

**RC** THE RĪGA  
CONFERENCE

Latvian Transatlantic Organisation

2023



## **POLICY BRIEF**

---

# **HARD TRUTHS AND HARD LESSONS**

Julian Lindley-French

# **THE RĪGA CONFERENCE**

## **POLICY BRIEF**

2023

# **HARD TRUTHS AND HARD LESSONS**

Professor Julian Lindley-French

"If you want peace, we must stop deluding ourselves and bloody well defend it!"

Julian Lindley-French after Publius Flavius Vegetius

## HARD TRUTHS

**2023 has been a year of hard truths with the Russo-Ukraine War revealing several hard truths about the US and its Western European allies.** First, the Alliance does not know what it wants to happen and cannot agree the price it is willing to pay to end the war. Consequently, there is a creeping narrative that Russia must be understood and accommodated and perhaps a brutal invasion of a neighbouring sovereign country killing many tens of thousands is not as bad as all that. Short of invading NATO Russia's evil act is just about as bad as it can be for Europe and its security. Second, the Russo-Ukraine War is intrinsically linked to a wider systemic threat to West democracies posed by China and Russia. Too many NATO allies fail to grip the severity of both and the tipping point which the former has reached. Third, neither the Americans nor Britain, France and Germany seem prepared to put the longer-term security of Europe before their shorter-term domestic imperatives. Consequently, there is an absence of strategic leadership, most notably from Washington. Fourth, ill-defined values, which cannot be defended, are now routinely confused within the Alliance with hard interests, particularly in Berlin, London, Washington, and Paris. Dealing with the threat is constantly postponed with the implication that European security is also seen as essentially discretionary. Fifth, even if Ukrainian forces do breakthrough the Surovikin Line and in strength and thereafter chase a rabble of a Russian Army back to the Sea of Azov, what then? Would Russia be defeated? No. However, the mindset in too many Western capitals is that a return to some status quo ante will be possible. It is not.

There are also hard lessons that should be learnt. First, the risk of Chinese-backed Russian revanchism is real and that the consequence of that risk is not really being thought through by an increasingly informal West. Second, if Russia succeeds in wearing down Ukrainian forces the munitions being supplied by North Korea and China will enable Moscow to launch a significant counterattack in Spring 2024. Third, the consequences of Western failure in Ukraine would be disproportionately being imposed by the most powerful NATO allies on the less powerful NATO allies in the immediate region with every likelihood that a future Europe could look not unlike a very large and dangerous version of the Korean Peninsula.

The link between today's war and a possible future systemic war concerns Russia's efforts to buy both time and space in Ukraine. In such circumstances, a reckoning between a Chinese-backed Russia and the rest of Europe, and China and the US, will become more, not less likely.

Of the more powerful NATO European allies only Poland seems to properly understand the hard truth consequences of not following through now and forcing Russia to accept a peace on terms favourable to Kyiv. This is hardly surprising. On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1939, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia signed the "Non-Aggression Pact" which not only paved the way for Hitler's September 1st invasion of Poland, but also set the scene for the most climactic event of the twentieth century – the June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1941, Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. It was as cold and calculated an exercise in cynicism and hypocrisy as any in Europe's long and undistinguished history of hypocrisy. The Pact gave time to both Berlin and Moscow in return for Poland's land.

## **HARD TRUTH UKRAINE**

There is a phrase that reveals the endemic short-termism of many Western politicians: "The official policy is...". It normally means there is an unofficial policy which is pretty much the opposite of that publicly stated. That is precisely why in August there was a micro-frenzy when a senior NATO official appeared to suggest that Ukraine might have to accept the loss of land to Russia in return for membership of the Alliance. For the record, he did not say that but what the reaction revealed is how many Allied governments are indeed thinking along those lines.



**There is a phrase that reveals the endemic short-termism of many Western politicians: “The official policy is...”. It normally means there is an unofficial policy which is pretty much the opposite of that publicly stated.**

Why are Allied leaders thinking this? First, despite the heroic efforts of Ukrainian forces, the Ukrainian counter-offensive stalled because it never had the necessary military weight to break the Russian land bridge in eastern and southern Ukraine, let alone re-take Crimea. At the October meeting of NATO defence ministers it also became apparent that the Allies had already given 90% of what they were going to give Ukraine, whether it was delivered as promised or not.

Second, attrition favours Russia. As the Rasputitsa, aka General Mud, begins to impose itself the war is in danger of becoming a stalemate which over time will suit Russia. The Alliance should thus be urgently considering what it will do to block any Russian counter and enable Kyiv to overcome Russia’s rebuilt defensive lines come the spring, which will coincide with NATO’s 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in Washington.

Third, the Russo-Ukraine War is now geopolitical Rasputitsa. China is determined that Russia will not lose and is supplying Moscow directly with helicopters and other vital materiel, and indirectly using North Korea as a conduit for other materiel. For all the wishful thinking, and for all its verbal and actual support for Ukraine, American and Western European fear of Russian nukes HAS prevented them from doing more to ensure Ukraine has any chance of reclaiming its pre-2014 borders, let alone its pre-1991 borders. Danish and Dutch F-16s are to be welcomed, but they will not be the game-changer that some hope.

Third, there are allies who now believe that Russia is a paper tiger and that there is thus little pressure for them to fulfil the goals set out in the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept. Any strategic pause, for that is what a stalemate in Ukraine would amount to, will give Russia the time and space it needs to learn

the lessons of its own incompetence and rebuild its armed forces, whatever the economic consequences. That is precisely what former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev meant when in May he suggested the war could last for decades. In a February 2023 opinion piece Medvedev also said that, "If the question of Russia's existence is seriously raised, it will not be decided on the Ukrainian Front".

Fourth, whilst there are several peace initiatives/peace feelers underway, most notably that being proposed by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, they all in some way reward Russia for its aggression. What is striking about all these peace initiatives is how very European they are. The history of European peace treaties is traditionally built on a marked lack of principle by which the aggressor is partially rewarded for its aggression in return for the aggressed being partially compensated. Even the Congress of Vienna of 1815 and the treatment of defeated Nazi Germany by the Western Allies post-1945 fitted that pattern. The only 'peace' treaty that did not was the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and that simply created the conditions for World War Two.

Therefore, the **Western governments now saying that, "The official policy is..." are looking at alternatives precisely because they are not going to step up further. They also means that when they say it is up to Ukraine to decide when the war ends, it isn't.** At some point there will be a ceasefire, that will turn into some form of typically European 'peace' by which Russia will get to hold on to some of the Ukrainian land it has stolen in return for what is left of Ukraine being offered NATO membership. And, if Kyiv does not get NATO membership? Ukraine will be conquered peace by peace.

## HARD TRUTH NATO

Let me now turn to the wider struggle. Is NATO doing enough to defend itself going forward given the confusion of interests with values and the sacrifice of longer-term strategy for short-term politics? In the twenty years to 2021, the combined EU countries increased defence expenditure by 20%, the US by 66%, Russia by 292% and China by 592%. (FN)



**Is NATO doing enough to defend itself going forward given the confusion of interests with values and the sacrifice of longer-term strategy for short-term politics?**

What is enough? At the very least, the Alliance must do enough to make the risk of attack on all and any of its nations simply too high for all and any adversary to contemplate. Deterrence concerns communicating strategic depth, be it deterrence by denial or deterrence by punishment. 'Depth' is not just fighting power, it is a complex combination of political will, strategic communications, societal resilience, and technological and industrial might. It is for these reasons that for Ukraine to defend itself NATO must offset the relative lack of strategic depth compared with Russia. Creating strategic depth was the implicit challenge of both the 2022 NATO Madrid Summit and the latest NATO Strategic Concept, the 2023 NATO Vilnius Summit and will be the central theme of the 2024 NATO Washington Summit. So, the answer to the question is yes, but... NATO is just about doing enough for now, but it is highly questionable whether the NATO nations will enable the Alliance to realise the 'family of plans' General Chris Cavioli and his team have developed to future proof the Alliance. They will need to given what is coming at Europeans just over the digital horizon.

In March 2023, the NATO Chief Scientist, Dr Bryan Wells, published "NATO Technology Trends 2023-2043". The core message of the NATO report was both sobering and encouraging in equal measure. Between 2023 and 2043 advanced military technologies will become increasingly intelligent, interconnected, decentralised and digital, which was also the conclusion of my 2022 Oxford book *Future War and the Defence of Europe*, co-written with General John R. Allen and Lieutenant-General Ben Hodges. Consequently, military capabilities will become ever more autonomous of human command, networked, multi-domain, and precise, as well as very fast, hyper-fast. The technologies that appear in the battlespace will also be developed first and foremost by the commercial sector and thus have a raft of dual-use applications.



**The news that China has made a breakthrough in the development of hyper fast microchips will only accelerate such technological progress and accelerate the digital arms race that is already underway.** Micro-chips are the Dreadnoughts and ballistic missiles of the twenty-first century.

The good news is that the very nature of emergent, emerging, and disruptive technologies also provides an opportunity for NATO to also upgrade a credible deterrence and defence posture by turbo-charging the Alliance's operational and organisational effectiveness through a reinvigorated technological and industrial base. The NATO of 2043 will necessarily be a markedly different beast to the NATO of 2023 and will need to be. Critically, emerging and disruptive technologies (EDT) should further enable the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept's five Warfare Development Imperatives (WDI): Cognitive Superiority; Integrated Multi-Domain Defence; Cross-Domain Command; Layered Resilience; and wide-ranging Influence and Power Projection.

The not-so-good news is that NATO's adversaries, most notably China, are also fully engaged in exploiting these technologies for future war and in many respects seem to be significantly further ahead than Europeans. Moreover, they also present significant challenges to the Alliance across the operational, interoperability, ethical, legal, and moral spectrum that really do not bother the likes of Putin or Xi.

## **HARD TRUTH VILNIUS**

Given the geopolitical context the NATO Vilnius Summit was more than a bus-stop on the road from Madrid to Washington, but not much more. Ukraine was not offered either membership of the Alliance or a road map to it, but rather a vague commitment that at some point its future is in NATO. Déjà vu Bucharest all over again? The final Turkish obstacle to Swedish membership was removed and a Defence Investment Pledge 2.0 was agreed under the terms of which 2% GDP on defence so many have so hard to achieve since 2014 has now become a baseline, the minimum Allies should spend on defence. This includes 20% on new equipment annually which will include

research and development. Still, there is plenty of scope for the nations to fiddle the figures there. The much-vaunted Regional Defence Plans and robust in-place combat forces were confirmed but where and when the new 300,000 agile, multi-domain Allied Reaction Force of mainly Europeans will see the light of day remains unclear. There was the usual cyber, space and China babble in the Summit Communiqué leavened by the equally usual NATO political correctness.

However, **there was one agreement which most commentators missed but which might in time be the thing the Vilnius Summit is remembered for – Defence Production Action Plan or DPAP.** The DPAP will have to survive the NATO bureaucracy first and ‘HQ’s’ almost genetically predisposition to strangle any innovative idea at birth in the name of ‘unity’. Look what is happening to the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA). That said, the idea that NATO will act as “convener, standard-setter, requirement-setter and aggregator and defence enabler to promote defence industrial capacity” is desperately needed.

It is about time! NATO Europe’s leaders have not so much taken their eye off the ball these past thirty years, they handed it over to potential enemies and invited them to kick us all in the teeth! The fielding times and affordability of European military equipment is so appalling it borders at times on the criminal and is a critical weakness in NATO’s defence and deterrence posture. This is because the lessons emerging from the Russo-Ukraine War are also clear: modern war is a giant black hole into which people and materiel vanish at an alarming rate far beyond that envisaged by the peacetime NATO establishment. At the very least, NATO European forces will need far more robust logistics, be far more forward deployed, with enhanced and far more secure military supply chains particularly important. Far more materiel is also needed, most notably ammunition, not least because of the rate at which Ukraine has been using up the weapons stocks of NATO Allies. Only then will the deterrence by denial agreed at Madrid be credible, as opposed to deterrence by punishment.

Furthermore, if the core of the NATO Defence Plan, Defence and Deterrence of the Euro-Atlantic Area, or DDA, is to be anything more than a

communiqué writer's wet dream the Allies desperately need to rebuild and build infrastructure to assist military mobility and remove all legal impediments to rapid cross border movements in a pre-war emergency. Deployed NATO forces will also need much improved force protection with the need to reduce the detectability and thus digital footprint of force concentrations ('bright butterflies') particularly pressing.

The war in Ukraine has also revealed the vulnerability of armour unsupported by infantry and helicopters in the battlespace, as well as the need for NATO forces to be able to dominate both fires and counter-fires, not least by using large numbers of expendable drones, strike drones and loitering systems allied to extremely expensive precision-guided munitions, such as ATACMS and Storm Shadow. Enhanced land-based, protected battlefield mobility is also needed together with increased force command resilience given how often the Ukrainians have been able to detect and 'kill' Russian forward (and less forward) deployed headquarters.

“**Planning is one thing:  
delivering another.**”

Planning is one thing: delivering another. None of the above can be realised without a new partnership with defence industries on both sides of the Atlantic and further partnerships with those in other democracies. This will at the very least include commitments to contracts that are longer, more stable, and more expensive than hitherto. This is because both military platforms and the systems that sit on them are about to undergo a technological revolution in which speed of data will drive speed of information which in turn will dictate both the speed of command and its relevance on the battlefield. **Europe is, as per usual, lagging way behind its competitors and not only going to have to spend more but radically-overhaul the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) far beyond the traditional metal-bashers and their hangers on.** 'Defence' will have to reach out to new tech communities and learn to operate at their rate of tempo.

## HARD TRUTH RESILIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Let me give you a sense of the scale of the challenge that confronts Allied leaders on our collective behalf. **The key to NATO's future credibility will be the demonstrable proof of robust military interoperability in extreme moments of stress during high-end warfare, which if events in Ukraine are any measure will demand both a mass of military capabilities at sufficient levels of relative capacity.** Industrial resilience will thus be a core plank not only of national deterrence but also NATO deterrence and defence posture. At the very least, the Alliance needs a new vision of burden-sharing built on a viable technological and industrial base that is interoperable on both sides of the Atlantic built on the principle of burden-sharing with programme collaboration from R&D to fielding between nations to economise on effort and maximise scale of production. First step? NATO and its agencies must undertake an immediate audit of industrial capability and capacity and, thereafter, act in the role of broker, ideally in conjunction with the European Defence Agency.

The specific aim of such a demarche would be to better understand the cradle-to- grave concept, development and acquisition of potentially revolutionary technologies that range across artificial intelligence, quantum computing, machine-learning, big data, Nanotech, materials, hypersonic and glide missile systems, drone swarming and a host of other technologies and capabilities.

Only then will the Alliance deliver the 2019 Military Strategy and the Warfare Development Initiative by developing a force model that can act as systems and platform integrator within Allied forces structures across the nations. The Alphen Group's Shadow NATO Strategic Concept called on the NATO Canadian and European Allies to go beyond current planning to preserve all-important high-end military interoperability into the future through the creation of a NATO Allied Command Operations Mobile Heavy Force (AMHF) that would consolidate all Allied Rapid Response Forces into a single pool of forces supported by the requisite force, logistical and wider support structures.

If speed of relevance is to be maintained the Alliance needs to adopt a concept of agile manufacturing and procurement that will better enable the exploitation of civilian technologies and thus far faster fielding of military

capability at the required capacity. ‘Spin-in’ from adjacent (non-defence) sectors and incentives for science and technology (S&T) collaboration expand defence’s ability to innovate. The pace at which ideas move from laboratory to frontline can be a deterrent but this relies on investment, focus and exploitation projects.



**Maintenance of a strong Science & Technology (S&T) base and supporting investment will be essential to sustain a warfighting edge.**

Maintenance of a strong Science & Technology (S&T) base and supporting investment will be essential to sustain a warfighting edge. Investment can be wasted if key R&D activity is not exploited quickly but to realise the scale needed given the threat any such effort will need to be far more co-ordinated and far more transnational in Europe.

**Critically, defence requirements and procurement practice have yet to embrace fully data and information-centric capability.** This is not to eschew the importance of platforms, but they will need to be better configured around the information [on-board or remote] operators will need to fulfil their mission and be able to integrate into the wider Allied force.

Given that most equipment in service in 2035 is either in service now or is just coming into service, platform-based capability will need to accommodate faster refresh rates for information- and other sub-systems. There are some historical precedents for this and current experimentation in the field. For example, in 1906 *HMS Dreadnought* was a platform that fielded innovations that had been discreetly developed independently for decades prior to being finally brought together in one ship.

Growing through-life technical complexity will only be delivered and sustained effectively by innovative commercial arrangements with so-called ‘rainbow teams’ of large and small suppliers with these long-term relationships requiring two-way commitment, transparency, and flexibility.

Today, higher procurement costs result in fewer platforms being acquired with more integrated capability to compensate but this leads to unbearable affordability and risk management issues, a vicious cycle of cost escalation, delayed delivery and reduced mass leads to indigenous industry abandoning key areas and leaving fewer off the shelf options. It is a defence-industrial vicious circle and why governments do not commit.

While significant effort is applied to delivering large-scale programmes, operational military capability is most often the result of combining those programme outputs. However, the future will demand far greater focus on thematic or cross-cutting multi-platform and/or multi-domain system of systems (e.g. integrated air defence) - which will be the key enabler of future military capability. Such focus can only be established with an honest broker at the helm and that must be NATO.

Although best led by market forces, there is strategic risk in the marked decline in the number of defence industries that has taken place. Reliance on a few 'mega-primers' will create dependencies which may not be able to deliver capability and materiel scale up at times of crisis.

Despite the Alliance having academic, research and commercial industry partners who lead the world in the development and fielding of some of the most exciting, breakthrough technologies for a range of applications, defence innovation too often focuses more on discovering ideas than innovation adoption. Generally high-tech, safety intensive nature will require systems thinking to be applied from the outset allied to the early engagement of regulators, investors and producers.

NATO will need more manoeuvrable European mass than exist today but fewer forces and less combat mass than in previous eras of confrontation. This creates an imperative for greater interoperability and multi-domain integration that in turn will require greater rigour in enforcing common standards (STANAGs) and measuring the effectiveness of technical and procedural interoperability.

Furthermore, defence and defence industry are increasingly in competition with other (non-defence) industrial sectors for the skills required to create

and sustain defence capability. An enterprise approach to the development and nurturing of relevant skills between public and private sectors will thus be required to ensure the right number and balance exists and will undoubtedly require closer collaboration and some employment innovation.

There are other lessons from the war in Ukraine. **Focussing time and resources on totemic platforms, without an equal focus on the ‘dull but essential’ supporting aspects (such as materiel and weapons stockpiles) undermines performance and effect.** At the very least, a revalidation of stockpile planning is urgently required in the light of recent experience in Ukraine.

Finally, there is also the danger the Alliance could become blinded by emerging and disruptive technologies. Human enhancement via twenty-first century professional military education and training (PMET) at all levels of mission command will be vital. Cognitive superiority will be as important as technological superiority and most definitely not an afterthought, which it too often is. PMET needs to do far more at all levels of intended effect, but it also needs to be far more imaginative, not least assisting in conscious work on using technology (simulation et al) to make the operation of platforms and systems easier from both a motor skills and cognitive perspective.

## **NATIONAL ENDEAVOUR, EUROPEAN SECURITY**

The European Allies need to relearn some of the ‘national endeavour’ lessons of industrial warfare – albeit contextualised for the information age – and provide the investment required to place their defence industries on a war footing. This needs to drive a closer and more transparent relationship between defence and industry to ensure that their forces can acquire and maintain the right information technology, combat platforms, support systems and munition stockpiles within the right timescale and at the right cost to deter and, if required, defeat future threats. The all-embracing nature of 21st century warfighting technology suggests that industry must be an integral part of the through-life team that helps to maintain defence’s combat edge and readiness. It also suggests that if the US wants more capable allies it will need

to assist far more than it does by ending some of the constraints imposed by the Conventional Arms Transfer (CAT) policy by taking a more strategic view of the benefits of such support with less emphasis on narrow American economic interests. Such American engagement will assist Europeans overcome the hidden but massive impediments and hidden inefficiencies from which the European defence supply chain suffers.

**Thankfully, there is a lesson from British history from which NATO might draw. In 1939 Britain was far better prepared for a long war than Nazi Germany, whilst Germany was much better able to fight a short war than Britain.** A bit like NATO and Russia today. In 1935, the “Shadow Scheme” was established by the British Government the aim of which was to subsidise manufacturers to construct a system of new ‘shadow factories’, reinforced by additional capabilities at existing aircraft and motor industrial plants that could immediately increase war production on the outbreak of war. It was this scheme that led rapidly to radar, the Hurricane and Spitfire fighters and eventually the Lancaster bomber. It also enabled Britain to surpass Nazi Germany in aircraft production in June 1940, a lead Britain never lost not least because of the entry into the skilled workforce of millions of British women.

Improved efficiency was as important to Britain in 1940 as it is to the Alliance today. For example, the Ministry of Aircraft Production had an immediate galvanising effect. Upon taking over Royal Air Force storage facilities it was discovered that whilst the RAF had accepted over 1,000 aircraft from industry, only 650 had been despatched to squadrons. Managerial and organisational changes were introduced that also had an immediate effect. Between January and March 1940 2,729 aircraft were produced by British industry, of which 638 were front-line fighters. However, between April to May 1940 aircraft production increased to 4,578 aircraft, some 1,875 of which were fighters. By June 1940, British fighter production reached 250% of German fighter production, whilst the overhauled repair service returned nearly 1,900 aircraft to action many times more than their German counterparts. As a consequence, German fighters available for operations over Britain during the Battle of Britain fell from 725 to 275, whilst fighters available for RAF operations increased from 644 on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1940 to 732 on October 1<sup>st</sup>.



Key to the success of the Plan was the Directorate of Aeronautical Production which began work in March 1936 and had two goals: rapid expansion of defence industrial production; and the dispersal of the defence industrial base to protect against air attack. By October 1937, there were five Shadow Factories already in production, whilst in July 1938 one Shadow Factory completed its first complete bomber. The Plan was also extended to industry in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa.

The most famous of the Shadow Factories was at Castle Bromwich near Birmingham, which today is the home of Jaguar Cars. The plant opened in June 1940 and after some initial problems went on to build 12,000 Spitfires of 24 variants! The Shadow Plan also standardised research, development and production. For example, the Rolls Royce Merlin engine became the power-plant for most (but not all) wartime aircraft. The Plan also looked to the future by helping to fund the development of the jet engine and the world's second operational jet fighter, the Gloster Meteor, which entered service with the RAF three months after the German Me 262.

By 1944, there were 175 dispersed Shadow Factories in operation, many of which were linked to industries not traditionally associated with defence but with relevant supply chain expertise. The most famous aircraft to come from the Plan apart from the Spitfire and Lancaster was the 'wooden wonder', the de Havilland Mosquito, a twin-engined fighter bomber that could outstrip for speed most single-engined fighters. The RAF was not the only service to benefit. The new King George V class battleships were built from 1936 by many workers and technicians recruited under the Shadow Plan, whilst the British Army got new tanks some of which, contrary to popular myth, were not at all bad.

## **THE NATO SHADOW PLAN**

Unfortunately, much of the advanced European Defence, Technological and Industrial Base has been left to rot since the end of the Cold War, whilst too much of the rot has been preserved under the heading of 'industrial policy'.

Production facilities are few, many are obsolete and orders even fewer and only seem to come when there is a political rather than a strategic imperative. Major systems only survive from cradle to grave because industry has learnt the vital need to tie government into contracts with punitive consequences when broken, whilst much of the 'kit' ordered has more to do with political power than fighting power.

Consequently, the unit cost of equipment European forces desperately need has become highly inflated, much of it obsolete before it is even fielded because innovation and technological advancement have been 'de-prioritised'. This has led to procurement disasters, most notably but by no means exclusively, Britain's Ajax armoured infantry fighting vehicle, a platform that has had so many systems put on it looks more like a Christmas tree than an armoured vehicle.

Whilst the Russo-Ukraine War has demonstrated the folly of emaciating Europe's defence industrial base, deterring future war makes its renaissance urgent and vital. **The Defence Production Action Plan is not yet a Shadow Plan and if it is not to be yet another of those 'wizard wheezes' announced with much NATO fanfare only to be lost in the vacuum of political irresolution DPAP will need to be pushed through.** It will also need to forge new partnerships across the entirety of a radically reconceived European security and defence supply chain that includes the Alliance, EU, governments, prime contractors, defence sub-contractors, systems-developers and providers who have thus far had little or nothing to do with defence.

The Shadow Plan is the great unsung hero of the British war effort between 1935 and 1945. Without the Plan Britain would have been defeated in 1940. The Alliance may not be AT war but is certainly engaged IN war and, like Britain in 1935, it most certainly is engaged in a systemic struggle, even if many leaders are in denial. Such struggles are not won by fine words, lofty summits and well-written communiqués crafted to meet the political need of the moment. They are won by the sustained, systemic, and considered application of resources, technologies, equipment and forces over time and space. If NATO does not learn and apply such lessons from the past the Chinese and Russians will.

## THE RIGA TEST 2023

In the past I have considered the annual Riga Test from the viewpoint of the security and safety of the people of this heroic city. Now it is time for the people of Riga to hold Western Europe to account. The United States might be the military heart of NATO, but Western Europe is its political heart. **As the Americans are stretched the world over by China, Russia, and others, and compressed within by a domestic agenda every bit as challenging as any in Europe the future credibility of NATO deterrence and defence will rest on the ability of Britain, France, and Germany to lead.** Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland are in many ways leading by example but with all due respect are too small to buttress Europe against a dangerous future. For example, in 2024 the Polish defence budget will be an impressive €35 billion. The British defence budget will be €62 billion.



**The United States might be the military heart of NATO, but Western Europe is its political heart.**

Solidarity is in short supply. Therefore, it is vital the people of Riga and their leaders do not under-estimate the softness of the defence commitment to the Alliance of their Western European allies. Given Riga's history complacency about such matters is thankfully unlikely but beset by a host of domestic challenges ranging from crumbling infrastructure, mass irregular migration, stagnant economies and indifferent leadership Western Europe has become a self-obsessed place these days, in which the word 'strategy' is routinely over-sec but rarely implemented. Nor do they like each other. The Franco-German relationship is a pale shadow of its former self whilst the Franco-British relationship is worse than at any time since World War Two.

And yet these allies are not just cornerstone powers, they are capstone powers. Moreover, solidarity will not be found in a 'common' this or a 'common' that. Transferring ever more critical state defence sovereignty to ever less

efficient Brussels bureaucracies is like buying an expensive yacht – it looks nice on paper but is really a black hole in the water into which one pours huge amounts of money and power for little obvious gain other than the chance to be a virtuous European. No, the centre of political gravity in Europe remains its nation-states for it is with those states that for all their many imperfections the people of Europe continue to identify.

NATO is the future just as it was our past. Those who believe that Russia is a busted flush miss the essential nature of Russia – its 'bustedness' is its very nature and the source of its danger. Russia might be struggling in the Rasputitsa of Ukraine and its people suffering but that is all Russia's corrupt elite have to offer Russia's people. Moscow has a warped sense of its own greatness reinforced by a warped view of its own history which means the only 'legitimacy' the Kremlin has is generated by depicting the democracies to its West as a threat.

It is precisely for this reason the people of Riga and the wider Baltic States are on the front-line of freedom. The Russian threat will be back because Russia has nothing else to offer, which is precisely why Finland and Sweden are trusting their future security to NATO, not the EU. However, for the Alliance to be credible in its critical role Europeans will need to take on ever more of the burdens for European security and defence if the Americans are to continue to offer the security guarantee still so essential for a peaceful Europe, even if the Americans need to help make that happen.

How does the Alliance get from an uncertain now to a more assured future.? First, our leaders must look at the world as it is, not as they would like it to be. Second, they must properly understand the scale of the threats Rigans and their fellow Europeans face given China's epochal determination to contest American power and use Russia as its useful idiot. Third, they must begin preparing for a radical defence future. It is for those reasons I instigated the Future War and Deterrence Conference in 2022 and the just held Future War, Strategy and Technology Conference at Wilton Park in the UK. Above all, our leaders must fulfil the NATO Strategic Concept, NATO Agenda 2030 and all the commitments they made at the NATO Madrid Summit, the NATO Vilnius

Summit, and will make at the 2024 75<sup>th</sup> NATO anniversary summit in Washington DC...and then far more.

The final hard truth is this: leaders must have the political courage and strategic foresight to act radically. Not simply modernise NATO deterrence and defence as General Cavioli and his team have done so ably, but radically upgrade it because only they can do it. 'Upgrade' is the optimal word because the next twenty years will see the digital transformation of defence. Consequently, Rigans, Latvians, Britons, Germans, and the rest of us all have a choice to make: are we prepared to make the collective effort and pay the collective price of the future peace which this article addresses, or rather are we simply going to await the shock that is coming our way?

Russia knows what it wants but cannot yet get it, we in the collective West do not know what we want and cannot in any case agree what we want. In the absence of agreement, we avoid rather than grip the search for strategic consensus. Moscow conversely for all its hideous incompetence has at least established some war aims.

First, Russia's war in Ukraine is not about territory it is about power, coercion and control which unless checked knows no bounds. Second, Russia is preparing for a long war, militarising youth, stoking nationalism, and turning Russian history once again into propaganda. Third, Russia wants not simply to extinguish Ukraine but also the very essence of Ukraine, its language and its culture and turn them into 'New Russians'. If it could do the same to Latvians it would. Fourth, Russia's war in Ukraine and Russia's war against the West are two different things even if they are intrinsically linked. We are not even sure we are at war whilst Russia is engaging in war by all means possible short of a force-on-force attack on NATO.



**The hardest truth of all is that there can be no peace without risk but that means the risk-averse having the political courage to do just that – take risk.**

We must not allow Russia to succeed in Ukraine and we must never allow Russia to succeed in Riga or anywhere else. Russia will fail as they so often do but how many people, including Russians, will have to die before Moscow does? Surely, it would make more sense to stop them in Ukraine and block them elsewhere. Are we up to it? **The hardest truth of all is that there can be no peace without risk but that means the risk-averse having the political courage to do just that – take risk.**

## THE LATVIAN TRANSATLANTIC ORGANISATION (LATO)

LATO is a non-governmental organisation established in 2000. Its aims are to inform the public about NATO and Latvia's membership in the Alliance, to organise informative public events about Latvian and Euro-Atlantic security issues, to promote partnerships with other countries, to lay the foundations for Latvia's international role as a member of NATO, and to foster the international community's understanding of Latvia's foreign and security policy aims. During the past 20 years, LATO has numerous achievements to be proud of. LATO organises the most influential security conference in the Baltic Sea region: The Rīga Conference facilitates discussion about issues affecting the transatlantic community and annually gathers international experts in foreign affairs and security/defence matters, policy makers, journalists, and business representatives. LATO promotes policy relevant research on topics such as gender equality, peace and security, resilience in the borderland, and the subjective perception of security. A series of various initiatives intended for increasing the interest of Latvian, Baltic and European youth in security related issues have been put in motion, including an annual future leader's forum and masterclasses for young political leaders. LATO's most recent projects are several information campaigns aimed to inform and educate wider publics about resilience, transatlantic bonds, national and international security. LATO has the SecureBaltics.eu internet platform, which serves as an information hub for those who are eager to join the debate on international security.

### CONTACTS:

E-mail: [lato@lato.lv](mailto:lato@lato.lv)

phone: (+371) 26868668

Facebook: Latvian Transatlantic Organisation

Instagram: [lato\\_lv](https://www.instagram.com/lato_lv)

Twitter: [@LATO\\_L](https://twitter.com/LATO_L)

## **PROGRAM WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

LATO launched its first initiative at the Rīga Conference 2020 with a discussion as part of focus on the Women, Peace and Security Initiative. In 2021, a series of different activities on behalf of LATO have been established including special discussion in the Rīga Conference and upcoming publications and a documentary film. In 2022, we hosted two discussions on the WPS agenda in the Rīga Conference. In the second part of the year, we conducted a mentoring program and offered a special training course for young women professionals dealing with security issues or interested in WPS agenda. In 2023, The Rīga Conference continues to lead the pace with a dedicated discussions in the Rīga Conference and a new mentoring program has been launched for aspiring young leaders.

The promise of the Women, Peace and Security agenda set by the United Nations provides a framework for sustainable peace amidst a global crisis, and it is powered by a fearless women's movement that knows few bounds. But, while the agenda has strong support from governments all over the world, that support hasn't plugged the persistent implementation gaps. This is also the case in Latvia and the Baltics.

The general public's knowledge on the importance, leadership and influence of women enlisted within the defence, military and security sectors are quite minimal and their role in defence is often overlooked. Therefore, LATO has been working on developing a series of activities with an overarching aim of raising awareness and understanding on women in the defence, military and security sectors.

The LATO Mentoring Program targets young women professionals from Latvia to connect them with multiple highly ranked, highly achieving and highly reputed women professionals in the defence and foreign affairs sectors. By connecting both the successful and the aspiring leaders, the program bridges the gap in understanding and support and aims to create a long-term network of like-minded individuals. Thus, LATO not only encourages the growth of young professionals and raises awareness of the need for such encouragement at different levels. The mentoring program is supported by the German Embassy in Riga and NATO Public Diplomacy Division.



## **INFORMATION SPACE SECURITY PROJECT #BORDERRESILIENCE**

From 1 November to 31 December 2021 the #BorderResilience information space security project was implemented under the leadership of the Latvian Transatlantic Organisation (LATO). The project included four workshops with eight simulation sessions in the Eastern border regions of Latvia. The project aimed to identify the practices of border communities in countering information attacks, especially on border security issues. The experience and knowledge offered by the communities was used to develop policy recommendations and further steps to promote information security in society with the special emphasis on the border regions. At the end of the project, the results, evaluation and recommendations were presented for the stakeholders, who took further steps in implementation on new information security-oriented policies. The final report of the project is available on the websites of the Latvian Transatlantic Organisation [www.lato.lv](http://www.lato.lv) and [www.securebaltics.eu](http://www.securebaltics.eu). Methodological and social campaign materials were also developed. The project is turned to become a strategic initiative, which encompasses new projects working together to serve the needs of the larger communities.

The project was implemented in cooperation with the State Chancellery and the NATO Public Diplomacy Division.

## **SECURE BALTICS**

LATO holds an internet platform SecureBaltics ([www.securebaltics.eu](http://www.securebaltics.eu)).

The site gathers different materials – policy briefs, discussions, interviews, studies, educational materials – created in the framework of the Rīga Conference, as well as work from our partners. It is a stable platform that the Rīga Conference community can rely on and use as a credible source of information in the region.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the platform is to collect the know-how that is generated by the excellent minds gathered at the Rīga Conference on an annual basis. The Rīga Conference gathers regional and international experts in foreign policy and defence, academics, journalists, and business representatives by promoting the discussions on issues affecting the transatlantic community. It has been growing in influence since its inception in 2006.

Every year, for two days the National Library of Latvia is the centre of the most important regional discussions on security issues. However, it is not enough to engage in these discussions only once a year. Therefore, LATO developed SecureBaltics as a practical tool which can encourage the use of any resources and materials that have been produced as part of the Rīga Conference or its follow-up events.

### **Reach**

The platform provides materials in both, English and Latvian, in order to reach multiple audiences. It is intended for the traditional Rīga Conference community of opinion leaders and experts in foreign policy and defence matters as well as any other interested parties that could benefit from the generated materials such as high school teachers looking for study materials.

### **Vision**

LATO is working on SecureBaltics to become the go-to hub for resource associated with defence and security issues in the Baltics within the next few years.

### **Materials**

The platform SecureBaltics provides resources:

- For all interested parties, including expert community, in the form of interviews, policy briefs, commentaries on topical issues
- For teachers and lecturers in the form of study materials and tests that can be included in academic curriculum
- For students in the form of lectures and study materials, as well as interactive study materials through games.

### **Partners**

The SecureBaltics portal is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, NATO Public Diplomacy Division.

Editor: Žaneta Ozoliņa  
Project manager: Sigita Struberga  
Cover design: Laura Benga  
Layout: Inese Siliniece

© Latvian Transatlantic Organisation  
© Authors of Policy Brief

Publishing house: SIA GREEN PRINT  
17 Andrejostas street 17, Riga, LV-1045

ISSN 2661-5789

The views expressed in this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Latvian Transatlantic Organisation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, NATO.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

---

Professor Julian Lindley-French is Chairman of The Alphen Group (TAG), Senior Fellow at the Institute for Statecraft in London, Director of Europa Analytica in the Netherlands, and a Fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute. He was educated at the University of Oxford, UEA and the European University Institute in Florence



He has thirteen published books to his name, many major reports and articles and has held three professorial chairs, including Eisenhower Professor of Defence Strategy. He was also Strategic Advisor to two Chiefs of the British Defence Staff and has held senior policy, operational and project positions for the UK, NATO, EU and UN in London, Brussels, Geneva, New York and elsewhere. He was formerly Director of both the International Training Course (ITC) and the European Training Course (ETC) at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.

In 2022, he published *Future War and the Defence of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press & Stuttgart: Kosmos) with US General (Ret.) John R. Allen and US Lieutenant General (Ret.) Ben Hodges. In 2022 he also drafted the *Shadow NATO Strategic Concept for NATO* Secretary-General, and in March 2023 presented "A Comprehensive Strategy for a Secure Ukraine" to NATO and partner defence ministers. In May 2023, he published a new book entitled *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (New York: Routledge). He is currently writing *The Retreat from Strategy* (London: Hurst) with General Lord Richards. He is also Director of the high-level *Future War, Strategy and Technology Conference* which will take place in October 2023 and will begin work shortly on the *TAG Russia Strategy*.



Ministry of  
Foreign Affairs  
Republic of Latvia



Ministry of Defence  
Republic of Latvia

