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Emergency Summit on Russia in the Baltics
North Atlantic Treaty Organization •
Organisation du Traité de l'Atlantique Nord
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“The world needs NATO's strength and leadership now more than ever before.”
- **Mike Pence, 48th Vice President of the United States**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the NATO-Russia Council

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an alliance of countries from Europe and North America. It provides a unique link between these two continents, enabling them to consult and cooperate in the field of defense and security, and conduct multinational crisis-management operations together. Politically, NATO promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defense and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict. If diplomatic efforts fail, NATO has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations. These are carried out under the collective defense clause of NATO's founding treaty - Article 5 of the *Washington Treaty* or under a United Nations mandate, alone or in cooperation with other countries and international organizations.

The NATO Russia Council (NRC) was conceived as a mechanism for consultation, consensus-building, cooperation, joint decision and joint action. Within the NRC, the individual NATO member states and Russia have worked as equal partners on a wide spectrum of security issues of common interest.

Following Russia's illegal military intervention in Ukraine and its violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, in April 2014 the Alliance suspended all practical cooperation between NATO and Russia including in the NRC. However, the Alliance agreed to keep channels of communication open in the NRC to allow the exchange of views, first and foremost on this crisis.

Three meetings of the NATO-Russia Council took place in 2016 and the first meeting in 2017 took place on 30 March. NATO remains open to a periodic, focused and meaningful political dialogue with Russia on the basis of reciprocity, as agreed at the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016. The NATO-Russia Council has an important role to play as a forum for dialogue and information exchange, to reduce misunderstandings and increase predictability.

The purpose of the NRC has been to serve as the principal structure and venue for advancing the relationship between NATO and Russia. Operating on the basis of consensus, it has sought to promote continuous political dialogue on security issues with a view to the early identification of emerging problems, the determination of common approaches, the development of practical cooperation and the conduct of joint operations, as appropriate. Work under the NATO-Russia Council has focused on all areas of mutual interest. New areas have been added to the NRC's agenda by the mutual consent of its members.

Crisis Simulation¹

This emergency meeting takes place in light of a worsening situation in the Baltic State of Latvia. Despite the protection and solidarity that NATO and European Union (EU) membership seem to provide, the three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) retain a sense of uncertainty and vulnerability. They are territorially small and militarily weak, and their economies, though prosperous, are tiny compared with other members of NATO and the EU. Part of the Soviet Union for decades before it collapsed in 1991, the countries also include significant ethnic Russian populations. NATO members must decide how to respond to worsening relations between Latvia's ethnic Latvian majority and its ethnic Russian minority—and to Russia's intervention in the conflict.

In recent months, ethnic relations in Latvia—rarely cordial but almost never violent—have grown steadily tenser. An insurgent faction has arisen within the political party known as *Harmony*, which has traditionally represented ethnic Russian voters. This faction, calling itself *Rodina* (Russian for motherland), has reached out to nationalist groups within Russia itself. *Rodina* enjoys a measure of support in Latvia's big cities—some of which are almost half Russian. More radical splinter groups have appeared in towns on the Russian border, where the percentage of ethnic Russians is higher still.

U.S. and European leaders initially believed that the Latvian government would be able to manage the problem and avert a crisis. In recent weeks, however, strikes at several factories in Russian-majority towns turned unexpectedly violent. *Rodina* and local groups rushed to support the strikers and appeared to invite confrontations with police. Parliamentarians in Moscow embraced the workers' cause. The television channel RT (Russia Today) and other parts of the Russian propaganda machine gave the story around-the-clock coverage.

The Latvian government concluded that a true national crisis was at hand when Latvian intelligence services received information that a Russian special operations unit had crossed the border and established a command center in one of the striking factories. These forces, Latvian officials feared, were the same "little green men" made famous during Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Declaring a state of emergency and imposing martial law in areas along the Russian border, the Latvian prime minister called for national unity against foreign interference. Many ethnic Russians in Latvia interpreted her remarks as impugning their loyalty, and after her speech *Rodina* managed to hold the largest rally in its history—in downtown Riga, Latvia's capital. (A Beatles tribute band stirred the crowd with an angry version of "Back in the USSR.") A new and more intense phase of the crisis had now begun.

Soon after the declaration of martial law, U.S. intelligence agencies detected the presence of significant Russian military concentrations, including heavy armor units, on the Latvian border. This information, which Washington shared with Riga but did not announce publicly, soon appeared on Latvian television and social media, heightening the national alarm. NATO governments responded with immediate expressions of concern and support for their Latvian ally. Russian spokesmen downplayed the information, insisting that the massing of forces was a routine exercise. Routine or not, the maneuvers also involved active patrols by Russian aircraft and naval vessels in the entire Baltic region. The chairman of the Russian parliament's foreign affairs committee noted publicly that "volunteers" who had served in eastern Ukraine might soon be dispatched to Latvia.

As this crisis unfolds, NATO faces a seeming repetition of Russian actions in Ukraine—the exploitation of a neighbor's internal divisions, the infiltration of special operations forces, a build-up of regular units on the

¹ This section was excerpted from the Council on Foreign Relations' [Model Diplomacy Online Case \(Simulation\) "Russia and NATO in the Baltic"](#) (2016).

border, and a potential Russian seizure of neighboring territory. The stakes for NATO would be considerably higher should such moves occur in one of the other member countries. You must consider a number of variables as you meet to choose among potential responses:

- How to send Moscow a strong signal of determination without provoking Russian escalation, encouraging new clashes inside Latvia, and making an already dangerous situation completely unmanageable.
- How to balance diplomatic initiatives that might ease tensions with military measures that would make it possible to defend Latvia if deterrence fails; and,
- Finally, how to develop effective public explanations of policy at a time when Russian propaganda is blaming Latvia for the crisis.

Origins of this Crisis²

Both the clash between Latvia's ethnic majority and its largest minority and the broader stand-off between Russia on the one hand and Latvia and its Western allies on the other have multiple origins.

1. The Legacy of Ukraine

Relations between Russia and the West had been deteriorating even before 2014, but the crisis over Ukraine crystallized hostility and mistrust on both sides. Lasting damage was done to trade, financial ties, energy cooperation, diplomatic interaction, and—above all—to expectations of partnership and cooperation. NATO has felt obliged to treat the security commitments made to its east European members with greater seriousness. In this charged atmosphere, members of the alliance solemnly reaffirmed their vows of collective defense. This reaffirmation has surely increased NATO's ability to deter challenges but at the same time may mean less flexibility in responding to challenges when they arise.

The Ukraine crisis left its mark on Latvian domestic politics as well. Ethnic Russian nationalists in Latvia had more opportunities to reach out to angry counterparts in Russia. And they stirred more anxiety among other Latvians when they did.

2. Lack of Russian Membership in Major Western Institutions

Since the end of the Cold War, every U.S. president has sought to forge a cooperative relationship with Russia. Yet finding a way to give Russia a large role in the major multilateral institutions of the West, such as NATO and the European Union, proved very difficult. Whatever the reasons for the failure to integrate Russia fully into the Western-led order—explanations are numerous—most Russians appear to have accepted a narrative of geopolitical grievance. From senior commentators to government insiders to people on the street, they argue that Russia enjoyed too little respect from the West after the Soviet collapse. Their country's strategic orientation and national identity seemed up for grabs in the 1990s. Had the United States and its allies treated Russian interests more sensitively in those years, such thinking goes, Russia could have evolved into a reliable, democratic, Western-oriented partner. That is no longer the case.

² This section was excerpted from the Council on Foreign Relations' [Model Diplomacy Online Case \(Simulation\) "Russia and NATO in the Baltic"](#) (2016).

3. Russia's Political Evolution

Russian President Vladimir Putin's revanchist outlook has had lasting effects on Russian domestic politics. To be a credible force in Russian politics has come to mean adopting a nationalist vocabulary. The extreme chauvinism that appeared early in the Ukraine crisis may over time be tempered somewhat. Yet many Russian commentators also expect the nationalist mood to linger. Its effects may include increased damage to the reputation of any leader who is seen to back down from confrontation with the West (and greater payoffs for one who is seen to have avoided displays of weakness), greater caution and self-censorship among advisors who might otherwise be inclined to question bellicose policies, and greater incentives for government officials and other public figures to stoke international tensions with provocative statements and actions.

4. Political Repercussions of Europe's Economic Difficulties

In twenty-five years of independence, Latvia has generally enjoyed strong growth. It pursued economic reforms as a candidate country of the European Union for many years, and then as a full-fledged member of the EU after 2004. But the economic downturn of 2008 and 2009 was significant, and the EU has not yet recovered, economically or politically. As an institution, it remains under acute stress. Latvia's challenges are made still greater by proximity to Russia's troubled economy. Latvia had enjoyed considerable success in muting ethnic tensions, but despite its success these tensions have hardly disappeared. The economic difficulties of recent years risk reanimating them.

Assignment

Students, you have been assigned to one of fourteen NATO member countries, plus one NATO partner including: (1) Belgium, (2) Canada, (3) Denmark, (4) Estonia, (5) France, (6) Germany, (7) Italy, (8) Latvia, (9) Norway, (10) Poland, (11) Russia, (12) Spain, (13) Turkey, (14) United Kingdom, and (15) United States. Prior to Thursday's crisis simulation, please read through the important background resources and complete the "Questions to Consider." Come to Thursday's crisis simulation with a prepared statement (2-3 sentences) from the perspective of your member countries, expressing your country's position on the crisis.

Questions to Consider

1. What is your NATO member country's position on Russia's actions in Ukraine? What actions (or inactions) has your member country taken towards Russia in light of these actions?

2. What is the state of relations between your NATO member country and Russia?

3. Does your NATO member country benefit economically from trade with Russia? If so, how important is this relationship and how would economic sanctions impact your economy?

5. How your NATO member country been impacted by Russian propaganda efforts? If so, how has this impacted popular discourse and mainstream politics or elections?

6. Does your member country see its relationship with NATO in a favorable or unfavorable light?

7. What assets could your NATO member country lend to help resolve this developing crisis? These assets should include a mixture of diplomatic initiatives, military and economic measures, and public messaging and political support.

Resource Guide

I. General Background Resources

- *NATO-Russia relations: the facts*
North Atlantic Treaty Organization http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/topics_111767.htm
- *How Do European Countries Really See Russia?*
Foreign Policy
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/24/how-do-european-countries-really-see-russia/>
- *NATO-Russia Relations in a Post-Truth World*
Carnegie Europe
<http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/67798>
- *Interactive map of NATO*
North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<http://www.nato.int/nato-on-the-map/#lat=50.08733182041053&lon=-9.00962933125002&zoom=0>
- *Brief video giving background on NATO and why it still exists/how it works:*
North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kP9rAO3Mql8>

II. Belgium

- *Belgium seizes bank account of Russia's EU embassy*
Euobserver
<https://euobserver.com/foreign/129201>
- *President of Ukraine and Prime Minister of Belgium discussed support for Ukraine in achieving de-escalation in Donbas and success in reforms*
President of Ukraine – Official Website
<http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/prezident-obgovoriv-z-premyer-ministrom-belgiyi-pidtrimku-uk-35878>

III. Canada

- *Canada's response to the situation in Ukraine*
Global Affairs Canada
<http://www.international.gc.ca/international/ukraine.aspx?lang=eng>
- *Canada to send 1,000 soldiers to boost Nato presence on Russia border*
The Guardian
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/01/canada-to-send-1000-soldiers-to-boost-nato-presence-on-russia-border>
- *Russia warns Canada over 'blatantly unfriendly' Magnitsky Act*
CBC News
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/russia-warns-canada-magnitsky-1.4122758>

IV. Denmark

- *Russia threatens to aim nuclear missiles at Denmark ships if it joins NATO shield*
Reuters
<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-denmark-russia-idUSKBN0MI0ML20150322>
- *Secretary General thanks Denmark for its strong commitment to NATO*
North Atlantic Treaty Organization
http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_142301.htm
- *Denmark to play key role in Nato's Russia plans*
The Local – Denmark
http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_142301.htm
- *Denmark says 'Key Elements' of Russian Government Hacked Defense Ministry*
The New York Times
http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_142301.htm

V. Estonia

- *Russia sent 2,500 troops to its border near Latvia and Estonia amid fears of conflict and annexation*
Newsweek
<http://www.newsweek.com/russian-forces-drop-nato-border-632178>
- *With volunteers and U.S. tanks, Estonia tells Russia it's "Ready to fight"*
CBS News
<http://www.newsweek.com/russian-forces-drop-nato-border-632178>
- *NATO troops arrive in Estonia to deter "Russian aggression"*
Euronews
<http://www.euronews.com/2017/03/21/nato-troops-arrive-in-estonia-to-deter-russian-aggression>

VI. France

- *Putin visits France in hopes of mending strained ties*
LA Times
<http://www.ukrweekly.com/uwwp/relations-between-russia-and-turkey-undermined-by-status-of-crimea/>
- *Macron says France, Russia agree on need for Ukraine peace talks soon*
Reuters
<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-russia-ukraine-macron-idUSKBN18P1RL>
- *How France's Macron is pushing back against Putin*
Newsweek – Opinion article
<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-russia-ukraine-macron-idUSKBN18P1RL>

VII. Germany

- *Germany's Real Role in the Ukraine Crisis*
Foreign Affairs
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/eastern-europe-caucasus/germany-s-real-role-ukraine-crisis>
- *Germany and Russia – An Uneasy Partnership*
Handelsblatt Global
<https://global.handelsblatt.com/politics/germany-and-russia-an-uneasy-partnership-758648>
- *The Impact of Russian Interference on Germany's 2017 Elections*
The Brookings Institution
<https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-impact-of-russian-interference-on-germanys-2017-elections/>

VIII. Italy

- *With Italy No Longer in U.S. Focus, Russia Swoops to Fill the Void*
The New York Times
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/29/world/europe/russia-courts-italy-in-us-absence.html>
- *How should Europe respond to Russia? The Italian view*
European Council on Foreign Relations
http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_how_should_europe_respond_to_russia_the_italian_view353
- *Understanding Italy's Russia dilemma*
Russia Direct
<http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/italys-russia-dilemma>

IX. Latvia

- *How World War III Could Begin in Latvia*
Foreign Policy
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/16/how-world-war-iii-could-begin-in-latvia/>
- *Russia sent 2,500 troops to its border near Latvia and Estonia amid fears of conflict and annexation*
Newsweek
<http://www.newsweek.com/russian-forces-drop-nato-border-632178>
- *Fearing closer Trump ties with Putin, Latvia prepares for the worst*
The Washington Post
https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/fearing-closer-trump-ties-with-putin-latvia-prepares-for-the-worst/2016/11/18/f22b3376-ab54-11e6-8f19-21a1c65d2043_story.html?utm_term=.aa6f7a3a1fcb

X. Norway

- *Norway won't lift Russian sanctions*
NewInEnglish.no
<http://www.newsinenglish.no/2017/04/20/norway-wont-lift-russian-sanctions/>
- *Troubled waters: Norway keeps watch on Russia's Arctic Manoeuvres*
The Guardian
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/13/troubled-waters-norway-keeps-watch-on-russias-arctic-manoeuvres>
- *Norway, an Exemplar of NATO Burden-Sharing*
Foreign Affairs
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/norway/2017-01-02/norway-exemplar-nato-burden-sharing>
- *Fear of Invasion? Norway and Russia's Rocky Relationship*
The Politic
<http://thepolitic.org/a-rocky-relationship-norway-russia-and-fear-of-invasion/>

XI. Poland

- *With Russia Threat Looming, Poland Pins Cautious Hopes on a Trump Administration*
Foreign Policy
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/06/with-russia-threat-looming-poland-pins-cautious-hopes-on-a-trump-administration/>
- *NATO deploys troops to Poland while concerns about country's army rise*
Reuters
<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-russia-poland-idUSKBN17F290>
- *An unpredictable Russia: the impact on Poland*
European Council on Foreign Relations
http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_an_unpredictable_russia_the_impact_on_poland

XII. Russia

- *The World According to Russia*
The Atlantic
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/12/russia-putin-miroporyadok/422196/>
- *Russia and the West in a New Standoff*
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
<http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/06/14/russia-and-west-in-new-standoff-pub-71250>
- *What makes Putin tick, and what the West should do*
The Brookings Institution
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/what-makes-putin-tick-and-what-the-west-should-do/>

XIII. Spain

- *Spain's balancing act with Russia*
European Council on Foreign Relations
http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_spains_balancing_act_with_russia
- *Rajoy reminds Trump of Madrid's role in NATO international missions*
El Pais
https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/05/26/inenglish/1495783362_579328.html

XIV. Turkey

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<https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21717080-putin-and-erdogan-expect-different-and-contradictory-things-their-relationship-turkeys>
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AI Monitor
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- *Relations between Russia and Turkey are undermined by status of Crimea*
UKRWeekly
<http://www.ukrweekly.com/uwwp/relations-between-russia-and-turkey-undermined-by-status-of-crimea/>

XV. United Kingdom

- *Europe's borders UNDER THREAT: UK demands Russia quits Crimea in UN security meeting*
Sunday Express
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XVI. United States

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- *Reaffirming U.S. Commitment to a Sovereign and Whole Ukraine on the Third Anniversary of Russia's Crimean "Referendum"*
U.S. Dept. of State
<https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/03/268482.htm>
- *The U.S. tightened sanctions on Russia over Crimea*
CNN Money
<http://money.cnn.com/2017/06/20/news/russia-sanctions-treasury/index.html>