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## **Central and Eastern Europe: NATO's New Centre of Gravity**

Edited by  
Dominik P. Jankowski  
and Tomasz Stępniewski



**PRACE** Instytutu  
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Dominik P. Jankowski and Tomasz Stępniewski

## **From Vilnius to Washington, D.C.: NATO's Adaptation and its Impact on Central and Eastern Europe**

### **Executive Summary**

- Russia's brutal war against Ukraine has fundamentally challenged post-Cold War assumptions about the security and territorial integrity of the Euro-Atlantic area. While NATO's initial response signalled commitment to strengthening deterrence and defence, it also began to expose critical shortfalls and stress points across the Alliance. As Russia and other adversaries will aggressively continue to exploit existing vulnerabilities, the need for meeting these challenges is acute.
- The 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid saw the release of a new Strategic Concept, defining the priorities of the Alliance. It is the eighth such document in its history



and came at a decisive time for NATO, as large-scale land warfare returned to the European continent. NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept is a blueprint for the Alliance in a more dangerous and competitive world.

- The 2023 NATO Summit in Vilnius focused on the less flashy – but far more important – task of implementing the priorities and vision Allies outlined in 2022. From the Central and East European (CEE) perspective, there were four key decisions agreed or reconfirmed at the Vilnius Summit: NATO's approach to Russia, a strengthened deterrence and defence posture, a new commitment to spend at least 2 percent of GDP on defence, and a politico-military package for Ukraine.

## **Introduction**

Russia's brutal war against Ukraine has fundamentally challenged post-Cold War assumptions about the security and territorial integrity of the Euro-Atlantic area. Russia has violated the norms and principles that contributed to a stable and predictable European security order. While NATO's initial response signalled commitment to strengthening deterrence and defence, it also began to expose critical shortfalls and stress points across the Alliance. As Russia and other adversaries will aggressively continue to exploit existing vulnerabilities, the need for meeting these challenges is acute. As underlined in the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, "strategic competition, pervasive instability and recurrent

shocks define our broader security environment. The threats we face are global and interconnected.”<sup>1</sup> The NATO Summits in Madrid (2022) and Vilnius (2023) addressed some of the fundamental challenges and shortfalls. On the road to the 2024 NATO Summit in Washington, D.C., the Alliance must speed up the implementation of the already agreed adaption measures. However, new decisions – including with regard to Ukraine’s membership in the Alliance, NATO’s adapted containment policy dealing with Russia, and the Western response to ongoing strategic competition with China – will have to be taken. The role of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in this process should not be underestimated, as NATO’s political and military centre of gravity has been shifting towards the Eastern Flank.

### **NATO Vilnius Summit: Key Decisions for CEE**

The 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid saw the release of a new Strategic Concept, defining the priorities of the Alliance. It is the eighth such document in its history and came at a decisive time for NATO, as large-scale land warfare returned to the European continent. Politically, the Strategic Concept and the unity it represents are very important.<sup>2</sup> In fact, NA-

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<sup>1</sup> *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>. [2.10.2023]

<sup>2</sup> Ed Arnold, *New Concepts but Old Problems: NATO's New Strategic Concept*, “RUSI Commentary”, RUSI, London, <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/new-concepts-old-problems-natos-new-strategic-concept>, 1 July 2022. [2.10.2023]

TO's 2022 Strategic Concept is a blueprint for the Alliance in a more dangerous and competitive world. The document offers a strategic vision and path to secure Allies now, and into the future. "The Strategic Concept describes the security environment facing the Alliance, reaffirms NATO's values, and spells out NATO's key purpose of ensuring collective defence. It further sets out NATO's three core tasks: deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security."<sup>3</sup>

The 2023 NATO Summit in Vilnius focused on the less flashy – but far more important – task of implementing the priorities and vision Allies outlined in 2022.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the Strategic Concept will only be as good as the willingness of NATO to implement it. In this context, it is important to note that the Vilnius summit was about implementing the NATO of tomorrow.

From the CEE perspective, there were four key decisions agreed or reconfirmed at the Vilnius Summit. First, on Russia. Allies reconfirmed that "Russia is the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area."<sup>5</sup> From the CEE viewpoint,

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<sup>3</sup> *NATO leaders approve new Strategic Concept*, NATO, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_197281.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_197281.htm), 29 June 2022. [2.10.2023]

<sup>4</sup> Jason C. Moyer, Henri Winberg, *NATO Vilnius Summit 2023: A Summit For Implementation*, Wilson Center, 11 July 2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/nato-vilnius-summit-2023-summit-implementation>. [3.10.2023]

<sup>5</sup> *NATO 2023 Vilnius Summit Communique*, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_217320.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm). [3.10.2023]

two additional elements need to be underlined – NATO's formal relationship with Russia and the Russia-Belarus alliance. Both elements will be crucial for regional stability and predictability. This is because Russia has ceased to be a NATO partner, “any change in our [NATO's] relationship depends on Russia halting its aggressive behaviour and fully complying with international law.”<sup>6</sup> Yet, the Vilnius Summit came short of taking decisive steps to redefine the NATO-Russia relationship. The NATO-Russia Council still exists. In fact, Russia formally remains a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme (PfP) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). At the same time, the process of increasing Russian control over Belarus poses additional security challenges for CEE and NATO's Eastern Flank.<sup>7</sup> At the Vilnius Summit, Allies agreed that “Russia's deepening military integration with Belarus, including the deployment of advanced Russian military capabilities and military personnel in Belarus, has implications for regional stability and the defence of the Alliance.”<sup>8</sup>

Second, on deterrence and defence. In line with 2022 decisions about the Alliance's new baseline for deterrence and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Anna Maria Dyner, *Belarus And Russia Move to The Next Stage Of Integration*, “PISM Bulletin”, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, <https://pism.pl/publications/belarus-and-russia-move-to-the-next-stage-of-integration>, 4 January 2023. [3.10.2023]

<sup>8</sup> *NATO 2023 Vilnius Summit Communique*, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_217320.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm). [3.10.2023]

defence posture, NATO leaders endorsed a “family of plans” and the command and control arrangements needed to implement it. These include an overarching strategic framework for the entire North Atlantic area, operational plans for each military domain, and three regional defence plans for the North Atlantic and High North, Central Europe, and the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. As Stephen J. Flanagan and Anna M. Dowd note, “This strategy aims to shape force structure, readiness requirements, and national defence investments.”<sup>9</sup> However, the new plans will not change the deployment of Alliance troops, including increasing the permanent presence on the Eastern Flank.<sup>10</sup> The eight forward presence battlegroups – present in almost all CEE countries<sup>11</sup> – are now in place, and the ambition to scale up to brigade-sized units where and when required remains. All eight battlegroups are integrated into NATO’s command structure to ensure the necessary readiness and responsiveness. Additionally, a new Allied Reaction Force is to be established, designed to rapidly respond to threats. Final-

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen J. Flanagan, Anna M. Dowd, *Alliance Assignments: Defense Priorities for Key NATO States, “War on the Rocks”*, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/10/alliance-assignments-defense-priorities-for-key-nato-states/>, 4 October 2023. [4.10.2023]

<sup>10</sup> Wojciech Lorenz, *NATO Regional Defence Plans Key to Credibility of Deterrence*, “PISM Bulletin”, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw, <https://www.pism.pl/publications/nato-regional-defence-plans-key-to-credibility-of-deterrence>, 26 September 2023. [4.10.2023]

<sup>11</sup> Host nations: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia. Czechia is the framework nation in the forward presence battlegroup in Slovakia.

ly, Allies agreed to “further improve the readiness, preparedness, and interoperability of NATO’s Integrated Air and Missile Defence, in particular through regular training and rotational presence of modern air defence systems and capabilities across SACEUR’s Area of Responsibility, with an initial focus on the Eastern Flank, thereby strengthening our deterrence.”<sup>12</sup>

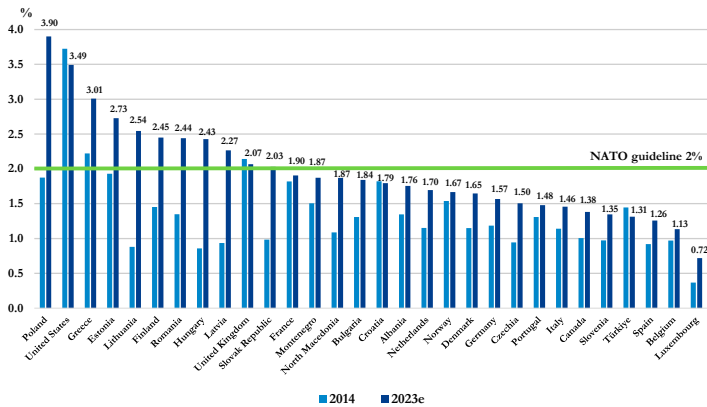
Third, on defence spending. At the NATO Summit in Vilnius, Allies agreed on a new commitment to spend at least 2 percent of GDP on defence. This commitment replaced the Defense Investment Pledge made in 2014. At the same time, Allies underlined that “in many cases, expenditure beyond 2 percent of GDP will be needed in order to remedy existing shortfalls and meet the requirements across all domains arising from a more contested security order.” While the 2 percent of GDP guideline alone is no guarantee that money will be spent in the most effective and efficient way to acquire and deploy modern capabilities, it remains an important indicator of the political resolve of individual Allies to devote to defence a relatively small but still significant level of resources. In fact, 2022 was the eighth consecutive year of rising defence spending across European Allies and Canada, amounting to a rise of 2.2 percent in real terms compared to 2021. In this context, Allies from CEE were leading

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<sup>12</sup> NATO 2023 *Vilnius Summit Communique*, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_217320.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm). [4.10.2023]

by example. In fact, only two CEE Allies did not meet the 2 percent threshold in 2023 (Bulgaria – 1.84 percent; Czechia – 1.50 percent). Table 1 presents the defence expenditure as a share of GDP in 2023.

Table 1: Defence expenditure as a share of GDP (%; based on 2015 prices and exchange rates)



Source: *Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2014-2023)*, NATO, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_216897.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_216897.htm), 7 July 2023.

Fourth, on Ukraine. A strong, independent Ukraine is vital for the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. At the Vilnius Summit, Allies agreed to a package of three elements bringing Ukraine closer to NATO. This includes a new multi-year assistance programme based on the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP). The programme will support Ukraine’s deterrence and defence in the short, medium, and long-term as well as facilitate the transition of the Ukrainian armed forces from Soviet-era to NATO standards and help rebuild

Ukraine's security and defence sector.<sup>13</sup> Allies also agreed to establish the new NATO-Ukraine Council, "a new joint body where Allies and Ukraine sit as equal members to advance political dialogue, engagement, cooperation, and Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO."<sup>14</sup> Finally, Allies also reaffirmed that Ukraine will become a member of NATO, and agreed to remove the requirement for a Membership Action Plan. At the same time, the Vilnius Summit did not clarify the exact path and timeframe of Ukraine joining the Alliance. Allies only agreed that they "will be in a position to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the Alliance when Allies agree and conditions are met."<sup>15</sup>

### **Towards the 2024 NATO Summit: Recommendations for CEE**

In 2024, NATO will enter its seventy-fifth year as an organization committed to safeguarding transatlantic security, freedom, and democracy. Yet, the 2024 NATO Summit in Washington, D.C., will be far more than just a celebratory event. In 2024, NATO will have to prove it has successfully embarked on the biggest adaptation since the end of the Cold War. CEE will play a crucial role in this process, as NA-

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



TO's political and military centre of gravity has been shifting towards the Eastern Flank.

There are three main objectives for CEE in the context of the upcoming 2024 NATO Summit. First, bringing Ukraine closer to NATO. In fact, Ukraine's membership in the Alliance is the cheapest and most credible deterrence option against Russia. As James Goldgeier notes, "Without NATO membership for Ukraine, the Russian threat against the country will continue, as will the need for the West to respond to Moscow's aggression. The only way to take care of that threat over the long term is to bring Ukraine into NATO and deter a future Russian invasion."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, CEE Allies should promote practical long-term military projects with Ukraine. These projects should boost Ukraine's interoperability with NATO and offer the Alliance unique insights into Ukraine's methods of fighting Russia. In this context, CEE Allies should lead the process of establishing a NATO-Ukraine Joint Analysis, Training, and Education Centre (JATEC).<sup>17</sup> JATEC would become the first ever NATO-Ukraine military structure, with a goal of applying lessons that the Ukrainian

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<sup>16</sup> James Goldgeier, *Why NATO Should Accept Ukraine*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/07/13/why-nato-should-accept-ukraine-pub-90206>, 13 July 2023. [5.10.2023]

<sup>17</sup> Gerlinde Niehus, *How NATO Is Helping Ukraine*, "Internationale Politik Quarterly", German Council on Foreign Relations, Berlin, <https://ip-quarterly.com/en/op-ed-how-nato-helping-ukraine>, 30 August 2023. [5.10.2023]

military is learning in operations against Russian forces to NATO defence plans and training.

Second, continue to increase defence spending and procure new military equipment. Indeed, it requires years of sustained effort to rebuild forces that in many instances had become quite hollow. According to Camille Grand, the substantial increases underway allow CEE Allies to pursue three equally important objectives:

- To rebuild forces at the right level of readiness and military effectiveness. “In short, this is about training and exercising, procuring ammunition and spare parts to ensure that the forces of NATO Allies are combat-ready – at short notice, under any circumstances and in sufficient numbers;”<sup>18</sup>
- To address capability shortfalls in domains that had been neglected. Allies should focus on rebuilding industrial capacity. “The priority for NATO across the board is regaining the military and industrial capacity to address the challenges of high-intensity warfare scenarios;”<sup>19</sup>
- To better prepare for the future. “Investing in defence fosters research, develops the next generation of equipment and enablers, and ensures that NATO stays com-

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<sup>18</sup> Camille Grand, *Defence spending: sustaining the effort in the long-term*, “NATO Review”, NATO, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2023/07/03/defence-spending-sustaining-the-effort-in-the-long-term/index.html>, 3 July 2023. [5.10.2023]

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

petitive in new domains of operations such as space or cyberspace.”<sup>20</sup>

Third, help NATO to be ready for a long-term strategic competition with Russia and China. To achieve this goal, CEE Allies should continue to invest in national and collective resilience, which are an essential basis for credible deterrence and defence and the effective fulfilment of the Alliance’s core tasks. CEE Allies should lead by example by developing national resilience goals and implementation plans, which will help to identify and mitigate strategic vulnerabilities and dependencies, including with respect to critical infrastructure, supply chains and energy systems. A lack of appropriate urgency in bolstering collective resilience in Europe will imperil the Alliance’s ability to effectively address the looming threats.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, CEE Allies should actively engage in the works of the civil-military Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) and the NATO Innovation Fund (NIF) to boost their technological edge. DIANA will work directly with top entrepreneurs, from early-stage start-ups to more mature companies, to solve critical problems in defence and security through deep technologies. DIANA will operate on the basis of competitive challenge programmes. In December

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Anna Dowd, Cynthia Cook, *Bolstering Collective Resilience in Europe*, “CSIS Brief”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., <https://www.csis.org/analysis/bolstering-collective-resilience-europe>, 9 December 2022. [6.10.2023]

2022, the Board of Directors of DIANA agreed that energy resilience, secure information sharing and sensing and surveillance will be the priority areas of focus for DIANA's work on Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDTs) in 2023. NIF is a EUR 1 billion venture capital fund which will provide strategic investments in start-ups developing dual-use EDTs. NIF will have three strategic objectives:

- Seek out cutting-edge technological solutions that solve the Alliance's defence and security challenges;
- Bolster deep-tech innovation ecosystems across the Alliance;
- Support the commercial success of its deep-tech start-up portfolio.

Both DIANA and NIF can have a transformative effect on the CEE civil-military technological ecosystem as they provide the right framework to prepare for technological strategic competition.

## **Conclusions**

Several important takeaways can be drawn from the 2023 NATO Vilnius Summit:

- Russia's aggression against Ukraine has disrupted post-Cold War security assumptions in the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO's response has been to adapt to a more dangerous and competitive world.

- The summit concentrated on the implementation of the 2022 priorities, highlighting the importance of translating strategic concepts into practical actions.
- The summit had four significant decisions relevant to CEE: reaffirming Russia as a primary threat, strengthening CEE's deterrence and defence posture, committing to defence spending of at least 2 percent of GDP, and offering a politico-military package for Ukraine.
- The NATO-Russia relationship remains uncertain, with the summit stopping short of defining a new approach. The deepening military integration between Russia and Belarus poses additional challenges for regional stability.
- NATO endorsed a comprehensive set of defence plans, including for the Eastern Flank. The presence of NATO troops in CEE countries is being increased to bolster readiness and responsiveness.
- NATO members agreed to spend at least 2 percent of GDP on defence. While this commitment is essential, it is acknowledged that some Allies may need to invest more to address shortfalls and adapt to new security challenges.
- Ukraine's closer alignment with NATO was affirmed, but the exact timeline and process for its membership remained unspecified. A new deterrence and defence initiative for Ukraine and the establishment of the NATO-Ukraine Council were key outcomes.

Looking ahead to the 2024 NATO Summit in Washington, D.C., CEE nations should continue their efforts to bring

Ukraine closer to NATO. They should also maintain defence spending increases, address capabilities shortfalls, and invest in national and collective resilience to prepare for strategic competition with Russia and China.

*Disclaimer: The views in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the institutions they represent.*



Edward Hunter Christie

## **NATO's Shifting Centre of Political Gravity: Power, Influence, and Voice**

### **Executive Summary**

- Central and Eastern European (CEE) states have become more important within NATO.
- This may be broken down into three channels: power, influence, and voice.
- Greater power stems from rapidly rising defence investments and capabilities.
- Greater influence is supported by a twin strategy of binding with the United States while also pursuing a sub-alliance at the regional level through the Bucharest Nine format.



- Greater voice refers to the fact that CEE states were able to make their views heard loudly and clearly at a time of acute danger.
- The policy recommendation for CEE states is to stay in motion: to continue investing in their capabilities (power), to continue to develop collaborative formats (influence), and to make new investments to acquire a greater footprint in the national conversations of key Allied nations (voice).

## **Introduction**

In 2022, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine shook the political consciousness of NATO's nations and governments. Nowhere was this shock as palpable as on the Alliance's Eastern Flank: nowhere else has Allied support to Ukraine been so strong, and nowhere else across the Alliance have governments increased defence spending as decisively. In parallel, there was a widespread recognition of deep errors in the pre-war policies of the European Union's legacy powers – Germany and France – and a new appreciation for the views and experiences of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Relatedly, a narrative developed according to which NATO's centre of gravity may be shifting eastward. The goal with this chapter is to ascertain the nature of the political shift that has occurred as of mid-2023.

## **Power, Influence, and Voice: A Conceptual Framework**

When one speaks of a centre of gravity in international politics, the first reflex may be to think in terms of traditional power metrics, such as population, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and military capabilities. However, aside from the singular case of German reunification in 1991, the populations of European countries are highly stable in a mid-run perspective, and resulting country rankings change very little over time. Economic growth is more differentiated: nations from CEE have had stronger economic growth in the last two decades than their Western European counterparts. However, nations such as Germany and France still have substantially higher GDP per capita, as well as larger populations, such that country rankings of total GDP will not change decisively in a mid-term perspective. Military power is more amenable to near-term changes in relative rankings. Peacetime economies only devote a small share of their resources to defence. Hence, one peacetime economy might spend double or even triple the percentage of its GDP on defence compared to another. Nations may also experience a change in their strategic importance by virtue of their location. Strategic importance may rise or fall depending on changes in the spatial distribution of international threats and opportunities. By some of these measures of power, but not all, CEE nations have become more important in recent years. But their rise in importance is a broader phenomenon

which is not reliant on power alone and which requires considering two other channels, namely influence and voice.

Influence is defined in this chapter as the ability of a state to convince other states to bring their positions in closer alignment with its positions. Influence plays a particularly important role in an alliance context, as mechanisms for the expression of power are regulated. This is especially the case if decisions are taken by consensus rather than based on voting rights that depend on country size. In the latter case, influence within an international organisation will be closely reflective of underlying power. However, collective foreign and security policy decisions at NATO as well as through the European Union are taken by consensus. In that case, the balance of views is not formally linked to country size, and some member states may have disproportionately high or low influence on collective decisions.

Voice is defined in this chapter as the propensity to both express policy preferences and to have these preferences clearly acknowledged by relevant counterparts. This is distinct from achieving actual influence, let alone power. But it goes beyond merely having a position and stating it through official channels and through public statements. Having more voice, as opposed to less, indicates a situation in which one's views have a greater impact on the national discourse, both official and public, of counterpart nations. Voice does not guarantee influence, but it can play a role in enhancing it, particularly in cases where peer pressure among states

becomes a significant force, as well as in cases where there is internationalised public pressure for greater action.

The aim in this chapter is to assess the extent to which CEE Allies in general, and Poland in particular, have experienced a shift in their relative political importance within the Euro-Atlantic space according to the three channels defined above – power, influence, and voice.

## **Power**

CEE nations are growing in terms of military power. In 2019, Poland was the 10<sup>th</sup> largest defence spender in the Alliance in current U.S. Dollars (USD).<sup>1</sup> In 2023, it is estimated to be the 6<sup>th</sup> largest spender, just behind Italy, and having overtaken the Netherlands, Turkey, Spain, and Canada. The sum of the defence expenditures of the Bucharest Nine (B-9) nations together accounted for only 36% of France's defence expenditures in 2014.<sup>2</sup> In 2023, they are at equality, each around 56 billion USD. The shift in procurement of major defence equipment by the B-9 nations is even greater, doubling in size in just one year, from 12.0 to 24.4 billion USD from 2022 to 2023, placing them about 50% higher than France. Poland

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<sup>1</sup> Except where otherwise indicated, the data on defence expenditures and force sizes are NATO data, with sub-totals and comparative ratios computed by the author. Source: *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2023)*, Press Release, 7 July 2023.

<sup>2</sup> The B-9 nations are Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.

alone will procure almost as much major equipment as France in 2023 (15.3 billion USD versus 16.5 billion). This large and rapid increase in procurement corresponds to a substantial upgrade and increase in capabilities. Poland again leads the way with particularly large purchases of armour and artillery, notably from the Republic of Korea and from the United States.<sup>3</sup>

The sizes of the armed forces are also growing sharply. Romania's force size increased from 65,100 to 81,300 (+25%) in just one year, from 2022 to 2023. Poland's force size increased from 95,000 in 2015 to 172,000 as of May 2023 (+81%).<sup>4</sup>

Alliance solidarity is also unfolding, with greater Allied force presence in CEE nations and new NATO defence plans. Prior to 2022, NATO's posture included four multinational battlegroups, in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. In March 2022, Allies decided to set up four new battlegroups, in Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. At the July 2022 Madrid Summit, Allies agreed to scale up the battle-

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<sup>3</sup> For more detailed independent commentary, see e.g. *Analysis: Poland aims to become first European Military Force and the shield against Russia*, "Army Recognition", [https://www.armyrecognition.com/weapons\\_defence\\_industry\\_military\\_technology\\_uk/analysis\\_poland\\_aims\\_to\\_become\\_first\\_european\\_military\\_forces\\_and\\_the\\_shield\\_against\\_russia.html](https://www.armyrecognition.com/weapons_defence_industry_military_technology_uk/analysis_poland_aims_to_become_first_european_military_forces_and_the_shield_against_russia.html), 3 May 2023. [19.08.2023]; Robert Czulda, *Poland's military modernisation – still many challenges ahead*, "Pulaski Policy Papers", Casimir Pulaski Foundation, Warsaw, 27 February 2023; Ben Barry, Henry Boyd et al, *The Future of NATO's European Land Forces: Plans, Challenges, Prospects*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), June 2023.

<sup>4</sup> *Poland has over 172,000 armed troops MoD says*, PAP Polish Press Agency, 21 June 2023.

groups from battalion size to brigade size “where and when required” and to pursue a new NATO Force Model, with the aim of having “a larger pool of high-readiness forces across domains ... pre-assigned to specific plans for the defence of Allies.”<sup>5</sup> At the July 2023 Vilnius Summit, Allies agreed three regional defence plans: North (Arctic and North Atlantic), Centre (Baltic and Central Europe), and South (Mediterranean and Black Sea).<sup>6</sup>

The fact that B-9 states are investing in their armed forces more strongly and rapidly than other NATO Allies increases not just their influence in policy discussions, but also their power. This increase in power has two parts: an increase in the share of the Alliance’s total capabilities that are provided by the B-9 states; and an increased importance of these states as host nations for other Allied forces and as centres of attention for NATO’s military planners. In sum, the B-9 states (plus Finland) are gradually becoming the “ring of steel” that the Alliance needs on its Eastern Flank to deter Russia for the foreseeable future. While these states are security consumers, with needs that other Allies provide for, they are also rapidly becoming security providers based on their own contributions and capabilities. This includes the

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<sup>5</sup> *NATO’s military presence in the east of the Alliance*, NATO, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_136388.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm), 28 July 2023. [19.08.2023]

<sup>6</sup> Justyna Gotkowska, Jakub Graca, *NATO Summit in Vilnius: breakthroughs and unfulfilled hopes*, “OSW Commentary”, Centre for Eastern Studies, Warsaw, 13 July 2023.

aforementioned increases in defence investments and force sizes, as well as the substantial military assistance provided by B-9 states to Ukraine.

The Ukraine assistance efforts of most B-9 states, as a share of GDP, have been much larger than those of Allies further West.<sup>7</sup> Key B-9 states also started transferring heavy land systems such as main battle tanks approximately an entire year before other Allies did so and have already transferred combat aircraft whereas other Allies have not done so to date.<sup>8</sup> Being the first to deliver a particular capability means extending the boundary of military assistance in the face of potential Russian aggression, which constitutes courage, an essential political virtue for a military alliance to be credible.<sup>9</sup>

At a lower level of conflict intensity, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia have already proven to be valued Allies that can manage severe border security challenges, notably the weaponisation of migrant flows that was engineered by Belarus in late 2021. Poland's response led to expressions of grati-

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<sup>7</sup> Using data from the Ukraine Support Tracker for the period of 24 January 2022 to 31 May 2023, the value of military assistance including European Peace Facility contributions divided by GDP is above 0.5% for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Poland, but below 0.25% of GDP for Germany, the UK, the US, Canada, and France.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. *Answering The Call: Heavy Weaponry Supplied To Ukraine*, "Oryx", <https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/04/answering-call-heavy-weaponry-supplied.html>, 11 April 2022. [14.08.2023]

<sup>9</sup> Edward Hunter Christie, *Military Assistance to Ukraine: Rediscovering the Virtue of Courage*, "RUSI Commentary", RUSI, London, 17 May 2022.

tude, for example from Germany's Interior Minister as well as from independent foreign policy commentators.<sup>10</sup> While such recognition may also be viewed through the prisms of influence and voice, the competence and solidity of these B-9 states was demonstrated through the deployment of thousands of security personnel, rapid infrastructure construction, steady crisis management, and political solidity in the face of a hybrid campaign that was calculated to strike at a politically emotive issue, namely migration. The Belarus border crisis of 2021 may be seen as the beginning of a historic shift in perceptions, across Europe and the Alliance, of Poland and the Baltic states being net contributors to European security.

## **Influence**

In the context of consensus-based decision making, smaller states may pursue a range of strategies to maximise the uptake of their interests. One way to understand these strategies is to imagine that each state has a certain amount of diplomatic capital, roughly proportional to its power. Following the emerging consensus defined by the other states does not expend diplomatic capital, but breaking with the

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<sup>10</sup> *The meeting of Polish and German Ministers of the Interior*, Polish Ministry of the Interior and Administration, 19 November 2021; Elisabeth Braw, *The European Union Owes Poland a Thank You*, "Foreign Policy", <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/12/10/eu-poland-belarus-deterrence-migration-lukashenko/>, 10 December 2021. [19.08.2023]



consensus does, the more so the stronger the deviation from it. The two most common smaller-state strategies that are consistent with economising diplomatic capital are: *shadowing* a large state's positions, while occasionally pursuing deviations from them, and *sub-alliance formation*.<sup>11</sup> Shadowing is often referred to as "hiding behind" a country, for example "hiding behind Germany" is heard in both NATO- and EU-related discussions and is a common strategy of smaller Western European states. Sub-alliance formation refers to the coordination of positions among a sub-set of smaller states. This behaviour is common among CEE states.

While sub-alliance formation can be quite informal, CEE states have taken the idea to a new level with the creation of the Bucharest Nine and of the Three Seas Initiative (3-Seas). The B-9 is conceptually the closest to a sub-alliance from a NATO perspective: its main focus is foreign and defence policy; it holds meetings of Foreign Ministers and of Defence Ministers; and it holds Summits of Heads of State and Government. The 3-Seas also holds Summits of Heads of State and Government, but its focus is on strategic economic development, notably energy, transport, and digital infrastructure.

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<sup>11</sup> The terms "shadowing" and "sub-alliance formation" are developed by the author for this chapter. These state behaviours are only imperfectly captured in the nascent theoretical literature on the influence strategies of small states, of which the most notable recent contribution is: Tom Long, *A Small State's Guide to Influence in World Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2022.

One question is whether sub-alliance formation by CEE states is effective in influencing NATO decisions. Another question is whether CEE states can reduce the need for higher influence at the NATO level by achieving stronger bilateral commitments to their security. This may be referred to as a *binding* strategy and will be aimed first and foremost at the United States.

CEE states – with the notable exception of Hungary in recent years – have a long history of viewing Russia with greater suspicion, and Ukraine with greater solidarity, than their counterparts further West. Prior to 2014, these views fell largely on deaf ears. A step change occurred following Russia's first phase of armed aggression against Ukraine in 2014, in the sense that relevant NATO and EU statements reflected strong positions condemning the Russian Federation for its aggressive acts and expressing clear support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. While Poland and the Baltic states obtained an important first step in Allied force presence on their territories, through NATO's enhanced Forward Presence in 2016, actual large Ally behaviour towards Russia and Ukraine did not always conform with the spirit of NATO and EU statements. The views of CEE states were thus acknowledged, indeed recorded, but not strongly influential. Over the 2015-2021 period, the most brazen deviations from the spirit of Alliance unity with respect to Russia came from France and Germany.

France launched a major, go-it-alone strategic dialogue with Russia following the Macron-Putin Summit of 19 August 2019 at Brégançon. This led to a flurry of meetings at Ministerial, Chief of Defence Staff, Policy Director, and Ambassadorial levels, all overseen by a new Special Envoy for the “architecture of security and trust with Russia”, given to veteran diplomat Pierre Vimont, and aimed at discussions on all ongoing conflicts, from Ukraine to Central Africa, as well as other major strategic questions.<sup>12</sup> The initiative was widely criticized. By Special Envoy Vimont’s own admission, the general sentiment among Allied governments was critical.<sup>13</sup> The public debate featured criticism from the UK, Poland, the US, Germany, the Netherlands, and the Baltic States.<sup>14</sup> There was also scepticism within France’s diplomatic corps, as evidenced by Macron’s portrayal of it as a “deep state” that would be well advised not to resist his new Russia policy.<sup>15</sup>

As for Germany, it chose to deepen its energy dependence on Russia through the development of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, despite sharp opposition from CEE Allies and

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<sup>12</sup> *Audition de M. Pierre Vimont, envoyé spécial du Président de la République pour l'architecture de sécurité et de confiance avec la Russie. Comptes rendus de la commission des affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées*, French Senate, 19 February 2020.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Jamie Dettmer, *Macron's Courtship of Putin Alarming Russia's Near Neighbors*, “VOA News”, 11 September 2019; Victor Mallet, James Shotter, Michael Peel, *Emmanuel Macron's pivot to Russia sparks EU unease*, “Financial Times”, 11 September 2019.

<sup>15</sup> *Discours du Président de la République Emmanuel Macron à la conférence des ambassadeurs et des ambassadrices de 2019*, Élysée, 27 August 2019.

from majorities in the European Parliament and the US Congress.<sup>16</sup>

It is also noteworthy that France and Germany refrained from providing training to Ukraine's defence and security personnel in that period, as opposed to the US, the UK, Canada, Poland, Lithuania, Denmark, and Sweden, which all did so.<sup>17</sup>

The outbreak of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 confronted the European Union's legacy powers with repeated instances of being proven wrong by events while their counterparts in the CEE region were repeatedly proven right. The war was also a forcing mechanism for two separate policy priorities: for the Alliance itself, the essential need to rapidly increase the deterrence and defence posture on the Eastern Flank; and for Ukraine, the need to organise logistically for military assistance to Ukraine overland. Both priorities placed CEE Allies centre stage.

During the first year of the war, Germany and France were on a trajectory of diminishing influence. In terms of

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<sup>16</sup> *Opposition to Russia's Nord Stream Pipeline Growing in Eastern Europe*, RFE/RL, 9 March 2018; Agnia Grigas, *Opposition to Nord Stream 2 gathers steam on both sides of the Atlantic*, "New Atlanticist Blog", Atlantic Council, 13 December 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Frank T. Goertner, Edward Hunter Christie, Yaropolk Taras Kulchyckyj, Eugene M. Fishel, *The Evolution of U.S. and European Security Assistance to Ukraine: Diplomacy and Defense on the Edge of Deterrence*, [in:] Kosnett P.S. (ed.), *Boots and Suits: Historical Cases and Contemporary Lessons in Military Diplomacy*, Marine Corps University Press, Quantico, 2023, pp. 123-157.

policy substance, both states modified their positions much more strongly than others and did so towards partial alignment with CEE positions, whereas the latter continued on their own trajectories. Another sign of diminishing influence was the reduction in shadowing behaviour on the part of smaller European states. For example, the Netherlands had shadowed the pre-war German opposition to arms supplies to Ukraine, but ultimately broke off from that position while Germany still held onto it, thereby contributing to peer pressure on Germany to change course three days after the Russian invasion had begun.

That same year also saw the rise of a broader alignment of nations willing to go further in supporting Ukraine, which is the issue that provided the litmus test for sub-alliance formation in that period. That broader alignment involved the UK, the Netherlands, and Denmark, joining forces with Poland, the Baltic states, Czechia, and Slovakia. A notable high point was the Tallinn Pledge of January 2023, a visionary statement for a Ukrainian battlefield victory based on enhanced deliveries of Allied equipment.<sup>18</sup> From the vantage point of July 2023, the Tallinn Pledge vision has partly prevailed, though with little overt recognition. A key test case was Germany's agreement to contribute, and to license oth-

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<sup>18</sup> *Joint Statement – The Tallinn Pledge: A joint statement by the defence ministers of Estonia, the United Kingdom, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania; and the representatives of Denmark, Czechia, the Netherlands, and Slovakia*, UK Ministry of Defence, 19 January 2023.

er states to contribute, German-made Leopard Main Battle Tanks in January 2023, following a long campaign of Allied peer pressure in which pledges made by both London and Warsaw played a key role.

In parallel, Poland has been very successful in pursuing a *binding* strategy towards the United States. While leading by example with higher defence spending, Poland has been able to elicit significant new U.S. force presence on its territory. As of March 2022, Poland was one of only four European Allies, and the only CEE Ally, hosting at least 10,000 U.S. service personnel.<sup>19</sup> This in turn makes Poland more significant to U.S. decision makers. In October 2022, the U.S. State Department described Poland as “*a linchpin of Eastern Flank security*.”<sup>20</sup> In April 2023, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) described Poland as “*a critical Ally in deterring and responding to Russian aggression*.”<sup>21</sup> This has also raised the visibility of Poland in the eyes of U.S. lawmakers and in segments of expert opinion and public opinion. While it is not uncommon for U.S. officials to refer to individual allies as “indispensable”, the label is much more significant when used by lawmakers, think tankers, and journalists.

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<sup>19</sup> Zachary Basu, *Where 100,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Europe*, “Axios”, <https://www.axios.com/2022/03/23/where-100000-us-troops-are-stationed-europe>, 22 March 2022. [19.08.2023]

<sup>20</sup> *U.S. Security Cooperation With Poland. Fact Sheet*, U.S. Department of State, 31 October 2022.

<sup>21</sup> *Statement of General Christopher G. Cavoli, United States Army United States European Command*, United States House Armed Services Committee, 26 April 2023.

Over the 2022-2023 period, Poland has been referred to as indispensable by House Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy, by the editorial board of the Wall Street Journal, as well as by analysts from the Hudson Institute and the Heritage Foundation.<sup>22</sup>

## Voice

In 2022, CEE states found their voices like never before in recent history. It was a natural effect of proximity to danger combined with the fact that certain Western European decision makers seemed either not to understand the gravity of unfolding events or not to care. It became necessary to shout. This may seem like the distant past, or an unpleasant period no longer worth discussing. But it was less than two years ago, at pivotal moments of doubt about the resolve of key Allied leaders. While the exercise of voice is broader and often milder than the two examples that follow, the latter are chosen to illustrate the role of emphatic public messaging within an Alliance in times of danger.

Latvia's Defence Minister, Artis Pabriks, took Germany to task publicly in late January 2022 for not only refusing to send weapons to Ukraine but also for blocking the transfer

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<sup>22</sup> Ivana Saric, *Bipartisan House delegation visits Poland*, "Axios", 10 April 2022; *Poland Is the Indispensable NATO Ally*, "Wall Street Journal", 3 May 2023; Boyse M. Berlin, *Warsaw, and Washington: Getting the Band Back Together*, Hudson Institute, 18 May 2023; Anthony B. Kim, *Stray-Missile Incident Should Serve to Strengthen Multidimensional U.S.-Poland Partnership*, The Heritage Foundation, 23 November 2022.

of GDR-era artillery from Estonia to Ukraine, stating: “Germans forgot already that Americans were granting their security in the cold war. But they should [remember]. It’s their moral duty .... They’ve been living in peace for years. They think about gas, exports and co-operation. For us border countries, it’s different. For us it’s existential. Our past doesn’t give much chance of just trusting [Russia]. It would be death for us.”<sup>23</sup>

In April 2022, soon after the discovery of the Bucha Massacre, Poland’s Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki blasted Macron’s telephone diplomacy with Vladimir Putin as follows: “President Macron, how many times have you negotiated with Putin? What have you achieved? Would you negotiate with Hitler, with Stalin, with Pol Pot?”<sup>24</sup>

These voices were also heard like never before in recent history. To say that Germany and France were not used to being addressed in this way by their own Allies would be an understatement. But it was better to speak out in public than to conceal from the public discourse of Germany and France, respectively, the gravity of concern felt at the highest level on the part of fellow Allies. Official reactions mattered little. In both cases, independent expert opinion from across

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<sup>23</sup> Richard Milne, *Latvia slams Germany’s ‘immoral’ relationship with Russia and China*, “Financial Times”, 28 January 2022.

<sup>24</sup> “Would you negotiate with Hitler?": Poland’s PM questions Macron over Putin dialogue”, “Euronews”, 5 April 2022.



Western Europe sided more with the CEE leaders than with the Western European leaders concerned.

The messages had a degree of influence. Pressure on Germany to start delivering weapons to Ukraine grew louder until it was untenable. As for Macron's telephone diplomacy, pressure ultimately drove Macron to give public assurances that his phone calls were coordinated with President Zelensky.

### **Recommendations**

- CEE states have found a recipe – through power, influence, and voice – for greater influence on the foreign and security policy priorities of the Euro-Atlantic institutions. The following key considerations are proposed to ensure this recipe evolves on a robust trajectory.
- *Power*: Continue to invest strongly on defence: significantly above 2% of GDP and towards capability goals that, while consistent with NATO and EU commitments, also ensure the emergence of a “ring of steel” stretching from Finland to Bulgaria – and including Ukraine.
- *Influence*: Stay in motion. The web of Western Alliances is in flux because it faces acute new threats, leading states to pursue multiple formats to achieve greater results. Questions worth asking in that context include: how to maximise the value of the B-9 format and ensure its cohesion; what can be done in the B-9 format versus what needs to shift to agreements among smaller sets of CEE

states; and which bilateral relations with non-CEE states need deepening or revisiting and in what areas.

- **Voice:** Deepen and structure the exercise of voice. Both expert opinion and public opinion in key Allied states are built nationally before anyone goes to Brussels. CEE states will find it in their interest to make financial investments to strengthen their footprints in key Allied capitals, not only through their respective Embassies but also through new or expanded representations of their leading think tanks and other relevant institutions.

## **Conclusions**

CEE states have gained in power in the military realm and have become more important by virtue of their location. They have also become more influential through the pursuit of two main strategies: sub-alliance formation, and binding with the United States. Sub-alliance formation occurs in the region, mainly through the Bucharest Nine, and more broadly across Northern Europe through such initiatives as the Tallinn Pledge. These strategies have been complementary in delivering foreign and security policy outcomes that the region needs. CEE states also found their voices as the war unfolded, as they needed to get essential views across in public. These incidents should be remembered as important moments that contributed to a better understanding of CEE views in a time of danger. Looking to the future, it is important for CEE states to stay in motion: to continue

their investments in their capabilities; to continue to develop collaborative formats with each other and with other Allies; and to make investments to ensure a greater footprint in the national discussions of key Allies.

Brig. Gen. Tomasz K. Kowalik

## **The Military Dimension of NATO's Eastern European Flank**

### **Executive Summary**

- NATO's Eastern European Flank, particularly the Baltic States and Poland – the region known as the Baltic Sea Region – requires an increased and more robust deterrence and defence posture that will stop Russia from conducting an armed attack in the future once it repositions and reconstitutes its forces after its war in Ukraine is over or stalled.
- The 2023 Vilnius Summit decisions have made it clear that significant work lies ahead. When deterrence fails, NATO will need to effectively defend its territory by actually defeating the invading enemy. To this end, a number

of recommendations should be considered for NATO's Eastern Flank, while understanding that in any Russian attack scenario, Poland would need to play a key role due to its size, geographical location as well as the potential of its population and armed forces.

## **Introduction**

Following Russia's invasions into European sovereign countries in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014 as well as its renewed and unprovoked full scale invasion into Ukraine on 24 February 2022, with an attempt to seize the capital Kyiv, NATO's Eastern Flank countries have been facing the hitherto largest military threat since the end of World War II. On the same day of Russia's invasion, already in the morning hours, an unprecedented number of as many as eight NATO Allies invoked Article 4 of the Washington Treaty. Essentially those countries clearly messaged that they perceived a threat to such an extent that immediate consultations with the other Allies were urgently called in the North Atlantic Council under this article.<sup>1</sup> Such a massive invocation of this special article has not happened before in NATO's near 75-year history.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Those eight NATO members were Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_192408.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_192408.htm). [26.06.2023]

<sup>2</sup> In NATO's nearly 75-year history, Article 4 has been invoked only seven times, and the first time only in 2003, i.e. after more than five decades of its existence. Prior

A few months later in June of 2022, Allies adopted a new Strategic Concept, replacing its 12-year-old predecessor adopted at the NATO Lisbon Summit in 2010. The current Madrid Strategic Concept states, among other things:

“While NATO is a defensive Alliance, no one should doubt our strength and resolve to defend every inch of Allied territory, preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Allies and prevail against any aggressor.”<sup>3</sup>

Such new commitment essentially implies that the Alliance is determined not to cede any of its territory to any aggressor.

Meanwhile, Russia's revanchist policy aims at re-establishing its sphere of influence, dating back to the pre-1997 realities, i.e. prior to the historic NATO enlargement into the territories of former Warsaw Pact countries: Poland, Czechia and Hungary. These became fully-fledged NATO members in March 1999. Those three and all remaining 12 European NATO Allies, who joined the Alliance since then up until 2023, should – according to Russia – not have become NATO members, and they also should not have been granted the security guarantees provided by Article 5. Hence Russia's intent remains unchanged – to challenge the security of those Allies, and it will grow its offensive capabilities to do

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to 22 February 2022, only two countries invoked Article 4 – Turkey (five times – 10 February 2003, 22 June 2012, 3 October 2012, 26 July 2015 and 28 February 2020) and Poland (3 March 2014).

<sup>3</sup> NATO 2022 *Strategic Concept*, <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>. [26.06.2023]

so in the future, and – if an opportunity, a weak spot, is identified – Russia would likely not shy away from attempting to seize NATO territory or challenge Allies' sovereignty in a deteriorating security environment, aiming at fragmenting the unity of the Alliance. Therefore, offensive opportunities cannot be created for Russia.

At the NATO Vilnius Summit in July 2023 Allies reiterated and further strengthened their defence commitment by stating:

“We reaffirm our iron-clad commitment to defend each other and every inch of Allied territory at all times, protect our one billion citizens, and safeguard our freedom and democracy, in accordance with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.”<sup>4</sup>

### **NATO's Eastern European Flank**

The Alliance is historically focused on the defence of its Allies and postured accordingly to dissuade and prevent any armed attack on its Allies. The Alliance's defensive posture and its capabilities are being developed in all five domains – land, maritime, air, cyber and space – where enemy offensive operations can take place, both in conventional as well as nuclear domains. While the nuclear domain also received a clear messaging and formulated way ahead at the 2022 Ma-

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<sup>4</sup> *NATO 2023 Vilnius Summit Communique*, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_217320.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm). [11.07.2023]

drid Strategic Concept as well as the 2023 Vilnius Summit, this article will focus on the conventional domains, with a specific focus on the land domain, presumably currently the most vulnerable one.<sup>5</sup>

The most exposed land spots need especially to be guarded so that the opponent does not explore the weak points and seize an opportunity to test the Alliance's resolve. Over the past decade – essentially, since Russia's first invasion into Ukraine in 2014 – the Alliance has gradually stepped up its defensive posture on its Eastern Flank. The highest threat in the land domain exists where Allied territory borders directly with Russia or its proxy, Belarus. This means the vulnerabilities lie particularly in the Baltic Sea Region (BASR), encompassing the thinly populated three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – totalling overall less than six million inhabitants as well as Poland, particularly the areas bordering with the Królewiec<sup>6</sup> oblast in the north and with Belarus in north-east where the Brest Gate is located – historically an avenue of approach for Russian

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<sup>5</sup> For a deeper discussion on NATO's deterrence and defence posture after the NATO Vilnius Summit, see: Steve Covington, *NATO's Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA)*, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/natos-concept-deterrence-and-defence-euro-atlantic-area-dda>, Harvard Kennedy School, 2 August 2023. [9.08.2023]

<sup>6</sup> The Kaliningrad oblast was named by Stalin after World War Two to commemorate Michail Kalinin (1875-1946), a Soviet communist apparatchik and war criminal who co-signed the order for the execution of thousands of Polish prisoners of war during World War Two. Hence, in Poland the oblast is officially called according to its historic name – Królewiec.



forces into the West. The only land connection from Central Europe to the Baltic States goes through the Suwałki Corridor, a 65-km-wide strip, with only one main motorway and one rail connection.

Since the NATO Wales Summit in 2014, a number of Allied reinforcements on the Eastern Flank have been undertaken. To name a few: the formation of small-sized HQs, known as NATO Force Integration Units, each with a 40-person-strong staff; Allied battalion-size rotational tactical groups (known as the enhanced Forward Presence) were established; two permanent multinational divisional headquarters were formed (in Elbląg in Poland, and later in Adazi in Latvia); and the Baltic Air Policing mission was extended and evolved into an Air Shielding Operation. Furthermore, some Reception, Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM) facilities aimed at streamlining Allied force deployments have been built and enlarged. In late 2021, the NATO Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) in Szczecin was certified for the first time as a Regional Land Component Command responsible for the BASR.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, extra reinforcements were implemented after the 2022 second Russian invasion into Ukraine in further countries on the Eastern Flank in the centre and south.

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<sup>7</sup> For a broader context of this HQ's development at that time see: Sławomir Wojciechowski, *Ready Today, Prepared for Tomorrow, Adapting for the Future: Observations from my NATO Journey*, Commander Multinational Corps Northeast, Public Affairs Office, Szczecin, Poland, 19 November 2021, p. 34.

A portion of the Very High Readiness Joint Tactical Force (VJTF) was temporarily deployed to Romania, and additional Allied forces were temporarily deployed to the region to better posture NATO troops for possible defence action near Russia and Belarus. Further, the U.S. forces have been rotating, on a bilateral heel-to-toe scheme, into the Eastern Flank since 2016 in larger numbers ranging their span from Greece to Estonia, with a main focus on Poland, where an Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) has been continuously deployed, with a divisional HQ as a higher command echelon. Following the renewed invasion into Ukraine, additional U.S. troops were deployed into the region. Furthermore, the U.S. V Corps got re-established and its Forward Command Element situated in Poznań, thus rendering a first permanent U.S. forward presence footprint into Poland and more broadly the Eastern Flank. In addition, a sustainment brigade was also forward deployed in 2022 in order to support a rotational division and to enlarge the level of robustness of the U.S. forward posturing on the Eastern Flank. At the Vilnius Summit NATO also took the decision to transform its NATO Response Force into a more ambitious Allied Reaction Force (ARF) to enable a more robust and rapid force deployment to a region where it is needed.<sup>8</sup>

All those aforementioned changes in NATO's forward posture and readiness were essential and doubtlessly steps

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<sup>8</sup> NATO 2023 *Vilnius Summit Communique*, op. cit.

in the right direction, enhancing the overall deterrence posture of the Eastern Flank. However, viewing the real and potential military threat emanating from Russia, particularly its ability to muster troops in mass and speed, the Alliance needs to make its next steps towards filling its defence plans, closing the potential security gaps on its Eastern Flank. This should be ensured to make sure that, indeed, every inch of NATO territory is to be credibly defended, preventing Russia from perceiving an opportunity to test the Allies' resolve. By preparing adequately for the defence of the BASR, the Alliance will deter future armed conflicts. Russia must understand that there is real capability on the other side and resolve to defend. It is not sufficient to develop ambitious defence plans, to provide trip wire forces, and train deterrence without actually being able to practically fully defend the entire BASR against an invading enemy force.

### **The Russian Threat**

Irrespective of the outcome of the Russo-Ukrainian war, and irrespective of the future leadership composition in Moscow, Russia will remain a tangible threat to its western neighbours in Europe for the foreseeable future. Essentially because, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Russia has had a continuous imperial ambition to dominate Central and Eastern Europe, and that attitude has not changed, even with possible future regime changes in Moscow. While Russian technological capabilities and military potential were significantly reduced

and degraded over the course of the war with Ukraine and its industrial base weakened as a result of the imposed sanctions, its ability to mass troops, equip them with still very capable offensive military equipment and its ability to wage a short-notice attack in some near- to mid-term future, with some combat experienced troops, remains plausible and unfortunately likely as the security threshold in Europe has already been significantly lowered over the past two decades, and particularly in the past two years, on several occasions.<sup>9</sup> Russia's *modus operandi* seems to involve gradually lowering the threshold bar for conflict escalation over time. This strategy aims to acclimate Alliance capitals to new threats and realities, leading them to incrementally accept deteriorating security conditions.

Russia has been conducting a whole range of escalatory acts of violence, well situated in the hybrid domain, ranging from cyber-attacks, to assassinations with biological weapons poisoning, sabotage activities, such as blowing up ammunition depot sites, attempting to rig various democratic elections in NATO countries, conducting the surreptitious downing of a governmental plane with the Polish political leadership on board in 2010 in Smolensk, Russia, and orchestrating, together with Belarus an artificial and sudden

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<sup>9</sup> Georgi Gotev, *Russia to stay a threat even if it loses war*, "Euroactiv", <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/russia-to-stay-a-threat-even-if-it-loses-war-says-top-nato-officer/>, 20 January 2023. [8.08.2023]

mass migrant crisis aimed against the European Union at the Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian borders since mid-2021, still ongoing as this article is written in mid-2023.<sup>10</sup> Russia – now fully engaged in a full-scale war in Ukraine and very much preoccupied militarily with this conflict – understands that most of the NATO countries have been supporting Ukraine in its struggle to fight back for its survival and independence as well as sovereign territory, and consequently it treats those nearby European countries as hostile states that could likely become targets of military offensive operations in the future.

### Way Ahead

NATO needs to embark on a series of additional measures to solidify its deterrence and defensive posture. In this respect, the 2023 Vilnius Summit decisions have made it clear that significant work lies ahead.<sup>11</sup> When deterrence fails, NATO will need to effectively defend its territory by actually **defeating** the invading enemy. To this end a number of recommendations should be considered for NATO's Eastern Flank, particularly for the BASR – Estonia, Latvia, Lithua-

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<sup>10</sup> *Polish commission again accuses Russia over 2010 Smolensk plane crash*, "Euronews", <https://www.euronews.com/2022/04/11/polish-commission-again-accuses-russia-over-2010-smolensk-plane-crash>, 11 April 2022. [13.07.2023]

<sup>11</sup> In particular, the Allies have adopted a new generation of regional defence plans as the main driver for the organisation of forces and military requirements NATO asks of them. See: *NATO 2023 Vilnius Summit Communique*, paragraph 34, op. cit.

nia, and Poland – while understanding that in any Russian attack scenario, Poland would need to play a key role due to its size, geographical location as well as the potential of its population and armed forces. The set of recommendations listed below are intended to be viewed as practical steps to the agreed way forward of the Alliance at the 2023 Vilnius Summit:

1. The **Host Nation Defence Forces (HNDF) of the BASR need to further grow in size and capability** to saturate the potential battlefield, in particular by creating an agile and robust reserve force that can be swiftly called under arms if the situation requires it. Notably, various enabling units at brigade and division echelon need to be developed and appropriate materiel procured to equip these units. An effective defence of the territory will not be possible if a joint, combined, and synchronised multi-domain operation cannot be conducted. Sheer light infantry and manoeuvre units are not sufficient in order to defeat an advanced enemy on the battlefield. In this respect, Poland sets the right tone by being on a very determined path to grow its forces, modernising its arsenal but also replenishing its kit following significant donations to Ukraine. For example, while in 2015 the overall number of serving soldiers in Poland was less than 100,000, in 2023 the number of troops on duty, under arms has reached a level of already 175,000 personnel (in-

cluding over 30,000 Territorial Defence Forces).<sup>12</sup> The amount of land divisions is being grown from three back in 2016 to six in the years to come. Similarly, the Polish defence budget has reached an estimate of an unprecedented level of 3.9% in 2023, with over 50% of it on defence modernisation.<sup>13</sup>

2. While NATO rightfully cannot have most of its land forces fixed to one region, and needs to remain flexible as the overall Alliance frontier line is much longer than in the Cold War, the continuous or permanent presence of NATO Allied forces in the BASR **should grow from a battalion tactical group to at least one manoeuvre brigade per country as well as some additional enabling units** (or at least smaller forward elements thereof) such as artillery, air defence, engineers, logistics (sustainment and transportation), electronic warfare, aviation, CBRN, reconnaissance and military police units – in sizes of brigade, regiment, battalion and/or company/squadron/battery to support the fight at corps and division levels. The Alliance needs to further grow its deterrence foot-

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<sup>12</sup> Adrian Kowarzyk, Gabriela Bogaczyk, *Szef MON: Polska ma ponad 175 tysięcy żołnierzy pod bronią*, PAP, <https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news%2C1594237%2Cszef-mon-polska-ma-ponad-175-tysiecy-zolnierzy-pod-bronia.html>, 7 July 2023. [8.07.2023]

<sup>13</sup> *Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries (2014-2023)*, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_216897.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_216897.htm), 7 July 2023. [23.07.2023]

print for a short-term or no-notice attack by Russia, which could create, particularly in the early days of the invasion, an unfavourable force ratio on the front. Essentially, in response to appropriate indicators and warnings of an imminent Russian attack on NATO territory, NATO should be able to deploy in a timely manner a force roughly equivalent to one third of the potential Russian ground attack units. These joint NATO forces (both HNDF and other incoming Allied forces) need to be well trained according to the tactical defence plan, and prepared to conduct an advanced combined-arms operation with all enabling units at division, corps, and finally at multi-corps echelon.<sup>14</sup>

3. While a strict hypothetical one-to-three force ratio is practically impossible to be attained on a permanent basis in the Baltic States as such a heavy footprint would be too cumbersome for those frontier Allies as well as the Allies providing those incoming troops, it is essential that some **pre-stocking of equipment**, such as the U.S. Army Prepositioned Stocks as a case in point, should be established in the BASR. It is much easier and swifter to send in just the troops into the

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<sup>14</sup> For a more in-depth discussion on the requirement to grow Allied forces in the BASR, see for example *All Unquiet on NATO's Eastern Flank* by Robbie Gramer and Jack Detch, "Foreign Policy", <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/04/13/nato-eastern-flank-battle-group-russia-poland-latvia-lithuania-estonia/>, 13 April 2023. [23.07.2023]



area, as opposed to deploying entire heavy formations with their equipment by sea, rail and road.

4. The BASR Host Nations need to establish **a sufficient base for the absorption of forward deployed Allied troops**. Not only more and larger barracks and bases are needed but also training areas sufficient in size matching the training requirements of the Allied units to be present in the BASR. Partial funding for such an Allied infrastructure extension should be granted through commonly funded expenditures – the NATO Security and Investment Programme (NSIP).
5. The amount of **prepositioned stocks** of supply, including ammunition, fuel and construction materials (including bridging equipment for wide wet gap/river crossings) should be enhanced via NATO's commonly funded projects. There is a requirement for a build-up of a number of smaller, well-constructed and dispersed storage depots (to avoid massive munitions explosions when hit) in the BASR to be able to swiftly use those vital stocks of supply for the forward deployed troops. In a time of crisis and in the run-up to an imminent Russian offensive on Alliance territory, the road, rail, air and harbour structures (lines of communications) would simply not be sufficient – particularly considering the narrow Suwałki Corridor – to have everything necessary (i.e. troops, equipment and supplies for a considerable amount of combat

time all at once) brought into the area of operations in a matter of days and weeks. Hence, pre-stocking of supplies in the area becomes a condition *sine qua non* for the effective defence of the BASR.

6. The various **lines of communication** in the BASR need to be improved. For example, a unified rail gauge from Poland into the Baltic States is needed because changing the gauge from the standard EU size (1435 mm) to the former Soviet and current Baltic and Russian size (1520 mm) takes invaluable time for unloading and reloading in a crisis where time is of the essence. Further, additional rail sidings, unloading capacities at harbours, additional capacities at airports of debarcation as well as better road connections and bridges capable of supporting heavy military equipment are needed. The road connections within the BASR should be analysed holistically, particularly in light of the sustainability of heavy equipment crossing bridges, and they should be adapted and expanded accordingly, as troops will need to reach forward defence positions quickly. Where possible those investments should be covered with NATO and/or EU common funds as the BASR countries would be overburdened with such specific, but necessary military requirements.
7. An **additional designated corps, complete with its assigned support and enabling units for the Baltic States**, would be required in order to provide better

command and control over a very long border line with Russia and Belarus combined, spanning (together with the 500-km Królewiec oblast border) roughly 2,300 km. In this respect the already existing NATO corps which are located in Western and Southern Europe without a regional focus come to mind as a natural pool of candidates. There are already ten NATO corps, including two already regionally focussed on the Eastern Flank, namely the Multinational Corps Northeast in Poland, and the Multinational Corps Southeast in Romania. Hence, instead of building a new additional third regional corps in the BASR from scratch, one of the eight existing Corps HQs in the Alliance, currently without permanently assigned troops should be considered to assume a regional mission there. A potential solution might be to designate one of these corps, during peacetime, for the defence of the Baltic States. This would involve establishing a forward command element there and prepositioning about one fourth to one third of the personnel forward, just like the U.S. V Corps moved from Fort Knox in Kentucky to Poznań, or the way the Multinational Division North forward deployed their command post to Adazi, Latvia, out of Karup in Denmark. Potential capable candidates for the function of a regional corps designated solely for the Baltics could be, for example, the Eurocorps, governed by as many as six European

Framework Nations<sup>15</sup>, perhaps the British-led ARRC<sup>16</sup> or – if those two will remain with their hitherto tasks or receive different missions – perhaps a new corps formation jointly developed by the Nordic countries in the future would be another logical solution.

8. The **NATO pipeline system** should be extended into Poland and the Baltic States. So far, military pipeline systems have been built, up until the 1980s, as far as into Germany, leaving out any newcomers since the 1999 enlargements. Consequently, for over 30 years, the NATO pipeline system has not been extended into the east. Fuel supply is essential for a logistically sound military operation. With limited lines of communication into eastern Poland and the Baltic States, it is particularly important that fuel flows in sufficient amounts to the east to supply the joint defensive operation effectively without competing with regular

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<sup>15</sup> The Eurocorps' six Framework Nations (FNs) are Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Poland, and Spain. In the case of their being so many FNs, the burden of such a commitment could be more easily shared than in the case of a single FN NATO Corps, where most of the costs would be borne by just one nation. Among the other nine NATO Corps, only two are formed by more than one Framework Nation: namely, the MNCNE (Denmark, Germany, and Poland) and the 1. German-Netherlands Corps (Germany, the Netherlands). For a discussion on the current main tasks of the Eurocorps, see the interview with the Commander by Magdalena Miernicka, titled *Unikatowe Dowództwo, "Polska Zbrojna"*, <https://polska-zbrojna.pl/home/articleshow/39906?t=Unikatowe-dowodztwo>, 7 July 2023. [7.07.2023]

<sup>16</sup> ARRC – Allied Rapid Reaction Corps.

traffic, troop movement, refugee movement and other vital logistics movements all on the limited road and rail networks. Only a mix of sufficient pipelines reaching into the eastern outskirts of the Alliance, fuel depots, rail systems as well as fuel trucks will enable a comprehensive sustainment of a military defensive operation on NATO's Eastern Flank.

9. A **multi-corps land component command** should be established for the Central-Eastern European front. If Russia invades the Alliance on its Eastern Flank, multiple corps would be engaged in an extended land fight: some along the border line to defend Allied territory, others in blocking position and in the rear as reserve corps. To this end, an intermediate command structure sandwiched between the operational Joint Forces Command at Brunssum in the Netherlands and the fighting land tactical corps is needed. Such an HQ needs to be in the NATO chain of command, multinational, in-place, permanently functioning and coordinating the training and exercises to execute the Land Tactical Plans falling within NATO's Regional Plan Centre of all the engaged and committed regional land corps and reinforcing corps in a multiyear perspective. A logical location for such an HQ, whose reach would span from Estonia down to Slovakia, would be in Poland.

10. The **Joint Support Logistics Group** (JLSG) in Brunssum – earmarked for rear support in the theatre of operations in Central Europe and currently located in the Netherlands – should be permanently forward located into Poland, which is geographically most suited for such an operational NATO logistics command entity. It is erroneous to assume that such a JLSG located some 1,500 km and two countries behind the area of operations will in the case of need swiftly enough relocate and establish an operational joint allied rear area logistics network and command incoming subordinated units. In this respect it is worthwhile debunking a common myth and erroneous misperception that the Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) would be running the logistics for such an operation. That is an oversimplification as the JSEC focuses on assessing and coordinating the entire Alliance Area of Operations from North America to Southern Europe and has *de facto* no subordinated units which can conduct sustainment and logistics missions, whereas a JLSG – a command element of a few dozen staff officers and non-commissioned officers – is designed to command and control subordinated logistics and enabling units of platoon, company, squadron, battalion, regiment or even brigade size formations, whose aim is to push equipment and various logistics supplies from the rear area to the

front where tactical fighting units are postured. Such a JLSG needs to be at the highest state of readiness, in place, understanding the region well and having established permanent working structures with local national logistics commands, where the fight and sustainment will take place and be coordinated.

11. Proper preparations of the future battlefield will require certain early deployments and the lifting of some additional **crisis response measures** so that the tight timelines for an effective defence can be met at very short notice. The Alliance needs more strategic agility. Essentially, the Alliance troops need to be able to be deployed and ready in defensive positions prior to any impending Russian attack. Large-scale military exercises conducted by Russia near NATO borders could be used as a cover ahead of a possible invasion. In this sense, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) will require certain pre-authorisations to act, as the time between the Indicators and Warnings and the possible day of invasion could become very short in the future, particularly if and when Russia forward deploys larger amounts of troops into Belarus, the Królewiec oblast or closer to the Western Military District.
12. The Alliance will also need to conduct advanced **large-scale deployment and sustainment exercises**, such as the CERTAIN STRIKE exercise, which was the field

training exercise of the REFORGER exercise (REturn of FORces to GERmany), last conducted in 1987. Essentially, the largest exercise at that late time of the Cold War deployed nearly 31,000 US troops and tested the capacity of a U.S. Army corps not deployed in a forward defensive position in West Germany to conduct an operational-level counterattack and to defeat an invading force in the direction of the English Channel from the Warsaw Pact.<sup>17</sup> Now those new exercises need to take place chiefly in the BASR region. Theoretical vignette-based discussions, table-top exercises, and computer-assisted exercises are all good tools for the preparation of reinforcements. But they are not sufficient to actually test all the practical aspects of a massive deployment and actually prove the concept of a rapid and large reinforcement of the Eastern Flank. That can only be done through a large-scale deployment and sustainment exercise.

13. All the aforementioned recommendations will only be possible if **appropriate funding** is provided by virtually all Allies. The militaries will need to rebuild lost and diminished capabilities during the post-cold war peace dividend period, but also as a result of the

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Böhm, Diego Ruiz Palmer, *REFORGER 87 – CERTAIN STRIKE, The Cold War's Largest Transatlantic Bridge*, Tankograd Publishing – Verlag Jochen Vollert, Tankograd – American Special no. 3029, 2017.



vital continuous and massive, long-term support to Ukraine with materiel and ordnance. Thus, a growth of defence expenditures to ensure capability as well as the replenishment of stocks of supply, including munitions, are required. Allies will need to further recalibrate their lens on defence and provide significantly higher defence commitments than before the currently ongoing largest War in Europe since World War Two.

Finally, the unprecedented support to Ukraine will need to continue as long as it is necessary to fight back the unlawful and illegitimate aggression of Russia, leading to the defeat of the invading force, and liberating the territories of Ukraine defined by international law in 1991.

## **Conclusions**

In order to effectively deter Russia from seizing the opportunity and invading NATO territory, the Alliance needs to get seriously ready for an effective defence with a new commitment by all its Allies. An important step was reached at the 2023 Vilnius Summit to approve regional defence plans which define well how to deter by denial and thus defend the particular regions of the Alliance, especially the East-

ern Flank. Now is the time to populate the plan and assign required formations and capabilities.<sup>18</sup>

It is the synergy and combination of the recommendations listed above that will render the Alliance ready for a credible deterrence and defence posture against a Russian invasion into the Eastern Flank countries. Essentially, Allies need to be physically able to jointly defeat Russian invading forces on the battlefield right at the borders or near them in order to prevent Russia from probing the Alliance in combat. As one of the regional NATO corps commanders has rightfully put it: "Only if you are ready for the fight can you prevent the fight."<sup>19</sup> This readiness will be achieved when: a sufficient number of troops are physically present at potential points of invasion in a timely manner; the troops are well-equipped and trained; there is a sufficient amount of stocks nearby; and there is a well prepared, robust, and resilient sustainment network, particularly on the Eastern Flank and specifically in the BASR. All this requires commitment by all Allies as the countries on the Eastern Flank will not be able to cope solely by themselves with a revanchist Russia once it rebuilds, reconstitutes and mobilises

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<sup>18</sup> *Russia is a Threat to all Nations*, "Baltic Amber Magazine", Interview with LTG Joachim von Sandrart by Jacek Raubo, May 2023, p. 56; see also: <https://defence24.com/armed-forces/custodian-nato-to-guard-the-integrity-of-the-territory-mnc-ne-commander-russia-is-a-threat-to-all-nations>, interview conducted by Jacek Raubo, 21 March 2023. [7.07.2023]

<sup>19</sup> *Interview with LTG Joachim von Sandrart*, op. cit., p. 56.

its forces at scale; and this may happen sooner than many would wish or expect.

*Disclaimer: The views in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of NATO, the Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin or the Polish Ministry of National Defence.*

Joanna Kamińska

## **Leading by Example: Central and Eastern Europe's Support for Ukraine**

### **Executive Summary**

- The security architecture is shifting Eastwards. The capacity to support this shift in the longer term might pose several challenges to NATO, the European Union, and their member states due to the production-delivery gap.
- It is clear now that together with the United States, Central and Eastern European countries remain Ukraine's most solid pillar of support.

There are multiple limitations in the reporting, coordination and follow-up of global support provided to Ukraine. It would be appropriate to establish a coordinated approach and define clear support packages from international in-

stitutions, which would facilitate longer term support to Ukraine in different sectors.

## **Introduction**

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has shifted the European security architecture towards the East. Internal EU power dynamics have been significantly affected as the countries traditionally seen as an engine of EU foreign and security policy, namely France and Germany, have shown limited leadership on Ukraine. Poland, Romania, Czechia, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, countries which are the most affected by the new reality, have increased their defence spending and procurement, and have advocated for the reinforcement of the Eastern Flank and for tough EU sanctions against Russia, as well as EU membership for Ukraine. The dynamic between Western and Eastern European states has changed rapidly due to geopolitical factors, Poland's and the Baltic States' leadership on Ukraine, and also due to the fact that military preparedness and hard power resources have become a new language of Europe in this new political reality.

Over the course of the past year and a half of war, Poland, together with the Baltic States, has emerged as a key bulwark in the West's confrontation with Russia. Beyond accommodating over 1.5 million Ukrainian refugees, it has been a major source of aid and supplies to Ukraine, a vocal advocate for Kyiv's initiatives to join both NATO and the Eu-

ropean Union, and a vociferous critic of Western softness towards the Kremlin. The Russian invasion of Ukraine gave the Central and Eastern Europeans a moral sense of superiority in Europe, anchored in the history and traumatic experiences of the past, and certainly also a more prominent place at EU and NATO tables. The increase of the power position is not only related to the military support for Ukraine but also to really mobilising all types of assistance in order to provide multi-faceted and comprehensive help for Ukraine. Central and Eastern European states have been really showing full solidarity and walked the walk.

### **Financial Support**

Analysing support to Ukraine poses many data and transparency limitations, as donor reporting is not comprehensive enough and uses different methodologies. Countries and institutions vary in their budgetary cycles and reporting, and often do not have a full overview of the different types of assistance offered. Despite those limitations, it is clear that the US, the UK and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries have been leading in financial contributions to Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> The Ukraine Support Tracker by the Kiel Institute of the World Economy, which takes into account gov-

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<sup>1</sup> Yuriy Gorodnichenko, Vladyslav Rashkovan, *Supporting Ukraine – more critical than ever*, The Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), Chapter 28, <https://euagenda.eu/upload/publications/182384-supporting-ukraine-more-critical-than-ever.pdf#page=136>. [22.07.2023]

ernment-to-government funding (excluding the support for refugees), shows over EUR 165 billion in government-to-government commitments from 24 January 2022 until May 2023.<sup>2</sup> The United States (US) is by far the largest bilateral supporter of Ukraine, having committed EUR 73.18 billion, more than 50% of total commitments in the database. EU country governments committed a total of EUR 19.9 billion bilaterally, plus EUR 29.92 billion through the EU Commission and Council, EUR 3.1 billion via the European Peace Facility and EUR 2 billion through the EIB. This brings total EU commitments to EUR 54.92 billion.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 shows an overview of the total support to Ukraine, as a percentage of donor GDP, including the estimated cost of support to Ukrainian refugees.

When one looks through the prism of the donors' GDP, the support of CEE countries clearly stands out. The Baltic countries, Poland, Czechia and Bulgaria have shown very high financial, humanitarian and military commitments (see Table 1). Poland so far has contributed 2.1% of GDP for assistance and help to Ukraine, followed by 1.5% of GDP by Estonia and 1.3% of GDP by Latvia.

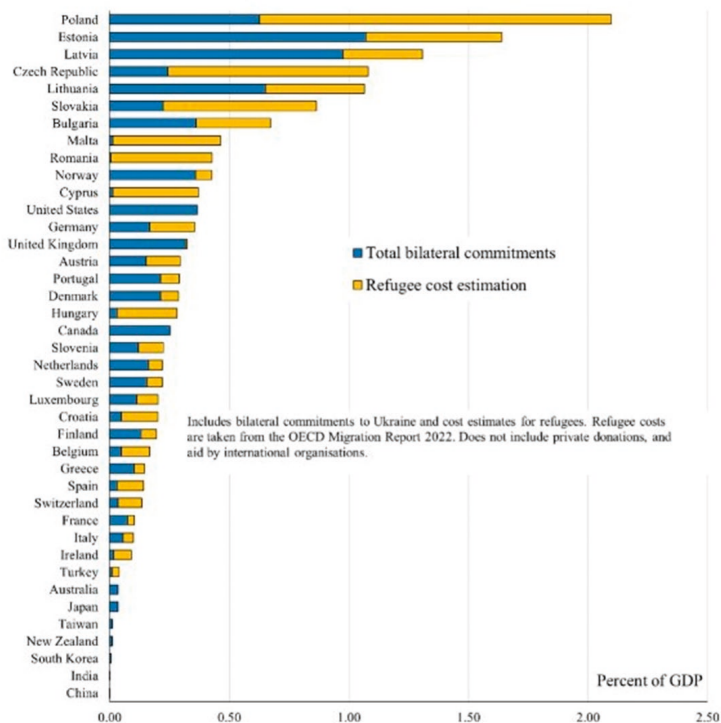
The contributions of the CEE countries should also be captured in the Team Europe financial envelope, through

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<sup>2</sup> *Kiel Institute Ukraine Tracker*, <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>. [22.08.2023]

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Figure 1: Total support to Ukraine (as a percentage of donor GDP)



Source: *The Ukraine Support Tracker*, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>.

the contribution to the EU budget and its instruments. The EU has made EUR 37.8 billion<sup>4</sup> available to support Ukraine's

<sup>4</sup> *EU Factsheet: Solidarity with Ukraine*, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/FS\\_22\\_3862](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/FS_22_3862). [22.07.2023]



Table 1: Financial, humanitarian, and military support to Ukraine (as a percentage of donor GDP)

Country	EU member (Yes/No)	Financial commitments		Humanitarian commitments		Military commitments		Total bilateral commitments	
		EUR billion		EUR billion		EUR billion		EUR billion	
Australia	N	0.00	0.07	0.07	0.36	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.84
Austria	Y	0.04	0.82	0.82	0.00	0.87	0.87	0.87	1.74
Belgium	Y	0.02	0.09	0.09	0.39	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.98
Bulgaria	Y	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.48
Canada	N	3.42	0.35	0.35	1.50	5.27	5.27	5.27	10.54
Croatia	Y	0.00	0.04	0.04	0.15	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.38
Cyprus	Y	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Czechia	Y	0.00	0.37	0.37	0.57	0.94	0.94	0.94	1.88
Denmark	Y	0.06	0.26	0.26	1.57	1.89	1.89	1.89	3.78
Estonia	Y	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.42	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.86
EU (Commission and Council)		25.32	2.14	2.14	0.00	27.46	27.46	27.46	54.92
Finland	Y	0.08	0.02	0.02	1.11	1.21	1.21	1.21	2.42
France	Y	0.70	0.32	0.32	0.45	1.46	1.46	1.46	2.92
Germany	Y	1.30	1.88	1.88	7.50	10.68	10.68	10.68	21.36
Greece	Y	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.38
Hungary	Y	0.00	0.05	0.05	0.00	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.10
Iceland	N	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.06
Ireland	Y	0.03	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.18
Italy	Y	0.41	0.22	0.22	0.71	1.34	1.34	1.34	2.68
Japan	N	5.59	1.00	1.00	0.03	6.62	6.62	6.62	13.24

Latvia	Y	0.03	0.01	0.37	0.40
Lithuania	Y	0.03	0.06	0.49	0.58
Luxembourg	Y	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.10
Malta	Y	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Netherlands	Y	0.99	0.59	2.48	4.06
New Zealand	N	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.03
Norway	N	0.89	0.19	1.01	2.09
Poland	Y	0.93	0.34	3.00	4.27
Portugal	Y	0.25	0.00	0.08	0.33
South Korea	N	0.40	0.21	0.00	0.61
Romania	N	0.00	0.12	0.00	0.13
Slovakia	Y	0.00	0.01	0.67	0.68
Slovenia	Y	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.06
Spain	Y	0.45	0.05	0.33	0.84
Sweden	Y	0.20	0.14	1.49	1.83
Switzerland	N	0.04	0.35	0.00	0.39
Türkiye	N	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.07
United Kingdom	N	3.89	0.27	6.58	10.74
United States	N	24.26	3.60	42.84	70.70
China	N	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Taiwan	N	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.06
India	N	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	.	69.31	13.74	74.77	157.82*

\*Christoph Trebesch, Arianna Antezza, Katelynn Bushnell, Andre Frank, Pascal Frank, Lukas Franz, Ivan Kharitonov, Bharath Kumar, Ekaterina Rebinskaya, Stefan Schramm, Christopher Schade, Leon Weiser, *The Ukraine Support Tracker: Which countries help Ukraine and how?*, Kiel Working Paper, No. 2218, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, pp. 1-75.

Source: The Ukraine Support Tracker, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>.

overall economic, social and financial resilience. This has been in the form of macro-financial assistance, budget support, emergency assistance, crisis response and humanitarian aid. In addition, military assistance measures total around EUR 15 billion, of which EUR 5.6 billion have been mobilised under the European Peace Facility. This brings the total support made available so far to Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's aggression to around EUR 53 billion.<sup>5</sup> This comprehensive emergency response from the EU institutions has been drawn from various budgetary resources: humanitarian aid, NDICI-Global Europe geographic and thematic programmes, and others to which all EU member states contribute. It comprises the following:

- Budget support: a total of EUR 620 million was provided in 2022. EUR 120 million were disbursed in April 2022 to strengthen Ukraine's state-building and resilience efforts and EUR 500 million disbursed in September 2022 to help Ukraine address urgent needs on the ground;
- Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA): in the form of loans for a total amount of EUR 25.2 billion<sup>6</sup>;
- European Investment Bank (EIB): as of December 2022 the EIB provided a total of EUR 2.2 billion in loans guaranteed

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> *Commission pays a further EUR 1.5 billion in macro-financial assistance to Ukraine*, European Commission, 25 April 2023, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-pays-further-eu15-billion-macro-financial-assistance-ukraine-2023-04-25\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-pays-further-eu15-billion-macro-financial-assistance-ukraine-2023-04-25_en). [26.07.2023]

by the EU to help Ukraine meet its financing needs, support strategic state-owned companies, repair damaged infrastructure and ensure municipal services;

- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD): pledged to invest EUR 1 billion in 2022 in supporting the Ukrainian economy. On 23 November 2022 EBRD approved a EUR 300 million loan for Ukraine's electricity company Ukrenergo in order to repair the damage caused by Russian shelling of civilian power infrastructure and to stabilise the country's energy system during winter.<sup>7</sup>

If one adds to it the costs of hosting refugees and the number of refugees from Ukraine per thousand inhabitants, then the support of Poland and Estonia is even more outstanding (see Figure 2).<sup>8</sup> The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II, and some regions and cities have been playing an essential role in receiving and integrating displaced populations. By the end of June 2023, there were more than 6 million refugees registered outside Ukraine and an additional estimated 8 million internally displaced in Ukraine.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Vanora Bennett, *€372 million for Ukraine's electricity company from EBRD and The Netherlands*, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, <https://www.ebrd.com/news/2022/372-million-for-ukraines-electricity-company-from-ebrd-and-the-netherlands.html>. [22.07.2023]

<sup>8</sup> *What are the integration challenges of Ukrainian refugee women?*, OECD, 30 May 2023, <https://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/what-are-the-integration-challenges-of-ukrainian-refugee-women-bb17dc64/>. [22.07.2023]

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/ukraine-emergency>. [22.08.2023]

The UNHCR reported over 9.2 million border crossings from Ukraine into neighbouring countries – including Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Czechia, and Moldova.<sup>10</sup> Many cities in Poland and the Baltic states had mobilised quickly to support the refugee influx in the early months of the invasion.<sup>11</sup> This aid by the municipal authorities, cities and small communities is not always reflected in the data set, adding to an incomplete picture of the support provided to Ukraine and its people.

The total amount of loans and grants received by Ukraine from EU member states in 2022 was EUR 9 billion. As for 2023, the EU budget includes another EUR 18 billion in direct financial assistance.<sup>12</sup> As part of the commitment made during the College-to-Government meeting and the EU-Ukraine Summit in February 2023, EUR 1 billion of EU support will be mobilised for Ukraine's fast recovery, to be financed from EU budget and EIB loans.<sup>13</sup>

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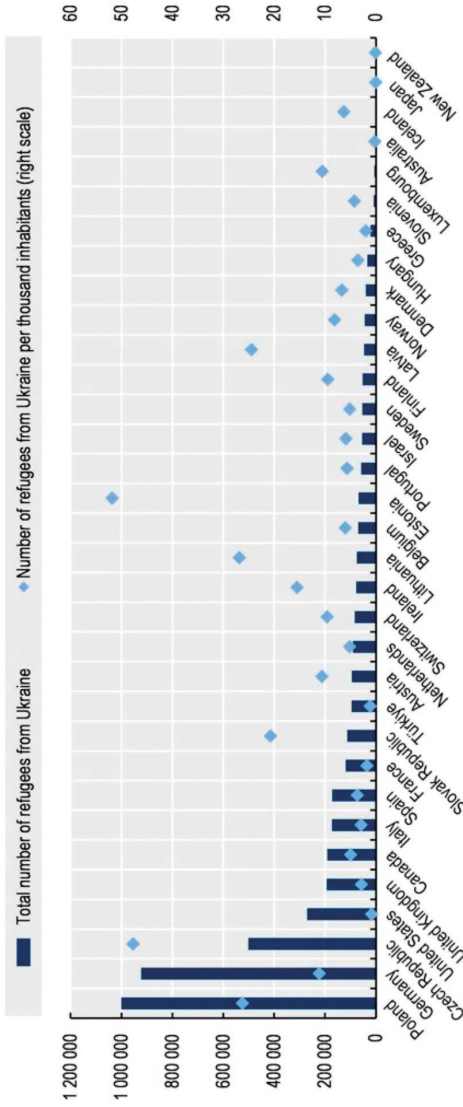
<sup>10</sup> UNHCR, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>. [22.08.2023]

<sup>11</sup> *Cities' actions in response to the war in Ukraine*, OECD Issues Note, prepared for the 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the Working Party on Urban Policy.

<sup>12</sup> *Military assistance to Ukraine: which countries provide support publicly and which hide arms supplies*, <https://visitukraine.today/blog/1840/military-assistance-to-ukraine-which-countries-provide-support-publicly-and-which-hide-arms-supplies>. [26.07.2023]

<sup>13</sup> *EU Factsheet: Solidarity with Ukraine*, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/FS\\_22\\_3862](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/FS_22_3862). [22.07.2023]

Figure 2: Number of refugees from Ukraine (absolute numbers and per thousand of total population)



Source: What are the integration challenges of Ukrainian refugee women? OECD, 30 May 2023, <https://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/what-are-the-integration-challenges-of-ukrainian-refugee-women-bb17dc64/>.

## Military Support

The US is the largest provider of military assistance to Ukraine, having committed USD 42.6 billion since Russia's invasion in February 2022.<sup>14</sup> As the second largest donor, the UK has committed GBP 4.6 billion in military assistance to Ukraine so far (GBP 2.3 billion in 2022 and a commitment to match that funding in 2023).<sup>15</sup> So far the European Union has provided more than EUR 4.6 billion of military support under the European Peace Facility (EPF). Additionally, the EU has launched the Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM Ukraine).<sup>16</sup> This military support includes all types of weapons and military equipment alongside items explicitly donated to the Ukrainian army.

When it comes to direct military support, the EU countries' efforts fall short compared to those of the US. Looking at bilateral aid as a percentage of GDP between January and August in 2022, the UK and the US outspent all other

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<sup>14</sup> Christoph Trebesch, Arianna Antezza, Katelyn Bushnell, Andre Frank, Pascal Frank, Lukas Franz, Ivan Kharitonov, Bharath Kumar, Ekaterina Rebinskaya, Stefan Schramm, Christopher Schade, Leon Weiser, *The Ukraine Support Tracker: Which countries help Ukraine and how?*, Kiel Working Paper, No. 2218, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, pp. 1-75.

<sup>15</sup> Nigel Walker, *Conflict in Ukraine: A timeline (current conflict, 2022-present)*, House of Commons Library Research Briefing, 22 August 2023, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9847/>. [28.08.2023]

<sup>16</sup> *EU joint procurement of ammunition and missiles for Ukraine: Council agrees EUR 1 billion support under the European Peace Facility*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/05/05/eu-joint-procurement-of-ammunition-and-missiles-for-ukraine-council-agrees-1-billion-support-under-the-european-peace-facility/>. [26.07.2023]

European countries except for those bordering with Russia (Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Norway, and Lithuania). At same time, many EU member states contribute through the European Peace Facility (EPF), which is indicated separately in many data sets reporting on the military assistance. Military support has also increased and changed significantly as the war continues. Partners share very varied strategic calculations, scope, scale and determination to provide assistance. Objective impediments to providing assistance also arise from limited reserves of arms and ammunition and decades of reduced production capacity in respect of the Western defence industry.<sup>17</sup> The data on the donated military aid is very misleading as each country values its support differently. Moreover, the methods of calculation and the accepted values of the equipment in question are not made public. Some countries do not disclose the type or quantity of armaments they send for security reasons.

The breakthrough on military support to Ukraine came during the Ramstein conference in April 2022, attended by defence ministers from 40 countries. The event marked the start of regular meetings of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group (UDCG) in support of Ukraine. These resulted in

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<sup>17</sup> For more details see: Marcin A. Piotrowski, *Military-Technical Assistance to Ukraine: An Assessment of Its Short- and Medium-term Needs*, Report PISM, Polish Institute of International Affairs, December 2022, <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/military-technical-assistance-to-ukraine-an-assessment-of-its-short-and-medium-term-needs>. [29.08.2023]



the announcement of the delivery of a range of armoured vehicles and barrel and rocket artillery, which was carried out throughout the summer of 2022. This equipment enabled the Ukrainians to launch effective assaults on Kherson and Kharkiv. The next surge in arms deliveries did not occur until October 2022, with massive Russian attacks by aerial assault means on critical infrastructure. The US, Germany and France declared the delivery of numerous brand-new and used short-range air defence systems to Ukraine. In addition, the delivery of one Patriot medium-range system battery each by the US and Germany was announced in December 2022. January and February 2023 saw decisions on the delivery of Western-made infantry fighting vehicles and tanks. In March 2023, Poland and Slovakia announced that they would send MiG-29 fighter jets to Kyiv.<sup>18</sup> Today, only the US has a longer term production capacity to support Ukraine, which makes them the most important supplier and supporter in this domain.<sup>19</sup> Yet, even the US has a problem in delivering the arms in the longer-term perspective, as the production-delivery gap is real.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Jacek Tarociński, Andrzej Wilk, *Arms deliveries to Ukraine: crossing the red lines*, OSW Commentary, 6 September 2023, Centre for Eastern Studies, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2023-06-09/arms-deliveries-to-ukraine-crossing-red-lines>. [22.07.2023]

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Missy Ryan, *In race to arm Ukraine, U.S. faces cracks in its manufacturing might*, The Washington Post, 9 March 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/03/08/us-weapons-manufacturing-ukraine/>. [22.08.2023]

Poland, Czechia and the Baltic States were the first to provide Kyiv with the weapons systems. Even before the Russian invasion, Estonia had taken steps to send it D-30 howitzers; Poland and Czechia were the first countries to hand over post-Soviet tanks (T-72); and in Western Europe, the UK was the first to declare the delivery of Western-made tanks (Challenger 2). Warsaw is emerging as the third largest – after Washington and London – donor of arms and military equipment to Ukraine, without which it would have been much more difficult to carry out last year's counter-offensive. Half of the tanks donated to Ukraine came from Poland. Realised deliveries and announcements of future ones indicate that the majority of modern self-propelled artillery (Krab howitzers, Rak mortars) and wheeled armoured personnel carriers (Rosomak) comes from Poland as well.<sup>21</sup>

Many EU member states also contribute through the European Peace Facility (EPF),<sup>22</sup> created in 2021 and based on a distribution key linked to gross national income. This makes an analysis of the military support for Ukraine even more complicated. The EPF is composed of two parts, one aimed at financing the common costs of the Common Se-

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<sup>21</sup> Jacek Tarociński, Andrzej Wilk, *Arms deliveries to Ukraine: crossing the red lines*, OSW Commentary, 6 September 2023, Centre for Eastern Studies, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2023-06-09/arms-deliveries-to-ukraine-crossing-red-lines>. [22.07.2023]

<sup>22</sup> See more: *European Peace Facility*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-peace-facility/>. [25.07.2023]

curity and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions and operations with a military and defence implication and the second part (“assistance measures” pillar) is aimed at strengthening the military and defence capacities of third countries or regional/international organizations. Using the EPF enables therefore the EU to provide the armed forces of partner countries with infrastructure and equipment, including weapons. The principle of the EPF is that EU member states provide (i.e. purchase and deliver) defensive lethal equipment to Ukraine, based upon their needs, and the EPF (via the EPF Committee in the Council) reimburses eligible equipment. This means that the data for the EU member states when it comes to financial contribution is even less transparent, as EPF includes in fact the support given by the member states for which they are partially reimbursed post factum.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the largest security aid donor is the US, with the UK, Poland and the Baltic States also among the leaders. Estonia’s total military aid in January 2023 exceeded 1% of its GDP, Latvia’s – 0.9% of GDP, Poland – 0.5% of GDP and the US – 0.2% of GDP.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> The most comprehensive attempt to gather all types of data on military, financial and humanitarian support is the Kiel’s Institute Ukraine’s Tracker, which currently remains the key reference for all studies on aid to Ukraine during the Russian invasion.

<sup>24</sup> Hanna Bazhenova, *Międzynarodowa pomoc finansowa i militarna dla Ukrainy walczącej z rosyjską agresją*, Komentarze IES no. 792, 22 February 2023, Institute of Central Europe, <https://ies.lublin.pl/komentarze/miedzynarodowa-pomoc-finansowa-i-militarna-dla-ukrainy-walczacej-z-rosyjska-agresja/>. [23.07.2023]

Clearly military support changes fast, depending on the situation on Ukraine's front. At the start of the Russian invasion, many donors were very cautious, fearing the Russian response. As the brutality of the Russian army continues, one observes more courageous support in terms of arms delivery. However the longer-term production capacity globally poses questions as to its sustainability.

### **Humanitarian Support**

Humanitarian aid refers to assistance supporting the civilian population, mainly food, medicines, and other relief items. It does not include support given by local or regional organisations or private donors. It also excludes in this context support to refugees. There is limited comprehensive data related to humanitarian assistance as the aid is cyclical and no comprehensive aggregated data exists. This is partially related to the lack of a coordinating platform and the paucity of current reporting on the biggest needs in 2022.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) publication International Migration Outlook 2022, the preliminary amount of Polish humanitarian aid to Ukraine in 2022 reached EUR 8.36 billion (approximately 1.5% of GDP), putting Poland in the top 27 European donor countries for Ukraine. The EUR 8.36 billion in humanitarian aid to Ukraine includes EUR 6.2 billion spent on accommodation and direct financial assistance, EUR 1.5 billion on education and EUR 664 million on health-

care.<sup>25</sup> The majority of people fleeing Ukraine went to Poland, which has recorded more than 6 million border crossings from the country since February 2022. Between February 2022 and May 2023, Hungary received 1.3 million people, Romania 1.2 million, followed by the Slovak Republic with 780,000 and Moldova with 600,000. Many Ukrainian refugees continued to travel towards other destination countries, and cross-border travel remains substantial in both directions.<sup>26</sup> As argued above, a lot of humanitarian assistance is not captured in the data set as it was offered by international organisations, private donors and associations and therefore is difficult to track. From the data gathered by the Kiel Institute, the US and the EU have made the highest commitments to the humanitarian assistance to Ukraine (see Figure 3).

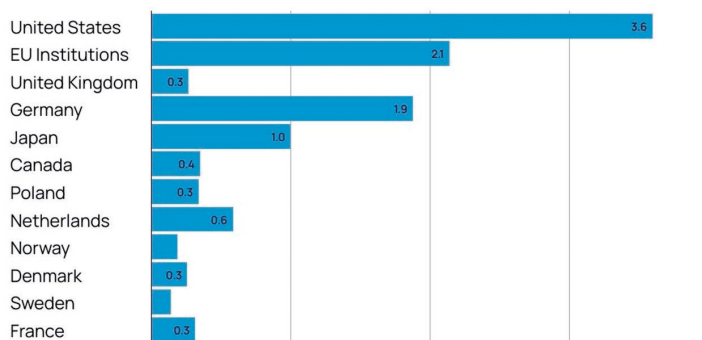
The EU has allocated EUR 485 million for humanitarian aid programmes in Ukraine, which is to be implemented by the humanitarian partners on the ground. The European Commission, the 27 EU members states, Norway, North Macedonia and Turkey are using the EU Civil Protection Mechanism to channel in-kind aid to Ukraine. This includes items such as first-aid kits, protective clothing, disinfectants as well as tents, firefighting equipment, power generators

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<sup>25</sup> *OECD Migration Outlook 2022*, [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/30fe16d2-en/1/3/4/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/30fe16d2-en&\\_csp\\_=97175d429ae5e4e04cd3cccbf84945&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book#section-d1e188](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/30fe16d2-en/1/3/4/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/30fe16d2-en&_csp_=97175d429ae5e4e04cd3cccbf84945&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book#section-d1e188). [22.07.2023]

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

Figure 3: Humanitarian assistance for Ukraine (in EUR billion)



Source: *The Ukraine Support Tracker*, Kiel Institute for the World Economy, <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>.

and water pumps. So far, over 88,000 tonnes of in-kind assistance worth over EUR 490 million has been delivered to Ukraine through this mechanism.<sup>27</sup> The aid also includes, via the rescEU emergency stockpiles, over EUR 36 million worth of shelter, medical and specialised equipment for public health risks, such as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats for Ukraine, as well as over 1000 generators.

The EU has also successfully coordinated over 2,340 medical evacuations of Ukrainian patients to provide them with specialised healthcare in hospitals across Europe. The EU is supporting the rehabilitation of damaged schools in Ukraine

<sup>27</sup> See more: *EU Civil Protection Mechanism*, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/eu-civil-protection-mechanism\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/eu-civil-protection-mechanism_en). [26.07.2023]

with EUR 100 million, including EUR 66 million through budget support and EUR 34 million from the humanitarian funding. The European Commission has allocated around EUR 14 million to purchase school buses and bring Ukrainian children safely to school. Here again, in some cases the data reporting on the EU member states support, including Poland and the CEE states, might be duplicating. Analysing the data from the OECD and the UN, one can see however that the majority of the aid was delivered by Ukraine's neighbours.

### **Other Types of Support**

Dividing the support to Ukraine on financial, military and humanitarian categories is somewhat limiting and in many cases also premature for a comprehensive picture. There had been a lot of efforts to include Ukraine in the EU's market, energy and transport infrastructures. The EU decided to re-orientate ongoing programmes and projects worth EUR 185 million in grants to best address urgent needs on the ground, including aid to conflict-affected populations; support to municipalities as first responders; health support, blood banks, cyber equipment, software and operational resilience to counter large-scale cyber-attacks; resources for critical infrastructure rehabilitation; support to Ukrainian SMEs and energy security, notably rehabilitation, reinforcement of the safety of energy pipelines and storage.

Many new projects and initiatives have followed the decision to grant Ukraine EU candidate status and therefore putting it on the path to EU membership. On 7 June 2023 the European Commission made an important step to further integrate Ukraine into the EU Single Market through opening up the Connecting Europe Facility for infrastructure funding. This agreement will enable Ukrainian project promoters to apply for EU funding for projects of common interest in the transport, energy and digital realms, further improving Ukraine's connectivity with its EU neighbours. It will support Ukraine's integration within the EU Single Market, promote growth, jobs and competitiveness. Today already Ukraine's authorities can apply for a number of programs and projects and receive funding in the areas of transport and energy. Those opportunities will clearly grow and multiply in coming months and years. However, given that the country is at war and has limited human resources, the real question may be one of capacity.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

As the Russian invasion of Ukraine continues, the financial commitment to supporting Ukraine is decreasing, despite growing needs. The larger packages of mostly military support continue, but the aid remains relatively low in summer 2023. The CEE countries and the US are the only ones that remain strongly committed to supporting Ukraine in the war. In 2023, Slovakia is next to Poland, the only other coun-



try that pledged and already delivered fighter jets. In total, Slovakian military aid increased by EUR 191 million since February 2022, more than tripling its military commitments to Ukraine. Perhaps the security architecture has shifted towards the East, but the capacity to support this shift in the longer term might pose several challenges.

It seems that the longer-term assessment of the production-delivery gap in terms of military equipment is necessary; better coordination and pooling of the industries and resources within the EU and NATO is necessary to have a better overview of the capacities for the future. As the entire aid and assistance landscape is quite scattered and reporting varies, it would be appropriate for international institutions to establish a coordinated approach and clear support packages that would facilitate longer-term support to Ukraine in different sectors. Such an overview and coordination still seems to be missing. It is therefore recommended that such a coordination body at the EU and global level should be established, taking stock of the existing assistance both in terms of financial and physical assets. It is also highly recommended that NATO should provide some forecasting of military equipment capacity, and better pooling and sharing should be provided in order to share the support for Ukraine equally.

In the first year of the war, most of the assistance included financial and humanitarian aid; in 2023 this aid has focused to a large extent on the delivery of military equip-

ment. There is clearly a commitment-delivery gap due to production and capacity limits of the relevant industries and a growing problem in mobilising regular support to Ukraine. One thing remains clear for now in terms of delivery of support – Central and Eastern European countries remain Ukraine's most solid pillar of aid.



Izabela Albrycht

## **The Technological Dimension of NATO's Eastern Flank: Towards Military Tech Powers**

### **Executive Summary**

- Over the next decade, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is set to catalyse unmatched technological, scientific, and business partnerships with defence, security and resilience needs. This momentum is driven by CEE's geopolitical position and heightened by the existential threat from Russia, further complemented by the region's high-tech potential, attractive investment prospects, strong STEM academic programs, strategic partnership with the US, and essential collaboration with Ukraine.

- This could position the CEE region to solidify its role and reputation as a military tech power and ascend to the status of NATO's emerging technological focal point.
- For CEE to truly stand as a military tech power, the region must ensure that technological innovation aligns with defence strategy objectives and that this culture of innovation and digitalisation is deeply integrated throughout its Armed Forces.
- A vibrant national innovation ecosystem is essential, promoting intensified collaborations among the key entities in the Triple Helix of innovation: the public sector, private industry, and academia.

## **Introduction to the Significance of Emerging and Disruptive Technologies for Security, Defence, and Resilience**

Russia's escalating aggression toward Ukraine, its ultimatum to the United States<sup>1</sup>, the NATO Secretary General's statement from 25 February 2022<sup>2</sup>, various disturbing testimonies

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<sup>1</sup> Agnieszka Legucka, *Rosyjskie żądania gwarancji bezpieczeństwa wobec USA i NATO*, PISM, 2021, <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/rosyjskie-zadania-gwarancji-bezpieczenstwa-wobec-usa-i-nato>. [22.08.2023]

<sup>2</sup> "The Kremlin's objectives are not limited to Ukraine. Russia has demanded legally binding agreements to renounce further NATO enlargement. And to remove troops and infrastructure from Allies that joined after 1997." See: *Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the extraordinary virtual summit of NATO Heads of State and Government*, NATO, 25 February 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_192455.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_192455.htm). [22.08.2023]

from Russian political leaders, and hybrid operations targeting NATO countries and its borders, confirm significant threats to the security of NATO's Eastern Flank countries. With Russia's leadership persistently pushing its imperialistic and revisionist geopolitical ambitions, frontline nations remain in a perpetual state of security alertness. In light of this geopolitical context, it is imperative to emphasise security-oriented cooperation within the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region. These circumstances further underscore the need for the region's countries to not only bolster their conventional deterrence and defence posture but also pursue radical technological innovations in security and defence to support cyber and digital defence and deterrence. Due to the tech-driven strategy that includes software and data-driven capabilities – capabilities which the Ukrainians have actively employed on the battlefield<sup>3</sup> – Ukraine has maintained a distinct operational advantage since 24 February 2022. This approach is now also being harnessed in counter-offensive actions. This leads to the conclusion that cutting-edge technologies, combined with digital solutions and infrastructure, can provide a distinct advantage on the battlefield against Russia's significant conventional forces and bolster resilience against continuously evolving hybrid

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<sup>3</sup> Alena Kudzko, Pavel Macko, *The future of digital deterrence in Central and Eastern Europe*, GLOBSEC, July 2023, <https://www.globsec.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/The%20future%20of%20digital%20deterrence%20in%20Central%20and%20Eastern%20Europe.pdf>. [22.08.2023]

tactics. This approach can reinforce national security, help to maintain border integrity, and boost deterrence measures. Technological capabilities and potential will not only determine defensive capacities but also the geopolitical and geoeconomic standing of CEE countries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The technologies, which have received committed political determination and a systematic approach to their support and development from an increasing number of member countries, and have also been a subject of geopolitical rivalry over the past few years, were termed by NATO as “emerging and disruptive technologies” (EDT). The prioritisation of these technologies in the Alliance’s policy has been evident since at least 2019 and the NATO 2030 agenda process. During the NATO leaders’ meeting on 3-4 December 2019, in London, it was highlighted that the development of EDT is crucial given the heightened geopolitical tensions with the Russian Federation (RF), but this is also the case in response to the growing technological capabilities of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The 2022 NATO Strategic Concept<sup>4</sup> endorsed those assumptions, especially in light of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. The Strategic Concept recognises the dual nature of EDT, underscoring their potential benefits and inherent risks.<sup>5</sup> It emphasises

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<sup>4</sup> *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, NATO, 2022, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf). [4.09.2023]

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, points 16 and 17.

that they are reshaping the nature of conflict, taking on increased strategic significance, and emerging as primary battlegrounds in global competition.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, in the Strategic Concept, Allies committed to fostering innovation and amplifying investments in EDT to ensure NATO maintains its seamless collaboration and military advantage.<sup>7</sup> Once again, the strategic and operational importance of EDT, their impact on the realisation of the Alliance's fundamental objectives of NATO, and the subsequent need to maintain NATO's technological edge was emphasised in the declaration<sup>8</sup> at the recent NATO Summit in Vilnius, held on 11-12 July 2023.

These technologies have yet to be developed and fully deployed across NATO member states at the scale and speed required, given the rising geopolitical tensions and direct threats to NATO's borders. The presence of a strategic technological gap in the military domain among NATO member countries is undeniable, and this includes CEE countries.<sup>9</sup> A multitude of reasons contribute to this disparity, and the extent of this gap varies significantly from one member

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., point 17.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., point 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Vilnius Summit Communiqué*, NATO, 2023, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_217320.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm). [4.09.2023]

<sup>9</sup> This is related to the digital gap between CEE and Western Europe and low investment in digital technologies. See more: *Bridging the digital gap between CEE and Western Europe*, PWC, <https://www.pwc.com/c1/en/future-of-government-cee/innovation-in-cee/smart-factories-case-study.html>. [4.09.2023]



state to another, highlighting the distinct challenges each country faces in military technological advancements. The reasons for this go beyond a lack of awareness of the serious nature of the geopolitical situation and include challenges tied to these deep technologies. To truly tap into their potential, a robust innovation ecosystem is needed. This along with long-term investment, collaboration with end-users, solid partnerships among academia, the private sector, and government agencies, retention of STEM talent, and sufficient and resilient digital infrastructure. Addressing these challenges calls for CEE countries to make a profound investment in technological and scientific endeavours, further digitalisation, including the digitalisation of the defence sector, fortifying the financial frameworks supporting high-tech enterprises, fostering knowledge sharing and streamlining technology transfers with NATO counterparts, as well as rapidly integrating “miltech” solutions within the armed forces.

### **NATO's EDT Definition and Innovation Ecosystem**

EDT defined by NATO, which are mostly dual-use and deep tech, are particularly important due to their key role in building an arsenal of offensive and defensive capabilities across all military operational domains and in strengthening the systemic resilience of the Alliance's member states. Beginning with seven EDTs in 2019, NATO's innovation initiatives are now focused on nine primary technological areas:

artificial intelligence (AI), autonomy, quantum technologies, biotechnologies and human enhancement, hypersonic systems, space technologies, novel materials and manufacturing, energy and propulsion technologies and next-generation communications networks.<sup>10</sup>

NATO's support for the development and implementation of these technologies has a dual nature. Firstly, it manifests at the policy and strategy levels. Secondly, it is evident in the creation of an innovation ecosystem. In the former case, NATO's backing aligns with the Emerging and Disruptive Technology Implementation Roadmap adopted in 2019 and the Coherent Implementation Strategy on Emerging and Disruptive Technologies from 2021. Both the roadmap and the strategy aimed to streamline NATO's efforts in pivotal technological sectors, followed by the development of specific plans and strategies for each key technology area. Between 2020 and 2022, based on these decisions, NATO's innovation ecosystem began the execution of its inaugural undertakings. The goals in the upcoming years are to establish an efficiently functioning collaboration network across NATO to promote, foster and protect EDT development and implementation. This network encompasses two crucial pillars: the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the

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<sup>10</sup> *Emerging and disruptive technologies*, NATO, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_184303.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_184303.htm). [22.08.2023]

North Atlantic (DIANA)<sup>11</sup> and the 1 billion euro NATO Innovation Fund (NIF).<sup>12</sup> It is anticipated that both DIANA and the NIF will systematically transform the landscape of creating, funding, and implementing innovative technological solutions to meet the military needs and requirements of NATO countries.

There are also two additional important components of DIANA that play a supplementary role in the innovation ecosystem. The first is the Rapid Adoption Service, a central mechanism designed to expedite the technology adoption process for all NATO member countries. It will support nations from the inception of a technological solution, through the prototype's delivery and testing phase, culminating in the acquisition of the final product. The second is the Trusted Capital Database. Ensuring that EDTs are shielded from external threats is equally important. Highlighting the significance of this protective stance, President Biden recently signed an executive order aimed to curb U.S. investments in specific Chinese firms and restrict the transfer of managerial expertise.<sup>13</sup> The underlying concern is these firms might bolster Beijing's military capabilities. In a similar vein, other

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<sup>11</sup> DIANA consolidates accelerators and test centres located in member countries and runs acceleration programs for all sorts of companies and academic innovators.

<sup>12</sup> The NIF is an investment fund aiding start-ups in innovation.

<sup>13</sup> Karen Freifeld, Andrea Shalal, David Shepardson, *Biden orders ban on certain US tech investments in China*, Reuters, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/white-house-detail-plans-restricting-some-us-investments-china-source-2023->

NATO members must remain prudent about the outflow of their proprietary technologies and capital – it could compromise the goals of their defence innovation strategies. To counteract these potential vulnerabilities, the NATO trusted capital marketplace will feature national databases, termed the Trusted Capital Database. These databases will compile data about vetted venture capitalists and investors,<sup>14</sup> and detail information on tech companies, including start-ups.

With DIANA gaining traction and the NIF making strategic investments, one can see a pronounced “NATO effect” potentially driving technological innovation across member nations. This initiative could foster the growth of an innovation-centric culture, ensuring that the essence of innovative learning permeates these countries. By disseminating best practices and catalysing network effects, DIANA could work to fortify national ecosystems to be more entrepreneurially robust and intensify collaborations among key stakeholders in the Triple Helix model. This model suggests that traditional boundaries between the public and private sectors, science and technology, and academia and industry, are increasingly blurred. In this paradigm, all agents have a primary role to play, thus the industry serves as the main engine

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08-09/#:~:text=The%20long%2Dawaited%20order%20authorizes,and%20certain%20artificial%20intelligence%20systems.[22.08.2023]

<sup>14</sup> Vivienne Machi, *NATO hopes to launch new defense tech accelerator by 2023*, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2021/06/22/nato-hopes-to-launch-new-defense-tech-accelerator-by-2023/>. [22.08.2023]

of production; the government provides the contractual framework ensuring stable interactions and transactions; and universities act as the primary sources of new knowledge and technological advancements.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, while each agent maintains its core function and identity, it can also adopt the roles of the others. For instance, universities might embrace industry roles by fostering start-ups through incubator and accelerator initiatives.<sup>16</sup> Beyond just fostering growth, DIANA could also play a crucial role in helping secure the national innovation ecosystems. Furthermore, this “NATO effect” would be poised to accelerate systemic changes within member states.<sup>17</sup>

### **DIANA and NIF Footprints in CEE**

The CEE region has made a good start in the NATO innovation ecosystem. The European HQ of DIANA will be partially co-located in Estonia thanks to the partnership with

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<sup>15</sup> The Triple Helix model of innovation refers to the enhanced cooperation between public, private and academic sectors in respect to developing and deploying innovative solutions thanks to the process of generating synergies across the collaboration. The Triple Helix model was introduced by Leydesdorff and Etzkowitz in 1996 and is perceived as a bedrock of Silicon Valley’s development, with government, start ups and Stanford University as major actors. For more see: Josep M. Pique, Jasmina Berbegal-Mirabent, Henry Etzkowitz, *Triple Helix and the evolution of ecosystems of innovation: the case of Silicon Valley*, <https://triple-helixjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40604-018-0060-x>. [4.09.2023]

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> For more see: Izabela Albrycht (ed.), *Three Seas United In Cyber Power*, The Kosciuszko Institute, May 2022, <https://ik.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/REPORT-3Seas-United-in-Cyberpower-ENG.pdf>. [22.08.2023]

the United Kingdom, which is formally hosting the HQ at London Imperial Collage. The second regional office of NIF will be located in Poland. Additionally, at least two accelerator sites and over twenty test centres will be located on NATO's Eastern Flank. Among the test centres pre-selected for DIANA, Poland is home to seven, Slovakia boasts six of them, Estonia has four, Romania and Hungary house two, while Lithuania and Latvia each have one. These test centres in CEE cover all aspects of EDT and have a specific focus on cybersecurity. Regarding the DIANA accelerators, two are slated for establishment in Prague and Tallinn. Meanwhile, a Polish consortium consisting of the Kraków Technology Park and the AGH University has put forth its candidacy to host the third accelerator in Kraków. All CEE countries have now become Limited Partners (LPs)<sup>18</sup> in the NIF. This offers innovators in the region access to a vast market opportunity, patient capital, and rigorous technological diligence and validation.<sup>19</sup> Within the region, there are several other NATO competence centres that specialise in addressing emerging threats: the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, the Counterintelligence Centre of Excellence in Kraków, and the Strategic Communications Centre of Excel-

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<sup>18</sup> "Twenty-three NATO Allies have officially become Limited Partners of the NATO Innovation Fund (NIF), which is preparing to make its initial investments later this year." See more: *NATO Innovation Fund closes on EUR 1bn flagship fund*, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_217864.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_217864.htm). [4.09.2023]

<sup>19</sup> See more: *NATO Innovation Fund*, <https://www.nif.fund/about>. [22.08.2023]

lence in Riga. All these centres can play a role in collaboration efforts aimed at delivering dual-use deep-tech solutions for defence and resilience.

Therefore, DIANA and the NIF should be recognised as guiding frameworks for new models of innovation and application of EDT as well as for tech cooperation throughout CEE. Additionally, they should serve as benchmarks for replicating similar institutions and ecosystems at the national level. In this conducive environment, the objective for CEE should be to solidify its stance in the digital and technological value chains. The war in Ukraine has further accelerated the transformation of supply chains and acts as a catalyst for changes that will revolutionise the technology market for the armed forces and public services in the coming years. This process will not only involve established technology innovation leaders but will particularly encompass countries whose geopolitical position is especially challenging, such as the countries on NATO's Eastern Flank and the broader CEE region.

This shift will also pave the way for emerging players in the tech industry who, in addition to traditional military technology suppliers, will provide innovative, radical dual-use solutions for the armed forces. Government backing, coupled with an increased demand for new technologies stemming from the rise in NATO countries' military expenditure, should manifest in tangible domestic solutions being commissioned. Given NATO's imperative to digitalise as well

as enhance and technologically advance the armed forces, this consideration is particularly significant for countries aiming to emerge as technology hubs. In the CEE region particularly noteworthy are Poland, Estonia, and Czechia as emerging technology hubs which already demonstrate significant potential. With the presence of NATO's reputable innovation-driving institutions, they are poised to become standout features on the global innovation map. With a DI-ANA accelerator situated in Kraków and the NIF regional office anchored in Warsaw, Poland could assert a dominant position among CEE countries within NATO's innovation ecosystem. Given Poland's high-tech potential, its attractiveness for Foreign Direct Investment from global entities, its robust STEM academic offerings, strategic partnership with the US, and the pivotal collaboration with Ukraine, the country is poised to catalyse unprecedented technological, scientific, and business partnerships. Such a setup could solidify Poland's role as the innovation cornerstone for CEE, enhancing both the region's global technological brand and its status as NATO's emerging technological nexus. However, every CEE nation has unique promise, with specialised technological expertise that can enhance NATO's overarching technological position and help establish CEE as NATO's new technological centre of gravity.



## **Recommendations:**

### **Moving Towards Military Tech Powers**

**CEE's Engagement with NATO's Ecosystem.** As CEE builds its innovative posture for resilience, defence, and deterrence, it should draw as much as possible from the support and ecosystem provided by NATO, integrating into DIANA and the NIF and functioning in the broadest and most effective manner. The CEE region must not only immerse itself actively within NATO's innovation ecosystem but also foster a strategic industrial policy, nurture national capabilities, and realise the principle of "technological security."

**Learning from Ukrainian Experiences.** Additionally, the CEE region should also learn from Ukrainian experiences, which prove that digital technologies, collaboration with companies, and building systemic resilience are crucial for a country's survival. The Eastern Flank countries, keen on enhancing their military capabilities and national resilience, should heed these lessons.

**Meeting NATO's Resilience Requirements.** The emphasis on national resilience and fulfilling NATO's seven baseline requirements for resilience<sup>20</sup> is particularly pertinent giv-

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<sup>20</sup> Seven baseline requirements for national resilience, against which Allies can measure their level of preparedness, were established at the 2016 Warsaw Summit. These requirements address: continuity of government and critical government services, energy supplies, uncontrolled movement of people, food and water resources, handling mass casualties and disruptive health crises, civil communications systems, and transport systems. See more: *Resilience, civil preparedness and Article 3*, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_132722.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132722.htm). [4.09.2023]

en the testing of hybrid tactics within NATO territory. In this age of rapid digital transformation, technology plays a pivotal role in bolstering state resiliency in each of seven resilience areas as defined by NATO.<sup>21</sup>

**Prioritising Defence Expenditure.** With the decision to increase military expenditure in CEE, it should be ensured that a significant percentage of national defence spending be allocated to EDT solutions, including those developed within the DIANA and NIF frameworks. Similarly, the NIF can serve as a benchmark for CEE decision-makers in establishing national sovereign investment funds, aimed at backing dual-use and deep-tech firms capable of producing advanced technological solutions for defence and security purposes. The current juncture is pivotal as the tech market is experiencing a notable drop in venture capital (VC) investment, including in the CEE region. Sovereign investment funds, alongside NIF and increased defence and security public spending, could sustain the momentum in this niche market and heighten VC interest in the region.

**Exploring and Deepening the Tech Market.** It is essential to chart out deep-tech and EDT companies and start-ups across the CEE region and actively involve them in the DIANA-led initiative focused on crafting dual-use innovations

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<sup>21</sup> Izabela Albrycht, *A Country's Systemic Resilience in the Digital Era*, The Kosciuszko Institute, September 2022, [https://ik.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/report\\_country-systemic-resilience-in-the-digital-era.pdf](https://ik.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/report_country-systemic-resilience-in-the-digital-era.pdf). [22.08.2023]

for security, defence, and resilience. Concurrently, it is crucial to implement strategies aimed at deepening the market. This means spurring the emergence of a new wave of innovators within academic institutions, fostering start-ups, spin-offs, and supporting the growth of tech-oriented SMEs.

**Fortifying the Triple Helix Model.** What is also needed is the merging of technological innovation ecosystems – encompassing both companies and universities – with the defence-industrial complex, bolstered by systemic support from governments and venture capitalists.

**Enhancing Collaboration and Investment.** It is vital to integrate into the DIANA innovation ecosystem in a manner that significantly amplifies the value of accelerator programs under NATO's umbrella. This can be further bolstered by enhanced collaboration between DIANA-affiliated entities across CEE, promoting shared experiences, and cooperative efforts.

**Considering Geopolitical Dynamics.** In line with the objectives of the trusted capital marketplace, not only should a database of trusted companies and start-ups be created, which could engage in the development of innovations in line with the Alliance's objectives, but also CEE nations must be acutely aware that powers such as the PRC<sup>22</sup> and other

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<sup>22</sup> Sophia Yan, *China helping to arm Russia with helicopters, drones and metals*, The Telegraph, 2023, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/08/19/china-helping-arm-russia-helicopters-drones-metals-xi-putin/>. [22.08.2023]

authoritarian regimes are actively bridging the technological chasm for Russia. Such manoeuvres pose a direct threat to their security, potentially offsetting the technological gains achieved through innovative initiatives. This strategy by authoritarian states is a reaction to the technological sanctions imposed on Russia by democratic nations, which have eroded Russia's technological prowess. Consequently, when CEE nations strategise to fortify their supply chains and channel investments into dual-use technologies for defence and security, it is imperative to consider these geopolitical dynamics. This becomes even more critical when navigating trade and political partnerships with influential economic allies like China.

**Positioning within NATO's Innovation System.** Last but not least, all member countries from the CEE region must determine the position they aspire to hold within NATO's innovation system. This should be done taking into account strategic planning, policy directions, and a culture of collaboration – especially the openness of the military community to collaborate with private entities. Adjustments on both institutional and financial levels will also be essential in realising their intended technological goals and meeting the Alliance's expectations in this realm. Notably, Poland has already initiated this discussion by establishing the Ministry of National Defence Innovation Forum and the collaboration between the Polish Development Fund (Polski Fundusz Rozwoju, PFR) and the Ministry of National Defence.

## **Conclusions**

To fully harness their potential, CEE must cultivate a robust innovation ecosystem. This involves sustained investment in technology and science, close collaboration with end-users, and forging strong alliances between academia, the private sector, and governmental bodies. Emphasising STEM talent development, establishing a resilient digital infrastructure, advancing further digital transformation – especially within the defence sector – and strengthening financial support for high-tech ventures are paramount. Furthermore, promoting knowledge exchange and facilitating technology transfers with NATO peers, as well as swiftly incorporating “miltech” solutions into the armed forces, are crucial steps. Each CEE nation brings a distinct value proposition, possessing specialised technological prowess that can bolster NATO’s collective tech capabilities. This uniqueness positions the CEE region to emerge as NATO’s technological focal point.

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This publication could not be more timely. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has triggered a geostrategic transition across the transatlantic space, with NATO and the European Union shifting eastward. Unprecedented Central and Eastern European solidarity and support for Ukraine has played a pivotal role in shaping the collective West's strategy vis-à-vis Russia. This volume contains five essays that are stimulating and provocative, offering answers to how the region's power, strategy and support can be amplified to increase collective security.

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