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The enhanced Forward Presence: innovating NATO's deployment model for collective defence

Christian Leuprecht *

The enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) is not merely a deterrence mechanism that relies on NATO's reputation to guard the northeastern flank, but an innovative deployment model in response to the spectrum of emerging threats that confront the Alliance and its members.

On the one hand, the eFP enables select member states to support others, harnessing the economies and economics of an alliance with the legitimacy of a NATO mandate under circumstances where not all member states want to, or are able to, opt in; or when timelines are tighter than a full-fledged NATO mission could meet. On the other hand, the eFP's potential for crisis management and security cooperation to address the spectrum of traditional and emerging threats identified in the Wales, Warsaw, and Brussels Summit communiqués is considerable: collective defence aside, the current eFP is already showing promise in areas such as building societal resilience and improved security cooperation among member states that are deploying and exercising together – but, in the case of the Baltic states, for instance, without a

permanent US headquarters or operational presence.

This study starts with a summary of the rationale that informs the eFP and situates it as a quintessential manifestation of NATO's new mission set beyond the 2014 Wales Summit. The eFP is bespoke for the highly dynamic and complex threat environment that is challenging NATO resources on multiple fronts, both in- and out-of-area. The *Brief* explicates the political and deterrence purposes of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence in northeastern Europe. It also considers eFP's strategic effects, conceptual limits, and the extent to which this new deployment model might lend itself to confronting a myriad of security risks – conventional and unconventional – that member states face in the 21st century. The final sections rationalize the prospects and value of applying the eFP framework for other conceivable in-area operations: the benefits that accrue from rotational forces, and in circumstances when there is NATO consensus but absent willingness by all members to make an actual contribution and commitment; all of which embodies the premium put on the shift in deterrence from political reputation to military preparedness.

NATO's forward presence as a deterrent

Confronted with Russian revisionist posturing, the Alliance had to renew its defence and deterrence posture, along with projecting stability beyond the Euro-Atlantic space. The July 2016 Warsaw Summit embraced a renewed strategy of deterrence and defence by way of denial (by punishment) *vis-à-vis* Russia: “the allies state that if the fundamental security of any of its members were to be threatened [...] NATO has the capabilities and resolve to impose costs on an adversary that would

* Professor in Leadership at the Royal Military College of Canada. He was Eisenhower Fellow at the NATO Defense College from April to July 2019.

be unacceptable and far outweigh the benefits that an adversary could hope to achieve”.¹

The eFP is an *ad hoc* deployment model implemented in accordance with NATO’s non-aggressive defensive posture and deliberately compliant with the 1997 *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation, and Security* between NATO and the Russian Federation.² Multinational battalion-sized battlegroups are deployed in Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, under the leadership of four Framework Nations: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany respectively. The deployment of 4,500 forces was stood up in less than a year and parallels the tailored Forward Presence in Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey.³

These deployments constitute a first line of defence to deter and/or defeat adversarial incursions into the aforementioned regions in response to a

resurgence of aggressive Russian posturing.⁴ The logic of deterrence is to signal commitment to an adversary and demonstrate the necessary capability to follow through. But how to deter without being aggressive? NATO’s defence ministers were divided over renewing dialogue with Russia; yet there was consensus on the enhanced Forward Presence as the minimum capability to signal a credible Allied commitment along NATO’s north-eastern flank.⁵

Combat-ready “boots on the ground” from NATO Allies are now stationed on Baltic territory – a historical first. The “Framework Nations Concept” is proving a novel paradigm of multinational defence cooperation: states retain full sovereignty, without the presence of a “NATO army.”



Source: NATO

1 NATO “Warsaw Summit Communiqué”, 9 July 2016, paragraph 54; J. Ringsmore and S. Rynning, “Now for the hard part: NATO’s strategic adaptation to Russia”, *Survival*, Vol.59, Iss.3, 2017, p.129.

2 “France’s role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)”, *France Diplomatie*, March 2019.

3 At the 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO member states also ratified the tailored Forward Presence (tFP) in the Black Sea region. Romania highlighted the geostrategic importance of the Black Sea region and proposed the tFP to bolster NATO’s presence in the land, air and maritime domains. The tFP maritime component involves interoperable training with the participation of the NATO Standing Naval Forces; the air component – NATO’s enhanced Air Policing (eAP) – is employed through a framework of rotating Allied forces patrolling the Romanian and Bulgarian airspace.

4 D. Mercier, “NATO’s Adaptation in an Age of Complexity”, *Prism*, Vol.7, Iss.4, 2018, pp.2-11.

5 C. Leuprecht, J. Sokolsky, and J. Derow, *On the Baltic watch. The Past, present and future of Canada’s commitment to NATO’s enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia*, Ottawa, Macdonald-Laurier Institute, 2018, p.10.

In the vernacular, the eFP is commonly characterized as a “tripwire”: if the sovereignty of any NATO Ally were compromised, that would pose an existential threat to them all and trigger a collective response.⁶ NATO member states have an immediate collective interest in ensuring the territorial integrity of member countries. Yet, NATO troops are outnumbered by an adversary that enjoys the advantage of a unitary actor, whereas NATO functions more like a federation. To deter against all-out invasion, many more troops would be required. Ergo, defence policy in general, and the eFP in particular, should be understood as an insurance policy: buy the amount and extent of coverage needed relative to the anticipated risk.

Instead of all-perils coverage, the eFP offers specified perils coverage against sovereignty violations of a NATO-member state’s air, sea, land, and even cyber domain, especially irregulars in the form of “little green men” akin to those that appeared in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.⁷ The eFP changes the calculus: it makes Russian adventurism into the Baltic states costlier and occasions greater military effort, all of which imposes a dilemma on the adversary to take ownership of the escalation of conflict.

The eFP, not a NATO mission

Although the eFP looks familiar at first glance, it is actually NATO’s first new deployment model since its founding 70 years ago. Strictly speaking, though, it is not a NATO operation or mission. Member states provide capacity and commitment to support another member state whose capacity is absent or insufficient to defend its interests and territorial integrity outside of a NATO command structure, yet enabled by NATO. With this innovative deployment model, NATO-member countries provide a Forward Presence in another member state that is enhanced, but not led, by NATO; it all hinges on the lower-case “e” in the acronym.⁸

NATO-enabled, not NATO-led

The eFP command structure is anchored in member states, not under the umbrella of an actual NATO mission. In the event of a crisis, NATO could take over. Although the eFP is a NATO action that is governed by NATO policies, principles,

and rules, it differs from conventional out-of-area missions conducted in Afghanistan or Kosovo where NATO was formally in command of all aspects of the mission. For the eFP, NATO has a degree of authority and autonomy over select aspects of the mission only, whereas the Framework Nations are responsible for force generation and strategic planning.

To ensure that decision-making processes and lines of communication on the potential employment of the eFP are nonetheless seamless, the 2016 Warsaw Summit decided that individual eFP battalions will be integrated into their respective host state brigades, which, in turn, fall under the authority of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). NATO will have limited control: each Framework Nation is responsible for its own battlegroup and its own relationship with their host country and its contributing states. Still, the idea is to increase the Alliance’s ability to respond effectively and more flexibly to limited Russian aggressions. By way of example, the Canadian battlegroup has links to three lines of command: the national lines of command of the Contributing Nation; the line of command in the host country (in Canada’s case Latvia); and the NATO command structure.⁹

In the event of a crisis, individual NATO member states – notably the United States – could bypass NATO’s political command and control structure to intervene while awaiting a decision by the North Atlantic Council.¹⁰

Although the authorities of SACEUR have been broadened to include the staging and preparation of military forces, any considerable manoeuvre beyond such measures – such as a military campaign to support and relieve the eFP – would require a unanimous vote of the North Atlantic Council. That decision-making process could take time.¹¹ Cognizant of this constraint, Secretary General Stoltenberg

The multinational component of the eFP is important in signalling that it is, indeed, a concerted show of cooperation, especially with new NATO member states

6 *Ibid.*, p.25.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*, p.9.

9 M. Zapfe, “Deterrence from the ground up: understanding NATO’s enhanced Forward Presence”, *Survival*, Vol.59, Iss.3, 2017, p.148.

10 J. Luik and H. Praks, *Boosting the deterrent effect of allied enhanced Forward Presence*, Tallinn, International Centre for Defence and Security, 2017, p.12; U. Kuhn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018.

11 J.M. Arnold, “NATO’s Readiness Action Plan: Strategic Benefits and Outstanding Challenges”, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Vol.10, Iss.1, 2016, p.79.

pointed out: “it doesn’t help to have a force which is ready to move within 48 hours if we need 48 days to take a decision to make it move”.¹² Thus, the notion of the eFP as a “tripwire”, with its convoluted structure, actually acts as a deterrent. Any response to Russian aggression requires the eFP to be a part of a larger force framework, with the capacity to react to perceived threats with speed and military assets. Should these capabilities be absent, the “trigger” would not trigger much. Ergo, the eFP is integrated into overall NATO operational planning for contingencies in the Baltic area and is “underpinned by a viable reinforcement strategy”.¹³

Access for Allies: a departure from out-of-area operations

There was to be no permanent NATO land-based mission along the northeastern flank. Instead, NATO members are present in the form of a battalion and headquarters. However, multinational headquarters capability and leadership experience is scarce. Without NATO leadership, a Framework

Nation would have to step up for each of the four battalions in each of its respective country. Framework Nations, therefore, provide the core of the battalion battlegroups, and Allies complement the task forces with combat-ready troops and equipment on a voluntary and rotational basis. The multinational component of the eFP is important in signalling that it is, indeed, a concerted show of cooperation, especially with new NATO member states.

The structure and Command and Control (C2) arrangements for the eFP certainly appear complicated. As with other aspects of the Alliance’s collective strategic posture, political compromise tends to outplay the efficiency of any military initiative. Yet, operational efficiency has not been altogether neglected. Rather, the posture of the eFP, along with the C2 structure, is being refined to maintain its operational objectives: credible pro-

tection of Alliance territory, populations, sea lines of communication, and airspace meant that the “tripwire” had to be in the right place. And after three years of implementing its stated initiative, the eFP has key accomplishments to show and offers a robust deployment model for NATO to replicate elsewhere.

Towards a forward presence deployment model?

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly Defence and Security Committee has identified four necessary and sufficient conditions to draw on the eFP deployment framework and enable political approval: signal Alliance solidarity; deter aggression by demonstrating more robust capabilities and capacities in a particular region through burden- and resource-sharing; counter a limited incursion in a particular area of confrontation, without antagonizing the adversary; and prompt military mobility should crisis response be hindered by bureaucratic delays in NATO’s command and control structure.¹⁴

First, the multinational character of the battlegroups is both a strategic strength in military effectiveness that demonstrates solidarity, as well as an Achilles’ heel at the operational level.¹⁵ However, positioning the eFP within a model of Framework Nations spreads the risk across all Allies. Should an adversary challenge the territorial integrity of an Ally and threaten its security through direct military confrontation, NATO member states forwardly deployed in that region would be equally vulnerable. This would entice the Alliance to respond promptly in concert.

Second, the multinational character and interoperable capacity of battlegroups signals political and military solidarity and enables effective and fair Allied burden-sharing. In the mid-1990s, NATO’s Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina “was composed of three multinational divisions led by France, the United Kingdom and the United States as framework nations, while the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in the late 1990s and into the 2000s decade comprised five multinational brigades led by these three nations, as well as by Germany and Italy. In Afghanistan, ISAF’s Regional

The multinational character and interoperable capacity of battlegroups signals political and military solidarity and enables for effective and fair Allied burden-sharing

12 V. Pop, “NATO seeks to speed up decisions on military deployment”, *Wall Street Journal*, 6 March 2015; J.M. Arnold, *NATO’s Readiness Action Plan*, 2016, p.86.

13 J. Luik and H. Praks, “Boosting the deterrent effect of allied enhanced Forward Presence”, *Policy Paper*, International Centre for Defence and Security, Tallin, 2017.

14 NATO Parliamentary Assembly, “Reinforcing NATO’s deterrence in the East”, 2018, p.13.

15 C. Leuprecht, A. Lanoszka, J. Derow, and K. Muti, “Future multilateral cooperation: leveraging the NATO enhanced Forward Presence two years on”, *Riga Conference Papers 2019: NATO at 70 in the Baltic Sea Region*, Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Riga, 2019.

Commands and Provincial Reconstruction Teams also relied virtually all cases on framework nation arrangements.”¹⁶ European Allies, therefore, have two decades of experience with the Framework Nation concept in land, air, and maritime force structures and operations, which enables a bolder and more responsive approach to deterring and defeating potential adversaries.

The concept of a Framework Nation optimizes not only NATO’s, but especially European capabilities with a view to a more effective and aggregated defence capacity. It does so by enhancing “the readiness and responsiveness of Allied forces, in support of deterrence and defense... by shortening their notice-to-move, into a deeper and longer-term effort to strength the Alliance’s overall capacity to counter a sudden and threatening concertation of forces and systems, both in regular warfare and asymmetric environments, on its periphery”.¹⁷ That said the Framework Nation model within the eFP framework distributes roles and responsibilities across the Alliance, “in such a way that a combination of optimization and specialization can leverage the unique capabilities and skill sets of each Ally”.¹⁸

Third, mitigating the proliferation of security threats that challenge the interests and territorial integrity of the Alliance necessitates a substantive investment in more effective, efficient, and capable military deployment models/tools by deterring without antagonizing. An enhanced Forward Presence – when prepared and deployed selectively “with clear responsibilities, pre-delegated authority and maximally harmonised rules of engagement”¹⁹ “can promote security and stability in any situation that falls below the threshold of grey-zone conflict and, in turn, any conflict short of major interstate war”.²⁰ Such a deployment model offers an efficient and effective means of achieving multiple objectives in accordance with NATO’s Strategic Concept (2010):²¹

- deterring aggression and security challenges to vital interests and territorial integrity through rotational forces rather than a standing military force;
- assuring Allies through a tangible commitment by member states that provides capacity and commitment to support other member states that lack specific capacity;
- enabling a more effective and expedited response to security challenges when and if they occur by being situated closer to the origin of the crisis;
- providing access to en route infrastructure, materiel, and lines of communication that are necessary to ensure collective defence; and
- contributing directly to building and maintaining interoperability amongst Allies.

Fourth, the eFP concept relies on member states reacting promptly with the 40,000-strong NATO Response Force, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), and then through the Readiness Initiative. The conventional operational posture of NATO’s “tripwire” deterrence is thus heavily contingent on reinforcements being deployed from the centre to the periphery of the Alliance at relatively short notice.²² As such, both notice-to-move and notice-to-effect timelines need to be shortened to ensure that an “adversary would not outmatch NATO’s forces by denying them freedom of movement to or inside the targeted area of operation”. However, rapid deployment of forces under a NATO C2 framework is bound to run afoul of political and logistical hurdles. Politically, “NATO states would first have to consent to activation of the VJTF, which is anything but certain. Yet, even after a potential decision by the NATO Council on the deployment of the VJTF and early activation by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, the Alliance would quickly encounter logistical hurdles. It would struggle to field the necessary strategic transport

An enhanced Forward Presence can promote security and stability in any situation that falls below the threshold of grey-zone conflict and, in turn, any conflict short of major interstate war

16 D. A. Ruiz Palmer, “The framework nations’ concept and NATO: game changer for a new strategic era or missed opportunity?”, *Research Paper No.132*, July 2016, NATO Defense College, Rome, p.10.

17 *Ibid.*, p.5.

18 *Ibid.*, p.5.

19 M. Zapfe, “Deterrence from the ground up: understanding NATO’s enhanced Forward Presence”, *Survival*, Vol.59, Iss.3, 2017, p.152.

20 C. Leuprecht, A. Lanoszka, J. Derow, and K. Muti, “Future multilateral cooperation: leveraging the NATO enhanced Forward Presence two years on”, *Riga Conference Papers 2019*.

21 J. R. Deni, “Military engagement and Forward Presence: down but not out as tools to shape and win”, Strategic Studies Institute and US Army War College Press, January 2016.

22 NATO Parliamentary Assembly, “Reinforcing NATO’s deterrence in the East”, 2018, p.7.

aircraft vital for any such deployment”.²³ Ergo, the eFP has to strike a fine balance between multinational components on the one hand, and overall combat readiness and capacity of the battlegroups on the other.²⁴

NATO’s collective defence mechanisms take time; to avoid political shirking in deploying a response force to an imminent threat, the eFP

The eFP has to strike a fine balance between multinational components on the one hand, and overall combat readiness and capacity of the battlegroups on the other hand

needs to have the capacity and ability to respond before the launch of a NATO-designated operation. The eFP model has the ability to respond to a threat “[p]rior to the activation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty”. However, “the military response will be an issue for individual Allies, especially those with troops on the ground. In this situation, the fullest possible integration of the eFP battlegroup... is important in ensuring co-ordinated joint action in the event of a crisis”.²⁵ The eFP

thus makes the deterrence posture credible by demonstrating a commitment by NATO member states’ forces to engage.

Application for a forward presence deployment model

Wherever a Forward Presence may prove useful and the preferred mechanism to show capacity and commitment, NATO and its member states can wargame and “develop relevant contingency plans. Through such activities, the parties involved can also better understand each other’s command-and-control chain, Rules of Engagement, political appetite for risk, etc.”²⁶ The less ambiguity there is in addressing an imminent or looming security challenge, the quicker a more effective and assured decision is likely to emerge from NATO member states in support of a Forward Presence.

23 M. Zapfe and N. Vanaga “NATO’s conventional deterrence posture”, in *Deterring Russia in Europe: defence strategies for neighbouring states*, Routledge, 2018.

24 W. Clark, J. Luik, E. Ramms, and R. Shirreff, “Closing NATO’s baltic gap”, *International Centre for Defence and Security*, 2016, p.22.

25 J. Luik and H. Praks, “Boosting the deterrent effect of allied enhanced Forward Presence”, 2017, p.10.

26 *Ibid.*, p.10.

Such a deployment model could conceivably be achieved with the implementation of rotational forces through NATO’s Readiness Action Plan (RAP); a consensus-based model among member states that are willing to get involved; or shifting from a posture focused on “deterrence by reputation” to “deterrence by preparedness”.

Rotational forces through NATO’s Readiness Action Plan (RAP)

The eFP was partly designed to remedy the shortcomings of the NATO Response Force (NRF), launched in 2002 and then enhanced through the establishment of a “spearhead force”, known as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The VJTF was established with the aim of “responding to emerging security challenges posed by Russia as well as the risks emanating from the Middle East and North Africa”²⁷ through the Readiness Action Plan adopted at NATO’s 2014 Wales Summit. While the NRF would require time to deploy to the field, an eFP model would allow for a pre-emptive deployment of credible capability and assurance on the ground to deter an attack instead of just responding to a crisis that is already underway. This “mobile tripwire” must be deployed strategically so as not to antagonize the adversary. However, how quickly and effectively this force could be deployed to the field is uncertain.

The Kremlin’s annexation of the Crimea and incursion into Ukraine in 2014 underscored that the NRF/VJTF was unsuited to its aim and needed to be enhanced “to symbolise allied solidarity at potential points of conflict”.²⁸ Similarly, to facilitate readiness and rapid deployment of forces to any such region that finds itself the subject of rapid changes in the security environment, NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) would need to be established there beforehand. NFIUs are the result of a decision taken at the 2014 Wales Summit as part of NATO’s Readiness Action Plan. Six of the eight NFIUs as part of the eFP in the Baltics and Poland – based in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania – have been fully operational since September 1, 2015, and thus ahead of the 2016 Warsaw Summit. The latest NFIUs – in Hungary and Slovakia – have been active since September 1, 2016 and have been fully operational

27 “NATO Response Force/Very High Readiness Joint Task Force”, NATO, 2016.

28 M. Zapfe, “Deterrence from the ground up: understanding NATO’s enhanced Forward Presence”, p.148.

since 2017.²⁹

Allied forces must be postured and equipped credibly to deter an adversary's access to, and freedom of any action across, all military theatres of the North Atlantic region. The deployment of rotational forces through NATO's RAP under a Forward Presence model has "a robust counter-A2/AD posture, involving a combination of capabilities to defeat... [a] threat by offensive and defensive measures, both kinetic and non-kinetic. NATO's plans... [would] be synchronised and quickly executable".³⁰ The RAP also increases strategic depth: should the Alliance be confronted simultaneously with multiple threats or crises on multiple fronts, the Forward Presence gives NATO "a 'level of ambition' of being able to provide command and control for two major joint operations and six smaller operations at any given time".³¹ Thus, a high readiness force is integral to securing the North Atlantic region from any and all conventional and non-conventional threats. Establishing NFIUs as part of the Forward Presence framework generates a visible and persistent NATO presence in any region that is being challenged. In turn, NFIUs foster collaboration with domestic armed forces and facilitate the rapid deployment of the NATO High Readiness Forces in times of military-political crises.

Consensus, but no willingness

Forging a political consensus among 29 NATO member states takes patience, effort, and above all, time.³² The eFP deployment model thus lends itself to cases where there is a consensus but no will to have a full NATO mission. Coalitions of willing NATO member states can successfully strengthen overall readiness, interoperability, and effectiveness of the NATO force structure in other NATO member states. Close cooperation within such a coalition "is underpinned by a mutual understanding of political intent, decision-making and authorization; secure capital-to-capital communications; and familiarity established through

political-level training and exercises".³³ That increases procedural readiness and political agility. Cooperation in limited partnerships and coalitions under a Forward Presence model is "borne out of pragmatic necessity, for efficiency or out of operational demand"³⁴ in response to a regional security crisis in which a member state, confronted by such a threat, is militarily and/or politically unwilling or unable to intervene. Moreover, within this deployment model, NATO member states can continue to act within the operating framework of the Alliance – using its institutions, resources, and command structure – while unwilling member states can not only abstain from such actions but even oppose the operation as a whole, provided they give their blessing at Council.

The notion of a group of member states resolving to act in concert and intervene with greater speed, depth, and efficiency than the Alliance as a whole could, is not new.³⁵ By way of example, "NATO operations in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan have forged small groupings of allies and partners, comfortable working together and with similar political appetites for military intervention".³⁶ As such, there is a significant degree of utility within the deployment of a coalition of willing member states under a Forward Presence model because "[l]ike-minded partners often share strategic and regional interests and can be more agile in terms of political consensus and decision-making, let alone military deployment. They have a willingness and capability to... [r]each with the 'speed of relevance' as former US Defence Secretary Mattis put it".³⁷

The eFP deployment model lends itself to cases where there is a consensus but no will to have a full NATO mission

From "deterrence by reputation" to "deterrence by preparedness"

The eFP strengthens the Alliance's preparedness through a substantial political and military reaffirmation of Article 5. Although collective defence through "deterrence by reputation" has remained

29 C. Leuprecht, J. Sokolsky, and J. Derow, *On the Baltic watch. The past, present and future of Canada's commitment to NATO's enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia*, p.12.

30 W. Clark, J. Luik, E. Ramms, and R. Shirreff, "Closing NATO's Baltic Gap", *Report*, International Center for Defence and Security, Estonia, May 2016, p.21.

31 J. M. Arnold, "NATO's Readiness Action Plan: strategic benefits and outstanding challenges", *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, 2016, p.84.

32 C. Leuprecht, A. Lanoszka, J. Derow, and K. Muti, "Future multilateral cooperation: leveraging the NATO enhanced Forward Presence two years on", *Riga Conference Papers 2019*.

33 K. Jans, "Strengthening NATO's readiness through coalitions", *King's College News Centre*, London, 2019.

34 *Ibid.*, 2019.

35 M. Zapfe, "Threatened from within? NATO, Trump and institutional adaptation", in O. Thränert and M. Zapfe (eds.), *Strategic Trends 2017: Key Developments in Global Affairs*, Centre for Security Studies, ETH Zurich, 2017, p.88.

36 K. Jans, "Strengthening NATO's readiness through coalitions".

37 *Ibid.*

an integral part of NATO's *raison d'être*, the end of the Cold War meant adapting how the Alliance pursued deterrence and assurance for its member states.³⁸ The eFP deployment model provides for flexible response, which enhances “deterrence by preparedness”: increasing a potential aggressor's cost of resorting to an act of war.

For example, in the case of a crisis it may take a while – if at all – to forge consensus on a NATO response in the Baltics and Poland. In the meantime, eFP Framework Nations and Contributing States can move on a decision to support a member state while the North Atlantic Council decides as a whole on a course of action. The eFP's actual *modus operandi* is “enhanced deterrence”, which enables a quicker and more agile response than waiting for the Alliance to resolve collective-action problems as a whole. Nonetheless, enhanced deterrence by means of a persistent military presence can only be credible if the Alliance is also willing and capable of imposing retaliatory punishment when confronted by adversarial aggression. Such retaliation “requires that the punishment imposes costs on an adversary that are greater than the adversary's valuation of the gains through action”.³⁹

The eFP shows how NATO is adapting to the changing security environment. The recent NATO Readiness Initiative in the form of “Four Thirties” calls on “the Allies to be able to deploy in the case of a crisis in Europe up to 30 battalion-sized BGs, 30 squadrons of aircraft and 30 warships in no more than 30 days”.⁴⁰ Lindley-French argues that this approach comes “to grips with the force lev-

els and structures credible 21st century deterrence demands by enabling rapid reinforcement of forward deployed forces in an emergency”.⁴¹ Put to the existential test, the eFP thus demonstrates the ability of the Alliance to mobilize anew. In this new security environment, the eFP deployment model offers timely reaction in a flexible and prepared manner.

Conclusion

Whilst the newest Allies on the northeast frontier of the enlarged Atlantic Alliance face a resurgent Russian threat, NATO is undergoing a process of a rejuvenation consistent with its founding purpose of providing for the collective defence of all its members.⁴² The Forward Presence framework enhances deterrence by shifting “from ‘deterrence by reputation’ to ‘deterrence by preparedness’ by integrating even those minimal, compromise-based measures already decided upon in Warsaw into credible, realistic and rehearsed defence plans with clear responsibilities, pre-delegated authority and maximally harmonised rules of engagement”.⁴³ However, far from a deployment model suited for Europe's northeastern flank only, the eFP framework is maturing into a cornerstone of conventional, extended nuclear allied deterrence against conventional and unconventional threats alike: deterrence by preparedness, which embodies, symbolizes, and ensures Allied capacity, capability, and interoperability.

38 J. R. Deni, “Is NATO's enhanced Forward Presence fit for purpose?” in W. G. Braun III, S. von Hlatky, K. Richard Nossal (eds.), *2018: the return of deterrence: credibility and capabilities in a new era*, Centre for International and Defence Policy, School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, 2018, p.38.

39 J.M. Arnold, “NATO's Readiness Action Plan: strategic benefits and outstanding challenges”, 2016, p. 82.

40 K. Stoicesu and P. Järvenpää, “Contemporary deterrence: insights and lessons from Enhanced Forward Presence”, *International Centre for Defence and Security*, 2019.

41 J. Lindley-French, “NATO@70: still adapting after all these years”, *NDC Policy Brief* No.7, March 2019, p.3.

42 J. T. Jockel and J. J. Sokolsky, “Canada and NATO: keeping Ottawa in, expenses down, criticism out ... and the country secure.” *International Journal*, Vol.64, Iss.2, 2009.

43 M. Zapfe, “Deterrence from the Ground Up”, p. 158.



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Research Division

Thierry Tardy, PhD, Series Editor
NATO Defense College
Via Giorgio Pelosi 1, 00143 Rome – Italy
www.ndc.nato.int

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