Negative Brief: Baltic Troop Deployment

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

***Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially reform its policy towards one or more countries in Europe***

The AFF plan increases US forces in Europe by doing permanent basing/deployment of US troops in the Baltic States (Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia). The Baltic states are demanding it, but it's a bad idea. They're really quick to have all kinds of fluster and bluster about standing up to Russia, as long as the US is the one doing the actual fighting. If they really thought Russia was a threat, they'd spend a lot more on their own defense, instead of demanding we do it for them.

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Negative: Baltic Basing

INHERENCY

1. Existing deployments sufficient

Status Quo has “heel to toe” deployment of US troops in the Baltics. That means there’s always US forces there at all times

Jen Judson 2019 (journalist) “Do the Baltics need more US military support to deter Russia?” 16 July 2019 DEFENSE NEWS <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2019/07/15/do-the-baltics-need-more-us-military-support-to-deter-russia/> (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

Ever since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, NATO and the U.S. military have [drastically bolstered their presence](https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2017/11/02/deterring-the-unthinkable-natos-role-along-the-eastern-flank-commentary/) in Eastern Europe to include deploying NATO rapid response forces, embedding units under the command of Baltic states’ forces, building up arsenals of equipment, deploying a heel-to-toe rotational U.S. armored brigade combat team and conducting increasingly complex exercises.

Massive east European deployments of US forces since Ukraine invasion

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 13 July 2022 "Europe Is Rich. So Why Does It Need America’s Help against Russia?" <https://www.cato.org/commentary/europe-rich-so-why-does-it-need-americas-help-against-russia> (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

According to the Pentagon, it was “dispersing forces already in Europe to bolster NATO’s Eastern Flank, to include the deployment of attack aviation from Germany to Lithuania; an airborne infantry battalion from Italy to Latvia; elements of a Stryker Brigade Combat Team from Germany dispersed to Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary; Patriot batteries from Germany to Slovakia and Poland; and F‑15s from the UK to Poland.” Anything else? Of course! Explained the Defense Department:
“Since February 2022, DoD deployed or extended over 20,000 additional forces to Europe in response to the Ukraine crisis, adding additional air, land, maritime, cyber, and space capabilities, bringing our current total to more than 100,000 service members across Europe. This included extending a Carrier Strike Group, deploying additional fighter squadrons and lift/​tanker aircraft, and deploying an Amphibious Readiness Group and Marine Expeditionary Force. DoD added a Corps Headquarters, Division Headquarters, Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), High Mobility Artillery Rocket System ([HIMARS](https://www.19fortyfive.com/2022/07/putin-has-a-problem-more-himars-rockets-are-headed-to-ukraine/)) battalion, and multiple enablers to the existing Corps Forward Command Post, Division Headquarters, and three BCTs already stationed in or deployed to Europe.”

MINOR REPAIR

1. Improve existing rotational deployment policy

"IF" more troops are needed, we still don't need permanent basing. Improving the capabilities of the rotational deployment would be the best policy

Jen Judson 2019 (journalist) “Do the Baltics need more US military support to deter Russia?” 16 July 2019 DEFENSE NEWS <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2019/07/15/do-the-baltics-need-more-us-military-support-to-deter-russia/> (accessed 27 Aug 2022) (brackets added)

If the U.S. were to put additional troops in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, [Former U.S. Army Europe commander, retired Lt. Gen. Ben] Hodges told Defense News in a recent phone interview from his home base of Frankfurt, Germany, the units should have capabilities that fill host-nation gaps. “I believe that the capabilities that we need would be logistics, intelligence, communications, and, really, air and missile defense,” he said. “In other words, enablers that take a little bit more time to get established, but which provide the important networks necessary for rapid reinforcement.” Additionally, by deploying key enablers, many of the units can come from the Army National Guard and Army Reserves because those capabilities are resident in reserve formations and ideally suited for rotational presence, Hodges said.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. Low risk to the Baltics

Invasion of Ukraine doesn't threaten the Baltics, and even if it did, it doesn't justify increased US military commitment

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 13 July 2022 "Europe Is Rich. So Why Does It Need America’s Help against Russia?" <https://www.cato.org/commentary/europe-rich-so-why-does-it-need-americas-help-against-russia> (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

Despite Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Moscow has shown no similar interest in any other state, including the Baltics, the conquest of which would gain little while ensuring enduring hostility. However in taking this perspective, the Europeans should not expect continued coddling, subsidizing, and protecting from the U.S. Surely nearly eight decades after the end of World War II Washington should end the continent’s cheap ride on Americans.

There’s only 1 reason Russia would use to justify invading Baltics: Blockade of Kaliningrad

Prof. Anatol Lieven 2022(Professor at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar, visiting professor in the War Studies Dept of King’s College London, senior fellow of the New America Foundation ) 14July 2022 “Just How Much Bigger Is the US-NATO Military Force Than Russia's?”https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/07/14/just-how-much-bigger-us-nato-military-force-russias (accessed 26 July 2022)

A Russian invasion of the Baltic would, in any event, be a deeply irrational act in purely military terms; and while Putin's invasion of Ukraine was utterly criminal, it was not insane—after all, as noted, Moscow's assumptions of an easy short-term victory were shared by Western intelligence. The one circumstance in which Russia might feel compelled to invade Lithuania would be if Lithuania were to blockade access to the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad; which is why the EU would be wise to follow Germany's lead exempting Kaliningrad from EU sanctions.

2. Actions deny the threat louder than words proclaim it

Europe's actions (minimal defense spending) prove they don't really think there's much of a threat from Russia

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 5 July 2022 " Great Power Folly? NATO’s Ill‐​Timed Turn to China" https://www.cato.org/commentary/great-power-folly-natos-ill-timed-turn-china (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

According to the latest figures, only [one alliance member](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/3/pdf/220331-def-exp-2021-en.pdf) spent a greater share of its GDP on the military than did Washington — Greece, which is more concerned about fellow NATO member Turkey than Russia. Just seven other European [governments met](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm) the two percent guideline, which was agreed to 16 years ago. Anyway, given the ferocity of combat in Ukraine, a couple pennies on the dollar seems inadequate for countries, such as Poland and the Baltic States, which claim to fear a Russian Armageddon and constantly lobby for their own US garrisons.

If the Baltics "really" were afraid of the "Russian threat," they'd already be spending more on defense

Doug Bandow 2022. (J.D.; senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties. He worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan ) 22 Apr 2022 "Nine Reasons Why NATO Should Close the Door to Sweden and Finland"https://www.cato.org/commentary/nine-reasons-why-nato-should-close-door-sweden-finland(accessed 16 June 2022)

Both Finland and Sweden have capable militaries that would promote an independent European defense system. However, further expanding America’s European defense dole would discourage defense efforts by them and others. Today19 NATO members (including Canada) devote less than two percent of GDP to their armed forces. Among the largest European countries, Germany, Italy, and Spain most dramatically leave the spending and fighting to others. Even the Baltics and Poland, so vocal about their fears of Russian aggression, spend little more than two percent of GDP on their defense, a pittance if their independence is truly at risk.

3. Russian threat exaggerated

Ukraine war proves how weak Russia is. We shouldn’t be wasting resources on such a weak “threat”

Prof. Anatol Lieven 2022 (Professor at Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Qatar, visiting professor in the War Studies Dept of King’s College London, senior fellow of the New America Foundation ) 14July 2022 “Just How Much Bigger Is the US-NATO Military Force Than Russia's?”https://www.commondreams.org/views/2022/07/14/just-how-much-bigger-us-nato-military-force-russias(accessed 26 July 2022)

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the atrocities that have accompanied it, have naturally caused deep anxiety throughout Europe. NATO's new Strategic Concept for the next decade calls Russia "the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area." But before devoting huge additional resources to confront Russia, it would be a good idea to take a level-headed look at Russian military resources and the nature and extent of the Russian military threat to NATO. We should not forget how, after the USSR's collapse, Western intelligence agencies concluded that their Cold War estimates of Soviet military power were greatly exaggerated(just as, it's worth noting, were Western predictions of an easy Russian victory over Ukraine this year). After all, U.S. and Western resources are not unlimited, and devoting them to defend against Russia means limiting them elsewhere

Ukraine proves weakness of Russian military. No way they can threaten the rest of Europe

Doug Bandow 2022(JD; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) 28 Mar2022 “With Russia’s Weakness on Full Display: Hawks Now Want America to Fight Russia and China”https://www.cato.org/commentary/russias-weakness-full-display-hawks-now-want-america-fight-russia-china (accessed 29 July 2022)

Putin also inadvertently showcased the limits of the Russian armed services. They have significant firepower but suffer from important weaknesses. While raw numbers of troops and tanks would suggest that Moscow could defeat any European nation, poor logistics, maintenance, morale, and training make Russia look substantially less threatening.

Russia isn’t much of a threat. Whatever problem it may be, it should be managed by Europe, not us

Doug Bandow 2022(JD; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; former special assistant to Pres. Reagan) 28 Mar2022 “With Russia’s Weakness on Full Display: Hawks Now Want America to Fight Russia and China”https://www.cato.org/commentary/russias-weakness-full-display-hawks-now-want-america-fight-russia-china(accessed 29 July 2022)

After World War II, many democratic and friendly states were vulnerable to Soviet subversion and assault. Hence Washington’s policy of containment. Thankfully, the justification for this policy disappeared: the USSR collapsed, the Warsaw Pact dissolved, Eastern European nations raced westward. Had Washington and its allies behaved differently, not treating Moscow as a defeated nation through NATO expansion and more, Russia likely would not have reemerged as a threat. But Putin has helpfully demonstrated that Moscow, though certainly not a paper tiger, nevertheless is not equipped for continent‐wide aggression. Russia remains a problem, but one that could and should be managed by Europeans, not Americans.

SOLVENCY

1. Insufficient space

There's not enough space in the Baltics for permanent large deployments

Jen Judson 2019 (journalist) “Do the Baltics need more US military support to deter Russia?” 16 July 2019 DEFENSE NEWS <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2019/07/15/do-the-baltics-need-more-us-military-support-to-deter-russia/> (accessed 27 Aug 2022) (brackets added)

One reason not to deploy large infantry, armored or artillery units in Baltic countries is the little space available to train and live while a rotational basis. Rukla training center, home of the Iron Wolf Brigade, “is saturated between the German EFP and the Lithuanians,” [Former U.S. Army Europe commander, retired Lt. Gen. Ben] Hodges recalled of a visit while he was U.S. Army Europe commander. “So barring a huge expanse in training areas that meet the standard for U.S. Army readiness, I would prefer to see other types of units.”

2. Need NATO consensus first

The best deterrent against Russia is NATO cohesion. Before stationing troops in the Baltics, we need to make sure NATO is all in agreement

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NATO also needs to be on board with additional U.S. troops, particularly if those troops embed in the EFP [Enhanced Forward Presence] units, [Former U.S. Army Europe commander, retired Lt. Gen. Ben] Hodges stressed. “The best deterrence that the alliance has is cohesion,” Hodges said. “That is the No. 1 thing that deters the Russian Federation from making a terrible miscalculation — that is cohesion that has no cracks … so we have to make sure that if we do decide to deploy additional capabilities into other countries, then we have done the diplomatic work necessary with all of our allies, not just the ones on the eastern front.”

3. No security benefit

Eastward expansion of NATO power is what causes Russian insecurity and creates the threats. Doing more of the same just makes it worse

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 5 July 2022 " Great Power Folly? NATO’s Ill‐​Timed Turn to China" https://www.cato.org/commentary/great-power-folly-natos-ill-timed-turn-china (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

Although unjustified, Vladimir Putin’s “special military operation” should have come as no surprise. NATO ostentatiously flouted Russia’s oft‐​stated security concerns and violated a gaggle of allied assurances by extending the alliance ever eastward. Then its members refused to negotiate over Putin’s demand that they go no further. No one believed he would follow up with a broad invasion of Ukraine. When he did, the Europeans engaged in much wailing and gnashing of teeth while turning to Washington.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Weaker long-term European security

Link: Lithuania increased its military specifically in light of the absence of EU/US help

Jen Judson 2019 (journalist) “Do the Baltics need more US military support to deter Russia?” 16 July 2019 DEFENSE NEWS <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2019/07/15/do-the-baltics-need-more-us-military-support-to-deter-russia/> (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

The country hasn’t sat idly by, waiting for Europe or America to help; it has taken steps to modernize its military by buying new [infantry fighting vehicles, tactical vehicles, howitzers and medium-range air defense systems](https://www.defensenews.com/land/2017/03/10/lithuania-to-acquire-boxer-vehicles-howitzers-nasams/), and it’s grown its ranks by adding another brigade and reinstating conscription. Lithuania also met the NATO pledge to spend 2 percent of its gross domestic product on defense in 2018, and it’s planning to increase that effort to 2.5 percent by 2030.

Link: Increased US defense motivates Europeans to slack off

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan ) 27 July 2022 "So If Europe Wants to Escalate against Russia Who Foots the Bill?" https://www.cato.org/commentary/so-europe-wants-escalate-against-russia-who-foots-bill (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

London earlier pledged that the UK would raise military outlays to 2.5 percent of GDP. Yet, [reported BBC](https://www.bbc.com/news/61984356), this year “the government is going to break the promise on defense spending that it made in its manifesto in 2019.” Even as [Prime Minister Boris Johnson](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/nato-summit-2022-madrid-boris-johnson-defence-spending-5hpvk6g5m) pledged to do more, he “refused to increase defense spending this year, as ministers and the head of the army plead for more money to deal with the Russian threat.” This rejection came despite warnings by defense secretary Ben Wallace “that the armed forces were surviving on a ‘diet of smoke and mirrors.’” Elsewhere, Europe’s enthusiasm for building up its forces is also ebbing. After all, President Joe Biden has been rushing US forces, men and materiel, to Europe’s defense, proving that Washington will do what it always has done. Why should America’s defense clients put themselves out?

Link: Europeans won't fight for each other because they believe America will rescue them

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 13 July 2022 "Europe Is Rich. So Why Does It Need America’s Help against Russia?" <https://www.cato.org/commentary/europe-rich-so-why-does-it-need-americas-help-against-russia> (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

This persistent reliance on America should come as no surprise. [A 2020 Pew Research Center poll](https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/02/09/nato-seen-favorably-across-member-states/) found little enthusiasm among Europeans to assist one another. The overall median result was 50‐​to‐​38 percent against. Of the 13 European nations polled, majorities in only three – Lithuania, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom – favored fighting for fellow NATO members. That number hit 40 percent in only three other nations – France, Poland, and Spain. Only 34 percent in Germany did so. In every case more people believed that America would defend them. Of course.

Brink: Europe on the brink of slipping back to their old ways of refusing to spend on defense and letting the US pay for it - and it's unsustainable because we can no longer pay for it

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan ) 27 July 2022 "So If Europe Wants to Escalate against Russia Who Foots the Bill?" https://www.cato.org/commentary/so-europe-wants-escalate-against-russia-who-foots-bill (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

If finally forced to choose between social services at home and military subsidies abroad, America’s aging population is likely to join its European cousins in choosing the former. Then the latter will have to decide whether they believe their countries are worth defending. Russia’s criminal invasion of Ukraine was a great wrong that seemed to wake a militarily somnolent continent. Now the Europeans show signs of slipping back into their previous defense stupor, but the old way of doing things is no longer sustainable.

Link: Only way Europe will increase its defense capabilities is if the US stops defending them

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 13 July 2022 "Europe Is Rich. So Why Does It Need America’s Help against Russia?" <https://www.cato.org/commentary/europe-rich-so-why-does-it-need-americas-help-against-russia> (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

A succession of presidents, secretaries of defense, and secretaries of state have asked, pleaded, insisted, whined, begged, and abased themselves in pressing the Europeans to do at least as much for themselves as the U.S. did. But continental governments took America’s measure, recognized that its foreign policy elite was determined to run the world irrespective of the cost to the American people, and would continue protecting Europe even if the Europeans disarmed completely. If so, Biden and company would express their disappointment … and then send more troops to cover the European shortfall! So the U.S. continues to provide defense welfare to its populous, prosperous “allies.” Instead of adding forces to Europe, Washington should be bringing American personnel home. Europe needs to decide if it believes Russia poses an existential threat and if so, take effective action accordingly. The only way that will happen is if Uncle Sam does less. Starting now.

Impact: Weaker European security. They're less secure when they rely on the US and we can't defend them in a crisis

Hans Binnendikj, Daniel Hamilton and Alexander Vershbow 2022. (Binnendiki - Distinguished Fellow at The Atlantic Council. Hamilton - Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution. Vershbow - Distinguished Fellow - The Atlantic Council. Former NATO Deputy Secretary General; former Assistant Secretary of Defense and former US Ambassador to NATO, Russia and S.Korea) Strategic responsibility: Rebalancing European and trans-Atlantic defense 24 June 2022 https://www.brookings.edu/articles/strategic-responsibility-rebalancing-european-and-trans-atlantic-defense/

China’s aggressive territorial claims in the South and East China Seas, and its threats to the integrity of Taiwan, present a real risk of conflict in the Indo-Pacific, including direct confrontation between China and the United States. In such a situation, critical sea lanes of communication, maritime shipping, and European commercial interactions with China, and with Asia more broadly, would be disrupted. The interests of various European allies in the Indo-Pacific would be at risk. Opportunities would also be created for Russia. U.S. forces might not be available to adequately reinforce European allies against a simultaneous Russian military challenge. The Europeans would need to quickly fill those gaps. They need to plan now how they would do so.

2. Irresponsible Escalation

Link: Baltic Advocacy. AFF takes advice and advocacy from the Baltic States.

AFF's position is: We have to send US troops to the Baltics because the Baltic governments say they need them and want them.

Link: Foolish Escalation. The Baltics are irresponsible because they want to escalate to war with Russia using our troops

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan ) 27 July 2022 "So If Europe Wants to Escalate against Russia Who Foots the Bill?" https://www.cato.org/commentary/so-europe-wants-escalate-against-russia-who-foots-bill (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

One of the most pernicious aspects of such an unbalanced alliance is the incentive for European governments to concoct irresponsible military schemes for NATO, meaning the U.S. military. For instance, early in the Russo‐​Ukrainian conflict Baltic State politicians [urged establishment](https://eng.lsm.lv/article/politics/saeima/baltic-and-ukrainian-parliaments-call-for-no-fly-zone.a449464/) of a “no‐​fly zone” for Ukraine, which would mean shooting down Russian aircraft, destroying Russian air defenses, and controlling Russian airspace, from which the Russian air force is operating. Escalation to a wider and deadlier conflict could scarcely be avoided. Conveniently, the Baltics would not be expected to fight Moscow. Collectively, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia possess a dozen transport aircraft. Everyone knows which state would be expected to defeat Russia and retaliate if the nukes started flying. Only through NATO can Baltic leaders indulge the fantasy of borrowing America’s military to make war on Russia.

Link: War with Russia. Lithuanian agitation increases risk of direct war between US and Russia

Doug Bandow 2022 (JD from Stanford; senior fellow at the Cato Institute; worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan) 30 June 2022 " Does Lithuania Want to Start a War with Russia?" https://www.cato.org/commentary/does-lithuania-want-start-war-russia (accessed 27 Aug 202)

A Baltic war is an option no one should want to see exercised. So why is Lithuania consciously raising tensions? Perhaps Lithuania hopes to push NATO, meaning America, into a direct military confrontation with Russia. The timing is convenient, with the latest alliance summit occurring in Madrid this week. Some in Vilnius have advocated war. In March, the Siemas unanimously [passed a resolution](https://www.baltictimes.com/lithuanian_parliament_calls_for_no-fly_zone_over_ukraine/) urging the imposition of a “no‐​fly” zone over Ukraine, which would entail an air war over Ukraine and require strikes against air defenses in Russia. Conveniently, only the U.S. could mount such an operation.

Brink: US and Russia are on the brink of nuclear escalation. NATO had better not push any further

Dr. Nikolai Sokov 2022 (*Senior Fellow at the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Nonproliferation. Previously he worked at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey and in 1987-92 was an arms control negotiator for Soviet and then Russian Foreign Ministry* ) 30 May 2022 " Risks of Nuclear Escalation after the End of War in Ukraine" https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2022/05/30/risks-of-nuclear-escalation-after-the-end-of-war-in-ukraine/ (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

It would still be wrong to completely disregard the risk of escalation. As NATO continues to test the limits of what is permissible, it may inadvertently cross a Russian red line. In mid-April, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov pointedly [noted](https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5316680?from=top_main_6) that Russia did not intend to use nuclear weapons “at this stage” of the war, reiterating the nuclear threat after almost a month of silence. The longer the war continues, the closer NATO and Russia will approach the threshold of tolerance.

Impact: Nuclear annihilation

Amy Goodman 2022 (journalist) Warnings Grow over Nuclear Annihilation as Tensions Escalate Between U.S., Russia & China 4 Aug 2022 https://www.democracynow.org/2022/8/4/united\_nations\_nuclear\_annihilation\_united\_states (accessed 27 Aug 2022)

The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned this week humanity is, quote, “one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation.” He made the comments at the opening of a major U.N. gathering here in New York to review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The meeting comes at a time when tensions are escalating between the United States and two other nuclear powers, Russia and China.