

France and the security challenges in the Baltic Sea region

«Your security is our security»,
Florence Parly,
Minister for the Armed Forces,
Helsinki, 23 August 2018



MINISTÈRE
DES ARMÉES



Mission Lynx, Estonia, 2017. Main Battle Tank Leclerc from 501st Combat Cavalry Regiment progressing during an exercise.



Trident Juncture 18, Norway, 2018. Two material transportation barges sailing to the Dixmude Projection and Command Ship.



Rovaniemi Air Base, Finland, 2017. Rafale taking off during the Arctic Challenge Exercise.

The Baltic space, a security challenge for France and Europe

A partly closed sea, joining the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean after a series of straits, the Baltic Sea accounts for **one-third of the European Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** and is home to **nearly 200,000 French nationals**. Marked by major security challenges, it has seen, over the last decade or so, the revival of tensions forgotten since the end of the Cold War that led to a deterioration of the regional stability.

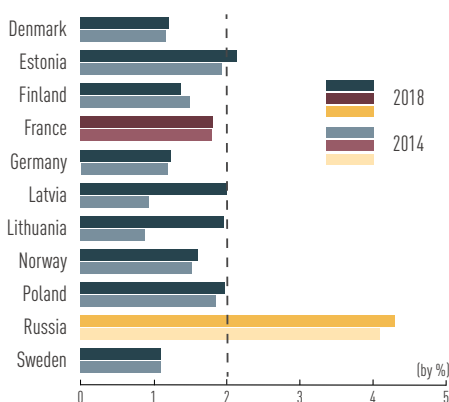
Brought about by Moscow's posture, the **remilitarisation of the region** has spread to all the countries bordering the Baltic Sea. Russia has developed a policy of power assertion and strategic intimidation made of military deployments, threats to use force and use of force on different theatres (Georgia, Ukraine, Syria), as well as international law violations, especially with the annexation of Crimea. Since 2011, it has modernised its armed forces in the Kaliningrad and Leningrad *oblasts* and adopted a posture of 'aggressive sanctuarisation' by deploying a large number of anti-access / area denial (A2/AD) capabilities. Along its Western border, Russia has set up a 'strategic belt' from the Arctic to the

Middle East. In an unprecedented manner since the Cold War, Russia conducts exercises and operations on different theatres at the same time (Baltic Sea, Caspian Sea, Black Sea, Levant). Its maritime presence and airstrike campaign in Syria are both symbols of it.

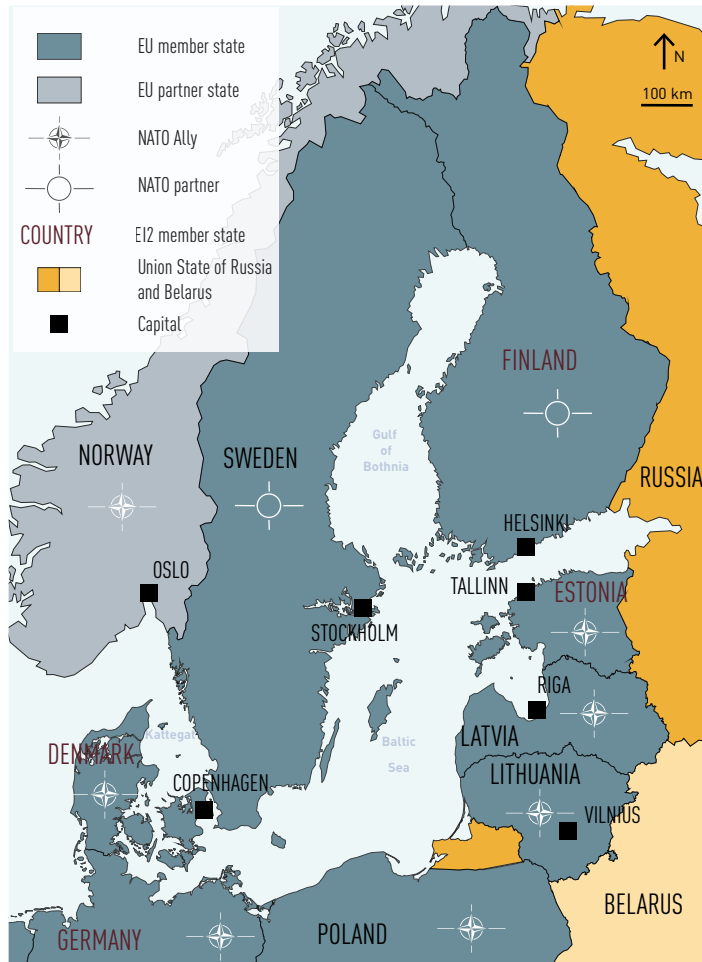
In reaction, **the Allies, including France, have reinforced their protection measures in the East on behalf of their Eastern Allies**. From the 2014 Wales Summit, assurance measures were taken. They were reinforced after the Warsaw Summit in 2016, notably through the setting-up of the **enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in Poland and the Baltic states**.

Most of the countries in the area also **increased defence spending** to meet the target of spending 2 % of GDP on defence by 2024. The Baltic states and Poland already devote this share of their budget to defence.

Share of the GDP devoted to defence
in the Baltic space



Main multilateral organisations in the Baltic space



Several countries in the region have pursued the modernisation of their militaries by procuring new equipment. Some reactivated conscription (Lithuania), reinforced their reserves (Finland and Baltic states), or partly remilitarised their territory (Gotland, Finnmark), while **strengthening their** defence partnerships on a bilateral basis or within different regional cooperation groups (Nordic Defence

Cooperation, Nordic Baltic 8 or Northern Group).

Despite their long-term military build-up, these countries cannot face alone the security challenges posed to the Baltic space, and call therefore upon the **solidarity of their allies and partners**.

Nearly 200 000
French nationals



Increase in France's strategic and operational partnerships

As a reaction to the deteriorating strategic context since 2014, **France has increased its presence in the region.**

It maintains a regular dialogue with its Baltic and Nordic partners, and develops cooperation bilaterally. Each year, it holds, with Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, **the French-Baltic security seminar**, a forum of discussion between parliamentarians, decision-makers from Ministries of Defence and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, as well as academic experts.

Since 2015, France has also signed intergovernmental agreements with the three Baltic states and Denmark, four letters of intent with Poland, as well as a framework paper with Finland. These agreements aim at increasing our strategic exchanges and **fostering interoperability between our armed forces.** In doing so, France confirms that it shares the security interests of its partners and is willing to remain involved in the region.

At multilateral level, France also works together with some of its partners in the region (Denmark, Estonia, Finland and Germany) to

develop a common strategic culture within the **European Intervention Initiative (EI2)**, which was officially launched in June 2018.

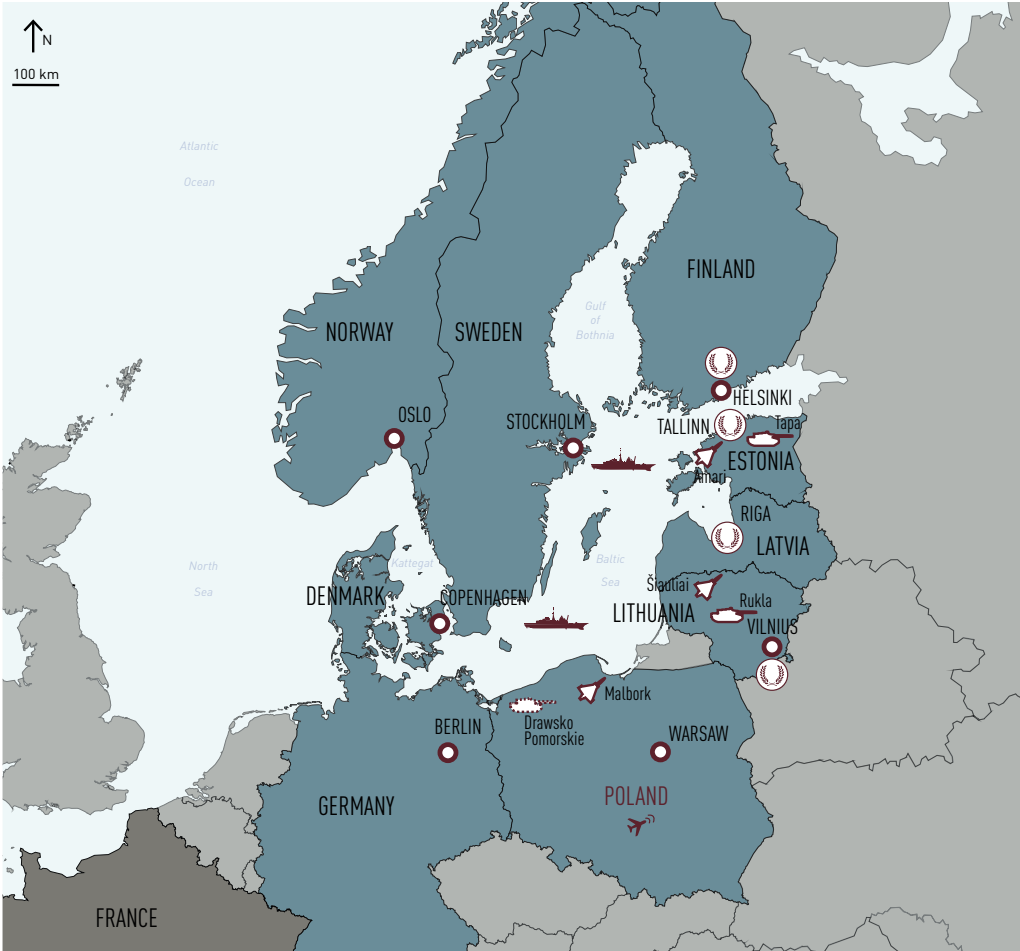
Within NATO, France has taken part in the **eFP**, since its inception in 2017, according to the decision taken at the Warsaw Summit to reinforce the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture. France deployed a contingent to **Estonia in 2017**, then to **Lithuania in 2018**. It will be once again deployed to **Estonia in 2019**. In 2015, French land forces had already deployed fifteen Leclerc Main battle Tanks to Poland in the framework of the *Puma* exercise.

Since 2014, France has actively contributed to NATO assurance measures in Northern Europe by deploying the three components of its armed forces.

France was the first country to act by deploying, from 2014, four Rafale to Poland, then by participating each month to air surveillance missions over Romania and Poland with a E-3F «Sentry» aircraft (AWACS).

France's involvement is not new. It has constantly taken part in **NATO Air Policing missions** over Estonia, Lithuania and Poland. **France is the second largest contributor to Air Policing missions** with seven deployments since **2007**. From April to September 2018, it deployed four Mirage 2000-5 fighter aircrafts to Estonia for monitoring, control

French commitment in the Baltic space



eFP - Lynx mission : a solidarity-based engagement



Nearly
300 soldiers



13 MRV



4 Leclerc MBT



VAB APC



Panhard LAV

France's permanent presence in the region :



Defence Mission



Centre of Excellence

France's contributions to assurance measures since 2014 :



Participation in Air Policing mission
2014 : 4 Rafale, then 4 Mirage 2000 (C/5) aircraft
in Malbork (Poland)
2016 : 4 Mirage 2000-5 aircraft in Šiauliai (Lithuania)
2018 : 4 Mirage 2000-5 aircraft in Amari (Estonia)



Participation in the eFP multinational battalion
2017 : Tapa (Estonia)
2018 : Rukla (Lithuania)
2019 : Tapa (Estonia)



Deployment of a Leclerc armoured combat
company (2015)

COUNTRY



Countries concerned with the 12 annual E-3F AWACS
flights



Maritime reconnaissance (6 deployments each year,
maritime and air assets)

and identification missions in the framework of the enhanced Air Policing mission.

France also ensures a regular presence in the Baltic Sea by deploying annual maritime surveillance patrols. In 2018, it took command of the NATO Maritime Component, which enables the projection of a command platform within five days. Last but not least, it participates in about ten military exercises each year in Northern Europe with air, land, and maritime assets.

To sum up, 4,000 French soldiers from all armed forces are mobilised each year **since 2014** to carry out about twenty activities on the Eastern flank, principally in this area, for an annual cost of 40 to 50 million euros. This momentum will be maintained in 2019.

Since 2014, 26 E-3F AWACS missions achieved over Poland and 6 directly over the Baltic Sea.

France's regular participation in major exercises in the area

Focus *Aurora 17*

Aurora 17 took place in Sweden from 11 to 29 September 2017. Focused on the defence of Gotland, it was the first very large exercise in Sweden in twenty years. 22,000 soldiers from eight nations (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Norway, Sweden and the United States) were involved. **France deployed 130 soldiers, as well as a surface-to-air missile system SAMP/T.**

Focus *Trident Juncture 18*

Organised every two years by NATO, *Trident Juncture 18* was held in Norway, Iceland, and the North Atlantic from 25 October to 7 November 2018. It has been the Alliance's largest exercise in ten years, bringing together 51,000 soldiers from thirty-one nations. This exercise was based on a scenario of military intervention following the activation of the collective defence principle (Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty). **France deployed up to 2,700 soldiers during this exercise.**

France's participation to Centres of Excellence in the Baltic region

France participates in the three NATO Centres of Excellence in the Baltic states through respectively one representative to the Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga, two representatives to the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn and one representative to the Energy Security Centre of Excellence in Vilnius.

It also participates in the Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki since its creation in April 2017, with an annual financial contribution to its budget and French representatives who take part in the different working groups, training sessions and exercises.

Since 2007, France is the 2nd largest contributor to the

Baltic Air Policing

with 7 participations :

- 3,600 flying hours
- 2,800 take-offs
- 82 interceptions of Russian aircraft



In 2018,

- 7 surface ships were deployed in the Baltic Sea

- 3 frigates,
- 4 mine hunters,
- 1 refuelling ship

- 5 Rafale have participated to NATO Tiger Meet in Potsdam



Every year since 2014, in the Baltic Sea, more than 200 presence days and 36 stopovers on average for French navy



More than 4,000 soldiers deployed on the Eastern flank each year, principally in the Baltic space



More than 10 participations in multilateral exercises for French armed forces

All Europeans, all committed

European Intervention Initiative (EI2)

Announced by President Macron during his Sorbonne speech on 26 September 2017 and officially launched on 25 June 2018, the EI2 comprises ten member states: Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

It aims at developing a common strategic culture by strengthening the solidarity and capabilities among a core of European states that are all politically willing and militarily able to take on their responsibilities.

The participation of several countries of the Baltic region will deepen our common reflections regarding security challenges in this area and the best ways to address them.

France shares numerous strategic interests with its Baltic partners. This leads to common deployments, mainly to Africa and the Middle East, as the major security challenges on the Southern flank, namely the **fight against terrorism** and the **management of migratory flows**, affect Europe as a whole. All the states

bordering the Baltic Sea are engaged either in the Levant, or in Africa. In the **Sahel region**, they take part in the fight against terrorism and the stabilisation of the region, alongside France, in the framework of MINUSMA (UN mission in Mali) and EUTM Mali (EU Training Mission). Estonia is also participating in the French operation *Barkhane* with 50 deployed soldiers since summer 2018.

In Lebanon, Finland has replaced a French company of the UNIFIL Force Commander's Reserve (UN mission) with 300 soldiers following France's invocation of article 42.7 Treaty of the European Union in 2015.

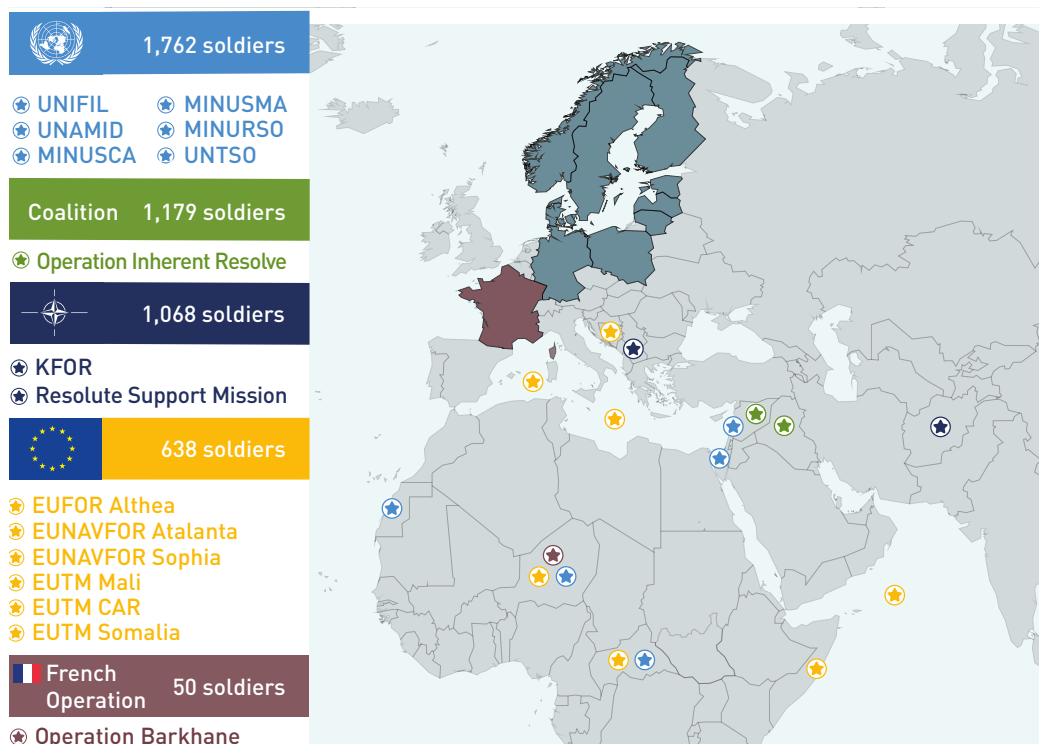
In order to fight against migrant trafficking **in the Mediterranean Sea**, all our partners in the region that are also EU members, with the exception of Denmark because of its opt-out from the CSDP, participate in operation *Sophia*.

Beyond such commitments, France's interests must be assessed in the light of the increasingly intertwined nature of the European nations' interests. Converging threats against Europe, including terrorism that has affected most of the territories of the Baltic space (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway and Sweden), and the in-depth dialogue between Europeans concerning strategic priorities, are gradually **shaping a growing number of fundamentally shared interests** (2017 French Defence and National Security Strategic Review).

France in the Baltic region: a longstanding presence

From 5 October 2018 to 20 January 2019, the Museum of the Armed Forces held in Paris an exhibition called 'In the East: an Endless War, 1918-1923' to illustrate France's contribution to the return to stability, especially in the Baltic region, following the armistice of 11 November 1918. France intervened together with the United Kingdom in Northern and Northeastern Europe to foster national aspirations, while maintaining the balance of power. France helped its partners in their war for independence. For example, on **17 October 1919, a French-British naval division** consisting of ten French warships, commanded by French Captain Jean-Joseph Brisson, repelled the artillery of German Freikorps and White Russians in Riga, **thus helping the Latvian Republic**, founded in November 1918, **to preserve its independence**. This event is now part of the common history that bonds France to Latvia.

European Baltic Sea States' contribution to external in 2018





Mission Lynx, Estonia, 2017. Light Armored Vehicles from 501st Combat Cavalry Regiment progressing on the firing range during an exercise.



Trident Juncture 18, Norway, 2018. Rapid Amphibious Landing Craft (EDA-R) manoeuvring while NH90 is taking off from the flight deck of the *Dixmude* Projection and Command Ship.



Mirage 2000-5 intercepting an Antonov 26



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Head of publishing office: Commander Jérôme Baroë

Art director: Jean-Charles Mougeot

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