

A photograph of the NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. In the foreground, several tall flagpoles hold the flags of member states, including Italy (green, white, and red), Hungary (red, white, and blue), and the NATO flag (blue with a white compass rose). Other flags visible include Canada, Belgium, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The background shows the modern architecture of the NATO Headquarters building under a cloudy sky.

SEPTEMBER 2021

Future NATO Enlargement

Force Requirements and Budget Costs

AUTHOR

Mark F. Cancian

COLLABORATING AUTHOR

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A Report of the CSIS International Security Program

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ISBN: 978-1-5381-4041-3 (pb); 978-1-5381-4042-0 (ebook)

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Acknowledgments

This report is funded by a grant from the Koch Foundation.

The author would like to thank Adam Saxton, the report’s collaborating author, who developed several sections of the report and coordinated the project’s research, and William Healzer, who helped with the research.

Finally, the author thanks the many interviewees, working group members, and reviewers—inside and outside CSIS—who answered questions, read the draft, and provided valuable comments. Their contributions improved the final report, but the content presented here, including any errors, remains solely the responsibility of the author.

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Executive Summary

This project arose as a result of both North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) success and a changing European security environment. The success was that NATO doubled the number of member states after the Cold War, which furthered the goal of a democratic, whole, and free Europe. However, most enlargement happened in a benign security environment without concerns about additional military force requirements or budget costs. The rise of a hostile and militarily strengthened Russia has changed the European security environment and raised questions about military force requirements and resulting budget costs if additional enlargement occurs.

This project assessed such requirements. Although no membership enlargement is imminent, five countries—Georgia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, and Sweden—are closer to membership than others. Three of these countries—Georgia, Ukraine, and Bosnia Herzegovina—are actively seeking membership. Finland and Sweden are not seeking membership and remain committed to nonalignment. However, there has been domestic discussion and analysis about the merits of joining (discussed in Chapter 1), and they have been edging closer to NATO over time. Thus, this project conducted detailed assessments of what might be required to defend each of these five countries if they became members of NATO in the future and were covered by the Article 5 commitment to mutual defense.

To consider force requirements related to future NATO enlargement is not to question the value of NATO itself or past enlargement. Rather, the purpose of these discussions is to enhance the security of the United States and its NATO allies and to support stability in Europe broadly.

Burden sharing of such future commitments would be an important political and military issue. In aggregate, the non-U.S. NATO members outspend Russia, and their militaries are collectively larger than Russia's. In theory, they could handle a Russian challenge on their own without some U.S.

support. However, they have struggled to turn their military forces and budgets into deployable military capabilities. As a result, a large part of the burden for defending future NATO members will fall on the United States.

One concept for defending new members would be to rely on trip-wire forces (called “minimum deterrence” in the report). Such a concept would be inexpensive and sufficient if Russia is believed to be readily deterred. However, it is highly risky because it relies on threats of retaliation, including, ultimately, nuclear weapons. If deterrence failed, NATO would have to conduct a long and difficult counteroffensive to recapture lost territory. Nevertheless, the report provides force structure and costs of a minimum deterrence option for Georgia, Ukraine, Sweden, and Finland.

The project rejected the use of insurgencies as a primary defense mechanism, although such an approach might be adopted in extremis. The difficulties in sustaining external support for an insurgency, the destructiveness that such a campaign would inflict on civil society, the long timeline involved, and the unlikelihood of success made such an approach unattractive compared with conventional defenses.

The project also rejected the planned or threatened use of nuclear weapons as a way to reduce demands for conventional forces. Although NATO retains the option to use nuclear weapons in an emergency, building a defense that required such use was rejected as morally questionable and unlikely to be supported by NATO populations.

The project therefore developed an option for a conventional forward defense (called “hold until reinforced” in the report). New NATO members would likely demand a forward defense that could hold out until NATO reinforcements arrived, being reluctant to risk the loss of national territory. West Germany demanded such a defense during the Cold War.

The project’s analysis showed that the military force requirements and budget costs for NATO to implement a forward defense for some of the potential new members could be substantial.

Georgia

Georgia has long-standing border disputes with Russia, is far from the centers of NATO military power, and is highly exposed. It would need a permanent NATO presence to sustain a defense long enough for reinforcements to arrive.

Establishing such a defense would require \$9.5 billion in one-time costs and \$3.8 billion annually. This would include a full, multinational NATO brigade, a battalion-sized U.S. air and missile defense task force, and a U.S. division (forward) staff permanently stationed in Georgia. In addition, the United States would pre-position equipment for one medium (Stryker) brigade and one heavy brigade, enhance Georgian infrastructure to facilitate NATO reinforcement, and provide modern equipment to the Georgian armed forces. An expanded exercise program would tie these elements together.

The attitude of Turkey would be crucial to the success of NATO’s defense of Georgia (Turkey borders Georgia in the southwest). Without Turkish involvement and if NATO forces were expelled from Georgian territory, a counteroffensive would require the largest amphibious operation since the Inchon landing in 1950.

Ukraine

Like Georgia, Ukraine is highly exposed, far from NATO centers of military power, and has ongoing disputes with Russia. Its open terrain makes it additionally vulnerable. A NATO forward defense of Ukraine would require, at a minimum, three NATO brigades permanently stationed in Ukraine (of which one would be U.S.), a brigade-sized U.S. air and missile defense task force to protect NATO assets from attack, a U.S. division headquarters to command the NATO forces, a composite airwing to provide immediate air support, and an advisory brigade to provide ongoing training to Ukrainian forces, plus four brigade sets of pre-positioned equipment, infrastructure enhancements to facilitate reinforcement, and materiel support for the Ukrainian armed forces. The total number of NATO personnel stationed in Ukraine would be about 18,000. An expanded exercise program would tie these elements together.

The total costs of such a defense would run \$32.6 billion in one-time expenses (of which the U.S. share would be \$27 billion) and \$13 billion annually (of which the U.S. share would be \$11 billion). Costs for non-U.S. NATO members could be substantially higher depending on which countries participated and what their forces needed. Although Ukraine spends over 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense, exceeding the NATO goal, it lacks the economic strength to pay any substantial element of these additional costs. Ukraine could provide some in-kind support, such as real estate. (Note: This analysis assumes a peacetime posture and some resolution of the current conflict in Eastern Ukraine.)

Although these costs may look high, several members of the project's working group thought that even this level of support would be inadequate. They drew an analogy to the defense of the West German border during the Cold War, which required large and highly ready forces because of the 26 Soviet divisions stationed in Eastern Europe and aimed at the West.

An unlikely but possible NATO peacekeeping scenario in Ukraine—unrest in the eastern provinces—would require an initial peacekeeping force of 130,000, though force size would decline over time as stability was restored. An operation of this size would be very demanding given NATO's limited deployment capabilities, though theoretically achievable with current NATO force levels.

Total costs of such a peacekeeping operation would be \$98–\$520 billion, depending on duration and whether counterinsurgency operations were required. U.S. forces and costs would be about half the NATO total, with somewhat higher costs in the longer-duration operations (up to \$360 billion) because of the need to expand the size of the U.S. Army to sustain the pace of rotations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina, unlike the other countries discussed here, does not share a border or sea frontier with Russia, thus reducing the direct threat.

A possible peacekeeping scenario in Bosnia and Herzegovina—unrest among the three ethnic groups, as happened in the 1990s—would require initial peacekeeping forces of 60,000 NATO personnel, though force size would decline over time as stability was restored. Total costs

of such an operation would be \$45–\$240 billion, depending on the duration and whether counterinsurgency operations were required. U.S. forces and costs would be about half the NATO total.

In the unlikely event of a Serbian incursion into Bosnia and Herzegovina, total U.S. costs for an air campaign to expel them and short stability operation afterwards would run about \$12.3 billion if the conflict resembled that of U.S. interventions in Croatia and Kosovo. Non-U.S. NATO members would have similar costs, so the NATO total would be about \$24.6 billion.

Costs for a NATO defense of Finland or Sweden would be less and depend on military budget increases in these countries. Further, as these countries are still nonaligned and have not requested NATO membership, any entry into NATO membership is speculative and further in the future.

Sweden

Defense of Sweden would be less demanding than defense of Finland, Ukraine, or Georgia because it does not directly border Russia. Finland and the Baltic Sea act as a buffer. Indeed, Swedish membership in NATO could help the defense of the Baltic states and Northern Europe.

As a member of NATO, Sweden would have three defensive challenges: protecting itself from Russian air and missile attacks, securing its vast territory against Russian infiltration, and defending Gotland Island and other key infrastructure so that NATO military forces could use them to protect the flow of forces to the Baltic states and elsewhere.

Sweden could meet these challenges with NATO reinforcements in wartime if its military spending (currently 1.3 percent of GDP) increased to NATO's 2 percent target and if the country expanded its armed forces commensurately. Unlike Georgia and Ukraine, Sweden spends far below the target and its armed forces are much reduced from their Cold War levels. They would not be adequate today to fully protect the country in a conflict, particularly against Russian air power.

If Sweden did not increase its spending, NATO would need to invest in improving Swedish infrastructure to allow rapid reinforcements and stand up a brigade-sized air and missile defense task force to defend Swedish airspace, particularly Gotland Island. Total one-time cost for NATO would be \$6.4 billion, with annual costs of \$1.1 billion. These costs would be shared between the United States and other NATO countries that maintain these kinds of capabilities, so the U.S. share would be \$3.2 billion in one-time costs and \$550 million annually.

Sweden would also need to recognize its role as a platform for staging air operations and ground forces in the event of a conflict in the Baltic states or Eastern Europe. That would involve Sweden in other countries' conflicts, something it has not done since the eighteenth century.

Finland

Finland is democratic, unified, and competent—a good fit with NATO—but highly exposed to Russian military threats. Finland can generate a powerful territorial defense. However,

there is a risk that Finland's military, essentially a militia force, might not be able to stand up to Russian professional units. There is also a risk of Russian intrusion against some exposed element of Finnish territory, for example, the Åland Islands or some corner of the long and exposed border. A coup de main would put Finland's forces in the position of having to counterattack, a role for which they are ill-prepared.

A minimum deterrence NATO program would minimize foreign troops on Finnish soil both to avoid unnecessary provocation of Russia and in recognition of Finnish sensibilities. This program would enhance infrastructure to facilitate reinforcement, rotate advisory units in peacetime to enhance Finnish skills in multidomain operations, expand joint exercises, and, in a crisis, provide air support and air and missile defense. The United States and other NATO members would share the burden of providing these capabilities. Providing the U.S. capabilities would require some enhancements to force structure because of limited U.S. forces in Europe and, in some communities, globally. One-time costs would be \$1.1 billion and annual costs would be \$730 million.

A more robust forward defense program would add prepositioning in Finland for two fires brigades. The Finns have a lot of maneuver units but need firepower—fires brigades bring long-range precision artillery and missile capabilities.

This program would also provide helicopter units to help Finland maintain control of its vast but sparsely populated and difficult to defend northern and interior regions. This would require, however, an expansion of U.S. aviation units in Europe.

Cost of this forward defense program would be \$5.2 billion in one-time costs and \$550 million annually.

Decisions about enlargement are heavily political, and this project did not evaluate such considerations. Nevertheless, military force requirements and associated costs are an important element of enlargement decisions. Thus, the project recommends that, as part of the process for any future enlargement, NATO develop and explicitly consider military force requirements and related costs to meet Article 5 commitments. The United States should develop independent assessments of force requirements and associated costs. Finally, as an alternative to full membership, NATO should maintain its current mechanisms for partnerships with and military support of countries that desire a relationship and contribute to European security.

Why This Project?

The North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) has been an extraordinarily successful alliance, helping to keep peace in Europe for 70 years and unite countries that have fought bitter wars against each other in the relatively recent past. It has also encouraged the building of democratic institutions and facilitated a common response to challenges to peace, such as global terrorism and piracy. This is a huge accomplishment.

Following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO's membership expanded eastward as many states sought tighter integration with Western Europe. At the time, Europe faced few external threats beyond the spillover effects of internal conflict in the Balkans. Russia was seen as a strategic partner.

However, Russia's revanchist activities have changed this environment, as seen with its invasion of Georgia in 2008, seizure of Crimea in 2014, and ongoing support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine. The threat of territorial aggression in Europe has reemerged for the first time since the end of the Cold War.

As new states seek membership in NATO, the security dimension of enlargement, with its associated costs and force structure requirements, needs to be considered. Unlike with previous enlargement, future enlargement will generate force requirements to make Article 5 guarantees credible. This could endanger NATO's achievement by requiring force and budget increases that current and new members cannot or will not meet.

To consider force requirements related to future NATO enlargement is not to question the value of NATO itself or past enlargement. Rather, the purpose of these discussions is to enhance the security of the United States and its NATO allies and to support stability in Europe broadly.

Scope of the Project

This project assesses the force structure requirements and potential budget costs of further enlargement. The project focuses on the five states that today appear closest to attaining membership—Georgia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sweden, and Finland—recognizing that each has unique circumstances (discussed below) that affect its likelihood of joining.¹ The goal is to reintroduce defense and cost-related considerations into discussions and studies as NATO considers future enlargement of its membership. Although NATO has important diplomatic and political elements, it is first and foremost a collective security alliance, and therefore this report focuses on that dimension of adding new members.

It is worth noting what this report does not cover. First, it is not a reconsideration of past decisions to admit new states into NATO. While a review of security requirements of new members is helpful for envisioning potential security requirements for future members, this report does not assess the merits of past NATO enlargement. Speculation about whether past enlargement was sound is interesting as an academic argument but not useful for present policy. Members are fully members regardless of when they joined. All members, old and new, deserve the full protection of Article 5.

Second, this report does not provide a comprehensive review of enlargement. There are many political factors to be considered for enlarging the NATO alliance that may potentially outweigh the perceived security risks for some member states. This study does not aim to detract from these arguments. Rather, it seeks to bring force structure and budget costs back into discussions about NATO enlargement.²

SERIOUSNESS OF THE ARTICLE 5 COMMITMENT

As NATO is an alliance dedicated to collective defense and the preservation of peace, Article 5 constitutes its core principle.

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.³

The Article 5 commitment has driven major policy and military actions by the NATO members. During the Cold War, for example, they collectively fielded armed forces of 5 million active-duty

1 Other countries might conceivably be interested in NATO membership in the future. Figure 1 shows the many countries with different relationships to NATO. However, none of these countries have the necessary attributes of membership, political interest in membership, or ongoing discussion about membership that would merit analysis in this report.

2 Michael O'Hanlon, a working group member, believed that this focus was too limiting: "Whatever its past merits, any further NATO enlargement will have costs that transcend what the CSIS study attempts to compute. It will almost certainly produce a worsening of U.S.-Russia and NATO-Russia relations, a more tense European security theater, a more uncertain state of deterrence—and on balance a greater risk of war, the costs of which would be incalculable and fundamentally unacceptable." Email to author, July 22, 2021.

3 "Article 5," NATO, April 4, 1949, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm. Note: NATO communications generally use British spelling, hence, "defence" rather than the U.S. usage "defense" and "programme" rather than "program." This report uses the spelling that occurred in the original reference.

servicemembers and 5 million reservists. For most members, it is the most significant foreign policy commitment that they make. President Joe Biden recently reaffirmed the U.S. commitment at the beginning of NATO's June 2021 Summit in Brussels, stating that "Article V, we take as a sacred obligation. . . . And I want all of Europe to know that the United States is there."⁴

The treaty requires each member to take "such action as it deems necessary" in response to an attack. In theory, that response could be nonmilitary. However, the expectation since the beginning of the alliance has been that members would make a military response in the event of an attack. Thus, bringing new members into the alliance carries with it an expectation that existing members will defend these new members militarily.⁵

Unresolved is whether the Article 5 commitment means the full defense of every square inch of a member states' territory or something less, perhaps simply ensuring the continued political autonomy and sovereignty of the respective state. How this commitment is interpreted has significant implications for the expected NATO response to territorial aggression, including current and future force structure requirements and their associated costs.

If understood as a commitment to protect the full territory of new member states, then NATO members and the United States will need to defend forward, potentially stationing troops, equipment, and supplies along the borders of Russia, and be prepared to escalate a future conflict to meet this end. If understood minimally, as ensuring the political autonomy of the member state without necessarily defending the full extent of its territory, then a lesser military response and presence might be acceptable. For example, if Ukraine were added as a future member, it is much easier to defend Ukraine up to the Dnieper River than to commit to ensure Ukraine maintains sovereign control over all of its eastern regions.

While a narrow understanding of NATO's Article 5 commitment may be attractive to risk-averse and budget-constrained policymakers, it would be difficult to maintain politically, as the Article 5 commitment is often discussed in terms of full defense of member states' sovereign territory. During the Cold War, West Germany was emphatic that alliance members must defend the full extent of its territory.⁶ Indeed, threatened nations will almost certainly take the "full defense" position.

At the heart of this debate is ensuring the credibility of the NATO alliance. If a credible Article 5 commitment played an instrumental role in deterring major territorial aggression over 70 years, the

4 Joseph R. Biden, Jr., "Remarks by President Biden and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg During Greeting," The White House, (speech, Brussels, Belgium, June 14, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/06/14/remarks-by-president-biden-and-nato-secretary-general-jens-stoltenberg-during-greeting/>.

5 This mutual understanding is presented as a tacit assumption in John Mearsheimer, "Maneuver, Mobile Defense, and the NATO Central Front," *International Security* 6, No. 3 (Winter 1981-82), doi:10.2307/2538609; and R. William Thomas, *Burden Sharing in the North Atlantic: A Preliminary Review of the Evidence* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, January 1985), <https://cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/ftpdocs/59xx/doc5942/doc02a.pdf>. Some working group members argued that there would be no guarantee of a unified NATO military response in a crisis. The United States invoked Article 5 after 9/11, but many NATO members did not provide a military response when it came to operations in Afghanistan, which were, in the U.S. perspective, a direct result of the U.S. calling for an Article 5 response. Additionally, Turkey (a NATO member) voted down the U.S. request for the use of its bases in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, an operation which was (at least in the mind of the United States) also a result of the 9/11 attacks.

6 West German calls for the continued defense of their territory are highlighted in: Helmut Kohl, "The Future of the Alliance and German-American Relations," *Harvard International Review* 9, no. 1 (November-December 1986): 31-44, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40104358>.

worst-case scenario is for Russia or another state to test that limit and find it hollow. Therefore, NATO members must be prepared to defend new member states and have a full and open assessment of potential new states' defensibility, security risks, and associated costs for defense.

ASSESSING FORCE AND BUDGET REQUIREMENTS TO DEFEND NEW MEMBERS

The last, and only, major round of study of the cost of NATO enlargement took in place in 1997 when NATO invited Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary to join the alliance. Four major cost studies were conducted at the time: by the Clinton administration, RAND Corporation, Congressional Budget Office (CBO), and NATO itself.⁷

The initial Clinton administration report, prepared jointly by the Department of State and Department of Defense (DoD), looked at the benefits, costs, and rationale for 12 years into the future (1997–2009). In its discussion of costs, the report focused on new member requirements to modernize their military forces and the NATO regional reinforcement capabilities needed to defend new members from external threats. The study estimated the reinforcement requirement as a “notional force of four divisions and six NATO fighter wings.” Since the United States already had such a deployment capability, it was not expected to incur any additional costs. The report also looked at costs to make new members interoperable with NATO, including enhancements in C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) systems, air domain awareness, and logistics as well as infrastructure improvements to airfields, ports, roads, railroads, and exercise facilities.

DoD estimated that between 1997 and 2009, it would cost \$27–35 billion to bring these new countries into NATO, with the new members bearing the brunt of the cost and the United States only paying \$1.5–2.0 billion. The report cautioned that the “analysis should be seen as purely illustrative and designed to provide an approximate estimate of the costs of enlargement.”

Notably, this study assumed a relatively benign European security environment in terms of risk of major territorial aggression. The study was explicit that “NATO enlargement will take place in a European security environment in which there is no current threat of large-scale conventional aggression and where any such threat would take years to develop.” Further, the study noted that “a fundamentally different—and far more demanding—set of requirements would be needed if trends developed in such a way as to renew a direct territorial threat to NATO members. . . . But there can be no question that the cost of responding to such a threat would be substantial.”⁸

The cost studies by RAND and the CBO arrived at different figures by using different scenarios and threat assumptions. RAND's study estimated the cost at \$10–110 billion, while the CBO's estimate was \$21–125 billion. While these studies differed on assumptions about what modernization was necessary for the defense of new members, they both assumed that new member states and European NATO members would pay the bulk of the costs.⁹ NATO's cost study focused just on NATO's common budget

7 Carl Ek, *NATO Enlargement: Cost Issues* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, February 26, 1998), https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/19980226_97-668F_512cd33fec05b72bee83170193138b83cf80df10.pdf.

8 Bureau of European and Canadian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, *Report to the Congress on the Enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization: Rationale, Benefits, Costs and Implications* (Washington, DC: February 24, 1997), https://1997-2001.state.gov/regions/eur/9702nato_report.html#impact.

9 Many of the equipment upgrades would come from U.S. defense industry, thus easing the cost of enlargement.

requirements for new members and therefore reached a much lower number of \$1.5 billion over the same 10 years.

No studies have emerged assessing the force and budget cost of adding new members since that first wave of enlargement in the 1990s. After the Russian aggression of 2014, discussed in the next chapter, some analyses were conducted regarding the requirements for defending members already added. RAND, for example, did a widely cited assessment of defending the Baltic states (described in Chapter 5). While there are references to classified analysis conducted by NATO and the U.S. European Command, no information about these classified assessments has entered the public domain. Thus, this project fills a research void.

THE CONTINUING SALIENCE OF ENLARGEMENT

Enlargement is a continuing issue. This arises first because of NATO's "open-door" policy contained in Article 10: "The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty." The 2021 NATO summit communiqué emphasizes the continuing viability of enlargement: "NATO's door remains open to all European democracies which share the values of our Alliance, which are willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, which are in a position to further the principles of the Treaty, and whose inclusion can contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area."¹⁰

NATO has a variety of relationships with non-member states that can act as precursors to formal membership, though most participants in these programs will not become members. The oldest such program is the Partnership for Peace program (PfP, involving 20 countries), which acts as NATO's most basic relationship mechanism.¹¹

In 2014, NATO launched the Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII) at the Wales Summit to ensure that the "deep connections built up between NATO in partner forces over years of operations will be maintained and deepened."¹² The PII in turn established "tailor-made 'enhanced opportunities' for deeper cooperation with six partners: Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan, Sweden and Ukraine."

The PII also established the Interoperability Platform (IP) to provide partners "who are interested and committed to deepening interoperability for future crises, with deeper access to cooperation on interoperability issues." Currently, the IP has 23 partners.

Still other states are in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership, the Mediterranean Dialogue, and the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative.¹³

The graphic below gives a sense of the many partnership relationships and types of relationships that NATO has. (Note that the graphic it is not exhaustive, leaving out, for example, the PfP.)

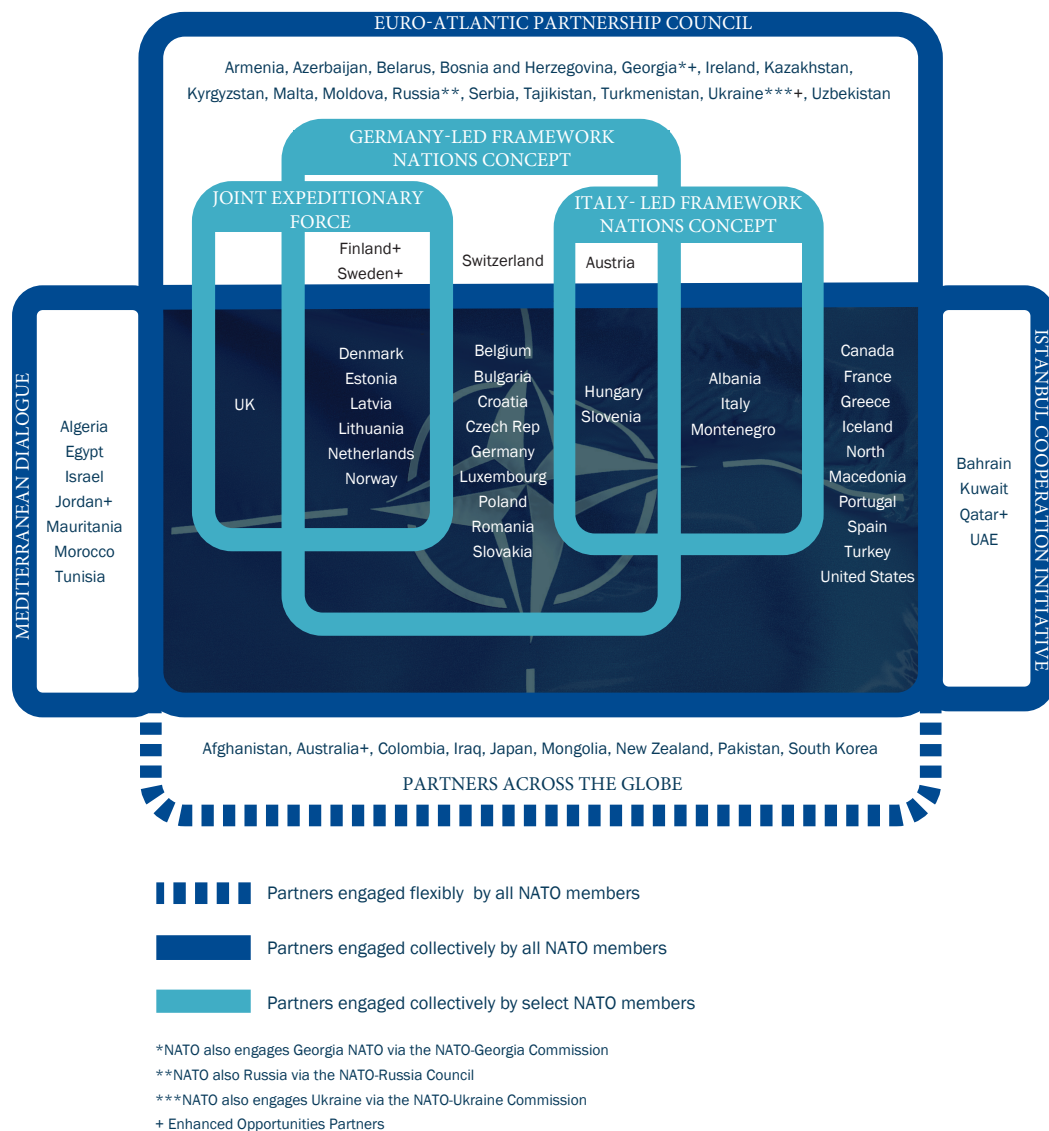
10 "Brussels Summit Communiqué," NATO, June 14, 2021, paragraph 66, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm.

11 "Partnership for Peace Programme," NATO, March 23, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50349.htm "https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50349.htm".

12 "Partnership Interoperability Initiative," NATO, November 3, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132726.htm.

13 "Partnerships: Projecting Stability Through Cooperation," NATO, June 3, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/top-ics_84336.htm?.

Figure 1: NATO Regional Partnership Frameworks and Flexible Formats



Source: Sophie Arts and Steven Keil, *Flexible Security Arrangements and the Future of NATO Partnerships* (Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund, February 2021), 5, <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/flexible-security-arrangements-and-future-nato-partnerships>.

Five states are subjects of this report—Georgia, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sweden, and Finland—because they are closer to membership than others and because there is an active discussion about bringing them into NATO.

The project notes that all countries have the right to pursue NATO membership if their publics support it and their political processes can implement the necessary military and governmental requirements. However, NATO members have the right to decide who they will defend and for which goals they are willing to sacrifice their blood and treasure. Membership is a two-sided dialogue.

Georgia

The 2008 Bucharest summit declaration was unequivocal about Georgia and Ukraine:

NATO's door will remain open to European democracies willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership. . . . NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. *We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO.* [Emphasis added] Both nations have made valuable contributions to Atlantic operations. MAP [Membership Action Plan] is the next step for Ukraine and Georgia on their direct way to membership.¹⁴

However, neither country has yet moved to a MAP, which is the necessary path to membership.¹⁵

NATO and U.S. officials continue to support the unequivocal language in the Bucharest declaration in public statements. For example, during a visit to Georgia in 2017 Vice President Mike Pence reiterated continuing U.S. support for Georgia entering NATO: “President Trump and I stand by the 2008 NATO Bucharest statement, which made it clear that Georgia, one day, will become a member of NATO.”¹⁶

In 2018 and again in 2021, NATO declared: “[The] allies reiterate their decision made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Georgia will become a member of the Alliance, with MAP [a Membership Action Plan] as an integral part of the process.”¹⁷

NATO membership is incorporated into the Georgian constitution under Article 78: “Integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures—The constitutional bodies shall take all measures within the scope of their competences to ensure the full integration of Georgia into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.”¹⁸

In 2010, NATO established a permanent liaison office in Georgia. As discussed in Chapter 7 Georgia actively participates in NATO peacekeeping operations and hosts NATO exercises on its territory.

Ukraine

Like Georgia, Ukraine is covered by the unequivocal language of the Bucharest declaration. NATO has reaffirmed this commitment repeatedly in subsequent years, declaring in 2021: “We reiterate the decision made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Ukraine will become a member of the Alliance with

14 “Bucharest Summit Declaration,” NATO April 3, 2008, paragraphs 8 and 13, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm.

15 Condoleezza Rice discusses the debates over Georgian and Ukrainian membership in her memoirs. She describes the NATO members as being deeply divided, with some, such as the United States and Poland, favoring membership and others, particularly Germany, opposing immediate membership. What resulted was a compromise. Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown, 2011): 670–675.

16 Nana Saija, “In Georgia, Pence Assures Eastern Europe of US Backing,” Voice of America, August 1, 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/georgia-pence-assures-eastern-europe-us-backing>.

17 “NATO-Georgia Commission Declaration at the Brussels Summit,” NATO, July 12, 2018, paragraph 6, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156627.htm?; and “Brussels Summit Communiqué,” NATO, paragraph 68.

18 “Constitution of Georgia,” Article 78, https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/8153/file/Georgia_Const_am2018_ENG.pdf.

the Membership Action Plan (MAP) as an integral part of the process.”¹⁹ In 2020, it gained the status of an Enhanced Opportunity Partner. In a visit to Ukraine in January 2020, Secretary of State Michael Pompeo reaffirmed the U.S. commitment: “We have maintained support for Ukraine’s efforts to join NATO and move closer to the European Union.”²⁰

Ukrainian desire for membership has a clear basis: Russian seizure of Crimea and intrusions into the eastern provinces. NATO membership would bring the forces of 30 other countries to bear.

In 2019, Ukraine amended its constitution, incorporating the goal of joining NATO and the European Union.²¹

In spring 2021, Ukraine, faced with Russian forces massing on its border, renewed its pleas for NATO membership. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine’s president, called on NATO to lay out a path for membership. He argued, “NATO is the only way to end the war in Donbass.”²² The deputy prime minister similarly argued, “accelerating Ukraine’s integration into the alliance should be one of the key elements of [NATO’s] renewed strategy.”²³

Ukrainian membership in NATO continues to be an active topic of discussion among political and national security commentators. For example, David Andelman, director of the Red Lines Project at Fordham Law School’s Center on National Security, recently argued that sanctions and defensive weapons were not enough to deter Russia from putting pressure on Ukraine. He argued, “the West needs to provide actions—the most consequential of which would be inviting Ukraine into the NATO fold. NATO inclusion . . . is the right move.”²⁴ John Bolton, former national security adviser, similarly recommended: “Ultimately, inclusion in NATO is the only way for the endangered countries [on Russia’s periphery, including Ukraine and Georgia] to minimize the inevitable uncertainty and instability between the alliance and Russia.”²⁵

19 “Brussels Summit Communiqué,” NATO; “Bucharest Summit Declaration,” NATO, paragraphs 8 and 13.

20 “Secretary Michael R. Pompeo and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a Press Availability,” U.S. Embassy Ukraine, January 31, 2020, <https://ua.usembassy.gov/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-and-ukrainian-president-volodymyr-zelenskyy/>.

21 “Ukraine Amends Constitution to Cement NATO, EU Course,” Voice of America, February 7, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/ukraine-amends-constitution-cement-eu-nato-course>.

22 Pavel Polityuk and Vladimir Soldatkin, “Ukraine calls for path into NATO after Russia masses troops,” Reuters, April 6, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-russia/ukraine-calls-for-path-into-nato-after-russia-masses-troops-idUSKBN2BT1LX>.

23 Olga Stefanishyna, “Ukraine Needs a Clear Path to NATO Membership,” *Foreign Policy*, April 12, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/12/ukraine-nato-membership-path-russia-border-georgia/>.

24 David A. Andelman, “Biden’s Russia sanctions are a good step. Here’s what else we should do to stand up to Putin,” NBC News, April 15, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/biden-s-russia-sanctions-are-good-step-here-s-what-nc-na1264234>.

25 John Bolton, “Between Russia and NATO,” *National Review*, June 1, 2021, 16–17; not all recent opinions about Ukraine and Georgia joining NATO have been positive. See, for example, Henrik Larsen, “Why NATO Should Not Offer Ukraine and Georgia Membership Action Plans,” *War on the Rocks*, June 8, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/06/why-nato-should-not-offer-ukraine-and-georgia-membership-action-plans/>.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a MAP, NATO's "program of advice, assistance and practical support tailored to the individual needs of countries wishing to join the Alliance."²⁶ Although a MAP does not guarantee membership, it does imply that the country is on track for membership. All countries that have joined NATO since 2004 have had a MAP, and, so far, no country with a MAP has failed to gain membership.

At their December 2018 meeting, NATO member foreign ministers kept Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership process moving forward while noting challenges: "NATO is ready to accept the submission of Bosnia and Herzegovina's first Annual National Programme under the MAP." However, the registration of immovable defense property was identified as an "unresolved issue."²⁷

The 2021 NATO summit communiqué cited Bosnia and Herzegovina as an "aspirant country."²⁸

Sweden

Sweden has increased ties to NATO, and several political parties have supported NATO membership, but the public and government remain committed to nonalignment. This could change if Russia becomes more threatening.

Even during the Cold War, Sweden had a close relationship with NATO despite its traditional position of neutrality or nonalignment. With the end of the Cold War, Sweden has become increasingly integrated into NATO's military command structure.²⁹ In 1994, Sweden joined NATO's PfP, and it has taken further steps to integrate its military with NATO in more recent years through becoming an Enhanced Opportunity Partner as part of the PII.

Sweden has participated in some of NATO's largest exercises, such as Trident Juncture, being involved from the initial planning stages to actual execution. Sweden is also viewed as an integral part of the defense of the Baltics. Sweden and Finland are members of the Joint Expeditionary Force that is part of NATO's Framework Nation Concept.³⁰

There has also been some recent political edging toward joining NATO, as Sweden's parliament voted to allow Sweden to join NATO at some point in the future.³¹ While Sweden is technically nonaligned, as opposed to neutral, having joined the European Union in 1995, Russia still refers to both Sweden and

26 "Membership Action Plan," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, March 23, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/top-ics_37356.htm.

27 "NATO Foreign Ministers Conclude Two Day Meeting in Brussels," NATO, December 5, 2018, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_161116.htm.

28 "Brussels Summit Communiqué," NATO, paragraph 67.

29 Sebastian Sprenger, "Sweden clings to its non-NATO status amid substantial defense budget boost," Defense News, April 8, 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2021/04/08/sweden-clings-to-its-neutrality-amid-substantial-defense-budget-boost/>.

30 Anna Wieslander, "What makes an ally? Sweden and Finland as NATO partners," Atlantic Council, April 1, 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/what-makes-an-ally-sweden-and-finland-as-nato-partners/>.

31 Charlie Duxbury, "Sweden edges closer to NATO membership," Politico, December 22, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/sweden-nato-membership-dilemma/>.

Finland as neutrals. The Swedish public remains committed to military nonalignment, but opposition to joining NATO has lessened in recent years in the face of increased Russia belligerence and willingness to use force. Public opinion for joining NATO now polls about even with those opposing, although the issue is highly contentious.³² Several opposition parties in Sweden support joining NATO in the future.³³ Nevertheless, two centuries of Swedish neutrality weigh heavily on decisionmaking and public attitudes, making joining an external alliance such as NATO a much larger decision than for other countries.

NATO members have spoken positively about closer military ties to Sweden. As former secretary of defense Jim Mattis stated in 2017, “America will not abandon democratic allies and partners, and we will stand with Sweden. . . . It’s not a NATO ally, but it is still, from our point of view, a friend and an ally.”³⁴

Sweden and Finland have used their relationship with NATO as leverage to deter Russian encroachments. If Russia begins to encroach further upon Sweden or Finland, both may increase integration with NATO and potentially formally join the alliance.

Finland

As with Sweden, Finland has edged closer to NATO, but remains committed to nonalignment. Although joining NATO has been a matter of public discussion, the Finnish public, unlike Sweden’s, remains strongly in favor of nonalignment. This could change if Russia became more aggressive.

Finland has a wide variety of connections to NATO. Indeed, as a Finnish study concluded, “Finland, in effect, belongs today to the inner circle of NATO partnership. . . . Finland is close to the limit of what a non-member can achieve with NATO.”³⁵

Finland joined the PfP at its creation in 1995. It is an Enhanced Opportunity Partner as a result of its participation in the PII. Finland has an Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme (IPCP), which is jointly agreed for a two-year period and lays out the program of cooperation between Finland and NATO.

Finland participated in NATO’s operations in Bosnia (deploying a construction battalion) and in Afghanistan (deploying a company).

Finnish politicians and national security officials routinely debate the possibility of NATO membership. For example, at the behest of Finland’s Foreign Ministry a Finnish think tank recently assessed the merits of Finland joining NATO.³⁶

32 Rafaela Lindeberg and Ott Ummelas, “Sweden’s NATO Skepticism Endures as Russia Flexes Muscles,” Bloomberg, January 10, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-10/sweden-shuns-nato-as-stability-outweighs-worries-about-russia>.

33 Anna Wieslander, “Will Sweden’s elections lead to NATO membership?” Atlantic Council, September 6, 2018, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/will-sweden-s-elections-lead-to-nato-membership/>.

34 “Remarks by Secretary Mattis and Minister Hultqvist at the Pentagon,” Department of Defense, May 18, 2017, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/1186980/remarks-by-secretary-mattis-and-minister-hultqvist-at-the-pentagon/>.

35 Mats Bergquist, Francois Heisbourg, Rene Nyberg, and Teija Tiilikainen, *The Effects of Finland’s Possible NATO Membership: An Assessment* (Helsinki: Finland Ministry for Foreign Affairs, April 2016): 21, https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/the_effects_of_finlands_possible_nato_membership/c206b3c2-aaaa-5809-c545-7aa67c9bcb2a?t=1525861455616.

36 Ibid., 10.

However, such a move does not have majority support with the public.³⁷ Unlike Sweden, where public support for joining NATO has increased in recent years, Finland's public has continued to support nonalignment and not seek formal NATO membership.³⁸ Further, Finland's long history of wars and occupation by powerful neighbors, especially Russia, make it especially cautious.

Organization of This Report

This report is organized into 12 chapters. Chapter 2 provides a brief history of NATO membership and its enlargement in the post-Cold War era. Chapter 3 assesses Russian forces today and how they have evolved from post-Cold War weakness to relative strength. Chapter 4 examines the current state of NATO forces and military budgets, describing their precipitous decline after the end of the Cold War as well as their recent rebuilding. Chapter 5 assesses the force requirements and resulting budget costs of defending recently joined members as a tool for understanding the forces and costs needed for future enlargement. Chapter 6 examines the policies and circumstances that would shape NATO's defense of potential future members, Chapters 7 through 11 provide campaign analyses for the five potential new members and illustrates what forces and associated costs might be needed to extend Article 5 guarantees to them. Finally, Chapter 12 proposes some actions that NATO and the United States might take to adapt the enlargement process to this new security environment.

37 Reid Standish, "Wary of Russia, Finns take another look at NATO," Politico, October 30, 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/finland-russia-nato-wary-finns-take-another-look/>.

38 In Finland, between 60 and 70 percent of the population have consistently sought to maintain the status quo, preferring Finland to not seek NATO membership. The ratio of those in Finland supporting membership, opposing it, or choosing "cannot say" was roughly 2:6:2, while in Sweden it was 4:3:2. Charly Saloniuss-Pasternak, *The defence of Finland and Sweden: Continuity and variance in strategy and public opinion* (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, June 2018), 4, <https://www.fia.fi/en/publication/the-defence-of-finland-and-sweden>.

NATO Membership

Cold War Stability Followed by Post-Cold War Enlargement

The willingness and motivations of countries to join NATO have varied with the European security environment. Thus, this second chapter describes three phases of NATO membership. The first phase was dominated by the massive and immediate threat from the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The second phase, with no immediate European threat facing the alliance, emphasized the political integration of Europe after the end of the Cold War and the addition of new members, as well as peacekeeping and out-of-area operations. The third and current phase takes place in the context of a hostile Russia with a rebuilt military.

Phase 1: Membership Stability and Military Integration during the Cold War

During the Cold War, there was little enlargement because, along with the political and security advantages of joining NATO, membership also brought dangers and heavy responsibilities: dangers of becoming involved in a cataclysmic war with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact and the responsibility to field large and capable military forces. As a result, only Spain joined between 1955 and the 1990s.

The need for NATO arose in the immediate post-World War II era as tensions with the Soviet Union mounted. The Berlin blockade of 1948 and Soviet confrontations over Iran and Greece convinced many European countries of the need for a more robust and collective defense. After some initial efforts, such as the Brussels Treaty, European nations, the United States, and Canada created NATO in 1949 with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. The North Korean invasion of South Korea heightened

concerns about communist aggression and drove a desire for greater military effort and integration by the alliance.³⁹

NATO developed an integrated military structure divided across three regions—Allied Forces Northern Europe (AFNORTH), Allied Forces Central Europe (AFCENT), and Allied Forces Southern Europe (AFSOUTH)—to provide a continuous defense against the Soviet Union. Creation of Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT) and Allied Command Channel (ACCHAN) in 1952 expanded integration into the naval sphere.

Turkey and Greece, driven by their exposed positions and history of Soviet interference, joined the alliance in 1952. West Germany joined in May 1955 after the Paris Agreements of October 1954 formally ended allied occupation. Joining NATO was also crucial to bolstering West Germany's place in a united Europe.⁴⁰

West German accession to the treaty sent shockwaves throughout the Soviet sphere of influence and prompted the creation of the Warsaw Pact as a counterbalancing alliance later in 1954. The Warsaw Pact constituted an immense challenge to the security of Western Europe. At the height of the Cold War, it fielded 56 active-duty divisions in Central Europe, with 18,000 main battle tanks (201 divisions with 52,000 main battle tanks in the Atlantic-to-Urals area).⁴¹

The accession of West Germany into NATO marked the beginning of membership stability, with two exceptions. The first exception was Charles de Gaulle's decision in 1966 to withdraw French forces from the military command structure, although not from the alliance itself. This withdrawal forced NATO troops to leave France and the military supreme headquarters to move from Paris to Belgium.

The second exception came with the end of the Franco regime in Spain. Many in Spain viewed joining NATO as necessary to modernize its armed forces and integrate its military with Europe as part of its broader strategic realignment toward the West. Spain officially joined NATO in May 1982. Spain was the only country from 1955 through the end of the Cold War to join NATO because it judged that the value of integration with Europe was worth the costs and responsibilities of NATO enlargement.

Throughout the Cold War, NATO engendered greater security across Western Europe, as Article 5's collective defense guarantee was perceived as a credible deterrent to a potential attack from the Soviet Union and its allies. This success came at a high cost. Collectively NATO fielded about 800,000 active-duty ground force troops in Central Europe (4.4 million, active and reserve, in the Atlantic-to-Urals area), and member states spent 3 to 5 percent of GDP on defense (with the United States spending more because of its global commitments). Even with such major military commitments, there were constant concerns about whether NATO could successfully defend itself against an attack by the Warsaw Pact.⁴²

39 "North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)," Office of the Historian, Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/nato>.

40 Jan Uelzmann, "Building Domestic Support for West Germany's Integration into NATO, 1953-1955," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 22, no. 2, (2020): 133-162, doi:10.1162/jcws_a_00941.

41 Warsaw Pact and NATO force totals from International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 1987- 1988* (London: 1987): 231.

42 For an overview, see Alice M. Rivlin, *Assessing the NATO/Warsaw Pact Military Alliance* (Washington, DC: Congressional Budget Office, December 1977), <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/cbo/77doc579.pdf>.

Phase 2: End of the Cold War: New Missions and Membership Enlargement

The end of the Cold War brought a fundamental change to the security environment. NATO responded in three ways. First, NATO became a mechanism for the political integration of Europe and the promotion of democratic values. Second, NATO built relationships with a multitude of newly democratic states from the former Warsaw Pact eager to join the alliance. Third, NATO shifted its military attention from in-theater defense against a major conventional threat to peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance within Europe, in places such as Kosovo and Bosnia, and out-of-area operations in Afghanistan, Libya, and the Gulf of Aden.

POST-COLD WAR ENVIRONMENT CHANGES INCENTIVES

With the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the disappearance of the Soviet Union in 1991, the danger for which NATO had been established disappeared and a benign security environment arose. Under Yeltsin, Russia was accommodating to the West. Russia was welcomed into the G8, recognizing its importance as a world power and a member of the world economic community. For this fleeting moment in Russian history, NATO member states were strategic partners in rebuilding the economy as Russia strove for greater integration with the West. Russia actively sought “joint decision-making . . . pertaining to the use of force, if necessary, and joint implementation of such decisions.”⁴³ There was even talk of bringing Russia into NATO.⁴⁴

In response to this benign security environment, NATO consolidated its regional commands, and NATO countries radically scaled back their military forces (as described in Chapter 3).

NATO emphasized its political function. For example, NATO heads of state met in November 1991 to create the “Alliance’s New Strategic Concept,” which committed to: “the growth of democratic institutions” and the “peaceful resolution of disputes.”⁴⁵ Spreading democratic values and economic integration had always been an element of NATO’s mission. Article 2 of the treaty states:

The Parties will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them.

This element of NATO’s mission became more prominent in the post-Cold War period, and one way to spread democratic values and encourage economic integration was to expand NATO membership.

43 Igor Ivanov, “Внешняя политика России на рубеже XXI века: Проблемы формирования, эволюции и преемственности” [“Foreign Policy and Security of Contemporary Russia at the Brink of the 21st Century: Problems of Formulation, Evolution and Continuity”], in *Foreign Policy and Security of Contemporary Russia, 1991–2002*, Vol. I, edited by T.A. Shakleina (Moscow: MGIMO et al., 2002): 207–208.

44 Kimberly Marten, “Reconsidering NATO enlargement: a counterfactual analysis of Russia and the West in the 1990s,” *European Journal of International Security* 3, No. 2 (June 2018): 7, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-international-security/article/reconsidering-nato-enlargement-a-counterfactual-analysis-of-russia-and-the-west-in-the-1990s/356448EA9D5C63C53BE1EC6B33FE470A>.

45 “The Alliance’s New Strategic Concept,” NATO, November 7–8, 1991, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm.

MEMBERSHIP ENLARGEMENT: EARLY AND LATE

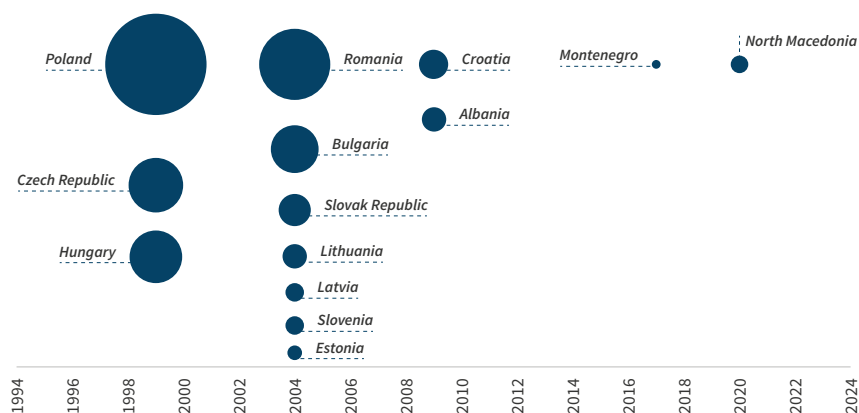
Upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many members of the Warsaw Pact clamored to join NATO to build links to the broader European community, demonstrate national modernity, and strengthen nascent democratic institutions. NATO secretary general Manfred Woerner announced in March 1992 that “the door to NATO is open.”⁴⁶ However, to avoid humiliating Yeltsin, who had just put down a coup and completed disestablishment of the Soviet Union, the United States waited until Yeltsin’s reelection in July 1996 before formally inviting Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in June 1997 to participate in the Madrid NATO membership talks. They formally became members in 1999.

Putin took office in 2000, and Russia became increasingly hostile. However, Russia was not able to do much about it. Its military was enfeebled, having imploded after the Cold War, and its economy was in shambles. The Russian military, for example, had been humiliated in Chechnya in the 1990s. When the submarine *Kursk*, the pride of the fleet, sank in 2000, Russia had to ask for help from the West in attempting to rescue the crew and, later, to salvage the submarine.

After the Visegrad Group’s (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic) accession to NATO in 1999, Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia formed the Vilnius Group to cooperate and lobby toward their collective candidacy to join NATO. The formation of the Vilnius Group accelerated its members’ NATO membership trajectory: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined in 2004, Albania and Croatia in 2009, Montenegro in 2017, and North Macedonia in 2020. The latter two joined well after Russia was not just hostile but also militarily reviving, as described below. However, their membership was a legacy of previous commitments and processes.

The membership process for joining NATO required transparency of military programs and budgets, clear civilian control of the military, and accountability of security institutions. It thus helped spread democratic values and structures in countries that had little recent experience with them. However, as the chart shows, these countries brought in progressively less military capability.

Figure 2: Comparative Size of New NATO Member’s Military at Date of Membership
(Military Personnel in Thousands)



Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *Military Balance 2021* (London: IISS, 2021).

46 “Poland in NATO – More Than 20 Years,” Polish Ministry of National Defense, 2020, [https://www.gov.pl/web/national-defence/poland-in-nato-20-years#:~:text=Poland%20in%202019%20celebrated%20the,our%20country's%20security%20\(70%25\)](https://www.gov.pl/web/national-defence/poland-in-nato-20-years#:~:text=Poland%20in%202019%20celebrated%20the,our%20country's%20security%20(70%25).).

The enlargement process also involved progressively less debate in the United States, and what debate took place after the 1990s generally ignored potential force requirements or costs.

Table 1: Senate Hearings on NATO Expansion

COUNTRIES ADMITTED	DATE OF RESOLUTION OF ADVICE AND CONSENT	SENATE HEARINGS AND FLOOR DEBATE	SENATE VOTE
Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic	April 30, 1998 ⁴⁷	Bipartisan concerns about cost and force requirements, as senators questioned proposed \$27–35 billion cost estimates and potential U.S. deployments to the region.	80-19
Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia	May 8, 2003 ⁴⁸	Discussion of cost shifts from financial cost to the opportunity cost of not admitting these countries to NATO. Virtually no debate on financial cost or force requirements.	96-0
Albania, Croatia	September 25, 2008 ⁴⁹	Concerns regarding potential cost dismissed, some limited discussion of force requirements.	Unanimous consent
Montenegro	March 27, 2017 ⁵⁰	No discussion of cost and force requirements; cost continues to be largely framed as opportunity cost. Some limited concern about low Montenegrin military spending.	97-2
North Macedonia	October 22, 2019 ⁵¹	No discussion of cost and force requirements; cost continues to be largely framed as opportunity cost. Some limited concern about low North Macedonian military spending.	91-2

47 There were six days of hearings by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (October 7–November 5, 1997), and eight days of floor debate (March 17–April 30, 1998). U.S. Senate, Congress, *Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate: October 7, 9, 22, 28, 30, and November 5, 1997*, 103rd Cong., 1st sess., <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-105shrg46832/html/CHRG-105shrg46832.htm>; see also, Michael John Garcia, *NATO Enlargement: Senate Advice and Consent*, CRS Report No. RL31915 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 2009), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL31915.pdf>.

48 U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Arms Services, *Hearing Before the Committee on Armed Services United States Senate February 28, 2002*, 107th Cong., 1st sess., 2002, S.Hrg 107-764, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-107shrg82912/html/CHRG-107shrg82912.htm>.

49 The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations held a single hearing on September 10, 2008; the bill was adopted by the Senate by unanimous consent on September 25, 2008; U.S. Congress, Senate, *Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate September 10, 2008*, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., TD110-20, <https://www.congress.gov/event/110th-congress/senate-event/LC9027/text>.

50 U.S. Congress, Senate, *Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Montenegro*, 114th Cong., 1st sess., 2014, S. Rep. 114-12, <https://www.congress.gov/treaty-document/114th-congress/12>.

51 U.S. Congress, Senate, “Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of the Republic of North Macedonia,” 116th Cong., 1st sess., 2020, S.Hrg 116-5, <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/116th-congress/executive-report/5/1>.

Cost and force requirements were a major topic in the debates about the initial enlargement to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, as described in Chapter 1. Several senators questioned the proposed \$27–35 billion cost estimates and expressed concerns about the potential need for U.S. servicemen to defend “states with traditional mutual hostility” in Eastern Europe.⁵² For example, Senators Jesse Helms and Paul Wellstone—one a conservative, the other a liberal—both expressed concerns that costs would be high and that other NATO members would not pay them. As Helms put it: “Just last week our allies made clear to us that they expect the United States, meaning the American taxpayers, to pay the lion’s share of the cost of enlargement.”⁵³ Cost was one of the concerns about including Slovakia in this first tranche, in addition to concerns about Slovakia meeting NATO legal and governance requirements. As a result, its accession was deferred until 2003.

A variety of national security experts also warned about the force requirements and costs of enlargement. A group from the Arms Control Association wrote:

If NATO enlargement is not a one-time event, but an open door, then the United States and its allies will eventually be obligated, for example: to defend the Baltics from an external threat (that is, Russia), a commitment that can only be carried out by the substantial deployment of troops backed up by threat of the use of nuclear weapons. . . . If the Baltics or Ukraine are actually incorporated into NATO (and Russia is not), we risk remilitarizing Europe.⁵⁴

Jonathan Dean, senior arms control adviser to the Union of Concerned Scientists, wrote:

Enlargement of NATO will be costly, risky, and above all, unnecessary. Even if we take the low, \$30 billion, [estimate] for the first group of candidates, the United States is likely to have to pay the largest part of that total if it is serious about these force improvements. Neither the European allies nor the candidate States can be expected to pay the amounts allocated to them in these estimates. Moreover, these estimates cover only the first three candidates for membership—the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. I believe that if the enlargement process continues, the total cost at the end will be from 3 to 5 times this low State Department figure of \$30 billion for the first group, with the United States paying at least half of this overall total of \$90 billion to \$150 billion.⁵⁵

Because of concerns over the precedent set by NATO enlargement, Senator John Warner proposed an amendment mandating a three-year pause before any further enlargement. The Senate rejected the amendment 41-59.⁵⁶ Ultimately, 19 senators voted against accession, with cost being a key concern,

52 U.S. Senate, Congress, *Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate: October 7, 9, 22, 28, 30, and November 5, 1997*.

53 Jesse Helms and Paul Wellstone, *Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate: October 7, 9, 22, 28, 30, and November 5, 1997*, 103rd Cong., 1st sess., October 22, 1997, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-105shrg46832/html/CHRG-105shrg46832.htm>.

54 Jonathan Dean, Susan Eisenhower, Michael Mandelbaum, Jack Mendelsohn, Richard McCormack, John Rhinelander and John Steinbruner, “Debate Over NATO Enlargement: A Critique of the Clinton Administration’s Responses to Key Questions,” Arms Control Association, June 1997, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1997-09/features/debate-over-nato-enlargement-critique-clinton-administrations-responses-key>.

55 U.S. Senate, Congress, *Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate: October 7, 9, 22, 28, 30, and November 5, 1997*.

56 Sonia Winter, “NATO: Some Senators Still Vacillate on Enlargement Vote,” Radio Free Europe, March 9, 1998, <https://www.rferl.org/content/NATO-Some-Senators-Still-Vacillate-on-Enlargement-Vote/1016161.html>.

though other concerns included the dangers of antagonizing Russia and involving the United States in Eastern European conflicts.

After these initial debates, cost was redefined as the opportunity cost of not including new members in NATO. That is, before 1998, the question was: Why should these countries be in NATO? After 1998, it was: What would happen if they do not join? The eventual admittance of countries ranging from the Baltics to Romania and even Ukraine was viewed as inevitable.⁵⁷

As a result, the discussions about NATO inclusion of the large Visegrád group in 2003–2004, had little mention of any fiscal cost to the United States. The vote proceeded without substantial debate on the Senate floor, and the accession vote was unanimous.

The question of cost reappeared briefly in the 2008 Senate Foreign Relations Committee's hearings on NATO membership for Albania and Croatia. During the testimony of Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Daniel Fried, Senator Bill Dodd asked for estimates of the specific costs incurred by the United States should Albania and Croatia join NATO, as well as for the estimated cost of upgrading their command and control and air defense systems as to bring them in line with NATO standards. Both Secretary Fried and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Europe and NATO Daniel Fata were unable to answer this question, and after the question was submitted for the record, the Senate received the following response: "Refining the cost estimates will require additional site surveys and more detailed analyses. It will take several years to complete this iterative process." The matter was not raised in any further hearings, and the bill ultimately passed with unanimous consent.⁵⁸

The issue of cost was completely absent from the Senate debates on Montenegro and North Macedonia, save objections from Senators Rand Paul and Mike Lee. Senator Paul objected to North Macedonia's small investment in its military and proposed not admitting North Macedonia until it met the 2 percent GDP goal for spending.⁵⁹ Senators Paul and Lee both objected to Montenegro's accession to NATO without the country spending a minimum of 2 percent of GDP on defense.⁶⁰ Neither raised the issue of U.S. costs.

During these debates, President Trump famously—or infamously—complained regarding Montenegro's accession: Why should his son defend this country and would these "strong and aggressive [Montenegrin] people" start "World War III?"⁶¹ However, these misgivings had no effect on the debate, congressional action, or, ultimately, U.S. approval for the accession.

rferl.org/a/1088181.html.

57 U.S. Senate, Congress, *Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate: October 7, 9, 22, 28, 30, and November 5, 1997*.

58 U.S. Congress, Senate, *NATO Membership for Albania and Croatia: Congressional Record Vol. 154 No. 153*, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., September 25, 2008.

59 "Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) Opposing North Macedonia membership in NATO," C-SPAN, October 22, 2019, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4824030/sen-rand-paul-opposing-north-macedonia-membership-nato>.

60 "Floor Statement on Montenegro Accession to NATO," Office of Senator Mike Lee, March 28, 2017, <https://www.lee.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/3/floor-statement-on-montenegro-accession-to-nato>; and "Dr. Rand Paul Votes Against Further Expanding NATO," Office of Senator Rand Paul, <https://www.paul.senate.gov/news/dr-rand-paul-votes-against-further-expanding-nato>.

61 The comment widely reported, for example, "'Very Aggressive': Trump Suggests Montenegro Could Cause World War Three," *The Guardian*, July 19, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jul/19/very-aggressive-trump-suggests-montenegro-could-cause-world-war-three>.

NEW MILITARY MISSIONS

As NATO's mission shifted toward integrating Europe, its military efforts shifted from in-theater defense against a large conventional threat to peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and humanitarian assistance missions, both within Europe and out of area.

This was a radical change from the Cold War when missions outside of Europe were regarded with great skepticism because they often involved the overseas empires of Britain and France. For example, De Gaulle cited lack of NATO support for the French in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu (Vietnam) and in Algeria as key reasons for withdrawing French troops from alliance operations in 1967.

As a result of the new approach, NATO deployed missions to Kosovo (1993–present), Afghanistan (2001–present), Libya (2011), and the Gulf of Aden (2012–2016).

NATO could expand its membership and take on new missions while cutting its military forces because of the benign security environment in Europe. All of Europe was cashing in on the peace dividend. NATO could also emphasize its role as a European integrator, guarantor of peace, and enhancer for democracy. The “open-door” policy could be fully open because new members did not place security demands on the existing members.

Phase 3: A Hostile and Reenergized Russia

Russian reaction to enlargement has changed from opposition in the 1990s to extreme hostility today. For the reasons described below, this hostility will likely continue and pose challenges to meeting Article 5 commitments to any new members, as it does for existing members. Russia does not get a veto over NATO membership, but military planners need to account for, if not the worst case, at least a plausible bad case in planning forces and budgets.

EVOLUTION OF RUSSIAN ATTITUDES

Even during the relatively benign period of East-West relations in the 1990s, Russia opposed eastward enlargement of NATO. At the beginning of the process, Gorbachev stated, “Any extension of the zone of NATO is unacceptable.” Yeltsin echoed these objections to NATO enlargement, telling President Clinton: “I see nothing but humiliation for Russia if [NATO expands] . . . for me to agree to the borders of NATO expanding towards those of Russia – that would constitute a betrayal on my part of the Russian people.”⁶²

The attitude sharpened with the rise Vladimir Putin, who strongly opposed eastward enlargement. In his speech to the NATO Bucharest conference in 2008, Putin was particularly clear about Ukraine and Georgia not joining the alliance. For Georgia, he noted: “To solve these [minority] problems, they need not enter NATO; they should have patience.” Regarding Ukraine, he stated, “When deciding such issues, realize that we have interests there as well. In Ukraine . . . one third are ethnic Russians.” He included a veiled threat: “If we introduce Ukraine into NATO, it may put the state on the verge of its existence.”⁶³

62 “Summary Report on One-on-One Meeting Between Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin, May 10, 1995, St. Catherine’s Hall, The Kremlin,” William J. Clinton Presidential Library, May 10, 1995, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16391-document-19-summary-report-one-one-meeting>.

63 Vladimir V. Putin, “Text of Putin’s Speech at NATO Summit,” Unian, (speech, Bucharest, Romania, April 2, 2008), <https://www.unian.info/world/111033-text-of-putin-s-speech-at-nato-summit-bucharest-april-2-2008.html>.

Putin's attitude arose from several factors, but especially perceived humiliation by the United States and NATO and the loss of superpower status. Perceived humiliations included the defeat of its client Serbia in 1999, recognition of autonomy for Kosovo over Serbian (and Russian) objections, and U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Indeed, Putin described the collapse of the Soviet Union as the greatest disaster of the twentieth century.⁶⁴ No longer was Russia one of the two world superpowers. Now, it was relegated to second-tier status.

PROMISES REGARDING ENLARGEMENT

A key driver of Russian hostility has been the differing perceptions about whether the United States and NATO promised not to move NATO east when the Soviet Union withdrew from East Germany and Eastern Europe. Russia argues yes; the United States and NATO argue no.

The Russian government maintains that NATO enlargement betrays promises that NATO would not encroach on Eastern Europe upon the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. President Putin frequently cites NATO secretary general Manfred Woerner's speech in Brussels on May 17, 1990, in claims that the West lied to Russia about its enlargement aspirations. Woerner had stated: "The fact that we [NATO] are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee."⁶⁵ Putin has repeatedly used this speech to demand that "[Russia] has the right to ask: against whom is this [NATO] enlargement intended? And what happened to the assurances our Western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact?"⁶⁶

The United States argues that such a promise never existed, and that this idea emerged from Putin's anti-NATO sentiments. In the U.S. view, the Woerner speech does not address the prospects for NATO enlargement eastward, but rather articulates NATO members' agreement to not deploy non-German forces or weapons systems in the former East Germany after the Soviet withdrawal. The United States makes similar arguments about James Baker's infamous "not one inch eastward" assurance in his meeting with Gorbachev on February 9, 1990.⁶⁷

Both sides have credible evidence to substantiate their argument, and resolution, if possible, goes beyond the scope of this report. The key insight for this project is that Russia truly believes that it has been wronged by NATO enlargement, and that has stoked hostility and a threat of military response to enlargement.

RUSSIAN SECURITY CONCERNS

Beyond NATO enlargement, Russia has a millennium of tragic experience with what happens when powerful military forces appear on its periphery. From the Mongols of the thirteenth century, to the

64 Associated Press, "Putin: Soviet Collapse a 'Genuine Tragedy'," NBC News, April 25, 2005, <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna7632057>.

65 Secretary General Manfred Woerner, "The Atlantic Alliance and European Security in the 1990s," NATO, (speech, Brussels, Belgium, 17 May 1990), https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1990/s900517a_e.htm.

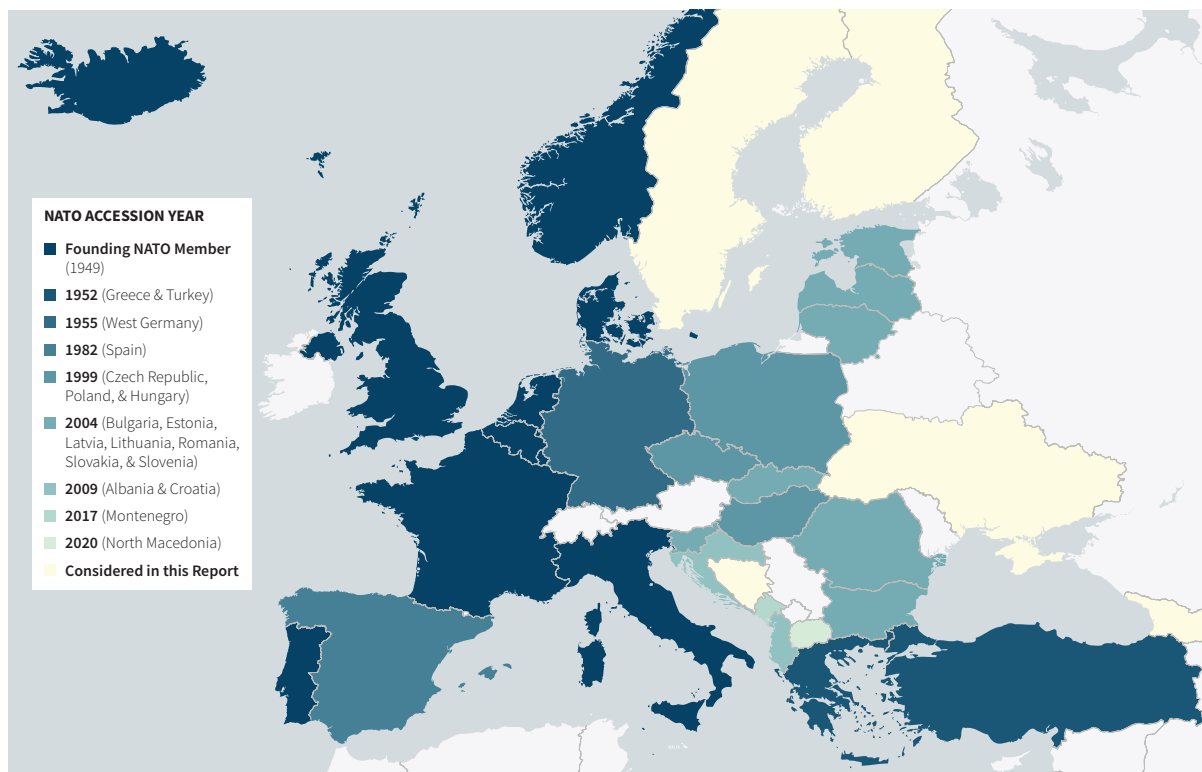
66 Vladimir Putin, "Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy," (speech, Munich, Germany, February 12, 2007), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html>.

67 James Goldgeier, "Promises Made, Promises Broken? What Yeltsin Was Told About NATO in 1993 and Why it Matters," War on the Rocks, November 22, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/11/promises-made-promises-broken-what-yeltsin-was-told-about-nato-in-1993-and-why-it-matters-2/>. Goldgeier's article contains a good description of the debate, and although he believes that NATO did not ultimately make an assurance against eastward enlargement, he notes that there was much room for confusion.

Swedes of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, to Napoleon in the nineteenth century, to the Kaiser and Hitler in the twentieth century, powerful foreign armies have invaded the Russian heartland, devastating its people and threatening its government.

These security concerns are misplaced regarding NATO. NATO’s unwillingness to take aggressive action in general and difficulty taking any action at all make an attack on Russia look inconceivable. The five potential NATO members discussed in this report do not field substantial offensive capabilities that could threaten Russia. Further, NATO has always recognized Russian sovereignty and has never expressed an intention of replacing the current regime or of infringing on its territory. Nevertheless, Russian security concerns, even paranoia, have deep historical roots and are well earned. NATO enlargement taps into this tragic historical narrative.⁶⁸

Figure 3: NATO Accession Year



RECOGNIZING BUT NOT ACCEPTING RUSSIAN ATTITUDES

Recognizing Russia’s tragic historical experience and current hostility to enlargement does not require acceptance of a Russian sphere of influence. NATO and the United States have been adamant that

68 Michael O’Hanlon, a working group member, felt strongly on this point: “Russia’s reaction was predictable, and predicted—by the likes of George Kennan, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Bill Perry. Moreover, NATO’s concept of enlargement was not strategically consistent with the original purpose of the alliance, which was to fortify strategically crucial areas of the world (three of George Kennan’s original five centers of strategic/industrial/military capability) against a potentially hostile threat—a clear and present danger. NATO was not then seen as a tool of democracy promotion; nor was it seen as an instrument that should extend to cover or include every possibly worthy American partner in the region (for example, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, and Finland). But the overconfidence of the 1990s and early 2000s changed this logic, in my view, and made the enlargement process too much about soft power, when NATO’s core purpose should and must ultimately still revolve around Article V and the mutual-defense pledge.” Email to author, July 22, 2021.

nations are free to choose their security arrangements and internal policies regardless of the views of powerful neighbors. Russia does not get a veto on NATO membership.

However, NATO planning for forces and budgets must recognize this likely hostility and account for it. It is a situation similar to the Cold War. NATO and the United States did not recognize the legitimacy of Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe and its imposition of communist governments on those countries. Nevertheless, military planners had to deal with the fact that Soviet forces were stationed in Eastern Europe in strength and postured for an offensive against the West.

Russian Military Capabilities Today

Russian military forces collapsed after the Cold War, when Russia no longer had the economic strength to sustain the vast military establishment maintained under the Soviet Union. These forces remained weak as NATO expanded eastwards in the 1990s and 2000s. The poor showing of Russian forces in the 2008 war against Georgia sparked a military revival. Those forces are now more ready, modernized, and skilled than before, though they are smaller.

Collapse and Reform

With the end of the Cold War, resources available to the military plummeted. Under the Soviet Union, the military had received 22 to 24 percent of GDP. That percentage declined in the 1990s, even as the economy also shrank. Russia was thus unable to maintain the old Soviet military system but had not yet developed a new system.

In 2008, Russia easily defeated the smaller and less-skilled forces of Georgia, but Russian forces performed relatively poorly against such a weak opponent. Equipment was old and obsolescent, there were many instances of fratricide, and operations were poorly coordinated. These weaknesses—combined with the nationalist outlook of the Putin regime—induced Russia to undertake major military reforms.

As Katherine Harris and Frederick Kagan observed, “The reforms sought to transform the massive Soviet legacy military organization into an agile, combat ready force able to mobilize quickly and deploy expeditionary forces.” Gone was the “bloated and inefficient Soviet era military structure.”⁶⁹ Thus, the

69 Katherine Harris and Frederick Kagan, *Russia's Military Posture: Ground Forces Order of Battle* (Washington, DC: Institute for

post-2008 military reforms improved the quality of Russian officers, suppressed hazing (“*dedovschina*”), streamlined a complex four-tiered command structure into a more flexible two-tiered structure, created a corps of “enlisted professionals,” and launched a 10-year weapons modernization program.⁷⁰

Readiness has also improved. As a CSIS study noted: “Since 2013, large-scale surprise inspections, complex two-sided tactical exercises, and major sports-like Army competition events such as ‘tank biathlon’ and ‘air darts’ have made the Russian Armed Forces much more fit and prepared for real deployment. Ammunition consumption in exercises has increased by five to seven times compared to 2012.”⁷¹ The Swedish think tank FOI similarly noted that the Russian military is no longer the mass mobilization military of the Soviet era: “The armed forces have a higher degree of preparedness compared to earlier periods and nominal units correspond to a much higher degree of what is available.”⁷²

To implement the reforms, Russian military budgets steadily increased from the low point of the 1990s—from 159 billion rubles in 1999 to 4,462 billion rubles in 2020 (\$17.5 billion to \$61.7 billion, in constant FY 2019 dollars).⁷³

The modernization program has not been evenly implemented. Nuclear forces, air defense, electronic warfare, and precision munitions have received highest priority. Navy surface ships have been lower priority. Nevertheless, about 70 percent of military equipment had been modernized by 2020.

Internal mobility has improved with maintenance of an excellent rail system and significant airlift capabilities designed to move forces around the vast Russian territory. Russia has a large advantage in having internal lines and being able to move forces rapidly to achieve local superiority.

Logistics and strategic mobility have also improved, but capabilities are limited—designed for local and regional conflicts and not for global deployment. A U.S. division, for example, has many times more logistical support available than a comparable Russian unit.

Russian Military Today

Russian forces today are much different from the Soviet forces of the Cold War and are closer in capabilities to those of the United States, though there are some important differences.

The first difference is in size. Russian forces are much smaller than those maintained during the Soviet Union and smaller even than those of the United States today.

the Study of War, March 2018), 10, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/russias-military-posture>.

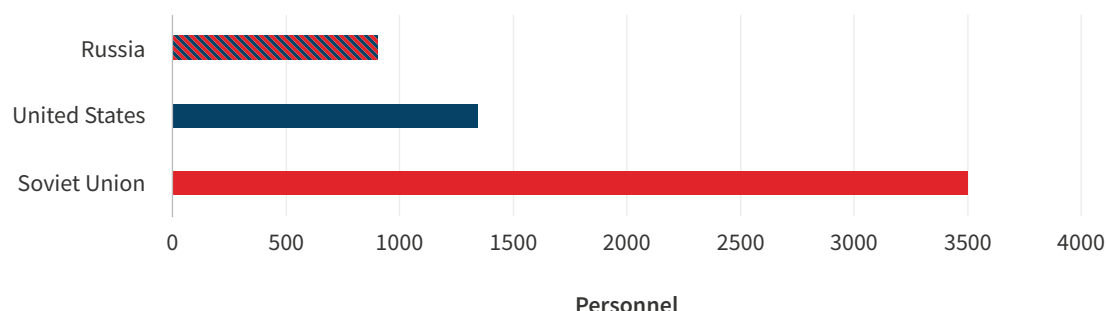
70 Jim Nichols, *Russian Military Reform and Defense Policy*, CRS Report No. R42006 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 2011), 11, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42006.pdf>.

71 Anton Lavrov, *Russian Military Reforms from Georgia to Syria* (Washington, DC: CSIS, November 2018), 5, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russian-military-reforms-georgia-syria>. Bartles discusses the transformation of enlisted personnel with the creation of “enlisted professionals,” in which category Bartles includes longer-term enlisted personnel and warrant officers. He argues that these are specialists, not quite the equivalent of U.S. noncommissioned officers, because they are not given the same level of leadership training. Charles Bartles, “Russian armed forces: enlisted professionals,” *NCO Journal*, March 2019, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331652482_Russian_Armed_Forces_Enlisted_Professionals.

72 Fredrik Westerlund and Suzanne Oxenstierna, *Russian Military Capability in a 10-Year Perspective—2019*, FOI (Stockholm, Sweden: Swedish Defense Research Agency, 2019): 19, 23, <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=-FOI-R--4758--SE>.

73 “Military Expenditure Databases,” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

Figure 4: Russian and U.S. Force Sizes (Personnel)



Note: Russian data for 2020; U.S. data for 2021; Soviet data for 1982–1983.

Source: IISS, *The Military Balance 2020* (London: IISS, 2020); IISS, *Military Balance 1982-1983* (London: IISS, 1982); Office of the Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), *Defense Budget Overview FY 2022* (Department of Defense: May 2021), Table A-5, https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2022/FY2022_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf.

To maintain these forces with the much smaller Russian economy, Russia must devote more of its economic effort to the military (4.3 percent of GDP) than the United States (3.3 percent). This level of military effort is much lower than during the Soviet Union but is sustainable over the long term. During the Cold War, for example, the United States spent 6 to 9 percent of GDP on defense and was able to sustain that for decades without damaging its economy.

Unlike the United States (since 1973) and the Soviet Union, Russia maintains its armed forces through both volunteers (called “contract” personnel) and conscription. About two-thirds of recruits are “contract,” and one-third are conscripts. The longer terms of contract soldiers have produced a higher-quality force. The Russian military has desired to move to an entirely contracted force, but the financial cost has been too high. There is, further, a desire to maintain the patriotic connection with communities through conscription.

Conscription does put a restriction on the employment of forces. Conscripts cannot be sent outside of Russia, so brigades typically deploy a battalion task force from contract soldiers in such situations.

Today’s Russian military structure is different from that of the Soviet Union and the United States in another way: it emphasizes active-duty forces and relies less on reservists. Because of universal conscription, the Soviet Union had a large active-duty force and an even larger reserve of former conscripts who could be recalled in an emergency. The United States maintains a large all-volunteer reserve that trains constantly and maintains a relatively high level of readiness. Although Russia has made efforts to create a reserve establishment, those efforts have been modest thus far. This means that Russia has a very strong active-duty force, but not the depth to sustain a long conflict.

Another difference between the Russian military today and that of the twentieth century is the sensitivity to casualties. Russian and Soviet forces during the world wars were infamous for their willingness to take massive casualties and endure great suffering. That is not the case today. During the war in Afghanistan during the 1980s, protests by the Russian population, especially Russian mothers’ groups, highlighted casualties and the costs of conflict. Russia has, therefore, designed a military to fight with skill and equipment rather than mass.

These reforms have succeeded in building a modern, ready, and high-quality—but smaller—military designed to operate near the Russian homeland. When Russian military forces occupied Crimea in 2014, the results were much different than in 2008. As a RAND study noted, “While few were surprised by the annexation, many were surprised by the performance of the Russian armed forces. Russian soldiers in Crimea were competent, capable, and professional, three terms that had not been applied to the Russian military in quite some time. The Russians themselves seemed to be no less surprised—and proud.”⁷⁴

The proxy war into Eastern Ukraine and the intervention in Syria also demonstrated considerable technical expertise. The operations, though relatively small, have given combat experience to many Russian military personnel.

In addition to the operations in Georgia, Crimea, and Ukraine, Russia has sent units to Syria for extended but limited combat operations. The Russian navy makes forays into the Eastern Mediterranean and occasionally into the North Atlantic. Russian patrol aircraft fly across the Atlantic. Small delegations of military personnel and contractors have been seen in Cuba, Venezuela, and Libya, as well as throughout other parts of Africa.⁷⁵

74 Keith Crane, Olga Oliker, and Brian Nichiporuk, *Trends in Russia's Armed Forces: An Overview of Budgets and Capabilities* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), 1, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2573.html.

75 For a description of how Russia uses private military contractors for regional and global influence, see Seth Jones et al., *Russia's Corporate Soldiers: The Global Expansion of Russia's Private Military Companies* (Washington, DC: CSIS, July 2021), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-corporate-soldiers-global-expansion-russias-private-military-companies>.

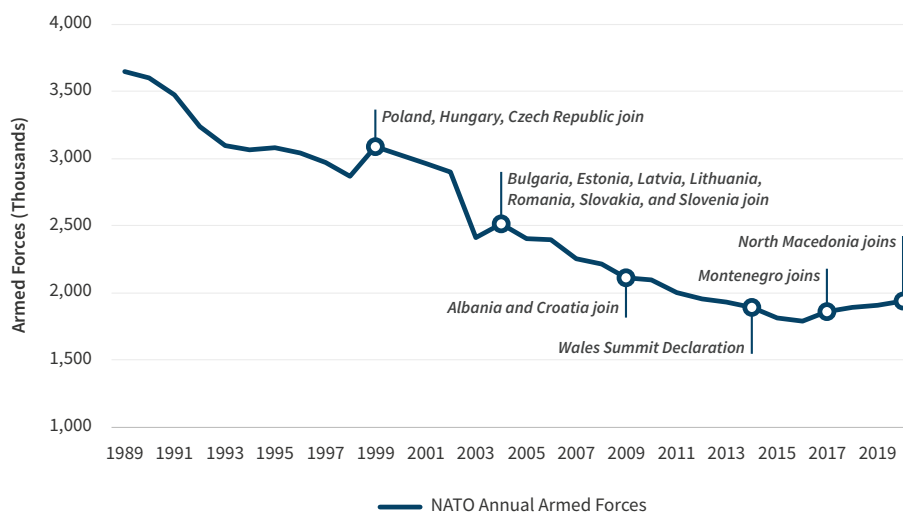
The Current State of NATO Forces and Military Budgets

NATO member states' defense budgets and force levels declined precipitously following the end of the Cold War. However, after Russia's seizure of Crimea in 2014 and its promotion of separatists in Eastern Ukraine, NATO's European members began to increase their defense expenditures. This has produced better-equipped forces with higher levels of readiness. In aggregate, the non-U.S. NATO members greatly outnumber and outspend Russia. In theory, they should be able to handle a Russian challenge. However, they have struggled to turn their military forces and budgets into deployable military capabilities. As a result, a large part of the burden for defending future NATO members will fall on the United States.

NATO Military Forces and Expenditures

As the chart below shows, the forces of non-U.S. NATO members measured by active-duty personnel have declined by 40 percent from the end of the Cold War, even as the alliance added 14 new members.

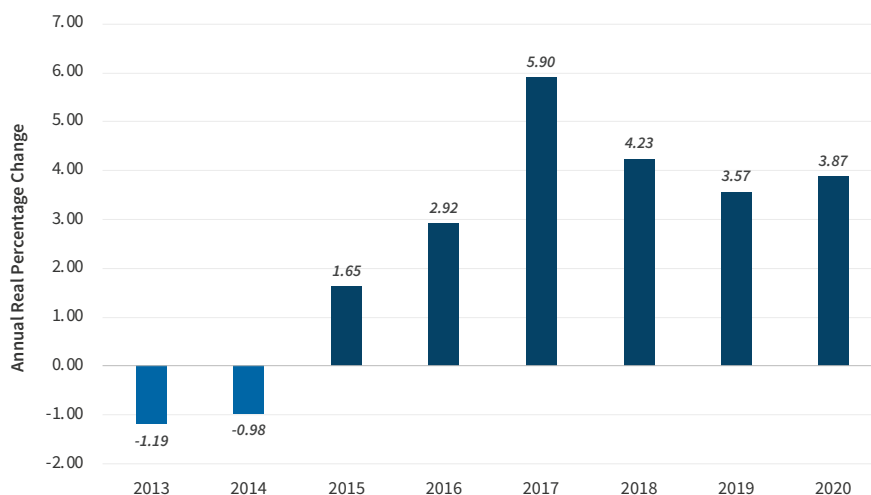
Figure 5: NATO Europe and Canadian Armed Forces Personnel, 1989–2020



Source: Authors' analysis based on multiple sources.

However, Russian actions in Crimea and Ukraine reenergized the alliance. At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO members set a goal of spending 2 percent of GDP on defense and a subsidiary goal of spending 20 percent of defense budgets on equipment acquisition.⁷⁶ This declaration has had an effect, with overall alliance spending increasing substantially.

Figure 6: NATO Europe and Canada Total Defense Expenditures, Annual Percentage Change



Source: Derived from NATO annual expenditure chart. Reported as percentages, based on 2015 prices and exchange rates. NATO, "Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013–2020)," press release, March 16, 2021, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/3/pdf/210316-pr-2020-30-en.pdf.

⁷⁶ "Wales Summit Declaration," NATO, September 5, 2014, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?mode=pressrelease.

Eleven states now meet the 2 percent target goal.⁷⁷ Member states on NATO's eastern flank in particular have taken steps to meet, and in some cases exceed, the goal. This includes Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Greece, and Slovakia. France, Norway, and the United Kingdom also meet the goal.

Focusing on force size and defense expenditures leaves out important qualitative indicators such as military readiness and force deployability. Further, this does not reflect the relative national contributions to NATO's ongoing missions, both inside and outside the European theater. Nevertheless, credible Article 5 capabilities require fielded equipment and units, and these, ultimately, depend on adequate budgets.⁷⁸

These increased resources have allowed NATO to expand its capabilities, for example, with the NATO Readiness Initiative. That sets a goal of "four 30s": 30 infantry battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 naval ships, all available in 30 days. This builds on previous initiatives for a NATO response force and a 5,000-servicemember "spearhead force."⁷⁹

As Figure 8 shows, contributions of non-U.S. NATO members are highly skewed. The top three countries contribute 55 percent of total spending (the United Kingdom, Germany, and France) and 34 percent of total active-duty personnel (Turkey, France, and Germany). The top ten countries contribute 90 percent of total spending and 85 percent of personnel.⁸⁰ It matters greatly, therefore, what these few members do.

The United Kingdom, Germany, and France have all pledged to improve their military capabilities, though some of these improved capabilities will not appear until the 2030s or even the 2040s.

Germany falls far short of meeting the 2 percent goal (currently only spending about 1.5 percent) but is still the second-largest defense spender of the European members due to the size of its economy. Since 2014, it has increased its defense budget by 25 percent and has a plan to modernize its armed forces. However, the severe readiness shortfalls of German military forces have led some experts to conclude that Germany has a military designed for mobilization rather than current operations.⁸¹

77 NATO considers defense expenditures as all payments made for armed forces, allies, or the alliance overall as well as pension payments to retired military and civilians and expenditures for humanitarian and peacekeeping missions. This is a broader definition than the United States uses for its defense budget or even its national security ("050") budget function. "Defense Expenditures of NATO Countries (2014-2021)," NATO Public Diplomacy Division, June 1, 2021, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/6/pdf/210611-pr-2021-094-en.pdf.

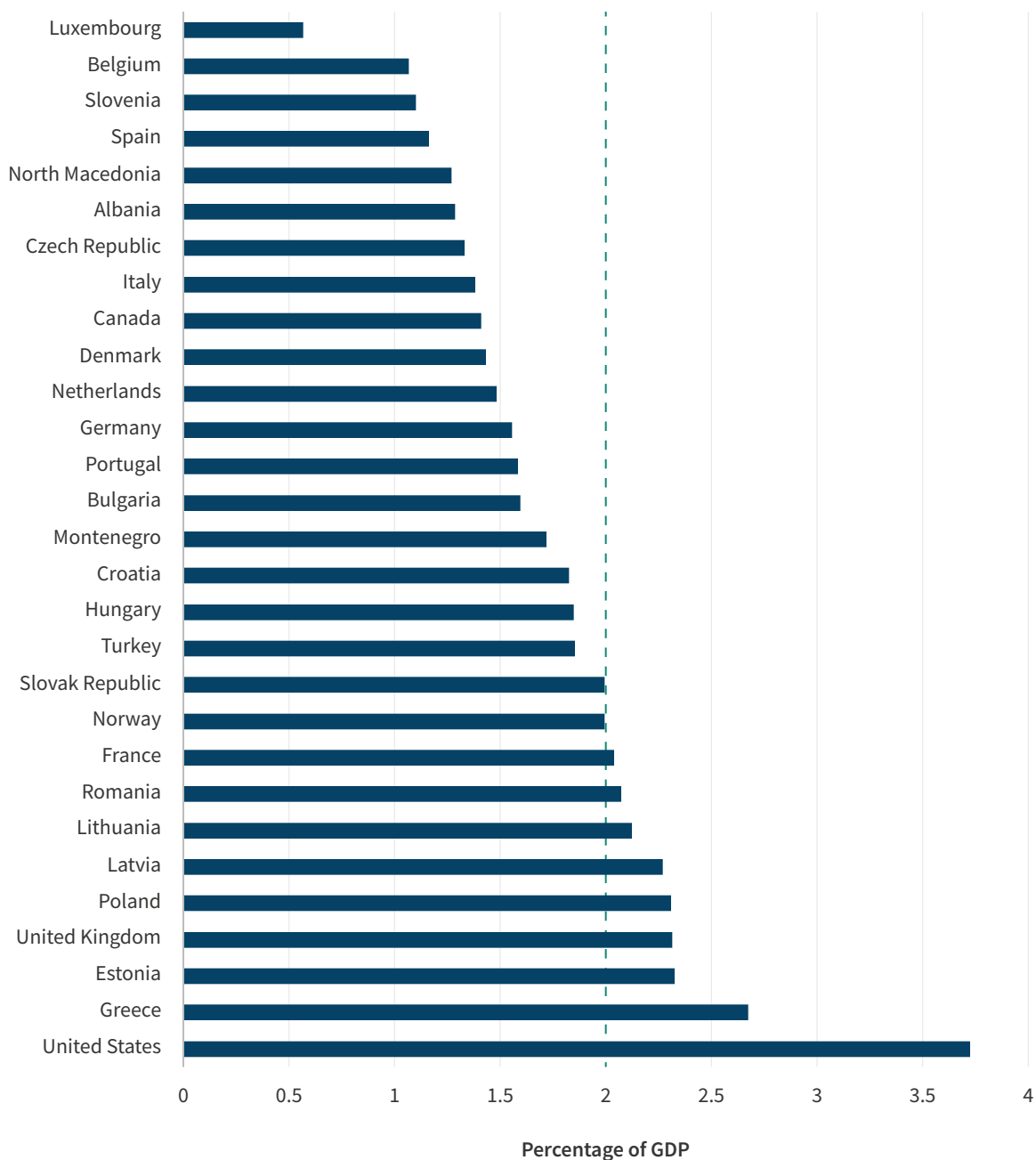
78 The value of the 2 percent of GDP defense spending requirement is hotly debated, with many experts arguing that it is too narrow a measure. See Kathleen Hicks et al., "Counting Dollars or Measuring Value: Defense Expenditure as a Share of GDP," *Defense360*, July 3, 2018, <https://defense360.csis.org/counting-dollars-or-measuring-value-defense-expenditure-as-a-share-of-gdp-2/>; Jan Techau, *The Politics of 2 Percent: NATO and the Security Vacuum in Europe* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015), https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_252_Techau_NATO_Final.pdf; and Todd Harrison and Seamus Daniels, "Bad Idea: Demanding Allies Spend Two Percent of GDP on Defense," *Defense360*, <https://defense360.csis.org/bad-idea-demanding-allies-spend-two-percent-of-gdp-on-defense/>.

79 "NATO Readiness Initiative," NATO, June 2018, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf-2018_06/20180608_1806-NATO-Readiness-Initiative_.pdf.

80 "Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2021)," NATO.

81 Interview with Professor Barry Posen, MIT, and member of project working group, April 9, 2021.

Figure 7: NATO Defense Expenditures as a Share of GDP in 2020



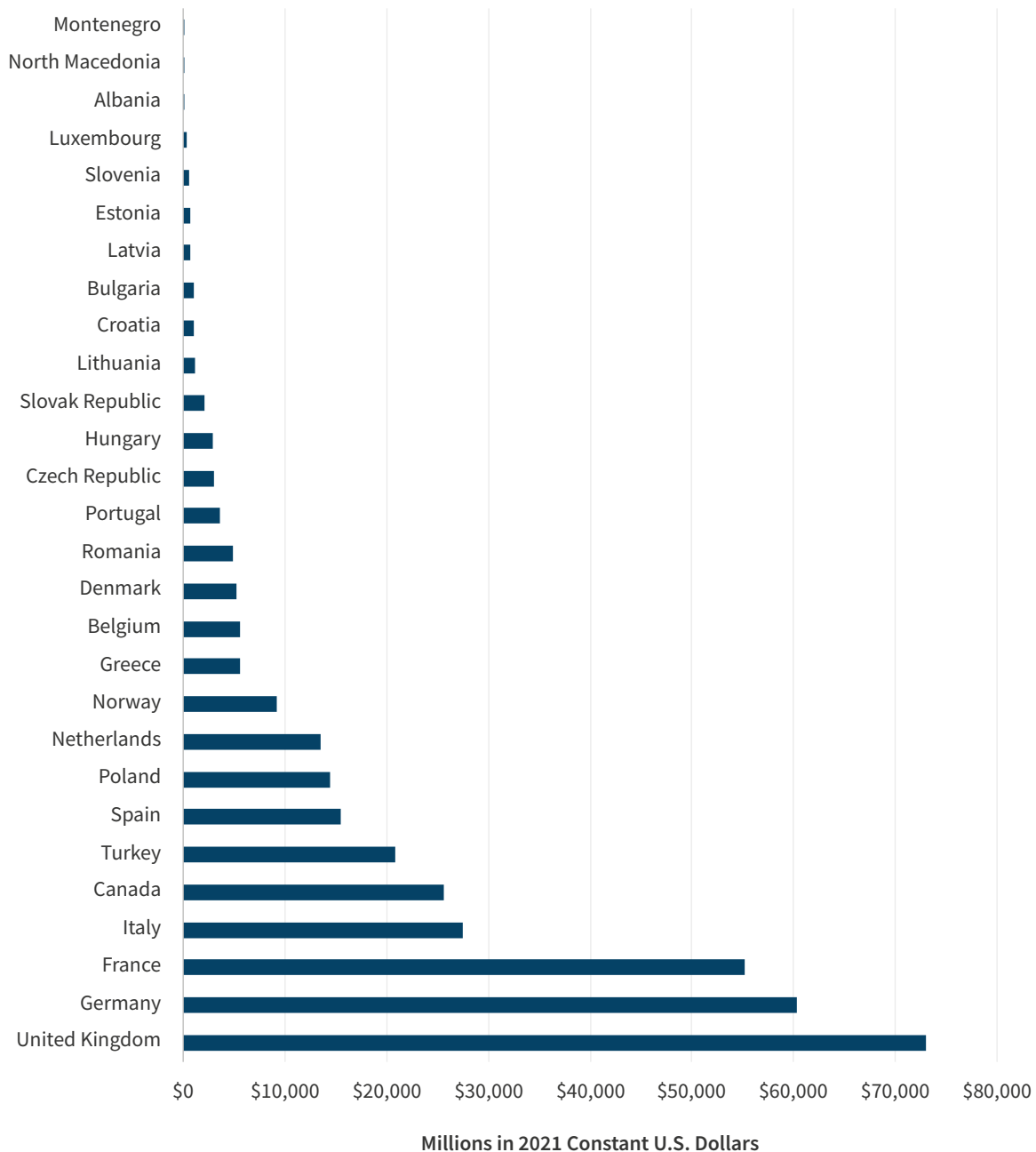
Note: Reported as percentages. Estimated in millions in 2015 constant U.S. dollars.

Source: NATO, "Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013–2020)."

France completed its Strategic Update 2021, which takes a traditional military view of threats and responses. It seeks "to prepare the armed forces to protect France and the French people more effectively against the threats of tomorrow." Regarding Russia, it sees "a balanced response that combines firmness and engagement, which has made it possible to initiate a candid dialogue with

Russia.” It also scolds other nations for not spending enough on defense: “Were Europeans to make further major cutbacks in their budgets, they would deal a fatal blow to the most fragile militaries and to Europe’s capacity for collective action.” It pledges continued increases in its defense budget consistent with the 2019–2025 Military Planning Law.⁸²

Figure 8: NATO Member States Defense Expenditures in 2020



Source: NATO, “Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013–2020).”

82 Ministère des Armées, *Strategic Update 2021* (Paris: 2021), 25, 28, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/605304/10175711/file/strategic-update%202021.pdf>.

The United Kingdom recently completed an “integrated foreign policy review” and complementary paper, *Defence in a Competitive Age*. These called for a “pro-active, forward deployed, persistent presence around the world” and noted numerous military modernization efforts. The review also pledged increased resources. However, military budgets will need to compete with other priorities, such as climate change and international development, and the forces will get smaller, with the army declining to 72,500.⁸³

Readiness Challenges for NATO’s European Members

The non-U.S. NATO members produce good capabilities for crisis response, small contingencies, and security cooperation, conducting many such missions since the end of the Cold War.

For large-scale operations, the capabilities are severely limited. Compared with Russia, whose armed forces were described in Chapter 4, the spending and forces of non-U.S. NATO members are far greater. However, NATO has difficulty deploying even small forces. NATO, which fielded 40 divisions (about 360 combat battalions) in Northern Europe during the Cold War, strained to stand up four battalion task forces in the Baltic states.⁸⁴ As a CSIS study on NATO concluded, “We assess that European states are likely to face significant challenges conducting large-scale combat missions, particularly in such areas as heavy maneuver forces, naval combatants, and support capabilities like logistics and fire support.”⁸⁵

The EU Court of Justice recently ruled that militaries, when conducting peacetime training, must abide by civilian workforce rules that limit workweeks to 35 hours. Some countries, such as Germany, already apply such rules. While such rules may enhance servicemember protection, they reflect a lack of urgency and constitute major barriers to achieving high readiness.⁸⁶

FOI, a Swedish think tank, assessed the readiness of NATO forces and found severe problems. It noted that members have different threat perceptions, with many not seeing an immediate military challenge and being content to build deterrence forces rather than forces for a credible defense.⁸⁷ Several factors inhibit readiness:

- Overlapping responsibilities between NATO commanders, troop-contributing nations, and host nations complicate reinforcements.

83 HM Government, *Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (London: March 2021), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age_-_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf; and Louisa Brooke-Holland, “Defence In a Competitive World,” House of Commons Library, March 22, 2021, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9181/>.

84 NATO Cold War strengths from: IISS, *The Military Balance 1982-1983* (London: 1982): 132.

85 Seth Jones and Rachel Ellehuus, *The Future of European Military Capabilities and Missions* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2021), forthcoming.

86 “The Court of Justice provides guidance on the instances in which the Directive concerning certain aspects of the organization of working time does not apply to activities carried out by military personnel,” Court of Justice of the European Union, July 15, 2021, <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2021-07/cp210131en.pdf>

87 Unless otherwise noted, data from Eva Hagström Frisell, Robert Dalsjö, Jakob Gustafsson, and John Rydqvist, *Deterrence by Reinforcement: The Strengths and Weaknesses of NATO’s Evolving Defence Strategy* (Stockholm: FOI, November 2019): 40, 41, 46, <https://www.foi.se/rapportsammanfattning?reportNo=FOI-R--4843--SE>; and Alma Dahl and Per Olesson, *Regional Defense Economic Outlook: Europe and Russia* (Stockholm: FOI, June 2021), <https://www.foi.se/en/foi/reports.html>.

- NATO's strongest European members remain its western members. NATO's eastern members, despite their recent increases in military spending, have comparatively weak militaries in absolute terms. This means that reinforcements to threatened members must travel a long distance.
- NATO deployment is hindered by dependence on U.S. strategic lift capacity: "There are doubts that U.S. sealift capacity . . . would be available in sufficient quantities for large-scale movement of forces within a reasonable time."
- Physically moving forces within Europe is difficult: existing road and rail infrastructure is not sufficient to move heavy military equipment, and there are legal and bureaucratic impediments to moving military equipment with respect to diplomatic clearance, transportation safety regulations, and differing ammunition transport standards between countries. A 2017 study from the U.S. Army concluded that the "reality is that it is extremely difficult to provide sustainment to exercises and forces deployed into Eastern Europe and the Baltic regions due to cumbersome and time-consuming requirements to gain diplomatic and security clearances for convoys. The long lead time (normally 30 days), specificity required, and inability to change requests make the process a great hindrance."⁸⁸
- The report estimates that it takes two months for deployment from Fort Riley, Kansas, to Zagan, Poland, and five weeks for equipment to travel from Fort Bliss, Texas, to Drawsko Pomorskie, Poland.
- Germany suffers from a lack of equipment. Its capability to "marshal and deploy heavy . . . formations of brigade size [is] low." Movement for the German high-readiness VJTF brigade from Munster to Zagan, Poland, takes approximately 10 days.
- The second stage deploys the Initial Follow-on Forces Group, which is comprised of brigades from previous years' VJTFs. These forces move within 30 to 45 days. The third stage deploys the NRF Follow-on Forces Group, which FOI estimates could take months to deploy.
- Dutch and Norwegian forces had similar deployment times during the NATO strategic mobility exercise Noble Jump.

As commentators have noted, Russia punches above its weight while NATO punches below its weight.⁸⁹

U.S. Capabilities and Forces in Europe

Unsurprisingly, the United States has the largest defense expenditures by far among NATO members. While the NATO European states and Canada spent a combined total of \$363 billion on defense, the United States spent \$811 billion, more than twice as much.⁹⁰ The United States does, however, have global responsibilities that the European members of NATO generally do not.

88 Leo Michel, "Lift the Tollgates: Europe needs greater cross-border military mobility," *FIIA, FIIA Comment* 22, 2017, 1, https://upi-live.storage.googleapis.com/2017/10/comment22_eng.pdf; and Center for Army Lessons Learned, "Strategic Landpower in Europe Special Study," *Center for Army Lessons Learned* 5, no. 18 (2017): 63.

89 Andrew Higgins, "Putin's Russia, Punching Above its Weight, Keeps Adversaries Off Balance," *New York Times*, December 23, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/23/world/europe/russia-putin.html>.

90 "Defense Expenditures of NATO Countries (2014-2021)," NATO. Note: NATO calculates defense expenditures in a different way from the United States budgeting practice, so the totals do not align with standard U.S. budget categories.

Despite this greater spending, U.S. forces in Europe have declined in parallel with those of the non-U.S. allies as U.S. attention turned to the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific. Total U.S. military personnel declined from 2.2 million in 1988 to 1.4 million in 2021. U.S. forces in Europe have declined from 310,000 in 1989 to 64,400 in 2021.⁹¹

In 2012 and 2013, the United States deactivated two U.S. Army heavy brigades (the 170th Infantry and 172nd Infantry in Germany), leaving only two permanently stationed combat brigades in Europe, down from a Cold War level of fourteen.⁹²

The European Reassurance Initiative/European Deterrence Initiative (described below) has partially reversed this decline, providing funds to maintain the level of U.S. forces in Europe and to rotate a heavy brigade into Eastern Europe. Unlike most NATO forces, the United States maintains ready and deployable forces and spends heavily on readiness and wartime sustainability.

91 Military personnel totals from Office of the Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), *National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2021* (Department of Defense: April 2020), Table 7-5, https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2021/FY21_Green_Book.pdf. Total includes full time guard and reserve. U.S. forces in Europe for 1989 from IISS, *The Military Balance, 1987-1988*; for 2021 from “Military and Civilian Personnel by Service/Agency by State/Country,” Defense Manpower Data Center, March 2021, <https://dwp.dmdc.osd.mil/dwp/app/dod-data-reports/workforce-reports>.

92 IISS, *The Military Balance 1982-1983*, 132.

Defending Recently Joined Members

Learning from History

NATO enlargement has produced great political and diplomatic benefits. It has furthered the goal of a Europe “whole, free, and at peace.” It has encouraged the building of democratic institutions. It has eased border disputes and suppressed lingering revanchism.

Nevertheless, because of the changed European security environment, defending new members has introduced military requirements that were not originally expected. These requirements give some insights into what might be required for future enlargement. The analysis also indicates that defending all the existing members will be challenging, and it is not clear that NATO’s ability to do so is fully credible.

ERI/EDI Funding, 2014–2022

One clear cost for the United States has been the establishment of the European Reassurance Initiative/European Deterrence Initiative (ERI/EDI). As late as 2014, the Obama administration’s Quadrennial Defense Review saw Russia as both a competitor and an opportunity for cooperation, particularly in counterterrorism.⁹³ That all changed in 2014 with the Russian seizure of Crimea and armed intrusions into Eastern Ukraine.

In response, President Obama pledged in May 2014 to counter Russian aggression: “Russia’s recent actions recall the days when Soviet tanks rolled into Eastern Europe. . . . NATO is the strongest alliance the world has ever known . . . but we’re now working with NATO allies . . . where our Eastern allies must be

93 Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington, DC: March 2014), https://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2014_quadrennial_defense_review.pdf.

reassured.”⁹⁴ On June 3, 2014, President Obama announced the ERI. The ERI was designed “to take actions that increase the capability, readiness, and responsiveness of NATO forces to address any threat and that aid in deterring further destabilizing activities.” The funding would go toward improving infrastructure in Eastern Europe to facilitate movement of NATO forces should that be necessary, retaining in Europe some U.S. forces that had been scheduled for return to the United States, improving pre-positioned equipment to allow more rapid deployment of U.S. forces to Europe, and expanding training programs in Eastern Europe.⁹⁵ The ERI represented the first growth in U.S. force posture in Europe after decades of force cuts.

Originally set at \$1 billion, the ERI was viewed as a one-time emergency expenditure. However, because the Russian challenge was long-term and the Eastern European countries, particularly the Baltic states, were highly vulnerable, the ERI not only continued but expanded. In early 2018, the ERI was renamed the EDI, to better reflect the initiative’s purpose. The EDI peaked at \$6.5 billion a year. From FY 2014 to FY 2021, funding totaled \$28 billion (now \$31.7 billion with the proposed FY 2022 amount).

Reflecting the initiative’s emergency nature, the administration put the ERI in the war funding account (Overseas Contingency Operations). This not only emphasized the temporary and unexpected nature of the initiative but also circumvented the budget caps and therefore did not require an offset against existing programs. Congress readily approved the initiative.

Table 2: Funding for the ERI/EDI

FY	\$BILLION
2014	1.0
2015	1.0
2016	0.8
2017	3.4
2018	4.8
2019	6.5
2020	6.0
2021	4.5
2022 (proposed)	3.7
Total	31.7

Source: Compiled from multiple sources.

General Tod Wolters, supreme allied commander of Europe, recently testified before Congress on the importance of EDI funding, stating that, “Through EDI, we have enhanced our presence in the theater to assure Allies and deter adversaries. . . . EDI funding for exercises, training, and building partner capacity programs enhance the readiness and interoperability of U.S. and Alliance forces. EDI funds have also improved our ability to respond using pre-positioned stocks and improved theater infrastructure.”⁹⁶

Although the funding level has declined some in recent years, the initiative will likely continue at \$4 billion a year, given the Biden administration’s public commitments to European allies. Elimination or deep cuts would be seen as evidence of a U.S. withdrawal from Europe, endangerment of Eastern European NATO members, and an acquiescence to Russia.

94 Barack H. Obama, “Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony,” White House, (speech, May 28, 2014), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony>.

95 “Fact Sheet: European Reassurance Initiative and Other US Efforts in Support of NATO Allies and Partners,” White House, June 3, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/02/02/fact-sheet-fy2017-european-reassurance-initiative-budget-request>.

96 Tod D. Wolters, Statement before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, February 25, 2020, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/download/wolters_02-25-20.

RAND Baltic Force Analysis

In 2014 and 2015, RAND ran a series of wargames on defending the Baltic states from a rapid Russian attack. The results were stark: “As currently postured, NATO cannot successfully defend the territory of its most exposed members. . . . The longest it has taken Russian forces to reach the outskirts of the Estonian and/or Latvian capitals of Tallinn and Riga, respectively, is 60 hours.”⁹⁷

The study made several further points:

- Rapid initial defeat would leave NATO with unattractive options: a bloody counteroffensive, escalation, or temporary acceptance.
- The light forces of the Baltic states and the rapidly deployable forces of NATO would be inadequate in the face of Russian heavy forces.
- Airpower could slow attackers but alone could not stop the attack.
- The Baltic states’ larger cities would be turned into battlefields and devastated.
- A NATO force of about seven brigades, including three heavy armored brigades with enablers, might prevent rapid defeat.

The study proposed that the U.S. Army expand by three armored brigade combat teams, with upfront costs of \$13 billion and annual operating costs of \$2.7 billion. Some of these new forces would need to be stationed in the Baltic states because of the long deployment times involved even for forces coming from Germany. (Note: CSIS’s Force Cost Calculator puts the annual cost for three such brigades higher, at \$7.7 billion, because it includes both enablers and indirect costs.)

RAND was not alone in making this determination, although it was most explicit about forces and requirements. Many others have reached similar conclusions. For example, a CSIS study, after reviewing a variety of wargames and analyses, concluded: “We have low confidence that European states will possess the capabilities to successfully conduct high-end missions in the Baltics without—or even with—the United States.”⁹⁸

Since RAND conducted its study, all three Baltic countries have expanded their military capabilities by increasing their military spending, expanding recruiting, including via conscription, and modernizing equipment. The problem for these states is that they are so small that they cannot generate the military forces needed to deter, defeat, or even sufficiently delay an attack by the much more powerful Russian military.⁹⁹

NATO is rotating forces into the region and conducting exercises. It has established four battalion-sized battle groups, under the leadership of the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and the United States (collectively referred to as an enhanced Forward Presence). In an emergency, these battle groups would reinforce the militaries of the Baltic states and slow a Russian incursion. Their day-to-day

97 David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2016), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html.

98 Jones and Ellehuus, *The Future of European Military Capabilities and Missions*.

99 Stephen J. Flanagan et al., *Deterring Russian Aggression in the Baltic States Through Resilience and Resistance* (Washington, DC: RAND, 2019), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2779.html.

presence, however, is small. The headquarters elements are permanent; the subordinate combat units are mostly on call, with some present intermittently for exercises and training.¹⁰⁰

NATO has an extensive annual series of exercises, many of which aim to enhance the defense of Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. In 2021, nine major exercises focused on Eastern Europe and the Baltic states specifically. For example, Spring Storm 21 in Estonia trained NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battlegroups and other allied forces. Iron Wolf II 21 in Lithuania conducted "live exercise in the land domain, aimed at training NATO's eFP and enhancing the interoperability of multinational forces."¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, a large gap remains between what RAND identified as a minimum defensive force and what the Baltic states and other NATO members can generate. The battle groups would fulfill the need for one, or perhaps two, of the seven brigades that RAND identified as the minimum defensive requirement. It is unlikely, therefore, that they could hold out long enough for NATO reinforcements to arrive. Early reinforcements would be mostly light infantry, brought in by air. Although these forces could arrive relatively quickly, they lack the heavy weapons to stop Russian heavy forces.

Slowing NATO Military Decisionmaking

NATO decisions are taken unanimously. This is appropriate for an alliance of sovereign states, which retain individual decisionmaking powers.

However, the larger the number of member states, the more difficult the decisionmaking process. Admiral James Stavridis, former supreme commander of NATO, likened NATO decisionmaking as having, at that time, "28 pairs of hands on the steering wheel."¹⁰² This has become a particular challenge as some states have developed different views about the Russian threat.

The decisionmaking process has a military effect because speed of reaction has always been a key requirement for effective action by a defensive alliance. The faster NATO reacts, the more likely it is to contain any military incursion. Slow reactions and lost territory require a costly counteroffensive that increases the risk of escalation and may not be supported by NATO populations.

Decision time has received renewed attention recently because many commentators have expressed concerns about a Russian *fait accompli*—rapid establishment of facts on the ground before NATO can react effectively which force NATO into the role of "aggressor."¹⁰³ Although these concerns have focused on the Baltic states, they would apply also to NATO enlargement since Georgia, Ukraine, and Finland border Russia and Sweden is just across the Baltic Sea. All are vulnerable to surprise attacks and *faits accomplis*.

100 "Boosting NATO's Presence in the South and Southeast," NATO, April 26, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm.

101 "Key Allied and NATO Exercises in 2021, March 2021," NATO, March 2021, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/3/pdf/2103-factsheet_exercises.pdf.

102 James Stavridis, *The Accidental Admiral* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014).

103 Elbridge Colby, "Against the Great Powers: Reflections on Balancing Nuclear and Conventional Power," *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (November 2018), https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/73731/TNSR_Vol_2_Issue_1_Colby.pdf?sequence=2.

Defending Potential Future Members

Forces and Budget Costs

This chapter discusses the policies and circumstances that would shape NATO's defense of potential future members: nuclear weapons, U.S. global commitments, concepts for defense, gray zone conflict versus conventional war, and burden sharing. It concludes the discussion of context with an argument about why wars of aggression are still a threat.

The Role of Nuclear Weapons

Hovering over any discussion of a NATO-Russia conflict is the specter of nuclear weapons. In theory, nuclear weapons provide the ultimate guarantee of NATO territorial integrity. However, planning for their use in a conventional conflict today is highly problematic.

Nuclear weapons have been a part of NATO's arsenal since the beginning of the alliance. NATO continues to maintain a nuclear capability, though at a much lower level than during the Cold War. As NATO states, "Nuclear weapons are a core component of NATO's overall capabilities for deterrence and defence, alongside conventional and missile defence forces."¹⁰⁴

However, the policy of integrating nuclear weapons into the defense of Europe has always been highly controversial. Their use would potentially kill millions even if employed "tactically," and the military results are highly uncertain. NATO publics have frequently expressed their opposition, from the "ban the bomb" protests of the late 1950s and 1960s to the anti-Pershing II protests of the 1980s. This concern

104 "NATO's Nuclear Deterrence Policy and Forces," NATO, May 11, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50068.htm#:~:text=Nuclear%20weapons%20are%20a%20core,will%20remain%20a%20nuclear%20alliance.

drove the United States and NATO to adopt a policy of flexible response in the early 1960s whereby NATO improved its conventional defenses in order to reduce the need of reliance on nuclear weapons. This policy is still valid. Although more expensive because of the relatively high cost of conventional forces, it is ultimately more sustainable politically, morally, and militarily. Further, the NATO-Russia Founding Act prohibits the stationing of nuclear weapons on territory of new NATO members.¹⁰⁵

Because there are strong moral, political, and military reasons to minimize the role of nuclear weapons, a policy that accepted conventional force weakness and explicitly relied on the early use of nuclear weapons would be highly problematic. Hence, the analysis in this report focuses on conventional conflict and avoids options that threaten the use of nuclear weapons to compensate for conventional weakness.

This does not eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in NATO defense planning. The 2021 NATO summit communiqué notes, “If the fundamental security of any of its members were to be threatened, however, NATO has the capabilities and resolve to impose costs on an adversary that would be unacceptable and far outweigh the benefits that any adversary could hope to achieve.”¹⁰⁶ However, conventional defense has priority.

Concepts for Defense: Forward Defense vs. Counteroffensive

In considering a concept for defense, NATO planners have long faced a difficult choice: maintaining a forward defense that holds territory but is potentially fragile or conducting a mobile defense that gives up ground initially and requires a later counteroffensive.

Mobile defense has many militarily attractive features and figures prominently in discussions about maneuver warfare. However, the politics are difficult. Nations are loath to cede any territory to an adversary, even temporarily, even though a strategic withdrawal might make military sense. Further, counteroffensives inevitably expand the geographical scope of operations and often the political scope as well. These enlargements raise the stakes of a conflict and could induce the use nuclear weapons.¹⁰⁷

There are other reasons that favor forward defense:

- It is much easier to hold territory than to reconquer it. The time delay between the attacking forces achieving their objective and the launch of a counteroffensive allows the invaders to strengthen their defensive position.¹⁰⁸

105 “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation, Signed in Paris, France,” NATO, May 27, 1997, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm. The act states: “The member States of NATO reiterate that they have no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members, nor any need to change any aspect of NATO’s nuclear posture or nuclear policy - and do not foresee any future need to do so.”

106 “Brussels Summit Communiqué,” NATO.

107 For a discussion of the interaction between military operational plans and politics during the Cold War, see: John Mearshheimer, “Maneuver, Mobile Defense, and the NATO Central Front,” *International Security* 6, no. 3 (Winter 1981-82), https://www.jstor.org/stable/2538609?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents. These interactions and trade-offs would pertain to future operational plans in Eastern Europe.

108 The interplay of offense and defense has engendered extensive academic discussion going back to Clausewitz, who argued that because of factors of time and terrain, it was better to defend territory than to reconquer it. Carl von Clausewitz, *On*

- As a result, a counteroffensive has higher force requirements than a defense. Analysts have debated for years whether that higher force ratio is 3:1 or something else, but all agree that higher force ratios are required.¹⁰⁹
- A mobile defense requires more skill and mobility in the defensive force.
- A mobile defense can inflict widespread destruction of property and civilian casualties as collateral damage because it often requires fighting in cities, using them as fortresses. Such a defense also requires demolition of key infrastructure to deny those facilities to an invader.
- Finally, the conflict will last longer, and with time comes destruction.

As a result, this report's campaign analyses for Georgia, Ukraine, and Finland, which directly border Russia, include a forward defense option and recognize that this will likely be the most politically attractive to the threatened country.

This force structure analysis does not consider diplomatic and political constraints that might be put on military enhancements and stationing of external forces in new member states. For example, NATO might make an agreement with Russia to restrict offensive weapons in some states on Russia's periphery. Such agreements might smooth NATO's enlargement, but they go beyond the scope of this report.

U.S. Global Commitments: A Possible Two-Front War

The United States faces a particular challenge: it is both a European and a Pacific power. A conflict in Europe might occur at the same time as a conflict in the Pacific. Indeed, conflict in one theater might induce an opportunistic aggressor to act in the other. Under the Trump administration's 2018 National Defense Strategy, the United States plans forces for a single great power conflict, with only enough forces to "deter" in another theater.¹¹⁰ The Biden administration's policy is unlikely to be substantially different. Indeed, its forces will be smaller and its options, therefore, more constrained. The bottom line is that U.S. forces might be stretched when they are most needed. For this reason (and for burden-sharing concerns, described below), this project assumes that any additional forces needed for NATO defense would come from both the United States and non-U.S. NATO allies. The project also calls for expanding U.S. force structure, when necessary, rather than assuming the use of existing and already committed forces.

War (Berlin: Drummlers Verlag, 1832), Chapter 13. Many recent scholars have come to the same conclusion. For example, Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the security dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167–214; Stephen Van Evera, "Offense, defense, and the causes of war," *International Security* 22, no. 4 (1998): 5–43.) Others have modified this conclusion, by noting that circumstances might change the balance. For example, at low force-to-space densities, it might be easier for counteroffensives to succeed. Also, at the tactical and operational level, a defense in depth has great strength (see Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004)), but this is different from deliberately ceding territory at the strategic level.

109 For the argument on a 3:1 force ratio, see Paul Davis, *Aggregation, Disaggregation, and the 3:1 Rule in Ground Combat* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1995): 15–16; and John J. Mearsheimer, "Assessing the Conventional Balance: The 3:1 Rule and Its Critics," *International Security* 13, no. 4 (Spring 1989), MIT Press, 54–89.

110 Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 6, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

BURDEN SHARING

Burden sharing has been a tension in the alliance since its inception, with the United States continually arguing that alliance members should do more. The debate is relevant to enlargement because additional force structure and budget commitments will be needed. The election of Donald Trump showed the depth of concern in a segment of the U.S. population about burden sharing. Trump was blunt: “I would not allow member states to be delinquent in the payment while we guarantee their safety and are willing to fight wars for them.”¹¹¹ His first secretary of defense, James Mattis, made the same point in speaking to European allies: “Americans cannot care more for your children’s future security than you do.”¹¹²

The election of Biden eases this concern, but it is ever-present in U.S. public opinion. Americans generally support NATO, with 57 percent having a positive view in one recent poll and higher levels of support in other polls.¹¹³ However, Americans are also wary of the cost and burden. A large minority (38 percent) believe that the United States should withhold support for NATO if allies do not spend more on their own defense.¹¹⁴

Therefore, this report, in its recommendations and analysis, distributes future burdens between the United States and the other NATO allies. Assuming that the United States would cover the bulk of new force requirements would risk undermining support for the alliance. Allied willingness to provide forces for the stabilization of Afghanistan and defense of the Baltics shows that such burden sharing is possible. However, the force demands in some of these options for new members go far beyond what NATO has been able to deploy recently. The project does not consider the viability of meeting these demands, but they would be part of a calculation regarding the admission of new members.

GRAY ZONE VS. CONVENTIONAL CONFLICT

Many commentators note that gray zone conflict—understood to cover a wide variety of activities between war and peacetime diplomatic engagement—would be much more likely for new NATO members than a conventional attack. These activities include misinformation and disinformation campaigns, political and economic coercion, and cyber disruption. CSIS has written extensively about Russian gray zone tactics and Russia’s recent use of such tactics.¹¹⁵ These gray zone challenges are real and immediate.

111 “Donald Trump tells NATO allies to pay up at Brussels talks,” BBC, May 25, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40037776>.

112 “Mattis Highlights U.S. Commitment to NATO, Warns of ‘Arc of Insecurity,’” Department of Defense, February 15, 2017, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1084785/mattis-highlights-us-commitment-to-nato-warns-of-arc-of-insecurity/>.

113 Moira Fagan, “NATO seen in a positive light by many across 10 member states,” Pew Research, November 30, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/30/nato-seen-in-a-positive-light-by-many-across-10-member-states/>.

114 Dina Smeltz, Ivo Daalder, Karl Friedhoff, and Craig Kafura, *What Americans Think About America First* (Chicago: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2017), 14, https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/ccgasurvey2017_what_americans_think_about_america_first.pdf.

115 Kathleen Hicks et al., *By Other Means Part I: Campaigning in the Gray Zone* (Washington, DC: CSIS, July 2019), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/other-means-part-i-campaigning-gray-zone>; Kathleen Hicks et al., *By Other Means Part II: Adapting to Compete in the Gray Zone* (Washington, DC: CSIS, August 2019), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/other-means-part-ii-adapting-compete-gray-zone>; Kathleen Hicks, “Russia in the Gray Zone,” CSIS, July 25, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-gray-zone>; Kathleen Hicks, John Schaus, and Michael Matlaga, *Zone Defense: Countering Competition in the Space between War and Peace* (Washington, DC: CSIS, November 2018), <https://www.csis.org/features/zone-defense>; and John Schaus et al., “What Works: Countering Gray Zone Coercion,” CSIS, *CSIS Briefs*, July 16, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-works-countering-gray-zone-coercion>.

However, this project focuses on conventional attacks for two reasons. First, such attacks would be the most dangerous course of action by Russia, and military planners must focus on the most dangerous challenges. Second, gray zone threats constitute a major political challenge but do not generally generate a large demand for military forces. They would put a premium on cyber defenses, psychological operations, and law enforcement, but military force requirements would be relatively modest.

Gray zone attacks that involve the use of proxy and disguised state forces such as Russia used in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine might edge toward a conventional military response. As Kathleen Hicks noted, “presenting perhaps the greatest risk for military escalation beyond the gray zone is Russian use of disguised forces.” This report’s campaign analyses consider these kinds of attacks.¹¹⁶

Is This Thinking Obsolete?

A fundamental question is whether this kind of conflict, one nation seizing the territory of another, is obsolete. A variety of arguments depict future conflict between nation states as unlikely: the nuclear peace (that war has never yet occurred between two nuclear powers because the risks are so great), the Pinker thesis (from Stephen Pinker, a psychologist at Harvard, that violence in the world has declined both in the long run and in the short run), and war’s inherent irrationality (that rational actors will seek to avoid its destructiveness).¹¹⁷

Yet, there have been many instances since World War II where one country has invaded another: North Korea invading South Korea in 1950–1953, the various conflicts resulting from the breakup of Yugoslavia, India invading East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971, Vietnam’s attack on Cambodia/Kampuchea in 1978, China’s attack on Vietnam in 1979, Iraq’s invasion of Iran in 1980, and Argentina’s attack on the Falkland Islands in 1983.

A CSIS report, *Coping with Surprise in Great Power Conflicts*, looked at this question in depth. Its conclusion was straightforwardly that wars and surprises do happen.¹¹⁸ Since this question is important for thinking about NATO enlargement, the report’s conclusion is laid out here:

States rarely go to war based solely on rational calculations of gain and loss. Instead, as Thucydides observed 2,500 years ago, they are driven by fear, honor, and interest. This led Colin Gray to conclude, “It is orthodox among both liberals and many conservatives to claim that major war between states is obsolescent or obsolete. If history is any guide, this popular view is almost certainly fallacious. . . . War and warfare will always be with us: war is a permanent feature of the human condition.

Jeff Ethel’s description about the outbreak of war in the Falklands in 1982 resonates for future conflicts: “During the three weeks following the Argentine landings, each side [the United Kingdom and Argentina] stood its ground while moving ahead with military preparations, fully

116 Hicks, “Russia in the Gray Zone.”

117 Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (New York: Viking, 2011).

118 Mark F. Cancian, *Coping with Surprise in Great Power Conflicts* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2018), 7, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/coping-surprise-great-power-conflicts>.

expecting the other to back down at any moment. Neither believed that two civilized nations would go to war over an issue so minor but ended up in that position.¹¹⁹

TIMELINE AND BASELINE

The timeline for this analysis is the next five years (2021–2026), although major elements would be valid for a longer time period. Within this time frame, estimates about forces of all the countries involved will not change substantially. The baseline is the budget and forces existing today, with recognition of changes that are planned or announced.

DANGER DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD

A point that repeatedly came up during discussions was that the transition period between membership commitment and treaty signing was the time of greatest danger. During that interval, potential new members had committed themselves to joining NATO and sent that signal to potential adversaries such as Russia. However, these countries were not yet covered by the Article 5 commitment and were thus vulnerable to preemptive actions. NATO will need to manage this “window of vulnerability” carefully lest it inadvertently spark an unintended conflict.

With that background, the report will examine the situation of individual potential members.

119 Ibid., 7.

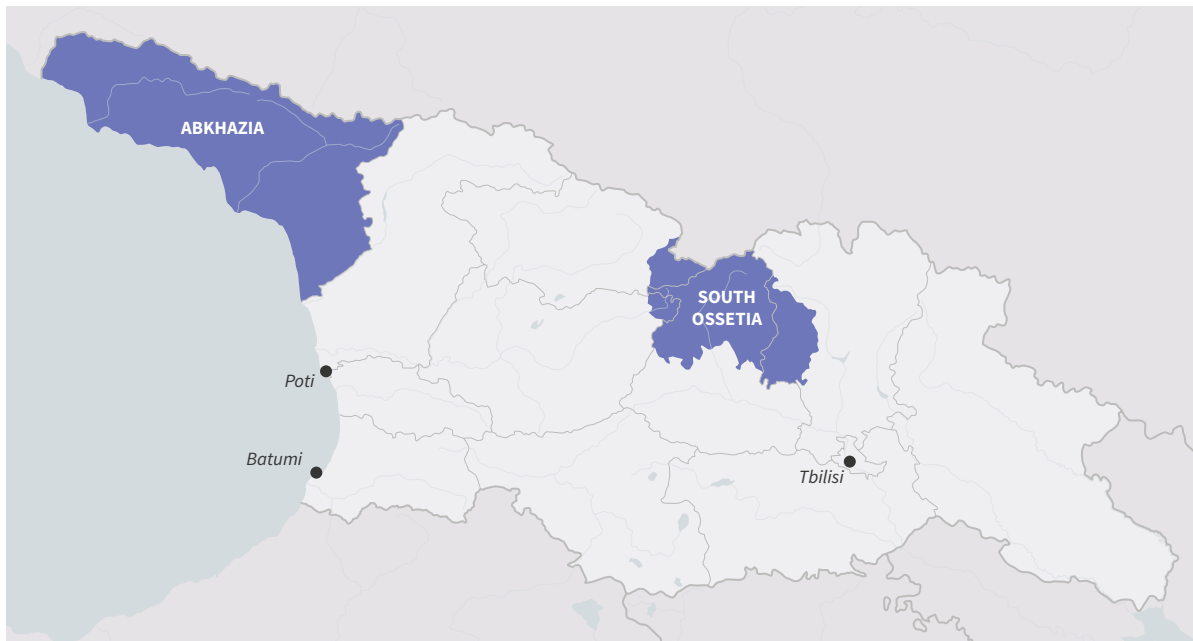
Georgia

As noted in Chapter 1, Georgia actively seeks NATO membership. To this end, it has worked to make its forces compatible with those of NATO. However, Georgia has long-standing border disputes with Russia and is highly exposed. It would need a permanent NATO presence to sustain the defense long enough for reinforcements to arrive. A successful defense would depend heavily on Turkey and Romania's attitudes and their willingness to participate actively in a conflict. If Russia defeated Georgian forces and effectively controlled the country, NATO would have a very difficult challenge mounting a counteroffensive.

Geography

Georgia is a long, narrow country on the eastern edge of the Black Sea. It shares a 550-mile border with Russia to the north and a shorter, 170-mile border with Turkey to the southwest. It also borders Armenia and Azerbaijan in the south.

Figure 9: Political Map of Georgia



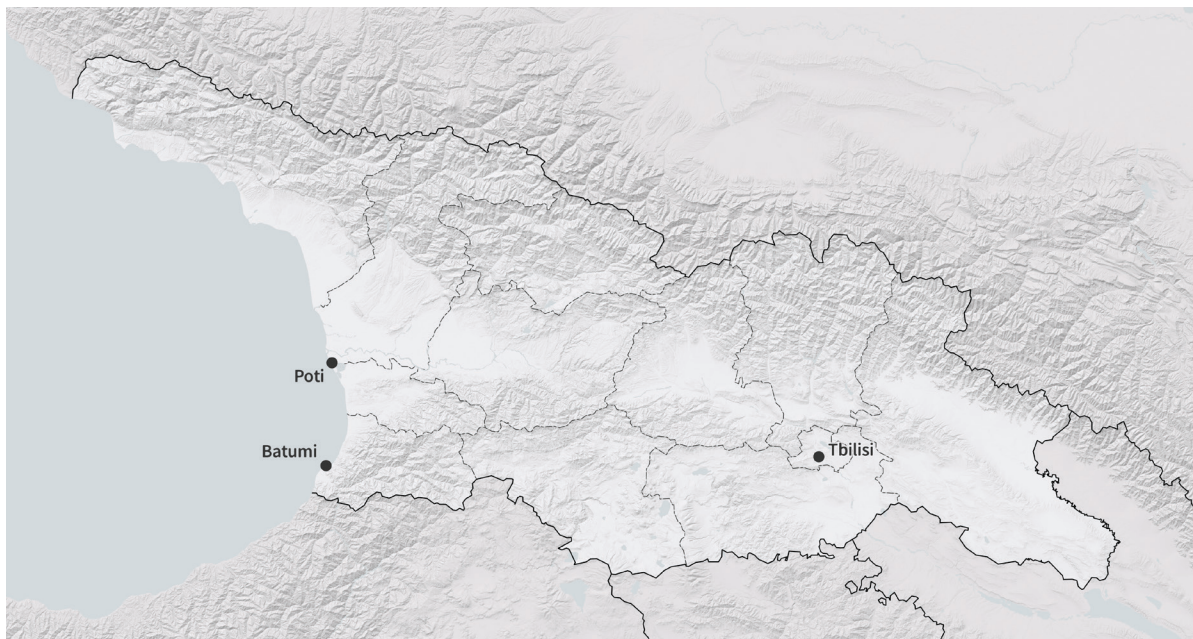
Source: Adapted from “Map of Georgia with Abkhazia and South Ossetia highlighted,” Wikimedia Commons, August 8, 2009, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Georgia_with_Abkhazia_and_South_Ossetia_highlighted.svg.

Georgia’s vulnerability is its narrowness, about 200 miles on average and tapering on the east and west. This means that Russian forces might cut the country in half. Although the capital, Tbilisi, lies in the interior, it is only about 100 miles from the frontier. The country’s major ports, Poti and Batumi, lie in a coastal plain that is favorable economically but difficult to defend militarily. Russian occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as a result of the 2008 war exacerbates these vulnerabilities.

Geography in Georgia has one major advantage for defense: its ruggedness. Much of the country is mountainous, including the Greater Caucasus Mountain Chain along the northern border and the Lesser Caucasus Mountain Chain to the south. Movement across these mountain chains is difficult, making large-scale movements only practical on roads.

The heavily populated areas lie in a central valley between the mountain chains. Indeed, nearly 30 percent of the country’s population lives in the Tbilisi metropolitan area.

Figure 10: Physical Map of Georgia



Source: Mapbox.

The mountains provide a barrier that aids defense. In a conflict, Georgian forces would race to set up blocking positions along the passes to prevent Russian forces from breaking through into the central valley. Prepared positions by well-trained and well-equipped forces could greatly slow any Russian incursion. However, Abkhazia and South Ossetia provide Russian forces with a pathway through the mountains. Russian airborne and airmobile forces would also provide a mechanism for countering blockages in the mountains.

The mountains provide a place for Georgian forces to hide and conduct an insurgency, but as described later, this strategy has severe limits.

Relevant Military History

Georgia has a long history of defending its identity, having built a distinctive culture over many centuries. However, until gaining independence in 1991, it had been independent for only five years in the preceding two centuries. This had occurred during the chaos after the Russian Revolution and before the Soviets were able to reestablish dominance in the Caucasus. Georgia has had long-standing, close ties to Russia, having been incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1800. For example, Stalin came from the region.

Georgia's recent conflicts have been unsuccessful. The first conflicts arose in the wake of independence. Although ethnic Georgians celebrated independence, Georgia's Ossetian, Abkhaz, and Mingrelian minorities perceived an independent Georgia as threatening their rights. After Georgia held its first free elections in 1990, separatist sentiments arose in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Paramilitary groups controlled by political factions on both sides of the conflict violated ceasefires and attacked civilian

targets. In South Ossetia, a force of 1,500 full-time fighters augmented by 3,500 volunteers turned out to be better trained and better equipped than the newly formed volunteer Georgian National Guard. President Shevardnadze was similarly unable to control the 1992–1993 conflict in Abkhazia. In the defense of Sukhumi, the Georgian-held Abkhaz capital, the Georgian military was beaten by an Abkhaz force half its size. In 2003, the Rose Revolution overthrew Shevardnadze because of the country's poor economic performance and his growing autocratic tendencies.

Conflict with Russia arose in 2008 as both sides sought to resolve the unsettled circumstances of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Georgian forces, despite having been greatly strengthened prior to the war, did poorly due to disorganized command and a weak logistics infrastructure. In a week of fighting, Russian forces destroyed much of Georgia's warfighting capacity even though Russia believed that its own performance was substandard. While Georgia has significantly reorganized its military in response to the deficiencies in the conflict, it illustrates the ease with which even a flawed Russian offensive might overrun Georgia.¹²⁰

Georgian Military Forces

Georgia suffers from the same limitations as the Baltic states. Not only is it exposed, but its population is small (4 million) and its economy modest (\$19 billion annually), making its ability to generate military forces limited. Georgia rebuilt its army after the losses in the 2008 war, but its navy and air force have never recovered. To compensate for its small size, Georgia has instituted conscription.

Georgia spends 1.8 percent of GDP on defense, about the NATO average but below the 2 percent NATO target and far below the level of states facing an immediate existential threat. Its military forces today total about 21,000 personnel and have been stable at that level since the 2008 war.¹²¹

The army consists of one mechanized infantry brigade and three light infantry brigades, with supporting units of artillery, air defense, and communications. It possesses obsolescent Soviet equipment except for modernized T-72B tanks and a few recent acquisitions such as Javelin anti-tank guided missiles. Special forces, a separate branch of the armed forces, consist of two battalions. An army reserve of former soldiers provides some depth.

To back up the active-duty army, there is also a small national guard and a large territorial defense force for local defense. They have limited training and old equipment.

The Georgian navy, merged with the coast guard, is a coastal defense force with small craft.

The air force has only a few operational SU-25 ground-attack jets, leftover from the Soviet era, along with a few transport and training aircraft. It has about 35 operational helicopters.

120 For a discussion of the tangled causes of the war, see Michael Kofman, "The August War, 10 years on: a retrospective on the Russo-Georgian war," War on the Rocks, August 17, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/08/the-august-war-ten-years-on-a-retrospective-on-the-russo-georgian-war/>; for a discussion of the Russian side, see Michael Kofman, "It's Time to Talk About A2/AD: Rethinking the Russian Military Challenge," War on the Rocks, September 5, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/09/its-time-to-talk-about-a2-ad-rethinking-the-russian-military-challenge/>.

121 Budget data from SIPRI. Military forces data from IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*.

Georgia joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994 and has been a member of the Planning and Review Process since 1999 as it seeks to build deployable units consistent with NATO standards.

NATO has held annual joint exercises with the Georgian military since 2016. The chairman of the Military Committee of NATO, Sir Stuart Peach, visited Georgia during the March 2019 exercises, during which he promised continued cooperation with Georgia in order to help the country “defend itself as well as advance preparations towards NATO membership.”¹²² Beginning with joint exercises in 2019, Georgian forces were tasked with leading a simulated multinational crisis response using the NATO planning process, which indicates an increased integration of NATO and Georgian forces.¹²³ Joint NATO-Georgia exercises have elicited strong negative reactions from Moscow, where they are perceived as a direct threat to Russian political interests. In response to joint NATO-Georgia exercises in 2019 and 2020, the Russian Southern Military District began a parallel exercise in the region. During the Kavkaz-2020 exercises, the Russian army trained motorized rifle and tank battalions in the village of Dzartsemi in South Ossetia.¹²⁴ Dzartsemi was an ethnic Georgian village that was destroyed during the 2008 Russo-Georgian War.

NATO maintains a permanent liaison office in Georgia to “facilitate political/military dialogue in practical cooperation” between Tbilisi and Brussels.¹²⁵

Georgia has participated extensively in U.S. and EU peacekeeping operations. For many years, it has rotated a battalion to Iraq and Afghanistan, which constitutes a major commitment for Georgia given the small size of its armed forces. Georgia is the largest non-NATO contributor of forces to the NATO Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. It has sent small detachments to peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic, Mali, and, until 2008, to Kosovo.¹²⁶

Russian Forces

Putin has been particularly critical of Ukrainian and Georgian entry into NATO, saying, “We will respond appropriately to such aggressive steps, which pose a direct threat to Russia.”¹²⁷ Thus, a Russian military reaction to Georgian membership in NATO is plausible. As noted, Georgia has historically been part of greater Russia.

Russian forces in the Caucasus come under the Southern Military District. Even in peacetime, these forces are substantial. In the immediate vicinity of Georgia, Russia has seven mechanized infantry

122 “NATO Military Committee Visits Georgia,” Civil, March 28, 2019, <https://civil.ge/archives/280833>.

123 Giorgi Menabde, “NATO Again Demonstrates Strong Support for Georgia,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 16, no. 45 (April 2019), <https://jamestown.org/program/nato-again-demonstrates-strong-support-for-georgia/>.

124 “Russian-led Kavkaz-2020 Drills Start in Abkhazia, Tskhinvali,” Civil, September 9, 2020, <https://civil.ge/archives/369450>.

125 “Relations with Georgia,” NATO, April 12, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_38988.htm.

126 See, “Georgian Peacekeepers Heading Off to Central African Republic,” Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, June 5, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgian-peacekeepers-setting-off-to-central-african-republic/25411040.html>; and “Georgia May Be Involved in the Mali Peacekeeping Mission,” *Georgian Journal*, March 19, 2013, <https://georgianjournal.ge/military/22672-georgia-may-be-involved-in-the-mali-peacekeeping-mission.html>.

127 Andrew Osborn, “Putin warns NATO against closer ties with Ukraine and Georgia,” Reuters, July 19, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-nato-putin-idUSKBN1K92KA>.

brigades/regiments, a special forces regiment, and various specialized units.¹²⁸ These forces alone are much larger and more powerful than the Georgian military.¹²⁹

Table 3: Force Comparison: Russia vs. Georgia

	RUSSIAN CAUCASUS FORCES	GEORGIAN MILITARY
Main Battle Tanks	327	123
Armored Personnel Carriers/ Infantry Fighting Vehicles	2,135	260
Self-Propelled Artillery	362	67
Personnel in Combat Units	~35,000	~16,000

Source: Mike Sweeney, “Assessing Georgia’s Prospects for NATO Membership,” Defense Priorities, June 2021, <https://www.defensepriorities.org/explainers/assessing-georgias-prospects-for-nato-membership>.

Further, Russia has the advantage of interior lines and an excellent rail system. It can easily move military forces around, concentrating them where needed. Thus, the substantial military forces in the vicinity of Ukraine could move south rapidly, adding to Russia’s military dominance in the Caucasus. Indeed, the Russian military surge on the borders of Ukraine in April and May 2021 showed Russia’s rapid reinforcement capabilities. Russia could also move its airborne forces to the area. Russia uses such forces as its strategic reserve to be moved rapidly where needed.

Russia has a military base in Armenia and two in occupied Georgian territory, one in Abkhazia and another in South Ossetia. Russia could reinforce these and use them as jumping off points for strikes against Georgia. This would squeeze Georgia from north and south, threatening to cut the country in half.

The Russian Black Sea Fleet has historically been the weakest of the four fleets and suffered two decades of neglect after the Cold War. However, seizure of Crimea and the Sevastopol naval base has energized the Black Sea Fleet. Currently it has six cruisers/frigates, six diesel submarines, and a large number of corvettes/missile craft. Many naval units mount the long-range and powerful Kalibr missile, which has anti-ship, anti-submarine, and land-attack versions. The Black Sea Fleet is stronger than any other naval force permanently stationed in the region. As one naval analyst noted, “Russian maritime dominance in the Black Sea is back.”¹³⁰

In addition to its naval strength, Russia has an air division and an air defense division stationed in Crimea. These form a formidable defensive bubble that can reach into the Black Sea with precision fires.

128 Catherine Harris and Frederick W. Kagan, *Russia’s Military Posture: Ground Forces Order of Battle* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, March 2018), http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Russian%20Ground%20Forces%20OBB_ISW%20CTP_0.pdf.

129 Table from Mike Sweeney, “Assessing Georgia’s Prospects for NATO Membership,” Defense Priorities, June 2021, <https://www.defensepriorities.org/explainers/assessing-georgias-prospects-for-nato-membership>. His detailed and insightful analysis parallels much of the analysis in this paper, including the assessment of geography, the Montreux convention, and the centrality of Turkish attitude.

130 Naval figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*; quotation from Michael Petersen, “The Naval Power Shift in the Black Sea,” War on the Rocks, January 9, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/01/the-naval-power-shift-in-the-black-sea/>.

Russia has a large naval base at Novorossiysk, just 200 miles north of Georgia. Most of the Black Sea Fleet submarines are based there, and the extensive port facilities could support major naval operations.

The Defensive Challenge

Georgia is in a difficult defensive position. As noted earlier, its own military forces are few and the Russian forces in the Caucasus region are many. Although estimating the course and outcome of a future conflict is difficult, an illustration is possible using the methodology that Michael O'Hanlon, a long-time military analyst at Brookings Institution, has used in his analyses. This methodology is based on earlier work by Army military historian and analyst Trevor Dupuy. O'Hanlon and Dupuy posited that combat power is the product of three factors: force size, force quality, and combat circumstances.¹³¹

Setting the Russian mechanized brigades at a combat value of one, the Russians would have combat power equal to seven:

- 7 brigades in the Caucasus x 1 (basic combat value) x 1 (factor for the circumstances of an attack) = 7. (Supporting unit capabilities, such as artillery, air defense, and special operations forces are factored into the brigade capability.)

The Georgians would have a combat value of 3, calculated as follows:

- 3 infantry brigades x .4 (reflecting their lack of mobility and firepower) = 1.2
- 1 mechanized brigade x .8 (reflecting its upgraded tanks but weaker command and control networks) = .8
- 1.2 + .8 = 2 (reflecting the combined value of the infantry and mechanized brigades)
- 2 x 1.5 (reflecting defense in prepared positions, although the low force-to-space ratio might make this difficult, with the highly mobile Russian forces being able to go around any prepared positions) = 3.

Thus, the Russians would have more than a 2:1 overall combat advantage even without bringing in forces from outside the region. This would likely be decisive, particularly when added to an aviation monopoly and the large number of special forces that would have wide latitude in the largely undefended geography. Although many commentators cite a 3:1 rule as necessary for success in an attack (as noted earlier), the same analysis notes that this ratio applies only to local circumstances, not to an overall campaign. With a 2:1 advantage overall, the Russians could concentrate forces for decisive local superiority.¹³²

NATO's Reinforcement Challenge

To help the Georgians with their defense, NATO would need to reinforce. NATO's reinforcement challenge is that Georgia is far away from most of its members, particularly its militarily powerful

131 For O'Hanlon's calculations see, Michael O'Hanlon, *The Future of Land Warfare* (Washington DC: Brookings, 2015), 88–89, <https://www.brookings.edu/book/the-future-of-land-warfare/>. For Dupuy's earlier work, see Trevor Dupuy, *Numbers, Predictions, and War: Using History to Evaluate Combat Factors and Predict the Outcome of Battle* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1979). Dupuy's estimate for the advantage of a prepared defense (1.5) is on page 230.

132 John Mearsheimer, "Assessing the Conventional Balance: The 3:1 Rule and Its Critics," *International Security* 13, no. 4 (Spring 1989): 54–89, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2538780?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

members. A NATO defense against a Russian invasion would require a large force, including some armored forces, which require an immense amount of transportation and logistical support. Even “light” forces require a lot of logistics. All of this equipment and supplies would need to be shipped long distances, initially from stocks in Central Europe but ultimately from the United States.

Airlift Fast and Slow: Airlift can move some forces quickly. However, although aircraft are individually fast, equipment buildup is slow. A C-17 travels at 520 miles an hour and carries an average load of 45 tons (depending on the type of equipment carried, 85 tons maximum load). A military cargo ship (LMSR) travels at only 24 knots (28 mph) but carries 58 tanks, 48 other tracked vehicles, and more than 900 trucks, about 200 times as much. Moving an airborne brigade into theater (a unit designed for movement by air) would need about 220 C-17 sorties. Moving a heavy brigade would need about 850 sorties. Such an operation would require air monopoly, that is, no opposition. If unopposed, then the operation would look like the massive reinforcements that the United States and its coalition partners were able to execute at the beginning of Desert Storm and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. This might be possible before hostilities began.

In the face of a determined Russian air defense, which could be ground-based in Russian territory, the operation might look like the infamous German effort to resupply Stalingrad in 1942–1943, with massive air losses and insufficient deliveries to sustain a defense. Even without opposition, airlift would be severely limited by the capacity of receiving airfields. Mounting and sustaining a major campaign by air would likely require the entire U.S. strategic mobility fleet as well as a massive air and missile defense effort.¹³³

The Turkish Connection: NATO operations in support of Georgia through Turkey would be a natural course of action since Turkey is the only NATO country directly bordering Georgia. In theory, NATO forces could cross Turkey, mass in its northeast provinces, then push into Georgia either to reinforce or, if necessary, launch a counteroffensive to push Russian forces out. However, the lines of communication would be long, and there are only two major roads into the area (through Trabzon on the coast and through Erzurum in the interior). The terrain is very rugged with only a narrow strip of flat country along the coast. NATO has never conducted exercises in this region or tested the logistics involved with such an operation.

The Russians and Turks (Ottomans) fought in this region during World War I. The mountains and lack of roads severely hampered movement by both sides, and cold in the winter caused great suffering among the troops.¹³⁴

NATO might mitigate the line of communication difficulties by using sealift directly to northeast Turkey, but the challenges of the Montreux Convention and Russian opposition from Crimea pertain, as described below.

133 Mobility data from Congressional Budget Office, *Options for Strategic Military Transportation Systems* (Washington, DC: September 200), <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/109th-congress-2005-2006/reports/09-27-strategicmobility.pdf>; Congressional Budget Office, *Moving U.S. Forces: Options for Strategic Mobility* (Washington, DC: February 1997), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/10337>; and “Large medium-speed roll-on/roll-off ships TAK-R,” U.S. Navy, February 2017, <https://www.navy.mil/DesktopModules/ArticleCS/Print.aspx?PortalId=1&ModuleId=724&Article=2232664>.

134 See: Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

NATO would want to use the air base at Incirlik. Established in the 1951 as a bomber base, U.S. and NATO forces have operated from it continuously since then through an agreement with Turkey. Currently, no aircraft are permanently stationed there, but the base has an extensive set of support and maintenance units to facilitate transit operations in peacetime and sustain reinforcing air units in wartime. Historically, the base has expanded operations during times of crisis, for example, during Desert Storm in 1991. It could accommodate the large increase in air operations that a NATO defense of Georgia would require. Unfortunately, the base is in south-central Turkey, about 600 miles from Tbilisi. That is at the unrefueled limit of most tactical aircraft.¹³⁵

NATO could try to use Turkish air bases that are closer to Georgia, such as Merzifon, Erhak, or Diyarbakir. It might use some of the larger civilian airports, such as at Trabzon or Erzurum. However, there is no history of NATO operating from these bases, and military-to-military contacts in post-coup Turkey are highly sensitive and unlikely to be welcomed by the Turks. Diyarbakir would be particularly sensitive since it is involved in operations against Kurdish insurgents.

Figure 11: Turkish Air Bases



Source: "Turkish Air Bases," Global Security, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/airfield-tu.htm>; Mapbox.

Air base usage raises the broader question of whether Turkey, even though a NATO member, would participate in such an operation or even allow access to its territory. Turkish involvement would expose Turkey to attack by Russian forces. Further, Turkey under Erdogan has increased its ties to Russia, including buying Russian equipment, such as the S-400, and has experienced severe disruption of ties to the United States and NATO.¹³⁶ On the other hand, Turkey has supported Georgia's

135 Greg Knepper and Peter W. Singer, "Short Legs Can't Win Arms Races: Range Issues and New Threats to Aerial Refueling Put U.S. Strategy at Risk," War on the Rocks, May 20, 2015, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/05/short-legs-cant-win-arms-rac-range-issues-new-threats-aerial-refueling/>.

136 For a description of tensions between the United States and Turkey, including the recent U.S. recognition of Armenian genocide, see Soner Cagaptay, "Biden recognizing the Armenian genocide shows how far Turkey and Erdogan have fallen," NBC News, April 24, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/biden-recognizing-armenian-genocide-shows-how-far-turkey-erdogan-have-ncna1265129>.

membership in NATO. As the Turkish foreign minister stated: “I don’t understand why we haven’t activated the action plan for Georgia to become a member. . . . We are criticized for having relatively better relations with Russia as a neighbor, but our Western friends are not agreeing to invite Georgia because they don’t want to provoke Russia. But Georgia needs us, and we need an ally like Georgia. So, we need enlargement and Georgia should be made a member.”¹³⁷

Turkey’s Potential Reactions to Conflict

Although Turkey’s attitude in a conflict between Georgia and Russia would be critical for NATO’s ability to defend and reinforce Georgia, this attitude is impossible to predict. Here are three scenarios that span the range of possibilities.

Scenario 1 – Full Commitment: Turkey participates fully in a conflict. It waives the Montreux Convention, allowing unrestricted NATO traffic through the Bosphorus. It allows unrestricted access to air bases, such as Incirlik, and operations of a NATO line of communications through Turkey. Finally, it supports a counteroffensive through northeast Turkey with troops and logistics.

Scenario 2 – Passive Support: Turkey does not participate directly in operations and does not allow ground operations from its territory. However, it does allow NATO access to Incirlik and unrestricted transit of the Bosphorus. This was essentially Turkey’s policy during the 1991 Desert Storm conflict and subsequent operations such as Northern Watch.

Scenario 3 – Strict Neutrality: Turkey enforces the Montreux Convention and forbids use of its territory for any military operations. NATO would be forced to conduct all reinforcement through Romania and Bulgaria. This is what Turkey did during the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In the project’s working group of NATO and force planning experts, the consensus was for Scenario 2 or 3. No one spoke in favor of Scenario 1.

A Maritime Approach

If airlift is too limited and Turkey is unavailable, a sea approach to Georgia is necessary. Georgia does have a short seacoast and two ports on the Black Sea. This would enable NATO reinforcement with heavy forces in a time of crisis.

Heavy military equipment could ship from Germany to the Romanian port of Constanta or the Bulgarian port of Varna, be loaded on cargo ships, and transit the Black Sea. That might take a long time, 30 days or more, because of the intermodal transitions. Even a 30-day estimate assumes that the process has been planned and exercised. A standing start operation, without preplanning and preparations, would take longer.¹³⁸

137 “Turkish Foreign Minister calls for enlarged NATO, Georgia membership,” Reuters, January 23, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-davos-meeting-turkey-georgia/turkish-foreign-minister-calls-for-enlarged-nato-georgia-membership-idUSKBN1ZM1HB>.

138 The 30-plus-day timeline comes from the following calculation: warning order, equipment preparation, and loading onto railcars (14 days); movement by rail from Germany to Romania (7 days); loading equipment onto ships (7 days); transiting Black Sea (2 days); and unloading at a port in Georgia (4 days).

Alternatively, equipment could come through the Bosphorus, which would open possibilities for direct shipment from the United States. Direct shipment from the United States would allow access to the full inventory of U.S. equipment, although the process of loading, transit, and unloading might take 60 days or longer. Ultimately, any major operation in Georgia requires shipment by sea from the United States because of the volume of sustaining supplies and materiel that needs to be delivered. For example, for the war in Iraq, an overwhelming majority of materiel went by sea from the United States, as has been true of all U.S. overseas wars.¹³⁹

Unrestricted use of the Bosphorus also allows deployment of the maritime pre-positioning force (equipment prepositioned on ships).¹⁴⁰ Maritime prepositioning exists for just such emergencies: conflicts in a littoral area that require the rapid deployment of heavy equipment. Two such squadrons exist, one customarily at Diego Garcia, the other at Guam. In an emergency, one or both squadrons could move into the Black Sea. They have an immense amount of equipment in 17 ships: full sets of equipment for two Marine brigades, ammunition for Army and Air Force operations, petroleum distribution systems, and supplies for 30 days.

Any sea line of communication running through the Black Sea would be exposed to Russian air and naval forces based in Crimea. Indeed, the IISS's *Military Balance* notes that the Russians have exercised "strike scenarios against surface ships in the Black Sea."¹⁴¹ Russian aircraft from airfields in Crimea could attack NATO ships, particularly the vulnerable cargo ships, as they transit the Black Sea. The six Russian improved Kilo-class submarines would constitute a major threat and require NATO to mount the largest anti-submarine warfare effort since World War II.

Planning naval operations that move through the Bosphorus into the Black Sea raises the issue of the Montreux Convention. This 1936 agreement gave Turkey control of the straits and regulates the transit of naval warships. The treaty allows unrestricted merchant vessel traffic but limits the size of warships that can transit, the number of warships allowed into the Black Sea, and the length of deployments by non-Black Sea countries.¹⁴² Interpretation of the treaty's provisions has been disputed, particularly around their application to aircraft carriers and naval armaments.

Turkey is currently digging a canal parallel to Bosphorus to relieve merchant traffic congestion. Turkey has asserted that the convention would not apply to this canal, although Russia disputes this.

In a crisis, use of the straits would depend on lawyers, diplomacy, and the attitude of Turkey. If Turkey were willing to bend the rules or even waive them, then NATO could reinforce at will. If Turkey adhered to its customary interpretations of the convention, then NATO naval operations would be severely restricted. Definite conclusions about wartime use cannot be reached in peacetime.

139 Eric Peltz, John M. Halliday, Marc L. Robbins, and Kenneth J. Girardini, *Sustainment of Army Forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom: Battlefield Logistics and Effects on Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005): 44–45, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG344.html>.

140 Tyler F. Hacker, "Defense Primer: Department of Defense Pre-Positioned Materiel," Congressional Research Service, December 9, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11699/2>; and "Prepositioning," U.S. Navy Maritime Sealift Command, n.d., <https://www.msc.usff.navy.mil/Ships/Prepositioning-PM3/>.

141 IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*, 170.

142 See "Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits, with Annexes and Protocol," signed at Montreux, July 20, 1936, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/LON/Volume%20173/v173.pdf>.

Romania and Bulgaria could use their limited naval forces for escort and protection, although this would subject their homelands to Russian attack. NATO might circumvent the treaty provisions by having a variety of countries send warships, each counting separately under the convention. The resulting flotilla would be relatively small. Further, multinational naval forces pose severe command and control problems so that the whole is less than the sum of its parts.¹⁴³ Putting any such force together would require a broad diplomatic effort. Nevertheless, given the distances involved and the limited size of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, the NATO flotilla might be sufficient to sustain a sea line of communication across the southern Black Sea.

The Limits of Insurgency

One strategy for Georgia would be to forgo defense of the lowlands and populated areas and conduct an insurgency in the mountains. Prolonged resistance might allow time for NATO to launch a counteroffensive or for diplomatic efforts to force a Russian withdrawal. This is a high-risk strategy because it concedes the most valuable national territory to the Russians. Given Russia's past resistance to diplomatic pressure in Crimea and Chechnya, a withdrawal from Georgia under diplomatic pressure is unlikely. Further, an insurgency would wreck the Georgian economy and much of its infrastructure.

NATO would likely endeavor to support an insurgency if it arose, but the ruggedness, remoteness, and lack of facilities in the mountain regions limit the sustainment NATO could deliver. Such sustainment would need to transit Russian contested airspace and land at airfields that insurgents still controlled. Aircraft would need to be small, hard to spot, and flown in irregular patterns to prevent interception. The airfields would need to be small and unobtrusive to avoid Russian observation and fires. Parachute drops avoid the need to land and allow delivery of supplies anywhere. However, their volume is extremely limited. Thus, NATO could probably deliver enough logistics to keep an insurgency going but could not introduce and sustain enough forces for a conventional campaign. A major caveat is Turkey's attitude. If Turkey allowed sustainment of a Georgian insurgency from its territory, then prospects would improve greatly.

Because of the difficulties in sustaining an insurgency, its high costs to civilians in society, the long timeline involved and the unlikeliness of success, such a strategy was ruled out as a primary defensive concept not only for Georgia but also for Ukraine, Finland, and Sweden.

Requirements for Counteroffensive

If Russia overran major parts of Georgia, and Turkey did not permit an overland offensive, then NATO would need to conduct a power projection operation to regain a foothold in Georgia. For such a demanding task, an airborne operation alone would be insufficient. Airborne forces are too light to stand up to Russian mechanized forces and typically link up with conventional ground forces in any case. An amphibious assault would be needed.

Such a demanding operation would need a substantial force. Estimating the exact size of such a force would depend on the exact nature of the defending Russian force and the circumstances of the conflict. However, an illustration is possible using the O'Hanlon/Dupuy methodology.

¹⁴³ The object lesson for employing hastily organized multinational naval forces is the American, British, Dutch, and Australian (ABDA) naval force that confronted the Japanese navy in the Indonesian islands during the spring of 1942. Although the individual allied ships were powerful, the force was decimated by a unified Japanese fleet. See, for example, Paul S. Dull, *Battle History of the Japanese Imperial Navy (1941-1945)* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1978): section 2, 47–71.

If the invading Russian force consisted of the seven brigades available in the region (without reinforcement from other districts), and two brigades were needed to garrison the interior of the country, then five brigades would be available to oppose a NATO landing. Their combat power could be set at 1 and their circumstances set at 1.5, given that they would be fighting from prepared positions. Thus, the Russian combat power opposing a NATO landing would be: $5 \times 1 \times 1.5 = 7.5$.

The landings at Inchon in Korea in 1950 illustrate what a NATO counteroffensive force might look like. The ground force was the X Corps, with the Marines seizing a port, an Army division (the 7th Infantry Division) moving through that port, and linkup forces from the south arriving in about two weeks. In contemporary terms, the NATO force might consist of one Marine division delivered by sea to create a friendly enclave, an airborne division delivered by air to reinforce immediately, and a heavy division delivered by cargo ships once a port was secured.¹⁴⁴

This would produce combat power like the following:

- 3 Marine regiments/brigades \times 1 (reflecting their firepower, precision strike, and extensive logistics that can be brought by sea) = 3
- 3 airborne brigades \times 0.8 (reflecting their lighter equipment partly offset by high-quality personnel) = 2.4
- 3 heavy brigades \times 2 (reflecting their large size, highly capable equipment, and long-range precision fires) = 6
- 1 Georgian brigade available from whatever elements survived the initial invasion \times 1 (reflecting older equipment and the difficult circumstances of defeat, mitigated by NATO training and resupply, thus retaining its original combat capability) = 1
- Total: $3 + 2.4 + 6 + 1 = 12.4$

That would give NATO about a 50 percent preponderance in combat power, a bare minimum but perhaps adequate when applied at the decisive point. NATO aviation would normally provide a significant advantage, but the challenges of basing and distance would mitigate that.

The naval demands of such an operation would be immense. The Navy/Marine amphibious operation at Inchon in 1950 landed 20,000 Marines behind North Korean lines. The naval force consisted of 40+ amphibious ships, 20+ transports, 4 aircraft carriers (three U.S., one UK), and dozens of destroyers and cruisers.¹⁴⁵ A similar operation in Georgia, combined with the airborne element and the heavy division lifted by sea, would be by far the largest forced entry operation since Inchon.¹⁴⁶

To execute such an operation today, the U.S. Navy would need to pull forces from across the globe, including from the Pacific. Under Marine Corps and Navy planning estimates, 34 amphibious ships

144 The Marines would organize as a Marine Expeditionary Force, with air, logistics, and command elements, consistent with their doctrine. The ongoing Marine Corps reorganization (called *Marine Corps 2030*) might make such an operation infeasible as the Marine Corps moves away from heavy forces and ground combat operations. In that case, Army forces would substitute for some or all Marine forces.

145 Lynn Montross and Nicholas Canzona, *US Marine Operations in Korea 1950-1953, Volume 2: the Inchon-Seoul Operation* (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, Marine Corps, 1955): appendices E and F.

146 For comparison, the British reconquest of the Falklands in 1982, which was the largest amphibious assault since Inchon, involved a single reinforced brigade.

could lift the assault echelons of two Marine brigades of 14,000 each.¹⁴⁷ (Modern amphibious ships are much larger than the amphibious ships of 1950.) Today, the U.S. Navy amphibious fleet numbers 33 ships. At any one time, about 10 percent of this fleet is unavailable because of long-term maintenance, so about 30 would be available. If reinforced by NATO allies, this fleet would, in theory, have the capacity to lift the division-sized unit needed for an amphibious assault to retake Georgia. It would require the U.S. Navy to mass nearly all its amphibious forces from both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets.

Moving all these ships to ports of embarkation, loading, then transiting into the Mediterranean and Black Sea would require at least 60 days. (The Inchon operation took about 60 days from McArthur's initial request to the actual landing.) However, this movement would leave the rest of the globe, particularly the Pacific, stripped of U.S. naval capability.

The airborne division would need to stage in Romania, Bulgaria, or Turkey. It could make a combat drop simultaneously with the Marine landing or could land administratively (i.e., not by parachute as aircraft cargo and passengers) at a captured airfield to reinforce the Marines on the ground. The seaborne heavy division would move through the Bosphorus or travel by rail across Eastern Europe and embark at Romania or Bulgaria.

A massive air campaign would need to precede the landings to beat down Russian air and naval defenses. This would entail airstrikes on the Russian homeland since many Russian capabilities have long ranges and could cover Georgia from bases in Russia proper. Many targets in Russian-occupied Crimea would also need to be struck. Some Romanian and Turkish participation in the conflict would be necessary for NATO to generate the counteroffensive. If either country sought to be completely neutral, then even the Inchon-type counteroffensive would be impossible.

The bottom line is that such an operation would be massive, risky, and require months to prepare.

Forces Needed to Make the Article 5 Commitment More Credible

Georgia could become a NATO member without other members making any special provisions for its defense. However, the high cost and uncertain prospects of a counteroffensive make deterring Russian aggression or mounting an effective defense a preferable path. Further, NATO's defensive efforts in the Baltic states indicate the possibility of doing something similar in Georgia. The discussion below examines force requirements and their costs.

The discussion assumes that Georgia and Russia have resolved their territorial disputes over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Otherwise, Georgian membership in NATO would be unlikely, though not impossible.¹⁴⁸

147 General James F. Amos, "Marine Corps Service Campaign Plan for 2014-2022," U.S. Marine Corps, 2014, [https://www.usm-cu.edu/Portals/218/CAOCL/files/2014%20Marine%20Corps%20Service%20Campaign%20Plan%20for%202014-2022%20FINAL%20\(MS\).pdf?ver=2019-05-02-142637-657](https://www.usm-cu.edu/Portals/218/CAOCL/files/2014%20Marine%20Corps%20Service%20Campaign%20Plan%20for%202014-2022%20FINAL%20(MS).pdf?ver=2019-05-02-142637-657).

148 Technically, Georgia does not have to settle its territorial disputes with Russia before joining NATO. The 1995 NATO enlargement study only requires it to *commit* to peacefully settling them, which Tbilisi has done. Second, the enlargement study also states that existing members can make their own decisions on new members regardless of any specific criteria. There are no hard legal rules as in the case of the European Union. One former NATO secretary general has even drawn an analogy to West Germany entering the alliance despite not controlling East German lands (Ani Chkhikvadze, "Former NATO Chief Suggests German Model for Georgia to Join Alliance," VOA News, September 12, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/europe/former-nato-chief-suggests-german-model-georgia-join-alliance>). Nevertheless, because of the potential for confrontation with Russia, NATO is likely to want a resolution of these disputes before allowing membership.

MINIMUM DETERRENCE

One approach would be a small forward-deployed force combined with plans for reinforcement and enhancements to the Georgian armed forces, such as NATO has instituted in the Baltic countries. This approach would be relatively low cost and not a major stretch from what NATO is doing elsewhere today.

The forward-deployed force would consist of a NATO brigade headquarters permanently stationed in Georgia and national battalion task forces (BTFs) that would rotate through for periodic exercises. In a crisis, these BTFs would deploy. One of these BTFs would be from the United States to give the defense more credibility and encourage other NATO members to participate. The non-U.S. BTFs would normally be stationed in their home countries. The U.S. battalion would be designated from forces already in Germany.

The enhancements to the Georgian armed forces would concentrate first on command and control systems so these forces could connect with and operate with NATO forces. The enhancements would also strengthen anti-tank, fires, and air defense capabilities, making Georgia a “porcupine” that might not defeat a determined Russian attack but would be capable of inflicting enough casualties to make the Russia think twice. Finally, enhancements would strengthen cyber and intelligence capabilities to counter Russian gray zone activities.¹⁴⁹

A reinforcement concept—whereby additional NATO forces would flow into Georgia in the event of a crisis—would support the forward-deployed forces. These reinforcing forces would enhance deterrence and, if conflict were to occur, strengthen the defense. Rapid reinforcement requires upgrades to Georgian airfields and ports.

The challenge of this “minimum deterrence” approach is threefold: during the pre-war period, it requires planning, infrastructure enhancement, and exercises, all of which cost money. During a time of increased tension, it requires excellent intelligence to have enough warning to flow forces, given how much time that flow would take. Finally, during a crisis, it requires rapid decisionmaking and action by NATO.

The strategy resembles NATO’s approach to Berlin during the Cold War. During that period, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France kept brigades in West Berlin, which was then an enclave inside communist East Germany. In a conflict, these forces would have been isolated and severely outnumbered. Thus, militarily, the Warsaw Pact could have taken the city at any time. However, to do that it would need to destroy a force of roughly 15,000 NATO soldiers, including 5,000 Americans. The implications for producing a broader war, with all the risks of escalation and nuclear weapons, made that unattractive.

The risk with such an approach in Georgia is that the Russians might not be deterred, overrunning the country and presenting NATO with the prospect of a difficult counteroffensive, as described earlier.¹⁵⁰

HOLD UNTIL REINFORCED

If minimum deterrence is not an attractive strategy, then the defensive task would be to hold out until major NATO reinforcements could arrive by air and sea. Since the Georgian armed forces alone are

149 The longer that Georgia prepared for membership, the smaller this enhancement cost would be, though it is unlikely to be eliminated entirely. Much of this equipment would be purchased in the United States, easing the cost impact.

150 For a critique of “deterrence on the cheap,” see Paul Poast and Dan Reiter, “Death Without Deterrence, or Why Tripwire Forces Are Not Enough,” *War on the Rocks*, June 17, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/06/death-without-deterrence-or-why-tripwire-forces-are-not-enough/>.

insufficient, a substantial NATO force would be needed. Such a force would include the infrastructure enhancements and building of Georgian military capabilities described earlier. In addition, it would include the following:

- **A full, multinational NATO brigade permanently stationed in Georgia.** Its continuous presence would provide a hedge against surprise attack and strengthen any defensive effort. NATO has experience with this sort of multinational effort, having operated together in Iraq, Afghanistan, and, recently, in the Baltic states with the forward-deployed battle groups. Countries would need to sign up to such a commitment. This force would not include any U.S. troops, as the United States would focus on building Georgian military capabilities and provide the division headquarters and the pre-positioned brigades, described below.
- **U.S. pre-positioned equipment for one medium (Stryker) brigade and one heavy brigade.** The Stryker brigade has both combat power and mobility, allowing it to operate in rougher terrain and to cover a wide front. The heavy brigade has firepower to deal with Russian heavy forces. The United States would need to take responsibility for the pre-positioning program because it has extensive experience with such programs, whereas other NATO countries have little. Some scholars whom the project interviewed suggested that a fires brigade might substitute for one of these maneuver brigades. That is feasible and would have an equivalent cost.¹⁵¹
- **A U.S. division (forward) staff permanently stationed in Georgia (~250 personnel).** A headquarters at this level of command (division) would be needed for a force of three or more brigades (including the NATO brigade). The major part of the division staff could be located elsewhere. The forward element would organize exercises, coordinate with the Georgian military, and supervise maintenance of the pre-positioned equipment. The headquarters could function as a joint task force headquarters for all U.S. military activities in Georgia.
- **A permanent U.S. air and missile defense task force (AMD-TF).** Working group discussion highlighted the need for air and missile defense of the pre-positioned equipment, NATO command and control, and Georgian military forces, all of which would be vulnerable to long-range Russian fires. The task force would include a spectrum of capabilities, perhaps a Patriot battery and a cruise missile defense battery (of which the U.S. Army is developing several kinds).

NATO would not need to station air units in Georgia permanently but would need to prepare an airfield for reinforcement in a crisis, such as the function that Incirlik plays. That requires the building of infrastructure and a small but permanent NATO base organization (about 1,000 personnel).

These changes require an expanded exercise schedule to ensure that reinforcement plans are understood and viable and that NATO can work effectively with Georgian military forces.

To cover the pre-positioning requirement and the enhanced exercise schedule, the U.S. Army would add one brigade combat team to its overall structure. This brigade would be stationed in the United States but deploy forward as needed. The Army would also need to add the AMD-TF to its force structure since those capabilities are already in short supply.

151 For a detailed discussion of army pre-positioned operations, see “Army Prepositioned Operations,” U.S. Army, October 27, 2015, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/atp3_35x1.pdf.

This new structure would produce a defense with some confidence of success. In the event of a surprise attack, the combat capability of the defense would be at least 3.2: 2.4 (Georgian Army) + .8 (NATO brigade, generally with high-quality personnel and equipment but hampered by command and control of a multinational unit). Being on the defense, this would increase the force’s capability, perhaps by a factor up to 1.5.

The pre-positioned units, after personnel flew in, would add a value of 3.5: 1.5 (Stryker brigade) plus 2 (heavy brigade), bringing the total to 7. That would further increase the strength of the defense and provide some counteroffensive capability to push Russian forces out of the country. Flying in personnel before the conflict would be preferable, as it would increase deterrence in a crisis and enhance combat power at the beginning of a conflict if one should break out. Flying in personnel after conflict began would be possible but risky because flights would need to transit Russian air defenses. Fortunately, the number of flights needed to activate two pre-positioned brigades is relatively small because activation requires only the personnel and certain kinds of equipment that cannot be pre-positioned.

COSTS

Costs associated with these enhancements would be of two kinds: one-time costs to set up capabilities and annual costs to maintain capabilities. Georgia might provide some in-kind support—land, for example—but its economy is too small to pay any of the military costs in this illustration.

Table 4: Georgia Costs for Minimum Deterrence

ONE-TIME COSTS (U.S.)	COST	SOURCE
Facility construction for upgrade of Georgian ports and airfields to handle reinforcement	\$200M	Based on costs in the EDI ¹⁵²

Some of these costs might be shared through the NATO Security Investment Program.¹⁵³

ANNUAL COSTS (U.S.)		
Additional exercises	\$100M	Ground and air, includes costs to rotate forces into Georgia for exercises ¹⁵⁴
Building partnership capacity	\$30M	Based on EDI budgets ¹⁵⁵

152 Total EDI infrastructure costs have run about \$500 million per year. Facility construction in Georgia estimated by using costs for construction in Romania as rough equivalent; those costs totaled \$200 million in FY 2015–FY 2021.

153 This NATO program is funded by all NATO members and distributes funds to jointly agreed infrastructure projects. See: “NATO Security Investment Program,” NATO, 2021, https://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/structure/nsip/nsip_nut-shell_1.pdf.

154 Assumes one major joint division-level exercise per year, with \$50 million for exercise operations and \$50 million for troop rotation. Based on exercises in Eastern Europe; data from Office of the Undersecretary of Defense Comptroller, *European Deterrence Initiative FY 2021* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 2020): 33–34, https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2021/fy2021_EDI_JBook.pdf.

155 These budgets have run \$300–\$400 million in the last few years, mostly for Ukraine. Estimate is that Georgia would need less than Ukraine but more than the other individual states in Eastern Europe.

COSTS (NON-U.S. NATO)		
Brigade set of facilities (one-time)	\$2,800M	Estimated from RAND's calculation of the average cost of a U.S. Army base in Europe
Rotations and additional exercises (annual)	\$150M	Costs for unit and personnel rotations, exercises outside national boundaries, based on U.S. EDI costs

These costs would be borne by NATO allies. The analysis does not make assumptions about which allies would participate in the effort or whether they would need to expand their force structure to do so. Infrastructure costs might be shared through the NATO Security Investment Program.

Table 5: Costs for Hold until Reinforced

ONE-TIME COSTS		
Defense Expenditure	Cost	Source
Facility construction for pre-positioned equipment, basing for AMD-TF, and upgrade of Georgian ports and airfields to handle reinforcement	\$1,350M	Based on costs from the EDI, Congressional Research Service (CRS), and RAND; ¹⁵⁶ includes infrastructure enhancements at the minimum deterrence level plus \$100 million for "Incirlik-like" forward air facility
Equipment for AMD-TF	\$500M	Based on costs for Patriot and Indirect Fires Protection Capability program
Stryker brigade pre-positioned equipment	\$2,100M	Includes sustainment brigade and 15 days of supplies; based on GAO analysis ¹⁵⁷
Heavy brigade pre-positioned equipment	\$3,000M	
Total	\$6,950M	

156 Facility construction calculated as follows: facilities for pre-positioned equipment \$850 million, based on Ek, *NATO Enlargement: Cost Issues*, 8, escalated to FY 2021 dollars; basing for battalion TF/Corps headquarters (fwd) \$200 million from Michael Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2013), 200–215, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR201.html; upgrade of Georgian ports and airfields \$200 million from Office of the Undersecretary of Defense Comptroller, *European Deterrence Initiative FY 2021*.

157 The Department of Defense inspector general cites \$5.1 billion as the total cost of two army pre-positioned brigades plus sustainment stores in Kuwait and Qatar. This analysis assumes a similar structure and cost. Department of Defense Inspector General, *Management of Army Equipment in Kuwait and Qatar* (Washington, DC: June 2018), 10, <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Oct/30/2002057273/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2018-132.PDF>. The Government Accountability Office cites a cost of \$3.3 billion for the afloat pre-positioned brigade set, which includes more sustainment than envisioned here. GAO, *Defense Logistics: Army Has Not Fully Planned or Budgeted for the Reconstitution of Its Afloat Prepositioned Stocks*, GAO-08-257R (Washington, DC: February 2008), <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-08-257r>.

ANNUAL COSTS (U.S.)		
One Army brigade and AMD-TF added to U.S. force structure	\$2,700M	From the CSIS Force Cost Calculator, includes personnel, operations, equipment replenishment, and direct and indirect overhead
Sustainment of pre-positioned equipment	\$200M	From annual EDI budgets
Additional exercises	\$200M	Air and ground, troop rotations and exercise operations, \$50M more than minimum deterrence level since now includes two brigades, estimated from EDI budgets
Stationing costs in Georgia	\$540M	For AMD-TF, division (forward) headquarters, and air facility, using RAND estimates ¹⁵⁸
Building partnership capacity	\$30M	Same as for minimum deterrence level
Total	\$3,670M	
COSTS (NON-U.S. NATO)		
Brigade set of facilities (one-time)	\$2,800M	Same as minimum deterrence level
Exercises (annual)	\$100M	\$50M less than the minimum deterrence level since entire brigade already stationed in Georgia
Stationing costs in Georgia (annual)	\$554M	Based on RAND costs for U.S. forces in Europe ¹⁵⁹
Total	\$3,454M	

158 Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces*. Base operating cost calculated as \$125 million per installation and \$25,700 per military servicemember. Total in this calculation: \$25,700 x 1,250 personnel = \$32 million + \$125 million = \$156 million annual cost; plus \$159,000 per servicemember for base facility sustainment x 1,250 = \$200 million; total annual cost \$156 million + \$200 million = \$356 million. Base operations cost for air facility calculated as: (\$25,000+\$159,000) x 1,000 personnel = \$184 million. Costs exclude any host nation support, which is assumed to be minimal.

159 Based on RAND data, Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces*, 195, 211, 212. Calculated as \$125 million for one installation plus \$184,700 per servicemember x 3,000 troops in brigade = \$202 million. Depending on how NATO nations postured forces, there could be some offsetting reductions in stationing costs back home.

Ukraine

“Ukraine” literally means borderland, and once again the country finds itself on the border between East and West, with Russia on the east and NATO and the European Union on the west. Ukraine’s National Security Strategy 2020 reiterated its desire to join NATO eventually and prescribed armed forces development and greater interoperability to meet NATO standards.¹⁶⁰ To these ends, Ukraine has actively participated in NATO exercises and accepted NATO trainers. However, Ukraine is difficult to defend, being large, open, and far from NATO centers of power. If Ukraine were to become a member of NATO, making the Article 5 commitment credible would require substantial investments by NATO.

Without some resolution of the conflict in the eastern provinces, Ukrainian membership in NATO would be difficult, though not impossible. As noted in the discussion of Georgian membership, admission does not require resolution of ongoing conflicts, though that has been the practice in the past.

Geography

Ukraine is the largest country in Europe by area. It shares a 1,400-mile border with Russia to the north and east and a 700-mile border with Russian-aligned Belarus to the north. As one analyst noted, “NATO would need to defend a frontier that’s roughly equal to the distance between New York City

160 Ihor Kabanenko, “Ukraine’s New National Security Strategy: A Wide Scope With Foggy Implementation Mechanisms,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 17, no. 133 (September 2020), <https://jamestown.org/program/ukraines-new-national-security-strategy-a-wide-scope-with-foggy-implementation-mechanisms/>. The internal politics are less clear. As Michael Sweeney points out, Ukrainian views about joining NATO vary greatly across the different regions of Ukraine. Mike Sweeney, “Saying no to NATO—options for Ukrainian neutrality,” *Defense Priorities*, August 2020, <https://www.defensepriorities.org/explainers/saying-no-to-nato-options-for-ukrainian-neutrality>.

and Miami.”¹⁶¹ To the west, Ukraine borders Moldova in addition to four NATO member states: Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania.

Ukraine’s vulnerability is a function of its terrain. For centuries, armies have swiftly crossed the steppe that dominates much of Ukraine, with the Carpathian Mountains in the far northwest and Dnipro River as the only two sizeable natural impediments to troop movement. The nation’s capital, Kyiv, straddles the Dnipro River in western Ukraine. Despite its large Black Sea coastline, the country’s main naval ports are penned in by Russian naval bases and have been threatened by Russian Black Sea forces.

One aspect of Ukraine’s geography is an advantage: the territory is too large to be swiftly taken in one Russian offensive. This would allow NATO and Ukrainian forces to regroup in the west/interior and then launch a counteroffensive.

Figure 12: Physical Map of Ukraine



Source: Mapbox.

Relevant Military History

Ukraine has a rich history of self-determination and a proud Cossack warrior culture. The Kyivan Rus dominated the plains of Eastern Europe and their empire stretched from the Black Sea to the Baltics. However, after losing to the Mongols at the Kalka River in 1223, Ukraine was dominated for nearly eight centuries by foreign rulers, first the Khanates and then Russian princes. Except for a brief period of independence during the Russian Revolution, Ukraine did not become independent again until 1991.

Despite Ukraine’s proud military tradition, recent Ukrainian military operations have had mixed results.

¹⁶¹ Sweeney, “Saying no to NATO.”

The Russian invasion of Crimea illustrated the threat of rapid Russian force deployments, highly skilled special operations forces, and neutral or Russian-sympathizing populations. Although Ukrainian forces greatly outnumbered the Russian forces, Ukrainian defenders in Crimea offered limited resistance. The Russian incursion began on February 27, 2014, and within three weeks Russia had complete control over all of Crimea.

Ukrainian resistance in the Donbas was a bit more successful, but Ukraine still lost effective control of the region. After separatist forces took control of territory in Eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian military forces launched a counteroffensive on April 15, 2014, aimed at controlling the areas surrounding rebel-held cities. By August 2014, repeated Ukrainian offensives had achieved some success, threatening to drive a physical wedge between the separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk.¹⁶² In response, approximately 4,000 Russian troops crossed the border and pushed Ukrainian forces back at the Battle of Ilovaisk.¹⁶³ After Ukrainian forces suffered another defeat at Debaltseve, Ukraine signed the Minsk II ceasefire, which awarded highly favorable terms to Russia. There is still active fighting between Ukrainians and Russian-backed separatist forces.

Ukrainian Military Forces

Before the crisis of 2014, Ukraine's military forces languished. Ukraine military spending averaged 1.6 percent of GDP. Readiness was low, and equipment consisted mainly of obsolescent Soviet platforms. After 2014, faced with the immediate threat posed by separatist occupation of Eastern Ukraine, Ukraine doubled its military budget, raising it to 3.4 percent of GDP. This allowed force enlargement and some modernization as well as paying for ongoing operations in Eastern Ukraine. This level is higher than both the NATO average and 2 percent NATO target.

In 2017, the Ukrainian parliament identified development of the armed forces as a key strategic objective toward NATO membership. Its National Security Strategy 2020 echoed this policy.¹⁶⁴ The result is strong political support for military spending.

The increase in military funding also made the defense conglomerate Ukroboronprom fiscally secure. Ukroboronprom, a leftover from the Soviet arms industry, gives Ukraine a stronger defense industry than a country and economy its size might otherwise have. In April 2021, General Ruslan Khomchak, commander in chief of the Ukrainian armed forces, affirmed that Ukraine's industrial base was "ready for an adequate response" to any Russian aggression.¹⁶⁵

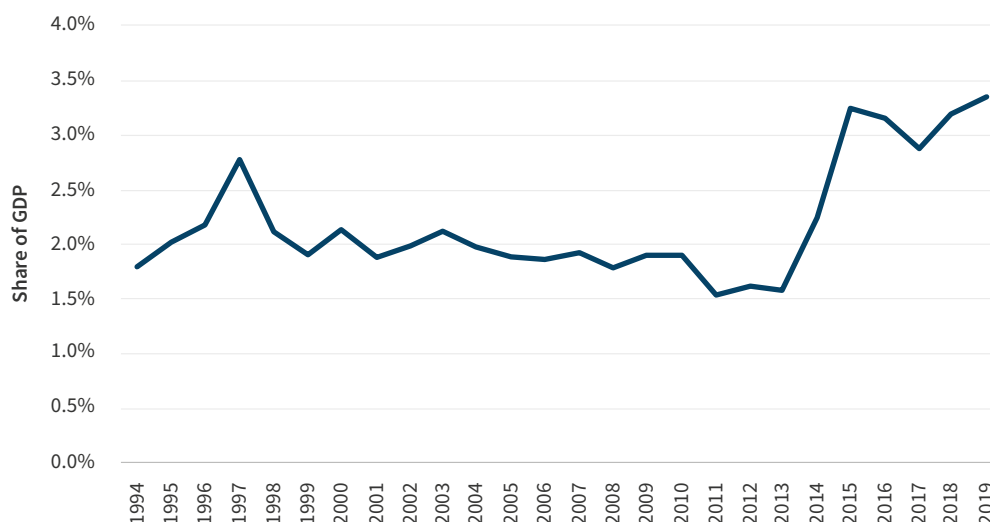
162 Michael Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2017): 39–41, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1498.html.

163 "Serving Russian Soldiers on Leave Fighting Ukrainian Troops Alongside Rebels, Pro-Russian Separatist Leader Says," *The Telegraph*, August 28, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/angela-merkel/11060559/Serving-Russian-soldiers-on-leave-fighting-Ukrainian-troops-alongside-rebels-pro-Russian-separatist-leader-says.html>.

164 IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*, 208.

165 Statement by the commander in chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Colonel-General Ruslan Khomchak, on the aggressive actions of the Russian Federation in the information space, General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/GeneralStaff.ua/posts/1893527870816461>.

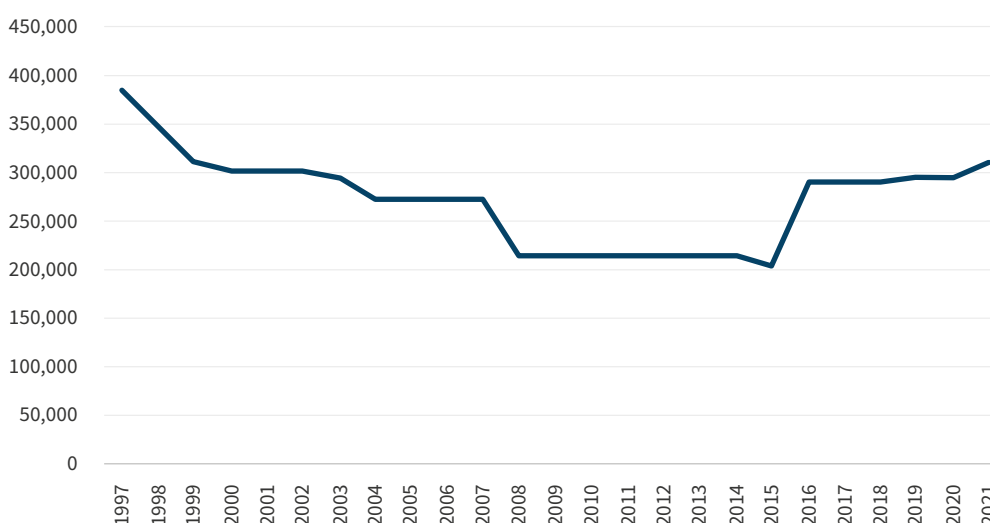
Figure 13: Ukrainian Military Expenditures as Share of GDP



Source: "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

After 15 years of decline, Ukrainian military forces expanded in 2015 to meet the separatist and Russian challenge. Unlike Georgia, Ukraine's large population (44 million) and relatively strong economy (\$142 billion annually) has enabled it to field a large military. Conscription has enabled Ukraine to recruit the personnel needed for these military forces.¹⁶⁶ All these forces now have combat experience, and training by NATO advisers has improved their skills.

Figure 14: Total Ukrainian Active Armed Forces



Note: *The Military Balance* does not include figures for the size of the Ukrainian Black Sea Fleet.

Source: IISS, *The Military Balance 2021* (London: IISS, 2021), 209–213.

¹⁶⁶ Figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*, 209–213.

The army consists of 209,000 active soldiers organized into 27 combat brigades and supporting units. The combat brigades are severely understrength, however.¹⁶⁷ For internal security, Ukraine has a large paramilitary force, national guard, and border guard. Ukraine has worked to rebuild its navy after the Russian seizure of several of its Black Sea Fleet vessels, but the navy is still small and has limited capabilities. The air force flies about 100 aircraft, which are upgraded versions of Soviet aircraft.

The Ukrainian armed forces have invested in some domestically produced modernization: air and missile defense (S-300V, 9K300 Tor, 2K12 Kub, and S-125 Neva); modernized coastal defense forces and Neptune anti-ship ballistic missiles for the navy; and Stugna anti-tank missiles for the ground forces, in addition to Javelin missiles from the United States.¹⁶⁸

Ukraine retired its nuclear weapons in the 1990s, so it lacks that ultimate guarantee of sovereignty.

Russian Forces

Ukraine is a special case for Russia. Reflecting on the importance of Ukraine to Russian geostrategic aspirations, Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote that, “Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire.”¹⁶⁹ Putin has reinforced these notions, saying that “Russians and Ukrainians are one people—a single whole” and that “we will never allow our historical territories and people close to us living there to be used against Russia. Those who will undertake in such an attempt . . . will destroy their own country.”¹⁷⁰ As a result, Russia has in the past pushed back hard against Ukrainian membership in NATO and will continue to do so in the future.

Russian forces in the region consist of the southern portion of the Western Military District and the northern portion of the Southern Military District. There are about a dozen armored and mechanized brigades facing Ukraine. In a crisis, another dozen could reinforce from other areas in the Western and Southern Military Districts, plus from the central reserves, such as airborne troops. Most of these units have better equipment than their Ukrainian counterparts.

In addition to these Russian forces, there are the militias of the breakaway provinces, reportedly 20,000 in Donetsk and 14,000 in Luhansk, armed with a variety of older Soviet systems. Several thousand Russian advisers may be supporting them.¹⁷¹

The Russian surge in the spring of 2021 showed its ability to concentrate forces rapidly and to do so without a military response from the West.¹⁷²

As noted in the section on Georgia, the Russian Black Sea Fleet dominates the region; the Ukrainian navy is greatly outclassed.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 209.

¹⁶⁸ Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*.

¹⁶⁹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Perseus, 1997), 46.

¹⁷⁰ Vladimir Putin, “On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians,” Government of the Russian Federation, July 12, 2021, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>.

¹⁷¹ IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*, 212.

¹⁷² Michael R. Gordon and Georgi Kantchev, “Satellite Images Show Russia's Expanding Ukraine Buildup,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 20, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/satellite-images-show-russias-expanding-ukraine-buildup-11618917238>.

The Defensive Challenge

Unlike Georgia, Ukraine faces two defensive challenges. The first, like that facing Georgia, is a Russian incursion. In Ukraine's situation, this might involve Russia creating a land bridge from separatist areas in Eastern Ukraine to Crimea. The second is unrest in Eastern Ukraine beyond what Ukraine's security forces could handle. Both would require substantial forces from NATO. In the case of an incursion, the NATO forces required would look like those identified in the Georgia analysis, though larger. In the case of internal unrest, they would resemble the requirements for Bosnia and Herzegovina (described later) though, again, larger.

DONBAS WITH A BRIDGE TO CRIMEA

In this challenge, Russia moves against portions of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts to establish a land bridge between the Donbas separatist region and occupied Crimea. The offensive also aims to secure critical aquifers that sustain Russian operations in Crimea.

MINIMUM DETERRENCE

As in the case with Georgia, one approach would be to station a small forward-deployed force combined with plans for withdrawal, reinforcement, and counteroffensive. This approach would be relatively low cost and not a major stretch from what NATO is doing elsewhere today. Barry Posen called this “strategic defense in depth” in his post-independence analysis of Ukraine. He assessed that this was Ukraine's only viable operational option when faced with stronger Russian forces. Forward defense, without NATO forces, was impossible given the strength of Russian forces, and “mobile defense” was too risky given the lack of skill and mobility of Ukrainian forces.¹⁷³

A RAND study described such a scenario. The analysis was based on an operational-level wargame combined with a strategic-level “global integration” game to connect Ukrainian regional events with a broader context.¹⁷⁴

The forward-deployed force consisted of the forward elements of a division headquarters, a security force assistance brigade (SFAB), and some NATO advisers and trainers. The scenario assumed rising tensions, which allowed NATO and the United States to respond more quickly. The scenario also assumed continued logistical and equipment support to the Ukrainian armed forces.

Although the game assumed that Ukraine had not joined NATO, the United States and other NATO countries became involved because of Russian threats and missile strikes on facilities, especially air bases, in NATO countries. In the RAND wargame, the United States moved its three brigades in Europe into the fight, but the Europeans had few forces ready to deploy quickly. The United Kingdom and France moved some aircraft and small ground forces. Poland sent a brigade.

The Ukrainians pulled back to the Dnipro River line. The game noted that if the Ukrainians insisted on defending the eastern portion of their country (Kharkiv and east), the Russians could encircle a sizable portion of the Ukrainian army by advancing west of Kharkiv and driving southward, thus cutting off the Ukrainian forces to the east.

173 Barry Posen, “A Defense Concept for Ukraine,” in *Ukraine: Issues of Security*, edited by Irina Kobrinskaya and Sherman Garnett (Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1996): 85–136 [in Russian].

174 Rafael Cohen et al., *Examining the Army's Role in a Fight in Europe: Insights from a Ukraine War Game and a Baltics Simulation* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, November 2020), [not publicly distributed].

The Russians were able to achieve their objectives of establishing a land bridge to Crimea and surrounding the city of Kharkiv, though they did not try to overrun the entire country. NATO's air power could get into the fight early and punished Russian forces but was unable to stop their advance. NATO built a counteroffensive force over three months, during which Russian forces dug in. The counteroffensive force eventually included all available U.S. active-duty heavy brigades, much of the Air Force's fifth-generation tactical aviation, and some NATO forces. It was not clear whether NATO's logistical structure could sustain this counteroffensive force. In response to the counteroffensive, Russia used tactical nuclear weapons, engendering a nuclear exchange.

The RAND study concluded, "The principal determinant of outcomes in the . . . Ukrainian game was whether U.S. Army forces were based forward to get to the fight in time to prevent a Russian fait accompli . . . Even dramatic increases in U.S. Army capabilities might not compensate for a sheer lack of forward postured units."¹⁷⁵

Posen came to a similar conclusion in situations where Ukraine had to withdraw to the Dnipro River line: "Even if help comes, one half of Ukraine may still be lost. It will be a long time, if ever, before it is recovered."

HOLD UNTIL REINFORCED

If the risks of a minimum deterrence approach are too great, then, as with the Georgia analysis, NATO would need to greatly strengthen the Ukrainian armed forces, enhance Ukrainian infrastructure for rapid reinforcement, and station enough capability in Ukraine to hold forward until reinforcements arrived.

The first element would have to be a major increase in support to the Ukrainian armed forces. Unlike those of Georgia, Ukraine could absorb substantial increases in funding and equipment. Such an effort would maximize the capability of these forces, which would in any circumstance provide the bulk of the military forces engaged.

Enhancements would concentrate first on command and control systems so Ukrainian forces could connect and operate with NATO forces. These systems have always been a high priority for new NATO members. The enhancements would also strengthen anti-tank, fires, and air defense capabilities. Finally, enhancements would improve cyber and intelligence capabilities to counter Russian gray zone activities. This support would increase from the current level of about \$120 million a year to \$500 million a year, a cost that could be shared among all NATO countries. Although the Ukrainian military has great modernization and training requirements, it probably could not absorb a higher level of annual support.¹⁷⁶

Another element would be improvements to infrastructure since rapid reinforcement would be critical. These improvements would focus on airfields and railroads. Seaports would not be as useful because of the strength of Russian naval forces in the Black Sea. Enhancements would include a major upgrade of an airfield in Poland or Romania from which NATO could conduct operations into Ukraine. Total one-time cost would be about \$750 million.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 15.

¹⁷⁶ As with Georgia, nearly all these systems would be purchased from defense industries in NATO countries, particularly the United States. This would ease some of the cost concerns.

Beyond this, as with Georgia, NATO would need to forward-deploy a collection of capabilities—headquarters, forces, training establishments, and pre-positioned equipment—to provide a credible forward defense. The RAND study came to the same conclusion: “For U.S. ground forces to be able to intervene quickly and in sufficient strength, there would likely have to be a major increase in army presence in Poland and perhaps Romania.”¹⁷⁷ Unlike in the RAND study, this study puts the forces in Ukraine itself since Ukraine is presumed to be a NATO member. Stationing large numbers of foreign troops on Ukrainian soil might be uncomfortable for many Ukrainians and politically controversial, though that goes beyond the scope of this report.¹⁷⁸

Many of these proposed force elements for Ukraine are the same as in the case for Georgia and with the same rationale. However, because Ukraine is larger and more exposed, these capabilities would need to be greater than in the Georgia case. The large size of the Ukrainian military compared to that of Georgia (an order of magnitude greater) allows some mitigation of NATO’s force requirement.¹⁷⁹

These additional personnel requirements (though not total costs) are split roughly evenly between the United States and non-U.S. NATO members.¹⁸⁰

- Three brigades permanently stationed in Ukraine, one U.S. and two NATO composite, to provide rough parity with Russian forces in peacetime.
- U.S. pre-positioned equipment for one fires brigade, one Stryker brigade, and two heavy brigades. The fires brigade has long-range attack capabilities; the Stryker brigade has mobility to screen the broad areas involved; the heavy brigades have firepower to deal with Russian armor.
- A permanent U.S. air and missile defense brigade-sized task force (AMD-TF) to protect against the nearby Russian air and missile threat.
- One U.S. security force assistance brigade, permanently stationed or rotational, to train Ukrainian forces.
- One composite fighter/attack air wing (approximately 54 aircraft), two squadrons from the United States and one squadron from other NATO allies, to provide rapid air defense/ground attack.
- A U.S. division (forward) staff permanently stationed in Ukraine to act as joint/combined task force headquarters (~250 personnel).

These changes require an expanded exercise schedule to ensure that reinforcement plans are understood and viable and that NATO can work effectively with Ukrainian military forces.

To cover the forward stationing, pre-positioned equipment sets, and the enhanced exercise schedule, the U.S. Army would add two brigade combat teams to its overall structure. One would be stationed in Ukraine; the other would be stationed in the United States but deploy forward as needed. The United

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 37.

¹⁷⁸ According to some polls, only 25 percent of Ukrainians support having foreign forces on their territory. Gerard Toal, John O’Laughlin, and Kristin Bakke, “Is Ukraine Caught between Europe and Russia? We Asked Ukrainians This Important Question,” *Washington Post*, February 26, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/02/26/is-ukraine-caught-between-europe-russia-we-asked-ukrainians-this-important-question/>.

¹⁷⁹ The Ukrainian military is five times the size of the combined militaries of the Baltic states, so comparison of this NATO force with the NATO multinational battle groups in the Baltic states must be handled with caution.

¹⁸⁰ Early drafts of this paper had a smaller NATO force proposed for Ukraine, but that force was increased after criticism by members of the working group that it was too small for the task. Even this larger force was seen by some as too small.

States could not move its existing brigades in Europe to Ukraine because these are needed for other commitments, for example, in the Baltic states. The Army would also need to add a full brigade-sized AMD-TF to its force structure, since those capabilities are already in short supply, and one SFAB to cover this continuous deployment. The Air Force would add two F-35 squadrons to cover the new deployment.¹⁸¹

COSTS

As with the Georgia case, Ukraine might provide some in-kind support—land, for example—but its economy is too small and its government resources too limited to pay a significant part of the military costs in this illustration. Thus, the cost would need to be borne by the United States and other NATO countries. (Note: Unless stated otherwise, derivation of these costs is the same as for the comparable Georgian costs.)

Table 6: Ukraine Costs for Minimum Deterrence

ONE-TIME COSTS (U.S.)	COST	SOURCE
Facility construction for upgrade of Ukrainian rail and airfields to handle reinforcement	\$750M	Based on costs in the EDI ¹⁸²
Equipment for new SFAB	\$100M	
Total	\$850M	

Some of these infrastructure costs might be shared through the NATO Security Investment Program.

ANNUAL COSTS (U.S.)		
Additional exercises	\$100M	Ground and air, includes costs to rotate forces into Ukraine for exercises ¹⁸³
Building partnership capacity	\$500M	Based on EDI budgets; ¹⁸⁴ could be shared among all NATO members
Add one SFAB to structure	\$390M	Based on CSIS Force Cost Calculator
Total	\$990M	

181 Note: no rotation base would be needed if the forces were permanently stationed in Ukraine. If the forces were rotational, then some rotation base might be needed to ease stress on personnel and units. This is likely unnecessary with current Air Force structure and deployments but might be needed in the future if the size of the Air Force declined significantly.

182 Total EDI infrastructure costs have run about \$500 million per year. Facility construction in Ukraine estimated as taking one full year of these resources. Costs for facilities in Poland or Romania would add about another \$250 million.

183 Assumes one major reinforcement exercise per year at the joint/division level, with \$50 million for exercise operations and \$50 million for troop rotation. Based on exercises in Eastern Europe; data from Office of the Undersecretary of Defense Comptroller, *European Deterrence Initiative FY 2021*, 33–34.

184 These budgets have run \$300–\$400 million in the last few years, mostly for Ukraine. This estimate would increase that amount because of the Article 5 commitment. Note that this amount is still far below what the United States has annually provided the Afghan security forces (\$3.3 billion). Office of the Undersecretary of Defense Comptroller, *Defense Budget Overview: Department of Defense FY 2022 Budget Request Overview* (Washington, DC: DoD, May 2021), 7-6, https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2022/FY2022_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf.

COSTS (NON-U.S. NATO)		
Rotations and additional exercises (annual)	\$150M	Costs for unit and personnel rotations, exercises outside national boundaries, based on U.S. EDI costs
Total	\$150M	

These costs would be borne by NATO allies. The analysis does not make assumptions about which allies would participate in the effort, whether the allied units have the necessary level of readiness and equipment, or whether the participating countries would need to expand their force structure to support the rotations. Thus, these countries might have large costs not identified here.

Table 7: Ukraine Costs for Hold until Reinforced

ONE-TIME COSTS (U.S.)		
Defense Expenditure	Cost	Source
Facility construction for pre-positioned equipment, basing for AMD-TF, and upgrade of Ukrainian ports and airfields to handle reinforcement	\$4,350M	Based on costs in the EDI, and analyses by CRS and RAND; ¹⁸⁵ includes infrastructure enhancements at the minimum deterrence level; these costs could be shared among all NATO countries
Equipment for two new Army brigades	\$5,100M	Based on equipment pre-positioning costs
Equipment for AMD-TF	\$1,500M	Based on costs for Patriot and Indirect Fires Protection Capability systems
Equipment for two F-35 squadrons	\$5,800M	With pipeline, training, and attrition aircraft ¹⁸⁶
Stryker brigade pre-positioned equipment	\$2,100M	Includes sustainment brigade and 15 days supplies; based on GAO analysis
Fires brigade pre-positioned equipment	\$2,100M	
Two heavy brigade pre-positioned equipment	\$6,000M	
Total	\$26,950M	

185 Facility construction calculated as follows: facilities for four sets of pre-positioned equipment \$1,600 million, based on Ek, *NATO Enlargement: Cost Issues*, 8, escalated to FY 2021 dollars; basing for brigade, AMD TF, and division headquarters (fwd) \$2,000 million from Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces, 200-215*; upgrade of Ukrainian/Eastern Europe rail and airfields \$750 million.

186 Calculated as follows: \$80 million per aircraft x 24 aircraft per squadron x 2 squadrons x 1.5 (for pipeline, training, and attrition) = \$5,760 million, or about \$5.8 billion.

ANNUAL COSTS (U.S.)		
Two Army brigades and one AMD-TF added to U.S. force structure	\$6,200M	From the CSIS Force Cost Calculator, includes personnel, operations, equipment replenishment, and direct and indirect overhead
One SFAB added to structure	\$415M	From the CSIS Force Cost Calculator
Two F-35 squadrons added to structure	\$1,200	From the CSIS Force Cost Calculator
Sustainment of pre-positioned equipment	\$400M	From annual EDI budgets
Additional exercises	\$200M	Air and ground, troop rotations and exercise operations; \$100M more than minimum deterrence level since the U.S. force now includes three brigade sets; estimated from EDI budgets
Stationing costs in Ukraine	\$2,065M	For brigade, AMD-TF, division (forward) headquarters, and air units, using RAND estimates ¹⁸⁷
Building partnership capacity	\$500M	Same as for minimum deterrence level
Total	\$10,980M	
COSTS (NON-U.S. NATO)		
Brigade set of facilities (one-time)	\$5,600M	Based on U.S. costs
Exercises (annual)	\$100M	\$50M less than the minimum deterrence level since entire brigade already stationed in Ukraine, hence no costs to rotate units.
Stationing costs in Ukraine (annual)	\$1,820M	Based on RAND costs for U.S. forces in Europe ¹⁸⁸

187 Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces*, 195, 211, 212. Base operating cost calculated as \$125 million per installation, \$25,700 per military servicemember for base operations, plus \$159,000 per servicemember for base facility sustainment. Total in this calculation: \$125 million x 3 bases (ground/headquarters, air, air defense) = \$375 million, plus (\$25,700 + \$159,000 = \$184,700 per servicemember) x 9,150 personnel (4,800 brigade, 1,800 air defense TF, 250 headquarters, 1,500 air units, 800 SFAB) = \$1,690 million + \$375 million = \$2,065 million. Costs exclude any host nation support, which is assumed to be minimal.

188 Based on RAND data, Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces*, 195, 211, 212. Calculated as \$125 million for one installation plus \$184,700 per servicemember x 8,500 troops in two brigades and air squadron = \$202 million.

Unrest in the East

Even if Ukraine reestablished national control in the Donbas, there would remain significant potential for instability and civil strife in Ukraine's eastern areas abutting the Russian border. Russia might continue to stoke dissatisfaction and demands for separatism. If at some future date after Ukraine joined NATO unrest escalated beyond what Ukraine's security forces could handle, the government might ask for NATO peacekeepers. Would NATO intervene if Ukraine were a NATO member?

NATO did intervene in the Balkans and Afghanistan, even though they were not NATO members. Ukraine might invoke Article 5, even though the events would not clearly constitute an external attack. Ukraine could argue that Article 4's reference to "territorial integrity, political independence, or security" and references elsewhere in the alliance agreement to "stability" would provide a basis—indeed, a requirement—for intervention. Ukraine would also point to UN and EU documents about the need to maintain European stability. It would be hard for NATO to ignore such a plea, though individual members might balk at providing forces.

Peacekeeping forces could be of any size, but RAND's historical work on foreign occupations provides a benchmark. That work examined occupations in seven countries, and its analysis suggested the need for about 20 occupation force personnel per thousand population in successful interventions. Unsuccessful interventions—Haiti and Somalia—had much lower force densities (5 per thousand).¹⁸⁹

For Ukraine, with a population of 6.5 million in its restive eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk, that means an outside force of about 130,000.¹⁹⁰ NATO would have a difficult time deploying such a large force. Although NATO has sufficient forces in total—the United States alone surged larger forces to Iraq and Afghanistan—the deployability of most NATO militaries is low. The maximum non-U.S. NATO force size deployed to Afghanistan was about 40,000.¹⁹¹

There are two major uncertainties that drive costs. The first is how long the occupation would last. The NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR)/Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina has lasted 26 years so far, although the number of troops has declined steadily. The United States stayed in Afghanistan for 20 years, and in Iraq for 15 (discontinuous) years. Haiti and Somalia had shorter occupations (3 to 4 years).

The second uncertainty is whether the operation would require any counterinsurgency (COIN) activities, which are fiscally more expensive aside from the political and human costs. That is impossible to predict ahead of time. Past predictions have been wrong even after an occupation has begun.

For a peacekeeping operation, the major additional costs above normal peacetime activity would be for operations—incremental personnel costs, such as reserve mobilization and additional benefits, plus

189 James Dobbins et al., *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Washington DC: RAND, 2003), 150, https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1753.html; and James T. Quinlaven, "Force Requirements in Stability Operations," *Parameters* 21, no. 1 (1995), <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1751&context=parameters>.

190 Ukrainian population statistics from "All-Ukrainian Population Census," State Statistics Service of Ukraine, <https://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/>. Population in these provinces has declined from these figures as a result of conflict but would likely return to earlier levels with stability.

191 "International Security Assistance Force: Key Facts and Figures," NATO, November 15, 2011, https://www.nato.int/isaf/placemats_archive/2010-11-15-ISAF-Placemat.pdf.

the costs of a higher level of unit activity and the maintenance costs that go with that. Investment costs would be modest.

If peacekeeping devolved into counterinsurgency, as it did in Iraq and Afghanistan, then substantial investment costs would be incurred to replace destroyed equipment and expended munitions and to acquire specialty systems.

Table 8: Incremental Costs per Deployed Service Member per Year in Iraq/Afghanistan

	OPERATIONS	INVESTMENT	TOTAL
Iraq	\$495,000	\$155,000	\$650,000
Afghanistan	\$625,000	\$174,000	\$799,000

Note: Figures exclude support to allies and the host government. Figures shown are averages from FY 2005 until personnel numbers decline below 40,000, at which point other factors resulting from the dynamics of withdrawal skew the results.

Source: Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*, CRS Report No. RL33110 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, December 2014), 47–48, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf>.

Costs for a peacekeeping mission in Ukraine would likely be less than for Iraq and much less than for Afghanistan because Ukraine is closer to NATO member home territories, the infrastructure is much more developed, and the transportation networks connect directly to Europe. Thus, this study will use \$300,000 per servicemember per year for peacekeeping and \$400,000 per year with some counterinsurgency combat activities. Because this cost would be above the normal peacetime costs, it would have to be added to the regular defense budget. The U.S. portion of the peacekeeping force is assumed to be half, with other NATO members picking up the other half, since the United States comprises about half of NATO forces.

Annual cost for a 130,000-servicemember force would thus initially be \$39 billion (\$52 billion with some counterinsurgency operations) tapering gradually to zero.¹⁹² Of this, the United States would pay half. The table below shows total and U.S. costs over the full period of the deployment.¹⁹³

Table 9: Total Costs of Illustrative NATO Peacekeeping Mission in Ukraine

	SHORT DURATION (5 YEARS) (TOTAL/U.S. PORTION)	LONG DURATION (20 YEARS) (TOTAL/U.S. PORTION)
Peacekeeping only	\$98B/\$49B	\$390B/\$195B
Some counterinsurgency activities	\$130B/\$65B	\$520B/\$260B

Source: Authors' analysis. Please reference the footnotes for methodology.

¹⁹² \$300,000 per servicemember for peacekeeping x 130,000 force size = \$39 billion; \$400,000 per servicemember for peacekeeping x 130,000 force size = \$52 billion.

¹⁹³ The calculations: total cost for peacekeeping, short duration: \$39 billion ÷ 2 (to account for gradual decline to zero) = \$19.5 billion x 5 years = \$97.5 billion (or roughly \$98 billion); peacekeeping, long duration \$39 billion ÷ 2 x 20 years = \$390 billion; some counterinsurgency, short duration, \$52 billion initially ÷ 2 = \$26 billion x 5 years = \$130 billion; some counterinsurgency, long duration \$52 billion ÷ 2 = \$26 billion x 20 years = \$520 billion.

A long-duration conflict would also likely require some increase in the size of the U.S. Army (and of the armies of other NATO members, though that depends on how the burden is distributed, which goes beyond the scope of this report). Deploying 65,000 troops year after year (the U.S. share of a 130,000 NATO force), on top of all the other demands for U.S. forces, would stress the reduced size of the Army, now 485,000 active-duty troops. Adding 50,000 troops to expand the deployment base to what it was during the Iraq/Afghanistan surges would cost \$10 billion per year.¹⁹⁴

Thus, total U.S. costs over the duration of the long deployments would increase by \$100 billion, to \$295 billion for peacekeeping only and to \$360 billion with some counterinsurgency activities.¹⁹⁵

194 From CSIS Force Cost Calculator. Scenario added two infantry brigade combat teams, two special forces groups, four security force assistance brigades, and enablers. These forces are illustrative of the additional forces a peacekeeping mission might require.

195 Calculations assume steady decline to zero at the end of the occupation period. U.S. Army enlargement costs \$10 billion (initially) ÷ 2 (average, since amount declines to zero at the end of the 20-year period) x 20 years = \$100 billion.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Unlike the four other countries considered in this report, Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia) does not border or directly face Russia. However, Russia has a long history of involvement with Balkan countries, including Bosnia. External attack from a neighbor (Serbia) is unlikely but not impossible. Its most likely military challenge comes from gray-zone attacks and internal unrest, with NATO, in an extreme situation, having to provide peacekeeping forces. This lack of an immediate threat is fortunate because Bosnia's military forces are small and weak, and NATO has lost much of its deployment capability since its initial involvement in Bosnia in the 1990s.

Geography

Bosnia is bordered on the north by Croatia and on the south by Montenegro, both NATO members. Although these countries have interfered with Bosnia in the past, NATO would work to suppress any such interference in the future. Serbia, to the east, is not a member of NATO, and its relationship with Bosnia is ambiguous, peaceful today but antagonistic in the past.

Political-Military Status

Bosnia consists of three separate ethnic groups (Bosniacs, Serbs, and Croats) as well as three languages and two main religions (Islam and Christianity). The capital, Sarajevo, is still rebuilding after its devastation during the civil wars. Ethnic and sectarian conflict go back to the days of the Ottoman Empire as each group has struggled for autonomy and dominance. For example, during World War II different groups sided with Italian occupiers, German occupiers, communist insurgents, ethnic insurgents, and local authoritarian regimes. The resulting conflicts caused civilian massacres and inflicted hundreds of thousands of casualties.

Russia has traditionally seen itself as the protector of Balkan Slavs. This role goes back centuries and has continued regardless of the regime in Moscow. For example, this role was a major contributor to the start of World War I, as Russia backed Serbia in its struggles against Austria-Hungary. Russia, likewise, helped Serbia in its struggles with NATO in the 1990s.

Like the Baltic states, Bosnia has a small population (3.3 million) and a modest economy (\$22 billion). The economy has not fully recovered from the internal strife of the 1990s. GDP per capita is about \$6,700, far below the U.S. level of \$63,000 and the average EU level of \$50,000.¹⁹⁶

When the central authority of Yugoslavia collapsed in the early 1990s, civil war broke out among the different ethnic groups in Bosnia, with Serbia supporting Bosnia's ethnic Serbs. The U.S.-negotiated Dayton Agreement of 1995 ended that war. NATO led the Implementation Force (IFOR, later redesignated as a Stabilization Force, SFOR), which was an international peacekeeping force to implement the agreement. These peacekeeping forces, initially at 60,000, dropped to 32,000 in 1998, and to about 700 today. Russian forces joined IFOR in January 1996 and continue to contribute to SFOR.¹⁹⁷

Bosnian Military Forces

As a result of its small population and weak economy, the country can support only a modest military establishment. The armed forces have about 10,500 personnel. The army consists of three light infantry brigades and support forces. Equipment is obsolescent to obsolete, the armored force being equipped with M-60A3s, which the U.S. Army retired in the 1990s. The air force has a few jet aircraft and helicopters. The small size of the armed forces and their weak logistics capability make any external deployments difficult. Bosnia's largest external deployment is to Afghanistan, with about 65 personnel.

196 Data from "World Economic Outlook Database," IMF, April 2021, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-data-base/2021/April/>.

197 "History of the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina," NATO, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/docu/d981116a.htm>.

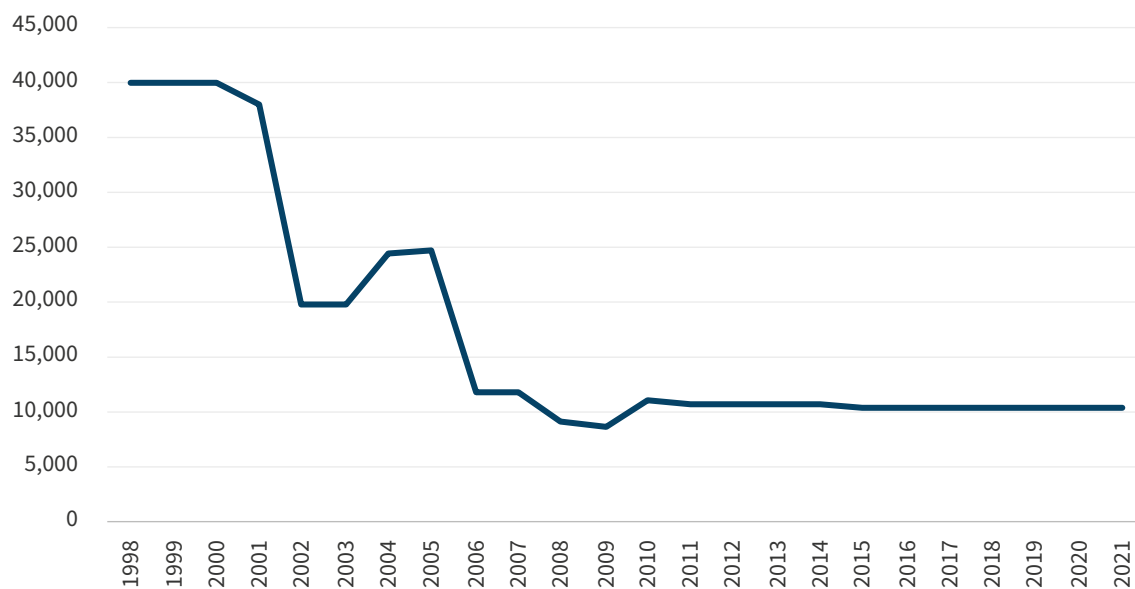
Figure 15: Physical Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina



Source: Mapbox.

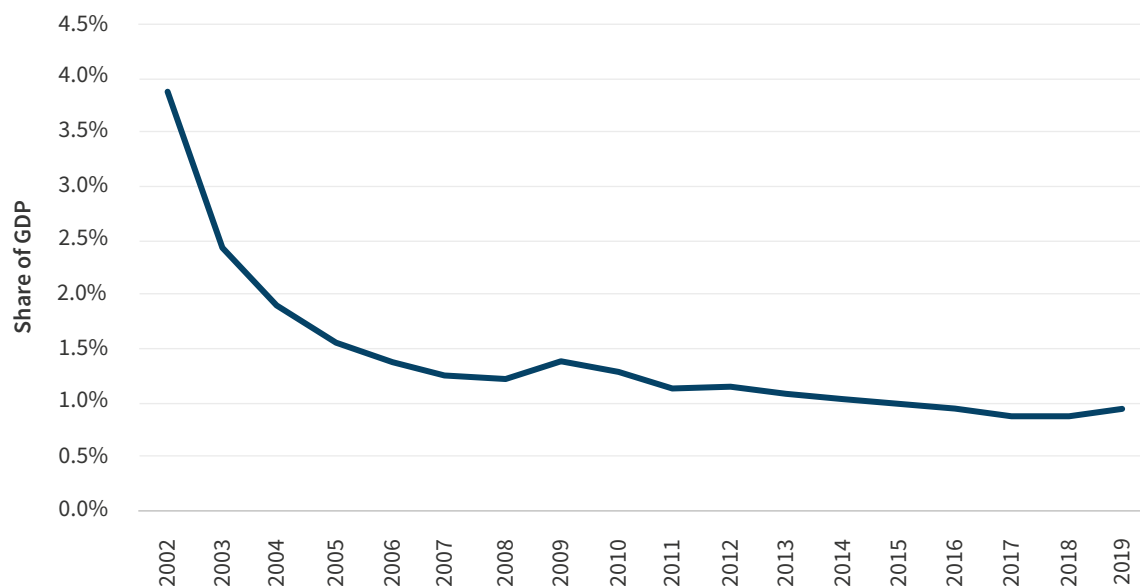
The size of the active forces has declined substantially from the level of the 1990s when they were involved in stability operations. Military spending as a percentage of GDP is lower than that of nearly all NATO countries.

Figure 16: Total Active Bosnian Armed Forces



Source: IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*.

Figure 17: Bosnian Military Expenditures as Share of GDP



Source: "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," SIPRI.

Serbian Views and Forces

Serbia is the only potential external threat to Bosnia. Today, that relationship is relatively benign. Serbia has an individual partnership action plan with NATO and is a member of the PfP. Its armed forces train with NATO. It seeks membership in the European Union but not NATO.

However, the relationship has not always been benign. When Yugoslavia collapsed, Serbian nationalist leader Slobodan Milošević sought to hold the disparate Yugoslav elements together, seeing Serbia as the successor to the former Yugoslavia. Serbia ended up fighting, or supporting, wars in Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia. (Other ethnic groups also tried to enhance their territory and standing during this period of turmoil.) NATO airpower helped Croat forces drive Serbian forces from Croat territory in 1995. Serbian treatment of Kosovo, a breakaway province of Serbia, engendered a conflict with NATO in 1999, ending with Serbian acquiescence to an international peacekeeping force in the territory. The status of Kosovo is still unresolved, with some countries recognizing Kosovo's independence, but Serbia claims that it is still a part of Serbian national territory. Although Serbian irredentist views have moderated since the conflicts of the 1990s, they have not entirely gone away.

Serbia maintains its historical relationship with Russia, including military exercises with Russian forces.

Serbian military forces consist of 28,150 personnel and about 50,000 reserves. The army has four large, combined arms mechanized brigades. Reserves provide some strategic depth and territorial defense. The air force has two squadrons of jet aircraft, plus attack helicopters and transport. Equipment is mostly obsolescent Soviet systems, with some locally developed variations (e.g., the M-84 tank as an

upgrade to the Soviet T-72). Nevertheless, the equipment is superior to that of Bosnia, and the forces are nearly three times the size.¹⁹⁸

Two scenarios illustrate situations where Serbian actions might require intervention by NATO forces. Although neither is likely, NATO must be prepared for even unlikely requirements, especially when considering enlargement.

NATO Peacekeeping during Internal Unrest

Bosnia has been peaceful and rebuilding for many years, but given the region's long history of strife, the ethnic and religious groups in the country have the potential for unrest and violence far beyond what is likely in other NATO members. Thus, one scenario projects what might happen if external parties instigate or support this strife. For example, Serbia could seek to reestablish its irredentist claims by supporting local Serbian minorities. Russia might support ethnic separatism in its traditional role of protecting ethnic Slavs in the region and, more recently, seeking to undermine NATO. Radical Islamic forces might induce some local Muslims to commit violent acts in response to perceived religious slights or persecution.

If unrest escalated beyond what Bosnia's limited and fragmented law enforcement authorities could handle, the government might ask for NATO peacekeepers. Would NATO intervene if Bosnia were a NATO member? NATO did intervene in the 1990s, although it waited until a peace agreement had been signed and thousands of casualties had occurred. Paralleling the reasoning in the Ukrainian scenario for unrest, Bosnia would likely invoke Article 5, cite Article 4, and point to UN and EU documents about the need to maintain European stability. As in the Ukrainian case, it would be hard for NATO to ignore such a plea.

History and theory suggest a force of about 60,000—history because that is the size of IFOR in 1995, theory because a force that size is consistent with RAND's work on foreign occupation (described earlier).¹⁹⁹

NATO would have a difficult time assembling such a large force today because its forces are half the size they were in the mid-1990s when NATO sent peacekeeping forces to Bosnia. In 1995, the United States sent a division to Bosnia from its forces in Germany, but today it lacks a division-sized force permanently assigned to Europe and has no divisional headquarters in Europe. Some U.S. force elements would therefore have to come from the continental United States.

The earlier discussion regarding Ukrainian stability forces noted two major uncertainties: how long the occupation would last and whether the operation would require any counterinsurgency activities. It also calculated a cost of \$300,000 per servicemember per year for peacekeeping or \$400,000 per year with some counterinsurgency combat activities. This scenario will use those same assumptions and costs.

Annual cost for a 60,000-servicemember force would initially be \$18 billion (\$24 billion dollars with some counterinsurgency operations) tapering gradually to zero. Of this, the United States would pay half. The table below shows total costs over the full period of the deployment.

198 Military forces data from IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*.

199 James Dobbins et al., *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Washington, DC: RAND, 2003), 150. Bosnia has a population of about 3,300,000 so the stabilization force would number about 66,000. This analysis uses 60,000 since that is the historical experience, though the two force sizes are close enough that they do not drive substantially different costs.

Table 10: Total Costs of Illustrative NATO Peacekeeping Mission in Bosnia

	SHORT DURATION (5 YEARS) (TOTAL/U.S. PORTION)	LONG DURATION (20 YEARS) (TOTAL/U.S. PORTION)
Peacekeeping only	\$45B/\$22.5B	\$180B/\$90B
Some counterinsurgency activities	\$60B/\$30B	\$240B/\$120B

Source: Authors' analysis.

As with the Ukraine scenario, a long-duration conflict would likely require some increase in the size of the U.S. Army. Adding 25,000 troops to expand the deployment base to what it was at the beginning of the last Bosnia operation (509,000) would cost about \$5 billion per year.²⁰⁰

Thus, total U.S. costs over the long duration mission would increase by \$50 billion, from \$90 billion to \$140 billion for peacekeeping only and from \$120 billion to \$170 billion with some counterinsurgency activities.²⁰¹

Serbian Incursion

Although highly unlikely, such a situation is not impossible. Serbia supported external militias during the civil wars of the 1990s. In this second scenario, a future ultra-nationalist regime in Serbia might initiate an incursion into Bosnia to support ethnic Serbs if sectarian tensions, Islamic extremism, or secular encroachment threatened them.

In a country-on-country fight, Serbia would have a significant advantage. Its four brigades have twice the firepower of the Bosnian brigades, and Serbia's air force would sweep the skies. Russia might strengthen Serbian forces with equipment, advisers, and volunteers as it has in the past. These advantages would allow Serbia to capture most of the Serbian ethnic regions of Bosnia, especially if the incursion were a surprise or partial surprise before NATO could send reinforcements.

NATO would need to respond since this would constitute an Article 5 breach, although some members might balk, not wanting to get involved in a messy ethnic conflict. NATO's response would likely begin with an air campaign, as have U.S. campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan and the NATO campaign against Serbia over Kosovo in 1999. The 1999 conflict lasted 78 days, but in that situation, the Serbian military could hunker down and hide. In a campaign against Bosnia, Serb forces would need to operate against remnant Bosnian forces, making its forces at least partly vulnerable.

NATO's ideal conflict of operations would be an air campaign followed by a Bosnian ground offensive facilitated by NATO ground advisers. This would parallel its 1995 efforts in support of Croatia when NATO advisers helped Croatian forces drive Serbian-supported militias out of Croatian territory

200 From CSIS Force Cost Calculator. Scenario added one infantry brigade combat team, one special forces group, two security force assistance brigades, and enablers. These forces are illustrative of the additional forces a peacekeeping mission would require.

201 Calculations assume steady decline to zero at the end of the occupation period. U.S. Army enlargement costs \$5 billion (initially) ÷ 2 (to get an average since the amount declines to zero at the end of the 20-year period) x 20 years = \$50 billion.

(Operation Storm). It would also parallel the 2001 U.S. campaign in Afghanistan that combined U.S. air power and anti-Taliban ground forces.

The advantage of such a campaign design is that the United States and NATO would not suffer the fiscal costs and casualties of a ground attack. Air campaigns have been nearly bloodless for U.S. and NATO forces. However, NATO would be indirectly responsible for any atrocities that Bosnian ground forces might inflict during the ground campaign. Past Balkan conflicts have been replete with atrocities by all participants.

After the 1999 air campaign, the DoD asked for \$5.4 billion to cover the incremental costs of the operation (\$9 billion in 2021 dollars).²⁰² That amount would be a reasonable estimate for what a future air campaign might cost.

Bosnia would be expected to reestablish control of its territory after the conflict ended but might need some temporary help from NATO. A rough estimate for the United States would be the one-year cost of the peacekeeping force after the Kosovo conflict. Deploying such a brigade-sized force cost \$2 billion in 2000 (\$3.3 billion in 2021 dollars).²⁰³

Total cost to the United States of the air campaign and immediate follow up would thus be about \$12.3 billion. If the Bosnian reestablishment of authority engendered an insurgency— perhaps supported indirectly and at a distance by Russia—then the peacekeeping and counterinsurgency costs described above would apply.

Table 11: Illustrative NATO Costs to Repel a Serbian Incursion

U.S. COSTS		ONE-TIME COSTS
Air campaign		\$9,000M
One-year peacekeeping operation		\$3,300M
U.S. Total		\$12,300M
NON-U.S. NATO COSTS		
Air campaign		\$9,000M
One-year peacekeeping operation		\$3,300M
Non-U.S. NATO Total		\$12,300M
NATO Total		\$24,600M

202 Congressional Research Service, *Kosovo Military Operations: Costs and Congressional Action on Funding*, CRS Report No. RS20161 (Washington, DC: June 3, 1999), https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/19990603_RS20161_90823b94173bd-4984e21284de24ac9834640279a.pdf. Congress added another \$5 billion to cover a variety of DoD shortfalls, not directly related to military operations in Kosovo.

203 Department of Defense, *Department of Defense FY 2000 Supplemental Request for Kosovo & East Timor Operations and Other Requirements* (Washington, DC: 2000), https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/Docs/fy2000_supp.pdf.

Sweden

Sweden is a mature democracy with well-armed and highly competent armed forces, making it an excellent candidate for NATO membership if Sweden decided to seek it. Defense of Sweden would be less demanding than defense of Finland, Ukraine, or Georgia because it does not directly border Russia. Finland and the Baltic Sea act as a buffer. Indeed, Swedish membership in NATO could help the defense of the Baltic states and Northern Europe.

However, Sweden's armed forces are much reduced from their Cold War levels and would not be adequate to fully protect the country in a conflict, particularly against Russian air power, without an increased Swedish military effort. Further, for conflicts in other countries, for example, the Baltic states or Poland, NATO will need Sweden as a transit point, a staging area, and a launch platform for strikes against Russia. Thus, Sweden will become involved in other countries' conflicts, a radical change from its historical practice.

Geography

Sweden's strategic geography frequently features in scenarios involving the defense of the Baltics against Russian aggression.²⁰⁴ For example, if Sweden allowed NATO access to its territorial waters, that would halve the distance that NATO forces moving through the Baltic to Estonia were exposed to Russian

204 F. Stephen Larrabee et al., *Russia and the West After the Ukrainian Crisis: European Vulnerabilities to Russian Pressures* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1305.html; and F. Stephen Larrabee et al., *The Ukrainian Crisis and European Security Implications for the United States and U.S. Army* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2015), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR903.html.

missile and air attacks. Further, use of Sweden's territory and ports could serve as bases from which to launch airstrikes and marshal troops and supplies for an amphibious assault in the Baltic Sea region.²⁰⁵

Sweden's population is relatively small, with 10.2 million people. Sweden's largest population centers are around its southeastern capital Stockholm on the Baltic Sea and Gothenburg on the western coast on the arm of the North Sea called the Kattegat, between Sweden and Denmark. The third-largest city, Malmö, is located on the southernmost tip of Sweden, directly across the Oresund Channel from Copenhagen. A few population centers stretch northwards along the long eastern coastline. The interior areas in the north are sparsely populated.

In land area, Sweden is one of the largest countries in Europe, at 173,000 square miles including its islands. The country is slightly larger than California (but with one-quarter the population). Overlaid on the United States, Sweden would stretch from Toronto to the Gulf of Mexico, about 1,000 miles long north-to-south but no more than 270 miles wide.²⁰⁶ The terrain is spotted by thousands of lakes and swamps as well as crossed by numerous wide streams. A narrow range of mountains sits along the northern border with Norway.

The territory in the south and the coastal lowlands are the most suitable for large-scale conventional maneuvers or large-scale airborne operations. The north is ill-suited for such operations due to the dense forests, lakes, and bogs. However, the same conditions that make the north less hospitable for large-scale movements make it more advantageous for irregular operations.²⁰⁷

The coastline, though very long, is not particularly accessible for amphibious assaults as it is dominated by a rocky shoreline, inlets, shoals, and islands. An old CIA military geography of Sweden described it as, "mostly unsuitable for amphibious operations because of obstructed and channelized approaches, flat nearshore gradients, rugged rocky shores, poor or unsuitable exits and cross-country movement conditions, and adverse weather conditions during most of the year."²⁰⁸ Nevertheless, some landing sites exist.

The island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea is particularly important both as a potential staging area for operations in the Baltic states and for sea control and air superiority in the central Baltic Sea. In effect, Gotland is an "immovable aircraft carrier" that when used in combination with modern long-range air defenses, can control the area from "the Danish island of Bornholm in the south to the Åland islands in the north and to the Baltic countries in the east."²⁰⁹ Alternatively, if Russia seized Gotland, its air defense and naval missile systems could interdict NATO traffic crossing the Baltic Sea.²¹⁰

205 Felix Chang, "Sweden's Importance to NATO's Defense of the Baltics," Foreign Policy Research Institute, September 28, 2017, <https://www.fpri.org/2017/09/swedens-importance-natos-defense-baltics/>.

206 "Sweden," CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sweden/>.

207 Although old, a detailed and still useful military geography of Sweden is provided by the National Intelligence Survey, Central Intelligence Agency, May 1973. See: <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp01-00707r000200090020-4>.

208 Ibid.

209 Albin Aronsson, "The Geostrategic Value of Greece and Sweden in the Current Struggle between Russia and NATO," Atlantic Council, December 19, 2015, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/the-geostrategic-value-of-greece-and-sweden-in-the-current-struggle-between-russia-and-nato/>.

210 Ibid. For additional discussion of Gotland's importance, see Robert Dalsjö et al., *Bursting the Bubble? Russian A2/AD in the Baltic Sea Region: Capabilities, Countermeasures, and Implications* (Stockholm: Swedish Defense Research Agency, March

Sweden recognized the strategic significance of the island during the Cold War, garrisoning it with a full armored brigade. Sweden pulled all troops out in 2005 but recently re-garrisoned the island with a small force of 360 soldiers.²¹¹ As Lieutenant General Ben Hodges, commanding general of U.S. Army Europe, told soldiers in Gotland before the Aurora 17 exercise in September 2017, “You have a strategically very important task here. I do not think there is any island anywhere that is more important.”²¹²

Figure 18: Physical Map of Sweden



Source: Mapbox.

Relevant Military History

Sweden has been neutral for two centuries, not having fought a war since 1814. Thus, Sweden avoided World War I, World War II, and formal association with either side during the Cold War.

Sweden’s main challenge during the Cold War was maintaining territorial defense, a concern often stoked by clandestine Soviet incursions into its territory. Sweden discovered evidence of reconnaissance activities, and there was an infamous incident where a Soviet submarine became grounded in Swedish territorial waters.²¹³

2019), <https://muep.mau.se/handle/2043/30208>; and Chang, “Sweden’s Importance to NATO’s Defense of the Baltics,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, September 28, 2017, <https://www.fpri.org/2017/09/swedens-importance-natos-defense-baltics/>.

211 “Sweden to re-establish military unit on Baltic Sea island,” Defense News, December 13, 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2017/12/13/sweden-to-re-establish-military-unit-on-baltic-sea-island/>.

212 “No island as important as Gotland, says US military chief,” The Local, July 24, 2017, <https://www.thelocal.se/20170724/no-island-as-important-as-gotland-says-us-military-chief-ben-hodges-europe-nato-russia-sweden/>.

213 See Gordon H. McCormick, *Stranger than Fiction: Soviet Submarine Operations in Swedish Waters* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1990), 4–9.

Sweden did have informal relations with NATO during the Cold War. A hint of this leaked out recently, when Swedish servicemembers received a U.S. award for helping a damaged U.S. SR-71 reconnaissance aircraft return safely from a mission over the Soviet Union in 1987.²¹⁴

Sweden has emphasized that it is not completely neutral. As its foreign minister stated, “Sweden will not remain passive if another EU member state or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack.”²¹⁵ As a result, Sweden now describes itself as “nonaligned” rather than “neutral.”²¹⁶

Sweden’s Military Forces

For its neutrality (or nonalignment) policy to be viable in a dangerous world, Sweden had to maintain a large military, a domestic defense industrial base, preparation of the country for total defense, and conscription. At its peak, the Swedish armed forces could—after mobilization—theoretically muster some 800,000 servicemembers. Sweden’s export-oriented defense industry can, even now, meet most of the armed forces’ equipment needs, including for advanced combat aircraft and conventional submarines.²¹⁷

With the end of the Cold War, Swedish armed forces shrank greatly. Conscription ended in 2010. Active-duty end strength shrank from 67,000 at the end of the Cold War to 14,600 today, a 78 percent reduction (compared with NATO’s 47 percent reduction). Wartime mobilization strength fell from 800,000 to 50,000.²¹⁸ Sweden restructured its remaining armed forces from territorial defense based on mobilizing reserves into a more mobile force ready for expeditions and peacekeeping operations. The number of army brigades shrank from 29 to 2.²¹⁹

214 Korey Fratini, “Swedish Pilots Presented with US Air Medal,” U.S. Air Force, November 28, 2018, <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/1700869/swedish-pilots-presented-with-us-air-medal/>.

215 Margot Wallström, “Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs,” (speech, Stockholm, February 24, 2016), <https://www.government.se/speeches/2016/02/statement-of-government-policy-in-the-parliamentary-debate-on-foreign-affairs-2016/>.

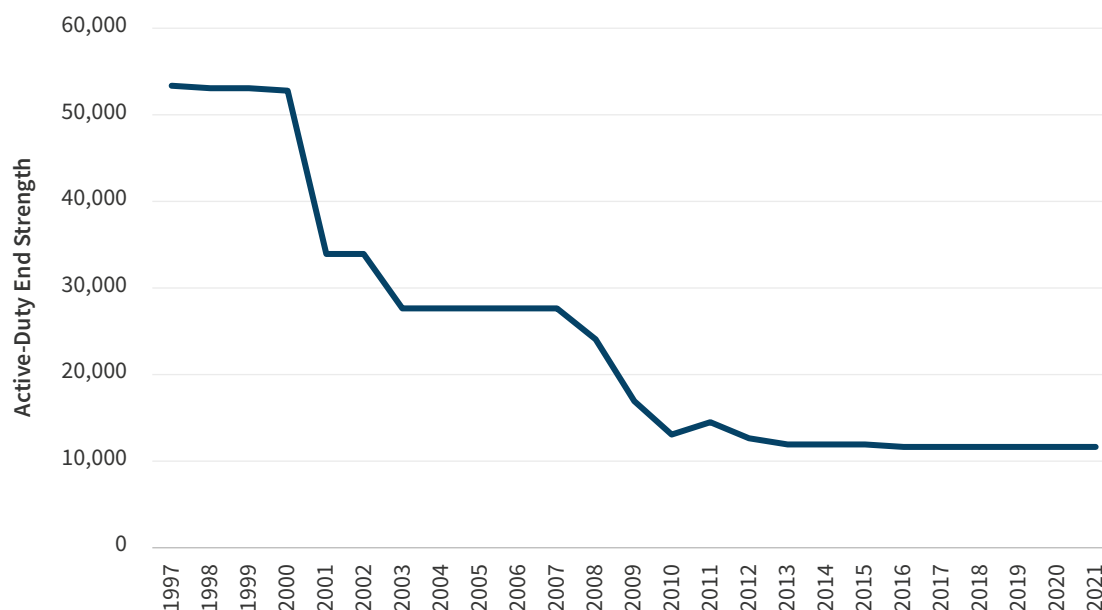
216 Felix K. Chang, “Sweden’s Foreign Policy: Nonaligned, But Not Entirely Neutral,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, November 2, 2017, <https://www.fpri.org/2017/11/swedens-foreign-policy-nonaligned-not-entirely-neutral/>.

217 Alyson Bailes, Gunilla Herolf, and Bengt Sundelius, eds., *The Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defense Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press and SIPRI, 2006), 141.

218 Pyykonen and Forss, *Deterrence in the Nordic-Baltic Region*, 36.

219 IISS, *The Military Balance 1987-1988*; and IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*.

Figure 19: Sweden Active-Duty End Strength



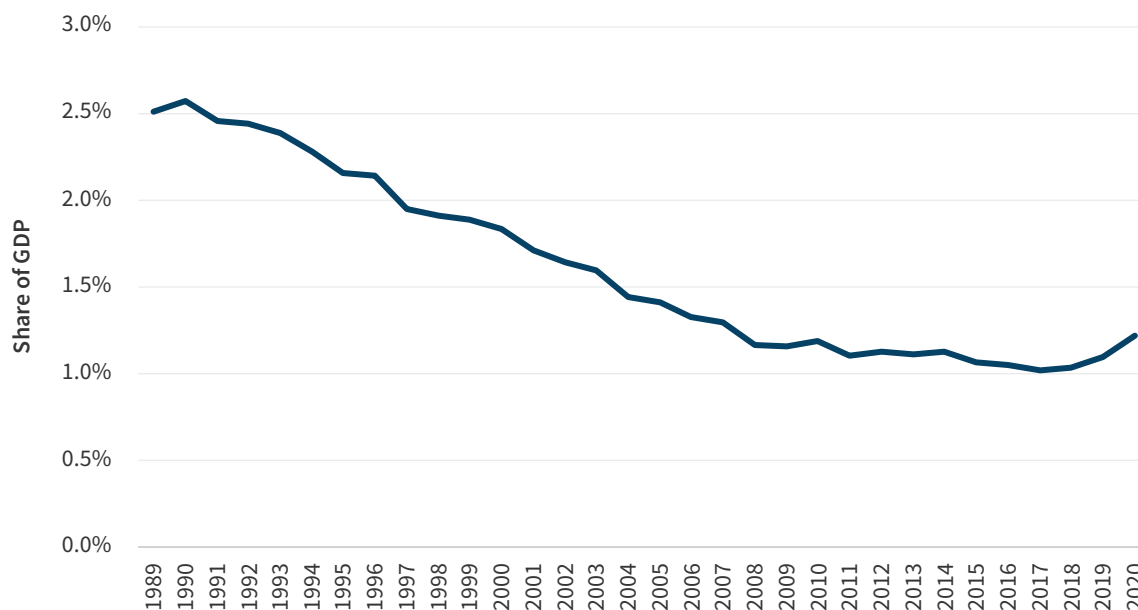
Source: IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*.

SWEDISH REARMAMENT

Russian aggression in Crimea and Ukraine, combined with assertive behavior in the Nordic region, pushed Sweden to increase investment in national security after years of decline (Figure 20). Defense spending is up 25 percent from 2017, although Sweden is still far below NATO's 2 percent goal. These increases are projected to continue as the 2021–2025 defense bill, presented in October 2020, envisages increased spending and an expanded force structure with the reestablishment of five regiments and one air wing.²²⁰

220 IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*, 148; and “Sweden boosts military spending, expands draft amid Russia tensions,” Reuters, October 15, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/15/sweden-to-increase-military-spending-by-40-as-tension-with-russia-grows>.

Figure 20: Swedish Military Expenditures as a Share of GDP



Source: "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," SIPRI.

The reactivation of conscription in 2018, driven by recruitment challenges and the desire to expand forces, "has come to symbolize the prioritization of national defence."²²¹ As other examples of increased investments, Sweden announced in 2018 that it was acquiring four PAC-3 Patriot air and missile defense systems, of which the initial deliveries began to arrive in May 2021.²²² Sweden also announced that it would again occupy the Muskö naval base, located on a cavernous island near Stockholm.²²³

In 2018, Sweden adopted a "total defense" concept, aiming to give all of Swedish society a defensive role and thereby discourage a potential invasion. Sweden has a history of such efforts. During the Cold war, there were detailed plans down to how parking garages were constructed to allow their use as shelters. Two guiding principles drive these plans: it will take Swedish military a week to fully mobilize, and three months will pass before allied ground troops could arrive and assist.²²⁴

221 Elin Hellquist and Kajsa Tiblad-Ludholm, *National Defense and International Military Missions: The Swedish Armed Forces at home and abroad 1958-2020* (Stockholm: FOI, 2021), <https://www.foi.se/report-summary?reportNo=FOI-R--5060--SE>.

222 Jen Judson, "Sweden Locked in to buy Patriot missile defense system," *Defense News*, August 10, 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/digital-show-dailies/smd/2018/08/10/sweden-locked-in-to-buy-patriot-missile-defense-system/>; and "Sweden received first components of Patriot Air Defense System," *Defense Brief*, May 7, 2021, <https://defbrief.com/2021/05/07/sweden-receives-first-components-of-patriot-air-defense-system/>.

223 David Crouch, "Swedish navy returns to vast underground HQ amid Russia fears," *The Guardian*, September 30, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/30/swedish-navy-returns-to-vast-underground-hq-amid-russia-fears>.

224 Aaron Mehta, "Fortress Sweden: Inside the plan to mobilize Swedish society against Russia," *Defense News*, March 14, 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2018/03/14/fortress-sweden-inside-the-plan-to-mobilize-swedish-society-against-russia/>.

Sweden has also in recent years stepped up its efforts to integrate itself with NATO's military planning and exercises. Sweden joined the PfP in 1994. Sweden has contributed to several NATO out-of-area missions, including Resolute Support in Afghanistan, the Kosovo Force in Kosovo, and NATO Mission Iraq. In more recent years, Sweden has stepped up its cooperation with NATO by becoming an Enhanced Opportunity Partner with the Partnership Interoperability Initiative and through hosting or joining multinational exercises.

A significant example of this closer cooperation was the Aurora 17 exercise in September 2017. This Swedish exercise involved 21,150 troops and took place over the whole of southern Sweden, including the islands of Gotland and Öland. Of the 21,150 troops, most were Swedish, with a large contingent from the United States and elements from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, and Norway. This was the largest military exercise in Sweden since the early 1990s and was also historic for involving a major foreign contingent of NATO countries in addition to Finland.²²⁵ Sweden has further joined several recent NATO exercises, including the annual BaltOps exercise, Trident Juncture in 2018, and Steadfast Defender in 2021.²²⁶

SWEDISH MILITARY FORCES TODAY

These forces are high quality but much reduced from their Cold War levels, as Figure 19 shows. Total personnel today include 14,600 active-duty personnel and 10,000 in reserves.²²⁷ In addition, there is the Home Guard (*Hemvärnet*), consisting of 40 battalions manned by reservists. For perspective, these forces are smaller though much better equipped than those of Georgia, a country with 40 percent of Sweden's population and 3 percent of Sweden's GDP.

Army: Sweden's army consists of two brigade headquarters and eight to nine battalions (mechanized, light infantry, cavalry, and airborne), together with artillery, air defense, engineer, logistics, and special forces units. Unlike during the Cold War, these units are at high readiness. Their equipment is relatively modern, for example, fielding an upgraded version of the Leopard II tank (the Strv 122).²²⁸

Navy: Sweden has a small navy designed for coastal defense. This consists of 3 Gotland-class and 2 Södermanland-class diesel-electric submarines, 9 corvettes, 10 vessels for mine countermeasures, and 11 landing craft and support vessels.

Air Force: Sweden has always invested heavily in its air force, developing sophisticated fighter aircraft that could operate at the level of great powers. The main element of the air forces is 96 JAS 39C/D Gripen aircraft. Although the Gripen is a high-quality fourth-generation fighter, it is non-stealthy and

225 Mike Winnerstig, "The Strategic Ramifications of the Aurora 17 Exercise in Sweden," International Center for Defense and Security, October 2, 2017, <https://icds.ee/en/the-strategic-ramifications-of-the-aurora-17-exercise-in-sweden/>.

226 "The Swedish Armed Forces Participate in Trident Juncture," NATO, 2018, <https://shape.nato.int/news-archive/2018/the-swedish-armed-forces-participate-in-trident-juncture->; "Exercise Steadfast Defender 2021 to test NATO readiness and military mobility," NATO, May 6, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_183459.htm; and "Why The U.S.-NATO Exercises In Eastern Europe Are Important," Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, June 10, 2020, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ex-plainer-why-the-u-s--nato-exercises-in-eastern-europe-are-important/30663259.html>.

227 *The Military Balance* reports an active end strength of 14,600, consisting of 6,850 in the army, 2,100 in the navy, and 2,700 in the air force, along with 2,950 in other positions. Figure 19 excludes the "other" category because of year-to-year irregularities in reporting, resulting in a total active end strength of 11,650.

228 IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*, 148–149.

would be vulnerable if flying inside the envelope of advanced Russian air defenses. In addition, there are helicopters, anti-submarine aircraft, and transport aircraft.

RUSSIAN FORCES

The Russians have large military forces in Kaliningrad and around Saint Petersburg. However, in any conflict with NATO, these forces would focus primarily on the immediate front in Poland and the Baltic states, where NATO forces would be strongest and most threatening to the Russian homeland. The threat to Sweden would come from Russian air, missile, naval, and special operations forces.

Russia's isolated enclave at Kaliningrad has the advanced S-400 air defense system that can range across the Baltic Sea, threatening traffic to Sweden and the Nordic countries.²²⁹ Russia has likely deployed Iskander missiles there. Iskander missiles can carry nuclear or conventional warheads and have a range of 300 miles, placing southeast Sweden and Gotland Island within their reach.²³⁰ Russia also has aircraft based there. Many of the aerial incidents that cause NATO planes from Baltic Air Policing to scramble involve Russian planes flying from or to bases in Kaliningrad.²³¹

In the Saint Petersburg region, Russia has the Baltic fleet and a variety of ground forces. In a conflict, these would likely be aimed at the Baltic states, not Sweden. However, a brigade and a regiment of naval infantry, along with a special forces brigade stationed in the area, could provide power projection capabilities into the Nordic region. The Baltic Fleet's two submarines could interdict traffic in the Baltic Sea, and the fleet's amphibious ships could move forces around the region, threatening Sweden.²³²

Defensive Challenges

A Swedish conflict with Russia would likely be in the gray zone, such as the incursions during the Cold War. Sweden can handle these with some assistance from NATO for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) to help pinpoint any incursions. It is difficult to imagine a scenario where Sweden, as a member of NATO, would by itself be pitted in a conflict against Russia. This is different from Sweden's current situation, where a Russian incursion is possible.

In a NATO conflict with Russia, for example, during a Russian incursion into the Baltic states, Sweden would be deeply involved. Because Finland acts as a buffer against Russia, land attack is extremely unlikely. Instead, Sweden would have three defensive challenges: protecting itself from Russian air and missile attacks, securing its vast territory against Russian infiltration, and defending Gotland Island and other key infrastructure so that NATO military forces could use them to protect the flow of forces to the Baltic states and elsewhere.

Protection against Russian Air and Missile Attack: Such attacks would constitute Sweden's main vulnerability, but its armed forces should be able to defend adequately if provided

229 Ibid., 190–205.

230 Missile Defense Project, "SS-26 Iskander," Missile Threat, CSIS, September 27, 2016, last modified December 19, 2019, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/ss-26-2/>.

231 Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis, *The Role of Sweden and Finland in NATO's Defense of the Baltic States* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, April 2016), <https://www.heritage.org/europe/report/the-role-sweden-and-finland-natos-defense-the-baltic-states>.

232 IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*, 190–205.

sufficient equipment. Sweden is buying Patriot missiles and would need to buy more. Sweden could also expand its air force to protect against Russian incursions.

In a conflict, NATO would want to move some forces forward into Sweden to secure the Baltic approaches. That would require some infrastructure improvements in peacetime. NATO would also want to use Swedish airfields to launch strikes against Russian forces, particularly if facilities in the Baltic states became unusable.

Securing Territory against Russian Infiltration: Sweden's actions for "total defense," if fully implemented, should protect it against Russian infiltration. Such infiltration forces would be small in any case since Russia is liable to be militarily involved elsewhere. Sweden might need some help hunting down adversary forces in its vast interior, but this help would be mostly NATO ISR to find any intruders, with perhaps some NATO special forces to neutralize them. Sweden might need to wait until the latter stages of a conflict when Swedish and other NATO forces could be diverted to such a mission.

Defending Gotland Island: This would be vital for any conflict in the Baltic area. The island would need a strong ground garrison to protect against assault, air defense to put a bubble over traffic through the Baltic Sea, and anti-ship capabilities to keep Russian naval forces away. Some of these capabilities would come from the Swedish armed forces. Some would deploy from other NATO countries. Sweden has two mechanized companies on the island and a battalion of reservists, with plans to enhance the defenses. A detailed campaign analysis by MIT scholar Suzanne Freeman showed that Russian forces might seize the island if the attack could use paratroopers from the central military reserve—a scarce resource. However, the operation would be highly risky, requiring surprise and assuming no abnormal NATO activity in the area.²³³ If Russian forces could hide some attack preparations, then the chances of success increase. This would require a breakdown of Swedish intelligence and decisionmaking, although other nations have experienced these failures in the past.²³⁴

Sweden has the economic strength and history of armed defense to protect itself from any of these threats. If its defense budget rose to the 2 percent NATO goal, then the enlargement of the armed forces and the increase in required capabilities, particularly for air and naval defense, could be achieved.

If Sweden did not step up its military spending, then NATO would need to enhance Swedish air, ballistic missile, and cruise missile defense for military and critical civilian infrastructure facilities in a crisis to ensure that NATO has unimpeded access to the Baltic Sea.²³⁵ These capabilities are already in short supply in NATO militaries, so provision of forces to Sweden would require increases to U.S. and NATO force structure. Patriot systems could provide defenses against all three threats. Each additional Patriot battalion costs approximately \$2.5 billion to procure and \$300 million to operate annually. An inventory of 100 missiles per battalion would cost \$400 million. A short-range air and cruise missile defense unit (such as the Indirect Fire Protection Capability, IFPC, that the U.S. Army is considering buying) would cost about \$200 million per battalion to procure and \$250 million to operate annually.²³⁶

233 Suzanne Freeman, "Can Russia Occupy and Hold Gotland?," MIT, July 2021, unpublished working paper.

234 For a discussion of how countries experienced surprise in the past, see Cancian, *Coping with Surprise in Great Power Conflicts*.

235 Some members of the working group were critical of this reasoning, arguing that Sweden would be "freeriding."

236 Patriot battalion cost based on recent sale to Poland, Jen Hudson, "US State Department clears Poland's \$10.5B request to

Improvements to Swedish military infrastructure would also be needed to accommodate NATO forces in a crisis. Sweden could easily bear these costs, likely in the \$200 million range, but NATO common funds would need to pick them up if Sweden did not.

Providing four air and missile defense battalions (two of each, Patriot and IFPC) would cover key points in Sweden, including Gotland Island. If not stationed in Sweden itself, these units would need to be stationed in Europe and ready for rapid deployment. Total one-time cost would be \$6.4 billion, with annual costs of \$1.1 billion. These costs would be shared between the United States and the other NATO countries which also maintain these kinds of capabilities.

Table 12: NATO and U.S. Costs for Defense of Sweden

U.S. COSTS	ONE-TIME COSTS	ANNUAL COSTS
Patriot	\$2,900M	\$300M
IFPC-like capability	\$200M	\$250M
Infrastructure upgrades	\$100M	-
U.S. Total	\$3,200M	\$550M
NON-U.S. NATO COSTS		
Patriot-like capability	\$2,900M	\$300M
Short-range air and cruise missile defense	\$200M	\$250M
Infrastructure upgrades	\$100M	-
Non-U.S. NATO Total	\$3,200M	\$550M
NATO Total	\$6,400M	\$1,100M

Source: Authors' analysis.

Beyond the purely military challenges, Sweden faces a political-military challenge in joining NATO: NATO membership does not just guarantee Swedish territory against outside aggression—it also requires that Sweden become involved in other countries' conflicts, something it has not done since the eighteenth century.

buy Patriot," Defense News, November 17, 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2017/11/17/us-state-department-clears-polands-105b-request-to-buy-patriot/>; Patriot missile ("Patriot Advanced Capability-3 Missile Segment Enhancement (PAC-3 MSE)) \$4 million, from DoD, *Selected Acquisition Report: Patriot Advanced Capability-3 Missile Segment Enhancement (PAC-3 MSE)* (Washington, DC: December 2018), https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/FOID/Reading%20Room/Selected_Acquisition_Reports/FY_2018_SARS/19-F-1098_DOC_74_PAC-3_MSE_SAR_Dec_2018.pdf; IFPC costs from U.S. acquisition of Iron Dome from Israel, Jen Hudson, "It's official: U.S. Army inks Iron Dome deal," Defense News, August 12, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/digital-show-dailies/smd/2019/08/12/its-official-us-army-inks-iron-dome-deal/>; operating costs from CSIS Force Cost Calculator. Operating costs include personnel, operations, maintenance, equipment upgrades, infrastructure, and a proportion slice of support units.

Finland

Finland is democratic, unified, and militarily competent—a good fit with NATO if Finland should decide to change its current policy and seek membership—but Finland is highly exposed to Russian military threats. Because the government is committed to nonalignment, Finland’s military strategy is based on defending itself even in absence of outside intervention. This is unlike Sweden, whose defense policy is based upon the assumption of eventual external assistance.

Geography

Finland’s geography drives its military challenges.²³⁷ The country shares an 813-mile land border with Russia, for which there is no natural barrier between the two countries. The proximity to Russia’s Kola Peninsula in the north—home to a major concentration of the Russian military—and the Russian city of Saint Petersburg in the south makes Russia sensitive to military activity in Finland.

With a population of only 5.5 million yet possessing the seventh-largest territory in Europe, Finland has a lot of territory to defend but not many people with which to defend it. Further, the population is mostly in the south, near Russia.

237 Geographic and demographic data from Eric Solsten and Sandra Meditz, eds., *Finland: A Country Study, Area Handbook Series* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1990): 76 <https://www.marines.mil/News/Publications/MCPEL/Electronic-Library-Display/Article/898252/country-study-finland/>; and Juha Pyykonen and Stefan Forss, *Deterrence in the Nordic-Baltic Region: The Role of the Nordic Countries Together with the U.S. Army* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, June 2019), 25, 32, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/3699.pdf>.

Finland is in Europe's northeast, far from NATO's military strength. Reinforcements would need to cross the contested Baltic Sea by air or sea. Reinforcements might come by air across Sweden (if Sweden permitted such a transit) or Norway, but that would require a long detour and be vulnerable to Russian air defense systems as they approached Finnish airspace.

One advantage is that the terrain is heavily forested (73 percent) with numerous lakes and bogs (20 to 30 percent), making maneuver of large-scale forces difficult. However, the territory along Finland's coast, up to about 60 miles inland, where most of the population resides, consists of land more suitable for military operations.²³⁸

Economically, Finland can be considered an island, with 70 to 90 percent of trade coming by water through the Baltic Sea and exposed to Russian interdiction in wartime.²³⁹

Finland has nearly 800 miles of coastline and thousands of islands, including the Åland Islands, which guard the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia. Thus, Finland has a lot of maritime exposure.

Figure 21: Physical Map of Finland



Source: Mapbox.

238 Peter Visuri, *Evolution of the Finnish Military Doctrine, 1945–1985* (Helsinki, Finland: War College, 1990): 11, <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiEupj6xftxAhWNPm0KHbjFAao-QFjAAegQIBRAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fcore.ac.uk%2Fdownload%2Fpdf%2F39979659.pdf&usg=AOvVaw1YEx7BAysxf-wmFjOINg65H>.

239 Charly Salenius-Pasternak, "An effective antidote: The four components that make Finland more resilient to hybrid campaigns," FIIA, FIIA Comment, October 2017, <https://www.fiia.fi/sv/publikation/an-effective-antidote>.

Relevant Military History

Finland's military has been shaped by the legacy of World War II, when Finland fought two ultimately unsuccessful wars with the Soviet Union: the Winter War from 1939 to 1940 and the Continuation War from 1941 to 1944.²⁴⁰ Although the Finns fought bravely and capably, Soviet numbers eventually overwhelmed them in both conflicts.

Throughout the Cold War, Finland fell within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence in a process known as Finlandization. Thus, Finland used Soviet equipment and accepted Soviet guidance of its foreign policy.

The core of Finland's security and defense policy has remained largely consistent from the Cold War to the present, with a focus on self-reliance; territorial defense; a large, trained reserve; universal conscription; and a defensive system that involves the entire society.²⁴¹

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Finland has increased its ties to the West. Finland transitioned from its policy of armed neutrality to one of nonalignment following joining the European Union in 1995. It replaced much of its Soviet-era military equipment with equipment from NATO and EU countries. For example, Finland acquired 64 F-18 C/D Hornets and Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles (AGM-158 JASSM) from the United States, Leopold tanks from the Netherlands and Germany, and MLRS rocket launchers from the Netherlands and upgraded its Soviet air defense systems with the Norwegian-U.S. National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAMS) II.

Finland has sought greater military cooperation with Western states, including contributions to NATO operations in Afghanistan, the Middle East, and the Balkans. Finland has also increased its participation in NATO and international exercises, such as Red Flag 2018 in the United States, Arrow 18 in Finland, and Northern Wind 2019 in Sweden. Finland has particularly enhanced its military cooperation with Sweden, with both countries adopting a concept of "strategic depth" in the case of a Russian incursion.²⁴²

Following Russia's seizure of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine in 2014, Finland has given more emphasis to the readiness of its armed forces and preparing for scenarios involving hybrid or gray zone

240 Eva Hagstrom et al. *Western Military Capability in Northern Europe 2020 Part II: National Capabilities* (Stockholm: FOI, 2020): 39, <https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI-R--5012--SE>.

241 Piotr Szymański, *With Russia Right Across the Border: Finland's Security Policy* (Warsaw: Center for Eastern Studies, May 2018), OSW Studies 73, 11, 12, 31, http://aei.pitt.edu/94234/1/with_russia_right_across_the_border_net.pdf; and Visuri, *Evolution of the Finnish Military Doctrine, 1945-1985*, 11.

242 Data on Finnish military and security policy from Felix Chang, "Collective Security without an Alliance: Finland's Defense Relationship with Sweden," Foreign Policy Research Institute, April 5, 2018, <https://www.fpri.org/2018/04/collective-security-without-an-alliance-finlands-defense-relationship-with-sweden/>; "The deepening Finnish-Swedish security and defence relationship: From operative cooperation to 'strategic interoperability'," FIIA, FIIA Briefing Paper 291, January 10, 2020, <https://www.fiaa.fi/julkaisu/the-deepening-finnish-swedish-security-and-defence-relationship?read>; Michael Jonsson, "Finland," in *Western Military Capability in Northern Europe Part II: National Capabilities*, edited by Eva Hagstrom Frisell et al., (Stockholm: FOI, February 2021), 39, <https://www.foi.se/en/foi/reports/report-summary.html?reportNo=FOI-R--4843--SE>; Salenius-Pasternak, *The defence of Finland and Sweden*; Szymański, "With Russia Right Across the Border," 34; and Mats Bergquist, Francois Heisbourg, Rene Nyberg, and Teija Tiilikainen, *The Effects of Finland's Possible NATO Membership: An Assessment* (Helsinki: Finland Ministry for Foreign Affairs, April 2016), 10, https://um.fi/documents/35732/48132/the_meffects_of_finlands_possible_nato_membership/c206b3c2-aa58-5809-c545-7aa67c9bcb2a?t=1525861455616.

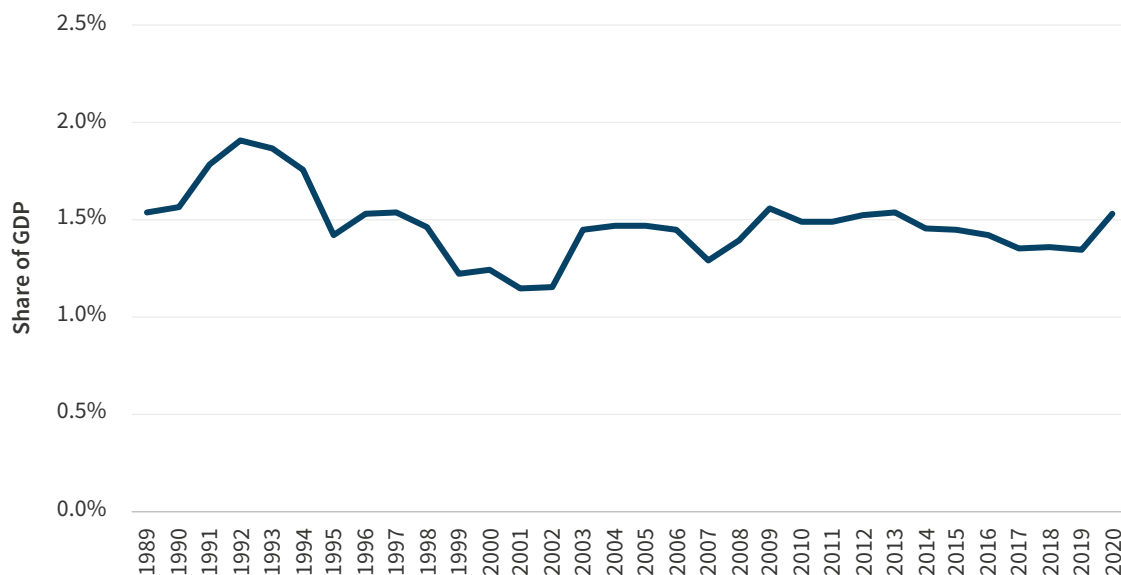
threats. These improvements include upgrading cyber defenses and air defense capabilities over the next five years.²⁴³

Many of these changes were outlined in a 2017 defense white paper, which warned about the changed security situation regarding Russia and called for improvements in readiness, modernization of forces, and developing abilities to counter hybrid threats.²⁴⁴

Finland's Military Forces

As a percentage of GDP, Finland's defense expenditures have been steady since the end of the Cold War. Finland maintained universal male conscription and a large army when mobilized. Thus, Finland's armed forces never disarmed in the same way as other Nordic countries did over the same period, although the size of the mobilized force decreased substantially. However, this level of spending is significantly below the NATO 2 percent goal.

Figure 22: Finland Military Expenditures as a Share of GDP



Source: "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," SIPRI.

Finland's armed forces are a mobilization military, with a mobilized end strength of about 285,000, but an active-duty strength of only 23,800 (with an army of 17,350, navy of 3,400, and air force of 3,050).

The military relies heavily on conscription, with two induction cycles consisting of 13,500 personnel taking place each year. Most conscripts go into the army, though a few go to the navy and air force. Conscripts serve a short period of active duty, one year or less, just enough to get basic training. Thus, the active-duty force is essentially a training establishment with little deployable capability.

243 Connie Lee, "Finland Upgrading Military Capabilities," *National Defense Magazine*, May 20, 2020, <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2020/5/20/finland-upgrading-military-capabilities>.

244 Prime Minister's Office, *Government's Defense Report* (Helsinki: Office of the Prime Minister, 2017); Jonsson, "Finland," 39.

The large mobilized force occurs because soldiers stay in a reserve capacity for many years after they leave active duty, during which they can be called up in an emergency. Although Finland's mobilization strength is still large today, its wartime mobilization strength had reached 700,000 during the Cold War.²⁴⁵

Army and Land Forces: Upon mobilization, the army can field two mechanized brigades, three infantry brigades (*jaeger*), six light infantry brigades, two armored regiments, one special operations battalion, and one helicopter battalion, together with twelve combat support and combat service support units. For its heavy forces, Finland has 100 Leopard 2A6 battle tanks (with 100 Leopard 2A4 in storage) and 612 armored personnel carriers.²⁴⁶

The army has a large number (up to 300) of short-range air defense systems to cover its bases and maneuver units but only 24 medium-range NASAMS IIs and no long-range systems.

This creates a “porcupine” defense whereby Finland’s army has relatively little offensive capability but substantial defensive capability in that its infantry can fight effectively on the inhospitable terrain that covers most of the country.

Navy: Finland’s navy consists of 3,500 personnel, of which 1,400 are professional and 2,000 are conscripts. This is a coastal navy, with 20 patrol and coastal combatant ships, 8 mine warfare vessels, 51 landing craft, and 7 logistics and support vessels. Total tonnage is less than that of a single U.S. destroyer. The Nyland Brigade constitutes a “mobile coastal *jaeger*,” in effect a marine corps to be transported in the amphibious craft. There are also capabilities for service support and transport tasks.

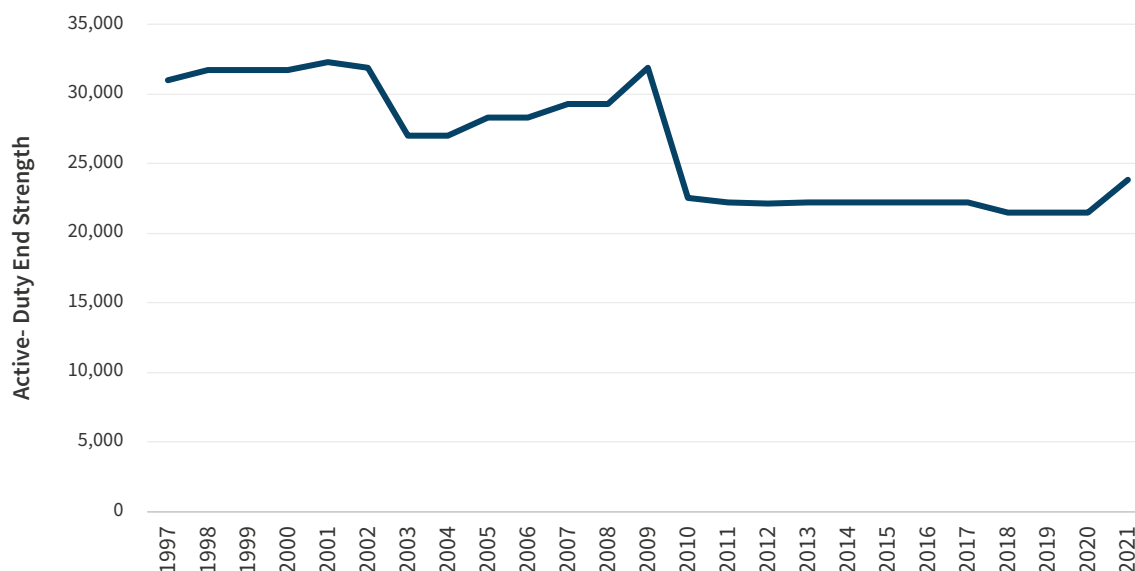
Air Force: The air force is small, with only 3,050 personnel, of which 2,050 are professional and 1,000 are conscript. It has two operational fighter aircraft wings with 62 F/A-18 C/D Hornet aircraft and one unit for reconnaissance, training, and transport, supported by four main air bases and surveillance systems. The Finns are conducting a competition to replace the aging F/A-18s.

Since much of Finland falls within Russian air defense systems, Finland has adapted its air force to focus on survivability and redundancy, with a mobile air defense grid, highway landings, and distributed airstrips. Nevertheless, the small number of aircraft and Finland’s proximity to Russia make the air force extremely vulnerable to surprise attack.

245 Szymański, “With Russia Right Across the Border,” 31; and Visuri, *Evolution of the Finnish Military Doctrine, 1945-1985*, 11, 40.

246 Data on Finnish military forces from IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*, 148–149.

Figure 23: Finland Active-Duty End Strength



Source: IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*.

Russian Forces

Russian forces in the region consist of the Western Military District, the Northern Fleet, and the Baltic Fleet.²⁴⁷ However, forces facing Finland are limited. Although the Western Military District has about 16 armored and mechanized brigades, only 2 face Finland (most face Ukraine). The 6 naval infantry brigades of the Northern and Baltic Fleets could also be brought to bear. In a crisis, brigades could reinforce from other areas in the Western Military District, as could airborne units from the central reserves. The resulting force would overmatch the Finns but leave other areas of Russia exposed.

Russia has a significant advantage in naval combatants, as the Baltic Fleet, headquartered in Saint Petersburg, near Finland, has 2 submarines, 8 surface combatants, and 25 patrol and coastal combatants. It also has 4 tank landing ships (LSTs), which can threaten Finland's exposed coastal areas.

These naval operations could also be reinforced by the 8 large surface combatants and 22 tactical submarines of the powerful Northern Fleet, although geography limits their operations to northern Finland. Russia has continued to expand operations in the Northern Fleet's bases on the Kola Peninsula to protect its strategic interests in the Arctic. Reflecting on Russia's relations with NATO and Finland in light of this expansion, Admiral Aleksandr Moiseev, commander in chief of the Northern Fleet, stated, "In the near future, we should expect a further increase in the military presence of the combined armed forces and, as a result, an increase in the likelihood of conflict."²⁴⁸

247 Data on Russian forces from Konrad Muzyka, *Russian Forces in the Western Military District* (Washington, DC: CNA, June 2021), https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/Russian-Forces-in-the-Western-Military-District.pdf; IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*, 180; Catherine Harris and Frederick Kagan, *Russia's Military Posture: Ground Forces Order of Battle* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War, March 2018), <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/russias-military-posture>.

248 Heather Conley, *The Ice Curtain: Modernization on the Kola Peninsula* (Washington, DC: CSIS, March 2020), <https://www.csis.org>.

Finland is greatly outclassed in the air, as the Russians have more aircraft (200 vs. 62 fighter/attack) and newer equipment in the Baltic Fleet and 6th Air Force.²⁴⁹ In addition, Russia has long-range Iskander missiles that can strike targets in Finland and extensive air defenses that would reach into Finnish airspace.

Defending Finland as a NATO Member

Finland would likely not welcome a large contingent of foreign troops on its territory, both for fear of provoking Russia and because of its long-standing neutrality sentiments. Further, some observers believe that its current defenses are adequate as a peacetime posture. For example, Professor Lukas Milevski concluded:

If one assumes that Russian force dispositions and activities remain more or less what they are today, Finland's current and planned force posture should be militarily adequate from a NATO standpoint. Finland's territorial defence is superior to that of the smaller Baltic States. This would be true whether Finland joins alone or with Sweden. Foreign military bases, let alone the stationing of nuclear weapons, would not be a prerequisite for the effective extension of NATO's defence guarantee.²⁵⁰

However, there is a risk that Finland's military, essentially a militia force, might not stand up well to Russian professional units. Although the determination of Finns to defend their homeland is unquestioned, their preparation to do so is uncertain. Further, the current generation of suburban office workers may not have the same background and preparation that their grandparents had in blunting Soviet attacks during the two Finnish-Soviet wars.

There is also a risk of Russia moving against some exposed element of Finnish territory, for example, the Åland Islands or a corner of the long and exposed border. A Russian coup de main would force Finland to counterattack, a role for which it is ill-prepared.

Finland is severely exposed to Russian air and missile attack. It lacks a large air force, and what aircraft it has are outclassed by the most modern Russian systems. Indeed, Finland, like many smaller countries, may be in a position where it can no longer afford to field an air force that is competitive against a great power. Finland has limited air defense and no missile defense, although it compensates through deception and hardening.

Finally, getting reinforcements to Finland in a crisis would take time because of the distance and geography.

MINIMUM DETERRENCE

One approach would be to focus NATO support on aviation and missile defense. Such a defense would compensate for Finland's greatest military weakness by providing firepower in case of a Russian incursion. In that situation, NATO airpower and ground fires would join with Finland's ground forces to generate a powerful counteroffensive. This has worked in many previous instances—Croatia in 1994

org/analysis/ice-curtain-modernization-kola-peninsula.

249 IISS, *The Military Balance 2021*, 180.

250 Lukas Milevski, *The West's East: Contemporary Baltic Defense in Strategic Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

to 1995, Kosovo in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001, Libya in 2011, and Iraq in 2014 to 2018—even when the ground force was not highly skilled. This would have the additional advantage of requiring a relatively small peacetime footprint, which would be important to the Finns.

As with the other potential NATO members on Russia's periphery, NATO would want to upgrade infrastructure to speed reinforcement and provide dispersed facilities, especially air facilities, for operations within the Russian missile envelope. Based on ERI/EDI experience, this would run about \$200 million. Finland could handle this bill itself if it increased defense spending. If not, NATO would need to cover it from its common funds. In any case, this analysis assumes that Finland pays for equipping its own forces and does not require support from NATO, except perhaps streamlined authorization for arms purchases.

Providing air- and missile-defense would be challenging. The ideal situation would be to have NATO units on the ground so they would be available from the beginning of a conflict. However, that would require stationing troops permanently. Instead, a rotational and intermittent presence might be adequate, though there is risk that units could not move forward in a crisis. Since Finland's weakness is in medium- and long-range air defense, Patriot systems, or the equivalent from other NATO countries, would be the desired capability. Such an additional capability would also be available to cover Sweden, should it join NATO or should NATO agree to provide that coverage in a crisis.

This approach provides two air and missile defense battalions, one from the United States and one from another NATO country. The United States would need to add a Patriot battalion to its forces in Europe since the existing assets there are quite limited and there are many other demands on them. Because Patriot units are limited globally, the United States would need to add one battalion to its overall force structure. Other NATO countries might also have large bills depending on which countries provided the capability and how stretched their forces were. Finland might be able to provide some of these capabilities itself with a larger defense budget.

The Finns have excellent small-unit capabilities but may need help with their higher-level coordination and planning. The security force assistance brigades (SFABs) can provide that assistance. Presence would be rotational from Europe and the United States to minimize footprint. Because these capabilities are limited and required globally, the United States would need to add one SFAB to its overall force structure. SFABs could also provide the liaison between U.S. and NATO forces and key Finnish headquarters. Elements from other NATO countries would augment the SFAB.

This approach also provides additional exercises to ensure that NATO capabilities work smoothly with Finnish forces and facilities.²⁵¹

251 Costs derived from the same sources as used for Georgia and Ukraine. Unit annual costs from the CSIS Force Cost Calculator.

Table 13: Finland Total Costs for Minimum Deterrence

U.S. COSTS	ONE-TIME COSTS	ANNUAL COSTS
Infrastructure improvements	\$200M (if not covered by Finland, then \$100M paid by the United States, \$100M paid by other NATO countries)	N/A
Additional exercises		\$50M (plus additional costs to other NATO countries)
Air- and missile-defense (Patriot battalion)	\$750M	\$290M for one additional Patriot battalion in the U.S. force structure
Rotational SFAB	\$100M for one additional SFAB	\$390M (relatively high because of the large number of personnel)
Total	\$1,050M	\$730M

Source: Authors' analysis.

HOLD UNTIL REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE

This more robust approach would build on the minimal deterrence option to provide additional firepower for Finnish forces. It would also provide some highly mobile forces to secure Finland's vast but mostly empty territory toward the north.

NATO would pre-position equipment for two fires brigades. The Finns have a lot of maneuver units but need firepower. Fires brigades bring long-range precision artillery and missile capabilities.

Stationing an additional helicopter force in Northern Europe would also significantly enhance the Finns position. In a crisis, this unit would deploy to provide transportation and firepower for Finnish units to move around the northern areas to deal with any Russian incursion. It would also be available for Swedish units to do the same. Such a unit could deploy later in a conflict when Russian air defenses have been reduced since any Russian incursion in these remote regions would not be decisive. Because these capabilities are limited, and the U.S. combat aviation brigade in Europe is greatly understrength, a composite helicopter battalion would need to be added to the force structure. Other NATO countries might contribute helicopters, although their rotary wing forces are limited.

Table 14: Finland Costs for Hold until Reinforcements Arrive

U.S. COSTS	ONE-TIME COSTS	ANNUAL COSTS
Pre-position equipment for two fires brigades	\$4,200M	\$50M for additional costs to maintain and exercise equipment
Composite helicopter battalion	\$1,000M	\$500M
Total	\$5,200M	\$550M

Finally, as with Sweden, Finland would become a platform for NATO to stage and launch strikes in the event of conflict in the region, for example, in the Baltic states. This would be a new role for Finland.

NATO Enlargement and Potential Actions

The following recommendations about further NATO enlargement are made in the context of NATO's history of success. For 70 years, there has been peace among the major powers in Europe, in large part due to the existence and activities of NATO. These recommendations aim to build on and safeguard that success.

These recommendations also recognize that past enlargement is an irrevocable fact. The recommendations look forward rather than back.²⁵²

1. **Recognize a changed European security environment.** As noted in Chapter 2, the European security environment has changed since enlargement began in the 1990s. Thus, the enlargement process should recognize the potential costs of military commitment as well as the benefits of future enlargement, when and if that enlargement occurs.
2. **Assess military requirements and associated costs as part of enlargement decisions.** As part of the enlargement process, NATO should produce a report on the threats a potential member faces, the forces it brings to the alliance, the quality of these forces, regional disputes it is involved with, the kind of military commitments enlargement entails in order to make credible

252 Michael O'Hanlon, a working group member, felt that the recommendations did not go far enough: "The CSIS study is a solid technical assessment of the kinds of specific military improvements that could be important in detecting, rapidly countering—and therefore hopefully deterring—any Russian test of NATO's commitment to five countries that might someday join the alliance. But as the authors of the study acknowledge in the report's executive summary, this technical approach does not—and, in fact, probably cannot—consider larger questions regarding the security and military implications of any further enlargement. My sense is that these would be predominantly negative, and much larger in magnitude than specific DoD budgetary costs associated with force enhancements or forward deployments." Email to author, July 22, 2021.

Article 5 guarantees to the potential new member, potential demands on NATO forces, what those potential force demands might cost, and how those demands and costs were calculated. This report may be classified, but if so, it should have an unclassified version for public release.

3. **Establish an agreement among NATO members regarding sharing costs to defend new members.** Once NATO's analysis establishes what the cost might be, existing members should agree on who will pay what, since the sharing of the burden will be politically sensitive for all countries, including the United States, which will not want to bear the burden alone.
4. **Conduct analysis in the United States.** In the United States, Congress should require the Congressional Budget Office or the Government Accountability Office to review this NATO report and provide independent views. These views should include any potential additional force requirements for the United States and associated budget costs.
5. **Include force requirements and cost in congressional hearings on new NATO members.** Historically, NATO members have expected the alliance to use its full military power to defend them, including nuclear weapons. Thus, expanding NATO membership commits all NATO members to an immense responsibility, but the United States in particular because of its preponderance of military capability within the alliance. Adding new NATO members may be the right thing to do when all factors, military and political, are considered, but that commitment should be made with a full understanding of the potential costs involved, as well as the benefits. Therefore, in the hearings associated with NATO enlargement, Congress should explicitly consider force requirements, costs, and who would be expected to bear those costs.
6. **Maintain opportunities outside of NATO membership.** NATO has developed a range of relationships short of full membership. NATO should continue to use tools such as the PfP and enhanced membership to build and sustain those relationships.
7. **Strengthen non-members when that contributes to European security.** NATO should continue to work with non-members to enhance European security and provide weapons, training, and joint exercises when that is appropriate.
8. **Assess current ability to meet Article 5 commitments.** It is unclear whether NATO can meet all its existing commitments under Article 5 at acceptable risk. NATO should therefore assess its current ability to carry out Article 5 commitments to all members. This assessment should consider possible threats to individual members and produce both a classified and an unclassified report. The current and possible future readiness of NATO forces, and therefore their ability to quickly come to the assistance of new member states, should be a key aspect of such a study. Such a report would improve the discussion about current NATO capabilities and member spending and about potential future members.
9. **Strengthen Article 5 credibility for existing members.** NATO has, to its credit, taken steps since the RAND study was published to improve its defenses, with more countries meeting the 2 percent spending target. However, there is still a long way to go. As Shlapak and Johnson noted in their RAND study, "The first step to restoring a more robust deterrent is probably to stop chipping away at the one that exists. If NATO wishes to position itself to honor its

collective security commitment to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, its members should first hit the pause button on further steps that reduce its ability to do so.”²⁵³

Therefore, existing members should strengthen Article 5 credibility as a first priority before stretching military capabilities to incorporate new members. The assessment recommended above, in conjunction with the many other assessments available, would provide a framework for capability enhancements.

253 David Shlapak and Michael Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2016), 11, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html.

About the Authors

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