



PERCEPTIONS OF GERMANY  
IN THE SECURITY OF THE  
BALTIC SEA REGION

EDITORS

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Andris Sprūds  
Elizabete Vizgunova

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The book project 'Perceptions of Germany in the Security of the Baltic Sea Region' assembles the contributions from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Germany. It assesses the perceptions of Germany's contribution to hard, soft and regional security of the Baltic Sea region. The publication also engages in a mapping exercise, pinning down the most important perception-drivers – various stake-holders from public and private sector and most important security narratives – and offers recommendations.

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# INTRODUCTION

Andris Sprūds, Elizabete Vizgunova, Benjamin Mangus

The March 2014 annexation of Crimea marks a turning point in the Russia-West relationship, making the three Baltic States the frontline in a conflict between Russia and the West. Despite the heightened level of awareness of the security and the strategic situation of the Baltic Sea region (BSR) in the West, the regional security situation has only grown more complicated due to turbulence within the EU, the transatlantic relationship and the uncertain fate of the western style of governance. Amid these events, the question of Germany's place in regional and European security is increasingly pertinent. Although Germany's size and economic strength requires it to take even more leadership in the future, the country's exact military potential is still unknown. In addition, the longstanding tradition of *Ostpolitik* has led to a virtual clash of strategies in how to approach Russia. Germany therefore has the potential to become a European 'game-changer' or 'deal-breaker'.

On the flipside, the BSR has also undergone rapid change that has far-reaching implications for the actors that have already been active in the region, and those who are still defining their interests. Germany's recent recommitment to the region could be interpreted as a step towards rediscovering its 'Baltic-ness' and defining its strategic interest in the BSR. Whereas international attention has enabled the region to benefit from increasing regional security cooperation – including a stronger link between NATO, Finland and Sweden, NORDEFCO, and enhanced military cooperation between the three Baltic States – it has also led to an increased conflict of geopolitical interests. The proximity of the conflict in Ukraine and the tense relationship with Russia has pushed the bordering states of Russia to sound the alarm bells; even more so, it seems to have ended the *détente* between Germany and Russia and propelled a military strategic awakening for NATO.

The countries of the region, included in this edition – Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden – are

bound together by various regional formats, including the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Nordic-Baltic 6 and the Nordic-Baltic 8, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), *inter alia*. Geographically, the region is linked to the Arctic, the Nordic countries, the post-Soviet space and central Europe, creating ever differing approaches to security and threats. In addition, the security of the three Baltic States is highly dependent on the US policy, which is becoming more erratic by the day. Clearly, the region has never been a priority in Berlin; rather, it has remained just one of Germany's fields of foreign policy. However, as the region has become a security concern on a transatlantic scale, several changes may be expected. Two of them are of significance for the three Baltic States – Latvia, in particular. Firstly, Germany's recommitment to European security, announced in the Munich Security Conference speech of 2014, indicates that the strategic awareness of Germany of the security situation in the BSR is likely to continue to increase in the future. This also means that the understanding of regional security threats in Berlin is more likely to align with that of Riga. Secondly, besides establishing itself as a regional security actor by leading the NATO forces in Lithuania, Germany seems to have taken the first steps to formulating a coherent approach to the Baltic States. Reciprocally, this volume's primary goal is therefore to examine the developing perceptions of the regional players of Germany. The publication also aims to advance the placing of the BSR in Berlin's agenda, as it offers both a comprehensive overview of national particularities, as well as recommendations for advancing security cooperation.

For this volume, 'perceptions' were broadly defined primarily according to the constructivist world-view. It followed the ideas explored by Nicholas Onuf, Friedrich Kratochwil and Alexander Wendt, giving the authors full liberty to develop their own emphases and assessments, as this diversity of approaches is crucial for researching the complexity of the Baltic region. It relies on the assumption that we, in our social interactions, act differently with friends and foes. Though we may play power politics with our foes, it does not mean that this is our only strategy, since we will act differently towards our allies. Both with human interaction and inter-state interaction, these different strategies for different countries are driven by past interactions. These interactions create meaning (also called 'perception drivers') that people will reflect on when conducting future diplomacy

with these nations. We must also remember that the definition of anarchy and these interactions change as the interests and identities of nations change. Interactions lead to a certain way of doing things, and this is how perceptions are formed and compromise and bargaining begins.<sup>1</sup>

The authors, from various national backgrounds, allowed the editors of this volume to analyse the countries in a comparative perspective in the conclusive chapter of this book. To do this, each chapter addressed four main issues. Firstly, the authors assessed Germany as a 'hard' security actor in their respective country. 'Hard' security allows countries to deal with global and regional threats, inter-state conflicts, the arms race, as well as strategic choices of allies. Many of the authors in this book will discuss Germany's general positive attitude towards the defence of the BSR and a simultaneous lack of sufficient military forces or military spending to create credible deterrence. Secondly, the authors assessed the engagement of Germany through 'soft' security. 'Soft' security is the engagement of a country in combatting threats which stem from sources other than inter-state rivalry and surpass state borders.<sup>2</sup> A non-exhaustive list of items discussed by the authors include the EU's asylum policy, the sovereign debt crisis, bilateral economic partnerships, energy policy, climate policy and Germany's *Ostpolitik*. Thirdly, the authors engaged in a discussion on the national perceptions of Germany as a regional actor. It appears that almost all regional countries may want Germany to play a larger security role in the region. However, it also showed that Germany is not living up to its potential and engages in policy areas on a selective basis, remaining largely invisible. Lastly, the authors discussed the main perceptions and perception-drivers that shape the popular narratives around Germany. This section in every chapter aims at identifying the relevant security actors or different national security narratives on different levels of policy-making, the roles and measures they take to contribute to policy-making on a national level, and, because of this process, how they contribute to shaping the security role of Germany in the BSR. Lastly, the authors were invited to offer forward-looking recommendations at the end of each chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 1999, Cambridge University Press, 26–29

<sup>2</sup> Aleksandar Fatić, 'Conventional and unconventional – 'hard' and 'soft' security: the distinction', in: *Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2002, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40130393>

This project is the fruit of the successful cooperation between the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Latvian Institute of International Affairs (LIIA). The purpose of this collaboration is to enhance the cooperation between Latvia and Germany. Latvia views Germany as a 'like-minded' country and sees it as an example for many of its domestic policies. Based on LIIA's previous experience with issues that concern the security dimension of transatlantic relations, the EU, the Baltic and Visegrad countries, Eastern Partnership and Russia, Germany is seen as a key player for widening and deepening research. Germany will become the actor that will shape the political and economic future of the EU and Latvia unequivocally.

The future of the German approach to the BSR seems uncertain. Despite the fact that the region is enhancing its cooperation in practically all security domains, the extra-regional developments show that conflict (most likely of an asymmetric nature) cannot be excluded. Baltic cooperation may also suffer from further deterioration of the transatlantic relationship. The interdependence of the ability of regional actors to find pathways to survive in an increasingly volatile post-Cold War world will largely depend on the strength of the 'umbrella structures', such as the EU and NATO. Germany is clearly going to play a crucial role in both of these. Therefore, enhancing the understanding and image of Germany in the region may contribute towards reducing the further disintegration of regional security. This book is a step in this direction.

# THE WIDER CONTEXT: GERMANY'S BALTIC ENGAGEMENT, THE 'MUNICH CONSENSUS' AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

Barbara Kunz

Due to its size and economic and political weight in Europe, Germany is an important actor in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). Berlin has chosen to play an active role: the *Bundeswehr*'s presence in Lithuania as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), but also proposals pertaining to Baltic Sea Cooperation within the Council of the Baltic Sea states, of which Germany is a founding member, are examples of German engagement in the region.<sup>1</sup> Beyond the regional dimension, however, Germany's engagement in the BSR needs to be seen in the wider context of German foreign, security and defence policy.

In this wider context, 2014 is a watershed year – with a double meaning. Conclusions drawn from Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in March that year led to a change of paradigm in German approaches *vis-à-vis* Moscow. Even earlier that year, high-ranking officials laid out what was sometimes labelled the 'Munich consensus' on security policy at the Munich Security Conference: Germany would assume greater responsibility for international security and stability. Since then, there have been considerable evolutions in German discourses and policies: the new approach needed to be translated into actual engagement on the international scene. This was (and continues to be) accompanied by measures at domestic level. Germany decided to increase the country's defence budget. Moreover, a new 'White Paper on Security and Defence and the Future of the Bundeswehr' replaced its decade-old and outdated predecessor in July 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> For details of Germany's engagement in the BSR, see the chapter by Malte Engelmann and Aylin Matlé in the present volume

Against this background, Germany's engagement in the BSR may be a test case for the general evolution of German security policy. This chapter will consequently analyse how Berlin's action there fits into the overall context of the current German security and defence policy. What are the likely decisive factors in Germany's engagement in the region; is Berlin intending to play the role of a 'Baltic power', and how is its approach linked to the wider context of German foreign and security policy?

## **The 2014 watershed: the 'Munich consensus' and lessons drawn from Russia's annexation of Crimea**

The German foreign policy discourse, long qualified as a 'reluctant hegemon',<sup>2</sup> has evolved considerably in recent years. The discontent of Germany's partners at Berlin's cautious stance perhaps peaked in 2011, when the country abstained at the UN Security Council during the vote on military intervention in Libya, in order to enforce Resolution 1973. To this day, 'Libya' remains one of the code words for Germany's reluctance to engage in military intervention as well as – from its critics' perspective – Berlin's lack of reliability and solidarity. Later that same year, Poland's foreign minister at the time, Radek Sikorski, famously stated that he feared German power less than he was beginning to fear German inactivity.<sup>3</sup> What followed was a debate, first at think tank level, which then triggered political results after the 2013 elections and the subsequent change of government: in December that year, the social democratic SPD returned to power as the junior partner in a grand coalition led by Angela Merkel (CDU) as chancellor. Incoming foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, *inter alia* launched the *Review 2014* project as a 'self-reflection on the perspectives of German foreign

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<sup>2</sup> Initially by William E. Paterson, 'The Reluctant Hegemon? Germany moves centre stage in the European Union', in: *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49 no. 1, January 2011, later published by the Economist

<sup>3</sup> Radek Sikorski, 'Poland and the Future of the European Union', 28/11/2011, <http://www.mfa.gov.pl/resource/33ce6061-ec12-4da1-a145-01e2995c6302:JCR>

policy’.<sup>4</sup> The most important official turning points, however, were three speeches at the 2014 Munich security conference: federal president Joachim Gauck, foreign minister Steinmeier and minister of defence Ursula von der Leyen laid out what came to be labelled the ‘Munich consensus’. In his opening statements on ‘Germany’s role in the world: Reflections on responsibility, norms and alliances’, President Gauck asked:

*‘Are we doing what we can do to stabilise our neighbourhood, both in the east and in Africa? Are we doing what we have to in order to counter the threat of terrorism? And, in cases where we have found convincing reasons to join our allies in taking even military action, are we willing to bear our fair share of the risks? Are we doing what we should to attract new or reinvigorated major powers to the cause of creating a just world order for tomorrow? Do we even evince the interest in some parts of the world which is their due, given their importance? What role do we want to play in the crises afflicting distant parts of the globe? Are we playing an active enough role in that field in which the Federal Republic of Germany has developed such expertise? I am speaking, of course, of conflict prevention. In my opinion, Germany should make a more substantial contribution, and it should make it earlier and more decisively if it is to be a good partner.*

*Germany has long since demonstrated that it acts in an internationally responsible way. But it could – building on its experience in safeguarding human rights and the rule of law – take more resolute steps to uphold and help shape the order based on the European Union, NATO and the United Nations. At the same time, Germany must also be ready to do more to guarantee the security that others have provided it with for decades’.*<sup>5</sup>

The quintessence of these three speeches was confirmed by the ‘White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr’ in 2016.<sup>6</sup> Partly elaborated through a process that sought to further the debate on security policy in German society at large, it was adopted by the entire conservative-social democratic grand coalition federal government, hence

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<sup>4</sup> For an analysis, see: Annegret Bendiek, ‘The 2014 Review. Understanding the Pillars of German Foreign Policy and the Expectations of the Rest of the World’, Notes du Cerfa 123, 2015, <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/enotes/notes-cerfa/2014-review-understanding-pillars-german-foreign-policy-and>

<sup>5</sup> Joachim Gauck, ‘Germany’s role in the world: Reflections on responsibility, norms and alliances’, 31/01/2014, [https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2014/01/140131-Muenchner-Sicherheitskonferenz-Englisch.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile,6](https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2014/01/140131-Muenchner-Sicherheitskonferenz-Englisch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile,6)

<sup>6</sup> German government, ‘White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr’, <https://ej.uz/42ku5>

not only reflecting the views held in the Ministry of Defence. However, as observers note, it ‘represents the beginning and not the end of the debate on security policy’.<sup>7</sup> Most notably, perhaps, Berlin has (still) not defined its national interests in a way comparable to other European countries. The German debate on security and defence is still in flux, and the approaches occasionally differ quite widely across the political spectrum – on its fringes, naturally, but also between the parties in government, as the 2018 coalition negotiations again made obvious.<sup>8</sup> Public opinion remains skeptical *vis-à-vis* military engagement, and the very controversial debate surrounding potential increases in defence spending – not least in light of NATO’s 2% objective – show that there is no consensus even among the parties forming the current government. Nevertheless, German officials at the highest level made it clear on numerous occasions that the Munich consensus is at the heart of Berlin’s security policy discourse. The 2018 coalition agreement between the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, i.e. the basis for Angela Merkel’s fourth term as chancellor, clearly confirms this.<sup>9</sup> ‘Responsibility’ has become a *leitmotiv* in Berlin’s discourse on security and defence.

Evolutions in foreign and security policy are of course difficult to measure. There is no, nor can there be any, clear-cut ‘before’ and ‘after’ e.g. the 2014 Munich speeches. However, there are a number of indicators that show that assuming more responsibility is indeed an objective pursued by Berlin. The phrase has not only become a standard in the foreign and security discourse, it also translates into deeds: for example, Germany’s 2016 OSCE Chairmanship, the *Bundeswehr*’s contribution to the United Nation’s stabilisation mission in Mali (MINUSMA) or the German participation in the coalition against the Islamic State may all be seen in this context. Whether these contributions are enough, whether the *Bundeswehr* is up to the task in light of its structural

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<sup>7</sup> Markus Kaim and Hilmar Linnenkamp, ‘The New White Paper 2016 – Promoting Greater Understanding of Security Policy?’ SWP Comments 47, 2016, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2016C47\\_kim\\_lnk.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2016C47_kim_lnk.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Defence-related issues were among the most controversial questions in the process, and in particular anything related to increases in the defence budget and NATO’s 2% objective

<sup>9</sup> The Federal Government, ‘Ein neuer Aufbruch für Europa. Eine neue Dynamik für Deutschland. Ein neuer Zusammenhalt für unser Land [A new departure for Europe. A new dynamic for Germany. A new cohesion for our country]’, 07/02/2018, [https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/\\_Anlagen/2018/03/2018-03-14-koalitionsvertrag.pdf;jsessionid=4B9A10C-D345EE1B98033DE5D5F1B71A1.s3t1?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=2](https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/_Anlagen/2018/03/2018-03-14-koalitionsvertrag.pdf;jsessionid=4B9A10C-D345EE1B98033DE5D5F1B71A1.s3t1?__blob=publicationFile&v=2)

lack of funding, and whether partners and observers think that they are commensurate with Germany's political and economic weight, is of course another question. However, it seems fair to assume that many of the examples that could be cited to support the thesis of an increased German role in global security would have been unlikely ten years ago.

But, as noted above, 2014 is in fact a watershed year in German security policy with a double meaning: not only did the government roll out its new discourse on security and defence at the Munich Security Conference in late January/early February, but only a few weeks later, the annexation of Crimea led to a change of paradigm in German-Russia policies.<sup>10</sup> Berlin was keen to see Moscow as a partner for the first two decades of the new millennium, and these views remained largely unaffected by the 2008 war in Georgia. The annexation of Crimea, however, triggered quite considerable change. Any rhetoric qualifying Russia as a 'partner' has disappeared. In the words of Angela Merkel at the 2015 Munich Security Conference, *'Russia's action – first in Crimea, then in Eastern Ukraine – has violated the fundamentals of our living together in Europe. The territorial integrity of Ukraine was disregarded in the same way as its state sovereignty. International law has been broken'*.<sup>11</sup> And the 2016 White Paper states: *'Russia is rejecting a close partnership with the west and placing emphasis on strategic rivalry. Internationally, Russia is presenting itself as an independent power centre with global ambitions'*.<sup>12</sup> In reacting to the annexation of Crimea, it also became clear that Berlin was willing to prioritise politics over economic interests – probably to the surprise of at least some observers. In short, after years of comparatively divergent approaches, the German perspective on Russia thus converged towards being closer to views long held by nations on NATO's eastern flank and in the BSR.

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<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Stefan Meister, 'Thesen für eine neue deutsche Russlandpolitik [Theses for a new German Russia policy]', DGAPkompakt 3, 2015, <https://dgap.org/de/think-tank/publikationen/dgapkompakt/thesen-fuer-eine-neue-deutsche-russlandpolitik>. See also Security Narratives in Europe – A Wide Range of Views, ed. by Wolfgang Zellner, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017

<sup>11</sup> Angela Merkel, 'Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel anlässlich der 51. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz [Speech by Chancellor Angela Merkel on the occasion of the 51st Munich Security Conference]', Munich, 07/02/2015, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Rede/2015/02/2015-02-07-merkel-sicherheitskonferenz.html>.

<sup>12</sup> German Government, 'White Paper 2016 [...]', op. cit., 32

## The Baltic Sea Region in the context of Germany's 'new approach'

Against the backdrop of the evolutions described above, how does Germany's action in the BSR fit into the overall context of German security policy? To most German officials and security policy experts, the Ukraine crisis arguably came as a surprise. In the years and decades prior to Crimea's annexation, the (western) European security and defence debate revolved around questions of crisis management, certainly not about collective defence and deterring Russia. When formulating the Munich consensus, it seems unlikely that the involved parties had 'traditional' territorial defence or a war over borders in Europe in mind. However, the events in Crimea and eastern Ukraine implied that Berlin's approach was to be put to the test in this new European security context – in particular on NATO's eastern flank.

Despite the paradigm change outline above, Germany does not perceive Russia as a major, imminent threat. When it comes to hard security and the military dimension, deterring Russia is consequently not the primary objective of Germany's engagement on the Alliance's eastern flank. Rather, the official discourse almost exclusively focuses on reassuring allies, in particular Poland and the Baltic States. This is illustrated, for example, by the defence minister's speech during the opening ceremony of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Rukla in Lithuania (where Germany serves as the framework nation), in February 2017. Ursula von der Leyen stated that *'[n]ever again will Lithuania stand alone. The future of its people is protected by the greatest military alliance of our times'*, while there is no direct reference to Russia throughout the entire manuscript.<sup>13</sup> In other words: although Germany's military engagement in the BSR is a direct consequence of Russian foreign policy, it is better understood as solidarity with allies and, more generally, a statement in favour of the European security order rather than a deterrence measure.

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<sup>13</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, 'Rede der Bundesministerin der Verteidigung Dr. Ursula von der Leyen bei der Begrüßungszeremonie für die Enhanced Forward Presence-Battlegroup am 7. Februar 2017 in Rukla, Litauen [Speech by Minister of Defence Dr. Ursula von der Leyen at the Welcome Ceremony for the Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group on 07/02/2017 in Rukla, Lithuania]', 07/07/2017, <http://www.wilna.diplo.de/contentblob/4987024/Daten/7324545/DDRedeBMinvdLeyen217Rukla.pdf>

The 2016 White Paper indeed defines ‘*maintaining the rules-based international order on the basis of international law*’ as one of Germany’s key security interests.<sup>14</sup> The predominant notion in the German debate about future relations with Russia is the return to a ‘rules-based environment’. Angela Merkel’s statement ahead of NATO’s 2016 Warsaw summit is perfectly in line with this assessment: the chancellor declared that Germany’s contribution to the Alliance’s reassurance measures also serve to make clear that ‘*for us, the basic principles of Europe’s security architecture are valid without any change, even in times of new challenges*’.<sup>15</sup> Berlin’s unwillingness to give up on the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, once and for all, is yet another illustration of the fact that Germany does not perceive an imminent threat from Russia, but is instead concerned with the European security order. The Act stipulates that ‘*in the current and foreseeable security environment*’, NATO will not resort to ‘*permanent stationing of substantial combat forces*’ in the Alliance’s eastern Member States.<sup>16</sup> Whether the Alliance still needed to stick to this political agreement was hotly debated in the run-up to its July 2016 Warsaw summit.<sup>17</sup> Merkel explained at the time that the Founding Act should remain the ‘*basis for relations between NATO and Russia*’, and that ‘the central place’ for a dialogue between the two ‘*is, and remains, the NATO-Russia Council*’,<sup>18</sup> positioning Germany as one of the strongest advocates of the Act’s ongoing validity, as well as in the camp of those who wish to keep up a dialogue with Moscow.

In short, in Berlin’s approaches to military engagement in the BSR, the emergence of the Munich consensus arguably plays a much more important role than a changed perspective on Russia. The willingness to take on more responsibility is the key driving factor, but the changed perspective

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<sup>14</sup> German Government, ‘White Paper 2016 [...]’, op. cit., 32

<sup>15</sup> Angela Merkel, ‘Regierungserklärung von Bundeskanzlerin Dr. Angela Merkel zum NATO-Gipfel am 8./9. Juli 2016 in Warschau vor dem Deutschen Bundestag [Government declaration by Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel on the occasion of NATO’s summit on 08/07/2016 in Warsaw before the German Bundestag]’, Berlin, 07/07/2016, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Bulletin/2016/07/84-1-bk-regerkl-bt.html>

<sup>16</sup> See: Act’s text on NATO’s website, [https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm). The Founding Act is the reason why the EFP is ‘rotational’ rather than ‘permanent’

<sup>17</sup> See: John R. Deni, ‘The NATO-Russia Founding Act: A Dead Letter,’ Judy Dempsey’s Strategic Europe, Carnegie Europe, 29/06/2017, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/71385>.

<sup>18</sup> Angela Merkel, ‘Government declaration by Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel on the occasion of [...]’, op. cit.

on Russia explains why Germany does not refrain from taking steps that it could most likely not have taken if Russia were still considered a partner – most importantly its contribution to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence. More specifically, a number of factors may explain Germany's key role as a framework nation:

- Firstly, within NATO, Alliance solidarity (*Bündnistreue*) quite simply matters and constitutes in itself a motive for action – as was already the case before the Munich consensus;
- Secondly, beyond the narrower context of NATO, Germany is under certain pressure to live up to its own expectations, and those of others, to actually 'do more' on the international scene. This aspect notably has a transatlantic dimension, where proving to Washington that the country is a valuable and reliable NATO ally is of relevance – keeping in mind that Germany may be a 'great power' as compared to many smaller EU Member States, but that it still remains a small state *vis-à-vis* the United States. There is, however, also a European and even bilateral Franco-German context to this aspect. Perhaps even more importantly, therefore, the pressure from European allies must not be underestimated, especially the expectations France holds *vis-à-vis* Berlin. There are indeed many in Paris who are waiting rather impatiently for Germany's 'normalisation', in terms of strategic culture, and see the ongoing evolutions as a teleological process (at the end of which Germany would, ideally, endorse French visions). Germany's EFP engagement is a frequently heard argument in refuting French claims that Berlin is not doing enough;
- Thirdly, and of course closely linked to the two previous aspects, it also seems fair to assume that among the many imaginable ways to 'do more' on the international scene, a strong contribution to the Enhanced Forward Presence is one of the less problematic ones in terms of political cost in a German domestic context. In other words, Germany's engagement in the BSR allows Berlin to actually 'do more', while at the same time doing so in a way that it is comfortable with – as opposed to, for instance, responding favourably to French expectations regarding external operations in Africa. With its somewhat 'traditional' character of territorial defence, the EFP contribution is more easily accepted among Germans, whereas peacekeeping and peace

enforcement operations continue to be met with deep skepticism.<sup>19</sup> Against this backdrop, and from a domestic political point of view, the EFP participation moreover has the advantage of not – legally – being an operation but technically an exercise, a so-called ‘commitment similar to an operation’ (*einsatzgleiche Verpflichtung*). One of the implications is that no mandate from the *Bundestag* is needed, meaning that almost no debate on the *Bundeswehr* in Lithuania is taking place in or outside of the parliament. It would of course be wrong and ill-willed to argue that the EFP is kept ‘under the radar’, yet even politicians such as Hans-Peter Bartels, the parliamentary commissioner for the Armed Forces, complain about the lack of debate on the matter.<sup>20</sup>

- Finally, and against the backdrop of the abovementioned, are there also specific, regional factors explaining Germany’s engagement in the BSR? Is Germany’s engagement part of a German strategy for the BSR? There is little that points towards this. Berlin’s policies towards the region have been fragmented, often led at the *Länder* level. In most of the regional fora, such as the Nordic-Baltic 6 or 8, Berlin hardly acts as a driving force.<sup>21</sup> In the February 2018 coalition agreement, the BSR makes no appearance other than in an environmental context. Besides the environment, economic matters are also important: in terms of trade, of course, but also in the context of the EU debate on eurozone reform, in which Finland and the Baltic States are more prone to be on Berlin’s side than on that of Paris’. When it comes to security, however, and although Germany is highly valued in its role as a security provider,<sup>22</sup> critics argue that Berlin’s approach is inconsistent: by

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<sup>19</sup> In contrast, in 2013, more than half of Germans rejected the operation in Afghanistan. See: e.g. Simone Meyer, ‘Afghanistan-Einsatz ist für Deutsche ein Fehlschlag [Afghanistan deployment is a failure for Germans]’, *Die Welt*, 14/01/2013, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article112735130/Afghanistan-Einsatz-ist-fuer-Deutsche-ein-Fehlschlag.html>

<sup>20</sup> See: e.g. ‘Bundeswehr ein Jahr an der Nato-Ostflanke [The Bundeswehr one year at NATO’s Eastern flank]’, 27/01/2018, <http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/einsatz-im-baltikum-bundeswehr-ein-jahr-an-der-nato-ostflanke/20885564.html>

<sup>21</sup> See the chapter by Malte Engelmann and Aylin Matlé in the present volume

<sup>22</sup> See: e.g. an interview with the Estonian ambassador to Berlin: ‘Deutschland ist in der Ostsee gefragt [There is a demand for Germany in the Baltic Sea (region)]’, 07/01/2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/interview-deutschland-ist-in-der-ostsee-gefragt/20819704.html>

backing Nord Stream 2,<sup>23</sup> Germany becomes an insecurity provider.<sup>24</sup> This inconsistency can hardly be resolved by looking at Berlin's actions through an exclusively regional lens. Looking at it through the prism described above of 'doing more' and 'preserving the European security order', however, Berlin's approaches seem less contradictory. For all these reasons, it seems fair to assume that Germany's Baltic engagement is not derived from a specific regional strategy. Moreover, given that it is not perceived as a direct threat, Russia does not necessarily qualify as a key explanatory variable either. Rather, Germany's engagement in the BSR is best understood within the overall context of German security policy. Engaging the *Bundeswehr* in Enhanced Forward Presence is a way for Germany to 'do more' and live up to the Munich consensus in a way it is more comfortable with than by, for instance, playing a more prominent role in military operations in the Sahel. This is of course not to diminish Berlin's contribution in the Baltics. Notably, from a political perspective, Berlin is indeed well-equipped – if not the best equipped – among the larger EU Member States to serve as a stabilising force in north eastern Europe well beyond the military dimension.

## The way forward: connecting the European security debate

However, it is precisely in this wider political context that Germany could, and should, do even more. European debates about security and defence have rarely been as vivid as today. The problem, however, is that there is not one European security debate but (at least) two: one NATO centred

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<sup>23</sup> Berlin considers Nord Stream 2 an economic endeavour involving independent businesses, not a political issue. This approach (contested also in Germany and even within the administration) causes severe disagreement at EU level and beyond. Poland, the Baltic States, and Sweden oppose it, as does the United States. Another – political – argument put forward by Berlin is the idea that engaging with Russia on such a major project will prove beneficial for European (energy) security

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, 'On Opposite Shores, Not Just Geographically,' in: The BSR. Hard and Soft Security Reconsidered, ed. Maris Andzans and Ilvija Bruge, Riga, Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 20

debate on deterrence and collective defence, and one EU centred debate on the future of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). These two debates are hardly associated with each other. Connecting them would be a major contribution to European security. Berlin is probably in the best position to work towards that goal.

The first debate is the consequence of the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia. Although a number of European countries were worried about Russia long before this, it is with Crimea that the possibility of territorial conflict has returned to mainstream strategic thinking in (western) Europe. As a result, collective defence has again become NATO's core business, providing it with a new *raison d'être* after profound post-Afghanistan operations' fatigue seemed to bring difficult times for the Alliance. The ramifications of this return of territorial and collective defence go deep, for example, in the military planning or public debates of many countries. The fact that the United States remains highly present in NATO and, more generally, European security in the wake of Putin's annexation of Crimea (notwithstanding earlier rhetoric to the contrary) gives this debate a strong transatlantic dimension, as preserving Washington's engagement is at the top of the agendas of many 'eastern flank' countries. In summary, this first debate thus primarily revolves around questions of territorial and collective defence, the United States' engagement and deterring Russia.

The second debate is most directly a consequence of Brexit. Eager to demonstrate that the European Union had anything but outlived itself, Member States – France and Germany in particular – sought to outline an integration agenda making this point. Defence matters turned out to be at the heart of this agenda, helped by a number of other factors, such as transatlantic insecurities under Trump, a general sense of an increasingly unfriendly strategic environment – and most likely also even more insurmountable differences in other policy areas, such as eurozone reform or migration. The defence agenda has yielded a number of results that were unthinkable just a couple of years previously: since 2016, Europeans have agreed on extending the common funding for EU Battlegroups (the Union's rapid reaction forces, so far never deployed due to the absence of political consensus among Member States); establishing a permanent 'mini-headquarters' (the Military Planning and Conduct Capability) for the strategic command of missions such as EU training missions; and,

certainly most widely debated, activating Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).<sup>25</sup> Europeans also agreed on steps to institutionalise a systematic exchange between Member States, and consequently contribute to identifying and closing gaps in the military and civilian resources of the Member States (the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, CARD). Finally, a European Defence Fund is intended to incentivise cooperation on acquisitions and development of key defence capabilities. In addition, there is the non-EU project of a European Intervention Initiative, led by France. In total, these measures, and the debates that surround them, have two sub-strands; one focused on making the EU fit(ter) for military operations; the other focusing on capabilities – capabilities needed for external operations. Which of these should be the priority is an ongoing sub-debate within this EU centred debate, which otherwise very much focuses on European integration, budget matters and the future of the Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

The problem with these two debates is that they hardly ever converge, although they are ultimately about the same issue: European security. They are in fact different sides of the same coin. However, the first debate almost completely ignores the European Union, by definition – Article 42 of the Lisbon Treaty – not involved in collective or territorial defence. The second debate naturally omits anything related to territorial defence, given that CSDP is exclusively about defending the European Union outside of its territory. As such, CSDP has little to do with BSR security. Even worse, the two debates and the ends pursued in the respective contexts are often seen as rivalling each other: in terms of attention, but, perhaps even more so, in terms of scarce resources and U.S. support. There are, however, a number of interconnected reasons why Europeans cannot afford to keep these debates separate.

Firstly, this simply makes no sense: European security is indivisible. Pursuing separate debates on the matter inevitably leads to dead ends and incompatibilities. These dead ends and incompatibilities will inexorably be reflected at the levels of security institutions and military planning.

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<sup>25</sup> PESCO is a provision of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty which allows for Member States 'whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions' to cooperate more closely in a wide range of fields

Secondly, in the current state of affairs, European collective defence relies heavily on the United States. Among eastern EU members in particular, President Trump's continued, and even increased, commitment to the European Reassurance Initiative is widely seen as an indicator that business as usual will remain an option for the foreseeable future. Consequently, a number of European capitals (Berlin *de facto* included) wish to continue betting on Washington. Arguments to that effect are even used to justify skepticism toward EU endeavours, such as PESCO, out of fear that they might weaken the transatlantic link.<sup>26</sup> However, no-one can be sure that the current state of transatlantic security affairs will last forever. No-one knows what will follow Trump, and no-one knows how long Washington will be willing to ensure the security of a continent that certainly has the resources to acquire all means necessary to take care of itself. This is why predominantly betting on the United States for European security is dangerous, perhaps not in the short-term, but certainly in the mid- to long-term. Admitting this reality may be unpleasant, but it is of crucial importance. Although the realisation that there is a need for a 'plan B' is gaining ground, it has not yet yielded a sustained debate on the future of European defence.

Thirdly, it is a matter of resources, both European and American. No European state is able to defend itself independently today. If these two debates are different sides of the same coin, then this is also because each European country only has one single set of military forces – and most do not even have a complete set. It is on the basis of these single sets of forces that European security will need defending. Ultimately, Europeans as a security community will have to deal with threats to the east and to the south, whether they like it or not. Cooperation is the only way forward in this regard. As long as the United States is the backbone of European security, this may seem more of a '*nice to have*' than a necessity. But, the day the U.S. is no longer willing or able to guarantee European security, this becomes vital. Moreover, the key idea here is not that European cooperation should replace NATO and transatlantic cooperation, but rather, a stronger

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<sup>26</sup> Minister Witold Waszczykowski, 'We joined PESCO but with doubts,' 13/11/2017, [http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/news/they\\_wrote\\_about\\_us/minister\\_witold\\_waszczykowski\\_we\\_joined\\_pesco\\_but\\_with\\_doubts\\_\\_pap\\_dispatch\\_from\\_13\\_november\\_2017\\_\\_;jsession-id=8E5E3F9C275CE0F5B1E044205177209A.cmsap1p](http://www.msz.gov.pl/en/news/they_wrote_about_us/minister_witold_waszczykowski_we_joined_pesco_but_with_doubts__pap_dispatch_from_13_november_2017__;jsession-id=8E5E3F9C275CE0F5B1E044205177209A.cmsap1p)

Europe will be a better and more attractive partner for the United States, hence preserving Washington's resources and consequently helping to maintain close transatlantic links.

Reconciling these two debates, however, is not simply about finding a compromise between two distinct camps. It is much more complicated than merely reconciling those Europeans who fear threats from the south with those who fear threats from the east. It is also more complicated than reconciling proponents of NATO with those of a European defence in the EU context (to the extent that the second of these two camps has not ceased to exist in any case). Rather, the two debates need to converge at a multitude of levels. Seeing the bigger picture requires answers to a number of significant questions: what is the future of the transatlantic security relationship? What is the relationship between the EU and NATO? How can Europeans ensure territorial defence *and* crisis management? How can military planning be harmonised in such a way that Europeans are fit for the various tasks – both in cooperation with the United States and on their own if required?

This is where Germany comes in: no other state is arguably in a better position to drive this most necessary agenda forward, at least theoretically. On all issues outlined above, Berlin indeed occupies the middle ground. Germany is Atlanticist, but a driving force in European integration. It is engaged on the 'eastern flank', but also in the 'south'. Although Berlin is not necessarily perceived as a major military actor, this middle ground confers political credibility to Germany: southern European countries will not suspect it of wanting to focus exclusively on Russia, while eastern and some northern Europeans are likely to be less suspicious than *vis-à-vis* France, sometimes still (however unjustly) suspected of anti-American tendencies and post-colonial approaches to Africa. Such a role for Germany would undoubtedly go far beyond what was intended with the Munich consensus. However, if Berlin took the lead – ideally together with France – in launching the necessary debate, its contribution to European security would be invaluable. This is consequently the main task ahead for Germany – and other Europeans should actively push Berlin to that end.

## Concluding remarks: Germany's Baltic engagement as a test case for the Munich consensus

Germany's involvement and implication in securing the BSR is extremely important and highly welcome. However, as this chapter has argued, it does not necessarily derive from an overarching strategic vision – for the region, but also for Germany's future security and defence policy. Rather, the German approach remains reactive in nature. Berlin is living up to the expectations inflicted on itself, as well as those of others. In that sense, Germany's Baltic engagement, and its contribution to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in particular, is clearly a positive test case for the Munich consensus and Berlin's willingness to assume more responsibility for international security and stability.

Berlin could, however, go further. For Germany to make a major contribution to European security, Berlin could, and indeed should, assume political leadership for the continent's security at large. As worn out as the assessment may sound – Europe's security is at a crossroads. With an increasingly unfriendly security environment to the east, the south and the north and, at the same time, growing transatlantic uncertainties, Europeans must indeed '*finally take our destiny into our own hands*', as Angela Merkel famously called for in May 2017. To what extent the German government itself is ready to let actions follow words remains to be seen, and there are good reasons to be skeptical in light of current policies.<sup>27</sup> However, starting the debate at various levels – transatlantic, European and domestic – is pressing. This also includes talking about difficult issues that many Europeans are (at least so far) unwilling to discuss, such as a possible (partial) withdrawal of the United States. In so doing, Berlin could build on the political capital it has earned through its handling of the Ukraine crisis, in particular by securing European cohesion on the EU's sanctions' regime against Russia. This would also allow Berlin to exert some political leadership on another issue crucial for Europe's security: the future relationship, or at least *modus vivendi*, with Russia.

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<sup>27</sup> On this note, see also Gustav Gressel, 'Germany's defence commitments: nothing but paper tigers?', Note from Berlin, ECFR, 27/03/2018, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_germanys\\_defence\\_commitments\\_nothing\\_but\\_paper\\_tigers](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_germanys_defence_commitments_nothing_but_paper_tigers)

# GERMANY'S ROLE AND SELF-PERCEPTION AS A SECURITY PROVIDER IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Malte Engelmann, Aylin Matlé

Germany has been in the limelight of international security issues since early 2014 when, at the Munich Security Conference, the so-called responsibility debate was initiated by the German president at the time, Joachim Gauck. His arguments, i.e. that Germany's economic power had to be translated into international security engagement, militarily if necessary, were echoed by Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen. Few expected that, shortly after Germany had laid out its self-professed role, the country would have to live up to the expectations it had incurred on itself when Russia illegally annexed the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea, in March 2014. Not only did the event bring home Moscow's increasingly aggressive posture towards the West – it also put emphasis on a geographical area that seemed to have stabilised for the longest period since the end of the Cold War: the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). Thanks to the accession to the European Union and NATO, respectively, of the Baltic States and Poland<sup>1</sup>, Germany had considered the region's security problems with Russia as largely settled.<sup>2</sup> All this changed in 2014 – ever since, *'Germany's status has evolved from that of a 'big absent one' on NATO's eastern flank, to that of a state with major involvement in the Baltic Sea Region'*.<sup>3</sup> In light of the BSR allegedly ranking high on Berlin's national security

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<sup>1</sup> N.B.:Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden have been members of one or both organisations prior to the EU's and NATO's eastward enlargement.

<sup>2</sup> Johan Eellend, 'Germany returns to the Baltic Sea', in: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 01/11/2016, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2016/11/germany-returns-baltic-sea/>

<sup>3</sup> Justyna Gotkowska, 'High on reassurance, low on deterrence – Germany's stance on strengthening NATO's eastern flank', Centre for Eastern Studies Commentary, 05/07/2016, [https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary\\_217\\_0.pdf](https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary_217_0.pdf), 4

agenda, the goal of this chapter is to determine what form and shape the increase in importance of the region takes and whether or not there is much substance to these claims: *'(...), conceptually, the long-term goal of the Baltic-Nordic focus in Berlin's security and defence policy is still not always clear, despite Germany being one of the largest states bordering the Baltic Sea and a key player in NATO'*.<sup>4</sup> To provide as broad an insight into Berlin's strategic thinking as possible, soft and hard power projections into the BSR will be assessed similarly, by outlining Germany's activities in both realms since 2014. To come full circle with the beginning of these introductory remarks, the chapter will explore whether these engagements are the result of Germany's self-perception of a crucial actor in, and for, the region. This chapter will conclude with the delineation of possible challenges and prospects ahead for Germany in the BSR.

## Soft Power

The term 'soft power' was coined by the political scientist Joseph S. Nye, in the 1990s. Nye discussed soft power as an instrument of political influence through attraction and persuasion. Accordingly, soft power stems from the appeal of a state's values, political culture and ideas.<sup>5</sup> Germany has plenty of soft power experiences at its disposal. It took a long time for Germany to find its place in the world after the horrors of the Second World War. Even decades later, German foreign policy is dominated by the idea of 'military reservation' (*Militärische Zurückhaltung*), which is infused by the idea of using its military resources only in a multilateral approach, as a last resort. Part of the German approach of 'military reservation' includes soft power aspects and strategies. Creating political influence in the world without military instruments, and at the same time creating a new image of Germany, is a key pillar of German foreign policy. Germany has at its disposal several soft power actors in foreign policy. Key actors are political foundations

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<sup>4</sup> Claudia Major/Alicia von Voss, 'Nordic-Baltic Security, Germany and NATO: The Baltic Sea Region Is a Test Case for European Security', in SWP Comments, 2016, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2016C13\\_mjr\\_vos.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2016C13_mjr_vos.pdf), 6

<sup>5</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004)

which are linked to the various political parties but act as independent NGOs,<sup>6</sup> the *Goethe Institut*, the German academic exchange service (DAAD) and the German foreign broadcast service *Deutsche Welle* (DW). The DW also runs the DW Academy which offers internships and training for foreign journalists. Other German actors include smaller foundations, such as the *Deutsch-Baltisches-Jugendwerk* (German-Baltic youth programme) or the foreign Chambers of Commerce in Germany.

German foreign policies towards the Baltic and the Nordic States differ. The relations to the Nordic States were always very close and intense. Similar political and social aims made the states strong partners in the region. Due to this stability, the northern countries were not the main focus of German foreign policy in the region. Instead, Germany centred its policy and support in the BSR around the Baltic States and Poland, since they had economic and structural deficits which had to be resolved in order to introduce more stability into the region. The Baltic States returned to the political map of western Europe after the independence they gained in the 1990s. After decades of Soviet occupation, the political and economic situation differed from other countries located in the BSR; Poland had similar challenges to face. Hence, German soft power politics soon concentrated on the new Baltic partners to support them on their way to democracy. After the Baltic States became independent, German foreign policy concentrated on supporting the Baltic States in their transformation processes. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Germany saw the BSR as a peaceful region. Germany's experiences during the economic transformation of the German Democratic Republic made Germany a competent advisor for the Baltic States. Germany engaged in the BSR, but it never seemed to be a region of focus for German policy, even though Germany has strong traditional and historic links to this region. Key points of engagement were the support of the economic development and the integration into the European Union and NATO. Germany traditionally

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<sup>6</sup> N.B.: The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is affiliated with the Christian-Democratic Party CDU; the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is affiliated with the Social Democratic Party SPD; the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung is affiliated with the Bavarian Christian-Democratic Party CSU; the Böll-Stiftung is affiliated with the Green Party; the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit is affiliated with the liberal Party FDP; and the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is affiliated with the Socialist Party Die Linke)

sees economic prosperity as key to strengthening the stability of countries. Regions with a close trade network and an intense political exchange are less prone to political and military crises. Thus, economic development has become crucial for German foreign policy in the region. As an export nation, a prospering region in Germany's direct neighbourhood also has positive effects on the German economy. In the German parliament, the BSR played an inferior role in debates. If the region was a subject of debate, it was mainly in the context of European Union policies.

This situation changed after the illegal annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea in March 2014. This event, in combination with the debate at the Munich Security Conference in 2014, changed Germany's soft power policies towards the Baltic States and the BSR. Apart from the direct historic links and geopolitical position (the Black Sea), the situation in the Baltic States is in some ways similar to the situation in Ukraine: The Baltic States were also part of the Soviet Union and have in parts a strong Russian minority. In Estonia, the Russian minority is as high as 25%, in Latvia 27% and in Lithuania 6%.<sup>7</sup> Lithuania's situation with regard to minorities differs as they could become the victim of military aggression due to their geopolitical position between Belarus and the Kaliningrad exclave. Hence, the Baltic States began fearing a similar incursion to the one Ukraine had endured.

Consequently, soft power engagement was intensified. Hybrid attacks in particular showed the need for integrated actions. Hybrid attacks are flexible interactions between open and covertly applied regular and irregular, symmetric and asymmetric, military and non-military means of conflict with the purpose of blurring the boundaries of the binary laws of war and peace under international law. In a mutual declaration signed in 2015, the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and his Baltic colleagues, the Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Linas Linkevičius, the Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkēvičs, and the Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs Keit Pentus Rosimannus, agreed to closer cooperation in the media realm and in other areas to strengthen civil

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<sup>7</sup> Deutscher Bundestag – Wissenschaftliche Dienste, 'Sachstand: Die russischen Minderheiten in den baltischen Staaten [State of affairs: Russian minorities in the Baltic states]'; 2017, 12, 21, 27

society.<sup>8 9 10</sup> The German government also declared its support to establish Russian-speaking broadcasts and TV stations in the Baltic States. The declaration states: *‘Ministers will cooperate with their respective authorities and their public media, with a focus on promoting education, work against Russian disinformation and the formation of a European society’*.<sup>11</sup> With the support of independent media and civil society, Germany began supporting democratic structures and resilience in the Baltic States.

An important part of German soft power politics is implemented by the German foreign broadcast service – DW. The cooperation between DW and Estonian television stations focuses on issues such as the development of independent, objective and professional media. This area of cooperation serves to promote the professionalism of media and the skills of journalists, including those who work across languages. The support of media in the languages of minorities was especially identified as key to face possible destabilisation attempts in the region. Russian TV is widespread among Russian minorities in the Baltic States, as Russian is their mother tongue and, on balance, the entertainment quality is higher than the domestic television programmes. Russian TV is either directly or

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<sup>8</sup> Auswärtiges Amt, ‘Gemeinsame Erklärung des Ministers für auswärtige Angelegenheiten der Republik Litauen, Linas Linkevičius, und des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Wilna am 16/04/2015 [Joint Declaration of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, Linas Linkevičius and German Foreign Minister Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Vilnius on 16/04/2015]’, <https://www.auswaertigesamt.de/blob/270918/135a48f4180a72418757301eb08c7d3d/150416-bm-erklaerung-litauen-data.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Riga, ‘Gemeinsame Erklärung des Ministers für auswärtige Angelegenheiten der Republik Lettland, Edgars Rinkēvičs, und des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Riga am 17/04/2015 [Joint Declaration of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia Edgars Rinkēvičs and German Foreign Minister Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Riga on 17/04/2015]’ [http://www.riga.diplo.de/contentblob/4825036/Daten/6347237/Kopie\\_von\\_2016GemeinsameErklärungRinkevicsSteinmeier.pdf](http://www.riga.diplo.de/contentblob/4825036/Daten/6347237/Kopie_von_2016GemeinsameErklärungRinkevicsSteinmeier.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Auswärtiges Amt, ‘Gemeinsame Erklärung der Ministerin für auswärtige Angelegenheiten der Republik Estland, Keit Pentus Rosimannus, und des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Tallinn am 17/04/2015 [Joint Declaration of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia Keit Pentus Rosimannus and German Foreign Minister Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Tallinn on 17/04/2015]’ <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/270938/c2204d6149bfe474dc53d399b847ae4e/150417-gemeinsame-erklaerung-data.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

indirectly controlled by the Russian government or by very Putin-friendly organisations. Thus, neutral and independent reporting is not offered by these stations. Against this backdrop, there is a huge fear of infiltration of the minds of Russian-speaking minorities. Hence, Estonia started transmitting a Russian-speaking TV programme in 2015.<sup>12</sup> DW became an important partner of this project in two ways: by contributing Russian-speaking content and offering training of Estonian journalists, through the DW Academy.

The German academic exchange service DAAD, which normally offers scholarships for students or scientists to study or research at German universities, now offers a special programme for mentoring journalists.<sup>13</sup> This programme is also based on the common declaration of the German and Baltic ministers for foreign affairs signed in 2015: *‘Referring to the joint declarations of the federal foreign minister and his counterparts in the three Baltic States in March 2015, to promote the development of independent, objective and professional media in the Baltic States, the DAAD invites Baltic students and German professors of journalism / media studies and related disciplines to apply for grants and project funding from the DAAD for the 2016/2017 academic year’*.<sup>14</sup>

Political foundations traditionally play an important role in Germany’s foreign policy. They have an independent status, but receive most of their funding through the German state.<sup>15</sup> Their international programmes are mainly financed by the federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development. This construction offers the German government a degree of influence while providing

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<sup>12</sup> Deutschlandfunk, ‘Fernsehen für die russische Minderheit [TV for Russian minorities]’, 18/10/2017, [http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/estland-fernsehen-fuer-die-russische-minderheit.2907.de.html?dram:article\\_id=398481](http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/estland-fernsehen-fuer-die-russische-minderheit.2907.de.html?dram:article_id=398481)

<sup>13</sup> Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, ‘Förderung des akademischen Austauschs im Fach Journalistik/ Medienwissenschaften und in verwandten Fachgebieten mit den baltischen Staaten [Support of academic exchanges in the subjects of media studies and similar subjects with the Baltic states]’, <https://www.daad.de/landingpages/de/37744-ausschreibung-baltikum/>

<sup>14</sup> Bundesregierung, ‘Steinmeier in Riga – Außenministertgespräche im Baltikum [Steinmeier in Riga – Foreign minister talks in the Baltics]’, 14/09/2016, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2016/09/2016-09-14-steinmeier-in-riga.html>

<sup>15</sup> Deutscher Bundestag, ‘Status und Finanzierung von parteinahen Stiftungen’ [Current status and financing of political foundations], 2006, <https://www.bundestag.de/blob/412424/0771c710a18a77bb41464711c32fe453/wf-iii-002-06-pdf-data.pdf>

the foundations for it to act as an NGO.<sup>16</sup> The tools of the foundations are nearly the same in all project countries: seminars, conferences, round-table meetings and summer schools.

The two biggest foundations, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (*Konrad Adenauer Stiftung/KAS*) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (*Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/FES*) have offices in the Baltic States. The KAS focuses on establishing and strengthening democratic structures and advising political actors.<sup>17</sup> In recent years, the offices have organised several meetings and workshops on how to face disinformation campaigns, and round-table meetings on the state of journalism in the Baltic States.<sup>18</sup> The activities of the FES have a similar focus. With the change from integration and transformation support to supporting local media and societal resilience, political foundations also followed the new focus of Germany's soft power approach towards the Baltics since 2014.

The German government itself is also instrumental in extending its support to the Baltic States. The 'revival' of cooperation instruments, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is an example thereof. In June 2016, the Icelandic government started a revival of the CBSS.<sup>19</sup> The German Minister of Foreign Affairs Sigmar Gabriel emphasised the importance of the CBSS as it is among the last forums at which Russia still participates.<sup>20</sup> For the long-term pacification of the region it remains important to keep dialogue and forums of cooperation open. More symbolic, but no less important, was the demonstration of loyalty to the Baltic partners through official visits by German politicians to the region. The German President Joachim Gauck, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the German Ministers for Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Sigmar Gabriel

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<sup>16</sup> Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 'Die parteinahen Stiftungen als Akteure und Instrumente der deutschen Außenpolitik [Political foundations as actors and instruments of German foreign policy]', 2002, <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/27121/die-parteinahen-stiftungen-als-akteure-und-instrumente-der-deutschen-aussenpolitik?p=all>

<sup>17</sup> Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Über uns[About us], <http://www.kas.de/lettland/de/about/>

<sup>18</sup> Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Veranstaltungen [Events], <http://www.kas.de/lettland/de/events/>.

<sup>19</sup> Auswärtiges Amt, 'Vertrauen durch Dialog: Gabriel will Ostseerat wiederbeleben [Trust through dialogue: Gabriel wants to revive the Council of the Baltic Sea States]', 21/06/2017, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/europa/zusammenarbeit-staaten/ostseekooperation/170621-bm-ostseerat/290796>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

increased the frequency of their state visits. All pointed out that visiting the Baltic States so often is a clear statement of solidarity. Angela Merkel visited Riga in August 2014<sup>21</sup> and Tallinn in August 2016. Her visit to Tallinn marked the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Estonia and Germany and was regarded as a strong signal in support of the Baltic States.<sup>22</sup> Between 2014 and 2016, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier visited the Baltic States six times, thus being the most frequent official German visitor.<sup>23</sup> During these visits, he underlined German solidarity with the Baltic States and relayed the message that Berlin was highly aware of the Baltic's concerns of a Ukraine-like fate.<sup>24</sup> The German President Joachim Gauck started and ended his time in office (2012-2017) with a visit to the Baltic States. These visits were seen as a great symbol of solidarity towards the region.<sup>25</sup>

Despite these demonstrations of solidarity, the Nord Stream 2 project continues to cause disharmony between Germany and its partners in the BSR. The Baltic Sea pipeline is designed to deliver Russian natural gas through the Baltic Sea directly to Germany, thus bypassing the transit countries in eastern Europe. For Germany, this option offers an advantage: high transit fees are eliminated and possible influences arising from political tensions in the region are reduced. The German partners in the BSR view the German approach as critical. Poland in particular feels left out. The controversial pipeline project, mainly organised between Russia and Germany, drives a wedge between the partners and shows another side of German foreign policy. Instead of demonstrating leadership and solidarity, Germany is withdrawing from its geopolitical responsibilities, initially

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<sup>21</sup> Bundeskanzlerin, 'Lettland-Reise der Kanzlerin – Solidarität mit dem baltischen Partner [Latvia visit of German chancellor – solidarity with the Baltic States]', 18/08/2014, <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Reiseberichte/2014-08-18-merkel-in-lettland.html>

<sup>22</sup> Mikko von Bremen, 'Germany's changing Baltic Policy – Competing norms in German foreign policy in light of the Ukraine crisis', Tartu, University of Tartu, Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, 2017, 41

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 42

<sup>24</sup> Deutsche Welle, 'Steinmeier sagt baltischen Staaten Solidarität zu [Steinmeier promises Baltic States solidarity]', 11/03/2014, <http://www.dw.com/de/steinmeier-sagt-baltischen-staaten-solidarit%C3%A4t-zu/a-17486866>

<sup>25</sup> Zeit Online, 'Baltikum – Wo sie Gauck schon jetzt vermissen [Baltic States – Where Gauck is being missed already]', 09/02/2017, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2017-02/baltikum-joachim-gauck-bundespraesident-letzte-amtsreise-riga>

insisting that this is a private sector project. This position is increasingly confronted with criticism articulated by members of the governing Christian Democrats. The chairman of the foreign affairs committee in the German Bundestag Norbert Röttgen (CDU) and the German Conservative leader in the European Parliament, Manfred Weber, (CSU) openly criticise the project.<sup>26</sup> In April 2018, Chancellor Angela Merkel acknowledged, in a joint press conference with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, *'that this is not just an economic project, but that, of course, political factors must also be taken into account'*.<sup>27</sup> Despite these comments, no change in German politics has yet been identified and the construction of the pipeline continues. Completion is planned by the end of 2019.

## Hard Power

Prior to 2014, Germany was engaged in the security of the BSR by participating in NATO's Baltic air policing mission since 2004, as well as the management of the multinational corps northeast in Stettin (Poland) which was established by Denmark, Germany and Poland. Beyond these activities, Germany's security profile in the north-east remained relatively low. All this changed with the onset of the year 2014 – since then, Germany has raised its profile through its commitment to NATO as well as through bilateral cooperation with countries in the region. First and foremost, Berlin has been the focal point of the alliance's short and long-term reassurance and deterrence measures that were set in motion at the Wales summit in September 2014, and expanded two years later at the gathering in Warsaw. Already prior to the Wales summit, Germany stepped up its engagement by means of increasing the number of employees participating in naval surveillance in the Baltic Sea and providing additional soldiers for allied exercises, for example. In addition, Germany contributed in meaningful

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<sup>26</sup> Frankfurter Allgemeine, 'Nord Stream 2 schadet Europa [Nord Stream 2 harms Europe]', 20/02/2018

<sup>27</sup> Bundesregierung, 'Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem Staatspräsidenten der Ukraine, Petro Poroschenko [Press conference of Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko]', 10/04/2018, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2018/04/2018-04-10-pk-merkel-poroschenko.html>

ways to the conception and implementation of the long-term structural changes NATO allies decided to introduce to the organisation's forces and command structure in response to Russia upending the security architecture Europe had rested and relied on since the end of the Cold War. The most significant of these changes included the "Readiness Action Plan" (RAP) agreed on at NATO's Wales summit. The RAP entailed the establishment of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), the storing of military equipment, increased military air and naval activities, as well as the bolstering of allied headquarters on NATO's eastern flank.<sup>28</sup> Germany was crucial in getting the VJTF off the ground, as the country was the first to volunteer, assuming responsibility for the rotational leadership of the reaction force, as well as its establishment together with the Netherlands and Norway. In 2019, Berlin will serve as the so-called framework nation for the VJTF once more.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Germany has dispatched employees to serve in NATO's newly established force integration units that are located in all three Baltic States, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria, each staffed with approximately 20 national and 20 allied service men and women. Most notably, Berlin agreed to be one of the four lead nations heading NATO's so-called Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), comprised of battalion-sized battle groups deployed to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland – one of the major outcomes of NATO's Warsaw summit held in July 2016. Since the beginning of 2017, Germany serves as the framework nation in Rukla, Lithuania thereby providing 450 troops that rotate in and out of the country every six months in compliance with the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, which Berlin is especially keen on preserving. Germany's armed forces are supported by troops from Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway, resulting in a total force strength of approximately 1,022. The other three EFP battle groups are headed by the United States of America (stationed in Poland), the United Kingdom (stationed in Estonia), and Canada (stationed in Latvia). As long as the other framework nations, and all other allies for that matter, agree to perpetuate the alliance's EFP, policy-makers in Berlin are very likely to continue contributing to these deterrence

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<sup>28</sup> Aylin Matlé, Johannes Varwick, 'Die NATO zwischen den Gipfeln von Wales und Warschau [NATO between the peaks of Wales and Warsaw]', in: *Der Mittler Brief*, 2015

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

and reassurance measures. During a visit of foreign minister at the time, Sigmar Gabriel, to Rukla, where the German EFP forces are stationed, he stated that *'the military potential that the Russian Federation has built up at the border is completely irrational in my view because there is zero threat emanating from these countries [the Baltics]'*.<sup>30</sup> He added that German troops would fulfil their commitment as a framework nation *'as long as needed'*.<sup>31</sup> Gabriel's remarks came shortly after German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen had paid the base in Rukla a visit. She underlined that *'Estonia, and our friends from Lithuania, Latvia and Poland, can rely on us (...) We Germans know what it means to be at the eastern border and to have the solid protection of the alliance'*.<sup>32</sup>

Germany did, and does not, restrain its activities in the BSR to allied cooperation: Berlin also attempts to contribute to the security of its neighbours to the east and north on a bilateral and multilateral level. The following examples are intended to illustrate this point, but are not meant to serve as an exhaustive list of Germany's engagements in this regard. For one, Germany decided to launch the 'Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training Initiative' (TACET), together with the United States of America, in 2015. The TACET aims to better coordinate training efforts in eastern Europe among countries in the region, as well as between Washington and Berlin. Furthermore, the initiative seeks to better coordinate capacity-building efforts between Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. On the latter point, in early 2016, Major Jason Siler, a desk officer in the US Army Europe's security cooperation division, mentioned: *'In today's complex and challenging security environment, we as an alliance cannot afford to waste resources or duplicate efforts (...) TACET gives us a great opportunity to better coordinate our efforts into leveraged assets across the alliance'*.<sup>33</sup> Although initially a German-US led framework, the United Kingdom joined to become a lead nation, in December 2015. At the NATO gathering of

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<sup>30</sup> Reuter Staff, 'Germany says to keep soldiers in Baltics as long as needed', 02/03/2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/nato-defence-baltics-germany/germany-says-to-keep-soldiers-in-baltics-as-long-as-needed-idUSLSN1GF3J8>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs, 'US, allies and partners work together on TACET initiative', 08/02/2016, [https://www.army.mil/article/162032/us\\_allies\\_and\\_partners\\_work\\_together\\_on\\_tacet\\_initiative](https://www.army.mil/article/162032/us_allies_and_partners_work_together_on_tacet_initiative)

defence ministers in early February 2016, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Norway vowed to contribute to TACET as supporting nations.<sup>34</sup> One of the achievements Germany can claim credit for so far is the introduction of the German conventional artillery system *Panzerhaubitze 2000* (armoured howitzer 2000) into the Lithuanian armed forces. Since 2015, Germany has been responsible for training Lithuanian soldiers to use the German weapons' system, both on German and Lithuanian soil.<sup>35</sup>

Drawing on, and acting in, the spirit of the TACET, Germany also dispatched one company (comprised of 150-200 soldiers) on a rotational three-month presence to the Baltic States and Poland in 2015 and 2016 in the shape of the so-called Persistent Presence.<sup>36</sup> The deployment in each host country entailed common training with German soldiers. In Lithuania, for example, German armed forces held a two-week long exercise with their Lithuanian partners under the codename 'Iron Wolf' in June 2015. The exercise was part of the large scale allied manoeuvre 'Sabre Strike 2015', through which NATO countries trained for the defence of the eastern flank in light of a possible attack.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, the German Air Force deployed a control and reporting centre in Latvia for the first time. Apart from the United States and the United Kingdom, Germany has provided the largest number of soldiers (about 1,750) to participate in military exercises in Poland and the Baltic States in 2015 and 2016.<sup>38</sup>

On a strictly bilateral level, Berlin also reached out to countries bordering the Baltic Sea in the north, most prominently to Norway and Sweden. In 2017, Berlin and Oslo struck an agreement to commonly acquire and maintain submarines harking back to a longstanding navy-to-navy

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<sup>34</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 'Kurz erklärt: Die TACET-Initiative [In short: The TACET initiative]', 05/04/2017, <https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/kurz-erklaert-die-tacet-initiative-11114>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Justyna Gotkoswka, 'High on reassurance, low on deterrence – Germany's stance on strengthening NATO's eastern flank', Centre for Eastern Studies Commentary, 05/07/2016, [https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary\\_217\\_0.pdf](https://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/commentary_217_0.pdf), 4

<sup>37</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 'Von der Leyen verspricht den baltischen Staaten Unterstützung [Von der Leyen promises Baltic states support]', 2015, <https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/von-der-leyen-verspricht-baltischen-staaten-unterstuetzung-11582>

<sup>38</sup> Justyna Gotkoswka, op.cit.

cooperation. The recently concluded deal entails not only the procurement of the submarines, but also encompasses *'cooperation on training, exercises, spare parts, maintenance and lifetime management of the new submarines.'*<sup>39</sup> According to the agreement, both governments are scheduled to sign a contract in 2019 to enable the delivery of the naval equipment from the mid-2020s to 2030.<sup>40</sup> Also in 2017, Germany and Sweden signed a letter of intent to deepen both countries' defence cooperation of the armed forces. The declaration includes common exercises, armament and multinational operations of air, land, and sea forces.<sup>41</sup> According to Sweden's Defence Minister Peter Hultqvist: *'Germany is an important actor in the Baltic Sea region and a partner that we share values and many central interests with. Consequently, German-Swedish defence co-operation promotes stability in the Baltic Sea region and in Europe as a whole.'*<sup>42</sup> Before turning attention to whether or not Germany arrives at a similar assessment with regard to its role in the BSR, a preliminary conclusion of Berlin's activities shall be drawn.

Taking into account allied, bilateral, as well as multilateral, reassurance and deterrence efforts that Germany has contributed to the BSR – at times and partly in a leading role – one can conclude that Berlin is *a* if not *the* backbone of these engagements. In the 'off the record' words of a German civil servant at the Foreign Ministry, Germany has developed into an 'engine' within NATO since 2014. Against the backdrop of this assessment, one cannot but wonder if the 'Munich consensus' that was forged in early 2014, encapsulating Germany's determination to take on a larger share of international security responsibility, was the conceptual starting point for Berlin's increasingly pronounced role in the BSR – declarations by government officials up to the highest ranks suggest just that.

In June 2014, German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen warned Russia about intervening in the Baltics militarily: *'Putin knows that NATO*

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<sup>39</sup> Permanent Delegation of Norway to NATO, 'Germany chosen as strategic partner for new submarines to Norway', <https://www.norway.no/en/missions/nato/norway-nato/news-events-statements/news2/germany-chosen-as-strategic-partner-for-new-submarines-to-norway/>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, 'Sweden and Germany sign letter of intent in area of defence', 29/06/2017 <http://www.government.se/press-releases/2017/06/sweden-and-germany-sign-letter-of-intent-in-area-of-defence/>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

is standing behind its eastern Member States determinedly (...) that's why he will not challenge the sovereignty and integrity of these countries'.<sup>43</sup> Drawing on these comments, the defence minister travelled to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania a year later in 2015, to reassure these countries of Germany's commitment to their security. In Tallinn, where she met with her Estonian counterpart, von der Leyen made clear that *'we take the concerns and threat perception of Estonia very seriously (...) Your concerns are also our concerns'*,<sup>44</sup> underlining her government's sustained support in the face of the BSR being confronted with an increasingly assertive Russian neighbour. It was during this meeting that the Estonian defence minister assigned a pronounced role to Germany in defending the region: *'Estonia is of the opinion that there could be a continuous presence of European allies in [both] Estonia and the Baltic region under Germany's leadership'*.<sup>45</sup> While Berlin did not explicitly respond to the Estonian invitation to assume a leadership role in the BSR, von der Leyen continued her trip through the Baltic States, where she also met with her Latvian and Lithuanian counterparts in an attempt to assuage their security concerns too.<sup>46</sup>

Zooming in on Germany's self-declared and self-perceived responsibility in reacting to the changes in Europe's security landscape, Chancellor Angela Merkel delivered an unambiguous message during a visit to Latvia in August 2014: *'Germany is willing to contribute its share [to establishing the necessary security infrastructure in the Baltics] to fill the legitimate desire for protection in Latvia and the other Baltic States'*.<sup>47</sup> Shortly before the Wales summit gathering in September 2014, Angela Merkel reiterated the message she had provided her Baltic partners with in a

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<sup>43</sup> Spiegel Online, 'Von der Leyen zur Ukraine-Krise: Putin hat enorm Vertrauen zerstört [Von der Leyen on the Ukraine crisis: Putin has destroyed trust enormously]', 06/06/ 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/osteuropa-krise-von-der-leyen-warnt-putin-vor-aktion-im-baltikum-a-973882.html>

<sup>44</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 'Von der Leyen verspricht den baltischen Staaten Unterstützung [Von der Leyen promises Baltic States support]', 2015, <https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/von-der-leyen-verspricht-baltischen-staaten-unterstuetzung-11582>

<sup>45</sup> Deutsche Welle, 'Germany assures Estonia of NATO backing', 14/04/2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-assures-estonia-of-nato-backing/a-18380460>

<sup>46</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 'Von der Leyen verspricht den baltischen Staaten Unterstützung [...] op.cit.,

<sup>47</sup> Die Bundesregierung, 'Lettland-Reise der Kanzlerin: Solidarität mit dem baltischen Partner [Latvia visit of German chancellor – solidarity with the Baltic States]', 18/08/2014, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Reiseberichte/2014-08-18-merkel-in-lettland.html>

government declaration before the German parliament: *'We [Germany] stand by our alliance obligations. Article 5 of the NATO treaty applies to all [Member States]'*.<sup>48</sup> Only a few months later, the German chancellor carried a similar message into a broader forum, the Munich Security Conference in February 2015, where she was forthright about the fact that the alliance's *'Eastern partners count on that [the centrality of collective defence] (...) Their worries about security are ours (...)'*.

Broadening the perspective in her speech, Merkel also referred to Germany's role in expanding the multinational headquarters in Stettin (together with Denmark and Poland) to serve as a hub for regional cooperation and collective territorial defence: *'With that we are assuming direct responsibility for the security of our allies and for the security of our neighbours in central and eastern Europe'*.<sup>49</sup>

Building on these words of reassurance, the chancellor travelled to Lithuania in April 2016, where the state would assume responsibility for an EFP battalion as lead nation in early 2017. Without mentioning the battle group that would formally be agreed upon at NATO's Warsaw summit, Merkel guaranteed that *'The protection of Lithuania (...) is of importance in its neighbourhood, especially with regard to Russia'*.<sup>50</sup> Hence, Germany was gladly ready to fulfil the commitment it had accepted at the alliance's Wales summit in 2014. Among these engagements agreed upon were the Baltic air policing mission carrying out surveillance of the air space of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

The foreign minister at the time, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, delivered a similar message in a speech in front of the German parliament in September 2014, when he referred to Germany's premium role in providing early reassurance to its Baltic neighbours: *'We were the first ones to travel to the*

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<sup>48</sup> Die Bundesregierung, 'Lettland-Reise der Kanzlerin: Solidarität mit dem baltischen Partner [...]', op.cit.

<sup>49</sup> Die Bundesregierung, 'Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel anlässlich der 51. Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz [Statement of German Chancellor Angela Merkel on occasion of the 51st Munich Security Conference]', 07/02/2015, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Rede/2015/02/2015-02-07-merkel-sicherheitskonferenz.html>

<sup>50</sup> Die Bundesregierung, 'Litauische Präsidentin in Berlin: Merkel: Schutz Litauens ist wichtig' [Lithuanian President in Berlin: Merkel: Protection of Lithuania is important] 20/04/2016, <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2016/04/2016-04-20-besuch-praesidentin-litauen.html>

*Baltics (...) and we told the people there: We understand that you feel especially threatened against the backdrop of what is happening in Ukraine and we can reassure you: The solidarity of NATO is at your disposal; Article 5 applies to you. – We didn't just say that but contributed to the reassurance measures without hesitation as the first ones in Europe (...).*<sup>51</sup>

It was not only German officials in Berlin who were eager to reassure its neighbours who have been feeling especially under threat since 2014. German representatives abroad have spoken in a similar vein, as did the ambassador to Sweden, Hans-Jürgen Heimsoeth, in a keynote speech in 2017: *'Today, the relationship with the Baltic States has a special place within the German foreign and security policy (...) Germany is willing to play a decisive role in the reassurance of our allies in the north-eastern part of Europe. By leading the battalion in Lithuania, Germany has taken over an important responsibility (...) It will not remain a one-off campaign. We are in for the long run (...).'*<sup>52</sup> He went on to point out that Germany's newfound responsibility does not exclusively apply to the BSR however – a qualification that should not come as a surprise, since Berlin defined its new role in security affairs internationally and not regionally alone.

It can be concluded that Germany's security and defence interests in the BSR finds its most salient expression in Berlin's commitment to NATO, as well as through bilateral support. In addition, Germany's self-defined and self-perceived enhanced role of reassurance in the region is most visible in the Baltic States than in other countries bordering the Baltic Sea. While the above deliberations have highlighted Berlin's political consensus when it comes to delivering the message of reassurance, it remains questionable whether the hardware that is buttressing the rhetoric is enough to refer to Germany as a vital security provider in and for the region.

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<sup>51</sup> Die Bundesregierung, 'Rede des Bundesministers des Auswärtigen, Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier zum Haushaltsgesetz 2015 vor dem Deutschen Bundestag am 11. September 2014 in Berlin [Statement of Foreign Minister Dr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier on the fiscal budget at the Bundestag]' 11/09/2014, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Bulletin/2010-2015/2014/09/96-1-aa-bt.html>

<sup>52</sup> German Embassy in Sweden, [http://www.stockholm.diplo.de/Vertretung/stockholm/de/00/Seite\\_\\_Rede\\_\\_Botschafter\\_\\_170422.html](http://www.stockholm.diplo.de/Vertretung/stockholm/de/00/Seite__Rede__Botschafter__170422.html)

## Conclusion and prospects

Germany has raised its profile as a security provider in and for the BSR since the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis and the ensuing war beginning in 2014, both in hard as well as soft power terms. While Berlin is traditionally more comfortable with the projection of soft power as a self-perceived and self-proclaimed ‘civil power’ for long, German decision-makers also turned relatively quickly to hard power instruments when the severity of the changes underway since 2014 resonated with the German government. Both aspects are two sides of the same coin, as Germany defined itself as a more visible actor on the international security stage at the Munich Security Conference in early 2014. Deriving from the broad political agreement about Germany’s responsibility to increase its efforts, Berlin decided to engage itself more actively and visibly in the security and protection of the BSR, most notably in the Baltic States. On the soft power front, Germany is particularly active in strengthening the media landscape, as well as the respective civil societies of the Baltic States. It remains imperative that Berlin sees to the further development of a free and independent media landscape. Thus, the German parliament should take into consideration that media programmes designed for the Baltics are included in the Bundestag’s budgetary planning.

As demonstrated above, the German government is supported by various non-governmental actors, each providing its partners in the region with a “construction kit” to help them face different hybrid threats. Both strands of cooperation should be perpetuated.

With the interaction of soft and hard power, Germany follows the idea of a networked approach (*Vernetzter Ansatz*)<sup>53</sup> which is mostly used in stabilising crisis regions in developing countries, and an approach that is very dear to German decision-makers as they continue to shy away from military projection on its own, regardless of the Munich consensus. One should bear in mind that the responsibility debate that commenced in early 2014 was not followed up by an extensive explanation as to how exactly Germany was prepared to assume more responsibility in international

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<sup>53</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, ‘Vernetzter Ansatz [Comprehensive Approach]’, <https://www.bmvg.de/de/themen/friedenssicherung/vernetzter-ansatz>

security affairs. Thus, it is easy for Berlin to point to its engagement in the BSR as an exemplification of its newly found responsibility. All the while, it remains doubtful whether or not Germany has the necessary resources as well as the political will to maintain and expand its military engagement in the region, thereby becoming a central security actor in the region. For the time being, it can be concluded that Germany's strategic outlook is pointing in the right direction. However, Germany has not overcome its unease when it comes to the employment of military power. The fact that the armed forces are officially on a training mission in Lithuania, where Germany heads the multinational battalion, should give pause in this respect. As a parliamentary army, every combat operation must be approved by the German Bundestag. Meanwhile, other nations contributing to the German-led EFP are on a 24/7 alert. This example illustrates that Berlin is comfortable to regard itself as a hard power provider in and for the region, only insofar as fighting is not required – an idea that is deeply embedded in the concept of deterrence, thus fitting Germany's preference not to resort to military power. Hence, one can conclude that Berlin does regard itself as an important security provider in soft and hard power terms – yet the requirements necessary for the latter fall short with respect to what Germany can bring to the table, at least for the time being.

# PRAGMATIC PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NEED FOR MORE? DANISH PERCEPTIONS OF GERMANY AS SECURITY ACTOR IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

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Denmark considers NATO to be the cornerstone of its security and defence policy, with the United States, the United Kingdom, and France serving as Denmark's closest strategic allies. Germany, on the other hand, is rarely considered in this light. This is based on two factors: on the one hand, up until the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany, the Danish perception of Germany, especially as a security actor, was mainly skeptical. The reason for this can be traced back to the Danish experience of the Second World War (and the preceding wars), where Denmark was invaded and occupied by Germany – their 'Great Power' neighbour. On the other hand, and more importantly when considering the existing Danish security and defence policy, Denmark has been committed to an active military role since the early 1990s, in contrast with Germany's reluctance to embrace more active military engagements and the German preference for stabilisation and nation-building operations. Thus, Denmark looks to the US, the UK and France as its main security partners and perceives Germany as playing only a very small role in Danish security.

However, this perception might be changing with Germany slowly taking on a more active role as a security actor. From a Danish perspective, Germany is still far from becoming a major security partner; but, if opportunities for increased cooperation prove useful, this development might create a larger role for Germany in Denmark, and in regional security.

This chapter examines the Danish perceptions of Germany's role as a security actor in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and Denmark. It is largely based on seven semi-structured interviews with eight Danish researchers and civil servants conducted by the author throughout April and May

2018.<sup>1</sup> While the chapter focuses on contemporary developments, the main perception drivers can be traced back to the early 1990s, and also link to Danish perceptions of Germany after the Second World War.

The chapter will firstly examine Danish security priorities and what security in the BSR means for Denmark. It explains the importance of NATO and looks at the main elements of the Danish threat perception in the BSR. The chapter then sheds light on Germany's role in Danish security and security in the BSR, and how this role is perceived by Denmark. By analysing the bilateral and multilateral security cooperation between Denmark and Germany in the BSR, the chapter highlights the main perceptions and their drivers that shape the narrative about Germany as a security actor in Denmark. The chapter concludes with a forward-looking perspective and specific recommendations from a Danish perspective as to what Denmark could do to strengthen Germany's role in Danish and regional security and why this is perceived as desirable.

## **Danish National Security Priorities**

This section introduces the national security priorities of Denmark. It explains the importance of NATO in the Danish security and defence policy, introduces other important alliances, and analyses the Danish threat perception in the BSR.

## **Denmark's Security and Defence Alliances**

There is no doubt that the perceived cornerstone of Denmark's defence is NATO. Denmark sees NATO as its primary security guarantor; it is the most relevant and powerful security alliance for Denmark. This largely guides and shapes Danish security policy.<sup>2</sup> Within NATO, Denmark

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<sup>1</sup> The researchers and officials will remain unnamed throughout this chapter and no direct quotes are provided to protect their anonymity. This was a conscious choice by the author, to allow personal assessments and honest opinions in the conversations. The interviews are on file with the author

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Danish Government, 'Udenrigs- og Sikkerhedspolitik Strategi [Foreign and Security Policy Strategy]', Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14/06/2017, 14; Forsvarsministeriet [Danish Ministry of Defence], 'Aftale på Forsvarsrådet 2018–2023 [Defence Agreement 2018–2023]', 28/01/2018, <http://www.fmn.dk/temaer/forsvarsforlig/Documents/Forsvarsforlig-2018-2023.pdf>, 2

positions itself to its closest allies – the US, the UK, and France, who, like Denmark, take on relatively active military roles.

Generally speaking, Denmark does not consider Germany to be an important strategic partner in security and defence matters. This can be explained through the two countries' opposite approaches to security and defence policies. Since the 1990s, Denmark has shown considerable military activism, contributing to many international missions and engaging in serious military action in heavily contested regions, such as Helmand in Afghanistan. Germany, on the other hand, has been passive in its security and defence policy since the end of the Cold War. Germany's participation in international operations has been limited to relatively safe stabilisation and reconstruction tasks.<sup>3</sup> Due to these contrasting approaches to military engagements and their underlying broader security and defence policies, Denmark has never seen Germany as an obvious strategic partner, focusing instead on the US, the UK, and France.<sup>4</sup>

Denmark's primary focus on NATO in its security and defence policy is further strengthened through the existing Danish opt-outs from the European Union. The four opt-outs cover union citizenship, the Euro, cooperation on justice and home affairs, and – most importantly for this book – defence cooperation. The opt-outs were agreed upon in the Edinburgh Agreement in 1992, after the Danish population rejected the Maastricht treaty in a referendum earlier that year.<sup>5</sup> The Danish EU defence opt-out means that Denmark does not participate in the elaboration and implementation of decisions and actions of the Union which have defence implications,<sup>6</sup> and thus cannot join the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and defence (PESCO). As this chapter will reveal, the Danish defence opt-out and German fondness of PESCO are significant,

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<sup>3</sup> This was also mentioned in an interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence, 14/06/2018

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Mikkel Runge Olesen, 'Tysk Militær Aktivisme På Vej Frem, Men Det Sker Med Små Skridt [German Military Activism on the Rise, but Happening in Small Steps]', 13/11/2015; also confirmed in interviews the author conducted with Danish officials

<sup>5</sup> Udenrigsministeriet [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark], 'De Danske EU-Forbehold [The Danish EU Opt-Outs]', <http://um.dk/da/udenrigspolitik/eu/danmark-i-eu/de-danske-eu-forbehold/>

<sup>6</sup> European Council, 'European Council in Edinburgh 11–12<sup>th</sup> December 1992. Conclusions of the Presidency', Part B: Denmark and the Treaty on the European Union, Annex 1 SN 456/1/92 REV 1', 54

in relation to the Danish perception of Germany as a security actor in general, and in the BSR.

While Denmark does not take part in EU defence cooperation, it participates in the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFECO) together with Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Iceland. Even though Denmark is committed to NORDEFECO, the alliance's relevance has been debated in Denmark due to the fact that Finland and Sweden are not members of NATO and no large countries (such as the United Kingdom or Germany) participate in the cooperation.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, neither Norway nor Iceland are members of the European Union, further complicating the alliance. Danish participation (and interest) in NORDEFECO has, until recently, been quite limited; but the changed security situation has increased the willingness for cooperation.<sup>8</sup> For the purpose of this book, NORDEFECO does not play a large role, as it is limited to the Nordic region, without the participation of Germany, and thus plays no role regarding the Danish perception of Germany as a security actor.

## Denmark's Perception of Security in the Baltic Sea Region

Turning to the Danish perception of security in the BSR region, the new Danish Defence Agreement from 28<sup>th</sup> January 2018 provides a clear picture of what Denmark currently perceives as threats to its security. In the agreement, the Danish government (*Venstre*, Liberal Alliance and *Det Konservative Folkeparti*) and three major opposition parties (*Socialdemokratiet*, *Dansk Folkeparti* and *Radikale Venstre*), which together received over two-thirds of the votes in the last election, find that the security situation of Denmark is the most serious since the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Four factors contribute to this perception: firstly, and most

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<sup>7</sup> Jesper Kongstad and Jette Elbæk Maressa, 'Efter mange års dansk fodslæberi: Trump og Putin kan tvinge Danmark ind i ny forsvarsklub [After many years of Danish footdragging: Trump and Putin can force Denmark into a new defence club]', 28/02/2017, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/indland/ECE9398666/trump-kan-tvinge-danmark-ind-i-et-styrket-nordisk-forsvarssamarbejde/>

<sup>8</sup> Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution, 16/04/2018; Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence; see also NORDEFECO, 'Memorandum of Understanding on Easy Access Signed by Nordic Defence Ministers', [nordefco.org](http://www.nordefco.org/Memorandum-of-Understanding-on-Easy-Access-signed-by-Nordic-Defence-Ministers) 09/11/2016, <http://www.nordefco.org/Memorandum-of-Understanding-on-Easy-Access-signed-by-Nordic-Defence-Ministers>

importantly for this book, NATO (and with it Denmark) faces a challenging and assertive Russia in its Eastern neighbourhood; secondly, the instability in the Middle East and north Africa that fuels militant Islamism threatens to increase terror attacks and irregular migration flows from the region; thirdly, heightened levels of activity and climate change threaten Danish interests in the Arctic; and, fourthly, threats from cyberspace have serious security and societal implications, notably fake news, disinformation, and influence campaigns, which can challenge democratic principles.<sup>9</sup>

The Danish perception of Russia has fundamentally changed since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the developments in eastern Ukraine.<sup>10</sup> The Danish government's strategy for foreign and security policy points to these events as those that exposed Russia's will and ability to use military means to achieve their strategic goals. In the government's view, this creates substantial insecurity, especially in the BSR, which is exacerbated through Russian disinformation campaigns and the threat of hybrid warfare.<sup>11</sup> The chapter will return to the hybrid warfare threat in the next section. As pointed out during one of the interviews, this threat perception of Russia is underlined by a massive military build-up in western Russia, bordering the Baltic NATO countries. This military build-up creates a need for NATO to react to the threat.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding security in the BSR, in Denmark much of the focus lies on preserving the options of free navigation in the BSR (both air and maritime) and keeping the region as free as possible from tensions.<sup>13</sup> The current Danish threat perception in the BSR is based on two main elements: the aggressive stance by Russia in the BSR, and Russian 'Anti Access/Area Denial (A2/

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<sup>9</sup> Forsvarsministeriet [Danish Ministry of Defence], 'Aftale på Forsvarsområdet 2018–2023 [Defence Agreement 2018–2023]', 2; for examples of such campaigns, see e.g. Jeppe Rothuizen and Lars Bangert Struwe, 'Ruslands Påvirkingskampagner i Skandinavien [Russia's Influence Campaigns in Scandinavia]', Copenhagen: Atlantsammenslutningen, 14/05/2018

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Delrive, 'Forsvarsminister: Danmark skal have tropper i de baltiske lande [Defence Minister: Denmark must have troops in the Baltic States]', nyheder.tv2.dk, 8/11/2017, <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/udland/2017-11-08-forsvarsminister-danmark-skal-have-tropper-i-de-baltiske-lande>; also confirmed in the interviews conducted by the author

<sup>11</sup> Danish Government, 'Udenrigs- og Sikkerhedspolitisk Strategi [Foreign- and Security Policy Strategy]', 7

<sup>12</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1), 26/05/2018

<sup>13</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence, 22/05/2018; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1)

AD)’ capabilities.<sup>14</sup> With its aggressive stance, Russia aims to restrict Danish courses of action through obstruction and harassment, for example by disrupting shipping, aviation, communications, and energy supply through (military) exercises.<sup>15</sup> Russia often conducts large-scale exercises without warning or involves many more troops than reported (e.g., during the Zapad exercise). These exercises can lead to dangerous misunderstandings about the intentions and purpose of these troop movements.<sup>16</sup> Danish defence minister, Claus Hjort Frederiksen, assessed that, when Russia conducted military exercises in the Baltic Sea, close to the Danish island of Bornholm in early April, this was a show of force, with the aim of intimidating Denmark.<sup>17</sup>

The second element of the Danish threat perception in the BSR, also categorised under the slogan ‘Anti Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)’, is posed by the weapons systems stationed in Kaliningrad, particularly Russian *Iskander* mobile ballistic missiles, the S-300/S-400 anti-aircraft and anti-ballistic missile system and the *Bastion* coastal defence system. With these missiles, Russia is able to dominate large areas of the Baltic and Baltic airspace. This poses a challenge for NATO, should it have to send reinforcements to the Baltic States, and causes concern that Russia could block NATO’s access to the Baltic Sea.<sup>18</sup> Due to Denmark’s location, the country has a strategic focus on access to the Baltic Sea, which it controls mainly through the Øresund (together with Sweden) and the Great Belt.<sup>19</sup>

Regarding the Danish threat perception in the BSR, it is crucial to note that, despite Russia’s threatening statements, its military build-up and its

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<sup>14</sup> Sometimes also called ‘Access to Area Denial (A2AD)’, the concept refers to a weapon or strategy used to prevent an adversary from occupying or gaining access to a certain geographical area

<sup>15</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20/04/2018; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2), 26/05/2018

<sup>16</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1)

<sup>17</sup> Morten Volf and Josefine Alberg, ‘Forsvarsministeren: Russisk militærovelse ved Bornholm er stærkt provokerende [Defence Minister: Russian military exercise near Bornholm is highly provocative]’, 04/05/2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/regionale/bornholm/forsvarsministeren-russisk-militaeroevelse-ved-bornholm-er-staerkt>

<sup>18</sup> Martin Murphy, Frank G. Hoffman, and Gary Schaub Jr., ‘Hybrid Maritime Warfare and the Baltic Sea Region’, Center for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2016, 8–9; Forsvarets Efterretningsstjeneste [Danish Defence Intelligence Service], ‘Efterretningsmæssig Risikovurdering 2017 [Intelligence Related Risk Assessment 2017]’, Copenhagen, 11/12/2017, 18–19; also confirmed in the interviews conducted by the author

<sup>19</sup> There is also the Little Belt (Denmark) and the Kiel Canal (Germany)

increased number of military exercises in Denmark's backyard, officials in Denmark do not consider Russia to be a direct military threat to the country.<sup>20</sup> They furthermore do not believe that Russia will risk a direct military confrontation with NATO.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the abovementioned factors create a serious threat perception in Denmark, and as defence minister Frederiksen said in Estonia, in 2017, '*as close NATO allies, our [Denmark's] security starts in the Baltic States*'.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, Denmark is aware that, should a confrontation between Russia and NATO occur in the BSR, Denmark would most likely serve as a NATO troops' assembly area (*opmarchområde*).<sup>23</sup> So, while Denmark does not perceive an immediate direct territorial threat against its own country, it is clear that there is a serious territorial threat against the Baltic States, which Denmark considers to be a matter crucial to NATO.

In line with the changed threat perception, security in the BSR is a major topic in the new Danish defence agreement, and much more significant than before. Through its altered focus, the defence agreement also marks a major change away from expeditionary warfare and towards collective defence.<sup>24</sup> It attempts to address this changed situation through the strengthening of Danish defence, focusing especially on increasing manpower, anti-submarine capabilities, and cyber defence.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think-tank, 23/04/2018, where the interview partner highlighted this perception as different to the Baltic States; Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>21</sup> Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Danish Government, 'Udenrigs- og Sikkerhedspolitik Strategi [Foreign and Security Policy Strategy]', 7; Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [Danish Defence Intelligence Service], 'Efterretningsmæssig Risikovurdering 2017 [Intelligence Related Risk Assessment 2017]', 18–19

<sup>22</sup> Claus Hjort Frederiksen: Vores Sikkerhed Begynder i Baltikum [Claus Hjort Frederiksen: Our Security Starts in the Baltic States]', 20/04/2017, <http://www.fmn.dk/nyheder/Pages/claus-hjort-frederiksen-vores-sikkerhed-begynder-i-baltikum.aspx>

<sup>23</sup> Regeringen [Danish Government], 'Et stærkt værn om Danmark: Udspil til nyt forsvarsforlig 2018–2023 [A strong defence of Denmark: Proposed new defence agreement 2018–2023]', October 2017, 8

<sup>24</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>25</sup> Forsvarsministeriet [Danish Ministry of Defence], 'Aftale på Forsvarsområdet 2018–2023 [Defence Agreement 2018–2023]'

## The Danish Perspective on Germany's Role as a Security Actor in the Baltic Sea Region

This section sheds light on the Danish perception of Germany as a security actor in the BSR and in Denmark. It analyses the existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Denmark and Germany, and how this cooperation is perceived by Denmark. While most of the following chapter addresses cooperation in the field of hard security, it is important to note that several interview partners stressed that the traditional distinction between hard and soft security is no longer valid when it comes to the Russian threat in the BSR. Because officials in Denmark consider a direct military confrontation between NATO and Russia as relatively unlikely, their focus is on addressing Russia's hybrid threat, which includes aspects of both hard and soft security. For them, the Russian doctrine of combining military escalation with cyber threats and a strong rhetoric no longer allows a separation of security matters into the 'hard'/'soft' categories. The hybrid 'low-intensity conflict' (as some interview partners call it) in the BSR is not fought with traditional military means; it stays below the threshold of what would trigger a more serious military response (sometimes referred to as 'Article 5 threshold', based on Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty), which makes it difficult to distinguish between situations of law enforcement and territorial defence.<sup>26</sup> One official from the Danish Ministry of Defence pointed out that this lack of distinction between hard and soft security might be connected to the fact that Denmark does not face a direct territorial threat from Russia: the closer a country is geographically to the threat; the more their focus lies on hard security matters.<sup>27</sup> The same official also noted a change in policy in Denmark

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think tank; see also Murphy, Hoffman, and Schaub Jr., 'Hybrid Maritime Warfare and the Baltic Sea Region'. It is important to note that the emergence of Russian hybrid warfare does not only affect the BSR, but also poses a fundamental challenge by Russia in other regions

<sup>27</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence; see also Steffen Jørgensen, Mikkel-Emil Hansen, and Lars Bangert Struwe, 'Forsvarsforlig Og Danmarks Strategiske Udfordringer: Prioritering i Forhold Til Trusler [Defence Agreement and Denmark's Strategic Challenges: Prioritisation in Relation to Threats]', (Copenhagen: Atlantsammenslutningen, October 2017), 4

since the Defence Agreement. The Defence Agreement separates the planned responses to the existing threats to Danish security as a matter of policy and financing, due to the Defence Agreement's necessary focus on building and enhancing specific capacities. However, in the view of the Defence Ministry's official, the hard and soft security aspects of the Russian threat, as well as the Danish response, have become more intertwined over the last four months.<sup>28</sup>

## Danish Perception of Bilateral Security Cooperation with Germany

As highlighted in the above section, Denmark considers the US, the UK and France to be its primary strategic partners; these countries are generally chosen as cooperation partners because Denmark has experience in collaborating with them.<sup>29</sup> Looking at the bilateral cooperation between Germany and Denmark in security matters, it is evident that, while several areas of cooperation exist, cooperation between the two countries is relatively limited in scale and focuses on practicality. The most important area of cooperation from a Danish perspective is the German-Danish maritime cooperation.<sup>30</sup> During the last years of the Cold War and the early 1990s, Germany and Denmark cooperated closely with their fleets regarding anti-submarine training. This collaboration was largely reduced, however, as there was no reason to maintain it in the low-tension area of the BSR. This meant that the institutional memory of this cooperation was lost to a certain extent, and has to be re-established in current attempts to revive it.<sup>31</sup>

The existing bilateral cooperation between Denmark and Germany takes place at a low, practical level and is generally military to military cooperation.<sup>32</sup> Examples of bilateral cooperation are the Ark project, that Germany joined in 2006,<sup>33</sup> the training of Danish navy personnel

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>29</sup> Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution

<sup>30</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>31</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); also mentioned in Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>32</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think tank

<sup>33</sup> Per Ludvigsen, Peter Gellert Pedersen, and Torben Ørting, 'Removal of toxic chemicals from Libya – DEU/DNK Ark Project', Movement Coordination Centre Europe, 12/10/2016, <http://mcce-mil.com/2016/10/removal-toxic-chemicals-libya-deudnk-ark-project/>; Peter Hartley, 'The German Navy – The Way Forward?', 29/11/2011, [http://defense-update.com/20111129\\_the-german-navy-the-way-forward.html](http://defense-update.com/20111129_the-german-navy-the-way-forward.html)

in Neustadt and access for the German navy to the Danish multi-threat exercise course (MULTEX),<sup>34</sup> an offer by Germany to train the Danish defence's anti-submarine capabilities on German submarines,<sup>35</sup> and the senior military expert talks established in 2014, taking place once a year between the Danish and German Ministries of Defence.<sup>36</sup>

This bilateral cooperation is very much based on needs and practicality, and is driven by the Danish military and ministry officials.<sup>37</sup> The Danish perception of Germany is, to a certain extent, contradictory. On the one hand, there is a clear focus on Berlin in Denmark's foreign, security, and defence policy, based on Germany's size and location and the similar interests of the two countries in the BSR.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, however, there is a clear perception that Germany does not operate on the same level of military activism as Denmark.<sup>39</sup> Together with Denmark's previous experience in cooperating with the UK and US, this leads to the general Danish preference of cooperating with its designated strategic partners, rather than Germany. This might also, to a certain extent, be based on the

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<sup>34</sup> Sebastian Rosenkötter and Frank Behling, 'Dänische Marine setzt auf Ausbildung in Neustadt [Danish Navy relies on training in Neustadt]', 15/03/2016, <http://www.ln-online.de/Lokales/Ostholstein/Daenische-Marine-setzt-auf-Ausbildung-in-Neustadt>; Frank Behling, 'Marine wagt den Schulterschluss [Navy dares to join forces]', in: *Kieler Nachrichten*, 14/03/2016, <http://www.kn-online.de/Nachrichten/Schleswig-Holstein/Marine-wagt-den-Schulterschluss-mit-Daenemark-und-den-Baltischen-Staaten>; Lars Skjoldan, 'Østersølandenes flåder mødtes i Danmark [Baltic Sea states' fleets met in Denmark]', Forsvaret [Danish Defence], 08/03/2017, <https://www2.forsvaret.dk/nyheder/intops/Pages/RepraesentanterfraOstersoelandenesflaermoedtesidanmark.aspx>. Interestingly, this bilateral cooperation regarding training of navy personnel was established under the Baltic Commanders' Conference, which is addressed in the next section

<sup>35</sup> Peter Ernstved Rasmussen, 'Tyskland inviterer Danmark med i samarbejde om ubåde [Germany invites Denmark to cooperate on submarines]', 03/04/2017, <https://olfi.dk/2017/04/03/tyskland-inviterer-danmark-samarbejde-ubaade/>; Johannes F. Sender and Edward R. Lucas, 'Danish-German Submarine Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Defence College, November 2017); was also mentioned in the Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>36</sup> Jéronimo Barbin and Mikkel Runge Olesen, 'New Winds in German Security Policy: Potential for Enhanced Danish-German Defence Partnership' (Copenhagen: Danish Institut for International Studies, December 2015), 4

<sup>37</sup> As was pointed out e.g. in the Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution

<sup>38</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>39</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

fact that Denmark has historically been skeptical towards working with neighbouring great powers, especially Germany, based on their experiences in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While this sentiment no longer seems to be relevant, it created a culture of military cooperation in Denmark that excluded Germany.<sup>40</sup>

However, this perception also seems to be changing. With an increasing focus on the BSR in both Germany and Denmark, one official from the Ministry of Defence points out that it seems Germany is interested in Denmark as its main partner in the BSR. Based on the similar geographic location of the two countries and their shared area of responsibility, this seems welcome in Denmark. Also, the maritime focus of the BSR plays well into the existing cooperation between Germany and Denmark. Additionally, much focus was placed on Germany modernising and building-up its military forces, and being much more active in its neighbourhood today than a few years ago. This is believed to be bringing Germany and Denmark closer together in their defence and security policies. However, it should be acknowledged that bilateral cooperation between the two countries to this day is based on pragmatism, training needs, and practicality.<sup>41</sup>

## **Danish Perception of Multilateral Security Cooperation with Germany**

Most cooperation between Germany and Denmark regarding the security of the BSR takes place in multilateral form. Examples of multilateral cooperation are the German-led Framework Nations Concept (FNC) project to increase the readiness of the Headquarters of the Multinational Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE) in Szczecin, Poland,<sup>42</sup> and Denmark's command

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution

<sup>41</sup> Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>42</sup> Forsvarsministeriet [Danish Ministry of Defence], 'Det Multinationale Korps hovedkvarter (HQ MNC NE) Faktaark [Multinational Corps Northeast (HQ MNC NE) Factsheet]', July 2016, <http://www.fmn.dk/temaer/nato/Pages/natotema.aspx>; Henrik Ø. Breitenbauch et al., 'Orden Og Afskrækkelse: Vestens Håndtering Af Rusland Efter Annekteringen Af Krim [Order and Deterrence: The West's Handling of Russia after the Annexation of Crimea]', Copenhagen: Center for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2017, 11

of Standing NATO Maritime Group One, throughout 2018.<sup>43</sup> Besides these multilateral projects, where both Germany and Denmark participate, Denmark is also part of the British-led Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in Estonia, contributing around 200 soldiers, and adding to NATO's Baltic Air Policing (although not in direct cooperation with Germany).<sup>44</sup>

It is clearly the perception in Denmark that Germany is taking more responsibility in the BSR region and in NATO regarding its neighbourhood, as is visible in the FNC and Germany's leadership of the EFP in Lithuania. While there is little specific overlap in multilateral security and defence cooperation between Denmark and Germany, Denmark seems very happy with the more active role Germany has chosen to play in the region, and considers the abovementioned existing examples of cooperation as successes.<sup>45</sup> Denmark supports many recent German initiatives, a prime example being the establishment of NATO's new Baltic Maritime Component Command in Rostock, Germany,<sup>46</sup> which Danish officials are extremely pleased with.<sup>47</sup>

Besides these more traditional, 'hard' areas of security cooperation, Germany and Denmark also engage in 'softer' multilateral cooperation, mainly through different meeting and discussion forums. These forums include the Baltic Commanders' Conference, at which the Danish and German naval

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<sup>43</sup> NATO, 'Allied Maritime Command – Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1)', NATO Allied Maritime Command, <https://mc.nato.int/snmgl.aspx>; Andreas Nygaard Just, 'Eksperter om ny dansk mission: Russerne skal vide, at de får nogen på ørerne, hvis de prøver på noget [Experts about new Danish mission: the Russians need to know they will get hit if they try something]', 04/05/2017, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/eksperter-om-ny-dansk-mission-russerne-skal-vide-de-faar-nogen-paa-oererne-hvis-de>

<sup>44</sup> Lene Lillelund and Jens Ringsmose, 'Hvad er NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), og hvordan bidrager Danmark? [What is NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) and how is Denmark contributing?]', Copenhagen: Forsvarsakademiet [Danish Defence College], 19/12/2017; Forsvarsministeriet [Danish Ministry of Defence], 'Air Policing in the Baltic States', 22/01/2018, <http://www.fmn.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/BalticandIcelandAirPolicing.aspx>

<sup>45</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think-tank

<sup>46</sup> NDR, 'Marine stellt NATO-Hauptquartier in Rostock auf [Navy sets up NATO headquarters in Rostock]', 23/02/2018, [/nachrichten/mecklenburg-vorpommern/Marine-stellt-NATO-Hauptquartier-in-Rostock-auf-marine1098.html](https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/mecklenburg-vorpommern/Marine-stellt-NATO-Hauptquartier-in-Rostock-auf-marine1098.html)

<sup>47</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

training cooperation was decided (see above); the Northern Group (a UK initiative),<sup>48</sup> the German-Nordic-Baltic forum,<sup>49</sup> and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS).<sup>50</sup> All officials and researchers interviewed for this chapter agree that these forums are good for meetings, discussions and information exchanges, and the forums are considered to support the Danish goals of cooperation and dialogue in the region, but are not considered to be of particular interest beyond that. Several interview partners point out that the CBSS used to play a more important role, because it allowed for a different kind of cooperation excluding military aspects, but due to the situation with Russia (Russia being a member state of the CBSS) not much is happening in the CBSS today.<sup>51</sup> In addition to the forums where Germany and Denmark participate, Denmark is also a member of the Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8), and one interviewed official has expressed the view that it would be important to include Germany into this framework, and potentially also Poland.<sup>52</sup> Two other interview partners point out that it seems to them that Germany seeks to avoid the introduction of initiatives in these forums, as its preference is to keep them under either a NATO or EU framework. These forums are consequently a low priority in Berlin, even though Germany maintains a positive public attitude towards them.<sup>53</sup>

While looking at the 'softer' side of security in the BSR, another issue of controversy in Denmark deserves a mention: The Nord Stream 2 pipeline project from Russia to Germany. Part of the pipeline would be built in Danish territorial waters close to the island of Bornholm, giving Denmark the option of deciding against the planned route. Considering the current perception of Russia as a threat, the project is highly controversial as the

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<sup>48</sup> Henrik Ø. Breitenbauch et al., 'Options for Enhancing Nordic-Baltic Defence and Security Cooperation: An Explorative Survey'. Copenhagen: Center for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2017, 10

<sup>49</sup> Institut für Europäische Politik IEP, German-Nordic-Baltic Forum Archives', <http://iep-berlin.de/en/forum/filter/german-nordic-baltic-forum/>

<sup>50</sup> Council of the Baltic Sea States Website, [cbss.org](http://www.cbss.org/), <http://www.cbss.org/>  
There is also 'SUCBAS: Sea Surveillance Co-Operation Baltic Sea', <http://sucbas.org/>; a cooperation for information exchange

<sup>51</sup> Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think tank

<sup>52</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1)

<sup>53</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think tank

different interests held by different actors collide. On the one hand, large economic benefits are expected and there is a need to increase the gas supply to Europe. This would, however, increase energy dependence on Russia. On the other hand, Eastern European states fear being bypassed, increasing their vulnerability towards Russia, and diminishing the financial returns from the existing pipelines, mainly through Ukraine.<sup>54</sup> Denmark has repeatedly attempted to make the decision an EU matter, to include these different interests, but the decision remains in Danish hands.<sup>55</sup> In the Danish view, Germany has so far been much more positive towards the pipeline than other important Danish allies, such as the US. Denmark has always considered the pipeline project to have substantial political and security implications, while Germany has been perceived to consider it a purely economic matter. Consequently, the statements made by Angela Merkel in April about the pipeline having political implications were received well in Denmark.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the decision about the pipeline project will remain controversial, and a Danish 'no' might have negative implications for the relationship between Denmark and Germany.<sup>57</sup>

Looking at the drivers of the Danish perception of Germany as a security actor in the BSR, four features stand out. The first two are based on Danish interests and the latter two on external changes. Firstly, the importance of security cooperation within a NATO framework; secondly,

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence; see also Reuters, 'Merkel Says Nord Stream 2 Not Possible without Clarity for Ukraine', 11/04/2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-ukraine/merkel-says-nord-stream-2-not-possible-without-clarity-for-ukraine-idUSKBN1HH1KW>

<sup>55</sup> Besides Denmark, of course Russia and Germany have decision-making power, as do Finland and Sweden, where the pipeline would be built in the countries' exclusive economic zone. See also: Andrew Rettman, 'Merkel: Nord Stream 2 Is 'Political'', 11/04/2018, <https://euobserver.com/energy/141570>

<sup>56</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think tank; Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution; Bundesregierung [The Federal Government of Germany], 'Merkel Trifft Poroschenko: 'Es Geht Um Die Menschen in Der Ost-Ukraine' [Merkel Meets Poroshenko: 'It Is about the People in Eastern Ukraine']', 10/04/2018, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2018/04/2018-04-10-praesident-poroschenko-zu-besuch-im-bkamt.html>

<sup>57</sup> Hans Mouritzen, 'Forsker: Nej Til Russisk Gasledning Er at Skyde Os Selv i Foden [Expert: No to Russian Gas Pipeline Means Shooting Ourselves in the Foot]', 8/03/2018, <https://www.altinget.dk/artikel/forsker-nej-til-russisk-gasledning-er-at-skyde-os-selv-i-foden>

the maintenance of possibilities for dialogue with Russia; thirdly, Germany's more active military role; and, fourthly, the election of Donald Trump, Brexit and the emergence of PESCO.

The officials interviewed from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs placed particular focus on the importance for Denmark to cooperate with Germany in NATO, and to include Sweden and Finland in a 29+2 framework, to share threat perceptions and cooperate regarding security in the BSR.<sup>58</sup> But it is also important for Denmark to maintain a dialogue with Russia.<sup>59</sup> Here, Germany is of major importance, because it is traditionally perceived to be good at maintaining a dialogue with Russia, with its traditional perspective of looking both east and west<sup>60</sup> and, Denmark sees Germany as a major influence in this regard.

Both of these Danish interests are supported by Germany's decision to play a more active military role (as mentioned above). While Denmark understands and respects the historical underpinnings for Germany's limited, careful, and comparatively passive military stand, the recent changes towards more activism are very welcome in Denmark, especially within the NATO framework.<sup>61</sup> This does not change the fact that Denmark still perceives Germany as a difficult military partner in many contexts (especially when compared to its strategic partners, the UK or France), needing a substantial reform of its policies before its military role in Europe matches its current economic role, but Germany's more active military role is certainly perceived in Denmark to open up more space for cooperation.<sup>62</sup> It is very important to understand the Danish perception of Germany and its increasingly active role

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<sup>58</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2)

<sup>59</sup> See e.g., Danish Government, 'Udenrigs- og Sikkerhedspolitik Strategi [Foreign- and Security Policy Strategy]', 14; Delrive, 'Forsvarsminister: Danmark skal have tropper i de baltiske lande [Defence Minister: Denmark must have troops in the Baltic States]' <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/udland/2017-11-08-forsvarsminister-danmark-skal-have-tropper-i-de-baltiske-lande>

<sup>60</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think-tank

<sup>61</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think-tank

<sup>62</sup> Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2)

in light of other external changes. Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as the President of the US have deepened Denmark's view of Germany as a necessary stabilising power in Europe and the BSR. Germany is perceived to have acted stably, reasonably, and responsibly since returning to its status of major power, always interested in integrating itself in an EU or NATO frame. While the US and UK are still Denmark's most important strategic partners, both Brexit and Trump create a need for Germany to step up and play a bigger role in Europe – and it is well received in Denmark that Germany seems to be doing just that, in a cooperative way.<sup>63</sup>

An interesting area of disagreement regarding what drives the Danish perception of Germany as a security actor is uncovered when looking at Brexit and PESCO: there are diverging views regarding the extent to which Brexit creates uncertainty about the UK as a strategic partner in Denmark. While some officials argue that Brexit pushes Denmark away from the UK as a strategic partner and closer towards Germany,<sup>64</sup> others do not think it has any influence. They argue that Brexit only affects the EU (where Denmark has an opt-out regarding defence and security), and not NATO or any bilateral security cooperation, the backbones of the strategic partnership with the UK.<sup>65</sup> The relevance of PESCO is also disputed: Some point towards the importance of close cooperation with Germany to keep informed and be a part of further developments regarding security and defence in the EU, where Denmark cannot officially participate due to the opt-out.<sup>66</sup> Others, however, see PESCO only as industrial cooperation and do not perceive the need for cooperation with Germany to get a foot in the door for EU decisions on the common security and defence policy.<sup>67</sup>

These Danish perceptions of Germany as a security actor are mainly driven by government officials and the military. One interview partner specifically highlighted that the election of Claus Hjort Frederiksen as defence minister made a difference, because the minister's analytical personality

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think-tank

<sup>64</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>65</sup> Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution

<sup>66</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>67</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2)

and interest in the BSR put even more focus on the developments in the region.<sup>68</sup> When asked for the role of non-state actors as perception drivers, the interviewees agree that these play little to no role in the Danish perception of Germany's role in the security of the BSR region. It is interesting to observe that, outside of the Danish Foreign and Defence Ministries, little attention is paid to the role of Germany as a security actor, due to the overwhelming focus on NATO and Denmark's preferred strategic partners. Few Danish researchers work on Germany's security and defence policy, especially directed towards the BSR. Nevertheless, some research institutions play a role by providing policy assessments and recommendations. The relevant reports have been included in this chapter as sources.

In addition, business groups played no role in the interviews conducted for this chapter. This is not to say that business groups have no influence on the perception of Germany as a security actor, but the interviewees did not mention any such influence, when asked which other actors besides the military and ministries drive the perception of Germany as a security actor. A similar point can be made about the German minority in Denmark and the Danish minority in Germany. These minorities have their own organisations: the German minority in Denmark has the Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger (BDN) as an umbrella organisation; and the Danish minority in Germany the South Schleswig Association (SSF) and a political party, the Südschleswigscher Wählerverband (SSW).<sup>69</sup> However, they have little impact on the Danish perception of Germany as a security actor, because their focus lies on cultural aspects and the border region between Germany and Denmark. Nevertheless, one interview partner suggested that the exemplary handling of the German and Danish minorities in the border region might serve as an example for how the Russian minorities in the Baltic States could be addressed.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2), 26/05/2018

<sup>69</sup> Denmark.dk, 'The German Minority in Denmark,' <http://denmark.dk/en/society/greenland-the-faroes-and-the-german-minority/the-german-minority-in-denmark>; Minderheitensekretariat.de, 'Who We Represent – The Danish Minority', <https://www.minderheitensekretariat.de/en/who-we-represent/danish-minority/>; SSF Sydslesvigsk Forening, 'SSF – De Danske Sydslesvigeres Kulturelle Hovedorganisation (SSF – the South Schleswig Cultural Association)'; SSW.de, 'SSW Who We Are,' <http://www.ssw.de/en/about.html>

<sup>70</sup> Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think tank, April 23, 2018

## Conclusion. Future Developments and Policy Recommendations

Overall, the Danish perception of Germany as a security actor in the BSR is positive. From the interviews conducted for this chapter, it became clear that officials in Denmark are pleased with Germany's more active military role and consider their large southern neighbour an important partner in the security and defence of Europe and the BSR. Nevertheless, despite Germany's increased activity, little direct bilateral or multilateral security and defence cooperation between the two countries is taking place. This is due to Denmark's focus on cooperation with its strategic partners – the US, the UK, and France – and their similar levels of military activism, from which Germany is still far apart.

There is, however, an expectation in Denmark that this might change in the future: many of the interview partners expect the cooperation between Germany and Denmark to increase in the future, becoming more integrated and encompassing more areas, especially if Germany continues to become more active regarding its security and defence policy, diminishing the differences in strategic culture and interests.<sup>71</sup> The reversal in defence posture to territorial defence from expeditionary warfare should also strengthen this development towards more obvious and intense cooperation; provided that Russia indeed continues to be perceived as such a threat.<sup>72</sup> In the context of Trump and Brexit, there is an expectation that Germany will take on more of a leadership role in the future, even though the military change is viewed to most likely occur incrementally.<sup>73</sup> For some of the interview partners, this makes rapprochement with Germany (and France) a top priority for Denmark, especially considering the Danish security and defence

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<sup>71</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution

<sup>72</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution

<sup>73</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think tank

opt-out,<sup>74</sup> and ties in with the development of a more European (EU) approach to security and defence policy in the form of PESCO, where Denmark cannot actively participate due to the opt-out. According to the interviews, it is the Danish perception that Germany is committed to cooperation in the EU and PESCO, which might well lead to future developments (in PESCO or e.g. the French European intervention initiative), in which Denmark has no say. Thus, close cooperation with Germany in this area is essential to keep track of the developments.<sup>75</sup>

From a Danish perspective, there is a general desire for Germany to play an even more active and leading role, both in the BSR<sup>76</sup> and in international operations in general,<sup>77</sup> while continuing its engagement and cooperation within the EU and NATO for security matters.<sup>78</sup> Specifically, it was mentioned in multiple interviews that Denmark should be open to pursuing more cooperation with Germany, even though operational cooperation between Danish and German forces on a larger scale is not very likely due to the very different military approaches.<sup>79</sup> The interviewees recommended that Denmark develops its cooperation with Germany based on pragmatism, practicality and fit. The country should build on, and extend, existing areas of cooperation where cooperation has already proven to be fruitful, the maritime area being a prime example.<sup>80</sup>

Another area suitable for cooperation is the development of materials and capabilities, for example regarding the air defence of land forces or an assessment of the need for long-range precision missiles.<sup>81</sup> Strengthening

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<sup>75</sup> Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>76</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution

<sup>77</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2)

<sup>78</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think tank

<sup>79</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Interview with researcher at a Danish research institution

<sup>80</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2); Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>81</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence

these small-scale cooperation projects could embody a step-by-step rapprochement that over time leads to much closer cooperation with Germany, also in other military operations and potentially on an operational/tactical level.<sup>82</sup> In the long-term perspective this might prove the right way to make Germany a strategic partner, potentially replacing France, as Germany and Denmark seem to have similar national interests and more cooperation potential.<sup>83</sup> A closer relationship with Germany is also desirable for Denmark given its EU opt-outs, at least according to some interview partners. It would allow Denmark to be a part of EU defence cooperation as much as possible, by being able to keep track of changes happening in the EU's security and defence policy and possibly gaining some indirect influence on the decision-making through close cooperation. In the times of Brexit and Trump, this is crucial.<sup>84</sup> Should PESCO develop further as an EU forum for security and defence policy, Denmark would be well-advised to reconsider the opt-out altogether.<sup>85</sup>

Regarding the BSR region more specifically, it is important for Denmark that a balance between dialogue and deterrence is maintained, in which Germany plays a vital role (see above) and should not revert to advocating too much for dialogue.<sup>86</sup> The interviewed officials point out that it is essential for Denmark that Germany plays an even bigger role in the BSR and provides more support for Nordic-Baltic cooperation, of course in cooperation with Denmark and the other countries of the BSR.<sup>87</sup> A suitable set-up for this could be a strong Nordic-Baltic collaboration that includes Germany and Poland and also potentially other countries with a strong interest in the BSR, such as the UK and the Netherlands, and addresses security and defence aspects.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2)

<sup>83</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>84</sup> Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence; Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>85</sup> Interview with researcher and former ministry official at a Danish think-tank

<sup>86</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1); Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2)

<sup>87</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Interview with two officials from the Danish Ministry of Defence

<sup>88</sup> Interview with official from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2)

# WAITING FOR GODOT? ESTONIAN PERCEPTION OF GERMANY IN THE SECURITY OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Riina Kaljurand and Piret Kuusik

While German-Estonian relations have not been especially close in the past, more recently Germany has become one of Estonia's primary political partners in Europe and the EU.

This chapter assesses the current perceptions of Germany in Estonia and argues that the overall perception of Germany in Estonia is positive. Nevertheless, there are lingering doubts about Germany's commitment to collective security and Germany's attitudes towards Russia. Estonia welcomes Germany's increased participation in the Baltic Sea region (BSR), however, Estonia is more interested in Germany's leadership in the EU that unites the Member States, includes small states and represents the trials and aspirations of the BSR.

This chapter starts by briefly discussing the divergent comprehension of security in Germany and Estonia, and then moves on to discuss Estonia's perceptions of Germany as a hard security actor in the BSR, from the perspective of military and political cooperation. This is followed by an overview of issues that shape Estonia's perceptions of Germany as a soft security actor in the region. The chapter ends with the authors' concluding remarks. Our research is based on interviews with foreign and security policy-makers in Estonia.

## Context matters: understanding 'security' in Estonia

Different comprehensions of security in Estonia and Germany create the context for perception development. The security of Estonia, the BSR and Europe is the primary concern of Estonia's politics. Security is mostly understood from the perspective of hard security – military security and

defence, where emphasis is on relations with the North Atlantic alliance and the US. Estonia looks at security as a regional challenge first and foremost, and then as a global one. Defence developments in the EU are seen as complementary to NATO's guarantees. The transatlantic alliance is the primary platform for Estonia in matters of defence and security.

There is a strong belief at all levels of Estonian policy-making processes that the cornerstone of European and BSR's security is the US. In terms of European partners, Estonia looks to the UK, since the UK has a strong attachment to the region, shares Estonia's belief in the primacy of NATO and is concerned about the challenges posed by Russia. The Brits and Estonians have already established a military-to-military relationship which was developed in Afghanistan, and has been further enforced with the presence of British troops in Estonia in the framework of NATO's enhanced forward presence (EFP).<sup>1</sup> Now, with the presence of France in Estonia on the backdrop of France-UK defence cooperation, Estonia's involvement with the European Intervention Initiative and with the development of PESCO in the EU, Estonia is pursuing deeper cooperation with France. Nevertheless, Estonia is concerned that France's intervention initiative might divert attention away from the BSR in Europe.

Estonia and Germany view security differently. According to the white paper on German security policy and the future of the Bundeswehr,<sup>2</sup> published in 2016, Germany is to play a more international role as a security provider globally. It seems that with the implementation of a comprehensive approach – bringing security and development together – in Germany and taking steps to strengthen the UN, Germany is to focus more on providing security in the areas outside of the EU, the alliance and Europe.<sup>3</sup> Germany supports the development of PESCO and other defence initiatives in the EU, while in NATO, Germany continues to be a more modest player. However,

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<sup>1</sup> Riina Kaljurand, Tony Lawrence, Pauli Järvenpää, Tomas Jermalavičius, 'Brexit and the Baltic Sea Security', International Centre for Defence and Security, <https://www.icds.ee/publications/article/brexit-and-baltic-sea-security/>

<sup>2</sup> The Federal Government of Germany, 'White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr', <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/white-paper-german-security-policy-and-future-bundeswehr>

<sup>3</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, 'Europäischer werden, transatlantisch bleiben [Becoming European, Staying Transatlantic]', Munich Security Conference 2018, 16/02/2018, <https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/europaeischer-werden--transatlantisch-bleiben-22174>

the new government of 2018 has expressed commitments to invest into Europe and the transatlantic relations.<sup>4</sup>

The conflicting definitions of security between Germany and Estonia are vital for understanding how perceptions develop in Estonia. Prevalence is given to hard security and the focus is centred around national and regional security, whereas Germany's outlook on security is global and brings together trends from a wider spectrum of fields, such as development. Therefore, how Germany is perceived in Estonia with regard to the security of the region depends on Germany's policies *vis-à-vis* hard security, military and Russia first and foremost.

## Germany As a Hard Security Actor in the Region

Since security is the primary concern of Estonia's foreign and domestic policy, the starting point for this analysis is to look at the perceptions of Germany from a hard security perspective. There is little belief in Germany as a hard security actor in the region since, from Estonia's point of view, Germany lacks both the military might and political will to play a substantially important role in the security of the region.

### Military Cooperation

Military cooperation between Germany and Estonia is very active and people-to-people relations are strong. Prior to 2014, Germany's input into Estonia's defence was most visible through supporting the education of Estonia's officers' corps and participation in exercises. Since 2014, the German footprint in Estonia has increased and Estonia only welcomes this.

In 2014, Germany decided to return to the NATO Baltic air policing mission as an active participant. Prior to 2014, Germany took part in the mission in every few years, however, since 2014, Luftwaffe has been flying in the mission every year. Participation in the military exercises, most notably the annual Spring Storm in recent years, has been a strong factor in shaping

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<sup>4</sup> Christian Thiels, 'Transatlantisch bleiben, europäischer werden [Staying Transatlantic, becoming European]', 21/03/2018, <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/regierung-sicherheitspolitik-101.html>

the perception of Germany as a partner in defence.<sup>5,6</sup> Germany's support of BALTFOR over many years is also significant. Additionally, in July 2016 two companies from Bundeswehr's 231st Mountain Rifle Battalion, visited Estonia for three months and thus fostered deeper relations between the defence forces of the two countries.<sup>7</sup>

Germany's leadership in the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) has been noteworthy and serves as an example of Germany's activities in the defence realm. The aim of the NFIU is to facilitate rapid deployment of NATO units kept in high readiness.<sup>8</sup> Recently, the unit has not received as much attention since NATO's EFP is at the centre of deterrence efforts, both within NATO and Estonia. NFIU is an example of Germany's way of leading efforts in the foreign policy and defence realm, where institutionalisation and consensus-based leadership are the key principles in fostering cooperation. The NFIU has a strong symbolic significance, but has not had any solid practical implications yet.

It is also to Estonia's liking that Germany has taken very seriously the development of cyber capabilities in multilateral platforms and its own structures. Germany is one of the founding members of NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) and has been an active contributor to the Centre over the years. Additionally, Estonia is very pleased that Germany has established a cyber command within its own structures and thus shows its commitment to cyber security and acts as an example to others.

However, Bundeswehr's lack of resources – financial, capabilities and personnel- undermine the relations and decrease the credibility and trust that Estonia has for Germany and its ability to take part in the defence of the region as an active and reliable actor. Recent internal accounts confirm

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<sup>5</sup> ERR news, 'Fotod: Kevadtormil osaleb kaheksa Saksa tanki [Photos: Eight German Tanks take part of Spring Storm]', 12/05/2017, <https://www.err.ee/595359/fotod-kevadtormil-osaleb-kaheksa-saksa-tanki>

<sup>6</sup> Taavi Rõivas, 'Peaminister Kevadtormil: iseseisva kaitsevõime järjekindel arendamine kindlustab Eesti julgeoleku [Prime Minister at Spring Storm: developing consistently independent defence capabilities secures Estonia's security]', 21/05/2016, <https://www.valitsus.ee/et/uudised/peaminister-kevadtormil-iseseisva-kaitsevoime-jarjekindel-arendamine-kindlustab-eesti>

<sup>7</sup> ERR news, 'Deputy chief of German Army visits, discusses cooperation with Estonian military', 04/10/2016, <https://news.err.ee/118708/deputy-chief-of-german-army-visits-discusses-cooperation-with-estonian-military>

<sup>8</sup> NFIU Estonia, <https://jfcbs.nato.int/page5725819/nato-force-integration-units/nfiu-estonia>

Estonia's perception of Bundeswehr as an ill-equipped army.<sup>9</sup> *'It is hard to speak softly, when there is not a big stick to carry'*, as was noted in one of the interviews.

In recent years, Germany has increased its footprint in Estonia and has taken part in defence-related activities and developments to the best of its capabilities. Thus, the perception is created of Germany as relatively willing to engage with the region, however, lacking the necessary resources to give any substantial input to increasing security in the region through military means.

## Political cooperation

Estonia has welcomed increased German attention to the region since 2014, however, uncertainty remains due to Germany's policies towards Russia and the alliances' collective security.

In the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Estonia welcomed the surge of high-level visits and increased attention to the region. Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier visited Estonia in 2014, 2015 and 2016 and as a *Bundespräsident* in 2017. Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen visited Estonia in 2015 and 2017. Estonia also enjoyed Chancellor Merkel's visit in 2016 and 2017 during the digital summit in September. According to estimates, around 5000 German official and soldiers visited the three Baltic States in the space of one year. During the visits, Germany made strong commitments of solidarity with Estonia and the region.<sup>10</sup>

Commitments of solidarity were treated with a sense of scepticism at first, however, to Estonia's great surprise Germany decided to take up the lead-country position in NATO's EFP in Lithuania. Estonia had been waiting for this type of political commitment from Europe and Germany's willingness to take up the leadership of EFP is interpreted as a sign that changes in German foreign and security policy thinking are taking place.

Namely, the community in charge of the Estonian security and foreign policy-making recognises Germany's domestic struggles in matters of defence and security. There is a strong understanding that defence and

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<sup>9</sup> Tobias Buck, 'German military: combat ready?', 15/02/2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/36e2cd40-0fdf-11e8-940e-08320fc2a277>

<sup>10</sup> Deutsche Welle, 'Germany assures Estonia of NATO backing', 14/04/2014, <http://www.dw.com/en/germany-assures-estonia-of-nato-backing/a-18380460>

security are contentious issues in the public discourse of Germany and thus the challenges and shortfalls of Germany's leadership are acknowledged. However, for Germany to play a credible security provider role in the region, it is necessary for Estonia to see further steps, similar to taking up the EFP lead in Lithuania, from Germany.

From the perspective of political cooperation, there are two central sticking points that shape Estonia's perception of Germany as a hard security actor. These are – Germany's attitudes towards Russia and its commitment to collective security. In both cases, uncertainty in Estonia is driven by Germany doubting the intentions of Russia and questioning the need to strengthen collective security.

One interviewee characterised Germany's policy towards Russia in the pre-2014 period as 'wishful thinking' – Germany's doubts in Russia's actions in Georgia in 2008, and a lack of investment into military and defence capabilities. However, it is evident to Estonia that the thinking in Germany has changed and Germany is paying more attention to the BSR than before. This is shaping the perception of Germany in a more positive direction.

However, many interviewees expressed surprise that Germany still treats Russia as a reliable partner and is willing to tie Europe with Russia, when Russia has clearly demonstrated its motives by deliberately causing friction between EU Member States and their allies. While Estonia understands the domestic pressures in Germany, these aggravations remain.

The first is Nord Stream 2. In addition to immediate security concerns in the BSR, Estonia is concerned with the larger effects of the project – tying Berlin and Moscow in an unreliable relationship, undermining common European energy policy and the impact on Ukraine. For Estonia, it is a little hypocritical to further European integration and ensure stability in the region, when at the same time Germany is pursuing policies that undermine this same stability and integration.

Additionally, Estonia is following the German government's response to the German business community's critical voice towards sanctions against Russia very closely. EU sanctions are an important measure for Estonia to counter Russia's aggressive and destabilising behaviour in the region.

The second issue driving perceptions of Germany in Estonia was Germany's insistence of a dialogue with Russia. Estonia supports maintaining a dialogue with Russia, but when it is the right time to do so. A case in point

is the so-called 'Steinmeier Dialogue' at the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>11</sup> While Estonia agrees that arms control is very important and the current treaties are outdated with regards to recent developments in technology and international affairs, it is also clear that Russia is not willing to have this conversation for the time being, and thus it is hard to see the reasoning behind the insistence for a dialogue with Russia. For Estonia, dialogue can never serve as a substitute for strengthening collective security. Estonia is of the opinion that strengthening collective security must come first, after which keeping a dialogue is only welcomed when the opposing party or parties are open to this.

When it comes to collective security, then the primary issue shaping Estonia's opinions about Germany is its defence spending. While Germany has increased its defence spending, then it is nowhere near the agreed 2% of GDP at NATO Wales Summit. While the interviewees noted that spending 2% on defence is a challenging undertaking, especially considering the amount of financial resources in the German context, then from Estonia's point of view spending 2% demonstrates a strong political commitment to the transatlantic partnership, security of Europe and the BSR. However, most importantly, spending more on defence means an increase in capabilities and for Estonia this is key. Spending 2% on defence would give weight to Germany's talk of commitment and solidarity and would serve as the much-needed political action that Estonia craves for, however, increasing defence capabilities that benefit the region and Europe at large is Estonia's primary interest.

There is a strong consensus in the Estonian foreign and defence policy community that changes in the German foreign and security policy thinking are taking place. This was demonstrated by Germany's agreement to take the position of EFP lead country in Lithuania. In Estonia, this is welcomed and is increasing positive sentiments towards Germany. Nevertheless, uncertainty also exists. Germany's support to the Nord Stream 2 project and insistence of dialogue with Russia, sometimes as a substitute to strengthening collective security, remain sources of the negative perception of Germany in the overall perception of Germany as an important partner in Europe.

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<sup>11</sup> OSCE Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security, 'Renewing Dialogue on European Security: A Way Forward', 23/11/2016, <https://www.osce.org/networks/291001?download=true>

## Germany as a Soft Security Actor

The overall positive perception of Germany continues in matters of soft security. Germany's open attitude towards digital developments is an immense source of pride for Estonia. In recent years, an interesting trend has emerged where perceptions of Germany have been shaped by Germany's actions outside of the region. Chancellor Merkel's response to the migration crisis in 2015 gave a surge to populist anti-immigration voices in the Estonian political spectrum and made Estonia a little wary of Germany's leadership in Europe. Subsequently, Germany's response to the eurozone crisis has increased Germany's reliability and positive image in Estonia.

The issue shaping the discourse and perceptions of Germany by Estonia from a soft security perspective is the handling of the migration crisis by the EU and Germany in 2015. Here, the perceptions about the EU and Germany have merged somewhat. Estonia's response to the migration crisis has been a balancing act between meeting the calls for European solidarity and objections to the European Commission's mandatory quota policy. However, in relation to the perceptions of Germany in Estonia, two important issues arose from the summer-autumn events of 2015 for Estonia.

Firstly, the European Commission's quota policy and Chancellor Merkel's declaration of an 'open door policy' gave a push to an already existing anti-European nationalist party – the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (*Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond; EKRE*).<sup>12</sup> EKRE's sentiments had a following prior to 2015, however, Chancellor Merkel's call and the EU's ensuing policy provided momentum for the party. In the 2015 parliamentary elections, EKRE entered the 101-seat parliament, gaining 7 places.<sup>13</sup> Today, EKRE is the third most popular party in Estonia.<sup>14</sup>

EKRE is highly suspicious of Germany and thinks Germany is enforcing non-Christian European values onto the smaller countries of Europe. EKRE is very critical of Germany's policy towards Russia and Nord Stream 2 and has been openly vocal about expressing its disdain towards Germany and Chancellor Merkel, most notably, organising public pickets

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<sup>12</sup> Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond [The Conservative People's Party of Estonia], <https://www.ekre.ee/>

<sup>13</sup> Riigikogu Valimised 2015 [Parliamentary Elections 2015], <http://rk2015.vvk.ee/>

<sup>14</sup> Erakondade toetusreitingud [Party Popularity], <http://www.emor.ee/erakondade-toetus/>

during Chancellor Merkel's visits to Tallinn in 2016<sup>15</sup> and 2017.<sup>16</sup> While in the matters of hard security, EKRE tends to be aligned with the general consensus in Estonia, then in matters of the EU, immigration, sustainability of the Estonian population, LGBT rights, EKRE runs a clear and strong contrary course.

Secondly, Chancellor Merkel's unilateral response to the migration crisis made Estonia somewhat cautious towards Germany's general leadership in the EU. Interviewees noted that Chancellor Merkel's unilateral decision to invite war refugees to Germany is understandable from a humanist point of view, however, it made them question whether this would be the way Germany's leadership would be exercised in the future. Estonia strongly believes in an inclusive EU, where the opinions of all Member States, irrespective of their size, economic contribution or population, are counted equally.

This opens the question of Estonia's perceptions towards Germany's leadership in the EU. Estonia welcomes Germany's leadership and whichever way Europe moves – single or multispeed – Estonia wants to be part of the core Europe. Estonia is a pro-European country and is very grateful to Germany for uniting and keeping Europe together in the recent tremulous years.

The effects of this single decision – Chancellor Merkel's open door policy – display the extent of Germany's already existing power and influence in Europe. The country leading the EU will have a direct consequence on the domestic politics of Member States.

Another issue shaping opinions about Germany is Germany's attitude towards digital developments and cyber security. Estonia loves 'digital' and Germany's increased interest in Estonia's digital agenda is welcomed with open arms. Estonia sees Germany as a strong partner in digital efforts and wishes that Germany would adopt more of its digital solutions, as well as support developments in this area in the EU. Most notably, Estonia was

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<sup>15</sup> Delfi, 'DELFI FOTOD: EKRE tervitab Merkelit Toompeal piketiga massiimmigratsiooni vastu [DELFI Photo: EKRE welcomes Merkel in Toompea with a picket against mass immigration]', 24/08/2016, <http://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/eeesti/delfi-fotod-ekre-tervitab-merkelit-toompeal-piketiga-massiimmigratsiooni-vastu?id=75436855>

<sup>16</sup> ERR News, 'EKRE to picket during Merkel visit in Tallinn', 28/09/2017, <https://news.err.ee/633164/ekre-to-picket-during-merkel-visit-in-tallinn>

satisfied when the former Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas was invited to talk about Estonia's digital agenda and solutions to Germany's government.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, in the realms of cyber security, Estonia is very pleased see the creation of cyber commands in Germany's state structures and its increased attention and support to cyber security.

The Eastern Partnership is an important topic in Estonia's foreign policy. Estonia is working on becoming the gateway and centre for Eastern Partnership<sup>18</sup> countries.<sup>19</sup> It is important for Estonia to bring the countries in the Eastern Neighbourhood closer to the EU through reforms and support for citizens' lives. For Estonia, the Eastern Partnership carries both importance in terms of geopolitics- limits the sphere of influence of Russia- and serves as a tool for Estonia to uphold and project the values of the EU. From the Estonian perspective, Germany's 'geo-strategic caution'<sup>20</sup> is at times too strong and it welcomes Germany's committed engagement with the Eastern Partnership.

Finally, Germany's leadership during the euro crisis and reforming the eurozone has increased the positive image of Germany in Estonia. Estonia and Germany think alike with regard to the eurozone and European Monetary Union developments. Estonia falls in the same line as the northern states of the EU, favouring respect for budget rules, national responsibility and increasing dynamic competition on the single market. Germany standing for these principles has been a source of positive perception in Estonia.

Fundamentally, Estonia does not suffer from 'Germany allergy'. Estonia's security and foreign policy community does not worry about the rearmament of Germany or the leadership by Germany of Europe. Thus, arguments of this kind are met with confusion and understanding at the

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<sup>17</sup> The Government of Estonia, 'Peaminister Rõivas Saksamaa valitsusele: e-riik ja küberturvalisus käivad käsikäes [Prime Minister Rõivas to the German Government: e-country and cyber security go hand in hand]', 24/05/2016, <https://www.valitsus.ee/et/uudised/peaminister-roivas-saksamaa-valitsusele-e-riik-ja-kuberturvalisus-kaivad-kasikaes>

<sup>18</sup> Eastern Partnership countries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine

<sup>19</sup> ERR News, 'Eastern Partnership countries encouraged to enter EU market via Estonia', 28/10/2017, <https://news.err.ee/639221/eastern-partnership-countries-encouraged-to-enter-eu-market-via-estonia>

<sup>20</sup> Liana Fix, 'Germany and the Eastern Partnership After the Ukraine Crisis', Note du Cerfa 128, 2016, [https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ndc\\_128\\_kirch\\_fix\\_en.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ndc_128_kirch_fix_en.pdf)

same time. It is known that various German organisations support projects of different kinds (conferences, events etc.), however this has not left a significant mark on the perception of Germany in Estonia.

A number of times, the interviewees mentioned that in Estonia, Germany is often perceived as a very slow country and at times this might be interpreted as Germany's apprehensive attitude. However, many reflected that Estonia is accustomed to seeing fast developments and quick responses since, in comparison to Germany, Estonia's governance machinery is very small. Therefore, it is common for Estonia to become a little impatient when cooperating with Germany.

To conclude, in matters of soft security, perceptions of Germany in Estonia have recently driven by migration crisis and Germany's response to it. However, it is hard to assess how much it has affected views on Germany per se, and how much it is connected to the wider debate on about immigration and the EU. Still, Germany's continuous interest in Estonia's digital developments and Germany's leadership in Eurozone are a source of positive impressions of Germany. Nevertheless, security and defence are the primary concern for Estonia and therefore dominate both bilateral and multilateral relations.

## Conclusion

The overall perception of Germany in Estonia is positive. It is evident that Estonian and German strategic cultures differ a great deal and thus some friction is only natural. With the growing German might in Europe, relationship between Germany and Estonia has become closer and Estonian foreign and security policy community hopes that it will continue to do so.

Since Germany's visible footprint in Estonia is small, then the perceptions of Germany are driven by issues, rather than individual agents or organisations. Access to international and German press and improved travel opportunities diversify the field of information, making it harder to track down any specific agents of influence or shapers of perception. However, in this more dynamic, faster and crowded information landscape, it is becoming clearer that being physically present is becoming more important. The presence of Estonia's other European partners – UK, France and Denmark –

in Estonia has left a mark on the foreign and security policy community and people's conscious. French and British soldiers take part of annual parades and other festive events all over Estonia, where Estonians have an opportunity to communicate and interact with them. The Brits and the French are visible and reachable and this leaves a long-lasting mark on people.

As said, specific issues tend to drive perceptions of Germany. Developments in energy, most notably Nord Stream 2, immigration and eurozone are issues semi-automatically connected to Germany and largely driving perceptions of Germany in the Estonian public discourse. Perceptions in Estonia are shaped deeply by attitudes and policies towards Russia, irrespective of the country or person. Therefore, relations between Russia and Germany are often under intense scrutiny.

Germany's activities and lack of in the field of security and defence shape the perceptions of Germany in the security of the Baltic Sea region and Estonia. Germany taking up the eFP lead country position in Lithuania has been a source of positive surprise, however, Estonia is somewhat cautious in terms of Germany being a hard security actor in the Baltic Sea region since it lacks the necessary resources and capabilities to substantially contribute to region's security. Nevertheless, commitments made by the new coalition government – investment into *Bundeswehr* and commitment to Europe and transatlantic relationship – is music to Estonia's ears. Developments in Germany are followed closely by the Estonian foreign and security community and Germany is part of future planning activities. However, the presence of other European partners – UK, France and Denmark – in Estonia leaves little room for Germany in the public media and policy landscape.

While Germany is physically a member of the Baltic Sea region, then it is just too big to be a regional player. Estonia wishes that Germany would pay attention to the region – its challenges and needs – but Germany's real importance lies in its leadership in Europe and the EU, especially in the light of revitalised Franco-German relationship. It is important for Estonia that EU continues to be inclusive and primacy is given to unity over efficiency. As Germany's leadership in Europe is growing, Estonia would like to see Germany representing region's interest, both security and economic in Europe rather than acting as a regional player in the Baltic Sea region per se.

The summer of 2015 showed that Germany possess enough wanted and unwanted influence in Europe to have an impact on the domestic politics

of other European countries, including Estonia's. Therefore, it is important for Estonia that Germany's leadership in Europe and the EU is considerate of the region and the politics of individual states, e.g. Russia, immigration, collective security and Eastern Partnership.

Germany is currently going through a transformation in their foreign and security policy thinking and this has been noted in Estonia, however, for Estonia and the region to expect that Germany will become one of the main security providers in Europe overnight is just too simplistic.

In the light of this, the following policy recommendations can be made:

- More attention to Baltic Sea region: Germany should pay more attention to the Baltic Sea region and develop a realistic vision for Europe that showcases a thorough understanding of the conditions and challenges of the region.
- Inclusive leadership of Europe: Germany should step up as a confident leader of Europe and develop a vision for Europe that is based on inclusivity of all states irrespective of size and might.
- Invest into its own military capabilities: Germany should firmly increase its defence spending. Commitment to spend 2% of GDP is also a strong political commitment for the region, however, attention should be on increasing necessary defence and military capabilities first and foremost.
- Greater involvement with the Eastern Partnership: Germany should become more engaged with the Eastern Partnership by developing a future vision for the countries and their relationship with the EU.
- Strengthen Transatlantic relationship: Germany ought to support and hold together the transatlantic relationship.
- Keep the UK involved in the security and foreign policy of the region: Germany ought to welcome UK's involvement in the security and foreign policy of Europe and the EU.
- Promote a more diligent representation of developments in Germany and Europe: Promote diligent and contextualized debates about foreign and security, immigration and European matters in the public discourse and media landscape of Estonia.
- Be present: In order to influence perceptions and image of Germany in Estonia, increase Germany's physical presence and visibility in Estonia.

# A WILLING PARTNER IN THE NORTH: FINNISH PERCEPTIONS OF GERMANY AS A BALTIC POWER

Matti Pesu, Santtu Lehtinen

After a period of cooperation and relative stability, the Baltic Sea region (BSR) has again become a potential hotspot and, hence, a principal priority for Finnish foreign and security policy. The obvious reason for this shift to a more regional focus is the worsened security situation in Europe. Moscow's assertive foreign policy, manifested not only in Ukraine, but also in the BSR, has caused concern in Finland, a country sharing a 1,340 kilometre border with Russia.

As a reaction, the BSR has drawn attention in Finnish diplomacy; references to the stability of the area abound in Finnish foreign policy debate, and Helsinki has even made a minor initiative to improve regional air safety. This is relatively unsurprising. Preserving regional stability has been a long-term objective of Finnish foreign policy, and since the end of the Cold War, maintaining the delicate regional balance has been the most powerful argument for Finnish military non-alignment.<sup>1</sup>

However, frankly, Finnish diplomatic activity has been modest. A more robust reaction has taken place in the security and defence policy. More specifically, Finland has bolstered its defence readiness and intensified security partnerships with its western partners. Finland has readily welcomed the increased presence of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and its Member States in the BSR's security, and it views credible – national and collective – deterrence as a crucial factor underpinning regional stability. Helsinki has actively ensured that the growing interest of the western alliance would also benefit Finnish security and national defence capabilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Jaakko Blomberg, 'Vakauden kaipuu. Suomi ja kylmän sodan loppu [A longing for stability. Finland and the end of the Cold War]', Helsinki: Otava, 2011

However, it is somewhat unclear what Helsinki wants from a third major NATO country, which also happens to be an important Baltic Sea power – that is, Germany. With this in mind, the text seeks to clarify the prospects of Finnish-German relations in general and Germany's stronger role in the BSR from the Finnish point of view in particular.

More specifically, by analysing key foreign policy documents, relevant comments and statements, and by conducting interviews with policy-makers, it sets about investigating Finnish perceptions of Germany's regional agency and the country's potential contributions to Baltic Sea security. The analysis is conducted not only from the perspective of diplomacy and military security, but also from the viewpoint of comprehensive security in general, and the Finnish regional priorities in particular. Additionally, the text charts possible avenues for Finnish-German cooperation and also identifies historical narratives and perceptions which affect Germany's image as a security policy partner.

Furthermore, the text pays special attention to institutions facilitating cooperation in the area. Notably, both Finland and Germany are quintessentially multilateralism-oriented states. Contrary to Russia's geopolitical *modus operandi*, the western nations of the BSR have based their policies on an institutional approach, viewing northeast Europe in terms of various institutions and interdependence.<sup>2</sup> The institutions pertinent to this study are NATO, the European Union (EU), and the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS).

Since good studies exist, that summarise the most essential developments in Finnish-German relations during the first two decades of the post-Cold War era<sup>3</sup>, the era under scrutiny is the contemporary, 'post-Crimean' security environment, with all its challenges and dangers.

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<sup>2</sup> Katri Pynnöniemi and Charly Saloni-Pasternak, 'Security in the Baltic Sea Region. Activation of Risk Potential', FIIA Briefing Paper 196, June 2016, 3, <https://www.fiaa.fi/julkaisu/security-in-the-baltic-sea-region?read>; see also Heather A. Conley, Jeffrey Rathke and Matthew Melino, 'Enhanced Deterrence in the North: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century European Engagement Strategy', CSIS Report, 2018

<sup>3</sup> Tuomas Forsberg, 'A friend in need or a friend indeed? Finnish perceptions of Germany's role in the EU and Europe', UPI Working Papers 24, 2000; Glenn R. Gassen, 'Getting along with Gulliver. A Review of Finnish-German Relations', FIIA Working Papers 64, 2010

## Finnish-German relations: historical narratives and perception drivers

Neither individual nor institutionalised collective perceptions and images take shape in a historical vacuum. It is thus important to recognise the role of the societal context – and the historical narratives it entails. Although cooperation between states is interest-driven, interests are constructed in an environment saturated with historical knowledge, which also conditions bilateral international relations.

In its national narrative, Finland has traditionally emphasised sovereignty and security through defence. Indeed, Finnish independence and its national narrative were constructed through the formative experiences of the European 20th century turmoil. From the perspective of strategic culture, *‘national defence still plays a pivotal role in the construction of Finnish nationhood’*.<sup>4</sup> Finland’s traditional geopolitical ‘triangle of fate’<sup>5</sup> has been Moscow, Stockholm and, importantly, Berlin and, as a result, the Finnish narrative focuses on survival in the precarious geopolitical environment of the BSR – the area between Germany and Russia. This strategy of “survival” is still regarded as a successful one, although traditional small state realism is guiding Finnish foreign policy to a much lesser extent<sup>6</sup> than in the Cold War, or the early years of the post-Cold War era.

Viewed through historical and geopolitical lenses, Germany has more than once been the traditional balancing element against perceived and actual threats from the East and a safeguard for Finnish sovereignty.<sup>7</sup> This history has its links with recent political musings. Receiving and giving military assistance has been widely discussed in Finland lately, especially in the context of the tense situation in the BSR. In what terms could Finland be assisted in a military conflict and under which conditions would Finland assist its partners? For example, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö has questioned Chancellor Angela Merkel about the reaction of the EU in the case of a possible breach

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<sup>4</sup> Antti Seppo and Tuomas Forsberg, ‘Finland,’ in: *Strategic Cultures in Europe: security and defence policies across the continent*, ed. Heiko Biel et al. Springer, 2013, 113

<sup>5</sup> Hiski Haukkala, *Suomen muuttuvat koordinaatit [Finland’s changing coordinates]*, Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 2012

<sup>6</sup> Antti Seppo and Tuomas Forsberg, ‘Finland’, *op.cit.*, 114

<sup>7</sup> Tuomas Forsberg, ‘A friend in need or a friend indeed?’, *op.cit.*, 5

of the territorial integrity, although actual discussions regarding possible bilateral assistance in defence matters have not taken place.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, Germany is the only country that has assisted Finland militarily during its independence, by sending its troops to Finland. Imperial Germany first intervened in Finnish affairs in 1918, during the Finnish Civil War, when the pro-government Whites requested help from Germany in the war against the Red revolutionaries. Imperial Germany's role in the formation of the *Jäger* movement,<sup>9</sup> which helped to develop the defence forces of independent Finland, is still widely revered and celebrated in Finland.<sup>10</sup>

In two major historical junctions, Germany has been a crucial partner for Finland and German troops have entered Finnish soil. Regardless of the historical accuracy or the political complexities and motives in Germany and Finland at that time, the Finnish narrative has been strongly affected by the historical experience of German willingness to provide military assistance to Finland during the First and Second World War. Consequently, German assistance and support has left an impression of Germany as '*Finland's saviour that remained in the Finnish consciousness*'.<sup>11</sup>

However, the historical narrative on German assistance to Finland and the co-belligerence, *Waffenbrüderschaft*, between the two countries has a mixed legacy. In both the First and Second World War, the German assistance gave short-term backing for Finland's capacity first to achieve and then defend its sovereignty. Furthermore, and importantly, in both cases the assistance was also a long-term threat to Finnish autonomy – the very thing it intended to preserve. Had Germany actually become the dominant player in Europe during the First or Second World War, Finland would most likely have been demoted to the position of a 'colony' of Germany.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Finland Times, 'Finland, Germany stress boosting European security', 03/03/2015, <http://www.finlandtimes.fi/national/2015/03/31/15593/Finland,-Germany-stress-boosting-European-security>

<sup>9</sup> Jägers were Finnish 'freedom fighters' who were trained and later served in the imperial German army during the First World War

<sup>10</sup> Forsberg, 'A friend in need or a friend indeed?', op.cit., 2–5; Gassen, 'Getting along with Gulliver. A Review of Finnish–German Relations', op.cit., 20

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 'A friend in need or a friend indeed?', op.cit., 2–5

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.; Marjaliisa Hentilä & Seppo Hentilä, *Saksalainen Suomi 1918* [A German Finland 1918], Helsinki: Siltala, 2016; Ville Jalovaara, 'Kun Suomesta melkein tuli Saksan siirtomaa [When Finland almost became a German colony]', 18/11/2016, <http://www.ennnenjanyt.net/2016/11/kun-suomesta-melkein-tuli-saksan-siirtomaa/>

Finland's traditional contacts with Germany were all but lost at the end of the Second World War, as the relationship between the countries became more complex. During the Cold War, Finland had to perform a balancing act between East and West Germany as a part of a larger struggle between the East and the West.<sup>13</sup> Bonn remained distant from Finland as the Soviet Union had suspicions about West German influence in Finland. In fact, the relationship with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) carried more political weight, as Finnish left-leaning parties had close contacts with their East German counterparts and the country's intelligence service, *Stasi*. Moreover, some features of the East German political system had appeal in the Finnish political field.

The dynamics of the Cold War dictated Finnish perceptions of Germany. The possibility of Finland having been used as a launching platform for an attack towards the Soviet Union was the nightmare scenario for Finnish leadership. The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between Finland and the Soviet Union mandated that, in the case of a German threat, there would be military consultations between Finland and the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

After the German unification, Finland returned to 'normality' in its relations with Germany. The 'abnormal' military relations between the countries during the Cold War, which stemmed from the restrictions placed onto Finland by the 1947 Paris Peace Agreement, were normalised in the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> Germany no longer had a special status as a military power or a potential troublemaker. Rather, it was a country which shared a comparatively common vision of the future of European integration, and, therefore, was an actor worth identifying with. This identification has happened especially in the EU, where Germany is an important reference group for Finland. From the Finnish point of view, Germany has been '*perceived as more predictable and accessible than other big Member States*', which importantly has not seen Finnish military non-alignment as a problem.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the rich Finnish-German history, few, if any, notable policy-makers in Finland proactively advocate closer connections with Germany.

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<sup>13</sup> Seppo Hentilä, *Kaksi Saksaa ja Suomi* [Two Germanies and Finland], Helsinki: SKS, 2003

<sup>14</sup> Forsberg, 'A friend in need or a friend indeed?', op.cit. 5–6

<sup>15</sup> Gassen, 'Getting along with Gulliver', op.cit., 20

<sup>16</sup> Timo Soini, 'Speech at the autumn meeting of the National Defence Course Association', 19/10/2017

Neither are there people who warn against such cooperation. It seems Germany is simply not counted among the powers, such as the United States or Russia, which creates divisions in the relatively consensual Finnish foreign policy-making environment. Thus, Finland lacks ‘Mr or Ms Germany’ – a high-level pro-German politician, like, for example, the former prime minister, Paavo Lipponen, or the former chairman of the National Coalition Party and minister of trade and industry, Ilkka Suominen.<sup>17</sup>

However, it is noteworthy that personal connections between Finland and Germany at the highest level appear to be working. This is exemplified by the fact that leading politicians in Finland hold Chancellor Angela Merkel in high esteem. Both President Sauli Niinistö and Prime Minister Juha Sipilä have expressed their admiration of Merkel, her leadership and sense of duty.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, and perhaps as a result, Merkel was the first laureate of the Finnish government’s international gender equality prize.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore no wonder that, in Finland, Merkel’s fourth term was widely seen as a reassuring and positive sign in an otherwise turbulent European political landscape.

## Finland and Germany in the Baltic Sea region: the big picture

The Baltic Sea has been a traditional link and a supply route between Finland and Germany which people, goods, culture, and religion have used for hundreds of years. This has created a common heritage connecting Finland to the wider German cultural sphere.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with a government official, 7 March, 2018 (1)

<sup>18</sup> Susanna Turunen, ‘Presidentti Sauli Niinistö Ylen podcast-sarjassa: Merkel on ihminen, jota kovasti ihailen [President Sauli Niinistö in a Yle podcast series: Merkel is a person I truly admire]’, 21/04/2017, <https://yle.fi/utiset/3-9573972>; Haloo Eurooppa [Hello Europe], 11/09/2017, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-4226454>

<sup>19</sup> Finnish Government, ‘Finnish government’s international gender equality prize goes to Angela Merkel’, 14/12/2017, [http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset\\_publisher/10616/suomen-hallituksen-kansainvalinen-tasa-arvopalkinto-liittokansleri-angela-merkelille](http://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/10616/suomen-hallituksen-kansainvalinen-tasa-arvopalkinto-liittokansleri-angela-merkelille)

<sup>20</sup> Ritva Koukku-Ronde, ‘Saksalle Itämeri on yhteistyön, hyvinvoinnin ja rauhan meri [For Germany the Baltic Sea is a sea of cooperation, prosperity, and peace]’, 08/12/2016, [http://www.centrumbalticum.org/uutishuone/julkaisut/pulloposti/saksalle\\_itameri\\_on\\_yhteistyön\\_hyvinvoinnin\\_ja\\_rauhan\\_meri.3532.news?3155\\_o=30](http://www.centrumbalticum.org/uutishuone/julkaisut/pulloposti/saksalle_itameri_on_yhteistyön_hyvinvoinnin_ja_rauhan_meri.3532.news?3155_o=30)

The Baltic Sea is crucial for Finland's global trade, as over 80% of Finnish trade is transported through the Baltic waters. Thus, Finland is dependent upon the logistics of sea transport and maritime infrastructure, which further highlights the importance of the region.<sup>21</sup> Former prime minister, Alexander Stubb, has aptly called the Baltic Sea Finland's 'window to the world'.<sup>22</sup> The fact that the Baltic Sea links Finland to Germany is essential. Not only is Germany Finland's most important trading partner, but German harbours in the Baltic Sea, such as Travemünde, Rostock and Hamburg, are also central to Finland's trade with the wider world.<sup>23</sup>

Along with good bilateral relations, the interests of Finland and Germany have tended to converge on regional issues. Environmental issues, workforce mobility and removal of barriers affecting this, a functioning maritime infrastructure and sustainable energy solutions are important for both Helsinki and Berlin.<sup>24</sup> Notwithstanding the common views, a clear asymmetry between the countries is however present. For Finland, the Baltic Sea cooperation is of the utmost importance and '*a matter for the president and the prime minister*', whereas for Germany the region is '*just one neighbourhood among many*'.<sup>25</sup>

Despite this asymmetry, Finland still has a major interest in Germany's regional presence. From the Finnish point of view, Germany has been especially important in the process of incorporating Russia into the regional cooperation and towards Europe in general.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Prime Minister's Office, 'Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region', 2017. <https://vnk.fi/en/finland-s-strategy-for-the-baltic-sea-region>

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Stubb, Speech at the Pohjola-Norden Seminar, 17/11/2009. <https://um.fi/speeches?nodeid=15149&contentlan=2&culture=en-US&listFocus=7783&listMode=1&page=19>

<sup>23</sup> Koukku-Ronde, 'For Germany the Baltic Sea is a sea of cooperation, prosperity, and peace', op.cit.

<sup>24</sup> Glenn R. Gassen, 'Getting along with Gulliver. A Review of Finnish-German Relations', FIIA Working Papers 64, 2010, 26; Ritva Koukku-Ronde, 'For Germany the Baltic Sea is a sea of cooperation, prosperity, and peace', op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 27

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 9–10; 28

## Finnish perceptions on Germany's role in the Baltic Sea's politics

Regardless of the overall positive perceptions, just a few glances at the relevant Finnish foreign and defence policy white papers reveal that Germany is not necessarily seen as a credible hard security actor – at least for the time being. For example, the government's report of 2016 on Finnish foreign and security policy does not include a single reference to Germany.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the defence white paper of 2017 mentions Germany once, as an interesting defence partner among approximately half a dozen other states.<sup>28</sup>

However, there are some indications that a change might be underway. In his speech held in October 2017, Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini emphatically stressed Germany's role as an important international player.<sup>29</sup> The minister highlighted that Germany's European and global influence is growing, and Helsinki should intensify bilateral relations with Berlin. Soini's speech was not rich in detail but he nonetheless identified three policy areas, where Germany's increased contribution could be fruitful: the Baltic Sea security, the prospects of Finnish NATO partnership, and binding Russia more closely to the international legal order. So far, nothing noticeable has taken place with regard to the aforementioned policy areas. The impression in Finland however is that Germany is much more interested in the region than it was a decade earlier.<sup>30</sup>

When it comes to foreign policy and the attitude towards Russia in particular, Germany and Finland's approaches are relatively similar, something that Finnish policy-makers acknowledge. For example, after the Crimean annexation, the subsequent war in Ukraine, and the 2018 nerve agent attack in the United Kingdom, Germany's line acted as a benchmark for Finnish policies.

Indeed, both Helsinki and Berlin see Moscow as the main culprit of the worsened European security situation, and they have reconsidered their longstanding Russia policies. More specifically, Finland, which has

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<sup>27</sup> Prime Minister's Office, 'Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy', 2016. <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/documents/10616/1986338/VNKJ092016+en.pdf/b33c3703-29f4-4cce-a910-b05e32b676b9>

<sup>28</sup> Prime Minister's Office, 'Government's Defence Report', 2017. [https://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07\\_2017\\_Governments\\_Defence\\_Report\\_Eng\\_PLM\\_160217.pdf](https://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07_2017_Governments_Defence_Report_Eng_PLM_160217.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Soini, 'Speech at the autumn meeting of the National Defence Course Association', op.cit.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with a government official, 07/03/2018 (1)

historically put emphasis on cordial and functioning relations with its eastern neighbour, has grown much more critical of Russia's policies and Kremlin's visions of international order, and it proactively voices its negative position. Germany has in turn abandoned its old practices of *Ostpolitik* by leading the common European response to Russia's action in Ukraine.<sup>31</sup> However, the accommodating postures towards Russia of the respective states have not died altogether. Although Finland and Germany support robust deterrence against Russia's further aggressions, in contrary to some other European nations, they also highlight the importance of dialogue between the West and Russia. That said, it is likely that Finland would welcome Germany's increased contribution also to the Baltic Sea security and it would not be hard to find common diplomatic priorities for Finland and Germany.

Helsinki and Berlin's pragmatic attitudes towards Russia have been visible, not only in traditional diplomacy, but also in energy policy – a highly politicised domain in the European political landscape. Both Finland and Germany supported the Nord Stream 1 (NS1) pipeline inaugurated in October, 2012. The NS1 and the planned Nord Stream 2 (NS2) have a geostrategic effect on the BSR.<sup>32</sup> According to the plans, NS2 would stretch along the existing NS1 pipeline from Vyborg, Russia to Lubmin near Greifswald, Germany passing through the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of five countries and the territorial waters of Russia, Denmark and Germany. Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine, coupled with its geopolitical and economic objectives regarding NS2 have complicated the construction of NS2, and critical voices have come not only from the Baltic States, but also from the United States and the European Commission.

Germany's line has also become less straightforward. Angela Merkel has recently stated that the Nord Stream 2 project cannot continue without the clarification of the political and strategic ramifications for Ukraine's role in Europe's gas transit. Nonetheless, Germany and Finland have officially approved the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline through their waters.

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<sup>31</sup> See e.g. Tuomas Forsberg, 'From Ostpolitik to 'frostpolitik'? Merkel, Putin and German foreign policy towards Russia', in: *International Affairs* 92, no.1, 2016, 21–42; Marco Siddi, 'German Foreign Policy towards Russia in the Aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis: A New Ostpolitik?', in: *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4, 2016, 665–677

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. Mikael Wigell and Antto Vihma, 'Geopolitics versus geoeconomics: the case of Russia's geostrategy and its effects on the EU', in: *International Affairs* 92 no. 4, 2016, 605–627

Unlike other Nordic nations which have voiced security concerns over the pipeline, Finland has emphasised Nord Stream primarily as a commercial project, with potential environmental and ecological aspects. Although the Finnish government sees ‘a geopolitical dimension’ in Russia’s activities in the field of energy, it has declined to address this dimension through political means. The government has stressed that NS2 poses no ‘direct security effects towards Finland’.<sup>33</sup> However, although Finland has not publicly used Germany’s stand to back up its own line, evidently Germany’s approach matters. For example, Matti Vanhanen, speaker of the parliament’s foreign affairs committee, has stressed that the permit to build NS2 should not be politicised and stated that ‘Finland shouldn’t give Germany advice on how to handle their energy needs’.<sup>34</sup>

Although Berlin has stepped up as a diplomatic actor, and is a major geo-economic player in European security, it has been unable – and unwilling – to translate its strengths into credible military power. After the Trump administration adopted the military burden-sharing question as an integral part of its Europe policy, Germany’s alleged ‘free-riding’ and the sorry state of the *Bundeswehr* have been in the spotlight.<sup>35</sup> For the BSR, the state of the German armed forces is not irrelevant. Currently, Germany’s capacity to deploy battle groups, for example to the Baltic States, in the event of a conflict is deemed to be comparatively limited.<sup>36</sup>

In defence policy, Finnish–German cooperation has traditionally revolved around crisis management and procurements.<sup>37</sup> Regional security and territorial defence have so far been of minor importance. However, from the Finnish point of view, other forms of defence cooperation are now

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<sup>33</sup> The Parliament of Finland, ‘Vastaus kirjalliseen kysymykseen [An answer to a written question] KKV 426/2016 vp, [https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Kysymys/Documents/KKV\\_426+2016.pdf](https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Kysymys/Documents/KKV_426+2016.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Petri Manninen, ‘Vanhanen: Itämeren kaasuputkea ei pidä politisoida [Vanhanen: The Baltic Sea gas pipeline should not be politicised]’, 09/09/2016, <https://www.suomenmaa.fi/uutiset/vanhanen-itameren-kaasuputkea-ei-pida-politisoida-6.3.152065.bf5848130a>

<sup>35</sup> See. e.g. Financial Times, ‘German armed forces in ‘dramatically bad shape’, report finds’, 20/02/2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/23c524f6-1642-11e8-9376-4a6390addb44>

<sup>36</sup> Michael Surkin, ‘The Abilities of the British, French and German Armies to Generate and Sustain Armoured Brigades in the Baltics’, RAND Research Reports RR-1629-A, 2017, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1629.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1629.html).

<sup>37</sup> Gassen, ‘Getting along with Gulliver’, op.cit., 20–26

secondary to collaboration enhancing Finnish national defence capabilities. Moreover, Helsinki is willing to develop forms of cooperation to improve Finland's odds of receiving military assistance should it fall victim to military aggression.

Against this backdrop, the Framework Nations Concept (FNC), spearheaded and initiated by Germany, and unveiled at NATO's 2014 Wales summit, looks particularly interesting. In short, the FNC seeks to coordinate capability developments between groups of nations, a larger country, such as Germany, acting as a framework nation. The focus is on coordinating the development of capabilities and developing large multinational frameworks. The primary objective of the concept is to increase Europe's capacity to act as part of NATO.<sup>38</sup>

The initiative is open not only to NATO members, but also partners. Finland has taken advantage of this opportunity and, in June 2017, it signed a framework agreement on defence cooperation with Germany. Moreover, Finland also signed a letter of intent in order to join the FNC.<sup>39</sup> The signing of the documents not only opened up new possibilities for cooperation, but also codified existing arrangements and interaction into a more institutionalised form.

At official level, the prospects of Finnish-German defence cooperation are seen in a positive light. For example, Prime Minister Juha Sipilä has emphasised that both Germany and Finland share the will to deepen defence cooperation within the EU.<sup>40</sup> Defence Minister Jussi Niinistö has aimed at forging deeper military cooperation with Germany in the BSR,<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Robin Allers, 'The framework nation: can Germany lead on security', in: *International Affairs* 92, no. 5, 2016, 1167–1187; Rainer L. Glatz and Martin Zapfe, 'Ambitious Framework Nation: Germany in NATO', *SWP Comments* 35, 2017); Håkon Lunde Saxi, 'British and German initiatives for defence cooperation: the Joint Expeditionary Force and the Framework Nations Concept', in: *Defence Studies* 17, no. 2, 2017, 171–197

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Defence, 'A Framework Agreement signed between Finland and Germany', 29/06/2017, [http://www.defmin.fi/en/topical/press\\_releases/2017/a\\_framework\\_agreement\\_signed\\_between\\_finland\\_and\\_germany.8583.news](http://www.defmin.fi/en/topical/press_releases/2017/a_framework_agreement_signed_between_finland_and_germany.8583.news)

<sup>40</sup> Siina Ekberg, 'Juha Sipilä tapasi Angela Merkelin: Suomi ja Saksa halukkaita läheiseen yhteistyöhön [Juha Sipilä met Angela Merkel: Finland and Germany willing for close cooperation]', 21/06/2017, <https://www.verkkouutiset.fi/juha-sipila-tapasi-angela-merkelin-suomi-ja-saksa-halukkaita-laheiseen-yhteistyohon-67048/>

<sup>41</sup> Veli-Pekka Leskelä, 'Jussi Niinistö: Tiivistää yhteistyötä Saksan ja Puolan kanssa [Jussi Niinistö: Closer cooperation with Germany and Poland]', 11/03/2015, <https://www.suomenuutiset.fi/jussi-niinisto-tiivistaa-yhteistyota-saksan-ja-puolan-kanssa/>

not least because of the perceived benefits from cooperation with ‘*the motor of the European economy*’.<sup>42</sup>

However, below the surface, opinions on the matter might not be as rosy as they seem. According to government officials interviewed for this study, the state of German armed forces affect Germany’s attraction as a security and defence partner irrespective of comparatively positive historical experiences. Notably, it would be in Finnish interests if Germany increased its defence expenditure, potentially all the way to NATO’s 2% of the GDP target. This would obviously create interesting opportunities for Finnish-German cooperation in defence, which could also have an impact on regional stability.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, the very fact that Finland was willing to sign such agreements indicates that in Helsinki, policy-makers include Germany among the few interested partners – or potential allies – should a crisis erupt in the BSR. With Germany, FNC is the platform, which could potentially bring the most fruitful results. Apparently, at this point, it is however not entirely clear what can be achieved in the FNC context, and it is currently the role of civil servants to identify common interests and areas of cooperation. At present, Finland is involved in the capability clusters, but it also welcomes the larger troop formations – and more so if their role in the defence of northeast Europe grows.<sup>44</sup>

## Germany in light of the Finnish national priorities in comprehensive regional security

In terms of comprehensive security, the Baltic Sea has been – and still is – a priority for Finland. After the post-Cold War security situation in northeast Europe was stabilised in the early 1990s, and until the European security situation exacerbated in 2013–2014, the comprehensive security paradigm was the major prism through which Finland perceived regional security.

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<sup>42</sup> Katja Inconorato, ‘Jussi Niinistö uudesta Saksa-sopimuksesta: ‘Euroopan talouden veturin peesissä on saatavaa Suomellekin [Jussi Niinistö on a new deal with Germany: Finland can benefit from the European economic locomotive]’, 29/06/2017, <https://www.uusisuomi.fi/kotimaa/224273-jussi-niinisto-uudesta-saksa-sopimuksesta-euroopan-talouden-veturin-peesissa-saatavaa>

<sup>43</sup> Interview with a Finnish government official, 26/02/2018

<sup>44</sup> Ibid; Interview with a government official, 07/03/2018 (2)

Now, Finnish policy-makers clearly frame the security situation in hard security terms. However, the re-emergence of geopolitics has not nullified other security problems, in fact quite the contrary. It is therefore pertinent to ask what Germany could do to promote comprehensive security in the region from the Finnish point of view.

The Finnish strategy for the BSR highlights a number of national priorities, such as sustainable growth, bio-economy and circular economy, security of supply, regional safety and security, innovations, and international impact and cooperation.<sup>45</sup> Clearly, not all of the priorities are about security *per se*, but the key goals, along with the priorities of the CBSS and the EU's strategy for the BSR, strive to create a sustainable and safe region.

Again, the Finnish regional strategy does not mention Germany, and, moreover, the regional comprehensive agenda is not high on Helsinki's foreign and security policy agenda. As a result, perceptions of Germany as a comprehensive security partner do not abound. Earlier research on the matter maintains that Germany and Finland's regional preferences are comparatively similar and that there has been little disagreement.<sup>46</sup>

Based on interviews conducted for this study, the state of affairs has remained almost the same. Finnish perceptions of Germany as a comprehensive security actor in the region are positive, and it is seen as an indispensable nation due to its size. Within the CBSS, Finland has appreciated Germany's efforts to promote dialogue between Russia and the West despite the poor relations. After the security crisis broke in 2014, high-level ministerial meetings paused for a while. Germany, among a couple of other states, advocated the continuation of high-level dialogue, and eventually in 2016, CBSS foreign ministers met in Poland, followed by the meeting in Reykjavik in 2017. It is in Finland's interests that the high-level meetings take place regularly.<sup>47</sup>

Policy-makers in Finland also appreciate that Germany's attitude towards Finnish priorities, such as soft security (e.g. rescue and law enforcement) and migration has been positive. Germany participated in a soft security and migration conference in Helsinki in May 2017 and Helsinki hopes that, with Germany's help, these priorities will stay on the CBSS agenda.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Prime Minister's Office, 'Finland's Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region', 15c, 2017; Erja Tikka, 'Finland's New Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region', in: *Baltic Rim Economies* 4, 2017, 13

<sup>46</sup> Gessen, 'Getting along with Gulliver', *op.cit.*, 26–27

<sup>47</sup> Interview with a Finnish government official, 27/02/2018

<sup>48</sup> Interview with a Finnish government official, 27/02/2018

Within the EU, the situation is somewhat different. From Helsinki's perspective, it seems that the macro-regional cooperation in the BSR is of secondary importance for the German federal government, which is not surprising given that Germany participates in two other macro-regional programmes. Instead, individual *Bundesländer*, such as Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommer, Brandenburg, and Schleswig-Holstein are key players on the practical level in the EU's Baltic Sea policy. This fact complicates matters somewhat, since it can be hard to find the federal position on some issues.<sup>49</sup>

## Conclusions and recommendations

Unsurprisingly, the general Finnish view on Germany is positive. In the BSR context, Germany can be seen as an ideal partner for Finland in diplomacy but, from the Finnish point of view, given Germany's potential, it punches below its weight in regional security and defence. However, the signing of the two agreements indicates that Helsinki is willing to take steps in deepening the security and defence partnership with Berlin.

When it comes to the non-military issues of the BSR, Germany is an indispensable power. Especially in CBSS, Germany appears as an active player having overlapping interests with Finland. In the EU's Baltic Sea cooperation, the activity of federal Germany pales in comparison to *Bundesländer*, and, therefore, Germany does not necessarily stand out as it does in the CBSS.

The eventful and, in part, complex history between Finland and Germany does not limit the contemporary cooperation by any means, nor is it an empowering factor. As it was pointed out earlier, Finnish policy-makers see Germany in a positive light and as an interesting partner in various policy matters. However, in public debate, Germany also tends to be overshadowed by more important players, and no figure or entity is actively advocating 'Germany's cause' or the deepening of Finnish-German cooperation.

How could Germany strengthen its contributions to regional security, and are there opportunities to intensify Finnish-German cooperation in the Baltic Sea area?

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with a Finnish government official, 27/02/2018

Firstly, in diplomacy and military security, Finland and Germany could promote measures mitigating the tension between the West and Russia in the BSR and perhaps also in wider Europe. In defence, the facilitative agreements signed were a good start, but the parties need to elaborate the agenda in the near future. Within the FNC, states in the region could possibly develop common capabilities, and, perhaps, these potential forms of cooperation could eventually be elevated to the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).<sup>50</sup> In any case, Finland hopes that Germany will clarify the link of the FNC to PESCO in the future. In addition, it is important to Finland that Germany's regional priorities in NATO and the EU are not contradictory. In other words, it hopes that Germany will stick to the so-called 360° approach in both organisations.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, in the non-military and comprehensive security domain, Finland counts on Germany to maintain the regional forms of cooperation dynamics. Within CBSS, both states could work further to ensure that regular dialogue with Russia is maintained irrespective of overall tensions. Within the EU, Finland hopes that in the ongoing negotiations on the EU's post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework – that is the EU's budget – Germany will not forget the BSR.<sup>52</sup>

However, the bottom line perhaps is that a stronger German identification as a Baltic Sea nation is in Finland's interests. Should Germany funnel more resources to the enhancement of regional cooperation and security, Finland seems more than ready to take advantage of the emerging opportunities and to be a serious partner.

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with a Finnish government official, 26/02/2018

<sup>51</sup> Interview with a Finnish government official, 07/03/2018 (2)

<sup>52</sup> Interview with a Finnish government official, 27/02/2018

# THE SECURITY ROLE OF GERMANY IN LATVIA POST-CRIMEA: NAVIGATING CHARTED WATERS

Elizabete Vizgunova

The waters surrounding Latvia have been charted by Germany both in forms of a menace, as well as a friend. It is hard to think of a country which has left an impact as significantly as Germany in terms of religious, cultural and political influence in Latvia. The strength and the longevity of these historic ties have ensured that Latvia would not recognise itself without Germany's footprint in its territory.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the dark chapters of Germany's history in the 1930s and 1940s, which extinguished most of the local Jewish population and created significant rifts in the social tissue of Latvia,<sup>2</sup> Germany's cultural influence throughout the centuries has ensured the belonging of Latvia to the European community of norms and values. The importance of Germany's imprint in Latvia's nation-building process since 1990, as a counterweight to Russia and its religious, cultural and political space, cannot be overemphasised. However, and paradoxically, the relationship between Latvia and Germany cannot be detached from Germany's relationship with Russia. Whereas the Latvian-German relationship is seen as a 'strong partnership' and characterised as 'excellent', its potential as a 'hard' security relationship is unlikely to be fulfilled in circumstances where the strategic paradigms *vis-à-vis* Russia in Latvia and Germany differ.

Since the annexation of Crimea on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 (referred to as the *post-Crimea era*), the pattern of the wider BSR is characterised by confrontation. Whereas Latvian policy-makers openly expressed their concerns over Russia's foreign and security policy even before the 8<sup>th</sup> August 2008 war in Georgia (for instance, Latvia's ex-president Vaira

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<sup>1</sup> Interview at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, 26/03/2018

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: Remembrance Day of the Latvian legionaries, 16 March

Vīķe-Freiberga characterising Russia's rhetoric *vis-à-vis* Russia as having a 'Cold War tone' in 2000),<sup>3</sup> the European powers – including Germany – seemed surprised, and did not hesitate to go back to 'business as usual' as soon as circumstances allowed. It not only seemed *naïve* for the Latvian policy-makers to expect that Russia 'can change'; there was also a feeling of disappointment in trading the dedication from international law to short-term normalisation.

This paper will seek to analyse the perceptions of Germany's involvement in Latvia's 'hard' and 'soft' security issues, as well as the Latvian perception of Germany's engagement in the security of the Baltic Sea region (BSR). The Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economy are considered core security players and the main perception-drivers. The paper will also account for the influence of various institutions, such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the Baltic-German Chamber of Commerce (*Deutschen Auslandshandelskammern*) and German investment in Latvia, as well as cultural institutions, such as the *Goethe Institut*. In addition, the article will rely on information, gathered from the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* (KAF), the *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung* (FES) and the Embassy of Germany in Latvia. The article will also consider various primary and secondary sources.

Since 2014, Germany has increased its strategic awareness of Latvia's security situation. A further pursuit of a 'military strategic awakening' is hoped for.<sup>4</sup> However, in 'hard' power terms, the US and Canada are currently seen as the primary guarantors of Latvia's security. In Latvia's eyes, Germany is not ready to take on even more responsibility over the security of Latvia. This is connected not only to the awareness of the historic trauma of Germany, which is seen as keeping it from pursuing the necessary military and industrial steps to becoming a credible military power, but also Berlin's longstanding tradition of *Ostpolitik*, which is best exemplified by engagement in projects such as Nord Stream 2.

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<sup>3</sup> Latvijas Vēstnesis, 'Prezidente norāda uz uzbrukuma draudiem', 03/05/2000, <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/5661>

## Perceptions of the security role of Germany since 1990: Latvia's context

Latvia's perception of the German-Latvian relations falls into three periods. Firstly, the period between 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1991 until Latvia's accession to NATO on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2004. Despite meaningful cooperation and investment, the expectations of the Latvian policy-makers were hit by (especially) Gerhard Schröder's (1998–2006) pro-Russian policies. Secondly, the period from Latvia's accession to NATO in 2004, to 2014. This period was characterised by 'low key' economic and cultural relations. Lastly, the period from 2014 to present day, when Germany's increasingly active role in Latvia is also matched by a perceived strategic change in Berlin. Whereas the paper will primarily focus on the latter period of the relationship, some nuances of the past are a crucial tool to understanding the attitude (and the insecurities) of Latvian policy-makers *vis-à-vis* Germany today.

In 1995, the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a document 'On the Main Directions of Latvia's Foreign Policy' (*Latvijas Ārpolitikas pamatvirzieni līdz 2005. gadam*).<sup>4</sup> To an extent, the principal vectors of Latvia's foreign policy, enshrined in this document, are valid to this day. It stated that the primary task of Latvia's foreign policy is to '*ensure the strengthening of independence, and its irreversibility*', to be achieved through: (a) integration in European security, political and economic structures; (b) participating in European policy-making and promoting the security and stability of the European continent; and, (c) engaging in global processes.

The document clearly states that Germany is a crucial part of all the main vectors of Latvia's foreign policy. Latvia's first priority includes the integration into the EU, pronounced as crucial for the '*survival of the Latvian people and the preservation of the Latvian state*'; accession to the Western European Union (dissolved in 1999) and NATO; and participation in international and regional organisations, including the CSCE (OSCE), the European Council and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). Latvia also announced its interest in deepening the bilateral regional connections

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<sup>4</sup> Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu ministrija [Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Latvia], 'Latvijas ārpolitikas pamatvirzieni līdz 2005. gadam' [Main Vectors of Latvia's Foreign Policy until 2005], <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/latvijas-arpolitikas-pamatvirzieni-lidz-2005-gadam>

with European states, and Germany was named as the first of Latvia's active partners, which, next to France and the United Kingdom, '*has a crucial place in ensuring Latvia's sovereignty*'.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the tone of the paper suggest that the cooperation with Germany, France and the UK was perceived as equally relevant for the Latvian heads of state as the collaboration with the US. This clearly shows that throughout the 1990s, asserting Latvia's European identity through the integration into the EU was perceived as a key security element, which was inseparable from the military guarantees, offered by NATO.

These expectations from Germany were matched by their foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genschner (1974–1992) (described as 'idealist' and a strong-enough counterweight to Chancellor Helmut Kohl (1982–1998), who held a more cautious attitude towards the newly-independent Baltic States), co-founding the CBSS.<sup>6</sup> Due to his strong personality, he was able to push for the integration of the Baltic States into regional European institutions (simultaneously, not offering the military guarantees).<sup>7</sup> This dichotomy of Germany's 'soft' and Latvia's 'hard' understanding of security is key to explaining the perceptions of Germany in Riga today. Germany took part in helping with the construction of Latvia's border control system, helped to Europeanise the education system via EuroFaculty from 1993–1995,<sup>8</sup> funded the training of administrative staff and installing of foundations and academic institutions.<sup>9</sup> Germany therefore indisputably became an important supporter of building sustainable democracies in the newly independent Baltic States, without providing a 'hard' security assurance.

Latvia's policy-makers have not forgotten that Kohl's interests lay in building a sustainable relationship with Russia to reunite Germany. Germany's position as regards to Latvia's accession to NATO was described as moderate, one of not taking sides, emphasising dialogue with Russia above all else (to note, the German approach to Central European states

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<sup>5</sup> Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu ministrija [Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Latvia], *Latvijas ārpolitikas pamatvirzieni līdz 2005. gadam*, op.cit.

<sup>6</sup> Kristina Sphor Readman, 'Germany and the Baltic problem after the Cold Era: the development of a new Ostpolitik, 1989–2000', Southgate: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004, 144

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 153

<sup>8</sup> EuroFaculty, <http://www.eldis.org/organisation/A6082>

<sup>9</sup> Ilya Tarasov, 'The Baltic policy of Germany and current international relations', in: *Baltic region*, Vol. 8:1, 2016, 62

at the time was more proactive). Similarly, Gerhard Schröder's tenure (1998–2006; often referenced to as the 'Schröder's effect',<sup>10</sup> the 'Schröder's syndrome')<sup>11</sup> is still mentioned in Latvia's media space, in the context of growing factionalism in EU. His name is also recurrently mentioned due to his position both as a director of the Council of Stakeholders of Nord Stream 2, as well as 'Rosneftj'.<sup>12</sup>

Angela Merkel's (2006–present) personal distaste (and distrust) towards Putin seemed to damage the *détente* tradition, put in place by her predecessors. Admittedly, Germany's strategic vision of Latvia has certainly undergone significant change; doubts and disbelief that Germany has abandoned its pragmatic *Realpolitik* were prevalent in the interviews.<sup>13</sup> Merkel's tenure was also muddled by the global economic crisis and the migration crisis, which have both impacted on the perception of the population – and the government – of the country.

Overall, the reasons for the radically different standpoints on Russia derive from Latvia's own perception of security. Since the restoration of independence, Latvia's security perception has been predominantly driven by the 'modern' narrative of preserving the independence and statehood of Latvia, achieved through self-defence and NATO membership.<sup>14</sup> However, the 'post-modern' paradigm, emphasising threats, like ethnic tensions and Russian propaganda, are gaining increasing popularity in the security circles. The State Defence Conception reads that *'Since the restoration of independence, Latvia has faced certain elements of asymmetric warfare, which have intensified in recent years. Identify the ever-increasing attempts by Russia to influence Latvia's*

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<sup>10</sup> Atis Lejiņš, 'Putins un Tramps: kurš kuru? [Putin vs. Trump: who will prevail?]', 19/07/2018, [www.lejins.lv/2018/07/19/putins-un-tramps-kurs-kuru/](http://www.lejins.lv/2018/07/19/putins-un-tramps-kurs-kuru/)

<sup>11</sup> Skaties.lv, 'Kudors: Krievija ar hibrīdkaru devusi iespēju tādiem politiķiem, kuri slimo ar Gerharda Šrēdera slimību [Kudors: Russia, with its hybrid warfare, has given an opportunity to politicians who are sick with Gerhard Schröder's syndrome]', 05/03/2015, <https://skaties.lv/zinas/latvija/viedokli/kudors-krievija-ar-hibridkaru-devusi-iespeju-tadiem-politikiem-kuri-slimo-ar-gerharda-sredera-slimibu/>

<sup>12</sup> Latvijas Avīze, 'Šrēders kāpj amatos Krievijā [Schröder gets promoted in Russia]', 15/10/2017, [www.la.lv/sreders-kapj-amatos-krievija/](http://www.la.lv/sreders-kapj-amatos-krievija/)

<sup>13</sup> Interview at the Ministry of Defence, 02/02/2018

<sup>14</sup> Diāna Potjomkina, Elizabete Vizgunova, 'Societal Security in Latvia: New Wine in Old Bottles?', in: Society Security in the Baltic Sea Region: Expertise Mapping and Raising Policy Awareness (Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2018), 119

*security through various leverage points*.<sup>15</sup> Asymmetric methods of warfare (or hybrid warfare) are preconditioned to blur the line between war and peace, as it is not only Russia's internal political dynamics, growing stationing and militarisation close to NATO borders, but also *'Artificially coordinated and directed communication (propaganda), psychological influencing, attacks in cyberspace, use of the energy sector to achieve political goals, influencing the economy and the business environment through artificial barriers and prohibitions, supporting agents and promoting dissatisfaction of society, reinforced by military activities in the border areas of Latvia [...]*'.<sup>16</sup> In these circumstances, it is hard for Latvia to accept that Germany 'needs' Russia for resources and its market power. Latvia fearfully expects that Germany, instead of taking a stronger stance, will seize every opportunity to turn to dialogue with Russia. Another reason is geographic – Germany and Russia do not share a common border. Ultimately, it is a question of national interests – in 2017, the German-Russian trade started picking up again.<sup>17</sup> The prolonged post-Cold War 'honeymoon' has, according to a Latvian executive, allowed Russian business to establish a constituency in Germany, which for a long time allowed Vladimir Putin to rely on Germany to serve as its advocate in the EU.

## **The perception-drivers in Latvia: institutions, personalities and topics**

Despite the different periods in the Latvian-German relationship, the rhetoric, directed towards Germany by the Latvian representatives, has been mostly positive. Notwithstanding the more recent, complicated chapters of the relationship, the surface-level positive perception of Germany did not undergo significant change.

The task of opinion-forming by Latvia's foreign partners falls into the hands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; in fact, Germany receives much less

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<sup>15</sup> Latvijas Republikas Aizsardzības Ministrija [Defence Ministry of the Republic of Latvia], 'Valsts Aizsardzības Konceptcija [State Defence Conception]', 16/06/2016, [http://www.mod.gov.lv/~media/AM/Par\\_aizsardzibas\\_nozari/Plani,%20konceptcijas/2016/AIMVAK\\_260516.ashx](http://www.mod.gov.lv/~media/AM/Par_aizsardzibas_nozari/Plani,%20konceptcijas/2016/AIMVAK_260516.ashx)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> DW, 'German-Russian trade picking up sharply', 13/02/2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-russian-trade-picking-up-sharply/a-42564278>

attention beyond this. Described as the most 'European-minded' and liberal of all ministries, Germany is presented and seen as an agent of Europeanisation, an 'advocate of the Baltic States' to achieve the current partnership in the EU and NATO.<sup>18</sup> Germany's key position in the EU is important for Latvia, as Germany is seen as sharing the same vision of the EU's economic and political future.<sup>19</sup> However, this idealistic perception of Germany is confounded by two primary issues: firstly, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Latvia's Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs (2011-present) considers it a political, not a business project, and calls Germany's high stakes in it 'shameful'.<sup>20</sup> The second issue clearly relates to migration and Latvia's refusal to accept the mandatory quota system, which was 'sponsored' by Germany.

The Ministry of Defence has a slightly different perception of Germany. On the one hand, Germany's 'new' commitment to enhancing the security of the three Baltic States is warmly welcomed. Germany's contribution to Baltic air policing missions and the presence in Lithuania is seen as significantly contributing to Latvia's security.<sup>21</sup> Former defence minister/current member of the European Parliament, Artis Pabriks is well-remembered for his spoken gaffe in 2013 when he argued that Latvia has been '[...] *welcoming German boots on the ground ever since 1940*' – instead of explaining that Latvia was anticipating German participation in the multinational exercises Steadfast Jazz 2013.<sup>22</sup> However, two other relevant factors came into play: firstly, Germany has a different strategic culture to Latvia, both due to the anti-confrontational stance that emerged from

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<sup>18</sup> Latvijas Republikas Vēstniecība Vācijas Federatīvajā Republikā [Embassy of Latvia in Germany], Latvijas-Vācijas divpusējās attiecības [Bilateral relationship of Latvia and Germany], [www.mfa.gov.lv/berlin/latvijas-vacijas-divpusejas-attiecibas](http://www.mfa.gov.lv/berlin/latvijas-vacijas-divpusejas-attiecibas)

<sup>19</sup> Jurista Vārds, 'Igaunijas, Latvijas, Lietuvas un Vācijas ārlietu ministru kopīgs paziņojums [Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania]', 13/06/2016, <http://www.juristavards.lv/zinas/269259-igaunijas-latvijas-lietuvas-un-vacijas-arlietu-ministru-kopigs-pazinojums/>

<sup>20</sup> Anna Ūdre, 'Vācijas lēmums par 'Nord Stream 2' – nožēlas vērts, uzskata Rinkēvičs [Germany's decision over Nord Stream 2 – regrettable]', 13/04/2018, <http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/vacijas-lemums-par-nord-stream-2-nozelas-verts-uzskata-rinkevics.d?id=49924871>

<sup>21</sup> NRA, 'Bergmanis: Vācijas ieguldījums Latvijas drošībā ir nozīmīgs [Bergmanis: Germany's contribution to Latvia's security is significant]', 13/03/2017, <https://nra.lv/latvija/203640-bergmanis-vacijas-ieguldijums-latvijas-drosiba-ir-nozimigs.htm>

<sup>22</sup> NRA, 'Pabriks izteikumu par 'gaidītajiem vācu zābakiem' domājis saistībā ar NATO mācībām', 13/09/2013, <https://nra.lv/latvija/101794-pabriks-izteikumu-par-gaiditajiem-vacu-zabakiem-domajis-saistiba-ar-nato-macibam.htm>

the Second World War trauma, as well as the changes that took place in Germany's longstanding presence in Afghanistan. Secondly, considerable doubt exists whether Germany has abandoned its *Ostpolitik* completely.

Considering Germany's role in the global financial crisis, the Ministry of Finance must be acknowledged. It became the leading force during the global sovereign debt crisis, which hit Latvia particularly hard from 2008-2010. Latvia's austerity model was closely in line with Germany's approach to the financial crisis, emphasising fiscal prudence and a productivity-oriented approach. For this reason, Germany is seen as holding a 'similar mindset'.<sup>23</sup> Here, the current Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue Valdis Dombrovskis must be mentioned; he became the international 'face' of Latvia's austerity programme and is said to have friendly relations with Merkel. Dombrovskis also became the longest-serving Prime Minister of Latvia (2009-2014) in the post-Second World War era, proving that paradoxically the austerity programme, however unpopular in the broader society, overlapped with a politically stable period.<sup>24</sup> Both Dombrovskis and the Minister of Finance Andris Vilks (2010-2014) were both considered the key actors in preparing Latvia for the accession to the eurozone in 2014. In the time when talk about 'multi-speed Europe' was recurrent, Vilks emphasised that '*We still want to see ourselves in the same group as Germany, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Finland*', and that '*we must not be in some sort of peripheral division*'.<sup>25</sup>

The other important group of perception-drivers are those *reémigrés* that spent a part of their life in German migration camps in the 1940s and later emigrated to the US or Canada. Latvia's North-American *reémigrés* are known to possess strongly liberal, pro-European views which are expressed by such members of the Saeima as Ojārs-Ēriks Kalniņš and Atis Lejiņš, the member of the European parliament Krišjānis Kariņš and the ex-President Vaira-Vīķe Freiberga, to name a few. Whereas this non-exhaustive list only covers a fraction of the liberal 'faces' of westernisation,

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with an ex-Ministry of Finance employee, 28/08/2018

<sup>24</sup> Iveta Kažoka, 'Dombrovska ēra [In the shadow of Dombrovskis]', 28/10/2014, <http://www.delfi.lv/news/comment/comment/iveta-kazoka-dombrovska-era.d?id=43594293>

<sup>25</sup> Ritvars Biders, 'Vilks: Tas, kas noticis Grieķijā, ir no citas pasaules [Vilks: What happened in Greece is from a different world]', 24/02/2012, <http://www.db.lv/zinas/vilks-tas-kas-noticis-griekija-ir-no-citas-pasaules-252588>

their longstanding presence in Latvian politics has played a part in Latvia's 'return to Europe' and tightening the bond between Latvia and Germany politically and ideologically.

Ultimately, a number of Germany's institutions have become close cooperation partners for a variety of Latvian institutions that drive the perception of Germany in Latvia's security. The FES and its counterpart KAF, for instance, finances several defence and security-related events in cooperation with various Latvian counterparts – such as the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, the Centre of Eastern Policy Research, the think tank Providus and the National Defence Academy of Latvia. Both foundations have promoted the popularity of issues related to history, the political situation in the Euro-Atlantic region, disinformation and propaganda, cooperation in the BSR, *inter alia*. In a sense, these institutions have become loyal partners of a number of Latvian intellectual centres, therefore ensuring continuous financing of home-grown quality research and analysis of political, economic and security developments in Latvia.

## **Perception of Germany in Latvia's 'soft' securities**

The following chapter will examine the perception of Germany's presence in various 'soft' security sectors of Latvia. Whereas the overall perception of German-Latvian economic and cultural relations merits high appraisal, two issues – namely energy security and migration – have inflicted a negative impact on Germany's image.

### **Economic security**

For Latvia, Germany is first and foremost seen as an economic partner, and a key for ensuring a stable, sustainable economic future for members of the eurozone. Germany's leading role in the eurozone is perceived as predictable and certain. A strong eurozone is seen as the potential remedy to the uncertainty which is created by the current rift in the Euro-Atlantic relationship, China's growing influence and Russia's foreign policy.

It is interesting to note that a gradual decline of the German-Latvian trade is noticeable since 2012. Sources suggest this is also true for Estonia

and Lithuania, indicating that *'the trade with the Baltic States was connected to, for Germany, the much more important Russian market'*.<sup>26</sup> However, this decline has been compensated by an increase of Germany's activities in other fields. This also means that the economic rationale is simply not the primary driver for Germany in Latvia; instead, it is 'western solidarity'.<sup>27</sup>

This equally does not change the fact that Germany is seen as a 'traditional' trade partner for Latvia. Germany is currently the second biggest importer and the fourth biggest export power in Latvia, overall being the second biggest external trade partner. This is only reinforced by several actors which propel Germany's economic interests in Latvia, as well as the FDI which reached 2,3% of Latvia's GDP in 2016.<sup>2829</sup> Germany's investment is significant for several large enterprises in Latvia, including 'Valmieras stikla šķiedra', SIA 'Knauf', SIA 'Ergo' and 'airBaltic'.<sup>30</sup>

The Latvian-German economic relations are also important due to German tourist flows. Latvia's labour market is highly dependent on the services' sector, which constitutes about 12,8% of the total job market. After the sanctions-countersanctions regime significantly curbed the flow of Russian tourists to Latvia, the concerns over repercussions on tourist-oriented businesses grew. However, the German tourists took over the 2<sup>nd</sup> position in terms of tourist numbers (the 1<sup>st</sup> being held by neighbouring Lithuania), growing steadily since 2014.<sup>31</sup>

An important episode in Latvia's economic security relates to the period between 2007–2010, and the sovereign debt crisis. Whereas the austerity

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<sup>26</sup> Mikko von Bremen, 'Germany's changing Baltic policy competing norms in German foreign policy in light of the Ukraine crisis', Tartu, 2017, [https://dspace.ut.ee/bitstream/handle/10062/55337/bremen\\_mikko\\_ma\\_2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://dspace.ut.ee/bitstream/handle/10062/55337/bremen_mikko_ma_2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 40

<sup>28</sup> Vācijas-Baltijas Tirdzniecības kamera Igaunijā, Latvijā un Lietuvā [The German Chamber of Commerce in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania], [https://www.ahk-balt.org/fileadmin/AHK\\_Baltikum/user\\_upload/Mitglieder/Satzungen/2017\\_Satzung\\_LV.pdf](https://www.ahk-balt.org/fileadmin/AHK_Baltikum/user_upload/Mitglieder/Satzungen/2017_Satzung_LV.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Linda Vecgaile, 'Ārvalstu tiešās investīcijas no Vācijas', <https://www.makroekonomika.lv/arvalstu-tiesas-investicijas-no-vacijas>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Centrālā statistikas pārvalde [Central Statistics Bureau], '2017. gadā ārvalstu ceļotāju skaits Latvijā pieauga par 13,7 % [In 2017, the number of foreign travelers increased by 13,7%]', <https://www.csb.gov.lv/lv/statistika/statistikas-temas/transports-turisms/turisms/meklet-tema/2398-arvalstu-celotaji-latvija-2017-gada>

programme (coined as the ‘tremendous sacrifice by Latvian people’<sup>32</sup> or the ‘economic hardship policy’<sup>33</sup> by the research and media community) faced some resistance from the opposition social democratic party ‘Harmony’, and high-ranking politicians, such as the ex-Head of the State Chancellery Mārtiņš Bondars and ex-Prime Minister of Latvia Andris Šķēle. Austerity was largely perceived as devastating by the population: polls from 2012 suggest that 55% of the population were inflicted with disproportionate damage.<sup>34</sup> However, the criticism *vis-à-vis* the austerity programme never touched upon Germany itself. Partly due to widespread euro-apathy, the sovereign debt crisis was predominantly experienced as an internal, not a global problem.

## Energy security

Since the early 2000s and the inception of the Nord Stream (functioning since 2011) and Nord Stream 2 projects, Latvia’s position has remained unchanged. The Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project is not in line with the EU Energy Community principles and could have a negative impact on the security of gas supply in several EU Member States.<sup>35</sup> Although the Nord Stream 2 project does not directly affect the individual economic or energy interests of Latvia, solidarity between the EU Member States on strategically important issues is desirable, if not obligatory.<sup>36</sup> This also means that Latvia

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<sup>32</sup> Kārlis Bukovskis, ‘Latvia’s Austerity Model in the Context of European Austerity versus Growth Debate’ in: The Riga Conference Papers 2012, ed. by Andris Sprūds, Ansis Spridzāns,

<sup>33</sup> NRA, ‘Saskaņas centrs iestādas ‘pret’ fiskālo disciplīnu [Harmony stands against fiscal discipline]’, 10/04/2012, <https://nra.lv/latvija/politika/69735-saskanas-centrs-iestajas-pret-fiskalo-disciplinu.htm>

<sup>34</sup> Delfi.lv, ‘Aptauja: vairāk nekā puse iedzīvotāju krīzes pārvarēšanas ceļu uzskata par valstij ļoti postošu [Survey: almost one half of citizens consider Latvia’s strategy for exiting the crisis as inappropriate]’, 20/06/2012, <http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/aptauja-vairak-neka-puse-iedzivotaju-krizes-parvaresanas-celu-uzskata-par-valstij-leti-postosu.d?id=42449412>

<sup>35</sup> Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu Ministrija [Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Latvia], ‘Ārlietu ministra ikgadējais ziņojums par paveikto un iecerēto valsts ārpolitikā un Eiropas Savienības jautājumos [The annual report of the Minister on the accomplishments and the tasks in state foreign policy and EU affairs]’, 2017. gads, [http://www.mfa.gov.lv/images/ministrija/Arpolitikas\\_zinojums\\_2017.pdf](http://www.mfa.gov.lv/images/ministrija/Arpolitikas_zinojums_2017.pdf), 9

<sup>36</sup> Reinis Ābolītiņš, ‘The regional and global character of energy security’, in: Latvian Foreign and Security Policy Yearbook 2018’, ed. by Andris Sprūds, Ilvija Bruģe, (Latvian Institute of International Affairs: 2018), <http://www.liia.lv/en/publications/latvian-foreign-and-security-policy-yearbook-2018-669,222>

views both the construction of this pipeline, as well as signs of a warming relationship between Russia and Germany as a threat to its security. This is clearly exemplified by high-ranking Latvian political figures – such as the speaker of the Saeima Ināra Mūrniece,<sup>37</sup> *inter alia* – who regularly expressed concerns Latvia's position is being ignored by Russia and Germany.<sup>38</sup>

There are important differences in the perception of both countries on this issue. Firstly, whereas Germany sees Nord Stream 2 as crucial for Europe's energy security, Latvia sees it as detrimental to it, and, whereas Germany considers that the very building of the pipeline is not a matter for political representatives but for the private sector of the economy, Latvian policy-makers believe that German policy-makers should act to interrupt the project. Thirdly, the Latvian policy-makers were particularly hit by the fact that German-Russian energy cooperation projects were not impacted either by the Georgian, or by the Ukrainian crisis.

Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2, alongside Russian oil and gas cut-offs to Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Ukraine in the past have been among the main reasons why Latvia has started to strive towards connecting to alternative energy supply sources.<sup>39</sup> Russia's asymmetric warfare in Latvia's closest partners (Member States of the EU and NATO) has made it increasingly aware of the possibility of it using such techniques again. Despite planning and progress in terms of regional interconnectedness, Latvia still primarily relies on Russian energy resources, paying some of the highest energy prices in the EU due to a lack of diversification in energy supply.<sup>40</sup>

An extra-regional effect relates to Ukraine, an 'emotionally' close partner to Latvia, that is seen as being 'put in harm's way'.<sup>41</sup> Nord Stream 2 has the potential of putting a *de facto* blockade on Ukraine, as a part of its energy infrastructure will be made obsolete. On top of this, Ukraine would

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<sup>37</sup> Latvijas Republikas Saeima, Ināra Mūrniece: security, transport and energy on agenda for Latvia and Lithuania, 27/05/2017, <http://www.saeima.lv/en/news/saeima-news/25915-inara-murniece-security-transport-and-energy-on-agenda-for-latvia-and-lithuania>

<sup>38</sup> Tarasov, 'The Baltic policy of Germany [...]', op.cit., 64

<sup>39</sup> 'Germany and the Baltic Sea Region: Proposals for the New Federal Government', [https://jis.washington.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Task-Force\\_F\\_Koenig.pdf](https://jis.washington.edu/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Task-Force_F_Koenig.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> TVNET, 'Kariņš: Briest EP konflikts ar Vāciju par «Nord Stream 2» gāzesvadu [Kariņš: An EP conflict over Germany's Nord Stream 2 pipe-line is on the rise]', 01/02/2018, [http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/viedokli/771460-karins\\_briest\\_ep\\_konflikts\\_ar\\_vaciju\\_par\\_nord\\_stream\\_2\\_gazesvadu](http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/viedokli/771460-karins_briest_ep_konflikts_ar_vaciju_par_nord_stream_2_gazesvadu)

lose the much needed revenue from the gas transit, therefore weakening its ability to counter the ongoing Russian military offence in the country's east. Following this reasoning, in the eyes of Latvian policy-makers, Nord Stream 2 calls into question Germany's dedication not only to European solidarity, but also to Ukraine's sovereignty.

## Other 'soft' security issues

On 17<sup>th</sup> April 2015, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Rinkēvičs and the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier (2013–2017) issued a joint statement.<sup>42</sup> This 'action plan' was in fact addressed to the foreign ministers of all three Baltic States,<sup>43</sup> and dealt with 22 sub-fields of activity. The list of tasks included media and communication, strengthening the civil society (with a focus on education – both in schools and of the public); enhancing cooperation in the field of education, training and exchange. As a result, Germany's embassy in Riga is among the financing institutions of the Baltic Centre for Media Excellence. Established in 2015, the centre has now become the most influential institution to advance media literacy regionally. The *DW Akademie* (under the German newspaper *Deutsche Welle*) is also among the stakeholders.<sup>44</sup> In May 2018, the DW Akademie offered courses to journalists and editors from the Latvian Television, Riga TV24, the Television of the Regions of Latvia Re:TV, Radio SWH, the newspaper 'Druva', the information agency 'LETA' and the publishing house 'Riga Waves' (*Rīgas Viļņi*). It provided training on emerging media trends, reflection on the integration of third-country nationals, media ethics and hate speech in social media.<sup>45</sup> As pointed out earlier, Riga's understanding of asymmetric warfare as ongoing did not seem to receive an appropriate response from the western powers until 2014. Only the post-Crimea era has brought about more understanding of the

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<sup>42</sup> Jurista Vārds, 'Igaunijas, Latvijas, Lietuvas [...] op.cit.

<sup>43</sup> Bremen, 'Germany's changing Baltic policy [...] op.cit., 42-43

<sup>44</sup> Baltijas mediju izcilības centrs, Par mums, <https://lv.baltic.media/par-mums>

<sup>45</sup> Vidzemes Augstskola [Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences], 'Latvijas mediju pārstāvji Vācijā izzina aktualitātes mediju nozarē [Representatives of Latvia's media discover actualities in the media]', <http://va.lv/lv/jaunakais/zinas/latvijas-mediju-parstavji-vacija-izzina-aktualitates-mediju-nozare>

full potential of these tools. This initiative clearly shows that Germany has become aware of the dangers of asymmetric warfare, and approximated its understanding of the security threats in the Baltic States to those of Riga.

Recent confusion, however, was created by the German TV channel 'ARTE', which published a documentary 'Cultural war in Latvia' (*Kulturkampf in Lettland*). The director seemed to push a narrative which largely overlapped with classical examples of Russian disinformation.<sup>46</sup> The Latvian Embassy of Germany addressed the TV channel with a letter, pointing to the biased (and factually incorrect) evaluation that the movie depicts.<sup>47</sup> Whereas the TV channel is clearly an independent constituency, it certainly contributed to confusing the general Latvian public over the motivations of making such a movie.

Germany's ability to pay tribute to the shared painful chapters of the common history is seen as very important. On 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2017, Steinmeier visited all three Baltic States. This came shortly after the deployment of the operation Enhanced Forward Presence in the three Baltic States and Poland. Whereas Germany is leading the forces in Lithuania, Steinmeier reassured Latvia's politicians of Germany's commitment to the security of the three Baltic States. The choice of the date was particularly symbolic, commemorating the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Russia and Germany on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1939. The visit followed a similar pattern of Merkel's visits to Latvia on highly symbolic dates: 2008, considering the Georgian crisis, and in 2010, just after the financial crisis, and in 2014 and 2016. On the latter occasion, she used the opportunity to welcome both further Europeanisation of Latvia through acceding to the eurozone, as well as confirmation of Germany's support to provide a quick reaction in case of threats.<sup>48</sup> Such *gestes de bonne volonté*, displaying a new tendency in the German commitment to the region, have directly impacted the perception of Germany as a 'hard' security player.

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<sup>46</sup> Paula Justoviča, 'Televīzijas ARTE filma par Latviju – propaganda vai neprofesionalisms? [‘ARTE’ movie about Latvia – unprofessionalism, or propaganda?]', 28/04/2018, <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/arzemes/televizijas-arte-filma-par-latviju-propaganda-vai-neprofesionalisms.a276659/>

<sup>47</sup> Delfi.lv, 'Ari Vācijā mītošos tautiešus satraucis telekanāla 'Arte' Latviju nomelnojošais raidījums [Latvians in Germany are also concerned with the vexatious documentary of 'Arte']', 04/05/2018, <http://www.delfi.lv/news/arzemes/ari-vacija-mitosos-tautiesus-satraucis-telekanala-arte-latviju-nomelnojosais-raidijums.d?id=49995339>

<sup>48</sup> Bremen, 'Germany's changing Baltic policy [...] op.cit., 41

Another recent issue which has put some strain on the bilateral relationship is linked to the so-called 'migration crisis'. The annual Report of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, in 2017 states: *'Latvia's position as regards to the European common asylum system's reform derives from the conviction that solidarity undertaking cannot be automatic and that the mechanisms of the repartition of the asylum seekers have to be grounded in the principle of voluntarism.'*<sup>49</sup> Despite the fact that the anti-immigration sentiment was primarily directed towards Brussels, Germany became the implicit target of Riga's dislike of the resettlement scheme. This was also due to the fact that Germany was usually depicted as suffering from unsuccessful integration and migration in the mass media, therefore facing public safety hazards and crime.<sup>50, 51, 52</sup> Latvia's population sees immigration as the second most relevant issue, faced by the EU; an absolute majority – 86% – of Latvians have a negative attitude towards immigration from outside the EU.<sup>53</sup> For this reason, despite harsh criticism from the side of other European countries, the Latvian Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis welcomed the EU-Turkey deal of 2016.<sup>54</sup> Resonating with this sentiment, Ilmars Latkovskis, head of the Latvian parliament's citizenship, migration and social cohesion committee, said that to make it attractive to stay, benefits would have to be boosted *'to a level which would be very unpleasant for our own population, which is not that well-off'*.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu Ministrija, 'Ārlietu ministra ikgadējais ziņojums' [...] op.cit., 10

<sup>50</sup> Apollo.lv, 'Vairāki tūkstoši vāciešu apvienojas, lai aizsargātu sievietes no imigrantiem [Several thousands of Germans unite to protect women from immigrants]', 08/01/2016, <https://apollo.tvnet.lv/S943201/vairaki-tukstosi-vaciesu-apvienojas-lai-aizsargatu-sievietes-no-imigrantiem>

<sup>51</sup> Tvnet.lv, 'Migrantu krīze: Vācijā ierodas aptuveni 100 imigranti stundā [Migration crisis: In Germany, approximately 100 immigrants arrive per hour]', 02/09/2015, <http://www.delfi.lv/news/arzemes/migrantu-krize-vacija-ierodas-aptuveni-100-imigranti-stunda.d?id=46411045>

<sup>52</sup> Uldis Kežberis, 'Baisā Jaungada nakts Ķelnē. Fakti un versijas [The scary New Year's Eve in Cologne]', 16/01/2016, <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/sestdiena/pasaule/baisa-jaungada-nakts-kele.-fakti-un-versijas-14126405>

<sup>53</sup> NRA, 'Gandrīz visi Latvijas iedzīvotāji uzskata, ka imigranti nesniedz nekādu ieguldījumu valstij [Almost all inhabitants of Latvia consider immigrants as non-contributing to the state]', 03/01/2018, <https://nra.lv/latvija/233144-gandriz-visi-latvijas-iedzivotaji-uzskata-ka-imigranti-nesniedz-nekadu-ieguldijumu-valstij.htm>

<sup>54</sup> Diena.lv, 'Kučinskis: Ar Turciju panāktā vienošanās nemaina Latvijā uzņemamo bēgļu skaitu [Kučinskis: The EU-Turkey deal does not change the number of asylum seekers Latvia has to accept]', 18/03/2016, <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/latvija/zinas/kucinskis-ar-turciju-panakta-vienosanas-nemaina-latvija-uznemamo-beglu-skaitu-14134239>

<sup>55</sup> Andrius Sytas, Gederts Gelzis, 'Resettled in the Baltics, refugees flee for wealthier lands', 28/03/11, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-baltics/resettled-in-the-baltics-refugees-flee-for-wealthier-lands-idUSKBN13NORY>

Latvia has only recently started to be concerned with climate security. In 2014, it established its first 'Environmental policy guidelines for climate policy 2014–2020' (*Vadlīnijas klimata politikas jomā 2014–2020*). On a European level, Germany is perceived as one of the more active players; Germany has also shown consistent concern over the ecological matters in the BSR. However, the results Germany produces are quite different. For instance, the Latvian policy-makers regard Germany's practices in recycling and green energy in the power sector as an example to follow.<sup>56</sup> However, the high dependency on non-renewable energy in Germany, which is still being used in transport and heating sectors, is seen as a reason to doubt Germany's credibility in following up on its promises on climate change. This particularly concerns transport emissions, and the failure to reduce them. In fact, non-renewable energy consumption increased after the economic recovery.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, Germany's climate policy is another example to Latvian policy-makers that Germany's strong tradition of putting its national interests first makes its leadership position uncertain.

Lastly, the 30,000 strong Baltic-German community in Germany is still considered an important cultural connector in Riga.<sup>58</sup> Germany's recognition of the shared past and the small German minority in Latvia – amounting to some 3,000 inhabitants – is mostly expressed through sponsorship of research, related to Latvia's history and historic memory, with the purpose of advancing societal cohesion between the ethnic fractions of Latvia's society. Institutions such as the KAF, the FES and the *Goethe Institut* are particularly active in financing various history and memorial politics-related projects.

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<sup>56</sup> Interview at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia, 20/03/2018

<sup>57</sup> Kalina Oroschakoff, 'Germany's green energy shift is more fizzle than sizzle', 23/03/2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-climate-change-green-energy-shift-is-more-fizzle-than-sizzle/>

<sup>58</sup> Latvijas Vēstnesis, 'Latvijas un Vācijas draudzība ir un būs cieša', 19/03/2003, <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/72792>

## **We are an alliance, we stand for one another? Germany as a hard security actor in Latvia**

According to the State Defence Conception 2016 (*Valsts Aizsardzības koncepcija*), 'Latvia's security is strengthened by the participation of states such as Germany and France in Latvia's defence. Therefore, a closer cooperation with these states is desirable.'<sup>59</sup> This is the only occasion where Germany is individually mentioned in this document; for comparison, the US is mentioned 11 times. It does, however, show that Germany's contribution to Latvia's security is also seen as a partner in the 'hard' security domain.

However, the previously mentioned 'soft' security commitment shows that Germany is developing an individual approach to the three Baltic States (and thus – Latvia), outside the context of the German-Russian relationship. For instance, Germany re-started its engagement in the Baltic air policing in September 2014, now doing it on a frequent basis (the latest round started on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2018). The ensuing developments: the Wales Summit declaration of 5<sup>th</sup> September 2014, as well as the Warsaw Summit of 8–9<sup>th</sup> July 2016 commitments, which foresaw the forward deployment of four battalions in the alliance's east, is seen as an indication of western – and German – solidarity to the Baltic States, regardless of the cost of deteriorating relations with Russia.

Whereas Germany is the biggest contributor to the rotating forces in Lithuania, Germany's re-engagement in the Baltic theatre is perceived as significant for two reasons: (a) foreign deployments being tightly restricted by German law and parliament, as well as highly sensitive in the eyes of the broader population; and (b) the Baltic States host the second biggest foreign deployment abroad with 650 troops (second after Resolute Support in Afghanistan with 980 troops (as of March 2018)<sup>60</sup>). The near-by presence enables the German and Latvian troops to closely interact and participate in multinational exercises, which increases interoperability. The interviews confirmed that Germany's willingness to pursue an *active* role in ensuring the security of Latvia and the broader region is also reconfirmed by Germany's

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<sup>59</sup> Latvijas Republikas Aizsardzības Ministrija, 'Valsts Aizsardzības [...]', op.cit.

<sup>60</sup> Chloe Lyneham, 'Bundeswehr in Afghanistan: What you need to know', 25/03/2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/bundeswehr-in-afghanistan-what-you-need-to-know/a-43122424>

participation in the NATO Response Force and in developing the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force.

Whereas deployments of German troops in the easternmost parts of Europe are unprecedented since the Second World War, for Latvian policy-makers, they are still wrapped within the 'unknown' of the future. The speech of the Federal Minister of Defence Ursula von der Leyen (2013-present) at the Munich Security Conference of 2014, encouraging modernisation of the German military was warmly welcomed in Riga.<sup>61</sup> However, taking into account the poor state of the *Bundeswehr* and the German military-industrial sector, Latvia still considers the US, the UK and France, alongside Canada as its primary security providers – more so than Germany. Germany is simply not seen as a country that would take on the role of a military leader. This is particularly important in the present conditions of incertitude: without the strong German commitment to modernisation and military expenditure, the US's engagement with NATO and the Baltic security is likely to weaken. However, some of the interviewees also expressed the opinion that Germany has, within its current capacity, reached its limit of engagement in the region.

As mentioned earlier, Latvia's policy-makers still see Germany's strategic culture as highly different to that of Latvia. This primarily relates to the fact that Germany is seen to have a 'special relationship' with Russia. There is disbelief that the post-Crimea era has put an end to the tradition of *Ostpolitik*. The bilateral dimension of the Russia-Germany relations is also seen, if not as a direct threat, then somewhat serving to the detriment of the security of the Baltic States, that see Russia's negligence of international law and democratic standards as highly dangerous for their own security. Despite Germany's situational awareness of the security conditions in Latvia being significantly increased in the post-Crimea era, German and Latvian policy-makers do not agree that Russian foreign policy is fundamentally unchanged (Crimea being just another expression of the revisionist foreign policy tradition). Until recently, Germany attempted to reconcile the Euro-Atlantic sanctions policy with a diplomatic approach to resolving the

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<sup>61</sup> Munich Security Conference, 'Speech by the Federal Minister of Defence, Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, on the Occasion of the 50th Munich Security Conference' 31/01/2014, [https://www.securityconference.de/fileadmin/MSC\\_/2014/Reden/2014-01-31-Speech-MinDef\\_vonder\\_Leyen-MuSeCo.pdf](https://www.securityconference.de/fileadmin/MSC_/2014/Reden/2014-01-31-Speech-MinDef_vonder_Leyen-MuSeCo.pdf)

Ukraine crisis by seeking ways of engaging Moscow on broader security and economic issues, as Russia is considered an essential European energy supplier.<sup>62</sup> Germany's policy *vis-à-vis* Russia is still being characterised as *Realpolitik*, a rational approach to Russia that has reconstituted itself as a force on the international scene, and that needs to be reckoned with.

## Germany's role as a regional security player: keeping up appearances

The annexation of Crimea had an impact on the overall approach to the Baltic States, making Germany's policy more decisive and aligning it more with the policy of Riga. Latvia's policy-makers know that the Baltics have never been a priority of Germany, as it is only one of the many fields of Germany's foreign relations. Instead, engaging Russia in regional formats was Germany's priority when dealing with the region. Therefore, whereas Germany – partly due to its size – has certainly been present in a variety of formats (and is even indispensable in them), it has not been *visible*.

The BSR has mostly come up in the context of ecology and maritime degradation. In this domain, Germany's fair share of work is noted and recognised in Riga. The German Ministry of the Environment has financially supported several cooperation projects. These include financing the activities of the Baltic Environmental Forum<sup>63</sup> and the Baltic Sea Region Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2011-2013), *inter alia*. It has continued to be active in the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and the Baltic Sea Region Energy Cooperation (BSREC). A strong link was also formed between the German *Bundesländer* with the Baltic Sea coastline, forming city partnerships. The *Bundesländer* have also engaged in the coordination

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<sup>62</sup> Marco Siddi, 'German Foreign Policy towards Russia in the Aftermath of the Ukraine Crisis: A New Ostpolitik?' in: *Europe-Asia Studies*, Volume 68:4, 2016, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09668136.2016.1173879?journalCode=ceas20>

<sup>63</sup> Latvijas Valsts prezidents [President of the Republic of Latvia], 'Vācijas federālā prezidenta Horsta Kēlera un viņa dzīvesbiedres oficiālā darba vizīte Latvijā [Official visit to Latvia by the German Federal President Horst Köhler and his spouse]', 23/11/2004, <https://www.president.lv/lv/jaunumi/zinas/vacijas-federala-prezidenta-horsta-kelera-prof-dr-horst-kohler-un-vena-dzivesbiedres-oficiala-darba-vizite-latvija-2004gada-23novembris-714>

of the first pillar of the EU Strategy for the BSR (EUSBSR) – building an environmentally stable region. In fact, it seems that the appetite of Berlin to take care of these macro-regional strategies is comparatively small, outsourcing these activities to the German federal states.

As noted earlier, due to the perceived change of Russia's behaviour, Germany has clearly started to become more aware of the context of increasing security concerns. This has clearly caused Germany to engage with the three (or B3) as an entity (also indicating that they are perceived to be relatively similar in terms of threat and security perceptions). The previously mentioned joint declarations between Steinmeier and B3 to combat asymmetric warfare clearly serve as proof of this. This, however, is a signal that Germany also seems to understand the spectrum of threats the bordering regions are facing.

On a more 'conventional' note, Germany's security and defence interest in the region is particularly visible in its commitment to NATO and a greater level of bilateral support. Here, the previously-mentioned operation Enhanced Forward Presence must be mentioned. Berlin and Washington also co-founded the Transatlantic Capability Enhancement and Training Initiative to raise their interoperability. However, doubts were expressed that Germany will be able to recommit to the modernisation of its *Bundeswehr* enough to seriously become a security actor in the region. The doubt goes even further, as there is disbelief that Germany would even want to take this role.

Germany has not come across as highly enthusiastic to enhance the regional cooperation in other formats. It was not often keen on regional formats that enabled a closer cooperation with Russia. To take the example of the CBSS presidency of 2011–2012, Germany did increase the BSR profile with events such as the Baltic Sea days in Berlin from 23<sup>rd</sup>–25<sup>th</sup> April, 2012, the Baltic Media Forum 2012 from 2<sup>nd</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> February, and a gathering of foreign affairs ministers of the 12 member countries on 5<sup>th</sup> February took place in various states of Germany.<sup>64</sup> However, the region largely disappeared from Berlin's political agenda as soon as the presidency was over. As Latvia is presiding over the CBSS, the 'soft' priority areas – integrity

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<sup>64</sup> Baltic Development Forum, '20th Anniversary of CBSS and Baltic Media Forum 2012', <http://www.bdforum.org/anniversary-cbss-and-baltic-media-forum/>

and social security, dialogue and responsibility<sup>65</sup> – are unlikely to see more engagement from Berlin. Almost traditionally, the front seat is clearly taken by the Nordic states; Germany therefore does not feel the need to fill the role of the leader.

Ultimately, the French-German ‘sponsored’ initiative of PESCO has received relatively little attention in Riga. Whereas Latvia has joined the initiative, advancing European defence cooperation has never been a high priority for Latvia, as the EU is seen predominantly as a ‘soft’ security structure. Whereas PESCO can advance defence and security cooperation in Europe (e.g. easing military crossing for personnel and material across the EU, supporting the European defence industry, strategic communication), Latvia still emphasises the ‘no duplication’ position.<sup>66</sup>

The outcome of this means that the Latvian policy-makers do not see Germany as a central actor for regional security cooperation. Instead, formats such as 3B and the NB8, followed by the CBSS (including Poland and Germany), and an EU-wide cooperation is seen as a priority for Latvia.

## Conclusions and prospects. The German-Latvian security partnership under a shadow of doubt

Germany’s policy *vis-à-vis* Latvia has undergone significant change in the post-Crimea era. Whereas Latvia was part of a marginal region of Europe – just one of many on Germany’s agenda – it became crucial for ensuring the stability of Europe’s eastern flank in the aftermath of March 2014. Germany has increased its commitment both on a diplomatic and a practical level, contributing to enhancing both the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ security of Latvia. Germany is now seen as ‘active’ instead of ‘low key’, and as finally pursuing a policy, directed towards the three Baltic States which is decoupled from its Russia policy. This happened in the light of

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<sup>65</sup> Council of the Baltic Sea States, Latvian Presidency 2018–2019, [www.cbss.org/latvian-presidency-2018-2019/](http://www.cbss.org/latvian-presidency-2018-2019/)

<sup>66</sup> Saeima.lv, ‘I.Murniece Tallinā: jāstiprina ES un NATO sadarbība drošībā un aizsardzībā [I. Murniece in Tallinn: the EU and NATO cooperation in security must be strengthened]’, 24/04/2018, <http://www.saeima.lv/lv/aktualitates/saeimas-zinas/26782-i-murniece-tallina-jastiprina-es-un-nato-sadarbiba-drosiba-un-aizsardziba>

Germany's Munich Conference 2014 commitment to modernising the *Bundeswehr* and becoming more involved in ensuring that Europe remains not only politically, but also militarily strong. Whereas these steps and commitments were welcomed in Riga, Germany's new presence in Latvia is still under a shadow of doubt.

Latvia's politicians seem to be fearful of Germany's differing vision of Russia. The questions in Riga still remain: What if it prioritises its relationship with Moscow over Riga? Will Germany take a decisive step to become a military leader in times of need? In addition, will Germany enhance its presence in the Baltic Sea regional formats? Latvia sees its future security guarantees from allied powers as dependent on the answer to these questions. What is more: regional security is unlikely to return to the Baltic Sea shores anytime soon, even if Germany does maintain its cooperation with NATO. Despite the situation having normalised, NATO is still both the only deterrent and the 'bone of contention' between the West and Russia. Other organisations and initiatives are currently unable to promote understanding between all members bordering the Baltic Sea. Berlin's daunting task of modernising and adapting its military force to the new requirements is ever more crucial to Latvia, in the light of Russia's 'military revolution' which is able to compete on a global scale, as well as the unclear situation in the US.

In the given circumstances, where should the German-Baltic partnership move from here?

- Germany has a crucial role to play in promoting a norms and law-based European security order. Nord Stream 2 is a political project (a fact which has now been admitted by Merkel herself); therefore it is Berlin's duty to take into consideration the security of its allies and partners;
- It is not only Nord Stream 2 that is making Germany's commitment to the region uncertain. The unpreparedness of the *Bundeswehr*, and the low defence expenditure are two more reasons to doubt Germany's credibility as a security actor. Therefore, von Layens statements' have to be matched with appropriate actions;
- Germany is a partner which is always expected in various Baltic Sea regional formats. Taking into account Berlin's recent interest in advancing 'soft' security in B3, Germany would be welcomed if it followed similar steps at regional level (e.g. border security through

CBSS). Such cooperation would also allow Germany to strengthen the cooperation with the non-NATO states Finland and Sweden;

- Germany's strong presence in the region is crucial to convince the US that the European powers are ready to share a part of the burden. The regional security problem of the Baltic States has now become a transatlantic one. Consequently, enhancing cooperation with the US is of crucial importance.

# A NEW SECURITY PROVIDER? LITHUANIAN-GERMAN SECURITY COOPERATION

Neringa Bladaitė, Margarita Šešelgytė

The role of Germany in the security policy of Lithuania has evolved throughout history from a potential threat, to a neutral observer and finally to a partner and security provider. Various factors such as the role of Germany in the European power balance, its ideological position, as well as developments in the region have been the driving forces behind these perceptions. Currently Germany, in the strategic documents of Lithuania, is defined as one of a few strategic partners.<sup>1</sup> Germany is Lithuania's second biggest trade partner and third largest foreign investor.<sup>2</sup> As part of the NATO enhanced forward presence, a German battalion is currently serving in Lithuania. As a gesture of courtesy, Germany lent Lithuania the Act of Independence for five years in 1918, a treaty which was recently found in German archives and documents of strategic value to Lithuania's statehood. During the state visit to Germany in 2016, the Lithuanian president noted: *'Lithuania and Germany have never been so close and have never worked so closely together for the good of their people. Germany is not only one of our biggest economic partners, but also a strategic ally whose troops help ensure the security of Lithuania. The development of our country would not be as rapid without Germany's help'*.<sup>3</sup>

Cultural, historical and economic relations with Germany have developed very positively since Lithuania regained independence in 1991.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, 'The Military Strategy of The Republic of Lithuania 2016', [https://kam.lt/en/defence\\_policy\\_1053/important\\_documents/strategical\\_documents.html](https://kam.lt/en/defence_policy_1053/important_documents/strategical_documents.html), 7

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 'Dvišalė prekyba, Vokietija [Bilateral trade, Germany]', <https://urm.lt/default/lt/lietuva-vokietija>

<sup>3</sup> President of the Republic of Lithuania, 'The President: Lithuania and Germany are close as never before,' <https://www.lrp.lt/en/press-centre/press-releases/the-president-lithuania-and-germany-are-close-as-never-before/25043>

Germany supported Lithuanian efforts to become a member of the EU and NATO. The interest of Germany in Lithuania could be derived from the general importance of Central and Eastern Europe in the foreign policy of Germany. Central and Eastern Europe are important regions to Germany historically, geographically and in terms of trade. As Germany has many trading relations with these countries, their stability is crucial for ensuring energy resource routes.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the cooperation between Germany and Lithuania were mostly evolving in the areas of politics and economy, but not in the field of security.

The recent change in German perceptions of Russia have allowed for possible enhancement of cooperation within the field of security. German Chancellor Angela Merkel was one of the key political leaders pushing forward the economic sanctions on Russia. Economic sanctions were followed by the suspension of Russian membership in the G8 and military reinforcement of NATO's eastern borders.<sup>5</sup> On the basis of the decisions made at the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, Lithuania hosts a NATO enhanced forward presence battlegroup under German command. Moreover, more ambitious plans for further cooperation and better integration of the armed forces of the two states have been developed.

The main aim of this paper is to analyse the role Germany plays in the security of Lithuania aiming to assess the potential for closer cooperation in the field of security. The paper is divided into four parts. The first part provides a brief overview of the relations between the two countries throughout the 20th century to demonstrate the dynamics of those relations. The second part introduces the main challenges that Lithuania and Germany face in their security cooperation and examines current perceptions of Lithuanian security elite *vis-à-vis* Germany. The last chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the German role in Lithuania as a security actor. Recommendations for the improvement of cooperation are outlined in the conclusions.

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<sup>4</sup> L. Fix, A., L. Kirch, 'Germany and the Eastern Partnership after the Ukraine crisis', Note du Cerfa no. 128 2016, <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/enotes/germany-and-eastern-partnership-after-ukraine-crisis>, 8

<sup>5</sup> Margarita Šešelgytė, 'Security Dialogue between West and Russia: A problem of Trust', in: Riga Dialogue Afterthoughts 2017: Transforming Euro-Atlantic Security Landscape, eds. Andris Sprūds, Diāna Potjomkina, Riga: Latvian Institute on International Affairs, 2017, 57

## Dynamics of Lithuanian German cooperation

Lithuanian-German relations were quite vibrant at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. As a nation, Lithuania succeeded in successfully taking advantage of changes in the international environment, and managed to declare the independence of Lithuania in the Act of 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1918.<sup>6</sup> Germany was among the first countries to recognise the independent Republic of Lithuania, doing so on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1918.<sup>7</sup> However, bilateral relations soon deteriorated due to issues with Klaipėda, which was strategically important for Lithuania as the exit to the sea. Klaipėda was formerly part of Prussia and was occupied by allied forces after World War I. The Treaty of Versailles left the status of Klaipėda undetermined and this caused tensions between Lithuania and Germany until 1923 when the territory was taken over by Lithuanians. On 17<sup>th</sup> February, the Conference of Ambassadors transferred sovereignty over Klaipėda to Lithuania.<sup>8</sup> After that, ethnic tensions between the German and Lithuanian inhabitants of Klaipėda were exasperated because of questions concerning policies on language, education and religion.<sup>9</sup> It should be taken into consideration that at that time Lithuania's foreign policy was dominated by two major territorial problems: Vilnius and Klaipėda. Therefore, Lithuanians considered the return of Klaipėda to be a huge diplomatic and military victory.

Another turning point in Lithuanian-German relations was the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. On 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1939, German foreign minister, J. Ribbentrop and his Russian counterpart V. Molotov signed a secret addition to the Treaty of Non-Aggression between the German Reich and

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<sup>6</sup> Česlovas Laurinavičius, Raimundas Lopata, 'Germany and Lithuania 1917–1939', in: Lithuania Foreign Policy Review, no. 8, 2015: 3, [http://lfpr.lt/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/LFPR-8-Laurinavicius\\_Lopata.pdf](http://lfpr.lt/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/LFPR-8-Laurinavicius_Lopata.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Alfonsas Eidintas, Alfredas Bumblauskas, Antanas Kulakauskas, Mindaugas Tamošaitis, The History of Lithuania, Vilnius: Eurimai, 2015, [http://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/Travel\\_Residence/history\\_of\\_lithuania\\_new.pdf](http://urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/Travel_Residence/history_of_lithuania_new.pdf), 162

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 183

<sup>9</sup> Vyngantas Vereikis, 'Memellander/Klaipėdiškiai Identity and German Lithuanian Relations in Lithuania Minor in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries', in: Identiteto raida. Istorija ir dabai, 2001, <http://www.journals.vu.lt/sociologija-mintis-ir-veiksmas/article/viewFile/7233/5047>, 64

the Soviet Union,<sup>10</sup> which meant the end of independence of Lithuania. The Baltic States became an object of a geopolitical exchange between two great powers. As a result, most of the Lithuanian territory was incorporated into the Soviet Union, while Germany received a small part in the southwest of the country. The situation changed again after Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1941. By that time, the Reich's army had overrun all of Lithuania's territory and Germany's occupation was established.<sup>11</sup> Lithuania remained under Germany occupation until the end of 1944, when the country was re-occupied by the Red Army. This dynamic period demonstrates the security challenges of small Eastern European states at the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The fate of these nations was, to a great extent, determined by the rivalry and agreements of the big powers in the region. Germany, alongside Russia, were the main regional powers and therefore both were considered a security challenge for the small states in the region.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union were important milestones for both Germany and Lithuania. Germany underwent a reunification process, which made it one of the biggest powers within the EU and the biggest power in the region. Reunification also left an important imprint on German-Russian relations. German leadership felt a certain gratitude towards the leaders of the Soviet Union for the smooth reunification process, which later transformed into gratitude towards Russia as a whole. Russia was considered as a partner, which was heading towards democratisation and should be included into the European institutions. For Lithuania, the end of the Cold War meant the restoration of their independence, departure of Russian armed forces and the ability to join Euro-Atlantic institutions. In contrast to Germany, for Lithuania Russia continued to represent a security challenge or a threat, and was defined as such in the political discourse, although not explicitly in major security documents. Germany played an important role during the first years of independence, providing Lithuania with economic support, consultancy and diplomatic assistance in the quest for EU and NATO membership. However, following enlargements, relations between Germany and Lithuania lost

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<sup>10</sup> Andreas M. Klein, Gesine Herrmann, 'Germany's Relations With the Baltic States Since Reunification', KAS International Reports, 9, 2010, [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_20710-1522-2-30.pdf?101002074648](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_20710-1522-2-30.pdf?101002074648), 61

<sup>11</sup> Lithuania, Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lithuania/History>

their viability and were defined as normal or even distanced in the context of the EU and NATO.<sup>12</sup> One of the main reasons behind this change was the different opinions of both countries *vis-à-vis* Russia as well as the divergent interests that derived from these positions, e.g. cooperation in the field of energy.

## Challenges and perceptions in cooperation between Lithuania and Germany in the field of security

After Lithuania joined the EU and NATO in 2004, new grounds for cooperation with Germany emerged. Nevertheless, two major challenges were preventing closer cooperation between Germany and Lithuania in the field of security.

One of the major obstacles for closer cooperation was diverging opinions *vis-à-vis* Russia. For Lithuania, despite the general positive attitude in Europe *vis-à-vis* Russia, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has never ceased to represent a major security concern or even a threat. Meanwhile, the German position was substantially different. Apart from a general gratitude for a smooth reunification, the German leadership strongly believed in the necessity to include Russia in European institutions, as well as in Russia's ability to become a modern and democratic state. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Germany was a strong advocate of strategic partnership with Russia. Its position was based on a strong conviction, as Constanze Stelzenmueller argues, '*successfully guiding Russia into the rule-based world of Europe would be the greatest triumph of Germany's soft power*'.<sup>13</sup> Political cooperation between the two countries was complemented by close economic ties, which produced a high level of German dependence on Russian natural resources. This dependency has resulted in good bilateral relations in the field of energy becoming one of the main national interests of Germany

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<sup>12</sup> Matthias Rantzs, 'The German Interest Towards Lithuania: a Dilemma of the Zwischenraum', in: LFPR, 20, 2015, <http://lfpr.lt/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/LFPR-20-Rantzs.pdf>, 43

<sup>13</sup> Constanze Stelzenmueller, 'Germany's Russia Question: A New Ostpolitik for Europe', 03/03/2009, <http://www.gmfus.org/archives/germanys-russia-question-a-new-ostpolitik-for-europe/#sthash.VbSCqn4a.dpuf>

and consequently on a number of occasions leading to disagreements with the Baltic States.<sup>14</sup>

Another important challenge which a negative impact on closer cooperation between Lithuania and Germany in the field of security might have, is incompatible strategic cultures. The German white paper on security and the future of Bundeswehr links German international identity to the 'lessons learned from history' and Europe.<sup>15</sup> Germany sees itself in international affairs as a civilian and moral power, but not a military power. Hanns Maull argues that the core elements of Germany's international role are three principles: never again, never alone, and politics not force.<sup>16</sup> These three principles lead to the pacifist nature of German foreign policy, based on active participation in international organisations, and the aim to solve international disputes rather through consultations and negotiation, but not by force. The Lithuanian concept of security has evolved in the face of imminent threat from Russia, therefore it has relied on a more traditional understanding of security, where the military instrument plays a very important role.<sup>17</sup> This security concept has become an important part of Lithuanian strategic culture, which differed from the pacifist strategic culture of Germany.

The changing security environment, crises in Europe and systemic challenges have forced the German political elite to reconsider its role in Europe and also review its position *vis-à-vis* Russia.

German-Russian relations began to deteriorate after V. Putin was elected as president for a third time, because the German political elite started to doubt the ability of Russia to develop as a democratic country. However a genuine change in German-Russian relations occurred during the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine. After a pro-Russian separatist shot down a plane belonging to Malaysian airlines, a three-page letter on the sanctions against Russia was sent to German parliamentarians which, according to

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<sup>14</sup> Klein and Herrmann, op.cit., 61

<sup>15</sup> White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of Bundeswehr, 19/09/2016, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/white-paper-german-security-policy-and-future-bundeswehr>

<sup>16</sup> H. Maull, 'Germany and the use of force: still a civilian power? Survival', in: *Global Politics and Strategy*, vol. 42, 2000, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1093/survival/42.2.56>

<sup>17</sup> Margarita Šešelgyte, 'A Midget Warrior: security choices of Lithuania', in: *Defence and Security for the Small: Perspective from the Baltic States*, Reykjavik: Center for Small State Studies, 2013, [https://ams.hi.is/wp-content/uploads/old/defence\\_and\\_security\\_-\\_layout3.pdf](https://ams.hi.is/wp-content/uploads/old/defence_and_security_-_layout3.pdf), 36

Judy Dempsey, marked the end of German *Ostpolitik*. This has opened new prospects for German policy towards Eastern Europe.<sup>18</sup> It might be argued that Germany assumed a leadership position both in trying to stabilise the crisis as well as the EU sanctions policy *vis-à-vis* Russia. These changes have made one of the major obstacles impeding security relations between Lithuania and Germany irrelevant. Moreover, the attitude of Germany itself towards the Baltic States has changed. Until the crisis in Ukraine, the German attitude *vis-à-vis* the BSR in terms of security policy might have been defined as a “friendly disinterest”. As Claudia Major and Milena Klaine argue, although Germany was cooperating and conducting consultations with the Nordic and Baltic States on a regular basis, the ‘*German security policy was built more on an east–west axis*’ and ‘*there was less of a strategic approach compared to other regions*’.<sup>19</sup> The situation in 2014 changed. Being ‘front-line states’ in the face of aggressive Russia, which additionally was employing hybrid tools of offence in the region,<sup>20</sup> the Baltic States have attracted the attention of other EU and NATO partners. In this context, the highest German officials have repeatedly expressed their commitments for Lithuanian security. Chancellor Angela Merkel has noted that protection of Lithuania is important for the region’.<sup>21</sup> Federal Minister of Defence Ursula von der Leyen in her speech to German-led NATO battalion in Lithuania, in February 2017, assured that Lithuania ‘never again’ will ‘stand alone’ and ‘*the future of its people is protected by the greatest military alliance of our times*’.<sup>22</sup> These words were supported by the German troops being sent to Lithuania in the format of a framework nation of NATO enhanced forward presence measures. While criticising Russia’s military build-up on its borders with the

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<sup>18</sup> Judy Dempsey, ‘Russia is Losing Germany’, 21/08/2014, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/?fa=56433>

<sup>19</sup> Claudia Major, Milena Kleine, ‘Baltic Sea security: The view from Berlin’, in: Baltic Sea Security, ed. Ann-Sofie Dahl, Centre for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2015, [https://cms.polsci.ku.dk/publikationer/2015/Baltic\\_Sea\\_Security\\_\\_final\\_report\\_in\\_English.pdf](https://cms.polsci.ku.dk/publikationer/2015/Baltic_Sea_Security__final_report_in_English.pdf), 24

<sup>20</sup> Edward Lucas, ‘The Coming Storm: Baltic Sea Security Report’, Washington, D.C., Centre for European Policy Analysis, 2015, <http://cepa.org/index/?id=f3af38a9500cfc72614a7cb788e5a56b>

<sup>21</sup> The Federal Chancellor, ‘Lithuania’s protection is important’, [https://www.bundestkanzlerin.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2016/04\\_en/2016-04-20-besuch-praesidentin-litauen\\_en.html](https://www.bundestkanzlerin.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2016/04_en/2016-04-20-besuch-praesidentin-litauen_en.html)

<sup>22</sup> BNS, ‘Germany pledges to defend Lithuania: Key quotes from defence minister’, 02/02/2017, [https://www.baltictimes.com/germany\\_pledges\\_to\\_defend\\_lithuania\\_\\_key\\_quotes\\_from\\_defense\\_minister/](https://www.baltictimes.com/germany_pledges_to_defend_lithuania__key_quotes_from_defense_minister/)

Baltic States, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said 'Germany would keep troops in the region for as long as needed'.<sup>23</sup>

Despite these changes, the Russian factor remains controversial in German-Lithuanian relations. During the visit to Lithuania, in 2017, the President of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier emphasised that '*Lithuania can rely on Germany's solidarity. Along with our NATO partners, we are shouldering responsibility for security in the Baltic Sea region*' but '*on the other hand, however, it has to be said that our readiness to defend does not mean that we are not willing to engage in dialogue with Russia*'.<sup>24</sup> This ambiguity which still prevails in the political discourse of the German elite makes Lithuanian decision-makers cautious and results in a certain distrust of long-term security cooperation. Changes in the German position *vis-à-vis* Russia has not eliminated German dependency on Russian energy resources. Support of the German government to Nord Stream 2 is causing discontent in Lithuania. A Lithuanian researcher based in the Atlantic Council, Agnia Grigas, notes that participation of Germany in Nord Stream 2 reflects 'duplicity of German foreign policy'. On one hand, Germany aims for the EU leadership and has a strong position *vis-à-vis* Crimea, on the other it participates in Nord Stream 2.<sup>25</sup>

Changing position *vis-à-vis* Russia has also coincided with the changing role of Germany in international politics. In 2014, Frank Walter Steinmeier, the new German foreign minister at the time, initiated a review of German foreign policy. In an article he wrote for the foreign affairs journal, Steinmeier argued that Germany '*has emerged as a central player*' in Europe and that preserving the EU and '*sharing the burden of leadership are Germany's top priorities*'.<sup>26</sup> In fact, since the UK decision on Brexit and the

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<sup>23</sup> The Peninsula, 'Germany to keep soldiers in Baltics as long as needed', 03/03/2017, <https://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/03/03/2017/Germany-to-keep-soldiers-in-Baltics-as-long-as-needed>

<sup>24</sup> Der Bundespraesident, 'Dinner hosted by the President of Lithuania', <http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/Frank-WalterSteinmeier/Reden/2017/08/170824-Lithuania-Toast.html>

<sup>25</sup> Vilija Andrulėvičiūtė, 'Energetikos ekspertė Grigas: projektu 'Nord Stream 2' Vokietija parodo savo dviveidiškumą [Energy expert Grieg: Germany's Nord Stream 2 project shows its duality]', 06/09/2018, <https://www.delfi.lt/verslas/energetika/energetikos-eksperte-grigas-projektu-nord-stream-2-vokietija-parodo-savo-dviveidiskuma.d?id=78993681>

<sup>26</sup> Frank-Walter Steinmeier, 'Germany's new global role', 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2016-06-13/germany-s-new-global-role/>

election of E. Macron as the president of France, the French – German axis is seen as the driving force behind the EU reforms; these two countries are perceived as the EU leaders.

The changing role of Germany as a more vocal and active player in Europe and the change in its position *vis-à-vis* Russia has also resulted in the revision of the Lithuanian position *vis-à-vis* Germany. Until 2014, the Lithuanian position might have been defined as pragmatic, based on cooperation in the areas where both states had interests or even opposing when it came to energy policy: after 2014, good relations with Germany became one of the key priorities of Lithuanian foreign and security policies. The minister of foreign affairs of Lithuania, Linas Linkevičius, underlines the particular importance of Germany in '*ensuring the security of the Baltic States and the region*' and expresses interest in deepening relations with Germany in various fields'.<sup>27</sup> The same ideas are echoed by the speaker of Lithuanian parliament, Viktoras Pranskietis, who sees Germany as a strategic partner for Lithuania<sup>28</sup> and Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis, who notes that: '*German-Lithuanian relations are good as never before. Germany is one of the most important partners of Lithuania in Europe, the EU and NATO. Our countries share close political, economic, and cultural ties*'.<sup>29</sup> Cooperation between the two countries is positively evolving in the field of defence, but also in other areas such as trade and investment. The political director of the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania, Robertas Šapronas, has noted that cooperation between Germany and Lithuania in the field of defence is closer than ever before. Moreover, Germany plays an important role in the current reform of Lithuanian defence forces as Lithuanian army land force brigade 'Iron Wolf' is being affiliated to the German army division.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, bilateral ties are strengthened by the biggest defence

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Lithuania, 'Lithuanian and German Foreign Ministers discuss reinforcement of security in our region', <https://www.urm.lt/default/en/news/lithuanian-and-german-foreign-ministers-discuss-reinforcement-of-security-in-our-region>

<sup>28</sup> Viktoras Pranskietis, 'Speaker of the Seimas: Germany is Lithuania's strategic partner', [http://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p\\_r=119&p\\_k=2&p\\_t=175176](http://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=119&p_k=2&p_t=175176)

<sup>29</sup> My Government, 'Prime Minister: German-Lithuanian relations are good as never before', <https://lrv.lt/en/news/prime-minister-german-lithuanian-relations-are-as-good-as-never-before>

<sup>30</sup> Aleksandras Matonis, 'KAM atstovas: Lietuvos ir Vokietijos bendradarbiavimas yra glaudesnis nei bet kada', 15/03/2018, <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/206267/kamatstovas-lietuvos-ir-vokietijos-bendradarbiavimas-yra-glaudesnis-nei-bet-kada#wowzaplaysta-rt=1177000&wowzaplayduration=897000>

procurement contract over the years of independence that Lithuania has signed with the German company ARTEC. A positive political climate and increasing cooperation in the field of defence might reduce the negative effects of diverging strategic cultures in the future. However, it should also be conceded that the security situation in the region is not likely to improve in the near future, which might increase a search for closer relations with NATO and in particular with the US. Lithuania remains an 'Atlanticist' and its security concept is strongly based on the principle of collective defence deriving from the North Atlantic Treaty and the US security presence in the region. NATO and the US are still regarded as key pillars of the Lithuanian defence policy.

## Germany as a security provider

Although over the years of independence Germany has not been considered as a security provider by Lithuania, it must be admitted that even before the changes in German foreign policy, when it defined its aim to play a more important role in Europe and globally, Germany might have been considered as a regional security player, ensuring strong support for multilateralism, which is beneficial for small states, and that the Baltic States, Lithuania among them, have benefited from this role. Research on the security of small states reveals that in order to ensure their security and to respond to numerous threats, it is crucial for them to be actively involved in international organisations and institutions.<sup>31</sup> These multilateral institutions not only ensure protection, but also enable small states to exert at least some influence on the external security environment. However, small states usually lack financial and human resources to act within these institutions and, most importantly, they do not have the necessary expertise. In this regard, Germany, being the biggest power in Europe and making a strong emphasis on multilateralism,<sup>32</sup> represented a comfortable partner for Lithuania.

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<sup>31</sup> Alyson Bales, Baldur Thorhallsson, 'Instrumentalising the European Union in Small States Strategies', in: *European Integration*, no 35, 2, 2013, 100ž

<sup>32</sup> Sophia Becker, 'Germany and War: Understanding Strategic Culture under the Merkel Government', Paris paper No 9, 2013, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/250309/2970933/file/2013%20-%209%20-%20Paris%20Paper%20-%20Becker%20-%20Germany.pdf>, 13

Since the restoration of independence of Lithuania, Germany has actively helped to build a number of multinational institutions in the region, concentrating on non-military aspects of security. The first one is the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) founded in 1992 and consisting of 11 member states (Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia and Sweden). The Council is aimed at building up trust for political dialogue.<sup>33</sup> The second regional framework where Germany is involved is the so-called B3+1 annual meetings. Since 1994, the foreign ministers of Germany and the three Baltic States have annual consultations where they discuss European security and international issues. These regional cooperation patterns have an important practical aspect as well as symbolic meaning in German-Baltic relations. It demonstrates German interest in the stability of the region and provides a platform to form a shared position or discussion on important issues.<sup>34</sup> In the recent annual B3+1 meeting that was held in Palanga, Lithuania's foreign minister emphasised that Germany's role was of particular importance not only in ensuring the security of the Baltic States, but also in preserving European unity in the context of current political challenges.<sup>35</sup>

The role of the 'protector' of European order and mediator became very explicit in the financial crisis of 2008. German leadership and its economic strength in general shifted Germany towards the centre of the EU's decision-making, and, despite the disagreements over the position *vis-à-vis* Russia, this shift was appreciated by Lithuanian decision-makers. Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, who has a very positive attitude towards Angela Merkel's role, has recognised her leadership in numerous European crises and dismissed the anxieties about the disregard of the Baltic States' interests, explicitly stating: *'In four years in the Council, I have never felt she was ignoring the interests of smaller states.'* After the start of the crisis in Ukraine in 2014, Germany and Lithuania also reinforced their cooperation in the 'soft' security area. A particular focus was placed on

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<sup>33</sup> Klein and Herrmann, *op.cit.*, 66

<sup>34</sup> Federal Foreign Office, 'Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Germany', <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/160913-gemerkl-riga/283374>

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Lithuania, 'Baltic and Germany Foreign Ministers meeting in Palanga', <https://www.urm.lt/default/en/news/meeting-of-baltic-and-german-foreign-ministers-takes-place-in-palanga>

information security and counter-measures to Russian propaganda. In 2015, Lithuania and Germany agreed on a joint action plan for strengthening people-to-people ties, resilience to propaganda, public education and promoting independent and objective media.<sup>36</sup> Lithuanian national radio and television and Germany's international news channel *Deutsche Welle* are cooperating, and other projects are being implemented. However, it must be said that these efforts have lost viability somewhat recently and cooperation is concentrated more in the field of hard security. Interestingly enough, despite the overall emphasis on soft security matters as a part of German strategic culture in Lithuania, it is not seen as a soft security provider. The cooperation exists in the field of information security, but does not exceed cooperation with other partners. The field of energy security is overshadowed by disagreements on the implementation of "Nord Stream". Therefore it might be argued that in other security areas not related to military defence issues, cooperation between Lithuania and Germany is mostly based on *ad hoc* initiatives; it was reinvigorated after the Ukraine crisis, but at the moment is stalling. There is a slight increase of cooperation in the field of economy, and both trade and investment have increased over the last two years. However, it might be argued that there is a lack of a strategic approach towards what both countries could do in various fields in a broader and more sustainable sense. The visit by German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Lithuania on 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2018 might be a good opportunity to revitalise this cooperation.

Paradoxically, despite differences in strategic cultures, currently the only slightly diverging, but still diverging attitude *vis-à-vis* Russia in the most dynamic area of cooperation since the Ukrainian crisis is the field of military defence. The military capabilities of Lithuania are limited which prevents it from defending itself against Russia alone. This shortage of military resources is compensated through cooperation with partners. The defence of Lithuania is based mainly on the principle of collective defence enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Key Lithuanian security documents (Lithuania's 'National Security Strategy 2017' and 'The Military

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<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 'Vilniuje aptartos Lietuvos ir Vokietijos bendradarbiavimo perspektyvos [Lithuania discusses prospects for cooperation between Lithuania and Germany]', <https://urm.lt/default/lt/naujienos/vilniuje-aptartos-lietuvos-ir-vokietijos-bendradarbiavimo-perspektyvos>

Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016') reflect this rationalisation indicating that the main security priorities of Lithuania are, 1) membership in NATO and the EU, 2) cooperation with its allies and other international partners, and 3) strong bilateral relations with the US. Strategic partnership with Washington is seen as one of the main pillars of Lithuanian defence since the country regained its independence.<sup>37</sup> Being a small state located in the neighbourhood of aggressive Russia, Lithuania has developed a strategic culture with a dominance of Russia-related issues and emphasis on strong military instruments.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the US with an active and strong strategic culture and powerful military capabilities in Europe become the main provider of 'hard' security of Lithuania. According to the President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaiė, *'the US troops and military equipment deployed in our region are an important and reliable deterrence ensuring the security of Lithuania and the entire alliance'*.<sup>39</sup>

Turbulences within the current international climate, such as changing power balances and strategic priorities of the big states, are extremely unfavourable for small states such as Lithuania. Firstly, Russia is demonstrating increasing aggressiveness. The annexation of Crimea has shown its willingness to use military power in order to implement its political goals. Therefore, Russia's military reinforcements on its western borders are especially threatening for Lithuania. Russia has intensified its activities and increased its presence on the Russian side of the border, in international waters and airspace, and in the Russian exclave Kaliningrad, squeezed between Lithuania and Poland, where it has deployed modern air defence systems.<sup>40</sup> These additional capabilities have significantly expanded the attacking power of Russia and formed an anti-access/area denial (so-called A2AD) bubble in the region.<sup>41</sup> It has made Lithuania more difficult

<sup>37</sup> Luke Coffey, 'The Baltic States: Why the United States Must Strengthen Security Cooperation', 25/10/2013, <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/the-baltic-states-why-the-united-states-must-strengthen-security-cooperation>

<sup>38</sup> Šešelgyte, 'A Midget Warrior: security choices of Lithuania' op.cit., 36

<sup>39</sup> President of Republic of Lithuania, 'About US leadership importance' <https://www.lrp.lt/en/press-centre/press-releases/the-u.s.-leadership-is-important-for-lithuanian-security/27117>

<sup>40</sup> Claudia Major, Alicia von Voss, 'Nordic-Baltic Security, Germany and NATO', 13/03/2016, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2016C13\\_mjr\\_vos.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2016C13_mjr_vos.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Guillaume Lasconjarias, Alessandro Marrone, 'How to Respond to Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)? Towards a NATO Counter-A2/AD Strategy', NDC Conference Report No. 01/16, 2016, 7

for NATO to defend if necessary. Secondly, the US, previously a reliable guarantor of liberal international order and regional security, is slowly changing its dominant policies towards China. Furthermore, President Donald Trump has also conveyed a need for the US to concentrate more on their own internal challenges. Moreover, his remark of NATO being obsolete, his mysterious links with Russia, and his demands that European nations pay their share of the NATO budget, have been raising serious doubts in the Baltics as to what extent the US is still interested in the region. Therefore, even though Lithuania still sees the US as the main guarantor, the country should seek increased cooperation with other European partners. Recent changes in the German position *vis-à-vis* Russia, together with its increasing role in Europe, are creating new opportunities to reevaluate Germany's role as a potential security provider to compensate the lack of clarity regarding the future stance of the US.

Germany, although not very active before the Ukrainian crisis, has been involved in Lithuanian military security and this has helped to create good interpersonal connections as well as increased interoperability. Lithuania and Germany have been developing cooperation in the area of defence since they signed the first defence cooperation arrangement in 1994 (updated in 2010).<sup>42</sup> Lithuania received expert-level assistance and consultations. Germany has been contributing to four trilateral Baltic projects: BALTBAT (Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion), BALTRON (Baltic Naval Squadron) BALTNET (Baltic Air Surveillance Network) and BALTDEFCOL (Baltic Defence College). Also, the structure of Lithuanian armed forces was rearranged in accordance with NATO's standard models with assistance from Germany's advisors. Germany also helped in creating a logistics system adapted to Lithuanian conditions.<sup>43</sup> In addition, since 1994, around 400 Lithuanian officers and soldiers have graduated from various German military education institutions.<sup>44</sup> This kind of assistance provided by Germany at the beginning of the

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<sup>42</sup> Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, 'Cooperation Between Lithuanian and German Military Medics is strengthened', [http://kam.lt/en/news\\_1098/news\\_archives/news\\_archive\\_2018/news\\_archive\\_2018\\_-\\_01/cooperation\\_between\\_lithuanian\\_and\\_german\\_military\\_medics\\_is\\_strengthened.html?pbck=10](http://kam.lt/en/news_1098/news_archives/news_archive_2018/news_archive_2018_-_01/cooperation_between_lithuanian_and_german_military_medics_is_strengthened.html?pbck=10)

<sup>43</sup> Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, 'Bilateral Cooperation, Cooperation with Germany', [http://kam.lt/en/international\\_cooperation\\_1089/bilateral\\_cooperation.html](http://kam.lt/en/international_cooperation_1089/bilateral_cooperation.html)

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

restoration of national military and integration into the NATO process, was significant for Lithuania as a small state with limited financial, human and administrative resources. Moreover, it has contributed to a better understanding of the German security concept and ensured better interpersonal cooperation, which is important considering further cooperation between the two states.

Since 2004, when Lithuania became a member of NATO and the EU, military cooperation between Vilnius and Berlin is mostly maintained within the boundaries of multilateral frameworks. Germany has been participating in NATO's Baltic air policing missions since 2005 and has been involved in five missions to Lithuania (in 2005, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012).<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Lithuanian and German troops have been working together in peacekeeping missions. For instance, in the ongoing EU-led operation SOPHIA, in the Mediterranean, Lithuanian troops have been serving aboard a German ship since 2015.<sup>46</sup> Since October 2017, a platoon of Lithuanian soldiers has served in the UN-led Operation MINUSMA in Mali as part of the German contingent.<sup>47</sup> This kind of cooperation within NATO, UN and EU strengthens German – Lithuanian military interoperability and gives them a chance to exercise their defence capacities together.

A sphere of military cooperation that has lately been intensified, is the procurement of military equipment manufactured in Germany. Since 2014, Germany has sold Lithuania 155 mm self-propelled PzH 2000 (*Panzerhaubitze 2000*) howitzers (21 pieces including the necessary logistical components), 'Boxer' armoured fighting vehicles (88 in total), and a Norwegian Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS), (two air-defence batteries and a logistical maintenance package).<sup>48</sup> D. Šlekys has observed that these purchases have substantially increased the firepower and maneuverability of the Lithuanian armed forces.<sup>49</sup> Since

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<sup>45</sup> Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, 'NATO air-policing missions', [https://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/structure\\_1469/air\\_force/nato\\_air\\_-\\_policing\\_mission.html](https://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/structure_1469/air_force/nato_air_-_policing_mission.html)

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, 'About Lithuanian rotation in Mali', [http://kam.lt/en/news\\_1098/news\\_archives/news\\_archive\\_2018/news\\_archive\\_2018\\_-\\_01/second\\_lithuanian\\_rotation\\_to\\_be\\_deployed\\_to\\_the\\_united\\_nations-led\\_operation\\_minusma\\_in\\_mali.html?pbck=0](http://kam.lt/en/news_1098/news_archives/news_archive_2018/news_archive_2018_-_01/second_lithuanian_rotation_to_be_deployed_to_the_united_nations-led_operation_minusma_in_mali.html?pbck=0)

<sup>48</sup> Deividas Šlekys, 'Lithuania's Balancing Act', in: *Journal on Baltic Security*, 3, 2, 2017, 50

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

institutional attempts by NATO and the EU to harmonise requirements for military capability and procurement have so far remained ineffective,<sup>50</sup> the importance of national level cooperation in this field has increased. The arms' market between nations creates interdependencies among national armed forces.<sup>51</sup> First of all, countries through shared maintenance, and the further upgrading of systems, are connected for long-term cooperation with those they deal with. Secondly, shared military systems increase interoperability that is crucial to cooperation in military conflict. 2017 marked the beginning of a new level of military cooperation between Lithuania and Germany. Based on the decisions made at the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, Germany became a framework nation for NATO's enhanced forward presence (eFP) battlegroup, which was deployed in Lithuania in 2017. A battlegroup comprising roughly 1,200-soldiers is manned by Germany and other contributing nations: Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Iceland, Croatia, and France.<sup>52</sup> The NATO eFP battlegroup, based in Rukla, is integrated into the mechanised infantry brigade 'Iron Wolf' of the Lithuanian armed forces.<sup>53</sup> The battalion is comprised of a headquarters, logistic support company, three to four combat companies, and different combat support units. Over varying intervals, dozens of tanks, armoured tactical vehicles and several hundred wheeled tactical vehicles will be deployed in Lithuania (Leopard 2 tanks, CV90, M113, Boxer, Fennek, armoured personnel carriers).<sup>54</sup> This notable increase in the military presence of allied forces on Lithuanian territory significantly strengthens the deterrence and collective defence capabilities of the region. Moreover, German troops stationed in Lithuania forms a basis to seek closer bilateral security cooperation. Most of the cooperation

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<sup>50</sup> Martin Zapfe, Michael Haas, 'Arms Procurement: The Political-Military Framework', CSS Analyses in Security Policy, no. 181, 2015, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse181-EN.pdf>, 3

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, 'Deployment of NATO eFP Battalion in Baltic States', [http://kam.lt/en/news\\_1098/news\\_archives/news\\_archive\\_2018/news\\_archive\\_2018\\_-\\_02/deployment\\_of\\_the\\_nato\\_enhanced\\_forward\\_presence\\_battalion\\_in\\_the\\_baltic\\_states\\_and\\_poland\\_is\\_beyond\\_doubt\\_a\\_success\\_story\\_of\\_the\\_alliance\\_minister\\_of\\_national\\_defence\\_r.karoblis\\_says.html?pbck=20](http://kam.lt/en/news_1098/news_archives/news_archive_2018/news_archive_2018_-_02/deployment_of_the_nato_enhanced_forward_presence_battalion_in_the_baltic_states_and_poland_is_beyond_doubt_a_success_story_of_the_alliance_minister_of_national_defence_r.karoblis_says.html?pbck=20)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, 'NATO Enhanced Forward Presence', [https://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/e\\_f\\_p.html](https://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/e_f_p.html)

in the field of defence has evolved in the framework of NATO or bilateral cooperation activities. German-Lithuanian cooperation in the EU defence initiatives is not very well-known. Lithuania has supported the German vision on permanent structured cooperation, which has entailed a more capabilities' development driven and inclusive approach, as opposed to exclusive and concentrating on operations (or the 'French vision'). But, further cooperation within PESCO is limited to both countries acting as observers in each other's PESCO projects (Lithuania is observing two German-led PESCO projects and Germany observes Lithuania's initiated PESCO project to create an EU Cyber Rapid Response Team.<sup>55</sup> Lithuanian decision-makers do not support the German concept of framework nations within PESCO. Therefore, it might be argued that Lithuanian– German cooperation in the field of security is concentrating in the field of military defence and evolves mostly in the framework of NATO, but it does not expand substantially into other areas of security or to other international organisations.

Even though all the preconditions of closer Lithuanian–German security cooperation discussed above have demonstrated that good foundations have formed for further relations in the military sphere, it is however too early to talk about Germany as a 'hard' security provider for Lithuania. If Germany intends to come out as a security provider, there are a few prerequisites it would have to meet. Firstly, noticeable improvements to defence capabilities are necessary to make Germany a credible strategic partner and military security provider for Lithuania. Bundeswehr's 2016 white paper reveals that for Germany to continue to play an active and substantial role in the world's security and defence policies, the country must be committed to reinforcing defence capabilities and increase the defence budget.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, Germany has committed to reach the 2% GDP goal set by NATO. To do so by 2024, Germany should double its defence spending to nearly 75 billion euros.<sup>57</sup> However, there is no guarantee that

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<sup>55</sup> Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, 'EU Member States to develop European cyber response force proposed by Lithuania', [https://kam.lt/en/news\\_1098/current\\_issues/eu\\_member\\_states\\_to\\_develop\\_european\\_cyber\\_response\\_force\\_proposed\\_by\\_lithuania.html](https://kam.lt/en/news_1098/current_issues/eu_member_states_to_develop_european_cyber_response_force_proposed_by_lithuania.html)

<sup>56</sup> 'White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of Bundeswehr, op.cit., 17

<sup>57</sup> Donata Riedel, John Blau, 'New German government set to miss NATO defence spending target', 19/01/2018, <https://global.handelsblatt.com/politics/new-german-government-set-miss-nato-defense-spending-target-877222>

Germany will continue with this strategic policy. Because of large financial commitments, there are debates within the country over increasing defence expenditures, and most Germans (64% according to a 2017 poll conducted by Pew Research) appear to oppose an increase in military spending.<sup>58</sup>

Secondly, to be a reliable provider of 'hard' security, Germany has to demonstrate its credibility. However, despite the intentions to further reinforcement of military capabilities, the willingness to use them remains uncertain. It should be noted that the public discussion about Germany's military role and strength within Europe has always been rather ambivalent. As a member of NATO and the EU, Germany is obliged to defend its allies in the case of aggression. Despite this, over half of Germans (57%) do not support sending their soldiers to defend NATO members, such as Poland or the Baltic States (including Lithuania), if they were attacked by Russia. Only one out of three Germans (31%) believes that if one of those countries were attacked, Germany should fulfill its obligations and stand in defence of the country that was attacked.<sup>59</sup> With such a negative public opinion, it would be difficult for Germany's government to take a decision to employ military measures in Europe. Nevertheless, even though recently German opinion *vis-à-vis* Russia is negative, there is no certainty that this attitude will remain. Germany is highly dependent on energy resources from Russia and some decision-makers still view Russia as a reliable supplier and business partner.<sup>60</sup> This could change Germany's attitude towards Russia. In the event of positive German–Russian relations, close military cooperation between Lithuania and Germany would be complicated.

Taking all these factors into account, the current role of Germany in Lithuania's security can be defined more as a security supporter rather than a provider. Further cooperation will depend on Germany's position *vis-à-vis* Russia and Germany's willingness to become a strong military power.

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<sup>58</sup> Deutsche Bank Research, 'German defence policy: Towards a more integrated security framework', 08/08/2017, [https://www.dbresearch.de/PROD/RPS\\_DE-PROD/PROD0000000000448936/German\\_defence\\_policy:\\_Towards\\_a\\_more\\_integrated\\_s.PDF](https://www.dbresearch.de/PROD/RPS_DE-PROD/PROD0000000000448936/German_defence_policy:_Towards_a_more_integrated_s.PDF), 3

<sup>59</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, 'Frayed Partnership: German public opinion on Russia', [https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/user\\_upload/EZ\\_Frayed\\_Partnership\\_2016\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/user_upload/EZ_Frayed_Partnership_2016_ENG.pdf), 11

<sup>60</sup> Kelin and Herrmann, *op.cit.*, 76

## Conclusions and recommendations

The crisis in Ukraine and increasing aggressiveness of Russia is a game changer, which has disturbed the security balance in the region. The European neighbourhood has ceased to be stable and secure. This change has also coincided with a change in the US's political leadership, which for a long time had been perceived as the main hard security guarantor of Lithuania. The US has receded from this role due to the focus on internal US challenges and competition with China. The remarks of the US President on NATO being "obsolete", as well as demands for Europeans to "pay for their security", as well as obscure potential links with Putin's administration made many in Europe uneasy about the future of US security guarantees. Although numerous reassurances have come from the US administration on the importance of Europe in the US security strategy, as well as increasing US spending on the defence of the region, small countries in the region, Lithuania among them, are concerned about the future of their security. It should be noted that NATO and the US are still perceived as the main security pillars of Lithuanian defence but at the same time other security cooperation formats are being reinforced. First of all, Lithuanian decision-makers are reinforcing their participation in the reinvigorated initiatives of the EU security and defence policy. Lithuania has joined the permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and supports its aims to enhance European defence capabilities, as well as leading one of the PESCO projects and participating as a member or observer in the other three. There is a notable increase in the interest in other cooperation formats. Lithuania has joined UK-led joint expeditionary force (JEF) and is considering taking part in the French-led European intervention initiative. Security cooperation is also being strengthened with Poland and the Nordic and Baltic States.

Changes in the German position *vis-à-vis* Russia, its growing role in Europe, and potentially changing security culture has created a window of opportunity for stronger Lithuanian-German security cooperation. German forces stationed in Lithuania as part of NATO's eFP battlegroup and the plans of both countries to further this cooperation through more ambitious integration projects represent a good basis for further cooperation. However, the same issues which were hampering Lithuanian-German security cooperation in the 1990s might still be prevalent for future initiatives. In

order to become a hard security provider for Lithuania, Germany must first have the necessary military capability to deter Russia and a willingness to use it. Overall, Germany is at least becoming less pacifistic at political level, though it is still too early to claim that this process is definite. There are a lot of doubts regarding the more active role of Germany in international security not only among their politicians, decision-makers, and businessmen, but also within the German society. Will society be ready to support the use of German military capabilities in the Baltic region if a crisis erupts? German armed forces are undergoing serious reforms to improve military capabilities, but it is still too early to judge the results of these reforms. There is strong opposition to an increase in the defence budget, which might be hampering these results. Finally, in recent years, closer relations between Germany and Lithuania in the field of security have been hampered by overall German-Russian relations. Although Germany's official position *vis-à-vis* Russia has changed significantly in recent years, there are still fractions among the politicians, business elite and society in general which are pushing for closer cooperation. Germany remains highly dependent on energy resources from Russia and this might affect its position *vis-à-vis* Russia in the future. The decisions related to further implementation of Nord Stream might become a litmus test for the potential of closer security cooperation between Lithuania and Germany in the future.

Based on this, the following recommendations can be made:

- Continue and strengthen cooperation in the formats already present (NATO EfP, cooperation of defence forces, exercises, improving interoperability, air policing).
- Efforts should be made in order to create a more positive view of Lithuania in German society and demonstrate Germany's interest to defend it. As was already mentioned, only one out of three Germans (31%) believes that if one of the Baltic States (including Lithuania) or Poland were attacked, Germany should defend them by sending its soldiers and fulfilling its obligations as a NATO member. This unfavorable perception is a serious challenge in considering Germany as a reliable partner of "hard" security for Lithuania.
- Defence procurements could be used for strengthening the relations between the two countries in other areas. Lithuania has implemented a

few significant weaponry procurements from Germany, by buying 155 mm self-propelled PzH 2000 howitzers, “Boxer” armoured fighting vehicles. Through maintenance and the further upgrading of these systems, the countries could develop their cooperation.

- PESCO could present an opportunity for further cooperation. Although current cooperation is quite limited, Lithuania and Germany although already using existing cooperation formats in NATO, could also benefit more from new European defence initiatives.
- Soft security cooperation is underdeveloped. Therefore, joint Lithuanian–German initiatives countering propaganda should be reinforced. Moreover, cooperation in other areas such as cyber security could be developed.
- A more strategic view on German–Lithuanian cooperation involving various fields might be beneficial for both countries, creating better prioritisation and sustainability.
- When addressing one of the major challenges – diverging opinions *vis-à-vis* Russia, better dialogue is needed to prevent an atmosphere of distrust. Differences of opinion remain on how to treat cooperation with Russia, in particular in the implementation of the “Nord Stream 2” project. Lithuania assesses it as contrary to the EU’s third energy package, meanwhile, Germany presents it as a purely economic national interest.
- In the context of a turbulent security environment, clear communication and dialogue with Germany is necessary in order to ensure that the interest of Lithuania as a smaller partner are not ignored or violated. Europe’s relations with the US and Russia are changing and this is reflected in controversial German statements towards the US, as well as in the suggestions for strengthening the strategic autonomy of Europe, that are supported by France. These dynamics, especially when followed by initiatives to create a dialogue with Russia, is a serious challenge for Lithuania as a small state.

# GERMANY IN A NORWEGIAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVE: A LIKE-MINDED ALLY IN A CHANGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Emil Jørgensen Øverbø

As in many other European countries, the Second World War impacted on the Norwegian perception of Germany as a security actor. However, the shadow of the Second World War no longer appears to be relevant in the Norwegian context. Germany has now been singled out as Norway's most important partner in Europe and a close NATO ally. The Norwegian perception of Germany as a security actor is changing rapidly in reaction to a changing German security and foreign policy. Nevertheless, the German reconciliation process, with its own history, still seems to have an impact on how Germany is perceived in a security and defence context. The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of how Germany as a security actor is perceived in Norway, and how this perception has changed during the last two decades.

Perceptions are subjective: they don't consist solely of objective observations. Rather, perceptions reflect the vision of reality that is then interpreted differently by individuals. To put it simply, different people often perceive the same phenomena differently. The subjective perceptions of voters and policy-makers affect how and which policies are formed. Top-level politicians possess the power to shape public perceptions. At the same time, democratically elected politicians reflect the perceptions of the public. The opinions of relevant academic experts are also interesting in this regard, as they are usually consulted by the media and the government to provide comments and analysis on issues of security, defence and foreign affairs. Consequentially, it would be of interest to examine the perceptions and opinions of relevant stakeholders and experts, as well as those of the wider public to make an assessment of how Germany as a security actor is perceived from a Norwegian perspective. The following discussion will be built upon the perceptions of Norwegian politicians, state officials, relevant academic experts and the media.

This chapter will mainly focus on issues of hard security. Due to the geostrategic position of Norway, and the increasing rivalry between NATO and Russia, the Norwegian threat perception has lately been focused on threats deriving from interstate rivalry. In the long-term defence plan, written by the Norwegian Ministry of Defence (NMoD) in June 2016, the increased Russian military capacity and use of power is described as the most significant change in the Norwegian security environment.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the bilateral security cooperation between Norway and Germany, during the last few years, has mainly been focused on hard security issues. Nevertheless, Germany is regarded as an important actor in many areas of soft security, such as migration, capacity-building in fragile states, organised crime and climate change.<sup>2</sup> Although still hugely important, soft security issues have gained less attention in the Norwegian security discourse since the Russian annexation of Crimea. Soft security is typically conducted through multilateral institutions and organisations, while hard security is more important at bilateral level. Hence, the Norwegian perception of Germany as a hard security actor is the central focal point of this chapter. Nevertheless, there will also be a sub-chapter on soft security issues.

The first part of this chapter describes the historical relationship between Norway and Germany, and how the perception of Germany as an important partner in security matters has grown in Norway over the last decades. This is followed by a discussion of how the credibility of Germany as a hard security actor is perceived in Norway and to what extent the pacifist mindset of post-war Germany has damaged this credibility. The subsequent sub-chapter discusses perceptions of Germany as a soft security actor, and the cooperation between Norway and Germany on these issues. Lastly, some concluding remarks about the current perceptions are drawn and a forward-looking perspective, coupled with some recommendations, is offered.

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<sup>1</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 'Kampkraft og baerkraft [Combat power and sustainability]', Prop. 151 S, 2016, p. 28

<sup>2</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Handlingsplanen: Tyskland [The Action Plan, Germany]', 2014

## Increasing Security Cooperation and Changing Perceptions

Historically, Norway has had close ties with Germany. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Germany was an important, if not the most important, centre of cultural and academic influence on Norway.<sup>3</sup> Almost all of the important and influential Norwegian authors and artists studied and lived in Germany at some point. Hans Gude and Adolph Tidemand, two of the most influential national romantic painters in Norway, studied at the Arts Academy in Düsseldorf. The famous composer Edvard Grieg studied at the Leipzig Conservatory, and the playwright and dramatist Henrik Ibsen lived in Germany for 23 years. These artists, and the German culture they brought home, had a huge impact on Norwegian culture and state-building in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the First – and especially the Second – World War delivered huge blows to the public perception of Germany in Norway. From being a source of major cultural influence, huge parts of the Norwegian public started regarding Germany as a source of instability and totalitarianism. Norway had a tradition of non-alignment in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It managed to remain neutral during the First World War, although was closely linked to the British and western allies due to the massive Norwegian trading fleet. In the Second World War, the German violation of Norwegian neutrality in 1940, and the subsequent five-year occupation, led to massive resentment towards Germany in the Norwegian society. The Second World War changed the Norwegian cultural orientation towards the Atlantic, the UK and the US. More importantly for the topic of this book however, the Norwegian security orientation towards the UK and the US cemented itself after the Second World War. In the first decades after the war, there was a public narrative of the UK as Norway's saviour and Norway's most important ally.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Olav Riste, *Norway's foreign relations: A history*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001, 61

<sup>4</sup> Kristin Haugevik, 'Ledestjernen som forsvant: Storbritannia i norsk utenrikspolitikk [The leader who disappeared: Britain in Norwegian foreign policy]', in: *Nytt Norsk Tidskrift* 33, no. 4, 2015, [www.idunn.no/nnt/2015/04/ledestjernen\\_som\\_forsvant\\_-\\_storbritannia\\_inorsk\\_utenriksp](http://www.idunn.no/nnt/2015/04/ledestjernen_som_forsvant_-_storbritannia_inorsk_utenriksp), 341

The process of overcoming the resentment of the Second World War took more time in Norway than in other countries.<sup>5</sup> However, due to its geographic proximity, multilateral meeting platforms and matching political cultures, the divisions were gradually overcome. The German social democrat Willy Brandt, who was a political refugee in Norway from 1934 to 1940, played an important role in the reconciliation process during his political career in West Germany after the war.<sup>6</sup>

The incorporation of West Germany into NATO in 1955 was an important milestone in the process of normalisation between the two countries. During the Cold War, security and defence cooperation between West Germany and Norway tightened. Joint training on Norwegian territory was, however, difficult because of war memories and protests from the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup>

Since the end of the Cold War, Norwegian and German cooperation on security matters has deepened and widened. During most of the Cold War, German security policy was designed to deter a large scale Soviet attack. Since then, however, Germany has become an important international actor.<sup>8</sup> As Germany has taken on more responsibility for security internationally and regionally, Norwegian interest in forming closer ties with Germany in the field of foreign, security and defence policy has grown.

During the last two decades, Germany has become increasingly important in the Norwegian foreign and security policy discourse. In 1999, the Norwegian government launched its first official Germany strategy (*Tyskland-strategi*). The strategy was updated in 2003 and in 2007, when it was supplemented with an action plan. In the strategy document of 2007, it was stated that Norway and Germany have, during recent years, been closely aligned when it comes to goals and methods in defence and security policy.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Robin Allers, Carlo Masala and Rolf Tamnes, 'Common or Divided Security? German and Norwegian Perspectives on Euro-Atlantic Security', Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2014, 21

<sup>6</sup> Vidar Helgensen, 'Svar på spørsmål om forholdet mellom Norge og Tyskland [Answer to question about the relationship between Norway and Germany]', [www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/svar-pa-sporsmal-om-forholdet-mellom-nor/id748202/](http://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/svar-pa-sporsmal-om-forholdet-mellom-nor/id748202/)

<sup>7</sup> Allers et al., Common or Divided Security?, op.cit. 20

<sup>8</sup> Helga Haftendorn, 'Germany's Return to the Global Stage', in: Common or Divided Security? eds. Robin Allers, Carlo Masala and Rolf Tamnes, Frankfurt: Peter Lang Edition, 2014

<sup>9</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Regjeringens Tyskland-strategi' [The Government's Germany Strategy], 2007, [www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/regjeringens-tyskland-strategi/id489163/4](http://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/regjeringens-tyskland-strategi/id489163/4)

The most recent version of the strategy, from 2014, singled out Germany as Norway's '*most important partner in Europe and a close NATO ally*' [author's translation].<sup>10</sup> In the white paper on foreign and security policy, published by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) in 2017, Germany – together with the Netherlands, the UK and France – was mentioned as an important ally with which the government wished to intensify its foreign and security policy cooperation.<sup>11</sup>

The Nordic and the Baltic countries are also mentioned in the white paper as important partners for strengthening defence cooperation with. The Nordic countries have historically been important for Norwegian foreign and security cooperation. However, during recent years there has been an enhanced emphasis on Germany as a strategic partner for Norway. When Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg formed his first government in 2000, the first state he visited was Germany. This caused some reactions in the Norwegian press, as – '*the common thing for new Norwegian prime ministers has been to organise their first visit abroad to a Nordic country*' [author's translation].<sup>12</sup> Prime Minister Erna Solberg also paid her first foreign visit to Germany when she took office in 2013. As Germany is the biggest economic power in Europe, there are many obvious incentives for Norwegian politicians to focus on Germany. There is also an increasing trend that Norwegian politicians perceive Germany as an important partner on defence and security issues. In the preface to the Germany strategy, written by the Norwegian Foreign Minister Børge Brende, in May 2014, Germany was mentioned as a close NATO ally in the first sentence of the preface.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the preface of Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, in the 2007 version of the strategy, defence and security cooperation was only mentioned as part of what the strategy included.<sup>14</sup> There are several possible reasons for this change. In 2007, the Arab Spring, the Russian

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<sup>10</sup> Regjeringens Tyskland-strategi, 2007, op. cit., 2

<sup>11</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Setting the course for Norwegian foreign and security policy, 2017, [www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-36-20162017/id2549828/sec1,33](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-36-20162017/id2549828/sec1,33)

<sup>12</sup> VG, 'Frekkis fra jens [Frekkis from jens]', 07/04/2000, [www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/regjeringen-stoltenberg/frekkis-fra-jens/a/1862023/](http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/regjeringen-stoltenberg/frekkis-fra-jens/a/1862023/)

<sup>13</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regjeringens Tyskland-strategi [The Government's Germany Strategy], 20014, [www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/regjeringens-tyskland-strategi/id489163/2](http://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/regjeringens-tyskland-strategi/id489163/2)

<sup>14</sup> Regjeringens Tyskland-strategi, 2007, op.cit. 2

modernisation of its armed forces and the annexation of Crimea were yet to happen. These events forced both Norway and Germany to prioritise security to a much higher degree. When Børge Brende wrote the preface of Norway's Germany strategy in May 2014, the annexation of Crimea had occurred just a few weeks earlier and war was ongoing in eastern Ukraine. In the meantime, Germany had taken on more responsibility in foreign and security affairs. This was especially visible in the diplomatic efforts of Germany after the crisis in Ukraine erupted.

As mentioned earlier, German goals and methods in defence and security policy are considered to be closely aligned with the Norwegian goals and methods. Although the US remains the most important ally of Norway, the government has also focused on building strong security cooperation with its European allies. It has been an explicit and consistent strategy of the current government to search for closer bilateral contact and security cooperation with 'like-minded' northern European states. Germany, the UK, France and the Netherlands are singled out as key allies, in this regard. Of these four states, the security and defence cooperation with the UK and Germany is the most consistent. The security and defence cooperation with other large European countries can be described as more sporadic.<sup>15</sup> Cooperation with the larger powers in NATO is important to Norway, but it is uncommon for this attention to run both ways. However, Norwegian politicians seem to be under the impression that Germany does take great interest in Norwegian concerns and views. In 2015, the minister for EU and EEA affairs stated that '*Norway is also important for Germany*' and pointed out that '*in many ways, Norway's road to Europe goes through Berlin*' [author's translation].<sup>16</sup> Norwegian diplomats also support this view. They describe the attitude of German politicians and officials towards Norway as very inclusive.<sup>17</sup>

The description '*like-minded northern European state*' seems to be particularly fitting in the German example. When asked to describe

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with a Norwegian diplomat, 23/03/2018

<sup>16</sup> Vidar Helgesen, 'Tyskland – Norges nøkkelpartner i EU [Germany – Norway's key partner in the EU]', 04/03/2015, [https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/tyskland\\_partner/id2398490/](https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/tyskland_partner/id2398490/)

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Norwegian diplomat, 23/03/2018; Kristin Haugevik, 'Diplomacy through the back door: Norway and the bilateral route to EU decision-making', in: Global Affairs 3, no. 3, 2017, DOI:10.1080/23340460.2017.1378586, 285

Germany as a security actor, a Norwegian diplomat answered that he couldn't remember any instances where Germany had followed a security policy that Norway completely disagreed with.<sup>18</sup> Norway and Germany largely share common values, political culture, interests, standards and strategic orientation. Both countries share a strong commitment to multilateral institutions and a rules-based international system, although partly for different reasons; Germany because of its history and Norway because of its status as a small state. The two countries also regard the US as their main security guarantor.

Norway and Germany have similar approaches to Russia. In the official Germany strategy of 2007, the Norwegian government singled out the common Russia policy as a key area of common interests between Germany and Norway. It stated that '*Germany and Norway are dedicated to developing the cooperation with Russia and to pull Russia into European cooperation*' [author's translation].<sup>19</sup> Both Norway and (West) Germany share a similar history of relations with the Soviet Union. Both countries managed a strong deterrence posture, coupled with reassurance, dialogue and interaction on fields of common interests (*détente*).

The tradition of a dual approach to Russia is reflected in the way both countries are responding to the Russian state in the current crisis between the West and Russia. Norway supports the sanctions against Russia and contributes to NATO's deterrence. At the same time, Norway and Russia maintain military to military contact to keep each other updated on exercises and to avoid misunderstandings and accidents. Different forms of cooperation, like cooperation on environmental issues, nuclear security, fishery, and search and rescue in the High North is also maintained. There is an ongoing debate in Norway on how to strike the balance between deterrence and *détente*. There is, however, widespread support of dialogue to solve the current tensions. Contrary to Sweden, Finland and the three Baltic States, Norway does not perceive the same level of threat from Russia. Russia does not pose a direct military threat to Norway, according to the Norwegian Chief of Defence.<sup>20</sup> This may partly be due to the fact

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with a Norwegian diplomat, 23/03/2018

<sup>19</sup> 'Regjeringens Tyskland-strategi', op.cit., 3

<sup>20</sup> Sveinung Berg Betzrød, 'Forsvarsjefen: Vårt handlingsrom er redusert', Aftenposten, 22/01/2018, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/QLxXz4/Forsvarssjefen-Vart-handlingsrom-er-reduisert>.

that Norway is more used to a high level of Russian military activity in its neighbouring area. The different perceptions may also be explained by how Russia is behaving in the High North, compared to the Russian behaviour in the Baltic Sea. As pointed out by the Norwegian defence minister in 2016, Norway has not experienced the same kind of aggressive behaviour as the Balts, the Swedes and the Finns.<sup>21</sup>

At regional level, the strategy of a dual approach towards Russia is reflected in the Norwegian military presence in the Baltics, on land, at sea and in the air. The mission is to contribute to the deterrence of Russia and to reassure Norway's Baltic allies. At the same time, Norway supports and encourages dialogue and interaction with Russia, largely in the same manner as the Germans. According to Norwegian diplomats, Norway fully supports Angela Merkel's approach towards Russia and the crisis in Ukraine, as well as her role in the negotiations in the Normandy format.<sup>22</sup>

## Germany: A Credible Hard Security Actor?

Because of Norway's geographical position and its long coastline, strategic and military cooperation with key naval powers, such as the US and the UK, has been, and will continue to be, of vital importance to Norwegian security. The UK continues to be the most important European ally of Norway in the maritime and air domains, but Germany has become an increasingly important partner on the land domain of military cooperation. Because of the geographic proximity and the overall power of Germany, Germany is among the few European allies that could be expected to have a surplus in military capacity to operate in the Norwegian territory in times of crisis and war.

The volume of cooperation with Germany on security and defence matters has increased in accordance with the German willingness to take on

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<sup>21</sup> Alf B. Johnsen, 'Eriksen Søreide: Russland opptreer forskjellig mot Norge og Sverige', 27/10/2016, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/4My9q/eriksen-soereide-russland-opptreer-forskjellig-mot-norge-og-sverige>; Kjell Dragnes, 'Uro for 'norsk' øvelsesmønster i Østersjøen', 16/06/2016, <https://www.forsvarsforeningen.no/norges-forsvar/norges-forsvar-3-2016/uro-for-norsk-ovelsesmonster-i-ostersjoen/>

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Norwegian diplomat, 23/03/2018

more responsibility in these areas, regionally and internationally. In 2004, Norway joined the German-Netherlands Corps (1GNC). The multilateral corps structure has since been an important framework of Norwegian-German cooperation (as well as Norwegian-Dutch cooperation). The Norwegian experience with the 1GNC has been largely positive.<sup>23</sup> Together with Germany and the Netherlands, Norway contributed to the development of the quick reaction force of NATO, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) in 2015 (which they will take shared responsibility for again in 2019). Norway is also contributing with military forces to the German-led battalion in Lithuania. At a security conference in Norway, the foreign minister and former defence minister, Ine Eriksen Søreide, explained that Norway chose the German-led battalion partly due to the fact that it was German-led, and because Norway has an overall strategic vision of deepening the military cooperation with close allies.<sup>24</sup> In June 2017, Norway and Germany joined the cooperation on the multinational multi-role tanker transport fleet with the Netherlands and Luxembourg.<sup>25</sup>

Seen from the Norwegian perspective, the most important defence and security cooperation with Germany in the BSR is taking place within the framework of NATO and the Northern Group. Traditionally, the region has not been an important part of Norwegian defence and security policy. The North Atlantic Sea and the High North are viewed as the areas of most strategic value to Norway. Since the Russian aggression in Ukraine, however, the region has been increasingly important in the Norwegian defence and security discourse. From the Norwegian perspective, the BSR is seen as an area where increased tensions could create spillover effects and increased tensions in the High North.<sup>26</sup> Efforts to create and maintain stability in the Baltic Sea are therefore seen as highly important. The current cooperation between Norway and Germany in the region is taking place at many levels within NATO, but cooperation at the strategic level is seen as the most

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<sup>23</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 'Tyskland er en viktig alliert [Germany is an important ally]', 22/03/2014, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/Nettsak-fra-Berlin/id757462/>

<sup>24</sup> The Norwegian Atlantic Committee, 'Kate Hansen Bundt in dialogue with Ine Eriksen Søreide and Frank Bakke-Jensen', 21/02/2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cq0Js-71sM>

<sup>25</sup> NATO, Multi-Role Tanker Transport Fleet expands significantly: Germany and Norway to join the MMF, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_147156.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_147156.htm)

<sup>26</sup> 'Kampkraft og bærekraft', op.cit., 29, 30

important from the Norwegian side.<sup>27</sup> The HQ Multinational Corps North East (HQ MNC NE) in Szczecin in Poland, the EFP in Lithuania, the Standing NATO Maritime Group One (SNMG1) and the Standing NATO Mine-Countermeasures Group One (SNMCMG1) are all examples of Norwegian-German cooperation in the region. Germany is considered to be a constructive, prompt and reliable actor in the BSR. A Norwegian official, who follows German policy closely, described Germany as gaining an increasing sense of responsibility and will to act upon that responsibility in the region. Germany's means to do so was also described as increasing.<sup>28</sup>

The latest addition to German-Norwegian defence cooperation is the joint procurement of new identical submarines. The submarine purchase includes strategic cooperation on training and exercises, as well as in weapons' development. The deal also includes German purchase of the Norwegian produced naval strike missile and advanced weapons' systems to the submarines. The Norwegian defence and security industry has described the deal as vital to strengthen and develop a competitive Norwegian defence industry.<sup>29</sup> There is also an overall ambition to strengthen the cooperation between the two naval forces, and in maritime military research and technology development.<sup>30</sup> The strategic cooperation that this deal represents is meant to secure the long-term cooperation needed to maintain a credible submarine capacity in the future; a capacity that is considered vital to the Norwegian deterrence. The deal has attracted a lot of praise and is seen as an important step towards strengthening the bilateral relations with Germany. The deal embodies how far Germany is willing to go to accommodate Norwegian interests and common strategic goals. It is clear by these examples that Norwegian policy-makers are supportive of the German Framework Nations Concept and appreciate Germany as a strategic partner.

The trust in German leadership, and especially in Angela Merkel's leadership, is also reflected in the wider Norwegian public. In a public

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Norwegian diplomat, 09/04/2018

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Per Dalløkken, 'Naval Strike Missile', 13/02/2017, <https://www.tu.no/artikler/tyskland-skall-ha-norske-missiler-pa-alle-sine-fregatter/376522>

<sup>30</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Defense, 'Norway and Germany enter into extensive cooperation on naval defence material', 22/08/2017, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/norway-and-germany-enter-into-extensive-cooperation-on-naval-defence-materiel/id2568087>

survey carried out in June 2017 by Ipsos, on behalf of the Norwegian newspaper *Dagbladet*, 55% of the participants answered that they believed Angela Merkel was doing the best job to secure world peace. Canada's prime minister, Justin Trudeau, came second with 18%. 15% trusted that the newly elected French president, Emmanuel Macron, was the most capable head of government to secure peace.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, there are still some concerns in Norway about the deterrence and defence capabilities of the German armed forces. The shadow of the Second World War is still present in the Norwegian security debate, but not in the way that Norwegians fear Germany as a hard security actor. Rather, the shadow of the Second World War is reflected in concerns that Norway should never make the same mistake of neglecting national defence in times of increased uncertainty and a deteriorating security climate. The link between Norwegian perceptions of Germany as a hard security actor and the Second World War is how Germany has chosen to deal with the legacy of the Nazi past. Germany as a pacifist country, reluctant to use hard power, is therefore a common perception in Norway.<sup>32</sup>

As the Norwegian-German defence cooperation has grown in the years since the Cold War, there have also been increasing concerns about German willingness to use its military power when needed, and the overall quality of the Bundeswehr.

Norway and Germany cooperated closely in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. The cooperation has been described as good in official Norwegian sources, but the many national caveats of the German forces have also created frustrations and critique in the media and within the Norwegian armed forces. The fact that the German forces rarely went outside the bases, in the relatively peaceful northern region of Afghanistan,

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<sup>31</sup> Halldor Hustadnes, 'Hun er nordmenns håp for verdensfreden [She is the Norwegian hope for world peace]', 10/07/2017, <https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/hun-er-nordmenns-hap-for-verdensfreden/68488654>

<sup>32</sup> See: Ingeborg Eliassen, 'Norske soldater snart i vinteroffensiv [Norwegian soldiers soon in winter offensive]', 12/12/2008, [www.aftenbladet.no/utenriks/i/y9bXA/Norske-soldater-snart-i-vinteroffensiv](http://www.aftenbladet.no/utenriks/i/y9bXA/Norske-soldater-snart-i-vinteroffensiv); Sten Inge Jørgensen, 'Tyskland: Europas nye stormakt [Germany: new power of Europe]', 11/01/2015, [www.nupi.no/Publikasjoner/Innsikt-og-kommentar/Hvorhender-det/HHD-2015/Tyskland-Europas-nye-stormakt](http://www.nupi.no/Publikasjoner/Innsikt-og-kommentar/Hvorhender-det/HHD-2015/Tyskland-Europas-nye-stormakt)

created a lot of bad press for Germany in Norway.<sup>33</sup> The German decision to abstain from the international campaign in Libya in 2011, the subsequent withdrawal of German naval forces from the arms' embargo and especially the withdrawal of the German AWACS<sup>34</sup> personnel, was also a blow to the Norwegian perception of Germany as a reliable ally and a hard security actor. Contrary to Germany, the Norwegian government decided to take an active role in the international intervention in Libya.<sup>35</sup>

A survey, carried out by the Pew Research Centre in 2015, showed that only 38% of the German population believed that Germany should use military force to support a fellow NATO country that became involved in a serious military conflict with Russia. Even though the public opinion does not make these decisions, the numbers still cause some concern. The results from the survey prompted concerned reactions among Norwegian observers and in the media.<sup>36</sup> Frank Walter Steinmeier's comments about 'sabre-rattling' in connection with NATO's Anaconda exercise in 2016, also raised some eyebrows in the Norwegian media.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that the German soldiers in the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) battalion in Lithuania are on a mission legally termed as an exercise (not a military operation as their Norwegian co-soldiers) has also raised concerns that Germany is too entrenched in a pacifist mindset.<sup>38</sup> However, this concern is rejected by other sources that point out that the German

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<sup>33</sup> See, for example: Janne Haaland Matlary, 'De Harde fakta [Hard facts]', 24/10/2007, [www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/dmxkj/De-harde-fakta](http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/dmxkj/De-harde-fakta); Jahn Otto Johansen, 'Alvorlig for Afghanistan [Serious for Afghanistan]', 02/01/2008, [www.nrk.no/urix/alvorlig-for-afghanistan-1.4412375](http://www.nrk.no/urix/alvorlig-for-afghanistan-1.4412375); Aftenposten, 'Tyske soldater bøtter nedpå I Afghanistan [A drop in the number of German soldiers in Afghanistan]', 16/11/2008, [www.aftenposten.no/verden/i/75743/Tyske-soldater-botter-nedpa-i-Afghanistan](http://www.aftenposten.no/verden/i/75743/Tyske-soldater-botter-nedpa-i-Afghanistan).

<sup>34</sup> Airborne Warning and Control System

<sup>35</sup> Gro Holm, 'Er tysk alenegang farlig [Is Germany facing the danger alone?]', 03/04/2011, [www.nrk.no/urix/kommentar\\_er-tysk-alenegang-farlig\\_-1.7576079](http://www.nrk.no/urix/kommentar_er-tysk-alenegang-farlig_-1.7576079)

<sup>36</sup> Jan Arild Snoen, 'NATO's gratispassasjerer [NATO's free passanger]', 10/06/2015, [www.minervanett.no/natos-gratispassasjerer/](http://www.minervanett.no/natos-gratispassasjerer/); Frithjof Jacobsen, 'NATO's krigsgrense [NATO's war limit]', 25/06/2015, [www.vg.no/nyheter/meninger/russland/natos-krigsgrense/a/23477375/](http://www.vg.no/nyheter/meninger/russland/natos-krigsgrense/a/23477375/); Ståle Ulriksen, 'Et skråblikk på FMR (Forsvarssjefens Militærfaglige Råd) [A snapshot of Defence Commanders' Military Council]', 09/11/2015, [www.oslomilsamfund.no/foredrag-et-skrablikk-pa-fmr-forsvarssjefens-militaerfaglige-rad/](http://www.oslomilsamfund.no/foredrag-et-skrablikk-pa-fmr-forsvarssjefens-militaerfaglige-rad/).

<sup>37</sup> Frank Rossavik, 'Steinmeiers varsko [Steinmeiers' warning]', 19/06/2016, [www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kommentar/i/KMeqy/Steinmeiers-varsko--Frank-Rossavik](http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kommentar/i/KMeqy/Steinmeiers-varsko--Frank-Rossavik)

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Norwegian diplomat, 20/11/2017

soldiers are considered serious and have the same rules of engagement as the rest of the battalion.<sup>39</sup>

The capability of the German armed forces has caused more concern than the reliability of the political willingness of Germany to defend its allies. The chief editor of the online newspaper Aldrimer.no (covering mostly security and defence issues) has published many articles that criticise the quality of the Bundeswehr. The newspaper has also raised concerns about the Norwegian decision to form a strategic partnership with Germany and the German defence industry, given the poor state of the Bundeswehr.<sup>40</sup> This critique has, however, not been reflected in other, bigger, Norwegian media outlets.

Norwegian politicians welcome the increased German defence spending, but there is little confidence among relevant politicians and experts that Germany is going to reach NATO's 2% target anytime soon.<sup>41</sup>

The election of Donald Trump in the US and the controversies around the NATO 'mini-summit' in Brussels and the G-7 meeting in May 2017, sparked some debate in Norway about the reliability of the US as a security guarantor, and some raised the question whether Norway should look to Germany and Europe as its key allies instead. The biggest TV channel in Norway televised a debate on whether Norway should look to Europe or Germany, instead of the US for its security guarantees. There was a broad consensus among the experts in the panel that Germany does not possess the military strength to defend Norway in a high-end conflict. As pointed out by one of the panellists, the US is still Norway's closest military ally, even though Norway and Germany stand more closely aligned politically. There was, however, agreement that the current strategy of building closer security cooperation with key European allies is a good strategy.<sup>42</sup>

Although there are reasons to be concerned about the present state of German armed forces, Norwegian officials do trust the resolve and political willingness of the German politicians to respond to an Article 5 situation.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Norwegian diplomat, 23/03/2018

<sup>40</sup> Kjetil Stormark, 'Europeisk kjempe på leirfotter [Europeans fighting at a campfire]', 26/02/2018, [www.aldrimer.no/europeisk-kjempe-pa-leirfotter/](http://www.aldrimer.no/europeisk-kjempe-pa-leirfotter/)

<sup>41</sup> NRK, 'Debatten: Sikkerhet og beredskap [Debate: security, or preparedness?]', 01/06/2017, <https://tv.nrk.no/serie/debatten/NNFA51060117/01-06-2017>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Norwegian diplomat, 23/03/2018

When Germany as a security actor is discussed in Norway, be it in the media or at seminars and conferences, it is often mentioned in the wider context of the European Union and Europe. Norway is not a member of the EU, but it is tied to European cooperation and integration through a wide range of agreements. The image of Germany as 'Europe's leader' is growing in the Norwegian perception. Brexit, the euro crisis and the election of Donald Trump are some of the factors contributing to this image. Discussions about Germany as a security actor do therefore often develop into a discussion of the EU as a security actor, and vice versa. Brexit and the new initiatives to deepen defence and security cooperation within the EU, has prompted a debate in Norway about the potential danger that the EU might duplicate NATO capabilities. In Norwegian defence and security circles there has traditionally existed some concern that EU defence integration might undermine NATO, or waste resources on duplication of NATO assets. The Norwegian prime minister related to this concern in a debate at the Storting (parliament) in 2016, when she said that:

*'... Germany and France have an agenda where they wish to strengthen the security policy and the defence policy dimension in the EU; something that will also be easier to do after Great Britain has pulled out. This is a [policy] that we primarily haven't been as fond of, because we want NATO to be the main route... [author's translation]*<sup>44</sup>

This is a concern that is generally mentioned whenever there is talk about EU defence integration. However, there seems to be an increased confidence among Norwegian politicians and diplomats that the EU defence initiatives do not risk duplicating NATO capabilities and that these initiatives might create synergy effects with them instead. The vice-minister/state secretary of the Ministry of Defence, Øystein Bø, reflected this tendency in a speech about the roles of NATO and the EU in security policy in 2014, when he explained that the EU and NATO filled different roles in the response to the Russian actions in Ukraine. He would, however, *'not go as far as to say that a formalised division of responsibility is beginning to develop between NATO*

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<sup>44</sup> Erna Solberg, Answer during oral Question Time at the Storting, 31/05/2017, [www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Referater/Stortinget/2016-2017/refs-201617-05-31?m=1#102057-1-16](http://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Referater/Stortinget/2016-2017/refs-201617-05-31?m=1#102057-1-16)

*and the EU* [author's translation].<sup>45</sup> It is important to Norway to stay close to, and participate in, the EU defence integration. Ine Eriksen Søreide, the current minister of foreign affairs, explained the Norwegian reasoning for this by stating that it is largely due to the actual value of the cooperation programmes, but it is also because Norway wants to make sure that the EU does not develop parallel capabilities to those of NATO.<sup>46</sup> After the British decision to leave the EU, and the subsequent developments of new defence integration in the EU, Germany is seen as an important ally in the EU to ensure no duplication and Norway being given access to the new agreements. There is considerable confidence in the NMFA that Germany is going to champion the Norwegian cause in the new defence integration process.<sup>47</sup>

## Soft Security

The majority of the Norwegian and German cooperation on issues of soft security is tied to multilateral frameworks, such as the UN, OSCE and the EU. Because of the multilateral approach, in contrast to some of the more bilateral cooperation on hard security, the cooperation with Germany on soft security is less visible. There are however some areas of soft security cooperation where Germany's role as a soft security actor is highlighted in Norway. The most prominent issues in this regard, are EU migration and asylum policy, climate policy, international aid and development policy, and the support of an institutionalised liberal world order.

Much of the cooperation between Norway and Germany on soft security issues in Europe is tied to the EU framework. In trans-border issues, the Schengen and Dublin agreements, Europol, Eurojust and Frontex are the most important cooperation frameworks. In trans-border issues, such as organised crime and migration, Germany is the most important partner to Norway, in addition to the Nordic countries. This is largely due to geography, but also due to Germany's power in shaping the policy in European

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<sup>45</sup> Øystein Bø, 'Sikkerhetspolitiske utviklingstrekk NATO og EUs rolle [NATO and EU role in the development of security policy]', 02/10/2014, [www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/Sikkerhetspolitiske-utviklingstrekk---NATO-og-EUs-rolle/id2005264/](http://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/Sikkerhetspolitiske-utviklingstrekk---NATO-og-EUs-rolle/id2005264/)

<sup>46</sup> 'Kate Hansen Bundt in dialogue with Ine Eriksen Søreide and Frank Bakke-Jensen', op.cit.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Norwegian diplomat, 23/03/2018

cooperation. Norwegian politicians often describe Germany as Norway's most important partner in Europe or the EU.<sup>48</sup> The practitioners often share this view. In a report by the Norwegian police from 2016 on the Schengen cooperation, Germany was described as the country most accommodating to Norwegian interests, even compared to other Nordic neighbours.<sup>49</sup>

In 2015, Norway received twice the EU's average of refugees per capita.<sup>50</sup> The sudden increase in refugees caused concern among some of the Norwegian public and politicians, especially on the right of the political spectrum, although the amount of refugees was modest compared to the numbers in Sweden and Germany. The concerns were largely tied to fears that an increased number of immigrants and refugees may threaten the sustainability of the welfare state and lead to increased criminality.<sup>51</sup> The second largest governing party, Fremskrittspartiet (FRP, The Progress Party) in particular, were highly sceptical of increased immigration and the possible consequences of the German refugee policies.<sup>52</sup> These concerns were, however, not shared by more refugee-friendly parties on the left and the centre.<sup>53</sup> On the contrary, many voiced their admiration of the German decision to welcome such a large amount of refugees.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See examples above

<sup>49</sup> Stein Ulrich, 'Norsk politi i Schengen 1996-2016 [Norwegian police in Schengen 1996-2016]', Report, Politidirektoratet, 2016, <https://www.politiet.no/globalassets/04-aktuelt-tall-og-fakta/schengen/norsk-politi-i-schengen.pdf>, 23

<sup>50</sup> Bård Amundsen, 'Fra 30 000 til 3000 asylsøkere. Hva har skjedd? [From 30,000 to 3000 asylum seekers. What happened]', 23/12/2016, <https://forskning.no/innvandring-samfunnskunnskap/fra-30-000-til-3000-asylsokere-hva-har-skjedd/375749>

<sup>51</sup> Mads Fremstad, 'FRP-Amundsen: Uredelig å underslå at kriminalitet er knyttet opp mot innvandring [FRP-Amundsen: Unreasonable to state that crime is linked to immigration]', 27/07/2017, [www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2017/07/28/195320137/frp-amundsen-uredelig-undersla-kriminalitet-er-knyttet-opp-mot-innvandring](http://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2017/07/28/195320137/frp-amundsen-uredelig-undersla-kriminalitet-er-knyttet-opp-mot-innvandring); Tor Sanberg, 'Innvandring uroer oss mest [Immigration hurts us the most]', 01/06/2016, [www.dagsavisen.no/innenriks/innvandring-uroer-oss-mest-1.733095](http://www.dagsavisen.no/innenriks/innvandring-uroer-oss-mest-1.733095)

<sup>52</sup> Arnhild A Kristiansen, 'FRP vil gi Erna problemer om hun åpner for flere flyktninger [The FRP will create problems for Erna, if she opens up for more refugees]', 29/06/2018, [www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/frp-vil-gi-erna-problemer-om-hun-apner-for-flere-flyktninger/69973626](http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/frp-vil-gi-erna-problemer-om-hun-apner-for-flere-flyktninger/69973626)

<sup>53</sup> Jan A. Snoen, 'Aps kvoteflyktninger [Refugee quota]', 17/04/2015, [www.minervanett.no/aps-kvoteflyktninger/](http://www.minervanett.no/aps-kvoteflyktninger/); Karl A. Giverholdt, 'Uttalelse, Flyktningkrisen krever økt innsats fra Norge [Statement, the refugee crisis requires increased efforts from Norway]', 17/10/2015, [www.venstre.no/artikkel/2015/10/17/uttalelse-flyktningkrisen-krever-okt-innsats-fra-norge/](http://www.venstre.no/artikkel/2015/10/17/uttalelse-flyktningkrisen-krever-okt-innsats-fra-norge/)

<sup>54</sup> Bård Vegar Solhjell, 'Kaldt hode, varmt hjerte [Cool head, warm heart]', 08/08/2015, [www.vg.no/nyheter/meninger/i/yqke2/kaldt-hode-varmt-hjerte](http://www.vg.no/nyheter/meninger/i/yqke2/kaldt-hode-varmt-hjerte)

In 2016, the amount of refugees arriving in Norway dropped by 90%. Although part of the dramatic decrease could be attributed to a stricter Norwegian immigration policy, the main reason for the decrease was the deal brokered between the EU and Turkey.<sup>55</sup> The agreement between the EU and Turkey to stop refugees crossing over to Greece, which was accredited to Angela Merkel's diplomacy, received broad support by the Norwegian government. During recent years, Norwegian and German refugee and immigration policy has become more aligned. The Norwegian prime minister sees Angela Merkel as a source of stability in these matters, and supported her candidacy in the German elections in 2017. As Merkel was facing demands for a more restrictive immigration policy, Prime Minister Solberg hosted CSU meetings to offer advice on immigration and integration policies.<sup>56</sup> Erna Solberg has several times voiced her support for the German demand for a common European immigration policy and increased internal European solidarity in settling refugees; an approach that enjoys wide support across the political spectrum of Norway. She also supported the German efforts to find a common European solution in the recent EU negotiations on refugee and migration policy held in June 2018.<sup>57</sup> As in Germany, however, this issue is highly controversial within the governing coalition in Norway. FRP has warned that they will cause problems for their coalition partners if Norway accepts more refugees due to an EU agreement.<sup>58</sup>

As mentioned in the introduction to this sub-chapter, Germany is seen as an important ally on climate policy, international aid and development policy, and as a co-champion for liberal order, promoting internationalism and multilateral institutions. The G-20 meeting in Hamburg, in 2017, provides an excellent case to illustrate how Norway regards Germany in these matters and their working relationship. The very fact that Germany invited Norway is

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<sup>55</sup> Amundsen, 'Fra 30 000 til 3000 asylsøkere. Hva har skjedd?', op.cit.

<sup>56</sup> Alf B. Johnsen, 'Merkel vil lære om norsk asylpolitikk [Merkel will learn about Norwegian asylum policy]', 04/01/2017, [www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/GWBlq/merkel-vil-laere-om-norsk-asylpolitikk](http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/GWBlq/merkel-vil-laere-om-norsk-asylpolitikk).

<sup>57</sup> Philip A. Lote, 'Erna Solberg – Vil være med på en ny asylavtale [Erna Solberg – we will join a new asylum deal]', 28/06/2018, [www.nrk.no/urix/erna-solberg\\_-vil-vaere-med-pa-en-ny-asylavtale-1.14104231](http://www.nrk.no/urix/erna-solberg_-vil-vaere-med-pa-en-ny-asylavtale-1.14104231)

<sup>58</sup> Mads Fremstad, 'EUs asylforlik kan skape store vansker for regjeringen [The EU asylum system can create major difficulties for the government]', 29/06/2018, [www.abcnheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2018/06/29/195411054/eus-asylforlik-kan-skape-store-vansker-regjeringen](http://www.abcnheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2018/06/29/195411054/eus-asylforlik-kan-skape-store-vansker-regjeringen).

seen as proof that Norway and Germany share many of the same priorities in international affairs and that there is a level of mutual trust between the two countries. In an op-ed to the biggest Norwegian newspaper, *Aftenposten*, Prime Minister Solberg emphasised the shared goals and values as the main reason why Norway was invited to participate in the meeting.<sup>59</sup> Traditionally, Norway has a somewhat ambivalent relationship with the G-20. In some instances, it is viewed as a potential threat and competitor to the institutionalised international system, like the UN, which Norway has invested heavily in for decades. The importance of institutionalised multilateral organisations was made clear in the government's recent white paper (*Veivalg i Utenriks- og Sikkerhetspolitikken*).<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the Norwegian government regarded the German agenda for the G-20 meeting in a positive manner. The emphasis set on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda showed that G-20, under German chairmanship, could serve as a supporter of the UN, rather than a competitor. The emphasis on combating climate change, together with the German *Energiwende* and green technology, is also welcomed by the Norwegian government and the wider public.

Norway prides itself as a humanitarian superpower, much like the Germans. Germany is therefore considered a reliable partner in these matters, creating the foundations for a more stable and prosperous international society. Due to the turmoil of Brexit and the Trump presidency, Germany is seen as an increasingly important partner in promoting the abovementioned values and goals. The increasing international trend of protectionism causes great concern to the Norwegian government and business community, as the Norwegian economy is highly dependent on free international trade. Germany is also seen as an important ally in fighting this trend.<sup>61</sup> In summary, Germany is seen as a trusted and reliable partner in soft security, because of the shared values and goals of Norway and Germany. In a world where many of these values seems to be under attack, a reliable and like-minded actor such as Germany is seen as increasingly important in Norwegian eyes.

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<sup>59</sup> Erna Solberg, 'Viktig mulighet for Norge [Important opportunity for Norway]', 31/01/2017, [www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/viktig-mulighet-for-norge/id2540094/](http://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/viktig-mulighet-for-norge/id2540094/).

<sup>60</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Veivalg i norsk utenriks-og sikkerhetspolitikk* [Roadmap in Norwegian foreign and security policy], Stortingsmelding nr. 36, 2016-2017, <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-36-20162017/id2549828/>

<sup>61</sup> 'Viktig mulighet for Norge', op.cit.

## Conclusion

The Norwegian perception of Germany as a security actor has changed during the last two decades. In many ways, the change in the Norwegian perception of Germany as a security actor mirrors the German perception of itself as a security actor. This chapter has shown that it is the Germans themselves that are the main perception-drivers that shape how Norwegians regard Germany as a security actor. As Germany has changed its policies, the image of German security policy has changed in the eyes of Norwegians. It is quite clear that history does matter in forming perceptions. There is, however, no existing fear of a revisionist Germany to be traced in Norway. The shadows of the past are instead affecting how German politicians and the larger public see their role as a security actor, and by extension how Norway sees Germany as a security actor. The German political will and ability to engage in hard security missions internationally and regionally has, however, changed. The increasingly strong trend of a more responsible and active Germany as a security actor, has been deemed a positive development by Norwegian observers and politicians.

An important reason why the change has been welcomed to such a large degree in Norway is that Norway and Germany largely share the same strategic interests and goals, as well as a common view on how to respond to the current security challenges the two countries are facing. Both countries have a tradition of applying a broad multilateral approach to security challenges. The fact that Germany is now, to an increasing degree, incorporating hard security instruments into this broad approach is greatly appreciated in Norway. These shared values and traditions are instrumental in building trust and a positive perception of Germany as a security actor.

However, there is a broad consensus among Norwegian defence and security experts that Germany still has a long way to go on defence and security issues. As the retired Norwegian naval officer, Commodore Jacob Børresen, phrased it in an op-ed in 2017: *'Traditionally, Europe's German problem has been that Germany is too strong. Now the problem is [...] that Germany is too weak'*. [Author's translation]<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Jacob Børresen, 'Europas tyske problem [Europe's Germany problem]', 07/06/2017, [www.dagbladet.no/kultur/europas-tyske-problem/67663646](http://www.dagbladet.no/kultur/europas-tyske-problem/67663646)

Germany's tradition of political continuity and stability is also an important factor affecting the Norwegian view of Germany. Angela Merkel's leadership in Europe is seen as a source of stability in Norway. The German method of leading from the centre is also greatly appreciated in Norway. In the field of security and defence policy, this is reflected in the German willingness to act as a framework nation and to form close alliances with the surrounding states. The German readiness to cooperate is building an image of it as a trustworthy and constructive ally.

As demonstrated throughout this text, the NMoD has been one of the main stakeholders in the security cooperation with Germany. This is largely due to the priority that hard security and collective defence has been given. Another reason is that the hard security cooperation has typically taken a more bilateral form, while soft security issues are typically handled in bigger multilateral frameworks, where the German-Norwegian cooperation is less visible. Germany traditionally has a more credible image as a soft security actor, than a hard security actor, although the latter is improving. As described in the sub-chapter on soft security, Germany is seen as an important ally in several issues of soft security, especially in tackling the refugee crisis, climate change and defending the international liberal order. The shared goals and values of Germany and Norway are seen as particularly important in an increasingly unstable world.

Looking ahead, the common interests and the increasingly positive Norwegian attitude to Germany as a security actor are creating a common platform from which to launch further cooperation. The cooperation agreement on submarines, missiles and other naval defence material is viewed as a step towards building a stronger strategic partnership. The agreement may also be viewed as a testimony of a more pragmatic and responsible German defence and security policy. In addition to the cooperation on defence capabilities and operational cooperation, bilateral dialogue on security policy and a common understanding of the security challenges are important in these times of increased uncertainty. Channels of dialogue and cooperation on security issues should be strengthened at all levels. Germany as an active, capable and pragmatic security actor is perceived as a positive development from a Norwegian perspective. While German defence and security policy initiatives are not perceived as undermining the NATO framework, a continuation of the current German trajectory may be expected to gain strong Norwegian support.

# GERMANY IN POLISH SECURITY – AN IRREPLACEABLE NEIGHBOUR<sup>1</sup> BUT NOT AN IRREVERSIBLE PARTNER

Monika Sus

After decades of relying on the United States as a security provider for the European Union, the Member States have decided to move towards a greater integration of their defence and security priorities, which should eventually lead to European strategic autonomy. This change has been caused by various factors such as the American pivot to Asia, the deterioration of the European neighbourhood both in the east and in the south, Russian aggression on eastern Ukraine and the uncertainty of the transatlantic relationship and NATO after the victory of Donald Trump. Developments such as the permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) or European Defence Fund clearly show that the political momentum for the European defence integration has come. As the biggest Central European Member State, and the fifth biggest EU country, Poland, alongside Germany, could play an active role in these developments. However, while Berlin engages in the joint projects, Warsaw stays in the shadow and seems to be occupied with the dispute with the European institutions over the reforms of the judiciary system and their threats to the rule of law. A country which had a few years ago successfully convinced the EU to launch the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and had been actively involved in promoting democracy in Eastern Europe, has since become a troublemaker. This transformation has affected the bilateral relationship with Germany which, since the end of the Cold War, has supported Poland in its attempts to join both NATO and the EU and which, until 2015, formed a main point of reference for Polish economic, but also foreign and security policy.

The aim of this paper is to examine the role of Germany in Polish security policy after 1990, following a broad understanding of security that

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<sup>1</sup> Poland Radio, 'Poland and Germany are 'irreplaceable neighbours'', 17 March 2017

blankets hard security issues, such as military and defence policy and soft security issues, such as foreign policy and energy security. Interestingly, in contrast with other states of the region, especially the Baltic States, Poland does not perceive Germany as a major regional player in the security domain for two main reasons. First of all, Warsaw tries to promote itself as the leader of the region when it comes to security, and it does so partly due to Poland's allegedly close ties with the United States, the global security provider. Secondly, Poland recognises the German dominance in the region in terms of economic power, but sees Germany's role in providing security as restrained. Nonetheless, the Polish-German security cooperation constitutes an important aspect of the Polish security environment. Since the bilateral security cooperation is embedded in the general framework of the bilateral relationship between these two neighbours and reflects its condition, this paper follows a chronological approach. By distinguishing three distinct periods, it shows the transformation of the German role in Polish security. The paper examines changes in the perception of Germany as a security partner and identifies topics that lastingly determine the bilateral relationship. The latter helps to outline areas of potential cooperation in the years to come. The chapter proceeds as follows: before the insights of the bilateral cooperation within security policy are presented, attention is paid to three topics that seem to be mostly contentious and overshadow the overall Polish-German cooperation: the shared history and the asymmetry in the relationship, the relations with Russia, and the perception of the United States. Next, the role of Germany in Polish security and the Polish perception of Germany as a security actor are presented – the examination covers three time periods since the end of the Cold War until now. The paper ends with conclusions and reflections on the future of the bilateral cooperation in the field of foreign, security and defence policy.

Before the analysis is carried out, an important caveat has to be made: taking into account the limited space of this chapter, the analysis of the German role as a security actor in Poland is not exhaustive. It focuses on the major trends and shifts in the bilateral security cooperation and illustrates them with a few examples. It also briefly reflects on the most important institutions and personalities that act as perception-drivers in the area of security cooperation.

## Bones of contention between Berlin and Warsaw

Among several differences between Berlin and Warsaw, there are three issues that constitute the most contentious topics which have influenced the bilateral relations in the recent decades.

### Shared history and the asymmetry in the relationship

The turbulent history of the relationship between Poland and Germany, the Second World War in particular, has not been overcome. Despite the fact that the war ended over 70 years ago, it has still been used for political purposes mostly by the right-wing parties in Poland. The German role in Polish history is frequently evoked by the leaders of the current governing party – the conservative ‘Law and Justice’. To name just a few examples: during the negotiations of the voting mechanisms in the council within the Lisbon Treaty, Jarosław Kaczyński, Polish prime minister at the time, called for more weight for Polish votes in order to even out the number of casualties among Polish citizens during the Second World War – *‘We’re only demanding that which was taken from us. If Poland had not experienced the years between 1939 and 1945, it would today be a country of 66 million if you look at the demographic data.’*<sup>2</sup> A more recent example is the renewed demands for Germany to pay financial reparations for Poland’s wartime losses incurred by Germany. Notwithstanding a shared opinion among Polish historians that this issue has been settled,<sup>3</sup> Law and Justice after winning the parliamentary elections in 2015, brought this topic back onto the agenda. Kaczyński, now the leader of the party, claimed in a radio interview in June 2018 that *‘This is a Polish-German issue. It was Germany who invaded Poland, murdering millions of people, destroying material goods and we must be compensated for this.’*<sup>4</sup> The war rhetoric has also been used in

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<sup>2</sup> DW, ‘Polish Prime Minister Brings World War Two Into EU Vote Debate’, 21/06/2007, <https://p.dw.com/p/AzCI>

<sup>3</sup> Bartosz T. Wielinski, ‘Ile naprawdę dostaliśmy odszkodowań od Niemiec? Historyk podlicza [How much did we really get compensation from Germany? A historian counts]’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 20/02/2018

<sup>4</sup> DW, ‘Poland’s Jarosław Kaczyński renews call for German WWII reparations’, 26/06/2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/polands-jaroslaw-kaczynski-renews-call-for-german-wwii-reparations/a-44452776>

the context of hard security issues. Kaczynski, referring to the attempts of the Polish government to strengthen the NATO presence in Poland, said in an interview that German NATO troops should not be allowed on Polish soil '*for at least seven generations*'.<sup>5</sup> These are just a few examples of many<sup>6</sup> illustrating the instrumentalisation of the history in the Polish-German relationship.

Another aspect of history that also plays a role is the asymmetry in Polish-German relations. Despite the fact that Poland has the largest population, the largest defence budget and domestic industrial base from all post-Soviet countries, it is still clearly the 'weaker partner' in the bilateral relationship with its western neighbour. This asymmetry was especially evident in the 1990s when Poland fought to become a member of NATO and the EU and Germany supported Warsaw on this path. Once Poland joined these organisations, the relationship changed to a more equal one, and yet the significant economic discrepancy between the two neighbours is in the way of a symmetric partnership. While the liberal and left-wing political circles accept the fact and perceive the partnership with Germany as the best channel to strengthen the Polish position in the European Union, the right-wing politicians describe such policy as a vassal position<sup>7</sup>. Law and Justice's slogan '*We're rising from our knees*' refers to Polish alleged dependency on the European Union and Germany in particular, and the current government announced a change of Polish foreign policy to one led by national pride. As the next section of the chapter will show, the policy of memory and the criticism of the asymmetry in the bilateral relationship significantly impacts on the perception of Germany as a security partner for Poland. Furthermore, the government and right-wing political parties are currently the major perception-drivers

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<sup>5</sup> Inside Poland, 'NATO Allies Welcome... Unless They Are German' 30/04/2014, <http://inside-poland.com/t/nato-allies-welcome-unless-they-are-german-kaczynski/>

<sup>6</sup> Jacek Korbus, 'Niemieckie wojsko i arcypolski Smoleńsk. Jarosław Kaczyński wraca w opary absurdu [German army and Archduke of Smolensk. Jarosław Kaczyński returns to the vapors of the absurd]', 03/04/2015, <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/jaroslaw-kaczynski-nie-chce-niemieckich-wojsk-w-polsce-newsweek-pl,artykuly,283334,1.html>; The Economist, 'Charlemagne, The politics of memory', 04/04/2016, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2016/04/09/the-politics-of-memory>

<sup>7</sup> Adam Balcer et al., 'Change in Poland, but what change? Assumptions of Law and Justice party foreign policy', Stefan Batory Foundation, 2016, [http://www.batory.org.pl/upload/files/Programy\\_operacyjne/Otwarta\\_Europa/Change\\_in\\_Poland.pdf](http://www.batory.org.pl/upload/files/Programy_operacyjne/Otwarta_Europa/Change_in_Poland.pdf), 4

that dominate the discourse in the bilateral relationship. They control not only the diplomacy run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but also state-financed media that are the major information source for the Polish society. There are groups such as business and entrepreneurs that oppose the often anti-German rhetoric, but they act in the background and are not perceptible to the broader audience.

## Divergent views on Russia

The relationship between Poland and Russia has historically been entangled and turbulent. Several wars over centuries, tsarist control and Soviet tutelage over Poland after the Second World War significantly marked the bilateral interaction and made it prone to deeply rooted mutual stereotypes. The underlying belief that determines Polish policy towards Russia is that Moscow aims to revise the post-Cold War order in Europe and to undermine the principles of security on the continent; in 2014, 36% of the respondents considered Russian proactive policy towards former USSR countries to be the biggest external threat to Polish security.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the Polish stance towards its biggest neighbour is the fear of being marginalised and of becoming a subject of a political game between Russia and the West, in particular Germany. The slogan *'not above our heads'* has often been repeated by various political actors from left to right and with regard to various issues concerning the bilateral relations with the eastern neighbour and with Germany. The latter neighbour has also caused a lot of suffering to Polish citizens, especially in the 19th century. Against this backdrop, it is no surprise that Poles have observed the emerging friendship between Berlin and Moscow after the collapse of the Soviet Union with caution.

After the Russian aggression on Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the German policy towards Russia has shifted. Chancellor Merkel was one of the major European leaders supporting sanctions and she condemned Moscow for its actions several times. The political crisis, did not, however, change the willingness of the German

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<sup>8</sup> Public Opinion Research Centre, 'Opinie o bezpieczeństwie narodowym [Opinions on national security]', no. 48/14, 2014, [http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2014/K\\_018\\_14.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2014/K_018_14.PDF), 4

government to cooperate with Moscow in the field of energy. Additionally to the Nord Stream pipeline inaugurated in 2011, which was strongly criticised in Poland – Radek Sikorski, defence minister at that time has even compared it to the Ribbentrop – Molotov pact as a symbol of the German-Russian collaboration;<sup>9</sup> the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is under construction. The German government argues that the project has a solely commercial and economic character while Poles perceive it as a political project. Warsaw argues that the project undermines European solidarity and the Energy Union by establishing a direct connection between Russia and Germany and by increasing the dependency of the European gas market on Russian resources.<sup>10</sup> As Polish Minister for European Affairs claimed, *‘by supporting Nord Stream 2, the EU in effect gives succour to a regime whose aggression it seeks to punish through sanctions’*.<sup>11</sup> In the same vein, former Prime Minister Beata Szydło labelled the new pipeline as a geopolitical and not an economic project, as its supporters claim it to be.<sup>12</sup> This issue constitutes a thorn in the side of the bilateral relationship.

## Perception of the United States as a security partner

After the end of the Cold War, the United States became the most strategic partner and a security guarantor for Poland. Polish belief in the support from the US in the face of danger has historical roots and goes beyond the scope of this chapter. The fact is that, over the last three decades, America has been associated with a guarantee of security and safety by the vast majority of the Polish elite. The membership of NATO, supported by 60% of the citizens in 1999 and 82% in 2017, has been perceived as a milestone for Polish security, mainly due to Article 5, with which NATO members would defend Poland in case of an attack. In 2018, 82% of Poles expressed their

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<sup>9</sup> Andrzej Turkowski, ‘The Polish-German Tandem’, 17/11/2011, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2011/11/17/polish-german-tandem-pub-46059>

<sup>10</sup> Konrad Szymanski, ‘Russia’s gas pipeline threatens European unity’, 21/10/2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/25a17928-96c3-11e6-a1dc-bdf38d484582>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Robbie Gramer, ‘Is Europe caving to Russia on Pipeline?’, 08/02/2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/08/is-europe-caving-to-russia-on-pipeline-politics-european-union-nord-stream-two-gas-oil-energy-germany-baltic-poland/>

certainty that NATO would defend Polish borders in case of an attack and the confidence was placed mainly on the American allies as the biggest army of the alliance.<sup>13</sup> Such an attitude towards the US, combined with Americans being one of the most liked nation by the Poles,<sup>14</sup> impacts on the Polish security policy and marks its strategic orientation towards Washington. Despite the attempts of the government of Donald Tusk to re-orientate the Polish security policy towards the European Union, the 'America First' approach seems to be enduring.

Germany, in turn, does not share this attitude. Anti-Americanism and ambivalence towards the US that dominate the discourse in Germany and their roots are to be found in history.<sup>15</sup> As the results of the Pew Research Centre have shown, in 2017, 67% of Germans support their country membership in the alliance and yet 53% think that their country should not support NATO allies against a Russian attack.<sup>16</sup> Also, 42% of Germans would welcome the withdrawal of American troops stationed in their country despite this issue not being on the political agenda.<sup>17</sup> German governments have always recognised the importance of the transatlantic relationship, but their strategic orientation was towards the European partners such as France, UK, the Netherlands and Poland, and multilateral platforms such as OSCE, NATO, EU and UN.<sup>18</sup> Hence, the strong Polish support for the US in the field of security policy and the readiness to put this bilateral relationship above the multilateral interests are met with little understanding on the other side of the Odra river, and the Polish-German relationship is marked by this discrepancy. In 2018, only 39%

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<sup>13</sup> Public Opinion Research, op.cit., 4

<sup>14</sup> Public Opinion Research Centre, 'Stosunek do innych narodów [Opinion on domestic affairs]', no. 37/2018, [https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2018/K\\_037\\_18.PDF](https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2018/K_037_18.PDF), 6

<sup>15</sup> Michael Werz, 'Anti-Americanism and Ambivalence in the New Germany', 01/01/2005, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/anti-americanism-and-ambivalence-in-the-new-germany/>

<sup>16</sup> Bruce Stokes, 'NATO's Image Improves on Both Sides of Atlantic. European faith in American military support largely unchanged', 23/05/2017, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/05/23/natos-image-improves-on-both-sides-of-atlantic/>

<sup>17</sup> Jon Stone, 'Germans want Donald Trump to pull US troops out of Germany, poll finds', 11/07/2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/us-troops-germany-public-opinion-pull-out-nato-summit-merkel-a8442021.html>

<sup>18</sup> The Federal Government, 'White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr', 2016, <http://www.gmfus.org/publications/white-paper-german-security-policy-and-future-bundeswehr>, 80-81

of Germans want a close cooperation between their country and the US, whereas 74% of Poles support a mutual cooperation between Warsaw and Washington.<sup>19</sup>

## **Polish perceptions of Germany as a security actor. Unfulfilled prospects for a strategic partnership**

After presenting topics that frame the background for the German role in the Polish security policy, the paper continues with the examination of the bilateral relationship using a chronological approach. For the purpose of the paper, the post-Cold War span has been divided into three periods which have been identified along major shifts in the perception of Germany as a security actor in Poland.

### **1989–2007: US first**

In the first post-Cold War period, the cornerstone of Polish security has been the United States. As mentioned earlier, the major foreign and security goals for consequent governments in Warsaw was the integration with two multilateral organisations: NATO (Poland joined 1999) and the European Union (Poland joined 2004). Whereas Germany played a role of Polish advocate on its way to the EU membership, the US played the first fiddle when it came to the accession to the alliance. The speech of US President Bill Clinton and his reference that NATO expansion is *'no longer a question of whether, but when and how'*<sup>20</sup> was largely celebrated by the Polish elite. Washington's support for Poland reinforced the strategic orientation of the Polish foreign and security policy towards the US. After joining the alliance, Poland tried to be a role model ally and not only signed the largest

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<sup>19</sup> Instytut Spraw Publicznych, 'Razem w Europie? Co Polacy i Niemcy sądzą o polityce europejskiej. Wyniki Barometru Polska-Niemcy 2018 [Together in Europe? What do Poles and Germans think about European politics. Results of the Poland-Germany Barometer 2018]', <https://www.pol-int.org/en/publications/razem-w-europie-co-polacy-i-niemcy-sadza-o-polityce>, 14

<sup>20</sup> Adrian Bridge, 'Clinton Pleases Poles with cash and NATO carrot', 08/07/1996, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/clinton-pleases-poles-with-cash-and-nato-carrot-1412366.html>

procurement order in Polish history, buying 48 multirole fighter aircrafts F-16 from the US, but also sided with the US over the 2003 invasion in Iraq, against the judgment of several EU states, among others Germany.

In this period Germany as a security actor played a role primarily at multilateral level, via NATO, EU and OSCE. In addition, in 2005, Law and Justice won the parliamentary election in Poland and created a government with two smaller parties with strong right-wing attitudes. As a result, the relations between Germany and Poland became worse and were disturbed by the various historical problems mentioned and by a growing misunderstanding at European level, such as Polish protests against the new voting system in the Council of the EU, Warsaw's veto during the negotiations of a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia, and the aggressive campaign against the opening of the Nord Stream pipeline between Germany and Russia. This climate dominated the bilateral relationship until the Polish parliamentary elections in 2007.

### **2007-2015: 'Polish-German tandem for Europe'?<sup>21</sup>**

The year 2007 marks a substantial change in Polish foreign policy towards a more EU-oriented one due to the victory of the liberal 'Civic Platform' in the parliamentary elections. It had an impact on the bilateral relationship with Poland's western neighbour who was described as '*Poland's most important partner in bilateral relations*'.<sup>22</sup> The prime minister of Poland at the time, Donald Tusk, and his foreign minister, Radoslaw Sikorski, both invested a lot of effort to build close and friendly relations with their German counterparts, Chancellor Angela Merkel and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and his successor – Guido Westerwelle. Since 2008, the interaction between Poland and Germany became more frequent and intense. The most important change was a shift from the so-

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<sup>21</sup> Ulrike Guerot and Konstanty Gebert, 'Why Poland is the new France for Germany', 17/10/2012, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ulrike-guerot-konstanty-gebert/why-poland-is-new-france-for-germany>

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Minister of Foreign Affairs on Polish Foreign Policy for 2012', <https://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/2b624fd4-d5f9-4c36-8b43-91543bc1e36c:jCR>, 17

called community of interest,<sup>23</sup> which characterised the Polish-German relations since 1991 until the eastern enlargement of the EU, to an idea of a Partnership for Europe put forward by Sikorski.<sup>24</sup> He expressed his hope that the Polish-German cooperation would become a source for new ideas for the EU and drew various areas of enhanced partnership, such as the European foreign policy towards eastern neighbours, energy policy, defence and security policy, or regional and cross-border cooperation.<sup>25</sup> Sikorski's proposals fell onto the breeding ground. After the parliamentary elections in Berlin, in September 2010, the new German government was interested in joining the efforts of its eastern neighbour and strengthening the relationships. The foreign minister of Germany, Guido Westerwelle, made a symbolic, yet significant, step towards enhanced cooperation and chose Warsaw for his first foreign visit after the election. Until that point, it had always been Paris. During his trip to Poland, the German foreign minister spoke about the mature partnership between these two countries and the necessity to activate the Polish-German-French cooperation within the Weimar Triangle.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, in June 2011, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighbourhood, the joint intergovernmental consultations were renewed in a more comprehensive formula and constituted by a common declaration as an annual event.<sup>27</sup> Polish and German governments pointed out the areas of their interests and promised to put special emphasis on the cooperation leading to the enhancement of coherence and effectiveness of the common foreign and security policy. Indeed, the security partnership between Poland and Germany developed and both countries partnered in several foreign policy issues. To illustrate this with a few examples: in 2010, both foreign ministers undertook a visit to

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<sup>23</sup> W. M. Goraliski, (ed.) *Poland-Germany 1945-2007. From confrontation to cooperation and partnership in Europe*, Polish Institute of International Relations, Warsaw, 2008

<sup>24</sup> Radosław Sikorski, 'Polska-Niemcy. Partnerstwo dla Europy [Poland-Germany. A partnership for Europe]', in: *Przegląd Zachodni*, No. 3, 2008, 3-10

<sup>25</sup> Radosław Sikorski, 'Polska-Niemcy. Partnerstwo dla Europy [...]', *op.cit.*, 3-10

<sup>26</sup> *Süddeutsche Zeitung Online*, 'Antrittsbesuch in Polen, Westerwelle zu Gast bei Freunden', 17/05/ 2010, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/antrittsbesuch-in-polen-westerwelle-zu-gast-bei-freunden-1.138397>

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, 'Common session of Polish and German government, Warsaw' 21/06/2011, [http://www.ms.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/wiadomosci/wspolne\\_posiedzenie\\_rzadow\\_polski\\_i\\_niemiec](http://www.ms.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/wiadomosci/wspolne_posiedzenie_rzadow_polski_i_niemiec)

Belarus and tried to create a new approach towards Belarus, which would bring the country benefits from the integration with the EU after the country made a move towards democratisation. The new tandem acted not only on the neighbourhood policy but managed to *'be an innovative and leading combination when it came to unlock hitherto deadlocked EU-Russia relations'*.<sup>28</sup> In November 2011, the foreign ministers of Germany and Poland sent a joint letter to the EU's High Representative Catherine Ashton calling for a reformulated European strategy toward Russia. They argued that the EU must pursue the goal of Russia finding *'an appropriate place in a democratic Europe of freedom and prosperity'* and they called for the block to continue to help Russia modernise its economy and political system, in return for which the EU should expect Russia to behave as a *'reliable partner on Europe's political and economic stage'*.<sup>29</sup> The letter was called a milestone in the two countries' common policy towards Russia who, as mentioned in the previous section, differ in their policies towards Russia<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, Westerwelle and Sikorski revived the idea of the Kaliningrad Triangle, regular meetings of Polish, German and Russian foreign ministers, inspired by the existing Weimar Triangle between Poland, Germany and France. In the beginning of 2012, Westerwelle initiated an informal dialogue forum called the 'Future of Europe Group'. Sikorski, together with foreign ministers of nine other Member States (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain) joined him. Their deliberations concluded in a joint letter with proposals on how to overcome the crisis by the strengthening of the economic and monetary union and to reinforce the common foreign and security policy and its further institutionalisation<sup>31</sup>. Moreover, Minister Westerwelle and his Polish counterpart together published an

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew Rettmann, 'Germany and Poland join up on EU foreign policy', 20/02/2013, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/119125>

<sup>29</sup> Radek Sikorski and Guido Westerwelle, 'Joint letter of Foreign Ministers Radosław Sikorski of Poland and Guido Westerwelle of Germany on EU-Russia relations', 2011m [http://www.mfa.gov.pl/en/news/joint\\_letter](http://www.mfa.gov.pl/en/news/joint_letter)

<sup>30</sup> Andrzej Turkowski 'Polish-German Tandem', op.cit.

<sup>31</sup> Federal Foreign Office, 'Final report of the Future for Europe Group from the Foreign Ministers of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain', 18/09/2012, <http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/626338/publicationFile/171783/120918-Abschlussbericht-Zukunftsgruppe.pdf>

article 'A New Vision for Europe' in the International Herald Tribune, in which they emphasised their commitment to renew the political shape of Europe in order to keep with the times, as Europe is a common future<sup>32</sup>. The political novelty and the contents of both the final report and the newspaper article should not be overestimated however, since most ideas were already presented by the countries on different occasions. The interesting fact here is the Polish–German cooperation and leadership of this multilateral initiative.

These political initiatives were complemented by hard security oriented proposals. The Polish-German security cooperation flourished in that period also due to Poland's 2013–2022 defence modernisation plan announced by Tusk's government. In 2014, Polish Defence Minister Tomasz Siemoniak and German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen signed a statement of intent to increase Polish-German army cooperation on the fringes of the annual Bundeswehr conference. The agreement covered the following areas of cooperation worked out by the German army command and the Polish general command:

- collaboration at brigade level, including placing combat battalions under each other's command, which was called a 'revolution' in the cooperation between the Polish army and the *Bundeswehr*;<sup>33</sup>
- cooperation between the combat arms of both armies: armour, reconnaissance, mountain infantry and artillery;
- joint training and exercises, including joint courses for young officers and cadets; and
- greater interoperability, such as common standards and regulations.

This agreement supplements a similar agreement on naval cooperation that leaders of both countries signed in Rostock, in May 2013. It included not only the acquisition and maintenance of new equipment but also joint exercises, exchange of knowledge and personnel and an establishment of a common operating authority.<sup>34</sup> The bilateral cooperation also included

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<sup>32</sup> Sikorski and Westerwelle, op.cit.

<sup>33</sup> Defence24, 'Revolution in the cooperation between the Polish army and the Bundeswehr', 23/01/2015, <https://www.defence24.com/revolution-in-the-cooperation-between-the-polish-army-and-the-bundeswehr>

<sup>34</sup> Defense Industry Daily, 'German Submarines for Poland', 22/07/2013, <https://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/german-submarines-for-poland-015457/>

sales contracts, such as the purchase of German-made Leopard 2 battle tanks by Poland.<sup>35</sup>

Poland and Germany also managed to enhance its cooperation within the NATO framework. A case in point is offered by the Multinational Corps Northeast (MCN) established in 1999 and headquartered in Poland's Szczecin. At the NATO Summit in 2014, the ministers of defence from Germany, Poland and Denmark decided to raise the level of readiness of the Headquarters MNC from a Forces of Lower Readiness Headquarters to a High Readiness Force Headquarters and to enhance its capability to address future threats and challenges.<sup>36</sup>

To summarise, one has to note that, between 2007 and 2015, Germany started to be perceived by Poland as one of the major security actors, with regard to both soft security aspects, such as offering shared proposals for the EU neighbourhood policy, and hard security issues such as joint military exercises. The US primacy as the security guarantor for Poland has been challenged by the emerging strategic orientation towards Germany and the EU in general. The partnership between Berlin and Warsaw was based on mutual interest. Poland, by engaging in a close partnership with Germany, limited the risk that Berlin will go globally on its own which could pose a risk for Warsaw and strengthen its position in the European Union as a reliable partner. Von der Leyen declared that the German-Polish military cooperation is a *'trendsetting milestone for the development of European integrated military structures'*.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, Germany needed a like-minded companion to support EU reforms, both at political and economic level. However, as the development of the bilateral relationship after 2015 has shown, slogans such as a new Polish-German tandem in foreign and security policy have proven to be premature.

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<sup>35</sup> The German Path to an EU Army, 31/10/2014, <https://www.german-foreign-policy.com/en/news/detail/6458/>

<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Science and Education, 'Polsko-niemieckie konsultacje w MON [Polish-Germany consultations in the Ministry of Science and Education]', 27/04/2015, <https://www.nauka.gov.pl/aktualnosci-ministerstwo/polsko-niemieckie-konsultacje-miedzyrzadowe.html>

<sup>37</sup> 'Absichtserklärung zu einer Deutsch-Polnischen Heereskooperation', 29/10/2010

## After 2015: Towards a deterioration of the bilateral partnership

Again, the shift in the perception of Germany as a security partner, has come together with the election results. The bilateral partnership that developed during the 'Civic Platform' party's term proved not to be irreversible. The Law and Justice government elected in 2015 returned to its vision for the cooperation with Berlin, of which a preview was observable between 2005 and 2007. As mentioned in the previous section, the new government declared a substantial change of Polish foreign policy characterised by the slogan 'Poland getting up from its knees'. This referred to the willingness to pursue an assertive foreign policy by defending Polish national interests combined with putting forward a national, or even nationalistic, narrative. In his first speech to the Polish parliament, Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski anointed the United Kingdom as Poland's new strategic partner in the European Union, with which Poles *'not only share an understanding of a number of major items on the European agenda, but also have a similar approach to European security'*. Germany was described as the most important neighbour and economic partner, yet the bilateral partnership has been faulted for a *'sometimes fake, superficial attitude of conciliation'*. Waszczykowski also stressed the willingness of Poland to further develop security cooperation with the United States, both bilateral (among others via the Polish-American missile defence agreement)<sup>38</sup> and multilateral within NATO. Furthermore, as between 2005 and 2007, the vision of international relations started to be dominated by historic categories. Waszczykowski, referring to the Minsk agreements between Russia and Ukraine and the role of Berlin in this process, indicated in an interview that *'Russia and Germany create a distinctive concert of powers over the head of Poland'*.<sup>39</sup>

The anti-German rhetoric of the new government does not help to keep up the climate of a close partnership in such a sensible issue as

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<sup>38</sup> Reuters, 'Poland says sign memorandum to buy Patriot missile system from U.S', 06/07/2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-defence-raytheon-patriots/poland-says-signs-memorandum-to-buy-patriot-missile-system-from-u-s-idUSKBN19R0IH>

<sup>39</sup> Fronda.pl, 'Potrzeba mężów stanu, a nie politycznych gier [A need for statement, not political games]', <http://www.fronda.pl/a/witold-waszczykowski-dla-frondapl-potrzeba-mezow-stanu-a-nie-politycz-znych-gierek,47653.html>

security policy. At operational level, the cooperation continues but there are two major factors that make it difficult. The first one is the rough relationship between Poland and the European Commission due to the reforms of the judiciary system carried out by the new government. The European Commission, together with a significant part of Polish and international law experts, argue that the new reforms pose a systemic threat to the rule of law. The commission triggered the first stage of the Article 7 disciplinary procedure that could ultimately lead to Poland losing its voting rights in the European Council, if the other 27 Member States agreed unanimously. It also started infringement proceedings against Poland before the European Court of Justice. The conflict seems to be escalating, and puts the Polish-German cooperation in a difficult position. Chancellor Merkel expressed her concerns about the reforms being implemented in Warsaw and together with Paris, Berlin is supporting a commission proposal to tie future structural assistance, of which Poland is one of the biggest beneficiaries, to respect for the rule of law.<sup>40</sup> Considering the image problem that Warsaw now has, it became a problematic coalition partner for other Member States.

When it comes to EU foreign and security policy that has been actively shaped by Polish-German proposals between 2007 and 2015, the situation has also changed. As an ECPR expert noticed *‘Poland was conspicuously excluded from the September 2016 Franco-German proposal to create an EU defence union – even though, only a few years earlier, Warsaw joined Paris and Berlin in pushing forward the idea of PESCO’*.<sup>41</sup> Warsaw declares its support for further integration of the security policy at EU level, but at the same time it remains reluctant. Poland finally opted to join PESCO but did so as one of the last Member States and apparently only with serious deliberation. The country’s foreign minister did not rule out that Poland would pull out of this cooperation if a number of Polish conditions would not be fulfilled: that PESCO does not duplicate or rival NATO structures, and that it supports the sustainable development of the

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<sup>40</sup> Maia de la Baume and David M. Herszenhorn, ‘EU not persuaded by Poland’s defence at rule-of-law hearing’, 27/06/2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-unpersuaded-by-polands-defense-at-rule-of-law-hearing/>

<sup>41</sup> Marcin Zaborowski, ‘Poland and the European Defence Integration’, ECFR Policy brief, 2018, [https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/poland\\_and\\_european\\_defence\\_integration,3](https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/poland_and_european_defence_integration,3)

defence industry of all EU countries, not only those of the major players.<sup>42</sup> In fact, experts fear that Poland could slow down the development of this project<sup>43</sup> since the Polish government seems to return to the 'America first' approach when it comes to security. To illustrate this with an example: despite the fact that in 2015 Airbus won a tender to replace Poland's Soviet-era military helicopters, the contract for delivery of Caracals was cancelled by the Law and Justice government, causing a crisis in the relationship with France.<sup>44</sup> Instead, the government decided to cooperate with an American company, Lockheed Martin which produces Black Hawk helicopters.

The second factor that complicates the close Polish-German partnership on security issues, are various attempts of the Polish political elite to implement new security-oriented projects without engaging Germany. To illustrate this with one of the most telling examples: The current Law and Justice government, together with Polish President Andrzej Duda, put forward an idea of a 'Trimarium' (also called the Three Sea Initiative). This is a project aimed at strengthening the regional integration of 12 countries of central, eastern and southeast Europe located on the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas by creating a north-south infrastructure in the telecommunications, energy, and transportation sectors.<sup>45</sup> This concept is an attempt to balance out the influence of western European countries on the energy market, especially in relations with Russia. In 2017, Warsaw hosted a second Three Sea Initiative summit attended by Donald Trump as a sign of support for this project.<sup>46</sup> As an expert from Atlantic Council stated, *'while not directly punitive toward Russia (...), the initiative is designed to alleviate*

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<sup>42</sup> PAP, 'Waszczykowski: przystąpiliśmy do PESCO z wątpliwościami; można wystąpić [Waszczykowski: we joined PESCO with doubts; you can leave]', 13/11/2017, <http://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/news,1164747,waszczykowski-przystapilismy-do-pesco-z-watpliwosciami-mozna-wystapic.html>

<sup>43</sup> Ulrike Franke, 'Pesco, the impotent gorilla', ECFR, Note from Berlin, 17/11/2017, [https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_pesco\\_the\\_impotent\\_gorilla](https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_pesco_the_impotent_gorilla)

<sup>44</sup> DW, 'Poland cancels multi-billion euro Airbus Helicopters deal', 05/10/2016, <https://www.dw.com/en/poland-cancels-multi-billion-euro-airbus-helicopters-deal/a-35967557>

<sup>45</sup> Marcin Kedzierski, 'Trójmorze musi stać się flagowym projektem polskiego rządu [Three Seas must become the flagship initiative of the Polish government]', 06/07/2017, <http://cakj.pl/2017/07/06/trojmorze-musi-stac-sie-flagowym-projektem-polskiego-rzadu/>

<sup>46</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'The Minister of Foreign Affairs on Polish Foreign Policy for 2018', 21/03/2018, <https://www.ms.gov.pl/resource/2b624fd4-d5f9-4c36-8b43-91543bc1e36c:JCR>

*the Kremlin's strong hand in the European energy sector, which Moscow has exercised to the detriment of EU Member States*'.<sup>47</sup> German concerns about the project relate to the fact that the Three Seas Initiative should '*increase the resistance of the region*' against projects such as Nord Stream 2, which Poland sees as prejudicial to EU interests.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the changing political climate, Germany remains of course the most important neighbour to Poland, and the political cooperation continues. In 2016, both countries celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the German-Polish Treaty on Good Neighbourhood, Friendship and Cooperation. To mark this, some 223 political meetings were held on various levels.<sup>49</sup> However, as experts point out, the current Polish government is mainly interested in Germany as an economic partner and thus it maintains the correct political relationship.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusions

The brief examination of the perception of Germany as a security actor in Poland presents a tangled picture. On one hand, Germany is not perceived by Poland to be a strong regional actor in the security domain. Warsaw prefers to see itself as a regional leader whereas Germany is perceived to be an economic leader, not only of the region but of Europe. On the other hand, since the end of the Cold War the Polish-German relationship has constituted an essential stability factor in the region. '*If Germany's reconciliation with France was the driver of the first decades of European integration, its rapprochement with Poland performed the same function over the last decade*'<sup>51</sup> argued Politico in 2016, and yet such a narrative seems

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<sup>47</sup> Rachel Ansley, 'Making the Three Seas Initiative a Priority for Trump', 03/05/2017, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/making-the-three-seas-initiative-a-priority-for-trump>

<sup>48</sup> BiznesAlert, 'Nord Stream 2 is anti-European. Three Seas Initiative will increase the resistance of the region', 21/11/2017, <https://biznesalert.com/nord-stream-2-anti-european-three-seas-initiative-will-increase-resistance-region/>

<sup>49</sup> Federal Foreign Office, 'Poland', <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/laenderinformationen/polen-node>

<sup>50</sup> Matthew Karnitsching, and Jan Cienski, 'Warsaw's EU spat stalls German-Polish engine', 17/01/2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/warsaws-eu-spat-stalls-german-polish-engine-poland-government-media-law/>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

to belong to the past. The close Polish-German partnership for Europe proved not to endure a change of Polish government and despite the continuity of correct neighbourhood relations, the climate of mutual trust, friendship and joint interest at EU level vanished without trace. Instead of highlighting and working around the common interests, the current Polish government instrumentalises the mutual history and focuses on disparities in the perception of Russia and prefers to seek a close partnership with the United States.

At the same time, the public opinion polls show that Germany enjoys a high level of trust among Poles. In 2018, 74% of Poles claimed that Germany poses, either now or in the future, a military danger to their country, and 65% claimed the same referring to economic and political threats.<sup>52</sup> These numbers represent the highest level of trust in the western neighbour since 2005. Also, despite slight differences, Poles and Germans point out the similar challenges for the EU, such as issues related to migrants and refugees – 56% of Poles and 62% of Germans, relations with Russia – 43% of Poles and 31% of Germans, instability in the EU neighbourhood – 30% of Poles and 26% of Germans.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, in a study conducted in 2017, only 18% of Poles claimed that the Polish-German relationship is good and 59% argued that this is due to the Polish foreign policy.<sup>54</sup> The readiness of Polish society to engage in a deep partnership with its western neighbour seems to be present. However, during the term of the current Polish government no change is to be expected, especially due to the fact that the major perception-drivers in Polish security relations with Germany are the government, the president and the leading parties in the parliament.

To conclude this chapter, a few recommendations for the German government will be presented. First of all, given the fruitful cooperation in the security domain until 2015, and the perception in the Polish society of Germany as an important partner in Europe, the German government should make efforts to maintain a close relationship with its eastern neighbor, despite the difficult political climate on the Polish side.

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<sup>52</sup> 'Razem w Europie? Co Polacy i Niemcy sądzą o polityce europejskiej', op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> 'Razem w Europie? Co Polacy i Niemcy sądzą o polityce europejskiej', op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Public Opinion Research Center, 'Postrzeganie relacji polsko-niemieckich', 2017, [https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2017/K\\_156\\_17.PDF](https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2017/K_156_17.PDF)

The attempts to use history for current political debates in the bilateral relationship will most probably continue and Germany would be well advised not to engage in such debates but to focus on joint interests. One area where the current Polish government is definitely interested to cooperate with Germany is the energy policy. Despite the diverging opinions on Nord Stream 2, there are still shared interests between the two neighbours and the potential for cooperation. Another topic that is definitely of interest for the Polish partner is cybersecurity. Both countries are about to invest in this domain and could profit from an exchange of experiences. Finally, if there is one piece of advice that could be directed towards the Polish government, it relates to the misuse of the tragic history with its western neighbour. The Polish suffering in the Second World War should not be forgotten, but it should not get in the way of a fruitful cooperation with Germany in every possible policy domain.

# SWEDISH PERCEPTIONS OF GERMANY'S ROLE IN BALTIC SEA REGION SECURITY

Anke Schmidt-Felzmann and Costan Barzanje

Sweden's position in the Baltic Sea region (BSR) regarding hard security challenges, and forms of cooperation to address them, is defined by the country's entrenched formal policy position as a 'militarily non-aligned' state, which it shares only with Finland. The Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea was a defining moment and turning point for Sweden's contemporary perspective on security in the Baltic Sea region. The events of spring 2014 led to the assessment by the Swedish government, parliament and armed forces of a significant increase in the hard security threats posed by Russia to its neighbours in the region. Some of the Swedish political elite attribute the blame for the deterioration of the security environment not just to Russia, but also to the interaction effects between Russia and the US, and the Russia-NATO confrontation in the Baltic Sea space.

The Swedish perspective on security in the BSR is shaped by its comprehensive approach towards security – *det bredare säkerhetsperspektivet* – with a strong focus on soft security challenges and non-military measures. The increased military presence in the region and risks of unintended consequences affecting Sweden is regarded as a source of insecurity. Because of both their formal 'non-alignment' *vis-à-vis* NATO, the bilateral defence cooperation with Finland has become a key focus in the Swedish security and defence policy towards the BSR. In 2015, Sweden and Finland confirmed the deepening of their cooperation on defence in 'conditions beyond peacetime' (*bortom fredstida förhållanden*).<sup>1</sup> Despite strictly maintaining its status as a non-NATO member, Sweden's cooperation with the alliance

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Sweden, Försvarssamarbete Sverige Finland [Defence cooperation Sweden Finland], Government of Sweden, <http://www.regeringen.se/regeringens-politik/forsvarssamarbetet-sverige-finland/>

has significantly deepened since it joined NATO's Partnership for Peace in 1994. In this context, the pressure has grown to strike a balance between the need to strengthen the military defence and better coordinate and integrate the civilian and military components in the 'total defence' (*totalförsvar*) of Sweden, and the strong Swedish conviction that security is in essence about the protection of human beings, where the equal participation of women and management of soft security threats are of a high priority.

This chapter examines the Swedish perceptions of the role that Germany plays, and could play, in the security of the BSR. It sketches out the current Swedish assessment, ambitions regarding bilateral cooperation, and expectations of Germany's engagement in areas of importance for Sweden, focusing on contemporary developments since the end of the Cold War. Swedish defence policy is fundamentally shaped by its close relations with NATO, which is complemented by the bilateral defence partnerships with key NATO members of importance for the BSR. Sweden's national security strategy (NSS) of January 2017 in this regard highlighted the importance of defence cooperation with the United States, the UK, Norway, Denmark and Poland.<sup>2</sup> But while the fundamental role of the United States for Sweden's security and that of its closest neighbours is regularly emphasised,<sup>3</sup> the role of Germany as a security provider had remained unacknowledged until mid-2017, when Sweden signed a bilateral letter of intent on defence cooperation with Germany.<sup>4</sup> With this agreement, and following the concerns about the effects of the British exit from the EU, the role of Germany as a security partner for Sweden in the BSR became more clearly defined.

The chapter is structured as follows: the first section explains the Swedish understanding of security and the threats and challenges it faces in

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<sup>2</sup> Government of Sweden, Nationell säkerhetsstrategi [National Security Strategy], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/48e36d/contentassets/a02552ad9de94efcb84154b0f6ed76f9/nationell-sakerhetsstrategi.pdf>, f

<sup>3</sup> 'A strong transatlantic link is a fundamental basis for the security in our immediate neighbourhood' [En stark transatlantisk länk är grundläggande för säkerheten i vårt närområde.] Government of Sweden, Nationell säkerhetsstrategi [National Security Strategy], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/48e36d/contentassets/a02552ad9de94efcb84154b0f6ed76f9/nationell-sakerhetsstrategi.pdf>, 12

<sup>4</sup> Government of Sweden, Sverige och Tyskland undertecknar gemensam avsiktsförklaring på försvarsområdet [Sweden and Germany sign a Letter of Intent on defence cooperation], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2017/06/sverige-och-tyskland-undertecknar-gemensam-avsiktsforklaring-pa-forsvarsområdet/>

the BSR. It reviews the Swedish priorities and the main drivers that shape Sweden's expectations and assessment of Germany as a security actor. The second and third sections review, respectively, Germany's role as a hard and soft security provider in the BSR. The fourth section discusses Swedish security concerns linked to Russia that have become more pronounced since 2014 and created frictions with Germany. This regards both the controversy surrounding the Russian-German Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project and a rather less known allegation of a German submarine intrusion in Swedish waters. The final section sketches out recommendations for Germany's future role and engagement in the BSR as an important soft and hard security provider.

## The Swedish approach to security in the Baltic Sea region

*'Sweden's security is closely linked to the developments in our neighbourhood.'*<sup>5</sup>

Sweden's perception of *security*, the assessment of what the *main threats* are to *Swedish security* and, more specifically, to *Sweden's security in the BSR*, is shaped by a broad consensus among the governing and opposition parties. The understanding that the developments in the region have an impact on Sweden (see the quote above) has been shaping Swedish security policy for a long time. It was underlined in the parliamentary defence commission's report of 2013 outlining Sweden's *'[c]hoices in a globalised world'*.<sup>6</sup> The subsequent Russian actions in Ukraine had a major impact on the Swedish assessment of the severity of the potential military threat and its consequences for the BSR. In November 2017, Swedish Defence Minister Hultqvist made clear that *'[t]he significance of the Baltic Sea Region to European security has increased. Russia has over the past few years showed [sic!] a more challenging behaviour including violations of its neighbour's territorial*

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<sup>5</sup> Original quote: 'Sveriges säkerhet är nära kopplad till utvecklingen i vår omvärld'. Government of Sweden, Ministry of Defence, Vägval i en globaliserad värld. Ds 2013:33 [Choices in a globalised world. Report of the Parliamentary Defence Commission, Ds 2013:33] <http://www.regeringen.se/49bb69/contentassets/0783c292579948ec8d9fb1ba70eb056b/vagval-i-en-globaliserad-varld---ds-201333>, 215

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

*integrity. The military-strategic situation has deteriorated and the region has become less secure*.<sup>7</sup> The Swedish defence bill for 2016–2020, adopted in April 2015,<sup>8</sup> included as an immediate priority the re-establishment of a permanent military presence on the island of Gotland. This decision on an enhanced military presence for the defence of Swedish territory reflects the Swedish perception of the severity of the military threat from Russia and the deteriorating security environment.<sup>9</sup> It was further underlined by the early establishment of the military on Gotland in September 2016, half a year ahead of the schedule outlined in the defence bill. The national security strategy noted that the BSR had become a geographic space in which frictions between NATO and Russia had surged.<sup>10</sup> It emphasised the necessity of defending Sweden's political independence, self-determination and the country's territorial integrity.<sup>11</sup>

The Swedish security and defence policy is regularly subject to lively debates in the *Riksdagen* (the Swedish parliament), but there is a broad consensus across the political parties on the assessment of the security situation: firstly, that Russia poses a security problem for Sweden; secondly, that the situation in the BSR has deteriorated significantly since 2014 and, thirdly, that Sweden needs to strengthen its civil and military defence. The defence bill adopted in 2015 was supported by the three largest mainstream parties (governing and in opposition), the Social Democratic Party (governing), the Moderate Party (in opposition), the Centre Party (in opposition) and two of the three smallest parties, the Green Party (governing), and the Christian Democrats (in opposition). Among the

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<sup>7</sup> Government of Sweden, *Anförande vid invigningen av Berlin Security Conference 2017*, [Speech at the opening of the Berlin Security Conference 2017], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2017/11/anforande-vid-invigningen-av-berlin-security-conference-2017/>.

<sup>8</sup> Government of Sweden, *Försvarspolitiska inriktning – Sveriges försvar 2016–2020* [Sweden's Defence Policy 2016 to 2020], Prop 2014/15:109, 2015, [http://www.government.se/49c007/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/sweden\\_defence\\_policy\\_2016\\_to\\_2020](http://www.government.se/49c007/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/sweden_defence_policy_2016_to_2020)

<sup>9</sup> 'Beslutet grundar sig i den över tid försämrade säkerhetssituationen i vårt närområde och behovet av en ökad militär närvaro [...]'. Swedish Armed Forces, *Tidigarelagd etablering på Gotland* [Earlier establishment at Gotland], 2016, <http://www.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/aktuellt/2016/09/tidigarelagd-etablering-pa-gotland/>.

<sup>10</sup> Government of Sweden, *Nationell säkerhetsstrategi* [National Security Strategy], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/48e36d/contentassets/a02552ad9de94efcb84154b0f6ed76f9/nationell-sakerhetsstrategi.pdf>, 12

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

alliance block that had governed Sweden from 2006 until 2014, only the small party of the Liberals (previously known as *Folkpartiet* – the Swedish People's Party) opposed the bill, claiming it did too little. Both the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) on the far right, and the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*) on the far left, systematically criticise the government's security and defence policy on ideological grounds.

The question of a possible Swedish NATO membership divides the political establishment. The Social Democrat-Green Party minority coalition government (in power since September 2014), agrees that NATO plays an important role for Sweden's military security, but rejects – together with the Left Party and Sweden Democrats – a Swedish NATO membership as a matter of principle. Meanwhile, *Alliansen* (Moderate Party, Centre Party, Liberals and Christian Democrats) has, since 2014, reached the conclusion that Sweden must join NATO. However, the alliance also concedes that a Swedish NATO accession is contingent on gaining majority support from the Swedish population in a referendum. Approval rates for a NATO membership have grown substantially since 2013 (until which point only 20% regarded membership as desirable), but between 2014 and 2018, public support has continued to hover between 30 to 40%, falling significantly short of a clear majority.<sup>12</sup> Despite the divisions between the governing and opposition parties on NATO membership, an important step was taken in mid-2016. With the support of a large majority in the Swedish parliament, Sweden ratified a host nation support agreement with NATO.<sup>13</sup> The agreement, which Sweden had signed in September 2014 in parallel with Finland, was approved on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016, after a drawn-out domestic debate.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Joakim Berndtsson, Ulf Bjereld & Karl Ydén, 'Tillbaka till framtiden? Svenskarnas syn på försvaret, värnplikten och Nato [Back to the future? Swedish perspectives on defence, military service and NATO]' in: Larmar och gör sig till. Göteborgs universitet: SOM-institutet, ed.by Ulrika Andersson, Jonas Ohlsson, Henrik Oscarsson & Maria Oskarson, 2017, [https://som.gu.se/digitalAssets/1645/1645269\\_tillbaka-till-framtiden---berndtsson-bjereld--yd--n.pdf](https://som.gu.se/digitalAssets/1645/1645269_tillbaka-till-framtiden---berndtsson-bjereld--yd--n.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Government of Sweden, Samförståndsavtal om världlandsstöd [The Host Nation Support Agreement with NATO], 25/05/2016, [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/samforstandsavtal-om-varldlandsstod\\_H301UF%C3%B6U4](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/samforstandsavtal-om-varldlandsstod_H301UF%C3%B6U4)

<sup>14</sup> Finnish Government Communications Department, Cabinet Committee on Foreign and Security Policy issued statement on signing of Memorandum of Understanding on Host Nation Support between Finland and NATO, 27/08/2014, <http://www.finlandnato.org/public/default.aspx?contentid=311370&nodeid=39170&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>

In 2016, an independent report for the Swedish government, 'Security in a new age' (*Säkerhet i ny tid*) by Ambassador Krister Bringeus provided food for thought to Swedish decision-makers regarding Sweden's security. The report revealed deeply-rooted Swedish concerns about Germany's special relations with Russia and its potential implications for Sweden's security and defence policy.<sup>15</sup> Supporters of NATO membership in Sweden harbour fears that Germany could veto a Swedish NATO accession due to the country's perceived accommodating approach to the Russian Federation, a fear that Ambassador Bringeus' study found was entirely unwarranted.<sup>16</sup> He emphasised that, while decision-makers in Berlin are careful to maintain a balance between supporting measures taken by NATO in the BSR and pursuing an approach of constructive engagement towards Russia, a Swedish NATO membership is wholeheartedly welcomed. *Säkerhet i ny tid* explained that

*'[...] a Swedish application for NATO membership would be welcomed [...] because] Sweden is a security provider and has important contributions to make to NATO's work [...] and with Sweden in NATO, the western ability to deter Russia and prevent conflict in the Baltic Sea region increases, while the risks of unintended Russian actions would be reduced [authors' own translation]'*

Bringeus underlined that Germany's perception of Sweden is that of 'a competent and sensible international actor with good knowledge of Russia'.<sup>17</sup>

The Swedish government's *Declaration on Foreign Policy* of 2017 reiterated that Sweden's '[...] non-participation in military alliances serves [it] well, and contributes to stability and security in northern Europe'.<sup>18</sup> Sweden remains outside of NATO, but it does not mean that the country is left to its own devices. The parliamentary defence commission in 2013 emphasised explicitly: 'Sverige är inte ensamt'.<sup>19</sup> The Swedish government

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<sup>15</sup> Krister Bringeus, 'Säkerhet i ny tid [Security in a new age]', a basis for reflection for the Government of Sweden, SOU 2016:57

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Authors' own translation, original quote: 'kompetent och förnuftsorienterad internationell aktör, därtill med goda kunskaper om Ryssland', 146

<sup>18</sup> Government of Sweden, Foreign Policy Declaration 2017, 15/02/2017, <http://www.government.se/496172/contentassets/ed65c7ddcbc64f17856d961f5969f1a5/utrikesdeklarationen-2017-engelska.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Government of Sweden, Ministry of Defence, Vägval i en globaliserad värld. Ds 2013:33 [Choices in a globalised world. Report of the Parliamentary Defence Commission, Ds 2013:33] <http://www.regeringen.se/49bb69/contentassets/0783c292579948ec8d9fb1ba70eb056b/vagval-i-en-globaliserad-varld---ds-201333>, 216

has made clear that it sees Sweden's security anchored in and protected by the European and Euro-Atlantic cooperative security structures.<sup>20</sup> Swedish defence policy, especially regarding the question of *aye* or *no* to NATO membership, remains divisive, but there is a broad agreement among the political elites over the benefits of the multiple overlapping cooperative security arrangements that Sweden is integrated into. While the need for '*credible national defence capabilities*' is emphasised,<sup>21</sup> any go-it-alone impulses are strongly rejected as '*Sweden cannot and will not isolate itself from its surroundings*'.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to an 'enhanced defence cooperation' with Finland, which the Swedish government has prioritised after the annexation of Crimea, closer cooperation with other countries in the BSR has come to play an increasingly important role. Since the late 2000s, when the mutual solidarity commitment emerged on the EU's agenda with the Lisbon Treaty, *solidarity* has also been fully integrated into Sweden's *explicit* security policy commitments towards its direct geographic neighbours. The government added, consequently, a *unilateral* commitment to Nordic solidarity that enjoys broad support in Sweden.<sup>23</sup> Foreign Minister Margot Wallström in her annual foreign policy statements reconfirmed the policy line on solidarity that was introduced by her predecessor Carl Bildt a decade ago, who himself reiterated annually that

*'Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected. Our country must therefore be in a position to both give and receive support, civilian as well as military'.*

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<sup>20</sup> Government of Sweden, Nationell säkerhetsstrategi [National Security Strategy], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/48e36d/contentassets/a02552ad9de94efcb84154b0f6ed76f9/nationell-sakerhetsstrategi.pdf>, 15

<sup>21</sup> Government of Sweden, Foreign Policy Declaration 2017, 15/02/2017, <http://www.government.se/496172/contentassets/ed65c7ddcbc64f17856d961f5969f1a5/utrikesdeklarationen-2017-engelska.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Authors' own translation from 'Sverige kan inte och vill inte isolera sig från omvärlden'

<sup>23</sup> Government of Sweden, Nationell säkerhetsstrategi [National Security Strategy], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/48e36d/contentassets/a02552ad9de94efcb84154b0f6ed76f9/nationell-sakerhetsstrategi.pdf>, 6

This Swedish perspective builds on the conviction that *‘[s]ecurity is built in solidarity with others and threats against peace and security are best met together with other countries and organisations’*.<sup>24</sup>

Together with the greater focus on preparations to face military threats to Sweden on its own territory, which constitutes a significant shift in Swedish security policy in the BSR, there is also a clear continuity in Sweden’s perspective on security. There is a broad consensus in Sweden on the need to attribute equal importance to hard and soft security challenges and the need to adopt *‘ett bredare säkerhetsperspektiv’* – that is, to adopt a comprehensive perspective on security threats affecting Sweden both directly and indirectly. This was also anchored in the defence bill of 2015 and the NSS of 2017. It includes the recognition of the importance of protecting citizens against epidemics, communicable diseases, and pursuing the fight against terrorism and organised crime, but also the need to secure transport links, the supply of food and protection of the Swedish people against energy supply disruptions, reducing the effects of climate change and continuing Sweden’s international engagement for peace and global development.<sup>25</sup> This continues the policy pursued prior to 2014, of addressing threats to life and health, the protection of critical societal functions and of the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and civil liberties.<sup>26</sup> The Swedish feminist foreign policy, famously launched by Foreign Minister Margot Wallström in September 2014,<sup>27</sup> also builds on this ‘broad perspective’ of the security challenges facing Sweden.

The reintroduction of the *totalförsvär* (total defence) concept with the defence bill of 2015 found wide support in this context. This total defence concept seeks to ensure at the same time the protection of the civilian

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<sup>24</sup> Government of Sweden, Ministry of Defence, *Vägval i en globaliserad värld*. Ds 2013:33 [Choices in a globalised world. Report of the Parliamentary Defence Commission, Ds 2013:33] <http://www.regeringen.se/49bb69/contentassets/0783c292579948ec8d9fb1ba70eb056b/vagval-i-en-globaliserad-varld---ds-201333>, 215

<sup>25</sup> Government of Sweden, *Nationell säkerhetsstrategi* [National Security Strategy], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/48e36d/contentassets/a02552ad9de94efcb84154b0f6ed76f9/nationell-sakerhetsstrategi.pdf>, 3, 6

<sup>26</sup> Government of Sweden, Ministry of Defence, *Vägval i en globaliserad värld*. Ds 2013:33 [Choices in a globalised world. Report of the Parliamentary Defence Commission, Ds 2013:33], 2013, 214–2016, section 14.1, <http://www.regeringen.se/49bb69/contentassets/0783c292579948ec8d9fb1ba70eb056b/vagval-i-en-globaliserad-varld---ds-201333>

<sup>27</sup> Government of Sweden, *Feminist Foreign Policy*, <http://www.government.se/government-policy/feminist-foreign-policy/>

population, the maintenance of important societal functions in crisis situations (of natural causes or man-made) and to contribute to the armed forces' ability to function effectively in the event of an armed attack on Sweden.<sup>28</sup> Sweden's contemporary *totalförsvar* is a modern form of the integrated military-civilian defence that Sweden maintained during the Cold War period whereby

*'[the] civil defence consists of tasks that make it possible for society to function in a situation of raised alert. Thus, civil defence is not an organisation. Its tasks are being performed by government agencies, municipal authorities, county councils, private companies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The primary tasks concern the protection of the population, ensuring critical societal functions and to support the armed forces.'*<sup>29</sup>

In summary, the BSR is today, from the Swedish perspective, clearly a geographic space where military tensions with Russia and between Russia and NATO Member States are creating long-term concerns about Sweden's security. But the broad security perspective sets the framework for contemporary Swedish security policy towards the BSR. This has also defined the Swedish engagement in the EU on security matters affecting the BSR, and it informs the Swedish expectations regarding Germany's role as a security partner in the Baltic Sea. Sweden and Germany differ most significantly in the importance attributed to the Baltic Sea as a geographic space. Whereas for Sweden the Baltic Sea is of central importance, Germany's role and interest in the region has fluctuated significantly, despite its long Baltic Sea coast.<sup>30</sup> This also has an impact on the extent to which Sweden has been able to engage Germany as a security partner in the BSR to strengthen both its soft and hard security dimension.

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<sup>28</sup> Government of Sweden, Regeringens proposition 2014/2015:109. Försvarspolitisk inriktning – Sveriges försvar 2016-2020 [Government bill 2014/2015:109. Sweden's Defence Policy 2016-2020], 2015, <https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/266e64ec3a254a6087ebe9e413806819/proposition-201415109-forsvarspolitisk-inriktning-sveriges-forsvar-2016-2020,2>

<sup>29</sup> Government of Sweden, Sweden's Defence Policy 2016 to 2020', 2015, [http://www.government.se/49c007/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/sweden\\_defence\\_policy\\_2016\\_to\\_2020,6-7](http://www.government.se/49c007/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/sweden_defence_policy_2016_to_2020,6-7)

<sup>30</sup> Germany's coast line along the Baltic Sea is approximately 2,000km long, see: European Commission, Maritime Affairs, Ch.8 Germany, [https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/docs/body/germany\\_climate\\_change\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/docs/body/germany_climate_change_en.pdf), 1. The Swedish Baltic Sea coast is more than 1,500km long, see: Helcom, Contracting Parties, Sweden, <http://www.helcom.fi/about-us/contracting-parties/sweden>

## Germany's potential as a security provider for Sweden in the Baltic Sea region

*'Germany is the largest EU Member State and plays a key role in virtually all decisions that are taken'.<sup>31</sup>*

For Sweden as a comparatively small EU Member State (in terms of population size, despite its geographic extension), and a non-NATO member, Germany's role as a motor of European Union integration, and as a large European member of NATO, is of importance. Consequently, Germany is regarded as an important cooperation partner with whose help Sweden can achieve its broader security objectives in the BSR.<sup>32</sup> Swedish perception of the importance of Germany in Baltic Sea security are directly linked to its assessment of Germany's role in the context of the British referendum on the United Kingdom's exit from the EU. Initially, following the Brexit vote, Swedish government representatives created the impression that the value of cooperation with Germany lies primarily in its role as an instrument for the promotion of Swedish interests in the EU.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps most unexpectedly, Swedish decision-makers and officials consistently place emphasis on Germany's economic capacity and its importance for Swedish trade and industry, reiterated also during the state visits in January 2017 (Chancellor Merkel to Stockholm) and in March 2018 (Prime Minister Löfven to Berlin).<sup>34</sup> This is also indicative of the importance attributed to Germany's position of power and influence in Europe, in broader terms.

To better understand the evolution of Sweden's perception of Germany's importance as a partner in the BSR, it is worth considering that the 'natural'

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<sup>31</sup> Government of Sweden, Förhoppning om ett starkare EU samarbete gällande säkerhet, klimat och migration [Hopes for closer EU cooperation regarding security, climate, and migration], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2017/01/forhoppning-om-ett-starkare-eu-samarbete-gallande-sakerhet-klimat-och-migration/>  
State Secretary Hans Dahlgren, January 2017 on Chancellor's state visit to Stockholm]

<sup>32</sup> Fredrik Haglund, "Tunga frågor när Löfven träffade Merkel [Difficult questions on the agenda when Löfven met Merkel]", 16/03/2018, <https://www.europaportalen.se/2018/03/tunga-fragor-nar-lofven-traffade-merkel>

<sup>33</sup> Government of Sweden, Förhoppning om ett starkare EU samarbete gällande säkerhet, klimat och migration [Hopes for closer EU cooperation regarding security, climate, and migration], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2017/01/forhoppning-om-ett-starkare-eu-samarbete-gallande-sakerhet-klimat-och-migration/>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

partner for Germany used to be Denmark, and that Sweden itself had concentrated its efforts in the 1990s on developing cooperation with Poland and the Baltic States, rather than Germany. The Swedish and Polish governments, for instance, had initiated the Ronneby Conference in 1990 on jointly solving environmental problems in the BSR, and also held the first Baltic Conference on Transportation, in 1992.<sup>35</sup> But, it was Germany, together with Denmark, who initiated plans for the creation of a Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) to bring all riparian states together in an intergovernmental organisation.<sup>36</sup> Germany's high-level support for the creation of the CBSS was instrumental in focusing the attention of European and international actors on the BSR and on the range of soft security issues in the region that required cooperation among local and international stakeholders. However, following the initial push for the development of cooperative networks to address the most pressing soft security issues across the region, the federal government of Germany mostly took a backseat and left the federal states, the German *Länder* in charge of promoting the practical implementation and further development of cross-regional initiatives.<sup>37</sup>

Very early on, Sweden took on a central role as the country from which all CBSS actions are coordinated. From the mid-1990s, the Nordic Council and the newly created Baltic Council obtained a more important role in promoting cooperation across the Baltic Sea,<sup>38</sup> replacing the Danish-German tandem as a motor of cross-regional cooperation. Since 1998, the permanent secretariat of the CBSS is located in Stockholm.<sup>39</sup> A notable

<sup>35</sup> CBSS 1<sup>st</sup> Ministerial Session – Copenhagen Declaration. Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Sea States, 1992, <http://www.cbss.org/council/coordination/>.

<sup>36</sup> History, Council of the Baltic Sea States, <http://www.cbss.org/council/about/>

<sup>37</sup> For an analysis of the role of Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, see Martin Koschkar, *Subnationale Außenbeziehungen. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern und Schleswig-Holstein im Ostseeraum* [Subnational External Relations. Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Schleswig-Holstein in the Baltic Sea region], 2018, Springer VS

<sup>38</sup> CBSS 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session – Kalmar Communiqué, 1996, point 5; CBSS 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session – Riga Communiqué, 1997, point 7 and 12; CBSS 7<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session – Nyborg Communiqué 1998, point 3, all at <http://www.cbss.org/council/coordination/>

<sup>39</sup> Already during its CBSS presidency, Sweden volunteered to act as a focal point for the coordination of BSR cooperation, an arrangement that was formalised with the establishment of a Baltic Sea States Support Group in Stockholm, see e.g. CBSS 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session – Kalmar Communiqué, 1996, point 14. In 1998, the ministers of the CBSS member states took the decision to establish a permanent secretariat, which was inaugurated in Stockholm in October 1998 on the island of Strömsborg, moving in November 2010 to its current premises in the Old Town. See: CBSS 7<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Session – Nyborg Communiqué, 1998, point 5, <http://www.cbss.org/council/coordination/>

difference in the role of Germany compared to Sweden is that, whereas Stockholm has pushed its interests regarding security in the BSR during and between its formal chairmanship of the CBSS and EU, much of the visible German engagement in the BSR has been concentrated around its formal responsibilities while chairing the CBSS.<sup>40</sup> As regards the areas of particular importance to Sweden, the German government and northern *Länder* made contributions over the years that reinforced Swedish initiatives, but they rarely took on a proactive role themselves. For Sweden, obtaining support from the largest EU Member State in the region has certainly been of value, but it is clear that Germany has maintained its supporting and facilitating role, rather than becoming a driver of developments in both the CBSS and the EU's regional frameworks.

From the Swedish perspective, a greater German engagement would be welcomed in the main regional organisations and cooperation forums, namely the CBSS, the EU with its Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), but also NATO and the development of a joint defence capacity in the EU framework. The latter gained greater salience for Sweden following the election of US President Donald Trump. The Swedish foreign policy declaration of 2018 underlined cooperation with Germany in the framework of the EU's common security and defence policy and Germany's contribution to the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Security and Defence (PESCO) and development of the EU's civilian capacity to prevent and manage conflicts.<sup>41</sup> What is problematic for Sweden is that the peripheral geographic position of the Baltic Sea, from the perspective of Bonn and later Berlin, has meant that Germany has paid more attention to Moscow and Brussels than its own 'backyard'.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Sweden held its first presidency of the CBSS in 1995–1996, 2006–2007 and 2017–2018. It was Germany's turn between 2000–2001 and 2011–2012

<sup>41</sup> Government of Sweden, Statement of Foreign Policy 2018, 14/02/2018, <http://www.government.se/49170e/contentassets/da51ffff1e3848b4bc5597190bdd8c4e/Statement-of-Foreign-Policy-2018>, 3

<sup>42</sup> See Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, 'Kaliningrad in EU-Russia Relations. The Neglected Enclave by the Baltic Sea', written for UI Paper, ed. by Ingmar Oldberg, <https://www.ui.se/english/publications/ui-publications/>

## Germany as a soft security provider in the Baltic Sea region

*‘[W]hen we look at the Baltic Sea region today, we see a positive picture. The region has [...] become a role model [...] for regional cooperation. [...] The annual forums [...] have become an integral part of cooperation in a spirit of mutual trust in the Baltic Sea region.’<sup>43</sup>*

Foreign Minister Gabriel’s statement makes it clear that, for Germany, the problems with Russia in the BSR are of a political rather than of a military nature. This also reflects the dominant view from Berlin, namely that the BSR is a low-tension environment, with the conflict with Russia being localised around Ukraine. German leaders acknowledge, of course, that there are also problems: *‘Since the annexation of Crimea [...] we have had a difficult debate with our partner in Russia on restoring national integrity and in particular on ending the fighting [in Ukraine]’.*<sup>44</sup> This is in some contrast to Sweden, where the military dimension has become a serious concern, linked at the same time to the core Swedish soft security interests. In June 2018, Foreign Minister Wallström, while speaking on societal security in the BSR, began her speech by emphasising that *‘[t]he security situation in our region is more tense than it has been for a long time. The European security order is threatened, mainly by Russia [...]. In the Baltic Sea we are seeing more exercises and rearmament. We are also experiencing how [...Russian] disinformation, trolls and hacking [...] pose new challenges for trust and cohesion in our societies’.*<sup>45</sup> Sweden undertakes every possible effort to reduce tensions by diplomatic means while *‘strengthening [...Sweden’s] national defence’* and *‘deepening [...] cooperation with others’* to enhance Sweden’s

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<sup>43</sup> German Foreign Ministry, Speech by Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel at the opening of the 8th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, 8th EUSBSR Forum, Berlin, 13/06/2017, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/170613-bm-jahresforum-ostseestrategie/290650>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Government of Sweden, Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström at Managing complexity: Addressing societal security challenges in the Baltic Sea region, 11/06/2018, <https://www.government.se/speeches/2018/06/statement-by-minister-for-foreign-affairs-margot-wallstrom-at-managing-complexity-addressing-societal-security-challenges-in-the-baltic-sea-region/>

military capabilities to deter any threats from Russia.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the Swedish NSS already remarked that ‘possibilities for deconfliction’ and an engagement in mutually beneficial cooperation with Russia are severely limited as a consequence of Russia’s actions.<sup>47</sup>

For the past three decades, Sweden has played a much more prominent role in promoting cooperation on a range of soft security issues in the BSR than Germany. In the mid-1990s, during Sweden’s first CBSS presidency, the focus was placed on civic security.<sup>48</sup> Another focal area was environmental protection, which culminated in the establishment of *Agenda 21* for the BSR that was later integrated in the CBSS.<sup>49</sup> Sweden had also been the initiator of a Baltic Sea Conference on Combating Organised Crime in 1993, from which the CBSS Task Force on Organised Crime emerged.<sup>50</sup> It had even initiated cooperation in the CBSS on tackling ‘*uncontrolled migration across the Baltic Sea*’.<sup>51</sup> Stockholm had further pushed for the establishment of cooperation in the CBSS on combating contagious communicable diseases and it had an important role in the establishment of a CBSS working group on nuclear and radiation safety.<sup>52</sup> The German engagement in soft security matters built on previous efforts on civil protection and crisis management research, where Sweden had already played a key role. Among others, a Swedish research project, launched in 1997 and designed to increase knowledge for managing crises in the Baltic Sea later became a Swedish initiative at the Conference on

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<sup>46</sup> Government of Sweden, Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström at Managing complexity, op.cit.

<sup>47</sup> Government of Sweden, Nationell säkerhetsstrategi [National Security Strategy], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/48e36d/contentassets/a02552ad9de94efcb84154b0f6ed76f9/nationell-sakerhetsstrategi.pdf>, 12

<sup>48</sup> This concept of ‘civic security’ was further developed in the CBSS. See: CBSS 6th Ministerial Session-Riga Communiqué, 1997, Point 11; CBSS 7th Ministerial Session – Nyborg Communiqué, 1998, point 4c; from 2005 it has been referred to as ‘civil security’.

<sup>49</sup> CBSS 5th Ministerial Session – Kalmar Communiqué, 1996, point 22; CBSS 10th Ministerial Session – Hamburg Communiqué, 2001, <http://www.cbss.org/council/coordination/>

<sup>50</sup> CBSS 6th Ministerial Session – Riga Communiqué, point 12; 1994, 3rd Ministerial Session, Tallinn Communiqué, 1994, point 5; CBSS 4th Ministerial Session – Gdansk Communiqué, 1995, point 23, <http://www.cbss.org/council/coordination/>

<sup>51</sup> CBSS 2nd Ministerial Session, Helsinki Communiqué, 1993, point 20, <http://www.cbss.org/council/coordination/>.

<sup>52</sup> CBSS 4th Ministerial Session – Gdansk Communiqué, 1995, point 25, 1994; 3rd Ministerial Session – Tallinn Communiqué, 1994, point 7, <http://www.cbss.org/council/coordination/>

Civil Security in Visby, in 1998, that was joined by other CBSS states.<sup>53</sup> Following another workshop on civil security and crisis management in Stockholm in 1999, Sweden and Estonia were charged with developing national networks or centres for crisis management research and training. By 2000, when Germany held its first CBSS presidency, soft security in the field of civil security was widely recognised as an important issue in the BSR requiring cross-regional cooperation. During its chairmanship of the CBSS, Germany itself put emphasis on issues relating to soft security.<sup>54</sup> It commissioned a study on soft security risk management, which also marked its first significant security-focused activity through the CBSS. Germany ascribed importance to the surveillance of the marine environment and development of new technologies, but its engagement in soft security cooperation in the BSR, especially with regard to the core Swedish concerns of civil and environmental protection, remained limited.<sup>55</sup> Swedish experts deemed Germany's civil security and crisis management capacity at that point to be 'still under development'.<sup>56</sup>

During Sweden's EU presidency in 2009, a Strategy for the Baltic Sea region – the EUSBSR – was adopted, and other soft security concerns, such as combating climate change, improving cooperation on fighting organised crime and terrorism and countering human trafficking, were

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<sup>53</sup> Bo Richard Lundgren and Bengt Sundelius, 'Regional Crisis Management Research and Preparedness Initiative', in: *Civil Security and Crisis Management in the Baltic Sea Region: The 1999 Strömsborg Workshop in Stockholm and the 2000 Tallinn Conference*, ed. Anna Fornstedt, Stockholm: The Swedish National Defence College, 2001, [https://medarbetarwebben.fhs.se/Documents/Externwebben/forskning/centrumbildningar/Crismart/Publikationer/Publikationsserier/VOLUME\\_5.PDF](https://medarbetarwebben.fhs.se/Documents/Externwebben/forskning/centrumbildningar/Crismart/Publikationer/Publikationsserier/VOLUME_5.PDF), 17-18

<sup>54</sup> 2001 CBSS 10th Ministerial Session – Hamburg Communiqué, Council of the Baltic Sea States, (June 2001): 5, <http://www.cbss.org/council/coordination/>

<sup>55</sup> Hans Jürgen Heimsoeth, 'CBSS and Civil Security', in: *Civil Security and Crisis Management in the Baltic Sea Region: The 1999 Strömsborg Workshop in Stockholm and the 2000 Tallinn Conference*, ed. Anna Fornstedt, Stockholm: The Swedish National Defence College, 2001, [https://medarbetarwebben.fhs.se/Documents/Externwebben/forskning/centrumbildningar/Crismart/Publikationer/Publikationsserier/VOLUME\\_5.PDF](https://medarbetarwebben.fhs.se/Documents/Externwebben/forskning/centrumbildningar/Crismart/Publikationer/Publikationsserier/VOLUME_5.PDF)

<sup>56</sup> Yvonne Gustavsson, Address to the International Conference on Civil Security and Crisis Management in the Baltic Sea Region, Tallinn, October 2001. In: *Civil Security and Crisis Management in the Baltic Sea Region: The 1999 Strömsborg Workshop in Stockholm and the 2000 Tallinn Conference*, ed. Anna Fornstedt, Stockholm: The Swedish National Defence College, 2001, [https://medarbetarwebben.fhs.se/Documents/Externwebben/forskning/centrumbildningar/Crismart/Publikationer/Publikationsserier/VOLUME\\_5.PDF](https://medarbetarwebben.fhs.se/Documents/Externwebben/forskning/centrumbildningar/Crismart/Publikationer/Publikationsserier/VOLUME_5.PDF), 36

prioritised.<sup>57</sup> In 2014, a new CBSS vision statement – the Baltic Sea Region by 2020 – presented long-term priorities; all security concerns were bundled in the priority area ‘safe and secure region’.<sup>58</sup> In 2015, it was decided that the Swedish civil contingencies agency (MSB) together with the CBSS secretariat would assume responsibility for the policy area (PA) ‘secure’, of the revised EUSBSR action plan.<sup>59</sup> PA secure’s specific focus areas, as well as security management, are closely related to the broad concept of security aligned with Sweden’s ambition of building a ‘common security culture’ in the BSR.<sup>60</sup> Besides PA secure, Sweden also assumed sole responsibility of PA hazard, and shared responsibility over another four priority areas. In comparison to Sweden’s seven areas of responsibility, Germany has the sole responsibility for PA tourism and shared responsibility for two PAs (culture & education). Meanwhile, Sweden is the lead partner for 34 ongoing projects in matters relating to, among others, security (8) and bioeconomy (4). Germany leads 21 EUSBSR projects in areas relating to culture (4), innovation (4) and energy (4).<sup>61</sup>

The potential for close cooperation and broader engagement of Germany in soft security is evident from the fact that Sweden hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual

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<sup>57</sup> Government of Sweden, Report on the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 1 July–31 December 2009, 2010, <http://www.government.se/contentassets/3cef-7f96132a4eac96121249dbd5dda2/report-on-the-swedish-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-european-union-1-july---31-december-2009,30>

<sup>58</sup> CBSS, Note of the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials to the Council on the Implementation of the CBSS Long-term Priorities, 04/06/2015, <http://www.cbss.org/council/coordination/note-on-deliverables-to-the-ministers-20150604-final/>

<sup>59</sup> CBSS, Annex Progress in Strategic Actions to Implement the CBSS Long-term Priorities: A Round Table, 04/06/2015, <http://www.cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Strategic-Actions-taken-to-implement-the-CBSS-ltp-20150604-final.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> Andriy Martynenko, ‘Spotlight on Policy Area Secure: Civil Protection + Law Enforcement = Safer Baltic Sea Region’, 11/04/2017, <https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/highlights/item/12-policy-area-secure-civil-protection-law-enforcement-safer-baltic-sea-region>

<sup>61</sup> Sweden’s flagship areas in 2018 are: PA Bioeconomy (5), PA Secure (4), PA Hazards (4), PA Education (4), PA Nutri (4), PA Innovation (3), PA Culture (2), PA Transport (2), PA Energy (2), PA Ship (1), PA Tourism (1), HA Climate (1), HA Spatial planning (1); total of 34. Germany’s ongoing projects in 2018: PA Culture (4), PA Innovation (4), PA Energy (4), PA Transport (2), HA Neighbours (2), HA Spatial planning (2), PA Bioeconomy (1), PA Tourism (1), PA Education (1); total of 21. Ongoing flagships of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) (Annex to the Action Plan of the EUSBSR (February 2018) N.B. the document is subject to change. Published 22/04/2017, last updated 21/03/2018. For more information, see: <https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/action-plan>

Forum of the EUSBSR, in November 2016, in Stockholm, while Germany hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum for the EUSBSR, in June 2017, in Berlin.<sup>62</sup> During its presidency of the CBSS in 2017–2018, Sweden aimed to promote a strong cross-regional partnership in the region to address shared soft security problems.<sup>63</sup> Sweden and Germany also jointly hosted a seminar in Berlin on developing EU's crisis management capacities with relevance for the Baltic Sea.<sup>64</sup> However, while Sweden's Prime Minister Löfven and Finland's Prime Minister Sipilä made a point of participating in the entire opening session in Stockholm in 2016, from the German side, it was officials and desk officers from Schleswig-Holstein and Brandenburg (neighbouring Poland and coastal Land Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) that represented the country at the forum.<sup>65</sup> Sweden, through its civil contingencies agency (MSB) continues, together with the CBSS secretariat, to coordinate cooperation on security within the framework of the EUSBSR.<sup>66</sup> Germany's engagement, in turn, remains at a low level and the range of areas in which Germany today plays a specific role as a soft security provider in the Baltic Sea remains limited.

Germany's strong engagement with relevance for the Baltic Sea countries has been on migration and terrorism, but this has not been targeted at, or tailored for, the region specifically. Both Sweden and Germany have become subject to severe criticism from their neighbours regarding their generous policy towards refugees and migrants. Together with Sweden, Germany has been committed to promoting European

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<sup>62</sup> The 7th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR – One Region, One Future, 2016, <http://www.strategyforum2016.eu/about/the-event-31980676>

<sup>63</sup> Population-Europe, 'New Social Vulnerabilities in the Baltic Sea Region', 14/11/2017, <https://www.population-europe.eu/event-review/new-social-vulnerabilities-baltic-sea-region>

<sup>64</sup> Government of Sweden, Regeringens skrivelse 2017/18: 118. Verksamheten i Europeiska unionen under 2017 [Written Communication by the Government 2017/18: 118. The Swedish Government's overall EU priorities for 2017], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/494367/contentassets/0ec5822c2c104bdf889a68ce72c93960/verksamheten-i-europeiska-unionen-under-2017.pdf>, 37

<sup>65</sup> See: 7<sup>th</sup> EUSBSR Strategy Forum 2016 programme at: <http://www.strategyforum2016.eu/programme/conference-programme-33028536>. See also specifically the session on Russia where the Land Brandenburg participated <http://www.strategyforum2016.eu/programme/seminars/perspectives-for-eu-russia-cooperation-in-the-baltic-sea-region-33349379>. The German participation was limited to the closing session in which Ambassador Ossowski of the German Foreign Ministry informed about the 8<sup>th</sup> EUSBSR Forum to be hosted in Berlin

<sup>66</sup> CBSS, Transnational cooperation to strengthen national crisis preparedness, 05/03/2018, at <http://www.cbss.org/transnational-cooperation-strengthen-national-crisis-preparedness/>

cooperation on addressing the security challenges of migration and terrorism across the EU. Consequently, Germany is today indeed an important security cooperation partner for Sweden with regard to reaching cross-European agreements on how to manage more effectively the influx of refugees and migrants from the southern Mediterranean. Already during Germany's EU presidency in 2007, the German Ministry of the Interior presented a working programme on 'Living Europe Safely' with the aim of '[s]trengthening security, controlling migration and promoting integration' through the means of '[c]lose police cooperation and a united front in the fight against terrorism', '[c]oherent asylum and migration policy', and '[m]ore effective protection of external borders'.<sup>67</sup> In the context of the terrorist attacks in Berlin (December 2016) and Stockholm (April 2017), the Swedish-German cooperation to combat terrorism has become an even more important issue on the bilateral security policy agenda. While more effective cooperation within the EU on these issues has positive consequences for the region, Germany's engagement with Sweden on these issues is not focused on the geographic space of the Baltic Sea.

Since 2015, the ambition to promote practical cooperation with Russia has become a driving force in Germany's engagement in soft security matters in the Baltic Sea. The CBSS had long been perceived by Berlin primarily as a forum to foster cooperation '*in a spirit of mutual trust*' (see Foreign Minister Gabriel's quote above) between Russia and the other coastal states. The entrenched conflict with Russia over its aggression against Ukraine revived the idea that regional cooperation could serve as a means by which to restore trust with Russia (*verlorenes Vertrauen wiederaufzubauen*). So, in 2017, the German foreign minister heavily promoted a reinstatement of the CBSS foreign ministers' meetings that had been suspended in 2014, following the start of the Russian military aggression.<sup>68</sup> On the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the CBSS in

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<sup>67</sup> Government of Germany, Europe – succeeding together – Presidency Programme 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007, 2007, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004\\_2009/documents/dv/eu\\_presidency\\_programme/\\_eu\\_presidency\\_programme\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/eu_presidency_programme/_eu_presidency_programme_en.pdf), 17-18

<sup>68</sup> Auswärtiges Amt, 'Vertrauen durch Dialog: Gabriel will Ostseerat wiederbeleben' [Confidence-building through dialogue: Gabriel wants to revitalise the CBSS], 21/06/2017, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/europa/zusammenarbeit-staaten/ostseekooperation/170621-bm-ostseerat/290796>.

June 2017<sup>69</sup> the foreign ministers met for the first time in four years and Foreign Minister Gabriel lobbied for a ‘new beginning’ in the BSR states’ relations.<sup>70</sup> However, the German initiative to build confidence with Russia via the CBSS in the midst of the ongoing remilitarisation of the Baltic Sea could hardly be successful.<sup>71</sup> In fact, the June 2018 CBSS meeting during the Swedish presidency reverted to a ‘mixed’ high-level meeting at which some countries were represented by foreign ministers – in addition to Sweden, also, Denmark and Latvia – while others, including Germany itself and Russia, were represented by their local ambassadors or representatives from the national capital.<sup>72</sup>

Having said that, Germany’s rhetoric about the need to promote dialogue and cooperation with Russia in the BSR also matches in a large part that of Sweden. In the same way in which Foreign Minister Wallström emphasised that *‘in times of tension, it is even more important that [...the regional] organisations function as platforms for dialogue and cooperation’*,<sup>73</sup> Foreign Minister Gabriel underlined that steps have to be taken *‘to make sure the mistrust that already exists does not seep to an even greater extent into the core of [their] cooperation. Instead, [CBSS member states] should focus on exploring opportunities for cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, especially with the neighbours with whom [the]*

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<sup>69</sup> MFA Russia, Declaration on the Occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), Reykjavik, 20/06/2017 [http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2794151](http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2794151); CBSS, Baltic Sea region ministers endorse the Stockholm Declaration, 18/06/2018, <http://www.cbss.org/baltic-sea-region-ministers-and-high-representatives-of-foreign-affairs-endorse-the-stockholm-declaration/>

<sup>70</sup> Auswärtiges Amt, Vertrauen durch Dialog: Gabriel will Ostseerat wiederbeleben [Confidence-building through dialogue: Gabriel wants to revitalise the CBSS] 21/06/2017, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/europa/zusammenarbeit-staaten/ostseekooperation/170621-bm-ostseerat/290796>

<sup>71</sup> Anke Schmidt-Felzmann and Kjell Engelbrekt, ‘Challenges in the Baltic Sea Region: Geopolitics, Insecurity and Identity’, in: Global Affairs, vol. 4, 2017

<sup>72</sup> CBSS, Stockholm Declaration, 18/06/2018, <http://www.cbss.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Stockholm-Declaration-June-18-2018.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> Government of Sweden, Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström at Managing complexity: Addressing societal security challenges in the Baltic Sea region, 11/06/2018, <https://www.government.se/speeches/2018/06/statement-by-minister-for-foreign-affairs-margot-wallstrom-at-managing-complexity-addressing-societal-security-challenges-in-the-baltic-sea-region/>

*political relations are currently difficult*'.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, the absence of a shared understanding of the *threat from Russia* in the BSR creates a significant gap between Germany and Sweden that – although not openly acknowledged by the Swedish political elites – poses obstacles for the Nordic-Baltic-Polish cooperation with Germany on Baltic Sea security, especially regarding Russia. While Sweden is in favour of pursuing dialogue with Russia at the CBSS as a matter of principle, Defence Minister Hultqvist also made clear that *'[t]here can be no business as usual [with Russia] as long as this behaviour continues, manifested in military action, disinformation and propaganda operations. Russia remains aggressive and thus increases tensions in our vicinity*'.<sup>75</sup>

## Germany's rapid rise as a (potential) hard security provider for Sweden

*'Germany has a decisive role to play in the European response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine, both due to its size but also due to its traditionally very good relations with Russia*'.<sup>76</sup>

Germany's role and visibility as a hard security actor in the BSR has developed only slowly. When Defence Minister Hultqvist spoke at the Munich Security Conference in 2016 and highlighted Sweden's bilateral cooperation with key states to strengthen security, stability and deterrence in the Baltic Sea, Germany was not even mentioned.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> German Foreign Ministry, Speech by Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel at the opening of the 8th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, 8th EUSBSR Forum, Berlin, 13/06/2017, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/170613-bm-jahresforum-ostseestrategie/290650>

<sup>75</sup> Government of Sweden, Anförande vid invigningen av Berlin Security Conference 2017 [Speech at Opening of Berlin Security Conference 2017], <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2017/11/anforande-vid-invigningen-av-berlin-security-conference-2017/>

<sup>76</sup> Original quote: 'Tyskland har en nyckelroll i den europeiska responsen på den ryska aggressionen mot Ukraina, både i kraft av sin storlek och av sin traditionellt goda relation till Ryssland'

<sup>77</sup> Government of Sweden, Speech by Peter Hultqvist at the Munich Security Conference 2016 [Tal av Peter Hultqvist på München Security Conference 2016], 2016, <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2016/02/tal-av-peter-hultqvist-pa-munchen-security-conference-2016-13-februari-2016/>

The Swedish defence bill of 2015 contained only very few mentions of Germany. It had indicated that the government saw ‘possibilities to develop and deepen’ Sweden’s bilateral cooperation with Germany and mentioned the large size of the *Bundeswehr* as being of relevance.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Germany’s defence spending amounts to more than twice what the Nordic countries themselves invest and is, in the BSR, second only to Russia’s defence expenditure.<sup>79</sup> For Sweden’s domestic defence industry, the development of the defence industrial relationship with German companies is important. Germany was among the five main recipients of Swedish military technology, equipment and munitions in 2017 – after Brazil, India, USA and Norway. The main Swedish defence export to Germany was component parts of robotic (missile) systems; Swedish sales to Germany amounted to 615 million kronor.<sup>80</sup> Germany is also part of the *Northern Group*, a defence cooperation forum bridging the gap between non-NATO members and members of the alliance – as such, an important defence group for Sweden.<sup>81</sup>

As the situation in the BSR continued to deteriorate (from the Swedish perspective) over the course of 2016, following the uncertainty caused by both the UK’s Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump as US President, the perceived importance of Germany in Sweden grew substantially. In November 2016, at his meeting with the German defence minister in Berlin, Peter Hultqvist emphasised that military cooperation with Germany had become an important priority and

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<sup>78</sup> Original quote: ‘Regeringen ser också möjligheter att utveckla och fördjupa samarbetet med [...] Tyskland’, Government of Sweden, Sweden’s Defence Policy 2016 to 2020, 2015, [http://www.government.se/49c007/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/sweden\\_defence\\_policy\\_2016\\_to\\_2020,26](http://www.government.se/49c007/globalassets/government/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/sweden_defence_policy_2016_to_2020,26)

<sup>79</sup> Government of Sweden, Försvarsmaktens långsiktiga materielbehov. SOU 2018:7 [The armed forces’ long-term defence equipment needs], 2018, [figures from 2016], <https://data.riksdagen.se/fil/09087ABC-9967-4381-B813-68393FA1D5DF,72>

<sup>80</sup> Government of Sweden, Regeringens skrivelse – Strategisk exportkontroll 2017 – krigsmateriel och produkter med dubbla användningsområden [Written communication from the Government – Strategic Export Control 2017 – Military equipment and dual-use items], 2017, <https://data.riksdagen.se/fil/08936D2E-E4DA-4F9A-96FB-BD8B2F32C7D8>

<sup>81</sup> The Northern Group was initiated by the UK in 2010. It is composed of the Nordic and Baltic States, Poland, Germany and the Netherlands. For details, see Swedish government, USA’s försvarsminister James Mattis gästade möte med Norra Gruppen [US Secretary of Defence James Mattis attends meeting of the Northern Group], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2017/11/usas-forsvarsminister-james-mattis-gastade-mote-med-norra-gruppen/>

formed part of broader efforts by the Swedish government to deepen the country's defence relationship with the states in its immediate neighbourhood.<sup>82</sup> In January 2017, at Sweden's annual National Defence Conference in Sälen, Hultqvist highlighted Germany's role as a *stabilising factor* in the BSR.<sup>83</sup> Notably, the German commitment to protecting the three Baltic allies is applauded in Sweden.<sup>84</sup> Stockholm especially appreciates that the German government sees '*the security of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania [as] ultimately synonymous to the security of the Federal Republic of Germany and Europe*'.<sup>85</sup> Through the implementation of NATO's Framework Nation concept, itself a German initiative,<sup>86</sup> and the creation of multinational battle groups in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Germany quickly acquired an enhanced role and greater visibility as a hard security provider in the BSR. Due to Germany's traditionally very close relationship with Russia, it is regarded as extremely positive in Sweden that it was only Germany that took the lead in the enhanced forward presence in Lithuania with the NATO battle

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<sup>82</sup> Original quote: '[S]amarbetet på försvarsområdet med Tyskland [...] är en viktig del i regeringens politik att fördjupa samarbetet med länder i Sveriges närområde. Tyskland är givetvis en betydande partner både genom sin centrala roll i det europeiska samarbetet och sin Östersjökust', in Government of Sweden, Tyskt-svenskt försvarsministermöte i Berlin [Meeting of the German and Swedish Defence Ministers in Berlin], 08/11/ 2016, <http://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2016/11/tyskt-svenskt-forsvarsministermote-i-berlin/>

<sup>83</sup> The Folk och Försvar (Society and Defence) Rikskonferens is the main high-level national security conference in Sweden at which the security and defence agenda for the year is presented and defined by government representatives, national decision-makers and invited experts. Government of Sweden, 'Tal av Peter Hultqvist på Folk och Försvars Rikskonferens 2017 [Speech by Peter Hultqvist at Folk och Försvar (Society and Defence) Annual National Conference 2017]', 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2017/01/tal-av-peter-hultqvist-pa-folk-och-forsvars-rikskonferens-2017/>

<sup>84</sup> Government of Sweden, Regeringens proposition 2014/2015:109. Försvarspolitisk inriktning – Sveriges försvar 2016-2020 [Government bill 2014/2015:109. Sweden's Defence Policy 2016-2020], 2015, [https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/266e64ec3a254a6087ebe9e413806819/proposition-201415109-forsvarspolitisk-inriktning--sveriges-forsvar-2016-2020\\_26\\_Krister\\_Bringeus\\_‘Säkerhet\\_i\\_ny\\_tid\\_\[Security\\_in\\_a\\_new\\_age\]\\_a\\_basis\\_for\\_reflection\\_for\\_the\\_Government\\_of\\_Sweden,SOU\\_2016:57](https://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/266e64ec3a254a6087ebe9e413806819/proposition-201415109-forsvarspolitisk-inriktning--sveriges-forsvar-2016-2020_26_Krister_Bringeus_‘Säkerhet_i_ny_tid_[Security_in_a_new_age]_a_basis_for_reflection_for_the_Government_of_Sweden,SOU_2016:57)

<sup>85</sup> German Foreign Ministry, Speech by Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel at the opening of the 8th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, 8th EUSBSR Forum, Berlin, 13/06/2017, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/170613-bm-jahresforum-ostseestrategie/290650>

<sup>86</sup> Rainer L. Glatz and Martin Zapfe, 'Ambitious Framework Nation: Germany in NATO', 2017, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2017C35\\_glt\\_zapfe.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2017C35_glt_zapfe.pdf)

group based in Rukla, where around 450–500 German soldiers have been deployed since early 2017.<sup>87</sup>

The Swedish ambition to deepen its defence cooperation with Germany culminated in June 2017, in the signing of a bilateral letter of intent which covers the land, marine and air forces and includes armament, as well as joint naval exercises and mine countermeasures in the BSR.<sup>88</sup> The stated aim is also to deepen the Swedish-German dialogue on defence, specifically concerning the Baltic Sea.<sup>89</sup> But, despite the rapid expansion of the bilateral defence agenda, the range of areas in which Germany has actually come to play a specific role as a hard security provider for Sweden are rather limited.<sup>90</sup> Contrary to the US army, navy, marine corps, air force and special forces as well as French, Finnish, Norwegian, Danish, Lithuanian and Estonian troops, the German armed forces did *not* take part in Aurora 2017, the largest Swedish military exercise held in more than 20 years in the BSR.<sup>91</sup>

No further steps were mentioned or evident, either by the German or the Swedish side towards closer defence cooperation in the 12-month period following the signature of the letter of intent. In November 2017, Sweden co-hosted the Berlin Security Conference, a major annual security and defence conference with a large presence of industrial

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<sup>87</sup> For details, see: Lithuanian Armed Forces, NATO Enhanced Forward Presence, [https://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/e\\_f\\_p.html](https://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/e_f_p.html); Government of Sweden, Anförande vid invigningen av Berlin Security Conference 2017 [Speech at Opening of Berlin Security Conference 2017], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2017/11/anforande-vid-invigningen-av-berlin-security-conference-2017/>

<sup>88</sup> Government of Sweden, Sverige och Tyskland undertecknar gemensam avsiktsförklaring på försvarsområdet [Sweden and Germany sign joint letter of intent in the area of defence], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2017/06/sverige-och-tyskland-undertecknar-gemensam-avsiktsforklaring-pa-forsvarsområdet/>

<sup>89</sup> Government of Sweden, Anförande vid invigningen av Berlin Security Conference 2017 [Speech at Opening of Berlin Security Conference 2017] 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2017/11/anforande-vid-invigningen-av-berlin-security-conference-2017/>. Note that a similar letter of intent was signed at the same time by Finland and Germany.

<sup>90</sup> Eva Hagström Frisell and Anna Sundberg, 'Germany, a new ally for Sweden in Europe [Tyskland en ny bundsförvant för Sverige i Europa]', Särtryck ur Strategisk Utblick 7, Stockholm: FOI, November 2017, <https://www.foi.se/report-search/pdf?fileName=D%3A%5CReportSearch%5CFiles%5C85ff4ecc-2cc8-4dea-960a-6a667ee6ebe6.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> Krisinformation [The national website for emergency information], Militärövningen Aurora 17 [The military exercise Aurora 17], 2017, <https://www.krisinformation.se/handelser-och-storningar/2017/aurora-17>

and military representatives.<sup>92</sup> On this occasion, Defence Minister Hultqvist reiterated that Germany is an important actor in the BSR and a partner that Sweden shares many central interests with.<sup>93</sup> However, any specific steps remained invisible to the public eye. Defence matters were apparently not a prominent issue during the German Chancellor's high-level meeting with the Swedish prime minister in Berlin, in March 2018.<sup>94</sup> However, in June 2018, the Swedish government announced its intention to join the German Framework Nation Concept (FNC). Its public statement emphasised that a key motivation for joining was to '*take advantage of the opportunity to deepen Sweden's bilateral defence cooperation with Germany*' and of developing Sweden's multilateral cooperation with other countries in the FNC framework.<sup>95</sup> The Swedish government neither specified which of the projects under the FNC it would want to join, nor did it clarify how Sweden's participation would improve its security or stability in the BSR.<sup>96</sup>

Sweden's principled choice of formal military non-alignment is certainly a persistent hindrance to deeper bilateral cooperation with NATO member Germany.<sup>97</sup> Judging by the steady flow of reports on an ever-growing range of serious practical problems that the German armed forces have to tackle, serious doubts must be cast, not only on the ability of the *Bundeswehr* in fulfilling its existing international commitments, but also on the extent to

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<sup>92</sup> Government of Sweden, Försvarsminister Peter Hultqvist inledningstalade på Berlin Security Conference [Speech by Peter Hultqvist at Folk och Försvar (Society and Defence) Annual National Conference 2017], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2017/11/forsvarsminister-peter-hultqvist-inledningstalade-pa-berlin-security-conference/>

<sup>93</sup> Government of Sweden, Anförande vid invigningen av Berlin Security Conference 2017 [Speech at Opening of Berlin Security Conference 2017], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2017/11/anforande-vid-invigningen-av-berlin-security-conference-2017/>

<sup>94</sup> Government of Sweden, Sveriges säkerhet i en ny värld [Sweden's security in a new world], Speech of Stefan Löfven at Society and Defence Annual Conference 2018, 2018, <https://www.regeringen.se/tal/2018/01/sveriges-sakerhet-i-en-ny-varld/>

<sup>95</sup> Government of Sweden, 'Sverige ansluter sig till försvarssamarbetet Framework Nation Concept (FNC) [Sweden joins the defence cooperation Framework Nation Concept]', 28/06/2018, <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2018/06/sverige-ansluter-sig-till-forsvarssamarbetet-framework-nations-concept-fnc/>

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Eva Hagström Frisell and Anna Sundberg 'Germany, a new ally for Sweden in Europe [Tyskland en ny bundsförvant för Sverige i Europa]', Särtryck ur Strategisk Utblick 7, Stockholm: FOI, 2017, <https://www.foi.se/report-search/pdf?fileName=D%3A%5CReportSearch%5CFiles%5C85ff4ecc-2cc8-4dea-960a-6a667ee6be6.pdf>

which Germany can actually strengthen Swedish and Baltic Sea security in the years to come. This concerns supply shortages of basic equipment for the troops, multiple reported equipment failures, missing spare parts and the resulting lack of availability of, for example, the small number of submarines that the Bundeswehr currently possesses. In addition to the failures and unavailability of core military assets, a further, even more fundamental, obstacle stems from the comparatively low priority attributed to the BSR by the German government that stands in complete contrast to the high salience of the region for Sweden's national defence. The lack of movement in the Swedish-German defence cooperation in 2018 may also have to do with the different priorities, which become clear in the context of the expansion plans for German gas imports from Russia, notably the Nord Stream 2 project. In any case, it raises the question of how far the German-Swedish bilateral defence dialogue and practical defence cooperation in the BSR can be expected to progress in the coming years.

## **Swedish security concerns regarding German activities in the Baltic Sea**

Since 2014, two vexing issues have surfaced in the Swedish public debate related to Germany's role in the Baltic Sea. The first, well-known, Swedish concern concerns the planned Russian-German double gas pipeline project, known as Nord Stream 2. Its predecessor, Nord Stream, whose construction was completed in 2011, was already highly controversial in Sweden.<sup>98</sup> The successor project has revealed even more forcefully the divergence of Germany's interests and priorities in the BSR compared to those of Sweden. It has in particular highlighted the gap between Sweden's threat assessments and the German self-perception as a security provider in the region. The German disregard for Swedish national security concerns regarding Russian activities in the area was revealed in January 2017, when Angela Merkel, at the press conference with Prime Minister Löfven

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<sup>98</sup> Robert L. Larsson 'Nord Stream, Sweden and Baltic Sea security', Swedish Defence Research Agency, 2008, FOI-R-2251-SE, [http://www.iaea.org/inis/collection/NCLCollectionStore/\\_Public/39/015/39015071.pdf](http://www.iaea.org/inis/collection/NCLCollectionStore/_Public/39/015/39015071.pdf)

in Stockholm, displayed her unwillingness to take into consideration the Swedish perspective on the anticipated consequences of Gazprom's Baltic Sea pipeline. At the press conference, Ingrid Thörnqvist of the Swedish public television (SVT) posed a question about Nord Stream 2 to which the Chancellor replied '*Nord Stream 2 is a purely commercial issue*' whereas Prime Minister Löfven reminded the Swedish and international media of the serious negotiations with the affected local authorities that his defence and foreign ministers had held the previous evening. The concerns stemmed from the government's and Swedish security services' assessment of the severity of military-security consequences that the use of Swedish harbours and the construction work in the Baltic Sea would have for Sweden.<sup>99</sup>

The Nord Stream 2 project had throughout 2016 been subject to a heated domestic debate in Sweden between the government, opposition parties and the local authorities, with which the Russian contracted agents were seeking to conclude storage and logistics agreements, and received considerable coverage in the Swedish media.<sup>100</sup> The Swedish Foreign Minister Wallström and Defence Minister Hultqvist, together with the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Bydén, supported by the intelligence services – the domestic *Säkerhetspolisen* (*Säpo*, Swedish security service), the Swedish armed forces' *Militära underrättelse- och säkerhetstjänsten* (*Must*, Military Intelligence and Security Service) and the Swedish signals' intelligence authority *Försvarets radioanstalt* (*FRA*, national defence radio establishment) had warned about the negative consequences of Nord Stream 2 for Sweden's security in the

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<sup>99</sup> Die Bundeskanzlerin, 'Mitschrift Pressekonferenz. Im Wortlaut [verbatim] Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem schwedischen Ministerpräsidenten Stefan Löfven in Stockholm [Transcript press conference. In the verbal [verbatim] press conference of Chancellor Merkel and the Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven in Stockholm]', 31/01/2017, <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2017/01/2017-01-31-pk-merkel-loefven.html>. For the statements by the Chancellor and Prime Minister, see: 'Merkel och Löfven i gemensam presskonferens [Merkel and Löfven in a joint press conference]', 31/01/2017, Nyheterna TV4, <https://www.tv4.se/nyheterna/klipp/merkel-och-l%C3%B6fven-i-gemensam-presskonferens-3767612>

<sup>100</sup> Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, 'On opposite shores, not just geographically: German and Swedish Perspectives on Nord Stream and Energy Insecurity with Russia in the Baltic Sea region', in: *The Baltic Sea Region, Hard and Soft Security Reconsidered*, ed. by M.Andzans and I.Bruges, <http://liia.lv/en/publications/the-baltic-sea-region-hard-and-soft-security-reconsidered-558>

short, medium and long-term perspective.<sup>101</sup> At stake in 2016-2017 was that the Nord Stream 2 company, wholly owned by Russian energy giant Gazprom, in turn majority controlled by the Russian state, had intended to use two Swedish harbours of strategic military importance, Slite harbour on the east coast of Gotland and Karlshamn harbour in the bay of Karlskrona.<sup>102</sup> Domestically, the Swedish government has, since then, been criticised for failing to make clear to the German government the Swedish security concerns regarding the planned pipeline construction.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, the Swedish NSS of January 2017 already noted that *'[o]ther countries' energy supply situation also influences Sweden's security'*.<sup>104</sup>

In light of the German government's insistence that the project is 'purely commercial' and the absence of an acknowledgement of the Swedish (and other Baltic Sea states') security concerns, the negative Swedish opinions towards Nord Stream 2 have been decoupled from the generally positive opinion held in Sweden about Germany and its role in Baltic Sea security. No public mention of Nord Stream 2 was made by the Swedish prime minister or the German Chancellor in conjunction

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<sup>101</sup> See e.g. statements by the Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces, Micael Bydén, 'ÖB: Låt inte Ryssland hyra svensk hamn [Supreme Commander: Don't allow Russia to rent Swedish harbour facilities]', 2016, 17/10/2016, updated 13/12/2016, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/utrikes/ob-mot-att-slappa-svensk-hamn-till-ryska-intressen>; Statements by the Swedish Foreign and Defence Ministers, 'Regeringen: gasledningen skadar Sveriges försvar [Government: The gas pipeline damages Sweden's defense]', 14/12/2016, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/live-regeringen-om-ryska-gasledningen>; further statements at final consultation meeting of the ministers with local representatives of Karlshamn and Gotland, 'Vi har inte ändrat oss om Nord Stream 2 [We have not changed Nord Stream 2]', 30/01/2017, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/regeringen-backar-om-nordstream>

<sup>102</sup> Anke Schmidt-Felzmann, 'Russia's military aggression and the security threats posed by 'purely commercial' projects in the Baltic Sea region', in: Baltic Rim Economies Review, 1/2017, [https://www.utu.fi/en/units/tse/units/PEI/BRE/Documents/BRE\\_1\\_2017.pdf](https://www.utu.fi/en/units/tse/units/PEI/BRE/Documents/BRE_1_2017.pdf), 17

<sup>103</sup> Swedish Parliament, Interpellation 2016/17:320 Nord Stream 2 av Mikael Oscarsson (KD) till Utrikesminister Margot Wallström (S) [Interpellation 2016/17: 320. Nord Stream 2 by Mikael Oscarsson to Foreign Minister Margot Wallström], 28/02/2017, [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/interpellationsdebatt/nord-stream-2\\_H410320](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/webb-tv/video/interpellationsdebatt/nord-stream-2_H410320)

<sup>104</sup> Government of Sweden, Nationell säkerhetsstrategi [National Security Strategy], 2017, <http://www.regeringen.se/48e36d/contentassets/a02552ad9de94efcb84154b0f6ed76f9/nationell-sakerhetsstrategi.pdf>, 23

with Löfven's return visit to Berlin in March 2018.<sup>105</sup> However, when in June 2018 the Swedish government granted the construction permit for the pipeline project, Minister Damberg emphasised that Sweden remains critical towards the project and that the armed forces and other affected authorities have responded with preemptive '*measures designed to enhance the security of Sweden*' and added that '*the Armed Forces' presence on Gotland has been strengthened*'<sup>106</sup> suggesting that the original hard security concerns over the construction of the second set of Russian gas pipelines through the Baltic Sea have not been alleviated.

A lesser known issue concerning Germany and Baltic Sea security, that attracted considerable attention in the Swedish security expert community, is that of an alleged territorial violation of Swedish waters, off the coast of Stockholm, by 'a German submarine'. On 11<sup>th</sup> June 2016, the Swedish public radio (*Sveriges Radio*, SR) alleged, in a report on foreign submarine activities near Sweden's eastern coast, that an incursion had occurred on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2015 in conjunction with a Swedish naval exercise near Vindbåden.<sup>107</sup> This 'revelation' came after an earlier, confirmed incident of

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<sup>105</sup> Swedish government, Statsministern mötte förbundskansler Angela Merkel [The Prime Minister met Chancellor Angela Merkel], 16/03/2018, <https://www.regeringen.se/artiklar/2018/03/statsministern-motte-forbundskansler-angela-merkel/>; Federal Government, 'Mitschrift Pressekonferenz. Im Wortlaut [verbatim] Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem schwedischen Ministerpräsidenten Löfven im Bundeskanzleramt [Transcript of a press conference. In the verbal [verbatim] press conference of Chancellor Merkel and the Swedish Prime Minister Löfven in the Federal Chancellery]', (16/03/2018), <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2018/03/2018-03-16-pk-merkel-loefven.html>

<sup>106</sup> Minister Damberg said in Swedish 'Sverige ser kritiskt mot projektet Nord Stream 2' and 'Vad gäller de försvarsintressen som aktualiserats av begäran om att få använda svenska hamnar för lagring av rör under byggnadsfasen har säkerhetshöjande åtgärder vidtagits bland annat genom att Försvarsmakten och andra berörda myndigheter samverkar i området kring Karlshamn. Regeringen tillsatte i mars 2017 en utredning med uppdrag att se över regelverket som syftar till att skydda Sveriges totalförsvarsverksamhet. Försvarsmaktens närvaro på Gotland har också stärkts, bland annat genom inrättandet av ett nytt regemente'. See: Swedish Government, 'Beslut om ansökan från Nord Stream 2 AG [Decision on the application from Nord Stream 2 AG]', 07/06/2018, <https://www.regeringen.se/pressmeddelanden/2018/06/beslut-om-ansokan-fran-nord-stream-2-ag/>

<sup>107</sup> The Swedish Radio stated in Swedish: 'Slutsatsen av analysen blev att det sannolikt rörde sig om en tysk ubåt och sannolikt inte en rysk...att det inte med säkerhet gick att säga att det var en tysk ubåt som siktats. Men 'slutsatsen var alltså att det sannolikt var en tysk ubåt och inte en rysk som observerades vid Vindbåden den 14 april 2015, see Mats Eriksson & Fredrik Furtenbach 'Sannolik tysk ubåt i svenska vatten [Probable German submarine in Swedish waters]', 08/07/2016, <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6469624>

a submarine intrusion in Swedish waters in October 2014, that resulted in a submarine hunt by the Swedish armed forces. The final conclusion on the basis of the vast range of evidence that had been collected and analysed, was that a foreign submarine had indeed violated Swedish waters.<sup>108</sup> In June-July 2016, the alleged 'German intrusion' became subject to a drawn-out debate and also caused some irritation with Germany.<sup>109</sup> SR journalists claimed that it had been confirmed that the armed forces had identified the submarine as German and added later that the attribution to '*a German, not a Russian submarine*' (*en tysk, inte rysk ubåt*) was based on an assessment conducted by the armed forces themselves.<sup>110</sup> This information, they said, came from an 'undisclosed source' which the Swedish public broadcaster regarded as reliable.<sup>111</sup> The Swedish armed forces and the government, including the Defence Ministry declined to make any statement on the alleged incident.<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, the insinuation that '*a German, not a Russian*' submarine had violated Sweden's territorial waters in April 2015, was quickly dismissed by the German Embassy's spokesperson in Stockholm. After consultation with the German navy, Valdemar Wiggers wrote

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<sup>108</sup> Forsvarsmakten [Swedish Armed Forces], Utom allt rimligt tvivel [Beyond any reasonable doubt], 23/09/2015, <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/aktuellt/2015/09/utom-allt-rimligt-tvivel/>.

<sup>109</sup> See: comments (in Swedish), by e.g. Jägarchefen, 'Tysk ubåt?', 12/06/2016, <http://jagarchefen.blogspot.com/2016/06/tysk-ubat.html>; Lars Wideräng, 'Cornubot' (08/07/2016), Sveriges radio backar om tysk ubåt – tidigare artikel var sannolikt fel, <https://cornucopia.cornubot.se/2016/07/sveriges-radio-ekot-backar-om-tysk-ubat.html>; Johan Kylander, 'Okänd men sannolikt tysk ubåt del 2', (19/07/2016), <https://goupillon.wordpress.com/2016/07/10/okand-men-sannolikt-tysk-ubat-del-ii/>

<sup>110</sup> 'Sveriges Radio', 'Tystlåtet om uppgifterna att Natoubåt kränkt svenska vatten', (08/07/2016), at <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6470062>

<sup>111</sup> The Swedish radio's head of news and current affairs confirmed in October 2016 that the information SR had received about the 'German, not Russian submarine intrusion' was deemed 'reliable' [Vi har sänt info som vi har fått från källor som vi bedömer som trovärdiga], tweet by Olle Zachrisson on 10/10/2016, 23:15, see <https://twitter.com/OlleZ/status/785725567098294273>; see also Mats Eriksson & Fredrik Furtenbach 'Sannolikt tysk ubåt i svenska vatten [Probable German submarine in Swedish waters]', 08/07/2016, <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6469624>

<sup>112</sup> Sveriges Radio, 'Tystlåtet om uppgifterna att Natoubåt kränkt svenska vatten [Silent regarding the allegations about NATO submarine having violated Swedish waters]', 08/07/2016, <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6470062>

that this allegation was *'bereft of any truth'*.<sup>113</sup> Three weeks after the first allegations against Germany were published, the Swedish radio's correspondent in Berlin asked the German Foreign Ministry and Defence Ministry to comment on the incident.<sup>114</sup> Both were bemused and bewildered about the alleged German submarine intrusion.<sup>115</sup> The Foreign Ministry's spokesperson found the notion of a *German submarine intrusion in Swedish waters* so unbelievable that he asked *'I don't know, did they hunt for eel? What would a German submarine be doing there? Mr Flosdorff?'*<sup>116</sup> to which the Defence Ministry's spokesperson, in turn, responded that he was unsure what this was all about since Swedish media had failed to contact the Defence Ministry to verify these claims.<sup>117</sup> Later that day, Flosdorff rejected the allegation and confirmed that there was *'definitely no German submarine in Swedish waters'* on that specific date in April 2015.<sup>118</sup> This was confirmed by the public broadcaster's head of news and foreign affairs who continued to

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<sup>113</sup> Original quote 'Efter att ha kontrollerat uppgiften med tyska marinen kan vi konstatera att uppgiften helt saknar sanningshalt [After checking the task with the German Navy, we can say that the task is completely lacking in truth]', in tweet @vallewigers, 13/06/2016, 7:25, in response to a tweet by former Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, <https://twitter.com/vallewigers/status/742362320970514433>

<sup>114</sup> 'Medienberichte über ein angeblich deutsches U-Boot in schwedischen Hoheitsgewässern [Media reports about an alleged German submarine in Swedish waters]'.

<sup>115</sup> Tilo Jung, 'Bundesregierung lacht: Deutsches U-Boot vor Schweden? [Federal government laughs: German Submarine near Sweden]', 09/07/2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgMFbsCQEUg>

<sup>116</sup> This was also reported on Twitter by Daniel Alling himself, 08/07/2016, at <https://twitter.com/DanielAlling/status/751463181294374912>

<sup>117</sup> Original quote by Jens Flosdorff, Spokesperson MoD: '[...] Die schwedischen Medien haben auf jeden Fall nicht im Verteidigungsministerium nachgefragt, um das zu verifizieren. Insofern weiß ich nicht, woher die Information stammt [In any case, the Swedish media did not ask the Ministry of Defense to verify it. So I do not know where the information came from]', in Auswärtiges Amt, 'Erklärungen des Sprechers/der Sprecherin des Auswärtigen Amts in der Bundespressekonferenz vom 08.07.2016 [Statements by the spokesperson of the Federal Foreign Office in the Federal Press Conference on 08.07.2016]'

<sup>118</sup> Sveriges Radio 'Tystlätet om uppgifterna att Natoubåt kränkt svenska vatten [Silent regarding the allegations about NATO submarine having violated Swedish waters]', 08/07/2016, <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6470062> ; 'Ja hans kollega på försvarsministeriet kollade. Absolut ingen tysk ubåt från tyska marinen sades det [Yes, his colleague at the MoD double-checked, absolutely no submarine from the German Navy he said]', Daniel Alling, tweet sent on 08/07/2016, 10:38, <https://twitter.com/DanielAlling/status/751470539311607808>

insist, however, that the anonymous source claiming the submarine was German was (more) reliable.<sup>119</sup>

The security policy community in Sweden heavily criticised the Swedish radio station for failing to provide any further explanations on how the conclusions about the intrusion by 'a German, not Russian submarine' had been reached.<sup>120</sup> On the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter, allegations of a #*tyskubåt* (German submarine) being responsible for just about anything became a running joke. With this criticism and frequently using the hashtag #*tyskubåt*, many frustrated observers continued to keep the alleged 'German submarine' incident in the public domain. However, despite the broadcaster's focus on 'Germany, not Russia' violating Swedish territory, the public perception of Germany in Sweden was *not* affected by these allegations. Germany itself continues to be regarded as an important and reliable defence cooperation partner in the BSR. The Swedish radio's allegations instead created doubts about the Swedish armed forces and even the government's trustworthiness, specifically regarding the much debated question of whether or not Russian submarines really had been responsible for earlier intrusions into Swedish waters along its Baltic Sea coast.

## Concluding remarks. Germany's future as a security provider in the Baltic Sea

*'German-Swedish defence cooperation promotes stability in the Baltic Sea region [...] It is of great importance for Sweden and for the region that Germany takes an active role in promoting peace, security and stability in our region'*<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Olle Zachrisson wrote in his tweet (08/07/2016), at 7:56, 'Så här skriver tyska försvarsminis talesman t @sr\_ekot: I April 2015 var det definitivt ingen ubåt från tyska marinen på svenskt vatten' [This is how German Defense Minister Speaker T @sr\_ekot writes: In April 2015 there was definitely no submarine from the German Navy on Swedish waters], <https://twitter.com/OlleZ/status/751429684638969858>

<sup>120</sup> Niklas Wiklund, 'Missledande uppgifter sår tvivel om försvarets trovärdighet [Misleading information raises doubts about the credibility of the defense]', 17/06/2016, <http://www.blt.se/ledare/missledande-uppgifter-sar-tvivel-om-forsvarets-trovardighet/>

<sup>121</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, Anförande vid invigningen av Berlin Security Conference 2017 [Speech at Opening of Berlin Security Conference 2017], <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2017/11/anforande-vid-invigningen-av-berlin-security-conference-2017/>

Sweden perceives both the need for Germany to play a more prominent role in the BSR and sees the potential for Berlin to do so, as Defence Minister Hultqvist's statement (above) makes clear. What defines these expectations *vis-à-vis* Germany, pre- and post-Brexit, is the implicit understanding that Berlin holds an asymmetric position of power in Europe, not just as the economic powerhouse, but also (together with France) as the decisive political actor holding the European Union together. By virtue of this elevated status, enhanced resources and influence, a more intense and more proactive German engagement in soft and hard security cooperation in the BSR would procure many benefits to Sweden and the other coastal states. In reality, as shown, the gap remains relatively large between the role that Germany could potentially play and the actual German-Swedish security and defence partnership in soft and hard security matters. This is certainly connected with Germany's central location in Europe from which the BSR is viewed as a periphery of limited importance, while Sweden sees itself directly affected by the deteriorating security environment that has resulted from Russia's military activities and '*ever more aggressive behaviour*'.<sup>122</sup>

Against this background, Sweden's closer cooperation with NATO and the envisaged Swedish integration in the FNC could provide the basis for a stronger German role and engagement in the BSR. The development of a formal bilateral defence agreement with Germany from the starting point of the Swedish-German letter of intent of 2017 could, in addition, provide the basis for an enhanced formal role of Germany as a hard security provider – or at least facilitator – in the BSR. Concurrently with Brexit sharply reducing the British role in the EU, including with regard to the Baltic Sea, Germany has the opportunity, and as some would argue even the obligation, to pull its weight and make a stronger contribution to securing the BSR. Similarly, a greater engagement by the decision-makers from the federal level on soft security challenges, both in the CBSS and in the EUSBSR framework, could boost Sweden's ability, and that of the other smaller states, to address the contemporary security challenges in the BSR more effectively. However, as we have noted, the absence of a shared understanding between

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<sup>122</sup> Government Offices of Sweden, Tal vid seminarium hos Folk och Försvar [Speech at a 'Society and Defence' seminar], Foreign Minister Margot Wallström, 06/11/2017, <https://www.regeringen.se/tal/2017/11/tal-vid-seminarium-hos-folk-och-forsvar/>

Stockholm and Berlin of the threats posed by Russia in the region place considerable constraints on this ambition. For Sweden, the BSR is clearly far from a low tension environment. From the Swedish perspective, Russia poses a threat to Swedish territory, and even Nord Stream 2 increases the security risks for Sweden and the whole region.

German representatives should take Swedish security concerns *vis-à-vis* Russia more seriously. Stockholm would certainly appreciate a greater German engagement in all security matters that affect the BSR, but only as long as core Swedish security interests are not compromised to the benefit of German industry. At present, and in the absence of a clearly defined German national strategy for the BSR, Berlin seems to be pulled along in Stockholm's efforts to bolster its own security. What is more, the evident problems that the Bundeswehr is experiencing and the challenges posed by Russia, require a realistic assessment of what Germany is able to contribute to defence cooperation in the BSR. It requires, at the same time, that Germany gets down to work to develop its own vision for Baltic Sea security and for the role that both Berlin and the Bundeswehr will be capable of shouldering in the region.

# **INDIFFERENCE IS NOT AN OPTION. GERMANY'S GROWING ROLE IN THE SECURITY OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION**

Andris Sprūds, Elizabete Vizgunova

This book has explained how the actors in the Baltic Sea region perceive Germany's role in their 'hard', 'soft' and regional security. The general conclusion of this book is that Germany's perception in the security of the Baltic Sea region states is anticipated and positive. Germany is seen as a critical Baltic power, with a like-minded approach to international affairs and domestic politics. However, whether Germany will become a credible security actor in the region will depend on several domestic political and security factors in Berlin. In this context, the presence of the US and Russia in the Baltic Sea region is very important, as it may turn into a field for great power competition and thus either exclude smaller players or make their participation dependent on choosing sides.

The concluding chapter discusses the findings from the different national perspectives. However, it goes further than simply explaining the major points from the previous chapters of this volume. Germany is not the sole subject of the concluding part, as it offers a synthesis of the main perceptions and perception-drivers of Germany in the security of the states of the Baltic Sea region. This approach identifies the trends in the regional environment and allows to provide medium and long-term agenda for German policymakers. The recommendations, presented at the end of this chapter, can serve as a conceptual toolbox to enhance the security relationship in the Baltic Sea region, contributing to a lasting and a consistent Baltic Sea region policy.

## Where do perceptions come from?

The security situation in the Baltic Sea region has become precarious since 2014. Whereas some players hope and expect cooperation to prevail over conflict, others ready themselves for prolonged tension. Several security highlights have pushed the international community to reconsider the place of the region in their security agendas. As a result, there was no 'going back to business as usual' for the Western alliance and Russia. The illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea attracted strategic attention to the Baltic Sea region and prioritised its place in the security policy agenda of regional players. Russia's 'Cold War tone' included holding military exercises on the borders of NATO and demonstrating power.<sup>1</sup> Russia has also gained increasing spotlight as it has attempted to meddle in EU political life, which has left the Western partners struck not only by Russia's outreach but the tangible results it has managed to produce.<sup>2</sup>

The debate in the popular media on the region has added to the narrative of tension. '*Who will defend the Baltics?*'<sup>3</sup>, '*Hybrid Threats and the Baltic Sea Region*'<sup>4</sup>, '*NATO focuses on speed in the Baltics amid worries over Russia*'<sup>5</sup> are the primary contexts the region appears in the international media. The media produces a narrative where Russia attempts to intimidate its neighbours with behaviour, nuclear posture and deployments near to NATO's borders,

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<sup>1</sup> NATO, Zapad 2017 and Euro-Atlantic Security, 14/12/2017, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2017/also-in-2017/zapad-2017-and-euro-atlantic-security-military-exercise-strategic-russia/EN/index.html>; CNBC, Putin reveals new Russian missile that can 'reach any point in the world', 01/03/2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/01/putin-new-russia-missile-nuclear.html>

<sup>2</sup> Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Michel Chertoff, 'West Still Isn't Prepared to Stop Russian Meddling in Elections', 06/05/2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/russian-election-meddling-west-not-prepared-to-stop-them/>

<sup>3</sup> Anna Wieslander. Text builds on a longer report recently published: NATO, the U.S. and Baltic Sea Security, UI Paper, No. 3, 2016 <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/?view=article&id=29088:who-will-defend-the-baltics-nato-the-us-and-baltic-sea-security>

<sup>4</sup> Aapo Cederberg, Pasi Eronen and Juha Mustonen, Hybrid Threats in the Baltic Sea Region: 2017, <https://www.gcsp.ch/News-Knowledge/Publications/Hybrid-Threats-and-the-Baltic-Sea-Region-Hybrid-CoE-s-Working-Paper>

<sup>5</sup> Carlo Angerer, 'NATO focuses on speed in the Baltics amid worries over Russia', 23/06/2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/nato-focuses-speed-baltics-amid-worries-over-russia-n885261>

showing that it is ready to match its harsh rhetoric with military force.

Moreover, 'hard' security issues are not the only ones causing concern in the East of Berlin. The Nord Stream 2 project, connecting Russia to Germany, has been denoted '[...] *the world's most controversial energy project*',<sup>6</sup> '*The Russia-to-Germany gas pipeline that fueled Trump's anger at NATO meeting*'<sup>7</sup> and '*Ukraine's worst nightmare*'.<sup>8</sup> This only adds to Russia's ability to skillfully use various asymmetric interference and influence techniques which are now becoming a contributing factor to the divergence in the Trans-Atlantic partnership.

The constellation of potential risks and trends in the region is, however, much broader than portrayed by media headlines:

- *Russia's foreign and security policy.* Ukraine was a proof that President Vladimir Putin is ready to apply his 'compatriot policy' outside the territory of Russia. Due to the large Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia, concerns persist that this policy might be applied to manipulate the Baltic Sea region.<sup>9</sup>
- *Strong partnerships and alliances.* The protection of the Baltic Sea region is now considered impossible without a high degree of coordination between regional powers and umbrella organisations, namely NATO. Whereas the Baltic Sea states have increased their defence capabilities substantially, the recent divergence of Trans-Atlantic relations has created a series of questions on the future of the present security guarantees.
- *Hybrid warfare/asymmetric methods of destabilisation.* Whereas Russia does not hold the much potential to exercise 'soft' power in the Baltic Sea region, it's capability to use 'full spectrum warfare' to install doubts

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<sup>6</sup> The Economist, 'Why Nord Stream 2 is the world's most controversial energy project', 07/08/2018, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2018/08/07/why-nord-stream-2-is-the-worlds-most-controversial-energy-project>

<sup>7</sup> Tom DiChristopher, 'Behind Nord Stream 2: The Russia-to-Germany gas pipeline that fueled Trump's anger at NATO meeting', 11/08/2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/11/behind-nord-stream-2-the-russia-to-germany-gas-pipeline-that-fueled-t.html>

<sup>8</sup> Ariel Cohen, 'Russia's Nord Stream II Pipeline Is Ukraine's Worst Nightmare', 18/06/2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/arielcohen/2018/06/18/russias-nord-stream-ii-pipeline-is-ukraines-worst-nightmare/#1ff89fc33524>

<sup>9</sup> UK Ministry of Defense, Future Security Challenges in the Baltic Sea Region, 2015, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/494595/20151201-Baltic\\_sea\\_regional\\_security.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/494595/20151201-Baltic_sea_regional_security.pdf)

in society and create a disaccord between social and political groups to undermine current governments and governing models is creating increasing concern.

- *Energy security.* Some members of the Baltic Sea region are still fully dependent on Russia for energy supply. The Nord Stream 2 project has created considerable disagreement in the regional relationship and made EU member states question the intentions of Germany in the context of the Single Energy Market of the EU, as well as its solidarity with countries feeling impacted by Russia's foreign policy.
- *Disaster preparedness and relief.* The potential of human-made and natural disasters in the region ranges from hybrid and conventional attacks to climate catastrophes. The destruction of infrastructure and a high human cost, caused by either of these threats, could significantly impact some parts of the region.<sup>10</sup> The required reaction would entail robust civil-military cooperation and the ability to operate cohesively on a cross-regional basis.
- *Environmental concerns.* The Baltic Sea basin is well known both for being highly polluted, as well as a busy traffic route. The spectrum of issues that can potentially affect the BSR ranges from climate change to nuclear matters.
- *The Arctic and the sub-Arctic dimension.* Nordic countries and Russia provide the Baltic Sea region with a close link to the Arctic. As Russia expands its presence in the North, other regions are expected to follow suit. The Baltic and the Black Sea fleets are expected to enhance their capabilities.<sup>11</sup> Such developments are likely to leave an impact on maritime commerce and trade in the Baltic Sea region.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> UK Ministry of Defense, Future Security Challenges in the Baltic Sea Region, 2015, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/494595/20151201-Baltic\\_sea\\_regional\\_security.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/494595/20151201-Baltic_sea_regional_security.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> For more information on sub-Arctic perceptions, see: Perceptions and Strategies of Arcticness in sub-Arctic Europe, ed. by Andris Sprūds, Toms Rostoks, Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2014

Many of regional challenges and concerns are shared by the number of the Baltic Sea countries. Germany has established strong bilateral bonds with all states of the Baltic Sea region, therefore making these concerns a set of shared security interests as well. The sea that connects Germany with the rest of regional players has created a whole spectrum of shared environmental concerns, close people-to-people links, workforce exchange, transport and commerce links, among other things. The Baltic Sea region is also closely linked to various international developments. The economic hardships, the threat of terrorist attacks across Europe, the rise of right-wing populism and competing models of governance in other European countries, Brexit and the EU, caught up in perpetual disagreement and division are systemic factors create additional strain on the precarious security situation in the region.

The array of issues has mobilised allied powers to provide reassurance to the partners in the Baltic Sea region. The various interlinked initiatives of the allies, including the Warsaw Summit Pledge, the Operation Enhanced Forward Presence, the European Defense Initiative, the Framework Nations' Concept, the strengthened cooperation between NATO and Finland, and Sweden, NORDEFCO, the Baltic and Nordic countries, *inter alia*, were put in place to demonstrate that the West remains united. These initiatives also reassure the smaller Baltic partners that partners and friends will protect their rights in the international, rules-based order. For instance, the role of Canadian forces has substantially increased due to the annexation of Crimea. Canada's stationing in Latvia is also the biggest Canadian stationing abroad. Prime Ministers Justin Trudeau's visit to Riga in June 2018 also showed that Canada's commitment is extended until 2023,<sup>13</sup> indicating that the Baltics 'are a thing' after all.<sup>14</sup>

The active and visible role of Germany announced in the Munich Security Conference of 2014 is rapidly taking shape in the Baltic Sea region. Since then, Germany has, indeed, lived up to Defense Ministers' Ursula von

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<sup>13</sup> LETA, '1,400 foreign NATO soldiers serve in Latvia at the moment', 27/07/2018, <http://www.leta.lv/eng/home/important/133EEF7E-ABEA-DS3C-1E69-021402206E4A/?text>

<sup>14</sup> Per Olaf Salming, 'Canadian PM Trudeau: Baltic Nations are not a thing', 15/12/2015, <https://upnorth.eu/canadian-pm-trudeau-baltic-nations-are-not-a-thing/>

der Leyens' statement that '*indifference is not an option for Germany*'.<sup>15</sup> The bilateral cooperation and contribution to Baltic 'hard' and 'soft' security dimensions, described by the authors of this book, is remarkable and is likely to have an impact on the development of the European defence organisations and structures in the future. Yet, Germany's engagement is made ambiguous by two issues: the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and a lack of resources to make Germany a credible security actor in the eyes of the regional partners. Besides, the regional organisations and strategies of the Baltic Sea basin – including the B3+1, NB6, NB8, Council of the Baltic Sea States, EUSBSR – are equally important for crafting a safe and stable Baltic Sea region. The heads are now turned to Berlin, where the Baltic Sea regional agenda has not been prioritised. Germany's regional engagement has primarily been described as fragmented and selective, paying considerable attention to including Russia in the various regional formats.

## What is Germany for the Baltic Sea region?

The security developments in the region have strongly impacted the perceptions of Germany in the Baltic Sea region. As this section explains, Germany is viewed as an emerging, yet ambiguous security actor – one which has been showing growing willingness which cannot always be backed up by equal strength and clout.

Perceptions of Germany's role in the Baltic Sea region are ambiguous for the following reasons:

- Germany has been passive in its security and defence policy since the end of the Cold War. Thus far, it has lacked a strong appetite to engage in international military efforts.
- Germany's long-standing presence in Afghanistan has reshaped the specification of the *Bundeswehr* to the extent that it is unlikely to be able to engage in a different theatre without a prolonged preparation.

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<sup>15</sup> Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 'Speech by the Federal Minister of Defense, Dr Ursula von der Leyen, on the Occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Munich Security Conference Munich', 31/01/2014, [https://www.securityconference.de/fileadmin/MSC\\_/2014/Reden/2014-01-31-Speech-MinDef\\_von\\_der\\_Leyen-MuSeCo.pdf](https://www.securityconference.de/fileadmin/MSC_/2014/Reden/2014-01-31-Speech-MinDef_von_der_Leyen-MuSeCo.pdf)

- The overall military restraint has created an image of under-committed Germany. If Germany has acquired the status of an economic and political giant, its military capabilities are still limited.
- Before March 2014, Germany's approach to regional affairs was predominantly focused on sustaining dialogue and 'pulling Russia into Europe'. Only recently has Germany changed its approach to Russia. Now Berlin's position has been converging with the position of the other Baltic capitals.
- Lastly, Germany has also become the key player in attempts to provide a solution to the current migration crisis, where Germany works (not always successfully) with other Baltic Sea partners.

On the other hand, Germany is undeniably seen as a key regional player. Whereas a fully changed policy from Germany is not expected to occur overnight, the recent developments, described in the chapters of this volume, are certainly welcomed as a long-expected and positive development. The regional states view this change as a part of a larger strategic shift in Germany's foreign and security policy thinking, where:

- Germany is seen as a vital 'counterbalance' to Russia and is therefore perceived as a safeguard against Russia's interests in the territory of the Baltic Sea states.
- Germany is seen as a like-minded state to most partners in the region. Germany's role is seen as crucial for upholding the common European values, European political culture and other attributes of Europe's 'normative power'. Furthermore, it is also seen as a safeguard of such institutions, which are based on internationally agreed norms and standards.
- Germany's efforts related to PESCO and European defence are seen in a good, yet cautious light. European defence is viewed as complementary to NATO first and foremost. Whereas confidence that the EU and NATO security efforts can coexist is growing, there is a considerable emphasis on the significance of Transatlantic relations.
- Germany's economic clout in Europe, during the eurocrisis, has shaped its image as a highly important partner economically. Other developments, such as Donald Trump's ambiguous attitude *vis-à-vis* Europe and Brexit

are only contributing towards cementing this perception across the EU (and in Norway).

- Eventually, Germany has significantly increased its security presence in the Baltic Sea region. The ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ security initiatives of Germany in the three Baltic States and Poland, discussed in this volume show that Germany has shown willingness to engage in the region.

The reason why Germany is seen as an emerging, yet ambiguous security partner is also related to the fact that the actors in the Baltic Sea region are primarily concerned with ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ security issues alike, emphasising their relations with NATO partners and the US first and foremost. This also accounts for the rapid development of security cultures in the Baltic Sea region, where the dynamic changes of the regional state of play have left an impact on the way the regional players view security.<sup>16</sup> For Germany, this process is expected to take many years in the future.

## **An (in)conclusive discussion. Which future for the German engagement?**

As the authors of this volume have explained, Berlin is taking more responsibility for ensuring permanent European stability. This ‘mantra’ is more than words, as Germany has backed it up with a military presence in the Baltic states for the first time since World War II. Germany has also extended its presence beyond only Europe and Afghanistan, contributing to UN stabilisation mission in Mali and the coalition against ISIS. It has limited its close ties with Russia, by ending the long-standing *détente* that was binding both ‘partners’ together. Crimea has become a precedent after which going back to ‘business as usual’ will not be possible. It seems that Germany has moved a step closer to becoming a credible and important partner (or even a leader) in the international rules-based order. The reasons for Germany’s more active role are multiple. The assertive Russian moves in it’s near abroad

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<sup>16</sup> See: e.g. Societal Security in the Baltic Sea Region: Expertise Mapping and Raising Policy Relevance, ed. by Boris Kuznetsov, Mika Aaltola, Andris Srūds, Elizabete Vizgunova, Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2018

have challenged the German security thinking at its core. It seems that Germany is striving to overcome the discomfort of employing military means to prevent conflict.

Germany also seems ready to prioritise European security interests over its national ambitions. This indicates an apparent change in a foreign policy paradigm which has been present for years. The development of European defence structures has been remarkable in the period since 2016. In this volume, the authors have enumerated several developments which over-exceed the achievements which were debated and put off for nearly 50 years.<sup>17</sup> It is almost paradoxical, considering the disagreements – including those surrounding the EU governance, the eurozone, the asylum policy, among other things – the member states seem to share. Germany and France are now seen as the main ‘sponsors’ of the new path the EU has taken. Whereas European defence is still likely to translate into CSDP, leaving territorial security matters to NATO, these quick and bold steps mean that the European powers have realised they cannot remain fully reliant on external security providers. Especially after Brexit, Germany is likely to bare the role of not only the key economic player but also the key player in political and security terms in Europe. This is particularly important, as the willingness of the US to lead the Euro-Atlantic alliance has been put in question for the first time since the end of the Cold War (with the coming of the Donald Trump presidency). Under these circumstances, Germany’s ability to contribute to security in Eastern flank will be crucial for stable European security architecture.

Germany is overall seen as a positive force to stay, and a power which has an increasingly thorough understanding of the complexities of the region. The mutual understanding and regional partnership could be strengthened even further. Considering Germany’s current abilities and constraints, Germany’s medium-term activities to support the Baltic Sea region could include:

- Reshuffling its regional priorities and making the Baltic Sea region more discussed in the policy-making circles of Berlin. The regional commitment could also entail shifting the priorities of the regional organisations to

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<sup>17</sup> NATO Review, ‘European defence takes a leap forward’, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2000/More-capable-balanced-alliance/European-defence-takes-leap-forward/EN/index.htm>

‘soft’ security issues which relate to urgent security threats, such as disinformation and propaganda.

- Crafting a consistent Baltic Sea strategy where it would define its place in the military domain.
- Aligning its military capabilities with NATO 2% defense expenditure target and collaborating with the US to ensure its presence in regional reassurance formats.
- Committing its support and forces to the Baltic Sea region, contributing to reestablishing a European security order and a credible deterrent to Russia.
- Ensuring that Nord Stream 2 and related projects do not sabotage European legal imperatives and the energy security of its close partners, including Ukraine.

On the long run, Germany’s tasks are challenging. From modernising the *Bundeswehr*, to changing the public attitudes, the high demands from the side of its smaller partners *vis-à-vis* Berlin are seemingly going against the very foundation of the post-World War II societal consensus. However, Germany is needed for the European security order to sustain itself on an equal footing with other emergent security orders. Overall, the turbulence in the global security environment is unlikely to leave the Baltic Sea region unchanged. Whether this change might relate to climate, asymmetric means of destabilisation, hybrid warfare, or natural resources, the landscape of the region will significantly change over the next century. The region will remain intrinsically linked to Germany. Therefore, further engagement of Germany with its regional partners will be instrumental – a message that all authors of the volume are signalling.



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