

Policy Review Memo of the National Security Advisor

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With significant Russian-speaking population and with reference to Crimea, the Baltics states are likely to be the next target of revanchist Russia. This memorandum reviews the President's decision regarding US actions in handling the ethnic tensions in Latvia and Russia's aggressive behaviour in the Baltics from the point of view of the National Security Advisor.

1. Principal Objectives of the National Security Advisor

1.1 The office holds the following principal objectives when presenting policy recommendations. First, it emphasizes the regional stability as this is directly affecting the economic activities. Second, the security of US citizens must be ensured. Third, it must be able to show to Russia that any aggressive action in the region is not appreciated but try not to put Russia in a desperate situation. Last but not least, suggested policy should be able to reaffirm the willingness of the US to back NATO and other European countries.

1.2 Based on these principal objectives, the following policy recommendations also draw the attention of some guiding principles. First and foremost, any move conducted by the US has to be legitimate. Second, the possibility of US policy will be transformed into an excuse for Russia in taking counter-measure has to be minimized. Supplementary concerns such as effective public explanation and how to avoid delay caused by too many stakeholders are taken into consideration as well.

1.3 Ultimately, the office hopes the President can identify the real threat to US national security is from China instead of Russia. Therefore, the US should abandon the traditional way of perceiving Russia as its biggest threat and through handling this case carefully, it will smooth the future cooperation with Russia in balancing China.

2. Primary Recommendations from the National Security Advisor

2.1 The US should first consider pressuring Russia through a multilateral platform, namely UNSC. This option aims at putting the issue on the negotiation table and pressuring

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Russia together with other UNSC members in order to demonstrate that any kind of instability in the region is in no one's favour.

2.2 This action is prioritized because it costs the least, and support from within and without the US is anticipated. Listing the issue on the agenda of UNSC does not require extra monetary costs, such as the costs for sustaining the military personnel and fuels. As such, the resistance from the public is expected to be relatively low. Meanwhile, UNSC only contains 15 members, limited effect on time caused by this relatively small group of stakeholders is acceptable.

2.3 Also, putting the issue into the agenda of UNSC should be able to generate significant pressure on Russia. Apart from UK and France, US' traditional allies, a number of the incumbent non-permanent members in the UNSC are either US' ally or facing threats from Russia, including Poland, Sweden and the Netherlands. Correspondingly, US' voice in the UNSC should be supported. Moreover, another permanent member, China is expected to align with the US as well if the issue is being discussed in UNSC. It is because China has been increasing its investment in the Eurasian continent and the Baltics are one of the strategic regions. Therefore, any instability is not preferred by the Chinese. As a result, getting China on board should not face huge obstacles. If this is the case, significant diplomatic pressure on Moscow can be generated.

2.4 However, overwhelming optimism should be prevented. Firstly, Russia is a permanent member of UNSC with veto power, UN resolution against Russia thus not likely be approved. Second, the capability of Russia to survive from UN resolution should not be underestimated as well, with reference to the sanctions imposed on Russia after Crimea crisis. Another hidden problem is that the Baltics states are not given the chance to voice out their concerns, the way of showing US' support for the Baltics thus indirect.

3. Secondary Recommendations from the National Security Advisor

3.1 If the primary recommendation is insufficient, it should be supplemented by increasing the US' military presence in Europe. Two things to be noted. First, mobilizing directly to Latvia, as suggested by other colleges during the NSC meeting, is not preferred. Second, such mobilization should not be operated under the title of NATO. Rather, such move should be done under the name of internal adjustment of the Sixth Fleet.

3.2 One of Russia's major sentiments is against NATO with its presence in Russia's sphere of influence (i.e. the Baltics). Therefore, the US should avoid further military mobilization in the region both unilaterally or collectively under the name of NATO.

Even a step backwards, mobilizing under the title of United States European Command is not the best alternative since the Command explicitly puts preventing Russian aggression is one of its missions. Accordingly, the Sixth Fleet would be an optimal choice. This is because the Sixth Fleet is responsible for the navy of both European Command and Africa Command, room for interchanging Europe and Africa thus exists. Specifically, the US can justify the increased military presence due to the operations in Africa instead of Europe. For details of this policy, an aircraft carrier can be transferred from the Seventh Fleet since the Seventh Fleet has a number of them while the Sixth Fleet has none. With an aircraft carrier in the Sixth Fleet, the US will be able to project jet fighters to the European territorial air and have regular training with the European Command (and Africa Command).

3.3 From the Baltics states' perspective, despite NATO forces being the optimal choice for them to counter Russia, the fact is that any force who are willing to join the counter-Russian force is welcomed. Therefore, mobilizing through the Sixth Fleet should be accepted by the Baltics. However, to play safe, closed-clarifications to the European allies should be made by the President at the same time. Precisely, the President has to tell the European governments that the area which the Sixth Fleet covers is indeed including Europe, and hoping that the European states, the Baltics states, in particular, continue to ask for help from NATO in order to relief Russia. In this line, this move can demonstrate and reaffirm the stance of US that the US is on the same boat with European countries in countering Russia.

3.4 The primary concern of this policy option is, given that Asia, particularly China, is the most considerable area in the coming future, transferring an aircraft carrier from the Seventh Fleet certainly involves risks even though the latest Ford-class carrier can be added afterwards. Also, it has the risk of the story told Russia about operations in Africa as the rational may not be accepted.

4. Conclusion

4.1 Despite Russia being the traditional enemy for the US, it does not have to be the case in the future. Instead, the US should avoid escalating the tension with Russia. As such, the office is suggesting the President take the measures with maximized maneuvering room on Russia as stated above.