-class submarines, six Admiral Grigorovich-class frigates, six Bykov-class patrol ships and at least nine Project 21631 small guided missile corvettes<sup>106</sup></li> <li>- Temporary deployment of Tu-22M3 long-range dual-capable bombers during exercises in 2015, with Russian reports indicating that the bombers would be stationed permanently in Crimea in “nearest future”.<sup>107</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Increasing the military <b>potential of the Western Military District</b><sup>108</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Permanent build-up of Russian military potential and infrastructure along the border with Ukraine, including re-location of the 33rd Mountain Brigade from North Caucasus and deployment of 9th Independent Motor-Rifle Brigade.<sup>109</sup></li> <li>- Reactivation of the 10th Tank Division as part of the 20th Guards Army, headquarters re-located from Mulino to Voronezh region.<sup>110</sup></li> <li>- January 2016 announcement of plans to create three new divisions in the Western part of Russia (most likely includes the 10th Tank Division)<sup>111</sup></li> <li>- Re-arming of the Western Military District incl. missile regiments with Iskander missile systems, introduction of S-400 air defence systems and deliveries of new armour, artillery and aircraft to the units of the District.<sup>112</sup></li> <li>- Deployment of additional transport and attack helicopters (tripling the previous numbers) to the Ostrov base close to the border with Latvia and Estonia, used by the 15th Army Aviation Brigade, a unit (re)activated in December 2013.<sup>113</sup></li> </ul>

<p>Extension of <b>military co-operation with Belarus</b></p>	<p>Beyond the existing military-to-military cooperation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Russian Su-27s deployed on quick alert missions to the airbase near Baranovichi from late 2013<sup>114</sup></li> <li>- Preparations to activate a new permanent Russian airbase in 2016. The airbase in Bobruysk in the Eastern part of the country (and not, as originally announced in 2013, close to the Western border in Lida), is to host up to 24 fighters.<sup>115</sup> Recent reports suggest that, due to Belorussian opposition to the airbase plans, the deployment may be postponed, scaled down, or even cancelled.<sup>116</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Military activities in the <b>Arctic</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Activation of a new Arctic Joint Strategic Command (AJSC) on 1 December 2014.<sup>117</sup></li> <li>- Plans for construction of at least 13 airfields and 10 radar stations, as well as the reactivation of a number of Soviet-era bases, incl. airfields and ports on the Novosibirsk Islands in the Laptev Sea and the Franz Josef archipelago, and a major airbase at Tiksi in Yakutia.<sup>118</sup></li> <li>- Re-activation and / or strengthening of units in the areas including the 61st Independent Naval Infantry Brigade and the 200th Independent Infantry Brigade, to be stationed at Sputnik Base, Pechenga, inside the Arctic Circle (16 km from the Norwegian border and 65 km from the Finnish border).</li> <li>- Re-deployment of troops to the previously abandoned base in Alakurtti, 60 km from the Finnish Lapland border.<sup>119</sup></li> </ul>

**Table 2: Major Russian exercises conducted since 2014 in its European part and the adjacent areas<sup>120</sup>**

<b>NAME/AREA</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>MAIN FEATURES</b>
<b>Snap Exercises in Western and Central Military Districts</b>	26 February - 3 March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- according to Russian sources, 150,000 army, navy and air force personnel; 90 aircraft; 120 helicopters; 880 tanks; 1,200 other pieces of equipment; and 80 warships<sup>121</sup></li> <li>- Predominant focus on territorial defence in the west and far north. It began with the large scale redeployment of forces to the Arctic, supported by aerial interdiction and defensive naval operations.<sup>122</sup></li> <li>- Coastal defence prominent, involving mine-clearing, submarine hunting, and repelling amphibious assaults.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic nuclear forces exercises</b>	26-29 March 2014	Previously scheduled exercise involving 10,000 troops and designed to simulate "massive and simultaneous use of nuclear missiles" <sup>123</sup>
<b>Snap exercises along the Ukrainian border</b>	April – May 2014	40,000 troops reportedly took part, with reporting suggesting the involvement of multiple battalion tactical groups from western and southern MDs. <sup>124</sup>
<b>Strategic nuclear forces exercises</b>	May 2014	President Putin personally took part in the command and control part of the exercises, which included training launches by all three elements of the triad. <sup>125</sup>
<b>Snap Central Military District exercises</b>	21 – 28 June 2014	<p>65,000 personnel; 5,500 pieces of equipment (including 720 tanks, 950 armoured vehicles, 600 artillery pieces &amp; MLRS); 180 aircraft; and 60 helicopters.</p> <p>The stated purpose of the exercise was to prepare a response to possible changes in the military-political situation in Central Asia following NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan.<sup>126</sup> However, the nature of the exercise suggests that the adversary possessed significant conventional capability.</p>
<b>Snap exercises in and around Kaliningrad Oblast</b>	5-10 December 2014	<p>9,000 troops, 642 tanks and other vehicles, Iskander systems and 55 warships</p> <p>Focus on the rapid reinforcement and subsequent defence of the exclave. Of particular note was the redeployment of Iskander missile system units from the Russian mainland under protection of the Baltic Fleet and Russian Air Force.<sup>127</sup></p>

NAME/AREA	DATE	MAIN FEATURES
<b>Snap exercises of nuclear forces</b>	February 2015	Conducted in “more than 30 missile regiments” to test the readiness to repel ground ‘saboteur’ attacks. <sup>128</sup>
<b>Airborne forces exercises in Western Military Districts</b>	February 2015	Tactical exercise on the Pskov training grounds involving 2,000 paratroopers and 500 pieces of equipment <sup>129</sup> Involved securing an airfield and simultaneous combat jump of 1,500 troops
<b>Snap exercises began in the High North but later expanded to other regions of Russian Federation</b>	16-21 March 2015	Conventional and strategic (including nuclear) elements coordinated by operations centre in Moscow. <sup>130</sup> - nearly 80,000 personnel, 12,000 pieces of heavy military equipment, 65 war ships, 15 submarines and over 220 military aircraft - theatres included the High North, the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea and Kaliningrad, and Russia’s Pacific coast. <sup>131</sup> - focus on defence of Russia’s outlying areas, including the construction of a ferry across the Kerch Straights to Crimea to facilitate its reinforcement; the simulated engagement of enemy warships and drones in the Black Sea; the amphibious reinforcement of Sakhalin; and a mass re-deployment of air and land assets from Leningrad and Smolensk Oblasts to the Arctic. <sup>132</sup>
<b>Snap air force and air defence exercises</b>	25-28 May 2015	Units from Central, Western and Southern Military Districts engaged, as well as long-range and transport aviation <sup>133</sup> - 250 aircraft and helicopters, 12,000 personnel - in parallel with Arctic Challenge exercises in Scandinavia - included training launches of cruise missiles by long-range aviation
<b>Cooperation 2015</b>	August 2015	Exercises of Collective Security Treaty Organization’ rapid reaction forces on the training grounds in the Pskov region - 2,000 troops, 200 pieces of equipment and 40 aircraft and helicopters from Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, - the scenario of “localizing an armed conflict and eliminating illegal armed formations in the Eastern European region” <sup>134</sup>

NAME/AREA	DATE	MAIN FEATURES
<b>Union Shield 2015</b>	September 2015	<p>Russian-Belarusian operational exercise, held on Russian training grounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- approximately 8,000 soldiers, 400 pieces of equipment, 80 aircraft and helicopters<sup>135</sup></li> <li>- defensive scenario focused on improving interoperability between Russian and Belarusian armed forces</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic nuclear forces exercises</b>	September 2015	<p>Initially tested the ability to detect the use of radiological, chemical or biological weapons against Russia,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- proceeded to test the readiness of mobile ballistic missile launchers to operate in the conditions of "a simulated enemy's air and ground attacks"<sup>136</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Center-2015</b>	September 2015	<p>95,000 personnel, over 7,000 pieces of equipment and 170 aircraft and helicopters.<sup>137</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- started with snap drills involving some of the Central Military District forces, airborne troops, transport aviation and air forces of Western and Southern Military District.<sup>138</sup></li> <li>- scenario of reacting to a conflict in Central Asia, but with use of full spectrum of military capabilities</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic nuclear forces exercises</b>	October 2015	<p>Testing operation of the command and control system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- included training launches by three elements of the strategic triad and use of sub-strategic (most likely dual-use) systems: land-based Islander and sea-based Kalibr cruise missiles<sup>139</sup></li> </ul>

**Table 3: Major decisions on force deployments taken by NATO and its Member States in response to or in the context of the 2014 crisis**

<p><b>Emergency increase</b> of military footprint along the Eastern flank of the Alliance <b>following Crimea takeover by Russia</b> in March 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- number of fighters deployed by NATO members as part of the Baltic Air Policy mission quadrupled (from 4 to 16 aircraft)<sup>140</sup></li> <li>- regular AWACS missions flown over the territories of Poland and Romania</li> <li>- additional U.S. F-16s and Canadian CF-18 aircraft stationed in Poland and Romania<sup>141</sup></li> <li>- increased US surveillance flights in the vicinity of Russia's Western borders</li> <li>- US company-size units from the 173rd Airborne Brigade inserted into Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland</li> </ul>
<p>Continued <b>rotational presence</b> of land forces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- U.S. comprehensive engagement in the framework of "Operation Atlantic Resolve", supported by European Reassurance Initiative funds, including roughly 90-days-long long tours in Central Europe for rotating land units<sup>142</sup></li> <li>- augmentation of U.S. presence in Romania and Bulgaria<sup>143</sup></li> <li>- Canadian "Operation Reassurance", continuous rotational presence of 120-strong Land Task Force deployed to Central Europe<sup>144</sup></li> <li>- other NATO states deployed elements of their forces in the region for shorter time periods and for specific exercise activities<sup>145</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Increased NATO <b>maritime activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- re-activation of Standing NATO Mine Counter-Measures Group One SNM-CMG1<sup>146</sup> and deployment into the Baltic Sea in April 2014<sup>147</sup></li> <li>- deployment of NATO Maritime Groups and ships of individual NATO states into the Black Sea<sup>148</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Development of NATO <b>command structure</b> in the flank region</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- establishment of NATO Force Integration Units (command and logistics coordination centres with approximately 40 military personnel) in the three Baltic States, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia<sup>149</sup></li> <li>- augmentation of staff and increasing the readiness level of the existing Headquarters of the Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin (Poland)</li> <li>- activation of the high-readiness Headquarters for Multinational Division Southeast in Romania<sup>150</sup></li> </ul>
<p>U.S. decisions on <b>pre-positioning</b> of equipment and supplies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The U.S. Army expanded its pre-positioned "European Activity Set"<sup>151</sup> in Europe (stored in Germany, used for exercises or crisis contingencies) from a battalion to an armoured brigade size</li> <li>- U.S. to prepare a second armoured brigade-size set of equipment reserved for use in contingencies, not for day-to-day training<sup>152</sup></li> <li>- as announced by U.S. defence Secretary Ash Carter in June 2015, elements of the European Activity Set will be stored in Central and Eastern European locations<sup>153</sup></li> </ul>

<b>Increase of the military potential</b> of Central and Eastern European NATO allies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- increase of the defence budgets (including a pledge to reach 2,0% GDP level by Lithuania and Latvia, increase from 1,95% to 2,0% GDP by Poland from 2016)</li><li>- acquisition of new weapon systems (U.S. air-launched cruise missiles and air/missile defence system by Poland; ex-Portuguese F-16s by Romania, German PzH 2000 howitzer by Lithuania, ex-Dutch CV90 infantry fighting vehicles by Estonia; ex-UK armoured vehicles by Latvia, portable air-defence systems by Latvia and Lithuania, Javelin and Carl Gustav anti-tank weapons by Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia)</li><li>- increased use of reservists in training, augmentation of National Guard-type forces in the Baltic States and Poland</li></ul>
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**Table 4: Major NATO and NATO-related exercises conducted since 2014 in Central Europe and adjacent areas**

NAME	DATE	MAIN	MAIN FEATURES
<b>Spring Storm 14/ Steadfast Javelin I</b>	May 2014	Estonia	6,000 troops from Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States in a NATO-led scenario of repelling aggression <sup>154</sup>
<b>Saber Strike 2014</b>	June 2014	Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia	US Army-led; 4,500 troops, including 1100 Danish personnel, 380 Americans and company-size units from Poland, UK, Norway, and Canada <sup>155</sup>
<b>Breeze 2014</b>	July 2014	Bulgaria-led, Black Sea	2014 exercises explicitly aimed at enhancing NATO solidarity and the readiness of NATO naval forces <sup>156</sup>
<b>Saber Junction 2014</b>	August-September 2014	Germany, Latvia	5,800 participating, mainly in Germany but one episode involved airdrop and seizure of airport in Latvia <sup>157</sup>
<b>Thracian Eagle</b>	August 2014	Bulgaria	New US-Bulgarian exercise involving 12 F-15s, repeated in April 2015 <sup>158</sup>
<b>Steadfast Javelin II</b>	September 2014	Poland, Germany and the three Baltic States	2,000 troops training parachute drops and air assault operations <sup>159</sup>
<b>Anakonda</b>	September-October 2014	Poland	Poland-led; 12,500 troops, including 750 from other NATO and partner countries
<b>Noble Justification/Noble Ledger</b>	September/October 2014	Various locations	13,000 NATO troops preparing the 2015 rotation of the NATO Response Force; Special Forces Component conducted exercises in Poland and Lithuania <sup>160</sup>
<b>Danube Express 2014</b>	October 2014	Romania	deployment of UK troops for exercises, in total 1,000 troops and more than 400 pieces of equipment <sup>161</sup>

<b>NAME</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>MAIN</b>	<b>MAIN FEATURES</b>
<b>Joint Warrior (autumn)</b>	October 2014	UK, the Atlantic	UK-led; 22 warships and submarines, 52 aircraft, and around 3,500 personnel <sup>162</sup>
<b>Black Eagle</b>	November 2014	Poland	UK's 1,300 strong battlegroup exercised in Poland, with 20 Challenger 2 tanks and Warrior armoured vehicles <sup>163</sup>
<b>Iron Sword 14</b>	November 2014	Lithuania	Inaugurated in 2014, to become a regular exercise; participation of 2,500 troops from 9 NATO countries, 300 combat vehicles <sup>164</sup>
<b>Joint Viking 2015</b>	March 2015	Norway	Norway-led; 5,000 troops training in the northern Finnmark region bordering Russia <sup>165</sup>
<b>Joint Warrior (spring)</b>	April 2015	UK, the Atlantic	UK-led; 55 ships, 70 aircraft and around 13,000 troops from 14 countries <sup>166</sup>
<b>Saber Junction 2015</b>	April 2015	Germany, Romania	US Army-led; 4,700 troops, included for the first time a training episode in Romania. <sup>167</sup>
<b>Wind Spring 15</b>	April 2015	Eastern Romania	Over 2,200 troops from Romania, the United States, UK and Moldova. <sup>168</sup>
<b>Spring Storm 15 / Siil (Hedgehog)</b>	May 2015	Estonia	13,000 troops, including 7000 reservists, training article 5-type scenario <sup>169</sup>
<b>Arctic Challenge 2015</b>	May-June 2015	Norway, Sweden, Finland	More than 100 aircraft from 9 NATO and partner countries <sup>170</sup>

NAME	DATE	MAIN	MAIN FEATURES
<b>Allied Shield</b>	June 2015	Various locations	15,000 personnel from 19 Members states and three partner states. Allied Shield was an umbrella name for four exercises, with different scenarios: <b>BALTOPS 15</b> (naval exercise in the Baltic Sea, with participation of 49 ships, 61 aircraft, one submarine, and over 5600 personnel), <sup>171</sup> <b>Saber Strike 15</b> , a regular US-Army led exercise, held in 2015 in Poland and the Baltic States, <b>Noble Jump</b> , the first training deployment of elements NATO's new "spearhead" Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) to Poland, <b>Trident Joust</b> , command and control exercise with elements of the Naples-based Allied Joint Force Command headquarters forward-deployed to Romania <sup>172</sup>
<b>Breeze 2015</b>	July 2015	Black Sea	30 warships from Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey and USA <sup>173</sup>
<b>Swift Response 2015</b>	August-September 2015	Germany, Bulgaria	US-led; appr. 5,000 paratroopers from 11 NATO countries – "largest combined airborne training on the continent since the end of the Cold War" <sup>174</sup>
<b>Dragon 15</b>	October 2015	Poland	7,000 troops including 900 from other NATO states, 700 pieces of equipment <sup>175</sup>
<b>Joint Warrior 15</b> (autumn)	October-November 2015	UK, the Atlantic	Appr. 30 ships, included also At Sea Demonstration of air and missile defence capabilities <sup>176</sup>
<b>Iron Sword 15</b>	November 2015	Lithuania	2000 troops from 10 NATO countries and Georgia <sup>177</sup>
<b>U.S. time-limited deployments of specific types of weapon systems</b>	2014-2015	Various locations, incl. Central Europe	Training deployments of systems which could be used in contingencies involving Russia, including: B-52 and B-2 strategic bombers, <sup>178</sup> Patriot air and missile defence batteries, <sup>179</sup> A-10 Warthog ground attack aircraft, F-22 Raptor fighters <sup>181</sup>

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### *Table 1*

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### *Table 2*

- 120 The biggest Russian exercise since 2014 was the September 2014 East drill in the Eastern Military District, with the participation of 155,000 personnel and over 4,000 pieces of equipment.
- 121 [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=11905664@egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11905664@egNews)
- 122 [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=11905692@egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11905692@egNews)
- 123 [http://www.ng.ru/armies/2014-03-26/6\\_strike.html](http://www.ng.ru/armies/2014-03-26/6_strike.html)
- 124 <http://www.army-technology.com/news/newsrussian-military-starts-exercises-after-ukraine-crackdown-on-activists-4220928>
- <http://rt.com/news/154588-russia-drill-ukraine-operation/>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/23/putin-military-exercises-ukraine-border>
- 125 [http://russianforces.org/blog/2014/05/multiple\\_missile\\_launches\\_duri.shtmlc](http://russianforces.org/blog/2014/05/multiple_missile_launches_duri.shtmlc)
- 126 [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=11962677@egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11962677@egNews)
- [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=11963425@egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11963425@egNews)
- 127 <http://rt.com/news/214667-russia-drills-kaliningrad-region/>

- 128 <http://tass.ru/en/russia/777221>.
- 129 [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12008939@egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12008939@egNews)
- 130 [http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/anatomy-of-a-russian-exercise\\_2914.html](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/anatomy-of-a-russian-exercise_2914.html)
- 131 [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12010900@egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12010900@egNews)
- 132 [http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12010807@egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12010807@egNews)  
[http://function.mil.ru/news\\_page/country/more.htm?id=12010708@egNews](http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12010708@egNews)
- 133 <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/1993782>
- 134 <http://www.rferl.org/content/csto-military-exercise-estonia-russia-belarus-kazakhstan-kyrgyzstan-tajik-istan-nato/27203792.html>; <http://tass.ru/en/russia/815206>.
- 135 <https://belsat.eu/en/articles/union-shield-over-8000-russian-belarusian-troops-take-part-joint-war-game/>
- 136 <http://tass.ru/en/russia/818934>
- 137 <http://tass.ru/en/russia/819367>
- 138 [http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2015-09-11/1\\_center2015.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2015-09-11/1_center2015.html)
- 139 [http://russianforces.org/blog/2015/10/russia\\_tests\\_command\\_and\\_contr.shtml](http://russianforces.org/blog/2015/10/russia_tests_command_and_contr.shtml)

*Table 3*

- 140 [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2015\\_02/20150205\\_1502-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_02/20150205_1502-Factsheet-RAP-en.pdf)
- 141 <http://www.stripes.com/hagel-us-forces-to-stay-in-poland-until-end-of-2014-1.278540>; <http://globalaviationreport.com/2014/08/23/canadian-air-task-force-completes-mission-in-romania/>
- 142 [http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/0514\\_Atlantic-Resolve](http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/0514_Atlantic-Resolve)
- 143 <http://www.agerpres.ro/english/2014/04/01/president-basescu-approves-deployment-of-us-troops-at-kogalniceanu-airport-15-02-22>
- 144 <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=916179>
- 145 See Table 2 for more details.
- 146 According to NATO definition, "The Standing NATO Maritime Groups are a multinational, integrated maritime force made up of vessels from various allied countries [...] permanently available to NATO to perform different tasks ranging from participating in exercises to actually intervening in operational missions", see: <http://www.mc.nato.int/org/smg/Pages/default.aspx>
- 147 [http://www.mc.nato.int/PressReleases/Pages/Standing-NATO-Mine-Counter-Measures-Group-ONE-\(SNMCMG1\)-Prepares-for-Baltic-Deployment.aspx](http://www.mc.nato.int/PressReleases/Pages/Standing-NATO-Mine-Counter-Measures-Group-ONE-(SNMCMG1)-Prepares-for-Baltic-Deployment.aspx)
- 148 <http://www.stripes.com/news/nato-maritime-group-enters-black-sea-as-ukraine-crisis-continues-1.332693>
- 149 [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_123655.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_123655.htm?selectedLocale=en)
- 150 [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_125356.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_125356.htm)
- 151 <http://www.army.mil/article/155832>. Pre-positioned set essentially encompasses the vehicles and equipment for a U.S. unit of particular size; its soldiers can be deployed to Europe from the United States. Armoured brigade-size set is approximately 1,200 vehicles, including 220-250 Abrams tanks, Bradley infantry fighting vehicles and self-propelled artillery.
- 152 <http://www.armytimes.com/story/military/careers/army/2015/07/15/army-plans-double-equipment-boost-soldiers-europe/30187329/>
- 153 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/23/us-usa-europe-defense-idUSKBN0P315620150623>

*Table 4*

- 154 [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_109929.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_109929.htm)
- 155 <http://www.army.mil/article/128187/>
- 156 <http://www.aco.nato.int/-nato-warships-participate-in-exercise-breeze-2014-.aspx>
- 157 [http://www.army.mil/article/132332/U\\_S\\_\\_Army\\_Europe\\_conducts\\_exercise\\_Saber\\_Junction/](http://www.army.mil/article/132332/U_S__Army_Europe_conducts_exercise_Saber_Junction/). See the presentation on the evolution of Saber Junction exercise over the years: <http://www.eur.army.mil/SaberJunction/Evolution.htm>
- 158 <http://www.novinite.com/articles/162825/US+Air+Force+F-15+Deploy+to+Bulgaria+for+Bilateral+Training+Event>
- 159 [http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/news\\_112999.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/news_112999.htm)
- 160 <http://www.aco.nato.int/special-forces-train-for-certification-in-exercise-noble-justification-14-.aspx>
- 161 <http://www.jfcnaples.nato.int/page11122031/2014/exercise-danube-express-begins-in-romania.aspx>
- 162 <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2014/october/08/141008-exercise-joint-warrior-gets-underway>
- 163 <http://www.army.mod.uk/news/26733.aspx#>
- 164 <https://nato.mfa.lt/nato/en/news/one-of-the-largest-international-military-exercises-in-lithuania-iron-sword-2014-has-ended>
- 165 <http://www.newsinenglish.no/2015/02/06/5000-soldiers-to-train-near-russia/>
- 166 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-warrior-military-exercise-to-take-place>
- 167 [http://www.army.mil/article/145053/Saber\\_Junction\\_15\\_kicks\\_off\\_with\\_rapid\\_deployment\\_and\\_jump\\_into\\_Romania/](http://www.army.mil/article/145053/Saber_Junction_15_kicks_off_with_rapid_deployment_and_jump_into_Romania/)
- 168 <http://www.agerpres.ro/english/2015/04/20/mircea-dusa-and-general-bradshaw-to-participate-in-wind-spring-15-multinational-exercise-18-27-15>
- 169 Biggest ever national exercises, UK and US biggest outside participants <http://www.icds.ee/blog/article/hedgehog-estonias-biggest-military-exercise-of-all-time-does-every-quill-really-count/> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/raf-typhoons-intercept-russian-aircraft-near-estonia>
- 170 <http://thesentinel.ca/norway-led-arctic-challenge-exercise-2015-starts/>
- 171 <http://www.aco.nato.int/nato-allies-begin-naval-exercise-baltops-in-the-baltic-sea.aspx>
- 172 <http://www.jfcnaples.nato.int/page11122031/2015/jfc-naples-commander-announces-exercise-increased-nato-capability-in-romania-.aspx>
- 173 <http://www.worldbulletin.net/balkans/161780/bulgaria-hosts-breeze-2015-naval-exercise>
- 174 [http://www.army.mil/article/153395/Swift\\_Response\\_to\\_exercise\\_NATO\\_airborne\\_forces\\_in\\_Europe/](http://www.army.mil/article/153395/Swift_Response_to_exercise_NATO_airborne_forces_in_Europe/)
- 175 <http://mon.gov.pl/aktualnosci/artykul/2015-10-02-dragon-15-najwieksze-tegoroczne-cwiczenie-wp/>
- 176 <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2015/november/03/151103-successful-completion-of-at-sea-demo>
- 177 <http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/defence/five-military-exercises-planned-in-lithuania-in-november.d?id=69530300>
- 178 <http://www.barksdale.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123444220>
- 179 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-3005705/US-air-defense-troops-train-fast-deployment-Poland.html>
- 180 <http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2015/08/11/12-more--10s-deploy-eastern-europe/31460615/>
- 181 <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/air-space/strike/2015/08/24/f-22-deploying-europe/32289415/>

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