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# LITHUANIA IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT:

## NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY DILEMMAS

GENERAL JONAS ŽEMAITIS  
MILITARY ACADEMY OF LITHUANIA



**LITHUANIA IN THE GLOBAL  
CONTEXT: NATIONAL SECURITY  
AND DEFENCE POLICY DILEMMAS**

Edited volume



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## FOREWORD

The traditional Chinese curse “May you live in interesting times” seems to be achieved to its fullest and without any stop in the foreseeable future. The “happy” or more predictable period of 1991-2008 ended, and the world is moving into greater uncertainty. The power becomes less defined, new centres of power rise from the restructuring international system and world order changes at an unprecedented pace. The world returns to a great power rivalry because China has started challenging the United States of America for the first time since the end of the Cold War. The distribution of power inevitably changes and the world is moving from a long-term Eurocentric period of history (since the 17th century) to an Asia-centric period. The political changes inside the Western countries force one to question if the old alliances forged in the ruins of World War II are still viable and how long will they be viable? What will replace these old alliances? The European Union, which brought an unprecedented period of peace, prosperity, connectivity and unity for Europe, shrinks for the first time, creating significant but still undetermined consequences for the future of the Union. International institutions and regimes no longer work to their fullest. Western countries wish to preserve them, but they will inevitably change, and they will have to adapt to new realities. The core headache for the Baltic region remains Russia and its aggressive actions to recreate the area of influence that the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union once had. Despite Russia’s challenge to the Baltic region’s security, Baltic states and their neighbours fail to cooperate to the fullest, thus to increase their security and deterrence. Lithuania’s defence policy remains reactive rather than proactive; defence is further increased by the acquisition of weapons while still lacking the development of military thought.

The changes in the international system at different levels create significant dilemmas for Lithuania’s decision-makers about how to adapt to a new reality which rapidly changes as a result of demographics, ideological and technological changes. Changes do not stop, constant adaptation to them is inevitable in order to keep pace with the present and not to stuck in the past. Just in this decade, Lithuania has started to think beyond its traditional geographic areas and paying attention to the East, Southeast and Southern Asia. However, emerging global, regional and sometimes domestic security and defence dilemmas remain beyond the grasp of the decision-makers.

The edited volume is unprecedented in the scope of topics as well as the size in the context of Lithuanian research regarding international relations and security. Though at first glance the topics might seem distant from one another, the structure of the edited volume has a reasoned approach. The volume starts from the chapters that analyse the core processes in the international system, then moves to the analysis of the main processes in the ideological field. Material and ideological elements define dynamic changes in the international order as well as domestic policies of the states, together with their bilateral and multilateral relations.

Later, the focus is given to the major powers – the United States of America



and the People's Republic of China – their impact and influence on European security and defence. Changes in European continent have the highest impact on the security and defence interests and policies of the Republic of Lithuania. Chapters focus on the processes in the European Union, NATO and Russia.

The edited volume further focuses on the close neighbours of Lithuania – Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic states. Attention is paid to the cooperation between Lithuania and the aforementioned neighbours.

Finally, chapters of the volume analyse evolution of Lithuanian defence policy, its commitments to the international community and the ways Lithuania could advance its security and defence interests via communities of experts and think tanks.

The core idea of this edited volume is to disclose how processes on different levels affect the security environment (military security for the most part) of Lithuania, thus creating security and foreign policy dilemmas in a less predictable world. In the edited volume, one can see how global changes translate to regional, sub-regional and national levels that define the environment of Lithuanian security and national defence, forcing one to search how to deal with remaining and emerging dilemmas.

The edited volume has the following objectives:

1. To identify major changes at the global, regional, sub-regional and national levels for Lithuanian security and defence;
2. To reveal the evolution of processes affecting the security and defence of Lithuania at the global, regional, sub-regional and national levels;
3. To define the emerging security and defence policy dilemmas for Lithuania;
4. To suggest policies to ensure Lithuania's security and defence in the rapidly-changing international environment.

The edited volume does not stick to one methodological approach, but focuses on the multilevel analysis of the changes in global, regional, sub-regional and national levels. The particular set of methods are not specifically defined, but the case studies, process tracing and comparative analysis are applied and synthesised. The aim was to give freedom for the authors to analyse the topic in the best approach of their selection, thus fostering academic and research freedom.

On the theoretical point, the approach of the volume does not seek to test theories, advance them or contribute to theoretical debates. The chapters' focus on realism, constructivism and other theories can be traced. The decision not to focus too much on theories is grounded on the aim that the volume should be accessible not only for experts but also decision-makers, students and the wider society. This model follows the tradition of well-known journals like *Foreign Affairs* and *World Policy* as well as numbers of edited volumes published by the best publishing houses.

This edited volume successfully gathered researchers of international relations and security fields from three key academic institutions in Lithuania. Such success suggests that joint efforts can produce substantial results. The edited volume also includes researchers from abroad, experts from the Ministry of National Defense

and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania.

This project would have never succeeded without the support and encouragement of the Commandants of the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania – Brigadier General (ret.) Algis Vaičeliūnas and Colonel Juozas Kačergius – as well as Vice-rectors Prof. Jūratė Novagrockienė and Prof. Mantas Bileišis. The biggest gratitude for the colleagues and silent workers who believed in this project and provided significant help. Last, but not least, special gratitude goes to the reviewers who took the challenge to review a book of such scope and length.

The hope is that this volume will be of crucial importance for the researchers on the contemporary security and defence challenges, but especially for the researchers on the Baltic states and Lithuania. At the same time, there is hope that this volume will be alive and hopefully chapters will be included into reading lists for students as well as be a guide for the Lithuanian decision-makers and a source of knowledge for society in general.

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# 1.

## THE CHALLENGES OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Giedrius Česnakas\*

### Introduction

The international system has experienced unprecedented transformations since the end of the Cold War in terms of power distribution, which changes in the existing world order and leads to emerging regional orders. The redistribution of power is also affected by technological innovations, also changing the perception of power and reality, introducing new domains to warfare and changing the existing ones. Radical changes in population modify the face of the world economy and demography of different countries. These processes are already fuelling a clash between globalism (liberalism) and traditionalism, deepening cleavages in societies. The old alliances, especially between the United States of America and European countries, become more intensively questioned, while rising new powers, especially the People's Republic of China, have become core actors shaping the international system. For the first time in history, the European Union project is facing a significant economic and political decline as a result of Brexit. At the same time, the European Union is focusing on its strategic autonomy, aiming to distance itself from the U.S.

The outlined global changes for the most part remain beyond the contemplations of Lithuanian decision makers, think-tankers or society, while these issues are only marginally touched by the researchers in Lithuanian universities. Lithuanian security and defence remains preoccupied with threats from Russian Federation, and it is rightly so, but the ongoing global processes will inevitably have strong impact on Lithuania's security and defence partners, therefore they will have impact on security and defence of Lithuania. At the same time, Lithuanian decision-makers, and society has to provide greater attention for the global transformations in order to find the most balanced approaches and share burdens with partners, thus leading to greater communality.

The aim of this chapter is to identify major global long-term trends in power distribution, advancement in cyber technologies and demographic, migration and ideological trends and their expected consequences for global stability, resulting in changes of threats for Lithuania. As a result, Lithuania will face dilemmas of balancing between traditional security and defence challenges and the emerging ones. The sooner it abandons a purely traditional approach to security and defence, the sooner it will become prepared for future challenges.

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## 1. Changes in the distribution of power in the international system

The distribution of power between the states defines the security and foreign policy dynamics of all states in the international system. The current redistribution of power moves the international system from unipolar – hegemonic, led by the United States, to multipolar with two leading poles – the United States and the People’s Republic of China (China). At the same time, new poles are on the rise, like India, Indonesia, Brazil and Mexico, while other major powers like Russia maintain its influence in the system despite its decreasing relative economic and military power. Two opposing superpowers – the U.S. and China – will define trends in a multipolar system. Other powers will seek opportunities to carve out their spheres of influence balancing between the U.S. and China. The world is becoming polycentric, where each dominating power seeks to establish local orders benefiting their interests. There will be a two-level order – a global one and a regional one. In such an international environment, smaller countries will face changes in their roles. Small states will be more objects of greater power struggles, but at the same time, their positions will be crucial to legitimize regional orders.

Traditionally, realists accentuate the importance of military power. However, military power is second to economic power, as this type of power primarily defines military and power projection capabilities as well as political, information, soft and other types of power. Economic trends since the end of the Cold War present quite a bleak future to Western powers. The centre of gravity of the world economy is moving to Southeast Asia because of the rise of two major economic powerhouses – China and India, as well as smaller powers – Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. In 2019, China was the biggest economy in the world if calculated by purchasing power parity. It accounted for 18.58% of the world’s economy, while the USA was only 15% – a drop of 5% since 1991. The relative power of the major European economies was continually shrinking.

**Table 1. The share of the World GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) (World Bank, International Comparison Program database., 2019).**

Country’s Share of the World GDP	1991	2000	2010	2018
China	4.16%	7.59%	13.97%	18.58%
U.S.	20.20%	21.00%	16.82%	15.02%
India	3.70%	4.67%	6.04%	7.69%
Japan	8.48%	6.97%	5.03%	4.02%
Germany	5.50%	4.60%	3.60%	3.30%

The data shows how dynamic the economic growth of the two major rising economies was. The Chinese economy has increased 20-fold since 1991, the Indian economy nine-fold, while the U.S. three-fold. The world economic growth outperformed the U.S., Japanese and German economies. While the

West enjoyed the unipolar moment and tried to shape the world in their image through neoconservative U.S. and normative EU foreign policies, their economic dominance was continually decreasing.

**Table 2. The growth of the GDP in 1991-2018 (GDP, Purchasing Power Parity) (World Bank, International Comparison Program database., 2019).**

Changes in the GDP in the period of 1991-2018	The number of times the GDP increased
China	20.02
U.S.	3.33
India	9.30
Japan	2.12
Germany	2.69
World	4.48

The upcoming rearrangement in the world economy will be volatile, and older powers will have to accept their changing roles in the international system. The changes will be especially painful for the European powers. It is projected that by 2030, the five largest economies will be China, the U.S., India, Japan and Indonesia. By 2050, Germany will be 10<sup>th</sup>, the UK – 11<sup>th</sup>, French – 13<sup>th</sup>, Italy – 18<sup>th</sup>, Spain – 26<sup>th</sup> and Poland – 31<sup>st</sup> among the largest economies in the world (PWC, 2017). Calculations suggest that the six largest European economies will make up only about 46% of China’s economy, while India’s – 75% and the U.S. – 58% (PWC, 2017). The understanding that even the most potent European Union member states are becoming middle-size powers in the emerging multipolar world, and their decreasing influence can already be noticed in the speech of Germany’s minister of foreign affairs, Heiko Maass. He argued that Germany and Japan are becoming “too small to be able to call the shots on their own” (Maas, 2018).

The growing economic power allows China to increase its economic influence globally by using geo-economic instruments. China’s economic expansionism should be assessed in the historical context. Approximately 316 BCE, the King of Huiwen of Qin had his sculptors carve five life-sized stone cows decorated with gold as a gift for the Kingdom of Shu. In order to transport those cows, the King of Qin argued for the need for a better road between kingdoms. When the Stone Cattle Road was completed, the King of Qin invaded the Kingdom of Shu and conquered it. Qin became a dominant power conquering all the rest of the Chinese kingdoms.

Beijing is significantly increasing its lending to developing countries, thus gaining economic and political benefits – boosting its exports (loans prioritise imports from China and the Chinese workforce) and the increasing economic dependence of those states on China. States debtors become more willing to take into account the political interests of China domestically and in international institutions.

Sebastian Horn et al. underline that “about one half of China’s large-scale lending to developing countries is ‘hidden’ and not recorded in the main international databases” (Sebastian Horn, Carmen M. Reinhart, Christoph Trebesch, 2019, p. 44) (French, 2017).

**Table 3. External debt to China (debt stock as a share of the GDP) (Sebastian Horn, Carmen M. Reinhart, Christoph Trebesch, 2019, p. 14).**

Percent of debt to China	Countries
>40%	Djibouti
30%-40%	Toga, Maldives, Dem. Republic of the Congo, Kyrgyzstan
20%-30%	Cambodia, Niger, Laos, Zambia, Samoa, Vanuatu, Mongolia
10%-20%	Dominica, Ethiopia, Ecuador, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Angola, Montenegro, Tajikistan, Mozambique, South Sudan, Turkmenistan, Belarus, Kenya, Bolivia, Pakistan, Cote d’Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Bosnia, Fiji, Uganda, Chad

The assumptions of experts would allow for the expectation that China’s economic and political influence is bigger. This economic influence is not limited only to developing countries. China also has a significant impact on big and developed economies. Estimates suggest that “China holds US Treasury, agency and corporate bonds equivalent to 7% of the US GDP, German bonds equal to 10% of Germany’s GDP and UK bonds equal to 7% of the UK GDP; finally, China holds Eurozone bonds equivalent to 7% of Eurozone’s GDP” (Sebastian Horn, Carmen M. Reinhart, Christoph Trebesch, 2019). In the global economy, this does not mean that China has a significant direct influence on those countries because it is also dependent on them, and actions by one side would create an economic ripple effect and would cause negative consequences to all interdependent actors. However, such positions strengthen the bargaining power of Beijing.

In 2013, China initiated the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) after it was dissatisfied with the role in the U.S., European or Japanese established world financial institutions – the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The growing economic power boosted the political ambitions of Beijing. The main task of the AIIB is to finance construction of infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific region. After establishment in 2015, it has 72 members, some of which are close American allies. The United Kingdom, South Korea, Israel and Australia became founding members of AIIB, despite the U.S. efforts. Washington looked impotent trying contain China (Haass, 2017, p. 91). The expanding membership of the AIIB, which now also includes Canada and other countries, indicates the growing Chinese influence in economic multilateralism, while the U.S. seeks a less multilateral approach, giving priorities to bilateral relations.

The AIIB is directly connected with another Chinese initiative – One Belt, One Road (OBOR) (Belt and Road Initiative). The OBOR seeks to develop the transportation infrastructure in Eurasia, Africa and the Indo-Pacific region, investing in logistic centres, ports and rail lines. The initiative improves opportunities for the transportation of goods and resources to and from China, thus strengthening its economy. Beijing increases its political leverage in the countries in which it has invested. The perception of OBOR also changes because some countries indicate it as debt-traps or neo-colonialism (Greer, 2018). The project also does not fulfil the expectations Beijing had. The US seeks to propose alternatives for the Chinese project, initiating the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy to balance China's approach, but this project lacks substance and commitment. At the same time, Western EU member states are expressing their dissatisfaction with the Central and Eastern European states who participate in the "17+1" format designed to boost cooperation in OBOR. Despite the dissatisfaction of other EU member states, Greece, Italy, Hungary and others strive for Chinese investments and greater political ties.

China's strategy of economic expansionism becomes the core pillar of other economies of the world to re-adjust their economic policies. As a result, Beijing has the broadest possibilities to shape the global economic future.

Of course, China has domestic problems that could limit the expansion of its economic power: the aging of society while the welfare system is still not developed to meet its challenges – getting old before rich; environmental degradation and pollution; increasing need to fund internal and external security; slowdown of economic growth; economic bubbles; mounting debt, which reaches more than 300 percent of the GDP.

The growing economies of rising powers allow for the expansion of their military capabilities while the capabilities of existing powers are in relative decline. China invests in its military, focusing on two key areas – defence of the coast and dominance in East Asian and Southeast Asian seas through the development anti-access area denial (A2AD) systems; the expansion of power projection - primarily in the Indian Ocean. It has to be noted that the Chinese military presence is occasionally being witnessed in Europe when their ships visit European ports or participate in exercises with the Russian navy, even in the Baltic Sea.

China is expanding its fleet of aircraft carriers. Currently, it has one, but it expects to have six by 2035. The U.S. still dominates power projection because it owns 11 carriers and continues to invest in new projects. China will not match the U.S. naval power quantitatively or qualitatively for some time, but it has enormous aspirations, especially accentuating the historical naval ambitions in the voyages of Admiral Zeng He in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Chinese power projection in the India-Pacific region will grow, but it will meet America and its allies (Australia, Vietnam) and more assertive India, in whose backyard China is willing to expand.

The U.S. will continue to lose its relative military power while Chinese military power is expected to increase further follow its economic growth. From 1992 to



2018, the U.S. spending on defence as a share of the world's defence spending contracted by more than 21%, NATO's spending excluding the U.S. by 25% and Germany's nearly 45%, while China's spending increased nearly five times and India's 1.5 times. Despite the relative decrease in defence spending, NATO still generates more than half of the world's spending on defence, but not for long.

Assessing the United States' relative economic power and defence spending, the U.S. punches above its weight in military power.

**Table 4. Share of World's defence spending**  
(SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 2019).

	1992	2000	2010	2018	Change in spending on defence 1992-2018 as of a share of the world's defence spending
USA	48.00%	41.76%	47.39%	37.91%	-21.02%
China	2.44%	4.01%	8.33%	14.31%	486.02%
India	1.59%	2.83%	3.13%	3.98%	150.36%
France	5.23%	5.07%	3.38%	3.56%	-31.84%
Germany	5.02%	4.25%	2.59%	2.76%	-44.92%
Russia	4.38%	2.37%	3.10%	3.84%	-12.33%
NATO excluding the US	24.02%	25.32%	17.28%	17.91%	-25.44%
NATO	72.02%	67.08%	64.67%	55.82%	-22.49%

Its presence in the Middle East, as well as bilateral and NATO commitments in Europe, exhausts U.S. resources. Stephen Walt argues that “many new NATO members were small, weak, and close to Russia, expansion in effect committed the United States to protect a group of vulnerable and hard-to-defend states that had little military capability of their own to contribute” (Walt, 2018). On the other hand, the hard to defend countries are willing to contribute financially for their defence, while Western European NATO member states are not eager to strengthen their military capabilities. A lack of spending commitment naturally creates dissatisfaction by the U.S., as European NATO countries seem too self-involved. NATO member states, even without the U.S., outperform Russia in military spending and economy, but they lack a stronger stance on Russia because of different positions towards Moscow and defence.

The growing necessity of attention in Southeast Asia will create greater constraints on the U.S. financial capabilities and will force it to reassess deployment of its forces globally. The U.S. aims to remain a hegemon in the international system, but trends suggest it will have to share global power, thus redefining world order.



## 2. Emerging orders

The changes in economic and military power lead to the end of the so-called “liberal world order”, which is currently one of the most discussed topics among experts in international relations. Michael J. Mazarr defined international order as “the body of rules, norms, and institutions that govern relations among the key players in the international environment” (Mazarr, 2018). John J. Mearsheimer suggests that there is no single global order. There are many orders in terms of geographical coverage as well as patterns of interaction (Mearsheimer, 2018). Mazarr supports this idea arguing that “the resulting order represents the aggregation of a number of important suborders, each with its own rules, institutions, norms, and levels of adherence. <...> States express starkly different attitudes and behaviors depending on the suborder they are dealing with, and these complexities must be kept in mind” (Mazarr, 2018). The redistribution of power will result in a multipolar system that would lead to the creation of one global and few regional international orders. It will not be unique in any way, just in the number of powers defining rules and norms regionally.

Contrary to the popular claim, there has been no such thing as the “liberal world order” since 1945. The Cold War had one global and two regional orders. The global order was not liberal but based on the agreements and necessary cooperation of two opposing superpowers, primarily in security matters. At the same time, the U.S. set economic and security rules in the Western world, while the Soviet Union defined the order in the communist/socialist bloc. Superpowers rivalled each other to expand the area of their influence to third-world countries and within one another’s area of influence. So, during the Cold War, there were at least three international orders. The emerging order would resemble the Cold War order but in a more sophisticated way because of a larger number of poles.

After the end of the Cold War, the U.S. aimed to set the global order – to shape the world in its image. Robert Kagan argues that the post-Cold War order favoured “liberalism, democracy, and capitalism not only because they are right and better—presumably they were right and better in the 1930s, too—but because the most powerful nation in the world since 1945 has been a liberal democratic capitalist nation” (Kagan, 2018). According to Ikenberry, “Political order is created when these basic governing arrangements [basic rules, principles, and institutions] are put in place, and the political order is threatened or broken apart when these arrangements overturned, contested or are in disarray” (Ikenberry, 2001). Fractures in the American-led order came not only from rising new economic powers, but also as a result that Washington was not capable of sticking to the rules it set. Though there was discontent, other great powers lacked the capabilities to challenge the U.S. The positions of some close allies of the United States indicate the will to deny the U.S. hegemony, even before the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. “The French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine repeatedly complained about American “hyperpower” during the 1990s, and he once said that “the entire foreign policy of France ... is aimed at making the world of tomorrow composed of several poles, not just one” (Walt, 2018). Assessing French president Emanuel Macron’s initiative

of European strategic autonomy, the will to dismantle hegemony remains (The Economist, 2019).

Since the global economic crisis of 2008, China started to be accepted as the second superpower, which becomes more confident with every year. The relative power of the U.S. is slowly declining as new centres of economic powers rise: India, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, Vietnam, the Philippines. The U.S. continues to maintain leadership, but it becomes only first among a few major powers. In the words of Mearsheimer, “if there are two or more great powers in the world, they have little choice but to pay close attention to their position in the global balance of power and act according to the dictates of realism” (Mearsheimer, 2018). The global order is expected to be defined by the main competitors – the U.S. and China – and the alignments and re-alignments of smaller powers.

To some extent, the 21<sup>st</sup>-century multipolar order is going to resemble the 19<sup>th</sup>-century European order but on a global scale. Major powers will have to agree on some basic principles globally. Despite the competition, major powers possessing weapons of mass destruction and vulnerability to each other’s actions will seek to preserve some certainty and predictability. Globalisation and economic interdependency define the need for global economic governance, with limited direct economic statecraft aimed at other major powers to preserve economic growth among major economies.

The multipolar system has some polycentric character, meaning that each pole in the system is interested in having some area of influence to define the main rules and dynamic of interaction with the lower-tier powers – establishment of regional orders. According to Mearsheimer “orders are indispensable in the modern international system because they help the great powers manage the behaviour of the weaker states in ways that suit the great powers’ interests” (Mearsheimer, 2018). Those orders will have significant variations depending on the political systems, values and traditions of major powers. Paradoxically, this might fulfil Russia’s goals set in its Foreign Policy Concept of 2008 and National Security Strategy of 2009, claiming that Russia should become the central element of stability in the international system in a polycentric world (Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation up until 2020, 2009) (The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2008). The National Security Strategy of 2015 indicates the more significant role of Moscow in shaping such a polycentric world (Russian National Security Strategy, 2015). In the polycentric system, the struggle for power and influence in all of its variety between major powers focuses on the peripheral countries of regional orders.

In the polycentric, multi-order world, the U.S., European Union and other Western countries stick to more or less a liberal order defined by democracy, human rights and the Westphalian system, the preservation of existing international organisations benefiting power positions of the West. Of course, the West is experiencing internal challenges as “Multiple members are dismantling the institutions and practices of liberal democracy that emerged triumphant in the Cold War, and things may get worse if autocratic demagogues exploit populist fears to gain political clout in other member states” (Wallander, 2018).

Cooperation among the Western countries face challenges because of US positions and the positions of some European countries deepen cleavages in transatlantic relations. In this context, Kissinger states that “The United States, if separated from Europe in politics, economics and defence, would become geopolitically an island off the shores of Eurasia, and Europe itself could turn into an appendage to the reaches of Asia and the Middle East” (Kissinger, 2014, p. 95). In the end, all Western countries share the same values, making them natural partners for the preservation of values. The number of countries which favour democracy is decreasing globally as indicated in the Freedom House reports. Experts suggest that problems of liberal democracy should be addressed with more liberalism, “the remedy for the problems of liberal democracy is more liberal democracy; liberalism contains the seeds of its own salvation” (Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, 2018). Most of the Western powers are declining powers, and in order to keep influence globally or limit the expansion of rising powers, they have an interest in preserving cooperation in the vast network of alliances.

The network of alliances is essential for European countries. The Eurocentric geopolitical world perception is being changed by a Sino-centric one – for the first time since the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Westphalian Peace). Naturally, the attention of the major Western power – the U.S. – shifts to Southeast Asia. Deeper integration in the EU could allow maintaining its geopolitical subjectivity for European states, otherwise small countries competing with each other become the prey in a great power rivalry. Ivan Krastev argues that the EU disintegration will “transform a sympathetic environment of tolerance and openness to one characterized by a bullying narrow-mindedness” (Krastev, 2017, p. 10). In order to maintain power and influence, European countries have to pool their resources in the pursuit of common goals in the international system. In such an environment, more profound integration becomes a necessity and not a matter of choice. The close alliance with the US also seems inevitable. Kissinger argues that Europe has three choices: “to foster an Atlantic partnership; to adopt an even-more-neutral position; or to move to a tacit compact with an extra-European power or grouping of them” (Kissinger, 2014, p. 94). Out of those three choices, the most beneficial is to foster an Atlantic partnership and coordinate economic, foreign and security policies among traditional partners.

The U.S. remains the core guarantor of European security through NATO. The idea of European strategic autonomy has to have substantial financial and political foundations. The current financial, as well as political capabilities, do not suggest this can be achieved anytime soon and would remain declarations. At the same time, NATO member states are more willing to accept the U.S. leadership than French leadership in European defence. Most European NATO member states fail to achieve the required financial commitments. They increase funding for defence marginally after funding decreased for decades. From the geopolitical perspective, there are no alternatives for the U.S. – EU cooperation, while involvement of Japan and Australia would further strengthen Western multilateral cooperation.

Table 5. Changes in the allocation of finances for defence as a % of the GDP in NATO countries (SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 2019).

	Change during the period of 2004-2009	Change during the period of 2009-2014	Change during the period of 2019-2018
Albania	x	-0.2%	-0.2%
Belgium	0.0%	-0.2%	-0.1%
Bulgaria	-0.7%	-0.4%	0.2%
Canada	0.3%	-0.4%	0.3%
Croatia	x	-0.2%	-0.1%
Czechia	-0.4%	-0.3%	0.2%
Denmark	-0.1%	-0.2%	0.0%
Estonia	0.5%	-0.3%	0.1%
France	0.0%	-0.3%	0.1%
Germany	0.0%	-0.2%	0.1%
Greece	0.6%	-0.9%	0.1%
Hungary	-0.3%	-0.3%	0.2%
Iceland	-	-	-
Italy	-0.1%	-0.3%	0.0%
Latvia	-0.2%	-0.4%	1.0%
Lithuania	-0.1%	-0.2%	1.1%
Luxembourg	-0.2%	0.0%	0.2%
Montenegro	-	-	-
Netherlands	0.0%	-0.2%	0.1%
Norway	-0.2%	-0.1%	0.1%
Poland	-0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Portugal	0.1%	-0.2%	0.0%
Romania	-0.7%	0.1%	0.6%
Slovakia	-0.1%	-0.5%	0.2%
Slovenia	0.2%	-0.6%	0.0%
Spain	-0.1%	-0.1%	0.0%
Sweden	-0.3%	0.0%	-0.1%
UK	0.2%	-0.5%	-0.2%
U.S.	0.8%	-1.1%	-0.3%

China, as its power grows, has an interest in revitalising its traditional order disrupted by “the century of humiliation” in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – *tianxia*. *Tianxia* is an ancient Chinese term which is usually translated as “all under the heaven”. According to Howard French, “For the better part of two millennia, the norm for China, from its own perspective, was a natural dominion over everything under heaven” (French, 2017). In international relations, it can be explained as

an order of relations between China and other states, defined by China, when other states have to accept unequal relations becoming similar to tributary states acknowledging Chinese hegemony. *Tianxia* was achieved diplomatically, economically with the possible threat of military actions if interests ignored. The approach is becoming revitalised with growth in China's power in the economic and military fields.

In the 2019 Defence white paper, China states that “[it] will never follow the beaten track of big powers in seeking hegemony” (China's National Defense in the New Era, 2019). Extensive lending, OBOR projects, AIIB, naval bases – all this increase China's influence. China approaches other countries with the position which can be put in this way: “Accept our superiority and we will confer upon you political legitimacy, develop a trade partnership and provide a range of what is known in the language of modern international affairs as public goods” (French, 2017). China, still following the Deng Xiaoping dictum “Hide your strength, bide your time”, tries not to expose its direct interests, not to seek direct control, but instead seek voluntary obedience through the posture of military power and economic pressure. In the case of conflict, China is willing to show its military power, and for this reason, China increases its power-projecting capabilities (Timothy R. Heath, 2016, pp. 33-4, 39). Chinese positions on the South China Sea as well as the East China Sea conflicts over maritime borders, and positions on Taiwan, the expansion of military presence in the Indian Ocean indicate their ambitions. In the white paper, China argues that “Overseas interests are a crucial part of China's national interests. One of the missions of China's armed forces is to effectively protect the security and legitimate rights and interests of overseas Chinese people, organizations and institutions” (China's National Defense in the New Era, 2019). According to the French, the primary ambition of China is “supplanting American power and influence in the region as an irreplaceable stepping-stone along the way to becoming a true global power in the twenty-first century” (French, 2017). China has possibilities to create its own regional *tianxia* order with its financial resources and military power projection. The core region for such order is Southeast Asia.

Contrary to the previous historical periods, China is not the sole dominating actor and faces competition from other powers. Southeast Asia is contested by the U.S. and the desires of regional countries to contain Chinese expansionism. China could also try to create *tianxia* with developing countries, especially in Africa and Latin America. This order would benefit China in global international institutions. Chinese investments in the European Union member states already helped China to have benefits when Hungary and Greece blocked the EU statement on human rights in China. Despite this success, European Union countries will gravitate towards major EU powers and the U.S., while China will have only limited possibilities to bring them into its order.

The economic data suggests that Russia is too weak to create its regional order, but Russia has opportunities to increase its power in the international system. It has the biggest nuclear arsenal in the world and a capable military able to act in Eurasia, especially near its borders, project power in Europe and the Middle East as well as, in some cases, Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia. Moscow acts

as a spoiler, getting more attention and more interaction with other great powers. Russia is an essential balancer in the multipolar system because it is important for the U.S. and China. Close cooperation between the U.S. and Russia would allow isolating China. However, if China has active cooperation with Russia, what is happening currently, the U.S. has to divide its attention on two flanks of the Eurasian continent. Russia is willing to dominate ex-Soviet space since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The will for domination was expressed in the creation of the Commonwealth of the Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the Eurasian Economic Union (Eurasian Economic Community). Moscow lacks economic power and diplomatic sophistication to create its order. States in the ex-Soviet space are not willing to accept direct commands from Russia. Moscow's possibilities to have its regional international order depends on the decisions of major powers to grant regional dominance in exchange for its support.

Other rising powers have limited possibilities to form their regional orders. India, the future second world economy, is a subcontinent and is geographically isolated. Its power projection will clash with China's in the Indian Ocean, Africa and Southeast Asia. It can create some balancing, but China already has greater power projection capabilities.

In Africa, Nigeria or South Africa could define the order in the continent, but because of internal political, ethnic and religious problems, their capabilities of doing this are minimal. The Middle East remains an area of clashes of major powers, an area of political, ethnic and religious conflicts. In Latin America, Brazil could be a pole defining regional order, but language differences limit its capabilities to shape the region. For the most part, Southeast Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America will be where major powers will compete for the expansion of influence and order using political, economic and military instruments.

### **3. Technologic, demographic, migration and ideological sources of threats**

The current international system is being affected not only by changes in the distribution of power between states but by technological, demographic, migration and ideological processes as well. These processes have a higher impact on the formation of international systems and orders than previously in history. The analysis of the changing international system has to include them.

Technological development affects all fields of State activities: economy, welfare, management, military affairs and others. Technologies expanded the material power of states, but only with a cyber element and the development of artificial intelligence (AI), material power is becoming subdued to the non-material – cyber element. The cyber element is the backbone of economic, financial, administration, infrastructure, informational and military affairs. Kissinger argues that “The emphasis of many strategic rivalries is shifting from the physical to informational realm, in the collection and processing of data, the penetration of networks, and the manipulation of psychology” (Kissinger, 2014, p. 347). Cyber disruptions lead to significant losses for the State; for this reason, the cyber element becomes the



essential focus of major powers. These powers increase competition in the creation of AI in order to gain a comparative advantage (Charlotte Stanton, Vivien Lung, Nancy (Hanzhuo) Zhang, Minori Ito, Steve Weber, Katherine Charlet, 2019). The major adversaries in the completion of this are the U.S. and China. Kevin Drum argues that the most critical development that will matter over the next 20 years is if China will have the best AI in the world (Drum, July/August 2018). Drum continues that if China has the best AI, it will have the possibility to take over the world if they wish so. Twenty-four countries and the EU have national strategies for further development of AI. AI development is mostly advanced in big economies this way; they further increase their relative power against middle-sized and small countries. Because smaller powers lack the resources cooperation, with great powers becomes inevitable. Such cooperation shapes a technologically polycentric world system.

The development of AI and advancements in nanotechnology, quantum computing, connectivity and biology lead to the fourth industrial revolution. The revolution creates new products and services, leads to advancements in medicine and environmental protection, but it also challenges the political stability of individual states and the international system. According to Stephen Kotkin, "3-D printing, artificial intelligence and the onrushing digital and genetics revolutions may upend global trade and destabilize the world radically" (Kotkin, 2018). The technological advancements might lead to the technological unemployment defined by John Maynard Keynes as "unemployment due to our discovery of means of economising the use of labour outrunning the pace at which we can find new uses for labour" (Keynes, *Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren*, 1963, p. 360). The fourth industrial revolution challenges the existing structure of capitalism, breaking connections between the closed circle of production and consumption.

Capitalism is a balance between production and consumption where consumers buy goods or services, depending on their price, and producers adjust to the consumers and compete with other producers. In other words, it is a closed system between consumers who earn income when they participate in the process of production (goods or services) and producers who sell goods or services for consumers. With the fourth industrial revolution, producers continue to produce and sell goods or services, but the purchasing power of consumers shrinks as consumers are being replaced by AI and autonomous systems in the production (earning) cycle. Low-skilled workers are in the most vulnerable position. States will have to deal with increasing disrupting forces in welfare, fiscal, investment policies as well as the capital movement resulted by the revolution. Klaus Schwab argues that the revolution would increase social tensions, a feeling of social injustice, depreciate living conditions in different countries, fuel social unrest, mass migration and violent extremism (Schwab, 2019, p. 49). These effects translate to the global economic and political environment and have an impact on states' relations. Technological development would fuel changes in ideological and demographic domains.

The role of AI in military affairs is increasing in strategic and tactical levels.

On the strategic level, cyber technology increases decryption capabilities creating greater transparency between rivaling countries, and because of this, military secrets become very difficult to hide (Coetzee, 2019). Transparency impacts strategic calculations leading to greater security between great powers, decreasing the possibility of miscalculation. States with lower AI capabilities experience significant disadvantages in warfare. The disadvantage continues to push smaller states to look for the protection by greater military powers. Basically, smaller powers have to outsource their military security – to become client countries of greater military powers.

Cyber technology and AI become more extensively integrated into tactical warfare operations. Lawrence Freedman argues that cyber elements allow impacting rival in a way that it would not be able to resist efficiently: “[w]hat if one side suddenly found itself in the dark, with screens either blank or full of misleading information, and was unable to send out orders to local commanders or else had these orders substituted by false instructions?” (Freedman, 2017, p. 230). Kevin Drum suggests that “warfare itself will become entirely machine-driven” (Drum, 2018). The increasing role of cyber technology and AI leads to the suggestion that powers which will innovate the fastest and be able to produce the most of units will prevail. At the same time, the danger of terrorism using technologies increases because disruptive capabilities become more accessible. Such threats lead to greater cooperation between states to prevent actions for non-state actors: “[w]ith the rise of bioweapons and cyberwarfare, the capabilities to wreak mass destruction are getting cheaper and ever more accessible, making the international regulation of these technologies a vital national security imperative for all countries” (Charlet, 2018). These capabilities are appealing to countries that search for cheap, disruptive actions to undermine stability in other countries avoiding taking responsibility.

The expansion of social networks on the internet allows the growth of information bubbles and therefore, radicalisation because alternative views are intentionally limited and dismissed. Amy Chua argues that “To truly understand today’s world and where it is heading, one must acknowledge the power of tribalism” (Chua, 2018). Tribalism is extensive in social networks and creates atomisation in societies, especially open ones. Tribalism makes societies more vulnerable to manipulation and disruption of social peace. Authoritarian states control access to the internet and social networks and the content for their benefit. Societies having one-sided information experience lower atomisation and internal disruptions. Democratic societies are challenged to find ways how to overcome tribalism without violating human rights and democratic values.

The international system will be affected by the dramatic changes in world demography. Growing population and development lead to the Asian century. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the most significant growth of population is expected in Africa. It is projected that by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one-third of the world population (more than 4 billion people) will live in Africa, compared to 1.3 billion currently (Africa Population 2019, 2019). Nigeria alone will reach a population of 1 billion. Fast population growth could boost the economy of Africa. At the



same time, population growth can create greater instability if governments fail to address security and welfare issues. The role of Africa in the world economy and security will significantly increase, and great powers will have to give a lot more attention to it. Europe's focus on Africa is expected to increase because of the close neighbourhood and expected growth of migration from Africa to aging Europe, which will lose about 30 million working-age people by 2050 and the population is expected to decline. The increasing migration to Europe already creates tensions and increases support for nativist political movements in Hungary, Germany, France, Italy, Poland and elsewhere. These movements can be expected to strengthen their political support together with increasing immigration, especially at the economic downturn periods. The migration into Europe is expected to continue from the Middle East, Asia and the ex-Soviet region. The countries of immigrants' origin have a more significant impact on small countries with a rapidly declining population in the long-term period, possibly threatening their sovereignty. Such a threat is especially real for Lithuania and Latvia who are surrounded by neighbours with larger populations. Countries try to exploit their emigrant diasporas to have a political influence in immigration countries. According to Andrei Korobkov, China encourages emigrants to stay in the countries of their immigration, this way increasing soft power through growing diasporas (Korobkov, 2019).

International migrant stock in Europe increased from 6.8 in 1990 to 10.5 in 2017. However, the refugee crisis is not as big as it is perceived. In 2018, there were 2.8 million refugees; although the number is quite high, it is lower than in the period of 1992 - 1997 (Total number of new international migrants each year, 2019). The colonial experience of Western Europe leads to higher immigration from former colonies.

Population growth in Asia is going to stabilise. The population will decrease in the developed countries, including China, and the most significant growth will be in the poorest countries. Disproportions of population growth will also affect migration within Asia. The most balanced population growth is expected to be in North America, which will allow it to have healthy economic growth. The population peak in South America is expected in 2050 with a later population decline.

To sum up, the demographic and migration drama is expected in Africa and Europe. Europe is forced to address challenges of increasing demographic variety and growing nativism in order to avoid ethnic or religious radicalisation threatening the stability in Europe and Africa. The assistance for Africa policy is becoming a greater priority of the EU in order to deal with issues resulting from the explosion of population.

Globalisation, technological development and migration increase uncertainty and longing for clarity, a slower pace of life and homogeneity (ethnic, religious, cultural). A reactionary mindset is especially true for the groups that benefit from the processes of globalisation the least. The response to growing uncertainty is entrenchment and increasing support for traditionalism and nativism with growing support to the right and far right-wing parties and movements. "When people feel their culture and way of life threatened, they look to their own for protection" (Kagan, 2018). The growing support for such political movements is

observed in Italy, France, Netherlands, Hungary, Estonia and elsewhere. The anti-immigration policy was underlined by the Brexit campaigners. Many countries were dissatisfied with Germany's open-door policy for refugees. Germany's right-wing party, Alternative for Germany, gained popularity campaigning against immigrants. In this context, defence of so-called traditional values becomes appreciated, and countries positioning themselves as defenders gain support.

Putin's Russia and Orban's Hungary, despite the suppression of democracy, become examples for Western European right-wing parties. Kagan defines that "[t]hose who most vigorously proclaim their Christian values these days are the nationalist, populist, and quasi-fascist parties, and would-be authoritarian governments in Europe" (Kagan, 2018). The clash of globalism and traditionalism is evident in the U.S. as well. Donald Trump was elected U.S. president with the slogan "Make America great again" and focuses on limiting immigration. The right-wing terrorist acts against Muslims, Jews and immigrants have been conducted in Europe, the U.S. and New Zealand. European countries with much higher ethnical homogeneity could provide more significant support for right-wing political movements if immigration continues to grow.

Technological and demographic changes boost ideological polarisation. Globalisation and traditionalism are already challenging each other, and it can be expected that it will continue to intensify. "Western policymakers have to find ways to make large majorities of their populations benefit from and embrace an open, integrated world" (Kotkin, 2018). The intensity of ideological clash is dependent on the foreign and security policies of Europe as well as education and integration. Ideological polarisation is attractive for countries applying sharp power in order to increase their relative power at the cost of a disarray of particular societies.

## Conclusions

To sum up, the contemporary international system is entering a period of greater instability which is extremely dangerous for small countries such as Lithuania. The growing power of China requires greater attention and resources of the U.S. in East and Southeast Asia. Despite the economic and military power, the U.S. cannot maintain its commitments in Europe and increase its commitments in East and Southeast Asia to contain China. The U.S. might face overextension, which would be disastrous for Lithuanian, European and even global security. The U.S. already has taken on a bigger military expense burden compared to its relative global economic power. NATO European allies have to take this into account and take their share of commitments to maintain sustainable global security environment, benefiting their interests for as long as they can. The U.S. also remains a hub for relations between European states and security partners in Asia. Despite the emerging dilemma to be pro-European (strategically autonomous) or pro-NATO (U.S.) in the defence area, Lithuania has to commit to a trans-Atlantic bond and lobby this idea in Europe and the U.S. Disruption would lead to negative consequences for both the EU and the U.S. Common values and an identical understanding of world order makes Western countries natural allies.

The growing economic power of China creates the dilemma of how much China there should be in Lithuanian and European economy, technologies and even culture. Some EU countries are favouring a strong economic partnership with China in OBOR and bilateral projects, while others search for ways to limit Chinese investments. Lithuania cannot ignore China in order to get economic benefits, but investment policy has to be clearly defined, limiting Chinese investments in strategic sectors and infrastructure. At the same time, Lithuania has to understand that there are more growing economic powers: India, Indonesia, Vietnam, as well as some countries in Africa, which can become attractive partners.

At the end of Eurocentric period, Lithuania does not have luxury to discuss if it wants a more integrated EU or a less integrated EU. The European continent is becoming a continent of declining powers and the smallest countries. If EU integration stagnates or even decreases, EU countries will become objects of great power politics. This can be already observed when some EU member states try to balance between the U.S., Russia and China, allegedly maintaining their autonomy in the EU. NATO and EU are core organisations ensuring Lithuania's security, while Russian interests to expand its influence in the Baltic region remain. The deeper it is integrated in the aforementioned organisations, the more secure Lithuania is.

Technological innovations demand greater attention to cyber and AI elements in the security and defence sphere. Lithuania invests in cyber capabilities, though some strategic infrastructure sectors remain vulnerable. The increasing role of technologies have to be addressed in military training and the preparation of officers as manpower is constantly replaced with robotic and at-a-distance manned vehicles, cyber control. Innovations complimenting existing systems could create opportunities for the Lithuanian defence industry and R&D sectors to partner leading companies of arms industry. The dilemma here is what is the most rational approach in arms R&D to be a part of PESCO projects or a bilateral cooperation with particular companies? It can be expected that more tangible results can be expected in bilateral cooperation, while the project of Military Schengen strengthens NATO substantially.

It is a paradox, but decreasing population decreases stress on the growing consequences of the fourth industrial revolution. Unfortunately, economic growth from domestic consumption also becomes more limited. Lithuania has to give greater attention to the education and training of the unskilled workforce in order to benefit from an industrial revolution.

The demographic explosion in Africa and migration models suggests that Lithuania has to provide more attention to the region, which was beyond its geopolitical thinking. Division of attention between the ex-Soviet area and Africa is not a traditional challenge for Lithuania, but it is challenge with which Lithuania has to deal. The effects of migration from Africa create ripple effects from southern to northern countries of the EU; the direct or indirect effect will be felt with the increasing population. Contribution to the management of challenges in Africa is important on the continental level.

Africa and Asia provide economic opportunities when traditional markets are stagnating, but Lithuania has to pay greater attention to understanding those

regions. It is necessary to better understand those regions, to study them, and the Lithuanian government has to allocate financial support for that.

Finally, Lithuania has to prepare for greater ethnic, cultural, racial and religious diversity. Immigration policy has to set preferential countries when assessing political threats in the long-term perspective. The question if immigration from Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia or Russia is preferential is open for discussion. Lithuania also lacks a long-term vision of education of society and immigrants for long-term cohesion in order not to allow these issues to be exploited by nativists for their political gains and courtiers applying sharp power.

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## 2.

# EMERGING IDEOLOGICAL SCHISMS. IN SEARCH OF NEW POLITICAL IDENTITIES

Nortautas Statkus\*

### Introduction

The chapter is based on a group of research that new ideological divisions emerge as a result of transformation of the previous economic left-right cleavage and other political cleavages in modern post-industrial societies of Western Europe and North America. Earlier political splits are losing relevance, as significant social, cultural or economic challenges that politicians are confronted with today go beyond national borders and require solutions at a broader scope, higher level and thinking outside of old ideological boxes.

Primarily, the author focuses on the emerging ideological or value cleavages in East Central Europe (and Lithuania, in particular) within the context of the Western ideological-political landscape. A new ideological-political division between globalists (internationalists) and nationalists, as well as a dichotomy between the “progressives” and “traditionalists”, have been developing visibly in Western Europe and North America since 2014.

Old political divisions lose relevance as significant social, cultural or economic problems that Western societies face, and which politicians should tackle, go beyond national borders. And the typical recipes offered by the political right or left, liberals or conservatives, no longer meet the challenges of the present, as the social and political problems, produced by industrialisation in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries have long been solved in Western countries. Climate change, the crisis of the global liberal economy, the regulation of biotechnology, the regulation of the Internet are global issues of a global scope and have an international dimension, but, the decision-making framework remains with the nation states.

One response to these problems can be finding global solutions – *globalizing politics* (US Democratic Party views and vision by the Junker’s European Commission). On the other hand, at the suggestion of nationalists, it is necessary to return the power to the citizens of the nation states, to abolish or narrow the competences of international institutions – to a re-nationalisation of politics (D. Trump’s, V. Putin’s, M. Salvini’s, M. Le Pen’s, N. Farage’s, V. Orban’s vision of world affairs).

Lithuanian political parties face the same challenges and new shifts that reflect these international tendencies are beginning to emerge in Lithuanian political life. Homeland Union-Lithuania’s Christian Democrats’ value attitudes move to the left and liberal globalism. The Social Democrats attempt to replicate Western

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European social democratic and other leftist political programmes and agendas to reproduce the liberal tendencies of international and European politics within the domestic political field.

These developments create an uncomfortable situation for the Lithuanian liberal and left parties that are baffled by President Trump's nationalistic *America First* policy and his overtures to V. Putin, though they perfectly understand that Lithuania's national security ultimately depends on the United States. On the other hand, the right-leaning Lithuanian political parties and voters cannot identify with the Western European Radical Right because of differences regarding Russia, although they share the same views on family policies, relations between individual and state, immigration and globalisation.

Furthermore, Radical Right political forces in Lithuania support the efforts of the globalists to constrain the aggressive foreign/economic policies of Russia and to force Russia to uphold global order based on liberal rules, but cannot adopt globalists' "progressive" agenda. It is an irony that the perception of Europe as a Christian-based civilisation unites the right-wing forces in East Central Europe and Lithuania with Russia, which portrays itself as a defender of "true" Europe and its "true" values – a role that the political "right" of East Central Europe would willingly attribute to itself.

## **1. Return of Nationalism and the Radical Right**

The majority of those who study right-wing party politics link the Radical Right ideology to nationalism, xenophobia and ethnocentrism as its essential features (Arzheimer, 2012, Mudde, 2000, Pupovac, 2010, Vam der Valk and Wagenaar, 2010, Van den Brug and Fennema, 2009). B. Pytlas mentions that the Radical Right tries to preserve traditional and religious values and maintains distrust towards a progressive liberal agenda (Pytlas, 2015, Ch. 2).

The concept of the Radical Right in political science literature was first used by Daniel Bello in 1963 and later developed by Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Rabe. Both terms – "radical right" and "extreme right" – are used quite frequently as synonyms (Ignazi, 2006). In this text, however, similarly to D. Pupovac, J. Rydgren, W. Van der Brug, M. Fennema, A. Zaslove, H. Kitschelt and many others, I will use the "Radical Right" to differentiate it from the extreme right (or far-right) political parties and organisations. I suggest to reserve the term Radical Right to denote those political forces that are not anti-democratic and seek to attain their goals of reversing fundamental social-cultural change or preventing that change through democratic elections and constitutional procedures.

A. Polyakova convincingly suggested that increasing the success of the radical right parties is related to a revival of ethnic nationalism (Polyakova, 2015, p. 51). This observation of A. Polyakova indicates that causal factors of the Radical Right rise, and a nationalistic resurgence might be the same in the West.

Nationalism is one of the great ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries. Typically, the mainstream academic thinking on nations and nationalism considered them to be mere cultural artefacts less than a decade ago. It was



asserted that these cultural constructions were socially invented during a certain historical period, when, as a result of modernisation, absolute monarchies were forced to undergo democratisation. The modernisation theory of nationalism proclaimed that social engineers of the 19th and 20th centuries took advantage of the old political traditions and invented new ones to legitimise ruling classes and to strengthen their ties with the masses. By doing that, active participation of broad masses in civic affairs was ensured. At the beginning of the 21st century, the prevailing view of the researchers belonging to the “modernists” camp held that there was no functional need to use the nationalistic sentiments anymore, and, consequently, there was a social foundation for nations. Until recently, it was widely believed that nationalism was driven out rapidly by the historical forces that supported it in the 19th and 20th centuries (Deutsch, 1966, Nairn, 1977, Gellner, 2006 Anderson, 1983, Hobsbawm, 1990, Posen, 1993).

However, V. Putin’s aggression against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, Brexit, election of D. Trump to the post of US President in 2016, Trump’s policy of economic protectionism, withdrawal from the Paris Climate Treaty, and the continued strengthening of right-wing parties across Europe have raised the question whether such a modernist approach is adequate for an account of real social processes and has led to a debate about the return of geopolitical competition and the revival of nationalism. The return of the United Kingdom and Russia to nationalism and traditional geopolitics provides for two notable examples when two of Europe’s oldest sovereign nations, who have not been conquered for more than 500 years, have chosen their way forward beyond European integration.

The growing wave of nationalism since 2014 sent shock waves through Western Europe and the United States. It became apparent that proponents of the nationalistic ideology would leave quietly and nationalist ideas – national sovereignty and national self-determination – would not fade out silently. The modernist theories of nationalism cannot explain sufficiently the ongoing process and only observe that the “rebirth” of current nationalistic ideas in Europe, Eurasia, East Asia and the US confirms the claim of Anthony D. Smith, a well-known critic of the modernistic approach, that nationalism is – politically necessary, socially functional and historically-rooted (Smith, 1995).

## **2. Emerging New Social and Cultural Cleavages**

### *Classical model*

Since Martin Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan published their well-known article (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), a large-scale party system change is primarily explained by the cleavage approach.

Modern European party families developed from four great cleavages: owners/non-owners; Church/State; Centre/Periphery and Industrial/Agrarian. The four cleavages were caused by a transformative modernising social and political process of national state-building the Industrial Revolution. These cleavages have continued to today (Katz, 2015).

However, the prominence of social class and religion is declining as cleavages. The tendency is a significant deterioration of the socialist far-left positions and a weakening of the big parties of the centre. These developments go along with growth of the 'post-materialist' left and the radical/populist Eurosceptic right (Katz, 2015, p.508-509).

#### *Transformation of cleavages*

A group of research indicates that new ideological/cultural divisions emerge as a result of transformation of previous structural economic class based and cultural religious left-right cleavages in modern post-industrial societies of Western Europe and North America. Earlier political differences are losing relevance, as significant social, cultural or economic challenges, related to globalisation and post-industrial society, transcend national borders; or require solutions that transgress conventional mode of operation; or presupposes higher level, broader scope thinking. (Magone, 2011: 95-136, Henjak, 2009: 66-70, Saarts, 2017: 30-31).

Because of deindustrialization and globalisation, a significant reconfiguration of social and cultural cleavages has taken place in the Western world. The new cleavage is characterised predominantly by antagonism between economic social and cultural openness, and social cultural exclusiveness supported by economic protectionist measures. Kriesi and his colleague have named this conflict as “*integration*” versus “*demarcation*” or libertarian-authoritarian cleavage (Lachat and Kriesi, 2003, p. 6-9).

Hooghe and Marks have proposed that a transnational cleavage has emerged as a reaction to European integration and immigration crisis. It demarcates those parties who promote the protection of national community – its political, social and economic peculiarities against penetration by “outsiders” like migrants, foreign capital, EU bureaucrats and the others who stand for integration of immigrants, further European integration and liberal agenda (Hooghe and Marks, 2017, p.1-2).

Previously, these authors argued that the right-left divide in European party systems has been supplemented by the new non-economic split between *Green/alternative/liberal* formation (GAL) and *traditionalism/authority/nationalism* (TAN). GAL was positioning itself for multiculturalism, gender equality, social egalitarianism and enhanced European integration, while TAN was for protection of traditional identities, authorities and boundaries. Hooghe and Marks have suggested that this new social and cultural divide cross-cuts an old left-right divide (Hooghe and Marks, 2009).

#### *Political articulation of transnational cleavage*

These new political issues that concern primarily immigration, European integration, alternative lifestyles, expansion of individual freedoms, multiculturalism and redefinition of citizenship, were voiced and promoted by a New Left. Its stand on these issues incited a new Radical Right response and produced increasing support for anti-diversity, anti-globalist, anti-progressive liberal ideological variants that are articulated by Radical Right parties and organizations both in Western and East Central Europe. The Radical Right

opposes the building of new societal solidarity based on re-evaluation of the role of religion. It also refuses to re-construct sense of a national community on inclusive multiculturalism (Lachat and Kriesi, 2003, p. 6-9, Polyakova, 2015, p. 51, Saarts 2017, p. 31-32, 41).

In essence, this ideological dispute revolves around what constitutes the effective political subject to whom the ultimate allegiance and loyalty should be attributed. For the New Left, Greens and liberals ultimate political loyalty lays with the Humanity. In “Sapiens,” Y.N. Harari, the most popular recently ideologue of globalisation admired by B.Obama, M.Zuckerberg and B.Gates, has depicted attractively the realization of a vision of a global empire ruled by a liberal international elite to safeguard the Earth and World peace (Harari, 2016, p. 195-196).

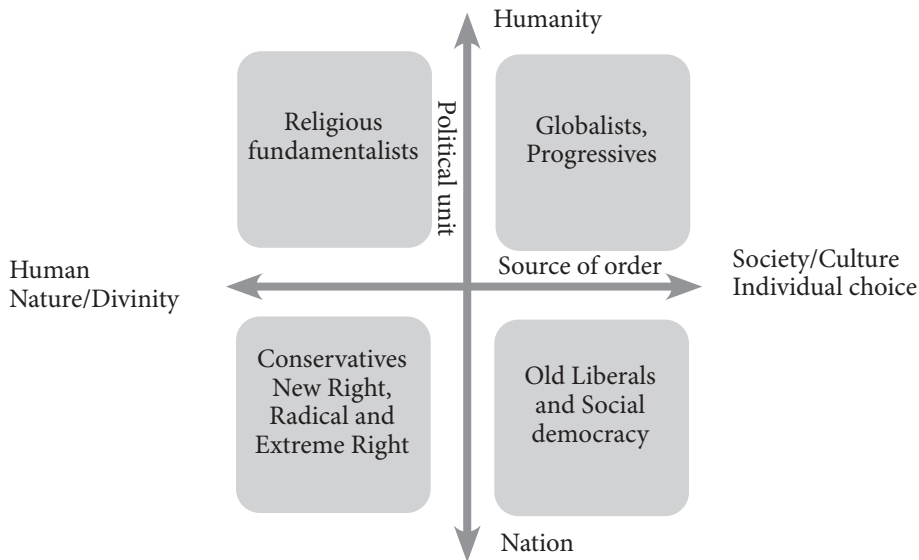
Nationalism remains the most vigorous political ideology in opposition to globalism, resolutely promoted by current administration of US President D.Trump, President of Russia V.Putin, President of Brazil J.Bolsonaro and many leaders of Radical Right parties across Europe. To these political forces the Nation remains the decisive foundation of political legitimacy and power. Nationalists believes that the just world order is based on nations and national self-determination and nation-state is an optimal form of a political organization. For fascinating illustration of this position see M. Pompeo’s speech at German Marshall Fund in Brussels on 4th of December, 2018 (Pompeo, 2018 December 4) or V. Putin’s interview for the Financial Times (Putin, 2019, July 5) or V. Orban’s speech at a conference held in memory of Helmut Kohl on 16th of June 2018 in Budapest (Orban, 2018 June 16)

There appears to exist a *transtraditional* dimension along the *transnational* cleavage in Western societies, which, in a post-modern form, is a continuation of the split about the role of religion in society. “Progressives” focus on transcending the constraints of Christian morality, traditional social bonds and identities that are in conflict with the pursuit of greater individual freedom, gender equality, acceptability and legal status of homosexuals; the status of euthanasia, and the decriminalisation of light drugs (Henjak, 2009, pp. 69-71). The “traditionalists” try to hold on to importance of traditional morality, gender roles, family, local communities and nations.

Essentially, an ideological argument signifies divergent views on the fundamentals of social order and on human nature. The Left and liberals believe that man has no nature, like Locke once thought, and that any social rules are random and can be fashioned by reason and individual interest. Simply, one need just to change social institutions to achieve the desired ends. They believe that the individual could design themselves by changing institutions, and no inherited nature would make this transformation impossible.

The traditionalists and conservatives are not so sure about this, since they have faith in human nature which, according to them, is much less malleable than the “progressives” so keenly believe. It does not matter whether the natural traditional order of things is ordained by the divinity or nature (*see Scheme 1*).

**Scheme 1. Differences between globalists, nationalists, progressives and traditionalists**



### 3. Distinctiveness of East Central Europe

In East Central European countries, however, the New Left and Green parties are unpopular or non-existent, and leftist concerns have been included into Radical Right parties' nationalist/traditionalist agendas (Hooghe and Marks, 2017, p. 16). However, like in Western Europe, emerging post-modern left-liberal values and lifestyles, unpacked a social and cultural conflict between "post-modern" and "traditional" views on the nature of society. It also prompted a renewed debate regarding definition of the political community – "liberal open inclusive" versus "conservative protective exclusive" meaning of a political community (Pytlas, 2015, Ch. 1).

Radical Right politics in Western and East Central Europe is characterised by exclusionary, xenophobic, nationalist, anti-globalist, anti-EU and traditionalist orientation to transnational cleavage. The European migration crisis has brought the East European radical right into line with its Western European "counterparts" in a mutual hostility to Islam and migrants from the Middle East and Africa and the European Union. However, the Radical Right in Eastern Europe differs in three important aspects – leftist social protective orientation on economic matters, linkages between identity politics, democratization and political reforms, and convergence of Radical Right parties with mainstream parties albeit radicalised (Bustikova, 2018, p. 568).

As L. Bustikova mentions, in the East Central Europe, "radicalized right" and "radical right" is becoming increasingly undistinguishable, and it is difficult to define whether such parties as Fidesz or PiS or Smer (Slovakia) cannot be considered as Radical Right (Bustikova, 2018, p. 575, Pytlas, 2015, Ch. 2). Internal dissent and

gravitation towards radical positions is not surprising of conservative parties, since, as Hooghe and Marks notice, moderate orientation towards transnational cleavage does not produce parties' solidarity. On the contrary, polarisation of positions yields more internal unity. *Vis-à-vis* transnational challenges, conservatives are susceptible to internal disagreements since their ideology includes neoliberal economic policy (globalist in its nature) and the defence of national sovereignty (Hooghe and Marks, 2017, p. 13).

In Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the Radical Right is less politically influential than in Poland or Hungary. The Lithuanian Radical Right is represented by Akcja Wyborcza Polaków na Litwie – Związek Chrześcijańskich Rodzin, AWPL-ZChR (Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance). Currently, AWPL-ZChR holds 8 mandates in the National Parliament and the party – its leader, V. Tomaševski, got through into European Parliament with 5.24 % of votes (The Electoral Commission 2019a). V. Tomaševski belongs to the European Conservatives and Reformists Group. Recently, this party was included in the coalition government headed by Prime Minister S. Skvernelis (The Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union). The party received ministerial positions of Interior and Transport and Communications. This party claims to be a conservative Christian democratic party of a sort, predominantly representing the Polish minority.

Another Radical Right political organisation is led by Vilnius University professor of Philosophy Vytautas Radžvilas. He was heading a public election committee to European Parliament (Susigrąžinkime valstybę 2019). The public election committee, Vytautas Radžvilas: Susigrąžinkime Valstybę (Vytautas Radžvilas: Let's get our State Back) has been formed out of right-wing, nationalistic, pro-catholic organisation Propatria's activists just a couple of months before European Parliament elections. The public election committee failed to get sufficient votes to step over the threshold of 5 per cent for entering the European Parliament (it received 3.17%, (The Central Electoral Commission 2019a).

Also, Christian democrat's fraction within the Homeland Union-Christian Democrats conservative centre right party can be considered as leaning to a Radical Right (Bendrija, 2019). None of its members managed to gather the necessary number of votes to be elected to the European Parliament (The Central Electoral Commission 2019a).

However, in the aftermath of European Parliament and presidential elections, the main body of Propatria, with the participation of a Member of Parliament R. Dagys (who left the Christian democrat's fraction within Homeland Union-Christian Democrats), an aspiration to create a truly rightist Christian democratic party has been announced (Gaučaitė, 2019).

The Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) — an anti-immigration, anti-gay, Eurosceptic party, but anti-Russia is the fastest growing political force in Estonia. In 2015, parliamentary elections it won 8% of the vote. It won 1st place in the European Parliament elections in 2019. This year, it received 17.8% of the votes and entered the coalition government where this party controls 5 ministries:

Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Information Technology, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Rural Affairs (ERR News, 2019), (Election for Estonian Parliament, 2019);

Currently, The National Alliance has thirteen seats (11% of the votes received in 2018) in the Latvian parliament (the fourth-largest party) and is the third-largest party in the government. It won 2 places in the European Parliament elections in 2019. It controls the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Agriculture (Latvia — 2018 general election results, 2018).

#### 4. Ideological and practical policy dilemmas for Lithuania

New shifts that reflect a reaction to the developing *transnational* and *transtraditional* cleavages are beginning to surface in Lithuanian political life. The leadership of Homeland Union-Lithuania's Christian Democrats' (conservative party) display political attitudes that are closer to the left and liberal globalism than to traditional conservatism. And marks of political polarisation appear within the ranks of Lithuanian Conservatives (Gailius, 2019, September 3; Laučius, 2019, July 17; Laučius 2019, August 12; Laučius 2019, August 23; Tapinienė, 2019, September 2).

Exactly, as Hooghe and Marks observed, internal disagreements and the radicalisation of positions in conservative parties is a typical response to transnational cleavage. It is noticeable that moderate positioning does not produce solidarity. Susceptibility to internal disagreements in conservative parties is explained by the fact that conservative ideology includes a neoliberal, pro-globalist economic policy and nationalistic defence of national sovereignty (Hooghe and Marks, 2017, p. 13). Therefore, the first signs of internal dissent among Lithuanian conservatives are not unexpected and demonstrate an analogous reaction to *transnational* and *transtraditional* cleavage in other Western countries.

It is interesting to notice that Conservatives, Liberals and Social democrats have agreed to cooperate in an opposition and to delegate its representative to the post of Opposition leader in rotational order (Pranešimas, 2019, March 22). This indicates that ideological and political positions among mainstream parties are becoming closer.

It is not surprising since one of the main current opposition parties, the Social Democrats, try to copy Western European social democratic and New Left political agendas by following the liberal vogue of international and European politics in which they expect to advance popularity among young voters (Gudžinskas L., 2019).

It is important to note that emerging differentiation regarding transnational cleavage is supplemented by the strong anti-Russian geopolitical orientation of mainstream and Radical Right-Leaning political parties, organisations and politicians in Lithuania and Poland. Resentment to the Kremlin's assertive foreign and military policies after aggression against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea might be considered as an *issue divide* or a *partial cleavage* in a sense used by Deegan-Krause (Saarts, 2017, pp. 45-46).

This *issue divide* over Russia's aggressive foreign and security policies against



the Western alliance increases cross-cutting cracks in Europe's politics and society, generating rather different responses and orientations to this issue in Western and Southern Europe, Scandinavia, East Central Europe and the Baltics (Pezard et al, 2017; Janda et al, 2017; Janda, 2018). The Baltic States and Poland are more explicit than others about the Russian threat (Karlsen, 2019).

The negative position of Radical Right parties regarding the foreign and security policy of Russian Federation puts them in an awkward situation and generates internal tensions within the Radical Right and right-leaning camp of Polish and Lithuanian political parties/organisations, politicians and voters. Because of the Russian threat to national security, the Radical Right and "radicalised" right political forces in Poland and Lithuania support the efforts of the so-called "globalists" mainstream parties to constrain aggressive foreign/economic policies of Russia, which aim to force it to uphold global order based on liberal international rules. However, the Radical Right detests the globalists' "progressive" agenda claiming to be the defenders of the Christian Civilisation – a "Bulwark of Christianity" against the "Civilisation of Death" (Pytlas, 2015, Ch. 4).

This perception of Europe as a Christian-based civilisation, oddly, in ideational terms brings closer Radical Right forces in Poland and Lithuania to Russia, which portrays itself as a defender of the "true" Europe and its "true" values (Laqueur, 2014; Laruelle, 2016; Caldwell, 2018). This conundrum is partially reflected by the Radical Right thinkers themselves (Radžvilas, 2017, pp. 45-46; Laučius 2018, December 12; Sinica 2018, December 22; Kalan, 2018). The contradictive position of the Radical Right is geopolitically syncretic. It reflects the underlying geopolitical syncretism in societies and widespread public views.

The recent study on the values in the Baltic countries demonstrates that the population in all three of them display a certain kind of "geopolitical syncretism" when the majority of populations support cooperation with the US and Western powers, but at the same time, they negatively assess Western values and policies (Kaprans and Mierina, 2019, p. 22). For instance, in Lithuania 38% of the respondents agree (combined 'tend to agree' and 'completely agree' answers) with the statement that there is a conflict between the country's traditional values and those of the West (Kaprans and Mierina 2019:15). However, the overwhelming majority (78%) consider that it is in national interests to work closely with the US and other Western powers (Kaprans and Mierina, 2019, pp. 13-15). All in all, the authors of the study conclude that two distinct opinion clusters in the Baltics exist: one is characterised by pro-Western attitudes and the second cluster reflects anti-Western orientations (Kaprans and Mierina 2019, p. 68). In Lithuania, the first cluster comprises 58.2% of replies, and the other – 41.8 % (Kaprans and Mierina, 2019, p. 67).

The situation with public opinion is similar in Latvia and Estonia (Kaprans and Mierina, 2019) and not very divergent in Poland. The signs of inconsistency between geopolitical and value orientations are visible there, too. According to the Pew Research Center survey, 89% of respondents expressed a lack of confidence in the Russian president in 2017, while 69% viewed Russia negatively itself and 65% saw Russia's power as a major threat (Vice, 2017, August 16). The findings of the survey also indicate that those who held right political views were more confident

in Putin than those on the left side (Vice 2017, August 16). Although, P. Oseka, a historian of propaganda at the Polish Academy of Science, alludes that “PiS voters may secretly admire strong, Putin-like leadership/.../To stress that something has connections with Russia is always a stigma” (Kalan, p. 2018: 3). At the same time, Catholicism remains at the core of Polish national identity (Diamant and Gardner, 2018). The Pew Research Center survey results demonstrated that 68% of Polish respondents oppose same sex marriages and 52% disfavour the legalisation of abortions (Pew Research Center 2018).

In Lithuania, the positions of *Akcja Wyborcza Polaków na Litwie – Związek Chrześcijańskich Rodzin, AWPL-ZChR* (Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance) is a notable example of those contradictions. This party has been used to form an election coalition with an openly pro-Russian party “Russian Alliance” before European, national and municipal elections since 2011 (The Central Electoral Commission 2019b). However, AWPL-ZChR is very cautious to posit Lithuania’s foreign policy relations with Russia in a more flexible manner (AWPL-ZChR 2019). In Poland, the *Konfederacja KORWiN Braun Liroy Narodowcy* (Confederation KORWiN Braun Liroy Nationalists) is less anti-Russian and stands for reviving economic ties with Russia (Konfederacja, 2019).

Radical Right parties (e.g. PiS) and radical right-leaning internal fractions (like the Christian democratic fraction in the Homeland Union of Lithuania) cannot, without reservation, identify and associate itself with the Western European Radical Right (France’s *National Rally*, Italy’s *Northern League*, Dutch *Freedom Party*, German *Alternative for Germany*, *Freedom Party of Austria*) due to different views regarding Russia, although they subscribe to similar views on family policies, relations between individual and state, multiculturalism, immigration and globalization (McLean, 2019; Radžvilas, 2019; Sinica, 2019, January 17; Rinkimai į Europos Parlamentą 2019, May 26).

PiS was in a different political grouping (*European Conservatives and Reformists Group*) in European Parliament than the *National Rally* and other Radical Right and Eurosceptic parties (*Europe of Nations and Freedom*). Head of the League, M. Salvini, unsuccessfully tried to persuade PiS to join the ENF grouping and combine the efforts before the European Parliament Elections during his visit to Warsaw in January 2019. PiS was reluctant to change the grouping, partly because of Salvini’s different position on Russia (The Guardian 2019, May 18). For instance, a member of Lithuanian Parliament, belonging to a Christian democratic wing of the Homeland Union, L. Kasčiūnas, was condemned by his party leader, G. Landsbergis, for organising the meeting with German AfD politicians in 2018 (Andrukaitytė, Skėrytė 2018, February 13).

PiS did not attend gatherings of the Radical Right neither on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April in Prague, nor the meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May in Milan, where parties from 11 EU countries did appear, including France’s National Rally, Germany’s Alternative for Germany and the Dutch Freedom Party (France 24. 2019a). Marine Le Pen’s, leader of the National Rally, call to PiS to join the ranks was in vain (France 24. 2019b). She also failed to visit Warsaw and Vilnius during her tour across East



Central Europe and the Baltic States in May. However, she has stopped in Prague, Sofia, Bratislava and Tallinn, as part of her European campaigning ahead of the European elections (Stolton, 2019).

The incongruity of geopolitical orientations between the Western European Radical Right and Polish and Lithuanian and other Baltic Radical Right-leaning political forces, despite overlapping value views, is impeding even wider Poland's and Lithuania's and other Baltic's Radical Right cooperation in Europe to defend traditionalist agenda as well as constrains their domestic positions. The inability to secure support from other European Radical Right political parties puts into question Poland's and Lithuania's Radical Right desire to portray itself as "defenders of true European values". On the other hand, opposition to liberal values hinder Poland's and Lithuania's Radical Right ambition to lead anti-Russian forces in Europe and gather political momentum to become the "Bulwark of Europe".

On the other hand, such processes produce a situation of discomfort for the Lithuanian liberal and Social democratic parties that are confused by President Trump's nationalistic *America First* agenda. President Trump's overtures to V. Putin puzzles them as they have to find the right path in a changing international situation, bearing in mind the essential fact that Lithuania's national security ultimately depends on the United States.

In any way, Lithuania's political elite (either right, centrist or left) have to manage the challenge of balancing the nationalist US President Trump's foreign policy with the globalist EU leaders' policies and aspirations for further EU integration.

## Conclusions

The noteworthy revival of ethnic nationalism and electoral successes of the Radical Right parties in the West are linked because of deindustrialisation and globalisation. These processes produce new transnational cleavage that is characterised by conflict between economic, social and cultural openness and closeness, on one hand, and post-modernism versus traditionalism on the other.

The geopolitical issue divide regarding Russia adds on transnational cleavage in Poland and Lithuania and other Baltic states. The Polish and Baltic Radical Right is caught in the trap of a political *cul-de-sac* – it can identify neither with the pro-Russian Western European Radical Right because of differences regarding Russia, nor the anti-Russian liberal progressive left, which they despise because of different views on family policies, relations between the individual and state, immigration and globalisation.

Growing political polarisation within the Western world impedes a unified Western position towards Russian revisionist aspirations. Growing political polarisation within Lithuania impedes social resilience and civic resistance preparedness.

Elimination of the contradiction between pro-Western geopolitical orientation and pro-traditionalist value orientation is a matter of social and political stability and of national security in the end.

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### 3.

## THE EFFECT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ON THE DYNAMIC OF TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

Gerda Jakštaitė\*

### Introduction

Transatlantic relations are often named as one of the most important partnerships in modern world politics (Smith, 2018; Riddervold and Newsome, 2018; Howorth, 2018; Gordon and Shapiro, 2019). However, since 2017, when Donald Trump became the president of the United States (U.S.), doubts have been raised about the strength of the Euro-Atlantic alliance (see Gordon and Shapiro, 2019; Peel, 2019; Sloan, 2017; Polyakova and Haddad, 2019; Bohacek, 2018; Sperling and Webber, 2019; Jakobsen and Ringsmose, 2018; Kanat, 2018).

During his time in office, Donald Trump named NATO, which is considered the bedrock of transatlantic partnerships (Bond, 2018), “obsolete” and stated that NATO members do not pay their bills (Trump, 2017). Moreover, the U.S. president lamented that the U.S. might “end up in World War Three for somebody that doesn’t even pay” (Trump, 2018b). He threatened to withdraw from NATO (Trump, 2018a). On the other hand, on some occasions he endorsed NATO article 5 (in the Warsaw speech, July 2017) and claimed that NATO “is no longer obsolete” (Trump, 2017). Trump repeatedly criticised European countries, put tariffs on European steel and aluminium exports. He called BREXIT “a great thing” and encouraged the United Kingdom to walk away from BREXIT talks if the European Union does not give “a fair deal” (Trump, 2019). During the Trump presidency, the U.S. has unilaterally withdrawn from the Iran nuclear accord, ended participation in the Climate Change agreement.

European politicians, in the meantime, expressed concerns about the direction that the U.S. took after 2017 and advocated for a stronger EU role in international relations. “Trans-Atlantic relations are under immense pressure due to the policies of President Trump”, the European Council’s president, Donald Tusk wrote to the leaders of EU countries (Herszenhorn, 2018). Danish Defence Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen claimed that NATO allies “live with an uncertainty that Trump plays in a completely different way than the rest of us” (Herszenhorn and Barigazzi, 2018). Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel stated that Europe “must take its destiny in its own hands” (Merkel, 2017). Former German foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel even declared that Trump “has done damage that the Soviets would have dreamt of” (Balz and Witte, 2018). Moreover, European countries started the PESCO initiative, opened a WTO case against the U.S., and at times started voicing opinions about the “replacement of the United States”.

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Lithuania, on the one hand, did not portray the Trump administration's foreign policy as causing major changes in transatlantic security architecture. Lithuania's officials often expressed support for the U.S. transatlantic policy also after 2017. Lithuania's minister of foreign affairs Linas Linkevicius stated that there was no reason to question the U.S. practical steps, financial and operational contribution, as well as an understanding of Lithuania's security needs (Delfi, 2018). He also claimed that there is continuity in the U.S. transatlantic policy during the Trump presidency (Delfi, 2018). On the other hand, Lithuania once again faced an indirect dilemma of how to navigate between the U.S. security interests in Europe and European initiatives in the security domain and aspiration for a more important role in the international arena.

The chapter aims to analyse the Trump presidency's implications to transatlantic relations and explore the foreign and security policy dilemmas it creates for Lithuania. The chapter attempts to answer the question of whether the Trump presidency is a turning point in transatlantic relations. I argue that the Trump presidency fits into the main pattern of transatlantic relations' history and, despite many claims, has not made extraordinary changes in these relations.

First, I discuss the dynamics in transatlantic relations before the Trump presidency: I present the main "channels" of transatlantic relations and I explore the key patterns in the transatlantic relations' political, military and economic domains before the Trump presidency (from WWII until 2017). Second, I analyse the Trump administration's transatlantic policy. How important is the transatlantic region for the Trump administration? What is the administration's vision of transatlantic relations? How is this vision transformed into policy? Third, I inspect the Trump administration's policy implications for the transatlantic region. Is the Trump administration's policy changing the transatlantic region and the EU as an international relations actor? Is the European position towards the U.S. and transatlantic institutions changing? What new initiatives have been created as a result of the Trump administration's policy? In the chapter, I also consider implications of the new dynamics in the transatlantic relations to Lithuania.

## **1. The effect of the U.S. to transatlantic relations before 2017**

In the broadest sense, transatlantic relations refer to the relations of countries on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean (Cambridge dictionary). The transatlantic relationship is often defined as a U.S.-European partnership (Archick, 2019). In this chapter, Michael Smith's definition of transatlantic relations is "the overall set of relations between the European Union and the United States, within the broader framework of the institutional and other connections maintained via NATO and other institutions" (Smith, 2018), and is used since it is broad enough to include relationships outside the U.S.-EU format and specific enough to name various frameworks of these relations. It suggests that transatlantic relations transcend the U.S.-EU relations and encompass such transatlantic relations "channels" like NATO, OSCE, G7, as well as some international financial institutions that emerged as a result of the U.S. leadership (IMF, World Bank). Some claim that since the

Table No. 1 - U.S. Stance about Transatlantic Relations

<i>Breaking Points/ Drivers of Change</i>	<b>Cold War</b>	<b>End of Cold War</b>	<b>Balkans Conflict</b>	<b>Kosovo War</b>	<b>9/11</b>	<b>Iraq War</b>	<b>Obama's Presidency</b>	<b>Ukraine War</b>	<b>Trump's Presidency</b>
<b>U.S. stance about Transatlantic (TR) Relations:</b>									
Relations	U.S. dominance in relations	U.S. dominance in relations	U.S. dominance in relations	U.S. dominance in relations	U.S. dominance in relations	U.S. dominance in relations	U.S. dominance in relations	U.S. dominance in relations	U.S. dominance in relations
EU-NATO interaction	Strict separation between ECSC and NATO	"Strategic bargain"	St Malo Declaration and M. Albright's 3 Ds ESDI within NATO	"Converging coexistence"	NATO-EU strategic partnership (2002)	Question of EU autonomy	Determination to improve the NATO-EU strategic partnership	Determination to improve the NATO-EU strategic partnership	Question of EU autonomy
NATO	Cornerstone of U.S. NSS	Cornerstone of U.S. NSS	Cornerstone of U.S. NSS	Cornerstone of U.S. NSS	Cornerstone of U.S. NSS	Cornerstone of U.S. NSS	Cornerstone of U.S. NSS	Cornerstone of U.S. NSS	Cornerstone of U.S. NSS
Europe in the U.S. Strategy	Cornerstone in U.S. interests (part of USSR containment)	Europe is important but interests are wider	Europe is important but interests are wider + Some regions in Europe -> source of instability	Europe is important but interests are wider + Some regions in Europe -> source of instability	Looking for support and relying on NATO structures	Building coalition but acting unilaterally	Diminished attention. Focus on Asia.	Increased attention: "back to Europe"	Isolation/ Confrontation with Europe vs Traditional FP line
<b>Outcomes and implications</b>	Dependence on the U.S.	Europe looking for a role in U.S. strategy	Europeans dependent on U.S. military capabilities	Europeans dependent on U.S. military capabilities	New honeymoon in TR relations	Damage to TR relations	Europeans looking for a new role in IR	Resemblance to the Cold War: common enemy -> common actions	?

Source: made by the author, based on Lundestad (2005, 2018).

end of WWII, the main framework for transatlantic cooperation has been NATO (Schoenborn, 2018). Others contradict this, claiming that transatlantic relations have been shaped by 2 sets of institutions that influence the way 2 transatlantic partners view the world: military (NATO) and economic ones (EU, IMF).

The transatlantic relationship was established after WWII under the U.S. leadership and has undergone numerous stages ever since. In the words of Geir Lundestad, after 1945, the U.S. has become an “Empire by Invitation” in Euro-Atlantic relations, meaning that the U.S. had an influence on Atlantic structure and certain long-time developments (Lundestad 2005): in 1948, the Marshall Plan was passed to provide Western Europe with economic assistance; in 1949, NATO was established.

Throughout transatlantic relations history, several trends can be noticed about the U.S. role in it. First, most of the time there has been U.S. dominance in transatlantic relations. The U.S. was in a position of strength after WWII and continued to be the most powerful country in the transatlantic region up to the 21st century. Moreover, it was the U.S. that determined the course of actions in transatlantic relations (Lundestad, 2018): for instance, as with the enlargement of NATO, the locations and scope of NATO military operations, institutionalisation of transatlantic relations, foreign policy approach towards Russia (for instance, “Reset” by the Obama administration that was followed by European countries, even Lithuania at a certain level), international financial governance.

Second, the U.S. has had an interest in not being excluded from European politics (Elie, p. 163) and has established numerous channels to implement this interest. This interest has been declared by numerous U.S. presidents from Truman (“We are faced with the most terrible responsibility that any nation ever faced”) to Obama (“Allies who will listen to each other, learn from each other and, most of all, trust each other”). Reasons behind that have been evolving over time: during the Cold War, the U.S. saw military, economic and ideological challenges to liberal democracy from the Soviet Union and intended to rebuild war-torn Europe. After the Cold War, U.S. administrations listed the following benefits of transatlantic relations: the U.S. leadership in transatlantic relations contributes to stability on the European continent, U.S.-led international order, mutual benefit in economic relations, helps to limit Russian and Chinese influences in the region, helps to counter common international challenges (Archick, 2019). After the Cold War, transatlantic relations were formalised with the Transatlantic Declaration in 1990 and the New Transatlantic Agenda in 1995. The documents have foreseen U.S. and European countries cooperation in economic relations, the promotion peace and stability, a response to global challenges, “building bridges across the Atlantic”, and institutionalised transatlantic relations on various levels.

Third, the U.S. has been consistent in its support for Europe’s integration project. At the same time, Americans regarded the EU project with “mixed feelings”: as a tool that might strengthen Europeans and as a potential competitor. For the U.S., Europe’s integration project served broader security objectives as cooperation among the major powers would make them more reliable allies in the face of the Soviet threat. For instance, the Obama administration strongly opposed BREXIT,

believing it might weaken the EU. During one of his meetings with UK Prime minister David Cameron, Obama stated that, if the UK leaves the EU, “the UK is going to be in the back of the queue” of the U.S. partners. One might claim that the reason behind the U.S. support for EU-NATO integration and institutionalisations lies behind the U.S. interest to keep European countries within its sphere of interests.

Fourth, disagreements between the U.S. and Europeans have been constant in changing the international environment since WWII. However, even during crises in transatlantic relations (for instance, when the U.S. made decisions unilaterally), the U.S. still declared Europe to be its most important ally and partner. During the Bosnian civil war, the U.S. did not support a political solution to the situation, endorsed by the EU, and eventually took over crisis management with military means. In the Kosovo case, the U.S. preferred not to use ground troops and strike directly at central leadership, while Europeans favoured boots on the ground. The war in Iraq (2003) damaged the transatlantic bond because of the U.S. unilateralism in military actions (Delpech, 2003). During the Obama presidency the U.S. had not received Europeans’ bigger contribution to situation management in Afghanistan within the NATO framework, while Europeans had worries about Europe’s place in the U.S. foreign policy strategy after Obama announced a “Pivot to Asia”, withdrew a high per cent of U.S. military forces in Europe and reduced the number of military exercises. Europe did not dominate Obama’s agenda; global issues did. However, some of the global issues coincided with European priorities: like climate change (“ISIS is not an existential threat to the United States. Climate change is a potentially existential threat to the entire world if we don’t do something about it”, Obama stated in one of the conversations).

Economic quarrels have been frequent in transatlantic relations as well during the years. The U.S. and the EU had disputes over beef hormones, bananas, genetically-modified organisms, steel safeguard measures, copyright protection, poultry, aeroplanes (Airbus and Boeing). Obama’s administration introduced new measures to manage financial crises such as infrastructure projects that required buying American, not European steel and iron, and resulted in dissatisfaction on the other side of the Atlantic.

M. Smith (2018) suggests that the EU, in turn, perceived itself and attempted to represent itself as “a security actor in ways that are fundamentally different than the US” for a long time (highlighting such aspects as the role of multilateralism, of military power as a last resort (if at all), and of the rule of international law). Thus, certain damage to transatlantic relations has been done, and U.S. leadership in Europe had already begun to shift before Trump.

Fifth, on the one hand, NATO has always been the key in the U.S. security strategy; on the other hand, there have been doubts about NATO’s value ever since the end of the Cold War (Schreer, 2019). Throughout history, U.S. administrations have viewed NATO as a cornerstone of the U.S. National Security Strategy. At the same, especially after the Cold War, there has been criticism for the European countries about the “burden-sharing” in the alliance from the U.S.. Many U.S. presidents have called for the increase in defence spending: Bill Clinton, George

W. Bush, Obama. NATO sceptics in the U.S. named such costs of U.S. membership in NATO as heightened risks to U.S. forces; continued European dependence; provoking Russia; financial costs (Belkin, 2019). However, despite debates and criticism, NATO had several enlargements after the Cold War. Moreover, efforts have been taken to adjust the alliance to new type of threats and asymmetric warfare.

In general, before 2017, the U.S. was in a position of strength to determine the development of transatlantic relations and had interests in doing so. Europeans were not passive about defending their interests though. The U.S. perceived NATO as one of the most important pillars of transatlantic relations but consistently supported the EU project as well.

## **2. The Trump administration's transatlantic policy**

Many are convinced that Donald Trump challenged some of the core principles of transatlantic relations (see Riddervold, 2018; Sestanovich, 2017; Smith, 2018). Moreover, Stephen Sestanovich (2017) suggests that the Trump administration has brought chaos in transatlantic relations as a result of Trump's impulse to confrontation. Overall, the following patterns of the Trump administration's transatlantic policy can be distinguished by:

- ▶ Questioning the U.S. European allies;
- ▶ Urging NATO members to spend more on defence and expressing the belief that European allies are in debt to the U.S. for their defence and financial contributions;
- ▶ Questioning the value of NATO (and, at times, refusing to reaffirm article 5): it seems that the president routinely criticised European allies for not spending enough on defence. However, in the whole context, it was extraordinary to call NATO "obsolete" and to question the existence of this international organisation;
- ▶ Opposing previously made trade deals and questioning free-trade.

Further, two of the most important domains of transatlantic relations are discussed: defence and economic transatlantic relations during the Trump presidency.

### *Defence domain*

Defence has been a key component in transatlantic relations since the end of WWII. As a result of "turbulence" in the Trump administration's foreign and security policy statements, during Trump presidency, European allies and the U.S. political establishment raised questions about how powerful the U.S. presidential figure is and how much his statements mean. It seems that there have been several political lines on transatlantic relations during the Trump presidency: the opinion of the U.S. president who questioned the value of a transatlantic alliance and assessed it through the prism of economic benefit, and the opinion of the U.S. political establishment that aimed to maintain the traditional U.S. policy in this domain.

The U.S. president challenged traditional U.S. security policy ideas, the value of European allies and the future of transatlantic relations. He called NATO "obsolete" (January 16, 2017), "a bad deal" (Benerson, 2018); he often stated that NATO members take advantage of the U.S., that they "do not pay their debts." Moreover, Trump claimed that "NATO <...> is better for Europe than it is for the



United States”. The U.S. president even said that the U.S. might withdraw from NATO if the U.S. financial demands are not met or that the U.S. would consider whether to defend certain NATO countries under attack if they do not spend 2% for defence (Barnes, Cooper, 2019). Some of Trump’s personal ideas seem to stem out of his conviction that the U.S. is perceived as weak and that the U.S. is not respected in global arena. It also suggests that some of the U.S. president’s ideas have been based on false information or simply ignorance. Donald Trump made some factual mistakes in his political discourse on Transatlantic relations: he stated that the U.S. financial contributions constitute 90% of NATO’s budget (Trump, 2018b) (while in fact, in 2017, the U.S. financial contributions constituted 65.7% and 2018 – 65.9% of the NATO budget) (NATO, 2019). He was also convinced that it was his merit that the NATO budget increased and stated that “nobody ever criticized NATO” (Trump, 2017). Thus, Trump’s statements indicated the president’s intention to bring some changes in the U.S. foreign and security policy. Trump expresses a narrow definition (Nye, 2019) of American interests, believes in a zero-sum perspective. Trump does not give much importance to the international community. Moreover, this reflects Trump’s conviction that, in a hostile world, a State can succeed only by military build-up (Sachs, 2018).

On the other hand, Donald Trump also claimed that the U.S. “commitment to NATO is very strong” and that he believes in NATO’s importance. (Trump, 2018b) Some mass media sources claimed that Trump was often under the pressure of his team to openly reaffirm the U.S. commitment to NATO Article 5. For instance, during his first attendance at the NATO summit, Trump hesitated and refused to endorse article 5 in his speech. Traditional notions about transatlantic relations in Trump’s political discourse appeared only after some NATO members met their financial obligations: in 2018, seven NATO members – Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Greece, Poland, UK, United States – met financial obligations. Moreover, Trump declared that, thanks to him, NATO members increased their financial contributions (“They’ll be paying \$200 billion. It took me one hour, but it was a rough hour.”). BNS claims that, in the chaotic NATO summit in 2018 (when Donald Trump publicly accused Angela Merkel of an insufficient defence budget), the prime minister of the Netherlands suggested giving credit to Donald Trump for the increase of NATO members’ financial contributions in order to lighten the atmosphere (Beniušis, 2019). However, even after stronger financial commitments by NATO members, Trump’s statements regarding transatlantic relations and NATO remained mixed, raising doubts about the U.S. president’s true beliefs.

The U.S. National Security Strategy of 2017 (NSS), the most important document that indicates the U.S. foreign and security policy priorities, provides a traditional perception of transatlantic relations and NATO. NSS outlines that “the United States is safer when Europe is prosperous and stable and can help defend our shared interests and ideals”. Moreover, the document names NATO as one of the greatest advantages of the U.S. and reaffirms the U.S. commitment to Article 5 (NSS 2017). In general, the Trump administration’s NSS highlights the importance of hard power instruments, “Peace through strength” and expresses similar notions about transatlantic relations and NATO as previous administrations did. Trump’s



team members also supported article 5. According to numerous U.S. officials (U.S. State Secretary Rex Tillerson, Mike Pompeo; U.S. Defense Secretary John Mattis), the U.S. commitment to NATO remains ironclad. The U.S. Congress publicly expressed bipartisan support for the transatlantic alliance as well.

In practical foreign and security policy, the administration continued initiatives in transatlantic relations started by previous administrations and strengthened transatlantic cooperation in some issues.

First, the administration requested a 40% increase in spending for the EDI (European Defence Initiative; Latici, 2017): the administration asked for an increase in spending in all EDI categories, including the deployment of U.S. military forces in Europe, an increase in military exercises, training of military forces. The administration has planned to deploy 9095 soldiers that are part of EUCOM.

Second, the Trump administration has returned the deployment of the U.S. military forces to the level of 2015 (the Obama administration reduced the number of U.S. military forces by 45% (Coffey, Kochis, 2015)). However, the U.S. president at times questioned this decision. For instance, according to the Washington Post, Trump expressed doubts about the increase of the U.S. military forces in Germany (Hudson, Sonne, deYoung, Dawsey, 2018).

**Table No. 2 - Deployment of the U.S. military forces in Europe**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Belgium	1200	1200	900	900	900
Bulgaria	-	-	-	300	150
Greece	380	380	370	400	400
Spain	2100	2100	2950	3200	3200
Italy	11360	11360	12550	12050	12750
Hungary	-	-	-	100	100
Latvia	-	-	-	60	60
UK	9500	9550	8700	8300	9250
Netherlands	380	380	380	410	400
Norway	1	1	1	330	1000
Portugal	700	700	220	200	200
Romania	-	-	550	1000	1150
Turkey	1550	1550	2700	2700	1700
Germany	40500	40450	36850	37450	37950
Denmark (Greenland)	130	130	170	160	160
In total:	67801	67801	66341	67560	69370

Source: Made by author, based on “The Military Balance 2018”, IISS: 2018. “The Military Balance 2017”, IISS: 2017. “The Military Balance 2016”, IISS: 2016. “The Military Balance 2015”, IISS: 2015.

Third, the U.S. president and his administration have requested NATO members to increase their defence spending up to 2% (as agreed in the NATO Wales summit in 2014). Trump perceives the value of NATO and assesses the strength of a transatlantic bond through the financial prism – if European countries do not spend enough, it means that they do not value the alliance.

Fourth, during the Trump presidency, the U.S. continued to actively participate in various NATO activities (despite criticism towards the alliance, expressed by the U.S. president). The administration supported the NATO deterrence and defence posture: deployment of forces in the Eastern part of the alliance; participated in Iceland Peacetime preparedness, Ballistic Missile Defense. The U.S. led one of the combat-ready battle groups (in Poland, together with Canada, Germany, and United Kingdom that led to this type of battle groups in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia); took part in NATO military exercises.

During the Trump presidency, the U.S. continued its support for NATO's open-door policy: the U.S. supported Montenegro's membership in NATO, even though the U.S. president stipulated that Montenegro might involve NATO (together with the U.S.) in an unnecessary confrontation.

During the Trump presidency, a significant role in keeping the traditional transatlantic U.S. policy and balancing the White House's ideas has been played by Congress. Since 2017, Congress passed various types of legislation to confirm the U.S. support for NATO and reassure European allies: for instance, H. Res. 256 (July 11, 2018) that expressed support for NATO and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; the NATO Support Act (H.R. 676, January 22, 2019) that aimed to prevent the U.S. president from withdrawing from NATO unilaterally (passed by both, the House and the Senate). The House and the Senate attempted to reassure European countries through visits to Brussels and other European capitals (Archick, 2019). For instance, the Congressional delegation, led by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, visited Europe to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to the transatlantic alliance and NATO article 5 in February 2019.

In short, during the Trump presidency, the U.S. position towards the transatlantic defence domain has been complex. Trump himself seemed not to believe in alliance(s) (or did not understand the meaning of this concept); he perceived Europe as a rival and not a partner. The Trump administration had, in the words of Schreer, a “transactional approach” (Schreer, 2019). In U.S. foreign policy, this approach is not new (Howorth, 2018): similar thoughts (perception of Europeans as free-riders) have been expressed by Obama, Eisenhower etc. However, despite initial concerns and the confusing political discourse of the U.S. president, there have been no major changes in the defence domain of transatlantic relations. On the contrary, some elements of transatlantic cooperation have been strengthened (weapons for Ukraine, sanctions against Russia, EDI, military deployments in Europe).

#### *Economic domain*

The U.S. and EU are each other's most important trading and investment partners (see Table 3). During the past 3 years, the U.S. has had a negative trade balance with the EU as the U.S. imported more goods and services than exported.

This trend, however, is not new – neither in transatlantic relations nor in the U.S. trade: the U.S. has a trade deficit with four of the most important trade partners out of five. Since 2017, the U.S. president put great emphasis on the U.S. trade deficit. In terms of foreign investments, it was the U.S. that dominated transatlantic relations though. Nevertheless, during the Trump presidency, economic issues have become another topic that the U.S. president criticised and attempted to change in transatlantic relations. Trump has been hostile about multilateral economic relations and, as some experts named it (Schneider-Petsinger 2019), has brought instability into transatlantic economic relations.

**Table No. 3 - U.S. Trade in Goods and Services with Major Partners 2016-2018 (in millions of dollars)**

	2016		2017		2018	
	<i>U.S. Import</i>	<i>U.S. Export</i>	<i>U.S. Import</i>	<i>U.S. Export</i>	<i>U.S. Import</i>	<i>U.S. Export</i>
EU	598,597	506,085	630,271	529,092	688,401	573,776
China	479,264	170,395	523,492	186,288	558,772	177,969
Canada	314,230	321,678	338,494	341,308	360,876	364,515
Mexico	323,955	261,933	343,970	276,563	378,382	299,802
Japan	165,348	108,823	171,495	114,285	179,137	121,156
Rest of World	767,020	756,231	821,469	789,811	890,096	838,481

*Source:* Made by author, based on data from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Donald Trump named the EU a “foe” for “what they do to us in trade” (later he explained that he perceives the EU as a “competitor”). He also referred to the EU trade practices as “unfair” (“We’ve been treated very unfairly on trade”) and claimed that the EU was “taking advantage of us on trade”. Moreover, the administration has taken several steps to tailor the U.S. trade policy according to the president’s ideas. The Trump administration introduced steel and aluminium tariffs (on imports at rates of 25 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively) in March 2018. The U.S. has also challenged the EU retaliatory tariffs (for such iconic American products as Harley-Davidson motorcycles and bourbon whiskey) in WTO. Trump declared U.S. motor vehicle imports from the EU (and Japan) a national security threat and imposed tariffs. Kristin Archich (2019) suggests that new tensions might arise in the protracted U.S.-EU “Boeing-Airbus” cases in the WTO dispute settlement.

During the Trump presidency, there are other issues that might put transatlantic economic relations in danger: BREXIT, the Iran Nuclear deal, the Trump

administration's view on international trade architecture. From the Europeans' point of view, Trump's attitude towards BREXIT also puts transatlantic economic relations in jeopardy as BREXIT might potentially enforce fragmentation in the EU. Donald Trump has expressed his support for the UK's wish to leave the EU numerous times and implied that, after BREXIT, the U.S. would negotiate a bilateral trade agreement with the UK. While the U.S. abandoned the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for Iran in May 2018, the EU remained committed to the deal since the EU tried to shield European business companies operating in Iran. The Trump administration's statements and initiatives towards multilateral instruments in international economic domain indicate significant differences in perception of international economic architecture between the U.S. and EU. The Trump administration openly favours bilateralism (during his meeting with Angela Merkel in March 2017, Trump confessed that he had never heard of TTIP), and it has been blocking appointments to the WTO's Appellate Body; it also has withdrawn of support from the joint communiqué released at the end of the G7 summit in June 2018.

During the Trump presidency, the U.S. transatlantic economic policy seems different from the traditional ones. Since WWII, the U.S. trade policy sought to liberalise trade and encourage non-discriminatory economic relations. The Trump administration, however, gave priority to bilateral instead of multilateral economic relations and highlighted the "America First" principle in its trade policy. Although economic disagreements between the U.S. and EU is not a new trend in transatlantic relations, Trump's wish to rewrite the principles of the economic system, established in the international arena by the U.S. after WWII might have a negative effect on both – U.S. economic power and transatlantic relations – in the long run (the U.S. and EU tariffs are low on average, but they are high on some sensitive products). The EU has already been looking for new economic partners. Other U.S. competitors such as Japan, Canada, as well as the EU have been finalising trade liberalisation agreements: for instance, EU-Japan FTA, TPP-11.

### **3. Implications to the transatlantic alliance and Lithuania**

Once Donald Trump was elected to be the president of the United States, some politicians and foreign policy experts were sceptical about the future for transatlantic relations and Europe and called Western unity in question: they labelled potential implications of the Trump presidency as 'the end of Europe' (Kirchick, 2017), 'the end of Western liberalism' (Luce, 2017; Judis, 2016; Krastev, 2017). Lithuanian officials have been more reserved while expressing their opinions and expectations for the Trump presidency. Lithuania's president Dalia Grybauskaitė declared her support for Trump's demands about NATO members' 2% defence spending (LRT, 2018). Some Lithuanian political parties, the Homeland's Union that represents conservative ideas, have been optimistic about the U.S.-Lithuanian relations during the Trump presidency (see Žygimantas Pavilionis' remarks), since the U.S. Republican party in Lithuania usually is associated with hard power usage and attention to Europe and NATO (that coincides with Lithuania's interests).

The Trump presidency seems to be weakening the U.S. and NATO's credibility

and has been raising a question of whether transatlantic countries can trust NATO article 5. As a result of a power vacuum that the Trump presidency has been creating, the EU tried to use its initiatives to fill it in (CSDP, PESCO) and to maintain multilateralism in the international arena. The U.S. administration at that point voiced concerns about PESCO and the potential duplication of NATO. Moreover, in the economic domain, the EU has been looking for new trade partners. In the words of John Peterson (Peterson, 2018), both parties in transatlantic relations at the moment are facing a dilemma whether to strengthen this alliance or to give priority to new partnerships.

On the other hand, despite the heavy turbulence in the political discourse of transatlantic countries' leaders, the architecture of transatlantic relations remains solid enough: the main "channels" of transatlantic relations have not lost any of their members (including the U.S.) (NATO, G7, EU-US) and continue to function. NATO has been constantly declared as the main pillar for the transatlantic security domain by transatlantic countries. The U.S., the main financial contributor to the NATO budget, has not withdrawn from the alliance. Moreover, various U.S. institutions – the State Department, Defense Department, U.S. Congress - (with an occasional exception of the U.S. president) have reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to Europe's defence. The Trump administration itself requested bigger financing for EDI and returned the number of U.S. forces deployed in Europe to its initial level. G7 continued to function as well; the U.S. and the EU remained each other's most important trade partners. Thus, after more than half of Trump's presidency it seems that initial predictions for transatlantic relations have been too dark.

In terms of Lithuania, the dynamics of the U.S. officials' public discourse has been dangerous for Lithuania as it perceives the U.S., together with NATO, as its main security guarantor. However, the continuity of transatlantic policy on a practical level during the Trump presidency has been beneficial for the country: the Trump administration's reliance on hard policy instruments, the emphasis of military instruments in its security policy, the increase of the military budget (for EDI as well). Although Lithuania's president Dalia Grybauskaitė has not received an opportunity for a bilateral official visit to the U.S., Lithuania could still portray itself as a faithful ally that respects its commitments (as for 2% of the GDP for defence).

The Trump presidency also raised some issues for Europeans to consider. First, the type of power play between the U.S. and European countries within transatlantic relations, especially in NATO, and the role of the EU in the transatlantic security domain. So far, it looks as if the EU has a serious problem to solve in case it attempts to play a bigger role in transatlantic relations: the EU lacks the ability to act decisively when there is no support/push from the outside (from the U.S., for instance). Nonetheless, there have been some steps made towards this direction: for instance, the EU response at Trump's decision to leave the Iran deal.

Second, the Trump presidency indicates that the U.S. interests in Europe should not be taken for granted. Europeans, most likely, should not wait until Donald Trump is replaced by another U.S. president, since it seems that Trump's foreign and security policy remarks and initiatives are the symptoms but not the reason for disagreements in transatlantic relations. Europeans will have to find the best way

to keep Americans' attention to Europe. In the U.S. foreign policy history, several administrations seemed to have had higher priorities than Europe: the Clinton administration, the Obama administration (first term). Thus, the Trump presidency is not an exception. Europeans might examine several options: contribution to issues that the U.S. finds important – mostly hard security issues: cybersecurity, conflict management operations in the Middle East, coping with terrorism. Sufficient defence spending and meeting financial obligations to NATO is an option and the base for effective transatlantic relations as well. In the future, more issues will likely arise in transatlantic relations: such as with China and Russia.

For Lithuania, as for Europe as well, the Trump presidency indicated once again that small states should make a lot of efforts to show their value for great powers instead of bandwagoning. In case of Lithuania, the trend of increasing the defence spending, an active role in NATO's military activities should continue regardless of who is the president of the U.S. It is likely that in the future Lithuania will also have to be prepared to make certain choices about its foreign policy towards China and the perception of the EU as a strong actor in the international arena. Lithuania will have to find a way to navigate between the U.S. current economic conflict with China and the EU economic interests in this country, as well as between the EU initiatives to strengthen its defence capabilities and the U.S. wish to avoid duplication of NATO and EU functions.

Eventually, the figure of the U.S. president is not the only variable that determines transatlantic relations. The future of transatlantic relations eventually might depend on several factors: sharing/not sharing a common threat perception; obstacles to true European strategic autonomy (+ the ability to develop its deterrence capabilities, including nuclear); leadership of the U.S.); ability to adapt to internal and external pressures (Sheer, 2019). Moreover, the outcome of the U.S. foreign and security policy is often a product of the checks and balances system. Thus, even with a politician who is sceptical about the need for NATO and European allies in the U.S. presidential office, the Washington foreign policy establishment might change the final foreign policy outcome (as happened with Trump's statements about the withdrawal from NATO that was followed by several Congressional resolutions).

Overall, the Trump presidency's implications to Europe and Lithuania do not exactly fit into the framework of "much ado about nothing". On one hand, the Trump presidency brought uneasiness in transatlantic relations. However, there is a pattern of transatlantic cooperation even during crises in relations. On the other hand, in addition to causing tensions in transatlantic relations, the Trump presidency might serve as a catalyst for stronger Europeans' role in transatlantic relations.

## Conclusions

The Trump presidency is not a turning point in transatlantic relations: despite the U.S. president's public discourse and attempts, so far the Trump administration has not made extraordinary changes on both sides of the Atlantic. The Trump administration's transatlantic policy resulted in tensions in transatlantic relations



and “inspired” initiatives of the EU to strengthen its own defence capabilities but has not changed transatlantic relations’ architecture. Security domain has been the strongest pillars of transatlantic dimensions, as well as NATO as a channel of transatlantic relations (since it has been the main tool for the U.S. to maintain domination in Europe). Moreover, the Trump administration’s transatlantic policy is not a new trend in transatlantic history. Ever since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has been looking for a new vision about the EU’s role in its foreign policy and has created fluctuations in the U.S. foreign policy towards economic and other dimensions in transatlantic relations as a result. It seems that the U.S. is still adjusting to the growing power of the EU as an actor in international relations.

Problems in transatlantic relations are generated by the ambiguity in the vision about the future of transatlantic relations. The U.S. and Europeans do not have a clear vision about each other’s role in transatlantic relations that results in tensions. This reflects in the EU’s indecision about its defence capabilities strengthening and fluctuations in the U.S. decisions on how much flexibility and independence the U.S. is ready to give to the EU. In the future, the presence of a defined vision about the U.S. and EU role in international relations and transatlantic relations would help to avoid crises.

In the case of Lithuania, the country had a clear vision of transatlantic relations since its independence: transatlantic relations should be dominated by the U.S. to gain the most benefit for its foreign and security policy. Lithuania’s foreign and security policy interests have always been to keep Americans both in Europe and in the Baltic States. Lithuania should promote the vision of the strong U.S. role in Europe and transatlantic relations and continue to be a valuable U.S. partner. This could be achieved by being an active participant in collective defence measures and expeditionary forces within NATO, demonstrating openness to the U.S. agenda and making sufficient financial contributions (2 per cent of the GDP) for defence. At the same time, Lithuania should not pull out of the EU initiatives in foreign policy and security domain if they do not duplicate and contradict NATO activities.

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## 4.

# THE NEW UNITED STATES DEFENCE STRATEGY: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE BALTIC STATES

Vaidotas Urbelis\*

### Introduction

Since the end of the World War II, Europe has played a major role in the U.S. defence policy. European countries have been the most trusted U.S. allies and trading partners, they shared the same common values and interests. NATO, by far the most successful global defence alliance, has bound Europe to North America. The U.S. leadership was the key to the success of NATO Alliance.

During the Cold War, NATO guaranteed that, if necessary, the U.S. would exert all its military power to halt the aggression of the Soviet Union. The U.S. deployed thousands of troops and reinforced the stability of deterrence by stationing nuclear weapons in Europe. The U.S. forces were kept in high readiness, and defence plans allowed for an immediate response to any sign of aggression. Europe was the central part of the containment policy, although constant conflicts were a commonplace in almost every part of the world, i.e. Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, Syria, Yemen, or Angola. Europe was not merely the only one but the most important part of the U.S. defence strategy.

When the Cold War ended, the global role of the U.S. has changed dramatically. The hyperpower, as it was affectionately called by French President Francois Mitterrand, dominated all continents and all domains of power. Russia became a U.S. partner as the U.S. expected it to become a democratic state with a functioning market economy. Trade with China was growing as did the U.S. investment in the Chinese economy. Free markets, democracy, the rule of law and human freedoms dominated the vocabulary of the U.S. foreign policy. There was no longer a military power in the world that could challenge the peace and prosperity. The U.S. defence expenditures declined and the number of the U.S. troops in Europe decreased. Even the first wave of NATO enlargement in 1997 did not cause much debate on the defensibility of new members. Nobody saw a need to enhance the American presence in Europe to ensure credible deterrence.

The second wave of NATO enlargement took place against the backdrop of the fight against terrorism. Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the U.S. defence strategy focused on the destruction of terrorist hotspots, development of lighter and more mobile forces and reconstruction operations. The remaining U.S. forces in Europe were not planned for conventional warfare. They were constantly involved in operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and other

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parts of the world. Europe became a place for training and rehabilitation, not a potential war zone. During the debate on NATO enlargement to the Baltic states, the issue of defensiveness was raised only randomly and several related studies were rather superficial. The visibility of NATO in the Baltic states was limited to the air policing mission, which is essentially a peacetime mission.

The Russian-Georgian war did not compel the U.S. and Europe to revise NATO's defence strategy and the strategic period of slumber continued. Although NATO approved the defence plans of the Baltic states, they were not detailed and had never been properly exercised. The U.S. capacity in Europe was reduced to two Army brigades. In 2011, Obama announced the U.S. rebalance to Asia, which was widely understood as "turning away from Europe".

Europe was a place from where the U.S. could project power but not a conflict zone. The U.S. Army V Corps was officially inactivated in 2013, and the U.S. Army Europe lost the ability to command a large land operation. In 2013, the last American tanks left Europe, the U.S. forces had virtually no air defence capability, long-range artillery, there were fewer ship visits and exercises. The U.S. was no longer able to fight a large conventional war in Europe. Diminishing footprints of the U.S. forces in Europe reflected a broader trend: from 2010 onwards the U.S. defence budget stagnated with significant reductions in the period of 2011-2013. The readiness of the U.S. military was plummeting, stocks were declining, personnel numbers were decreasing and readiness level was deteriorating.

Other countries, including Russia and China, quickly took advantage of the U.S. strategic retreat and weakness. As the Russian and Chinese military readiness was growing, the countries began challenging the U.S. in important areas, such as cyberspace and freedom of navigation rights. The U.S. technological superiority has also diminished in such areas as artificial intelligence and hypersonic weapons. The Russian and Chinese aggressive actions and increased ambitions have forced the U.S. to change its attitude towards current threats and reconsider its security and defence strategy.

The changes in the U.S. defence policy and its relations with Russia and China have a direct impact on the security of the Baltic states as the U.S. is a guarantor of the Baltic security and they are bound by collective defence obligations. Following the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Baltic states began demanding a greater U.S. visibility and footprint in the region to deter Russia. Their expectations were met with understanding albeit not always were materialized. The Baltic states are only a small part of the U.S. global policy; therefore, their expectations are not always in line with Washington's broader strategy.

This article aims to show how the Baltic countries fit into the constantly changing U.S. defence strategy, their role in its implementation and the main challenges and opportunities of defence cooperation with the U.S.

## **1. Revolution in the U.S. Mindset**

Russia's aggression against Ukraine in February 2014 has dramatically changed the U.S. approach to the European security and defence. The U.S. politicians have

ceased to think that war in Europe is no longer impossible, or that Russia remains a strategic partner in addressing global problems. Russia challenged the Pax Americana by violating the basic principles of international law and using military power against her neighbours and supporting countries such as Iran. Russia's attempts to interfere with the U.S. elections have further exacerbated a negative sentiment towards this country. Russia might be a declining power but its adventurist practices and militant behaviour poses a direct threat to the interests of the U.S.

China's growing power and investment in new technologies have begun to challenge the U.S. technological superiority in Asia and beyond. The U.S. has been outraged by China's unfair trade policies and intellectual property thefts. China's attempts to use military power in the South China Sea have led U.S. politicians to view the country as a competitor or even as a potential adversary. The U.S. politicians have reached an overwhelming consensus that China will remain a long-term technological and military threat to America, the importance of which will only grow over time.

The new U.S. strategy had to reflect these new realities and revise strategic priorities. The U.S. has recognized that the main threat to its security is no longer terrorism, it is Russia and China, and a military conflict with them is no longer impossible. This change did not happen overnight and was publicly announced in the National Security Strategy in 2017 and enshrined in the National Defence Strategy in 2018.

The U.S. strategies declare that the world has become a more dangerous place with threats posed by Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, terrorism and cyber-attacks. As the number of threats has increased, the U.S. resources to respond to them have remained the same. The U.S. cannot fix the world alone, it needs to reduce its commitments and expect for greater contributions from its allies. The U.S. President Donald Trump has clearly abandoned the role of the world policeman and in his speech on the new strategy in Afghanistan has moved away from the liberal world agenda adopted by previous administrations: "But we will no longer use American military might to construct democracies in faraway lands, or try to rebuild other countries in our own image." (Trump, 2017). This change was not a revolution, it has long been maturing in the U.S. policy circles, including the last years of the former U.S. President Barack Obama's administration.

Most of the U.S. security community, including the majority of the Democrats, have welcomed a new understanding of the U.S. strategic priorities and threats but have emphasized that the strategy must be backed by adequate resources. The U.S. policy to deter two near-peer competitors and simultaneously manage regional conflicts, e.g. with North Korea and Iran, to fight against terrorism and to restore and maintain freedom of navigation requires tremendous efforts. The U.S. defence doctrine has shifted from a possibility of simultaneously prevailing in two major joint operations to a more modest option of "defeating aggression by a major power and deterring opportunistic aggression elsewhere" (Department of Defense, 2018).

By presenting a new defence strategy, former U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis noted that the U.S. military power is no longer sufficient to face new challenges:



“Our military remains capable, but our competitive edge has eroded in every domain of warfare – air, land, sea, space, and cyber. The combination of rapidly changing technology, the negative impact on military readiness resulting from the longest continuous period of combat in our Nation’s history, and a prolonged period of unpredictable and insufficient funding, created an overstretched and under-resourced military.” (Mattis, Remarks by Secretary Mattis on the National Defense Strategy, 2018).

In response to the complex and demanding threats, the U.S. has begun a military build-up by increasing the size of military forces and making additional investments. The U.S. defence budget has increased significantly in 2018 exceeding 700 billion dollars. Despite the large investments, it will take some time to correct the years of underfunding and address the U.S. military shortage of ammunition, training, people and infrastructure. The U.S. must not only rebuild its forces in Europe, but also prepare for war in Korea and Persian Gulf and maintain stability in the Middle East.

A potential conflict with China and Russia means a war against technologically advanced adversaries, this requires a completely new approach to war-fighting. The U.S. has had a technological edge in recent decades when it came to fighting and defeating terrorists or insurgents. China and Russia are different as they can disrupt communications, shoot down satellites and drones, turn off GPS, cut submarine cables, and attack with cyber weapons; therefore, the U.S. must be ready to fight without GPS signals or direct data transmission. Former National Security Advisor Nadia Schadlow has stated that we are back in the age where not only technological advancement but the size of forces becomes important again (Schadlow, 2018). Countries like Russia could exploit the U.S. dependence on technology making the defence of the Baltic states an extremely demanding task.

The U.S. is heavily investing in technologies that can provide advantages against near-peer adversaries. These technologies include stealth, jamming, unmanned vehicles, advanced air and missile defence and offensive cyber capabilities. The U.S. has introduced a concept of multi-domain operation which integrates all the elements of military power. The U.S. Army structure is changing. Light brigades designed to fight rebels or low-tech adversaries are transformed into heavy mechanized brigades, the number of tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and long range artillery is growing. The U.S. military is growing in size, although the number of Army combat brigades is still insufficient to rotate freely in Europe, Korea or Kuwait as only one additional brigade was added to the force structure. New investments will focus on increasing readiness and deploying full divisions and even corps as opposed to the brigade combat teams.

In order to reduce the burden for regular Army units, the U.S. established the Security Force Assistance Brigades. They can be rapidly deployed for training and combat advisory mission, like the one in Georgia. This concept should free up Army resources to prepare for near-peer threats, including Europe.

The U.S. military build-up does not mean that the U.S. could win anywhere, anytime, and against any opponent. While the U.S. military superiority was



declining, Russia and China significantly boosted their defence spending by modernizing their military capabilities. Furthermore, in the event of war in Asia or Europe, the U.S. would fight “away game”, far away from home and logistical support facilities, whereas for Russia and China it would be a “home game”. Geography matters, and it is not always favourable to Americans.

The National Defence Commission Report mandated by the U.S. Congress come to an unsettling conclusion that there is no guarantee that the U.S. will win every war, it may even lose under adverse circumstances (National Defence Strategy Commission, 2018). The report criticizes the lack of clarity on how the U.S. would operate in the A2/AD environment near the Russian-Chinese border. Such uncertainty could provide the U.S. adversaries with an opportunity to occupy a territory and then threaten with nuclear weapons, thus further increasing the “liberation operation costs” thus forcing the U.S. to engage in a “devastating general war”, a war that everyone wants to avoid. The report frequently mentions the Baltic scenario. It concludes that in the event of war with Russia, the U.S. would have a great difficulty in overcoming Russian A2/AD capabilities. This could significantly slow down the movement of forces for the defence of the Baltic states.

## **2. Europe and the Baltic States in the New U.S. Defence Strategy**

Since the end of the World War II, Europe has been part of the U.S. strategy of containment. Europe has enjoyed robust American security guarantees; European integration and economic prosperity was built upon the U.S. commitment to Europe. The Pax Americana guaranteed free trade, rules based on world order and stable financial markets. Europe greatly benefited from this arrangement. The end of the Cold War did not shatter this vision, it was even strengthened by allowing the European countries to reduce their defence budgets, increase welfare and further promote European integration.

Concentration and modernization of Russia’s military capabilities in the Western Military District and aggression in Georgia in 2008 did not change the European threat perception. It was only after the Russian aggression in Ukraine that the European NATO allies took their first but still modest steps to increase defence expenditures (additional 100 billion euros for defence).

Europe is and will remain for a long time a U.S. military protectorate, a territory entirely dependent on the U.S. security guarantees. This feeling of dependence is strengthening as one moves closer to Russia’s borders. It is most clearly noticeable in the NATO’s Eastern flank, however, even the countries such as France or Great Britain admit their dependence on the U.S. military capabilities, particularly in the areas such as intelligence, strategic transportation and missile defence. Despite its political ambitions, Europe remains part of the Pax Americana.

For Americans, Europe and NATO remain the cornerstone of the U.S. defence strategy. The National Security Strategy emphasizes that the European allies and partners increase strategic reach and provide access to forward basing overflight rights for global operations (National Security Strategy, 2017, p. 48). NATO is a key framework for keeping the U.S. leadership, and with Great Britain’s withdrawal

from the European Union, the role of NATO has become even more relevant. The U.S. commitment to Europe does not take away the European responsibility to contribute to common defence. President Trump does not shy away from fierce criticism of NATO and some Alliance members for the lack of defence funding, unfair trade and gas purchases from Russia. Nevertheless, support for NATO and European defence remains strong as NATO is unanimously supported by the Republicans, Democrats and the whole U.S. security community.

The U.S. Defence Strategy sees NATO and European allies as countries able and willing to fight along the Americans in other parts of the world: "Our allies and partners provide complementary capabilities and forces along with unique perspectives, regional relationships, and information...". The former U.S. Secretary of Defence James Mattis' favourite quote comes from Winston Churchill: "There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them". The U.S. retains the ability to act alone, if needed, but the allied support is greatly valued.

The U.S. expects European countries to take more responsibility for global stability, thereby reducing the U.S. costs for such engagements. European countries have made significant contributions to the international fight against terrorism, particularly in Afghanistan. Many European countries participated in the operation in Iraq, some went into Syria. Europeans were in lead of the NATO operation in Libya. The U.S. strongly supported French interventions in Central Africa by providing French with intelligence and logistics. In the era of the great power competition, the U.S. needs more support from Europe vis-à-vis China, ensuring freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

The U.S. dominance in the world, the area of the great power competition, does not come cheap, it places a huge burden on the U.S. taxpayers. If such a policy is to be maintained, the U.S. leadership must be cost-effective with European countries and other allies taking greater responsibility for their security. Europeans must act more decisively in the NATO's Eastern flank, increase commitment to stability in Africa and the Middle East, modernize their forces and invest in new technologies or purchase of American military equipment. Leadership comes at a price; the U.S. wants to share its costs more fairly with European countries.

It is unacceptable for the Americans that European countries retain welfare states, while Americans pay 4% of the GDP for defence. Such an unfair burden sharing has become a motto of the Trump's administration policy causing negative sentiments in some European countries accustomed to living at the expense of the American taxpayers. The U.S. politicians do not understand why when facing the Russian threat, Europeans are slow to react and deploy more forces to the NATO's Eastern flank. Germany has become the main target of Trump's annoyance.

The U.S. has always been pressing Europeans for a stronger involvement in NATO's deterrence posture in the Eastern flank. Germany and Great Britain were warmly welcomed for taking over the responsibility for leading the NATO battle groups in the Baltic states unlike Spain, Italy or France that were reluctant to make such commitment. Also, the U.S. appreciated that most European countries have

joined NATO's air policing mission in the Baltic states, but does not understand why knowing the lack of air defence capabilities in the Baltics only the U.S. has to deploy Patriot missiles for training when Germany, the Netherlands, Spain or Greece have not contributed so far.

The U.S. approach to Lithuania and other Baltic states is a reflection of its global and European strategy. The U.S. guarantees security for the Baltic states, but Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia must do their homework and share the burden, i.e. strengthen the military, invest in new technologies and make efforts to combat terrorism. The U.S. wants a fair deal from the Baltic nations benefiting both sides, free riding is not part of this approach. The uniqueness and complex geography of the Baltic states do not relieve them from their responsibility for self-defence. Richard Hooker's message to the Baltic countries is simple: similar-sized Israel has a dozen times more troops, conscripts serve two years and the defence budget exceeds 5% of the GDP. "If the Baltic countries feel insecure, why not to follow the Israel's example?" he asks (Hooker, 2019, p. 14).

In the U.S. strategy, the defence of Lithuania, like other Baltic states, is based on the viability of the NATO organization and its ability to defend its members. Theoretically, the U.S. could provide bilateral security guarantees to Poland or the Baltic states, but because of the geographical location, their defence requires the involvement of the Allies. German, Belgian and Dutch ports and railways, Norwegian and British fleets and French rapid response forces can be best utilized under NATO's framework. Therefore, the U.S. looks to the defence of the Baltic states primarily through NATO and coordinates its plans accordingly.

NATO's area of responsibility covers a vast area from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea and beyond. The U.S. has no separate defence strategy for the Baltic states, they are part of a common defence effort and a common approach for the defence of Europe. The U.S. does not create or maintain separate forces solely for the defence of the Baltic region. A well-trained U.S. Army brigade combat team must be able to fight everywhere, i.e. in the Baltic region, Norway, the Balkans, and even in the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula.

The Baltic countries are just a small part of a bigger puzzle, therefore, they have to be very aware of it and plan accordingly. This might be not a satisfactory answer to the Baltic defence planners who want to know in advance what forces the U.S. would assign to the Baltic defence, when they will be deployed and where they would come from. The U.S. has a different approach towards defence planning, it wants to retain planning flexibility and unpredictability in dealing with near-peer competitors. For this reason, the U.S. maintains and updates contingency plans and tests them during exercises, however, the response depends on regional and global circumstances. Flexibility must be maintained in order to deter all potential adversaries.

### **3. Layered Defence**

Even with increasing defence budgets, the U.S. resources in Europe and Asia remain limited. The U.S. simply does not have sufficient military units to deploy and sustain in every possible area of confrontation. The authors of the U.S. Defence

Strategy decided to solve this dilemma by making the U.S. forces more agile and less predictable, thus preventing a potential adversary from anticipating what steps the U.S. might take during a particular crisis or even in the peacetime. It is called Dynamic Force Employment model.

For Russia and China, this means uncertainty about where and when the U.S. forces would deploy. There may be two aircraft carrier groups in the Indian Ocean in April and none in June. A Special Forces team may suddenly be deployed to the Baltic region and then leave for the Balkans next month. One week a Patriot surface-to-air missile system may be in Turkey and the next one it may be moved to Norway. The word *dynamic* is fundamental here as speed and unpredictability are essential features of the U.S. strategy. The U.S. forces must become more flexible even if such flexibility may not please those allies who want a permanent presence of the U.S. military.

The Dynamic Force Employment explains why there are not many regular U.S. forces in the Baltic states. The answer lies in the strategy: a Dynamic Force Employment does not tie the U.S. forces to any particular geographic region making it harder for Russia to predict a possible U.S. response. The interests and commitments of the U.S. are global, and a crisis can arise anywhere, therefore, such flexibility is very logical from the U.S. point of view. For the Baltic defence planners such American strategy creates difficult dilemmas, as they have great difficulties to prepare for a possible U.S. reinforcement or any other deployment to the region. Also, such advanced knowledge is of particular importance in the event of a rapid Russian conventional attack.

The Dynamic Force Employment model goes in parallel with the Global Operating Model describing how the U.S. forces will be postured and employed to accomplish its competition. In his presentation of the U.S. Defence Strategy, former U.S. Secretary of Defence James Mattis said that the U.S. needed “a flexible global posture... that combines combat-credible forward forces competing below the level of armed conflict with flexible theatre forces and surge forces that are able to deter attacks, blunt adversary attacks, and bring decisive force to bear” (Mattis, House Armed Services Committee, Written Statement, 2018).

The Global Operating Model consist of several overlapping layers. First, the surge layer that guarantees the flow of forces to win a war and the defence of the U.S. homeland against an external attack. Second, the blunt layer aimed at delaying and denying aggression; it consists of forces near a conflict zone, e.g. in Germany or the Netherlands. Third, the contact layer enables the U.S. to fight below the level of the armed conflict and guarantees a rapid response in a potential conflict zone, e.g. in the Baltic states.

The majority of the U.S. military is based on the continental U.S. (CONUS) and constitute a core of the surge layer. The CONUS-based forces assure a global reach of the U.S. military and ability to project power to other parts of the world. Of the thirty-one U.S. Army brigade combat teams (ABCT), only three are permanently stationed outside the U.S., i.e. in Italy, Germany and South Korea. The CONUS-based forces could be deployed to any part of the world, but defending Europe requires them to be transported across the Atlantic, debarked at sea and airports

and transported further to the area of a potential conflict. This huge logistics enterprise requires time, at least several weeks. European ports, railways and storage facilities must be capable of transporting huge amounts of armament, whereas legal procedures must guarantee uninterrupted flow of equipment and personnel in Europe.

Not all the U.S. capabilities need to be on the battlefield to effect the course of the battle. The U.S. aircraft carrier group may attack targets in the area of the Baltic states from the North Atlantic; it was tested during NATO Trident Juncture exercise in 2018. The U.S. Air Force and Navy can operate even from their basis in CONUS. The Air Force can use bomber aircraft stationed in Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri to strike targets on other continents. Such capabilities can significantly affect the balance of power on the battlefield.

For direct impact on the ground, the U.S. Defense Strategy emphasizes the importance of the blunt layer. The forces assigned to this layer must be combat-credible and kept in a high state of readiness with all enablers and supporting infrastructure (Blume, 2018). For the defence of the Baltic states, the U.S. units deployed in Europe are part of the blunt layer.

Over the past year, the U.S. has dramatically increased the number of troops deployed in Europe. In addition to two brigades stationed in Italy and Germany, the U.S. added artillery and combat aviation units and prepositioned stocks under the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI). In Poland, the U.S. deployed a rotational armoured brigade combat team, NATO battle group close to the Lithuanian border and prepositioned heavy brigade set of equipment. These forces form the “iron fist” of the U.S. combat power in Europe which can be quickly deployed to the Baltic region or anywhere in Europe. Reactivated V Corps Headquarters would provide a command and control capability for the European battlefield. The U.S. has also strengthened antisubmarine warfare capabilities in the North Atlantic to fight Russian attempts to threaten reinforcement of Europe by sea.

The U.S. military, especially the U.S. Army, has not enough resources to deploy military units to every part of the world and Europe cannot change local balance of forces in the U.S. favour. The U.S. has not enough army brigades to tie to every possible contingency, while Norway, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria cannot expect to host ABCDs on permanent basis even if they provide an excellent host nation support.

The U.S. defence strategy is not based on permanent presence, it focuses on flexibility, unpredictability, rapid deployment and reinforcement. The U.S. forces in Germany, Poland, Italy or continental America should be at high readiness prepared to reinforce contact layer forces or to be deployed to any other place to dissuade the aggressor.

As for the Baltic scenario, the biggest threat to this strategy of defence via reinforcement is Russian A2/AD capabilities in the Kaliningrad region, which provides Russia with capabilities to threaten the reinforcement and movement of NATO forces.

For almost three decades after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. was fighting



wars having supremacy in the sea and air; ground-based air defence capabilities were neglected and fighter aircrafts were seen as universal weapons. In the era of the great power competition, the U.S. superiority in the air and sea cannot be taken for granted. Ground-based air defence, antisubmarine warfare capabilities, electronic warfare, and missile defence must receive additional focus and funding. These capabilities are essential to the defence of the Baltic states considering that Russia's main modernization efforts are Western-oriented.

The surge and blunt layers are useless without forces on the ground. Certain capabilities must be permanently deployed beforehand in order to rapidly engage enemy forces and provide time to mobilize the surge and blunt forces. Forward-deployed forces are the first responders, these capabilities ensure early warning, reception of reinforcement, intelligence and surveillance. They must be able to act below the level of the armed conflict. These forces do not necessarily need to be full-spectrum ready, but they do need to remain focused on the competition, vice assurance or engagement (Blume, 2018). These are intelligence assets, cyber defence, logistic support forces, unmanned aerial vehicles, special operations forces, i.e. military units able to respond to aggression in a manner of hours. Although the contact layer may not be sufficient to counter Russian aggression, it is "the nerve cells" that enable full-scale response in the event of a military crisis.

#### **4. Lithuania and the Defence of the Baltic Region**

The Article 5 of the NATO Treaty is guaranteed by NATO and the U.S. defence plans. The American defence community and military planners are confident about the defence of the Baltic states. Until the Russian aggression against Georgia and Ukraine, defence planning for the Baltics was not the first priority for the European Command (EUCOM) or Pentagon. The strategic breakthrough in 2014 has changed the situation. Until 2014, the Baltic defence planning was considered merely as an assurance measure, however, since 2014, the issue has been taken extremely seriously.

In the summer of 2014, the U.S. launched the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI). Immediately after the Russian aggression in Ukraine, the U.S. deployed three light infantry companies to the Baltic states and strengthen NATO air policing mission by deploying ten fighter jets to Lithuania under the auspices of the ERI. Although the three infantry companies were a symbolic gesture in military terms, they did send a clear signal to Russia about the commitment of the U.S. to the defence of the Baltic states.

The policy of reassurance had significant limitations, something that the U.S. planners quickly realized after evaluating various options for a military conflict in the region. The U.S. military started to develop detailed plans, conduct realistic exercises and prepare for the worst-case scenario in the region. Following the deployment of NATO battle groups and Poland, the U.S. withdrew the infantry companies from the Baltic states. Although it caused a great deal of resentment in the Baltic capitals, the U.S. officials were sticking to their plans to fights in brigades and divisions instead of infantry companies of one hundred troops. The



introduction of the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) manifested a change in the U.S. strategy: from reassurance to deterrence, from dispersed forces to larger fighting formations.

During the development of the new national security and defence strategies, the defence of the Baltic states was discussed in great detail and excellently evidenced by the testimony of Elbridge Colby, one of the leading authors of the U.S. defence strategy. He claimed that for the U.S. defence planners, rapid and unexpected attack was “the most severely challenging of the theories of victory the Chinese or Russians could employ – especially against Taiwan in the Pacific or the Baltics and Eastern Poland in Europe” (Colby, 2019). The defence of these most exposed regions has become a major headache for the U.S. defence planners.

Following the adoption of the new strategy, the U.S. has started testing more realistic plans on how to defend the Baltic states. Simply waving the flag during peacekeeping exercises was no longer considered a valuable option against the aggressive near-peer competitor. In his memoirs, former U.S. Secretary of Defence Ash Carter made clear that in 2015 he approved the “creation of the first new war plan for responding to a Russian attack in twenty-five years” (Carter, 2019, p. 263). The details of the defence plans will remain secret, however, it is safe to assume that the U.S. threat assessment is similar to the reports released by the Lithuanian intelligence services – an unexpected and rapid attack is the most dangerous scenario for the security of the Baltic states.

According to Elbridge Colby, the National Defence Strategy “calls for a substantial increase in investment for European posture designed to quickly and materially address the imbalance in military power on NATO’s Eastern flank and improve the Alliance’s ability to defeat a Russian fait accompli strategy” (Colby, 2019). The time and space dilemma poses the biggest challenge to the military planners. Deterrence and defence by reinforcement can work only if NATO is able to overcome Russian A2/AD challenge in a matter of days. Combined military power of the Baltic states, NATO EFP or small U.S. Special Forces’ detachments are not able to outweigh Russia’s advantage of conventional forces. In the early stages of a conflict, for at least the first month and possibly for a good deal longer, NATO “would find itself outnumbered, outranged and outgunned” (*The Economist*, March 8, 2019).

Rich Hooker is straightforward: “the defence of NATO’s Eastern flank may be one of the most pressing national security issues of our time”, but by setting the theatre, strengthening in-place forces and improving the timeliness and quality of reinforcing forces, the Baltic defence dilemma could be solved (Hooker, 2019, p. 36). The Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian military forces strengthened by their allies must be able to withstand the aggression for a sufficient period of time to allow for reinforcements to come. Such an approach is best explained through the concept of layered defence.

Strength and reliability of the contact layer is critical. Lithuania and its neighbours must be able to deal themselves with local crises, especially with those below the level of the armed conflict. This reasoning is based on two arguments. First, geographical location of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia is best to deal with

disturbances, unrest or provocations at home. They know their people and possible provocateurs or groups supported by the Russian special services. Second, deploying large-scale military units could be ineffective in a non-yet-military crisis. Intelligence services of the Baltic states must be able to identify, detain and neutralize hostile foreign agents.

In the event of a military crisis, the Lithuanian Armed Forces, intelligence services, police and other institutions have a key role to play in dissuading aggression or, if deterrence fails, slowing down the advancing enemy forces. The U.S. and other NATO countries would support the Baltic states by conducting special operations, providing intelligence and reconnaissance, attacking ground targets, assuring air superiority or launching cyber-attacks. Strengthened by NATO EFP, the U.S. Special Forces and the Baltic states in cooperation with Poland must be able to withstand the first wave of aggression. The objective is pretty straightforward: to prevent a complete *fait accompli* scenario by denying the control of the Lithuanian territory.

The research of the RAND Corporation on wargaming indicated that the force of seven brigades, including three heavy armoured brigades – adequately supported by air power, land-based fires, and other enablers on the ground and ready to fight at the onset of hostilities – could suffice to prevent the rapid overrun of the Baltic states (David Shlapak, Michael Johnson, 2016).

The conclusion of the RAND study was widely quoted and well received by NATO military planners. Based on the RAND wargaming, Rich Hooker recommended that “a reasonable goal is for Estonia and Latvia to expand from a light brigade to a small heavy division [...] composed of a headquarters, two manoeuvre brigades, and enablers such as a general support field artillery battalion and air defence, engineer, logistics and signal battalions – about 10,000 soldiers. Lithuania, with its larger population, can field a full division with three brigades (about 12,000 soldiers)” (Hooker, 2019, p. 14). The Baltic states are already moving in this direction. The Lithuanian Land Forces Headquarters has started to develop a division-level command and control (C2) capability, while Latvia and Estonia assisted by Denmark are creating Multinational Division North.

In case of a major military conflict, the military units deployed to Europe, part of the blunt layer, would be used. Currently, the U.S. can assemble a division-size unit with enablers and logistical support using forces stationed or rotated within Europe in a manner of weeks. It is difficult to predict where and when these forces would be used, however, the operational surprise must be maintained within the European theatre and beyond. The U.S. may choose a variety of targets to strike on the aggressors’ territory, thus the Baltic defence would benefit from the disruption of enemies’ supplies, crackdown of its C2 structure or the need to reinforce other critical spots. The defence of the Baltics is not confined to the Baltic states’ territory only; this view is widely shared by defence planners.

The strategy of deterrence by reinforcement suffers from many critical shortcomings. First, in times of crisis, politicians often refrain from making difficult decisions, therefore, transferring forces to a crisis region could be seen as a provocative action and politicians might consider refraining from such a

decision. This could be mitigated by frequent and continuous exercise circle, which would make the U.S. exercises in the Baltics “business as usual” and guarantee a semi-permanent presence of the U.S. forces in the region. The Dynamic Force Employment Model offers such flexibility, but even exercises under such an umbrella would require a separate political decision by the Secretary of Defence in close coordination with the White House.

The second challenge comes from the Russian concept of active defence and A2/AD capabilities. General Valery Gerasimov, Russia’s Chief of General Staff stated: “we must act quickly so as to pre-empt the enemy with our preventive measures, promptly identify his vulnerabilities, and create threats of unacceptable damage to it.” (Kofman, 2019). Russia would deny freedom of action by challenging NATO’s ability to control the air and sea, including the use of anti-ship and anti-aircraft assets deployed to Kaliningrad A2/AD bubble. In response to that, the U.S. strategy must assume that the U.S. could be engaged in war without dominance in the air or sea, otherwise its forces will arrive too late (Colby, 2019).

Air support would not necessarily be available, as previously assumed, in the opening days of a conflict (Jacobson, 2019). Preventing *fait accompli* could be accomplished by developing capabilities that would enable the blunt layer to overcome Russian A2/AD challenge. The U.S., NATO and local forces must learn how to operate in the contested air and maritime space environment, thus preventing the most dangerous scenario, i.e. Russia occupying the majority of the Baltic states’ territory and offering negotiations using threat of nuclear weapons.

Finally, after a few weeks, the surge layer capabilities would arrive to the theatre of operations. The FOI study calculated that in 2018 it took two months to transfer ABCT to Poland (Frisell, 2019, p. 41). The U.S. and allies learned some hard lessons and we might expect this time frame to become shorter, however, limitation imposed by geography would remain. It does not mean that the U.S. forces in CONUS would wait and watch as the conflict develops. They would act from the first seconds of contingency, but some capabilities require time and effort to get across the Atlantic.

Rapid arrival and deployment of the U.S. forces to Europe requires proper infrastructure: bridges, railways, highways, sea and air ports must be able to receive and transport thousands of heavy vehicles. Procedures and legal framework must be prepared before the troops’ arrival; civilian authorities must be trained to deal with the concept of military mobility.

After NATO enlargement in 2014, no efforts were made by NATO to prepare for such contingencies. NATO’s infrastructure has remained in Western Europe, thousands kilometres away from a potential conflict line. This understanding is changing, “military mobility” has become a new buzzword in NATO and the European Union. In order to accept a large number of the U.S. troops, NATO’s Eastern flank countries are increasingly investing in railways, airports, roads, fuel storage facilities, training areas, warehouses, electrical networks, and bridges.

Poland is the key for reinforcement of the Baltic states. As Coffey and Kochi noted, “Poland’s 65-mile border with Lithuania, as well as Polish ports and

airspace, will prove vitally important should the Baltics come under attack. According to reports, NATO contingency plans for liberating the Baltic states, code-named 'Eagle Guardian', call for heavy reliance on Polish troops and ports" (Coffey, Kochis, 2015). The defence of Suwalki Corridor has received a great deal of attention from the U.S. planners, as it provides a vital land connection between Lithuania and Poland (Hodges, Bugajski, Doran, 2018).

Appropriate infrastructure and well-organized border crossing procedures in Europe would facilitate an unimpeded flow of the U.S. forces. The improvement of military mobility is an essential prerequisite for the American military concept "strategically predictable and operationally unpredictable". As new military conflicts can occur anytime and anywhere, the U.S. forces must not be tied to one geographic region or contingency (South Korea is a notable exception) and must be able to deploy where the need arises, e.g. Estonia, Romania, Norway, Greece or Lithuania. In the case of contingency, the U.S. would act according to its plans with a global view of a military confrontation.

The U.S. remains the world's greatest military power. No other country can expect to win a full-scale war against the might of the U.S. military. A winning strategy against the U.S. could only be asymmetrical, i.e. acting below the level of the armed conflict and/or using geographical imbalance of powers in certain regions. Russia would seek to create fear, confusion and uncertainty and break politicians' will and determination to resist aggression.

Russia can be deterred. It requires the potential aggressor to believe that the Baltic states and their allies, including the U.S., have capacities and will to defend the Baltic states. For this to happen, all the layers of the U.S. Defence Strategy must be integrated into the defence plans of the Baltic states and vigorously exercised with local forces. Such common effort could ensure credible deterrence and defence even though many challenges and unknowns still remain.

## **5. Cooperation with the Services of the U.S. Armed Forces**

The cooperation between the Baltic states and different services of the U.S. Armed Forces will be based on one coherent strategy to address the Russian challenge and implement defence plans. The U.S. European Command, as a joint headquarter, serves a vital function by integrating the efforts of the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force into a joined and coherent effort.

Russia is a land-based power. Its strategy is primarily based on the ability to fight in the land domain, while the naval and air forces play a supporting role in securing land-based domination. This strategy is supported by huge investments into nuclear forces and the integration of nuclear weapons into the Russian way of thinking about military conflicts. The fact that the Russian doctrine allows the use of nuclear weapons for de-escalation ("escalate to de-escalate") makes conventional defence and deterrence even more important. It is not surprising that the Baltic states, Poland, Romania and other neighbours of Russia base their defence strategies on land warfare. Deterrence by denial is the core of their strategies. The air and naval forces are important, but their primary function is to

support ground troops and stop Russian ground offense.

The Baltics' cooperation with different branches of the U.S. armed services must be based on this understanding. Each service has a unique role to play in safeguarding the U.S. interests in Europe and the Baltic states. They are part of a bigger plan and joined efforts to strengthen deterrence in the region.

So far, the U.S. Army's posture and capabilities have been the focus of attention in the Baltic states. They highlight the most visible parts of the U.S. presence in the Baltics. This comes as no surprise in the light of the Russian land-based "grab and keep" strategy in other parts of Europe like Ukraine or Georgia. The RAND recommends a force of about seven brigades in the Baltic states to strengthen deterrence. The conclusion of this study serves as a reference guide even today.

As expected, the Baltic states base their defence plans on strengthening their Land forces and the U.S. Army comes as an extremely important partner of cooperation. Most of the U.S. assistance to the Baltic states is directed towards this area, e.g. anti-tank capabilities, communication equipment, short-range air defence, and night vision devices. Joint exercises, training, financial support, and new acquisitions strengthen the capabilities of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian land forces.

Joint exercises conducted by the U.S. Army in Europe is a perfect example of the successful cooperation. In 2018-2019, thousands of the U.S. servicemen participated in various exercises in the Baltic states. In 2019, the U.S. deployed an infantry battalion for a six-month rotation to Lithuania. The partnership with Pennsylvania National Guard is a tremendous source of support for Lithuania. Joint activities and exercises are geared towards the implementation of the defence plans using infrastructure in the Baltic states and host nation support. Of particular importance is the Lithuanian division project very cautiously mentioned by the former Chief of Defence of the Republic of Lithuania Lieutenant General Jonas Vytautas Žukas in 2019 (LRT, 2019).

Air supremacy of the allied forces is crucial to the defence of the Baltic states. The U.S. Air Force can operate not only from its bases in Poland, Germany and the UK but also use the aircraft stationed in CONUS repeatedly tested during various exercises. In case of a military conflict, the U.S. Air Force together with the allies would try to prevent Russia from dominating the airspace and strike ground targets in the Baltic region.

The U.S. Navy's dominance in the seas, especially compared to the land powers like Russia, provides flexibility, robustness and strategic depth for the Alliance. The U.S. Navy can completely cut off Russia from the rest of the world using its capabilities in the Mediterranean Sea, North Sea or in the Pacific Ocean. Furthermore, it has impressive air and missile defence capabilities, a critical shortfall in the Baltic states.

Command of the sea is hugely important for the deterrence by reinforcement strategy and surge layer forces. In 2018, the U.S. Navy deployed an aircraft carrier group for the exercise Trident Juncture with the primary focus on training to defend the Alliance's sea lines of communication, which are essential for the



outcomes of any possible Russian invasion. During his testimony to the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee in March 2019, Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Curtis M. Scaparrotti emphasized that NATO still has inadequate maritime capabilities in the North Atlantic and he would welcome any additional U.S. Navy deployments to the European theatre (Scaparrotti, 2019).

From the point of view of the U.S. Navy, the Baltic Sea is just a shallow lake, too small for big naval operations or aircraft carrier groups. The U.S. Navy's presence in the Baltic Sea is limited to port visits and exercises providing good training opportunities for small naval forces of the Baltic states.

The U.S. Special Forces will be among the first ones to appear on the scene as a part of the contact layer forces. Their purpose is to combat asymmetric threats, to support joint fire target acquisition and to conduct covert operations. The U.S. ISTAR capabilities are essential in providing early warning and constant flow of information to warfighters in the case of military contingency.

The U.S. cyber defence and offensive capabilities can engage in cyber offensive operations and provide assistance to the Baltic states in the case of major cyber-attacks. Referring to the Cyber Defence Strategy, the U.S. Department of Defence states that “the Department will counter cyber campaigns threatening the U.S. military advantage by defending forward to intercept and halt cyber threats” (Department of Defence, 2018). The U.S. strategy clearly emphasizes the need for partners in cyber operations, and the Baltic states, with considerable cyber expertise, can become important partners for the U.S. cyber engagements.

## 6. Non-military Aspects

The defence of Lithuania and other Baltic states extends beyond the use of military force. The U.S. military superiority can be challenged by fighting the American strategy using non-military or paramilitary means, i.e. restricting flexibility, impeding decision-making, misleading intelligence, and eroding social cohesion. *Hybrid, asymmetric, grey zone warfare* are just a few terms describing unconventional thinking about possible confrontation in the Baltics. The potential aggressor could annoy, poke, provoke, lie, humiliate, irritate but remain below the level of the armed conflict, thus avoiding the military might of the U.S. at least temporarily.

The U.S. would defend the Baltics only if their societies showed determination and resolve to fight for their freedom. Although the European Union plays a leading role in strengthening societal resilience, the U.S. contributes to this effort by using Countering Russian Malign Influence Fund (CRIF), where the Baltic states are among the main beneficiaries.

Strong intelligence services of the Baltic states are important for preventing Russian covert activities in the region and informing the societies about threats posed by foreign actors. As trustful partners of the U.S. intelligence community, the intelligence services of the Baltic states provide valuable insights to their counterparts on the regional security challenges. They understand regional dynamics and can provide early warning in the case of possible contingency.

Intelligence cooperation can significantly reduce the chances of



misunderstandings and miscalculation in the case of crises. No country would risk going to war with another nuclear power for a wrong cause. The U.S. considers deterrence as the primary objective, consequently, it is especially beware of misjudgement, misunderstanding, provocation or misinterpretation of its actions. In other words, if one goes to war, it must be for the right reason and assumption.

Keeping channels of communications with China and Russia open is part of this approach. The U.S. and Russia hold a strategic dialogue at the ministerial level, maintain hot lines between NATO/European Command and Russian General Staff, and de-conflict flights in the areas of operations as it was done in Syria.

Some U.S. decision-makers believe that it is still not enough. “We don’t understand Russians, and they don’t understand us. The odds of miscommunication are increasing and can provoke unnecessary conflict”. Such logic is frequently heard among the U.S. politicians. The U.S. expects from the Baltic states to act responsibly vis-à-vis Russia and base their assessment of Russia’s actions on thorough examination of facts.

Investment and mutual trade could strengthen the Americans’ understanding and interest in the Baltic region. Poland has given a highly useful example of drawing the U.S. attention. In the last couple of years, Poland signed agreements to buy 1.5 million metric tons of liquefied natural gas per year from the U.S. companies and made important investments in the U.S. defence technology by purchasing fighter jets, air defence systems and long-range artillery. The Baltic states cannot compete with Poland simply because of their size, but strengthened relations with the U.S. defence industry should be important part of their strategy. What the Baltic region lacks most is the U.S. investments into big infrastructure or manufacturing projects, such as factories, power plants, roads, oil and gas pipelines, sea and air ports.

Although China is not an important military player in the region, but its growing influence and control of critical or communication infrastructure in Europe is perceived as a threat to the U.S. security. The U.S. ability to move troops within Europe or reinforce European theatre of operations from CONUS could be disrupted by unreliable civilian service providers. Chinese activities in the Baltic region, for example, investments in 5G technology and sea or air ports will always receive increased attention from the U.S. administration.

## **Conclusions**

The U.S. and the Baltic states are bound by the strong commitment to collective defence. In 1940, the U.S. condemned the Soviet occupation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and refused to recognize the annexation of the three Baltic states. The U.S. supported the Baltic states’ accession to NATO in 2004. Especially since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014, potential threats posed to the Baltic states by Russia have been a primary driver of increased support and interest in the region. The Baltic states must continue investing into this relationship to keep it viable and strong.

First, Lithuania and its neighbours must continue increasing their defence

spending. No one will defend countries who are not prepared to defend themselves. Two per cent for defence is a symbol of responsibility for one's destiny and commitment to freedom.

From the U.S. perspective, it is of vital importance that the neighbouring countries of Russia, from Estonia to Romania, spend at least 2%, a bare minimum, of the GDP on defence. In 2018, the U.S. President Donald Trump told NATO leaders that they should increase their defence spending to 4%. The more European countries invest in defence, the stronger the U.S. commitment is. Failure to do so raises sharp criticism from any U.S. administration. This criticism, albeit right, could seriously undermine the Alliance's credibility not only in the eyes of the Americans but also of the Russian politicians. They have every reason to believe that the transatlantic bond is fracturing. Deterrence is not just about military force, it involves an ability to convey determination and to fight. Doubts about the U.S. leadership and its security guarantees can reduce the reliability of the deterrence and provoke a desire for Moscow to test the limits of collective defence. This is a huge challenge for the Baltic states, over which they have little influence.

Second, the U.S. expects the Baltic states to take their share of responsibility for dealing with crises in other regions of the world. Since 1994, the Baltic states have participated in international operations in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan suffering 20 casualties. From 2005 to 2013, Lithuania led a Provincial Reconstruction Team launched in Ghor province, Afghanistan. It was a huge undertaking for a country which had regained its independence just fifteen years before the first Lithuanians arrived in Chaghcharan, the capital of Ghor. In recent years, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have increased their attention to Africa and the Middle East and received support from the U.S. Self-defence remains a primary focus of the Baltic states, however, the ability to contribute to and share the burden strengthens the link with the U.S.

Third, regional approach. The U.S. fosters the Baltics' cooperation and integration of their defence and procurement plans. The Baltic countries should work together in such areas as intelligence capabilities, special forces, maritime situation awareness, and air defence. The U.S. encourages joint projects by supporting them with expertise or security assistance, e.g. by allocating 50 million dollars for the Baltic states' regional air defence in the Defence Appropriation Bill 2019.

Fourth, the U.S. global reach and ability to project power has its limits. Lithuania and other Baltic states have to take into account the limitation of the U.S. military power, it is constrained by size, space and time. It takes time to deploy forces from one region to another; moreover, Russian A2/AD capabilities could slow down this transfer even further. In the worst case scenario, the U.S. could find itself involved in two simultaneous military conflicts. Nobody can predict the speed of political decision-making, especially if crisis is below the level of the armed conflict. The U.S. remains the most powerful country in the world, but it is not omnipotent. Defence starts at home and only full commitment to defence of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian societies can guarantee a successful partnership with the U.S. and the implementation of its strategy in the region.

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## 5.

# CHINA'S MILITARY REFORM IN THE LIGHT OF AMERICAN AND RUSSIAN MILITARY REFORMS

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### Introduction

Barry R. Schneider and Lawrence E. Grindler in a book "Battlefield of the future: 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare issues" described recent changes in the military by quoting a head of Net Assessment Office of the Department of Defense Andrew Marshall. According him "A Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) is a major change in the nature of warfare brought about by the innovative application of new technologies which, combined with dramatic changes in military doctrine and operational and organizational concepts, fundamentally alters the character and conduct of military operations". (B. Schneider, 1998). This is valid in describing recent changes in the China's People Liberation Army (PLA) as well.

The PLA has been playing an important role in the country's life since its creation in 1927. State's political and military leadership always kept a close eye on the national military being able to defend the homeland. Relying on almost unlimited human resource and previous military experiences, China's leaders for a quite long time thought about the PLA as a force being able to perform all tasks, requiring no essential reforms and able to continue only with some improvements done. The last more or less serious reforms took place in the PLA in the fifth decade of the last century.

In the nineties military experts around the world were surprised and even shocked while observing American soldiers victoriously performing in Iraq. Newly structured units, armed with new technologies and weapons, employing new combat tactics and fighting concepts had demonstrated that the country was on a way to finish essential changes in military matters or the so called RMA. Chinese experts carefully analysed America's military transformation. They concluded that the US and Russia, two countries possessing advanced military weapons, significantly changed a structure of military organization by this demonstrating a desire to move away from a single service domination towards joint and direction (region) oriented commands. Changes in global security environment and new types of threats (terrorism, separatism and other instabilities) also added to a Chinese motivation to initiate a military transformation.

As a consequence statements in China's MOD's „White Paper" and other publications appeared stating the country's elites being not satisfied any more with the existing military and wishing to transform it into a modern Armed Forces possessing certain national particularities which in China are named as „Chinese characteristics". Ways for an improvement and change were analysed and

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presented in a typical Chinese manner by suggesting the military to be reformed through delivering more mobile platforms into units (so called “Mechanization”), introducing Automated Data Systems (so called “Automatization”) and developing digital technologies (“Informationization”). At the end the military had to become a new quality ready to respond to existing and future threats. This task and the way to achieve it were announced in the “White book” of 2008 by stating “It (PLA) has been dedicated to performing its new historical missions and improving its capabilities to counter various security threats and accomplish diversified military tasks. It has accelerated the composite development of mechanization and informationization, vigorously conducts military training in conditions of informationization, and boosts innovation in military theory, technology, organization and management, to continuously increase the core military capability of winning local wars in conditions of informationization and the capability of conducting MOOTW” (China’s National Defense in 2008, 2008). Enhanced training and a political supervision by the Communist Party of China (CPC)<sup>1</sup> were also emphasized as two other the most important things to have.

Another factor convincing the CPC to progress with the own reform was Russian RMA. Even though both Russia and China started military reforms almost simultaneously they had chosen different approaches and areas to start from. Russia began with more visible changes in the military structures leading to a creation of operational and institutional forces at first and rearming them by modernized arms at second. The third area of the RMA - fighting concepts – was officially initiated in Russia only in 2013 with the Chief of General Staff, General V. Gerasimov’ presenting an article analyzing modern wars and ways to wage them. China with its long lasting own war philosophy traditions has chosen another sequence. It decided to start from updating and developing the traditional military theory and new war waging concepts and almost simultaneously to initiate weapon modernization programs. Structural changes were left for later, because the PLA was just too awkward and big to be transformed without a preparation.

In 2003 the PLA adopted so called “Three warfare” concept describing views of new war waging. The national armaments modernization was launched as well. With the tasks in first two areas more or less accomplished in 2015, China’s political leadership sounded a plan to give the military structure a new shape and size. The US and Russia finalizing own structural changes (the US set up Africa Command in 2007 and Russians established an Arctic Joint Strategic Command in 2014) also added to the China’s leaders desire to initiate the organizations’ change. The President himself presented a plan - military should shrink and get a new shape by this becoming an entire new quality. On 4<sup>th</sup> of January 2016, while meeting with military personnel from 13<sup>th</sup> PLA Army group, Xi Jinping said “We have to free our minds from previous burden and to march step to step with the time” (Manukov, 2016 ).

Today it is obvious that China has become the third country (next to the USA and Russia) engaged into a full scale RMA with goals very similar of those

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<sup>1</sup> “Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is a synonym to “Communist Party of China (CPC) used in official documents



announced by the USA and Russia - to get national military up to the highest military standards and be able and ready to engage into modern wars. So far those goals are being achieved quite successfully, the PLA becomes stronger and this forces the US to react and redirect resources and efforts to the Pacific with consequently less of them left for the West. As a result, the US requested other NATO countries to contribute more to the burden sharing and strengthen own defenses. Simultaneously strengthening China opened "a window of opportunity" for Russia. Now it is not only seeking to get China as a strategic ally but also started to act more aggressively in other regions including Baltics and North Atlantic and by this forcing NATO countries, including Lithuania, to pay more attention to national security issue.

### **1. China's military before the reform**

Red and Soviet Armies served as standards for the PLA to follow. Like Red and Soviet Armies the PLA is headed by the Communist Party and for a long time a defense of the country was the only declared PLA mission (Manukov, 2016 ). During this time the PLA has seen some minor changes but a unique system of command, control and general administration remained untouched. Its uniqueness was following. At first, the President of China officially was not the Supreme Commander (SC) of China's Armed Forces. The Supreme Commander was the Chairman of Central Military Commission (CMC). For quite a long time those two officials were different persons. Only last two China's Presidents were the Chairmen of the CMC as well. At second, the ideology was ruling the military with the party deeply embedded in all PLA structures. On the top the Secretary General of the central committee of CPC performed as the Chairman of CMC. But he was not the only communist in the PLA. Thousands of communists commissioned and occupying positions of political officers were an integral part of the command and control (C2) system. At third, roles of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the minister himself were limited and minimal. Commenting this situation one Russian expert pointed out that Chinese MOD "... was not involved into command and control of Armed Forces, did no procurement on behalf of the Armed Forces and performed mainly two functions: representing the country on military matters abroad and providing a coordination between military and other civilian institutions (Kashin, 2016).

The CMC performed as a supreme body for an entire state defense. Next to the PLA, the CMC controlled a sizable part of the Chinese People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) with a remaining part left subordinated to the China's Ministry of Public Security (CMPS). Other forces including China's Ministry of Public Security (CMPS) were left outside the CMC control and reported to the Government. As an example the mentioned CMPS with approximately 1.9 million servicemen was headed by the Minister of Public Security and remained responsible for day-to-day law enforcement.

Before the reform the CMC consisting of four units: the General Staff (GS); the Main Political Department (MPD) the Main Department for Rear (MDR) and

the Main Department for Armaments and Military Equipment (MDAME). The first three departments were as old as the PLA itself. The fourth one was formed in 1998 as a consequence of reforms done in a military industrial complex. All departments simultaneously acted as the PLA Land Force (Army) HQ which in its own turn was placed over other three PLA services and adequate HQs. Russian experts believe that the old system (the departments of CMC) hold much more authority compare to similar structures in the former Soviet Union MOD. As an example the old Chinese General Staff was very much involved into intelligence, electronic warfare and other activities and even commanded a structure responsible for personal security and protection of state leaders (Kashin, 2016). Besides providing political guidance the Main Political Department was also controlling military jurisdiction and courts and commanded counterintelligence activities. China's Communist Party simultaneously used the MPD to control all personnel appointments. The MDR was responsible for resources, infrastructure and finance. This was the reason for Russian experts to believe it being the most tended to be corrupted (Kashin, 2016).

All troops were subordinated to the CMC in everything including combat readiness, administration, training, etc., but this simultaneous division and concentration of powers began causing problems for troops and services to interoperate. Principle of joint operations was almost absent and a land force mentality prevailed. With threat coming from land mostly the old organization worked well, but in the era of national threat assessments indicating potential challenges appearing in seas and air as well, the PLA Navy, Air Force and even Second Artillery suddenly found their progress being influenced by the land component too much. After careful analysis of this situation Chinese leadership realized that the old system in a new security environment became awkward.

## **2. The change**

As it was mentioned China started its RMA from a “conceptions” segment. Already in 1996 two PLA colonels Cia Lian and Van Xiengsun published a book titled as “Unrestricted war”. The book presented strategic thoughts on how to fight modern wars. Based on it, other military strategist works and “People's war” philosophies the PLA developed so called a “Three Warfare” document and adopted it as a manual for troops.

For quite a long time westerners did not take “Unrestricted War” and “Three Warfare” seriously despite some American experts describing “Three warfare” as a philosophy of waging modern wars with non-military means until military ones are available and simultaneously a method of winning the time necessary to upgrade existing and develop new military equipment and weapons. Applying this “out of box thinking” PLA strategists and tacticians began designing new not known before tactics and concepts. One of those, so called Anti Access Area Denial (A2/AD) concept, was created relying mostly on existing surveillance and engagement means. As soon as A2/AD was established it began causing problems for foreign navies to operate in areas where it was applied. In the beginning

A2/AD was thought to be a pure defensive and applicable only around Taiwan. With technical characteristics of existing weapons being quite modest China concentrated on increasing numbers of systems involved into A2/AD. As a result A2/AD strengthened and turned it into such dense surveillance and engagement net that US experts had to conclude "...China's use of A2/AD directly opposes the local and regional interests of the U.S. and its allies, leaving us vulnerable when operating in these disputed regions" (China's Anti-Access Area Denial, 2018). The Pentagon seconded this by stating that "Three Warfare" is used by China to project psychological pressure, publicize "legal" arguments and to assert China's claims to resources and territory in regions ranging from the East and South China Seas to the Poles. The Senkaku Islands and Okinawa provide cases in point" (China: The three Warfares, 2013).

By the way another Chinese "thinking out of box" example was an idea to build islands. In the "Three warfare" this approach was developed under so call "legal warfare" which concentrated on exploring loops and weaknesses of existing laws and/or norms. Referring to cases then countries claimed new islands they found as national territories in the past, Chinese decided to use the same argument for the islands they build.

Russian military experts studied "Unrestricted War" and "Three Warfare" more carefully. As a result they took a lot of Chinese ideas and transformed them into concepts which today are applied and named as Russian "Hybrid War". This "out of box" thinking became a challenge for western countries. Elements of legal, psychological or financial warfare developed in China and adopted by Russia are already causing problems in the West.

Development of concepts wasn't the only area of reform. Weapons and equipment became a second segment of modernization. China started it from acquiring Soviet/Russian weaponry, initiating its licensed production and copying. At the same time Chinese engaged in a reverse engineering of acquired platforms and a development of nationally designed weapons (aircrafts, frigates, missiles, etc.). New designs went straight to the production line. The PLA began receiving modernized and new weapons (DF-21D, DF-26D missiles, J20 jet, Type55 destroyer, H-20 Strategic Bomber and etc.). Chinese ability to produce weapons in big numbers allowed concepts to progress. As an example already existing A2/AD zones began expanding far behind disputed areas and started to effect areas outside and even intrude into other countries' territories and international waters. So A2/AD had lost its defensive nature and became an offensive one. As a proof of this, today the US Navy has to devote time and efforts on working out ways and concepts to guarantee freedom of navigation not only in disputed but in all potential operations areas as well.

A change of organizational structure became the last accord of the RMA. It started with a creation of the Central National Security Commission (CNSC) in the Communist Party of China. Right after a "major regrouping of the top CPC power structure" (Ji, 2016) was launched and this was "not only an important step forward in overall security reform but also demonstrated a will inevitably undergo military structural changes" (Chunshan, 2015). Directions and guidance given to

the military dismissed a single-service operations concept in order to promote an idea of joint operations and integrated multiple services.

Chinese White Books describe country's military strategy as "an active defense". According it the country is not going to attack anybody first but reserved a right to respond to any attack. To be capable to do this the country has to have standing combat forces able to perform joint operations at short notice and structures (forces) able to support them. Simply to say it requires the PLA to have operational and institutional force. This was not a new approach. The US adopted it and had such forces already. Russian announced a wish to have standing operational and institutional forces in so called "Ivanov's doctrine" back in 2003<sup>2</sup> and since then was building them.

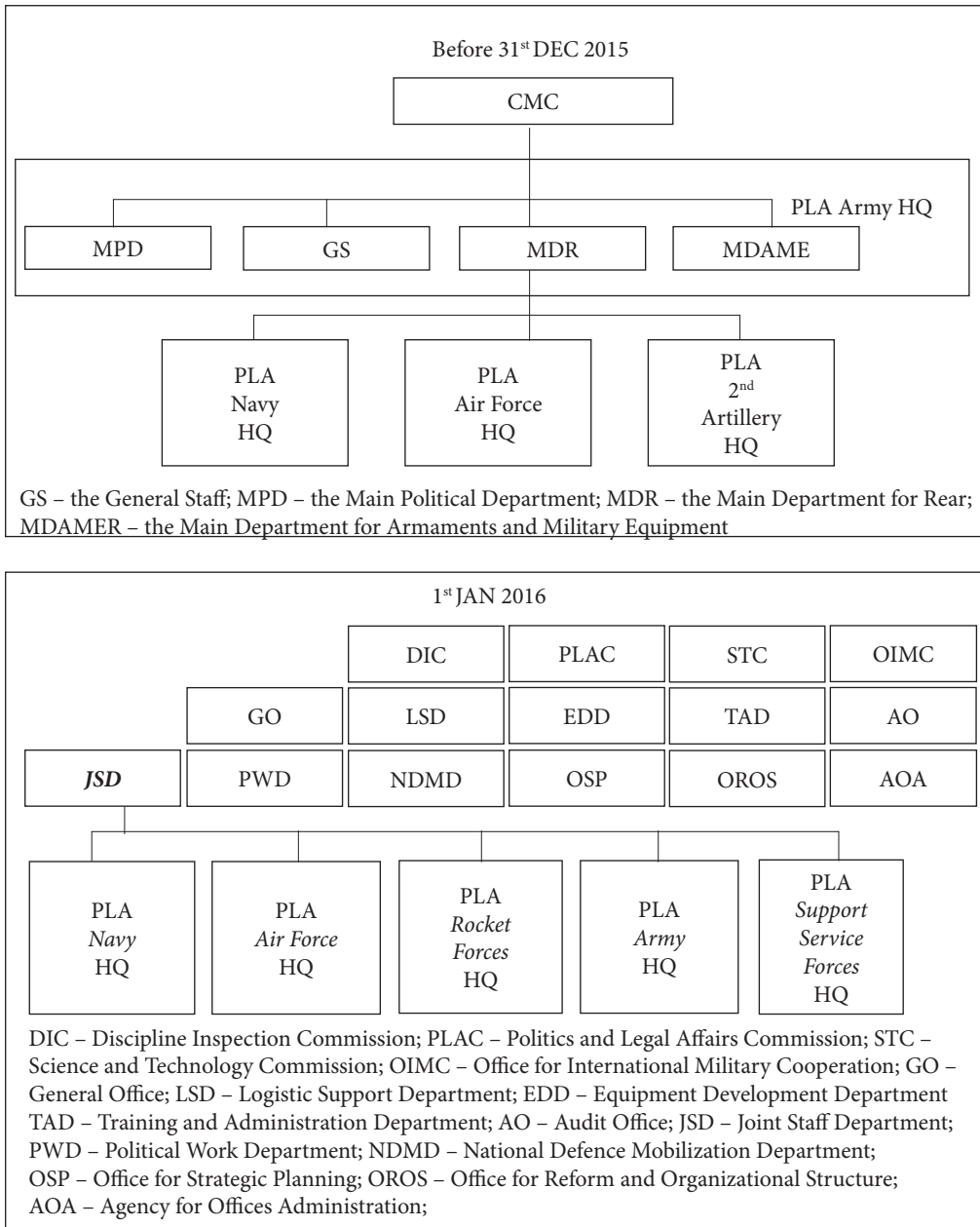
On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 the old PLA structure was abolished and a new one adopted. The CMC expanded its areas of responsibility, and grew up with more structural units added and a Joint Staff type structure (Joint Staff Department - JSD) established. As a result, the CMC became a central nerve center providing political guidance to fifteen newly incorporated functional structures (departments and commissions). Those departments and commissions became responsible for a wide spectrum of issues like logistics, training, mobilization, equipment, legal and political matters, technology and science, international relations and so on. And the JSD became the main commanding HQ for an operational force devoted for a war fighting. The Pentagon immediately reported this to the Congress by stating "the reform plan aims to establish two clear lines of authority under the CMC. It gives the services authority over "force management" issues while the theatre headquarters command operations - a distinction that was ambiguous in the past" (Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2016). Simultaneously old PLA Land, Air and Navy (forces and HQs) were completely reformed and two new structures - PLA Rocket (RF) and PLA Strategic Support Force (SSF) established. In general they perform as an institutional force tasked to arm, equip, man and train adequately own operational units. In fact Chinese created structures which were very similar to Russian Land, Naval, Space-Air, Rapid Reaction and Strategic Missile Forces or US Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines departments in the Pentagon.

The newly created Chinese operational forces had a Joint Staff Department (JSD) on the top. The Staff in general has a lot of features of both - the US Joint Chiefs Staff and Russian General Staff. It is not only a structural part of CMC but, as this has been already mentioned, at the same time acts as the highest HQ commanding operational forces coming from PLA Land, Air, and Navy and assigned to newly established combatant (geographical and functional) commands. This is an exact copy of Russian approach where Russian General Staff is a part of the MOD and simultaneously the highest HQ for operational forces. The schema below is produced from different open sources and the best presents the change which happened at the strategic level.

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<sup>2</sup> "Ivanov Doctrine" prescribed having forces enough to participate in two conflicts and one peacekeeping operation simultaneously.

**Graph No. 1. Structural changes in the strategic military leadership of China<sup>3</sup>**



The geographical commands divided China's territory into parts and were named as Eastern, Western, Northern Southern and Central Joint Theatre Commands (JTC). They became very similar to Russian Joint Strategic Commands "West", "South", "Centre", "East" and "Arctic" or American combatant commands (African, Central, European, Indo-Pacific, Northern and Southern). While creating own JTCs Chinese military leadership reduced a number of former military districts

<sup>3</sup> The Graph is produced by the author from information taken from different sources.

from seven to five. This was not a simple reduction of numbers. New geographical commands had got not only new territories to operate but became real joint commands there. From former administrative and primary ground operations orientated entities they became formations tasked to lead mobile and coordinated movements of troops performing in a joint manner and operating in the areas assigned. Differently from American geographical combatant commands with areas of responsibility (AOR) and areas of operations (AOO) located inside and outside the national territory or Russia Rapid Reaction forces tasked to operate everywhere including abroad, China so far restrained itself from establishing commands with AOR and AOO lying outside national territories.

Chinese Rocket Forces and Strategic Support Forces also perform as combatant (functional) commands responsible for specific functions and are very similar to Russian Nuclear and Rapid Reaction commands or American Special Forces, Cyber Forces, Space Forces, Strategic and Transportation commands. The Rocket Force, as it is stated in White book of 2019, performs a role of nuclear deterrence, but differently from nuclear forces of the US and Russia, also commands and controls conventional missiles of all ranges and is responsible to provide long range precise strike capability. The Strategic Support Force is a new type force responsible for battlefield environment, information, communications, information security and new technology testing and performs a role of multiplier in all PLA action. Getting all this under one command meant that “three warfare” philosophy based ideas would be more and more used against the US, NATO and west in general. As a result ,cyber, STRATCOM and other new type capabilities had to be established and given certain priorities in NATO (and Lithuania).

The entire structural change was well accepted and appreciated in the PLA Air Force and Navy HQs which were placed under the PLA Army HQ before. Now they obtained more freedom and became equal to the PLA Army HQ. Contrary, for the PLA Army and its HQ the change became a cultural shock due to its leading role diminished and powers split and transferred to the JTCs and JSD. This was noticed by experts pointing out: “Having operated under a similar structure in the former military region system, TC Navy and Air Force headquarters should be accustomed to working under such a dual chain-of-command, but this setup is new for the Army, where previously units re-ported to military region headquarters because there was no national-level Army headquarters” (Blasko, 2017).

Before reshuffling existing structures China’s political and military leaders announced a decision to reduce military by 300 thousand servicemen. They did the same as the Russian MOD had done in the beginning of own military reform then around 200 thousand personnel was released. China did follow Russians while reforming nuclear forces as well. Russian operational nuclear forces were taken from services, transformed into nuclear triad and subordinated directly to the president. The PLA Second Artillery was also transformed into stronger Rocket Force and, like in Russia, became subordinated directly to the countries leadership (the CMC).

Chinese did not do too many inventions in tactical and operational levels. Russians took an idea of a brigade as a main tactical unit from the US and designed own, national brigades. China followed Russians in this as well. New



Chinese brigades have got shapes very similar to Russian ones. Chinese “Armies” are operational level formations very similar to Russian operational commands (Armies) also. As a result thirteen Chinese land armies with more than a hundred of new infantry and other brigades became a bulk of today’s PLA operational force (Khamchikhin, 2017).

According Chinese leadership “Informationization” is a core of modern military and a reality of the RMA to which the military must adapt. China has overpassed Russia in “Informationization” by establishing the SSF. While Russia is still considering “plugging” cyber and electronic warfare (EW) capabilities into a single joint formation, China has already got space, EW, cyber and other capabilities as parts of the SSF. Some analysts claim this proving once more a strong Chinese desire to build really wide profile armed forces in future (Reshetov, 2016). With new technologies like 5G or Quantum communications adopted by the PLA, the SSF became very active not only in a traditional military fields but in other “Three warfare” spheres as well. Under a cover of promoting a usage of those technologies in Western societies for civil purposes Chinese almost succeeded getting access to western (and Lithuanian) mass information and national communication systems and forced those countries to take a precaution actions.

While rearming reformed forces China faced the same challenges as Russia did. According some analysts China was even in a worse situation compare to Russia due to a number of modern weaponry in Chinese units being even lower than in Russian ones. To solve the problem Chinese followed Russians again and armed troops with modernized weaponry at first and later (again like Russians) continued the rearmament by new weapons simultaneously retiring old ones. As a final stage China is looking to have only own designed next generation weapons to be used in future joint network-centric warfare operations.

Differently from the PLA Army which relies on Russian experience, while reforming the Navy China is trying to follow the US, as a naval power, experiences. As it has been already mentioned the PLA Navy now is assigned wider tasks and missions. Previous Chinese naval missions consisted mostly from amphibious operations which were oriented toward Taiwan and identical to Russian naval “from point to point” force delivery. Recent missions next to amphibious landing involve power projection and other operations at long distances for long time periods. This requires transforming the Navy into a force with aircraft striking groups and landing docks and being able to perform new tasks successfully. Chances to get an assistance from the US in this field is almost impossible so the Navy relies on developing own platforms (new Chinese aircraft carriers, landing dock, destroyers and other platforms) and keeps experimenting with national naval concepts and tactics. Developed skills are tested and improved in national naval training and bilateral Russian-China “Sea cooperation” type exercises.

What all this means to us? Given that Chinese are adopting so many Russian approaches and getting forces similar to Russian ones. Due to a fact that Lithuania is considered as one of countries possessing Russian expertise, we might contribute more to our allies understanding about China.

### 3. What to expect?

The recent reform is announced to extend until 2020. So far Chinese leadership is satisfied with the results. The 13th China's National People's Congress concluded that "As a result, our people's armed forces have achieved a remodelling of their political ecosystem, of the way they are organized, of the structure of their forces, and of their conduct and image ..." and "... military equipment has been significantly modernized, and we have deepened military-civilian integration. The people's armed forces, full of new drive, have taken solid strides toward building themselves into a powerful military with Chinese characteristics" (Keqiang, 2018). Without any doubt after accepting major structural changes China would continue strengthening the military. With the recent China's disagreements occurring mostly in the seas and potential threats coming from the seas the biggest effort will go to build strong air and naval capabilities consisting of new air platforms, aircraft carriers, submarine, surface and amphibious warships (Reshetov, 2016). Simultaneously this means that the US will have to contribute more and more national assets, which as recent reports show are limited and require time and resources to build. To help the ally we already see English vessels reassigned to South China Sea instead of joining training in North Atlantic or Mediterranean and more nation might be asked to do the same.

Another step while reforming the PLA might be to continue the Rocket Forces development. China is not a signatory of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) which restricted the US and Russia on having intermediate and shorter range missiles. The country developed and is producing such missiles in big numbers. According the Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Navy Admiral (Ret.) Phillip Davidson 93 percent of all Chinese missile belong to this category and are capable of impeding US Navy activities ((Davidson, 2019). Both, the US and Russia, even though not announcing this loudly, realized that China has "the upper hand" here. To expect China joining a new INF type agreement alongside the US and Russia is almost impossible, so looks like both countries are already implementing adequate precaution measures. Russia has rearmed 3rd Chita missile brigade (located next China's border) by Iskander-M system (Zabaikal'skij rabochij, 2017). According to US estimates the Iskander-M has got an enhanced range missile (type SSC8) which is able to fly up to 2500 km (MilitaryToday.com, 2019) and reach China. The US military in the Pacific would welcome developing and locating something similar as well (Davidson, 2019). If this happens China most probably will respond. Russian experts tend to believe the country intensifying a development and production of new shorter and mid-range missiles and next to ground based missiles the Rocket Force might get under direct control air and naval (conventional and nuclear) assets as well (Shlyidov, 2016). All this leads to a conclusion that any new treaty related to missiles would be post pointed unless China agrees to join negotiations. In the absence of the treaty Russia would have "free hands" to locate new missiles everywhere including our neighborhood. Actually this is already happening and it has a direct impact on our national security.

There are strong indications showing that China might follow Russians in extending the reform into other (not only MOD) spheres and initiating a

militarization of an entire state. At least first steps towards this have already been done. Since 1st January 2018 dual control of China's Peoples Armed Police Force (PAPF) was abolished. The PAPF was placed under direct CMC command as it was announced (Zhou, 2017) and more than 1.5 million troops added to a unified command and control system. The Ministry of Public Security (CMPS) followed the PAPF and became subordinated to the CMC as well. The reformed CMC is able to command and control those forces already and has reserves (trusted officers) to take control of much more. Experts already warned that "... in the wake of the massive restructuring of the PLA command-and-control apparatus in December 2015 and January 2016, Central Military Commission (CMC) Chairman and Commander-in-Chief Xi named trusted generals to scores of senior military slots (Lam, 2018). Chinese leaders could use the reform to fight internal problems like corruption. The Pentagon concluded "...military discipline inspectors have targeted individuals and sectors historically prone to corruption and as an outcome of reform the PLA will revise its regulations to prevent abuse more effectively" (DOD 2016). This shows the PLA already possessing an expertise in this field. The PLA can help country's leaders to "clean up" the CMPS and PAFP from corruption and reorganized them to be more suited to continue this task countrywide. As a next step in centralizing the C2 it could be an establishment of an overarching command post (CP) in the CMC itself. Such the CP would supervise all assigned to the CMC forces and might be very similar to a recent Russian National Defense Management Centre (NDMC) (Vinogradov, 2016). Potentially next step could be an adaptation of another Russian practice, so called sudden combat readiness checks (snap checks) as a way to guarantee constant readiness of units, formations and the state. All this leads to strengthening of authoritarian rule in China and brings the country closer to the potential alliance with Russia.

Structural changes and rearmament have increased PLA self-confidence and are fueling country wishes for military expansion. PLA Navy started this expansion by establishing so called PLA's Naval Escort Task Force (NETF), which is used to sail outside Chine waters and demonstrate country's ability to project power. According to the US pacific commander "This spring, approximately 10,000 PLA Marines travelled more than 1,200 miles as part of a large-scale exercise designed to improve long-range maneuverability (Hearings of Senate Armed Service Committee, 2019) With forces spending long time far away from the home a question of national military bases outside the country becomes valid. On 11 of July 2017 the PLA Navy established its first military installation in Djibouti and most probably will continue. As outcomes of the reform Gwadar, Darwin and other locations have already been named as potential places for naval bases (Vladimirov, 2015). With naval capabilities related to the force projection strengthening China could announce its willingness to challenge a control of sea shipping lines even farther into Indian and Pacific Oceans (Prochvatilov, 2016). And here we need to again to turn to "Three warfare". With Chinese companies investing and buying port facilities in European ports we face a danger of PLA Navy getting potential "dropping in" point for routine maintenance or something similar.

#### **4. Implication of Chinese military reform to Europe**

Increased military capabilities have influenced China's behavior internationally. In 2017 China officially announced entering a new era of "Making China Great again" with adequate steps to be taken in international arena. Military was assigned a role and place to play here as well. China's White book of 2019 announced "Overseas interests are a crucial part of China's national interests. One of the missions of China's armed forces is to effectively protect the security and legitimate rights and interests of overseas Chinese people, organizations and institutions" (China's National Defense in the New Era, 2019). The PLA became actively involved in the United Nations peacekeeping. China claims to have tens of thousands of troops already possessing the UN international peacekeeping missions' experience. The country contributes a few thousand soldiers to a majority of recent UN peacekeeping mission on permanent basis. So far it's military is not involved in missions closer to Europa, but while getting stronger and resources available it might consider joining not only UN operations and not only in Africa.

The PLA has already moved outside the country. With a list of areas to be stationed and operate growing, sooner or later, Chinese military will neighbor European military installations or bases in the world. Today PLA is already present in areas where Europeans are operating. Chinese ships are carrying on own missions appeared in Aden Gulf since 2008. Europeans had got them as a new military power to operate alongside at the same time having almost no ideas about Chinese "modus of operandi". In March 2014 a first joint naval Chinese-European counter-piracy training exercise took place in the Gulf. Next year China's ships entered Mediterranean Sea to participate in Russian-Chinese exercise "Sea cooperation 2015".

Quite soon Chinese ships began sailing in Baltics. For Europeans this meant a new naval power entering the Europe's back yard. In summer of 2017 the PLA Navy made a big tour visiting different ports and exercising. At first Chinese ships attended Russian naval parade in San Petersburg and after they took part in a joint Russian-Chinese exercise "Sea Cooperation 2017" in Baltics. To position the country as an independent player and minimize negative impressions in Europe for "too close cooperation with Russia", right after the exercise, the same ships on the way home visited Helsinki and Riga. To strengthen this stand, simultaneously to the Baltic voyage and right in the middle of "Zapad-2017" exercises, another Chinese ship group after finishing own mission in Aden Gulf paid a five day visit to NATO port Antwerp in Belgium. So, from the military point of view 2017 became the year when China's Navy became familiar with waters close to Europa and Baltic and we were made to realize that this is a reality. Next year China continued with two guided missile frigates and a supply ship from 28<sup>th</sup> Naval Escort Task Force (NETF-28) arriving for a three-day technical stop in the Port of Valencia Spain. And in summer of 2019 China was present in naval parade in Russia again. All this shows that Chinese presence in the region becomes more frequent and unpredictable in future and forces Europeans to take this country's naval power in consideration. For Lithuania this is an alarm bell.

We have to work out our national positions and develop an own stand in case Chinese decide to visit.

The PLA keeps trying to enter Europe on land as well. Chinese soldiers attended a Victory parade in Moscow in 2015. In 2018 Chinese soldiers were marching in the military parade in Belorussia. In both cases only Chinese honor guard soldiers were presented but the PLA might consider sending combat troops with armament to participate in bilateral or international exercises closer to Europe as well. This became especially plausible after Russian “Vostok-2018” exercise where an entire PLA land brigade and air force assets were involved. In the next year “Centr-2019” exercise Russian-China military cooperation moved forward with exercising units already being integrated into joint formations. Bearing in mind a close cooperation between Chinese and Belorussian militaries and a willingness of Belarussian leadership to show independent stand, the PLA might be invited to join Belarussian military exercise in future. Possibilities to train inside the Europe itself are also being explored. In 25<sup>th</sup> July 2018, during the Chinese defense minister meeting with his Serbian counterpart was announced that “The Serbian side is willing to further strengthen high-level exchanges with the Chinese military...” (Jianing, 2018). Among potential areas of bilateral cooperation “... deepen exchanges and cooperation in military health care, joint exercise and training, personnel training, and so on, so as to continuously push forward the relationship between the two militaries” (Jianing, 2018) were mentioned.

Chinese experience in peacekeeping might serve as a reason for Chinese military to step on European turf as well. Even though it is difficult to imagine this right now but bearing in mind Chinese UN peacekeeping activities and ties with some countries, Balkans is a potential place where Chinese peacekeepers could appear as representatives from “a neutral force”. If Chinese peacekeepers are stationed another task of the PLA contribution to “Make China Great” policy - a demonstration and promotion of own rearmaments everywhere including Europa - would be achieved as well.

## **Conclusions**

Recent structural reform of the PLA is not an accident, but a continuation of “a well thought through” military transformation. Already from the first steps done, it becomes obvious the reform focuses on a development of essential new military capabilities. China deems necessary not only to deter or defeat an adversary power at home but at the same time to encounter any third-party - including Russia or the US - intervention into a crisis or conflict in the region and later even globally.

Chinese military reform is not about minor changes and corrections. In its essence the reform is designed to change an inner working style of the military as well. The country is trying to catch up with changes occurring in the armies of big military powers and to have a sort of analogy of military arrangements of the United States and Russia. Although the United States and Russian militaries’ “modus of operandi” compare to the Chinese one bears some differences, a



general approach - to transfer to joint operations and joint commands or “battle zones” according Chinese - is the same. Like American or Russian ones, those “battle zones” are set up to maintain readiness of all military branches, to ensure the strategic interests of the country and execute missions within assigned zones. All this has a direct impact on the US and Russian behavior and indirectly forces other countries to engage into own modernization programs just to be ready to join allies or to respond to increased threats. Lithuania is not an exception, with the USA getting ready to fight near peer foes (Russians and Chinese) Lithuania is also reconsidering emerging threats and own force development.

China’s military reform possesses some features named as “Chinese characteristics”. Some, like the Communist Party embodiment in the military structures, is an exceptional Chinese idea. Others, like getting all but not only MOD forces under centralized command are borrowed from Russia.

Judging from recent PLA achievements and activities it conducts military analysts tend to believe that the ongoing transformation is quite successful and “... with the potential to degrade core US operational and technological advantages” (Department of Defense, 2018). There is the only “but,, here. While estimating China’s military one needs to take into account Chinese experience and abilities in fighting a real war. The US military tested those in Iraq wars and Russia has got Crimea and Syria operations. Both countries have militaries continuously “experimenting” with new weapons, tactics and concepts in conflicts and “hot spots” around the world. The PLA so far remains reluctant to send a reformed military into a real combat, so experts are right stating “This makes it difficult to assess how the impact of such widespread institutional reforms would really impact the PLA if it had to operate in a wartime situation” (CSIS report, 2016).

Growing PLA strength has an impact on China’s international behavior. The country announced “Make China Great” policy as a guidance for the military as well. Following it the PLA expands its horizons and sends military units farther and for longer times. Performing mostly independently China’s military is appearing in the areas where they have never been seen before. Far Pacific, India ocean, Arctic, water close to Europe have already seen Chinese ships. Given the PLA Navy turning into “a real Ocean Navy” China most probably try to sail to different ports globally. This means Lithuanian Klaipėda most probably be included in a “places to visit” list.

With the PLA becoming stronger diplomatic- military Chinese presence will increase. We already witnessed Lithuanian Secret services ringing a bell on increased intelligence and other activities conducted by military diplomats. Chinese defense attaché corps will work hard to find potential areas for China’s military to come to Lithuania for military cooperation, exchange of representative visits and so on. It will be a challenge for Lithuania to work a proper “modus operandi” given Chinese “knocking the door”. Chinese soldiers have already marched in parades in Moscow and Minsk. If this continues Lithuanians might see more Chinese military participating in activities and areas which used to belong mostly to Westerners and Russians before.



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## 6.

# THE IMPACT OF EAST ASIA'S RISING POWERS ON EUROPEAN SECURITY: THE CHINESE FACTOR

Konstantinas Andrijauskas\*

### Introduction

In 1918 Oswald Spengler, a prominent German philosopher of history, published the first volume of his most well-known book *The Decline of the West*, the eponymous argument of which was obviously affected by the horrors of the largely European World War I. In the century since, the Western world has managed to withstand various geopolitical, economic, ideological and cultural pressures, though mostly under the leadership of the United States (US) instead of Spengler's native continent. Today, however, this multi-dimensional transatlantic relationship that long formed the basis of Western primacy in the international system is increasingly questioned by both sides' difficulties to re-emerge after the financial crisis of 2007–2008, subsequent domestic isolationist impulses and the simultaneous “rise of the rest” in the Global South.

Since the latter trend has been led by Asia, particularly its eastern part, different authors essentially followed Spengler's somewhat premature insights by proclaiming “reOrient'ation” (Frank 1998) or “easternization” (Rachman 2017) of the world in political, cultural and, most importantly, economic terms. Other perceptive scholars questioned this argument of the “Asian Century”, among the principal reasons for scepticism citing numerous remaining or emerging security issues there (e.g. Auslin 2017). Indeed, the world's greatest continent largely lacked the post-Cold War peace dividend as showcased by the Cross-Taiwan Strait relations, the Korean conflict, maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas, the Sino-Indian and Indo-Pakistani border disagreements, or the complex challenge of Afghanistan and transnational terrorism in general. As this inconclusive list suggests, a proper attempt to only briefly analyse Asia's impact on European security calls for deliberate limits of the research object. Thus, the article deals with issues pertaining to traditional “harder” security and confines itself temporarily to the last ten years (till mid-2019) and geographically to the Eastern part of the Asian continent, particularly emphasising its emerging superpower's role in Europe.

As definitions of both the European and East Asian regions tend to vary considerably, this article deliberately follows a narrower approach, notably excluding neighbouring Russia from both of them and the member states of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) from the latter. Thus, the former region is primarily associated with the European Union (EU), but

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encompasses other countries conventionally recognised as belonging to the continent in their territorial entirety, and the latter follows the United Nations Statistics Division's definition of East(ern) Asia as the sum total of the People's Republic of China (PRC, China), including its both Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao, Japan, both the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) that uneasily share the same peninsula, and Mongolia (UNSD). For all practical purposes, such a definition would also encompass Taiwan (officially the Republic of China) that has full diplomatic relations with a small group of distant and relatively small countries with a single but important European representative among them being the Holy See.

Whatever understanding of a "rising power" would be used, there is no question that East Asia is uniquely representative in this regard. According to economic criteria, the region contains three members of the G20 (China, Japan, South Korea), while Taiwan falls just behind the list of the world's twenty largest national economies. More importantly, in terms of military power it has three representatives (China, Japan, South Korea) in the group of the ten largest spenders on defence in the world, and two nuclear armed actors (China and apparently North Korea) with three others (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) being able to rapidly develop such capabilities. Subject to both of these criteria, East Asia is widely recognised to host the only emerging superpower today – China. The historically unprecedented rise of the PRC for these last forty years has largely conditioned active reactions from its numerous immediate neighbours, particularly in East Asia, and thus further contributed to the whole region's impact on global security with important repercussions for Europe.

Indeed, both ends of the Eurasian landmass share a historically unprecedented degree of interrelationship today, particularly in economic areas of trade and investment that are widely expected to expand further due to numerous connectivity projects. Beijing, as the author of by far the most important of these, the so-called Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has been trying to supplement its usual profit and market attraction with major foreign investments of its own, including in Europe. The (re-)emergence of China as a global economic and technological powerhouse on its own terms is coinciding with the country's rapidly expanding military budgets, power projection capabilities and resolve to pursue its "core interests" in numerous territorial disputes. Despite their wide differences, both of the latest presidential administrations in the US apparently acknowledged that such developments in East Asia signified the rise of a peer competitor and had to be dealt with sooner rather than later. From Barack Obama's more nuanced "pivot/re-balancing to Asia" to Donald Trump's more assertive "trade war" with China, Europe has witnessed serious dilemmas.

Should the EU and its member states, including the United Kingdom (UK) on its way out, follow Beijing's enduring expectation to pursue policies "truly independent" from their ally across the Atlantic Ocean in order to become a separate major actor in an emergent multi-polar world, or should it remain committed to Western solidarity despite Trump's real or perceived questioning of this same relationship?

More specifically, should Europe jump on the economic bandwagon with the rising China to rapidly reap the promised benefits instead of recognising that this same country has become a high-tech competitor that would further side-line it in the global economic system in mid- to long-term perspective? In a related fashion, should the EU remain committed to its “normative power” ideals, or should it opt for value-less pragmatism in its dealings with the PRC? Should Europeans support the increasingly balancing activities of the US and some Asian great and middle powers (Japan, India, Vietnam) towards China instead of being neutral? Finally, should the EU prioritise the threat of Beijing when it is Moscow that actively pursues hard power policies on its own doorstep and destabilising activities within? Or, rather, how should it react to the deepening axis beyond sheer convenience (Lo 2008) between Eurasia's two most powerful authoritarian countries?

These are only some of the questions that both the EU and its members have increasingly to contend with in their foreign and security policy making. Being at the same time among the most Euro-optimist, pro-American and Russia-concerned countries in the whole world, the three Baltic states in general and Lithuania in particular are understandably worried about the above-mentioned common dilemmas. The trio's very sensitive geopolitical position forming the eastern border of both the EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with Russia and its ally Belarus, their surprisingly active and resolute foreign policies on several issues of regional and even global concern, including consistent reliance on international law and a normative agenda, as well as voiced ambitions and some recent achievements in high-tech industries make them interesting not only for traditional powers in this part of the world but increasingly China as well.

Based on representative primary sources as well as authoritative academic and think tank analyses, this article first deals with the increasingly prominent place that (North-)East Asia occupies in Europe's perceptions of its security. Since China is omnipresent in these, the paper then provides a necessary contextual discussion of its current rise to the status of an emerging superpower. The subsequent analysis of China's place in Europeans' perceptions of and its actual impact on their security reveals that the Chinese challenge has indeed transcended the purely economic realm. Long affecting the EU by its sheer rise in the international system, China has gradually become an important security actor in the European neighbourhood and finally started to penetrate the Union itself. Brussels suddenly came to recognise that Beijing's foreign policy behaviour increasingly contradicted not only its interests, but also its sheer identity of a unique rules-based normative and economic power. The main conclusion is that the EU and its member states, including Lithuania, were thus provided with somewhat easier choices to their long-held dilemmas on a relationship with Asia in general and China in particular.

## **1. East Asia in Europe's Perceptions of Its Security**

The question of the impact that East Asia's rising powers make on Europe's security has usually focused on the developments in the world's most dynamic region rather than its countries' actions in the continent itself. Thus, with notable



but recent exception of China (see below), the vast majority of academic studies on this topic examined the EU's increasing activities on the other end of the Eurasian landmass in order to deal with fairly indirect security repercussions emanating from there. Instead of hard security, the European agenda towards Asia, particularly its north-eastern part, usually prioritised the improvement of economic relations, especially trade and investment. It was only since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that the EU and its member states have gradually developed a better understanding of East Asia's increasing strategic importance to their own prosperity. However, different from the US, Europe's approach to the region lacked any hard security-related commitments (Bersick 2014, 115–116). This is not surprising because Asia did not really feature as a place of pressing strategic concern for the EU given the immediate threats on its own doorstep in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (Merrett 2016, 68).

Nevertheless, in the foreword to the 2016 EU's Global Strategy the then High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini, asserted that one of the main ways to achieve the ambition of EU's strategic autonomy is to connect to "new players" in other regions of the world. The document itself explicitly states that peace and stability in Asia are a prerequisite for European prosperity and promises to deepen its economic diplomacy and scale-up the security role there. In order to make greater practical contributions to Asian security, the EU aims to (1) expand its partnerships, including on security, particularly with Japan, South Korea and Indonesia; (2) promote non-proliferation of the Korean peninsula; (3) uphold freedom of navigation and respect of international law in Asia's numerous maritime disputes; (4) help build maritime capacities and support an ASEAN-led regional security architecture; as well as (5) promote human rights and support democratic transitions such as in Myanmar (EU 2016, 4, 37–38).

In their assessment of the Global Strategy's implementation, three years later, the Europeans claim to be more engaged than ever on Asian security – from military cooperation with ASEAN, to support for Korean de-nuclearization (EU 2019, 48). Indeed, the most clear-cut example of the EU's security involvement in the (north-)eastern part of Asia so far has been its membership in the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO), which pursued the objective of a denuclearized peninsula but failed to achieve it in 2006 when North Korea conducted its first nuclear test. Discussions on shared security concerns have somewhat risen in prominence as the EU established "strategic partnerships" with all three other major countries in the region, Japan (2001), China (2003) and South Korea (2010). Finally, perceptive European scholars have showcased that their native continent has quite a large impact on Asian security through arms exports and transfers of dual-use technology or actually lack thereof (Duchâtel & Bromley 2017, 1). Indeed, the EU has imposed arms embargoes on two East Asian countries, China (1989–) and North Korea (2006–).

With a recent exception of China, even less noted has been the East Asian secondary countries' impact on security in Europe and its immediate neighbourhood. Japan, as the former region's only genuine democracy during



the Cold War, established a security dialogue with the European Economic Community (EEC) as early as 1959 and has contributed to the reconstruction of the Western Balkans/Former Yugoslavia since the mid-1990s (Mykal 2011, 203). The EU has actively cooperated with China, Japan and South Korea in the area of maritime security, particularly counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden for a decade now. These common efforts have facilitated friendly visits of the ships representing the three respective Asian navies to various European ports and substantiated the creation of Japanese (2011–) and Chinese (2017–) military bases, the only ones abroad for both of them, in strategically significant Djibouti. It is Beijing, however, that clearly stands out in the whole of Asia as the security actor with utmost concern for the EU today. The rest of the article thus deals with China's rapidly increasing profile in Europe, but a proper understanding of this process arguably necessitates a brief discussion of its complex domestic context.

## **2. The Domestic Context of China's Rise Today**

The PRC has just celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2019. This occasion was preceded by oddly numerous others marking among them a hundred years since the May Fourth Movement that highlighted the power of Chinese nationalism and provided a stepping stone for the subsequent creation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921, a full forty operational years since the “reform and opening-up” was initiated by Deng Xiaoping in December 1978, and thirty years since the Tiananmen Square protests that created the largest challenge to the one-party state ever since its proclamation by Mao Zedong in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Throughout the post-Maoist period, China experienced a historically unprecedented transformation from a poor, largely agricultural and autarchic country into the world's second most powerful national economy. In a span of only forty years, it has become the largest producer, trader, foreign exchange reserves holder and natural resources consumer on the planet, while the size of its economy has already exceeded that of the US if measured in terms of purchasing power parity. Equally remarkable is the fact that China has achieved this as a one-party state led by the 90 million-strong CCP, the world's largest deeply-institutionalised<sup>4</sup> political organisation by far.

Since 2012, at the helm of the CCP has been its General Secretary (and the PRC President) Xi Jinping, widely assumed to be China's most powerful leader since Deng or even Mao due to his successful centralisation and personalisation of national politics, including getting rid of term limits for his own position. It was he who proclaimed the BRI mega-project of infrastructural development across Eurasia in 2013, and it was he who would rule China during the momentous 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CCP's creation and the country's emergence as the world's largest economy by any single criterion a short while after.

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4 India's governing Bharatiya Janata Party is larger in membership, but the requirements and procedures to become part of it are incomparably easier than in the case of the CCP.

It has been largely agreed upon that the major shift in China's international conduct has accelerated since Xi's ascent to the top of the country's complex political system. Apparently encouraged by the immediate negative impact of the global financial crisis on the West in general and the US in particular, as well as its own developmental achievements symbolised by the successful conduct of the 2008 Summer Olympics, Beijing became more confident in reacting to domestic security concerns and more assertive in its international territorial disputes, as shown by rapidly increasing tensions with Japan around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea (September 2010) and with the Philippines around the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea (April 2012). Meanwhile Beijing's only *de jure* ally,<sup>5</sup> North Korea, continued to rapidly develop its nuclear arms by conducting its second nuclear test (May 2009) building up on the previous successes of the first one in October 2006. Hence, as Xi became the *de facto* leader of China in November 2012, his huge and complex country seemed to be in a less secure environment in comparison to one that his immediate predecessor Hu Jintao found a decade earlier.

The obvious difference with the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was China's own tremendously increased power and capabilities that were instrumental in convincing Xi to remain committed to such a foreign policy shift. Under the new General Secretary his country seems to be shedding the authoritative dictum by the late Deng to "hide brightness and nurture obscurity", i.e. to bide time till the right circumstances emerge. Xi's conviction that the time to claim what supposedly was rightfully China's had indeed come was more than apparent by his proclamation of a condominium-like "new type of great power relations" with the US that contradicted Beijing's decades-old rhetoric prioritising multipolarity, the introduction of the BRI directed at Eurasia and Africa, and the surprising bid to lead economic globalisation voiced at Davos in January 2017.

The two fundamental lacking domestic ingredients on China's path to a comprehensive superpower have also been unprecedentedly addressed under Xi. The goal of a true economic superpower was intimately tied with the "Made in China 2025" plan proclaimed in 2015 that emphasised the need to become a leading high-tech nation in such fields as the pharmaceutical, automotive and aerospace industries, semiconductors, information technologies, robotics etc. The goal of a true military-strategic superpower was associated with rapid expansion of the world's second largest defence budget<sup>6</sup> that facilitated further impressive modernisation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the party-state's armed forces, following the principles of rapid reaction, "jointness" of command and power projection through genuine blue water navy as well as air and strategic missile forces, thus contradicting its embedded strategic culture that used to prioritise land warfare for centuries.<sup>7</sup> It was under Xi that China launched its

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5 Although China unilaterally removed the mutual defence clause from the respective treaty after the Cold War.

6 China's internal security budget is the largest in the world, however.

7 As is evident from the actual name of the PLA.

first indigenously built aircraft carrier<sup>8</sup> (April 2017) and opened its first de facto military base abroad in Djibouti (August 2017).

The usage of a disturbing mix of high-tech and semi-military means to solve China's numerous "problems of stateness" (Nathan & Scobell 2012) has particularly attracted the world's attention since Xi's rise to power. Indeed, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising has passed largely unnoticed within the country as Beijing managed to contain the wave of self-immolations by increasing its already overwhelming security presence and elaborate surveillance technologies on the whole plateau. Actually, perhaps for the first time in the history of PRC-watching, the issue of Tibet has been overtaken by neighbouring Xinjiang, where a panopticon-like network of the Kafkaesque "re-education camps" and high-tech control and surveillance infrastructure has been successfully imposed on the indigenous Sunni Muslim, mostly ethnic Uyghur, population. Arguably, China's conduct in its largest and most restive province provides a pattern to better understand the repercussions that the so-called "social credit system" might have in the rest of the country.

However, so far Xi has not been as successful dealing with the other two crucial "problems of stateness" as Taiwan democratically elected pro-independence political forces in early 2016 and the massive Hong Kong anti-extradition bill protests escalated in mid-2019. To sum up, China's increasingly volatile domestic problems create further dilemmas for the West in general and the EU in particular as they struggle to make a proper choice between normative and pragmatic imperatives in a complex relationship with the world's only clear-cut emerging superpower nowadays. The next section takes a look at how Brussels characterises the increasing impact of China on its security today.

### **3. China in Europe's Perceptions of Its Security**

According to the veteran American China-watcher, David Shambaugh, the PRC's rise to global power has probably been the single most important development in world affairs in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (2016, 3). However, until recently the Europeans lagged behind their transatlantic colleagues and allies in recognising this fact, especially in the field of non-economic security. Although the EEC and China established diplomatic relations back in 1975, with a major exception of the European post-1989 arms embargo, security questions were side-lined by economic agenda till the new millennium. Despite a push towards deepening their "strategic partnership", the European Commission (EC) started to perceive China as a strategic competitor in the economic realm as early as 2006. Both actors failed to agree on a joint statement finalising the tenth EU-China summit the following year, and in 2008, Beijing unilaterally called off the eleventh one because of a recent meeting that the then French President (serving in his capacity as the rotating President of the European Council at the time) Nicolas Sarkozy had with the Dalai Lama. As the Europeans began to suffer from the

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<sup>8</sup> China's first operational aircraft carrier was supplied by Ukraine. So was the case with its first ice-breaker and several of the world's largest military hovercrafts.

sovereign debt crisis, the Chinese increasingly considered them as representatives of “a power in relative decline”, while the EU’s own ambitious China Strategy Paper for 2007–2013 naturally failed to take a proper account of these new developments (Bersick 2014, 142–143).

In order to re-invigorate and upgrade their increasingly unbalanced relationship, both sides adopted the highest-level joint document guiding it, the EU–China 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation, in 2013. It was agreed back then that the two actors would develop their partnership through the three pillars directly underpinning their regular summit meetings, the annual High Level Strategic Dialogue among them. Some four years later, the respectable authors of the second “Power Audit of EU–China Relations” declared that the agreed Agenda 2020 for political and security cooperation had been fulfilled only minimally with human rights and humanitarian aid as the most disappointing areas (Godement & Vasselier 2017, 8). In fact, these scholars concluded that it was Beijing that drove this whole relationship, and, most importantly, that it had already become an insider in Europe.

Thus, a need for the EU’s own strategy towards its increasingly active and troublesome Asian partner was soon recognised in Brussels. At the time of this writing, the EU’s China policy continues to be defined by the documents adopted in 2016. In its Global Strategy, Brussels pledges to engage Beijing based on respect for the rule of law, both domestically and internationally. It aims to pursue a coherent approach to the latter’s connectivity drives westwards by maximising the potential of the EU–China Connectivity Platform and older Euro–Asian cooperation frameworks. The Strategy also stresses the EU’s willingness to deepen trade and investment with China, seeking a level playing field, appropriate intellectual property rights protection, greater cooperation on high-end technology, and dialogue on economic reform, human rights and climate action (EU 2016, 37–38).

The issue of the Chinese impact on European security is more thoroughly addressed in the EC’s “Elements for a new EU Strategy on China” (2016) that encourage Beijing’s active contribution to peace and security in the EU’s Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods in line with international law, and call for more common ground particularly on disarmament, non-proliferation, counter-terrorism and cyberspace, but also peacekeeping, conflict prevention and humanitarian affairs. Brussels aims for closer Chinese cooperation in major security hotspots for itself such as Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Libya, the refugee and migration challenge, and the overall settlement of the Middle East, as well as in more distant areas of concern, including Central Asia, North Korea and the disputed East and South China Seas. The document suggests that Africa offers the best opportunity for EU–China security cooperation, with the joint anti-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden providing a stepping stone for more of it onshore. On security issues within its own continent, Brussels explicitly calls for Beijing to be a partner in investing in the long-term viability and prosperity of Ukraine and in ensuring a stable, peaceful and rules-based Eastern European region to the benefit of all sides.

The “Conclusions” (2016) that the Council of the European Union (Council) provided for the “Elements” not only add to the whole policy framework for the EU’s engagement with China, but also go further in addressing Brussels’ most recent economic and increasingly security concern – Chinese investment in Europe. The document welcomes such activities, if they are in line with EU policies and legislation and based on reciprocity and free market principles. Brussels further pledges to pay particular attention to the potential risks of investment by enterprises which benefit from subsidies or other advantages given by the party-state. In essence, the China strategy, outlined in both the “Elements” and “Conclusions”, expresses Brussels’ awareness of Beijing’s ability to sow division within its ranks by default or design, and thus calls for a strong, clear, principled and unified voice in pursuing this relationship. Such a goal remains to be of outmost importance, as the EU has recently recognised that China rises into an “economic and technological superpower” and a “systemic competitor” to it (EU 2019, 15). The rest of the article would show that such competition has already transcended the purely economic realm, including in Europe itself.

#### **4. China’s Impact on Europe’s Security Today**

From the perspective of the global level of the international system, it has to be acknowledged that the multi-dimensional rise of China by default has an impact not only on Europe’s prosperity but also its security. Indeed, Beijing shares a lot of responsibility with both the established and some other (re-)emerging powers in making the current international environment less based on rules and thus unpredictable. Beijing’s deliberate dismissal of The Hague’s arbitration ruling on the South China Sea in 2016 is probably the most clear-cut example of its disregard for international law so far. One can expect more of such instances considering that, with a thoughtful exception of “sovereignty”, the Chinese deem today’s international legal norms and principles as inherently serving the interests of their Western authors.

China’s unprecedented activity across the globe has increasingly put it at odds with the EU not only in terms of economic competition for markets or resources but also security-wise. Despite the mutually valuable and effective cooperation on such security issues as anti-piracy or Iran, Beijing in effect has become a spoiler in reducing joint Western diplomatic and economic pressure on countries as varied as North Korea, Syria, Russia or Venezuela. Partly by default and partly by design, the dynamic and bold China is the main reason why Europe’s relative power (i.e. the actual proportion of it in material terms) in the international system is decreasing. Notably, the Sino–European foreign policy talks take place on third countries and areas that are part of the EU’s neighbourhood, and neglect the Asia-Pacific (Godement & Vasselier 2017, 21), thus strengthening the perception of Brussels being deliberately side-lined from global affairs.

Along with Moscow, Beijing also has emerged as the principal challenger to the EU’s cherished “normative power” worldwide. Since the Europeans have officially re-committed themselves to “maintaining [their] strong links with Hong Kong



and Macao and to promoting respect for the Basic Law” as well as to “continuing to develop [their] relations with Taiwan and to supporting the shared values underpinning its [democratic] system of governance” (Elements 2016), and, finally, expressed concerns on several occasions about security crackdowns in Tibet and Xinjiang, the stakes in the new round of the decades-long value-based debate have risen a lot for the Chinese leadership as well. Thus, there is no wonder that in mid-summer 2019, China’s ambassador to the UK took the unusual step of holding a press conference in London to admonish the British government for its position on the anti-extradition bill crisis in Hong Kong warning of possible “consequences” to bilateral relationship if it continued to “interfere” (The Economist 2019). One is left wondering about the future peculiar dilemmas that the UK will be faced with in its post-Brexit relationship with China.

On the sub-systemic regional level of analysis, China’s security-related activities first became apparent on the EU’s borders rather than within it. From the PLA’s military cooperation with Russia (see below), Belarus and even Ukraine to Beijing’s essentially pro-Moscow stance on the Crimea, inconsistent with its sovereignty-based foreign policy outlook, the Asian giant has gradually become an important security actor in the EU’s eastern neighbourhood. It also increasingly approached Europe from other directions. Deeply disturbed by the Arab Spring, China used the PLA ships and planes to successfully evacuate over 35,000 of its nationals from a war-torn Libya in 2011. The opening of a base in Djibouti has facilitated the PLA Navy’s (PLAN) activities not only in the western Indian Ocean and the Red Sea but also the Mediterranean. Finally, since 2012, China has rapidly become a relevant actor in the Arctic with the Pentagon recently reporting Denmark’s concern about Beijing’s interest in Greenland and its own warning of possible deployment of PLAN submarines in the world’s northernmost ocean (Reuters 2019).

A deeply worrying trend from the European perspective is that these Chinese advances have been facilitated by Russia. Indeed, it was an excuse of joint security cooperation that allowed the PLAN ships to enter the Black Sea for the first time, and later to participate in its first naval drills ever in both the Mediterranean (2015) and the Baltic (2017) Seas. With Russia’s consent, Chinese research and cargo vessels have been increasingly crossing the Arctic through the Northern Sea Route ever since the first such voyage in 2012 (Reuters 2012). In 2015, Moscow and Beijing pledged to cooperate in coordinating the development of their most important international integration initiatives, the Eurasian Economic Union and the BRI, respectively (Lo 2019, 10), although widely differing guiding principles would probably make major results hard to achieve.

On the EU’s own (supra-)national level of analysis, China’s security impact has been the most recent but also most disturbing trend. The evolution of the three decades-old arms embargo in the article’s research period provides a telling background to this story. In 2010, the then HR/VP Catherine Ashton recommended to the EU to drop it in order to boost relations with Beijing and “to remain relevant on the world stage” in general. Although the US factor was usually cited to explain the European decision to disregard this recommendation, the role of their Asian



partners, particularly Japan, was also important (Tunsjø 2015, 155–156).

Since then, the arms embargo has in effect become a non-issue for several notable reasons. First of all, disillusioned by the EU's supposed lack of backbone, Beijing itself effectively froze the problem in 2012 by simply stopping raising this question during bilateral summits and strategic dialogues with Brussels. More importantly, the embargo has not really worked that effectively due to a lack of strict legal provisions and thus different interpretations by the EU's individual member states. Although complete European weapons systems have not been supplied to China ever since 1989, important components for them have come through, with knowledgeable scholars citing technologies for submarines, sonar equipment or military helicopters. Indeed, the Chinese have focused on lifting the restrictions on exports of high-tech products, including those with military end-use, by cleverly tying it with the EU's burning goal of reducing its massive trade in goods deficit with their Asian peer (Duchâtel & Bromley 2017, 9), that reached a figure of €185 billion in 2018, almost matching Greece's whole nominal gross domestic product for that year.

Throughout the article's research period, such politisation and securitisation of the Sino–European economic affairs has become especially apparent in the field of investment. It was as early as 2009 that the then EU Industry Commissioner and Vice-President Antonio Tajani began testing the idea of establishing a special review board to scrutinise foreign investment in Europe. The timing, however, proved to be ill-conceived as the global financial crisis made the EU member states even more eager to attract investment from abroad, particularly China (Holslag 2015, 133–134). Although in 2018, Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in the EU-28 dropped over 50 percent to €17.3 billion from the peak of €37 billion in 2016, this decline was mostly related to Beijing's own increasing capital controls and mirrored global trends (Hanemann, Huotari & Kratz 2019, 8–9).

Ten years of unprecedented Chinese investment activity in Europe have highlighted two major security risks. The first is related to high-tech. As has already been mentioned, Xi's China has pledged to become a leading high-tech nation with rather clear dual-use implications. Besides such emerging technologies as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, quantum computing, big data, cloud computing or, more specifically, blockchain, Internet of Things, 5G and smart cities (Shi-Kupfer & Ohlberg 2019, 8), this strategy emphasises more “traditional” goals related to semiconductors, broadband communications, machine tools, space, aviation and shipbuilding. Outgoing FDI has secured a prominent role in these efforts, because China's focus is now on acquiring research and development capacities and human resources rather than simply copying technologies (Godement & Vasselier 2017, 42–43) as long used to be the case.

Aside from investing into seemingly non-sensitive European technology companies, such as Estonia's Taxify (today's Bolt), various Chinese entities have effectively used direct acquisitions or establishment of joint ventures to wisely circumvent the arms embargo. Anecdotal evidence points to Beijing's increased access to European dual-use aviation technologies through acquisitions of the German (Thielert Aircraft Engines in 2013), British (AIM Altitude in 2015)

and Spanish (Aritex in 2016) companies by the state-owned Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC). Joint ventures were allegedly used to acquire sensitive shipbuilding technology from Finnish (Wärtsilä) and German (Dornier Seawings) companies (Duchâtel & Bromley 2017, 10–11). European scholars have taken notice of more complex designs covering both these means, as when the Chinese first bought a controlling stake in one Italian shipbuilding company (Ferretti in 2012) and later concluded a construction and technology transfer agreement with another (Fincantieri in 2017), finally leading to a cooperation agreement between the two that included the joint development of military vessels (Godement & Vasselier 2017, 41–42).

Another security risk from China's investments in Europe derives from its interest in critical transportation, energy and telecommunications infrastructure. Since the state-owned giant China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) established itself in the Greek container port of Piraeus in 2009, the Chinese have expressed interest in pretty much any single European port of significance, and successfully acquired some of them. The trend seems to be extending to other types of transportation infrastructure. In 2017, the HNA Group acquired 82.5 percent of the German Frankfurt-Hahn airport, a former US military base during the Cold War (Financial Times 2017). At the time of this writing, the state-owned China General Nuclear Power Group (CGN) is attempting to enter into nuclear-reactor construction agreements in the UK and Romania.

Nothing, however, compares in intensity of China-related security debates today to the role of its company built on the intersection between high-tech and critical infrastructure, Huawei. Along with its software (Alibaba and Tencent) and hardware (ZTE) state-backed peers, China's foremost "national champion" has already become involved Europe-wide in telecommunications networks, data centres or online payment systems, and emerged as a global trend-setter in the crucial 5G technology (Shi-Kupfer & Ohlberg 2019, 8–9). Worried about its military origins and alleged connections to the party-state, the British and French governments had already blocked Huawei's most sensitive acquisition and equipment expansion plans on at least two occasions (Le Corre & Sepulchre 2016, 111, 126) before the North American-inspired twist of this saga in late 2018. Barely six weeks after the arrest of the company's chief financial officer (and the daughter of its founder) for fraud in Canada at the request of the US, Poland announced that two people working on a local 5G Huawei network had been detained on spying charges (BBC 2019).

It is no wonder that Europeans have recently started to pay more attention to Chinese investment based on the fear of losing their economic competitiveness in general and national security grounds in particular. During the 2016 "investment raid" on Germany, its government at the request of the US halted the sale of one technology company (Aixtron) and forced another (KUKA) to sell off its particularly sensitive aeronautics division before purchase by China (Godement & Vasselier 2017, 52–53). Ever since, numerous European governments – including Germany, France and the UK – have proposed or passed new legislation that increases the scrutiny of foreign mergers and acquisitions (M&A) for potential national security

risks. In November 2018, the EU agreed to adopt a new investment screening framework of its own. China is expected to be particularly targeted by it, because at least one of the three criteria for a “no-go” covered an estimated 82 percent of Chinese M&A transactions in Europe in 2018 (Hanemann, Huotari & Kratz 2019).

Moreover, the challenge of sensitive technology transfer to China has been connected with other security issues, both from the harder and softer sides of the spectrum. In the former case, Beijing has been accused of numerous cyberattacks on the EU and its member states as well as more traditional espionage activities as recently showcased by Warsaw's Huawei episode. On the softer side of security, China is gradually increasing its undue influence on European public decision-making, the media and even education. In reaction to that worrisome trend, European universities that host the often-mentioned Confucius institutes need to ensure their own academic freedom and autonomy while their governments take account of the fact that substantial numbers of new foreign Chinese language speakers will probably have been trained with the party-state methods and course material. The universities and other research institutions should also focus on potential security implications of their growing scientific exchanges and technological cooperation with Chinese entities (Godement & Vasselier 2017, 60, 80–81).

Finally, it has to be acknowledged that China's impact on Eastern and Central European security is somewhat peculiar. Although there is a widely-held assumption that this sub-region is particularly prone to Beijing's influence, its EU member states have yet to attract truly significant Chinese M&A activity, accounting for only 1.5 percent of their investment in the Union in 2018 (Hanemann, Huotari & Kratz 2019, 11). The common “divide and rule” charge against China's actions there, however, has some substance, especially if Greece were to be included into the (sub)region's definition following Beijing's curious 2019 decision to invite Athens to its foremost cooperation format there (and thus make it the so-called “17+1”). Despite the fact that Hungarian, Czech or Greek political leaders have indeed supported China on several occasions in contradiction to the EU's position, their free agency on its behalf actually differs from many Western European colleagues by degree, not that much in kind. The requisite call for the continent's unity in dealing with China and Asia in general has to account for legitimate Eastern European wishes to succeed.

## **Conclusion**

East Asia is rapidly becoming a region with the largest concentration of material power, economic or military, worldwide, and deeply globalised Europe would sure feel more repercussions of this continuing process. From intellectual origins of the Chinese party-state's current official ideology to North Korea's Kim Jong-un's allegedly rich experience in Switzerland, the Europeans often fail to take proper account of their influence, positive or sometimes even negative, on contemporary East Asians. In some sense, thus, the current impact of the later on the former is re-active, and China fits this pattern well.

The global financial crisis along with its European derivative that marked the

beginning of this article's research period were seen in Beijing as kickstarting the beginning of the end of the West in general and the EU in particular, that would finalise its return to the supposedly rightful and natural predominant position in the world affairs. Long affecting the other end of the Eurasian landmass by its sheer rise in the international system, China has gradually become an important security actor in the European neighbourhood and finally started to penetrate the Union itself.

The EU suddenly came to recognise that Beijing's foreign policy behaviour increasingly contradicted not only its interests, but also its sheer identity of a unique rules-based normative and economic power. Since Xi's consolidation of power, China has gradually become Europe's strategic competitor way beyond the purely economic realm. Due to Beijing's ambitious plan of becoming a high-tech superpower by pretty much any means possible in order to fulfil Xi's "Chinese dream", the Sino-European economic affairs increasingly remind a nascent security dilemma. The main fear is that through further technology transfer and market access without level-playing field Europe itself would provide the Chinese with the means targeting its own long-term competitiveness, prosperity, unity and, thus, security. The worst-case scenario thus would mean the ageing continent's rapid marginalisation in an era of renewed great power politics.

Luckily, such securitisation of bilateral economic interaction, along with troubling developments in China itself ranging from Xinjiang to Hong Kong, and, finally, the Sino-American "trade war", all collectively forced the EU and many member states to re-consider most of the long-held dilemmas in their relationship with the Asian emerging superpower. Even despite apparent suspicions between major European countries and Trump's America, both sides seem to come to an agreement that China has become a major problem for them all, thus creating an additional basis for trans-Atlantic cooperation. Similarly, current circumstances provide the EU with a good opportunity to re-balance its still predominant pragmatic tilt in the China policy with more values-based normativity as well as better security relations with democratic partners in Asia. The important thing is to have in mind that Beijing's emergence in the EU security-wise was greatly facilitated by Moscow, and European unity is thus required in dealing with them both.

Lithuania is faced with many of the dilemmas mentioned previously. In comparison to most of its EU and NATO colleagues being a relative late comer in its dealings with Asia in general and China in particular, it can and should take advantage of the lessons learned elsewhere. As a small but economically open state in a very sensitive part of the continent, it is deeply interested in preservation of international law and normative integrity as well as closer contacts with the world's most dynamic region at the same time. However, economic pragmatism should not outweigh comprehensive security and normative imperatives as the country's rich experience with Russia has shown on many occasions. Lithuania needs to be fully aware that it is precisely Beijing that has most increased Moscow's room for manoeuvre in international politics since the kick-off of the Ukrainian crisis, and

that the two partners' security cooperation and mutual learning, including that of hybrid influencing and warfare, have indeed become unprecedented.

Neither should Lithuania underestimate the Chinese willingness to target the perceived "soft underbelly" of both the EU and NATO for reasons largely unrelated to the country itself. China's conduct worldwide and in Europe has already revealed that the strategically crucial port of Klaipėda and other pieces of Lithuania's critical infrastructure should be off limits to Asia's emerging superpower. Lithuanian policy makers and entrepreneurs are also well advised to take full account of Beijing's ambitions to become a leading high-tech powerhouse when offering their expertise in potentially dual-use sectors, ranging from lasers to fintech, or using Huawei's equipment in truly sensitive areas. The issue here is not only economic but also remarkably moral as China's politically technogenic domestic context has already shown.

All of this does not mean that Lithuanians should not learn more about or deal with the Chinese. Quite to the contrary, but they also need to remember that the long-promised decline of the West, if ever to finalise, might take a lot more time than Beijing expects, and that the rise of Asia in any case is not only about its current emerging superpower but also numerous competitors to it, with which the Europeans have much more in common. More intensive bilateral and perhaps even multilateral relations, including security-wise, with and mutual learning from major friendly actors in Northeast Asia (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) and beyond (Australia, India) would definitely help Lithuania to ensure its prosperity without sacrificing security and moral integrity.

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## EUROPEAN DEFENCE VERSION 2.0: WHAT DOES IT OFFER FOR LITHUANIA?

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### Introduction

Since the launch of the European Union (EU) Global Strategy in 2016, the speed and substance of the progress in the EU security and defence policy has been impressive. A number of external and internal circumstances have created a window of opportunity for the EU to integrate faster and more substantially in the area of security and defence. A deteriorating security environment in the EU vicinity both East and South, contradicting messages of the US President Donald Trump about the prospects of NATO and BREXIT have urged Europeans to consider taking more responsibility for their security. The EU Global Strategy established the foundation for several projects, which might become an important trigger for further integration in defence. It was followed by the Security and Defence Implementation Plan (SDIP) providing concrete measures for turning ideas of the EUGS into action. The creation of European Defence Fund (EDF) for the first time in EU history linking the EU Commission funds with defence projects was proposed. It was an important innovation creating financial incentives for the frontrunners in the defence innovation and integration which did not exist previously. Prior instruments aiming to develop defence capabilities such as the Headline Goal were not implemented fully: the lack of financial incentives and binding instruments were among the main obstacles.

A process of a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) aiming to foster capability development, to address shortfalls and to deepen cooperation and coherence has been proposed in 2016. National Implementation Plans (NIPs) linked to CARD defined national goals in defence development, moreover commitments set in the NIPs are of the binding nature. NIPs were embedded in the framework of Permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) another innovation which although launched in the Lisbon Treaty (Art. 42.6) was not applied until recently.<sup>9</sup> Implementation of CARD is closely related to the capability development goals set by the EU and might benefit from already functioning EU institutions such as the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the EU Military Staff (EUMS). All these initiatives as well as the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), an intermediary version of a long-disputed EU command structures, are the parts of a new EU's comprehensive defence package. Another important innovation in

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<sup>9</sup> 25 member states have joined PESCO in 2017 (Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315, 2017) and committed to more binding defence goals.

the EU security and defence policy are PESCO projects. Member states are invited to propose projects in various defence-related fields ranging from training to the development of cyber capabilities. PESCO projects create opportunities for the member states to cooperate and develop the capabilities necessary both for the EU and for the national purposes of the member states. These projects are eligible for EU funding. Although new European defence initiatives are still in the development phase and their ultimate success is not guaranteed, it should be noted that one of the potential impetus for their sustainable progress is a holistic approach – all of them are embedded into a quite comprehensive structure which entails legal basis, institutions and finances. As S. Biscop, for a number of years closely following CSDP progress, observes: “Success is obviously not guaranteed but seems more likely in this case than in the past” (Biscop, 2018).

Apart from the internal EU developments, another impetus for the progress might come from the EU NATO rapprochement in 2016. Improved cooperation between two organisations on the political level on one hand might reassure those member states who are anxious about the duplication of forces and undermining of NATO; on the other hand, it opens the door for better coordination of efforts and cooperation in addressing new security challenges. New areas of cooperation proposed on the basis of the Joint Declarations of 2016 and 2017 open the ground for the potential solution of the hybrid challenges, which became one of the most pressing security issues in Europe over the past years.

New developments in CSDP open a window of opportunity for the states like Lithuania which, for a number of years, have been quite sceptic vis-à-vis European defence projects: first of all, due to a strong emphasis on NATO primacy in their security policies; second, because of the slow progress within CSDP. In the face of changing security environment, emerging new threats and potential transatlantic tensions, Lithuania has become more open towards CSDP. It might be argued that the Lithuanian position on European defence evolved during past years has slightly changed from a cautious to a “pragmatic scepticism”, which allows the opportunity to enhance Lithuanian involvement in CSDP. Numerous challenges such as the lack of more decisive steps towards integration (Deubner, 2018), diverging visions of PESCO and different national interests still remain; the substance and speed of the new developments give CSDP a chance. The article explores new developments in European defence with the aim to define the main challenges and opportunities for Lithuanian security policy.

## **1. European defence version 2.0**

For a number of years, the EU has been perceived as a political body dedicated to handling economic, political and societal issues of its member states. This attitude still prevails in the number of member states and in Lithuania among them. Although there is a general high support for the EU in the Baltic states, 72 per cent of Lithuanians, 60 per cent of Estonians and 51 per cent of Latvians trust the EU (EU average 44 per cent) (Spring 2019 Standard Eurobarometer), the EU is not considered a security actor neither by political nor military elites.

After double accession to the EU and NATO, each organisation has been assigned quite distinct roles in the Baltics: NATO, with strong US leadership, had to ensure collective defence against a potential Russian threat and the EU had to help to secure economic welfare. This labour division has been institutionalised and consolidated in the security documents. Lithuanian Military Strategy maintains that “Lithuanian security is ensured by its membership in NATO, the US military presence in Europe and in the region”; it then adds that “membership in the EU provides additional security guarantees” (Lietuvos Respublikos Karinė strategija, 2016). Similar perceptions are prevailing in Latvia and Estonia, Poland and, to a certain extent, in the Nordic countries – even in Finland and Sweden, which are not the members of NATO but have strong links with the US.

Since the early nineties when CSDP was launched, the EU has slowly but determinately evolved as a security organisation. It has managed to create a legal basis and to develop a number of institutions operating in the security and defence field. Since the nineties, the EU has managed to execute over 30 security missions and operations (European External Action Service, 2019). However, it might be argued that the definition of the EU as a security organisation could be attributed to the softer side of the security concept: there were 25 civilian missions and only 9 military missions. The military dimension of CSDP though has been under constant criticism since its establishment – one of the major challenges being a lack of military capabilities. The lack of deployable, well-equipped personnel became obvious during the conflicts in the Balkans and has not been diminished substantially ever since. In 2016, from a total of 1.5 million armed forces personnel in the 28 member states, the EU has deployed only 24,343 (1.6 per cent) to CSDP, NATO, UN, national and coalition operations (Bund, Fiott, Tardy, & Stanley-Lockman, 2017). The inability to generate deployable forces makes the EU reliant on the US military capabilities in ensuring its security.

Capability challenge has been addressed by the EU on a number of occasions and certain measures to solve it were proposed (Headline Goal 2003 (Helsinki) and Headline Goal 2010).<sup>10</sup> By 2010, member states intended to be able to respond with rapid and decisive action when needed and, if possible, to be able to prevent crises in deteriorating situations – the action being either a stand-alone force or a part of a larger operation. The European Council communiqué of 17-18 June 2004 noted that “As indicated by the European Security Strategy, this might also include joint disarmament operations, the support for third countries in combating terrorism and security sector reform” (European Parliament, 2004). The Headline Goal 2010 was built on the European Security Strategy of 2003 and the Helsinki Headline Goal, which aimed at member states being able to deploy rapidly and “sustain forces capable of the full range of Petersberg Tasks as set out in the Amsterdam Treaty” (Lindley-French, 2005). Although the policy, legal basis and institutions for the capability development were in place, the Headline Goal 2010 did not manage to achieve its purpose, as similarly to the previous attempts,

<sup>10</sup> With the aim of engaging in humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management and peacekeeping, member states were seeking a coherent and overarching approach addressing existing gaps in the European Security Strategy (European Parliament, 2004).

the whole process was based on an exclusively voluntary basis, whereas collective top-down steering was needed in order to address significant shortfalls (Coelmont & Biscop, 2010). Moreover, political and financial incentives for the member states and binding commitments were missing.

In this respect, the innovations that were proposed in European defence after 2016 are addressing the obstacles that were preventing capability development in the previous decades. Their ambition and scope to push CSDP onto the next level allow one to talk about a qualitatively new version of the European defence.

First of all, the launch of the European Defence Fund (EDF) could be considered as a major innovation connecting defence projects with the EU financial instruments and ensuring financial incentives to invest in defence and cooperate for the member states. On the European level, it will allow to better coordinate national investment in defence research, standardisation and interoperability (European Defence Agency, 2019). It will also help to build up the European defence industry avoiding wasting money, which according to the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, adds up from 25 billion to 100 billion euros every year (Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, 2018). Moreover, defence-related matters for the first time are becoming a part of the EU Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), with a definite sum reserved for defence for 2021-2027. The EU would be offering up to 90 million euros before 2019 for research and 500 million euros for the years 2019 and 2020 for development and acquisition in the framework of EDF (European Commission, 2017). These efforts attempt to create opportunities for member states to identify their needs in defence and to receive the needed funding from the EU.

A second very important innovation is the coordination of efforts and lining these efforts with the strategic goals ensured by the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) initiated in 2017 and National Implementation Plans (NIPs). CARD is meant to ensure better coordination of member states' defence developments identifying the niches which lack coordination and cooperation the most. A reporting system within CARD aims to promote systematic data collection; however, member states retain the right to choose which information to share and which to withhold. NIPs are enshrined in the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) agreement (Notification on Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) to the Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2017) and is a tool to tie European needs to national goals as well as to ensure binding commitments. A country's NIP is a complete set of relevant data including roadmaps, where applicable, reflecting intermediate objectives and milestones provided annually in order to help assess the overall picture in the EU. Member states outline how they will meet more binding commitments, specifying how they will fulfil the more precise objectives that are to be set at each phase. The monitoring process requires that the participating member states formulate their NIPs as precisely as possible (Nováky, 2018). It should be noted that NIPs are a part of a comprehensive strategy, which helps to better identify the shortfalls and necessary improvements and tie them with necessary funds; in addition, NIPs represent binding commitments for member states. However, there are still doubts

about what happens if the commitment is broken and a member state does not implement what it has been promising. One of the potential restrictions could be a possibility of being excluded from further PESCO activities, but this option is to be regarded with a degree of scepticism as it is still not clear if it would be supported by the member states.

The third innovation, which is meant to address a capability issue, is the reinvigoration of PESCO, a clause defined in Article 42(6) of the Lisbon Treaty, which was meant to enable closer integration of able and willing member states in the area of defence. The importance of PESCO is extensive as, on one hand, it creates binding commitments for member states through NIPs (a part of PESCO memorandum); on the other hand, it allows the participating EU member states to access funds in order to invest into capability development and cooperation. Moreover, PESCO capability-oriented projects open the opportunity to develop the capabilities needed nationally and at the EU level, again linking them to EDF. PESCO projects, which come in a form of proposals from member states, have created the framework for the member states to find their own place in the European defence. Defence Policy Director of the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania Robertas Šapronas argues that PESCO projects “should energise defence capability development in Europe to respond to the new security environment and to strengthen the European pillar of NATO” (Šapronas, 2018).

Currently, 47 projects have already been launched and some of them are progressing quite well. The areas of PESCO projects vary – they are organised into groups of training and facilities, land, formations and systems, maritime, air and systems, enabling and joint functions, space and cyber and C4ISR. Lithuania has launched a project in the last group – Cyber Rapid Response Teams and Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security – and also takes part in two other projects. One of the challenges for the implementation of these projects is the new format where the final rules, deadlines and overall system has yet to be decided as it develops. Moreover, PESCO projects in their essence are based on a bottom-up approach, whereas all other initiatives are organised on the top-down basis. The EU ability to match these two approaches and to ensure a comprehensive and smooth process will be a litmus test for a further progress in European defence.

The final additions to the new version of European defence are related to boosting planning and operational capacities within the EU to conduct military operations. The launch of the separate EU military headquarters for a long time has been a taboo, in particular opposed by the UK. However, partly due to BREXIT and a quite reluctant participation of the UK in CSDP discussions, Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), which is a permanent operational headquarters for military operations up to 2500 troops, was finally launched in 2017. It commands 3 non-executive missions executed under the CSDP at the moment: the EU Training Missions (EUTM) in Mali, Somali and the Central African Republic (European Defence Agency, 2019). Together with the already existing Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC), MPCC becomes a part of an integrated system designed to improve the ability of the EU to observe



the close by environment, plan its interference and use its resources while reacting.

The EU has been quite successful in creating a fairly integrated new version of European defence since 2016. Great progress can be seen in incorporating documents, institutions and funds, which make it possible to address the newest security and defence challenges such as hybrid threats and to develop the needed capabilities. Yet the success of further implementation of this version is still not guaranteed. A lot will depend on the success of the reforms in the EU but also on the political will to implement those reforms at the member states.

## **2. New tools, same disagreements**

One of the biggest challenges for further development of the new initiatives might turn out to be the diverging interests of member states which arise from different political interests, evaluation of threats and strategic cultures. Most of them have quite different views on what these initiatives exactly mean and how they should evolve. For instance, from the very start of the discussions on PESCO, French and German visions of it have parted. Different interests regarding necessary capabilities, the degree of “Europeanisation” in the field of the defence industry might slow down various processes. Another potential challenge is the implication of the new developments on the transatlantic relations. PESCO has recently become one more among others in the list of transatlantic disputes. The US ambassador to NATO, Kay Bailey Hutchinson, has warned Europeans that the EU cooperation projects should not become a mask for European protectionism: “we want Europeans to have capabilities and strength, but not to fence off American products, of course” (Mehta, 2018). PESCO has received a lot of criticism regarding the conditions for the non-EU participants, it involves the US, but also other EU partners. At the same time, there is a criticism in some states that the EU once again is choosing a softer-than-necessary approach to solve the significant fall-backs of the Union’s security and defence area and this is not the right option (Koenig & Walter-Franke, 2017).

Even though Eurobarometer surveys demonstrate an overall positive attitude to a common security and defence policy among EU member states with 75 per cent of respondents being in favour of it (European Commission, 2017), diverse geopolitical circumstances and differing strategic cultures of the EU’s member states result in rather divergent narratives on where this policy has to head to. It might be argued that three extremes are represented by the UK, France and Germany; moreover, these visions are backed by a relative degree of necessary political support. Arguably, the UK version is currently the weakest one due to Brexit, but its general ideas still retain support in many countries (Baltic and Nordic states, Poland). The UK has always been CSDP sceptic, blocking various initiatives which are mostly connected to conduct and operability development. France is on the other side of extreme, with an aspiration to create more autonomy for the EU in the matters of defence, to reinforce its capacities to act in Africa. Germany is one of the supporters of a moderate approach, with the emphasis on civilian capacities and combining the functions of NATO and the EU.

Negotiations on PESCO have illustrated the differences between Germany

and France. Germany was advocating for all-inclusive PESCO, which has deviated from the Lisbon Treaty, and the launch of Framework Nation Concept in the NATO context, leaving the European army far down on the priorities list. Berlin had many supporters among member states, including countries from Eastern, Central and Northern Europe, which see the deterrence of Russia as a security policy priority. France was arguing for a direct interpretation of Article 42(6) of the Lisbon Treaty on the European Union (TEU) (Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, 2008), which meant that PESCO should become an exclusive club for those willing and able to integrate on a higher level in the area of defence. Certain requirements would be set for those willing to join PESCO, and the rest would have to be left behind.

The all-inclusive model proposed by Berlin was a more acceptable alternative for most of the member states. 23 countries signed the agreement on establishing PESCO in 2017 and two more joined afterwards (the UK, Denmark and Malta did not take part). It might be argued that, to a certain extent, the final version of PESCO has managed to include both visions the French one aiming for ambitiousness and the German demanding inclusivity. But France, not satisfied with the final version of PESCO, had launched a separate defence cooperation project outside the auspices of the EU – the European Intervention Initiative with nine other states in it (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK), which reflects better its ideas on how PESCO should have been organised. European Intervention Initiative (E2I) aims to develop a common strategic culture and to enable its member states to act together militarily outside the existing structures such as NATO or the EU (Mauro, 2018).

Another important dividing line that could hamper further implementation of a new European defence version is a South-East division in threat perceptions: the Eastern member states of the EU are pre-occupied with conventional or hybrid threats coming from Russia, and the Southern states fear uncontrolled migration the most. This division, on one hand, creates divergent demands on what capabilities and regions should be prioritised. On the other hand, it intersects with another division – positions on the importance of transatlantic link. Those that prioritise the deterrence of Russia in their security policies tend to rely on the need for military security solutions and importance of the US presence in Europe, and those who are more pre-occupied with the migration challenge tend to focus more on Africa and softer security instruments. Due to the significant military imbalance between Russia and NATO on the Eastern borders of the EU, as Sven Sakkov, Director of the International Center for Defence and Security (ICDS), argues that in the Baltic Sea region “Russia is at its strongest and NATO at its weakest, with the bulk of forces far away” (Marson & Grove, 2019); for those countries, the US military presence in the region is indispensable. Europeans lack the necessary capabilities – in particular, those that could be deployed on a short notice and conduct Cold War-type operations. Moreover, decision-making procedures to deploy those capabilities in Europe are very cumbersome and take time. The prioritisation of US and NATO in their security policies over the EU explains the general long-term CSDP scepticism in these countries, which rests on a belief

that the development of CSDP should be based on three standards for judgement defined by the former US State Secretary Madeline Albright – non-delinking, non-duplication and non-discrimination against non-EU NATO members (3Ds) (Secretary Albright’s remarks to the North Atlantic Council ministerial meeting, 1998) and all new initiatives are judged accordingly. The criticism towards PESCO on the part of the US will have an impact on the position of these countries. The US ambassador to NATO, Kay Bailey Hutchinson, indicated that the EU cooperation should not become a mask for European protectionism: “we want Europeans to have capabilities and strength, but not to fence off American products, of course” (Mehta, 2018). PESCO has received a lot of criticism regarding the conditions for the non-EU participants; it involves the US, but also other EU partners.

### **3. Lithuanian pragmatic scepticism towards the European defence**

Although Lithuanian society is very supportive towards European defence: 87 per cent of Lithuanians support CSDP (which is above 75 per cent of the EU average) and 71 per cent of is also in favour of the European Army (Special Eurobarometer Report 461, 2017); on the other hand, at the political level, Lithuania is considered among the most CSDP-sceptic member states not willing to grant the EU more power on defence matters (Gotkowska, 2017) and insisting on clearly-defined NATO primacy in European defence. Since its accession to the EU, Lithuania has been participating in CSDP and taking part in the EU’s civilian military operations;<sup>11</sup> yet in comparison with its international deployments elsewhere (NATO, international coalitions), involvement in the EU military operations is fairly nominal, accounting for one or several officers.

It might be argued though that the position of Lithuania on European defence has slightly changed recently to the one which allows the opportunity to enhance Lithuanian involvement in CSDP. One of the reasons for this change was BREXIT. Losing a strong ally opposing major development in CSDP makes Lithuania and other CSDP-sceptics less willing to battle initiatives led by France and Germany. There is still a strong opposition towards the creation of European army and scepticism regarding European strategic autonomy among Lithuanian security elites, but the general political climate is more favourable. Another reason that contributed to a more positive attitude towards CSDP – was the revival of CSDP after 2016 and an emerging niche for a new type of capabilities that could be developed by the EU. Lithuania perceives PESCO and its link with the EDF as an opportunity to strengthen European military capabilities and by extension – transatlantic link. Former Defence Adviser for EU Affairs at the Permanent Representation of Lithuania, Margiris Abukevicius, argues that Lithuania in particular welcomed binding commitments outlined in Annex II of the Notification on PESCO, viewing them as an important tool to step by step ensure the improvement of the European military capabilities (Abukevicius, 2018), which are also essential for NATO.

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<sup>11</sup> Currently, Lithuanian officers take part in the EU Training mission in Mali, EU NAVFOR Atalanta, EU NAVFOR MED SOPHIA, EU Training mission RCA (Lietuvos Respublikos Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2019).

Heavily investing in the defence after the annexation of Crimea, Lithuania stands above the average of the EU level in terms of defence spending and the investment in the acquisitions. Lithuanian armed forces have experience and a good record of participation in international military operations. Therefore, PESCO and EDF are primarily seen as the opportunity to improve European capabilities in general, rather than those of their own. One of the major concerns in Lithuania regarding the implementation of the review processes is related to the non-duplication judgement criteria; CARD, NIPs, NATO NDDP should be synchronised and not require additional bureaucratic burden.

The value added of PESCO for Lithuania is also seen as the framework to develop the necessary capabilities to address hybrid threats (Šešelgytė, 2018), which became a key security challenge in the region. Lithuania joined PESCO in 2017 and leads a project on the creation of Cyber Rapid Response Teams and Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security. Together with the rest of PESCO members, it participates in the Dutch-led Military Mobility project as well (Lietuvos Respublikos Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2018). By proposing a project aimed to develop additional cyber capabilities, Lithuania addresses the need for those capabilities both on the national as well European level. The speed of the implementation of the project (it is one of the fastest progressing PESCO projects) demonstrates the commitment of Lithuania to PESCO and the EU defence, and at the same time, it also defines the mission of European defence, how Lithuania sees it – to contribute to the development of the capabilities aimed to address hybrid threats and by extension to complement NATO. Military Mobility, another PESCO project that Lithuania takes part in, is aimed at identifying legal and infrastructural challenges for the military mobility within the EU, which is particularly important to Lithuania, whose defence depends substantially on the rapid and smooth reinforcements of the allies. The Action Plan on Military Mobility and the new Military Mobility Programme signed by 23 member states were recently developed (European Defence Agency, 2019). The European Commission has announced that it would “call for a €6.5 billion investment in military mobility under its proposals for the Connecting Europe Facility to be negotiated as part of the next MFF 2021-2027” (Fiott, 2019). Close EU - NATO cooperation in implementing military mobility initiatives should be considered as an additional advantage of the project.

Notification on PESCO among other initiatives also envisions “Europeanisation” of the defence industry and defence procurements. The aim of this process is to strengthen the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB), to benefit from economy of scales and to make European capabilities more uniform. (European Commission, 2019). A financial pool of around €500 million is foreseen to co-finance the joint development of defence products and technologies. This innovation would allow the European defence industry to increase its productivity; however, due to the restrictions for the production of non-EU member states, it might have an impact on the transatlantic link. France, Italy, Germany, Poland and Sweden will most likely benefit from this initiative as they have the largest defence industries (Roth, 2017) and therefore the largest companies with which to compete. France and Germany provide their defence companies with subsidies

allowing them to remain the market's front-runners.

Although Lithuanian decision-makers do not oppose "Europeanisation" of the defence market in general, participation in the related PESCO initiatives might be hampered due to particularities of defence industry and procurement in Lithuania. The Lithuanian defence industry is small, relatively young, niche oriented and essentially private. On one hand, it could be viewed as an advantage as Lithuania is not limited by the needs to protect the national infrastructure and production as many other EU countries and therefore might be more flexible to participate in various European projects. On the other hand, the incentives and capacity to participate in European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) are quite low. Main obstacles preventing them from being more active are a lack of knowledge and experience, high administrative costs, relatively small overall profits (due to small size), protectionism of big states' defence industries (Šiaučiulis, 2018). A state does not have a strong role in mediating between private industry companies and international institutions or foreign contractors, therefore companies are searching for the partners on the individual basis.

Due to the limited resources, Lithuania relies on an "opportunity-based" defence procurement method (Šiaučiulis, 2018), which is driven by the amount of the available budget, the needs of the armed forces, accessibility of products for a certain price in the market and political choices. This method makes procurement less coordinated, ad hoc and very dependent on the external circumstances. Defence procurements over the years mostly concentrated on a second-hand production of one of the most important criteria for choice being the price. European products are in many cases more expensive than the US or Israel equivalents. The US is one of the biggest providers of various defence systems; a big part of these acquisitions was made in the framework of the US military aid (Foreign Military Fund and from 2015 as well the European Reassurance Initiative Fund). The ties with the US companies are considered to enhance bilateral relations with the US decision-makers, which are very imperative for Lithuanian security policy. Successful integration of the European defence market or additional financial incentives from the EU might reduce the price of the EU products, and this might impact defence procurement choices in Lithuania, but at the same time, deepening transatlantic competition in the area of defence industry is the scenario that Lithuania should try to avoid. Recent trends in defence developments in the region might signal that political calculations might play an even bigger role in the future. An article written by former Lithuanian Defence Vice-Minister Giedrimas Jeglinskas and retired General Ben Hodges urges Lithuania to use the window of opportunity and enhance trilateral (American-Lithuanian-Polish) military cooperation, which might be the extension of the already signed Joint Declaration on Advancing Defence Cooperation between the US and Poland. They call the new initiative "Plus" and argue that it could evolve into a "values-based and interests-assured regional strategy, which would encompass military and defence, economic and investments, energy and environment, education, and cultural initiatives" (Jeglinskas & Hodges, 2019). Although this initiative is not formalised at the moment and could be judged more as potentially politically-oriented, aiming at a closer integration with the US



and Poland in the area of defence would also set requirements for interoperability, which would involve coordination on acquisitions, and buying systems that can be plugged into the American ones. Lithuania has signed an agreement to procure 200 UAVs for €145 million with the US company “Oshkosh Defence” in 2019 and is preparing to sign another agreement for the acquisition of six Black Hawk helicopters for approximately €300 million.

## Conclusions

Lithuanian position vis-à-vis CSDP has become more positive in the past years and can be defined as a pragmatic willingness to “give CSDP a chance”. This adjustment became possible due to the new developments in the area of European defence, closer cooperation between the EU and NATO, which allowed Lithuania to find new niches for potential involvement relating it to its own security interests. Changes in the security environment such as Russian militarisation and the US potential concentration on other priorities than Europe has also put strengthening of European defence capabilities in a more positive light. Other regional formats of cooperation are also considered. BREXIT, on one hand, decreased the Lithuanian ability and willingness to stall CSDP developments, but on the other hand, UK leaving the EU defence pillar is substantially weakening European capabilities – and this is also an important point to consider. First of all, British military capabilities and nuclear deterrence are significant as additional element of deterrence vis-à-vis Russia. In order to ensure the link with the UK (apart from NATO), Lithuania has joined UK Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF). Closer defence cooperation has also evolved at the regional level (e.g. Lithuania is strengthening defence cooperation with Germany and Poland).

It should be admitted though that the security environment in the Baltic Sea region remains tense and is not likely to substantially change in the nearest future. The Russian factor both in conventional and non-conventional terms will continue to affect Lithuanian security and defence policy. Therefore, major changes in the current Lithuanian security and defence choices are unlikely. NATO and the US presence in the region will continue to be major goals of Lithuanian security policy, and the EU will be perceived as an additional security provider and the one on the “softer” side. Further involvement of Lithuania in CSDP will depend also on the general dynamics in the EU as well as the implementation of the PESCO projects already started. One of the major tests could become the implementation of the Military Mobility project. Divergent threat assessments of Eastern and Southern EU members and the unwillingness to invest in defence are serious challenges that might hamper success of this project. Further deliberations on new concepts such as strategic autonomy and the European army, which might have a negative impact on the transatlantic link, might also be the reason for the return of scepticism vis-à-vis CSDP in Lithuania. But the most important challenge might become the disputes between the EU and US on the involvement of non-EU members in PESCO. If the dispute would evolve to the extent that the EU member states would have to choose sides, it will be an immense challenge for Lithuanian security policy.



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## 8.

# NATO'S DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE IN A CHANGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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## Introduction

The article traces the evolution of deterrence theories and addresses major challenges they encountered over the time. The article looks for analytical means to explain changes in NATO defence and deterrence postures. It is focused upon the analysis of deterrence and defence policy of NATO and its adaptation to major external challenges. The article focuses upon the perception of collective defence and deterrence, and how the role of NATO nuclear and conventional deterrence is changing over the time. The article overviews the fundamental principles of NATO deterrence and defence that existed during the Cold War, and depicts the major changes that emerged right after its end. It observes the major changes in the Alliance doctrine and challenges it faces in the post-2014 security environment. It addresses NATO's adaptation to contemporary challenges and its attempts to sustain Allied cohesion, and guarantee the credibility of NATO defence and deterrence.

## 1. Contemporary Deterrence Studies

Deterrence was under the Strategic Studies radar throughout the Cold War. For many years, deterrence studies were dominated by a Rational Choice theory, which assumed that the decision-making process is based on the principles of rationality. Rationality was defined as "gaining as much information as possible about the situation and one's options or dealing with it, calculating the relative costs and benefits of those options as well as their relative chances of success and risks of disaster" (Morgan, 2003, p. 12). The deterrence is based on discouragement of the opponent from military action, that could be militarily disadvantageous, and the cost of the action might be higher than the benefit. Cold War literature highlighted two types of deterrence, namely, deterrence by punishment and deterrence by denial. As depicted by Snyder in 1961, "deterrent threat can be based on a capability of defence denying the adversary its immediate objectives on the battlefield; if that is not possible, deterrence can be based on the threat of inflicting heavy punishment in a larger struggle" (Snyder, 1961).

Deterrence by denial is supposed to have a similar effect as deterrence by punishment, namely, it is aimed at discouragement from the action, whereas denial is mainly about the development of capabilities able to prevent the opponent from

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getting the access to your territory. David Yost underscores that “doubts about the reliability and political credibility of deterrence based on threats of punishment have led to (a) greater interest in capabilities for deterrence by denial – that is, capabilities designed to frustrate and defeat an enemy’s assault while minimising collateral damage to the maximum extent possible – and (b) closer attention to concepts of anticipatory defence, including pre-emptive action, with regard to state as well as non-state adversaries” (Yost, 2011).

Deterrence is significant, when it comes to nuclear capabilities, “detering threats through the possession and credible intention to use nuclear weapons is a bedrock of nuclear deterrence” (Futter, 2015, p. 45). Thomas C. Schelling (in the 1960s) outlined “it is not the “balance” – the sheer equality or symmetry of the situation – that constitutes mutual deterrence; it is the stability of the balance. The balance is stable only when neither, in striking first, can destroy the other’s ability to strike back” (Schelling, 1960, p. 232). The ability to survive the surprise attack and strike back is essential. This principle is called deterrence by punishment; nuclear power is deterred from the nuclear attack by the calculation that any attempt to strike first will not give it any strategic superiority, and the other side’s retaliation might be disadvantageous. The first-strike stability comes with a certain sense of equilibrium, but it has to be mutually accepted and commonly perceived.

Scholars distinguish four to five waves of deterrence studies (Jervis, 1979; Knopf, 2010). The first wave is related to the end of World War II and emergence of nuclear powers: it focused upon the nuclear weapons, their military role, broader strategic and defence implications. The first wave scholars started developing the perception of nuclear weapons’ impact on global security, stability and conflict perception. This wave defined the role of nuclear weapons in the context of military strategy and paved the way for the future deterrence research. The second wave is marked by the more sophisticated rational choice and game theory models, based on studies of the decision-making process. It focused upon the analysis of strategic stability and strategic balance (for instance, T. Schelling, M. Kilgour, P. Morgan, S. Brams, F. P. Harvey, R. Powel, O’Neill, Ch. Leah, A. Lowher). The third wave emerged a few decades before the end of the Cold War. It criticised the rational choice and game theories by questioning the rationality of single actors and the rationality of the decision-making process per se (Allison, 1971; Wohlforth, 1999; Gaddis, 1997; Lebovic, 1990; McGwire, 2006; De Nardo, 1995; Zhang, 1992; Morgan, 2003; Kroon, 1996; Zagare, 1990). The rational choice models were extensively criticised by case study analysts and statistics studies (R. N. Lebow, 1981; Glen Snyder and Paul Diesing, 1977; Robert Jervis, 1970; John D. Steinbruner, 1974; Jenice G. Stein, 1985; R. N. Lebow, J. G. Stein, 1990).

Actually, the decision-makers have been seriously influenced by the rational choice theorists and their game-theory models of deterrence, so the critical deterrence studies brought doubts and encouraged questioning of not only the rationality of the decision-making process but also the reliability of those models and their applicability in a real life. They observed that rational choice models have failed to explain a number of deterrence failures, for instance, “two World Wars, Korea, Vietnam and the Falklands, along with crises such as Berlin, Quemoy and



Matsu, Lebanon and Cuba have had a powerful effect on how political scientists think about deterrence” (Aachen, 1989, p. 145); also, they classified as deterrence encounters a number of crises where the deterrence encounter was not present (Knopf, 2010, p. 1).

The fourth wave is struggling not only with the loss of the historical memory of deterrence studies and the hesitation whether those Cold War theories can be applicable in a contemporary strategic environment, but also with a numerous ontological and epistemological challenges, how the deterrence should be perceived and studied – is it a socially constructed narrative or just an ordinary social practice. The fourth wave is attempting to broaden the scope and scale of deterrence studies to include non-state actors, to expand the list of analysis levels. The fifth wave is going back to the first three waves and attempts to adapt and find analytical tools and looking for its place in a contemporary security environment.

Nevertheless, the changes in strategic environment are encouraging scholars to re-ignite the Cold War deterrence studies. The fourth wave emerged after September 11, 2001; it addresses numerous security challenges, including nuclear proliferation. As Jeffrey Knopf observes, the fourth wave is primarily a response to real-world developments. Similar to the first wave, it has been more concerned with developing a deterrence strategy than the deterrence theory. Whereas, the fifth wave of deterrence studies, which is emerging in the post-2014 environment, is looking to the new regional nuclear deterrence, also observing and analysing the possible impact of new technologies on deterrence strategies; additionally, they are rediscovering the rational choice theories and attempt adapting them to contemporary realities.

The contemporary deterrence studies highlight that not necessarily all the decision-makers in all the occasions will act rationally. The decision might be driven by misperceptions, miscalculations, misjudgements due to a lack of information or intention to mislead the opposing party. So, the rationality of an actor becomes doubtful. In addition, the decision might be based on the individual judgement of a decision-maker: here, the attitudes, subjective judgements, fears and other personality traits might be decisive. Richard Ned Lebow distinguishes four possible intensions of aggression: “fear of an imminent negative shift in a global context; the need to counteract domestic political instability; the weakness of specific set of leaders; and competition for power among the elites of a state” (Lebow, 1983, p. 334). The classical rational choice and perception of deterrence could hardly meet and respond to those intentions. Admittedly, “deterrence can fail due to a variety of reasons including a lack of capability and credibility, irrational behaviour, miscalculation, excessive provocation (either military or diplomatic), unauthorised actions or poor communications” (Reed, Wheeler, 1991, p. 18).

However, the absence of attack does not mean that deterrence works; all the strategies, policy planning to ensure and sustain deterrence by punishment and deterrence by denial cannot necessarily serve as a proof that deterrence works. This drawback of the deterrence theory has been observed since the Cold War, as testing the theory and operationalising the variables is rather challenging. The



models illustrating how deterrence works remain largely hypothetical, especially when it comes to nuclear exchange. As Jeremy Stocker highlights that deterrence “firstly, seeks to maintain the status quo, because it aims to prevent action by another party (in contrast to coercion, which tries to force the other party to act), and secondly, the key decision-maker is the other party, who decides whether or not to be deterred. Deploying a supposed ‘deterrent’ by no means ensures that others will be ‘deterred’” (Stocker, 2007, p. 41). The subjectivity and psychology might be the determining the decision to take action.

Contemporary deterrence studies are shaped by the achievements and insights of the Cold War Strategic Studies and their adaptation to the contemporary security environment. The following elements are usually addressed by the contemporary deterrence research: national interests, rhetoric, public messaging and communication, doctrine, capabilities, fears, expectations of the other party and new unconventional challenges that might affect the traditional deterrence calculus. In fact, contemporary deterrence faces more unknown unknowns, the strategic environment is less predictable, the adaptation of security and defence strategies is more challenging, the risks of deterrence failure are higher, more technological challenges, cyber security, together with hybrid security threats, make the security environment less predictable and riskier. Amy Woolf has observed that current strategists have to plan now by taking into account challenges that might exist in the future (Woolf, 2018), so contemporary deterrence and defence planning is complicated as the technologies and challenges evolve very fast, and it is hard to predict and evaluate the best possible strategies to offset the possible military imbalances that might come up in 10 to 20 years’ time.

Contemporary deterrence and strategic stability studies are including into analysis the regional level deterrence dynamics, which make nuclear deterrence and perception of military calculus even more complex and challenging. Scholars are addressing nuclear deterrence dynamics not only among the US and Russia, but also including China and other nuclear states. They are also focusing upon nuclear dynamics in different regions, such as South Asia, Northeast Asia or the Middle East. Also, the polarity of the international system might strongly affect the principles of strategic stability. As F. Harvey observes, “if deterrence is primarily about ‘relationships’, as old threats diminish, as new threats emerge and as bipolarity collapses under the weight of multipolar pressures, a complex mix of strategies will be needed to address new and evolving relationships” (Harvey, 2003, p. 322). This observation comes in line with Thomas C. Schelling’s, a Nobel prize-winner for his studies on nuclear deterrence, observation that:

*“Now the world is so much changed, so much more complicated, so multivariate, so unpredictable, involving so many nations and cultures and languages in nuclear relationships, many of them asymmetric, that it is even difficult to know how many meanings there are for “strategic stability”, or how many different kinds of such stability there may be among so many different international relationships, or what “stable deterrence” is supposed to deter in a world of proliferated weapons.”* (Colby, 2013, p. vii)

## 2. NATO Deterrence and Defence: Cold War Experience

NATO was established by the North Atlantic Treaty that was signed in 1949; at the centre of this treaty is collective defence, deterrence and the transatlantic link, which is fundamental for the security and stability of the region. The agreement upon the collective defence and the principle of consensus of decision-making served as a receipt for success of the Alliance. The collective nature of defence and the unity of Allied action, as well as a commitment to respond to any attack on Allied territory, is a pivotal element of Allied deterrence. Collective defence was perceived as contributing to global and regional security and stability. The main purpose of NATO “was (and remains) to maintain sufficient military strength to deter aggression and attempts of coercion, to defend the Allies in the event of aggression, and to ‘assure the balance of forces, thereby creating a climate of stability, security, and confidence’” (Yost, 2014, p. 5).

NATO’s deterrence and defence posture evolved over the time, together with the evolution of the Alliance and in response to the external strategic environment, international political dynamics and the development of technology. In the 1960s, NATO introduced deterrence based on flexible response; it was extensively debated by Allies as it aimed at replacing the previous NATO’s military strategy based on massive retaliation, which existed since mid-1950s. The flexible response introduced a broader scope of non-nuclear options in response to aggression, while deterrence strategy of massive retaliation was based on the principle, that the Alliance would respond to the Warsaw Pact attack with strategic nuclear capabilities. The flexible response strategy reflected the aim to retain “the adequacy of the means to be employed in order to ensure that NATO is able to respond to attacks of any size, to prevent uncontrollable escalation, to assure damage limitation and to terminate a conflict imposed upon it at earliest possible point” (Osgood, 1986, p. 5). It was based on the idea that “at each level of fighting, the deterrer would seek to be able to do better than the challenger (escalation dominance) and thereby discourage the challenger from escalating” (Morgan, 2003, p. 18) and from the use of nuclear weapons. This strategy was based on:

*“The call in MC 14/3, NATO’s fundamental strategy document from 1967 to 1991, for ‘direct defence ... to defeat the aggression on the level at which the enemy chooses to fight’, stipulated that ‘successful direct defence either defeats the aggression or places upon the aggressor the burden of escalation’. On the NATO side escalation could have involved, among other options, ‘selective nuclear strikes’” (Yost, 2009, p. 756)*

This strategy was intended “to convince the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact that any conflict, even one that began with conventional weapons, could result in nuclear retaliation” (Woolf, 2019, p.10). It was partly driven by the fact that the Soviet Union had conventional superiority over the Allied conventional capabilities, so the Alliance decided not to enter into conventional arms races with the Soviet Union. However, NATO was aimed at maintaining the strategic balance and prevent the crisis escalation by retaining the status quo. The major principle of the NATO flexible response deterrence was prevention of war – to this end, it aimed at retaining the military balance. The military balance that NATO required for credible deterrence was not

based on “a parity in numbers, but a parity of defensive options that could be invoked to provide pre-war or intra-war deterrence” (Osgood, Wegner, 1986, p. 5). It means that NATO aimed at obtaining more flexible military options to provide credible defence and deterrence, conventional forces, short-range, intermediate-range nuclear weapons and strategic nuclear forces as interlinked combination formed complex or continuum of deterrence (Osgood, Wegner, 1986, p. 5).

During the Cold War, deterrence by punishment came together with the practice of extended deterrence. Brad Roberts observes that in late 1950s, the American homeland first became vulnerable to Soviet nuclear attack; this raised questions if the US was willing to put at risk its own cities in defence of its European Allies (Roberts, 2016, p. 178). Extended deterrence is a frequently used term when it comes to regional security. Brad Roberts defines it as “a form of protection provided to an ally” (Roberts, 2016, p. 178). NATO's extended deterrence is related to the transatlantic bond and its credibility. Jeremy D. McCausland emphasises, that “extended deterrence was seen to depend upon forward deployed American conventional forces as an explicit link between the direct defence of Europe and the U.S. central strategic deterrent” (McCausland, 2013, p. 272).

The nuclear weapons of the US have been deployed to Europe in 1950s, as a means to offset the conventional superiority of the Soviet Union. “The US therefore committed theatre nuclear weapons to NATO as a key part of forward defence in July 1953, with the first atomic weapons arriving in Europe in September 1954” (Alberque, 2017, p. 13; see also, Pedlow, 1999; Larsen, 2019). Jeffrey Larsen highlights that these weapons were also meant to provide a “coupling” between the fates of the European and North American members of NATO by threatening to escalate a conventional war to a nuclear level” (Larsen, 2019, p. 176). William Alberque observes that:

*“The weapons were deployed under positive US control and custody, with the agreement of the host nation, and releasable by the President of the United States to the NATO Supreme Allied Commander (who is always an American citizen to maintain the US chain-of-authority) for employment in the case of war. The artillery, aircraft, bombs, and missiles designed to deliver US nuclear warheads could only be mated and armed after release by the US for launch, at which point they came under the control of NATO.”* (Alberque, 2017, p. 14)

The extended deterrence evolved from the strategic planning that existed during the Cold War, and its linkage with deterrence by punishment emerged from the practical planning of deterrence; this principle is about the commitment of the US to European defence and the technical means and principles of how this commitment would be exercised. Allies “feared that the vulnerability of the USA would result in strategic decoupling” (Roberts, 2016, p. 178) of the US from its European Allies, so that is why the extended deterrence was a meaningful strategic commitment. D. Yost observes that “NATO Allies concluded that US extended deterrence requires, among other things, US nuclear forces based in Europe” (Yost, 2014, p. 5). The risk of strategic decoupling became an issue of credibility of the US commitments to the Alliance. During the Cold War, it was extensively debated how to ensure *credible deterrence* of an aggressor and provide *credible assurance*

for Allies; those two elements had to be synchronised and balanced. The famous quote of British Defence Minister Denis Healey, who in the 1960s, underscored “it takes only five percent credibility of American retaliation to deter Russians, but ninety-five percent credibility to reassure the Europeans” (Roberts, 2016, p. 179).

### 3. Harmel Report and New Era of Deterrence

The strategy of flexible response was adopted in 1967, and, in parallel, NATO had issued the Harmel Report (1967)<sup>12</sup>, underscoring the political dialogue and political process as such. The Harmel Report “advocated the adoption of a dual-track policy for NATO: deterrence and détente, i.e., maintaining adequate defence while promoting political détente”. This report served as a significant milestone for NATO as a political security organisation, security community with a great deal of tasks to be accomplished. Primarily, it highlighted the need to consider prospects for arms control measures and their relations with broader European security. Furthermore, it took stock of complex strategic elements that affected the security environment. For instance, it depicted the nature of deterrence in the mid-1960s, addressed the Soviet threat to the Alliance, analysed the likelihood of conflict in Western Europe and possibilities of war in Europe; it also focused upon the relationship between deterrence and détente. It overviewed the external security environment and also focused upon internal NATO policies and institutional practices.

Interestingly, the Harmel Report addressed military posture, defence policies of NATO, including technological changes and strategic mobility, strategic and tactical nuclear weapons available for the defence of the Alliance also, focused upon the possible enhancement of the role of non-nuclear powers in nuclear planning. It expressed an expectation for the balanced and gradual revision of force levels on both sides. With regard to the Alliance’s deterrence, the Harmel Report concluded “that existing and programmed strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance remain adequate for deterrence of large-scale attack by the Soviet Union (Harmel Report, Volume 6, 1967). The Harmel Report also highlighted the significance of strategic deterrence and reiterated the principles of flexible response, underscoring “the numerical superiority of the Alliance in strategic forces, while still NATO has a limited utility as a deterrence unless, it is linked with tactical nuclear capabilities and strong non-nuclear forces” (Harmel Report, Volume 6, 1967). Interestingly, the Harmel Report, also addressed emerging nuclear capability of China, which “was devoting very substantial resources to the development of both nuclear warheads and missile delivery systems” (Harmel Report, Volume 6, 1967).

As Jamie Shea, a former speaker of the NATO Secretary General observed, the rationale behind the Harmel Report was “that once Allies felt completely secure from external threats, and within the context of improved NATO consultation, they could more confidently play a leading role in resolving the political conflicts of the day and hastening the end of the East-West arms race” (Shea, 2018). It

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<sup>12</sup> Pierre Harmel was a Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1967, notably, in 1966, NATO moved its headquarters from Paris to Belgium. So, it is symbolically significant that a host nation demonstrated an attempt to improve the Alliance performance.

encouraged extensive discussions on arms control and arms race stability, and led to extensive talks on nuclear and conventional disarmament. Actually, the Harmel Report paved the way for post-Cold War NATO strategic principles and helped NATO to develop and retain a position as a political security actor in the international community.

The Harmel Report supported arms control talks and dialogue; nevertheless, this did not bring it to greater transparency and security. In the late 1970s, NATO engaged in extensive intergovernmental consultations, and in 1979, made a decision upon the deployment of intermediate range nuclear forces. The Soviet Union lagged behind the US in its deployment of tactical nuclear forces (TNF) until the 1970s, when the Soviet Union undertook a massive expansion programme that resulted in strategic and tactical parity, and by the 1980s, had theatre superiority in numbers and types of TNF weapons deployed in Europe (Larsen, 2019, p. 176). In late 1970s the Soviet Union started replacing old SS-4 systems with the new mobile, harder to identify, multiple warheads systems – SS-20. Those systems granted the Soviet Union strategic superiority over NATO in Europe. So, Allies engaged in debate over the possible deployment of ground-launched nuclear missiles with the aim to offset Soviet superiority.

In December 1979, NATO's foreign and defence ministers agreed to a dual-track arrangement, calling for the deployment of those missiles if the Soviet Union did not remove its own TNF weapons, or if arms control initiatives to eliminate this category of weapons proved unsuccessful (Larsen, 2019, p. 176). This decision led to the later deployment of Pershing II in Europe and finally the successful negotiation and decision to eliminate the entire category of the intermediate and shorter-range cruise and ballistic missiles. In sum, since the 1970s, the US nuclear forces in Europe had been significantly reduced, including with the 1987 INF treaty, which eliminated intermediate and shorter ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles with ranges between 500 and 5500 kilometres. As a reaction to the successful INF negotiations, in 1989, NATO Heads of State and Government agreed upon the Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament, which noted that despite the significant disarmament opportunities, the Alliance retains principles of the flexible response strategy:

*“For the foreseeable future, deterrence requires an appropriate mix of adequate and effective nuclear and conventional forces which will continue to be kept up to date where necessary; for it is only by their evident and perceived capability for effective use that such forces and weapons deter.” (The Alliance's Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament, 1989)*

The Comprehensive Concept depicted the new international security realities, addressed the dynamics of arms control, dialogue and deterrence. It addressed the relation between conventional and non-conventional deterrence, as well as the role of nuclear forces that are below the strategic level. It portrayed the relationship among conventional, strategic and sub-strategic nuclear weapons as well as a role of the US forces in Europe as follows:

*“Nuclear forces below the strategic level provide an essential political and military*



*linkage between conventional and strategic forces and, together with the presence of Canadian and United States forces in Europe, between the European and North American members of the Alliance. The Allies' sub-strategic nuclear forces are not designed to compensate for conventional imbalances. The levels of such forces in the integrated military structure nevertheless must take into account the threat – both conventional and nuclear – with which the Alliance is faced. Their role is to ensure that there are no circumstances in which a potential aggressor might discount the prospect of nuclear retaliation in response to military action. Nuclear forces below the strategic level thus make an essential contribution to deterrence.” (The Alliance’s Comprehensive Concept of Arms Control and Disarmament, 1989)*

In 1991, the US and NATO decided upon elimination of all US ground-launched nuclear systems in Europe (including artillery, surface to air missiles and surface-to-surface missiles) (Yost, 2014, p. 89). The US has withdrawn around 80 percent of its nuclear weapons from Europe, retained only B-61 gravity bombs that could be delivered by the US and allied dual-capable aircraft (Yost, 2009, p. 756). As Jefferey Larsen observes, “the remaining aircraft were no longer poised to deliver their weapons from an alert posture; decisions made in 1995 reduced dual-capable aircraft readiness levels from minutes to weeks, and further decisions in 2002 reduced that readiness level even further, to ‘months’” (Larsen, 2019, p. 179). The NATO Handbook reiterates, that none of those nuclear weapons are targeted against any country, and readiness levels of dual-capable aircraft have been progressively reduced, and the emphasis placed on their conventional roles (The NATO Handbook, 2006, p. 66). The strategic reality and principles of military balancing have evidently changed due to the political practices, quite efficient arms control, political expectations and the end of the Cold War per se.

This period in history of NATO can be associated with a certain level of trust between Russia and the Alliance; most likely it was based on quite successful arms control, bilateral agreements on nuclear weapons cuts and also successful conventional arms control negotiations, namely, the 1987 INF Treaty, 1989 CFE, 1991 STARTI, 1993 STARTII. However, “shorter range tactical warheads and their delivery systems were left uncovered by any treaty” (Larsen, 2019, p. 177). In 1991, the US and the Soviet Union signed Presidential Nuclear Initiatives regarding, addressing the non-strategic nuclear forces, which were meaningful for mutual trust and predictability at that time.

In 1991, the US-extended deterrence was broadly debated at NATO. According to Martin A. Smith, “Bush stated that the US will ensure the preservation of the effective air-delivered nuclear capability in Europe. That’s essential to NATO security” (Smith, 2000). In the NATO Strategic Concept issued in 1991, deterrence was depicted as “ensuring uncertainty in the mind of any aggressor about the nature of the Allies’ response to military aggression”. Martin Smith observes the decline of NATO’s nuclear dimension during 1990s; he describes the NATO nuclear role at that time as residual (Smith, 2000). Similar observation is provided by Brad Roberts, touching upon the anxieties over the US efforts to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons (under the Clinton and Bush administrations) or to reduce their role and number as steps toward their ultimate elimination. Along those lines,



Jeffrey Larsen observes that “the Alliance found itself increasingly unwilling to rely on or at least openly discuss its nuclear deterrent” (Larsen, 2019, p. 177).

#### 4. Post-Cold War NATO Deterrence

During the Cold War, NATO managed to establish and retain a military bond between the United States and its European counterparts. The US had to assure Allies on its commitment and capability to defend its European territory, at the same time to maintain the convincing deterrence of the Soviet Union. James R. Schlesinger, former US Secretary of Defence, noted that during the Cold War, the US “had to persuade the Russians and European Allies that extended deterrence still worked, even though the Soviet Union could destroy our cities” (Barrass, 2009, p. 181). Eventually, the doctrine of flexible response was replaced by the new dynamics of the end of the Cold War with the new strategic concepts and military strategies, as well as with the intentions to reduce the reliance on nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons became a political means of deterrence rather than military and strategic assets. In the Strategic Concept of 1991, it defined the following:

*“From the point of view of Alliance strategy, these different risks have to be seen in different ways. Even in a non-adversarial and cooperative relationship, Soviet military capability and build-up potential, including its nuclear dimension, still constitute the most significant factor of which the Alliance has to take account in maintaining the strategic balance in Europe.” <...> “To protect peace and to prevent war or any kind of coercion, the Alliance will maintain for the foreseeable future an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces based in Europe and kept up to date where necessary, although at a significantly reduced level.”* (NATO Strategic Concept, 1991)

Allies perceived the need to preserve the unity and cohesion of the Alliance to retain credibility of defence and deterrence as well as ensure feasible burden sharing with reduced level of forces. In the Strategic Concepts of 1991 and 1999, the Alliance has retained conventional and nuclear forces as tools for credible deterrence. As the 1999 NATO Strategic Concept states: “to protect peace and prevent war from any kind of coercion, the Alliance will maintain, for the foreseeable future, an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces based in Europe and kept up to date where necessary, although at a minimum sufficient level” (NATO Strategic Concept, 1999). In the Post-Cold War period, NATO first of all de-securitized Russia, the partnership between NATO, and Russia became gradually institutionalised, and in 1997, the NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed. This marked a completely new strategic reality.

The 1999 NATO Strategic Concept addressed nuclear weapons from the political perspective. However, nuclear weapons remain as the US security guarantees for European Allies. “Reassurance comes from knowing that the USA has made a visible, physical commitment to the defence of Europe, as shown by its weapons and forces being forward deployed in NATO Europe” (Larsen, 2019, p. 180). Allies have focused on changed security environment and searched for a new NATO identity in the post-Cold War era. They have completely changed defence and deterrence principles and perception, and adapted the military planning. The

collective deterrence was no longer perceived as a major mission of NATO and essential part of NATO's existence. It still existed, but with changed meaning and adapted purpose<sup>13</sup>.

Since the end of the Cold War, Allies started to believe that the possibility of a major armed conflict in Europe is extremely remote, as the major threat has disappeared; this principle laid the foundations for defence and deterrence. The Alliance gradually stopped planning and exercising territorial defence, and since 2001, NATO has started focusing upon expeditionary forces development and deployment trainings. NATO forces were prepared either for stationary defence or for expeditionary deployment to distant hot spots. As Kęstutis Paulauskas observes, “after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a long period of denial of deterrence followed. The Alliance dramatically downsized its forces (conventional and nuclear) and persistently reduced defence spending” (Paulauskas, 2016). The reliance on nuclear weapons was diminished, the reliance on conventional weapons was diminished as well. In sum, NATO had shifted its overall paradigm from territorial defence, including forward defence conducted by large and heavy formations, to out-of-area crisis response, underpinned by expeditionary capability based around more deployable but also smaller and lighter units” (Paulauskas, 2016). There was no aim to adjust Allied capabilities, in terms of troop numbers, equipment or posture, to deter and defend Allied territory from a massive land invasion.

In the NATO Security Concept (2010), Allies agreed that “the Euro-Atlantic area is at peace and the threat of a conventional attack against NATO territory is low,” and the conventional military threats to Allies' security are moribund. Despite that, “the Alliance did not rule out conventional military threats, notwithstanding positive developments in the strategic environment and the fact that large-scale conventional aggression against the Alliance is highly unlikely, the possibility of such a threat emerging over the longer term exists” (NATO New Strategic Concept, 2010). The 2010 NATO Strategic Concept highlights the collective defence principle, as “NATO will deter and defend against any threat of aggression and against emerging security challenges where they threaten the fundamental security of individual Allies or the Alliance as a whole” (NATO New Strategic Concept, 2010). The source of threat is less evident, more complex and harder to identify. Maintaining the reservation on traditional security threats Strategic Concept emphasises that:

*“The conventional threat cannot be ignored. Many regions and countries around the world are witnessing the acquisition of substantial, modern military capabilities with consequences for international stability and Euro-Atlantic security that are difficult to predict. This includes the proliferation of ballistic missiles, which poses a real and growing threat to the Euro-Atlantic area.”* (NATO New Strategic Concept, 2010)

The strategic mindset of the Alliance started changing in 2014, together with Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and its aggression in and around Ukraine, due to its confrontational rhetoric directed towards NATO and the Allies, and intensified military activities, massive military drills in a close vicinity

<sup>13</sup> In the NATO Strategic Concept of 1991, the word ‘deterrence’ was mentioned once, in the NATO Strategic Concept of 1999, ‘deterrence’ appeared 6 times.

to NATO. As J. Rathke notices, “Russia has developed since 2008 the ability to rapidly deploy on the border with NATO over 100,000 troops with practically no warning to the United States and its European allies” (Rathke, 2015). At the same time, Russia has undermined the most of the meaningful measures that provided transparency and predictability in the conventional arms control domain by suspending its participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, the INF Treaty and has continued rather selective implementation of arms control commitments such as the Vienna Document and the Open Skies Treaty. It leads to decreased trust and predictability in the region and beyond.

Evidently, the new global nuclear deterrence retains the same principles, but at the same time entails a long list of new characteristics. The fourth wave deterrence studies observe a very dynamic strategic environment, which differs from the Cold War bipolar symmetric deterrence. Contemporary deterrence is existing in a more complex, less predictable and multifaceted world. In addition to classical nuclear balancing practices, the issues of non-military security, such as terrorism, cyber security, artificial intelligence, new technologies and non-proliferation contribute to changed principles of assessment of deterrence and should be taken into account. Lawrence Rubin noticed that “rising powers, rogue nations and regional rivals are all expanding and enhancing their nuclear arsenals” (Rubin, 2018), so it is not only US-Russia nuclear dynamics, but also China’s, Iran’s, DPRK’s nuclear programs that are contributing to a less predictable and more challenging world.

The Alliance has to take into consideration multiple challenges of military and hybrid nature and adapt its defence and deterrence. Some scholars observe that “nuclear multipolarity has already obtained or is on the horizon, which could make defence planning and crisis diplomacy far more challenging” (Rubin, 2018, p. 24). As Robert Jervis observes, “multipolarity makes second-strike capability harder to obtain: as each State must have a force sufficiently large and protected to be able to withstand the attack from all the others” (Jervis, 1997, p. 124).

## **5. Red Queen Effect and Contemporary NATO Deterrence**

In a contemporary security environment NATO faces a Red Queen effect. According to Louis Carol’s “Alice in Wonderland”, “the Red Queen has to run faster and faster in order to keep still where she is” (Carroll, 1865). The Alliance has to adapt constantly to the contemporary challenges in order to retain the status quo. Apparently, NATO had been standing still for too long, so now it has to run and adapt much faster. A new security environment encouraged on NATO’s adaptation to the new realities came together with renewed Allied focus on its core mission of collective defence and principles of NATO defence and deterrence. NATO recognised a need to synchronise the response to major territorial challenges from Russia as well as a complex asymmetrical challenge such as cyber risks, hybrid security threats, terrorism as well as challenges related to new technologies and space activities that have been mentioned in the NATO Brussels and London Declarations.

The threat and security perception agreed in the New Strategic Concept (2010),

stating that “the Euro-Atlantic area is at peace and the threat of a conventional attack against NATO territory is low” – has shifted due to Russia’s actions in Ukraine and an aggressive military posture. Russia’s invasion and annexation of Crimea has changed the regional security environment as well as contributed to the shifting threat perception within the Alliance. In 2014, NATO started the adaptation of the Alliance’s military strategic posture in response to challenges posed by Russia and threats emanating from a southern direction. As Brad Roberts observes, “in Europe, Russia’s new belligerence, along with instability in the Middle East, has renewed a high level of interest in strengthening NATO’s deterrence and defence posture” (Roberts, 2016, 176).

In reaction to a changed security environment, the Alliance has taken a number of significant steps to reassure Eastern Allies and to deter Russia. NATO’s adaptation is based on principles of responsiveness, readiness and reinforcement – namely improvement of NATO’s ability to respond to major challenges, including military ones, a readiness to have capabilities and a preparedness to respond, and assurance measures for Eastern Allies and the ability for timely reinforcement. Heinrich Brauss observed that “Ensuring the credibility and effectiveness of NATO’s posture requires a holistic view at the breadth and depth of the Alliance’s entire territory and its periphery and adjacent waters. Any potential adversary’s risk calculus at any time needs to come to the conclusion that NATO is capable of dealing with all relevant contingencies and deny the adversary any options, so that even a limited aggression or attempt at coercion in one region” (Brauss, 2018).

At the NATO Wales Summit, Allies agreed upon the reassurance package for Eastern Allies. “The assurance measures include a continuous air, land and maritime presence and meaningful military activity in the eastern part of the Alliance, both on a rotational basis. They will provide the fundamental baseline requirement for assurance and deterrence, and are flexible and scalable in response to the evolving security situation” (NATO Wales Summit Declaration, 2014). The Wales Summit Declaration highlighted the significance of readiness and reinforcement; it agreed upon the reassurance package, including the Readiness Action Plan, development of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), NATO Response Forces (NRF), Framework Nations concept, and NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs).

In addition to commitments made in Wales, NATO readiness was fortified at the Warsaw and Brussels Summits. In Warsaw, NATO decided “to establish an enhanced forward presence in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to unambiguously demonstrate, as part of our overall posture, Allies’ solidarity, determination and ability to act by triggering an immediate Allied response to any aggression” (NATO Warsaw Summit Communique, 2016). Following this decision, in mid-2017, NATO established the multinational battalion-size battle groups Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic States and Poland, led by Framework states, Germany, the UK, Canada and the United States. “The headquarters of the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) in Szczecin, in charge of collective defence in the region, is fully operational” (Brauss, 2018). The SHAPE underscores the collective defence and reassurance mission of the EFP, stating “their presence makes clear that an attack on one Ally will be considered

an attack on the whole Alliance. NATO's battle groups form part of the biggest reinforcement of NATO's collective defence in a generation" (SHAPE, EFP). Those decisions marked the fundamental change in the threat perception and evaluation of strategic environment, but also demonstrated the NATO's unity, cohesion and willingness to provide defence assurances for its Allies.

**Table No. 1 Defence and deterrence principles in post-2014 strategic environment**  
(created by author, based on NATO Summit Declarations and Communiques)

NATO Summit Decisions	Deterrence and defence principles	Means and tools to ensure defence and deterrence goals
Wales Summit Declaration 2014	- Adaptation of the Alliance's military strategic posture in response to challenges posed by Russia and threats emanating from the southern neighbourhood.	- Readiness Action Plan; - Adaptation Measures; - Assurance Measures: VJTF, NRF, Framework Nations concept.
Warsaw Summit Communiqué 2016	- Reiteration of decisions made in Wales, adaptation of NATO defence and deterrence posture to new challenges including from the south.  - Emphasis on Article 5, renewed emphasis on deterrence and collective defence.	- Commitment to continuation of measures that have been agreed in Wales. - Decided to establish an enhanced forward presence in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. - Reiteration of Assurance measures, Readiness Action Plan and Adaptation, including Counter-hybrid warfare. - Introduced cyber defence concept.
	- Adaptation needed to ensure that:  NATO's overall deterrence and defence posture is capable of addressing potential adversaries' doctrine and capabilities, and that it remains credible, flexible, resilient and adaptable. (para 52)	Emphasis on full range of capabilities necessary to deter and defend against potential adversaries and the full spectrum of threats that could confront the Alliance from any direction. (para 32)
Brussels Summit Declaration 2018	- Reaffirmed decisions towards Russia agreed at the Wales and Warsaw Summits, continue to respond to the deteriorated security environment by enhancing deterrence and defence posture, including by a forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance.	- Continuation of Adaptation measures, Readiness Action Plan. - Introduction of NATO Space Policy. - Highlighted continuity of cyber defence initiative; - Hybrid security threats mentioned in connection with defence and deterrence. - <i>Launched NATO Readiness Initiative: "Allies will offer an additional 30 major naval combatants, 30 heavy or medium manoeuvre battalions, and 30 kinetic air squadrons, with enabling forces, at 30 days' readiness or less". (para 14)</i>



NATO has increased and improved its military training; it also accelerated the decision-making process as well as enhanced the readiness of the Allies forces. Procedures for accelerated decision-making enable the Alliance to make a decision on the deployment of rapid response forces within 8–12 hours (Brauss, 2018). The Readiness Action Plan (RAP), agreed at the summit in Wales in 2014, has been implemented; the size of the enhanced NATO Response Force (NRF) has been tripled to become a joint force of some 40,000 troops and readiness has been significantly increased, in particular through the multinational Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) of some 5,000 troops, which is on permanent standby, ready to move within a few days (Brauss, 2018). At the Brussels Summit, Allies launched the NATO Readiness Initiative, under which “Allies will offer an additional 30 major naval combatants, 30 heavy or medium manoeuvre battalions and 30 kinetic air squadrons, with enabling forces, at 30 days’ readiness or less” (NATO Brussels Summit Declaration, 2018).

Evidently, in the post-2014 strategic environment, NATO is focusing upon reassurance, speed of reaction and reinforcement. Kęstutis Paulauskas observes that “it is about both mass and speed: bringing back heavier forces and larger formations without losing speed and mobility. Moreover, speed is even more of the essence. Today, NATO is facing a non-discretionary environment in which its potential adversaries choose the time and place for their ‘strategic surprises’ without giving Allies much notice, and terrorist attacks often have no warning at all” (Paulauskas, 2018). Evidently, NATO has to run very fast to meet and adapt to the multifaceted security challenges, and at the same time, be prepared to react to new, emerging risks. Heinrich Brauss observes that NATO needs to ensure that it has the right forces in the right place at the right time to deter and defend, if necessary, or deploy for crisis intervention outside its territory (Brauss, 2018).

In all of Wales, Warsaw and Brussels, NATO reiterated the very similar principles with regards to the nuclear component of deterrence, and the Summit rhetoric is in line with the Defence and Deterrence Posture Review (of 2012); for instance, in Wales, it was declared that “as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance. <...>NATO’s nuclear deterrence posture also relies in part on the United States’ nuclear weapons forward-deployed in Europe and on the capabilities and infrastructure provided by the Allies concerned. These Allies will ensure that all components of NATO’s nuclear deterrent remain safe, secure and effective” (NATO Wales Summit Declaration, 2014). Similarly, in 2018, at the Brussels Summit, the NATO Heads of State and Government declared: “NATO continues to adapt in order to ensure that its deterrence and defence posture remains credible, coherent, resilient and adaptable to a changing security environment. Following changes in the security environment, NATO has taken steps to ensure its nuclear deterrent capabilities remain safe, secure and effective. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance” (NATO Brussels Summit Declaration, 2018).

In November 2018, a chair of NATO’s High-Level Group, Dr James H. Anderson, said that “the current nuclear threat landscape is the most dynamic it has ever been; increasingly salient is the issue of nuclear weapons in the security strategies



of other states, particularly the need to continue to hold Russia accountable for its aggressive actions and violations of the INF Treaty” (NATO policy makers discuss deterrence and nuclear policy, 2018). In August 2019, the INF Treaty ceased to exist due to Russia’s violation and development of treaty breaching missiles. Jacek Durkalec observes, the INF violating capabilities contribute to Russia’s deterrence strategy; he notices that the SSC-8/9M729 missile is aimed at either fracturing NATO solidarity and demonstrating that the costs of military confrontation with Russia are not worth the stake; or shocking NATO Allies to surrender, denying them credible war-fighting options in collective defence scenarios (Durkalec, 2019). Notably, the test of NATO solidarity was passed successfully, Allies provided a unified support for the USA against the backdrop of the INF demise.

In December 2019, at the Leaders’ meeting in London, the NATO Heads of State and Government provided the following reaction to the INF violation by Russia and subsequent demise of the treaty:

*“We are addressing and will continue to address in a measured and responsible way Russia’s deployment of new intermediate-range missiles, which brought about the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and which pose significant risks to Euro-Atlantic security. We are increasing action to protect our freedoms at sea and in the air. We are further strengthening our ability to deter and defend with an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defence capabilities, which we continue to adapt.”* (NATO London Declaration, 2019)

A Russia’s violation of the INF has a significant impact on security of the region, it should be addressed as complex strategic, political and military issue. It is a psychological trust issue as well. It marks the end of the period where arms control was considered as highly successful and balancing acts. NATO highlights a measured and responsible reaction to Russia’s deployment of the new intermediate range missile systems. The US retains its guarantees and assurances for its Allies. In the US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR, 2018), the US reiterates the extended deterrence guarantees for its Allies. The NPR declares “no country should doubt the strength of our extended deterrence commitments or the strength of the US and allied capabilities to deter, and if necessary, to defeat, any potential adversary’s nuclear or non-nuclear aggression”. Observing the strategic environment, scholars reiterate that the contemporary nuclear dimension requires “NATO to continue to reassess its nuclear deterrence posture, the survivability of NATO nuclear forces, NATO nuclear burden sharing arrangements, and the role of nuclear weapons in NATO defence planning and military exercises” (USA Nuclear Posture Review, 2018).

In 2018 during the Brussels Summit, the heads of NATO states reiterated the continued adaptation to external challenges, strengthening of defence and deterrence capabilities, the declaration also expressed new directions, recognized the more complex, fluid and challenging security environment. The 2019 London declaration (NATO London Declaration, 2019), in addition to cyber, hybrid, energy security threats, also highlighted new technologies, critical infrastructure, security of communications, including 5G; it also declares space as an operational

domain of NATO and highlights China's growing influence which needs to be addressed by the Alliance as well as the threats emanating from different sorts of actors and from different strategic directions.

Today's strategic environment is more fluid and complex if compared to ones that existed during the Cold War or immediately after it. NATO has to retain vigilance and relevance in reaction to the mixed military and asymmetrical challenges the Alliance faces. So, the strategy should be focused, balanced and smarter than ever before. The top priority should be not to lose focus on the territorial defence and traditional military threats and retain credible deterrence. However, not only the readiness, reaction time and reassurance should be ensured, but also NATO has to keep strategic wisdom and preparedness to encounter different contemporary challenges stemming from different directions and origins.

## **Conclusions**

The contemporary deterrence studies are facing a certain identity crisis, as the old theories and analytical models do not reflect the contemporary environment to the fullest, and the new models haven't been introduced yet. The new thinking about the deterrence is focused on regional aspects, proliferation and complex security environments. It is more complicated to rationally plan in advance and find the right toolkit meeting the future challenges and strategic environments. However, the post-positivist approaches are not sufficient yet to unravel the complicated security environments and implications on the deterrence, while old rational choice theories are overly rigid and designed to narrowly depict the old-fashioned nuclear deterrence principles based on bipolar military balancing.

NATO's defence and deterrence evolved over the years, starting with the massive retaliation deterrence strategy, later moving to flexible response deterrence, and in the post-Cold War environment turning into a more political symbolic mission. At that time, NATO changed the principles of its defence and deterrence and moved to development of expeditionary capabilities; it did not perceive Russia as posing an existential threat anymore. The Alliance developed a different type of military, better fitted for out-of-area operations that required greater responsiveness, greater flexibility, a smaller footprint and ease of transportation (Larsen, 2019, p. 189). The major wake-up call for NATO was Russia's aggression in Ukraine when the Alliance had to rekindle the old-style principles of territorial defence. The new security environment instigated NATO's return to its core principles of collective defence and deterrence. NATO's adaptation is based on greater responsiveness, readiness and reinforcement – namely improvement of NATO's ability to respond to major challenges, including military ones, a readiness to have capabilities and a preparedness to respond, and assurance measures for Eastern Allies and the ability for timely reinforcement.

Together with the threats from Russia, NATO's Mediterranean Allies face challenges stemming from the south of Europe; moreover, the challenges from North Korea and possibly over the longer period, China would be particularly worrisome for the Alliance (Larsen, 2019). The Alliance is confronted by multiple

and complex threats and challenges together with technological challenges that can fundamentally affect the defence and deterrence as well as, cyber security, new technologies and defence issues, threats of a hybrid nature which might negatively affect the resilience of the Allies' populations. NATO has to find creative and vigilant approaches to counter multiple challenges and adapt its defence and deterrence: on one hand, maintaining focus on traditional territorial defence and, on the other hand, keep looking for creative, asymmetrical approaches to counter new sophisticated and fluid challenges.

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## 9.

# EUROPEAN POWER TRIAD AND LITHUANIAN SECURITY COOPERATION

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### Introduction

Since the Cold War, Lithuanian policy elites, especially the conservatives, have tied their hopes for independence from Russia and long-term security to U.S. support. President Ronald Reagan's critique of Mikhail Gorbachev and encouragement to "tear down that wall" were taken as sure signs of readiness to back the counter-USSR independence movements. To this day, Lithuania seems to consider the U.S. a more important security guarantor than any of the European powers, and tends to side with the U.S. if there is a transatlantic conflict of interests or positions.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has long desired to see more significant European contributions and burden sharing (particularly financial) in ensuring the security of the continent. President Donald Trump's ascent to power has delivered the message in perhaps a more glaring manner, but the isolationist preference expressed by Hillary Clinton on the campaign trail, albeit delivered more politely, would have likely had little substantive difference. The U.S. pivot to Asia, unfolding over the past several years, has taken on markedly more aggressive terms under the current leadership as well, further slighting European security concerns.

Europe's vision of security has also changed since 2014. While the challenges of migration and terrorism have far from subsided, the continent has all but gotten used to having these non-state actor issues on the security agenda over the past two decades. In contrast, the rise of a prospect of a confrontation with Russia, following the incursion in Ukraine, has been a major wake-up call for many in the West. It has become a new rallying cry for NATO (an alliance that had previously struggled to find a role in addressing the abovementioned non-state actor challenges), a prompt for defence budget increases, additional military procurements, as well as for troop recruitment and more intense national and international exercising. While financial crises and the rise of nationalist sentiment have started to tug at the EU's social fabric, the triad of European political, economic and military power seems to be facing up and adjusting to the new geopolitical reality. Instead of looking for pan-European consensus on defence matters (in an era where pan-European consensus on any major issue is an uphill battle), France, Germany and the UK are increasingly stepping up bilateral cooperation within this triad, and establishing new multilateral purpose-built security initiatives. The UK has been shepherding partners under the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), France – under

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the European Intervention Initiative (EII), and Germany has taken the lead in shaping NATO's Framework Nations Concept.

The current NATO posture is in line with Lithuania's desire for a tough joint European stance vis-à-vis Russia, but the European power triad holds a sizeable constituency sceptical of this posture, threatening to undo the fine balance between Europe's economic and military security interests. In this context, can Lithuania still afford to rely primarily on the U.S. to nudge NATO along to shore up the defences of its Eastern European borders? A dilemma before the security and foreign policy establishment is complex and manifold – rather than a binary choice. On the one hand, sliding along with the increasingly challenging American posture to Transatlantic security, while responding ad-hoc to the European moves, risks leaving the country short-changed, should an abrupt crisis require a forceful response. On the other hand, a pronounced shift and recalibration towards European powers would require substantively new strategy and long-term vision, including potential doctrinal changes and reassessing the defence acquisitions strategy. In between the two extremes of little changes to a new posture, the on-the-go response options balancing the abovementioned strategic partnerships require extremely delicate management of the available diplomatic, financial, and military resources, and present an immense challenge of strategic vision and consistency.

In an attempt to inform this discussion, sections two through four offer a brief overview of Lithuania's historic and current security cooperation with each of the pillars of the European power triad, contextualizing and comparing the security and foreign policy directions. Section five elaborates on the non-military aspects of the security dilemmas at hand, looking at the identifiable policy direction and public sentiment in the European power triad, and the challenges this potentially implies for future cooperation with Lithuania. The article seeks to convey the current Lithuanian and partner-state views on the success, significance and future prospects of security cooperation – reflecting both the public and expert views, – and offer some broad policy recommendations for the way ahead. Nevertheless, these insights are offered with intellectual humility, appreciating that significant information concerning these matters continues to be held informally and may not be available in the unclassified environment.

## **1. Germany**

Historically, the relationship between Lithuania and Germany has been a mixed bag. In the Middle Ages, the crusading Teutonic knights were the main threat to the Lithuanian kingdom. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lithuania was looking to balance Russia and had proposed to crown a German nobleman as its king after WWI, and in the face of Russia's invasion during WWII, Lithuania's president went into exile in Germany. The Nazi occupation of Lithuania over 1941-1945, and the Cold War German-Russian cooperation (ranging from cordial leadership relations to the collaboration over unifying Germany) has subsequently kept Lithuania suspicious of this European power. Nevertheless, since Lithuania has regained independence in 1990, the two countries have enjoyed increasingly closer

defence and security cooperation, and during the last decade, Germany came to be seen as the principle European security ally.

In the early nineties, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Germany has taken an active part in helping stand up a regional security architecture in Eastern Europe, contributing to the establishment of a Baltic Defense College, as well as a Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion, Naval Squadron, and Air Surveillance Network. Germany also helped Lithuania reorganise its armed force structure in line with the NATO requirements and as Lithuania joined NATO.

Germany had been one of the most frequent contributors to the air-policing mission (on rotation in 2005, 2008, 2009, 2011, and 2012). In addition, Lithuanian officers have also been regularly attending a number of German military institutes. Furthermore, Lithuanian troops frequently participate in German-led out-of-area peacekeeping missions. In 2016, Germany became the lead framework nation for the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) battalion to be deployed in Lithuania, and has also pledged to invest over 1 million euros in improving the target practice facilities in Pabradė by 2021.

Since 2015, Lithuania has been contributing 5-20 navy and special operations troops to the EUNAVFOR's Operation SOPHIA – a vessel boarding crew that serves aboard a German ship in countering illicit trafficking in the Mediterranean sea. Since 2016, Lithuania has also been sending 34 volunteer defence force (KASP) troops to serve in the UN's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) – they have been serving on the German contingent patrolling the bases, and do not take part in armed combat.

Arguably the most significant avenue for strengthening bilateral security cooperation between Germany and Lithuania has been the defence procurements. Over the past five years, 2 out of 3 major equipment upgrades for Lithuania's armed forces were sourced from Germany: 21 Panzer howitzer artillery systems purchased in 2014 (delivery to be completed by the end of 2019), and in 2016 – 88 Boxer multirole armoured fighting vehicles<sup>14</sup> (delivery to be completed by 2021). In terms of operational implications, it is also worth mentioning that in October 2018, Lithuania's mechanised brigade the Iron Wolf was affiliated with a German artillery division (until then, it has mainly been training and cooperating with a Danish division).

Germany's political and social reactions to the changes in European security environment has led to the 2016 white paper discussing the future direction of its armed forces. Following public and expert consultations, the white paper expressed a willingness to participate in and lead international military coalitions – a new development for a country that had been cautious about participating even in UN peacekeeping missions. Some of that was reflected in spearheading NATO's EFP initiative, greater presence at the UN mission in Mali, and a slight increase in the defence spending. However, although Germany consistently surpasses the UK by a number of active troops and compares well to France in this respect, in 2019 only

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that the gun turrets mounted on the Boxer vehicles are supplied by Israel and represent a sizeable portion of the contract. It can be viewed as another bilateral rapprochement effort with a country that Lithuania likes to hold up as an example (of a successful small state conscript army).

1.8% of these troops were deployed abroad – whereas that portion stood at 12.1% in the UK and 8.8% in France (IISS Military Balance, 2019).

Despite this gradual opening up for more military involvement, the doctrinal divergence between Germany and Lithuania continues, resurfacing with a forte every time the tensions with Russia are on the rise. As aptly noted by Bladaitė and Šešelgytė (2018), Germany's view of what it entails to be a security provider is still, at the core, much more in line with soft civilian power, as articulated by the EU or UN, and exercised through missions of institution building and economic development. The 2016 white paper also views greater European defence integration as primarily symbolic political act (in contrast to the more literal French interpretation of defence integration, discussed below).

This stands in contrast with Lithuania's view of security primarily through the military lens – even in the face of rising so-called hybrid threats. Although the view in Germany is gradually shifting towards more support for military involvement, there is still a strong preference for other, non-violent tools of crisis resolution – in contrast to the sentiment in Lithuania. That is particularly, and increasingly, felt in dealings with Russia: whereas Lithuania might prefer a tougher military response to provocations, Germany seems increasingly inclined to pursue closer economic relations.

With Germany's former minister of defence Ursula von der Leyen taking the helm as the first woman President of the European Commission, it seems that at least some of Germany's broad and not overly militaristic view of security will be transferred to the European policy picture – she has already pointed to combatting climate change as one of her priority items on the agenda to ensure the continent's security.

## **2. France**

France has tended to play a somewhat antagonistic, if not always significant, role in Lithuanian history, sending troops to crusades against Lithuanian territory in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and nominating a number of candidates to the throne of the Polish-Lithuanian over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. France has historically maintained and advocated closer relations with Russia, which has made Lithuania suspicious of the overt Communist sympathisers. As Lithuania regained independence from the USSR, the French leadership was in no rush to support this bid. In Lithuania's subsequent negotiation for EU membership, the French seemed to view the country primarily as a less-developed welfare seeker, especially in agriculture, and were the primary force behind the pressure to shut down Lithuania's nuclear power plant as unsafe. Delving deeper into the security aspect in the context of NATO, it seems that Lithuania has not sufficiently appreciated the nuanced relationship that France had with the alliance, due in no small part to its nuclear capabilities. Having officially become a nuclear state in 1960, France was always bent on maintaining a level of independence over its use of armed forces (so much so that in 1966, France had requested all allied forces to be withdrawn from its territory). This stance has often led to antagonism with the U.S. as the key driver of alliance unity.

Among the French experts of today, there is a clear understanding that Lithuania has historically thrown in its lot with the U.S. primarily, and with Germany secondarily. For instance, in 2003, France (along with Germany and Russia) were among the staunchest opponents to the U.S. war in Iraq – and Lithuania’s prominent political support for this effort, as well as active military participation in the war and post-war missions, did not go unnoticed. France is also cognisant of the tight connection between Lithuania’s operational cooperation and defence procurements, where Germany has been chosen as the primary supplier of armoured vehicles, and Norway – as the main supplier of air defences. Although the Lithuanian-French security cooperation is said to have grown in recent years, the NATO air policing mission and the joint training exercises outside the European theatre have been the primary vehicles for it.

Since 2007, the French Mirage 2000 fighters have served on five NATO air-policing missions based in Šiauliai (2007, 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016). In addition, in 2018, France deployed 300 troops to Lithuania in support of the German-led EFP mission. Finally, France is also one of the many regular participants in the NATO’s annual Open Spirit mine countermeasures exercise in the Baltic Sea, and runs exchange programs for the Baltic military at its Saint-Cyr academy. In terms of non-military security and defence cooperation initiatives, in 2018 France has joined Lithuania’s Cyber Rapid Response Force established under the EU’s Permanent Structured Cooperation policy (PESCO), and has also delegated an officer to the NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence in Vilnius, who has been the second in command since 2013.

Given France’s historic sympathies to Moscow, the decision taken in Paris in 2015 to bow to NATO’s (particularly American) pressure to and cancel the deal to sell two Mistral helicopter carriers to Russia was perceived in Lithuania a massive win for NATO and a show of political support for the Baltic security concerns. Nevertheless, this seems to have been more of a costly political gesture, as the French Mistrals were sold to Egypt instead, where they have been fitted with Russian helicopters and are being served by Russian training crews; Russia has subsequently bid on maintenance contracts for these ships, and there have been conflicting claims about Russia effectively receiving the blueprints and custody of these ships (Radio Free Europe, 2016; Sputnik 2017).

When it comes to “returning the favour” of international support, Lithuania does not seem too forward leaning on either political or operational level. For instance, President Grybauskaitė was one of the most ardent critics of President Nicolas Sarkozy’s signature initiative – the French-led NATO mission in Libya to remove Muammar Gaddafi from power in 2011. Presently, there is also a curious narrative dynamic on Lithuania sending its troops to Mali. In Lithuania, these deployments, under the auspices of MINUSMA, are construed as a way of supporting the French efforts in Africa – and were in fact authorized in 2016 at the French request. However, while politically Lithuania’s presence is appreciated, the fact that it is done under the German-led MINUSMA peacekeeping force, rather than under the French counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency Operation Barkhane in the Sahel region, does not go unnoticed by France. So, while it may be

tempting to view Lithuania's presence in Mali as a balancing act, in international eyes, it remains skewed towards Germany.

On the other hand, there has been a great deal of appreciation for Lithuania sending one of its C-27J Spartan transport aircraft to provide logistical support to the French Operation Sangaris in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2014. Although there is a palpable desire on the French part to see more such logistical supports initiatives, Lithuania seems to hardly have the capacity to do so. Its three Spartans, purchased on a limited maintenance contract, are increasingly strained by the intense wear-and-tear from the regular flights to Afghanistan (where Lithuania continues to support the U.S. peacekeeping mission)– the technical difficulties have made these aircraft increasingly unavailable even to transport the country's leadership, to say nothing of taking on additional military mission support flights. Nevertheless, in 2013 Lithuania has acquired three French-made Eurocopter AS365N3+ Dauphin helicopters for search and rescue (SAR) missions (delivered in 2015), and is putting together a bid to acquire more SAR helicopters in 2022. Scheduled to be one of the most sizeable strategic acquisitions after the Boxers, this could potentially open up some additional allied support capacity.

It is also worth noting that, in addition to cooperating in Mali and CAR (including through EU training missions), the French and Lithuanian troops are jointly serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. This means the Lithuanian and French troops do share some operational familiarity - albeit not as great as with the other two power triad states. However, perhaps of greater significance is the current divergence of troop training priorities, reflective of the strategic and defence concept divergences discussed below: whereas Lithuanian forces (except for the Special Forces) are increasingly geared towards territorial defence, especially following the heightened concerns over Russia's incursion since 2009, the French forces are mostly, and increasingly, tasked with counter-terrorism engagement and out-of-area military operations.

Under President Emmanuel Macron, France has expressed a notably greater visionary ambition for Europe, including significantly more attention to the security of the Baltics – which it had historically seen as more within the German purview. However, the latest strategic publications put out by the French government suggest a view of “the Baltic region” as a geographic area encompassing Scandinavia, and the interest seems to lie there, rather than in Lithuania or Latvia (see, e.g. DGRIS, 2019)<sup>15</sup>. In terms of European security, Macron's new vision for a stronger Europe was the platform to revive the idea of a European Army, and while that has caused some debate, France's new European Intervention Initiative (EII) has already taken off in 2018, with 10 participating states. The EII was an attempt to create a more agile military force, primarily for missions outside Europe, although without entirely ruling out intra-EU assistance, and there are hopes of eventually folding it into EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) structure. This was in line with the

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15 Of the three Baltic states, only Estonia historically enjoys close defence relationship with France. However, as the focus of this article is Lithuania specifically rather than the Baltic region more generally, it does not further elaborate this aspect of defence cooperation with France – despite its valued contribution to the security of all three Baltic states.



French desire for greater strategic autonomy (in terms of operations and nuclear deterrence) expressed in the 2017 National Strategic Review of Defense and Security.

Lithuania has not joined any of these new abovementioned initiatives, choosing to focus instead on strengthening its NATO links, and seems to increasingly view the out-of-area missions as necessary NATO contribution, albeit a distraction. As discussed in detail by Šlekys (2015), following Russia's incursion into Georgia in 2008 and the conflict with Ukraine in 2014, Lithuania's armed forces have systematically been transformed towards greater capacity for territorial defence. The significance of involving the whole of society in defence preparedness and active resistance in case of a crisis has also increasingly come to the fore – drawing on the historical experience and narratives of Baltic resistance fighters, aka forest brothers, as well as integrating the experiences of the “hearts and minds” from the U.S. campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan that Lithuanian troops continue to support.

Overall, the emerging French strategic direction seems to be engaging its troops in counter-terrorism operations abroad in order to safeguard the increasingly anti-European society at home, regardless of how NATO feels about this – if it comes to that. This is almost a mirror-opposite to Lithuania's emerging response to the security challenges it is facing – the country is increasingly focused on getting ready to mobilise and unite the armed forces and mostly pro-European society for national defence, and in case of crisis – to be able to hold out until NATO comes to the rescue.

### **3. The United Kingdom**

Lithuania and the UK do not seem to have as deep a history of either cooperation or confrontational relations: there are traceable 15-17th century trade ties between the British and Lithuanian nobility, but in this context, of utmost relevance is the British assistance in the period between the two world wars in restoring the Lithuanian national army. Nevertheless, the large Lithuanian diaspora and closely aligned interests of security cooperation with the U.S. have facilitated the current partnership between them. The operational level cooperation between Lithuania and the UK has been particularly smooth and perhaps easier, compared to the two other European partners discussed here. In the early 1990s, as the newly independent Lithuania worked to re-establish its armed forces, sizeable portions of military doctrine have been borrowed from the UK (and the U.S.). This has led to mutually recognizable similarities of troop training elements and approaches that presently enhance interoperability.

The UK was also one of the first countries to contribute fighter jets for NATO's air policing mission as soon as Lithuania joined the alliance in 2004 (and again for the second rotation in 2014). In addition, the UK, along with Lithuania, were among the key U.S. supporters in the 2003 war in Iraq – nine Lithuanian the troop rotations were serving in the UK-patrolled area, and some troops were serving in the headquarters for the UK-French Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (C-JEF).

Presently, the two countries continue to regularly participate in military



exercises through NATO's Force Integration Unit (NFIU) presence in Lithuania.

One of the most important vehicles for UK-Lithuania's bilateral defence cooperation has been the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) initiative, launched at the NATO Wales Summit in September 2014. While JEF is not a standing force, it is a partnership and integration instrument with a fast decision-making capability that allows deployments to Eastern European borders during peacetime security crises. Its advancement has enjoyed particular attention in the UK as one of the measures to tighten European security cooperation in the face of Brexit that had started to loom ever larger – and NATO has, in turn, welcomed JEF as a collaborative tool with non-NATO countries in Scandinavia. Lithuania's growing willingness to engage via JEF more closely over the past few years has been met with appreciation.

While the military-to-military channel for security cooperation is the most active, it is also important to mention the British efforts to assist, and partner with, Lithuanian government institutions in developing the civilian capabilities needed to address the broader security challenges, such as resistance and resilience building in both conventional and cyber space. While Lithuania cooperates with both, the UK and Germany, through the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Finland, an effort to engage the civilian side of Lithuanian government in matters of security, crisis preparedness, and resistance may be unique to the UK.

In terms of pan-European security initiatives, both the UK and Lithuania have been consistently sceptical of proposals that threaten to compete with, rather than complement, NATO. In addition, the UK seems to have little confidence in initiatives spearheaded by France, such as the EII. Nevertheless, the UK does enjoy close bilateral cooperation with France (through Combined Joint Expeditionary Forces), as well as with Germany – including the recent acquisition of Boxer multi-role armoured fighting vehicles.

On defence and security policy issues, historically, the UK has tended to cluster together with a like-minded group of Nordic and Baltic countries – a coalition that the UK might be looking to tighten in the face of Brexit. Furthermore, several British officials have expressed confidence about Brexit freeing up resources and operational capacity that will allow the country to engage more actively through other European forums.

#### **4. Challenges and dilemmas**

The strategic direction of Lithuania's security policy has seen little change over the past decade, especially vis-à-vis the European power triad. Consistently emphasising the Russia threat, president Grybauskaitė had used her two terms to tighten Germany's security commitments, leveraging her personal rapport with Chancellor Merkel to maintain this a priority alliance, especially since 2014. However, Germany's national economic interests have increasingly come to the fore on economic matters, like the Russian Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project, and with the chancellor's term drawing to a close, Lithuania's leadership will likely be

dealing with a less sympathetic counterpart. In a somewhat comparable manner of energy and commercial interests intersecting with security, France has remained sceptical of Lithuania's concerns over the Belarus Ostrovet's nuclear power plant – ostensibly being a large nuclear exporter itself. It is also worth noting that Germany and France have been significantly increasing their investments in, and bilateral trade with, Russia – in 2019, these two countries had the highest levels of economic interconnectedness with Russia among the EU members, surpassing the pre-2014 levels (Foy, 2019).

Still, as of the fall 2019, there have been no indications as to how Lithuanian foreign or security policy might shift to account for this change in dynamic – president Nausėda seems poised to maintain the current course. Similarly, there does not seem to be an articulated appreciation of France's growing commitments in the Sahel and potential distancing from European defence initiatives in favour of ad-hoc multilateral or bilateral coalition building. More thought might have been given to managing the relationship with the post-Brexit UK – but in the defence sphere thus far it has meant mostly continued training under JEF and reiterating commitments to collaborate under NATO's auspices. In addition to the changing internal and relational dynamics among the European power triad, the continent has seen a number of contextual changes to the geopolitical order – from growing concerns about the security implications of China's economic activities to Russia's resurgence as conventional (and potentially also a tactical nuclear) threat to Europe.

In the face of this changing European power dynamics, it is important for Lithuania to commence a long-term strategic re-assessment of the direction the continent and its institutions are headed, and how that may (or may not) align with the preferred direction for Lithuania over the next decade or two. At the very least, it is important to recognise the heavy weight that Lithuania presently assigns to the German corner of the European power triad and consider ways of balancing out the other two corners more carefully. While there might not be much love lost between Lithuania and France, it would be most unfortunate to see both France and Germany pursue closer business interests with Russia. While with Germany, Lithuania had mounted a concerned oppositional effort, including extensive discussions and familiarising the partners and their public with the security implications of such moves, with France such efforts seem largely absent. Lithuania must consider its willingness to, and potential new avenues for, investing more in a tighter defence cooperation with France – be it via more explicit out-of-area mission support, or perhaps strategic procurement considerations. With the UK, Lithuania ought to put significantly more efforts into energising its massive diaspora in Britain to familiarise their communities with Lithuania's security realities, concerns and needs. Engaging the local public opinion and looking to build more political sympathy through grass-roots activism would constitute important moves towards shoring up the UK's security commitments to Lithuania, and the Baltics.

In reassessing Lithuania's stance, it is important not to lose sight of the strategic views on security and defence priorities in these partner states. The ECFR (2018) expert survey revealed that Lithuania saw Poland, Germany and Estonia as most desirable partners in defence and security – although none of these (or, for that

matter, other EU nations) saw Lithuania among the top partner choices. The lack of Lithuania's attention to France (which was collectively ranked as the overall most influential EU member on security policy) and the UK was notable, and the three pillars of European power saw each other in the top five partner positions – reflective of those increasingly tight bilateral connections the Baltics seem to be missing out on. The survey also listed the top security concerns for Lithuania's as Russia, energy security, integrated European security policy and Ukraine. While this is unsurprising, it is quite revealing to see how these priorities differed among the European power triad: Germany and France shared their top four priorities (with slight ordering variations) as a single fiscal policy, immigration, common border police and integrated security policy. This suggests an emerging broader view of security as a whole of government issue, where social and economic policies play an increasingly important role, and civilian forces and agencies can be deployed to resolve crises. This view currently seems entirely lacking in Lithuania, where defence and security, and other domestic policy aspects, are highly separated (not just in terms of planning and implementation, but also in the limited overlap of decision-maker expertise). While Germany's overall interests might have reflected Lithuania's concerns somewhat (Russia was still in the top five concerns, and energy security and Ukraine were present at the end of the list), the UK – the only one to rank Russia as the most significant security concern – seemed to get little credit for it from Lithuania as a potential partner. Seeking punitive measures against Russia following Skripal poisoning seems to have brought the Lithuanian and British diplomatic communities closer, but somehow that sentiment did not carry along the broader security community.

Another study by Koenig (2017) comparing the EU public and expert attitudes on defence matters complements this picture. The German public seems supportive of diplomatic, humanitarian, and even civilian counter-terrorism measures in responding to the security crises the continent is faced with, but remains staunchly opposed to military out-of-area operations. In contrast, the French favoured forceful military responses. Furthermore, in Germany, the internal narrative seems to be that of an already on-going international strategic leadership in defence and security, with little to no stomach for more military responses to security crises (Franke, 2018), so increasing the ask directly in this area would likely fall on deaf ears. It is also worth noting the increasing anti-U.S. sentiment in these two countries – in Germany, the U.S. is currently seen as a greater threat to global peace and stability than Russia, and Brown (2014) notes that in France this has translated into a growing anti-NATO sentiment, as the alliance is seen to be mainly U.S.-led.

In light of these developments, it is clear that Lithuania will be increasingly forced to choose between U.S. and European security partnerships. What is more, neither seem to align particularly closely with Lithuania's identified security priorities, as the U.S. is increasingly concerned with developments in Asia, and Europe – in both NATO and EU institutional environments – seems increasingly fractured on defence and security matters (including on what constitutes defence and security matters). In turn, Lithuania's decision makers do not seem to appreciate the agenda items that resonate highly with the public and expert views

– either in the U.S., or in the European power triad. It is not impossible that closer identification with partner security challenges would come organically, as security dialogue broadens and matures in Lithuania, and the society develops – but that is hardly a given, and bilateral civic initiatives would go a long way to pave the road to support closer defence cooperation.

## **Conclusions**

Lithuania's defence and security cooperation with the European power triad has become somewhat more intense over the past decade, due in no small part to the personal leadership rapprochement between Germany's Angela Merkel and Lithuania's Dalia Grybauskaitė. Based mostly around strategic acquisitions and troop deployments, cooperation with Germany has been the most solid of the three pillars. However, as Germany's economic interests increasingly trump Lithuania's security concerns, that relationship will likely change in the face of shifting domestic and geopolitical contexts. Indeed, the crisis in Ukraine in 2014 has been the biggest impetus to revisit the vision for defence and security, including the partnerships. However, the broader European and global geopolitical shifts have not been reflected in Lithuania's security priorities, the manner in which security cooperation is sought, or what types and channels of cooperation are considered to be meaningfully contributing to security. France and the UK have not received nearly the same level of attention or efforts in building the partnership ties – and in reassessing its future defence policy, the first suggestion would be to balance partnerships with the three pillar states more carefully (especially given the differences and overlaps in security interests).

The second important aspect would be to consider ways of reflecting partner security interests internally – finding domestic channels and initiatives that may not traditionally fall within the security realm in Lithuania, which could connect and meaningfully contribute on socioeconomic issues, will be increasingly important.

Third, greater involvement is needed of both the Lithuanian diasporas in partner countries to lobby the policy makers, and of media and other social channels to engage the partner publics on Lithuania's concerns.

Fourth, when shaping the defence and security discourse with the domestic public more in light with the current geopolitical realities, it will be important to move away from the rhetoric of encirclement and the need to brace for imminent threats, and towards a more long-term vision of the country in the European context. There has been considerable reluctance among the foreign and defence policy decisionmakers to incorporate more closely the public opinions into the country's official positions, in turn increasing buy-in and support.

Finally, the strategic partnership with the U.S., which Lithuania has historically relied on as the primary security guarantor, needs to be reassessed in light of Europe's – and America's – priority shifts. As a small state, Lithuania would certainly benefit most in supporting policies and missions that advance and enshrine international norms and avoid reduce the rifts among major interest factions – but if forced to choose, it would be increasingly important to improve relations and defence

cooperation within the continent – if for no other reason than to balance the shifting nature of current alignments. The strategy of befriending the giant should be increasingly replaced by hedging the bets within the fractured realm.

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## ECONOMICS, POLITICS, SECURITY: RUSSIAN-EUROPEAN GEO-ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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### Introduction

The political crisis in Ukraine in 2014, evolving into an armed conflict, drew the attention of international relations experts to the relations of Western European states with Russia. There is no shortage of research in academic literature looking into different aspects of this relationship, and one of the most discussed topics is economic-energy cooperation (Baran, 2007; Rahr, 2007; Wallander, 2007; Nitoiu, 2011; Szabo, 2014). After the energy crises between Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, which disrupted natural gas supplies to Western Europe, the issue of energy security became a focus of attention. Experts in the field have warned that energy is increasingly becoming a means of achieving Russia's foreign policy goals. It is noted that Russia seeks to break the unity of European states, hinder the diversification of sources of energy raw materials and thus gain a monopoly on the supply of resources in Western European countries. It is emphasised that increasing economic and energy dependence of Western European countries on Russia increases their vulnerability, adversely affecting the economic situation and forcing foreign policy priorities to change (Balmaceda, 2002; Baran, 2007; Budrys, 2006; Česnakas, 2016; Molis, Česnakas ir Juozaitis, 2018). The problem is that in these studies the relations between Western Europe and Russia are viewed through a realistic (security) prism, which makes them be perceived as conflicting. This prevents us from understanding why the countries of Western Europe are developing an economic-energy cooperation with Russia, although this is said to threaten their security. Even the crisis in Ukraine has not affected the position of Western Europe. Despite the concerns of the Allies in Central and Eastern Europe and the United States, they continue to assert a geo-economic alliance with Russia. The most striking example is the Nord Stream gas pipeline, which, critics say, is not a commercial, but a geopolitical project of the Kremlin, designed to bypass traditional transit countries of resources, among them Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Baltic States.

Close economic-energy relations between Russia and Western European countries suggest that there is no fundamental conflict between them, therefore, a realism-based explanation of this relationship should be considered empirically unfounded. At the same time, this gives rise to two questions: first, what are the factors determining Western European relations with Russia?; second, how does

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this relationship affect the international and security situation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe?

To answer these questions, the article is based on the perspective of the World-system, analysing the effect of economic factors on the policy (Wallerstein, 1974; 1979; 1984; Chase-Dunn, 1981; 1984; 1989; Hopkins 1982a; 1982b; 1982c; Shannon, 1996). Based on it, the main research thesis is formulated: Relations between Western Europe and Russia are determined by structural geo-economic factors – the pursuit of the Western European countries belonging to the world system “core” geo-economic zone to keep Russia in “semi-periphery” and to maximise the economic potential of this relationship (“core” and “semi-periphery”).

The article analyses the cases of Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, France and Italy, whereas these countries are geographically defined as Western Europe, moreover, these Western European countries have the most intensive relations with Russia.

The relevance of the analysis is justified by the fact that it, examining the Russian-Western European relations, applies a World-system perspective that the sizes the impact of economic factors (links) on politics. The article aims to show that it is necessary to take into account the geo-economic conjuncture affecting Russian-Western European relations.

## 1. World system

### 1.1. Geo-economic zones

The world system is hierarchical, and its expansion will always be uneven and unequal. Given the hierarchical division of labour in the global economic system, it is possible to determine the position of a particular state in the global network of capitalism. Traditionally, three geo-economic zones are distinguished, to which different countries of the world belong: “core”, “periphery” and “semi-periphery”.

The “core” of the world system includes the most economically powerful countries, of which the per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is the highest in the world, living standards – the best, and employees are the most qualified and the most productive. The “core” states have accumulated the most capital, because they produce and export high-tech production, are technologically advanced and highly competitive in international markets. Because these products are relatively expensive, the population of the “core” states earns and consumes the most.

The “periphery” includes the world’s economically weakest countries, which mainly produce and export relatively cheap industrial and agricultural produce or raw materials, and source expensive high-tech industrial products from “core” countries. The “peripheral” states do not have sufficient accumulation of economic resources, which would enable them to reach the level of development of the “core” countries. Moreover, they are heavily dependent on investment from the “core” countries, their credits, markets and technology.

The “semi-periphery” countries occupy an intermediate position between the “periphery” and the “core” states – they are economically more powerful than “peripheral” states, but give up to the “core”. The “semi-periphery” countries are

characterised by the fact they manufacture and export both higher value-added industrial products (e.g., electronic devices, machinery or other equipment etc.), and lower (e.g., metals, inorganic and synthetic chemicals, textiles, food, leather products etc.) or is a resource provider for the “core”. The “semi-periphery” states are (partly) economically independent of the “core”, which allows them to rise from one world high to another, i.e. from the “semi-periphery” to “core”. In pursuit of their goal, “semi-peripheral” states can use protectionist measures to protect existing technologically-advanced (“core”-like) industries from the competition of imports from the “core” (Norkus, 2015). On the other hand, “semi-peripheral” states may be over-exploited by “core” countries; as a result, they may slide to the “periphery” (Shannon, 1996: 41).

In reviewing the impact of isolated economic factors on domestic situations and policies, in the “core” countries, socio-economic tensions are reduced through democratic practices and a more active redistribution of capital through various social programs. As a result, “core” states are world leaders in terms of relative wage levels, education, social and health and other social areas.

The competitiveness of production or raw materials produced in the “periphery” in international markets is supported by the low level of labour remuneration. To keep it as low as possible, various economic and non-economic coercive instruments are used. The consequence of this is that “peripheral” states are politically unstable – they often suffer riots, civil wars and coups. Conflicts are caused by the extremely uneven distribution of very limited economic resources within a society. In suppressing unrest, “peripheral” ruling regimes usually use force structures.

The economic well-being of workers in the “semi-peripheral” states is higher than that of the “peripheral” workers. However, the economies of the countries in the zone do not accumulate sufficient capital to ensure relatively high standards of socio-economic well-being for the majority of the population. Generally, higher socioeconomic indicators in “semi-peripheral” countries are ensured by a more technologically advanced (“core”-like) industry. Meanwhile, accumulated capital of “peripheral” industrial sectors – much smaller and there, as in the “peripheral” countries, relatively cheap labour prevails. The accumulation of added value varies between different industrial sectors, resulting in unequal distribution of capital among the population of these countries. The “semi-periphery” countries tend to have higher, if we compare it to the “core”, level of poverty and social exclusion, income inequality, uneven regional development, emigration and other socio-economic problems which create tensions in society.

The economic and political elites of the “semi-periphery” countries are usually made up of two groups. The first is made up of an export-oriented “peripheral” type, and the second from the technologically-advanced “core” industry. It is in the interest of the actors controlling the “peripheral” industry to maintain close economic and political relations with the “core” countries, whereby this allows them to maintain access to their profitable markets where they can market their produce. In turn, “core-like” industry advocates close relations with the “periphery” or other “semi-periphery” countries, which are the markets for their (advanced) production. Together, they urge states to protect technologically-advanced

industrial production under their control from competition from imports from “core” countries (Chase-Dunn, 1989: 121-129, 213-214). Socio-economic tensions in society and the intersecting interests of ruling elite groups lead to political instability. Political regimes in “semi-peripheral” countries range from authoritarian to formal democracies, dominated by industrialists and financiers, representatives of political or bureaucratic apparatus and power structures (Shannon, 1996: 27-32, 106-107, 112-117).

*1.2. Economic and political relations between “core” and “peripheral” and “semi-peripheral” states*

The World-system perspective is based on the assumption that economic relations between the “core” and the “semi-periphery” and the “periphery” is exploitative. This is because there is a system of uneven exchange in the global network of capitalism – the “periphery” and “semi-periphery” export relatively low value-added industrial products or raw materials to the “core”, manufactured or produced by cheap labour, while importing expensive high-tech industrial products from the “core”, produced by skilled and highly-paid employees in the “core” countries. The difference (profit) remains in the “core” countries. Therefore, the economic power block of the “core” countries, made up of financiers, industrialists and traders, forces “peripheral” and “semi-peripheral” countries to participate in uneven exchanges. To this end, “core” states rely on economic, political, and, as a last resort, military instruments (Shannon, 1996: 33-38).

The economic power block of the “periphery” is usually made up of large landowners, the extraction and export sector, merchants, small business, bureaucrats, representatives of the military or other power structures. They are interested in maintaining a “periphery” in the global network of capitalism, whereby this ensures markets for the products and raw materials they produce, despite the fact that the economic benefits of uneven exchanges with “core” or “semi-peripheral” countries are insufficient to ensure even limited standards of socio-economic well-being for local workers. Moreover, while “peripheral” countries are significantly (economically) dependent on the “core”, they have virtually no choice but to participate in disbalanced exchanges (Shannon, 1996: 33-38, 100, 106-107).

The “semi-peripheral” states interact with the “periphery” economically as the “core”, and with the “core” – as the “periphery”. They export lower-value industrial products to the “core” than produced in the “core” countries, or raw materials, and to the “periphery” – higher value-added industrial products than those produced in the “periphery” (Shannon 1996: 33-38, 41, 112-117). This is because without the “semi-periphery” of the “peripheral” type of industry, states also have more technologically-advanced (“core”-like) industrial sectors. The latter occurs when, due to excessive production costs and falling production prices, certain economic activities lose profitability at the “core”, so industrial production is being moved to those geo-economic zones where the labour force is paid less. In the meantime, the “core” retains institutions for research, experimental development and coordination of international production chains (Norkus, 2015).

In assessing the impact of economic relations (relationships) on political relations, the “core” states compete with each other in the global system as to

which one of them will control the “periphery” or gain more influence in the “semi-periphery”. During the colonial period, the “core” countries conquered and directly controlled the “periphery” (colonies). Today, they rely on a network of “client” states: the “core” state, using economic, political or military pressure, may intervene in the internal affairs of the “peripheral” party (client) and thus act in a way beneficial to itself.

The “periphery” countries, although politically independent, do not have possibilities for implementing autonomous economic policies, which would allow them to rise from one level of the world system to the other, because they are too economically dependent on the “core”. Incidentally, these countries are often governed by incompetent and corrupt regimes, the members of whose authority means, in particular, personal enrichment or privilege, rather than representing the interests of the state. The “core” states politically support these regimes because their policies are in the strategic interest of maintaining the “periphery” in the world system.

The behaviour of the “core” states on the “periphery” creates tension in the world system, absorbed by the “semi-periphery”. Countries in this geo-economic area ensure that the “core” will never face the united resistance of economically-exploitable states. The “semi-periphery” countries have no interest in uniting with the “periphery” because they themselves exploit it economically. In addition, mediation between the “core” and the “periphery”<sup>16</sup> creates the conditions for “semi-peripheral” countries to accumulate capital, which may subsequently be invested in the development of advanced economic enterprises. However, this does not mean that the interests of the “semi-periphery” and the “core” countries coincide. The “semi-peripheral” states are constantly balancing between the “core” states and their (national) interests. That, on the one hand, allows “semi-peripheral” countries to pursue economic policies (partially) independent from the “core” countries, which allows them to ascend to the next level (to the “core”) of the world system; on the other hand, it prevents over-exploitation of the “core” economy, capable of being pushed to the “periphery” (Wallerstein, 1979: 69, 83-92, 95-108; Shannon, 1996: 36-37, 40-41, 112-117).

## **2. The position of Western Europe and Russia in the global system**

### *2.1. “Semi-peripheral” Russia*

Russia’s economy is the most powerful in the post-Soviet space. The country’s GDP is 1.4 trillion US dollars, and according to this indicator, Russia ranks 11th in the world (World Bank, 2018). The basis of Russia’s economy consists of a “core” and a “periphery” type industry: the country produces and exports both relatively high value-added industrial products (e.g., armaments, aviation components, space technology etc.) and lower-value products (e.g., steel, petroleum products, fertilisers, machinery, rubber etc.). Also, Russia is one of the world’s largest exporters of resources.

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<sup>16</sup> Some of the “semi-periphery” countries function as regional trade and financial centres, tasked with transfer profits to the “core” and administer “peripheral” investments by the “core” states (or corporations).

Looking at the Russian “peripheral” type industry, a distinction needs to be made between the extraction and export of raw materials. This branch of the economy is major in the Russian economy, with value added exceeding many other areas of the economy. Russia has the largest reserves of natural resources in the world<sup>17</sup>, controls strategically important energy supply routes in Europe and Asia, and its resource extraction and export companies – are among the largest in the world. Energy resources (oil, natural gas, coal, uranium etc.) forms the basis of Russian exports. The resource sector accounts for more than a quarter of the country’s GDP, accounts for more than half of exports, income from the sale of raw materials, in excess of one-third of the federal budget revenue. The situation in global resource (especially in energy) markets has a significant impact on macroeconomic indicators in Russia. Experts, in evaluating the importance of the resource sector for the Russian economy, the size that country “<...> shows a clear and conspicuous so-called ‘Dutch disease’, where the export of raw materials in practice accumulates most of the public funds” (Zdanavičius, 2006: 209, op cit).

When discussing a “core”-like industry, Russia largely inherited it from the Soviet Union. The main sector of this type of industry is the military industry. According to analysts, this sector of the Russian economic “<...> is practically the only area of the Russian economy capable of competing in foreign markets (Zdanavičius, 2006: 203, op cit). Currently, Russia is one of the world leaders in arms production and the second largest arms exporter after the United States<sup>18</sup> (Tian, Fleurant, Kuimova, Wezeman, Wezeman, 2018). In terms of export geography, most of the production is exported to “peripheral” or “semi-peripheral” countries. The main importers of Russian armaments are China and India. These countries account for about 70% of the exports. Other important Russian arms exports include Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa (Russia Remains Second-Largest Arms Exporter Despite Sales Drop – Think Tank, 2019). In summary, despite more advanced industrial sectors, a large proportion of Russian industrial products are not in demand on the domestic and global markets. As a result, Russia is forced to import a lot of industrial production, especially high-tech, from Western Europe or other “core” countries. Funds received from the sale of energy resources are used to pay for imports.

In assessing the impact of economic factors on Russia’s domestic situation and policies, the lack of a technologically-advanced industry makes Russia remain significantly dependent on a “peripheral” type of industry, the competitiveness of which is guaranteed by the low level of wages in the global markets, while the accumulated capital is too small to create the conditions for a high level of economic prosperity for many residents. By analysing the main parameters of

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17 In terms of energy reserves, Russia holds 32% of global natural gas (1st place in the world), 12% oil (8th place), 10% of carbon (2nd place), and 8% of uranium reserves. Also, the country is rich in wood, precious metals, diamonds, iron and other minerals.

18 Russia’s global armament market share is 21%, and that of the US – 36%. Since 2000, Russia exported arms for about 50 billion US dollars, and this number is growing steadily: from 3.7 billion dollars (in 2002) up to 15.2 billion dollars (in 2012).



the state's socio-economic situation, including the level of salaries or retirement pensions, Russia is not only lagging behind the most developed countries in the world, but also some post-Soviet countries. For example, the share of GDP per capita in Russia reaches 10.7 thousand US dollars and, according to this indicator, the country ranks 60th in the world (For comparison, Sweden has a GDP per capita of 53.4 thousand, 44.4 thousand in Germany, in Estonia – 19.7 thousand dollars)<sup>19</sup> (Trading Economics, 2019; Eurostat, 2019; The Moscow Times, 2018). According to official statistics, in 2018 in Russia, around 20 million people were living below the poverty line, which is about 13% of the total population of the country (The Moscow Times, 2019). After the collapse of the USSR, the level of wealth inequality began to increase rapidly in Russia – it is estimated that currently 10% of the population have accumulated over 80% of total public assets in their hands (The Moscow Times, 2019). Russia has a relatively high Gini coefficient, measuring social exclusion in society. And in 1996, the Gini in Russia was 46.1, in 2005 – 41.3, in 2015 – 37.7 (World Bank, 2019). By comparison, in the Soviet Union, the Gini was 29 (1991).

The economic development of Russian cities and regions differs. Two of the largest cities in the country – Moscow and St. Petersburg – generate most of the country's GDP, while moving away from those metropolitan areas, there is a decline of income among the population, along with employment rates, lack of investment, and deterioration of infrastructure. In general, experts say, “<...> It is becoming increasingly difficult for Russia to maintain the infrastructure inherited from the Soviet era, since there was virtually no investment in infrastructure, industry etc. from 1992 (mainly due to the lack of funds). Therefore, houses are collapsing, there is an increasing number of technogenic disasters, <...> whole regions are left without heating in winter, and these trends are increasing every year (Zdanavičius, 2006: 210, op cit).

One of the reasons for the backwardness of Russian industry is an insufficient investment in technological progress. Russia ranks among those countries in the world that account for a particularly low share of the GDP in research and development (R&D) per year (~1.1%) (UNESCO, 2019). Only a small number of technologies and innovations created in Russia are applied in the industry, while entire industries continue to use technologies inherited from the Soviet era. The situation is further exacerbated by the rapid ‘brain drain’. It is estimated that over 5 million of the country's population left Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, including many scientists and highly-qualified personnel (Rosstat, 2016).

The socio-economic situation is a natural source of dissatisfaction among the population, sharpens ethnic, religious and regional disagreements and reinforces

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<sup>19</sup> In terms of other parameters reflecting the socio-economic situation in the country, the minimum monthly wage in Russia in 2018 was about 150 euros, the average salary around 495 euros and the average retirement pension is around 190 euros. For comparison, the minimum monthly wage in Germany in 2018 amounted to 1.1 thousand euros, the average salary – 2.2-2.4 thousand euros and the average retirement pension – 1.1 thousand euros. The minimum wage in Estonia in 2018 amounted to 540 euros, the average salary – 1 thousand euros and the average retirement pension 500 euros.



the trend towards decentralisation. In order to stabilise the situation, the Russian ruling regime is forced to tighten political control over society. For this purpose, carrot and stick tactics are used, i.e. using both mobilising and repressive measures to the society, among them the persecution of critics of the regime, implementation of the ideology of nationalism, constructing narratives about external and internal “enemies”, military campaigns abroad (Syria, Ukraine) etc. Meanwhile, conflicts are alleviated within the ruling elite through the so-called “rent” system: the relations of the “patron” (renter) and the “client” (rentee) allow for the control of competition between different elite groups and securing the fidelity of diverse elite groups and the entire bureaucratic apparatus to the system (Wallander, 2007).

Russia’s ruling elite is made up of industrialists and financiers, who, after the collapse of the USSR, privatised large, state-owned business structures and who are in close contact with the state apparatus, representatives of the bureaucratic apparatus and power structures. Members of the ruling elite control major state-owned finance, industry, commodity and transportation companies; they also have close relationships with corporations in the “core” states, to whom they sell industrial products, raw materials or agricultural production. Access to lucrative markets in Western European countries enables members of Russia’s ruling elite to accumulate capital, by which they retain a dominant position in the state and influence national politics in a way beneficial to themselves.

It is true that, as is typical of “semi-peripheral” states, Russia’s ruling elite are not homogeneous. Representatives of the groups that comprise it differ in their approach to the economic development of the state. Representatives of the energy sector and other raw material exports seek the closest possible economic links with Western Europe, where they market their produce. In turn, the Russian elite members controlling more technologically-advanced industry (e.g., military-industrial complex) follow the view that close relations with the West are holding back the development of the Russian economy. According to them, Westerners have assigned Russia the role of the supplier of raw materials, and their corporations seek to gain a foothold in the Russian market and destroy competitors (i.e. Russian capital companies). Russia needs to develop its technologically-advanced industry independently to protect it from Western competition imports and to build close economic and political relations with countries on the “periphery” and on the “semi-periphery”, which are markets for more technologically-advanced Russian production.

## *2.2. Western European “core” area*

Western European countries that are at the “core” of the global system are some of the world’s most powerful economies and major industrialised countries. Technologically-advanced industry, led by investment in the latest technologies and their application in production, is a key determinant of the position of Germany, France, Austria, the Netherlands and Italy in the global network of capitalism.

Western European economies are among the largest in the world<sup>20</sup> (World Bank, 2018). Manufacturers in these countries are leaders in aviation, car manufacturing, energy, computer and information technology, microelectronics, biomedical and many other high-tech industries. The industrial sectors of these countries generate a relatively large share of the GDP, even compared to other “core” states (e.g., US or UK). Germany ranks fourth in the world in this indicator, France – 7th, Italy – 10th, the Netherlands – 27th, Austria – 30th (List of Countries by GDP Sector Composition, 2018).

Western European countries export a considerable amount of agricultural produce. For example, France ranks sixth in the world in terms of production and the second after the US in terms of agricultural exports. The country exports highly-competitive agricultural products on world markets, including champagne, cognac, wine, meat and dairy products. Unlike “peripheral” or “semi-peripheral” countries, the agriculture of Western European countries is characterised by intensity and high technological development. For this reason, the agricultural sector in these countries has a smaller population engaged, and the added value generated exceeds that generated in “peripheral” or “semi-peripheral” countries.

Western Europe is one of the world’s financial centres. The European Central Bank is located in Frankfurt, Germany; and Deutsche Bank, the largest German bank, one of the largest global financial institutions (Top Banks in the World, 2018). Large banks with global operations are also located in France, Italy, Austria and the Netherlands (The 50 largest banks in Europe by total assets, 2018).

In discussing the impact of economic factors on domestic situations and policies, the accumulated capital of Western European economies and a more even redistribution of it through various social programs ensure a relatively high level of socio-economic well-being for their population<sup>21</sup> (World Bank, 2018; Minimum Wages in European Union, 2018; Average Salary in the European Union, 2018). Western European countries are world leaders in financing education, health and social security systems (OECD, 2018)<sup>22</sup>, having a relatively low level of poverty and social exclusion (World Bank, 2019)<sup>23</sup>, and they are characterised by the balanced development of the regions, well-developed infrastructure etc. High welfare

20 Germany, with a population of 83 million, has a GDP of 3.652 trillion US dollars, and according to this indicator, the country ranks fourth in the world and first place in Europe. France is just behind Germany, with a population of 66.9 million and a GDP of 2.575 trillion dollars (6th in the world). Italy, with a population of 60.5 million, has a GDP of 1.92 trillion US dollars (8), the Netherlands, 822.5 billion GDP in US dollars (18), Austria, 409.3 billion GDP in US dollars (26).

21 In terms of GDP per capita, in Germany, it reaches 44.4 thousand US dollars (16th in the world), in France – 38.4 thousand (19), in Italy – 34.2 thousand (25), in the Netherlands 49.7 thousand (12), in Austria – 47.2 thousand US dollars (13). Average wage levels in Western Europe vary from 1.7 to 2.4 thousand per month. In Germany, the figure is between 2.2 and 2.4 thousand, 2.2 thousand in France, 2.1 thousand in the Netherlands, 2.3 thousand in Austria, in Italy – 1.7 thousand euro. Minimum wage – 1.1 thousand in Germany, 1.3 thousand in France, and 1.4 thousand in the Netherlands (euro). These are some of the highest rates in the world.

22 France accounts for the highest wage of social security – 31.2% GDP. Italy is behind it (27.9%), Austria (26.6%), Germany (25.1%), the Netherlands (16.7 %).

23 When evaluating the Gini coefficient, in Germany, the figure is 31.4, 28.6 in the Netherlands, 30.5 in Austria, 32.3 in France, 34.7 in Italy.

standards compared to “peripheral” and “semi-peripheral” states, and prevailing democratic practices counteract socioeconomic tensions in society.

The promotion of research and industrial innovation has a significant impact on the progress of Western Europe. According to the share of GDP in R&D, Western European countries rank among world leaders<sup>24</sup> (Gross domestic spending on R&D, 2018). Their employees have a high level of skills and productivity. Europeans are rapidly adapting technological innovation to economic needs.

In conclusion, it should be said that Western European countries have among the largest and most modern armies in the world and are the world leader in defence spending. In military terms, France, the strongest continental nation, ranks fifth in the world in terms of defence spending (63.8 billion US dollars / 2.3% of GDP), Germany – eighth (49.5 billion US dollars / 1.2% of GDP), Italy – 11 (27.8 billion US dollars / 1.3% GDP). The Western European military industry holds the leading position in the world. According to armament sales, France ranks fourth in the world, Germany is fifth, and Italy eighth (Tian, Fleurant, Kuimova, Wezeman, Wezeman, 2019).

### **3. Relations between Western Europe and Russia**

#### *3.1. Economic relations*

In the subsection, according to the World-system perspective that the economic relationship between the “core” and the “semi-periphery” is exploitative, the aim is to show the asymmetry of economic relations between Russia and Western European countries.

The “semi-peripheral” Russia is one of the most important suppliers of relatively cheap energy resources to Western Europe (“core”) and the main market for the sale of high-tech industrial production of these countries. Russian industry is not competitive in global and domestic markets; this is why it imports both finished goods from foreign manufacturers and technology. Most of Russia’s imports come from countries that are members of the European Union (EU). The EU is Russia’s main trading partner, accounting for almost half (42.8%) of Russia’s total trade (Eurostat, 2019). In 2018, despite political tensions, trade between the EU and Russia exceeded 300 billion euro, most of which went to the energy sector. From 2016 to 2017, the EU trade with Russia increased by 18%, and from 2017 to 2018 – by 20%. Both Russian exports to the EU and imports from Russia into the Community increased during this period, which was again largely due to the growing demand for energy products in the industrialised countries of the EU (Eurostat, 2019).

EU countries account for 60% of total foreign direct investment in Russia. The main investors are Western European countries, whose investments in Russia include the extraction of energy raw materials, manufacturing, sale and repair of vehicles, financial activities and insurance, public administration and defence, real estate (Eurostat, 2017; Zubacheva, 2018; Santander, 2018).

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<sup>24</sup> Germany spends 3.02% of its GDP to R&D each year, France – 2.1% Netherlands – 1.9 %, Italy 1.3%.

As is typical of “semi-periphery” countries, Russia’s exports to the EU mainly consist of raw energy materials or exclusively primary (i.e. lightly-processed or unprocessed) products, among them metals or products made of base metals. Exports of energy and other resources to the EU represent around 70% of total Russian exports. In turn, exports to Russia by EU countries have a relatively high added value. Exports cover almost all categories of machinery, transport equipment, electronics, electrical engineering, perfumery and cosmetics, household chemicals, pharmaceuticals etc. (Russia-EU – international trade in goods statistics, 2019).

Germany is Russia’s most important economic partner in the EU. In 2018, this country’s direct investment in Russia reached 3.3 billion euro, and export volumes rose to 61.9 billion euro. Germany mainly exports high-tech industrial products to Russia: cars, machines, electronic and electrical products, chemical products etc., and imports raw energy materials. Currently, Germany imports 40% of its annual natural gas consumption and 25% of its oil from Russia. In 2006, Russia and Germany agreed on the Nord Stream gas pipeline, which further increased the export of Russian resources and made Germany and Austria the main natural gas distribution centres in Europe. Starting in 2018, the second branch of this pipeline is under construction (“Nord Stream 2”). The project is being implemented by the largest Russian energy company, Gazprom, in cooperation with the largest energy companies in Western Europe – Shell Netherlands, OMV Austria, Engie French, Uniper and BASF-Wintershall German. France maintains close economic relations with Russia. In 2017, bilateral trade volumes exceeded 15.5 billion euro, while in 2018 it reached 17 billion euro. As of 2014, France is the largest investor in Russia and the second largest investor in Russian equities after Germany. It is noteworthy that French energy companies, including Total, invest heavily in energy resources in Russia (Kuzmickaitė, 2019). Close economic relations link Russia with other Western European countries, including Italy, Austria and the Netherlands (Russia-EU – international trade in goods statistics, 2019).

Economic and energy relations with Western European countries are extremely important for Russia. Although the Russian government has recently announced plans to diversify energy exports, it is noticeable that implementing these plans is challenging, because Russia would face enormous logistical, infrastructural, legal and financial difficulties in supplying oil and natural gas for customers in other regions of the world. Therefore, Russia remains significantly dependent on Western European countries (markets).

In conclusion, the economic relations between Russia and Western Europe are obviously asymmetric. Russia exports relatively cheap low value-added industrial products or (energy) resources to Western Europe and imports expensive high-tech industrial products from Western Europe. An uneven exchange makes it more profitable for Western Europe, and the Russian economy does not accumulate enough capital necessary to ensure the technological progress of the national industry. With no strong (“core”-like) industrial sector, Russia remains significantly dependent on the “peripheral” type of industry and Western European markets where the products of this industry are realised. As it will soon be shown, this interdependence has a significant impact on the political dimension of the relationship.

### *3.2. Impact of economic factors on political relations*

This subsection aims to confirm the World-system perspective assumption of economic relations as the decisive influence of (relations) on politics and to review the prevailing realistic interpretation of Russian-Western European relations. To do this, two events in international politics are briefly reviewed: the civil conflict in Libya that started in 2011 and the crisis in Ukraine of 2014. The aim is to answer two questions: first, why did Russia, one of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), not veto the resolution, opening the way for the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) military intervention in Libya? The second, why did the events of 2014 in Ukraine, triggering a crisis in Western-Russian diplomatic relations, practically not affect the economic-energy cooperation?

In 2010, the so-called “Arab Spring” in the Middle East and North Africa did not leave Libya aside. In 2011, anti-government protests in this country had escalated into a bloody civil conflict. The UN Security Council on March 17 adopted the resolution (No. 1973), which envisaged the establishment of a no-fly zone over Libya and the implementation of the necessary measures for the protection of civilians. In approving this resolution, the UNSC mandated NATO to act on behalf of the international community and conducting military intervention. Nine days after the resolution was passed, Alliance military aircraft began bombing Libyan troops and strategic objects of the country. The NATO attacks ended in the autumn of 2011 when Libyan leader Muamar al Gaddafi was assassinated in Libya’s Sirte city. Soon after, anti-government rebels took over power in Libya.

Almost a decade after this intervention, even in the West, it is recognised that the reasons for the overthrow of the M. al Gaddafi regime were not humanitarian. It is said that the aspirations of Western powers for a regime change in Libya were possibly motivated by pragmatic interests – the pursuit of economic-energy interests and to maintain a geopolitical influence in North Africa. While the Western actions in Libya are highly questionable, then Russia’s attitude towards this intervention is rather problematic.

After M. al Gaddafi’s death, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin publicly accused NATO of causing chaos in Libya (Bryanski, 2011). But on the eve of the intervention, not only did Russia not block the UNSC resolution, opening the way for a NATO military operation, which actually led to the collapse of M. al Gaddafi’s regime, but also adhered to the embargo on international arms supplies to Tripoli, suspending all contracts for the export of military equipment. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has joined the camp of the Libyan leader’s critics, stating that M. al Gaddafi has lost legitimacy in society and should resign. Also, he expressed his support for the creation of a no-fly zone over Libya, stating that:

Russia has not exercised its right of veto for one reason:

“I do not think that this resolution is bad. By the way, I think that this resolution largely reflects our perception of what is happening in Libya” (Respublika, 2011).

As such, Russia’s position was radically different from that of traditional Moscow, both because of the so-called humanitarian interventions and the Western military alliance. Until the onset of the uprising in Libya, Moscow has repeatedly been critical of NATO – from the expansion of the Alliance to Central and Eastern



Europe, to the organisation and enforcement of military campaigns in foreign countries, including the former Yugoslavia. Russian dissatisfaction has been fuelled by the effort of the US and their allies to obtain a UNSC mandate for a military campaign in Iraq, leading to the overthrow of the country's long-standing leader, Saddam Hussein. In 2003, Russia, together with France, blocked the adoption of the UNSC resolution on Iraq, therefore, the US had to act unilaterally. In March, after the hostilities in Iraq began, Putin warned Washington that intervention is “<...> a serious political mistake, which could cause a terrible humanitarian and environmental disaster throughout the region” (Reuters, 2003). In 2006-2007, Russia criticised US and Israeli plans for a preventive military strike against Iran in response to Tehran's nuclear program. Next, Moscow (with Beijing) protested against references to Article 7 of the UN Charter, not only allowing economic sanctions to be imposed on the offending country, but also to use force as a last resort (Dainoras, 2006).

Another aspect that causes problems to Russia's stance on Libya is that Moscow had pragmatic interests in Libya, which are said to have been affected by the collapse of M. al Gaddafi's regime. Since 1969, when M. al Gaddafi seized power, Libya maintained close relations with the Soviet Union. Over the long years of cooperation, Libya became heavily indebted to the USSR and its successor Russia. It is said that the debt repayment issue led to the rapprochement between Tripoli and Moscow under Putin. Following M. al Gaddafi's visit to Moscow in 2008, Russia had written off 100 million US dollars out of 4.6 billion US dollars of Libya's debt free of charge. The remaining 4.5 billion dollars were annulled in exchange for profitable contracts related to energy, infrastructure development and armament sales. True, even before M. al Gaddafi's visit to Moscow, Russian companies were operating in Libya. For example, in 2005-2010, Gazprom invested 200 million dollars into exploration for oil and natural gas in this country. It is estimated that a total of Russian energy companies, including Gazprom Neft, Tatneft etc. had invested 265 million dollars to a total of 14 deposits in Libya. Meanwhile, the Russian Railways secured a project for a 3.5 billion USD 550-km high-speed rail construction from Benghazi to Sirte (Notably, it was the largest contract ever signed by Russian Railways in a foreign country). But the collapse of M. al Gaddafi's regime has complicated relations between Russia and Libya. The Russian media claimed that, due to the changed political situation in Libya, Russian corporations could lose between 4 and 10 billion US dollars, since most of the contracts between the parties were approved personally by the former Libyan leader. In 2012, Tatneft did not obtain permission to renew resource exploration in the country; the Benghazi-Sirte high-speed rail project was frozen, whereby the Russian arms exporter Rosoboronexport has also suffered losses as a result of the announced arms embargo on Libya; according to different figures, it has lost 4 billion US dollars (Reuters, 2008; Oil Price, 2011; Sudakov, 2011; Ria Novosti, 2012; Lazareva, 2012; Saini Fasanotti, 2016).

In summary, if we follow realism, not only did Russia have to confront NATO, but also it had sought to protect their pragmatic interests in Libya. Why did Moscow do the opposite? The deviation of the Russian policy is explained



by structural geo-economic factors (relations), linking it with Western European states (in particular France), namely, those with important economic, energy and geopolitical interests in North Africa, and M. al Gaddafi obstructed their implementation. Being significantly dependent on economic-energy relations with Western Europe (“core”) states, “semi-peripheral” Russia decided not to obstruct the West’s pursuit of its geostrategic goals in Libya, because they did not want to jeopardise these relations.

The nature of the cross-border relationship between Western European countries and Russia, based on economic considerations, becomes even more pronounced when examining the 2014 crisis in Ukraine. After a failed attempt to sign an Association Agreement with the EU, in the winter of 2014, anti-government protests broke out in the Ukrainian capital Kiev, escalating into clashes between pro-European protesters and representatives of security structures. These events, ending in bloodshed, forced the retirement of the then President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich. Russia, taking advantage of the chaotic political situation in the neighbouring country, annexed the Crimean Peninsula and became involved in a civil conflict in the Donbass region, supporting local rebels who do not recognise the new Ukrainian government. Russia’s actions have caused the worst crisis since the Cold War between Russia and the West. US and EU condemn Russian annexation of Crimea demanded the return of this Black Sea peninsula to Ukraine and the cessation of support for the Donbass separatists. As Russia failed to meet these requirements, the EU imposed economic sanctions on Moscow in the summer.

It is noteworthy that although sanctions restricted exports of certain services and technologies to Russia, they had virtually no effect on Russian-Western European economic cooperation and large-scale energy imports from Russia. On the contrary, economic-energy relations between Russia and the countries of Western Europe are developing very rapidly. There were no punitive measures either, which could affect Russian-Western financial relations. For example, in the autumn of 2014, calls for Russia to be disconnected from the Global Interbank Settlement System began (SWIFT). However, the US and EU governments rejected the initiative, justifying it with excessive economic damage, although in 2012, a similar step was taken against Iran. In the same year, there was a debate in Europe over the Russian oil embargo in response to Moscow’s aggression in Ukraine; however, no specific decisions have been made. On the contrary, high officials from Germany, Austria, France, Italy justified energy projects with Russia, including the North European gas pipeline, claiming that they are intended to safeguard the energy interests of the Old Continent (Delfi, 2018). In June 2017, Germany and Austria criticised the United States when their Senate announced the planned sanctions on European companies involved in the Nord Stream 2 project. Austria and Germany then warned that such US intentions threaten Europe’s energy security and negatively impact transatlantic relations (Deutsche Welle, 2017; Deutsche Welle, 2017a; Jordans, 2017; Pabiržis, 2018).

It should be noted that since 2014, the situation in Ukraine has remained largely unchanged. Not only did the conflicting parties not implement the so-called Minsk

ceasefire agreements, mediated by France and Germany, but also intensified military action. In 2017, at Avdijivka (a Donetsk suburb), one of the fiercest battles between Ukrainian government forces and separatists occurred, during which, based on different sources, eight Ukrainian soldiers were killed. It has been announced that during these battles armament was used, which, according to the ceasefire, had to be diverted from the front line. Although the EU has identified the clashes in Ukraine as a clear violation of the Minsk Agreements, no specific action was taken (LRT, 2017). In turn, Russia continues its efforts to integrate the Crimean Peninsula, which Ukraine regards as an integral part of the country, into its composition. Many energy and infrastructure projects are underway, designed to separate Crimea from Ukraine: for example, a bridge across the Kerch Strait separating this peninsula from mainland Russia. By the way, the peninsula is increasingly militarised. Despite these circumstances, Western European countries are increasingly calling for the lifting of sanctions on Russia, arguing for their negative impact on EU economies and inefficiency (L'Huffington Post, 2014; Reuters, 2019). In conclusion, it should be said that the Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (EPPA) adopted in June 2019 as a result of German and French efforts by opening the way for the Russian delegation to return to this organisation, witnesses the warming Russian-Western European relations (Russian rights in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe were suspended after the annexation of Crimea). Finally, it is debated that Russia could be re-invited to the G8 from where it was revoked in 2014 etc.

In conclusion, if Western European states consider Russia a rival and there was a conflict between them, they should seek to limit the growth of Russia's economic and military power, as this would endanger their own security and that of other European countries. However, Western European states do not seek to limit the growth of Russian power. On the contrary, they even increase it by maintaining very close economic-energy ties with Russia, which did not stop even after the Russian aggression in Ukraine. This suggests that interpretation of Russian-Western European relations based on a realistic paradigm of international relations, emphasising that politics determine the economy, is not accurate, because Western European relations with Russia are primarily determined by geo-economics factors.

#### **4. Impact of Western Europe-Russia Relations on the Central and Eastern European Countries**

Given the pragmatic relationship between Russia and Western European countries, based on close economic-energy cooperation, efforts to isolate Russia from Western Europe will not succeed. According to Evaldas Nekrašas, the EU simply cannot distance itself from Russia, and if it can, then only in words. <...> The policy of isolation towards Russia cannot succeed. The West did not and will not follow the isolationist attitude towards Russia (Nekrašas, 2009: 137, op cit). Thus, seeking to separate Russia from the West, Central and Eastern European countries risk isolating themselves from Europe. Meanwhile, with regard to the

economic and energy ties of Central and Eastern European countries with Russia, the confrontation with Moscow has a negative impact on the economies of the region.

In assessing the security situation, stability of the “semi-peripheral” Russian ruling regime is significantly dependent on the economic-energy ties with Western Europe. It is likely that the current ruling regime in Russia will not solve the structural problems of the country’s economy in the future and will not reduce dependence on resource exports. These are the terms that in Russia, socio-economic tensions will increase and, probably, manifestations of political instability. In order to mobilise society and divert its attention from socio-economic problems, Russia’s ruling regime may try to exploit foreign policy instruments, which will exacerbate tensions in Russia’s neighbourhood. This will adversely affect the security situation in Central and Eastern Europe.

Against this background, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have two choices. First, they cannot change their strategic direction and to continue to form the barrier between East and West in order to prevent Western European states and Russia from coming closer together and avoid potential divisions of spheres of influence in Central and Eastern Europe (Lopata, 2010). However, the success of this strategy is significantly dependent on two factors: first, the US support; however, under Donald Trump, advocating the normalisation of US-Russian relations is not completely clear. Second, the unity of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which has been absent lately, especially in terms of their attitude towards relations with Russia.

The second choice is to coordinate their geostrategic goals with Western European countries and build a bridge that would connect the East and West. That would mean that confrontation with Russia is abandoned and the close economic-energy ties with this country, potentially exploiting them for their socio-economic well-being. True, such a strategy runs the risk of Eastern and Central Europe, as has happened in the past, to become the point of the division of spheres of influence of Moscow, Berlin and Paris.

## **Conclusions**

In the article, from the World-system perspective, the aim was to demonstrate that Western European-Russian relations are significantly affected by structural geo-economic factors. Two characteristic examples from international politics were used for this purpose – the crisis in Libya in 2011 and the crisis in Ukraine in 2014.

In Libya, based on realism, Russia should have confronted NATO and sought to protect its pragmatic interests, but it did the opposite: it did not oppose the Western Military Alliance, declaring it to be a hostile military bloc for intervention; it not only lost its influence in North Africa, but also suffered economic losses following the collapse of M. al Gaddafi’s regime. Russia’s unusual behaviour can be explained from the World-system perspective. Based on it, Russia has decided to sacrifice its pragmatic interests in Libya in order to maintain a close economic-

energy relationship with the Western European states.

Realism cannot explain why Russia and Western European countries maintain close economic-energy relations, despite the political tensions between them, related to events in Ukraine. If Western European states had the goal of curbing Russia's economic power and in turn, the growth of military power, they were unlikely to import Russian energy resources or have no economic activity in that country. Still, their behaviour is the opposite. This is because the position of the Western European countries ("core") towards Russia is determined primarily by geo-economic factors; therefore, there is no reason to claim that there could be some fundamental conflict between Russia and Western Europe.

Taking this into account, any effort made by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to isolate Western European countries from Russia, are not and will not succeed. The priority of the foreign policy of Lithuania and other countries of the region should not be Eastern, but Western-focused. Relations with key Western allies, first and foremost, with Germany, France, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, must be actively pursued. By having discovered like-minded people inside the EU, not only will the Central and Eastern European countries not move away from the Western European states whose financial support is vital to them, but they will also be able to represent their national interests more effectively in the EU.

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## 11.

# CHALLENGES POSED BY RUSSIA FOR LITHUANIAN MILITARY SECURITY AND THEIR PROSPECTS

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### Introduction

Concerning the conduct of modern Russia in the community of states, we see its extremely active power struggle to justify and strengthen its state status as one of the centres of global power, i.e. to reclaim positions lost during the relevant historical period. Such behaviour, which is concerned with strengthening the potential of the state, is seen as common practice among states. It is a factor in maintaining and creating a new Russian influence, primarily in the neighbouring states, in the context of the post-Soviet space and in far-flung areas. In this competitive struggle, the military component, which represents the national power, plays a special role. The so-called “heavy metal diplomacy” became Russia’s mark of recognition after 2014, when actions are realised leading from peace to war – threats, the development of conflict situations, such as provocative actions by the Air and Navy forces against NATO forces, violations of national airspace, redeployment of troops at the borders of neighbouring countries, continuous large-scale military exercises with imitation of offensive actions (Galeotti, 2016). These factors, with different levels of risk, can trigger a large-scale military conflict.

Why has a policy of demonstrating military power been adopted? Truth be told, there may be different answers, but one of them would be other special measures or material resources that Russia has at its disposal, not producing the desired results. The economic power factor realised through oil and gas diplomacy in the modern world had only a short-term impact, and the political potential in the international arena was constrained after the annexation of Crimea. In the post-Soviet space, Russia is somewhat rescued by soft power, but in the case of Lithuania, despite favourable circumstances (people’s desire to maintain good relations, Russian-speaking minority and rudimentary Russian language proficiency), it has a limited effect, whereas the wrong strategy is being used, whose potential is weakened by emigration ethnic minority communities in Lithuania and natural change of generations (Česnakas and Isoda, 2019). This further strengthens the representation of Russia’s image, associated with a bear as a threatening, high-powered, rabid animal capable of crashing obstacles on its way (Ryabova, 2012).

Therefore, at this time Russia is actively strengthening its military potential, engaging in aggressive actions and making extensive use of military rhetoric in order to secure a presence on the list of the most powerful states. Along with the rise of military power and the use of this power as an instrument of foreign policy,

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Russia has activated hybrid measures directed against Western states. According to Kremlin ideologues, the role of the military-political factor is growing, Russia's foreign policy is considered extremely successful and has allowed Russia to play its part in building a new world order (Karaganov and Suslov, 2018). Russia's security strategy explicitly seeks to dominate the region, the escalation of the situation in relation to both regional actors and other external powers, to make the Russian military response in its region more than just a flexible and transformative response against any potential adversary in the region, but at the same time discourage external powers from further engaging in conflict (Radin et al., 2019).

Looking at Russia's behaviour following the annexation of Crimea, it becomes an unmissable scenario where the Russian regime would decide to conduct a military intervention in one or more NATO countries, hoping that Article 5 would remain merely a paper declaration and a joint response would not succeed. Without a doubt, the most likely targets of provocation would be the Baltic States (Ivanauskas et al., 2016). For Lithuania, as a neighbour of a large state that has belonged to its territorial area several times during the various historical periods, one of the most sensitive issues is ensuring the security of its independent state. In 2018, the evaluation of threats to Lithuanian military security states that there is no knowledge of Russia's attempts to adjust military security policy in order to de-escalate and reduce tensions. On the contrary, military power continues to remain one of the main sources of pride in the state and the pillars of domestic and foreign policy (Assessment of National Security Threats, 2019). The Baltic region is one of the most active areas on Russia's confrontational map with NATO states. In this case, challenges to Lithuania's military security are understood as the use of conventional means, and hybrid threats as an integral part of such a conflict.

This article focuses on the changes in Lithuanian military security that determine the potential of Russian military power.

## **1. Technical parameters of military power**

Many academic and expert studies state that Russia's military power was strengthened by the radical reform of the military (reduction of the number of troops, optimisation of the military structure and management), the first two stages of which continued until 2012. The final stage of military reform, for final optimisation of the military and rearmament with new weapons and upgraded versions, with a percentage between 70% and 100%, is expected to be completed by 2020 (Grätz, 2014) (Giles, 2014) (Golts, 2010) (Petraitis, 2010–2011) (Kaukas, 2014–2015). At the end of the reform period approaching, the progress and results of the reform can be talked about.

Russian armed forces are actually being rearmed, including modern military equipment, at an unprecedented pace, as evidenced by aspects such as huge political support for the direction of reforms and a big military budget, which in 2018, is ranked sixth in the world in terms of cost (61.4 billion) and since 2009, increased by 27% (Tian, Fleurant, Kuimova, Wezeman and Wezeman, 2019). Indeed, comparing the state of the armed forces at the beginning of the reform and

its penultimate year, we are seeing quite dramatic changes. Some basic qualitative and quantitative parameters can serve as an example. In addition to upgraded vessels, the Navy added 41 new vessels, including submarines armed with Kalibr winged missiles in 2014-2016. According to Russian official sources in 2018, under contracts, the armed forces had to receive about 600 units of new and 1500 units of repaired and modernised military equipment. However, the list shows that these figures are dominated by the modernisation of old technology and the production of missiles, while examples of new technology are few. Among them are 9 Armata tanks (total of 132 scheduled by 2021), 2 out of 15 new 5th-generation Su-57 aircraft, which means that, albeit on a small scale, Russia has started their serial production; as well as 6 upgraded Mig-35 (Novye nositeli, Kalibrov, 2018). At the annual military submission Army-2019, which showcases the achievements of the military-industrial complex, no technological news was presented and mostly featured unmanned vehicles of various types and variants (Fedutinov, 2019).

Military armaments based on new technologies are unlikely to gain much momentum until the end of the reform, and their serial production is expected to take a 10-year perspective (Nevidimy aviapolk Su-57, 2019) (Putin zayavil o zakupke, 2019). In 2019, Russia has declared such official figures – equipment of military forces with modern weapons since 2012 increased to 61.5%, and separately by the types of forces: 82% in strategic nuclear, 48.3% for land, 74% for space, 62.3% for the navy, 63.7% for the Air Force; the number of contracted troops has more than doubled and reaches nearly 400,000 troops (Po armeyskim zakonam, 2019). In this case, it is difficult to accurately estimate the correspondence of percentage to reality, but it is clear that the momentum of the relative growth of military power in modernising the military forces and increasing the level of preparedness can be observed (The Military Balance, 2018). What is important here is that Russia's chances of a local conflict have increased dramatically, as has the determination to inspire such a conflict, especially as Russia has gained some experience in pursuing its interests abroad, as noted by Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu (Po armeyskim zakonam, 2019)

Russia, on the other hand, has conventional high-precision weapons at its disposal, which military experts believe will increase in importance and are effective with other types of weapons. They are intended for destruction of stationary military infrastructure (control points, staffs, military equipment and ammunition depots, airports, locations of unit deployments). The Russian military has at least 288 Iskander ballistic missiles. Next to them are the Avangard, Kinzhal ballistic and winged missiles, the Poseidon unmanned vehicle, the Peresvet laser weapon, which are at the disposal of the Navy and the Air Force, and the development of land-based missile complexes in the plans (McDermott, Bukkvoll, 2018), ("Iskander" – bolshche chem raketa, 2019). In 2017, Chief of General Staff of Russian Armed Forces Army, General Valery Gerasimov, stated that the offensive potential of this weapon will increase 4 times by 2021 (Gerasimov, 2017). Without going into the practical realisation of this statement, it can be stated that today, at least part of such potential has given Russia an advantage in the context of the Baltic region in the case of the local war.



Recently, two important factors have emerged in the dynamics of Russian military power, of particular relevance to the military security of the Baltic States, and Lithuania in particular – rapid remilitarisation of the Kaliningrad region and the prospect of using Belarus as a Russian military platoon. In this case, Kaliningrad issues as an obvious potential threat are discussed in detail by (Lopata, 2017-2018) (Ivanauskas et al. 2016), therefore, it is appropriate to focus on the processes taking place in neighbouring Belarus.

Recently, a new phase in the strengthening of the Russian military alliance with Belarus is clearly noticeable. In the context of the acute conflict with the West, Russia has been seeking to strengthen military power in recent years, exploiting and controlling Belarus' military potential and the domestic airspace. However, military expert Alexander Golts says Russian and Belarusian military alliance has problems that may weaken it under certain circumstances, but specific actions are evidence of an intensified process of military cooperation between the two countries (Golts, 2017).

We can talk about creating a unified regional armed forces, consisting of all Belarusian forces and the 20th Army of Russia's Western Military District with assigned central and regional management units, determining the optimal combat composition during joint exercises. The durability of this military alliance after the annexation of Crimea was strengthened by enhanced cooperation: the objectives of military integration are recorded in new instruments of strategic level – military doctrines, finally-completed old projects (air defence system) and the implementation of new initiatives, more specifically the attempt to implement what has been declared several decades ago in the strategic documents of both countries. The level of military interaction has increased significantly due to the rapid increase in the number of joint strategic exercises, as a result, their ability to conduct joint combat tasks expeditiously has been significantly strengthened. In military-technical cooperation, intensification processes are less pronounced; however, significant changes have taken place in the development of the overall military infrastructure (Dunec, 2017) (National Security Threat Assessment, 2018-2019), (Pugačiauskas, 2019–2020) (Golts, 2017).

This provides opportunities for united regional military forces to exploit and grow their combat potential. It is important that, at the stage of deepening the alliance's development, Russia has considerably expanded its use of military capabilities by means of the Belarusian military force, and can use its territory as a bridgehead for potential military actions, even without permission from Belarus. It can be concluded that these actions have boosted the potential of Russian military power and its potential for use at the Lithuanian borders.

The Belarusian factor of bridgehead is becoming very significant as a potential threat to Lithuania and for the entire Baltic Sea region for one more reason: increasing the military potential of the Russian Armed Forces Western Military District. The Western Military District comprises more than 2.5 thousand platoons and military units, with more than 400 thousand troops, which is about 40% of all Russian military capabilities. In total, there are 5 divisions in the Western Military

District (1 motorised, 1 tank and 3 airborne) and 47 brigades (2 tanks, 8 motor rifle and other combat support and supply brigades). In the opinion of Erikas Kaukas, this may constitute the first echelon of Russian defence/offensive targeting Europe and would consist exclusively of military units in the Western Military District: 1st Tank Army, 6th Army and 20th Army, Baltic and North Sea Fleets and the CSTO Eastern European Task Force (it is likely that this group includes all Belarusian armed forces). It is worth noting that fairly abundant units of airborne troops, air-space forces and strategic missile troops are deployed in the Western Military District (Kaukas, 2017). The apparent dominance of the Russian military force in this region can be observed as compared with the NATO states forces bordering Russia.

## 2. Strategy papers and political rhetoric

In order to understand the prospects for the use of Russian military power, it is necessary to disclose the aspirations for increasing military potential. The primary reasons for the strengthening of military power, as declared by Russian experts, were complex. Most importantly – degradation of the unreformed Soviet army at all levels: hypertrophied management, surplus officers, low military readiness (13% of units had regular combat readiness level), complete domination of morally and physically obsolete machinery. According to local experts, Russia did not have the necessary resources in the case of a conventional war, in turn, considered the conflict with NATO unlikely and considered China as not a lesser threat (in both cases, Russia could only resist with nuclear weapons). They put more emphasis on the so-called military-political threats, the focal points of which are potential conflicts in the post-Soviet area due to the instability of the state system. The reason for this instability is the Bialowieza Agreement, announcing the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The reform was driven by the rapid progress of military thought, warfare, requiring mobility, precise weapons, new strategies and tactics. The Russian military sympathised with the theory of network-centric warfare seen in the US. The poor demographic situation in the country, with a decline in the age of drafted persons, was forcing the reformers think about a more compact and professional, much more mobile army (McDermott, 2009) (Barabanov, Makiyenko, Puchov, 2012) (Golts, 2010). The original objective of strengthening military power seems to be better achieved with the forced need for reforming the military forces rather than with its use as a major instrument to realise its political ambitions outside the country.

It is necessary to discuss how the military perspective of power was identified in key strategic documents governing Russia's foreign, security and military policy, i.e. the Foreign Policy Concept of 2008, 2013, 2016, 2009; the National Security Strategy to 2020, 2010; and the military doctrine of 2014. The Foreign Policy Concept states that international issues should be addressed through network diplomacy, while military power is seen as a means of influencing states in international politics, but only in combination with economic, legal, ecological, scientific-technical, demographic and informational (Kontseptsiya vneshney

politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2008). In the version of 2013, its wording was reproduced, and as early as in 2016, military power was identified as a tool to operate in the international arena in addition economic, legal, technological and informational, noting the growing role of the force factor (Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2013) (Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2016). Meanwhile, the National Security Strategy only states the potential of Russia to establish itself in the foreseeable future among the countries leading the global economy, with no mention of military power. However, it is quite abstractly emphasised that the national interests of the state will be adversely affected by the unilateral force attempt (bearing in mind the US) used in international relations of a recurrent nature (Strategiya natsionalnoy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2009).

The perspective of using military capabilities is highlighted the most in Military Doctrine, of which NATO is listed first on the main list of military threats. The authors of this strategic document envisage the possibility of protecting citizens abroad – “whereas the armed forces outside the Russian Federation may be deployed expeditiously in the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens, in order to ensure international peace and security, in accordance with the principles and rules of international law, interstate treaties and federal laws of the Russian Federation” (Voeynaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2010). This diplomatically sleek formulation of the problem allows the ruling party to create an endless variety of interpretations to justify the use of force, i.e. completely vague criteria that assesses the state and its citizens, and the interests of especially those living outside Russia. From the security point of view of neighbouring non-allies, this is the most “dangerous” formulation of the doctrine, allowing Russia to justify and conduct offensive military action under certain circumstances. The president has the right of decision outside to use of military force expeditiously (Rus. *operativno*) outside Russia and can implemented, in the opinion of Keir Giles’s, with less consultation and under a little more in different circumstances (Voeynaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2010) (Giles, 2010) (Pugačiauskas, 2010–2011).

In the military doctrine of 2014, essential positions on the use of military forces remain largely unchanged, stating that the geopolitical situation has escalated (Voeynaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2014). According to Katri Pynnöniemi, a Finnish researcher, Russia’s strategic documents are characterised by the fact that they do not refer to how to deal with specific conflict situations, they are full of contradictions, leave plenty of room for interpretation, thus, a lot of freedom for unexpected actions (Pynnöniemi, 2018).

Uses of military forces are explicitly declared in the rhetoric of politicians. President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev, in the Annual Report to the Federal Assembly in 2009, declared only technical issues related to military capabilities enhancement, but already at that time, the vision of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was clearer and more specific, as it has been identified as a means of strengthening the strategic detention potential of the military reform, finding that the country cannot rely on diplomatic and economic methods to resolve the contradictions

and conflicts (Poslaniye Prezidenta Federalnomu Sobraniyu, 2009) (Poslaniye Prezidenta Federalnomu Sobraniyu, 2010) (Putin, 2012).

Upon returning to presidency, Putin, in his annual report of 2015 at the federal meeting, noted the importance of the fight against terrorism and the fact that the armed forces in Syria fought for Russia and defended the security of its citizens, and the soldiers proved their combat ability and demonstrated increased civilities. It is further emphasised that Russia cannot be vulnerable and needs to be “strong” in the economy, in technology and in “professional competences” (Poslaniye Prezidenta Federalnomu Sobraniyu, 2015). Three years later, the president’s thoughts centred on two key statements: first, “it is necessary and very important to emphasise that Russia’s growing military potential as a guarantor of global peace, it ensures strategic balance and the balance of power in the world; second, we do not threaten anyone, and we’re not going to attack anyone, threatening with a weapon that we are going to take away” (Poslaniye Prezidenta Federalnomu Sobraniyu, 2018 goda).

Therefore, it can be stated that in the rhetoric of the president as commander of the armed forces mentions the use of armed forces formulated in the abstract needs of the defence of citizens against terrorism, in the territory geographically far from Russia, and at the same time, assuming the functions of a peacekeeper for state borders. The corresponding combination of such abstraction can be applied to any other place in the world, even more so in the territories that belonged to the area of the Soviet Union.

### **3. Demonstration of military power**

Let’s explain another practice related to the growth of Russian military power, which is clearly at odds with the mission of the peacekeeper. The dynamics of the growth of military power is characterised by an exceptional demonstration of military activity that is inadequate to the international situation. These actions against the Western powers gained a systemic character after the annexation of Crimea. We can assign the following composite elements to it: provocative actions of a military nature, regular military exercises, and the actual use of military power already mentioned (Syria’s case). The first two are most relevant to Lithuania’s military security.

The continuing activity of Russian-based aircraft around the Baltic airspace has been observed since 2014, when the NATO air police mission aircraft from the Baltic States were lifted 140 times to take over Russian aircraft; in 2015, this type of lift was recorded around 160 times. Typically, fighter jets are on a mission several times a week. This behaviour of the Russian military continues from time to time: for example, from 29 July to 4 August 2019 – 14 times per week, most often intercepting Russian fighter aircraft Su-24, Su-27 and transport craft An-26; as well as a patrol aircraft, Il-38, an early warning and control system; A-50 without an operating radar transponder, without a flight plan. Additionally, radio communication with the Regional Air Traffic Control Centre (RSVC) was not supported (data on aircraft response to the Baltic state borders: 29-09-2019 – 08-

04-2019, 2019), which does not meet the standards of the armed forces/actions in international waters and international airspace. Dangerous manoeuvres by a Russian Su-24 airliner in 2016 took place near the USS Donald Cook missile destroyer sailing to Klaipėda (US commander: Russia's actions are not in line with international norms, 2016). It is important to note that the Russian side denies the existence of such a fact. Such provocation of Russian planes can be seen as a high-risk factor that could lead to a larger-scale conflict situation by accident. It is obvious that circumstances do not warrant similar military action, therefore, they can also be seen as certain signs of preparation for the war. In addition, in 2017 and in 2019, dangerous situations accompanied the flight of Russian Defence Minister S. Shoigu near Lithuania (Incident near Lithuania, 2019). Therefore, we see that this year-on-year military activity is not accidental, but systemic, as premeditated, deliberate actions.

Another factor of activity posing additional risks to the Lithuanian military security at various levels is the constant large-scale manoeuvres targeting NATO and that are carried out at the Lithuanian borders. Expert studies discussing large-scale joint Russian-Belarusian military exercises (Zapad) state that the scenario consists of simulated actions as a sudden attack by an opponent, seizure and establishment of battlements and territories, consolidation and extension of the result achieved, conflict stabilisation and wide-ranging (all-state) defence with the involvement of the full capacity of the state, and transition to nuclear war in case of defeat. The training included not only force readiness testing but also military camouflage and strategic communication for the West. The cases of Georgia 2008, Crimea 2014 lead Russia to believe that the opening of talks in the West will consolidate what has been achieved by military means. It shows the efforts of Russia to prepare for a possible new military conflict in Europe and the long-term approach in this direction (Petraitis, 2017–2018) (Wilk, 2017).

It is important to emphasise that large numbers of smaller-scale exercises are constantly organised, including Air Command, Air Defence and other specialised military units. The objectives of such high-activity, incidentally, costly, are complex, although officially declared purely defensive in nature. Exercises are not only to intimidate, but also to encourage politicians and the public in NATO countries to speak out against increasing NATO capabilities near the Russian border, the exercise should be understood as a warning addressed to NATO partners in the Baltic region, Sweden and Finland, to not to seek NATO membership or close cooperation with the Alliance. On the other hand, they can be designed to spread the message that Russia has the means and the political will to deploy its forces in military action (can react faster and more efficiently than NATO), where Russia and a particular NATO country or group of countries are fighting (Kaukas, 2017). Ongoing exercises near Lithuania can be seen as a potential source of threat.

Recently security issues are seen as covering increasingly more aspects; it is not limited solely to the threats arising from the use of the conventional instruments. This trend intensified in the wake of the crisis in Ukraine in 2014 and led to a rethinking of security issues within NATO and allies. In this context, we should know the time of the “hybrid war”, albeit not new, but increasingly more often



heard in public discourse, not only in relation to the use of military actions, but also in areas such as diplomacy, economics or information. The definition of the so-called “hybrid war” is not well-established and is often criticised – in many cases, authors Andrew Monaghan and Elie Tenenbaum point out its abstract nature and the need to take the context into account when addressing security issues (Monaghan, 2015) (Tenenbaum, 2015). The term is also problematic for analysts such as Damien Van Puyvelde, who notices that the systematic use of the term implies that something new is emerging in modern warfare, however, asymmetric measures are generally applied in conflicts (e.g., propaganda) is not news, and the use of new technologies such as cyber-attacks is seen as bringing another new dimension (Puyvelde, 2015). According to Chris Tuck, the concept of hybrid warfare says more about our fears than any new warfare model, but as the author says, this does not mean that the current security environment is not complicated or dangerous (Tuck, 2017). The extensive discussion on hybridity indicates that asymmetric measures have recently gained increasing relevance. While we may find some examples in the story, new dimensions force us to look at the situation from new perspectives.

Concerning the hybrid threats posed by Russia to Lithuania, it must be understood that any of them can easily transform in order to become a strong argument for Russia to inspire and launch an armed local military conflict. In the opinion of Samuel Charap, who analysed the logical sequences of the use of Russian military force as a last resort in foreign policy since the Crimean conflict, Russia is using military force in order to force the adversary to stop the actions he has taken so far, and the probability of a conflict between Russia and NATO is quite high and has a tendency to increase. The most likely place of conflict is the Baltic region in particular (Charapa, 2016). By increasing the activity of NATO troops (rotation of troops, extension of the air mission, joint military exercises) in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in response to Russia’s aggressive actions, Russia, for its part, responded by disproportionately increasing military power – the military contingent in the Western Military District, remilitarisation of Kaliningrad and, as already mentioned, establishment of a military platoon in Belarus. In his official speeches in 2019, V. Gerasimov emphasised that one of the important conditions for the reduction of tensions between NATO and Russia is the reduction of the destabilising activity of NATO troops and deployment of additional forces and expansion of military infrastructure in the Baltic States (*Vystupleniye pervogo zamestitelya Ministra Oborony RF*, 2019).

This issue is also used in Russian academic literature, warning that these countries are becoming Russia’s number one target to be addressed, which could receive a retaliatory or warning military strike (Tsedilina, 2017). Thus, we can see that Russia’s military pressure has become one of the essential tools of long-term foreign policy and there is no need to look for additional arguments that this neighbouring state again poses a fundamental existential challenge to Lithuania’s national security.

Looking back, we can see that Russia is, at all times, seen as an unpredictable and/or difficult-to-predict player on the international stage, so it’s important to



try to understand and anticipate its actions, even more so as key decisions, in particular international relations and security policy, depend on one person. In the near future, the likelihood of diminishing confrontation with the West is very low. Russia is reluctant to make compromises, will seek to preserve its imagined geopolitical positions, so there is ample room for exacerbating the situation. On the other hand, it is worth remembering one more reality of today's Russia. As Russian political scientist Andrei Kolesnikov notes, the Russian political regime has succeeded in restoring the mystical "heroism" of the war, a certain aura of justice and to convince everyone that, quite paradoxically, aggression is a defensive war or just a series of military operations; personalised government and its associated financial groups need the mobilisation and support of society, so the permanent war with the supposed enemies, who attack the Russian fortress will continue, but society doesn't want a real big war, therefore militarisation and its propaganda have their limits (Kolesnikov, 2016).

## Conclusions

The security dilemma remains a problematic issue on the international scene at all times, and in this case, we see state-players increasing their security in every possible way without providing each other with security guarantees. The confrontational policy chosen by the Russian political regime, with the demonstration of military power to the West, the signs of a possible conflict preparedness are at an initial stage of development and may be further strengthened in the foreseeable future. In Russian strategic documents, military power is identified as one of the means to influence states in international politics, and the use of military forces is not explicitly regulated, leaving plenty of room for free interpretation. In the documents mentioned and in the rhetoric of politicians, the need to strengthen military power is based on ensuring the security of one's country. In practice, we see a far more sophisticated image, especially prominent in regions bordering the West with the major neighbour. The accelerated mobilisation of troops near the Lithuanian borders in the Western military district, equipping them with modern weapons, enhancement of military readiness, large-scale military exercises maximised Russia's military potential. Strengthening of the Russian-Belarus military alliance has become an additional significant factor reducing Lithuania's security guarantees, where Russia demonstrates the principle of expanding the possibilities for using military capabilities, relying on Belarussian forces, military infrastructure and territory as a platform for potential military action.

It is obvious that Russia's military power dominates the region, and this provides additional opportunities for aggressive action against Lithuania and other neighbouring states. On the other hand, the constant inspiration of the provocative actions initiated facilitates the emergence of an unexpected conflict, which can easily lead to more intense confrontation. Russia's disposition to rely on military power is a destabilising, heightened risk factor that diminishes security guarantees and reinforces a sense of insecurity, and its subsequent dynamics have become difficult to predict. In this case, Lithuania's membership in the EU-NATO

alliance from the point of view of security offers much greater guarantees than before.

Policy makers in Lithuania's military security enhancement should take care of complex measures, depending on the relevance of the problem. First and foremost, it is the strengthening of defence efforts of the country and the region through its own efforts and those of the allies, and a number of initiatives and practical instruments have been taken in recent years to further strengthen this dynamic on the basis of balanced internal resource potential. It is equally important to initiate and support actions to preserve and reinforce the unity of the Euro-Atlantic structures and to contribute to efforts to reduce confrontation and the possibility of local conflict.

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## THE IMPACT OF KALININGRAD FACTOR ON THE LITHUANIAN NATIONAL SECURITY

Liudas Zdanavičius\*

### Introduction

The factor of the Kaliningrad region has been receiving continued, albeit limited, academic attention since the end of the Cold War. Interest was driven by the region's unique geographical location (exclave), its future following the accession of the neighbouring countries to the EU and NATO, and problems of economic and social development. The issue of Kaliningrad area received special attention in 2002-2003 before Lithuania's accession to the EU, when the problem of facilitated transit through Lithuania was successfully solved.

Already at that time there was an obvious dualism between the liberal points of view, focusing on the status of the Kaliningrad region as a 'pilot region' in the context of EU-Russia cooperation, and more realistic, which had already highlighted the problems of Kaliningrad's geopolitical situation (Lopata, *Geopolitinis įkaitas: Rusijos Federacijos Kaliningrado (Karaliaučiaus) srities atvejis*, 2005).

After the onset of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the security of the Baltic Sea region, together with the issue of the Kaliningrad area factor, attracted significant interest from the Western analytic centres and the academic community. The Kaliningrad factor is analysed in the context of the broader security of the Baltic States (Hooker, 2019; Milevski, 2018; David A. Shlapak, 2016; Lopata, *Kaliningradas Europos saugumo architektūroje po Krymo aneksijos*, 2018). Important security issues, such as the A2/AD 'bubble' (Dalsjö, Berglund, & Jonsson, 2019; Frühling & Lasconjarias, 2016; Sukhankin, 2019) and the Suwałki corridor (Hodges, Bugajski, & Doran, 2018; Veebel & Sliwa, *The Suwalki Gap, Kaliningrad and Russia's Baltic Ambitions*, 2019), have attracted much attention. Some authors provide more broad and detailed analysis of the Kaliningrad region factor (including developments inside of this Russian region) (Ivanauskas, Keršanskas, & Kasčiūnas, 2017; Domańska, et al., 2019).

This article gives an overview of the impact of the Kaliningrad factor on Russian foreign and national security policy in the states of the Baltic Sea region (and Lithuania in particular). The idea of a 'pilot region' and a space for cooperation during the warming period of Russian-EU relations was strongly replaced by the development model of the 'fortress under siege' (or 'unsinkable aircraft carrier'). Russia is purposefully strengthening its military capabilities in the region (thus, in many cases, giving it a much broader role in the European security architecture than one would expect from such a small region). The economic and social disadvantages of this development model are being addressed by financial assistance from the federal centre.

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Is Russia preparing for a new aggression in Kaliningrad? This question is difficult to answer unequivocally because of limited opportunities for an objective investigation into the Kremlin's decision-making mechanisms. Simultaneously, in the case of the Kaliningrad region, it is possible to see the signs of the classic 'security dilemma' (Herz, 1950; Waltz, 1978; Jervis, 1978; Glaser, 1997). Russia and the NATO countries have entered into an escalating spiral of mutual distrust, with both sides boosting their own capabilities in response to each other's capacity building. This narrative of the security dilemma is strongly promoted by Russia, positioning itself as an "innocent victim of circumstances" and inviting the other side (NATO) to 'build mutual trust' and/or to create a common disarmament space.

This narrative of the security dilemma (although, purely from the academically point of view, it might be appealing and compelling) could be detrimental to the security of the Baltic States, whereas it largely ignores the revisionist component of Russian foreign policy, which was clearly demonstrated by Moscow's military aggression against Georgia and Ukraine, interference in and conflicts with Syria, Libya and other factors. This narrative is difficult for Moscow to base on facts: strengthening NATO's capabilities is a response to growing militarisation and provocative actions in the Baltic Sea region (for example, NATO military training has consistently been significantly smaller than Russian, there is an obvious asymmetry in deployed military capabilities etc.)

In this case, the existence of offensive realism is more appropriate for the analysis, according to which the Kremlin is obviously a revisionist actor, seeking to replace the existing international order and its place in it by military and non-military means.

### **1. Militarisation of the Kaliningrad region**

For Russia, the Kaliningrad region at the same time is a big problem and a vulnerability (geographically separated from the rest of Russia, with a potential adversary of NATO, limited military capabilities), and a great opportunity to influence a regional and global security architecture. In this case, the long distance west of Moscow creating a defensibility problem, at the same time means geographical proximity to European capitals and critical infrastructure.

The Western military district, part of which the Kaliningrad region is, is one of the main priorities of Russia's military modernisation. In 2019, this was reaffirmed by the Chief of the Russian General Staff, V. Gerasimov, who stated that the Western and Southern military districts will be given special attention compared to other military districts in the country. In the Western military district, despite the fact that the real security challenges do not exist unlike other Russian neighbourhoods, the active supply of the latest weaponry and other equipment is being carried out.

Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kaliningrad region had substantial military was heavily militarised (about 100 thousand troops), but later, following the restrictions on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (Russia withdrew from it in 2007), the warming of relations with the West and economic problems, the military deployments in the region were drastically reduced.

There are no open, reliable sources on the exact number of troops deployed in the Kaliningrad region. Russia itself does not publish this information. Various sources provide figures between 20 and 25-30 thousand soldiers. Methodologically, the National Guard and border guards should be included in the total numbers. This shows that the ratio of military personnel to the total population is disproportionately high compared to the surrounding states. It also implies a significant economic dependence of the region on the level of defence spending. For example, salaries for military personnel are significantly higher than the regional average.

This relatively large contingent of troops (relative to the area's population) manages a modern armament complex, which is constantly being strengthened and modernised.

The nature of the weaponry deployed in Kaliningrad, Russia, suggests (and the Russian authorities and experts do not conceal it too much) that Russia has formed and further strengthens the so-called A2/AD (anti access/area denial) 'bubble' in the Baltic Sea region (notably, such 'bubbles' are also formed in the Crimea, the Kola Peninsula, and some experts count up to 11 such 'projects' in Russia). Its purpose is to secure an advantage in the air and in the sea by using limited resources (primarily by deploying various missile systems). Russia is developing similar systems in the Crimea and the Arctic, and China does so off the coast of Taiwan. In principle, the development of such a system can be seen as an asymmetric Russian response to NATO's relative military advantage (it should be noted that, based on the armed forces stationed in the Baltic region, Russia has a significant advantage over NATO members and their partners).

While the system is usually positioned as strictly defensive, it can also be used for offensive purposes. The main scenario where A2/AD would be truly dangerous is Russia's aggression against its neighbours. In this case, such a system could potentially block the arrival of reinforcements from NATO allies, and could also assist Russia in securing control over the Baltic Sea air and maritime space.

Major military modernisation projects in the Kaliningrad region, including the development of A2/AD system:

- ▶ Iskander-M operational-tactical missile complex. Russia, since 2007, has been actively threatening to deploy this missile system, with a range of up to 500 kilometres, in response to the US missile defence shield in Europe. It is noteworthy that the issue of the deployment of Iskander-M was perceived by Moscow as an effective means of exerting pressure on NATO countries and as an argument in negotiations. Therefore, Russia delayed the deployment of this armament, since the argument in this case would lose its importance. It is likely that the temporary introduction of this armament for exercise was considered a more effective tactic (for example, in October 2016 (BNS, 2016)), Iskander-M were finally deployed in Kaliningrad in 2018). According to the Lithuanian intelligence authorities, Russia would in any case have deployed this armament sooner or later, whereas older generation Tochka-M complexes are being replaced by Iskander-M in all similar units in Russia (VSD&AOTD, 2019).

- ▶ In conclusion, deployment of Iskander systems in the Kaliningrad region

increased the reach of these missile systems to the Western direction (the territories of the Baltic States were already accessible from the Leningrad region). It is likely that Iskander complexes deployed in the Kaliningrad region may be equipped with 9M729 missiles in the future (SSC-8, according to NATO classification) (possibly equipped with the nuclear warheads). These missiles, the creation and testing of which led to the collapse of the INF Treaty, have a much longer operating range, which could be similar to that of a Kalibr missile (the prototype of which they are created) – 1500-2600 km. This basically means that, in the event of a potential military conflict, Russia could attack targets across Europe from the Kaliningrad area (Domańska, et al., 2019).

- ▶ Modernisation of the Baltic fleet is hindered by the general difficult situation in the Russian naval industry. Nevertheless, both the existing ships are being modernised and new ones are built. It is noteworthy that most new ships are small missile boats (projects 21631 and 22800) equipped with powerful and long-range missile systems 3M-54 Kalibr (up to 2600 km) and Onyx (up to 600 km (according to other sources, 800 km)).

- ▶ Air defence missile systems S-400. The first systems were deployed in 2012. In 2019, Russia officially announced the deployment of additional systems. (Ministry of defence of the Russian Federation, 2019).

- ▶ Coastal mobile defence missile systems K-300P Bastion-P (range 350-450 km) were deployed in 2016. It is noteworthy that the Onyx missiles used in this system can also be launched from ships. The same 25th Missile Coast Marines Regiment (Donskoe, Kaliningrad region) should be equipped with Bal coastal defence missile systems (range up to 260 km) by the end of 2019 (Interfax, 2019).

- ▶ The air force stationed in the region is constantly being enhanced. New SU-30 SM aircraft have been deployed in recent years. It was reported in 2018 that a new aviation division will be formed in Kaliningrad, which will include both existing and new aviation units (Orlova & Moskvin, 2019).

- ▶ In 2011, Russia has deployed a modern Voronezh-DM radar system in the Kaliningrad region, capable of monitoring all European airspace and the North Atlantic (a range up to 8000 km). Also, in 2017, plans were announced for the deployment of the Podsolnukh-S radar system (operating range, according to different sources, is 400-900 km), and in October 2019 this system, designed in particular for monitoring sea and airspace (including the key Danish straits), was reported to be already active in the Kaliningrad region (RIA novosti, 2019).

Russia is actively developing radio-electronic combat capabilities in the Kaliningrad region. For example, in 2019 it deployed the Murmansk-BN combat unit in Kaliningrad region with an operating range (according to Russian sources) of up to 8000 km (Dmitrijev, 2019).

The Kaliningrad Land Forces component is also constantly being upgraded. New military equipment is also continuously being supplied here. In response to the deployment of additional US troops in Poland, at the beginning of 2019, Moscow has stated that it will deploy an additional 30 tanks in the Kaliningrad region. Subsequent media reports speak of 70-100 new tanks (Warsaw Institute, 2019). Also, new artillery systems are being supplied, other armament is being

modernised. At the end of 2019, it was announced that a new motorised division will be formed in Kaliningrad, following the strengthening of existing military units (Stepanov, 2019).

Therefore, we can observe that in 2018-2019, militarisation of the Kaliningrad area, despite Russia economic problems, accelerated even further.

When analysing the importance of Kaliningrad to the security of the Baltic region, the so-called Suwalki corridor factor is of particular importance. The Suwalki corridor (often referred to as Suwalki gap in English literature), of which the international security community learned about only after 2014, has a distinctive strategic significance (Hodges, Bugajski, & Doran, 2018):

- ▶ The only land logistics route that would allow NATO allied forces to assist the Baltic States in the case of a potential security situation escalation. The situation is exacerbated by the relatively underdeveloped transport infrastructure and difficult geographical conditions;

- ▶ Key energy and transport infrastructure already exists or will be built in this corridor: LitPol Link power bridge (essential component of synchronisation with Western European electricity networks), the planned GIPL gas pipeline, the Via Baltica motorway and the Rail Baltica section.

It is noteworthy that Russia has repeatedly simulated occupation of the Suwalki corridor (including a 'meeting' of troops arriving from the Kaliningrad region and Belarus, landing operations etc.) and/or a blockade in its exercises, under the guise of counterterrorism watered by external forces.

The challenges posed by the militarisation of the Kaliningrad region are exacerbated by Russia's rather aggressive posture. By their actions, usually explained as response to the 'aggressive expansion of NATO capabilities at the Russian borders', Moscow seeks to demonstrate its military superiority in the region and regularly checks the level and nature of vigilance of NATO forces.

There is constant tension over Russian military exercises. There are at least some key issues related with Russian military exercises:

*Lack of transparency on the Russian side.* Some of the exercises are either unreported or unannounced beforehand (for example, some exercises are simply called 'non-routine combat readiness checks'). In the case of announced exercises, information on their actual scope is concealed (in the case of exercises in regions within the Vienna Document Regulatory Area, avoiding the exercise monitoring requirements of this document, less than 13,000 troops are reported to be participating in the exercise and/or the exercises are broken down into smaller, ostensibly, unrelated exercises); in actual scenarios, observers are only given limited information at the same time as wide-ranging disinformation campaigns are being conducted.

Nature of scenarios. Even though it is formally declared that scenarios are strictly defensive or anti-terrorist, in the vast majority of cases, large-scale combat actions against NATO's Alliance have been simulated (including offensive operations, aerial and missile bombing, blocking of Allied assistance by sea and air etc.). Russia has also repeatedly tested the ultra-rapid transportation of large numbers of troops (tens of thousands) and military equipment to the Kaliningrad



region from other regions of Russia.

Military units and polygons in the Kaliningrad region are in extreme vicinity to the Lithuanian and Polish borders (which, on the other hand, are natural due to the small size of the area), so during the exercise, the Armed Forces of neighbouring countries must operate in a higher alert mode. This is because, in the cases of conflicts of Georgia and Ukraine, Moscow actively used military exercises to conceal the onset of future aggression. Bearing in mind that Russian troops can start military action within 24-48 hours, while decisions are made very quickly, the situation requires an extra level of vigilance indeed.

Russia is also using military exercises for more tactical purposes. For example, Russian military exercises on the Baltic Sea in 2014-2015 led to the interruption of the construction of Nordbalt electricity cable between Lithuania and Sweden. The Russian Navy, despite official Lithuanian protests, on several occasions ordered cable-laying vessels to leave the exercise area because of ongoing shootings (Fuks, 2015).

It is likely that these actions were part of the overall demonstration of Russia's power in the Baltic Sea region. At the same time, this type of action could theoretically be used in the future to escalate the overall security situation (for example, disrupt the operation of the LNG terminal, maybe even the whole Klaipėda port) and/or obstruct the planned Harmony Link submarine cable between Lithuania and Poland.

Moscow also uses other power design tools. For example, continuous flights of military aircraft without transponders and/or airspace violations serve this purpose.

The use of electronic warfare tools is also established. Lithuanian intelligence authorities stated in their annual threat assessment that "Radio-electronic units deployed in the Kaliningrad region in 2016 conducted interference propagation against foreign military aircraft (VSD; AOTD, 2017). There is evidence that systematic interception of pilot radio communications and suppression of frequencies was placed during NATO aircraft flights over the Baltic Sea".

It is noteworthy that militarisation of the Kaliningrad region, including the challenges posed by the A2/AD 'bubble', are getting so much attention from researchers.

For example, there are sceptical voices in analysing the Kaliningrad A2/AD. The Swedish Defence Research Centre (FOI) states in its study that this Russian system is not as effective as is often thought. Many missiles have a much smaller effective range for technical, physical and other reasons. Also, an analysis of the use of this weaponry in the Syrian conflict shows that the systems' accuracy and overall efficiency are often lower than declared. On the other hand, many measures can be taken by NATO and partner countries, which could potentially weaken or even completely undermine the effects of the A2/AD 'bubble' (Dalsjö, Berglund, & Jonsson, 2019).

However, most studies provide some form of modelling of the conflict in the Baltic region and take the consequences of militarisation in the Kaliningrad region more seriously. It should be noted that in order to neutralise the operation



of this system, NATO nations would not only have to defend themselves in their territories, but also to attack targets in the Kaliningrad region. For example, RAND experts say that NATO may need to 'neutralise' the Kaliningrad region by military means (Pezard, Radin, Szayna, & Larrabee, 2017). Similar views are adopted by some other investigators (Hooker, 2019; Milevski, 2018).

These considerations are not just theoretical. In 2019 the US Air Force commander in Europe told reporters that US forces are preparing for a possible neutralisation of the air defence system in the Kaliningrad region. This would allegedly be done through what is known as the 'multi-domain approach' (Breaking Defence, 2019).

At the same time, it is likely that as the situation develops, Russia could threaten or use nuclear weapons. Moscow has reserved this possibility for itself in official documents (in particular, Article 27 of the Military Doctrine of 2014, which states that nuclear weapons can also be used in response to a conventional attack, threatening the survival of the Russian state). This means the so-called escalate to deescalate of the conflict<sup>25</sup>. Situation is worsened by the fact, that at least part of the missiles, stationed in the Kaliningrad region, could be equipped to carry nuclear warheads. These are extremely dangerous, both because of the potential collapse of regional and global security architecture, and because of the potential for further nuclear escalation.

Obviously, much more effective and less dangerous is deterrence by increasing the cost of the offensive (deterrence by denial), than the possible capture of the seized territory and the punishment of the aggressor (deterrence by punishment).

This can also be observed in the actions of the Baltic States and their NATO partners, directed, among other things, at neutralising the threats posed by the militarisation of the Kaliningrad region. Examples of these actions include:

Not only did Lithuania increase its defence funding to 2 percent of the GDP, but accelerated the formation of the Samogitia Brigade (which is mainly aimed at reducing the Kaliningrad threat) formation process;

In 2018, Poland announced the formation of a new mechanised division in Eastern Poland (Poland In, 2019). The formation of a territorial defence force will also contribute to the security of the Eastern flank. Warsaw also has an extensive armaments acquisition program (including the Patriot air defence systems, 32 F-35s, and 20 Himars missile complexes (range 70-300 km)).

In 2019, the US, while strengthening the security of the Baltic region, significantly increased its contingent in Poland and also began the deployment of the rotational mechanised battalion in Lithuania.

Sweden reversed its decision and returned troops to Gotland Island and announced plans to strengthen the state's defence capabilities.

NATO is also strengthening the security of its Eastern flank (including measures such as the deployment of EFP battalions, formation of the NRF forces, four-30 initiative and other relevant measures.

Joint military exercises of varying degrees are a major deterrent in the region.

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<sup>25</sup> Noteworthy, Russia repeatedly simulated the use of nuclear weapons during the Zapad exercise.

## 2. Unconventional threats: Kaliningrad region factor

After the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, the so-called non-conventional threats are receiving increasing attention. Russia uses a wide range of measures to pursue its foreign policy goals. What role does the Kaliningrad region play in this system?

According to Lithuanian intelligence authorities, Russia is actively using the Kaliningrad region as a basis for the collection of intelligence. For example, the FSB Electronic Intelligence Centre, which performs large-scale signal monitoring, is stationed in Kaliningrad (State security department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014). Also, Russian special services were very active in attempting to engage Lithuanian border guards and other state officials travelling to the Kaliningrad region (Pancerovas, 2015). The aim was to obtain information on both Lithuanian institutions in which they were employed, and the border and military infrastructure. A total of 5 border recruitment cases were recorded in 2015 alone (ELTA, 2016).

The collection of intelligence also seeks to exploit regional cooperation formats, cultural exchange, business visits etc. Also, business entities of Lithuania and other NATO countries having business interests (for example, investment) in the Kaliningrad area are vulnerable.

Based on the experience in other countries, it can be assumed that smugglers and other organised crime networks with interests in the Kaliningrad region may be at high risk.

Lithuania, strengthening the physical control of the border with the Kaliningrad region, erected a fence on the land border section in 2017-2018. The total length of the fence is about 45 kilometres (most of the border follows bodies of water) (Kanapka, 2019). Estonia and Latvia are building similar fences at the border with Russia. The construction of the fence at the Kaliningrad border received a strong and high-ranking Russian response. Foreign Minister S. Lavrov has publicly called the construction a 'Russophobic' act (RIA Novosti, 2017).

The Lithuanian side declares that the main task of the fence is to combat smuggling and illegal migration; the then Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania emphasised that the fence will help prevent provocations from the Russian side, such as the abduction of the Estonian KAPO officer E. Kohver from Estonian territory near the Russian border in 2014 (BNS, 2017).

In turn, in 2016 Poland suspended the operation of the facilitated border movement between the Kaliningrad region and the Polish Border provinces for an indefinite period. Their main motivation – national security considerations.

Successful operation of the Facilitated Rail Transit Scheme (STS) and Russian military transit through Lithuania after 2014 more often attracts the attention of the media and security experts as a potential security flaw, which Moscow could exploit for possible provocations, maybe even as one of the measures in case of potential aggression against Lithuania. It is noteworthy that, after 2014, there have been several incidents where Lithuanian border guards were forced to disembark groups of young men from the transit train, but this can be seen as sporadic cases.

Nevertheless, in 2016 SBGS officials organised an exercise to manage problem

situations on the Kaliningrad transit train. Simultaneously, the then Minister of the Interior, T. Žilinskas, pointed out that he does not see any major challenges in this sphere (ELTA, 2016).

The issue of military transit after 2014 did not cause any additional problems. Russia transports the main sensitive cargo by St. Petersburg–Baltiysk ferry (for example, in October 2016, the Estonian media reported that this was the case with Iskander-M systems) and by air.

Meanwhile, Russia continues its efforts to secure control over the transit of goods by rail from/to the Kaliningrad region. On the one hand, after 2014, Moscow no longer raises the issue of the continuous high-speed rail project from Kaliningrad to Moscow. On the other hand, efforts to take over control of the goods transit continue. It is noteworthy that the first such efforts were halted in 2004, when companies related to Dujotekana and the then head of Russian Railways, V. Yakunin, attempted to become important players in this transportation sector.

In 2018-2019, the Latvian company LGC Cargo associated with the oligarchs of this country, A. Schleser and A. Skele (in turn, linked to Russian companies), seeks to enter the transit sector from the mainland Russia to the Kaliningrad region (via Latvia or Belarus) (Laurinavičius, 2019).

On the other hand, Russia seeks to attract as much Russian and Belarusian export cargo as possible to the ports of the Kaliningrad region. Also, there is much hope that part of the rail freight flow between China and the EU will be taken over. In this case, the transportation route would go across Lithuania, the Kaliningrad region and later by rail to Poland (or by sea to Scandinavia or Germany). In 2018-2019, this route managed to attract relatively small Chinese-EU freight flows; however, its economic viability raises a number of questions.

To achieve the above objectives, new deep-water port projects are under development in Kaliningrad.

Until 2014, it was planned to build a new deep-water port in Baltiysk near the main Baltic navy base of Russia. Later, another scenario was selected – to build a passenger-cargo terminal in Pionersk, and the main cargo deep water port – in Jarntarnyj. The planned port size – 48 million cargo loads per year. The cost of the project – about 2.8 billion euro (for comparison, the Klaipeda deep water port project would cost about 800 million euro, stevedoring volumes – 34-38 million tonnes per year) (Interfax, 2019).

In its information policy, the Kremlin actively uses the Kaliningrad region factor in various narratives against the Baltic States. Both many Russian officials and the controlled media actively use the narratives of the Kaliningrad region as an island surrounded by hostile NATO nations from all sides (or a fortress). It is noteworthy that these narratives are part of the overall anti-Western narrative of Russian official propaganda, which became particularly strong after the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

In 2014, against the backdrop of Russian aggression in Ukraine, the then Governor of Kaliningrad Region publicly accused Lithuania and Poland of apparently bringing in many young men from these countries ‘with unclear intentions’. He also accused Western ‘special services’ of trying to instigate the

'Maidan' (in the model of Ukraine) in a 'sensitive and strategically important region of Russia'. Later, the governor stopped escalating the topic.

The Russian media is also actively promoting the issue of supposed territorial claims of Lithuania, Poland and Germany against the Kaliningrad region. This is done through the careless words of politicians or societies in these countries. This narrative also underpins the need to strengthen military forces and to shape mobilisation sentiment.

At the same time, the Kremlin pays special attention to the strengthening of the Russian identity of the people of the Kaliningrad region, thus combating the supposed separatism of the region. Funded youth visits to major Russian cities, participation in patriotic organisations is encouraged (for example, Yunarmia) with the help of the Russian Orthodox Church. Also, the so-called 'Germanism' is being actively fought. In this case, the active campaign against renaming Khrabrovo airport after the name of philosopher I. Kant and the closure of the German-Russian House organisation in 2017 are illustrative.

It is noteworthy that in addition to purely propaganda measures, the Kremlin is actively using other means to manage the situation in the Kaliningrad region. Moscow's appointed governor, Anton Alichanov, has no links with the region's elite and is exercising control over financial flows and local elite groups by using the anti-corruption 'flag'. The federal centre has also significantly strengthened control over the region's power structures (including troops) (in particular, by appointing loyal personnel from other regions of the country) (Domańska, et al., 2019).

### **3. Kaliningrad region factor in the Baltic Sea energy system**

The impact of the Kaliningrad region on security processes in the Baltic Sea Region is closely related to energy security issues. Together with the Baltic States, the Kaliningrad Region is part of the post-Soviet BRELL electricity ring. Also, until moment of writing, 100% of the natural gas that has been reaching the region is in transit through Lithuania.

Such dependence prevented Moscow from exerting the full range of possible energy pressure measures not only against Lithuania but also other countries of the region (including Belarus). For example, unlike the closure of the Druzhba oil pipeline for alleged repairs in 2006 (in retaliation for 'improper' privatisation of Mazeikiu Nafta), Russia could not close the main gas pipeline through Belarus or Lithuania for a similar 'repair' (the current throughput in Latvia would not have been sufficient even to meet the needs of Lithuania), or disrupt the power supply in the BRELL ring. In these cases, the Kaliningrad region would be facing serious economic and social problems as a result of the disrupted supply of energy resources. Therefore, despite threats, unlike in Ukraine, Russia had only temporarily stopped gas supplies to Belarus.

This dependency has also significantly reduced the likelihood of both 'hybrid actions' (such as cyber-attacks on energy infrastructure) and the probability of a conventional military conflict, as this would significantly increase the risk of damage to and/or a shutdown of the transit energy infrastructure.

At the same time, the Kremlin is deeply dissatisfied with the aspirations of Lithuania and the other Baltic States to increase their energy independence from Russia (construction of the LNG terminal, liberalisation of the gas market, construction of energy interconnections, synchronisation projects with Western European electricity networks). In this context, the issue of Kaliningrad remained unresolved.

In 2008, Moscow demonstratively began the construction of the Baltic Nuclear Power Plant in the Kaliningrad region. This project, if seen as a real, rather than psychological measure (as part of the Lithuanian analysts believe), aimed to make the Kaliningrad region an influential player in the region's energy system, both for exporting large volumes of electricity and for stopping energy independence projects in the Baltic States. In 2013, the project was frozen after it became clear that Lithuania, Poland and Germany were not interested in allowing the export of electricity produced at this energy facility (Lithuania also refused to allow to use the Kruonis Pumped Storage Plant for the project). Although the construction of a smaller nuclear power plant is still sometimes mentioned, these talks hardly have a solid foundation.

Also, despite various declarations, the Nord Stream pipeline branch project to the Kaliningrad region was not implemented. The probable cause – Gazprom's resistance to the extremely high cost of the project.

After the disruption of the power system in Kaliningrad region in 2013 (when at least 650,000 residents of the region were left without electricity due to power grid infrastructure problems) (Klops.ru, 2013), V. Putin ordered to resolve it urgently. The Russian government has approved the so-called coal and gas development scenario for the Kaliningrad region in 2014 (Kgd.ru, 2014).

Most of the projects in this scenario are already implemented by autumn 2019:

In March 2018, Mayakovskaya TES (157.35 MW Gusev) and Talakhovskaya TES (159 MW, Sovetsk), and in March 2019 – gas Pregolskaya TES (455.2 MW) gas-fired thermal power plants were launched. In 2020, the completion of the coal-fired Primorskaya MES (installed capacity 195 MW) is scheduled; it will be used as a backup generating capacity (Inter RAO, 2019).

In January 2019, the LNG terminal was completed (Gazprom, with annual imports of up to 3.7 billion cubic meters, 1.5 times the area's annual consumption) (Interfax, "Gazprom" sdelał rozhdestvenskij podarok kaliningradcam za \$1 mlrd. Obobshhenie, 2019). It is intended to ensure diversification of gas supply.

In 2017, the construction phase of the underground gas storage complex was completed. Its capacity reached 180 million cubic meters. It is planned that its capacity will increase to 800 million cubic meters by 2024 (GAZPROM, 2019).

In January 2019, at the opening of the Kaliningrad LNG Terminal, V. Putin stated that the Kaliningrad region had succeeded in securing energy independence. Meanwhile, this 'achievement' seems rather dubious. The cost of the project is extremely high. The new power plants will cost a total of 1.392 billion euro and the LNG terminal – almost 900 million euro (at least twice as expensive as the Klaipeda LNG terminal).



The operation of the Gazprom LNG terminal is also unprofitable, since the cost of gas in the Kaliningrad region does not cover these costs. This is also confirmed by the fact that, in 2019, the gas supply through Lithuanian gas pipelines continued, and the vessel storage was leased to the Austrian company OMV and departed from the Kaliningrad region to serve the European markets (RBC, 2019).

After the new power plants were put into operation, there is a clear surplus of electricity generated in the Kaliningrad region, which is almost twice the area's maximum consumption. This way, about 40% of the electricity produced is exported.

In conclusion, Moscow's quest to create an energy island in the Kaliningrad region is not based on economic logic. Gazprom has a gas transit agreement with Lithuania, which will remain in force until 2025. Unlike Russia, Lithuania has never manipulated on the matters of gas or electricity supplies.

It should also be noted that in the project of synchronisation of the Baltic States with W. Europe networks, the issue of Kaliningrad was and is one of the most important issues. As mentioned above, Russia sees it as an opportunity to slow down or even stop the synchronisation process.

The European Union, for its part, took seriously into consideration the four possible variants of the Kaliningrad region harmonisation with synchronisation projects when considering the synchronisation project (Purvins, Fulli, Covrig, & Chaouachi, 2016). Russia was offered not to opt for an island mode functioning, but to synchronise with the West together with the Baltic states. Russia's choice of an island operation can be seen as part of a process of overall confrontation with the West, as is the case with the Nord Stream – an obvious and corrupt element of these energy projects.

In May 2019, Russia has carried out tests of the Kaliningrad region power system in the island mode. Unlike in 2012, when the island mode lasted for only about 10 minutes, in June, the governor of the area, A. Alichanov, declared that these attempts were successful (Interfax, Jenergetičeskaja sistema Kaliningradskoj oblasti uspeshno proshla ispytanija v izolirovannom rezhime - gubernator, 2019).

Successful isolation of the Kaliningrad region extends Moscow's energy and military influence sphere significantly. Russia has been gaining the opportunity to threaten or even disrupt the operation of the energy systems of the Baltic States (Juozaitis, 2019). As the conflict escalates, and maybe even in the event of an open military conflict, the Kaliningrad region and its military units could self-sustain their energy needs on a temporary basis.

## **Conclusions**

The Kaliningrad region is often interpreted as a classic example security dilemma's "escalation spiral" in the West and NATO. In the case of the Kaliningrad region, Russian behaviour is often irrational (allocating surplus resources to combat non-existent threats, such as NATO aggression or energy isolation in the region). However, it acquires rationality if the factor of Kaliningrad is to be seen in the broader context of Russian-Western relations. In this case, Russia, publicly



imitating the victim of the 'security dilemma', can achieve its objectives in relations with NATO and EU Member States through relatively limited means and influence the security situation in the Baltic Sea region.

The situation analysis suggests that last year Russia has further accelerated the militarisation of the Kaliningrad region. The region is actively used to demonstrate the power of the Kremlin in the Baltic Sea region (provocations, non-transparent military exercises with offensive scenarios etc.).

Military capabilities in the region are not in line with Moscow's rhetoric of a 'fortress under siege', as they can be used for offensive action against Western powers (especially in the Baltic region; however, the range of deployed armaments also allows for reaching Western Europe). Russia's ever-increasing A2/AD 'bubble' can be used to block the arrival of Allied troops in case of escalation of security situation (including the scenario of direct Russian aggression). Meanwhile, military and infrastructure deployed in the area, in the event of a potential escalation, could become a lodgement for much larger Russian forces. Moscow has repeatedly demonstrated the ability to deploy tens of thousands of troops and large quantities of military equipment within 24-48 hours.

The region is also and can be used for non-conventional (hybrid) actions against neighbouring states. Preparation of the area's power system for operation in island mode cannot be explained for economic reasons, rather, it is inherently geopolitical (and/or possibly a corruption-based project).

In conclusion, it can be stated that Russian militarisation of the Kaliningrad region, as part of the overall projection of regional and global power, is largely detrimental to Russia itself. At least officially, the aim is to avoid the presence of NATO forces in the Baltic Sea region, and Moscow, through its actions, has only led to the deployment of deterrence capabilities.

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## 13.

# TALKING “WITH” OR “ABOUT”? *THICK* RECOGNITION IN LITHUANIAN-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

Gediminas Vitkus\*

### Introduction

In Europe, there are two approaches to Russia. You can conditionally call them the “critical” and the “pragmatic”. The latter approach has more supporters than the former. This is also confirmed by the statements of politicians and academic studies. The most recent example of such a division is a Decision of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 26 June 2019 to return the voting right to Russia. At that time, delegations from most European national parliaments were in favour of such a proposal, specifically following a “pragmatic” approach, while “critical” delegations from Ukraine, the Baltic states, Poland and Slovakia remained in the minority (Erlanger, 2019).

Thus, Lithuania officially takes a “critical” attitude towards Russia. Compared to other European Union member states, Lithuania even belongs to the category of the strictest “critics” of Russia. At such a political attitude, such a decision seems quite fundamental. In this respect, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 did not bring anything new, meant no turns, just further consolidated this position, giving its supporters new strong arguments. On the other hand, in the sense of the “Russian issue” (foreign policy actions), it still remains “open”. This is confirmed not only by the retention of Lithuania and several other states in the minority of the Council of Europe, but also by the internal political context. Lithuanian Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis also called for a “more pragmatic” relationship with Russia in his time, following the initiative to resume the work of the Russian-Lithuanian Intergovernmental Commission (Grytėnas, 2018). Finally, it is no secret that public opinion is in favour of the idea of “better relations” with Russia (Krupavičius, 2018).

This is why, in this context, there is a practical political question of the conditions under which it is possible and whether it is generally feasible for Lithuanian foreign policy towards Russia to turn from a “critical” position to the so-called “pragmatic” one. In other words, the question would be what should happen, what should change or what obstacles should be removed so that relations between Lithuania and Russia, even if they do not return to normal, would at least begin to improve and move towards mutually beneficial neighbourhood cooperation. In a deeper academic sense, it would be a question of what determines in general and what is needed for bad interstate relations to start improving, warming up or,

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ultimately, for the countries to simply reconcile. In other words, the answer to the question is what are the causes of bad relations and hostility between states and how and under what conditions they could be eliminated.

### 1. What is Wrong with Lithuanian-Russian Relations?

If you ask politicians and diplomats why Lithuanian-Russian relations are bad, it is no doubt that you would have to hear a “mirror” response from opposite sides. Lithuanian foreign policy makers are likely to answer that Russia is to blame for that and could probably provide a full list of arguments and facts, one of the most solid of which is the annexation of Crimea (ELTA, 2019). If you ask Russian diplomats the same question, then their answer would be that Lithuania itself is primarily to blame for bad relationships (Interv’ju Posla Rossii v Litve A. I. Udal’cova mezhdunarodnomu informacionnomu agentstvu “Rossija segodnja”, 2019).

The answers of politicians and diplomats are clear. And what are the answers of academics-researchers of Lithuanian-Russian relations? First of all, it should be noted that although recent relations between Lithuania and Russia have certainly been explored and from different perspectives, but the answers to the question why Lithuanian-Russian relations are bad basically can be divided into two categories. The first category refers to geopolitics and *Realpolitik*. Russia’s geopolitical position, its exceptional size and power simply encodes it to be expansive, aggressive and naturally threaten its smaller and weaker neighbours (Statkus, Motieka, & Laurinavičius, 2003, pp. 41-44) (Laurinavičius, Motieka, & Statkus, 2005, pp. 311-340). Because of Russia’s strategic interests in the Baltic Sea region, it behaves harshly and even aggressively (Grigas, 2013, p. 9). From this perspective, bad relations between Lithuania and Russia were seen more as an independent than the dependent variable. Researchers, focusing on one or other aspects of the Lithuanian-Russian relations, accept the bad relations between Lithuania and Russia as a kind of constant, which does not require further attention and problematisation. Researchers are usually more interested in issues related not to why Lithuania has bad relations with Russia, but how it should live with it, deal with it and solve such problems as choosing the right foreign policy strategy and tactics (Paulauskas, 2005) (Vitkus, 2006) (Lopata & Statkus, 2005); development of appropriate defence policies (Kaukas, 2015); ensuring energy security and independence from Russia (Šatūnienė, 2003); information security (Jurgelevičiūtė, 2006a) (Jurgelevičiūtė, 2006b); Russia’s soft power (Česnakas & Isoda, 2019) hybrid war management (Bajarūnas & Keršanskas, 2018) etc.

The second category emerged under the influence of Constructivist approach. Its response to the poor state of Lithuanian-Russian relations refers to the incompatibility and even antagonism between Lithuanian and Russian identities. Gražina Miniotaitė stated that the image of a hostile and antagonistic Russia has become an integral part of Lithuania’s identity, determinative of all its other foreign policy choices (Miniotaitė, 1998). Dovilė Jakniūnaitė has linked Russia’s aggressiveness towards its neighbours (including Lithuania) with an inadequate understanding of its borders and territory (Jakniūnaitė, 2007). Finally, when

looking deeper into Lithuanian and Russian identities, Jakniūnaitė even saw their paradoxical similarity, i.e. their liminality. According to the researcher, this “dual liminality shapes the interdependence and antipathy and the quest to deny each other’s images of identity and security” (Jakniūnaitė, 2013, p. 42).

Constructivist studies of Lithuanian and Russian foreign policy, without a doubt, provide new and exciting insights, allowing a deeper understanding of the causes of these countries’ bad relations and hostility. However, bearing in mind that the countries’ identities are much less stable entities than their geopolitical situation, the possibilities and conditions for identity changes should also be considered. If it can already be accepted that country identities can change and transform relatively quickly and easily, then it’s not just worth asking what specific political practices enable and establish a stable hostile relationship (Jakniūnaitė, 2015a, p. 100) or “how have Lithuanian-Russian relations remained tense for a decade” (Jakniūnaitė, 2015b, p. 71), but also under what conditions that hostility of identities could change or be transformed or even eliminated?

From this perspective, one interesting thing can be noticed in the insights of almost all researchers. Whatever the basic theoretical postulates (geopolitical or constructivist) one or another researcher follows, each of them touches upon the subject of recognition in one way or another and captures the fact that both sides of the disagreement refuse to recognise what is important to the other side. Most often, those disagreements primarily concern the interpretation of past events. For example, Russia refuses to recognise the fact of Lithuania’s occupation and dismisses the related claim for damages. In turn, Lithuania refuses to recognise the importance and show respect to the commemoration of the victory of the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany on May 9, which has been very prominent in recent decades. And those acts of non-recognition concern not only history but the present. Lithuania does not recognise the legitimacy of the annexation of Crimea or Russian-sponsored Abkhazian and South Ossetian independences. Meanwhile, some Russian political figures generally suggest that the legal recognition of the Baltic states be reviewed or withdrawn altogether. True, Moscow’s official position is different, however, the development and promotion of such ideas is probably not accidental.

In other words, researchers almost universally agree that relations between Lithuania and Russia are bad to a large extent because one side or the other does not recognise something (different geopolitical interests or different identities). However, this is usually acknowledged by the authors as given, and the phenomenon of recognition itself is not discussed in detail. Therefore, in this case it is worth asking, but what does it really mean to recognise or not to recognise something? When do the parties recognise each other? How do countries that recognise each other, nevertheless, do not recognise something? Is it possible to talk about the level and quality of recognition? How does (non) recognition interact with the quality of interstate relations? Can changes in the existing recognition regime also affect the quality of the relationship?

Therefore, the article originally takes a closer look at the very phenomena of recognition in international relations and the theories explaining it. Later, we will

return to Lithuania-Russia relations. They will be reviewed from this perspective with the aim of clarifying its relation to the quality of the interstate relationship.

## 2. Theory of Recognition in International Relations

Until recently, in international relations studies, recognition of states is frequently understood excessively formally and in simplistic terms as a one-off political decision that, once made, is very rarely ever withdrawn.

On the one hand, though it is a political decision, but in its form, it is a legal act. Therefore, the problems of recognition have been the focus among international law scholars. The main problem, which has been discussed in law research circles, was a question of recognition criteria for new states, i.e. the criteria by which a political entity may be recognised on the basis of the proclaimed state. Two schools were formed: declarative and constitutive (Lauterpacht, 1947) (Menon, 1994). Essentially, they argued about who creates the state – events in the entity on earth, or the very fact of recognition, because without recognition, the entity with all criteria will still not be a state.

For a long time, this debate seemed to be a formalism of low interest for international relations theory, since for international relations theory states are unquestionably given. What was more important to traditional theory was not how states emerge, but how they interact. On the other hand, it would not be fair to say that this sub-theme has been completely eliminated in international political studies. Although the recognition of new states is a legal act, but it is up to politicians to decide on it. It's easy to imagine that politicians consult lawyers on recognition criteria; however, it would be difficult to believe that they make their decision solely on the basis of the lawyers' opinion. Politicians undoubtedly also take into account the interests of their nation, geopolitics, security, economy and positions of other countries. There are many cases in history where states are concerned not only with their own interests but also with the stability of the international system as a whole, so they even coordinate and harmonise their decisions on the recognition of new states. (Fabry, 2010) (Coggins, 2014). Non-recognition or Recognition can equally be a means of competing between states and fighting for influence and power. Finally, nowadays, decisions of states to recognise new political entities as states are also increasingly influenced by humanitarian moral aspects, especially when legal recognition allows for the de-escalation or termination of conflicts.

Therefore, it can be said and not only in the context of law but also in the context of international relations studies there are theories explaining the recognition of states. On the one hand, they are based on versions formulated by lawyers, but gives realistic/conservative or liberal/idealistic interpretations, respectively. Realistic will be closer to the declarative and liberal – to the constitutive theories. But, of course, there is no consensus, because international relations are not about formal criteria, but about explaining the motivation behind political decisions. However, in any way, the problem of recognition studies in international relations studies remained peripheral, because its object is quite narrow – political entities without

recognition and aspirations. As one might know, the problem of “unrecognised” states (Österud, 1997) (Caspersen, 2008) cannot compare in its importance with research on the politics and relations of the major political actors. Finally, it is nothing strange that the theory of recognition thus understood has little to say about Lithuanian-Russian relations or rather the cause of their poor quality.

However today, research on the issue of recognition is no longer confined to such a narrow traditional concept. Already at the end of the last century, along with the constructivist turn in the study of international relations, a much broader concept of recognition began to emerge, which first came to the study of international relations from Hegel’s philosophy. Hegel, in his book “Phänomenologie des Geistes” (Hegel, 1807/1997), developed the intersubjective ontology of human nature from his predecessor, Fichte (Fichte, 1800 / 1982). Hegel, based on another idea formulated by Aristotle that a human is a social being, emphasises the significance of personality recognition, or, more precisely, its struggle for recognition. The basic idea of Hegel is that, namely by interacting and recognising each other, the self-consciousness of individuals acquires their own self and freedom. Conversely, if the struggle for recognition of self-awareness is unsuccessful, its freedom and wholeness are denied (McQueen, 2019).

This philosophical idea of Hegel is not only philosophical, but has its social as well and the political dimension. For example, it is fully reflected in the problems of modern “unrecognised states”, and in the debate on theories of declarative and constitutive recognition of states. For political entities who believe they are all who seek to become states, it is vital to obtain the recognition of other states. Meanwhile, the failure of recognition aspirations means a qualitatively inferior lifestyle and the inability to enjoy many privileges provided by full membership of the international community. Therefore, constructivist international political sociology unlike theories of international law and international relations, looked at the phenomenon of cross-border recognition more broadly. Constructivism has directed the problem of recognition research its role in the birth/death of states, its importance for the overall survival of the states, to the quality of their relationship. By the way, this turning point was discussed in detail and presented at an international symposium published in *the Journal of International Theory* (2013, 5 (1)).

It even allowed for the development of an alternative to the traditional theory of international relations, at the centre of which is the constant “Hegelian” struggle of states for recognition. Its outlines, drawing on the work of previous theorists, were persuasively outlined by Eric Ringmar (Ringmar, 2002) (Ringmar, 2010). According to him, traditional interpretations of relations between states (realism or liberalism) are often problematic because “matters of interests and pay insufficient attention to matters of identities” (Ringmar, 2002, p. 115). Meanwhile, if, according to him, we were to rely on a different “non-rationalist, interpretation of the fundamental logic of world politics”, we would find that states are, in fact, concerned not only with their “national interests” but, above all, the establishment of their own identity for themselves, “according to this logic, states not only pursue their ‘national interest’, but also — and before anything else — they seek to establish identities

for themselves. In fact, questions regarding a state's identity must always be more fundamental than questions regarding its interests” (Ringmar, 2002, p. 116).

Identity is more important than many other things, because without it, people wouldn't know who they are. However, constructing an identity is not always an easy thing to do. Sometimes it turns into a real struggle because it takes at least two steps to overcome. First, it is up to them to decide for themselves who they are. Secondly, it is necessary for other people to recognise this created identity as such, not as something different. This applies not only to separate individuals, but also to states which, as collective beings, would not exist if, on the one hand, they did not define their identities and, on the other, they did not seek to be recognised as such by others.

If countries conditionally can be compared to individuals, then the formation of their identities can be understood by drawing on the same intellectual tools, which are interpreted by the formation of identities of personalities. According to Hegel in “Phänomenologie des Geistes”, it can be understood as personal narratives/narratives about oneself. Collective entities, like states, are first and foremost communities of narrators who construct and possibly believe in a narrative or stories about themselves. But that is not enough, because narrators don't know if their visions are right or wrong, are persuasive or disturbing. Therefore, the second step is needed – to tell your narratives to others and find out their reaction. And only if others believe it and admit it, only then can it be said that the identity of the state will be established.

Therefore, according to this theory, global politics can be conceptualised not as a race for power (realism) or a race for wealth (liberalism), but as a perpetual and never-ending struggle for recognition. In this context, the legal recognition of the state is that it is a very important, but nevertheless just one narrow aspect or element of the fight for recognition. Indeed, the struggle for recognition is perpetually and not only in legal terms, but also in all other political, social, ideological and even psychological aspects. For states, the fostering and renewal of their identities and seeking recognition is an ongoing process of exceptional importance.

The introduction of such a concept of broader recognition in the course of international relations has led not only to the taking of empirical research on the grounds of recognition, practitioners and dynamics of specific states, but also to further develop the recognition in the international relations theory that would go beyond the frames of narrow legal declaratory and constitutive theories or political realism and liberalism debates (Agné, Bartelson, Erman, Lindemann, & Herboy, 2013).

The aim was primarily to respond to the need for a more detailed classification of recognition manifestations. In considering the inevitability of the global state, Alexander Wendt distinguished between formal and comprehensive recognition, describing them with the picturesque epithetuses of *thin* and *thick* recognitions. The recognition of *thin* is essentially a formal recognition of equality and autonomy within a defined community. In this case, one state recognises another as a separate and independent entity – but not more. Everything else is *thick* recognition. It means that one state recognises the extraordinary, specific character, uniqueness;



this is a property of the other state (Wendt, 2003, pp. 511-512). Accordingly, Wendt notes that the struggle for *thin* recognition always has a clear purpose and an easily identifiable end, if the states seeking formal recognition finally receive it. Something else is *thick* recognition, which has no well-defined purpose. Therefore, the struggle for recognition is permanent and everlasting, because the identity itself is constantly in a state of change and in interaction with the other identities. Therefore, the recognition of *thick* is volatile and constantly evolving, difficult to measure and constantly redefined, but always highly desirable (Wendt, 2003, pp. 511-512).

Ringmar, in his own way, concretised the expression of this form of recognition, distinguishing four basic wishes posed by states seeking *thick* recognition – they want that their narratives are presented about (1) attention, (2) respect, (3) diversity and (4) recognition of affiliations. Respectively, according to Ringmar, in the face of disapproval, there are three ways to react. The first option is to accept criticism, to acknowledge that those around us are right and we are not in fact what we are. States usually take that step after losing wars or other terrible events. Then they rethink themselves, raising new narratives and performing image rebranding. Secondly, it is possible to seek recognition by re-adopting the criticism, but without changing the basic idea of reforming its image, for example, to undertake economic reforms, to reform the political system, to release political prisoners, etc. Finally, the third one can continue to follow the old image, but also to take new measures to make the recognition and critics will be forced to change their opinion. In interpersonal relationships, using force can do little to help, but in interstate, it has a greater chance of success and is therefore more frequently used – and often very successful, because no one judges or criticises the winners (Ringmar, 2010, pp. 7-8).

The problem of recognition thus understood in the academic literature is now widely studied. For example, the fact that *thick* recognition is directly linked to the quality of relations between states has been highlighted by Lindemann. In his book, “Causes of War”, he showed that the cause of the war may be non-recognition, which is defined as an attack (imaginary or real) directed against the state’s created own image (Lindemann, 2010). In turn, Lisa Strömbom (2014) and Karl Gustaffson (2016) explored the interesting idea of how gradual implementation of *thick* recognition can help resolve protracted conflicts. However, it has not been possible to detect analysis of the Lithuanian or Baltic relations with Russia from this perspective. Therefore, given the heuristic potential of this concept, further attempts will be made to see the causes of the poor quality of Lithuanian-Russian relations by assessing their state of mutual (*thick*) recognition.

### **3. *Thick* Recognition in Lithuanian-Russian Relations**

As we have already noticed, the notion of recognition/non-recognition often resonates in the works of Lithuanian-Russian relations researchers. However, it did not receive particular attention because the emphasis was primarily on the fact that the parties’ interests or identities conflict and try to deny each other. The



question that attracted most of the researcher’s attention was how to deal with this situation.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of recognition theory, this situation can be described as the refusal of the parties to grant each other thick recognition. In other words, the poor relations between Lithuania and Russia can be explained by the fact that both sides do not recognise more than they recognise each other’s identities. In the current situation, it would be difficult to talk about total non-recognition. Lithuania and Russia formally recognise each other as subjects of international law, maintain diplomatic and economic relations, but not more. Mutual recognition is very *thin*. Meanwhile, such elements of thick recognition as attention and respect for different identities are rudimentary and increasingly fading. The countries not only cultivate identities that are not only different, but they also deny each other are logically incompatible and provoke indignation and protests. For example, Russia salutes and celebrates the liberation of Vilnius and Kaunas from the Nazis; meanwhile, Lithuania is angry and protesting. Lithuania solemnly buries partisan commander Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, and threats of reprisals from Moscow are heard. It is not surprising, therefore, that in this context, ideas and suggestions arise to withdraw even “formal” recognition. While Lithuania has never considered this idea, but some members of the Russian Duma were recently proposing to withdraw recognition of the Baltic states. However, Lithuania retaliated – Lithuania’s President Grybauskaitė called Russia a ‘terrorist state’ etc.

On the other hand, there is no need to let go of the fact that identity/self is not a variable affixed once and for all. These are not material variables (territory, population, economic capacity or size of the armed forces), which are relatively stable. Identities, whatever fixed and clear they are, are much more volatile and can change very quickly as they respond to other identities. Theoretically, it is possible that hostile identities can flip in just over a day. It is only enough for one of interacting parties to raise the elements, not dividing but uniting the identities.

Well-known is the example of Mikhail Gorbachev, showing how it is possible to end the Cold War and change the international system by purposefully modifying some elements of identity. There are more examples of reconciliation between nations and states. For example, French-German, German-Polish reconciliation, which became the political foundation of European integration. These reconciliations actually made for a very complex operation politically, but very simple in theory – changing the mode of mutual recognition of identities. However, when analysing the relations between Russia and Lithuania, these examples may not be the most appropriate, as more or less comparable sizes occur. On the other hand, examples of reconciliation can also be found in asymmetric relationships, which usually receive less attention. The most striking example here is Ireland and the United Kingdom. However, it took some time – the first official visit of Queen Elizabeth II of the UK to Ireland after the announcement of independence in 1922 only happened in 2011 (!).

Finally, there are moments in the Lithuanian-Russian relations where a kind of discourse has been cultivated different than now, when several high-level political

meetings have taken place. From this point of view, the official speeches or other statements that should have been drafted in such a way as to humiliate neither oneself nor others are particularly interesting. These sparse summits between the top political leaders of Lithuania and Russia, and the speeches and accompanying discourse being developed during them, are an important source for identifying possible manifestations of *thick* recognition in bilateral relations. Demonstrating *thick* recognition in such cases is simply inevitable, because otherwise such visits would be not possible at all.

Three such cases will be discussed below: 1) Vytautas Landsbergis' visit to Moscow on 29 July 1991 and a meeting with Boris Yeltsin, the then President of the then Russian Soviet Socialist Federal Republic (RSFSR). During that visit, Lithuania and the RSFSR signed the "Agreement on the Foundations of Interstate Relations"; 2) The official three-day visit of President of Lithuania Algirdas Brazauskas to Moscow on 24-26 October 1997, during which Brazauskas and Yeltsin signed agreements between Lithuania and Russia on the delimitation of the state border and the delimitation of the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf in the Baltic Sea; 3) The official three-day visit of President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus to Russia on March 29-31, 2001, including negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and visiting St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad. No new contracts were signed during the visit; however, a joint statement by Russia and Lithuania was issued.

### 3.1. Vytautas Landsbergis' visit to Moscow in 1991

The official meeting between Vytautas Landsbergis and Boris Yeltsin on July 29, 1991 was, without a doubt, an exceptional event in the history of bilateral relations. First of all, because of the agreement "On establishing the fundamentals of mutual international relations" establishing mutual international recognition. The text of the agreement contains abundant provisions establishing mutual equality and mutual respect between the parties and a commitment to mutually beneficial cooperation. However, the visit of the Lithuanian delegation was and continues to be interesting, as the expression of *thick* recognition in the speeches made by the leaders during the signing of the agreement.

Two aspects of the relationship were particularly emphasised in Yeltsin's speech. On the one hand, Lithuania and Russia are connected by a deep historical tradition of close mutual relations, full of everything. As examples of good practice, Yeltsin has used the following personalities to reflect these links: "... Ivan Fyodorov, the great pioneer of the Russian press, worked on Lithuanian soil. Creative and political activity of Lithuanian poet Jurgis Baltrušaitis is related to Russia..." (Lietuvos aidas, 1991a). On the sad historical events, Yeltsin was laconic: "... the relationship between our nations dates back to the distant ages. It seems that everything that could have happened between us has already happened. But sometimes it seems to me: the most important, most interesting, meaningful times in the lives of our nations are just beginning. Few countries have such a complicated history like ours; few could withstand what our compatriots had to endure. By signing the contract,

we are opening a whole new page of our relationship... (Lietuvos aidas, 1991a)”.

As it was already mentioned, disagreements over historical assessments, a refusal to recognise each other’s deliverable versions is one of the main causes of conflict. However, the wording chosen for the Yeltsin’s speech seems to solve the problem relatively easily, because their content is, in principle, acceptable to both sides, whatever they think of the historical past. On the one hand, it does not directly acknowledge that there have been many wrong things, but on the other hand, it emphasises the vector of the future, because only the future will have any real meaning.

In the much shorter Landsbergian answering speech, there were no sensitive historical tours. However, from the perspective of the *thick* recognition theory, the interesting emphasis of the speaker on Russia’s special importance, or even a peculiar mission, is striking. Landsbergis said: “The agreement between Russia and Lithuania is of great significance, of fundamental importance to the two countries. But its meaning is wider; it goes beyond the scope of the bilateral agreement. Let Russia be a good example for other states not only with regard to Lithuania (which we are naturally also interested in), but in principle, let it be a good example of how to go into the future, into the world, where there will be more justice, hope and kindness to each other...” (Lietuvos aidas, 1991b).

Given the propensity of Russia’s identity as a great state to feel more important or better than others, a guide of sorts to others with a special mission, this was an interesting attempt. On the one hand, it shows proper respect for Russia and recognises its special role. On the other hand, given the birth of the new Russia, the aim is to cautiously prompt to it what the purpose and content of its new mission might be.

Of course, this small episode could have happened at all only because of the extraordinary situation in which Lithuania and Russia became strategic allies in the fight against the still-adherent central government of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, it demonstrates these forms of interaction and speaking practices, which can potentially be adapted to changes in the political climate.

### **3.2. Visit by President Algirdas Brazauskas to Moscow in 1997**

It was an important visit – the first visit of the Baltic Head of State to Moscow after the collapse of the USSR, during which a long negotiated and very important agreement between the parties was to be signed on the delimitation of the state border and exclusive economic zones and the delimitation of the continental shelf in the Baltic Sea. Lithuania was the first of all the former Soviet republics to negotiate such an agreement with Russia. Interestingly, although this visit was very important and he received a lot of attention from the media in Lithuania, Russia and neighbouring countries, there is practically no available archival documentation that reflects important details of this visit. Therefore, first of all, we have to rely solely on journalist reports.

The visit was difficult and controversial, because the attitude of the Russian side was quite ambiguous. According to the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*,

it was a slap to the face that the Lithuanian President was not greeted at the airport by high-ranking officials, but by the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Protocol of the Russian Presidential Administration. On the other hand, reception in the Kremlin was warm and the planned signing of the agreement went smoothly. According to *Lietuvos Rytas*, “a statement by B. Yeltsin that Russia is the guarantor of the security of Lithuania and the other Baltic states, and even ready to defend them from attackers, briefly confused A. Brazauskas” (*Lietuvos rytas*, 1997). However, at the same time, the Russian side prepared the main surprise for the Lithuanian side. Yeltsin said that Lithuania should not expect any surprises from Russia. “And if Lithuania is in any danger, that country will have to deal with us.” In addition, Yeltsin did not limit himself to a verbal statement, but gave Brazauskas a signed statement, which was also to be forwarded to the Presidents of Latvia and Estonia. In a brief press conference later, President Yeltsin did not specify which countries in his opinion were threatening Lithuania’s security. “I don’t know it, President Algirdas Brazauskas knows it better. We will guard against anything the Lithuanian leadership will ask for” (BNA, LA, 1997).

The analysis of the text of the Russian presidential statement, which, incidentally, was not published in Lithuania, shows that the document affirms that Russia has an interest in the security and stability of its Baltic neighbours, as it has an interest among all the others in the Baltic states that the Russians living in peace have a peaceful and quiet life; that Russia treats Lithuania and the other Baltic states as neighbouring countries with whom they want to have closer economic, commercial, transport, energy and other relationships. Russia is therefore ready to provide the Baltic states unilateral security guarantees, which could still be reinforced with the accession of other countries or with a regional security pact and confidence-building measures (Prezident Rossijskoj Federacii, 1997).

Undoubtedly, even the untrained eye at first glance, in this flawless statement, could see a diplomatic trick to engage in the security policy of the Baltic states in such a way and to play if not decisive, then is at least a significant role in it. Therefore, from the theoretical point of view of *thick* recognition, Brazauskas had a difficult task indeed, to evaluate and respond appropriately to this controversial statement, to politely decline the service that is still politely but nevertheless quite persistently offered. Bearing in mind the historical experience of Lithuania with the Soviet Union guarantees already received in 1939 and the country’s strategic self-determination to achieve security integration into NATO and the European Union, this Russia proposal was in principle unacceptable. On the other hand, the maintenance of good neighbourly relations, the demonstration of respect for the partner in the warm relations with the Russian President, Yeltsin, i.e. all important intertwined elements of the Russian *thick* recognition made direct, open and categorical rejection of the offer impossible. Judging from press releases, Brazauskas got out of the situation, choosing diplomatic omission. He did not respond at the press conference about how he evaluates the Russian proposal. According to him, “security is on the agenda of every state, and Lithuania, like other states, has suffered much in this century” (Prezident Rossijskoj Federacii, 1997). Later, in Lithuania, commenting on the outcome of the visit at the press

conference, the Lithuanian leader said that the form of Yeltsin's statement on Russia's security guarantees to Lithuania has been unexpected. “I can't tell you how we will continue, but such an offer cannot be forgotten.” Brazauskas stressed that the formulations mentioned in the statement of the Russian leader did not mean that Lithuania was abandoning its foreign policy – membership of the European Union and NATO. “We are looking for security guarantees not only from the West but also from our Eastern neighbours. It is natural and logical” (Sakalauskaitė, 1997). Brazauskas stated that he does not think that Yeltsin's offer should be rejected immediately, without delving deeper into its substance and examining its consequences. On this occasion Brazauskas, at the same time, critically commented on his political opponents, who reproached him because of the too moderate reaction to the suggestion of Russia: “Some Lithuanian politicians have already managed to reject the Russian leader's statement with one sweep of the hand without even knowing what it says”, adding “that this approach to politics is not acceptable” to him (Lietuvos rytas, 1997). Finally, Brazauskas pointed out that that statement was addressed to all Presidents of the Baltic states, therefore, he will meet with Latvian and Estonian leaders in the near future and the Russian proposal will be considered.

This is how Brazauskas dealt with a rather difficult task – on the one hand, to maintain and demonstrate a respectful attitude towards Russia, recognise its importance and influence. And at the same time, on the other hand, avoid the “gifts” offered. As can be seen in Brazauskas' speech, a compromise can be heard, but the decision is delayed, by smartly using the fact that it is a proposal not only for Lithuania but for the other Baltic states. This provided the opportunity to delay the final answer and eventually “defuse” it in order to avoid open and direct “rejection” of the services offered by Russia. In exchange, Brazauskas emphasised the importance of economic cooperation and constantly stressed Russia is an important economic partner for Lithuania. This is how Brazauskas first “recognised” Russia as a key economic partner, but politely yet persistently ignored Russia's idea to become the patron saint of the Baltic states and “guarantor of security”.

Thus, the identities that were mutually recognised during this visit were quite different, but nonetheless politicians were successful in managing to find touchpoints and avoiding escalating those differences.

### **3.3. Visit by President Valdas Adamkus to Moscow in 2001**

The last official meeting of the Presidents of Lithuania and Russia took place in 2001. The then Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus met in Moscow Vladimir Putin, who then was the president of Russia for just one more year.

The image of Russia, painted by Adamkus in his official remarks, had particularly attractive features. Adamkus has not spared good words about Russia, and its President and did not avoid the many signs of demonstration of recognition and respect, just as it is appropriate for the guest. In his speech at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Adamkus called Russia “free,



independent and new”, regretting he does not speak Russian, emphasised the support of democratic Russia to Lithuania and the importance of the masterpieces of 20th-century Russian literature such as Mikhail Bulgakov, Anna Akhmatova, Joseph Brodsky, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and other writers who then became widely available after the collapse of the totalitarian system. Finally, Adamkus, in explaining Lithuania’s decision to seek NATO membership, even expressed the belief that “NATO’s door is not and will not be closed to Russia” (Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentas, 2001a). While visiting the Kremlin, Adamkus told Putin that “Your steps in building the democratic process in Russia is an example to follow for all those who care about the future of Europe” (Sakalauskaitė, 2001). In his toast at the official lunch, Adamkus called Russia a “great country”, “never ceasing to be one of the main trading partners” (Lietuvos Respublikos Prezidentas, 2001b).

It is not known what Putin talked about when he met Adamkus and the Lithuanian delegation. In a public statement by the Russian president, the conversation sounded much more moderate; however, the emphasis was nevertheless on the positive. Putin’s statement to the press was very positive about the policy of granting Lithuanian citizenship to the Russian-speaking population. Also, it was recognised that there are large unused reserves and opportunities in the area of economic cooperation. It was acknowledged that Lithuanian membership in the European Union will cause additional problems, but they can all be solved through cooperation both directly with the European Union and with Lithuania. Optimism was also expressed regarding the Kaliningrad transit issues. Finally, differences in views were noted regarding NATO enlargement, but the right of each country to choose its own security policy priorities has been acknowledged. And in general, Putin summarised in his brief statement that there are more areas where opinions and positions overlap than those where they do not (President of Russia, 2001).

No new treaties were signed during the visit; however, a joint statement by the President of the Republic of Lithuania and the President of the Russian Federation was prepared and signed. That statement contains important wording on the security policy of the countries: “The Parties recognise the right of each state to choose its own paths of security while committing itself not to enhance its own security at the expense of the security of other states” (Sovmestnoe rossijsko-litovskoe zajavlenie, 2001). The wording is a compromise, concealing different opportunities of interpretations, but it nevertheless proved acceptable to both sides.

Thus, what happened during this visit was difficult to attribute to hostile and incompatible relationships. One side gave the other side at least a minimal recognition of each other’s uniqueness and distinctiveness. In this sense, Adamkus, from the media point of view, may have even slightly overstepped it (Sakalauskaitė, 2001), but such things are difficult to measure. In other words, the relationship between the two countries during the visit should be regarded as reasonably normal pragmatic communication. Nothing special. However, in the context of the further development of the relationship, such communication later became almost exotic. According to the testimony of the former president Dalia Grybauskaitė, her last encounter with the actual Russian leader Putin, then



the prime minister, in 2010 in Helsinki, was already marked by an exceptional demonstration of disrespect (Ulbinaitė, 2019, pp. 239-244) and prevented further pragmatic and mutually beneficial cooperation. One possible answer to why this might have happened is that both sides have lost even the slightest desire to give each other at least some signs of *thick* recognition.

## Conclusions

This brief overview of three episodes of Lithuanian-Russian pragmatic cooperation at the highest level shows that, despite the very large differences between the identities, the complex historical past and serious disagreements, interaction or even cooperation between the countries is nonetheless possible. Identities are and will be different. However, they are very broad, so the points of overlap and mutually acceptable assessments at the desired and political will can always be traced. Therefore, it is worth repeating: there is no need to forget that identity/self is not a variable fixed once and for all. These are not material variables (territory, population, economic capacity or size of the armed forces), which are relatively stable. Identities, whatever fixed and clear they are, are much more volatile and can change very quickly as they respond to other identities. Theoretically, it is possible that hostile identities can flip in just over a day. It is only enough for one of interacting parties to raise the concept of not dividing but uniting the identities.

Therefore, from the theoretical point of view, there are no objectively insurmountable obstacles that would prevent Lithuanian-Russian relations from being transferred from a “critical” to a more “pragmatic” mood. It is just a matter of subjective attitudes, of the will of the living people, of political leaders, and of self-determination. Just like in Europe, different approaches to Russia are expressed. These different approaches – “pragmatic” and “critical” - are not the result of reinforced concrete construction, but rather the result of speaking and practicing of *thick* recognition practices. Therefore, although at first glance the relations between Lithuania and Russia is a diplomatic aporia, i.e. an insoluble task, because cherished identities simply deny each other. However, it should also be noted that although aporias cannot be resolved by logical reasoning, they can be resolved by active and determined action.

All we have to do is remember how the Cold War was almost completed in one go. Here, too, one can imagine a hypothetical situation that, one day, politicians come to power in Lithuania and Russia, who, without major problems, merely normalise relations between the countries by relying solely on political will to end gun fighting, economic sanctions, “war of words” etc. In this case, probably many or even all observers of Lithuanian–Russian relations would say that it’s a beautiful fantasy, but for a thousand reasons it could not be implemented. However, scarce examples of cooperation between Lithuania and Russia at the highest level show that, in fact, there are no objective obstacles to this. The essence of the matter – in the form of a proper *thick* recognition/mode that doesn’t just talk about each other, but also makes the choice to talk to each other.

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## THREATS OF PROPAGANDA AND THE INFORMATION WAR ON LITHUANIAN SECURITY

Viktor Denisenko\*

### Introduction

National security is a complex issue consisting of different elements. The conventional military level occupies an essential position among these elements; however, it can be noted that the importance of other elements has grown rapidly in recent decades. Today, it is natural to discuss the different types of security and their interrelationships. Alongside conventional threats, threats related to the security of information, cybersecurity, energy security, etc. are widely mentioned.

This text is intended to analyse threats that Lithuania is facing an information war, with particular emphasis on the challenge of propaganda, which is direct and realistic. It should be noted that threats to information are difficult to quantify because of differing perspectives on what is meant. *Information security* in itself is a phenomenon, which can be divided into several categories. In other words, the term of information security can be interpreted as an endeavour.

In terms of essential subtypes of information security, cyber security is understood as technological, in terms of the country's critical information infrastructure and its protection. Psychological security is understood as the need to protect their information space (public sphere) from harmful effects, i.e. from propaganda narratives and a flow of fake news.

Here it must be stated that dealing with "information wars" so much can be said about cyber warfare, so much about the psychological warfare. It is assumed that different states give priority and different types of "information warfare" and relevant security matters. For example, according to Nerius Maliukevičius, the US focuses more on the "cyber" dimension of the information war, whereas Russia focuses more on psychological warfare (Maliukevičius, 2002). However, it seems that today these differences are gradually disappearing. Consequently, it becomes clear that in reality, these types of information warfare may interact and complement each other.

It is necessary to point out that the challenge of information warfare is of great importance to Lithuania (and other countries in the region), because they are directly confronting this issue. For this reason, the issue of information security cannot be ignored – it must be accepted as an integral part of the overall national security of the country. Quite often, challenges in the information sphere are interpreted as phenomena, which pose only an indirect threat to national security; however, such an approach is too narrow. The events in Ukraine in 2014 (annexation of Crimea,

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separatism in the Donbass region) made it clear that information operations are an integral part of modern warfare. It is also worth mentioning that the impact of information war can be compared to that of radiation effects – the latter acts imperceptibly, but the consequences of its dissemination are critical. Just like the long-term effects of propaganda and misinformation changes the attitudes of society, forcing citizens to make wrong decisions (based on misinformation), destroy social connections etc. As for the military sphere – hostile propaganda seeks to undermine people’s will to resist military aggression, weakens support to the military among citizens, seeks to spread doubts among the military, affect their value system etc.

Among the fundamental dilemmas in the field of information security, the question also remains of how to respond correctly to current challenges, how to ensure the security of the information space, when and in what way one can prohibit propaganda, hostile information, and when does it begin to threaten freedom of expression and the democratic functioning of the state? Finding the right answers to these questions is not easy, since they cover not only the military but also the social and political spheres. Also, in this area it is difficult to formulate a universal answer to all the questions, because clear advice on how to respond in one case or another can be determined by the nuances of each specific situation.

## **1. Concerns about information warfare**

Concerns about information security (among others, in terms of security) and a clear understanding of the challenges in this area can be named among the strengths of Lithuania. The importance of information security is not questioned, and this topic is also reflected in the main documents.

For example, information security is explicitly mentioned in the National Security Strategy adopted in (National Security Strategy, 2017). Incidentally, information security is also mentioned in earlier versions of the Strategy. It is acknowledged among the primary national security interests of Lithuania and is one of the elements that ensure sustainability of state development, together with other security considerations – such as economic, energetic, environmental, cyber, or social security (Chapter II, item 12.3 of the Strategy).

Information threats to Lithuanian national security are clearly defined in a separate paragraph of the document (Chapter IV, item 14.6 of the Strategy). They are seen in the strategy as follows:

*Information threats* – war propaganda by some state and non-state actors, incitement of war and hatred, attempts to distort historical memory and other unreasonable and misleading information directed against national security interests of the Republic of Lithuania, which promotes mistrust and dissatisfaction with the Lithuanian state and its institutions, democratic order, national defence, aims to fuel national and cultural divides, weaken national identity and the attitude of citizenship, attempts to discredit Lithuania’s membership in NATO, NATO capabilities and commitment to defend allies, weaken the determination of citizens to defend their state, also information activities, aimed at influencing the country’s democratic, electoral processes, for the party system or anything that

targets public and policymakers of other EU and NATO member states, seeking solutions unfavourable to the Republic of Lithuania.

It must be emphasised that cyber threats are singled out in the Strategy as a separate element (Chapter IV, item 14.7 of the Strategy). It demonstrates that in this paper, information threats are primarily understood as factors in the psychological information domain (open or covert intervention in the so-called public sphere) – an attempt to influence the attitudes of Lithuanian society by means of propaganda.

Special attention to the field of information security, as an integral part of national security, and annual public reports on the assessment of threats to national security, which, since 2013, have been prepared by the Lithuanian State Security Department (as of 2015, these reports are being prepared in conjunction with the Second Operational Department under the Ministry of National Defence). The aforementioned reports:

It is necessary to mention that and the National Security Strategy explicitly states that currently, “aggressive actions by the Russian Federation” pose a great threat to Lithuania’s security (Chapter II, item 8 of the Strategy). It is noted that it is a significant source of destabilisation and danger both in the short-term as well as in the long run.

It should be emphasised that Lithuanian security (including information security) cannot be analysed without a broader context, in terms of processes in the region or even across the European continent. Obviously, a special event that also raises information security challenges, was the Russia’s annexation of the Ukrainian Crimean peninsula in spring 2014 and subsequent events in the Donbass region.

In the scientific world, it has become customary to describe the events in Ukraine in 2014 using the term “hybrid war”. The term itself is controversial – for example, Latvian researcher Janis Berzinš (2015) states that hybrid war is not a new phenomenon, as it is sometimes positioned. Similar operations, as that experienced by Ukraine, were prominent in military history also earlier. In this case, the dispute over definitions is irrelevant. It is more important to emphasise that the events of the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the destabilisation of the Donbass situation demonstrated that information warfare can be an effective aid in conditions of real aggression. In the above case, the Kremlin has created a specific narrative to support and justify its actions or even a virtual (propaganda) view of reality – portraying the so-called “little green men” as local self-defence units, creating scary stories about “Banderovtsy seizing power in Kiev” etc. (Darczewska, 2014).

The propaganda narratives used by the Kremlin against Ukraine in 2014 and beyond cannot be called extremely new and original. They are in line with the principles of propaganda used against Ukraine in the past. In 2014, these narratives were simply updated and adapted to the situation. By the way, the similarities between those narratives and the propaganda narratives the Kremlin is targeting the Baltic States can be discerned – structurally, such narratives are similar: they focus primarily on aspects of historical memory, also issues the geopolitical orientation chosen by Ukraine and the Baltic States, seeking to discredit power

and authorities, state institutions etc.<sup>26</sup>

As mentioned, the events of 2014 have become a strong signal to the entire region. This is not a specific challenge for Lithuania alone; however, Lithuania's security in this case must be seen in the context of the common European security.

Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine and their possible spread to other countries was also forced to respond by international organisations. This reaction has clear links also with Lithuania's security issues. For instance, NATO made a decision to deploy the forefront battalion combat forces in the Baltic States and Poland. This move cannot be interpreted as merely strengthening a defence infrastructure but also as a kind of communication act. The deployment of these forces is a message to Russia, communicating NATO's determination to meet its responsibilities.

Another important international response to the challenges of information warfare and propaganda in the context of information security became the European Parliament resolution of November 2016 on EU strategic communication to counter third country propaganda directed against it (Report on EU Strategic Communication..., 2016). This document is important, because it clearly identifies those "third parties" who need promote propaganda against the European Union. There are basically just two "parties" responsible – the terrorist organisation DAESH and Russia. Essentially, this resolution officially speaks of "information warfare" against the Western world (and Lithuania as part of this world) exercised by the current Russian government.

In summary, it can be said that concerns about information security in the West have intensified precisely after the events of 2014 in Ukraine. The international response to a named challenge is primarily related to these events. In Lithuania, attention to information security challenges was noticeable in the past. First of all, it was related to the experience of Lithuania and its neighbours.

The 2007 turmoil in Estonia became a significant event in the Baltic States, related to the relocation of the monument to Soviet soldiers – the so-called Bronze Soldier – from the centre of Tallinn to the Military Cemetery. These events were accompanied by a wide range of information warfare tools, applied by Moscow: propaganda measures, strengthening the gap in Estonian society, incitement to unrest, cyber-attacks on the websites of Estonian authorities.

Lithuania also has a similar information aggression experience. For example, when in 2008 the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania legally compared Nazi and Soviet symbolism and banned their public display, Lithuania also received both propaganda and cyber-attacks. From Moscow's side, accusations were made against Vilnius for "rewriting history". At that time, the Lithuanian Internet sector was also attacked; some official and commercial Lithuanian websites were hacked, where the home page image was replaced with a depiction of Soviet symbolism.

This way, a topic of the variety of information aggression, its prevention and responses to it is not new to Lithuania. Concern for this challenge stems from the previous experience and observable trends affecting the entire region.

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<sup>26</sup> A comparison of the narratives used against Ukraine and the Baltic States can be found in the article of the author of this text "Similarities and Differences between Kremlin Propaganda Matrices Applied to the Baltic States and Ukraine" (Denisenko, 2016a).

## 2. Lithuania in the field of information warfare

The information war has several specific aspects. First of all, that war is not officially declared, it is harder to identify – the aggressor may deny engaging in information warfare actions; he will seek to conceal them or present them as a different phenomenon (for example, presentation of an alternative viewpoint of events). Also, the state may be involved in information war regardless of one's position. Simply put – if the country fails to perform any action which can be attributed to the sphere of information warfare, including defensive steps – this does not mean that it is not the subject of an information war. In other words, it is virtually impossible to remain neutral in an information war situation. Aggressive actions of one country in the information space against another state automatically involve the latter to the information warfare field. This is exactly what happened to Lithuania, which, against its will, became the subject of an information war.

It is more difficult to answer the question of when Lithuania was involved in information war. It can be argued that the country faced sudden targeted propaganda, offensive in fact, immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union<sup>27</sup>. The attack was primarily related to the Russian Federation's efforts to maintain influence in the post-Soviet space to keep the former Soviet republics in the geopolitical gravity field of Moscow. Resistance of Lithuania and other Baltic States to this endeavour, a different choice of vector for foreign and integrative politics largely caused the Kremlin dissatisfaction and a corresponding reaction in the information space.

Moscow used and still uses several standard narratives against Lithuania (similar narratives are used against Latvia and Estonia). These are accusations of the violation of the rights of the Russian-speaking population, attempts to prove that “fascism and nationalism is reborn in Lithuania”; there are also disputes over historical truth – Moscow questions the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States, denying the post-war struggle for independence and accusing Lithuania of their attempt to “rewrite history”. Another standard charge is the accusation of “Russophobia”.

As mentioned, facing information attacks and propaganda attacks is not a new experience for Lithuania. However, imagining what the country looks like on the frontline of information aggression and what immediate challenges they face, it is worth reviewing the most significant incidents of the last few years, related to information security. The most significant incidents of this nature, presented and briefly described below, happened from 2017 – 2019.

In the information space of February 16, 2017, a celebration of Lithuania's National Restoration Day, an attempt was made to spread the false message that five German soldiers from NATO forces raped a minor from a foster home in Jonava (a small town near Kaunas).

There have been several attempts to disseminate this narrative. Firstly, an email with such information was sent to the Speaker of the Seimas, (Viktoras Pranckietis, and several more members of the Lithuanian Parliament and state institutions.

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<sup>27</sup> The author concludes this based on their dissertation research “The attitude of the Russian periodicals towards the Baltic States in the context of geopolitical changes (1991-2009)” (Denisenko, 2016b).

Fake images of publications on Lithuanian news portals were distributed online, supposedly writing about this story, and were later removed (this claim, like the images, were not true).

The story of the “Jonava girl” was also circulated on the blog Auraspress.wordpress.com<sup>28</sup>. It should be mentioned that it seems the said blog was created specifically to spread this story. It was registered one month before the said information attack. There are only a few posts on this blog, featuring the aforementioned fake news.

The aforementioned information attack is very interesting for several reasons. First of all, structurally, it is reminiscent of another actively advocated and disseminated story of Kremlin propaganda about the so-called “Lisa girl”<sup>29</sup>. We will remind you that this story happened in January 2016, when it was reported that migrants in Germany allegedly kidnapped and raped a girl from a Russian-speaking family. The incident was quickly investigated. German police found that the girl named Lisa was not kidnapped, but voluntarily spent the night with a guy who has nothing to do with migrants.

Comparison of these two stories – the “Lisa girl” and the “Jonava girl” – shows a way in which the narrative is built and both stories have the potential for a strong emotional charge. The organisers of the attacks expected a stormy reaction from the audience, an outburst of outrage. In the case of the “Lisa girl”, this outrage in German society had to be targeted against migrants, thus influencing the opinion of the people of the country. The choice of migrants as a target was not a coincidence, because their integration is not only relevant in Germany, but also across the European Union.

In the case of an attack on Lithuania, a structurally similar narrative was simply adapted. In an identical situation – in a “report” of a raped underage girl – just the participants were changed. In the case of the “Jonava girl”, migrants turned into German soldiers. The purpose of informational provocation was to provoke dissatisfaction with the allies in Lithuanian society who came to strengthen the country’s defence within the forefront of NATO’s ranks. Such is the construction of a propaganda narrative that also correlates with the rather absurd claim of the Kremlin propaganda that “NATO occupied the Baltic states”. In other words, the case of the “Jonava girl” is easily seen in a broader context of the Kremlin’s information warfare, not just directed against Lithuania, but, more broadly against the EU, or the so-called Western world.

One can also speak of a repetitive pattern of certain propaganda narratives. For example, in June 2018, another fake story was attempted to be dished out into the information space, which should affect the image of Lithuania’s allies. The story was based on a real event – the armoured car of the U.S. forces had a crash during Saber Strike 2018 exercises. Taking advantage of the context of this event fake news started circulating on the internet about a boy on a bicycle colliding with an armoured

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28 At the time of writing, the blog was still available online: <https://auraspress.wordpress.com/>

29 More information on Lisa’s case is easily found in the media. For example, one could mention an article published by NATO Review Magazine on this subject “The Lisa case”: Germany as a target of Russian disinformation” (The “Lisa case”..., 2016).



vehicle. Also, visual material of the “event” was also falsified. It can be argued that this fabricated information was intended to provoke public outrage, to incite a biased attitude against military exercises and the allied forces. The account of the “child victim” was again used to cause a strong emotion (basically, this story can be attributed to the same type as the propaganda narrative about the “Jonava Girl” or the famous Kremlin propaganda lie on the crucified boy in Slaviansk, Ukraine<sup>30</sup>).

Another vector of propaganda attack is aimed at the country’s history. It is primarily related to disagreements between Lithuania and Russia on the interpretation of historical events. Particular attention is given to the context of the 20th century. It’s no secret that there is much discussion in Russia about the events of World War II (admittedly, with emphasis only on the period of 1941-1945, when the Soviet Union fought against the Nazi Germany – in Russia, this period is called the “Great Patriotic War”). The Kremlin is consciously forming a victory cult based on the claim that it was the Soviet Union that liberated Europe during World War II, crushing Nazi Germany.

The concept of “liberation” promoted by Moscow is not appropriate for Lithuania, as the country suffered several occupations during World War II. In the summer of 1940, Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union. In 1941, when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Soviet occupation Lithuania was replaced by Nazi German occupation. In 1944, the second Soviet occupation took place. In other words, “liberation” did not bring freedom to Lithuania.

As mentioned, disagreements about history are reflected in the current information war conducted by Russia. The reaction of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the NATO film about the Baltic post-war resistance movement became a striking example. As a response, Moscow began to actively revive another Soviet narrative about freedom fighters as “bandits” and “Nazi accomplices”.

Looking at Lithuania’s experience on the information front, it should be emphasised that the ways in which different propaganda narratives are attempted to be inserted into the information space are becoming more sophisticated. Of particular significance in this context is the case of hacking into the content system of the main Baltic news agency BNS, which took place on April 12, 2017. The purpose of said cyber hacking was to publish fake news into the news agency system in a message created by propaganda, which was attempted to be distributed in this way; it stated that in Latvia, US soldiers were poisoned with iprite (mustard) gas during the exercise in Latvia (this narrative was already reflected in the title of the “message”: *“Echo of Syria in Latvia: US troops poisoned with iprite”*). This case is worth analysing in more detail.

First of all, the narrative itself, which was attempted to be distributed, has several hidden meanings and quite a broad context. On the one hand, it made repeated attempts to discredit the Baltic Allies, in this case – US troops. The message implicitly states that they brought the chemical weapon to Latvia, but failed to control it and poisoned themselves. It is not a coincidence that Syria is

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30 The story of that in 2014, Ukrainian troops allegedly crucified a 3-year-old boy in Slaviansk became a symbol of modern Kremlin propaganda (Fake: Crucifixion in Slaviansk, 2014).



also mentioned in the title of the fake news. Syrian President Bashar al Assad has been accused of using chemical weapons against his own citizens (the Syrian regime denies these accusations). Text placed by hackers into the BNS system shifts accents, raising doubts and suspicions that maybe it's US forces or the militants who support the use of chemical weapons in Syria etc.

Particularly noteworthy is the attempt to spread a fake message. It can be argued that the hacking into the BNS system and inserting the narrative text mentioned therein was an attempt to legitimize this fake news. The BNS news agency is a reliable source of information, trusted by other media. A large part of the Lithuanian media subscribes to the services of this news agency and uses its content to build their news feeds.

The insertion of fake news into the BNS system was discovered in a timely manner. Text was blocked and prevented from spreading. Otherwise, the "legalised" propaganda message could spread in the Lithuanian information space, and possibly more widely in the region.

It should also be noted that a message about Latvia was posted also by hacking into the Lithuanian BNS system. This potentially was an attempt to mislead and complicate the possibilities of verification of this information. Simply put, in case of doubts about the reliability of the information contained in it would be harder for journalists to verify (that would take more time), then the competent authorities of another state should be contacted.

Moreover, if this fake message was spread, it could be relied upon by other sources of Kremlin propaganda. The "incident" would be presented as evidence that the chemical weapon is "used by Americans" in Syria. The fact is that this "message" would be distributed from the BNS, i.e. the information medium attributed to the Western space, would enhance its illusion of credibility bold between its audience inside and outside Russia, which is sceptical of the information circulated by the Kremlin-controlled media.

The case described is also significant in that in this case, we see a convergence between different types of information warfare. The principles of cyber warfare are realised by illegally entering the media content system. The hacker's job here is just an auxiliary tool in a psychological war, because hacking into a system is intended to discreetly place a propaganda narrative there, thus legalising it and in their attempt for wider dissemination through trusted media channels.

The case of hacking into the BNS is not one-off. Lithuanian experience alone indicates that this type of attack is becoming a clear trend and a challenge, first of foremost, for the Lithuanian media. Below is a summary of other similar attacks:

▶ In January 2018, the TV3 news portal was hacked. The aim was to spread fake news that the Minister of National Defence of Lithuania Raimondas Karoblis harassed journalist Ridas Jasiulionis and confessed to being gay. The hack was spotted on time; the text with the fake news was removed from the portal five minutes later.

▶ At the end of October 2018, the portal "*Kas vyksta Kaune*" was hacked. The hackers posted a message in the archive of the website that NATO forces are "planning to invade Belarus" during the military exercise in Poland. The

information has been placed in the archive so that the portal staff would not notice it. This goal was partially achieved – the fake news was identified and removed from the portal only after a while – in early November.

▶ In June 2019, the websites of the *Valstiečių Laikraštis* and the *Baltic Times* were hacked. The purpose of hacking was to spread the false news in Lithuanian and English that a shell with enriched uranium fell in the River Neris during exercise. The hacked text also stated that contaminated water had reached the homes of Kaunas residents.

The following examples show that such combined information attacks against Lithuania have been ongoing since 2017. This allows us to expect new attacks of this kind.

The examples in this section do not claim to be a comprehensive overview of the information war against Lithuania. On the other hand, they clearly demonstrate that the information war has become a reality in Lithuania. This is a realisation of information security issues. It makes me think, how should Lithuania strengthen the relevant sectors and develop a strategy to counter information threats.

### 3. Essential aspects of information challenges

By analysing challenges to information security, you can try to formulate recommendations about how Lithuania should behave before them.

The following examples show that the thrust of information warfare is obviously directed against military structures. During this period, this may be primarily due to the fact that after the events in Ukraine, security discourse has been strongly actualised throughout the region. Defence issues also become the subject of public debate. It is this debate that propaganda narratives try to influence.

It can be seen that the information attack is not only directed against the Lithuanian Armed Forces, but collectively against NATO. There are attempts to discredit foreign forces, which are involved in the strengthening of Lithuanian security. Also, an attempt is made to position the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation as aggressive, pursuing expansive goals.

It would be wrong to assume that information warfare is directed solely against military structures and against the NATO Forces Battalion contingent (although the examples in the previous section may project exactly that image). In fact, information attacks have a wide range. They can be targeted at different areas of security. Conventional military defence is only one of these spheres. For example, elements of information warfare are also directed at energy security issues<sup>31</sup>. In this case, propaganda narratives try to ridicule and belittle Lithuania's steps towards energy independence, or seek to portray these steps as unsuccessful, irrational, contrary to economic logic etc.

As mentioned, historical narratives are actively challenged by propaganda.

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31 For example, in the summer of 2019, false information about the Lithuanian Independence liquefied natural gas terminal was distributed on Facebook. The information circulated made fictional claims about Lithuania's "billionth debt to Russia" for natural gas; it is believed that the liquefied gas terminal is actually redundant for the state, that it does not provide energy independence etc.

These attacks are dangerous too, because it's historical stories, imagining your past, historical and, consequently, a profound connection with the state, and the native land forms the psychological basis of the country's society and creates a massive historical memory, which unites different representatives of society.

All of this also raises the fundamental goals of the information war when we talk about the goal of one state to have an informational effect on another. In this case, it is worth not talking about individual goals, which may depend on the circumstances, changing information environment, events and their context, but also about the fundamental purpose of the information war. It is destructive. One of the targets of the information war is the connection between society and the state (first, of different authorities). Propaganda is trying to discredit the authorities in the eyes of the public, arguing that they are ineffective, irrational, unwise or even deliberately harming the state and society.

It must be emphasised that the main target of the information war is man. There is both a potential impact on individuals having the decision-making power, and in terms of the impact on society as a whole. As Georg J. Stein wrote in his time, "the target of the information war is the human mind" (Stein, 1995).

Other state propaganda directed against the country becomes the target of an information war, seeking to persuade society of the attacked country so that it lives in a so-called "failed state". This means that national authorities fail to fulfil their functions; the state does not function as a normal state should function. Relationships between society and the authorities are presented as a natural, ongoing conflict.

Information warfare actions may also aim to raise information noise and to create informational chaos. This is how Peter Pomerantsev describes the aims of modern Kremlin propaganda (2015). He argues that modern Russian propaganda tactics are not so much persuasive as attacking the very principle of truth, to create the illusion that everything is relative and truths as such does not exist. Such tactics also destroy the psychological basis of society, leaving people without support points and landmarks.

The potential real consequences of the information war should not be overlooked either. If the enemy manages to influence society, to convince its members that their home state has failed, wrong, not defending human freedoms and rights, this may cause individuals who make up such a society to have reasonable doubt in the face of real aggression, whether you need to resist the aggressor and defend your country. In other words, information warfare weakens public determination to defend and resist aggression, or, in other words, to realise constitutional law<sup>32</sup>.

Propaganda attacks seek to strengthen alienation in society. Their common goal is to create and sanction internal conflicts – for example, sharp controversy over the interpretation of history, doubts about the legitimacy and fairness of political and economic processes. Another clear problem is that the use of such instruments complicates the critical debate in democratic countries, the painful reflection of the pages of their story. There is a danger that every such step, every

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32 See Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 3 (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, 2005).

debate in society, which would otherwise be viewed in a relatively calmly, can be interpreted as a “propaganda attack”. In other words, it becomes difficult to distinguish between naturally occurring processes in society and those artificially sanctioned or incited.

Another significant aspect is the protection of the information field. Problems arise because today it is impossible to see and define clear boundaries in the national information space. Internet technologies have transformed the national information field into a part of one global information space. It also facilitates the introduction of propaganda narratives and fake news into the country’s information space.

Technological tools, used to protect a national information field, can be both ineffective and questionable. They are primarily used by non-free countries to block unwanted information. In a democracy, every restriction on information must be well thought out and reasoned, because such steps are a potential threat to the fundamental principles of democracy – freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of beliefs etc.

Lithuania has some restrictive measures in place designed to counter propaganda. The Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission may apply to court for a decision to interrupt the retransmission of some TV channel, if the channel violates the laws of the Republic of Lithuania. This practice has been applied since 2013. All decisions so far (interrupting the retransmission for a period of one month to one year) were adopted on Russian television channels re-broadcasted on Lithuanian cable television networks. These sanctions were mainly caused by violations of Lithuanian laws related to war and incitement to hatred.

However, in a situation where the national information field is largely open and technological solutions can be so inefficient, both in some cases and dubious, other ways of ensuring information security should be highlighted.

Strategic communication and its various aspects are of particular importance in the real challenge of the information war. Strategic communication principles allow for a long-term positive relationship between public authorities (including the military) and the public. Explanation of the state’s strategic objectives, existing security challenges and steps to strengthen security becomes a counterweight to the narratives of propaganda.

The resistance to information warfare requires constant and continuous monitoring and analysis of propaganda attacks. First of all, it allows one to see the existing tendencies of a propaganda attack and to record their changes. Knowing the targets of information warfare can effectively strengthen those spheres that are being targeted by propaganda attacks.

Given that the main target of the information war is the public, relevant recommendations can also be made related to information security objectives. First of all, it is the resilience of society itself and immunity to these types of phenomena. In this case, we should be talking about comprehensive information education, which would allow members of the public to distinguish reliable information themselves from being untrustworthy or having the character of propaganda narratives.

The media plays an important role here. There are successful examples in Lithuania, showcasing how the media fulfils the function of information education. Here, we can identify a project that reveals propaganda narratives – Debunk.eu. This is not the only example. In one way or another, most Lithuanian media inform their users about the challenge and danger of propaganda.

Essentially, information literacy, understanding it as a tool, who knows how to use and analyse all kinds of information correctly, should also be integrated into mainstream schools. This would allow systematic development of public resistance to misinformation and propaganda. Although some steps are being taken in Lithuania in this direction, they are not yet sufficient.

In summary, it can be mentioned that a large study a number of years ago has shown that Lithuania's immunity to information threats is quite high, compared to other Central and Eastern European countries (Disinformation Resilience..., 2018). Strengthening information security and information resilience must be a continuous, ongoing process. This should be done both by concentrating the available national resources and interacting with partners who face similar challenges. The experience of the other Baltic States and Ukraine could be of particular benefit to Lithuania. To such practices, for example, can be attributed to the Estonian media project Strazhi ("The Sentinels"), which informs the Russian-speaking population of the country, related to national security and defence, or the Ukrainian project *StopFake*<sup>33</sup>, which conducts constant monitoring, analysis of propaganda attacks and deconstruction.

## Conclusions

Summarising all discussed aspects of information security and its challenges, it can be maintained that the information war situation is an objective reality in Lithuania, and Russia poses the major and most significant threat to Lithuania's information security. The information theatre of war against Lithuania is quite broad. Propaganda and misinformation aim to influence public awareness of security, affect the historical memory, trust in state institutions etc. These effects are intended to disrupt social relations within the society of the country, undermine citizens' values and thinking. Among the specific challenges of this type of impact one can see an attempt to break the will of the people of the country to resist military aggression, call into question state decisions in the field of defence, cause mistrust of allies.

Information attacks against Lithuania are not only commonplace (propaganda), but also feature the combined nature, realised through the interplay of the principles of cyber and psychological warfare. The attack is essentially destructive, sometimes questioning the very principle of truth.

Technological solutions, to respond to information challenges, have natural limitations, resulting from the specifics of the modern information field. Therefore, measures to strengthen information security be primarily concerned with

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33 Ukrainian website StopFake (<https://www.stopfake.org/en/main/>).

strengthening the overall resilience of the public to information threats, realising it through education (media literacy) and strategic communication implemented by the state. Recommended actions, taking into account the specificity of the cases identified, would be as follows: strengthen the interaction between the military and society, implementing the principles of strategic communication (links between the military and the media should also be strengthened in this case); view the challenge of information security as a complex issue, covering the military, social and political sphere, seeking appropriate solutions integrated into these areas; strengthen the value attitudes of society and the ability to work with information (media literacy); continuously analysing attacks in the information space and building the strategy of not only response, but also their prevention.

The challenge of information security is not a specific problem in Lithuania, therefore, appropriate strategic interactions with other states in a similar position would be logical and natural. Interaction with our closest neighbours and allies would be important here in the first place – Latvia, Estonia and Poland. The Ukrainian experience could also be analysed, evaluated and partially taken over, especially considering that this country was facing direct military aggression in which the information element also played a very important role.

A slightly different kind of interaction should be developed with other NATO allies. Here, Lithuania can play a role of a country with specialised knowledge and experience. The strategic interest in this area is a clear and uniform understanding of information threats across the alliance, the development of common strategies and common response principles.

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## 15.

# LITHUANIAN – UKRAINIAN COOPERATION ENSURING UKRAINIAN AND REGIONAL SECURITY\*

Jonas Daniliauskas\*\*

### Introduction

It all started in Vilnius. During the late night from 28 to 29 November 2013, despite the last-minute attempt by European leaders to persuade the President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich otherwise, it finally became evident that he will not reverse his decision not to sign a landmark deal with the EU – the Association Agreement / DCFTA. His refusal to do so, made after instructions from Moscow, was announced a few days earlier – on November 21st. Such a U-turn triggered the events, which now are called the “Revolution of Dignity” – tens of thousands (and later – hundreds of thousands) of people have taken to the streets of Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities daily in the biggest anti-government protests since the 2004 Orange Revolution. The aim was to pressure Yanukovich to reverse his November 21st decision and sign the deal in Vilnius. (Grytsenko, 2013) The protests have not achieved their initial aim – to persuade Yanukovich. However, they achieved much more – after the brutal crackdown against the protesters in February 2014, mass protests became so widespread that Yanukovich fled to Russia.

The new democratic interim government and Ukrainians in the streets had little time to celebrate. They immediately had to deal with Russian military aggression against Ukraine. First, Russia annexed and occupied Crimea. Soon after that – inspired and militarily backed up so-called “uprisings” in the East Ukraine – Donetsk and Luhansk regions. This led to a bloody war, which was partially stopped by the Minsk Agreement (now known as Minsk I) on 5 September 2014. It soon became evident that Minsk I is unable to stop the war – Russia sent more military units to Donbas and the full-scale fights renewed. On 12 February 2015, a new agreement – “Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements” (known as Minsk II) was brokered and signed. Minsk II offers a detailed roadmap for resolving the conflict. The 13-point plan begins with a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front lines, to be monitored by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). An “all for all” prisoner exchange, local elections and amnesty for fighters are to follow; both sides are to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid and work toward the socio-economic reintegration of the separatist-held territories. Ukraine promises to implement constitutional changes to provide for “decentralisation”; in exchange, all “foreign armed formations” will be withdrawn and Ukraine will regain control of its state borders. But the agreement is

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\*\* Assessments and views expressed in the chapter are exceptionally those of the author and can never be treated as the official position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania or its subunits.

riddled with loose language and the sequencing of many steps is highly convoluted. (The Economist explains, 2016).

The Minsk Agreements only partially ended the war. Minsk Group, which includes representatives from Ukraine, Russia, OSCE and as observers – from so-called “DNR” and “LNR” (Russia-backed, self-proclaimed and non-recognised entities in Donbas) and Normandy 4 (representatives of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia) meetings and negotiations are failing to bring concrete results, none of the 13 points/obligations outlined in Minsk Agreements are fully implemented; some analysts describing this format as a “fig leaf for real progress”. (The Economist explains, 2016)

The result is a huge humanitarian crisis in Eastern Ukraine with around 1.4 million IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) (National Monitoring System Report on the Situation of Internally Displaced Persons, 2019), the collapse of the Donbas region’s economy, massive economic crisis in Ukraine during 2014-2015, more than 13,000 people killed and 30,000 injured (Donbas war death toll rises up to nearly 13,000 – UN, 2019).

After more than 5 years, the war is still ongoing, and today, it is neither a real war nor a frozen conflict. It is more like a “burning conflict” with violations of ceasefire and victims almost every day. However, it is without full-scale military escalation and with stable, fixed contact line.

The international community, first of all – the EU, the US, Canada, strongly supported Ukraine from the very start of Russian aggression. This support came in various forms: political, diplomatic, humanitarian, military etc. Lithuania is considered as one of the staunchest supporters of Ukraine in the West. This chapter will provide an overview of the various forms of Lithuania’s support for Ukraine, Lithuania’s motives and the strategic dilemmas for Lithuania with regard to supporting Ukraine in the context of Russia’s ongoing aggression.

## **1. Geopolitical situation around Ukraine after 2014**

Russian military aggression against Ukraine in 2014 fundamentally changed the geopolitical landscape around Ukraine. The main features of this new landscape are as follows:

First, the true nature and intentions of Russia became more vividly exposed. The West’s reaction to Russia’s aggression against Georgia in 2008 was critical, but only in the forms of statements and comments. Soon, things were back to “business as usual”. However, Russian military aggression against Ukraine in 2014 was of a much larger scale, with more casualties, including the citizens of Western nations.<sup>34</sup> The brutal and cynical violation of Ukrainian sovereignty by Russian military, coupled with blatant denial of the facts and lies about Ukraine by Russian diplomacy (Russia still does not officially recognise its military presence in Donbas, i.e. Ukrainian territory; Russia blames only Ukraine; Russia usually refers to the war in Donbas as a “civil war inside Ukraine”) and widespread propaganda

<sup>34</sup> The downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 by Russian missile in Donbas on 17 July 2014 led to the deaths of 298 people from the Netherlands, Malaysia, UK, Australia and other nations.

of lies, fake news, half-facts by the Russian state-owned media machine finally was a kind of eye-opener both for Western political elites and societies about the true intentions and nature of Putin's regime.

Second, the West responded with sanctions against Russia and by unprecedented political, financial and practical support for Ukraine. Probably the greatest miscalculation of Putin's regime was not even the ability of Ukraine to stop Russian aggression and contain it limited to Donbas region, but the reaction of the West. Differently than in 2008, after the war against Georgia, this time there was no return to the "business as usual". This time, the Western reaction was much harsher, swift, consolidated and unified. Russia ended up as a kind of "black sheep" – Russia was kicked out of G7; the US, Canada, EU introduced sanctions against Russian officials responsible for the annexation and occupation of Crimea, for the downing of the MH17 flight, for supporting military aggression against Ukraine in Donbas and participating in it. The West also started to support Ukraine in all international formats and by providing unprecedented amounts humanitarian, economic, military aid – with the two main objectives – to help withstand Russia's aggression and to help reform the country, to Westernise it, to bring it closer to the EU criteria and NATO standards.

Third, Ukraine itself became much more West-oriented and real reforms started. For more than two decades, Ukraine was pursuing some kind of "multi-vector" foreign policy, flirting with both the West and Russia, which resulted in an ineffectively governed country penetrated with unimaginable to Westerners' comprehension scale of corruption at all levels, with oligarch-dominated economy and politics. The "Revolution of Dignity" has changed it all, though not entirely. Many observers claim that in terms of reforms, in terms of political developments, Ukraine has managed to achieve more in the last few years than it did during the previous two decades. The paradox and the main miscalculation of Russia's aggression against Ukraine was that instead of subjugating Ukraine, instead of absorbing it into Russian "sphere of influence", it turned Ukraine into much more pro-EU, pro-NATO, and anti-Russian country with a very vibrant, strong, reform-demanding, pluralistic civil society, which enjoys all democratic freedoms – free and fair elections, free media, unlimited freedom of assembly, much higher level of political accountability and responsibility etc.

## **2. Lithuania's motives for supporting Ukraine**

On her last visit to Ukraine as President, Dalia Grybauskaitė said it bluntly and frankly – "Supporting Ukraine is within Lithuania's security interests" (President of the Republic of Lithuania, 2018). Lithuania's rationale for supporting Ukraine is, first of all, based upon national security calculations. By supporting and strengthening Ukraine's resilience against Russian aggression and by supporting Ukraine's reforms to meet NATO standards and the EU criteria, Lithuania at the same time is pursuing several of its own national security interests. One of the main of those interests is to contain Russian aggression not only in Ukraine, but in the whole region. The aim is to make Russia understand that its aggressive policies

and practices will not go unpunished. Thus, Lithuania strongly supported the idea of a strong Western reaction in condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine, including the sanctions directed against Russia. The other interest is to make the world know about Russia's true intentions to break the rule-based international order, to raise awareness in the West, to explain by Ukrainian example the real threat Russia poses to the democratic world.

At the same time, Lithuania and other EU and NATO countries pursue the interest to increase the zone of stability, security and democracy in its own immediate neighbourhood. By helping Ukraine implement reforms needed, by sharing expertise and good practices, by educating, Lithuania strives to help Ukraine move closer to the EU and NATO, and at the same time – contributes to a more predictable and secure neighbourhood.

Lithuania also tries to maintain a consistent EU Eastern Partnership (EaP) policy. Since its beginning in 2009, Lithuania actively shaped the EaP; it was and remains one of Lithuania's foreign policy priorities, with Ukraine being the most important and crucial country in the EaP region. Thus, it remains a "two-way policy" for Lithuania – by actively pursuing stronger EaP, Lithuania helps Ukraine, and vice versa – by actively supporting Ukraine, Lithuania seeks a stronger EaP.

Finally, by supporting Ukraine, Lithuania at the same time seeks to strengthen its own resilience against Russia's threat. Russia's military aggression against Ukraine forced Lithuania to increase its own efforts to ensure national security. After 2014, the defence expenditure is rapidly increasing and finally reached 2% GDP, conscription service is reintroduced, intelligence capabilities strengthened, NATO presence on the ground increased, public awareness about threats to national security, propaganda, fake news, disinformation efforts are significantly higher compared to years before.

### **3. Forms of support for Ukraine and cooperation with Ukraine**

Lithuania's support for Ukraine is manifested via various forms and formats: political and diplomatic support both bilaterally and in international fora, support for sanctions against Russia, military aid, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, civic initiatives, sharing of expertise, advice and good practice, political initiatives. Lithuania became known and now has an image of Ukraine's advocate in the international arena.

One of the first manifestations of Lithuania's support for Ukrainian people and democracy (but not for the Yanukovich regime) was an active lobbying and pressure to sign the EU-Ukraine AA/DCFA before and during EaP Summit in Vilnius in November 2013. Then, when EuroMaidan started, Lithuanian politicians in their statements were openly supporting the protesting people of Ukraine, not the Ukrainian government. When the Yanukovich regime started the crackdown of EuroMaidan in early 2014, then again – there was implicit political support from the Lithuanian political elite and people for EuroMaidan and political pressure for the Yanukovich regime to immediately stop the violence.

Political support for Ukraine is also vivid by looking at the numbers of visits of

the Lithuanian President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Parliament, Foreign and Defence ministers to Ukraine (the latter two usually visit Ukraine at least 4-5 times per year). Interesting fact – it was the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linkevičius who was the first ever EU Foreign Minister to visit the frontline in Donbas (in March 2016) (Lithuanian foreign minister visits Ukrainian troops in Donbas, 2016). That set a precedent – later, other European ministers started to visit not only Kyiv, but the frontline also. The high level of political support to Ukraine by Lithuanian politicians is also obvious when looking at the numbers of statements, interviews, tweets, remarks about Ukraine, war in Donbas, illegal annexation of Crimea, Russian aggression, sanctions against Russia, support for reforms in Ukraine and other topics related to Ukraine.

When Russia started its military aggression against Ukraine, Lithuania started to act as an active promoter and supporter of the “Ukrainian case” in various international formats. The timing coincided with Lithuania’s non-permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UN SC) in 2014-2015. One of the first and most important tasks for Lithuania at the UN SC table was to help draft and adopt a UN Resolution condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine.

The most active work was during 2014 by the Lithuanian Mission to the UN. Throughout 2014, Lithuania focused on addressing the conflict in Ukraine, ensuring the rule of law, protecting civilians in armed conflict, strengthening cooperation between the UN and the European Union, and proper implementation of the Security Council’s decisions on sanctions. Lithuania was one of the authors of a UN SC draft resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, which was vetoed by Russia. To counter the Russian narrative of the events in Ukraine and to strengthen coordination on the issue, Lithuanian diplomats formed an informal group of friends of Ukraine. Lithuania also regularly raised the issues around human rights violations in the Russia-annexed Crimea. (Lithuania at UN Security Council, 2016).

When the UN SC draft resolution was vetoed by Russia, Lithuania and other countries tried and eventually succeeded the other way – they went through the UN General Assembly (GA). The UN GA resolution No 68/262 “Territorial integrity of Ukraine” was introduced by Canada, Costa Rica, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine and adopted by the General Assembly on 27 March 2014 (UN GA Resolution 68/262, 2014). The Resolution expressed strong support for Ukraine’s sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, and non-recognition of Russia’s annexation of Crimea. The same language is used since then not only in other UN GA Resolutions on this issue each year since then, but also in drafting other national and international statements and documents. Lithuania was also quite instrumental and very active in pushing support for Ukraine, the condemnation of illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea, Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine in Eastern Ukraine (Donbas) in other international formats: the EU, NATO, OSCE and others.

Lithuania was and still is very active in drafting and introducing a sanctions regime against Russia in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and the



deliberate destabilisation of Ukraine. The main bulk of these sanctions (restrictive measures) have been adopted by the EU, and Lithuania played an active role in the process of drafting, adopting and since then – in prolonging them each 6 or 12 months (depends on the particular type of restrictive measures). Since March 2014, the EU has progressively imposed several different types of restrictive measures against Russia:

1. diplomatic measures (the EU-Russia summit was cancelled, no regular bilateral summits, Russia no longer invited to G8 summits (it is now G7), negotiations over Russia's joining the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Energy Agency (IEA) suspended);
2. individual restrictive measures (asset freeze and travel restrictions);
3. restrictions on economic relations with Crimea and Sevastopol;
4. economic sanctions;
5. restrictions on economic cooperation (via EIB, EBRD, EU bilateral and regional cooperation programmes with Russia) (Council of the European Union, 2019).

What is important to note is that sanctions (asset freezing and travel restrictions) are being applied not only to Russian officials and entities (170 people and 44 entities) responsible for aggression against Ukraine, but also to former Ukrainian officials (including Yanukoych) who are responsible for the misappropriation of Ukrainian state funds. Also – in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by Russia – the EU adopted restrictive measures, which apply to EU persons and EU-based companies. They are limited to the territory of Crimea and Sevastopol and include: an import ban on goods from Crimea and Sevastopol, restrictions on trade and investment related to certain economic sectors and infrastructure projects, a prohibition to supply tourism services in Crimea or Sevastopol, an export ban for certain goods and technologies.

Economic sanctions targeting exchanges with Russia in specific economic sectors were also introduced: limit access to EU primary and secondary capital markets for certain Russian banks and companies; impose an export and import ban on trade in arms; establish an export ban for dual-use goods for military use or military end-users in Russia; curtail Russian access to certain sensitive technologies and services that can be used for oil production and exploration. (Council Decision 2014/145/CFSP, 2014 and Council Implementing Regulation No 810/2014, 2014).

The military cooperation with Ukraine is also growing. The best example is a trilateral Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade LITPOLUKRBRIG – a multinational unit consisting of subunits from the Lithuanian, Polish and Ukrainian Armed Forces. The agreement to establish this trilateral unit was reached back in 2007, but for 7 years, because of a lack of political will and bureaucracy, this project stalled. Only after EuroMaidan, after Russian aggression, and with an urgent need to help to implement defence reforms in Ukraine, the process of establishing LITPOLUKRBRIG moved forward quickly. The Agreement upon its creation was signed on 19 September 2014; the Brigade was finally formed in the fall of 2015;

Initial Operational Capabilities achieved on 25 January 2016; and Full Operational Capabilities achieved on 24 January 2017. The declared mission of the Brigade is to participate in international operations, trainings, exercises (The Grand Hetman Kostiantyn Ostrogski Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade, 2019). In practice, the Brigade serves as a good training venue primarily for Ukrainian officers – they are able to learn how to function as de facto part of the NATO military unit, get to know NATO standards, procedures and later – to apply that knowledge to the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Another multinational format, although, of a much smaller scale and of different kind, is the Defense Reform Advisory Board (DRAB), which advises Ukraine on modernising its Armed Forces as it seeks to reach NATO standards by 2020. DRAB is comprised of only 4 members – retired generals and military experts from the US, UK, Canada and Lithuania. (Rahemtulla, 2016).

Other areas of military cooperation, which in its essence are more similar to military aid in-kind are:

- ▶ Transfer of military knowledge by Lithuanian military officers – since 2014, more than 200 Lithuanian military officers were deployed to Ukraine where they are training Ukrainian Armed Forces battalions; at the same time, more than 60 Ukrainian officers were trained in Lithuania.

- ▶ Military advisors – high-ranking Lithuanian officers seconded to Ukrainian Defence Ministry and General Staff to provide them with strategic advice, help them to understand NATO procedures, adhere to NATO standards, implement defence and security sector reform. (Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, 2017).

Lithuania was the first country to provide Ukraine with the legal weaponry. Back in 2016, Lithuania sent about 150 tonnes of ammunition (mainly cartridges for rifles) to the Ukrainian Armed Forces (Lithuania says it supplied ammunition to Ukraine for the first time in two years, 2016). Lithuania continued this the following years – in 2017, Lithuania handed over automatic rifles/carbines, machine guns, anti-armour guns, ammunition and spare parts. (Ministry of National Defence, 2017) In 2018 alone, the value of supplied arms amounted to more than 3 million EUR (7,000 weapons and about 2 million rounds of ammunition) (Raś and Szeligowski, 2018).

This was not only a symbolic, but also a politically bold move. Ukrainians had been asking the NATO allies to help them with lethal weapons for quite a long time. However, the other Allies are still reluctant to provide Ukraine with lethal weaponry in order not to provoke Russia's hysterical reaction. As of 2016, while 18 countries supplied Ukraine with non-lethal military aid, only Lithuania was providing lethal equipment (Friends in Need: 18 countries who gave Ukraine non-lethal military aid, 2016).

The Lithuanian Embassy in Kyiv served as a NATO Contact Point Embassy (CPE) for two consecutive terms – from 2015 till 2019. The main tasks of a NATO CPE are to disseminate information about the activities of the Alliance, its policies, to organise educational events, to cooperate with local media, public institutions and NGOs (the Lithuanian Embassy in Kiev to resume NATO CPE functions for two more years,

2016) The main focus of the activities was targeted towards one specific audience – young people, students in the regions of Ukraine, where knowledge about NATO (and usually – support to NATO) is much lower than in Kyiv.

Probably the most ambitious and often misinterpreted Lithuanian initiative regarding Ukraine is a “Marshall Plan for Ukraine”, also known as “A New European Plan for Ukraine”. The essence of the plan is to offer a new long-term strategy for the relations between the West and Ukraine, to keep Ukraine on track with pro-European reforms, to implement sizeable reforms within the next decade, to offer a New European Plan for Ukraine with two key elements: Plan for Economic Support with a package of significant financial investment support for next 10 years, and a Support for Membership Package for yet another decade, with an assumption that after first 10 years Ukraine’s progress will be enough for EU membership negotiations, and the EU will be politically ready to start EU membership negotiations with Ukraine (Kubilius, Kirkilas, Vaitiekūnas, 2016).

The Plan was often understood by other Western partners as being too ambitious, too sound, too expensive, too optimistic. However, if analysed carefully, the plan is maybe too ambitious only because of the same name as the original US post-WW2 Marshall Plan for Western Europe. A New European Plan for Ukraine does not require such enormous amounts of financial aid; it rather focuses on a better and more effective use of already-existing financial pledges to Ukraine, half of which are unused due to the lack of administrative absorption capacities of Ukraine. Given the more or less sceptical initial reaction from the other Western capitals, it is hardly likely to achieve a consensus inside the West on such a comprehensive plan. However, the value-added component of such a plan is that it creates an opportunity to keep Ukraine on the EU agenda, to keep support for reforms in Ukraine, to keep support for Ukraine’s integration with the EU and NATO. In its essence, major elements of the plan are already discussed in such formats as the annual Ukraine Reform Conference. Here, Lithuania also acts as an active supporter of Ukraine; the next conference will be organised in Vilnius in 2020 (Zelensky, Linkevicius agree that Lithuania to host next conference on supporting reforms in Ukraine, 2019).

At the same time, based on the New European Plan for the Ukraine draft, the Parliament of Lithuania drafted a national plan – Lithuania’s Plan on Ukraine in 2017-2020 (Decision on the fundamental principles of the position of the Republic of Lithuania on Ukraine and Lithuania’s support measures for Ukraine, 2017). The national plan encompasses the main elements of Lithuania’s existing policy towards Ukraine, proposes several new measures, and also includes the main elements of the New European Plan for Ukraine: political support through international organisations, parliamentary cooperation, financial assistance, support for Ukrainian army, reforms, implementation of AA/DCFTA, humanitarian aid, economic cooperation, youth education, capacity building, Europeanisation of Ukraine’s historical memory, support for civil society, fight against Russian propaganda.

#### 4. Development and humanitarian aid

Since 2014, Ukraine is also high on the Lithuanian development and humanitarian aid agenda – both because of the increased demand for such aid due to conflict-related areas in Donbas' needs and also because of the increased importance of Ukraine on a broad Lithuanian foreign policy agenda. Today, Ukraine receives the biggest share of Lithuania's bilateral development aid assistance. Lithuania has consistently pursued the transfer of good practices in the implementation of the AA/DCFTA, provides support to Ukrainian citizens affected by Crimean annexation, supports capacity-building of State institutions, implementation of education reforms and promotion of entrepreneurship. Lithuanian experts transfer experience in the areas of anti-corruption, health, energy, justice, taxation, heritage protection and registry creation. The overall Lithuanian support for Ukraine under the Development Cooperation and Democracy Support Program in 2014-2018 totalled 11.48 million EUR (Development Cooperation with Ukraine, 2019).

In addition to development aid, Lithuania also provides Ukraine with humanitarian aid – in 2014-2017, around 1.5 million EUR were provided as humanitarian aid support to Ukraine by Lithuania. The funding is usually channelled through various international organisations – ICRC, IMO, UNICEF, WHO (Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine, 2019).

Since 2014, Lithuania also significantly increased participation in EU Twinning projects, which aim at capacity building, good practices, EU norms and standards, reforms, effectiveness. During 2014-2016, Lithuania individually or as a partner of a consortium was selected to implement 8 EU Twinning projects in Ukraine in such areas as road safety, border management, sanitary and phytosanitary, antimonopoly, travel document verification, rail transport service, Ombudsman institution, plant protection (EU Twinning projects in Ukraine, 2019).

In addition to government-led initiatives to support Ukraine, there are also civil society, individual-driven initiatives. The most famous and well-known both in Lithuania and Ukraine, especially – by Ukrainian soldiers on the frontline in Donbas and civilians living in conflict-affected areas is a Lithuanian NGO Blue Yellow. Established and led by a Swede who lives in Lithuania, Jonas Ohman, since 2014, Blue Yellow has provided almost 1 million USD worth of humanitarian aid and military equipment to Ukraine. All the money and equipment were provided by Lithuanian people as charity donations. Blue Yellow, in cooperation with Lithuanian National TV, organised three charity initiatives in 2017-2019 – concerts during which people were donating money by phone – and collected 340 000 EUR (Blue/Yellow, 2019).

Such practical support has a value-added component in several aspects: it shows that Lithuania's support is not only political, not only about some abstract, though important, issues, but also has a real practical form; it is also a nationwide support – coming not only from the President, government or MFA, but also from the ordinary people; finally, Ukrainian people, who are receiving that practical support are exactly those who need such support mostly – development and humanitarian aid is primarily directed to IDPs, families affected by military conflict, Ukrainian soldiers directly on the frontline in Donbas.

## 5. Lithuanian experts in Ukraine

The last, but not least, area where Lithuania provides support to Ukraine is expert help. In addition to sharing expertise via bilateral consultations, twinning projects, military advice, diplomatic cooperation and support, one additional and important channel for such sharing of expertise and support are the Lithuanians working in the Ukrainian institutions as executives and advisors. Since 2014, there was quite a substantial influx of Lithuanians into Ukrainian institutions: Business Ombudsman, Economy minister, Head of “Ukroboronprom” (the largest conglomerate of Ukrainian defence industry producers), EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) Head, Advisor to the Chief of National Security and Defence Council, more than a dozen Lithuanian experts in various Ukrainian ministries and agencies.

They are valued for their expertise, leadership, have a comparative advantage against the majority of Western experts because of good knowledge of Ukrainian realities, mentality, language, the EU, and NATO integration experience is also still quite fresh. The topic about sending more expert help to Ukraine is almost always on the agenda in the meetings between Lithuanian and Ukrainian officials, as, for example, during the very first meeting of Lithuanian Foreign Minister with then President-elect Zelensky just few days after the elections (Andrukaitytė, 2019). The same message was delivered during the very first meeting of the new President of Lithuania Nausėda and Ukrainian President Zelensky in Warsaw on 1 September 2019 – “we said that we are ready to offer even more Lithuanian reformers, if they [Ukrainians] want” (G. Nausėda gavo V. Zelenskio patikinimą dėl eurointegracijos, siūlė lietuvių reformatorių, 2019).

Ukrainians themselves also value Lithuanian support and advice very much. Just to illustrate – 90% of the experts named Lithuania as the friendliest country towards Ukraine, while 87% mentioned Canada (Experts see Lithuania as the friendliest country towards Ukraine, 2019).

The main idea behind providing such support and the value-added component of it is to help Ukraine to implement reforms needed, to help the country to modernise itself, to increase resiliency in the face of Russia’s aggression, to move forward in pursuing the main objectives of Ukraine’s foreign and security policy – closer integration with the EU and NATO.

## 6. Strategic Dilemmas for Lithuania

There are several strategic dilemmas for Lithuania with regard to supporting Ukraine in the context of Russia’s aggression.

First, any support for Ukraine provokes Russia. The dilemma in this case is Russia’s aggressive reaction versus trying to avoid Russia’s critique. Obviously, Lithuania’s active position and practical support to Ukraine always provokes Russia, which reacts with protests, counteractions, statements, open lies. On the one hand, Lithuania can do nothing with regard to Ukraine and thus try to avoid Russia’s reaction. On the other hand, the whole calculation and logic of Lithuania’s



support for Ukraine is based on the assumption that Ukraine needs to be supported so Russia will not achieve victory in Ukraine and also not get away with another victory at its borderlands, which, in turn, most probably will inspire Russia to continue its aggressive policies elsewhere, and possibly – by attacking the Baltic States. In other words, it is a wide perception among Lithuanian political, security and military elites that we need to stop Russia in Ukraine, otherwise we will have “enemy at the gates” or even “in our own backyard”.

Second, the question of effectiveness of support. There is always the question of whether a support provided is used effectively or whether there is enough absorption capacity from the recipient side? There is always a question of corruption in Ukraine. The dilemma in this case is possibly wasted money in Ukraine versus effectively used money in Lithuania. However, at the moment this is more a hypothetical dilemma, since the vast part of Lithuania’s support is not financial, thus, impossible to waste. Also, a substantial part of support is given in-kind and delivered by Lithuanians directly to the end-recipient on the ground in Ukraine, thus, properly controlled.

Third, unconditional support could risk being taken by granted. The dilemma is “doing for Ukrainians what Ukrainians should do themselves” versus “nobody is doing anything”. One of the risks of active, vocal and unconditional support is that the receiving side could be “spoiled”, could start thinking that the other side (Lithuania) will support Ukraine on every occasion, on any matter, that the support “is there forever”, that it should be taken for granted. There were examples with the other donor countries when Ukrainians, instead of being grateful and thankful, were complaining openly that the military equipment, given for free by the US, is “not brand new”, is “obsolete”, “not suitable for Ukrainian conditions” (*Plastikovye okna i razryvajushhiesja shiny: vmesto voennoj tehniki SShA peredali Ukraine musor*, 2015) (*Amerikanskije zhurnalisty soobshhili o nizkom kachestve vooruzhenija, kotoroe SShA predostavilo Ukraine*, 2015). Similar stories are told by various Western diplomats who have experience in drafting documents for Ukrainians instead of Ukrainians doing that themselves with Western advice.

Fourth, possible disunity in the West. The dilemma is that too active support for Ukraine could for Lithuania result in alienating other EU Member States versus no support or only symbolic support for Ukraine that could result in Ukraine failing to withstand Russia’s aggression. Lithuania, being probably the most vocal and staunch supporter of Ukraine in the West, sometimes risks irritating some other EU Member States who pursue a more balanced or careful approach and try to balance their policy vis-à-vis Ukraine with that of Russia, i.e. sometimes a particular initiative regarding Ukraine is considered too far-reaching or ambitious by them, but Lithuania still pursues it (like the EU membership perspective). This contains a risk of creating an image of a one-issue country, of losing important allies inside the EU, of risking to gain an image of Russia-phobic and anti-Russia. This risk is being countered by explaining to the other Member States that Lithuania’s support to Ukraine and the continuous push for more EU support to Ukraine is not necessarily always to counter Russia, but it is also to help Ukraine



to implement reforms, to move closer to the EU, to consolidate a market economy and civil society.

To sum-up, the above-mentioned dilemmas are in fact not really strategic; part of them are more hypothetical than real, thus, there is not much of a debate among decision-makers in Lithuania when it comes to the issue of supporting Ukraine. Usually there is no question whether to provide support on particular issue or grant a particular request, but more a question of how to do it, what resources to allocate, where to get those resources. In other words, there is a wide understanding and consensus inside Lithuania that the benefits of supporting Ukraine are incomparably much bigger than the costs.

## **Conclusions**

One of the paradoxes of Russia's aggression against Ukraine was that the end result is not pro-Russian Ukraine, but an almost totally anti-Russian Ukraine. Instead of keeping Ukraine under control, Russia ended up in a situation where – at least for generation a to come – Ukraine is now probably the most anti-Russian country. Russia underestimated the Ukrainian sense of national pride, unity, consolidation and the level of Western unity and solidarity. Thus, Russia's strategy to subjugate Ukraine by military means failed.

However, after 2015, when it became clear that military means are not enough, Russia employed other tactics – creating chaos inside Ukraine, exploiting weaknesses of widespread corruption, a fragmented political system, systemic obstruction of the reforms. The strategic task of Russia – with regard to Ukraine now – is to pursue destructive efforts inside Ukraine, create an image of a failed State, obstruct reforms, lay blame for non-implementation of Minsk Agreements only on the Ukrainian side and ignite a kind of “Ukrainian fatigue” inside the EU and NATO, thus preventing Ukraine from implementing reforms and moving closer to the EU and NATO.

The main aims of Lithuania's support for Ukraine are exactly those which counter-react to Russian aims in Ukraine. Lithuania puts its main efforts in helping Ukraine to withstand Russian aggression, to implement reforms needed both for achieving NATO standards and for implementing AA/DCFTA, i.e. moving closer to the EU. Thus, Lithuania helps Ukraine to implement its major foreign policy objectives – stop Russia, move forward by pursuing Euro-Atlantic integration.

As was outlined above, the overview of Lithuanian-Ukrainian cooperation after 2014 demonstrates that the attention of Lithuania to events and processes in Ukraine has increased significantly; that support for Ukraine is nowadays one of the main priorities of Lithuania's foreign and security policy; that this support is visible in a wide variety of spheres – political, diplomatic, security, military, humanitarian. When analysing the content of Lithuanian-Ukrainian cooperation, it is quite clear that this interaction in the majority of the areas is better described not as an active Lithuanian-Ukrainian cooperation, but more as Lithuania's active support for Ukraine. However, as Ukraine moves forward in implementing reforms and adopting EU regulations and norms and NATO standards, the nature

of this interaction should change – it should gradually move from support towards active cooperation. On the other hand, on the political and diplomatic level, and partly – on a military level, the interaction between Lithuania and Ukraine already reached a level where those relations can be described as “special relationship” or even a “strategic partnership”.

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## THE DYNAMICS OF THE LITHUANIAN – POLISH RELATIONS AND MILITARY COOPERATION

Ieva Gajauskaite\*

### Introduction

In 2017, alleged private interviews with Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski and General Manager of the PKN Orlen Dariusz Jacek Krawiec, which could have been secretly recorded between 2013 and 2014, were made public. In 2006, PKN Orlen acquired almost 90 percent of the shares in AB Mažeikių Nafta and became its major shareholder. The decision to acquire an oil refinery in Lithuania was not driven by financial gain. In the latest interview with Polish President Lech Kaczyński, published after his death, the president stated that the acquisition of Mažeikiai was proof of the Lithuanian-Polish friendship. The president believed that Vilnius is the best friend of Warsaw, and the investment in the refinery will allow for the long-term independence from Russia's supply of oil (Warzecha, 2016). The secret recordings stated that Igor Sechin, CEO of the Russian company Rosneft and close friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin, had made an offer to Orlen to acquire Mažeikių Nafta, which was not profitable at the time due to Russia's oil supply cut-off since 2006. Sikorski offered to inquire again whether Igor Sechin would consider buying a minority stake, and thus it would be possible to at least partially reverse the major strategic decision of the president, Lech Kaczyński (Radosław Sikorski chciał wejścia do polskiej rafinerii Igora Sieczyna – człowieka Putina i FSB, 2017). Back in 2010, Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius confessed that he had heard about Orlen's intentions to sell the refinery to Russian dealers for several years from various sources, although Polish leaders were denying it (Filipiak, 2010). Even the strategically important electricity interconnection LitPol Link was started only with the intervention of Lech Kaczyński (Kaczyński, 2011).

In general, energy security had become a means of pressure on Lithuania, and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski were prepared to maintain Lithuania's energy dependence on Russia. On the pretext of the crisis in bilateral relations, a draft law rejected by the Lithuanian Seimas in 2010, which would authorise the writing of surnames of Latin origin in original characters on personal documents. Last, but not least, there was a long-running disagreement between the Lithuanian Railways and Orlen Lietuva regarding the freight tariff, dismantled railway sections Mažeikiai (Lithuania) - Rengė (Latvia) and the additional transport charges for dangerous goods. The real causes of the crisis in bilateral relations include the change of heads of state, lack of mutual

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motivation to deepen political cooperation, the desire to mobilise the electorate, the role of the media (Vaščenkaitė, 2015), changes in the international environment, decreasing interdependence on security after Lithuania became a NATO member, lack of a common strategic objective and failure to have a shared vision for the development of bilateral relations (Gajauskaitė, 2012). Thus, the transformation of bilateral relations from a trust-based strategic partnership into strife was caused by several simultaneous strengthening factors.

Development of bilateral relations depends on many factors. External factors include: the position of the state in the geopolitical strategies of powerful states, changes in the power relationship in the regional and international structure, changes in the security environment, states' relations with third party states, membership in alliances etc. Internal factors include: the strategic coherence of the countries, assessment of the global structure, its own position and the place of the partner in this structure, or the desire to change it, the common history and values, the matching security threat identification, mutual anticipating and pursuit for benefits, motivation for long-term liabilities etc. Strategic coherence is the synergy between objective developments in the international environment and assessment of, or the aim of, the changes to the subjected political elites. (Gajauskaitė, 2014). If states are more inclined to coordinate foreign policies and specific decisions, then strategic coherence is optimal during this period. This coherence may be undermined by a change in the political elite or/and changes in the external environment. Thus, while externalities have an element of longevity, internal factors are more short-term but both affect the intensity and effectiveness of bilateral cooperation.

Recently, Lithuania-Poland relations have been characterised by optimal strategic coherence and bilateral cooperation in the field of security and defence has been defined as the basis for a reviving strategic partnership. The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the domestic policy factors that have contributed to the crisis in the bilateral relations between Lithuania and Poland and have the potential to systematically undermine strategic coherence, despite the manifestations of favourable external cooperation factors. The premise of the article is that, in the long term, Lithuanian-Polish relations are doomed to new crises. The main reason is the frozen implementation of issues of importance to the Polish minority, which, with the changing political elite in Lithuania and Poland, could potentially become a pretext for disagreement and have negative consequences for Lithuania's national security.

## **1. Development of strategic coherence between Lithuania and Poland**

Bilateral relations between Lithuania and Poland since the restoration of independence have been based on overlapping security interests and the pursuit of escaping Russia's sphere of influence. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (since 1995, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) was the first international organisation, of which the Baltic States and Poland became members, seeking to return to the West and to meet the needs of the



declared Euro-Atlantic geopolitical orientation. The Helsinki Decalogue, the final act of the Helsinki Conference, encouraged political dialogue between Lithuania and Poland, whose purpose was to normalise bilateral relations and to ensure the rights of the national minorities. Thus, since the restoration of bilateral relations, Lithuania had to reconcile the need for close cooperation with Poland in the field of security and to reduce Poland's influence on domestic politics. It symbolises the constant dilemma of Lithuanian-Polish relations: In order to increase its security in the face of the Russian military threat, will Lithuania not have to accept the superiority of Poland?

The implementation of NATO membership requirements has become a determinant of the agenda of bilateral security relations between Lithuania and Poland – the convergence with Poland has become a necessity. In 1997, in a joint declaration by the presidents of the states, Lithuanian-Polish relations were described as a strategic partnership aimed at becoming full members of NATO and the European Union (*Wspólna Deklaracja Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej i Prezydenta Republiki Litewskiej*, 1997). Developments in Georgia and Ukraine following the enlargement of the EU and NATO to Eastern Europe have encouraged partners to become exporters and experts of democracy in their quest for new directions of foreign policy. Lithuania and Poland found a few more overlapping interests – the US War on Terror and missile defence plans in Eastern and Central Europe, Russia-EU negotiation on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Thus, considering the factors determining external bilateral relations and the security environment, in 2008, the Lithuanian-Polish strategic partnership was to remain a priority in the security and foreign policy of both states. Nevertheless, strategic coherence between states has deteriorated drastically. Since Dalia Grybauskaitė became president in 2009, Lithuanian foreign policy has become multi-vector – priority was given to cooperation with the Scandinavian countries (Frenkel, 2017). Lithuania's accession to the EU and NATO made the state relatively secure, and close cooperation with Poland on security was no longer vital – alternatives were being sought. The same trend emerged in Polish foreign policy: Because of the announcement of the Poland's "pragmatic" foreign policy doctrine, previously frozen bilateral disagreements on unresolved minority issues were actualised (Dambrauskaitė, Janeliūnas, Jurkonis & Sirijos Gira, 2011). Polish foreign policy towards Lithuania was determined not only by the development of external factors, but also changes in political power.

In 2007, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Anna Fotyga offered to exploit the geopolitical position of Poland and to add the North-South axis to the traditional East-West policy axis, thus becoming a major actor in the region (a regional leader) and promoting closer cooperation between Scandinavia and the Baltic States and the Visegrad Group. Accordingly, the European region was divided into sub-regions and each of them had a strategic partner identified that had been or could potentially become a sub-regional leader. Lithuania was highlighted as the most important strategic partner in the Baltic Sea Region (Fotyga, 2007). However, parliamentary elections were held shortly and the new government was formed by the Platforma Obywatelska (PO) political party. The foreign policy concept by

former Foreign Minister Anna Fotygos, representing the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) party, was rejected.

The new Foreign Minister, Radosław Sikorski, has begun to emphasise of seeing foreign policy as a means of pursuing national interests. A key dimension - Europe: preparation for the presentation of the Eastern partnership policy and to secure Poland's role as an EU expert on Eastern policy. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a new leader at the forefront, indicated that foreign policy will be based on Poland's role as a regional leader, based on close security cooperation with the US, European policy with France and Germany (key strategic partner), and Sweden has become a special partner in the development of the Eastern partnership initiative (Sikorski, 2008). The role of Lithuania as a strategic partner in Polish foreign policy was considered by Sikorski as sentimental and did not coincide with the development of the diaspora's foreign policy: relations with the diaspora no longer meant "what Poland can do for them, but what they can do for Poland" (Sikorski, 2009). Thus, the diaspora became prominent in its relations with Belarus, Lithuania and Germany; however, attitudes towards the position of Polish minorities in neighbouring countries was not the only element of a pragmatic foreign policy.

The foreign policy concepts of the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) and Platforma Obywatelska (PO) political parties exhibited several fundamental differences. The PO and the PiS formed their political identities and their respective programs based on contradictions with each other. Accepting another party's proposals or policies was tantamount to treason. The parties became fierce critics of each other, and eventually this led to the division of the electorate and the media into two hostile camps (Jaskiernia, 2007). For this reason, parliamentary or presidential elections could only guarantee policy continuity if the same political force would form the government. In addition, Sikorski's personal disagreements with the Kachynski brothers emerged in his role as Minister of Defence and reached the apogee during the Sikorski's bid to become a presidential PO candidate in 2010. This way, personal motives and the desire to mobilise the electorate became one of the main reasons for the change of Polish foreign policy not just in relation to Lithuania.

PO saw the EU as a guarantor of the modernisation of Poland. PiS, on the contrary, saw a threat to Christian and national values in deeper European integration and considered strong bilateral relations with the US and the new EU members as a guarantee of modernisation (Bieńczyk-Missala, 2016). In particular, PiS emphasised the importance of Christianity not only in the Polish domestic policy, but also sought to emphasise the Christian roots of European civilisation in the Constitutional Treaty of the European Union. In addition, party representatives have consistently stressed that EU membership must not undermine state sovereignty and that Poland must maintain as much influence as possible in the European institutions. This party's critical attitude to the EU and hostile rhetoric towards Germany prompted the PO to forge a pro-European identity and underline the importance of partnership with Germany (Raś, 2017).

The purpose of the PO was to transfer important issues of Warsaw to the European level (e.g., the European neighbourhood policy, to create a European energy union) and to play an important role at this level. Thus, since 2010, “not less, but more Europe” has become the motto of Polish foreign policy (Sikorski, 2010).

PiS saw a threat in Russia’s foreign policy. For this reason, the party tended to focus more on defence, US military commitments to Poland, and expressing dissatisfaction with pro-Russian foreign policy developments in Germany (notably, the Nord Stream project) and France (military cooperation, arms trade). Reconciliation of national and collective interests became some of the most pressing problems after Poland joined the EU (Taras, 2015). Fragmentation and egoism of the most powerful EU member states were major challenges in the PiS foreign policy concept (Meller, 2006). Following the outbreak of the Russo-Georgian War, the Kaczynski brothers and other PiS members had evidence that Russia’s policy was imperialist, and that Germany and France were also threatening Poland by avoiding to punish Russia (Taras, 2015). PiS was aimed at the quickest possible integration of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova into the EU and NATO; for this reason, the party leaders sought to facilitate the Union’s and Alliance’s policy towards these countries by promoting dialogue with Belarus, while limiting Russia’s influence in neighbouring countries as much as possible (Raś, 2017). The leaders of the party presented the strategic partnership with the US as the only strong guarantee of Polish security. The PO’s position towards Russia was much more moderate: the party sought to normalise relations with the Kremlin and pursue dialogue at the European level (Sikorski, 2011). From the Lithuanian perspective, PiS’ strong stance towards Russia was more beneficial to national security.

Thus, the foreign policy concepts of PiS and PO had a different impact on the strategic coherence of Lithuania and Poland. The PO’s vision of the regional leader and Eastern policy expert did not include Lithuania as a strategic partner. In addition, new foreign policy presented by Lithuania since 2004 was also based on the idea of a regional leader. PiS saw an opportunity in Lithuania’s foreign policy to coordinate actions in the context of the EU Neighbourhood policy, and at the same time, play the role of Ukrainian Euro-integration lawyers. Meanwhile, in the concept of the PO’s policy, Poland was to become a leader and one of the three centres of power in continental Europe. From the Lithuanian perspective, the increasing role of Poland in Europe was desirable: the conviction that the friendship between Vilnius and Warsaw would guarantee that Poland would take care of Lithuania’s interests as before, was prevailing. These hopes were unfounded.

Following the adoption of amendments to the Law on Education in Lithuania in 2011 to strengthen Lithuanian language teaching in minority language schools and standardise the Lithuanian language maturity exam for minorities, Lithuanian Poles began pickets and rallies, which were actively supported by the PO. Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius, Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis and Minister of Education and Science Gintaras Steponavičius failed to persuade members of both the national minority and the Polish ruling coalition that the amendments are aimed at facilitating access to the labour market and higher education. In the same way, the Polish public failed to hear the message

that the amendments stipulate that Polish children in the Lithuanian language will have the same number of lessons as Lithuanian children in Poland have in Polish language (Sirijos Gira, 2011). Both sides accused each other of nationalism and the Polonisation of a national minority (from the Lithuanian perspective) and assimilation (from the Polish perspective) (Frenkel, 2017). Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski linked the education of the national minority in Lithuania to bilateral relations: “Poland’s relations with Lithuania will be as good as Lithuania’s relations with the Polish minority” (Grigaliūnaitė, 2011).

President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė and Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis strongly treated the situation of national minorities as a matter of domestic policy, seeking to limit the ability of Polish representatives to influence political decisions in Lithuania. Reluctance to include the issue of minority in foreign policy spurred Sikorski to seek leverage in other areas: economics, energy and even security. This way, ethnic minority disagreements became a legitimate pretext for Poland to consider not only economic sanctions against Lithuania, but also to formalise security cooperation, despite the fact that since 2004, the aggressive Russian policy towards the Eastern partnership states has intensified. The change in strategic coherence and the resulting foreign policy towards each other indicate that Lithuania’s focus only on overlapping interests and security threats is not sufficient to guarantee Poland’s support in the event of a security crisis. Accordingly, the development of Lithuanian security policy and foreign policy towards Poland should focus on mutual benefit, excluding the premise that Lithuania’s security and territorial integrity are a national priority of Poland.

## **2. Change in strategic coherence and military cooperation**

Intensive cooperation between Lithuania and Poland in the field of security was supposed to coincide with the desire to expand the security system of a united Europe, involving Eastern and Central European countries. Lithuanian-Polish cooperation in the field of defence was characterised by strategic collaboration following the implementation of the proposal of the Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas to establish a joint military battalion for UN peacekeeping operations. LITPOLBAT, Lithuanian–Polish Peace Force Battalion, was the only Lithuanian military unit with NATO member, and therefore became an important tool for Lithuania’s integration into the Alliance (Žigaras, 2002). LITPOLBAT’s function in participating in peacekeeping missions was not primary. In 1996, following the ethnic-religious conflict in Kosovo (Republic of Yugoslavia), territorial defence was still NATO’s primary function. With the immediate end to the security of NATO members following the end of the Cold War, the Alliance faced the need to transform not only NATO-Russia relations, but also its own security and defence agenda. Following Poland’s accession to the Alliance in 1999, the transformation process accelerated: One of the main tasks of the new strategic concept was not territorial defence, but the role of conflict management outside the Alliance (The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, 1999). Thus, potential member states not only had

to contribute to the Alliance's deterrent role, but also be able to participate in international conflict management missions, delegated by the United Nations to carry out its functions.

As Poland actively developed the US-Poland partnership, the latter became one of the most active members of NATO missions. International missions were one of the main reasons for the modernisation of the Polish army (Zaborowski, 2018). Simultaneously, Lithuania could benefit from Poland's experience and closer cooperation in the field of defence to seek more effective integration into the Euro-Atlantic security area. The Polish Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence contributed to the successful implementation of the Lithuanian NATO Membership Action Plan by sharing their experience of joining the Alliance, providing information on technical requirements, personnel training, budget planning etc. (Krivas, 2001). Poland's interest in Lithuania's Euro-integration was strategically validated – Lithuania's membership in the EU and NATO increased stability in the region and positively influenced Poland's security. Active military cooperation had a clear cause and purpose, which, after Lithuania's accession to the Alliance, had to be replaced by a new one.

After Lithuania joined NATO and the EU in 2004, the aim of Poland's security policy was to further expand the Alliance to Ukraine and Georgia. Ukraine has been the main focus of Polish foreign policy since the Orange Revolution, and only the US support could become the guarantor of Euro-Atlantic integration (Zajac, 2017). Partnership with Ukraine has also become a priority in Lithuania's foreign policy. At the same time, neighbours viewed NATO and the US as the most important guarantor of European security and were keen to maintain Washington's attention, which was increasingly focused on Asia. In order to contribute independently to the development of the Euro-Atlantic security area, in 2007, Lithuania and Poland agreed to promote military cooperation with Ukraine by establishing a joint military unit similar to LITPOLBAT (and POLUKRBAT), which had already ceased operations. In 2009, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine expressed its wish to create a brigade LITPOLUKRBRIG in a letter of intent not only within the framework of NATO, but within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union, assigning the brigade to the multinational battlegroups of the European Union for crisis management. The assignment of the brigade to the EU was consistent with the aspirations of Lithuania and Poland to become responsible and credible not only within the Alliance, but also as members of the Union. In addition, after the Russian-Georgian war, the Polish ruling elite began to prioritise increasing European defence capabilities. The choice was greatly influenced by the wish of US President Barack Obama to restart bilateral relations with Russia and to halt the development of the missile shield in Europe.

Reducing Russia's influence in Eastern Europe was one of the main and overlapping strategic interests of Poland and Lithuania. In 2008, Sikorsky delivered a speech at an event hosted by the Atlantic Council: "the Barack Obama Promise: A European View", which sought to draw attention to Ukraine. Sikorsky's speech was



intended to awaken the United States on the revival of Russia's imperialist power policy (Transcript: Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski Talks to Council, 2008). However, for security in Eastern Europe, Poland could not trust NATO, which Sikorski himself called a "toothless political club" (Poland: A Natural U.S. Ally On Eastern Policy, 2008). In this context, the Treaty of Lisbon, reinforcing the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), was seen as Poland's preferred option for harmonising the EU's ability to impose economic sanctions on Russia while promoting security cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries. The Polish ruling coalition, to avoid being marginalised when developing a Common Security and Defence Policy, decided to intensify cooperation with Germany and France (Kaminska, 2014). In preparation for the EU Council Presidency, the CSDP became one of Poland's priorities, highlighting the need to strengthen the EU's operational capabilities, including combat groups (Zajac, 2017). Thus, LITPOLUKRBRIG reflected Poland's political agenda of becoming one of the EU's centres of power and a major US ally in Central and Eastern Europe. Unfortunately, implementation of the project was delayed due to Ukraine's attempt to manoeuvre between the EU and Russia, and Lithuanian-Polish military cooperation faced challenges not only due to the reduction of Lithuania's military budget due to the economic and financial crisis, but also due to countries returning to territorial defence.

After the Georgia-Russia war of 2008 and the lack of strong reaction from the Western world, Polish defence policy has gradually become more focused on national territorial defence, rather than on international cooperation. When Bronislaw Komorowski, a PO spokesman, became President of Poland after the Smolensk air disaster, a new defence strategy known as the "Komorowski doctrine" was formed. It envisaged limiting the involvement in peacekeeping missions or other similar international operations but concentrating resources on the national defence system's preparedness to defend the state in case of war (Reeves, 2019). Thus, modernisation of the Polish Armed Forces became a top priority.

Cooperation in the field of security and defence with Polish President Komorowski was declared an area free from disagreements, although it was expressed to Lithuanian representatives that, due to the situation of Poles in Lithuania, Warsaw may consider no longer contributing to the NATO Air Policing Mission in the Baltic States (Bronislaw Komorowski: Poland will continue to participate in the NATO Air Policing Mission in the Baltic States, 2012). The Polish press announced that with the establishment of a Weimar Battlegroup in the context of the EU CSDP, Warsaw will not support Lithuania's aspiration to join this initiative until names and surnames in original spelling are allowed to be written in Lithuania. Although the battlegroup was a side issue, blocking of the bilateral electrical interconnection project LitPol Link became a major pressure element (Pawlicki, 2010). Political disagreements on the national minority thus affected all areas of bilateral cooperation, even those considered to be the basis of a strategic partnership. A new phase of bilateral military cooperation has begun, following the Russian military aggression against Ukraine: The violation of the territorial integrity of Lithuania's and Poland's strategic partner, Ukraine, prompted NATO's



return to territorial defence.

Following the annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine, NATO's new territorial defence agenda in Eastern and Central Europe is a major external factor promoting Lithuanian – Polish defence cooperation. The Baltic States and Poland are the external border of NATO. Thus, both countries face the inevitability, in the event of a conflict with Russia, to become frontline states and a buffer for Western Europe. Accordingly, Lithuania and Poland have equal responsibilities – to protect the eastern border of NATO; and (if not able to withstand Russian military attack, then at least) to have the greatest possible chances to gain support from the Allies. Therefore, the Baltic States' poor defensiveness due to geographical location and the neighbourhood of Kaliningrad and Belarus are the most important problems of Polish territorial defence (Zaborowski, 2018). For this reason, Lithuanian and Polish security interests overlap, and strategic culture determined by the geographical location of the two powers – Russian and German – promotes a focus on territorial defence (Reeves, 2019). Both countries have plans to raise their defence budgets above the 2 per cent of the GDP threshold and modernise the forces. Lithuania and Poland are interested in increasing US engagement in European defence: Lithuania supports the idea of “Trump's Fort” proposed by Andrzej Duda.

Although Lithuania and Poland have recently seen each other as reliable security partners, it is important to mention that this trend is driven by external factors. With the increasing intensity of external military threats, Lithuania and Poland, belonging to the same security complex due to geographical location, coordinate defence capabilities in the implementation of NATO's regional security agenda. Optimal strategic coherence is not long-term – military threats make national hard security a priority, hence, when the dilemma of providing military assistance in the event of a third-country aggression arises, the decisive factor is the answer to the question: “How will our assistance affect our security and our ability to defend ourselves?” It follows that Lithuanian national security is becoming more than just a matter of Polish strategic thinking, but also a question of moral duty. The question of whether Poland will be prepared to defend the Baltic States in the event of a third-country aggression depends not only on NATO Article 5, but also on the belief that there is no right not to defend.

In 2016, Jan Parys, former Minister of National Defence of Poland and then Director of the Political Cabinet of the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, raised the question, proving the fragility of political relations between Lithuania and Poland and the need to change Lithuania's concept of security, based on self-evident Polish altruism: “Why should Polish troops defend the Baltic States when the rights of the Polish national minority in Lithuania are violated?” (BNS, 2016). At first glance, such a question may seem out of place – the crisis in bilateral relations is over. However, the causes of the crisis are wide-ranging, including internal and external factors, and the political agenda for cooperation does not include solving potential problems and transforming them into opportunities for strategic cooperation at a time when the internal factors of Lithuania and Poland provide the preconditions.

### 3. Vulnerability of strategic coherence and Lithuanian national security

In 2016, a survey of ethnic minorities was commissioned by the Eastern Europe Studies Centre, which found that nearly 64 per cent of respondents of Polish descent rated Russia as a friendly state and Russian President Vladimir Putin more favourably than Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė. The survey data was used to compile a scientific monograph on the impact of Russian propaganda on Lithuanian society, which pointed out that people who receive news from the Russian media favour Russia's foreign policy, consider the annexation of Crimea legitimate and believe that Russia is a victim of NATO and US policy (Jastramskis, 2017). In a report by the State Security Department in 2016, Darius Jauniškis, the director of the department, noted that Russia seeks internal confrontation through national minority exclusion and alienation: *"It's always easiest to get to your side frustrated people, whose opinions are ignored, who feel alienated [...]"* (Department of State Security of the Republic of Lithuania, 2017).

Alienation and exclusion were also mentioned in the 2017 study of the Eastern Europe Studies Centre, "Ethnic Minorities in Lithuania". The study made sound recommendations for developing a coherent national minority policy in Lithuania, emphasising the importance of information space change, the need for alleviation of socio-economic exclusion and representing the interests of national minorities (Klimanskis, Ivanauskas, Kazėnas, Keršanskas & Legatas, 2017). None of these problems were included in the programme of the 16th Lithuanian Government or in the list of priorities of Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda. The political agenda lacks long-term mutual plans in addressing one of the biggest security threats in Lithuania – social, economic and mental exclusion of the Polish national minority.

The issue of the Polish national minority and common history is an abstraction in the bilateral political agenda. During the visits of Polish representatives to Lithuania, the demonstrated patriotism of the national minority is not a sufficient condition to claim that Poles living in Poland and Lithuania are homogeneous "us" (Kazėnas, Jakubauskas, Gaižauskaitė, Kacevičius & Visockaitė, 2014). Collective identity is something that is historically worth defending. Identity refers to communion and exclusion: these are the unique traits of an entity and the traits that the entity shares with other entities. There are two perspectives that can be applied to others – assimilation or transformation of others into another: countries, when confronted with other countries, can either transform them into hostile "others" or assimilate into a friendly "similar". The "similar" is reacted to with active ethical responsibility, and if another country is an "other", it can be considered a threat to national identity, the ethics do not apply and therefore military power can be used against it. Facing the "similar" supports an existing identity, therefore, similar is recognised, creating a narrative that maintains similarity and empowers "similar" to be worthy and preserved and even defended (Williams, Hadfield & Rofe, 2012). In this context, shouldn't it be assumed that stronger cooperation between Polish society and the Polish national minority benefits Lithuanian security? Perhaps public belief in the negative impact of Poland on Poles living in Lithuania is a fatal

mistake in allowing the Russification of the Polish national minority? The solution to this dilemma lies in the systematic formation of a collective identity, i.e. the Lithuania, Poland and Polish national minority becoming “us”.

The common history remains the greatest constraint in creating a collective Lithuanian and Polish identity. When Lithuania’s National Day was celebrated, Speaker of the Polish Parliament, Marek Kuchcinski, visited Vilnius, and Kamil Janicki’s article was published in the largest and most popular daily newspaper in Poland, *Gazeta Wyborcza*: “The Lublin Union in the eyes of Lithuanians: rescue us from plague, famine, fire and the Union with Poland, Lord.” This article states that the Union of Lublin (creation of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth) meant Polonisation of Lithuanians, and for this reason, the Lithuanian national movement and identity were being created, rejecting Polish culture and language, while the Union symbolised political, national and cultural slavery (Janicki, 2019). Before this article was published, celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth took place in Lublin. Commemorating the creation of the Commonwealth, Polish President Andrzej Duda congratulated Lithuania and Poland by letter, claiming that the Union of Lublin is a great historical monument, demonstrating deep political wisdom and a clear-sighted mindset. There was also a joint statement by Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė and Polish President Andrzej Duda, which also emphasised that the union symbolised mutual respect, a compromise and cultural diversity. Therefore, the gap between negative stereotypes prevalent in societies of Poland and Lithuania and rhetoric of political elites provides the prerequisites for re-actualisation of the issues of national minorities and common history in order to mobilise the electorate. According to opinion polls of the last few years, 21–25 per cent of Poles feel antipathic to Lithuanians, whereas the number of sympathisers ranges from 26 to 38 per cent (Omyła-Rudzka, 2019). Thus, Poland’s public opinion favours both the mobilisation of negative and positive attitudes towards Lithuania. Poland’s historical policy based on patriotism and national pride prevents the elevation of rhetoric on Russia and positively affirms security co-operation between Lithuania and Poland, but at the same time, potentially reinforces the belief that neighbouring countries are part of the exclusive zone of Poland’s interests (i.e. *kresy*) (Filipiak, 2017). Taking these factors into account, a long-term vision for the development of Lithuania-Poland must be included in the agenda of bilateral cooperation, and the Lithuania’s security strategy must include specific unilateral and bilateral instruments to reduce the exclusion of the Polish ethnic minority from the Lithuanian society.

## Conclusions

After the 2016 NATO summit, as the Alliance returns to territorial defence and strengthening of the Eastern Flank defence as a key function, Lithuanian-Polish defence cooperation is the best ever. In 2020, Polish troops participate in the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission for the ninth time. LITPOLUKRBRIG has reached operational capability and soldiers take part in international exercises. In February 2019, Polish President Andrzej Duda and Lithuanian President Dalia

Grybauskaitė signed a joint declaration on strengthening the Lithuanian-Polish security partnership and pledged to coordinate their actions within the NATO and EU CSDP and to develop intensive military cooperation to strengthen deterrence of Russia. In addition, a joint Lithuanian-Polish Defence Ministers Committee was established, and ministers signed a comprehensive defence cooperation agreement. Lithuania and Poland assigned brigades to the NATO's Multinational Division North East Headquarters in order to protect the strategically important Suwalki Gap. Polish-acquired US Patriot air defence missiles are being considered for defending objects in Lithuania – a potential opportunity to synchronise air defence is emerging.

Cooperation between Poland and Lithuania is directly related to conventional and non-conventional threats originating from Russia – if states want to reduce the Russia's ability to instigate conflicts between Lithuania and Poland, problems that give reason to quarrel must be resolved. Thus, intense cooperation, be it in security, defence or other areas, is not in itself evidence of a breakthrough in bilateral relations: the cooperation agenda must be based on long-term aspirations, allowing for altruistic attitudes toward one another. The key in this process is to strengthen cooperation in the field of education, culture, national minorities, that would contribute to the sense of commonality between Lithuanians and Poles, while reducing the prevalence of negative national stereotypes.

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## THE POTENTIAL FOR AND LIMITATIONS OF MILITARY COOPERATION AMONG THE BALTIC STATES

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### Introduction

Defence cooperation is widely seen as a means of delivering, among other benefits, better value for money, access to capability that could not be developed on a national basis alone, and improved interoperability with cooperating partners. Across Europe, however, defence cooperation has not been as extensive as it might. Despite multinational defence planning efforts such as the NATO Defence Planning Process and the EU Capabilities Development Plan, which seek to align national defence plans towards common goals, and high profile initiatives specifically aimed at increasing defence cooperation, such as NATO's Smart Defence initiative and the EU's Pooling and Sharing programme, states have by-and-large continued to define requirements for, acquire, operate and support military capability on a national basis. The prospective benefits of defence cooperation have thus largely eluded European states, leaving serious capability gaps in capabilities that are beyond the reach of individual nations, such as smart munitions, air-to-air refuelling, and intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance. Interoperability is complicated by a lack of cooperation—European states operate, for example, 17 different types of main battle tank, 29 types of destroyer and frigate, and 20 types of fighter aircraft (European Union, European Commission, 2017, p. 9). And there are substantial financial penalties. For example, a study by the European Added Value unit of the European Parliamentary Research Service (Ballester, 2013, p. 78) produced a lower-end estimate of the annual costs that arise from the lack of integration of the military structures of the Member States and the lack of a truly integrated defence market of at least 26 billion Euros (2011 prices).

While organisations such as the EU and NATO may encourage defence cooperation, they are generally too large and bureaucratically cumbersome to be effective implementers of it. Most practical defence cooperation projects take place in smaller groupings of states with shared interests—either in bilateral or so-called minilateral frameworks or clusters. For example, while the EU's most recent efforts at encouraging European military capability development are being carried out under the umbrella of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO),

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a treaty-based mechanism that includes 25 participating member states, the actual work of building capability is carried out through a raft of (presently 47) projects, each involving smaller subsets of the PESCO participants (European Union, n.d.).

At first sight, the three Baltic states might be expected to form a natural cluster of cooperation partners in a wide range of fields, including defence. It would be hard to find a group of European states that appear so close in terms of size, geography, strategic circumstances, history and politics; indeed, to their irritation, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are often perceived by the rest of the world as a single block (the ‘Baltic States’, rather than the ‘Baltic states’). In the period following the re-establishment of their independence, the three states did in fact work closely together in defence, offering hope that they might succeed where others had not. Their four flagship projects, whose success was advertised to others as examples to emulate, were the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT), the Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON), the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL) and the Baltic Air Surveillance Network (BALTNET). BALTBAT was launched in 1994 with the aims of using the less controversial framework of peacekeeping as a means of providing Western military assistance to the Baltic armed forces and of introducing Western military standards. BALTRON was launched in 1998 to coordinate Baltic naval enhancement through the development of defensive mine countermeasure capabilities. The BALTNET agreement was also concluded in 1998 and foresaw the development of a Baltic radar network and a cooperative framework to include a common air command and control system. Finally, BALTDEFCOL was established in 1999 to deliver a common programme of military education.

A strong case can be made that Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia’s success in developing military organisations and capabilities as well as in achieving their NATO integration goals was due, to a very large extent, to their trilateral defence cooperation. Given the trends in the transatlantic and regional security environments, it might further be argued that strengthening and expanding this cooperation as an instrument of enhancing defence and deterrence in the region should be high on the agendas of Baltic policy makers. The reality, however, is somewhat different. BALTDEFCOL continues to thrive, providing military education at the more senior levels to Baltic and other officers. Through BALTNET, and glued together by a shared need to provide host nation support to NATO’s Baltic Air Policing mission, the three states continue to cooperate to execute the vital function of air surveillance. But BALTNET has certainly had a rocky history, and has neither broadened nor deepened its scope since its establishment in the late 1990s. BALTBAT, meanwhile, has never deployed at full strength and, despite its occasional revival as a framework for, for example, coordinating a Baltic contribution to the NATO Response Force, has been largely dormant for most of the period of its existence. BALTRON no longer exists as a trilateral project following Estonia’s withdrawal in 2015, justified by the need to prioritise naval resources and to contribute more effectively to the NATO Standing Maritime Groups (Vanaga, 2016, pp. 1-2).

Furthermore, despite what might be expected to be major external motivators

for closer defence cooperation such as the global economic crisis of 2008 or Russia's aggression against Ukraine from 2014, no major trilateral initiatives have been implemented since the 1990s to build on the promise of these early flagship projects. At least since Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania achieved their primary security and defence policy aim of joining NATO in 2004, Baltic defence cooperation has been characterised by ambivalence and missed opportunities, if not outright cynicism. The Baltic states have preferred either to work alone, or to seek cooperative opportunities with larger nations, such as the US, Germany, and Finland.

Defence cooperation, including its Baltic variant, is a perennial subject for the research community who, apparently without exception, advocate more and closer collaboration in all aspects of defence. A regional approach is frequently a strong component of their analyses. Tomas Valasek, for example, has advocated the concept of 'islands of cooperation,' arguing that by forming discrete, regional clusters of countries that cooperate extensively, even to the degree of integrating their militaries, the overall fighting capacity of both the regional clusters and that of the organisations they belong to can be increased (Valasek, 2011, pp. 9, 29). These academic views are underwritten by frequent pronouncements from the most senior policy makers in Europe's defence establishments on the value of defence cooperation. Baltic decision makers are no exception and often make reference to Baltic defence cooperation. Meeting in June 2019, for example, in a very typical statement, the Ministers of Defence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, "committed to further deepening and broadening Baltic defence cooperation through actions ranging from policy coordination to cooperation in capability development" (Baltic Defence Cooperation Ministerial Committee, 2019). At least in terms of political rhetoric, there seems to be strong will to pursue closer trilateral defence cooperation, but this does not appear to translate to reality on the ground—a situation that should be of concern not only to the academics but also to the defence policy makers and military practitioners mandated to develop credible and effective national defence capabilities, while creating regional coherence, synergies and collective effects in terms of deterrence.

The clear disconnect between stated ambitions and the implementation of these ambitions makes this subject ripe, once again, for review. This chapter is intended to be a contribution to this endeavour. In the first part, we draw on the literature and on interviews with defence practitioners to examine the current and historic state of Baltic defence cooperation against ingredients for success in defence cooperation identified by the research community. We thus aim to identify the particular factors relevant to success and failure in a Baltic context. In the second part of the chapter, we consider whether the prospects for Baltic defence cooperation have been enhanced or weakened by contemporary circumstances such as the degraded security environment, increasing Baltic defence budgets, the framework nations groupings, and the EU's 'Europe of defence' agenda. In the final part of the chapter, we evaluate the prospects for success in what is perhaps the most promising area for future Baltic defence cooperation: the development of the Baltic states' navies.

## 1. Factors for Success in Defence Cooperation

Here, we consider in the Baltic context various criteria that have been put forward to explain the success (or otherwise) of defence cooperation projects. Defence cooperation is a complex business and no two projects are identical. As one set of analysts has noted, while the chances for success in cooperation may be enhanced by the application of a set of understood criteria, every individual case is different and may require a unique mix of factors (Zandee, Drent and Hendriks, 2016, p. 3). Our aim is thus not to provide a recipe for success—this would be an exercise doomed to inevitable failure—but to examine ingredients for success that have been identified by the research community and to understand how these might help or hinder defence cooperative efforts by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Perhaps the most useful recent list of ingredients for success in defence cooperation has been provided by researchers at the Clingendael Institute (Zandee, et al., 2016, pp. 3-7) whose report is based on several case studies of successful defence cooperation. The report focuses on operational forms of defence cooperation, specifically excluding research & development and procurement, and identifies the following criteria for success:

- ▶ Trust, confidence and solidarity
- ▶ Sovereignty and autonomy
- ▶ Similarity of strategic cultures
- ▶ Geography and history
- ▶ Number of partners
- ▶ Countries and forces of similar size and quality
- ▶ Top-down and bottom-up
- ▶ Mind-set, defence culture and organisation
- ▶ Defence planning alignment
- ▶ Standardisation and interoperability
- ▶ Realism, clarity and seriousness of intentions
- ▶ Involvement of parliaments

Tomas Valasek's earlier influential work for the Centre for European Reform (many of the Clingendael criteria build upon Valasek's analysis) was written in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, which left numerous governments cash-strapped and resulted in cuts to defence budgets. Valasek's work was not constrained to operational cooperation alone, and adds two further items to the list above (Valasek, 2011, pp. 23, 26):

- ▶ Level playing field for defence companies
- ▶ Low corruption

We examine here only criteria for success that are inherently characteristic of the participating states, and exclude criteria that may or may not be present on a project-by-project basis (although, of course, such criteria are important for promoting success in individual projects). We thus exclude factors identified by other analysts such as operational need and common requirements (Kepe, Flint and Muravska, 2019, p.13) and the notion that success in minilateral formats is more likely if those cooperative efforts are supported by the multilateral institutions



under which they are housed (Moret, 2016, pp. 3-4).

In considering these criteria in the Baltic context, it is not possible to simply treat them as a checklist and to determine which are present and which are not. For each criterion, various nuances will pull the three states towards and away from defence cooperation. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify on balance those factors that broadly advance Baltic defence cooperation—those that need nurturing if Baltic defence cooperation is to be further encouraged; and those that broadly hinder Baltic defence cooperation—those where more attention is required.

## **2. Factors advancing Baltic defence cooperation**

### *Similarity of strategic cultures*

Zandee, Drent and Hendriks argue that the “similarity of strategic cultures is important, but mainly for interventions at the high end of the spectrum” (e.g. for expeditionary operations) (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 5). We contend that the influence of strategic culture on successful defence cooperation extends well beyond this, and suggest that shared threat perceptions, similar ideas about the role, utility and uses of military power, and converging strategic choices with regard to security alliances form the very foundation of practical cooperation.

In strategic terms, the idea that “the Baltic states are small, flat, and easy to invade” and are neighbours of an aggressive great power has resulted in a focus in all three states on territorial defence (Bosoni, 2018) and a common search for security through membership of international organisations. The historical occupier-occupied dynamics have produced a shared threat perception with regard to Russia, which in turn has encouraged the three states to seek to coordinate their foreign and security policy positions in international fora. A half-century of the traumatic historical experience as well as geographical proximity to a much larger—and increasingly aggressive—military power has imbued Baltic strategic cultures with two overwhelming imperatives: never again (never shall they fail to resist aggression by all possible means) and never alone (never shall they find themselves isolated and without credible allies) (Atmante, Kaljurand and Jermalavičius, 2019). These imperatives drove the efforts of the three states to join NATO and the EU as their primary foreign policy goals—efforts which in turn have further shaped their strategic cultures in profound and largely similar ways (Hedberg and Kasekamp, 2018).

The fear of being left alone in the uncertain post-Cold War environment motivated all three Baltic states to work together to demonstrate their eligibility for admission into the EU and NATO. Through BALTRON, BALTBAT, BALTNET and BALTDEFCOL they sought to demonstrate to prospective allies and partners a will and ability to find common defence solutions. It also motivated them to participate in the international operations prevalent in this period, when NATO’s principal focus was ‘out of area’ crisis management and stabilisation missions. For the Baltic states, military force was as an instrument to demonstrate solidarity and pursue political integration with the West as much as it was a tool for ensuring homeland defence (Paljak, 2013).

In this regard, policy coordination (which is beyond the scope of this chapter) sometimes also involving partners such as Poland or the Nordic states, has been perhaps the most successful form of Baltic cooperation in the security sphere. Policy successes (from the Baltic viewpoint) such as the conferring of an effectively permanent status on the Baltic Air Policing mission, the agreement that NATO should develop contingency plans for the defence of the Baltic states, and the reinforcement of NATO capability in the region (and in Poland) in the form of enhanced Forward Presence were greatly assisted by the agreement and advocacy of common positions among the Baltic states (Marmeš and Jermalavičius, 2018).

The shared strategic outlook of the Baltic states that has enabled such common positions has been clearly visible in the decade marked by Russia's aggressive resurgence. Russia's wars in Georgia, Ukraine and Syria, and Moscow's effective employment of hybrid warfare techniques to challenge the West have similarly impacted all three strategic cultures. There is absolute certainty in the Baltic states that the threat posed by Russia is multidimensional and existential, and that military deterrence and total defence are essential to national survival. The Baltic states all include society's will to defend itself, initial self-defence capabilities, and allied military deployments as primary pillars of this approach. Alongside a broad political and societal consensus over the value and importance of military defence, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania recognise the value of a comprehensive security perspective and have begun to incorporate non-military aspects such as cybersecurity, psychological defence and societal resilience into their thinking about defence and deterrence (Atmante, Kaljurand and Jermalavičius, 2019).

Last, but not least, the Baltic states are unwavering in their trans-atlanticism and regard US involvement in European security affairs and military presence for deterrence purposes as pivotal (Jermalavičius, et al., 2018). This also imprints on their strategic cultures a degree of instinctive cautiousness with regard to ideas such as European Strategic Autonomy and the EU's defence dimension, which they see as risks to US engagement. In the strategic cultures of the Baltic states, both a strong NATO and an effective EU, and close cooperation between the two are essential, while political trends that appear to force a choice between the two are regarded as disruptive and dangerous. To the extent that they support such initiatives, the Baltic states are keen to emphasise their capability-building aspects, rather than their political and institutional aspects (Lawrence, Praks and Järvenpää, 2017), an emphasis that might be expected to nudge them in the direction of Baltic defence cooperation as an efficient means of developing capability.

#### *Geography and history*

Zandee, Drent and Hendriks argue that, "most forms of deeper operational defence cooperation exist between neighbouring countries" (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 1). Generally speaking, geographical proximity not only places states in a similar—or even the same—geostrategic reality, but also enables easier interaction simply because the physical distances involved are shorter and neighbours are thus more likely to be familiar with each other. Tallinn and Vilnius are separated by only 530km, while Tallinn is just 280km from Riga, and Riga just 260km from Vilnius. Aside from physical distance, a neighbourhood can also be defined by proximity

to, or the opportunities and limitations imposed by physical or geopolitical features. For example, the Baltic states are connected to each other not only by land borders, but also by the more than 2,000 kilometre long Baltic Sea coastline. Their physical geography is very similar too, characterised by a cool, damp climate, low uplands and flat plains, a multitude of lakes and bogs and large areas of forest. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also all share a border with the Russian Federation—an Eastern border with mainland Russia in the case of Estonia and Latvia, and a border with the Kaliningrad exclave in the case of Lithuania.

In addition to a shared geography, the Baltic states also feature phases of shared history. Their economically important location has historically incited foreign powers to conquer their territories. Most recently, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were all occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940 and the more than 50 years of occupation that followed have deeply affected relations between them and Russia.

The history, and political and physical geography that the three states share might be expected to favour more practical defence cooperation. At the operational level, for example, the small physical size of their territories coupled with the high speed of air operations makes it sensible to treat the airspace of the three states as a single operating area (Harper, Lawrence and Sakkov, 2018). While at the tactical level common operating conditions ought to make the harmonisation of equipment requirements a relatively easy task. However, this is not always the case: recent potential cooperation in the acquisition of infantry fighting vehicles, for example, was thwarted in part by a disagreement over whether to select tracked or wheeled vehicles. In the end, the three states all procured different solutions from different suppliers: Estonia purchased CV90s from the Netherlands, Latvia purchased CVR(T)s from the UK, and Lithuania purchased Boxers from Germany. This case demonstrates that criteria for successful defence cooperation cannot be treated in a black and white manner; political geography, for example, while generally favouring Baltic cooperation can at times also work against it. Lithuania's purchase of Boxer vehicles from Germany in part reflects its self-identification as a central, rather than northern European state, and its preference to work, sometimes, with states of this region. Similarly, Estonia is often more inclined to work with Finland or other Nordic states.

#### *Number of partners*

Generally speaking, multinational defence cooperation becomes more difficult as the number of cooperation partners increases; indeed analysts suggest that the most successful cases of defence cooperation are undertaken bilaterally (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 5). Examples include BENESAM, the Belgium/Netherlands naval cooperation project, and the Lancaster House treaties signed in 2010 between France and the UK. Nonetheless, there are plenty of examples of successful trilateral defence cooperation, including the Baltic states own flagship projects of the 1990s, although the international support provided to the Baltic states in developing and implementing these projects—which made them *de facto* larger than trilateral projects—was also a key factor in their success (Ito, 2013, pp. 276-

7).<sup>35</sup> Other positive examples include the long-standing cooperation between the BENELUX countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg), most recently energised by a 2012 declaration (Biscop, Coelmont, Drent, and Zandee, 2013). Certainly, there is no reason to believe that a partnership of three states would be unmanageable.

*Countries and forces of similar size and quality*

There are certainly examples of successful defence cooperation between countries of different size, including some involving the Baltic states. For example Estonia, whose active armed forces are only around one third the size of Finland's has nonetheless cooperated with its northern neighbour to acquire howitzers and air surveillance radars. In the latter case, Estonia claims to have essentially acquired two medium range radars for the price of one through a cooperative military off-the-shelf procurement (Ministry of Defence (Estonia), 2009). Furthermore, three of Europe's leading cooperation efforts, the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, the French-led European Intervention Initiative and the German-led Framework Nations Concept, have as their very basis the notion that successful cooperation requires the leadership of a larger state.

Generally, though, cooperative arrangements between countries of different size run the risk of being hindered by the dynamics of domination. A smaller country might be reluctant to join a project due to the fear of being ignored or overshadowed by a larger power; conversely, the larger power might neglect the smaller power and dismiss it as inferior. Other factors favouring success need to be present to mitigate the difficulties of pursuing projects in which partners are of unequal size (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 5). Most successful examples of cooperation thus usually involve countries of similar, or at least comparable, size whose armed forces are of a similar degree of sophistication.

While the three states have sometimes been reluctant to admit it themselves, the size, composition and quality of their defence forces are clearly similar enough—and sufficiently different from the forces of other European states—to support the case for Baltic defence cooperation (see Table 1). Furthermore, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are all at roughly the same stage in their defence development, having embarked on the building of armed forces essentially from scratch following the re-establishment of their independence. They have all developed small, light armies whose main focus is on securing national sovereignty and territorial integrity, navies based around mine countermeasure vessels, and air forces so far without combat capability. Thus, for example, while Finland has around 21,500 active service personnel and on size considerations alone might appear an equally natural cooperation partner for Estonia as does Lithuania, the fact that Finland also fields main battle tanks, naval combatants and jet fighters, not to mention retaining a reserve of close to a quarter of million personnel and having a defence budget of more than €3bn (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2019, pp. 103-5), puts even this small country into a different league from the Baltic states.

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<sup>35</sup> Denmark acted as lead nation coordinating international assistance to BALTBAT, while Germany played a similar role for BALTRON, and Norway for BALTNET.

**Table 1. Baltic states: Summary defence statistics**  
(International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2019, pp. 101-2, 123-6)

	<b>Estonia</b>	<b>Latvia</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>
Defence Expenditure Million euro, 2018	524	576	873
Defence Budget Million euro, 2019	614	601	952
Active Armed Forces	6,600	6,210	19,850
Reserve Armed Forces	12,000	15,900	6,700

*Top-down and bottom-up*

For defence cooperation to succeed, leadership from the political and senior military levels and the inclusion and engagement of the armed forces at working levels are both necessary (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 5). When political leaders change, as they do frequently and suddenly, an engaged military is able to preserve project continuity. At the same time, defence cooperation, which inevitably entails a degree of national compromise, is unlikely to succeed without the commitment of the political leadership and their readiness to accept the risks. In the Baltic states, the picture here is somewhat mixed, but generally favourable.

In terms of top down leadership, senior Baltic defence officials meet on a regular basis. The ministers of defence meet formally twice a year. Baltic defence cooperation is a regular subject for their discussions and the three states have developed a procedure by which chairmanship for matters related to defence cooperation rotates between their ministries of defence. As noted, their joint communiqués regularly embrace Baltic defence cooperation and applaud progress. The three chiefs of defence, chiefs of the single service staffs and policy directors are also among those who meet on a regular and formal basis to discuss, among other matters, Baltic defence cooperation. However, what is missing is an overarching strategic direction to pursue cooperation in a Baltic framework. If cooperation opportunities arise, the senior leadership will certainly encourage them. But they do not direct their staff to actively seek such opportunities, for example by instituting some sort of ‘Baltic first’ policy or insisting on consideration of cooperative opportunities as part of project scrutiny. Inevitably, this passive approach leads to missed opportunities.

Bottom-up, the picture is largely positive. Baltic service personnel regularly cross borders to participate in each other’s exercises. In 2018, the Estonian exercise ‘Siil’ (‘Hedgehog’), for example, took place in southern Estonia and northern Latvia (Lõuna-Eesti Postimees, 2018). The members of each state’s voluntary defence organisations also train together and join each other’s parades (Kaitseliit, 2016) and the Military Academies all list each other as cooperation partners (Kaitsevää Akadeemia, n.d). Meanwhile, specialist communities such as navy divers, and explosive ordnance disposal and air defence personnel also exercise together (albeit often on a bilateral rather than trilateral basis). There is thus a low-level,

but continuous habit of cooperation and the sharing of best-practice among Baltic military personnel.

#### *Standardisation and interoperability*

Standard concepts, doctrine and equipment make defence cooperation much easier and more likely to be far-reaching. Common equipment not only enhances interoperability, but also opens opportunities for sharing costs through common maintenance and training, and coordinated logistics (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 6). The defence forces of the Baltic states are mostly following the standards required by NATO: both formal standards prescribed in NATO Standardisation Agreements, and less formal concepts and procedures of best practice that develop from close operation with other allies and participating in military education in their defence academies. The effect of NATO membership should not be underestimated: one analyst, for example, has recently found that while trilateral Finnish/Swedish/Norwegian cooperation has been greatly assisted by Finland and Sweden's partnership with NATO, problems in information exchange and command and control that arise from their non-membership remain obstacles to optimal cooperation (Møller, 2019, p. 250-1). A further factor in the Baltic case is the existence of BALTDEFCOL, which provides not only joint education, but also less tangible outcomes such as the cultivation of a shared mindset and the development of professional networks.

#### *Involvement of parliaments*

Constitutions may specify different roles for parliamentary involvement in defence, but parliaments often play a part in the deployment of military forces and in defence planning and procurement (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 7). Parliamentary endorsement of cooperative efforts provides greater confidence to the other participants of political, public and, given parliaments' typical role in the allocation of resources, financial commitment to a project. In the Baltic case, in addition to the involvement of national foreign affairs and defence committees in the respective parliaments, elected representatives also meet in the format of the Baltic Assembly. This was established in 1991 to be "a consultative cooperation organisation of the parliaments of the three Baltic States which discusses issues of mutual interest in the Baltic region" (Riigikogu, n.d). The positions of the Assembly are communicated to the parliaments and the governments of the Baltic states and its members also engage with selected regional and international organisations. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are represented by a total of 60 representatives. The Assembly's security and defence committee includes among its six priority issues for 2019 "joint procurements in the military sector, defence cooperation of the Baltic States, [and] cooperation in the field of disaster prevention, preparedness and response, crisis management and civil protection"(Baltic Assembly, n.d.).

However, the favourable impact of supportive legislatures on defence cooperation may be eroded in the Baltic case by their different constitutions. While Estonia and Latvia are parliamentary democracies, Lithuania has a dual executive system in which the Lithuanian president is elected in a direct ballot and has considerable executive power, in particular over the matters of foreign affairs and national security, and is simultaneously the commander-in-chief of the



armed forces (Norkus, 2013, pp. 11-13). Indeed, there have been cases related to strategic cooperation where the Lithuanian president's position has been at odds with the parliament's opinion and shaped foreign and defence policy to a greater extent than the will of the legislature: for instance, early in her first term, President Dalia Grybauskaitė (in office 2009-2019) sought to diminish reliance on the US and to build closer ties with the Nordic states and large European powers such as Germany (Park and Paulionyte, 2016).

*Level playing field for defence companies*

Defence cooperation may diminish opportunities for the defence industry by, for example, reducing the overall numbers of equipment procured, or centralising maintenance and support. Cooperating states must thus not be seen to favour their own national defence industries at the expense of those of their partners (Valasek, 2011, pp. 23-4).

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have very small defence industries and this particular factor should not be an issue in the Baltic case. Nonetheless, the three states have argued bitterly over such questions as the location of facilities related to their collaborative efforts—notably over the location of the command and control nodes associated with BALTNET—and it is not inconceivable that such jealousies would be factors in projects with local economic impact (e.g. shared maintenance facilities run by local contractors).

### **3. Factors hindering Baltic defence cooperation**

*Trust, confidence and solidarity*

Analysts agree that trust between partners is the most important factor for the success of the defence cooperation (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 4; Valasek, 2011, p. 22). It must be present from the beginning, and can be expected to grow over time as cooperation progresses. Each participant of a cooperative project must be confident that the other participants are acting in the common interest and that they will not be tricked into undesirable situations or be left to act alone. Partners must be transparent in their actions and guarantee that they have no hidden agendas (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 4).

Unfortunately, the Baltic states have struggled to establish trust for many years. This is not just a security and defence issue, but a much broader one. At the time of writing, complications and arguments surrounding the Rail Baltic railway project, disagreements over the terms of Lithuania's integration into a common regional gas market created by Estonia, Latvia and Finland, lack of solidarity of Estonia and Latvia with Lithuania's position regarding Astravyets nuclear power plant in Belarus, the inability of the Baltic (and Nordic) leaders to speak with one voice in the allocation of top EU positions, and a dispute between Estonia and Latvia about alcohol duty, at least three of which might be considered strategically important issues, are evidence of the shaky state of mutual trust between the Baltic states.

In defence, the desire of each Baltic state to stand out and to find its niche has undoubtedly led to healthy competition between the three small states. But this competitive atmosphere has also produced arrogance, chauvinism and a

desire to stand out as individual states at the expense of cooperation. As the Baltic ministries of defence and military staffs are small and the same personnel deal with a broad range of issues, good interpersonal relationships are essential. Sadly, this has often not been the case—to the point that officials have even considered raising the poor state of relationships between ministry of defence personnel to government levels (Vanaga, 2016, p. 6). The attitudes of defence personnel have undoubtedly been unhelpful in creating trust and solidarity. Estonia has been singled out for uncompromising rhetoric (for example, a notorious article in the daily *Postimees* claiming that Latvia's alleged weakness in defence was Estonia's greatest security threat (Salu, 2012) drew senior government ministers in a lengthy and unpleasant debate) and an “unwillingness to share information crucial to Baltic defence purposes” (Vanaga, 2016, p. 7), although Latvia and Lithuania must doubtless share some of the blame. An acrimonious row also broke out in the early 2010s between Lithuania and Estonia over the latter's ambitions to host NATO's Baltic Air Policing operation on a rotational basis at its Āmari airbase (at the time air policing was conducted solely from the Lithuanian airbase in Šiauliai) (Baltic News Service, 2012). Even the flagship cooperation projects have not been immune: a particularly bitter dispute about the required number (one regional or three national) of the air operations Control and Reporting Centres (CRC) in the mid-2000s came close to destroying BALTNET and spilled over into BALTDEFCOL when one of the three states threatened to withdraw their participation if their aims were not met. The ambitions of successive BALTDEFCOL commandants to develop the college in one direction or another, meanwhile, have been a persistent source of tension in its governance structures, where the three states have clashed in attacking or defending commandants according to their nationality.

While it is certainly not the case that Baltic defence personnel are today engaged in open quarrels about Baltic defence cooperation projects, the fact is that there are few Baltic defence cooperation projects for them to quarrel about. A failure to generate solid mutual trust, when so many other factors favour cooperation, is almost certainly one of the reasons why.

#### *Sovereignty and autonomy*

A desire to retain sovereignty is frequently cited as a justification for avoiding defence cooperation as states seek autonomy in defence capabilities in order to avoid dependence on others (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 4). The counter argument is that credible capability can rarely be reached by one state alone—this is certainly evident in the development of big-ticket items such as fighter aircraft, or in the provision of sufficient enabling capabilities such as strategic transport and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets. When an insistence on sovereignty results in hollow capability, sovereignty is meaningless; it should thus be considered not in terms of autonomy, but as the ability to deliver security, which implies cooperation with others (Drent, Homan, and Zandee, 2013, p. 5).

In the Baltic states, however, sovereignty is seen very much in terms of autonomy. For their defence, the three states rely heavily on NATO, but their defence concepts all include notions of an initial self defence capability. Estonia's

national defence strategy requires “an initial independent defence capability”; Latvia’s national defence concept states that “the national defence system ... must be able to resist aggression during the initial conflict stage”; while the Lithuanian Armed Forces “must be ready for individual defence until reinforcement from the Allies has been provided” (Ministry of Defence (Estonia), 2011, p. 10; Ministry of Defence (Latvia), 2016, p. 11; Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), 2016, p. 8). This concept of sovereignty, enshrined in the highest level state strategic documents, is clearly an obstacle to Baltic defence cooperation.

*Mind-set, defence culture and organisation*

Zandee, Drent and Hendriks argue that one of the key paradigm shifts that needs to happen in the context of multinational defence cooperation is the shift in thinking from ‘national first’ to ‘multinational first’ (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 6). Valasek agrees, quoting Nordic officials who link the success of Nordic cooperation to a shared identity and a tendency to think of themselves as Nordic first, and European second (Valasek, 2011, p. 22). The Baltic states are certainly reaping the benefits of running a common combined joint staff college, BALTDEFCOL. Many senior military officials of the Baltic states share a perspective that it is easy to work with the cadre of BALTDEFCOL graduates, as they seem to understand each other very quickly and collaborate with the same points of reference in mind (Corum and Johansson, 2019). But in general, the Baltic states cannot be said to have formed a unified Baltic defence identity.

A number of organisational factors makes their defence cultures broadly similar, but also rather distinct. One the one hand, the armed forces of all three nations are small. Staff officers in non-operational structures hold responsibilities comparable to those of much more senior officials in larger organisations and members of all three defence organisations are far more likely to deal regularly with senior political, civilian and military figures. At the same time, the senior defence leadership in all three countries can often be found managing the issues that might be regarded as too low-level by larger nations.

The Baltic armed forces are all heavily dominated by a land component and have very small naval, air and other components, resulting in overall similarities in terms of requirements, priorities, doctrinal approaches and mindsets. Meanwhile, the need for the small air forces and navies to deal with similar challenges flowing from their being regarded as of lesser importance to national military strategies and lower in the order of capability development priorities might be expected to make them natural partners to each other. Further, the growing significance that the three states attach to the development of certain niche capabilities pertaining to asymmetric warfare, such as special operations forces, or capabilities in new domains of warfare such as cyber, should create new opportunities for trilateral cooperation.

The three states also all value and encourage voluntary participation in defence through paramilitary structures. Latvia’s Home Guard (*Zemessardze*), Estonia’s Defence League (*Kaitseliit*) and Lithuania’s Riflemen Union (*Šaulių Sąjunga*) and National Defence Volunteer Forces (KASP) bring volunteers from their societies into regular interaction with members of the armed forces (Mölder, 2013). While

this might be expected to encourage cooperation on aspects such as paramilitary volunteer structures and whole-of-society approaches to defence, relations between the voluntary (paramilitary) and regular military components of national defence are not always frictionless in all three countries, and their integration into overall national defence designs varies. Thus, for instance, Estonia and Latvia could easily be confused as to whether it is Lithuania's Riflemen Union (an independent organisation) or KASP (essentially an adjunct to the Land Forces) which is more relevant cooperation partner for their Defence League and Home Guard in different activities.

When it comes to operational experience, the picture is mixed. Although Lithuania led a Provisional Reconstruction Team in Ghor Province, Afghanistan, from 2005-2013, the Balts have more often found themselves deploying platoon- or company-size units within the formations of a larger framework nation. The political and military leadership in all three states has always been cognisant of the needs of the very practical military profession to gain actual exposure to the challenges of military operations. In Estonia, however, most of the involvement in international missions has been confined to one particular unit, the Scouts Battalion, while the mindset of the rest of the organisation has focused on homeland defence. In Latvia and Lithuania, the burdens and opportunities of international deployment have been more broadly and evenly spread across the entire force structure (Paljak, 2013).

This difference in approach is largely due to the very different schemes the three states have developed towards the manning of their armed forces. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were all reliant on conscripted manpower during the 1990s and much of the 2000s. However, Latvia and Lithuania suspended the military draft in 2006 and 2008 respectively, while Estonia has remained strongly committed to universal male conscription. Latvia continues to be convinced that an all-volunteer force best suits its defence needs and societal context, but Lithuania resumed the military draft in 2015. Nonetheless, Lithuania relies mostly on full-time professionals to maintain its higher readiness units, prioritises voluntary rather than compulsory conscription, has a lower proportion of conscripts than Estonia in the force structure, and does not envisage the same degree of reliance on a mobilised reserve force in wartime as Estonia (Jermalavičius, 2017). The armed forces of the Baltic states thus occupy different points of a continuum between an all-volunteer force and a conscript-heavy force. This makes for a fundamental difference in defence culture between the three states, resulting in different challenges to and constraints on their development. The opportunities to cooperate, for instance in personnel policies, mobilisation concepts, infrastructure, and strategic communications are inevitably lessened. Defence cultures that are familiar with and incorporate 'citizens in uniform' are distinct from those that rely solely on full-time professionals; they tend to approach such issues as readiness, operations and equipment management in different ways.

The Baltic defence establishments have also evolved in somewhat different directions when it comes to the role and functions of civilians in their structures. Latvia and Lithuania have experimented with merged civilian-military ministries

of defence, resulting in top-level structures with a greater number of military officers and more frequent daily interactions between military and civilian personnel compared to Estonia, which kept its ministry of defence and main military headquarters separate (Lawrence & Jermalavičius, 2012). Lithuania has recently reverted back to a model closer to that of Estonia's. In any case, trilateral cooperation has to contend with the fact that each defence establishment puts civilian and military personnel in different positions and that the former can have a different status and perception in the eyes of the latter in each of the three nations. This comes on top of the fact that the defence structures of one nation do not necessarily mirror those of the other two, making it harder to establish who appropriate cooperation partners might be and to synchronise processes across all three defence establishments.

*Defence planning alignment*

Transparency, and ultimately alignment, of defence planning is important in long-term collaboration as, for example, equipment ages and requires coordinated upgrade or replacement; perhaps more importantly, transparency and alignment of defence planning makes the identification of potential future cooperation more likely (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 6). While the three Baltic states have made efforts to share their defence plans with each other, the lack of synchronisation of planning cycles is a further practical obstacle to defence cooperation. In terms of high-level, longer-term planning guidance, Estonia is presently implementing the requirements set out in its National Defence Development Plan 2017-2026; Latvia's twelve year defence plan covers the period 2016-2028; while the current iteration of Lithuania's Guidelines of the Minister of National Defence covers the period 2017-2022. On the upside, Latvia and Lithuania signed an agreement in 2016 to synchronise military procurements such as acquiring fire-distribution centre for air defence, anti-tank missiles, and short-range anti-aircraft missiles (Adamowski, 2016).

*Realism, clarity and seriousness of intent*

Without a clearly defined reason for cooperation and a realistic set of objectives which the partners take seriously, defence projects risk being merely symbolic or superficial (Zandee, et al., 2016, p. 6). Valasek explains that there are numerous legitimate reasons for cooperation, but it is important that the partners agree on the reason right from the start because "this will determine the scope, form and depth of their common project"; such reasons might include saving money, enhancing sub-regional/regional unity, and interacting with new partner countries (Valasek, 2011, p. 24).

One of the key factors behind the success of the Baltic states' flagship cooperation projects, BALTBAT, BALTRON, BALTNET, and BALTDEFCOL, was a clear shared purpose. While Nordic sensitivities prevented it being declared aloud, the Baltic projects were all intended to support the Baltic case for NATO accession (Ito, 2013, pp. 261-2). Indeed, the achievement of this goal in 2004 removed this common sense of purpose and contributed to the subsequent decline of these otherwise successful projects. Today, the lack of a clearly defined and shared understanding of why the Baltic states should establish more extensive



defence cooperation is another limiting factor.

*Level of corruption*

Corrupt defence officials may see cooperation projects that require them to share or delegate financial decisions as reducing their ability to profit; defence cooperation is thus less likely to succeed in high corruption environments (Valasek, 2011, p. 26). Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2018 gives Estonia a score of 73 (on a scale from zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)), Latvia a score of 58, and Lithuania a score of 59; European states' scores range from 42 (Bulgaria) to 88 (Denmark) and average 66 (Transparency International, 2018). Transparency International's Global Defence Corruption Index, which rates states on a six point scale (Very Low, Low, Moderate, High, Very High, Critical) has no data for Estonia, but places Latvia in the Low category and Lithuania in the Moderate category; the vast majority of European states are also located in these categories (Transparency International, 2015).

The picture across the Baltic states is thus somewhat mixed. Latvia and Lithuania both fall below the European average on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. While European states tend to have scores higher than those in much of the rest of the world (the global average is just 43, and two-thirds of countries score below 50 (Transparency International, 2018)), Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania should, as European states, be held to European standards. In Lithuania, the lowest scoring of the three Baltic states, concerns relate to the inadequate scrutiny of procurement tender boards, personnel shortages and lack of training in the defence procurement structures, and the high number (57%) of single source tenders (Transparency International, 2015; Delfi, 2015). Such concerns certainly have the potential to damage the trust on which cooperation critically depends.

#### **4. Baltic defence cooperation: present-day external influences**

Many of the factors for success in defence cooperation identified by the research community and discussed in a Baltic context above may vary over time making the prospects for successful cooperation more or less likely. Trust, for example, may grow with greater experience of working together, while deliberate policy changes may be adopted with the aim of removing obstacles such as the lack of planning alignment or the frequency of defence corruption. It might also be expected that external change would strengthen or weaken the prospects for defence cooperation. This does not, however, seem to have been the case in the Baltic context since the 1990s: diverse influences such as the global economic crisis or Russia's aggression against Ukraine do not appear to have either encouraged Baltic defence cooperation or explicitly taken it off the table. The flagship cooperation projects of BALTBAT, BALTRON, BALTNET and BALTDEFCOL, meanwhile, were very clearly driven by external influences—the central policy aim of the three Baltic states to join NATO, and the encouragement and pressure applied by supporting states for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to work together. Here, we briefly consider whether the prospects for Baltic defence cooperation are increased or lessened by some of the features of the present external environment.



*The degraded security environment*

Probably the most striking feature of the present environment is the weakening of security in Europe generally and in the Baltic region in particular. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and subsequent semi-covert intervention in eastern Ukraine alerted the Alliance to the fact that inter-state military conflict in Europe, although still unlikely, is no longer entirely unthinkable. The Baltic states have drawn attention to the military threat posed by Russia since at least the war in Georgia in 2008. Their heightened vigilance to the Russian threat may in part be explained by the fact that many analysts regard the Baltic region as the most likely location for a Russian military challenge to NATO (Shlapak and Johnson, 2016, p. 3). NATO's response, the enhancement of its defence and deterrence posture, has included a greater emphasis on readiness and reinforcement, the boosting of its exercise programme and, most visibly, the deployment of multinational battlegroups to the Baltic states and Poland.

It might be expected that the vulnerability felt in the Baltic states in the face of this renewed threat would stimulate defence cooperation as a means of developing defence capability more efficiently. It seems, however, that this has not been the case. Indeed, while the Baltic states may have been able to find a common voice at NATO regarding the threats of the post-Crimea security environment, their instincts regarding practical defence cooperation have led them to seek military assistance on a unilateral basis (Vanaga, 2016, p. 7). Further, they have been unable to agree on any common concrete solutions to the Russian threat—at least any solutions that display forward thinking and ambition. In a telling example, the US Congress authorised \$100m under the European Deterrence Initiative in the 2018 US defence budget for “a single joint program of the Baltic nations to improve their interoperability and build their capacity to deter and resist aggression by the Russian Federation” (U.S.C. 155 § 91, 2017, sec 1279D). The three states, however, to some disappointment from their US counterparts according to defence officials, were able to agree only on a lowest common denominator programme of ammunition procurement.

*Increasing Baltic defence budgets*

The Baltic response to the degraded security environment has included an acceleration of the growth of their defence budgets, in particular those of Latvia and Lithuania (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Baltic states: defence budget growth  
(NATO, 2019, p. 6)**

	Million euro, constant 2015 prices					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 (est)
Estonia	390	418	443	454	466	513
Latvia	221	254	361	452	547	561
Lithuania	323	425	567	685	818	842

If anything, the larger volumes of money available to the three states has discouraged them from seeking cooperative defence opportunities. Absorbing rapid defence budget growth when allocations must be spent in-year is in any case a challenge, and would be further complicated by the need to cooperate with partners, which inevitably slows projects. Flush with money, Lithuania has, for example, pushed ahead with the acquisition of medium-range, ground-based air defence systems. All three states have had a longer-term aspiration to acquire such systems and a collaborative programme might have brought benefits, for example in common training and logistics support. But in the absence of any funded commitment on the part of Estonia and Latvia, Lithuania—understandably—proceeded alone. In this particular case, should Estonia and Latvia find the funding for system acquisition, it may still be possible to reverse engineer arrangements to allow at least some aspects of a programme to be cooperative (Harper et. al., 2018, p. 24).

#### *Enhanced Forward Presence*

The tendency of the Baltic states to seek unilateral, rather than common Baltic solutions to defence problems is likely to be exacerbated by the presence of the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battlegroups on their territories. Under eFP, multinational units of around 1,000 personnel have rotated through the Baltic states (and Poland) since early 2017, each led by a framework nation—the UK in Estonia, Canada in Latvia, and Germany in Lithuania. While eFP is a substantial and welcome contribution to deterrence and defence in the Baltic region, it adversely impacts Baltic defence cooperation in at least two ways. Firstly, hosting eFP consumes resources (Estonia has, for example, allocated €15m for hosting allied units in 2019 (Ministry of Defence (Estonia), 2019). Perhaps more importantly, hosting eFP places demands on personnel who, in the small Baltic defence establishments, are already stretched. The prospects for bottom-up Baltic defence cooperation, which requires dedicated time and effort, are thus reduced. Secondly, and related, cooperation with framework nations on the ground in the Baltic states inevitably leads to broader defence cooperation with these nations at the expense of Baltic cooperation. Examples include Lithuania's procurement of Boxer infantry fighting vehicles from Germany, and Estonia's close operational partnership with France in Africa (France is not a framework nation, but a major contributor to the eFP battlegroup in Estonia (Stoicescu and Lebrun, 2019, pp. 3-8)).

A related development that will further distance the Baltic states from each other is the establishment of Multinational Division North (MND North), a NATO force structure division-level headquarters to be led by Denmark, Estonia and Latvia. Like eFP, the creation of a headquarters at this level in the Baltic states (MND North will divide its staff between Ādaži in Latvia and Karup in Denmark) is a welcome and important contribution to regional defence and deterrence. However, while it is expected that MND North will eventually include staff from all three Baltic states, Lithuania is likely to continue to focus its attention at this level on the existing Multinational Division Northeast, which is located at Elbląg in Poland.

#### *Defence in the European Union*

Alongside NATO, the EU has also placed greater emphasis on defence and

security in the post-Crimea period. Although its focus is crisis management, rather than collective defence, the EU has agreed to a robust military level of ambition in the implementation plan for its Global Strategy, and subsequently put in place a package of measures—Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund, the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence, as well as a programme of cooperation with NATO—intended to realise this ambition (European Union, Council of the European Union (2019), pp. 2-3).

Perhaps the most relevant of these measures for defence cooperation is PESCO, a treaty-based defence cooperation initiative in which 25 EU member states, including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, participate. As this number is too large for meaningful defence cooperation, PESCO is being implemented through a series of (so far) 47 defence projects, each involving a subset of the 25 participating member states. The Baltic states have generally been sceptical of defence initiatives in the EU and this scepticism—and their constrained resources—is reflected in their limited participation in PESCO projects. Estonia leads one project (Integrated Unmanned Ground System) and participates in a further two (Cyber Rapid Response Teams and Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security, Military Mobility); Latvia participates in three projects (Integrated Unmanned Ground System, Maritime (semi) Autonomous Systems for Mine Countermeasures, Military Mobility); Lithuania leads one project (Cyber Rapid Response Teams and Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security) and participates in two more (Military Mobility, Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe and Support to Operations) (European Union, Council of the European Union (2019)).

Although their participation is limited, there is some degree of overlap between the projects that the three states have chosen to join, and Estonia and Lithuania's leadership of projects may be seen a welcome sign of the value they attach to cooperation. Furthermore, PESCO projects stand a greater chance of success by virtue of their existing within a wider, supportive multilateral framework. On the other hand, these projects are not Baltic defence cooperation projects, but defence cooperation projects in which one or more Baltic state participates. The Integrated Unmanned Ground System project has a total of 11 participating member states, the Cyber Rapid Response Teams and Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security project has 7, the Military Mobility project has 24, the Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe and Support to Operations has 15, and the Maritime (semi) Autonomous Systems for Mine Countermeasures has 7 (European Union, Council of the European Union (2019)).

*The framework nations groupings*

A final potential external influence on Baltic defence cooperation is the existence of multinational groupings that may, like the EU/PESCO support cooperation in minilateral formats. While the Baltic states are included in broad, but largely ineffective formats such as the US-led Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe and the Nordic-Baltic 6, they are also members of three frameworks that actively encourage defence cooperation. The UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) is intended to facilitate the assembly of high-readiness, multinational, northern European intervention forces and includes Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania

among its nine members. The JEF exists under the NATO Framework Nations Concept (FNC) and the three Baltic states are also members of the German-led FNC grouping of 21 nations, which focuses on capability building among so-called capability clusters and the development of multinational formations. The French-led European Intervention Initiative (E2I) exists outside NATO and the EU and focuses on the development of a common European strategic culture as well as, like the JEF, the ability to assemble European forces for intervention operations; Estonia is the only Baltic state represented in the E2I.

Of these groupings, the German-led FNC is perhaps the most likely to directly encourage and support Baltic defence cooperation. There are currently 24 capability clusters available to the FNC participants, but there appears to be no evidence that Baltic defence cooperation has been influenced by the three states' participation.

## 5. The prospects for Baltic naval cooperation

As already noted, the Baltic states have earlier been very successful in developing trilateral cooperation in the maritime domain. The BATLRON project provided a framework for developing a niche mine countermeasure capability (MCM)—a capability that has been and remains highly relevant to NATO, particularly in the Baltic Sea, and where the Baltic states are seen among the leaders (Nordenman, 2018). Although Estonia withdrew from the project in 2015, BALTRON has nonetheless created a culture of cooperation between the three small naval forces (Romanovs and Andžāns, 2017). On the other hand, this cooperation has been quite limited; it has not led, for example, to the common procurement of vessels or the development of common maintenance facilities. At different points in time, each Baltic state has chosen to conduct separate acquisition projects, leading to them each operating MCM vessels of different classes and, in the case of Latvian and Lithuania, also different classes of patrol vessels.

However, the MCM fleets of all three states—ex-UK *Sandown* class in Estonia, ex-Netherlands *Tripartite* class in Latvia, and ex-UK *Hunt* class in Lithuania—are simultaneously approaching the end of their useful lives and will need to be replaced towards the end of the next decade. This presents an ideal opportunity for the three states to embark on a collaborative fresh path towards building broader naval capability and breaking out of the MCM niche.

The MCM capability will need to be retained, but the three states could also consider developing capabilities in three further areas. Firstly, the three navies might aim to execute—at least on a limited scale—other naval warfare disciplines; in particular, an ability to conduct anti-submarine and anti-surface operations will be important in enhancing their credibility. The optimal way for small navies to achieve a range of capabilities at reasonable cost is through the acquisition of small multi-purpose vessels, such as corvettes or fast patrol boats, perhaps augmented with a range of unmanned vehicles. Finland's Squadron 2020 serves as a useful example of the range of capability that can be integrated into a small, modern, multi-purpose platform (Ministry of Defence of Finland, 2017). Such vessels can also contribute to maritime situational awareness and provide

command and control functions.

Secondly, the requirement to protect sea lines of communication and maritime infrastructure, and to deny an adversary the opportunity to disrupt friendly shipping movements, could be partly met through the development of mine-laying capabilities. Mines can be decisive in the defence of a small coastal state—Finland also provides an example of a small state that is highly proficient in both offensive and defensive mine warfare. Thirdly, another approach to protecting sea lines of communication and infrastructure is through the use of land-based, mobile anti-ship missiles. The balance between providing maritime defence from the sea and from the land in a Baltic context would require further analysis of costs and operational effects (Lange et al 2019).

The importance of the sea in peacetime, crisis and war ought to persuade the Baltic states to take their maritime responsibilities seriously and to tackle their ‘sea blindness’ in the next phase of their defence development. There is no doubt that capability development in the maritime domain would be expensive and that there would be other competing priorities that, in defence cultures focused primarily on land warfare, would likely diminish any national naval ambitions for the future. It is thus most unlikely that any of the three Baltic states could achieve these types of capabilities alone. Instead, they would need to think seriously about acquiring, operating and commanding naval capability on a shared basis.

This opportunity for collaboration has been acknowledged by the defence leadership in the three countries: the chiefs of the three navies have been tasked with developing a common vision for 2030. The vision document (in the possession of the authors) is not yet publicly available, but was presented to the Baltic Ministerial Committee in the first half of 2019 and contains a number of proposals that might lead to much greater synergies between the three nations: in their investments in new technologies (such as unmanned and autonomous underwater and surface platforms); in acquisition and life cycle management of new ships; in training and exercises; and in the conduct of operations on the Baltic Sea. Even if the vision might not encompass all three capabilities described above, it would be a huge step towards building a credible, common naval posture for the future.

There is, however, already a degree of scepticism and caution among defence policy makers concerning this common Baltic naval vision. One interviewed official observed that the initial cost estimate for acquiring the capabilities envisaged by the three navies was around €1.5bn just for one state alone.<sup>36</sup> Even if this cost were spread over a period of ten years, it would amount to, for example, half of Lithuania’s current defence investment budget. This is clearly unrealistic, even before taking into account that Baltic defence priorities focus largely on land forces and air defence. On the other hand, there is also among policy makers an acknowledgment that something needs to be done—otherwise the Baltic states might lose their naval capability altogether.

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<sup>36</sup> This is most likely based on an ambition to acquire new rather than second-hand platforms and cutting edge battle management systems and armaments: as the interviewed official hinted, having begun to procure new equipment in recent years, it is psychologically hard for the Baltic states to return to purchasing legacy systems.



## Conclusions

Defence cooperation is widely recognised to improve interoperability, provide economic benefits, and allow states to develop capability they would have no hope of providing alone. It is only to be expected, then, that NATO and the EU, eager to have more defence capability to call upon, should have launched successive initiatives aimed at encouraging European states to work more closely together in defence. While these efforts have largely been unsuccessful, at least on the scale envisaged by their originators, defence cooperation has been shown to sometimes work among small clusters of allied states. Simply being a small cluster of allies is, however, not enough. Numerous accompanying criteria for success in defence cooperation have been identified by the research community. We have examined some of these in the context of the Baltic states in this chapter. Many of these criteria suggest that the Baltic states ought to be good partners to each other. Indeed, through their flagship cooperation projects of the 1990s, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have demonstrated an ability to work together and have seen substantial benefit from this. Since then, in spite of multiple high-level declarations from Baltic defence policy makers stressing the importance of Baltic defence cooperation as well as the very successful coordination of policy positions and actions, there has been little practical cooperation between the three states. Furthermore, none of the external factors that might be expected to push the Baltic states closer together in defence—for example, changes in defence financing, the deterioration of the security environment, a new defence agenda in the EU—have done so; other external factors have even pushed them further apart.

Meanwhile, criteria that today generally act to hinder Baltic defence cooperation, such as differences in defence culture and a lack of defence planning alignment, ought to be surmountable given sufficient political courage and will. Even the high obstacles of a lack of trust and Baltic conceptions of autonomy should be able to be ground down by robust political leadership. A combination of top-down direction and bottom-up enthusiasm may be required for individual defence cooperation projects to succeed, but the binding of cooperation into the very fabric of Baltic defence policies can only be achieved through top-down leadership. Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn must thus focus on reaffirming the policy rationale for cooperation, building organisational capacity and shaping defence culture in ways that enable and facilitate the effective short, medium and long-term trilateral projects required to deliver their common strategic aims. If Baltic policy makers are serious about giving effect to their regular statements on Baltic defence cooperation, they will need to be clear on just what they are trying to achieve by working together, demand that ‘(Baltic) multinational first thinking’ should replace ‘national first thinking’, and have the courage to reject—on a strategic and on a project-by-project basis— notions that cooperation would be overcomplicated, or produce sub-optimal solutions.

The historic record suggests that this will likely be a step too far. It is far from certain that Baltic defence leaders have the political will to follow such a course, or even if they accept that its benefits would outweigh the costs of driving such



fundamental change. In the absence of a bold strategic vision, a pilot project may be an alternative route to reminding the Baltic defence establishments of the advantages of deep cooperation with their neighbours. Naval cooperation is perhaps the most promising opportunity to re-energise the defence cooperative relationship and to set the three states on a fresh path of working together. It should thus be hoped that the political and military leaderships of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, after a period of discussions and calibration of ambitions, endorse and provide concrete support to the three navies' common vision—a vision that puts Baltic cooperation at the very heart of their future as separate services of the armed forces. Without naval cooperation, the three Baltic navies are destined to be left on the periphery of the Baltic Sea naval community, and the Baltic states' defence and deterrence are bound to retain a significant vulnerability that the rest of the Alliance will not be able to fully remedy. Without a suitable pilot project to lead the way in Baltic defence cooperation, the Baltic states are bound to continue on national paths that will produce less defence capability, at greater cost, than their defence forces require and deserve.

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## 18.

# LITHUANIAN MILITARY TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGING EFFICIENCY OF DEFENCE

Deividas Šlekys\*

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the changes and development of the Lithuanian military since 2014 and how it managed to navigate between conflicting, contradictory Western ideas, proposals and looked for its own authentic ways. The position taken in this chapter is as follows: Institutional and conceptual inertia and a copy-paste mentality in the Lithuanian armed forces was broken only in 2014, when the real military transformation started. Yet, the magnitude and breakneck pace of change made this transformation uneven, leaving conceptual and societal aspects of defence politics least developed.

Thinking about Lithuanian defence policy in general and the development of its armed forces in particular, one word comes to mind – laboratory, or in military parlance – proving ground. For some people, the metaphor of “laboratory” sounds too condescending and shows a programmed inferiority vis à vis Western allies. For others, this metaphor is too vague and does not indicate any specific elements associated with the military. According to some scholar and state officials, all spheres of Lithuanian public policy, for instance, education, health, were experimental grounds for Western ideas and practises. Be that true, the military domain was one big exception. While health, education or public security sectors developed from Soviet institutional legacy, Lithuanian armed forces and Ministry of National Defence (MOND) structure had to be built from scratch. The only Soviet legacy was a physical infrastructure (barracks, bunkers, roads), some equipment and some officers, NCOs with a Soviet military background. In general, the military domain was a clean slate where many different Western military ideas and practises could be put to the test.

### 1. The Road to Crimea and Aftermath

From the early days Lithuania faced daunting challenges, yet the most important was the question: how was it planning to fight and defend itself. The source of the threat was clear, as well as an orientation towards Western security systems. However, as a small and young State, it lacked know-how concerning conceptual approaches, and therefore “hunting season” was open for military ideas. That led to a testing, experimentation with various ideas, which not necessarily complimented each other.

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At first, from the early 1990s to 2010s it was a proving ground for Western military concepts such as territorial defence, network-centric warfare, effect-based operations, counterinsurgency. Western ideas, through various mediums like training, preparation for and service in international missions, officer education and military assistance initiatives, shaped the procedures, tactical manuals and conceptual thinking of Lithuanian military (Šlekys, 2016).

Alongside this conceptual emulation, Lithuania arranged its security and military apparatus following good practises of Western civil-military relations. Advisors from various countries gave their insights on how to establish civilian control upon the military, how to organise the work of MOND and how to conduct defence planning (Urbelis, 2002; Stankevičius, 2008).

This multidimensional learning and copying of Western practices only increased in tempo and variety after becoming a member of NATO in 2004. Lithuania was fast to embrace the then popular ideas like the transformation, professionalisation of armed forces, which led to such outcomes as the cancelation of conscription or creation of a fourth branch of the armed forces – Special Operations forces (Paulauskas, 2013).

At the same time, due to NATO membership and increasing cooperation with the US military, Lithuanian armed forces went through the Americanisation process. Professional military education was based upon the American model, some officers studied in American military colleges. Daily, routine military procedures were based on American Field manuals (FMs). In a literary sense, the Lithuanian military used the American FM as official Lithuanian military training and procedural documents. On the same note, major military operational concepts like manoeuvre warfare and mission command also came from American military thinking (Šlekys, 2016, pp. 132-165). On the one hand, all of that helped Lithuanian armed forces bypass some conceptual and procedural gaps much faster and establish interoperability with NATO allies, the majority of whom also relied on the American/NATO approach to war. Yet, all of that also created an environment that favoured a “copy-paste” culture. It was much easier just to use the American FM than to create an authentic one. Under such conditions, there was not much effort dedicated to the development of authentic, Lithuanian military thought or a more serious adaption of the Western one to suit our needs (Šlekys, 2015).

While the military was experiencing these developments, political circumstances only encouraged and facilitated this “copy-paste” culture. After the membership of EU and NATO was achieved, the Lithuanian political elite entered a phase of impasse, thus failing to reach a consensus on what the next big foreign policy goal should be (Nekrašas, 2009). The interest of political leadership towards the military gradually decreased. For instance, the number of meetings of the State Defence Council during the period from 2005-2013 declined substantially. A similar fate happened to the defence budget, which was shrinking even before the 2009 financial crises struck. The overall mood of that period was the notion that the hard job was done, we are in NATO, and if Russia were to threaten us, the Alliance would help and rescue Lithuania. In the political realm, it led to a free rider situation. The Lithuanian defence budget was far from the required 2% of the

GDP, its preparations for an Article 3 situation, i.e. self-defence, was lukewarm, hoping that the Allies would fill in the gaps (Zapolskis, 2015). In order to get into their good graces, Lithuania pursued active participation in international missions and operations: Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan. With its biggest mission in Afghanistan (the lead nation of one provincial reconstruction team and a Special Forces unit) Lithuanians joked that its military is defending Lithuania on the borders of Afghanistan (Šlekys, 2017).

Only having this picture of trends in the Lithuanian defence policy and military helps to understand the real magnitude of change, which happened in this sphere after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. It will not be an understatement to see the events in Ukraine as a wake-up call, which shocked Lithuania and its people to the core.

Since regaining its independence, Lithuania has never stopped worrying about Russia. Historically-bounded distrust was too big a bridge to cross. Even membership in the EU and NATO did not diminish a sense of insecurity. The Lithuanian fixation on Russia in various international forums and meetings started to annoy the Allies, who called Lithuania a “one question State” (Laurinavičius, 2009). The 2008 events in Georgia proved to be confirmation of some truth, in which Lithuania and the rest of the Baltic nations were trying to say to the Western capitals. Yet, the financial crisis and Barak Obama’s reset of Russian policy had not created favourable conditions to make a U-turn in Western policy towards Moscow. Lithuania itself, despite rising suspicions towards Russia, was not rushing to implement new policies. The defence budget remained below 1% of the GDP, enlargement of armed forces was not planned and it phased out its major international mission in Afghanistan.

Therefore, when the events of Maidan and later in Crimea happened, it shocked Lithuania deeply. First of all, despite the fact that anti-Russian sentiments were quite pronounced, it seems Lithuanian people and the ruling elite did not think that Russia could really go that far and start using military power to solve its international problems. After all, during that year, the whole world, and especially Europe, commemorated the World War One centenary. Therefore, it was difficult to accept the fact that having in mind these lessons of the past, there might be states that wanted to start a military conflict in Europe again.

Secondly, people in power were also shocked by realizing that, in the worst case scenario, Lithuanian armed forces were seriously unprepared for self-defence. The best illustration of that was a frank assessment provided by General Major J. V. Žukas during his hearings for the position of Chief of Defence. According to him, Lithuanian military units were seriously undermanned, some of them having only 25% of its manpower, while the reserves of ammunition were seriously depleted (Čekutis, 2014; LRT, 2014). All of that led to a serious overhaul of the Lithuanian armed forces and defence policy.

Looking from a wider perspective, this overhaul signalled challenging times for Lithuanian national security. On the one hand, it was good news because the government and people took matters of State defence seriously. Yet, a lack of

doctrinal clarity and the pace of political, institutional, cultural change, taken after Crimea, brought its own risks of the possibility of uneven transformation.

## 2. Physical element

The changes happened fast in all possible areas related to the military. Therefore, in order to provide an overview of these changes, they will be analysed and discussed by applying the matrix of military power. In its classical definition, continuously repeated in many different doctrinal documents, military power is seen as consisting of three interrelated elements: physical, moral and conceptual. We will start with an overview of the physical element.

As the Roman proverb says, money are the sinews of war. Without proper funding, any preparation for a war effort will be futile, and money was scarce in the early winter of 2014. That year, the Lithuanian defence budget was only 0.79% of the GDP (300 million EUR) Political leaders understood that, if Lithuania wanted to weather the storm, funding issues should be resolved first. Already in late March 2014, all major political parties signed an agreement that by 2020, the defence budget should be 2% of the GDP (15min, 2014; Lietuvos Respublikos Seime atstovaujamų politinių partijų susitarimas, 2014). What happened in the next five years was a very rare sight in Lithuanian political life. The defence budget steadily increased yearly by hundreds of millions of euros, and by 2019, it reached 2%<sup>37</sup> (almost 1 billion EUR). In September 2018, political parties signed a revised political agreement, agreeing to reach 2.5% of the GDP for the defence by 2030 (Beniušis & Jakučionis, 2018; Lietuvos Respublikos Seime atstovaujamų partijų susitarimas dėl Lietuvos gynybos politikos gairių, 2018). Overall in five years, Lithuania increased its defence budget tremendously and showed its political resolve to take defence politics seriously (Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2019).

It did not take long for the military to provide its wish/shopping list and spend money that was so generously provided by politicians. The armed forces were in serious need of all sorts of equipment, weaponry, ammunition etc. Depleted ammunition reserves had to be restocked, tactical gear and uniforms replaced, yet the biggest chunk of money was allocated for a big projects like the purchase of German Panzer howitzers and armoured fighting vehicles and the Norwegian air defence system NASSAMS (Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2015 and 2018; Gudavičius, 2015). The upcoming years will see even more hardware reaching the Lithuanian armed forces: at least two ships, 6 helicopters, hundreds of light tactical vehicles (Jakučionis, 2019a; Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2019a).

If an increased budget and shopping spree was not enough to confirm Lithuanian seriousness, then the decision to bring back conscription, made in March 2015, had to put to rest all doubts. The increase of defence expenses and procurement was more a question of relocation of money and better management. However, conscription moved issues of defence from a governmental level to a wider societal one. For common Lithuanians, the changes in defence politics

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37 Yet in 2018 and 2019, the Lithuanian economy grew faster than planned, and the government had to borrow money (18 and 30 mil. euros accordingly) to reach 2% of the GDP.

stopped being abstract, distant events happening in political corridors in the capital and later seen on TV while watching the evening news. By bringing conscription, the government brought war to every household, because somebody from the family could potentially be drafted into the army (Černiauskas, 2015; Katkus, 2015). It is important to emphasise that in 2015, only partial, not universal, military service was introduced. At the beginning, the government intended every year to call to service around 3500 conscripts, and the decision had to be revised in 2020. However, later that year, it was decided to remove the date of revision and to continue conscription as long as necessary. Gradually, the number of conscripts increased, and in 2019, it was around 4200 (BNS, 2015). At the same time, politicians toyed with the idea of universal military service, when all males and females, after finishing secondary school, would have mandatory service in the armed forces for 9 months. Yet, the decision was not made and, according to party agreement, this question should be reopened only in 2022 (Gudavičius, 2018).

The decision to reintroduce conscription served several purposes. First of all, it was a political statement that Lithuania takes its security seriously and is ready to make serious political sacrifices. Considering that in Western allied countries issues of defence budget and conscription (especially in Anglo-Saxon states) are very sensitive or even politically toxic themes, Lithuania's decisions got attention and provided an important element for lobbying in Western capitals (BBC, 2015). At the same time, conscripts helped to fulfil the vision of the Chief of Defence, who wanted to have at any given moment as many soldiers as possible in the ranks and barracks. In his mind, the lessons learned in Ukraine and increasing Russian practices of snap military exercises were clear indicators that, in the case of an attack, there may not be enough time for a mobilisation (Jakilaitis, 2015). Therefore, it is better to have more people in the ranks, even raw conscripts, than empty, half-manned battalions. Finally, the conscription system allowed a stronger bond between society and the armed forces as well as encouraged stronger society's involvement in the State's defence debate.

Reintroduction of conscription raised the level of ambitions in the armed forces. Yearly influx of few thousand freshmen and a steadily increasing number of long-term professional soldiers allowed for an increase in the number of military units. In January 2016 second infantry brigade, the Zemaitija (Griffin) motorized, was created, followed by a third one – Aukštaitija (Lrt.lt, 2016; 15min, 2017).<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, the number of battalions increased to 16 by adding additional infantry, artillery, logistics and signals battalions (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybė, 2018; Budzinauskienė, 2018; Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2019b; Jakučionis, 2017). The size and complexity of land forces reached such level that, at the beginning of 2019, it was announced that Lithuania, with the help of the US, will develop divisional-level headquarters capability. This initiative was finalised and an agreement was signed in September 2019 (Jakučionis, 2019b).

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<sup>38</sup> The third brigade is a reserve brigade and, at this moment, its development is on hold due to personnel and funding issues.

Additionally, Lithuania started hosting an increasing number of allied soldiers coming to participate in various military exercises and training. Also, following the decisions agreed at the NATO Wales and Warsaw summits, an Enhanced forward presence (EfP) forces are deployed in Lithuania on the basis of permanent rotation. Since January 2017, more than 1000 soldiers from the lead nation Germany and other allied countries (Netherlands, Croatia) are constantly deployed in Lithuania (Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2019c).

Such an increase of national and international forces in the country has required an investment in and the expansion of the military infrastructure. To get political support from allies is one thing, but to be ready to host thousands of foreign soldiers is an entirely different thing. Therefore, one of the top jobs for the armed forces became the development of a host nation support infrastructure. Lithuania, together with financial help from Germany, the US and NATO reconstructed, expanded, built key infrastructures like an airport in Zokniai, a training ground in Pabrade, Kazlu Ruda, storage facilities for pre-dispositioned ammunition and logistical equipment (BNS, 2019; Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2018a; Lrt.lt, 2019). In 2019, Lithuania initiated a public tender for a public-private partnership in order to build three new military towns/bases, because the existing basing infrastructure is not capable of accommodating a rapidly-growing military manpower (Karsokaitė, 2018).

Overall, since 2014, Lithuania started spending more money, buying more munitions and equipment, recruiting more soldiers, hosting more friends than ever before. All of that, accordingly, required the right mindset and attitude not only from members of the military, but from all members of society. Eventually, it became clear that the physical build-up of military power was the easiest part. More daunting challenges appeared when it came to explaining and involving society into the fray.

### **3. Moral element**

Carl von Clausewitz said that war is an attempt to enforce your will upon the enemies. All technological and material advantages may be for nothing, if the armed forces and society in general does not have the will to fight back. The moral element is even more important for a small State, where every person counts.

Lithuanian armed forces, even before the events in Crimea, enjoyed high public support. Through the years, its popularity, according to public opinion polls, was between 55-60 %, i.e. 3-4 positioned among all major State institutions. Events in Ukraine and decisions made after that (defence budget, conscription) did not have a negative impact. People's support even slightly increased. Only on one occasion, in summer 2015, ratings suffered a serious fall because of a mismanaged of funds scandal, which showed that people will not forgive inefficient management, especially in times of an increasing defence budget. However, MOND managed to weather the public relations storm (Pancerovas, 2016).

Probably the most surprising support from society concerns conscription. Opinion polls shows high support for conscription. There were worries that older



people would not support it because of the memories of the Soviet era military service, especially *dedovchina* (Lrt.lt, 2016a). On the other hand, there was a lot of scepticism concerning the younger generation, which could rebel and does not want to serve due to postmodern values and virtues associated with Generation Z (Pukenė, 2015). Yet, a greater number of youth volunteered for military service. At the same time, the majority of conscripts are satisfied with the armed services, and around one-third stays in the military with signed contracts. On the other hand, the armed forces make a lot of effort to accommodate the various needs of contemporary youth: providing entertainment spaces equipped with Xbox game sets or adjusting the menu by adding burgers or vegetarian options (Saldžiūnas, 2019; Alfa.lt, 2017; BNS, 2015; 15min, 2017a). Yet, it is also important to notice that while conscription has the support of the general public, the number of volunteers in last few years has declined and the State has had to broaden its more forceful recruitment by selecting conscripts via lottery (Kisielius, 2019).

However, good spirits reflect the general trend of society's interests in military issues. People, and especially the younger generation, volunteered not only to the conscripts, but also to the National Defence Volunteer forces and especially into the Paramilitary Riflemen's union.<sup>39</sup> Membership in this organisation for the last few years increased substantially and now it has around 11 thousand members. What is more important is that many famous people, influencers (politicians, journalists, businessmen, sportsmen, artist and celebrities) joined the ranks and, in that way, attracted the attention of the wider society and encouraged it to think about State defence and security (Kaikarytė, 2018; 15 min, 2015).

At the same time, this increase of societal interest and support was equally matched by the political community, which showed that it had the political will to make hard decisions and to implement them. None of the major political players tried to get a free ride or to capitalise on defence issues. Politicians demonstrated restraint and discipline when it came to questions of defence. Political leadership, first of all, associated with President D. Grybauskaitė, efficiently used all these positive domestic changes for international lobbying. A concerted action with other two Baltic states and Poland and having done their homework helped send a message and convince major allies in NATO and the EU that the issue of defence in these countries is taken seriously – yet they cannot do it all and alone. On the other hand, Lithuania reinforced its commitments to NATO and the EU by continuing participation in international missions and operations.

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<sup>39</sup> The Lithuanian Rifle Union is paramilitary organization established, controlled and funded by the government. Its purpose is to help strengthening society's patriotic and civic duty as well as serve as an auxiliary component of the armed forces. It is an organisation with its legacy coming from the interwar era. After regaining independence in 1990, a decision was made to re-establish the organisation. It is organised in such way that it covers the territory of a whole country like a blanket. All bigger cities and towns had their local units of riflemen. It is important to emphasise that at least 2/3 of the members are under-age, and their activities are similar to the Boy Scouts; the rest could be seen as militia-type combatants, trained to conduct territorial defence and civilian resistance duties.

The National Defence Volunteer Forces, established in 1991, is part of the Lithuanian Armed forces and formed on a voluntary basis. Its members have civilian jobs and train only on weekends and on special occasions, i.e. training exercises. Mostly the formations of these forces are for training and preparing for territorial defence and resistance. The size of these forces is around 5000 strong.



All these domestic and international achievements, to some extent, were the result of strategic communication in which Lithuania really excelled. Long before the Ukrainian events, Russia was testing and challenging the Western info-domain, and the Baltic states were and remain one of the hottest areas of this fight. Through various techniques like manipulation, the falsification of history, exploitation of Soviet nostalgia or by subversive techniques, Russia constantly tests Lithuanian alertness and awareness. Because of that, even before the Ukrainian events, Lithuania started paying serious attention to strategic communication. A network of State institutions and volunteer groups (so-called Lithuanian “elves”), by working together, started fighting back Russian trolls (Euronews 2017; Debunk 2019; Peel 2019). For the last six years, Lithuanian society, through various forms – TV shows, internet blogs, news, booklets, discussion shows – constantly was informed and educated about Russian attempts to manipulate Lithuanian perception and attitudes. People’s interests in military issues is much bigger than it was 10 or 15 years ago. You would not be surprised to hear people talking about military issues at coffeehouses, pubs or at the family dinner table. In comparison to Western societies, societal resilience towards information attacks in Lithuania is in much better shape. Lithuanian alertness sometimes even borders on the edge of acute paranoia to see Russia’s hand in all bad or corrupt events happening in Lithuania. To some extent, it is a by-product of increased resilience. On the other hand, a better understanding and grasp of defence themes encouraged more active societal participation, which, as was discussed, manifests itself in the increasing number of volunteers in military and paramilitary institutions and in general support of political decisions such as increased defence budget and conscription (Ramonaitė et al., 2018).

Yet, this society’s enthusiasm also created some uneasiness within political and military circles. In general, as many scholars rightly observed, Lithuanian civil society always was lukewarm to being proactive and engaging energetically in various political activities (Kuokštis, 2013; Ramonaitė, 2007). Therefore, this defence-related civic enthusiasm, while being a welcome development, at the same time was something new and unusual. Military circles in particular were worried, because initially they did not know how to handle enthusiastic civilians.

#### **4. Conceptual element**

Alongside the will not to surrender and the tools for defence, you need an idea, a concept or a method of how to organise yourself for defence. As was mentioned at the beginning, for many years, conceptually Lithuania followed the American example, most of the time not bothering to go deeper into intellectual reflections and the creation of authentic Lithuanian military thought.

The events in Ukraine and innovative Russian strategies and tactics, i.e. little polite green men, AD/A2 bubbles, forced Lithuanian and Western militaries to revise and adapt new military ideas (Revaitis, 2018; Dalsjö, Berglund & Jonsson, 2019). One of these ideas, which captured the attention and imagination of many is an idea of hybrid war. Lithuanian politicians, experts and the military spend

many hours discussing and analysing the Russian actions in Ukraine – later in Syria – and are trying to decide what lessons should be learned (Kilinskas, 2016). Yet, in time it became clear that Lithuanians, at least the military, did not buy into the notion of hybrid war. They discussed hybrid threats, but they dismissed idea of hybrid war by saying that it is an old wine in the new bottle.

However, depending upon which definition of hybrid war was used, it was unclear how to treat another form of war – the information war. Some were saying that it was part of hybrid war. Others were convinced that it is a separate form of war. In any case, information war also became a popular topic (Koleva, 2017). Yet, increased interest in information warfare and also, cyber war, raised a fundamental question: how much are these non-kinetic types of war important in comparison to kinetic operations. Such questions raised tensions and friction between separate military units and services.

Naturally, the regular armed forces, dominated by the Army, are planning to fight a conventional military campaign based upon the principles of manoeuvre warfare (Hooker, 1993; Lind, 1985; Lietuvos karinė doktrina, 2016). The procurement of German howitzers and armoured vehicles is the strengthening of manoeuvre, armour and firepower capabilities. The major conceptual innovation, which emphasises the centrality of regular forces and conventional fighting, is a notion of the Suwalki corridor introduced by American American Lieutenant General B. Hodges, Commander of United States Army Europe (Barnes, 2016; Maceda, 2015).<sup>40</sup>

If the idea of hybrid warfare was major topic in 2014-2015, then the Suwalki corridor debate replaced it in 2016 and was fashionable to talk about up to recently. Basically, the idea of the Suwalki corridor/gap was similar to the Cold War Fulda gap notion. At that time, the idea was that the major, manoeuvre-centric battle between NATO and Warsaw pact armies will happen in Germany in the Fulda area because it was the only place where Soviets could hope to get through and reach the Rhine (Krüger, 2017).<sup>41</sup> The Suwalki gap problem/challenge by senior American and NATO officials was seen in a similar vein. From their perspective, the biggest challenge for NATO was to keep this gap open and not to let Russia plug it. Therefore, rapid redeployment of military units from Western Europe to the Baltics became an essential element for keeping the Suwalki corridor open (Hodges et al., 2018). This idea and need to be able to send soldiers through all

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40 The Suwalki corridor is a 100-kilometre land border between Lithuania and Poland, which is sandwiched between Russia's Kaliningrad district and Belarus. This land corridor is the only land connection between Western Europe and the Baltic states and is vital for NATO's Eastern flank defence. According to official and unofficial talks, in time of war, this corridor could be overrun and taken over in a very short time, thus generating a threat of disconnecting the Baltic states from the rest of Europe. After the events in Crimea and with the increased Russian military build-up in Kaliningrad, the question of the defence of the Suwalki gap became one of the major headaches and themes inside NATO.

41 The Fulda gap is the area between the Hesse-Thuringian border and Frankfurt am Main. During the Cold War, it was the former Inner German border between West and East Germany. During that era and especially in the 1980s, this area was considered as potentially the place of a major NATO and Soviet military confrontation. Western allies thought that this land corridor offered the shortest and easiest road for Soviet tanks to reach the Rhine. Accordingly, US and NATO developed military doctrines favouring a more dynamic, offensive, manoeuvrable warfighting approach.

Europe gave birth to the idea of military Schengen, which, at this moment, is implemented through one of the PESCO initiatives of the EU.

However, this emphasis of regular forces, through such ideas as the Suwalki corridor, stumbled upon two other notions of defence: territorial defence and total defence. Both of these ideas were explored and entertained in the 1990s, but later replaced by American military notions of manoeuvre warfare. The idea of territorial defence is also grounded into Lithuania post-war resistance tradition. As the title of this type of defence suggests, it will be fought in all territory by territorially-based local military units mostly using guerrilla and unconventional war tactics (Slekys, 2016, pp. 92-132; Jokubauskas, 2018; Jokubauskas et al., 2015). Yet, territorial defence was delegated to Volunteer forces and is perceived as more niche approach, secondary to more conventional, manoeuvre warfare.

Most likely, the bigger conceptual challenge to this conventional mindset comes from the tradition of total defence.<sup>42</sup> This idea, borrowed from Scandinavia, emphasises that, in time of war, the defence of the State is everybody's business. It is a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic elements. Defence is not only the activities of the regular forces, but also civilian military and non-military resistance. In this system, everybody has its role, and war is not a monopoly of regular forces (Miniotaitė, 2004). Yet, in Lithuania, the idea of total defence, despite the fact of being written in all major strategic documents, is gaining traction slowly. Disagreements about the Riflemen's union's role in overall defence structure, disagreements concerning members of the Volunteer forces taking political positions are very good illustrations about ambiguities of the Lithuania defence strategy (Saldžiūnas, 2017; Jakučionis, 2019). Essentially, the disagreements are about who is the "owner" of the State's defence – armed forces or armed forces and society as an equal stakeholder.

## Conclusion

Since the 2014 events in Ukraine, Lithuanian armed forces and military system made a huge step forward essentially in all directions. The changes could be summarised as three "mores" (money, people and weapons), three "highs" (readiness, tempo and awareness) and three "strongs" (will, resilience and cooperation). All of that stands in stark contrast with the military of 2000s. Even the greatest sceptics have to acknowledge, that Lithuania armed forces in 2019 are better trained, better equipped, better manned and led than in 2013. The same goes to the level of society's resilience and general interest in military issues. If in 2013, only a handful of civilians were interested in the life of armed forces, then in 2019, it is not the case anymore.

On the one hand, this bigger interest in military issues is one of the challenges

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<sup>42</sup> Total defence is the form of defence which is more society, not armed forces-centric. It means that defence of the State is the business of all members of society. It is understood that defence should be conducted not only in the military domain, but also in economic, political and social domains. The framework of such understanding of defence ranges from conscription, various militia, paramilitary units to involvement of emergency services, other public actors (schools, financial institutions etc.), business (especially logistics and IT companies) and finally, various volunteer organizations, active citizens.

that will affect future defence debate. In 2014, the military was not prepared to accept an increased interest or even interference by civilians into military life. Due to upcoming decisions concerning major procurement projects (helicopters, ships), the question of the reopening of universal services, the unresolved question of a total defence idea already programmed civilian involvement in all these discussions. In some way, the military lost its privileged position to be the sole owner of defence issues and debates. Civilians demanded their share and got it. Yet, it is still unclear how and in what ways the civilian side could be used as an active, not passive, asset for the defence needs.

Conceptual issues remain unresolved, especially concerning issues of territorial and total defence as well as the importance of strategic communication. Essentially, all these debates are about the search for some authenticity and an attempt to free ourselves a little bit from the American notions of war, its conduct and to diminish a copy-paste culture. On that account, credit to the Lithuanian military and civilian thinking should be given. While reliance on American concepts remains strong, the period since 2014 saw some serious attempts to move away from that influence and to find Lithuanian conceptual solutions. This area for the foreseeable future will remain “hot”, because the initial shock after Ukraine is almost over and the Lithuanian military is entering the phase of “maturing”, which will require a more serious conceptual revision.

Fast growth in a short time period always is painful. Rapid expansion of military units and the reintroduction of conscription created an acute problem in leadership and command. There are not enough junior officers; therefore, the military is relying on various short-term solutions, yet it may come back to haunt the military in the long term. Such rapid expansion is a fertile environment for conceptual experimentation; yet, the speed of various changes has become an obstacle to institutionalise learned lessons by revising doctrinal documents.

Therefore, it is important to draw some lessons for the last five years and provide some recommendations. The most important lesson and following the recommendation is that the changes in the regional security environment are for a long haul. That means that the Lithuanian military should move from its fixation on the Ukrainian case. The events there demanded immediate reaction, yet it was more like a treatment of symptoms of the illness, but not its causes. The Lithuanian military in 2020 should prepare to fight the Russian military, if necessary, not only now, but also to think, about how Moscow’s military could fight in 2030 and change accordingly.

In order to do that, the following steps should be taken into consideration. First of all, politicians should stay clear from the temptation to manipulate defence funding and not to decrease the budget, unless the global economic and financial situation were to take a turn for the worst. Second, it is essential to emphasise that the defence of the State is not the business of the Ministry of National Defence and armed forces only. The whole-government approach is essential, and other State institutions should be educated, informed, directed to the understanding that they should to pitch in too. Related to that point is the third one; military and political circles should take a more serious approach concerning deeper and

wider involvement of society in preparations for the defence. Starting from the change, revision of various legal documents, transformation of the institutional framework, to rethinking military doctrines, Lithuania should wholeheartedly embrace the whole-of-society approach. Yet, it requires the fine tuning of teamwork and separation of jobs.

Lithuanians have to take a more serious approach and make more efforts to move away from a copy-paste culture. It is important to understand how our major allies operate and think, yet it is equally important to find your own voice. It means that civilians and the military itself should encourage its members to be more active in defence debates by writing briefs, reviews, academic articles, online blogs. The authenticity of the Lithuanian approach will also help to tailor the assistance coming from allies.

That leads to the final point. It is important not to miss the point that without allies, the Lithuanian defence would be in a very precarious position. Therefore, we should do our homework and be ready to be a good host by improving our infrastructure, training grounds and the legal side of things. Yet, at the same time, we should not lose our voice and remind as well as show our allies that Lithuania is no longer a place, a laboratory for testing Western military ideas, but a place for Western militaries to test and to learn Baltic military practices and concepts.

Yet, the overall assessment of the latest Lithuanian military transformation leaves us with an impression of the military, which left its infancy and is rapidly maturing into a proper, efficient institution.

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## THE PARTICIPATION OF THE LITHUANIAN MILITARY IN INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS AS AN ELEMENT OF LITHUANIAN DEFENCE POLICY

Vytautas Isoda\*

### Introduction

In peacetime, one of the most important tasks of any country's military is participating in peace-keeping and peace enforcement operations outside their own country. Whereas great powers sometimes deploy their expeditionary forces on their own, small countries like Lithuania usually "jump on the bandwagon" of certain existing peace operations; whereas for the most of the 20th century, the United Nations were the main and unchallenged organiser of such operations devoted to restoring peace and security, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, regional organisations – such as the African Union, NATO and the European Union – took over similar tasks all around the globe. Lithuania is a member not only of the UN, but of all European security institutions – NATO, EU, OSCE and the Council of Europe – and is therefore forced to divide its military and civilian capabilities across all these venues. So far, it has managed to satisfy the demand for personnel as its main allies and partners are members of the same organisations and have not pushed for any difficult choices (at least not publicly); yet, with the number of conflicts demanding outside intervention increasing every year and the positions of Lithuania's closest allies on the two sides of the Atlantic slowly growing apart on many international issues<sup>43</sup>, it may one day find itself unable to satisfy all the requests for participation in international military operations and may have to choose which partner (or partners) to help.

For all countries, Lithuania among them, the decision whether to send troops to a particular military operation involves the questions of (1) legitimacy, (2) national interests and (3) resources. The issue of legitimacy is two-dimensional: the country has to appear as a legitimate intervener on the international stage, and it also has to master the support of its own population. The Lithuanian government has never faced a serious backlash from the Lithuanian public for its military involvement in distant regions due to the professionalism of Lithuanian soldiers and a respectively low number of battle deaths so far; the international legitimacy of expeditionary operations is by far more complicated as Lithuania's closest allies (e.g., United States, France and others) sometimes opt for military

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43 Since the election of Donald Trump as President in 2016, the U.S. and European great powers, especially France and Germany, have increasingly different views on how to respond to Iran's nuclear programme, how to deal with Israel and Palestine in the context of their dispute for statehood, how to manage global trade, the refugee influx from conflict-ridden countries, global warming and many other issues.

action without the mandate of the UN Security Council, or even without the consent of host government, and appeal to Lithuania among others for help. Here is where the question of national interests comes in; it is not only that one's partner may ask for a contribution to an essentially illegal operation, but that such operation may contradict the interests of some other partner. Moreover, from the perspective of national interests, a country must always calculate what it gets from its partner countries and organisations in return for putting its military at risk. Last but not least, every country has to come to terms with the limitations of its resources which is particularly relevant for small states, such as Lithuania. The imperatives of legitimacy and interests may suggest participation in many operations, but the contributions themselves may have to be merely symbolic or military participation may have to be replaced by a civilian or other type of presence.

In this chapter, the record of Lithuanian participation in international military operations and the future of this policy area is evaluated from all three perspectives: legitimacy, interests and resources. The ultimate goal of this analysis is to identify the main dilemmas that the changing global environment poses to Lithuanian defence policy-makers and possibly suggest a few solutions to those dilemmas. The shifts in global security environment that will shape the future landscape of international military operations and effect Lithuania's military deployments are discussed elsewhere in this book; most important of them are the growth of Russian revisionism, emerging multipolarity of the international system (including the rise of China), and possible decline and / or isolationism of current global hegemon, the United States of America.

### **1. Major trends of Lithuania's contributions to international military operations since the 1990s**

After joining the UN in 1991 and declaring its intent to also join NATO and the EU as early as 1994, Lithuania faced a major challenge to build up its national military from a scratch. It took part in its first international operation in August 1994 under the UN flag; it contributed a small platoon-size (~30 troops) unit to a Danish battalion in operation UNPROFOR in Croatia. Even though by 1994 the three Baltic States – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – had created a multinational battalion, BALTBAT, the main function of which was to participate in traditional UN-type peacekeeping (Šapronas, 1999), UNPROFOR was Lithuania's first and last significant contribution to UN operations up till 2018. As the three countries were also members of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme and were striving for full membership in this organisation, BALTBAT's first battlefield experience was actually a NATO-led operation SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina from October 1998 to February 2003 where the three Baltic States sent up to 100-150 soldiers on a rotational basis – once again, under Danish command. From March 2003 when the Danish battalion was transferred from Bosnia to another NATO operation in Kosovo (KFOR), successful rotation of Baltic squadrons was continued up till 2006. In parallel to project BALTBAT, from 1999 to 2009,

Lithuania contributed a platoon of active reservists (*KASP* in Lithuanian) to the Polish-Ukrainian battalion in the U.S. area of responsibility in Kosovo. All in all, some 1500 Lithuanian soldiers and officers were deployed to NATO operations (compared to only a few dozen in UN missions), even before Lithuania was a member of this alliance.

The first decade of participation in international operations can be summarised as learning from and building credibility in the eyes of (future) allies. The Nordic states, Denmark among them, were the main “teachers”, as they helped not only in coordinating the peacekeeping efforts of the Baltic States, but also donated equipment, provided training and education for their officers, and eventually supported their NATO and EU membership bids (Hedberg & Kasekamp, 2018). On the other hand, already in the first decade of independence, the U.S. and Poland were identified as countries vital for Lithuania's defensibility and deterrence of potential Russian revisionism. Hence, it was very important to be visible amongst their militaries in action and to enhance interoperability with them on the ground.

More than a decade-long goal of Lithuania's foreign and security policy was finally realised when, in November 2002, it was invited to and, in March 2004, it joined the North Atlantic Alliance. Lithuania's new National Security Strategy adopted in 2005 was based “on the assumption that [Lithuania] will no longer act alone in case of potential threat” (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2005); by the end of the decade, its defence spending and the size of its military were reduced dramatically (not least because of 2008-2009 economic crises and the abolition of a compulsory military draft). At the same time, the 2000s made the history books with the U.S. “Global War on Terror”, of which Lithuania could not stay on the side-lines; providing “*practical* support for the antiterrorist coalition led by the USA” (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2005) became its strategic course. Lithuania contributed its special forces to U.S.-led operation “Enduring Freedom” in Afghanistan (from 2002 to 2006) and up to 120 troops-strong rotations to the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq (operation “Iraqi Freedom” from 2003 to 2008); both were combat rather than peacekeeping operations, and both were highly contested from the perspective of international law, even though in the former case, the U.S. did invoke the right to self-defence under the UN Charter (United Nations Security Council, 2001). Following the American intervention and overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the UN authorised a multinational stabilisation force (ISAF), which was taken over by NATO command in August 2003; herein, Lithuania took up its largest ever peacekeeping task assuming responsibility for the security situation in the whole of the Ghor province in central Afghanistan and maintaining a force of some 200 to 250 troops at any given time from 2005 to 2013. Units of Croatian, Danish, Georgian, Ukrainian and U.S. military served in Ghor under the Lithuanian provincial reconstruction team (PRT). In contrast to such powerful presence in NATO and U.S.-led operations, in the first decade following NATO and EU accession, only token contributions (mostly involving staff officers and military observers) were made to UN and EU missions and operations from Lithuanian side.

To sum up the second decade of Lithuania's participation in international military missions and operations, it was characterised by its new status within the international order; as a full member of “elite” Western organisations, the country now shifted its focus from merely consolidating its own statehood to a broader task of furthering Western values and contributing to international peace. Yet the underlying interest of earning loyalty points in relation to its most vital allies still remained<sup>44</sup>, even at the expense of a certain degree of international legitimacy compared to the 1990s<sup>45</sup>. The period was also characterised by the EU's search for a security and defence identity independent from NATO, wherein initially Lithuania largely ignored EU undertakings (possibly also due to a significant drop in national capabilities that were slowly built up while the country was still a candidate).

The latest period of Lithuania's participation in international military operations is marked by a gradual phasing out of the Western (including Lithuanian) military presence in Afghanistan and the sudden wave of Russian aggression towards EU's Eastern Partner Ukraine, i.e., approximately in 2014. Lithuania still maintains a unit of some 20+ troops in Afghanistan from 2015 following the formal closure of ISAF in December 2014 as part of NATO's successor operation “Resolute Support” (RSM), but their official task is the training and support of Afghan security forces rather than direct engagement with the Taliban insurgency. Even though Lithuania pledged a sizable contingent of some 30 to 40 soldiers (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2017b), including special forces, to its biggest ally, the U.S. to participate in an antiterrorist campaign against ISIS in the Middle East (code name “Operation Inherent Resolve”), up till now, it maintains only 6 military instructors to train the Iraqi soldiers on the ground (instead, Lithuanian special forces were sent back to Afghanistan from April 2018). However, this same period features Lithuania's return to UN peacekeeping after two decades of very limited involvement, as well as a renewed interest in EU military operations. It joined the UN Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) with only a couple of foot soldiers and military experts in 2016, but after Germany's (which was leading one of MINUSMA's contingents) request, Lithuania sent a platoon of nearly 40 troops in 2018 and plans to keep it there till 2020 at least. On the basis of its land forces, Lithuania formed a vessel protection detachment in 2013 and vessel boarding and inspection teams from 2017 to join EU naval operations “EUNAVFOR Atalanta” and “EUNAVFOR Sophia”, reaching its largest ever military deployments to any EU-led operation (15-20 personnel strong). Last, but not least, for the first time ever, Lithuania embarked on its own military initiative, and from summer 2015, has been providing military training

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44 For example, in Iraq, Lithuanian units served either as part of a Polish division (rotations LITDET-1 to LITDET-5) or as part of a Danish battalion in the British area of responsibility (LITCON-1 to LITCON-10).

45 Both NATO operations Lithuania took part in during the 1990s and early 2000s (SFOR and KFOR) were endorsed by the UN Security Council; even though the NATO air bombings of Yugoslavia from March to June 1999 were strictly speaking illegal, the subsequent deployment of KFOR ground forces was already authorised by the UN SC resolution 1244.

for Ukrainian army soldiers fighting in Donbas (by 2017, this deployment reached some 30 to 40 instructors). Overall, Lithuania has never had such a wide variety of deployments across so many different types of operations under different flags and frameworks as it has now.

From the perspective of national interests, Lithuania's latest contributions to international military operations around the world are paying off in very concrete returns: for example, Germany, whose peacekeeping efforts in Mali are supported by Lithuanian soldiers, has in turn deployed some 500-550 soldiers and agreed to become the lead nation of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Lithuania. NATO's actual military presence on Lithuanian soil and Ukraine's successful campaign against Russian-controlled separatists in Donbas are key factors in deterring a full-scale military threat from Russia. On the other hand, as requests from other important allies (namely the U.S. and France) are growing exponentially and becoming very specific (not just for any soldiers, but rather concrete specialists, like military instructors or special operations units), Lithuania starts to feel a serious strain on its limited resources.

## **2. Greatest achievements and biggest challenges of Lithuanian participation in international military operations so far**

For more than 20 years of Lithuanian involvement in international military missions and operations, there has been little public debate over the issue of legitimacy neither nationally nor internationally. With regards to international reactions, Lithuanian contributions are usually relatively modest compared to those of the big powers, and thus are usually viewed through the lens of the overall input of states in the Baltic or Central and Eastern European region; one could easily remember the famous 2003 'lash out' by French President Jacques Chirac at the EU candidates from Central and Eastern Europe that all supported and / or contributed to U.S.-led operation "Iraqi Freedom" without an explicit UN mandate (CNN, 2003). Such controversies, however, have not significantly affected the achievement of Lithuania's main goals on the international stage, such as full membership in the EU and NATO (later also the Eurozone), a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council and last, but not least, containing the Russian threat.

As for the domestic audience, in the first decade of NATO membership, public opinion had little to no influence on governmental decisions to deploy troops abroad; a survey conducted in March 2007 showed that 56% of the population would have opted for Lithuania's withdrawal from Iraq (against 31% who preferred to maintain that deployment) (Delfi, 2007); a survey in October 2012 indicated similar disapproval of Lithuania's presence in ISAF, Afghanistan (only 32% supported it, whereas 60% disapproved of this deployment) (Jackevičius & Samoškaitė, 2012). This goes to show that the legitimacy of Lithuania's participation in those operations was questionable, if not by international legal standards, then at least by democratic ones.

The domestic dimension of the legitimacy of Lithuania's out-of-area deployments, however, has somewhat shifted since 2014, as the security situation



in the region and the government's attitude towards investing in national defence have changed dramatically. Whereas back in 2005, public trust in Lithuanian Armed Forces amounted to only 53% and was still at 57% in 2010, after a massive governmental effort to rally Lithuanians against a resurgent threat from the East, it jumped to 71% in 2014 and reached its absolute height of 76% in spring 2018 (European Commission, 2005) (European Commission, 2010) (European Commission, 2014) (European Commission, 2018). According to polls conducted by the Lithuanian Ministry of Defense, 65% of citizens in 2015, and even 72% in 2018, agreed to sending Lithuanian troops to international operations "if such was the request from NATO allies". Moreover, 64% now support the idea of Lithuania's military aid to Ukraine, which is fighting the Russian-controlled separatists in Donbas (Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of Lithuania, 2015) (Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of Lithuania, 2018). All in all, over the last few years, the Lithuanian public seems to have arrived at better understanding of the national interest and the nexus between out-of-area operations and the security situation back in Lithuania.

The main achievements of and greatest returns from Lithuania's participation in international military operations is the valuable field experience and enhanced interoperability with its counterparts from allied nations that the Lithuanian military has gained over the past decades. The country has certainly established a reputation of credibility in the eyes of its most important partner, the U.S.; during the 2006 NATO Summit in Riga, the then President of the U.S., George W. Bush, went as far as naming the Baltic States to be America's "friends and allies in the cause of peace and freedom" (Bush, 2006). Successful cooperation with German *Bundeswehr* in recent expeditionary operations (namely UN's MINUSMA and EU's "EUNAVFOR Sophia") has spilled over to the area of defence procurement, as Lithuania ordered its biggest ever arms purchase (88 "Boxer" armoured fighting vehicles for nearly 390 million euros) from a German – Dutch manufacturer (Masiokaitė, 2019). Finally, a multi-national NATO battalion in Rukla and NATO's Baltic air police mission in Zokniai (which has more than doubled in strength since 2014) are concrete returns in terms of Lithuania's national security for its contributions to international military deployments up till now.

For Lithuania, the main challenges with regards to participation in international military operations have always revolved around resources, namely manpower and armaments. Even though the NATO threshold of 2% of the GDP spent on defence was finally reached in 2018 (from a mere 0.8% before the 2014 Ukrainian crises) (NATO, 2019), and the Lithuanian Armed Forces now amounts to some 18 000 troops (compared to ~12 000 back in 2009 after conscription was abolished) (Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of Lithuania, 2019), not all of the country's military is fit for out-of-area operations. NATO's guideline metric for deployability is 50% of all the land-based military personnel, whereas the Lithuanian army has recently been able to reach only 17% (The Armed Forces of Lithuania, 2019). Some 3500 conscripts who serve in the military for only nine months are essentially unsuitable for expeditionary tasks. Moreover, according to the national Department of Statistics, only 2.6% of Lithuanian citizens in the



age group of 20 to 55 speak French (Lithuanian Department of Statistics, 2013), which is of great importance for military deployments to Africa (the region with the highest demand for international interventions), especially when it comes to training missions. So far, the Lithuanian armed forces have felt a significant shortage of French-speaking military instructors; hence, the current training mission in Ukraine (75.9% of the same age group can speak Russian) is far more numerous compared to those in the Sub-Saharan region (there are only 2 to 4 soldiers deployed to EUTM Mali and EUTM RCA). All in all, the record of Lithuanian participation in international military operations so far indicates an innate tension between territorial defence and out-of-area deployment when it comes to structuring the national military organisation.

### **3. Main dilemmas for the Lithuanian decision-makers and the military with regards to future participation in international missions and operations**

With the number of inter- and intra-state conflicts worldwide growing over the last decade (see Table 2), the demand for peacekeeping and peace enforcement will likely remain high in the future, at least for the short to medium term. If the Western countries, including Lithuania, will not respond to this demand, countries with different values and a different international agenda may fill this vacuum. For example, over the last decade, China has been one of the fastest growing troop contributors to UN peace-keeping operations, from only a few dozen contributed in the 1990s to over 2500 troops deployed by 2015; it now (as of July 2019) ranks as number eight among all UN member states by military personnel contributions, higher than any European or North American nation (see Table 4). Around 80 per cent of Chinese peacekeepers are stationed in Africa, where it has clear economic and political interests (Taylor & Zhengyu, 2011). NATO and EU countries have to coordinate their efforts in order to reverse this unsettling trend.

For now, however, the U.S. remains the world's second largest contributor of troops to international military operations counting deployments to not only the UN, but also *ad hoc* campaigns and those commanded by regional organisations (see Table 3). Even though Washington has been talking of withdrawal from Syria and Afghanistan since President Obama's second term, currently U.S. troops are still there. President Donald Trump, who won the 2016 presidential election on a somewhat isolationist platform, has promised the American public a complete withdrawal at least from Syria. Under his presidency, the U.S. not only pressures its European allies to spend more on defence instead of relying on American protection, but also expects them to assume a greater burden in the global fight against terrorism, especially when it comes to fighting ISIS in the Middle East. In fact, in summer 2019, Lithuania already received Washington's request to contribute ground troops to the Syrian theatre of operation that would replace the decreased American presence there (Jakučionis, 2019). This request constitutes a challenge to the Lithuanian government from the perspective of both international law and national interests. Legally, the U.S.-led coalition operation in Syria has no explicit

mandate from the UN Security Council<sup>46</sup>, even less so it enjoys any endorsement by the host government of Bashar al-Assad. On the interest side, a similar request from the U.S. to contribute “boots on the ground” was already denied by such important Lithuanian allies like Germany (Donahue & Delfs, 2019). In this case, it would be wise of the Lithuanian government to take the middle ground: it could try to appease the Americans by contributing more troops to less controversial operations (e.g., KFOR in Kosovo, NMI and “Inherent Resolve” in Iraq, RSM in Afghanistan), or bargain it down to sending medical corps to Syria etc., so that the damage to Lithuania's public face internationally and amongst its European allies would be minimised.

On the top of the U.S. involvement in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, some analysts (Gordon, 2019) (Ostovar, 2019) see a high possibility of an open conflict with Iran before the end of President Trump's first term, which would be, by far, longer and more resource-consuming than any recent American war (Goldenberg, 2019). For example, just before the 2003 invasion, Iraq's active military personnel amounted to 424 000 troops, whereas Iranian armed forces now employ 523 000; Iran's territory and current population is nearly four times larger than that of Saddam Hussein's Iraq (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2001, p. 134) (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2019, p. 340); it took a coalition force of nearly half a million in strength to occupy Iraq back in 2003 and eight more years to suppress the insurgency, so it would take at least twice as many resources to break the Iranian resistance. There is very little hope of receiving a UN “blessing” for such intervention (not least because of Russian, Chinese and European vetoes in the Security Council), so the U.S. would probably try to legitimate the operation by forming as broad a coalition of states as possible. Lithuania is also likely to be invited to join such coalition. By siding with the Americans, Lithuania will not only alienate its closest and most important European allies – especially France and Germany that (unlike the U.S.) have been strongly advocating “carrots” rather than “sticks” with regards to the Iranian nuclear programme – but also risks defying the EU law, as the EU Council decision of October 2015 (to follow the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, otherwise known as “Iran's Nuclear Deal”) is still in place (Council of the European Union, 2015).

Apart from American demands in the Middle East, France has been constantly pushing for a bigger Lithuanian contribution to its *ad hoc* operations in Africa. In fact, the latest Lithuanian involvement in French-led military campaigns dates back to spring of 2014 when it deployed a transport aircraft C-27J Spartan with a crew of 10 airmen to operation “Sangaris” in the Central African Republic; there were no contributions ever since, even though from January to August 2018, France

46 The closest the UN came to authorising military actions against ISIS and other terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq was the Security Council Resolution 2249, which “calls upon [UN] Member States that have the capacity to do so to take all necessary measures, in compliance with international law, <...> on the territory under the control of ISIL, also known as Da'esh, in Syria and Iraq, <...> to prevent and suppress terrorist acts committed specifically by ISIL <...> and other terrorist groups, <...> and to eradicate the safe haven they have established over significant parts of Iraq and Syria” (United Nations Security Council, 2015); however, this resolution does not explicitly refer to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which means sovereign rights of the governments of Syria and Iraq cannot be violated.

committed an armoured infantry company and a tank platoon (a total of some 270 soldiers) to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence battalion stationed in Lithuania. Estonia, by contrast, has sent a sizable contingent of nearly 50 troops to France's biggest overseas operation "Barkhane" in the Sahel from August 2018, for which it was later praised by the French government; on the occasion of its meeting with his Estonian counterpart in September 2018, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian was sure to emphasize the connection between Estonia's contribution to "Barkhane" and France's next rotation to NATO EFP (French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2018) (as of July 2019, there are 337 French troops in Estonia). For Lithuania, which – as it was mentioned in the above section – has limited capabilities to deploy to French-speaking Africa either in French or EU-led operations, the "next best thing" would be to support France politically, especially when it comes to its initiatives on European defence integration (albeit only those projects that do not overstep NATO). It could start by joining a German, French and Italian led PESCO project of developing an EU Training Mission Competence Centre (EU TMCC), which was kicked off last year in Berlin (Federal Ministry of Defense of Germany, 2018), at least at a later stage so that Lithuanian military instructors could benefit and Lithuania's contributions to future training missions in Africa would increase.

## Conclusions

Lithuania's involvement in international military operations is a significant element of the national defence strategy. For one thing, "international security and stability is an important factor ensuring security and welfare of the Republic of Lithuania" (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2017a); moreover, contributing to joint military deployments is the most effective way to build political leverages and score loyalty points in the eyes of its closest partners and allies. It takes top-level statesmanship to navigate through the often-differing needs of one's most important allies, but for over more than two decades, the Lithuanian defence establishment has learned to do just that; whereas the first two "generations" (see Table 1) of Lithuanian military deployments abroad were marked by a clear focus on furthering the U.S. interests, recently they have become more balanced in terms of their international legitimacy, as well as the national interests of Lithuania and most of its allies.

It also takes top-level military skills to perform the increasingly diverse tasks of modern-day military operations. Lithuanian troops in general and its special forces in particular have so far proven to be up for the task. Yet the issue of resources is becoming increasingly pressing as the last few years saw a more assertive Russian foreign policy and a real threat of direct military confrontation on the European continent; therefore, "the best and the brightest" of the national military forces are needed not only overseas, but also back home. The tension between territorial defence and expeditionary demands can only be addressed by boosting investment in the personnel. It is often said that the greatest national treasure of a small country like Lithuania is its people, but this is particularly true when it comes to national defence.

Last but not least, Lithuania's expeditionary assets seem to be in need of diversification and the military deployment policy has to acquire a proactive character. Disagreements over joint military interventions between Lithuania's most powerful ally, the U.S., and its allies in Europe often come down to not only where and whether to intervene, but also what kind of intervention (enforcement, peace-keeping, training) is needed. Lacking its own vision, Lithuania allows its policy to be determined by other countries' needs (inevitably appearing to side with one at the expense of another) or by the resources it possesses (e.g., a shortage of French-speaking military instructors). If Lithuania were to set its national policy towards such "global" challenges like Iran's power stance, state failure in the Middle East / Sahel, or Chinese presence in Africa, and adjust the long-term development of its military accordingly, it would not be so overwhelmed by the shifting winds in foreign capitals; a clear national stance towards the "Russian challenge" (which inspired a highly successful Lithuanian military training mission to Ukraine) seems to back this point up.

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THE PARTICIPATION OF THE LITHUANIAN MILITARY IN INTERNATIONAL  
MISSIONS AS AN ELEMENT OF LITHUANIAN DEFENCE POLICY

**Annexes**

**Table 1: Major Lithuanian military contributions to international missions and operations since 1994**

Period of Lithuanian input	Name of the operation	Country / region of deployment	Multilateral framework	Peak contribution	Total	Currently deployed (as of 2019/07)	Notes on the context of deployment on the ground
<i>First “generation” (decade) of Lithuanian participation in international military operations</i>							
1994/08 – 1996/02	UNPROFOR	Croatia	UN	32 (1994/08 – 1995/08)	60	–	Danish battalion
1996/02 – 2004/11	IFOR / SFOR	Bosnia & Herzegovina	NATO	147 (1999/03 – 1999/10)	683	–	Nordic-Polish brigade / Danish battalion
1999/09 – till now (last full unit withdrawn 2009/07)	KFOR	Kosovo	NATO	127 (2003/08 – 2004/02) and 126 (2005/02 – 2005/08)	over 800 so far	1	Polish battalion (KASP units) and Danish battalion (BALTBAT rotations)
<i>Second “generation” (decade) of Lithuanian participation in international military operations</i>							
2002/11 – 2006/12	“Enduring Freedom”	Afghanistan	U.S.-led coalition	40 (2002/11 – 2004/11)	162	–	
2003/04 – 2008/12	“Iraqi Freedom”	Iraq	U.S.-led coalition	~120	890	–	Polish contingent (Polish sector) and Danish contingent (UK sector)
2003/08 – 2014/12	ISAF	Afghanistan	NATO	260 (~2008/02 according to NATO placemat), latest 244 (2013/06)	2931	–	From 2005/06 to 2013/09, Lithuania led a PRT containing Croatian, Danish, U.S. and Ukrainian soldiers
2005/02 – 2011/12	NTM-I	Iraq	NATO	2 to 4 troops each rotation	41	–	
<i>Third “generation” of Lithuanian participation in international military operations / current deployments</i>							
2015/01 – till now	Resolute Support (RSM)	Afghanistan	NATO	70 (~2015/05 according to NATO placemat)	on-going	≤50 (exact numbers not made public, includes special forces)	

2011/01 – till now	EUNAVFOR Atalanta	Somalia / Indian Ocean	EU	19 (2013/08 – 2013/12 and 2015/08 – 2016/04)	over 70 so far	13 (from 2019/08)	
2013/02 – till now	EUTM Mali	Mali	EU	1 staff officer + up to 2 military instructors each rotation	~20 so far	2	
2015/05 – till now	EUNAVFOR Sophia	Mediterranean Sea	EU	15 (2017/03 – 2017/08 and 2018/09 – 2019/04)	over 60 so far	1	German navy ship
2016/09 – till now	MINUSMA	Mali	UN	39 (2018/04 – 2019/04)	over 150 so far	37	German battalion
2015/08 – till now	military training of Ukrainian soldiers	Ukraine	national	30-40 since 2017/07	on-going	~30	
2017/02 – till now	“Inherent Resolve”	Iraq	U.S.-led coalition	6	on-going	6	

**Source:** Data compiled from the UN (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>), NATO (<https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/144032.htm>), and Lithuanian Ministry of National Defense ([https://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis\\_bendradarbiavimas/tarptautines\\_operacijos.html](https://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis_bendradarbiavimas/tarptautines_operacijos.html)) websites; also from the information bulletin *Taikos sargyboje: Lietuvos kariai tarptautinėse operacijose 1994-2014 m.* [Guarding the Peace: Lithuanian Soldiers in International Operations 1994-2014] (Vilnius: Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014)

**Table 2: Levels of armed conflict worldwide since 2010**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Armed conflicts	31	37	32	34	40	52	53	50
<b>Wars</b> (conflicts with ≥ 1000 deaths per year)	5	6	6	6	11	11	12	10
Battle-related deaths	21 062	22 931	61 797	90 403	104 769	97 877	87 432	~69 000

**Source:** Uppsala Conflict Data Program, University of Uppsala (<https://ucdp.uu.se/>)

**Table 3: Top contributors of uniformed personnel to all types of international peace operations (as of 31st December 2017)**

Overall (military + police) personnel contribution		
#	Country	Staff
1.	Ethiopia	12534
2.	United States	9627
3.	Bangladesh	7246
4.	India	6697

**Source:** SIPRI Global and regional trends in multilateral peace operations 2008-2017 (<https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2018/global-and-regional-trends-multilateral-peace-operations-2008-17>)

**Table 4: Top contributors of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations + P5 countries and Lithuania (as of 31st July 2019)**

Contribution of military personnel			Overall (military + police) personnel contribution		
#	Country	Staff	#	Country	Staff
1.	Ethiopia	7018	1.	Ethiopia	7060
2.	India	6001	2.	Rwanda	6520
3.	Bangladesh	5783	3.	Bangladesh	6431
4.	Rwanda	5323	4.	India	6178
5.	Nepal	5083	5.	Nepal	5674
8.	China	2518	11.	China	2521
29.	France	717	30.	France	743
35.	United Kingdom	570	37.	United Kingdom	570
70.	Russia	38	71.	Russia	71
71.	Lithuania	37	79.	Lithuania	37
74.	United States	30	82.	United States	34

**Source:** UN website (<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>)

**THINK TANKS AND KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION  
AS A TOOL OF LITHUANIAN FOREIGN AND SECURITY  
POLICY: ASSESSMENT OF OPPORTUNITIES**

Danguolė Bardauskaitė\*

**Introduction**

The recent agreement on defence guidelines by the Lithuanian political parties represented in the Parliament (2018) states, in a quite blunt language, that Lithuania will seek that its interests would be represented in the US and European think tanks. In 2019, the Lithuanian parliament passed a package of legislative amendments establishing the legal basis for providing public budget funding to the state-founded Eastern Europe Studies Centre (EESC) (Nacionalinio saugumo pagrindų įstatymo Nr. VIII-49 priedėlio pakeitimo įstatymas, 2019). All of this illustrates the willingness to actually seize think tanks for national interests. However, there are still a lot of questions left on the table to answer regarding the opportunities and difficulties while trying to instrumentalise think tanks. Additionally, it is not absolutely clear whether the intention is to use think tanks as tools of knowledge dissemination for reaching certain policy goals or to use them as a brain capacity for identifying and expanding policy options.

A centre of this practical-theoretical inquiry is the opportunity of having think tanks as a tool of Lithuanian foreign and security policy – is there an opportunity to seize? Why bother to invest money in a national think tank as they might not serve what the government intended? In general, policy practitioners tend to abandon ideas that might take too long to bring obvious results and if it seems that there is too much risk involved. Despite that, this article tries to put forward the idea that the support for think tanks should be continuous, extensive and strategically thought-through.

The instrumentalization of think tanks might be useful, but the success depends on the real ambition underneath it. If the primary focus is to influence, for instance, the US Congress and Administration through think tanks, the Lithuanian government is not likely to succeed, or the success would be speculative. Lithuanian ambitions on influencing foreign governments through think tanks might be a failure due to the unsubstantiated belief that a think tank can significantly influence foreign and security policies. However, the possible options where think tanks might be useful for the governmental goals will be discussed.

The chapter argues that the ambition of representation of Lithuanian interests in foreign think tanks is only partially reachable by having at least one strong Lithuanian think tank. The challenges (such as a vulnerability and

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underdevelopment of the Lithuanian state of policy research) signal that the effective implementation of the dissemination of the knowledge around the think tank community might take longer than expected. The option of having a robust quasi-governmental think tank is suggested. Such a think tank could be an anchor between the Lithuanian government and the other think tanks around the globe.

### **1. Think tanks and the idea of influence**

According Kubilay Yado Arin, “Think tanks help to define the boundaries of the policy debate, offer agendas and options, catalyze and popularise new ideas, help bridge the gaps between agencies and between the academic and policy worlds, provide advice to policy makers and serve to educate and inform Congress, the media, policymakers, and the general public” (Yado Arin, 2014). Similarly, Andrew Rich defines “think tanks as independent, non-interest-based, non-profit organisations that produce and principally rely on expertise and ideas to obtain support and to influence policy making process” (2004). On the one hand, think tanks many times are described as independent entities, striving to achieve and spread knowledge. On the other hand, “Politically, think tanks are aggressive institutions that actively seek to maximize public credibility and political access to make their expertise and ideas influential in policy making” (Rich, 2004). As there is a broad agreement that think tanks are too vague institutions for a proper definition, it is somewhat more important to discuss the idea of think tank influence. Nobody has measured so far the influence of think tanks, even though scholars and analysts tend to agree that they are influential to a degree. However, is that enough to claim that it is worth it to invest in think tanks for the Lithuanian government?

Without diving deeper into the definitional matters, one has to realise that the unclear character of think tank influence cannot provide a basis for a definite answer. According to Talcott Parsons, “Influence is a way of having an effect on the attitudes and opinions of others through intentional (though not necessarily rational) action – the effect may or may not be to change the opinion or to prevent a possible change” (Parsons, 1963). Influence of think tanks on policies is possible, but due to “the methodological difficulties, it is hard to establish a causal relationship between policy recommendations by different think tanks and decisions made by policy-makers” (Yado Arin, 2014). The problem lies in the difficulty to capture the changing directions of perceptions, but this time the article discusses a circle of influence, when not only think tanks are trying to influence policy makers and shapers, but also vice versa. When a government wants to influence other government’s foreign policy through think tanks, it admits their influence is real despite its uncertainty. As influence is not necessarily measured by the direct success of ideas put into action, the idea to influence policy makers through think tanks by changing the subtleties of their thoughts allows believing that it is perhaps worth the effort and finances to try to affect think tanks. The expectation, of course, is that as a final result these efforts might lead to an impact on policy decisions.

Robert Jervis argues that in order to have political influence, it is not necessary to have power (1976). Bearing that in mind, Lithuania as a small state might have an impact on, for instance, US foreign and security policy through indirect channels. Think tanks might be one of those channels. Despite that, “generalized persuasion without power” (Jervis, 1976) seems complicated to become a reality because that also requires recourses. Thus, it is hard to fully agree that persuasion without power is a reality. On the flip side, he claims that “political influence is analytically independent of power, we conceive the two to be closely interconnected” (Jervis, 1976). Generally, one might claim that a state trying to influence think tanks is trying to use and expand its soft power, which means “getting others to want the outcomes that you want” (Nye, 2004). Think tanks might help with extending soft power, but governments should not think that think tanks are a panacea for solving issues with the political elite abroad because the attraction is challenging to capture. It is also hard to distinguish from the other possible factors for making a particular decision or changing opinions. Despite that “...it is often impossible to explain crucial decisions and policies without reference to the decision-makers’ beliefs about the world and their images of others” (Jervis, 1976). The experts, therefore, might be the ones who shape or have an influence on these perceptions and in that way makes an indirect impact on the decision made. Nonetheless, a foreign country’s decision makers cannot expect to have a profound impact on foreign or security policy choices – that would be naive. Think tanks are just a tiny piece in the puzzle of a bigger picture of how the decision is made.

The researchers in the report “Linking Think Tank Performance, Decisions, and Context” have defined already what kinds of policy influence there exist when it comes to think tanks (Brown et al., 2014). The list puts policy influence into levels. The first level would be when the decision makers just “know that a particular think tank exists” (Brown et al., 2014). The second level is when they “know/use think a tank product” (Brown et al., 2014). The third is when they “adapt a think tank’s policy recommendations” (Brown et al., 2014). The highest level of influence is when the policy makers “implement policy based on think tank’s research” (Brown et al., 2014). Despite the list, it is tough to capture the real moments of influence. Overall, the whole idea of think tank influence might be a constructed concept because the perceived influence is the “bread and butter” of think tanks. If they would not be seen as influential or potentially influential, the chances are that they would lose a significant part of financial support from their donors. Therefore, the think tanks influence might be the delusional thing. For that reason, the governmental decision makers should be aware that their efforts to influence foreign governments risk not being paid off. If a government is satisfied with just being in a discourse of foreign debates on policies and being heard without necessarily being listened to, then it is worth it to risk and put some money trying to occupy some part of a broad political/societal debate through think tanks. For doing that, it is essential to define expectations and to realise the difference between knowledge dissemination and the pursuit of knowledge, which is discussed in more depth in the next section.



## 2. Dissemination versus the pursuit of knowledge

Everyone seems to agree that think tanks' influence is a contentious topic. Despite that, attempts to instrumentalise think tanks re-enforce the perception of think tanks as influential actors. Donald E. Abelson explains: "Although think tanks are often portrayed as scholarly institutions detached from the political process and the world around them, in reality they are acutely aware of the need to establish a strong foothold in the policy research community" (Abelson, 2006). Think tanks want to influence policies as it is one of the criteria of their success, but that does not mean that they are meant to be only influencers. They are influenced as well. When they seek the attention of the government, they need to find ways how to attract their attention and that, of course, requires some adaptability to the interests of governments. The sceptics of think tanks claim that their "ideas are just hooks: competing elites seize on popular ideas to propagate and to legitimise their interests, but the ideas themselves do not play a causal role" (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993). In other words, think tanks could be seen as producers of repetitive ideas, but not the inventors of ideas that could change the tracks of policies. The conformism of think tanks and the interdependence between think tanks and governments make the perceptions correspond rather than challenge each other (Bardauskaite, 2018). To change this tendency is possible, but requires the efforts of both sides.

The instrumentalization of think tanks for achieving foreign and security policy goals might signal a "programmed" tendency of conformist results of this kind of "partnership". When a government tries to get into the agendas of foreign think tanks for its policy goals, the think tank loses part of its independency. Nonetheless, it is important to realise that none of the actors perform in a vacuum. The entire political atmosphere is a matrix of various influences. Even though in the long run, the side effects of this instrumentalization of think tanks might diminish the role of think tanks, the think tanks can protect their original mission of pursuit of practically-applicable knowledge through criteria-based policy analysis and research rigour. According to Diane Stone, think tanks are a part of normative and ideational power: "The content of policy knowledge, and its credibility, it is also an important consideration in networks becoming a site of authority" (Stone, 2013). If think tanks were not pursuing objective knowledge, their credibility would be put into question. Therefore, think tanks should be self-protective, and governments should also try not to jeopardise the validity of think tank existence. James McGann argues that a "way to ensure the rigor of the think tank community is for these institutions, despite partisan or ideological differences, to work together to insist upon high standards in their research, integrity, and independence from interest groups, partisan ideologies, and donors" (2007). Despite that, if governments are constantly intrusive with their belief that think tanks intend to validate their policy choices, the think tanks will not have a basis to fulfil their mission to "find ways to shed light on policy-making process" (Abelson, 2006). Governments and think tanks should build a partnership to get the most out of each other.

Henry A. Kissinger explained a while ago that pragmatism closes down creativity in the political sphere because: “sees in consensus a test of validity; it distrusts individual effort or at least individual certitude and it tends to suppress personal judgment as ‘subjective’” (1959). Think tanks intend to open up space for personal judgment as their results are not strictly academic, but think tanks are still trying to be pragmatic. This feature means that being overly creative might bring much scepticism because it does not meet consensus. Such scepticism is a challenge when a foreign government tries to influence foreign and security policies in a way that does not meet a consensus or most common perspective that already exists in a particular country. Therefore, one should calculate if it is worth to invest in such a situation.

Sometimes think tanks are seen as advocates rather than those who enlighten society. Andrew Rich says that “many experts now behave like advocates” (Rich, 2004), and that makes think tanks similar to lobby organisations. The difference is, however, that think tanks are trying at least publicly to protect their independence. It might become challenging because the “leaders expect a major share of their influence to be translated into binding support” (Jervis, 1976), but think tanks are not per se obliged to support anyone. The relative independence of think tanks is an advantage rather than disadvantage for the governments that try to have an impact on, for instance, US Congress members, this quality of independence provides the basis to have more qualified opinions and ideas that could be communicated to Congress members. The governments should decide whether they want to use think tanks as knowledge disseminators or to have independent expertise that they could lean on when needed.

The arguments of a think tanker might look more valid in comparison to a lobbyist, which means that think tankers’ influence should rely, for the most part, on their expertise. The potential influence on them should be, in a way, hidden in order to avoid the label of a “lobbyist.” As “the independence of influence from power means that the influence system is an open one” (Jervis, 1976), and that would mean that tying it “to power in direct, matching terms would...reduce the power-influence relation to a barter basis” (Jervis, 1976). For that reason, it is crucially important to protect independence in order for think tanks to be the ones that might have an influence but not the ones who are the disseminators of governmental messages. Overall, if think tanks were used only as disseminators of messages, their importance and role would diminish significantly. Think tanks should still primarily pursue knowledge. Otherwise, their credibility would be put into jeopardy.

### **3. The assessment of opportunities**

If the role of political advocacy is the main thing that the Lithuanian government expects from think tanks and if Lithuania wants to make an impact on a certain foreign government through think tanks, they have to “look inside its [foreign country’s, A/N] domestic policy, its bureaucratic bargaining, or the preference and calculations of its decision makers” (Jervis, 1976). Lithuania has to evaluate if all

these elements provide a basis to believe what role think tanks have in the country that is in consideration of being influenced. However, the line is almost invisible in being realistic and being too optimistic. As mentioned before, one has to realise that this impact is almost impossible to measure. Therefore, the question “Is the result worth the efforts?” can be answered only in the way – depends how much visibility you want to have, without necessarily being capable of identifying and assessing the outcome. The section will look at the broad strategic ways of how the Lithuanian government might produce benefits reducing the risk of compromising the intellectual basis and credibility of think tanks.

Some might find it cynical to claim that the government could “use” think tanks for extending their foreign and security interests abroad. However, as it is claimed by Diane Stone, “Think tanks are not expert organisations situated outside of or above decision processes, transmitting research from their scientifically-independent position into policy. <...> research and policy are symbiotic and interdependent” (2013). Think tanks are already a part of power-knowledge nexus, but the way government and think tanks interact defines how much think tanks are the shapers of ideas and how much they are the “mirrors” of what is already established. Therefore, the Lithuanian government’s interactions with think tanks are a natural process of power.

Think tanks are not “independent or ‘free-floating’ forces” (Parmar, 2004). However, “A diffuse and pervasive ‘nexus’ cannot be operationalised into a policy tool in the same way as a compelling but simplistic narrative can be built of think tanks ‘bridging’ or ‘linking’ the scholarly/political, the national/global, the state/society divides” (Stone, 2013). By and large, if the government wants to have influence abroad through think tanks, there is no evidence that could suggest success. Despite that, the governments are seeking to do that as “the study in “The New York Times” (September, 2014) revealed that think tanks receive funding from foreign countries” (Bardauskaite, 2016). If the governments would not believe that think tanks are to a degree influential, the question is, if they would invest money in the US think tanks.

Lithuania has also tried to do similar steps like other governments. The recent example could be financial support to the Atlantic Council, a Washington D.C.–based think tank. Lithuanian politicians are common visitors in this think tank. Additionally, there are a number of articles published by this think tank that covers topics that are important for Lithuanian national interest, also written by Lithuanian nationals. This is just one example of illustrating Lithuanian interest to have some input in the most powerful capital’s intellectual/policy sphere.

Lithuania is already making efforts to be visible in think tanks abroad, but there is another opportunity to seize if Lithuania would solve the issues of its internal brain capacity. Lithuania does not have a single strong think tank, differently from Poland, Estonia, Denmark and Finland – to mention just a few. If a government expects a foreign think tank to disseminate a message for decision makers in the US, for instance, they might be overly disappointed as there are so many governments who try to do the same. The better approach is to educate a lot of bright minds who could compete with the best ones abroad. Once they have

jobs in a competitive environment of think tanks as equally qualified employees, they would have vast networks and could be of help for Lithuanian interests. The same applies to a robust national think tank that could be visible and respected in the international arena.

A standard narrative in Lithuania among politicians is that Lithuania needs a strong think tank. However, before writing this article, the informal conversations with the think tankers of Lithuania revealed the uncomfortable situation, that for the most part Lithuanian government wants to see durable think tanks, but they are mostly left alone to fight the struggles that require money and genuine dialogue with those trying to produce something valuable. The current wish to have a Lithuanian think tank recalls the idea that Lithuanian universities should appear on the top rankings in the world with tiny budgets. The most profound question to be answered here is to decide on the expectations of government for think tanks. Overall, what is the need and what is the mission of a strong think tank if a government makes a final decision to invest money in one?

Think tanks in Lithuania face many challenges that are systemic and somewhat difficult to solve. Nevertheless, it is possible with political consistency and prioritisation. One of them, of course, is a lack of funding. Lithuanian think tanks tend to be dependent on projects that they apply for and receive money particularly from that. The practical question for think tanks is how to maintain the think tanks in place and afford to hire necessary employees for existence like a proper project manager, accountant and management of a think tank from only project money. For example, EESC has until now received public funding by winning individual projects (BNS, 29 June 2019), but the recent legislative changes might bring some ease to the financially struggling centre. EESC barely can afford to hire experts and rely a lot on interns and younger employees who primarily seek job experience rather than a payment. However, due to the low salaries, it is almost an impossible task to keep young professionals at the think tank, as they leave for better-paid jobs once the experienced is gained. When it comes to stretching out a helping hand, any think tanker stands in a beggar's position. The problem is how to sustain the longevity of the EESC project when the government changes. The changing governments should realise this priority in the long perspective. Despite that, finance is not a panacea to this. It seems that the main issue is human resources and flaws in the educational system. There are no proper analysts to hire in Lithuania, even if there is enough money.

The other challenge is the quality of higher education. Think tanks are supposed to suggest timely ideas, but they face a challenge to find bright-educated minds to do that. The leaders of the Lithuanian think tanks find it difficult to find experts who can write in an analytical but not academic style. The current academic background and poor conditions for proper internships as a part of education do not provide a proper basis. Perhaps think tanks themselves could shape think tankers, but this requires a lot of financial support and time. In general, in order to learn how to write in the style that would be accessible to the politicians, governmental officials and a broader audience, the experience outside the purely academic field is necessary.

Think tank scholars are in need of having a connection to the government despite a need to maintain the independence of their research. If they do not have access to the government, their mission is also not fulfilled: “The informal links to politicians enable scholars to promote ideas and mould public opinion. Think tanks bring their expert knowledge into the public sector by serving in government agencies and congressional committees” (Yado Arin, 2014). The latter feature is mostly noticed in the American government, while in the European system, think tank scholars are usually not working at governmental agencies, with an academic background and more relying on governmental funding rather than donors from the private sector. As Lithuania does not have a revolving door principle, there are no conditions for both, academic and policy-orientated, writing skills to be developed. The revolving door principle in the US builds conditions for understanding academic and policy worlds, helps to build networks and to adapt the style of writing and communicating for officials who could use a piece of advice.

During the informal conversations with Lithuanian think tank leaders, think tankers expressed their dislike of an idea to have a think tank that would be directly affiliated with the government. Think tankers are afraid to lose their independence because of this sort of affiliation. It is a well-known fact that foreign and security policy planning and implementation contains plenty of classified information. If the government would like extend the usage of think tanks from being message disseminators to advisers, perhaps it should provide some access to this kind of information.

Naturally, security and foreign policy fields in Lithuania itself have minimal boundaries to expand. Seriously – how many other alternatives do we have when it comes to these policies? Perhaps there might be a need for some technical/specific expertise in area of defence/cyber etc., but most think tanks are better in speculating grand ideas rather than giving solutions. One of the limitations is not having access to the classified material that is so essential for writing something substantial. How might a think tanker suggest something new, if the government does not give at least some of access in order to know what is already on the table?

The surprising part was those think tankers were not enthusiastic about having access to classified information due to the fear of losing their outsiders’ perspective. On the one hand, it is a challenge for think tanks to not have access to the classified information when they work on defence and security matters. Governmental officials see that the think tanks cannot say much, as they do not know much about the things that they do. On the other hand, if a think tank becomes “part of the machine”, any possible independence and the view from the outside become highly tricky to achieve. Even though think tanks claim that access to the classified information would jeopardise their independence, it could be claimed that some access to governmental institutions is a must. It should be in their interest to provide some information (not interpretations), but a sort of factual basis for think tankers. Otherwise, the analysis of think tankers will not be good enough, and the officials will complain again that think tanks are not useful for their purposes.



As the empirical application of the think tank research is quite difficult to have, one might question if think tanks are not just another advocacy group asking for money and support from the government. This is how the politicians in Lithuania sometimes see think tanks. However, mutual trust might create circumstances for mutually beneficial partnerships. Taking an example of the most prominent think tanks in Washington D.C., it is vital at least to have very close connections to government officials in order to have access to the information (not necessarily classified). It should be an interest of the government to talk with think tankers. It is easy for the government to blame outside experts for not saying anything new, but the dialogue between two sides should guarantee that the factual information is the same, while the interpretations might differ. It should be in the government's interest to provide space for think tankers to think "outside the box". If not, the role of governmental messages' disseminator would not be sufficient to say that think tanks are used in full capacity. The idea is that think tanks by fulfilling their primary role provide the most significant benefit. When they perform well, they can support joint efforts of protecting Lithuanian interests.

Regardless of the claims by the government about the importance of the need for outside expertise, the problem lies in perception when the outsiders are seen not as capable due to their theoretical approaches and lack of "hands-on" experiences. The way the Lithuanian government perceives think tanks is an issue. The Lithuanian government should see think tanks as partners, not only as instruments of their agendas. Howard Wiarda described the role of think tanks in the US:

"They do the government's thinking for it, hence the term "think tanks." It may sound ludicrous but the fact is these days neither presidents, Congress, nor the big government departments have the time, resources, or personnel to do much thinking. They are too busy with meetings, paperwork, deadlines, bureaucratic requirements, and everyday administrative matters. So, the think tanks do their thinking for them." (Wiarda, 2010)

If Lithuanian politicians and officials would give a chance for think tanks to do some of the thinking for them, the true partnership for the Lithuanian interest could be built with mutual respect.

One of the ways to establish the dialogue between think tanks and the government is to create conditions for government officials to work for some time in a think tank as a part of their professional development. That would give a better chance for think tankers who are primarily academicians to learn what governmental needs are and ways of working, and the diplomats would be provided with an opportunity to expand their horizons with a little bit wider and creative perspective rather than one narrow file that they are usually covering in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Think tanks "As agents of learning, they start a learning effect with their long-term analysis and the application of their knowledge crosses the limits of coalitions and political activities" (Yado Arin, 2014). The "symbiotic relationship between interests and knowledge" (Yado Arin, 2014) is of vital importance. Thus, the think



tankers of Lithuania would, without a doubt, represent Lithuanian perspective abroad, if this understanding and conditions are established. This, however, does not mean that think tankers do not have a right to criticise the government and suggest ways of improvement. That should be even encouraged and welcomed by the government.

Finally, there should be a clear understanding of the government that they cannot dictate think tankers what to say. It is against any state interest to purely dictate what think tanker has to write or say. One must realise that think tankers are there primarily to provide innovative and practically applicable solutions to different situations or to provide the knowledge basis for the others to do that. The government should have the interest to be challenged and to invest in people that would have such an attitude to dare to be critical to the government that provides money. Overall, Lithuania has to have the interest to have an influential think tank that could represent Lithuania independently enough in foreign countries but with a common understanding that they also work for the Lithuanian interests while working abroad.

As a result, Lithuania's opportunities to have a direct impact through think tanks on foreign and security policy of US or any other government are vague. Nonetheless, Lithuania might have stronger visibility in the discourse through its think tank. If Lithuania invests steadily to a Lithuanian think tank and continues to do it throughout the changes of the government and provides conditions for independency, those think tanks might become respected by other think tanks. Finally, Lithuanian think tankers would become a part of a broader expert network, which would give a chance to spread a Lithuanian (but not only official) perspective outside Lithuania. Instrumentalization of think tanks is dangerous for their credibility. If think tanks become just an instrument for governmental manipulations, their mission is put into question. For that reason, if governments want to have outside expertise, they have to be protective and caring of think tanks' independency.

The other colossal misunderstanding that might happen is the belief that, if a think tank does not make a direct impact on governmental entities it does not have any importance what they think tank or do. However, think tanks also have to find ways to educate society, which in democratic conditions has a decision power when it comes to who will be elected. Overall, "social science research became more narrowly focused and less easily communicated to the ordinary citizen." (Smith, 1991). That could be fixed by think tanks, but they many times be more focused on having an impact on politicians rather than the education of citizens. The impact on media, of course, usually is one of top priorities for think tankers: "To compete successfully, many think tanks devote considerable resources to attracting media exposure, a critical strategy for capturing the attention of policy-makers" (Abelson, 2006). Think tanks could admit that they have a large impact on politicians and society in an indirect way, but through media as a filter of think tank opinions. Thus, the Lithuanian government could use an opportunity to have a much broader impact through think tanks, despite the ability, yet, to predict the outcomes of the efforts to work with and together with think tanks.

## Conclusion

First of all, the Lithuanian government has to realistically define its expectations towards think tanks abroad. The Lithuanian government cannot expect think tanks to be preoccupied only with knowledge dissemination as a tool of Lithuanian foreign and security policies. Secondly, the opportunities to advance Lithuanian interests through think tanks are present, but they are mostly grounded on the ability to be respectable due to its capacity to offer their qualified expertise. Lithuania has to continuously support think tank(s) financially, providing information, and be open to the meetings with them. At least one strong think tank could be an anchor between the Lithuanian government and the other think tanks around the globe through networking and various kinds of cooperation. Thirdly, governmental institutions cannot expect to receive what they need without a dialogue based on respect for the independence of a researcher. Fourthly, the human resources problem requires a strategic approach to the educational system. Think tanks struggle to find proper brain capacity for analytical jobs. Finally, if Lithuania has something to offer to the international network of expertise, the chances to be heard and visible in various think tanks in the US and Europe would increase significantly. Lithuania has made steps already to financially support think tanks abroad while expecting fast results and support here and now. Now it is time to think in a long-term perspective and focus on balancing the support. Lithuania as a small country could achieve more in foreign and security policy spheres, among others, while using think tanks as a brain capacity for identifying and expanding policy options.

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## EPILOGUE: WHAT HAS BEEN LEFT UNSAID?

Nortautas Statkus

Since 2004, when Lithuania successfully implemented its two most important foreign policy goals to become a member of both the European Union (EU) and NATO, the country has been asserting its status and position in the Euro-Atlantic community. However, after 15 years, this community faces a significantly changing global and European strategic environment, which is best characterised by an ever-growing uncertainty. The transatlantic relations continue to be tense. Russia has re-emerged as an expansionist imperial power. The European Union is undergoing one of the most severe internal crisis in decades.

The dominant Lithuanian foreign and security policy narrative, which could be clearly discerned as the main line in this book as well, is a vital importance of the preservation of the transatlantic link. One could readily agree that any other strategic configurations would bring new difficulties for Lithuania. What further complicates this puzzle for Lithuania is that the bigger EU member states and the U.S. seek to achieve a common understanding with Russia, albeit for different reasons. These aspirations could potentially jeopardise the vital security interests of Lithuania. Undoubtedly, either the Western European great powers aligning with Russia against the U.S. or the U.S. teaming with Russia against China would be less desirable from the perspective of the Lithuanian national security since Russia would exert an adequate geopolitical reward for such an alliance.

If the transatlantic link broke down irreparably, neither France, nor Germany, nor could China single-handedly counter-balance Russia in the Baltic Sea region. The U.S. alone would also be incapable of pushing back Russia. Only the U.S. and Europe can contain together the revisionist Russia.

However, the U.S. hegemony based on the liberal world order is fading out and major international recalibration of power relationships is underway. The new global leadership strategy introduced by the U.S. President's administration is contributing to this reconfiguration of international system too. President Donald Trump's strategy aims to replace liberal hegemony by a selective engagement-based policy that focuses solely on the regions of geopolitical importance for America and building bilateral relationships with the major players thereof. The U.S. (re) creates regional balances in Europe, East Asia and the Middle East.

The U.S. President's administration is putting a value on bilateral alliances and partnerships as providing the solid foundation for security of transatlantic community. As a response to such U.S. policies, an idea of the European strategic autonomy has been reintroduced by France with the tacit support of Germany.

These geopolitical processes posit a vital dilemma for the security and defence policy of Lithuania as well as other Baltic states. Should Lithuania put more efforts to contribute to Europe becoming a full-fledged single autonomous international actor albeit closely cooperating with NATO and the U.S.? Or should Lithuania re-energise and develop bilateral defence relations with the U.S., the U.K. and like-minded nations? Would it be more practical to consider joining "coalitions of

the willing”? And wouldn't it be more sensible to set-up complementary regional arrangements with other NATO nations that share similar threat perceptions and the will to counter the threats?

To be consistent, let us take a global look at the nature of international change and explore the regional security challenges that would enable the identification of Lithuania's defence and security weaknesses and opportunities to address them.

### **1. Towards Asymmetric Unipolarity**

Many international relations researchers and commentators assert that the world order is changing and humanity has entered a transitional phase – asymmetric multi-polarity. The United States of America retains its primacy almost in every area because of the gap between the U.S. and other poles of power, particularly China, India and Russia. However, the major revisionist powers are gradually narrowing the power asymmetry between themselves and the U.S. China – an emerging potential superpower – is successful precisely because of the economic opportunities given by the global order. The U.S. liberal hegemony, securing a global open world economy, was the one that created conditions for China to rise. R. Gilpin observes that a hegemonic state, by creating and maintaining a world order that is conducive to itself, “digs a pit for itself” either by wasting resources for maintaining that order (over-extension) or collapsing through internal antagonism and hedonism created by the excess (corruption) and thus enabling the revisionist states to arise (Gilpin, 1982, p. 161-179).

Indeed, in the second decade of the 21st century, regional competition in Europe, Asia and the Americas has intensified fuelled by uneven technology innovation and development, as well as by the growing geopolitical tensions among Russia, Iran, and China on the one hand and the U.S. on the other.

The desynchronization of the global economy and the rise of major powers, who seek to become regional poles with exclusive zones of interests, show that globalization is being replaced by regionalization tendencies. The data of the last 25 years show that the global economy is desynchronising and that business cycles are converging within regions due to divergent development thereof that leads to regional business cycles (Hirata, January 2013).

Researchers argue whether the international system is experiencing a hegemony change (a *systemic change* – a redistribution of power in the system) or we are witnessing a radically new stage in the historical evolution of international relations – *system's change* (Gilpin, 1982, p. 39–49). As Giedrius Česnakas rather convincingly argues in the opening chapter, there are signs that the whole system change is underway.

The dominant state or group of countries in different regions are aiming to form regional military-political and economic bloc, while some nation-states oppose others to cling to these military-political blocs. The political, economic, civilizational and ethnic boundaries of the regions intertwine, and the regional configuration of the international system remains very dynamic since small and

medium-sized states cannot compete with the economically most influential countries and their blocs.

Regional poles and their blocs are capable of maintaining the biggest allocations for military research and technologies, which are highly advanced in terms of military technological power (Česnakas, 2018)<sup>47</sup>. It seems that the prospects for Europe, as a single geopolitical actor in the international arena, are not very promising. In contrast, the transatlantic security community has a much better chance to thrive, though it has to solve one strategic problem at its heart.

NATO remains as crucial as ever for the future of the Euro-Atlantic security bloc. In the year 2020, many countries in Eastern and Central Europe mark the 30th anniversary of the first entirely free elections that manifest a critical milestone in the transition of these countries from the Soviet communist system to democracies. It was also the beginning of their road to join NATO, the most successful long-enduring political-military alliance in history. However, the discussions before and during the NATO Leaders Meeting in London in 2019 and subsequent conversations in Munich Security Conference offer a thought that the Alliance continues to exist in form but not in substance. As J. Lindley French persuasively makes evident that NATO lacks the unity of threat perception and purpose and, therefore, requires the unity of efforts (Lindley-French, *The 2019 NATO London Charter*, 2019).

Indeed, it is apparent that successfully operating alliances are those that are united by 1) common understanding of the situation and evaluation of challenges and 2) resolve to overcome the challenges, and, therefore, 3) have the ability to launch joint actions. At the same time, members of these organisations should be capable of retaining sufficient flexibility to side-step and downplay minor factors that might disunite them. This brings about credibility and capability to alliances. All in all, such reasoning applies to credibility and capability of NATO as well. Strength and endurance of NATO is not given, but is an outcome of policies directed at dynamic international equilibrium of threats and opportunities.

For the Baltic security, it would be optimal for NATO to continue being a cornerstone of Europe's security architecture. Margarita Šešelgytė and Ieva Karpavičiūtė wisely observe that Lithuania's security policy is based on ensuring NATO effectiveness and the U.S. military presence in the Baltics (see chapters 7 and 8). The EU is perceived as an additional "softer" security provider. This is the result mentioned in chapter 4 by Vaidotas Urbelis that Europe will continue to be under the U.S. military protection for a foreseeable time and depends on the U.S. nuclear and conventional force guarantees. Even countries like the United Kingdom or France acknowledge their dependency on the U.S. military capabilities, such as *ISTAR*, strategic lift or missile defence.

V. Urbelis underlines that Europeans do little to appreciate the strategic challenge posed to America by China's growing military strength. In his chapter, Daivis Petraitis has dealt extensively with structural changes and rearmament of

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<sup>47</sup> Only 9 countries have access to the outer space, but only the U.S., Russia, China, and, perhaps, India in the future can utilize it to the fullest for their military goals.



China's People Liberation Army (PLA), which have increased its confidence and military capabilities to operate beyond immediate borders. He draws attention to the fact that PLA is present in the areas where Europeans, Russians and Americans were only operating so far and has entered the close European waters, i.e. the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 and North and Baltic Seas in 2017.

Germany is at special attention of Trump's administration to hit the spending targets because it is assumed that it responds too slowly and with little enthusiasm to the deteriorating U.S. global strategic situation. *The Heritage 2020 Index of U.S. Military Strength* concludes that aggregated American military posture against formidable threats posed by Russia and China is rated "marginal". Such evaluation means that the U.S. military "is likely capable of meeting the demands of a single major regional conflict <...> and certainly would be ill-equipped to handle two nearly simultaneous major regional contingencies." (Wood, 2020, p. 491).

The U.S. has increased its defence budget by almost 7% with a particular focus on the development of new technologies for the twenty-first-century battlespace. At the same time, China has responded in almost similar proportions. Germany, though, increased its defence budget by 10% in 2019, but still lags with 1.35% of its GDP behind the U.S., U.K. and 14 other NATO countries (McCarthy, 2019).

In agreement with J. Lindley-French, one could say, that Europe's strategic problem is not Russia or China but Germany and the U.S.-German strategic military relationship. Until the political relations improve, that deeper military partnership is on hold. Germans refuse to take up to their strategic responsibilities as Europe's leading democratic power and to recognize implications of doing not enough for the future security and defence of Europe. NATO and Europe need credible deterrence, a high-end, heavy and fast European/German first responder force while the U.S. would come in an emergency. This is a reality, which contemporary Germany seems not to be ready to confront and take its responsibilities as a leader (Lindley-French, 2020).

While Germany remains passive, France is toying with Russia, and the U.K. recalibrates its relations with the Continent after Brexit. Such an environment might lead to the regionalisation of the European security. This risk Lithuania and other Baltic States should overcome at any costs. If this happens, the consequence will undermine the efficiency and effectiveness of the transatlantic relations upon which the Lithuanian independence and prosperity rest.

## **2. Lithuanian Threat Perception: 3R – Russia, Russia, Russia**

Many observers have pointed out that Russia is on a tacit political war footing against the Western alliance (Galeotti, 2019). It is mobilizing all available national power elements and state instruments to undermine transatlantic unity, solidarity and ability to make swift decisions (Pronk, 2019). Some researches and scholars have convincingly argued that Russian strategic culture is prone to the use of military force to achieve political aims (Milevski, 2018, p. 155-160). Russia is proving that a declining power can be as disruptive as a rising one. It could concentrate an intensive force and exploit divisions in and around the region and

the West in general. Russia has demonstrated its hostile intentions (aggression against Ukraine, election interference and special intelligence operations in NATO territory).

This posture stems from the misperceptions of Western intentions by the Russian regime and its own identity as a great power that should be reckoned with in all serious matters of international politics. Mistakenly, the Russian regime sincerely feels embattled and frustrated (Robinson, Linda, Todd C. Helmus, Raphael S. Cohen, Alireza Nader, Andrew Radin, Madeline Magnuson, and Katya Migacheva, 2019). From Putin's perspective, Russia struggles for existential issues like its authentic civilizational individuality, identity and rightful place in the international system. Thus, it aims to create such combinations of international politics which would eventually help to reduce the influence of the U.S. in Europe and the remaining parts of Eurasia (Caldwell, 2017).

Russia expects to retain the great power status by spreading discord among NATO and EU members – fundamentally weakening these international organizations rendering them ineffective or even achieving their dissolution. Russia seeks to have the arrangement of a more traditional power balance in Europe. Success for Russia is Europe, where the U.S. has effectively retreated, and security-providing institutions (NATO, EU) have become dismantled or hopeless to deter the Russian intervention. As the largest power, Russia would have a greater control over foreign and security politics of other European States. Basically, it would dominate Eastern Europe and become the hegemonic power in Central Eurasia as well. Moscow views the Western virtues pluralism and openness as vulnerabilities to be exploited (Wright, 2017) (Bremmer, 2018) (Walt, 2018).

Putin has chosen not to integrate with the West but to confuse and neutralize the Western countries as much as possible. Since Russia is not going to join them, it has chosen to build the relationship according to the so-called “concert model” of the great powers where Russia could be a global balancer. Russia seeks to manage global affairs together with big countries and to have at minimum its exceptional zone of direct control in Central Eurasia which includes former territory of the Soviet Union (Arquilla, J., et al, 2019).

This project of the overall political war with the West is subsumed under the concept “Russian world”. Its building is undertaken simultaneously in three areas/theatres and, if completed, would result in the following three spheres of influence albeit of different degrees and forms of control exercised by Moscow:

- ▶ Former Soviet Union, a zone of direct vertical and horizontal control including post-Soviet states;

- ▶ Central and Eastern Europe, a zone of friendly allied nations with the Russian veto regarding serious foreign and defence policy matters including former countries of the Warsaw Pact and COMECON, Balkan region, some Arab countries as well as India, Brazil, Iran and Venezuela;

- ▶ Western Europe and Scandinavia, a zone of neutral states with a pro-Russian lobby able to block any decisions unfavourable to Russia.

The Russian success in each of these concentric zones of diminishing control could be hardly called satisfactory (Dykyi, 2016, p. 14-23).

V. Urbelis has insightfully observed that the most relevant crisis scenario in the NATO's Eastern flank is a possible rapid Russian attack on the Baltics. Russia's real military capabilities to attack the Baltic States and thus challenge the solidarity of NATO are existent as well. If Russia decided to invade the Baltic States, it could do it with a certain degree of success. In the case of a conventional attack, time will be on the Russia's side (see chapter 4).

If the Baltic States were occupied before NATO could react, the Alliance would have to liberate the Baltic countries. At best, the Russians' eviction would involve time to gather necessary forces. Some simulations estimate that it would take 35 days. If the Suwalki Corridor was sealed by the Russian forces, it would create considerable difficulty for the Alliance to come with the reinforcements. Besides, Russia could aim to decouple Western Europe and the U.S. by threatening to execute limited nuclear de-escalatory strikes as well as long-range high-precision strikes targeting Western European capitals and vital infrastructure to make any NATO counter-offensive very difficult politically and militarily. However, the probability of this scenario is considered low (Svarovsky, 2019). It decreased after the U.S. had introduced submarine-launched low-yield explosive nuclear warheads (W76-2) that currently are on patrol as a countermeasure to the Russian threat to use "tactical" nuclear weapons (Pickrell, 2020).

Nevertheless, the scenario of a rapid conventional Russian attack cannot be discounted, since successful occupation of the Baltic states would achieve sound geopolitical, strategic-military and political goals which would secure not only domestic survivability of "Putin's long state" (*Dolgoe Gosudarstvo Putina*) but his legacy in the Russian history as well (Surkov, 2019). The age cohort of the Russian elite to which Putin belongs has always considered independent Baltic States as the Achilles heel of Russia, a marker of its decadent weakness. Recapture of the Baltics would signify a critical development in the restoration of Russia's greatness (Laurinavičius, 2005, p. 25).

In chapter 11, Virgilijus Pugačiauskas has demonstrated that Russia considerably improved its combat readiness, modernized armed forces, and increased frequency, scope and scale of military exercises. It also reinstated snap exercises with large numbers of troops and equipment. Because of the non-democratic character of the regime, Russia can very fast (within hours) decide on the use of its forces abroad (contrary to the Western democratic countries, where such decisions could be considerably slower). In their public reports, the Lithuanian intelligence services assess that Russia have capabilities to start military actions in 24-48 hours (see e.g. (National Threat Assessment 2020, p. 20).

Is Russia preparing for a new act of aggression against Lithuania? It is difficult to provide an unequivocally determined answer to this question as Liudas Zdanavičius considers in his chapter. However, he posits that military and socioeconomic developments in Kaliningrad region could give some clues where the pattern "fortress under siege" or "unsinkable aircraft carrier" is observed. Russia is purposefully strengthening its military capabilities in this region with a view of giving Kaliningrad a much broader role in the future European security architecture.

In his chapter, Virgilijus Pugačiauskas concludes that Russia has taken the use of military power as one of the essential instruments of its long-term foreign policy, and, therefore, the regime in this neighbouring country once again poses a fundamental existential challenge to the national security of Lithuania. Nonetheless, as Lucas Milevski pointed out, Russia still lacks appropriate command and control arrangements necessary for carrying out a combined arms operation in the Baltic direction (Milevski, 2020).

Bearing in mind this dramatic context, a practical political question arises under what circumstances the Lithuanian foreign and security policy towards Russia (and vice versa) could be moved from critical to the so-called pragmatic line? Gediminas Vitkus sharpens the problem in the chapter 13. He asks what should happen or what obstacles should be removed to normalize the relations between Lithuania and Russia and improve for mutually beneficial neighbourly cooperation. G. Vitkus maintains that the Lithuanian-Russian relations are a diplomatic *aporia* – an impossible mission – because the geopolitical identities of these neighbouring states simply mutually deny each other. However, he notes that although arguments and reasoning cannot remove *aporias*, they can be resolved by an active and determined action.

If one wishes an action to be productive, it requires not only a subjective desire to act decisively but also objective conditions which G. Vitkus himself defined rather explicitly in his previous book *Diplomatic Aporia* on troubled Russian-Lithuanian relations. In that book, G. Vitkus asserted that the normalization of Lithuania's relations with Russia is possible when either Russia significantly weakens or Lithuania builds up its power respectively. A solution to the problem of normalization lies in the ability of Lithuania to gather international diplomatic and public opinion support and skilfully avoid dangerous political isolation from the West. Fundamentally, normalization is hardly possible without a crucial political and social change in Russia (Vitkus, 2006, p. 173-183).

In other words, one has to assume that Lithuania, as a weaker actor in this dyadic relationship, may increase its security by implementing the policy which would eliminate the hostile intentions of Russia or increase its power to prevent the realization of the hostile intentions. There are two ways for Lithuania to increase its power: internal balancing (a self-sustaining increase of power) based on the mobilization of domestic resources (improvement of governance, accumulation of funds, increasing resilience of the population, procurement of armaments, etc.) or external balancing based on strengthening political and defence cooperation with allies which are hostile to the perceived threat.

### **3. Lithuanian Response: Deterrence by Denial or by Punishment or Both?**

All the three Baltic countries share a common goal to deter Russia from a possible aggression either by *deterrence by denial* or by *deterrence by punishment* or a combination of both. It appears, however, that current NATO's deterrence posture in the Baltic region is neither *deterrence by denial* (because of the lack of sufficient capacity) nor *deterrence by punishment* (because not all strategic options

are considered). As one observer noted, we have something like *deterrence by the assured response* – NATO is sending a signal that if the Russians attacked, NATO would respond in the Baltics, although, it is not very clear in which way.

Lithuania, as well as other Baltic countries, has undertaken many legal, procedural, financial and technical measures to boost resilience and deterrence. This renders the idea that the Baltic States are not defensible rather incorrect. In chapter 18, Deividas Šlekys has nicely formulated that the Lithuanian Armed Forces and military system made enormous improvements in 9 directions: three *mores* (money, people and weapons), three *highs* (readiness, tempo and awareness) and three *strongs* (will, resilience and cooperation).

However, V. Urbelis points out that there are not enough national or NATO military forces that would be able to counter conventional Russian forces in the region. Also, he draws attention to the challenges such as air defence and control of the Baltic Sea. Land forces are not present in adequate quantities. As a result, V. Pugačiauskas argues that the Lithuanian security and defence policy should develop in the following two directions. First, Lithuania has to strengthen its own capabilities with the help of the allied countries, and, second, to work towards coherence in the Alliance with a view of supporting action to preserve and strengthen the unity of the Euro-Atlantic structures. Also, V. Pugačiauskas advises to contribute to the efforts aiming to reduce any confrontation and the potential for regional or local conflicts.

To this end, strategic military cooperation of the Baltic States with Poland and Germany as well as with Sweden and Finland are of utmost importance. Eglė Murauskaitė suggests that France and the U.K. should receive a more balanced level of attention or efforts in building the partnership ties and keeping the coherence of the Alliance and complementarity between NATO and the U.S. Army. Martin Svarovsky argues that NATO eFP battle groups and the U.S. rotational brigade combat teams require comprehensive and coordinated NATO-U.S. battle plans, including intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance resources and updated solutions for air and missile defence and long-range fires. In such a way, strengthened NATO ground forces in Europe, in combination with the enhanced U.S. presence, and increased readiness of the European NATO forces through large-scale exercises will deter Russia (Svarovsky, 2019).

Thus, the most important factor required for the effective Europe's defence is a significantly enhanced capacity and capability of NATO ground forces. One could not agree more with J. Lindley-French stating that what currently NATO needs is a high-end, heavy-armoured and fast twenty-first-century rapid response European force with a powerful German armoured division at its core if NATO wishes to maintain credible deterrence (Lindley-French, 2020).

Furthermore, to ensure the security of the Baltic Sea region, a closer cooperation between the EU members Sweden, Finland and NATO is essential. Sweden and Finland will provide a direct support to the U.S. in its defence of the Baltic States. The format of the Joint Expeditionary Forces (JEF) also significantly enhances the security of the Baltic Sea. It encompasses Sweden and Finland and is led by the United Kingdom. Along the U.K. and other maritime NATO nations



of the Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea (Netherlands, Denmark and Norway), the Baltic states participate in this format as well. E. Murauskaitė aptly observes that it is the most critical vehicles for defence cooperation in Northern Europe and particularly for the Lithuanian-British bilateral defence relations (chapter 9). The JEF provides for interoperability and augmentation of the military capabilities of its members and in such a way complements NATO defence in Northern Europe and offers a perfect platform for engaging non-NATO countries Finland and Sweden. Besides, it proves the U.K.'s readiness to contribute effectively to the security of this region. However, the absence of Poland in the JEF, as a provider of security in the Baltic Sea region, puts limits to the completeness of this format (Greta Tučkutė and Liudas Zdanavičius, 2019).

It is appropriate to mention the Nordic defence cooperation, which is an excellent reminder to the Baltics of the advantages of deep cooperation with their neighbours. Tomas Jermalavičius, Tony Lawrence and Anna-Liisa Merilind's careful analysis of the prospects for the Baltic regional cooperation indicates that naval cooperation is perhaps the most promising avenue to re-energise cooperative relationship. Accordingly, military cooperation in the maritime sphere could produce a much-needed capability to close a significant vulnerability for defence and deterrence of the Baltic Sea region which no Baltic country could manage to achieve acting alone (see chapter 17).

As the U.S., Germany, Sweden and Finland are backed by the U.K. maritime power, Poland is essential for the security of Lithuania. In her chapter 16, Ieva Gajauskaitė rightly concludes that the Russian threat, confirmed through centuries of common historical experience, is a solid geopolitical background bringing the states closer together. Overlapping strategic interests and need to counter common conventional and non-conventional threats to national security are sufficient conditions for Poland and Lithuania to strengthen and deepen cooperation in security and defence. In this context, I. Gajauskaitė makes an insightful observation that the Polish community living in Lithuania is a valuable asset in promoting deeper defence cooperation.

On 29 January 2020, the first meeting of the Lithuanian-Polish Council of Defence Ministers took place in Vilnius. The meeting discussed air defence, the security of the Suwalki Corridor, military mobility, permanent military presence of the allies in the region and their deployment as listed in the Declaration on Strengthening the Lithuanian-Polish Security Partnership signed by Poland and Lithuania on 21 February 2019.

At the meeting, the Lithuanian and Polish Chiefs of Defence also signed an act of affiliation of the Lithuanian Armed Forces' Mechanised Infantry Brigade *Iron Wolf* and the 15th Mechanised Brigade of the Polish Armed Forces to the Multinational Division North-East HQ. The affiliation will enable both parties to train and act together to protect the Suwalki Corridor and facilitate joint NATO planning for the defence of the region. The Ministers of Defence shared the need for Lithuania and Poland to ensure a long-term deployment of the U.S. forces in the region as well (Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, 2020).

Poland and Lithuania seek more U.S. presence in the region as it has a strategic



value for the defence of the entire region. If successful, the cooperation between Poland, Lithuania and the U.S. for securing the Suwalki Corridor could potentially grow into a long-term cooperation format symbolically named *Projekt Kosciuszko PLUS* (Greta Tučkutė and Liudas Zdanavičius, 2019).

From a geopolitical point of view, the efforts to engage the U.S. to contribute more military assets and other ways to the defence of the Baltic Sea region are understandable. Currently, no country or group of countries apart from the U.S. is capable or willing to counterbalance Russia's influence in the Eastern part of the Baltic Sea region. Among the maritime powers, only the U.S. and partially U.K. have interests and capabilities to limit and contain the Russian influence in this region. It is of utmost geostrategic importance for the U.S. to control the Eurasian coastline to prevent any potential opponent from challenging the global military dominance of the U.S. in the oceans. Thus, the U.S. and Lithuania's long-term interests towards Russia are the same. The success of the American geostrategy towards Russia and Europe is in the best interest of Lithuania and the best possible security guarantee.

But, if Lithuania could additionally engage Poland, Germany, Sweden, Finland and other Northern countries and the U.K. to contribute more actively to the defence of the Baltic States, the Lithuanian geostrategic position might be very strongly assured. However, in return for defence assistance, the U.S. expects from Lithuania and other Baltic States a political support and input for resolving crises in other regions of importance to the U.S.

#### **4. Broad Conclusions**

The U.S. expects from Lithuania to do its defence homework. Strengthening defence not only means to maintain military spending at least at 2% of GDP, it is also about enhancing societal resilience, energy security and introduction of necessary changes in the legal base to counter hybrid and conventional threats to national security. It is vital to improve infrastructure to support the forward defence of NATO and enable enhanced deployment and mobility of defence assets.

Also, it is expected that Lithuania, as well as other Baltic States, will be fighting a resistance war in the time of crisis making it a whole-of-society effort rather than a struggle by scattered individual groups of the society or the armed forces only.

On the national level, all the efforts to strengthen national security and defence after the war in Ukraine could be qualified as enhancing resilience both national and societal in Lithuania. Lithuania needs to strengthen its internal societal consolidation, i.e. national security institutions, their interaction, governance and coordination; involvement of business and NGOs should be ensured as well as. Lithuania has to hold at least one nation-wide mobilization exercise to show readiness to defend against any attack by itself and together with the allies.

Modern deterrence and total (comprehensive) defence is multi-domain, multi-dimensional and includes military, economic, social, cultural, information, and cyber aspects. Therefore, a coordinated and active response should be delivered by the government. Since Lithuania is on the Eastern frontier of NATO, societal

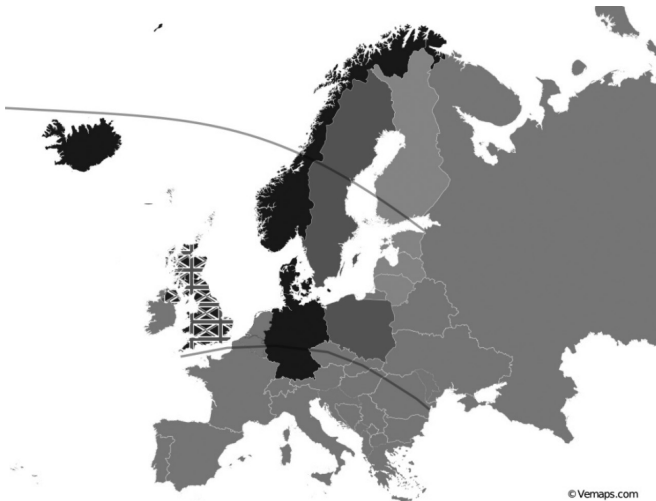
resilience and comprehensive security is a matter of the whole society where a contribution of each member of the society is valuable and required.

Deividas Šlekys points out to the conceptual defence issues that remain unsettled, i.e. the balance between territorial and total defence and the role and importance of strategic communication. Lithuania needs a serious and sincere debate to find an authentic way to ensure national security and defence.

Thus, governmental decisions on total defence (including strengthening of societal resilience) should be made on the highest political level. However, there is no top-level organizational structure that oversees, coordinates and manages the policy of resilience on the national level. The Lithuanian State Defence Council, the highest political body for strategic decisions, does not possess relevant administrative resources to make decisions and oversee their implementation regularly.

To conclude, it is expedient to make all efforts that in its strategic calculations Russia understands that it will be impossible to achieve easy and rapid victory in the Baltics until Western partners will figure out what to do and gather necessary resources. The key deterring factor is the perception of Putin's regime that NATO partners will act swiftly and decisively to secure the sovereignty of Lithuania.

In essence, one could point to the further direction of the Lithuanian foreign and defence policy, i.e. to strengthen its links within North Central Europe and to become an indispensable component in defence of NATO's North Eastern flank. Lithuania should put every effort in contribution to a closer political, security and defence cooperation in a *geopolitical arch* that starts at Iceland and runs to the U.K. across the NATO's Northern and Eastern frontiers from the Baltic Sea through Poland to the Black Sea (see map 1).



Map 1. North Central Europe.

If Lithuania aims at credible deterrence, it should do everything itself and put all the efforts with partners to change Russia's perception that it can overwhelm the Alliance by taking the opportunities at the right time. Lithuania should make everything, at least what depends on itself, to prevent such chances and dash any hopes of arising opportunities.

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