

DEFENCE AND
SECURITY FOR
THE SMALL

*Perspectives from
the Baltic States*



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By

*Raimonds Rublovskis,
Dr. Margarita Šešelgyte
& Riina Kaljurand.*



Centre for Small State Studies
Institute of International Affairs

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Perspectives from the Baltic States**

© Raimonds Rublovskis, Dr. Margarita Šešelgyte
& Riina Kaljurand.

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PREFACE

In 2011 the Institute of International Affairs and Centre for Small State Studies at the University of Iceland launched a collaborative project, financed by the Nordic Fund for Joint Research into Social Sciences (NOS-HS), to look at the challenges facing small states on Europe's Northern periphery at the start of the 21st century. The partners for this 'Nordic-Baltic Small States' (NBSS) initiative were chosen to bring out some of the differences, as well as parallels, in perceptions, agendas, and the choice of responses among the small polities concerned. Denmark, Iceland and Norway represented the Nordic family, and were compared and contrasted with the three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Finally, Greenland and the Faroe Islands were invited to take part as small 'quasi-states' that have attained a high degree of self-rule within the Danish realm. Finnish and Swedish experts were invited on a self-funding basis.

In May 2012 the project held its second workshop in Stavanger, co-hosted by the University of Stavanger and the International Centre for Defence Studies in Estonia. The topic was the challenge of security, in its broadest sense. What main security concerns and priorities does each small nation have; to what extent is its security predicament determined by its smallness; and what kind of solutions – including

multilateral institutional ‘shelters’ – is it currently implementing or seeking?

The present publication is one output from the valuable exchange of analyses and views that ensued on these issues in Stavanger. It brings together the three papers presented by the respective experts from the three Baltic States, reviewed after the meeting to take advantage of insights gained there. These studies offer intriguing parallels and contrasts with the Nordic test-cases on the one hand, and the perception of security in the Faroes and Greenland on the other. Above all, they help to understand and – where necessary – to differentiate the three Baltic States themselves. They do so all the better because the three authors have chosen not only to present different facts, but to follow somewhat different lines of analytical enquiry.

All three of the papers do start with the same question, namely how to define a ‘small’ state, and all conclude that the Baltic States are unquestionably ‘small’ in terms of numbers. Further, living so close to the huge Russian and former Soviet neighbour, their security is clearly something they cannot guarantee for themselves. A cruel demonstration of the fact was the speed with which the Soviet Union engulfed them in 1940 after their first period of independent statehood. Today, all three have concluded that their best hope lies in their full integration into the strongest available Euro-Atlantic institutions, namely NATO and the European Union (EU); but they also seek strong bilateral relations with Washington, and a stable *modus vivendi* with Russia as part of the Baltic Sea community.

Up to this point, all three of the Baltic cases fit well with a main theme of small state studies today: the need for small polities to seek external strategic ‘shelters’, which are increasingly of an institutional rather than purely bilateral kind. The Baltic States have been fortunate

to live in a continent that offers unusually well-developed multilateral structures of this sort, providing both 'hard' military security (NATO) and support in many 'softer' dimensions ranging from economic to health security (the EU). Further, these Western institutions are sufficiently open and democratic to provide room even for small players to exercise some influence and have their voices heard, so long as they make good use (among other things) of their inherent advantages of flexibility and speed of adaptation.

Playing the integration game, however, also involves costs and risks; and while these affect all states concerned, the stakes are often especially high for the small. The potential downsides and in particular, the difficult choices that can arise for a small member state are explored along different tracks in the three papers here.

Raimonds Rublovskis, a former military officer, expands on the most basic question for a small nation – whether to have military forces, of what kind, and for what purpose. Latvia set out in the 1990s to create both a realistic self-defence capacity and the possibility of making modest contributions to overseas operations. It has struggled ever since with shortage of funds, manpower and equipment, and also with the heritage of an outdated Soviet-age structure. The financial crash of 2008, which hit all three Baltic States hard, is now creating a double worry: can Latvia itself maintain viable forces, and can NATO as a whole stay as capable and united as its most vulnerable members would hope? 'Smart defence' and specialization, to make the most of shrinking funds, is the watchword of the day but creates its own dilemmas for smaller partners. If you 'specialize out' of some important function that you are not well equipped for, how certain can you be that your allies will come and fill the gap in a real crisis?

Under the provocative title 'Midget Warrior', Margarita Šešelgyte

depicts Lithuania as facing a similar tug-of-war between traditional defence needs and the pressure to provide inputs for NATO (and to a lesser extent EU) peace missions. She also explores, however, the corresponding issues at the level of security/defence doctrine and culture. A small state whose strategic horizons are overshadowed by Russia has a double problem of balance: first, between home defence tasks and contributions abroad; and then between the traditional agenda of military or territorial security on the one hand, and all the other fields – terrorism, crime, environment – in which contemporary European states are supposed to assist each other, on the other. As depicted by Šešelgyte, since the Georgian war and economic shock of 2008 Lithuania has been driven back to focus more on traditional, Russia-dominated concerns, and has also seen its ambitious neighbourhood policies (including partnership with Poland) partially discredited. This inward-turning phase comes, however, just at a time when the country's dependence on its allies' help and the need to find ways of keeping NATO interested in its plight are more obvious than ever.

Of all three Baltic States, Estonia has perhaps striven hardest to be the 'A-student' in both the NATO and the EU class. At the same time it has faced the sharpest provocations from Russia and has learned that 'softer' aspects of security like finance, energy, environment and cyber-safety are crucial to its own integrity - not just agendas that demand lip-service to comply with institutional doctrine. Riina Kaljurand's paper starts with a brief summary of Estonia's security predicament pre-1990, which is useful because the story is *mutatis mutandis* the same for all three states. She goes into particular detail about Estonia's efforts to keep up with fast-evolving NATO (and US) demands, and the strains that these requirements – including the target of spending 2% of GDP on defence – have placed on the country at a time of

financial retrenchment. She expresses very directly the concern that underlies all three of the analyses in this collection: after all this effort has been made, is it actually *enough*? Not so much ‘enough’ for Estonia’s own defence, which will never be self-sufficient, but enough to tip the chances of NATO’s survival and continued effectiveness in a positive direction?

These questions lead back to the general issue of small states making use of European security institutions for shelter, and help to highlight some of the crueller aspects of their situation. Not only is it the institution, not the small state, that decides when ‘enough is enough’, but the large institution’s formulation both of its doctrines and its demands is liable to evolve rapidly under pressure from larger members’ preferences as well as the outside environment. For some years after 2001, even the smallest West European states could ‘earn points’ directly from the USA and then from NATO by making more-or-less symbolic inputs to the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. That opportunity has been gradually closed to them as both operations wound down, and they have no way of knowing whether the next popular definition of ‘good behaviour’ within the Western family will be one that allows them to compete for favour. Meanwhile their own resources have been pushed near to the line of diminishing returns, and – in the most ironic paradox of all – the effectiveness of the strong institutions they rely on is being sapped not least by these groups’ own expansion. The Baltics might have less reason to worry about NATO’s survival if it had not taken in so many new members that are net *demandeurs* for security, including the Baltics themselves.

One way that over-large institutions can try to rationalize their governance is by processing issues in sub-groups, such as regional neighbourhoods. So could greater Baltic-Nordic security cooperation help

to ease some or all of the Baltic States' current quandaries? All three of our authors point out the limitations of the Nordics' role thus far: they have given their Baltic cousins military aid and helped them get into NATO and the EU, but have never been ready to guarantee their security directly with their own resources. Doing so formally would be hard anyway with Sweden and Finland still outside NATO; but other nuances of difference between Nordic and Baltic defence agendas stand in the way, besides a gap in technological levels, and an occasional lack of coherence between the three Baltic States themselves.

Nevertheless, the second decade of the 21st century could be a good time to re-visit the Nordic/Baltic security nexus. The universal shortage of funds makes it worth looking at any 'smart defence' combinations around the Baltic shores that might help, while the Nordics themselves have taken new steps towards strategic unity with the (non-military) mutual 'solidarity' pledge of April 2011. The economic crash has meanwhile shown up the growing interdependence of the whole Baltic region in terms of finance, energy and trade. What practical steps might be taken to build on these developments is just one of the interesting lines for further research emerging from the Nordic-Baltic Small States project. The Centre for Small State Studies looks forward to further work on these issues – and more! - with all its Baltic and Nordic partners in future.

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**THE CHALLENGES OF A SMALL
STATE IN THE 21ST CENTURY
GLOBAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE
ENVIRONMENT: LATVIA'S CASE.**

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Abstract:

A complex security and defence environment of the beginning of the 21st century has created new security risks and challenges. Small states are increasingly vulnerable to these security threats and challenges, and Latvia, as a small state with rather limited economic and military capabilities, is particularly vulnerable. Historical, geographical and institutional issues have a profound impact on Latvia's security and defence policy in the 21st century; and security, defence, and the very independence of the Republic of Latvia depend on important external factors. These include the ability of the United States to remain militarily capable and politically committed to play an active role in Europe and the Baltic Sea Region; the ability of NATO to remain an effective and efficient military organization; and the ability of Europe to decrease its military capabilities gap with the United States via the NATO

Smart Defence initiative. Such issues and the ability of the concerned actors to solve upcoming security and defence challenges will determine the level of security and stability in the Baltic Sea Region.

1. Introduction

There is no clear-cut definition of what it means to be a “small state”. Qualitative definitions encompass the physical and geographical characteristics of small states, their degree of insularity, and vulnerability. In terms of quantitative characteristics, the factors include land area, population size, Gross National Product, Gross Domestic Product, and per capita income. One might argue, however, that the key feature determining the definition of a “small state” is not simply the size of the territory, population and economy. One could rather emphasize the heavy dependence of “small states” for their own security and defence arrangements upon a politically powerful and militarily capable global actor, or upon a security and defence organization where such an actor plays a prominent role. In this light, the key issue in determining whether or not the state is “small” is to address key security and defence issues. The size and capability of the armed forces, the size and capability of the entire security sector of the state, and the size of the defence budget - both in real money and as a percentage of GDP - will determine whether or not the state should be viewed as “small” from the perspective of security and defence. Granted, one may also emphasize the role of external factors in shaping the small state security mentality (Väyrynen, 1997: 98).

Latvia is one of the least populous and least densely populated

countries in the European Union, with a territory of 64,589 square kilometres and a population of roughly 2 million people, including significant ethnic minorities. The size of the Latvian National Armed Forces is around 5000 personnel, with close to 1% of GDP allocated for state defence.

Since 1991 when the Baltic States regained their independence as one of the outcomes of the Cold War era, there has been a clear understanding that these countries cannot maintain their defence and wider security arrangements on their own, without the assistance of powerful global players. From the hard security perspective it was quite obvious that bilateral security arrangements should be negotiated with the United States, while NATO is the best qualified organization to provide military protection under Article 5 conditions. Since 2004 Latvia, as well as the other Baltic States, has been a full member of the NATO Alliance, and one could argue that under its present arrangements, Latvia enjoys the highest level of security and defence ever.

However, several factors may still be identified that have a profound impact on Latvian internal and external security and defence policy, and which directly stem from the “smallness” of the country. The first is the historical background of the 20th century, with the loss of independence in 1940 and more than 50 years of experience within the former Soviet Union. The historical background should probably be traced even deeper in history, starting as far back as the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as the period of time when the current territory of Latvia and other Baltic States was part of the Russian Empire. The result is that there is still a notion of threat from certain neighbours, and this notion is deeply based on historical background. Certainly, such a notion of perceived threat could be countered with security and defence arrangements within a global security organization that

includes at least one, or more, politically, economically and militarily powerful actors with global interests and a global military reach. Definitely, the United States and NATO play the role of security and defence providers for Latvia and other Baltic States in this regard. The Baltic States, as well as other Eastern European countries, have learned that geopolitics and geostrategy are apt to be cyclically menacing when your national territory lies in the gateway into and out of continental Europe (Grey, 2005: 76).

Although Latvia has now been a member of NATO for almost 8 years, there are still the same security considerations on the table - the Russia factor, including questions of Russia's own security concerns (as outlined in Russian National Security Concept of 2009 and Russian Military Doctrine of 2010), as well as Russian-speaking minority issues in Latvia (Knudsen, 1999: 101). Other issues that are still relevant from the purely military perspective are the military defensibility of the Baltic States (Brzezinski, 1999: 24), and the availability of credible and capable military forces within the Baltic States. (Asmus and Nurick, 1996: 124). These issues are still alive now in the light of some recent Russian military activities, as well as certain social activities in Latvia (Neretnieks, 2011: 31). Large-scale Russian military exercises, such as Zapad-2009 and Ladoga-2009, have seen over 30,000 Russian and Belarusian military personnel taking part, and these military activities seemed overtly to threaten Poland and the Baltic States (Somerville, Kearns and Chalmers, 2012:3). The Baltic States are also among the militarily weakest members of NATO, with only Estonia coming close to spending 2% of GDP on defence. The other two spend pitifully little on their military, around or below 1 per cent of their GDP (Lucas, 2011:3). All those examples show that the security and

defence concerns which were valid for Latvia in mid-nineties of the 20th century are still very relevant today in 2012.

2. “Smallness” reflected in Latvian defence: challenges and advantages

The main characteristics of Latvia’s military and security sector structure, development and current situation that arise from the “smallness” of the country could be viewed as the following: the very limited size of its military personnel, the quality of the military personnel and leadership, the very low level of the defence budget, the extremely limited military capabilities of the Latvian National Armed Forces, and the low percentage of GDP allocated to national defence. All these characteristics should be compared with the global averages and trends of military spending, both in terms of real financial investment in defence sector, and of the global percentage of GDP allocated for defence needs. The size of Latvian military personnel and military capabilities should also be compared with global patterns. Comparing Latvian military capabilities, as well as total numbers of military personnel, capabilities, and real money investment in the realm of the state security and defence, with global data reveals that Latvia has one of the smallest armies and smallest defence budgets not only in NATO, but also on the global scale.

The current State Defence Concept, which is one of the core planning documents for the defence of Latvia, was approved by the Saeima (Parliament) on June 19, 2008. Since then some significant changes have occurred within the global security environment. Those changes have deeply affected Latvia’s defence and security structure and ca-

pabilities. Firstly, the consequences of the global financial crisis have been very severe for the economy of Latvia and, subsequently, for the defence budget of the Ministry of Defence. The latter has suffered significant cuts since 2008 and is now not even close to the figures of Latvian defence spending in 2004-2007.

Secondly, the outcome of the Russian-Georgian conflict in August of 2008 has also focused new attention on security and defence issues in Latvia. The size of the National Armed Forces of Latvia (LNAF) according to the current State Defence Concept of 2008 is limited to 5800 personnel (Valsts Aizsardzības Konceptija, 2008: 5). The project for a new State Defence Concept of Latvia, which should be approved in 2012, provides for an even lower level of personnel in the LNAF - 5500. Actually, the real number of LNAF personnel is around 5000 as a result of defence budget-based rather than threat-based calculations, in turn reflecting the severe negative impact Latvia suffered in the global economic and financial crisis. The direct outcome of the crisis is that significant numbers of highly professional military personnel have left military service during the 2008-2011 time-frame. Moreover, increasing levels of emigration from Latvia to other EU countries, and other demographic challenges that Latvia is facing right now, make it highly unlikely that the Latvian National Armed Forces will be able to recruit and maintain sufficient numbers of educated and motivated personnel.

The defence budget issue in Latvia is very important, because the country is far below NATO's 2% of GDP benchmark for the financial resources allocated to the defence. It is a significant challenge to maintain the defence budget of Latvia even at the level of 1% of GDP, and this very fact exposes Latvia to substantial internal and external

political pressure, as it is one of the smallest budgets in the NATO Alliance and this is very negative political signal for the Allies.

Further challenges could be identified in terms of the personnel and institutional structure of Latvian defence and security sector. In part, this stems both from the historical background of the creation of security and defence institutions after the Republic of Latvia regained its independence in 1991, and from the “smallness” of the new country. The institutions of the security sector were marked by the legacy of the former USSR, so personnel of Latvian origin had to be recruited from the military of the United States, United Kingdom, and other NATO countries as well as from the former USSR military. Thus the personnel who filled posts in the newly created Latvian security and defence institutions had come from military organizations of non-comparable size and capacity to those of Latvia. Significant differences in experience of previous institutional behaviour, political views, individuals’ positions within their former military organizations - all created challenges during the development of Latvian military and security institutions after 1991, and such challenges involving the personal background of military personnel are still relevant today.

Another challenge stemming from the “smallness” of the state is that the military personnel who started to build the National Armed Forces tended to have only tactical or sub-tactical level experience within their previous military organization; this experience very rarely reached operational military level, and never reached strategic level. However, this new military leadership of Latvia was directly raised to strategic level duties without previous knowledge and experience. Even if the LNAF structure comprises Land, Air, Maritime, Special Operations Forces with integrated Combat Support, Combat Service Support institutions, Logistic and Doctrine entities, such small armed

forces with their limited personnel and military capabilities can never encompass military units above the Battalion or, in the best case, Brigade level. It is thus almost impossible for military leaders to gain significant operational and strategic military experience at Divisional or Corps level. That is an advantage enjoyed by more politically and military powerful countries and their military leadership.

The classic institutional structure of the security and defence sector directly inherited from the previous legacy, together with the notion of how it is in other countries and how it should be, have determined the way that the institutional structure of the previous USSR superpower has been applied to the small country of Latvia. To take an example from the Latvian National Armed Forces: Land, Air and Maritime commands, SOF, MP, Logistic Support, Training and Doctrine institutions, Headquarters – all these institutions exist within a total of roughly 5000 military personnel, so that almost all of them encompass only a few hundred personnel, whereas large countries have at least tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of personnel within each branch.

The smallness of the institutional structure creates another challenge: limited expertise, especially on strategic issues. Very often the central military leadership has to engage simultaneously in handling high strategic-level issues with the NATO Military Committee and NATO Supreme Commanders, and in low-level, sub-tactical issues within respective domestic military institutions.

All the factors mentioned above provide the main source of security and defence challenges for Latvia. To sum up: the very limited number of personnel in the military and the entire security sector of the state, the nation's extremely limited military capabilities if compared with global and regional patterns, the limited real money resources and low

percentage of national GDP allocated to state defence, the historical background, geographical location, economic challenges, emigration of the population, and the rather small number of Latvia's inhabitants - all these constitute the typical security and defence challenges of a "small state" in general, and of Latvia in particular.

However, there are also some advantages of being a "small state". There are still opportunities to play a role within NATO international military operations, where the political support of small states matters. From the purely military perspective there is no urgent need for the United States and other major NATO security and defence providers to include the minor and militarily very limited contingents of "small" Allies within the framework of NATO international military operations; but the significance of such modest military contributions is explained by the political importance of the support of "small states" for major NATO states. One could argue that this political support by "small" Allies results in financial and logistical support from major NATO countries, in order to meet the "small" states' logistical requirements for deploying their modest military contingents to the operational theatre.

3. Latvia's future defence: key conditions and the Baltic/Nordic factor

The approaches of Latvia's current political and military leadership to defence and security issues are based on those characteristics mentioned above. Among the high priority challenges that the current Government is facing, first come the severe consequences of the economic crisis for state defence spending. This constitutes a profound

internal and external political challenge to Latvia's image as a trustworthy and capable NATO Ally that fulfils its obligations. Secondly, however, there are far more important points in the Government's agenda that require urgent action: the economic situation of the state, education, and continuous emigration from Latvia. As a consequence, defence and the security sector are not high on the priority agenda for the current political leadership, and this very fact has an extremely negative impact on the survival and development of the state security and defence system.

Certainly, the policy approach remains to rely on NATO's ability to fulfil its Article 5 obligations, as well as maintaining and developing bilateral relationships with the United States as the main provider of Latvia's security and defence. However, the current situation over the defence budget and the inability of the current political leadership to increase defence spending may result in damage to the country's security and defence ties with both NATO and the United States. In sum, the current political approach is to rely both on the NATO organization and the United States as security providers and the main protectors in case of urgency. However, there are several important conditions required in order to maintain the military effectiveness of NATO and the United States.

First, it is necessary that the United States should remain a militarily and politically powerful global player, committed to its NATO obligations and, consequently, to the military defence of the Baltic Region. Current trends show that the United States is focusing more on the Pacific Region and Persian Gulf Region. From the pure military perspective this means that important conventional military capabilities of the United States will be deployed in those regions, and Europe can expect to see a decreased military commitment and decreased

conventional military capabilities of the United States in our region. Secondly, it is essential that NATO remains an effective military organization with rapid and effective decision-making procedures. One might argue that this issue constitutes a significant challenge for the effectiveness of the Alliance. Indeed, several factors may be identified that could undermine the ability of the Alliance to remain an effective and efficient political and military tool. Firstly, the financial crisis is certain to have a negative impact on the level of military capabilities of European members of NATO, and the seriousness of this short-fall will be reinforced by a further strategic shift of the United States to the Pacific region. Secondly, further discussions among the Allies concerning NATO's Defence and Deterrence Posture, especially on its nuclear component and the future of American non-strategic nuclear capabilities in Europe, could create significant divisions of opinion within the Alliance.

Taking into account current trends of American involvement in European security affairs and NATO decision-making issues, enhanced regional Nordic-Baltic cooperation may seem to be an option for increasing security and defence environment in Baltic Sea region. However, there are several issues of importance here that cannot be dismissed. Firstly, from the Latvian perspective, Nordic-Baltic security and defence cooperation could be very useful if it is *supplementary* to the wider NATO and the United States commitment to defend the Baltic States. It would be very difficult to accept this kind of cooperation as a replacement for NATO Article 5 security guarantees, as well as the American military commitment in the Baltic Sea area. To reinforce the point, some Nordic military experts have commented that in the case of a "hard" security event, it is doubtful whether NATO and Nordic countries will have a credible capability to defend the territory

of the Baltic States (Neretnieks, 2011:29). However, recent trends in Sweden's approach in the Baltic security and defence domain, as expressed in its "Solidarity Declaration", have marked an important shift toward greater regional involvement (Lucas, 2011:4).

Another important underlying issue in Baltic-Nordic security and defence cooperation is that the three Baltic States have no realistic prospects, either separately or together, of developing military capabilities that might deter Russia from an attack (Neretnieks, 2011: 29). This leads logically to considering the chances of enhanced military cooperation in a Nordic-Baltic framework. As mentioned earlier, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are among the militarily weakest members of NATO. By contrast, the Nordic countries have real military capabilities which are among the best in Europe, and, combined, the four Nordic countries would be one of the Europe's military heavyweights (Lucas, 2011: 4). All these issues must be addressed in the perspective of further military cooperation between the Baltic and Nordic countries, while taking into account that the Nordic-Baltic cooperation framework encompasses non-NATO, non-EU, and NATO/EU countries. Nevertheless, Baltic-Nordic cooperation in recent years has witnessed Danish support to the development of the Latvian Land Force Brigade, Norwegian involvement in deep-reaching cooperation with the Latvian SOF unit, and cooperation in a PRT in Afghanistan. Those are just a few examples of successful Nordic-Baltic military cooperation.

Bearing in mind all previous points and characteristics, certain initial policy recommendations may be offered on further Baltic-Nordic security and defence cooperation. Firstly, further Nordic-Baltic military cooperation is very welcome, but it must not dilute the core NATO and US commitments to the security of the Baltic States. How-

ever, this commitment might be coming under challenge within the current and future NATO Deterrence and Defence Posture because of the debate over Alliance nuclear capabilities and the development of relevant conventional military capabilities. One could argue that the significant decrease in European defence budgets, and the commitment of the United States to focus on the Pacific and the Gulf regions, may seriously weaken in future the US and NATO conventional capabilities in Europe as a whole, and in the Baltic region in particular. This trend could bring an unacceptable decrease in the Baltic States' level of security and defence.

Secondly, NATO's Smart Defence initiative, as announced by NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, was on the agenda of the NATO Summit at Chicago in May 2012 (Chicago Summit Declaration, 2012). The very definition of the Smart Defence initiative goes to the core of the entire NATO defence and force planning systems. The NATO Secretary-General has called for wiser spending and better investment of the money available, to help NATO nations to preserve military capabilities, and to deliver new ones. It means that NATO must prioritize, specialize, and seek multinational approaches and solutions. One could emphasize several reasons behind this initiative. Certainly, the severe economic crisis is the main reason given its direct negative impact on NATO defence budgets. A high proportion of NATO countries, including Latvia, are not able to sustain the benchmark of 2 % of GDP allocated to defence needs: meaning that the majority of NATO members will not be able to attain further levels of defence transformation and modernization. Consequently, the gap in defence spending and military capabilities between the United

States and European members of NATO will increase and reach an unacceptable level.

The main dilemma for Latvia within the NATO Smart Defence initiative is whether to continue to maintain a classic institutional force structure including Land Forces, Air Forces, Navy, Special Operations Forces, Combat Support, and Combat Service Support structures; or to transform the Latvian National Armed Forces into a highly specialized set of capabilities that offer added value for NATO future military operations. The first option seems to be very difficult to maintain and sustain in the future. It is arguable that the current force structure of the LNAF will never be able to possess and deliver modern combat capabilities. The second option would require fundamental changes within the tasks and force structure of LNAF. The new NATO initiative could provide a framework of opportunity to develop and deliver Latvian military capabilities that would have high added value for NATO. However, this would oblige Latvia to set a priority list of specialized capabilities. Further, several important points will influence the further development of Latvian security and defence system within the Smart Defence Initiative. Firstly, although the Latvian Government has agreed to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2020, it is still doubtful whether Latvia will be able to afford such an increase due to the economic situation. If the Latvian defence budget remains at its relatively low level, around 1 % of GDP, the current force structure of the National Armed Forces will not be sustainable and it will need to undergo fundamental structural transformation.

Secondly, the high-added-value capabilities needed by NATO can clearly not be achieved by Latvia alone. Here, perhaps, the NATO Smart Defence initiative could be seen as a new framework for closer Baltic-Nordic security and defence cooperation, focusing on the de-

livery of modern and relevant military capabilities. One could name several possible options for pursuing enhanced cooperation within the NATO Smart Defence initiative that might be relevant for Latvia. First, taking the United States as a strategic partner within the Initiative; secondly, enhanced cooperation among three Baltic States; and thirdly, enhanced Nordic-Baltic cooperation. Moreover, drawing Poland into more proactive regional defence and security cooperation within the NATO Smart Defence initiative would create the framework for a Nordic-Baltic-Polish initiative. At the same time, the United States will remain the most important global strategic partner of Latvia for achieving the goals of the NATO Smart Defence initiative.

However, risks and challenges must also be borne in mind in the context of the various cooperation frameworks for Latvia within the NATO Smart Defence initiative. First comes the state sovereignty issue and the need to preserve the effectiveness of the national military chain of command. Secondly, the issue of assured availability of hypothetical shared military capability for participating countries within the NATO Smart Defence initiative. Thirdly, the extremely limited military capabilities of the Baltic States, which make it vital for Latvia's political and military leadership of Latvia to identify very clearly which option(s) of cooperation within the Smart Defence initiative would bring the country most added value. Arguably, the state sovereignty issue will become increasingly important for Latvia if the country engages in enhanced military cooperation not only with Nordic countries, but with Poland and the United States. Such wide and close interdependency would put substantial pressure on the ability of the Latvian political and military leadership to exercise sovereign national command and control arrangements.

Meanwhile, a further increase in Host Nation Support (HNS) ca-

pabilities in order to facilitate the hypothetical deployment of NATO personnel and capabilities; further participation in NATO-led military operations; and a significant increase in the defence budget should be on the very top of Latvia's defence priorities list.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Further security and defence arrangements for Latvia and other Baltic States will depend on the ability of NATO to remain an effective organization with timely and effective decision-making processes, and on the ability of the United States to remain militarily effective and committed to the defence and security of Europe.
2. Military cooperation between the Baltic States at the tactical level needs to be enhanced; however at the operational and strategic level, all three countries have very similar security concerns and arrangements with NATO and the United States.
3. Nordic-Baltic military cooperation should be enhanced, but it cannot be a substitute for NATO security guarantees and the United States' military involvement in the defence of Europe and the Baltic Sea region.
4. The NATO Smart Defence initiative could become the framework for developing further Baltic and Nordic-Baltic defence cooperation and military capabilities.
5. Contradictions between the NATO Strategic Concept and Rus-

sian National Security Strategy, and Russian military doctrine on further NATO enlargement and deployment of NATO military infrastructure in proximity of Russia's borders, have an impact on Latvia's security and defence policy.

6. Latvia needs to increase its defence spending to 2 percent of GDP by 2016 in order to reaffirm its political commitment to the Alliance.
7. Latvia must maintain Host Nation Support capabilities as one of its priority defence tasks.
8. Latvia has to maintain its participation in NATO-led military operations as one of its defence priorities.
9. The military defence of Latvia should be planned for as part of NATO's contingency plans.

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**A MIDGET WARRIOR:
SECURITY CHOICES
OF LITHUANIA**

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Abstract:

This paper analyses Lithuanian security policy choices with the aim of explaining the rationale behind those decisions. Employing the concept of strategic culture, it approaches security policy decisions from three different angles: strategic environment and threats, strategy to address the threats, and main security partners. The paper argues that two entirely different visions of the strategic environment – modern and postmodern, which in turn are closely related to national identity and foreign policy, predetermine the choices of Lithuanian security policy. While in the official documents both visions are combined, practical choices grant priority to the modern one.

1. Introduction

When writing about the security policy of small states, one risks becoming involved in academic debates on at least two topics. The first is, what is a small state? And the second: can a small state have such a thing as independent strategic thinking, does it really decide upon its own security policy, or is the latter pre-decided by external factors? Responding to the first potential challenge, one may agree on the existence of certain objective standards of smallness that in one way or another allow a state to be assigned to the category of small states. There is an immense academic debate on the factors determining the power potential of the state in international politics: some researchers preferring traditional factors (population, GDP, military capability and territory), while others emphasize the importance of status, reputation, and an active foreign policy. Baldur Thorhallsson argues that though traditional factors cannot be employed as the only criteria defining the potential of the state in international politics, nevertheless they remain very important (Thorhallsson, 2006). Regardless of the configuration of other factors, population and GDP could be decisive elements delimiting the scope of potential international political activity for countries that are very small. Lithuania, as one of the smallest states of the European Union (EU), having a population of 3 million, total GDP of 61.3 billion USD (2011 estimate),¹ armed forces of around 7520 personnel (including a national guard of 4220), and territorial area of 65,200 sq.km., may be considered a small state in these terms.

There is no doubt that the opportunities for small states to shape

¹ Data from the CIA World Factbook

and implement visionary, or even substantially independent, security policies in the contemporary globalized world are very limited. Small states lack the resources, influence, and ability to have a long term strategic vision. Nonetheless smallness does not prevent some states from finding their niche of activism in international politics. Sweden, Finland, Denmark are well known and respected as international mediators and diplomats. These and other countries, such as Ireland, actively participate in international military operations. Last but not least, small states do not hesitate to speak loudly in international fora, or to bring to the table controversial security issues that are not welcomed by the big states: thus for example, Lithuania was the only EU member state daring to veto the new EU–Russia Agreement in the aftermath of the Russian–Georgian war. Therefore smallness does not necessarily prevent independent and active behaviour by such states in the domain of international security.

Since its independence Lithuania has been gradually increasing its participation in international military operations and has aimed to become an active player in ensuring international security. The first operations it took part in were low-intensity humanitarian missions in Bosnia Herzegovina. After the first decade, however, Lithuanian armed forces were already taking part in high-intensity war-fighting missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Surprisingly to many observers, the Lithuanians decided to lead their own Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) within the ISAF mission. Since 2005 the Lithuanian government has been sending around 250 soldiers every half-year to its PRT in the province of Ghor, which is a very resource-heavy contribution (both in financial and human terms) considering the overall size of Lithuanian armed forces. Lithuanian international deployments

have not been reduced even in the face of severe financial crisis since 2008, which has imposed major burdens on the national budget.

Active participation in international military operations is one of the salient features of Lithuanian security policy. Emphasis on Russia-related threats and an Atlanticist foreign policy are the others. This article analyses Lithuanian security policy with a view to explaining the rationale behind these choices.

As has already been pointed out, while the behaviour of a state is influenced by material factors such as its geographical position, population and GDP, the superficial analysis of material factors does not provide comprehensive answers as to why states take one or another decision (Johnston, 1995). In order to understand what certain security policy decisions really mean and why they have been taken, along with the material characteristics one must analyse cultural factors, perceptions and ideas. Ben Tonra argues that the cultural characteristics and identity of states have a direct impact on their strategic behaviour (Tonra, 2003).

One way to analyse security policies and strategic decisions is to employ a concept of strategic culture, which offers explanations for the strategic behaviour of states and provides the rationale for security policy decisions. Alistair Ian Johnston defines strategic culture as a system of symbols composed of two parts. The first part involves fundamental premises about the order prevailing in the strategic environment, the nature of the enemy and the threats it poses, the effectiveness of the use of military force and the conditions under which military force is employed. The second part is of an operational character and is related to the most effective choice of means for fighting threats (Johnston, 1995). A causal link exists between the first and the second parts. The first part allows the forecasting of potential behaviour,

while on the other hand certain patterns of operational behaviour can point to features of strategic thinking within the state.

With the aim of explaining the rationale of Lithuanian security policy, this paper is divided into three parts. The first covers the analysis of strategic environment and threats. The second analyses the ways in which Lithuania chooses to respond to those threats; and the last part is devoted to the analysis of main security partners of Lithuania.

2. Security environment, threat assessment and identity

Size, geographical position, neighbours and historical experience have been the main factors shaping the Lithuanian people's perceptions of their security environment over the years. Despite periods of independence and prosperity, the nation's security environment has never been perceived as safe and stable. The Lithuanian historical narrative about the security environment carries elements of glory on the one hand, but humiliation and pain on the other. The history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania speaks of success in international politics, recalls the nation's European roots, reinforces belief in European values, and strengthens self confidence of the nation. Conversely, the memory of painful and long-lasting periods of occupation (partitions of the Lithuanian–Polish Commonwealth in the second half of 18th century and Soviet occupation in 1940) causes disillusionment with the idea of peaceful and just international relations, suspiciousness towards European states and European politics, and feelings of victimization. Left on the other side of the Iron Curtain in the Cold War, Lithuanians became aware that politics of reconciliation, pacification,

and the inability to have a strong voice in international politics lead to disastrous consequences for national sovereignty and therefore should be avoided. They have learned that size and military strength matter a lot in international politics. This two-fold perception of the strategic environment has a significant impact on the contemporary security policy of Lithuania.

The dual nature of the strategic environment in Lithuanian security discourse is reflected in the threat definitions and assessments found in the main security documents of Lithuania today. Gražina Miniotaite argues that the concept of security in Lithuania combines both Realism and Constructivism (Miniotaite, 2003). Despite the general postmodern European spirit of the main security documents, one may also observe the traces of Cold War-type thinking. Vaidotas Urbelis notes that Realist concepts such as national interest, balance of powers, domination of great powers still survive in Lithuanian strategic documents (Urbelis, 2007).

The Lithuanian National Security Strategy, Lithuanian Military Strategy, and Lithuanian Defence Policy White Paper all state that in the contemporary security environment there is an observable decrease of inter-state conflicts and increase of non-traditional threats: economic, social, environmental, technological (Nacionalinio saugumo strategija, 2005, The Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania, 2004, Lietuvos gynybos politikos Baltoji knyga, 2006). The threats listed in the main Lithuanian security documents seem to reflect those defined in the strategic documents of the Euro-Atlantic community, such as the NATO Strategic Concept or European Security Strategy (NATO, 2010; European Council, 2003). Like most European states, especially smaller ones, Lithuania tends to follow the latest “fashion” in Euro-Atlantic security definitions and designs its own

security documents accordingly. For instance in the National Security Strategy of 2004, one of the main focuses was the international ‘threat of terrorism’?. The new National Security Strategy adopted in 2012 adds some new buzzwords of international security discourse, such as energy and cyber-security (Nacionalinio saugumo strategija, 2012); in the process, either intentionally or by the accident of those threats being relevant for Lithuania, it actually makes the strategy more oriented towards national security needs.

Alongside postmodern threats, modern ones retain an important place in Lithuanian security documents. The Lithuanian Defence Policy White Book states that non-democratically ruled armed forces, failing states, and frozen regional conflicts pose serious threats to Lithuania and points out that “in the long run, force demonstration and military conflicts remain a potential threat” (Lietuvos gynybos politikos Baltoji knyga, 2006). The new National Security Strategy adds that “though the probability of direct military confrontation in the region is low, yet the increasing military power of certain regional states, tendencies towards the demonstration of power and threats to use it, and also cases of the use of that power, do not allow a possible military threat to Lithuania in the future to be ruled out”. (Lithuanian National Security Strategy, 2012) The re-emphasis on the increased probability of military threat could be partly attributed to the Russian–Georgian war in 2008. Indeed, it should be admitted that the majority of modern-type threats within the Lithuanian threat perception – even if not overtly - are related to Russia. However, the strong emphasis on the modern threats in the new security strategy and current political discourse could also be related to the political standing of the conservative ruling party Homeland Union–Lithuania Christian Democrats, who aim to promote “traditional values”, the “na-

tional state”, and Christianity. A “crisis of values” (crisis of Christian values, downvaluing of the family as an institution) is thus indicated in the strategy as one of the most crucial threats. The first drafts of the National Security Strategy also included a controversial concept of “mental security” (aiming to safeguard people’s minds from cyber-attacks), which was deleted from the final version.

The emphasis on modern-type threats and the prioritisation of Russia-related security issues in Lithuanian political discourse provokes criticism both in political and academic circles internationally. In 2007 the European Council on Foreign Relations named Lithuania, together with Poland, as the “New Cold Warriors” in their relations vis-à-vis Russia, emphasizing not only Lithuanian mistrust of Russia, but also the importance of traditional security concepts in Lithuanian–Russian relations. (Leonard and Propescu, 2007). Lithuanian decision makers have been accused on numerous occasions of demonstrating “a security tunnel vision” caused by militarization of the security concept (Moller 2002); they have also been blamed for deliberately and artificially securitizing Russia.

Though it is not the aim of this chapter to analyse Lithuanian attitudes towards Russia, nor elaborate on the reasons behind these attitudes, it must be acknowledged that the Russian factor still plays a crucial part in Lithuanian security policy. Russia is not only perceived as a direct and indirect threat in all security sectors; it is a part of the Lithuanian narrative of historic memory that is integrated in national identity, and in which Russia equates to the concepts of “they” and the “enemy”. Though the security environment has been changing, the necessity to protect Lithuanian sovereignty from the challenge that “they” present to it remains, together with the imperative to keep a strong military instrument of the kind that - throughout history - has

proved itself the only means capable of protecting the state vis-a-vis Russia. The war in Georgia and the Russian military exercises “Zapad 2009” and “Ladoga” have only strengthened distrust towards Russian intentions in Lithuania. The need to protect Lithuania from Russia is a theme cultivated by the security elite but it is also echoed by society. In a 2007 survey, 44 per cent of the inhabitants of big cities responded that Russia posed the biggest threat for Lithuania (DELFI.lt 2007). The latest public opinion survey reveals that a majority of Lithuanians (60 per cent of the male population and 32 per cent of females) would go to defend Lithuania if it was threatened, with 73 per cent believing that Lithuanian citizens must be trained in how to defend their homeland. (DELFI.lt 2012)

3. Ways and means of addressing the threats

The dominance of Russia-related issues and the emphasis on a strong military instrument in the Lithuanian security agenda has an impact on security strategy, but also on ideas of how to address the main threats. Lithuanian security policy relies on two principles – comprehensive security strategy and collective defence. The strategy to address threats presented in the New National Security Strategy specifies a wide variety of means for security policy implementation: for example the formation of a safe external environment, active contributions to international security and stability, strengthening defence capabilities, increasing energy security, cyber-security, the preservation of national and cultural identity, increasing economic compatibility internationally, and addressing the challenges of climate change

(Lithuanian National Security Strategy, 2012). Though the aim of implementing a *comprehensive* security strategy reflects wider trends in European security thinking and appears to be sincere in the National Security Strategy, it needs to be supported by real action plans and substantial financing if its implementation is considered seriously. In fact, however, of a limited defence budget, it will be necessary to balance security-related expenditures between comprehensive security and collective defence commitments.

Since Lithuania joined NATO it has been incrementally decreasing its defence budget. Lithuania is among the NATO members with the smallest percentage of the state budget allotted for defence needs, and the smallest defence budget overall. For instance in 2011 Lithuania allocated 0.85 per cent of GDP for defence (252 million Euros), whereas the NATO requirement is 2 per cent. In May, 2012 Lithuanian political parties signed a new agreement on the defence budget, committing themselves to gradually increase defence expenditures until 2016. The last such agreement was signed in 2004 and terminated in 2008, but when a new agreement was proposed in 2009 the harsh austerity measures in face of economic crisis and the lack of political will prevented this document from being signed.

In 2011 the detailed break-down of Lithuanian defence expenditure was as follows: personnel costs 64.9 per cent, participation in international operations 4.7 per cent (i.e. extra costs, not the personnel and equipment), maintenance of the material base 18.5 per cent, weapons and military equipment 11.9 per cent, and investment 10.4 per cent (Report of the Minister of Defence, 2011). Vast efforts and the lion's share of the defence budget for several years now have been devoted to adherence to the principle of collective defence, meaning a gradually increasing participation in international military opera-

tions, with other security instruments being underdeveloped. For example, although the Lithuanian Provincial Reconstruction Team is often praised as successful, it is mainly composed of the military element, while civilian projects in Afghanistan are scarce and underfinanced (Matonis, 2005). This preference for the military over the civilian instrument in international operations is influenced not only by the lack of financial resources and expertise, but also echoes national perceptions of the strategic environment. As Frank Moller points out, in Lithuania the cooperative approach to security “may be applauded up front at the stage, but it is laughed at behind the curtain as being unrealistic, naive and utopian” (Moller, 2002). It is noteworthy how Lithuanian commitments to international military operations have been growing since the 1990s. From 1994 onwards Lithuanian troops participated in various missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Albania, FYROM, Iraq and Afghanistan. As already noted, since 2005 Lithuania has been sending around 250 soldiers every six months to its PRT in Chagcharan in the province of Ghor. Up to 2009, this international military activity was further supported by an active Lithuanian foreign policy that has frequently been labelled as “hyperactive”, too ambitious, and ill-matched to the size and resources of a small state (Racas, 2009; Urbelis, 2007).

There are several explanations for this phenomenon. First of all, the security policy of Lithuania has been developing in the face of a direct and evident threat from Russia, requiring development of a strong military instrument. Secondly, Lithuania’s strategic choice to rely on the collective defence of NATO demands a national contribution to global security, making use of armed forces. Last but not least, the active contribution of Lithuania to international military operations is related to the drive for closer relations with the US. Finally, it would

be wrong to dismiss the argument that Lithuania is using its internationally rather successful armed forces to increase its international visibility – a possible example of a small state exploiting whatever relatively favourable “niches” it can find.

The dual nature of this Lithuanian vision of the strategic environment is not only reflected in the threat assessment and emphasis on the military instrument, but also affects the force development choices of Lithuania. Despite active participation in international military operations and the move towards higher deployability of armed forces - as required by NATO - the element of territorial defence remains alive in Lithuania. Since 2004 the armed forces have gradually abolished military infrastructure and units designed only for territorial defence; Lithuania suspended conscription in 2009; and defence planning is now oriented towards participation in crisis management operations and expeditionary forces (Karine strategija, 2005). However after the Parliamentary elections of 2008 and the Russian–Georgian war, the Lithuanian ruling elite expressed the need to “re-balance territorial and collective defence”. In June 2009 new guidelines issued by the National Minister of Defence were approved. They envisaged a creation of a new high readiness battalion – a unit of a size fit to react to any violations of Lithuanian sovereignty (Guidelines of the National Minister of Defence, 2009). The same goal was restated in the guidelines for 2012-2017. In 2011, an amended Law on Conscription reintroduced conscription and foresaw a gradual increase in conscript numbers and the size of armed forces (by as much as one third up to 2017) (Karo prievoles istatymas, 2011). In the context of limited financial resources, this would mean less money for deployability and international military operations, and may thus challenge not only the

principle of comprehensive security but also collective defence commitments.

4. Friends and partners “in arms”

The security choices of small states to a great extent depend on their security partners, be they big states or international organizations. In 1991 the Lithuanian political elite was considering several options for security policy: neutrality, a security alliance among small states, and membership in a military alliance (Miniotaite, 2007). However, in the light of historical experience and the unpredictability of Russia, the first two options were rejected by the Lithuanian elite. They did not have support within society either. Upon becoming a member of the EU and NATO, Lithuania chose these organizations as main allies. Membership in the EU and NATO not only satisfied security and economic needs, but above all was perceived as the “restoration of justice” and a “return to Europe”. The White Book of Lithuanian Defence Policy lists even more international organizations and states that are considered important partners for Lithuanian security: “Northern Europe, the Baltic states, the United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Euro-Atlantic Partnership, the USA, Poland, Denmark and Ukraine” (Lietuvos gynybos politikos Baltoji knyga 2006). Key security documents indicate a clear security orientation towards the trans-Atlantic community and forbid any alternative orientations. The Constitutional Act of the Republic of Lithuania, while recognizing the need to foster mutually functional relations with the post-soviet states, strictly forbids participation in any kind of political, military, economic or other alliances or organizations constructed on the basis of the for-

mer Soviet Union (Konstitucinis aktas “Del Lietuvos Respublikos nesijungimo i posovietines rytu sajungas, 1992).

Regardless of the variety of security partners mentioned in the main strategic documents, a thorough examination of public speeches and analysis of strategic decisions may suggest that within the “security family” NATO is awarded a special status. Gražina Miniotaite argues that Lithuanian defence policy, since becoming a part of collective defence, has two aims: to build and to preserve the secure environment (Miniotaite, 2007). The Lithuanian security discourse posits a clear division of labour between NATO and the EU, whereby NATO is accorded security provider functions and the EU is considered as source of economic welfare. A public opinion survey presented by Jurate Novagrockiene and Diana Janušauskiene echoes the same attitudes within society (Novagrockiene and Janušauskiene, 2003), and the same finding is equally valid for all three Baltic States (Molis, 2008). Despite Lithuania’s active participation in international military operations, its contribution to military actions led by the EU is limited to a few staff officers.

The Lithuanian security elite have been worried that strengthening the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) might undermine the transatlantic link that is crucial for national security, and would confront Lithuania with hard strategic and operational choices. The lack of military capabilities among European partners and their inability to agree on main foreign policy directions further reduces the CSDP’s credibility. Another argument for prioritizing NATO is the past cases of disagreement between “old” and “new” Europe and thus the limited opportunities for the “new” Europe to influence the EU agenda. The prioritizing of NATO over other security partners is also driven by the Russian factor. Persistent worries remain that the CSDP

might undermine the US-dominated, NATO-centric security system and create the basis for a Europe-centric one as previously called for in Primakov's doctrine.² In general, the Lithuanian security elite is afraid of European states becoming too susceptible to Russian influence. A heated debate on this issue started after the statement of the Commander of the Russian Fleet, Admiral Valdimir Visocky, that the Russian armed forces would have been able to win the war with Georgia in 40 minutes if by that time Russia had already possessed the Mistral landing ship, purchased from France. (Kucera, 2011)

Though NATO is considered as the main security partner in Lithuania, it is regarded as such to a great extent because of the trans-Atlantic link. Lithuania belongs to the group of "new Atlanticists" or the "new Europe" who are major supporters of the USA and aim to strengthen the US presence in Europe. Like many others from this group, Lithuania very enthusiastically supported the USA decision to start the military operation in Iraq, without ever considering its legality and consequences, and in 2011 voted against membership of Palestine in UNESCO (though these decisions received quite a controversial appraisal abroad).

The White Book of Lithuanian Defence Policy states that maintaining the USA's interest in the Baltic region, practical cooperation in the field of defence, and the direct military presence of the USA in Europe is one of the main priorities of Lithuanian defence policy

² Yevgeny Maksimovich Primakov is a Russian politician, former Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of Russia. The "Primakov doctrine" was never formalized as a conceptual document; however it defined three major priorities of Russian foreign policy in the last decade of the 20th century. It aimed to integrate Russia into the world economy, to establish a multi-polar world, and to oppose all US initiatives on major issues (NATO enlargement, Iraqi economic embargo etc.). Primakov proposed an alternative to NATO in the form of a Euro-centric regional security system including western European states and Russia.

(Lietuvos gynybos politikos Baltoji knyga, 2006). The National Security Strategy defines strategic partnership with the USA as one of the most important tools of external security (Nacionalinio saugumo strategija, 2012). The current Minister of Defence, Rasa Juknevičienė, has underlined that “partnership with the US in the field of defence is the fundamental of Lithuanian statehood” (DELFI.lt, 2012). A famous quotation from the speech given by George W. Bush in Vilnius in 2002, when he said that “anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America”, is engraved on the plaque at the entrance to the City Hall of Vilnius. Partnership with the USA in the security field could be justly considered a “special relationship” for Lithuania, and extends to other areas of cooperation.

The USA was an important factor also in initiating the strategy of “regional leadership” in Lithuanian foreign policy. A speech by Acting President Arturas Paulauskas on 24 May 2004 defined the new strategy of Lithuanian foreign policy as aiming to achieve leadership in Eastern Europe - though the strategy itself has never specified which region it was addressing (Paulauskas, 2004). The concept was later elaborated in the strategic documents of the Republic of Lithuania and shaped Lithuanian foreign policy up until 2009. A search for closer relations with European neighbourhood countries in partnership with Poland was seen as a way to help those countries on their way towards stability and democracy, to enhance security in the region, and to increase Lithuanian visibility in the international arena.

In 2009, however, changes in key state administration positions and the economic crisis created the preconditions for reconsidering Lithuania’s foreign policy stance. The strategy of “regional leader” had come under harsh criticism both from academia and politicians. Eval-

das Nekrašas for example queried both the definition of the region, and Lithuania's ability – given its size and limited resources - to become a leader in this area (Nekrašas, 2009). Immediately after taking office, the new Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė declared that Lithuania's "active foreign policy in the region" was not bringing the expected revenues for the state and therefore did not correspond to the national interest (DELFI.lt (2009). Indeed, the lack of resources has limited many of Lithuania's ambitious foreign policy goals to ad hoc initiatives and declaratory statements, with doubtful political consequences.

The notion of Lithuanian–Polish strategic partnership was evoked immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and was developed on the way into NATO: when Poland became a member of the Alliance it became a very active advocate of Lithuanian membership. After 2004 this strategic partnership was strengthened by common goals in these neighbouring states, including their strong support for the USA, and was nurtured by the very close relationship between the respective Presidents, Alexander Kwasniewski and Valdas Adamkus. Lithuania saw Poland as its gate-way to Europe, and strategic partnership between the two as an opportunity to strengthen Lithuania's voice in Euro-Atlantic structures. However, the "honeymoon" between the two partners ended in 2009. Current Lithuanian–Polish relations are clouded by quite trivial issues such as the writing of Polish surnames and reform of secondary education, which have been highly politicised. These disagreements are fostered by historical tensions and have been aggravated by the harsh rhetoric of Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski towards Lithuania, Poland's refusal to take part in the construction of a new nuclear power plant in Lithuania, and growing Polish emancipation in European politics. The latest

“slap in the face” for bilateral relations was the refusal of the President of Lithuania to attend a summit of Baltic and Polish leaders to consult on common issues for NATO’s forthcoming Chicago summit. The official motivation for this decision was the information received through diplomatic channels that the Poles were intending at Chicago to veto the extension of the Lithuania-based air policing mission covering the Baltic States. The President’s controversial decision not only caused further deterioration in the already tense Lithuanian–Polish relations at political level, but left a bad flavour in the mouths of the other two main partners: Latvia and Estonia.

It should be noted, however, that the “frost” at highest political level has not spread too rapidly to the lower levels, so working-level bilateral defence cooperation remains very good. During the visit of the Lithuanian Defence Minister to Warsaw on 14 May 2012, both countries agreed that they share the same attitude towards threats, have common goals, and have similar interests in neighbourhood countries. Moreover, practical military cooperation is very fruitful, one of the latest examples being the forthcoming NATO Article-5 rapid response force exercise “Steadfast Jazz 2013”.

After the “regional leader” policy was discarded by Lithuania’s leaders as not bearing the desired fruits, there was need for a new orientation in foreign policy. The most logical new direction, which would not mean denouncing but could potentially strengthen already existing partnerships and ties in various fields, appeared to be working with the other Baltic and Nordic countries. Though the Baltic States differ among each other in history, language and religion (Lithuania for instance being a Catholic country), those states have one very important uniting element – the common Soviet heritage and the resulting security interests. This element keeps them together despite minor

disagreements in other areas such as economy or politics – disagreements that often distract attention from their many well functioning and useful practical initiatives in defence, such as Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT) (operational from 1994-2003), the Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON), the Baltic Air Surveillance Network (BALTNET), Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL), the NATO air policing mission, and cooperation in peace operations (BALTSQN) (2002-2006) (Molis, 2009).

Baltic–Nordic cooperation began during the very first years of independence, embracing a wide spectrum of fields from culture and the economy to the military domain. Nordic states have been ardent supporters of regional cooperation especially in the military field, and have contributed a great deal to regional cooperation projects (Molis, 2009). For example, one of the most successful Baltic cooperation projects – the joint defence college BALTDEFCOL - was initiated and supported financially by the Nordic states. Lithuanian armed forces were trained by Danish instructors. Nordic–Baltic cooperation also made good progress in the foreign policy domain, especially after Baltic states became members of the EU. The already favourable conditions existing for cooperation, as well as elements of similar size and geographical proximity, became important factors encouraging Lithuania to search for closer integration with the Nordic states. The Nordic models of good governance and economic progress have also worked as an attracting force for the Baltic States. Lithuania’s National Security Strategy states that “aiming to ensure the defence of common interests and to implant good practices strengthening the common cultural identity between Nordic and Baltic states, Lithuania would attach a special attention to bi-lateral and multilateral cooperation with Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Latvia in

the domains of security, education, science, economy, finance, energy, transport, environment and others” (Nacionalinio saugumo strategija, 2012).

Nevertheless, when estimating the sustainability and success of this new Lithuanian policy direction, several facts need to be taken into consideration. Despite many commonalities between Nordic and Baltic states there are several important differences: language, historical heritage, and traditions. One of the strongest uniting factors for the three Baltic States is the Soviet heritage, which Nordic states do not have. Though at the surface this might seem an insignificant obstacle for cooperation, provided a strong political will and interests to cooperate do exist, one should not underestimate the cultural and values-related dimension of this heritage. The Soviet heritage had a stronger impact on the Lithuanian values system than contemporary Lithuanians would like to admit. Very important features that Lithuania shares with other post-Soviet states are a weak civil society, rather reluctant participation by society in affairs related to state security and foreign policy, and a low level of public trust. Soviet Communism, although resented by Lithuanians, throughout the period of occupation managed to change a number of values and perceptions within Lithuanian society including attitudes towards human rights, the role of the state, and fundamental freedoms). Last but not least, Baltic and Nordic states do not share the same attitude towards traditional security concepts and the Russian threat. This might become one of the biggest challenges for closer Baltic-Nordic cooperation in the security field.

5. Conclusions

In its present-day security personality Lithuania may be defined as a trans-Atlantic military activist, albeit with limited resources and potential. The main factors that have shaped its culture of security decision-making are geographical position, historical experience, and the renewed state identities that have been developing since the 1990s. The interaction of these factors has led to a strong emphasis on military threats and on Russia in Lithuanian security policy, and contributed to the duality of the security concept in Lithuania. Modern and post-modern rationalisations of security policy are combined in official documents; yet as a result of historical experience, limited resources and strategic vision, there is an observable emphasis on modern threats that demand military ways to address them. The Lithuanian security elite tend to apply a different security policy rationale when dealing with Russia, compared with other states.

Though the small size and resources of Lithuania do not prevent it from actively participating in international military operations, activism in the military sphere does not leave many resources for other fields. Even within the military field, Lithuania will constantly be facing the dilemma of how to balance territorial defence, expeditionary contributions and limited resources.

Closer cooperation with partners, including more practical sharing and pooling, might solve this dilemma to some extent. However in this context, the main challenge will be how to accommodate Lithuania's traditional security concepts and natural distrust towards Russia with the concepts of other partners.

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**SECURITY CHALLENGES
OF A SMALL STATE:
THE CASE OF ESTONIA**

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Abstract:

This paper gives an overview of the development of Estonia's security thinking. It analyses how Estonia's security policy has evolved through its history of statehood, with particular reference to its smallness, geographical location, challenges and vulnerabilities.

Since regaining its independence in 1991, Estonia's security and defence policy has been aimed at integrating into the Western security structures. Often taking a more normative approach than older members towards the fulfilment of membership criteria and obligations, Estonia has earned a good reputation as a member and a partner. However, against the background of a changed security environment and harsh fiscal realities, the most serious security problem for Estonia today lies not so much in the rise of Russia as in the continuing unity and solidarity of the organisations from which Estonia seeks its security

guarantees. The problem lies in the ability of Estonia, the other Baltic Sea states and the members of both NATO and the EU to adapt to the changes and remain true to their commitments.

1. Introduction

“Security is like virginity: you’re either a virgin or you’re not. You either have security or you don’t.” L. Meri

This quotation from the former Estonian President Lennart Meri rightly defines the essence of security. Even if no state can claim to possess security in absolute terms, because security in absolute terms does not exist, no state can be satisfied with being only a little bit secure. Hence every state, whether big or small, needs a strategy to provide its nation with security.

When addressing the security of a small state one faces two main challenges: how to define a small state, and how to define security? Although there is no single clear definition of a small state, there are still qualitative and quantitative characteristics that might help us to define smallness and vulnerability. The quantitative characteristics usually include a country’s land area, the size of population and several economic and fiscal indicators. The qualitative characteristics include geographical location and external factors like closeness to a great power, great power rivalry, membership in international institutions and alliances, regional partnerships and cooperation.

There is no universally accepted definition of national security either. National security refers to the need to maintain the survival of

the state through the use of military, economic, diplomatic, and political means. The concept developed mostly in the USA after World War II. Initially focusing on military might, it now encompasses a broad range of facets, all of which impinge on the non-military or economic security of the nation and the values espoused by the national society, *inter alia* because the threats are becoming more global and more asymmetrical. Thus, in order to possess national security, a nation needs - in addition to military security - also economic security, energy security, environmental security, cyber security and societal security. The means for small states to maintain the survival of the state are usually limited to diplomatic skills in finding allies and staying loyal to them by fulfilling relevant commitments. But not even this strategy seems to be flawless. The stability of alliances and organisations where the small states seek their security guarantees depends on the equal commitment of all the allies. Fading commitments and national caveats set by other members and allies may themselves be a cause of instability and insecurity.

However, security is not only a form of protection, embodied in structures and processes that provide or improve security as a condition. It is also a state of mind: something that is perceived and constructed through identity, historical experience and political culture. This is also reflected in different countries' threat perceptions and security strategies.

The collapse of the Soviet Union created a transformed Baltic Sea region, where co-operation was made possible with the disappearance of the iron curtain, but which is still divided along lines of culture, identity and strategic paradigms. Although every state objectively ex-

periences the same reality, the subjective interpretation of the latter can differ dramatically.

This paper analyses the development of Estonia's security thinking and how Estonia's security policy has evolved through history with special reference to its smallness, geographical location, challenges and vulnerabilities.

2. Indicators of Smallness: Geography and Population

Estonia is the smallest of the three Baltic States with the total area of 45,227 sq km³. The area includes 1,520 islands and the length of coastline is 3,794 km. The country is situated in the north-western part of the flat East European Plain, lying entirely within the drainage area of the Baltic Sea. More than 30% of the land area is waterlogged. Almost half of the land surface is covered by forests (c. 47%).

From the traditional security perspective, Estonia's geographical location makes the country vulnerable to attack. The territory lacks the defence depth necessary for retreat and its openness to the sea makes the coastline difficult to defend. The terrain of the country appears to support high manoeuvrability, but the numerous wetlands and large forest areas would make a traditional military invasion challenging. However, the risk of a traditional military attack from the East today

³ From 1920 to 1945, Estonia's border with Russia, set by the 1920 Tartu Peace Treaty, extended beyond the Narva River in the northeast and beyond the town of Pechory (Petseri) in the southeast. This territory, amounting to some 2,300 square km., was incorporated into Russia by Stalin at the end of World War II. There is still no Border Treaty between Estonia and Russia.

is very low, and current concerns deriving from Estonia's geographical location are more related to the environment.

The population of Estonia according to the latest estimates is 1,294,236, which is 5,5% less than in 2000 (Statistics Estonia, 2012). The population density is 30.9 persons per sq km, which is one of the lowest in Europe. Ethnic Estonians make up 68.7% of the population and Russians, the largest minority group, constitute 24.8% (Statistics Estonia, 2012)⁴. The other minorities make up 4.9%. The number of inhabitants has been decreasing remarkably since the reconstitution of the Estonian Republic in 1991, due to large-scale emigration by ethnic Russians and the removal of the Russian military bases in 1994, as well as the low birth rate and ageing. However, in recent years the population decline has slowed down somewhat.

3. Security Policy: Historical Context

The roots of contemporary Estonian security policy lie in the establishment of Estonian statehood in 1918 when Estonia began the search for its true place in international order.

During the first period of independence (1918-1940), no prevailing feature of the security architecture really satisfied Estonia's security needs. Unlike the other small states popping up in Europe, Estonia's independence was definitely not a result of an agreement between the

⁴ The population of Estonia increased considerably during the Soviet period, especially between 1970 and 1990 as a result of the Soviet Nationalisation Programme promoting mass immigration of industrial workers from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus as well as Soviet military troops. By 1989, minorities constituted more than one-third of the population.

Europe's great powers. It reflected, rather, a coincidence of favourable factors such as the weakness of Russia and Germany after the First World War, the activities of the Estonian national movement, and – more generally - the spread of the Wilsonian⁵ concept of internationalism accommodating the ideas of nationalism and self-determination (Medijainen, 2009).

Only eight months after the declaration of independence on the 24th of February in 1918, Estonia had to stand up against the Soviet Russian aggression in the War of Independence. The situation in terms of equipment as well as the number of troops was very critical and there was no political consensus on how to structure the national armed forces. Nevertheless, the war ended with Estonia's victory: partly thanks to the timely restructuring of forces,⁶ the appointment of a new military leadership,⁷ and the high morale of Estonian troops; and partly thanks to the enemy's weakened position and substantial military aid, especially from Finland and Great Britain.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Estonia's main problem was how to guarantee the security of the country without either the protection of a great power, or adequate self-defence capability. Although the victorious war left Estonia with one of the strongest armed forces in the region during the 1920s, this was not a sustainable solution (Nömm, 2008). Estonian defence doctrine, as seen through a compilation of

⁵ The then President of the US, Woodrow Wilson, brought several new ideas to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 regarding diplomacy and international relations.

⁶ Earlier, the political elite had managed to mobilise Estonians who had been serving in the Russian army during First World War and who formed the first Estonian Division together with the other national units by the end of 1917. The same Division, although somewhat diminished, also became the first national army.

⁷ The counteroffensive was launched by a young and charismatic Commander-in-Chief, Johan Laidoner.

statements in newspaper articles, political speeches, and government documents, clearly expressed the need for proper national defence forces. In peace-time, the idea was to show the aggressor that Estonia was ready for resistance and any attack would be costly. However, the self-defence capability was to be combined with diplomatic efforts to find allies in case Estonia was attacked. For this, Estonia needed to gain international recognition and support (Travel, 2004).

Important milestones along this path were the signing of the Tartu Peace Treaty with Soviet Russia in 1920 and *de jure* recognition by Finland in the same year. A wider international recognition followed, making it possible for Estonia to be accepted as a member of the League of Nations, together with the other two Baltic states, in 1921. Estonia was a very active member of the League of Nations and aimed at close ties and integration with the Western countries, joining all available political conventions and agreements so as to buttress its national security (Laur, Pajur and Tannberg 1995) .

The Estonian political elite was often split over common security policy. Several security options were discussed and a possible defence alliance between the Baltic and the Scandinavian states was one of them. The idea was to establish a new centre of gravity in Europe consisting of small states. This idea, however, never became a reality. This was partly due to the different interests of the countries involved, and also because of active opposition by Soviet and German diplomacy (Made, undated). The Political and Military Co-operation Treaty signed between Estonia and Latvia in 1923 remained the only embodiment of this initiative.

Russia's interest remained high in Estonia during the whole period of independence, starting with political provocations by local Bolsheviks in 1920s, followed by a Trade Agreement and Non-Aggression

Pact in 1932 and leading up to a Mutual Assistance Pact that resulted in the positioning of Soviet military bases in Estonia in 1939.

Estonia faced a very unfavourable situation at the end of the 1930s and fell into political isolation. The League of Nations had weakened, the Soviet Union and Germany had turned more aggressive and the other European powers were not sufficiently interested to risk war in the name of Estonia's independence. In response, the official neutrality of the country was approved by the President in 1938;⁸ but it was little more than a declaration, as Estonia lacked the military capacity to actually defend its neutrality. Estonian independence ended *de facto* with full annexation by Moscow in summer 1940. Although Soviet Russia's military strength far outweighed Estonia's own military capacity, the Estonian political elite has often been blamed for not resisting the Red Army demands and not standing firm against Moscow by defending Estonia with arms in 1939-1940.⁹

After the end of the Cold War and after regaining independence in 1991, Estonia had theoretically three different security policy options: neutrality following the Finnish model; the establishment of tight relations with the CIS countries (especially with Russia); and integration into the Western economic and security structures. Estonia found itself in a situation defined by non-existent military capabilities, lack of human resources, the absence of a legal or conceptual framework for national defence or any necessary infrastructure, and very limited financial resources.

In spite of several attempts to write the national defence concept,

⁸ The Estonian Neutrality Law was based on the Swedish model.

⁹ According to some historians, records of contact between President Päts and the Soviet government suggest that the civilian authority may have "sold out" Estonia in 1939 (Ilmjärv, 2010).

no official defence policy was approved until 1996 when the Estonian Parliament (*Riigikogu*) approved the “Guidelines for the Estonian National Defence Policy”. This document declared that Estonian national defence should be built upon two interdependent and complementary foundations: independent self-defence capability and international defence-related cooperation.¹⁰

It became clear early on that the only viable security guarantee could come from the West, and Estonia firmly opted for a Western orientation through gradual integration into the EU and NATO. With the pull-out of the last Russian troops from the Baltic states in 1994 and the general reduction of military force levels in the region, the main question became how to combine security with stability and political reform. The idea of joining NATO was publicly expressed in 1991 for the first time. Estonia signed NATO’s Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP) in 1994, and negotiations about possible NATO enlargement began in 1997.

PfP provided extra motivation for democratic development and facilitated inter-institutional co-operation in Estonia as well as between the Estonian institutions and NATO. It also paved the way for tighter co-operation with Latvia, Lithuania and the Nordic countries. The stability and security of the Baltic States became a serious issue for the whole of Europe, but especially for the Nordic countries whose own security and regional stability depended on it most directly. None of the Nordic countries was willing or able to offer military protection to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Instead, they became the main spokesmen and promoters of the Baltic countries’ integration into Western security structures. They played an immense role in building up and

¹⁰ The defence concept was similar to the one of the first period of independence.

training the Baltic defence forces from scratch, as well as building up the Defence Ministries and tutoring the staff in personnel management, civil-military relations, legal frameworks of defence, and procurement matters.¹¹ The political support of the US was also of utmost importance in the process of international negotiations, especially with Russia. One of the most important milestones was the signing of the US-Baltic Charter in 1998 where the US declared its support for Baltic integration with the West.

Intra-Baltic co-operation blossomed in the mid-1990s largely thanks to Western, and especially Nordic, involvement. The three Baltic States' cooperation almost became a precondition for their membership in the North Atlantic Alliance, as it demonstrated their ability to work together for a coherent regional defence. All three Baltic States were given Membership Action Plans (MAPs) by NATO in 1999. In this framework Estonia proved its ability to build up modern defence forces, functioning under democratic civilian control and interoperable with NATO forces. Both NATO and the EU membership were achieved in 2004, allowing the Baltic States to enjoy the security benefits of both organisations ever since.

Since first receiving a MAP, Estonia's main goal has been to bring its defence forces in line with NATO's requirements and to raise the national defence budget to a level of 2% of GDP. Although Estonia also participates in the EU defence planning process within the framework of Common Security and Defence Policy, the emphasis still strongly lies with NATO. Estonia considers NATO's Article 5 on collective de-

¹¹ As regards equipment, Estonia hardly needed to buy anything for six years (1997-1999) because of substantial foreign aid and gifts of second-hand military hardware, especially from Sweden.

fence to be its main security guarantee, which also explains its active contribution to NATO- or US-led international operations.¹²

4. Current Security Challenges and Security Policy

Estonian security and defence policy has come a long way since regaining independence in 1991. The first security concept aimed first and foremost at protecting the territorial integrity of Estonia and the nation. The following two national security concepts (2001 and 2004) dealt with the challenges of heading towards NATO and EU accession and the reorganisation of the national security structure. After Estonia's full accession to both NATO and the EU in 2004, the horizon of its security challenges also broadened and it adopted a new National Security Concept in 2010 reflecting the new challenges (National Security Concept, 2010). In the same year, its National Military Strategy was replaced by a National Defence Strategy based on a comprehensive approach to security, encompassing defence, foreign policy, economy, the environment, crisis management, law enforcement, energy security, information technology and the intelligence community.

The main idea behind the new strategy was to detect not only military but also non-military threats at an early stage - so as to avoid the escalation of conflicts - and to improve inter-institutional cooperation

¹² The highest priority for Estonia is currently ISAF, the NATO operation in Afghanistan since 2003. As an EU member, Estonia further participates in the EU's largest military operation EUFOR-ALTHEA and belongs to the EU's Swedish-led Nordic Battle Group.

accordingly.¹³ Estonia's immediate security challenges today are related to the security situation in the Euro-Atlantic area and in its close vicinity.

With relatively healthy economies, homogeneous culture and common membership of most Western security organisations, the Baltic Sea region has never been more secure and stable. On the other hand, the security of the Baltic Sea region cannot be seen separately from the security of the transatlantic space, as the variables of regional and global security are increasingly intertwined. For Estonia, the main challenges today are connected to the eurozone crisis, the US's increasing focus on Asia, and the military modernisation and soft power tools of Russia.

4.1 Soft security concerns

ECONOMY

As a small country, Estonia is extremely vulnerable to global economic recession and financial crises due to its integration with the global economy, global markets and the eurozone. The financial crisis in Europe had a huge impact on the stability of national economies in the EU member states and on their priorities in budget allocations. The 2008 crisis in the world economy hit the Baltic countries hard. As a result, the volume of the Estonian economy contracted by nearly 20% over two years. According to the 2009 estimates, the Estonian GDP fell 14.1 % compared to the previous year. However, Estonia's recovery from the crisis was relatively less painful than that of its Baltic neigh-

¹³ A Long-term Defence Development Plan 2013–2022 for the implementation of the National Defence Strategy is currently being drafted; it will be finalised by the end of 2012.

bours. This was due to accumulated reserves, strict austerity measures with fiscal adjustments, and structural reforms. At the end of 2010, Estonia became officially a full member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Like the other two Baltic States, Estonia returned to growth after two years of recession, reaching a growth rate of 7.6% in 2011. Despite fiscal hardships, Estonia also managed to adopt the Euro in 2011. According to latest estimates for 2011, the country's GDP per capita was €16,206, the state budget surplus amounted to 0.1 % and the public debt was 5.9 % (Statistics Estonia, 2012).

Defence expenditure in 2008 was up to 1.82 % of GDP¹⁴. Because of the budget deficit, in 2009 two additional budgets with more spending cuts all round were adopted by the *Riigikogu*. The third budget cut was made by Government decree. The defence budget was decreased approximately by 14%, bringing it down to 1.75% of GDP. Most of the cuts hit the purchase of defence-related supplies, as well as management and personnel expenses. However, the budget cuts did not have any serious impact on joint equipment projects and contributions to foreign operations (Estonian Ministry of Defence). Estonia's political commitment to NATO's 2% requirement remained steady. Today, Estonia is one of the very few NATO member states that have ever met the target of spending 2% of GDP on defence. Even if it is a marginal sum in NATO's terms, it demonstrates a steady commitment to membership obligations.

The worst recession is over by now but as the Estonian market is small and with limited growth potential, economic growth is directly dependent on exports. At present, external demand is weakening be-

¹⁴ The standard NATO requirement is 2% of GDP. According to the Estonian Defence Forces Development Plan 2009-2018, Estonia would reach the 2% level by 2010.

cause of the poor economic situation in the eurozone. Current risks to financial stability in Estonia are thus primarily related to uncertainty stemming from the eurozone debt crisis, and the resulting poor growth outlook for Europe in general (Bank of Estonia, 2012).

ENERGY

Estonia's energy grid is only partly connected to Western grids, which leaves unsolved the issue of energy dependency on one key source (Russia).¹⁵ This decreases the sustainability of critical services and makes the country vulnerable to political and economic pressure. It is important for Estonia to improve its energy efficiency and to diversify its sources of energy supply.

Currently, Estonia's energy dependency on foreign sources is 21.2%, which is the lowest among the Baltic States (Europe's Energy Portal). Oil produced from shale is the primary local fuel. The Estonian electricity production system is a complex that includes fossil fuel-based thermal power plants, wind power plants, and small, restored hydroelectric power plants. More than 90% of electricity is produced from oil shale. The use of renewable energy sources for electricity generation has been increasing gradually, but it is still modest making up 11% of electricity consumption. However, over the next 15 years, the share of oil produced from shale in Estonia's energy portfolio is planned to fall by 30% in view of the large-scale environmental damage caused by shale mining as well as the oil consumption. Phasing out the use of oil shale may potentially turn Estonia from a relatively

¹⁵ Estlink 1 is the first electricity interconnection between Estonia and Finland, to be followed by Estlink 2 in 2014. The main purpose of the connection is to secure power supply in both regions by integrating the Baltic and Nordic energy markets.

self-sufficient country to one dependent on electricity imports. Some 75% of local heating needs are met by wood and peat briquettes, with the remainder mainly based on natural gas. All natural gas needed for heat production is imported from Russia (Eesti Statistika Kvartalikiiri). Estonia is currently weighing the possible LNG options.

CYBER-SECURITY

Estonia has the greatest internet freedom in the world (Freedom House, 2012) and 78.4% of people in Estonia use the internet regularly (Government of Estonia, 2012). Higher dependency on information technology and the transfer of critical services to cyberspace also increases the vulnerability of cyberspace and the risks to availability of services. After having fallen victim to a comprehensive cyber-attack in 2007, Estonia has become one of the leading countries in the world in creating and implementing e-government solutions and cyber-security measures. The NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence was established in Estonia in 2008. An informal cyber-defence cooperation network started to take shape within the *Kaitseliit* volunteer corps immediately after the massive attacks of 2007 and led to the establishment of the Cyber Defence League, bringing together volunteer competence in IT security, in 2010. Estonia was also given the opportunity to lead cyber-defence cooperation within the European Defence Agency in November 2012, and the European Commission has asked Estonian President Mr Toomas-Hendrik Ilves to chair the Steering Board of the European Cloud Partnership. As a small state,

Estonia has managed to build up a serious niche capacity in this field that is internationally recognised.

SOCIETAL SECURITY

Estonia is also concerned about external and internal coercion, which may damage its international reputation and create internal instability and ethnic tensions between Estonians and the Russian-speaking minority in the country.

After the EU and NATO enlargement in 2004, Russia came increasingly to rely on various tools to gain influence in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. By adopting its “compatriots policy” in 2008, Russia sought to protect the life and dignity of Russian citizens¹⁶ wherever they might live, by cultural, economic and also military means.¹⁷ When refining the policy in 2010, *Russia broadened the concept of compatriots by applying it to civil society organisations that promote and preserve the Russian language and culture.* The compatriots policy has thus become a foreign policy tool, funded and overseen by several Russian government bodies at the federal level including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By sponsoring different interest groups in the Baltic States such as the Russkiy Mir Foundation and Russkiy Dom network, Russia has deliberately created ethnic tensions within Baltic societies.

At the same time, by creating asymmetric economic relations, Russian state-controlled or state-influenced companies have built a significant presence in vital parts of the economies of the Baltic coun-

¹⁶ The term “compatriots” includes Russian citizens living abroad, former citizens of the USSR, Russian immigrants from the Soviet Union or Russia, and descendants of compatriots.

¹⁷ *Vide* the case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia during the Russia-Georgia war in 2008.

tries. Russia has also harshly criticised Estonia and Latvia in the international arena for discriminating against Russian minorities and has demanded lower barriers for acquiring citizenship.

Despite all Russia's attempts to meddle in Estonia's affairs, Estonia's internal capacity to resist negative external influences has increased thanks to the maturation of society, achieved through deeper integration into the EU structures, economic growth, the well-being of citizens and the consolidation of democracy.

ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

Environmental threats deriving from climate change may have serious and unpredicted consequences. Increased shipping in the Baltic Sea increases the risk of oil leakages and extensive environmental pollution. Large-scale oil tanker accidents may have fatal consequences for the ecosystems of the Baltic Sea. Today, the Baltic Sea is home to seven of the ten largest marine dead zones in the world. Dead zones are often caused by a high level of chemical nutrients in the water, which as a result has very low concentrations of dissolved oxygen. It would be very challenging to face the consequences of a dead sea, especially for a small state with a long and open coastline.

The Nord Stream gas pipeline project between Russia and Germany has always been as much an environmental as a political concern for Estonia, given the sensitivity of Baltic Sea ecosystem, seabed geology, and the risk of leakages from the pipeline. The Estonian government took part in the consultation process for the first two planned routes but refused a study request in 2007 due to environmental concerns. Nord Stream AG, the operating company for the construction of the Nord Stream gas pipeline, finished laying its second line on the Bal-

tic seabed in the summer of 2012, and is considering adding two additional pipelines along a different route. These corridors would run through the waters of Estonia's or Finland's extended economic zones, so the company has applied to both governments for permission to do studies. The aim of these studies would be to evaluate the feasibility of building a third and possibly a fourth pipeline, and they would result in documentation on the basis of which the Nord Stream shareholders could decide on the continuation of the second stage of the pipeline's expansion. The Government of Estonia is expected to respond by December 2012.

The risk of radiation incidents and radioactive pollution is increased by the old-generation nuclear power plants operating in the Baltic Sea area. A serious environmental concern for Estonia is the Russian nuclear power plant in *Sosnovy Bor*, about 90 km from the Estonian north-eastern border. This is an old Soviet-type reactor, identical to the reactors of Chernobyl, and any accident with this reactor would have serious consequences for the whole region.

4.2 Hard security concerns **– NATO as the coalition of the unwilling?**

The relevance of hard security challenges and guarantees for Estonia must be seen against the background of Russia's assertive behaviour in the region; its policies towards the US and NATO, and the vulnerability of regional security arrangements. Even if a military attack against Estonia is considered to be highly unlikely in the near future, the possibility cannot be totally ruled out in the long-term perspective. The war in Georgia in August 2008 reinvigorated the Baltics' traditional

security concerns about Russia. In addition to the use of economic and political means, Russia has demonstrated its readiness to employ military force in order to reach its political goals. As a result Estonia, together with the other Baltic States and Poland, raised serious concerns in 2008 about the functioning of NATO's Article 5 commitments in the case of a crisis in the Baltic Sea area. Ironically, a positive side effect of Russian aggression against Georgia was that NATO member states - led by the US - agreed to expand the contingency plan for Poland, codenamed 'Eagle Guardian', to include the Baltic States in 2009.

The main security guarantees for Estonia today include its membership in NATO and the EU and close cooperation with its allies and other international partners. However, the growing scarcity of resources both in the US and Europe together with shifts in broader geopolitical realities is leading the US to focus less on European affairs, requiring a thorough reassessment both of the distribution of burdens within the transatlantic alliance and of national contributions. With no direct military threat in sight and with the continuing economic crisis in the eurozone, defence will not be a priority area for most of NATO's European allies and partners any time soon. In addition, the tendency of some members to be selective about alliance obligations, and to emphasize national caveats, undermines the unity of the alliance and is leading towards a kind of coalition of the unwilling.

The balance of military force capabilities in Europe and of defence expenditure in the region is changing in Russia's favour. The modernisation of Russia's military forces, and the deployment of the most up-to-date equipment along the borders of the Baltic States and in Kaliningrad, will make it harder for NATO to bring reinforcements to the region should the need arise. This growing imbalance of forces

between Russia and the North Atlantic Alliance in the region is bound to cause concern.

Estonia's military defence is based on its initial self-defence capability and the NATO principle of collective defence under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. This means that the capabilities that are necessary for military defence and deterrence, but which Estonia cannot develop on its own, are ensured in cooperation with its allies in NATO. As the clearest example in peace-time, all three Baltic States rely on NATO for air policing. The visibility and credibility of NATO are especially significant against the backdrop of an assertive Russia. It is important to point out that the region has never hosted as many US-NATO military exercises as in 2012.

Having concentrated on the development of its capability to participate in international operations since its accession to NATO in 2004, Estonia now devotes increasing resources to enhance its territorial defence and host nation support capabilities.¹⁸ The Estonian Defence Forces are heavily land-centric. The army has a small professional contingent (the Scouts Battalion), but the majority of units are reserve-based; compulsory military service remains, and is planned to remain, the basis for manning these units (Military Defence Development Plan, 2009). Major investments have been made in the reconstruction of the Ämari Airfield, in the renovation of training and housing facilities for conscripts, in a 3D mid-range radar system and in a new maintenance centre (Estonian Ministry of Defence).

The Military Defence Development Plan for 2009–2018 set a specific time-frame after which Estonia was to have an interoperable defence force that would meet NATO's usability criteria and facilitate

¹⁸ Approximately 90% of the defence budget is spent on the self-defence capability, while direct and indirect costs of Estonia's international operations do not exceed 10%.

continued participation in NATO-led, EU-led and coalition operations outside the national territory (Military Defence Development Plan, 2009). However, the development plan was adopted before the financial crisis and it is unlikely that all its objectives (to develop command and control, intelligence, surveillance and communications systems; to develop air defence capabilities; to develop a high-readiness infantry brigade; to develop mechanised units; and to procure multi-role fast patrol boats) will be met within the planned time-frame. A new Defence Development Plan (2013–2022) is being drafted to better reflect the new fiscal realities.

Estonia faces a typical dilemma for a small state: how to balance the allocation of limited resources. One perceived weakness in Estonia's current defence concept is an imbalance between the development of initial self-defence capabilities and the capabilities that can be used in international operations. Although national security documents put equal emphasis on both of these, planning and force development activities focus on initial self-defence, while many capabilities developed for this purpose have limited or no use outside Estonia. Despite its impeccable performance in international operations, the Scouts Battalion – the professional expeditionary force – is undermanned and overcommitted, meaning that it is often necessary to deploy *ad hoc* units for international operations. The demographic trends that prevailed in Estonia in the 1990s are likely to cause problems for the military recruitment system in terms of the numbers of conscripts and professional soldiers available in the very near future. The most critical period will come in 2013–2021 (Statistics Estonia, 2012). This might, in turn, complicate the fulfilment of Estonia's national and international tasks.

While the role of Western countries in shaping global political and

economic processes has diminished, it is in Estonia's interest to preserve unity and cohesion within NATO and the EU and to keep the US engaged in European affairs and in the Baltic Sea region. However, the reality must be faced that under the new circumstances the role of regional security arrangements within the Alliance has increased.

According to the Estonian National Security concept, in order to preserve stability in the Baltic Sea region, Estonia aims to enhance political and practical cooperation in all critical fields with the Nordic and Baltic countries, with Poland, and also with Russia either on a bilateral basis or within the framework of the EU and NATO. Bilateral cooperation with the US is of strategic importance. Estonia's participation in both NATO and EU military operations and civilian missions plus its engagement in crisis management operations form an integral part of its security policy.

Although the need and will to cooperate is there, Nordic-Baltic security and defence cooperation has remained a controversial issue. Due to different decisions made in the past, cooperation between the Baltic States is often hindered by different priorities, interests, capabilities and degrees of readiness to cooperate. The Baltic States' ability to change the dynamics of cooperation and to integrate into the Nordic cooperation framework depends to a large extent on their will to work out the differences between their own past choices, and also on the political will of Latvia and Lithuania to raise their defence budgets.

The Baltic States have expressed their interest in deeper integration into the NORDEFECO¹⁹ structures in all areas of cooperation (strategic development; military capabilities; human resources; training

¹⁹ I.e. Nordic Defence Cooperation. The term NORDEFECO began to be applied after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2009, see <http://www.nordefco.org/facts-about-nordefco/>

and exercises; and operations), but there are currently several obstacles in their path. There is a growing gap between the capability requirements and available resources on the two sides of the Baltic Sea, making it difficult to deliver on common procurement programmes. Another reason why Nordic-Baltic cooperation has yet to achieve its full potential is the unwillingness on the part of the Nordics to fully include the Baltic states in existing cooperation structures. The individual Nordic nations have different relations with the Baltic States, different ambitions regarding NORDEFECO and, last but not least, different self-perceptions in foreign policy. Their willingness to cooperate also depends on economic factors and on their wish to maintain their national defence capabilities and freedom of action. In addition, the Nordic countries are concerned about the possible increase in bureaucracy and formalism in Nordic cooperation after the inclusion of the Baltic states. Last but not least, both the Nordic and Baltic states have expressed worries about US reactions to emerging regional defence cooperation formats, as these might offer a further possible motive or excuse for the US to reduce its attention to the region and for the undermining of NATO.

5. Conclusions

Throughout the history of its statehood, Estonia's security challenges have been related to its size (both in terms of territory and population) and geographical location. Too small for taking care of its own security interests and identifying itself as belonging to the European cultural space, Estonia has always sought its security allies in the West.

As history shows, most of Estonia's security challenges have been

and to some extent still are related to the Russian neighbour and to Russia's ambitions to control its sphere of interest by various means. Russia's military modernization and build-up along the Baltic borders, Estonia's energy dependency on Russia, environmental concerns related to pollution of the Baltic Sea, the questionable safety of the old Soviet type of nuclear power plants close to Estonian border and the Nord Stream gas pipe lines on the ecologically sensitive Baltic Sea bed, Russia's 'soft power' measures causing societal instability and damaging Estonia's international reputation – these are only some of the relevant challenges today.

In order to tackle these challenges, Estonia has always preferred the integrationist approach. Today, being a member of the United Nations, NATO, the EU, the eurozone and the OECD, Estonia is the most integrated country of the Nordic-Baltic region. Memberships and alliances, however, require commitments and contributions. Among the Baltic countries, Estonia has always been the A-student, always fulfilling the expectations of the organizations it belongs to: the first in its class to adopt the euro, the first to reach NATO's 2% spending target, ready to join international military operations in the most dangerous areas. Estonia has also become a vocal spokesman of cyber-security, energy security and regional cooperation. On this showing one might conclude that Estonia has done everything to secure its state and sovereignty. But is it enough? Does Estonia have enough security?

Against the background of a changed security environment and the new fiscal realities, there is a serious commitment and solidarity problem among both NATO and EU member states today, as well as an identity problem for the organizations themselves. Differing priorities and budget allocations cause discrepancies between the necessary capabilities and resources and bring collective ambitions into question.

Hence, the most serious security problem for Estonia today is not so much the rise of Russia as the ability of the security organizations to deliver if the need arises.

We may conclude that the security of the Baltic Sea region and Estonia more specifically will increasingly depend on the ability of the local states – Nordic as well as Baltic - to adapt to these concerns and changes; to converge in their strategic thinking; to cooperate, and to offer regional solutions capable of supporting the implementation of NATO and EU policies and strengthening the unity and capability of these organizations.

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