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## BEYOND NATO'S EASTERN BORDER

Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova

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**G|M|F**

The German Marshall Fund  
of the United States

STRENGTHENING TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION

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On the cover: Sergeant Jim Lynch, 1st Battalion, The Royal Newfoundland Regiment, Canadian Army, discusses urban operations with Ukrainian soldiers. © Capt Marc Greatti, Army Public Affairs, 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Division

# Beyond NATO's Eastern Border

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# 1 NATO's New Challenges

Christopher S. Chivvis

When NATO leaders convene for their 27<sup>th</sup> summit in Warsaw, the challenges set before them are greater than at any moment since the end of the Cold War. Allies face a security environment transformed even since leaders met in Wales in September 2014. Then, Russia's invasion of Ukraine had shocked the world and piqued concern about the vulnerability of NATO's eastern flank by exposing the Kremlin's disregard for international law. Today, the Eastern challenge from President Vladimir Putin is overlaid by the mass exodus from the Middle East and North Africa and the brutal terrorist attacks in France, Belgium, and elsewhere.

The Southern and Eastern threats are not additive, but compounding, and seriously threaten the political and security achievements of post-Cold War Europe. As in the decade before World War II, when socialist and fascist political movements reinforced one another, debilitating Europe's moderate center, today's eastern and southern challenges exacerbate one another, encumbering the Alliance. The migrant crisis has fuelled populist forces in Europe that attack the European Union and question the validity of its liberal democratic order. This in turn threatens the very political values that NATO was first established to defend. The Kremlin has manipulated Europe's massive migrant crisis to further divide Europe and weaken it, inflaming anti-immigrant sentiment through *Russia Today* and other tools of information operations while simultaneously boosting the flow of migrants with its indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas in Syria. Meanwhile, Moscow funds anti-Ukrainian and anti-EU forces, and engages in political subterfuge in multiple European capitals. These manipulations exacerbate pre-existing rifts within Europe, where Greece and Hungary incline toward Moscow's orbit, Italy and France seek practical cooperation with Russia on Syria at the cost of progress on Ukraine (infuriating

Poland and other Central European allies), Britain contemplates exiting the EU, and Germany is caught in the middle.

As such, these threats to European security and European disunity should not be assessed in isolation from one another. This combination can be frightening. But timorousness is not the answer. In Warsaw, Allied leaders must address these challenges with bold new initiatives that speak to the fears of their populations.

## Deterrence in the East

To begin with, NATO needs to do more to strengthen deterrence on its Eastern flank. The old adage that good fences make good neighbors now applies to Europe's relations with Russia more than ever. Significant improvements in NATO-Russia relations will only be achieved in an environment where the risks of a Russian attack on a NATO member are diminished from the current level. Like West Germany during the early decades of the Cold War, NATO must face Russia from a position of strength, not vulnerability. At the Wales Summit, some allies were still hesitant to accept this new reality, but since then consensus about Russian malevolence has grown much stronger.

Over the last two years, extensive RAND analysis has demonstrated the significant time-space and area-defense, area-denial (A2/AD) challenges that NATO would face in repelling a Russian attack on the Baltic states as currently postured.<sup>1</sup> Even though the possibility of a Russian attack on the Baltics is currently fairly low, Russia's domestic dynamics and future remain very uncertain and it is not implausible that future Russian leaders might find themselves in a position where a gamble on war with NATO seems worthwhile. As postured today, NATO would eventually prevail in expelling

*The Southern and Eastern threats are not additive, but compounding, and gravely threaten the political and security achievements of post-Cold War Europe.*

<sup>1</sup> Michael Johnson and David Shlapak, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2016.

*Strengthening deterrence along the Eastern flank will require significant efforts from the countries that are most directly threatened.*

invading Russian forces from the Baltics, but only after a lengthy conflict with a high risk of nuclear escalation — a risk that should be of the most grave concern. NATO must take steps now to decrease the likelihood of such a scenario.

RAND analysis has also demonstrated the conventional requirements for defending the Baltic States against such an attack and recommended the deployment several light and medium combat brigades to the Baltics themselves in order to ensure a capability for rapid response within Russia's A2/AD bubble.<sup>2</sup> In the near term, however, a major buildup of forces in the region seems unlikely, so NATO will need to rely on other strategies to strengthen deterrence. These strategies will include conventional force deployments, but should also involve irregular capabilities, improved cyber defenses, and changes in nuclear posture. Such changes, in combination, will raise the overall capability of the alliance in the region, and greatly increase the risks to the Kremlin for even a surreptitious attack on NATO territory.

Strengthening deterrence along the Eastern flank will also require significant efforts from the countries that are most directly threatened. The Baltic States are increasing their defense budgets but need to do more, for both military and political reasons. Militarily, these allies are capable of making larger contribution to NATO deterrence in their own sub-region than they do today, for example, by deploying more sophisticated air defense systems and strengthening their military infrastructure.<sup>3</sup> Equally important, there is growing evidence from the U.S. presidential campaign that the politics of U.S. defense expenditure for these countries will remain contentious. If the Baltic

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> For greater detail, see, Christopher Chivvis et al., *NATO's Northeastern Flank: Emerging Opportunities for Engagement*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2016.

States and their regional partners and allies do not spend more on their own defense, burden sharing issues will likely arise, impeding the ability of the United States to maximize its deterrent force in the region.

Additionally, as states in the sub-region increase their defense spending, they should seek to strengthen sub-regional cooperation, for example, between the Nordic and Baltic States. Stronger military ties between the front-line countries of the region has both political and military deterrent value. The Baltic States in particular need to be strongly encouraged to pursue much closer integration of their defense efforts: Although they are small individually, collectively they could even build a considerable deterrent force. This would reinforce their security, and thereby NATO's. Finland and Sweden should meanwhile signal that even if they are not currently members of NATO, further Russian aggression would inevitably lead them to join the alliance in order to protect their own interests. This in and of itself can further augment deterrence.

Even as NATO strengthens its deterrent posture in Central Europe, it must maintain the high ground in the face of the Kremlin's aggressive policies. It would be unwise to follow Russia's lead in pre-emptively abandoning the treaty arrangements that have underpinned security in Europe for the last several decades. This includes the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the Treaty on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces, and the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. Strengthening deterrence in Europe is possible without abandoning these existing commitments. Moreover, strengthening deterrence in Europe may be a means of bringing Russia back to the table to explore new regional and sub-regional arms control arrangements,

specifically around Kaliningrad and the Baltic States.<sup>4</sup>

### Key NATO Partners: Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine

Russian pressure on Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova continues at an accelerated and unacceptable pace. In Georgia, Russian troops continue to occupy Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and gradually seek to expand their territory by pushing out the boundary fence in South Ossetia. In Moldova, the Kremlin continues to pressure Chisinau economically and via political subterfuge. In Ukraine, Moscow's military, political, and economic policies continue to destabilize the region, perpetuate humanitarian suffering, and complicate Ukraine's domestic politics.

There are some, however, who would seek to draw a firm line between NATO's allies in Central and Eastern Europe and its partners just beyond its borders. This would be a mistake. Strengthening deterrence of NATO allies in central Europe also requires measures further east along Russia's periphery in Georgia, Moldova, and especially Ukraine. Explicit or implicit Article V commitments must remain limited to the Alliance itself, but how NATO responds to Russian aggression in Ukraine and any other country with which it has a close partnership will inevitably inform the Kremlin's interpretation of NATO's collective strength and will — and these will have implications for the effectiveness of deterrence within the Alliance itself. In other words, deterrence in Central Europe is inextricably linked with NATO policy in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia due to the commitments NATO has made to these countries in the past, above all to Georgia and Ukraine at the 2008 Bucharest Summit. Moreover, neither NATO nor European security benefits from the states on Russia's periphery

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Bridge Colby, "Step Up or Stand Down" *Foreignaffairs.com*, August 13, 2015.

being weak and subject to frequent Kremlin interference. European security will not grow stronger by acceding to a Russian *pre-carré* along its borders. European security will not benefit if the Donbas becomes another Transnistria, much less if the Kremlin's Ukraine policy leads to a further destabilization of the region. Instead, security in this region calls for a regional balance of power based on strong, independent states.

Clearly, strengthening the states that lie between Russia and NATO is primarily a task for these states themselves. It is first and foremost a political and economic task. Absent progress fighting corruption and implementing institutional, political, economic, and legal reforms, these countries will never achieve their ambition of joining the transatlantic community and will always remain under Russia's thumb. Advances on these fronts will take time — even generations — however, and could easily be undermined if these NATO partners are unable to defend themselves militarily against continued Russian subversion and pressure. If their defenses are permitted to languish, these nations' politics will suffer, and progress toward establishing the strong political institutions required for eventual membership in NATO, the European Union, or other Euro-Atlantic security institutions will falter. The experience of Georgia and Ukraine since their wars with Russia makes this clear. It behooves NATO to support their efforts to defend themselves so that they can grow stronger politically and economically and thereby gain independence. In short, recent efforts to build political and economic resilience against Russian aggression could be in vain if these countries lack a capability for self defense.

From a practical perspective, further NATO enlargement is not on the table now as a means of protecting these states. As explained above, the alliance is already under considerable pressure to strengthen deterrence for its existing Article

*Russian pressure on Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova continues at an accelerated and unacceptable pace.*



*The choice between Southern and Eastern fronts is a Hobson's choice. A strict division of labor must not be permitted with some countries focusing solely on Southern and others on Eastern questions.*

V commitments. It is thus not in a position to take on additional commitments that are even more militarily challenging. Doing so would be extremely risky, invite Russian malfeasance and potentially encourage a forthright Russian attack, for which NATO would be ill-prepared as postured today. Moreover, appetite for enlargement to these countries is extremely low among all the most important allied capitals.

But the United States and Europe could nevertheless consider doing more to complement their existing commitments to these important partners with more defense assistance. Specifically, NATO should offer further funding and training to bolster command and control, intelligence, surveillance reconnaissance, special forces, and air and missile defenses, while seeking to increase overall transparency and civilian control of the militaries of the region. NATO's decision to open a training center in Georgia is a positive step. NATO can further increase the funding it has provided to date via trust funds for Ukraine. The alliance can also help to reduce the influence of Russian security services within the militaries and defense establishments of all three countries. More frequent visits from NATO and Allied senior officials are likewise desirable. Although major measures on these fronts are not to be expected at Warsaw, NATO should continue to expand its assistance in these areas over the medium term, especially as it looks forward toward the next summit.

There is no cookie-cutter approach to these nations of Eastern Europe or the Caucasus. Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova are different in their domestic composition, geography, and level of interest in cooperation with NATO. Building the resilience of these states, however, requires both political and military measures, and NATO has an interest and a vocation to do so.

### **Ahead to the Next Summit and Beyond**

At the Wales Summit, the revival of NATO's Eastern challenges was rightly given top billing, and the Alliance is well on its way toward an effective strategy for strengthening deterrence on the Eastern flank. Since Wales, however, the massive influx of migrants and terrorist attacks in Europe threaten European freedoms directly and indirectly, frighten Europe's citizens, and bolster Moscow's position. If NATO fails to take action to protect its populations from these attacks, defend their political systems, and reinforce the political values that the alliance stands for, these efforts to address the Eastern Flank challenge could falter. NATO's efforts to strengthen Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine would suffer — maybe irreparably.

The choice between Southern and Eastern fronts is a Hobson's choice. A strict division of labor must not be permitted with some countries focusing solely on Southern and others on Eastern questions. Countries will naturally have priorities that reflect their interests, but a sharp East-South division would endanger allied solidarity and sap its overall strength. The Kremlin has successfully manipulated the southern threats to serve its interests and objectives in the east. Putin's intervention in Syria and continued efforts to bolster allies in the Middle East and North Africa illustrate that he clearly understands the interlinked nature of the two fronts. NATO must as well.

These are trying days for the Alliance. Yet, if the challenges facing the alliance are great, so are its capabilities — military, economic, and political. NATO remains by far the most powerful alliance in the world. It has survived the Cold War, stabilized the Balkans, greatly enlarged its membership, fought a complex war in South Asia, and conducted an intervention in Libya that was (initially) a smashing success. By comparison, Russia's military budget is only somewhat larger

than France's. Its economy is smaller than Italy's. The military capabilities of the self-proclaimed Islamic State group are miniscule in proportion. As they contemplate the challenges their nations face, NATO's leaders should bear these facts in mind. Protecting security in the future will require bold initiatives. NATO must be ready.

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# 2

## Ukraine, NATO, and the Art of Dam Construction

Andriy Shevchenko

*A more secure Ukraine means a more secure Europe. Cooperation between Ukraine and NATO can have important results in improving Ukrainian security structures.*

Europe needs Ukraine to be a reliable dam, capable of holding back the floods of threats from Russia. Building a strong dam is an art of engineering that comes down to three essential questions, which apply to strengthening European security in the east as well: 1) Where do you want to build it? 2) What construction solution will you choose? and 3) How are you going to maintain it in the future?

The best location for a dam is a narrow valley, allowing massive amounts of water to be held upstream. While not small, Ukraine does neighbor six NATO countries (including Bulgaria and Turkey across the Black Sea) and holds tremendous social and political influence over the post-Soviet world (and Russia itself) — making it the perfect spot to have massive downstream effects.

The Kremlin is preparing itself for a war against the West, and Ukraine is just one of the potential theaters. Russia is already testing the West's temper along an impressive frontline, from Syria to the Arctic. There are many reasons why this intellectually and culturally rich nation has taken an aggressive, imperialistic, and deliberately anti-Western path. For now, it is important to understand that under heavy and cynical propaganda, Russian public opinion is (and will be for a substantial time) obsessed with confronting the West. This should encourage us to seek long-term solutions.

Long-term solutions require solid construction. Whether it is an old-style dam with a massive foundation or a sophisticated and elegant arch dam, the engineering objective is to redistribute the pressure of water to strengthen the structure. There are important shifts going on in Ukraine, shifts that will also be important for the security of wider Eastern Europe. The international community can help reinforce these shifts and help them lead to strong structures.

Ukrainian society is transforming. Eighty percent of Ukrainians want their country to join the EU; 60 percent of the population supports NATO membership. This is a dramatic change from the flip-flopping of the 1990s and 2000s. It is also the mature choice of a nation that is now paying a high price for its reluctance to address strategic challenges through the years of independence. We can be frustrated with the slow pace of the reforms after the Euromaidan Revolution. However, we cannot overlook Ukraine's vibrant and powerful civil society, which is the mightiest force for shaping the future of the country. There is enough capacity to make these changes sound, deep, and permanent, especially if supported by the international community.

### Engineering a Strong Security Structure

A more secure Ukraine means a more secure Europe. Cooperation between Ukraine and NATO can have important results in improving Ukrainian security structures. First is the profound reform of the Ukraine's defense sector. Foreign advisors have been very helpful in drafting key Ukrainian roadmap papers, including the National Security Strategy (2015),<sup>1</sup> the Military Doctrine of Ukraine (2015),<sup>2</sup> and the Concept of Development of Security & Defense Sector of Ukraine (2016).<sup>3</sup> There is space for more intellectual exchange on these initiatives. Comprehensive security reform should include removing corruption from the defense sector, raising social standards for servicemen, greater civil control over the army and intelligence services, and changing human resources and recruiting practices. Altogether, these

<sup>1</sup> Full version (in Ukrainian): <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/287/2015>

<sup>2</sup> Full version (in Ukrainian): <http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/5552015-19443>

<sup>3</sup> Full version (in Ukrainian): <http://www.president.gov.ua/documents/922016-19832>

would have a profound positive spillover effect on modernizing the country.

Second, on a more practical level, NATO standards should be introduced. It is time move from “adjusting to the standards” to full-scale implementation — not in words, but in compatibility of the practitioners. This can be achieved through more training and more joint exercises. It is a two-way road, of course. Canadian officers who trained Ukrainians under Operation UNIFIER,<sup>4</sup> Canada’s contribution to support Ukrainian troops, also brought back unique knowledge of what it is like to fight a modern war against the second strongest army in the world, with tanks, heavy artillery, “GRAD” missiles and radio warfare.<sup>5</sup> The Ukrainians pay a heart-breaking price for this experience, and it should be shared.

Third, a quick look at the Black Sea region shows a worrying geography of Russian interventions, from Abkhazia to Transnistria. The economy of Crimea (tourism, trade, and transit) has been ruined by the occupation, which is pushing Russia to further militarize the strategically located peninsula. This makes the situation even more explosive. NATO’s cooperation with Ukraine and Georgia through the Black Sea command under the 28+2 format will provide a good opportunity for Ukraine to contribute to the security of this region, which is key for a peaceful and safe Europe.

Fourth, the recent decisions by NATO and its individual members to strengthen the defense infrastructure in Eastern Europe (from Romania through Poland to the Baltic States) were necessary and timely. This will play a role of “foot-rocks” in the new security dam construction.

<sup>4</sup> More on Operation UNIFIER: <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad/op-unifier.page>

<sup>5</sup> See also <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/canadian-forces-trainer-ukraine-1.3394037>

Finally, intelligence exchange can help both Ukraine and NATO allies, as Ukraine has become an important source of security information. This, of course, requires good “leak control,” and Kyiv has shown results in detecting the Russian network inside its defense sector.

### **What Should We Expect of the Warsaw Summit?**

The Wales Summit happened at a time of a wake-up call time. Now it is time for strategic brainstorming. The Ukrainian delegation will come to Warsaw with a clear national consensus behind partnering with NATO to create a stronger security system. The political manifest will be supported by symbolic decisions. Kyiv has already appointed a new vice prime minister, specifically responsible for European and Euroatlantic integration, and a new ambassador to NATO will be sent to Brussels shortly.

Kyiv hopes to share its experience of fighting a hybrid war and reinforce the idea of the Center for Preventing Hybrid Interventions. Ukraine (along with Georgia) has valuable experience in fighting hybrid aggression, including how to confront the Soviet-style propaganda; how to detect the networks of Kremlin-led “rebels”; how to use drones in combat situations; and how to face modern radio-electronic warfare. There is ample evidence that we will see more of these tactics in the near future in hot-spots around the world, including countries led by allies of Russian President Vladimir Putin who have received Russian arms. Kyiv is also ready to offer NATO more assistance where it feels it can, such as cargo transportation and anti-missile defense.

Ukraine will also bring expectations to the summit. They want to see a strong and efficient NATO. The Ukrainian people, who successfully stopped their local dictatorship and who now are fighting a war,

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would like to hear a clear signal from their partners: that NATO will help to bring the continent back to international law, that Crimea and Donbas will be part of Ukraine, and that NATO membership will be a sovereign choice of every country.

Kyiv is eager to confirm the Comprehensive Package of Assistance. This should bring improved cooperation through international trusts, successfully employed to help Ukrainian reforms. This will also be a good moment to understand how Ukraine and NATO can get the most out of the existing annual National Program. On a practical level, there is an obvious opportunity to participate more in joint exercises, especially in the Black Sea and at the Yavorivsk training base, which is one of the largest in Europe, unique in its capacity and equipped according to the NATO infrastructure standards.

The Ukrainian dam is a multi-purpose structure. Its brave resistance to Russian aggression has given Ukraine the legitimacy of a European (or Western) foothold in the east of the continent. Not just in the military context, but international crime, terrorism, money laundering, and human trafficking have links with this region as well. It puts Ukraine in an

important position to help confront a wide number of threats, and encourages us to look at Ukraine-NATO cooperation in a wider security context.

In the future, a reformed Ukraine will be the strongest advocate for rule of law and democracy vis-à-vis Russia and the post-Soviet world. With its profound cultural, family, business, and intellectual ties, every success in Ukraine will resonate well in Russia and throughout the region. Sooner or later, when Russia again is open to the world, we might need Ukraine's experience of post-Communist transition to help the Russians modernize. But for now, Ukraine has great need of support to fight the existential threats it faces. Ukrainians know they fight not just for their country, but also for the Free World. They will not look away if their neighbors are in trouble, and expect their neighbors to behave the same way.

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# 3

## Beyond NATO's Eastern Border: Georgia's Perspective

*Eka Tkeshelashvili*

In the lead up to the NATO summit in Warsaw, Georgia finds itself in the situation where it has to play the delicate role of an aspirant country, trying to maximize the scale and scope of its partnership tools with the alliance while simultaneously pushing for tangible progress on its membership path. As a result, political as well as pragmatic considerations are underpinning policy choices in Tbilisi. The deteriorating regional security environment has enhanced Georgia's interest in partnership tools that enhance Georgia's defense capabilities. However, both the credibility of NATO and public support for Georgia's Euroatlantic choice is placed at risk from prolonged uncertainty on when and how the Alliance will deliver on its promise of membership. While it is clear by now that a membership action plan (MAP) is not in the play for the 2016 Summit, Tbilisi needs to see that NATO is ready to shape a shared security environment, and that it views Georgia as an integral part of that process.

For more than a decade, NATO's security environment has been deteriorating. While threats emanating from the south have been more vivid, to its east there was a grave gap between perceived and actual realities of geopolitical change. Russia's invasion and partial occupation of Georgia in 2008 should have served as a discomfiting wakeup call, but in strategic terms it was largely ignored. The annexation of Crimea and war against Ukraine finally prompted reconsideration of existing threat perceptions and the Alliance's deterrence doctrine.

While this process is still ongoing, it will be crucial for NATO to forge consensus on common threats and to act upon it not in the crisis management modus operandi, but with the strategic foresight. NATO needs to shape the changing security environment, rather than adapting to it. For an aspirant country such as Georgia, two main metrics, membership and deterrence, will be

decisive for measuring ultimate success of Alliance's ongoing strategic review.

### Revitalization of the Open Door Policy

After the last large round of enlargement in 2004, when seven Central and Eastern European countries joined NATO, continued commitment to the open door policy has been assessed critically in various European capitals and expert communities. The Alliance has never backtracked formally from the founding principle of the Washington Treaty, and the enlargement process has not been fully stalled, as Albania and Croatia joined in 2009. However "enlargement fatigue" and the lack of sound strategy vis-à-vis Russia has placed the open door policy in a state of strategic suspense.

NATO's post-Cold War strategy toward Russia downgraded the need for collective security and deterrence measures and overestimated the potential for constructive cooperation based on the perception of common interests in both the area of a shared neighborhood and globally. The Kremlin led allies to believe that as long as NATO refrained from further enlargement in former Soviet Union countries, Russia would consider broader cooperation and not test the alliance on its own terms, especially in the domain of Article V obligations. Putting enlargement vis-à-vis former Soviet Union countries on hold was tantamount to the tacit acceptance of the boundaries of the free Europe imposed by Russia.

The biggest test case became the issue of the membership aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine at the Bucharest Summit in 2008. The decision to promise membership to both while failing to deliver on the roadmap for accession was perceived by the Kremlin as a realistic but relatively distant threat, due to NATO's reluctance to challenge Russia's claim of "spheres of influences" in its neighborhood. This opened the door to expedited

*The deteriorating regional security environment has enhanced Georgia's interest in partnership tools that enhance Georgia's defense capabilities.*

*While a strengthening of collective defense infrastructure along the eastern periphery of the alliance is long overdue, NATO must avoid focusing its deterrence strategy exclusively on collective defense and thus limiting itself to a purely responsive posture.*

Russian action first in Georgia in 2008 and later on in Ukraine in 2014.

For NATO to regain its role as a strategic player capable of shaping its security environment, the open door policy needs to be revitalized as one of the most powerful transformative tools at hand. Preparations for the Warsaw Summit indicate that the alliance is not ready to consolidate political capital for game-changing decisions in this direction. The statement of NATO foreign ministers of December 2, 2015 on the Open Door Policy allowed the Alliance to remove enlargement-related contentious issues from the agenda. At the same time, however, it has indicated the impossibility of keeping Open Door Policy-related issues off the Alliance's radar screen indefinitely.

The invitation in Warsaw for Montenegro to start membership talks is a move in the right direction. However, clarity on Georgia's accession, the more sensitive issue for Russia, is the essential test of the Alliance's resolve to deliver (which in its own terms is important for the deterrence strategy to work). It is also critical if NATO wants to act as a strategic player capable of maintaining a rules-based security environment in Europe. In the absence of a Membership Action Plan for Georgia, it will be important to reach consensus on language in the final declaration of the summit that goes beyond a mere restatement of the Bucharest Summit decision and brings more clarity on both the "when" and the "how" of Georgia's membership.

Though crucial, a clearer statement is still only a short-term fix. Prolonged ambiguity on the accession timeframe will negatively affect internal political discourse in Georgia, which is already challenged by a full-fledged informational offensive by the Kremlin. The Georgian public has so far shown remarkable strategic patience and commitment to the cause. But the danger of shifting public opinion should not be underestimated.

Against the backdrop of a deteriorating security environment in the Caucasus and the larger Black Sea area, prolonged uncertainty on the accession path will contribute to the perception that Russia's challenge to NATO and the EU is successful — weakening public alliance with the Western cause and strengthening the Kremlin's appeal.

### **Deterrence Strategy: Providing Balance Between Collective Defense and Cooperative Security**

It is widely expected that the Warsaw Summit will be focused on the deterrence and defense posture of the alliance. While a strengthening of collective defense infrastructure along the eastern periphery of the alliance is long overdue, NATO must avoid focusing its deterrence strategy exclusively on collective defense and thus limiting itself to a purely responsive posture. The alliance should also engage with frontline partner countries targeted by Russia in the strategic political dialogue related to the deterrence strategy vis-à-vis Russia, and include them in the relevant operational planning platforms. Effective deterrence can only be based on the proper synergy between collective defense and cooperative security tasks. Extended deterrence that encompasses defense capability buildup of partner countries, as well as their direct engagement in sub regional strategic and operational planning frameworks, will better serve the Alliance's goals, both short and long term.

For Georgia, both NATO's deterrence strategy and its work with partners are important. The summit in Wales opened up the possibility of extending NATO's role in defense capabilities development. However it will be important to enhance the implementation process, including by broadening the scope and scale of concrete projects and encouraging member states to contribute more to improving Georgia's territorial defense capabilities.

The overall defense and deterrence posture of the Alliance needs to include a well-developed maritime strategy for the Black Sea Region. The security of the region has significantly deteriorated due to the occupation of the Georgian region of Abkhazia, the annexation of Crimea, and the political crisis between Russia and Turkey. Apart from militarization of the occupied regions of Abkhazia and Crimea, it is clear that there is no longer a durable and mutually acceptable equilibrium of forces between Turkey and Russia in the Black Sea area. The Baltic/Nordic Sea regional discourse is a good example of a consolidated effort to enhance deterrence posture at a regional level through the involvement of partner countries like Finland and Sweden in strategic and operational planning. NATO's overall deterrence posture will be limited if the Black Sea Region remains the weak link due to fragmented and at times conflicting views of littoral states on shared security in the region, as well as lack of integrated strategy of the alliance toward the Black Sea Region and the limited role played by partner countries like Georgia and Ukraine. The Black Sea needs to receive elevated status as a region of strategic importance for the overall security of the alliance, and any new vision must include Georgia and Ukraine in strategic as well as operation planning for the region.

## Conclusion

For the past two decades, NATO has proved its resilience to adverse changes of its security environment. The summit in Warsaw takes place at a time when more mature assessments of the contested security environment are being developed. The gap between the perceived and actual geopolitical and security situation on the eastern flank of the alliance has never been so narrow; the summit will be successful if it can capitalize on this. The outcome will be mainly measured by the depth of commitment the Alliance demonstrates in standing up for the rules-based security architecture of Europe. Progress of Georgia's integration process and its inclusion in the broader deterrence strategy of NATO falls within these issues, which will determine the role the Alliance will play in defining the future security architecture of Europe.

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# 4

## Moldova's Security Cannot be Achieved Outside of NATO

Igor Munteanu

*Russia's annexation of Crimea and warfare operations in Donbas only heightened the insecurity in Moldova.*

Every security and defense issue on the agenda of the upcoming NATO Summit in Warsaw could have a significant effect on the security of Moldova, and indeed on the whole of Eastern Europe. The country's severe deficit in security and defense is most prominently defined by vulnerability to the regional crisis in Ukraine and increasing assertiveness of Russia in Eastern Europe at large. Particularly daunting is the ongoing frozen conflict on Moldova's sovereign territory, in Transnistria, where Russia over the last two decades has been able to impose a sort of area denial policy on Moldova's constitutional authorities, propping up a separatist regime and building up a de facto military base less than 40 kilometers from Moldova's capital. While not recognizing the independence of the Transnistrian quasi-state, Moscow has leveraged its impressive military presence to further destabilize an already fragile democracy.

In spite of a constitutional provision (art.11, para 2) that stipulates "no foreign troops are allowed to station on the soil of Moldova," Russia continues to use its military presence to interfere with Moldova's domestic affairs. Conceived as a way to force Russia to withdraw its troops,<sup>1</sup> Moldova's self-imposed "constitutional neutrality" has failed to keep Russia out of Moldova's sovereign territory, and has fallen short in preventing the transformation of Transnistria into a Russian active military and intelligence outpost. Furthermore, Russian policy toward Moldova has become a sort of matrix-like axiom: the more openness Moldova demonstrates toward the EU, the more Russia compensates with a secessionist regime in Tiraspol. And the more NATO and Moldova cooperate, the more military drills Russia conducts with the forces of the separatist regime.

<sup>1</sup> The former 14<sup>th</sup> Russian Army, which fought against Moldovan authorities in 1992 and then remained in Transnistria as the Russian Limited Military Group (RLMG, or in Russian OGRV).

Russia's annexation of Crimea and warfare operations in Donbas have only heightened insecurity in Moldova. Many in Chișinău realize that their national security depends on the outcome of the military conflict in Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> But the increased sense of vulnerability has forced policymakers to strive for a complete overhaul of both the national security documents and defense capabilities. This includes increased efforts in strengthening ties with NATO and expanded bilateral forms of military-to-military cooperation, while also stressing that this does not conflict with constitutional neutrality. This view is supported by Moldovan Defense Minister Anatol Șalaru, who stated in May 2016 that "Moldova shall apply to get an Observation statute for the NATO Summit in Warsaw," and that "Moldova cannot be a stable country without a modern national army."<sup>3</sup>

### Reconsidering Neutrality

Despite these conclusions, Moldova is struggling to shift policies. It is unclear how Chișinău can operationalize reforms on its own, but it is also unrealistic to think that other states will guarantee what Moldova cherishes for its own security needs. Leading voices of the civil society are calling on Moldovan politicians to stop pretending that the country's neutrality is a viable solution. When other NATO partners are concerned about their security and defense capabilities, these countries increase their national defense budgets and take steps to secure adequate military equipment and training. Hostage to its own economic modest growth, Moldova, on the other hand, has so far avoided addressing its defense priorities in a comprehensive

<sup>2</sup> Minister of Defense's Statement at the TVM. February 16, 2016. <http://www.trm.md/en/social/anatol-salaru-securitatea-republicii-moldova-nu-poate-fi-scoasa-din-contextul-european/>

<sup>3</sup> Anatol Șalaru. Deutsche Welle. "Moldova cere să fie invitată la summitul NATO de la Varșovia" [Moldova is asking to be invited to the NATO Summit in Orso]. <http://www.jurnal.md/ro/politic/2016/5/17/deutsche-welle-moldova-cere-sa-fie-invitata-la-summitul-nato-de-la-varsovia/>

manner, and has mostly relied on partners, or the Individual Plan of Actions (IPAP) with NATO, officially launched on May 19, 2005.

### Upgrading Defense

Regional turmoil may take a high toll on Moldova. In order to keep up with threats, Moldova will need to significantly upgrade its national defense capabilities, and increase its inter-operability with U.S. and European armies. Moldova will need to effectively use the available opportunities of the Partnership Staff Element (PSE), which may enable career Moldovan military personnel to apply for various positions at NATO Headquarters, increasing human interoperability and institutional dialogue with individual partner-members. Today the largest beneficiaries of the PSE are neutral states Sweden, Austria, and Switzerland, as well as Ukraine and Georgia; Moldova would easily also fit into the existing cooperation framework. Since every form of interoperability is based on specific NATO standards, Moldova should be able to target more results in the transposition of the operational standards, known as STANAGs — Standardization Agreements — into its military forces as a driving mechanism for modernization. It is a shame that with exception of STANAG 6000 (English language learning for militaries), the Moldovan National Army has largely missed the chance to follow other NATO regulations.

To be clear in this regard: participation of the Moldovan militaries under the Kosovo Force (KFOR) does not mean that the National Army has fully complied with existing STANAGs. Thus, increasing the interoperability with NATO in the area of standards and military rules would be an excellent instrument for Moldova to boost adjacent civil-to-military cooperation platforms, which can address cyber-security threats, prevention of human-caused or natural disasters, and other forms of crisis situations generated by hybrid

warfare. Interoperability with NATO can create the capabilities to achieve a higher degree of integration with other multinational coalitions and forces, which will definitely modernize the National Army of Moldova.

The unstoppable flows of illegal migrants from the war-torn Middle East have affected homeland security and captured much attention. But the security map of Europe also continues to be altered by economic, media, cyber, and political attacks known as hybrid warfare. An assertive Russia continues to pressure its weaker neighbors, keeping them and the West on high operational alert. This adds instability to the whole social fabric of the EU, with little room for magical recovery plans or quick political fixes. Europe has a long and thorny path ahead in redesigning the collective security of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Considering the increasing demand for division of labor and specialization, Moldova will find out how it can contribute to the existing security frameworks in Europe and NATO with its own specific niche-tailored capabilities, such as mine clearing, special operations, and military intelligence, and then bring them up to NATO standards.

A first step would be to build on efforts that have proven effective and draw on lessons learned. Moldova has completed several international missions under the mandate of the United Nations, and based on the increasing capabilities of their specially trained peacekeeping subunits, Moldovan peacekeepers started their individual mission in Kosovo on November 1, 2013, as part of the KFOR multinational operation. Moldova should build on these efforts and continue increasing civic control over the armed forces with decisions endorsed by the political class. Based on its risks evaluation, Moldova should be able to revise and adopt a totally new package of security and strategic defense acts.

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*The alternative to an EU path, the policy of neutrality, is clearly not working, particularly with regards to Transnistria.*

At the same time, Moldova should recognize that taking a neutral stance toward Russia has been counter-productive. Decades of brainwashing via Russian state TV programs had a large impact on public opinion. To some political parties in Moldova, neutrality entails refraining from NATO cooperation, while to others it means the absence of an army all together. Russia's grip on Moldova's economy influences the stance on neutrality, which is viewed by many as a means to safeguard Moldova's economic interests and to protect its large migrant population employed in Russia. But Russia is already targeting Moldova's economy. In response to the EU-Moldova Association Agreement, Russia has instituted a policy of embargoes on Moldovan exports, which contributed to plummeting living standards, and still keeps a grip on the banking sector.<sup>4</sup>

#### Unmatched Expectations on the EU Path

It was supposed to unfold very differently. In 2014, Moldova signed major deals with the EU: a Visa-Free Agreement on April 27 and an Association Agreement on June 27 (ratified by all the parliaments of the EU member states). It is essential to note here that from the perspectives of Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine, the Association Agreements with the EU were not simple trade agreements, but rather important institutional steps toward closer political ties to the EU, equivalent to a sort of "security insurance." This may have been a sort of "cognitive dissonance" between the EU and the three (more advanced) states in the Eastern Partnership (EaP), but it would seem naïve to believe that these states could take on the most painful reforms without an accession perspective with the EU, and outside of the EU's "defensive walls." All three states firmly believed that their associated status was a "geopolitical victory,"

<sup>4</sup> M. Lupashko. Эксперт новостей [Expert of the news]. "Война стучит в нашу дверь" [The War knocks in our door]. No. 7. March 11, 2016

whereas the EU equivocated the agreements to the more than 20 other free trade agreements that it previously signed with various non-European states. This created a clear asymmetry. The EU was only risking money, but the EaP states were putting their freedom from Russia on the line. However, the European Commission remained unimpressed with the trio's demands for a right to accession, which was ruled out as a viable option during the Riga Summit of May 2015.

The alternative to an EU path, the policy of neutrality, is clearly not working, particularly with regards to Transnistria. Moreover, the policy of neutrality backfired on Moldovan politicians when Russia staged a Military Victory Show in Tiraspol on May 9, 2016. The Russian Military Contingent (OGRV) and so-called Peacekeepers were in full control over the separatist Army of Transnistria, equipped with combat armory cars, jets, and tanks, which had previously been withdrawn from the region in accordance with the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit Declaration.

Russia continues to sponsor Transnistria via direct and indirect cash benefits. Since 2013, Russia has issued repeated threats to shatter the EaP Association Agreements with the EU. Warning Moldova that "its train en route to Europe may lose its wagons in Transnistria,"<sup>5</sup> Deputy Prime Minister Dimitri Rogozin promised local industries opportunities to work within the Russian defense sector,<sup>6</sup> announcing that Russia will soon open a consulate in Tiraspol as a sign of implicit

<sup>5</sup> A. Motyl. "Ukraine's Orange Blues." *World Affairs*. <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/alexander-j-motyl/russia%E2%80%99s-revisionist-claims-ukraine-and-moldova>

<sup>6</sup> D. Rogozin. Приднестровье и Молдова: Россия усиливает позиции на стратегически важном направлении [Transnistria and Moldova: Russia is strengthening its positions on a strategically important direction]. [http://www.newscom.md/rus/dmitrij-rogozin-prizhdnestrov\\_e-i-moldova-rossiya-usilivaet-pozitcii-na-strategicheski-vazhnom-napravlenii.html](http://www.newscom.md/rus/dmitrij-rogozin-prizhdnestrov_e-i-moldova-rossiya-usilivaet-pozitcii-na-strategicheski-vazhnom-napravlenii.html)

recognition.<sup>7</sup> When Chişinău put the consular office on hold, Russia claimed that this would harm the interests of those 180,000 Russian citizens in the region and would negatively affect relations with Russia.<sup>8</sup> The Russian narrative aims to dispel any belief that the EU, and by extension NATO, is serious about Moldova. Among its propaganda claims are that the Association Agreement is “superficial” and “narrow,” designed to achieve only geopolitical gains and inconsequential for the economy.<sup>9</sup> As a better alternative to EU’s Common Market, Moscow is pushing Moldova to join its own Eurasian Economic Union, which has no conditionalities.

During 2015-16, Russia’s anti-EU narrative only intensified. The Kremlin sanctioned Moldova’s exporters after the Association Agreement was signed, instead distributing trade licenses to the loyal pro-Russian business groups, similar to the ones distributed earlier in Transnistria. Also, Russian-speaking activists from various regions of Moldova were recruited to join some of the training camps in Rostov (Russia), with some of them being involved in the Donbas conflict and other volunteers being later arrested by the Moldovan intelligence service for their participation in separatist activities in Ukraine. When a Budjak Republic was announced in Odessa in 2014, “on behalf of several regions and nations of Ukraine and Moldova,” the threat of another special operation of the “polite green-men” from Russia was taken seriously in Chişinău and Kyiv.

<sup>7</sup> “Rogozin Institutionalizing Direct Relations with Transnistria.” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* Volume: 9 Issue: 79. [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=39292&no\\_cache=1#.Vz9Z074w3IU](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=39292&no_cache=1#.Vz9Z074w3IU).

<sup>8</sup> Grigori Karasin, February 15, 2014. <http://infoprut.ro/27282-deschiderea-unui-consulat-la-tiraspol-ramane-o-prioritate-a-rusiei.html>

<sup>9</sup> Statement made by S. Naryshkin, chairman of the Russian Duma. *Nash Vybor*. <http://vybor.md/naryshkin-ukraina-i-moldova-vyibrav-evrosoyuz-nichego-vzamen-ne-priobremli/>

This confrontation and propaganda has also affected opinions on NATO and neutrality. In November 2015, 16 percent of the population polled by the International Republican Institute agreed that “NATO membership would be the best solution for ensuring the security of Moldova,” while 50 percent supported a neutral status. This plummeting support for EU and NATO correlated with political crisis, corruption scandals, political controversies massive protests, and demands for change. According to the IPP Opinion Barometer, only 11 percent of respondents wanted Moldova to be part of NATO in 2016, a sizable drop from the highest levels of support (29 percent) in December 2005. Public support of neutrality in Moldova is traditionally high, and reached 58 percent in 2016. There is also a growing trend toward accepting the idea of joining the CIS security structures (18 percent) according to the April 2016 IPP Poll.

In March 31, 2016, the Parliament of Moldova adopted a declaration on neutrality, with votes from the Communists, Socialists, and Democrats (62 out of 101 MPs), to “stop attacks on the status of neutrality and consolidate Moldova’s independence.” The declaration fails to mention the presence of the Russian troops in Transnistria and their illegal status backing a separatist regime. Thus regional instability (coupled with the domestic political crises) has affected Moldova’s willingness to cooperate with NATO.

### **Beware of False Transnistria Solutions**

The war in Ukraine has imposed a radical change on Ukraine security decisions, which suddenly cut off most of the previous smuggling corridors and suspected activities. Almost 80 percent of the exports from that country now go to the EU and Moldova. All previous statements on industrial integration with Russia remain largely unfulfilled, and the economic situation in Transnistria is rapidly disintegrating. Not only are the largest

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taxpayers bankrupt, but the region is rapidly depopulating. Thwarted by the Western policy of sanctions, Moscow is not pushing for a quick unilateral recognition of Transnistria (like South Ossetia and Abkhazia), but is instead knitting a sort of conditional insertion of it into a federal state of Moldova, one that it would have extensive veto powers over. This may lead to the creation of a formally reintegrated, but dysfunctional, state. Russia is beefing up military forces in the breakaway region, training them in sophisticated drills with participation in the Russian Limited Military Group, and capturing the most valuable assets of the region. Under the guise of a Russian peacekeeping operation, it continues to recruit local conscripts, in defiance of the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit declaration and limitations of the mandate it claims to have. This shows that Moscow has never given up on the idea of keeping a military backup in Moldova, as the 2003 Kozak Plan clearly stipulated (a 20-year military presence for Russian troops in Moldova), concomitant with other instruments of oversight and control.<sup>10</sup> Moscow would also like to pass the financial debts of the separatist region on to Chişinău, in the case of reintegration, which is clearly not liked by Moldova. But, despite all Russian efforts, the breakaway region is very far from being an attractive location to live even by the most-humble Russian standards.

Of course, Russia would be happy to bail out the separatist regime in Transnistria, perhaps with Western support, but only under its own strategic terms. This reveals a calculating estimate of its available options, given that Russia finds itself internationally isolated and sanctioned by the EU, yet with an unaltered strategic perspective on Eastern Europe. Therefore, the suggestion that Moscow may concede to ending its grip

on Transnistria in exchange for a federal state in Moldova must be treated with maximum prudence. Ending the frozen conflict may only create the illusion of a common state, which would be fully dysfunctional, have distinct con-federal “veto-players,” and be used by Moscow to further achieve its objectives in a post-conflict context. Federalization is clearly at odds with Moldova’s intimate national interests; it is not popular in public polls, and it may be further used to play a decisive role in domestic politics, since pro-Russian populists have taken advantage of the recent convulsions of the pro-EU parties and failures in 2015.

It is improbable that Russia could dismantle Moldovan trust in future integration with the EU, but it can complicate the state-crafting efforts of a democratic Moldova through hostile anti-Western propaganda, political bickering of pro-Russian parties or manipulation of the fears of ethnic minorities. The eastern flank of NATO needs to be secured, including recognizing the strategic priorities for the West to play an important role in strengthening security and defense reforms in the neighboring democratic states, as well as in preventing hybrid attacks on economies and societies of the NATO partners in Eastern Europe.

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<sup>10</sup> Russian Federation’s Foreign Policy Review, 2013. [http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign\\_policy/official\\_documents/-/asset\\_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/122186](http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/122186)

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