
Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Sanctuary, honor, and war termination: considerations for strategy in Baltic defense

Milevski, L.

Citation
Milevski, L. (2019). Sanctuary, honor, and war termination: considerations for strategy in Baltic defense. *Orbis*, *64*(1), 150-160. doi:10.1016/j.orbis.2019.12.010

Version:	Publisher's Version
License:	Licensed under Article 25fa Copyright Act/Law (Amendment Taverne)
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3201174

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Sanctuary, Honor, and War Termination: Considerations for Strategy in Baltic Defense

November 2019

By Lukas Milevski

Lukas Milevski is an assistant professor at Leiden University in the Netherlands, where he teaches strategy on the MA International Relations and BA International Studies programs. A Baltic Sea Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in 2017 and again in 2019, he has published two books with Oxford University Press, *The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought* (2016) and *The West's East: Contemporary Baltic Defense in Strategic Perspective* (2018).

Abstract: *Until the Russian Federation's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the West had not seriously considered strategy in the Baltic context. Although much research and deliberation has been undertaken on topics crucial to Baltic defense, these have tended to be focused narrowly on the military—operational and logistical considerations. Despite the clear importance of strategy, little has been written about it as a theory for Baltic defense in a hypothetical war. Two major considerations are worth highlighting in this strategic context: the problem of sanctuary and the importance of Western honor—particularly as both relate to war termination. Russia as a "sanctuary" puts a political limit on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) ability to coerce Russia militarily, whereas considerations of honor may prove an insufficiently strong motive to sustain active Western participation in a hypothetical war over the long term.*

The Baltic region has changed substantially over recent decades. After regaining independence in 1991, the Baltic states joined both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union in 2004. These states' concerns about the Russian Federation in 2008 were brushed aside by Western nations, seemingly desiring to portray Russia in a positive light. However, the optimism changed fundamentally in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea. Consequently, the region must once again face the possibility of war with Russia, which demands serious consideration of strategy. While considerable time has been devoted to operational questions and the military imbalance, about deterrence, and even about geopolitics in the Baltic region, little priority has been placed on actual *strategy*. Observers tend to be complacent, particularly in assuming that NATO would win a prolonged war against

© 2020 Published for the Foreign Policy Research Institute by Elsevier Ltd.

doi: 10.1016/j.orbis.2019.12.010

Russia.[1] Few have sought to combine the operational and political questions together to present an actual strategy, a *theory of success* in a hypothetical Baltic war.

This article seeks to address this topic. While it may be too early to offer an actual strategy or theory of success, it is certainly possible to raise considerations vital to any such endeavor.

The Need for Strategy

From the West's perspective, Russia would not be a threat in an ideal world. Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, this conceit was the basis of nearly all Western policies toward Russia, upset only fleetingly in 2008 before being truly upset in 2014. But the West does not live in such a fantasy world. Its ideal, but realistic, relationship with Russia is one in which Russia is deterred from attacking the Baltic states. This approach is problematic because neither NATO, nor any other entity, can strictly rely upon deterrence. Deterrence cannot be practiced. Phrases such as "to deter" or "the deterrent" are grammatically correct, but strategically unsound. "[D]eterrence is *inherently* unreliable. . . . Quite literally, deterrence can work only if the intended deteree chooses to be deterred. There is no way in which such a choice, for deterrence, can be guaranteed."[2] NATO may seek to shape the environment in such a way that the Kremlin is confronted with a more difficult task if it ever were to consider attacking the Baltic states. The West may hope to effect a deterred mindset within Russia through Western capabilities, military posture, strategy, and policy. Yet, these efforts all are viewed through the prism of the opponent's own perceptions and decision-making.

Achieving deterrence is increasingly problematic because NATO is unclear as to whether it is succeeding in creating the desired deterrence relationship or not. There is no evidence; we do not know why Russia has not invaded. This non-outcome *might* be because NATO has successfully deterred Russia, but the explanation may instead be that Russia has no intention of invading the Baltic states. A third and final reason may be that Russia simply has not invaded *yet*—but anticipates that this will occur at some point and is actively preparing for it. After all, a day before Russia invaded Crimea, Russia had not invaded Crimea. NATO's task in the Baltic states is burdened by fundamental uncertainty about Russia's future intentions.

In such circumstances, and assuming that NATO members desire to maintain the current regional order in and around, it becomes prudent to think beyond deterrence. As Bernard Brodie, U.S. military strategist, rightly argued in an early Cold War context about nuclear war, "[S]o long as there is a finite chance of war, we have to be interested in outcomes; and although practically all outcomes would be bad, some

[1] See, for example, Kris Osborn, "NATO vs. Russia in a War for the Baltic states: Who Wins?," *National Interest,* Nov. 8, 2018, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/nato-vs-russia-war-baltic-states-who-wins-35532.

[2] Colin S. Gray, "Deterrence and the Nature of Strategy," *Small Wars & Insurgencies,* vol. 11, no. 2 (2000), p. 20.

would be much worse than others."[3] This situation is especially true of the Balts themselves, who have no wish to subject their countries to Russian domination for a third (or fourth, depending on how one counts) time. To be interested in outcomes and how to achieve preferred outcomes is to think about strategy. And strategy is today's major existing gap in thinking about Baltic defense. Of course, this prudent approach does not imply that a Russian invasion of any of the Baltic states is likely, only that it can be a possible, and therefore serious, future contingency.

Although defense analysts have now begun thinking beyond deterrence, the level of consideration remains primarily focused on military operations and logistics. Among related publications, one may identify the alarming RAND report *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics*. Many others also exist.[4] Topics such as air defense, logistics, and anti-access/area denial have also been discussed in depth.[5] Since 2014, Lt. General (ret.) Ben Hodges, former commander of U.S. Army Europe, has advocated actively for improving NATO's military mobility. These considerations—logistics, military mobility, air defense, Russia's A2/AD challenge, and military operations—are all vital components of strategy and its potential success.

However, these components are in themselves not strategy. Strategy in a practical sense is a *theory of success* in war. Any theory of success encompasses not only operations, but also how these operations are intended to achieve the chosen political goals and, ultimately, end the war. Successful strategies should be self-concluding because through using force and other instruments they break the enemy's adversarial mindset and thereby create a context in which hostilities may be ended. Thus, strategy should necessarily encompass war termination. War plans that masquerade as strategies usually emphasize tactics and operations. This fact is consistent with the

[3] Bernard Brodie, "The Anatomy of Deterrence," *World Politics,* vol. 11, no. 2 (Jan. 1959), p. 178.

[4] David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics," RAND Report (2016); see, also, Ben S. Wermeling, "Fighting Russia? Modeling the Baltic Scenarios," *Parameters,* vol. 48, no. 2 (Summer 2018), pp. 63-76; Wesley Clark, Jüri Luik, Egon Ramms, and Richard Shirreff, "Closing NATO's Baltic Gap," International Centre for Defence and Security Report (May 2016); Ben Hodges, Janusz Bugajski, and Peter B. Doran, "Securing the Suwałki Corridor: Strategy, Statecraft, Deterrence, and Defense," Center for European Policy Analysis Report (July 2018); and Scott Boston, Michael Johnson, Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, and Yvonne K. Crane, "Assessing the Conventional Force Imbalance in Europe: Implications for Countering Russian Local Superiority," RAND Report (2018).

[5] On air defense, see, Christopher Harper, Tony Lawrence, and Sven Sakkov, "Air Defence of the Baltic states," International Centre for Defence and Security Report (May 2018); on logistics, see, Michael Shurkin, "The Abilities of the British, French, and German Armies to Generate and Sustain Armored Brigades in the Baltics," RAND Report (2017); on A2/AD from Kaliningrad, see, Stephan Frühling and Guillaume Lasconjarias, "NATO, A2/AD and the Kaliningrad Challenge," *Survival,* vol. 58, no. 2 (2016), pp. 95-116.

public debate about Baltic defense thus far. As Fred Charles Iklé noted in his classic volume on war termination,

> In part, governments tend to lose sight of the ending of wars and the nation's interests that lie beyond it, precisely because fighting a war is an effort of such vast magnitude. Thus, it can happen that military men, while skillfully planning their intricate operations and coordinating complicated maneuvers, remain curiously blind in failing to perceive that it is the outcome of the war, not the outcome of the campaigns within it, that determines how well their plans serve the nation's interests. At the same time, the senior statesmen may hesitate to insist that these beautifully planned campaigns be linked to some clear ideas for ending the war, while expending their authority and energy to oversee some tactical details of the fighting.[6]

If a plan does not lead to an anticipation of how military, along with non-military, actions might lead to political outcomes, it can only be an incomplete strategy at best.

With so many unresolved questions remaining, it may be too early to offer a strategy for Baltic defense. Nonetheless, the debate should be broadened to include the myriad considerations that inevitably will affect the overall strategy in the Baltic, albeit not necessarily its early military operations. Eventually, one must offer not only strategic direction to the planning of potential military operations, but also an informed consideration of the limits of those operations.

Two crucial limiting issues within the broader debate about Baltic defense—that have clear relevance to strategy—have yet to be discussed comprehensively. The first issue is the prospect of a hypothetical war in the Baltic being a limited war with a concomitant question on sanctuary. The second issue is the role of honor in Baltic defense, strategy, and war termination. To discuss these broad themes, we need to assume for argument's sake that the fierce operational and logistical challenges, of either defending the Baltic states or returning forces to the theatre after an initial defeat and then sustaining them there, have been achieved successfully.

The following discussion on sanctuary in limited wars and the role of honor assumes that strategy, as a theory of success in war, posits that defining success in a hypothetical Baltic war would include the preservation or restoration of the political and territorial integrity of the Baltic states.

Limited War and Sanctuary

The concept of sanctuary would be a critical consideration for strategy in the Baltic. During such a war, Russia as the only conceivable enemy in the Baltic would pose the main strategic problem, but the point here is not Russia as an adversary, but Russia as a national territory. This topic rarely has been touched upon in operational discussions. As the RAND report *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank* notes, "[B]y turning a NATO counterattack aimed at liberating the Baltic republics into an

[6] Fred Charles Iklé, *Every War Must End* (New York: Columbia University Press 2005), p. 2.

'invasion' of 'Russia,' Moscow could generate unpredictable but clearly dangerous escalatory dynamics."[7] Further,

> On a tactical level, a counteroffensive campaign into the Baltics would likely entail the desire, and perhaps even the necessity, of striking targets, such as long-range surface-to-air defenses and surface-to-surface fires systems, in territory that even NATO would agree constitutes 'Russia.' Under Russian doctrine, it is unclear what kinds or magnitudes of conventional attacks into Russian territory might trigger a response in kind (or worse), but there would certainly be concern in Washington and other NATO capitals about possible escalatory implications.[8]

While discussion of this problem stops approximately at this point, it requires further elaboration.

As a territory and a nuclear weapon state, Russia is exactly the kind of state that one would not wish to make desperate. Russia seeks to make Western decision-making related to its nuclear threshold difficult by being opaque about where that threshold is. The Kremlin's military doctrine published in December 2014 stated that Russia "shall reserve for itself the right to employ nuclear weapons in response to the use against it and/or its allies of nuclear and other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, as well as in the case of aggression against the Russian Federation with use of conventional weapons when the state's very existence has been threatened."[9] Although this statement appears clear, Russian officials have muddied the waters in various statements since 2008. At times, they have suggested that "Russia may use nuclear weapons against NATO missile defense facilities, and may increase the readiness of its nuclear forces in reaction to limited regional scenarios that do not involve WMD attacks or threats to its 'very existence.'"[10]

Despite the lack of clarity, by which the Russians may be trying to deter the West from even considering fighting for the Baltic states, it should be clear that crossing the Russian border would be ill advised. In such a situation, the Kremlin might conclude that Russia's existence or more narrowly that of the regime would be threatened and consequently would retaliate with nuclear weapons. This assumption would be especially the case if the NATO-Russia border were crossed by land power. Air power would appear to be more permissible, but still represents a gamble. The United States and its allies may face the possibility of conducting land and sea operations in an environment in which they lack air superiority, a situation they have not encountered since the early 1940s.

The problem of sanctuary, essentially giving the enemy an area where they will not be attacked, is reminiscent of Cold War-era Western, especially American, limited

[7] Shlapak and Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank," p. 7.
[8] Shlapak and Johnson, "Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank," p. 7.
[9] Hans M. Kristensen & Robert S. Norris, "Russian Nuclear Forces, 2016," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* vol. 72, no. 3 (2016), p. 127.
[10] Kristensen & Norris, "Russian Nuclear Forces, 2016."

war theory and real war quandaries. Brodie noted that "[a]s a result [of the Korean War experience], the concept of sanctuary has played an important part in speculations on limited war as well as in certain war games." Moreover, it was immediately considered a fundamental element of limited war as a concept: "Limited war of necessity implies the existence of a great sanctuary area in the rear of each major contestant. Keeping the war limited may depend on not using that sanctuary area as a base for attacking the other with nuclear weapons."[11] Brodie further discussed limited war, as the Vietnam War was winding to its ultimate end.

> The principle of sanctuary is a vital one in the whole concept of limited war. Nevertheless, it is too easy to gloss over the heavy military disadvantage that may result from applying it as we did in Korea and even more so in Vietnam. One major dilemma is pointed up by the question: If the enemy is already doing virtually all he *can* do against us, what kind of sanctuary does it make sense to grant him and why?[12]

Despite all the early Cold War writing about limited war broadly, as well as sanctuary more narrowly, theorists never seriously grappled with sanctuary specifically as a *strategic*, rather than military or political, problem. How does the essential fact of sanctuary affect strategy as a theory of success? How does it affect war termination? If Russian territory is a national sanctuary and NATO land forces may not breach it, then how may Russia be pressured to end the war in NATO's favor? This is the basic strategic problem the United States faced in Korea against China, as well as in Vietnam against North Vietnam. With no way to coerce the enemy into terminating either war, the result was a stalemate armistice in Korea and a defeat in Vietnam. These outcomes are hardly encouraging in the Baltic context.

One potential successful approach might be information operations, targeted against the Russian public,[13] one of the Kremlin's greatest weaknesses. Russia, in recent decades, has looked askance at all U.S. international influence because it believes that the various color revolutions from the Rose Revolution of 2003 in Georgia through to the Maidan Revolution of 2013-14 in Ukraine are U.S. State Department and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) plots. The Kremlin even believes the 2011 Arab Spring was instigated by the United States as a matter of policy. This inclination to suspect the United States in such ways began at least as early as the Singing Revolution of the late 1980s in the Baltic. "Soviet loyalists have always argued that the CIA was behind the national movements, via agents from the Baltic emigrations."[14] This is not just paranoia, but also includes an element of personal emotion as soon as the domestic Russian public is involved. "Putin's personal sense of *obida* (offense) at U.S. support for the public demonstrations against him in late 2011 and early 2012 was the single

[11] Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 329.
[12] Bernard Brodie, *War & Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 67.
[13] Lukas Milevski, "Prospective Strategy for Baltic Defense: The Russian Public and War Termination in the Baltic states," *Military Review* (Jan.-Feb. 2018), pp. 58-70.
[14] Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 224.

most important reason behind the hardening of Russian policy toward Washington."[15] To demonstrate support was to chip away at Russia's main self-identified susceptibility, an unforgivable act.

Moreover, regarding international intervention, neither the Russian regime nor its public have suffered gravely from a foreign adventure so far, nor have they experienced disaster in such an endeavor since Afghanistan. Where specific aspects of Russian interventions have not succeeded, such as high casualties in the Donbas war or the slaughter of the Wagner Group, a Russian paramilitary organization, in Syria in early 2018, the Kremlin has covered them up successfully. The Russian regime insulates its public from bad news because it remembers how a different generation of that same public reacted to the Afghanistan experience and does not wish to repeat it. Indeed, since May 2017, in times of internal crisis, the Russian army is to be subordinated to the National Guard to help control the domestic situation.[16]

However, the prospect of conducting effective information operations against the Russian public appears increasingly unlikely as Russia is fortifying its information space. Russia has been improving its ability to mobilize not just militarily, but also politically and societally. "[T]he Russian leadership is well aware that war is a test of society and that, despite the recent military experience gained in Ukraine and Syria, Russia is not ready for this test."[17] Russia has also experimented with entirely disconnecting Russian cyberspace from the rest of the World Wide Web.[18]

Bringing in Honor

Honor can sound like an old-fashioned word. It still is used as a verb to describe the act of fulfilling an agreement, but is much less commonly used as a noun to describe that intangible attribute certifying one's trustworthiness if called to act upon an agreement. Honor's dated perception also affects how the word is used in strategic studies. Although part of the ancient Thucydidean trinity of fear, honor, and interest, the word often is glossed over in favor of the other two. *Fear* incentivizes pre-emptive, if not preventive, war. *Interest* often is considered the idealized standard of realpolitik, in which states go to war for limited and clearly definable objectives, achieve them in a straightforward manner, and easily persuade the adversary that violence serves no further purpose and that peace is the reasonable policy option to pursue. *Honor* has largely, albeit unjustifiably, fallen by the wayside. "Most modern students of the question assume that states want power to achieve tangible and practical goals such as

[15] Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (London: Chatham House, 2015), p. 8.
[16] Aleksandr Golts, "The Russian Army to Be Subordinated to the National Guard in a Crisis," *Eurasia Daily Monitor,* vol. 14, no. 76 (June 8, 2017), https://jamestown.org/program/russian-army-subordinated-national-guard-crisis/.
[17] Andrew Monaghan, "Russian State Mobilization: Moving the Country on to a War Footing," Royal Institute of International Affairs Research Paper (May 2016), p. 3.
[18] This has been extensively discussed in a series of papers compiled in Juha Kukkola, Mari Ristolainen, and Juha-Pekka Nikkarila, *Game Changer: Structural transformation of cyberspace* (Tampere: Finnish Defense Research Agency, 2017).

wealth, prosperity, security, and freedom from external interference. But the range of goals that move people to fight wars is broader and not always so practical."[19] Nonetheless, the reason that honor is little discussed in strategy is clear. How does a strategist translate honor into a guide for military operations?

Any war in the Baltic unavoidably would be a war of honor for the West. NATO's Article 5, the Alliance's collective defense clause, is an Alliance-wide commitment of one for all and all for one. This article of the treaty is a commitment to the West's internal geopolitical blindness, the simultaneously absurd yet necessary conceit that 40 years ago West Berlin was equivalent to Washington, D.C. and that today Riga, Vilnius, or Tallinn are similarly equivalent. Yet, this deliberate blindness is a strong part of the glue that holds the Alliance together. If NATO does not defend its honor, if it does not honor this commitment, then the credibility of the Alliance collapses and perhaps, with it, the West altogether as a geopolitical construct.

Honor affects strategy through politics and political decision-making. This connection occurs not only in terms of going to war for collective honor, but also how success is defined and what costs alliance members are willing to bear to achieve success. Yet, if honor is to guide military operations, then one must ask: what does success in a war of honor look like in the Baltic? This question is especially pressing if Russian political will proves resilient in the face of a hypothetical ejection from the Baltic states. If Russia decides to cut its losses in such a scenario and makes peace rather than continuing the conflict, then the honor question becomes far less urgent. Yet, it would be imprudent to assume such an outcome.

Thus, in discussing the relationship between honor and war termination, one must remember that because of sanctuary, outright military victory over Russia is not an option. Even if NATO were to fight to the national borders of the three Baltic states, Russia would face no military pressure to give in as long as NATO does not cross the border, a foolhardy and reckless course of action. This would leave NATO on the permanent defensive at the Baltic borders with Russia holding the initiative to attack when and where it wants. Such a defensive position would be catastrophic for NATO. As Clausewitz noted about defense, its concept is "[t]he parrying of the blow" and its characteristic feature is "[a]waiting the blow," which perfectly describes NATO's hypothetical situation guarding the Baltic borders. The purpose of the defense is negative; it aims to preserve the situation and prevent the enemy from achieving anything. It cannot on its own, however, achieve anything, but ultimately needs to be paired with the offense, which is inherently positive and aims to change the situation. For this reason, Clausewitz also notes that any defensive engagement is made up of offensive actions, whether tactical or operational. He wrote, "So the defensive form of war is not a simple shield, but a shield made up of well-directed blows."[20] Ultimately, a good defense must do more than passively prevent a particular set of outcomes. Yet, NATO's well-directed blows would be limited by an injunction

[19] Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995).
[20] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War,* Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds. and trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1984), pp. 357-359.

against crossing the Russian border. Such is the power of territorial sanctuary ensured by a nuclear arsenal.

This dynamic, between a geographically limited NATO defense and a Russian offensive posture that threatened an attack anywhere along the long Baltic-Russian border at any time, would turn this hypothetical war into a contest of endurance in which NATO would be largely passive. However, passivity is deadly. Clausewitz concluded his warning about relying solely on a shield: "We are left with the conclusion that if the attacker sustains his efforts while his opponent does nothing to ward them off, the latter can do nothing to neutralize the danger that sooner or later an offensive thrust will succeed."[21] If nothing else, this is inherently a question of adversarial operational military readiness over the long term. NATO would find it impossible to maintain incessant maximum operational readiness, whereas Russia, being able to choose its timing, could always ensure maximum operational readiness at time and point of attack. As Richard Betts, political scientist at Columbia University, notes,

> It turns out to be *impossible* to maximize readiness *in general*, to reach and keep one level of it indefinitely, because readiness is not all of a piece; the components move at different rates and in different directions. If readiness is to be conceived broadly enough to be a basis for strategic, budgetary, and organizational choices, it must be seen as a *complex system* composed of numerous variables, some operating in linear and cumulative fashion, and some in a *non*linear, self-negating, and cyclical way.[22]

Despite the problem of military readiness, the endurance required undoubtedly would not be strictly military, but rather political. The militaries might not be weakened, but the political will would. Whose political will, and in what form, would be exhausted first? Would it be Russian interest in conquering the Baltic states or its ability to hide military disaster from its public, or would it be Western honor?

The danger is that Western honor would falter first. Although the anticipated goal of any war in the Baltic would be preserving or restoring Baltic political and territorial integrity, once Western honor is involved this goal, no longer appears to be as simple. When might Western honor be considered satisfied, specifically that Article 5 or the West as a geopolitical project has been credibly defended? Might it be only with successful war termination? What if satisfaction is reached short of war termination? Honor is political; it is individual, but also collective. The Alliance might weaken in its defensive efforts if individual decision-makers begin to feel that honor has been satisfied—or, alternately, that honor is no longer worth the costs of the fight. Sufficient numbers of individuals together might influence national governmental decision-making, and sufficient governments together may influence NATO decision-

[21] Clausewitz, *On War,* p. 613.
[22] Richard K. Betts, *Military Readiness: Concepts, Choices, Consequences* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1995), p. 32, original emphasis.

making. Honor in collective political decision-making is inherently non-linear, and considerations of honor run at various speeds for various people and ultimately various countries. What if honor falters short of war termination? How would that affect efforts to end the war with the borders of the West still intact?

Virtually no experts have written *strategically* about Baltic defense and a hypothetical Baltic war. One exception is Richard Hooker, at the time Director of the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., published an article with *RUSI Journal* in 2015 titled "Operation *Baltic Fortress*, 2016: NATO Defends the Baltic states." Although, government employees normally publish with the proviso that opinions expressed are the author's own and do not represent their departments or the government as a whole, Hooker's proviso differed: "This work was authored as part of the Contributor's official duties as an Employee of the United States Government and is therefore a work of the United States Government."[23]

Hooker's article may be considered a snapshot of U.S. strategic thinking about the Baltic in 2015. This article also considers a hypothetical war, in Estonia, albeit one which remains at the level of "little green men" with no overt Russian involvement. Rightly recognizing the importance of ending the war, Hooker plays out this hypothetical war, won by the West, through to war termination. It is worth quoting his anticipation of the hypothetical settlement in full:

> Statesmen on all sides agreed, privately if not publicly, that an overt Russian defeat, whether military or political, would not in the long run serve anyone's interests. There must be compromise—each side must make painful concessions. The NATO offer, made discreetly through intermediaries, was simple and direct. All Russian military and subversive activities on the soil of NATO member states must cease. NATO would make a public declaration announcing that Ukraine should not join NATO but would be free to choose its political and economic future for itself. Resolution of the Crimea issue would be deferred until a future date under UN auspices. Economic sanctions would be lifted, and NATO forces would return to their home garrisons, with a promise not to be permanently stationed on the territory of any state formerly a member of the Warsaw Pact. A reinvigorated Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) would monitor the disengagement of all parties and the stationing of their forces. The NATO-Russia Council would be reactivated to take a lead role in addressing the concerns of ethnic Russian minorities in the Baltic republics.[24]

In Hooker's scenario, NATO approached Russia diplomatically as a supplicant rather than the victor of a brief strategically defensive campaign to restore Estonian territory. The "painful concessions," which each side had to make, stemmed disproportionately from NATO and rarely from Russia, which in any case could hardly be expected to adhere to its treaty commitments—their support of supposed separatists was

[23] Richard D. Hooker, Jr., "Operation Baltic Fortress, 2016," *RUSI Journal,* vol. 160, no. 3 (2015), p. 26.
[24] Hooker, Jr., "Operation Baltic Fortress, 2016," p. 33.

ambiguous and "deniable" in the first place, and would be so again. This outcome would be a disproportionately unfavorable deal, through which NATO could well lose the peace despite winning the war. It is a portrayal of what is, at best, NATO's half surrender to Russia—and one not limited to the Baltic.

War termination matters. NATO will need to do better than half surrender, for the sake of its own honor and for that of the West as a geopolitical entity.

Future Strategic Thinking

Ever since Russian invaded and annexed Crimea, the West finally has begun to take Baltic defense more seriously. Thus far, however, discussions on the issue have been limited predominantly to operational concerns such as military mobility, getting forces to the Baltic theatre, air defense, anti-access and area denial, etc., plus deterrence. These are all vital topics, which together form a substantial foundation for strategy. Yet, they do not constitute strategy itself; even together, they do not offer a theory of success if the worst contingency were to come to pass.

Moreover, even these key operational concerns have not been deliberated to their full extent and prospects for actual Baltic defense against a serious invasion remain fairly woeful. The public debate must be broadened beyond the limited operational perspective. It is time to begin thinking about strategy in the region. Introducing the strategic element will give operational considerations a direction by tying them to politics and political goals. Strategy is the final frontier for thinking about Baltic defense. As seen in Hooker's hypothetical war termination, outcomes matter. In the foreseeable future, barring extraordinary change in Russia, there always will be some finite, non-zero chance of war in the Baltic theatre, which requires the West to be prepared to practice strategy and conduct military operations in the region. In such circumstances, despite the practical and indeed moral difficulty of doing so, it is incumbent upon us to think seriously about strategy for the defense of the Baltic states.