Edited by Toms ROSTOKS and Guna GAVRILKO

DEFENCE POLICY AND THE ARMED FORCES IN TIMES OF **PANDEMIC**

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Taken on April 2, 2020 when COVID-19 began to spread at a local church community-run men's shelter on the outskirts of Riga. The National Armed Forces provided a large military tent, suitable for emergency housing for infected persons, to limit the spread of the infection and was the first high profile activity by the military to curtail the virus.

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Introduction

Toms Rostoks

Defence spending was already on the increase in most NATO and EU member states by early 2020, when the coronavirus epidemic arrived. Most European countries imposed harsh physical distancing measures to save lives, and an economic downturn then ensued. As the countries of Europe and North America were cautiously trying to open up their economies in May 2020, there were questions about the short-term and long-term impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the most important being whether the spread of the virus would intensify after the summer. With the number of Covid-19 cases rapidly increasing in September and October and with no vaccine available yet, governments in Europe began to impose stricter regulations to slow the spread of the virus. Public concern about the spread of the virus was compounded by bleak economic prospects with numerous industries devastated by the virus.

Although the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are manifold, this study looks at its effect on defence policy and the military. Although there are several areas and industries that have suffered immediate consequences from the pandemic, the experience of the defence sector in general and the armed forces in particular is especially interesting. This is because the military has been heavily involved in the response to Covid-19. It is also likely that the pandemic may affect the defence sector negatively in the medium term. Doctors, not soldiers have been on the forefront of the battle against the coronavirus, but military organizations have often been

enlisted to take part in the effort to stop the virus. The relationship here is complex.

The pandemic is a major public health challenge, but it has also become an economic problem, as governments had to borrow heavily to deal with the economic consequences of the pandemic. The economic implications of the Covid-19 crisis are likely to be particularly stark because of an anticipated economic recession in 2020 and due to potentially lasting negative economic implications. Although a V-shaped recovery is still possible, this will become less likely if the economic recession proves to be lasting. In addition, democratic political systems provide political leaders with incentives to prioritize social (and related) spending over defence expenditure, unless there is a major external military threat present. The absence of a major war in Europe since 1945 has produced a sense of security that has not been shattered even by increasing international competition.[1] Thus, military spending may once again fall victim, at the hands of other more pressing crises that have clearly discernible implications for human security.

There is no shortage of information about the spread of the pandemic, but there is less clarity about its implications for international (and national) security. Despite information about the pandemic and lessons that can be learned from previous pandemics, the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic are hard to fathom because various factors point in different directions, and their relative weight and interplay is still unknown. The many unknowns about the pandemic include, not only the severity of the spread of Covid-19 throughout the world and whether scientists will be able to develop a vaccine against the virus, but also the reaction of governments to the pandemic. The consequences of the pandemic will be determined not only by the virus itself, but to an even greater ex-

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1 There is a growing sense of unease in the international relations literature about the likelihood of great power military conflict. Braumoeller, B. Only the Dead: The Persistence of War in the Modern Age. Oxford University Press, 2019. See also Layne, C. Coming Storms: The Return of Great Power War. Foreign Affairs 99:6, 2020.

tent, by the reactions of governments and society to it. In late-2020, it is clear though that Covid-19 is going to be a consequential event, that is, it will have across-the-board implications. It is possible that historians will refer to the pre- and post-Covid-19 world because of the ripple effects that it is likely to have for international security.

The aim of this study is to assess the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on national defence policies and armed forces in selected NATO and EU member states. There have been variations in terms of how countries have responded to the pandemic, and some countries have been hit harder than others. Thus, it is expected that there will also be variations in terms of the consequences for defence policies and the armed forces. Although the overall effects of the pandemic are likely to be detrimental because of expected defence cuts due to the economic recession, the cancellation and suspension of military exercises (such as Defender 2020), countries turning inward in search of solutions to the problems created by the pandemic, and the partial weakening of military organizations because of physical distancing requirements, it is not necessarily all bad. Some countries imposed early lockdowns and thus avoided Covid-19 case numbers spiralling out of control, but in others the response was sluggish. Some were better prepared economically to tackle the Covid-19 crisis because their finances, like the government debt to GDP ratio, were better than elsewhere. The pandemic can also be regarded as an opportunity, because it may show the utility of the armed forces in responding to civilian emergencies. Rising unemployment may also be an opportunity for military recruitment. And, for countries like the Baltic states which are so close to Russia, the lessons from the Ukraine crisis still loom large, despite strong pressure to divert funds from defence spending. This is a useful reminder that the pandemic is just one of the many driving forces behind decisions on defence policy.

This chapter is set out to accomplish three objectives. First, it discusses the potential implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for international security. Much has happened since early 2020, and the impact of the pandemic on international security has been uneven.

The potential effects of the pandemic are discussed along three dimensions: conflict vs cooperation, direct and indirect effects on international security, and implications for the global distribution of power. Second, this chapter explains the structure of country case studies. Third, it also summarizes the main findings from country case studies. The subsequent chapters offer analyses of NATO, the United Kingdom, Poland, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Estonia and Latvia during times of pandemic. This study does not aim to provide a definitive account of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on defence. Although this edited volume focuses mostly on the process and less on outcomes (that are not fully known at the time of writing), it can provide a valuable first draft for subsequent analyses.

Covid-19 and the International Security Environment

How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected international security and what aftershocks is it likely to create? This general question is addressed through three sub-questions. First, what has been the effect of the pandemic on international conflicts? Second, what are the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic on international security? Third, which countries are likely to be the winners and losers from the pandemic? The subsequent paragraphs address these pressing questions.

The Pandemic and International Peace and Conflict

As to the first question about the effects of the pandemic on peace and conflict dynamics, there is no consensus on the issue. Pandemics can have pacifying effects, but they can also be bad for peace and stability. The argument that the Covid-19 pandemic may exert a pacifying impact on international relations is based on the view that countries that consider the use of military power, have to take the possibility of the outbreak of Covid-19 in their military

into consideration, which may significantly affect their morale and battle readiness. This has been demonstrated to a significant extent by the case of the US aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt where a large number of crew members were diagnosed with Covid-19.[2] As a result, the aircraft carrier ended up stuck in Guam until early June when it could finally continue its scheduled deployment in the Indo-Pacific region.[3] Similar problems were experienced by the French aircraft carrier, Charles de Gaulle, where almost half of the crew members of the aircraft carrier and its escort frigate Chevalier Paul eventually tested positive for Covid-19.[4] The US military has, however, after some initial missteps, managed to maintain training, deployment and recruitment during the Covid-19 pandemic. Infection and fatality rates among service members have also been lower than average in the country, and the military has largely succeeded in keeping the coronavirus out of bases.[5]

In addition, battling an adversary while dealing with the damaging effect of the pandemic may be difficult. Countries may simply prefer to deal with one problem instead of creating another by initiating a military conflict. Covid-19 creates incentives for countries to turn inward. This can be detrimental for international cooperation, but it may also prevent the use of force internationally. The argument put forward by Barry Posen is that the pandemic weakens

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2 Cimmino, J., Kroenig, M., Pavel, B. Taking Stock: Where Are Geopolitics Headed in the COVID-19 Era? Atlantic Council, June 2020, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Taking-Stock-Where-Are-Geopolitics-Headed-in-the-COVID-19-Era.pdf

3 The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases reached 940 (out of nearly 5,000 crew members) by late April, 2020, and one crew member died from the coronavirus. McCurdy, C. USS Theodore Roosevelt Leaves Guam to Resume Deployment. Defense News, 4.6.2020, https://www.upi.com/Defense-News/2020/06/04/USS-Theodore-Roosevelt-leaves-Guam-to-resume-deployment/1851591292217/

4 France Finds more than 1,000 COVID-19 Cases on Flagship Aircraft Carrier. France 24, 17.4.2020, https://www.france24.com/en/20200417-france-reports-40-of-aircraft-carrier-group-crew-test-positive-for-covid-19

5 Cancian, M., Saxton, A., Morrison, N. Covid-19 and the US Military. War on the Rocks, 10.11.2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/11/covid-19-and-the-u-s-military/

countries and thus makes them pessimistic about the odds of winning militarily.[6] This argument is consistent with a long tradition in war studies which suggests that optimism is a key precondition for the initiation of military hostilities. Countries prefer quick and decisive victories, and they are unlikely to initiate a conflict if they expect it to be protracted and costly.[7] There are also other reasons why the onset of a major war is unlikely. States may be tempted to use military conflicts to distract domestic audiences from more pressing economic and social problems, but it would be risky to launch such a war in order to distract society from the inefficient handling of the pandemic. It is also unlikely that a war would provide impetus to economic development (the argument of military Keynesianism). And, initiating a major military conflict would create the risk of further weakening the military, because large military formations would contribute to the spread of Covid-19.[8] In short, there are powerful reasons why policymakers may refrain from armed hostilities during the epidemic.

There are reasons, however, for holding this optimistic view to be suspect. It is, indeed, correct that the pandemic has not triggered great power military conflict, but there are indications that the pacifying effect of the pandemic is uneven at best. In addition, it seems that great power relations have taken a turn for the worse

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6 Posen, B.R. Do Pandemics Promote Peace? Why Sickness Slows the March to War. Foreign Affairs, 23.4.2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2020-04-23/do-pandemics-promote-peace?amp&__twitter_impression=true

7 Blainey, G. The Causes of War. Free Press, 1988. A somewhat similar claim has been made by Dominic D.P. Johnson that positive illusions as an evolutionary biological coping mechanism can be blamed for the outbreak of military conflicts. Johnson, D.D.P. Overconfidence and War: The Havoc and Glory of Positive Illusions. Harvard University Press, 2004. Another related argument has been advanced by John J. Mearsheimer who has claimed that countries go to war when they expect to achieve a quick and decisive victory, which would help to keep down the costs of war and avoid protracted fighting. Mearsheimer, J.J. Conventional Deterrence. Cornell University Press, 1985.

8 Walt, S.M. Will a Global Depression Trigger another World War? Foreign Policy, 13.5.2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/13/coronavirus-pandemic-depression-economy-world-war/

during the pandemic.[9] With regard to military conflicts, it is notable that military tensions flared on the India-China border in June 2020, with clashes between the militaries of both sides. The hostilities resulted in dozens of casualties on both sides.[10] The track record has been mixed in other conflicts. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued an appeal for a global ceasefire in March 23, 2020.[11] Although it seemed to have a limited impact on some conflicts (the UN estimate was that warring parties in 11 conflicts heeded the call), its effect has decreased over time. In some places, the situation has worsened, for example, fighting has intensified in Libya. In late-2020, there is little evidence that the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in anything close to a global ceasefire.[12] There are several reasons that contributed to this failure. The UN Security Council was slow to support the Secretary-General's initiative. Conflicts may also include a number of warring parties and factions which make it difficult to get everyone to support a ceasefire initiative. Mediators were also not available because of lockdowns and travel restrictions. In addition, initial concerns about the deadliness and

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9 Great power war is rare, and it has been noted that there is a powerful norm against the annexation of large territories from other states as a result of military conflict. This norm, however, is less influential when it comes to minor territorial disputes. This is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, military conflict is still possible. On the other hand, it is unlikely that minor conflicts over disputed territory will escalate into major wars. Daniel Altman writes that 'there have only been four attempts to conquer entire countries since World War II', but there have been 66 'instances of one country seizing part of another country's territory'. Altman, D. What the History of Modern Conquest Tells Us about China and India's Border Crisis. War on the Rocks, 9.7.2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/07/what-the-history-of-modern-conquest-tells-us-about-china-and-indias-border-crisis/

10 Goldmann, R. India-China Border Dispute Explained: The New York Times, 17.6.2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/world/asia/india-china-border-clashes.html

11 Secretary-General Calls for Global Ceasefire, Citing War-Ravaged Health Systems, Populations Most Vulnerable to Novel Coronavirus. United Nations, 23.3.2020, https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sgsm20018.doc.htm

12 Gowan, R. What's Happened to the UN Secretary-General's COVID-19 Ceasefire Call? International Crisis Group, 16.6.2020, https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/whats-happened-un-secretary-generals-covid-19-ceasefire-call

impact of the coronavirus turned out to be exaggerated, because the number of outbreaks in conflict zones and developing countries has generally been less than initially expected. The virus has also been less deadly than some of its predecessors, such as SARS and MERS, the fatality rates of which were considerably higher. Conflict dynamics may change though if there are more Covid-19 outbreaks in conflict zones, where existing medical facilities are particularly ill-equipped to deal with such outbreaks.

The coronavirus pandemic has not been able to put a lid on armed conflicts around the world, but does have the potential to exacerbate some of them by creating windows of opportunity for the warring parties. This works in two ways. First, the international community may be so distracted by focusing on the Covid-19 pandemic and the crises related to it, that comparably smaller incidents that would receive a lot of attention during more settled times, may go either unnoticed or may not be paid sufficient attention. For example, the early July 2020 attack on Iran's centre for advanced nuclear centrifuges[13] in Natanz, would normally have been a high-visibility event, but the exclusive focus on the pandemic has rendered this attack a low-visibility event. There are also concerns that Russia and China may exploit the world's preoccupation with the pandemic to pursue more aggressive policies towards their neighbours.[14] If anything, the claim that the coronavirus pandemic might facilitate a more peaceful world, was put to rest by Azerbaijan's assault, backed by Turkey, on Nagorno-Karabakh. The bitter fighting

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13 Sanger, D.E., Schmitt, E., Bergman, R. Long-Planned and Bigger than Thought: Strike on Iran's Nuclear Program. The New York Times, 10.7.2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/10/world/middleeast/iran-nuclear-trump.html?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiTVdFeE5EUTJNell6T1RCaCIsInQiOiJxVFhwNlIzcnpwb3NsNU5DcFhqZ1VCN3U1XC9SRTZiRXB0dnRuclk4OHFkNEE2b1AwbzBXWE9oaTZQajFGdGg3REYrQm5la0tNT1wvWmErZytEZnA2emFtaVl3TUZXVzJCTE8wcmdUMXEyclczMVBXdDc3RHcwK1h0OTZuNmZ3a1BPIn0%3D

14 It is likely that the crackdown in Hong-Kong took place because it was a window of opportunity for the Chinese government while the Western governments were distracted by the domestic health, political and economic consequences of COVID-19.

which began in late September, left thousands of people dead and injured. Second, this may seem far-fetched, but some countries may be seriously weakened due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which may create the preconditions for domestic unrest, or for major powers to pursue regime change in states that are vulnerable due to external pressure and domestic discontent. This is a modified version of the argument that the pandemic may provide incentives for major powers to distract the attention of their domestic public by provoking international hostilities. In this version though, smaller and weaker countries that have been ineffective may become more vulnerable to external intervention because of the pandemic.

Then there are the relations between major powers. Instead of coming to a consensus about dealing with the challenges caused by the pandemic, actors such as the US, China, Russia, India and the EU have found it very hard to cooperate. It is likely that these actors will eventually emerge from the present crisis worse off, both domestically and internationally, that is, their relations will be worse than prior to the pandemic. There is some consternation about China's initial tackling of this problem and its lack of transparency. US President Donald Trump has been particularly keen to distract domestic audiences from his administration's failed attempts to deal with the crisis by blaming China for not handling the coronavirus well-enough.[15] The US's handling of the pandemic, however, has been particularly inept, and the country has been ravaged by partisan conflict throughout 2020 in anticipation of the presidential election in November. This has prompted President Trump to allocate blame for the spread of the coronavirus to other actors abroad. The US treatment of the EU during the pandemic has been disparaging, for example, when President Trump announced travel restrictions to Europe in March without consulting with his European allies. Relations between India and China have been further soured by the border clashes, and relations between Russia and

[15] US President Donald J. Trump has consistently referred to COVID-19 on his Twitter account as the 'China virus', https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump

NATO have not improved either, despite the aid delivered to Italy and the US by Russia to fight the coronavirus. China is increasingly perceived in Europe as a long-term threat, and the EU has not lifted economic sanctions on Russia despite the economic recession. All in all, there is not much hope for great power cooperation as a result of the pandemic. The pandemic has not been good for international peace, although its effects have not been disastrous either.

Direct and Indirect Effects of the Pandemic

The pandemic is likely to have direct and indirect effects on the international security environment. It is hard to gauge the aftershocks of the pandemic, especially, its long-term implications, therefore, the following paragraphs point out some potentially problematic aspects of the pandemic. The geopolitical aftershocks of the crisis could be damaging, and so could the pandemic's surge in the autumn of 2020.[16] There is little doubt about the effect of the pandemic on international security at all three levels of analysis – the individual, the state, and the international system. To start with, it affects the fates of political leaders. Their handling of the pandemic results in either decreased or elevated domestic standing. The government's response to the pandemic has been the key issue in the US Presidential election, and President Trump himself tested positive for coronavirus in early October. The public support for Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, has decreased over past years, presumably because of the poor performance of Russia's economy, but the Russian government has not been particularly adept in dealing with the pandemic either. Although it is unlikely that the pandemic will result in the demise of a large number of

[16] McTague, T. The Pandemic's Geopolitical Aftershocks Are Coming. The Atlantic, 18.5.2020, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/05/coronavirus-pandemic-second-wave-geopolitics-instability/611668/

political leaders, it is definitely going to be a significant factor. In contrast, if the government handles the pandemic well, then public support for political leaders may increase. The competent handling of the pandemic in New Zealand was a major reason why the Labour Party, led by Jacinda Ardern, won a landslide victory in the October 2020 general election.

At the state (and society) level, there is much potential for direct and indirect effects. Societies can be unequally affected by the pandemic, and this may result in widespread dissatisfaction with how the pandemic was handled and how the human costs of the pandemic have been distributed along ethnic, racial, cultural, regional, and socioeconomic divides. People whose lives are saved by hospital staff during the pandemic may nevertheless turn into disgruntled voters, who go bankrupt due to inflated health care costs (such as in the US). Economic recession and unemployment can eventually result in the subsequent rise of populist parties, as happened after the 2008 financial crisis. The newfound focus on human/individual security[17] may lead to a lesser commitment to defence spending.[18] But it does not have to be all bad. The fact that scientists and doctors are at the forefront of the battle against the coronavirus may increase the appeal of science and the medical profession. Societies can become more resilient and self-confident if the challenges posed by the pandemic are handled efficiently. Physical distancing

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17 The pandemic is likely to create a more 'individual-centric security policy'. Tardy, T. COVID-19: Shaping Future Threats and Security Policies. COVID-19: NATO in the Age of Pandemics. NATO Defence College, May, 2020.

18 This effect might be unequal and depend on the particular geographic (the presence of adversaries in immediate geographic vicinity) and regime characteristics. It might be easier for China to retain high defence expenditure than for the US. Hathaway, O. COVID-19 Shows How the U.S. Got National Security Wrong. Just Security, 7.4.2020, https://www.justsecurity.org/69563/covid-19-shows-how-the-u-s-got-national-security-wrong/ David Barno and Nora Bensahel, in turn, claim that the US military is likely to change after the pandemic with lesser emphasis on forward defence. Barno, D., Bensahel, N. Five Ways the U.S. Military Will Change after the Pandemic. War on the Rocks, 28.4.2020, https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/five-ways-the-u-s-military-will-change-after-the-pandemic/

measures and travel restrictions may result in changed work and leisure habits.

If there is a consensus, however, on one specific outcome of the pandemic, then it is the strengthened role of the state. Crafting a successful response to the pandemic requires adequate 'state capacity, social trust, and leadership'.[19] The abilities of states to muster adequate response to the pandemic are very different, and so are the likely outcomes. The role of the state is generally strengthened, because the state is the only actor that has the capacity to respond to this stress test.[20] But, not all states have sufficient capacity. One of the concerns in mid-2020 has been the eventual impact of the pandemic on developing countries with weak health care systems. If the developing world is overwhelmed by the pandemic, this may eradicate decades of economic development. If this happens, disillusionment is likely to be immense. It may haunt domestic politics in the developing world for years. Mass emigration from the affected countries is another possibility.

The economic consequences of the pandemic are likely to weaken the state though, because governments had to intervene with extraordinary economic stimulus packages to keep businesses in most affected sectors of the economy afloat and workers employed. US government debt increased by approximately 3 trillion USD in the first half of 2020, and the overall US national debt stands at approximately 25 trillion USD.[21] The US budget deficit hit a record high in June 2020, when federal spending outpaced revenue by 864

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19 Fukuyama, F. The Pandemic and Political Order: It Takes a State. Foreign Affairs, July/August 2020. P. 26.

20 While a strong state is a precondition for dealing efficiently with the challenges caused by the pandemic, the pandemic has in some cases been used as an excuse for consolidating state power beyond what is necessary to handle the pandemic. Hungary is a case in point. Thorpe, N. Coronavirus: Hungary government gets sweeping powers. 30.03.2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52095500

21 Egan, M. The US Is Becoming a King of Debt. It's a Necessary Risk. CNN Business, 6.5.2020, https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/06/business/us-debt-deficit-coronavirus/index.html

billion USD.[22] Although government economic stimulus was expected and necessary, such a high level of debt is not sustainable. This made President Trump's determination to open the economy in the summer of 2020 more understandable, although the negative public health consequences later damaged his re-election chances. Similar problems of mounting government debt are faced by many other countries. In Europe, further increases in government debt in some countries may threaten the Eurozone and by extension the whole European integration project. At the start of the pandemic some countries were better positioned financially to take on more government debt, while others had already accumulated significant debt. The length of the crisis is likely to matter a great deal. Government debt will continue to accrue if governments have to impose heavy restrictions once again. Even states that may have pursued relatively economic-friendly policies during the pandemic are likely to suffer due to economic recession in other countries. If commodity prices decrease further, exporting countries such as Iraq, Russia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and others are going to be hit hard. Tourism has suffered particularly badly during the pandemic, and countries like Egypt and Turkey that depend on the hospitality industry have been negatively affected.[23]

It is too early to identify the effects of the pandemic at the level of the international system, because it will take more time for effects to materialize. After all, any such effects are the result of state interaction, which takes time, while the initial stages of the pandemic have been about domestic adaptation to the challenges posed by the coronavirus. Some initial effects are easy to pinpoint such as the blame-game in China-US relations and the absence of notable improvement in relations between major powers more gener-

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22 To give some sense of perspective, the budget deficit in June 2019 was just 8 billion. These are eyewatering figures. Stein, J. U.S. Budget Deficit Shattered One-Month Record in June as Spending Outpaced Revenue by 864 Billion USD. Washington Post, 13.7.2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/07/13/june-2020-budget-deficit-coronavirus/

23 Mead, W.R. The Pandemic: A Global Review. Hudson Institute, 9.6.2020, https://www.hudson.org/research/16128-the-pandemic-a-global-review

ally. As states have failed to launch a more cooperative approach to fight the pandemic, existing international institutions, most notably the World Health Organization (WHO), have been weakened. US President Donald Trump has criticized the WHO's response to the coronavirus and eventually decided to initiate the withdrawal process from this organization.[24] The pursuit of selfish policies has weakened international cooperation.

The long-term effects of the initial response to the pandemic are undetermined though, as the economic consequences of the pandemic are likely to be more far-reaching than its effects on geopolitical rivalries. Relations between China and the US were already worsening before the pandemic, and Covid-19 is simply another factor contributing to this.[25] The same consideration applies to other major power relations. Simply put, pandemic peace and pandemic war are extreme options that are unlikely to fully materialize. The future course of events, however, largely depends on the outcome of the US presidential election. States are not always content with international agreements and the workings of international organizations, but they usually value the overall benefits that participation in international regimes bring them. President Trump stands out in that sense because he has not been deterred from pursuing unilateralist policies, and he has been unafraid to tear up international agreements even though his ability to replace these agreements has been limited. The US will likely chart a more multilateralist course in the coming years with Joe Biden at the

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[24] President Trump blamed the WHO as being too China-centric. The process of the US withdrawal from the WHO is bound to be completed in early July 2021, more than half a year after the US presidential election. Rauhala, E., Demirjian, K., Olorunnipa, T. Trump Administration Sends Letter Withdrawing U.S. from World Health Organization over Coronavirus Response. Washington Post, 8.7.2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/trump-united-states-withdrawal-world-health-organization-coronavirus/2020/07/07/ae0a25e4-b550-11ea-9a1d-d3db1cbe07ce_story.html

[25] The preoccupation of US President Trump with the 'China virus' was probably exacerbated by US domestic politics, that is, by the Presidential election in November 2020.

helm. The US will try to provide leadership internationally and revive international institutions. In the realm of global health, governments are likely to conclude that they need viable international institutions despite their occasional discontent with the actual workings of these institutions.[26] These efforts, though, are likely to be hampered by the lesser economic means available for these purposes.

Winners and Losers from the Pandemic

The question about the winners and losers from the pandemic is mostly about the effects that the pandemic will have on state actors in the short- and long-term. All states have been somewhat weakened by the pandemic, but the question is about the extent to which major players have been weakened. Governments that have pursued competent policies based on scientific advice during the pandemic are unlikely to be as weakened domestically. Internationally, however, the competition is about relative losses, that is, who loses less than the others. The aim for major players is to be weakened to a lesser extent than key competitors. At this stage in the pandemic, it is hard to say which countries will be weakened to a greater or lesser extent, as it depends on leadership, government policies, and the total economic cost of the pandemic. A preliminary conclusion though is that all of the key players have been weakened. It is likely that Covid-19 originated in China, and the delayed response and lack of transparency of the Chinese government allowed the coronavirus to spread.[27] Although the economic and military dimen-

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[26] Patrick, S. When the System Fails: Covid-19 and the Costs of Global Dysfunction. Foreign Affairs, July/August 2020. pp. 40-50.

[27] There is much disagreement on these issues, but it can be argued that the heavy-handed policies that the Chinese government has pursued domestically in recent years and increasing confrontation with the US may contribute and deepen the Chinese people's dissatisfaction with their government. Pei, M. China's Coming Upheaval: Competition, the Coronavirus, and the Weakness of Xi Jinping. Foreign Affairs, May/June 2020.

sions of China's power may be left largely intact, its soft power has once again been tarnished.[28]

The US response to the pandemic has been largely inefficient and politicized. The surge of new cases in the summer of 2020, when most developed countries recorded lower infection rates, speaks volumes about a lack of competence and political leadership. The heavy-handed approach towards international institutions, particularly against the WHO, has also tarnished the US's image internationally.[29] The EU, Russia and other actors have also been preoccupied with mustering a response to the challenges posed by the pandemic. The numbers of Covid-19 infections and fatalities reported by Russia have raised a few eyebrows, fuelling concerns that Russia has tried to conceal the true state of its infection rates. Meanwhile, a number of EU member states have been hit particularly hard, resulting in border closures and strict lockdowns, begetting questions about the future of the European integration project and the economic consequences of the pandemic.

The effects of the pandemic have been mixed with regard to the rest of the world. South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan have dealt with the spread of the coronavirus successfully. China seemed to have succeeded in preventing the rapid increase of coronavirus cases in September-October, when European states were still being heavily affected, but individual successes will depend on the concerted efforts of most countries. Virus outbreaks in one country can be detected and dealt with, but the benefits of this are likely to be limited if other countries are ineffective in stopping the spread of the coronavirus. The worst-case scenario with regard to the spread of the coronavirus in the developing world has not materialized, but it

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28 Bates, G. China's Global Influence: Post-Covid Prospects for Soft Power. The Washington Quarterly 43:2, 2020. pp. 97-115.

29 The US halted funding for the WHO in April 2020. This was a heavy financial blow for the WHO because US funding covers approximately 10 percent of the organization's budget. Hathaway, O., Shapiro, S.T. Welcome to the Post-Leader World. Foreign Policy, 4.7.2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/04/after-hegemony/?fbclid=IwAR2Kldha50qwOWRXdC7Gog1cbkOqz3gei0xntFhWiJV7OXNDMAjRho3dyYk

is too early to tell whether this is the result of the effect of a partially globalized world or whether this is due to effective government policies. The uncontrolled spread of Covid-19 in the developing world is one of the worst-case outcomes that has not materialized yet, but may still happen. The increase in the infection rate during the summer of 2020, was largely driven by the US and developing countries.[30] In the worst-case scenario, the economic gains that have been made by developing countries over the past decades may be decimated, and hundreds of millions of people may once again be plunged into poverty. Developed countries, facing their own domestic crises, may not be able to provide an effective response to the unfolding emergency.

The pandemic will eventually come to an end, but some states may emerge from the pandemic in better shape than others. It is still too early to tell which states will be more affected, but it seems that China has handled the coronavirus much better than the US and Europe. Although the vaccine against Covid-19 has not been yet produced, it is likely that is just a matter of time until the efforts of scientists come to fruition. In the meantime, the pandemic is not over yet.

Framework for the Country Case Studies

The coronavirus pandemic has affected most aspects of people's lives, but the emphasis of this study is on developments in the defence sector during the pandemic. This subject is of great interest because the interplay between defence and the coronavirus is conditioned by two opposite considerations. On the one hand, states

30 Witte, G., Sheridan, B.S., Slater, J., Sly, L. Global Surge in Coronavirus Cases is Being Fed by the Developing World – and the US. Washington Post, 15.7.2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/global-surge-in-coronavirus-cases-is-being-fed-by-the-developing-world--and-the-us/2020/07/14/1e9ca48e-c605-11ea-8ffe-372be8d82298_story.html?utm_campaign=wp_todays_headlines&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpisrc=nl_headlines

are preparing for the new era of great power competition which requires adequate military power.[31] On the other hand, however, the pandemic has placed human security[32] concerns front and centre and has resulted in a sharp economic recession which is coupled with the uncertain perspective of economic recovery. States are likely to react to these contradictory pressures in a variety of ways, because they have to weigh defence concerns against other pressing problems. NATO and the EU member states are particularly interesting in this sense because the US is still very much invested in European security affairs, while Russia has recently been considered as a growing threat. Economic pressures created by the pandemic are likely to challenge the previous policy of a limited military build-up in the face of Russia's assertive policies.

The subsequent chapters provide analysis of how the pandemic has affected some of the major security actors in Europe. Alongside a number of country case-studies, this study includes a separate chapter on NATO because of two reasons. First, the chapter on NATO outlines the broader context for the subsequent discussion on individual country case studies. It is imperative to understand the international context within which states operate. Second, it is only possible to answer the question about the extent to which international cooperation broke down or succeeded within NATO during the pandemic, by looking into the role that NATO played

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31 Mazarr, M.J. et al. Understanding the Emerging Era of International Competition. RAND Corporation, 2018.

32 Michael H. Fuchs has compared the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in comparison to the US's participation in military conflicts since the early 1950s: 'Covid-19 killed more Americans in the first few months of the pandemic than all of the United States' military conflicts since the beginning of the Korean War combined'. When the Covid-19 pandemic eventually ends, it will have killed many times more Americans than have been killed in military conflicts since the mid-20th century. Fuchs, M.H. A Foreign Policy for the Post-Pandemic World. Foreign Affairs, 24.7.2020, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2020-07-24/foreign-policy-post-pandemic-world?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=twofa&utm_campaign=A%20Foreign%20Policy%20for%20the%20Post-Pandemic%20World&utm_content=20200724&utm_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%20112017

during the crisis. Intra-alliance political disagreements are often widely publicized, but the day-to-day operations of the alliance are less visible. The chapter on NATO addresses both political disagreements and the collective effort to tackle the consequences of the pandemic.

The remaining chapters of this study are country case-studies. The subsequent chapters include case-studies of the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Thus, the focus of this study is on the Baltic Sea region, as most countries included in this study are from this particular region. The study also includes states – Finland and Sweden – that are not part of NATO, but which are important security actors in the Baltic Sea region. The United Kingdom is included in the analysis because of the close cooperation between the group of Nordic-Baltic states and the United Kingdom in recent years. The sample of states included in the study, however, is limited and does not allow for the making of far-reaching conclusions regarding other NATO or EU member states. Although the states included in the study are mostly part of the same region in Europe, they are also a diverse group in terms of threat perception, defence spending, history, population size and prosperity.

The framework for the country cases studies, outlined below, addresses a number of issues, such as the pre-Covid-19 state of affairs in the defence sector, dynamics during the pandemic, and the most-likely post-pandemic developments in defence. The authors of the country case studies were encouraged to identify key changes in defence policy and how the military was affected during the pandemic. The country case-studies have a similar structure and address the following three subjects. The first subject was the state of the defence sector prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The provision of a description about the state of affairs in the defence sector prior to the Covid-19 crisis was necessary to be able to identify changes in defence policy. The first part of each chapter focuses on general trends, such as, the political significance of the defence sector in the country, defence spending, key decisions re-

garding military procurement, public discussions on defence and public opinion.

The second subject was the role and activities of the military during the Covid-19 pandemic. This part explains what the pandemic meant for the country in question and for its defence sector. There are four distinctive elements upon which the country case-studies focus. First, the impact of Covid-19 on the defence sector (affected personnel, cancelled military exercises, impact on the defence budget and recruitment opportunities). Second, the involvement of the armed forces in dealing with Covid-19 and its consequences. Military organizations are usually among the first to respond to such emergencies, although their participation may depend on the circumstances. Third, international military cooperation in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This demonstrates the extent to which the military has been used as an instrument for delivering aid to other countries during the pandemic. Fourth, the political as well as the wider societal context is outlined, with an emphasis on political and public initiatives calling for a reduction or an increase in defence expenditure.

The third subject was the short- and long-term outlook for defence. Here, the aim was to look at the potential short-term and long-term implications for defence. On the one hand, economic recession provides political leaders with strong incentives to reduce military expenditure in both an absolute and a relative sense. On the other hand, however, it can still be assumed that Covid-19 may not necessarily be a game-changer in the long run and that other factors, such as the emerging era of international competition, a lessening US military presence in Europe,[33] and a resurgent Russia may create strong incentives to sustain and even increase defence spending. This makes it possible to discuss and compare country-specific implications for the defence sector.

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[33] US President Trump announced the withdrawal of 9,500 troops from Germany. Trump Approves Plan to Withdraw 9,500 Troops from Germany. BBC, 1.7.2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53248177

Main findings

The pandemic is not over yet, some of the economic pain is yet to come, and a vaccine has not yet been developed at the time when this study was concluded, although it is likely that the vaccine (or indeed several vaccines) will be made available in early 2021. The analysis in the subsequent chapters, however, makes it possible to identify a number of preliminary conclusions about the impact of Covid-19 on defence policies and the military.

As for NATO, Covid-19 represented a security challenge that the alliance was not built to deal with. Military cooperation is at the heart of alliances, but the pandemic was a threat to human security that did not warrant a military response. The three primary aims of NATO, as well as its member states during the pandemic, were to retain readiness and credible deterrence, to limit the spread of the infection within the military, and to assist the civilian sector. Although it is hard to assess the extent to which the alliance managed to maintain the credibility and readiness of the alliance, the chapter on NATO indicates that these goals were mostly achieved, and that operational readiness was not diminished. The second aim, to limit the spread of the coronavirus within the military, was primarily the responsibility of NATO's member states. Planned military exercises were cancelled or downsized and the military took measures to reduce the risk of infection of military personnel. To tackle the third aim, NATO established the Covid-19 Task Force to provide strategic coordination of military support which was required by allied nations in the fight against the pandemic. As a result, NATO contributed to the delivery of assistance to both NATO member states and partners. Seven NATO member states and nine partner states requested assistance, and nineteen allies responded to requests. A clear sign that the pandemic has not changed the relationship between NATO and Russia was the fact that the alliance had to deal with sustained disinformation campaigns throughout the pandemic. Arguably, NATO's efforts to battle disinformation and assist civilian authorities in allied and partner states helped to

prevent the pandemic from having far-reaching destabilizing effects.

As for the countries included in this study, Covid-19 struck at a time when defence was becoming increasingly important. The emphasis was on developing forces that would be more suited for an era of great power competition than for out-of-area operations. The post-Cold War downsizing of forces had been replaced by policies aimed at higher defence spending and development of military capabilities suited for high-intensity mechanized warfare. This was reflected in greater emphasis on NATO's eastern flank, military exercises, higher defence spending and greater emphasis on deterrence in relations with Russia. Although the pandemic has negatively affected some of the developments in this regard, the post-2014 focus on Russia is likely to stay. The pandemic has dealt a devastating blow to public health and been a setback for economic development, but it has not mitigated international competition which has become a key characteristic of the contemporary international system. Although countries included in the study had not moved to strengthen their militaries to an equal extent and speed before the pandemic struck, the upward trend is indisputable. In some cases, defence was already prioritized before 2014. For example, Norway's approach to defence changed in 2008. The Baltic states were also among those countries that sounded alarms after the Russia-Georgia war in 2008, but only Estonia managed to achieve the desired benchmark of 2% of GDP for defence spending. Latvia and Lithuania intensified their defence-related efforts after 2014. Sweden, in turn, was quick to react after the rude awakening in 2014, and significant improvements have been made, but defence spending has increased only moderately until now. Prioritizing defence began at different times, and proceeded at different speeds, and this process is likely to continue despite the negative impact of the pandemic.

Over the course of the pandemic, the armed forces have been involved to a varying degree in responding to the health emergency. The decisions to involve the military as responders to Covid-19 were conditioned by the severity of the pandemic and by the signals that

political leaders tried to convey to the public. The involvement of the military in response to the pandemic, however, was limited because the threat was not military. The military has been contributing to its best capacity, but it has mostly fallen to doctors to be on the frontlines in the battle against the coronavirus. In the countries that were most affected, such as the United Kingdom, the military has been involved to a greater extent. The military played an important role in spring when 20,000 military personnel were assigned to the Covid Support Force. The military constructed several military hospitals, were assigned to British Overseas Territories and helped to transport stranded British tourists back home. For example, as the virus returned with a vengeance in the autumn, 2,000 military personnel were deployed to Liverpool as part of a plan to implement a new mass testing programme.[34]

Military organizations have performed somewhat similar functions in the other countries included in this study. The Swedish military donated medical equipment and protective gear, participated in testing and set up military hospitals. In Denmark, even though the absolute majority of the Danish military worked from home to help prevent the spread of infections, military personnel were assigned to corona call centres to assist in the tracking effort. The military also assisted in setting up testing centres. The Polish military was involved in bringing Polish citizens back home from Wuhan province in China in February, and approximately 10,000 military personnel were assigned to this task at the peak of the fight against Covid-19.

In Germany, the Bundeswehr was ready to provide assistance to civilian authorities, and approximately 32,000 military personnel were assigned to this task. However, the German military mostly provided logistical support, and was also involved in helping other European countries which were hit harder by the pandemic than

34 Smith-Spark, L., Davey-Attlee, F. Military Forces Drafted in as Europe Risks Being Overwhelmed by Covid Cases. CNN, 07.11.2020, https://edition.cnn.com/2020/11/07/europe/europe-coronavirus-military-role-intl-gbr/index.html

Germany. It provided ventilators to the United Kingdom and airlifted medical equipment from China. In Norway, the Home Guard was deployed to assist the police at checkpoints along the border with Sweden and Finland. In Latvia, the National Guard patrolled the eastern border with Russia in tandem with the Border Guard. Thus, the contribution of the military has been quite visible, but limited during the Covid-19 crisis. This is partly because of the limited means at the disposal of the military organizations. The participation by the military did add a higher sense of urgency to the pandemic-induced crisis though. In addition to the practical contribution, the visibility of the military during the crisis sent a powerful message to the public – that this was a serious emergency and that the public had to treat it as such.

There are no indications of major Covid-19 outbreaks in the countries included in this study. They have, for the most part, managed to avoid instances of large numbers of military personnel being infected. Although all countries registered at least a few instances of military personnel becoming infected, these were dealt with efficiently, for the most part. This success is even more noteworthy due to the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) multinational battle groups in the Baltic states and in Poland on a rotational basis. Strict protocols had to be put in place to make sure that the troops assigned to the Baltic states and Poland would not contribute to the spread of infection when the rotations changed. The only partial exception relating to military inefficiency (perhaps, simply due to bad luck) came from the Danish case, where 28 of the 34 participants in the Security Policy Course 2020 became infected, in what has been referred to as a super-spreader event. Thus, the military have contributed to the anti-Covid-19 effort, while mostly staying out of trouble themselves.

The longer-term implications of the Covid-19 pandemic in the countries included in this study are less certain though. Some countries, such as Norway, are well-prepared to deal with the economic consequences of the pandemic, and military spending is likely to remain constant or even increase. Finland represents a particularly

interesting case because it had already gone through defence cuts between 2012 and 2015. Finland's defence spending is likely to increase in the coming years because of major procurement projects. The British military was been particularly visible during the pandemic, but there were lingering doubts about the government's ambition regarding the military. This was partially because of Brexit and Covid-19, but an important reason was the need to reform the procurement process. This was particularly worrying, because the promise of Global Britain had to include a stronger military component, if Britain aimed to remain a first-tier military power. These concerns were put to rest in November when the British government took the decision to boost military spending by more than 18 billion euro in the coming years, the largest increase in its defence budget since the end of the Cold War. Germany's military spending has increased from 1.1% of GDP in 2014 to 1.3% in 2019, but Germany has not set ambitious aims in this regard, and its defence budget is projected to stagnate in the coming years. The Baltic states and Poland, due to their proximity to Russia, aim to sustain their relatively high level of defence spending, and thus far, there has been a sustained effort not to let the economic recession of 2020 derail and delay existing military procurement plans. It is, however, hard to predict whether these efforts will be successful in the coming years, especially, if the predicted V-shaped economic recovery fails to materialize.

All in all, Covid-19 struck at a time when the defence policies of the countries included in this study were getting ready for the dangers associated with increased great power competition. Military organizations assisted civilian institutions as much as they could, while maintaining readiness and trying to prevent infection among military personnel. They have largely succeeded on this. Close cooperation among the military, facilitated by NATO membership, made it easier to use military assets for providing much-needed help to other allies and partners. The longer-term effects of the pandemic on defence policy and the military are less clear though. The pandemic has not created a more peaceful world, and this means that

there will be a strong incentive to prioritize defence in the coming years. However, the economic pain caused by Covid-19 will make adequate defence allocations less likely. At the time of writing, the outlook for defence was still optimistic, but this may change if the crisis extends well into 2021 and beyond. If that is the case, then preparation for coming storms may become more difficult.

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NATO

Thierry Tardy

Introduction

The COVID crisis is, first and foremost, a health crisis that questions our way of life, what we consume, and how our societies are organized to respond to the immediate and longer-term effects of pandemics. It may be a paradox, but the pandemic is not primarily a defence matter, although it has killed approx. 900,000 people worldwide in six months, nor does it call for military organisations – be they national or international – to curb it. And indeed, NATO, as expected, was not a first responder to COVID. In the first six months of the crisis, NATO was mainly concerned with three sets of issues: to maintain its readiness and the credibility of its defence posture; to prevent any development that would transform the health crisis into a security crisis; and to demonstrate its presence and relevance by supporting civilian efforts.

In this context, what does the COVID crisis say about international security and the role of the main security actors in the face of pandemics? How has NATO responded to the crisis and what was the main rationale for NATO's involvement? What is the impact of COVID on NATO's cohesion and adaptation? Was the Alliance sufficiently involved in tackling the COVID-19 and should it do more in the future to adapt to what might become a human security agenda?

COVID and International Security

The COVID crisis is characterized by at least three kinds of features that are of interest for international security. First, the threat has been global in nature and has disregarded national borders in its dissemination. Second, it has been a threat with no enemy, i.e. no *Clausewitzian* "collision of two living forces", no notion of a winner and a loser, of "us" vs "them". Third, the crisis has raised questions about the role of security actors, and more broadly, the virtues of multilateral responses to multifaceted threats.

Globalization. The global character of the COVID pandemic has raised questions about the process of globalization and some of its negative aspects. The nature of global supply chains, over-dependence on China in some areas of goods production, the virtues of free travel and borderless regions, and the overexploitation of natural resources (and incidentally, the increasing proximity of human populations to wild species, which explains the spread of some diseases) are just a few examples of issues that will be looked at differently in the post-crisis era.

Most importantly, a widely-shared assessment of the post-COVID international security environment reveals that some existing threats will get worse as a result of the crisis, some will emerge, but none of those existing will be solved. In other words, the "new" world is likely to be more dangerous than the pre-COVID one. The pressure that this will create on the international system will be huge.[1] It is likely that this will make security institutions such as NATO even more indispensable, yet how these institutions will demonstrate their added-value, in a world characterized by a mix of traditional security threats and more human security related ones, is uncertain.

The Security Agenda. Second, the COVID-19 crisis will most likely shape our conception of threats and subsequently the nature of

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1 See Colin Kahl and Ariana Berengaut, "Aftershocks: the Coronavirus pandemic and the new world disorder", *War on the Rocks,* 10 April 2020.

security policies and the fighting of war. Two parallel trends are possible here: on the one hand, the nature of the current pandemic may lead to an increased focus on human security considerations above strictly-defined defence matters. The concept of human security was framed in a 1994 report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was defined as an alternative to the traditional territorial defence concept. Human security establishes a link between the security of the individual and the security of the state: the latter is not possible in the absence of the former. Security is then defined as "safety from the constant threats of hunger, disease, crime and repression."[2] This definition leads to a shift in what constitutes the referent object of security (the answer to the "whose security?" question), from the state to the individual. The COVID crisis is implicitly a plea for a human security approach, as opposed to a more defence-focused one. There are policy implications for this. One is possible defence spending cuts, while debates and policy choices related to health security, resilience or civil protection will likely gain momentum. But this may also lead to some rethinking of the notion of security, by which health is not conceptually and practically distinct from security, but part of it. At this stage, this contradicts the conservative NATO approach by which the health crisis has not turned into a security crisis,[3] as a human security approach would point out that the health crisis is indeed a security crisis.

There is, however, another possible evolution, by which the general destabilization of countries or regions (notably through the impoverishment of populations), or increased tensions between great powers that may result from the COVID situation, may indeed transform a primarily health-related crisis into open conflicts. Signs of the destabilizing effects of COVID in countries of the Middle

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2 UNDP, Human Development Report, New York, 1994, p.3.

3 The NATO Secretary General's narrative has been to distinguish between a health crisis and a security crisis, the "primary objective" of the Alliance being to ensure that the former does not become the latter. Cf. "Pre-ministerial press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg", NATO, 1 April 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_174770.htm

East and North African (MENA) region already attest to this possibility. If open conflicts were to materialize, some sort of renewed traditional security efforts, be they crisis management or more robust defence activities, would become required and could partially revert the human security trend.

Security Governance. This leads to a third consideration that pertains to how various security actors assume their responsibilities and interact with one another in the management of the crisis. One short-term lesson from the response to the COVID crisis is the prominence of the state and of national policies versus the low profile of multilateral institutions. From the World Health Organization (WHO) to the European Union (EU), and including NATO, international organisations were challenged in the immediate response to the crisis, and not perceived by their own member states as central instruments of crisis management. In the longer run, the virtues of multilateral institutions are likely to appear in a better light, in the broad global governance domain (including health), but also in the security domain, where the transnational nature of threats is difficult to reconcile with a predominantly national response. Furthermore, in this state-centric picture, none of the great powers has appeared in a real position of leadership, and the US risks coming out of the crisis in a relatively weaker position than before. As for China, early hesitation in the management of the crisis and the fact that the virus may have originated from there, will tarnish China's profile as a great, responsible, power, and it is unclear how adjustments to the meaning of globalization will impact its position. In the medium term though, China may well benefit from the relative decline of the US, and therefore confirm its rise on the international scene. Finally, non-state actors have also played an important role in some domains, most notably the GAFAMs[4] through the provision of technological tools that have enabled entire sectors to continue to operate despite the lockdown.

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4 Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft.

To summarize, the COVID crisis has left the international system less stable, more de-regulated, one in which the state-centric paradigm is competing with a more human security agenda.

NATO's Response to Pandemics

The COVID crisis raised two sets of issues for the Alliance: one related to the maintenance of NATO's deterrence and defence posture in the context of pandemics; the other pertained to what NATO could do to contribute to the management of the crisis. The former was no doubt a higher priority than the latter. Initially though, the Alliance's response was somehow delayed as a result of mixed signals by member states, unsure about NATO's role and a sense of inadequacy from the organization with respect to the nature of the crisis.[5]

Against this backdrop, NATO, as any military organization, considered measures to mitigate the effect of the crisis on its own posture, so as to limit the spread of the virus among the Allied forces, as well as to maintain the credibility and readiness of the Alliance.[6] Whether this was achieved is difficult to assess. According to NATO's Secretary General, the Alliance's "operational readiness [has] remained undiminished".[7] Protective measures were adopted for the troops and at the HQ level; the virus was closely monitored in NATO forces deployed on operations (incl. through the testing of the troops deployed). NATO also looked at the various requirements of resilience to ensure that the crisis would not negatively impact the ability of the Alliance to decide, communicate, and operate. On

5 D. Chollet, M. Baranowski, S. Keil, "Where is NATO? And Where is Trump?", *DefenceOne,* 13 April 2020. https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/04/where-nato/164568/?oref=d-river

6 R. Ellehuus, "NATO Responds to the COVID-19 Pandemic", CSIS, Washington, DC, 2 April 2020, https://www.csis.org/analysis/nato-responds-COVID-19-pandemic ; See also "The Role of NATO's armed forces in the COVID-19 Pandemic", NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 18 June 2020.

7 NATO Secretary General, Press Conference, 15 April 2020.

2 and 15 April respectively, meetings of NATO Foreign ministers and then Defence ministers took place, both online for the first time in NATO's history. Internal work was also conducted to review the so-called Baseline Requirements of NATO's resilience policy.[8] Yet the crisis has also created vulnerabilities wherever forces were hit by the virus or forced to reduce their own activities.[9] Exercises were postponed or reduced in scale;[10] and some countries pulled out their own contingent from operations (in Iraq in particular), while troop rotations were delayed in other cases.

Insofar as the proper response to the crisis is concerned, it was clear from the beginning that NATO would not be a first responder. As long as the crisis was health-related and did not morph into a (narrowly-defined) security crisis, the role of NATO in its management was expectedly limited.

This said, there are at least three reasons that led to NATO's incremental involvement in crisis response: one is political, the second is capacity-related, and the third one has to do with the need to respond to disinformation. At the political level, NATO was confronted with a relevance imperative, by which, being an organization mandated to ensure the security of its member states and their citizens, it had to contribute to the management of a threat that was killing people by the hundreds. In other words, the magnitude of the crisis was implicitly posing the question of how the most pow-

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8 At the Warsaw Summit in 2016, NATO adopted a series of baseline requirements for national resilience that included: assured continuity of government and critical government services; resilient energy supplies; ability to deal effectively with the uncontrolled movement of people; resilient food and water resources; ability to deal with mass casualties; resilient communications systems; and resilient transportation systems. See Wolf-Diether Roepke and Hasit Thankey, "Resilience: the first line of defence", *NATO Review*, 27 February 2019, https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/02/27/resilience-the-first-line-of-defence/index.html.

9 More than 1,000 personnel from the 2,400 crew of the French aircraft carrier Charles-de-Gaulle were tested positive in April 2020.

10 The Cold Response exercise, to take place in Norway in March 2020, was cancelled, while the US-led exercise, Defender-Europe 20, was largely reduced in format.

erful Alliance could respond: to demonstrate relevance, and to attenuate the effects of the pandemic so that the health crisis would not turn into open conflicts.

Table 1: The Role of the EADRCC

Seven Allies have requested assistance through the EADRCC (in chronological order of request	Nine partner nations have requested assistance through the EADRCC (in chronological order of request) (as well as UN agencies)	Allies that have provided assistance through the EADRCC
Spain, Montenegro, Italy, Albania, North Macedonia, Slovenia and Bulgaria	Ukraine, Moldova, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Colombia, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Tunisia, Iraq, UN-OCHA and WFP	Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, UK and US

Source: EADRCC, 'Matrix of reported requests for and offers of international assistance in the fight against COVID-19', NATO, 11 September 2020, pp. 1&8.

Second, NATO has a number of resources that were of use in responding to the pandemic. In early April 2020, NATO established a COVID-19 Task Force within SHAPE, mandated to provide "strategic coordination of military support required by NATO nations to combat [the] pandemic".[11] NATO then contributed to the delivery of assistance to both NATO member states and partner countries through the activation of its Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC). The EADRCC is a coordination mechanism that centralizes requests and assistance offers made by member states and partner countries in situations of civil emergen-

[11] Remarks by ACO Vice Chief of Staff on the COVID-19 Task Force, 7 April 2020, https://shape.nato.int/news-archive/2020/video-aco-vice-chief-of-staff-on-covid19-task-force See Olivier Rittimann, 'NATO and the COVID-19 emergency: actions and lessons', *NDC Policy Brief* 15, September 2020.

cy. Between mid-March and the end of July 2020, the EADRCC had received and processed requests for assistance from seven Allies and nine partner countries. This ranged from requests for medical supplies, personal protection equipment, sanitizers/disinfectants, and even field hospitals, to the provision of this equipment, airlifts, medical doctors and nurses, or financial aid. Nineteen Allies have provided assistance through the EADRCC.

NATO has also made various instruments available in the logistical domain, in particular the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA), the Strategic Airlift International Solution (SALIS) programme and the Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC). The NSPA has provided logistics support for the delivery of medical supplies to Allies, partner nations as well as international organisations. As an example, the NSPA helped deliver testing kits and BioForce machines to the Resolute Support operation in Afghanistan. Allies were also able to charter transport aircraft used for the delivery of supplies through the SALIS programme. Similarly, the SAC, through which the Allies operate heavy cargo aircraft, allowed for the airlifting of supplies. In doing so, NATO's Rapid Air Mobility initiative was utilized in order to simplify flight procedures. These support activities were also conducted in response to UN requests, most particularly the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the World Food Programme (WFP). NATO coordinated approximately 350 missions in support of civilian authorities through those various initiatives in the first three month of the pandemic.[12]

From the very beginning of the crisis, the Alliance also identified lessons from its own experience, and as the first wave was slowly moving away from Europe, it started to plan for a response to a possible second wave.[13] This has included the drafting of an opera-

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12 "The Role of NATO's armed forces in the COVID-19 Pandemic", NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 18 June 2020, p.1.

13 See "Coronavirus response: NATO Defence Ministers plan for possible second wave of COVID-19", 18 June 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_176558.htm

tion plan, the constitution of a stockpile of medical supplies as well as the creation of a dedicated fund.

The third reason leading to NATO's involvement is the fact that the Alliance was the target of disinformation campaigns in relation to the COVID crisis, and therefore, had to develop a communication strategy to counter these. These campaigns have taken the form of fake news intentionally spread in media outlets and social networks (inter alia through the use of trolls) to generate confusion or anxiety among the targeted populations. A significant portion of these activities emanated from Russia. The news most commonly referred to talks about: COVID being created by NATO or spread by NATO exercises; the fact that NATO would fail to support its member states in the fight against COVID; the fact that an outbreak of COVID within NATO's eFP in Lithuania had led to a decision to pull out the troops (backed with the production of a fake letter by NATO's Secretary General); or that NATO would encourage its member states to spend on defence in lieu of healthcare.[14] In response, NATO has developed a policy of 'Understand' and 'Engage'. The 'Understand' track aims to monitor and analyse the information (and disinformation) environment in which NATO and its member states operate. Under the 'Engage' track NATO defines and implements its own StratCom policy. While doing so it puts forward fact-based information, tries to debunk the disinformation narratives, refutes fake news, and furthers the argument that a "free and independent media is the best response to disinformation".[15] NATO also works with the EU East StratCom Task Force through information-sharing and exchange of best practices.[16]

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14 "Russia's Top Five Myths about NATO & COVID-19", April 2020, www.nato.int/factsheets ; NATO, "NATO's approach to countering disinformation", July 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/177273.htm?selectedLocale=en

15 See "Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers by teleconference", 18 June 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_176561.htm

16 See "Fifth progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017", 16 June 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/6/pdf/200615-progress-report-nr5-EU-NATO-eng.pdf

These various levels of response gradually put NATO on the map of institutions contributing to the management of the crisis. Such a role should not be overstated: NATO was mainly operating in a coordination mode and was a secondary protagonist overall in the broad response to the pandemic. Nonetheless, the coordination of some national efforts, the support of civilian health entities and the development of a counter-disinformation policy were all part of a resilience building effort, which contributed to making COVID less destabilizing than it could have been.[17]

The Impact of COVID on NATO

NATO's overall relevance depends on a mix of internal cohesion and adaptation to threats. In other words, NATO is delivering on its mandate if its member states converge on objectives and methods and if the organization is matching the level and nature of threats. With this in mind, the COVID crisis can impact NATO at the two levels of cohesion and adaptation.

NATO's Cohesion. The COVID crisis has called into question the role of international organizations and the virtues of solidarity between states (and even Allies) in a way that has adversely affected transatlantic relations. The national reflex observed in most capitals in the first months of the crisis does not bode well for future transatlantic relations or for maintaining trust in international organizations. Intra-Alliance politics were also affected by a low point in US-Europe relations in handling the crisis; while the fight against a common threat could have strengthened the Alliance and its cohesion, it further revealed transatlantic divergences instead and the widening of the gap between the US and Europe on some key policies. In the medium term, Alliance cohesion may also suffer from divergences in threat assessment between member states that will

[17] See Henrik Larsen, "The pandemic could enhance NATO's resilience", CSS Blog, ETH Zurich, 16 June 2020, https://isnblog.ethz.ch/defense/the-pandemic-could-enhance-natos-resilience .

be less eager to agree on the salience of the Russian threat, or the danger of terrorism, as new priorities (in relation to health issues or simply the challenge of economic recovery) will appear on national radar screens.[18]

Second, while NATO's cohesion has for a long time been dependent on the degree of US leadership within the Alliance and commitment to the transatlantic bond, the COVID crisis has confirmed the distance that the US has taken with the organization. No leadership – be it political or operational – was visible during the peak of the crisis. The relative weakening of the US, as a result of the COVID crisis on its own soil, may also negatively impact its leadership position within the Alliance. The election of Joe Biden in November would undoubtedly appease the relationship between the US and Europe, and could signal a new vision for NATO; the opposite, the re-election of Donald Trump could even further undermine the already damaged relationship.

Third, the burden-sharing agenda and the related Defence Investment Pledge (by which NATO member states have agreed to move towards spending 2 percent of their GDP on defence by 2024) are likely to feature as collateral damage from the COVID crisis, which would further strain transatlantic relations and intra-Alliance politics. Pre-COVID, the narrative about Europeans spending more on defence to better share the security and defence burden with the Americans, was already tenuous,[19] and it will get even more difficult to maintain post-crisis. On the one hand, the economic depression that is unfolding will simply constrain public spending; on

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18 N. Gvosdev, "The Effect of COVID-19 on the NATO Alliance", Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, 23 March 2020. https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/03/the-effect-of-COVID-19-on-the-nato-alliance/

19 In an EU context, negotiation of the Multiannual Financial Framework had already revealed States' reluctance to fund defence-related initiatives like the European Defence Fund or military mobility. According to the 21 July 2020 deal, the European Defence Fund will receive a contribution of EUR7 bn for the period 2021-2027 (*versus* EUR13 bn proposed by the European Commission in 2018), and the military mobility project will get EUR1.5 bn (*versus* EUR6.5 initially planned). Cf. "Special meeting of the European Council", Conclusions, Brussels, EUCO10/20, 21 July 2020.

the other hand, although the post-COVID security situation would probably require sustaining financial efforts in the defence domain, such a narrative will lack credibility in any public debate at a time when other human security-related priorities will have emerged.[20] Societal resilience, civil protection, internal security, and health are more likely to get traction and a budget than narrowly-defined defence capabilities.

NATO's Adaptation. The 2020 COVID crisis is a peculiar challenge to NATO in the sense that the most powerful military Alliance in the world has proven to be of little utility in responding to the most deadly and destabilizing worldwide event since the Second World War. This observation connects to the debate about NATO's adaptation to the so-called new threats and what it means for NATO's core defence task.

To start, the COVID-19 crisis gives a real-life sense of what bioterrorism could look like and there are lessons to be learned from that for any defence institution. The notion of grey-zone conflict is also informed by the COVID crisis, especially when thinking of a possible combination of health and security issues.

This said, in a post-COVID-19 era, pressure will increase on NATO to find its place in the broad resilience / human security debate and the pandemic response.[21] This can only exacerbate the dilemma by which the Alliance either broadens its mandate to embrace the width of contemporary threats or it focuses on its core defence agenda. Embracing contemporary threats may mean an enhanced civilian role, a revised conception of resilience, and even some sort of internal reorganization so that NATO is capable of

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20 Not to mention that any percentage of GDP for defence spending will inevitably mean lower budgets as GDP decreases; although in the case of the GDP decreasing more rapidly than the defence budget, the percentage of the defence budget compared to the GDP would automatically rise.

21 See Gunhild Gjorv, "Coronavirus, indivisible threats and preparing for resilience", *NATO Review,* 20 May 2020; D. Altman, "**In the wake of bushfires and coronavirus, it's time we talked about human security**", *The Conversation*, 19 March 2020; L. Coombs, "Strengthening the Role of Human Security in NATO Operations", in T. Valášek, *New Perspectives on Shared Security: NATO's Next 70 Years,* Carnegie, November 2019.

planning and conducting large-scale operations in response to civil emergencies; this may come at the expense of NATO's cutting edge military capacity.

This debate leads to several related issues. In the short term, one is the level of readiness of NATO forces in the immediate aftermath of the COVID crisis or in case a second wave were to come. The very nature of military activities is difficult to reconcile with social distancing and lock-down, and any infected unit is immediately weakened or simply non-operational. If large numbers of troops were to be contaminated, the overall readiness of the Alliance would inevitably be affected.

Second, while Deterrence and Defence gets prominence in NATO's posture, the Projecting Stability agenda is likely to be affected by the COVID crisis wherever countries at the periphery of the Alliance get hit by the pandemic. How NATO-led capacity-building programmes in the MENA region can help the recipient countries in fighting the pandemic is unclear; and the propensity of Allies to remain committed to these programmes in case of massive infection in these countries is equally uncertain. But then NATO (and the EU) may have to face massive flows of migrants trying to reach Europe to escape the pandemic in their own country, which leads back to the issue of planning and preparedness.[22]

Finally, the COVID crisis reinforces the need for NATO to solidify its partnerships, based on the various entities' comparative advantages. Developing the relationship with the European Union further is the most obvious option, but the nature of the threat also calls for more ambitious cooperation with a wide array of private sector entities, ranging from health to new technology actors. In this endeavour, NATO will have to accept a back seat position, i.e. in support of (civilian) actors that may be better placed or resourced to handle civil emergencies for which NATO's own assets will be secondary.

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[22] See Stefanie Babst, "The coronavirus pandemic hits NATO: five potential implications", *Commentary,* European Leadership Network, 14 April 2020.

Conclusion

At the December 2019 London Leaders Meeting, NATO member states launched a reflection process – now called NATO2030 – that will aim at making recommendations on how to "further strengthen NATO's political dimension". The response to pandemics and what it means for a military alliance will have to find its place in this debate.

In this context, there are two possible ways to analyse NATO's response to the COVID crisis: one is to observe that given the nature of the threat, NATO could not, and did not have to, be a first respondent; NATO is mandated to deter and defend, and to guarantee a certain level of stability at its periphery, and insofar as the COVID was not threatening the (narrowly-defined) security of its member states, NATO was not to be the first line of defence. Against this backdrop, NATO has however contributed to the broad civilian efforts, and thus demonstrated relevance.

The other interpretation is more critical; it implies that the COVID pandemic is, to an extent, a challenge to the relevance of the Alliance because it questions the capacity of the organization to protect its citizens and, to do so, to adapt to the evolution of threats; this thinking draws on the human security debate and the necessity for any security actor to embrace a wider range of threats.

Arguably, COVID-19 does not make existing threats less salient; NATO simply has to further adapt to an even more complex environment. In this endeavour, the challenge will be for the Alliance to be able to maintain its defence added value, while offering a meaningful response to what are increasingly multifaceted threats.

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United Kingdom

Elisabeth Braw

Introduction

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the United Kingdom, one of the country's first concerns – similar to that of other countries – was the availability of hospital beds. This chapter explains the role the UK armed forces played during the country's coronavirus crisis, for example, in setting up new hospitals and testing sites and assisting ambulance crews across the UK. The early stages of the pandemic thus gave the UK armed forces rare visibility as part of the ordinary daily lives of its citizens. The Covid-19 crisis has, however, also triggered a severe economic downturn. As this chapter will detail, the crisis has obvious implications for UK defence capabilities. Expected defence cuts come at a time when the government's post-Brexit globalist strategy[1] would have warranted increased defence spending, a step that was also promised in the Conservative Party's election manifesto.

Defence Sector Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic

In the UK, the armed forces are a source of significant pride. In a 2019 poll for the Royal British Legion, 80 per cent of

1 UK Government, Global Britain: delivering on our international ambition, 13 June 2018, https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/global-britain-delivering-on-our-international-ambition

Britons said armed forces personnel make a valuable contribution to society. That, however, does not mean that the armed forces' duties are well-known. In the Royal British Legion survey, 69 per cent of respondents said they did not know what the armed forces do on a day-to-day basis. More than four in ten (44 per cent) thought soldiers run fitness bootcamps for the general public, and 16 per cent believed they performed as movie extras.[2]

What it does mean, however, is that the British public has for decades supported defence spending at a higher level than that of many allies. In the years since 2013, for example, the UK has consistently spent more than two per cent of GDP on defence, while the NATO Europe average has been steady at around 1.5 per cent.[3] The UK defence budget for fiscal year 2020/2021 amounts to £41.3 billion,[4] less than a tenth of the US defence budget, which comes in at $738 billion.[5] For a country of its size, the UK also maintains a formidable presence outside the country. Today it has bases in, among other locations, Brunei, Belize and Cyprus.[6] This is partly in support of British Overseas Territories – mostly islands that were formerly often part of the British Empire and remain under UK jurisdiction – but also to help the UK maintain the global presence required of a first-tier military nation.

With its current setup, the UK has a strength of 193,980, 0.9 per cent more than in 2017, but a significant decrease from its Cold War strength. There are 145,320 serving in the regular forces and 37,760

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2 The Military Times, 'Survey Shows Few People Know What the Armed Forces Do', 30 April 2019

3 NATO: Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2019), https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_11/20191129_pr-2019-123-en.pdf

4 Andrew Chuter, UK government to launch 'radical assessment' of Britain's place in the world, Defence News, 19 December 2019, https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2019/12/19/uk-government-to-launch-radical-assessment-of-britains-place-in-the-world/

5 https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2019/12/19/pentagon-finally-gets-its-2020-budget-from-congress/

6 British Army, Operations and Deployments, https://www.army.mod.uk/deployments/

in the volunteer reserves, of which 3,760 are Gurkhas and 7,840 are other personnel.[7]

Britain's new aircraft carriers, too, are part of its ambition for a worldwide presence. HMS Queen Elizabeth, which is currently undergoing sea trials, and HMS Prince Charles, currently under construction, are Britain's only aircraft carriers[8] and thus hold pride of place in UK defence. Indeed, aircraft carriers are the most important symbol of global power and reach. Today, only the United States, China, the UK and Italy as well as (with one each) Russia, France, Spain, India and Thailand have aircraft carriers. Aircraft carriers are, however, costly. Construction of HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince Charles has, to date, resulted in a price tag of more than £6 billion[9], and like other aircraft carriers, they will also require a significant number of supporting ships in order to prevent becoming an easy target for attacks by enemy states.

This, along with other funding needs that would severely stretch the UK taxpayer, has led to structural discussions in the UK about whether the country can afford to maintain its status as a first-tier military power. While the UK is clearly not as strong a military power as the United States, it has until now strived to be considered first-tier. Although there is no clear definition of what "first tier" entails, it is understood to mean the capability to operate independently around the world.

In theory, the UK is able to do that. Currently some 11,000 UK soldiers, sailors, airmen and Royal Marines are deployed around the world[10]; the highest number of any European country. Most

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7 UK Ministry of Defence, Quarterly service personnel statistics 1 April 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2020/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-1-april-2020

8 Royal Navy, *The Nation's Flagships*, https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/features/queen-elizabeth-carriers

9 Forces.net, HMS Queen Elizabeth: All You Need To Know About Britain's Aircraft Carrier, 2 July 2020, https://www.forces.net/news/hms-queen-elizabeth-all-you-need-know-about-britains-aircraft-carrier

10 Forces.net, Where Are Military Personnel Deployed This Christmas?, 20 December 2019, https://www.forces.net/news/where-are-armed-forces-christmas

are, however, deployed in countries without major combat: Estonia, South Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, even Canada (where the British Army operates a training range). Though the UK has played a vital role in Iraq and Afghanistan, no UK military or political decision-makers are under any illusion that the UK would be able to single-handedly carry out a major international intervention. That is, of course, why alliances exist.

But, the UK's current status as de facto second fiddle to the United States has underlined a fundamental question: what is the UK's ambition as a military power? As Prime Minister, Theresa May began questioning whether remaining a first-tier power was feasible.[11] May resigned before having settled this fundamenta[l] issue, but at his first hearing with the new parliament's Defence Select Committee, on 22 April, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace raised a similar question, noting about the defence budget that "it's not just about sums of money. It is about cultural change — our relationship with our allies, what Britain's ambitions are going to be".[12]

Boris Johnson's chief advisor Dominic Cummings, meanwhile, is eager to tackle defence, and to do so his own way. That means radical reform, both of defence procurement and of the armed forces themselves. Cummings, who is not a defence specialist, but is considered the UK government's key thinker, has complained on his blog that military procurement "has continued to squander billions of pounds, enriching some of the worst corporate looters and corrupting public life via the revolving door of officials/lobbyists".[13] Unsurprisingly, given this analysis, Cummings wants to fundamen-

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11 Nicholas Mairs, Theresa May clashes with MoD over 'challenge to Britain's 'tier one' military status', *Politicshome*, 21 June 2018, https://www.politicshome.com/news/article/theresa-may-clashes-with-mod-over-challenge-to-britains-tier-one-military-status

12 UK Parliament, Formal meeting (oral evidence session): Introductory Session with the Defence Secretary, 22 April 2020, https://committees.parliament.uk/event/786/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session/

13 Dan Sabbagh, Dominic Cummings seeks to launch MoD spending review, The Guardian, 16 December 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/dec/16/dominic-cummings-seeks-to-launch-mod-spending-review

tally change the way the UK armed forces' equipment is built and procured, but he also wants to significantly change the emphasis of UK defence, moving resources from traditional capabilities to AI and drone technology.[14]

Defence Sector and the Military During the COVID-19 Pandemic

When the pandemic hit the UK, the armed forces found themselves in a paradoxical situation: though the coronavirus crisis was obviously a public health emergency, not a kinetic attack, the armed forces immediately found themselves in demand. They were asked to contribute to the government's efforts to test the population and treat patients, which gave them rare visibility in the daily life of the country, but the pandemic also squarely focused the public's and decision-makers' attention on public health and the economy, which has suffered catastrophically as a result of the pandemic.

On 18 March, five days before the UK went into lockdown, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace demonstrated the seriousness of the situation by committing 20,000 service personnel to the fight against coronavirus, an effort labelled Covid Support Force.[15] The soldiers immediately went into action, playing a key role in the construction of the 4,000-bed Nightingale Hospital in London, which was completed within a record nine days. They also helped build a 2,000-bed hospital in Birmingham, a 1,000-bed hospital in Manchester, three other hospitals and additional recovery facilities for COVID-19 patients discharged from hospital. In addition, service

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14 Matthew Powell, Military spending: Dominic Cummings may have met his match in trying to reform the Ministry of Defence, The Conversation, 20 January 2020, https://theconversation.com/military-spending-dominic-cummings-may-have-met-his-match-in-trying-to-reform-the-ministry-of-defence-129656

15 UK Government, COVID Support Force: the MOD's contribution to the coronavirus response, 23 March 2020, https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-support-force-the-mods-contribution-to-the-coronavirus-response

personnel were deployed to assist National Health Service (NHS) staff in the care of patients at the new hospitals, and the Ministry of Defence made 2,700 ventilators available to the NHS for the care of COVID-19 patients; it also assisted private companies in the manufacturing of new ventilators.

Further aspects of military assistance to civilian authorities included medical evacuation and training of medical personnel in medical evacuation procedures. The armed forces also transported medical workers by helicopter, delivered oxygen to hospitals and helped identify sites for mortuaries. Reflecting the fact that Britain has a significant number of Overseas Territories – territories that are largely self-governing but fall under UK jurisdiction – around the world, the UK Armed Forces also deployed personnel to such territories. 175 servicemen and -women were, for example, deployed to Gibraltar, while other service personnel transported Falklands children attending boarding school in the UK back to their homes, on military aircraft.

Another part of the armed forces' coronavirus efforts, one perhaps noticed by more people, were the mobile coronavirus testing units the military set up around the country. The units were also staffed by military personnel. With the UK struggling to test large numbers of people, the military's 96 mobile units – set up in in converted transport vehicles – provided vital assistance. Soldiers also conducted coronavirus tests for the elderly and other homebound Britons.[16] In addition, the armed forces also played a key role in helping repatriate British citizens from around the world. Holidaymakers stranded abroad included 109 Britons and 28 foreign nationals in Nepal; Gurkha soldiers – Nepalis serving in the British Army's Gurkha regiment – travelled some 6,500 kilometres through the Himalayas to collect the tourists.[17]

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16 Sian Grzeszczyk, Coronavirus: Personnel Run New Mobile Testing Units Across UK, *Forces.net,* 27 April 2020, https://www.forces.net/news/coronavirus-forces-man-new-mobile-testing-units-across-uk

17 UK Government, COVID Support Force: the MOD's contribution to the coronavirus response, 23 March 2020, https://www.gov.uk/guidance/

A military man, albeit one out of uniform, also played a unique role in raising the country's spirits during the most difficult part of the pandemic and the lockdown. In March, Tom Moore, a 99-year-old World War II veteran, set out to walk 100 laps of his garden by his 100th birthday on 30 April, with the goal of raising £1,000 for the NHS. By the time Captain Tom, as he became known, turned 100, he had raised more than £32 million[18] and inspired a nation. British Army soldiers stood guard as Captain Tom completed his final lap on live television, Prime Minister Boris Johnson recorded a birthday greeting for him[19] and the Royal Air Force and the Army Air Corps congratulated him with flypasts featuring Spitfires and Hurricanes, planes used by the British armed forces during World War II.[20] Captain Tom was subsequently named Honorary Colonel of a British Army Foundation College[21] and knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in her first public engagement since the beginning of the lockdown.[22]

All this activity raised the armed forces' profile. All-volunteer force systems such as the UK often suffer from too little exposure to the wider population and thus limited understanding of what the armed forces do. This reality is demonstrated by the British Legion survey. The armed forces' very significant coronavirus activities have, however, not translated into more public interest in

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covid-support-force-the-mods-contribution-to-the-coronavirus-response

18 Forces.net, Captain Tom's NHS Fundraising Finishes At £32m On His 100th Birthday, 1 May 2020, https://www.forces.net/news/captain-toms-nhs-fundraising-reaches-ps30-million-his-100th-birthday

19 10 Downing Street, Prime Minister Boris Johnson wishes Captain Tom Moore a happy 100th birthday, 30 April 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3fqE7ttygE

20 Captain Tom's 100th Birthday Marked With Flypasts, Forces.net, 30 April 2020, https://www.forces.net/news/captain-toms-100th-birthday-marked-raf-flypast

21 BBC, Captain Tom made honorary colonel of Harrogate's Army Foundation College, 3 August 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-53643195

22 BBC, Capt. Sir Tom Moore knighted in 'unique' ceremony, 17 July 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-53442746

the armed forces or national security. In June 2019, 10 per cent of Britons considered defence and security the most important issue facing the country, compared to 67 per cent who considered Brexit the most important issue. Immigration and asylum polled at 23 per cent; the economy at 27 per cent. (Other options such as education, housing and health also ranked above defence and security; only transport and pensions ranked lower.) By June 2020, the coronavirus pandemic had radically shifted people's priorities: 57 per cent of Britons considered health the most important issue; 56 per cent, the economy; 45 per cent, Brexit; and 19 per cent, immigration and asylum. Only six per cent considered defence and security the most important issue.[23]

Short- and Long-Term Outlook for the Defence Sector

The British armed forces are faced with the paradox that COVID-19 has made them a more noticeable presence in society, but at the same time, strengthened people's belief that healthcare and the economy are more important than defence. COVID-19 and a changing political climate have together created a perfect storm for the British armed forces, which now face the very real prospect of budget cuts in the short term, as well as a redirection of their focus in the long term.

When the Conservative Party won the UK general election in December 2019, it did so with a manifesto that promised significant increases for the armed forces, including:

- To exceed the NATO defence spending target of two per cent of GDP and increase the budget by 0.5 per cent above inflation, each year of the new parliament.
- To modernise military equipment and improve capability.

[23] YouGov, The most important issues facing the country, 21 August 2020, https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/trackers/the-most-important-issues-facing-the-country.

- To invest in training.
- To invest more in cybersecurity and establish a UK Space Command.
- To invest in "ambitious global programmes", including building Type 31 frigates and new armoured vehicles.[24]

Labour, which lost the election, offered significantly less to the armed forces. The Conservatives' election promises to defence are linked to Brexit, which will leave Britain outside the comfort of the European Union, but at the same time able to pursue a more active global role. Theresa May's government introduced the label Global Britain for this strategy. For Global Britain to work, it needs to be accompanied by armed forces that punch above the weight of a mid-sized country.

Ever since the end of World War II, which marked the beginning of Britain's decline from its global power status, Britain has in fact maintained a global outlook and armed forces significantly larger than those of other mid-sized countries. This is a legacy of its imperial past, where the Royal Navy famously ruled the waves. This fact is reflected in the title of Britain's navy chief: First Sea Lord.

Even though the UK, like most other Western countries, cut defence spending following the end of the Cold War, as previously mentioned, it is one of very few NATO countries that maintained spending of two per cent of GDP.

The UK's position as a significant military power – as exemplified by its two new aircraft carriers – could aid the government's efforts to create a Global Britain that is active and present around the world. Such an effort would, however, need to be backed up by more funding, as also suggested by the Conservative Party's election manifesto. That is the case, even if the UK does not want to return to Cold War-era postures of, for example, troops permanently stationed in Germany. The UK government does not seem interested in such expansion of traditional capabilities. The coronavirus

[24] Forces.net, Manifesto Comparison: What Do Political Parties Say On Defence?, 5 December 2019, https://www.forces.net/news/manifesto-comparison-what-do-political-parties-say-defence

crisis has, however, altered the equation. The UK armed forces face the unenviable paradox that a crisis that has placed them in the centre of UK daily life is also likely to result in less, not more, defence funding. The public is not interested in more defence spending, and as a result of the enormous government expenditures to keep the economy going during the crisis, budgets are likely to include less – not more – money for the armed forces. While other Western countries' economies are also contracting as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the contraction is particularly severe in the UK.[25] This is a highly challenging turn of events for the armed forces.

Defence Secretary Wallace addressed the fundamental challenge facing the UK armed forces in his hearing with the Defence Select Committee on 22 April.[26] "We will have to take some pretty distasteful medicine. […] Do we want to do everything? Do we want to do less? Do we want to let go of something? Do we want to bank on international consortia every time, or do we want to invest in our industrial base? All those are difficult questions."

The latter is perhaps the easiest to answer: the first step is reform of the procurement process. Even though it has long been clear that the UK armed forces need to reform their procurement, Cummings' plans for reform have unsurprisingly caused alarm among the armed forces. At the 22 April Defence Select Committee hearing, Conservative committee member Mark Francois (a former junior defence minister) pointed out that a March 2020 National Audit Office report examining 32 of the UK Ministry of Defence's most significant programmes, stated that only five were due to be delivered on time. "Your point is not just about money; it is culture. Everyone who has been on this [video] call would rather see us spend three per cent of GDP on defence than two per cent. That is a

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25 Jason Douglas, U.K. Economy Shrinks by More Than Any Other Rich Country, *Wall Street Journal*, 12 August 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-k-economy-shrinks-by-more-than-any-other-rich-country-11597213570

26 UK Parliament Defence Committee, Formal meeting (oral evidence session): Introductory Session with the Defence Secretary, 22 April 2020, https://committees.parliament.uk/event/786/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session/

cross party argument, but the first thing the Treasury say is, 'there's no point giving this department any more money, because they can't even spend properly what we give them in the first place'."[27] In a subsequent hearing with General Sir Nick Carter, the head of the UK armed forces, Francois told Sir Nick that procurement "has been such a mess for years […]. Unless you reform yourselves very quickly someone is going to do the reforming for you, and it might be easier to do it yourselves. […] Please nip back to the department and ask them to sort their bloody selves out, because if not, Cummings is going to come down there and sort you out his own way, and you won't like it."[28]

Procurement reform may, in fact, be the most pressing issue in UK defence, not just because the National Audit Office has identified so many flaws and because Cummings is indeed threatening radical change unless the Ministry of Defence can get the situation under control, but also because cost-savings are now a vital concern. A critical issue in any procurement reform will be how much the UK government should – or should not – concentrate on building domestic capabilities. While the government is currently trying to facilitate more UK production (an advantage of having left the European Union, since the UK will no longer have to issue EU-wide tenders), it may find that it has no choice but to instruct UK suppliers to continue building consortia with defence contractors based in the EU or the United States.

The size of the armed forces and their ambition is a much more difficult question. There is currently no consensus in the UK on what the ambition of the armed forces should be, although the spectre of radical cuts that existed while Jeremy Corbyn was leader of

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27 UK Parliament Defence Committee, Formal meeting (oral evidence session): Introductory Session with the Defence Secretary, 22 April 2020, https://committees.parliament.uk/event/786/formal-meeting-oral-evidence-session/

28 The Guardian, Mark Francois warns armed forces head: 'Cummings will sort you out', 8 July 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/global/video/2020/jul/08/mark-francois-warns-armed-forces-head-nick-carter-dominic-cummings-will-sort-you-out-video

the Labour Party has now given way to a more pragmatic approach under the new leader, Keir Starmer. For the UK, contemplating tier-two status or a regional focus would not just be a considerable shift, but a blow to the country's self-perception just as it has left the European Union. Interestingly, the threat posed by the Russian armed forces is a relatively minor issue in the UK public debate, where non-kinetic aggression by Russia and China – for example the poisoning of Sergey Skripal, interference in UK elections and Chinese subversion of the UK economy – have received more attention. "Global Britain will be a force for good and an energetic champion of free trade as it pursues closer ties with international partners and embarks on a new role in the world," the UK government promised in February this year.[29]

British media reported in July that the Ministry of Defence has been asked to draw up plans for a reduction to the British Army from 74,000 to 55,000 and an almost complete cut of the Royal Marines.[30] That would be a development fundamentally different from what the armed forces were expecting when the Conservative Party won the general election in December 2019, and from what they were still anticipating when the coronavirus pandemic struck. In the current situation, the UK armed forces will not be able to do everything they and the government had hoped for in the coming years, especially not everything associated with a first-tier military power.

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29 UK Government, Bold new beginning for Global Britain as Foreign Secretary kicks off Asia-Pacific tour, 5 February 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bold-new-beginning-for-global-britain

30 Tim Shipman and Tim Ridley, Army 'to be cut by 20,000' if No 10 plan is approved, *The Times*, 5 July 2020, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/army-to-be-cut-by-20-000-if-no-10-plan-is-approved-bc2zbqm2h

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Denmark

Jeppe Plenge Trautner

In early March 2020, Danish TV news showed overloaded hospitals in Northern Italy with doctors and nurses collapsing from exhaustion, while bodies were collected in trucks. This news brought home the fact that the new coronavirus was a severe risk, to the Danish public. At the time, Danish health and epidemic experts also had little experience of the virus and disagreed over its severity and proper containment. While a full analysis of the decision process has not yet been written, the actions of Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen were resolute. On March 11, she declared a lock-down of the country, excluding essential services. In the days that followed, the borders were closed and emergency laws which restricted public life were passed. For the first time since 1945, the Danish regent held an emergency speech, with the Queen calling for strict adherence to social distancing and other public health advice. Hospitals suspended their routines and were readied for a massive influx of corona-cases, as had happened in China and Italy. The measures were adopted in time to prevent the hospitals from being overwhelmed. Infections peaked at the end of March, and the number of deaths abruptly declined two weeks later. While about 600 lives were lost, the outbreak was brought under temporary control, and the country was gradually reopened from early May until August. The second wave of infections followed from mid-August, although with markedly fewer deaths this time, as the infected were younger and the treatments had improved. At the time of writing in November 2020, the Dan-

ish government is seeking to balance the need to keep society partially open and the economy running, but without prompting a major surge in the disease and deaths. Social distancing measures with masks, partial lock-downs and international travel restrictions, plus the tracking of infections and improved treatment, seem to be keeping the virus at a manageable level until vaccines are available, which at the time of writing, is expected to happen mid-2021.

This chapter details the COVID-19 response of the Danish armed forces, to document how they responded to the pandemic. It also seeks to lay bare some of the key dynamics which are likely to persist for some time and may impact on the Danish armed forces and shape their interaction with partners and allies.

COVID-19 affected the Danish forces at a critical time. The virus at first suppressed and then accentuated the tensions under which the forces have operated for some years. These tensions reflect longstanding differences in the views and values of those at the top of the armed forces, which have led to rivalries and scandals which culminated in 2020. Within a few months, the former Army Chief was sentenced to three months in prison, a handful of high-ranking officers and defence civil servants were publicly removed from their positions,[1] the Permanent Undersecretary for Defence was suspended by the minister,[2] the COVID-stricken Chief of Defence suddenly retired, and most recently, NATO publicly criticised the Danish forces.[3] All in all, 2020 has not been a good year for the Danish armed forces.

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1 Andreas Krog, 'Chefen for Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste Sendes Hjem', *Altinget.Dk*, 24 August 2020, https://www.altinget.dk/artikel/chefen-for-forsvarets-efterretningstjeneste-sendes-hjem.

2 Henning Jørgensen, 'OK18 Blev et Drama Som Tilsiger Ændringer Af Systemet', *Ugebrevet A4*, 10 October 2018, https://www.ugebreveta4.dk/forligsinstitutionen-set-i-lyset-af-ok18_21404.aspx; Lasse Sjøbeck Jørgensen, 'Kritiseret Departementschef Og FE-Chef Har Fået Job i Forsvarsministeriet', *Altinget.Dk*, 6 October 2020, https://www.altinget.dk/navnenyt/kritiseret-departementschef-og-fe-chef-har-faaet-job-i-forsvarsministeriet.

3 North Atlantic Council, 'NATO Defence Planning Capability Review 2019/2020 - Denmark Overview' (Brussels: NATO, 14 October 2020).

The Defence Sector Prior to COVID-19

During the final decade of the Cold War, Danish forces could engage Warsaw Pact forces assigned to take Denmark with a conscript-based field army of about ten brigades, three of which were prepared for mobilisation and deployment to Schleswig-Holstein in 72 hours. A navy of fifty warships and an air force of 120 jets could be readied to meet invading forces in hours, while a nearly hundred thousand strong volunteer force provided local defence and deep logistics all over the country. Although the numbers and their readiness may impress, the forces were built in excess of their funding and had severe flaws in their structures, materiel and readiness.[4]

The post-Cold War drawdown was gradual. Funding was frozen at the 1990 level until 2013, which led to a gradual decline of about two per cent per year. While this saved the forces from a funding crash, it may also have induced the forces not to reform and renew. By 2003, the slow decline had become untenable, as Russia was becoming friendly and international operations in the Balkans, and after 9/11, in Afghanistan and Iraq, were NATO's new mission. At that time, four brilliant colonel-level officers drafted a daring plan that would completely renew the Danish armed forces and brought politicians, the defence commander, and not least, the ministers of Defence and Finance aboard.[5] It was clear to these officers and their followers that Europe would remain at peace for generations to come, and that the Danish forces would not therefore, face a conventional adversary in Europe "in the foreseeable future".[6] The new armed

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4 Michael H. Clemmesen, 'Koldkrigsudredningen Og Danmark i Den Kolde Krig', in *Forum for Forsvarsstudier* (Forsvarsakademiet, 2005), 67–69.

5 A TV documentary about the process remains accessible: Dola Bonfils, 'K-Notatet - ...Om Forsvaret i Fremtiden' (Easy Film, Danmarks Radio (DR), Det Danske Filminstitut, 21 April 2004), www.imdb.com/title/tt0418774/?ref_=ttfc_fc_tt.

6 The events are reconstructed in Michael Hesselholt Clemmesen, 'Da Hær Og Professionalisme Blev Ødelagt (v. 2, Nov. 2, 2017)':, blog.clemmesen.org, *Clemme's Blog For Critical Insight* (blog), accessed 15 October 2020, http://blog.clemmesen.org/2017/11/02/ungtyrkerprojektet-der-odelagde-den-danske-haer-og-militaere-profession/. For a supplemental view, see

forces were to be transformed into expeditionary "first-in, first-out" force components. These would be attached to larger American and British and other forces in regions outside Europe where armed conflict was still taking place. Thus, the forces were organised according to a "toolbox-principle", where force components were to be used individually as military "tools" rather than as an integrated whole. The Army would build a brigade without artillery and supporting logistics, the Navy would build and arm five ocean-going frigates, and the Air Force would acquire the stealthy Joint Strike Fighter.[7] To pay for this, the forces would get rid of the old mobilisation capabilities and the components which were relevant only in a Northern European conventional context. The Army abolished its air defence and anti-tank capabilities, battlefield logistics, mortars and artillery. The Navy got rid of its submarines and its mine capabilities, and the Air Force its air defence and air base defence capabilities. All three services also closed down their conscription-based fighting forces and mobilisation system and abolished their reserve forces. Formally, Denmark has retained conscription and calls up about 4,500 young persons yearly for four months of military training. The purpose of this is to recruit soldiers for full-time employment, and the four months of individual training is neither intensive nor used as the basis for operational units.

Since 2004, war stores have been depleted, sold off or closed. Most vehicles are now leased from car rental companies and maintained by civilian workshops. The national deep logistics system, which had tied the defence forces to industry and infrastructure to support the forces in case of war, was dismantled. Some officers

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Peter Ernstved Rasmussen, 'Sådan blev Forsvarsministeriet en superspreder af dårligdomme', *OLFI* (blog), 30 August 2020, https://olfi.dk/2020/08/30/saadan-blev-forsvarsministeriets-departement-en-superspreder-af-daarligdomme/."In the foreseeable future" is a quote from the 2004 Defence Agreement, cf. Forsvarsministeriet, 'Agreement Regarding Danish Defence 2005-2009' (Copenhagen: Ministry of Defence of Denmark, 10 June 2004), 2.

7 Denmark formally joined the F-35 project in 1997. For Danish defence transformation, see Peter Viggo Jakobsen and Sten Rynning, 'Denmark: Happy to Fight, Will Travel', *International Affairs 95*, no. 4 (1 July 2019): 877–95, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz052.

warned that this re-orientation was too radical but most went along. Quite a few officers – including the four who had designed the new defence forces – worked hard to make it happen and had and still have excellent careers.[8]

In the new era of European peace, it was felt that the ability to protect the population and the state from the dangers and fears of war would be irrelevant. In 2004, the civil defence obligations and much reduced Civil Defence forces, now without their emergency hospitals and stores, could thus be transferred from the powerful Ministry of Home Affairs to the Ministry of Defence. Although the aim of societal resilience was abolished, an ability to help in case of large fires and floods or a major terrorist attack was retained. In 2020, the 2004 decision to reduce societal resilience limited the response of the Danish armed forces and the civil defence to COVID-19.

The premise of the transformation, that the pre-2003 forces were wasteful, may have been doubly wrong. The slack had been taken up and efficiencies harvested in the 1990s, and the abolishment of entire service branches such as air defence, artillery, mines and submarines after 2003 did not save much, but incurred considerable costs. Under the new plan, the manning of the Danish forces was to be based solely on full-time employees largely with fixed civilian-type working hours and thus became inflexible and expensive. The already dated 1983 model for force manning was retained beyond 2004, except that its youngest and least expensive personnel were shed. As the 2004-reforms depleted the youngest and thus most militarily fit and minded personnel, the forces became even less effective by the year. By 2018, about 54 per cent of the 15,000 uniformed full-time defence employees were officers and NCO[9], and

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8 The careers of the four, and how they have shaped the direction of the forces since 2003 until is charted in Clemmesen, 'Da Hær Og Professionalisme Blev Ødelagt'. .

9 Mette Brødsgaard Larsen, *Krigerkultur Eller Managementkultur - Fastholdelse i Forsvaret - En Undersøgelse Af Stampersonellets Arbejdsvilkår* (Dansk institut for Militære Studier, 2009), 5. Forsvarsministeriets Personalestyrelse, 'Antal ansatte [i Forsvaret]', Forsvarsministeriets Personalestyrelse, accessed 19 October 2020, /da/hr-i-tal/antal-ansatte/.

the forces, therefore, had more leaders than privates. The average age of Danish private soldiers is 34 years, NCOs - 40 years and officers - 43 years. About half of the private soldiers are older than 30 years, and 17 per cent are between 50 and 67.[10] It is unusual for the armed forces to retain military personnel to an advanced age as this decreases operational capacity. At the same time, older personnel are more expensive, and the Danish forces spend about 53 per cent on personnel. The high percentage of the budget used for salaries leaves the forces short of funding for training, materiel and deployments.

The structural inefficiencies inherent in the 2004-model have made it increasingly difficult to keep the armed forces operationally capable. Measured in person-years, in the mid-1990s Denmark could maintain about 2,000 soldiers deployed abroad, ten years later about 1,000, and in recent years as few as 350.[11] Considering that the Danish forces have about 20,000 full-time employees of whom 15,000 are in uniform, this is a worrying, although not a widely recognised trend. NATO's recent review of the Danish forces provides an unusually robust and detailed criticism of such inefficiencies.[12]

By 2020, it had been thirteen years since Danish ground troops were brought home from the unpopular counter-insurgency operations in Iraq, and eight years since Danish combat units left Afghanistan. Nearly fifty Danish soldiers died and more were severely wounded in these two countries. At the time, this gave Denmark a positive aura and outsized visibility in NATO with two Danes

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10 Forsvarsministeriet, 'FOU Alm.Del Endeligt Svar På Spørgsmål 87' (Forsvarsudvalget 2016-17, 28 March 2017), https://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/almdel/fou/spm/87/svar/1393675/1737681.pdf.

11 Often the figures are given as military persons who have been stationed abroad for an unspecified time, a practise that makes it difficult to assess the output-effectiveness of the forces. For the 2016 figure, see Forsvarsministeriet, '"Input- Output Metrics", National Fact Sheet Denmark: 2015 & 2016' (København: Forsvarsministeriet, 29 June 2017), http://www.fmn.dk/temaer/nato/Documents/Metrics-2017-UNCL-DNK.pdf.

12 North Atlantic Council, 'NATO Capability Review Denmark 2019/2020'.

simultaneously in top positions.[13] Afterwards, most Danish politicians felt that the loss of life and limb and the political risk of seeking an exposed position in distant small wars were not worth it. In recent years, Danish contributions to NATO's and other missions have, thus, mostly been naval and air force assets and training missions which operate from relative safety.

Russia's cyberattack on Estonia in 2007, the war against Georgia in 2008, and the war against Ukraine in 2014 did little to change the Danish defence posture. A 15% defence budget cut was begun in 2013 and fully implemented in 2017. While the major political parties agreed in 2014 to NATO's minimum spending of 2% of GDP, Denmark went down to less than 1.2%. The 2018 defence agreement opted for increasing the defence budget from 2019 to 2023. After an initial downward adjustment in the first year, spending reached 1.3% in 2019 and additional funding will be arriving in 2022 and 2023 and reach 1.5% in 2024.[14] At the same time, non-military tasks such as anti-terrorism and passport control at the borders to discourage illegal immigration were increasingly included in the defence budget. To satisfy NATO's requests for regional solidarity, Denmark contributes 200 troops to the Alliance's Enhanced Forward Presence forces in Estonia every other year, as well as other force components with limited operational capacity against a peer competitor.[15]

The strains of the 2004 transformation, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, political distrust of the utility of the forces and the declining defence budget have divided the Danish forces. Until 2020, the top of the officer corps has been dominated by

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13 Former Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen was the Secretary General 2009-2014 and former Chief of Defence General Knud Bartels was Chairman of NATO's Military Committee 2012-15.

14 Forsvarsministeriet, 'Danish Defence Expenditure' (Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Defence, Probably 2019), https://fmn.dk/globalassets/fmn/dokumenter/aarsrapporter/-danish-defence-expenditure-2020wcagua-.pdf; NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 'Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2019)', NATO Communique (Brussels, 29 November 2019).

15 North Atlantic Council, 'NATO Capability Review Denmark 2019/2020', 20.

the original 2003 planners and their aides. They have promoted what civil-military relations scholars may term a fusionist[16] approach to the military. According to this view, the armed forces ought to integrate closely with and function like civilian society in as many ways as possible to avoid military inefficiencies and moral insularity. Non-military terms mark the language of the higher staffs, and military personnel are labelled "employees", commanders "conglomerate leaders", staff studies "business cases", supporting units "suppliers" and supported units "customers".[17] Typically, the fusionists who are made generals and high commanders are experienced administrators, although not always with extensive operational and international experience.

A 'traditionalist' group of officers has emerged, and is increasingly in visible opposition to the fusionists. They have less formal influence but considerable following from the operationally more active and thus typically younger soldiers of all ranks. The further away one gets from the MoD and the top defence levels, the more traditionalist influences are found. They are now the more assertive influence in the Army and perhaps amongst Danish officers in NATO-related positions abroad. The re-emergence of Russia as a destabilising factor in Northern Europe is emerging as a point of contention between fusionists and traditionalists. Also after 2014, fusionist officers have been hesitant to think of the Russian challenge as anything but bluster. Their view is that since NATO's combined defence budgets and military strength are, by far, larger than Russia's, no NATO country can really be threatened by Russia. Although such arguments ignore history, geography and military factors, they are popular among Danish defence and strategy experts.[18]

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16 Huntington Samuel, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Belknap Press, 1957), 350.

17 In Danish "medarbejdere", "koncernledelsen", "business cases", "leverandører" and "kunder".

18 Cf. Flemming Splidsboel, 'Putins Rusland', Longread (København: Dansk Institut for Internationale Studier, 1 January 2020), https://www.diis.

In response to NATO's post-2014 force requirements, Denmark will set up a NATO Divisional Headquarters in Latvia, a Special Operations Component Command, a medium brigade, and naval and air force capabilities. These new capabilities will be costly and may require substantial changes to the personnel structure and other aspects of the forces. Therefore, Denmark has sought to postpone implementation and to scale down expectations. As the Army Chief recently publicly noted, when established in 2024, the Danish medium brigade of 4,000 soldiers will be ready at 180 days' notice because the Army needs time to call back soldiers from expeditionary operations and to buy munitions. He also stated his concern over Russia's military stance and the low level of readiness that the brigade will have initially.[19] The views of the Army Chief, who has served in high NATO and international functions and commands are, what is here termed, traditionalist, and he is popular with the forces.[20]

Defence is among the least salient topics in Danish politics with about four per cent of the electorate finding it to be of at least some importance.[21] Defence ministers may be appointed among untested

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dk/node/23718; Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, *The Ukraine Crisis and the End of the Post-Cold War European Order: Options for NATO and the EU* (København: Centre for Military Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2014); Steen Rynning and Jens Ringsmose, 'Danmark kan bidrage til politisk dialog | DIIS', DIIS Policy Brief, 23 August 2019, https://www.diis.dk/publikationer/danmark-kan-bidrage-politisk-dialog; Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste, 'Efterretningsmæssig Risikovurdering 2019' (København: Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste, November 2019).

19 Lolle Maj.Gen. Michael Lollesgaard, 'Oplæg om Hæren for Folk & Sikkerhed, Sønderborg den 28. sept. 2020 (video).', Video, *Facebook*, 28 September 2020, https://www.facebook.com/annchristina.salquist/videos/10157892230474211.

20 Peter Ernstved Rasmussen, 'Læserne har talt: Han skal være ny forsvarschef', *OLFI*, 2 November 2016, https://olfi.dk/2016/11/02/laeserne-har-talt-han-skal-vaere-ny-forsvarschef/; Peter Ernstved Rasmussen, 'Dansen om den varme stol', *OLFI*, 4 October 2020, https://olfi.dk/2020/10/04/dansen-om-den-varme-stol/.

21 Kristoffer Kvalvik, 'Køn, Indkomst Og Geografi: Her Er Vælgernes Vigtigste Dagsordener', *Altinget.Dk,* 16 January 2018, //www.altinget.dk/artikel/163051-koen-indkomst-og-geografi-her-er-vaelgernes-vigtigste-dagsordener.

government politicians, and are soon promoted to head important ministries if they do well and discarded if not. In the last 20 years, there have been ten defence ministers, seven since 2010. The quickly rotating ministers who have not all had a previous interest in defence matters may be quite dependent on ministerial civil servants and the top generals. This may have led to a high degree of continuity and left the fusionist view unchallenged.

The Defence Sector During the Pandemic

By the end of February 2020, it was clear to the armed forces' units engaged in international co-operation, deployments and logistics that COVID-19 would affect their operations. Soon after, plans were made to bring Danish soldiers home from ongoing exercises, while keeping those deployed in operations abroad. As the government closed down Denmark, the Chief of Defence instructed everyone in the armed forces, except those providing essential military duties and civilian services, to work from home. About 17,000 worked from home while 3,000 continued to work on-site. In mid-April, a thousand were called in, and by the end of May all were back. With regard to the approximately 600 soldiers stationed abroad in March when Denmark was closing down, nearly all initially stayed at their missions. As these missions were quite different, some being under UN and NATO and others being led by single countries and coalitions, each mission adapted to COVID-19 according to local circumstances and their perception of the risks involved. Judging from the publicised Defence Command weekly briefings on Danish soldiers abroad and from media reports, this did not cause notable concern. Some personnel had their deployments shortened as training with locals was terminated due to the risk of COVID-19, while others were kept abroad longer than planned as replacements were delayed.[22] Those

[22] Forsvarskommandoen, 'Mission Update Uge 13 Til Uge 29, 2020 [Weekly

who were to be sent abroad were mostly isolated in Denmark for two weeks before their deployment.

Danish soldiers were planned to participate in the sizeable US-led exercise "Defender Europe", which was scaled down and then mostly cancelled in March 2020. Those who were under deployment or already deployed were recalled from mid-March. Training activities in Denmark, including that of conscripts mostly ended. The retention of about 700 conscripts of the Royal Lifeguard Regiment serving as guards at the royal palaces created public concern in March. As the Defence Command informed the public that the conscripts were being tested for the virus, these concerns vanished.[23] Likewise, as one of the frigates was preparing for several weeks at sea, concern about the risk of getting coronavirus aboard was discussed in the media.[24] A few Danish soldiers were tested positive for the virus while at missions abroad, but none seem to have been seriously ill.[25]

As a positive pointer for the future, the Army held a week-long field exercise in September 2020 with 2,500 soldiers in Denmark, with visiting Estonian and Lithuanian units, and managed to keep the coronavirus at a minimum. Only two soldiers were infected, which indicates that strict observance of mask-wearing and social distancing also works well in military exercises.

In early March 2020, as the number of COVID-19 cases rose exponentially, it became clear that the health system could not handle the contact tracing effort and the several thousand daily calls for the

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Briefing on Danish Personnel Deployed Abroad]' (Forsvarsministeriet, 2020), https://test.www2.forsvaret.dk/nyheder/intops/Pages/MissionUpdateuge13%E2%80%932020.aspx.

23 Forsvarskommandoen, 'Meddelelse vedrørende situationen for værnepligtige ved Livgarden', Forsvaret, 22 March 2020, /da/nyheder/2020/meddelelse-vedrorende-situationen-for-varnepligtige-ved-livgarden/.

24 Kasper Junge Wester, 'Internationale missionskrav tvinger danske soldater i corona-karantæne', *OLFI,* 28 April 2020, https://olfi.dk/2020/04/28/internationale-missionskrav-tvinger-danske-soldater-i-corona-karantaene/.

25 Forsvarskommandoen, 'Smittetilfælde på Brave Lion', Forsvaret, 29 September 2020, /da/nyheder/2020/smittetilfalde-pa-brave-lion/.

corona-hotline from the public alone. Four call-centres were quickly set up, and manned by police, civil defence, regular forces and Home Guard volunteers from March 6, with the latter called up and ready within hours.[26] At that stage, the understanding of the virus and pandemic was sketchy, and some of the volunteers were not well suited to answering questions from anxious citizens.[27] By March 20, more call-centre operators were being recruited by the Home Guard, primarily from among volunteers, reservists and former and retired service members. They were uniformed, organised in platoons, and given rank and pay as privates, no matter their previous rank. Some were recently trained conscripts in their early twenties, and others seasoned NCOs and officers. While the answering of the public's questions was based on standard answer sheets and could be done by many, contact tracing proved challenging. Calling those who had been tested positive, advising them, gaining their confidence and tracking and warning those potentially infected required skills that are more often seen in mature soldiers. The low pay and other challenges have since led to a rather quick turnover of call-centre staff.[28]

Testing was expanded as COVID-19 tests became available in large numbers. From April, dozens of regional drive-in and walk-in test centres were set up at large parking lots and mainly with tents and prefabs rented from private contractors. Civil defence and military logistics officers and NCOs assisted in the design of the test centres and their logistic flows. Initially, Home Guard volunteers and civil defence conscripts staffed the centres.[29] After

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26 Hjemmeværnskommandoen, 'Hjemmeværnet Bag Hurtig Støtte Til Corona-Hotline', 11 March 2020, https://www.hjv.dk/oe/HDEJY/nyheder/Sider/COVID-19.aspx.

27 Af Mathias Sonne Mencke, 'Borgere forvirrede efter brug af corona-hotline', Kristeligt Dagblad, 11 March 2020, https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/laegeforening-undrer-sig-over-corona-hotline.

28 The description of the functioning of call-centres is based on interviews with two military persons working at the Jonstrup call-center, conducted on Oct. 17 and 31, 2020.

29 Nina Vibe Petersen, 'Testcentret til de raske', *Fyens Stiftstidende*, 22 April 2020, sec. Fyn, https://fyens.dk/artikel/testcentret-til-de-raske.

a few weeks, privates and civil defence personnel who had just been released from their conscript service were contracted for these functions by the defence forces' personnel agency. In November 2020, the government concluded, based on expert advice, that the large Danish mink industry presented a serious health risk as the coronavirus mutates in mink and infects humans, and the Ministry of Defence tasked regular soldiers with assisting in the culling of up to 17 million mink.[30] While neither the armed forces nor the Civil Defence had field hospitals and other COVID-19-relevant materiel in stock, their uniformed personnel were quickly available for training into effective and reliable teams for the manning of hotlines and test-centres and the culling of mink.

Denmark was in no position to assist other countries as the country soon ran out of surgical masks and other personal protective equipment. During the lock-down in March, the main fear was that the number of severe COVID-19 cases would exceed the hospitals' ventilator capacity, and thus make for triage rather than treatment, causing the death of thousands. A scramble to find and activate as many ventilators as possible followed. As the need for ventilators and the number of fatalities topped in early April, about half of the country's ventilators, about 600 in number, were in use. After this, fewer ventilators were required. On April 8, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Defence together announced that Italy would receive 15 to 20 surplus ventilators from the Danish forces. Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that these ventilators could not be used for COVID-19 treatment, and the Danish gift was, therefore, of no value to Italy. In June, the press documented that the Defence Medical Command had warned the Ministry of Defence that the ventilators were unsuited for the purpose. A senior civil servant in the Ministry of Defence had then concluded that the Ministry

30 Forsvaret, 'Forsvaret skal støtte Fødevarestyrelsen', Forsvaret - Nyheder, 9 November 2020, /da/nyheder/2020/forsvaret-skal-stotte-fodevarestyrelsen/.

of Foreign Affairs "is probably mainly interested in the signalling value" of providing ventilators to Italy and ignored the information.[31] A few days later it was announced that the already embattled Permanent Undersecretary for Defence would leave the MoD.[32]

The Outlook for the Danish Defence Sector

The cost of the coronavirus to the Danish economy has been considerable, and GDP is expected to contract by five per cent in 2020, while public debt rises from 33 to 46% of GDP. So far, Danish politicians have not publicly considered reducing any part of the state budget. A drawn-out international recession may further harm the Danish economy, and this could postpone the planned 2022-23 increase in the defence budget. As defence funding is not, by itself, a major issue relative to the inefficiencies inherent in the 2004 expeditionary defence model described above, a moderate funding cut will not mean much for Denmark's partial inability to meet its stated NATO obligations. What may be the most crucial determinant of the forces' future posture is the outcome of the traditionalist and NATO's challenge to dominant fusionist Ministry of Defence and defence forces' leadership views described above. The top level of the Danish forces has been seriously challenged in 2020, but not so much by COVID-19, as by the decrease in public and political trust. One of the 2003-reformers, who had been made Army Chief, was removed from his post in 2018 and sentenced to three months in prison in August 2020 for abusing his position. His fellow reformer, the 2017-2020 Chief of Defence, had

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31 Steffen McGhie, 'Forsvaret vidste allerede i marts, at respiratorer til Italien var ubrugelige (...)', *Berlingske,* 22 June 2020, sec. Nyheder/Samfund, https://www.berlingske.dk/content/item/1484129.

32 Kasper Junge Wester, 'Departementschef Thomas Ahrenkiel forlader Forsvarsministeriet', *OLFI*, 30 June 2020, https://olfi.dk/2020/06/30/departementschef-thomas-ahrenkiel-forlader-forsvarsministeriet/.

tried to deflect initial media interest.[33] At the same time, several other embarrassing situations, such as the Italian ventilator case related above and embezzlement and questionable practises in the Defence Estate Agency, appeared in the media.[34] When asked why she had retained the compromised Chief of Defence, the Minister of Defence, Trine Bramsen, responded that the rest of the military leadership was alike, in wording which reveals the depth of her distrust.[35] In September 2020, shortly after the Chief of Defence had participated in the 2020 Security Policy Course, a yearly signature event for his invited guests, he and 28 of the 34 participants were infected with COVID-19, as the course had been a superspreader event.[36] Although seemingly in good health, the general suddenly retired two weeks later.[37] In October, the Minister of Defence announced the selection of the new Chief of Defence who is administratively highly capable, but has quite limited NATO, operational, and international posting experience,[38] and thus seems likely to continue the fusionist line. On the other hand, NATO's recent overt criticism of the Danish reluctance to fulfil its com-

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33 Peter Ernstved Rasmussen, 'Forsvarschefs svar på anklager om nepotisme: "Hvad skal jeg undersøge?"', *OLFI*, 20 October 2018, https://olfi.dk/2018/10/20/forsvarschefs-svar-paa-anklager-om-nepotisme-hvad-skal-jeg-undersoege/.

34 For a summary, see Peter Ernstved Rasmussen, 'Frygten for sin egen skygge', *OLFI,* 27 March 2020, sec. DEBAT, https://olfi.dk/2020/03/27/frygten-for-sin-egen-skygge/.

35 Peter Ernstved Rasmussen, 'Forsvarsministeren har »stor, stor tillid til« forsvarschef Bjørn Bisserup', *OLFI*' 29 May 2020, sec. FORSVAR, https://olfi.dk/2020/05/29/forsvarsministeren-har-stor-stor-tillid-til-forsvarschef-bjoern-bisserup/.

36 Peter Burhøi, 'Forsvarets øverste leder ramt af corona – 29 smittet (...)', *Berlingske,* 24 September 2020, sec. Nyheder/Samfund, https://www.berlingske.dk/content/item/1506574.

37 Forsvarsministeriet, 'Bjørn Bisserup Stopper Som Forsvarschef', FMN Nyheder, 29 September 2020, https://fmn.dk/da/nyheder/2020/bjorn-bisserup-stopper-som-forsvarschef/.

38 Forsvarsministeriet, 'Generalløjtnant Flemming Lentfer Ny Forsvarschef', FMN Nyheder, 9 October 2020, https://fmn.dk/da/nyheder/2020/generallojtnant-flemming-lentfer-ny-forsvarschef/.

mitments[39] may strengthen the traditionalist point-of-view, although Defence Minister Trine Bramsen has brushed off NATO's criticism as merely "NATO politics".[40]

In 2014, the Norwegian and Swedish armed forces were in many ways in the same position as the Danish forces are today, marked by political inattention, strained structures, ineffective personnel policies, and an indistinct vision of their mission. The Russian challenge to the stability of northern Europe prompted a quick renewal and expansion of Norway's and Sweden's armed forces. This included, in particular, their rational use of conscription for creating a substantial conventional military capability. In contrast, the sweeping transformation of the Danish forces since 2004 has left the forces ill-suited to the current regional challenge from Russia. The defence-internal fusionist versus traditionalist tug-of-war has worsened an already difficult situation. Generally speaking, fusionists believe that Russia cannot be a threat to any NATO member while traditionalists are less certain, and this discrepancy shapes their preferences. In recent years, Denmark has thus committed to NATO priorities, bilaterally to several initiatives, as well as to operations in Africa, the Persian Gulf and Iraq without a well-defined strategic direction or sufficient means. This and the post-2004 transformation limited the armed forces' ability to contribute to COVID-19 containment and amelioration in other ways than to have most of its employees working from home while recruiting retirees and Home Guard volunteers for the corona call-centre and test-centres. One positive trend has, nevertheless, emerged. The defence forces have seen the number of applications for officers' schools and other employment rise, probably due to the recession which the pandemic set off.

Like Denmark's defence forces, Germany's Bundeswehr is currently quite limited in its ability to produce conventional militari-

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39 North Atlantic Council, 'NATO Capability Review Denmark 2019/2020'.

40 Steffen McGhie, 'Analyse: Trine Bramsens modangreb på NATO er en fejlslutning på holbergsk niveau', *Berlingske.dk*, 31 October 2020, sec. Nyheder/Samfund, https://www.berlingske.dk/content/item/1516333.

ly strength,[41] and partly for the same reasons. Yet, if political and public concerns regarding Russia's military capabilities and political intentions change, the Danish armed forces could rapidly be subjected to quick turnarounds such as those that the Swedes and Norwegians have experienced. A change in Germany's view would most likely prompt Denmark to follow. So far, it seems that COVID-19 has accelerated the destabilising economic and political trends which Europe has experienced in recent years, and the only thing one may predict with certainty about the future is that it will surprise us.

41 Daniel Darling, 'Germany's Military Readiness Woes Continue', *Defense Security Monitor* (blog), 31 January 2019, https://dsm.forecastinternational.com/wordpress/2019/01/31/germanys-military-readiness-woes-continue/; Scott Boston et al., Assessing the Conventional Force Imbalance in Europe: Implications for Countering Russian Local Superiority, RAND Research Report 2402, 2018.

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Germany

Dominic Vogel

Germany got off lightly compared to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on other European countries in the spring of 2020. Up until the end of September, it had counted 9,400 deaths out of some 270,000 registered cases[1]. The country nevertheless experienced a lockdown for more than a month, from mid-March 2020 until late April 2020, and is facing an economic recession far larger than the one experienced after the 2008/2009 financial crisis. GDP in the second quarter of 2020 was 11.3% lower than the same period of the preceding year, and general exports declined by 22.2%.[2] Although the COVID-19 pandemic caused this severe economic setback, the government's countermeasures were supported by a large majority of the German public[3].

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Germany's defence sector. It focusses on the role that the military has played in crisis relief so far and the implications that the pandemic has had on defence policy so far. As the rise in infection numbers during October 2020 grievously illustrated, the pandemic is far from over, making a comprehensive conclusion on the measures taken to counter it difficult. Thus, the main focus of

1 Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Centre, https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html, (23.9.2020)

2 Statistisches Bundesamt: Press release No. 323 of 25 August, 2020, https://www.destatis.de/EN/Press/2020/08/PE20_323_811.html (23.9.2020)

3 Politbarometer Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, https://www.forschungsgruppe.de/Aktuelles/Politbarometer/

the chapter is on an analysis of the so-called first wave which occurred in Germany in spring 2020.

Reforming Reforms: The Situation of the German Military

Whereas, the success of Germany's counter COVID-19 policy is widely attributed to the federal government and especially to Chancellor Angela Merkel, the actual competence for crisis management is exercised at Lander level, that is, at the level of the federal states. The constitution guarantees that law enforcement and crisis response are to be handled by the governments of the federal states. The responsible authority is established even lower when it comes to disaster control, at the level of the counties. This fundamental principle of federalism had both positive and negative implications during the pandemic. On the one hand, it ensured that the concerned bodies on the ground were in charge of crisis management and adjusted the measures individually to certain areas, rather than following central orders from Berlin which may not be adaptable to the local situation. County administrators and federal state leaders were able to adjust their counter measures to their own local infection dynamic. On the other hand, it resulted in a high need for coordination at several levels (e.g. neighbouring counties, Lander with counties, Federal level with Lander level) in order to ensure that all measures were in line with each other. Since the federal government has limited competence in crisis response, it subsequently also has a limited number of its own agencies that it can task. The federal level does not have a substantial operational force in the field of health care to cope with events like a pandemic. So, the various actors, the limits in the federal governments' competences and the unpredictable dynamic during the pandemic made it difficult to create, maintain and monitor a common operational picture over the events.

Hence, it became clear at an early stage that it would be necessary to task the military (Bundeswehr) to support the public health

sector. However, there are clear legal limits to the use of military means to provide such support, unlike in neighbouring European countries. The deployment of soldiers within the country as, for example, in France within the framework of the "Vigipirate" anti-terrorism plan, is not conceivable in Germany. Instead, local leaders are required to declare a state of emergency to be eligible to apply for military assistance, for example, logistical and medical support. Moreover, German armed forces are currently facing a process of reorientation. Since the end of the Cold War, the numbers of active duty personnel have constantly declined, from some 500,000 troops at the beginning of the 1990s, to around 176,000 in 2016, the smallest figure since the country's rearmament in 1955[4].

Having become more involved in out of area missions, Germany ended conscription in 2011, and focused fully on international crisis management at the price of losing sight of the military's core mission. The 2011 structural reforms were meant to optimize forces to the needs of stabilisation missions like KFOR and ISAF, but no longer recognised the tasks of national and collective defence for planning guidance[5]. This had three effects. Firstly, there was a considerable decrease in manpower. Secondly, the ability to mobilise and maintain larger reserve units was lost, both due to the suspension of conscription. Thirdly, the reduction in bases throughout Germany, with 31 being wound up and 91 being diminished by more than 50% of their personnel.[6] These factors have become relevant because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 marked a turning point in German defence policy. The narrative of an end to military aggression and a strategic partnership with Russia in Europe has

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4 Wiegold T.: „Neue Zahlen zur Personalstärke: Die kleinste Bundeswehr aller Zeiten, Augen Geradeaus! July 2016, (https://augengeradeaus.net/2016/07/neue-zahlen-zur-personalstaerke-die-kleinste-bundeswehr-aller-zeiten/)

5 Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (Ministry of Defence - BMVg): „"Konzeption der Bundeswehr", 01.07.2013.

6 Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (Ministry of Defence - BMVg): „"Die Stationierung der Bundeswehr in Deutschland", October 2011.

proven to be wrong and, as with many other countries, Germany also got caught on the wrong foot. The 2011 reform had not been entirely implemented when then Minister of Defence, Ursula von der Leyen, proclaimed a U-turn[7]. In accordance with NATO's 2014 Wales Summit declarations, Germany initiated a change in its defence policy with the main aim being to focus again on collective defence, rather than international crisis management, as the core objective. The shrinking in German military planning was to be overcome and replaced by so called *trend reversals*[8] in terms of personnel, equipment and funds.

The strategic framework was subsequently adjusted. With the 2016 White Paper for Security Policy, Germany explicitly refocused on national and collective defence as the main task for its military, connected with a pledge to take up more international responsibility. For the first time in decades, the defined structural manning level target rose, from 185,000 to 203,000 troops in 2025.[9] Moreover, procurement policy changed back to the aim of building up fully equipped units instead of having to exchange equipment between units for training and mission purposes. This was accompanied by increasing budgets in absolute and relative numbers. From 2014 to 2019, the share for defence constantly grew[10] from 32.4bn € to 43.2bn €, which equals an increase from 1.1 to 1.3% of GDP. With the 2018 review of

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7 Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (Ministry of Defence - BMVg): „"Ursula von der Leyen stellt das neue Weißbuch vor", Press Release 13.07.16, (https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/von-der-leyen-stellt-weichen-fuer-trendwende-personal-11294)

8 Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (Ministry of Defence - BMVg): „"Von der Leyen stellt Weichen für Trendwende Personal", Press Release 10.05.16, (https://www.bmvg.de/de/aktuelles/von-der-leyen-stellt-weichen-fuer-trendwende-personal-11294)

9 Bundeswehr Website: „"Die Trendwende Personal", (https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/ueber-die-bundeswehr/modernisierung-bundeswehr/trendwende-personal)

10 Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (Ministry of Defence - BMVg): „"Entwicklung und Struktur des Verteidigungshaushalts" (https://www.bmvg.de/de/themen/verteidigungshaushalt/entwicklung-und-struktur-des-verteidigungshaushalts)

the *Conception of the Bundeswehr* central doctrine, the German Ministry of Defence adapted its military strategic guidance. Most notably, it recognised that the two major tasks of the armed forces (mainly collective defence and stabilisation/crisis management) described in the 2016 White Paper were equally important, although it was clear that Germany is currently not able to fully perform them simultaneously. Hence, with regards to procurement and force organisation, the focus should no longer be on international crisis management. Rather, the Bundeswehr should aim to be able to fulfil both tasks with the same set of forces. To this end, the concept stipulates that existing capabilities must not only be improved and expanded, but also partly rebuilt in the areas of national and collective defence. Capability planning was consequently revised and adapted. The so-called *capability profile* outlines the capability goals and the needs in terms of equipment. It describes the projected growth towards the national level of ambition in accordance with NATO's Defence Planning Process. Nevertheless, this change in defence policy has not yet materialized. Firstly, personnel numbers indeed increased from the all-time low of 2016, but with some 185,000 they are not notably larger than the original target level. Secondly, readiness in terms of equipment has not yet significantly improved, something which the media and the political opposition in parliament constantly criticize.

The Forces' Commitment in the Pandemic so far

When the pandemic began to spread through Europe and affected Germany bit by bit, the first military activity which caught public attention was the evacuation of 124 German citizens from Wuhan by an Air Force transport aircraft by the end of January 2020. The passengers were first brought to Frankfurt Airport, and from there, to an air force base near the city of Karlsruhe, where the majority of them were quarantined and consequently monitored. This unique package, which included the services of both military and civilian

agencies, received serious media attention in the early days of the pandemic. With the numbers of infections rising in spring 2020, it became clear that COVID-19 had global magnitude and would not leave Germany untouched. The Bundeswehr was confronted with requests for support from federal states, counties and municipalities even in the early stages of the pandemic.

Since the beginning of April 2020, all federal states had applied for and received administrative assistance from the Bundeswehr. Most of the requests were focused on logistical assistance.[11] The Bundeswehr responded to these requests with numerous support missions, the establishment of new structures and the activation of reservists. The focus was on helping public health authorities to track infection chains, as well as on support at old people's homes and nursing homes. In practical terms, this meant that the Bundeswehr offered personnel, materiel, transport, and provided infrastructure. In March and April 2020, the Air Force also flew more than 20 intensive care patients from regions in Italy and France, heavily affected by COVID-19, to Germany for treatment.[12] As a further sign of European solidarity, it provided medical equipment such as ventilators for Great Britain and used its airlift to procure medical equipment from China. The Bundeswehr also set up new, temporary structures for this crisis management: The *Corona Mission Contingent* was made up of soldiers from existing structures. On 26 March 2020, the Chief of Staff of the Bundeswehr, General Eberhard Zorn, announced that four regional commands of up to 15,000 soldiers would be set up as part of an emergency response team.[13]

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11 Streitkräftebasis Website: „"Amtshilfe: Die Bundeswehr informiert." (https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/streitkraeftebasis/im-einsatz/der-inspekteur-der-streitkraeftebasis-informiert)

12 Braw E.: "No Military Has Done More for Corona-Stricken Allies Than Germany's", Defence One, April 2020, (https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/04/no-military-has-done-more-corona-stricken-allies-germanys/164671/)

13 Wiegold T.: „"Coronavirus-Pandemie und Bundeswehr – Sammler 27. März", Augen geradeaus!, (https://augengeradeaus.net/2020/03/coronavirus-pandemie-und-bundeswehr-sammler-27-maerz/)

The soldiers were kept available for this purpose in platoons with different standby times and a failure rate of up to 15 percent. This meant that the units would still be operational if 15 percent of the personnel were not available, for example, due to illness. In total, the Bundeswehr had up to 32,000 soldiers ready to provide support in the Corona crisis. This figure is composed of the 15,000 soldiers from the Corona Mission Contingent and 17,000 soldiers from the Central Medical Service of the Bundeswehr, which has the status of an additional military service in Germany. But these are the planning figures: The troops are kept at higher readiness, but were not fully deployed.

This was the first time in its history that the Bundeswehr had set up a contingent for domestic assistance as a preventive measure. This is a significant change from previous practice. Up to now, the Bundeswehr has responded to requests for administrative assistance with its existing structures. Whenever the military was deployed in domestic contexts e.g. floods, it usually tasked units which were stationed nearby and sent them to assist as a whole. This was not feasible in the context of the pandemic due to the forementioned changes in stationing.

Therefore, the Corona Mission Contingent followed the logic of foreign missions in terms of command and control. Firstly, forces and capability from the entire armed forces were mobilised and combined to form a new contingent. Secondly, these units were separated from their existing chain of command and combined under the command of the national territorial commander, that is, the commander responsible for the command and control of the Bundeswehr in domestic operations. However, the forces of the Central Medical Service assigned to assist in the Corona crisis remained under the command of their chief of staff. The Corona Mission Contingent thus followed a decentralised understanding of hierarchy, which ensured functional leadership with regards to medical requirements, but also caused an additional need for coordination within the forces' chain of command.

The Corona pandemic not only challenged the Bundeswehr internally, but also made the conditions for its current 12 internation-

al missions more difficult. For example, in Mali, where Bundeswehr soldiers were training Malian security forces within the framework of the EUTM European training mission, training operations were suspended. So far, the pandemic has made operations more difficult, but has not limited the Bundeswehr's operational readiness. This is due to the low number of infections and military planning, which has always taken buffers for personnel into account. However, if the 15,000 soldiers planned in the Corona structure were to be withdrawn continuously and over a longer period of time, or if the number of infections were to increase significantly, the Bundeswehr would run the risk of no longer being able to staff its foreign missions. At present, however, this is not to be feared.[14]

It is more difficult to assess the direct consequences of the pandemic on operations. These include the extent to which stabilisation successes in Mali or Iraq will be set back if local security forces are not trained. Temporary staff restrictions, partial evacuation and quarantine periods have weakened those missions, with regional and local security suffering as a result. In Iraq and Mali, for example, the freezing of the international training missions coincided with a rise in security incidents.[15]

The Pandemic Underlines Existing Deficiencies

The German Armed Forces' involvement in the pandemic illustrates how vulnerable their personnel framework actually is. The 32,000 troops, those potentially assigned to provide domestic support in the pandemic, of a total of more than 180,000, is at first

14 Major C., Schulz R., Vogel D.: Die neuartige Rolle der Bundeswehr im Corona-Krisenmanagement. SWP-Aktuell 2020/A 51, https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/bundeswehr-im-corona-krisenmanagement/

15 D. Zandee, E. Duchateau-Polkerman and A. Stoetman: "Defence & COVID-19: why budget cuts should be off the table", Clingendael Magazine, April 2020; C. Major: "Catalyst or crisis? COVID-19 and European Security" , NDC Policy Brief No.17, October 2020.

glance a number that can be easily handled. However, even at the peak of the foreign missions in 2009, the Bundeswehr had fewer soldiers deployed, namely about 25,000 troops over the year.[16] The Corona Mission Contingent thus outstripped the Bundeswehr's previous efforts in crisis management in terms of personnel and equipment planning and readiness levels.

The need to provide significantly more soldiers, in addition to ongoing commitments (such as the missions in Mali, Afghanistan and Iraq), is an enormous challenge which the Bundeswehr can hardly cope with in the long term in terms of personnel. This tense situation could be aggravated if the pandemic has a negative impact on the Bundeswehr's personnel development, especially on recruitment. In the current recruitment year, the number of newly hired personnel might not grow as planned. Moreover, the pandemic made it obvious that the reserves of critical goods, such as personal protection equipment gear, were insufficient, for both the Federal Government and those of the Bundeswehr. In fact, the Bundeswehr has fundamentally changed its stockpiling in recent years. As part of cost-cutting measures, many sites, including many logistics facilities, have been closed.

This was justified not only by austerity measures, but also by lower staffing levels and subsequently lower requirements in terms of equipment. In this way, the Bundeswehr had reduced its cost-intensive material stocks, which it could have provided or used itself in the event of a crisis. Instead, it sought to equip itself directly from the civilian market when required.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed known problems in the German armed forces and threatens to exacerbate them. Even today, the Bundeswehr is often only able to equip contingents for international operations or similar commitments, for example, for NATO's rapid reaction force, and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), if it brings together equipment from several units. Accord-

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16 Bundeswehr Journal: „"Bisher fast 427000 deutsche Soldaten im Auslandseinsatz", (http://www.bundeswehr-journal.de/2018/bisher-fast-427-000-deutsche-soldaten-im-auslandseinsatz/)

ing to the capability profile, the equipment status is to be improved by 2031. Nevertheless, this planning horizon is not backed by current defence budget plans.

Should the moderate increases in the German defence budget which have been planned so far be suspended or significantly reduced as a result of the pandemic, the existing problems of the German armed forces could become even more acute. The modest amelioration launched in 2014 might come to an end. The initiated trend reversals in the areas of personnel, finances and materiel could hardly be continued. Major armament projects, such as the Franco-German-Spanish Future Combat Air System (FCAS) for the development of the next generation of a combat aircraft system, would come under pressure. According to the key figures' resolution on medium-term financial planning, an outlook on upcoming budget lines issued by the Treasury before the actual budgeting process starts, major projects are to be financed in order to close capability gaps in line with the armed forces capability profile. The aim is to achieve the capability goals agreed with the EU and NATO partners. In order to meet Germany's ambitious objectives and to guarantee a fully equipped joint force, it is, however, necessary to reach at least NATO's 2% of GDP benchmark, as measured by 2019's GDP, but this was not the case before the pandemic and will not be afterwards. Until 2024, the GDP ratio, according to current plans issued *before* the pandemic, would even fall in real terms, and does not even reflect GDP changes due to the pandemic yet.[17]

There has been a disconnect between the planned growth of the forces by the Ministry of Defence and the budget lines scheduled by the Treasury. The pandemic did not cause these differences, but it certainly amplified the notorious *guns vs. butter* narrative: Why should we pay billions of taxpayers' euros for new fighter jets when

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17 Schnell, J: "Zum Verteidigungshaushalt im 54. Finanzplan der Bundesregierung für die Jahre 2021 bis 2024", Diskussionsbeitrag, Universität der Bundeswehr München, March 2020,(https://www.unibw.de/militaeroekonomie/2020-finanzierung-vtghaushalt-eckwerte-2021-bis-2024-maerz-2020.pdf)

we currently need medical equipment to fight the pandemic? Indeed, the recently issued draft of the defence budget for 2021 shows a small increase to a total of 45.6bn € compared to 2020's 45.2 bn €.[18] But nevertheless, the outlook for 2022-2024 indicates a stagnation at that level, as this was already stipulated before the pandemic. Besides, the pandemic is still ongoing, as the growing infection rates in autumn 2020 painfully demonstrate.

The effects of the pandemic are likely to be felt in the next budgets. Hence, the short-term outcome with regards to budgeting is not the sometimes expected and sometimes feared cut, but may be the beginning of a stagnation which could have more severe consequences than an actual decline. Two facts appear to be key for further developments. Firstly, the defence budget for the upcoming years is not carved in stone. It would not be the first time in recent history that final budgets outstrip mid-term financial plans. From this point of view, it may be too early to be overly pessimistic. Secondly Germany is facing general elections in 2021. Chancellor Angela Merkel will not be running for another term of office. Given the current polls, there is a realistic chance that the governing conservative party (CDU) will again be able to obtain a majority of the vote and subsequently staff the chancellor's position. But it is also highly likely that it will have to enter into a coalition government with the Greens. So, there could be a shift in priorities due to new majorities in parliament which could affect the defence budget in the coming years in either way.

Lessons Identified: A Conceivable Mid-Term Perspective

The coronavirus pandemic will not be a game changer in the general direction of Germany's defence policy. The overarching princi-

[18] Deutscher Bundestag: "Finanzplanung 2022-2024 vorgelegt", Press Release 09.10.2020, (https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/798306-798306)

ples and narratives will not be affected in a way that is able to cause a major change of policies and plans. Nevertheless, there are some lessons that have been identified due to the pandemic, that are also relevant in the light of the ongoing reorientation towards collective defence that the forces have been undergoing since 2014. They mainly concern a need to reform in the areas of personnel, the operationalisation of homeland security in practical terms, and interaction with civilian authorities and command and control structures.

Firstly, the question of how the Bundeswehr can effectively generate and mobilize a personnel reserve became more urgent. In terms of the capabilities needed for collective defence, it is necessary to reconsider mobilization concepts that enable forces to recruit larger numbers of trained personnel in a short period of time. With the end of conscription in 2011, the structures for registration and enlistment have been diminished to the extent that they barely exist anymore. The pandemic is now boosting new ideas of reserve and military service, as the MoD, for example, launched the so-called *Year for Germany Programme*. This is an adapted recruitment model for volunteers that consists of 7 months active duty, mostly filled with training focused on homeland security, followed by a phase of reserve duty, in which the applicant has to serve actively for another five months.[19]

Secondly, and connected with this development, German defence planners will have to elaborate on homeland security and the meaning of the term for the engagement of forces in both collective defence and the military's role in domestic security. Whereas, both the 2016 White Paper and the 2018 Conception of the Bundeswehr define contributions to homeland security as one of the duties of the military, but this is not backed up in the capability plans. Meaning, that personnel and equipment policy is primarily focussed on the needs of collective defence, while domestic security issues are considered to be a kind of side effect. The pandemic has now

[19] Bundeswehr Karriere Website: „"Dein Jahr für Deutschland", (https://www.bundeswehrkarriere.de/deinjahrfuerdeutschland)

revealed that the present arrangement is insufficient to cope with possible major catastrophic events or, even worse, simultaneously handle them with a collective defence situation. Acknowledging the constitutional limits, the government will have to define which role it would like its military to play, the extent to which it should be deployed in domestic assistance missions and how the relationships with civilian partners are to be shaped.

Thirdly, the pandemic underlined that, as a result of the peace dividend after 1990, public structures for disaster relief have been so drastically reduced that they hardly exist anymore. From the beginning of the 1990s until today, the security sector as such, and not just the military, has been under the pressure of efficiency and austerity. Costly stockpiling, redundancies and resilient structures have been given up and replaced by just-in-time logistics and ad hoc configurations. What seemed to match the requirements for out of area missions is failing in the face of events like a pandemic. A process of rethinking in all areas of public security is likely to take place in the aftermath of the COVID-19 events.

Fourthly, the pandemic is another indicator that Germany's military needs another structural reform in order to adapt to the demands of collective defence and to be able to react to fast emerging non-military threats. Currently, neither the commander in chief (Minister of Defence) nor the chief of staff of the forces have their own command and control capabilities. Germany's missions are led by the armed forces' operations command, which is only responsible for missions abroad. In terms of domestic deployments, the national territorial commander takes responsibility. But, he is simultaneously also chief of staff of the joint support and enabling services, and thus responsible for another military service. The pandemic produced further evidence that the current structures and procedures were outdated.

Eventually, in the best case, the pandemic is likely to act as a catalyst in German defence policy. In many aspects, it revealed existing and in some cases, well-known issues in a non-military threat context. The experiences of COVID-19 might help to imple-

ment new concepts in the fields of recruiting, command and control and stockpile logistics which are also relevant for collective defence. In the worst case, potential pandemic induced austerity measures might further weaken the Bundeswehr. It will become more difficult for defence planners to legitimate their demands for more and better military equipment if Germany were to face prolonged economic recession. The whole of government policy on homeland security and resilience, that takes into account lessons identified from different authorities and leadership levels, is key to it emerging stronger from the pandemic and also contributing to collective defence efforts, which remains the main task of the forces. Since the pandemic delivered indisputable evidence of obvious deficiencies, there will be a window of opportunity to initiate and then accelerate the changes necessary for it to become more capable for the requirements of collective defence.

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Poland

Piotr Szymański

After the initial uncertainty, Poland has managed to adjust its health-care system to the pandemic and develop COVID-19 containment measures. The armed forces have played a vital role in these efforts, launching the largest post-1991 crisis management operation. This study takes a closer look at the implications of COVID-19 for Poland's defence policy and the military. The chapter starts with an overview of Poland's defence sector prior to the pandemic. This is followed by a broader analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on the armed forces (their activities, financing, personnel and their response to the pandemic) and on the security debate. The chapter concludes with a short- and long-term outlook for Poland's defence policy and the military.

COVID-19 has not been a game-changer for Poland's defence sector thus far. During the pandemic, the armed forces supported the government and society while carrying out other tasks, including participating in military exercises and foreign deployments. Poland's 2020 defence budget is set to reach a record level and no U-turns in defence policy are currently under discussion. However, the pandemic may influence the way Poland perceives its security in the long-term, drawing more attention to non-military threats, civil defence and preparedness. In addition, the global economic slowdown may negatively affect Poland's security environment by heating up international competition.

The Defence Sector Prior to the Pandemic: an Overview

Over the last few years, Poland's defence policy has been primarily focused on: strengthening military capabilities, increasing the size of the armed forces, ensuring an allied military presence, enhancing NATO's collective defence and deterrence, developing bilateral military cooperation with the US, and providing robust contributions to international operations. Unsurprisingly, Russia – with its neo-imperial policy, pursued by military and hybrid means – has been perceived as the most serious threat.

Poland's ambition is to be one of the leading military powers in Europe. The Polish Armed Forces (PAF) have been allocated financing to the level of roughly 2% of GDP, with a steadily growing defence budget (from $7.6 bn in 2013 to $11.3 bn in 2019).[1] The 2017 Defence Concept stipulates that Poland should have more than 200,000 troops (including ¾ operational and ¼ volunteer troops) by 2030 and will allocate at least 2.5% of GDP for military needs.[2] In 2019, the number of operational troops increased from 104,900 to 107,700 (the volunteer forces surpassed 20,000). In 2019, the size of its armed forces and its military expenditure placed Poland in 8th and 10th position in NATO, respectively.

Since 2014-15, there have been several changes of note in the PAF's organisation and force posture. With regard to the chain-of-command, the role of the Chief of the General Staff has been strengthened. Poland has also established cyberspace defence forces, which will be fully operational by 2024, and the fifth branch of the PAF – the Territorial Defence Forces (TDF). This

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1 From PLN 28.8 bn to PLN 42.6 bn (constant 2015 prices). *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries* (2013-2019), NATO, 29 November 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_171356.htm.

2 *Koncepcja obronna kraju*' Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej, https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/koncepcja-obronna-krajuu.

volunteer-based formation is set to reach full operational capability in 2021 (53,000 troops). Poland also reinforced its military posture in its eastern regions in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. This included the redeployment of armoured units and the creation of a new mechanised division east of the Vistula River[3].

As of 2020, the PAF still have a dual nature – where time-worn Cold War equipment coexists with more recent acquisitions. The defence ministry has been implementing the 2017-26 Technical Modernisation Plan (TMP), which is worth PLN 185 bn (approx. $49 bn). The TMP was updated in 2019 and Poland is set to spend PLN 524 bn (approx. $138 bn) on new capabilities during 2021-35[4]. Since 2014, the share of equipment expenditure in Poland's defence budget has been 25.6% on average.[5] The development of the PAF focuses on land force capabilities and air defence, with the navy being neglected. Poland has recently enhanced the army's firepower by introducing self-propelled mortars (120mm RAK) and howitzers (155mm KRAB), bolstered SHORAD (PIORUN MANPADS), and upgraded its F-16s' strike capability with the AGM-158 JASSM. Unfortunately, most of the modernisation programmes are struggling with delays of many years. The postponed replacement of post-Soviet helicopters and the stagnation of the surface and submarine fleet are among the most significant shortcomings of the TMP. The upcoming big-ticket acquisitions are: Patriot air defence systems (eight batteries, i.e. 64 launchers), HIMARS artillery (one unit with 20 launchers), and 32 F-35 aircraft.[6]

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3 The 18th Division (fourth in the land forces) will reach full operational readiness by 2026 and will be composed partly of already existing brigades and partly of newly-established units (a mechanised brigade and support elements).

4 M. Cielma, "Akceptacja modernizacyjnych planów na kolejne 15 lat", *Dziennik Zbrojny,* 10 October 2019, http://dziennikzbrojny.pl/aktualnosci/news,1,11256,aktualnosci-z-polski,akceptacja-modernizacyjnych-planow-na-kolejne-15-lat.

5 *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries* (2013-2019), op. cit.

6 Medium-range air defence is the PAF's most significant capability gap. In

After the annexation of Crimea, Poland succeeded in securing a substantial allied military presence on its soil. Currently, it hosts roughly 1,000 NATO troops (the US-led eFP battlegroup) and 4,500 US troops deployed on a bilateral basis (Operation Atlantic Resolve). With the US's enduring presence – encompassing two forward command elements (a division and corps) and an armoured brigade combat team among others – Poland became the hub for the US Army's activities on the eastern flank.

Given Poland's growing defence budget and its geopolitical location with an aggressive Russia across its border, it is striking that defence policy plays only a minor role in public debate, something which was particularly visible during Poland's 2018-20 election cycle. This may be the result of political consensus regarding security policy. The strategic importance of growth in defence spending, active NATO membership, close cooperation with the US, and the hosting of allied troops remain uncontested by the main political stakeholders.

A comprehensive 2018 opinion poll shows that the public perceives a military conflict with Russia to be a greater threat than terrorism, the EU's disintegration, or the migrant crisis. Most Poles see NATO membership as the most important security guarantee (followed by the alliance with the US, their own armed forces, and EU membership) and the US as the most important ally (followed by Germany). Finally, 43% assess the state of the armed forces positively (31% in a negative and 25% in a neutral way).[7]

2022, two first batteries will be delivered (including IBCS, PAC-3MSE, and AN/MPQ-65) at a cost of $4.75 bn. The remaining six batteries with the new 360-degree radar are scheduled after 2026. The TMP also provides for the procurement of short-range air defence systems. HIMARS will be equipped with GMLRS and ATACMS M57. The first unit is scheduled for 2023 and will cost $414 m. The procurement of two additional units will take place after 2023. F-35 deliveries are planned for 2024-2030. The programme will amount to $4.6 bn. The air force is aiming to buy additional F-16s as well.

7 *Polityka zagraniczna i bezpieczeństwo zewnętrzne Polski: badanie opinii publicznej*, Fundacja im. Kazimierza Pułaskiego, Selectivv Mobile House, 2018, https://pulaski.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/e661d35d4de1cc10d22db11bfa2e4a07.pdf.

The Defence Sector and the Pandemic: Rising to the Challenge

The impact of COVID-19 on the defence sector

Infections. COVID-19 broke into the armed forces from the top when General Jarosław Mika – the PAF general commander – was tested positive after a military conference in Germany at the beginning of March. As of mid-April, 74 soldiers and 36 civilian personnel were diagnosed with COVID-19.[8] Since then, however, the defence ministry has not updated these numbers, providing information that the scale of infections and quarantine in the PAF is very small and has no impact on the activities of the armed forces. Therefore, only fragmentary information is available on Covid-19 in the PAF, such as the case of the 30 soldiers who tested positive after returning from Afghanistan.[9]

Military Exercises. The spread of COVID-19 affected the large-scale military drills scheduled for the spring/summer of 2020 heavily. In 2020, the PAF were supposed to be involved in the most ambitious series of exercises in the country's recent history (both international and national). Instead, the exercises were reduced in scale and some military personnel were despatched to bolster COVID-19 containment measures.

The scaling down of the US-led DEFENDER-Europe 20 exercises was the most significant blow to the drills programme. Scheduled for April and May, it was focused on the deployment of an entire US division over the Atlantic to practice the reinforcement of Europe. The DEFENDER-Europe 20 and related exercises were designed to involve 37,000 soldiers from 18 nations in

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8 *Szef MON podał informację o zakażeniach koronawirusem w armii,* Polskie Radio 24, 14 April 2020, https://www.polskieradio24.pl/5/1222/Artykul/2491517,Szef-MON-podal-informacje-o-zakazeniach-koronawirusem-w-armii.

9 M. Elmerych, "Kilkudziesięciu szczecińskich żołnierzy zakażonych koronawirusem", Radio Szczecin, 2 July 2020, https://radioszczecin.pl/1,408258,kilkudziesieciu-szczecinskich-zolnierzy-zakazony.

total, with Poland hosting the majority of the US troops – roughly 14,000 with over 2,200 military vehicles.[10] Poland itself was set to engage over 10,000 troops in the Host Nation Support and operational tasks. However, before the decision was made in mid-March to suspend the exercise, the US had moved around 6,000 troops and 3,000 pieces of military equipment to Europe. Thus, the US Army managed to test its deployment capabilities and procedures, and Poland received an enhanced US military footprint for several months, hosting an additional US armoured brigade which remained in Poland due to the pandemic.[11] It allowed Poland and the US to develop the concept of DEFENDER-Europe 20 Plus – the Allied Spirit exercise in June (with 4,000 US and 2,000 Polish soldiers) and a snap deployment of a US armoured battalion to Poland in July-August (Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise).[12]

Anakonda-20 (conducted without allies, with only 5,000 Polish troops) and the US-led BALTOPS 2020 were other major coronavirus-affected exercises, carried out in a reduced way. In addition, the calling off of the military parade on Armed Forces Day (15 August), commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw, was of great symbolic importance.

Foreign Deployments. The pandemic has not disrupted the PAF's foreign deployments. In July 2020, Poland extended its participation in five military missions in: Romania (NATO tFP, 250 troops), Latvia (NATO eFP, 200 troops), Kosovo (KFOR, 300 troops), Afghanistan (Resolute Support, 400 troops), and Iraq

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10 *MON: DEFENDER-Europe 20 – pierwsze wojska USA docierają do Polski (komunikat),* PAP, 27 February 2020, http://centrumprasowe.pap.pl/cp/pl/news/info/154817,25,mon-defender-europe-20-pierwsze-wojska-usa-docieraja-do-polski-(komunikat).

11 M. Świerczyński, "Amerykanie obcięli Defendera prawie do zera", *Polityka*, 17 March 2020, https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/swiat/1947232,1,amerykanie-obcieli-defendera-prawie-do-zera.read?backTo=.

12 *DEFENDER-Europe 20 Plus,* Wojsko Polskie, https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/DEFENDER_Europe_20_opis_cwiczenia/.

(Inherent Resolve, 350 troops).[13] Poland is also in charge of NATO's VJTF land component (21st Podhale Rifles Brigade) in 2020 with roughly 3,000 troops on standby.

Defence Expenditure. The extent to which the pandemic will affect Poland's defence budget in the long-term, which also depends on its further development and its impact on the global economy, remains to be seen. In the short-term, Poland is set to be among the least-hit European economies. The Summer 2020 Economic Forecast by the European Commission shows that Poland's GDP will shrink by 4.6% in 2020 and then recover, returning to the growth track next year.[14] So far, the defence ministry has declared that it will not give up on any major modernisation programmes. This attitude was reaffirmed by President Andrzej Duda at the onset of his second term.[15] Accordingly, but still quite surprisingly, the updated 2020 budget – adopted in October – provides for an increase in defence spending. Poland's 2020 defence expenditure will amount to PLN 52.9 bn (approx. $14 bn) and around 2.4% of GDP, i.e. PLN 3 bn (approx. $0.8 bn) more than originally planned.[16] The draft budget for 2021 envisages similar military expenditure (PLN 51.8 bn, i.e. 2.2% of GDP). This makes it the biggest post-1991 defence appropriation, despite the sizeable budget deficit (estimated at 4.9% of GDP). In

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13 *Prezydent wydał 5 postanowień dot. przedłużenia okresu użycia Sił Zbrojnych RP poza granicami państwa,* PREZYDENT.PL, 2 July 2020, https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/komunikaty-kancelarii-prezydenta-rp/art,28,prezydent-wydal-5-postanowien-dot-przedluzenia-okresu-uzycia-sil-zbrojnych-rp-poza-granicami-panstwa.html.

14 *Summer 2020 Economic Forecast: An even deeper recession with wider divergences,* European Commission, 7 July 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1269.

15 *Prezydent: Żołnierze, możecie na mnie liczyć jako Zwierzchnika Sił Zbrojnych,* PREZYDENT.PL, 6 August 2020, https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wypowiedzi-prezydenta-rp/wystapienia/art,1139,prezydent-zolnierze-moi-kochani-wspaniali-mozecie-na-mnie-liczyc-jako-zwierzchnika-sil-zbrojnych.html.

16 J. Palowski, "More Funding for the Polish Army. Sejm Approved Budget, Cuts Proposals Rejected", Defence 24, 8 October 2020, https://www.defence24.com/more-funding-for-the-polish-army-sejm-approved-budget-cuts-proposals-rejected.

this way, Poland wants to avoid disruption to the PAF's modernisation plan and offset the recent PLN depreciation, which may lift the cost of foreign procurement. The growth in military spending may also help Poland's arms industry during the pandemic, since it relies largely on the domestic market. Still, some projects are expected to face delays due to the pandemic (as notified in the case of the T-72 overhaul/upgrade package).[17]

Recruitment Opportunities. The Covid-19 restrictions may slow down the expansion of the PAF's personnel to 200,000 by hindering their recruitment. To prevent this, the defence ministry will attempt to capitalise on the recent uncertainty in the labour market by intensifying voluntary (3-months long) exercises for reservists. These are open to not only reserve soldiers, but also citizens without a military background, encouraging job seekers to join the PAF (the unemployment rate increased from 5.4% in March to 6.1% in August). The PAF are ready to train roughly 20,000 volunteers, providing them with accommodation, meals, and a salary.[18] It is, however, too early to examine the effectiveness of these measures.

Fighting an Invisible Enemy: the Armed Forces' Way

In February 2020 – when COVID-19 still seemed to be a distant threat for most Poles – the Polish Air Force performed its first COVID-related task, helping with the evacuation of a group of Polish citizens from Wuhan. Only a few weeks later, the PAF's involvement in the struggle to curb the pandemic was in full gear. Since then it has been gradually increased to approximately 10,000 troops at the peak, resulting in the biggest crisis management operation since 1989. It is worth noting that around 50% of the troops

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17 T. Dmitruk, "Możliwe opóźnienie dostaw zmodyfikowanych czołgów T-72", *Dziennik Zbrojny*, 19 August 2020, http://dziennikzbrojny.pl/aktualnosci/news,1,11414,aktualnosci-z-polski,mozliwe-opoznienie-dostaw-zmodyfikowanych-czolgow-t-72.

18 *MON wznawia szkolenia żołnierzy rezerwy i zaprasza do służby*, Defence 24, 30 May 2020, https://www.defence24.pl/mon-wznawia-szkolenia-zolnierzy-rezerwy-i-zaprasza-do-sluzby.

were provided by the Territorial Defence Forces.[19] Their contribution was of great importance since the TDF relieved operational forces, which were busy, not only with COVID-related tasks, but also with military exercises with US troops.

The PAF's contribution to COVID-19 containment measures was similar to that applied in other countries. The decision on the PAF's assistance to civilian authorities and other uniformed services was taken by the President in coordination with the government. It was based on existing non-emergency legislation (for instance, the Act on the Universal Obligation to Defend the Republic of Poland, the Police Act, and the Border Guard Act), as none of the extraordinary measures envisaged in the constitution had been introduced yet (for instance, on a state of emergency or natural disaster). It also stemmed from the PAF's peacetime tasks, which include supporting public administration and society. The PAF's response can be divided into bottom-up efforts (charity, blood donation and protective equipment manufacturing) and top-down actions. The latter consisted of two operations led by the Armed Forces Operational Command ("Shield") and the Territorial Defence Forces ("Resilient Spring"),[20] which were focused on:

A) Bolstering the activities of other uniformed services. This relates mainly to the PAF's assistance to the border guard and the police. As a result of the reintroduction of border controls within the EU, the PAF were engaged in border patrols and delivering food and water to drivers (who were waiting to cross the border). The military also established over 160 additional border posts. These activities involved 2,000 troops with 220 equipment units, including M-28 aircraft, and Mi-8 and Mi-17 helicopters. The PAF's support to the police focused on street patrols, checking compliance with govern-

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19 M. Pietrzak, "Summary of 'Resilient Spring' – an anti-crisis operation held by the Polish Territorial Defence Forces", WOT, 27 April 2020, https://media.terytorialsi.wp.mil.pl/informacje/503046/summary-of-resilient-spring-an-anti-crisis-operation-held-by-the-polish-territorial-defence-forces.

20 *Polish Armed Forces support the nation in fight against COVID-19*, MoD, 26 May 2020, https://www.gov.pl/web/national-defence/polish-armed-forces-support-the-nation-in-fight-against-covid-19.

ment restrictions, and the checking of people undergoing quarantine. It involved 1,000 troops with 200 equipment units. In both cases, the military assistance was urgent and indispensable due to the insufficient number of personnel in the border guard and the police for handling this type of emergency.

B) Providing support for the health-care system. The PAF's medical assistance involved 2,500 personnel – medics, paramedics and nurses (serving in 14 military hospitals and other medical facilities) – in order to relieve the overstretched public health service. At the initial stage of the pandemic, the PAF helped to transform selected hospitals into infectious disease units treating COVID-19, and to establish quarantine centres. The decontamination of hospitals was another important task.[21] These efforts were supplemented with the construction of a container hospital and with the boosting of Poland's testing capacity (with seven military laboratories, including two mobile, and *Test&Go* points launched by logistics forces).

C) Protecting vulnerable groups. The PAF provided assistance to residents of social welfare homes – the most vulnerable COVID-19 hotspots. The Territorial Defence Forces were especially active in this regard. During the "Resistant Spring" operation, the TDF provided social welfare homes with food, protective equipment, and tests. In response to the most serious outbreaks, the military carried out evacuations of residents. Food and other supplies were delivered to veterans, the elderly, and the families of medical staff.

D) Transport and logistics. The PAF used its logistic and airlift capabilities to transport sanitary materials from the Material Reserves Agency and military stockpiles to numerous institutions. This included deliveries of swab samples to hospitals. The army as-

[21] The chemical warfare units assigned over 1,700 soldiers to this task, which included decontamination of people, vehicles, planes, communication routes, social welfare homes, schools, and administration buildings. *Podziękowania dla wojskowych medyków*, Wojsko Polskie, 7 July 2020, https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/dgrsz/articles/aktualnosci-w/2020-07-07p-podziekowania-dla-wojskowych-medykow/.

signed dozens of sanitary vehicles and military buses to crisis management (military helicopters were also put on standby). In April, the air force transported two loads of cargo from Turkey with 20 tons of protective equipment onboard (the PAF organised four loads of cargo with protective equipment as part of the SALIS NATO programme as well). Air force capability was crucial for the evacuation of Polish citizens too. During February-May, it conducted five evacuation flights from France, the UK, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Afghanistan.

During the first months of the pandemic, the PAF bolstered civilian efforts aimed at containing COVID-19 considerably. It provided vital direct and indirect support to citizens and numerous institutions at a time marked by great uncertainty and a low level of preparedness.[22]

International Solidarity: the Military as an Aid Provider

Aside from this domestic involvement, the PAF joined international efforts to contain COVID-19 by delivering aid to other countries. Poland's Military Centre of Pharmacy and Medical Technique – supported by the 1st Logistic Brigade – sent 300,000 face masks and 5,000 litres of sanitiser to countries where Polish troops were deployed (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Kosovo).[23] Furthermore, during March-April, the PAF organised three missions from Poland's Military Institute of Medicine: to Italy (15 medics), Slovenia (four medics), and the US (nine medics). In Italy, military medics – supported by the non-governmental Polish Center for International Aid – worked in the worst-affected region of Lombardy, relieving local doctors and gaining experience in dealing with COVID-19. The later teams in Slovenia and the US

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22 M. Kozubal, "Wojsko wyszło ze strefy komfortu", *Rzeczpospolita,* 5 April 2020, https://radar.rp.pl/wojsko-polskie/17034-wojsko-wyszlo-ze-strefy-komfortu.

23 M. Ziegenhagen-Przepiórka, "Pomoc międzynarodowa", Wojsko Polskie, 15 May 2020, https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/dorsz/articles/aktualnosci-w/2020-05-15a-pomoc-miedzynarodowa/.

were focused mostly on the exchange of information and the lessons learned[24].

However, the military's contribution represents only part of a broader humanitarian effort which was led by the foreign ministry. This included, for instance: the "LOT flies back home" action aimed at bringing home Polish (55,000) and foreign (2,000) travellers (one of the largest operations in the history of the diplomatic and consular service); medical help (sending teams of Polish doctors to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan); assistance with medical supplies to roughly 20 countries; increased contributions to international organisations (the EU's humanitarian actions and the UN-led efforts in Palestine, Belarus, Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia and Kenya). Poland's international pandemic aid amounted to EUR 90 m in total.[25]

Societal and Political Context

The public is largely in favour of the PAF's involvement in pandemic support. Opinion polls show that Poles think that the army should assist the border guard (93%) and the police (in quarantine compliance checks – 83%, and in street patrols – 82%).[26] The increased visibility of the PAF during the pandemic was placed, by some observers, in the context of the ongoing presidential campaign. According to this view, the government wanted to display a decisive reaction and good crisis management to strengthen the position of the incumbent President, who was striving for re-election.

In the recent elections, all of the main presidential candidates were in favour of raising defence expenditure, proving that Poland's

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24 M. Kowalska-Sendek, "Kolejne misje wojskowych medyków", *Polska Zbrojna,* 22 April 2020, http://polska-zbrojna.pl/home/articleshow/30965?t=Kolejne-misje-wojskowych-medykow.

25 *Poland shows solidarity during COVID-19 pandemic*, MFA, 27 July 2020, https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/poland-shows-solidarity-during-covid-19-pandemic.

26 The figures are lower when it comes to the PAF's enhanced presence in public places. 47% consider that it would make them more secure, while 66% assume that society would respond positively to it. *Polacy pozytywnie o zaangażowaniu Wojska Polskiego w walkę z koronawirusem*, MON, 12 April 2020, https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/polacy-pozytywnie-o-zaangazowaniu-wojska-polskiego-w-walke-z-koronawirusem.

political "spending consensus" has remained in force despite the economic downturn. Keeping the defence budget at 2% of GDP was proposed only by the left-wing candidate, Robert Biedroń. This puts Poland in the vanguard in NATO anyway. It also shows that cuts, at the expense of the armed forces, remain unpopular among voters.[27] However, if the economic recession turns out to be deeper, decision-makers and the public could become more assertive against rising defence expenditure at a time of austerity. Currently, opposition parties have spoken out against increasing it at a faster rate, to reach 2.5% of GDP in 2024, which is one of the goals envisaged in the 2020 National Security Strategy[28]. In October, two main opposition parties (Koalicja Obywatelska and Lewica) proposed transferring a part of the 2020 defence budget to municipalities, education and heal-care.[29] There is also growing opposition against the big-ticket military procurements in the US within the smaller parties. In the 2020 presidential campaign, four candidates – representing Lewica, Koalicja Polska, Konfederacja, and Polska 2050 – proposed the postponement or cancellation of the purchase of F-35 fighters.

Short- and Long-Term Consequences for the Defence Sector.

The ongoing pandemic has not brought ground-breaking changes so far for the defence sector. However, it is likely to have some

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27 All major candidates supported strengthening or keeping the NATO/US military presence in Poland at the current level. Almost all were in favour of increasing the size of the armed forces. A 2017 opinion poll showed that 74.8% of Poles back the increase in defence spending. *Polacy za rozbudową armii: wyniki sondażu CBOS,* Defence 24, 14 August 2020, https://www.defence24.pl/polacy-za-rozbudowa-armii-wyniki-sondazu-cbos.

28 M. Kozubal, "Nie ma zgody opozycji na więcej pieniędzy dla armii", *Rzeczpospolita*, 6 May 2020, https://www.rp.pl/Wojsko/200509617-Nie-ma-zgody-opozycji-na-wiecej-pieniedzy-dla-armii.html.

29 J. Palowski, "2,2 proc. PKB na armię w 2021 roku", Defence 24, 8 October 2020, https://www.defence24.pl/22-proc-pkb-na-armie-w-2021-roku.

immediate, as well as long-standing consequences, for Poland's defence policy and the military.

Resupplying protective equipment and sanitizer stockpiles, placing additional resources with the military medicine service and chemical warfare forces, and introducing COVID-19 safety measures in the armed forces, were a part of the short-notice response to the pandemic. This was aimed at increasing the PAF's preparedness for the second wave.

As to the other short-term effects, the pandemic has created new opportunities for manipulating the public. Poland is one of the countries targeted by Russia's coronavirus disinformation campaign, aimed at sowing panic and distrust – both between the government and society, and towards the armed forces and NATO allies. It included fake news on: COVID-19 paralyzing the military, the US and Polish troops spreading the virus, and NATO conducting aggressive war games despite the pandemic.[30] This recent rise in disinformation once again highlights the need for a proactive information policy, strategic communication, and the fight against fake media content on the part of the defence sector.

In addition, COVID-19 proved that the newly established Territorial Defence Forces were a vital element of Poland's crisis preparedness. The 2020 pandemic was a major test for the TDF, which effectively took over the duties of civil defence (a long-neglected area), filling a gap in Poland's crisis management system. The formation was active at airports, border posts, hospitals, social welfare homes, day-care institutions, and even ran the mental health helpline. It also supported medics' families, the elderly, and people who had been quarantined. These efforts helped to build the TDF's positive image within society and among decision-makers, most likely resolving the lingering disputes between the proponents for, and the opponents to, the development of this

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30 *Żaryn: Kreml wykorzystywał pandemię do informacyjnych ataków na polską armię,* WNP, 18 June 2020, https://www.wnp.pl/parlamentarny/spoleczenstwo/zaryn-kreml-wykorzystywal-pandemie-do-informacyjnych-atakow-na-polska-armie,81036.html.

branch of the armed forces (and possibly helping ongoing recruitment efforts).

The pandemic has also left its "last-minute" mark on the newly adopted 2020 National Security Strategy, which mentions COVID-19 as an example of threats to the health and life of the people.[31] In the long term, the pandemic may encourage Poland's political and military decision-makers to take a broader view of national security, traditionally perceived through the prism of conventional military threats and high-end capabilities. A more comprehensive approach could entail enhancing cooperation and coordination within public administration (working with NGOs), as well as investment in the security of supply, emergency reserves, health-care capacity, and well-functioning civil defence in terms of organisation and education. The 2020 National Security Strategy takes the first step in that direction, since it envisages the establishment of an integrated national security management system (merging national security, crisis management and cyber domains) and a common civic defence.

In addition, COVID-19 restrictions on troop movements underscored the importance of the permanent presence of allied forces on the eastern flank. Consequently, Poland may show even more interest in hosting permanent NATO/US forces in the future, which would be less dependent on reinforcements and undisrupted lines of communication.

Finally, in the long run, the pandemic is going to further destabilise the post-1991 international order, which has been beneficial for Poland. COVID-19 is expected to exacerbate already existing global problems and create new societal, economic and political tensions, accelerating the ongoing competition between the great powers. This will adversely impact Poland's security environment (in a direct or indirect way). For Poland, any major military crisis in some other part of the world could undermine NATO's deterrence

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31 *The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland*, BBN, 12 May 2020, https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dokumenty/National_Security_Strategy_of_the_Republic_of_Poland_2020.pdf.

vis-à-vis Russia by diverting the allies' attention and resources from the eastern flank, thus generating additional challenges for Poland's military.

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Latvia

Guna Gavrilko

Introduction

Unless the Covid-19 pandemic spins out of control in late 2020 or early 2021, Latvia's response to the pandemic has so far been mostly successful. The first Covid-19 tests in Latvia were run on February 29. Three days later, the first infected person was diagnosed, and a state of emergency was declared in the country on March 13. In a bold move, Latvia closed its educational institutions, banned public events, and shut down its borders, including air traffic, a few days later. The sorry state of the national health-care system was the likely cause behind these quick and tough decisions. If the coronavirus were to spread and a large number of people were to require hospitalization, hospital capacity would soon be exceeded, thus overwhelming the health care system and resulting in otherwise preventable deaths.

The Ministry of Defence and the National Armed Forces were actively involved in containing the spread of the virus in Latvia from the very beginning of the pandemic. However, the most significant contribution in terms of keeping society healthy was from medica[1] workers and epidemiologists. A six-metre high sculpture of a medical worker dressed in a white coat and with a face mask was erected in front of the National Art Museum (which coincidentally is right next to the Ministry of Defence) to emphasize appreciation for their work. The *Medics to the World* sculpture depicts a female medic who has just come out of the treatment room and is

getting ready for her next shift.[1] The creator of this statue explained that this piece of art is in gratitude to health care personnel, not only during the COVID-19 crisis, but also for their everyday effort in saving people's lives. While nobody has built a sculpture of a Latvian soldier, military personnel have certainly been closely involved in the management of the pandemic and have been on the front line from the very beginning of the state of emergency in Latvia.

This chapter explains developments in the Latvian defence sector before the global pandemic forced the closure of the nation's borders, the imposition of physical distancing, and the shutting down of ordinary life. It also analyses the defence sector's activities during the first months of the COVID-19 and demonstrates how Latvia used this crisis for the development of its defence and promotion of the Defence Ministry's newly established comprehensive defence initiatives. Finally, it identifies a number of lessons from the crisis and discusses the short and long-term outlook for Latvia's defence sector.

Defence Sector Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since 2018, when Latvia's defence budget reached the 2% benchmark of GDP, Latvia's defence sector has been developing at the pace of a high-speed train. To understand the dramatic increase in the size of defence budget, when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, it was just 0.94 per cent of GDP.[2] Today, it stands at 2 per cent. The more than doubling of the defence budget (in real terms) in four years was very difficult in terms of effective spending of the

1 Eng.lsm.lv, Latvia unveils statue to COVID-19 medics, 16 June 2020, https://eng.lsm.lv/article/culture/culture/latvia-unveils-statue-to-covid-19-medics.a364053/

2 Ministry of Defence, Defence expenditures 2019, https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/AM%20budzets%202019_LV_0.pdf

money. These problems were also noticed by State Control in its annual assessment of the defence sector[3].

The problems with the effective expenditure of a significantly increased defence budget came from the fact that Latvia's defence sector had been underfunded for almost 30 years, ever since the restoration of independence in 1991. Latvia's National Armed Forces were effectively built from scratch. The army did not have any equipment or logistical support, which is why Latvia depended on foreign goodwill in the early 1990s. The Swedish Armed Forces donated some equipment, transportation vehicles and uniforms, training assistance was received from Danish and British forces, and its artillery systems came from its Czech partners.

With such a difficult starting phase, the modernization of existing equipment and new procurements only began after 2014 when the defence budget began to increase. Since the defence sector fundamentally lacked any types of weapons, communications, transportation, surveillance or other systems, even with the 2% of GDP going to the defence budget and new procurements, military needs exceeded the available financing.

An increase in military personnel was also only planned after 2014. A return to military conscription was not considered. Instead, Latvia decided to gradually increase the number of soldiers on active duty by 2,000 in three years (from 5,000 to 7,000 in 2018).[4] This was a challenging ambition considering Latvia's small population base. It already proved to be too ambitious a goal one year later, when the "State Defence Concept 2016 – 2020", the main defence policy document, was approved by the parliament. It stated that the

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3 Lsm.lv, Pētnieks: Aizsardzības ministrijai ir grūtības ar finansējuma apgūšanu, 23 January 2019, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/petnieks-aizsardzibas-ministrijai-ir-grutibas-ar-finansejuma-apgusanu.a306973/

4 Lsm.lv, Vējonis lūgs Saeimas piekrišanu karavīru skaita palielināšanai par 2000 līdz 2018. gadam, 22 January 2015, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/vejonis-lugs-saeimas-piekrisanu-karaviru-skaita-palielinasanai-par-2000-lidz-2018.gadam.a114775/

National Armed Forces would reach 6,500 soldiers in 2020,[5] compared to the previous aim of 7,000 by 2018.

The Ministry of Defence also began to invest heavily in and intensively develop the National Guard (Zemessardze) which is an organization with territorial units across the entire country, covering all of Latvia with assigned battalions. Currently, there are 8,000 trained guardsmen, but the plan is to increase this number to 12,000 by 2027.[6] The guardsmen train 20 days per year and are the backbone of territorial defence,[7] because the units are recruited from local men and women, and their knowledge about their local area is likely to be a significant advantage over an adversary in the case of a military conflict.

Another initiative commenced recently by Latvian decision makers and which has been declared to be an alternative to military conscription, is the involvement of the younger generations in a defence debate in their early senior school years. The government has introduced a National Defence course in Latvian schools and plans to gradually increase the number of pupils studying it. The main goal is to cover all Latvian high schools in 2024, thus reaching 30,000 pupils.[8] The course curriculum consists of the skills that would be required in a potential conflict scenario – crisis readiness, survival skills, critical thinking, leadership, team building and most importantly – basic military skills. During the school year, pupils will undertake basic military training, with basic military boot camps being offered during the summer holidays. The training, over two summers, would make it possible to

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5 Sargs.lv, NBS tuvākajos gados jāstiprina ar ievērojamu skaitu jaunu karavīru un zemessargu, 13 June 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/nbs/2020-06-13/nbs-tuvakajos-gados-jastiprina-ar-ieverojamu-skaitu-jaunu-karaviru-un-zemessargu

6 Ibid.

7 Nacionālie bruņotie spēki, Zemessardze, Par mums, https://www.zs.mil.lv/en/node/137

8 Ministry of Defence, Education of Society, https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika/visaptverosa-aizsardziba/sabiedribas-izglitosana/valsts-aizsardzibas-maciba

achieve the same basic infantry level which regular soldiers receive, when they join the military. Government decision makers argue that by not forcing youngsters to serve, but involving them gradually in security and defence discussions, they may develop a natural interest for the military profession and the responsibility to defend the country if required. Moreover, if compulsory military service traditionally involves only male soldiers and around 5 per cent of society, then the National Defence course applies to both boys and girls. Considering the fact that all 10th and 11th graders will be taking the National Defence course at school, it allows a much broader section of society to be reached, than would military conscription.

The Defence Sector and the Military during the COVID-19 Pandemic

As the development of the defence sector has indeed been impressive during the last couple of years, with many different initiatives being commenced before COVID-19, the global pandemic made decision makers and planners cautious about how the crisis would impact on the defence sector. After the introduction of the state of emergency, military exercises, training, on-site education and most other defence-related events were cancelled, due to the risk of coronavirus spreading. The only exception was training that was aimed at testing and increasing combat readiness. For example, the military exercise with newly acquired artillery systems was not cancelled and was held according to the pre-COVID-19 agenda. However, routine work at military installations continued as working from home is not an option for soldiers. The same applied to all the foreign nations within the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group - around 1,500 soldiers from nine nations located at the Ādaži military base - half an hour's drive from the capital, Riga. There was also a Ministerial order that forbade soldiers from leaving their home base at Ādaži.

Since the Latvians borders were closed from March 17, the State Border Guard renewed border checkpoints on entry to Latvia – on the border with Estonia, Lithuania and Russia. No international travel was allowed, with the exception of cargo and freight transport. Because of the intensive movement of transport inside and outside of Latvia, the government made a decision to involve the Armed Forces at border checkpoints, together with the Border Guard to support border-crossing procedures. National Guard soldiers were sent to four checkpoints on the border with Estonia, to two checkpoints on the border with Lithuania and another two checkpoints on the border with Russia[9]. About 1,000 National Guard soldiers in total were involved at these checkpoints. The joining of forces also prevented an increase in illegal immigrants crossing the border with Russia and Belarus away from the official checkpoints. As Russia had also closed its land borders, there were growing concerns that illegal immigrants would use other entry points to get into Latvia, considering the active daily flow before COVID-19. The most common group of illegal immigrants trying to cross the border from Russia to Latvia are Vietnamese citizens. During 2019, there were 52 people arrested for crossing the border illegally – 25 Vietnamese, 13 from India, 4 from Iran, 3 from Ukraine, 3 from Cuba and 1 from Belarus. In 2018, there were 199 illegal immigrants[10].

In the very first week of the state of emergency, Mr. Artis Pabriks, the Minister of Defence, declared that the Armed Forces were prepared and ready to provide a wide range of support to society in this crisis. The Armed Forces offered transport, large sized tents, generators, etc. and personnel to support hospitals and bor-

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9 Sargs.lv, Bruņotie spēki sniegs atbalstu Valsts robežsardzei Covid-19 izplatības ierobežošanā, 28 March 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/nbs/2020-03-28/brunotie-speki-sniegs-atbalstu-valsts-robezsardzei-covid-19-izplatibas-ierobezosana

10 Kristaps Feldmanis, Aizturēta valsts robežu nelikumīgi šķērsojušu Vjetnamas pilsoņu grupa, 17 January 2020, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/aizturets-valsts-robezu-nelikumigi-skersojusu-vjetnamas-pilsonu-grupa.a345157/

der security if it was needed. However, such support was not needed from military institutions until an increase in infected persons which began to spread in a men's shelter run by a local church community on the outskirts of Riga at the beginning of April.[11] There was a need to separate those infected from other people. As a result, the Riga municipality requested the assistance of the National Armed Forces. The military provided a large sized military tent that was suitable as an emergency housing option, thus limiting the potential for the infection to spread further. This was the first high profile activity organized by the National Armed Forces to limit the spread of the virus. Late March also marked the first coronavirus case diagnosed for a foreign soldier stationed in Latvia. However, the soldier was quickly isolated, and no other troops were infected.

As for hospital equipment reserves, Latvia was clearly not prepared for a crisis extending for more than a couple of weeks in terms of, for example, individual equipment for medical workers. There were no reserves stocked and personnel were rapidly running out of masks. Therefore, in early April, the government decided that the Ministry of Defence would be responsible for all Covid-19 procurements and this would all be centralized. This decision put the Ministry of Defence in charge of the planning, control and purchase of disinfection and individual protective gear, and for creating the reserves of stocks for at least three months.[12] The Ministry encouraged local producers to actively take part in procurements and use this opportunity to develop the country's own crisis solving industry. The military provided the logistics support and delivered the equipment to hospitals and other services. The first

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11 Delfi.lv, LTV: Pirms saslimšanas uzliesmojuma patversmē 'Zilais krusts' noticis lūgšanu pasākums, 19 April 2020, https://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/ltv-pirms-saslimsanas-uzliesmojuma-patversme-zilais-krusts-noticis-lugsanu-pasakums.d?id=52069233

12 Sargs.lv, Turpmāk Covid-19 aizsarglīdzekļus centralizēti iepirks Aizsardzības ministrijas iestāde, 2 April 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/sabiedriba/2020-04-02/turpmak-covid-19-aizsarglidzeklus-centralizeti-iepirks-aizsardzibas

cargo of medical equipment landed at Riga Airport from China on April 10.[13]

As the Covid-19 crisis took place at the time when the Latvian government was introducing a comprehensive defence system for the country, this sudden crisis provided the opportunity to demonstrate that preparedness for any sort of crisis was needed more than ever. Just before Covid-19 reached the Baltic region, the Ministry of Defence had launched a campaign providing citizens with information on what to do in a crisis situation, one of the main messages being that society would have to survive the first 72 hours unaided. It would most likely take time for the government to respond effectively during the onset of a crisis, and each family should be ready to sustain itself during a crisis for up to 72 hours. Individuals should stock up with food, medicine, and first aid items for themselves and their families. The coronavirus crisis showed that unusual situations can happen from time to time and significantly impact peoples' daily lives. As an example, the 72 hours concept states that citizens must have food and water reserves stocked at home at all times. This was clearly not the case as right after the government declared the state of emergency, people overcrowded grocery stores despite warnings not to gather in public and to maintain social distancing of at least 2 metres. Unsurprisingly, the products which were most in demand were buckwheat and toilet paper. The 72 hour project also envisaged the design of a brochure "How to react in crisis?" which was made available to the public in the Latvian, English and Russian languages and is also accessible online. The Minister of Defence, Mr. Artis Pabriks, explained that the brochure was intended to be published in autumn 2020, but the onset of Covid-19 clearly showed the need for this type of information to be available immediately. It was, therefore, published online on June 2020.[14] The

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13 Delfi.lv, Piegādāta pirmā centralizēti iegādāto individuālo aizsardzības līdzekļu krava, 22 April 2020, https://www.delfi.lv/video/zinas/latvija/piegadata-pirma-centralizeti-iegadato-individualo-aizsardzibas-lidzeklu-krava.d?id=52079337

14 Sargs.lv, Aizsardzības ministrs informēs par bukletu "Kā rīkoties

Ministry of Defence established a website with a specific segment for a crisis and information for citizens on what to do in the case of an extreme situation to get this brochure out to reach as many people as possible. In order to get this information to every citizen, the State Revenue Service's digital infrastructure was used for the first time ever to inform individuals that an emergency situation had been declared in the country.

The Ministry of Defence had established a new initiative back in 2018. This was a financial grant programme that envisaged support for the military industry in order to promote new creative ideas and to support local military production. In 2019, a company named SIA *Exonicus was* one of six participants that were included in the programme and thus received a financial package to develop a virtual simulator where treatments are taught for different kinds of injuries and trauma. The simulator provides various scenarios for civil and military medics to train them for crises.[15] This simulator training was oriented mostly towards injuries or trauma, but after the Covid-19 crisis hit the country, the company came up with the idea of training medics to deal with people infected with the coronavirus, and how to use equipment protective gear correctly. The idea for this specific training came up during the *Latvia HackForce* event, which was created as an innovation hub for Covid-19 related ideas which could help in dealing with the epidemiological crisis. About 800 people from 25 countries participated in the virtual hackathon over the 48 hours, creating innovative ideas on how to deal with the never before experienced new crisis[16]. The innovative

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krīzes gadījumā", 1 June 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/nozares-politika/2020-06-01/aizsardzibas-ministrs-informes-par-bukletu-karikoties-krizes-gadijuma

15 Sargs.lv, Latvijā izstrādā mācību simulatoru mediķiem darbam Covid-19 apdraudējuma apstākļos, 27 March 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/uznemejdarbiba-un-inovacijas/2020-03-27/latvija-izstrada-macibu-simulatoru-medikiem-darbam-covid-19

16 Labs of Latvia, HackForce hackathon solutions are already being implemented, 21 March 2020, https://labsoflatvia.com/en/news/hackforce-hackathon

simulator will be used at Rīga Stradiņš University to prepare new medical professionals in a modern, creative way.

The Armed Forces used this crisis period as a window of opportunity for many crisis management related exercises. While abiding with health guidelines, the services cooperated with local forces and public institutions to test and train their collaboration on different types of needs. For example, the Latvian Air Force organized a virtual exercise with neighbouring municipalities where they discussed and planned potential checkpoints and patrols if more strict movement regulations were to be required or if a specific area was restricted due to quarantine measures. This allowed for understanding and identification of the missing elements in order to conduct such an operation successfully if it was necessary. During the exercise, the most common missing elements in such scenarios were identified as being command and control components for local municipalities, which are certainly an area of expertise in the Armed Forces.[17] During the practical part of this exercise, the National Guard organized joint patrols together with local police.

From the deterrence perspective, one of the key NATO military events of 2020 was supposed to be the *Defender Europe 2020* military exercise. This exercise was particularly important for the Baltic region, because it was meant to test the speed with which the US could move its reinforcement forces to Europe. The initial plan was to send around 20,000 troops from the US to Europe, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the US sent only 6,000 for exercises in Poland and Germany. While the main manoeuvres in Latvia were cancelled, Latvian military officials say that the objectives of the exercises were achieved in terms of the procedures that were tested,[18] because the planning for joint manoeuvres was already a major part of the exercise.

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17 Sargs.lv, Gaisa spēki sadarbībā ar pašvaldībām rīko mācības cīņai pret Covid-19, 1 April 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/nbs/2020-04-01/gaisa-speki-sadarbiba-ar-pasvaldibam-riko-macibas-cinai-pret-covid-19

18 Sargs.lv, G. Kerlins: galvenie mācību "Defender Europe 2020" mērķi jau ir sasniegti, 17 March 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/militaras-macibas/2020-03-17/g-kerlins-galvenie-macibu-defender-europe-2020-merki-jau-ir-sasniegti

Another strategically important military event that was cancelled due to the ongoing pandemic was the military parade to celebrate the declaration of Latvia's independence from the Soviet Union on May 4, 1990. Each year, the 4th of May parade is held in regional cities in order to show national and allied forces and equipment and to celebrate independence, regained after 50 years of Soviet occupation. The military parade to commemorate the Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia is always held in Riga, the capital city on November 18th. However, this year's parade was to be even more significant as it was planned to take place in Daugavpils – Latvia's second largest city and also the city with a majority of Russian speakers – 50.5 per cent Russian speakers and 18.5 per cent Latvians[19]. This would have been the first time that the Latvian military had held the parade in Daugavpils. A decision was made to postpone it, however, and return to Daugavpils in 2021, when the global pandemic will hopefully have receded.[20]

Another problem created by the Covid-19 crisis was the slowdown in the economy that was developing solidly before the global pandemic. As a result, the unemployment rate increased by 1.4 per cent in the first quarter and thus reached 7.4 per cent,[21] but was already 10 per cent in June[22]. This was, however, a window of opportunity for the Armed Forces which received increased interest

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19 Silvija Smagare, Latviešu valodas pozīcijas Daugavpilī uzlabojas, taču saziņa bieži notiek krieviski, 14 December 2020, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/zinu-analize/latviesu-valodas-pozicijas-daugavpili-uzlabojas-tacu-sazina-biezi-notiek-krieviski.a260899/

20 Sargs.lv, Covid 19 pandēmijas dēļ pārceļ 4. maija NBS parādi Daugavpilī, 17 April 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/latvija/2020-04-17/covid-19-pandemijas-del-parcel-4-maija-nbs-paradi-daugavpili

21 SEB banka, Covid-19 sagriež kājām gaisā Latvijas darba tirgu, 4 June 2020, https://www.seb.lv/info/ekonomiska-vide/covid-19-sagriez-kajam-gaisa-latvijas-darba-tirgu

22 Lsm.lv, Pirmo reizi kopš Covid-19 parādīšanās novērojams neliels bezdarba sarukums, 7 August 2020, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/pirmo-reizi-kops-covid-19-paradisanas-noverojams-neliels-bezdarba-sarukums.a369773/

about military service. Compared to the results last year, this interest had increased by almost 60 per cent by the middle of April.[23] Certainly, this may have been so because people had lost their jobs, but it could also have been the result of the intensive and active recruitment campaign conducted earlier. Once the data came in about an increased interest in serving, the Chief of Defence publicly announced that the Armed Forces were ready to provide both military and civilian job opportunities to those who had lost their jobs during the pandemic. Lieutenant General Kalniņš named stability, social guarantees and the pride in serving your country as being the main advantages of being an employee of the Armed Forces. During the first three months of 2020, the number of people accepted into the service had increased by 25 per cent compared to the previous year. Boot camps for recruits were continued, and some changes were also made during the acceptance procedures, for example, with medical examinations. In acknowledging that people may be hesitant to visit medical centres for the necessary tests, or may want to avoid public transport due to the risk of getting infected with the virus, the Armed Forces established a centralized medical examination for the National Guard and the professional service at one place. A decision was also made to organize joint transportation options from the regions to the capital for the tests, thus decreasing chances of getting infected while using public transport. Such centralized medical examinations were organized for the first time and provided an opportunity for accepting far more potential soldiers than would occur on a regular basis. The examinations and tests were organized in Army tents with all the necessary equipment and medical workers on the spot.[24] All interested persons were tested for Covid-19 infection. The most worrying part for the

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23 Sargs.lv, Sabiedrībā pieaug interese par dienestu Nacionālajos bruņotajos spēkos, 15 April 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/nbs/2020-04-15/sabiedriba-pieaug-interese-par-dienestu-nacionalajos-brunotajos-spekos

24 Sargs.lv, Medicīnas nodrošinājuma centrā uzsāk centralizēto pārbaudi zemessargu kandidātiem, 23 April 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/nbs/2020-04-23/medicinas-nodrosinajuma-centra-uzsak-centralizeto-parbaudi-zemessargu-kandidatiem

defence sector was certainly a potential decrease in the defence budget. Considering the fact that Latvia had reached the threshold of 2% of GDP in 2018, the expected economic recession could seriously have hurt ongoing procurement projects. It would have been especially hard for those local companies in Latvia that had signed agreements with the Ministry of Defence to produce specific military equipment or services needed by Armed Forces. Breaking contracts with them would have meant a full stop to the newly established military industry. The Ministry of Defence has emphasize that support from the government and society for spending the 2 per cent of GDP on defence came from the fact that this money is invested back into the national economy, supporting companies and creating jobs in the industry.[25] It now means convincing the government to spend more than the 2 per cent of GDP on defence, as the overall GDP has decreased. This topic was also discussed during the three Baltic Defence Ministers' meeting in Latvia on June 16. The ministers even signed a joint *Communiqué* where they agreed not to decrease defence budgets, despite the financial constraints that the states may experience.[26] The ministers emphasized that, despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Baltic States were still dealing with potential military threats from Russia.

It is also worth mentioning that the Covid-19 crisis will go down in history as the moment when Latvia and Estonia signed an agreement on joint military procurement for the first time ever. The decision was made to purchase Carl Gustaf M4 anti-tank weapon systems from Swedish company, Saab Dynamics AB. The Baltic States' leaders often receive questions about potential joint defence

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25 Sargs.lv, A.Pabriks: Latvijā nedrīkst pieļaut nekontrolētu aizsardzības izdevumu samazināšanu, 16 April 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/nozares-politika/2020-04-16/apabriks-latvija-nedrikst-pielaut-nekontroletu-aizsardzibas-izdevumu

26 Sargs.lv, Baltijas valstis nesamazinās aizsardzības izdevumus zem 2% no IKP, 15 June 2020, https://www.sargs.lv/lv/nozares-politika/2020-06-15/baltijas-valstis-nesamazinas-aizsardzibas-izdevumus-zem-2-no-ikp

procurements,[27] as it will be a joint operational area in any type of military conflict with Russia. Common procurements seem logical for experts outside the Baltic area because of the small defence budgets and the need for inter-operability between the three Baltic States. But for Baltic decision makers, this has never been the case. Different planning processes, different financial procedures and disagreements on which purchases to make have always been stumbling blocks for joint military purchases. Thus, this step for Latvia and Estonia in jointly acquiring anti-tank weapons, is an important achievement.

Since joining NATO, Latvia has transitioned from being a security receiver to a security provider, because of Latvia's contributions to and participation in international military operations. This was also proven in the case when the Latvian government avoided the first major shortages of disinfectants and masks nationally, and made a decision to send assistance to other countries that had suffered much more than Latvia in the COVID-19 pandemic – in this case. Italy and San Marino. Around 11 tons of disinfectant were sent to Italy as gratitude for its involvement in the eFP Battle Group in Latvia. Such a cargo was also planned to be sent to Spain as well using the same rationale.[28] Disinfectant was purchased from a local, private company in Latvia. Ironically, the same company produced disinfectant that was given to Latvia as a gift from the US Embassy in Latvia, and sponsored by the US European Command (EUCOM).[29] Such initiatives certainly prove the point about having

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27 Aaron Mehta, Does major joint military procurement really work in the Baltics? 27 October 2019, https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2019/10/28/does-major-joint-military-procurement-really-work-in-the-baltics/

28 Lsm.lv, Latvija dāvinās dezinfekcijas līdzekļus Itālijai un Sanmarīno, 21 May 2020, https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/latvija-davinas-dezinfekcijas-lidzeklus-italijai-un-sanmarino.a360786/

29 ASV Vēstniecība Latvijā, ASV Bruņoto spēku Virspavēlniecība Eiropā sadarbībā ar ASV vēstniecību dāvina Neatliekamās medicīniskās palīdzības dienestam dezinfekcijas līdzekļus, 15 May 2020, https://lv.usembassy.gov/lv/asv-brunoto-speku-virspavelnieciba-eiropa-sadarbiba-ar-asv-vestniecibu-davina-neatliekamas-mediciniskas-palidzibas-dienestam-dezinfekcijas-lidzeklus/

strong Allied solidarity and the need to demonstrate partnership in a case of need.

Short- and Long-Term Outlook for the Defence Sector

So far, Latvia has largely succeeded in terms of limiting the spread of the coronavirus. Overall, only 56 people had died from the coronavirus by October 25, 2020. This fact has not gone unnoticed to international audiences. *Foreign Policy* wrote in May that – 'To the surprise of many, this not particularly wealthy Northern European country of 1.9 million people appears to be one of the coronavirus pandemic's success stories'.[30] Indeed, such successful crisis management came as a surprise to the wealthier and more developed health care systems, not only around Europe, but also in North America. The article also stated that "its underfunded health care system, which includes a number of Soviet-era facilities, could hardly be called state-of-the-art. Moreover, many staff are over the age of 65 and there are too few nurses. In part, it was an awareness of the health care system's deficiencies that prompted the government to act quickly and pre-emptively."[31] These decisive actions at the beginning of pandemic allowed for the control of the spread of the infection and saved people's lives in contrast to other European nations.

As the spread of the virus in Latvia was low, it also provided an opportunity to the Armed Forces to stand out and be visible with different community services. The controlled spread of the infection allowed the National Armed Forces to use this crisis as a window of opportunity to continue successful ongoing initiatives, recruit military personnel and to prove to the population that the military had

30 Gordon F. Sander, Facing Pandemic, Latvia Follows the Lead of Its Experts, 13 May 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/05/13/coronavirus-pandemic-latvia-follows-lead-medical-experts-science/

31 Ibid.

the readiness and capabilities to step in and support society even in a health crisis. Since combat readiness related training was continued, this allowed it to show society that regardless of the ongoing measures and preventive activities, the Armed Forces are the institution that gets involved in keeping society safe, no matter what.

While it is as yet unknown how deep the economic recession caused by the global pandemic will be, Latvia's government has demonstrated that it understands how important it is to sustain defence spending of at least 2 per cent of GDP. If defence spending is cut, it can threaten the modernization of and combat capabilities of the National Armed Forces. This may be especially threatening to local industry that has already signed agreements with the Ministry of Defence and has received initial funds to start the production of military goods and services, as explained in the section above. These investments have created jobs and started the very first steps towards military production in Latvia. The newly established State Defence Concept for 2020–2024 declares that the development of the military industry is of critical importance.[32] Firstly, because it allows for the investment of the defence budget back into the Latvian economy and secondly, because local industry and its resilience will be crucial in a case of military conflict – the option to produce goods and services that are needed for war locally.

This crisis has definitely been a timely reminder that different types of crises are possible and that it may take time for the government to solve a crisis. Therefore, the creation of a comprehensive defence system now can be emphasized and explained to society in a rational way, with a real crisis scenario, and not as a test or exercise. This is so, not only for the population, but also for the many government agencies and public institutions that were forced to learn that they must cooperate and work together.

Therefore, it is clear that crises cannot be fully prevented and the defence sector will almost always be impacted by such turbu-

[32] Par Valsts aizsardzības koncepcijas apstiprināšanu, 24 September 2020, https://likumi.lv/ta/id/317591-par-valsts-aizsardzibas-koncepcijas-apstiprinasanu

lent and sudden crisis scenarios. This is so, especially if the defence budget takes a considerable proportion of taxpayers' money. Showing the Armed Forces in action in other than a military crisis is crucial for the reputation of the military in the long term. Regardless of the crisis scenario, soldiers and their actions may play a central role for citizens in terms of showing reliability, readiness, quick mobility, resilience and trust. Military personnel that take the lead and the initiative in a civilian type of crisis may bring positive benefits in the long term. If society has seen and experienced effective assistance and support from the Armed Forces, they will continue to support the political parties that advocate for larger defence budgets. This in turn will allow for the maintenance of modern and capable Armed Forces with trained and equipped military personnel. Such a military force is combat ready and capable of standing up against military threats.

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Estonia

Kalev Stoicesku

Introduction

Estonia, like Latvia and Lithuania (and Finland), is among the countries in Europe least affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The first SARS-CoV-2 positive case in Estonia was recorded on 27 February, but the disease began spreading rapidly, especially after a sporting event which brought the virus from Italy to Saaremaa Island in early March. The Estonian government felt compelled to declare a state of emergency on 12 March that lasted until 17 May 2020, particularly after the World Health Organization announced (on 11 March 2020) that COVID-19 had evolved into a pandemic.

Estonia re-instated temporary border controls from 17 March until the end of the state of emergency, after which a so-called "Baltic bubble" was agreed to by the three Baltic states. Travel between Estonia and Finland, of major economic importance for both sides, was also temporarily restricted during the state of emergency.

Fortunately, Estonia's healthcare system was never overwhelmed by the pandemic, even though there was a risk of this in Saaremaa in April. The Estonian Defence Forces (EDF) then deployed a field hospital and medical personnel to the island in order to assist the Kuressaare Hospital. The number of positive cases and deaths caused by COVID-19 in Estonia remained rather low until late August, due to the population's quite disciplined respect for the restrictions and/or the recommendations issued by the government. The daily number of positive cases has risen once again in Estonia,

but the coronavirus seems to be spreading mostly to younger people now. The number of hospitalisations has grown and coronavirus deaths may be expected again.

Estonia's economy was hit by the pandemic, but less than for most other European Union member states (a 7% decrease in GDP in the second quarter, compared to the same period in 2019). The decrease in GDP, before any recovery could be expected, would be likely to have an impact on political and public discussions about Estonia's defence budget in 2021 and beyond.

The impact of COVID-19 on Estonia's defence has been multifaceted. The EDF have to fulfil three tasks: to protect themselves (and Allied forces deployed in Estonia) against the pandemic, to assist civilian structures and support the population whenever necessary, and most importantly, to maintain permanent combat and mobilization readiness, in spite of restrictions and limitations.

This chapter analyses Estonia's defence sector prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a short- and long-term outlook for Estonia's defence sector, and finally, formulating some conclusions and recommendations for decision makers in the defence area.

Estonia's Defence Sector and the Military Prior to and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Estonia's military defence is based on two pillars. The initial/immediate self-defence capability is made up of forces that are permanently present on Estonia's territory - i.e. the EDF, including the UK-led enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup that is embedded in the 1st Infantry Brigade of EDF's ground forces, and the voluntary League of Defence. The EDF is a force made up mostly of reservists, who are trained during conscription and subsequent training cycles, and make up the "hot reserve" and other reserve contingents of lower readiness (depending on the length of time since their military service).

Ground forces make up the bulk of the EDF. The 1st Infantry Brigade is complete, while the 2nd Infantry Brigade is in the process of formation. The EDF's only fully professional unit of ground forces (which participates in international peacekeeping operations) is the Scouts Battalion. Estonia's air and naval forces are rather limited in size. The air force runs the Ämari Air Base (including the Air Operations Control Centre) and four radar stations. The navy manages a naval base in Tallinn and has four commissioned ships (for mine warfare).

The forces based in Estonia on a rotational basis also include a Baltic Air Policing unit in Ämari AB that usually deploys 4 fighter aircraft and about 100 personnel. In addition, there are frequent temporary deployments of various Allied units for training at Tapa Garrison (and the Central Training Range) and/or the Ämari Air Base. For example, the US deployed MQ-9 Reaper drones to Ämari from mid-June to end-July 2020, and a battery of multiple launch rocket systems (MLRS) for the Rail Gunner Rush (live firing) exercise in Tapa, together with the EDF, in early September 2020. Interestingly, the Russian media covered the MLRS live firing exercise extensively, accusing NATO allies, particularly the US, for "coming too close to Russia's borders" with powerful artillery.

Conscription

The Estonian law provides for compulsory military service of 8 or 11 months (optional) for males between 17 and 27years of age.[1] Females of the same age are allowed and encouraged to serve as well in the EDF on a voluntary basis (latest figures are about 40). Opting for alternative service of 12 months on religious or ethical grounds is possible. The number of yearly trained conscripts has stabilised from 2017 between 3,300 and 3,400.[2] The number in the professional military (soldiers, NCOs and officers) is about 3,500.

1 Compulsory Military Service. Estonian Defence Forces. https://mil.ee/en/defence-forces/compulsory-military-service/

2 Ajateenistusest väljalangevus mullu vähenes. ERR.ee, 10.03.2020. https://www.err.ee/1061647/ajateenistusest-valjalangevus-mullu-vahenes

The annual compulsory military service concludes with the (usually brigade-level) Spring Storm exercise in May.

There were a few isolated positive cases of COVID-19 in the EDF, including among conscripts, and Allied troops (British and American). However, these cases were dealt with very effectively by imposing quarantine on the infected persons and those who were in close contact with them. There was no larger/massive spread or outbreak of the coronavirus in any units of the EDF or temporarily deployed Allied units.

Conscription in 2020 was certainly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the sense that all necessary measures had to be taken in order to avoid the importing of the coronavirus to the EDF's units around Estonia (Tapa, Võru, Paldiski, Tallinn, Jõhvi etc.). All conscripts have to be tested in order to prevent having to place entire platoons/companies in quarantine. On the other hand, the number of volunteers may decrease significantly under the present circumstances. Nevertheless, at this moment, it is difficult to precisely predict the impact of COVID-19 on 2020 conscription.

Defence Budget

Estonia's defence budget already achieved 2% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2012, and has been maintained at this level. In addition, a four year (2018-2021) extra defence procurement budget of 100 million euros was approved by the Estonian government, on top of the 2% of GDP, mainly for the acquisition of munitions. Host Nation Support costs – to support the eFP battlegroup in Tapa- are also provided through Estonia's state budget, on top of the 2% of GDP. The defence budget, including HNS costs, constitutes 2.16% of Estonia's GDP.

Estonia's defence budget for 2020 is 615 million euros. Before the parliamentary elections in March 2019, some political parties (Isamaa and EKRE) argued that Estonia's defence expenditure should be augmented to at least 2.5% of GDP due to the deteriorating security situation and the need to invest more in deterrence and defence. Both Isamaa and EKRE are members of the governing coalition, but

there was no decision in 2019 to that effect (regarding the 2020 defence budget). Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its negative repercussions on Estonia's economy, there have been calls (the Finance Minister from EKRE)[3] not to compensate the gap in the defence budget which would emerge due to the economic slowdown. The Estonian Ministry of Defence (MoD) has calculated that the defence budget would decrease by 66 million euros if the country's GDP decreases by an estimated 8%. This sum is equivalent, for example, to the entire budget of the League of Defence or the EDF's reconnaissance and intelligence capabilities. Estonia cannot give up any such assets which are absolutely necessary.

The MoD has considered postponing certain defence investments and acquisitions that are planned but have not yet been started/initialled. The Mod and EDF need to sustain the already existing defence capabilities and assets, and attempt to pursue those already in progress. The latest and more substantial acquisition of arms was the purchase of HK USP 5.56 mm pistols and LA-R20-12 5.56 mm automatic rifles (called "Rahe", i.e. "hail" in Estonian) from the US producer LMT. Estonia's Ministry of Defence will certainly do the maximum that it can to secure a defence budget for 2021 that is nominally at least equal to the 2020 defence budget, possibly arguing for the coverage of the deficit with state loans.

Military Exercises

Estonia's main annual military exercise Kevadtorm 2020 (Spring Storm, in late April and early May) was initially planned as part of the US-led major NATO exercise, Defender Europe 20. It envisaged the participation of about 10,000 personnel. Estonia declared a state of emergency because of the pandemic on 12 March, and a day later, the US announced that it was terminating the ongoing deployment of troops to Europe. The EDF had to change its plans quickly and

[3] "Riigieelarve 2021. Helme ideed ärritavad kaitseväge ja Isamaad" ("State budget 2021. Helme's ideas irritate defence forces and Isamaa"), Postimees, 17 September 2020, https://leht.postimees.ee/7064248/helme-ideed-arritavad-kaitsevage-ja-isamaad

decided that Kevadtorm 2020 would take place at a far more limited scale, at Estonia's main training range and without involving reservists. The UK-led enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup participated in the exercise. The main loss due to the pandemic and the US's decision was that the allies could not exercise the receipt and integration of reinforcements in Estonia.

The main questions were about what should be done differently in the exercise, and what the main lessons learned would be for the conscripts (future reservists). The EDF is, after all, a force that is mainly based on reservists. The exercise took place in two phases. First, units of the EDF's ground forces 1st Brigade, including the Scouts Battalion and the eFP Battlegroup, countered – under the guidance of the 2nd Brigade – units made up by conscripts. The second phase included live firing at the Central Training Range. It was the largest live firing exercise in Estonia since the restoration of independence in 1991.

The EDF was very satisfied with Kevadtorm 2020. The exercise was adjusted successfully to the unavoidable restrictions imposed by the pandemic, but the EDF acknowledged that, in future, a return to the previous much wider format was necessary, as soon as possible. This concerns not only the much larger forces that require training in the exercise, including reservists, but also a considerably larger area/environment for conducting the exercise (i.e. conditions similar to those in which the forces would actually need to operate in real situations).

The EDF was also very thankful to the local population in the areas adjacent to the Central Training Range, as the exercise could not be conducted strictly within the boundaries of the range. The attitude of the civilian population shows that people understand the need to proceed with national defence in the present difficult circumstances.

In general, the EDF's General Staff, navy and ground forces (Scouts Battalion) suffered the most, due to the cancellation of the 19 exercises (mainly abroad, including Trident Jupiter 19-2, Aurora, Baltic Fortress, Furious Hammer and Sabre Strike). Exercises and

training involving conscripts were also conducted with certain adjustments and limitations – as much as possible in the open air and with little contact between units and sub-units.

Role of the Military in Dealing with COVID-19

The legal framework for dealing with COVID-19 is provided by Estonia's Law on Civil Emergencies ("Kädaolukorreaseadus").[4] The law regulates the institution, management and termination of a state of civil emergency, including the role of the EDF and the League of Defence in supporting state (civilian) structures and the population. It does not regulate the preparation for dealing with security threats (including threats to the parliamentary/democratic system, and military threats). In addition, the Law on Assistant Policemen ("Abipolitseiniku seadus")[5] provides the legal framework for volunteers to be trained and to support police forces (also in normal conditions, i.e. when a state of emergency has not been declared), many of whom are members of the League of Defence.

Feedback from the Estonian government confirmed that the Ministry of Defence, including the EDF, and also the League of Defence, was best prepared of the state structures for the emergency situation, both in terms of the immediate readiness to act (on the basis of exercised contingency plans), and the possession of the required human and material reserves and stocks.

The Ministry of Defence was not initially included in the Government's Special Commission for dealing with the state of emergency, but it proposed its assistance and was successfully integrated into the Commission. The Ministry of Defence first charted the country's existing C2 (Command and Control) structures and proposed a C2 scheme, including an exchange of information that was suitable in the circumstances of the pandemic. The ministry also

4 Law on Civil Emergencies (in Estonian), Riigi Teataja, https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/117052020003

5 Law on Assistant Policemen (in Estonian), Riigi Teataja, https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/106052020002

supplemented the Crisis HQ of the Healthcare Board with assistants and experts from the League of Defence.

The principal task of the EDF was/is to be continuously ready to proceed with the training cycles of conscripts and reservists, and to fulfil the tasks of initial self-defence. The number of COVID-19 positive tests in the EDF, including conscripts, was/is very low, because most exercises (during the state of emergency) were also severely limited and did not exceed company level. The exception was the Spring Storm exercise described above.

The success stories of the EDF in this context are: the deployment of a field hospital and personnel to Saaremaa Island that supported the Kuressaare Hospital at a very critical point in time, and the donation to hospitals of about 800,000 masks. The deployment of the field hospital affected the full combat readiness of the 1st Infantry Brigade for a few days, but this was undoubtedly a necessary action to support the population. Saaremaa was in a very critical state at that time, and there were even temporary travel restrictions imposed between the island and the country's mainland.

The EDF was also active in supporting Estonia's Police and Border Guard Board to develop crisis plans, including for the imposition of restrictions and limitations against the outbreak of the coronavirus in certain protection zones.

The League of Defence offered significant support to the Police and Border Guard Board by providing manpower for border control (at Estonia's border with Russia in the country's north east and south east, as well as the Estonian-Latvian border and the Port of Tallinn), and for maintaining law and order in Saaremaa. About one thousand volunteers from the League of Defence participated in these operations.

Many members of the Women's Homeland Defence (the women's organization of the League of Defence) volunteered to support medical staff in testing facilities, and by counselling and supporting pre-test patients. They also took part in the work of the national 24/7 crisis information system (provided by phone and online).

International Military Cooperation

The international military cooperation of the EDF has not suffered much in terms of Estonia's participation in peacekeeping operations.[6] Estonia continues to rotate units and staff/training officers in Mali (Operation Barkhane, including Task Force Takuba, and EUTM and MINUSMA), as well as in Afghanistan (Resolute Support), Iraq (Inherent Resolve), Lebanon (UNTSO) and the Mediterranean Sea (EUNAVFOR MED). Estonia even increased its participation with additional elements (including Special Operations Forces) in Operation Barkhane/TF Takuba.[7]

Estonia's future participation in these operations may be affected by the spread of COVID-19, particularly in Mali and other countries in the Sahel. However, any decisions to limit or terminate participation in certain operations would certainly be taken collectively, together with other allies participating in these efforts (e.g. France in Mali). There is sufficient political and military motivation (as well as resources) to continue Estonia's participation in international peacekeeping operations and missions – the only problem is the pandemic.

Other forms of international military cooperation – including training and exercises, visits etc. in Estonia or abroad- were largely affected by COVID-19, particularly during the state of emergency. Travel restrictions continue, according to limits imposed by governments, but these do not affect the deployment/rotation of enhanced Forward Presence contingents from the UK, Denmark and France.

The end of the state of emergency raised the number of the EDF's and MoD's international contacts significantly, but about a half of the previously planned activities (also compared to the same period in 2019) had to be cancelled, rescheduled or conducted on VTC platforms. However, Estonia's exchange of defence and

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6 Estonian Defence Forces, Operations Abroad, https://mil.ee/en/defence-forces/operations-abroad/

7 "Eesti plaanib saata Malisse eriväelased" (Estonia plans to send SOF troops to Mali), Postimees, https://www.postimees.ee/6769949/eesti-plaanib-saata-malisse-erivaelased

military information with its allies intensified through communication channels, in spite of (or perhaps due to) the lack of direct contact.

The EDF has made great efforts to smoothly continue the conduct of international military cooperation. The enhanced Forward Presence (in Tapa) and the enhanced Air Policing (in Ämari AB) are absolute priorities, and the EDF does its best to ensure that rotations of allied contingents are not hampered and proceed in full accordance with decisions adopted by the Government of Estonia in the context of the pandemic.

Defence Acquisitions and Infrastructure

The negative influence of COVID-19 on Estonia's military acquisitions is rather extensive. It is too early to make specific assessments, but the cost of delays in deliveries of purchased/ordered military equipment is already in the millions of euros. Many suppliers use the pandemic as an excuse for delays *(force majeure)*.

Another serious impediment was travel restrictions that did/do not allow EDF's specialists to visit suppliers for conducting factory acceptance tests (FAT). This consideration applied equally to foreign service-providers (technicians and engineers) who cannot visit Estonia in order to service previously provided equipment (includes IT assets/devices). Therefore, logistics planning has become largely a nightmare.

It is, for now, almost impossible to predict future developments and trends in this domain. However, the supply and servicing of equipment/materiel will surely often remain chaotic, if the pandemic does not recede (globally). This could also affect prices. Construction of the EDF's infrastructure has become relatively cheaper during the pandemic, but the prices of military equipment/materiel that are purchased abroad could rise.

Political and Societal Context

Defence expenditure at, or over, 2% (to include HNS costs) of Estonia's GDP have never been contested by the public/population

or political parties.[8] There is general support for strengthening Estonia's defence capabilities and creating/maintaining proper conditions for allied contingents in Estonia, considering the prevailing security conditions in the Nordic-Baltic region.

However, the economic decline caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will certainly exert pressure on most areas financed through the state budget, including healthcare, education and national defence. Considering the composition of the current Estonian government, the level of defence expenditure (2.16% of GDP) is not likely to be diminished in 2021. However, nominal defence expenditure could decrease significantly (about 8%) if the loss is not compensated by raising the defence budget level up to about 2.3% of GDP. Political negotiations are continuing over Estonia's state budget for 2021.

Possible Impact of COVID-19 and the Short- and Long-term Outlook for Estonia's Defence Sector

There are various possible forms of impact on Estonia's defence sector in the short- and long-term. The main variable is the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. how it develops (affects Estonia and other allied nations) and how the Estonian government (as well as the EU and its member states, and other allies) is constrained in its actions. The other paramount variable is economic growth versus decline, which determines actual defence expenditure.

Political and popular support for defence should certainly remain strong, but there could be pressure on keeping Estonia's defence budget strictly at the level agreed with NATO (2% of GDP), which would directly affect, for example, the EDF's acquisition and capabilities development plans (as well as maintaining the already developed capabilities).

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8 "Toetus NATOsse kuulumisel püsib jätkuvalt kõrge" (Support for NATO membership is continuously high), ERR, https://www.err.ee/949529/toetus-nato-sse-kuulumisse-pusib-jatkuvalt-korge

In the short term (one to two years), the activities of the EDF and the League of Defence (conscription, training and exercises, including with allies, and international military cooperation) should normalize as much as possible if the pandemic recedes (or becomes a "normal" seasonal disease).

One long-term effect could be that the EDF would need to acquire more medical supplies and maintain extra medical capabilities to be able to operate safely, in normal peacetime conditions as well. Estonia's defence system (based on conscription and reservists, including the League of Defence) would be likely to remain in place, even if there may be temporary difficulties caused by future pandemics.

Conclusions and Recommendations

COVID-19 has had a direct and visible/tangible impact on Estonia's defence sector, as it has for all other NATO and EU allies and partners. There is clearly a need for individual and collective adjustment to the situation caused by the pandemic, particularly if this lasts (quite probably) for many years.

Estonia's MoD and the EDF are acting effectively, according to sufficiently flexible rules. They are paying attention to ensure the smooth continuation of international military cooperation (eFP and eAP, as well as Estonia's participation in international peacekeeping operations and missions). They are also adjusting to the pandemic environment in areas related to conscription, training and exercises, as well as military acquisitions.

General (political and public) support for defence will, most likely, remain very strong in Estonia. However, Estonia's defence sector could face different challenges in the short- and long-term. First, the defence sector certainly needs proper and sufficient financing, but the future (nominal) level of Estonia's defence budget is not yet clear. Maintaining the 2% level of GDP, while the country's GDP is going downwards, means a significant decrease in the nominal defence budget, which in turns means that the MoD and the EDF must make painful decisions.

Secondly, the MoD and the EDF (as well as the League of Defence) proved, especially during the state of emergency, that they are capable and ready to operate in pandemic conditions like COVID-19, including through supporting civilian structures and the population. They need to maintain their know-how, as well as resources and stocks.

Thirdly, Estonia's defence sector needs to develop measures and capabilities of resilience, especially in logistics and the procurement of defence equipment. Finally, Estonia, as well as all the other NATO allies, have to acknowledge that they will be facing both the Russian and COVID-19 challenges in the future.

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Finland

Henri Vanhanen

Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic progressed to Finland in early 2020, it became clear that Finland's preparedness for the pandemic had been deficient at the beginning of the epidemic. Like in many other European countries, there were shortages of equipment and staff at Finnish hospitals.[1] Yet, Finland is one of Europe's best success stories in the fight against the coronavirus, as measured by the spread of COVID-19 disease and the economic damage caused by control measures to date.

The pandemic has progressed less than expected due to severe restrictions. Restrictions were regulated both at the legislative level and in the form of regulations, in addition to which, strong recommendations were made. An example of firm reactions was the execution of the Emergency Preparedness Act, which was valid from 17 March 2020 to 15 June 2020. As a result, among other things, the maximum number of people allowed at public gatherings was limited and distance learning was introduced in schools.

While the pandemic is expected to have serious impact on Finland's economy, the defence sector in the country has remained stable. The immediate impact on defence related to the role of the Finnish Defence Forces in the form of assisting other authorities, as

[1] Yle News: *Yle selvitti: Suojavarusteet paikoin loppumassa – kertakäyttöisiä käsidesipulloja pestään, HUSissa hengityssuojainten käyttöä alettu valvoa* https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-11268965

well as measures taken to prevent the spread of the disease among the Defence Forces. This has had minor impact on the training and exercise activities of the Defence Forces. The government of Finland has also maintained its support for defence procurements and the security situation in Europe remains tense. Thus, it will be unlikely that the pandemic will have serious impact on Finland's strategic defence priorities in the short or the long-term.

This article offers an overview into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Finland's defence sector. The first chapter explains the general trends and structure of defence policy in Finland. The second chapter looks into the role of the Finnish Defence Forces amid the pandemic. The third and final chapter analyses the impact of the pandemic on Finland's defence sector in the short and long-term and offers conclusions.

National Defence as an Elemental Part of Finland's security

Finland's defence is based on conscription, a trained reserve for the defence of the entire country and its citizens' high willingness to defend the country. Finland has opted to remain outside military alliances and defines itself as a militarily non-aligned country[2]. Its defence policy, thus, relies primarily on national capabilities and its defence strategy is based on territorial defence.[3] Stemming from its past role, national defence has maintained itself as the important pillar in the post-Cold War security of Finland.

While joining European Union in 1995, and rejecting neutrality as its formal status, Finland has adopted a status of military non-alignment. Finland has not sought to become a member of NATO

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2 The Finnish government's report on foreign and security policy (2016) https://valtioneuvosto.fi/documents/10616/1986338/VNKJ092016+en.pdf/b33c3703-29f4-4cce-a910-b05e32b676b9

3 Legal tasks of the Finnish Defence Forces https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2007/en20070551.pdf

and continues to develop its national capabilities, while increasing its international defence engagement with NATO through a partnership, in the EU and on a bilateral level. While not being a member of any military alliance, Finland has taken part in international standardization efforts of its national capabilities within the framework NATO's Planning and Review Process (PARP), as well as the European Defence Agency since the 1990s.

National defence is widely appreciated by Finnish society. Studies conducted on the will to defend the country have, since the 1970's, indicated that up till today, the willingness of Finns to defend their country has remained among the highest in Europe. The most recent results indicate that 68% of the respondents felt that Finns must defend themselves with arms, even if the result seems uncertain.[4] In addition, 77% of the respondents were in favour of maintaining the current system of compulsory military service. Several studies have also indicated that the Finnish Defence Forces are among the most trusted institutions in Finland.[5] The Finnish Defence Forces have kept close relations with a wide range of societal actors by implementing annual National Defence Courses since 1961. The courses aim to provide information on Finland's defence policy as well as many other functions relevant to comprehensive national defence, such as security of supply, civil protection and border security, for people representing business, culture and political institutions.

Finland's national defence forms a distinctive feature in the security dynamics of the Baltic Sea Region and Northern Europe. Unlike most of its Nordic-Baltic neighbours, Finland is not a member of NATO. In addition, Finland has maintained conscription, which provides the Finnish land, naval and air forces with resources to op-

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4 Annual report of the Advisory Board For Defence Information (ABDI) on the opinion of Finns on Finland's security and foreign policy, released in January 2020. https://www.defmin.fi/files/4832/MTS_tammikuu_2020_Mielipidetutkimusraportti.pdf MTS

5 Elinkeinoelämän valtuuskunta (2018) https://www.eva.fi/blog/2019/04/04/presidentti-eu-ja-yrittajat-nousussa-suomalaiset-luottavat-poliisiin/

erate in conflict and war situations. The current wartime strength of the Finnish Defence Forces is 280,000 soldiers.[6] These are, in principle, divided into standby and replenishment forces. The contingency forces consist of contingency departments and units staffed by general personnel and conscripts, as well as immediate contingency forces, which consist mainly of reservists. The conscription system is a constitutional duty and applies to all men between the ages of 18 and 60, while women can apply for service as volunteers. A conscript must perform either armed or unarmed military service or civilian service.

The perceived military threats in Europe decreased significantly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Territorial and collective defence became less crucial as many European countries cut their defence spending and deactivated conscription services. In the case of Finland, it maintained its national defence-focused system, based on national military service and a large reserve. At the same time, Finland updated its national defence capabilities and continued its tradition of participating in international operations. In other words, unlike most European countries, Finland did not completely follow the trend of downsizing defence capabilities.[7] Finland's defence spending[8] in recent years has remained close to the general defence expenditure among EU member states.[9] However, the general

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6 The Finnish Government Report on Defence Policy (2017) http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/79274/J05_2017_VN_puolustusselonteko_Su_PLM.pdf

7 For more on the development of Finland's defence policy after the end of the Cold War, see Pesu, Matti (2017) Koskiveneellä kohti valtavirtaa https://www.defmin.fi/files/3776/01_17_Pesu_Koskiveneella_kohti_valtavirtaa_V2.pdf

8 See the chart below. If included in the calculation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' share of military crisis management, defense administration pensions and part of the Border Guard expenditure, and the share of defense expenditure in GDP is about 0.2 percentage points higher than in the chart. Source: Finland's Ministry of Defence https://www.defmin.fi/tehtavat_ja_toiminta/puolustushallinnon_voimavarat/talous/puolustusmenojen_osuus_bruttokansantuotteesta

9 EU Commission (2020) https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Government_expenditure_on_defence

international tradition of evaluating defence budgets differs from that of Finland. Most states use a model in which the defence budget includes military pensions, border guard and crisis management expenditure. The Finnish Ministry of Defence usually calculates the share of defence spending in GDP so that it only includes the costs of the ministry's budget. Costs, such as crisis management are included in the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. However, as Finland is not a member of NATO, it is not committed to allocating a certain GDP percentage share to defence spending.

Year	GDP (million □)	Military Expenditure (% of GDP)	Defence Expenditure by Finland's Ministry of Defence (million □)
2010	187,100	1.46	2,732.3
2011	196,869	1.37	2,696.8
2012	199,793	1.40	2,804.5
2013	203,338	1.40	2,851.9
2014	205,474	1.30	2,670.8
2015	209,604	1.28	2,691.7
2016	216,111	1.30	2,801.1
2017	225,781	1.23	2,767.2
2018	234,453	1.22	2,850.8
2019	242,109	1.30	3,138.2
2020	249,328	1.27	3,172.7

In Finland, a viable and competitive domestic defence industry is a fundamental element of its national defence. Finnish technological expertise plays a vital role in the entirety of the defence system providing in-country capabilities. The Finnish defence industry is also integrated into the national defence system. The majority of army, navy and air force maintenance has been outsourced to domestic

companies, which are partnering with the Defence Forces. The Finnish Defence Partnership model relies on companies carrying out their responsibilities, at all times, to secure military capabilities.[10]

Despite high-level technological expertise and skills, Finland's own defence industrial capacity is focused on certain specific areas and it has, therefore, chosen to procure many major systems and platforms from abroad. Thus, the Finnish defence industry alone is not dependent only on procurements by the Finnish Defence Forces and Finnish companies can also export military equipment and technology abroad. According to a report commissioned by the Defence Committee of the Finnish Parliament in 2017, approximately 650€ million of the 1.4€ billion turnover of the Defence and Aviation Industry Association's approximately 100 member companies in 2016, came from exports.[11]

In a European comparison of small and medium-sized companies, the Finnish defence sector is small compared to, for example, its neighbour Sweden. Between the years 2003-2018, Finland's arms exports have been between 76€ and 205€ million per year. Finland exported weapons and military products worth €205 million to other countries during 2018, of which around €128 million of the total came from the sale of military equipment.[12] However, due to the fact that Finland relies on its own defence, the defence industry in Finland is a key part of its military security of supply. Military security of supply means that Finland must seek to sustain the necessary industrial and technological competence and autonomy. This includes maintaining and tailoring critical systems so that their independent use can be guaranteed under all conditions.

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10 For more on Finland's defence industry and its partnership with the private sector, see *Securing the Finnish Defence Technological and Industrial Base* https://www.defmin.fi/files/3789/Securing_the_Finnish_Defence_Technological_and_Industrial_Base.pdf

11 Defence Committee of the Finnish Parliament (2017) https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Lausunto/Sivut/PuVL_8+2017.aspx

12 Finnish Arms Export Report 2018 by Saferglobe https://saferglobe.fi/armsreport/?lang=en-US

The main trends in the development of Finland's national defence in recent years have been in relation to strategic procurements by the Finnish Air Force and Finnish Navy. Finland is currently in the process of replacing its existing Hornet fighters and this project is known as the HX Fighter Program[13] When completed, the acquisition will be the most expensive procurement in Finland's history. The HX fighter project started in 2015 and the government of Finland is scheduled to decide on the acquisition in 2021. According to the project's schedule, the new aircraft would arrive in Finland in 2025–2030. In spring 2016, a request for information was sent to the United Kingdom, Sweden, France and the United States regarding the following fighter models: the Boeing F/A-18 Super Hornet (United States), the Dassault Rafale (France), the Eurofighter Typhoon (UK), the Lockheed Martin F-35 (United States) and the Saab Gripen (Sweden).

In the case of the Finnish Navy, the major procurement has been the Squadron 2020 Project,[14] which started in 2015. The Finnish Minister of Defence, Jussi Niinistö (during 2015-2019), launched the Squadron 2020 Project in 2015 but the preliminary work already began in 2008. Squadron 2020 aims at replacing the seven vessels the Navy will be decommissioning, which will be replaced by four modern corvettes. The construction of the new vessels is scheduled to start in 2022 and the new vessels are projected to be completed by 2028.

Cooperation in defence material forms an instrumental element of Finland's international engagement. It entails a strategic dimension as international cooperation on armaments has contributed to creating the conditions for the international compatibility of the material (NATO compatibility has been an obligation imposed on Finnish defence procurement since 2007), the capacity

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13 For more on the HX Program, see the Finnish Ministry of Defence https://www.defmin.fi/en/administrative_branch/strategic_capability_projects/hx_fighter_program

14 For more on the Squadron 2020, see the Finnish Ministry of Defence https://www.defmin.fi/en/administrative_branch/strategic_capability_projects/squadron_2020

to receive assistance, security of military supply and the ability of the armed forces to participate in international crisis management operations.

Procurement of defence equipment in Finland is based on the broader strategic planning process of the defence administration. Most of the material projects are replacement equipment projects, but some of the projects create completely new equipment. Procurements are executed through the Defence Forces own planning process, which have political inputs from, for example, the government's defence reports. Ultimately, however, the approved budgets determine the content and scope of the projects. The procurement projects are implemented through the Defence Forces, but administrative tasks are handled by the Ministry of Defence in the request for information stage, in which possibilities are explored from the various suppliers providing the desired performance. The process is similarly handled by the Ministry of Defence when making the calls for tenders. The Minister of Defence will make the final decision on the procurement based on a proposal from the Finnish Defence Forces. When a larger project, such as the HX Program is concerned, the Finnish government makes the final decision.

The Defence Sector and the Military During the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the spring of 2020, the defence forces in many European countries provided assistance to other authorities and the Finnish Defence Forces were also active in assisting with the ramifications of the pandemic. However, the Defence Forces never had the main role in countering the ramifications of the COVID-19. This is mostly due to Finland's comprehensive security approach. In practice, this is a whole-of-government approach to security, in which tasks and responsibilities are divided between different authorities; the tasks and allocation of responsibilities for preparedness in society

are based on legislation[15]. In Finland, the Defence Forces were not the main authority in dealing with the COVID-19, but rather an assisting authority.

A major concern within the Finnish Defence Forces regarding the pandemic has been the safety of conscripts. As Finland annually trains about 20,000 conscripts, there was a need to consider, how the COVID-19 pandemic would affect the training process. The Defence Forces took immediate measures in March to limit the spread of COVID-19 at the behest of the Defence Command. An instruction and guidelines were issued, that if a member of the Defence Forces, a conscript, a woman performing voluntary military service or a reservist instructed for refresher training has returned, or will return, from epidemic areas determined by the National Institute of Health and Welfare, he or she must stay away from service or work for 14 days. The Defence Forces also trained conscripts on duty to identify symptoms and seek treatment if necessary. The measures have been effective, as there are only 42 confirmed cases of COVID-19 (including recovered people) in the Defence Forces.[16]

One of the legal tasks of the Finnish Defence Forces is to assist other government officials and institutions. As such, the Finnish Defence Forces announced in March[17] that they would support police-led duties with about 40 soldiers and 750 conscripts. Conscripts were used, among other things, to regulate traffic and isolate areas. In addition to assisting the police, the Defence Forces have also supported other authorities. For example, the Border Guard was provided with transport assistance for operational needs and the Centre for Military Medicine has provided support to the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) by allocating human and equipment resources (respirators) for its use.

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15 For more on Finland's comprehensive security, see the Security Strategy for Society (2017) https://turvallisuuskomitea.fi/en/security-strategy-for-society/

16 Situation as of 7.9.2020 https://puolustusvoimat.fi/koronavirustilanne

17 Finnish Defence Forces press release: *Viranomaisyhteistyöllä turvataan yhteiskuntaa poikkeusoloissa* (28.3.2020) https://puolustusvoimat.fi/-/viranomaisyhteistyolla-turvataan-yhteiskuntaa-poikkeusoloissa

As most COVID-19 cases in Finland had been registered in the Uusimaa region in Southern Finland, the Finnish government made a decision in late March to isolate the region from the rest of the country for three weeks. This was done to prevent the pandemic from spreading as Finland's capital and largest city, Helsinki, along with the surrounding Greater Helsinki area, are both located in Uusimaa, Finland's most populous region. The Defence Forces assisted the police in the process by monitoring movement within the borders of Uusimaa.

The potential impact of COVID-19 on Defence Forces' exercises was considered at an early stage. At the beginning of April, the Defence Forces announced[18] that it had cancelled participation in several international exercises, and the way national exercises were to be conducted would be monitored via case-by-case consideration. In addition, the Defence Forces decided to cancel the refresher exercises and the voluntary exercises for the Defence Forces, which were scheduled for July 2020. As of August, the Defence Forces have returned to the normal cycle of refresher exercises and the pandemic has not had a major impact on national and international exercises. For example, the Navy was able to conduct its major spring exercise Lotta in May[19] and the Army held six local defence exercises in several provinces of Finland in September[20], which were attended by about 4,400 members of the Defence Forces, conscripts, reservists and other authorities. The Finnish Air Force held national exercises and participated in international exercises throughout the spring and summer.[21]

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18 Finnish Defence Forces' press release: *Puolustusvoimien jokaista harjoitusta tarkastellaan tapauskohtaisesti* (1.4.2020) https://puolustusvoimat.fi/-/puolustusvoimien-jokaista-harjoitusta-tarkastellaan-tapauskohtaisesti

19 Finnish Defence Forces' press release: *Merivoimien taistelukykyä kehitetään poikkeuksellisissa olosuhteissa* (19.5.2020) https://merivoimat.fi/-/merivoimien-taistelukykya-kehitetaan-poikkeuksellisissa-olosuhteissa

20 Finnish Defence Forces' press release: *Local defence exercises to start across the country* (25.8.2020) https://maavoimat.fi/-/paikallispuolustusharjoitukset-alkavat-eri-puolilla-maata?languageId=en_US

21 List of the Finnish Air Force exercises: https://ilmavoimat.fi/en/exercises

Regardless of the otherwise relatively minor impact of COVID-19 on Finland's defence exercises, the cancellation of the Arctic Lock exercise has been a major setback. Scheduled to take place in May-June 2021, Arctic Lock was going to be the largest exercise for the Defence Forces in 2021 with a planned 20,000 participants. The exercise had a significant share of international cooperation, with participation from 13 key partners, with its main purpose being to simulate the territorial defence of Finland, together with its partners. Due to COVID-19 travel constraints, the planning of the exercise was not able to continue beyond March 2020. According to the Finnish Ministry of Defence, the postponement of the international planning events necessary for the implementation of the exercise, as well as the related preparatory events, such as field surveys of the exercise area, was no longer possible. Instead of the Arctic Lock exercise, the Defence Forces will organize a national exercise in 2021 with approximately 15,000 participants. Finland's Minister of Defence stated that the defence administration is exploring the possibility of organizing a major international exercise later in the 2020s.[22]

Expected Short- and Long-term Impact on Finland's Defence Sector

The coronavirus pandemic and the measures to prevent it from spreading have resulted in recessions around the world. The economic impact has been unprecedented and rapid. In Finland, the economy is estimated to shrink by 5.5 percent as Finland's deficit will increase by more than 13€ billion in 2020, with the govern-

[22] Finnish Ministry of Defence press release: *Defence Forces 2021 Arctic Lock exercise to be replaced by national main military exercise* (22.9.2020) https://www.defmin.fi/en/topical/press_releases/defence_forces_2021_arctic_lock_exercise_to_be_replaced_by_national_main_military_exercise.10726.news#b82a1e04harjoitus_korvataan_kansallisella_paasotaharjoituksella.10662.news#b82a1e04

ment being prepared to take on a large amount ofadditional debt.[23]

However, there have been no major calls in Finnish public debate to cut defence spending. Mostly, this is because parliamentary budget discussions will take place during the fall of 2020 and, at this point, there are no clear views on how the pandemic will impact the economy of Finland as a whole. The COVID-19 pandemic is a problem for defence budgets and more broadly, for the strategic execution of defence policy. In the case of Finland, however, the potential harm to national defence has remained modest. While utilizing certain precautions, the Finnish Defence Forces have mostly been able to continue their normal exercise and training routines, both nationally and internationally.

Downsizing the defence budget or demanding cuts could also turn out to be challenging due to the circumstances. In 2021, the Finnish government is set to decide on a 10 billion euro fighter deal, which will likely require more funds within the defence budget for maintaining the fighters. Finland is in the process of replacing its F-18 Hornet fighter jets (phasing them out in 2030) and is currently in the final stages of the procurement process. The fighter procurement costs, in addition to Finland's other strategic procurement in recent years, such as the Squadron 2020, mean that Finland's defence expenditure will amount to around 2% of its GDP in the following years.[24] Significant cuts to defence seem unlikely as these strategic capability procurements will require defence investments for years. Paradoxically, as defence spending may decrease in several European countries, in Finland, defence expenditure in GDP will see an increase in the near future.

The low public demand for defence cuts may partially also be explained by the current level of resources for the Defence Forces.

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23 Finnish Ministry of Finance press release: *Finnish economy hit hard by coronavirus* (16.4.2020) https://valtioneuvosto.fi/-/10623/koronavirus-iskee-lujaa-suomen-talouteen?languageId=en_US

24 Memo by the Finnish Ministry of Defence, given to the Defence Committee of the Finnish Parliament (2017) https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/JulkaisuMetatieto/Documents/EDK-2017-AK-118781.pdf

In 2012-2015 the Finnish Defence Forces went through a structural change, which required savings totalling around € 825 million including staff cuts, while at the same time introducing new duties. The defence budget was cut by about 10 percent. The number of hired staff in the Defence Forces was reduced to about 12,000 employees and the war strength of Finland was reduced to 230,000 soldiers (this has been increased since to 280,000). The process was not met with praise and has raised critique that the Finnish Defence Forces staff are suffering from work overload and has raised the question of whether the Defence Forces have sufficient resources.[25] For years now, the defence administration has voiced the concern[26] that Finland cannot afford any more defence cuts if it is to uphold credible national defence. This message was repeated in the Finnish government's 2017 report on defence, which stated that there is an imbalance between the requirements for developing Finland's defence and current resources. The report stated that during the implementation of the reform of the Defence Forces, a funding gap had emerged due to the additional budget cuts, the increased duties for the Defence Forces, the rising costs of defence materiel and the need to respond to changes in the security environment.[27] Therefore, it would be difficult to find plausible justifications for additional defence cuts without compromising the demands on Finland's national defence.

While the public or political narrative for defence cuts has been mostly absent, there have been minor exceptions. As the pandemic

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25 Sotilasaikakauslehti 8/2018 https://www.upseeriliitto.fi/files/5988/Sotilaiden_tyouupumuksella_ei_ole_varaa_leikkia.pdf

26 Speech by the Minister of Defence, Mr. Jussi Niinistö (2016) https://www.defmin.fi/ajankohtaista/puheet/puolustusministeri_niiniston_ukk-luento_paasikivi-seurassa_13.9.2016.7958.news. The issue of declining resources for the Defence Forces was already also raised in 2012, in the Finnish Government's report on foreign and security policy https://vnk.fi/documents/10616/622970/J0512_Suomen+turvallisuus-+ja+puolustuspolitiikka+2012.pdf/b534174a-13bc-4684-beb0-a093be30ce2a/J0512_Suomen+turvallisuus-+ja+puolustuspolitiikka+2012.pdf?version=1.0&t=1422011065000

27 The government of Finland's report on defence policy 2017 https://www.defmin.fi/files/3688/J07_2017_Governments_Defence_Report_Eng_PLM_160217.pdf

evolved in the spring and summer of 2020, individual voices and statements, especially from the Left Alliance party[28] stated that Finland should postpone the HX process and re-evaluate the size of procurement. However, the Prime Minister of Finland[29] as well as the Defence Minister of Finland[30] have both spoken on behalf of, and emphasized, the importance of continuing the process according to the planned schedule. It is unlikely that the HX Program will postponed or go through a revision, as it has also been agreed upon in the current government program[31].

More notably, as the security situation in Europe worsened after Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and its military activities in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, a tense security dynamic has developed in the Nordic-Baltic region.[32] The military strategic importance of the Baltic Sea region has grown and military activity in the region has increased. The military presence in the Arctic has also increased. As long as the wider standoff between Russia and the West continues, the need for increased preparedness in defence policy remains. Thus, it seems unlikely that the pandemic would change the general Finnish view on the importance of national defence and improving capabilities or general threat-perceptions.[33]

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28 Statement by the Party Council of the Left Alliance (2020) https://vasemmisto.fi/vasemmistoliitto-koronakriisi-otettava-huomioon-myos-havittajahankinnoissa/

29 Ilta-Sanomat: *Marin Ylellä: Hävittäjähankinta lykkääntyy jonkin verran* (8.4.2020) https://www.is.fi/ulkomaat/art-2000006469126.html

30 Speech by the Minister of Defence Mr. Antti Kaikkonen (2020) https://www.defmin.fi/ajankohtaista/puheet/puolustusministeri_antti_kaikkosen_puhe_234._maanpuolustuskurssin_avajaisissa.10540.news#b82a1e04

31 Programme of the Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government (2019) http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/161935

32 Pesu, Matti (2020) Hard security dynamics in the Baltic Sea region: From turbulence to tense stability https://www.fiia.fi/julkaisu/hard-security-dynamics-in-the-baltic-sea-region

33 This was highlighted by Prime Minister Sanna Marin in her speech given to the ambassadors of Finland in August https://valtioneuvosto.fi/-/10616/paaministeri-sanna-marinin-puheenvuoro-suurlahettilaskokouksessa-25.8.

In the long run, the strategic emphases in Finland's national defence will remain unchanged. In practice, this means that Finland will continue its strategic procurement programs and to engage in international defence cooperation. The government of Finland is set to release a new report on defence policy in 2021, which will outline the precise short and long-term emphasis in Finland's defence policy.

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Sweden

Michael Jonsson

Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic reached full force in Sweden, a lacklustre response served as yet another stinging reminder that the once proud ship of state was in urgent need of repair, with gaps in civil defence coming into particularly sharp relief. Contradicting the swiftly forming international consensus, Sweden developed its own, notably toned-down coronavirus strategy, with dire results.[1] At one point, Sweden had the highest mortality rate per capita in Europe, and at the time of writing, the death toll stands at close to 5,900, whereas Finland, Denmark and Norway have seen less than 1,300 deaths combined.

The COVID-19 pandemic also coincided in time with a drawn-out and contentious debate over Sweden's upcoming defence decision for the 2021-2025 period. The cross-parliamentary Defence Commission delivered its final report in May 2019,[2] with broad consensus surrounding its main thrust, which sees a sharply deteriorating security situation in the Baltic Sea region, requiring strong improvements in the Swedish Armed Forces (SAF), in particular the army. However, there have been sharp disagreements about whether the incumbent centre-left government is ready to provide

1 Lauren Leatherby and Allison McCann "Sweden Stayed Open. A Deadly Month Shows the Risk" *New York Times,* May 15 2020.

2 Regeringskansliet *Värnkraft. Inriktningen av säkerhetspolitiken och utformningen av det militära försvaret* 2021-2025, May 14 2019.

the full funding required, with rifts within the governing Social Democrats. In early September, the governing coalition presented a funding proposal for 2021-2025, but disagreement remains regarding the 2026-2030 period.

The remainder of this chapter will, firstly, provide an overview of the situation in the Swedish defence sector, which is slowly but surely turning the corner and recovering from rapid downsizing and an excessive focus on expeditionary peacekeeping operations. This is followed by an analysis of the way in which the pandemic has impacted the SAF, which have taken a back-seat role during the crisis. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the short- and long term outlook of Swedish defence policy, which is sometimes characterized by close observers as "Groundhog Day"[3] or "Waiting for Godot".[4] While there is broad agreement on the fundamental reforms needed, their actual implementation and full funding has proven bewilderingly slow and is frequently interrupted by proposals to rehash the analysis yet again.

The Swedish Defence Sector Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the end of the Cold War, Sweden's defence spending has decreased from some 2.2% of GDP to approximately 1% in 2015.[5] During the same period, the SAF were transformed, from a large conscript force that was focused on territorial defence, to a small professional force optimized for expeditionary peacekeeping, with sizable and long-term engagements in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Force structures were thus dramatically reduced – between 1992

3 Robert Dalsjö, as quoted in Niclas Vent "Så starkt är det svenska försvaret" *Aftonbladet,* August 31 2020.

4 Robin Häggblom "Det absurdas teater". Kungliga Krigsvetenskapsakademin, June 18 2020.

5 Juuko Alozious "Sveriges försvarsutgifter 1900-2022" FOI Memo 7249, August 2020.

and 2009, the army shrank from 16 brigades to 2, the air force decreased from 20 squadrons to 4, and the navy was reduced from 30 surface combatants and 12 submarines, to 7 and 4, respectively.[6]

While Russia's war in Georgia in 2008 raised concerns in defence policy circles, this did not rouse the political establishment sufficiently and the downsizing of the SAF continued unabated. In 2012, the then Chief of Defence, Sverker Göransson, again raised the alarm, by reporting that "we can [only] defend ourselves against an attack with a limited aim. We are talking about approximately one week on our own".[7] Göransson also raised the prospect of possibly being forced to cancel one of the SAF services due to lack of funding. The following year, a close observer raised the question of whether Sweden was becoming a "net consumer of security", arguing that its weak military capabilities could become regionally destabilizing.[8]

Given this troubling state of affairs, Russia's annexation of Crimea in February and March 2014 came as a "rude awakening" to the Swedish defence establishment. Adding insult to injury, in the autumn of 2014, the Swedish Navy was forced to scramble to conduct a submarine hunt in the Stockholm archipelago.[9] Furthermore, in March 2015, Russia purportedly conducted a snap exercise which involved "the speedy seizure of […] the Swedish island of Gotland".[10] In conflict-averse Sweden, this forced a rapid re-evaluation of the regional security situation.

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6 Robert Dalsjö "Sweden and Its Deterrence Deficit. Quick to React, Yet Slow to React", 93-109, in Nora Vanaga and Toms Rostoks (eds) *Deterring Russia in Europe. Defence Strategies for Neighboring States* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 94.

7 Mikael Holmström "Försvar med tidsgräns" S*venska Dagbladet*, December 30 2012.

8 Charly Salonius-Pasternak "Will Sweden Become a Net Consumer of Security" FIIA Comment 19/2013, Helsinki November 2013.

9 Peter Walker "Sweden searches for suspected Russian submarine off Stockholm" *The Guardian,* October 19, 2014.

10 Edward Lucas "The Coming Storm. Baltic Sea Security Report" CEPA, Washington DC, June 2015, 9.

However, in this context of low-key panic, Sweden has been notably "quick to react, but slow to act", in the words of scholar Robert Dalsjö. That is, while the assessment of Russia shifted, as did the perceived need for national deterrence capabilities, surprisingly little was done to bridge Sweden's "deterrence deficit" in practice.[11] On the first point, Sweden's strategic community now routinely concludes that the risk of war has increased and that Sweden would inevitably be drawn into any conflict between Russia and the West in the Baltic region.[12] The Defence Commission even concluded that a major war might start with an attack on Sweden.[13] In spite of this, budget increases have been modest, from an alarmingly low base – the defence budget increased from SEK 45 billion to 56 billion (approximately € 5,4 billion) between 2015-2019, or from 0.9 to 1.1 percent of GDP. In fact, despite recent increases, the Swedish defence budget has never been lower as a share of GDP during the entire 1900-2020 period, outside of the catastrophic 2010-2014 period.[14]

However, since 2015, the SAF have made a range of smaller improvements – largely within existing budgets and using mothballed materiel – which have improved readiness and territorial defence significantly. In September 2016, a military presence was re-established on the strategically important island of Gotland.[15] This occurred against the backdrop of worries of a "Gotland grab", a scenario in which Russia would seize the island to cut off the Baltic states from NATO reinforcements. The company of mechanized infantry that was initially deployed has since been reinforced by short-range (2017) and medium-range (2019) air defence systems.

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11 Dalsjö "Sweden and Its Deterrence Deficit", 93.

12 Cf Krister Bringéus. *Säkerhet i ny tid – Betänkande av Utredningen om Sveriges försvars-och säkerhetspolitiska samarbeten* SOU 2016:57. Stockholm 2016, Wolters Kluwer.

13 Cf. Regeringskansliet, Värnkraft, 114.

14 Alozious "Sveriges försvarsutgifter 1900-2022"

15 John Granlund "Så ska ÖB:s stridsgrupp försvara Gotland" *Aftonbladet*, September 16 2016.

Beyond this, previously acquired modern materiel has become operational, including the Meteor air-to-air missile, and 24 wheeled Archer artillery pieces. Mothballed materiel, such as the RBS 15 anti-ship missile, and RBS 70 and RBS 90 air defence systems have also been re-activated.[16] Conscription has likewise been reactivated, with some 3,400 recruits trained annually. With a history of universal male conscription, almost 70% of the public supported its reintroduction.[17] Whilst most of these measures have drawn on materiel already available, an important exception is the decision in August 2018 to acquire Patriot 3 air defence systems, at an initial cost of 10 billion SEK (approximately 0.96 billion Euros).[18] With the offer including both missiles optimized for countering cruise and ballistic missiles, respectively, this was read as a response to Russia deploying its ballistic Iskander missiles in the Kaliningrad exclave.

Last but not least, Sweden has significantly deepened its military cooperation with like-minded countries, primarily Finland and the US, but increasingly also Norway.[19] Informally dubbed the "Hultqvist-doctrine" (after the current Minister of Defence), Sweden now collaborates closely with the US, whilst remaining outside of NATO.[20] Cooperation with Finland is even more far-reaching, and now explicitly aims to create the preconditions for "combined join military […] operations in all situations", including "beyond peace time".[21] Perhaps surprising to outsiders – given both countries' traditional emphasis on military non-alignment – the collaboration makes sense militarily, given the geography and comple-

16 Vent "Så starkt är det svenska försvaret"; Dalsjö "Sweden and Its Deterrence Deficit", 101.

17 Josefin Pehrson "Undersökning: Stort stöd för allmän värnplikt" *Svenska Dagbladet*, January 10 2016.

18 *SVT Nyheter* "Regeringsbeslut idag: Sverige köper Patriot" August 2 2018

19 Frank Bakke-Jensen, Peter Hultqvist and Antti Kaikkonen "Sverige, Finland och Norge utökar försvarssamarbetet" *Dagens Nyheter*, September 24 2020;

20 Dalsjö "Sweden and Its Deterrence Deficit", 103-104.

21 Dalsjö "Sweden and Its Deterrence Deficit", 104; Regeringskansliet "Proposition om operativt militärt stöd mellan Sverige och Finland" March 12, 2020.

mentarities in the respective force structures. This includes Sweden having sophisticated submarines while Finland has none, Finland´s large number of mechanized battalions and artillery pieces relative to Sweden´s undersized army, and the complementary armaments of the respective air forces.[22] Similarly, the defence of the demilitarized Finnish Åland islands and northern Finland and Sweden can benefit greatly from cooperation between the two countries.[23] In 2017, Sweden organized Aurora 17, a multinational exercise with over 20,000 participants. This included a US contingent of 1,300 soldiers bringing heavy equipment, whilst Finnish troops participated in the defence of Gotland. The largest SAF exercise in 20 years, Aurora also signalled Sweden's strategic orientation, loud and clear.

The Swedish Armed Forces and the COVID-19 Pandemic.

As the COVID-19 pandemic reached full force in Sweden, it revealed a country that was woefully underprepared. A notably moderate approach to countering the outbreak swiftly led to mortality rates five to ten times higher than amongst its Nordic neighbours. Like in many other countries, Swedes temporarily hoarded food, medicines and personal protection gear. But whilst deliveries quickly re-stocked empty food shelves, protective gear such as surgical masks and medicines such as the Propofol anaesthetic were running dangerously low.[24]

Comparisons with its eastern neighbour are particularly jarring. Finland has built up national stockpiles of medical and mili-

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22 Cf. Michael Jonsson and Jakob Gustafsson "Färdplan för tillväxt: erfarenheter för Sverige från den finska Försvarsmaktens reformer för ökad beredsap och operativ förmåga" FOI Memo 7105, Stockholm August 2020.

23 Charly Salonius-Pasternak and Henri Vanhanen "Finnish-Swedish Defence Cooperation. What History Suggests About Future Scenarios" FIIA Briefing Paper 284, Helsinki June 2020.

24 Andersson and Pryser Libell "Finland, 'Prepper Nation'".

tary equipment since the 1950s as part of its comprehensive security model, in part inspired by Sweden's "total defence" concept. But whereas Sweden has abandoned its stockpiles – and swiftly ran low on protective gear and medicines early during the pandemic – Finland could dip into its reserves to cover shortages[25], although they too encountered some problems. Hence, this illustrated that civil defence capabilities are not what they used to be in Sweden[26], due to the same type of cost-cutting that has hampered the SAF.

In this context, the SAF has not been a key player in responding to the pandemic, but it has nonetheless contributed to the best of its ability. Whilst the number of personnel who fell ill has not been reported, headquarters adjusted its operations to minimize the risk of contagion.[27] Several major exercises have been cancelled or postponed. Aurora 20, planned for May 11-June 4, 2020, was intended to be even larger than its 2017 predecessor, with 25,000 participants from 12 different countries. Of these, 3,000 were planned to be international troops, including a US Marine Corps battalion and Patriot systems. Instead, it has been postponed indefinitely, in part because several countries notified the SAF that they would not be participating. Likewise, large parts of a major total defence exercise (*Totalförsvarsövning 2020*, TFÖ 20) have been rescheduled, with planned elements postponed until 2021.[28] The head of the Aurora exercise, Brigadier General Stefan Andersson, however, noted that "we don't need any total defence exercise, it's on-going as we speak".[29] As opposed to all of its neighbours, Sweden was, however, not planning to participate in the cancelled major Defender 2020 NATO exercise.

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25 Christina Andersson and Henrik Pryser Libell "Finland, 'Prepper Nation of the Nordics', Isn't Worried About Masks". New York Times, April 5, 2020.

26 Mariette Hägglund "Rebuilding Sweden´s Crisis Preparedness. Lack of clarity impedes implementation". FIIA Briefing Paper 283, Helsinki May 2020.

27 Försvarsmakten "Coronaviruset och Försvarsmakten", n.d.

28 Försvarsmakten "Totalförsvarsövning 2020", n.d.

29 Mikael Holmström "Storövningen Aurora stoppas men slutövningen genomförs" *Dagens Nyheter,* April 3, 2020.

In the short term, the COVID-19 pandemic has not impacted the defence budget, and short to medium term plans indicate a fairly steep increase, albeit from a very low base around 1.1% of GDP (approximately SEK 56 billion in 2019).[30] Like in many countries, the pandemic has caused a recession, with GDP decreasing an estimated 3.4% in 2020, and unemployment nearing 10%.[31] Youth unemployment has been particularly impacted, increasing from 9.4 to 13.3% between February and August 2020.[32] GDP is forecast to recover in 2021, whilst unemployment will take longer to reach pre-pandemic levels. Whether this improves the opportunities for the SAF to recruit, remains to be seen. Arguably, re-activation of conscription in 2017 (creating a suitable pool of recruits) and the planned re-establishment of army regiments in rural regions will prove more important.[33]

While the primary responsibility for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic fell on other agencies, the SAF quickly put its resources at the disposal of civilian authorities. Already in late January, its CBRN-unit ran a COVID-19 exercise, testing methods for diagnosing the virus. Furthermore, the SAF established two military hospitals – one in Stockholm and one in Gothenburg – with a total of 50 intensive care beds, and 90 additional hospital beds, albeit not without some friction.[34] It also supplied 154 ventilators and 50,000 protective masks and 40.000 pieces of personal protective gear, distributed to other government authorities. The protective masks, of which 750,000 were originally produced, reportedly provide better protection than civilian gear, and can be reused an unlimited

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30 Alozious "Sveriges försvarsutgifter 1900-2022".

31 *Dagens Nyheter* "Återhämtning i ekonomin – men lågkonjunkturen håller i sig" September 30, 2020.

32 Dan Lucas "Coronakrisen försenar ungas inträd på arbetsmarknaden" *Dagens Nyheter,* October 8, 2020.

33 Mikael Holmström "Nya förband öppnar för fler värnpliktiga" *Dagens Nyheter*, October 12, 2020.

34 Cf. Kristina Hedberg and Marina Ferhatovic "Tältet som fick hela Sahlgrenska att svaja" *Dagens Nyheter*, June 9, 2020.

number of times. In spite of this, health care staff reported a lack of personal protective gear.[35] The SAF also supported other authorities with helicopter transport, ambulances, and the construction of health care facilities. Overall, whilst the pandemic revealed worrying gaps in Sweden´s civil defence, little of this criticism has been directed at the SAF. As a result, the funding of civil defence has been increased with SEK 1 billion in the 2021 national budget.[36]

There has been little impact in terms of military cooperation, beyond the cancelled and scaled-down exercises. However, the "nationalized" responses, with Norway and Finland closing their borders with Sweden, have raised some questions regarding whether Nordic solidarity is only skin deep, and whether it would prove robust in the event of a crisis or armed conflict.[37]

The Short- and Long-term Outlook for the Swedish Defence Sector

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Sweden's defence policy had rapidly shifted, the SAF had harvested many of the low hanging fruit apparent in 2015, and public opinion had shifted in favour of expanded defence budgets and military cooperation. Even so, a decisive shift in the funding of the SAF was still not forthcoming – not because the economy could not support it, but because of a rift within the governing Social Democrats over prioritizing defence.[38] In May 2020, negotiations over how the Defence Commission reports should be translated into defence policy for the 2021-2025 period

35 Cf Mikael Holmström "Trots försvarets leverans av skyddsmaterial – vårdpersonal larmar om brist" *Dagens Nyheter,* April 9, 2020.

36 *Dagens Nyheter* "Civilförsvaret får en miljard i höstbudgeten" September 17 2020.

37 Cf. Ewa Stenberg "När solidariteten i Norden och EU provides brast det" *Dagens Nyheter,* March 14, 2020.

38 Robin Häggblom "Continued imbalances. The Swedish Defence Forces towards 2030". *Corporal Frisk blogg,* July 24, 2020.

collapsed.[39] Towing the party line, Minister of Defence Peter Hultqvist argued that the COVID-19 pandemic meant that full funding could not be provided. Since the Social Democrats had already been unwilling to provide the funding in May 2019, this argument rang decidedly hollow.[40] Centre-right parties insisted instead that the funding of defence and crisis preparedness was needed more than ever.[41]

The situation was deeply troubling, as Swedish defence policy is traditionally decided through broad parliamentary support. Due to the parliamentary situation, the disagreements over defence could also easily translate into a parliamentary crisis for the government.[42] It was also frustrating for the strategic community, since there is broad agreement on what needs to be done, and the Defence Commission had provided a comprehensive plan. But instead of acting, the government delayed and sought compromises that would satisfy no-one. Fed up, close observers drew parallels to Samuel Beckett´s "Waiting for Godot"[43] and "Groundhog Day", the movie in which Bill Murray is forced to relive the same day over and over.[44] Finnish analysts noted that if Sweden lacks the political will to fully fund its defence, this would be noted "in a number of capitals"[45] and inevitably impact Finnish-Swedish cooperation.[46]

In late August 2020, the centre-right parties (the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats and the Liberals) demanded adamantly that the proposals of the Defence Commission be implemented in

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39 Mikael Holmström and Hans Olsson "Enad borgerlig front för mer pengar till försvaret" *Dagens Nyheter* May 19, 2020.

40 PM Nilsson "Uppgörelse om försvaret föll på regeringsfrågan" *Dagens Industri,* June 9, 2020.

41 Mikael Holmström "Pandemin regeringens argument mot satsning på försvaret" *Dagens Nyheter* May 14, 2020.

42 PM Nilsson "Uppgörelse om försvaret"

43 Häggblom "Det absurdas teater."

44 Robert Dalsjö, as quoted in Vent "Så starkt är det svenska försvaret".

45 Robin Häggblom "Det absurdas teater";

46 Salonius-Pasternak and Vanhanen "Finnish-Swedish Defence Cooperation", 6.

their entirety.[47] Facing the realities of governing with minority support in parliament, the government relented, and signed an agreement which fully funds the proposals, with a "control station" in 2023 to ascertain whether further funding will be supplied. In the recently presented defence bill, Swedish defence spending increases gradually, from SEK 66 billion in 2021, up to SEK 88.7 billion in 2026 (8.6 billion Euros)[48], which would push it above 1.5% of GDP. In theory, this allows the SAF to drastically improve their operative capabilities. The air force will maintain its JAS Gripen C/D in service alongside the coming E/F version and receive long-range air-to-ground munitions, the army will grow from two to four brigades and its artillery will be much improved, and the navy will receive two submarines and four surface combatants.[49]

Over the long term, Swedish defence spending will continue on an upward trajectory, with operative capabilities improving too, modestly to drastically, depending on further funding decisions in 2023. This trajectory has been forced by Russia´s revisionist foreign policy, and whilst the Minister of Defence attempted to use the COVID-19 crisis as an excuse to lower the spending increases, this was not long-lived. Instead, the crisis in Belarus served to further reinforce demands from the centre-right parties in parliament that the full proposals of the Defence Commission should be implemented. Whilst high-end, domestically produced materiel consume a disproportionate share of the materiel budget[50], the SAF is slowly but surely moving from "islands of excellence" towards a more bal-

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47 Pål Jonsson, Mikael Oscarsson and Allan Widman M, "KD och L beredda att köra över regeringen om försvaret" *Dagens Nyheter* August 29 2020.

48 Regeringskansliet "Totalförsvaret 2021-2025" Regeringens proposition 2020/21:30, Stockholm, October 14, 2020, 91.

49 Mikael Holmström "Försvarsuppgörelsen öppnar för större upprustning" Dagens Nyheter, September 22, 2020.

50 In the 2021-2032 period, fighter jets and underwater systems (primarily 60 JAS Gripen E/F and two new submarines of A26 Blekinge class) are expected to cost SEK 181 billion (approximately $20.6 billion) (Mikael Holmström "181 miljarder till stridsflyg och ubåtar, men materiel till soldater saknas" Dagens Nyheter, September 21 2020).

anced system of systems. This modestly upbeat assessment should however be capped by a major caveat. Depending on the elections in 2022, there is a real chance that the debate on defence spending will be reignited in 2023, an unwelcome "Groundhog Day revisited" visible again to our entire neighbourhood.

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Norway

Robin Allers / Paal Sigurd Hilde

The Corona virus reached Norway in late February 2020. After a surge in the number of cases in early March, the government adopted the most extensive and wide-ranging emergency measures since World War II on 12 March to stem the spread of the virus.[1] The measures included, amongst others, the closing of kindergartens, schools and universities as well as services such as hairdressers and gyms, the banning of cultural and sports events, and the imposition of strict restrictions on travel in and out of Norway. The country's total defence concept was put into action and both civilian and military resources were mobilised.

As spring and summer progressed, it became evident that that strict measures had been effective. The need for military assistance to be provided to civilian authorities turned out to be limited. Starting in late April, the central government and local authorities gradually eased the restrictions. Like many European countries, Norway is experiencing a second wave of cases at the time of writing (October 2020). Provided that the restrictions which have been reimposed both nationally and locally are effective again, the overall impact of the pandemic on Norway will be relatively limited compared to many other European countries. Given its sovereign wealth fund of NOK 10.7 trillion (October 2020; EUR 980 bn), Norway has also been in a favourable position to meet the economic

1 For a timeline of events and decisions, see https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/koronavirus-covid-19/timeline-for-news-from-norwegian-ministries-about-the-coronavirus-disease-covid-19/id2692402/.

impact of the Covid-19 crisis, with the government enacting, and later extending, a range of stimulus measures.

This chapter will analyse the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the Norwegian defence sector. After a brief overview of Norwegian security and defence policy prior to the pandemic, the chapter will first describe and analyse the role of the military during the crisis, and then the potential short- and longer-term impact that the crisis may have.

Norwegian Security and Defence Policy Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic

A balancing act has stood at the core of Norway's security policy since 1949. As a neighbour to the Soviet Union during the Cold War and Russia since 1992, Norway has on the one hand sought integration in NATO and close relations, particularly with the United States to deter and, if needed, help defend against the eastern neighbour.[2] On the other hand, Norway has instituted self-imposed restrictions to assure the Soviet Union and later Russia, that Norway would not be a staging area for U.S. or NATO aggression. Most notably, these restrictions included banning the permanent stationing of allied combat troops in Norway in peacetime.

After the end of the Cold War, most allies and therefore also NATO quite quickly turned their attention towards new threats and challenges, notably out-of-area crisis management. While supporting NATO's new roles, Norway remained conservative for most of the 1990s. Norwegian troops were deployed to the Western Balkans as part of the UN- and later NATO-led peace missions. Pointing to the continued instability in Russia, however, Norway was among the last to start reforming its armed forces away from their Cold War missions and structure. Conversely, when dark clouds again

2 Rolf Tamnes, *The United States and the Cold War in the High North,* Oslo: ad Notam, 1991; Olav Riste, *Norway's Foreign Relations - A History* [2nd edition], Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2005.

started forming in European security in 2007-2008, Norway was among the first to argue that NATO needed to also direct attention to traditional threats and challenges at home, not just asymmetric ones at strategic distances.

In September 2008, at the first NATO ministerial meeting after the Russian intervention in Georgia in August, Norway launched its core area initiative, urging a NATO rebalancing in both politica[1] and military terms towards at-home challenges. Along with the Baltic states and Poland, Norway became a key voice for a balance between in-area and out-of-area strategy in the run-up to the 2010 Lisbon NATO Summit and the adoption of a new Alliance Strategic Concept.[3]

As Norwegian security policy had already shifted in 2007-2008, the events of 2014 did not trigger major change in Norway. The Ukraine crisis did, however, underline the seriousness of the changes in European security and spurred on what became a major reinvestment in the Norwegian armed forces.[4] The extraordinary pressure from the Trump administration on European allies to increase defence spending most likely also played a part. Trump turned the vague 2014 Defence Investment Pledge of aiming "to move towards the 2% guideline" by 2024, into a much firmer expectation that allies should reach that goal.

Before looking closer at Norwegian defence spending, it should be stressed that the two last long-term plans – 2013-2016 and 2017-2020 – have seen a particularly strong emphasis on what the government terms strategic capabilities. Most importantly, these include the F-35 Joint Strike fighter and the P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft that Norway is currently acquiring, and intel-

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3 Paal Sigurd Hilde & Helene Widerberg "Norway and NATO – the art of balancing", in R. Allers, C. Masala & R. Tamnes (eds.), *Common or divided security? German and Norwegian perspectives on Euro-Atlantic security.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014, pp. 199-218.

4 Expert Commission on Norwegian Security and Defence, *United Effort,* Oslo: Ministry of Defence, 2015, available at https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/fd/dokumenter/unified-effort.pdf.

ligence.[5] A perusal of the details in the defence spending figures briefly presented below shows that the budget of the Norwegian Intelligence Service has increased in real terms by almost 60 % since 2014. The government has also decided to replace the aging fleet of German-built submarines in a cooperative effort with Germany.[6]

This emphasis on maritime and air capabilities, as well as intelligence, corresponds with the emphasis Norway places on the maritime situation in the North Atlantic.[7] While supportive of NATO's efforts to reassure the Baltic states and Poland particularly after the 2014 Ukraine crisis, Norway took the initiative in 2016 to enhance the "maritime profile" of the Alliance. Given the significance of the Northern Fleet based on the Kola Peninsula to Russia, any crisis or conflict between Russia and NATO seems likely to spread to the European part of the Arctic – the *High North* in Norwegian and NATO parlance. The prime mission of the Northern Fleet is to protect the missile-carrying, strategic submarines that constitute Russia's maritime second-strike capability within the so-called *Bastion* in the Barents and Polar seas. In doing so, however, Russia is expected to conduct sea-denial operations into the Norwegian Sea down to the line stretching from Greenland via Iceland to the United Kingdom, the GIUK Gap.[8] If

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5 On the F-35, see Ministry of Defence, "New Combat Aircraft for the Norwegian Armed Forces", https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/defence/innsikt/kampfly-til-forsvaret/id474117/; on P-8 see e.g. Ministry of Defence, "Norway has ordered five Boeing P-8A Poseidon", 4 April, 2017, https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/norge-har-inngatt-kontrakt-om-kjop-av-femnye-p-8a-poseidon-maritime-patruljefly/id2546045/.

6 See Ministry of Defence, "New Submarines", https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/defence/innsikt/ubater/id2353930/.

7 See e.g. Rolf Tamnes, "The Significance of the North Atlantic and the Norwegian Contribution" (pp. 8-31) and Svein Efjestad, "Norway and the North Atlantic: Defence of the Northern Flank" (pp. 59-74), both in John Andreas Olsen (ed.), *NATO and the North Atlantic: Revitalising Collective Defence,* London: RUSI, 2017.

8 Expert Commission on Norwegian Security and Defence, *Unified Effort,* p. 21.

given the opportunity in crisis and conflict, Russia will most likely also seek to hold NATO's vital sea line of communication across the Atlantic at risk.

To counter this, Norway and other allies, notably the United States and the United Kingdom, have emphasised allied maritime surveillance and sea-power capabilities, and the rebuilding of NATO maritime command and control. Norway considered the establishment of the Joint Forces Command Norfolk, closely tied to the re-established U.S. Second Fleet, as an important achievement. Norway has promoted pushing NATO's forward line of defence north from the GIUK Gap towards the so-called *Bear Gap* between the Norwegian mainland, Bear Island, and the Svalbard Archipelago.[9] Such a shift would improve NATO's freedom of manoeuvre and action in the Norwegian Sea and thus facilitate the reinforcement of Norway if needed.

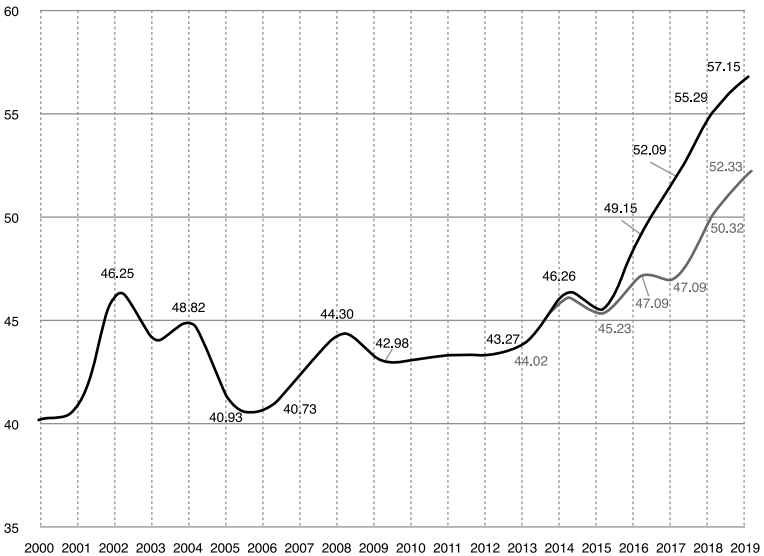

Figure 1: Norwegian defence spending 2000-2019
(NOK bn.; Accounting data corrected for technical adjustments; constant 2019 values) Source: Authors' calculations

9 See e.g. James Black et.al., *Enhancing deterrence and defence on NATO's northern flank,* RAND Europe, 2020, available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4381.html.

The black line in Figure 1 shows the development of Norwegian defence spending in constant 2019 Norwegian crown (NOK) values since 2000. As is evident, defence spending remained within a NOK 40 – 46 billion band until 2015, after which it increased rapidly. An important reason for the rapid increase was a temporary funding increase to finance the acquisition of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. The grey line in Figure 1 shows defence spending without this additional funding. Overall, from 2013, which is the year before the extraordinary funding was introduced, until 2019, defence spending increased by 30 % including the F-35 programme, and by 19 %, excluding it.

As Figure 2 shows, defence spending, as a share of GDP, has also increased rapidly. It should be noted, however, that part of this increase is related to technical adjustments that Norway has made on what it has been reporting to NATO as defence spending. This is in line with what many other NATO countries have done and is based on encouragement from NATO staff. The formal reason for the adjustments has been to ensure that member states reports are as similar and comparable as possible. It is hard, though, not to read this particular emphasis as also being encouraged by a shared interest in recent years in lifting the GDP-ratio towards the 2 % guideline. Moreover, the estimate that Norwegian defence spending will cross the 2 % of GDP-ratio threshold in 2020, is based on a prediction that GPD will fall due to the Covid-19 crisis.

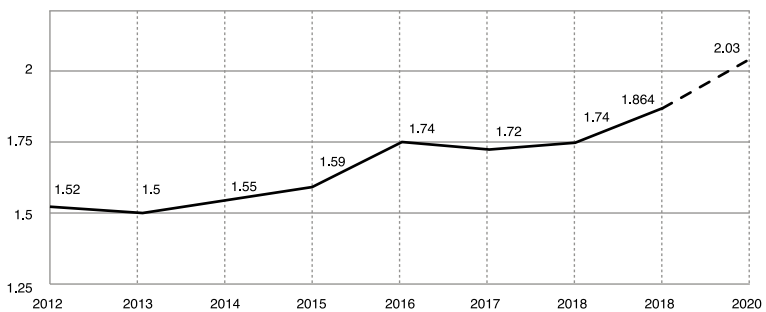

Figure 2: Norwegian defence spending as a share of GDP
Source: NATO defence statistics

Defence Sector and the Military During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The defence sector has been affected by the pandemic like every other part of society.[10] The defence sector has defined three goals for its role: First, to maintain readiness and operability; second, to contain the virus in the sector by implementing the measures established by the authorities; and third, to assist the civilian sector.

The armed forces managed to maintain their operational activity, although some activities related to training and exercises had to be cancelled. The Cold Response winter exercise involving 14,000 soldiers from nine countries had already commenced when the pandemic brought it to a halt.[11] In Norway, military service is compulsory for men and women, and in April 2020, it was decided to go ahead with the annual draft for about 9,000 recruits in order maintain readiness.[12] Some of the rapidly implemented adjustments necessary to comply with the health authorities' infection control measures, mainly through digitalisation, may lead to more permanent adjustments of the selection process.[13] The somewhat reduced level of activity during the first months of the pandemic partly compensated for the additional expenses resulting from infection control measures.

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10 Norwegian Armed Forces, "Forsvaret og koronaviruset", https://forsvaret.no/aktuelt-og-presse/aktuelt/koronaviruset-og-forsvaret, last accessed 2 November 2020.

11 Norwegian Armed Forces, "Forsvaret avslutter Cold Response", 11 March, 2020, https://forsvaret.no/aktuelt-og-presse/aktuelt/forsvaret-avslutter-cold-response; Thomas Nilsen, "Norway cancels Cold Response due to coronavirus outbreak", *The Barents Observer,* 11 March 2020, https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2020/03/norway-cancels-cold-response-due-coronavirus-outbreak.

12 Norwegian Armed Forces, "Forsvaret tilpasser inntaket til de som skal inn i førstegangstjenesten etter påske", 1 April, 2020, https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/forsvaret-tilpasser-inntaket-til-de-som-skal-inn-i-forstegangstjenesten-etter-paske/id2696069/.

13 Mathias Brandt, "Korona tvang fram nye sesjonsrutiner", *Forsvarets forum,* 14 October, 2020, https://forsvaretsforum.no/koronavirus-sesjon/korona-tvang-fram-nye-sesjonsrutiner--forsvaret-vil-gjore-endringer-permanente/165162.

The pandemic also affected Norway's participation in international operations. Early on, the armed forces decided not to withdraw troops from ongoing operations.[14] Yet, contingents had to undergo lengthy periods of strict pre-deployment quarantine, and efforts to keep the virus out of military camps became a large part of their daily routine. Some missions changed their character due to the crisis. A Norwegian field hospital deployed to Afghanistan spent most of its time on infection control, testing and assisting in the treatment and evacuation of Covid-19 patients, rather than treating trauma patients. Like the troops deployed to other operations, they had to operate over longer periods without leave and with limited welfare services.[15]

The Norwegian armed forces' support to the civilian sector was swift and visible, but as noted above, their role in dealing with the pandemic was limited. During the first months, the Home Guard (*Heimevernet*) was deployed to assist the police at checkpoints along the land border to Sweden and Finland and at Oslo Airport Gardermoen. The armed forces also supported the civilian medical sector with tents for reception centres and with air transport.[16]

Even though the sector's involvement in countering the pandemic's first wave was limited, the Covid-19 crisis will likely lead to a revaluation of the armed forces' level of preparedness and readiness regarding security of supply, capacity shortages, the identification of critical infrastructure and personnel, and the ability to provide adequate medical services and infection control. There will be an increased emphasis on the importance of civil-military co-

14 "Internasjonale operasjoner fortsetter som vanlig", *Forsvarets forum,* 17 March, 2020, https://forsvaretsforum.no/internasjonale-operasjoner-fortsetter-som-vanlig/113885.

15 Jonathan Simachai Hansen, "Norske soldater frykter corona-katastrofe i Afghanistan", VG, 13 April, 2020, https://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/i/e8LR8l/norske-soldater-frykter-corona-katastrofe-i-afghanistan; Andreas Rognstrand, "I frontlinjen mot pandemien: – Drev feltsykehus i Kabul", *Forsvarets forum,* 20.11.2020, available at https://forsvaretsforum.no/afghanistan-forsvarets-sanitet-intops/i-frontlinjen-mot-pandemien--drev-feltsykehus-i-kabul/165273.

16 See Norwegian Armed Forces, "Forsvaret og koronaviruset", op.cit.

operation and mutual support between sectors. Emergency legislation introduced in the spring to provide a firmer legal basis for the armed forces to assist civilian authorities, such as the health sector, is to be turned into a law and included in the "normal" legislative framework.[17]

In Norway, civil-military relations are traditionally dealt with under the "total defence concept".[18] Norway has revitalised and modernised its concept in line with the increased emphasis on resilience in NATO in recent years. This work has gained a new dimension under the influence of the corona pandemic. Both the new long-term defence plan, in its revised version, and a simultaneously published white paper on societal security (or resilience), presented to parliament on 16 October 2020, provide updates on the consequences of the pandemic on the defence sector and its interaction with other sectors.[19] A more detailed evaluation of Covid-19-related consequences for the defence sector is under way and its result will be presented in 2021 as part of a general assessment by the government.

The defence sector's participation in the international response to the crisis was mostly carried out through NATO. Norway contributes to NATO's support fund and Norwegian units cooperated with allies and partners in international operations. There has been little bilateral assistance so far involving the armed forces, but medical equipment was delivered to North Macedonia as part of a long-standing cooperation between the two countries.[20]

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17 Norwegian Government, "Forskrift om Forsvarets bistand til aktører med ansvar for samfunnssikkerhet under koronapandemien", https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/31b9f82d0e9e4de7937a520348b9cf6d/forskrift-om-forsvarets-bistand-til-aktorer-med-ansvar-for-samfunnssikkerhet-under-koronapandemien.pdf.

18 Norwegian Ministry of Defence, Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, *Support and Cooperation. A description of the total defence in Norway,* Oslo, 8 May 2018, https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/5a9bd774183b4d548e33da101e7f7d43/support-and-cooperation.pdf.

19 "Ny langtidsplan for forsvarssektoren (2021-2024)", government.no, https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-5-20202021/id2770928/.

20 https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/noreg-donerer-medisinsk-utstyr-til-nord-makedonia-for-a-handtere-covid-19/id2723275/

The Short- and Longer-term Outlook for the Norwegian Defence Sector

It is too early to conclude, with any kind of confidence, the kind of impact the pandemic will have both narrowly on the Norwegian defence sector and more broadly on the international security environment. Despite this, we will assess below how the pandemic may come to influence the short- and longer-term outlook for the Norwegian defence sector.

There are already signs of a negative impact from the Covid-19 pandemic according to both the new long-term defence plan and the white paper on resilience.[21] "Covid-19 seems to have reinforced the negative trends in international security in some areas", the defence plan holds.[22] Notably, this includes worsening the already strained relations between the worlds' great powers and strengthening China's ambitions to consolidate its great power status.[23] Moreover, while the pandemic has highlighted the importance of international cooperation, the long-term plan holds that, at least initially, it also exposed weaknesses in the multilateral system as governments prioritised national ahead of international measures.[24] The pandemic has, furthermore, strengthened authoritarian governments and nationalism in many countries, a trend that might be further strengthened by the economic crisis unleashed by Covid-19. Finally, the crisis has exposed the vulnerability of societal cohesion through disinformation and cyber-attacks, highlighting, as noted

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21 All translations are by the authors, unless otherwise noted. Ministry of Justice and Preparedness, *Meld. St. 5 (2020-2021) Samfunnssikkerhet I en usikker verden,* 16 October 2020, available at https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/ba8d1c1470dd491f83c556e709b1cf06/no/pdfs/stm202020210005000dddpdfs.pdf.

22 Ministry of Defence, *Prop. 14 S (2020-2021) Evne til forsvar – vilje til beredskap,* 16 October 2020, p. 8; available at https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/81506a8900cc4f16bf805b936e3bb041/no/pdfs/prp202020210014000dddpdfs.pdf.

23 *Ibid*., p. 19, 35.

24 *Ibid*., p. 42-43.

above, the necessity of building resilience based on a comprehensive understanding of security. The government expects more EU-NATO cooperation in these areas.

The long-term defence plan emphasises the increased economic uncertainty caused by the pandemic. The budget proposal for 2021 includes a defence budget of NOK 64.4 billion (EUR 5.9 bn).[25] This represents a nominal increase over the 2020 budget of NOK 3.5 bn. or about 5.7% and an estimated real increase of NOK 2.5 bn. or about 4.1%.[26] This is in line with the proposed growth in the new long-term plan.[27] The plan calls for a real increase in the defence budget of 27.5% from 2020 to 2028. Thus, there is no Covid-19 impact on planned defence spending so far. While the defence forces' activity has been affected in 2020 and will likely also be in 2021, procurement programmes and a range of reforms are proceeding basically as planned.

Moreover, the overall impact of the crisis has, until now, been less severe than feared in the spring and the recovery, that began after the easing of restrictions in summer, more rapid than expected. In June 2020, Statistics Norway predicted an annual fall in real Norwegian GDP of 3.9%, and the IMF predicted a fall of 6.3% in August.[28] By autumn, these figures had improved. The government predicted a drop in GDP of 3.1 percent in 2020 in its budget pro-

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25 Note that this is not directly comparable to the amounts given in Figure 1, as Figure 1 denotes 2019-values and, just as importantly, is adjusted for a few technical issues that inflate the budget and accounts.

26 Ministry of Defence, *Prop. 1 S (2020 –2021) For budsjettåret 2021*, 21 September 2020, available at https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/5695ead7edfc43ebb03a581d75cfa674/no/pdfs/prp202020210001_fddddpdfs.pdf.

27 Ministry of Defence, *Prop. 62 S (2019 –2020) Vilje til beredskap – evne til forsvar Langtidsplan for forsvarssektoren,* 17 April 2020, available at https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b43ae5a187034670adc96a83fbf79651/no/pdfs/prp201920200062000dddpdfs.pdf.

28 Statistics Norway, "Konjunkturtendensene med nasjonalregnskap for april 2020", 5 June, 2020, p. 10, available at https://www.ssb.no/nasjonalregnskap-og-konjunkturer/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/423360?_ts=172e5774b20; International Monetary Fund, "Norway", https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/NOR (quoted figure from 9 August, 2020).

posal for 2021, and in October 2020, the IMF predicted a fall of only 2.8%.[29] The Norwegian government also projects a rapid post-Covid-19 recovery; according to the budget proposal for 2021, and the economy is expected to grow by 4.4% next year.

Despite this relatively strong optimism, uncertainty remains. As a small and open economy that is highly dependent on petroleum exports, the recovery of the Norwegian economy will, to a significant degree, be determined by the rate of the global recovery. Developments in the international petroleum market will be of particular importance as they are closely related to the value of the Norwegian crown. A significant share of the defence procurement budget, which will constitute nearly 30% of defence spending in the next few years, is exposed to exchange rate alterations. A sharp fall in the value of the NOK will, thus, have significant implications for the defence budget. This was evident in spring 2020, when the simultaneous impact of the Russian-Saudi oil price war and Covid-19 caused a sharp drop in petroleum prices. As a consequence, the NOK saw a 20 % fall in value against both the U.S. dollar and the Euro.[30] The Ministry of Defence reprioritised NOK 206 million (EUR 18.8 mil.) on the 2020 budget to meet the increased procurement costs. However, the recovery of the NOK-USD exchange rate to pre-crisis levels by summer alleviated most of this pressure. At the time of writing (end of October 2020), the NOK is about five percent weaker compared to both the USD and EUR than in 2019.

More generally, regardless of the outcome of the 2021 parliamentary elections, both the sitting and coming Norwegian governments will face strong pressure to rein in public finances. In

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29 Ministry of Finance, Meld. St. 1 (2020-2021) *Nasjonalbudsjettet* 2021, 25 September, 2020, p. 6, available at https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/53adf7ea24b54e4a961005443231fd08/no/pdfs/stm202020210001000dddpdfs.pdf. International Monetary Fund, "Norway", https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/NOR. (IMF data as of 26 October).

30 Norwegian (Central) Bank, "Valutakurser EUR", https://www.norges-bank.no/tema/Statistikk/Valutakurser/?tab=currency&id=EUR; Norwegian (Central) Bank, "Valutakurser USD",https://www.norges-bank.no/tema/Statistikk/Valutakurser/?tab=currency&id=USD

2020, Norwegian public spending is estimated to account for 66 % of GDP, representing a figure that "is very high, both in light of our own history and compared to other countries" according to the Ministry of Finance.[31] While the proposed budget for 2021 brings the projected share down to 61%, this is still higher than before the Covid-19 crisis when it was about 50%.[32] Thus, the government expects that its "room for manoeuvre" in financial policy will be "significantly smaller than we have been used to".[33] It is not definite that this will affect defence spending, but given the need to prioritise the dealing with more immediate consequences of a protracted Covid-19-related economic crisis, it seems unlikely that the defence sector will escape unscathed. The fact that Norwegian defence spending may reach the NATO 2%-guideline in 2020, and remain there if GDP fails to recover or falls further, will likely diminish pressure on the government to allocate resources to defence.

To sum up, it is too early to make conclusions about the kind of impact the Covid-19 crisis might have for the Norwegian defence sector. In the short term, that is, in the next couple of years, the impact seems likely to be limited. If the long-term defence plan and the 2021 budget are passed, as seems probable, the strengthening of the Norwegian defence sector is set to continue. Even if the economic situation in 2021 turns out less favourable than hoped for, and the 2022 defence budget suffers as a result, there will still be time to address this in the remaining two years of the plan. However, if the economic crisis ends up deeper and more long-lasting than expected, the longer-term prospects for the Norwegian defence sector are much bleaker.

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31 Ministry of Finance, *Meld. St. 1 (2020-2021)*, p. 10.

32 OECD, "General government spending", https://data.oecd.org/gga/general-government-spending.htm, accessed 28 October 2020.

33 Ministry of Finance, *Meld. St. 1 (2020-2021)*, p. 10.

This edited volume looks at the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on defence policy and the military in several European countries. Although doctors, rather than soldiers have been at the forefront of the battle against the coronavirus, military organizations have often been enlisted to take part in the effort to stop the virus. The military will also eventually be affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic. The study includes a separate chapter on the role of NATO during the pandemic, with subsequent individual chapters discussing developments in defence in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway.

From the editor´s foreword
Toms Rostoks

This book aims to identify the implications of the COVID crisis for the defence sectors in several European countries, with its geographical focus being on the Baltic Sea region.

This study makes some preliminary conclusions about the implications of the pandemic for defence, although it was written at a time when the pandemic had not yet come to an end. During the pandemic, the three primary aims of NATO and its member states were to retain readiness and credible deterrence, to limit the spread of the infection within the military, and to assist the civilian sector. Defence forces have largely succeeded in accomplishing these aims, albeit with a few exceptions. However, the way ahead for the countries included in this edited volume is less clear and is likely to be affected by a number of factors, such as the transformation of the defence sector prior to the pandemic, the assessment of the international security environment, and the economic consequences of the pandemic.