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Transatlantic Security Challenges – Central and Eastern Europe Prepared Statement of Julianne Smith



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Prepared Statement of Julianne Smith

Senior Fellow and Director of the Strategy and Statecraft Program, Center for a New American Security

Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Johnson, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the transatlantic security challenges in Central and Eastern Europe. I appreciate the Subcommittee's attention to this issue—one that I have written about as a scholar and focused on closely while serving in the Obama administration.

Russia's recent annexation of Crimea raises a number of questions about the future of transatlantic security. Europe and the United States share three core objectives associated with this crisis all of which require close transatlantic cooperation: isolating Russia and halting further Russian aggression, reassuring allies in Central and Eastern Europe and supporting the interim government in Kiev. I would like to focus today on the last two tasks. Both sides of the Atlantic deserve praise for their ongoing work in these areas but several challenges lie ahead. It will be absolutely critical in the coming weeks and months for the transatlantic partners to show continuing resolve, enhance their efforts to date and ensure that they don't provide President Putin with an opportunity to drive a wedge through NATO or the transatlantic relationship more broadly.

Transatlantic Efforts to Reassure Central and Eastern Europe

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe have watched events in Ukraine with considerable alarm. Given their proximity to Russia's borders; their inability to counter a Russian military threat relying solely on their own defense forces; past experience with various types of Russian intimidation; and, in some cases, Russian minorities numbering in the hundreds of thousands (which could potentially serve as a pretext for Russian aggression), many of the countries in this region are feeling increasingly vulnerable. Even NATO member states that benefit from an Article 5 security guarantee and countries like Poland that have made considerable progress in modernizing their own defense forces over the last twenty years have made it clear in recent weeks that they are seeking additional layers of reassurance from both sides of the Atlantic.

In the first few days following the Crimea crisis, the United States undertook a number of steps to address the security concerns of its NATO allies in Central and Eastern Europe. Those steps included dispatching six F-15s to the Baltic States as part of the ongoing Baltic Air Policing Mission, extending the USS Truxtun's stay in the Black Sea

and deploying 12 F-16s and 200 airmen to Poland. The United States also plans to send F-16 fighter jets to Romania this month as part of planned joint exercises, and a guided missile destroyer is scheduled to arrive in the Black Sea today for training and exercises.

In comparison to the United States, Western Europe was somewhat slower to respond to reassurance requests stemming from Central and Eastern Europe. Some countries like the United Kingdom and France offered swift support and NATO agreed in mid-March to send two surveillance planes to fly over Poland and Romania. But a number of countries in Western Europe felt that NATO's security guarantee should be sufficient and were hesitant to commit to do more either due to resourcing constraints or concerns about unnecessarily provoking the Russians. There are signs, however, that European reticence is changing. NATO's recent ministerial in Brussels on April 1-2 succeeded in garnering additional forms of support for Central and Eastern Europe. At least eight countries pledged to provide assets to bolster the NATO's eastern flank.¹ NATO's supreme military commander, Gen. Philip Breedlove, was tasked to look for additional ways to deploy or reinforce land, sea and air forces in Eastern Europe, upgrade training and military exercises and update contingency plans. In addition, NATO foreign ministers discussed ways in which they might boost the readiness of the NATO Response Force (NRF) consisting of 13,000 troops available on short notice.

CEE allies, while appreciative of these steps, continue to yearn for tangible measures beyond reassurance especially in light of the recent protests in eastern Ukraine, which by many accounts are being orchestrated by Russia and could serve as a pretext for more Russian aggression. Specifically, some countries such as Poland and the Baltic States have made it clear that what they really want is a permanent ground presence. At the NATO Ministerial in early April, Radek Sikorski, the Polish Foreign Minister, asked NATO to station 10,000 troops on Polish territory as a demonstration of NATO's resolve to defend its member states. That request went unanswered but raised one of the toughest questions associated with reassuring NATO allies in Central and Eastern Europe – will the Alliance consider abandoning a 1997 pledge to Russia not to permanently station NATO troops in new member states?² That question has triggered

¹ James Neuger, "NATO Reassures East Allies as it Questions Russian Pullback," *Bloomberg*, April 01, 2014, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-04-01/nato-to-reassure-eastern-allies-amid-no-sign-of-russian-pullback.html>.

² In 1990, in an effort to secure Soviet approval for German reunification, the parties participating in the Two Plus Four talks agreed that NATO troops and nuclear weapons would not be stationed in Eastern

² In 1990, in an effort to secure Soviet approval for German reunification, the parties participating in the Two Plus Four talks agreed that NATO troops and nuclear weapons would not be stationed in Eastern Europe. NATO repeated that promise in 1997 during the first round of NATO enlargement when it stated that it had "no intentions, no plans, and no reason" to send substantial numbers of troops and military assets to countries bordering the former Soviet Union.

a lively debate inside the halls of NATO and across the capitals of NATO member states.

While a number of European countries have condemned the Russian annexation of Crimea in the harshest terms and called for punitive measures, few Western European leaders have shown a willingness to date to reverse the 1997 pledge not to station troops in Eastern Europe. When he was asked at the NATO Ministerial about this issue, the Dutch foreign minister, Frans Timmermans, responded by stating, “No, we don’t need any NATO troops on the border with Russia.”³ That sentiment has been repeated by officials in Berlin and other European capitals.⁴ The rationale behind it is multifold. First and foremost, a number of NATO members worry about the risks of escalating the conflict with Russia at a time when they are pursuing diplomatic means to solve the crisis. Second, publics in some NATO member states oppose even less controversial reassurance measures in Central and Eastern Europe. For example, in Germany, more than 60% of the population opposes sending the country’s air force to strengthen NATO’s eastern borders (which would not be inconsistent with the 1997 pledge).⁵ Finally, as they prepare to withdraw from over a decade of conflict in Afghanistan, some NATO members simply lack the will to deploy ground forces. Others just lack the actual capabilities to do so. All that said, NATO should immediately determine if Russia has already broken its own promises outlined in the NATO–Russia Founding Act, thereby freeing us of the 1997 obligation and opening up the option of stationing troops in Eastern Europe.

While the United States has yet to respond formally to Poland’s request for ground troops, Secretary Hagel, during a meeting with Asian defense ministers in Hawaii on April 3, indicated that the U.S. was looking at the possibility of permanently stationing an additional U.S. Army brigade in Europe. Considering that it was just a little more than two years ago when the Department of Defense withdrew from Europe two of its four Army brigades and eliminated them from the force, doing so would represent a substantial reversal in U.S. force posture. It is no secret that the United States is facing genuine resource constraints that have forced the administration to prioritize its core missions, shrink the size of its armed forces and reduce its global presence. As a

³ Bruno Waterfield and Tony Paterson, “Ukraine Crisis: Poland Asks NATO to Station 10,000 Troops on Its Territory,” *The Telegraph*, April 01, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10737838/Ukraine-crisis-Poland-asks-Nato-to-station-10000-troops-on-its-territory.html>.

⁴ Spiegel Staff, “Ukraine Crisis Exposes Searching for Deterrence: Gaps Between Berlin and NATO,” *Der Spiegel Online*, April 07, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/ukraine-crisis-exposes-gaps-between-berlin-and-nato-a-962978.html>.

⁵ Matthew Karnitschnig, “Germany’s Angela Merkel Treads Softly With Russia’s Putin On Ukraine,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 7, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304819004579485311981419836>.

result, any additional U.S. commitment in Eastern Europe will have to be weighed against competing defense priorities. If permanently stationing troops in Eastern Europe proves to be a bridge too far, the United States should at least consider earmarking another U.S.-based Brigade Combat Team (BCT) for rotation in Europe.

The core challenge for the transatlantic partners will be to prevent their differences on the ground forces request and other related issues from leading to policy paralysis that would only boost Putin's confidence and unnerve skittish NATO allies in Central and Eastern Europe. Looking ahead, Europe and the United States should focus on the following:

Present a united front even when there isn't consensus. It is clear that there are already cracks in transatlantic cooperation, particularly in regard to reassuring allies in Central and Eastern Europe. When that happens, it is important that the two sides of the Atlantic avoid airing their differences in public (as they did on the utility of sanctions during the first few days of the crisis), which gives Moscow the satisfaction of feeling like it has the upper hand. As Europe and the United States look at additional measures to pursue in Central and Eastern Europe, in Ukraine or vis-à-vis Russia, they must keep in mind what is at stake and what lessons other corners of the world might draw from their perceived inaction or indecisiveness. The Ukraine crisis is not a short-term hiccup in our relationship with Russia but a wake up call about the importance of transatlantic unity and resolve in the long term. This crisis will require additional measures using a wide variety of economic, diplomatic and military tools, which at times will test the transatlantic partners both economically and politically (especially as they begin to look at ways to reduce Europe's reliance on Russian oil and gas). Accepting and committing to that reality is an important first step.

Get the NATO piece right. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has repeatedly stressed that the Ukraine crisis will serve as a "game changer" for the Alliance, one that will return it to its core mission of collective defense. He has also expressed his hope that the crisis will spur NATO members to spend more on defense after decades of defense cuts that have hollowed out NATO capabilities. While that optimistic vision has been welcomed in Washington and a handful of other NATO member states particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, much more work needs to be done to build consensus on the way ahead. Not all members see Ukraine as a turning point. Not all members are prepared to put collective defense above NATO's other focus on expeditionary operations. Not all members feel compelled to develop new reassurance and deterrence initiatives to ensure that Russia doesn't get any ideas about moving towards NATO member states. That is especially true in regard to the upcoming NATO summit in the United Kingdom this September. That summit currently revolves around three main baskets of work: the end of the Alliance's combat mission in Afghanistan, a new transatlantic compact and the future of NATO

partnerships. It is hard to imagine Ukraine not having a major impact on the last two baskets. The question of course is how and to what degree. Some members, again due to resource constraints or interest in avoiding confrontation with the Russians, will no doubt opt for mere symbolic gestures. But the United States, in tandem with the Secretary General, will need to lead the effort to develop robust initiatives that showcase NATO's resolve, innovation and unity. That means taking on the highly sensitive subjects of NATO enlargement, cyber security, energy security and missile defense. The United States will also have to take a leadership role in navigating what will no doubt be a rigorous but dated debate over Article 5 missions vs. expeditionary operations.

Don't forget those countries in the region that are not NATO members. Europe and the United States have largely focused reassurance efforts on current NATO members and Ukraine. But they will need to keep their eye on those countries that sit just outside of NATO territory – countries like Georgia and Moldova that are in many ways more vulnerable than their neighbors that are already in NATO and the EU. Understandably, these countries are also seeking visible signs of reassurance (preferably via military channels) as well as political and economic assistance. Given that the collective weight of Europe and the United States far surpasses anything that either side of the Atlantic might do unilaterally, transatlantic coordination will be an indispensable part of any European or American initiative in this regard. A U.S. Assistant Secretary of State and a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense recently traveled together to Moldova to review U.S. defense cooperation. Europe should follow suit and work with Washington to develop joint initiatives so that the two sides of the Atlantic don't inadvertently leave a gray zone between NATO territory and Ukraine.

Transatlantic Efforts to Support Ukraine

In addition to reassuring allies in Central and Eastern Europe, Europe and the United States have sought ways to assist the interim government of Ukraine, which faces three enormous tasks: prevent the Ukrainian economy from collapsing, prepare for May elections and avoid a military confrontation with Russia, particularly in eastern Ukraine, which is looking increasingly unstable. While the two partners deserve relatively high marks in the first two categories, little has been done to assist in the last.

Ukraine estimates that it will need upwards of \$35 billion in foreign assistance over the next two years to avert default.⁶ To their credit, both the European Union (EU) and the United States came forward with pledges of assistance (\$15 billion and \$1 billion respectively) shortly after the crisis began. The EU and Ukraine also recently signed

⁶ Carol Williams, "Ukraine Needs \$35 Billion in Aid to Avert Default, Interim Leaders Say," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 24, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-ukraine-aid-default-20140224,0,7587311.story>.

the political chapters of the Association Agreement, committing them to closer political and economic cooperation. In late March the IMF stepped forward with an agreement to provide \$18 billion in loans over the next two years. On top of all of this important financial assistance, both sides of the Atlantic have sent or will soon send a number of policy experts, high-ranking policymakers, and business delegations to offer technical assistance and much-needed reassurance.

As with their joint efforts to reassure the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the transatlantic partners will have to avoid a situation where support drops off once Ukraine falls off the front pages of the world's newspapers (assuming it actually does). Getting Ukraine on the healthy path of stability and prosperity will take years, if not decades, of work and billions of dollars, a fact that neither side of the Atlantic can afford to underestimate. Of course, the risks and rewards could not be clearer. If Ukraine succeeds in reforming its economy, it could serve as an important beacon of hope for others in the region and refute the Russian notion that countries in Russia's neighborhood do not have the freedom to choose their own future. If it fails, however, it could "become a huge festering sore on Europe's frontiers, capable of undermining the political health of the entire region, including the eastern reaches of the EU itself."⁷

In regard to the upcoming elections, the United States and Europe must do everything they can to assist the interim government of Ukraine prepare for its May 25th election. As Secretary Kerry noted in his testimony yesterday, no one in Kiev has revealed any plans to delay these elections. As partners, Europe and the United States must ensure it stays that way. The two sides of the Atlantic will need to deploy international election monitors and provide Kiev with the tools they need to ensure free and fair elections, which will be an important step forward on the road to economic and political recovery.

As for the task of supporting the interim government in Ukraine as it copes with an immediate Russian military threat on its border, only modest steps have been taken by the United States and Europe to date. Washington sent Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Evelyn Farkas to Kiev to represent Secretary Hagel during Bilateral Defense Consultations with the Ukrainian government. That was a good start to a conversation about Ukraine's short- to medium-term military requirements but it should ultimately lead to U.S. plans to meet at least some of those requirements. The United States is

⁷ Daniela Schwarzer and Constanze Stelzenmuller, "What Is At Stake In Ukraine: Europe and the United States Need to Do What It Takes to Protect the Right of the Eastern Partnership Countries to Choose Their Future," *German Marshall Fund of the United States*, European Policy Paper 1/2014 (March 2014), http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files_mf/1395247945Schwarzer_Stelzenmueller_Ukraine_Mar13_web.pdf.

also looking at International Military and Education and Training as well as Foreign Military Financing.

NATO is moving forward with its upcoming military exercise in Ukraine this summer called Rapid Trident, which will bring together over a thousand international forces. The Alliance has expressed its willingness to intensify its military cooperation with Ukraine, including assisting in modernizing its military. Individual European countries, however, have yet to engage the Ukrainians directly on defense cooperation. In sum, the transatlantic partners have done far less to respond to Ukraine's defense requests than similar requests coming from Central and Eastern Europe. So far, that gap hasn't been that consequential thanks to the incredible restraint that the Ukrainian military has shown in dealing with tensions both inside and around its borders. We should caution, however, against relying on that continued restraint, especially in light of Russia's latest tactics in eastern Ukraine. It is not unimaginable that Ukraine could soon face a very serious military threat to the rest of its territory from the tens of thousands of Russian forces assembled on its border. For that reason, the United States should accelerate its reviews of Ukrainian military requests and determine what steps might be taken as soon as possible. Europeans – primarily the more capable ones – should be encouraged to assist with those efforts. Some capabilities obviously require substantial training but that does not apply in all cases, particularly in regard to requests for ammunition, intelligence sharing or training.

Transatlantic Efforts to Date Must Be Considered the Opening Act

Europe and the United States deserve some credit for their joint efforts in recent weeks to reassure allies in Central and Eastern Europe and support the interim government of Ukraine. NATO and the EU also merit kudos. But the real test will be whether the initiatives to date can be paired with a longer term strategy for enhancing engagement in the region and pairing that strategy with real capabilities and financial and political assistance. More importantly, the two partners must correct the mistake they made before the Russian annexation of Crimea and take the time now to outline the various scenarios they may be facing in the not too distant future. Are there high-level consultations among Europeans, Americans and Ukrainians about how they would respond to Russian troops moving into eastern Ukraine? Are the partners thinking about the consequences of delayed Ukrainian elections? How would Europe and the United States react if Russia were to take steps to further destabilize Transnistria? A failure to plan now for such future scenarios risks leaving Europe and the United States unprepared and would send all the wrong signals to an already overconfident President Putin.

I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

Biography

Julianne Smith
Senior Fellow and Director of the Strategy and Statecraft Program,
Center for a New American Security



Julianne Smith is Senior Fellow and Director of the Strategy and Statecraft Program at the Center for a New American Security. Ms. Smith also serves as a Senior Vice President at Beacon Global Strategies LLC. Prior to joining Beacon, she served as the Deputy National Security Advisor to the Vice President of the United States from April 2012 to June 2013. In addition to advising the Vice President on a wide range of foreign and defense policy issues, she represented him in Cabinet and Deputies level interagency meetings. During March and April of 2013, she served as the Acting National Security Advisor to the Vice President.

Prior to her posting at the White House, she served as the Principal Director for European and NATO Policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in the Pentagon. In that capacity, Ms. Smith acted as the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs for all matters falling within the broad spectrum of NATO and European policy. Her office also managed the Department's bilateral relationships with 31 European countries. In January 2012, she was awarded the Office of the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Public Service.

Prior to joining the Obama administration, Ms. Smith served as the director of the CSIS Europe Program where she led the Center's research and program activities on U.S.-European political, security, and economic relations. Earlier, Ms. Smith served as deputy director and senior fellow in the CSIS International Security Program. Prior to joining CSIS, she worked at the German Marshall Fund as program officer for the Foreign Policy Program and director of communications for the Project on the Role of American Military Power. She has worked as a senior analyst on the European security desk of the British American Security Information Council and in Germany at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik as a Robert Bosch Foundation Fellow in 1996/97. Ms. Smith is a recipient of the American Academy in Berlin Public Policy Fellowship and the Fredin Memorial Scholarship for study at the Sorbonne in Paris. She received her B.A. from Xavier University and her M.A. from American University. She spent a year learning German at the University of Munich.