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The Evolution of The Military Personnel in The Nato Member States

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ABSTRACT

Based at the latest NATO annual report (NATO, 2022) this article examines the number of military personnel in the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) member states between 2014 and 2022. These two years are taken as a result of the NATO decisions at the Wales summit in 2014 to increase the defence expenditures against 2024 to 2 % of the national GDP in every member and also to invest at least 20 % of the national military budget in new material for the different army parts.

Keywords: NATO, military personnel, military budgets

INTRODUCTION

This article researches the evolution of the military personnel in 30 of the 31 NATO member states with exception of Iceland, because this country doesn't have an army but only a coast guard of approximately 200 men. Since the spring of 2023 is Finland the newest NATO member. The indicated annual report doesn't have the figures for this Scandinavian country. Therefore, this study is based at the Finnish reports. In the 2022 NATO annual report the methodology for counting the number of military personnel contains also unites as the coast guard (f.e. the US coast guard which is an armed force with about 50 thousand personnel) but not the military police forces which are still existing in several NATO countries. (f.e. "Gendarmerie nationale" in France with about 110thousand men, "Carabinieri" in Italy with 110thousand men, "Guardia Civil" in Spain with 77thousand men, "de Koninklijke Marechaussee" in the Netherlands with about 7700 personnel). Nevertheless, the budgets of this military police forces are counted in the total of military expenditures concerning the NATO methodology, but not their number of personnel!

This study doesn't analyse the impact of the military service, which exists in several nations (f.e. Finland, Turkey). The mentioned figures are the NATO facts about the professional troops.

The main question in this study is how did the number of military personnel evaluated from 2014 until 2022 and what is the impact in the national military budgets?

MILITARY PERSONNEL

The first table of this study gives an overview of the number of military personnel between 2014 and 2022, as published in the NATO annual report 2022.

The first row gives the place of the NATO member in the list of personnel based at the figures 2022, going from high to low. After the country name, between brackets, the respective place

in the year 2014. The next line mentions the number of military personnel and the country share in the NATO total amount.

In the year 2014 the total number of NATO military personnel was upgraded to 3.255.000 and in 2022 it was 3.341.000 men or an increase of nearly 85thousand men. This is included the figures for the latest members: Montenegro in 2017, North Macedonia in 2020 and recently Finland in the spring of 2023. This table takes only the countries with an army with more then 20thousand men in the year 2022. The share percentage is limited till greater than 1% of the NATO global total of military personnel.

Table: I Number & Share Military Personnel (In Thousands of Men)

	Place 2022-2014		2014	2022	2014	2022
1.	USA	(1)	1.338	1.348	41,1 %	40,3 %
2.	Turkey	(2)	426	446	13,1 %	13,3 %
3.	France	(3)	207	207	6,3 %	6,2 %
4.	FRG	(5)	178	188	5,5 %	5,6 %
5.	Italy	(4)	183	174	5,6 %	5,2 %
6.	UK	(6)	168	156	5,1 %	4,6 %
7.	Poland	(8)	99	122	3,0 %	3,6 %
8.	Spain	(7)	121	118	3,7 %	3,5 %
9.	Greece	(9)	107	111	3,3 %	3,3 %
10.	Romania	(11)	65	78	2,0 %	2,3 %
11.	Canada	(10)	66	76	2,0 %	2,2 %
12.	The Netherlands	(12)	41	41	1,2 %	1,2 %
13.	Bulgaria	(15)	27	27		
13.	Czech rep.	(18)	20	27		
14.	Portugal	(13)	31	26		
15.	Finland	(16)	26	26		
16.	Norway	(17)	21	23		
17.	Belgium	(14)	30	22		
18.	Hungary	(19)	17	21		

Over these years 19 members have an army of more than 20.000 persons. The US army has increased the total number of personnel to a limited extend, but with a share of 40% this country overwhelmed everyone. Only 12 countries have a share of more than 1% in the NATO total number. This indicates the fact that a lot of member states have a small army comparing with this total of military personnel. Over these studied years there is an increase for Turkey, Germany, Poland Canada, Romania, and the Czech Republic. The decrease of number is related with the following countries: Italy, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Belgium.

If this study counts the shares of the two North American members have a share of 42,5%! With the shares of Turkey and the non- EU state: the United Kingdom are counting with this North American percentage; it's increasing till 60,4% of the NATO personnel. The 22 European Union members of the NATO (NOT: Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, Malta and Sweden) have together a share of about 38% or 1.269thousand military personnel. This is also except the non -EU states in the military alliance: Albania, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway and North Macedonia.

The increase of military personnel is to be determined for sure in the NATO states near the Russian border.

Concerning the shares there is not only an important difference between the USA and Turkey , but also between this little Asian member and the greater European members (France etc.). The next table in this study gives the division per category of the number of military personnel in the 30 studied states with exception of Iceland.

Table: II Category of Armies

	2014	2022
• Plus 400.000	2	2
• 200.000-400.000	1	1
• 100.000-200.000	5	6
• 50.000-100.000	3	2
• 25.000-50.000	5	5
• 12.500-25.000	4	7
• Under 12.500	10	7

In the first category we do find the US and Turkey. In the second group is France the only army with a strength between 200 and 400 thousand military personnel. The next group with the UK, Spain, Italy, Germany and Greece is in 2022 expanded with Poland. This east European NATO country increased the number of personnel over these years with more than 20%! The two armies with an armed force between 50 and 100 thousand are Canada and Romania. This last country has a border with Ukraine and Moldavia, that's partly occupied by the Russians. The growth of the Canadian army can be explained as result of the geo political position of this nation in the northern arctic region and the future importance of the north pole area.

In the group 25 till 50 thousand there are the same four countries: the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Finland and Portugal. Belgium has lost this category and the Czech Republic joined it.

Between 12500 and 25.000 men four countries were and are there situated: Norway, Denmark, Croatia and Hungary. Belgium descends from the upper category. The Slovak republic increased, over these years, from 12.300 till 13.800 men. The Baltic state Lithuania upgraded his army from 8.600 till 17.200 men.

The smallest armies are located in Albania (6.600 men), Estonia (6.900), Latvia (7.500), Luxembourg (900 men), Montenegro (1.700 men), North Macedonia (6.200 men) and Slovenia (5.900 men).

Over the studied years the results of these 30 countries are as follow:

- Sq in total military personnel: Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Luxembourg and the Netherlands or eight countries,
- A decrease of the number in: Belgium, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom or seven countries,
- In 15 countries the number of military personnel increased comparing between the years 2014 and 2022.

In figures the greatest increase and decrease are related with the following countries:

- Turkey plus 20thousand, Poland plus 23thousand, Romania plus 13thousand, Canada plus 11thousand and Germany plus 10.000 men.
- The United Kingdom minus 12thousand, Italy minus 9thousand and Belgium minus 8.000 men

In percentages the most important evolutions are the following one:

- Increase: Lithuania 100% (from 8.600 to 17.200), Latvia plus 62% over these years, Czech Republic plus 26%, Poland plus 23%, Romania plus 20%, Hungary plus 19%, Canada plus 16%, federal republic plus 6% and Turkey plus 5%;
- Decrease: minus 26% Belgium, Portugal minus 12%, United Kingdom minus 8% and Italy minus 5%.

The next table of this article classifies the members in categories in relation to their share concerning the personnel cost in the total national defence budget, with exception of Iceland and also Finland. For this Nordic country the concerned figures are yet not know. Therefore, this table is related to 29 members of the alliance.

Table: III Personnel Share (in %)

	+ 80 %	+ 70 %	+ 60 %	+ 50 %	+ 40 %	+ 30 %
2014	2	8	4	8	4	3
2015	2	8	2	7	6	4
2016	1	8	4	4	9	3
2017	2	5	4	7	5	6
2018	0	8	2	6	5	8
2019	0	5	5	2	9	8
2020	0	2	6	6	8	6
2021	0	0	5	7	10	6
2022	0	0	3	5	11	8

The last years a few countries decreased their personnel cost to under the 30% share of the national budget. It concerns the following years and NATO member states.

- 2020: Hungary (27%)
- 2021: Hungary (29%)
- 2022: Estonia (29%) and Luxembourg (24%).

The best scored countries in 2014 were Estonia, the United Kingdom and the United States with a share of personnel costs between 30% and 40%. In the beginning year 2014 the plus 80 % group started in 2014 with Portugal and Slovenia. Since the year 2018 there are no members anymore with a military budget in which more than 80 % went to personnel outlays. The plus 70 % group existed in 2014 of eight countries and reduced to two (Croatia, Greece) in 2020. Since 2021 there are no members anymore in this situation.

The Hellenic republic is one of the greatest defence spenders in relation to the GDP (2014: 2,22 % and 2022: 3,54 %), but with an army of more than 100thousand men the personnel costs were always on the high side. In 2014 it was 77% and it was still 74% in 2020. But then the

percentage share went down to 53% in 2021 and 43% in 2022. This important reduction was the consequence of an increase of the military budget in this country. (2020: 4,8 billion euro, 2021: 6,7 billion euro and 2022: 7,4 billion euro). This Greek policy is to relate with the tensions between the Hellenic republic and Turkey, the discovery and possible exploitation of gas-oil reserves in the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea. Since the budget year 2021 there are no countries anymore with a personnel cost share of more than 70%. This is an important improvement with the beginning year 2014.

If we do take the 50% share as border between the countries, the result is as follow over these years:

- 2014: 22 countries more than 50% share;
- 2015: 19 countries,
- 2016: 17 countries,
- 2017: 18 countries,
- 2018: 16 countries,
- 2019: 12 countries,
- 2020: 14 countries
- 2021: 12 countries,
- 2022: 8 countries.

The reasons for this improvement concerning the personnel costs in the military budgets is on the one hand the increase of the military outlays in the national budgets and also in some countries the reduction of personnel.

Anno 2022, based at the NATO annual report, the members are as follow related to the percentages in shares (not in the list: Iceland and Finland):

- 60% plus: Italy (62%), Montenegro (61%) and Portugal (63%) = 3 countries;
- 50% plus: Bulgaria (56%), Croatia (53%), Romania (55%), Slovenia (53%) and Spain (53%) = 5 countries;
- 40% plus: Albania (46%), Belgium (49%), Canada (45%), Czech rep. (44%), Denmark (43%), France (41%), Greece (43%), North Macedonia (42%), Poland (40%), Slovak rep. (45%) and Turkey (48%) = 11 countries;
- 30% plus: Germany (39%), Hungary (30%), Latvia (35%), Lithuania (33%), the Netherlands (38%), Norway (32%), UK (30%) and the USA (38%) = 8 countries;
- 20% plus: Estonia (29%) and Luxembourg (24%) = 2 countries.

During this period 2014-2022 the countries decreased their personnel costs in the national military budgets. The next table gives an overview of all the countries with their share in 2014 and the last in 2022.

Table: IV Evolution 2014 - 2022

- Albania :	68 % (2014)	-	46 % (2022)
- Belgium:	77 % (2014)	-	62 % (2022)
- Bulgaria:	72 %	-	56 %
- Canada:	50 %	-	45 %
- Croatia:	76 %	-	56 %
- Czechia:	61%	-	44 %
- Denmark:	51 %	-	43 %
- Estonia:	38 %	-	29 %
- France:	48 %	-	41 %
- FRG:	50 %	-	39 %
- Greece:	77 %	-	43 %
- Hungary:	49%	-	30 %
- Italy:	76 %	-	62 %
- Latvia:	52 %	-	35 %
- Lithuania:	57 %	-	33 %
- Luxembourg:	49 %	-	24 %
- Montenegro:	78 %	-	61 %
- Netherlands:	56 %	-	38 %
- North Mac.:	72 %	-	42 %
- Norway:	40 %	-	32 %
- Poland:	51 %	-	40 %
- Portugal:	81 %	-	63 %
- Romania:	71 %	-	55 %
- Slovak rep.:	69 %	-	45 %
- Slovenia:	82 %	-	53 %
- Spain:	67 %	-	53 %
- Turkey:	56 %	-	48 %
- UK:	36 %	-	30 %
- USA:	35 %	-	38 %

There is only one example of a NATO member state, where the personnel costs share went up: the United States with three percent!

Based at the fourth table the most important reductions in the personnel costs are situated in the following countries: Greece (- 34%), North Macedonia (- 30%), Slovenia (- 29 %), Luxembourg (- 25 %), in three countries it went down with 24% over the studied years : Spain, Lithuania and the Slovak republic, Albania (- 22 %), Croatia (- 21 %), Hungary (- 19 %) etc...

NATO FIGURES

In the annual report of the military alliance counts the share of the equipment's (investments of weapons), personnel, infrastructure and operations/maintenance. Based at the mentioned report here are some examples:

	Personnel	equipment	infrastructure	operations/maintenance
Belgium =	49,5%	19,3%	2,7%	28,5%
France =	41,6%	28,6%	3,1%	26,7%
Greece =	43,7%	45,3%	0,1%	10,9%
Latvia =	35,5%	24,6%	8,7%	31,2%
Luxembourg =	24,1%	39,1%	11,2%	25,6%
Netherlands =	38,8%	23,7%	3,3%	34,2%
UK =	30,9%	28,1%	2,1%	38,9%
USA =	38,8%	27,3%	1,5%	32,4%

Knowing the Wales guidelines of 2014 most of the members do have already a budget in which more then 20% is related with equipment. The mostly percentage of the operations and maintenance is related with the cost of sending troops to NATO operation area's and/or the existence of a nuclear force, which is the case for the United Kingdom, France and the United States.

Based at the 2022 NATO report the personnel costs is the highest share in the military budgets and this in 24 countries, with exception of Luxembourg, the United Kingdom and Estonia (39%) where operations/maintenance is the highest cost in the military budget. In three countries is equipment the highest cost: Greece, Hungary (45%) and Lithuania (34%).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Over the studied years 2014-2022 in this article the number of military personnel decreased with as deepest point in the year 2016. Then the number raised again. The total figure in the year 2022 is situated already over the starting year 2014. In the half of all the NATO members the size of their army is less than 25thousand persons.

The US has the greatest army in number of military personnel with a share of about 41% of the NATO total, followed by Turkey. The most important European army is France. The result of the evolution concerning the military personnel in this nuclear power is a status quo in numbers over the studied years. On the other hand, Germany and Poland are countries with an increasing number of military personnel.

The opposite is the fact in Italy and the United Kingdom. Near the increase of the total of military personnel, the share of this cost in the military budgets went down. In 2014 there were these countries where more than 70% of their military expenditures were personnel costs. Table III of this study gives the evolution till the present years. Table IV gives the evolution of the national shares concerning the personnel cost. The concerned conclusion is that this decreased in all the member states of the NATO, except the United States. With six exceptions is personnel still the greatest budget post in the military. The increase of the total number of military personnel is also related with the location of the countries. The border states with Russia and Ukraine are more focussed at the security – military policy.

Only the joint sum of the military personnel in the EU members of the NATO with the United Kingdom gives a greater army then the US military.

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