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# Commentaries

New Series

## FROM ĀDAŽI TO DAUGAVPILS: NATO'S NEW MESSAGE ON LATVIA'S EASTERN FRONTIER

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The first deployment of NATO Multinational Brigade troops to Daugavpils, in the eastern region of Latgale, marks a highly significant step in the redefinition of Latvia's defence posture and, more broadly, of NATO's eastern flank. This is not merely a military or logistical move, but a political and strategic signal addressed simultaneously to Latvian society, European and North American allies, and Russia. NATO's presence in a city as symbolically and geographically sensitive as Daugavpils shows that collective defence does not concern only the country's main military centres, such as the Ādaži military base, but the entire national territory, including the most exposed border regions.

Daugavpils and Latgale occupy a particular place in the Latvian context. The region lies close to the borders with Belarus and Russia and is marked by a complex social and linguistic composition, with a significant Russian-speaking population and a history shaped by multiple imperial, national, and cultural affiliations. For this reason, its full inclusion in NATO's defence planning carries a meaning that goes beyond the strictly military dimension. It affirms that Latvia's security cannot be territorially or socially fragmented: every region, every local community, and every critical infrastructure is part of the same political and strategic space. The first deployment of NATO's Multinational Brigade to Daugavpils therefore represents a politically and strategically important development for Latvia's security and for the Alliance's eastern flank as a whole. The decision to extend the allied presence beyond the Ādaži base indicates that the defence of Latvian territory cannot be conceived as a static posture limited to the central areas of the country, but must fully include the most exposed regions, especially Latgale. The message is twofold.

On the one hand, NATO and the Latvian Armed Forces are strengthening deterrence vis-à-vis Russia by demonstrating mobility, logistical capacity, and command-and-control capabilities in the eastern regions as well. On the other hand, the allied presence in Daugavpils also has domestic political significance: it confirms that collective defence applies to the entire national territory and to all local communities, including those located in a region that is sensitive from a geographical, historical, and linguistic point of view. Colonel [Kristopher Reeves' remarks](#) clearly illustrate the change that has taken place since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The mission is no longer merely to train and deter, but to prepare concretely for the defence of Latvia. In this sense, becoming familiar with the terrain, infrastructure, and local population becomes an integral part of military strategy. Security depends not only on the presence of troops, but also on the ability to operate in coordination with national institutions and with the country's social fabric. The permanent nature of the allied presence in Latgale, even if personnel are deployed on a rotational basis, further strengthens the credibility of NATO's commitment. This is not simply a temporary exercise, but a structural adaptation of the Alliance's posture in the Baltic region. Latvia, located in a strategic position between Russia, Belarus, and the rest of the European Union, thus becomes a concrete testing ground for integrated European defence.

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From a federalist perspective, this development confirms a broader trend: European security can no longer be conceived as the sum of separate national policies. The defence of Latvian territory is also the defence of the common European space. The multinational presence in Latgale shows that the sovereignty of member states, far from being weakened by cooperation, is strengthened through strategic interdependence and solidarity among allies. NATO's deployment to Daugavpils signals that the eastern flank is not a periphery of European security, but one of its decisive centres. The Alliance's ability to defend Latvia in its entirety will also be a measure of the credibility of the Euro-Atlantic order after Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

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