

NATO Consolidation: The “Baltic Reassurance Act” Is a Ruse for Provoking Russia

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The proposed “Baltic Reassurance Act” aims to more closely integrate the Baltic countries into NATO, but its most controversial clause is the suggestion that “the United States should lead a multilateral effort to develop a strategy to deepen joint capabilities with [those three countries], NATO allies, and other regional partners”, strongly implying that this legislation is a ruse for provoking Russia by facilitating non-NATO-members Finland and Sweden’s military interoperability with the bloc under the pretext of protecting the Baltics.

Texas Republican Congressman Michael Conaway introduced the so-called “[Baltic Reassurance Act](#)” into the House earlier this month, which recently drew the attention of Russian Chairman of the Committee on International Affairs Leonid Slutsky who [alleged](#) that its true purpose is to push American arms onto the countries abutting Russia’s borders. While that’s certainly true, there might actually be a bit more of an anti-Russian provocation brewing if this bill ultimately enters into law judging by its ultra-controversial clause that “the United States should lead a multilateral effort to develop a strategy to deepen joint capabilities with Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, NATO allies, and other regional partners”, with a key emphasis being placed on the last-mentioned “regional partners”.

The only realistic countries that this could refer to are non-NATO-members Finland and Sweden, making it suspiciously seem like this legislation is a ruse for facilitating those countries’ military interoperability with the bloc under the pretext of protecting the Baltics from so-called “Russian aggression”. The case being made in the text is that these former Soviet Republics are supposedly vulnerable to a lightning-fast military attack from their neighbor, one which might be so quick that it overwhelms NATO’s troops there and succeeds before the bloc can call in reinforcements. In the extremely unlikely chance that this fringe scenario comes to pass, the only real recourse that the US believes it can have is to rely on its nearby “NATO allies, and other regional partners” to buy time before its own forces can arrive en masse to the area of operations.

It’s here where Poland (the US’ [top NATO ally](#)), Finland, and Sweden are envisaged as having a role to play. The first-mentioned country used to be part of the same historical Great Power as Lithuania during the centuries of their Commonwealth, so it naturally has an interest in expanding its growing “sphere of influence” into the Baltic region. Being the most populous country and best-performing economy out of all the former communist satellites, it makes sense for the US to consider Poland as its “[Lead From Behind](#)” ally in the Central European space and use it as its hub for military activity in the broader region, as it’s now planning to do following the latest US-Polish military deal that was clinched last week during President Duda’s visit to DC.

As for the other two countries — Finland and Sweden — the former has close cultural connections to Estonia while the latter used to be the one-time hegemon over the aforementioned two and Latvia prior to Russia’s victories in the Great Northern and Napoleonic Wars spelling the end of its regional dominance. Finland shares a very long land border with Russia while Sweden has been involved in phantom Russian sub hunts invented solely for the purpose of preconditioning its public into accepting eventual NATO membership on this basis. The US’ grand strategic vision in the Baltics is to form the so-called “[Viking Bloc](#)” of “Greater Scandinavian” states (traditional Scandinavia plus Finland and the Baltics) aimed at “containing” Russia, which is exactly what Conaway’s clause about “deepening (NATO’s) joint capabilities with...other regional partners” is aimed at.

At this point, there’s no telling whether or not the so-called “Baltic Reassurance Act” will pass, but its importance nevertheless lies in the intent that it conveys. Not only is it all about selling more American arms to the Baltic countries, but it’s a veiled attempt to strengthen Finland and Sweden’s military interoperability with NATO under the pretext of defending the three countries that jointly form part of their combined historical “spheres of influence” in coordination with regional leader Poland. It’s difficult to predict how Russia would respond to this latest provocation if it ultimately ends up happening, but it could of course always continue its military buildup in the Kaliningrad exclave and improve the snap preparedness of its Baltic Fleet and the forces of its Western Military District.

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