

Deliberating Deterrence and Détente

NATO's Balance Between Threats and Reassurance Towards Russia

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Reassurance Towards Russia*

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Abstract

The war in eastern Ukraine and the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, have led to a significant worsening of the relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Russia. The Russian willingness to use force to redraw borders in Europe and to support unrest in eastern Ukraine, have created a sense of uncertainty and fear not seen since the Cold War. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, did United States and Russian officials agree on defining each other as a threat to their national security. The events in Ukraine have forced NATO to reassess its relationship to Russia. NATO has discarded the two pillars of the post-Cold War relationship with Russia, dialogue and cooperation, and embarked on heavy reforms to enhance its defence of its eastern flank. Since then, both sides have expanded their military activity significantly. The increased military activity, and a worryingly high number of dangerous close encounters between the armed forces of NATO-member states and Russia, have given a rise to an increased risk of accidents or miscalculations that could escalate tensions. Observers have consequently warned that NATO and Russia are in an unstable and dangerous security dilemma. Unsatisfied with the reforms taken at the Wales Summit of 2014, NATO's eastern members have called for more military presence and defence in their region to deter further Russian aggression. In the NATO Summit in Warsaw 2016, did the Alliance agree on a new strategy of deterrence and dialogue towards Russia. The strategy closely resembles the two pillars of Atlantic security during the Cold War; deterrence to deter a possibly expansionist Russia from aggressive actions, and dialogue (or *détente* as it was called back then) to reduce the tensions and to reassure a potentially frightened Russia. This master thesis is meant to answer what this dual-track strategy of deterrence and dialogue is, and how NATO employs the strategy.

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Mistakes and shortcomings are most definitely my own.

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1 Introduction

2014 marked a shift in the relationship between Russia and the West. Following the political upheavals in Ukraine after the 2014 Maidan Revolution, Russia unlawfully annexed the peninsula of Crimea and supported an insurgency in Eastern Ukraine. The Russian actions have triggered a more adversarial relationship between NATO and Russia. Since then, mistrust, fear and hostile rhetoric have dominated the relationship between NATO and Russia. In 2015, for the first time since the Cold War, the United States (US) defined Russia as an adversary and an existential threat. Speaking at a press conference, US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter defined Russia as *“a very, very significant threat ... [and that] Russia poses an existential threat to the United States by virtue simply of the size of the nuclear arsenal”* (Carter, 2015). Similarly, Russia’s latest security strategy defines the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a threat to their national security.

“The build-up of the military potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and vesting it with global functions implemented in violations of norms of international law, boosting military activity of the bloc's countries, further expansion of the alliance, the approach of its military infrastructure to Russian borders create a threat to the national security,” (McKridy, 2016)

There have been numerous comparisons made between the Cold War and today’s tensions between NATO/EU and Russia. Some have even gone to the extent of calling it a new Cold War. Among these, is the Russian Prime Minister Medvedev. Speaking at the Munich Security Conference, last year, he said that: *“NATO's policy with regard to Russia has remained unfriendly and opaque. One could go as far as to say that we have slid back into a new Cold War”* (CNN, 2016). There are even some scholars that agree with the statement, that we are at the brink of a new Cold War (Kroenig, 2015) (Legvold, 2016). As a response to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, NATO and the EU have issued economic and diplomatic sanctions on Russia. Russia has responded with countersanctions. The member states of NATO have decided to boost their military defences and to take measures to deter Russia from further aggression (NATO, 2014) (NATO, 2016). Russia has responded by increasing their military presence in the Western district and by deploying S-400 air missile defence system and ballistic Iskander missiles to the enclave of Kaliningrad (Deutsche Welle, 2016). The increased military activity has also lead to numerous, dangerous incidents, involving close encounters between Russian and NATO forces. In the Baltic Sea, Russian jets buzzed an American destroyer and a reconnaissance aircraft in two separate incidents. Similarly, NATO

vessels in the Black sea have encountered Russian aircrafts in what have been deemed as unsafe incidents (Gibbons-Neff, 2016). In 2015, a close encounter between NATO and Russian forces ended with a loss of life, when Turkey shot down a Russian jet close to the Syrian border (BBC, 2015a).

The Russian actions in Ukraine have sparked fear of continued Russian aggression, even against NATO countries, as well as an increasing debate within NATO on how to respond to the Russian actions. Many analysts have pointed to the possibility of a Russian conventional or hybrid offensive against one or several NATO member states, and subsequently called for increased attention to the defence of the Eastern borders of NATO. Others again, have warned against increasing the NATO presence close to Russia's borders. Fearful of escalation and a possible arms race, scholars and politicians have warned against deterrence measures that may provoke Russia. The underlying presumption that divide the analysts, is how to perceive Russia and President Putin. Analysts and politicians, who call for more defence spending and deterrence measures against Russia, generally view Russia as an opportunistic and a revanchist actor. They typically fear that Putin is trying to establish regional hegemony, conquer former Soviet republics, or even threaten NATO territory. On the other hand, analysts who call for restraint, typically view Russia as a frightened and defensive actor. They believe that Putin's actions in Ukraine stem from a fear of being encircled and a fear that the West want to conduct a regime change in Russia. The question of whether Russia is an aggressive or defensive actor demands two radically different responses. If Russia is seeking to expand its zone of influence by force and follow the logic of Lenin's famous proverb "*You probe with bayonets: if you find mush, you push. If you find steel, you withdraw.*" NATO should respond by increasing its effort to deter Russia from aggression and boost its defences. However, if Russia is enhancing its military capabilities out of fear of NATO and the US, NATO should seek to limit its military posture close to the Russian border, focus on dialogue and try to assure Russia of the Alliance's friendly intentions.

It is, however, impossible to know what Putin is thinking. We can make qualified guesses, at best. Putin might be an aggressive or defensive actor, acting out of opportunity or necessity, or a mixture of both. An exclusive focus on deterrence bares the risk of unintentional provocation and escalation, greater insecurity, and increased instability. Contrary, an approach based exclusively on dialogue, neglecting defence, is hazardous when NATO is confronting a possibly aggressive power, willing to redefine borders by force. Responding to the dilemma, NATO has decided to follow a strategy dealing with both

scenarios. Since taking office in October 2014, NATO's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, has argued for the dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue (Stoltenberg, 2014). Deterrence to persuade Putin that he can't solve the political disputes with NATO by military force, and dialogue to limit the risk of confrontation and to solve the dividing political issues. A strategy that was affirmed in the communiqué of the Warsaw Summit of 2016. This dual-track strategy resembles a long-standing strategy of NATO, known as the Harmel approach. 50 years ago, the Harmel Report defined deterrence/defence and détente/dialogue as the two main pillars of NATO's strategy towards the Soviet Union. In an era of increased confrontation and decreased political contact between NATO and Russia, it might be helpful to revisit this dual-track strategy. Although, a lot has changed since the Cold War, insights into how NATO managed the relationship to the Soviet Union, might prove helpful in addressing the tensions of today. NATO has, however, been criticised for neglecting both deterrence and détente/dialogue, and received critique for emphasising one or the other too heavily. This essay seeks to investigate whether, and to what extent, NATO is pursuing a dual-track approach of deterrence and détente, by answering the following research question:

Is NATO conducting a dual-track strategy of deterrence and détente towards Russia today?

It is, however, hard to say something about the extent of which the policies are followed today, without having anything to compare them with. In order to provide a comparable example, and to learn more about how the two strategies of deterrence and détente can be practiced, I am going to provide a background chapter describing how the NATO allies conducted deterrence and détente in the late 1960s and early 1970s, after the Harmel Report was implemented. In the next chapter, I will provide an analytical framework, conceptualising the two terms deterrence and détente. Thereafter, I will use the analytical framework to analyse if NATO is conducting deterrence and détente today. The timespan of my empirical investigation is between 2014 and the time of writing.

1.1 Literature Overview: The Debate on How to Respond

As mentioned in the introduction, the discussion about how NATO should respond to Russia's actions in Ukraine has been driven by different perceptions of the Russian

leadership's intentions and nature. Those who perceive Russia's President Putin as an inherently aggressive and opportunistic actor, demands more attention to NATO's deterrence. In contrast, observers who perceive Putin as defensive actor, acting out of fear and perceived necessity, call for restraining NATO's deterrence measures and increased dialogue. Scholars, like Zapfe and Haas (2016), Colby and Solomon (2015), Shlapak and Johnson (2016), and many more, have argued for the need to improve NATO's deterrence and defence. In what seems to be a clear reference to World War II, several leading national security experts argued in an Atlantic Council report, that:

“The world has faced this kind of challenge before. History makes clear that the only way to stop such aggression from precipitating a regional or even world-wide conflagration is to deter and defend against it as early as possible and not to be fooled by protestations of innocent motives or lack of further ambitions.” (Daalder, 2015: 3).

Simultaneously, scholars, like Shiffrinson (2016), Åtland (2017), Wilhelmsen and Godzimirski (2017) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE: 2016), have warned against the possibility of escalation and the risks inherent in the continued efforts to bolster deterrence. This debate has also been reflected within the political leadership of NATO. Central and Eastern European allies, like Poland and the Baltic Republics, perceive Russia as an aggressive actor and have consequently argued for more deterrence of Russia. Many Southern and Western European allies, on the other hand, don't perceive Russia as an inherently aggressive actor and an existential threat have argued for more dialogue¹. There is also another division of threat perception in NATO, between those who are concerned by a possible Russian threat and those who see the threat from the South as more pressing.

In the face of uncertainty about Russia's intentions, there's an argument to be made for simultaneously deterring a potentially aggressive Russia while pursuing dialogue and to reassure a potentially frightened Russia. There has been a growing call, within the academic as well as the political debate, to bring the Harmel Report back into light and to redevelop the combination of deterrence and détente. Within the political debate, Germany has been the most vocal supporter of implementing such a policy. Ahead of the Warsaw Summit of 2016, Germany wanted the summit to be a 'Harmel' Summit, focusing on the combination of deterrence and détente (Mölling: 2016: 6). Germany tried to get the Harmel Report explicitly mentioned in the Warsaw Summit Communiqué. The suggestion was, however, not supported by the majority of the member states. Nevertheless, big European member states, like France,

¹ Information received in a seminar in Brussels, held under the Chatham House Rule.

Spain and Italy, did support the combination of deterrence and détente². In an effort to reach a compromise on the issue of how to respond to Russia, NATO decided to increase its efforts to deter Russia, while leaving the channels of political dialogue open. In the aftermath of the Warsaw Summit, the German permanent representative to NATO, Ambassador Hans-Dieter Lucas, has continued to emphasise the relevance of the Harmel Report. In a speech in Brussels, September 2016, Ambassador Lucas stated that, *“Ever since the Harmel Report was published in 1967, the dual-track strategy of deterrence and defence on the one hand, and détente and dialogue on the other, has been ingrained in the North Atlantic Alliance. This approach remains relevant to this day.”* (Lucas, 2016). Critical of the German policy, Polish observers have argued that Germany overemphasises the continued relevance of the Harmel Report, and that Germans misinterpret history when they believe that the dual-track strategy of the Harmel Report played a critical role in ending the Cold War peacefully (Gotkowska, 2016: 1-3). Anyhow, with the on-going American ‘pivot’ to Asia and the British exit from the EU, Germany’s relative power in Europe is growing. Germany has also agreed to take on more responsibility in NATO and progressed towards a more active leadership role in military and security affairs (Rathke, 2016). Germany’s increasing importance in the European security architecture calls for an enhanced understanding of German security policy.

Although, the German suggestion to mention the Harmel Report explicitly in the communiqué of the Warsaw Summit didn’t receive a majority support in the Alliance, traces of the Harmel Report and the dual track approach may be found in official statements and records in NATO. In addition to the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, the most visible example of this, is the rhetoric of the current Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg. In his first speech as Secretary General of NATO, October 2014, he spoke in accordance to the same logic that underpinned the Harmel approach.

“So let me be clear. I see no contradiction between a strong NATO and our continued effort to build a constructive relationship with Russia. Just the opposite. Only a strong NATO can build such a relationship for the benefit of Euro-Atlantic security. Actually, I think that a strong NATO, both as a military alliance but also as a political alliance, is a precondition and the best way to establish a constructive relationship with Russia again.” (Stoltenberg, 2014).

This has been a consistent message from Stoltenberg, throughout his time in office and one that he has reaffirmed on several occasions, for example in his last year speech at the Munich

² Information received in a seminar in Brussels, held under the Chatham House Rule.

Security Conference. Talking about how to handle the relationship with Russia, Stoltenberg said that he “*strongly believe that the answer lies with both more defence and more dialogue. Pursued together, they can help us to achieve greater stability in Europe.*” (2016). On face value, it seems like NATO is pursuing a policy closely linked to the Harmel approach. However, rhetoric is one thing, action is something else. Stoltenberg has stated that “*NATO has a united position on Russia: strong defence and deterrence combined with dialogue. We are delivering on both.*” (Stoltenberg, 2017). In light of widespread critique of NATO’s defence and deterrence, and of warnings that NATO and Russia is in a downward spiral of worsening tensions, it is interesting to investigate if the rhetoric is followed by action.

1.2 Research Design

This thesis is a descriptive single case study, focused on empirical investigation. It will not try to explain anything beyond the single case of interest. The goal of this text is to either falsify or to confirm the claim that NATO is conducting a dual-track strategy of deterrence and détente towards Russia.

John Gerring describes a case study as “*an intensive study of a single unit... a spatially bounded phenomenon – e.g. a nation-state, revolution, political party, election, or person – observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time*” (2004: 342). In my study, the unit of analysis is NATO over the time period of 2014 to the time of writing. My research will, however, not be bounded by a singular focus at NATO’s institutional level. As the background chapter will illustrate, would an analysis solely focusing on the decisions taken at the institutional level miss a considerable amount of the data that is of interest. This is especially true for how détente is conducted. During the Cold War did much of the détente happen at a bilateral or multilateral level, outside of the NATO framework. It’s therefor necessarily to give considerable attention in the analysis to particular sub-units of the Alliance. The sub-units of interest in my analysis is Germany and the US. The US is the largest economy and military power within the Alliance, while Germany is the largest economy in Europe and second biggest in the Alliance. Germany does also enjoy substantial political power in the EU and a growing responsibility within NATO. As demonstrated in the background chapter, where both countries pivotal in the détente engagement with the Soviet Union, during the Cold War. Given their current importance within the Alliance, is it reasonable to believe that the most influential efforts of détente with

Russia would be conducted by these two countries today. Robert Yin differentiates between two types of single-case study designs, a *holistic* case design, with a single-unit of analysis, and an *embedded* case design, with multiple units of analysis (Yin, 2009: 50, 54-56). My research falls into the latter category, as I won't only examine the main unit NATO as a whole, but also look into specific sub-units within the Alliance and intermediary units, like the NATO-Russia Council.

The section of my analysis, focusing on NATO's deterrence, is more open to a holistic design, as the aggregated deterrence value of NATO may be calculated as the total military power of the Alliance as a whole. As described by Yin, may a holistic design be advantageous "*when the relevant theory underlying the case study is itself of a holistic nature*" (2009: 55). For reasons described later in this thesis, however, do a holistic view of NATO's deterrence miss important aspects, like the local military power balance. Given the potential importance of the local balance of military power, do an analysis of smaller sub-units (which is more limited in geography) of the overall deterrence by the Alliance make an important contribution to the conclusion. Unfortunately, do I neither have the time nor the space available to examine every relevant sub-unit of local military balance. I have therefore chosen to focus on the balance of military power and NATO's deterrence in the Baltics, which is considered by many analysts to be the weakest link in the Alliance in the case of potential Russian aggression. This embedded unit of analysis serve a similar function as a critical case, in that it may confirm or challenge the perception of the overall deterrence by the Alliance, which is the main unit of analysis in this section of my thesis.

In order to understand which data to collect on how to interpret them, I'm going to use an analytical framework derived from theories of deterrence and *détente*. To answer the research question, I will first investigate how NATO has been conducting deterrence towards Russia, since the Wales Summit of 2014. Afterwards I will focus on the efforts of NATO to establish dialogue/*détente* with Russia. In order to examine if and how NATO is conducting deterrence and *détente* aimed at Russia, I'm going to draw on theories of deterrence and *détente* to help me identify the factors that need to be present in NATO policy for the two concepts to be working. By examining the presence of both pillars of the Harmel approach, and by drawing on the findings from the first research question, I hope to establish to what extent NATO is following the dual-track approach of deterrence and *détente* today.

If NATO is conducting deterrence, I expect to find that NATO is employing a defence strategy consisting of war-fighting capabilities, considered to be able to change the potential

aggressor's cost/benefit calculations. In the chapter on the analytical framework, I'm going to explain in more depth, how such a strategy may look like and how deterrence works. If NATO is conducting détente, I expect to find examples of such policies that may be categorised into the strategy of détente. Those are political actions and initiatives aimed at decreasing tensions and solving the underlying political issues of conflict. In the analytical framework chapter, I'm going to provide examples of what such policies may look like.

The data presented in this essay is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are consisting of NATO documents, transcripts of official speeches, statements, interviews and seminars/meetings. The interviews and meetings that I took part in, was restricted by the Chatham House Rule to preserve the anonymity of the source and to facilitate a more open exchange of information. The Chatham House Rule states that,

“When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.” (Chatham House)

In the parts of this essay where my information stems from interviews and meetings where the Chatham House Rule was applied, I will not cite my source by name or his/her affiliation. My secondary sources consist mainly of academic articles, reports, op-eds, news articles and books.

2 The Harmel Report: Deterrence and Détente in the Cold War

The Harmel Report was a reaction to internal crisis and an adaptation to the emerging East-West détente. The report reasserted NATO's central principles and introduced the dual-track policy of deterrence and détente/dialogue (Haftendorn, 2008: 103). This chapter serves as a background chapter on how deterrence and détente were combined in the Harmel approach, and how it was applied in its heydays of the 1960s and 70s. The Harmel Report didn't exist in a vacuum. To broaden the understanding of the Report, this chapter will also include a section describing the political context within which the Report was written in and how the combined strategy of deterrence and détente was understood at the time. At the end of the chapter, I'll introduce some of the most acknowledged theories on why the dual-track strategy broke down with the decline of détente in the late 1970s.

2.1 Internal Crisis and a New Strategy

The report came at a time when the very existence of NATO was put into question. The threat from the Soviet Union was no longer as pressing as before, and the Alliance was under increased public debate and scrutiny. Disintegration of the NATO structure was a looming threat. France's president, Charles de Gaulle, had withdrawn France from the integrated military command structure and expelled the NATO headquarters from Paris. America's participation in the defence of Europe had a backdrop because of the war in Vietnam, and the British contribution was weakened by a deteriorating British economy. The Mansfield Resolution proposed a significant reduction of U.S. troops in Europe, and the UK planned cutbacks of the British Army of the Rhine (Bozo, 2007: 118). Adding to the uncertainty, several European members were sceptical of the credibility of the Alliance's strategic concept of massive retaliation. The doctrine, also known as massive response, was a product of the imbalance of conventional forces in Europe. Due to the Soviet superiority in quantities of conventional forces, NATO relied on a large nuclear arsenal for its deterrence. In the event of even a limited conventional offensive by the Soviet Union, NATO would respond with an all-out nuclear retaliation (Haftendorn, 2007: 80-81). Given the new strategic nuclear capability of the Soviet Union, several Europeans did not deem it credible that the US would risk the devastation of American cities, in order to retaliate against a limited Soviet attack on Western

European territory. The European Allies were convinced that their security was better suited to deter aggression from the East if a spectrum of tactical nuclear weapons were deployed on the continent. The US, on the other hand, was convinced that a limited conflict could best be deterred if NATO had a stronger conventional defence. The compromise was the new strategy known as Flexible Response, adapted by the Alliance in September 1967. An ironic element of the compromise was that the agreement was facilitated by the French withdrawal from NATO's integrated command (Haftendorn, 2007: 84-87). The compromise entailed that the Europeans accepted to boost their conventional forces to deter a non-nuclear attack from the Warsaw Pact. The Americans, on their part, accepted a larger role for tactical nuclear weapons in the defence strategy. The tactical nuclear forces (TNF) were given a war-fighting role, in that the TNF was supposed to annihilate the adversary's conventional forces, in case the conventional defence broke. Depending on the circumstances, the TNF could also be used to escalate the conflict to make the employment of strategic nuclear weapons more credible (Coffey and Schubert, 1989: 113). The continued presence of American soldiers in Europe, was also deemed important for the credibility of the new strategy. The strategy of flexible response was meant to ensure NATO's ability to act in a variety of ways across the spectrum of conflict, leaving the aggressor uncertain of what risks he might take and what costs an aggressive action would bring (Coffey and Schubert, 1989: 112).

During the same time period, an environment of relaxed tensions and *détente* had spread in Europe. Parallel to the defence debate, much of the discussion centred around the issue of what scope of political profile the Alliance should have (Rynning, 2017: 269). Should NATO be a forum of coordination of foreign and security politics, and should NATO serve as a platform for the efforts to engage in dialogue and *détente* with the Eastern Bloc? There was substantial disagreement as to what role NATO should play in the developing *détente* between East and West. De Gaulle had the most controversial approach to *détente*. In addition to disputes over the military doctrine, the reason for the French withdrawal from the integrated military command structure, was that de Gaulle thought that NATO was an obstacle for overcoming the tensions between the East and the West. He envisioned a Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals", free from the rival blocs of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. *Détente* was his policy of choice to accomplish the disintegration of the two blocs and to create a new pan-European security system based on a Europe of strong states (Wall, 2008: 136) (Haftendorn, 2008: 103).

The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) on the other hand, was totally dependent on the functioning of the Alliance for its security policy, but they dragged their feet on détente. The Hallstein-doctrine prescribed that Bonn wouldn't maintain diplomatic relationship with any state that recognised the German Democratic Republic (GDR, often referred to as East Germany) (Haftendorn, 2008: 103). The FRG saw détente as an end more than as a mean to achieve East-West normalization (Rynning, 2017: 279). In line with the Hallstein-doctrine, the FRG wanted to make German unification a precondition for normalization between the East and the West, but the other allies feared that a firm West German stand on the German question could block constructive efforts to ease East-West relations (Haftendorn, 2008: 103). After the Berlin and Cuban crises brought the Eastern and Western blocs to the brink of war, FRG's allies wouldn't allow the German question to hinder efforts to develop better relationships with the Soviet Union. The American President Lyndon B. Johnson wanted Chancellor Ludwig Erhard to improve the German-Soviet relations and pursue a gradual policy of détente instead of confrontation. The new West German administration of Willy Brandt changed the FRG's policy of détente. Launching his policy of Ostpolitik, Willy Brandt embraced the concept of détente as a way to overcome the division of Europe. Brandt had a more flexible understanding of the Hallstein-doctrine and saw open for dialogue with the East. Brandt's Ostpolitik, however, accelerated the process of détente to an extent that the American administration wasn't comfortable with (Wall, 2008, s 134 - 135). Although the FRG didn't recognize the legal status of the GDR, they established formal contact with the GDR in 1969. The ultimate goal of Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik was to transform the Communist East-Europe and eventually unify Germany by peaceful means (Niedhart, 2008: 119). Brandt's version of détente relied on a unified and strong NATO to provide for German security in that process. This was especially true in the case of continued Soviet pressure on the status of West-Berlin. Nevertheless, the US feared that Germany could withdraw from NATO and that the policy might lead to a partial 'Sovietization' of a neutral and unified Germany (Wall, 2008: 134).

The American policy of détente began in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which led to the establishment of the Washington-Moscow "hotline", during the John F. Kennedy administration and was continued under President Johnson. Johnson advocated a gradual step-by-step approach, including both of the blocs, to shape a new political environment. This approach stood in contrast to de Gaulle's bold and transformative anti-bloc policy (Rynning, 2017: 278). The Europeans were, however, sceptical of the American

engagement with the Soviet Union. They feared that the two superpowers could reach a grand bargain where the Europeans could be marginalized (Rynning, 2017: 272). The Alliance was also sceptical towards the Soviets intentions, and feared that the Soviets used détente as a way to ease tensions selectively “*to weaken the cohesion of the Alliance*” and to “*divide the states of Western Europe*” (Harmel, 1967: AC/261-N/13). The widely different approaches to détente made cooperation within the NATO framework challenging. The lack of internal cohesion on how to solve the question of European security and division, resulted in increasing distrust within the Alliance. There was a pressing need to find a consensus on the policy of détente and a way to anchor it to a common understanding, to reassure the members of the NATO and to provide mutual internal trust. Approaching the 20th anniversary of the Alliance in 1969, the earliest date that member states could withdraw from the founding Treaty of Washington, there were real concerns that the internal upheaval within the Alliance might cause member states to leave NATO. The Belgian Foreign Minister, Pierre Harmel, hoped to save the internal cohesion of the Alliance by defining a consensus on its political position (Haftendorn, 2008: 104). The agreement on the new strategic concept of flexible response, helped to facilitate progress in the work on the Harmel Report. The flexible response strategy and the involvement of non-nuclear allies in the nuclear planning of NATO, increased the credibility of the Alliance’s deterrence and provided the confidence needed for reaching a consensus on détente (Haftendorn, 2007: 94-96). Yet, the significant differences between the FRG, France and the US, concerning the issue of détente and the political role of the Alliance, made progress on the Harmel Report hard to achieve. At the end, they were able to reach a compromise that allowed for both the gradual approach of the US and the détente as an ‘end’, as advocated by the FRG. France eventually signed up to the Report, because they feared becoming totally isolated.

In 1967 the *Report of the Council on the Future Tasks of the Alliance*, also known as the Harmel Report, was written. It was named after its architect, Pierre Harmel. The report analysed the two previous decades of NATO cooperation, and put forward a policy suggestion based on previous experience and future challenges. The Harmel Report identified two crucial functions of NATO. The first is “*to maintain adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression and other forms of pressure and to defend the territory of member countries*” This required “*a suitable military capability to assure the balance of forces, thereby creating a climate of stability, security and confidence.*” The second function is that: “*In this climate the Alliance can carry out its second function, to pursue the search for*

progress towards a more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be solved” According to the Report, the “*way to peace and stability in Europe [rests] in particular on the use of the Alliance constructively in the interest of détente.*” The Report stressed that “*Military security and a policy of détente are not contradictory but complementary.*” (NATO, 1967: para. 5). Although, the Report acknowledged that “*As sovereign states the Allies are not obliged to subordinate their policies to collective decision.*”, it underlined that “*The chances of success will clearly be greatest if the Allies remain on parallel courses*” (NATO, 1967: para. 7). In addition to the military aspect of the Alliance, the Harmel Report gave NATO explicit responsibilities in determining a joint policy of détente and provided a political framework for that process (Haftendorn, 2008: 109).

2.2 The Two Poles of Détente after the Harmel Report: Brandt’s Ostpolitik and Nixon’s Détente

The Harmel exercise laid the ground for substantial developments in the East-West relationship in the late 60s and the early 70s. But the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, served as a reminder of the importance of the Atlantic framework as a provider of security and political cohesion. Reacting to the invasion, NATO strengthened their military defence in Central Europe and put détente on ice. Although, not for very long. Shortly after the crisis, the West continued their dual-track approach to the East (Bischof, 2011: 74-75). There were, however, considerable differences between the European and the American practise and vision of détente.

2.2.1 Brandt’s Ostpolitik

For the Federal Republic, the adaption of the dual strategy of deterrence and détente suggested the possibility for change. The Harmel Approach offered a more realistic strategy towards German reunification as a part of the long-term goal, rather than as an immediate possibility. The French détente started earlier than the West German policy of détente. Albeit being more visionary, the French détente was eventually surpassed by the German one, because the FRG had more to offer the Eastern bloc. The prospect of recognition of boundaries and the legitimacy of East Germany offered increased security, and West German credits, technology and consumer goods offered the East more prosperity (Wall, 2008: 147).

After the first agreements on détente was signed with Moscow in 1970, Brezhnev and

Brandt reached a series of aid and trade agreements that gave the Soviet Union billions of deutsche marks in credits. Trade between the FRG and the Soviet Union quadrupled between 1969 and 1975. Exports of heavy machinery, together with sophisticated technology, was an especially important aspect of West German trade with the Soviet Union. West German technology was crucial for the Soviet exploitation of its natural resources and helped to modernize the Soviet economy and infrastructure. Trade and credits for the Soviet Union became a lasting part of the FRG policy of *détente* in the following years (Smyser, 2003: 180). Brandt had a liberalistic view on the value of trade, in easing East-West tensions. Supplementary to the economic benefits, Brandt saw trade as a way to increase trust and interaction between the two parties and to alter the threat perception, both domestically and abroad. In Brandt's reasoning, trade had a penetrating effect in that it would ultimately undermine the Soviet system and cause positive change in the Eastern bloc (Lippert, 2005: 245).

The abandonment of the Hallstein-doctrine and new negotiation with East-Berlin, Moscow, Warsaw and Prague, helped to relax tensions between NATO and the Soviet bloc. The German-Polish and the German-Soviet non-aggression treaties paved the way for the process that led to the Helsinki talks and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, later OSCE) (Wall, 2008: 147). As observed by Helga Haftendorn, the Harmel Report served as a means for the FRG to gain support and trust from the rest of its allies in the pursuit for *Ostpolitik* (2008: 110-111). Still, the framework of consultation, derived from the Harmel Report, did not succeed in fully abating American, British and French scepticism of the consequences of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*. They feared that the Soviet Union was applying a selective *détente* towards the Western countries to dissolve Western unity and to detach Germany from NATO. Still, the Nixon administration understood that it could not block the FRG's *Ostpolitik* without jeopardising the crucial relationship between Washington and Bonn. Through continuous reassurance, Brandt managed to calm their allies sufficiently to continue his policy of *détente* towards the east (Niedhart, 2008: 126-127).

One of the areas where the difference between the German and American perception of *détente* manifested itself, was in Nixon and Brandt's attitude towards the European Security Conference (CSCE). Nixon didn't see the conference as necessary, but for Brandt it was an essential part of *détente*. The CSCE offered Brandt an opportunity to diminish the fear of German revanchism, a crucial obstruction to German reunification (Lippert, 2005: 183).

The German enthusiasm for radical change at the CSCE was, however, not shared by the Soviet counterparts.

“As Brandt envisioned it, the establishment of an effective European security system would allow for an eventual German reunification. Within a European framework of peace and stability, Germany’s reunification would no longer be perceived as a threat. While this was probably acceptable to Germany’s European neighbours, it contradicted Soviet interests. A complete disarmament of Europe would seriously undermine their control over Eastern Europe and increase the influence Germany already exercised economically.” (Lippert, 2005: 197).

To avoid the undermining of the Soviet system, Brezhnev tried to block any German efforts to link political and military détente with economic policy. By the end of 1973, Soviet-German trade stagnated. The marketability of Soviet imports remained low and an increasing Soviet trade deficit meant that German sales to the Soviet Union had to rely on the issuing of credit, causing investors to be wary. The Soviets refused to modify their plan-economy in such a way that made increased cooperation between Soviet and German companies possible. These problems threatened to cause West German disillusionment with the Soviet-German economic cooperation. Through considerable political bargaining, however, the Soviet Union and the FRG managed to reach an agreement on extensive cooperation on the Kursk steel mill project in 1974, which helped to revitalise economic ties between the two countries (Lippert, 2005: 206).

2.2.2 The Nixon Doctrine: The Rise and Fall of Superpower Détente

In contrast to the West German and French efforts of détente, the American version of détente was more static and spheres-of-influence orientated. This was especially evident in the case of Nixon and Henry Kissinger’s version of détente, which was based upon the continuation of spheres of influence established at Yalta. This version of détente was not popular among America’s European allies. Instead of consulting the other allies within the political framework of NATO, Secretary of State and National Security Advisor Kissinger and President Nixon engaged the Soviet Union and China directly in bi-lateral talks. The Nixon-doctrine stepped outside of the framework of consultations and broke with the conduct proposed by the Harmel Report. This fuelled European fears of marginalisation in a Soviet-American grand bargain (Rynning, 2017: 274). For the American administration, détente was a way to keep peace with the Soviets, not a way to overcome or transcend the status quo. On

the contrary, Henry Kissinger's détente was meant to stabilize the status quo in order to enable the Americans to concentrate their efforts on more pressing issues, like the war in Vietnam (Wall, 2008: 134). This was confirmed at the meeting between Nixon and Brezhnev in Moscow May 1972, where Nixon recognized the Soviet Union as an equal, improving the Soviet feeling of being respected, and implicitly accepted Soviet control of Eastern Europe (Lippert, 2005: 177). The Nixon-doctrine led to an era referred to as superpower-détente, although it proved to be short lived, it accomplished to gain some progress at the Moscow Summit of 1972, where the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) were signed (Litwak, 1984: 193). The ABM Treaty was an effort to secure a strategic military balance, in that it ensured that both sides had the ability to deter each other. Together with the SALT agreement, it was a statement that the US recognized the USSR's strategic parity. In an effort to develop a common understanding of acceptable competition and code of conduct, the US and the USSR signed the Basic Principles Agreement in 1972 and another crisis management agreement, the agreement on Prevention of Nuclear War, in 1973 (Stein, 1991b: 438). The agreements entailed that the superpowers were supposed to work together to avoid situations that could trigger military confrontation (Copeland, 1999: 33).

There were several key factors that helped to lay a foundation on which the US administration could build their diplomatic strategy of détente. Seyom Brown (1977: 4-5) identified these factors to be: the stabilization of the European status quo, expansion of East-West trade, limitation of the power of China, reduced competition for Third World patrons, arms control, and negotiations over the conflicts in Vietnam and the Middle East. The listed factors led to what Nye and Keohane (1977: 24-29) have called *complex interdependence* between the Soviet Union and the US. Because of the number of salient issues of mutual interest for both sides, the interdependence between them grew. The different issue areas were weighted differently by each side, but they laid out a foundation for a common ground between East and West that hadn't been so strongly present since the start of the Cold War. Trade between the Americans and the Soviets was, nevertheless, limited during the Cold War. Due to a bad harvest, however, the Soviet Union was forced to make large grain purchases from the US in 1972. The purchases led to a quadrupling of trade between the US and the Soviet Union. The commercial benefits for the US were limited, but the trade presented the US with the opportunity to press for concessions on other issues through linkage diplomacy. The US used trade to facilitate other agreements, more import to them. The growth in trade

coincided with the SALT I agreement and Soviet participation in the Middle East and Vietnam negotiations. The Nixon administration usage of linkage diplomacy has been credited for the increased cooperation and ease of tensions between the USSR and the US in the early 1970s. (Gasiorowski and Polachek, 1982: 713). Kissinger saw trade as a vital tool of détente. In what may be seen as an effort to copy Brandt's usage of trade as a part of the Ostpolitik, Kissinger advocated the need for more trade between the US and the Soviet Union after the success of the Moscow Summit of 1972. He told Congress that "*over time trade and investment may leaven the autarkic tendencies of the Soviet system, invite gradual association of the Soviet economy with the world economy and foster a degree of interdependence that adds an element of stability to the political equation*" (Schwartz, 2008: 518). Due to domestic opposition, Kissinger never gained the support domestically to increase trade with the Soviet Union. With little to no growth in other sectors of trade, the trade in grain didn't provide any consistency in the ties between the US and the Soviet Union. The grain shortage didn't last and the amount of trade did not grow to those large quantities that the Carter administration's grain embargo on the Eastern bloc, caused by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, had the desired effect on the behaviour of the Soviet Union (Gasiorowski and Polachek, 1982: 713).

The Nixon-Kissinger administration was the most prominent American supporter of détente as a political tool in dealing with the Soviets, but the American détente eventually dissolved with the increasing ideological critique of Kissinger's détente and foreign policy. Kissinger was a realist and an opponent of what he called "*moralistic foreign policy*" (Allen, 2015: 185). In the presidential election of 1975, the Ford-Kissinger administration lost power to the Democrat Jimmy Carter, who criticised the administration for the moral compromises of détente (Schwartz, 2008: 522). The détente relationship between the US and USSR deteriorated because of a number of reasons. Raymond Garthoff (1982) analysed why détente failed. One reason, was that both parties had a different understanding of what détente was. The Americans saw it as a way of managing the emergence of Soviet nuclear power. The Soviets, on the other side, saw détente as a way to manage the relative decline of US superiority, given that both sides now controlled roughly the same nuclear power. Furthermore, both Washington and Moscow failed to endorse a "*policy of détente involving reciprocal restraint and consultation*" (Garthoff, 1982: 2). The two sides also failed to agree upon a common code of conduct, which increased the distrust between the parties. The formal agreements of 1972 and 1973 on crisis management and competition rules had substantial shortcomings, which lead to a disagreement on interpretation and consequently provoked

charges of cheating and defection. Instead of contributing to increased trust, the formal agreements lead to increased anger and misgivings (Stein, 1991b: 438). More importantly, détente failed because of the American failure to deliver on its promises to the Soviet Union. Both in the case of the SALT I and II agreements and on extensive trade agreements, internal American political processes prevented the US administration delivering upon their commitments. The US adaption of the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the Trade Act of 1974, concerning immigration of Soviet Jews, hindered important trade agreements on natural gas and infuriated the Soviet leadership, causing a disillusionment of the Soviet commitment to détente (Garthoff, 1982: 3) (Gasiorowski and Polachek, 1982: 713). Kissinger had long tried to sell the policy of détente to the domestic audience, without any luck. The public didn't understand the meaning of détente, and it soon became a subject for criticism. Many also believed that the balance of benefits from détente, disproportionately favoured the Soviet Union (Allen, 2015: 211). Constrained by domestic public attitude and misperception of the each other's intentions, the Soviet and American leadership didn't manage to agree upon a common understanding and agreement of nuclear parity (Garthoff, 1982: 5).

2.3 Concluding Remarks

The Harmel Report was written at a time of considerable political divisions within NATO. Reflecting the political disagreements, the Report became a product of the lowest common denominator. Still, the Harmel report proved to be a valuable tool for the Alliance. The implementation of the Harmel Report, was preceded by the implementation of the doctrine of flexible response. The flexible response doctrine and the increased sharing of nuclear planning increased the sense of security and confidence within the Alliance. This was a contributing factor in facilitating the agreement on the Harmel Report, as observed by Haftendorn. This is an important observation, because it suggests that the member states of the Alliance need to be confident in the deterrence effect of the Alliance, before they agree to embark on engagement and détente with the Eastern Bloc. While the doctrine itself might be outdated, this observation might prove useful in the current political debate of the Alliance. The consensus reached, on the flexible response, secured the first goal of the Harmel report, *“to maintain adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression and other forms of pressure and to defend the territory of member countries”*. The political solidarity of the Alliance, was further enhanced by the increased consultation and cooperation on issues of

foreign policy and détente. The pursuit of the second objective, namely détente, was however more diverse. The two most prominent proponents of détente, the FRG and the US, pursued détente with different goals and different practises.

The ultimate goal of the West German state, was a peaceful German reunification. Détente was the means to overcome the obstacles for German reunification. With the security provided by NATO, Germany had the opportunity to engage the Soviet Union without having to give in to Soviet pressure and threats. An important aspect of Brandt's détente was to lower the threat perception of the Eastern Bloc. One of the most central obstacles to German reunification, was the wide held perception of Germany as an inherently aggressive actor. In order to reassure the East of the FRG's peaceful intents, the West German administration increased its diplomatic contact with the Eastern bloc, signed non-aggression treaties and participated in the Helsinki talks. At the same time, Brandt also pursued a policy of Westpolitik to ensure his Western allies that his Ostpolitik didn't go too far. The consultative framework, set up in the Harmel Report, helped Brandt to assure the rest of the Alliance that Ostpolitik didn't come at odds with continued German membership in NATO.

While the German administration saw détente and Ostpolitik as a way to alter the status quo and to tear down the division of Europe, the Nixon administration saw détente as way to stabilise status quo in Europe and to preserve the continuation of the spheres of influence, established at Yalta. To the Americans, there were more pressing issues outside the European theatre. Nixon needed a stable Europe, to be able to focus on crisis in the Middle East and the war in Vietnam. The American efforts of détente proved to be shorter lived, than the German effort. The most outstanding achievements of the superpower détente, was the Soviet-American agreements on arms control, like the SALT and ABM treaties. The agreements helped to curve the arms race and provided more stability. But, the efforts to agree on a common code of conduct and crisis management, to limit competition and to build trust, didn't achieve the desired effects.

Another issue of détente, where the US and the FRG differed, was on the use of trade in facilitating détente. Researchers, like Lippert (2005), Smyser (2003), Copeland (1999), Gasiorowski and Polachek (1982), emphasised the importance of trade to the accomplishment of East-West détente, in the 1970s. Hence, increased trade would cause increased interdependence between the states involved, which in turn would encourage the parties to avoid confrontations that could damage the trade. As pointed out in the analysis of Dale Copeland, the prospects of increased trade were especially important in inducing the Soviet

leadership to make concessions on other fields of détente (1999). Given the importance of trade in fostering closer relationships between states, it is interesting to observe the different attitudes of the US and the FRG to the use of trade in facilitating détente. Brandt's government saw economic interaction and exchange of technology as a mean to achieve a positive outcome, as the trade and the people-to-people interaction might ultimately cause positive change in the direction of increased freedom and democracy in the Eastern bloc. Kissinger seemed to share some Brandt's ideas of the value of trade in détente, but Nixon and other conservative powers in the US, on the other hand, harboured more scepticism towards conducting trade with the Soviet Union, portraying economic interaction with an enemy state as dangerous. Contrasting the German approach, the Americans used trade more actively as a leverage in its linkage diplomacy. To Nixon, the German Osthandel went too far, and he feared that increased trade with the Communists would strengthen the Soviet power base (Lippert, 2005: 242). Trade with the Communist East remained much more important to the West German economy than to that of the United States. The US export to the Soviet Union consisted only of 2.2% of the total US export from 1972 to 1977 (Gasiorowski and Polachek, 1982: 712). Because US exports to the Soviet Union remained such a small part of the total exports of the US, there was never any substantial domestic pressure in the US to preserve economic ties with the Soviet Union. The FRG, on the other hand, was more dependent on East-West economic cooperation. German exports of heavy machinery and technology provided jobs and industrial growth, and the import of Soviet gas and oil was important, especially during the Yom-Kippur war and the Arab oil-embargo in 1973. At the same time trade with the FRG, and Western Europe in general, was of significant value to the Soviet economy.

The increased cooperation and communication with the East helped to reduce the threat perception of the Communist states in the political establishment and the West German public. The same change in perception didn't occur to the in the US. Trade between West Germany and the Soviet Union opened the gate for Ostpolitik. While the West German population increasingly viewed the Soviet Union in more favourable light, the conservative threat perception of the Soviet Union in the US blocked further concessions on détente. The Harmel Report was followed, in that it added détente to an already existing strong deterrence. The dual-track approach proved to be a successful compromise, because it allowed individual allies to emphasise the aspect they were most comfortable with. The Harmel Report preserved the cohesion of the Alliance, but it's evident that the allies lacked a common understanding

about détente. It was roughly two types of détente that were pursued by the allies. Nixon's détente aimed at stabilising the status quo and reaching a mutual acceptable strategic stability, and to avoid unnecessary risks and unintentional escalation. Brandt's détente, to the contrary, aimed at transcending the status quo, to foster a less adversarial relationship and to overcome the political issues that created the division of Europe. The increasing dissatisfaction of the American electorate with Nixon's policy of détente, tells a lesson that domestic opinion is important and that a strong threat perception domestically might hinder further progress on détente. Brandt's emphasis on trade and citizen-to-citizen helped to minimise the domestic enemy perception of the Soviet Union and ensured domestic support for détente. The cases where détente succeeded emphasised that the West needed something substantial to offer, in order to show that there was more to be gained by diplomacy than military force.

In short, the Harmel approach was firstly, to maintain adequate military defences and political cohesion to deter aggression and pressure. Secondly, the Alliance should pursue détente, preferably in a collective effort, to ease tensions and to overcome the division of Europe. The fact that the report became a very general document, ensured the flexibility and robustness of the Harmel approach throughout a changing international context. The report also served as platform of political cohesion within the alliance, and gave the Alliance a new *raison-d'être* with the long-term goal of overcoming the Cold War division. The Harmel approach of defence first, détente second became a lasting contribution to strategic thinking of NATO. A contribution that is still echoed today. Although the final report became a very general document, reflecting that it was a product of the lowest common denominator on which the member states could agree to, the report had a lasting contribution in that it defined the dual-track approach of the Alliance (Haftendorn, 2008: 109).

3 Research-Framework

Deterrence and *détente* are two concepts that are both vague and hard to measure. To conduct an examination of NATO's application of the two concepts, there is a need to apply a theoretical framework of deterrence and *détente*. In the following chapter, I will conceptualize both terms with the help of well acknowledged theories. By applying these theories in my empirical research, I hope to be able to examine if and to what extent NATO is conducting deterrence and *détente*.

Deterrence is a concept, already heavily theorised. I'm going to use existing deterrence theories to develop a consistent understanding of the term. *Détente*, however, is not theorized to the same extent as deterrence. In order to properly conceptualise how I understand *détente*, I'm going to use a mix of previously developed theories, coupled with experience drawn from the attempts to conduct *détente* during the Cold War. In this regard, my findings from the background chapter, will be useful.

3.1 Conceptualising Deterrence

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 'deterrence' is: "*the action of discouraging an action or event through instilling doubt or fear of the consequences*". This is a dynamic that plays a role in our everyday life, from law-making and policing to parents' effort to raise a child. For the purpose of this text, I will look into what is called strategic deterrence. Deterrence at a strategic level involves states as the main actors. In other words, state X's actions are used to discourage a specific action of state Y, by increasing the perceived cost for Y to initiate that specific action. The threat of consequences issued by state X may be explicit or implicit, and the nature of the threat will differ according to the context.

Deterrence strategy focuses on the appliance of theory to the management of international conflict. It is therefore crucial to understand the theories of deterrence when discussing the current adversarial relationship between Russia and NATO. A wide range of deterrence theories were produced during the Cold War. In the book *The Meaning of Deterrence*, Lawrence Freedman maps out four important distinctions to be made within strategic deterrence: narrow and broad, extended and central, denial and punishment, immediate and general (2008: 32).

Narrow deterrence entails the deterrence of a particular kind of warfare. This is

exemplified by the ban to use chemical weapons in war. A recent example is Obama's 'Red Line' in the war in Syria. In 2012 Obama tried to deter the Syrian regime not to use chemical weapons in the civil war, threatening that such an action would lead to "*enormous consequences*" (Obama, 2012.08.20). *Broad* deterrence entails deterring all war (Freedman, 2008: 32). An apparent example is the League of Nations (LN) failed attempt to deter a new war after the First World War. The LN issued a declaration called 'Collective Security' which was based upon the principle that if one state attacked another state, all of the member states in the LN would bring about a response against the aggressor. This meant that the aggressive party would face the combined power of all the member states in retaliation.

Central deterrence is the actions of a state to deter an attack on its own sovereign territory. *Extended* deterrence is the actions of a state to deter an attack on another state, typically an ally (Freedman, 2008: 34-35). The distinction between central and extended deterrence is exemplified by the role of the US in NATO. According to article 5 in the Washington Treaty, an attack on one member would be considered an attack at all members of the alliance. As the most powerful member of the alliance, the extended deterrence of the US arsenal is especially important to its allies. While, the US will retaliate in order to defend its own territory is here classified as central deterrence.

In 1958 Glenn Snyder explained the distinction between deterrence by *denial* and deterrence by *punishment* in the book *Deterrence by Denial and Punishment*. Snyder stresses that there is no clear-cut distinction between denial and punishment, but that the difference lies in the dominant function of the two. To explain deterrence by punishment, Snyder argues that: "*the primary function of strategic air-nuclear power is to reduce the enemy's will either to start a war or continue once started, by posing the prospect of unacceptable costs*". Deterrence by denial is explained by the "*dominant utility of surface forces...*" which is "*... their capacity to deny the enemy his territorial objective*" (Snyder, 1958: 1). Both elements raise the cost of aggressive military action, but deterrence by punishment poses a significantly higher cost because of the existence of nuclear weapons. By contrast to punishment, deterrence by denial offers the defending part a chance to control the situation, deny victory on the battlefield and control the escalation once deterrence has failed. When a state has to implement the threat of punishment, there would be a situation of continued coercion where it is left to the adversary to decide when to stop the conflict (Freedman, 2008: 37).

The fourth and last distinction made by Freedman is between *immediate* and *general* deterrence. The typology is credited to Patrick Morgan. He describes immediate deterrence as

a scenario where a state mounts a threat of retaliation to prevent aggression when an opposing state seriously considers launching an attack. On the other hand, general deterrence is a scenario where opposing states maintain military forces to regulate their relationship even though neither is anywhere close to launching an offensive (Freedman, 2008: 40).

3.1.1 The Nature of Conventional Deterrence and the Element of Credibility

The element of credibility is of pivotal importance to the functioning of deterrence. In order for the military capabilities to deter an adversary, the adversary needs to be convinced that the threat of force is credible. Deterrence credibility is built up by two components, the adversary's assessment of a nation's military capability and political resolve. In a NATO context, this includes that the political willingness and ability to use military force and act upon an Article 5 situation is credible enough to deter an adversary from attacking. This element of political will is also emphasised in the Harmel Report:

“From the beginning the Atlantic Alliance has been a co-operative grouping of states sharing the same ideals and with a high degree of common interest. Their cohesion and solidarity provide an element of stability within the Atlantic area.” (Harmel, 1967: para. 6)

Because of the undisputed devastating destructive effect of nuclear weapons, most of the Cold War discussion of nuclear deterrence focused on the matter of political resolve. Discussion about conventional deterrence has, on the other hand, been more focused on the capability component. This fact is observed by Richard Harknett:

“In a conventional environment, the issue of credibility is dominated by suspicions about the capability to inflict costs rather than on the decision to inflict costs ... In the end, a state evaluating a conventional deterrent can assume that the deterrer will retaliate. The pertinent question is how costly that response will be.” (Harknett, 1994: 89)

In a NATO context, however, the one-sided focus on capability is misguided when discussing conventional deterrence. The power of the Alliance relies on the aggravated military power that the entire Alliance can muster in times of crisis. When addressing the conventional deterrence of NATO, an adversary's perception of the political resolve of the member states is therefore just as important as NATO's military capabilities.

Conventional deterrence is not theorized to the same level as nuclear deterrence. This

is largely due to the fact that most of the deterrence literature was written during the Cold War, a time when nuclear weapons were a pivotal part of international relations and the balance of power. Because of the increased Russian ability and willingness to use conventional military force as a tool of its foreign policy, there is a need to understand how conventional deterrence works. For reasons discussed later in this text, nuclear deterrence suffers from some substantial shortcomings in deterring limited conventional warfare.

There are, however, three interrelated aspects of conventional deterrence that can be extracted from the existing literature. First, leaders who consider conducting conventional aggression would typically seek short and cheap victories. Prolonged wars are generally expensive and unpredictable. Leaders would avoid being caught in bloody and expensive wars, which may undermine their legitimacy and create political instability (Mearsheimer, 1985: 24, 30). Second, following the logic that an adversary would avoid protracted and costly wars, deterrence by denial is often the best strategy (Rhodes, 243-247). Hence, denying the potential adversary a quick and cheap victory is likely to obtain a deterrent effect (Rhodes, 2000: 222-223) (Solomon, 2013: 118) (Mearsheimer, 1985: 64, 206-208). Third, while deterrence by denial is the most common in conventional war, conventional deterrence by punishment may also serve as a useful addition to the deterrence toolkit (Harknett, 1994) (Freedman, 2008: 38). Modern precision strike capabilities may be utilised by the deterrer to inflict unacceptable costs to the adversary (Solomon, 2013: 117).

3.2 Conceptualising Détente

Deterrence is a complex strategy, with many obstacles to success. In an unstable strategic environment, an attempt to reinforce strategic deterrence by the use of threats or show of military force may decrease stability and provoke the very action it seeks to prevent. Deterrence is a defensive strategy, directed at preserving the status quo. The status quo power would seek protection by requiring armies and arms to defend itself from potential rivals. Problematically, arms and armies designed to defend, may also be used in offensive actions. Defensive measures may, therefore, be interpreted as signs of hostile intentions by neighbouring states and thus create instability. *“What one state regards as insurance, the adversary will see as encirclement. This is especially true of the great powers”* (Jervis, 1976: 64). The British Prime Minister in the interwar period, Ramsay MacDonald, summed up the dilemma when he told the Japanese ambassador that *“Japan would have to be very careful*

that in seeking her own security she did not upset the sense of security of other nations” (Jervis, 1976: 66). The dilemma is reflected in the concept of the *spiral model*. In short, the spiral model describes how defensive, well-intentioned states, seeking to increase their own security, may unintentionally be caught up in arms races and even war because of mutual distrust of the other’s intentions. This is commonly referred to as the security dilemma. Contrasting deterrence theory, the spiral model focus on each sides’ quest for security entails that *“an increase in the adversary’s military strength may lead, not to greater assertiveness, but to a more conciliatory stance.”* (Jervis, 1976: 80). Secondly, the spiral theory predicts that *“threats and negative sanctions, far from leading to the beneficial results predicted by deterrence theory, are often self-defeating as a costly and unstable cycle is set in motion.”* (Jervis, 1976: 81). Whereas a deterrer would worry that an adversary could underestimate its ability and resolve to defend itself, spiral theorists are concerned that each side overestimates the hostile intentions of the other. In line with the reasoning of Robert Jervis, deterrence is an appropriate strategy for tackling expansionist and opportunistic states, while it is the wrong strategy and likely to trigger an escalatory spiral when dealing with states motivated by insecurity (1976: 58-113). Détente and dialogue may be understood as a means to avoid these undesirable side-effects of deterrence.

While deterrence seeks to halt any aggressive action of an opportunistic adversary, détente seeks to address the adversary’s needs and weaknesses, and to assure an adversary of its own defensive intentions. In general terms, détente may be understood simply as the lowering of tensions and a relaxation of hostilities between two opponents. In the Harmel Report, détente is an approach designed to enhance deterrence, prevent instability and overcome tensions. According to the Harmel Report, détente is not a goal in itself, but a tool to solve *“underlying political issues”*. The combination of deterrence and détente is supposed *“to achieve a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe accompanied by appropriate security guarantees”* (NATO, 1967: para. 9). Détente aims at improving stability, predictability and responsiveness to avoid war. This is achieved through routine diplomacy, verbal de-escalation, legal and political agreements. Furthermore, détente also implies a possibility for a transformation into partnership.

As described in the background chapter on the Harmel Report, détente was understood very differently by the different powers in the Cold War. It’s therefore hard to produce an exact definition of the term. In 1971, Secretary George W. Ball ironically summed up his perception of détente: *“Détente - a French word we employ to conceal the fact that we have*

only the vaguest idea of what we are trying to say.” (Lippert, 2005: 171). Indeed, détente may be diffuse and confusing, and it’s not analysed and theorized to the same extent as deterrence. There are, however, some scholars that have written upon the subject. Robert Jervis, Janice Gross Stein and Ned Lebow are among the most influential. Writing within the realist tradition, focusing on the structural problem of the security dilemma, Jervis focuses on the military component of reassurance strategies, recommending a defensive rather than an offensive military capability (Jervis, 1978). Stein and Lebow take a broader perspective, when they take into consideration the impacts of psychology and domestic politics (Stein: 1991a) (Stein: 1991b) (Lebow: 2001). These writers did not conceptualize it as détente, but as *reassurance*. “*Reassurance strategies*” Stein describes “*are conceived broadly as a set of strategies that adversaries can use to reduce the likelihood of resort to threat or use of violence*” (1991a: 31) (Lebow: 2001). This term is different and must not be conflated with how the term *reassurance* and *assurance* has been used in the NATO-debate in recent years. In the context of the Wales Summit and the Warsaw Summit, reassurance is understood as the assurance measures aimed at the population of the eastern Allies, nervous of Russian aggression. Reassurance as Stein describes it, is aimed at the adversary. It’s described as a way to regulate a conflict by developing norms of competition to reduce the risk of miscalculated war. A party may also put restraint on its political and military action, in order not to provoke the other party. In accordance to how détente is described, Stein points out that reassurance can be used to complement deterrence. Furthermore, reassurance may be used in a diplomatic strategy to “*establish informal or formal regimes designed specifically to build confidence*” and “*reduce uncertainty*”. Finally, reassurance may be used as a way to reduce tensions through “*strategies like ‘tit-for-tat’ and gradual reciprocation in tension-reduction*” (Stein, 1991a: 32). The reciprocal strategies may serve to demonstrate an alternative to the use of force, showing that there is more to be gained through diplomacy than military means. The way Stein describes reassurance, corresponds with the way détente is described and what goals the Harmel report sets détente to achieve. But, the concept of détente also transcends Stein’s concept of reassurance, in that it seeks to solve the underlying political issues. Détente is not to be understood as a single entity, but rather as an approach consisting of different policies and strategies to reduce and, eventually, overcome tensions.

For détente to work, there needs to exist a set of common interest between the parties, where cooperation would be beneficial to both parties. In other words, détente needs a specific context to work effectively. According to rational choice theory, issues of potential

mutual gain, like trade, may present an incentive to ease tensions in order to secure the gains. As demonstrated in the background chapter, was the era of détente was coupled with a time of increased interdependence between the Eastern and the Western blocks. During the Cold War, the most obvious common interest between the East and the West was the common interest of avoiding nuclear war, which is mirrored in the first SALT agreement. Efforts could also be taken to increase the interdependence between the states. An apparent example is how the FRG used trade in heavy machinery and technology to increase the interconnection of the welfare of both states. The Soviet Union was dependent on Western credit, technology and machinery to exploit its natural resources. This made the USSR vulnerable to changes in the trade policy, because the assets it needed could not be easily obtained elsewhere.

In the case of trade during the Cold War, between the West and the East, there was a considerable asymmetry of interest in maintaining the trading relationship. Trade with the West, was much more important to the USSR, than what trade with the East, was to the FRG or the US. Because the Soviet Union needed Western technology and machinery to exploit its natural resources, the Soviets had reasons to expect relatively larger potential gains by committing to trade, than what the West had reasons to expect. The asymmetric trading relationship between the West and the East, made it possible for the Western allies, through linkage diplomacy, to press the Soviet Union for concessions on its foreign policy. Following the logic of Copeland's (1999) analysis, it is important to stress that the expectations of future trade value are just as important, or even more important, than the current value of trade. If a state expects a substantial increase in future trade, it would be less likely to conduct aggressive actions that could endanger the future benefits of trade.

To sum up, détente may be understood as multi-layered approach in need of a specific context to achieve positive results. For the purpose of this analysis, I'm going to divide the strategy into two categories of détente, based on the purpose of the strategy. The first category aims at achieving a "more stable relationship", as it was described in the Harmel Report. This may include short-term strategies aimed at reducing the chance of miscalculated and unintended war and the escalation of hostilities. It may be understood as a way to manage the risks of deterrence, where the deterrer should seek to avoid provoking the very action it seeks to prevent. This may be achieved through exercising rhetorical, political and military restraint to avoid aggravating the pressures and constraints that operate on the adversary to use force. Détente may also be used to reduce uncertainty and avoid miscalculations, by developing informal shared norms of competition and rules of conduct to regulate the conflict. This part

of the détente may also employ medium to long-term policies, like establishing institutionalised forums of dialogue, arms control, formal security regimes and treaties, to reduce uncertainty, build confidence, secure strategic stability and to alter misconceptions and false stereotypes. The second category of détente is more ambitious than the other strategies, in that it seeks to overcome the “underlying political issues” of the conflict. It’s an effort to show the adversary that there is more to be gained through diplomacy, than force. This may be achieved by offering increased prospects of trade, to change the cost calculations of the adversary and make a stable relationship more attractive. Trade may also serve to build more trust between the parties, by regular interaction and increased cooperation. If the adversarial relationship is largely issue driven, détente should include an attempt to solve the dividing issues of conflicts, in order to obtain a more sustainable situation and overcome the reasons for hostilities. This type of détente holds the prospect of a potential transformation into a partnership.

4 NATO's Deterrence

Deterrence is a tool used for different purposes, aimed at different audiences. When policy makers decide to boost deterrent measures, the main audience that the policy makers are signalling to, may not always be that of the potential adversary. It might instead be intended to calm a domestic audience or an ally. However, deterrence is aimed at changing the cost calculus of a potential adversary when considering certain actions. Hence, deterrence measures that are implemented for the sake of reassuring a domestic audience or an ally does not fit with the definition of deterrence. Instead, such measures may be defined as *assurance*. The distinction between deterrence and assurance is here understood as the intent and the effect of the policy. An implemented defence policy may reassure a domestic audience, but have little or no effect in deterring a potential adversary. There is, however, an ambiguity between deterrence and assurance measures, because deterrence measures may work as assurance. Assurance measures, by contrast, may not work as deterrence. Either it is solely assurance, or it is deterrence with an additional assurance effect.

The distinction between these two definitions are important to keep in mind when discussing the deterrent effect of NATO's defence policy. The enhancement of military capabilities may mistakenly be interpreted as deterrence measures, when in reality it only serves as assurance and vice versa. Detecting the intention behind a policy is a challenge, but the effect is somewhat easier to detect and measure. In the cases where NATO is conducting deterrence, I expect to find a war fighting capability able to significantly alter the cost calculations of a protentional aggressor. In this section, I intend to analyse NATO's military response to the war in Ukraine and the call for a stronger territorial defence. By utilising well-renowned theories of deterrence, I hope to conclude whether the military measures taken mainly serve the purpose of deterrence or assurance for its allies.

4.1 A Return to General Deterrence?

General deterrence is a term that could be used to describe most of the cold war relationship between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Both parties tried to manage their relationship in a way that made an armed attack unattractive to the other. The two parties maintained huge conventional and nuclear capabilities, even when neither was close to mounting an attack (Freedman, 2008: 41). After the end of the Cold War, Russia was no longer considered a

threat to the alliance. Its economy, army and political system quickly deteriorated after the fall of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. NATO and Russia increased cooperation, and friendly ties were bound between the former adversaries. General deterrence aimed at Russia was largely considered unnecessary and NATO force structures were reduced and retrained for a new reality. In the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, NATO mainly focused on 'out of area operations'. As underlined in The Alliance's Strategic Concept of 1999, the Alliance saw crisis management as one of the core tasks for the Alliance in the 21st century. When listing possible security challenges and risks, the Strategic Concept pointed to "...positive developments in the strategic environment and the fact that large-scale conventional aggression against the Alliance is highly unlikely," (NATO, 1999: para. 20).

The Russian-Georgian war of 2008 put some constraints on the relationship between NATO and Russia (Bowker, 2011: 208). Nonetheless, was Moscow still considered a key partner to the Alliance. In the Lisbon Summit of 2010, NATO adopted the Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The New Strategic Concept (NSC) emphasised the importance of NATO-Russian cooperation in creating peace, stability and security. It further stated that NATO posed no threat to Russia (NATO, 2010: 29-30). In an effort to respond to concerns of the Central and Eastern European states (CEE), prompted by the Russian-Georgian war, NATO implemented a strategy of *visible assurance* in the NSC (NATO, 2010: 15). The assurance consisted of a minor increase in presence of NATO forces, improvement of military infrastructure and some military exercises.

Although, collective defence and Article 5 of the Washington Treaty remained underlined as the *raison d'être* for the Alliance throughout the time after the Cold War, its importance wasn't revitalized before the NATO summit in Wales 2014. After the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine, the Wales Summit Declaration directly linked the "...challenges posed by Russia..." with the need to strengthen NATO's collective defence (NATO, 2014: para. 5). The heads of states in the Alliance approved the NATO Readiness Action Plan to respond to the new security challenges. The Plan included measures to assure the Eastern Allies with air, land and maritime presence on a rotational basis. This would "...provide the fundamental baseline requirement for assurance and deterrence," according to the Declaration (NATO, 2014: para. 7). The Plan also included adaption measures to enhance the responsiveness of the NATO Response Force (NRF) and the overall ability to quickly reinforce Allies. In order to boost responsiveness, there was also an agreement to

improve “... *intelligence and strategic awareness and ... place renewed emphasis on advance planning.*” (NATO, 2014: para. 9). There was also some emphasis on addressing hybrid war threats and on reversing the trend of shrinking defence budgets across the Alliance. The decision to increase the defence budgets among European allies signalled a return to the general deterrence strategy. Increased spending in defence budgets and on new military equipment and innovations, represents a long-term investment which would not result in significant immediate gains. Rather, it improves the Alliance’s ability to manage the relationship to new adversaries in the long run, reflecting the general deterrence of NATO in the Cold War.

As warned by Freedman, general deterrence risks breaking down when the international order looks illegitimate in the eyes of rising powers (2008: 41). As pointed out by several researchers, there are strong signs that the Russian public and President Putin do consider the current ‘Western’ international order as illegitimate (Bowker, 2011: 205-206) (Kramer, 2010) (Mattox, 2011) (Tsygankov, 2015). The Russian annexation of Crimea and willingness to escalate the situation in eastern Ukraine, created a sense of security crisis in NATO, especially among its eastern members. The functioning of general deterrence depends on convincing the potential adversary that it cannot expect to successfully resolve its disputes with another state or group of states by military means (Freedman, 2008: 42). CEE allies have voiced concerns, doubting that NATO’s deterrence is sufficient in persuading Russia that it cannot successfully alter the status quo in the region by military means. Already in 2009, former heads of states and ministers from Eastern and Central Europe sent an open letter to the Obama Administration, where they called for “*contingency planning, prepositioning of forces, equipment, and supplies for reinforcement in our region in case of crisis*” (Adamkus et al., 2009). After the annexation of Crimea, there was a call for immediate deterrent measures to be assembled in Eastern Europe in order to deter further Russian aggression.

In particular, Poland has been especially vocal in demanding a stronger military presence of NATO forces in the region (Buckley, Fontanella-Khan and Cienski, 2014). Although, the decisions at the Wales Summit demonstrated increased willingness to confront Russia and bolster the Alliance’s military capabilities, the extent of actual military capability to defend CEE allies and deter Russia has been an issue of discussion. At a conference co-hosted by the Atlantic Council, the Polish President Andrzej Duda spoke of Polish positions ahead of the Warsaw Summit in 2016, where he argued that “*real deterrence means real presence*” (quoted in Sen, 2016). A comment which is easily interpreted as a critique against

the deterrence value of the NATO capabilities in the east. As summed up by Baranowski (2016), the Polish position towards the Warsaw Summit was to move from the assurance measures of the Wales Summit to actual deterrence measures. However, rushing in large NATO-forces to CEE countries bordering Russia bares the risk of aggravating the already tense relationship between NATO and Russia. This problem is commonly referred to as the *security dilemma*.

Are the concerns of the eastern members of the Alliance justifiable? Certainty, the use of the word reassurance in framing the measures taken at the Wales Summit, does not bolster confidence in the actual deterrent value of those measures. The very wording implies that the military measures are intended to calm Allies, not necessarily deterring a potential aggressor. As recommended in a White Paper issued by the Allied Command Transformation and the Atlantic Council (2015: 10), the Communiqué of the Warsaw Summit emphasised deterrence to a larger degree, instead of assurance (NATO, 2016). Does this mean that the measures taken at the Warsaw summit serves to establish an actual working deterrence, or does it simply represent a new word for the same capability? It's hard to tell if the general deterrence of NATO is working or not, because we do not know if it has been tested. In order to investigate further the deterrence of NATO I will assess more specific aspects of deterrence.

The Russian army does not possess the conventional capabilities to threaten, let alone conquer, all of Europe (Zapfe and Haas, 2016: 35). However, the general deterrence of an overwhelmingly militarily strong actor may break down when the local balance of military power greatly favours the adversary (Mearsheimer, 1985: 53-54) (Guertner, 1993: 142). It therefore makes sense to investigate a more concentrated geographical case. I have chosen the Baltic states, because they are seen by many to be among the NATO states most vulnerable to Russian aggression (Shlapak and Johnson, 2016) (Shearer, 2017: 38) (Binnendijk, Hamilton and Barry, 2016).

4.2 The Extended Deterrence of NATO in the Baltics

President Putin's pledge to actively protect the rights of Russians abroad by all means, sparked concerns in Baltic states with large ethnic Russian populations (Herszenhorn, 2014). The three Baltictates, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, found themselves with Russian forces stationed in the enclave of Kaliningrad to the West and around St. Petersburg to the East. In addition, they border the Russian ally Belarus to the South. This has left the Baltic states

feeling encircled and vulnerable. In light of their geographic position, weak army and a considerable Russian population, the three Baltic states have been pointed out as the Alliance's weakest spot in case of Russian aggression (Zapfe and Haas, 2016: 36).

There have been some speculations that a Russian attack in the Baltics could follow the same patterns as in Ukraine (Thornton and Karagiannis, 2016). Under the guise of civil unrest in ethnic Russian areas, Russian special forces would operate under the threshold of Article 5. Many observers have later called the Russian involvement in Ukraine a typical case of hybrid warfare and there are concerns that the Baltic Republics might be next (Renz, 2016: 284-286). The discussion about the nature of hybrid warfare and how to deter and defend against it, however, is too complicated and demanding to include in this text. There is an increasing amount of literature that covers the subject of hybrid warfare more thoroughly than this text could possibly do.

Nevertheless, there is a link between hybrid and conventional warfare that makes the case of deterring conventional warfare of sufficient relevance to this text. As the prolonged fighting in Eastern Ukraine showed, Russia was unable to maintain the intervention without resorting to conventional capabilities. Dave Johnson, Staff Officer in the NATO International Staff Defence Policy and Planning Division, remarked that *"once the thin veneer of Russia's hybrid warfare" is peeled back, its reliance on at least the leveraging, and potential employment, of full-spectrum conventional, unconventional and nuclear military capabilities is revealed*" (quoted in Renz, 2016: 292). As pointed out by Renz, *"There is nothing in contemporary Russian strategic thought to suggest that the use of force and military technology is seen as secondary"* (2016: 291). Deterring Russian conventional capabilities would consequently render a substantial amount of the leverage that Russia enjoys over the Baltics, especially in a more heated, hostile context. The Baltic states are confident that they have the ability to deal with hybrid threats and low-intensity scenarios on their own. Their biggest concern, is the conventional military imbalance between NATO's eastern flank and Russia (Samp, Rathke and Bell, 2016: 12). The Baltic republics do not possess a strong enough military power to serve as a credible central deterrence of their own. Instead, they depend upon on the extended deterrence of their allies, and especially that of the United States. Extended deterrence may rely on conventional or nuclear capabilities, or a mixture of both. In the communiqué of the Warsaw Summit, both the nuclear and the conventional aspect of deterrence were emphasised. Nuclear deterrence has not been placed on the top of the agenda for decades, and has almost considered to be a relic of the Cold War. NATO's

nuclear deterrence haven't changed significantly in the recent years. It was, however, reemphasised in the Warsaw Summit Communiqué to signal deterrence towards Russia (NATO, 2016: para. 54-55). Problematically, extended deterrence is deemed less credible than central deterrence. During the early period of the Cold War, NATO had a strategy of Massive Retaliation. The strategy entailed an immediate and devastating nuclear counterstrike, in case of Soviet aggression. When the Soviet Union developed similar nuclear capabilities to NATO, the broad deterrence of the Massive Retaliation strategy was questioned. Largely because of Soviet counterstrike capabilities, the credibility of the Alliance's willingness to use the hydrogen bomb as an answer to a limited war was severely damaged (Freedman, 2003: 95). It's easy to imagine that the same logic applies today. The extended deterrence of NATO's nuclear arsenal doesn't enjoy the credibility as a broad deterrence against all kinds of military aggression. Instead, the nuclear arsenal has a narrower deterrence value, in that it deters the adversary from using their own nuclear weapons and enjoys higher credibility as a weapon of last resort. Given Russia's nuclear arsenal, it is unlikely that the Americans would be willing to use nuclear weapons and risk a nuclear attack against the US in order to secure Riga. And a more limited tactical nuclear exchange over the Baltics, would ruin the territory NATO seeks to protect. Insofar, the relative balance of the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the US only serve as narrow deterrence against the use of nuclear weapons, there is a risk that NATO and Russia is in a 'stability-instability paradox'. Aware of this paradox, Robert Jervis warned "*To the extent that the military balance is stable at the level of all-out nuclear war, it will become less stable at lower levels of violence*" (Jervis, 1961: 31). Glen Snyder also voiced a similar warning, "*a range of minor ventures which they can undertake with impunity, despite the objective existence of some probability of retaliation*" (Snyder, 1961: 226). According to this logic and in line with the strategy of flexible response, NATO should seek to establish conventional deterrence to deter aggression under the nuclear threshold.

In order to prevent a conventional attack on the Baltics, NATO has to rely on extended conventional deterrence. Given the overall conventional superiority of the Alliance, the critical aspect of the extended deterrence is the credibility of the Alliance commitment to sacrifice soldiers and resources to defend the Baltic states. NATO is unlikely to be able to out-presence Russia in the Baltics in any plausible scenario, and NATO is unable to defend the Baltics from anything above a sub-conventional threat, without relying on reinforcements (Zaphe and Haas, 2016: 37). But the Russian anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities,

including sophisticated anti-air and anti-ship missiles, proves damaging to the extended deterrence of NATO to the Baltics. The A2/AD defence would significantly raise the cost of reinforcing and launch a conventional counteroffensive in the Baltics. Via the heavily militarized Kaliningrad enclave, Russian A2/AD capabilities may drive a wedge between the Baltic states and the rest of their allies. Even if the A2/AD isn't strong enough to deny NATO access for a long time, the military assets in Kaliningrad have the ability to change the political cost-benefit calculations of the NATO allies and possibly deter some of the member states from participating in a counteroffensive (Zaphe and Haas, 2016: 36) (Frühling and Lasconjaris, 2016: 104 - 105). The extended deterrence based on the overall superiority of NATO's military strength vis á vis Russia may be insufficient to deter an attack in the Baltics. Research conducted on deterrence by Huth and other scholars, concludes that the local balance of force is more important than the overall force balance, because: "*potential aggressors are influenced by perceived opportunities in the local environment and fail to consider the full weight that can be brought against them*" (Rhodes, 2000: 246).

4.3 Deterrence by Denial or Punishment?

Largely because of the awareness of the constraints of extended deterrence, much of the current deterrence-debate focuses on the deployment of forward military presence in the Baltics. A critical question is then whether NATO possesses the means to conduct deterrence by denial in the Baltics.

The geographical conditions and the local balance of military power favours Russia. In 2014-2015 the RAND Corporation conducted a series of wargames to test the defensibility of the Baltic states, given the local and NATO force posture at the time. Largely due to geographical conditions, it would take 36 to 60 hours for Russian conventional forces to reach the outskirts of Tallinn and/or Riga. The NATO forces in the region were both outnumbered and too lightly equipped to stop a sudden conventional attack (Shlapak and Johnson, 2016: 1-3). In the event of such an attack, the Alliance would be left with only bad options, as stated in the research done by RAND. One option would be to conduct a prolonged mobilization in order to launch a conventional counter offensive. At best, this would lead to heavy casualties and severely test the cohesion of the Alliance. The worst outcome, would involve the grave risk of escalation. RAND anticipates that deterrence by punishment with nuclear weapons would have little effect, due to its lack of credibility. Another option, listed in the report, is to

concede Russian control over the occupied territory. According to RAND, the best outcome such an action could achieve would be a new cold war. The worst outcome would be a collapse of NATO, because of the fundamentally weakened credibility of the Article 5 agreement of the Washington Treaty (Shlapak and Johnson, 2016: 7). The strategic challenge posed by this scenario is similar to the “*fait accompli*” strategy described by Mearsheimer (1985: 53). By striking quickly and then setting up a strong defensive posture with A2/AD capabilities, Russia could hope to deter NATO attempts to reverse any territorial gains and to restore status quo. There are also speculations that the Russians may use its doctrine of employing nuclear weapons to de-escalate a conflict, and to deter NATO from liberating the territorial gains made by Russia (Kroening and Slocombe, 2014: 2) (Kroenig, 2015: 57). However, Russia’s nuclear doctrine doesn’t embrace the idea of de-escalatory nuclear strikes in a limited conventional conflict. In a conventional war Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons only in cases where the very existence of the Russian state is threatened (Dvorkin, 2015).

For the sake of avoiding these potentially devastating scenarios, the report argues in favour of deterrence by denial. According to the war games, NATO would need about 7 brigades, including three heavy armoured brigades, in order to obtain a deterrent effect and deny the Russians a quick and cheap victory. The stationing of 7 brigades close to the Russian border would, likely, be seen as a huge provocation by Russia. Conscious about the possible security dilemma, the authors behind the report suggest that not all of these 7 brigades would need to be forward stationed. Given an early warning, several brigades could be deployed in the Baltics within a few days, but the crucial heavy armoured brigades would not be able to get there in time. The problem could be solved by prepositioning the equipment in the Baltics, Poland or Germany and fly in the soldiers in an event of crisis. The forces suggested are not enough to withstand Russian forces in the long run, but they should be able to hamper the invasion long enough for reinforcements to arrive (Shlapak and Johnson, 2016: 8).

At the Warsaw Summit in 2016 NATO undertook measures to boost the defence of its eastern flank. In addition, the US have three combat brigade teams (BCTs) stationed in Europe. One cavalry regiment (Stryker) in Germany, an airborne brigade in Northern Italy and a freshly deployed rotational heavy armoured brigade in Poland. In addition, the US contribute some smaller units, spread out over Eastern Europe. There are approximately 29 000 US army personnel in Europe, but that is still one less BCT than in 2012 (Samp et al., 2017: 121). However, the four rotational multinational battalions, that are expected to be fully

operational in June 2017, and the three American BCTs, do not meet the criteria of deterrence by denial according to the RAND study. The forces are too insignificant to perform a deterrence by denial mission. Instead multinational battalions of the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), that are being deployed in the Baltics and in Poland, are designed to serve as a *trip-wire* force. The battalions are meant to enhance the credibility of the extended deterrence of NATO. As a part of the Readiness Action Plan, NATO also decided to establish another multinational brigade (approximately 5,000 troops) that is designed to be deployed in the theatre before a crisis emerges and to act as a potential deterrent to further escalation. The Very High Readiness Force (VJTF), as it's called, is too small to conduct deterrence by denial. Instead, it is designed to serve as a mobile equivalent to the trip-wire battalions in the Baltics and Poland (Brooke-Holland, 2016: 3). It is conceivable that these forces might deter sub-conventional and hybrid threats, but NATO is not trying to deter by denial a large conventional attack. The EFP and the VJTF would neither stop a full-scale conventional invasion nor provide a credible punishment to the invader. Instead the troops are meant to ensure that an invasion of the Baltic would entail an attack on a broad number of NATO-members' forces, thus ensuring a dramatic escalation of the conflict. The trip-wire concept was a strategy much used in the 1950s. The idea is to deploy a relatively small force in a strategic location to activate retaliation in case of an attack. In the 1950s, the Americans deployed brigades in West-Germany to signal political resolve and to enhance the credibility of the nuclear deterrence by punishment (Schelling, 1966: 47-49). The trip-wire is meant to ensure the will of NATO to fight, not its capability to do so. In this regard, the American forces deployed to Europe in the *European Reassurance Initiative*, are the most important deterrent. Given that the US is the most powerful country in the Alliance, the presence of American forces is the most important aspect of the trip-wire. In Mearsheimer's study of 12 cases of failed and successful deterrence, Mearsheimer found that a potential aggressor, in search a limited aim, will most likely be deterred if a limited victory most likely would lead to a war of attrition (1985: 67). The trip-wire forces are present to ensure that a limited Russian victory in the Baltics, would lead to a prolonged war of attrition with NATO.

But what, precisely, is NATO supposed to escalate to? At the present time, the only existing backdrop to the tripe-wire forces are nuclear or a lengthy conventional mobilization (Zaphe and Haas, 2016: 40). A nuclear escalation would destroy the very territory that the Alliance seeks to protect, and risk a mutual destructive nuclear war between Russia and the United States. NATO is now developing a more flexible response to avoid resorting to

nuclear weapons. To do so, it's now working on improving the credibility of its extended conventional deterrence, linked to the trip-wire troops. The credibility of the extended deterrence relies on the overall armed forces of NATO and their ability to deploy to the Eastern flank of NATO. The 40 000 strong NATO Response Force (NRF) that NATO is currently developing, is the asset most likely to be used as the first follow-on reinforcements, or to be used in a counteroffensive in case deterrence fails. The Alliance is improving its command relationships, mechanisms and logistics that it needs to ensure that NATO forces would actually arrive to fight (Brooke-Holland, 2016: 11). Yet, even if the full force of the NRF would arrive in time to defend the Baltics, it's only able to defend the three republics for a limited time. The 8 brigades of the NRF would ultimately rely on reinforcements or a counteroffensive. However, the overall forces of NATO in Europe have been suffering from enduring underfinancing and a focus on a few expeditionary forces. Their ability to fight a technologically advanced enemy in a full-scale war, is therefore limited (Samp et al., 2017: 121). Even if these forces could be mustered, it is hard to imagine a scenario where NATO could reinforce its soldiers in the Baltics or launch a counteroffensive without attacking targets in Kaliningrad. Because of the threat posed by the A2/AD capabilities in the Russian enclave, NATO would have to conduct direct attacks on Russian soil to protect the counteroffensive (Zaphe and Haas, 2016: 39) (Frühling and Lasconjaris, 2016: 106 - 107). In an essay discussing this challenge, Frühling and Lasconjaris suggest that NATO could try to deter the use of the A2/AD systems in Kaliningrad by issuing threats to invade the enclave (2016: 110). Still, delivering on the threat would bare the risk of escalation and possibly crossing nuclear red lines.

Instead of relying on deterrence by denial, NATO could build up its ability to deliver deterrence by punishment by non-nuclear means. There are, however, some shortcomings to such a strategy. Deterrence by punishment would put the cost of escalation on NATO and leave Russia to decide how much it is willing to suffer. In addition, punitive conventional precision strikes against targets of great economic or military value of Russia, would likely lead to a matching counterstrike against targets in Europe. It's also possible to deliver deterrence by punishment with economic and diplomatic means and a blockade of Russian ships. Yet, the Western sanctions, responding to the Russian actions in Ukraine, has so far shown little ability to change Russian behaviour (Aleksashenko, 2016: 18). It is, however, possible that the sanctions may work as deterrent for further Russian adventurism. If such a deterrence is working is hard to prove or falsify. The sanctions are, however, better described

as compellence. Deterrence has an inherently better chance of success than compelling an adversary to change behaviour through sanctions. As Thomas C. Schelling has argued, compellence, “*a threat intended to make an adversary do something*”, is inherently harder than deterrence, “*a threat to keep him from starting something*” (Schelling, 1966: 69). One would imagine sanctions to be tougher if Russia attacked a NATO country, but sanctions are unreliable at best.

4.4 The Cost of Inaction and the Cost of Action

An important aspect to consider, when worrying about the possibility that Russia’s aggressive behaviour in Georgia and Ukraine might translate into similar behaviour in the Baltics, is that states motivated by necessity will be likely to have a different cost and risk calculations than states motivated by opportunity. As pointed out by Rhodes: “*There is, in fact, a considerable and growing body of evidence and literature, rooted in experimental psychology, on “prospect theory” and its implications for interstate aggression.*” (2000: 243). An actor who considers issuing aggressive actions in search of potential gains tends to be more careful and risk avoiding, than actors who view the situation in terms of potential losses. Hence, an actor who is motivated by some perceived necessity may be willing to take considerable risks, especially if inaction is calculated to result in an unacceptable loss (Solomon, 2013: 119). Consequently, an actor with the former perception would act in a more desperate fashion and be harder to deter than an actor in search for potential gains.

It may be useful to take these considerations into account when analysing why Ukrainian deterrence failed, but deterrence in the Baltics has yet to fail. In the case of Ukraine, Russia was about to lose Ukraine as a possible partner in the Eurasian Economic Union and as a buffer to NATO and the EU. Additionally, there might have been Russian fears of losing the strategically important port of Sevastopol used by the Russian Black Sea Fleet (Biersack and O’Lear, 2014). The expected cost of inaction seems to have outweighed the expected cost of action in Russia’s calculations. The same logic may apply to Georgia. Before the war broke out in 2008, it seemed like Georgia was drifting towards NATO membership. There was a growing cooperation between Washington and Tbilisi, Georgia was participating in NATO operations in Afghanistan and the US was pressing for Georgia to be added to the Membership Action Plan (MAP) (Bowker, 2011: 203 - 205). In this context, the cost of inaction by Russia seemed to be growing by the day, and the war opened a window of

opportunity to put a stop to Georgia's NATO ambitions (Bowker, 2011: 208).

In the Baltics, the situation is different. There is a possibility for Russia to obtain a quick victory in the Baltics. A possibility that is not new, as described by the proponents of deterrence by denial. As already demonstrated, do Russia enjoy an unavoidable advantage in the Baltic theatre, because of the geographic position of the three republics located between Russia and Kaliningrad. Consequently, there are fears that Russia might seize a part of the Baltics to present the Alliance with a *fait accompli*. However, in accordance with Prospect Theory, NATO may expect Russia to be much more risk assertive in the search for any potential gains in the Baltics, than what it was in Ukraine. The Baltics is already "lost" to the EU and NATO. Hence, the cost of inaction in the Baltics are considerably lower than in Ukraine, unless NATO decides to boost their presence to such a level that Russia's geographical advantage may be zeroed out. Needless to say, the potential costs of aggressive action are considerably higher in the Baltics, than in Georgia and Ukraine. The risk of a prolonged war with NATO, with all the uncertainties that comes with it, would always be present because of the Baltic states' NATO membership. From this perspective, it seems like NATO do not need to, and should even avoid, conducting deterrence by denial in the Baltics. Deterrence may fail if NATO pursues a denial-centric strategy in the Baltics, because Russia might fear that their relative power is facing an inevitable and lasting decline in the region if NATO continue to increase their presence. The longer Russia refrains from aggressive action, the more likely its chance to retain the grand strategic benefits in the region would be diluted. The prospect of losing the margin of security Russia enjoys by the current balance in the region, might trigger the very action NATO seeks to prevent (Stein, 1991: 16).

4.5 Concluding Remarks

As displayed by RANDS's wargames in the Shlapak and Johnson's article, NATO does not possess the conventional capabilities in CEE to conduct deterrence by denial. The trip-wire forces possess little warfighting abilities when compared to their Russian counterparts. If deterrence is understood as NATO's ability to deny a Russian invasion in the Baltics, then the Central and Eastern European member states are right in their critique of the defence measures taken at the Wales and Warsaw Summit are merely branded as deterrence, but in fact serve as assurance measures. The trip-wire forces do, however, strengthen the credibility of the extended deterrence of NATO by making Article 5 more credible as a political process.

In the Harmel Report, the first function of the Alliance was to “*maintain adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter*” (NATO, 1967: para. 5). The multinational character of the EFP battalions is meant to signal the *political solidarity* of the Alliance, which is a message of deterrence in itself. There is, however, disagreement if NATO possesses the *adequate military strength*, to back up its trip-wire forces. During recent decades, contrary to the time prior to the Harmel Report, NATO has not focused on deterring a possible threat from the East. The Report stated that the Alliance needed to *maintain adequate military strength*, because it already had a working deterrence with the strategic concept of a flexible response. Today, the Alliance is focusing on building up the *adequate military strength* to deter. The EFP does not possess a capacity to deter by denial anything above a sub-conventional threat. Instead, the Alliance is working on enhancing its deterrence and defence by improving its ability to rapidly reinforce vulnerable areas in times of crisis. The ability to do so, and the forces that are meant to reinforce/reconquer vulnerable areas, are not yet adequately developed.

There is, however, evidence to be found, suggesting that general deterrence of Article 5 still holds. If we are to believe that Russia was willing to attack and inject instability in Ukraine and Georgia to prevent them from becoming EU and NATO-members, then there are reasons to suspect that Russia does take the credibility of Article 5 seriously. The road towards obtaining a stronger level of deterrence directed towards Russia is fraught with risks of escalation and security dilemmas. Mearsheimer’s theories of offensive realism makes deterrence by denial an intuitive option to deter an opportunistic Russia. Yet, NATO needs to consider Russian interests when conducting deterrence. Russia has little to gain by aggressive, opportunistic actions in the Baltics and has much to lose. The findings of research conducted on Prospect Theory and deterrence tells us to avoid placing Russia in a position where it may lose its strategic advantage unless they conduct aggressive actions. A robust defence and deterrence posture in the Baltics risks provoking aggressive Russian behaviour and may cause deterrence to fail.

5 Détente

In this chapter, I'm going to map out NATO's efforts to conduct détente with Russia. The empirical research will focus on the time after the Russian annexation of Crimea, up to present time of writing. In a time when NATO and the EU have been issuing sanctions and condemning Russian behaviour in Ukraine and Syria, examples of a cooperative approach, tensions reduction and trust-building measures may be hard to find. Still, efforts to pursue such policies may still be found in the Western approach to Russia. Similar to the Harmel approach, the Warsaw Summit Communiqué signaled that dialogue with Russia should complement deterrence, not replace it. In this chapter, I will investigate if the dual-track rhetoric of the Secretary General and the Warsaw Summit Communiqué was followed by concrete action. The first part of the investigation will focus on the actions taken by the Alliance as a whole, particularly in the NATO-Russia Council. The actions of NATO as an alliance, does not cover all the efforts pursue détente with Russia. Consequently, in the second part of the chapter, I'm also going to investigate the bilateral efforts of the US and Germany to pursue détente.

5.1 Sliding Backwards Into an increasingly Unstable and Hostile Relationship

Although, it was the events in Ukraine that triggered the current crisis in the Russia-NATO relations, tensions and conflicting interests between Russia and the West (NATO/EU) have been lingering in the background for a long time. A quick recap of the Russian-NATO relationship after the Cold War, might be useful.

There were several attempts after the Cold War to build friendly ties between the former adversaries, but none of the attempts managed to foster a long-term relationship of trust and cooperation between NATO and Russia. Seen from the Kremlin, the relationship with the West in the 1990s and the early 2000s was affected by continued humiliation and Western exploitation of Russian weakness. The NATO enlargement in 1999, including the admission of former Warsaw Pact countries into NATO, and the new enlargement in 2004, including former Soviet states, infuriated the Russian leadership. In the Russian view, the purpose of NATO had ceased to exist after the Cold War, and the NATO expansion was considered to be an American effort to expand its geopolitical control over Europe and to

encircle Russia (Carlsson and Winnerstig, 2016: 18). The NATO intervention in the war in Bosnia in 1995, and the war in Kosovo in 1999, was taken as evidence that NATO no longer served as a purely defensive alliance, but used brute force to obtain its foreign policy goals. Although, consultative mechanisms, like the NATO Russia Founding Act of 1997 (NRFA), had been established to mitigate Russian-NATO disagreement and ease Russian concerns, NATO's failure to consult Russia and to act upon their concerns, caused Russian disillusionment with the Alliance. These actions, together with NATO's decision to use force in Kosovo without a UN mandate, left the Russians with a sense of betrayal and distrust towards NATO (Dannreuther, 1999: 152-153). The American invasion of Iraq and the toppling of Saddam Hussain in 2003, again without the approval of the Security Council, exaggerated Russia's frustration. The Russians also considered the 2003 Rose Revolutions in Georgia and the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine as examples of US efforts of regime change. Although these regime changes did not occur as a result of American armed force, the Russian leadership suspected the US of behind-the-scenes manipulation to overthrow local leaders friendly to Moscow (Wilson, 2009: 370-371). The American unilateral withdrawal in 2002 from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972, was also a major source of Russian dismay. The following deployment of regional ballistic missile defences (BMD) in America and in Eastern Europe, has triggered Russian concerns that the US is trying to undermine Russia's strategic nuclear deterrence, despite American efforts to reassure Russia that the BMD systems are aimed at North-Korea and Iran and pose no threat to Russian nuclear deterrence (Nygaard and Hakvåg, 2013: 10-11). In 2010 NATO tried to reassure Russia, by inviting Russia to join a joint regional BMD system, but the efforts failed (Nygaard and Hakvåg, 2013: 12). In his famous speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, President Vladimir Putin summed up the Russian grievances towards the US. In the speech, Putin criticised the US for neglecting international law and trying to become a global hegemon in a unipolar world. He went on to criticise the US intervention in Iraq, the NATO expansion and the plans to deploy a missile defence system in Europe. According to Putin, *"the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies it imposes on other nations."* (The Washington Post, 2007).

NATO perceived Russia as a somewhat dubious actor during the 1990s and the 2000s. In the early 1990s, NATO feared that Russian was so weak that it might collapse and dissolve into anarchy. NATO was also sceptical of the authoritarian tendencies in the Kremlin.

Subsequently four American presidents have made attempts to bind more friendly ties with Russia and increase cooperation between the two countries, but none of them managed to reach a lasting understanding with the Russian leadership (Forsberg and Herd, 2015: 43-50). The relationship between NATO and Russia deteriorated further, when Putin announced that Russia was suspending its compliance with the 1990 Treaty of Conventional forces in Europe (CFE) in 2007, and that it would no longer permit international weapons inspections in Russia. The CFE Treaty was designed to limit the number of troops and heavy conventional weapons in Europe, and to increase trust and transparency by on-site inspections. In 2015, Russia stopped participating in the meetings of the CFE treaty's Joint Consultative Group (NTI, 2016). Contributing to the diminishing security cooperation in Eurasia, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty of 1987 also appeared to be breaking up. The INF treaty banned all ground launched cruise and ballistic missiles, with a range from 500 to 5500 kilometres, from Europe and the Russian Far East. Since 2010, however, both the US and Russia have accused each other of violating the treaty (NTI, 2017).

The 2008 war in Georgia triggered the most significant crisis in the relationship between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War. There was however considerable political and academic disagreement within NATO on how to distribute the blame for the hostilities between Russia and Georgia. The governments of the UK, US, Poland and the Baltic countries saw the war as purely Russian aggression. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was quick to draw the lines to the Soviet interventions of the Cold War. The same kind of rhetoric came from the Eastern European Allies. On the other hand, the German and the French administration argued that not all the responsibility of the war could be blamed upon the Russians (Bowker, 2011: 197-198). After the war, the Alliance sought to reengage with Russia. This was reaffirmed by NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who stated that: "*Russia is such an important factor in geopolitical terms that there is no alternative for NATO than to engage Russia*". Nonetheless, Scheffer emphasized that relations with Russia were still "*not business as usual*" (Erlanger, 2008). Yet, the 'not business as usual' period didn't last. With the presidential shift in the US and in Russia, ties between Russia and NATO's most important country grew stronger. As the fourth American president to engage Russia to develop friendlier ties, President Obama's 'reset' policy with Russia opened for closer relations between the two countries. Nevertheless, despite increasing cooperation and the New SALT agreement, the most salient issues of disagreements between NATO and Russia remained unresolved and the relationship deteriorated once again (Forsberg and Herd,

2015: 50).

The increased tensions between the members of NATO, especially the US, and Russia has led to a more adversarial relationship. Coupled with the dissolve of security regimes and arms control, the risk of war and escalation is growing. The breakdown of these regimes has led to a heightened risk of accidents and unintentional escalation, less predictability and decreased the level of mutual trust. In spite of mutual efforts to form closer cooperation and partnership, NATO and Russia have failed to transform the end of the Cold War into a lasting friendship.

5.2 Mapping NATO's Actions of Détente

The deterrence and dialogue approach, that was emphasised in the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, was a necessary compromise to preserve the cohesion of the Alliance. Just like on the issue of détente in the 1967 Harmel Report, the allies today lack a common understanding of the dialogue track. The more cautious allies, like Germany, believe that dialogue with Russia is essential because Russia holds the key to the security situation in the Middle-East, Caucasus and Northern Africa. As Germany's former Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, puts it "*security for Europe cannot be achieved without Russia and certainly not against Russia*" (Steinmeier, 2016). These allies hope that dialogue/détente may serve to achieve some degree of normalisation of the relations with Russia, in the not too distant future. Other allies, especially the CEE allies, accepted the dialogue track as a part of a compromise to obtain the EFP. Contrary to the former group, these allies harbour little hope of normalisation, and consequently view the dialogue track as a largely technical issue focused on risk-management and not as a means to overcome the current tensions and distrust between NATO and Russia³. In an op-ed before a G7 meeting in Germany 2015, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Linas Linkevičius, warned the leaders of the G7 states against détente, which he effectively compared to appeasement (Linkevičius, 2015). In the following two subchapters, I'm going to investigate how NATO as an alliance have tried to pursue détente with Russia, in spite of the internal differences over the scope of such an approach.

5.2.1 Rhetorical Reassurance and Military Restraint

³ Information received in a meeting in Brussels, held under the Chatham House Rule.

In the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, NATO's leaders used an unusual clear and harsh rhetorical stance on Russia. This rhetoric includes condemnation of the *“ongoing illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea (...) the violation of sovereign borders by force; the deliberate destabilization of eastern Ukraine; large-scale snap exercises contrary to the spirit of the Vienna Document, and provocative military activities near NATO borders”*. NATO also condemned Moscow's *“irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric”* (NATO, 2016: para. 10). At the same time, the Alliance is opening for increased political dialogue with Russia, to avoid escalation and to overcome the tensions.

We remain open to a periodic, focused and meaningful dialogue with a Russia willing to engage on the basis of reciprocity in the NRC, with a view to avoiding misunderstanding, miscalculation, and unintended escalation, and to increase transparency and predictability. We also have military lines of communication. We have agreed to continue to use all these channels to address the critical issues we face, and call on Russia to make good use of all lines of communication. (NATO, 2016: para. 12)

As well as being an act of policymaking, this pledge demonstrates to Russia NATO's intention to avoid conflict and to manage the current tensions. In addition, the Alliance is offering further reassurance to the Russians when stating that *“The Alliance does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia.”* (NATO, 2016: para. 14). In the next paragraph of the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, the Alliance states that it does *“continue to believe that a partnership between NATO and Russia (...) would be of strategic value.”* But *“the conditions for that relationship do not currently exist,”* before *“Russia demonstrates compliance with international law and its international obligations and responsibilities.”* (NATO, 2016: para. 15). With this statement, NATO applies a carrot and stick approach to Russia, making the benefits of a partnership conditional on a Russian change of action and withdrawal from Ukraine. The prospect of a strategic partnership also represents a NATO effort to show Russia that there is more to be gained through diplomacy and compliance with international law, than by conflict. It is evident from the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, that the Alliance is committed to the first part of détente; risk reduction, reduce uncertainty and to avoid unintentional escalation and miscalculation. As a part of this effort, NATO is committed to use existing security regimes like the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE, the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the Rome Declaration. The Alliance also seeks to enhance existing security regimes by modernising the Vienna Document, to increase predictability, trust and transparency (NATO, 2016: para. 13, 15, 16). These measures serve to mitigate the risks inherent in the increased emphasis on military deterrence, and they may also succeed in

reducing the tensions between the two parties.

As a part of the efforts to reduce the Russian threat perception of NATO, the Alliance has sought to exercise military restraint in their deterrence posture by adhering to the NATO-Russia Founding Act. As discussed in the chapter on NATO's military deterrence, Eastern allies and military analysts have persistently called for an increased military presence, preferably permanently stationed, in NATO's Eastern periphery. Adding to the military strategic logic behind the argument, it is also a considerably cheaper option to have a permanent force posture, or at least permanently prepositioned heavy equipment in the East, compared to a rotational presence. This is especially true for the Canadian and US forces (Samp, et al. 2017: 121-122). The decision to station the four multinational battalions and the American heavy armour brigade on a rotational basis in Poland and the three Baltic states, represents an effort to avoid unnecessary provocations. Although NATO contends that Russia has violated the terms of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, Germany and other, more cautious allies argued in favour for the rotational and the modest character of the NATO presence in the East, in order to secure adherence to the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997. The Act, that is a political agreement and not a legally binding agreement, that excludes permanent stationing of substantial combat forces in the region. The modest size of the military presence serve to demonstrate NATO's defensive intentions, and the strict adherence to the principles of the NATO-Russia Founding Act is meant to serve as a confidence-building measure towards Russia. Ahead of deploying the increased military presence to NATO's eastern flank, NATO signalled its intentions well in advance⁴. The action seems to be another effort to increase predictability and to avoid misperceptions.

The success of the military restraint of NATO as confidence-building has so far proved to be limited. In an international security conference organised by the Russian Ministry of Defence, Russian officials denounced NATO's military build-up along its eastern border. The chief of the Russian General Staff, Army General Valery Gerasimov, called NATO's actions in Eastern Europe "*destructive and provocative*" (Gerasimov, 2017).

5.2.2 The Role of the NATO-Russia Council

In the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, the Alliance underscored the importance of the NATO-Russia Council as a forum for dialogue focused on "*avoiding misunderstanding,*

⁴ Information received in a meeting in Brussels, held under the Chatham House Rule

miscalculation, and unintended escalation, and to increase transparency and predictability.” NATO, 2016: para. 12). The NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was established at the NATO-Russia Summit in Rome 2002, by the declaration on “NATO-Russia Relations: a New Quality”, building on the principles of the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997. The NRC replaced the Permanent Joint Council as the formal basis of NATO-Russia relations. “*The purpose of the NRC has been to serve as the principal structure and venue for advancing the relationship between NATO and Russia*” (NATO, 2017) It is designed as a mechanism for consultation, consensus-building and cooperation. As a part of the sanctions, that were imposed on Russia after the intervention in Ukraine, NATO suspended all practical military and civilian cooperation with Russia in April 2014 (NATO, 2014: para. 22).

Although, the Alliance decided at the Wales Summit to leave political channels of communication open, there were no meetings taking place in the NRC between June 2014 and April 2016. But in 2016, the NRC started to meet more regularly. The NRC met three times that year, and held another meeting in March 2017. At the four meetings, NATO and Russia discussed the situation in Ukraine, Afghanistan, military activities and how to improve transparency and risk reduction (Stoltenberg 2016b, -c, -d and 2017). The first topic of each meeting, has been the situation in Ukraine and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Still, the discussions have yet to result in any concrete progress. This was reaffirmed by Stoltenberg after the last NRC meeting in March 2017, when he stated that “*Allies and Russia continue to have clear disagreements on the crisis in and around Ukraine.*” (Stoltenberg, 2017).

The discussions on risk reduction and transparency improvement have appeared to contain more grounds of common interest and the possibility of increased cooperation. In order to provide more transparency, NATO briefed Russia on Exercise Trident Juncture 2016 and Russia gave a briefing on the KAVKAZ-2016 exercise, at the meeting in December 2016. In the following meeting in March 2017, NATO held a briefing on the four battle groups of the EFP in Poland in the Baltic countries. Russia responded in turn, with a briefing on its three new divisions in its Western Military District (Stoltenberg, 2017). The US has also briefed the Council on their military presence in Europe, outside of the NATO framework (Stoltenberg, 2016c). These mutual briefings serve as a trust building measure, increasing predictability and transparency. NATO is, however, not happy with the extent of the transparency in the relationship with Russia. At all the four meetings in 2016 and 2017, NATO has raised the need of modernising the Vienna Document and called on Russia to do

more to improve transparency and risk reduction, and to follow the rules and the spirit of the existing Vienna Document of 2011. The military-to-military lines of communication, a crucial part of the measures existing to reduce the chance of miscalculation and unintentional escalation, have also been on the meeting agenda in the NRC. The communication lines continue to be open, but NATO has been unsatisfied with the way they function and has called for an enhancement of the direct military-to-military lines of communication (Stoltenberg: 2016c). In an effort to pursue further risk reduction, Russia raised a proposal to improve the air safety over the Baltic Sea at the NRC meeting in July 2016 (Stoltenberg, 2016c). One of the issues that was brought up in the discussion was that many military aircraft were flying with their transponders turned off, increasing the risk of accidents by making the planes invisible to the ground radars. Both NATO and Russia accused each other of turning off their transponders (Emmott, 2016). As a result, the Baltic Sea Project Team and the International Civil Aviation Organisation briefed the representatives at the following NRC meeting in December, on how to improve the air safety in the Baltic region. Finland took the initiative to host a technical-level meeting to review the implementation of the recommendations given in 2015 and to assess whether any further work was needed (Stoltenberg, 2016d). The meeting, which was held in Helsinki in March 2017, concluded that the recommendations given have led to positive developments. The participants of the meeting also stressed the need to increase the use of transponders. The participants were not able to agree on the practical agreements needed, and decided to meet again later that year (Trafi, 2017).

During the last four NRC meetings, NATO has repeatedly called for a modernisation of the Vienna Document on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, particularly in the domain of risk reduction and transparency measures. The Document is an agreement between the 57 states of the OSCE. It consists of a set of confidence- and security-building measures to improve transparency, including an annual exchange of military information, on-site inspections and notifications of certain military activities. Since it was first formulated in 1990, changes in the security environment and developments in military technology have required several updates of the Vienna Document. It was updated in 1992, 1994 and 1999, before the OSCE participating states decided to sign a new version of the Vienna Document in 2011 (Rowberry, 2014). Taking the increasingly changing security environment and the rapidly changes in military technology and operations into account, the OSCE decided in the latest version of the Document that they have to organise a special meeting at least every five

years to reissue the Document (OSCE, 2011: 47). The NATO allies have been especially keen to update the Vienna Document in order to address the issue of Russian snap exercises. NATO accuses Russia of conducting the snap exercises without inviting international inspectors, by using loopholes in the Vienna Document. The issue of snap exercises is especially worrisome to many allies, because they think Russia used a snap exercise as a disguise for the annexation of Crimea (Stoltenberg: 2016c). The unpredictability and lack of transparency, makes the snap exercises particularly destabilising. The deadline to reissue the Vienna Document of 2011 passed at the end of 2016. Despite continuous efforts to reach an agreement, the OSCE states were not able to reach a consensus. According to an official statement by the EU, the efforts to update the Vienna Document were blocked by Russia (EU, 2016). NATO have also accused Russia of failing to comply with another security regime, called the Open Skies Treaty (NATO, 2016: para. 69). The treaty allows for monitored observation flights over the territory of signatory states. It is meant to increase transparency in military activities, and strictly forbids the acquiring of intelligence. Any State Party in the treaty is permitted to conduct observation flights based up to an annual quota of flight paths, and the entire territory of a member state must be made available for peaceful surveillance. Since the outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine, however, Russia has been criticised for restricting the territory open to observation flights. This reduces the transparency and trust building purpose of the treaty. Due to the installation of high tech surveillance cameras on Russian aircraft tasked with conducting flights over the US, Russia has also been accused of breaching with the principle of none intelligence gathering by US officials (NTI, 2017b).

Afghanistan has been a continuous issue of mutual interest and discussions in the NRC meetings. Although much of the cooperation on Afghanistan has been hampered by the frictions in the NATO-Russian relationship, both Russia and NATO has an interest in avoiding the return of Taliban and chaos in Afghanistan. In February 2017, Zamir Kabulov, a Russian Foreign Ministry Official, said that Russia is concerned by the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. Kabulov said that we would prefer NATO to keep its military presence in the country to secure the positive results that have been achieved, and stated that Moscow is ready to renew cooperation with the US and other NATO powers to reach their mutual goals in Afghanistan (Ostroukh, 2017). If Russia and NATO succeed in agreeing on increased cooperation in Afghanistan, it might lead to more mutual confidence and provide a spill-over-effect to other areas. It remains to be seen if any substantial cooperation in Afghanistan is possible in the current political climate.

Except from the discussions on the issue of Ukraine, the talks in the NRC meetings have touched on little else than the issues concerning military activity and efforts to reduce the risks inherent in military deterrence. Given that NATO is a military alliance, this is hardly surprising. Détente is, however, not only concerned with the military domain. As highlighted in the background chapter on the Cold War, much of the efforts of détente occur outside of the Alliance framework and on a more bilateral basis. In order to gain a better understanding of how the Alliance and its members are pursuing détente, there is also a need to investigate the efforts of détente pursued outside of the Alliance framework. In the next part of this chapter, I'm going to revisit Germany and the United States to examine their efforts of pursuing détente with Russia after the Ukraine crisis.

5.2.3 Germany

Germany currently lobbies for a strategy similar to the Harmel approach, but what does that entail? Is the German policy towards Russia today a continuation of the Ostpolitik of Willy Brandt, or does the sanctions represent a breach with the most important aspect of the Ostpolitik, the Osthandel? Following the Ukraine crisis, Germany has taken a leading role in EU's efforts to negotiate a conflict resolution. Germany has been the most important European country in the Normandy group, that consists of France, Russia, Ukraine and Germany, and led the diplomatic negotiations that formulated the Minsk II agreement in February 2015 (Speck, 2015).

From the onset of the war in Ukraine, Merkel has insisted that there is no military solution to the crisis and rejected the permanent stationing of NATO troops in Eastern Europe, reflecting the post-war foreign policy of Germany. This stand became particularly visible after the first Minsk agreement collapsed. After considerable pressure from senior US officials, President Barack Obama considered supplying Ukraine with weapons after the break down of the cease fire. Merkel starkly opposed such a plan and stated they should continue to follow the diplomatic track (BBC, 2015b). Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, was also a staunch supporter of a diplomatic solution to the war in Ukraine. Steinmeier repeatedly appealed to the pragmatic détente approach of his predecessor Willy Brandt (Steinmeier, 2016). His support of a diplomatic solution became particularly visible when he linked a NATO exercise in Poland to "*saber-rattling and warmongering*" that served "*to inflame the situation*" between Russia and NATO, and urged the importance of a re-engagement with Russia on disarmaments and arms control (Huggler, 2016). Germany was, however, not

passive to the crisis. From the beginning of the crisis, Merkel engaged in shuttle diplomacy to persuade Putin to abandon his aggressive policy, but when the Crimean annexation was a fact and the Russian involvement in Eastern Ukraine grew, Germany opted for stronger economic and diplomatic sanctions of Russia (Hesse, et al. 2014). Being the largest European economy and Russia's main trading partner, the German decision to join the sanctions imposed on Russia were of vital importance for the economic sanctions to have any effect (Somaskanda, 2014). In spite of the considerable negative impact of these sanctions on the German economy, Markus Kerber (director general of the Federation of German Industries and one of the most important representatives of German industry and business) supported the government's decision (Forsberg, 2016: 34).

Although German-Russian trade dropped significantly after the imposing of sanctions, Osthandel has not been completely omitted from Germany's relationship to Russia. In the summer of 2015, the German energy companies of Wintershall and E.ON resumed cooperation with the state owner Russian energy giant Gazprom. Together with Royal Dutch Shell, the Austrian ÖMV and the French company ENGIE, German companies started cooperating with Gazprom on the construction of a new gas pipeline in the Baltic Sea, from Russia to Germany, called Nord Stream 2. The new project would double the capacity of the existing Nord Stream pipeline. The new route seems to be more secure than the current Ukrainian transit pipelines, but the project has a controversial dimension in that it undermines Ukraine's strategic position as a transit country of Russian gas to Europe, and in that it is led by the state-owned company of Gazprom. Consequently, the efforts of EU officials have delayed the project, because they fear that the project would strengthen Russia's energy dominance in Europe. The project was, nevertheless, revitalized by an influx of European funding in April 2017. The construction is set to start in 2018, but the project has met sharp opposition by Poland, the Baltic states and other EU countries, that argue that Nord Stream 2 contradicts European efforts to reduce their reliance on Russian gas, and the objective to diversify the EU's energy supply (Foy, et al, 2017). The German political leadership has been defending the Nord Stream 2 as a commercial project of private investors. Nevertheless, Washington is also sceptical of the German enterprise. Amos Hochstein, US special envoy and coordinator for international affairs, said that the US administration is sceptical of the argument that Nord Stream 2 is a purely commercial project, pointing out that current pipeline isn't running at full capacity (Delcker, 2016). The argument that the project would increase German energy security is, however, valid.

Even though, Merkel has tied the lifting of sanctions to Russian compliance with the Minsk Agreement, the Nord Stream 2 project isn't the only example of German efforts to increase bilateral trade with Russia outside of the areas affected by the sanctions. In September 2016, the then acting Vice Chancellor and Economic Affairs Minister, Sigmar Gabriel, visited Moscow together with a contingent of German industry delegates to hold talks with other Russian industry representatives. Although the main purpose of Gabriel's visit to Moscow focused on the bilateral trade, he also discussed the crisis in Ukraine and Syria with Putin (Deutsche Welle, 2016).

The relatively frequent bilateral meetings between Russian and German officials suggests that Merkel didn't abandon the long-standing German policy of détente and engagement with Russia. As the only Western European political leader, Angela Merkel visited Moscow in May 2015 to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Though she declined the invitation to observe the military parade at the Red Square and arrived one day later, the fact that she decided to go underscored the German commitment to diplomacy and helped to preserve trust and respect between Germany and Russia (BBC, 2015c).

Before Germany took the chairmanship of the OSCE for 2016, Steinmeier pledged that Germany would use its position as the Chair of OSCE to restore security, trust and dialogue in Europe (Steinmeier, 2015: 1). As a part of the effort to deescalate the tensions and to preserve dialogue, Germany has struggled to keep channels of citizen-to-citizen contact open. Referring to the human dimension of the Helsinki Final Act, Steinmeier stressed the importance of civil society contact as a part of the OSCE framework (Steinmeier, 2015: 2-3). Merkel reaffirmed this approach, on her visit to Moscow in May 2017. She stressed the need to maintain the two countries' cultural and humanitarian relationship, in science and youth exchange programmes, at a time of "*grave differences of opinion*", to preserve a mutual understanding between the two. Although, the visit was described by German officials as a bridge-building mission, Merkel did not go soft on Putin. She raised concerns over human rights violations in Chechnya, restrictions on the freedom of assembly and the spread of misinformation by Russian media. Merkel also urged Russia to do more to guarantee the ceasefires in Ukraine and Syria. She also stated that she and Putin had completely different opinions over the cause of the conflict in Ukraine (Connolly, 2017).

Preceding Merkel's last visit to Moscow, the then newly appointed Foreign Minister, Sigmar Gabriel, made a new bilateral meeting with President Putin and Foreign Minister

Lavrov in Moscow in March. The main topic of the meeting was the German-Russian relationship including Ukraine, Syria and NATO. At the meeting, Gabriel expressed concerns that NATO and Russia were entering into a new arms race, and stressed the importance of avoiding a new Cold War. Concerning the implementation of the Minsk Agreement, both sides agreed on the aim of strengthening the OSCE Monitoring Mission (Germany's Federal Foreign Office, 2017).

Even though there have been some efforts to maintain parts of the trading relationship between Germany and Russia, the economic relationship between the two countries has suffered substantially since the imposing of sanctions. Despite projects like the Nord Stream 2 and remarks made by the former Foreign Minister Steinmeier, calling the NATO exercise Anakonda in Poland 2016 unnecessary "*saber-rattling and warmongering*", the German policy towards Russia has not been that of appeasement (Huggler, 2016). Merkel has not shied away from criticising Russian actions in Ukraine and Syria. The German administration has also remained a firm supporter of the sanctions, while at the same time maintained diplomatic contact with Russia through bilateral and multilateral meetings. While the German efforts to secure adherence to the Minsk II Agreement has failed, the continuous diplomatic and political contact serve to preserve a level of mutual trust and understanding.

5.2.4 USA

By contrast to the German relationship with Russia after the eruption of the crisis in Ukraine, the American policy towards Russia has been more fluctuating. In 2014, the Obama Administration joined the EU in rolling out increasingly stronger sanctions on Russia in response to the Russian actions in Ukraine. "*What we are expecting is that the Russian leadership will see once again that its actions in Ukraine have consequences, including a weakening economy, and increasing diplomatic isolation*" President Obama remarked, after initiating new sanctions (quoted in Acosta and Cohen, 2014). Obama has also supported German and French negotiations in the Normandy format, but refrained from participating in the negotiations directly. The relationship between the US and Russia had already started to deteriorate before the Russian intervention in Ukraine, and it followed a downward spiral until the change in the US administration in January 2017.

The US-Russia relationship soured further, when Putin decided to intervene in the Syrian conflict on the side of President Assad. The Russian intervention was a serious blow

for the US, who supported the Syrian opposition. Obama denounced the Russian bombing campaign in Syria and said that the US was not going to cooperate with the Russian campaign to support Assad (Baker, 2015). The Americans and the Russians managed to break a deal in October 2015 to ensure that American and Russian aircrafts operating in Syria didn't come into conflict with each other, but their differences made any further cooperation unattainable. Trying to reach a diplomatic settlement of the Syrian conflict, The US and Russia engaged in several peace talks over Syria, but the talks collapsed (Wintour, 2016) (Shear and Cumming-Bruce, 2016).

The diplomatic relationship between the US and Russia received another blow, when Russia was accused of hacking the Democratic National Committee. The allegation was that Russian state sponsored hacking groups had hacked the Democratic Party and published internal e-mails to hurt the presidential campaign of Hilary Clinton. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Russia intervened with the primary aim of helping Donald Trump to power (Mazzetti and Lichblau, 2016). The Obama Administration reacted with measures targeting Russia's intelligence services and expelled 35 Russian diplomats accused of espionage. To the surprise of many observers, the Kremlin did not respond in a symmetrical manner. In an effort to create better relations with the incoming President Donald Trump, Putin decided not to respond by expelling any American diplomats. Trump praised the Russian move, calling Putin "very smart". Putin stated that; *"We will make further steps to help resurrect Russian-American relations based on the policies that the administration of Trump will pursue,"* (Walker and Adley, 2016). Trump had several times expressed his willingness to search for a closer relationship with Russia and used more favourable rhetoric of Putin, during the election campaign.

During the US presidential campaign, there was a considerable amount of hope in Russia that an election victory for Donald Trump would be beneficial to the US-Russia relationship. In the campaign, Trump had spoken positively about President Putin and the opportunity of a more cooperative relationship with Russia. During the presidential campaign, Trump received a lot of favourable media coverage in Russia. In Russian state media Trump was portrayed as someone fighting the "corrupt and Russia-hating" Washington elite (Rosenberg, 2017). At the end of March 2017, the Trump administration stated that US diplomatic policy on Syria was no longer focused on making the Syrian President Assad leave power (Nichols, 2017). The statement, made by the US ambassador to the United Nations, marked a departure from the official policy of the Obama administration. The changed policy

on the fate of Assad, also made the possibility of a closer cooperation between the US and Russia in Syria more attainable.

One of the areas where Trump saw an opportunity for closer cooperation with Russia, was the campaign against the Islamic State (IS) in Syria. In a phone call following the terrorist attack in St. Petersburg, Trump offered the full support of the United States government in responding to the attack and bringing those responsible to justice. In what the White House described as a significant start in fixing the Russian-American relationship, Trump and Putin agreed to cooperate in the fight against IS. According to a statement issued by the White House, the two leaders discussed "*efforts in working together to achieve more peace throughout the world including Syria*". The Kremlin issued a similar statement after the conversation, which said that both leaders were ready to cooperate "*on a constructive, equitable and mutually beneficial basis*" (Al Jazeera, 2017).

The new Russian hope of a less confrontational American administration was, however, dashed by the American decision to fire missiles at the Syrian airport used by the Syrian Air Force, to punish the alleged use of poisons gas by the Syrian army. The White House also accused Russia of trying to cover-up the chemical attack, made by their ally (Davis and Cooper, 2017). Russia condemned the attack and briefly suspended the communication line, that was designed to avoid incidents between the two countries air forces in the Syrian airspace. The renewed tensions between Russia and the US was reflected at a meeting between the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Putin in Moscow 12 April 2017. Tillerson visited Moscow with a joint message from the G7 countries (formerly the G8, before Russia's exclusion) that Russia should withdraw its support for the Assad Regime in Syria. Putin said that trust had eroded between the two states, in what has been described as "*an unusual hostile reception*" for the US Secretary of State (Graff, 2017). Due to the American attack on the Russian ally, Putin said that "*One could say that the level of trust on a working level, especially on the military level, has not improved but has rather deteriorated*" (Graff, 2017). Rex Tillerson and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov did, however, manage to carve out some areas where they could agree. In a joint press conference after the meeting, Tillerson stated that they had "*discussed approaches to improving our channels of communication*". As a part of this effort, Tillerson said that "*We agreed there needs to be more senior-level communication between our two countries, both at a diplomatic and military level.*" and "*We have agreed to establish a working group to address smaller issues and make progress toward stabilizing the relationship, so that we can then address the more*

serious problems". The US Secretary of State also emphasised that Russia and the US had a common interest in solving the issues of North-Korea and Syria, and that they had agreed on the importance of "*a unified and stable Syria... [and] ...to deny a safe haven for terrorists who want to attack both of our countries,*" and "*that North Korea has to be de-nuclearized.*" (Tillerson, 2017). During the talks, the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov is reported to have expressed interest in resuming a pragmatic dialogue on strategic stability and arms control. The issue was, however, not mentioned in the public press conference afterwards (Tennis, 2017). These are all steps in the direction of increased détente and suggests that the Americans and Russians wish to move forward with confidence-building measures and to reduce uncertainty. Tillerson did, however, state that "*Until full progress is made under the Minsk Accords, the situation in Ukraine will remain an obstacle to improvement in relations between the U.S. and Russia*", making further détente conditional upon the implementation of the Minsk accords (Tillerson, 2017).

Despite the increased tensions between the Trump administration and the Kremlin after the US missile attack in Syria, Trump has continued to express his wish for a more cooperative relationship with Russia. He has also continuously refused to lay the blame for the hacking of the Democratic Party upon the Russians, saying that it could have been anyone. Despite the missile attack against the Syrian Air Force, Trump told ambassadors from the United Nations Security Council in late April, that "*The future of Assad is not a deal-breaker*" (Baker and MacFarquhar, 2017). On 2 May, Trump and Putin held a new conversation over the phone, where they again discussed the prospects of ending the violence in Syria and the strategy of working more closely on defeating IS. Trump agreed to send a representative to the cease-fire talks in Kazakhstan, and the two presidents also discussed meeting each other at the G20 meeting in Germany in July. Putin and Trump also discussed the issue of North Korea (Baker and MacFarquhar, 2017)

Trump's efforts to ease tensions with Russia has been a subject of ongoing criticism from the opposition. The alleged Russian meddling in the American presidential campaign, made cooperation with Russia very unpopular domestically. The continued unraveling of the hacking scandal, including the resignation of Trump's National Security Advisor Michael Flynn who had championed closer US-Russian ties, made a pursuit for closer ties with Russia hard (Rosenberg, 2017). Domestic opposition has repeatedly accused Trump of being a puppet of Putin (Haberman, et al. 2017). After the last phone call in May, Adrienne Watson, the deputy communications director of the Democratic National Committee criticised

Trump's rapprochement. *"Trump's bromance with Putin appears to be back on track,"* she said in a statement. *"Instead of sending Putin a tough message on backing Assad's brutal regime, Trump appears to be opting for a strategy of appeasement."* (Baker and MacFarquhar, 2017). With the extensive powers of the American President in the realm of foreign policy, Trump does, however, possess the power to pursue the policy as he sees fit towards Russia, without concerning himself too much with domestic opposition.

5.3 Concluding Analysis

The increased frequency of meetings held in the NRC may be interpreted as a sign of increased willingness of both sides to explore the option of détente. The ongoing exchange of views may also serve to build confidence, and alter misconceptions and false stereotypes. Yet, the result of these talks bares little hope that the differences between NATO and Russia are about to be mitigated. So far, there has been little to none progress towards achieving a mutually acceptable agreement on the most divisive issue, Ukraine. The talks directed at avoiding misunderstanding, miscalculation, and unintended escalation, and to increase transparency and predictability have shown more promise of success. The mutual briefings on force posturing is a tool to increase transparency and to build trust. The continued talks within the framework of the Baltic Sea Project Team and the International Civil Aviation Organisation have also shown some promise of progress. Still, many of the efforts launched by NATO to increase mutual trust and confidence, are hampered by the ongoing tensions and a lack of trust. Existing security regimes, like the CFE and the INF treaties, have broken down in the face of worsening relations and tensions. Efforts to update other existing initiatives, like the Vienna Document, have also failed. Adding to this, mutual distrust and failure of compliance, has reduced the transparency and trust-building effect of the Open Skies Treaty. Despite their limited success, these initiatives still constitute examples of NATO's efforts to pursue détente with Russia, by trying to prevent instability and to reduce uncertainty. The emphasis of the NRC to address issues of risk-management and its failure to achieve more ambitious policies of trust-building and gradual reciprocation in tension-reduction, also reflects that the efforts of NATO to pursue dialogue are constrained by the lowest common denominator of the Alliance.

The bilateral approaches of Germany and the US have so far shown little ability to solve the underlying political issues that divide NATO and Russia. The American relationship

to Russia, under the Obama administration, suffered from grave differences over the crisis in Ukraine and Syria, and the hacking of the Democratic National Committee. With the new American president, the tone seemed to change. During the election campaign, Trump talked about warmer relations to Russia and made positive remarks about Putin. The verbal de-escalation was met by a positive coverage by the Russian state owned media, which led to a short period of reciprocation in verbal tensions-reduction on both sides. Russian hopes for a quick improvement of the US-Russian relationship was, however, crippled by the American missile strike on Syrian government forces and the relationship reached a new low. Still, the American president has continued to search for areas where he can cooperate with Russia. His willingness to discuss the fate of Assad, may be interpreted as an effort to solve one of the underlying political divisions between the US and Russia. Contrary to his critics, Trump's efforts to pursue détente with Russia have not amounted to appeasement. He hasn't withdrawn US support for the sanctions, and the White House has also made it clear that Trump expects the annexation of Crimea to be reversed (Rosenberg, 2017).

Angela Merkel's position is a cautiously crafted compromise. To keep the door open to détente, Merkel has sought to favour sanctions as opposed to a military response; to maintain the overall framework of NATO–Russia partnership (the 1997 Founding Act and the NRC), and by focusing on the Minsk accords in the Ukraine negotiations she has tied the lifting of sanctions to the war in eastern Ukraine as opposed to Crimea. There are however separate sanctions tied to Crimea. The German administration has also stressed the importance of citizen-to-citizen contact and other measures of tension reduction, to preserve trust and keep the hostilities from boiling over. To avoid appearing forgiving towards Russia, Merkel has invested heavily in the maintenance of EU sanctions and signed up as a framework nation in NATO's EFP battalion in Lithuania, she has also openly criticised Russia on several occasions. The sanctions have made a pursuit of Osthandel difficult, but efforts to maintain a working trading relationship may still be observed. Merkel has made the prospects of the easing of sanctions conditional on the implementation of the Minsk II agreement. In this matter, Germany and the EU enjoys considerably higher leverage over Russia, than what the US does. This is exemplified by the considerable difference in trade figures between EU-Russia and US-Russia. In 2015, the total trade in goods between the EU and Russia amounted to 222 billion US dollars, while the US-Russian trade only amounted to 23 billion US dollars (Samp, et al. 2017: 95). The continued talks on trade serve to remind Russia of the potential prospects of increased trade and investments, if the Kremlin change its

foreign policy course. Apart from the risk-reduction, arms control, citizen-to-citizen and diplomatic contact, further détente appears to be conditional on the ceasefire. Thus, making détente to an end, rather than a gradual approach. The possibility of cooperation and the eventual transformation into a partnership, seems to be conditional upon the end of the Russian occupation of Crimea.

Germany has taken the leading role in the Western search for détente with Russia. Although, the Obama administration lent its support to the German efforts to reach a diplomatic solution to the crisis, Obama has taken a backseat role in the overall engagement with Russia after his reset-policy broke down. Since Trump took office, he has engaged in a low-level détente with the Russians. He has talked more warmly about the Russian leadership and he has created space for closer and more regular dialogue, both at a senior and at lower levels. Trump has also gone to greater lengths than his predecessor in exploring areas of common interests with the Russians and opened for a compromise on the future of Assad. There is, however, hard to find a coherent policy of détente in Trump's foreign policy. The ambiguity of his actions and rhetoric, and the often contradictory statements made by the President and the Secretary of State, make it hard to determine how committed Trump is to détente and how he is trying to achieve it. Contrary to the American administration, the German approach to détente appears to be more consistent. While keeping a strong stance on the principle of international law, the German Chancellor is doing what she can to keep the dialogue going and the conflict from escalating. Both Trump and Merkel are active in the first part of détente, in that they are both trying to limit the conflict and seeks ways to deescalate the tensions. Merkel does, however, appear to be more active and consistent in her policies. Further détente, implying a better relationship and the possibility of a transformation into a partnership, rests on a solution to the war in Ukraine and adherence to the Minsk Agreement. In this regard, both the German and the American policies are matching, as they treat the final stage of détente more as an end, than a means.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Summary and Conclusion

It's apparent that NATO has moved from the assurance measures of the Wales Summit, to a strategy more in line with deterrence, after the Warsaw Summit. The new battalions of the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) and the American rotational armoured brigade (ABCT) possess actual war-fighting capabilities, and constitute an important function in the overall deterrence of NATO in the east. The multinational trip-wire forces of the EFP, the US ABCT and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) are, however, not designed to fight off a full-scale conventional invasion. Instead, they are designed to send a political signal of the Alliance's cohesion and resolve. The multinational character of the forces, are meant to ensure that an attack against the territory they protect would also involve a direct attack against all the nations represented in the multinational battalions, making a unified allied response more likely. The main objective of the trip-wire deterrence is to deter an attack by showing political unity and alliance solidarity. NATO is already the strongest military force in the world. The prospect of a unified military response, should be able to change the cost-benefit calculations of Russia. The main purpose of the EFP and the VJTF is not to strengthen NATO's capability to react, but to ensure its political resolve and to bolster Article 5 of the Washington Treaty as a political process. Yet, it is unclear how NATO would react if the deterrence of the EFP and VJTF would fail. For deterrence to be reliable, there needs to exist a plan coupled with a suitable capability to act in case deterrence fails. As demonstrated by the modest number of troops deployed in the area, and the limited size of the follow-on forces, NATO is not planning to conduct deterrence by denial. At present, the only real backdrop to the trip-wire forces deployed along NATO's eastern flank is nuclear retaliation. Such a response to a limited conventional attack is, however, unthinkable. In order to avoid relying on a nuclear escalation, the Alliance is currently working on improving its capability to react by conventional means. As a part of the effort, NATO is bolstering its conventional armies and enhancing their ability to respond more swiftly when called upon. Currently, it would take the Alliance several months to reinforce the contested area or to launch a counteroffensive. It is also unclear how NATO should respond to the A2/AD challenge and whether NATO possesses the means to counter the challenge without overstepping some Russian red lines.

The dilemma NATO is facing in its search for stronger defence and deterrence, is that the increased military capability and activity risks strengthening the Russian threat perception, which in turn would encourage Russia to respond by enhancing their own military capability. As described by the spiral model, arms and armies designed to defend, may also be used in offensive actions. Defensive measures may, therefore, be interpreted as signs of hostile intentions by neighbouring states and thus create instability. NATO is trying to solve this dilemma in the way the Alliance is deploying its forces. By limiting its presence in Poland and the Baltic countries to a rotational brigade size deployment (approximately 4000 troops), the Alliance is ensuring that their military presence possess no offensive capability to threaten Russian territory. By adhering to the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, that stated that no permanent substantial combat forces should be deployed in the region, NATO is trying to prove its purely defensive intentions to the Russians. Coupled with repetitive vocal and written reassurance of NATO's defensive intentions, this act of military restraint is, perhaps, the most visible act of détente by NATO today.

NATO's pursuit of dialogue, seems to be focused on risk-reduction, transparency and trust-building measures, similar to the Harmel goal of creating a "*more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be solved*" (NATO, 1967: para. 5). So far, most of the progress has been made on risk-reduction. Concrete steps to avoid dangerous incidents in the Baltic Sea are discussed within the format of the Baltic Sea Project Team and the International Civil Aviation Organisation. Mutual briefings in the NRC on force posturing and exercises also help to increase transparency and may serve to build confidence. Yet, the prospects of obtaining more ambitious agreements and new deals of trust-building and arms control seem daunting. Existing security regimes and arms control agreements, designed to build confidence, stability and transparency, and to limit competition and arms races, have failed to pass the stress test of an increasingly hostile relationship and lack of mutual trust. Efforts to update the Vienna Document of 2011, have also failed. Still, the negotiations on security regimes arms control are important in themselves because they provide a forum for dialogue and exchange of information. Even when negotiations fail, the negotiation process on arms control is important as they offer insights into the other party's strategic thinking.

Reading from statements by the EU and NATO, it seems like Russia is unwilling to engage the West in any ambitious effort to form a new détente. There is, however, some foot-dragging within the Alliance, too. The reluctance of many of the eastern members of the Alliance to engage in dialogue and détente, seems to be deriving from their perceived

insecurity and military imbalance compared with Russia. One of the lessons that could be drawn from the efforts of the Alliance to agree upon a common approach to détente in the 1960s, is that progress on the Harmel Report was facilitated by a strong existing defence and a renewed strategic concept. It might be that the CEE countries will become more confident and more willing to play a constructive role in the dialogues with Russia, when the defence plans of the Warsaw Summit are fully implemented and the EFP is properly in place.

On the bilateral basis, Germany has taken on the leading role in the efforts to address the war in Ukraine, the underlying political issue dividing NATO and Russia. Unfortunately, the German engagement in the Normandy format to achieve a ceasefire and a political settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, has been unsuccessful. The Minsk II Agreement only exists on paper, and violations of the ceasefire occur on a daily basis. The German leadership has, however, been more successful in its pursuit of the first part of détente, although the Russian enthusiasm for détente has been rather limited. Partly due to German initiatives, the Alliance has been steered in the direction of détente. In the drafting of the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, Germany was able to form the agenda of NATO. The emphasis on dialogue in the Communiqué and the explicit reaffirmation of NATO's compliance to the NATO-Russia Founding Act, clearly reflects German priorities. The German government has also shown that it has the ability to take issues off the agenda, as demonstrated when US was considering to provide lethal arms to the Ukrainian government. The German leadership has also gone to great lengths to keep its diplomatic ties with Russia open, by paying its respect to the Russian celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II and by seemingly using the bilateral trade to keep the dialogue going with the Kremlin. Germany's emphasis on maintaining the cultural and humanitarian relationship and to keep citizen-to-citizen contact going reflects the Ostpolitik of the Cold War and the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act. Similar to the goal of Willy Brandt's détente, such policies serve to alter the threat perception and false stereotypes in the civil society, both domestically and in Russia.

The American engagement with Russia under the Barack Obama administration, was largely contained by the US-Russian differences over the war in Syria and the fate of President Assad. Although Obama supported the German and French efforts to obtain peace in Ukraine through the Minsk accords, Obama chose to take a more cautious role in the diplomatic efforts to solve the crisis. The unravelling of the hacking scandal of the Democratic National Committee served to worsen the relationship even further and made

détente unattainable. The change in administration gave the Russians hope of a more cooperative America and a new era of détente. Even though the Democratic opposition has accused Trump of appeasement and of being Putin's puppet, the Russian leadership has so far been left disappointed by Donald Trump's administration. As pointed out by President Putin, the US bombing of Assad's air force led to a new low in the relationship between the US and Russia. The Trump administration has shown considerable ambiguity in its approach to the Kremlin and their conflicting interests in Syria. After the G7 meeting in April, Tillerson was reported to have carried a joint demand of Assad's removal to his Russian counterpart. Only a couple of weeks later, did Trump tell the UN diplomats that the fate of Assad was not a deal-breaker. Although Trump and his Secretary of State has managed to reach some agreements with the Russians on establishing closer and more regular communication, the overall prospects of American détente with Russia appear to be lacking. The general ambiguity of the American leadership and Trump's unpopularity among Western leaders makes Trump an unlikely candidate to lead NATO's diplomatic engagement with Russia.

In the introduction, I described how NATO was criticised for both being too weak on deterrence and too reluctant on détente. In a way, it seems like both critiques are valid to a certain degree. NATO's trip-wire deterrence sends an important political signal of alliance cohesion and solidarity, but the ability to enforce the threat if deterrence breaks appears to be inadequate. NATO would eventually prevail in a prolonged conventional conflict, but the cohesion of the Alliance is vulnerable to pressure in a protracted period of mobilization and mustering of reinforcements. NATO is currently working on shortening its reaction time to mitigate this vulnerability and to strengthen the credibility of its trip-wire deterrence. In the area of détente, the Alliance currently focuses on reducing the chance of a miscalculated war, unintentional escalation and the chance of military accidents. The breakdown of existing security regimes and arms control agreements, and the inability of the NRC to agree on concrete measures to strengthen confidence-building, transparency and risk-reduction measures, suggests that the Alliance is failing to achieve the first objective of détente. However, the limited success of NATO's détente policy, doesn't prove that the Alliance isn't trying to achieve détente. It takes two to tango, as the saying goes. The deployment of the EFP embodies the dual-track approach of deterrence and détente. While serving as a trip-wire deterrence, the limited size of the deployment and the strict adherence to the NATO-Russia Founding Act demonstrates the Alliance's efforts to show its defensive intentions and to pursue détente. The efforts to solve the underlying political issues, Ukraine (and Syria to a

lesser degree), have been equally unsuccessful. Germany, and the US to some degree, are nevertheless active in lowering the tensions and pursuing dialogue to keep the door open for détente. Further détente is, however, conditional upon the successful implementation of the Minsk II Agreement. NATO's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, is correct when he is saying that NATO is delivering on both deterrence and dialogue, but the efforts need to be improved if the Alliance ought to be successful.

6.2 The Prospects of Ending the Conflict and Suggestions for Further Research

One of the main objectives of détente is to show that there is more to be gained by diplomacy than by military means. In the Warsaw Summit Communiqué, the Alliance offered the prospect of a strategic partnership to Russia, if it ceased its hostile actions and committed itself to follow international rules. Evidence from the two last decades, however, tells us that such an offer is not enough to secure a cooperative relationship with Russia. In the Russian view, the partnership that was offered in the NRC and the EU partnership programme were considered to be merely a junior partnership where Russian interest and concerns were largely ignored. The NRC was considered to be a *“sugar coating for the bitter pill of enlargement [and] the EU's idea of partnership was that Russia should adopt the EU's rules”* (Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security, 2015: 8). Unless the West wants to rely solely on military deterrence to make the use of military means unattractive to the Russians, NATO and the EU need to consider how they can better accommodate Russian interests and concerns. It is clear that an enhanced understanding of Russian interests, strategic and political thinking is needed, for the policy makers of NATO's member states to better interact with their Russian counterparts. More research and expertise in this matter is desirable.

If the policies of risk reduction, trust and stability-building succeed in reaching a *“more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be solved”* (NATO, 1967: para. 5), how are those underlying political issues like Crimea going to be solved? There seems to be no mutually recognized status quo in Europe (Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security, 2015: 24). As pointed out by a variety of researchers, the underlying issues of conflict seem to stem from two incompatible ideologies, or rather, world views (Matlary, 2016: 35-57) (Radin and Reach, 2017: 87-89) (Lipman, 2014). The Russian view seems to derive from what may be described as realism based on spheres of interest. In the Russian

view, the world is moving towards, and should be better off with, a multipolar world order based on the balance of power, in which it sees itself as one of the great powers. As a great power, Russia should have its own sphere of influence in its respective neighbourhood (Turner, 2009). Within this sphere of influence, Russia should enjoy a privileged position, and the West should avoid meddling in that influence sphere and respect Russia as a great power. Consequently, the West should avoid drawing those states close to Russia into the Western sphere of influence, by expanding the EU and NATO (Putin, 2015). In a report following a meeting in the Panel of Eminent Persons of OSCE, the Russian professor Sergey Karaganov described the Russian view of the current conflict. In this view, the expansion of the Western institutions after the Cold War, came at the expense of Russian security interests (Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security, 2015: 24).

By contrast, the Western liberalistic worldview dismisses this spheres of interest centred realism as a nineteenth-century approach. The Western worldview suggests that every nation should be and has the right to be democratic, and that any democratic state has the right to determine their own foreign policy, external affiliations and alliances (Shilliam, 2009) (Owen, 1994). Following this view, there is also a principle that neither Russia or the West has the right to prevent any state from joining the EU or NATO, as long as the aspiring state meets the given criteria. The incompatibility of these two worldviews are highlighted in the case of Ukraine. According to the Russian view, has the West no right to offer the prospect of increased partnership or even membership in NATO or the EU to Ukraine, as Russia understands it to be within its privileged sphere of influence. Equally, the West maintains that Russia has no right interfere in Ukraine's choice of external affiliation. To the West, the annexation of Crimea is also threatening another crucial principle of the rule-based, international, post-World War II order: that there can be no redrawing of international borders by force.

For both sides these principles are hard, or even impossible, to back away from. This makes the hope of a diplomatic settlement and the overcoming of underlying political issues look quite distant. It is hard to imagine a compromise over Ukraine, that does not conflict with the basic principles of either side. Hence, the prospect of a political agreement between NATO and Russia seems daunting. However, the political and ideological division of Cold War Europe, also seemed to be incompatible and unbreakable. Yet, the countries of NATO pursued a policy of détente that sought to overcome this division of incompatible worldviews. During the Cold War, it took the almost catastrophic event of the Cuban Missile Crisis in

1962, before NATO and the Soviet Union moved towards détente. The first effort to decrease the risk of miscalculated war and unintentional escalation were embodied in the “hot-line” between the White House and the Kremlin. It took almost a decade after the Cuban Missile Crisis for the increased emphasis on détente to be translated into concrete measures like the strategic arms control agreements and crisis prevention agreements of 1972. Almost another two decades were required before Germany was reunified and the Cold War ended.

Considering the road ahead for the relationship between NATO and Russia, it looks like there are three realistic possible scenarios. If the détente succeeds in both tensions reductions and solving the underlying problem of conflict, a return to business as normal, where Russia and NATO are cooperating and rivalry is low, should be obtainable. A stable but adversarial relationship with a minimal risk of conflict might be expected, if no agreements are made on Ukraine, but the Russians and NATO manage to agree on a common understanding of détente where the rules of competition are reasonably clear and accepted, and arms control agreements increase strategic and regional stability. This scenario is similar to the Cold War relationship after the implementation of the Harmel Report. If no agreements are achieved in Ukraine and détente continues to fail to achieve a substantial reduction in tensions and an effective security regime, an unstable hostile relationship should be expected. In such a scenario, where the status quo is contested, rules are uncertain, arms control have little effect and fail to improve military stability, there would be a substantial and continuous risk of conflict and a downward spiral of trust and stability.

In order to avoid the most daunting scenario, there is a need to enhance our understanding of how the different strategies and policies of deterrence and détente work and how they interact with each other. For the dual-track strategy of NATO to be successful, more research is needed to properly understand how deterrence and détente should be combined. Especially détente and tensions reduction are understudied and demand more attention from scholars in the field of international relations. The combination of deterrence and détente does, however, appear to be the right approach as the exclusion of either track entails a considerable risk. An exclusive reliance on deterrence might provoke Russian counteractions and trigger a downward spiral of escalation, while a singular focus on détente may leave the Alliance vulnerable to hostilities and threats.

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