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The Baltic States, NATO and Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe

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Acknowledgements

This paper is a product of a RUSI-ELN partnership programme to address particular national positions in the non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) debate within NATO. It draws on secondary source material but also on the substance of meetings with key ministers, politicians, policy-makers and analysts from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and on the outcomes of a policy symposium jointly hosted with the International Centre for Defence Studies in Tallinn in September 2011.

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I. Introduction

Over the past three years, there has been renewed debate within NATO on nuclear policy and on the continued relevance and role of US non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) stationed in Europe in particular. This debate, motivated in large part by President Obama's commitment in Prague in 2009 to reduce the role of nuclear weapons, was clearly evident both in discussions around NATO's new Strategic Concept and in the more recent Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR). Despite the heat and noise generated by the debate and the expectations in some quarters that this was an opportunity for NATO to demonstrate its support for the Prague agenda, little has been seen by way of change. Indeed, the prevailing consensus within the Alliance has been to reaffirm NATO's existing posture and, far from reducing the numbers of US NSNW in Europe, to endorse decisions to enhance those capabilities.¹

However, the outcome and conclusions of the DDPR will not be the end of the story. More likely they represent a further stage in the development of NATO's strategy as it adapts to the prevailing strategic, political and economic circumstances. The debate about NATO's nuclear weapons will continue.

Several factors support this contention. The commitment by Alliance leaders to reducing the role of nuclear weapons remains and the agreement at Chicago to consider further reductions, albeit conditional on Russian reciprocity, is a positive chink of light; likewise, NATO's agreement to create a new advisory and consultation arms control and disarmament committee to oversee the consideration of further reductions. There is also the practical question of replacing the ageing dual-capable aircraft used for the nuclear mission. Each of the four countries facing this challenge has its own solution to the question of replacement.² The purchase of a conventional strike fighter is an expensive proposition. Moreover, while the adaptations required for the nuclear version are relatively inexpensive, they are not insubstantial in today's age of austerity.

In the short term, the collective commitment to sustaining the nuclear mission would seem to be firm. However, domestic politics are never far away. The nuclear mission is controversial and the associated warheads represent a permanent security risk. It is always possible that domestic considerations could at some point in the future call into question this collective commitment, by challenging either the aircraft replacement or the continued deployment of the warheads. While many officials support the mission, it is equally true that many analysts and military leaders appear to attach little military, as opposed to political, value to these weapons. Given the potential vulnerability of the consensus position to domestic factors and possible unilateral decisions, it would be far better to seek solutions that

reduce and eventually remove the systems through a managed process that sustains NATO cohesion.

The NSNW debate has also brought to the fore an underlying division in NATO members' approaches to Russia. For some within NATO, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, part of the reason for retaining US nuclear weapons on European soil is their perceived value in deterring any potential external attack from or intimidation by Russia. From these countries' perspectives, the weapons also play a valuable role in contributing to Alliance solidarity and bolstering the transatlantic link, and serve as important manifestations of transatlantic risk- and burden-sharing. For others in the Alliance however, especially Germany and the Netherlands, the weapons are redundant relics of the Cold War in an age in which NATO is supposed to be pursuing a strategic partnership with Russia.³

The disagreement on these issues runs deep and will not disappear any time soon; but what seems indisputable is that an agreement with Russia on the contentious issue of missile defence, while currently highly unlikely, could unlock other elements and developments in the relationship with Russia, and radically alter the prospects for a change in NATO nuclear policy in the period ahead, and perhaps even in the short term.

Other external events, such as new national election outcomes in NATO member states, or a yet deeper economic and political crisis in Europe, may contribute to the continual resurfacing of the NATO nuclear policy debate as political leaders and citizens look to save money, restricting their focus to essential priorities and pursuing the commitment to reducing the role of nuclear weapons. Indeed, statements declaring the end of the debate are almost certainly premature.

The Role of the Baltic States in the NATO Debate

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania occupy a particularly significant place in this debate due to their geographic location and history. As countries that, until 1991, were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union, they have understandably acute security concerns with regard to Russia. Their entry into NATO in 2004 also meant that these countries were, for the first time, able to contribute to NATO's most recently published Strategic Concept.⁴ As full members, their views were taken into full account throughout the consensus process. Accordingly, as part of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group, they were able to ensure that their views on the role of NSNW in Europe influenced the outcome of the DDPR.

Due to their geostrategic location, the perspectives of the three Baltic States in these debates have a particular resonance. For them, NATO's primary purpose is collective defence through the Article V commitment and the

maintenance of the necessary capabilities for deterrence and defence. Their priority and principal focus, therefore, is on ensuring the credibility of these capabilities, the transatlantic link and the US nuclear deterrent. They are wary of any proposal for change which could, in their view, weaken the credibility of the commitment to collective defence, and are sceptical about those that involve Russian reciprocity. Changes are not excluded, but can be considered only after the question 'will we be more secure?' is answered.

Any future changes to NATO nuclear policy will need to incorporate strategies to manage Baltic State concerns, at least if NATO is to manage any future process of change while simultaneously maintaining Alliance cohesion.

The Purpose and Structure of This Paper

This paper, therefore, explores the key strategic security concerns which inform the Baltic States' perspectives and the positions these states take in the NATO debate. It follows a companion paper by Andrew Somerville, Ian Kearns and Malcolm Chalmers on Poland, and will be followed by a paper examining the position of Turkey in the NATO nuclear debate.⁵

The paper is organised into three main sections. The first sets out the main issues on the security agenda as seen from the perspective of the Baltic States, examining historical and cultural relations with Russia and their spill-over into present-day relations. The second focuses on Baltic State security strategy, exploring the approach these countries have taken to NATO and the EU in particular. The third examines the place of nuclear issues in the wider Baltic security debate, and the ways in which general attitudes towards such issues and security challenges in these countries have played into a particular approach to nuclear policy discussions inside NATO. The paper concludes with a brief review of the measures that might be required to obtain any further movement in the position of the Baltic States. Our findings are based on reviews of the secondary literature, on private meetings with policy-makers at NATO and in the region, and on views expressed at a seminar co-hosted by the European Leadership Network (ELN), the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI), and the International Centre for Defence Studies (ICDS) in Tallinn in September 2011.

Throughout the paper, we refer to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania collectively as the Baltic States. The authors acknowledge that grouping these countries together in such a way for parsimony can be problematic. As separate states they exhibit a range of important historical, linguistic, economic and demographic differences. However, in the debate on NSNW in Europe, the paper is premised on the belief that their concerns and positions are sufficiently similar to make a collective treatment valid.

II. Relations with Russia

The Baltic States' security concerns are dominated by relations with Russia and by a desire and determination, in the context of those relations, to preserve both state sovereignty and territorial integrity. This prism, through which most security challenges are viewed in the region, is rooted in history but also in real concerns over more recent events. We review both some of this history and some of these recent events briefly below.

Historical Context: Soviet Occupation and its Legacy

From June 1940, for over fifty years, with the exception of a brief period of occupation by Nazi Germany, the Baltic States endured Soviet occupation and externally imposed Communist Party rule. The various phases of this occupation were accompanied by the wholesale deportation and exile to camps in Siberia of large numbers of the Baltic population. Occupation was persistently challenged throughout this time by politically active nationalist dissident movements, each of which sought to keep the dream of independence alive.⁶ The achievement of this goal in 1991, however, was far from a clean break with the past.

At independence, some 130,000 Russian troops remained stationed across the Baltic States in naval facilities and air and land force bases. The strategically important Paldiski nuclear submarine training centre, the only one of its kind and the largest facility in the former USSR, also remained operational in northwestern Estonia. This made for a difficult start to post-independence relations with Russia.

A debate about the future of the military installations ensued and became connected with, and complicated by, two other aspects of the legacy of occupation. The first of these was that the years of occupation and the associated Soviet migration policies had seen increased levels of ethnic Russian penetration of much of the Baltic region. This development was accompanied and exacerbated by the wholesale deportation of native Balts. In Estonia alone, the number of Russian speakers in the country almost quadrupled, from 8.2 per cent to 30.3 per cent of the population, between 1934 and 1989.⁷ Post independence, this meant the issue of the rights and status of what had become large but minority ethnic Russian populations was a prominent feature of the landscape. This situation is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

From the Baltic perspective, the post-independence Russian minorities provided Russia with a justification for a continued troop presence and for interference in domestic Baltic affairs.⁸ From the perspective of the Russian government, the issue was that of how the remaining minorities were being treated.⁹ Russian President Boris Yeltsin issued a decree in 1992 to

suspend the withdrawal of Russian troops because of what he described as a 'profound concern' over the treatment of Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic States.¹⁰ He also attempted, in this context, to establish a new role for Russian troops as putative peacekeepers. The situation became so tense that the EU and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) set up missions in Estonia and Latvia to monitor the possible mistreatment of minorities.

The second complicating factor was the legacy of the energy relationship between Russia and the Baltic States. During the occupation, all three Baltic States became heavily integrated into the Soviet energy infrastructure. A big feature of the early years of independence was therefore a concern in the Baltic States about Russia's ability to use energy to attempt to force them to concede to Russian demands. In 1992, these fears appeared justified when Russia halted supplies in response to the Baltic States' insistence that Russian military forces should leave their territory.¹¹ Russian military withdrawals were only completed in August 1994, and it was not until 30 September 1995 that the Paldiski nuclear base was decommissioned.¹²

This entire period made it difficult for the Baltic States to define their post-Soviet relationship with Russia and to shore up a nascent sense of security, sovereignty and independence. This in turn contributed to a deep-rooted mistrust of Russia. Some in the region fear that the issue of minority rights and the lingering issue of energy dependence on Russia could yet be used by Moscow as pretexts for future Russian intimidation and intervention.¹³ As the next section of the paper makes clear, developments in the more recent past have done little to assuage these fears.

More Recent Problems in the Relationship with Russia

Tensions persist to this day in a number of areas. First, although there are no longer any Russian military bases on the Baltic States' soil, Russian military exercises and a troop presence close to the borders of the Baltic States remain a cause for concern. The Russian military exercises conducted near Baltic territory in 2009, known as *Zapad-2009* and *Ladoga-2009*, are emblematic of this point. At least 30,000 soldiers and navy personnel were involved in what became the largest military exercises to be conducted close to NATO borders since the end of the Cold War.¹⁴ The hypothetical front line of one of the exercises was the entire Russian border with the Baltic States and Finland, while the *Zapad-2009* exercise ended with a simulated first-use nuclear attack on Poland in a scenario aimed at stopping a NATO invasion of Russia following the hypothetical failure of Russian conventional defences.¹⁵ In this context, and as is discussed later, Russian officials often refer to NATO's superiority in conventional forces as the reason for their reliance on nuclear forces. This superiority certainly exists in overall numbers and also quality. However, from a regional perspective, the small size of the Baltic

forces means that Russia would enjoy a substantial advantage in forces that could deploy rapidly; hence the importance to the Baltic States of NATO's plans for reinforcement.

More recently, in November 2011, then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev declared that Russia would deploy nuclear-capable 9K720 Iskander short-range ballistic missiles to Kaliningrad 'to neutralize, if necessary, the NATO anti-ballistic missile system emerging in Europe'. As Kaliningrad borders Lithuania and is close to Latvia and Estonia, these missiles, with a range of 500 km, would be able to reach all three Baltic countries if and when deployed.

Second, the legacy of the Soviet period has meant that the status and rights of ethnic Russian speakers in the Baltic States, particularly Estonia and Latvia, have been a source of friction within the two countries and in their relations with Moscow. It is worth noting that in both the pre-membership period, and subsequently in carrying through the reforms necessary for both NATO and EU membership, the three Baltic States came under the scrutiny of the Council of Europe and the OSCE. The examinations by both bodies were exacting and the criticism tough. Both Latvia and Estonia were criticised for being too rigorous and rigid on the requirements for citizenship and related policies on language and education. However, the unwillingness of the residual ethnic Russians to adapt to their new environment or even acknowledge their new countries was also recognised, as was the willingness of Moscow to use the issue for its own purposes.

These discussions demonstrated that the questions of minority rights, language and citizenship are complicated in most member countries, and even more so in Estonia and Latvia given the specificity of their respective situations. In Latvia, despite extensive efforts to facilitate the naturalisation process, the refusal of Russian speakers to comply has meant that there are now approximately 300,000 'non-citizens' in the country.¹⁶ On 18 February 2012, a referendum took place on whether the constitution should be amended to accord Russian official status as a national language. This proposal was rejected by 74.8 per cent of the vote, with a 69 per cent turnout.¹⁷ However, given that almost a third of the Latvian population is ethnic Russian, this remains a potential source of domestic friction and instability. In Estonia meanwhile, where 25 per cent of the population is ethnic Russian, the Estonian government recently rejected a proposal for children of non-citizens to be accorded citizenship. Accordingly, the rights of some Russian speakers also remain a protracted source of contention between Russia and Estonia.¹⁸ These issues will take time and the passing of generations to resolve, so it is not surprising that tensions continue to resurface. While these could be seen as part of a familiar and complex

process of integration and assimilation, the adversarial relationship with Russia provides an additional dimension and cause for concern.

Third, the question of minorities is related to claims of continued Russian political interference in domestic Baltic affairs. This is said to take place through Moscow's support for pro-Russian political parties in the Baltic States. The most recent example of this is said to be Moscow's support for Harmony Center, the main pro-Russian political party in Latvia, which has a co-operation agreement with Putin's party and which comprises a grouping (the Socialist Party) which questions the legitimacy of Latvia's restored independence. In the last national election on 17 September 2011, Harmony Center won the most seats in the Latvian parliament: a total of 31 out of 100. Most other parties, including the far-right National Alliance, formed a coalition government to exclude this party, which they identified as being under Russian influence. Similarly, in Estonia there are said to be links between the Russian government and the pro-Russian opposition Center Party, which is supported by most of the ethnic Russian population.¹⁹

Fourth, tensions have resurfaced regularly in recent years over contested historical events and symbols. In 2007, for example, tensions between Estonia and Russia erupted during what became known as the 'bronze soldier' incident. This saw the Estonian government relocating a Second World War Soviet memorial from the centre of Tallinn to a military cemetery on the outskirts of the city. To ethnic Estonians the statue was a symbol of Soviet oppression, but to the Russian minority, and indeed to Russia, it was a commemoration of fallen Soviet war heroes. The relocation of the statue resulted in an outpouring of anger from the Estonian Russian-speaking minority as well as from many in Russia.²⁰ Riots followed, resulting in one death and assaults on Estonian and Swedish diplomats in Moscow. Russia closed a railway line used to transport oil to Estonia, cancelled a passenger rail service between the two countries opened only two months earlier and banned heavy transportation vehicles from using the Narva-Ivangorod bridge, a major border crossing between the two countries.²¹

Moreover, on the day that the 'bronze soldier' monument was moved, Estonia suffered a major cyber-attack on its IT infrastructure. This affected civil and government websites including government servers and the nation's banking system. For a country whose electorate can vote online in national elections and where 98 per cent of the population uses online banking, this was a major national-security incident which undermined the day-to-day functioning of Estonian society.²² It also demonstrated the vulnerability of core institutions in government and finance.²³ There is no independent confirmation of the source of the attack, but because of the timing it is alleged that the attack originated in Russia, although this was denied by the Russian government.²⁴

In June 2008, Lithuania was also subject to a cyber-attack, three days after passing legislation banning the use of Soviet or communist symbols. Over 300 websites were attacked by similar methods to those used in the Estonian cyber-attack.²⁵ Some websites were also vandalised in the Lithuanian cyber-attack through the use of Soviet-era hammer and sickle images. Before the attack, Lithuanian-Russian relations had worsened due to Russia's refusal to compensate Lithuanian victims of Soviet labour camps, Russia's use of energy as a political weapon, and Lithuania's moves to block talks on an EU-Russia partnership.²⁶

Beyond these developments, it must also be noted that energy politics are never far from the surface. Between 1998 and 2000, Russian-owned oil company Transneft cut off oil supplies nine times to prevent the sale of a Lithuanian refinery, port and pipeline to the American-owned company Williams International.²⁷ In January 2003, Russia stopped its deliveries of oil to the Latvian port Ventspils when Latvia refused to sell its oil transit company Ventspils Nafta to Transneft.²⁸ Russia has also had energy disputes with Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine and Turkmenistan, and the patterns of Russian behaviour within these relationships are keenly watched in the Baltic States. The February 2004 Russian-Belarusian row, in which Belarus was accused of illegally tapping Gazprom pipelines, resulted in the suspension of gas supplies to the country for nearly twenty-four hours and affected Lithuania as almost all of the country's gas comes via Belarus.²⁹

In addition, the Russian intelligence services are also reportedly active in the Baltic States. In September 2008, Herman Simm, head of the Estonian state secret protection office, and his wife Heete Simm, a lawyer who formerly worked in the Estonian national policy headquarters, were arrested for passing highly classified information on cyber-security and missile defence to the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. Simm had set up and operated the system which handled classified NATO information, including information on the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn. He was convicted in February 2009 of treason 'for passing secret state and foreign state information'.³⁰ He was alleged to have started working as a spy for the Russian intelligence service in 1995. Although it is unknown how much data was passed on, it is claimed to be one of the largest NATO security breaches in recent times.³¹

Last but not least, many of these developments seemed small compared to the 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict. This was interpreted in the Baltic States as evidence of a bellicose Russian approach to its neighbours, including, where necessary, a continued willingness to use military incursions to secure political objectives, especially where the rights and status of a Russian-speaking minority appeared to provide a pretext.

Given these historical and current tensions, the Baltic mindset can be characterised as one of deeply felt and – as many in the region would argue – justified insecurity. This all plays directly into the Baltic States’ security strategies and into their approach to the internal NATO debate on forward-deployed US NSNW in Europe.

III. The Baltic States' Security Strategies

NATO Membership

Russia's conventional and nuclear military superiority *vis-à-vis* the Baltic States, against this backdrop of tense relations, has underpinned the Baltic States' strategies to obtain hard security guarantees from Western allies in recent years. Following independence, the Baltic States refused to join the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States, rejected the Finnish model of total defence, and concluded that regional co-operation with the Nordic countries would not be enough to satisfy their security concerns.³² Instead, to achieve the objective of obtaining hard security guarantees from allies in the West, their strategy was to pursue integration into pre-existing Western security institutions, namely NATO and the European Union.³³ NATO membership, in particular, was perceived as offering an effective military counterbalance and diplomatic leverage with regard to Russia.

Feelings of insecurity, given Baltic history and geography, were therefore a powerful motivation in the wishes of all three Baltic States to join NATO. However, equally powerful was the desire to return to where they felt they belonged: to the group of democratic nations from which they had been cut off. It was, therefore, not only fear of Russia which provided the motivation for membership, but also a strong sense of returning to the democratic fold.

Consequently, in 1994, all three Baltic States joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme and embarked upon wholesale changes to prepare for membership that this involved. The PfP process encouraged reform in a broad range of areas in order to align the candidates with the countries they wished to join, not just in terms of their armed forces, but also in terms of their democratic institutions and societies. There was, of course, an emphasis on their potential military contribution and the need to 'democratise' defence and the armed forces, particularly given the Soviet legacy. In addition, NATO provided advice on the development of the embryonic armed forces through its planning process. These changes were undertaken with the advice and practical assistance of several NATO members, particularly the US and the Baltic States' Nordic neighbours.

The accession of the Baltic States to NATO was opposed by Russia. The integration of its neighbours into the Alliance was considered destabilising to its own security, removing any 'buffer' zone between itself and NATO and exposing its western borders. NATO expansion also meant, according to Russian perceptions, that NATO could increase its influence and play a greater part in the Central and Eastern European region, thereby encroaching on what Russia is said to perceive as its 'near abroad'.

NATO made considerable efforts to assuage Russian fears concerning the implications of enlargement by signing the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security. This established the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council as a special framework for relations with Russia, followed by the creation of the NATO-Russia Council in 2002, with a similar motivation. The Founding Act also contained the 'three No's', namely that NATO member states had no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members. This declaration has been a source of irritation for several of the 'new' members.

It is worth noting that the membership of the three Baltic States was under consideration during a period when developments in Russia looked less controversial than perhaps they do now. It was often said that Baltic State membership would be a bridge, rather than a barrier, to relations with Russia. Unfortunately, it has not worked out that way.

In 2004, the three Baltic States did become full members of the Alliance. They have since sought to contribute to, and benefit from, membership of NATO. Even the pursuit of NATO membership itself had a significant impact on the post-independence Baltic defence forces. The requirement for interoperability with NATO forces, and for a contribution to collective defence and crisis management operations, helped shape the militaries of these countries as they built new forces from scratch.³⁴ While the new forces were being created, they were obliged to use, for a short period, military personnel who had served in the Soviet armed forces. Though a transitory measure, this led to initial teething problems as these personnel had to adjust to NATO standards of soldiering under mentors from NATO countries.

An emphasis has consequently been placed on improving Baltic military forces to ensure their suitability and relevance to defending NATO territory. Among other things, the Baltic navies have developed mine countermeasures and monitoring capabilities, while the air forces have focused on the development of reliable air surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, both to enhance air defence itself and to strengthen the defensive potential of land forces.³⁵ Through these changes and the increased level of interoperability with NATO forces, the Baltic States have become active contributors to the security of the Alliance and to a range of NATO-led international operations. It is fair to say that their contribution to Alliance operations relative to their size represents an impressive commitment.³⁶

All three countries have participated in the ISAF operation in Afghanistan – with Lithuania leading a Provisional Reconstruction Team – and the KFOR mission in Kosovo. From June 2012, they agreed to contribute to a joint unit in the NATO Response Force (NRF).³⁷ The three countries also continue to co-operate with each other in order to boost their collective contribution

to NATO. The Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT) – a single infantry battalion with 800 service personnel from the three countries – was established for the 14th rotation of the NATO Response Force (NRF-14) and declared ready for military duty at the start of 2010.³⁸

With respect to NATO's contribution to Baltic State security, the Baltic air-policing mission is the most visible sign of NATO's presence in the region. This peacetime mission is intended to protect the airspace and territories of the Baltic countries, with other allied nations rotating in the mission since 2004. It is considered vital to Baltic security as none of the three countries possesses fighter jets of their own, and therefore cannot protect or control their own airspace without NATO assistance.³⁹ Although it predates NATO's 'Smart Defence' initiative, the air-policing mission is referred to as an example of the intelligent use of scarce resources that should become more commonplace within the Alliance. Any waning of the commitment to this mission would obviously be viewed as a negative development, especially in light of unofficial reports of an increase in Russian violations of Baltic airspace in 2011.⁴⁰

The NATO Response Force is of particular importance to the Baltic States. The NRF's ability to provide a rapid military response to an emerging crisis is seen as highly valuable as a potential contribution to the preservation of territorial integrity and to the credibility of NATO commitments to the region under Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty.⁴¹ The Baltic States' strategic location and the limitations of their own armed forces mean that in a regional contingency, superior numbers of 'unfriendly' forces could be brought to bear in a relatively short period, making the availability of a rapid reinforcement capability particularly important. This involves ensuring the provision of host-nation support facilities, the allocation of relevant forces, contingency planning and regular exercises. It is therefore not surprising that Baltic officials have persistently asked for contingency planning and exercises including the full spectrum of a NATO response. Furthermore, providing reassurance that NATO has the commitment and the capability to come to the assistance of the Baltic States in time of need is an Alliance priority, with these measures of reassurance, including an Article V exercise, having now been agreed.

The assurance of credible reinforcement as an essential component of deterring aggression was something that NATO also had to deal with during the Cold War in providing for the defence of the then Northern Region. Despite the political constraints of the time, credible reinforcement arrangements were put in place through a combination of host-nation basing, contingency planning, regular exercises and the creation of a small, mobile, rapid-reaction force designed to signal Alliance solidarity.

A further valuable dimension to the Baltic States' relationship with NATO, given the recent history of cyber-attacks, concerns co-operation on cyber-security. The Estonian government responded quickly to the cyber-attack on the country in 2007, employing its Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) to manage the attack and prevent serious damage to the country's IT infrastructure. Estonia has since invested heavily in cyber-security and cyber-defence. On 14 May 2008, partly in recognition of this effort, a NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (NATO CCD COE) was formally established in Tallinn to enhance NATO's cyber-defence capability.

The Baltic States are also playing an active role in NATO's third core co-operative security task through partnerships with other relevant countries. All three are lending assistance, as well as experience and expertise, to countries currently seeking membership of, or closer association with, the Alliance. This assistance is being provided not only to defence establishments, but also to parliaments seeking to improve their oversight capabilities.

US-Baltic Relations

Within this broader context of relations with NATO, the Baltic States' relationship with the United States is seen as vital. All three Baltic States are deeply committed to strengthening their transatlantic partnerships with the United States, and to ensuring that the US security presence in Europe remains.⁴² A legacy of gratitude for US non-recognition of the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States remains.⁴³ After their renewed independence, and as previously noted, the US, along with other Allies, made a concerted effort to assist the Baltic region by facilitating democratic and free-market reforms, and by committing funding to assisting the region's post-communist economic and political transformation. During this period, National Guard units from several US states established firm links with, and provided assistance and training to, the emerging militaries of the three states.

In recent years, in addition to their broader engagement in NATO activities, all three Baltic militaries have taken part in US-led exercises such as *Sabre Strike*, a multinational air and land forces training event. Through the Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe (e-PINE) initiative, launched in 2003, the Council of the Baltic Sea States also co-operates with the US on issues such as the security of energy supplies, environmental protection, nuclear-radiation safety and the fight against human trafficking.⁴⁴

Given the importance to the Baltic States of their bilateral relationships with the US and its presence in Europe, the US pivot to the Asia-Pacific is viewed with concern in these states. In January 2012, the Department of Defense (DoD) released the document 'Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense', in which it outlined the shift in US posture toward the Asia-Pacific, set to include a substantial reallocation of US military assets

away from the European theatre, including the withdrawal of two US Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs), to be replaced by rotational units. In practice, this will mean a reduction of around 80,000 troops in Europe.⁴⁵ The US Air Force is also deactivating two European-based squadrons.⁴⁶ This reduction of US conventional forces in Europe is a matter of concern to policy-makers in the Baltic region, and is not unrelated to Baltic State views on the nuclear policy debate in Europe, a point we return to in the next chapter.

Nordic-Baltic Security Co-operation

Finally, on the hard-security side of the equation, the Baltic States have pursued, and received, considerable support and co-operation from other countries in the Nordic region.⁴⁷ Baltic analysts and politicians are careful to point out that this should not be seen to substitute, or undermine in any way, broader co-operation with the US or NATO. Nonetheless, at the political level, biannual meetings among the eight Nordic defence ministers have been taking place, and have more recently been supplemented by meetings between Nordic and Baltic defence ministers in the fringes of EU and NATO defence minister sessions. At the practical level, Finland has provided Estonia with air-defence radars and Sweden has assisted the Baltic countries in building their defence forces, border control and coastguard systems.⁴⁸ This reflects the fact that, as countries in the same neighbourhood, the Nordic states face shared regional security challenges, forming a natural basis for security co-operation.

Relations with the European Union

In 2004, EU membership was achieved by all three Baltic States and forms an important complementary pillar of policy to membership of NATO. With its vast economic and political resources, the EU provides soft security and economic development opportunities to the Baltic States, complementing the hard security guarantees provided by NATO. In particular, the EU is seen as a means by which, in future, the Baltic States might be able to diversify their energy supplies and consumption, though this has not always been a straightforward process. The Baltic States also contribute to the Nordic Battlegroup, one of eighteen EU Battlegroups, along with Norway, Sweden, Finland and Ireland.⁴⁹

Membership of both NATO and the EU therefore provides the Baltic States with a stronger and more prominent voice in international affairs, improved economic, defence and security arrangements, and, in Baltic perceptions at least, a stronger position in their relations with their larger Russian neighbour. All of this is seen as hugely important in the context of the history of Soviet occupation and perceived Russian interference and intimidation.

IV. The Baltic States, Nuclear Weapons and the Debate on NATO Nuclear Posture

The Baltic States' position on the issue of nuclear weapons, both in general terms and with respect to the more specific internal NATO debate on nuclear posture, must be understood in this wider context. In general, the Baltic States support a number of international nuclear arms control agreements and initiatives and, on occasion, each has individually taken a lead on such initiatives. All three are signatories to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). They have each expressed support for a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) banning the production of fissile material relevant to nuclear weapons production. They have also each recognised the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), supported the adoption and implementation of the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, and signed, ratified and implemented the Additional Protocol.

Lithuania has also put forward a proposal for the creation of a low-enriched uranium fuel bank under the control of the IAEA, urging countries already with, or developing, civil nuclear programmes to participate collectively in this endeavour. In addition, both Lithuania and Estonia made contributions to the 2010 NPT Review Conference, calling for measures to deter withdrawal from the treaty and urging nations that have not yet joined to do so as non-nuclear states. Lithuania also participated in the Global Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul in 2012, and has been supportive of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI).⁵⁰ Latvia, for its part, took on the European co-chairmanship of the NATO Committee on Proliferation for the period between July 2011 and July 2012,⁵¹ prioritising actions against WMD threats in the maritime environment and promoting information-sharing, policy development and international co-ordination on issues of prevention of, and response to, proliferation.

The three Baltic States are also active members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which is working towards non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through the implementation of guidelines for nuclear exporters and nuclear-related exports.

Nevertheless, despite these public governmental positions, it remains true that there is little public discussion of nuclear weapons and nuclear policy in the Baltic States, and nuclear policy does not enjoy a high-profile position in the wider public policy and political debate.

The one exception to this concerns interest in the possible deployment of Russian NSNW in Kaliningrad or elsewhere in the Baltic region. Baltic policy-

makers believe that NSNW, of which Russia is thought to have some 2,000, are used by Russia to intimidate its neighbours and are therefore worthy of attention.⁵² Of particular concern is the apparent reliance by the Russian military on their NSNW, as demonstrated in their exercises and doctrine, and in statements by military officers. This reliance appears similar to the operational use foreseen for NATO's tactical nuclear weapons in the early phases of the Cold War, and would appear to be due to similar concerns over a perceived inferiority in conventional forces. The validity of Russian concerns and the distinction between overall totals and regional imbalances in comparing conventional forces have been noted earlier in this paper. Here it is sufficient to note that the presence of Russian NSNW and Russian attitudes to their potential employment bear heavily on Baltic attitudes regarding the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy.

Beyond this regional preoccupation, the potential threat of proliferation in Iran and the wider Middle East is seen as important, but is also seen to confirm the necessity of vigilant deterrence policies for the long term, and to render discussion on nuclear disarmament and a nuclear-weapons-free world largely irrelevant to current security realities.⁵³ Baltic officials take a sceptical approach to the proposal by some NATO members that the Alliance should play a greater role in promoting disarmament and arms control. They maintain that this is an unnecessary and potentially counterproductive distraction from the primary mission of the Alliance. It remains to be seen which approach will be taken by NATO's recently established advisory and consultation committee.

This overall outlook on nuclear issues, along with the Baltic States' history of relations with the Soviet Union and Russia, underpins a particular Baltic position with regard to the ongoing NATO nuclear policy debate. Talk of the removal of NATO's NSNW from Europe in the current circumstances is thought to be misguided, and it is believed that any such move would undermine the credibility of the US commitment to European and Baltic security. From the Baltic perspective, any move of this nature would require, at a minimum, substantial reductions in the Russian stockpile, as well as measures that demonstrate that the character of the Russian state and the way in which it treats its neighbours have fundamentally changed. Without such assurances, any policy changes of this nature by NATO are unlikely to find Baltic support.

The Baltic States consider nuclear capability to be a core element in the mix of capabilities that NATO requires for credible deterrence and defence. These capabilities must be kept as effective as possible, and must include modernisation wherever necessary, with such modernisation seen as an essential component to ensuring credible deterrence. The presence of US nuclear weapons in Europe is also seen as essential to the credibility of

deterrence. Estonia's Foreign Minister Urmas Paet publicly stated at the NATO foreign ministers meeting in April 2010 that NATO nuclear deterrence in Europe should remain, and that:⁵⁴

Any decision made on the nuclear weapons located in Europe must take into consideration the long-term security perspective and the reliability of deterrence, not be based on short-term political goals or budget considerations ... Although the use of nuclear weapons is unlikely, nuclear deterrence based in Europe must remain, as it preserves close transatlantic ties and allows for greater flexibility in deterrence.

A further widespread view in the Baltic States is that other complementary elements of the Alliance's deterrence function, such as strong and capable conventional forces, demonstrable political cohesion within the Alliance and dependable commitments to meet Article V obligations, must also be as robust and reliable as possible.

In addition, and as previously noted, there is limited recognition within the Baltic States as to why NATO, as a collective security and political-military alliance, should itself focus heavily on arms control and disarmament efforts. The prevailing perception is that other security issues, beyond nuclear, are more important for NATO, and that bodies other than NATO ought to be taking the lead on addressing the challenges of nuclear arms control and disarmament.

Behind these policy positions sits not only the history and legacy of perceived security concerns with regard to Russia, but also a number of current concerns with regard to the state of NATO itself. There are worries over a lack of political will within NATO to follow through on Article V collective defence commitments, particularly as these might relate to sub-regional security challenges. Policy-makers in the Baltic States want, in particular, to be assured that Russian aggression and threats of intimidation against them, in whatever form, are being taken seriously by their NATO Allies. This, again, explains the Baltic insistence on as much NATO visibility as possible, and on contingency planning and regular exercises.

There are also concerns over the possible weakness of NATO conventional capabilities that would be involved in the defence of the Baltic region. Although, as previously noted, it is widely understood that NATO's conventional forces are numerically and qualitatively superior to Russian forces, this relates to absolute numbers that could be circumvented by concentrations of forces within the region, even if only for a temporary period. Baltic leaders need reassurances that, in a crisis, NATO has the capacity to deploy rapidly in order to counter any potential threat.

The question of the respective strengths and weaknesses of the conventional forces that would be available in a crisis in the region is a source of concern not only for the Baltic States, but also for Russia. It is a question that should be further addressed if, and when, Russia agrees to dialogue and transparency on the issue.

There is also concern in the Baltic region that the Alliance has been distracted by out-of-area operations, and has not sufficiently considered and exercised for what would be required to reinforce the area in the event of a crisis. This manifested itself during the drafting of the NATO Strategic Concept, which was eventually agreed at the Lisbon Summit in 2010, in the expression of concerns over a lack of contingency plans in relation to the region. It would appear that developments since then have largely answered these concerns. They are reinforced, however, by the fact that few European countries, in the context of austerity, are meeting the unofficial NATO target of spending 2 per cent of GDP on defence (although the authors acknowledge the limited usefulness of the GDP calculation as a measure of actual contributions to collective defence). Such anxieties are a reflection of instances in which other allies, such as Turkey, appear to have been let down by their fellow members of the Alliance.⁵⁵

It is on the basis of this full range of concerns and considerations that the Baltic States have accepted NATO ballistic-missile defence as the new glue binding the Alliance together but, along with France, have been vocal in their objections to suggestions that such missile defence could allow reliance on nuclear deterrence to be downgraded.

These positions combine to produce a distinct stance within the Baltic States regarding the issue of NATO NSNW stationed in Europe, a stance that leans heavily in favour of the status quo in NATO nuclear policy and posture.

V. Conclusion

If any of these policy positions and perspectives are to change, the Baltic States will have to receive additional security assurances from NATO members, from Russia or, more probably, from both.

First, within NATO, before a proposal to remove US NSNW from Europe could be acceptable to the Baltic States, they would need to be convinced of the credibility of the Article V commitment and associated deterrence and defence capabilities. This would include specifically those measures relating to the defence of the region, and the provision of adequate and timely reinforcements, including:

- Clear planning and exercises to demonstrate the practical readiness of military units to reinforce the Alliance's territory in Central and Eastern Europe
- Greater attention to NATO infrastructure, host-nation support and forward bases in the region to provide a stronger NATO presence and greater involvement through training and operations
- Strong signals that the United States intends to remain committed to the region. As US battle groups are being reduced elsewhere in Europe, the Baltic States want reassurances that the US will keep an effective presence in Central and Eastern Europe.

To attempt to meet the Baltic States' concerns, NATO members have recently put in place additional military contingency plans, and the NATO Baltic air-policing operation has also been extended.⁵⁶ However, more must be done for such doubts to be overcome.

Second, some former senior Baltic politicians and officials have called for Germany, together with the Nordic and Baltic countries, to engage in further sub-regional co-operation as a mechanism for encouraging the US to stay involved, principally by demonstrating to Washington that all members consider it important enough to do what is necessary to provide reassurance and to use resources wisely.⁵⁷

Third, others have reviewed the combination of US troop withdrawals from Europe, the persistent challenge of energy security and the onset of newer security challenges such as cyber-attacks in the Baltic region and have suggested that NATO itself needs to offer much more support in these areas if levels of deterrence and reassurance are to be increased.

If the above measures were taken in the context of fewer cuts to European defence budgets, a greater commitment to intra-European defence co-operation and initiatives like Smart Defence, that would be all for the good.⁵⁸

It is unlikely, however, that these measures on their own would be sufficient to reassure Baltic State governments and peoples such that they would countenance a rethink of their current position in the NATO nuclear debate. To obtain movement in that direction, a significant step-change in the nature of relations with Russia would also have to occur and become embedded. In this context, it is important to remember that measures to address Baltic concerns must also be implemented with one eye on potential Russian reactions. However, from the Baltic perspective, NATO has already accepted limitations through the 'three No's', and its priorities must lie in doing the right thing for the security of its members.

In seeking potential Russian reciprocal action, a willingness by Russia to make reductions in NSNW in response to those undertaken by NATO would be a welcome start, as would any willingness by Russia to move its NSNW away from its western borders, thus creating a zone of NSNW non-deployment in the vicinity of Baltic borders. Unfortunately, thus far, Russia has shown little interest in NATO's proposals to engage in a dialogue on NSNW. It remains to be seen whether NATO's new committee will produce proposals that have any chance of eliciting a more positive Russian response.

Building trust and confidence more widely, through increased levels of transparency in relation to both Russian nuclear and conventional forces, would also be required, as would commitments to end what is seen as Russian willingness both to use energy supplies for political purposes and to interfere in Baltic domestic affairs.

If some movement in this direction was visible, this might be sufficient to lead Baltic State policy-makers to consider a phased withdrawal of US NSNW from Europe, alongside steps to find alternative methods of nuclear consultation and burden-sharing within NATO. Without such movement, and without any clear signal from the United States that its own policy preference is to withdraw its NSNW from the continent, no such consideration would appear possible.

Notes and References

1. The current B61 modernisation plans will replace the 'dumb' freefall B61 bombs which possess no guidance systems with precision-guided weapons and stealth-enabled bombers. For further information, see Ted Seay, 'Escalation by Default: The Future of NATO Nuclear Weapons in Europe', NATO Policy Brief No. 2, European Leadership Network, May 2012.
2. Belgian officials say that the F-16 can be kept operational throughout the 2020s and that no replacement is planned. Italy is buying the US F-35 despite the escalation in costs, and will presumably pay the additional costs for a nuclear version. Germany is already introducing the Eurofighter for the conventional mission. For various reasons the Eurofighter cannot be nuclearised. German officials insist that the Tornados for the nuclear mission can be kept operational until 2020, which will require additional funding for Bundestag approval. The Dutch plan is to buy the F-35, although previous parliaments have been concerned about rising costs. These four countries, together with Turkey, host the US B61 warheads deployed in Europe.
3. See Tom Nichols, Douglas Stuart and Jeffrey D McCausland (eds), 'Tactical Nuclear Weapons and NATO', Strategic Studies Institute, April 2012, <<http://www.posse.gatech.edu/sites/posse.gatech.edu/files/Tactical%20Nuclear%20Weapons%20and%20NATO.pdf>>, accessed 29 November 2012.
4. NATO, 'Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization', November 2010.
5. Andrew Somerville, Ian Kearns and Malcolm Chalmers, 'Poland, NATO and Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe', RUSI Occasional Paper, February 2012.
6. There were appeals, for example, in 1972 to the United Nations against Soviet abuses and calls for the re-instatement of Baltic State independence. In 1979, a co-ordinated, joint Baltic petition for independence was submitted to foreign governments, the USSR and the United Nations secretary general. A decade later, in 1989, a Baltic Council of Popular Fronts sought to break longstanding Soviet rule by peaceful means. For details on this period, see Kai-Helin Kaldas, 'The Evolution of Estonian Security Options During the 1990s', Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes (PfPC), Athena Papers Series No. 4, October 2005.
7. Margit Sarv, 'Integration by Reframing Legislation: Implementation of the Recommendations of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to Estonia, 1993–2001', Comparative Case Studies on the Effectiveness of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, Working Paper 7, 2002, p. 12.

8. Part of the Russian concern over a hasty withdrawal was that there was limited housing for troops returning to Russia, not just from the Baltic States but also from other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, and the cost of rebuilding and rehousing thousands of troops was extremely high. This was in addition to dismantling its military installations in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The West took the housing problem very seriously and several NATO members provided funds for the building of new housing facilities in Russia. See also Carl Bildt, 'The Baltic Litmus Test: Revealing Russia's True Colors', *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 1994).
9. In Estonia and Latvia, automatic citizenship was only granted to those who had been citizens in the interwar period. For those who migrated during the Soviet period, stricter naturalisation criteria were established. This included declaring loyalty to the state, having a certain number of years of residency and undertaking language examinations. See Peter Van Elsuwege, 'Russian-Speaking Minorities in Estonia and Latvia: Problems of Integration at the Threshold of The European Union', *European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), Working Paper No 20, April 2004, p. 3.*
10. Serge Schmemmann, 'Yeltsin Suspends Baltic Troop Pullout', *New York Times*, 30 October 1992.
11. *Ibid.*
12. On 30 July 1994, Russia and Estonia signed the Paldiski Nuclear Base agreement which included the provision that until 30 September 1995, the base territory would belong to Estonia and the nuclear object to Russia. For more information, see <<http://estonia.eu/about-estonia/history/withdrawal-of-russian-troops-from-estonia.html>>, accessed 30 November 2012. See also Bildt, 'The Baltic Litmus Test'.
13. Kaldas, 'The Evolution of Estonian Security Options During the 1990s'.
14. See 'The Threat of Militarization of the Security Environment at EU's Eastern Borders (With Special Emphasis On The Kaliningrad Region – Geographical Scope of the Military Exercises of Russian Forces In Cooperation With Belorussian Army In Kaliningrad Enclave, Belorussia and North Western Russia – Zapad 2009 and Ladoga 2009)', Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, Directorate B, Policy Department, <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/sede/studiesdownload.html?languageDocument=EN&file=31339>>, accessed 30 November 2012.
15. *Ibid.*
16. The category of 'non-citizen' does not apply to all ethnic Russians residing in these countries. Although the majority of non-citizens are ethnic Russian, there are people of Russian ethnicity who are also citizens.

17. For Latvia's 2012 election results, see <<http://www.electionresources.org/lv/>> and <<http://www.tn2012.cvk.lv/>>, accessed 30 November 2012.
18. *Stratfor*, 'The Next Stage of Russia's Resurgence: The Baltic States', 9 February 2012.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Russian President Vladimir Putin even spoke out against the relocation of the statue, stating publicly at the annual celebration of the Second World War Soviet victory over the Nazis on 9 May 2007: 'Those who are trying to belittle this invaluable experience, those who desecrate monuments to the heroes of the war, are insulting their own people and sowing discord and new distrust between states and people'. See Robert Anderson and Catherine Belton, 'Putin takes swipe at US and Estonia', *Financial Times*, 10 May 2007.
21. *Ibid.*
22. See *Estonia.eu*, <<http://estonia.eu/about-estonia/economy-a-it/e-estonia.html>>, accessed 30 November 2012.
23. Estonia is particularly vulnerable to this form of attack, as it has a comparatively narrow bandwidth relative to its high level of national Internet usage.
24. The Estonian government published a list of Internet provider (IP) addresses from which it believed the attacks could have come. This list also included Russian government IP addresses. See *BBC News*, 'The cyber raiders hitting Estonia', 17 May 2007.
25. These included request for information attacks – ping attacks, botnets and distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks – to overwhelm the IT infrastructure.
26. William C Ashmore, 'Impact of Alleged Russian Cyber Attacks', *Baltic Security and Defence Review* (Vol. 11, 2009).
27. Daniel S Hamilton, 'The Baltics: Still Punching Above Their Weight', *Current History* (March 2008), pp. 121–22.
28. *Stratfor*, 'The Next Stage of Russia's Resurgence: The Baltic States', 9 February 2012.
29. Steven Paulikas, 'Gas Disruption Underscores Vulnerability', *Baltic Times*, 26 February 2004.
30. See Michael Schwartz, 'Former Estonian Official Convicted of Treason', *New York Times*, 25 February 2009.

31. See Schwartz, 'Former Estonian Official Convicted of Treason'; *The Economist*, 'Fog in the Baltic: A sensational arrest inside Estonia's defence ministry', 6 November 2008.
32. The Finnish definition of total defence is as follows: "'Total defence" means all of the military and civil functions by which Finland's sovereignty and the living conditions and security of its citizens are safeguarded against threat by other nations or by other external threats. Coordination of total defence involves coordinating measures by the public sector – that is, the Government, State authorities and the municipalities – and the private sector and voluntary activities by citizens to maintain functions vital to society under all circumstances.' Finnish Government Report 6/2004 (VNS 6/2004 vp), 'Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2004', 'Section 5.6 Coordinating total defence', p. 131, <<http://formin.finland.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=9453&GUID=%7BDD0D490C-F121-4621-800D-7BCC539F7C7F%7D>>, accessed 30 November 2012.
33. Kaldas, 'The Evolution of Estonian Security Options During the 1990s'.
34. At present, the Baltic militaries consist of limited naval and air forces with larger army elements. The composition of forces, with their significant reliance on reservists, shows the strong influence of a doctrine of territorial defence, itself a legacy of immediate post-Cold War defence planning and of persistent Baltic fears about possible Russian aggression. Lithuania has an active service personnel force numbering 10,640, Estonia 5,750 and Latvia 4,600. Despite differences in size, there are a number of common features characterising the Baltic militaries: in the event of a crisis or conflict, for example, each state would draw on reserve forces sourced from general conscriptions. Estonia has a 30,000-strong reserve force, Latvia a force of 10,666 and Lithuania 6,700. Additional defensive elements are provided by defensive groupings such as the 12,000-strong Defence League in Estonia, and by paramilitary forces such as the 14,600-strong force in Lithuania and the State Border Guard in Latvia. For further details, see International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2012* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis for IISS, 2012), pp. 131–32.
35. This has taken place through the Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT) infantry battalion for participation in international peace-support operations; the Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON) naval force with mine countermeasures capabilities; the Baltic Air Surveillance Network (BALNET) air-surveillance information system; and the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL) joint military educational institution for the training of senior officers and civil servants. For further information, see Estonian Ministry of Defence, 'Baltic Defence Co-operation', January 2002, <<http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/4105>>, accessed 4 December 2012.
36. See Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 'NATO's Baltic Allies: punching above their weight', speech made by the NATO secretary-general in Tallinn, 19 January 2012, <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_83482.htm>, accessed 4 December 2012.

37. Estonian Ministry of Defence, 'Baltic ministers of defence agreed on joint ammo procurement', 8 June 2012, <<http://www.kmin.ee/en/baltic-ministers-of-defence-agreed-on-joint-ammo-procurement>>, accessed 4 December 2012.
38. This included 600 Lithuanians, 200 Estonians and three Latvian staff officers. For further details, see Olga Portnova, 'The Baltic Battalion is ready for service', *Geo Politika*, 12 January 2010, <<http://www.geopolitika.lt/?artc=3777>>, accessed 4 December 2012.
39. The mission, based at the Lithuanian First Air Base in Zokniai and launched in 2004 when Baltic States became members, was first extended in 2010 to 2014, and extended again in 2012 to 2018. After the most recent decision to extend the mission to 2018, the three Baltic States agreed to increase their financial contribution to the mission by 50 per cent. With the combined annual contribution of the three countries amounting to €2.2 million in 2011, this will be increased to €3.5 million by 2015. For further information, see Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Baltic States to Boost Funding for NATO's Air Policing Mission by More Than 50 Percent', *Estonian Review*, 17 February 2012, <<http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/13772>>, accessed 4 December 2012.
40. Wojciech Lorenz, 'Baltic Air Policing: A Mission in the Interest of the Whole Alliance' by, *Bulletin* (Vol. 88, No. 421, 21 September 2012) Polish Institute of International Affairs, <<http://www.pism.pl/publications/bulletin/no-88-421>>, accessed 4 December 2012.
41. Member nations of the Alliance contribute naval, air, land or special forces units to the NRF. The force comprises three battle groups, standing naval maritime groups, standing naval mine countermeasures groups, combat air and air-support components, special forces, and a CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) defence task force. See NATO, 'The NATO Response Force', <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49755.htm>, accessed 4 December 2012.
42. Each of their national security strategies or concepts highlights the importance of the US as the primary strategic partner in the provision of Baltic and wider European security. The 2002 Latvian National Security Concept (Section 2.1), for example, states that: 'The majority of European countries consider the permanent and close participation of the United States of America (hereinafter the USA) in ensuring European security as a necessary element of stability in the continent ... Co-operation with the United States of America is one of the priorities of the foreign policy of Latvia which should further the resolution of the security problems of Latvia, as well as the economic, scientific and cultural development of the country ... The USA's relations with Latvia and involvement in Latvia is a part of the European policy of the USA and it is in Latvia's interests to encourage the lasting presence of the USA in Europe and in the Baltic Sea region'. See <<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/security/basic/4534/>>, accessed 4 December 2012. The 2010 Estonian National Security Concept (p. 10) states that: 'The enduring presence of the United States in Europe, ensured through NATO, serves to guarantee peace, security and stability both within the region and on a wider scale'. The 2002 Lithuanian National

- Security Strategy (p. 12) states that: 'The Republic of Lithuania considers the United States of America to be its main partner of the European security'.
43. In the 1940 Sumner Welles statement, the US declared and stood by its recognition and support for the political independence and territorial integrity of the three Baltic States.
 44. The Council of the Baltic Sea States consists of all of the countries from the Baltic Sea region: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden and a European Commission representative. For further information on the e-PINE initiative, see <<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rt/epine/>>, accessed 4 December 2012.
 45. Three of the four BCTs in Europe are stationed in Germany. The fourth is located in Vicenza, Italy. See *BBC News*, 'US to withdraw two Europe combat brigades', 13 January 2012.
 46. The two squadrons being deactivated are the 81st Fighter Squadron at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, and the 603rd Air Control Squadron at Aviano Air Base, Italy.
 47. For a good recent review, see Imants Liegis and Airis Rikveilis, 'Nordic-Baltic Security: How relevant is NATO?', in Robert Nurick and Magnus Nordenman (eds), 'Nordic-Baltic Security in the 21st Century: The Regional Agenda and the Global Role Nordic-Baltic Security', p. 19, Atlantic Council, September 2011, <http://www.acus.org/files/publication_pdfs/403/090711_ACUS_NordicBaltic.PDF>, accessed 4 December 2012.
 48. See Estonian Ministry of Defence, 'Ministry of Defence Procured Weapons From Finland', *Estonian Review*, 13 February 2012, <<http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/13717>>, accessed 4 December 2012. This states that: 'The Ministry of Defence procured from Finland a limited number of additional launchers, training and maintenance devices, and spare parts for the Mistral SHORAD-system, as well as 23mm ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft cannons to be installed on Navy vessels. The additional launchers and spare parts for the Mistral-system arrived in Estonia this week; the 23mm anti-aircraft cannons were delivered in the summer of 2011. The 23mm ZU-23-2 anti-aircraft cannons, purchased from Finland, are also used by the air defence units of the Estonian Army. The cannons are installed on special vessel platforms, which also allows for their use against surface targets as well as air targets. The procured cannons will be installed on the vessels of the Estonian Navy.' See also Andrew A Michta, *The Limits of Alliance: The United States, NATO, and the EU in North and Central Europe* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers., 2007), pp. 49–52.
 49. On 5 October 2012, the Baltic States defence forces' chiefs of staff agreed that each country would assign at least fifty troops to the Nordic Battle Group by 2015. For further details see Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Each Baltic State to Contribute at Least 50 Troops to Nordic Battle Group', *Estonian Review*, 5 October 2012, <<http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/15617>>, accessed 4 December 2012.

50. The PSI is a global effort seeking to stop the trafficking of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related materials.
51. As a representative of the Baltic region, Latvia prioritised actions against WMD threats in the maritime environment and promoted information-sharing, policy development and international co-ordination on issues of prevention of and response to proliferation.
52. Hans M Kristensen and Robert S Norris, 'Nonstrategic nuclear weapons, 2012', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (Vol. 68, No. 5, September/October 2012), p. 46.
53. According to senior officials from the Baltic States in discussion with the author in Tallinn, September 2011.
54. NATO, 'Foreign Minister Paet and NATO Secretary General Rasmussen: New Threats Receive the Same Attention', informal meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers, Tallinn, 22–23 April 2010, <<http://www.vm.ee/?q=en/node/9374>>, accessed 4 December 2012.
55. In fact, the Baltic States themselves are not, according to recent figures, meeting the 2 per cent target either, but the issue of expenditure levels has become a lightning rod for wider concerns over the perceived unwillingness of some NATO member states, especially those that might be described as geopolitically sheltered, to take their defence obligations seriously. For figures on NATO country defence expenditure, see NATO Press Release, 'Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence', 13 April 2012, <http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2012_04/20120413_PR_CP_2012_047_rev1.pdf>, accessed 4 December 2012. The reference to Turkey relates to incidents during the 1990–91 Gulf War, in which Turkey requested missile-defence assistance but some Allies apparently opposed a response from NATO.
56. Hans Binnendijk and Catherine McArdle Kelleher, 'NATO Reassurance and Nuclear Reductions: Creating the Conditions', *Transatlantic Current*, Institute for National Security Studies, National Defense University, January 2012.
57. See Imants Liegis, 'From Lisbon to Chicago', European Leadership Network, 5 March 2012, <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/from-lisbon-to-chicago-_300.html>, accessed 4 December 2012.
58. *Ibid.*

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