# The Trump Effect in Eastern Europe: Heightened Risks of NATO-Russia Miscalculations

## Sarah Fainberg

Eastern Europe's frontline with Russia now grapples with the unanticipated effects of the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump. The sudden withdrawal from the EU of one of Europe's firmest supporters of a containment policy vis-à-vis Russia, and the stunning electoral victory of an American presidential candidate apparently committed to an isolationist or at least conciliatory approach to Russian President Vladimir Putin, have revived Central and Eastern Europe's traumatic memories of imminent security threats from Moscow.

Such anxieties are seemingly corroborated by the increased number and heightened gravity of hazardous military-military and military-civilian incidents involving Russia, NATO's "eastern flank" (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria), and NATO's non-aligned "partners in security" (Sweden and Finland) since the Ukrainian crisis began in 2014.[1] Eastern Europe's feelings of vulnerability are similarly reinforced by the expected rise of pro-Russian populist parties and conservative candidates in elections across EU member states in 2017 (pro-Russian candidates already won Bulgaria's and Moldova's presidential elections in November 2016). The EU's political shift to the right and far right may ultimately facilitate a Western-Russia rapprochement regardless of the enduring conflict in Ukraine. Furthermore, candidate Trump's public identification of the Islamic State as the main enemy in Syria and the reduced likelihood of Assad being ousted following the Russian and Iranian supported regime victory in Aleppo and the Russian-Iranian-Turkish "Moscow Declaration" on a Syrian settlement in December 2016 may

Dr. Sarah Fainberg is a research fellow at INSS.

increase the West's propensity to engage with Russia against the Islamic State and other extremist groups in Syria.

Eastern Europe's anxious pursuit of a NATO military buildup is mirrored by Russia's existential worries about NATO's encroachment in its "near abroad" and Russia's swift militarization of its Western borderlands. After periods of high alert following the 2008 Georgian War and the 2014 Ukrainian war, the winds of war are again blowing across the Baltic Sea. They threaten military escalation due to strategic miscalculations between a nuclear-armed NATO alliance and a nuclear-armed Russia, and reinforce the risk of a Western-Russian confrontation on the European continent.

## Drumbeats of WWIII in the Baltics

In 1990-1991, the shift by the former Warsaw Pact countries to NATO and the EU planted the seeds of conflict between Russia and the West. Rooted in the deep traumas of vulnerability based on the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact, half a century of Soviet occupation after 1940, and the violent crackdown on pro-independence demonstrations in 1990-1991, the Baltic states, Poland, and their East European neighbors joined NATO and the EU in a single year (2004), decisively separating from Russia's sphere of influence. Furthermore, the EU's new eastern members favored expanding both NATO and the EU eastwards, with Poland and Sweden initiating the Eastern Partnership Program (EaP) in 2009, a move that precipitated the Ukrainian crisis in the fall 2013. [2]

In the Polish and Baltic narrative, articulated vividly by Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linkevičius' reaction to Trump's election, Russia is not a "super power"; it is a "super problem" that threatens the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security of East European states. The 2008 Georgian war and the ongoing war in Ukraine since 2014, along with Russia's alleged violations of the Baltic states' air and maritime spaces, are presented as proof of Russia's subversive strategy and serve as justification for the strengthening of NATO's "purely defensive" capabilities in the vicinity of Russia.

With the War in Donbass and Russia's annexation of Crimea, NATO incorporated the Polish and Baltic states' narrative of an aggressive Russia into its own core doctrine, leading NATO to reframe the "challenges posed by Russia and their strategic implications" as its top priority concern. [3] In 2014, therefore, NATO shifted from a defensive doctrine designed to confront a variety of threats (with Iran and its nuclear program heading

the list) to a proactive engagement aimed at reinforcing its capabilities against Russia per se. NATO's reassessment of strategic threats (replacing Iran with Russia as its first strategic threat) also derives from the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2015, which was seen as bringing some breathing space on the Iranian front.

While the Baltic states and Poland cast Russia as a potential instigator of a Third World War in the heart of Europe, Russia dismisses these concerns as false, politically driven allegations designed to reap political dividends inside the EU and attract US and German financial and military support. In Russia's narrative, NATO's expansion eastwards reflects a covert US strategy to contain Russia on the global stage, dismiss its core national interests, curb its regional influence, and breed regime change. For Moscow, NATO's enlargement eastwards is anything but trivial: it poses an existential threat to its revival as a power of regional, if not global, significance as well as its political stability. Moscow has already castigated NATO's "aggressive" stance, insisting that Russia had sought NATO membership but was rejected.[4]

In the 2010 and 2014 versions of Russia's "Military Doctrine," NATO's expansion (in particular via NATO's Membership Action Plan offered to Georgia and Ukraine), its desire to "move infrastructure closer to Russia's borders," and the "deployment of military contingents of foreign states" into Russia's neighboring states represent Moscow's top strategic threat. These mutually contradictory narratives have triggered an intense military buildup on both sides of the East European frontline, with each side's military and power projection accompanied by aggressive nuclear rhetoric, thereby reinforcing the other's readiness for military confrontation.

At the very heart of NATO's power projection on its eastern flank is its long and carefully designed US ballistic missile defense system, whose implementation was accelerated by the Ukrainian crisis. In May 2016, the system was declared operational during its inauguration in Romania and Poland. Meanwhile, NATO established a Readiness Action Plan (RAP) in September 2014 that includes "increased military activity in the eastern part of the Alliance" and "longer-term changes to NATO's force posture."[5]

> Brexit and the lingering uncertainties regarding Trump's loyalty to previous commitments to European defense deepened fears across Central and Eastern Europe about an imminent Russian threat, while further bolstering Russia's image of a doomed and disintegrating European Union and transatlantic alliance.

During the 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO further upgraded its capability. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, NATO announced the deployment of multinational troops in Eastern Europe (starting in early 2017) and their continuous rotation in four countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland), thereby reviving the early Cold War logic of a "tripwire" consisting of a small number of troops and equipment positioned in a specific zone to showcase its strategic importance to a state's enemies and its allies. Under the concept of a "framework nation," NATO is to deploy about 4,000 troops to the designated battalions, signaling its readiness to enter into a full-blown conflict with Russia in case of an attack on one of the Baltic states or Poland (those strengthened battalions are to face the nearly 330,000 Russian soldiers stationed on Moscow's western border).[6] The "framework nation" model is also supposed to bolster NATO's deterrence in light of the potentially devastating effects of Russian troops killing soldiers of Canadian, American, or British nationality. The deployment of NATO's additional multinational troops is to be expanded to the Black Sea area at a later stage (in late 2016 Romania and Bulgaria agreed to host an increased air force presence that will conduct surveillance missions over the Black Sea).[7] In addition, NATO's Air Policing Mission over the Baltics was quadrupled in size. In February 2016, the US Defense Department announced that it would allocate $3.4 billion for the European Reassurance Initiative in 2017 (up from $789 million in 2016 and $985 million in 2015), aimed at deterring "Russian aggression" against NATO allies and including the positioning of military equipment in the Baltic states, Poland, and Central Europe. The question remains whether this increase will be affirmed by the Trump administration.[8]

Moscow may well overestimate Europe's disunity on the Ukrainian question, NATO's weakening, and US hesitations in case of a collision between NATO and Russia, a miscalculation that could lead Moscow to initiate bold moves in Europe and create an unintended confrontation.

Furthermore, US-NATO military training and exercises in the area reached unprecedented levels since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In June 2016, NATO conducted Anaconda-16, the largest training exercise in Poland since the end of the Cold War.[9] In November 2016, eleven NATO countries sent 4,000 troops to Lithuania to participate in the Iron Sword exercises to test the country's ability to mobilize troops in case of a Russian invasion. Yet again this war game was the largest Iron Sword maneuver since 2014.[10] NATO

also considers the possibility of significantly shortening its reaction time (currently NATO enjoys a 30-day span to mobilize and deploy its troops in case of a military conflict).

In the meantime, Russia strengthened its deterrence capacity and conventional capabilities on its western front, which currently represent the main focus of its military buildup (along with the Black Sea and Crimea). First, Russia has long endorsed the need for a powerful air defense system in the Kaliningrad enclave (a Russian territory between Lithuania and Poland) and in the southeast corner of the Baltic Sea, both aimed at limiting NATO's capabilities in the area. This Russian missile deterrence shield would make any US-NATO move in the area dangerous in case of crisis or war. In addition, Moscow would be able to deploy its combat aircraft and anti-ship missile systems quickly to constrain US-NATO action in the region. Since the Ukrainian crisis, Russia has also resorted to nuclear rhetoric (whether explicitly or implicitly) when confronting NATO and denouncing the "aggressiveness" and "hypocrisy" of the missile defense project in Europe. In particular, Russia has introduced training exercises on the use of nuclear warheads in Europe and practiced simulated nuclear strikes against NATO and EU members (including Sweden). Russia's nuclear threats were amplified yet again before Trump's entry into the White House. In December 2016, President Putin vowed to strengthen Russia's nuclear arsenal, a statement that was matched by President-elect Trump's Tweet calling for a massive strengthening of US nuclear capabilities. And yet, beyond the clear psychological impact of the military buildup and escalating rhetoric on both sides, what is the actual operational significance of NATO's strengthened troops and equipment on the one hand and of Russia's demonstrations of force on the other?

NATO's involvement has dramatically intensified due to the Ukrainian crisis, and its military budget and manpower surpass Russia's by far (NATO's military budget in 2016 was $846 billion compared to Russia's $46 billion). Yet NATO's capacities remain insufficient, considering the larger mobilization capacity and general military potential of the Russian Federation. A 2016 RAND Corporation study documented that in its current architecture, NATO would be unable to defend any Baltic state against a Russian invasion. Assuming the validity of the RAND study, this document shows that NATO, outgunned and outnumbered by Russian tanks and troops, would lose a war against Russia in three days.[11] Furthermore, NATO's long term cohesion and credibility may be undermined by its

28 members' internal differences, divergent perceptions, and respective assessments of security threats stemming from Russia on each side of the former Berlin Wall, (Western) members' stagnating defense budgets, and a potential Trump-led US disengagement.

On the Russian side, Moscow efficiently deployed nuclear-capable forces in Kaliningrad in 2014 and moved Iskander-M short-range ballistic missiles (with a 500 km range within reach of Berlin) in 2015. However, little data is available about the extent to which the S-400 and Iskander missiles were actually positioned in Kaliningrad and in what quantity. Many additional questions remain about the actual production and deployment of Russia's inter-continental ballistic missiles – ICBMS – which have encountered technical difficulties related to Ukraine's separation from Russia's military-industrial complex (Russia previously co-produced ICBMS and some of its components in the Ukrainian town of Dnepropetrovsk).

Mistrust and tensions have not only contributed to a military race between NATO and Russia, but also to a swift militarization of the Baltic states and Poland. Lithuania in particular has reintroduced military conscription and issued a pamphlet that guides its population on what to do in the event of a Russian invasion. Moreover, the historically low Baltic state defense budgets increased dramatically after the Ukrainian crisis, to the point where Latvia and Lithuania have had the fastest growing defense budgets in the world since 2014.[12] Lithuania alone has increased its defense budget by about a third each year since 2014. In addition, the Baltic states have invested massively in new military equipment. For example, in August 2016, Lithuania signed its biggest-ever arms purchase, for 88 German-made Boxer armored fighting vehicles fitted with Israeli-made turrets. Finally, the self-defense militias that were established in the three Baltic states shortly after their independence received a major boost after the Ukrainian crisis. In Estonia, which borders Russia and is home to a 25 percent Russian minority, the number of volunteers to the Estonian Defence League surpasses by far that of the regular army: with affiliated organizations Women's Home Defence, Young Eagles, and Home Daughters, the Estonian Defence League currently comprises over 24,500 volunteers in action,[13] compared to the 6000-large regular Estonian army. Those national defense organizations, which received advanced training and guerilla-type military equipment, are designed to conduct a guerilla warfare against Russia in case of a direct, cyber, or fifth column type attack on their soil. Their mission is to buy time to enable NATO to mobilize and deploy its troops, and help prevent

a Russian take-over of the strategic Suwalki gap, the narrow land corridor situated between Kaliningrad and Belarus (on the border between Poland and Lithuania) that would serve as the main corridor for the transfer of NATO forces to come to the aid of the Baltics (the second main transfer area would be the Baltic sea).

## Increase of Incidents and Lack of De-escalation Mechanisms

In this volatile context, any incident might trigger a snowball effect and an unintended military escalation. Of concern is the increase in both quantity and gravity of hazardous military-military and military-civilian incidents in the Baltic Sea area since the Ukrainian crisis. Over 60 incidents between NATO and Russia were reported between September 2014 and March 2015 on the Baltic Sea, Black Sea, and Atlantic Ocean. Over 400 interceptions by NATO of Russian aircraft around Europe occurred in 2015 alone (of which 160 were conducted by the Baltic Air Policing Mission). These incidents culminated in the incident between Turkey and Russia on November 24, 2015 along the Turkish-Syrian border, leading to a breakdown of Turkish-Russian relations until their reconciliation in the summer of 2016. Additional grave incidents were documented: on January 30, 2016, a Russian SU-34 violated Turkish airspace, and in April 2016, a Russian fighter jet and a helicopter conducted dangerous maneuvers close to the destroyer *USS Donald Cook* in the Baltic Sea.[14] The danger not only lies in a military-military incident but also in a military-civilian collision, exemplified by the use of a Buk missile smuggled across the border from Russia to shoot down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine in July 2014; all 298 passengers were killed in the attack.

The increase in actual or narrowly-avoided collisions is all the more hazardous given the lack of any official agreement between NATO and Russia on how to defuse tension or deescalate a dangerous incident. Unlike the tactical "de-confliction mechanism" that Israel (and other states) established with Russia on the Syrian border, which provides a network of narrowly focused military-to-military channels of communication to avoid an inadvertent clash of armed forces operating in the same combat arena, NATO and Russia as yet possess no formal Memorandum of Understanding that would rapidly and efficiently defuse tensions. Rather, there is an ongoing NATO-Russian Council dialogue and a series of disparate and uncoordinated Cold War era agreements between a number of NATO countries and Russia.[15] However, the Cold War era agreements involve only

11 NATO members and leave the remaining 17 members (most critically Central and Eastern European states and Turkey) outside of the potential de-confliction arrangement. In light of the insufficiency of the above mentioned crisis management mechanisms, the Task Force on Cooperation in Greater Europe invited NATO members to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with Russia in August 2015, yet this initiative has yet to see any palpable achievements. In July 2016, the Russian Federation suggested steps for risk reduction in the Baltic airspace, again without tangible results.

Moreover, NATO and Russia do not possess effective tools for prevention of military escalation stemming from broader attribution of political and/or strategic intentions. Such broader prevention is jeopardized by the hybrid nature of US-NATO and Russian power projection. On the one hand, Russia accuses NATO of building up military forces near up its borders, fomenting political coups in its bordering countries, and challenging Russia's strategic positioning in the Eurasian space. Meanwhile, the West charges Russia with destabilizing Europe by combining a steady military buildup in the Kaliningrad enclave and Russia's Western Military District, the use of cyber attacks, soft power, energy politics, and diaspora politics, particularly in Latvia and Estonia, which are home to a large diaspora of ethnic Russians. Under these (intentionally) confusing circumstances, it is unclear when NATO's collective defense Article V may apply, especially if one of the parties' actions involves something other than a direct armed attack. For example, once Crimea was annexed by Russia in March 2014 through hybrid means involving a minimal and unofficial use of force, NATO did not have any substantive response and reacted by merely suspending the NATO-Russia Council, a platform of consultation between NATO's ambassadors and Russia's ambassador to NATO established in 2002.[16] From the perspective of Poland and the Baltic states, NATO's suspension of the NATO-Russian Council testified to NATO's lack of credibility when dealing with Russia's assertive moves. Ukraine, however, is borderline case: even though it applied for NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2008, Ukraine was and remains a non-aligned country.

## The Brexit-Trump Effect: Increased Propensity for Miscalculation
The removal of Britain's voice from the EU decision making arena and the lingering uncertainties regarding Trump's loyalty to previous commitments to European defense deepened fears across Central and Eastern Europe about an imminent Russian threat, while further bolstering Russia's image

of a doomed and disintegrating European Union and transatlantic alliance. Such a situation creates fertile ground for increased misperceptions and hazardous miscalculations from both sides.

In this context, Moscow enjoys its most favorable European moment since the Ukrainian crisis began. At the same time, euphoria can be misleading. Russian hopes for a domino effect in the EU after Brexit and Europe's further decay were undoubtedly encouraged by Europe's lingering economic crisis, counter-terrorism failures, and ill-managed refugee crisis. Furthermore, Moscow may celebrate the mounting criticism of US and EU sanctions against Russia. Some NATO members as well as Donald Trump have expressed reservations regarding the functioning and value of NATO.[17] And in another potential gain for Moscow, Germany has signaled greater interest in developing distinctively European defense capabilities, thereby further isolating the Polish and Baltic argument for NATO as the sole framework for collective defense.

With this new favorable context, Moscow may well overestimate Europe's disunity on the Ukrainian question, NATO's weakening, and US hesitations in case of a collision between NATO and Russia, a miscalculation that could lead Moscow to initiate bold moves in Europe and create an unintended confrontation. Indeed, Moscow's expected softening – if not complete "reset" – of relations with Washington, based on Trump's early declarations, may not hold up under the Trump administration. On the one hand, Trump's appointment of Michael Flynn as National Security Advisor and Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State, both of whom have open and strong Russian ties, potentially signal an imminent reengagement of Washington with Russia. This positive signal to Moscow followed earlier encouragement when candidate Trump antagonized Republican senators John McCain and Lindsay Graham, both known for their pro-Ukrainian positions. On the other hand, the choice of Mike Pence as Vice President (thus far harboring a hawkish position vis-à-vis Moscow), along with the broad anti-Russian consensus in the Republican Congress, the Pentagon, the intelligence community, and the military, may rapidly challenge Trump's declared intention of finding a common language with Moscow. Furthermore, both the Bush and Obama administrations intended to "reset" relations with Russia, with few results. In addition, Trump's campaign promise not to intervene in the event of Russian aggression against the Baltic countries, and his plan to make US aid dependent on these countries raising defense spending (to at least 2 percent of their GDP, compared to the US's 7 percent), may

ironically have a bolstering effect on Eastern Europe's defense budget and military preparedness. Currently, Poland and Estonia meet the Alliance's recommended level of defense spending, which is 2 percent of GDP, while Latvia and Lithuania are likewise projected to meet the NATO 2 percent target in their 2017-2018 budgets. The combined Brexit and Trump effects triggered a shift of the Eastern European countries, primarily Poland and the Baltic states, toward Germany, which is by now perceived as the only country capable of defending them against Russian aggression – a 21st century twist that reframes Germany as the democratic and liberal savior against an illiberal and aggressive Russia. Moreover, perceptions of greater Europe, especially in Eastern Europe (where domestic politics disproportionately focus on the "Russian question"), may prompt some to overestimate Russia's intentions to attack, and .such an alarmist mood may breed an over-reaction to any incident or collision in the vicinity of Russia and precipitate a crisis that neither side envisioned or desired.

## Eastern Europe Eyeing Israel's Border with Syria

Russia's military buildup in western Syria has been closely monitored by Central and East European states. From their perspective, the parallel wars in Ukraine and Syria now serve as two frontlines for Russia's projection of power with respect to the West. It has been argued that those two fronts even act as "communicating vases" for Moscow: they can either serve as a diversion strategy when Russia heats up tension in the Baltics to distract the world's attention from its actions in Syria, or vice versa, or serve as negotiating cards, with Russia requesting the reduction of a NATO military presence in member states and an end to sanctions in return for Russian concessions to the West in the war in Syria.

Poland and the Baltic states closely follow Israel's posture vis-à-vis Russia's buildup on its borders. It is evident that Central and Eastern Europe's relation to Russia is radically different from Israel's, because of both historical and strategic reasons. First and foremost, despite its one million Russian speakers, Israel is not a candidate for inclusion in Russia's sphere of influence; Russia has no territorial, imperial, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural claim on the State of Israel. Most critically, Russia's intervention in Syria thus far does not constitute a threat to Israel in the way that Russia's military buildup does to Eastern and Central Europe.

With these main dramatic differences in mind there are nevertheless a few similarities that may justify intensified dialogue between Israel

and Eastern Europe in the near future, including periodic exchanges of assessments. Indeed, East European states and Israel share an interest in preventing unwanted military clashes with Russia and curbing some of Russia's impact, be it the destabilization of European security and stability or the strengthening of the Tehran-led Shiite axis running through Baghdad and Damascus to Beirut. Israel, however, should be careful not to allow any such dialogue to be part of an adversarial relationship with Russia similar to that existing between Russia and some East European countries. There should certainly be no illusion that in the unlikely event that Israel finds itself in a real conflict with Russia that it cannot deal with alone, any European state, even Germany, will be willing or able to constitute an adequate substitute for the United States.

## Conclusion

It may well be that the recent wave of military incidents in the Baltics is merely a replay of previous scenarios involving heightened and yet temporary tensions between NATO and Russia, such as those surrounding the 2008 Georgian War and the 2014 Crimea annexation. Yet many fear that it signals a tipping point that will unleash an enduring confrontation between Eastern Europe and Russia, involving not only military buildup and deterrence on both sides but the actual outbreak of a military conflict. In either case, perceptions about a weakening transatlantic alliance and fears about Russia's reinforced posture toward the West – whether or not validated under the new Trump administration – may continue to have repercussions in the Middle East. With the legacy of Russian military intervention on Israel's border with Syria, Central and East European states and Israel may be pushed to intensify their dialogue on challenges posed by the volatile dynamics in the East European and Middle East arenas.

## Notes

1   Sweden and Finland are not NATO members, yet they have participated in the 28-member NATO meetings in different formats. The two non-aligned countries have moved closer to NATO and US security structures in light of the deteriorating security situation in the Baltic Sea. However, their full membership in NATO is not on the near-term agenda due to domestic opposition in both Sweden and Finland.

2   The Eastern Partnership program aims at enhancing the EU's relations with countries that Russia considers as belonging to its own sphere of influence (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine).

3    NATO Wales Summit Declaration dated September 5, 2014, "NATO's Readiness Action Plan. FactSheet. July 2016." See http://www.nato.int/ nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160627_1607-factsheet-rap-en. pdf.

4    NATO-Russian relations were established in 1991 within the framework of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. In 1994, the Russian Federation joined the Partnership for Peace program. In 2002, the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was established as a platform of consultation, dialogue, and joint decision making. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea, NATO unilaterally suspended cooperation with Russia but preserved a channel of communication within the NRC and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council at the ambassadorial level and above.

5    The RAP includes a series of assurance measures such as operation of fighter jets on air-policing patrols, deployment of ground troops to the eastern part of the Alliance for NATO training, or intensified NATO maritime patrols in the Baltic Sea. The long term "adaptation measures" include the strengthening of the NATO Response Forces (NRF) and the establishment of multinational NATO headquarters (NFIUS) on the territories of the East European allies (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia) that are to become operational by the end of 2016.

6    Canada stands as the "framework nation" for Latvia, Germany plays this role for Lithuania, the UK is assigned to Estonia, and the US will serve in this capacity for Poland.

7    "NATO Chief Gives Details about Battalions on Eastern Flank, Black Sea Region," UNIAN Info, October 26, 2016, http://www.unian.info/ politics/1592591-nato-chief-gives-details-about-battalions-on-eastern-flank-black-sea-region.html. See also Anna Maria Touma, "Romania and Bulgaria to Host Greater NATO Presence in the Black Sea Region," Atlantic Council, October 31, 2016, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/ romania-and-bulgaria-to-host-greater-nato-presence-in-the-black-sea-region.

8    "European Reassurance Initiative, Department of Defense Budget, Fiscal Year 2017, February 2016," p. 4, http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/ Documents/defbudget/fy2017/FY2017_ERI_J-Book.pdf.

9    The exercise involved almost 4,000 troops from the US, the UK, Germany, Canada, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Luxemburg, and the three Baltic states (compared to 2,500 in 2015 and just over 2,000 troops participating in 2014).

10   This military exercise included some 31,000 troops from Poland, the US, and 17 other NATO member nations.

11   David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank," RAND Corporation, 2016, https://www.rand. org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1253/RAND_ RR1253.pdf.

12   An IHS Markit analysis shows that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania boosted their spending on new defense equipment from $210 million in 2014 to $390

million in 2016. By 2018, the three nations are collectively expected to spend approximately $670 million annually on new equipment. See "Press Release: Baltic Defence Budgets Surge as Russia's Neighbours Respond to Perceived Threat, IHS Markit Says," October 20, 2016, http://news.ihsmarkit.com/press-release/aerospace-defense-security/baltic-defence-budgets-surge-russias-neighbours-respond-per.

13 See the website of the Estonian Defence League, http://www.kaitseliit.ee/en/edl.

14 Lukasz Kulesa et al., "Managing Hazardous Incidents in the Euro-Atlantic Area: A New Plan of Action," Policy Brief, European Leadership Network, November 2016, pp. 7-9, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2016/11/02/ab4a4c1d/ELN%20Managing%20Hazardous%20Incidents%20November%202016.pdf.

15 Eleven NATO countries enjoy bilateral agreements with Russia to prevent incidents at sea (INCSEA) (the US, the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Norway, Spain, the Netherlands, Canada, Portugal, and Greece). Three other agreements on managing potentially dangerous encounters exist: (1) the US-USSR (now Russia) Agreement on Preventing Dangerous Military Activities (DMA), signed in 1989; (2) the Canada-USSR Agreement on Preventing Dangerous Military Activities (DMA) from 1991; (3) a Greece-Russia DMA signed two years after end of the USSR. Ian Kearns and Denitsa Raynova, "Managing Dangerous Incidents: The Need for a NATO-Russia Memorandum of Understanding," March 7, 2016, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/managing-dangerous-incidents-the-need-for-a-nato-russia-memorandum-of-understanding_3578.html.

16 From March 2014 until December 2016, the NATO-Russia Council convened only three times, thereby reinforcing the potential for military escalation.

17 Trump made a statement in July 2016 to the effect that he would not jump to defend the Baltic states from Russian attacks. David Sanger and Maggie Haberman, "Donald Trump Sets Conditions For Defending NATO Allies Under Attack," *New York Times*, July 20, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/us/politics/donald-trump-issues.html?_r=0.