



## POLICY PAPER

# NATO'S NORTHEAST QUARTET

PROSPECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR BALTIC-POLISH DEFENCE COOPERATION

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, NATO has made good progress in strengthening deterrence and defence postures on its eastern flank, including establishing a rotational Allied land component presence in the Baltic states and Poland. For quite some time, territorial defence seemed to be an obsolete need, a leftover from the Cold War era. However, Russia's overt and covert uses of military force—against Georgia in 2008 and against Ukraine since 2014—have profoundly altered the security environment and threat perceptions in the region and, indeed, across the entire Alliance.<sup>1</sup> Has this new situation also provided opportunities for the Baltic states and Poland to enhance their cooperation in their defence policies? What are the factors that enable and facilitate the advancement of cooperation in this format—and are there any obstacles to be removed? Ultimately, if these four countries on NATO's northeast flank are functioning smoothly as a quartet, what are the political and military steps they could take to bring their cooperation to a new and enhanced level? Drawing upon a series of interviews with defence policymakers and military practitioners in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, this policy paper examines the drivers, pressures and opportunities for closer defence cooperation among the Baltic states and Poland with the aim of articulating some recommendations as to how NATO's "northeast quartet" could work together more harmoniously.

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, a special volume "Putin's Russia: Down But Not Out", *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 95, Number 3, May/June 2016. Even issues of nuclear deterrence have returned after decades of neglect. See, for instance, Bruce Blair, "[Could U.S.-Russia Tensions Go Nuclear?](#)", *Politico*, November 27, 2015; or Franklin C. Miller, "[Adjusting NATO's Nuclear Policies: A Five Step Program](#)", Atlantic Council, *NATOSource*, March 23, 2016.

## 1. PAST AND PRESENT COOPERATION

The need for increased regional defence cooperation among the three Baltic states, as well as between the Baltic states and Poland, has particularly become salient since 2014, after the events in Ukraine. Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are united in perceiving Russian revisionist policies as a potential threat to their territorial integrity and sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> This common threat perception—combined with geostrategic reality of the Baltic states being a "peninsula" linked to the rest of the Alliance only through a narrow strip of land between Lithuania and Poland, the so-called Suwałki Gap—should be a strong driver to enhancing cooperation among these countries

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at every possible level. There is a growing sense in the defence establishments of the Baltic states and Poland that defence postures and policies have to be better coordinated across the region, and that closer cooperation between these countries can add to the overall deterrent effect of measures implemented by NATO.

This regional cooperation is not starting from scratch. For almost two decades, the Baltic states have been developing trilateral cooperation frameworks such as BALTBAT, BALTNET, BALTRON and BALTDEFCOL.<sup>3</sup> Those frameworks served as vehicles to build military capabilities, provide a common contribution to the Alliance and engage various Allies and partners, including Poland. The three countries' bilateral relations with Poland have also been developing steadily. Lithuania and Poland in particular, despite a period of political tensions over issues related to the Polish minority in

<sup>2</sup> See Jakub J. Grygiel and A. Wess Mitchell, *The Unquiet Frontier: Rising Rivals, Vulnerable Allies, and the Crisis of American Power* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> BALTBAT—Baltic Battalion; BALTNET—Baltic Airspace Surveillance Network; BALTRON—Baltic [mine countermeasures] Squadron; BALTDEFCOL—Baltic Defence College.

Lithuania, built a strong partnership that included such cooperation frameworks as LITPOLBAT (until 2007) and, since 2014, LITPOLUKRBRIG together with Ukraine.<sup>4</sup> Lithuania's procurement of Polish Grom man-portable air defence systems (MANPADs) in 2014 led to the subsequent training of Lithuanian personnel in Poland, and is a good example of bilateral cooperation.<sup>5</sup> Another example of a successful bilateral programme is the Latvian-Polish project to train Latvian Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) specialists for the Latvian National Armed Forces (LNAF) in Poland.<sup>6</sup>

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Poland's military contribution to Baltic security within the framework of NATO has been quite visible and, lately, also more substantive. Poland has participated in the Baltic Air Policing (BAP) rotations regularly since 2006 (7 times altogether thus far).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Poland is a contributing nation both to the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga and the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallinn—and is in the process of joining the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence (ENSECCOE) in Vilnius. It has also sent officers to NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) located in each of the three Baltic states. Furthermore, Poland has placed an armoured company within the Canadian-led NATO eFP battlegroup located in Ādaži, Latvia. The company has been rotated every six months since 2017, and occasionally is augmented by other subunits. For example, in

2017, one such augmentation was an artillery unit equipped with self-propelled multiple rocket launchers.<sup>8</sup> Polish participation in military exercises conducted in the Baltic countries has been active and much appreciated by the host nations. (See Annex for a compendium of bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral cooperation formats, programmes and initiatives).

Despite this positive overall picture of cooperation in bilateral, multilateral and NATO frameworks as well as the general tone set by high-ranking officials about its importance, there is a sense that more could be done. This

applies to political and military cooperation within NATO (e.g. on eFP, the Alliance's adaptation and "Military Schengen") and within the EU (e.g. on the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy,

CSDP) as well as in bilateral and quadrilateral formats between and among Poland and the Baltic states. Poland's military "footprint" in Estonia, for instance, is light, and the bilateral cooperation agenda is fairly thin. Baltic support to Poland's positions—which are otherwise seen as closely aligned with those of the Baltic states—on such issues as NATO Force Structure (NFS) and NATO Command Structure (NCS) reforms has been less forthcoming than expected by Warsaw. In essence, the Three Plus One (3+1) format—in contrast to bilateral initiatives—has hardly led to any substantive outcomes. Therefore, looking at the recent record, many observers of Baltic-Polish cooperation point out that despite the examples of increased cooperation cited above, on the whole there has been "more talk than walk". The reasons behind the difficulties encountered will be further explored in the next section.

<sup>4</sup> LITPOLBAT was a combined Polish-Lithuanian battalion for peacekeeping missions, headquartered in Orzysz, Poland. It was disbanded in 2007. LITPOLUKRBRIG is a trilateral brigade established in 2014 consisting of an international staff, three battalions, and specialised units. It is headquartered in Lublin, Poland.

<sup>5</sup> See Jakub Pavlovski, "Lithuanian Soldiers Involved in the Grom MANPADS Training Programme", *Defence24.com*, December 1, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> See Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, *Public Report of the Year 2015* (Riga, 2015), 21.

<sup>7</sup> Juliusz Sabak, "Polish Air Force's F-16 Jets To Protect The Baltic Airspace, Starting from May", *Defence24.com*, March 24, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> "Poland offers tank company to join Canadian forces in Latvia", *Latvian Public Broadcasting*, October 6, 2016.



## 2. OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES

### 2.1 SIZE AND PRIORITIES MATTER

Even as Baltic-Polish cooperation has fulfilled an important political function, in reality this format has not been the primary instrument of achieving strategic goals—such as becoming an integrated part of the Western security community—for any of the states involved. In pursuit of their integration aspirations, all four countries looked to their biggest Western allies—most of all the US—to enhance political and military ties. Poland, for its part, simultaneously sought both greater politico-military cooperation within the Weimar Triangle with the biggest European powers, France and Germany, as an aspiring CEE regional power—while also working within the Visegrád Group as a way of strengthening the standing of the region as a whole. These efforts resulted, for instance, in the formation of the Weimar (2013) and Visegrád (2016) EU Battlegroups. In Warsaw, military cooperation with the Baltic states has thus been considered “nice to have” but not a real strategic imperative. In the relatively benign pre-2014 security environment, the same sense could be felt in the Baltic capitals: Poland was important, but not so essential that developing new initiatives to engage Warsaw as a first-choice partner was a top priority.

Additionally, the significant difference in political, economic and military potential between Poland and the Baltic states presents an ongoing challenge for Baltic-Polish cooperation. Poland’s population is more than seven times larger (and its GDP five times larger) than those of the Baltic states combined. These figures are reflected in the gap in military expenditures: Poland’s defence budget is more than five times those of the Baltic states combined.<sup>9</sup> Finally, its armed forces—measured

<sup>9</sup> Defence expenditures in 2017: Poland—\$9.935 billion; the Baltic states combined—\$1.868 billion (Estonia—\$0.54 billion; Latvia—\$0.512 billion; Lithuania—\$0.816 billion. See North Atlantic Treaty

in terms of the number of active duty military personnel— are four times larger than those of the three Baltic countries taken together.<sup>10</sup> While it is clear that mid-sized Poland has been “too big to be small,” and has therefore aspired to stand on a more equal footing with Germany, France and the UK; it is, at the same time, somewhat “too small to be big”, from the Baltic state’s perspective, in order to serve as a central hub and driving force of regional defence cooperation.

### 2.2 COMPETITION FOR MORE NATO IN THE REGION

However, since 2014 Poland has been emerging as a geo-strategically pivotal player in the region and a hub of NATO efforts (spearheaded

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by the United States) to bolster deterrence and defence on the Alliance’s eastern flank. Its efforts to modernise and enhance its own national defence capabilities as a bulwark against a resurgent Russia have impressed many observers.<sup>11</sup> It is a host nation to the Multinational Corps North East (MNC NE) headquarters (HQ) as well as to a US-led NATO eFP battlegroup and to the recently deployed 4,000 troops of the US Army Armoured Brigade Combat Team (not to mention the ground-based SM-3 interceptors’ site that will be part of the US global missile defence system as well as part of the US contribution to NATO’s Ballistic Missile Defence system in Europe).<sup>12</sup>

Organisation, “[Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries \(2011-2018\)](#)”, Communique PR/CP(2018)091, July 10, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Active duty military personnel (2017): Poland—105,000; the Baltic states combined—24,600 (Estonia—6,100; Latvia—5,500; Lithuania—13,000). See North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, “[Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries \(2011-2018\)](#)”.

<sup>11</sup> See John R. Schindler, “[Poland Stands Up For the West Against Russia – Again](#)”, *Observer*, September 10, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> See US Department of State, “[U.S. Relations With Poland](#)”, Fact Sheet, April 25, 2018.

The hard fact is that reinforcement of the Baltic countries via the land domain would be impossible without the Alliance's use of Poland as a staging ground and Poland's own work to enable and support reinforcement flows. Warsaw has launched a rigorous effort to establish a more coherent command and control structure based in the country as part of the overall NCS review, which includes a new Multinational Division North-East (MND NE) HQ in Elbląg (located in north-eastern Poland) and, perhaps, an army-level HQ in the future as well.

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All this is clearly of benefit and interest to the Baltic states, as it increases collective defence and deterrence potential in the region.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, this has also become a source of some friction. There is some degree of “win-lose” thinking in the region, whereby the gains of one party—in terms of securing a more substantive and visible Allied presence—are perceived as potentially diminishing the likelihood of gains of others. NATO's own incoherence, piecemeal approach and lack of long-term vision in enhancing and streamlining command and control as well as force structures in the region only aggravate the problem.

With the deployment of NATO eFP battlegroups in the Baltics, the United States withdrew the infantry companies it had deployed, on a rotational basis as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve, in the three nations since 2014, while at the same time bolstering its presence in Poland.<sup>14</sup> The US presence to the north of the

<sup>13</sup> See Kalev Stoicescu and Henrik Praks, *Strengthening the Strategic Balance in the Baltic Sea Area* (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, March 2016).

<sup>14</sup> For more on the measures undertaken by the US and other allies and partners in the Baltic states in 2014-2015, see Justyna Gotkowska, “[NATO's presence in the Baltic states – reassurance](#)

Suwałki Gap thus remains small and transient; this has become a frequent cause for complaints voiced by Baltic officials in different fora.<sup>15</sup> Ostensibly, the Baltic states support Warsaw's efforts to secure a permanent US military presence in Poland, as most recently stated by the Baltic prime ministers during their meeting with their Polish counterpart.<sup>16</sup> However, there remains a lingering cautiousness in the Baltic capitals that such efforts by Warsaw (which seem to echo and work in synch with the US military thinking and emerging posture to concentrate more capabilities to the south rather than to the north of the Suwałki Gap) will leave the Baltic states with too light a military footprint of such a crucial NATO Ally, the US.

This reminds the Baltics of the situation in the aftermath of the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, when the three states pressed the Alliance for a contingency plan. Out of fear of diluting NATO's commitments, Poland was then cautious about extending NATO's “Eagle Guardian” plan (that focused on the defence of its territory) to cover the Baltic states as well. It argued in favour of a

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separate contingency plan for the Baltic states instead—a proposal that was opposed by Germany. However, Poland's position was interpreted as unhelpful by the Baltic states.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> [of allies or deterrence for Russia?”, OSW Commentary](#), April 29, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> One of the most recent examples was at the Annual Baltic Conference on Defence (ABCD), organised in Tallinn on 26 September 2018 by the International Centre for Defence and Security and the Estonian Ministry of Defence.

<sup>17</sup> [“Baltic states in favour of permanent US military base in Poland: report”, Radio Poland](#), June 5, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> See [“Eagle Guardian”, GlobalSecurity.org](#).

## 2.3 THE eFP EFFECT ON THE BALTICS

At the same time, it is notable that the Baltic states became very focused on cultivating, on a bilateral basis, relations with the lead nations and key partners of the eFP battlegroups deployed on their soil. This was first rooted in a practical rationale: deployment of the battlegroups was a huge challenge to the small host nations that absorbed much of their attention, energy and time. Insofar as eFP deployments indeed act as an important factor in shaping bilateral and multilateral defence cooperation agendas and priorities, then Riga is best positioned to advance defence relations with Poland—a significant contributor to the eFP battlegroup in Latvia. For Vilnius and Tallinn, however, this connects with their longer-term policy to develop special defence relationships with the lead (“framework”) nations as well as other key participating countries of the battlegroups they host, which may divert their attention from deepening cooperation with Poland.

Estonian troops, for instance, have been involved in Afghanistan as part of the British contingent, forging a strong connection between the two defence establishments.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF) participated in the operations led by another major contributor to the Estonia-based eFP battlegroup—France—in the Central African Republic and, lately, in Mali.<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that Estonia is the only Baltic nation that joined the European Intervention Initiative (EII) recently launched by Paris.<sup>20</sup> Some of the largest Lithuanian “big ticket” defence procurement contracts—infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), self-propelled artillery howitzers, infantry rifles, ship cannons—have been awarded to German suppliers.<sup>21</sup> More

<sup>18</sup> Chris Holtby, “UK-Estonian defence cooperation in NATO”, *Estonian World*, April 1, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> See “Estonian government approves sending 50 troops to French-led Mali mission”, *ERR News*, March 22, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> “Estonia joins eight EU members in building joint military intervention force”, *Baltic News Network*, June 26, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> This includes the largest ever defence procurement contract since the restoration of Lithuania’s independence - approximately \$440 million for the purchase of 88 “Boxer” IFVs (renamed “Wolf”

recently, the Iron Wolf mechanised infantry brigade of the Lithuanian Armed Forces (LAF) became affiliated with a German division HQ and not with the MND NE HQ in Poland, as envisaged earlier.<sup>22</sup> Lithuanian troops participating in the UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) serve within a German contingent, while Lithuania’s Vessel Boarding Team (VBT) was deployed to EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA in the Mediterranean on a German Navy ship.<sup>23</sup>

## 2.4 COURTING WASHINGTON

Very similar dynamics define the way that the Baltic states and Poland approach relations with the United States, arguably their key strategic partner. All are eager to cultivate bilateral political ties with Washington, while the Baltic states utilise the so-called 3+1 format as well. Poland justifiably sees itself as too big and too important to be lumped together with the small

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Baltic countries in conducting defence relations with the United States, while for their part the Baltic states would inevitably feel marginalised and turned into insignificant adjuncts during any arrangements made between Warsaw and Washington. Given the degree of competition between Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius for American attention, having to contend with being in Warsaw’s shadow would be a little too much to stomach, especially while watching Poland accrue more and more benefits from the US

in the variant delivered to Lithuania). See Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, “[Minister J. Olekas: ‘The Contract of 88 IFV is the signal that Lithuania takes care of its security and investments into it seriously’](#)”, News Release, August 22, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> “On 21 Sep [September] Agreement of Affiliation of Iron Wolf Brigade of Lithuanian Armed Forces to a German Army division was signed in Vilnius to ensure better interoperability with German-led NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group eFP in Lithuania among other goals”. Lithuanian MoND, [Twitter Post](#), October 21, 2018, 9:10AM.

<sup>23</sup> See Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, “[Lithuanian unit began service in the UN mission in Mali](#)”, News Release, October 19, 2017, and “[First Lithuanian Vessel Boarding Team deployed to EUNAVFOR MED Operation SOPHIA in the Mediterranean](#)”, News Release, March 6, 2017.

military presence in the country. Poland's recent bid to secure permanent stationing of US forces by offering \$2 billion in spending<sup>24</sup>—as beneficial to regional security as it might be if successful—overshadows anything the Baltics could ever promise to entice an increasingly transactional Trump administration into establishing an American military presence to the north of the Suwałki Gap. More vocal Baltic support for Poland in its efforts to secure a US presence would show to Western European allies the importance of strengthening US

Despite lots of talk about joint procurement, there have been only some modest projects such as purchase of anti-tank munitions through the European Defence Agency—and even those did not fully yield the expected results. (For example, officials in Latvia pointed out that the cost of collectively-purchased munitions ended up being higher compared to what each country would have paid as a result of individual tenders). Moreover, after failing to agree on operational requirements and technical specifications while also proving unable to synchronise their planning cycles, all three nations opted for separate national solutions in purchasing IFVs, self-propelled artillery, medium-range air surveillance radars and in other larger and smaller procurements. As a result, the three missed out

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involvement in the region. However, it is clear that more dialogue and mutual understanding among the governments of Poland and the Baltic states are necessary on this issue.

## 2.5 BALTIC REALITIES

The Baltic states have also been moving in fits and starts when it comes to their own trilateral defence relations; periods when fierce disputes threatened to derail even the most established cooperation projects have been followed by periods in which the three countries eagerly generated new ideas while seeking new forms or areas of collaboration. However, it could be plausibly argued that ever since the “golden four” projects—BALTBAT, BALTNET, BALTRON and BALTDEFCOL—were established, there has been little in the way of expanding the scope and depth of trilateral cooperation with projects or initiatives of the same impact on national defence capabilities and organisations. Indeed, one of those four, BALTBAT, has since withered away, while BALTRON has shrunk to two participating nations after Estonia's withdrawal in 2015.<sup>25</sup>

on an opportunity both to achieve further synergies in, for instance, training, maintenance and sustainment as well as to enhance interoperability.

While regular trilateral political, political-military and military formats (Baltic Ministerial Committee, Baltic Military Committee, etc.) continue as usual and occasionally generate useful ad hoc initiatives, there have been no recent increases in the actual substance of trilateral defence cooperation to allow one to declare that it has reached some completely new qualitative and quantitative level. Despite pronouncements to the contrary, there is a distinct impression that none of the three Baltic states regard trilateral military cooperation as an absolute priority, and that they only invoke its ideals as a matter of political ritual. In some areas, there are more bilateral (e.g. between Latvia-Lithuania in the areas such as special operations forces, maritime surveillance, and air defence development) than trilateral cooperation projects and programmes going ahead.

Last, but not least, there are also practical challenges related to the cooperation capacity of the small defence establishments of the

<sup>24</sup> Edyta Żemła and Kamil Turecki, “Poland offers US up to \$2B for permanent military base”, *Politico*, May 27, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> For a recent update on the state of play of Baltic defence cooperation, see Nora Vanaga, “Baltic Military Cooperation:

Seeking a Common Response”, Centre for Security and Strategic Research, *Strategic Review*, No 11, April 2016.



Baltic states. Expanding the scope and intensity of multilateral cooperation programmes requires additional administrative and financial resources. Intensified Baltic-Polish cooperation would compete with the host of other cooperative frameworks, measures and commitments within NATO, EU and multilateral formats that already significantly stretch the small Baltic defence organisations.

Furthermore, the three Baltic countries regularly host (and participate outside their territories in) a highly intensive and demanding programme of military exercises that absorbs a significant amount of their energies and attention.<sup>26</sup> Due to the high tempo of the exercises, continuous involvement in international military operations and increasing cooperation efforts in multiple directions, there are signs both of fatigue and of a reluctance to generate further ideas for future cooperation—as this usually spells more work and more strain for the same already overloaded and over-committed people. On top of that, from a Baltic perspective, the frequent and sudden changes of key military personnel in Poland inhibit the building of mutual trust and close working relations, thereby adding a degree of disruption and discontinuity to practical cooperation efforts.

This does not imply that there is no space for enhancing Polish-Baltic military cooperation, as it is a question of managing priorities, ambitions, resources and programmes in ways that best align with the strategic imperatives and political will. However, the four countries need to be careful and smart in identifying and selecting opportunities that add real value, make great political and military sense, and do not fizzle out due to a lack of follow-through. In the next section, we will consider what such opportunities could look like.

<sup>26</sup> As an example, see the list of major military exercises conducted by the Lithuanian Armed Forces just in 2017: Lithuanian Armed Forces, “[Military Exercises 2017](#)”, last updated May 5, 2017.

### 3. OPPORTUNITIES

Various developments across the Alliance and within the region offer multiple opportunities for the Baltic states to enhance their defence cooperation with Poland. Some of these opportunities are related to already ongoing bilateral and multilateral cooperation efforts in the region that need only to be expanded and scaled up. Some arise from within each country’s defence development needs, plans and priorities. Others are driven by impetus key external strategic partners as well as from new initiatives within the frameworks both of NATO and the EU. Exploiting these opportunities, however, will require increasingly intensive and continuous political and military work from all four countries. The current political trends are favourable for such enhanced security and defence cooperation.

Moreover, the financial context is also positive, as all four countries have been steadily increasing their defence spending over the last few years and maintain—or are about to reach—the benchmark of 2% of GDP for

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defence.<sup>27</sup> On the one hand, it is financial austerity rather than budget growth that often serves as a strong motivating factor for closer defence cooperation; on the other hand, availability of sufficient funding for cooperative initiatives, projects and activities is a necessary condition for expanding the scope and intensity of such cooperation.

One important opportunity comes from the growing US military re-engagement in Europe and in the Baltic Sea region. Various measures undertaken by Washington through the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI)—particularly those fortifying defence and

<sup>27</sup> In 2018, defence spending as a percentage of GDP is expected to be 1.98 in Poland, 2.14% in Estonia, 2.00% in Latvia, and 1.96% in Lithuania. See North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011-2018)”.

deterrence in the north-east of the Alliance—should present possibilities for the Baltic states and Poland to work together more closely. The US National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA), which provides funding for the EDI, encourages the Baltic states to spend *jointly* more of their US financial assistance.<sup>28</sup> There certainly are areas of defence investments where the possibility of including Poland in such joined-up approaches could make sense, particularly when they enable and facilitate the continued American military presence in the region.<sup>29</sup> (On the other hand, the fact that the Baltic states themselves could only agree on procurement of

shortfall in the region and must be built up on a basis of a coherent regional architecture.<sup>30</sup>

Since the Baltic states' armed forces modernisation process is already underway and is conducted mainly in co-operation with major Western Allies, there will be little room for manoeuvre for armament co-operation with Poland in the next few years. The same applies to the Polish complex procurement programmes that are already, and that preferably will continue to be conducted with major US or European partners. However, since the Baltic states often (but not always) prefer buying cheaper second-hand military equipment, it opens a window of opportunity for future Baltic military tenders. Instrumental in this context could be financial support from the Regional Security Assistance Programme 2022 (ReSAP) that Poland started in 2015.<sup>31</sup>

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anti-tank munitions in order jointly to use the US assistance is indicative of the difficulties in finding areas for common investments or, indeed, in expanding the number of cooperation partners).

In some cases, common or better coordinated solutions are the best way to increase interoperability of military forces, enhance national resilience, strengthen the effect of collective deterrence or enable and facilitate successful reinforcement by NATO forces in crisis or war. Eliminating capability gaps that may hamper the reinforcement and defence of the north-eastern frontier of NATO—in air defence, maritime domain (including coastal defence), electronic warfare, logistics & Host Nation Support (HNS) and other areas—would benefit if the four countries allocate the human and financial resources necessary to developing joined-up approaches and synergies. Air defence is a particularly acute capability

At the same time, the joined-up approach could be pursued in capability areas where fast technological change is driving major changes in warfare. From cyberwarfare to unmanned autonomous weapon systems, such areas require the constant assessment of various implications to national defence as well as development and testing of new concepts in order to stay abreast of overall trends. Concept Development and Experimentation (CD&E) is a relatively underdeveloped field in the Baltic states and Poland, and could become one of the ways that the four states come together in order to study and introduce new capabilities in the region's defence. At least in some capability areas, NATO Centres of Excellence (COEs) hosted by each of the four nations are suitable platforms for more extensive CD&E collaboration, but new additional mechanisms also have to be created.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, to advance common interests and needs requiring

<sup>28</sup> See Eerik Marmeï and Gabriel White, "[European Deterrence Initiative: Bolstering the Defence of the Baltic States](#)", International Centre for Defence and Security, Policy Paper, December 2017.

<sup>29</sup> See Lisa Sawyer Samp, Jeffrey Rathke and Anthony Bell, [Perspectives on Security and Strategic Stability. A Track 2 Dialogue with the Baltic States and Poland](#) (Laham, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield and Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 2016).

<sup>30</sup> See Christopher Harper, Tony Lawrence and Sven Sakkov, [Air Defence of the Baltic States](#) (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, April 2016).

<sup>31</sup> See Jarosław Adamowski, "[Poland Launches Effort To Help Arm E. European Allies](#)", *Defense News*, October 4, 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Cooperative Cyber Defence COE in Estonia; Strategic Communications COE in Latvia; Energy Security COE in Lithuania and Counter-Intelligence COE in Poland.

extensive, risky and costly R&T/R&D investments as well as industrial development, new EU defence cooperation frameworks—Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund—offer considerable opportunities to be exploited through joint Baltic-Polish initiatives.

This is not to say that old, time-tested concepts and capabilities—and their adaptation to contemporary strategic and operational realities—do not merit attention or common approaches. For instance, in the face of the Russian military threat, Poland is establishing Territorial Defence Forces as the fifth branch of its military—something in which the Baltic states have retained considerable experience. This could be an opportunity for cooperative endeavours and exchanges of knowledge concerning legal, doctrinal, organisational and other aspects of building, sustaining and employing territorial defence forces in times of crisis and war. Poland has already embraced this idea and established a European Territorial Defence Regional Cooperation Initiative (with the first conference taking place in October 2018 in Warsaw), including representatives of the Baltic states among other countries.<sup>33</sup> The initiative will facilitate the sharing of experiences and the development of closer international cooperation among territorial defence forces from the region and beyond. Enhancing and maintaining the special operations forces (SOF) capabilities already achieved in the four countries, as well as widening the scope of their cooperation, is another area where a quadrilateral approach could be beneficial—especially in light of how critical such capabilities are in countering various forms of potential Russian aggression.

Although resilience is officially a national responsibility in both NATO and EU contexts, various aspects of this multi-dimensional and highly relevant (especially in the context of hybrid threats) concept call for region-wide solutions and coordinated plans. In the event of

a crisis, the Baltic states are of course likely to turn for assistance first to Poland and the Nordic countries for reasons of geographical, economic and political proximity. Areas such as ensuring security of supply of essential goods and materials, protecting critical infrastructure or countering disinformation would benefit from regional cooperation. The resilience of societies and governments in crises that fall short of NATO's Article 5 scenarios (but could fall under Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union, for instance) require solidarity and mutual assistance—something that must be planned and prepared for well in advance. Herein lies an opportunity to bring together not only the defence establishments but also civilian security organisations such as police, border guards, customs, internal security and intelligence services, rescue agencies and civil protection authorities of the Baltic states and Poland.

*There are significant opportunities for cooperation among the four countries in order to advance ongoing NATO adaptation aimed at improving the Alliance's ability to respond to various contingencies on its eastern flank*

Military capabilities, however, remain the bedrock of strengthening collective defence and deterrence in the region. The speed of their deployment to the region by NATO as well as the ability of the Baltic states and Poland to provide for their initial self-defence—in a coordinated and synchronised manner—are of critical importance. In this context, there are significant opportunities for cooperation among the four countries in order to advance ongoing NATO adaptation aimed at improving the Alliance's ability to respond to various contingencies on its eastern flank. Poland's efforts to develop MND NE HQ in Elbląg and the recently-launched Danish-led initiative to create similar headquarters in Ādaži (Latvia) and in Denmark, are important stepping stones in this direction; together, they open up new opportunities for regional defence cooperation, mutual support as well as for common planning

<sup>33</sup> [“Territorial defence chiefs from 13 countries meet in Warsaw”](#), *Radio Poland*, October 10, 2018.

of initial military responses to military aggression.<sup>34</sup>

The intensive programme of military exercises in the region continues to be one of the best opportunities to draw the defence organisations of the Baltic states and Poland more closely together while involving the US, Nordic countries, and NATO Allies that contribute to the eFP units in the region. In November 2018, Polish national exercise Anakonda is held, for the first time, in the three Baltic states, involving units and personnel not only from Poland, but also from a number of other NATO Allies (see Annex A). This is a good example of what starts as a national initiative is scaled up and turned into a region-wide cooperation opportunity. However, it is necessary to coordinate the national exercise cycles better as to avoid overload and also better to share training facilities and infrastructure, much of which is being developed with the assistance of the EDI as well as NATO Security Investment Programme funding. Individual training of various military specialists is another very important direction of Baltic-Polish defence cooperation that could be intensified, drawing upon the strengths of

*There is still room for better political cooperation and coordination. This entails a more proactive stance, vocal mutual support and common positions on issues affecting the eastern flank in internal NATO debates*

each nation in specific fields as well as on existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation programmes. The quantitative and qualitative growth of the armed forces of all four countries means ever-increasing demand for such specialists that can be addressed through collaborative efforts.

While the above discussion focuses primarily on the region's own demand for enhanced security, the four countries also often undertake efforts—both individually and in concert with other partners—to project security and stability outside the EU and NATO.

<sup>34</sup> See Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, "[Multinational Division Headquarters North to be established in Latvia and Denmark in 2019](#)", July 12, 2018.

International military operations and security assistance programmes led by these organisations could be one of the opportunities for the four countries to make common contributions and, figuratively speaking, fly the region's flags in such enterprises—thereby increasing visibility as well as impact. One particular direction stands out: all four countries are ardent supporters of Ukraine and provide assistance to its armed forces. The existing platform, LITPOLUKRBRIG, could become a vehicle of cooperation for all three Baltic states and Poland in supporting Ukraine's defence development and trans-Atlantic integration aspirations.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Poland and the Baltic states share a common threat perception as well as an understanding of what has to be done, in terms of credible deterrence and defence, to deal with the military threats in the region. Their strategic interests are closely aligned, especially regarding creation and maintenance of the necessary conditions for enhancing the availability and presence of US and other NATO forces in the north-east of the Alliance. Close alignment of the four countries will be even more important in the future, as other allies may become less willing to further strengthen the NATO military posture in

the region. Consequently, the web of security structures and relationships among the four states should not be hard to build and maintain. Thus far, the Baltic states and Poland have focused primarily on developing bilateral relationships (e.g. Poland-Lithuania, Poland-Latvia, Poland-Estonia). Nevertheless, as outlined above, areas of quadrilateral cooperation are far from being exhausted, and even bilateral relations could be further enhanced.

First and foremost, there is still room for **better political cooperation and coordination**. This entails a more proactive stance, vocal mutual support and common positions on issues affecting the eastern flank in internal NATO



debates (e.g. NSC and NFS reform, availability of follow-on forces, NATO exercises in the region, nuclear policy, and countering Russia's anti-access/area denial, or A2/AD, capabilities). The four countries should **better coordinate their cooperation with the United States**—especially while aligning US military engagement in the region with NATO's eFP. They should also consider establishing a quadrilateral forum of expert discussions on nuclear deterrence issues, in order to facilitate common positions on the Alliance's nuclear policy. Similarly, concerted political effort is required to ensure that the EU CSDP and the overall direction of various EU initiatives in security and defence (PESCO, European Defence Fund, Capability Development Plan) also reflect the countries' shared imperatives of building stronger military deterrence and defence in the Baltic Sea area. Finally, a joint Baltic-Polish voice would also be better heard also in discussions within the OSCE, especially on the issue of conventional arms control and in the so-called Structured Dialogue.

In the NATO context, one obvious area of Baltic-Polish cooperation and coordination is the ongoing **adaptation of NCS and NFS in the region as well as broader adaptation of the Alliance's posture**. A robust political

*There is also a need to work in close coordination on pursuing further enhancement of the air and maritime components of NATO's presence in the region*

commitment to regional structures (at army, corps and divisional levels) would be a sign of regional cohesion that ideally would encourage other allies to join these structures. The Baltic states should consider contributing more staff officers to the Polish-led MND NE HQ in Elbląg and support the Polish proposal of establishing an army-level HQ in the region; at the same time, Poland should consider participation in setting up the MND North HQ element in Ādaži. Poland's political support to the Baltic states in

advocating within NATO for the transformation of the BAP operation into an air defence mission would also be helpful in achieving this goal.

There is also a need to work in close coordination on pursuing **further enhancement of the air and maritime components of NATO's presence in the region**, while a further issue to tackle jointly is **the harmonisation of training and exercises** of the four battlegroups as well

*A robust political commitment to regional structures (at army, corps and divisional levels) would be a sign of regional cohesion that ideally would encourage other allies to join these structures*

as coordination of eFP, VJTF/NRF and follow-on forces. Additionally, it should be discussed how the three Baltic states might reinforce the Polish-led VJTF in 2020. Poland could consider contributing not only to the NATO eFP battlegroup in Latvia but also in Estonia, in order to increase its military footprint further to the north and open new possibilities of bilateral defence cooperation with Tallinn. The Baltic states should also contribute to the NFIU in Poland.

Poland and the Baltic states should intensify their cooperation to **remove any bottlenecks between and within them for the movement of allied forces**, as part of the broader effort by NATO and the European Union known as "Military Schengen" (and possibly also with the Nordic countries through the "Easy Access" initiative within Nordic Defence Cooperation, NORDEFECO). There is much scope for developing arrangements to access each participating country's territory via air, land and sea to enable quick and efficient troop movements using improved infrastructure. Such arrangements would greatly increase the quality and effect of air, land and maritime operations, lessen bureaucracy and ease border crossing procedures. They would also be particularly useful in the region when sharing national training infrastructure and conducting multilateral military exercises. Polish and Baltic stakeholders should therefore team up both in

implementing the European Commission's Action Plan on Military Mobility and in using Connecting Europe Facility military mobility funding in the next multiannual financial framework (2021-2027) to improve transport infrastructure in the region. The four countries should consider the possibility of setting up a regional coordination structure to enhance military mobility in the region.

Furthermore, the **civil preparedness of the Baltic states and Poland should be strengthened through cooperative efforts**, while requirements for maintaining security of supply in the region should be regularly reviewed. Such reviews can be undertaken as part of comprehensive studies on resilience conducted in the framework of the EU and NATO and bring together elements such as critical infrastructure, cyber security, security of energy and other supplies, strategic communication, etc. The expertise of the NATO COEs based in the region and Hybrid Threats COE in Finland could be harnessed to inform and advice such work. The national focus on resilience should be supported by a set of coordinated measures that would allow each country both to draw upon as well as provide immediate assistance to their partners while facilitating management of various potential crisis scenarios within the region. **Crisis management table-top exercises involving the senior political, military and civil security leadership of the four countries** would be useful in order to highlight regional and broader inter-dependencies in maintaining national resilience as well as to appreciate the various assumptions, constraints and principles that each nation's leaders apply to their crisis decision-making.

As voluntary territorial defence organisations are a significant element of deterrence and defence in the Baltic states and increasingly in Poland, their cooperation could be an important part of the quadrilateral defence cooperation agenda. **The four countries need to exchange best practices among their territorial defence organisations** (Estonia's *Kaitseliit*, Latvia's *Zemessardze*, Lithuania's National Defence Volunteer Forces and the

Riflemen's Union, Poland's Territorial Defence Force), coordinate the activities of their territorial defence units in border areas (especially between Poland and Lithuania in the Suwałki Gap) and make better use of each other's training infrastructure.

Overall, as the programme of national and international military exercises in the Baltic states is already quite demanding, intensifying it would only further overstretch the armed forces of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It is necessary, however, to **coordinate and synchronise national schedules better, provide more opportunities for units from all four countries to participate in each other's national exercises and jointly advocate for a larger number (and size) of NATO exercises in the region**. Joint Baltic-Polish participation in exercises conducted by Nordic partners (e.g.

*Crisis management table-top exercises involving the senior political, military and civil security leadership of the four countries would be useful in order to highlight regional and broader inter-dependencies*

Sweden's Aurora or Finland's national exercises) would also be beneficial in order to develop interoperability with these NATO partners. Equally important is for Baltic and Polish military staffs to draw common lessons learned from various exercises that involve all four countries, as this can create the basis for common initiatives to develop military capabilities. Such initiatives could lead to closer cooperation—perhaps even building common capabilities—in CD&E, especially in land operations.

The Baltic states and Poland should create **more possibilities for common individual training and education of staff officers, NCOs and various military specialists as well as for developing regional competence and knowledge networks** in various fields. Lithuania and Estonia could join Latvia in its cooperation with Poland at the JTAC School in Dęblin. Polish-Latvian cooperation could include training of Latvian self-propelled howitzer operators in Poland. Polish-Estonian cooperation could include training of Estonian pilots at the Polish Air Force Academy in Dęblin, as well as

maintenance of Skytruck aircraft. The four countries should also do more to promote the exchange of officers taking part in staff officers courses of various levels held both in the Baltic states and in Poland. Training and Doctrine Commands (or their equivalents) of the four nations should coordinate their requirements and needs more closely. In addition, Estonia and Latvia should consider joining the CI COE in Krakow.

The four countries should also **coordinate their initiatives to develop new capabilities within the PESCO framework and act as catalysts of EU investment into capabilities most relevant to the strategic and operational environment in the region**. A special emphasis should be placed on capabilities necessary for countering A2/AD and for the reinforcement and survivability of forces in theatre (e.g. electronic warfare and cyberwarfare capabilities, unmanned autonomous systems, precision long-range stand-off fires, C4ISR systems, etc.). Poland, Estonia and Latvia, for instance, could join the PESCO project on cyber rapid response teams and mutual assistance in cyber security that is led by Lithuania. The four countries

*The four countries should also coordinate their initiatives to develop new capabilities within the PESCO framework and act as catalysts of EU investment into capabilities most relevant to the strategic and operational environment in the region*

could also **work more closely in order to identify opportunities for joint participation of their enterprises and research establishments European Defence Fund's projects**. The Baltic states, however, need to start moving towards fulfilling a benchmark of spending 2% of national defence budgets on defence-related R&D/R&T if they are to become credible partners for Poland (and others) in building and sustaining the technological edge NATO and the EU enjoy over their adversaries.

There are a few specific areas in which the Baltic states and Poland should aspire to form a more tightly integrated defence area with a very high degree of interoperability, common planning, C2 arrangements, exercises and

operational cooperation. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Air defence**, where the Baltic states have to make sure their efforts to develop systems enabling medium and long-range air defence support by NATO's Allies also provide for smooth cooperation with Poland's national air defence capabilities, to include Patriot systems;
- **Maritime situational awareness, protection of sea lines of communication (SLOC) and shoreline defence**. The four countries should consider setting up a regional maritime coordination structure focused on these aspects. BALTRON could be rejuvenated by reviewing its scope and mission in order to bring Estonia back and open it to Poland's participation. Poland and Estonia should consider joining the real-time maritime surveillance data exchange system development project conducted by Latvia and Lithuania.
- **Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance and Target Acquisition (ISTAR)**, which is a critical capability in providing early warning as well as countering Russian A2/AD. The four countries could team up to study possibilities for joint investment and even in some cases, common ownership of ISTAR assets in order to bolster regional security and defence. Wherever possible, the four countries should jointly push for PESCO projects in this capability area;
- **Host Nation Support**, which needs to be carefully standardised across the four countries. The four states could develop a service network of private-sector contractors across the region capable of providing maintenance and repair services to Allied land forces moving units and assets on exercises or operational deployments to and within the region;
- **Special operations forces (SOF)**, which could be brought even closer together by establishing a regionally focused combined

SOF command element.<sup>35</sup> This could also be a platform to involve the SOF of the US, UK and other key allies involved and present in the region with such capabilities;

- **Cyberwarfare**, which despite being the subject of a multitude of existing initiatives, including within the EU defence cooperation framework, and a bilateral U.S.-Lithuanian proposal for a regional cyber security centre, still demands more integrated Baltic-Polish strategy and capabilities if cyber elements of Russia's A2/AD strategy are to be countered. NATO CCDCOE in Tallinn is recognised as an important hub for cooperation in the area of cyber security, and its expertise should be utilised;
- **Strategic communication**. To strengthen deterrence messaging and counter Russia's efforts to undermine trust and solidarity among the Allies, Poland and the Baltic states should coordinate their strategic communication strategies, plans and actions more closely—particularly those that require synchronised approaches during a regional security crisis. Aligning strategic communication may also be useful also in order to underline the importance of a strong US presence in Europe in the face of continuing transatlantic tensions.

*The quartet does not have to sing at all times and cannot replace the entire choir, but when it performs, it must be heard loud and clear*

The Baltic states and Poland could also become closer partners in conducting defence outreach and in **projecting stability and security outside NATO and the EU**. One particular functioning vehicle for engaging a special partner of NATO, Ukraine, is already in place—LITPOLUKRBRIG. It could be joined by Estonia and Latvia as well.

<sup>35</sup> A similar initiative for multilateral SOF cooperation that might be used as a template is pursued by Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands. See North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "[Allies take steps to create multinational Special Forces command](#)", February 16, 2017.

Once all four are participating nations, they could then seek opportunities for joint deployments of units or headquarters in international operations under NATO, EU or UN auspices. The Baltic states and Poland should also **discuss their common interests in NATO's southern flank**, especially the possibilities for pooling their contributions to its security. The Baltic states could review the possibility of their engagement, with some niche capabilities (not necessarily in large numbers), in the Polish-led V4 EU Battlegroup in the future.

The above point regarding common interests, positions and actions in a southern direction is an important consideration, as its implementation would help to ensure that ever closer Baltic-Polish defence cooperation does not lead to fragmentation and regionalisation of security in NATO. The principle of indivisibility of the security of the Alliance is a very important one to uphold, and Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania need to show solidarity with the security concerns of their Allies on the southern flank.

At the same time, as highlighted in these recommendations, it is very important to involve Allies from other geographical regions in existing regional cooperation formats in the Baltic Sea and Northern Europe. The Northern Group is already an increasingly important political instrument that simply needs to be given more practical substance. NATO's eFP and

BAP are proving to be valuable tools to facilitate the involvement of nations such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, Slovenia, Albania and Croatia. However, Baltic-Polish defence cooperation is primarily needed to bolster

security of NATO's eastern flank—and, by extension, the entire Alliance—and to anchor the US to Europe's defence during an era of geopolitical turbulence and uncertainty. The quartet does not have to sing at all times and cannot replace the entire choir, but when it performs, it must be heard loud and clear.



## ANNEX: BALTIC-POLISH DEFENCE COOPERATION

BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL POLITICAL COOPERATION	
<i>Polish-Estonian Quadriga talks</i>	Meetings between MFA and MoD secretaries of state (first held in 2013, with the most recent edition taking place in 2016).
<i>Polish-Baltic Defence Ministers meeting</i>	Planned as an annual event with a rotational host; first in 2013 in Poland, second in 2014 in Latvia and third in 2015 in Ukraine (th latest one to be held in this format).
<i>Polish-Baltic Presidents meeting</i>	Irregular; held in 2006, 2011, and 2014 (in 2012, Lithuania’s president cancelled participation due to bilateral tensions).
<i>Polish-Baltic Prime Ministers meeting</i>	Irregular; held in 2010, 2014, 2017 and 2018.
<i>Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) plus Visegrád Four (V4) Foreign Ministers meeting</i>	Regional consultations on security, economy, energy and EU issues between the V4 (CZE, HUN, POL, SVK,) and NB8 (DNK, EST, FIN, ISL, LTU, LVA, NOR, SWE) countries; held since 2013; the latest meeting held in 2017 in Poland
<i>Northern Group (NG)</i>	Consultations on regional security issues between DEU, GBR, NLD, POL, the Baltic (EST, LVA, LTU) and Nordic (DNK, FIN, NOR, SWE ) countries, held on the level of defence ministers and security policy directors since 2010; latest meeting took place in the Hague in 2018.
<i>Bucharest Nine</i>	Consultations before NATO summits on security and defence issues between BGR, ROU, the V4 countries and Baltic states; first meeting in 2014 in Poland (presidential level); latest meeting held in 2018 (defence minister level)
<i>Polish-Baltic presidential security advisers meeting</i>	Annual consultations with rotational hosts since 2013; format subsequently opened for Sweden and Finland; the latest meeting was held in 2017 in Riga.
<i>Nordic, Baltic and Polish defence committees’ meeting</i>	Annual consultations on security and defence issues among DNK, EST, FIN, LTU, LVA, NOR, POL, SWE, featuring representatives of parliamentary defence committees; the latest meeting was held in 2018 in Poland.
<i>eFP Latvia defence ministers meeting</i>	Consultations on shaping NATO eFP in Latvia among contributing nations to the Canadian-led battlegroup (currently LVA, CAN, ESP, POL, ITA, SVN, ALB), held since 2016.
<i>“Quint” defence ministers meeting</i>	Consultations among members of the US-led military training mission to Ukraine (USA, GBR, CAN, POL, LTU).

## MULTILATERAL MILITARY COOPERATION

### NATO

<b><i>NATO Assurance Measures</i></b>	A mechanised company from POL (150 soldiers with 26 vehicles including 15 APCs) exercising in the Baltic states in 2016 (one month rotation in each: June in LVA, July in EST, August in LTU)
<b><i>NATO enhanced Forward Presence (eFP)</i></b>	An armoured company from POL within the Canadian-led battalion-sized battlegroup in Ādaži (170 soldiers with 14 PT-91 Twardy tanks) on six-month rotations since 2017; occasionally augmented by other subunits (in 2017, by an artillery subunit with Langusta self-propelled multiple rocket launchers)
<b><i>Multinational Corps Northeast Szczecin (MNC NE)</i></b>	8 officers from LTU, 4 from EST and 4 from LVA
<b><i>Multinational Division North-East Elbląg (MND NE)</i></b>	2 officers from LTU, 1 officer from EST.
<b><i>NATO Counter Intelligence Centre of Excellence (CI COE) in Krakow</i></b>	LTU is one of the sponsoring nations.
<b><i>NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (STRATCOM COE) in Riga</i></b>	POL is one of the sponsoring nations of NATO STRATCOM COE in Riga (one person).
<b><i>NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCD COE) in Tallinn</i></b>	POL is a member of CCD COE in Tallinn (one person). Teams from POL (National Cryptology Center) participate in world's biggest cyber exercise Locked Shields, held annually in EST.
<b><i>NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence (ENSECCOE) in Vilnius</i></b>	POL is finalising procedures necessary to join the centre, which is expected to happen in the end of 2018 or in early 2019.
<b><i>NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU)</i></b>	POL has sent officers to the NFIUs in the Baltic states (2 to LTU, 1 to LVA, 1 to EST).
<b><i>Baltic Air Policing (BAP)</i></b>	POL has participated in BAP regularly since 2006, with an augmented presence after 2014 (7 times in total, the first time with F-16 jets in in 2017).

<b>Joint Multinational Training Group - Ukraine</b>	POL, LTU, LVA and EST send military instructors to UKR to train Ukrainian troops and special operations forces together with USA, GBR and CAN at the Yavoriv International Peacekeeping and Security Centre.
<b>EU &amp; EDA</b>	
<b>EU Battlegroup (EUBG)</b>	Polish-led EUBG in 2010 included LTU and LVA among others (other contributing nations: SVK, DEU).
<b>EDA Joint Procurement Initiatives (JIP)</b>	In 2013, POL joined the JIP launched by the Baltic states for the procurement of Carl Gustav recoilless rifle ammunition.
<b>PESCO</b>	POL, LTU, LVA and EST participate in the Military Mobility project led by NLD and DEU.
<b>REGIONAL</b>	
<b>Baltic Defence College (BALDEFCOL)</b>	POL fills one post in the Directing Staff and sends students to courses. Letter of Intent on Cooperation with the Polish War Studies University signed in 2018.
<b>Military exercises</b>	<p>POL minesweepers contribute to removal of WW2-era naval mines in the waters of the Baltic states in Baltic Fortress and Open Spirit exercises.</p> <p>POL military exercise Anakonda 2018, held on 7-16 November 2018, is also conducted, for the first time, in the three Baltic states. In the Baltic states and the Baltic Sea, it will employ about 5,000 troops (17,500 in total). In addition to POL, EST, LTU and LVA, the remaining three of V4 (CZE, HUN, SVK) as well as ROU, TUR and USA are also participating in the exercise. The exercise aims to integrate military and non-military capabilities in order to achieve ability to conduct shaping and decisive operations as a coalition/multinational response to hybrid threats and their escalation to potential Article 5 violations.</p>
<b>Regional Security Assistance Programme 2022 (ReSAP)</b>	ReSAP was established in 2015 and has been coordinated by the MoND since, It is directed to a regional group of states: BGR, CZE, EST, HUN, LTU, LVA, ROU, SVK. ReSAP is aimed at: strengthening political, military and industrial cooperation among participating states; strengthening regional military capabilities through training at Polish Armed Forces training centres and acquiring Polish military equipment (credited); enhancing interoperability through using the same military equipment and repair facilities and through common military training and exercises; donating spare military equipment of Polish Armed Forces to participating states.
<b>BILATERAL MILITARY COOPERATION</b>	
<b>POLAND-LITHUANIA</b>	
<b>Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade (LITPOLUKRBRIG)</b>	LITPOLUKRBRIG HQ was established in 2009 with a seat in Lublin (Poland); it reached full operational readiness in 2017 (around 100 personnel); LTU affiliated one unit – the Grand Duchess Birutė Uhlan Battalion.

<i><b>Military training</b></i>	Training of Lithuanian GROM MANPADS operators has been conducted at Koszalin Air Force Training Centre.
<i><b>Military exercises</b></i>	In 2017, POL participated in Iron Wolf (land forces), Flaming Thunder (artillery), Flaming Sword (special operations forces) and Tobruq Legacy (air defence) exercises.
<i><b>Special Operations Forces</b></i>	A close cooperation between POL and LTU SOF has developed since 2001. In 2013, it was formalised in a separate MoU. Both SOFs participated in the NRF component in 2015. They cooperated earlier in Afghanistan (2007-2008).
<i><b>Land Forces</b></i>	In 2017, Polish and Lithuanian Defence Ministers declared intensified cooperation between the Iron Wolf Lithuanian Mechanised Infantry Brigade and Polish 15 <sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade from Giżycko.
<i><b>Procurement</b></i>	LTU acquired GROM MANPADS for €34mn in 2014 (deliveries 2014-2021).
<i><b>Vessel tests</b></i>	LTU tested its mine-hunter vessel at the Polish test facility in Gdynia (measurement-control area).
<b>POLAND-LATVIA</b>	
<i><b>Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) training</b></i>	Cooperation has been based on Memorandum of Agreement signed by Polish and Latvian Defence Ministers in 2013. Training has been conducted in Tactical Air Control Party Training Centre in Dęblin. LVA fills 2 instructor positions at this centre.
<i><b>Military exercises</b></i>	Exercises take place on a permanent basis within the eFP in Latvia. Exercises of Polish and Latvian SOF take place as well.
<i><b>Vessel tests</b></i>	In 2015, on the basis of the Polish-Latvian memorandum LVA tested its mine-hunter vessel at the Polish test facility in Gdynia (measurement-control area). The memorandum allows LVA to test four more vessels.
<b>POLAND-ESTONIA</b>	
<i><b>Military exercises</b></i>	Poland contributes to the annual Spring Storm exercise (air defence of Ämari airbase, close air support, air interdiction). Exercises of Polish and Estonian Special Operations Forces take place as well.



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