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### 1NC – ! – Baltics

#### NATO flirts with danger in the Baltics—the region lacks strategic assets and risks escalation with Russia

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Since the end of World War II, U.S. officials have had an unduly expansive concept of what constitutes worthwhile strategic allies for the United States. In too many cases, the “allies” that Washington touts are small, weak, often militarily useless dependents. Worse, some of them are on bad terms with more powerful neighboring states. Under those circumstances, the so‐​called allies are major liabilities rather than assets to the United States. Indeed, they are potential snares, ones that can entangle America in unnecessary military confrontations.

Washington would do well to become far more selective about which nations it includes in its roster of allies, and U.S. leaders should stop elevating security dependents to the status of allies. When U.S. officials described the regimes that Washington installed through military force in Afghanistan and Iraq as allies, it became clear that they had lost even minimal understanding of the concept. That point became abundantly evident when their Afghan client collapsed almost overnight in the face of the Taliban military offensive. It’s time for U.S. policymakers to do better.

TROUBLING PROMISCUITY about acquiring weak U.S. security partners was evident even during the Cold War, and the tendency has become even more pronounced in the post‐​Cold War era. As the fiasco in Afghanistan (and its ugly predecessor in South Vietnam) confirmed, that problem with U.S. foreign policy has existed in multiple regions. However, the defect has become most acute with respect to Washington’s campaign to expand NATO into Eastern Europe. Since the mid‐​1990s, U.S. administrations have worked to add a menagerie of new NATO members, and it has done so with even less selectivity and good judgment than some people use to acquire Facebook friends.

Many of America’s so‐​called allies are major liabilities rather than assets to U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, they are potential snares, ones that can entangle America in unnecessary military confrontations.

Many of those new members have very little to offer to the United States as security partners. Indeed, some are mini‐​states, bordering on being micro‐​states. Such lightly armed Lilliputians would add little or nothing to Washington’s own capabilities—especially in a showdown with another major power.

As economic assets, their importance is decidedly limited, and militarily, they are even less valuable. It’s hard to see how new NATO allies such as Albania, Slovenia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia enhance America’s power and security. That point should be apparent based on size of population alone. Albania’s 2.87 million, North Macedonia’s 2.1 million, and Slovenia’s 2.07 million people put those countries squarely in the mini‐​state category, while Montenegro’s 628,000 barely deserves even that label. It doesn’t get much better with respect to either annual gross domestic product or size of military forces. Even Slovenia’s $52.8 billion GDP puts that country only eighty‐​sixth in the global rankings. Albania’s $15.2 billion (125th), North Macedonia’s $12.26 billion (135th) and Montenegro’s $4.78 billion (159th) are even less impressive.

The military forces that our new NATO allies can field are not likely to strike fear into Russia or any other would‐​be aggressor. Albania’s armed forces consist of 8,500 active‐​duty personnel, Slovenia’s consist of 8,500, and North Macedonia has 9,000 available. Montenegro’s active‐​duty force totals 2,400. In comparison, the Austin, Texas, police department has 2,422 people in its ranks.

Granted, the Cold War edition of NATO also had some mini‐​states as members, most notably Luxembourg and Iceland. However, those members were located within a stable, democratic Western Europe. Their defense also was geographically inseparable from Washington’s mission of protecting important military and economic players, such as West Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Great Britain, from what appeared to be a totalitarian superpower with expansionist ambitions. That situation was qualitatively different from Washington’s gratuitous post‐​Cold War decision to manage the security of quarrelsome mini‐​states in the chronically volatile Balkans. Since the mid‐​1990s, the United States has entangled itself in the region’s parochial spats, but giving some of the countries NATO membership intensified America’s exposure to needless risks and burdens.

THE RISK-BENEFIT calculation is even worse with respect to some of the other small nations that have joined NATO in the post‐​Cold War era. Those partners are not merely irrelevant from the standpoint of U.S. security; they are potentially dangerous tripwires that could trigger a conflict between the United States and a nuclear‐​armed Russia.

That point underscores one very important difference between individuals casually amassing Facebook friends and the United States promiscuously adding new security mendicants. Facebook friends do not have the ability to entangle anyone in armed conflicts; irresponsible security dependents definitely can do so. Indeed, there are multiple examples throughout history of such clients snaring their patrons into devastating, unnecessary wars. One notable example was how Tsarist Russia’s fateful decision to give strong backing to Serbia in the latter’s escalating quarrel with Austria‐​Hungary following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand helped ignite World War I—and caused the utter ruin of the Russian empire.]

The United States is flirting with a similar danger today regarding its small clients in Eastern Europe. President George W. Bush’s decision to support the NATO membership bids of the three Baltic republics was—and remains—highly provocative to Russia. One crucial way to reduce the danger of armed clashes between great powers is to show mutual respect for respective spheres of influence. Washington has repeatedly violated that principle by pushing NATO to expand right up to Russia’s border.

The addition of the Baltic republics in 2004 was the most dangerous step in that process. As in the case of the subsequent addition of the small Balkan nations to NATO, the three Baltic countries have little to offer in terms of military capabilities. Estonia’s 6,700 troops, Latvia’s 5,500, and even Lithuania’s 20,500 wouldn’t be much of a factor if war broke out between NATO and Russia.

However, the drawbacks of making the Baltic republics U.S. security dependents go far beyond their irrelevance as military players. Those three countries were once part of both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, and substantial ethnic Russian minorities still live in both Estonia and Latvia. The Kremlin has complained on numerous occasions since the Baltic republics became independent at the end of 1991 that the Russian population suffers discrimination and other mistreatment. Indeed, that allegation emerged long before Russian president Vladimir Putin became Russia’s leader. Relations between the Kremlin and its former territories remain tense because of that issue.

Perhaps even more troubling, Washington’s Baltic allies now are feuding with Moscow’s principal client in the region, Belarus. In the summer and autumn of 2021, Latvia and Lithuania (along with the European Union) accused Belarus of trying to use a flood of Middle East refugees as a form of “hybrid warfare.” The Lithuanian government even told its border guards to use force if necessary to prevent the continued entry of the migrants. A short time later, Latvia imposed a state of emergency to deal with the same issue. A few weeks earlier, Lithuania had augmented its border barrier by erecting a fence with razor wire. Latvia soon followed suit. A new round of large‐​scale, Russia‐​Belarus military exercises (held every four years) in September made tensions even more acute.

By virtue of both size and location, the Baltic republics are not credible strategic assets for the United States. Indeed, they would be virtually helpless if Russia made a military move against them. A 2016 RAND Corporation study concluded that a Russian offensive would overrun their defenses in approximately three days. Such countries are not U.S. “allies” in any meaningful sense; they are vulnerable dependents that could trigger a war between NATO (primarily the United States) and Russia.

Washington’s patron‐​client relationship with the Baltic republics is risky, and U.S. leaders were unwise to push for their inclusion in NATO. However, beginning with George W. Bush’s administration, officials have engaged in even more reckless conduct regarding possible alliance membership for two other countries, Georgia and Ukraine. They have done so despite repeated warnings from the Kremlin that making either country (especially Ukraine) a NATO member would cross a red line that Moscow cannot tolerate.

BUSH CONDUCTED a veritable geopolitical love affair with both Georgia and Ukraine, portraying them as models for emerging democracies and repeatedly referring to them as U.S. allies in the most glowing terms. Only firm French and German opposition thwarted Bush’s lobbying effort to get NATO to grant Tbilisi and Kiev membership. Berlin and Paris were troubled by evidence of endemic political and economic corruption in both countries, but they were even more worried that further NATO expansion would create a crisis with Moscow. Their continued opposition has thus far prevented the addition of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO’s ranks, even as the alliance added multiple Balkan mini‐​states.

However, U.S. actions have increasingly made the issue of formal membership a distinction without a difference, and the outcomes indicate that even unwise informal security relations with client states can cause serious trouble. Bush encouraged Georgia to take a firmer stance against the continued presence of Russian “peacekeeping troops” in two breakaway regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In addition, the United States was busily equipping and training Georgian military forces. Georgia’s president, Mikheil Saakashvili, apparently read too much into Washington’s expressions of support. In August 2008, his forces launched an attack on Russian units in South Ossetia, and Moscow responded with a full‐​scale offensive that soon overran much of Georgia. When Saakashvili begged for U.S. and NATO help to repel the Russian “aggression,” Bush expressed firm support for Georgia’s sovereignty, but he also indicated that U.S. troops would not be coming to Tbilisi’s rescue. A U.S. client had tried to create a military confrontation between NATO and Russia for its own parochial goals, but it had misread Washington’s signals. Clumsy U.S. policy, though, was at least partly responsible for that dangerous episode.

Unfortunately, the actions of subsequent foreign policy teams with respect to Georgia, and even more so with respect to Ukraine, indicate that U.S. leaders learned nothing from the mistakes in 2008. Officials in both the Trump and Biden administrations have treated Kiev as a de facto NATO member and a crucial U.S. military ally. Trump’s administration approved multiple weapons shipments to Kiev, sales that included Javelin anti‐​tank missiles that Russia considers especially destabilizing. Such transactions have continued since Joe Biden entered the White House.

Worse, Washington’s security relationship with Kiev goes far beyond arms sales. Over the past five years, U.S. forces have conducted multiple joint exercises (war games) with Ukrainian units. Washington also has successfully pressed NATO to include Ukraine in the alliance’s war games. Indeed, Ukraine hosted and led the latest version, Rapid Trident 21. It is no secret that such exercises are directed against Russia. In early April 2021, Biden assured Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Washington’s“unwavering support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of Russia’s ongoing aggression.”

Such a pledge places the United States in a very dangerous situation. Kiev seeks to regain Crimea, which Russia annexed following U.S. and European Union backing for demonstrators who overthrew Ukraine’s elected, pro‐​Russian president in 2014. Indeed, Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian officials have expressed that intention repeatedly and in diverse settings. Kiev’s behavior also has become disturbingly bellicose. In early April 2021, both the Zelenskyy government and NATO complained loudly when Russia moved some 80,000 troops and heavy weaponry closer to Crimea and other areas along the border with Ukraine. What they did not mention, and most Western press accounts also ignored, was that Kiev had previously executed its own military buildup, amid statements of a determination to regain Crimea. In any case, an extremely tense confrontation between NATO and Russia ensued, which was not resolved until Russia pulled back its forces in late April.

Given the size of its territory and population, Ukraine is not in the same category as the Balkan and Baltic mini‐​states or Georgia. However, it has an even greater potential to entangle the United States and the rest of NATO in a perilous war. The April 2021 episode was a classic case of a security client behaving in ways that could trigger an armed conflict. For all of Kiev’s boasts about regaining Crimea, the outcome of a military clash between Russia and Ukraine would be a foregone conclusion. Ukraine would have no chance of prevailing without massive outside assistance. Even disregarding the crucial difference that Russia possesses a strategic and tactical nuclear arsenal, while Ukraine does not, Russia’s advantages in conventional forces are massive. Legislation that the Ukrainian parliament approved in July 2021 will increase Kiev’s armed forces to 261,000, but Russia fields more than 1 million active‐​duty personnel. Moreover, although U.S. aid has improved the quality of the hardware available to Ukraine, Russia’s troops are equipped with some of the most sophisticated weapons in the world.

U.S. leaders should be deeply concerned when a security dependent suffering from such quantitative and qualitative disadvantages makes empty boasts about retaking lost territory. It is even more worrisome when that client engages in provocative military gestures toward its powerful neighbor. That is precisely the way that a rogue dependent can entangle its great power protector in a disastrous war. U.S. leaders should want no part of such a risky patron‐​client relationship.

THE TEST of whether a specific country is a worthwhile U.S. ally or a useless, perhaps dangerous, dependent should not be terribly difficult. A key question that must be asked is: Does that country substantially add to America’s own economic and military capabilities without creating significant new dangers or vulnerabilities? Only if that question can be answered with an unequivocal “yes,” should the country be considered a beneficial ally. Otherwise, it is either a useless or (even worse) a dangerous security client. U.S. leaders badly need to learn the difference. As a result of NATO’s expanded membership and mission, the United States has acquired a worrisome number of both types.

#### Even with US military personnel, deterring regional insecurity in the Baltics isn’t possible.

Lucas, 2-2 (Edward Lucas, 2-2-22, on resident fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis, “NATO Is Dangerously Exposed in the Baltic,” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/02/nato-baltic-states-sea-russia-military-defense/>mahimahi)

Nowhere is the credibility of the United States and its allies at greater risk than in the Baltic Sea region. NATO’s [Article 5](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm) pledges the alliance to defend its members. Doing that for the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—three thinly populated states squeezed between Russia, Belarus, and the Baltic Sea—is hard. Years of cost-cutting, timidity, and wishful thinking by NATO governments make it harder.

As the Russian military buildup around Ukraine raises fears of a broader East-West security crisis, NATO allies are hastening to bolster the Baltic states’ defenses while non-NATO members [Sweden and Finland](https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/05/finland-sweden-nato-russia-putin/) are tightening their ties with the alliance. In late January, U.S. Air Force F-15 fighters [arrived](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-nato-military-moves-send-message-russia-ukraine/story?id=82462943) in Estonia as part of a wide-ranging reassurance effort. At bases elsewhere in Europe and the United States, 8,500 U.S. military personnel are on heightened alert, ready to deploy to the region as part of NATO’s 40,000-strong Response Force.

These moves, though desirable, are belated and insufficient. Regional security in the Baltic Sea has been a problem for much longer than the current standoff with Russia. Solving this requires more than a one-off, reactive deployment. With Ben Hodges, a former U.S. Army commander in Europe and now my colleague at the Center for European Policy Analysis, I have spent the past year deep in the weeds, looking at the problems of Baltic Sea regional security and how to fix them.

### 2NC – ! – Baltics

#### The Baltic states cannot provide the US a beneficial geopolitical relationship—the security commitments of NATO have grown to an extent where withdrawal for the US is the most strategically valuable

Matthew Mai, 21; 07/19/2021, B.S. in Public Policy from Rutgers University, Marcellus Policy Fellow at the John Quincy Adams Society, and Associate Editor at the Nation Interest; “The Baltic States: Assets or Liabilities?” https://realistreview.org/2021/07/19/the-baltic-states-assets-or-liabilities//ekc

President Biden has pledged to put America “back at the head of the table” by restoring confidence in the NATO alliance. Yet, regardless of the current attitude in the White House, the United States’ defense commitments to countries on the European periphery need a serious re-examination.

Specifically, what does the United States gain by pledging to defend the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania?

The geopolitical integrity of NATO rests on the assumption that its members are, out of calculated self-interest, committed and able to help defend every country within the alliance.

However, if Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania are unable to provide the transactional value that the United States does for them through its robust military and economic power, this would undermine the rationale for guaranteed reciprocity in security and defense.

There are three criteria for assessing how other countries might improve the security of the United States. First, can the country in question aid the United States in a decisive manner if the US were attacked by another great power? Second, does it help preserve the balance of power in a region of critical interest to the United States? Third, does it provide economic value that, if lost, would dramatically weaken the foundations of American national power?

If the answer to all three of these questions is “no”, then a geopolitical relationship based on guaranteed reciprocity in security and defense is much more likely to be a liability than an asset.

At present, there are only three countries that undoubtedly qualify as great powers: China, Russia, and the United States. Not only are they the three largest countries in the world but, in relative terms, each maintains formidable military capabilities reinforced by large nuclear weapons arsenals. The United States and China enjoy the additional advantage of having the two largest economies in the world while retaining significant latent power capabilities with large national populations.

If the United States were attacked by either of these countries, neither Estonia nor Latvia nor Lithuania could provide decisive military or economic support. None have nuclear weapons and their national GDP’s are only $31 billion, $35 billion, and $54 billion, respectively.

Ironically, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were three of the nine countries that met NATO’s defense spending requirements in 2020 and each has punched above their weight in contributing troops to the NATO missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet, in total, they have less than 50,000 active-duty armed forces personnel and the combined size of their national populations is less than 7 million.

A great power war between the United States, China, or Russia is unlikely to take place without the use of strategic nuclear weapons. However, even in the event of a limited conflict outside of American, Chinese, or Russian territory, the Baltic states would not be able to effectively mobilize enough forces to tip the balance in the United States’ favor.

Given their geographical, economic, and military disadvantages, the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian militaries have a primarily defensive force structure. Notwithstanding their NATO support missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, their forces would be unable to undertake sustained offensive operations in foreign territory as a defeat would likely leave their homeland defenseless.

Therefore, it follows that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are also not key to preserving the balance of power in Europe. The foundations of European geopolitical strength largely rest upon the militaries and economies of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Italy. Additionally, the United Kingdom and France are both nuclear weapons states with the former possessing sea delivery capabilities and the latter possessing both air and sea delivery capabilities.

In the Baltic region specifically, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are less important in determining the balance of power than the larger and much wealthier countries of Poland, Germany, Sweden, and Finland.

For Russia, taking control of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania would not dramatically alter its strategic position. It already has access to the Baltic Sea from bases in the Kaliningrad (a small piece of territory which lies between Lithuania and Poland) and Leningrad oblasts.

The costs of occupying any or all these countries would outweigh any marginal gains in increased access to the Baltic Sea or material resources. Annexation of the Baltic states would raise already-high threat perceptions in neighboring countries such as Poland and Sweden and could provide the pretext for an increased American footprint in the region in the name of supporting its NATO allies. Consequently, it would fuel a costly and risky self-perpetuating cycle of regional force buildups and maneuvers that would needlessly aggravate tensions between Washington and Moscow.

Finally, when compared with the hundreds of billions of dollars in trade the United States does bilaterally with countries such as China, Mexico, and Germany, America’s commercial relationship with the Baltic states is relatively insignificant.

In 2020, American trade with the Baltic states was less than $4 billion while trade with Germany alone was over $150 billion. Neither are the goods and services exchanged especially remarkable. Exports and imports between the United States and Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania primarily consists of electronics and computer equipment, chemicals, liquor and alcohol, and miscellaneous industrial products.

A significant reduction in any of these imports would not impact the foundations of American economic or military power in any meaningful way. Likewise, for the Baltic states, their largest trading relationships are with neighboring countries in the European Union and not the United States.

Given this analysis, it is worth considering if it would be prudent for the United States to withdraw from NATO altogether.

Regardless of NATO’s treaty obligations, there is no strategic value in fighting a war on Russia’s border to defend three countries that contribute virtually nothing to U.S. national security. If Article Five were invoked, American policymakers would be at a loss to justify an all costs-no benefits military intervention.

By this measure, an American withdrawal from NATO could end up strengthening the integrity of the alliance by making countries who have a greater interest in the alignment of the Baltic states, such as Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Finland, primarily responsible for the region’s security.

Ironically, the Baltic states are more committed to NATO than their larger and wealthier allies to the west as evidenced by their higher levels of defense spending and troop deployments to the Middle East.

However, their commitment to strengthening the integrity of the alliance does not match their ability to defend its most important member. In joining NATO, they correctly calculated that the United States would contribute more to their security than they would in return.

#### NATO military engagement escalates tensions with Russia and the Baltics—the US is not willing or capable to provide necessary forces.

Kuhn, 18 (Ulrich Kuh, 3-28-18, nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the head of the arms control and emerging technologies program at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, “Preventing Escalation in the Baltics,” <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/03/28/consequences-for-nato-pub-75881>//mahimahi)

If NATO wants to deny Russia the ability to successfully attack one or more Baltic states, it has little choice but to deploy forces on a much larger scale than it currently does.

While such measures might mitigate the short-term risk of deliberate Russian escalation, they would create a number of severe political trade-offs. First, a deterrence-by-denial approach would risk overstretching the delicate political consensus among NATO members about conventional deterrence and assurance. A number of member states, perhaps led by Germany and France, would not support such a policy and would seek to block it. Even more importantly, perhaps, not even the Baltic states are supportive of such a maximalist approach. While many Baltic officials and experts would like to see greater U.S. military engagement in the region, some of them are highly skeptical of the assumptions underlying the RAND war games and think that they are too pessimistic about Baltic defenses. While they would like to see a strong, unified allied response to the growing threat from Russia, they also recognize the need to avoid unnecessarily escalating general tensions with Russia.2 Also, against the background of often contentious debates within NATO about financial and military burden sharing, it would not be clear at all who would provide the necessary funds and forces for such a large military footprint. Neither the United States nor most other allies currently seem to be both willing and capable.

Second, instead of preventing deliberate Russian escalation this deterrence-by-denial approach could, in fact, reinforce Russian perceptions of insecurity. Russia would be loath to accept a NATO force that size so close to its borders. Moscow might seek to prevent NATO force deployments through various means, including, not inconceivably, by considering the preventive use of force (that is, Russia might wage a war because it could only see its position deteriorating in the future). This risk might become more acute in the early stages of a crisis when Russia could misinterpret the large-scale movement of sizable forces, such as the 70,000 personnel reinforcement the RAND study suggested, as NATO preparations for a preemptive attack on Russia. Third, large-scale conventional deployments could help further solidify Russian reliance on its nuclear deterrent and could even serve to lower Russia’s threshold for nuclear use, making the early employment of nuclear weapons more likely.

### 1NC – ! – Enlargement Bad

#### NATO enlargement has opened the door to military risks – US engagement is counterproductive because they will either overestimate or understimate risks.

Kuhn, 18 (Ulrich Kuh, 3-28-18, nonresident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the head of the arms control and emerging technologies program at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, “Preventing Escalation in the Baltics,” <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/03/28/consequences-for-nato-pub-75881>//mahimahi)

For the past twenty years, as NATO has mostly pursued an open door policy toward Central and Eastern Europe, the alliance has grown by integrating former members of the Warsaw Pact, nonmembers who were previously friendly with the Soviet Union, and three former Soviet republics (the three Baltic states). The principles underlying enlargement are that new member states must choose freely to join NATO, that they fulfill a number of political and military criteria (such as having settled any ethnic or external territorial disputes, as well as being able to contribute militarily and financially to collective defense), and that their accession strengthens the alliance.1 In addition, NATO has fostered close cooperative ties with all other former Soviet republics and continues to champion their political independence. At the same time, NATO has engaged Russia to try to alleviate Moscow’s concerns about NATO enlargement and to pursue cooperation in areas of common security interest, such as mutual military risk reduction and counterterrorism. NATO insists that it does not seek conflict with Russia.2

NATO members have sometimes disagreed about which elements of this approach to prioritize; at times, fractures between different national positions have become very visible. For example, at NATO’s 2008 Bucharest Summit, the United States and some other allies pushed for Georgia and Ukraine to become members, directly challenging a core Russian interest. But France and Germany blocked this proposed accession, partly because they were concerned about Russia’s likely negative reaction and partly because they questioned the fitness of these states to join NATO and their potential to strengthen the alliance.3

Russia’s occupation of Crimea and subsequent deterioration in relations with NATO has again pushed the task of collective defense to the fore.4 At its 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO allies underscored that Moscow is now considered to be a “challenge [to] the Alliance” and “a source of regional instability.”5 To meet this challenge, NATO agreed first and foremost to assure its easternmost allies and to enhance its means of deterring and defending against Russia. But allies also recognized the need to increase the resilience of all members and to seek dialogue with Russia.

GENERAL UNCERTAINTY

For NATO, the Russian challenge presents multiple uncertainties, which exacerbate the potential for disagreement. For starters, NATO members have different views of Moscow’s intentions in the post-Soviet space and toward the alliance. Some officials from certain members—including the three Baltic states, Poland, and the United States—have repeatedly claimed that the Kremlin is “revanchist,” in the sense that it purportedly wants to redraw the map of Europe.6 They argue that Russia’s aggressive actions in Ukraine demonstrate Moscow’s willingness to use force in the former Soviet republics. They fear that Moscow could even use military force against the alliance, particularly the Baltic states. At a minimum, they see Russia as a challenger of the status quo—a view diametrically opposed to Moscow’s view of itself.

For NATO, the Russian challenge presents multiple uncertainties, which exacerbate the potential for disagreement.

In addition, the states that see Russia as revanchist are mindful of Russian domestic politics and how these forces interact with the tensions with NATO. According to a popular—and probably correct—theory, Putin, confronted with an ailing Russian economy, to some extent may need the friction with NATO, and particularly with Washington, to hold on to power.7 According to this theory, Putin’s efforts to foster nationalistic support to divert attention from Russia’s deep-seated domestic problems could even force him to militarily test the alliance one day.

Other NATO members—such as France, Germany, and Italy—seem rather skeptical that Moscow presents an immediate military threat to NATO and question the plausibility of Russia waging war against the world’s most powerful military alliance.8 Some former officials and analysts from these countries agree with the Kremlin’s view that NATO has moved too far east and understand how Russia could perceive NATO enlargement as a threat.9

This general disagreement about current and projected Russian intentions and interests is important because it exacerbates the potential for escalation for two quite different reasons. First, if NATO underestimates the threat from Russia, that may give Moscow reason to test the alliance’s resolve—maybe even by escalating to the use of military force against NATO’s weakest link, the Baltic states. In this case, an incorrect threat assessment by NATO could invite Moscow to deliberately escalate the already simmering general tensions with NATO and go a significant step further, perhaps by invading one of the Baltic states. Second, and conversely, if NATO overestimates the threat from Russia, its well-intentioned defensive measures may reinforce legitimate, as well as imagined, Russian security concerns. In this case, misreading the threat could lead NATO to create additional pressure on Moscow to up the ante, which could lead to both arms races and increased tensions—making escalation more likely. These two potential risks—of NATO doing too little and doing too much—create very specific escalation risks in the Baltic region, in both the conventional and nuclear realms.

THE RISKS OF CONVENTIONAL ESCALATION

The regional imbalance between NATO’s and Russia’s conventional forces, NATO’s own deterrence loopholes, and the geography of the Baltics all make both deliberate and inadvertent escalation possible. Although NATO as a whole has much greater conventional military capabilities than Russia, Moscow enjoys a significant margin of conventional superiority in the wider Baltic region (see map). Russia has been heavily funding and modernizing its aging armed forces over the last decade, making them a credible force again. In addition, Moscow continues to expand its arsenal of long-range cruise missiles and other precision-guided munitions.

### 1NC – ! – France

#### France wants autonomy in NATO now

Pannier, 2-4 (Alice Pannier, 2-4-22, assistant professor of European studies and international relations at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, [https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/how-to-keep-france-engaged-in-nato///mahimahi )](https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/how-to-keep-france-engaged-in-nato///mahimahi%20))

Secondly, the quality of French-US relations (and thus French-NATO relations) depends on the Biden Administration’s attitude towards European defence efforts. President Emmanuel Macron’s view of the articulation between NATO and European defence is –in line with previous French Presidents– as follows: “our security also inevitably requires that Europeans have a greater capacity for autonomous action. […] Europeans must now take greater responsibility for this European defence, this European pillar within NATO. […]. NATO and European Defence are two pillars of European collective security” (Macron, 2020).[[1]](https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/how-to-keep-france-engaged-in-nato/#_ftn1) Macron managed to get out of the AUKUS crisis in September 2021 with a recognition, from his counterpart ‘[of the importance of European defence for transatlantic security and that of Europe](mailto:https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2021/11/19/jean-yves-le-drian-nos-concurrents-n-ont-ni-tabous-ni-limites_6102656_3210.html)’. While seemingly symbolic, such declarations could mark a shift after 30 years of US Administrations that warned against ‘duplication’ rather than welcoming European initiatives to develop defence capabilities. Seen from Paris, further US insistence will be needed to convince Europe to fully invest in its capabilities and in the tools developed by the EU and thus to strengthen NATO’s European pillar.

#### US withdrawal from NATO incentivizes European defense spending and military developments – otherwise continued freeriding which undermines democracy

Eland, 19 (Ivan Eland, 1-18-19, “NATO May Help Putin, but It Will Help Americans More,” Senior Fellow at the Independent Institute and Director of the Independent Institute's [Center on Peace & Liberty](https://www.independent.org/centers/copal/), <https://www.independent.org/news/article.asp?id=11688>//mahimahi)

Even if this were true—as it may be—the time has come to reassess whether the U.S. needs to stay in an outdated alliance that was designed to deter the Soviet Union from an attack on Western Europe during the Cold War, which ended more than a quarter century ago. In fact, once the Soviet Union fell in 1991, the United States should have turned NATO over to the by-then rich Europeans to deter a much-diminished Russia. It was no longer 1949, when the Soviets still had a massive tank army in central Europe, and most of Western Europe was in rubble from World War II.

Despite today’s hype of a resurgent Russian threat, Russia still has a GDP roughly equivalent to Spain. In contrast, the Europeans combined have a GDP greater than the United States. However, Trump is correct that the wealthy Europeans are free riders on massive and excessive U.S. defense spending. For example, the mighty German economy only spends one percent of GDP on defense. And despite establishment analysts perennially noting that the only time NATO’s Article V mutual defense clause has been invoked was after the Cold War ended in response to the 9/11 attacks against the United States, European efforts in Afghanistan have been mostly window dressing, and in any major war, the United States would be defending Europe and not vice versa.

For most of American history, the country followed the prescription of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson to avoid “permanent” and “entangling” alliances, respectively. Only after World War II did the United States go wild in policing the world via Pax Americana, with NATO being one of the first permanent alliances established, which has now turned into an entangling end in itself. Washington and Jefferson realized that the United States had geographical advantages that other countries could only dream about—two huge ocean moats separating it from the world’s usual zones of conflict—and thus had the luxury of using only temporary alliances to enhance its security.

In contrast, historically, Russia has had very poor intrinsic security; because of bad geography and topography on its western flank, it has been invaded many times—by, for example, Poland, Sweden, France, and Germany—the last of which resulted in 25 million dead Russians at the hands of Adolf Hitler. Two primary reasons exist for the failure of post-Cold War democracy in Russia and the rise of the now autocratic Putin: 1) given Russia’s precarious security situation, it may be impossible for a stable democracy to take root there; and 2) the eastward expansion to Russia’s borders of NATO, an alliance hostile to Russia (think about what the U.S. reaction would be to Russia forming an alliance with Mexico), after promising Russia that it would not happen, contributed to the historically aware country’s attraction to an ex-KGB authoritarian ruler.

Putin is certainly no gem, meddling in the U.S. election, stealing Crimea from Ukraine by armed force, and surreptitiously invading eastern Ukraine; but Ukraine is very important within Russia’s security buffer. Although Presidents Barack Obama and Trump both should have taken stiffer action in response to Putin’s election meddling to deter future interference, that has little to do with whether the United States still needs to formally pledge to defend affluent European nations against a second-rate conventional power, such as Russia. Even in the nuclear weapons area, in which Russia is still a superpower, the British and French nuclear forces provide a deterrent against a conventional or nuclear attack by Russia on Europe.

In a post-Cold War world—with the rise of China and $150 trillion in unfunded American liabilities (Social Security, Medicare, and federal and state pensions), including a $22 trillion U.S. national debt—the Europeans need to take over the burden of their own defense so that the U.S. can focus on more important things, such as its own prosperity and thus security. This change would entail the U.S. withdrawing from NATO but potentially acting as an informal balancer of last resort only in the unlikely event, given the aforementioned wealth disparity, that the balance of power between Russia and Western Europe got out of whack.

Despite the histrionics from establishment pundits and even President Trump’s potentially suspect motives, the best U.S. policy is to withdraw from NATO, even if it helps the nefarious Putin in the short term. In the long term, the move will enhance both U.S. and European security by making American policy more independent and the Europeans more self-reliant.

#### Democracy solves extinction

Carla Zoe Cremer & Luke Kemp 21, The Future of Humanity Institute, Oxford. Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, Cambridge. "Democratising Risk: In Search of a Methodology to Study Existential Risk" <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/2201/2201.11214.pdf> //pipk

There is an intimate and neglected relationship between existential risk and democracy. Democracy must be central to efforts to prevent and mitigate catastrophic risks. It is also an antidote to many of the problems manifest in the TUA. Do those who study the future of humanity have good grounds to ignore the visions, desires, and values of the very people whose future they are trying to protect? Choosing which risks to take must be a democratic endeavour.

We understand democracy here in accordance with Landemore as the rule of the cognitively diverse many who are entitled to equal decision-making power and partake in a democratic procedure that includes both a deliberative element and one of preference aggregation (such as majority voting)45,115. Decision-making procedures are not either democratic or non- democratic, but instead lie on a spectrum. They can be more or less democratic, inclusive, and diverse.

We posit three reasons for why we should democratise research and decision-making in existential risk: the nature of collective decision-making about human futures, the superiority of democratic reason, and democratic fail-safe mechanisms.

Avoiding human extinction, or crafting a desirable long-term future, is a communal project. Scholars of existential risk who take an interest in the future of Homo sapiens are choosing to consider the species in its entirety. If certain views are excluded, the arguments for doing so must be compelling.

Democracy will improve our judgments in both the governance and the study of existential risks. Asking how our actions today influence the long-term future is one of the most difficult intellectual tasks to unravel, and if there is a right path, democratic procedures will have the best shot at finding it. Hong and Page116,117 demonstrate both theoretically and computationally that a diverse group of problem-solving agents will show greater accuracy than a less diverse group, even if the individual members of the diverse group were each less accurate. Accuracy gains from diversity trump gains from improving individual accuracy. Landemore115, builds on this work to advance a probabilistic argument that inclusive democracies will, in expectation, make epistemically superior choices to oligarchies or even the wise few. This is supported by promising results in inclusive, deliberative democratic experiments from around the world 118. In the long run, democracies should commit fewer mistakes than alternative decision-making procedures. If this is true, it should improve the accuracy of research efforts and decision-making. We are more likely to make accurate predictions about the mechanisms of extinction, probable futures, and risk prevention if the field invites cognitive diversity, builds flat institutional structures, and avoids conflicts of interest.

Thereare many ways to consider the interests of the many. Democratic assemblies could allow global citizens to deliberate about the futures they prefer, citizens could be surveyed, and the field of ERS itself could be diversified. At the moment, the field is, as many academic disciplines are, unrepresentative of humanity at large and variably homogenous in respect to income, class, ideology, age, ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, and professional background. The latter issue is particularly true of existential risk, which, despite being an inherently interdisciplinary endeavour, is at the highest levels dominated by analytic moral philosophers. We need to be vigilant to what perspectives are not represented in the study of existential risk. An awareness of bias will go some way towards mitigating its negative effects. To get close to replicating the cognitive diversity found among humans, we must begin by inviting different thinkers with different values and beliefs into the field.

Democracies can limit harms. Any approach to mitigating existential threats could create response risks, and the TUA seems particularly vulnerable to this. Despite good intentions and curiosity-driven research, it could justify violence, dangerous technological developments, or drastically constrain freedom in favour of (perceived) security. If we hope to explore ideas but minimise harms, democracies can be used to moderate the measures taken in response to harmful ideas. It seems, for example, vanishingly unlikely that a diverse group of thinkers or even ordinary citizens would entertain the idea of sacrificing 1 billion living, breathing beings for an infinitesimal improvement in reaching an intergalactic techno-utopia. In contrast, the TUA could recommend this trade-off.

The democratic constraint of extreme measures may simply be a form of collective selfinterest. Voters are unlikely to tolerate global catastrophic risks (GCRs), which incur the death of a sizeable portion of the electorate, if they know they themselves could be affected. We expect that scholars who do not support sacrificing current lives in the name of abstract calculations, but would still like to explore the use of expected value theory in existential risk, will be in support of democratic fail-safe mechanisms.

Empirically, this fail-safe mechanism seems to work. Even deeply imperfect democracies, like the ones we inhabit now, often avert detrimental outcomes. Democracies prevent famines 119 (although not malnutrition)120. They make war — a significant driver of GCRs — less likely 121. The inclusion of diverse preferences in democracies, such as those achieved through women’s suffrage, further decreases the likelihood of violent conflict 122. Citizens often show a significant risk aversion in comparison to their government. While surveys are notoriously difficult to collect and interpret, existing data suggest that the public has little support for nuclear weapons use 123–125, but strong support for action against climate catastrophe 126–128. We can further show that when citizens deliberately engage with the subject at hand, their concern and readiness for action often increases 118. For example, citizen assemblies on climate change have recommended widespread policy-changes across sectors, amendments to incentive structures and laws against ecocide to reach emissions targets 129. Indeed, many lament that when it comes to genetically modified organisms and nuclear power, citizens are far too riskaverse130 . The problem is not that the public is riddled with cognitive biases that make them unconcerned about global catastrophes.

Democratic debate cannot be an afterthought. Navigating humanity through crises will involve many value-laden decisions under deep uncertainty. Democratic procedures can deal with such hard choices. Greater cognitive diversity should be represented amongst scholars of ERS. Recommendations on policies that would reduce risk should be passed through deliberative assemblies and await the approval of a wider pool of ordinary citizens, as they will be the ones who will bear this risk. A homogenous group of experts attempting to directly influence powerful decision-makers is not a fair or safe way of traversing the precipice.

### 2NC – ! – France

#### US must withdraw – France is pissed over Submarine withdrawal – if not France withdraws from NATO

Shuo, 21 (Wang Shuo, 9-23-21, contributor to Global Times, “Will France play ‘NATO withdrawal’ card after being stabbed in the back by US”, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202109/1234928.shtml>//mahimahi)

Washington has once again stabbed its allies in the back after the troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. This time, the victim is France.  
  
Last week, the US, Australia and the UK formed a trilateral security partnership, known as AUKUS. Meanwhile, it urged Australia to break its submarine deal with France by offering US nuclear power technology. As French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said in an interview Saturday, there is a "serious crisis" between the allies which will affect NATO's future. Le Drian's remarks triggered a heated debate: Will France break up with NATO after being stabbed in the back by the US?  
  
France has lost a contract worth 31 billion euros ($36.5 billion) and, more importantly, its face. France has always boasted about its global influence, especially in the Indo-Pacific region, in recent years. With a total of 8,000 French soldiers stationed in the region, it has the biggest military presence among Western countries after the US. France has also been participating in a series of US-led military exercises there.  
  
But Washington unexpectedly snatched Paris's submarine deal. Besides, it has left Paris in the dark when forming a new security alliance with London and Canberra that focuses on the Indo-Pacific region. Paris might now feel that the US doesn't take its oldest ally seriously.  
  
The impact of this incident will spill over into next year's French presidential election. After four years in office, President Emmanuel Macron now faces difficulties in fulfilling most of his promises to the voters. Only his achievements in foreign policy are somewhat recognized by the French public. But just as the presidential election approaches in France, what the US has done overturned it all.  
  
Even so, the Macron administration still acts cautiously. First, France's dissatisfaction was expressed by Le Drian with a non-diplomatic tone and language. It leaves room for the future. Second, France canceled Washington's reception, toned down celebrations of the US-French Revolutionary War victory, and recalled its ambassadors to Washington and Canberra. Third, France has been seeking EU support in this case, turning the controversy between Paris and Washington into an issue over transatlantic ties. It is a tactic to increase France's own leverage and to prevent the scenario of fighting alone. In the end, France sent out a signal, whether by accident or on purpose, that it may pull out of NATO.   
  
Yet only a few politicians in France, such as far-left Jean-Luc Mélenchon, have raised serious voices to call their country to withdraw from NATO. Paris' official attitude over the case is so far vague. This is undoubtedly an important "card" in Macron's hand. The Biden administration is paying great efforts to gang up with allies against China. So this is not good news for the US.   
  
According to CNBC, US President Joe Biden on Sunday requested a call with Macron. On Wednesday, Biden and Macron made their first call after the diplomatic crisis exploded over the AUSUS deal. Macron agreed to return his ambassador to Washington. It seems that both sides are trying to deal with the crisis.   
  
But still, in theory, France's "withdrawal" from NATO is not an illusion. France has always pursued independence in defense and has a history of warning to withdraw from NATO. There is no psychological barrier for the country to break up with the bloc again. On the other hand, Macron has repeatedly expressed his disappointment with NATO. He even once described NATO as being "brain dead."

#### US presence causes France to feel emboldened— strains relations

Pannier, 2-4 (Alice Pannier, 2-4-22, assistant professor of European studies and international relations at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, [https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/how-to-keep-france-engaged-in-nato///mahimahi )](https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/how-to-keep-france-engaged-in-nato///mahimahi%20))

Thirdly, a key element in the quality of French-NATO relations will be the degree of convergence on the new threat landscape, and the respective roles attributed to NATO, individual states and the EU in addressing these threats. When looking at security challenges that France is concerned with (Russia and China’s aggressive foreign policies, hybrid and emerging security threats, terrorism or instability in the Middle East and Africa), French decision-makers see a role for NATO, albeit a limited one, complementing European and national efforts.

Close to Europe, France has supported NATO’s renewed investment in collective defence after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of Eastern Ukraine. France has taken part in NATO’s enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) and welcomes NATO’s ability to design a ‘balanced, deterrent and predictable posture’ in Eastern Europe (Ministère des Armées, 2017, p. 23). At the same time, Emmanuel Macron has been viewed by some NATO partners as ambiguous as he has, simultaneously, advocated a renewed dialogue with Russia so as to avoid further misunderstandings.

When it comes to threats and instability south of Europe, which do matter to France, France has been reluctant about the idea of a significant NATO engagement. Despite supporting a NATO ‘360’ approach, French leaders have favoured coalitions or the EU, rather than NATO, to act in Europe’s southern neighbourhood. NATO’s role has nonetheless been welcomed for naval operations in the Mediterranean or in the Gulf of Aden.

#### French withdrawal creates instability within NATO and decks Europe unity – empirics prove

Blakemore, 2-9 (Erin Blakemore, 2-9-22, journalist and contributor to History.com, “When France Pulled the Plug on a Crucial Part of NATO,” <https://www.history.com/news/france-nato-withdrawal-charles-de-gaulle//mahimahi>)

Over the years, France had come into conflict with nearly all of its NATO allies, especially the United States and Britain. Though all three countries had founded the steering group from which NATO was born, France had soon fallen out of the driver’s seat. French president Charles de Gaulle still resented what he saw as the United States’ abandonment during the 1956 [Suez Crisis](https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/suez-crisis), when the U.S. effectively forced France to withdraw its forces from the area around the Suez Canal during a conflict over its nationalization by Egypt. And he [valued](https://www.nytimes.com/1964/05/03/archives/de-gaulle-and-nato-his-challenge-to-the-alliance-poses-large.html) French military independence—something he felt could never be achieved within the context of the alliance.

Frustration mounted even more when de Gaulle [suggested](https://www.cvce.eu/en/recherche/unit-content/-/unit/02bb76df-d066-4c08-a58a-d4686a3e68ff/c4bbe3c4-b6d7-406d-bb2b-607dbdf37207) that France, the United States and Britain be put on equal footing within NATO in terms of nuclear strategy. The proposal failed, and as a result de Gaulle began [slowly](https://books.google.com/books?id=tcicr6TrwjUC&lpg=PA93&ots=qxCaygXk-E&dq=tripartite%2520directorate%2520de%2520gaulle&pg=PA93#v=onepage&q=gradually%2520diminished&f=false) reducing French participation in NATO. He [withdrew](https://www.cvce.eu/en/recherche/unit-content/-/unit/02bb76df-d066-4c08-a58a-d4686a3e68ff/c4bbe3c4-b6d7-406d-bb2b-607dbdf37207) France from the Mediterranean fleet and refused to store nuclear weapons from other countries on French soil.

The situation reached a boiling point by 1963, when the U.S. and France clashed over a plan to have NATO nations man a North Atlantic nuclear fleet. De Gaulle and his military had planned their own North Atlantic nuclear fleet, and withdrew France’s participation as a result. Then, in 1966, de Gaulle struck a final blow. He [announced](https://iht-retrospective.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/02/22/1966-france-finished-with-nato/) that he was withdrawing France from the integrated military structure and that all foreign forces had to leave France.

It was the first major crisis faced by the alliance, and it shook member nations deeply. On both sides of the Atlantic, politicians and pundits mused on the best way to proceed forward. President Johnson castigated De Gaulle in a strongly written [letter](https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/f85d2acd-3287-458e-9486-18a94773a09f/publishable_en.pdf); Dwight Eisenhower [proposed](https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1965/09/20/290272042.html?pageNumber=4) that NATO appoint a French commander. For The New York Times’ editorial board, there was only one solution: for the U.S. to stand down. “Bonn and London, in turn, must make it clear to Washington that continued American predominance cannot save NATO, but only destroy it,” they [wrote](https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1966/03/20/356110112.html?pageNumber=220). “The Atlantic alliance can only be restored in one way, through restoring the unity of Europe.”