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The Ukraine Crisis: A Comparison of Three European Countries'
Responses to an International Crisis

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The Ukraine Crisis

Background and Synopsis

In February, 2010, Viktor Yanukovych was announced the president of Ukraine, ousting his rival, Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who was eventually arrested for abuse of powers and jailed in October, 2011[i]. Three years and nine months after his election, on November 21, 2013, Yanukovych sparked protests throughout his country when he and his cabinet chose to abandon a promised and much anticipated agreement on closer trade ties with the European Union. Instead, he expressed a desire to seek closer cooperation with Russian president Vladimir Putin[ii].

Russia and Ukraine "have been intertwined for over 1,000 years of tumultuous history"[iii], the most memorable of that tumult being the incorporation of Ukraine into the Soviet Union in 1922. When Ukrainian peasants demonstrated resistance to Soviet Russia by refusing to join collective farms, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin called for mass executions and the creation of a famine that killed up to 10 million Ukrainians[iv]. Shortly thereafter, Stalin brought millions of Soviet citizens to Ukraine in order to repopulate the east, rich with both iron-ore and coal. In total, about one sixth of the Ukrainian population died during World War II (at least 5.3 million citizens), and tens of thousands of Ukrainians were deported by Stalin to Siberian prison camps at the end of the war, with thousands more being executed, both for cooperating with the Nazis, allegedly[v].

According to former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Steven Pifer, this history, specifically the mass migration of Soviet citizens to east Ukraine, explains why "the sense of Ukrainian nationalism is not as deep in the east as it is in the west." According to a 2001 census, 68.8 percent of Ukrainians reported that they identified as Russian and/or considered Russian to be their first

language in the Luhansk Oblast, the easternmost region of the country. A greater percentage, at 74.9 percent, reported as such from the Donetska Oblast, 44.3 percent from the Kharkiv Oblast, and 48.2 percent from the Zaporizhia Oblast[vi].

Although more than 90 percent of Ukrainian citizens voted to declare independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine clearly still possesses great ties to Russia to this day[vii]. This was manifested by the 2004 Ukrainian presidential election, when the Kremlin backed the pro-Russian candidate, Yanukovych. This fraudulent election sparked the Orange Revolution. According to Nelson Ledsky of the National Democratic Institute, it was reported that "the rigged voting was in the neighborhood of over 1 million extra votes"[viii].

Viktor Yushchenko, the pro-Europe/West candidate who ran against Yanukovich, had received the western Ukraine vote, and those supporters took to the streets of the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, demanding that the results be annulled[ix]. The Orange Revolution received its name from the color that represented the "media savvy" supporters of Yushchenko, which was pitted against the blue that represented the Yanukovich supporters.Both Europe and the United States denounced the runoff, and Yanukovych was ultimately prevented from power—until the failures of the leaders proceeding the Revolution allowed him to rise to a comeback (and real election) in 2010[x].

This backstory reveals the myriad of reasons that a large portion of the Ukrainian population was driven to outrage over Yanukovich's decision in November, 2013. The turn from the West and toward Russia sparked frustration with the government, rekindled resentment toward Russia, and intensified a desire to fully reconcile with the western world. Later that same month (November, 2013), a total of approximately 100,000 people gathered in Kiev to denounce the

government's decision[xi]. The following month (December), approximately 800,000 protesters occupied the Kiev City Hall and the surrounding Independence Square[xii]. These protests, known as the Maiden or Euromaidan protests, were met by government forces, who were not afraid to use violence against their own people.

On December 17, 2013, Russian President Vladimir Putin gives what many have referred to as an "economic lifeline" by agreeing to buy $15 billion of Ukraine's debt, as well as to reduce the price of Russian gas supplies to Ukraine by about a third[xiii]. This only caused more uprisings, eventually forcing the Ukrainian Parliament to pass restrictive "anti-protest" laws in January, 2014. In response, protests grew and turned deadly, and demonstrators began storming regional government offices in western Ukraine. In the two-day period of the 28th and 28th of January, 2014, the Ukrainian Prime Minister, Mykola Azarov, resigned, and Parliament annulled the anti-protests laws[xiv].

The tides continued to turn the following month (February), when the total of 234 protesters who had been arrested since December were freed and Kiev City Hall, which had been occupied for over two months by protesters, was abandoned[xv]. But the tentative peace was fleeting. On February 18, 2014, the confrontation reached its peak, and the nation of Ukraine saw the worst bloodshed on its soil since its separation form Soviet Russia. Clashes erupted in Kiev's Independence Square, and over 20 people were killed and over 500 were injured by riot police[xvi]. A large portion of the protesters' camp was set up in flames. This latest uprising (and the brutal crackdown that followed) is said to have been caused by President Yanukovych's stalling in regard to forming the outline of an agreement to either appoint a new government or to draw back his own powers[xvii].

The violence did not stop there, as just two days later, on February 20, Kiev saw "its worst day of violence for almost 70 years"[xviii]. This time, approximately 88 people were killed over the course of about 48 hours, and video was released that showed the firing of uniformed snipers at protesters. The next day (February 21), Yanukovych signed a deal of compromise with opposition leaders. The very next day, Yanukovych disappeared—which sparked a strange string of events. First, protesters finally took complete control of the presidential administration buildings. Secondly, Parliament voted to remove the missing president from power and set the subsequent election of the 25th of May, 2014. Third, the now-former president Yanukovych appeared on Ukrainian television to denounce the "coup" that was playing out in his country. His whereabouts still remained undisclosed. Lastly, his arch-rival, Yulia Tymoshenko, was freed from jail with impeccable timing[xix].

The strange events continued as, from the 23rd to the 26th of the same month (February), Parliament voted to ban Russian as the second official language of Ukraine, causing uproars in Russian-speaking regions that later resulted in the vote being overturned. Next, Parliament named the speaker, Olexander Turchynov, the interim president, while an arrest warrant was issued for former and on-the-run president, Yanukovych. Finally, the Berkut police force, accused of the deaths of protesters over the recent months, was disbanded[xx].

On the 27th of February, 2014, pro-Russian gunmen first entered the fight, seizing key buildings in the capital of Crimea, Simferopol. Additionally, gunmen in unmarked combat uniforms, believed by many to be Russians, began to appear outside of Crimea's main airports. Crimea has a long and disjointed history between both Ukraine and Russia. Most recently, Crimea, a part of Soviet Russia until 1954, was given to Ukraine by the successor of Joseph Stalin, Nikita

Khrushchev, who was Ukrainian. Since the Soviet Union's dissolve in 1991, both Russia and Ukraine have still continued to struggle over who rightfully claims the region[xxi].

Since this first pro-Russian presence in Crimea, tensions have only escalated. On the 1st of March, 2014, the Russian parliament approved Russian President Vladimir Putin's call for the use of force in Ukraine. This force was justified by the Russian government as the necessary means to protect Russian interests. Putin cited events such as the vote to ban Russian as the second language of Ukraine and the alleged mistreatment of pro-Russian citizens since the revolution began as reasons for his decision. On the 16th of the same month (March), a reported 97 percent of voters in Crimea voted in favor of joining Russia in a secession referendum—a referendum that the west touted as falsified. In response to this suspected foolery, both the European Union and the United States imposed travel bans and froze assets on several Russian and Ukrainian officials. Their actions did not deter Putin, however, and he signed a bill that incorporated Crimea into the Russian Federation on March 18, 2014[xxii].

In April, the protester vs. government scuffle turns into a pro-Ukraine vs. pro-Russian war. On the 15th, Ukraine's acting president, Turchynov, announced the beginning of what he called an "anti-terrorist operation" against the pro-Russian separatists. The operation stalled at first, but quickly regained momentum after three people were killed in a raid on a base in Mariupol, which marked the first deaths in the country's east[xxiii].

The fighting continued through May, including a clash that left 42 people dead in the Black Sea city of Odessa on the 2nd. On the 11th of May, pro-Russian separatists in the east Ukraine regions of Donetsk and Luhansk declared their independence, although their referendums were not recognized. Due to the east's negligence to identify as Ukrainian citizens, the

election that handed the Ukrainian presidency to Petro Poroshenko on May 25, 2014, was not

held in many portions of the east. On the 14th of June, pro-Russian separatists are responsible for

shooting down a military plane in eastern Ukraine, killing 49 people, and on the 17th of July, the

Malaysian Airlines flight MH17, flying from Amsterdam, was shot down near Grabove, Ukraine,

a rebel-held territory. This crash resulted in the loss of 298 lives and is believed, as reported by

U.S. intelligence officials five days after the incident, to have been an accident carried out by

Ukrainian separatists who "probably mistook the airliner for a Ukrainian military plane"[xxiv].

      Also in June of 2014, on the 27th, the European Union signed a "landmark" association

agreement with Ukraine, as well as with Georgia and Moldova[xxv]. This pact, strongly opposed by

the Russian government, essentially brought the three countries closer to the West, both in eco-

nomic and political terms[xxvi]. Putin in a sense defined the fundamental issue causing and extend-

ing the Ukraine War when he said that the pact would make Ukraine "choose between Russia

and the EU", calling it a move that would "split it [Ukraine] in two"[xxvii]. Russia continued its at-

tempt to prove this statement through escalated aggression that left many Ukrainians internally

displaced. On the 30th of July, both the European Union and the United States announced the cre-

ation of new sanctions against Russia[xxviii].

      On the 22nd of August, a large Russian convoy administered humanitarian aid to the east

Ukrainian city of Luhansk without the permission of the Ukrainian government (later determined

to have been a guise for sending in military assistance to the rebels), and four days later Ukraine

released videos of captured Russian paratroopers, proving the involvement of Russian forces

which Putin consistently denied. By the 27th of August, a Ukrainian rebel leader stated that there

were 4-4,000 Russian citizens among the rebel forces, and by the 1st of September, the nation of

Ukraine stated that 700 Ukrainian men had been taken prisoner while pro-Russian rebels made more headway in the east[xxix].

Things seemed to be finally turning around in September; on the 5th, Ukraine and the pro-Russian rebels signed a truce in Minsk, Belarus, and by the 24th, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was reporting a "significant withdrawal of Russian troops form Eastern Ukraine"[xxx]. Continuing this trend, on October 12, Putin ordered thousands of Russian troops, who were stationed near the Ukrainian border, to return to their bases, and, on the 31st and due to a deal worked out by the European Union, agreed to resume the sending of gas supplies to Ukraine over the winter. During the parliamentary elections in Ukraine that month, pro-Western parties came out on top.

However, the good news was not meant to last. On the 2nd of November, pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine elected leaders through polls that were supported by Russia and condemned by the West. President Poroshenko of Ukraine accused the separatists of "jeopardizing the entire peace process" and said that Ukrainian forces "should prepare defenses against separatist attack"[xxxi]. On the 12th of the same month (November), NATO's commander, General Philip Breedlove, stated that Russian military equipment and combat troops had been seen coming into Ukraine over the course of several days[xxxii]. The equipment is said to have included 32 tanks, 16 pieces of heavy artillery, and 30 trucks[xxxiii].

By November 30, Russia had sent a total of eight military convoys, disguised as humanitarian aid, to eastern Ukraine. On the 4th of December, Putin blamed the entire Ukraine War on the "'unlawful' ouster of Yanukovich and on Western support for 'far-right factions' controlling the Ukrainian government"[xxxiv]. Closing off the year, Ukraine signed a bill on December 29 that

dropped its "non-aligned" status, an act that Russia deemed as a threat to Russian national secu-

rity. Beginning the New Year, on January 11, pro-Russian separatists began an "aggressive" of-

fensive in the region of the Donetsk Airport, and, on the 14th, a rocket that is believed to have

been fired by pro-Russian rebels hit a bus in the south of Donetsk, killing 13 people[xxxv].

After the head of the Donetsk People's Republic, Alexander Zakharchenko, declared that

separatist forces refused to accept any form of a ceasefire and rockets fired by separatists contin-

ued to wound and kill in south eastern Ukraine, the Ukrainian parliament officially named the

Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics as terrorist organizations. Additionally, because of all

previous actions by Russia and the increasing evidence that the Russian military was indeed di-

rectly involved in the crisis (more specifically the alleged involvement of heavy weaponry and

up to 9,000 Russian troops), the nation of Russia was labeled by the Ukrainian parliament as an

"aggressor state"[xxxvi].

On February 12, 2015, the second Minsk agreement was signed in Ukraine by the leaders

of Russia, Ukraine, Germany, and France. This agreement was believed by many to be a poten-

tial and likely marker of the end of the Ukraine War[xxxvii]. Alas, only a day after the signing,

fighting resumed. The ceasefire, not coming into effect until the following Sunday, only inspired

separatist forces to increase their efforts to seize more territory before their time was up. Sunday

eventually came and, while the ceasefire was in fact upheld in some areas of the country, a con-

flict persisted around Debaltseve, a strategic rail hub[xxxviii].

Relevance Today – NATO and the Weimar Triangle

Since Minsk II, the creation and signing of ceasefire deals in Ukraine has proven to be

ineffective. The year 2015 so no real, major change to a conflict that has now been dragged on

for three years. Fighting continues, and the situation has provoked tensions not only between Russia and Ukraine, but among all of the world's greatest Western powers, as well as many smaller countries. President Putin has made clear his stance on Crimea—he is unwilling to negotiate the matter and views the region of a rightful part of the Russian nation. His desire to rebuild Russia's great influence in the world reminds those around him of a not-so-long-ago Soviet Union, sparking fear in the hearts of both those who were a part of this great power and those who fought against it.

Three of those nations reside in Europe and together make up the Weimar Triangle: Germany, France, and Poland. Each of these nations has its reasons for working to combat Russian aggression in Ukraine and beyond, as well as the growth of a worldly Russian power. They also each have their own individual ways of dealing with the crisis, some of which have proven to be more effective than others. Furthermore, each nation is a member of NATO, an alliance formed in 1949 and originally purposed with the task of aligning against, defeating, and preventing the rebirth of Communism and the Soviet Union. In recent years, it was widely believed that NATO was beginning to lose its purpose, seeing as there was no longer an immediate threat of any such occurrence, and with that the alliance lost much of its credibility.

This has changed of late, and now each NATO member fights to define its own position in the alliance and to regain the credibility of the alliance as a whole. Often, the four major Western powers—the U.S., the UK, France, and Germany—are looked on as being the leaders of such a mission, and all other nations are viewed merely as followers of these great nations. However, the events and circumstances around the world today are changed evermore rapidly, and many smaller nations are now being forced to step up and join the fight as many greater powers look

toward an ideology strongly solidified in diplomacy, peace talks, and isolation. The nation of Poland is one of those countries, and a country that has more than once proved itself to be more militarily capable and politically willing to act than its more influential counterparts. This essay will analyze each nation—Germany, France, and Poland—in regard to their responses and contributions to the Ukraine War. It will compare and contrast these efforts for the purpose of demonstrating the fact that Poland has become, in discussion of this crisis specifically, just as strong or stronger in more than one way than Germany and France combined.

Poland

Background, Relevance, and Position

The Republic of Poland became a member of the NATO Alliance on March 12, 1999. Polish citizens have historically supported this membership, as NATO supplied greater political and military security guarantees, especially from the United States, in the aftermath of World War II and the Cold War. After being partitioned once by the Hapsburg Empire and four times by both Germany (thrice as the Prussian empire) and Russia (once as the Soviet Union), as well as being forced to operate under the harsh conditions of Soviet control for 42 years, NATO membership was viewed as a way to put an end to the years of wars and uprisings fought by the Polish people in order to achieve and maintain independence. It was also viewed as a safeguard to protect the nation from the potential reemergence of Russian aggression. Today, according to Pew Survey data from June, 2015, 74 percent of Poles still maintain a favorable view of NATO and their membership in the Alliance, rising from 64 percent in 2014[xxxix].

Twenty-five years after Poland's leave from the Warsaw Pact in 1990, this Russian aggression has indeed reemerged—in the form of the Russian annexation of Crimea, invasion of

Ukraine, violation of multiple national airspaces, abduction and imprisonment of an Estonian in-telligence officer, and war exercises simulating a nuclear attack on Warsaw (the capital of Po-land), to name a few. These Russian actions remind Poles all too much of the rise of the Soviet Union and the death and destruction that their ancestors faced. Poland and other European na-tions' (especially former Soviet states) reason for joining the NATO Alliance have been realized, and now it is time for the members of that alliance to act.

Poland's strategic culture, closely tied to the nation's tempestuous history, is also strongly rooted in the concept of strategic uncertainty[xl]. The partitions and wars it has faced throughout history, as well as its proximity to both Germany and Russia, have forced Poland to develop a keen sense of defense and nationality, beginning with its loss if statehood in the 18th century. These factors have created a state of mind in Poland that they are constantly being threatened by their neighbors, a viewpoint that was only greater enforced by both Russia and Germany's refusal to accept a newly independent Poland in 1918[xli]. Thus, Poland seeks to attain, through the maintenance of its own forces as well as its alignment with powerful countries such as the U.S., the UK, France, and Germany via the NATO Alliance (and the European Union), the greatest level of national and international security for itself and in its best strategic and security interests.

History has played a role in shaping the window through which Poles view the military, as well. Approximately five million Poles died between 1939 and 1945, after traumatic events such as the Katyn massacre of Polish prisoners of war, ordered by Stalin in 1940, and the brutal crackdown on uprisings in Warsaw by Nazi forces in 1944. These gruesome events in Polish his-tory are said to have led Poland into the mentality that military endeavors are not only a way to

achieve political goals, but also a way to achieve and/or maintain national identity. Thus, demonstrating both military capability and the political will to use that capability became important aspects of Polish strategic culture. "Polish strategic culture entails a perception of the military as the carrier of national identity as well as the romantic vision of the soldier-freedom fighter"[xlii].

Poland believes in the importance of not only aligning oneself with great world powers, but also of all European NATO nations, especially its closest neighbors, to take on a greater responsibility for their own security interests and "commit to building our defense capabilities and make them available to NATO and the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)"[xliii]. Poland's actions in response to the Ukraine War are guided heavily by this principle, including its position that NATO and the EU should play "a complementary and mutually reinforcing role in supporting international security" by improving coordination and tackling "prioritized capability shortfalls to meet common EU and NATO requirements"[xliv]. For example, nations should ensure that the EU's Pooling and Sharing and NATO's Smart Defence initiatives (designed to provide a common source of security and defense for all European member nations) do not overlap or replicate one another. This would, in essence, create a more efficient and effective system for the defense of Europe as a whole, making Poland's weakest allies stronger and its stronger allies more contributing to a common cause.

Poland also strongly endorses the opinion of Peter Pindják, who represents the Security Policy Department of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, in regard to tackling hybrid warfare, a tactic that Russia has used effectually in the Ukraine War. Pindják states: "Undoubtedly, prevailing in hybrid warfare presents NATO with an institutional challenge. To effectively counter irregular threats, the Alliance will need to strengthen cooperation with international organizations, particularly with the EU"[xlv]. Pindják believes that NATO,

as a military alliance, is not capable of taking on the myriad challenges that accompany hybrid warfare on its own. Currently, NATO's hybrid warfare deterrence policy is founded on rapid military response, but this response has a number of weaknesses, including potential disagreement between member states on the source of a conflict, the inefficiency of hard power alone in response to irregular threats, and the lack of credibility that a deterrent built solely on military force may present[xlvi]. NATO must pursue the ability to tackle this new threat from more than its existing military angle, and the EU provides that alternative angle with a more flexible policy and a wider range of tools that could be used against hybrid warfare—tackling the issue both militarily and politically[xlvii].

<center>Polish Efforts – Ukraine War</center>

Poland, along with the Baltic nation of Lithuania, was the first country to make an effort toward NATO action regarding the Ukraine crisis and Russia's actions, by calling for an Article Four consultation of all Alliance members in March, 2014. This consultation refers to Article Four of the Washington Treaty, also known as the North Atlantic Treaty, which serves as the governing document of the NATO Alliance. Article Four states, "The Parties [NATO allies] will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened." Such NATO consultations have been seldom used throughout history, with Turkey being the only country to enact them; the country called for a meeting once during the Iraq War in 2003 and twice over the Syrian conflict in 2012[xlviii]. Poland's proactive response to the crisis is reflected not just in its history and geolocation, but also in public opinion. According to Pew Survey data from June 2015, 70 percent of Polish civilians are worried about Russian military threat, and 57 percent believe that Russia bears the largest share of blame for the violence in Ukraine[xlix].

Since these initial talks among allies, has flown six rotations so far in the Baltic Air Policing Mission, coming in behind only the Germans, who have flown eight rotations. The Baltic Air Policing Mission is an effort by NATO allies dedicated to guarding the three Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, as well as Slovenia, Iceland, and Albania, all of which do not have the necessary resources to defend their own airspaces. The mission began when the three Baltic nations joined the NATO Alliance in 2004, and has recently increased in the Baltics due to Russian aggression (including the kidnapping of an Estonian intelligence official), the Baltics' history with Russia, and the countries' geolocation. Poland's contributions to the mission are devoted entirely to the protection of the Baltics. "Baltic Air Policing has been acclaimed by NATO as an example of a kind of 'smart defense'…[and] an important symbol of the indivisibility of NATO security"[l].

In addition to assisting its neighbors in their own defense, Poland is committing to building its capability to defend its own country, as well. Poland currently spends 1.95 percent of its GDP on defense, a rise of 21.7 percent since 2014. Furthermore, the country has vowed to spend the NATO requirement of 2 percent by 2016 (currently only four NATO allies actually hit this mark). The current level amounts to PLN 38.5 billion (around 11 billion U.S. dollars) spent on Polish defense in 2015[li]. Poland is ranked 21st in the world's economies[lii]. Since the early 2000s, Poland has obtained for itself more modernized weapon systems in order to replace outdated equipment from the time of the Soviet Union[liii], and the country has spent over four billion U.S. dollars in the purchase of 45 American-built F-16 fighter jets. Poland has also committed itself to a new military modernization program, which is anticipated to cost approximately 46 billion U.S. dollars and is scheduled to be completed by 2022. It will be one of the greatest military investments ever made by a European member of NATO. Poland is also working today to build and

prepare its forces. In 2008, universal conscription in the country was suspended and, for the first time, professional armed forces began to be built. The justification for the change was "to make the military more capable of both taking part in peace and stabilization operations and fighting conventional wars (territorial defense)"[liv]. Polish pilots currently fly 160-200 hours a year, to be compared to the NATO flight hour standard of 160 hours minimum.

Due to the escalation of Russian aggression, there has recently been a call for the NATO Alliance and the EU to work together more closely and effectively—a call that, as pointed out earlier, Poland agrees strongly with. Poland has consistently pushed for the support for cooperation with NATO in collaboration with an informal group of EU countries within the EU Council, which would include the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Denmark. Poland has also been a key player in improving dialogue between the EU and the United States.

Furthermore, Poland has called for NATO to take an even greater stance in the situation in the form of the stationing of NATO troops in Poland. Poland calls for this NATO military presence on its soil as a measure of both security and assurance by its American ally. The American military presence in Europe has continued to diminish in size, and in 2012 a Polish public opinion survey illustrated that, for the first time, Poles preferred Germany, now considered the nation's key ally and trade partner in Europe, over the United States. The country also strongly supported the stationing of a missile defense system in Poland, an idea that was scheduled to come to fruition until U.S. President Barack Obama abandoned the deal. On September 17, 2009, the Barack Obama administration decided to cancel the system on the anniversary of the 1939 Soviet invasion of Poland. More recently, the administration cancelled plans to deploy "high-speed Standard Missile 3 Block IIB interceptors in Poland and Romania". Polish (and

Czech) leaders expressed their disappointment in the missile defense cancellation with an open letter to President Obama in October, 2009. The first paragraph of the stated:

> In the wake of your recent decision on European missile defense, we write in the hope that you honor the deep and principled connections that have bound the United States and the nations of Central and Eastern Europe since the time of Woodrow Wilson. Mindful of these links, we are concerned about the impact that canceling the planned missile defense sites in Poland and the Czech Republic will have on our relationship with these strategic allies, other countries in the region, and our global credibility[lv].

The letter ended with a call to action, as the signatories stated, "We urge you to reiterate America's commitment to these allies that have endured Russian intimidation in support of the United States and a shared commitment to democracy"[lvi]. Poland has been strongly vocal and has made clear its desire for real and decisive action from the United States of America as well as the entirety of the NATO Alliance. During U.S. Vice President Joe Biden's visit to Poland in March of 2014, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk repeated Poland's stand: "It is a challenge for the whole world…It is not just Poland, but all of Europe must speak in a strong voice"[lvii].

In June of this year, thousands of NATO troops engaged in the first Very High Readiness Joint Task Force exercise by rehearsing sea landings, air lifts, and assaults in Poland and the three Baltic states. The NATO Response Force was created as part of the "Readiness Action Plan" announced at the 2014 NATO summit in Wales. This force is comprised of 13,000 personnel, which includes a 5,000-personnel combat brigade to be deployed within five to 30 days' notice. The force was designed to "reinforce Alliance solidarity, capability, and credibility" through both "short-term 'assurance' measures and longer-term 'adaption' changes to NATO's military

capability"[lviii]. In 2014, NATO allies committed to enhancing the force by forming a "spearhead force" within it, known as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). This force would be comprised of 5,000 ground troops, which will be supported by air, maritime and special forces. Their lead elements will be able to deploy in 48 hours, and the entire force will be deployable within 2-5 days. This force is scheduled to be implemented between 2016 and 2018, and in the meantime the land component of the Response Force is serving as an "interim version" of the extended VJTF[lix].

In addition to hosting these exercises on its soil, Poland will serve as the NATO Response Force Headquarters in 2019. "Polish and Baltic state leaders have made it clear that they want to host large numbers of U.S. and NATO forces as a deterrent in the face of a resurgent Russia, and are welcoming the thousands of allied troops to their land and sea test ranges. Polish and Romanian leaders are even seeking more of a permanent allied military presence ahead of next year's NATO summit in Warsaw" states a Polish writer for the Associated Press[lx]. Poland is also leading the Multinational CBRM Battalion in the 2015 NATO military exercise Trident Juncture.

At the September 2014 NATO summit in Wales, the North Atlantic Council made a step toward greater commitment to fulfilling the three core tasks set out in the Strategic Concept, which are collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security by confirming the notion that collective defense efforts "should go beyond missile and cyber defense"[lxi]. One step taken in this direction is the Framework Nation Concept, introduced by Germany in 2013 and accepted by the Alliance at the 2014 summit. This concept is comprised of three core elements. The first is "collective defense", with Germany and Poland in the lead. Key elements would include development of host nation support, prepositioning, and stationing of forces; acquisition

focused on air defense; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance for contested environments including survivable persistent capabilities; combat aircraft, including fighter and air-ground capability; and precision strike capacity". The second is "expeditionary capacity for crisis management", to be led by France and the UK, and the third and final element is a "partnership for cooperative security", which the U.S. would lead[lxii].

This concept takes great steps in solidifying the bond between NATO and the EU, enabling forces to work together efficiently and effectively, and bringing the U.S. into Europe as a partner on global and transnational security issues; military capabilities; education, training, and mentoring for partner military/security sector development; and the establishment of strategic cooperation and compatibility on issues of international concern. This very commendably reflects the goals that Poland has both for its own standing in the world's affairs and for the rest of the NATO allies' efforts in working toward a more stable international security environment. It also has the potential to positively influence European ballistic missile defense, which NATO's secretary-general has deemed a "flagship project"[lxiii], and to assist Poland in its national defense after the action taken by the U.S. in 2009.

Another decision made at the 2014 NATO summit in Wales was the opening of six Force Integration Units (NFIUS) as part of the Readiness Action Plan. These units, active since September 1 of this year and scheduled to be fully operational by the NATO summit in Warsaw next year, are based in Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania. The Polish base is located in the northern city of Bydgoszcz (Poland). These units "will help facilitate the rapid deployment of Allied forces to the Eastern part of the Alliance, support collective defense planning and assist in coordinating training and exercises"[lxiv] and will not serve as military bases. They will serve as a crucial linkage between national and NATO forces and will assist host nations in

identifying "logistical networks, transportation routes and supporting infrastructure to ensure that NATO's high-readiness forces can deploy to the region as quickly as possible and work together effectively to help keep our nations safe."[lxv] Additional NFIUs may be established by NATO in the future.

"Poland is, by any measure, the most successful case of post-communist political and economic transition to market democracy in Europe. As a relatively new member to NATO, it has made significant contributions to American and NATO military missions. But Poland is entering an era of increasing uncertainty"[lxvi]. Polish thought concedes that the recent events in Ukraine have changed the existing security environment in Europe and presented a common threat with the aptitude to bring the NATO Alliance and the EU closer and build stronger ties between European countries, Canada, and the United States. As the U.S. has failed to fully reassure its European allies thus far and budgetary cuts throughout the western world have taken a toll on military capability and political will among allies, it is essential that the countries of Europe strengthen their alliances and work together in as many ways as possible.

Germany

Background, Relevance, and Position

West Germany joined the NATO Alliance in 1955, just 10 years after the Nazis were finally defeated (in 1945) at the end of World War II[lxvii]. Germany had been divided since that date between East and West Germany, with the U.S., France, and the UK holding "zones of occupation" in Western Germany and West Berlin and the Soviet Union still controlling Eastern Germany and East Berlin. Public statements suggested that both the United States and Soviet Russia would have liked to have seen a unified and newly independent Germany, but the conditions of

which they desired this goal to be met with were not so publicly acknowledged. The reality, to be eventually recognized, was that each nation refused to accept a Germany that did not function in favor of its own state interests[lxviii].

In 1949, the same year that the NATO Alliance was founded, the three countries in control of West Germany pooled their occupied regions together to form the Federal Republic of Germany. In response, Soviet Russia established the German Democratic Republic in the east. Six years later, on May 5, 1955, the U.S., France, and the UK officially ended their military occupation of West Germany by pulling their forces out and announcing that West Germany was now an independent country; four days later, on May 9, that country became a NATO ally. "This action marked the final step of West Germany's integration into the Western European defense system"[lxix]. West Germany's remilitarization, although viewed skeptically by some nations, including France, was believed by the U.S. government to be entirely necessary in order to build a defensive perimeter and ultimately crush any attempt by Soviet Russia to once again rise up and expand its borders eastward.

Soviet Russia lost no time in responding to this move by the West. On May 14, a mere five days after West Germany joined NATO, the Soviet Union formed the Warsaw Pact, which can be defined as a "counter" military alliance between Soviet Russia, East Germany, and its remaining European satellite nations. The West's actions had completely nullified the possibility of a reunited Germany anytime soon, and so for the next 35 years, the divided region became the perfect symbol of the Cold War and its effects. East and West Germany were finally reunited as one after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1990, and the new, larger German nation has remained to be a member of the NATO Alliance to this day[lxx].

From the outset, NATO membership was clearly a favorable route for Germany and the German people, given its effect in bringing the country back to Europe and eventually reunifying the country as a whole. However, Pew Survey data from June, 2015, shows a dramatic change in the way that German citizens view NATO and their membership in the alliance, just over the past six years. In 2009, 73 percent of German civilians had a favorable view of the NATO Alliance. Today, in 2015, only 55 percent of civilians maintain this attitude[lxxi]. Of all eight NATO countries which were surveyed (accounting for 78 percent of NATO's population, 88 percent of NATO's total GDP, and 94 percent of NATO defense spending), "the greatest change in support for NATO has been in Germany, where favorability of the alliance has fallen 18 points since 2009"[lxxii]. Much of this negative opinion is derived from Germany's history—with Russia and even with itself.

While NATO members who are close to Russia both in locational and historic terms are generally serious about the growing threat from Russia, "the reaction of some [other] NATO members has been lackluster"[lxxiii]. Germany is frequently pointed to today as being the least responsive of those nations, having had a halfhearted reaction to the Ukraine crisis, as well as showing "excessive sympathy" for Russia's aggressive moves. In fact, such sympathy has become popular enough among Germans to have been given a name: Russlandversteher[lxxiv].

"Russland" obviously refers to the Russian nation, and the suffix "versteher" means "one who understands." Putinversteher has also become a term meaning the same thing but referring more specifically to the leader of Russia himself. The word versteher typically mixes flattery with irony in Germany, as seen by the term frauenversteher, or "one who understands women", which is used to describe a male who "boasts excessively about his knowledge of the opposite sex"[lxxv]. Thus, the terms described above are most widely referring to "members of the elite or

intelligentsia [in Germany] who gush with empathy for Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, on talk shows, in journals and at dinner parties"[lxxvi]. Included in this group of people during the time of Crimea's annexation (2014) were two former Social Democratic party chancellors: Helmut Schmidt and Gerhard Schröder. The former stated in a German newspaper that Putin's annexation of Crimea was not exactly "legitimate" but certainly "understandable", while the latter was seen hugging the Russian president at a party in just two months after the annexation. The party, held in St. Petersburg, Russia, was marking Schröder's 70th birthday[lxxvii]. These chancellors, like the majority of Russlandversteher, are on the political left, and their particular party (Social Democratic) believes in the eastern policy of Ostpolitik, or the concept that, in regard to dealing with Russia, rapprochement (understanding or compromise) works and confrontation does not[lxxviii].The party has been accused of further "channeling well-honed anti-American and Russophile instincts", in addition to viewing the Ukraine War as a "natural Russian response to NATO's expansion"[lxxix].

"Russophilia" exists within the political right in Germany as well, and the attitude is largely prevalent in the boards of large German companies and among intellectuals. The latter often hold the belief that Russia's spiritual culture is more compatible with the materialistic culture of the West. German citizens also have not forgotten the 26 million people killed by Germany in the former Soviet Union during World War II, a common source of guilt and trigger of sympathy. Polls have illustrated the uncertainty felt by the German population; such polls have shown the majority of Germans opposing sanctions on Russia, almost half of Germans wishing for a "middle way" between Russia and the West, and 57 percent of Germans opposed to Ukraine's joining the NATO Alliance against Russia's wishes. John Kornblum, a former American ambassador to Germany and now a lawyer in Berlin, Germany, speaks to that uncertainty.

"Germany has never figured out whether it wants to be part of the West," he stated. "At the moment, they are almost as dangerous as the Russians."[lxxx]

Germany's government is fragmented between policy concerning the European Union, located primarily within the chancellor and several ministries (including the ministries of economics and technology, finance, and the interior) and policy concerning the NATO Alliance, located chiefly within the ministry of defense. While the country's foreign office, tasked with presiding between both sides and coordinating those policies, is meant to "uphold the strategic mantra of coherence with the governance based on guideline competence", the office often fails to "reign in the considerable constitutionally-granted autonomy of the individual ministries"[lxxxi]. This creates a tension that is only worsened the extent to which Germany wavers in the middle in regard to its European vs. transatlantic focus.

Germany maintains a desire to avoid pitting the European Union and NATO against one another, viewing NATO as the tool for engaging in vigorous military operations that Germany may or may not possess the military capability or, more importantly, the political will to engage in, while the European Union holds the advantage of being seen as a tool for broad, civil military operations. In essence, the two organizations are entirely separated from one another (with the European Union generally being viewed as more favorable), which contrasts sharply with the Polish desire for a united and complementary relationship between the two organizations. Germany's preference for the European Union also continues the flow of pro-Russian rhetoric, as German strategy towards Russia has historically placed a large emphasis on "strong respect for the EU's most important neighbor and its interests"[lxxxii]—as opposed the NATO Alliance's view of Russia as being its strongest opponent.

"Civilian power" has become somewhat of a label for Germany, due to its reliance on multilateral procedures and avoidance of military force. Military spending has greatly decreased in the nation in recent years, and "as…[Germany's] financial commitment was shrinking, conflicting expectations were rising"[lxxxiii]. These conflicting expectations include a desire to create a security and foreign policy founded on humanitarian and moral principles and a firm transatlantic orientation that has been cultivated over the country's history. In response to the need to adapt and change their security posture, Germany moved to restructure it—and a large part of this reformation fell on the German military. In the process, Germany realized just how greatly terms such as "civil" vs. "military" and "national" vs. "international" had become blurred concepts, as well as that much of this blurring was due to the introduction of new elements into what is known as "security": economics, ecology, and humanity. Reform initiatives at this time, which can be seen in documents such as the White Paper of 2006, the "Weise Report" of 2010, and the "Otremba Report" of 2011, suggested the scaling down of German troops from 250,000 to 185,000. However, the initiatives also recommended increasing the amount of troops ready to be sent abroad, with the 2011 Defense Policy Guidelines stating specifically that Germany should aim to sustain up to 10,000 deployable troops dedicated to international conflict prevention and crisis management[lxxxiv].

German Efforts

At the outset of the Ukraine conflict, Germany was forced to make its position known. It, under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel, adopted a stance of criticism toward Russia, especially at the annexation of Crimea, but its moves thereafter where altogether characterized as cautious and clearly diplomatic. The country gave its consent only to limited sanctions on members of the Russian elite, expressing disapproval toward economic sanctions on the country as a

whole. A political debate was also forced to begin, a debate that pointed out the "catastrophic" consequences that would follow the deterioration of German-Russian relations[lxxxv].

Germany's biggest priority in this diplomatic offensive seemed to be targeted primarily at ensuring that Putin would not farther expand his military invasion of Crimea, which would cause greater tensions and force Germany to take a firmer stance in the matter, as opposed to playing the fence. The nation agreed to diplomatic talks with Russia to discuss the economic portion of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine. An Association Agreement is an international agreement between the European Union and its member countries and "third countries", or partner countries, that seeks to build a comprehensive framework by which the two parties will conduct bilateral relations; "in certain cases, they prepare for future membership of the European Union"[lxxxvi].

Germany also made clear its support of one of Russia's greatest demands regarding Ukraine—the country's "federalization." This essentially meant the transformation of Ukraine into a "confederation of independent regions", giving Russia a direct influence in south and east Ukraine and an indirect influence on the entire nation[lxxxvii]. Ukrainian politicians and analysts expressed their concerns over such a move, saying that it would weaken Ukraine and allow Russia to have unwarranted control over the country's politics as a whole[lxxxviii]. When Germany's vice chancellor and Economy Minister (and a leader of the Social Democratic Party), Sigmar Gabriel, used the word "federalization" in an interview, offending many Ukrainian's, Chancellor Merkel came to his rescue, saying that he meant to say "decentralization"[lxxxix]. Gabriel stated, "Beyond that [preventing direct military conflict between Russia and Ukraine], we have to develop an idea about the reconciliation process that could be introduced after the end of the military conflict in East Ukraine." He then added, "The territorial integrity of Ukraine can only be maintained if an

offer is made to the areas with a Russian majority. A clever concept of federalization seems to be the only practicable way"[xc].

Merkel stated during a briefing with Ukrainian Prime Minister Yatsenyuk that the Association Agreement was not an "instrument against Russia" and nor was the opening of new markets. She instead pointed out that "stability in Ukraine makes sustainable development possible"[xci]. Merkel also emphasized the importance of an effective ceasefire and of Ukrainians access to the eastern borders, as well as confirming Germany's commitment to continuing to assist Ukraine[xcii]. Part of that assistance came in the form of helping to stabilize Ukraine's financial troubles, through taking action as part of the International monetary Fund and the European Union. Germany has expressed its support for the European Union's plan to provide immediate financial assistance to Ukraine, loans worth up to 15 billion euros, and access to the European Union's internal market for Ukrainian companies[xciii]. The German government even went as far as to suggest that Ukraine's development aid be increased by 20 million euros a year, from the 33 million previously offered[xciv].

German public opinion of the Ukraine crisis is another indicator of Germany's lackluster, or, some might even go as far to say, backwards response. While 57% of Poles believed that Russia was the most to blame for the crisis, only 29% of Germans blame Russia; furthermore, while a mere 3% of Poles blamed the West for the conflict, a total of 12% of Germans blamed the West. This is only a difference of 17% between those who blame Russia and those who blame the West…and ultimately, the NATO Alliance member countries. In addition, while 70% of Poles expressed concern of the Russian military threat, only 38% of Germans feel that such a threat is something to be worried about[xcv].

Germany has flown the largest amount of rotations so far in the Baltic Air Policing Mission, with eight rotations. However, the nation's combat aircraft fleet has been greatly reduced in recent years, from 450 fighter jets in 1993 to just 209 in 2013; included in those 209 fighter are 6 squadrons, or approximately 144, Typhoon fighter jets, a mere 42 of which are currently available for use. In addition, German pilots only fly 140 hours per year, with the remaining 40 hours that they need to reach the NATO standard being flown on a simulator.

Germany spends 1.2 percent of its GDP on defense, to be compared with Poland's 1.95 percent. The country has, however, made a commitment to increase their defense budget by 6.2 percent over the next five years, an act which would bring Germany closer to reaching the 2 percent of GDP standard set by the NATO Alliance. The current level amounts to approximately 39.3 billion euros (42.2 billion U.S. dollars) spent on German defense in 2015. While this number is much larger than Poland's on a nominal scale (greater by about 30 billion dollars), it is important to note that while Poland ranks 21st in the world's economies, Germany ranks 4th; Germany had a GDP greater than Poland's by 406.8 billion U.S. dollars in 2015[xcvi]. Thus, in terms of percentage of GDP, Poland spends much more on defense than does the economically powerful Germany. The new economic plan would improve Germany's performance by allocating around 8 billion euros (8.6 billion U.S. dollars) more than previously planned over the next four years[xcvii].

Germany's armed forces are considered to be "30 percent underequipped" and "will need years to bring their lacking arsenals up to speed", according to Lt. Gen. Bruno Kasdorf, an inspector of the German Army, who stated these sentiments in a June 2015 radio interview[xcviii]. He also praised Germany's decision to increase defense spending. Before the plan's effects take place, the country will remain to have neither the finances nor the production capacity to remedy

the problem, he added[xcix]. Germany's military announced in late 2014 that a large portion of its military equipment, including such essentials as helicopters and fighter jets, were unfit for service. Specifically, the military stated that only 70 out of its 180 Boxer armored fighting vehicles, seven of its 43 navy helicopters, 42 of its 109 Eurofighters, and 38 of its 89 Tornados were usable. Additionally, only 24 out of its 56 Transall transport planes were considered to be deployable. Unsurprisingly, this called Germany's ability to contribute to the NATO Alliance in light of the Ukraine War into question, a leading factor in the country's decision to increase its spending, in the hopes that it may regain credibility through a military upheaval and more capability. In fact, according to a "key issues document" leaked to the media, the additional spending is in part due to a desire for "an increased NATO engagement"[c].

Germany will participate in NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force with up to 2,700 soldiers. Since the beginning of 2015, the leadership of NATO's Rapid Response Force has been located in Münster, Germany. In 2014, 4,000 German soldiers committed to the NRF were qualified as "combat ready"; at the core of such troops is the Armored Infantry Battalion 371, from Marienburg, Germany, which has been ready for "treaty-obligated deployment" (that treaty being the Washington Treaty and more specifically Article 5 of that treaty) since the end of 2013[ci]. Thus far Germany has struggled to pull its weight in regard to preparing for a large-scale crisis or even the measures that might be necessary for the prevention of such a crisis, so this latest commitment, if followed through with, will make Germany's smaller neighbors—including Poland—feel significantly more protected.

Germany introduced the Framework Nation Concept in 2013, which was accepted by the NATO Alliance at the 2014 NATO summit. As discussed previously in regard to Poland's part in the concept, Germany, along with Poland, would lead the element of "collective defense." Key

components of this would include development of host nation support, prepositioning, and stationing of forces; acquisition focused on air defense; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance for contested environments including survivable persistent capabilities; combat aircraft, including fighter and air-ground capability; and precision strike capacity.

> Germany is adamant that capability planning and operational deployment constitute two parallel universes, as the latter requires parliamentary approval. The number of nations interested in partnering with Germany may of course dwindle if it is clear that multinational capabilities are unlikely to be used in expeditionary operations. Participating in a German-led framework essentially means conforming to a more restrained strategic culture.[cii]

Germany committed 3,000 troops to the latest NATO military exercise, Trident Juncture, and provided territory for the exercise, along with Italy, Portugal, Spain Canada, Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands. The German contribution also consisted of a mountain task force, amphibious engineers, two frigates, one combat support ship and other naval vessels, airlift and air refueling capabilities, the Bundeswehr Operational Communication Center, support elements of the Joint Support Service, and a mobile surgical hospital[ciii].

Germany has been labeled an indecisive and unorganized country of late, but much of what of seen as dysfunction from the outside is largely caused by a fractious and changing government and security policy approach from the inside. While neither scenarios sound entirely promising, the latter at least is something that can be eventually worked out. The question now is how soon Germany will achieve this solidification—and more importantly, which side they will choose to stand with. While right now the nation is reeling in regard to reputation with its closest

neighbors, a commitment to an increase in military spending and the showcasing of solid dedication to many international endeavors, such as the Baltic Air Policing Mission and Trident Juncture, show that Germany is, for now, still willing to be a somewhat active member of the Western world…so long as that activity does not step to closely on Russian toes.

France

Background, Relevance, and Position

France was a founding member of NATO in 1949. France fully supported the Alliance and participated in its operations from the beginning, as one of the nations who saw the threat of both German and Russian aggression and the need to defeat and contain it. In fact, Paris was the home of NATO's first permanent Headquarters—until the nation decided to withdraw from the NATO Integrated Military Command Structures. The NATO Integrated Military Command Structures is the organization responsible for planning and directing NATO's military forces[civ] France withdrew its forces because Charles de Gualle, a general and the 18th president of France, believed NATO to be dominated by the U.S. and the UK and sought greater independence for France. France slowly began to remove its forces from NATO command, starting with the Mediterranean fleet, in 1959. By 1966, seven years later, all of France's forces had been successfully removed and all foreign forces that remained on French soil were commanded to leave the country. The NATO Headquarters, previously in Paris, were moved to Brussels, Belgium, where they remain today[cv].

However, France still remained a part of the NATO Alliance as a whole. In fact, a secret agreement between U.S. and French officials was formed out within just a year of the France's force removal. This agreement, known as the Lemnitzer-Aillert Agreements, laid out a detailed

plan of how French forces would be incorporated into NATO's command structure once again should hostilities between Eastern Europe and the West break out[cvi]. In 2009, forty-three years later, French President Nicolas Sarkozy announced that France had decided to return to NATO as a "full-fledged member", stating that this action would not lessen the independence of the French military or use of nuclear weapons, but instead would "open the way" for France to have heavier influence in matters such as what missions the Alliance should take on after the Cold War[cvii]. "The time has come," he declared during a speech to the French Strategic Research Foundation. "Our strategy cannot remain stuck in the past when the conditions of our security have changed radically. We send our soldiers onto the terrain but we don't participate in the committee where their objectives are decided? The time has come to end this situation. It is in the interest of France and the interest of Europe"[cviii]. This move was a reflection of Sarkozy's desire to bring France and the U.S. closer to one another again, and was formally recognized during celebrations to signify the Alliance's 60th anniversary, at which U.S. President Barack Obama was present[cix].

While out of NATO's Integrated Military Command Structure, France blocked any form of cooperation between NATO and the European Union. However, today's relational environment is much different, and the reincorporation of France into the entirety of the NATO Alliance to many did not just make the Alliance itself stronger, but also opened the door for renewed talks and efforts regarding NATO-EU coordination[cx]. Since the 1990's, the French have both actively participated in and held principle positions within NATO missions, as well as once again sending officers to the Integrated Command Structure. They also have not hesitated "to duplicate NATO structures within the EU"[cxi] and have adopted what some would refer to as a "Europe first" policy. The nation has participated in over 20 EU missions since 2003 alone, some of which are still

ongoing, including the naval anti-piracy mission, entitled *Atalanta* and located at the Horn of Africa[cxii].

At the time of France's reintegration into NATO's Military Command (in 2009), public opinion of the Alliance and the country's participation in it was high, standing at 71%[cxiii]. This opinion did slightly decrease over the years to follow, getting down to 58% in 2013, but it rose again after the Ukraine War began. Last year (2015), public opinion stood at 64%, a 6% increase from two years prior[cxiv]. This public opinion is predicted by many to have increased once more after the terror attack, conducted in Paris by the terrorist organization Islamic State, that left 120 dead and many more injured in November, 2015. However, there are still others who point to evidence that there may be different and more negative factors involved. One of these is a survey taken of the general public in France in May 2014, after Russia annexed Crimea and escalated tensions in the region. Only 31% of respondents said that they viewed NATO as the foundation of their country's security, and only 42% said that they thought leaving the Alliance would potentially pose a threat to that security[cxv].

Furthermore, a third of French respondents stated the belief that expanding NATO troops into Eastern Europe would serve to provoke Russia, and only 30 percent of respondents believed that French troops should be the ones to go into the area[cxvi]. These statistics, as well as a close look at French foreign policy, reflect the idea that while France supports the NATO Alliance and the deterrence of Russian aggression from the outside, or in principle, they are often hesitant in regard to specific action that could be taken as hostility by Russia. "France's strategic culture is often viewed with suspicion by its partners…[its] strategic and security culture is regularly a cause of concern"[cxvii].

It is argued that this unpredictability and/or inconsistency is caused by the fact that French strategic culture, much like German strategic culture, is based upon two conflicting ideas or traditions. In the case of France, these are self-awareness as the "country of human rights" and an "established tradition of self-reliance and independence"[cxviii]. These two principles, contradictory as they are, are what begin to draw the explanation for the country's distrustful reputation. Their level of ambition when taking on matters of international security policy can be analyzed by taking a look at their defense and security objectives, outlined in the 2008 White Paper on Defense and National Security.

According to this document, French security policy focuses on three distinct goals: to secure the population and France's territorial integrity, to contribute to European and international security, and to contribute to the defense and promotion of "republican values." In working to contribute to European and international security, France takes a stance unique to other European countries. The White Book in which this goal is found also claims that the nation has special "duties" and is required to contribute to international security, preferably within a multilateral framework, due to its status as a founding member of both NATO and the European Union, member of the United Nations Security Council, and a nuclear power that is recognized by the Non-Proliferation Treaty. France's definition of "republican values", which it also seeks to contribute to, is stated in the White Paper to be, most notably, "individual and collective freedoms, the respect of human dignity, solidarity, and justice"[cxix].

These three goals of defense and security policy, taken together, further form the "intellectual grounding" of three more specific goals of French security policy concerning its actions within international organizations. In regard to the NATO Alliance, this ambition is an expecta-

tion to pursue "a contribution to the Atlantic alliance and the organization in charge of material-

izing the alliance, NATO. The Atlantic alliance is described as the cornerstone of European secu-

rity, but a renewed strategic partnership with the United States should be established"[cxx]. These

statements in goals of French policy, when collectively utilized, translate into an "odd mix" of

policies with the objectives of both defending French national interests while also defending hu-

manitarian values and multilateralism. Perhaps this is what causes the country to be perceived by

others in the Alliance as unpredictable or indecisive.

However, although these forces have been applied more ambitiously to the conflicts in

the Middle East and North Africa as opposed to Eastern Europe and, most specifically, Ukraine,

France does not suffer from a lack of political will to use military force to the extent which Ger-

many does. "Overall, France considers its armed forces a primary tool to achieve security objec-

tives, more than commerce or international aid for example"[cxxi]. Anthony Forster, a British polit-

ical scientist, former British Army official, and current Vice-Chancellor of the University of Es-

sex, classifies the nation of France as one of two "'expeditionary warfare' models of armed

forces in Europe", along with the United Kingdom[cxxii]. However, while the French government

puts high value on the ability of military power to deal with crisis management both at home and

abroad, there is a level of disagreement with this mindset among the French public. According to

a public opinion poll, 85 percent of French civilians believe that economic power is more im-

portant than military power.

This is illustrated in a tangible way by further narrowing this opinion into two categories:

dealing with Iran's potential acquiring of nuclear weapons and dealing with the Middle East and

North Africa, or the "Arab Spring" region, as well as the use of force in helping to put non-dem-

ocratic government out of power, such as in Libya in 2011. However, this poll includes no mention of the potential use of force in a situation that involves the invasion of Ukraine (or any part of East/Central Europe) and dangerous aggression by Russia—not even the annexation of Crimea, which has already occurred.

Laurent Fabius, French Foreign Minister since May 2012 and someone who has been labeled "one of Europe's star diplomats", spoke to the annexation of Crimea and the Ukraine War as a whole in an interview with The Washington Post in 2014. In regard to Crimea, he called Russia's actions "unacceptable". "You cannot accept that one country annexes another," he said. But he backed up in his fervor when discussing the rest of Ukraine. "We cannot accept the annexation or the fact that Ukraine would be controlled or invaded," he admitted. "On the other hand, we should not go to war with Russia. In between, you have diplomacy and sanctions to exert pressure." However, he also stated within the same interview that, as long as Russia allowed the Ukraine government to hold elections, there was "no reason [to] enhance [sanctions]"[cxxiii].

The great divide in France between government and public opinion is one that is not seen in Poland (a country impressively united in its negative feelings toward Russian aggression and its actions in Ukraine) or Germany (a country that, while struggling to work through internal conflicts within the government, is consistently wary of public opinion and toeing the line between what is best for the nation and what the people really want). While French President François Hollande has worked to create a peace plan for Ukraine and Russia and flown to Russia to engage in peace talks, the French public perceives the Ukraine War as "not only distant, but also as emotionally 'cold' and politically 'complicated'", according to French journalist and political analyst Gil Mihaely.

For most French people, Russia is seen as the aggressor, and yet at the same time…for

most French people the Ukrainian crisis is a geopolitical problem in a region they

recognize as strategic for Russia and where Russia has legitimate interests. Therefore,

question of right and wrong or victim and bully are not seen as dominant. They don't

want to go to war, and to even suffer some discomfort, in order to support those who they

believe are right. In other words, the French public position is: Russia is too strong - be

reasonable rather than right.[cxxiv]

French Efforts

According to a source at the European Leadership Network, the nation of France was

"surprised and dismayed" to find out about Russia's annexation of Crimea. After the news broke,

France was one of the first European countries, on March 2, 2014, to announce that it would be

suspending its preparation for the 40th G8 Summit, which was due to take place in Sochi in June

of that year. France, along with six other countries, then decided on March 24 that the Summit

should be held in Brussels, Belgium instead—where the NATO Alliance is headquartered. On

March 4th, French President François Hollande referred to the multiple situations within the con-

text of the Ukraine War as "exceptionally grave events which remind us of a time that we

thought was passed, the time of military interferences, interventions and demonstrations"[cxxv].

Despite these initial efforts and a demonstration of concern, "generally speaking, Paris

adopts a prudent position regarding Russian-European relations – somewhere between Germany

and Poland"[cxxvi]. On the one hand, France is "keen to engage in Moscow and believes that rela-

tions with Russia should be nurtured"—a more Germany-like approach—but at the same time,

France "has always insisted on the importance of NATO's mission of collective defense under

Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and has sought to reassure its Eastern European allies on this point"—a more Poland-like approach[cxxvii]. France's involvement in handling the Ukraine crisis stemmed largely from reasons connected to the country's membership in the European Union, its seat at the United Nations Security Council, and the existence of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Along with the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia, France assured security to Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, in exchange for its accession to the NPT in 1994[cxxviii].

France's first step came when Poland called for a visit among the foreign members of the Weimar Triangle (France, Germany, and Poland) in February, 2014. French minister Laurent Fabius participated in these talks, which took place in Kiev and resulted in the February 21st memorandum on a political compromise between Ukrainian authorities and Ukraine rebels. In March, French President Hollande welcomed two prominent Ukraine rebels, Vitali Klitschko and Pero Poroshenko, both candidates in the upcoming Ukrainian presidential election, into the country. This occurrence garnered much media attention and made organizer and French philosopher Bernard-Henry Levy, a supporter and lobbyist for military intervention in Libya in 2011, a more talked-about figure—something that was sure to antagonize the Russians[cxxix]. The nation also cancelled its plan to sell to warships to Russia, a deal that had been signed in January 2011, before Russia made its aggressive moves in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. Lastly, Permanent French Representative to the UN, Gérard Araud, presented French ideas for a resolution to the Ukraine crisis on March 4, 2014, at the Security Council, which detailed the following:

> (1) a verified return of Russian armed forces to their bases, (2) the immediate and verified disarming of paramilitary forces in Crimea, (3) the reestablishment of the Ukrainian law on regional languages, (4) the establishment in Ukraine of a high council for the

protection of minorities, (5) the implementation of constitutional reform, [and] (6) the
organization of presidential elections on May 25 under the supervision of the OSCE[cxxx].

Aside from these actions and showings of support, however, France does not wish to escalate the situation or to become too heavily involved. Less than half (44%) of the French public believe that Russia is to blame for the situation in Ukraine, but only 9% blamed the West. Additionally, just a little over half (51%) of the French see Russia as a major military threat. It can be seen simply be taking a look at this numbers that France clearly is a nation standing in the middle, between Germany on one side and Poland on the other, when it comes to both its views on and its response to this crisis[cxxxi].

France has flown five rotations in the Baltic Air Policing Mission, coming in behind both Germany and Poland, although certainly not suffering from a completely lackluster commitment. However, France, just like Germany, has experienced downsizing of the military due to budgeting cuts. In 2013 the French Air Force decided that instead of cutting all their pilot's hours by 17%, from 180 hours per year to 150 hours per year, they would allow half of their pilots to remain at 180 hours. However, the other half would fly only 40 hours per year in combat aircraft, while the other 140 hours would be in a trainer aircraft. In case of a major war, these "second line" pilots would require about 60-90 days of intense training in the combat aircraft before they could be considered equal in capability to their counterparts[cxxxii].

France spends 2.2 percent of its GDP on defense, more than both Poland (1.95) and Germany (1.2). Furthermore, French President François Hollande stated on April 29, 2015 that the French nation would be increasing its defense budget by approximately four billion euros over the next four years, as well as that France would only reduce the number of army jobs it had planned to cut over the next five years by half the originally designated amount. Because of this,

18,500 jobs would be saved[cxxxiii]. The current level of defense spending amounts to approximately 32 billion euros (35.7 billion U.S. dollars) spent on French defense in 2015. Therefore, while France spends more than both Germany and Poland in percentage of GDP terms, its spending falls in between the two countries on nominal terms, with Poland on the lesser side and Germany on the greater (although only by about 7.3 billion euros). This is aligned with France's ranking in the world's economies, as France ranks 4th and is situated in between Germany and Poland.

According to Dave Majumdar, France "retains one of the most capable military forces in Europe"[cxxxiv]. Majumdar brags on France's military capabilities and equipment, including its fleet of indigenous ballistic missile submarines, which are able to carry French-designed missiles armed with French-made warheads, and its independent air and land-based nuclear deterrent, which uses French-designed Mirage 2000N bombers and the ASMP missile. France also sports a "formidable" conventional military force comprised of 215,000 troops and supplied with a sufficient amount of main battle tanks and attack helicopters. France's military capabilities are not suffering quite as much as Germany's, yet they are also not on a strong journey of growth and recommitment such as Poland's. Rather, it is adequately stable—while of course factoring in dealing with the cuts that it has had and will continue to have to experience—for what it perceives its roles in the world to be. Its focus (and special forces) are largely dedicated to missions in Asia and Africa, most notably Afghanistan, Libya, and Mali, as opposed to Central and/or Eastern Europe[cxxxv]. This fact is even more pronounced after terror attacks like the November 2015 attack in Paris carried out by ISISL. France sees the Middle East as a priority for its military at the current time, more so than Ukraine or Crimea…not because it is as pacifist as Germany, but because it perceives greater threats elsewhere.

France will also participate in NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, as a framework nation, and has shown its commitment to rapid response since 1984, when it began its first phase in showing support for NATO's goals by creating a Rapid Reaction Force of 50,000 troops, most of which were professional units. "Giving up the conscription and designing a more reduced armed forces format was the next step," said Major General Lony. "This format was entirely professional and only made up of operational units that can all be deployed. The last stage consisted of taking part, very actively, into the NATO Response Force concept."[cxxxvi] France provides one of three deployable, High Readiness Forces (Air) Headquarters, along with the United Kingdom and Germany, which provide the Air Component Command for the NATO Response Force on a rotational basis. France also houses a High Readiness Forces (Maritime) Headquarters, which provides the Maritime Component Command for the NATO Response Force on a rotational basis. In addition, France's contributions to NATO force structures include housing EUROCORPS (in Strasbourg, France), a headquarters that has signed a technical agreement with NATO's Allied Command Operations, can be committed to NATO missions, and is sponsored by Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain, and France; providing the base for today's French Rapid reaction Corps (in Lille, France)[cxxxvii].

As previously discussed in both Poland and Germany's parts in the concept, France is also a member of the Framework Nation Concept, introduced by Germany in 2013 at the 2014 NATO summit. Under this concept, France, along with the United Kingdom, would lead the effort in expeditionary capacity for crisis management, of which key elements would include mobility of forces and equipment, logistics, and ISR capacities. Focus would be placed on airlift, aerial refueling, munitions stocks, and persistent surveillance. According to Franklin D. Kramer of the Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, "while the precise crises that might lead

to the use of military force cannot be determined in advance, the NATO experiences over the past two decades have significantly informed the requirements of expeditionary capability."[cxxxviii] He points out that France and the United Kingdom are capable of taking on the leadership of this category because they both have designed their forces in a way that maintains their own ability for expeditionary missions and are willing to work together on developing military capabilities[cxxxix].

France has also committed troops to the 2015 Trident Juncture exercise. French Air Force Gen. Denis Mercier serves as NATO'S Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation, a role created in 2002 that is responsible to NATO's Military Committee and is in charge of the ongoing transformation of the Alliance's forces and capabilities, identifying how best to adapt to the future and implement changes in NATO's defense planning process, conducting experiments and research and developing new technologies and capabilities, and overseeing NATO's training and education programs. Mercer has stated about Trident Juncture 2015, "The threats and surprises have accelerated, so we have to be sure that we are flexible enough to integrate in our exercises these new concepts and to speed up the processes of developing new ideas." He noted the difference between the exercise now and the last large NATO exercise of this kind, which was performed the same year that his position came about, in 2002. He said that this mission is much more focuses on testing out new ideas and training NATO troops, in response to Russian aggression and recent events.

France is, without a doubt, a nation best characterized as being settled between its two Weimar Triangle counterparts. It is committed to its own security, like Poland, but sees itself as having differing priorities that exist in other regions of the world. It, like Germany, does not wish to escalate tensions with Russia, but at the same time is not quite as willing to lay down its weapons in spite of Article 5. It is, in essence, a softening and blending of two extremes, concentrating for the time being on the myriad of conflicts that take place in the Western Hemisphere. As the French Foreign Minister of Affairs, Jean-Marc

Ayrault, once said, " France is an ally that exercises its responsibility as a founding member and is com-

mitted to promoting common values but does not hesitate, if necessary, to air its differences honestly.[cxl]"

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