FIIA REPORT 51

Managing Unpredictability

Transatlantic relations in the Trump era

Mika Aaltola and Bart Gaens (eds.)

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Finland

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Table of contents

Preface

This report is the outcome of the third Helsinki Summer Session, a high-level annual conference organized by the Center on US Politics and Power (CUSPP) at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. The conference took place from 31 August to 2 September 2016, and revolved around the theme of "US policies in Northern Europe". An interdisciplinary event, the Helsinki Summer Session examined the drivers of the transatlantic partnership from the perspective of the Nordic-Baltic states. It assessed the impact of US global commitments, economic resources, cultural and value-related ties, and changing conceptualizations of the US global role. The conference also looked ahead to the future of US foreign policy, its global role and the transatlantic partnership in the light of the upcoming presidential elections.

A few months after the Helsinki Summer Session, however, the start of the administration under President Donald Trump led to a strongly perceived shift in US foreign policy, including in transatlantic relations. It seemed that the advent of the Trump era, marked by an inclination towards hard power, national self interest, protectionism and transactionalism, necessitated a fundamental rethink of the global role of the US, its relations with Europe and, indeed, the rule-based international order. The contributors to this report were all compelled to adapt their initial conference papers to the new and occasionally inconsistent rhetoric coming from Washington, as well as to the policy shifts these messages could potentially portend.

This report therefore sets out to chart the main contours of the ongoing recalibration of transatlantic relations in the Trump era, including in the context of Nordic-Baltic security. It starts from the larger picture, assessing how internal as well as external threats to the

liberal world order have resulted in a loss of faith in the foundations and institutions of the post-war system. The analysis then shifts to the Trump administration's rhetoric and action, and its impact on the European security order. The focus thereafter settles on the Nordic-Baltic region, and the inherent challenges, priorities, and opportunities for an evolving regional defence and security strategy. The report also pays attention to US relations with Russia, a relationship marked by competition and volatility as well as potential pragmatic cooperation. Finally, and significantly, a key part of the analysis focuses on the rise of a possible new paradigm for transatlantic defence and security relations, and its effect on NATO as well as on US-Europe bilateral relations. A core theme running through all the chapters is the belief that transatlantic relations are going through a period of transition as well as uncertainty. A key challenge for the years to come concerns how to manage this unpredictability. At the same time, however, this era of transition offers an opportunity to "re-imagine" a transatlantic relationship that supports a reformed liberal order.

The editors of this report wish to thank all the participants in the Helsinki Summer Session for their high-level intellectual input, and especially the contributors to this report who were willing to undergo several rounds of comments and to revise their chapters accordingly. The Helsinki Summer Session is funded by the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation. On behalf of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, the editors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Foundation for its generous support.

Introduction

For years, US foreign policy has been rooted in a relative consensus over the need to take on a global-leadership role, to safeguard past commitments, and to remain actively engaged regionally as well as globally. At present, however, it seems that the mode of relatively active multilateral engagement during the Obama years has transformed into a pattern of competitive relationships, transactional bilateralism, and a tendency to use harder power to gain an advantage over others. After President Trump's first tour in the Middle East and Europe, his national security advisor H. R. McMasters together with Gary D. Cohn argued in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed that criticism of Trump for isolating and weakening the US was misplaced. As they stated: "The President embarked on his first foreign trip with a clear-eyed outlook that the world is not a 'global community' but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors and businesses engage and compete for advantage. We bring to this forum unmatched military, political, economic, cultural and moral strength. Rather than deny this elemental nature of international affairs, we embrace it." The perception that there was no global community based on generally shared norms represented a departure from the more normative approach of the Obama years when the US leadership was based on the need to have a global approach to major structural challenges, including climate change. The new approach passes over normative standpoints, such as human rights, in arguing that the US had suffered relative losses when it tried to arbitrate win-win situations, and emphasized the economic and geopolitical necessity of relative gains.

This report examines the consequences of the ongoing recalibration, or even transformation, in the transatlantic engine of the rule-based international order. More specifically, it examines Nordic-Baltic security

as a case in point of the ongoing changes. How are the changes in the key institutional embodiments of the liberal order, as exemplified by NATO and the EU, sustained and how might their interrelationships materialize in the future? Moreover, what is the impact on smaller member states, allies and partners in the North, specifically in terms of their developing roles as they confront different types of traditional and hybrid security challenges?

Recent analyses have been leaning towards declinism, whereas others have tended to be hyperbolic. However, they all point out the consequential changes taking place in the West. Anne Applebaum states in her op-ed from Spring 2016: "Right now, we are two or three bad elections away from the end of NATO, the end of the European Union and maybe the end of the liberal world order as we know it".[1] She was referring to Brexit, the US Presidential elections, and the French presidential elections. Two of the three "bad elections" turned out to be just that. This leads to the question of what the supposed near "end" of the West looks like. What are its causes and security-related consequences?

This report assesses the dynamics taking place in the West's main axis, the transatlantic relationship. These dynamics are driven by domestic factors, as well as by the different states facing the challenge of the structural pressures of our time, including the global economy, transnational value chains, the information-technology revolution and climate change. Other pertinent questions are also explored. What are the main characteristics of the ongoing dynamics involving the new administration in the US that, at least rhetorically, have challenged some key international institutions? How is the American transformation perceived in the European security context and in the scenarios? What are the corresponding dynamics in Europe?

Clear evidence of a Trump doctrine is yet to emerge. The results of the Brexit negotiations remain uncertain. The beginning of the Trump administration's term has been characterized by episodes of seemingly contradictory statements and policy changes, and the ongoing Congressional and independent investigations slowed the policy processes down. Evidently, some of the ambiguity could be interpreted as a form of strategic action rather than a lack of vision.

1 A. Applebaum, "Is this the end of the West as we know it?", *Washington Post*. 4 March 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/donald-trump-and-the-end-of-nato/2016/03/04/e8c4b9ca-e146-11e5-8d98-4b3d9215ade1_story.html?utm_term=.f33f6cf76150.

The transformation from the rather transparent strategic persistence of Obama to the use of strategic ambiguity could be one of the most salient and clear policy changes. The emerging Trump doctrine also favours major power politics, bilateralism over multilateralism, reactionary stances amidst continuity as in the case of the Paris climate agreement, and lightening the US burden of regional security while highlighting US autonomy in terms of using its power toolbox.

Trump's views have also focused on the concept of civilized nations and civilization, which stands in opposition to "barbaric" entities such as terrorists.[2] In justifying the US missile strikes against Assad's regime in Syria, Trump referred to the chemical strikes as barbaric. He has also used the term barbaric with reference to North Korea. What Trump means by civilized nations and civilization on the geographical level remains vague. However, his definition does not emphasize classical liberal values such as human rights, or other normative responsibilities, but appears to be based more firmly on conservative cultural affinities and economic interests. One clear consequence of his realist foreign policy and his conservative ideological stance is a more positive stance towards Russia under President Vladimir Putin. However, his emerging vision stands in contrast with mainstream European views, even if there are populist elements in Europe that support the Trumpian redefinition of the West.

A key element of the ongoing randomness, vagueness and uncertainty in Washington is the worry over the sustainability of the West and the future of the liberal order in Europe. Clearly, the Trump administration dismisses some elements and processes as outliers, including terrorists, migration flows, North Korea and, potentially, Russia and China, but if there exists a value-based core, the relevant values are yet to be clearly articulated. The change towards interest-driven cooperation challenges traditional ways of formulating what is meant by the West, and specifically what it entails as the nucleus of the Western liberal rule-based world order. Moreover, it challenges and reformulates the transatlantic relationship in a new or even reactionary way. Reformulation also places the onus on change instead of on the traditional continuity of American foreign and defence policies, resulting in occasionally nervous policy re-evaluations in Europe, especially in parts of neighbouring Russia.

2 M. Aaltola and V. Sinkkonen, "Political culture and the domestic aspects of American leadership: Towards a new version of the Clash of Civilizations", FIIA Working Paper 95, June 2017.

The further one zooms out from the transatlantic sphere towards the global level, the lower the lowest common denominator tends to become. The "rule" aspect of the rule-based world order defines increasingly less. Differences become standard, and similarity recedes into the background. Competition and conflict start to surface. As James Traub argues in this volume, norms and values still largely prevail in the transatlantic heartland, although confidence has been lost. At the same time, normative and value-based affirmations have lost ground. Although famously omitting the reaffirmation of the fifth article of the NATO Charter while visiting the organization's headquarters in May 2017, Trump did mention that the US stood by its commitments. He also referred to some enduring elements pertaining to the transatlantic community, but the stress was on engagement with Europe that would be more conditional, transactional and self-interested. It may well be that the new commitments in the emerging Trump doctrine are based on the recognition of mutual self-interest. If this is going to be accentuated in the transatlantic realm, it is likely that the transactional tendency will be even more prevalent in US relations with other regions and major powers. The future of US engagement with Russia, in particular, could have consequences for transatlantic unity.

The liberal order could be under challenge from both external and internal sources. The military ascendancy of Russia, terrorism and migration flows exist in the framework of internal challenges such as economic malaise, populist movements and xenophobia. The sustainability of the Western order is challenged internally, or as Traub phrases it in his contribution to this volume: "The danger to the liberal world order comes not from institutional collapse but from a collective loss of faith." The liberal modus operandi of the heartland of the rule-based order faces challenges that stem from increasingly illiberalist political mobilizations. This alone is causing strains in the security relationship, as ideational shifts are casting doubt on alliances and partnerships that were long considered to be unshakable. As Traub argues, the liberal in the liberal international order was based on the Truman doctrine. The US and the West would, through different means, defend people who were under pressure from illiberal internal or external forces. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the expectation was that there would be incremental yet still noticeable progress in different corners of the world towards a universalization of liberal democracy and capitalist economics. Confidence in the inevitability of this process has been shaken, as

democratic vulnerabilities have emerged from globalization pressures, exploited by external non-state and state challengers.

The aim in this report is to chart the causes and consequences of recent changes in transatlantic relationships with the key security institutions NATO and the EU. How is the differentiation between the US interest-driven approach and the European multilateral and value-focused orientation likely to play out? How do the burden-sharing dynamics change the underlying relationship? How will the division of labour and cooperation between the EU and NATO turn out? Furthermore, how will internal Western trends and institutional changes influence North European security trends? Many regional states have built their defence capabilities in ways that rely on the sustained health of the key institutions as members, allies and partners. The reactions and strategic choices in response to the ongoing changes are vital aspects of the networked security arrangements in the Nordic-Baltic region.

One key theme in the report is the contest between continuity and discontinuity, and several chapters concentrate on this aspect and its likely outcomes. What is the staying power of the liberal world order in the Western heartland? According to Kari Möttölä, for example, the transatlantic relationship has gone into an expectant mode, in the sense that many key characteristics of the overall security scenarios have not been worked out. This is, to some extent, a waiting game that requires its own coordination and management. Many in Europe are observing how the intended closer relationship between the US and Russia is playing out. The wait for clarity is causing some nervousness in Europe. Newer policies are being planned based on increasing strategic independence and taking fate into Europe's own hands. There is a new impetus in the EU's common defence policy at a time when many are highlighting the need to have a stronger European leg of NATO. European defence tends to serve the security needs of European citizens, whereas NATO puts a clear stress on territorial defence. However, new areas are emerging: cyber security, democratic vulnerabilities, hybrid influencing and terrorism, for example, challenge the maintenance of a clear difference between NATO and EU efforts. Deepened coordination between these two institutions is needed, and the actions already taken as well as further plans are consequential from the perspective of Nordic-Baltic security.

Recent headlines covering various surprising election results have tended to be hyberbolic, and to accentuate change over continuity. A more nuanced view would be that the staying power and best practices

of Western institutions are being challenged. It may just be a matter of an ill-fated combination of elections. The mega election cycle will continue, and keep on producing new governing patterns. However, the evidence suggests that the overall scenario is not just random, but undermines the progressive liberal belief in a teleological process that leads to deeper integration and the dissemination of liberal practices. A confluence of events, including the Euro-crisis, the migration crisis, election unpredictability, Brexit, Theresa May's gamble with new elections and Trump's policy, shape expectations. Furthermore, the analyses in this report highlight the need to resist overly simplistic interpretations and being caught up in the moment. The loss of confidence in the liberal order is strong, but the core remains intact. There has been discontinuity and rupture, but there is time to salvage much of the liberal legacy and its key institutions.

Aside from the value-oriented discussion, the underlying debate has focused on the conditionality of commitments. The focus has recently moved to the burden-sharing issue. Some of the chapters in this report analyse the ramifications of burden sharing on security dynamics. The two-per-cent target has become a magic figure that indicates a sufficient contribution to defence. It is also highlighted by non-NATO states such as Finland. Although it appears merely budgetary, the consequences may be very significant. If key states such as Germany were to reach this goal it would lead to profound ramifications in terms of the distribution of hard power capabilities. Potential European defence capabilities would be considerably enhanced, which would open new avenues for deeper defence integration in the EU. However, there are doubts. One criticism is that it represents too straightforward an approach to what a sufficient defence contribution means. One underlying issue is the nature of defence and security in today's increasingly asymmetrically interdependence on the regional and the global level.

Many states are focusing on various threats that are not strictly military. Recent events – such as election-related vulnerabilities – have highlighted the need to build up resilience, societal security, and readiness for various hybrid threats. Many experts argue that the two-per-cent figure should also include resilience-building measures elsewhere in the region, and globally. Should long-term capacity-building and development policies be included in the overall discussion on what policies are relevant for today's security? At the same time, the harder version of security is of topical interest as many states see territorial threats in their horizon-scanning exercises. The push and pull of these various considerations also highlight the relationship

between the EU and NATO, which will face further challenges connected to the role of the UK during and after the Brexit negotiations. The UK has traditionally been a strong supporter of a solid transatlantic link, and has been hesitant towards increasing the strategic independence of the EU.

Covering these broad themes, the report is structured as follows. Chapter One, written by James Traub, lays down the overall framework for the other chapters. Traub outlines the main drivers of the threat to the liberal world order, zooming in on the internal threats to the post-war order, and on the limits of liberalism and the Anglo-American consensus on economic and political freedom. As mentioned earlier in this introduction, the institutions underlying the current system, its laws and norms are in jeopardy, not because of the prospect of war, but due to a crisis of faith that threatens to weaken the foundations of the post-war system. Kari Möttölä takes the analysis of this perceived threat to the liberal world order a step further in Chapter Two, focusing on agency, and on the difference between words and deeds in US policy making. Möttölä critically assesses the potential for a remodelled transatlantic partnership that will remain in the driving seat in shaping the European security order.

Chapter Three, written by Aap Neljas, zooms further in on the security paradigm in the Baltic region. It begins with an analysis of the impact on the US and NATO of the changed security situation in the Baltics and Europe arising from Russian actions in the Ukraine. Neljas then looks ahead to the future and scrutinizes how shifts in US policy during the Trump administration will prompt the Baltic states to further recalibrate their defence posture. Chapter Four, written by Eoin McNamara, also focuses on the prospects for the Nordic-Baltic security community during the Trump era. After pointing out the need for less-US-dependent security options, McNamara delineates the different priorities for the Nordic and Baltic states, while at the same time identifying concrete areas for cooperation.

In Chapter Five, Kalev Stoicescu examines NATO's reactions to the annexation of Crimea, in the form of assurance and adaptive measures to the organization's easternmost allies. Focusing on the Baltic Sea regional context, Stoicescu assesses the current state of affairs in NATO specifically in terms of an enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), in other words the evolving deployment of allied troops to the Baltic states and Poland. Chapter Six, written by Donald Jensen, analyses US relations with Russia, a crucial factor in shaping the transatlantic links. Jensen juxtaposes Russian and US differences in perspective in terms of their

global role, and assesses the likelihood of US–Russian cooperation on matters of common interest, as well as the prospect of Russian challenges to NATO's commitment to Baltic security.

Leo Michel seeks to decipher the approach of the Trump administration to transatlantic defence and security in Chapter Seven. He examines changes in the US stance in recent years, surveys the evolving paradigm under President Trump, and provides an in-depth analysis of risks and opportunities for the transatlantic relationship, as well as for the wider liberal world order. The conclusion sums up the main arguments set out in the preceding chapters, and explores the prospects for transatlantic relations in a liberal world order in flux.

1

1. Does the liberal world order have a future?

James Traub

INTRODUCTION

It is increasingly feared that the "liberal world order" (LWO) is in peril. This, on the face of it, is a perplexing worry. Previous forms of world order, whether it be the Westphalian system, the Congress of Vienna or the League of Nations, have been wrecked by war, and replaced with a new system meant to be more effective in preventing war. In that respect, the world order that emerged from World War II, embodied in the United Nations and kindred institutions and codified in international law and shared norms, has succeeded. Those institutions are under tremendous pressure – but not from the prospect of war. The danger to the liberal world order comes not from institutional collapse but from a collective loss of faith. It is precisely the "liberal" character of the world order that is in jeopardy.

THE LWO AS A BULWARK OF THE COLD WAR

The liberal world order is the shorthand used to describe the American-led system that emerged from World War II. Just as the Westphalian system came into being to prevent the kind of holy war between Catholic and Protestant princes that had devastated Europe in the first half of the seventeenth century, the liberal order was designed to embed the rule of law in the structure of international relations: statesmen had concluded that only a rules-based system could prevent the rise of monstrous totalitarian states such as Nazi Germany. Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter

in early 1942, pledging to establish "a new world order" in which, among other core principles, the violation of territorial integrity would no longer be tolerated, and all peoples would have the right to self-determination and a government based on consent. Other allied nations later subscribed to those principles in a "Joint Declaration of the United Nations." The planning proceeded from this starting point.

Nevertheless, the post-war system ended up facing a very different danger from the one first envisioned – not territorial aggression as such, but the Soviet Union specifically. The central features of the liberal order were focused on the task of winning the Cold War. When Harry Truman declared in 1947 that "it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures" – a the policy thereafter known as the Truman Doctrine – he appeared to be defending the broad principles laid down in the UN Charter and other key documents. In fact, he was asserting that the US would come to the aid of any country, democratic or not, threatened by communism. This principle would guide US policy throughout the Cold War. Truman and his senior officials shaped the Marshall Plan in such a way that although it appeared to apply to the Soviet Union as well as Europe, the Soviets could be counted on not to participate, thus leaving the programme free to do the essential work of boosting economic growth in Europe to reduce the appeal of indigenous communist parties.

The liberal world order, in short, increasingly merged with the Cold War so that liberalism came to be virtually synonymous with the American campaign to outlast and defeat the Soviets. Indeed, the "Cold War liberals" who surrounded John F. Kennedy – men such as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and John Kenneth Galbraith – saw liberalism as the great intellectual weapon in the war of ideas against the Soviets. Liberalism, in turn, was the American way: democracy, free-market capitalism tempered with a concern for equality, and the extension of civil and political rights. Abroad, the Cold War liberals were prepared to use military force to block the spread of communism, as well as diplomacy and foreign aid to support anti-communist reformers. "To those new States whom we welcome to the ranks of the free," as John F. Kennedy said in his inaugural address, "we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny." Liberalism was the American *mission civilatrice*.

The West finally prevailed in its "twilight struggle" with the Soviet Union. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, the liberal world order was the only order left standing. As Francis Fukuyama wrote in

his famous 1989 essay *The End of History*[1], "The triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism." Fukuyama depicted liberalism as a kind of magnet standing at the forefront of history and drawing everything towards it. Autocratic states such as China might be advancing very slowly in that direction, but their destiny was still a liberal one. What we were witnessing, Fukuyama believed, was "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

WITH THE COLD WAR WON, WHAT IS THE LWO FOR?

In the immediate post-Cold-War era, the administration of President Bill Clinton dedicated itself to "democratic enlargement" – a kind of post-Cold War liberalism. Fukuyama's magnet proved to be weaker than he had thought, however. Although the stock of liberal democracies expanded in the 1990s, it has since contracted. A few major states, such as Turkey, have moved out of democracy into the authoritarian column. China has demonstrated that it is possible to seek economic liberalization while avoiding political liberalization: while joining global economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) it has pursued territorial ambitions in the South China Sea that violate the spirit, and perhaps the letter, of the UN Charter. Russia, of course, has descended deeper and deeper into authoritarian rule, and is doing its best to force its neighbours, including Georgia and Ukraine, out of the Western orbit.

One could argue that the liberal magnet has faltered, but not failed. International relations scholar John Ikenberry in his work *The Future of The Liberal World Order*[2] retaliates against the declinist view that liberalism's best days are behind it. Arguing that "the liberal international order is alive and well", he predicts that rising powers such as China will ultimately conclude that "the road to modernity runs through – not away from – the existing international order." Ikenberry's optimism seemed more solidly founded in 2011, when the book appeared, than it does today, however. China's *à la carte* approach to the liberal world order, choosing the elements that suit

1 F. Fukuyama, "The End of History", *The National Interest*, no. 16, 1989, p. 3.

2 G. J. Ikenberry, "The Future of the Liberal World Order: Internationalism After America", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011.

its national interests and flatly rejecting those that do not, seems to be working very well so far. Beijing's reaction to the World Court's recent ruling that China had violated international law in the South China Sea was simply to ignore it. How many troops, China seemed to be asking, does the World Court have?

The challenge to the existing order does not come exclusively from authoritarian states. Many non-Western democracies clearly do not share all the values prized in the West: insofar as such values are considered "liberal," they dissent from the liberal order. For example, the consensus in the West has evolved away from the impermeable sovereignty of the Westphalian order towards a policy of "conditional sovereignty", which stipulates that states cannot be permitted to violate fundamental humanitarian or human-rights principles within their own borders. The doctrine of "the responsibility to protect" thereby dictates that states have an obligation to prevent the perpetration of mass atrocities both at home and abroad. However, formerly colonized states tend to be deeply attached to their hard-won sovereignty. Major countries such as India, South Africa and Brazil, which aspire to join the UN Security Council as permanent members, are deeply reluctant to criticize the human-rights practices even of serious abusers, and have only very warily embraced the responsibility to protect. It is thus entirely possible that a more fully representative international order that has a place at the diplomatic head table for major emerging nations would be less liberal.

If the challenge to the liberal order came only from non-Western states and their peoples one could say that liberalism had spread only hesitatingly beyond the West, and remained deeply rooted where it was conceived. This is not the case, however, as is apparent in Eastern Europe. For the first two decades after the fall of Communism, the former Soviet satellites devoted themselves to building free-market democracies on the rubble of the command economy. Poland, the Czech Republic and others strove to satisfy the demands of the European Union for transparency and the rule of law, and thereby gain full access to the European market and re-join a European culture from which they had been forcibly separated. These energies have now waned, and the commitment to liberal institutions and ideologies in the east looks much shallower than it once did.

Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary since 2010, has championed what he calls "illiberal democracy," using "liberal" as a catch-all pejorative. He has employed the language of the statist left to criticize free-market economics as an abdication of state responsibility and a

surrender to the forces of corporate control. He deploys the vocabulary of the Catholic right to criticize the secularism and sexual freedom of the West. He has also exploited Hungarian nationalism to lash out at immigrants and multiculturalism, claiming that accepting refugees from Syria would endanger Hungary's Christian identity. Yet for all that, some Hungarians regard Orban as the only figure who can stem the rise of the even more nativist and reactionary Jobbik party. Anti-liberal politics are a winning formula in Hungary.

One could attribute Orban's rise to Hungary's brush with bankruptcy during the economic collapse of 2008. Poland, however, a country that had enjoyed high rates of growth throughout this period and served as Eastern Europe's great success story, elected the far-right Law and Justice party to power in the Autumn of 2015. Law and Justice supporters described the party's victory as a triumph for the Church, traditional values and Polish patriotism – a rebuke to urban elites who looked to Munich or Paris for their cultural and political models. Poland's government, like Hungary's, has rejected the idea that it must take its "fair share" of Middle Eastern refugees. The government's domestic policy has focused on gaining control over institutions previously regarded (although not by Law and Justice) as neutral, and above politics – the Constitutional Court, public media and the prosecutor's office, for example. Poland seems prepared to turn its back on its brave post-Cold War history. Polish liberals fear a creeping authoritarianism. "Maybe this twenty-five years of democracy and liberal values in Poland is a deviant period," Radoslaw Markowski, one of Poland's leading political scientists, suggests. "Maybe now we're returning to normal."[3]

THREATENED MORE FROM WITHIN THAN FROM WITHOUT

It may nevertheless be the case that the most dangerous challenge to the post-war order comes from inside the liberal world itself – from Western Europe, and even the United States. The Brexit vote constituted a stinging repudiation of the core European policy of freedom of movement within the EU and, more fundamentally, of the virtue of European cosmopolitanism. Movement leaders such as Boris Johnson appealed explicitly to the British fear of a loss of identity

3 J. Traub, "The Party That Wants to Make Poland Great Again", *The New York Times Magazine*, 2 November 2016.

both to "Brussels" – in other words European government – and to the Polish and Spanish citizens who had flooded into England in search of work. The new prime minister, Theresa May, opposed Brexit, but has nevertheless concluded that she must embrace the new anti-immigrant spirit. Hostility to refugees has taken root in England, as in Poland, despite their absence in reality.

The refugee crisis has provoked an anti-cosmopolitan backlash elsewhere in Europe. Despite its reputation for tolerance and social democracy, Denmark has sought to drive refugees from the country by forcing them to forfeit their meagre assets to pay for their care. The single most popular political party In Sweden, a country that is proudly committed to the humanitarian obligation to accept refugees, is the nationalist, anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats. Questioning Sweden's capacity to integrate 100,000 new refugees was once a taboo in in the country, but that is no longer the case. Growing fears about integration and terrorism have so deeply eroded the once-formidable political standing of Chancellor Angela Merkel in Germany that she may well be defeated in her bid for a new term. In France, seeking to return to power former President Nicholas Sarkozy largely adopted nationalist, anti-immigrant language and the policy prescriptions of the far-right National Front.

The United States had its own champion of illiberal democracy in the form of Donald Trump, who exploited anger at political and cultural elites and a sense of dispossession among white working-class voters that was far deeper than those elites realised. Before his election in November, Trump treated the rule of law, the core principle that American statesmen infused into the post-war order, as an obstacle to the popular will. He encouraged gun owners to take the law into their own hands to defend their alleged Second Amendment rights, and promised to jail Hillary Clinton should he be elected President. Trump's ominous authoritarianism failed to disturb enough voters. His shocking political ascendance showed that many Americans pined for a strong candidate who would run roughshod over "politically correct" obstacles to the restoration of a vanished era of prosperity, stability and unquestioned white male supremacy.

Whether seen from Warsaw, Berlin or Washington, the picture is a grim one. "Liberalism is dead," *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen recently pronounced. "Or at least it is on the ropes. Triumphant a quarter-century ago, when liberal democracy appeared to have

prevailed definitively over the totalitarian utopias that exacted such a toll in blood, it is now under siege from within and without."[4]

THE LIMITS OF LIBERALISM

To understand the reasons for this crisis of faith it is necessary to look more closely at a word that is used as if its meaning were self-evident. It is striking, for example, that Fukuyama barely pauses to define liberalism even as he proclaims its global triumph. This, too, is a consequence of the entanglement of "liberal" and "Cold War." As liberalism became shorthand for "the West," the term shed its accumulated historical meanings to encompass "all good things." It may be this vague penumbra of virtue that has allowed figures such as Viktor Orban to turn the word against itself to mean "all bad things."

In fact, the word "liberal" has a long history, and has evolved in contradictory directions. It first came into use in the early 19th century, when French thinkers such as Benjamin Constant contrasted liberalism with the growing absolutism of revolutionary France. Liberalism as a doctrine stipulated that individuals must enjoy political freedom independently of the state, and this remains the classic meaning of the term. As far as the great liberal thinkers of the mid-20th century, including George Orwell, Raymond Aron and Karl Popper, were concerned liberalism meant anti-totalitarianism. However, by the second half of the 19th century the term had already acquired a new dimension, that of economic freedom and the right to trade one's labour and capital free from state interference. This meaning also survives today in the form of the free-market doctrine and the neoliberalism of those who argue for deregulation, tax cuts and the like. These two strains of liberalism tend to go hand in hand in the Anglo-American tradition, but not in the social democracies of Northern Europe. In France, as in today's Hungary, "liberal" is a pejorative word implying that the state has abandoned the citizen to join forces with the capitalists.

The liberal world order reflected the Anglo-American view that economic and political freedom were inextricable. With the Cold War over, it became increasingly obvious that many political liberals did not accept economic liberalism. This would not in itself jeopardize the post-war order: even mainstream American and British thinkers did not

4 R. Cohen, "The Death of Liberalism", *The New York Times Magazine*, 14 April 2016.

consider economic freedom synonymous with free-market orthodoxy. States ranged themselves along a spectrum of interventionism, with the US on one end and France on the other. Even this very rough free-market consensus is showing serious signs of wear, however. Slow growth and stagnation in the West have undermined faith in free trade and the open movement of capital and labour. Supporters of Donald Trump and of Brexit saw themselves as victims of globalization, and instead cast a vote for economic nationalism. When Trump told voters that China, or Mexico, was eating America's lunch, he meant that globalization helped "the rest" at the expense of the West. Free trade increasingly pits elites against ordinary voters.

Even the political freedom that is at the very core of the liberal ethos is less robust than once seemed to be the case. Liberalism is often conflated with democracy, whereas in fact, liberal principles put the brakes on majoritarianism. Majorities in liberal societies must respect the political rights of minorities, whether in the form of opposition parties or of ethnic or religious groups. Liberalism thus requires a degree of self-restraint that is normally learned over many years, when power has begun to rotate among groups, and has far less visceral appeal than democracy. Everyone wants a voice: the wish for others to have a voice is not so universal.

The demand for democratic representation may thus be a prelude to illiberalism. The Middle East was long governed by autocrats such as Hosni Mubarak and Bashar al-Assad, who ruled in the name of secular principles. Elites in these countries enjoyed at least a pale version of the freedoms available in the West as the leaders sought to modernize their countries. Even before the Arab Spring, many secular autocrats – including Saddam Hussein – had begun to Islamize to curry favour with the conservative majority. The process accelerated after 2011. Egypt's brief experiment with democracy, between 2012 and 2013, brought an Islamist party to power, and the second-largest grouping in parliament was Salafist. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the charismatic leader of Turkey, the one democratic country in the region (at least until recently), has re-Islamized a society that had been ruthlessly purged of religion. Kemal Attaturk's campaign of secularization had appealed deeply to Turkey's secular elites, but most Turks remained deeply pious and traditional, and thus welcomed Erdogan's assault on liberalism. As the Brookings scholar Shadi Hamid argues in *The Temptations of Power*, a more democratic Middle East, should it arrive, is bound to be less liberal.

The popularity of liberal principles has been grossly over-estimated. Liberalism is less a magnet pulling history along than a peak to be reached after a long climb, during which it is always possible to slip. Over time, the liberal order has acquired new dimensions that render it yet harder to scale. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the principle that individual human rights must at times override sovereign authority, although thoroughly amenable to a post-Westphalian Europe, demands a great deal of states that are still becoming accustomed to having their own authority. Many of the new rights codified in Western law, such as the right to gay marriage, threaten religious convictions as well as settled ways of life. Liberalism progresses, of course, by slowly re-shaping public opinion until the barriers give way. Nevertheless, the struggle between liberal secularism and religious traditionalism has proven much more equal than seemed to be the case 25 years ago. One need only look at the way Russia's Vladimir Putin, seeking sources of legitimacy as his nation's economy continues to disintegrate, has made himself a tribune of the Russian Orthodox church and a stout warrior fighting against Western moral values.

Of all the recent additions to the canon of liberalism, none will demand more of the public than the cosmopolitan ideals invoked by advocates of immigration and the acceptance of refugees. At the outset of the refugee crisis, Angela Merkel told her citizens that the obligation to take refugees would "occupy and change" Germany. That was a brave admission. However, once the German people came to understand the magnitude of the challenge they began to rebel. What would it mean to have so many strangers in their midst? Would the newcomers become German or, what was more likely, would Germans have to accept new habits, values, accents and food habits? Urban elites, who cherished diversity, spoke of the refugees as agents of national renewal, but town-dwellers feared the loss of a cherished lifestyle. Voters in the conservative and less prosperous cities of the east began to turn to the right-wing Alternative For Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD) party, and to the anti-immigrant movement known as Pegida. The refugees nevertheless also turned out to pose a threat to Germany's progressives. The spate of sexual assaults attributed to the newcomers at the New Year gathering in Cologne seemed to indicate that many of the young men Germany proposed to absorb had no concept of the norms the German people took for granted. Hard-up workers in Leipzig were not the only ones who were fearful of the cost of taking in a million refugees from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

It is tempting to view the threats to the liberal world order as early warning signs of a new Dark Age. Roger Cohen gloomily observed that the era of liberal democracy had been "a brief interlude," and that most of human history was characterized by "infallible sovereignty, absolute power derived from God, domination and serfdom, and subjection to what Isaiah Berlin called 'the forces of anti-rational mystical bigotry.'"[5] If this is so, then dedicated liberals have little recourse save to mount the ramparts and fight with the few tools available to them: op-ed articles, moral philosophy, town-hall meetings and targeted development assistance. On the other hand, if it is recognized that the liberal world order now makes demands with which many liberals, not to mention perfectly rational conservatives, are uncomfortable, the answer must be to re-think certain liberal shibboleths.

Secularism, for example, has proved to be a false god. Political philosopher Michael Walzer reluctantly acknowledges in *The Paradox of Liberation*[6] that the dream of secular social democracy has crumbled in the face of the human need for transcendent meaning. Indeed, Christian thinkers such as Reinhold Niebuhr had warned of the hollowness of secular liberal culture in the first years of the post-war world. Fukuyama was concerned that the loneliness and individualism of the liberal credo might be its weak points. It is best to accept this truth, and to recognize that the craving for spiritual rather than purely rational answers, the wish for communal organizations to stand between the individual and the state, is a fixed element of life. More controversially, one needs to accept that conservative, religious societies in the Arab world and elsewhere will make illiberal choices as they democratize. People have the right to freely choose illiberal ends.

Similarly, people cannot, and certainly should not be shamed out of their attachment to a familiar world in the name of cosmopolitanism. Elites who travel effortlessly over the face of the globe value nothing more than the spice of variety. However, most people stay close to the place in which they were born, and would like that place to stay just the way it has always been. Such a wish cannot always be granted, but neither should it be simply discarded in the name of multiculturalism. Perhaps, for example, Brexit could have been avoided had the UK had

5 Ibid.

6 M. Walzer, *The Paradox of Liberation: Secular Revolutions and Religious Counterrevolutions*, Yale University Press, 2015.

the right to limit the number of EU citizens who arrived annually. Doing so would not have mollified xenophobes who hate hearing foreign languages spoken on the streets, but it might have reassured many others that EU membership did not require the sacrifice of a familiar world.

The same principle applies to refugees. The jingoistic anti-refugee campaign in Hungary, as well as the harsh crackdown in Denmark, constitute unacceptable violations of European norms, but states should not be expected to follow Germany's open-door policy. Indeed, Merkel herself came to recognize that she could not ask citizens to accept what looked like the surrender of their own borders, and so reached a deal with Turkey that cut off the flow of refugees to Europe. For this she was castigated by human-rights organizations, who accused her of violating the terms of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Merkel nevertheless understood that she could not act without popular consent: international law pulled her one way, democracy another. Liberal principles cannot be reduced to a political suicide pact and Europe will have to find a way of limiting the damage from the refugee crisis without violating its humanitarian obligations.

The liberal world order has not only survived over the last seventy years, it has also spread and deepened. This is an extraordinary tribute to those who devised and founded it, yet the teleological foundations of the system are wobbling. It can no longer be assumed that the direction of history is preordained. The world order may become less consensually liberal as new states take their place in its upper ranks. Authoritarianism has proved more durable, and more popular, than was once supposed. Democratizing states may choose illiberal means, while citizens in liberal democracies are turning against some of the core commitments that have upheld the post-war order. It may be, as both Francis Fukuyama and John Ikenberry have argued, that the liberal world order will persist so long as no rival ideology proves more appealing, but the crisis of faith will be enough to seriously weaken its hold. For those of us who cherish liberalism there is no business more pressing than to determine which elements of this faith must be defended at all costs, and which must be re-drafted to suit the world in which we find ourselves.

2

2. Present at the (re)creation? Words and deeds in an emerging Trump foreign policy and the consequences for European security

Kari Möttölä

INTRODUCTION: A EUROPEAN STRATEGY IN TRANSITION UNDER AN UNPREDICTABLE LEADERSHIP

With US domestic and external drivers in a state of flux, the makers of the country's grand strategy in the transition from the Obama legacy to the Trump administration are facing a turning point in European security. What may be called for are policy innovations and initiatives of a present-at-the-creation moment[1] of the Western role not only in Europe but also in the world order.

Although it is trivial to characterize the ongoing situation as the ending of the post-Cold-War period, albeit with ambiguity about the nature and extent of the change, it has become justifiable to ask whether the liberal fundaments of the international order created in the aftermath of the Second World War are crumbling as well.

The leadership role of the United States has been the subject of narratives and politics for a long time, but it is the destructive implications in the "America First" rhetoric of Donald Trump and his

1 Analogous to US leadership in constructing postwar institutions and policies for Europe, cf. D. Acheson, *Present at the Creation, My Years in the State Department*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1969. As a sign of "an Acheson renaissance", an ambitious bipartisan think-tank report by the Brookings Institution aimed at the incoming president took its core theme for building "situations of strength" from Acheson's strategic musings in 1950 (ibid., p. 378) on the proper way of addressing the Soviet challenge in the escalating phase of the Cold War, see D. Chollet et al., *Building "Situations of Strength", A National Security Strategy for the United States*, Foreign Policy at Brookings, Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., February 2017.

acolytes for key elements of the US grand strategy such as alliances, free trade and multilateralism that has turned a new page in the national and international discourse.

The sustainability of the liberal international order, shaped and led by the United States as a grand strategic goal encompassing values and interests throughout the seven decades of the post-WWII era, and more significantly in the quarter-century of the post-Cold-War period, is seemingly being questioned, or even endangered, by the new US administration.[2]

It is not simply that liberalism as an international project and a modernization model has been in retreat due to power shifts, economic crises and impasses in global governance, the Trump phenomenon representing an extreme form of backlash in what is being experienced throughout market democracies as uneven benefits and disadvantages of globalization. It is also because the will and intention of the US administration to place engagement by leadership of the world order at the centre of its grand foreign-policy strategy has become a core issue of politics rather than marginal or academic speculation.[3]

At the same time, the early months of the Trump presidency have underscored the relevance of the relationship between words and deeds in foreign policy making and analysis. It is not only the international and structural constraints on any dramatic change in US policy that need to be closely investigated, but also the impact of agency.

Trump and his inner circle may be ideological radicals with deeply-rooted aims to bring about revolutionary changes in foreign policy, but the political and institutional conditions of the domestic political system as well as the substantial benefits of international engagement and leadership to US national interests could turn the scales in favour of the forces of moderation in the administration as a whole.

Given the rise of "mainstreamers" and "stabilizers", a nightmarish scattering of European security ordering is not necessarily in the offing as a consequence of US policies.[4] Even if inconsistency appears to be

2 J. S. Nye, Jr., "Will the Liberal Order Survive? The History of an Idea", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 96, no. 1, Jan/Feb 2017, pp.10–16; A-M. Slaughter, "How to Succeed in the Networked World, A Grand Strategy for the Digital Age", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 95, no. 6, Nov/Dec 2016, pp. 76–89.

3 R. Niblett, "Liberalism in Retreat, The Demise of a Dream", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 96, no. 1, Jan/Feb 2017, pp.17–24; M. J. Mazarr, "The Once and Future Order, What Comes After Hegemony?", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 96, no. 1, Jan/Feb 2017, pp. 25–32; R. Kagan, "The twilight of the liberal world order", *Brookings Report*, 24 January 2017.

4 D. Ignatius, "Reality is creeping into the Trump show", *The New York Times*, 21 March 2017; D. Rothkopf, "Can Trump Learn?", *Foreign Policy*, 5 April 2017.

the most consistent theme in the young presidency, the outcome may be closer to mainstream choices on matters related to NATO and Russia, for example, whereas unconventional departures may be gaining sufficient support in areas such as economic nationalism and counterterrorism. The caveat in all this is that the crisis conduct of the Trump presidency is beyond predictability.[5]

This chapter investigates the US strategic reorientation in shaping the European security order at what is considered the third post-WWII turning point following the Cold-War and post-Cold-War eras. Special attention is given to the shape and role of the transatlantic partnership as an instrumental objective of foreign policy amidst increasingly explicit great-power rivalry as a principal theme of world politics.

The analytical framework is wider Europe or the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region as a geostrategic space, as it emerged from the outcome of the Second World War and was consequently shaped by the geopolitical Cold-War division into western and eastern structures, with geo-economics introduced as another key tool. In its post-Cold-War form the putatively mega-regional order has been framed and driven by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Given that the creativity and sustainability of its leadership have been key determinants and drivers of US trajectories, answers regarding the future variant of the European security order should be sought from among the choices at hand in Washington, DC, going forward.

FACING A THIRD TURNING POINT IN EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL ORDERING

The transatlantic partnership as a core strategy of the West has been a key variable in the transformational and transactional phases of European security as shaped by geostrategic and normative drivers.

(i) First, the collaboration of the leading democracies across the Atlantic world that emanated from the great-power *diktat* of Yalta in 1945 was aimed at promoting and sustaining liberal ascendancy as a normative and institutional model of modernization and cooperation, as underpinned by the Bretton Woods institutions, the Marshall Plan and the

5 T. Wright, "Trump's Jekyll and Hyde Foreign Policy", *Politico Magazine*, 13 March 2017.

European Community. The security-cum-political purpose was to build up deterrence and defence, served militarily by NATO and politically by Western European integration, to contain the challenge by the Soviet Union to the transatlantic west in a bipolar Europe.

(ii) Second, addressing the vision of "a Europe whole and free and at peace"[6] that had formed by the end of the Cold War as the liberalist consummation of its primary mission, the transatlantic partnership took on the dual operational task of spreading political and economic reforms eastwards and leading the process of normative and institutional ordering in the wider European region. The OSCE was viewed as a forum and framework for applying the common norms of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975[7] across an all-European space, including a democratic Russia and the rest of the post-Soviet space.

(iii) Navigating a third phase in the post-WWII European trajectory, the transatlantic community has been weakened internally by political and economic regression, particularly and more seriously within the European Union, and tested by the problematic of solidarity and burden sharing within NATO. At the same time, the US-led West is facing a strategic rift with a revisionist Russia in the European and Eurasian space, and a challenge from an ascendant China seizing the strategic opportunities to advance in East Asia and elsewhere arising from the regional fragmentation of the global order.

Although an inter-governmental organization with no enforcement or supranational powers, the OSCE has served as a thermometer of European security ordering. The intermittent discussion in expert

6 As eloquently put by George H.W. Bush in Mainz, Germany, on 31 May 1989, commenting on the world "at the end of one era and the beginning of another".

7 *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Final Act*, Government Printing Centre, Helsinki 1975.

panels on the authority, capability and competence of the OSCE has reflected the ambiguity and persistence of failures and deficits in the process of co-operation among the participating states and their multilateral institutions, in what was declared in the Paris summit of 1990 to be a "new Europe".[8]

The period of growth of the OSCE in the 1990s into a regime of joint norms and common institutions, while tackling the Balkan wars gave way to anxiety and stagnation in the 2000s with the split of the West over Iraq and the emergence of Russia as a dissatisfied power having not digested the consequences of the demise of the Soviet Union. The Georgia war in 2008 gave a warning sign, and the conflict over Ukraine that started in 2014 has become a symbol and driver of what has gone astray in the security order. Not only the enlargement of NATO but also the widening sphere of partners of the EU have become bones of geostrategic contention with Russia, while the US has been pursuing a varying presence.

THE GAME OF NARRATIVES IN RECONSTITUTING THE EUROPEAN SECURITY ORDER

The chequered history explains the challenge of identifying a post-post-Cold-War era, given that there is no common understanding on the roots and dynamics of what may have become a systemic crisis of European security.

A "competition of narratives" between Russia and the West and the additional participation of actors from the middle ground emphasize the role of discursive claims regarding the causes and effects of the crisis. The failure of the authoritative track-two panel set up in 2015 to reflect on reconsolidating "European security as a common project" demonstrated the conflictual nature of narratives as a foreign-policy tool. The group was forced to settle for printing three alternative versions: Russian, Western and the countries in-between.[9]

8 *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, Paris 1990; K. Möttölä, "To Sustain a Strategic Position in Turbulent Times: Efforts to Strengthen the OSCE", in Mina Zirojevic and Vesna Coric, eds., *Forty Years since the Signing of the Helsinki Final Act*, Institute of Comparative Law, Belgrade 2015, pp. 307–326.

9 *Back to Diplomacy*, Final Report and Recommendations of the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project, November 2015.

Faced with instability and fragmentation along the fault lines between Russia and NATO/the EU, the experts issued a "back to diplomacy" appeal. A follow-on track-two report, lamenting the lost consensus on a common normative basis, devised a code of conduct for dialogues within the OSCE context between Russia and NATO, Russia and the EU, and the European Union and the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) as paths for recovery of the common purpose and action on European security.[10]

From the strategic point of view, narrative is a means used by policy makers to construct a shared meaning of the past, present and future of international politics and thereby to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors. From the discursive perspective it is an identity-driven and identity-reproducing process, whereby nations, leaders or people strive to connect their roles and destinies with internal and external developments. The need for narrative is at its greatest when there is a change in policy underway or expected.[11]

As interpretations of developments in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region, narratives serve to rationalize and validate strategies and actions. The crisis in and around Ukraine has brought matters to a head in narratives commenting upon the status of a security community as an agreed goal of the OSCE and an area of mutual responsibility.[12]

Both the initial Russian narrative and the Western counter-narrative characterize the current situation as a rupture of the established order based on post-Cold War commitments and understanding. Russia sees the breakdown as a cause of adversarial developments, whereas for the West it is an effect. A political settlement remains out of reach, underlined by the contention whereby the West sees Russia as a revisionist power seeking to prevent and roll back the enlargement of the liberal order into Central and Eastern Europe, whereas Russia sees herself as protecting a historical and privileged security zone while being encircled by the US-led West.

Russia has been more assertive in the game of narration over a longer period. The aggravated Western response has raised the question of whether Russia's actions should be treated as violations

10 *European Security – Challenges at the Societal Level*, OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, Vienna, 2016, p. 9. Conventional arms control is also raised as a potential game-changer.

11 Cf. R. R. Krebs, *Narrative and the Making of US National Security*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015.

12 As formulated in the *Astana Commemorative Declaration, Towards a Security Community*, issued by the OSCE Astana Summit Meeting, 3 December 2010.

of OSCE-related obligations or interpreted as a rejection of post-Cold-War security governance in general. For the West, the implications of Russia's adoption of spheres of interest violate key principles of the Helsinki Final Act, and its calls for a European "security treaty" represent an unacceptable attempt to overturn the agreed rule of "mutually reinforcing institutions and organizations each with its own area of action and responsibility"[13].

In an unsettling and fractured situation, the common narrative related to the regime based on the Helsinki and Paris documents is being contested, complemented or supplanted.[14] At the same time, the situation testifies to a set of issues beyond the Russian-Western relationship, such as the rise of socio-economic narratives securitizing the financial and economic crisis and globalization in general. A varied set of values and interests is reflected in national narratives, which do not evaluate the great-power relations with identical attention or intensity.

Although not widely viewed as a new cold war[15], narratives picture the situation as *fluctuation* in international relations, *rupture* in the established order, or as the *transformation* of order resulting from the other two eventualities. Consequently, analysts struggle to determine whether, in a cyclical or evolutionary manner, *a new era*, *a new order* or *an indeterminate phase* is looming ahead.

THREE FUTURES FOR A RENEWED EUROPEAN SECURITY ORDER

Analytically and conceptually, the European security order is a combination of three modes: a security *complex* driven by structural factors such as power and interests; a security *regime* comprising functional factors that drive the governance of common norms and institutions; and a security *community* framed by ideational factors such as identity and values.

13 *The Challenges of Change*, CSCE Helsinki Document 1992, Helsinki, 1992. The Medvedev initiative was expressed in speeches in Berlin and Evian in 2008.

14 "Helsinki+40: The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe under a Stress Test", *Security and Human Rights*, Special Issue, vol. 25, no. 2, 2014 (published 2015).

15 Even if the US were reassessing the post-Cold-War order in Europe, pundits foresaw early on that the relationship with Russia could lead to a new divergence of interests instead of strategic collusion, cf. I. Krastev & S.Holmes, "Get Ready for the Most Violent Détente Ever", *Foreign Policy*, 21 November 2016; A. J. Motyl, "Trump and Putin's Game Theory, Why Cooperation Won't Last", *Foreign Affairs*, 1 February 2017.

Consequently, in historical and CSCE/OSCE parlance, these three patterns for reordering European security could be envisaged as follows:

- A rearrangement of the security complex: as a negotiated outcome among the great powers on spheres of influence and enforcement structures, produced by power shifts and the reappraisal of security interests ("Yalta II");
- A readjustment of the security regime: reaching a multilateral understanding on the implementation of established norms and the functioning of common institutions, as a new phase in interdependence and integration ("Paris II");
- A recasting of the security community: forging a multilateral agreement on revising the common norms and principles of international law and politics, as submission to changes in the ideational situation ("Helsinki II").

EUROPEAN SECURITY ORDER

SECURITY COMPLEX	*SECURITY REGIME*	*SECURITY COMMUNITY*
POWER "Yalta II"	**GOVERNANCE "Paris II"**	**IDENTITY "Helsinki II"**
INTERESTS	INSTITUTIONS	NORMS VALUES
STRUCTURAL FACTOR	*FUNCTIONAL FACTORS*	*IDEATIONAL FACTORS*

Figure 1:
A schematic model for analysing the European security order in its modes and drivers of change: developments in power, governance and identity, shaped by structural, functional and ideational factors, in ordering European security as a combination of security complex, security regime and security community, with the respective historical patterns.

Reflecting consensus among pundits, the recent track-two report does not identify a need to recast the security order, although the need to update the way it is implementing agreed rules and principles, as well as co-operative objectives is recognized. The Helsinki Final Act would not be renegotiated but a shared confirmation of its obligations could be re-established in a diplomatic process. According to the logic of the report, with a resolution of the "conflict in and around

Ukraine" as a precondition, a path would be opened to an OSCE summit restating how the agreed norms and principles would be applied in the new circumstances. Such a development would be analogous to the adoption of the charter for a new Europe in the 1990 Paris summit at the ending of the Cold War. [16]

A SKETCH OF US FOREIGN POLICY IN A HISTORIC TRANSITION

The trajectory of the order of security and governance in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian space will be critically influenced by the choices of the United States in pursuing its strategic and normative interests amid global turbulence, with geopolitics and geo-economics in simultaneous ascendancy.

At stake is the responsibility of the US as a transatlantic and all-European power, which has been a core commitment of its foreign policy whether under the political banner of pragmatic realism or of activist idealism. Alternative strategies for restraint such as offshore balancing, not to speak of nationalist isolationism, have been marginalized by the dominant patterns of engagement with broad bipartisan support.

The legacy of Barack Obama's foreign and security policy, which "redefined the purpose and exercise of American power for a new era", offers an analytical and practical baseline for resolving the current situation. [17] Addressing the challenge of relative decline as narrated in customary parlance[18], and recognizing the limits of US power, the Obama administration exercised caution in the use of force in regional conflicts, and counted on the logic of strategic patience ("the long game") with the aim of sustaining and renewing global leadership.

While rebalancing strategic attention and resource introduction to Asia in response to the ascendance and challenge of China, the US also maintained its indispensable role in the security and defence of alliances and partnerships in Europe.

Engaging in ambitious trade negotiations across the transatlantic and Asia-Pacific mega-regions (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, TTIP; Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP) the US pursued

16 European Security, op. cit.

17 D. Chollet, *The Long Game, How Obama Defied Washington and Redefined America's Role in the World*, Public Affairs, New York, 2016, p. xiii.

18 H. Brands & P. Feaver, "Stress-Testing American Grand Strategy", *Survival*, vol. 58, no. 6, Dec2016/Jan2017, pp. 93–120.

a wedging strategy whereby the community of liberal democracies was to maintain the initiative in economic rule-making. In response to geopolitics, the Obama administration pursued a hedging strategy of selective engagement in the patchwork of world politics, in which revisionist and rising great powers are competing for influence over their respective regions.[19]

The Obama administration extended the area of great-power co-operation with its initiatives for combating global problems: specific examples include global warming, in leadership and together with China, as well as nuclear proliferation, capped by the Iran deal with contributions from the P5 and the EU. On the other hand, attempts to resolve intractable regional conflicts, in the wider Middle East and the Korean Peninsula as well as elsewhere, were failing because of a local impasse among rogue actors and diverging interests among the great powers.

Strategic-level reorientation took place on the tactical level, with a checklist-driven approach whereby decisions were taken to ensure balanced and sustained outcomes, providing specific solutions to specific problems. Obama's leadership style tended to place as much importance on what not to do as on what to do, while recognizing fallibility and expressing scepticism regarding American exceptionalism. With a chequered pattern of democracy promotion and crisis management, the Obama era witnessed distinct victories for liberal internationalism, particularly in free trade, arms control, climate change, sanctions against violations of international law and multilateral institutionalism.[20]

The combination of running foreign policy as "gardening" the field of co-operation and seeking perfectionist results in taking initiatives locked the Obama administration into the denial of a need for changing the course as international relations took unwelcome turns, counter to the initial presuppositions. The rise of illiberalism and nationalism, ethnic and xenophobic populism, economic protectionism and anti-globalism, blatant forms of power politics and cross-border violence

19 K. Möttölä, "US Grand Strategy in Flux: Geo-economics, Geopolitics and the Liberal International Order" (forthcoming).

20 Chollet, op.cit., pp. 215–231; K. Möttölä, "Obama's grand strategy as legacy", in M. Aaltola & A.Kronlund, eds., *After Rebalance, Vision for the future of US foreign policy and global role beyond 2016*, FIIA Report 46, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki, 2016, pp. 39–55.

seemed to turn the transactional – if not systemic – tide against Obama's legacy of enlightened cosmopolitanism.[21]

Positioned in the American heritage of schools of thought in foreign policy,[22] Obama appears as a Wilsonian liberal internationalist, intent on the use of multilateralism driven by great-power cooperation as well as regimes of norms and institutions. Although believing in shaping history via a long-term and values-driven strategy, as an executor Obama was attracted by the deliberative approach of moderate republicanism (Eisenhower, Bush 41) and the Hamiltonian philosophy of focusing on the economic side of globalism.

Long before the Obama-Trump transition, a line of narration had been warning against financial and strategic overstretching in American interventionist and globalist foreign policy. This was reminiscent of the Jeffersonian model of perfecting democracy at home as the basis for foreign policy, which was another element in Obama's thinking.

It was not the call for Jeffersonian nationalism on which Donald Trump rode to power: it was Jacksonian populist nationalism, not seeking to leave a minimalist footprint in global affairs but following a unilateralist pattern in the use of power, wielding a big stick to be used against domestic and external adversaries.[23]

In contrast to the neoconservative attempt at unilateralism aimed at shaping the world order by promoting the liberalist agenda of democratic values, in objectives if not in means that coincide with the trait of liberal interventionism, Jacksonian policy focuses on the nation state and only intermittently or derivatively on foreign affairs. Whereas Jeffersonians associate the idea of American exceptionalism with a special kind of democracy, which may call for the country to turn inwards, the Jacksonian mission is to protect the American individual, society and economy as a model, prevent external influences and act unilaterally outwards when needed.

As a narrative, exceptionalism makes America different from Europe. What sets Trump's storytelling of tribalism and nativism apart from

21 H. Brands, "Barack Obama and the Dilemmas of American Grand Strategy", *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2017; S. Hamid, "Obama and the limits of 'fact-based' foreign policy", *Order from Chaos*, Brookings Institutions, 19 January 2017; A. Shatz, "Obama Hoped to Transform the World, It Transformed Him", *The New York Times*, 10 January 2017.

22 W. R. Mead, *Special Providence, American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*, A. A. Knopf, New York, 2001.

23 W. R. Mead, "The Jacksonian Revolt, American Populism and the Liberal Order", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 96, no. 2, Mar/Apr 2017, pp. 2–7.

that of a series of his predecessors, not least from Obama's narration of domestic inclusiveness and international partnership, is the stress on the exclusive sovereignty of the American people.[24]

Investing in the effect of identity politics on his political base, Trump in his version of Jacksonian philosophy pits the governing elite against the people, cosmopolitanism against American individualism and globalization against the national interest. This means prioritizing the politics of division over the search for a durable coalition, which experience proves is crucial to sustain foreign-policy leadership.[25]

As a doctrine of foreign policy, Trump's vision of "America First" is a revolt against the core aspects of the liberal international order. At the same time, the populist Trump phenomenon as economic nationalism could be considered a consequence and not a cause of a critical phase in market capitalism. Globalization is disrupting social progress and political stability in developed democracies, as the leading power itself challenges and casts doubt on the benefits of a global order that ensued from US leadership as a provider of global common goods.[26]

NATO AND EU RESPONSES TO RUSSIAN TRANSGRESSIONS

As a fragile part of the post-Cold-War order, the United States with its European allies and partners have been addressing "an Eastern Question"[27] with geopolitical and geo-economic dimensions. The focus

24 P. Beinart, "How Trump Wants to Make America Exceptional Again", *The Atlantic*, 2 February 2017; D. W. Drezner, "America the unexceptional, Trump's brand of nativism could be the death knell for American exceptionalism", *The Washington Post*, 1 February 2017; M. Boot, "Trump's 'America First' Is the Twilight of American Exceptionalism", *Foreign Policy*, 22 November 2016.

25 R.R. Krebs, "Is Foreign Policy Leadership a Fool's Errand?", *The National Interest*, March–April 2017, 12 February 2017.

26 Recognizing the rise of a president who is critical of the international order, and understanding popular anxieties about globalization, the bipartisan expert group is making a determined effort to convince the incoming administration of the advantages of its goals for a continued US strategy of engagement and commitment in the rules-based international order, albeit in a renovated and reinvigorated form, see *Building "Situation of Strength"*, op. cit. Bearing in mind that most of the Republican members of the group had disavowed candidate Trump, and none were expected to be invited to join his circle of advisors, doubts were expressed at the launch event (24 February 2017) over the impact of the message on the White House, which was recruiting experts from the extremist margins of the think tank community, cf. M. Anton, "America and the Liberal International Order", *American Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 2017, pp. 113–25.

27 D. S. Hamilton and S. Meister, eds., *The Eastern Question, Russia, the West and Europe's Grey Zone*, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Washington, DC, 2016.

in diplomacy is on the common neighbourhood between the European Union and NATO on the one side and Russia on the other, with the Ukraine crisis as the crucible.

From the perspective of the United States, Europe must be viewed separately from Asia as a key geostrategic region when it weighs its international engagement and commitment. While facing the challenge of a revisionist Russia in Europe, the US takes on a similar responsibility as a guarantor power for the periphery of the ascendant China.

It is not only a question of how the US will find a balance between the two pivotal regions, drawing from the added geopolitical and geo-economic value of its alliances and partnerships, to prevent the weakening or collapse of the liberal order *by default*. The onset of the Trump presidency has introduced an alternative scenario to that of the leading liberal power submitting *by design* to strategic regression towards a multipolar power system that allowed Russia and China to gain control over their coveted spheres of interest.

The Obama administration handed over a record of measured response and reassurance to NATO allies facing Russian military adventurism, combined with collaboration with the EU in imposing economic sanctions against Russia for its transgressions in violating the sovereignty of Ukraine. With the combined Western countermeasures having halted the Russian-backed separatist military advance without providing Ukraine with lethal weapons, the US has allowed the European partners to lead the effort to reach a negotiated resolution of the conflict. The resolution will be based on the Minsk agreements in observance of the rules of the OSCE security order, to which the use of platforms and instruments offered by the organization will give added value.

Building positions of strength in the framework of the European Reassurance Initiative (later the European Deterrence Initiative) in response to Russian challenges, the US has enhanced its contribution to the interoperability and readiness of the NATO Alliance defence and deterrence posture, with a rotational and persistent presence of forward-based US combat forces in the eastern zone of responsibility.

Moreover, in a show of burden-sharing among European allies aiming to move defence spending closer to the two-per-cent/GDP goal stressed by the Trump administration as a condition for smooth partnership, the NATO Alliance has agreed to strengthen its multinational response force with a new spearhead unit, to increase military exercises and to introduce measures countering hybrid warfare and cyber threats. To deter Russia's anti-access/area-denial capability, NATO has focused on the Baltic Sea region with the forward deployment

of multinational battalions on the ground in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. A similar Russian–NATO configuration is emerging in the south–eastern region.[28]

In the broader transatlantic partnership, with the EU following up a new global strategy with spearheading efforts in the areas of security and defence, NATO and the EU have agreed on reinforced cooperation in the areas of societal resilience and countering hybrid threats, as well as in crisis management and complementary capability development.[29]

THE ANTITHESIS OF LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM?

Given the apparent persistence of President Trump's improvisational and situational approach to policy and publicity, the key question is whether he will be able to move from rhetoric to action and turn the United States into a Jacksonian–style rogue power inclined to disrupting the structures and practices of multilateral (global and regional) co–operation.[30]

Designs and moves derived from a narrowly defined national interest and drawn from an absolutist doctrine of sovereignty, as well as detachment from established responsibilities and commitments,

28 H. Binnendijk, "NATO's future: a tale of three summits", Center for Transatlantic Relations, Washington, DC, October 2016; A. Vershbow, Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 21 March 2017; General C. M. Scaparrotti, Statement in the Senate Committee on Armed Forces, 23 March 2017.

29 *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe, A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy,* June 2016; Council conclusions on implementing the EU global strategy in the area of security and defence, 14 November 2016; Joint declaration, 8 July 2016; D. S. Hamilton, ed., *Forward Resilience: Protecting Society in an Interconnected World,* Center for Transatlantic Relations, Washington, DC, 2016.

30 The missile strike against the Syrian air base (7 April 2017) may have complied with the criteria of Jacksonian unilateralism. The action was greeted by many as a measured step in the traditional US pattern, whereas others questioned whether it was taken for domestic political reasons. For a strategic change to an internationalist foreign policy the unexpected event would need to herald consistency in the enforcement of international law and the "responsibility to protect" principle as a pillar of the global order. In addition, with the Trump national security team dominated by generals, the punitive response to the Syrian use of chemical weapons was perceived as a sign of a military–directed propensity to use doses of hard power as quick and limited solutions to broad political and diplomatic challenges: this was a course of action Obama avoided in a similar situation in 2013, referring to it as a slippery slope. Cf. T. Wright, "What the Syria strikes tell us about Trump's foreign policy", *Order from Chaos*, Brooking Institution, 7 April 2017; A–M. Slaughter, "The strike on Syria heralds a new Trump doctrine", *The Financial Times*, 12 April 2017; J. Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine, R.I.P.", *The Atlantic*, 7 April 2017.

would introduce incalculability and arbitrariness as a driver of US foreign policy, not least regarding alliances and partnerships in Europe.

Regardless of whether the opening of the gap between rhetoric and action is attributable to a failure of coordination, a battle among factions within the administration or the use of the presidential pulpit as a gambit for achieving specific objectives through consequent deals in trade and security, Trump's unconventional governing style has been seriously destabilizing at home and abroad, and has engendered uncertainty, speculation and scenario-building.[31]

Unpredictable in its pattern of interventionism, the US would contribute to a security complex of great powers shaping the structure of international and European order. In cases of similarly nationalist and populist leadership profiles these powers would reach transactional agreements over the heads of smaller states, in contravention of the rules of a liberal world order.[32]

Just as the great powers would collide over the common practices of the OSCE security regime, their deals would tend to harm smaller countries located on fault lines or in grey zones. A hierarchy of sovereignty and competence based on power distribution would violate the idea of a rules-based order open for anyone to join and benefit from. Furthermore, countries that were not covered by security alliances or were placed in recognized zones of influence of one of the great powers would find themselves in an exposed position. A bilateral Russian-US deal on the neutralization of Ukraine would be an ominous case.

Consequently, and to an extent in any case, European members of NATO would be pressed to increase their contribution to national and regional security. To forestall a centrifugal spiral of members embracing populism[33] or seeking alternate sources of security, with a US bent on destabilizing Europe, the EU would hedge its bets by facilitating further integration and strengthening its autonomy in security and defence.[34] If the TTIP project were shelved the EU would

31 "The imperious presidency", FT interview, *The Financial Times*, 3 April 2017.

32 On the open and rules-based order, cf. G. J. Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0: America and the Dilemmas of Liberal World Order", *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 7, no 1, pp. 71–87; republished in: T. Dunne & T. Flockhart, eds., *Liberal World Orders*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, pp. 23–51.

33 T. Garton Ash, "Is Europe Disintegrating?", *The New York Review of Books*, 19 January 2017; H. Kundnani, "President Trump, the U.S. Security Guarantee, and the Future of European Integration", *Policy Brief*, no. 048, The German Marshall Fund, 2017.

34 J. Dempsey, "The Specter of Post-Atlanticist Europe", *Carnegie Europe*, 2 February 2017; S. Biscop, "Oratorio pro PESCO", *Egmont Paper* 91, January 2017; A. Thomson, "Security Autonomy for Europe?", European Leadership Network, 7 April 2017.

be bracing itself for a tug of war over future trade relations across the Atlantic, and for a spate of seeking partners globally.[35]

EFFECTS AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE TRUMP POLICY

The alarmism in the political atmosphere gives good reason to consider the domestic and international constraints on the drastic deviation from liberal internationalism in US foreign policy.[36]

As far as elite and public opinion is concerned, a long-standing bipartisan pact has supported the core commitment to an active US leadership role, while the nation at large has been following opinion leaders in administration and Congress. Although such continuity was measured in surveys over the 2016 election cycle, signs of erosion have emerged in the elite consensus and public support. By politicizing the core criteria of a liberal foreign policy such as democracy, alliance and an open global economy, the Trump campaign aggravated partisan polarization and public insecurity, which had been smouldering due to discontent with setbacks in domestic and foreign policy.[37]

Despite the constant battle of narratives over foreign-policy choices, the established and dominant narrative has argued for a liberal internationalist stance as a calculated pursuit to protect and advance US national interests. Promoting principles such as democracy and human rights, building coalitions and leading alliances, contributing to multilateral institutions and trading globally, the long-term benefits of sticking to the line would surpass any results Trump's deal-making or renegotiation might produce for the short term. In addition, as the narrative goes, the position the US has acquired is based on hard bargaining, and abrupt or drastic changes in the US stance would not go without response or retaliation by friends and adversaries alike in the international community.[38]

Consequently, despite the mixed signals from the Trump administration, mainstream think tanks express confidence in the

35 I. Bond, *The EU, the Eurasian Economic Union and One Belt, One Road, Can they work together?* Centre for European Reform, March 2017; S. Biscop, "Europe and the Great Powers: Playing our Trump Cards", *Security Policy Brief*, no. 84, Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, April 2017.

36 "Is Liberal Internationalism Still Alive?", *Policy Roundtable 1–6*, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University, 14 March 2017.

37 J. Busby, Essay, in *Policy Roundtable*, ibid.

38 S. Chaudoin, H. V. Milner & D. Tingley, Essay, in *Policy Roundtable*, ibid.

benefits of the global system the US has created and sustained. In a response pattern from the early Cold-War era, experts advise the administration to meet regional and global challenges from a strengthened position together with European and other like-minded nations, albeit that bargaining may lead to adjustments in the European security order.[39]

The reports stress the primacy of Western unity in the NATO-EU nexus for going forward and leveraging conditionality in engagement with Russia. Building on the strategy of the Obama administration, expert consensus calls for a (somewhat) harder and less risk-adverse approach in contesting Russia's strategic advances.

The relationship with Russia has become a central strategic issue that will shape Western interests not only in European security but also globally. With the TTIP process stalled, the geo-economic renovation of the transatlantic base remains uncertain, as an anti-free trade atmosphere in American polity extends beyond the Trump campaign. Although the strategic significance of trade is recognized, the continuation of the TTIP process as such is not forced onto the agenda. As for going forward geopolitically, in a mode of enhanced continuity the US strategy would be to maintain or enlarge the range of conditional sanctions against Russia, leverage a unified NATO's capabilities in deterring traditional and both cyber and hybrid threats, and support a resilient EU against political destabilization. Game changers with Russia would be sought in conventional and nuclear arms control as well as in counterterrorism and regional conflict management when mutually advantageous.[40]

39 B. Jones & W. Moreland, "To negotiate from strength, Team Trump has to build 'situations of strength'", *Order from Chaos*, Brookings Institution, 24 March 2017.

40 Cf. J. Smith & A. Twardowski, "The Future of U.S.-Russian Relations", *Strategy & Statecraft Papers*, Center for a New American Security, Washington, DC, January 2017; U. Kühn, *U.S.-Russian Relations and the Future Security of Europe*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC, 24 January 2017; A. Jain, et al., *Strategy of "Constrainment", Countering Russia's Challenge to the Democratic Order*, The Atlantic Council, 2017; K. H. Hicks et al., *Recalibrating U.S. Strategy toward Russia, A New Time for Choosing*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, Washington, DC, March 2017; Eugene Rumer, et al, "Trump and Russia, The Right Way to Manage Relations", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 96, no. 2, Mar/Apr, 2017, pp. 12–19.

It was in policies towards Russia and European security that the juxtaposition of rhetoric and action first became clarified in the foreign policy of the Trump administration. Given the aggravation of relations with Russia and the enhanced position of moderates in the national security team, the US hastened to confirm its commitment to NATO and the joint Western stand on sanctions against Russia, largely following the "Obama plus" policy suggested by the mainstream think tanks. A bilateral US–Russian "deal" on European security, and even transactional cooperation over Syria and the wider Middle East, became increasingly distant.

Despite the elements of a conventional pattern, the policy moves taken on Russian and European security do not necessarily signal the transition to a fixed strategy. Political and diplomatic gestures do not undo strategic obstacles that have arisen in complex domestic and international situations. The key elements of choice facing the transatlantic partnership in the US/NATO/EU nexus lie in the concepts and policies of deterrence and security ordering.

For *deterrence* to be a workable analytical and policy tool it needs to be deconstructed.[41]

Existential deterrence – as a specific form of *general* deterrence – pertains to the norms- and values-driven commitment to common defence within NATO and among its members, as well as security-related cooperation with key partners, and to the joint Western leadership of the US–EU political and economic partnership in the liberal world order.

Diverging normative and societal trends between Europe and America have weakened existential deterrence. The main driver of uncertainty is the conditional approach to alliances and trade agreements by the populist American President, who is keen on a turn to detachment from commitments considered disadvantageous to US interests and/or run by asymmetrical contributions.

As a result, the transatlantic bond – although not tested in an existential crisis – is in danger of becoming ambiguous in European and global change. On the practical level, transatlantic partners seem to go different ways in prioritising the sources and targets of the policy of *immediate* deterrence, albeit not in an irrevocable manner.

41 Cf. P. M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

As far as the Europeans are concerned, Russia has re-emerged as an anticipated and specific challenge calling for a strengthened and readjusted *extended* or forward deterrence in the NATO treaty area and in wider Europe. Conversely, the US is pointedly identifying violent (Islamic) terrorism originating in the Middle East as well as regional nuclear proliferators as the main enemies located outside Europe and calling for joint responses with allies.

Russia appears to the US as a potential or transactional partner rather than an immediate threat, which turns US engagement in European security into an open or tactical rather than a strategic issue. As far as the EU is concerned, transnational terrorism belongs to the category of potential and unspecified threats to be addressed in a wide set of security-policy instruments and societal resilience. By and large, sustaining the post-Cold-War OSCE security order would be a deterring factor by its nature and essence.

In effect, the US is driving a wedge in the transatlantic community of solidarity such that its allies and partners are looking to hedge their positions against consequent risks. To adopt and maintain a common policy of deterrence has emerged as a test of the coordination and solidarity in transatlantic relations.

	IMMEDIATE DETERRENCE	***GENERAL DETERRENCE***
UNITED STATES	*COUNTERTERRORISM*	*RUSSIA AS A CHALLENGE*
EU/NATO-EUROPE	*RUSSIA AS A CHALLENGE*	*COUNTERTERRORISM*

Figure 2:
The prioritization of policies and targets in two forms of deterrence by the transatlantic partners.

The US-European puzzle becomes more complex when the priorities of the transatlantic partners are analysed to address regression in the European *security order*. Viewed through the lenses of a security complex, regime or community as the driving force for adjustment and change, the US and Europe end up with diverging instrumental objectives.

Even given the duality of disrupters and mainstreamers, the US is focused on Europe predominantly as a power-driven security complex, and it is using its power and influence there to pursue geopolitical and geo-economic interests among the great powers within and outside the OSCE region. As for the security regime, in pursuing a policy

of conditional or selective engagement the US is leaving European partners and allies to share the main responsibility for and burden of institution building and crisis management. To the extent that the US is eschewing democracy promotion as a generic element of its grand strategy, while stressing the national identity, its interest in reviewing the implementation of OSCE-related common norms and values is limited.

Strengthened institutionalization covering NATO, EU and OSCE structures will be of primary interest to US allies and partners in Europe as a condition for wider and comprehensive stability. At the same time, the Europeans are inclined to assume greater autonomy in terms of security, albeit the emergence of spheres of influence in the context of power politics would be a strategic nightmare. Although the observance of existing common norms and principles is a precondition for a re-established and sustainable common security order, the idea of revisiting the OSCE normative acquis would be considered a slippery slope that could be utilized by nationalist and populist forces among the primary great powers of NATO and some members of the European Union.

	POWER	GOVERNANCE	IDENTITY
THE UNITED STATES	1	3	2
EU/NATO–EUROPE	2	1	3

Figure 3:
Priorities of instrumental goals in security ordering by the transatlantic partners.

A TRANSATLANTIC EUROPE AMIDST THREE FUTURES

Foresight analysis requires the re-examination of ideational trends and international structures for a sustainable transatlantic partnership.

Analytically, the Yalta, Helsinki and Paris scenarios could be repeated in the same pattern as they were imposed on and embedded in European security in post-WWII history. The initial rhetoric of the Trump administration foretold a "Yalta II" in the making, but consequent events have pointed to alternative futures.

The victorious great powers at Yalta (1945) dictated a redrawing of zones of influence with the consequent rearrangement of interstate

and societal governance reflecting the power shift produced by the war. The attempt at a concert of powers failed, to be replaced by ideational and structural bipolarity. The prerequisites for a concert do not exist today, either, with Russia challenging the structural primacy of the US and China pursuing revisionist strategies. On the other hand, US collusion with Russia would instigate a division of NATO and could lead to the rise of the EU as a competing power.[42]

The Helsinki summit (1975) coincided with an era of détente in which the status quo in the balance of power was recognized and the entrenched spheres of influence were registered. With incipient great-power cooperation in multilateralism, gates were opened for ideational transition within societies and common institutionalization across the wider region. Even if the US were to put into effect a transactional "America First" policy, with the EU adhering to the OSCE normative regime, there is no prospect of Western agreement with Russia on revising a core principle such as the freedom of choice.[43]

The Paris Charter (1990) was primarily about turning the OSCE *acquis* into reality in the context of multilateral governance aimed at all-European unification. A return to Paris would call for the US together with European NATO members and the EU to collate and focus their strategic priorities on regime-building as the main driver of a renewed European security order. Engaging Russia in a workable package of proposals, supplanting the interests of power politics, will require strategic innovation. In view of the aggravated situation of the later post-Cold-War era, a similar combination of will and capability that prevailed at the turn of the 1980s/1990s is unlikely to be regained.

The Helsinki–Paris security governance has not been attractive enough normatively, robust enough institutionally or collaborative enough in great-power politics to manage, mitigate or repel the rupture of the later post-Cold-War period. To avoid a great-power confrontation-to-collusion at "Yalta II" and a political deadlock at "Helsinki II", the downward spiral needs to be reversed towards "Paris II" (cf. Figure 1).

42 Cf. M. Mazarr & H. Brands, "Navigating Great Power Rivalry in the 21st Century", *War on the Rocks*, 5 April 2017.

43 While the "Follow-up" section of the Final Act rules over the continuation of the multilateral process with follow-up meetings on implementation, it also refers to the possibility of "a new Conference", which presumably would have a mandate to revisit the whole agenda including the "Decalogue" of principles guiding inter-state relations.

Ideally, as a result of clarifying the contradictions between words and deeds in US policy-making, and in tandem with European strategic reassessments within NATO and the European Union, a remodelled transatlantic partnership could succeed in keeping the West in the driving seat in European security ordering.

In as much as the US approach to engagement in European security is deemed a variable combination of deterrence and detachment, building a reformed and sustainable transatlantic agency will be a demanding effort. Overshadowed by ambiguity between the White House and the rest of the players in the executive branch, the situation on the ground throughout the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region remains volatile.

To resolve the contradiction, Trump's messaging has been taken both literally and seriously: literally as a storytelling narrative aimed at taking the initiative and gaining attention, acquiescence and support among domestic and foreign audiences in pursuit of change; and seriously as a tactical narrative with less-than-perfect implementation due to domestic and international constraints.

Based on current trends, it could be assumed that the respective priorities for policies of deterrence and security ordering in the United States and the EU/NATO-Europe will be a conditional mix of convergence and divergence. Although the transatlantic partnership is losing its geopolitical and geo-economic significance for the West, it should be possible flexibly to coordinate priorities for sustaining existential and immediate deterrence and achieving a practical rebalance between power-driven and regime-building tools in shaping the European security order.

Whether a post-post-Cold-War order will fulfil the criteria of "Paris II" and be called liberal in the post-war sense may be a far-fetched matter of foresight, but a restructured transatlantic partnership could prevent a slide down to a "Yalta II" order of power politics. As an object of narratives and strategies, the European security order is undergoing a deep rupture, not a mere spell of fluctuation in international relations. However, a disruptive transformation is not necessarily on the cards as far as transatlantic agency and structure are concerned.

3

3. Possible future trends in US foreign and security policies regarding the Baltic region and Europe

Aap Neljas

INTRODUCTION

Russian aggression in Ukraine increased concerns in the West about the security of the Baltic States. There is a general consensus in the West that Russian actions in Ukraine created deep instability within Europe of a type not witnessed since the end of the Cold War. It is a problem that affects Europe in general, and specifically the US-led NATO Alliance.[1]

Unlike Ukraine, the Baltic States are members of NATO, which means that Russian aggression against them would trigger Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty – the collective defence provision according to which an attack against any signatory is seen as an attack against all. This creates an obligation on the part of the United States and its alliance partners to be prepared to come to the assistance of the Baltic States, should Russia seek to actively and violently destabilize or out-and-out attack them.

President Barack Obama articulated and strongly affirmed that commitment in a speech he gave in September 2014 in the Estonian capital of Tallinn:

> *We will defend our NATO Allies, and that means every Ally. . . . And we will defend the territorial integrity of every single Ally… Because the defense of Tallinn and Riga and Vilnius is just as important as the defense of Berlin and*

1 "Russia: Implications for UK defence and security, First Report of Session 2016–17", *2016 House of Commons Defence Committee*, 5 July 2016, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmdfence/107/107.pdf, accessed 30 January 2017.

> *Paris and London … Article 5 is crystal clear: An attack on one is an attack on all. … We'll be here for Estonia. We will be here for Latvia. We will be here for Lithuania. You lost your independence once before. With* NATO*, you will never lose it again.*[2]

The question of protecting the Baltic States of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia was seen as largely hypothetical in NATO and the USA until Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, and is now one of the major challenges facing NATO. The location of the Baltic States, surrounded by Russian and Belarusian territory and connected to the rest of the Alliance by the narrow Suwalki corridor, has turned them into an oversized version of the former West Berlin.

My aim in this chapter is to analyse how the reactions of the US and NATO to the changed security situation in the Baltics and Europe developed, and how President Donald Trump's administration policy could unfold in the near future. I will also consider how this change in US administration policy could influence security in the Baltic States and Europe.

PREVIOUS US AND NATO ACTIONS CONCERNING SECURITY IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE BALTIC STATES

Much of NATO's post-2014 assurance to its Eastern members was based on the understanding that countries at risk could be rapidly given reinforcements. Russia's recent deployment of additional military forces and military equipment in its Western military district that could impede access to and constrain freedom of action in the Baltic region raises questions about this plan and about the Alliance's capabilities in Europe.

As a response to the Russian military build-up the Baltic States have increased their defence budgets and are adding new weaponry. This, however, raises the question of whether such a posture will fundamentally change the strategic picture as seen from Moscow.

2 "Remarks by President Obama to the People of Estonia" *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, 3 September 2014, Nordea Concert Hall Tallinn, Estonia, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/03/remarks-president-obama-people-estonia, accessed 30 January 2017.

In response to Russian actions in Ukraine and to fill the security vacuum in the Baltic States the US implemented new deterrence measures in 2015: expanding its presence across the region, the US Army began periodic rotations of armoured and airborne units to Poland and the Baltic states.[3]

The Obama administration then launched the European Reassurance Initiative, also in 2015, which envisages the addition of another armoured brigade in Europe. With the two existing brigades this will bring the total number of US brigades permanently on the European continent to three. There are also provisions regarding pre-positioning US military equipment in Europe, including the Baltic States. Funding was approved with strong bipartisan support in Congress, which recognizes the need to counter increasing Russian aggressiveness. The Obama administration had the foresight to quadruple funding for the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) in the 2017 federal budget.[4]

There is thus general recognition in the US and NATO that the threat from Russia will not go away in the foreseeable future and, in fact, may get worse. The Baltic States welcomed the decision[5] made at the July 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw to strengthen the US and NATO presence in the Baltic Sea region. NATO hopes that the deployment of some 4,000 troops (approximately 1,000 troops in each of the three Baltic States and Poland) will help to deter further aggression from Moscow.

The RAND Corporation examined the shape and probable outcome of a near-term Russian invasion of the Baltic States in a series of war games conducted between Summer 2014 and Spring 2015. The findings were unambiguous: as currently positioned, NATO cannot successfully defend the territory of its most exposed members.

Further war-gaming indicated that a NATO force of about seven brigades, including three heavily armoured brigades – adequately supported by airpower, land-based fire and other enablers on the

3 M. F. Cancian and L. Sawyer Samp, "The European Reassurance Initiative", *CSIS Critical questions*, 9 February 2016, https://www.csis.org/analysis/european-reassurance-initiative-0, accessed 30 January 2017.

4 M. F. Cancian and L. Sawyer Samp, "The European Reassurance Initiative", *CSIS Critical questions*, 9 February 2016, https://www.csis.org/analysis/european-reassurance-initiative-0, accessed 30 January 2017.

5 "Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8–9 July 2016", *NATO press release*, 9 July, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm, accessed 30 January 2017.

ground and ready to fight at the onset of hostilities – could suffice to prevent the rapid overrun of the Baltic States.[6]

NATO officials disagreed with the RAND estimate, insisting that the four battalions served as a tripwire for engaging the whole Alliance. They would send the message, according to one official, that should Russia "try anything" it would face "a multinational force that includes two nuclear-armed member countries". NATO officials also believe that good intelligence would allow time for them to respond if deterrence were to fail.[7]

One could conclude that NATO's steps to increase its military presence in the Baltic States would barely balance the much bigger Russian military build-up in the NATO border region. Taking up the West Berlin analogy, US and NATO forces in the Baltic region are intended to serve as "tripwires" signalling to Russia that an attack on one of the states would result in immediate escalation to a full-blown conflict with NATO. In other words, the four battalions are supposed to convince Russia that moving against one of its Baltic neighbours would not be worth the risk of a wider war with the United States and its European allies. However, critics of such posturing argue that the NATO tripwire force will not deter Russia from advancing into the Baltics if it wishes to do so. In short, cheap force cannot signal high resolve. [8]

The above overview of US and NATO decisions thus far gives a basis on which to evaluate the plans of the Trump administration. It remains to be seen if and how measures already agreed will be implemented and developed under the Trump administration.

6 D. A. Shlapak and M. W. Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics" *RAND Corporation* 2016, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1253/RAND_RR1253.pdf, accessed 30 January 2017.

7 "Trip-wire deterrence. An ageing alliance hopes that Russia will get the message it is serious", *The Economist*, 2 July 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21701515-ageing-alliance-hopes-russia-will-get-message-it-serious-trip-wire-deterrence, accessed 30 January 2017.

8 D. Pfundstein Chamberlain, "NATO's Baltic Tripwire Forces Won't Stop Russia", *The National Interest*, 21 July 2016, http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/natos-baltic-tripwire-forces-wont-stop-russia-17074, accessed 30 January 2017.

Trump's electoral-campaign speeches revealed his scepticism not only of America's traditional alliances, which have provided it with influence and ensured stability in all regions of the world, but also about globalization, which has kept the US economy strong and healthy.[9] He said in his April 2016 foreign-policy speech[10] that US resources were overextended and "the U.S. must be prepared to let these (NATO) countries defend themselves... if they are unwilling to pay more. They look at the United States as weak and forgiving and feel no obligation to honor their agreements with us." In his July 2016 interview for the NYT Trump explicitly raised new questions about his commitment to automatically defend NATO allies if they were attacked, saying he would first look at their contributions to the alliance.[11]Asked about Russia's threatening activities that had unnerved the Baltic States, for example, he said that if Russia attacked them he would decide whether to come to their aid only after ensuring that those nations "have fulfilled their obligations to us." "If they fulfil their obligations to us, the answer is yes." Mr. Trump has repeatedly defined American global interests almost purely in economic terms.

After the elections, however, the president-elect emphasized in his interview for The Times that he was committed to the defence of Europe and the West. His concerns were, principally, that NATO had not reformed to meet the main threat facing the West, namely Islamist terrorism, and that its members had relied too heavily on America. "I said a long time ago that NATO had problems. Number one it was obsolete, because it was designed many, many years ago. Number two the countries aren't paying what they're supposed to pay ... which I

9 S. Manney and C. Littlepage, "Baltics in the Balance? The Race for the American Presidency and the Risks for European Security", *International Center for Defence Studies*, September 2016, https://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/ICDS_Analysis-Baltics_in_the_Balance-Sarah_Manney___Caitlyn_Littlepage.pdf, accessed 30 January 2017.

10 "Donald J. Trump Foreign Policy Speech 27 April 2016", *Campaign Committee, Donald J. Trump for President, Inc*, https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/donald-j.-trump-foreign-policy-speech, accessed 30 January 2017.

11 "Transcript: Donald Trump on NATO, Turkey's Coup Attempt and the World" *The New York Times*, 21 July 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/donald-trump-foreign-policy-interview.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=a-lede-package-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=1, accessed 30 January 2017.

think is very unfair to the United States. With that being said, NATO is very important for me."[12]

In the same interview, Trump also showed his scepticism towards the EU as an entity likely to break up. He expressed his belief that the EU was merely a vehicle for German domination and that the UK was doing the right thing to leave it.

Trump has further claimed that his posturing around Putin is in the geopolitical interests of the United States, saying the two countries could cooperate on counterterrorism as well as countering nuclear proliferation. From Moscow's point of view, lifting the sanctions imposed by the Obama administration for interference in the presidential election and Russia's intervention in Ukraine would be a good start, as would a reduction in NATO's military presence near Russia's borders.[13]

Trump set out his position on defence expenditure among US allies at a time when defence spending in NATO had fallen in nominal terms from $1.06 trillion in 2008 to $871 billion in 2016. The US accounted for 72 per cent of the total defence expenditure of the Alliance. As a proportion of GDP, spending has fallen from 3.2 to 2.4 per cent in the US, and from 1.7 to 1.4 per cent among European members[14].

Trump again stressed in his Inaugural Address[15] that the US in the past had "subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military; we've defended other nation's borders while refusing to defend our own", although he promised that his administration would "reinforce old alliances and form new ones".

12 M. Gove, "Donald Trump interview: Brexit will be a great thing", *The Times*, 15 January 2017, http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/donald-trump-interview-brexit-britain-trade-deal-europe-queen-5m0bc2tns, accessed 30 January 2017.

13 P. Rucker and D. Filipov, "Trump orders ISIS plan, talks with Putin and gives Bannon national security role", *The Washington Post*, 28 January 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-holds-calls-with-putin-leaders-from-europe-and-asia/2017/01/28/42728948-e574-11e6-a547-5fb9411d332c_story.html?utm_term=.6f9b7e5eb588&wpisrc=nl_most-draw14&wpmm=1, accessed 30 January 2017.

14 M. Holehouse, "Donald Trump is right about Nato spending, says UK diplomat", *The Telegraph*, 19 May 2016, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/19/donald-trump-is-right-about-nato-spending-says-uk-diplomat/, accessed 30.01.2017.

15 "The Inaugural Address Remarks of President Donald J. Trump – As Prepared for Delivery", *The White House*, 20 January 2017, https://www.whitehouse.gov/inaugural-address, accessed 30 January 2017.

In the January 2017 Senate confirmation hearings, Trump's candidates for Secretary of State Rex Tillerson[16] and for Secretary of Defense James Mattis[17] stressed the importance of the NATO alliance and the need to confront Russian aggression. James Mattis specifically told the Senate Armed Services Committee that he supported a permanent US military presence in the Baltic nations to deter Russia[18]. Under questioning at his confirmation hearing he described Russia as a strategic adversary and a country that was raising grave concerns on several fronts, adding that Mr Putin was trying to break the North Atlantic alliance.[19]

As stated in the Trump administration's America First Foreign Policy statement[20]: "Peace through strength will be at the center of that foreign policy. This principle will make possible a stable, more peaceful world with less conflict and more common ground. Defeating Islamic State (ISIS) and other radical Islamic terror groups will be our highest priority. To defeat and destroy these groups, we will pursue aggressive joint and coalition military operations when necessary." The White House statement also appears to hint at better relations with Russia, something that Trump said he would pursue. "We are always happy when old enemies become friends, and when old friends become allies."[21]

The Trump administration's known views also indicate that Trump sees China as the main adversary among the great powers. He had earlier questioned the US One-China policy[22] and threatened to declare China

16 "Nomination Hearing Mr. Rex Wayne Tillerson of Texas, to be Secretary of State" *United States Senate Committe on Foreign Relations*, 11 January 2017, http://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/nominations-hearing-011117; http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/011117_Tillerson_Opening_Statement.pdf, accessed 30.01.2017.

17 "Confirmation Hearing – James Mattis", *United States Senate Committee on Armed Services*, 12 January 2017, http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/17-01-12-confirmation-hearing_-mattis; http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Mattis_01-12-17.pdf, accessed 30 January 2017.

18 A. Wright and J. Herb ,"Mattis breaks with Trump on Iran, Russia", *The Politico,* 12 January 2017, http://www.politico.com/story/2017/01/james-mattis-confirmation-hearing-233530, accessed 30 January 2017.

19 P. Whiteside, "James Mattis: World order under 'biggest attack' since WWII" *Sky News*, 13 January 2017, http://news.sky.com/story/james-mattis-world-order-under-biggest-attack-since-wwii-10726229, accessed 30 January 2017.

20 "America First Foreign Policy" The White House, https://www.whitehouse.gov/america-first-foreign-policy, accessed 30 January 2017.

21 Y. Torbati, "Trump admin targets violent Islamist groups as foreign policy priority", *Reuters World News*, 20 January 2017, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-foreignpolicy-idUSKBN154204, accessed 30 January 2017.

22 "China hits back at Trump, says one-China policy is 'non-negotiable'", *FoxNews,* 15 January 2017, http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2017/01/15/china-hits-back-at-trump-says-one-china-policy-is-non-negotiable.html, accessed 30 January 2017.

a currency manipulator[23]. Rex Tillerson in his confirmation hearings raised the possibility of a threat to use force in any dispute with China over artificial islands in the South China Sea.[24]

However, Trump's position shifted again somewhat in his first address to Congress. He remarked: "Our foreign policy calls for a direct, robust, and meaningful engagement with the world. It is American leadership based on vital security interests that we share with our allies all across the globe. We strongly support NATO, an alliance forged through the bonds of two world wars, that dethroned fascism and a Cold War and defeated communism. But our partners must meet their financial obligations. And now, based on our very strong and frank discussions, they are beginning to do just that. In fact, I can tell you the money is pouring in. … We expect our partners, whether in NATO, in the Middle East, or in the Pacific, to take a direct and meaningful role in both strategic and military operations, and pay their fair share of the cost."[25]

Trump also reversed his statement that NATO was obsolete in a press conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in April 2017. He said that he had changed his views after NATO's leaders assured him the Alliance would turn its attention to combating the advances of groups such as ISIS. He also attempted to assure European nations that were fearful of Russian territorial aggression, saying that they would have nothing to fear.[26]

One could therefore conclude that Trump's attitude towards NATO commitments changed from very critical to generally supportive after he assumed the presidency, although he remains critical of the NATO contributions of US allies.

23 D. J. Trump, "Ending China's Currency Manipulation", *The Wall Street Journal*, 9 November 2015, http://www.wsj.com/articles/ending-chinas-currency-manipulation-1447115601, accessed 30 January 2017.

24 M. Forsythe, "Rex Tillerson's South China Sea Remarks Foreshadow Possible Foreign Policy Crisis", *The New York Times*, 12 January 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/12/world/asia/rex-tillerson-south-china-sea-us.html?_r=0, accessed 30 January 2017.

25 Full text of Trump's address to Congress PBS News, 28 February 2017, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/read-full-text-trumps-address-congress/, accessed 10 April 2017.

26 Trump says NATO no longer "obsolete" By Kevin Liptak and Dan Merica, CNN 13 April 2017, http://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/12/politics/donald-trump-jens-stoltenberg-nato/, accessed 13 April 2017.

There are critics of Trump's attitude towards NATO among foreign-policy experts in the US, as well as in Congress. Michael McFaul (special assistant to President Obama at the National Security Council from 2009–2012 and former US ambassador to Russia from 2012–2014), puts it as follows: "Donald Trump made clear that he sees allies as business partners and relationships with them in transactional terms: Pay up or we won't protect you." According to McFaul, this framing of alliance relationships ignores the strategic value of allies to the United States. The country needs its allies to keep the peace, fight alongside it in times of war and defend common values: these are long-term strategic objectives that stretch well beyond any debate about national military budgets. As McFaul put it, fuelling uncertainty about US security commitments to NATO to get the allies to increase their military budgets by one percentage point is not strategic. He also stressed that an alliance undermined by the loss of a credible commitment from its biggest military power would quickly lose its value to everyone. He concludes: "When framed in strategic terms, not transactional terms, what US provides to NATO is not a burden to US economy but a direct contribution to safety and prosperity."[27]

One could conclude from the information made available so far that the Trump administration's foreign-policy priorities are mostly elsewhere than in Europe. Islamic terrorism is enemy number one, and the need to confront China comes second. Although there is an awareness that Russian aggression is running counter to Western interests and security, some people are of the view that Russia could be a suitable ally in confronting ISIS.[28]

Trump's critical views of the EU herald the end of traditional US support of EU integration processes. Moreover, as an opponent of multilateral free trade agreements Trump has already withdrawn the US from the Transpacific Partnership (TTP), and the Transatlantic Trade

27 M. McFaul, "Mr. Trump, NATO is an alliance, not a protection racket", *The Washington Post*, 25 July 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/mr-trump-nato-is-an-alliance-not-a-protection-racket/2016/07/25/03ca2712-527d-11e6-88eb-7dda4e2f2aec_story.html?utm_term=.d9040d864a45, accessed 30 January 2017.

28 S. Holland, "Trump says he would consider alliance with Russia over Islamic State", *Reuters World News*, 25 July 2016, http://europe.newsweek.com/donald-trump-vladimir-putin-isis-syria-iraq-moscow-islamic-state-democratic-483826?rm=eu, accessed 30 January 2017.

and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations with the EU will be frozen indefinitely. This kind of US strategy could increase instability in the European Union, causing further concern in the Baltic States.

Trump's original foreign-policy positions gave rise to uneasiness among European leaders concerning the effects it could have on their region. Some former leaders sent Mr Trump a letter in which they warned against striking a deal with Russia at the expense of Eastern and Central European states, pointing out that such a deal would weaken the Atlantic Alliance. It would make war more likely, as Putin would be inclined to test American credibility on frontline American allies such as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.[29]

Concern about Trump's position on NATO defence commitments to Eastern Europe are not restricted to Baltic and Polish leaders. British Prime Minister Theresa May indicated that when she met Trump as the first European leader to do so she would urge him to make it clear that America was prepared to defend the Baltic States and Poland from Kremlin aggression.[30] She also pointed out in her speech at a Republican retreat in Philadelphia that the US and the UK should be ready to defend their allies: "And whether it is the security of Israel in the Middle East or Estonia in the Baltic states, we must always stand up for our friends and allies in democratic countries that find themselves in tough neighbourhoods too. … But we should engage with Russia from a position of strength. And we should build the relationships, systems and processes that make cooperation more likely than conflict – and that, particularly after the illegal annexation of Crimea, give assurance to Russia's neighbouring states that their security is not in question."[31] At the press conference after their meeting Theresa May said Trump had assured her that the US was "100 percent behind

29 "Letter to President-elect Donald J. Trump from America's Allies (January 9, 2017)", *The Washington Post*, 10 January 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/r/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2017/01/10/Editorial-Opinion/Graphics/Letter_to_Trump.pdf?tid=a_inl, accessed 30 January 2017.

30 T. Shipman and T. Harnden, "Women diss the Donald as May prepares for visit", *The Times*, 22 January 2017, http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/women-diss-the-donald-as-may-prepares-for-visit-qk66xzljn, accessed 30 January 2017.

31 Transcript of Theresa May's speech in the article: "Theresa May's speech to Republicans: 'Beware of Vladimir Putin'" *The Independent*, 26 January 2017, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/theresa-may-speech-to-republicans-transcript-beware-of-vladimir-putin-philadelphia-a7548496.html, accessed 30 January 2017.

NATO".[32] After meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel Trump said that he supported the NATO Alliance, but that his backing came with caveats: "I reiterated to Chancellor Merkel my strong support for NATO as well as the need for our NATO allies to pay their fair share for the cost of defence. Many nations owe vast sums of money from past years and it is very unfair to the United States. These nations must pay what they owe."[33]

In other words, publicly Trump has taken a step backwards in his criticism of NATO and has adopted a more conventional line stressing the importance of the Alliance. However, his original critical view will nevertheless probably mean that NATO will receive less attention when his administration formulates its vision of US foreign and defence policy, especially if Trump fails in his efforts to persuade the allies to increase their defence spending. In the worst-case scenario, if Trump is focusing on cutting the costs to the US of NATO commitment as well as on eradicating Islamic terrorism, it may well be that he would be unwilling to take on new defence commitments in Eastern Europe.

TRUMP'S DEVELOPING FOREIGN POLICY IN THE LIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL-RELATIONS THEORY

Trump's more isolationist approach to US security commitments could be compared on the theoretical level with the preferable strategy based on realist-school views, in other words on theories of offshore balancing.[34] Proponents of offshore balancing do not see the need to maintain a strong US military presence in Europe on the grounds that European states are strong enough to defend themselves. Hence, the USA could buck-pass the European security burden to them. They acknowledge that the approach could lead to increased trouble in Europe, but do not think that conflict in Europe would threaten vital

32 A. Rafferty, "British PM Theresa May: U.K., U.S. United in Our Recognition of NATO", *NBC News*, 27 January 2017, http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/trump-welcomes-british-pm-theresa-may-first-foreign-visit-n713131, accessed 30 January 2017.

33 D. Smith and P. Oltermann Merkel "Trump can't hide fundamental differences in first visit", *The Guardian*, Saturday 18 March 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/mar/17/trump-merkel-white-house-trade-refugees-wiretapping, accessed 10 April 2017.

34 J. J. Mearsheimer and S. M. Walt, "The Case for Offshore Balancing", *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2016, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-06-13/case-offshore-balancing, accessed 30 January 2017.

US interests, given that neither Germany nor Russia has the potential to rival the hegemonic position of the United States (as opposed to China).

Richard Haass, President of the influential US Council on Foreign Relations, expresses such a view in his new book "A World in Disarray", concerning the intentions of Russia and China and the preferable US reaction: "Russia's behavior in Ukraine … is not the first phase of a bid for global domination, any more than is China's behavior in the South China Sea," he argues. "Rather, each has political (nationalist) and security-related concerns that … can be influenced and shaped."[35] In other words, the United States need not attempt to contain either country: there are opportunities for both Russia and China "to be involved in building and operating global and regional orders" and, accordingly, for the three countries to reduce the possibility of great-power conflict. Haass also states[36] that it would be worthwhile for the US to devote considerable effort to arresting the deterioration in relations with Russia, not as an end in itself but on terms that promote stability in Europe and beyond. This would argue for increased dialogue on issues from cyberspace to Syria and Ukraine, but also following through on bolstering NATO's conventional military strength and linking any sanctions relief to meaningful changes in Russian behaviour.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHANGES IN US POLICIES ON SECURITY IN THE BALTIC STATES AND EUROPE

The change towards more interest-based transatlantic cooperation influences the deeper security agenda as well as broader aspects, including trade. Defence-related issues will drive this transactional agenda in the immediate future from the US side, especially given the renewed US priority to achieve allies' cooperation in the fight against Islamic terrorism.

One could conclude that the US will probably change its security policy on European security and NATO to some extent under the Trump administration. It is improbable that it will abdicate its role as a leading NATO country. Trump has also proposed increasing US

35 R. Haass, "A World in Disarray" Penguin Press, 10 January 2017 cited from A. Wyne, "Trump's Foreign Policy Chaos", *The New Republic*, 23 January 2017, https://newrepublic.com/article/140038/trumps-foreign-policy-chaos, accessed 30 January 2017.

36 R. Haass, "On President Trump's to-do list: fixing a world in disarray", *The Guardian*, 23 January 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/23/president-trumps-to-do-list-fixing-a-world-disarray, accessed 30 January 2017.

defence expenditure, which will result in stronger defence for NATO members. However, US allies are expected to contribute more to maintaining their own security in the future to ensure continuing US involvement in European defence, possibly allocating more than two per cent of GDP in the process. European NATO members will have to take part in US efforts to eradicate radical Islamic terrorism, and will probably have to allocate more resources to achieving the defeat of Islamic State (ISIS). The increased defence expenditure will strengthen NATO's European flank, but will not inevitably lead to a lower level of US commitment to European defence if the allies prove their worth in terms of defence cooperation.

It may be that the security of the Baltic States and Poland will assume less importance in the grand scheme of US foreign policy. To counter that impression, US Vice President Mike Pence reaffirmed US commitment to the security of the Baltic States in a meeting with the presidents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania during the Munich security conferences in February.[37] Nevertheless, the Baltic States should actively engage with Trump's administration on security matters and convince those involved to continue to improve NATO deterrence capability in Eastern Europe.

The Baltic States – especially Latvia and Lithuania whose defence expenditure is below two per cent of GDP – should continue to intensify their own defence efforts. The transactional defence equation in the Baltic Sea area would probably mean that the US contribution to collective defence should be matched by the Baltic States in their contributions to Trump's fight against terrorism. Less support from the US would also require the Baltic States to explore the possibilities of increasing security cooperation on the regional and EU level.

The Trump administration's critical views on free trade and European integration dash any hopes of strengthening economic integration between the EU and the US via the TTIP in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, the Baltic States should continue to work in the EU to retain a working dialogue with the US on security and other matters, including trade, the fight against terrorism and cyber-defence. Given Trump's preference for bilateral cooperation with other states, the Baltic States should also seek to intensify bilateral cooperation with the US in areas that do not contradict EU law.

37 "The Latest: Pence offers Ukraine's president support", *AP*, 18 February 2017, http://bigstory.ap.org/article/116c5d80374f4cd284ee215dfaab1aba/latest-pence-reassure-allies-nato-era-trump, accessed 10 April 2017.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown how Russian aggression and the military build-up in Ukraine have changed the security situation in Europe for the worse. Of the NATO members, the small Baltic States are in the worst situation in their relatively isolated geographical location. The US and NATO have taken several steps to improve NATO deterrence in the region, but according to some critics such steps barely match the Russian military build-up. In other words, the defence of the Baltic States depends largely on their independent efforts supported by a thus-far limited US and NATO presence based on precarious tripwire logic: the signal to Russia is that an attack on one of these states would result in immediate escalation to a full-blown conflict with NATO.

The new Trump administration is setting the US on a more self-centred and isolationist path in the world. The fight against Islamic terrorism and confronting China will become the first priorities in foreign and security policy while European security will be less prominent. Although President Trump's foreign-policy statements are a step removed from his electoral campaign rhetoric portraying NATO as an obsolete organization and promising to defend only allies that have contributed enough to defence, it is clear that he remains sceptical of NATO's usefulness to US foreign and security goals. European allies, including the Baltic States, are expected to increase their defence expenditure and to contribute to the fight against Islamic terrorism if they expect their security concerns related to Russia to be heard. It is also unlikely that EU-US cooperation will progress, and TTIP negotiations will probably remain frozen. All in all, European partners, especially the Baltic States, will have to intensify their diplomatic efforts to ensure that the Trump administration's developing foreign policy will take their concerns into account.

4

4. A time for alternative options? Prospects for the Nordic–Baltic security community during the Trump era

Eoin Micheál McNamara

INTRODUCTION

Donald Trump's election as US president and his assumption of office in January 2017 have been conveyed by many commentators as ushering in an era of ideological division within the West that stands to inhibit multilateral cooperation across a multitude of policy sectors. With security policy as a specific focus, the generally negative strictures prompted by Trump's political rise have provoked considerable concerns in the Nordic–Baltic region. The rhetoric he expressed on various platforms during the 2016 presidential election campaign, and afterwards when in office has appeared to cast serious doubt upon the continuation of tangible US support for the transatlantic security link of which the Nordic and Baltic states have been long-term beneficiaries. Against the backdrop of renewed geopolitical tensions in Northern Europe following the Ukraine crisis in 2014, this chapter addresses two main research questions focused on Nordic–Baltic security during the Trump era. First, in the context of whether the Trump administration's actual policy actions match its president's often radical rhetoric, what implications will Trump's foreign policy have for Nordic–Baltic security? Second, given the increased unpredictability and less strategic focus from Washington identified in this chapter as pertinent implications in this regard, will the Trump era represent a time when the Nordic and Baltic states should pursue less-US-centric options?

It is argued that Trump's past rhetoric chastising NATO has not matched his administration's policy actions to leave the alliance's US-backed deterrence presence in Europe in place. However, the Trump era does signal a need on the part of America's European allies and partners – the Nordic and Baltic states prominently among them

– to pursue less-US-dependent security options, not specifically as a means of replacing the American contribution to European security, but as a means of ensuring the continued durability of the transatlantic security partnership through fairer burden-sharing. In this context, it is argued that the Nordic and Baltic states do not share precisely the same geostrategic environment. Different priorities focused on Arctic security for the Nordic states and the "Suwałki Gap" for the Baltic states direct some emphasis away from mutual cooperation. Nevertheless, this chapter identifies opportunities for enhanced Nordic-Baltic security cooperation in areas such as the joint procurement of military equipment and the improvement of "total defence" systems, as well as through the heightened defence initiatives currently in process on the EU level.

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

Aspects of Donald Trump's rhetoric during the 2016 presidential campaign and since his ascent to the presidency have created negative strictures surrounding NATO. As detailed elsewhere in this report, after assuming office in January 2017, Trump expressed harsh criticism both of NATO as an organization and of Germany's position within the Alliance.[1] Adding to his populist election campaign narrative, Trump's claims that NATO's European allies are essentially "free-riding" and "ripping-off" American tax-payers will no doubt appeal to his domestic electoral base. However, this rhetoric is far removed from the fundamental principles that have constantly shaped NATO's albeit evolving *raison d'être*. First, NATO is an alliance that emphasizes solidarity to achieve allied objectives. Since its foundation in 1949 there has been a recurring tendency for many US presidential administrations to fervently call on European governments to redress the significant disparity between themselves and the US in shouldering NATO's financial and military costs. However, Trump has delivered this message in an unprecedentedly abrasive manner, using rhetoric that casts doubt

1 For Trump's comments on NATO, see "Trump worries NATO with 'obsolete' comment", *BBC News*, 16 January 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-38635181, accessed 28 January 2017. For Trump's comments on Germany's NATO policy, see A. Erickson, "No, Germany doesn't owe America 'vast sums' of money for NATO", *The Washington Post*, 18 March 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/03/18/no-germany-doesnt-owe-america-vast-sums-of-money-for-nato/?utm_term=.f65880533913, accessed 28 March 2017.

on the credibility of NATO's collective security guarantee. The Alliance has never functioned through simple debit / credit transactions.

Second, although the US presence within the Alliance undoubtedly constitutes the strongest support for NATO's collective deterrence, Trump's populism appears to over-exaggerate the extent of the defence the US assigns directly to its allies during peacetime. The defence-spending ratios of individual NATO allies reflects the percentage of these states' GDP spent on defence. From an American perspective, Michael McFaul notes that NATO does not function on the basis of "protection-racket contracts" but on the "strategic value of allies to the United States".[2] The benefits for Washington have been listed as: allies committed to defending the US; a stable and peaceful Europe that can subsequently yield $699 billion in trade turnover for the American economy; bases that allow US military power to be projected towards threats centred on Russia, Africa and the Middle East; and cooperation in counterterrorism and intelligence sharing. As far as America's allies in Europe are concerned, they provide 34 per cent of US basing costs, accounting for $2.5 billion per year.[3] It has been claimed that the US defence budget has risen from 50 to 75 percent of NATO's aggregate defence spending since the attacks carried out on 11 September 2001.[4] However, inferred in isolation this statistic could be misleading. The Pentagon spends significant proportions of this budget on defence assets required, for example, to uphold US strategic interests around the Pacific and America's security-management efforts in the Middle East. These are specific costs largely unconnected with US NATO contributions.

As elaborated upon elsewhere in this report, Trump, as a presidential candidate in July 2016, appeared to jeopardize the credibility of America's commitment to NATO's Article 5 security guarantee, hinting that he might only sanction security assistance for the Baltic states

2 M. McFaul, "Mr. Trump, NATO is an alliance, not a protection racket", *The New York Times*, 25 July 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/mr-trump-nato-is-an-alliance-not-a-protection-racket/2016/07/25/03ca2712-527d-11e6-88eb-7dda4e2f2aec_story.html?utm_term=.8b8590fe0d6e, accessed 5 February 2017.

3 M. Fisher and S. Peçanha, "What the U.S. gets for defending its allies and interests abroad", *The New York Times*, 16 January 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/16/world/trump-military-role-treaties-allies-nato-asia-persian-gulf.html?_r=0, accessed 4 February 2017.

4 M. Foucault and F. Mérand, "The challenge of burden-sharing", *International Journal*, vol. 67, no. 2, 2012, p. 424.

had they, in his judgment, "paid their bills" or "met their obligations".[5] By "obligations", it can be assumed that Trump was alluding to NATO's two-per-cent-of-GDP defence-spending pledge. These comments perplexed many in the Baltic capitals. Estonia is one of the few NATO allies conforming to this defence-spending obligation, which it has done since 2012. Latvian and Lithuanian defence spending has not reached the same level, hovering around the one-per-cent mark for the past decade. Defence spending is not the only metric highlighting solidarity within NATO, however. Some Baltic politicians interpreted Trump's comments as extremely unfair, given that their military personnel had recently finished almost a decade of service closely connected to US objectives and NATO-led stabilization efforts in Afghanistan.

Estonia and Lithuania took on particularly strenuous tasks as part of NATO's collective mission, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). From 2006 until 2014, alongside American, British and Danish contingents, units from the Estonian Defense Force (EDF) were deployed in the hostile combat conditions of southern Afghanistan's volatile Helmand Province. Although essential to ensure a secure Afghanistan, Helmand was an environment in which few NATO governments wished to deploy their armed forces. Doing so came with a high risk of casualties and subsequent knock-on political risks. Lithuania was the only ally from NATO's second post-Cold-War enlargement round in 2004 to take on the onerous task of leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The Lithuanian PRT was based in Ghor in central Afghanistan.[6] It is against this context that Baltic leaders viewed with disparagement Trump's comments indicating a potential denial of US solidarity. Pre-Trump, Baltic leaders believed that they had progressed diplomatically from NATO newcomers in 2004 to allies integral to the core of the alliance. Trump's election appeared to shatter a decade of diplomatic progress,

5 D. E. Sanger and M. Haberman, "Transcript: Donald Trump on NATO, Turkey's coup attempt and the world", *The New York Times*, 21 July 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/donald-trump-foreign-policy-interview.html?_r=0, accessed 6 February 2017.

6 D. Lamothe, "Donald Trump cast doubt on the Baltics' involvement in NATO. Here's what they actually do", *The New York Times*, 21 July 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/07/21/donald-trump-cast-doubt-on-the-baltics-involvement-in-nato-heres-what-they-actually-do/?utm_term=.c75ed58c9fb1, accessed 5 February 2017.

as the current Estonian Minster for Defense, Jüri Luik, explained: "We [Estonia] have to explain who we are all over again".[7]

TRUMP'S UNPREDICTABLE SECURITY POLICY

A troubling dimension of Trump's discourse on European security affairs has been his appraisal of US relations with Russia. His view has at times deviated radically from the views of the preceding Obama administration and many of America's European allies. Trump occasionally spoke effusively about Vladimir Putin during his presidential election campaign. Once elected, he firmly and publically emphasized his "respect" for the Russian president.[8] ISIS and "radical Islamic terrorism", as the Trump administration describes the more general threat, are security problems of prominent concern among his core conservative electoral support-base. If the rhetoric expressed during the 2016 election campaign is any indication, countering terrorism is likely to be the foremost priority in Trump's security policy.

US-Russian cooperation in combating the insurgency and terrorism that originate from the Middle East has been heralded as an appealing prospect for some within the Trump White House. Although probably a spontaneous event that is difficult to place within a wider rationale, Trump's alleged sharing of classified intelligence on ISIS with Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, in May 2017 would indicate a degree of amity on Trump's part towards Russia, at least in counter-terrorism policy.[9] Often accompanied with some hard-line rhetoric, Trump has, at times, also promised a more offensive US military stance against

7 J. Luik cited in "Estonia counts on NATO, but worries about Donald Trump", *The Economist*, 26 November 2016, http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21710862-militia-moms-are-practising-their-marksmanship-just-case-estonia-counts-nato-worries, accessed 30 March 2017.

8 "Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin pledge cooperation to 'tackle terrorism'", *Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) News*, 31 January 2017, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-29/donald-trump-and-vladimir-putin-talk-terrorism-relations/8220866, accessed 28 January 2017.

9 A. Goldman, E. Schmitt and P. Baker, "Israel said to be source of secret intelligence Trump gave to Russians", *The New York Times*, 16 May 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/16/world/middleeast/israel-trump-classified-intelligence-russia.html, accessed 23 May 2017.

China's rising power projection around the Pacific.[10] These tendencies indicate, at first glance, that the security of NATO's "Eastern flank" is in danger of drifting down America's priority list. The Ukraine crisis and the rise of ISIS create contradictory interests for the US and NATO in general. It is difficult to foresee that these interests can be reconciled to the satisfaction of all allies. Seeking Russia as a meaningful partner with intelligence-sharing and military coordination in the fight against ISIS is likely to be politically infeasible unless the West reduces its punishments, such as the economic sanctions imposed in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine. This view is held by NATO allies on the frontline against the Russian threat, such as the Baltic states and Poland. On the other hand, not taking advantage of counter-terrorism cooperation with Russia might appear to some as an opportunity missed in the effort to reduce the exposure of Western societies to terrorist attacks.[11] This sentiment might resonate with NATO allies facing a greater risk from transnational terrorism, such as France and Belgium.

Trump's rhetoric during the 2016 presidential election campaign frequently signalled the prospect of a radical transformation in US foreign policy. However, some have since argued that the direction of his foreign policy will be managed by those within his executive holding the key foreign, security and defence portfolios. Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, favoured increased cooperation between Washington and Vladimir Putin's Russia in the fight against terrorism. The sentiments expressed by Flynn as one of Trump's closest security-policy aides led some to suspect that a rapprochement between Washington and Moscow might be in prospect. In a similar vein, reports have indicated that Henry Kissinger has been positioning himself as an informal mediator between the Trump administration and the Kremlin. The "Kissinger plan" for conflict resolution was said to include US recognition of "Crimea as part of Russia", and the termination of economic sanctions in exchange for the withdrawal of Russian troops from eastern Ukraine.[12] These

10 T. Phillips "Donald Trump and China on dangerous collision course, say experts", *The Guardian*, 7 February 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/07/donald-trump-and-china-military-confrontation-dangerous-collision-course-experts, accessed 29 April 2017.

11 I. Kfir, "NATO and Putin's Russia: seeking to balance divergence and convergence", *Comparative Strategy*, vol. 35, no. 5, 2016, pp. 447–464.

12 A. Buncombe, "Henry Kissinger has 'advised Donald Trump to accept' Crimea as part of Russia", *The Independent*, 27 December 2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/henry-kissinger-russia-trump-crimea-advises-latest-ukraine-a7497646.html, accessed 17 May 2017.

developments have been viewed with concern by some NATO allies. At the outset of Trump's presidency in January 2017, British journalist Edward Lucas feared that the Trump administration might be tempted by the idea of a "grand bargain" with Russia, which could be heralded as a significant foreign-policy success deflecting attention away from the domestic troubles that the administration will inevitably face. In Lucas' view, "Putin can offer Trump cooperation on terrorism; he can offer cooperation on Syria". He can propose to take "missiles out of Kaliningrad" while reducing the military presence in Russia's western military district. Moscow could offer this package in exchange for the withdrawal of US and NATO forces from the alliance's "Eastern flank".[13] On the surface this would appear to be progress towards de-escalation, but it would not be welcomed by the Baltic states and Poland. From their perspective, it would be considered a betrayal of solidarity, and would weaken trust and unity within NATO. Following Russia's actions in Ukraine, such a deal would alleviate some pressure on Putin's government, allowing the Kremlin to consolidate its power domestically and regionally.

Nevertheless, events during the early months of Trump's presidency have reduced the prospect of this type of "grand bargain". The sharp controversy created by Flynn's contacts with Russian diplomatic representatives before the inauguration, ultimately leading to his resignation as national security adviser in February 2017, have taught the administration a pertinent lesson on the domestic political risks that the active pursuit of cooperation with Russia might entail.[14] In the aftermath of the debacle surrounding Flynn, some commentators have argued that the unpredictable trend in Trump's foreign policy actually fosters wariness in Moscow. This apprehension would probably not have been present had the more hostile, yet consistent, strategies pursued by Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton been followed. Mixed signals have, thus far, been a defining feature of Trump's foreign policy. Despite rhetoric criticizing NATO, the White House has stayed quietly consistent with NATO's Readiness Action Plan (RAP) in support of America's European allies, while nevertheless continuing to discuss

13 "The Baltic states in a post-NATO environment: an interview with Edward Lucas", *Deep Baltic*, 16 January 2017, https://deepbaltic.com/2017/01/16/the-baltic-states-in-a-post-nato-environment-an-interview-with-edward-lucas/, accessed 3 February 2017.

14 J. Borger, "Trump security adviser Flynn resigns after leaks suggest he tried to cover up Russia talks", *The Guardian*, 14 February 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/13/michael-flynn-resigns-quits-trump-national-security-adviser-russia, accessed 6 February 2017.

the idea of rapprochement with Russia.[15] In January 2017, during the very early days of Trump's presidency, Washington announced that it would reinforce its assurances to the Baltic states with the deployment of M1A2 battle tanks.[16] This context also lends support to the view that the defence-cooperation agreements negotiated between the US and Sweden and Finland, respectively, to include "military training, information sharing and research" are likely to retain their value under the Trump administration.[17]

The profiles of and the viewpoints expressed by some further members of Trump's executive will continue to reflect the unpredictable character of contemporary US foreign policy. This is evident in the outlook of Stephen Bannon, Trump's current chief political strategist. Speaking in 2014, Bannon expressed the view that Putin's government was a "kleptocracy", and that Russia was "really an imperialist power that want[s] to expand". Conversely, Bannon also acknowledged that "there was something to admire in Putin's call for more traditional values" while stating that Washington should prioritize "radical Islamic terrorism" because it constituted a bigger threat than Putin's Russia.[18] Bannon appears to be under no illusions in his view of Russia's intentions vis-à-vis US security interests. Nevertheless, coming from the "alt-right" political tradition, he does hint at some admiration of Putin's Russia as an international flag-bearer for paleo-conservative ideology.[19] Bannon's initial appointment to the Principals Committee of the National Security Council (NSC) was highly controversial. However, April 2017 saw him demoted from the NSC on the grounds that it was

15 S. Lain, "US–Russia relations: is the prospect of a Trump–Putin reset over?", *Royal United Services Institute Commentary*, 22 February 2017, https://rusi.org/commentary/us%E2%80%93russia-relations-prospect-trump%E2%80%93putin-reset-over, accessed 24 February 2017.

16 S. Hankewitz, "The US is to deploy tanks to Estonia", *Estonian World*, 31 January 2017, http://estonianworld.com/security/the-united-states-is-to-deploy-tanks-to-estonia/, accessed 4 April 2017.

17 J. Borger, "Finland says it is nearing security deal with US amid concerns over Russia", *The Guardian*, 22 August 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/22/finland-us-russia-military-security, accessed 4 April 2017.

18 F. Stead Sellers and D. A. Fahrenthold "'Why even let 'em in?' Understanding Bannon's worldview and the policies that follow", *The Washington Post*, 31 January 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/bannon-explained-his-worldview-well-before-it-became-official-us-policy/2017/01/31/2f4102ac-e7ca-11e6-80c2-30e57e57e05d_story.html?utm_term=.adbc6d34a79b, accessed 21 February 2017.

19 For a discussion of paleoconservative ideology during Vladimir Putin's third term as Russian president, see V. Morozov, *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World*, Palgrave MacMillan, Basingstoke, 2015.

inappropriate for a political adviser to be so prominently involved in decisions that were highly consequential to global "war and peace".[20] This might be an indication that the Trump administration is gradually "normalizing" its approach to security policy.

Trump selected Rex Tillerson, a former CEO at ExxonMobil, as his administration's Secretary of State. With its lucrative business interests in Russia's energy economy, it was rumoured that ExxonMobil had been lobbying against US economic sanctions applied to Russia following the Crimean crisis in 2014, and some feared that Tillerson would take a sceptical approach towards the continuation of these sanctions in his position at the State Department.[21] However, throughout the first five months of his term he has maintained that US economic sanctions on Russia will continue as long as Moscow continues to illegally annex Crimea from Ukraine.[22] Following Flynn's resignation, the appointment of HR McMaster as National Security Adviser to the President was approved by many who wished to see a return to a more circumspect perception of Russia in US foreign policy, and the stable maintenance of America's core alliances. As Keir Giles argues, McMaster's appointment came without "a suspect relationship with Moscow and a toxic relationship with the US's own intelligence services".[23] Both these features had plagued his predecessor's short stint in the role. Trump's Secretary of Defence, James Mattis, with his experience as a retired General in the US Marine Corps, possesses a comprehensive knowledge of European security affairs, which informs his view that the US must remain vigilant to the Russian threat posed to NATO's "Eastern flank". Mattis has described Putin's Russia as a "strategic competitor" of the West.[24] At the same time, he has warned

20 P. Baker, M. Haberman and G. Thrush, "Trump removes Stephen Bannon from National Security Council post", *The New York Times*, 5 April 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/us/politics/national-security-council-stephen-bannon.html, accessed 6 April 2017.

21 "At NATO, Tillerson pledges U.S. support For Ukraine and continued Russia sanctions", *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, 31 March 2017, https://www.rferl.org/a/nato-tillerson-spending-plans/28402111.html, accessed 23 April 2017.

22 D. Smith and L. Gambino, "Rex Tillerson denies knowledge of Exxon lobbying against Russia sanctions", *The Guardian*, 11 January 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/11/rex-tillerson-confirmation-hearing-trump-russia, accessed 4 February 2017.

23 K. Giles, "McMaster appointment could bolster US line on Russia", *Chatham House Expert Commentary*, 22 February 2017, https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/mcmaster-appointment-could-bolster-us-line-russia, accessed 24 February 2017.

24 E. MacAskill, "Russia is a 'strategic competitor' to the West, says James Mattis", *The Guardian*, 31 March 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/31/russia-strategic-competitor-to-west-james-mattis, accessed 2 April 2017.

that tangible change is required in the attitudes of many European allies concerning the higher defence spending that is required for NATO to remain viable.[25]

Vice-President Mike Pence has expressed similar sentiments. As he stated in February 2017, "The promise to share the burden of our defense has gone unfulfilled for too many for too long, and it erodes the very foundation of our alliance".[26] While emphasizing this pressing US concern, both Mattis and Pence have attempted to restore some confidence in transatlantic relations. Nevertheless, true to the unpredictable pattern of the Trump administration's foreign policy, Tillerson undermined these initiatives a month later in March 2017. The Secretary of State initially indicated that he would skip the April 2017 meeting of NATO foreign ministers in favour of holding talks with Chinese leaders. These events momentarily "unsettled European allies" concerned that the move "reopened questions about US President Donald Trump's commitment to the alliance".[27] Although Tillerson eventually backtracked and the meeting was rescheduled, episodes such as this serve to warn European allies that unwavering US support for NATO should not be taken for granted during the Trump era.

The varying influences that shape Trump's foreign policy direct the attention of many towards the long-standing tradition set by Andrew Jackson, US President between 1829 and 1837, as the conceptual mould from which contemporary US foreign policy will be formed.[28] The "Jacksonian tradition" outlines a desire for an international order in which America is "left alone", but with the caveat that the severe use of military force will be advocated should others purposely conflict with American interests. Coupled with his scepticism towards multilateral international institutions and his support of economic protectionism, Trump's statements indicating that he will retaliate against his political

25 "Remarks by Secretary Mattis at the Munich Security Conference in Munich, Germany", US Department of Defense, 17 February 2017, https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/1087838/remarks-by-secretary-mattis-at-the-munich-security-conference-in-munich-germany, accessed 20 February 2017.

26 "Remarks by the Vice President at the Munich Security Conference", The White House Office of the Vice President, 18 February 2017, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/02/18/remarks-vice-president-munich-security-conference, accessed 20 February 2017.

27 A. Mohammed and R. Emmott, "U.S. reverses course and offers new dates for NATO talks", *Reuters*, 21 March 2017, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-tillerson-nato-iduskbn16s18s, accessed 31 March 2017.

28 W. Russell Mead, "The Jacksonian tradition: and American foreign policy", *The National Interest*, no. 58, 1999, pp. 5–29.

enemies "times 10" as well as his decision to target ISIS militants in Afghanistan with the "mother of all bombs" in April 2017 reveal some Jacksonian foreign-policy tendencies.[29] However, classifying Trump's foreign policy solely from this perspective would not tell the full story. On the evidence of his first months in office, one might argue that his administration's foreign policy could also be modelled as an albeit unpredictable version of the "hawkish" policy designs adopted by some previous Republican Party presidents such as Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. Stripped of the angle of neoconservative ideology that seeks to promote liberal democratic values, this tradition's military dimension specifies an offensive posture against America's terrorist adversaries as well as aspiring powers seeking to strategically compete with the US in different regions of the world.[30] Although the process was initiated by the preceding Democratic administration of Barack Obama, the Trump administration's continuation of US support for NATO's deterrence presence along the alliance's "Eastern flank" could nevertheless be perceived as an indicator of the latter outlook. This continuity has been acknowledged and welcomed by some leaders among NATO's Eastern allies. For example, Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid stated in this context: "In the new [Trump] administration's steps [on NATO deterrence], I see not a single U-turn."[31] It is nevertheless debatable whether this represents justifiable confidence or naïve thinking.

ARCTIC TENSIONS AND HYBRID CONFLICT

While much unpredictability emanates from the White House, Nordic-Baltic security continues to be challenged by Russia's varied approaches to "multi-spectrum" conflict. There has been an increase in Russian military activity in the Arctic over the past decade. Particularly in relation to Russia's nuclear arsenal, the Arctic is a site where its military capabilities can be based, while focused on other regions. Thus, additions to its military equipment based in the Arctic

29 P. Beinart, "Trump's self-pitying aggression", *The Atlantic*, 19 May 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/05/the-jacksonian-candidate/483563/, accessed 17 April 2017.

30 See C. Dueck, *Hard Line: The Republican Party and US Foreign Policy Since World War II*, Princeton University Press: Princeton NJ, 2010.

31 K. Dozier, "Russia's NATO neighbors: we're ok with Trump, actually", *The Daily Beast*, 15 May 2017, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2017/05/15/russia-s-nato-neighbors-we-re-ok-with-trump-actually, accessed 17 May 2017.

might not always have direct implications for that specific region. However, tensions spreading from the Ukraine crisis in 2014 have brought a halt to much of the Arctic security cooperation untaken since the end of the Cold War, which involved Russia, the US, Canada and the Nordic nations. Although the cooperation focused mostly on "softer" security initiatives such as multilateral training exercises involving the coastguards and the emergency services, the militaries of the participating states retained a coordinating role.[32] Hence, these initiatives created a functional basis for military-to-military confidence-building. Lower levels of multilateral cooperation make room for further suspicion and insecurity. For instance, a report written by defence experts for Norway's Ministry of Defence in 2015 advised that Oslo should increase its defence budget and extend military provisions as a contingency against possible Russian plans to militarily expand from the Kola Peninsula into Norway's northern territory and its maritime zones in the Barents and Norwegian Seas.[33]

The Arctic is also a potential site for Russian "hybrid warfare" or "full spectrum conflict", which could manifest in a variety of ways.[34] The notable increase in airspace violations has been described as a near-permanent form of low-intensity conflict taking place between rival states across the international system.[35] With a similar pattern noted in the Baltic states since 2014, airspace violations by the Russian Air Force are also a trend with which Nordic governments have to contend.[36] Given the ongoing Finnish and Swedish debates on NATO membership, as well as Baltic complaints about Russia's actions communicated on the EU and NATO levels, these airspace violations could perhaps be perceived as a low-tariff tactic aimed at intimidating a target state that considers political action incompatible with Russia's

32 E. Klimenko, "Russia's Arctic security policy: still quiet in the High North?", *SIPRI Policy Paper*, February 2016, pp. 26–32.

33 A. Staalesen, "New reality for Norwegian defence", *The Barents Observer*, 30 April 2015, http://barentsobserver.com/en/security/2015/04/new-reality-norwegian-defence-30-04, accessed 28 January 2017.

34 O. Jonsson and R. Seely, "Russian full-spectrum conflict: an appraisal after Ukraine", *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 28, no.1, 2015, pp. 1–22.

35 A. Nardelli and G. Arnett, "NATO reports surge in jet interceptions as Russia tensions increase", *The Guardian*, 3 August 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/03/military-aircraft-interventions-have-surged-top-gun-but-for-real, accessed 28 January 2017.

36 D. Sharkov, "Russia violates Finnish airspace for the sixth time in a year", *Newsweek*, 7 October 2015, http://europe.newsweek.com/russia-violates-finnish-airspace-sixth-time-year-330105, accessed 28 January 2017.

strategic interests. The Arctic, among other locations, is a site that is conducive to the effective use of this tactic.[37]

Russia's Arctic border also became an unlikely focus of the European immigration crisis during 2015 and early 2016. Substantial numbers of migrants reached Finland by crossing the border from Russia. Although the debate concerns whether this trend emanated from within Russia with the help of state officials or whether it was the work of illicit traffickers, the border is known to be managed meticulously on the Russian side by the FSB concerning both entry into and exit from Russian territory. Some believe that these events further demonstrate Moscow's aim to intimidate Finnish decision makers and escalate the European immigration crisis. In this context, the chairman of the Finnish Parliamentary Defence Committee, Ilkka Kanerva, is of the opinion that "They [the Russian authorities] are very skilful at sending signals. They want to show that Finland should be very careful when it makes its own decisions on things like military exercises, our partnership with NATO and European Union sanctions".[38] Nordic governments should upgrade their resources and strategic positioning related to the Arctic. With different instruments from within Russia's "full spectrum" repertoire being utilized in the region, the Arctic's position vis-à-vis wider European tensions requires increased vigilance.

THE "SUWAŁKI GAP" AND A2AD

The Arctic is not of direct concern as far as the territorial security of the Baltic states is concerned. However, the "Suwałki Gap" is a specific security problem of pressing importance for them and for Northern Europe. According to the Estonian President's National Security Adviser, Merle Maigre, the term "Suwałki Gap" was first introduced by the former Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves to refer to the thin strip of land that links Poland with Lithuania. This portion of territory is bordered both by Russia's Kaliningrad Oblast and Belarus. Although only 65 km in width, this narrow land corridor

37 A. Russell, "Russia has a long history of violating NATO airspace", *Global News*, 24 November 2015, http://globalnews.ca/news/2358786/russia-has-a-long-history-of-violating-nato-airspace/, accessed 28 January 2017.

38 Cited in A. Higgins, "EU suspects Russian agenda in migrants' shifting Arctic route", *The New York Times*, 2 April 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/03/world/europe/for-migrants-into-europe-a-road-less-traveled.html, accessed 28 January 2017.

is considered vital for Baltic security interests. NATO troops would have to pass through it unimpeded to effectively defend its three Baltic allies. As the convoluted diplomacy surrounding NATO assurances runs its course, the "Suwałki Gap" as a concept highlights to all allies the precise predicament the Baltic states face. A parallel is drawn with the well-known "Fulda Gap" at the height of the Cold War: it was viewed as a serious weakness, specifically for West Germany as a frontline state but also for NATO more generally.[39]

The ethnopolitical situation in the Suwałki Gap is not ideal from a collective-security perspective. Poland's three main towns in this area, Suwałki, Sejny and Punsk, have Lithuanian minority populations. Local ethnopolitical issues have sometimes been the focus of attention in the frequently tense relations between Warsaw and Vilnius concerning the treatment of minorities. Agnia Grigas has argued that this circumstance could create an opportunity for Russia to stoke these tensions and thus aggravate disputes between Poland and Lithuania. Although the means by which Russia might pursue this strategy remains unclear, any worsening of Polish-Lithuanian ethnopolitical disputes could negatively affect both states' cooperation in seeking to assist NATO in its efforts to allow free access along the Suwałki Gap.[40] The Suwałki Gap also comes into focus in connection with recent evaluations suggesting that Russian "full spectrum" approaches aiming to destabilize target states by agitating the Russian-speaking minorities within them would be far less effective in the Baltic context than they were in Crimea in March 2014. The Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic states, which on average are comparatively well integrated locally, are considerably less likely to mobilize against the states within which they reside, which happened in Ukraine with Crimea and thereafter in Donbas starting in 2014. The purposely ambiguous military dimension of a Russian "hybrid" operation in the Baltic states using *spetsnaz* in tandem with local vigilantes would be significantly more difficult to conceal than in these parts of Ukraine.[41] Therefore, in the event of a serious escalation of Russian aggression against the Baltic states, a well-planned and quick

39 M. Maigre, "President Ilves and the Suwałki Gap", *Diplomaatia*, no. 153, 2016, https://www.diplomaatia.ee/en/article/president-ilves-and-the-suwalki-gap/, accessed 28 January 2017.

40 A. Grigas, "Putin's next land grab: the Suwalki Gap", *Newsweek*, 14 February 2016, http://www.newsweek.com/putin-russia-suwalki-gap-426155, accessed 28 January 2017.

41 A. Kasekamp, "Why Narva is not next?", *Estonian Foreign Policy Institute Opinion Paper Series*, No. 21, May 2015, http://www.evi.ee/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/EVI-mottepaber21_mai15.pdf, accessed 28 January 2017.

conventional military invasion aiming rapidly to seal off air, sea and land access might represent a preferable option for Moscow.[42]

Rhetoric emphasizing the nuclear threat further strengthens the Anti-Access / Area Denial (A2AD) that Russia could implement under this scenario. The international fallout from the Ukraine crisis has brought a marked increase in Russian discourse seeking to highlight the force of the country's nuclear arsenal. Nuclear threats have emerged as a formidable element within Russia's repertoire for "multi-spectrum" conflict. It is argued that creating a deterrent hindering a US or NATO military response to Russian aggression is one of the main functions of the Russian nuclear threat in a severe-crisis scenario.[43] Baltic security analysts have pointed to scenarios such as this in their appraisals of weaknesses in RAP as NATO's current deterrence stance. In response to an incursion into allied territory in the Baltic states, for example, the decision to deploy the RAP's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) against the threat of possible nuclear retaliation would be a severe test of NATO decision-makers' political mettle. Thus, it has been argued that a "forward-pressed" deterrence posture involving considerably more NATO troops stationed on a permanent basis represents a better option in terms of providing a stronger bulwark against the onset of this scenario in the Baltic states than the persistent presence of NATO's rotating multinational battalions.[44]

Isolated on the Baltic coast, Russia's Kaliningrad Oblast is often considered a prime strategic asset to facilitate a Russian A2AD strategy in Northern Europe. The military situation in Kaliningrad is frequently referred to as a litmus test for the condition of NATO-Russia tensions. Following Russian disillusionment with the US decision to locate a missile defence infrastructure in Poland and the Czech Republic during the years of the George W. Bush administration, for example, Moscow's rumoured retaliation was to use Kaliningrad to position *Iskander* mobile short-range ballistic missiles within the immediate

42 A. Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Threat and Potential Responses*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017, pp. 28–31.

43 D. Johnson, "Nuclear weapons in Russia's approach to conflict", *Fondation Pour la Recherche Stratégique, Recherches & Documents*, no. 06, p. 15, November 2016, http://www.frstrategie.org/publications/recherches-documents/web/documents/2016/201606.pdf, accessed 28 January 2017.

44 H. Praks, "Rethinking deterrence and assurance for the Baltic region – forward conventional deterrence and defence is the key", *International Center for Defense and Security Blog*, 18 June 2015, https://www.icds.ee/blog/article/rethinking-deterrence-and-assurance-for-the-baltic-region-forward-conventional-deterrence-and-defe/, accessed 28 January 2017.

hinterland of Polish territory.[45] Military analyst Dmitry Gorenburg describes Kaliningrad as a "forward-operating base" bringing the Russian military critically close to the territory of its Nordic and Baltic neighbours. According to one anonymous NATO official, Kaliningrad allows Russia to host "thousands of troops, including mechanized and naval infantry brigades, military aircraft, modern long-range air defense units and hundreds of armored vehicles".[46]

Kaliningrad also provides Russia with the opportunity to project its power and pursue its A2AD strategy in the maritime domain. The US is the principal guarantor of maritime security in the Baltic Sea region. However, there are questions concerning where the region stands in the pecking order of US maritime security priorities. China's growing ability to develop an effective A2AD strategy against the US naval presence in the Pacific is of critical concern to Washington. Securing the sometimes piracy-threatened sea lanes close to Africa and the Middle East is of paramount importance to maintain the stable international commerce that supports America's global primacy. An inference that can be drawn from the March 2015 US maritime strategy issued jointly by the US Navy, the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard is that these priorities have left Europe's seas in third place. Although having some doubts about the US strategic focus in the Baltic Sea, Moscow prioritizes this maritime zone on its preference list. Through its 2020 Armaments Programme, Russia plans to modernize its Baltic Naval Fleet based outside St. Petersburg and in Kaliningrad.[47] Finally, although many factors appear to favour a Russian A2AD strategy in the Baltic Sea region, it should also be emphasized that utilizing Kaliningrad would be a strategic gamble for Moscow. Should its adversaries find a way to enforce a blockade on the Oblast, Russia's military advantage would be seriously compromised.[48] Knowledge that this outcome is feasible could serve as a formidable deterrent against any aggressive Russian intentions involving Kaliningrad. Therefore, to strengthen collective deterrence, it is the responsibility of all NATO allies and partners

45 W. A. Sanchez Nieto, "Assessing Kaliningrad's geostrategic role: the Russian periphery and a Baltic concern", *Journal of Baltic Studies*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2011, p. 469–470.

46 Both D. Gorenburg and an "anonymous NATO official" cited in T. Wesolowsky, "Kaliningrad, Moscow's military trump card", *RFE/RL*, 18 June 2015, http://www.rferl.org/a/kaliningrad-russia-nato-west-strategic/27079655.html, accessed 28 January 2017.

47 S. Lundqvist and J. J. Widen, "The new US maritime strategy: implications for the Baltic sea region", *The RUSI Journal*, vol. 160, no. 6, p. 34.

48 S. Frühling and G. Lasconjarias, "NATO, A2/AD and the Kaliningrad challenge", *Survival*, vol. 58, no. 2, p. 97.

surrounding the Baltic Sea to improve their cooperation and capabilities on land and sea and in the air so as to alleviate the A2AD threat.

ASSESSMENT: A TIME FOR ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS?

In sum, US influence – a crucial source of stability in Northern Europe since the end of the Cold War – might be on the wane. It is also clear that the Arctic requires increased vigilance in the light of the potential use of different instruments included in Russia's "full spectrum" repertoire. More importantly for the security of the Baltic states and Northern Europe, the "Suwałki Gap" is a security problem of pressing importance. Given this background, has an era now emerged when the Nordic and Baltic states must consider alternative options to enhance mutual security cooperation? If this is the case, what scope is there for them to do so effectively? Let us start with the first question. The Trump administration has so far chosen to maintain America's support for NATO's post-2014 deterrence posture along the Alliance's Eastern flank. However, Washington's relations have veered unpredictably both in and out of tension with Russia, a tendency that began when the Trump administration distanced itself from the notion that it was Russia-friendly after Michael Flynn's resignation as National Security Adviser. Tensions with Moscow have also shown a propensity to escalate since then, especially following the US missile strike against Bashar al-Assad in Syria in April 2017. Soon afterwards and true to his unpredictable form, having denounced NATO less than a year previously, Trump announced that NATO was "no longer obsolete".[49] Despite the absence of vigorous enthusiasm, there are tangible indications that his administration will remain committed to Europe's security. This bodes well for those in the Nordic-Baltic region. Nevertheless, Washington is unlikely to lavish resources on the transatlantic partnership. Trump himself as well as some of his administration's members such as Vice-President Pence and Defense Secretary Mattis have implied that enhanced performance in military burden-sharing is required from NATO's European allies. If this is not forthcoming, a frosty reception will continue to greet these allies in their diplomacy with Washington.

49 "Trump says NATO 'no longer obsolete'", *BBC News*, 12 April 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-39585029, accessed 17 April 2017.

European allies do not need to pursue alternative security options that are less US-dependent specifically as a means of replacing the American contribution to European security. They do need to do so, however, as a means of ensuring the durability of the transatlantic security partnership. This leads to the second question, concerning the available scope for European states to develop options that will enhance their collective defence and security capacities. To focus specifically on the Nordic-Baltic region, effective options for enhanced security cooperation could be visualized as three concentric circles: an inner circle containing the Nordic and Baltic states exclusively; a middle circle connecting these states to wider European security and defence-cooperation efforts; and an outer circle including the US through the transatlantic link. Security in Northern Europe could be enhanced significantly if cooperation were strengthened within both the inner and middle circles.

As the analysis in this chapter indicates, the specific strategic attention the Nordic and Baltic states need to give to the Arctic and the "Suwałki Gap", respectively, could understandably take resources away from shared projects promoting Nordic-Baltic security cooperation. However, stronger leadership is required in the areas in which it is feasible to strengthen cooperation so as to ensure tangible results. As one of the most politically high-profile states in the region, Sweden might be expected to take a more prominent role in regional security and defence matters. Carl Hvenmark Nilsson points out the increased Swedish activity since 2015 in coordinating improved Nordic maritime-security cooperation in the Arctic as well as in "shared air space, and exchanging information about incidents/provocations orchestrated by Russia". Nilsson also mentions Sweden's prominence within the Northern Group: "a military forum where the Baltic and the Nordic countries coordinate their defense policies together with the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, and the Netherlands".[50] Although significant, however, these activities do not contribute to the heavier deterrence requirements of military cooperation.

Before Trump took office in 2017, one view expressed in Sweden was that transitioning from a technical defence cooperation agreement with the US to a bilateral defence guarantee with Washington might

50 C. Hvenmark Nilsson, "The Baltic region's security gap: understanding why US-Swedish military cooperation is key", *Centre for Strategic and International Studies Commentary*, 7 June 2016, https://www.csis.org/analysis/baltic-region%E2%80%99s-security-gap-understanding-why-us-swedish-military-cooperation-key, accessed 17 April 2017.

serve to enhance Sweden's security without triggering the political complications associated with possible NATO membership. However, as Leo Michel pointed out, such an arrangement would not be satisfactory from Washington's perspective because it would undermine the commitment to collective action that the US continues to encourage through the transatlantic partnership.[51] The US position emphasizing increased military burden-sharing has been spectacularly underscored by the Trump administration. With Trump's election initially fostering doubt over the future viability of the 2016 US-Swedish defence-cooperation agreement, some people such as the leader of the Swedish Moderate Party, Hans Wallmark, have argued that membership even of a "post-American" NATO should be a preferred option. Sweden would gain "strength in cooperating with 28 countries rather just one nation".[52] Although Trump's position on NATO became more positive during the early months of 2017, those in favour of NATO membership for Sweden might still see some merit in the latter option should Trump's position again turn negative.

Nevertheless, the domestic political landscape in both Sweden and Finland remains divided on the merits of NATO membership.[53] In the medium term at least, both will seek to strengthen their defence capacity while contributing to collective security around the Baltic Sea in partnership with NATO. Some might see the strategy put forward by Swedish Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist as a potential guiding blueprint in this regard. What has been termed the "Hultqvist doctrine" involves Swedish support for the transatlantic security link, a rule-based international order and a tough line on Russia for any violations of international law. Swedish NATO membership is not recommended: instead a multi-vector approach is outlined advocating comparatively more flexible defence cooperation with Finland, NATO,

51 L. Michel, "Bilateral defence treaties with the United States: not an alternative to NATO", FIIA Comment 19/2016, 4 October 2016, http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/618/bilateral_defence_treaties_with_the_united_states/, accessed 17 April 2017.

52 R. Milne, "Swedes ponder joining NATO as Trump presidency focuses minds", *The Financial Times*, 21 November 2016, https://www.ft.com/content/8b83d6e2-aff9-11e6-a37c-f4a01f1b0fa1, accessed 18 April 2017.

53 T. Cronberg "The NATO divide in Finnish politics", *The European Leadership Network*, 2 September 2014, http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/the-nato-divide-in-finnish-politics_1836.html, accessed, 17 May 2017.

the US, and other Nordic states.[54] Compared to the benefits of full NATO membership, this compromise could offer fewer opportunities to strengthen territorial defence. Nevertheless, it would facilitate intensified Swedish and Finnish involvement in NATO exercises that are relevant to wider Nordic–Baltic security and could be used to hone military tactics conducive to more effective deterrence.

Some authors have proposed a "deterrence by denial" strategy as a stronger approach to safeguarding the Baltic states against the dangers that Russia presents. It involves signalling to Moscow that any military encroachment on Baltic territory will incur financial and military costs that would exceed any possible strategic gains.[55] Occupying forces would experience a hostile environment intended eventually to bleed the adversary of military and financial resources. This approach is almost indistinguishable from the system of "total defence", which has historically characterized smaller states, notably Finland, as they seek to compensate for the disparity in troop numbers against a larger adversary.[56] To create the desired effect, "total defence" requires the complete "mobilization of national resources" and the generation of a large military force drawing on conscript and reserve components. "The ultimate aim is to conduct prolonged guerrilla warfare against the encroaching adversary.[57] Norway, Denmark, Finland and Estonia have, to varying degrees, retained a reserve component as part of their post-Cold-War defence systems since the 1990s. In accordance with the post-2014 Northern European security environment, Lithuania and Sweden reintroduced conscription in 2015 and 2017, respectively.

The renaissance of total defence across Northern Europe provides considerable opportunities to increase security cooperation, leading to enhanced deterrence through more frequent and comprehensive training exercises involving all Nordic and Baltic states. Further exercises could serve to hone and develop this system, which relies heavily for its effectiveness on tight battlefield integration between professional units, reserve components and conscripts. Furthermore,

54 The term "Hultqvist doctrine" was coined by Annika Nordgren Christensen, and is elaborated in R. Dalsjö, "Trapped in the twilight zone? Sweden between neutrality and NATO", FIIA Working Paper 94, April 2017, p. 23, http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/674/trapped_in_the_twilight_zone/, accessed 17 May 2017.

55 A. Wess Mitchell, "A bold new Baltic strategy for NATO", *The National Interest*, 6 January 2016, http://nationalinterest.org/feature/bold-new-baltic-strategy-nato-14818?page=2, accessed 17 April 2017.

56 T. Ries, *Cold Will: The Defense of Finland*, Brassey's: London, 1988.

57 K. H. Kaldas, "The evolution of Estonian security options during the 1990s", *Athena Papers*, no. 4, 2005, p. 26.

given that Nordic and Baltic defence forces tend to require similar specifications for military equipment, there is renewed scope for cooperation in joint procurement. Pooling orders when appropriate brings economies of scale into effect, thereby reducing the financial costs.[58] As demonstrated by Estonia's decision to join the Finns in the procurement of K9 Thunder howitzers from a South Korean manufacturer in February 2017, cooperation in this area can seamlessly cross Northern Europe's NATO / non-NATO divide.[59]

In terms of wider European security cooperation, the Nordic and Baltic states hold a considerable stake in the ongoing efforts to strengthen the European side of the transatlantic security partnership, be it through the EU or NATO. Should its defence dimension develop from the current political impetus, the EU has the potential to emerge as an entity that can further bridge security and defence cooperation between the Nordic and Baltic states. As well as highlighting Finland's commitment to EU solidarity (Article 222, TEU) and mutual assistance (Article 42.7, TEU), the *2016 Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy* also alludes to the EU's potential to effectively meet the challenge of hybrid conflict given the extensive mix of civilian and military instruments at its disposal; which are required in response to hybrid tactics.[60] The Trump administration has insisted that the European side of the transatlantic partnership must shoulder more of the collective security burden, and whether this is done through the EU, NATO or both combined is unlikely to matter significantly.

Much of the progress that the EU might make in military and defence affairs will hinge on German leadership. There has been a detailed debate on the question of whether, on the one hand, generational change has allowed Germany's predominantly Western security outlook, in place since 1945, to fade in favour of a pragmatic geo-economic focus that also develops strong engagement with Russia or, on the other hand, whether Berlin remains firmly anchored on the Western security course. Chancellor Angela Merkel's ultimately resolute approach in

58 P. Järvenpää, "On deterrence and defense: the case of Estonia", *International Center for Defense Studies Blog*, 20 March 2014, https://www.icds.ee/blog/article/on-deterrence-and-defense-the-case-of-estonia/, accessed 17 May 2017.

59 J. Adamowski, "Estonia joins Finland in howitzer procurement", *Defense News*, 6 February 2017, http://www.defensenews.com/articles/estonia-joins-finland-in-howitzer-procurement, accessed 17 April 2017.

60 Government of Finland, *Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy*, Prime Minister's Office Publications: Helsinki, 2016, pp. 19–20, http://formin.finland.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=159273&GUID=%7BBE1F0734-B715-4C7F-94AA-CBFD3AF7EA5A%7D, accessed 17 April 2017.

leading EU economic sanctions against Russia since 2014 lends support to the latter argument. [61] The continuation of this foreign-policy line together with improved German leadership in EU and NATO defence policy should represent a beneficial development for all Nordic and Baltic states. Nevertheless, given the "culture of restraint" that has long shaped Germany's approach to military affairs, filling Europe's leadership void in defence could still be an uncomfortable undertaking for any German government.[62] The estimation has been made that "Europe is $100 billion short of strategic autonomy". Considering the country's economic prowess, a German increase in defence spending towards the NATO target of two percent of its GDP would make a sizable contribution to reducing this deficit.[63]

Trump's criticism of Germany's defence-spending rates has fostered a counter-productive political backlash from some in German politics. Should Merkel's government further increase defence investment, it risks being perceived as timidly succumbing to Trump's outbursts and thus less popular domestically. A large-scale increase in defence spending is unlikely to be popular for the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the current coalition partner as well as the main rival of Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU). On this question, Germany's SPD Foreign Minister, Sigmar Gabriel, has said that "Two per cent would mean military expenses of some €70bn [$75bn]. I don't know any German politician who would claim that is reachable nor desirable".[64] Transcending disputes solely over financing, it has been argued that a lack of political attention in recent decades has allowed serious weaknesses to emerge within the *Bundeswehr*. Criticism has been focused on the shortage of key military equipment available to perform core defence tasks.[65]

61 See H. Kundnani, "Leaving the West behind. Germany looks East", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 94, no.1, 2015, pp. 108–116 and the contrary argument in E. Pond, "Germany's real role in the Ukraine Crisis", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 94, no. 2, 2015, pp. 173–176.

62 For context, see R. Baumann and G. Hellmann, "Germany and the use of military force: "total war", the "culture of restraint" and the quest for normality", *German Politics*, vol.10, no. 1, 2001, pp. 61–82.

63 F. Pothier, "NATO survival will depend on Germany", *Politico*, 15 February 2017, http://www.politico.eu/article/nato-survival-will-depend-on-germany/, accessed 17 April 2017.

64 "Germany rebukes Tillerson over call for NATO allies to boost defense spending", *The Guardian*, 31 March 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/31/rex-tillerson-nato-spending-germany, accessed 17 April 2017.

65 K. von Hammerstein, "'Rearmament spiral': a German clash over Trump's NATO demands", *Der Spiegel*, 24 February 2017, http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/trump-nato-demands-becomes-political-debate-in-germany-a-1136140.html, accessed 17 April 2017

CONCLUSION

During the 2016 US Presidential Election campaign and since taking office in 2017, Trump has appeared to advocate the radical re-thinking of the many established norms that have traditionally shaped US global engagement. Much of his rhetoric initially sparked strong apprehension among America's allies and partners, chief among them being the Nordic and Baltic states. There may be indications that the Trump administration is gradually "normalizing" its approach to security policy. Nevertheless, it seems clear that unwavering US support for NATO can no longer be taken for granted, and that unpredictability will remain a dominant feature of the White House during the Trump era.

My aim in this chapter was to address two key questions in the light of these developments. First, should the Nordic and Baltic states consider alternative options to include enhanced mutual security cooperation in this era of growing unpredictability? I have argued that the Trump administration will probably remain committed to Europe's security, but NATO's European allies might be required to invest more in military burden-sharing. This could force European allies to pursue less-US-dependent security options, which leads to the second key question. What scope do European states have for developing effective options that will enhance their collective defence and security capacities? The analysis focused on three concentric circles: an inner circle comprising the Nordic and Baltic states; a middle circle including the nexus between these states, and wider European security and defence-cooperation efforts; and an outer circle including the US through the transatlantic link. I suggest that security in Northern Europe can be enhanced significantly if cooperation is strengthened within both the inner and the middle circles.

Even so, from a Nordic-Baltic perspective, security-cooperation at the regional, European and transatlantic levels continue, for now, to be only moderately effective. The uncertainties concerning the prospects for a stronger European defence project, combined with Trump's unpredictable security policy, will ensure that the wider security environment will continue to challenge Nordic and Baltic decision-makers beyond 2017.

5

5. The enhanced Forward Presence of allies strengthens security in the Baltic Sea region and the transatlantic link

Kalev Stoicescu

INTRODUCTION

The European and transatlantic political and security landscape has suffered profound changes since 2014. Western nations and organisations could not afford virtually to ignore Russia's aggression against Ukraine, including the occupation and annexation of Crimea, that happened in 2008 following Russia's war and land-grab against Georgia. The EU and the US enforced and continuously prolonged targeted sanctions against Russian officials and entities responsible for those acts. NATO recognised the immediate need to bolster the defence of its easternmost allies, and adopted a package of assurance and adaptive measures to that end. However, Russia's appetite for military action did not diminish, but assumed an even higher profile in late September 2015 through the deployment of forces and combat actions in Syria. On the other hand, the Western world is going through a politically challenging period following the Brexit vote in the UK and the US presidential elections. French and German presidential and/or parliamentary elections in 2017 will be equally critical for the future of the EU and NATO. Russia, with its openly stated foreign-policy priority to alter the existing Western-dominated world order, will certainly try to exploit any differences between Western nations, especially those that would weaken the North Atlantic Alliance. It would therefore be appropriate to examine the state of affairs in NATO, which is the backbone of the transatlantic link, paying special attention to the Baltic Sea regional context.

MARE NOSTRUM

Since 2004, the Baltic Sea has virtually become a *Mare Nostrum* of the EU and NATO, including the close partners in the Alliance. Only some seven per cent of the coast remains under the control of Russia, including the Kaliningrad Oblast exclave. NATO's Baltic coastline has extended further from Szczecin to Narva. The US has become, for the first time, one of the most prominent security players in the Baltic theatre, a key ally of the Baltic States and Poland, and a crucial defence partner of Sweden and Finland. NATO's summit meetings in Newport, Wales, in 2014, and in Warsaw in 2016, marked a comeback to the Alliance's core task, i.e. collective defence under the traditional leadership of the US. Thus, a new chapter in the history of the transatlantic link has been opened. There is obviously also an equally important economic dimension – related to European–American mutual trade and investments, for example, but in this context I will stick strictly to security and defence.

To put the present situation into context it is doubtlessly worthwhile to take a deeper look at the history, the recent game-changing events, the practical repercussions and possible future developments concerning the American–European defence relationship in the Baltic Sea region, particularly given the ongoing deployment of Allied troops to the Baltic States and Poland, officially called an "enhanced Forward Presence" (EFP).

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF THE TRANSATLANTIC LINK

The 6th of April 1917 could be considered the birthdate of the American–European relationship for European defence: the "transatlantic link". On that day, the US declared war on the German Empire. It became involved in the Great War, and by the summer of 1918 had sent a million soldiers to France, of whom one tenth never returned home. However, soon after the Armistice the American military left a devastated Europe, and the US did not ratify the Treaty of Versailles[1], nor did it join the newly established League of Nations. Two decades of US isolationism

1 A multimedia history of World War One, "Primary Documents – U.S. Peace Treaty with Germany, 25 August 1921", http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/uspeacetreaty_germany.htm, accessed 7 November 2016.

and military absence from Europe followed, the only "pause" in the transatlantic link. It proved to be fatal to our continent.

The US hesitated to get involved in World War II, although it did so ultimately in December 1941, with results that would prove to be totally different from those two decades before. It actively promoted the establishment of the United Nations Organization, and kept its troops in Western Europe in order not to have to bring them back across the Atlantic for a third time. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded in April 1949, the purpose being to counter the perceived imminent Soviet threat. NATO became the cement of the renewed transatlantic link and America's strategic interest in Europe's defence. A broadly pictorial parallel could be drawn between those historic periods and the starkly different approaches towards NATO and European defence, as well as to multilateralism in general, between former US president Barack Obama and his successor Donald Trump. Obama fully understood that the Russian threat to Europe and the US was real and that NATO had to be strengthened, which would also benefit the US. On the other hand, Trump pretends not to recognise any threat by Russia, and seems not to be convinced of the usefulness of major Western organisations, as opposed to bilateral inter-state relations.

The third phase of the evolution of the transatlantic link started with the end of the Cold War. NATO, under US leadership, embarked on partnerships with former adversaries, including Russia, and in unprecedented operations – in terms of both scale and scope – out of its own area of direct responsibility for collective defence, particularly in Kosovo and Afghanistan. The American military presence in Europe was vastly reduced[2] due to the overall Western perception of a lasting absence of any threat from the East. In addition, most NATO Allies continued to decrease their defence budgets until 2014, and to pursue partnerships with Moscow despite the Kremlin's increasingly confrontational stance.

2 From an average exceeding 310,000 troops during 1986–1990 to an average of 110,000 troops during 1996–2000, and later even below 70,000 personnel. T. Kaine, "Global U.S. Troop Deployment, 1950–2003". The Heritage Foundation, http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2004/10/global-us-troop-deployment-1950-2003, accessed 8 November 2016.

The accession of ten European nations to NATO in two waves of enlargement starting in 1999, from Estonia to Slovenia and Bulgaria, added to the Alliance significant swathes of territory to the East, together with the respective indigenous armed forces. However, NATO remained focused on out-of-area operations, especially the ISAF in Afghanistan, and largely ignored its core task, namely collective defence. The new member states, particularly the "eastern flank nations" – the Baltic States, Poland and Romania – made efforts to develop their response capabilities in case of aggression, while many other allies continued to decrease their defence budgets and tailor their armed forces to warm-climate counter-insurgency operations, rather than territorial defence.

Russia's six-day war against Georgia in August 2008, including the subsequent "independence" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, was not taken seriously enough in the Western world. Some European allies, particularly France and Germany, were keen to interpret that act of aggression as Russia's one-time burst of fury against potential future NATO enlargement to include Georgia and Ukraine. Russia advocated, in parallel, its so-called "Medvedev's plan" for the establishment of a new security order in Europe and beyond, which had no clear formulations apart from its short headline.[3]

In 2009 and alongside a "Reset Policy" towards Russia, President Barack Obama declared a "Pivot to Asia", which signalled a potential shift in American strategic interests from the transatlantic link to the Asia-Pacific region. Obama also abandoned the agreement that the Bush administration negotiated with Poland and the Czech Republic covering the deployment to those countries of missile-defence systems to protect the US, and Europe, against a possible Iranian missile attack.[4]

Russia's speedy militarisation since 2009, including a huge increase in its defence budget, a very ambitious State Armaments Programme, a fast, qualitative leap in the performance and capabilities of the armed forces, and Cold-War style massive regular and "snap"[5] exercises, were largely overlooked in Washington, in other Western capitals and at

3 Russia did not officially present any specific proposals, merely advocating a vague, multipolar world concept that hinted at the Kremlin's wish to establish its own exclusive area of influence.

4 "Obama's Missile Offense", *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 September 2009, http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204518504574418563346840666.

5 No-notice combat control exercises.

NATO's HQ in Brussels. Various Allies were keen to resume business as usual with the Kremlin, and as soon as possible. France, as an alleged sign of confidence and for obvious reasons related to the promotion of its defence-industry exports, was even ready to sell to Russia two powerful Mistral-class helicopter carriers.

Last but not of the least significance,[6] SHAPE was mostly engaged in ISAF operational planning until 2014, and did very little collective defence planning, because Russia was still considered a "problematic partner" but not an adversary. The only presence of Allies in the Baltic Sea region continued to consist of four fighter aircraft and the respective personnel deployed – on a rotational basis – at Šiauliai Air Base in Lithuania, carrying out the peacetime Baltic Air Policing Mission. Most of NATO's collective defence exercises, including those in the Baltic Sea area, were not live, and – most importantly, in comparison to Russian military activities – very limited in size, scope and regularity.

UKRAINE – THE GAME CHANGER

However, America's turn away from Europe's defence – after the declared "Pivot to Asia" – did not happen. The transatlantic link entered its present phase of transformation following Russia's grab of Crimea and fomentation of "separatism" in the Donbas. Those events were the principal game changer that necessitated a totally new approach to NATO's collective defence, especially in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea theatres. The Alliance could not afford to pretend, as it did in 2008, that nothing serious had happened, or that Russia did not pose a real threat, particularly to the "eastern flank" Allies. Since then, even the US has repeatedly stressed that Russia presents a potential threat to American national security, which has given a new boost to the transatlantic link in terms of a common threat perception and preparedness for collective defence. The message delivered by President Barack Obama in Tallinn[7], just before NATO's historic summit meeting in Newport, Wales, unambiguously reinforced US commitment to Europe's defence, particularly in the Nordic-Baltic region, which is the only area in which Russia borders the territory of NATO Allies.

6 Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe – NATO's strategic operational command based in Mons, Belgium.

7 "Remarks by President Obama to the People of Estonia", The White House, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/03/remarks-president-obama-people-estonia, accessed 6 November 2016.

The introduction of inevitable, resolute and speedy measures to deter Russia, specifically deploying forces to support frontline Allies, was promptly backed by the US, and was unanimously approved.

Consequently, the Allies adopted various short- and long-term measures[8] that were designed specifically to increase NATO's visibility and credibility in the Baltic Sea region. The EFP became the central component of regional deterrence by denial, complemented with NATO's deterrence by punishment, which is based on the overall deployable and usable capabilities of the Alliance. It must be clearly understood that NATO Allies do not wish to replicate in the Baltic region – or anywhere else for that matter – any kind of situation that in any way resembles the Cold War era during which huge numbers of intra-German and Central European adversarial forces stood against each other. Quite the opposite: the Alliance has taken as a basis the absolute minimum EFP that is thought to be sufficient to deter Russia from undertaking yet another local military adventure. Moreover, the US – as well as the other Allies – has taken every step in this direction with ultimate care and with the utmost transparency to alleviate Russian suspicions.

AMERICAN ASSURANCES AND NATO'S ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE

Four companies of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team of the United States Army, based in Vicenza, Italy, were deployed in April 2014 – one each to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland – a first sign of assurance on the part of the US to the most exposed and vulnerable Allies in NATO's eastern flank. The "Sky Soldiers" were the the first ever American or any other allied troops to maintain a continuous presence on the eastern rim of the Baltic Sea, even though their deployment was labelled "temporary" and it proceeded on a rotational basis. In addition, the US occasionally demonstrated some of its state-of-the-art equipment for visibility and training purposes. Examples include the visit of F-22 Raptor aircraft to Ämari Air Base, and the deployment of some M1A2 Abrams main battle tanks that carried out live exercises on Estonia's main military training range.

Other Allies followed the American example and temporarily deployed units to the area. For example, a fully equipped German

8 These were called – respectively – "assurance measures" and "adaptation measures".

company of Alpine Hunters visited Estonia for a couple of months in 2016, for the same purpose of "assurance", joint training and acclimatisation. Not the least significant outcome was the decision by the Alliance to establish a NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) in each Baltic state and in Poland. In fact, these were small headquarters designed and tasked to coordinate NATO and national structures and forces, as well as to prepare and support exercises and the deployment of reinforcements.

The deployment and maintenance of troops, particularly across the Atlantic, necessitates significant resources, especially financial means. To that end, President Obama, who announced the establishment of the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) in June 2014 at the height of the Ukrainian crisis, decided in early 2016 to quadruple ERI funding from USD 789 million to 3.4 billion in the Financial Year 2017.[9]

The rather symbolic deployment of US and other Allied forces in the Baltic Sea region in early 2017 gradually transformed into a genuinely multinational Allied – NATO and American – enhanced Forward Presence. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland will each host a combat-ready and fully equipped multinational Battalion Tactical Group, to be manned mainly by a "framework nation" – the UK for Estonia, Canada for Latvia, Germany for Lithuania and the US for Poland – but also including other contributing Allies. The other contributors – which will rotate forces among themselves, complementing the framework nations – are France and Denmark for Estonia; Albania, Poland, Italy and Slovenia for Latvia; Belgium, Croatia, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway for Lithuania; and Romania and the UK for Poland. For example, Estonia will host around 800 UK and 300 French/Danish troops equipped with main battle tanks (Challenger 2, Leopard 2 A5) and drones, among other things. Thus, in addition to the four eastern flank nations and the US, fourteen other Allies have pledged to contribute forces to the EFP, clearly demonstrating political solidarity within the Alliance.

In parallel with the NATO framework, in early January 2017 the US deployed, on a national basis, the 3rd Brigade Combat Team (BCT) of the US Army 4th Infantry Division, nicknamed the "Iron Brigade", from Fort Carson, Colorado through Germany to Poland.[10] The around

9 Mark F. Cancian and Lisa Sawyer Samp, "The European Reassurance Initiative", CSIS, https://www.csis.org/analysis/european-reassurance-initiative-0, accessed 10 January 2017.

10 Deutsche Welle, http://www.dw.com/en/us-armor-brigade-unloads-in-europe-to-deter-russia/a-37056712, accessed 8 January 2017.

3,500-strong and fully equipped American BCT is not formally part of NATO's multinational eFP, but is a major complement. In fact, company-sized BCT units were deployed to each of the Baltic States to rotate out the "Sky Soldiers", and to keep the American flag flying until the eFP framework nations and other contributing Allies fully deploy their own forces to the area: the UK and France by May 2017 to Estonia, for example. The US will probably continue thereafter – for training and visibility reasons – to deploy company-sized units temporarily throughout the eastern flank. Some 87 tanks, 18 howitzers, 419 humvees, 144 infantry fighting vehicles, 446 tracked vehicles, 907 wheeled vehicles and 650 trailers were involved in the deployment of the American BCT. These exact figures – which were provided to the media – exemplify the utmost transparency in the American deployments and the eFP, which has been the case from the beginning of the whole process.

However, the American presence in the Baltic Sea and Black Sea theatres[11] is not limited to the contributions that are listed above. Elements of NATO's Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) – provided and operated by US forces – are already or will soon be deployed to special sites in Romania and Poland[12]. SM-3 Block IB interceptors[13] are fully operational at the Romanian Air Force base in Deveşelu, and will become operational by 2018 at the Polish Air Force base in Redzikowo, in the northern region of Pomerania.

The deployment of a rotational force of US Marines to Norway[14], a country that was, and still is in the Alliance's north-eastern flank, will complement the picture. Norway's importance to NATO's operations in the Nordic-Baltic theatre cannot be underestimated. In fact, Norway continuously hosts significant amounts of the US Marine forces' stored equipment, as well as regular and multinational joint live exercises.[15] No less important is the increasingly close defence cooperation between

11 It should be mentioned that the Allied presence in the Black Sea theatre is not permanent, it is somewhat different in character (mainly focused on training) from the Baltic Sea theatre's eFP, and it is called a "tailored Forward Presence" (tFP).

12 These sites are called "Aegis Ashore", and they complement other elements of NATO's BMD, including four US Aegis BMD-capable ships based in Rota, Spain, Patriot SAMP-7 systems and different radar and satellite surveillance systems, for example.

13 A missile system designed to intercept short-to-intermediate-range ballistic missiles (up to 700 km or 2,500 km).

14 Approximately 330 Marines have been deployed in Vaernes, Norway, since January 2017, according to a statement by the Norwegian Ministry of Defence. CNN, http://edition.cnn.com/2016/10/18/politics/marines-norway-russia/, accessed 6 November 2016.

15 NATO's "Cold Response", usually at least brigade-sized exercises.

both Finland and Sweden and the Alliance, and the very close bilateral ties that these two non-NATO countries also promote with the US.

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE

The EFP's sustainability depends primarily on Allied political solidarity, as well as on thorough defence planning, manning[16] and combat readiness, whereas the US plays the crucial role. The combat readiness of EFP, US and indigenous troops is a matter of proper equipment and capabilities – including air and coastal defence – as well as continuous joint training. Given their overall capabilities, the Baltic States and Poland are capable of providing adequate training facilities for ground, air and naval forces.

The political solidarity of European Allies concerning the EFP seems not to have been shaken by unexpected political events in 2016. Quite the contrary, the UK's commitment even seems to have strengthened after the Brexit vote. France and Germany, both facing major elections in 2017, have announced that their pledge – to deploy combat-ready and fully equipped forces to Estonia and Lithuania – stands firm. However, the credibility of the EFP and the overall Allied presence in the Baltic region depends almost totally on the determination of the new US administration to stick to the Warsaw decisions.[17]

The political essence of NATO and the transatlantic link and the potential major challenges they may have to face could hardly be better formulated than in the following words of Joschka Fisher, former German Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor (1998-2005)[18]:

> *Now that Donald Trump has been elected President of the United States, the end of what was heretofore termed the "West" has become all but certain. That term described a transatlantic world that emerged from the twentieth century's two world wars, redefined the international order during the four-decade Cold War, and dominated the globe – until now.*
> *[...]*

16 I.e. the continuous generation and deployment of rotational units.

17 Adopted at NATO's Summit Meeting in Warsaw, in July 2016.

18 "Goodbye to the West", Project Syndicate,https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/goodbye-to-american-global-leadership-by-joschka-fischer-2016-12, accessed 6 January 2017.

> *More fundamentally, the West was founded on an American commitment to come to its allies' defense. The Western order cannot exist without the US playing this crucial role, which it may now abnegate under Trump. As a result, the future of the West itself is now at stake.*

The sustainability – or rather the effectiveness – of the EFP is also influenced by certain practical factors, including the rotation of troops and the multinational build-up of forces. The troops' rotation factor is, in all probability, taken care of by means of toe-to-toe rotation, in other words there will be no temporary absence of Allied troops anywhere in the eastern flank while units prepare to leave the area and others to be deployed there. The multinational nature of the EFP may be somewhat more problematic, depending on the ability of units from framework and other contributing Allies to fit perfectly together. However, this cannot become a major impediment, especially given the specific sets of nations in the respective hosting countries and their experience of cooperation. UK and French or Danish troops in Estonia, for example, will undoubtedly match one another.

Last but not the least significantly, US commitment depends on yearly appropriations by Congress to sustain the present level of American forces on the eastern flank. The ERI has been relabelled the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), which corresponds to the real mission of US and NATO EFP forces, and the new US Administration has not questioned the continuation of the EDI.

THE IMPACT OF THE EFP ON BALTIC REGIONAL SECURITY

NATO's conventional deterrent has become more relevant than at any time since the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, the Alliance's nuclear deterrent, which is mostly dependent on the nuclear capabilities of the US, complemented by the UK and France, remains the supreme guarantee of security.[19] In this sense, the transatlantic link is based not only on common values, cultural and historic ties, and mutual interests, but quite profoundly on the readiness of the US to employ its nuclear deterrent for the defence of its European Allies. The mere fact that NATO's three nuclear powers – the US, the UK and France – are

19 "Warsaw Summit Communiqué", p. 53 and p. 54, NATO, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm, accessed 8 November 2016.

actively participating in the eFP gives the Baltic States and Poland direct nuclear guarantees.

The eFP is the clear expression of the common understanding of NATO Allies that political and diplomatic, economic and military nuclear deterrence is – in the present circumstances that most probably herald a long-term climate change – not sufficient, and must be complemented with limited but adequate and robust conventional military deterrence in the Baltic Sea region.[20]

NATO's defence posture in the Baltic region, including its indigenous forces, remains fairly limited compared to Russia's military posture. In addition, the Kaliningrad Oblast poses certain operational-tactical challenges due to the powerful A2/AD capabilities[21] deployed in this geographically "misplaced" Russian exclave. However, the current security and defence situation of the Baltic States and Poland, as well as of Sweden and Finland, which are increasingly engaged in NATO's activities and planning, is incomparably better than before 2014. Despite the somewhat different political rhetoric vis-à-vis Russia, these countries clearly share common security concerns and perceptions, and are keen to cooperate with each other and other NATO allies, especially the US. The importance of Finland and Sweden as NATO's most valuable Enhanced Opportunities Partners can hardly be underestimated, whereas they also benefit indirectly from NATO's eFP and the US military presence in the Baltic Sea region.

Russia pretends only to "respond" to NATO's adaptation measures, including the eFP, by strengthening its Baltic Fleet and ground, air and other forces deployed near NATO's eastern flank. The Kremlin would probably wish to create the impression of a seriously destabilised security situation in the Baltic area attributable to the eFP and the US deployment of troops, and the "instigation" by the West of a "new arms race". Russia will conduct a major military exercise – Zapad-2017 – in its Western Military district soon after the eFP carries out its first rotational deployment. It will be an initial moment of truth concerning the emerging modus vivendi between the Allied and Russian forces

20 K. Stoicescu and H. Praks, "Strengthening the Strategic Balance in the Baltic Sea Area", ICDS,https://www.icds.ee/fileadmin/media/icds.ee/failid/Kalev_Stoicescu__Henrik_Praks_-_Strengthening_the_Strategic_Balance_in_the_Baltic_Sea_Area.pdf, accessed 10 January 2017.

21 Russian anti-access and area-denial capabilities may seriously affect the deployment of Allied reinforcements and the capability of eFP and indigenous forces to operate effectively, especially in the air and the maritime environment, in the absence of adequate and effective countermeasures.

in the Baltic region. For now, it seems that Russia will not hesitate to escalate the situation, given its announcement in Kronstadt/Saint Petersburg about the unprecedented deployment of the Akula/Typhoon-class nuclear ballistic missile submarine Dmitry Donskoy and the Kirov-class nuclear-powered battlecruiser Pyotr Velikiy to the Baltic Sea for the Russian Navy Day parade on July 30, and even more significantly about its possible participation in the Zapad 2017 exercise. It goes without saying that such a prominent nuclear dimension added to the forthcoming large-scale Russian military exercise will exacerbate tensions between Russia and the Alliance.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

For obvious political reasons, some Allies are still of the opinion that Russia has not breached the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act[22] – given the annexation of Crimea, incitement and support of "separatism" in the Donbas, massive military build-up in the Western direction and provocative behaviour towards neighbours – to the extent that the agreement should be declared null and void, or obsolete. However, in addition to the general clause requiring "respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states", the Founding Act includes the following:

> *NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces. Accordingly, it will have to rely on adequate infrastructure commensurate with the above tasks. In this context, reinforcement may take place, when necessary, in the event of defence against a threat of aggression and missions in support of peace consistent with the United Nations Charter and the OSCE governing principles, as well as for exercises consistent with the adapted CFE Treaty, the provisions of the Vienna*

22 The Allies and Russia signed the politically binding "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation" on 27 May 1997. See http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm.

Document 1994 and mutually agreed transparency measures. Russia will exercise similar restraint in its conventional force deployments in Europe.

The "current and foreseeable security environment" of 1997 has evidently changed in a drastic manner, and the eFP became inevitable. Nevertheless, it does not violate the letter or the spirit of the Founding Act because the Allied presence in the Baltic States and Poland is and will be neither permanent in nature – rather rotational and temporary – nor substantial in size, compared to Russia's own military posture in the area, including the Kaliningrad, Leningrad and Pskov oblasts. Therefore, the Kremlin's persistent official claims – that the eFP represents a "serious threat" to Russia – are clearly overstated. The same consideration applies to Moscow's self-justifying rhetoric implying that the eFP was "unprovoked", as Russia claims not to be a threat to any NATO nation. Moreover, Russia argues that the eFP is a "destabilizing factor" that would rather weaken the security of the Baltic States and Poland. Depending on the course of the US-Russian relationship, Russia may wish – in "appropriate" circumstances – to provoke an incident or a situation just to "prove" that point. One should bear in mind the upcoming large-scale regular Zapad-2017 exercise – in Russia's Western Military District and Belarus – that may serve as a platform in this context, including the possible toppling of President Lukashenka's regime and the introduction of massive Russian ground forces into Belarus, along NATO borders.

The US impetus and its contribution to strengthening the transatlantic link is remarkable against the background of rising confrontation fuelled by Russia's aggressive behaviour and show of military might. However, the link is a two-way street. All European Allies and their closest partners, not only the frontline NATO member states, have to adjust their policy and defence efforts to the new reality, increase their defence budgets to a sufficient level, and show solidarity and determination to avoid a large-scale conflict with potential catastrophic consequences.

Finally, but not the least significantly, the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States of America, in combination with certain comments concerning NATO that he made before his official inauguration, has raised concerns amongst European Allies. Trump has stated that the Alliance is "obsolete", arguing that not all Allies – in fact, just five, including Estonia – spend at least two per cent of their GDP on defence. In fact, almost all post-Cold-War

US presidents, namely Bill Clinton, George W. H. Bush and Barack Obama, repeatedly raised the same issue, albeit not with such tonality – implying threats not to defend non-complying Allies – and not undermining the meaning and role of NATO. Trump expects NATO to play an active role in the fight against terrorism, which it has obviously been doing for more than ten years in Afghanistan and elsewhere. He seemingly refers to the ISIS-related context in which the Alliance as such is not involved, although many Allies, including France, the UK, Germany, Canada, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark, are engaged in military actions alongside the US. Apart from those comments, Trump has not raised any questions regarding the EFP and the EDI, including the deployment of the "Iron Brigade" to Poland, notwithstanding his expressed desire to improve US-Russian relations. He has, in fact, abandoned the term "obsolete" with reference to NATO, and called the Alliance an "important" organisation during his White House meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. All the Allies clearly heard Trump's appeal to increase defence budgets and his presentation of concrete pledges and plans at the end of April 2017.

The statements made under oath by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defence James Mattis in front of the respective Senate committees were, indeed, reassuring in terms of confirming America's firm commitment to its obligations and pledges in the Alliance. The Allied presence in the Baltic Sea region will certainly continue until Western-Russian relations improve considerably, including – as a precondition – the appropriate adjustment of Russia's military posture in its Western Military District.

6

6. Shifting US–Russian relations

Donald N. Jensen

INTRODUCTION

As Donald Trump enters the White House as the 45th President of the United States, the US–Russia relationship is in crisis. Acrimony over Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine, intervention in Syria, and interference in the US presidential campaign have put relations in the deep freeze. Long gone is the public desire for a "partnership" between the two countries that marked the unrealistic optimism of the Obama Reset. Since 2014 most formal channels of communication have been closed.

The United States and Russia are not in a new Cold War: the two countries no longer compete globally, nor offer diametrically opposing ideologies – indeed the Putin regime offers no coherent ideology at all other than a cult of Russia's great power status. Russia, moreover, has nowhere near the economic and military clout possessed by the Soviet Union. Moscow today is a revisionist power of a different sort, however. Resentful of what it sees as its humiliation in 1990 by a triumphalist West, which unfairly regarded itself as the victor in the Cold War, it seeks to overturn an international system it views as unfairly rigged against it and in favour of the United States. At the same time, the Kremlin strives to be a key player in that system.

Great-power status and the desire for external domination have long been central components of the Russian state. However, building a galaxy of satellite states, as the USSR did, is no longer the only way Russia seeks such influence. With diminishing resources, the Kremlin has increasingly resorted to intimidating the world's liberal democracies into accepting Russia's grand ambitions through other

than military means. At the same time, Russia is wrestling with a critical contradiction: how can it preserve its role as a global power without simultaneously undermining its ability to exploit liberal civilization for its own ends?[1] Thus, their sharply differing views of the international order mean that it is difficult for the United States and Russia to cooperate in dealing with the new challenges both countries now face – terrorism, cyber security, instability in the Middle East, and the ascendance of China.

During the 2016 US presidential election campaign both candidate Trump and the Kremlin expressed the hope that, despite the difficulties between them, the two sides could work together on matters of common interest. This chapter explores the prospects of that happening.

RESETTING THE RESET

To some extent the United States is to blame for the deterioration in relations. The Obama Administration inaugurated its Reset policy with Moscow In March 2009. It was a policy intended to enhance cooperation with Russia on key issues while setting aside those on which agreement could not be reached. The reset, indeed, had several noteworthy achievements, especially the so-called New START treaty in which both sides agreed to further reduce numbers of nuclear weapons.

However, the reset was badly oversold. Although the US Administration tended to view it as a limited partnership between the two countries, the Kremlin saw it as an opportunity for the US to correct the mistakes it had made regarding Russia since the end of the Cold War. Some members of the Obama Administration reportedly irritated Putin by publicly courting Dmitry Medvedev – the then Russian President – as the best hope for the country's future even though Putin still controlled most of the country's political and financial strings. Further, Putin blamed Washington – especially Secretary of State Hillary Clinton – for encouraging the street protests that greeted his decision to formally return to the Russian presidency. Personal relations between Obama and Putin were also strained. Nor did the Russian leadership welcome Obama's frequent description of Russia as a regional rather than a global power. The fact of the matter

1 L. Shevtsova, "Russia cannot live with the west – or without it", *Financial Times*, 19 March 2017, https://www.ft.com/content/8f6e1e08-05bb-11e7-aa5b-6bb07f5c8e12.

was that there were not many issues on which the United States and Russia could cooperate for their mutual advantage.

However, the fundamental cause of the tensions between Russian and the United States is the changing relationship between rulers and ruled in the changed system that Putin leads. With the basis for the legitimacy for his rule – higher living standards – weakening after the 2008 global economic crisis and the system's inability to sustain economic growth due to the faltering of commodity prices, widespread corruption and the weak rule of law, Putin shifted the foundation of his role to old Russian themes: that the country was surrounded by enemies seeking to undermine Russia's security (by NATO expansion, for example), and that the West, especially the United States, sought to deny Russia's greatness.

Today, the Kremlin measures the success of its foreign policy in terms of how well it is succeeding in restoring the superpower status it has lost since the end of the Cold War. While the seriousness of this campaign can be measured in terms of the resources spent on reforming the military, it has also been successful in using propaganda, money, cultural and linguistic levers to undermine the united Western approach to resolving security and economic problems.[2] Putin's aggressive meddling in the election campaigns in the US, France and the Netherlands is fuelled by his conviction that the surest way to restore Russia as a great power is to rock the foundations of an American-led global order.[3]

Russia's major foreign-policy goals include preserving or restoring its influence in the countries along its border, including the Baltic States. As the Kremlin sees it, attempts by those countries to join the European Union or NATO, both of which it seeks to undermine, cross a red line, and that requires a response. In Putin's view, for example, the West forced the Ukraine crisis upon him: he had no other choice but to use all means possible to halt Ukraine's move to the West. Although Putin has achieved some of his tactical goals – Crimea is annexed and eastern Ukraine is destabilized to keep Kiev vulnerable – Moscow has

2 "International Security and Estonia 2017", Estonian Information Board, http://teabeamet.ee/pdf/EIB_public_report_Feb_2017.pdf.

3 W. J. Burns, "How We Fool Ourselves on Russia", *The New York Times*, 7 January 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/07/opinion/sunday/how-we-fool-ourselves-on-russia.html.

been unable so far to achieve its strategic goals of integrating Ukraine into its sphere of influence.[4]

Yet Russia does not limit its efforts to its immediate neighbours, and is actively intervening in the election campaigns in France and Germany. It has formed political alliances with populist, anti-establishment forces in Italy.[5] Moscow has been linked to the failed coup attempt in Montenegro in October 2016 – that country is seeking NATO membership. It is also throwing its weight around in the region to prevent Serbia from joining the European Union. There is so little trust in the West that the Kremlin's intentions are benign that policymakers are unsure whether Russia's Zapad 2017 military exercises, planned for September, will be restricted to military manoeuvres. Some observers suspect they will provide a pretext for a move against a restive Belarus, or presage greater military involvement in Ukraine.

A GRAND BARGAIN?

Incoming US President Donald Trump appeared reluctant to criticize Vladimir Putin during the US election campaign. In debates with other candidates and in a variety of other fora he targeted most of his fire on China's trade practices, Islamic extremism and illegal immigration from Latin America. He repeatedly complained that America's NATO partners did not pay their own way and he did not hide his contempt for the European Union. More deeply, Trump's populist, anti-establishment rhetoric echoed many of the messages coming out of the Kremlin. Although the Russian leadership preferred Trump to Hillary Clinton and interfered in the US election to undermine the integrity of the system, according the US government there was no evidence that the Kremlin helped Trump to win. Nevertheless, Russian officials openly welcomed his victory and saw the president-elect as someone with whom they could do business. Trump, in turn, gave signals he might be interested in forging a strategic realignment with Russia.

From the comments of some members of the Trump team it could be concluded that the script for a Grand Bargain might include the following: America would team up with Russia to destroy "radical

4 "International Security and Estonia 2017", Estonian Information Board, http://teabeamet.ee/pdf/EIB_public_report_Feb_2017.pdf.

5 A. Polyakova et al., "The Kremlin's Trojan Horses", Atlantic Council, 15 November 2016, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/kremlin-trojan-horses.

Islamic terror" – and specifically Islamic State (IS). At the same time, Russia might agree to abandon its collaboration with Iran, an old enemy of America in the Middle East and a threat to US allies in the region. In Europe Russia would stop fomenting conflict in Ukraine, agree not to harass NATO members on its doorstep and, possibly, enter nuclear-arms-control talks. In the longer term, closer ties with Russia could also help to curb Chinese expansion.[6]

Such talk is unrealistic. In Syria, for example, the two countries' priorities are quite different – Moscow's goals are to prop up the regime of Bashar al-Assad and be a long-term player in the region, whereas the US seeks regional stability and to fight Islamic radicalism. A US cruise missile attack on Syria to punish Assad for using chemical weapons against Syrian civilians in April 2017 seemed intended, in part, to force the Kremlin to choose between Assad and better relations, although there is little sign so far that its backing of the Syrian dictator is weakening.

Iran is a genuine partner of Russia in the Syria conflict, and a promising market for Russian arms exports. Economically far weaker than China and with a much smaller army, Moscow is unlikely to pick a fight with its populous neighbour.

In any case, Trump may be hemmed in by political forces in Washington that oppose a deal. Although key advisors, most notably Steve Bannon, appear to favour a deal – or at least better relations – with Moscow, Vice President Pence, Defense Secretary Mattis and Secretary of State Tillerson have all been critical of Putin's authoritarian rule at home and aggressive foreign policy. A tough line towards the Kremlin is also supported by the leadership of both parties in Congress. Trump's own rhetoric about Russia eventually became much tougher when he took office.

Given the differing views on Russia among Trump's team, the new US Administration has sent out mixed messages about its relationship with Moscow. European security appears to be lower in priority than the Middle East, the war against terror, the Iran nuclear programme and China. The Trump Administration has reaffirmed its commitment to the security of the Nordic Baltic region, but publicly and privately has indicated that neither Georgia not Ukraine will be offered a path to NATO membership in the foreseeable future.

6 "Donald Trump seeks a grand bargain with Vladimir Putin", *The Economist*, 11 February 2017, http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21716609-it-terrible-idea-donald-trump-seeks-grand-bargain-vladimir-putin.

Putin's demands are likely to be high in bringing about any substantial improvement in relations. They are likely to include sanctions relief, recognition of Russia's annexation of Crimea, a stop to any further expansion of NATO, and acknowledgement of a privileged position for Moscow in the countries along its periphery, including Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. Even if Europe and the United States were to yield to such demands, there is every indication the Kremlin would soon want more.

Currently, Russian leaders generally believe that the Kremlin's course, with its unchanged strategic goals, has paid off. The Western pushback to its foreign-policy assertiveness has been relatively ineffective, despite the burden of economic sanctions. The US and Europe do not have a coherent strategy for Russia, according to Kremlin calculations, and their unity and self-confidence have been undermined by the Trump election, Brexit, the immigration crisis, and upcoming elections in France and Germany. This will lead the EU in particular to focus inward and weaken Western influence in the former Soviet Union. "Russia can wait until the fruit itself can fall [into its] hands," a prominent analyst in Moscow wrote recently, adding: "We must take advantage of opportunities while avoiding confrontation."[7]

Meanwhile, the ardour of Russian media coverage of Trump – which bordered on cheerleading immediately after the November election – has cooled considerably since January. Russian officials have repeatedly expressed scepticism as to whether he will be able to break through the political barriers to improving relations. Some people are troubled by what they see as his unpredictability, and the publicly visible strained relations between the President and the US intelligence community have called into question their credibility. Nevertheless, for the moment the Kremlin seems prepared to avoid confrontation as it tests the new President and focuses on practical results that will advance its interests. Some officials in Moscow have expressed the hope that a breakthrough will occur at a summit between the two leaders later this year.

7 https://vk.com/id244477574?w=wall244477574_27405%2Fall.

As the two sides assess one another the potential for recrimination and miscalculation remains high. Some Russian officials have recently stated vaguely that this is the West's "last chance" to come to an agreement. If a "constructive" dialogue with the West fails to advance Russia's interests this time, they have warned that Moscow could strike back hard, particularly against Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus, countries that are outside NATO and in which many people in Europe and the US believe the West does not have vital interests. However, although the Kremlin sends out a constant stream of Russian information seeking to cast doubt on NATO's commitment to Baltic security, arguing that the Balts are unreliable alliance members and seeking to stir up trouble among the Russian minorities in those states, it is highly unlikely that Moscow will seek to challenge NATO's commitment to defend the region. Donald Trump himself is an unknown entity in the Kremlin. Officials there were taken aback by his recent call for the United States to expand its nuclear arsenal, an issue on which they believed an understanding with the US had already been achieved.

The reality is that the US relationship with Russia will remain competitive and adversarial for the foreseeable future.[8] At its core are fundamental differences in outlook about each other's role in the world. It is tempting to project that a personal rapport could bridge this disconnection and that the art of the deal could unlock a grand bargain. The ultimate realist, Putin understands Russia's relative weakness, and he has demonstrated several times that declining powers can be at least as disruptive as those on the rise. The Trump–Putin era, therefore, is likely to be a time of volatility, with periods of pragmatic cooperation punctuated by periods of conflict linked to the domestic agendas of each president, and including the drive to stay in power.

8 W. J. Burns, "How We Fool Ourselves on Russia", *The New York Times*, 7 January 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/07/opinion/sunday/how-we-fool-ourselves-on-russia.html?_r=0.

7

7. Transatlantic defence and security relations under the Donald Trump administration: a new paradigm?

Leo Michel

INTRODUCTION

Donald Trump kept his pronouncements on transatlantic relations brief and provocative during his 17-month campaign for the presidency. NATO, he insisted, was "obsolete." Asked whether NATO allies could count on US military aid if attacked by Russia, Trump's response was equivocal: "If they fulfil their (financial) obligations to us, the answer is yes." Chancellor Angela Merkel, he opined, was "ruining Germany," and France was "compromised by terrorism" due to its immigration policy. He chastised the EU for having "pushed" the migration crisis on Europe, and voiced his personal pique at its alleged interference with his overseas business ventures. Underscoring his disdain for the EU, he applauded the UK referendum vote on "Brexit," and welcomed UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage as a speaker at his campaign rallies.

Prominent members of the Republican foreign-policy establishment openly rebuked Trump for such statements, but with little effect. He essentially reprised his campaign's critique of the transatlantic relationship in his inaugural address – albeit without specifically mentioning Europe or NATO – by repeating his "American first" mantra and complaining that the United States had "subsidized the armies of others" and "defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend our own." Buried in his unabashedly nationalist and dystopian rhetoric, his vague promise to "reinforce old alliances" seemed like a throwaway line. Two months later, after an awkward joint press conference with Merkel, Trump tweeted – falsely – that "Germany owes NATO & US vast sums of money." Even while acknowledging that "NATO is no longer obsolete" during his April meeting with its Secretary General

Jens Stoltenberg, the President continued to suggest – contrary to the facts – that other allies "owe" money to NATO, and that he deserved credit for convincing NATO to "fight terrorism."

Welcome to the dawn of the Age of Trump in Washington. The brash businessman and reality television celebrity is now the 45th President of the United States. He can announce a position (or send a tweet) one day and appear to change course a few days later, apparently with little or no real consultation with European leaders or regard for their interests. Still, America's transatlantic allies and partners face serious and rapidly evolving challenges. These range from managing the complicated Brexit process (limiting, it is to be hoped, its potentially severe impact on the remaining EU membership and the post-Brexit fate of the United Kingdom), to dealing with a resurgent and authoritarian Russia and further to coping with multiple threats (terrorism, failed states, and the effects of large refugee and migrant flows) emanating from the broader Middle East and parts of Africa. It is therefore vital that these allies and partners understand the emerging policies and decision-making processes of the new president and his team.

As a case in point: only days before Trump ordered the April 6 cruise missile strike against the Syrian regime's base used to launch a particularly deadly chemical weapons attack, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley signalled that removing Syrian President Bachar al-Assad from power was no longer a US priority. Their statements in effect rejected the stated policy of the previous administration. However, a few hours before the US strikes were announced, Trump and Tillerson seemingly reversed course again by suggesting, in separate comments, that the United States would seek Assad's removal. For allies and partners who are directly involved in, or affected by, the US-led anti-ISIS military coalition and are concerned about the roles of Russia and Iran in the Syrian conflict, understanding the long-term US strategy in the region – if, indeed, there is one – would be of critical importance.

The task of deciphering the Trump administration's approach to transatlantic defence and security issues is further complicated by two unprecedented phenomena. First, the new administration faces multiple investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and Congress involving Russian attempts, confirmed by the US intelligence community, to influence the 2016 election, possibly in collusion with members of the Trump campaign entourage. The fact that prominent Republican senators and congressmen are among the most outspoken proponents of such investigations undercuts Trump's attempts to dismiss

them as "witch hunts" inspired by former President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State (and defeated presidential candidate) Hillary Clinton. While Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Haley and (more recently) Tillerson have sharply and publicly criticized Russian policies in Europe and Syria, Trump has not. If this apparent disconnect were to continue, some Europeans and Canadians would justifiably wonder if the Commander-in-chief's views on Russia are accurately reflected by his cabinet members. This, in turn, would fuel doubts about the credibility of the US commitment to NATO and its bilateral defence-cooperation arrangements with various European governments.

Second, US allies and partners have reason to worry about the short- and long-term consequences of the administration's self-styled "disruptor" approach. Trump's first few months in office have been marked by incidents calling into question his judgment, veracity and management style. Examples include: his poorly prepared executive orders on immigrants and refugees, and related sharp criticism of federal judges who blocked those orders; his failure to win sufficient Republican congressional support to "repeal and replace" healthcare law enacted under Obama; his harsh (often ad hominem) attacks on large segments of the US media; his firing of FBI Director James Comey, which Trump later acknowledged was linked to "this Russia thing"; and his accusations (categorically refuted by top serving and former intelligence officials) that Obama ordered wiretapping of the Trump organization during the campaign.

Adding to European concerns is the continued influence in and around the White House of ultra-conservative ideologues. Trump's rhetoric and legislative proposals imply that, at least for now, the President remains attracted to substantial parts of the ultra-conservatives' agenda. That agenda, although still inchoate, appears to be aimed at undoing a decades-old (albeit imperfect) consensus among the mainstream leadership of the Republican party on the basic principles of the US tax structure, government regulation (including in the banking and, to a limited degree, environmental sectors), the value of a multilateral approach to free trade pacts, and US participation in regional and global multilateral organizations that remain key pillars of a Western-oriented liberal world order. In short, Europeans cannot afford to ignore the risk that the "disruptor" approach favoured by many in the President's camp, if broadly applied within the United States, could paralyze effective governance and aggravate societal tensions at home, with serious knock-on effects on US influence on the international scene.

Against this background, the aim in this chapter is to answer three questions – one factual and two speculative. First, how has the US approach to transatlantic defence and security relations evolved over time, especially in recent years? Second, what might a new paradigm look like under the Trump administration? And finally, what risks and opportunities might such a new paradigm entail for the transatlantic relationship as well as the wider "Western liberal world order?"

AN OVERVIEW OF THE US APPROACH THROUGHOUT THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

From the founding of the Atlantic Alliance in 1949 through to the George W. Bush administration (2001–2009), the United States relied an essentially two-track approach to managing defence and security relations with Europe. One track connects the United States to its European allies through NATO, and the other consists of multiple US bilateral accords with individual allies, reinforced by a wide range of informal arrangements. Under the Obama administration (2009–2017) the United States took modest steps towards adding a third dimension – a US–EU track – to the transatlantic defence and security relationship.

The NATO track

NATO remains a unique commitment for the United States. During the first century and a half of its existence, the US avoided any formal military alliance, with one notable exception: the 1778 Treaty of Alliance with France, concluded in the middle of the Revolutionary War, committed the parties to defend each other against Great Britain. Although indebted to France for its aid, President George Washington advised fellow citizens in his celebrated "Farewell Address" of 1796 to "steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world."

For many Americans, the two world wars of the 20th century attested to the folly of isolationism, but not all were entirely convinced. Hence, even while negotiating with ten European nations and Canada on the North Atlantic Treaty, the Harry Truman administration sought to assure a group of sceptical senators that the envisaged treaty would not oblige the United States to take immediate military action in the event of an armed attack against an ally.[1] This explains the careful

1 Under the Constitution, the Senate must give "advice and consent" to the ratification of treaties by the Executive Branch.

wording of the Treaty's Article 5 (collective defence) provision, which binds allies to "assist" the attacked party with "such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force."[2] Similarly, the Treaty provides only bare-bones guidance on how the Alliance should function. Specifically, Article 10 establishes the North Atlantic Council (or NAC) of allied representatives, with the broad mandate to "consider matters concerning (Treaty) implementation," and a subordinate "defense committee." The NAC, however, was authorized to set up additional "subsidiary bodies as may be necessary."

Faced with the existential threat posed by the Soviet Union, the allies soon accepted the need for additional standing bodies to accomplish the Treaty's objectives.[3] These included a Military Committee to provide consensus-based advice on military policy and strategy to the NAC, and an "Allied Command Europe," with US General Dwight Eisenhower as its first "Supreme Commander." This command was charged with developing the structures, plans, procedures and integrated forces – including, by the mid-1950s, over 400,000 American military personnel based in Europe – deemed necessary to mount a credible deterrent to and, if necessary, defence against Soviet aggression. By the end of the Cold War, NATO had morphed into an organization comprising over ten thousand civilian and military personnel working in its Brussels headquarters (and some 200 committees), two "Supreme Commands," over a dozen subordinate military commands, and multiple technical and logistical agencies.[4]

Following the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO's emphasis shifted from territorial defence to so-called "out of area" operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. At the same time, it established mechanisms, through the Partnership for Peace,

2 Article 5 reads, in part: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them…will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

3 Adding to their large conventional force advantages, the Soviets detonated their first nuclear device in August 1949, a few days after the Treaty's entry-into-force.

4 Created in 1951, Allied Command Europe, based in Mons, Belgium, initially focused on land and air operations on the European continent. Its responsibilities were expanded in 2002 to include all NATO operations, without geographical limitation. A second command, Allied Command Atlantic, based in Norfolk, Virginia, was added in 1952 to focus on naval and air operations on and over the Atlantic Ocean. This was replaced in 2002 with Allied Command Transformation, which focuses on capabilities development, doctrine, training and exercises, and the interoperability of Alliance military forces.

to cooperate with a broad array of European and Central Asian nations, some of which aspired to become full members of the Alliance. In parallel with sizeable force and budget cuts by its member states, NATO began a reform and adaptation process that led to significant reductions in its civilian and military personnel. In 2003 it extended its operational reach into Afghanistan, which soon became its most difficult and costly military involvement, and in 2011 it conducted a militarily successful but strategically flawed intervention in Libya. However, by 2014, Russia's annexation of Crimea and its intervention in eastern Ukraine led NATO to shift its focus back to territorial defence in Europe and closely related threats (so-called "hybrid" and cyber-warfare issues), while not losing sight of a range of security challenges, specifically terrorism, emanating from the broader Middle East and parts of Africa.

Although its degree of satisfaction with the Alliance's performance has varied over time, the United States has been remarkably consistent in using NATO as its principal channel for managing transatlantic defence and security relations. There are three major reasons for this.

First, NATO provides a single organizational framework for a diverse, inter-related and mutually reinforcing set of activities, including: political-military consultations across a wide range of issues; decision-making under a "consensus rule" that helps to build solidarity while respecting national sovereignty; capacity-building, standardization and interoperability of military equipment and procedures; the development of a common doctrine and training and readiness standards, with realistic exercises; and the planning and conducting of military operations. Through the American presence at NATO headquarters in Brussels and its network of commands and facilities elsewhere, the US government and its military can influence, learn from and cooperate with allies at every level of activity, maximizing the organization's overall ability to deliver coherent, comprehensive and collective approaches to transatlantic defence issues. Absent from such a framework, the United States would potentially be forced to negotiate, coordinate and sustain up to 28 separate treaties and/or executive agreements with European states and Canada – a patently unworkable arrangement to maintain transatlantic security and stability.

Second, NATO's value lies not just in the US–European relationship, it also binds Europeans and Canadians to cooperate with and, if necessary, defend one another. Such cooperation among Europeans in particular builds their political solidarity in ways that complement US strategic objectives. It serves as a force-multiplier for the US

military, which otherwise would need to carry a greater burden of defence tasks and costs within and outside NATO territory. NATO provides the political, legal and practical framework for US forces and support facilities based on the premise that one allied nation should be readily available to help another. Intra-allied cooperation also helps to demonstrate to the US Congress and public that Americans are not alone in deterring aggression, and would not be alone in defending a threatened ally.

Third, the military capabilities, common procedures and habits of cooperation established through NATO can be invoked in US-led "coalitions of the willing" in cases in where allies cannot reach a consensus on taking action under a NATO banner. This type of coalition has been very useful in cases such as the 1991 Gulf War, the initial stages of Western intervention (consisting essentially of coordinated US–French–UK strikes) in Libya in 2011, and in the current US-led counter-ISIS coalition operating in Iraq and Syria. That said, coalitions of the willing cannot match the political and military benefits of NATO. In fact, they may carry significant risks, especially if they are formed for missions that some members of the Alliance view as strategically flawed – as was the case with the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. More broadly, a perceived US preference to use NATO essentially as a "tool" for coalitions of the willing would risk undermining the "one for all, all for one" ethos of the whole Alliance, which in turn would serve as a disincentive for many allies to invest in common capabilities or to consider collective action in the first place. Put bluntly, no allied government relishes the perception or reality that it serves as a "tool" of the United States.

Bilateral arrangements

US defence and security relations with Europe have not been completely defined by, or confined to, the NATO framework. Rather, they have necessitated a complex set of bilateral arrangements both to buttress the Alliance and to serve US defence- and foreign-policy objectives that, although relevant to NATO interests, do not necessarily fall under its purview.

These bilateral relations come in many forms and cover a wide range of activities. For example, agreements on the basing, access (including port visits and military overflights) and status of forces covering the presence and activities of US military personnel stationed in, or rotating

through, Europe are generally negotiated on a bilateral basis.[5] Most US foreign sales of military equipment and US purchases of European military systems are also conducted through bilateral channels. Depending on the specific objectives, some US training and exercise activities may be conducted on a bilateral or multilateral basis outside of NATO. Indeed, bilateral channels are especially important to the United States and the allies concerned in certain sensitive areas such as information sharing and cooperation involving nuclear weapons.

US defence relations with the United Kingdom and France perhaps represent the best examples of the interconnections and complementary nature of NATO and bilateral channels.

US and UK military services have a long history of close bilateral cooperation, reflected in various basing arrangements (such as for US Air Force combat aircraft), regular port visits by US Navy and Marine ships, and officer exchange programmes on the planning and tactical level. The "special relationship" between the two countries encompasses unique intelligence-sharing arrangements, and their nuclear weapons cooperation has had a long and enviable history. Indeed, there is no other programme on which the United States has worked so intimately with another country for such an extended period on the gravest matters of national security. This decades-long interrelationship of forces, capabilities and intelligence has served, with only a few exceptions, to help align US and UK operational commitments within NATO as well as coalitions of the willing.

Unquestionably, France's decision to return to NATO's military structures in 2009 (after a 43-year absence) removed a major impediment to improving bilateral ties with Washington. The installation of highly-talented French officers in top NATO posts, including as Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation, provided new opportunities for collaboration with US defence officials inside and outside Alliance channels. The benefits of this *rapprochement* became evident during NATO's troop surge in Afghanistan in 2009–2010, and in its intervention in Libya in 2011. Currently the lion's share of French military operations in the Middle East and northern Africa involve, directly or indirectly, coordination with and/or support from the US military, including its formidable intelligence and logistical assets. Their strengthened relationship, in turn, benefits the Alliance, since France's nuclear and conventional capabilities, as well

5 It is a longstanding US practice, however, to attempt to standardize certain provisions, such as privileges and immunities for stationed US personnel across the Alliance.

as its operational expertise, make significant contributions to NATO's deterrence, collective defence and crisis-management missions.

Since the early 1990s the United States has also used bilateral channels to strengthen the capabilities of NATO Partners. US advisory teams and material assistance helped the three newly independent Baltic nations to create their defence structures virtually from scratch. They also played a key role in the downsizing and transformation of former Warsaw Pact militaries in Central, Eastern, and South-eastern Europe. As a result, these nations were better prepared to join the Alliance and to contribute to its operations. In a similar fashion, the Obama administration significantly expanded a range of defence-cooperation programmes with Finland and Sweden that have facilitated their interoperability with NATO, their participation in NATO-led operations and the enhancement of their territorial defences.

US-EU relations

American policymakers struggled for nearly a decade to find a coherent response to the 1998 St. Malo declaration by French President Jacques Chirac and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair that the EU "must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises." The initial US reluctance to consider the EU as a contributor to European defence and security perplexed many Europeans. After all, ever since the creation of NATO the United States had regularly exhorted Europeans to assume greater responsibility for collective defence. Then, when the Balkans began to implode in the early 1990s, the administration of George H.W. Bush hoped that the Europeans would sort things out without major US involvement. Nevertheless, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's first reaction to St. Malo was to warn the Europeans to avoid the "three Ds": "decoupling" European decision-making from the Alliance; the "duplication" of NATO structures and planning processes; and "discrimination" against Allies (notably Turkey) who were not EU members.

At the time the Clinton administration harboured two somewhat contradictory concerns. Some people worried that a successful European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) meant that key decisions on European security would migrate from NATO, where America had a prominent role in shaping Alliance policies and operations, to the EU, where Washington had no seat at the table. Others feared that ESDP would produce an expensive but ineffective talk shop, ultimately

doing little to improve European military capabilities or political resolve. Nevertheless, a Pentagon-led effort in late 2000 to recast US policy in the ESDP direction struck a positive chord with European defence ministers in advocating a "close, coherent, cooperative, and transparent relationship" between NATO and the EU.

With the arrival of the Bush administration in 2001, the US view on ESDP turned sceptical once again, fuelled by concerns that it would weaken US leadership in matters of European defence. By 2003, American officials – embittered by French and German criticism over the invasion of Iraq – were making little effort to hide their hostility to any effort to further intra-European defence cooperation outside NATO. It was only in 2008 that Washington, as part of its efforts to repair relations with Europe, tentatively embraced EU-led defence efforts.

The United States moved on various fronts to improve relations with the EU during the Obama administration. Building on discussions from the Bush administration the US became full partners with the United Kingdom, France and Germany in negotiations to ensure that Iran's nuclear programme would serve exclusively peaceful purposes. The EU, in the person of its High Representative for Foreign Policy and Security Affairs, played an active role in the negotiations, specifically because of its involvement with sanctions against Iran. At the same time, Washington became an increasingly vocal advocate of closer NATO-EU cooperation, ranging from high-level political consultations to cooperation in operations (in the Balkans, Afghanistan and parts of Africa), and capacity-building efforts (especially through informal channels established between the European Defence Agency and Allied Command Transformation).

Over time, the United States complemented these efforts by strengthening bilateral relations with the EU. In 2011, for example, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and High Representative Catherine Ashton signed an agreement to allow US civilian personnel to participate in EU crisis-management operations. The following year they issued a statement aimed at strengthening US-EU cooperation in areas such as maritime security, the peaceful resolution of territorial and maritime disputes (notably in the Asia-Pacific region), non-proliferation and sustainable development. Then, in 2015, the US Combatant Commander, Europe, signed an administrative agreement with the Director, EU Military Staff to deepen the previously informal cooperation (involving information sharing, and logistical and other mutual support) between the US military and the EU military structure. In December 2016, Secretary of State John Kerry and High

Representative Federica Mogherini signed an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement to enhance cooperation on crisis-response management and facilitate reimbursable logistical support between the United States and the EU during military deployments and operations. There have also been informal contacts between the US Combatant Command, Africa, EU Military Staff and EU operational commanders in Africa.

Nevertheless, Obama administration officials remained sensitive to the inherent limits on bilateral US-EU relations regarding defence. The United States, they reasoned, should not put at risk its long-term military and political relationships with its non-EU Allies (Canada, Turkey, Norway and Iceland) by effectively circumventing NATO structures to consult, plan and conduct operations directly with the EU, or by encouraging an "EU caucus" within NATO: such a caucus would run counter to NATO's tradition of consensus decision-making by individual, sovereign member states. Moreover, as noted above, NATO's effectiveness derives in part from the multinational and multi-layered nature of its civilian and military structures, with Americans, Canadians and Europeans sitting side by side to discuss, plan, decide and implement a broad range of political and military tasks. A bilateral US-EU relationship would not include such structures: indeed, it would be incompatible with the EU's emphasis on "autonomous" decision-making and capabilities. A third factor goes to the heart of the CSDP's *raison d'être*: if the EU is serious about creating new capabilities that it could use, in some cases at least, as an "autonomous actor," it makes little sense to encourage EU dependence on US assets and capabilities to accomplish EU operations.[6] Nevertheless, dedicating US military assets to the EU (as the United States does, in effect, to NATO) would have precisely the same result.

A NEW TRUMP PARADIGM?

At this stage, it is difficult to predict with high confidence how the Trump administration will attempt to manage transatlantic defence and security relations. Nevertheless, there are reasons to worry that it might – by design, by mistake or by oversight – bring disruptive changes to each of the three tracks described above.

6 ESDP was re-designated the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) with the entry-into-force of the EU's Lisbon Treaty in 2009.

During his first months in office the President has not demonstrated a strong grasp of the importance of reassuring allies about US commitment to common values. His use of loose and/or provocative rhetoric, such as his continuing invocation of "America first," his complaint that "almost" every nation in the world has abused US generosity, and his insistence during an interview in the White House that "torture works", would seem to indicate a wilful disregard for, or a lack of understanding of European views. Among his early policy actions, there was no hint of prior consultation with European governments before he issued his executive order imposing severe restrictions on immigrants and refugees from seven Muslim-majority countries.[7]

Trump's meeting in late May with fellow NATO leaders did not put to rest doubts about his understanding of how the Alliance works. His public remarks chastising allies for "ow(ing) massive amounts of money from past years and not paying in those past years," and his failure to explicitly recommit the United States to fulfill its Article 5 obligations irritated many allied leaders.[8] Chancellor Merkel voiced widely-shared concerns when she pointedly remarked, after meeting with Trump in the NATO and G-7 formats, that "the times in which we could completely depend on others are, to a certain extent, over." That it took another two weeks before Trump made an explicit statement of support for Article 5 (during his press conference with the visiting Romanian president) likely was viewed by many Europeans and Canadians as only a begrudging gesture by the White House to change the narrative.

The President's views are not the only issue here. "People are policy," according to Washington's political *cognoscenti.* On the cabinet level, Mattis is widely viewed as a steady hand at the Pentagon, attributable in part to his previous experience as head of the US Central Command (which involved close coordination with European contributors to operations in Afghanistan and the Middle East) and as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation. During his first meeting with fellow NATO defence ministers, he took pains to reassure his colleagues that the US commitment to the Alliance, and specifically to Article 5, was "rock solid", but warned that "if your nations do not want to see America moderate its commitment … each

7 The widely perceived anti-Muslim bias of the order also affected EU passport holders who were dual-nationals from the seven targeted countries. This drew sharp responses from several European leaders, including UK Prime Minister Theresa May, who had just visited the White House to reaffirm the "special relationship".

8 Trump's advisors reportedly were blind-sided by this failure. See: http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/06/05/trump-nato-speech-national-security-team-215227.

of your capitals needs to show its support for our common defence." (In subsequent public remarks alongside European officials, Mattis has emphasized categorical US support for Article 5.) Tillerson's stated views on NATO closely resemble those expressed by Mattis, although apart from on energy-related issues given his long career in the giant Exxon Mobil Corporation, his knowledge of European security matters appears relatively thin.

Trump's decision to replace his controversial National Security Advisor, retired Army Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, with Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, a widely-respected Army officer with extensive experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, and well versed in doctrine development, was a positive step.[9] McMaster reportedly dismissed or demoted several National Security Council (NSC) staffers whom Flynn had hired based on their ultra-conservative political affiliations and ideological viewpoints. In their place, he has recruited ostensibly non-partisan, mainly career officers drawn from the military, the State Department and the intelligence community. In early April he also apparently played a key role in removing Trump's controversial chief strategist, Steve Bannon, from the NSC's Principals Committee, which prepares final recommendations for presidential decision-making. (McMaster also succeeded in restoring the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of National Intelligence and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency to their positions as permanent members.[10]) Still, McMaster has not escaped criticism – including from moderate Republicans – for his awkward defence of the President's problematic remarks (involving intelligence information on ISIS threats) to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and of the administration´s "America first" mantra.[11]

9 Flynn was forced to resign after less than one month in office for misleading Vice President Mike Pence regarding the nature of his contacts in late 2016 with the Russian Ambassador to the United States. Flynn reportedly has sought immunity from prosecution in return for testifying before federal authorities and congressional panels investigating his involvement with Russian interests before and during his role as a top advisor in the Trump campaign.

10 The President's appointment of Bannon to the Principals Committee in late January, which in effect demoted the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of National Intelligence and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, drew fire from a range of members of Congress and national security experts, including former top officials in Republican administrations. They challenged the propriety of having the President's Chief Strategist – in effect his principal counsel on domestic political affairs – participate in the senior inter-agency forum for considering national security policy.

11 See: http://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/16/hr-mcmaster-trump-intelligence-sharing-appropriate-238450 and https://www.wsj.com/articles/america-first-doesnt-mean-america-alone-1496187426.

Moreover, as of mid-June, several important sub-cabinet positions involving transatlantic relations in the State and Defence departments remain vacant. In recent administrations, these have been filled by a few dozen political appointees on the levels of deputy secretary, undersecretary, assistant secretary and deputy assistant secretary. It is not unusual for some of these positions to remain unfilled for several months following a change in administration, given that most appointees above the rank of deputy assistant secretary require Senate confirmation. Nevertheless, according to media reports, Tillerson faces serious problems of morale among senior Foreign Service officers in his department, and Mattis has apparently met White House resistance to some of his preferred nominees for senior Pentagon positions. If Mattis and Tillerson want their policy priorities towards Europe to be effectively promoted and sustained through the interagency process they will need to assemble teams at the top echelons of their respective departments that can effectively advocate and implement them.

Here, then, are some admittedly speculative reflections on what this might portend for US-European defence relations.

NATO

The Trump administration has no obvious reason to provoke a crisis within NATO in the near term. The President's rhetoric, which has largely focused on the burden-sharing debate and his claim that the Alliance has been on the side-lines in the fight against "Islamic terrorism," has been more pointed than that of his predecessor. Nevertheless, the Obama administration, like its predecessors, also complained about the low level of European defence spending: only five of the 29 allies currently meet the 2014 Wales Summit commitment to move towards the two-per-cent of GDP guideline within a decade.

The critical difference here is that as a matter of policy, no previous US administration had suggested, as candidate Trump did, that the American commitment to collective defence would depend on the defence spending of an ally under attack. Such a condition, as Trump's critics quickly pointed out, could undermine the deterrence of a potential aggressor, such as Russia, and spark a broader crisis of confidence in US defence guarantees among European allies. Given recent trends, Mattis and Tillerson, with support from the NATO Secretary General, should be able to make the case within the Trump administration that most allies have stopped the decades-long trend of steadily declining defence budgets, even if many remain unlikely to reach the two-per-cent level in the foreseeable future. This should

allow the White House to claim that Trump's expression of concern over spending is producing results, although Trump's tendency to exaggerate his own success might prove counterproductive.[12]

As for the fight against terrorism, NATO's supporters correctly point to its long record of involvement in Afghanistan, which cost the lives of over 1,000 European and Canadian soldiers, and its current (albeit limited) involvement in training Iraqi forces as part of the anti-ISIS coalition. In time, the Trump administration might convince the Alliance to do more, such as consolidating under a NATO flag the allies' separate bilateral training programmes for the Iraqis. However, the new foreign-policy team is also likely to be made aware of some of the difficult obstacles to achieving a NATO consensus, including Turkey's complicated relationship with the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts.

Over the longer term, however, the Trump administration's hardest challenge with NATO will be to balance its efforts (still at an early stage) to reassure allies with its anticipated efforts to improve relations with Russia. Here, the jury is still out, but one could point to areas in which US policies might – or might not – indicate a new Trump approach.

European reassurance initiatives. For now, US implementation of the Obama administration's decision to deploy additional forces (specifically, a third Brigade Combat Team and an additional Combat Aviation Brigade) to Europe is proceeding apace. Other previously agreed measures to strengthen conventional deterrence under US and NATO auspices are in the pipeline, and bipartisan Congressional support for increased funding for the US build-up in Europe appears solid. Russian leaders regularly denounce these as a serious threat to their nation's security, while promising to deploy even more Russian forces in the region. If Washington were to slow down or suspend this very measured augmentation of its conventional capabilities, especially in the wake of recently increased Russian military pressure on Ukraine, it would seriously alarm many NATO allies and Partners, within and beyond northern Europe.

Missile defence and nuclear weapons. Russia has been attacking NATO's plans to deploy missile defences in Europe for several years, claiming – falsely – that they are designed and intended to degrade Russia's strategic deterrent forces. While modernizing a wide range of its own

12 For example, before leaving Europe after his NATO and G-7 meetings, Trump told US military personnel that "(it's) a big difference over the last year, money is actually starting to pour into NATO from countries that would not have been doing what they're doing now had I not been elected."

nuclear forces and engaging in many forms of "nuclear sabre rattling," Moscow is also denouncing US plans to replace its much smaller numbers of non-strategic nuclear weapons forward-based in Europe (under longstanding NATO arrangements) and to modernize US and allied "dual-capable aircraft."[13] Prior to his inauguration, Trump and his various surrogates promised a major expansion of US missile defences and spending on nuclear weapons systems. He proposed a roughly 10-per-cent increase in defence spending in his administration's first budget submission to Congress, to include a significant boost in resources for nuclear and missile defence programmes. NATO allies will closely follow the administration's ongoing detailed reviews of strategic forces and missile defence requirements, seeking meaningful consultations as they progress. If Washington were to approve programmes judged to be excessive or provocative, the allies would face renewed difficulties in finding consensus on NATO's overall deterrence and defence strategy and capabilities.

Bilateral relations

There is no *a priori* reason why the Trump administration should seek major changes to existing patterns of bilateral defence relations with NATO allies and partners. Notwithstanding the rhetoric of candidate Trump and his surrogates, these relations provide many benefits to US national security and economic interests; the latter include sales of US military systems to Europe and Canada at a relatively modest cost to the US Treasury. Many of these benefits extend beyond NATO. For example, the above-mentioned bilateral arrangements for overflight and base access rights in Europe are critical to US military operations outside Europe, especially in the broader Middle East and Africa.

Nevertheless, a case-by-case review of these relations, although unlikely for now, would not be surprising, given the administration's apparent transactional approach to overseas partners. It would be consistent with the President's "America first" and "Buy American" rhetoric, and his previous assertions that many allies were "ripping off" the United States. An exaggerated insistence on *quid pro quos* could damage cooperation in many areas in which long-term investments are necessary to build strong, confident and resilient relations: from defence-industry collaboration and technology-sharing to strategic

13 For a recent background paper on NATO nuclear issues, see L. Michel, "NATO as a 'nuclear alliance'", FIIA Working Paper 93, February 2017, http://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/661/nato_as_a_nuclear_alliance/.

assessments, intelligence and military-to-military contacts. Moreover, given the increasing defence links among European allies and partners, a dramatic change in US relations with one ally could have serious if unintended repercussions for that ally's relationship with third parties.

Managing the complex interplay between US relations and its allies in a NATO context and in a bilateral and/or coalition-of-the-willing arrangement will require a sophisticated understanding of the disparate strategic outlooks, requirements and capabilities of those individual allies. Simply put, success in preserving and strengthening transatlantic defence and security bonds is highly dependent upon longstanding patterns of cooperation and the building of mutual trust. Conversely, allied and partner governments and militaries who come to believe that Washington dismisses their interests in one region may well think twice before committing to working closely with the United States elsewhere. For example, failure to coordinate closely with allies who are militarily committed to the US-led anti-ISIS coalition in Iraq and/or Syria could damage the US ability to cooperate with those same countries within NATO-led efforts in Europe, or in operations in other regions (such as Africa) conducted under national, EU or UN leadership.

US-EU relations

In some respects, the future of US-EU relations under the Trump administration is one of the biggest question marks. EU leaders, including European Council President Donald Tusk, have already echoed concerns expressed by several European heads of state and government regarding the Trump administration's approach to Brexit, specifically, and to future US-EU trade and economic relationships, in general. Trump's decision in June to withdraw the United States from the 2015 Paris climate agreement was sharply criticized by EU leaders and heads of state and government of leading EU member states. If Trump were to follow through on his campaign pledge to jettison the Iranian nuclear deal – for now, the new administration apparently has decided to stick with the deal, while pursuing other means to put pressure on Iran – it would seriously affect US relations with the EU. Tensions between the United States and the EU concerning how to approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are nothing new, but if Washington were to adopt policies that, in European eyes, raise the level of tension, it would significantly reduce the chances of US-EU cooperation in relaunching the moribund peace process. Moreover, if Trump were to move unilaterally to ease Ukraine-related sanctions on

Russia, many (albeit not all) EU member states would view this as a major breach of faith.

Even without a major clash over issues such as Iran or Russian sanctions, it is hard to know if the Trump administration will maintain or reverse the steps taken since 2008 to deepen US–EU bilateral ties in areas related to defence and security. Broadly speaking, by the end of the last administration, more Americans in the national security community were concerned that the EU would do too little rather than too much in terms of capability-building and stabilization operations in areas where NATO has little or no interest in major engagement. Moreover, the slow but positive progress towards making NATO–EU cooperation more pragmatic and effective encompasses several domains, such as cyber defence and countering "hybrid" threats, which are high on the list of Pentagon and State Department priorities.[14]

However, the impending UK withdrawal from the EU has resulted in initiatives by some of its member states (led by France, with significant backing from Germany) to boost European defence cooperation within an EU context. If mishandled or poorly explained, such initiatives could be viewed by some in the new US administration as an effort directed mainly at reducing US influence in Europe – and, more specifically, at limiting American access to the European defence market.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE "WESTERN LIBERAL WORLD ORDER"

It has always been the case that the United States and its transatlantic allies and partners do not necessarily agree on every major defence policy or military engagement. Indeed, their demonstrated ability over more than 70 years to navigate through (or around) differences, while preserving a broad community of interests and values, testifies to the underlying strength of the transatlantic relationship. That said, it should be self-evident that the strength and resilience of the transatlantic community's defence and security relationship depends strongly on its overarching framework of common (but not necessarily identical) values, such as respect for individual liberties, universal human rights, democratic institutions and processes, the rule of law,

14 See: "Joint declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization", NATO, 8 July 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm.

and predominantly market-based economies. It is difficult to see how the defence and security relationship between the United States and its transatlantic allies and partners can prosper if they are increasingly at odds over the values they have pledged to defend together, which broadly speaking represent the "Western liberal world order".

It is worth pointing out that neither Trump nor his most conservative and "disruptor" advisors have openly indicated that they intend to launch a full-scale assault on the Western liberal world order. As suggested above, the greater risk is that an accumulation of disparate actions, omissions and pronouncements from the President and his administration might, over time, serve to diminish what historically has been one of the most potent assets of the United States: its "soft power," or its ability to attract and co-opt others through the demonstrated health of its institutions and society, and its tradition of humanitarian outreach and non-military assistance to a wide variety of countries and populations.

Unfortunately, several of the Trump administration's early initiatives appear to have increased the political polarization that has lowered the citizenry's confidence in many of the country's major institutions. Furthermore, several of its proposals pending congressional action, such as the planned cut of about one-third in the State Department's budget that will probably come from economic and humanitarian assistance programmes, as well as financial contributions to the UN, would, if implemented, be widely viewed as a very short-sighted application of the President's "American first" approach.

CONCLUSION

To paraphrase Mark Twain's famous response to the rumour that he was gravely ill, reports of the impending death of the transatlantic defence relationship have been greatly exaggerated. That the advent of the Age of Trump has rattled many NATO allies and partners is understandable; that it will prove corrosive is possible, but not inevitable.

Much depends on how the new American ship of state emerges from its shakedown cruise over the coming months. To the dismay of some – but to the delight of others – much will depend on the extent to which the new President, who retains vast powers in defence and foreign affairs, will come to appreciate vital US interests in preserving, strengthening and adapting, where necessary, the Alliance and bilateral ties (including with the EU) that have prevented a major war

in Europe since 1945 and promoted transatlantic cooperation outside Europe. Indeed, many of his critics, including respected members of the Republican foreign-policy establishment, remain sceptical of his ability or will to do so. Others hope that countervailing forces such as congressional controls over the budget and the US military's strong preference for deterring war or, if necessary, fighting with allies at its side will put him under an obligation he cannot break.

Two caveats remain. First, the bad news: other international actors, both state and non-state, also have a vote. In Europe, a miscalculation by Russia could turn a "hybrid" event, which Moscow intended to be limited in nature, into a more serious confrontation. Similarly, one of its provocative military activities in the Baltic or Black Sea regions might cause a fatal accident, with unpredictable repercussions. Alternatively, well-timed, dramatic terrorist attacks could swing governments and publics in Europe toward more inward-looking policies.

However, there is also good news: America's NATO allies and partners still possess considerable assets, including their values, democratic institutions, economies and militaries. It is true that they are all under threat, but none appear to be on the brink of collapse. In some countries – France is a recent, hopeful example – the electorate seems willing to back candidates with a positive message of domestic political and economic reform, and continued international engagement. If the past is any indication, given good leadership and an engaged citizenry, Europeans can recover their optimism and strength, and it is to be hoped that they will again find the right kind of American encouragement and support to help them do so.

Conclusion

The unexpected election results on both sides of the Atlantic and the unsettled nature of the Trump administration's foreign policies have resulted in at least a momentary loss of transatlantic confidence and a waiting period. After many relative shocks – from the Iraq debacle, the financial crisis and the Euro-crisis to election-related unpredictability – the strong teleological belief in the inevitable progress of the liberal market-oriented democracies has declined. There is a growing awareness that a pause has taken hold over steady progress. The presence of cross-currents is increasingly felt, and uncertainty has started to prevail.

Today's world is characterized by contradictory trends. On the one hand, after steady bad news, the EU seems to have dispelled some of the clouds that were hanging over its head after various crises and Brexit. This signals that liberal institutions still have sustainability, and that the underlying spirit of integration can still be sold to voters. On the other hand, major powers and their geopolitical contestations seem to be making a return. Authoritarian political orders appear to have strengthened their appeal. The end goal of an increasingly resilient liberal order in Europe seems to be losing some of its energy. As James Traub contends in this report, "...(t)he teleological foundations of our system are wobbling. We can no longer assume that the direction of history is foreordained." A sense of teleonomy has replaced a stronger belief in the liberal telos. To a degree, this might be a healthy development, as it places the onus on active political mobilization instead of relying on a more fatalistic approach coupled with less active measures.

Indeed, as Aap Neljas and Eoin McNamara conclude in their chapters, recent years have been action-packed in Europe and the Nordic Baltic region. Measures introduced to counter challenges to the stability of the region include investing resources in harder forms of security, in countering hybrid threats and in building defence capabilities and security networks, even if they cross the NATO boundary. The region is now better prepared to meet the need for independent, networked and collective defence. This active stability promotion includes the forging of bilateral and trilateral relationships, as in the case of the deeper cooperation between Sweden and Finland with links to both the US and NATO. Efforts have been made to acquire new capabilities and to foster cooperation arising from an awareness of the hybrid means of influencing democracies. At the same time, there has been a steady development in establishing mutual ties between NATO and the EU.

However, there are still various challenges to be managed. The rise of "major power-ism" is a global phenomenon. Active stability promotion – such as in the Baltic Sea region – requires a degree of win-win thinking. Zero-sum tendencies and expansionist policies could be consequences of the increasing challenge of rule-based international order. On the one hand, major transformation of the world order rarely happens without large-scale violent contestation, and regressive cycles would inevitably have ramifications in Europe and the Nordic-Baltic region. On the other hand, many of the up-and-coming major states, such as China, India and, to a degree, Russia are beneficiaries of rule-based order. Their willingness to radically alter the foundations of economic prosperity and domestic stability would seem counter-intuitive. The biggest economic beneficiary of the liberal order, China, does not represent its key values. Democratization-related expectations and promises have been increasingly downplayed. The country has remained authoritarian. However, the geopolitical challenge is still limited to the maritime regions and to silk-road projects. The more externally directed challenge from Russia is interpreted by some to prove how a more illiberal state can be tempted to challenge regional security norms. As Donald Jensen points out in his chapter, declining major powers may be as disruptive as those on the rise. However, the counter-measures taken so far should be enough to check the current level of challenge. Darker clouds could loom on the horizon. The possibility of bilateral deals between major powers worries some because of Europe's historical experience with them.

As contended in this report, the challenging dynamics are not only external in origin. Trump's strong words on burden sharing have been

noted in Europe with concern. His criticism of NATO has left a mark. As Kalev Stoicescu concludes in his contribution, it is not so much the message of the burden sharing that is worrisome, but Trump's apparent threat to reconsider the US commitment to NATO if European members do not step up their defence contributions. This has shaken trust in the unwavering nature of the relationship. The concerns are also related to threat perceptions. The US prioritization of different threats appears to be changing. Its global outlook includes allies that have their own unique regional threat perceptions: in Europe these include Russia and terrorism, in the Middle-East they comprise Iran and Shiia forces, and in Asia the main threats are usually listed as being North Korea and China. It seems that the new Trump administration does not prioritize the complete list of threats in the same way as many European states do. Most notably, the administration seems to look for ways of collaborating with Russia and recognizing some of its interests. These developments give rise to anxieties as European allies and partners have become used to trusting the American slogan "Europe whole and free".

The ambiguities, mixed messages and doubts signalled by the US have caused a dual dynamic in Europe. There is more emphasis on the two-per-cent defence spending both among allies and partners. However, there are also strong sentiments expressed favouring European strategic independence, most notably by German Chancellor Angela Merkel after the G7 meeting. The project concerning the common defence of the EU has acquired new momentum. The idea of a stronger European leg of NATO is also being entertained. This is happening as one of the main military powers in Europe is negotiating its exit from the European Union. All these dynamics could, in the end, be perceived as synergic, and as contributing to the collective defence and the closer integration between NATO and the EU. However, it could also lead to contradictory dynamics, resulting in an increasing preoccupation in the US with non-European matters, or its forging ahead without involving European states.

The situation will remain murky, fluctuating between strategic autonomy and the desire for transatlantic unity. Unexpected confluences are likely to happen. All this will constitute a challenge for policy planners. As McNamara points out in the conclusion of his chapter: "The uncertainties concerning the prospects for a stronger European defence project combined with Trump's unpredictable security policy will ensure that the wider security environment presents considerable challenges for Nordic and Baltic decision-makers

beyond 2017." The ambiguity of the ongoing situation places the onus on waiting for clarity. At the same time, the European drive for a strategic rethinking of EU–NATO relations provides some highly-needed focus. Kari Möttölä expects this overall situation to develop towards "a conditional mix of convergence and divergence", which will happen in the context of discontinuity in the European security environment. Regression into a Yalta-type of arrangement with its spheres of interest is possible. However, as Traub and Möttölä both point out, this possibility alone should give the West the impetus to re-imagine what kind of transatlantic relationship would support the emergence of reformed liberal-order outcomes for post-post-Cold War Europe.

The degree of change in the transatlantic relationship will not depend solely on the leadership on both sides of the Atlantic. Balancing domestic forces is especially important in the US given the vast powers of the President in foreign and defence policies. Congress with its more traditional foreign-policy views as well as the key branches of government, departments and agencies can and will exert moderating influences on radical ruptures in the long-prevailing US foreign-policy consensus. Leo Michel in his chapter emphasizes these moderating influences:

> *Much depends on how the new American ship of state emerges from its shakedown cruise over the coming months. To the dismay of some – but to the delight of others – much will depend on the extent to which the new President, who retains vast powers in defence and foreign affairs, will come to appreciate vital US interests in preserving, strengthening and adapting, where necessary, the Alliance and bilateral ties (including with the EU) that have prevented a major war in Europe since 1945 and promoted transatlantic cooperation outside Europe. Indeed, many of his critics, including respected members of the Republican foreign-policy establishment, remain sceptical of his ability or will to do so. Others hope that countervailing forces such as congressional controls over the budget and the US military's strong preference for deterring war or, if necessary, fighting with allies at its side will put him under an obligation he cannot break.*

The situation also remains in flux in Europe. It is clear from recent elections that Western democracies are not experiencing one-way change in their party politics. The Trump administration's views on national sovereignty, transactionalism and the status of liberal institutions such as the EU and NATO are being balanced by strong views and political mobilization in opposite directions. Michel's analysis adds two further, crucial caveats to his assessment, downplaying the possibility of more radical change in the transatlantic relationship. Enemies do exist and they can exploit the ambiguities and hesitancy in the expectant mode into which some may have fallen. Russia, for example, could challenge the ongoing transformation by scaling-up its hybrid operations along the Eastern frontier. On the other hand, terror organizations could turn the steady series of strikes into more serious incidents. To paraphrase former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, it is events that underlie substance as well as trouble in international relations. Confluences of circumstances could turn out to be the drivers of the Trump administration's policy formulations, in a similar way as 9/11 functioned as the driver of US president Bush's shift in focus from the economy and domestic affairs to the seemingly opposite, namely major military operations abroad.

The key projects of the liberal international order, international institutions, tend to soften the impact of randomness and excessive power politics. Any weakening of these institutions will result in the more challenging coordination of European security, as self-interest among the major powers will tend towards zero-sum conflicts instead of seeking win-win situations. If the security dynamics are perceived as a playground for self-interest and transactional deals, the flow of events may fuel reactive conflict dynamics, and harden cultures of fear at the expense of international order and norms. There are voices in the West claiming that this anarchy is unavoidable. At present, it seems that the Trump administration is highlighting the zero-sum nature of global affairs. The same is evidently true of Russian policies, and one can detect hints of the same in Chinese behaviour, especially in the maritime regions in its proximity. All this signifies the return of "major power-ism" in Europe, too. If events can be the driver of rushed reactions and potential diversionary actions, then the key is to think about the moderating influences.

This report set out to assess recent changes in transatlantic relations, gauge their current – and evolving – character, and look ahead to the future by pointing out challenges, risks, opportunities and future scenarios. James Traub started by charting the overall

internal dynamics in the West. Traub acknowledges the long-term sustainability of the liberal order and predicts that, in the absence of strong ideological competition, the order that has lasted for seventy years will continue to sustain itself. However, this will require more active internal and external defence activity. Kari Möttölä suggests in the next chapter that the European order might remain liberal in the post-war sense, although there is a danger of regression towards a Yalta-II-type situation. The rupture in the transatlantic relationship therefore needs to be healed. Its successful recalibration would achieve the agency required to avoid regression. Leo Michel equally emphasizes the need to guard against worst-case scenarios in his chapter. He discerns similar dangers as those pointed out in Möttölä's analysis, but concludes that the internal balances of power in the US are strong enough to resist any final rupture in the relationship. Kalev Stoicescu draws a positive conclusion, however. The balance of power within the Trump Administration – especially in the form of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defence James Mattis – will serve to preserve the firm commitment to meet the obligations and pledges related to the Alliance. The allied presence will continue to counter Russian adjustments in its Western Military District. Even so, both Möttölä and Stoicescu foresee a period of uncertainty before things calm down. Jensen also argues that the US's relationship with Russia will remain competitive and adversarial for the foreseeable future. As domestic agendas link with patterns of conflict as well as pragmatic cooperation, Jensen predicts that the Trump-Putin era will be marked by volatility and the drive within both leaders to stay in power. Aap Neljas highlights the need for regional actors to gain agency over their own defence, irrespective of the overall flux in the major power and transatlantic relations. Eoin McNamara in his analysis emphasizes the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of the priorities of each of the regional actors, and thereby to identify tangible areas for possible further cooperation. He argues for the further development of the Nordic-Baltic region into a security community.

The rise of realism, methodological nationalism, and major power politics would have been considered an alarming and unlikely prospect only a few years ago. However, it seems that the contemporary European security environment will face a situation in which bigger states wield more influence and power. At the same time, their liberal values will remain very strong. The defence and security of liberal open societies operates both internally and externally. Various hybrid means of influence have been manifestly present in recent elections. At the

same time, the challenging prospect of spheres of interest and forced border changes are directing more attention and resources towards territorial defence. How much of this internal and external defence can be collectively organized and coordinated, and by which institutions or configurations of institutions, remain open questions. This report has charted both current and foreseeable patterns of such efforts. Many uncertainties remain, and the central political frameworks have been challenged. Even so, they still play a crucial role in maintaining security in the West and in the various states that find their place there.

About the contributors

Mika Aaltola is Programme Director of the Global Security research programme at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. His areas of expertise are US foreign and domestic policies as well as the international system and major-power relations. He has been a visiting researcher in universities in the US and France, and he holds the rank of Docent at the University of Tampere.

Bart Gaens works as a Senior Research Fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), and is also Project Director at the Center on US Politics and Power at the same institute. Furthermore, he is Adjunct Professor (Docent) at the University of Helsinki. His appointments in the recent past include Specially-Appointed Associate Professor at the University of Osaka, Japan, and Professor of Japanese Studies at the University of Helsinki. He has published on Europe–Asia relations, with a special focus on the ASEM (Asia–Europe Meeting) process. Further research interests include Japan's foreign policy, as well as security-related issues in East Asia.

James Traub is a journalist and scholar specializing in international affairs. He is a columnist and contributor to the website foreignpolicy.com. He worked as a staff writer for The New Yorker from 1993 to 1998, and as a contributing writer to The New York Times Magazine from 1998 to 2011. He has also written extensively about national politics, urban affairs and education. Among his recent books are The Freedom Agenda, on the American policy of democracy promotion, and The Best Intentions, on the UN under Kofi Annan. His most recent book, the widely-acclaimed

John Quincy Adams: Militant Spirit, is a biography of a figure who spanned the period from the Revolution to the dawn of the Civil War, and did much to define that era. Traub is currently writing a book on the rise and fall of liberalism from the mid-19th century to today. He teaches classes on American foreign policy at NYU's Abu Dhabi campus as well as at the main campus in New York.

Kari Möttölä has been a Visiting Scholar, Professor, at the Network for European Studies, University of Helsinki, since September 2013. He is engaged in the study of Finnish, regional and European security; the European Union and transatlantic relations; and the US grand strategy. He was a policy planner at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 1989–2013, and Director of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Helsinki in 1973–1988.

Aap Neljas is a Senior Researcher at the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute. He has degrees in law and political science from the University of Tartu. He has worked as a political analyst in the policy-planning division of the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in 2008–2011 served as a diplomat at the Estonian Embassy in Washington, USA. He was a member of the Estonian Parliament in 1992–1999 and 2002–2003, and in 1991 he was a diplomat at the Estonian Permanent Representation to the United Nations, New York.

Eoin Micheál McNamara is a PhD researcher at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu (Estonia), where he has lectured in transatlantic relations and Asian security, and an Associate Fellow at the Latvian Institute of International Affairs in Riga. His research interests include NATO burden-sharing, transatlantic relations, comparative security policy in Central and Eastern Europe, civil-military relations and the dynamics of America's global-alliance networks. He holds an M.Sc. in security studies from University College London (UK), and a B.A. (Hons.) in history and politics from University College Dublin (Ireland).

Kalev Stoicescu, a former Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence official, took the position of researcher at the International Centre for Defence and Security on 11 August 2014. Among other fields, he specializes in issues related to Russian foreign and domestic policy, as well as developments in the fields of the military, the economy, the media and minorities.

He served at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1991–2000, including as Ambassador to the OSCE and Ambassador to the US and Canada. He was a member of the Estonian delegation in border negotiations with Russia and Latvia. He worked for the Ministry of Defence from 2002 to 2014, first as the head of the civilian–military cooperation department and then, from 2007, as counsellor on defence policy at the Estonian Embassy in Paris.

Donald N. Jensen is a Senior Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and Adjunct Senior Fellow, Center for East European Policy Analysis, where he is editor of the CEPA Information Warfare Initiative. A former US diplomat, he writes extensively on the domestic and foreign policies of Russia, Ukraine and the other former Soviet states. He received his PhD from Harvard University and his BA from Columbia. Jensen was a foreign-policy advisor to the presidential campaign of Governor John Kasich.

Leo Michel is a Visiting Senior Fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs and a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council. Michel's previous government positions included: Distinguished Research Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies; Director for NATO Policy and Director for Non-Nuclear Arms Control in the Office of the Secretary of Defense; Deputy U.S. Representative to the U.S.–Russia Bilateral Consultative Commission; analyst in the Central Intelligence Agency; and legislative aide for a Member of Congress. He holds an M.A. from Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies and a B.A. from Princeton University.

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Managing Unpredictability

Transatlantic relations in the Trump era

Mika Aaltola and Bart Gaens (eds.)

The initial stages of President Donald Trump's administration are marked by an apparent shift in US foreign policy, including in its transatlantic relations. For many, the advent of the Trump era with its perceived inclination towards hard power, national self interest, protectionism and transactionalism necessitates a fundamental rethink of the US's global role, its relations with Europe and, indeed, the rule-based international order. The aim in this report is to map out the main contours of the ongoing recalibration of transatlantic relations, with Nordic-Baltic security as the key frame of reference and case in point of the ongoing changes.

The report assesses how both internal and external threats to the liberal world order have resulted in a loss of faith in the foundations and institutions of the post-war system. It also explores the Trump administration's rhetoric and action, and its impact on the European security order. The contributing chapters zoom in on the challenges, priorities and opportunities that arise in an evolving defence and security strategy in the Nordic-Baltic region, against the background of volatile US-Russia relations and a liberal world order in flux. A new paradigm for transatlantic defence and security relations may be arising, which will affect NATO as well as US-Europe bilateral relations. It is evident that transatlantic relations are going through a period of transition and uncertainty. Key challenges in the years to come will relate to managing this unpredictability, and "re-imagining" a transatlantic relationship that supports a reformed liberal order.

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