Topic One: Addressing the Burden Sharing and Defense Spending Pledge

“European allies boost defense spending, most still miss NATO's U.S.-backed goal” (Reuters)

In a report for 2017, it was shown that the United States, UK, Estonia, Greece, and Poland are still the only countries that meet the 2 percent GDP spending target, however a few countries are projected to meet it in 2018. Overall, however, there is an upward trend in defense spending among NATO members for the third year in a row. Many of the countries with the largest increases share a border or are in close proximity to the Russian Federation. This also seems to reflect a global trend in response to China’s increased military spending and an increase in aggressive policies by the Russian Federation.


“Cerar claims NATO memberships keeps Slovenian defense spending down” (Total Slovenia News)

In a meeting of parliament, Slovenian Prime Minister Miro Cerar stated that the country would spend a much higher amount in defense if they were not a member of the alliance. This statement was made in response to his opposition who has been critical of the increased defense spending programs associated with Slovenia’s NATO membership. Cerar, the outgoing Prime Minister, has taken appropriate measures to modernize Slovenia’s military capabilities and opposed a referendum on their new spending programs.

“Russia to cut defense spending, capital construction outlays, vows presidential aide” (TASS)

According to Russian Presidential Aide Andrei Belousov, the Russian Federation will have to cut its military spending in order to fund other projects proposed by President Vladimir Putin. This comes shortly after Putin introduced Russia’s Hypersonic Missile capabilities as shown by the quote by Belousov saying “...we have passed the peak of saturating our defense forces with new types of armaments and military equipment.”

http://tass.com/defense/994572

“Germany Chooses Ulm for New Proposed NATO Logistics Command” (USNews)

Following the proposal for building a Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) in Europe, the southern German city of Ulm was ultimately picked to be the location. The implications of this are that it can coordinate with Germany’s Multinational Joint Headquarters in Ulm that will give them communication with the EU and UN, it will be located close to the center of the European continent to better allow for communication with and mobilization of troops, and it allows for Germany to increase defense expenditure which is still below the 2% GDP target.


Topic Two: Nuclear Threats to NATO Member States

“Putin boasts military might with animation of Florida nuke strike” (CNN & Reuters)

Responding to Russian President Vladimir Putin’s announcement of the nation’s new array of nuclear weapons in development, NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu decried the threatening remarks made by Putin, stating “Russian statements threatening to target allies are unacceptable and counterproductive.” The statement comes following an animated video during the Russian press conference that seemed to depict a flurry of newly-announced RS-28 nuclear
missiles striking an area closely resembling the state of Florida. In addition, Lungescu reiterated NATO’s goal on the topic of the Russian threat, stating “NATO is pursuing a twin-track approach to Russia: strong deterrence and defense, combined with meaningful dialogue. We are committed to delivering on both tracks.”


“Russia just announced it will test its allegedly unstoppable new 'Satan 2' nuclear missile” (Business Insider)

On March 1st, Russian President Vladimir Putin unveiled the latest addition to the nation’s nuclear arsenal, the RS-28 Sarmat hypersonic intercontinental ballistic missile, dubbed by NATO as the SS-X-30 or “Satan 2”. The project, which has been in development for nearly nine years, has been publicly known since at least 2014, but previous tests were rumoured to have ended in failure. A computer-generated video played during the announcement appeared to show the rocket carrying five nuclear warheads, however Russian media has reported it as being able to carry up to ten large nuclear warheads, or sixteen smaller warheads. Putin described the missiles as being unstoppable and touted their practically unlimited range, due in part to the unmatched speed of the rocket and its ability to carry and deploy countermeasures against NATO’s anti-ballistic missile defense systems.


“Poland says U.S. missile shield site delayed until 2020” (Reuters & Breaking Defense)

In a U.S. Senate hearing on March 23rd, Lieutenant General Samuel Greaves, head of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency (MDA), announced that construction delays would push back the completion of a new NATO missile defense site in Redzikowo, Poland until at least 2020. The site, which is set to fill a large gap in NATO’s missile defense shield in eastern Europe, is being outfitted with the Lockheed Martin-developed Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defense system, similar to the one completed in Romania in May of 2016. Both of the aforementioned sites have drawn criticism from ranking Russian officials who see the missile defense sites as acts of aggression by NATO, however NATO has repeatedly stated that the installations are strictly defensive measures being taken as a result of the improved offensive capabilities of Iran and North Korea.
In the event of a nuclear strike by North Korea on one of the more established members of NATO such as the United States and the subsequent invocation of Article 5, some wonder what role smaller member states or those with less advanced military capabilities will play, such as the central European members. Aside from relatively small troop contributions in the case of an invasion of the Korean mainland, the central European member states’ roles in a NATO response would likely be in a logistical capacity, such as supply and medical aid contributions or the transportation of NATO forces. These “soft” military contributions are important in times of conflict in order to shoulder some of the burden carried by more established NATO members, and such duties are usually welcomed by member states who wish to limit their role in direct combat in a scenario where Article 5 may be invoked.

**“Thinking the Unthinkable: Central Europe at War With North Korea” (The Diplomat)**

