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NATO SMART DEFENCE: OPERATIONAL DETERRENCE OR STRATEGIC ALLIANCE?

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Exercice Solo Flight

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NATO SMART DEFENCE:

OPERATIONAL DETERRENCE OR STRATEGIC ALLIANCE?

The idea of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a group of countries who have similar democratic values and geographical interests have officially signed on and agree to consult and cooperate on defence and security related issues. The long term goal, simply, is to prevent conflict. If diplomatic efforts fail in this effort, NATO has a military faction to carry out crisis management and collective defence of member states. The Alliance was initially conceived as a group of countries grouped together to counter Soviet Communism, with agreements of mutual support. Despite the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian annexation of Crimea and their foray into Georgia has made it clear that Russian interest increased in their desire to return old Soviet territory to present day Russia.¹ Putin and the Russian government also made it clear that they will protect the Russian population in other countries if they are required to do so, as has been seen by Russian involvement and rhetoric in the Baltic State region.² This has given rise to some interesting conflict between NATO and Russian, as the commitment in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania creates significant regional tension. The need to protect member states from Russian aggression became relevant once again.

In 2012 at the Chicago Summit, NATO made the announcement that the concept of Smart Defence would be adopted. This was implemented to develop, acquire and maintain capabilities among member states that would achieve collective future goals. Initiatives were put into place to develop and maintain policies and procedures for Smart

¹ Adomeit, H. "Putin's 'Greater Russia': Misunderstanding or Mission?" *Raamop Rusland*, 27 February 2018. <https://www.raamoprusland.nl/dossiers/roesski-mir/878-putin-s-greater-russia-misunderstanding-or-mission>.

² Lucas, E. "The Fall and Rise and Fall Again of the Baltic States: A recessionary tale from Europe's new Basket Cases," *Foreign Policy* July/August, (2009): 79.

Defence, including new governing bodies, procurement agencies and formal economic relationships between member states related to shared capabilities. This has come with both benefits and costs. The purpose of the paper will be to assess the NATO policy of Smart Defence and determine whether or not the implementation will be sufficient to deter current and future Russian threats.

Following definition and background information to frame some examples of the policy in action, three main concepts will be investigated to conduct an analysis on the viability and effectiveness of Smart Defence as a potential deterrent. First, a look at previous examples of policies which closely resembled Smart Defence, including the Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD) from 1966 and the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC), initiated in 2002. Second, an analysis of weaknesses to Smart Defence, including national sovereignty concerns which could be troublesome to the viability of the policy. Finally, a comparison of the European Union (EU) policy of Pooling and Sharing, which could provide redundancies and conflict of resources for nations who are members of both organizations. Overall, through an examination of these factors, this paper will attempt to prove that while the concept of Smart Defence has all of the theoretical ingredients to contribute as an effective deterrent to Russian aggression, it is far more effective as a strategic tool which exhibits alliance solidarity rather than an enabler which would provide operational capability sufficient to deter military action.

BACKGROUND: Definition, Components, Critical Capabilities and Examples

In 2008, the world experienced a recession that immediately and drastically sent many countries into an economic crisis. As a result, many nations saw drastic cuts in overall government spending, which consequently led to cuts in global defence spending,

as focus became placed on national economic recovery efforts.³ In a response to the decrease in national spending, NATO initiated the Smart Defence policy in 2012. Smart Defence is defined as, “a cooperative way of generating modern defence capabilities that the Alliance needs, in a more cost-efficient, effective and coherent manner.”⁴

There are three main components of Smart Defence – prioritisation, cooperation and specialization. Prioritization ensures that member state’s goals are more closely aligned with NATO goals. This also includes an analysis of what needs to be actioned with regards to military investments and what can be postponed or cancelled.⁵ Cooperation involves the pooling of military capability amongst the allied nations so that inter-operability and economies of scale are generated. Finally, specialization within nations should be in consultation with NATO so that planned defence budget cuts can be internationally coordinated. This ensures the Alliance has various critical operational capabilities. Not all member states would have to own all military capabilities.⁶

At the Chicago Summit where Smart Defence was developed, NATO leaders and Heads of State determined that key capabilities would be targeted. Any projects taken under this initiative would target the critical capabilities that had been identified at the Lisbon Summit in 2010. These critical capabilities included missile defence, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, maintaining readiness, training and education of the

³ Sandler, T. & George, J. “Military Expenditure Trends for 1960-2014 and What They Reveal,” *Wiley Online Library* 07 March 2016. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1758-5899.12328>.

⁴ NATO. “Smart Defence,” *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* 20 February 2017. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_84268.htm?

⁵ Ionita, L. “The Smart Defence Concept – A New Approach of Common Defence within NATO.” *Annals: Series on Military Sciences*, 4 (2), (2012), 61.

⁶ Giegerich, B. “NATO's Smart Defence: Who's Buying?,” *Survival*, 54:3 (2012), 70.

forces, active engagement and force protection, high precision guided munitions, cyber defence and intelligence common services.⁷

One of the main organizations of the Smart Defence initiative was the establishment of the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) in 2012. This agency streamlined and reformed 14 different agencies that had previously been involved in procurement, support and communications and information. The capabilities of the NSPA include all aspects of systems procurement from initial acquisition throughout sustainment.⁸ An example of the NSPA contributing the Smart Defence initiative took place in 2014. In accordance with the critical capabilities identified at the Lisbon Summit, the NSPA executed a multinational order between 11 NATO Allies and Finland in 2014. These countries entered into an agreement to acquire Air-to-Ground Precision Guided Munitions within the framework of US Foreign Military Sales.⁹ This is a good example of how Smart Defence could cut costs, capabilities could be uniform and the logistics chain could be shortened by inclusion of the NSPA in the process.

Another example of Smart Defence in action is the Norwegian-German submarine build that was announced in 2018 and is still currently in negotiations. Norway and Germany will together negotiate a contract to procure six identical submarines. This should provide lower costs in acquisition, higher inter-operability between Navies, lower risks and savings throughout the lifetime of the submarines for both nations.¹⁰ In an

⁷ Poenaru, R. "Development of NATO Capabilities and Interoperability of Allied Forces through Smart Defence and Connected Forces Initiative." *Strategic Impact* No.2 (2015), 45.

⁸ NATO. "NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA)" *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* 30 January 2017. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_88734.htm.

⁹ NATO. "11 NATO Allies and Finland united in buying Precision Guided Munitions." *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* 09 November 2017. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_148422.htm

¹⁰ "A Building Block in Enhanced European Defense Capabilities: The German-Norwegian Common Submarine Build," *Second Line of Defense: Delivering Capability to the Warfighter* 02 December 2018

announcement on the partnership, the Norwegian Minister of Defence directly mentioned Smart Defence as a driving force in the negotiations, "...cooperation with Germany will ensure that Norway gets the submarines we require, and at the same time contributing to Smart Defence and more efficient defence material cooperation in NATO."¹¹

A final example is the NATO Ballistic Missile Defence System. This defensive system will protect Europe and its citizens from long-range threats, and Initial Operational Capability (IOC) was declared in 2016.¹² This system worked in a way that was specifically designed to follow the Smart Defence policy, both in addressing a critical capability and cutting costs, "The system is based on the cooperation between the NATO member states and offers a security level that the states could not afford individually."¹³ As a result of the success, several other Allies are undergoing the development or acquisition of further assets for ships, ground based air systems and advanced detection and alert capabilities.¹⁴

Based on the definition, critical capabilities, components and success stories of Smart Defence, it appears initially as though it could be extremely successful at Russian deterrence. This, in conjunction with providing an effective and efficient system of capability sharing and procurement, appears to be a victory for the concept of Smart Defence. However, with a closer look, there are glaring holes that can be established. First, other iterations of collective procurement/training/capability sharing have already

<https://sldinfo.com/2018/12/a-building-block-in-enhanced-european-defense-capabilities-the-german-norwegian-common-submarine-build/>

¹¹ Nilsen, T. "Norway teams up with Germany for new submarines." *The Barents Observer*, 03 February 2017. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2017/02/norway-teams-germany-new-submarines>

¹² NATO. "Ballistic Missile Defence." *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* 15 April 2019. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49635.htm#.

¹³ Ionita, 61.

¹⁴ NATO. "Ballistic Missile Defence." *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* 15 April 2019. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49635.htm#.

been established and Russian aggression was not significantly deterred. Second, there are further examples where national sovereignty issue have gone in direct contravention of this policy. Finally, the EU policy of Pooling and Sharing remains a redundant policy which could negatively impact economies of member states even further, which is in direct contravention of the Smart Defence raison d'être. First, a closer look at previous similar policies and their impact.

SIMILAR PAST POLICIES

While Smart Defence was officially launched in 2012, there have been previous iterations that are similar in nature. As stated by Johnson, Labenz & Driver (2013), "...the ambitiousness of the Smart Defence Initiative is novel, but the concept of resource pooling, capabilities sharing, and niche specialization have been around for several years."¹⁵ There have been three such agreements or organizations that exist in NATO within in the last two decades that preceded or followed the Smart Defence initiative discussed here. The first is the Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD), second is the Defense Capabilities Initiative (DCI) and finally, the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC). Each of these will be discussed further.

CNAD was created in 1966 with the intention of providing a, "flexible and open framework for armaments cooperation within the Alliance."¹⁶ They are the most senior NATO committee to promote cooperation between members as it relates to armament. It functions as a committee which identifies opportunities for collaborative defence industrial cooperation. While CNAD has some projects that are presently under the guise

¹⁵ Johnson, P, T. LaBenz & D. Driver. "Smart Defense: Brave new approach or déjà vu?" *Naval War College Review*, Summer 2013, Vol. 66, No 3, 42.

¹⁶ NATO. "Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD)." *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* 28 September 2016. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49160.htm.

of Smart Defence, the mandate is certainly familiar. As pointed out by Stone (1984), “As part of the current drive to implement a strategy for a better utilization of resources allocated to defence, NATO is trying to foster increased armaments co-operation and a greater degree of standardization and interoperability.”¹⁷

CNAD continues to work on projects that are in line with Smart Defence, however it predates the concept, and it has functioned in this manner since its inception. An example is the NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance System (AGS), which was initiated in 2007, before the economic crisis had impacted defence budgets.¹⁸ The project is only now seeing fruition. The objective was for the Alliance to provide greater situational awareness (SA) on the ground in as real time as possible. This was truly a joint procurement, as fifteen members states bought five Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) as well as the command and control systems for operating them. Twenty-nine alliance members are participating in the long term support. With an original delivery expectation by 2011, the first will finally be delivered mid-2019, years late. The AGS, while promoted under the guise of Smart Defence, was already in progress and initiated by CNAD which acts as a redundant organization/process.

Despite the existence of CNAD, the Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI) was introduced in 1999 and came from discussions during the NATO Washington Summit. As a reaction to the United States outspending other members, it was intended to identify, “core capabilities nations would need to bring to Alliance operations and then seeking commitments from states to procure such capabilities.”¹⁹ DCI was cut from the same cloth as the introduction of Smart Power – assessment of core capabilities and the

¹⁷ Stone, J. “CNAD-Focal Point of Equipment Co-operation,” *NATO Review*, (1984): Vol. 32, Iss. 1, 10.

¹⁸ “CNAD Makes Progress!” *NATO’S NATIONS: and Partners for Peace* (2007), IV, 30.

¹⁹ Johnson, Labenz and Driver, 42.

specialization of nations to contribute more effectively, however pre-dating it by 12 years. Just like Smart Defence, DCI also laid out categories for future development, and just like Smart Defence, this initiative was accepted with optimism by member states.²⁰

Like CNAD, the DCI was given multiple projects and capabilities to work on, and in the first two years, fifty-eight capabilities were slated for initiation – including AGS. Unlike CNAD, the DCI would not survive long. Only ten months after the agreement, representatives from the United States had concerns that there were few nations working towards the goals of DCI.²¹ In response to its inadequacies, only two years later in 2002 the Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC) looked to make improvements toward another attempt at cooperation, specialization and prioritization.

The main effort of the PCC was to place, “‘greater influence’ on ‘multinational commitments and pooling of funds,’ to enable, ‘smaller countries to combine resources to purchase hardware that would be unaffordable for each alone.’”²² One of the strengths of PCC over the DCI was that it was more specific over the needs of the Alliance. Nations were also held more to account over their implementation of commitments as well as explanations for shortcomings.²³ There were some minor success stories over the next six years that came as a result of PCC initiatives. Different projects were led by the Netherlands, Germany, and the Czech Republic, all of which fulfilled the critical capabilities identified by the PCC but culminated in NATO continuing to urge member states in 2010 to find more innovative ways to develop capabilities in cost effective

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid, 43.

²² Ibid

²³ Ek, C. “NATO’s Prague Capabilities Commitment,” *CRS Report for Congress* 24 January 2007. 3. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21659.pdf>

ways.²⁴ While there were success stories, the transition from the PCC to Smart Defence was not much of an innovation in processes or policy.

Whether analyzing the inception and implementation of the CNAP, DCI or PCC, the similarities in policies, goals and characteristics are equal to that of the Smart Defence initiative. Redundant and equivalent policies from 1966 to present have not changed the narrative for increased cooperation, prioritization or specialization. It is not that these programs have not been able to develop projects that have been successfully implemented; it is that they do not significantly impact the operational capabilities of NATO, especially in their deterrence of Russia. Russian actions in Georgia, Chechnya and Ukraine have shown that these minor operational capabilities will not rein in Russian desires to return to Soviet dominance. That being said, the strategic implications are much more significant. The Alliance showing that they are cooperating - especially in projects led by nations other than the United States – is far more strategically valuable. These joint projects show Russia that the resolve of the Alliance is strong and cooperation is a priority, even in times of financial austerity.

NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY: One tenet to rule them all

Much like any international agreement or treaty, there are no real punishments or legal repercussions if a NATO member state did not want to follow a policy. This can be true even if the nation had agreed or signed on to follow an initiative when it was introduced. Additionally, as pointed out by Ionita (2012), “the Alliance, as an organism, has no control over international commerce and the control regulations of the exports among the members’ states.”²⁵ As it relates to Smart Defence, all member nations would

²⁴ Johnson, Labenz and Driver, 43.

²⁵ Ionita, 56.

presumably agree that the concept works in principle – saving money and increasing capability, all while simultaneously increasing operational effectiveness.

There is one concept that will regularly and rightfully trump military (and therefore economic) decisions, and that is the prioritization of national interests and national sovereignty. As it has been seen through some successful Smart Defence initiatives, member nations will choose how to do business within NATO when it is to their national benefit. Consequently, nations will also choose to abstain or completely remove themselves from projects when they do not align with national goals. This inherent weakness in the concept of Smart Defence certainly hurts the potential operational effectiveness of the Alliance, especially as it relates to Russian interactions with NATO. One such Canadian example was the withdrawal from the NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control (NAEW&C) program in 2012 as well as the NATO unmanned aerial vehicle program. The reasoning was based on economics in Canada at the time, “In difficult economic times, this government believes in making tough, action-oriented decisions that are more essential to NATO member-states’ security than any other initiative.”²⁶ Canadians decided that home based economic issues would trump agreed upon NATO policies and processes.

Richter and Webb (2014) convey a similar sentiment, with the prioritization of decisions made by national leaders, especially related to the Smart Defence component of specialization, “National leaders’ instincts will be to invest in capabilities critical to maintaining national sovereignty and they generally prefer to ensure the use of these

²⁶ Pugliese, D. “Canada pulls out of NATO airborne surveillance programs to save \$90M,” *National Post* 17 March 2012.

capabilities without relying on alliance partners.”²⁷ Specialization requires that nations would potentially be asked to develop a capability that would be beneficial to NATO, however not necessarily develop a capability that would necessarily be required at home. This would force them to rely on alliance partners, which is cautioned as problematic. Specialization can cause states not to be prepared for the full range of threats to themselves. This would require a degree of trust amongst the members that they would come to each other’s aid if required.

As an example of difficulties that might be encountered through the idea of specialized capability development is the NATO operation in Libya. Outlined by Johnson, Labenz & Driver (2013), “Only nine of twenty-eight members were prepared to attack ground targets; only two (Britain and France) would assume the risk of employing attack helicopters; and Germany refused to participate in the operation altogether.”²⁸ Despite being in the Alliance, there is no way to coerce nations to provide specific capabilities or equipment, or to even take part in any way. This brings to light a second weakness based on national sovereignty, participation in NATO operations that are counter to national interests.

Another impact of the Smart Defence approach related to national sovereignty is that smaller members can become reliant on larger members, especially related to critical capabilities. This is especially true as larger states can pressure smaller ones who need to contribute in a specialized way as dictated by NATO. The pressure for contribution can have effects on the military (influencing defence budgets), politics (members refusing to

²⁷ Richter A. & N.J. Webb. “Can Smart Defence work? A suggested approach to increasing risk and burden sharing within NATO,” *Defense & Security Analysis*, 30:4 (2014), 350.

²⁸ Johnson, Labenz & Driver, 41.

participate) or technical (common capability employed elsewhere).²⁹ Urbelis (2013) suggests that to combat this effect, smaller nations should have capability lists which would not be shared or cut, including sensitive areas like cyber operations, Special Forces and national command nodes.³⁰

One of the main roadblocks to the Smart Defence initiative, national sovereignty and national interests will always take precedence over commitment to an alliance. The decisions that are made can be impacted by economic crises, political alliances, industry or military capability requirements. Militarily, being required or requested to specialize could take away key capabilities that a nation would not want to give up. Economically, military budgets are generally considered discretionary spending, and national priorities will almost always take precedence. As it relates to national sovereignty, the concept of Smart Defence would hurt NATO either way at an operational level. If nations pull out of agreements, the Alliance appears potentially fractured, this weakens the Alliance strategically. Additionally, when agreements are made and actually adhered to, they have not proven to bring cheap, timely or operationally relevant capabilities. Alliance members pulling out of programs, projects and agreements can only strengthen the resolve of Russian desires to see the stability of the Alliance degrade.

POOLING AND SHARING: European Redundancy

While NATO is a very powerful alliance, it is not the only one that has political, economic and military impact in the region. The European Defence Agency (EDA) has influence all over Europe, with members who are in NATO as well, although the EDA acts independently. In an effort to react to the same economic crisis in 2008, increased

²⁹Urbelis, V . "Implication of Smart Defence Initiative for Small Members of NATO," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* Vol. 11 Iss. 1 (2013), 13.

³⁰ Ibid, 23.

critical capability gaps, and the increased cost of defence systems, the EDA developed the Pooling and Sharing initiative in 2010.

“The *pooling* of capabilities occurs when several Member States decide to use capabilities – either nationally owned or multi-nationally procured – on a collective basis.”³¹ An example of the pooling of capabilities is the task of Maritime Surveillance. All countries will contribute to Identification, Surveillance and Reconnaissance in one way or another, and members continue to join the initiative. “*Sharing* or more precisely role-sharing is when some Member States relinquish some capabilities with the assumption or the guarantee that other countries will make them available when necessary.”³² A Sharing initiative that was implemented was pilot training. France took the lead on transport crew training and Italy on fast jet training, allowing the potential for other nations to send their pilots to a member state for training.

The concept of Pooling and Sharing is similar to that of the concept of Smart Defence. Bogzeanu (2012) believes that the concepts are similar, with general concepts of common security, permanent structured cooperation and burden sharing.³³ Consequently, like the idea of Smart Defence, Pooling and Sharing is not a new concept in the EU. The EDA’s mission when it was established in 2004 was to enhance European Defence cooperation, and the Treaty of Lisbon created means and ways for Europeans to implement a Common Security and Defence Policy.³⁴

³¹ Cimpean, S. “‘Smart Defence’ and ‘Pooling and Sharing’ Concepts in NATO and EU,” *International Scientific Conference “Strategies XXI”* Vol. 2 (2016), 179.

³² *Ibid*, 179.

³³ Bogzeanu, C. “NATO-EU Relation from the perspective of the implications of ‘Smart Defence’ and ‘Pooling and Sharing’ Concepts.” *Strategic Impact* No. 3 (2012), 33.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 34.

The redundancy seen between the mandates of the EDA and NATO detract from the states which belong to both alliances. There are 21 common Member States, and the financial participation and the input of each member are critical, which can spread resources thin. The secondary impacts are that both alliances have to implement organisms which are required to coordinate the effort. This, again, adds to the redundancy as there are now two institutions moving toward the same goal but in potentially different directions.

Not only are the organisms redundant, the EDA and NATO are not mutually exclusive of each other as it relates to policy. Since the EDA is smaller and less influential, it must react to decisions made in NATO and not the other way around. In this respects, the NATO adoption of Smart Defence could actually hurt the ability of the EDA to fully implement Pooling and Sharing in the way it would like and so it becomes more of a reactive process than a proactive one. "...modifications in this area [developing EU's defence and security] have always manifested as EU answers to the mutations occurred in the international security environment and international policy."³⁵ Despite the Libyan conflict being led by NATO, it was primarily led by European member states as the United States made the strategic decision that they would support and not lead. These states had to react to decisions made by other nations in NATO, but all members involved were part of both alliances.

Based on some of the potential redundancies as well as the shared members, one of the keys for success in the co-existence of the two concepts is tight coordination. As pointed out by Cimpean (2016), both NATO and the EU are constantly and regularly

³⁵ Ibid, 35.

meeting to de-conflict and coordinate defence strategies.³⁶ Informal meetings take place between ambassadors, International staff, foreign ministers and military members. More formal connections take place as well, and permanent military liaisons have been established – A NATO Permanent Liaison Team works with the EU Military Staff, and an EU Cell is established in the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE). While all of these connections are critical to coordinate action between the two alliances, all of these connections also take precious resources to execute.

As it relates to Russia and potential deterrence, no significant operational capabilities have been realized, and with the delays, financial issues and national defence priorities this may take significant time before it becomes relevant – if ever. However, the main benefit according to Bogzeanu (2012) is that the European states will become more involved in guaranteeing their own security, especially with the expectation that the US has pulled from being a center of power, shifting to the Asia-Pacific area.³⁷ Despite their potential operational redundancy, it is the strategic importance of having multiple alliances - especially in Europe at the forefront of Russian aggression. All of the concerns over coordination, redundancy and overlap are less important than the strategic importance of showing a united alliance, the most important aspect of the Smart Defence initiative as well as policies of Pooling and Sharing.

COUNTER ARGUMENT: Smart Defence at the Operational Level

Even though Smart Defence has weaknesses and came about based on economic crisis, there are still positive operational possibilities as they relate to Russian deterrence.

³⁶ Cimpean, 181.

³⁷ Bogzeanu, C. "Pooling and Sharing' and 'Smart Defence'. Beyond the Concept". *International Scientific Conference, Strategies XXI, Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies*. (2012), 418.

One of the main tools that could emanate from Smart Defence policies are present in the Cyber domain. Bourbaki (2012) believes that, “Smart defence creates for Russia a wide range of dangers and threats associated with the development of technologies of information warfare in the cyber and mental spheres.”³⁸ NATO also understands the importance in Cyber activities, as it is a relatively cheap capability that can be undertaken by smaller countries.

In 2018, the fourth NATO Cyber Defence Smart Defence Projects Conference (CD SDP) was held with the intention to build a new synergistic approach in this domain, as NATO has integrated cyber defence into the Smart Defence initiative. One of the capabilities discussed was making the NATO Communications and Information (NCI) Academy based in Italy. It is being transferred to Portugal as a “shared lighthouse” for NATO-EU collaboration and the main source of, “high quality Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) and Cyber Training.”³⁹ Joint training in the cyber domain is an ideal representation of how Smart Defence can provide an eventual operational deterrence tool against Russia. Beyond training in Portugal, Belgium successfully led a group that developed a malware information sharing platform that was shared and implemented amongst NATO and EU allies. A third cyber defence project under the Smart Defence initiative focuses on situational awareness and incident coordination, successfully implemented by the

³⁸ Bourbaki, V. “‘Smart defence’ NATO new challenges and threats to Russia.” *Center for Strategic Assessment and Forecast* 29 June 2012. <http://csef.ru/en/oborona-i-bezopasnost/340/umnaya-oborona-nato-novye-vyzovy-i-ugrozy-dlya-rossii-3508>.

³⁹ Communications Team, “4th NATO Cyber Defence Smart Defence Projects’ Conference” *NATO Communications and Information Agency* 05 February 2018. <https://www.ncia.nato.int/NewsRoom/Pages/20180502.aspx>.

Netherlands and Romania.⁴⁰ Russian deterrence can certainly be achieved through the Cyber Domain; however, in this case, the argument can also be made that it would be considered a strategic asset. The real value in this Smart Defence initiative would again be a strategic one and not acting as much of an operational asset.

As a second counter argument, it may be too soon to effectively assess whether or not Smart Defence initiatives are operationally effective. Some of the projects have not yet come to fruition and take time to implement. At the time of its introduction, the initiative was meant to start having successes which start seeing impact in the 2020 time frame, for which it remains to be seen. Poenaru (2015) argues that some of the Russian deterrence measures undertaken will be, “an opportunity for the checking of the viability and effectiveness of *smart defence* initiative.”⁴¹ That being said, the number of projects under the guise of the Smart Defence initiative have decreased, and according to Allers (2019), all NATO initiatives, “require allies to spend more. Allies have stepped back from the logic that Smart Defence can help in cutting costs. Reacting to the strategic shocks of 2014 and under increased American pressure, states now accept the need to spend more.”⁴² So while time will tell as to whether or not Smart Defence was successful, the time may also have passed where it is no longer an effective tool in the time of Russian aggression and necessity for security.

⁴⁰ Shea, J. “How is NATO Meeting the Challenge of Cyberspace?” *Prism: A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations*, Vol. 7, Iss. 2, (2017), 25.

⁴¹ Poenaru, 47.

⁴² Allers, R. “Strengthening NATO’s capabilities: embrace the bottom-up approach,” *European Leadership Network* 28 February 2019. <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/strengthening-natos-capabilities-embrace-the-bottom-up-approach/>.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Self Defence is not a new one, a unique one, nor have the iterations in the past been overly successful at saving resources or time. However, this is a case where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Just the idea of such a powerful alliance militarily working together is a success story in and of its own, especially as it relates to solidarity in the face of the adversaries. In this regards, the policies that NATO decides to implement could be considered to be strategically successful just in the fact that policies are agreed upon at all.

Smart Defence policy that was born out of the economic downturn in 2008 may not have a place in today's world. With Russian aggression more prevalent, the Chinese military increasing spending, the threats out of Iran and North Korea and asymmetric threats permeating daily life, spending less money on the military does not seem to be as a viable or internationally accepted option. In more recent years, the United States has also called out nations around the world to spend more money on defence. This is to adhere to the 2% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) agreement on minimal spending at NATO.

Overall, Smart Defence policies and processes could work well if they operated in a geo-political vacuum. It would be tough to argue that sharing capabilities and nations developing niche expertise is a bad thing. Neither would it be difficult to argue that having more or equivalent capabilities by spending less money has a negative impact. Unfortunately, these policies do not exist in a vacuum, and national and regional interests can sometimes cause irrational and/or complicated decisions. In the future, policies will continue to flow out of NATO to try to help member nations and the Alliance become more effective. It is this continuation of effort under the pretext of cooperation and

alliance solidarity that will act as an effective strategic deterrent against current and future adversaries.

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