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Key Points

- ◆ **Deterring and defending against Russian aggression in the Baltic Sea region prior to open hostilities, or “left of bang,” is a political problem that requires a coordinated regional approach by the Baltic southern shore states—Poland, Germany, and Denmark—in conjunction with their North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU) allies.**
- ◆ **Despite common membership in NATO and the EU, the southern shore states hold differing strategic perspectives that reflect the challenges of a coordinated approach.**
- ◆ **These states should prioritize Baltic maritime security, regional mobility, and unconventional warfare capabilities in coordination with regional allies and partners. They should also leverage or enhance EU capabilities in cyber, information, and strategic communications to better deter and defend against Russian hostile measures.**

Baltics Left of Bang: The Southern Shore

by Marcel Hadeed, Mariusz Kaminski, Monika Sus, Brett Swaney, and Amelie Theussen

Sponsored by the U.S. National Defense University (NDU) and the Swedish Defence University, this is the fourth and final paper in a series of INSS Strategic Forums dedicated to the multinational exploration of the strategic defense challenges faced by the Baltic states. The December 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy describes Russia as “using subversive measures to weaken the credibility of America’s commitment to Europe, undermine transatlantic unity, and weaken European institutions and governments.”¹ The American and European authors of this paper, along with many others, came together in a series of exercises conducted in late 2017 through the winter of 2019 to explore possible responses to the security challenges facing the Baltic Sea region (BSR).

Prior studies have examined the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the merits of deterrence by denial, as well as the efficacy of Nordic states’ efforts to bolster regional resistance and resilience efforts through unique total defense and comprehensive security strategies, as well as the Baltic states’ own efforts to adapt to a persistent threat. This fourth paper highlights research and gaming insights examining the perspectives and evolving efforts of the Baltic southern shore states of Poland, Germany, and Denmark to deter and defend against Russian hostile measures in the BSR, as well as exploring opportunities to bolster regional security.²

For long-time observers of the BSR, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent conflict in Ukraine acted as a catalyst for the states of the southern shore to focus their attention more fully on NATO’s eastern flank. A scenario in which a mix of Russian conventional or unconventional forces, bolstered by antiaccess/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities projected by the Kaliningrad Oblast, seize key maritime outposts in the Baltic Sea, seal off the Suwalki Gap, and then rapidly consolidate control of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania remains a troubling prospect.³ While such a scenario appears unlikely at present, a consistent hybrid strategy, leveraging a mix of economic, political, and information measures,

Baltic Sea Region



aimed at preparing the operational environment, has already been observed. The vulnerability of the Baltic states and the need to defend against Russian hostile measures and hybrid aggression have necessarily caused regional NATO and European Union (EU) allies, Poland, Germany, and Denmark, to reconsider their posture and readiness, strengthen regional relationships, assess new commitments, and explore new investments in regional security.

With overlapping commitments to their Baltic allies through both the EU and NATO, Poland, Germany, and Denmark play crucial roles in the defense of the BSR. In many ways, Poland is a regional linchpin, the connective tissue between the Baltic states and Central Europe. The Polish border runs astride the Suwalki Gap, a narrow corridor between Belarus and the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad. The Suwalki Gap is a crucial land bridge connecting Poland to Lithuania and is an important but

vulnerable route through which allied reinforcements might flow to the Baltic states in the event of hybrid or conventional aggression. Poland's growing defense budget, military modernization, and experience mitigating Russian hostile measures only serve to highlight its pivotal regional role.

By far the largest and wealthiest of the Baltic regional states and an influential member of both the EU and NATO, Germany views the Baltic Sea as a vital link with its political, security, and economic allies in the BSR. However, Russia also offers Germany the potential of an economic partnership. Germany navigates between these competing internal narratives about the nature of the Russian challenge. It takes a cautious approach to regional security that seeks to incorporate Russia gradually into the European sphere. Thus, some of its neighbors and outside observers assert that Germany has yet to marshal its full strength in defense of the BSR, although there are signs that the south shore Baltic giant is stirring.

Denmark's location gives it a crucial strategic role as the gateway to the BSR. Together with its northern Nordic neighbors, Denmark straddles the main maritime routes of access—the Øresund Strait and the Great and Little Belts—and fortifications at Elsinore and Copenhagen remain important locations for allied A2/AD capabilities in the BSR.⁴ While Denmark's strategic outlook has been principally focused on the North Atlantic and the Arctic, it has turned greater attention to the BSR in recent years, strengthening its concept of total defense, as its interests increasingly overlap with other regional allies. As an EU and NATO member, Denmark also shares concerns about maintaining a free and open Baltic Sea, which is increasingly pressured by Russian hostile measures and hybrid aggression.

In light of the importance of the Baltic southern shore states in the regional defense of the BSR, this fourth Baltics left of bang report examines the nature of the challenge Russia poses to them and the ways in which the Baltic southern shore states are adapting to meet the threat. It also assesses critical dimensions along which the southern shore states are positioned to bolster

regional resilience. These dimensions include the need to prioritize regional mobility, enhance maritime awareness and cooperation in the Baltic Sea, and foster unconventional capabilities. They also include the unique capacity of the southern shore states to leverage the EU's information, cyber, and strategic communications capabilities to counter hostile measures.

Hostile Measures and Hybrid Threats

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian political-military doctrine coalesced around the concept of a “near abroad,” a Russian area of privileged influence that envelops the Baltic states.⁵ In 1993, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Andrei Kozyrev described the near abroad as a “unique, *sui generis* geopolitical space, to which nobody but Russia could bring peace.”⁶ Within this space, a key Russian objective is to halt EU and NATO activity.⁷ This stands in sharp contrast to the welfare of the Baltic states and the integrity of these institutions.

Russian strategy in the BSR is highly opportunistic, working to achieve strategic objectives through the use of “hostile measures.”⁸ This approach is often characterized by the simultaneous exploitation of economic, cultural, social, and other divisions in target nations, often as preparation for higher level violence or hybrid warfare.⁹ Operationally, hostile measures include many modes of influence, including economic coercion, disinformation and propaganda, cyber disruption of critical infrastructure, assassinations, and even limited or covert military incursions.¹⁰ Given the right circumstances, Russian leadership then seeks to exploit the resulting opportunities.¹¹ It is a strategy rooted in maximizing the benefits of chaos and chance.

While the Baltic-Nordic states clearly bear the brunt of Russian aggression, the corrosive effect of hostile measures increasingly extends to the southern shore states of the BSR as well. The most recent Danish defense strategy asserts that the primary issue of the threat environment is a challenging and assertive Russia in NATO's

eastern neighborhood.¹² In 2016, Germany's domestic intelligence agency found evidence that hackers tied to the Russian government had targeted German state computer networks.¹³ More recently, Poland has been the target of several Russian disinformation campaigns accusing Poland of disrupting the distribution of medical aid to Italy in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴

The results have been consistently disorienting, as Western strategy and policy communities struggle to respond in a coordinated manner to hostile measures.¹⁵ This dynamic was observed during the Baltics left of bang exercises as allied players often experienced a sense that they were perpetually reacting to diffuse Russian initiatives and chasing the strategic narrative.¹⁶ In fact, by simultaneously offering economic and diplomatic "carrots" to some while poking "sticks" at others, Russia continually presented barriers to coordinated action. This dynamic was especially clear for the southern shore states. As Fiona Hill and Clifford Gaddy have noted, Putin has "strategic objectives, and there are many ways to achieve those objectives," but "exactly what his next step towards the objective will depend on the circumstances. It depends on how his adversary reacts."¹⁷

Deterring and defending against Russian aggression in the BSR prior to open hostilities is a political problem that requires a coordinated approach among the nations of the BSR, including the states of the southern shore.¹⁸ The following sections explore how the governments of Poland, Germany, and Denmark have been adapting to the challenge, highlighting their advances and exploring additional security dimensions along which there are opportunities to further coordinate or enhance regional security and resilience.

Poland: A Baltic Linchpin

Along with the other Baltic states, Poland is on the frontline confronting aggressive Russian hostile measures in the BSR. The most recent visible manifestation has been the dispute over historical memory in which Vladimir Putin has publicly accused Poland of being complicit with Germany for starting World War II. It is

a historical rewrite that is at odds with the known record. It is also an alarming disinformation campaign with the likely goal of further undermining Poland's position with European and NATO allies.¹⁹

To defend against aggressive Russian behavior, Poland has been steadily upgrading its capabilities across the civil-military spectrum and establishing relationships that will aid regional resilience and resistance efforts to hostile measures in the gray zone. Poland is currently host to a U.S.-led battlegroup, one of several deployed throughout the Baltics as part of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence.²⁰ In addition, Poland has taken the rotating command role of the NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) for 2020.²¹

Poland's rapidly growing capabilities are largely due to the political consensus around modernizing its armed forces with a defense budget to match. Following Poland's accession to NATO in 1999, the Polish parliament passed a law in 2001 on the reconstruction, technical modernization, and financing of the armed forces.²² It stipulated that defense expenditure would be no less than 1.95 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). This principle has proved durable despite many changes in government. In fact, consensus seems only to have grown. A provision was introduced in 2017 that defense expenditures will gradually increase to 2.5 percent of GDP by 2030.²³ The stability of the law made it possible to triple the defense budget from \$3.1 billion in 2000 to \$10.8 billion in 2018.²⁴ Poland became one of only a handful of NATO Allies to achieve the 2 percent defense spending guideline within a decade as agreed to at the 2014 Wales Summit.

By adopting the defense spending budget into law, the Polish finance minister is bound to comply with its provisions when constructing the state budget. It also reduced the temptation of the government to limit defense spending during a crisis. The durability and consensus around Polish defense commitments lead many to wonder about the viability of such commitments by other regional allies who claim a similar threat perspective but have yet to commit the resources required to develop

adequate capabilities. While the severe economic stress inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly challenge regional defense spending, Poland is set to stay the course over the next several years.

In the event of a crisis or conflict, Poland's traditional strategic focus has been on securing the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast and Belarus in anticipation of rapid support from allied forces. Another crucial strategic focus is on securing the Suwalki Gap, a narrow corridor of land (approximately 65 kilometers) connecting the Polish territory to Lithuania between the Kaliningrad Oblast and Belarus. The loss of the Suwalki Gap would cut the land bridge to the Baltic states.²⁵ Support for Poland provided by NATO forces in defending this section means de facto "to be or not to be" for Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in case of a possible crisis or armed conflict with Russia.

While Poland has made substantial investments in its conventional military in accordance with the Technical Modernization Plan for 2026, it has also sought to boost its societal resilience, crisis management, and unconventional warfare capabilities by investing in a new branch of its military, the Territorial Defense Force (Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej [WOT]), officially launched in 2017.²⁶ The WOT is modeled in part on the National Guard of the United States and is primarily a volunteer light infantry force constituted at the regional level and intended to supplement the formal armed forces.²⁷ The WOT is technically the fifth branch of the Polish armed forces and is subordinate to the minister of defense, but falling outside the regular command hierarchy.²⁸

The rapid growth and prioritization given to the WOT has generated some friction because of its priority status. Several hundred noncommissioned officers were transferred from the regular forces to the WOT, and psychological and educational requirements for officers are more relaxed.²⁹ These territorial forces operate and train close to regions in which they live, and excluding weapons, some equipment is allowed to be kept at home. At peak strength, the WOT intends to enroll about 50,000 personnel, and, in recent years, there

has been some effort to cross-train with U.S. National Guard Special Forces.³⁰

The WOT units are designed to bolster resistance against hostile measures and trained to provide a response during the early stages of a hybrid conflict. So they will not only perform traditional roles such as protecting infrastructure or supplementing security for military facilities, but also assist in countering disinformation campaigns, cyber operations, and act to provide stability in a crisis situation.³¹ Their performance in crisis has recently been demonstrated: since mid-March, nearly 1,000 WOT soldiers have been assisting with border checks, supervising quarantines, and screening potential patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.³²

Poland also continues to oppose the construction of the Nord Stream 2 project, with the Polish government suggesting it may seek the seizure of assets owned by

Poland has been steadily upgrading its capabilities across the civil-military spectrum and establishing relationships that will aid regional resilience and resistance efforts

Gazprom, the Russian state-owned oil and gas conglomerate.³³ Regionally, this places Poland at odds with other southern shore states such as Germany, which backs the project, and Denmark, which finally granted the last permit required for the 765-mile pipeline to connect Russia to Germany.³⁴ It is in light of these political disconnects that Russia may feel it is able to rewrite history, smearing Poland with a disinformation narrative in the hope of further isolating it from its allies and partners. It is also a clear reminder of the different strategic perspectives of the southern shore states that make the BSR a complex challenge to defend against Russian hostile measures.

Germany: The Sleeping Baltic Giant

In its approach to the BSR, Germany is guided by two overarching principles: respect for the current European security structure and international agreements.³⁵ Germany perceives Russia's "policy of aggression" as threatening the current international order, as it has shown in Ukraine, and the BSR constitutes a particularly exposed region.³⁶ While Germany shares the threat assessment of other NATO Allies, its strategic outlook and response remain unique. Germany follows a multipronged approach, increasing collective security and resilience against Russia while simultaneously reaching for cooperative security and sectoral cooperation with Russia.³⁷

Despite being the most powerful regional state in the BSR, Germany has not been immune to the direct influence of Russian hostile measures. The "Lisa" case is a well-known act of political warfare deployed by Russia. In January 2016, Russian news media broadcasting into Germany reported that Lisa, a Russian-German girl who had been missing for 30 hours, had been sexually assaulted by migrants in Germany.³⁸ This false story was amplified by both German and Russian news and social media outlets. Despite German police debunking the story, the initial disinformation created a wave of anti-immigrant and anti-government protests.³⁹

Russian political warfare in Germany also includes efforts to cultivate relationships with individuals associated with far-right and far-left political parties in Europe, many of which have developed pro-Kremlin stances. In Germany, these include Alternative for Germany and The Left (Die Linke), among others.⁴⁰ Their goal, of course, is to undermine European politics and weaken European consensus on a common policy toward Russia by enhancing friction among EU members and between the EU and the United States.⁴¹

For Germany, increasing collective security and resilience requires international cooperation. It is no coincidence that in her inauguration speech, current German

Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer recalled the German Basic Law. Its preamble bestows on Germans the "determination to promote world peace as an equal partner in a united Europe."⁴² Her tenure would continue the emphasis on multilateralism that is a hallmark of German security and defense policy.

More specifically, under the idea of "remaining transatlantic and becoming more European," the German government agreed to strengthen both its own defensive capabilities and its budget in a nod to persistent U.S. demands, while simultaneously enhancing European cooperation and capabilities. Indeed, Germany has not only signaled its willingness to approximate the NATO 2 percent commitment but also demonstrated a growing willingness to provide leadership within the Alliance.⁴³ This willingness is reflected in its command of the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) battalion in Lithuania and the host role it took in the initial phase of the Defender Europe 20 exercise.

The primary node of German engagement in the BSR is its leadership of a multinational battlegroup of 1,200 troops from 10 countries sent to Lithuania in 2017 as part of NATO's EFP. The rotational EFP can be perceived as a compromise between the expectations of Alliance members from the region for a permanent NATO presence and those, like Germany, that argue against it on the basis of the NATO-Russia Founding Act.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Berlin's decision to serve as a framework nation in the EFP was perceived more as a way to reassure Allies of German recognition of their security concerns than a conviction about the necessity of deterring Russia.

Yet the German approach toward the EFP has evolved and the military presence has been gradually expanded. In 2019, Germany took command of the VJTF, established at the NATO Wales Summit in 2014. This multinational brigade of 5,000 soldiers (land, maritime, air, and special forces) operates in a permanent high state of alert and can be deployed to a frontline position within 48 hours. Of course, this is optimistic given the challenges to military mobility throughout central and eastern Europe. Nonetheless, the VJTF constitutes

the vanguard of the Alliance's 40,000-strong NATO Response Force. Also in 2019, then-German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen expanded German commitment to the defense of NATO's Eastern flank and announced the investment of a total of 110 million euros until 2021 toward improving military bases in Lithuania.⁴⁵ Vilnius has become a significant bilateral partner on the Eastern flank due to intensifying military-technical cooperation.

Another important element of the German approach to the BSR is participation in NATO exercises. Taking place in Germany, Poland, and the Baltic states, Defender Europe 2020 was supposed to be one of the largest military exercises since the end of the Cold War. The intention of the exercise goes beyond testing readiness and improving interoperability. Its main purpose is arguably to demonstrate NATO's deterrence ability and to signal the Alliance's commitment to defend its Eastern flank. In that sense, it was a large information campaign targeted at Russia. As the host nation, Germany's role was prominent, serving as a logistics hub for allied military forces and testing German infrastructure—an exercise in military mobility needed to move NATO troops to the Eastern flank. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Defender Europe 2020 is currently planned for a later date.⁴⁶

At the same time, however, Germany prioritizes enhancing European capabilities from within NATO (“the European Pillar”). Besides promoting Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) initiatives, Germany sees merit particularly in improving European interoperability, research and development, procurement, standardization, and certification.⁴⁷ A “European response” also encapsulates nonmilitary measures and Germany quickly hardened its stance on sanctions against Russia in 2014.⁴⁸ Notably, however, Germany did not endorse harder sanctions in November 2018—sanctions that were endorsed by the United Kingdom, Poland, and the Baltics in light of Russia's failure to live up to the Minsk Agreement.⁴⁹

Germany also pursues resilience beyond the framework of the EU. It participates in the Northern Group,

which brings together the Nordic and Baltic countries with the United Kingdom, Poland, and the Netherlands, to informally consult on security and defense matters. German bilateral defense cooperation elsewhere in the BSR could be characterized as “interested” in Poland, “intent” on Sweden, and “engaged” in Lithuania and Norway. Thus, the first prong of German policy toward the BSR—increasing security against Russian activity—is conducted with a focus on concerted multilateral action in NATO, the EU, and through bilateral cooperation, all supported by a general increase in defense spending. It is moderated by its second approach, a cooperative stance toward Russia.

Despite its criticism of Russian aggression and hostile measures, Germany still views Russia as an indispensable partner. Conditional on adherence to the current European security structure, it sees the potential

despite its criticism of Russian aggression and hostile measures, Germany still views Russia as an indispensable partner

of long-term strategic partnerships among itself, NATO, and Russia.⁵⁰ In accordance with its steadfast support of international agreements and principles, Germany remains unwaveringly committed to the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the commitment to carry out collective defense missions without the permanent stationing of combat forces. Germany has also remained a steadfast partner in the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, a project that has caused a great deal of concern among allies and partners in the BSR. Moreover, despite its obvious ineffectiveness, Germany also remains committed to the continuation of the Minsk Agreement, signaling its willingness to remain in dialogue.

In short, there are two competing narratives in Germany regarding Russia and the impact on German strategy toward the BSR. The first narrative, deeply

rooted in German-Russian history, treats Moscow as an indispensable economic and security partner, and the second one recognizes Russia as a challenge to European security. Since the 2014 war in Ukraine, the latter view has been gaining ground. And yet the debate about the threat from Russia still remains abstract for most Germans.⁵¹ A recent poll by the German daily *Die Welt* found that 58 percent of Germans are in favor of closer relations with Russia.⁵² A more recent poll found that on the question of defending a fellow NATO Ally against Russia, 6 in 10 German respondents stated the country should not get involved.⁵³ This second narrative, combined with German commitments to multilateralism and its willingness to take the concerns of its Eastern neighbors seriously, provides context for Berlin's careful, even restrained, engagement in the BSR.

Denmark: The Baltic Sea Gateway

Although Denmark has a strategic focus on the North Atlantic and the Arctic, the security of the BSR is of direct relevance to the security of the Danish realm. It is in the interest of Denmark to ensure free navigation of the Baltic Sea and to mitigate regional tensions.⁵⁴ Denmark's location gives it a crucial strategic role in access to the BSR. Together with Sweden and Norway, it straddles the main maritime routes of access: the Øresund Strait and the Great and Little Belts.⁵⁵ Historic fortifications at Helsingør (also known as Elsinore) and Copenhagen highlight the enduring importance of geography for allied A2/AD, even though it is usually Russian A2/AD capabilities in the BSR that are being considered.⁵⁶

Denmark would not likely be a frontline state in a possible military confrontation with Russia but instead serve as a troop staging area.⁵⁷ Having opted out of EU defense cooperation, Danish security and defense policy rely on the Alliance as its cornerstone. Since the 1990s, Denmark has pursued an active military role in international missions in line with the expeditionary and Atlanticist orientation of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France—Denmark's closest strategic partners. Denmark and Germany have increasingly overlapping

interests, especially regarding security in the BSR, and Germany is beginning to take on a more active role. This creates potential and an expectation for deepening cooperation between the two countries.⁵⁸

Denmark's perception of the Russian threat changed substantially in the wake of the annexation of Crimea, the frozen conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and the nerve gas attack in Salisbury, among other acts of overt and covert subversion. As Danish security and policy strategy states, "Russia has not changed its aggressive conduct in the Baltic Sea Region, and it is clear that the political leadership in Russia wants a different version of Europe than what was built through cooperation after the fall of the Berlin Wall."⁵⁹ Russia stands in opposition to Danish interests in maintaining the rules-based international order because it uses multilateral institutions to obstruct cooperation. Nevertheless, Denmark continues to assess that Russia does not pose a direct military threat because Russia is unwilling to risk an outright military confrontation with NATO.⁶⁰ However, Denmark does believe Russia will continue to test the credibility and unity of NATO by pressuring the Baltic states through hostile measures in the gray zone.

The Danish approach toward Russia and maintaining security in the BSR is two-pronged: it focuses on enhancing and supporting NATO deterrence on the one hand, and on maintaining a dialogue with Russia on the other. The defense agreement from 2018 increased the defense budget up to 4.8 billion kroner annually, and an additional agreement from January 2019 provided a further 1.5 billion kroner by 2023.⁶¹ As a result, Denmark will spend 1.5 percent of its GDP on defense in 2023.⁶²

These financial resources are meant to strengthen the Danish military's contribution to NATO's collective defense, bolster deterrence, and enhance the country's ability to contribute to international operations, as well as upgrade cyber capabilities, support national rescue and emergency services, and expand total defense initiatives. The goal is to ensure that "together with NATO, the Danish Armed Forces must have sufficient potency, weight, and robustness to deter and prevent other countries from

attacking our allies—and ultimately ourselves.”⁶³ For this purpose, a deployable rapid response brigade has been established that includes a dedicated cyber warfare unit and frigates upgraded with area air defense missiles and enhanced antisubmarine capacity.⁶⁴ Special operations forces are also set to be strengthened under the new defense spending strategy.

Demonstrating engagement as one of NATO’s core member states is critical for Denmark, as is its ability to contribute substantially and purposefully to international operations. To that end, Denmark plans to increase air transport capacity and bolster financial reserves for international operations and the Peace and Stabilisation Fund. Additionally, a light infantry battalion has been established that serves both collective defense and the potential for deployment in international operations.⁶⁵

There is a clear understanding that NATO’s collective defense requires Denmark (together with Allies) to be able to defend the Baltic states. Denmark’s geographic position means that it might serve as a staging area for troops and reinforcements entering the BSR, all the while Danish forces are deployed abroad. This means there is a need to strengthen domestic infrastructure to support allied and Danish mobility, particularly the Home Guard and total defense force.

Total defense in Denmark received renewed attention in the aftermath of the terror attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 and on Bali in 2002, with a focus on unconventional threats. Recently, however, the focus has shifted again in light of the changing threat environment, which includes Russian hybrid threats and hostile measures. This is reflected in the move to establish a total force concept (Totalstyrkekoncept) as the organizational basis for the integration of reserve forces into the established structures of the armed forces and Home Guard in 2014.⁶⁶

In Denmark, Total Defense (TotalForsvaret) is the cooperation among the Danish military, the Home Guard, the police, and emergency services. The origins of the Danish approach to total defense can be found in World War II, where it became clear that the defense

of the country could not rely solely on the military, but also needed to include other institutions to ensure the continuation of society.⁶⁷ By coordinating the overall effort of both civilian and military authorities, it aims to ensure the effective and balanced use of resources in case of a catastrophe, crisis, or war, with the overall goal to keep the Danish society functioning.⁶⁸ Total Defense has always been a part of Danish emergency preparedness. Since the end of the Cold War, it has been focused on large-scale accidents, natural disasters, and other catastrophes due to the absence of a conventional military threat. It is now being retooled to respond to the growing threat of Russian hostile measures and hybrid warfare in the BSR.

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The total force concept and its integration of full-time soldiers, reservists, and volunteers allow the Danish armed forces a more effective and flexible way to collect, adapt, provide, and deploy the variety of competences from peace to war, a particularly effective attribute against hostile measures.⁶⁹ The Danish approach to total defense also has received renewed attention in the last defense agreement with a limited expansion of conscription designed to increase intake of up to 500 additional conscripts per year. This growth provides more conscripts for the national emergency preparedness service. After completion of conscription, there is an obligation to serve another 6 months over the next 5 years within the total defense force.⁷⁰ This constitutes an extension of the previous time period of only 3 years.⁷¹

If necessary, in case of crisis or war, the total defense force can be activated together with the Home Guard to undergo further training relating to security and force protection tasks. This includes the ability to call on former soldiers, should the need arise. This is part of a larger initiative to strengthen the Home Guard and total defense force's ability to mobilize. In the event of an exceptional crisis or war, the two forces could together mobilize around 20,000 troops.⁷² This signifies a return to traditional territorial defense focused on mobilization capabilities.

Interestingly, the latest defense agreement also considers how to strengthen national emergency management in order “to utilize the full potential of overall resources and capabilities.”⁷³ There is also a special emphasis on expanding cyber capabilities. As part of the

the differences in strategic perspectives among southern shore states create barriers to assertive, coordinated responses to Russian aggression

total defense concept, the agreement gives special consideration to bridging the gap between the public and private sectors for cyber defense.

Denmark is one of the most digitized societies in the world, making it dangerously vulnerable to cyber attacks for both illicit political and economic objectives as well as other hostile measures. The threat of cyber attacks is directed against both the public and private sectors, as well as individual citizens. These attacks not only have socioeconomic, security, and defense implications but also threaten to undermine the foundations of democracy. Defense in cyberspace must be “based on closer interaction between the public and the private sector, with a view to enhancing the protection of critical telecommunications, energy, health, finance, and transportation infrastructure.”⁷⁴

A Southern Shore Approach to Mitigate Diverse Strategic Outlooks

In the wake of the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the security interdependence among BSR states has increased considerably. The Baltic southern shore states have taken critical steps toward defending against Russian hostile measures and hybrid aggression. Yet one of the key findings of the politico-military exercises conducted for the Baltics left of bang project, at a macro level, was that despite cooperative efforts and multilateral linkages through international organizations and military alliances such as the EU and NATO, cooperation and coordination to blunt Russian hostile measures continue to fall short of the concerted action required. This was due to differing threat perceptions and strategic views by the many nations of the BSR and is certainly true of the southern shore states despite their key roles in the security of the region. A common strategic outlook remains elusive and effective coordinated action remains challenging.

The differences in strategic perspectives among southern shore states create barriers to assertive, coordinated responses to Russian aggression. While Poland has embarked on a significant defense spending and modernization program that keeps Russia almost singularly in focus, Germany remains caught between two countervailing narratives about how to relate to Russia. Denmark, meanwhile, remains focused predominantly on its transatlantic relationships, while also having opted out of the EU common security and defense policy. This provides avenues for Russia to exacerbate tensions and erode regional solidarity.

However, there remain significant opportunities for the southern shore states to mitigate the impact of these differences in strategic outlook in order to enhance regional resilience and security in the BSR. The entire 2-year suite of Baltics left of bang exercises revealed that while many collective defense and denial-based deterrence approaches to security rely on conventional

military dimensions of power, regional resilience and cohesion could be improved with smart use of other instruments of power. The southern shore states and their Baltic region allies and partners could enhance collective deterrence and stability by pursuing information, diplomatic, and infrastructure initiatives, often in conjunction with an assertive EU.⁷⁵ Specifically, a coordinated southern shore approach should include:

- ◆ aggressively leveraging and resourcing the cyber, information, and strategic communications capabilities of the EU to mitigate Russian political warfare
- ◆ prioritizing infrastructure and regional coordination through regional mobility initiatives that enhance resilience in response to crises
- ◆ strengthening maritime cooperation, information-sharing, and awareness of the Baltic Sea to deter Russian hybrid activity
- ◆ bolstering unconventional capabilities to mitigate hostile measures
- ◆ maintaining channels for dialogue to limit the negative effects of the trust deficit between Russia and allies and partners of the BSR.

A concerted pursuit of these five elements would enhance regional resilience and security in the BSR as well as strengthen cohesion among the southern shore states and their regional allies and partners.

Leveraging the EU

Mitigating Russian hostile measures is an endless and amorphous competition. However, it is a space in which the political, economic, and informational levers of the EU may have special efficacy for the BSR and are certainly just as important as conventional military tools alliances such as NATO might bring to bear. This finds support in Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which provides for solidarity in the case of a wide range of crises.⁷⁶ It was clear from politico-military exercises that when the EU was active, aggressive, and united, Russian hostile measures and hybrid

action were noticeably blunted. There was also a recognition that in the BSR region, in which the states are participants in EU, NATO, and regional alignments, Brussels's role was critical to countering Russian aggression left of bang. As members of the EU, Poland, Germany, and Denmark could apply their significant weight behind efforts to strengthen the rule of law, diminish ethnic tensions, enhance cyber security infrastructure, and build resilience to disinformation campaigns in the BSR.

The EU has components to assist the BSR in countering hostile measures, but the machinery is nascent and propped up by ad hoc coalitions of members. For instance, the EU cyber security agency, the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), despite some additional funding, remains tiny, with only 85 to 135

the political, economic, and informational levers of the EU may have special efficacy for the BSR and are certainly just as important as conventional military tools alliances such as NATO might bring to bear

personnel.⁷⁷ The 2017 malware attack that crippled the Danish shipping firm Maersk resulted in a loss of nearly €250 million.⁷⁸ It is imperative that ENISA and similar agencies be given transformative funding, personnel, and the mandate to assist EU members of the BSR. ENISA should be chartered and resourced to provide computer emergency response teams, cyber forensics teams, and advisors to assist with cyber hygiene. All these enhancements should go hand in hand with additional information-sharing and coordination with NATO elements such as the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence.

The EU's information apparatus could also be leveraged more effectively by southern shore states to mitigate Russian disinformation and hostile measures. In 2015, the EU formed the East StratCom Task Force,

and in 2016, the EU outlined a framework for establishing a hybrid fusion cell, a hub for the analysis of hybrid threats at the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (EU INTCEN), and in March 2019, a rapid alert system was established for combatting disinformation. These are positive developments.⁷⁹ However, coordination and information exchange between EU strategic communications structures and similar institutions, such as the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga, must be improved and expanded because the tendency to silo information remains prevalent.

Of course, the BSR cannot be inoculated against Russian disinformation by leveraging the EU alone. Focused national efforts by the southern shore states should continue to be strengthened. For instance, recognizing that the hybrid challenge from Russia seeks to take advantage of vulnerabilities in societies, the German Defence Ministry signed a series of cooperation agreements with the Baltic states in areas such as energy, culture, education, and civil society to improve societal resilience. A special focus was placed on media and strategic communications with the objective of fostering independent, unbiased, and professional media to counter Russian propaganda and political warfare. This has included exchange programs and grants for journalists and students.⁸⁰

Effectively leveraging the capabilities of the EU to enhance the resilience of the BSR remains at a crossroads. There has been some progress, such as the Paris-backed European Intervention Initiative and the European Commission's European Defence Fund. However, the burden falls on Warsaw, Berlin, Copenhagen, and elsewhere to determine the level of investment and scope of commitment. Unfortunately, the political leadership required by major EU powers and debate appear to have stagnated. This will likely be harder given the global economic and societal shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, which will likely reduce resources for defense initiatives. Furthermore, with friction between Poland and the EU growing, and Denmark having opted out of the common security and defense policy, Germany remains the nexus

of leadership required to marshal EU capabilities into a cohesive defense of the BSR. It is a political mantle that Berlin could, but so far has declined, to shoulder, although, there are some signs that that may be shifting.⁸¹

Leadership from Berlin to enhance the resilience and resistance capabilities of the BSR through EU initiatives would not only serve to consolidate and unify regional efforts but also allow Germany to preserve the integrity of the EU, which Russia also seeks to undermine.⁸² If Germany ever hopes to realize a day when Russia is a genuine regional economic and security partner, it must first demonstrate to Russia the resolve to protect the institutions, values, and nations of the BSR.

Regional Mobility

Leveraging the EU is also an important factor in enhancing regional mobility, a key element of bolstering resilience and resistance in the BSR. This is a critical concern to southern shore states such as Germany and Poland, as well as Denmark, which is likely the staging ground for allied forces moving east in response to a crisis. The ability of allied and partner military forces, reserve units, supply convoys, or other crisis management units to rapidly mobilize and transit allied and partner states requires both significant investments in infrastructure (rail, road, bridges, and cyber, for example) and appropriate legal authorities across many states and domestic subregions. For now, transit remains a complicated and time-intensive process that is often beyond the scope of NATO influence and requires EU authorities to navigate.

For instance, to move allied units stationed in Germany to Poland or one of the Baltic states, military forces must obtain transit permissions from every nation they pass through. It is time consuming to secure national transit permits, and each nation must further coordinate with the domestic regulations of subregions. Complicating this, EU transit regulations must also be followed. In addition, there is a great deal of mistrust for cross-border traffic in the wake of the migration crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mitigating this issue requires a coordinated effort among NATO, the European Defence Agency, the European Commission for Transport, and the focused national attention of the southern shore states.⁸³ The establishment of the Joint Support and Enabling Command in Ulm, Germany, to support the rapid movement of troops and equipment into and across Europe is a positive development.⁸⁴ It is also encouraging that nearly every EU member has signed up to contribute to the Netherlands-led PESCO project on European mobility. In addition, the EU should fund and incentivize infrastructure efforts through its 2021–2027 multinational financial framework with an emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe.⁸⁵ Regional mobility is a critical enabling function that requires significant multinational coordination and sustained diplomatic leadership from the southern shore states. Investing in the defense infrastructure and regulatory overhauls necessary to enable regional mobility will also have the downstream benefit of providing dividends for regional economic development.⁸⁶

Unconventional Capabilities

For the southern shore states, robust multinational unconventional forces in the BSR are also critical for any effective denial-based deterrence strategy.⁸⁷ Regional cooperation of special operations forces (SOF) is a key element in blunting Russian hostile measures. In a gray zone environment, SOF operating in close coordination with police and intelligence agencies play a crucial information role by detecting changes in the operational environment and countering adversary hostile measures, such as infiltration, subversion, and sabotage. They can also play a role in galvanizing a population's will to resist aggression.⁸⁸

To process intelligence and deliver it straight to SOF units, a new intelligence center, the Baltic Special Operations Forces Intelligence Fusion Cell, is being stood up in Vilnius. This is a joint project among Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, with some help from the United States. This cell provides integrated intelligence and analysis directly to special operators on the ground. Germany and Denmark should consider supporting, even joining,

efforts like this to enable regional SOF operations in the early stages of a crisis.⁸⁹

For years, Germany, Denmark, and Poland have geared their SOF units for operations outside the BSR in support of NATO activities beyond Europe. Now, as they return to the BSR, they must retool for territorial defense and crisis management. The southern shore states should lead and expand regional cooperation of SOF. Military exercises such as Trojan Footprint, which bring together SOF units from allies and partners in the BSR and beyond, are valuable for not only their utility in training but also in building competencies required in multinational coordination.⁹⁰ SOF are able to provide advisors and partners with conventional, reserve, or militia forces throughout the region. They are also a critical signal to adversaries about regional solidarity and the capability to fight. This is vital to an effective deterrence-through-denial strategy. Unfortunately, authorities to operate SOF in a domestic context vary greatly and should be a focus of southern shore states and their regional allies and partners.

In addition to common EU membership, the southern shore states are all members of NATO and are committed to the findings of the 2016 Warsaw Summit that recognized hybrid threats could trigger allied collective defense obligations and endorsed efforts to enhance regional resilience. While civil preparedness is a national responsibility, Allies agreed that members should work to enhance each other's capabilities.⁹¹ It is critical that the southern shore states work to adopt and incorporate advanced technologies into regional resilience-building efforts.

Poland, Germany, and Denmark have robust scientific and technological communities, relatively wealthy economies, and defense industrial bases in need of revitalization. They should invest their collective efforts with other regional partners to leverage existing technologies such as 3D manufacturing, drones, artificial intelligence, long-range communications, robust cyber capabilities, and inexpensive space capabilities that could revolutionize the potency of regional resilience and resistance capabilities.⁹²

Denmark's participation in the Nordic Defense Cooperation framework offers a potential for the cooperative development, procurement, and deployment of many of these key technologies.⁹³ The Polish army is already fielding large numbers of inexpensive drones; for example, the Warmate and Dragonfly are designed to complicate Russia's calculus at a fraction of the cost of an F-35.⁹⁴ The extent to which the southern shore states are able to coordinate, fund, and expand the benefits of these technologies with their Allies and partners will only enhance regional resilience and effectiveness.

Maritime Cooperation

Beyond leveraging the tools of the EU—prioritizing regional mobility and bolstering unconventional capabilities—the southern shore states are also uniquely positioned to counter and deter Russian hostile measures and hybrid conflict in the Baltic Sea, a maritime dimension that continues to be neglected. The Baltic Sea is a significant conduit of critical energy, commercial goods, and communications infrastructure that is particularly vulnerable and requires tightly knit regional cooperation to secure.⁹⁵ There are many ways Russia might employ hybrid tactics and hostile measures in the Baltic Sea. In 2015, for example, Russia “repeatedly declared” military exercises within Lithuania's exclusive economic zone and ordered a ship laying the NordBalt power cable linking Sweden and Lithuania to leave the area, delaying the entire project on multiple occasions.⁹⁶

A cornerstone of securing the maritime dimension of the BSR is continuous shared domain situational awareness. It is critical that maritime traffic is monitored and that data are shared among all entities with invested interests in the integrity of the domain. As some have noted, the EU's Maritime Surveillance and the Sea Surveillance Cooperation Baltic Sea (SUCBAS) programs are important but continue to fall short. There also continues to be significant legal and political obstacles to data-sharing among the allies and partners of the BSR.

Improvements to SUCBAS itself could be made by implementing a multilevel information-sharing architec-

ture in which the armed forces of NATO members and regional partners could share classified information over the entire conflict spectrum. This would also allow for the sharing of unclassified information on domain awareness suitable for regional law enforcement agencies.⁹⁷ It is not a small or easy project, but certainly necessary. There are also considerable opportunities to expand the redundancy of undersea cables, expensive projects that would require a consensus among littoral nations to enable, but which could be led and financed with the backing of the southern shore states.

Of course, the southern shore states must also have the capability to operate on the Baltic Sea. To this end, Germany has undertaken an expansion of its naval capabilities, doubling the number of *K130*-class corvettes, modernizing mine countermeasures capabilities, growing its submarine fleet, and replacing aging frigates with new multirole vessels. In all, the German navy will grow from 46 to 60 vessels, and much of the fleet will be configured for operating in the shallow waters of the Baltic Sea.⁹⁸ Germany's leadership of the establishment of the Baltic Maritime Component Command (BMCC) in Rostock is a positive development that should enable effective coordination of NATO and partner operations in the BSR. The BMCC is expected to achieve initial operating capability in 2023 and full operating capability by 2025.⁹⁹

Poland, however, is working on upgrades to an aging fleet and legacy platforms. Denmark recently acquired three capable multipurpose frigates but sees its navy primarily as a blue water force, supporting NATO interests in the North Sea and the Atlantic as well as fulfilling obligations to Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Nonetheless, regional navies around the Baltic Sea are growing steadily in number and capability.¹⁰⁰ PESCO projects—in which Denmark, unfortunately, cannot participate due to the opt-out—focused on unmanned aerial and submersible systems and harbor and maritime surveillance should be expanded.¹⁰¹

Channels for Dialogue

For Russia, the southern shore states, and the West, relations have worsened throughout NATO enlargement and the assimilation of former Soviet Union allies into the EU. While much of this remains a self-inflicted wound by Russia, it represents a significant challenge in mitigating the corrosive effects of hostile measures or arresting the development of crisis or conflict left of bang.

The consequence of the trust deficit between Russia and the West was a consistent lesson of the politico-military exercises. Frequently, efforts to build trust or act in good faith during the exercises were undermined or ignored. For instance, even when Russia acted with constructive intent, allies and partners failed to believe Russian intentions and leverage the potential opportunity.

For many southern shore states, their strategic outlook maintains opportunities for dialogue and the potential for cooperation with Moscow given the right circumstances. Channels for communication are necessary and forums for multilateral security dialogue with Russia are more important than ever to prevent miscommunication, accident, or surprise.

Summary

The ebb and flow of hostile interactions have been a constant dynamic between the West and Russia since 1917 and will remain an enduring feature for emerging Great Power competition in Europe.¹⁰² Despite differing strategic viewpoints, allies and partners in the BSR are cooperating in ways they have not before. Poland, Germany, and Denmark have all taken unique and important steps toward countering a new generation of Russian hostile measures and hybrid aggression. Poland has embarked on a concerted defense spending and modernization effort that is expanding conventional and unconventional capabilities. Germany, while grappling with competing internal narratives about Russia, has begun to cautiously explore a greater leadership role in the security of the region. Finally, Denmark has sought to enhance and expand its

total defense concept as a mechanism to bolster regional security and national resilience.

Russian hybrid aggression and hostile measures used to influence or infringe on allies and partners in the Baltic Sea Region could be diminished with consistent, coordinated, and measured action. It is vital that multinational exercises and studies such as the Baltics left of bang project continue to examine the nature, modes, and motivations of Russian hostile measures and hybrid strategy to avoid the loss of hard lessons learned in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea.

Ultimately, success against Russian hybrid aggression and hostile measures left of bang will depend on the Baltic southern shore states devoting serious muscle to at least the five elements detailed in this paper: enhanced EU information, cyber, and strategic communications capabilities; prioritized regional mobility initiatives; bolstered unconventional warfare capabilities; enhanced maritime awareness and cooperation on the Baltic Sea; and maintenance of channels for serious and sober dialogue. These elements offer the southern shore states the opportunity to mitigate differences in strategic outlook and enhance resilience and security in the BSR. Leaders in the southern shore states—as in all BSR capitals—are best to recall that Russian hostile measures and hybrid behavior, at their root, stem from fear and are encouraged by perceived weakness.¹⁰³ As the British scholar Keir Giles stated, “the longer the West waits to make it clear that it will resist Russia, the harder this resistance will be and the lower its chances of success.”¹⁰⁴

Notes

¹ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, December 2017), 47, available at <www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

² For the purpose of this paper, *deterrence* is defined as the threat intended to discourage an adversary from beginning an undesired action.

³ David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2016), available at <www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1253/RAND_RR1253.pdf>.

⁴ Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, “Deterring Russia: An A2/AD Strategy in the Baltic Sea,” in *Strategic Challenges in the Baltic Sea Region: Russia, Deterrence, and Reassurance*, ed. Ann-Sofie Dahl (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 73–84.

⁵ Raphael S. Cohen and Andrew Radin, *Russia’s Hostile Measures in Europe: Understanding the Threat* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2019), 8, available at <www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1793.html>.

⁶ Karsten Møller, “Russian Security Policy—In Search of a Major Power Identity,” *Baltic Defence Review*, No. 3 (2000), 69, available at <www.bdcol.ce/files/docs/bdreview/06bdr100.pdf>.

⁷ Sergey Lavrov, “Russia’s Foreign Policy: Historical Background,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, March 3, 2016, available at <www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2124391>.

⁸ Many have also used the phrase *gray zone operations* as the desire of certain powers to stay under the threshold of triggering a military response. Gray zone operations are “best understood as activity that is coercive and aggressive in nature but that is deliberately designed to remain below the threshold of conventional military conflict and open interstate war.” See Hal Brands, “Paradoxes of the Gray Zone,” e-Notes, Foreign Policy Research Institute, February 5, 2016, available at <www.fpri.org/article/2016/02/paradoxes-gray-zone/>; Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Operating in the Gray Zone: An Alternative Paradigm for U.S. Military Strategy* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, April 2016), available at <<https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1013691.pdf>>; Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, December 2015). NATO characterizes *hybrid threats* as methods that “combine military and non-military as well as covert and overt means, including disinformation, cyber attacks, economic pressure, deployment of irregular armed groups and use of regular forces. Hybrid methods are used to blur the lines between war and peace and attempt to sow doubt in the minds of target populations.” See “NATO’s Response to Hybrid Threats,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, August 8, 2019, available at <www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_156338.htm>.

⁹ Edward Lucas, *Watch Out, This Is What China Is Learning from Russia* (Brussels: Center for European Policy Analysis, May 28, 2019), available at <www.cepa.org/russias-influence-arsenal>. Similarly, the European Hybrid Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats characterizes hybrid threats as coordinated and synchronized action that deliberately targets democratic states’ and institutions’ systemic vulnerabilities through a wide range of means, exploiting the thresholds of detection and attribution, as well as aiming to influence different forms of decisionmaking at the local, state, or institutional level in favor of the agent’s strategic goals. See “Hybrid Threats,” European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, available at <www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-threats/>.

¹⁰ Ben Connable et al., *Russia’s Hostile Measures: Combatting Russian Gray Zone Aggression Against NATO in the Contact, Blunt, and Surge Layers of Competition* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2020), ix, available at <www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2500/RR2539/RAND_RR2539.pdf>.

¹¹ Cohen and Radin, *Russia’s Hostile Measures in Europe*, 13.

¹² *Defense Agreement 2018–2023*, Danish Ministry of Defence, January 28, 2018, available at <<https://fmn.dk/globalassets/fmn/dokumenter/forlig/-danish-defence-agreement-2018-2023-pdf-2018.pdf>>.

¹³ Alina Polyakova and Spencer P. Boyer, *The Future of Political Warfare: Russia, the West, and the Coming Age of Global Digital Competition* (Washington, DC: Brookings, March 2018), 10, available at <www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/the-future-of-political-warfare.pdf>.

¹⁴ Stanislaw Zaryn, “The Coronavirus Disinformation Campaign against Poland,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 2020, available at <www.wsj.com/articles/the-coronavirus-disinformation-campaign-against-poland-11585509765>.

¹⁵ Cohen and Radin, *Russia’s Hostile Measures in Europe*, 1.

¹⁶ Some of this can be attributed to the construct of the exercises that followed a matrix format in which the Russian team was able to act at the beginning and end of every turn. This was done to account for Russia’s inherent advantages due to its close proximity and influence within the Baltic Sea region (BSR).

¹⁷ Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, “What Makes Putin Tick, and What the West Should Do,” Brookings Institution, January 13, 2017, available at <www.brookings.edu/research/what-makes-putin-tick-and-what-the-west-should-do/>; also see Andrew Radin and Raphael S. Cohen, “Russia’s Soft Strategy to Hostile Measures in Europe,” *War on the Rocks*, February 26, 2019, available at <<https://warontherocks.com/2019/02/russias-soft-strategy-to-hostile-measures-in-europe/>>.

¹⁸ *Left of bang* is used to describe hostile measures in the gray zone that precede conventional warfare. Hostile measures employed in the gray zone are often used by states across the entire spectrum of conflict.

¹⁹ Anne Applebaum, “Putin’s Big Lie,” *The Atlantic*, January 5, 2020, available at <www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/01/putin-blames-poland-world-war-ii/604426/>.

²⁰ NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence factsheet, March 2019, available at <www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_04/20190402_1904-factsheet_efp_en.pdf>.

²¹ “Poland Takes Charge of NATO High Readiness Force,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, December 30, 2019, available at <www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_172334.htm>.

²² *The Act of 21 May 2001 on Reconstruction and Technical Modernization and Financing of the Polish Force Armed Forces*, Republic of Poland, Dz.U. of 2019, poz. 1453, available at <<http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20190001453>>.

²³ M.A. Kamiński, “Military Law in the Republic of Poland,” *Safety & Defense* 5, no. 2 (2019), 32.

²⁴ *The Military Balance 2001* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2001), 68; *The Military Balance 2019* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies 2019), 135.

²⁵ L. Elak and Z. Śliwa, “The Suwalki Gap—NATO’s Fragile Hot Spot,” *Zeszyty Naukowe AON* 103, no. 2 (2016), 25–26.

²⁶ Dan Goure, “Poland Is Becoming America’s Key NATO Ally,” *Defense News*, February 20, 2020, available at <www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2020/02/20/poland-is-becoming-americas-key-nato-ally/>.

²⁷ Justyna Pawlak and Kacper Pempel, “In Training with Poland’s Volunteer Militia,” Reuters, October 18, 2018, available at <www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-nationalism-militia/in-training-with-polands-volunteer-militia-idUSKCN1MS1OP>.

²⁸ Charlie Gao, “This Is How Poland Plans to Fight Russia in a War,” *The National Interest*, March 3, 2018, available at <<https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/how-poland-plans-fight-russia-war-24731>>.

²⁹ “Polish Government Rocked by Resignations of Several Generals,” *Defense News*, March 6, 2016, available at <www.defensenews.com/home/2016/03/06/polish-government-rocked-by-resignations-of-several-generals/>.

³⁰ Kyle Rempfer, “Green Berets Train Polish, Latvian Resistance Units in Western Virginia,” *Army Times*, July 8, 2019, available at <www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/07/08/green-berets-train-polish-latvian-resistance-units-in-west-virginia/>.

³¹ “Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej” [Territorial Defense Forces], Ministry of Defense Poland, *Cyber.mil.pl* available at <www.cyber.mil.pl/articles/o-nas-f/2018-11-20t-wojska-obrony-terytorialnej/>.

³² Jakub Link-Lenczowski, “COVID-19: Poland’s WOT Territorial Defence Forces Deployed for First Time,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, March 19, 2020.

³³ *Poland, Russia: Warsaw Threatens Seizure of Gazprom’s Nord Stream 2 Assets*, Stratfor Situation Report, April 28, 2020, available at <<https://worldview.stratfor.com/situation-report/poland-russia-warsaw-threatens-seizure-gazproms-nord-stream-2-assets>>.

³⁴ Stine Jacobsen and Vladimir Soldatkin, “Nord Stream 2 Clears Major Hurdle as Denmark OKs Gas Pipeline,” Reuters, October 30, 2019, available at <www.reuters.com/article/us-gazprom-nordstream-2/nord-stream-2-clears-major-hurdle-as-denmark-oks-gas-pipeline-idUSKBN1X91KR>.

³⁵ *Weißbuch Zur Sicherheitspolitik Und Zur Zukunft Der Bundeswehr* [White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr] (Berlin: Bundesministerium der Verteidigung [Federal Ministry of Defense], 2016), 32, available at <www.bmvg.de/resource/blob/13708/015be272f8c0098f1537a491676bfc31/weissbuch2016-barrierefrei-data.pdf>.

³⁶ *Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik der Ostsee-Anrainerstaaten seit der russischen Annexion der Krim und dem Ausbruch des Konflikts in der Ost-Ukraine* [Security and Defense Policy of the Countries Bordering the Baltic Sea Since the Russian Annexation of Crimea and the Outbreak of the Conflict in Eastern Ukraine] (Berlin: Wissenschaftliche Dienste des Deutschen Bundestags, 2017), 7, available at <www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/529926/14b33273c3a4e64ef7afb09a59fab863/WD-2-064-17-pdf-data.pdf>.

³⁷ *White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr*.

³⁸ Damien McGuinness, “Russia Steps Into Berlin ‘Rape’ Storm Claiming German Cover-Up,” BBC News, January 27, 2016, available at <www.bbc.com/news/blogs-eu-35413134>.

³⁹ Polyakova and Boyer, *The Future of Political Warfare*.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Influence Operations in Germany and Their Effect* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 3, 2020), available at <www.csis.org/analysis/russian-influence-operations-germany-and-their-effect>; Raphael S. Cohen and Andrew Radin, *Russia’s Hostile Measures in Europe*, 120.

⁴¹ Polyakova and Boyer, *The Future of Political Warfare*, 6.

⁴² *Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany 1949*, rev. 2019 (Bonn: Deutscher Bundestag, 1949), available at <www.btg-bestellservice.de/pdf/80201000.pdf>.

⁴³ *White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr*.

⁴⁴ The Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security Between NATO and the Russian Federation codified the new post–Cold War relationship with Russia, noting that NATO and Russia do not consider one another adversaries; establishing a forum called the NATO–Russia Joint Council; and reiterating that the Act had no impact on NATO enlargement, among other dimensions to the new relationship. See *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security Between NATO and the Russian Federation*, signed in Paris, May 27, 1997, available at <www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm>.

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⁴⁸ S. Wagstyl and P. Spiegel, “Germany Set to Back EU Russian Sanctions,” *Financial Times*, July 27, 2014.

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⁵⁰ *White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr*.

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⁵³ Sebastian Sprenger, “Poll: Germans, Americans Far Apart on Use of Military, Defense Spending,” *Defense News*, March 9, 2020, available at <www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2020/03/09/poll-germans-americans-far-apart-on-use-of-military-defense-spending/>.

⁵⁴ Official from the Danish Ministry of Defence, interview by authors, May 22, 2018; official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interview by Amelie Theussen, May 26, 2018.

⁵⁵ This leaves the Kiel Canal in Germany as a maritime access route to the BSR that is not controlled by Denmark.

⁵⁶ Rasmussen, “Deterring Russia.”

⁵⁷ *Et stærkt værn om Danmark: Udspil til nyt forsvarsforlig 2018–2023* [A Strong Defense of Denmark: Proposed New Defence Agreement 2018–2023] (Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Defence [Forsvarsministeriet], October 2017), 8, available at <<https://fmn.dk/temaer/forsvarsforlig/Documents/udspil-til-forsvarsforlig-2018-2023-web.pdf>>.

⁵⁸ Amelie Theussen, “Pragmatic Partnership with the Need for More? Danish Perceptions of Germany as a Security Actor in the Baltic Sea Region,” in *Perceptions of Germany in the Security of the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Andris Sprūds and Elizabete Vizgunova (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2018), available at <<https://www.regeringen.dk/media/4163/regeringens-udspil-til-nyt-forsvarsforlig-2018-2023-pjece.pdf>>.

⁵⁹ *Foreign and Security Policy Strategy 2019–2020* (Copenhagen: Ministry of Public Affairs in Denmark, November 2018), available at <www.dsn.gov.es/sites/dsn/files/2018_Denmark%20Foreign%20and%20security%20policy%20strategy%202019-2020.pdf>; *A Strong Defence of Denmark*, 12.

⁶⁰ *A Strong Defence of Denmark*.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

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