

Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States

Edited by

Tony Lawrence

Tomas Jermalavičius



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Foreword

The swift and total collapse of the Soviet Union may still be viewed by some in Russia as a disaster, but to those released from foreign dominance it brought freedom, hope, and a new awakening. To some it restored independence and for others it removed the hand of a subjugating empire. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, were plunged, largely unprepared, into the turmoil of realignment, reform and restructuring. All sought urgently to reaffirm their identities in the wider world by aligning themselves with modern liberal values and established institutions, and to make provision for their security within that framework. All eventually resolved these issues in differing ways.

The former Warsaw Pact countries and the three Baltic states shared similar strategic security policy goals: membership of the EU and NATO. With the process of integrating the nations of Central and Eastern Europe fully into that continent nearly complete, it is easy to overlook the fact that in the early years, achievement of these aims was not a straightforward or easy process.

For Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, their proximity to the Russian Federation and fear of a possible resurgence of an existential threat from that direction meant that NATO membership was the issue of immediate urgency, with the guarantee of Article 5 as the ultimate shield. But NATO itself was not united in viewing enlargement as necessarily to be desired. At the political level the initial views of member states varied from strongly supportive to, at best, lukewarm. Many senior NATO military figures warned that an enlargement of the Alliance would weaken its core defence capability. The Nordic neighbours argued that national security could be preserved without the need to join an alliance and were ambivalent about extending the reach of NATO to the Russian border. Russia itself fought hard to prevent this happening.

While the high-level arguments were debated, and the case eventually won, a process of security sector reform had to be worked out and put in place in readiness for meeting the standards of the EU and NATO. This was particularly challenging for the Baltic states, who had not just to reform existing organisations, but to create and then harmonise new defence structures. This required the resolution of complex doctrinal issues centring on the role, shape and size of the new defence forces. Should they have the full spectrum of capability on land, at sea and in the air, and if so how could it be afforded? Should they concentrate on providing niche capabilities for a

NATO of which they were not yet, and might never be, members? Should they rely on a total defence system, with small standing forces backed by a large mobilisable reserve? Should the standing forces be professional and small, or based on conscription and large?

There was no shortage of external advice, official, private or commercially inspired, much of it conflicting, some of it seeking to promote or defend vested interests. A major difficulty faced by all three Baltic states was the lack of homegrown expertise with which to assess this torrent. There were no existing forces on which to build and military officers had gained their experience in a system very different from those they sought to emulate. There were no robust academic or institutional fora within which to conduct the debate. In this setting the early advice of an independent group of senior international experts, working at high level with ministers, civil servants and defence chiefs, provided a useful and objective body for the provision of considered and disinterested advice.

Many of these issues and others of equal importance are addressed in the essays which are gathered in this publication, which is a great help in recording the past and pointing the way forward for the defence posture of the Eastern Baltic. It deserves wide readership by all those interested in that issue.

General Sir Garry Johnson has been the Chairman of the International Advisory Board to the International Centre for Defence Studies since 2007. He was the Chairman of the International Defence Advisory Board to the Baltic States from 1995-2001.

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Introduction

More than two decades have passed since the re-establishment of the independence of the Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – and the re-creation of their defence organisations. In this period, their armed forces have grown almost beyond recognition, from poorly armed, equipped and trained organisations to modern and professional forces, contributing effectively to operations alongside their Allies and partners. The three defence communities have also seen remarkable growth in their intellectual and political sophistication, and their organisational acumen. Most striking of all, in this period the Baltic states have moved from a geopolitical grey zone, where they were vulnerable to external and internal pressures, to being an integral part of the West's security and defence structures. This process has brought about profound transformation in many directions. Defence has been at the forefront of it and thus deserves closer scholarly inquiry.

It is perhaps surprising that research into defence development in this period has been somewhat deficient. There are many academic articles scattered through different national and international publications addressing various aspects of defence in one or (less commonly) all three Baltic states. There is also a vast amount of journalism and professional writing on the subject, but this is usually in national languages and thus inaccessible to the broader international audience. Some of the participants of the processes of re-building the Baltic defence organisations have started to publish their memoirs, adding valuable personal perspectives on what happened and why. However, there has been a dearth of scholarly analysis aimed at collating facts, unearthing the perspectives of decision makers and comparing defence development in all three countries in a comprehensive and systematic fashion. We hope that this volume, the product of the efforts of scholars from all three countries and beyond, will begin to address this gap in the literature.

Certainly, the Baltic states have an aversion to being compared with each other or, worse, to being seen as a single geopolitical unit. Both during the years of Euro-Atlantic integration and today, they have sought to differentiate themselves, even though the strategic realities have often forced them to act together or, at least, to co-ordinate their positions. Over these two decades there have been, as this volume demonstrates, many similarities in the learning and development curves of the defence establishments of the Baltic states, just as there have been – and continue to be – unique

traits which set them apart and, sadly, complicate defence relations between them and make defence cooperation harder.

In his analysis of the evolution of key strategic documents – which mirror conceptual thought about the security environment and the role of defence – Erik Männik shows that the Baltic states have shared many fundamental assumptions and exhibited similar responses to security challenges. This, in conjunction with similar levels of capability, close geographical proximity and shared history, made them natural cooperation partners in many endeavours in the 1990s and 2000s, standing in contrast to the inter-war period. Today, all three countries, torn between modern and postmodern models of security, are in the process of re-thinking their security and defence concepts, and their ideas on the role of military force. The outcomes of these processes, and whether the Baltic states will find sufficient grounds to stick together as each other's closest partners in defence, remain to be seen.

Kęstutis Paulauskas looks at the development of Baltic defence through the prism of the three states' integration into western security and defence structures. This is the story of a constant search for and re-definition of the role of the Baltic states in those structures and, concurrently, the ways in which military force could support this role. Undoubtedly, the three states practised a great deal of 'strategic mimicry' in order to be accepted by the West. This aspect, and the fact that the dramatic changes in the world and in NATO and the EU along with it have not always been to the delight of the Baltic states, has greatly complicated their task of fitting well into these two organisations. Yet with time, and safely within the ranks of the member states, the Balts have grown more self-confident, vocal and assertive about their core interest in defence – protecting their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity in the face of growing uncertainty in the region. This development has marked another stage in their spiral of learning and adaptation, bringing home the point that accession to NATO and the EU was not the 'end of history', but that regional political and strategic stability would still depend on the time-honoured notions of deterrence and assurance.

The military cultures of the Baltic states took shape in parallel with the evolution of strategic thought. Holger Mölder demonstrates how different forces have influenced the thinking and choices about the profession of arms in the Baltic states and how this framework has underpinned the diverse development of the three armed forces. Strategic assessments, political ideologies, historical background, foreign partnerships and cultural affinities, the dynamics of integration, operational experience and many other factors have produced three distinct - although in some ways also similar - military

cultures. These similarities and differences need to be properly appreciated if the Baltic states wish to continue their close defence cooperation, or to engage other Allies and partners in collaborative projects.

In the past twenty years, the Baltic states have also had to learn, sometimes the hard way, the complex business of defence governance. Sintija Oškalne reviews the evolution of supreme command arrangements in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania since the early 1990s. The present architecture and culture of defence governance in each of the three states has emerged from years of difficult clashes between personalities and political interests, and different views about historical antecedents and the nature of civil-military relations. It has also been heavily influenced by the imperatives of integration into NATO and the EU, for which democratic civilian control of the armed forces (and other security agencies) was of paramount importance. Although in a broad sense all three countries have developed similar approaches to the roles of their parliaments, governments, ministers and chiefs of defence, there are many subtle national idiosyncrasies.

An issue that has recently divided Estonia on the one hand and Latvia and Lithuania on the other is that of defence spending. All three countries maintain a commitment to meeting NATO's benchmark of spending 2% of GDP on defence, but Latvia and Lithuania have found this difficult to achieve. They have thus often been at the receiving end of criticism from the Alliance's officials, as well as from their Estonian counterparts. Kristīne Rudzīte-Stejskala explores how views about defence financing and its allocation have evolved in the Baltic states, and shows how the three states have progressed from drafting unrealistic and not properly resourced plans, to more realistic assessments and more skilled management of defence finances. However, the impact of the recent economic downturn on the willingness to sustain defence spending has been different in each country, pointing to deeper factors at play, such as national strategic cultures and the dynamics of public support for defence development.

The economic downturn has not, however, managed to dampen the Baltic states' eagerness to participate in international operations. Piret Paljak presents an analysis of the political and strategic motives that have driven them to get involved in operations (or, in some instances, to stay away or participate only symbolically) from the Balkans to Iraq and Afghanistan. The benefits have been multiple, although the cost in blood and treasure has sometimes been high. The entire current generation of political decisionmakers, military leaders and ordinary servicemen and women has been shaped by the experiences gained and lessons learned from these operations. The end of the NATO-led

campaign in Afghanistan – by far the largest, longest and most demanding operational commitment of the Baltic states – the associated mission-fatigue sinking in across the Alliance, and the renewed emphasis of the Baltic states on their own territorial defence needs is likely to affect their policy towards future international operations in ways yet to be seen.

To a large extent, the Baltic states owe their ability to contribute to international operations, the development of their military capabilities, and their readiness for NATO membership to the early trilateral defence cooperation projects and to the western assistance that was channelled through them. Baltic defence cooperation is undoubtedly a theme that runs through this volume and has, until recently, been a success story. Pete Ito looks at the origins, evolution and impact of the flagship project, the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT). By virtue of initiatives such as BALTBAT and its sister projects, BALTRON, BALTNET and BALTDEFCOL, the Baltic states anticipated the ideas behind NATO's 'smart defence' concept by some years. There is much to be learned from these projects – both in the Baltic capitals and farther afield. The question is whether the Baltic states are really willing to treat each other as defence partners of 'first choice' and to apply the lessons of the past to the benefit of future projects and initiatives.

The contributors to this volume faced many challenges, including: the availability of data (especially from the 1990s) and its comparability between different periods and between the three countries; a lack of written sources in the English language; the selective or thinning memories of those who were making decisions many years ago; and the sensitivity of some questions and topics to present day decisionmakers. We pay tribute to them for their effort and persistence and, of course, for their contribution to a body of knowledge about a recent historical period, which has so far been the subject of only rather disjointed research. We are also very grateful to all of those who made themselves available to the authors, for their guidance and for the interviews which were an important source of raw data – without your participation, this volume would not have been possible.

The Evolution of Baltic Security and Defence Strategies

Introduction

Since regaining their independence in 1991, the three Baltic states have constituted an intriguing research subject. Bordering an assertive great power, and in spite of many doubts and their Soviet past, these fiercely independent small nations have managed to join the key European and transatlantic security structures. In order to understand this group of small states, and in the process to strengthen international security, their policies and security prospects have been studied by various strategists from the perspectives of different major international relations theories including realism, constructivism, and alliance theory.¹

The Baltic states almost experienced an 'end of history' moment in 2004 when they joined the EU and NATO,² and Baltic security retreated from the top of the research agenda in the years that followed. However, any feeling the three states had of being sheltered from external challenges was not long lived. In 2007, Estonia was stunned by riots and cyber-attacks, triggered by its relocation of a monument to the Red Army. In 2008, the international community was taken by surprise and shaken by the Russo-Georgian war. A year later, the Baltic states experienced a dramatic economic downturn. And the beginning of 2012 brought the news that the US was going to rebalance its strategic posture towards the Asia-Pacific region; even though the US intended to uphold its Article 5 commitments, its military footprint was expected to shrink.³

- 1 For example: Birthe Hansen and Berthel Heurlin, *The Baltic States in World Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Olaf F. Knudsen, *Security Strategies, Power Disparity and Identity. The Baltic Sea Region* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Hans Mouritzen, *Bordering Russia: Theory and Prospects of Europe's Baltic Rim* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998); Ronald D. Asmus and Robert C. Nurick, "NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States," *Survival* 38, no. 2 (1996): 121-142.
- 2 See: International Relations Department of the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, "Northeast European Security After the 2004 Dual Enlargement: The End of History? A joint Vilnius Roundtable in co-operation with the Institute for National Strategic Studies, George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies, Konrad Adenauer Foundation," *Baltic Defence Review* 9, no. 1 (2003): 108-113; and Kęstutis Paulauskas, "Yesterday Came Suddenly. The Brave New Security Agenda of the Baltic States," in *Global and Regional Security Challenges: A Baltic Outlook*, eds. Tiago Marques and Heli Tiirmaa-Klaar (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2006), 15-16.
- 3 Department of Defense (US), *Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington: Department of Defense, 2012).

The US announcement came at a time when several European states were implementing extensive defence cuts that questioned seriously the willingness and ability of Europeans to defend themselves. Concurrently, the EU continued to struggle with a worsening financial crisis, which had troubled the euro zone since 2008. It appeared that tumultuous times for the Baltic states did not end with their accession to international security structures, and their ability to deal effectively with various security problems has been tested time and again.

In theory, states ought to have the capacity to foresee challenges to their well-being and existence, and prepare to tackle these well in advance. Connecting a nation's policy objectives, its ways of achieving them and the resources it has available constitutes the very essence of strategic thinking.⁴ However, the existing body of research demonstrates that the Baltic states have experienced substantial difficulties in accomplishing this task. In the beginning of the 1990s, they lacked the necessary qualified personnel, experience and maturity in the field of security policy to produce realistic and insightful strategic documents. Moreover, there were widespread doubts as to whether such small states could achieve a viable defence sector at all.⁵ From the mid-1990s, developments in Baltic strategic thinking were largely influenced by their efforts to join NATO. During this period, the Alliance managed to inject a substantial dose of realism into Baltic defence planning in terms of matching defence plans to existing resources.⁶ Even so, inconsistencies in strategic thinking and arguments with regard to future developments in Baltic defence structures persisted.⁷

The perplexing international environment, the limited capability for strategy formulation, and the resource constraints typical of small states have made the strategies of the Baltic states more snapshots of their situation at different moments in time, rather than visionary documents looking painstakingly into the future.⁸ The utility of any further analysis of Baltic strategic thinking, which

4 David Jablonsky, "Why Is Strategy Difficult?" in *US Army War College Guide to National Security Issues. Volume I: Theory of War and Strategy*, 5th edition, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 3.

5 Michael H. Clemmesen, "Before Implementation of Membership Action Plan: Baltic States' Defence Development Until the Present." *Baltic Defence Review* 2, no. 2 (1999): 35.

6 Erik Männik, "Estonia's Integration into NATO: Opportunities and Willingness of a Small State," (PhD diss., Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University, 2005), 167-9.

7 Margus Kolga, "New Challenges to the Estonian Defence System after Accession to the Alliance," in *Global and Regional Security Challenges: A Baltic Outlook*, eds. Tiago Marques and Heli Tiirma-Klaar (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2006), 42-62; Karlis Kreslinš, Aleksandrs Pavlovis and Inese Kreslina, "Defence of Latvia: Past, Present and Future," *Baltic Security and Defence Review* 13, no. 2 (2011): 110-127.

8 Tomas Jermalavičius and Erik Männik, "Security Foresight of a Small Ally: The Case of Estonia," (paper presented at the NATO SAS-088 Specialists' Meeting - Long Range Forecasting of the Security Environment, Stockholm, Sweden, April 11-12, 2011).

is the subject of this chapter, may be questioned, as a number of studies have dealt with it already, and identified numerous shortcomings, mistakes and problems. It is beyond any doubt that the Baltic states will have to work hard to harmonise their national policy objectives with the ways of achieving them and their existing resources.

However, there is still at least one facet of the strategic thinking of the Baltic states that warrants a closer look. It concerns historical development and continuity. We know that the independence of the Baltic states ended before the Second World War, when they tried to stay apart and neutral in an increasingly tense and violent world.⁹ The split between the three states was well appreciated by the Soviet Union, which had tried either to keep the Baltics apart or to push all of them together in their chosen direction. In the mid-1930s, the Soviet ministry of foreign affairs assessed that the growing ties between the Baltic states would only be beneficial for the Soviet Union if the latter retained its influence in one of the Baltic states. Such a 'handle' would provide an opportunity to influence the policies of all the Baltic states.¹⁰ Similarly, the Soviet military plans for conquering the Baltic states in 1940 envisioned a synchronised military action against all three of them, with the main thrust from south to north – from Belarus through Lithuania to Riga. This plan, which completely disregarded Baltic ideas about their own status, took full advantage of the poor defence cooperation between the three states.¹¹

History thus raises a question: have the lessons of the interwar period been learned and in which direction has the contemporary strategic thinking of the Baltic states evolved? The security environment of the three states has, without question, changed dramatically in comparison with the 1930s and 1940s, but the strategic imperatives have altered less. Referring to Lord Palmerston's famous maxim may seem misplaced in the postmodern 21st century,¹² but the security and stability of neighbours remains one of the permanent interests of all states. This chapter will thus examine how much, and in what context, Baltic strategists have paid attention to the security of their small neighbours.

9 Andres Kasekamp, *A History of the Baltic States* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 123.

10 Magnus Ilmjärv, "Põhijooni Euroopa suurriikide välispoliitikast Kirde-Euroopas 1930. aastate teisel poolel" (Main Traits of the Foreign Policies of the European Great Powers in North West Europe in the Second Half of the 1930s), in *Sõja ja rahu vahel I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani (Between War and Peace I. Estonian Security Policy until 1940)*, eds. Enn Tarvel, Tõnu Tannberg and Meelis Maripuu (Tallinn: MTÜ S-Keskus, 2004), 11.

11 Erkki Nordberg, "Baltia: Strateginen Perusselvitys" (The Baltic Republics: A Strategic Survey), *Strategian Tutkimuksia Julkaisusarja* 1, no. 2 (1993): 19-20.

12 "Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests." Common paraphrasing of remarks attributed to Lord Palmerston.

A second aspect that this chapter will consider is the overall approach of the Baltic states to the role of the military instrument in enhancing their national security: how important is it and what are its applications? How have these views changed? The third aspect of Baltic strategic thinking to be examined here is the presence of traits traditionally associated with small state behaviour and policies. In particular, it has been stated that (modern) small states tend to rely on superpowers for their protection, that they try to hold the attention of their large allies to avoid abandonment, and that they generally prefer to avoid the use of force as a technique of statecraft.¹³ These considerations should together provide a context for a better understanding of the depth of self-reliance, and of the self-confidence of the Baltic states to take care of their own security after 20 years of independence.

The study uses a qualitative content analysis of the key strategic documents of the Baltic states. This entails a "systematic, directed search of selected documents for presence or absence of desired bits of significant information."¹⁴ While the national strategies and concepts of the three states are intended to serve primarily as a conceptual basis for national decisionmaking, and are thus less binding than laws, they do represent the consensual views of the national parliaments and governments that adopted them. These documents thus reflect the security-related understandings, intentions and priorities that the three countries have been willing to declare to their Allies and to the international community as a whole. As such, they serve as benchmarks against which the policies and behaviour of the Baltic states can be measured, and from which the three states themselves cannot stray too far.

The remainder of this chapter is organised so as to form a continuous narrative of the evolution of Baltic strategic thinking from their first period of independence. The following section sheds light on the security-related activities of the Baltic states between the world wars. It is followed by an outline of the re-birth of strategic thinking at the end of 1980s, and the formulation of the first more or less strategic documents. Subsequently, attention is focussed on the security and defence concepts of the three states before and after their accession to NATO and the EU. The chapter ends with a summary of findings.

13 Jeanne A.K. Hey, "Introducing Small State Foreign Policy," in *Small States in World Politics. Explaining Foreign Policy Behaviour*, ed. Jeanne A.K. Hey (London: Lynne Rienner, 2004), 5; Robert O. Keohane, "The Big Influence of Small Allies," *Foreign Policy* 2 (1971): 167-8; Maria Papadakis and Harvey Starr, "Opportunity, Willingness and Small States: The Relationship Between Environment and Foreign Policy," in *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, eds. Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley and James N. Rosenau (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 428-9.

14 Ole Rudolf Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (London: Addison-Wesley, 1969), 10; Doris A. Graber, *Verbal Behavior and Politics* (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 126.

The Search for Security in the Interwar Period

The Baltic states ended their Wars of Independence with remarkably different outcomes. Estonia and Latvia signed peace treaties with Soviet Russia in January and August 1920, respectively. Their territories were uncontested and Soviet Russia renounced all sovereign rights in this regard. But Lithuania did not achieve a similar status. At the end of the Russo-Polish war, in October 1920, Polish troops seized and retained Vilnius – Lithuania's historical capital. Lithuania never accepted this loss (and was supported in this by Soviet Russia) and laid additional claims on the Memel/Klaipeda area of the Lithuanian coast, then under French governance. In 1923, Lithuania annexed the Klaipeda region during a staged coup.¹⁵

As a consequence, the three Baltic states faced different challenges from different directions. Estonia and Latvia had land borders with Soviet Russia, a state they considered a major source of security challenges and threats. In contrast, Lithuania had no border with Soviet Russia, but tense relations with Poland and, a few years later, with Germany. Moreover, Soviet Russia supported Lithuania in its territorial aspirations regarding Vilnius.

The Baltic quest for security between 1920 and 1940 encompassed four different areas of activity: (1) establishing a military alliance, (2) working through the League of Nations, (3) relying on a great power ally, and (4) adopting neutrality.

Plans to form a grand military alliance among the new states on the perimeter of Soviet Russia emerged even before the end of the Wars of Independence and were driven mostly by fear of Russia. Several conferences aimed at establishing a Baltic alliance were held between Finland, Poland and the Baltic states in the period 1920-1925. These efforts came closest to fruition when the foreign ministers of Estonia, Latvia, Finland and Poland signed an agreement on political cooperation in 1922. The Finnish parliament, however, refused to ratify the treaty because of fears of being dragged into conflicts with Germany and Lithuania through an obligation to support Poland. Various tensions and contradicting policies led to a situation where the only military alliance among the Baltic states was created between Estonia and Latvia. This treaty was signed for 10 years in 1923 and stipulated the peaceful resolution of problems between

15 Kasekamp, *A History of the Baltic States*, 104-5, 120.

the two states, and the provision of military assistance in the case of aggression. The two countries extended their alliance in 1934.¹⁶

Despite the good intentions, defence cooperation between Estonia and Latvia never reached sufficient intensity and depth: only a small number of military exercises were conducted; and the two states never agreed on who would be in charge of the allied forces in the case of war, or what language would be used to command them. From the beginning of the 1930s, Estonia and Latvia developed increasingly disconnected war plans that left the respective neighbour's flanks open. Larger states thus paid much less attention to the military potential of the Baltic states when they drew up their own strategic plans for the region, even though the three Baltic states had a combined mobilisation potential of 570 000 men, i.e. 230 000 more than Finland mobilised in the Winter War.¹⁷

The second option – of ensuring national security through the League of Nations – was initially greeted by the Baltic states with significant optimism. The three states joined the League in 1921. Articles 10 and 11 of the League's Covenant that stipulated collective action of member states in the case of attack against one of them, and Article 16 that envisioned various sanctions, made the League of Nations appear to be the only serious guarantee of independence and sovereignty for small states. These hopes turned out to be ephemeral. In 1925, after the failure to ratify the Pact on Mutual Assistance and Security Guarantees, Baltic faith in security guarantees from the League of Nations began to dwindle. The Manchurian incident in 1931, the failure of the disarmament conference in 1933-1934, and the outbreak of the Italian-Abyssinian war in 1935 made the ineffectiveness of the League of Nations utterly clear.

Paradoxically, Baltic cooperation increased greatly during the period of the League's failures. The three states concluded the Treaty on Baltic Entente in Geneva in 1934 and worked together on the formulation of common positions in respect of various policy matters within the organisation. Latvia subsequently gained a non-permanent seat on the League's Council (for the period of 1936-1939). The Baltic states approached and resolved in a reasonably coordinated manner the question of their recognition of Italy's occupation of Abyssinia, their presentation of neutrality declarations in 1938,

16 Magnus Ilmjärvi, "Eesti välispoliitika 1930. aastatel" (Estonias Foreign Policy in the 1930s), in *Sõja ja rahu vahel I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani* (Between War and Peace I. Estonian Security Policy until 1940), eds. Enn Tarvel, Tõnu Tannberg and Meelis Maripuu (Tallinn: MTÜ S-Keskus, 2004), 52,54.

17 Urmas Salo, "Eesti kaitsejõudude areng 1939-1940" (Development of the Estonian Defence Forces in 1939-1940), in *Sõja ja rahu vahel I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani* (Between War and Peace I. Estonian Security Policy until 1940), eds. Enn Tarvel, Tõnu Tannberg and Meelis Maripuu (Tallinn: MTÜ S-Keskus, 2004), 226.

and their abstention when the Soviet Union was expelled from the League of Nations because of its aggression against Finland.¹⁸

This close foreign policy cooperation between the Baltic states had its roots in the changing balance of power in Europe. The First World War had concluded with a dramatic weakening of the two traditional European centres of power – Germany and Russia. The mid-1930s was a period of rapid change. Germany was becoming an assertive great power again. Its ascent led to the deterioration of Soviet-German military cooperation, the abolition of the Versailles limitations on German military power, and the conclusion of the British-German Naval Treaty in 1935. The latter had serious implications for the security of the Baltic states as it allowed the German navy to operate on the Baltic Sea practically without impediment,¹⁹ while making the Royal Navy's access to the Baltic Sea fully dependent on Germany.

In 1934, both Germany and the Soviet Union signed treaties of non-aggression with Poland that were aimed at preventing Poland's alignment with any of the opposing powers.²⁰ Polish-German rapprochement combined with the Soviet-Polish treaty left Lithuania standing alone against Germany and Poland. Lithuania was compelled to seek closer Baltic cooperation to strengthen its position. Latvia and Estonia, however, refused to support Lithuania's policies on Klaipėda and Vilnius, and the Baltic Entente envisioned only political and diplomatic cooperation between the three states.²¹

From the mid-1930s, the Baltic states thus found themselves caught between two increasingly dominant centres of power and subject to growing political influence from both sides. As its primary threat perceptions were associated with the Soviet Union, Estonia was more susceptible to German influence, whereas Soviet influence dominated in Lithuania. Latvia looked warily at both sides – Germany and the Soviet Union – and oscillated between various courses of action.²² Both great powers sought to use their small Baltic allies to expand their own influence, and to prevent the alignment of the three Baltic states with their opponent. By the end of the 1930s, the three states had little choice but to opt for neutrality.

Their declarations of neutrality required the Baltic states to take decisions on how to interpret and implement Article 16 of the Covenant of the

18 Vahur Made, "In Search of Abstract Security: Estonia and the League of Nations," in *Estonian Foreign Policy at the Cross-Roads*, eds. Eero Medijainen and Vahur Made (Helsinki: Kikimora Publications, 2002), 26-27.

19 Ilmjärv, *Põhijooni Euroopa suurriikide välispoliitikast*, 36-38.

20 Ibid., 16,45-46.

21 Ilmjärv, *Eesti välispoliitika 1930. aastatel*, 52,55.

22 Ibid., 60,70.

League of Nations. This required economic and political sanctions to be imposed on an aggressor state, and the granting of free passage to the armed forces of League members to fight the aggressor. These clauses posed a critical problem for the three states. On the one hand, Germany sought to isolate states against which it had aggressive intentions and, therefore, supported the voluntary and case-by-case application of Article 16. Germany's interpretation of neutrality was about states being neutral *vis-à-vis* German activities; it was not about limiting Germany's freedom of action or preventing German access to the strategic raw materials it badly needed. On the other hand, the Baltic states had little faith that Soviet forces would leave their territories once they were permitted to transit to fight an attacking state.

Moreover, the danger of angering one of the competing great powers by opting for neutrality lurked in the background. Eventually, the Baltic states followed the example of Finland, which declared the application of Article 16 to be voluntary and dependent on each country's judgement. Estonia was the most vociferous supporter of the Finnish approach. It was determined to oppose any passage of Soviet troops through its territory, and secretly hoped for German military assistance against the Soviet threat. Poland was also supportive of Baltic neutrality as it desperately tried to create a 'barrier' of neutral states between itself and the Soviet Union.²³

It is interesting to note that while there were numerous advocates of Baltic neutrality, none of them explained in clear military-strategic terms how the three small states were expected to stay neutral and preserve their sovereignty in the case of conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union. Instead, there was a great deal of idealism, rhetoric, and a rather desperate desire to ignore the ominous political changes in Europe. In 1939, once the two great powers had signed an agreement to carve up the larger part of Europe between themselves, Baltic hopes and illusions came to a bitter end.

The First Conceptualisations of National Security in the 1990s

Half a century later, even before they regained their statehood, the Baltic nations had to start thinking about their security arrangements once more. Their initial strategic visions proceeded precisely from the point where they had ended before the Second World War. The obvious reason for this was

23 Ibid., 75-82

the restitutionist approach to re-establishing the independence of the Baltic states,²⁴ but the need to avoid irritating the Russian Federation needlessly while its forces were still on Baltic territory could also not be ignored.²⁵

In 1989, the Estonian nationalist opposition leader Tunne Kelam expressed the opinion that "Estonians will be able to survive only in a neutral, independent state outside military blocs."²⁶ Such thinking was reflected in 1993 in the first draft of the Defence Concept of the Republic of Estonia that envisioned Estonia as a neutral state.²⁷ Analogous thoughts were also included in the first drafts of the Lithuanian security concept written in 1990 and 1992. These saw Lithuania as a neutral state, a sort of bridge between East and West, and stipulated that Lithuania had to strive for maximum independence, as integration efforts could undermine Lithuanian national identity.²⁸ Moreover, Hain Rebas, the first Estonian Defence Minister, declared in 1992 that "Estonia is going to recreate her armed forces, similar to the Estonian army of General Laidoner [Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian Defence Forces until 1940]".²⁹

Other ideas circulated and discussed among the Baltic states in the beginning of 1990s also had a historical background. They included close and institutionalised cooperation among the three states, close cooperation with the Nordic states, some form of alliance between the Central European states, and obtaining security guarantees from both western powers and Russia.³⁰ As Russian strategists had simultaneously begun to develop the concept of the 'near abroad', none of these alternatives was perceived as a viable security solution. Russia's then minister of foreign affairs Kozyrev characterised the 'near abroad' as a "unique, *sui generis* geopolitical space to which nobody but Russia could bring peace."³¹ Consequently, in a joint statement issued in December 1993, the presidents of the Baltic states

24 The Baltic states considered themselves as occupied states under Soviet rule, and legally existing entities with some representative bodies abroad. In line with such thinking, their independence was restituted in 1991 along with the population's rights to unlawfully expropriated property. This return to independence initially brought with it the revival of the security visions of the late 1930s.

25 Vaidotas Urbelis, "Defence Policies of the Baltic States: From the Concept of Neutrality Towards NATO Membership," NATO-EAPC Individual Fellowship Report 2001-2003 (Vilnius, 2003), 7.

26 Quoted in: Gert Antsu, "Estonia's Security Policy Options 1991-1999." (MA diss., Tartu: University of Tartu, 2000), 27.

27 Eesti Vabariigi Kaitseministeerium (Ministry of Defence (Estonia)), *Eesti Vabariigi Riigikaitsekontseptsioon. Projekt* (National Defence Concept of the Republic of Estonia, Draft) (Tallinn, 1993), 5-6.

28 Grazina Miniotaite, "The Security Policy of Lithuania and the 'Integration Dilemma,'" NATO Individual Democratic Institutions Research Fellowship Report (Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1999), 15, 18.

29 Quoted in: Mare Haab, "Estonia and Europe: Security and Defence," in *The Baltic States: Security and Defence after Independence*, Chaillot Papers, no. 19, ed. Peter Van Ham (WEU Institute for Security Studies, 1995).

30 Eitvydas Bajarūnas, "Lithuania's Security Dilemma," in *The Baltic States: Security and Defence after Independence*, Chaillot Papers, no. 19, ed. Peter Van Ham (WEU Institute for Security Studies, 1995).

31 Karsten Møller, "Russian Security Policy - In Search of a Major Power Identity," *Baltic Defence Review* 1, no. 3 (2000): 69.

declared that NATO membership would be the main guarantee of Baltic security.³² This has remained the principal security solution of the Baltic states ever since.

The first commandant of the Baltic Defence College, Michael Clemmesen, claims that all three Baltic states adopted their initial strategic documents on defence in the mid-1990s.³³ This is, perhaps, an optimistic view. Estonia approved a document called 'Estonia's Defence Policy Guidelines' in 1996 that was, in fact, neither a defence strategy nor a concept. While the document strengthened civilian control over the Estonian Defence Forces and advanced their steady development,³⁴ its most fundamental purpose was, in reality, to end the argument over whether the nation should have any defence forces at all.³⁵ Similarly, a Lithuanian document called 'The Basics of National Security of Lithuania' was, in essence, a rather brief annex to the Law on the Basics of National Security. As such, it focussed on delineating the basic aspects and features of the nation's security system, and paid little attention to outlining national interests or to the harnessing of national power in their support.³⁶ Latvia's conceptual thinking was clearly ahead of its Baltic neighbours at this time. Latvia had managed to push both the theoretical and practical debates on security and defence matters to a stage where the state had actually adopted both security and defence concepts.³⁷ Undoubtedly, this was a great step forward showing a growing intellectual consensus on security issues in Latvia, but there were serious problems when it came to actually following the agreed documents. For instance, the Latvian military leadership failed to transform risk assessments and resource estimates into the realistic force development plans required by the defence concept.³⁸

In sum, one can agree with the views of Jundzis and Urbelis that the first expressions of official strategic thinking were focussed primarily on avoiding a repeat of the quiet surrender that took place in 1940, and on launching defence development based on the use of all national resources and elements of power for that purpose.³⁹

32 Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Estonia), "The Baltic Presidents Call for Greater Regional Security," *Estonian Review*, 13-15 December, 1993.

33 Clemmesen, *Before Implementation of Membership Action Plan*, 36.

34 Urbelis, *Defence Policies of the Baltic States*, 8.

35 Margus Kolga, "Uuenev NATO: Eesti-NATO suhted 1989-1998" (Renewing NATO: Estonia-NATO Relations 1989-1998) (Peaseminaritöö, Tartu: Tartu Ülikool, 1999), 45.

36 Giedre Statkeviciute, "The Lithuanian National Security Strategy," *Baltic Defence Review* 1, no. 7 (2002): 13.

37 Talavs Jundzis, "Baltic States: Cooperation on Security and Integration into the European Security System." NATO Individual Democratic Institutions Research Fellowship Report (Riga, 1996).

38 Gundars Zalkans, "The Development of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Latvia." *Baltic Defence Review* 1, no. 1 (1999).

39 Urbelis, *Defence Policies of the Baltic States*, 5; Jundzis, *Baltic States: Cooperation on Security*.

2000-2003: Baltic Security and Defence Strategies before Accession to NATO and the EU

Approximately ten years after regaining their independence, all three Baltic states adopted comparable conceptual documents on security and defence. The beginning of a new millennium witnessed a growing competence and consensus among the Baltic decision makers, producing much more coherent reflections on security. In addition, the Baltic states were actually expected, and were gently pushed (e.g. by the US) to express their strategic views before NATO's summit meeting in Prague in 2002, where they were invited to join the Alliance.⁴⁰ The Allies wanted to ascertain that the future members were in compliance with the requirement to harmonise their strategies with NATO's Strategic Concept.⁴¹ After the Prague Summit, the tacit expectation within NATO was that the candidate countries would start to reorganise their armed forces, which had been geared for territorial defence, into more expeditionary capabilities.⁴²

Latvia

Latvia's strategic vision and the means and ways it foresaw for strengthening national security revealed a state that was shaping its defence structures in line with NATO's expectations. The National Security Concept of 2002 and the State Defence Concept of 2003 clearly satisfied NATO's conditions for the candidate countries. Latvia demonstrated a strong adherence to a broad concept of security. Security challenges were perceived both in the external and internal environments, ranging from traditional (although diminished) military risks and threats to those in the economic, societal and environmental spheres. These were all manifest in an increasingly fluid and dynamic environment, in which the Cold War's zero-sum approaches no longer applied. The process of globalisation facilitated the spread and reach of terrorism, in particular. While Latvia perceived a low level of military threat, this was not to detract from the improvement of its defence capabilities. The diminishing threat of major conflict was substituted by the increased likelihood of regional conflicts, accompanied by spill-over effects. Furthermore, the role of the Latvian defence forces in enhancing international security and in dealing with asymmetric threats was expected to grow.⁴³ Internally, Latvia treated crime, economic instability and unpredictability, uneven development of different regions, and poor social integration as its primary security challenges.⁴⁴

40 Männik, *Estonia's Integration into NATO*, 150.

41 North Atlantic Council, "Membership Action Plan" (1999), paragraph 4.

42 Männik, *Estonia's Integration into NATO*, 169.

43 *State Defence Concept* (Latvia, 2003); *National Security Concept* (Latvia, 2002).

44 *National Security Concept* (Latvia, 2002).

In order to function effectively in such a security environment, Latvia envisioned integration into NATO and the EU, and the development of close cooperative relationships with countries having the same basic values. Latvia valued very highly its relationship with the US and prioritised cooperation with the sole remaining superpower. The US had a decisive role in supporting and strengthening Baltic independence and security. The continued US presence in Europe and in the Baltic Sea region was seen as highly desirable and to be encouraged. The most important fields of cooperation with the US lay in politics, economy and defence.⁴⁵

At the regional level, the stability of the neighbouring Baltic states constituted a precondition for the steady development of Latvia, and for the achievement of its integration objectives. A threat to one Baltic state posed a threat to all of them, and Latvia aimed for coordinated (and possibly joint Baltic) policies to ward off such threats. In a similar vein, Latvia strove for intensive cooperation with other countries in the region. The aim of these efforts was to promote the harmonious development of the region and to fulfil its economic potential. Deepening relations with the Nordic countries was also seen as a tool for learning about their European integration experience. Notwithstanding the problems in dealings with the Russian Federation and Belarus, the proposed Latvian policies foresaw the development of good-neighbourly relations and a growing level of pragmatism in dealing with these countries. It was considered that the progress of democracy in Russia and Belarus was in Latvia's best interest.⁴⁶

According to the National Security Concept, the purpose of the state's defence policy was to avert threats to national security, resolve various crises and ensure peace and stability in the region through international cooperation. In 2002, Latvia intended to develop a total defence system and exploit the nation's resources to maximum effect. It was to consist of a military and a civil defence system. The former was based mainly on the Latvian National Armed Forces, which were to engage in territorial defence in the case of hostilities against Latvia. In peacetime, they were tasked to provide assistance to the civilian authorities and to participate in international peace operations to show Latvia's determination to strengthen international security.⁴⁷

The State Defence Concept of 2003, however, envisioned increasingly professional armed forces (backed by a small reserve) with conscription due to end in 2006. The document stated that the contemporary security situation

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

put the emphasis on having available forces of the best quality, rather than forces in quantity. Latvia affirmed its reliance on NATO's collective defence as its guiding strategic principle, and in return focussed on developing the capabilities required for collective security efforts (international operations). The professionalisation of the Latvian National Armed Forces was expected specifically to facilitate the latter.

The ground component of the Latvian forces was reduced to one regular infantry brigade and the National Guard. Force development priorities included command and control systems, training, logistics, and improved air defence. Cooperation with the other Baltic states to prepare for collective defence, and the development of host nation support capabilities constituted another set of important areas of activity. The continued importance of Estonia's and Lithuania's security was once more expressed: "Latvia's security is irrevocably bound to the common security of the Baltic States." In addition to strengthening the military security of all three states, Baltic defence cooperation was simultaneously to serve as a tool to facilitate their integration with NATO. Finally, Latvia noted its intention to allocate 2% of GDP to defence by 2008.⁴⁸

Lithuania

Lithuania adopted a very detailed National Security Strategy in 2002. Its security assessment began with the assertion that the majority of traditional and new security challenges to the Republic of Lithuania were transnational. Various crises had the potential to spread beyond their countries of origin, and the security of states had become increasingly indivisible. Transnational threats included terrorism, organised crime, the proliferation of various weapons, drug trafficking, illegal migration, and epidemics. The indivisibility of security suggested that terrorism threatened Lithuania by the mere fact of its posing a serious challenge to the global community. While Lithuania perceived no direct military threat, various crises, provocations and intimidation remained distinct possibilities.⁴⁹ The nation's other security challenges included its excessive dependence on strategic resources from one source, external interference in its economy, corruption, and uneven social and economic development.⁵⁰

As its long-term security solution, Lithuania aspired to integration with the EU and NATO and cooperation with states sharing the same values. The membership of all three Baltic states in these organisations was expected to

48 *State Defence Concept* (Latvia, 2003).

49 Lithuania's military strategy, adopted in 2000, did not exclude small-scale military actions (e.g. raids) against Lithuania. Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), *Military Defence Strategy of Republic of Lithuania* (Vilnius: Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, 2000), 11.

50 *National Security Strategy* (Lithuania, 2002).

contribute to the security of the whole region. However, Lithuania's strategic vision did not tie the security of the three states together as explicitly as did Latvia's. Lithuanian strategists categorised "freedom and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states," as the nation's primary security interest that, "if not protected, could eventually affect the vital interests of the Republic of Lithuania."⁵¹ The strategy stood, first of all, for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lithuania.⁵²

Lithuania's quest for security involved close relationships with two crucial partner countries. One was the United States, which was perceived as Europe's main ally in security cooperation. Lithuania had extensive cultural ties with the US; it sought to involve the US more in the Baltic region, and rendered political and practical support to the US in its campaign against terrorism. The second strategic partner was Poland, Lithuania's strategic link with western Europe, which was expected to assist in the "integration of the Lithuanian economy, information, communications, transport, energy and infrastructure into western European systems, and in the process of inclusion of her defence infrastructure into NATO's integrated military structure."⁵³ Another aim of close cooperation with Poland was to learn from the Polish NATO integration experience.⁵⁴

At the regional level, Lithuania intended to pursue security (and military) cooperation with the Baltic states, seek assistance in its integration efforts from the Nordic countries, and participate in various initiatives to involve the US and the EU in this cooperation. Lithuania planned to sustain the cooperative military projects with Estonia and Latvia, including joint military units, education institutions, and defence infrastructure, which would in the future be integrated into NATO's military structure.⁵⁵ Lithuania would implement confidence and security building measures, and launch pragmatic and mutually beneficial cooperation programmes with Russia and Belarus. The situation in the Kaliningrad region was of particular interest as its possible deterioration could test Lithuania's security in several ways.⁵⁶

51 Ibid.

52 It should be added that Lithuania's Military Defence Strategy did not mention the other two Baltic states or their potential loss of independence at all. The document focussed on the Russian military power concentrated in the Kaliningrad region and Belarus. Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), *Military Defence Strategy* (2000), 11.

53 *National Security Strategy* (Lithuania, 2002).

54 Lithuania and Poland established a joint military battalion LITPOLBAT, that was described by Lithuania as potentially one of the first units to be integrated into NATO's force structure. Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), *Military Defence Strategy* (2000), 13.

55 The Baltic military cooperation projects included BALTBAT (joint peacekeeping battalion), BALTRON (joint naval squadron), BALTNET (joint air surveillance network), and BALTDEFCOL (joint college providing third and fourth levels of military education).

56 *National Security Strategy* (Lithuania, 2002)

The defence forces had to enhance Lithuania's security by establishing credible deterrence by their readiness for 'total and unconditional' defence, and through contributions to international cooperation based on Euro-Atlantic solidarity and collective defence. This included providing assistance to the armed forces of other states. While Lithuania preferred to take part in peace operations launched on the basis of a UN Security Council mandate, it also attributed high importance to active participation in NATO-led operations. The armed forces had to develop interoperability with NATO, establish a functional mobilisation system and train reserves. The principle of total and unconditional defence included both regular and irregular warfare, civil resistance and disobedience.⁵⁷

The structure of the Lithuanian Armed Forces was to be shaped in accordance with these statements. The largest branch – the ground forces – would consist of four combat brigades and one logistics brigade. The National Defence Volunteer Forces trained and provided territorial defence units. The brigades had to be mobile (as Lithuania's territorial defence was to be based on a manoeuvrist approach to warfare) and fully interoperable with NATO forces.⁵⁸ Lithuania's defence spending was stipulated in the Law on Strategy of Funding of National Defence System and constituted 1.7-1.75% of GDP in 2000.⁵⁹

Estonia

Estonia's National Security Concept made a series of direct references to NATO's New Strategic Concept of 1999 to underline its full concordance with NATO's strategic thinking. In 2001, Estonia perceived neither a military threat nor that of coercion aimed at changing Estonia's policies.⁶⁰ The security environment was dominated by the new risks (including terrorism, crime, ethnic conflict, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction) and economic challenges. Estonia's economy was closely integrated with the world economy, making it susceptible to fluctuations in external markets. Estonia also paid attention to the risks inherent in excessive dependence on one country to provide strategic resources.⁶¹

Like its southern neighbours, Estonia strove for NATO and EU membership and advanced cooperation with the Nordic countries, and recognised the

57 Ibid.

58 Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), *Military Defence Strategy* (2000), 12,20.

59 Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), *Report on the Status and Development of the National Defence System for the Year 2000* (2001), 19.

60 The possibility of a military threat arising in longer term was, however, mentioned in the defence strategy.

61 *Eesti Vabariigi sõjalise kaitse strateegia* (National Military Defence Strategy of the Republic of Estonia) (2001).

61 *Eesti Vabariigi julgeolekupoliitika alused* (National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia) (2001).

special importance of relations with the US – a country seen as deeply interested in the Baltic states. Estonia's appreciation of the importance of the security of the other two Baltic states fell somewhere between the understandings of Latvia and Lithuania. Estonia saw the three states as being in a similar geopolitical and security situation, and permanent stability for Estonia was thus not conceivable without a similar status for Latvia and Lithuania. Wide-ranging Baltic cooperation (in both civilian and military spheres) and coordinated actions in the international arena would thus have a special significance in shaping the common security environment.⁶²

Russia was seen as a potential source of security challenges, not so much because of deliberate actions on its own part, but more due to its continuous instability and on-going economic transition. In common with its southern neighbours, Estonia intended to focus on pragmatic cooperation and increasing military transparency with the Russian Federation.⁶³

According to its defence strategy, Estonia was to build a total defence system to provide for the defence of the nation, support its integration efforts, and enable participation in crisis management operations. Estonia envisioned three main threat scenarios: (1) intimidation, (2) coup attack, and (3) a full military attack, but did not consider any of the new threats listed in the security concept. Neither did the document make any mention of the other two Baltic states. The Estonian Defence Forces were to resist military aggression under any circumstances and carry out territorial defence. The main part of the defence forces was to be the reserve, built through mandatory military service and called up to fill the wartime force structure. The land component of the wartime defence forces was to consist of general purpose, territorial and support units. Estonia intended to reach defence expenditure equalling 2% of GDP in 2002 and to maintain that level thereafter.⁶⁴

This brief review of the declared strategic thinking of the Baltic states before 2004 reveals an interesting picture. Evidently, all three small states had hard security concerns as they tried to maximise their defence effort through the building of total defence systems. Estonia and Lithuania tried to enhance their deterrence by stressing their uncompromising willingness to defend themselves regardless of circumstances, and Estonia's threat scenarios pointed quite clearly at the perceived Russian threat. Latvia, on the other hand, was ready to rely fully on NATO's collective

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 *Eesti Vabariigi sõjalisel kaitse strateegia* (2001).

defence, and announced the conversion of its defence forces into a smaller volunteer force by 2006. Lithuania expressed a desire in 2003 to follow Latvia's example in creating a professional force, but also expected to keep its defence expenditure below 2% of GDP due to sustainability concerns.⁶⁵

Aside from their quest for security through NATO, all three Baltic states clearly indicated that they wanted to keep a great power Ally – the US – engaged in regional defence cooperation. The US was described as a very important actor in supporting Baltic independence and security.

In contrast with this unanimity, the strategic documents also show that Latvia and Estonia expressed the importance of the security of the other Baltic states in stronger terms than did Lithuania. Latvia saw the threat to one Baltic state as a threat to them all, while Estonia could not imagine permanent stability for itself without stability for Latvia and Lithuania. Lithuania's approach, of allocating its own security interests and the security of the other two states into 'vital' and 'primary' categories respectively, raises the question of whether Lithuania assumed that it could remain relatively safe while Estonia's or Latvia's security was seriously challenged? After all, Lithuania bordered its key strategic partner and NATO member Poland, and faced the Russian Federation only in the Kaliningrad region. Also, there was only a very small and already naturalised Russian-speaking minority in Lithuania.

Some support to such a view can be found in the vision of Algirdas Gričius, the deputy chairman of the foreign affairs committee of the Lithuanian parliament in 1995. He argued that although the three Baltic states should cooperate, Lithuania should not seek the joint entry of the Baltic states into NATO. In his words, it would have been more beneficial if Lithuania had applied for NATO membership together with Poland.⁶⁶ Moreover, high-ranking statesmen from all three Baltic countries subsequently made a series of comments against Baltic unity and in favour of individual quests for security.⁶⁷ In the light of these views, statements supportive of Baltic security cooperation looked more like a formal acknowledgement of the inevitable, than demonstrations of an intent to adopt a joint proactive approach to enhancing security.

65 Robertas Šapronas, "Modern Force Structuring in Lithuania," in *Defence Reform in the Baltic States: 12 Years of Experience* (Riga: Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2003), 30-31.

66 Haab, *Estonia and Europe: Security and Defence*.

67 Grazina Miniotaite, "The Baltic States: In Search of Security and Identity," in *Almost NATO. Partners and Players in Central and Eastern European Security*, ed. Charles Krupnick (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 264-5.

In any case, behind these attitudes lay an extremely limited defence capability. The Baltic defence forces were, in fact, in no position to defend their own countries effectively – not to mention provide military assistance to their neighbours. This did not affect, however, the desire of the three states to participate in international peace operations.

The three states' views on the use of armed force also differed slightly. Paradoxically, it was the largest of the Baltic states – Lithuania – that expressed views closest to those considered typical of small states. Lithuania stipulated clearly its preference to act within the framework of international law (under a UN Security Council mandate), whereas Estonia and Latvia used less specific formulations. The activism of the three small states in using their limited military capabilities abroad, meanwhile, suggests that their security concerns overrode the traditional wariness of small states to use military force.

A Period of Relief: Baltic Strategic Thinking after Accession to NATO and the EU

Accession to NATO and the EU was nothing short of a revolution for the security and strategic status of the Baltic states. For the first time in their history, by joining the most powerful military alliance in the world, the three states received official security guarantees from great powers. The Baltic states had also become a part of the world's largest economy. This changed situation was duly reflected in their updated strategic documents.

All three states acknowledged that their security situation had changed and improved tremendously. Latvia was the most optimistic: it saw no direct military threat to any of the Baltic states, and characterised the Baltic region as stable and secure. Lithuania, while agreeing with the lack of direct military threat and the low probability of military conflict in the region, did not exclude provocations, military intimidation and demonstrations. Estonia also excluded a military attack against any NATO member state in the medium and long term, and saw various crises as the most likely military risks; these could arise from unexpected and unexplained military activities on the nation's borders, intimidation and provocations, and from terrorist attacks against Estonia, its Allies or neighbouring states. Estonia also assessed the risk of political pressure and coercion as minimal. Lithuania and Estonia agreed that the main sources of security challenges lay in uncontrolled developments in the world, and in the instability of states. In Latvia's view, accession to the EU and NATO increased the influence of international security developments and amplified the impacts of modern security challenges on Latvia's own security.

Latvian forces deployed on various missions abroad were potential targets for terrorist attacks, a threat that also extended to the Latvian state. Estonia was more reserved, stating that EU and NATO membership had extended Estonia's security interests to regions that were of little concern previously.⁶⁸

However, these improvements in political and military security were accompanied by internal developments that in some cases received closer attention than before. Latvia remained concerned about its economic sovereignty, regional and social development, and environmental issues. Lithuania and Estonia paid more attention to the societal sector of security. Lithuania complemented the list of national security challenges with the devaluation of the institution of the family, the worsening of public health, alcoholism, and depreciation of Christian values, whereas Estonia was concerned primarily about the spread of drugs, HIV/AIDS, other contagious diseases, and alcoholism. All three states were increasingly aware of the risks and threats associated with the widening application of information technologies.⁶⁹

Despite joining the Alliance, all three states continued to stress the importance of their strategic partnership with the US. In 2005, Latvia was the most concise in its statement of continued support for a US role in European security. Estonia judged its relationship with the US to be of utmost importance in strengthening Estonia's security, and US military presence in Europe to be the bedrock of European security. Lithuania agreed and took a step further, declaring its active support for the US 'Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe' initiative, which aimed to reinforce security and stability in the region. Estonia and Lithuania saw their close cooperation with the US as strengthening the transatlantic link. Lithuania continued to stress the strategic nature of its relationship with Poland.⁷⁰ This was echoed by Estonia, which characterised its relations with Poland and Germany as "multifaceted and rapidly evolving."⁷¹

The prominence of the neighbouring Baltic states in the updated security strategies decreased considerably. Latvia's security concept mentioned only the existence of military cooperation between the Baltic states and outlined further strengthening of the regional cooperation as a foreign policy priority. Lithuania and Estonia described the cooperation between the three Baltic states

68 *National Security Concept of the Republic of Latvia* (2005); *National Security Strategy* (Lithuania, 2005); *Eesti Vabariigi julgeolekupoliitika alused* (National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia) (2004).

69 Ibid.

70 It must be noted, though, in 2012 there were serious problems in Polish-Lithuanian relations. They were mostly caused by nationalist politicians on both sides whose quarrels also spilled into the defence field and could affect NATO's Baltic air policing mission. Tomas Jermalavičius, "The protracted agony of 'strategic partnership,'" ICDS blog, comment posted on 23 April 2012.

71 *Eesti Vabariigi julgeolekupoliitika alused* (National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia) (2004).

as multidimensional, including a military aspect. Both countries were also interested in deepening defence and security cooperation between the Baltic and Nordic states.⁷² Perhaps, the clearest indication of changing perceptions of the importance of the security of the neighbouring Baltic states came from Lithuania. While it continued to divide its security interests into 'vital' and 'primary' categories, in 2005 the latter included the security, democracy and welfare of all NATO Allies and European Union member states – instead of the narrower focus on the Central European and Baltic states set out in the 2002 document.⁷³ Such a formulation illustrates a distinct strategic vision of the Euro-Atlantic area, based on the principles of the indivisibility of security and collective defence.

In line with their new international status, the Baltic states outlined their willingness to assume more responsibilities in international crisis management and collective defence. Again, the change in attitudes was most evident in Lithuania's security strategy, which prioritised participation in NATO and EU-led missions in contrast to the previous preference of missions led by organisations acting under a UN Security Council mandate. Estonia declared that its international standing and authority depended on its ability to contribute to NATO and EU missions, while Latvia mentioned participation in international missions as an inherent part of being a member of NATO and the EU.

Similarly, the three small states re-defined their approach to military defence. Latvia announced that a military threat to Latvia is a threat to NATO and, therefore, the defence of Latvia could no longer be considered a purely national task. Estonia defined its defence as a NATO Article 5 operation, and Lithuania viewed collective defence as the basis for effective deterrence and defence. Moreover, Lithuania initiated a defence reform that envisioned a gradual professionalisation of its armed forces and the continuous modernisation of equipment. The nation's wartime defence capability was to be based largely on a reaction brigade that could be augmented with reserve units. In sharp contrast with its southern neighbours, Estonia continued to develop a total defence system. The ground component of the armed forces was to consist of an infantry brigade and territorial units, while defence expenditure was to stay at 2% of GDP. The tasks of the Estonian Defence Forces were expanded to cover the requirements of collective defence.⁷⁴

In sum, the immediate impact of NATO and EU membership on Baltic

72 Lithuania's military strategy went a little further, stating that close Nordic-Baltic military cooperation enables better coordination of actions within international organisations, and projection of regional cooperation experience to Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. *Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania* (2004), 3.

73 *National Security Strategy* (Lithuania, 2005).

74 *National Security Concept of the Republic of Latvia* (2005); *Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania* (2004), 9-10; *Sõjalise kaitse strateegiline kava* (National Military Defence Strategy of the Republic of Estonia) (2005).

strategic thinking was an increased sense of security, and a willingness to contribute to the Alliance by both aligning national defence development with NATO's priorities and participating in NATO's operations. Geopolitical and regional considerations lost much of their significance once NATO's security guarantees had been received. The strategic outlook of the small Baltic states became much wider. Remarkably, security cooperation with the single remaining superpower, the US, remained very important, and seemed to deserve least attention in Latvia, a state whose security thinking exuded possibly the strongest sense of relief and increased security.

2008-2012: Return of Doubt and Uncertainty?

This mild euphoria did not last long, however. The next generation of the Baltic states' strategic documents once again expressed much more caution and concern regarding security developments and evolving challenges.

Latvia

In 2008, Latvia recognised the overall unpredictability of security developments, the rapid spread of various crises, and the possible changes in the balance of power in different regions of the world. While the generally low level of traditional external threats in the region was re-affirmed, Russia's moratorium on participation in the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe was thought to signify dwindling trust and the decreasing predictability of developments in the region. Even so, Latvia remained concerned mostly about its economy (energy independence, stability), the security of its critical infrastructure, the activities of foreign intelligence services in Latvia, growing cyber threats, and organised crime and corruption. Such circumstances dictated the need for Latvia to take a more active role within international organisations to shape the security environment, and to participate in crisis management. The importance of Baltic cooperation and the strategic partnership with the US were reiterated.⁷⁵

The Latvian National Armed Forces were to work on improving their military contribution to collective defence (including providing host nation support) and international operations. Their main goal was to increase their effectiveness and combat power, primarily through better recruitment, training and equipment. The armed forces' personnel were not to exceed 20,000 of whom 5,800 were to serve on a contractual basis. The remainder were to be provided by the National Guard. In the medium term, the Latvian armed forces were expected to become capable of deploying and sustaining two companies with support units at a distance of 3,000 km, one company at a distance of

⁷⁵ *National Security Concept (Latvia, 2008)*, 4-11,16-18.

5,000 km, and one platoon at a distance of 15,000 km from Latvia. No less than 8% of the armed forces' personnel were to be deployed on operations (a total of 450 soldiers) and at least 40% had to be able to participate in operations led by NATO, the EU and other international organisations. In 2008, Latvia re-stated its objective to increase its defence expenditure to the level of 2% of GDP, but specified no date for achieving this.⁷⁶ This commitment was also mentioned in Latvia's defence concept of 2012, according to which the defence expenditure was to reach the 2% level by 2020 (from the 1% allocated in 2012).⁷⁷

The Russian Federation and its activities returned to the focal point of Latvia's security outlook. Russia's conflict with Georgia, its intensive military cooperation with Belarus, and exercises *Zapad 2009* and *Ladoga 2009* raised concerns.⁷⁸ The changing military situation was accompanied by the active operations and influence of foreign intelligence services, challenges that had the potential to fragment Latvian society. Nevertheless, in Latvia's view, the overall situation in the region remained stable.⁷⁹

The most illuminating example of Latvia's perception of the shifting security environment was expressed in its defence concept of 2012, in which the most likely threat to national security was expected to consist of the simultaneous application of multiple means to subvert, destabilise, and coerce the society and state. Such attacks were to combine conventional and non-conventional methods of warfare, and would not shy away from resorting to terrorism and information warfare (mostly psychological operations and cyber-attacks), as well as exploiting organised crime in Latvia. The future adversary of Latvia was expected to exert both physical and virtual influence, and to be capable of operating on land, at sea, in the air, and in cyberspace. The overall probability of military conflict on Latvian territory was low, but could not be ruled out completely.⁸⁰

Latvia's response to the evolving strategic environment was to encompass active work within international organisations and an increasingly comprehensive/unified approach to safeguarding the internal stability of society. A renewed emphasis was put on the regional dimension of security and

76 *State Defence Concept* (Latvia, 2008), 3,5,8.

77 *State Defence Concept* (Latvia, 2012), 20.

78 These were the largest military manoeuvres on the western frontier of the Russian Federation since the end of the Cold War. The hypothetical frontline of the exercise included the entire border between Russia, and the Baltic states and Finland. See: Alexander Rahr, "The Threat of Militarization of the Security Environment at the EU's Eastern Border," EU Directorate-General for External Policies, Directorate B, Policy Department, 2010, 10.

79 *National Security Concept* (Latvia, 2011).

80 *State Defence Concept* (Latvia, 2012), 5,7.

cooperation with the other Baltic states. Latvian strategists confessed that their country was affected by every development in the region, and that cooperation (especially military cooperation) among the Baltic and Nordic states constituted one of the main elements of providing for regional security. The role of the US, as a crucial actor in Baltic security, endured.⁸¹

The defence forces continued their streamlining process, with manpower limited to 17,000 troops, and the professional core shrinking to 5,500 troops. Latvia's force development priorities included, first and foremost, the combat capability of its ground forces, reliable and effective information systems, host nation support, and transition from *cooperation* with the defence forces of the other Baltic states to *integration* between them. Latvia's vision included joint Baltic development of expensive military capabilities, and intensive cooperation in the areas of planning, acquisition, training, and the formation of joint support units. It was acknowledged that serious obstacles existed in initiating integration of Baltic defence capabilities. In order to enhance deterrence and strengthen public support for NATO, the Latvian defence forces had to contribute to NATO's joint military exercises on the territories of the Baltic states. Latvia intended to uphold its commitment to have 8% of its forces deployed to international operations, and specified that 50% of its professional military personnel had to be available for expeditionary missions.⁸²

Lithuania

Lithuania's National Security Strategy of 2012 very clearly reflected the difficulties it had experienced during the economic downturn. There was no direct threat to the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but the security environment had become more complex and the state could experience serious economic problems affecting its ability to cope with the changing world.

The principal security risks and threats to Lithuania lay in the sphere of the economy. They included the dominance of foreign entities and the nation's isolation from the energy sector of the EU, while dependence on a limited number of providers of strategic resources also constituted a main challenge. These were followed by the potential development of nuclear power in the region without sufficient attention to international safety standards. The third most serious threat comprised multidimensional (political, military, social, economic, and intelligence) attempts to influence, coerce or manipulate Lithuania. Terrorism, which had dominated the security agenda in 2005, was

81 Ibid., 6.

82 Ibid., 8-10,19.

pushed towards the bottom of the list. Other external security challenges included information and cyber-attacks, the potential weakening of the Euro-Atlantic community, and undemocratic integration projects (that ignore the free will of citizens) in neighbouring countries. Internally, Lithuania was most concerned about uneven social and economic development, corruption, high rates of emigration, and insufficient defence funding.⁸³

The changed security environment was accompanied by a somewhat altered set of primary security interests. This was topped by the need to preserve the viability of NATO and the EU, and to strengthen security, democracy and welfare in all states of the Euro-Atlantic community. The previously declared desire for the development of democracy and the protection of human rights in the vicinity of the EU was substituted by a similar requirement for *all* neighbouring states.⁸⁴ Another major addition to Lithuania's declared primary security interests was the maintenance of credible national defence and its adequate funding.⁸⁵

In order to enhance the nation's security with regard to these evolving challenges, Lithuania envisioned the continuation of its active stance within NATO and the EU. Within the region, Lithuania intended, based on common security interests and fundamental political priorities, to strengthen its strategic partnerships with Estonia and Latvia. Special attention was to be paid to bilateral and multilateral co-operation with the Baltic and Nordic countries in the fields of security and defence, politics, education, science, culture, economy, finance, energy, transport, and environmental protection. Defence cooperation might include joint military projects to enhance the interoperability of the involved defence forces, and allow for the development of various capabilities at lower cost. The US remained Lithuania's key strategic partner, enabling the latter to shape its security environment. Poland was mentioned simply as a cooperation partner in the development of joint regional infrastructure projects in military, energy security, transport and other areas.⁸⁶

The 2012 National Security Strategy also stipulated Lithuania's willingness to increase its defence spending to the level of 2% of GDP as soon as

83 *National Security Strategy* (Lithuania, 2012).

84 Lithuania's references to undemocratic integration and the need to protect human rights in all neighbouring states point to the political controversy surrounding the Lithuanian minority in Poland and the Polish minority in Lithuania. Relations between the two states deteriorated to the extent that the OSCE High Commissioner Kurt Vollebaek prepared a confidential report in mid-2012 on the status of both minorities and forwarded it to both governments (see also footnote 70).

85 *National Security Strategy* (Lithuania, 2012).

86 Ibid.

possible to accelerate the development of national defence. This was to comprise a renewed focus on the development of reserve units and a respective mobilisation system, the modernisation of equipment, the improvement of surveillance systems, and an increase in host nation support capability.⁸⁷

Estonia

Estonia's strategic outlook in 2010 overlapped with those of Latvia and Lithuania with regard to the potential scenario of multidimensional influence or coercion. The gravest threat to Estonia was also seen in the potential combination of external and internal factors.⁸⁸ Military conflict was unlikely in the near future, but an attack against NATO in the misguided hope that collective defence would fail to activate could not be excluded. The external pressure on or coercion of Estonia could take different forms, including discrediting Estonia in the eyes of its Allies, internal destabilisation, military pressure, or influencing Estonia and/or its Allies to take decisions harming national security.

In a wider context, Estonia was depicted as existing in the stable and secure Baltic region that was, in turn, a part of the larger Euro-Atlantic area. The latter was dominated by the collective defence system of NATO that preserved US involvement in European security, and by deepening integration within the EU. Harmonious co-existence in that space, though, was increasingly affected by the behaviour of the Russian Federation. Moscow had assumed the role of assertive major power and was willing to bring its political, military and economic resources to bear on contested issues.

At the global level, Estonia pointed to tectonic shifts in the relative balance of power that had the potential to change the values and principles that lay at the foundation of international mechanisms for the resolution of security problems. The US remained the most powerful state in the world, but the number of influential states kept growing. Such a change was expected to curtail the West's ability to shape global political and economic processes. Globalisation, developments in information technology and mass media, population growth and resource shortages, failed and failing states, deep integration and fluctuations in the world economy, terrorism, proliferation of weapons and armaments, and new types of crime all had a detrimental effect on national security. These factors could, under the worst circumstances,

87 Ibid.

88 Estonia thus included a chapter on the cohesion and functionality of its society in its security concept, and a chapter on internal security in its military strategy.

lead to a situation where the security problems of a small state could go unnoticed in crisis-riven world.⁸⁹

To mitigate the adverse effects of the security environment, Estonia intended to focus its efforts on strengthening the unity and effectiveness of both NATO and the EU, and 'punching above its weight' with contributions exceeding the country's relative size. The enhancement of regional security would require deeper and more extensive cooperation between the Baltic states in the areas of policy, defence, energy security, economy, and environmental protection. Estonia was particularly interested in connecting Baltic defence cooperation to that between the Nordic countries, and maintaining the engagement of the US, as a "central actor of European security" in regional security cooperation. The bilateral cooperation with the US was to deepen even further.⁹⁰

Estonia continued to work on its total defence system. The new defence strategy specified for the first time detailed tasks and priorities for the national authorities responsible for military defence, civilian support for the military sector, international activities, internal security, vital services for society, and psychological defence. The Estonian Defence Forces were to focus on improving early warning, mobilisation and readiness systems, rapid reaction capability, and readiness to launch collective defence operations. Their participation in international operations was to continue unchanged, with preference given to participation in NATO and EU operations, and deployments with Estonia's strategic partners. The envisioned level of defence expenditure would stay at 2% of GDP.⁹¹

Conclusions

The *prima facie* evidence from the strategic documents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania shows that the importance attributed to the security and stability of the neighbouring Baltic states has varied during the last 10-15 years. It reached its lowest point right after the enlargement of NATO in 2004. Joining the Alliance led the three small states to adopt a considerably more global outlook, while expressing their trust in collective security arrangements. Before and after that (especially by the end of 2012), the three states expressed a much clearer perception of the interconnectedness of their security. Latvia and Estonia have been more outspoken than Lithuania about addressing

89 *Eesti Vabariigi julgeolekupoliitika alused* (National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia) (2010), 5-9; Eesti Vabariigi Kaitseministeerium (Ministry of Defence (Estonia)), *Eesti Vabariigi riigikaitse strateegia* (National Defence Strategy) (Tallinn, 2010), 4.

90 Eesti Vabariigi Kaitseministeerium, *Eesti Vabariigi riigikaitse strateegia* (2010), 5-6; *Eesti Vabariigi julgeolekupoliitika alused* (2010), 10-11.

91 Eesti Vabariigi Kaitseministeerium, *Eesti Vabariigi riigikaitse strateegia* (2010), 6,8-9.

the security of the Baltic states. Nonetheless, Lithuania's growing emphasis on accelerating its own defence development and regional security and defence cooperation indicates that it attributed considerable importance to the well-being of its neighbours in 2012. Importantly, this drive for regional cooperation coincided with Lithuania's statement on the need to preserve the viability of NATO and the EU. Latvia's 2002 ideas about coordinated (possibly joint) Baltic policies and its 2012 vision of military integration are a telling sign of a country looking for support from its neighbours. Furthermore, in the cases of all three states, renewed emphasis on intensifying Baltic security cooperation has been accompanied by a perception of threats, which comprise combined and multidimensional assaults on the stability and security of a country.

What does this tell us about how and to what extent the Baltic states have realised their (theoretically) enduring basic strategic interest in having secure and stable neighbours? The clarity and intensity of such realisations are seemingly related to perceived levels of threat and to the availability of external assistance. Before their accession to NATO, the Baltic states had no formal security guarantees and a very limited defence capability. Their strategic thinking revealed a clear sense of vulnerability accompanied by a willingness to defend their independence under any circumstances. The latest changes in the three states' strategic documents suggest that the feeling of vulnerability has grown again. The three countries are not quite sure about how to deal with the changed (combined) threats, and what sort of external assistance would be available in critical situations. A parallel could be drawn from the interwar years when the heightened sense of insecurity motivated the Baltic states to discuss a potential alliance in the 1920s, and facilitated the establishment of the Baltic Entente in 1934. Thus, it is possible to argue against Hansen that it does not always take a third party to bring the Baltic states together to cooperate meaningfully.⁹²

Even so, one cannot be absolutely sure that the three states' concerns regarding each other's security and thoughts about working closely together will persist. The Baltic states' attempts to adopt more global postmodern views on security after their accession to NATO and the EU testify to their preference to lay their hopes on some supra-regional security actor, and adopt the required strategic posture in return. Their unwavering emphasis on the bilateral relationship with the US only underlines this attitude.⁹³ Furthermore, the NATO and

92 Birthe Hansen, "The Baltic States and Security Strategies Available," in *The Baltic States in World Politics*, eds. Birthe Hansen and Berthel Heurlin, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 106.

93 Kestutis Paulauskas, *The Baltics: From Nation States to Member States*, Occasional Paper no. 62 (Paris: EU ISS, 2006), 31.

EU integration experience demonstrated that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania can occasionally turn into fierce competitors and strive for individual success.⁹⁴

Can such behaviour be compared to the individual search for security through the adoption of policies of neutrality at the end of the 1930s? Not quite, but one can speculate that there may be a recurring element of perceiving one's state as a special case, standing apart from its neighbours and existing in different political, strategic or geographical realities. The competitiveness of the three states could be partially explained by the strategic imperative to get at least one of them into the EU or NATO as soon as possible (to cross the 'red line' of expanding these organisations into the territory of the former USSR). However, this justification does not undo the fiery rhetoric of the Baltic politicians who highlighted the differences between the Baltic states, and argued for the need to treat them separately.

The quest for external security guarantees and the subsequent reliance on them has most certainly influenced the development of the Baltic armed forces. Some authors have even reasoned that the Baltic armed forces have been converted from war-fighting tools to tools of integration.⁹⁵ This claim may have some validity. For example, Latvia's rapid shift to professionalise its armed forces (at the expense of its wartime size) even before its accession to NATO looks like a rational and cost-effective step in line with NATO's expectations. At the same time, the former Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces, Ants Laaneots, has openly expressed his concerns about the defence capabilities of Estonia's Baltic neighbours, and said that "Estonia must be ready to defend its southern borders in case an opponent enters Latvia."⁹⁶ These words seem to echo the developments of the 1930s, when the defence efforts of Estonia and Latvia became increasingly disconnected and Estonia felt that its southern flank was more and more exposed.

On the other hand, Laaneots also mentioned the good cooperation between the Baltic defence forces and argued that it should be taken further. The situation is thus rather different from the interwar period, and the strategic divide between the three neighbours appears to be primarily reflected in how much trust each country places in NATO's collective defence arrangements. Estonia, the smallest and apparently the most cautious of the Baltic states, has adhered to a strategy of an extensive defence effort.

94 Hansen, *The Baltic States and Security Strategies Available*, 106-7.

95 Albert M. Zacchor, and Vitalijus Vaiksnoras, *The Lithuanian Army: A Tool for Re-Joining Europe* (Sandhurst: Conflict Studies Research Centre, 1996), 9-10.

96 Sven Randlaid, "Ants Laaneots: lõunapiiri kaitse valmistab Eestile muret" (Ants Laaneots: Defence of the Southern Border Worries Estonia), *ERR Uudised*, 14 May 2012.

The Baltic defence forces have also had to support national integration efforts through their participation in international missions. This has been an important indicator of the determination of the three states to implement NATO's strategies, and to support the coalitions formed by the large, and largest NATO member states. The Baltic deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan have peaked with high-intensity combat activities and, given the strategic preference of the Baltic states to play a part in NATO-led operations, show them as active users of military force. Such activism makes the Baltic states resemble a few other smaller Atlanticist members of NATO – such as the Netherlands and Denmark – who render their support to large Allies in return for security guarantees. Hence, the three states' active quest for security has overshadowed traditional small state caution about the use of military force in support of national policies.

To conclude, one cannot but draw attention to the fact that nearly a century after the Baltic states launched their search for security, they are returning to where it all began in the 1920s. Ideas about close defence cooperation between the Baltic and Nordic countries are outlined as strategic objectives, and respective efforts are under way. Certainly, the security guarantees provided by NATO and EU membership and the bilateral relationship with the US will not be substituted by deepening Nordic-Baltic cooperation, but the latter is a clear recognition that neighbours will always be there – regardless of what happens on the global stage.

All in all, the three Baltic states have travelled a long way and found themselves in an ever-changing world that continuously presents new security challenges. While they have received security guarantees against traditional military threats, the search for new solutions is still under way. Will the three states have sufficient resilience and trust in their own capabilities to manage the changing security environment? Will they manage to focus on the 'big picture', to overcome various quarrels, and be more united with their neighbours? Time will tell.

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The Baltic Quest to the West: From Total Defence to 'Smart Defence' (and Back?)

***"NATO makes our Allies strong, but only
our Allies can keep NATO strong."***

Anders Fogh Rasmussen

Introduction

All states have unique identities and all states pursue security. States identify with or against other states, and align with or protect themselves against other states. Any project of statehood is constantly being constructed and revised around these two mutually constitutive phenomena. The foreign, security and defence policies of states are essential manifestations of their statehood. According to David Campbell, states are never finished as entities, but are always in the process of becoming.² They have to maintain a discourse of threat to their existence in order to substantiate the need to be infinitely protected, secured and defended. All states perpetuate identity and security narratives in order to establish the pretence of existence in the social world. If a state ended its practices of representation, it would expose its utter lack of prediscursive foundations and such stasis would mean death.³

While susceptible to critique from different schools of international relations theory, this short excursion to postmodern security thinking provides a useful backdrop for understanding the narratives and practices employed by Baltic statesmen in their Euro-Atlantic quest. The author will draw on this to some extent in order to offer a critical account, which usefully supplements and in some cases challenges the assumptions of the traditional (neorealist 'balance of power' or neoliberal institutionalist 'cooperative security') approaches employed by most authors who have addressed this subject in the past. In other words, the author will argue that ideas, norms, identity and social

1 The views expressed here are the author's. The author would like to thank Linas Linkevičius, Jūri Luik, and Andres Vosman, as well as two Baltic officials who did not want to be identified, for their time and invaluable insights.

2 David Campbell, *Writing Security. United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 12.

3 Ibid.

constructions of threats are no less important than geopolitics, military power and national interests in explaining and understanding the Baltic journey westward.

The chronology of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Baltic states is well known and well documented. There were three more or less distinct periods in this short history. All three periods were driven by different logic, and different actors and factors were at play. The early days (roughly 1990-1997) witnessed the birth of the indigenous defence forces of the Baltic states, a short-lived security debate about neutrality versus Western alliances, the timid hope of Euro-Atlantic integration in the distant future, a sympathetic, but also deeply sceptical western attitude, and Russian agnosticism – the Russian leadership probably assuming that Baltic membership of the EU, let alone NATO, was utterly impossible.

This Baltic 'childhood' ended with the invitation to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to start accession talks with NATO. The 1997 Madrid Summit was a game-changer, which ushered in the second and most pivotal period (roughly 1998-2004). The membership of former Warsaw Pact members meant that the same prospect for former Soviet republics was no longer unthinkable. The Russians were lured into formal political cooperation with NATO, which was part of the deal in exchange for a relatively calm Russian reaction to the integration of the Visegrád countries.

The Baltic states became increasingly vocal about their own Euro-Atlantic aspirations, fuelled in part by the US-Baltic Charter of 1998. These aspirations were famously labelled the 'Baltic puzzle':⁴ the Russians quite simply could not let go, the western Allies were very reluctant to alienate Russia any further, but the status quo could not last forever. As a result, a host of alternative arrangements were proposed, discussed and ultimately discarded. The Kosovo war did not help: NATO essentially disregarded Russian protests, while Russia itself engaged in its own brinkmanship, peaking with the surprise deployment of Russian troops to Pristina airport.

The 9/11 tragedy provided an escape route for all parties concerned. Americans and Russians agreed to forge a relationship at a new level, which has been referred to by some authors as a 'sensational rapprochement',⁵

4 For example, see: L. E. Kauppi, *The Baltic Puzzle: Russia's policy towards Latvia and Estonia 1992-1997* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1999).

5 Matthias Conrad, *NATO-Russia Relations under Putin: Emergence and Decay of a Security Community? An Analysis of the Russian Discourse on NATO (2000-2008)* (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2011), 78.

an early version of the current 'reset policy'. This rapprochement produced the NATO-Russia Council in exchange for Russian acquiescence to the accession to NATO of the Baltic states, as well as Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania in 2004. This year – the year of double enlargement for all three Baltic countries – marked the beginning of probably the least exciting and least historical, but in a sense more difficult period of adopting membership principles, abolishing the remnants of narrow national perceptions of security and defence and adjusting to life without clear strategic landmarks on the horizon.

This chapter does not recount the above narrative in detail. Instead, it critically re-examines, with the benefit of hindsight, the key debates, issues and challenges encountered by the three countries in their quest to join western security organisations. The chapter consists of five parts. The first part discusses the reasons for and logic behind the integration efforts of the Baltic states and tries to understand them in a broader historical context. The second part elaborates the alternatives that were presented to the Baltic states in the run up to the double enlargement. In the third part, the author discerns the key enablers that ultimately allowed Baltic membership of NATO to happen. The fourth part discusses the key dilemmas that Baltic policy makers and defence planners have faced along the way. The fifth part offers an assessment of NATO's performance vis à vis Baltic expectations and vice versa – the Baltic states' achievements and failures with regard to NATO's requirements.

A word on sources and methodology. The period between 1995 and 2004 is a real treasure trove for any researcher of the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Baltic states. The number of articles and books on the subject is quite overwhelming. The periods before and after are less well documented. This chapter has an inevitable Lithuanian bias, as the author himself worked in the Lithuanian national defence establishment in various capacities in Lithuania and at NATO. Not surprisingly, some of the arguments advanced in this chapter are based on the author's personal experiences, as well as his professional encounters with Latvian, Estonian and NATO officials. To fill in the blanks, a few well informed senior Baltic officials were interviewed and their remarks and comments have been included in the text. As the author adheres to post-positivist epistemology in international relations, a disclaimer must be made that the text below is a subjective, and at times speculative, interpretation of the Baltic quest to the West, which aims to help the reader to better understand the process, the people, and the problems, rather than to pinpoint a definite truth or offer an explanation of all the causes and effects.

The Reasons

According to a group of prominent Lithuanian scholars, the existence of the Baltic states on the world's political map is a unique phenomenon – a 'geopolitical anomaly' that occurred by mistake: "judging by objective geopolitical parameters, they should not exist."⁶ Today, this phenomenon manifests itself in the form of an ever-present existential uncertainty which permeates the foreign and security policies and mainstream narratives of the Baltic states, and even their statehood projects themselves.

It is imperative to understand the narrative of historic memory in the three countries in order to understand their foreign and security policy choices of the past twenty years. There are two key, intertwined threads that constantly recur in this narrative: victimhood and nationalism. Because of their exposed geopolitical location, all three countries repeatedly fell prey to the surrounding great powers – the Teutonic order, the Livonian order, the Kingdom of Denmark, the Kingdom of Sweden, tsarist Russia, Nazi Germany and, lastly and most atrociously, the Soviet Union. Hence, the strong sense of historic injustice and wrong having been done among the Baltic populations. Notwithstanding all these different occupations, the three countries managed to survive, retain their ethnic identities and re-emerge as modern democracies at the end of the 20th century. Hence, the strong feeling of national pride.

Some authors believe that there is an on-going 'memory war' between the Baltic states and Russia, in which both sides claim the one and only 'true version' of history.⁷ A particularly contentious issue is the question of what transpired in the run up, during and immediately after World War II in the relations between the Soviet Union and the Baltic states. The official Russian version of history denies the fact of occupation and annexation of the Baltic states and claims that a 'voluntary' accession took place. Meanwhile the Balts argue that for them World War II ended only in 1991, when they broke free from the Soviet 'prison'. In addition, the West complacently sacrificed their independence to Stalin at the Potsdam Conference. It might be argued that this moral argument must have played at least some role in the thinking and calculation of the western Allies when it came to membership decisions in 2004.

6 Česlovas Laurinavičius, Egidijus Motieka, and Nortautas Statkus, *Baltijos valstybių geopolitikos bruožai, XX amžius* (Geopolitical features of the Baltic State in the 20th century) (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2005), 23 (author's translation).

7 For a good discussion on the relationship between memory, history and foreign policy, see: Nils Muižnieks, ed., *The Geopolitics of History in Latvian-Russian Relations* (Riga: Academic Press of the University of Latvia, 2011).

Ideas of romantic nationalism have been a critical source of inspiration for the independence movements in all three republics. Lithuanian society in particular has been very receptive to the re-discovery and, in a sense, the recreation of the medieval history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The mythology of past Lithuanian glory, which was imbued during the interwar period, quickly found traction with the *Perestroika* generation. One of the most celebrated myths – that of the Lithuanian empire stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea early in the 15th century – captivated the imagination and galvanised throngs of Lithuanians, both young and old, to stand up to the Soviet regime. Interestingly, the Lithuanian independence movement gave birth to a new prominent myth: that it was Lithuanian courage above anything else that brought down the Soviet Union.⁸

Estonia and Latvia could exploit their own medieval history for their mythmaking in a different manner, selectively casting the periods of German and Scandinavian dominance of their territories in the positive light of the Hanseatic League – a very early precursor of the European Communities. The independence movements in these countries found inspiration in more modern forms of nationalism, relying especially on the short-lived interwar independence. For these countries, it was mostly about breaking away from centuries of foreign rule.

While the identity narrative in all three cases was built around the ever-dangerous 'other', i.e. Russia, a positive narrative was also necessary to entrench the emerging nationhood; hence the 'return to Europe' motto, common to all three Baltic states. Europe became the positive pole of attraction, the promised land of prosperity and welfare, human rights, democracy and safety.⁹ The narrative was straightforward – the further away Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania could get from the 'East', the closer they would come to the 'West', and vice versa. Again, the 'return to Europe' claim in the case of Estonia and Latvia was built around their history in the Hanseatic League, and in the case of Lithuania, around the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which pioneered cosmopolitanism, religious tolerance and constitutional democracy in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The inherent tension between the idea of national statehood, built upon deep feelings of romantic nationalism, and the idea of the 'return to Europe' was evident from the start and has recurred ever since. Returning to Europe

8 For example, in a recent interview Vytautas Landsbergis claimed that, "Lithuania has protected everyone's right to be free and have their own states." "V. Landsbergis: Lietuva apgynė visų teisę būti laisviems ir turėti savo valstybes." (Lithuania has protected everyone's right to be free and have their own states), TV interview with Virginijus Savukynas, *Delfi*, 11 March 2012.

9 This thesis is well developed in Grazina Miniotaite, "Convergent Geography and Divergent Identities: A Decade of Transformation in the Baltic States," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2003): 209-222.

essentially required the abandonment of the zealous efforts of historic mythmaking and the securitisation of the 'others'. The very idea of the European communities was anti-historical, whereas Baltic foreign policies have essentially been policies of historic memory. For the European project to be successful, European nation-states had to abandon their past as well as a significant part of their statehood. The Baltic states, on the other hand, have been striving to embrace their past, right all wrongs and protect their newly found statehood at any cost.

Herein lie the origins of the dual-track approach of the Baltic states. The ahistorical project of the European Union, with its very mellow approach to power politics, clearly did not seem suited to guaranteeing Baltic statehood in the long-run. The western European track record of ambiguous relations with the Soviet Union, especially as manifested by Willy Brandt's reconciliatory *Ostpolitik*, also did not induce much trust. The United States, on the other hand, never recognised the legitimacy of the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states and did fight the Russians in a cold war.

While in 1990-1991 the fledgling statehood of the three Baltic states was still very fragile, the Russian leadership, with Boris Yeltsin at its helm, was also striving for its own statehood apart from the Soviet Union. Western reaction to these processes was unclear and hard to gauge, and the idea of Swedish or Finnish style neutrality for the Baltic states could have received some traction. Paradoxically, in summer 1991, the Baltic states and Yeltsin's Russia were essentially allies in their common quest against the collapsing regime of Mikhail Gorbachev. The treaty of mutual recognition between Lithuania and Russia (29 July 1991) was probably the highest point in the bilateral relations between the two countries. At that point, it did not seem pre-determined that Russia would abandon its fledgling democratic experiment and revert to its former expansionist ways.

Nevertheless, the idea of neutrality never really took off the ground and was dead before it gained any kind of momentum. The Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia and Estonia were instinctively anti-NATO, but not necessarily anti-EU. However, the strict citizenship rules prevented these minorities from exerting any kind of tangible influence on Latvia's and Estonia's foreign and security policy choices. Today, some marginal extreme left and extreme right elements in the three countries still try to propagate anti-NATO and anti-European sentiments, but fail to receive any public support whatsoever.¹⁰

10 In Lithuania, the most vocal and visible anti-NATO outlet is the daily "Respublika." Some of the Russian-language newspapers in the three countries also promote an anti-western line.

Related to the idea of neutrality was another failed interwar project – the Baltic Entente. Established in 1934 on the basis of the Treaty of Good Understanding and Cooperation, it did not live up to its potential, and all three countries faced the growing German and Soviet threats utterly alone rather than as a single and determined front. One of the reasons for the lack of cooperation was Estonian and Latvian uneasiness about committing to Lithuanian security, because Lithuania was in conflict with Poland over the Vilnius region throughout almost the entire interwar period. Based on this historical experience, the three countries never seriously considered recreating the Baltic Entente. The trilateral security and defence cooperation which did take place, e.g. through the Baltic Battalion and Baltic Defence College, was conceived not as a stand-alone project, but as a part of something bigger – the Euro-Atlantic project.

To be sure, in the uncertain international environment of the early 1990s, with the Russian army still on their territories, the Baltic leadership was appropriately cautious with regard to their long-term security aspirations. Yet, subtle signals were there: as early as 31 May 1991, there was an unofficial visit of a Lithuanian delegation, headed by the Chairman of the Supreme Council Vytautas Landsbergis, to NATO headquarters. On 20 December 1991, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) – one of the first international cooperation frameworks that the Baltic states joined after regaining independence.

Almost as soon as the last Russian troops had left the territory of Lithuania (August 1993), the Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas sent a letter to NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner expressing the desire of Lithuania to become a NATO member. The letter was based on an agreement signed by all parliamentary parties concerning Lithuania's aspiration in this direction. In 1995, the Baltic states all signed association treaties with the European Union – obviously, hard security and defence calculations did not play any noteworthy role in that case, as the EU was yet to agree on having a defence policy.

It could be argued that the Baltic statesmen did not have many illusions. Hardly anyone expected that the three countries would become members of both NATO and the EU in the next ten years. Nevertheless, a vocal articulation of their aspirations did cause a considerable stir in the West, and also in the north and the east, as attested by the considerable amount of books, reports and articles produced on the 'Baltic puzzle' in subsequent years. Presumably, more brain cells were burned in the search for alternatives to Baltic membership, rather than on working out how to make it happen.

The Alternatives

In 1996, Ronald Asmus and Robert Nurick famously proclaimed that, "how to deal with the Baltic states in the context of NATO enlargement is one of the most delicate questions facing the Alliance," thereby setting the scene for 'crunch time' in the Baltic Euro-Atlantic integration story.¹¹ Because Baltic membership seemed "improbable in the near future," the Allies had to devise an alternative strategy for "anchoring these states in the West."¹²

Some authors were much less nuanced and unequivocally opposed any NATO enlargement.¹³ According to Stephen Walt, those who adhere to the realist tradition of international relations would have had no NATO enlargement whatsoever.¹⁴ For the US foreign policy realists, it should have been about the security of the western Allies and not about a misplaced sense of guilt over Yalta. The realist logic dictated that NATO "should offer membership to additional Central and East European states if and only if Russia begins to threaten its western neighbors militarily."¹⁵ In other words, the sovereignty and security concerns of the Baltic states were an irritating nuisance that should not trump the national interest calculations of the United States.

Secondly, the Baltic states would not be able to add any tangible value to NATO's military prowess, their membership would lead to a conflict with Russia and, as a result, the credibility of NATO would be undermined. According to Kent R. Meyer, "none of the Baltic republics currently possesses a credible military force capable of adequately defending its own territory or of effectively contributing to NATO's collective defense."¹⁶ Another widely held belief was that "the enlargement weakens NATO because the more members it has, the more difficult it will be to reach decisions."¹⁷ On a personal note, the author would argue that this myth has clearly been dispelled by experience: most decision-making difficulties in NATO arise from disagreements among the major Allies and not from those among the expanding ranks of smaller Allies.

11 Ronald D. Asmus and Robert C. Nurick, "NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States," *Survival* 38, no. 2 (1996): 121.

12 Ibid.

13 See for example, Sherle R. Schwenninger, "The case against NATO enlargement: Clinton's fateful gamble," *The Nation*, 20 October 1997, 21-31.

14 Stephen M. Walt, "What if realists were in charge of U.S. foreign policy?" *Foreign Policy*, 30 April 2012.

15 Michael E. Brown, "Minimalist NATO: a wise Alliance knows when to retrench," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 3 (May/June 1999): 212.

16 Kent R. Meyer, "US support for Baltic membership in NATO: what ends, what risks?" *Parameters* 30 no. 4 (Winter 2000-01): 72. A classical counterpoint to the 'indefensibility' argument has been provided by Robert Dalsjø. See: Robert Dalsjø, "Are the Baltics defensible? On the utility of and prospects for a capability for self-defence," *RUSI Journal* 143, no. 4 (1998): 40-44.

17 Dan Reiter, "Why NATO Enlargement Does Not Spread Democracy," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (Spring 2001): 51.

Russian objections to Baltic membership of NATO were the elephant in the room throughout the 1990s. Both the Baltic states and the Allies did their best to circumvent (at least in public) direct references to Russia as a threat factor. The predominant narrative mostly consisted of several key elements:

- NATO's open door policy, meant that all candidates meeting the membership criteria could join NATO;
- a recognition that all independent states could freely join alliances of their choosing; and
- an assertion that NATO's enlargement meant an expansion of the area of security, stability and shared democratic values, which could only benefit the international security system.

The Russian counter-narrative had arguments to repel all these claims.¹⁸ First, and most obviously, NATO should have ceased to exist at the same time as the Warsaw Pact. With the existential Soviet threat gone, there was no reason for the military alliance to continue, unless it had some devious designs on ex-Soviet Russia. An even stronger argument would be applied to enlargement – an alliance, which had no fathomable purpose to exist, most definitely had no reason to expand. Lastly, no Russian authorities (or Russian academics) ever bought into the idea of indivisible security. For Moscow, security has always been and continues to be a zero-sum game. Expansion of the Euroatlantic area of security and stability could only mean undermining and containing Russia's area of security and stability. Russia felt implicitly cheated when NATO invited the three Visegrád countries to join in 1997, although NATO did offer a number of sweeteners, including the establishment of the Permanent Joint Council and the 'three no' guarantees.¹⁹

The essence of the 'Baltic puzzle' during the mid- and late 1990s could be summarised in the following way: the NATO Allies were unsure how strong the Russian 'red-line' on Baltic membership was; they were also unsure how far Russia would go to stop accession from happening, and what the Russian reaction would be if it did. At the same time, the Baltic states were becoming increasingly vocal about their aspirations: they were determined to meet all the

18 For a classical text on the Russian approach to NATO enlargement see: Alexander A. Sergouning, "Russian Domestic Debate on NATO Enlargement: From Phobia to Damage Limitation," *European Security* 6, no.4 (Winter 1997): 55-71. For a rare and interesting analysis of the Russian political elite's attitude towards NATO enlargement see: Leonid Kosals, *Russia's Elite Attitudes to the NATO Enlargement: Sociological Analysis*, NATO-EAPC Research Fellowship Final Report (Moscow, 2001).

19 The 'three no's' constitute a unilateral commitment made by NATO to Russia in 1996 and repeated in the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, whereby the Allies assert that they have "no intention, no plan and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members." "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation," 27 May 1997, Chapter IV.

formal requirements for membership, and their accession would close one of the remaining security gaps in Europe, unless Russia overreacted. In other words, the Allies were facing a classical security dilemma: providing security guarantees to the Baltics would mean antagonising Russia and making it feel exposed and less secure; while failing to provide security guarantees to the Baltics would leave them utterly insecure and exposed to Russian resurgent ambitions, at the same time fanning those ambitions by appearing weak and undecided.

One could argue, perhaps somewhat speculatively but not implausibly, that the different regional security arrangements that were proposed and even implemented in the late 1990s were in fact designed to find viable alternatives to Baltic membership of NATO. 'Viable' would mean finding an acceptable *modus vivendi* for all parties concerned: reassuring the Baltics, appeasing the Russians, and resolving the security gap without actually enlarging NATO into the territory formerly occupied by the Soviet Union.

There was no shortage of ideas and projects put forward in the Baltic Sea region, as well as a number of efforts directed at resolving the 'Baltic puzzle'. One unlikely initiative was put forward by the Russian Federation itself: in 1997, Boris Yeltsin offered unilateral security guarantees to the Baltic states, if they quit their NATO quest. Obviously, this generous offer was promptly rebuffed. Indeed, integration with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was never considered a viable option. Lithuania even adopted a Constitutional Law, which forbade any east-bound integration.

A somewhat more promising idea was that of establishing a unique regional arrangement which would firmly anchor the Baltics to the West, while also engaging Russia in one way or another. Examples of such efforts were the Council of the Baltic Sea States, established in 1992, which included the Baltic three, the Nordic five, Russia, Germany, Poland and the EU; and the EU's Northern Dimension (ND) project, which was launched in 1997 and encompassed all the same players. Both initiatives covered most aspects of regional cooperation except for security and defence. These two projects had a distinctly European approach, which emphasised: regional, transnational cooperation; non-governmental, cross-border, people-to-people contacts; development projects; and the de-securitisation of political agendas. For the same reason, they both fell well short of meeting Baltic expectations for hard security guarantees.

The Americans had very similar designs for the region, launching the NEI (Northern European Initiative) in 1997, which was replaced by the E-PINE initiative (Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe) in 2003. According to Edward Rhodes, the NEI was "an effort to escape what it regarded as an unacceptable

choice between, on the one hand, failing to support the legitimate aspirations of the Baltic states and, on the other hand, foregoing a constructive relationship with Russia."²⁰ The NEI was an unusually postmodern undertaking by American policy circles. Its narrative encompassed human security conceptions, a return to Hanseatic political architecture, post-territoriality and overlapping identities.

Both the ND and NEI were geared towards what actually matters to the societies of Northern Europe – social and economic development and prosperity. As Eurobarometer surveys have shown throughout the years, all Europeans, including the Balts, care much more about their personal insecurities: employment, crime, the economic situation and healthcare, rather than about security and defence. Political elites often fail to address the former, and tend to divert disproportionately large amounts of energy and resources towards the latter. The same has been true of Baltic statesmen: the ND and NEI initiatives, which championed human security conceptions, were unacceptable alternatives to what they perceived as their ultimate grand strategic goals – NATO and EU membership.

Baltic steadfastness on this point did not go unnoticed. A number of anxious authors from northern Europe ventured into unusually heated and conspicuously biased – although not entirely unwarranted – attacks on Baltic security and defence policies. The Baltic decision makers were blamed for exhibiting “a security tunnel vision” caused by “militarization of the mind,”²¹ they were deliberately and irresponsibly “imagining the Russian threat,”²² and confusing “Soviet and post-Soviet, conflating Russia with the USSR and casting *everything Russian* as a threat.”²³

The third alternative – various Nordic-Baltic cooperation settings – proved to be more successful because of their quite explicit hard security dimension. Nordic-Baltic cooperation began as early as 1992. At first it was pursued in the non-binding fashion of Nordic Five plus Baltic Three meetings, but became increasingly cohesive and comprehensive, eventually acquiring the ‘NB8’ moniker. There has been an unwritten division of labour among the Nordic states in terms of their assistance efforts towards the Baltic countries. Denmark was a ‘tutor’ to Lithuania’s nascent armed forces, Sweden took charge in Latvia, while Finland,

20 Edward Rhodes, *Rethinking the Nature of Security: The U.S. Northern Europe Initiative* (Copenhagen: Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, June 2002).

21 Frank Möller, “The Baltic States: Security, Identity and the Identity of the State,” in *The Military in Transition: Restructuring and Downsizing the Armed Forces of Eastern Europe*, brief 25, ed. Moira Davidson-Seger (Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2002), 50.

22 Andreas Heinemann-Gruder, *Small States – Big Worries. Choice and Purpose in the Security Policies of the Baltic States*, brief 21 (Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2002), 16.

23 Øyvind Jæger, “Securitizing Russia: Discursive Practices of the Baltic States,” *Peace and Conflict Studies* 7, no. 2 (November 2000).

naturally, assisted Estonia. The Nordic influence – in particular Swedish and Finnish – on the development of the Baltic armed forces did have a side effect, which was somewhat at odds with the NATO integration logic. The non-aligned Sweden and Finland have traditionally promulgated philosophies of total defence and self-sufficiency – a model, which was eagerly copy-pasted into the defence development plans of the Baltic states in the 1990s. This legacy remains a constant mental shackle on the strategic thinking of the defence officials, and especially the militaries, of the three countries.

Defence assistance efforts to the Baltic states were institutionalised by creating the BALTSEA forum (1997-2005) – a clearing house for the various initiatives and projects aimed at arming, training and modernising the armed forces of the three Baltic states. At one point BALTSEA encompassed 17 states (including the NB8). As a senior Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs official observed, however, the “West were unwilling to donate the serious stuff to the Balts.”

The NB8 format has been more to the liking of Baltic policy makers quite simply because their Nordic friends did not shy away from security and defence matters, including the thorny issue of Russia. The NB8 received an additional boost in 2002, when an NB8+1 meeting of defence ministers took place, the +1 being the United States. Above all though, the Baltic states did not see the NB8 format as an alternative to their Euro-Atlantic aspirations, but rather as a tool, a complementary arrangement to help them achieve their objectives. Not surprisingly, the Baltic decision makers themselves continue to actively promote NB8 cooperation and strive to lure the Nordics into ever closer cooperation on an ever wider range of issues. However, it is noteworthy that some aspects of intra-Nordic defence cooperation – the Nordic countries pursue deeper defence cooperation and integration under the NORDEFECO arrangement – have remained off-limits for the Balts. In any case, Nordic assistance was a very important element of the Baltic integration efforts, bringing the Baltic militaries ever closer to NATO standards in terms of equipment and training. No less importantly, the Nordics also lent active political support for their membership bid.

In 2002, even as the momentum in favour of accepting the Baltic states was building up, several options were still quite seriously debated: a limited enlargement to one or two countries; the ‘big bang’ involving nine countries (the seven that made it plus Albania and Macedonia); postponement of enlargement pending adjustments within NATO; combining the entry of a limited number of new members with the initiation of a negotiation process with the remainder (this option was applied in the next enlargement round that took in Albania and Croatia, while promising membership to Ukraine

and Georgia); and pressing ahead with the EU enlargement before NATO enlargement.²⁴

The European Union must have been seen as the first and probably the only option for the Baltic states among some policy makers and analysts in western Europe and the United States. For one, the Russian Federation could surely live with Baltic membership of the non-military EU. Secondly, the EU did have a new selling point – the nascent European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The Balts, however, did not buy this. According to a senior Latvian MFA official, Latvian delegations often heard arguments in favour of ESDP when visiting western European capitals on their final negotiation push to attain NATO membership. From the very beginning of the ESDP project, the Balts were firmly in the camp of the sceptics, presumably making a point with their nuisance contributions to ESDP missions. Madleine Albright's famous '3D' formula of no duplication of NATO assets, no decoupling from the US and NATO, and no discrimination against non-EU members was fully supported by most in the three Baltic capitals.

The Enablers

What ultimately enabled Baltic membership of NATO? Did enlargement take place because of Baltic statesmanship or regardless of the endeavours of Baltic policy makers? It would be difficult to pin down one or two definite causes of the Baltic success, but there were several developments that enabled it: the Baltic states' own efforts; changes in identity perceptions; the evolving debate inside the United States; US-Russia and NATO-Russia rapprochement; and, no less importantly, international events that reverberated throughout and beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, in particular the Kosovo war and 9/11.

An important precondition on the road to the West for Baltic statesmen was to achieve recognition that their countries were fully-fledged, modern European democracies, and not savage post-Soviet states 'from the east'. A fundamental shift in identities and perceptions had to occur. Maria Mälksoo has convincingly argued that in the run up to 2004, "the image of the Baltic states in the 'mental map' of the NATO allies has fundamentally changed."²⁵ It is indeed difficult to understate the feat achieved by the policy makers in Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius in a remarkably short period of time. In a decade, they managed to transform their countries from former soviet socialist republics with defunct economies, distorted social systems and non-existent armed forces into European nations with functioning market economies, dynamic,

24 Richard Latter, *Enlarging NATO: Implications for European Security*, Wilton Park Paper, February 2002.

25 Maria Mälksoo, "Enabling NATO enlargement: changing constructions of the Baltic States," *Trames* 8, no.3 (2004): 284–298.

multicultural information societies and robust, if inevitably limited, military capabilities. The western Allies could not fail to notice and acknowledge such a dramatic transformation.

According to the 1995 study on NATO enlargement, published in advance of the first enlargement wave, countries seeking NATO membership would have to be able to demonstrate that they had fulfilled certain requirements. These requirements were quite steep, especially given the social and economic transformation struggles most post-Soviet countries were undergoing at the time:

- a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy;
- the fair treatment of minority populations;
- a commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts;
- the ability and willingness to make a military contribution to NATO operations; and
- a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures.

Once admitted, new members were expected to “enjoy all the rights and assume all obligations of membership under the Washington Treaty; and accept and conform with the principles, policies and procedures adopted by all members of the Alliance at the time that new members join.”²⁶

NATO's requirements, along with the Copenhagen criteria of the European Union, were important tools for disciplining the prospective candidates. One can assume with a large amount of certainty that the Baltic decision makers knew full well that they would have to meet all five requirements without any shadow of a doubt. Anything less would play into the hands of the sceptics, who were willing to postpone indefinitely the question of Baltic membership. One can also assume that the Russian leadership knew as much, and tried to compromise the Baltic efforts at every opportunity.

In the case of Latvia and Estonia, the sticking point was the fair treatment of minority populations. Russian representatives blamed, shamed and accused Riga and Tallinn countless times in every imaginable international forum. Given Russia's resources, it is all the more remarkable that Latvian and Estonian policy makers managed to stand their ground and convince the international community that minority rights were appropriately protected. In 2001, the OSCE acknowledged this by terminating its missions to Latvia and Estonia. As for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, Russia dragged its feet on the issue

26 NATO, *Study on NATO Enlargement* (Brussels: NATO, 1995), paragraph 4.

of borders for years, anticipating that this would preclude the Baltic states from joining NATO and the EU. In 2004, however, both organisations went ahead without Russian-Estonian or Russian-Latvian border agreements, while the demarcation of the Russian-Lithuanian border was also not complete. Only in 2005 did the Russian government agree to sign the border agreement with Estonia, just to renounce this a few weeks later, objecting to the fact that the Estonian parliament had included a reference to the Estonian-Russian peace treaty of 1920 in its ratification instrument.²⁷ As of 2012, the deal remains in stalemate. In a similar vein, Latvia wanted to annex a declaration, which would mention the Latvian-Russian peace treaty of 1920. The Russian side interpreted this as an unacceptable territorial claim. The agreement was finally signed and ratified in 2007, once Latvia had dropped this 'claim'.

For Lithuania, a major issue was settling its relationship with Poland. One could argue that NATO's and the EU's watchful pressure played a very important part in reining in the ambitions and grievances of both countries towards each other, and helped the signing of the landmark treaty on friendly relations and good neighbourly cooperation in 1994. It is noteworthy that with the enlargement issue gone, Lithuanian-Polish disagreements have flared up again in recent years.

With regard to the ability and willingness to make a military contribution, all three countries mustered a relatively robust record of troop contributions to NATO's operations. They have steadfastly contributed from 1996 onwards to most of NATO's engagements. The commitment to democratic civil-military relations, however, was not exactly a cake-walk for the three countries. Lithuania, in particular, had a serious crisis in that respect in 1993, when an armed group of some 150 national defence volunteers started an anti-government mutiny which lasted for a few weeks. Squabbles between the Estonian Ministry of Defence and the Headquarters of the Estonian Defence Forces are the stuff of legend in the circles of Baltic defence planners. But, paradoxically, the development of the defence forces in Latvia and Estonia was an important tool in dealing with the minority issue – many young Russian speakers have been enlisted, and presumably have been ingrained with some sense of loyalty towards the fledgling republics.

While Baltic reform efforts were no doubt an important precondition for them even to be considered eligible candidates for membership, at the end of the day, any decision on enlargement would be a political one. In other words, all Allies had to consent to expansion, whether the candidates met the formal requirements, or not. Presumably, most Baltic decision makers considered the United States to

27 Lisbeth Kirk, "Russia pulls out of Estonia border deal," *EUobserver.com*, 28 June, 2005.

be the most equal among the equals at NATO, so American support was indispensable to making enlargement happen. In that regard, an important milestone was achieved in 1998, when Bill Clinton's administration signed the US-Baltic charter, which rather explicitly declared American support for Baltic NATO integration efforts. In 1999, the first wave of NATO enlargement to the east took place while the other NATO hopefuls received the Membership Action Plan (MAP). In the Baltic capitals, the MAP was understood as a clear and irrevocable commitment to Baltic membership, conditioned only by the three states' readiness to meet NATO standards.

The big debate in the United States between the proponents and opponents of Baltic membership had finally coalesced around the agreement that the benefits would outweigh the potential costs and risks. Bill Clinton's commitment was carried forward by George W. Bush's administration. A famous quotation from the speech given by President Bush in Vilnius in 2002, "anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America,"²⁸ was put on a plaque and hung on the wall of the historic town hall of Vilnius.

Once the United States was firmly behind the idea of Baltic NATO membership, the reluctant major European Allies followed suit. The Nordic countries and Poland already counted among the staunch supporters. A senior Latvian foreign policy official pointed out that, "once the Americans were fully behind us, the French and Germans moved along."

The Americans and their west European Allies probably decided to take a calculated risk, assuming that the Russians would not be prepared to die in a ditch over these relatively tiny, but troublesome territories. In any case, resolving the 'Baltic puzzle' once and for all made the risk of a Russian overreaction acceptable.²⁹ It is difficult to assess whether NATO sought in some shape or form a tacit understanding with the Russians before that decision was made.

The tragedy of 9/11 no doubt helped to expedite the process. Russia's President Vladimir Putin seized the opportunity to establish himself as a strategic ally of George W. Bush in the 'global war on terrorism'. The US-Russian rapprochement was mirrored in the Rome Declaration, which replaced the defunct Permanent Joint Council with the NATO-Russia Council. The enticing element of this institution for the Russians was the change of decision-making

28 George W. Bush, "Remarks to the People of Lithuania in Vilnius, November 23, 2002," in US Government Printing Office, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George W. Bush (2002, Book II)*, 2117.

29 For a comprehensive analysis on this, see Mark Kramer "NATO, the Baltic States and Russia: A Framework for Sustainable Enlargement," *International Affairs* 78, no. 4 (October 2002): 731-756.

procedure from '19 + 1' to '20'. Instead of coordinating their positions before meeting the Russian representatives, the Allies now committed to making NATO-Russia decisions by consensus. The establishment of the NATO-Russia Council allowed Moscow to graciously tone down its opposition to a lost cause in a face-saving manner. To be sure, the NATO Allies also did their utmost not to add any insult to the injury.

In summary, Baltic political will and reform efforts, American support, Russian self-restraint, and US/NATO-Russian rapprochement after 9/11 provided a critical combination of factors that enabled the Prague Summit decisions.

The Dilemmas

As the author of this chapter has argued elsewhere, yesterday came suddenly for the Baltic states.³⁰

Policy makers in the three countries came to realise that 'member' status is, in some respects, much more demanding than 'candidate' status. Now that they were inside both clubs, they had to learn all the unwritten rules of the game. More importantly, they now faced a new set of challenges and dilemmas. Before the enlargement, NATO and the EU had pretty much told the three countries what kind of decisions they had to make in order to qualify for membership. Since 2004, the Baltic statesmen have had to make their own choices. And this is where the difficult part starts.

Clear Goals Before Enlargement, Blurred Eyesight Afterwards

The goals of NATO and EU integration served as very clear strategic landmarks. The key challenge for the policy makers was *how* to achieve those objectives. Moreover, there was a considerable degree of domestic political consensus that this was the strategic direction in which the Baltic states should move. In Lithuania, the main political parties had on several occasions signed agreements pledging to seek NATO and EU integration and devote the required 2% of GDP to defence spending, regardless of the Parliament's composition. While the Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia and Estonia tended to be instinctively anti-NATO, both countries invested heavily in public information campaigns to promote Euro-Atlantic integration. There was a possibility of referenda on NATO membership, as sought by the Russian-speaking minority leaders but, during the crunch time of the late 1990s and early 2000s, public polls were convincing

30 Paulauskas, Kęstutis "Yesterday came suddenly: the brave new security agenda of the Baltic States," in *Global and Regional Security Challenges: A Baltic Outlook*, ed. Heli Tiirmaa-Klaar and Tiago Marques (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2006).

enough in the eyes of other NATO nations to negate their necessity. It is noteworthy that no Lithuanian, Latvian or Estonian government has ever faltered or dithered in any way with regard to NATO and EU integration.

However, once the three countries had fulfilled their NATO and EU dreams and the initial euphoria had died down, the policy makers found themselves facing an entirely different kind of challenge: a lack of clear strategic milestones on the horizon, i.e. what to strive for now? In 2004, the Acting President of Lithuania Artūras Paulauskas gave a symptomatic speech on the new foreign policy of Lithuania.³¹ The next big idea for Lithuania was to be “an active member of NATO and the EU” – not exactly a breath-taking vision to rally and steer the Lithuanian foreign and security policy community into an uncertain future.

Moreover, the immediate urgency and determination to pursue reforms, modernisation and transformation of the armed forces was gone. This might be a perennial problem for NATO enlargement, and to a lesser extent for European Union enlargement: once the candidate is inside the club, there is no efficient way to enforce adherence to all the written and unwritten rules. Implementation of the latter becomes especially lax. Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė has even remarked publicly that the 2% GDP rule was not written in any treaty, and therefore did not apply.³²

It was the area of defence expenditure that produced the most glaring disappointment. While the financial turmoil in Europe affected most countries, Lithuania and Latvia have been especially methodical in cutting down their defence spending, showcasing an absolute lack of solidarity with other Allies. Estonia, on the other hand, has demonstrated a steadfast resilience by steadily increasing defence spending as a percentage of GDP (if not in absolute terms) despite the economic hardship. It is on track to reach the landmark 2% by 2012, which will make Estonia a member of an elite club of a handful of Allies who keep up their spending commitments.

While in the pre-2004 era there was a remarkable political consensus on the direction of foreign, security and defence policies, in the era after 2004, defence affairs became hostage to domestic politics, especially in Lithuania. It is no longer about what is right in terms of national security interests, but rather what is right in terms of the electoral strategies of the major political parties. Foreign and defence affairs are not seen among the top priorities by

31 Artūras Paulauskas, “Naujoji Lietuvos užsienio politika” (The New Lithuanian Foreign Policy), speech at Vilnius University, 24 May 2004.

32 BNS, “Prezidentė apie 2 proc. BVP gynybai: ne nuo pinigų kiekio priklauso kokybė” (The President on 2 percent of GDP for defence: quality does not depend on the quantity of money), *BNS*, 22 June 2011.

the Baltic publics. Not surprisingly, economic and social affairs tend to feature most heavily in the programmes and electoral campaigns of the political parties. Governments, once elected, tend to push national defence to the bottom of the list, alongside or even below sports and tourism.³³ While this trend puts considerable pressure on defence spending, one could argue that at least the statehood project is no longer considered to be in grave danger and the Baltic states feel sufficiently protected from external threats.

Global NATO and EU versus Local Baltic Interests

The apparent disregard of national security and defence issues leads to a bigger problem – a lack of security and defence experts inside the political parties and, as a result, narrow, provincial thinking by politicians on foreign and security affairs. Both NATO and the EU are organisations with global interests and global outreach. The national security interests of the Baltic states are naturally regional, or even local. It is therefore difficult for politicians to sell to their constituencies the idea that sending troops to Afghanistan or Libya will advance their country's national interests.

As a result, global issues almost never capture the spotlight in the national media and are not debated by politicians in public. This absence of national debate sometimes leads to inexplicable foreign policy manoeuvres. For example, the Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė remarked in public that NATO's mission in Libya went beyond the mandate of the UN resolution, hinting that Lithuania did not really support the actions of its Allies.³⁴ EU operations in countries like Chad or the Democratic Republic of the Congo are even less appetising to Baltic policy makers. If the mission in Afghanistan is at least seen in the light of solidarity with the Allies and the United States in particular, EU missions are usually dismissed as west European post-colonial adventures that have nothing to do with Baltic security. Very scarce Baltic resources limit the possibilities to contribute even further.

With regard to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, a study conducted by the European Council of Foreign Relations indicated that Latvia is among the EU's 'slackers', not taking the lead on any of the EU's foreign policy issues or contributing at all to some of them; Estonia and Lithuania meanwhile are mediocre member states, leading (not surprisingly) on relations with Russia,

33 Vaidotas Urbelis, "Lithuanian Strategic Culture," in *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2006*, ed. Raimundas Lopata, Jūratė Novagrockienė, and Gediminas Vitkus (Vilnius: Lithuanian Military Academy, 2007), 197.

34 Presidency of Lithuania, "Prezidentės Dalios Grybauskaitės interviu Austrijos dienraščiui Die Presse: 'Operacija Libijoje peržengia JT mandatą,'" (Interview of Dalia Grybauskaitė with Austrian newspaper Die Presse: Operation in Libya violates UN mandate).

but 'slacking' on such matters as famine in the Horn of Africa, Sudan, climate change and the uprising in Syria.³⁵

Russia: a Strategic Partner and a Perennial Problem

Russia presents another cumbersome dilemma for Baltic policy makers. The Baltic approach to Russia is quite obviously at odds with NATO's or the EU's ideas of cooperative security and a 'common space of trust'. Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius did not, do not and will not trust Moscow, whether it hosts an authoritarian, semi-authoritarian or semi-democratic regime. And herein lies the problem: the Baltic states have built for themselves an image of hopeless Russophobes inside both NATO and the EU, to the point of being considered 'one issue nations' that do not care about anything else.

To be sure, the Kremlin puts considerable efforts into various provocations and propaganda, directed against the Baltic states. Moscow methodically endeavours to undermine the democratic credentials of the three countries. Minority issues have already been discussed. In addition, Russia routinely inflates the number and significance of the occasional manifestation of radical nationalistic groups, claiming that the Baltic states are seeking to revive Nazism. The platform of choice for the Russian authorities to name and shame the Baltic states, and especially Latvia, for 'alleged attempts to vindicate Nazi ideology and crimes' is the OSCE.³⁶ It does not matter that the odd demonstration of a small group of radical youths on the streets of Riga or Vilnius pales in comparison to the neo-fascist symbolism of 'nashism' in Russia itself. Russia occasionally also probes the credibility of NATO's commitment to the Baltic states. Incidents involving Russian military aircraft infringing Baltic airspace have been periodic, presumably indicating Russia's willingness to keep NATO's air policing mission alert. The 'Bronze soldier' riots in Tallinn and the simultaneous cyber-attack on Estonia was probably the most aggressive case of hostile activity inspired and/or directed by Moscow. Energy dependence is another tool of Russia's Baltic policy, which is skilfully used against the Baltic governments.³⁷

The perceived Russia-related threats pose a difficult challenge for Baltic decision makers. On the one hand, they cannot completely disregard Russian provocations, especially if these can undermine the safety and security of their populations (e.g. cyber-attacks, energy supply cut-offs). On the other

35 Justin Vaïsse, et al., *European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2012* (London: The European Council on Foreign Relations, 2012), 135-140.

36 For example, see: Delegation of the Russian Federation (OSCE), "Statement by Mr. Andrey Kelin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation at the Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council," 22 March 2012.

37 For a good analysis of Russia's policies towards the Baltic States see: STRATFOR, *The Next Stage of Russia's Resurgence: The Baltic States*, 9 February 2012.

hand, trying to counter each and every Russian move carries the risk that the Baltic states will become increasingly isolated within NATO and the EU. Essentially, Baltic decision makers may have to learn to pick the right fights at the right time. At times, the best policy option could be simply to ignore Russian rhetoric, rather than hopelessly trying to attain historic justice.

To avoid the image of 'one issue nations', the Baltic states may also have to diversify their policies. To some extent, such diversification is already happening. For example, Estonia is promoting itself as a small, peaceful Nordic country with an advanced information society, which excels at hi-tech industry. Lithuania is trying hard to gain some name recognition at the global level: Vilnius relatively successfully chaired the OSCE in 2011, which must have helped to diminish its Russophobic image in the eyes of the Euro-Atlantic community. It now aims to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2014-2015.

Paradoxically, some Russian actions are counterproductive and tend to actually favour the Baltic cause. The cyber-attacks on Estonia triggered NATO's debate on cyber defence policy and led to the establishment of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn. Infringements of Baltic airspace make termination of the NATO air policing mission less likely. In fact, at the Chicago Summit, the decision was made to prolong the mission indefinitely as a good example of the 'smart defence' initiative, championed by the NATO Secretary General Anders Rasmussen.³⁸ Russia's use of energy supplies as a tool for blackmail has led to more unity in the EU on energy security. In addition, Lithuania is attempting to set up a NATO centre of excellence for energy security in Vilnius. The Russian-Georgian war helped the Baltic states to receive their long-sought defence contingency plan.³⁹

Most importantly though, Russia is an absolutely indispensable element in the statehood projects of the Baltic states. It provides a very significant, dangerous and therefore useful 'other' against which the Baltic states can develop their national identities, formulate their foreign and security policies and perpetuate the urgency and importance of their independent statehood. If Russia did not exist, the Baltics would have to invent it. In addition, one could argue that the Baltic tendency to over-dramatise and securitise Russia is keeping NATO and the EU honest on the issue. As annoying as the Baltic interventions at the decision-making tables in Brussels may sometimes sound, some of the more optimistic NATO Allies and EU Member States have to pay attention and temper their expectations about Russia's behaviour.

38 NATO, *Chicago Summit Declaration*, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago on 20 May 2012, paragraph 56.

39 T. N., "The Eagle Guardian has landed," *The Economist*, 7 December 2010.

Defence Planning: Individual and/or Collective Defence?

Perceptions of Russia are closely related to the defence planning dilemmas that Baltic policy planners have to address. One of the very few issues of defence policy that does merit the attention of the public in the Baltic states is the question of the credibility of NATO's collective defence clause. Would NATO Allies come to the defence of the Baltic states if they faced military aggression from the east? In other words, would the Allies put the security of Washington or Warsaw on the line in order to save Vilnius?

This is related to the initial argument of this chapter: states need to construct threats and pursue security and defence policies to counter them in order to perpetuate their existential necessity. Naturally, once the three countries secured NATO membership, the political elites and the public in the Baltic states felt more secure than ever. At the same time, however, questions about the credibility of collective defence began to pop up.

Estonian author Margus Kolga has argued that with the accession to NATO, the old debate about the need for self-defence capability resurfaced, fuelled by NATO's increasing involvement in 'out-of-area' operations.⁴⁰ It might also be added that the watchful pressure of NATO's defence and force planners, led by the fearsome Frank Boland, was gone, replaced by a rather formal periodic review of defence plans and force structures. NATO simply does not have an efficient tool to force nations to meet their obligations – naming and shaming in the NATO conference room has no bearing whatsoever on national ministers of finance.

Can 'Alliance defence requirements' and 'national defence requirements' be reconciled? The former define what is necessary for the security and defence of the Alliance as a whole; the latter define what is necessary in terms of the security and defence of a concrete country. The entire Alliance's defence planning edifice is based upon a key planning assumption that NATO has to "maintain the ability to sustain concurrent major joint operations and several smaller operations for collective defence and crisis response, including at strategic distance."⁴¹ All Allied planning efforts are geared towards meeting this level of ambition. For most Allies, the collective NATO requirements will be over and above what would be necessary nationally. There is a paradoxical disconnect between the Allies

40 Margus Kolga, "New Challenges to the Estonian Defence System after Accession to the Alliance," in *Global and Regional Security Challenges: A Baltic Outlook*, ed. Heli Tiirmaa-Klaar and Tiago Marques (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2006), 43.

41 NATO, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (Brussels: NATO, 2010), 15

wish to see NATO capable of responding to any contingency, and the Allies' unwillingness to deliver fully their fair share of the burden. Many Allies, bigger and smaller, usually find many good reasons not to develop certain capabilities from the 'target packages' proposed by NATO's planners.

NATO requirements and national requirements are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but their inter-relationship would depend on three factors: the geographical location of a given Ally, its resources, and its strategic culture (e.g. whether the political and military elite of the country adheres to the philosophy of surgical, expeditionary warfare or upholds the tradition of heroic homeland defence in the trenches). For a country bordered only by Allies and facing no conventional external threat, collective defence requirements ought to overlap with national defence requirements rather closely, especially if it also has a long-standing expeditionary culture. It is possible to indicate a few Allies who are in such a comfort zone (e.g. the United Kingdom, France, Netherlands, Denmark, and Canada). Of course, some Allies who are situated in a relatively secure environment do not pursue the expeditionary path (e.g. Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany) and have issues with the 'crisis response at strategic distance' part of NATO's ambition (e.g. national caveats put on troops in Afghanistan and, more recently, Germany's reluctance to sign up for the Libya mission). If the financial and manpower resources of a country are extensive, it can cover fully both national and the Alliance's requirements. In NATO, only one country – the United States – has that luxury. One could speculate that its national defence requirements may in some areas be even more demanding than those of the Alliance. The Allies who find themselves on the periphery of the Alliance's territory, meanwhile, have the most difficult time reconciling national defence requirements with those NATO requirements related to 'crisis response at strategic distance' and have to make difficult defence planning choices.

The Washington Treaty is not exactly a helpful guide on this, as its less famous Article 3 clearly hints that the Allies need to maintain and develop individual, as well as collective, capacity to resist armed attack. How much capacity would be sufficient? The defence establishments of the Baltic states had to negotiate the Partnership Goals, and later the Force Goals, set by NATO defence planners. As a rule, NATO's requirements were always much higher than the three countries' willingness to contribute. The Baltic states would be asked to develop or procure capabilities that would not make any sense in terms of national defence needs but were necessary for NATO to fulfil its collective defence mission. Capabilities related to logistics for 'out-of-area' operations were an especially tricky issue. For example, Lithuania was asked to contribute a deployable water purification unit to NATO – not exactly the most vital capability for Lithuanian national needs. Also, NATO would usually require reductions in static structures (HQs)

and non-deployable forces (e.g. units composed of conscripts) – such decisions would always be sensitive in political and social terms. Finally, the three countries wanted to contribute capabilities that NATO already had in abundance. For example, Lithuania enthusiastically tried to offer special operations forces to NATO's pool, but NATO's planners were not enthused.

The challenges of establishing the NATO Response Force (NRF) was not encouraging for the proponents of a collective defence philosophy. NATO declared the NRF at full operational capability during the Riga Summit in 2006, only to revoke this decision a few months later due to repeated failures to generate the necessary capabilities. The promise of a super-capable NRF, able to deploy in a matter of days to deter any potential aggressors and defend any Ally from any aggression, was a big carrot for the European Allies to develop the capabilities required by NATO rather than to invest in social schemes of keeping large numbers of personnel in barracks on home soil for mostly symbolic purposes.

Transforming NATO: the Old and/or the New Threats?

The defence planning dilemma is closely related to the larger question of what kind of NATO is in the interest of the Baltic states. Should they wholeheartedly buy into the transformation and 'smart defence' agenda, try to shape it, or try to stop it? Should NATO's role go beyond the traditional defence crisis response tasks to encompass new threats (cyber-attacks, threats to energy security, piracy etc.) and new ways of doing defence business ('smart defence', specialisation, the comprehensive approach etc.)? If so, would NATO have enough resources to diversify into these areas while also retaining sufficiently robust readiness to undertake conventional force planning, deterrence and collective defence tasks? NATO's apparent overstretch in Afghanistan suggests that sustaining a balance between new and old tasks may not be a viable option in the long run. Add to this the newly found policy of disarmament, vehemently advocated by Ministries of Foreign Affairs in some Allied countries,⁴² and the odds are against NATO being able to do the full spectrum of operations. On top of it all, financial prospects do not look encouraging for most of NATO's European Allies and even for the US itself.

The Baltic states, aided by Russia's 'adventures' in Georgia, were among the few Allies pushing NATO to retain some elements of its traditional deterrence and defence posture. A senior Latvian MFA official cites the retention of the

42 These efforts resulted in a report submitted to the Bucharest Summit in 2008, some elements of which were later used in the new Strategic Concept. See: United States State Department (US Mission to NATO), *Non-paper Circulated By Some Allies on Raising NATO's Profile in the Field of Arms Control and Disarmament*, Cable 07USNATO525, 26 September 2007.

regional focus of NATO's commands and the inclusion of the pledge "to provide appropriate visible assurance and reinforcement for all allies" in the new NATO Strategic Concept as successful examples of how the three states have influenced the direction of NATO's transformation.⁴³

With regard to the new tasks, Baltic policy makers are likely to see them in the light of the old threat – be it cyber-attacks, energy supply disruptions or even terrorism. One could argue that this would explain why the Baltic policy makers are rather keen to see these 'new threats' on NATO's agenda. There is little doubt that the cyber-attacks on Estonia were orchestrated by Russia. Energy supplies are routinely used by the Russian authorities as tool of pressure and/or seduction in pursuit of their political goals. Even terrorism has a different connotation in the Baltic states from both western Europe and Russia: the Baltic states have been sympathetic to the Chechen independence fight, especially in the 1990s, which has always been cast by Russia as separatism or outright terrorism. Today, the Chechen diaspora in the Baltic states is a potentially testy issue in relations with Russia.

However all three issues – energy, cyber and terrorism – sit somewhat uncomfortably with NATO's status as a political-military organisation. NATO *per se* is not really in the business of fighting terrorism. ISAF's military activities in Afghanistan are, in essence, a counter-insurgency effort. Inside the territory of NATO countries, terrorism is not a military, but a criminal matter and therefore a problem for the police and security services, not the defence establishments. Energy security is mostly a political-economic phenomenon. There is little NATO could do in response, for example, to Russian energy blackmail, other than discuss it. The EU is much better equipped to deal with energy security challenges. Cyber security, especially cyber defence, could be a somewhat more promising area if NATO manages to carve out a clear role for itself. In a sense, this is a test for NATO's long-term viability, as cyber security challenges will, presumably, become an ever more pertinent part of the international security agenda.

NATO and CSDP: More or Less of the EU?

The Baltic states never saw EU membership as primarily a security question. For Baltic decision makers, security first and foremost meant military defence from external military threats to their territorial integrity and sovereignty. In the 1990s, security and defence integration was an unspoken taboo in the EU. However, the Balkan wars and the decreasing willingness of the United

43 NATO, Active Engagement, *Modern Defence*, 15.

States to bail out the Europeans on every occasion changed the debate in Europe, resulting in the French-British St. Malo initiative and the Helsinki decision to launch the European (now Common) Security and Defence Policy.

As discussed above, the Baltics were rather wary of this new development. They were, for a number of reasons, slow to buy into the importance of ESDP, despite some prodding from academic circles.⁴⁴ Apart from the 'decoupling' issue, ESDP presented the prospect that the members of both organisations may eventually have to develop two sets of capabilities, based on differing sets of standards, and/or choose under which flag to deploy them. While there has been a considerable amount of duplication – for example, the EU developed its own capability and force planning mechanism, run by the newly established European Defence Agency – progress has been largely on paper alone. The EU would hardly be able to deploy more troops to more distant places on more complex missions now than it could in 1999.

The EU's military missions have been limited to the Balkans and Sub-Saharan Africa – areas that the Baltic states do not consider to be of primary relevance to their security. Not surprisingly, Baltic troop contributions to the EU's military operations have been very small compared to their contributions to NATO missions.

The EU did, however, deliver on the civilian side of the equation by deploying a number of successful civilian missions, including in eastern Europe. In one particular case – the first ever EU rule of law mission, EUJUST THEMIS to Georgia (from July 2004-July 2005) – Lithuania actually played a leading role in initiating the mission. No less importantly, the EU is coming through, albeit slowly, on the energy security issue. One could argue that a strong Common Foreign and Security Policy in general, and a strong Common Security and Defence Policy in particular, would be in the interest of the Baltic states, if these policies developed in a manner which would complement NATO's hard power with the soft power of the EU.

The Grades

Life for Baltic decision makers was not easy after the post-enlargement euphoria subsided. They had to make hard decisions and difficult choices. Eight years (2004-2012) is a sufficiently long period of time to allow at least an initial assessment of the Baltic membership record. In particular, this section discusses

44 For example, see: Andres Kasekamp and Viljar Veebel, "Overcoming doubts: the Baltic States and European Security and Defence Policy," in *The Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbook 2007*, ed. Andres Kasekamp (Tallinn: The Estonian Foreign Policy Institute, 2007), 9-33; and Kęstutis Paulauskas, *The Baltics: from nation states to member states*, Occasional Paper no. 62 (Paris: EUISS, 2006).

two key aspects: (1) the Baltic expectations of NATO versus NATO's actual commitment to Baltic security and defence; and (2) NATO's requirements from the Baltic states versus the actual Baltic contribution to NATO's collective endeavours.

Baltic Expectations towards NATO: a Rather Good Thing, After All?

Baltic expectations were indeed high and to some extent unrealistic. NATO membership was seen as the ultimate guarantee of their security and statehood, a 'never again' moment in Baltic history. Life after the double enlargement should have looked something like this: a permanent and tangible NATO (preferably American) military presence deployed in the Baltic states (preferably in each one of them); a detailed NATO contingency plan for the collective defence of the Baltic states against potential foreign military aggression; NATO troops training and exercising regularly in the Baltic states; NATO Allies investing in the development of Baltic defence infrastructure; NATO sending a clear deterrent message to keep the Russians out of the Baltic Sea region and reacting with resolve and solidarity to each and every Russian provocation against Riga, Tallinn or Vilnius; and last but not least, NATO continuing to expand eastwards to make sure that Russia would be ever more contained within its own territory and abandon its nefarious designs on 'the near abroad'. Meanwhile, membership of the EU would ensure social and economic prosperity.

Obviously, reality has damped down the high Baltic expectations, thereby reviving the debate on how credible Article 5 really is. As already mentioned, after years of lobbying the Baltic states finally received NATO's contingency plans, which are also referenced in the new NATO Strategic Concept ("we will ... carry out the necessary training, exercises, contingency planning and information exchange for assuring our defence against the full range of conventional and emerging security challenges").⁴⁵ Both the Estonian ambassador to NATO Jüri Luik and a senior Latvian MFA official pointed out that this is the single biggest achievement of the Baltic states since joining NATO. In the words of Ambassador Luik, "generic or not, the symbolic value of the NATO contingency plans is impossible to overestimate." The three countries also fought hard and mostly in a united manner to make sure that the air policing mission – the only visible permanent presence of NATO in the Baltic states – would continue at least until 2018 and, at best, indefinitely. As noted above, these efforts were vindicated with success in Chicago. More NATO live exercises should also be expected in the Baltic region in the years to come, starting with STEADFAST JAZZ, an American-led NATO exercise scheduled for 2013. A speculative assessment of NATO's performance *vis à vis* Baltic expectations is provided in Table 1.

45 NATO, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence*, 15.

Table 1: Baltic Expectations versus NATO Performance

Baltic Expectation	Assessment	Grade
Contingency plans for the defence of the Baltic states	The plans were drafted in 2010-2011, but only after years of prodding by Baltic policy makers, and the sobering war in Georgia. The details of the plans were not made public.	A-
Permanent military presence	Due to NATO's transformation and a tacit understanding with Russia, a permanent military presence (either command elements or troops) has presumably not been considered by the Allies. NATO also made a unilateral commitment not to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of the new Allies.	D
Air policing	NATO has ensured a 24/7 air policing of the Baltic states' airspace from day one and, in Chicago, committed to do so indefinitely, albeit with periodic reviews.	A
Infrastructure investment	NATO has invested tens of millions of dollars (several times the amount that the Baltic states pay into NATO's civil and military budgets) in Baltic defence infrastructure, in particular in facilities related to the air policing mission, despite the predominant trend to curb investment in static defence structures.	A
NATO-Russia relations	NATO has never really been tough with Russia and has carried on a policy of rapprochement, and later 'reset', regardless of Russian antics, such as the cyber-attacks on Estonia, energy blackmail, the war in Georgia and espionage. On the other hand, Russia has not achieved decision-making rights on NATO's internal matters.	C
NATO transformation	While transforming to meet future challenges, NATO should retain a robust capability to plan and deploy for Article 5-type operations. Some elements to that effect were included in the new Strategic Concept, however, financial strains, and problems with troop and capability generation are a cause for concern.	B-

NATO partnerships and enlargement	The Baltic states have been among the most vocal supporters of NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia. Their efforts met with some success in the form of the Bucharest Summit decisions (i.e. the explicit NATO pledge that Georgia and Ukraine will become members of NATO) and Annual National Programmes. However, the reluctance of some other Allies, and the strategic mistakes made by Kiev (underperforming and failing to capitalise on the 'orange' momentum) and Tbilisi (overreacting to the Russian provocations in South Ossetia), have closed and probably sealed the 'window of opportunity' at least for the near future.	B-
The 'new threats'	Estonian-led efforts resulted in NATO's cyber defence policy and the foundation of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn. Lithuanian-led efforts resulted in a reference to energy security in the new Strategic Concept. On the other hand, NATO has yet to react in a more robust manner to the new challenges that the Baltic states perceive as originating from Moscow.	B-
NATO's nuclear posture and missile defence	The Baltic preferences are clear: NATO should retain its nuclear posture as long as Russia retains its arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons. NATO missile defence should cover all Allies, and only the Allies should make decisions on its employment, whatever the cooperation arrangements with Russia. However, the mood in Europe is swinging towards 'nuclear zero', while some Allies will keep working hard to accommodate Russian concerns about and interests in NATO's ballistic missile defence. Nevertheless, the Chicago summit upheld the status quo with regard to nuclear posture and declared an interim ballistic missile defence capability, disregarding Russian proposals for a joint system.	B
Overall	While the real NATO is obviously different from the ideal NATO that Baltic policy makers would have liked to see transpire, when all is said and done, the Baltic states have never been more secure militarily than they are today.	B

Baltic Performance in NATO: from Underdogs to Underachievers?

The Membership Action Plans, which the Baltic states started implementing in 1999, were an important stepping stone, but did not specify when membership would follow, if at all. The Baltic defence planners thus had to undertake difficult defence reforms without actually being sure that a membership invitation would come. In the meantime, the fear of Russia dictated the need to retain self-defence capabilities. According to former Lithuanian ambassador to NATO Linas Linkevičius, balancing between these two pressure points was by far the most difficult challenge. As a result, the defence reform record of all three states is impressive, but far from exemplary.

How successfully have Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius managed to adopt NATO's standards and adapt to life within the Alliance? NATO defence planners asked each of the three countries to contribute two things: a deployable battalion-size task group with support elements for low intensity peace support operations; and certain specialised, niche capabilities, such as engineers, medics, divers, mine countermeasure vessels, and logistic capabilities. While the three countries more or less deliver on the latter requirement, none of them has so far achieved the feat of deploying, let alone sustaining, an entire battalion in an out-of-area NATO operation. As of 2012, all three countries face rather similar challenges with regard to defence transformation and NATO requirements; and defence transformation seems to have slowed down considerably after accession.

Estonia stands head and shoulders above Latvia and Lithuania in terms of defence spending – it sustained a remarkable political will to keep increasing military expenditure when most other Allies were making cuts. Estonia is also spearheading NATO's efforts in cyber defence and is punching above its weight in Helmand province in Afghanistan, suffering relatively heavy casualties. Andres Vosman, national security advisor to the President of Estonia, commented that these are the top achievements of his country since NATO accession. Probably the biggest shortcoming on the otherwise impressive Estonian résumé is its strong attachment to territorial defence thinking.

With regard to defence reform, Estonia pursues a sort of a balancing act. Tallinn has retained some key elements of a Finnish-style defence concept, keeping conscription and relying on a relatively large voluntary force, tasked in essence to provide the 'initial self-defence capability'; in other words, to ensure Estonia's territorial defence. However, Estonia does continue, albeit at a pedestrian pace, to transform its military by increasing the number of

professional servicemen in the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF) and reducing dependence on conscription. In 2006, the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF) had 5,500 servicemen, including 2,400 conscripts, and the Volunteer Defence League an additional 11,000.⁴⁶ In 2012, according to its official website, the EDF still has 5,500 servicemen, including 2 000 conscripts (i.e. a reduction of 400) and 10,000 in the Defence League, "which is growing steadily."⁴⁷ While the long-term EDF development plans envision increasing the number of professionals to 4 000, Estonia also has plans to be able to bring its wartime strength for 'initial self-defence' up to 25 000, with additional units from the Defence League.⁴⁸ According to the EDF's "Army" website, Estonia has committed a deployable infantry battalion tactical group and some deployable combat support and combat service support units for deployment on NATO missions. The infantry brigade would act as a training and support frame for deployable units, while "homeland security structure units will have the capability to carry out territorial military tasks and support civil structures."⁴⁹

For Latvia, the big push to carry out defence reforms came with the actual invitation to join NATO. According to Igors Rajevs, "the invitation to join NATO completely altered Latvia's international situation and its approach to national defence. The principles of total defence and territorial defence have become obsolete, thus making the maintenance of large reserve units – which are poorly manned, trained and equipped – irrelevant."⁵⁰

A senior Latvian MFA official emphasised that NATO's continuing transformation favours Latvia's national security interests. He believes that doing away with conscription (Latvia has had fully professional armed forces since 2007) and reforming the large, ineffective *Zemessardze* (National Guard) was a prudent move by Latvian decision makers, allowing savings and the reallocation of resources towards fulfilling NATO requirements. Latvia had reduced the number of National Guard units from 32 to 20 before joining NATO,⁵¹ but the *Zemessardze* still remains the biggest part of the Latvian National Armed Forces (NAF). It is organised territorially into 3 regions and consists of some 11,000 volunteers. They would presumably provide Host

46 Margus Kolga, "New Challenges to the Estonian Defence System", 52.

47 See: Estonian Defence Forces, "Kaitseväge struktuur," (Structure of the Defence Forces) (website). Interestingly, the English version of the same website provides different numbers: 3,800 servicemen, 1,500 conscripts and 8,000 volunteers. See: Estonian Defence Forces, "What are the Estonian Defence Forces," (website).

48 Estonian Defence Forces and Ministry of Defence (Estonia), *Estonian Long Term Defence Development Plan 2009 – 2018* (Tallinn: Ministry of Defence, 2009), 13.

49 Estonian Defence Forces, "Army," (website).

50 Igors Rajevs, "Modernization in the Latvian Armed Forces," in *Defence Reform in the Baltic States: 12 years of experience*, conference proceedings, 17-18 June 2003, Riga, 26.

51 Jānis Sārts, "Force modernisation and restructuring in Latvia," in *Defence Reform in the Baltic States: 12 years of experience*, conference proceedings, 17-18 June 2003, Riga, 40.

Nation Support to arriving NATO troops, but otherwise their cost-efficiency is doubtful, especially given Latvia's defence spending performance.

Lithuania, meanwhile, has come full circle. It has painstakingly pursued defence transformation after receiving the MAP and essentially abandoned the philosophy of territorial defence. Static structures and non-deployable forces have been significantly reduced. For example, plans to develop three infantry brigades to ensure territorial defence were scrapped in favour of one motorised infantry brigade capable of generating, deploying and sustaining one battalion-size task group with combat support and combat service support elements on NATO operations. The National Defence Volunteer (NDV) forces were transformed into an active reserve, deployable on international operations, and made an integral part of the Land Forces.⁵² The numbers of NDV went down from the ridiculous 25,000 'paper wolf' in 2002 to a more realistic 5,200 in 2012.⁵³ In 2008, Lithuania also suspended conscription. These reforms helped free up some resources for investment in modern deployable capabilities.

In 2009, however, following the previous year's parliamentary election, Lithuania made a conceptual U-turn back to the 1990s. In the words of the former Commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces (LAF) Jonas Kronkaitis, "Lithuania succeeded in turning around the direction of the LAF development."⁵⁴ The current commander of the LAF Arvydas Pocius points instead to, "a successful rebalancing of territorial and collective defence."⁵⁵ The NDV has already grown again from 5 to 6 units, and a second infantry brigade is taking shape according to the 2012 LAF force structure. The issue of conscription is also being reconsidered.

This would not be a big problem if Lithuania was spending at least 2% of GDP on defence. With its current level of spending though, Lithuania is basically putting the emphasis back on non-deployable territorial units, rather than acquiring and developing modern deployable capabilities. The only bright spot on Lithuania's NATO résumé is the mission in Ghowr province in Afghanistan. Linas Linkevičius commented that the performance of the Lithuania's Special Operations Force unit in the south of Afghanistan has been

52 For more on key Lithuanian defence reforms see: Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), *White Paper: Lithuanian Defence Policy* (Vilnius: Ministry of National Defence, 2006), 27-56.

53 Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), "Savanorių pajėgos" (National Defence Volunteer Forces) (website).

54 "J. Kronkaitis: pavyko pakeisti Lietuvos kariuomenės strateginę kryptį" (J. Kronkaitis: We managed to change the strategic direction of Lithuanian armed forces), *Delfi*, 22 November 2011.

55 Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), "Lietuvos kariuomenės vadas: 'Pertvarkyta kariuomenės struktūra atspindės subalansuotą požiūrį į gynybą'" (Commander of Lithuanian Armed Forces: the New Force Structure will reflect a balanced approach to defence), *National Defence Newsletter*, no.1 (224), 30 December 2011, 22.

even more impressive and has been repeatedly praised by Allies. However, once the Afghanistan mission terminates, Lithuania's commitment may be increasingly questioned by other Allies. Accordingly, NATO's commitment to and investment in Lithuania's defence infrastructure may be eventually undermined.

A senior Lithuanian defence official described the current state of defence reform in Lithuania as "tragic." According to him, the problem is that Lithuania has always based defence plans on a pipedream of 2% defence spending. As a result, spending on personnel is approaching 70% of the defence budget. The bloated ranks of officers and non-commissioned officers have too few privates to train and no modern capabilities. The only bright spot is participation in Afghanistan. Otherwise, "the Lithuanian Armed Forces would simply start to stink in their barracks."

While before 2004, the three Baltic states used to be the underdogs of NATO enlargement, Latvia and Lithuania increasingly face the risk of being seen as underachievers and free-riders, especially if the current defence spending trends in these two countries continue. Regarding Estonia, the model of total territorial defence, based on a large voluntary reserve and some form of conscription is not viable in the current security environment; but Estonia's perseverant defence spending can somewhat mitigate this criticism. However, even 2% of GDP for defence would be insufficient for the three small states to establish a sufficiently robust initial self-defence capability to withstand the kind of aggression they would be expected to repel in the worst-case scenario. It is simply unwise to invest into the kind of capability that does not add tangible value to the collective defence of the Alliance and is utterly unusable in crisis response operations.

The overall assessment of the Baltic performance is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Grading the Baltic Performance. Sources: NATO (ISAF), “Troop numbers and contributions”; NATO, Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence.

Area of Activity	Baltic Performance (in ranking order)	Grade
Defence spending	Estonia leads the pack with 1.8% of GDP for defence, and is set to achieve the 2% benchmark in 2012.	A
	Latvia is far behind Estonia with only 1% of GDP in 2010 (down from 1.6% in 2008) although expects to reach 2% by 2020.	D
	Lithuania is just behind Latvia with 0.9% and only ahead of Luxembourg among the 28 Allies. The average since membership has been 1.2%.	D
Defence reform	Estonia still retains conscription and a considerable territorial defence structure – a wartime reserve and the Defence League, which are essentially useless in a collective security system, except for a limited host nation support role. However, by increasing defence spending Estonia should be able to improve its performance with regard to NATO obligations.	C → B
	Latvia has come a long way reforming its defence. It was first to move to fully professional armed forces. However, it still retains a large territorial defence structure – the National Guard, while severe cuts in spending make it unlikely that Latvia could meet NATO requirements in the short and medium term.	C +
	Lithuania was a clear leader in defence transformation prior to and immediately after enlargement. It fully abandoned its territorial defence philosophy, cut down non-deployable structures, and suspended conscription. However, after the 2008 Parliamentary election, Lithuania made a conceptual U-turn back towards territorial defence. With severe cuts in defence spending, it is increasingly unlikely to meet NATO requirements in the short to medium term.	B → C

NATO operations	This is the only area in which Lithuania is somewhat of an overachiever. Lithuania has taken part in most NATO operations since as early as 1996. In 2005, Lithuania took the lead of the Ghawr Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan, while also contributing a special operations unit. As of January 2012, Lithuania had 237 troops in Afghanistan.	A+
	Estonia is close behind Lithuania with a determined and costly effort in Helmand province, Afghanistan. As of January 2012, Estonia had 150 troops in Afghanistan. Estonia also contributes financially to the reconstruction efforts.	A
	Latvia sustains a similar contribution to Estonia, however, in a relatively more benign province in northern Afghanistan. As of January 2012, Latvia had 185 troops in Afghanistan.	B
Other contributions	Estonia is pioneering cyber defence policy in NATO and is probably one of the most capable Allies in this regard. It also hosts NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. Estonia is also a staunch supporter of NATO's enlargement and partnership policies.	A
	Latvia plays the role of an important logistic hub in supplying ISAF. It is also a staunch supporter of NATO's enlargement and partnership policies.	B
	Lithuania is trying to emulate Estonia's cyber defence policy success in the area of energy security. It is also a staunch supporter of NATO's enlargement and partnership policies	B
Overall	While the Baltic states have consistently delivered with regard to NATO operations before and after enlargement, defence reforms and defence spending – the two key prerequisites for long-term viability of the Baltic contributions to NATO – have stalled or even reversed.	B → C

Conclusions

In the 1990s, the entrance of the Baltic states into the EU and NATO was a distant and uncertain prospect. Indeed, there were very serious attempts to postpone such a development indefinitely, if not to cancel it outright. The predicament of the Baltics in the mid-1990s looked very much like that of Ukraine and Georgia in the current – post-colour revolution – era: not now, not tomorrow, maybe someday. Some analysts failed miserably in forecasts that seemed sensible at the time. For example, Henry Plater-Zyger authoritatively argued that, “Moscow will have no difficulty ensuring that the area (i.e. the Baltic states) is not sufficiently stable to join any security structures in the future.”⁵⁶

Given this context, the Baltic states’ ultimate membership in both NATO and the EU was indeed an historic feat, stemming from a confluence of international developments, the political determination of the three countries, and support of some key Allies, in particular the United States, the United Kingdom, the Nordic countries and Poland.

The defence establishments of the Baltic states have come a long, but also a somewhat circular way. They started out building their armed forces from scratch, on the basis of a few patriotic officers who left the Red Army in the sunset days of the Soviet Union, and a rag-tag collection of civilian volunteers. They inherited no Soviet military equipment and no defence infrastructure. They were under-resourced, poorly equipped and poorly trained. Yet, they were trying to build Nordic-style total territorial defence systems – a high cost endeavour by definition – while, because of their geographic location and negligible size, remaining essentially indefensible.

Once the Baltic states received NATO Membership Action Plans, they started to transform their armed forces in accordance with NATO standards, moving away from national territorial defence concepts to collective defence concepts. Yet, when the Baltic states became NATO members and the pressure to keep up the pre-enlargement commitments was gone, Baltic policy makers went back to debating collective defence credibility versus national defence needs. Today, they embrace the NATO-speak of ‘transformation’, while retaining narrowly individualistic approaches to national defence. Linas Linkevičius commented that the defence spending curve in particular indicates that, “we are not the kind of Allies that we have promised we would be.”

56 Henry Plater-Zyberk, *NATO Enlargement: Benefits, Costs and Consequences* (Sandhurst: Conflict Studies Research Centre, Royal Military Academy, 1996), 8.

While the Baltic states have been vocal about their security demands, and their high moral standards on issues related to Russia and other eastern Partners, in particular Georgia and Ukraine, their own performance has not been so stellar. The one area where the Baltic states continue to deliver is NATO operations. The question is: can they keep this up, given the emerging signs of foot-dragging or even rolling back on some of their commitments?

Going forward, a prudent approach for the Baltic states would be to 'smarten up' for NATO's 'smart defence' by specialising in niche capabilities where they can add real value and pooling scarce resources for multilateral projects. Hard economic reality presents a good opportunity to try to overcome national (and sometimes personal) ambitions for the sake of the common – national, Baltic and NATO – good.

Such a strategic direction would require strong political will and bold decisions, but the policy makers in Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius have very little choice. Otherwise, they risk becoming increasingly unable to contribute to NATO's international missions, which are likely to become ever more complex and hi-tech. Today, none of the three countries can boast having advanced C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) systems or are able to seamlessly 'plug and play' with NATO's network-centric warfare. To put it bluntly, territorial defence is an obsolete concept in an era of virtual wars.

One could argue that the double enlargement of 2004 was the last major strategic achievement of the West in the post-Cold War era. Europe came close to the noble vision of Europe whole, free and at peace. However, western domination of global affairs has since faded. The West failed to build on the momentum of the Orange and Rose revolutions – and in the last few years the Russians have come marching back. If the 'big bang' enlargement had been postponed in 2004, it is difficult to imagine the Americans and Europeans would take such courageous strategic decisions today. Indeed, the western media is lamenting the lack of visionary leadership. The open letter of former Central and Eastern European leaders to Barack Obama was a rather symptomatic reflection of the general mood in this part of Europe.⁵⁷

Would the Baltic states be different countries were they not part of NATO? Probably yes – they would be less secure, less stable and less prosperous. Would NATO be a different organisation without the Baltic states? Paradoxically enough, one could make the case that it would: conventional

57 David Hayes, "East-central Europe to Barack Obama: an open letter," *OpenDemocracy*, 24 July 2009.

military contingencies in Europe would be a more salient issue on the European security agenda, which would probably require NATO to retain a more regional and conventional focus.

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The Development of Military Cultures

Introduction

The three Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – started to build up their armed forces after re-gaining their independence in 1991. The international situation of the 1990s was substantially different from that of the previous decade. The Cold War had ended and the world found itself in a new security environment without a clearly visible polarisation between great powers; this new stage in international systems is often called the post-modern society. Nevertheless, the understandings that had accompanied previous international systems, in particular the Cold War, did not disappear very easily, and the emerging military cultures of the Baltic states, even if they were shaped under the circumstances of a new security environment, were influenced by the traditions and beliefs of these previous systems.

Despite their similar fates after they had established themselves as independent states in 1918, all three nations remain culturally distinct entities. Estonia and the major part of Latvia are mostly Lutheran countries culturally close to northern Germany and the Nordic states. Lithuania and the eastern part of Latvia (Latgale) are Catholic and culturally closer to Poland and central Europe. Historically, Lithuania and Poland had formed a union since 1385, when the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Jogaila, had acceded to the Polish throne. From 1569 to 1791, a semi-federal Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, comprising the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had existed. Until the establishment of their independent states in the first half of the 20th century, Estonia and Latvia had shared a common past within the same state under German, Swedish, Danish, Polish, and Russian rulers. From time to time, these rulers also governed Finland. Despite their distinctive historical background and cultural differences, their shared geopolitical space and similar security concerns strengthened the need for cooperation between these three small nations. They failed, however, to establish a Baltic Union before World War II and significant Baltic cooperation became a notable feature only at the end of the 20th century.²

1 The author would like to thank Brigadier General Michael Hesselholt Clemmesen (Royal Danish Defence College) and Colonel Igors Rajevs (BALTDEFCOL) for their valuable contribution to this, and Colonel Raul Tõnnov and Tomas Jermalavičius for their assistance in finding contacts in Latvia and Lithuania.

2 There were numerous attempts to create a Baltic Union in 1920s and 1930s, sometimes with the participation of Finland and Poland, but all these attempts failed due to disagreements between the countries, notably Lithuania and Poland who disagreed over the Vilno problem.

Similar concerns in security and defence matters have effectively forced political and military cooperation between the Baltic countries since the 1990s, although the individual responses of the three states – how Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have chosen to manage their national defences – have produced conceptually different military cultures. This chapter examines why countries with such similar security concerns and extensive military cooperation, supported by multinational security- and defence-related projects, have chosen different ways to build up their armed forces. In it, I establish two competing basic models of military culture, on the basis of which the three states' national models are examined. The 'Nordic model' stresses national solidarity in defence matters expressed through total defence and compulsory military service for male citizens. The 'European model' stems from the requirements of the postmodern security environment and relies on smaller, professional and deployable forces.

As well as studying the development of military cultures in the three states, this chapter also pays attention to the specific role of western military advice and of BALTSEA³ in providing military support to the Baltic states, especially before Baltic involvement in NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) process, which began in 1999. As the Baltic states built up their military societies from scratch, it is important to acknowledge this outside influence on the development of their military cultures, and the role of donor states in shaping military thinking in the three Baltic states will thus be examined. Denmark was particularly active in the 1990s in assisting the build-up of the Baltic defence systems and encouraging their interoperability with NATO. Of the three nations, only Latvia did not have a particular donor state to strongly influence its defence establishment. The Finnish influence on Estonian military culture and Polish influence on Lithuanian military culture, derived from their linguistic, cultural and historical ties, will also be analysed.

How should military culture be defined?

In general, culture is a set of ideas, beliefs and symbols by which a group or organisation defines its actions.⁴ Cultures manifest themselves in the ways people classify, codify, and communicate their experiences.⁵ The discussion between rationalists and cultural relativists has recently become another great debate in scholarly society. Within the social sciences, theories that rely on cultural or psychological variables are at least to some degree concerned

3 BALTSEA (Baltic Security Assistance) – an international forum to coordinate security- and defence-related assistance to the Baltic states from 1997-2005.

4 Christopher Dandeker and James Gow, "Military culture and strategic peacekeeping," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 10, no.2 (1999): 59.

5 Thierry Balzacq, "The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agent, Audience and Context," *European Journal of International Relations* 11 no.2 (2005): 172.

with motivations, inclinations, understandings or commitments to practices, which people may be unaware of or unable to conceptualise or articulate. These variables form patterns, which will develop into cultures.⁶

In international relations, the cultural motives of international actors have been recognised through the emergence of the constructivist school of IR-theory. Constructivists argue that the structural and materialist orientations of neo-realism and neo-liberalism strove to remove identity from the equation, even though identity had played a central – but often implicit – role in many traditional realist and liberal theories.⁷ One of ‘founding fathers’ of the constructivist school, Alexander Wendt defines culture as a subset of social structure, which is based on shared ideas.⁸ The main argument of this chapter is that despite similar security concerns and extensive military cooperation, supported by multilateral military projects, the three Baltic countries have chosen different ways to build up their armed forces, testifying to the determining role of self-identity in the political decision-making of individual actors. The fact that similar security concerns can lead to different outcomes demonstrates that actors do not necessarily choose rationalist approaches in building security.

Cultures are closely related to collective identities, the specific paradigms that characterise the appearance of the ‘We’ identity in a world of ‘Others’. Wendt identifies four variables that condition the collective identity: interdependence, common fate, homogeneity, and self-restraints.⁹ If it is introduced into regular practices, a collective identity can be transformed into a cultural identity, which, in turn, can be manifested by security cultures and strategic cultures. There is a difference between security culture and strategic culture – while the main concern of a security culture is self-identification, a strategic culture focuses on interactions with other entities. As Christoph Meyer writes:

Strategic culture consists of the socially transmitted, identity-derived norms, ideas and habits that are shared among the most influential actors and social groups within a given political community, which help to shape a ranked set of options for community’s pursuit of security and defence goals.¹⁰

As a set of social beliefs and values appearing in a certain cultural environment, security culture would usually be a much broader concept than strategic

6 Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 118.

7 David Rousseau and A. Maurits van der Veen, “The Emergence of a Shared Identity: An Agent-based Computer Simulation of Idea Diffusion,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49 no.5 (2005): 686.

8 Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory in International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 249.

9 *Ibid.*, 343.

10 Christoph O Meyer, “The Purpose and Pitfalls of Constructivist Forecasting: Insights from Strategic Culture Research for the European Union’s Evolution as a Military Power,” *International Studies Quarterly* 55 no.4 (2011):677.

culture. Strategy aims to accomplish national goals by primarily focussing on security against external threats.¹¹ Therefore, strategic cultures express the strategic intentions of international actors by displaying their interactions with and practices towards the international system.¹²

Military cultures, in their turn, are specific manifestations of security cultures, which more precisely refer to the norms, beliefs and values practised by the military sector of society – the principles that are used in organising the defence system and the patterns that are adopted in establishing military identity. In fact, the military is an entity with an ancient origin that displays certain patterns of understanding related to the collective activities of armed forces. By the traditions of international society, “the military profession is often assumed to have a distinct ethos, culture or identity, though the characteristics of this culture are subject to discussion.”¹³

In the context of security culture, a military culture is a specific paradigm built upon values and beliefs which, among other paradigms, creates an appropriate cultural environment for national defence management. Military culture is a way to use military tools for fulfilling the strategic goals of actors. In defining different assets of military culture, Anthony King refers to the distinctive practices which military groups perform together by using three sets of capabilities: physical (material assets); moral (organisational cohesion of the military and will to fight); and conceptual (strategic orientation).¹⁴

The physical element is characterised by variables that describe the material resources available to the armed forces, including the defence budget, equipment and human resources and stems from the social and institutional environment, which can restrict an actor’s choices. More specifically, it explains how the budget demonstrates the attention paid to the military and defence sector in terms of readiness to spend from the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and how the actor values the position of the military sector in society. If significant resources are provided to the armed forces, the importance of the military sector to wider society is higher. There have been significant changes in the composition of national budgets during the last two decades – in 1989, only one NATO member state had military spending

11 Alistair Iain Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture,” *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995):36.

12 Holger Mölder, *Cooperative security dilemma – practicing the Hobbesian security culture in the Kantian security environment* (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2010), 17.

13 Torunn Laugen Haaland, “Still Homeland Defenders at Heart? Norwegian Military Culture in International Deployments,” *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 4(2010): 541.

14 Anthony King, “Towards a European Military Culture?” *Defence Studies* 6, no. 3 (2006): 259.

lower than the NATO benchmark of 2% of GDP.¹⁵ In 2010, however, only five NATO member states had military spending equal to or greater than 2% of GDP – Albania, France, Greece, the United Kingdom and the United States.¹⁶

The moral element reflects the ideological motives of the armed forces, which has a long-term impact on military culture. Callahan and Schönborn observe that military culture is rooted in concepts of honour, obedience, and sacrifice rather than the ideas of booty and spoils.¹⁷ Military culture is often considered a unique phenomenon within society because it places unique demands on its bearers, including the obligation to kill and sacrifice and when necessary to fulfil a 24-hour commitment to service, while participating in a distinct military community, in which the community members work, live and socialise with other service personnel.¹⁸ While civil society in the western cultural hemisphere highlights individual liberties, military society occupies a more normative environment.

The conceptual element is established through the doctrines that the military uses, and depends upon “the moral character of the fighting force and its physical assets.”¹⁹ The cohesion between political and military guidelines also plays an important role. The military and defence is always part of broader politics even when direct guidance might be hidden. Carl von Clausewitz has wisely noted that, “war is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means.”²⁰ Military culture is, therefore, one of the multiple outcomes of political culture, and the military is a valuable instrument in the hands of the political elite. Sometimes the military may start to involve themselves in political decision making, but since they will then act as politicians, they can no longer legitimately represent themselves as militaries.

This chapter refers to the practices defined by King for identifying the elements that have influenced the emergence of military cultures in each Baltic country and focuses on the social and institutional environments, which have been possibly influential in establishing the ways that the Baltic nations classify, codify, and communicate their experiences into their military

15 Defence Dateline Group, “As Europe Wakes to Defence spending Shortfall, NATO Risks Losing US Investment,” *DefenceIQ*, 14 March 2011.

16 NATO, *Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence*, Communiqué PR/CP(2011)027 (Brussels: NATO, 10 March 2011), 6.

17 Jean Callaghan and Mathias Schönborn, *Warriors in Peacekeeping, Points of Tension in Complex Cultural Encounters* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 14.

18 Dandeker and Gow, *Military culture and strategic peacekeeping*, 60.

19 King, *Towards a European Military Culture?* 259-260.

20 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Digireads.com Publishing: 2008), 34.

thinking and institutional rituals. Randall Collins pays attention to institutional rituals that may intensify mutual focus and bonding and contain the following components: (1) group assembly and bodily copresence; (2) barriers to outsiders; (3) mutual focus of attention; and (4) shared mood.²¹ Organisational culture practised in the national defence system may influence the ways in which different capabilities – physical, moral and conceptual – can be used for strategic purposes. Defence spending, the organisation of the armed forces, and attitudes towards conscription, homeland defence and peace operations would characterise the elements by which military cultures are organised.

In the present-day world, military cultures can be divided between modern and postmodern types, between traditional understandings that relate security to military security and new ones that follow a much broader concept of security (see Table 1). A commitment to modern military culture is manifested through traditional understandings of the role of militaries in society, which focus on the primary purpose of preparing for and conducting war, while new understandings have replaced classic inter-state war fighting with a variety of peace support missions.²² The modern manifestation of military culture, which is based on conscription, total defence and territorial defence, is visible in the defence concept that is more popular in the Nordic countries, especially in Finland, but also in Norway, which both maintain compulsory military service for all citizens. Sweden started to move towards the European model after suspending conscription in 2010, while the Danish concept has always contained elements of both the Nordic and European models.²³

Table 1: Two Types of Military Culture

Cultural type	Security environment	Components
European	Postmodern (cooperative)	Professional armies Voluntarism
Nordic	Modern (balanced)	Conscription Total defence

21 Randall Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 445.
22 Dandeker and Gow, *Military culture and strategic peacekeeping*, 58.
23 Sweden ended conscription in peace time in 2010. Denmark maintains a short duration conscription system, based on a lottery. In 2010, Denmark decided not to hold a conscription lottery because of a sufficient number of volunteers.

The Nordic model has been elaborated on the basis of World War II experiences, and sets as its goal the involvement of the entire society in defence matters. The Nordic model of national defence takes more account of the traditional values of the military and promotes total defence, compulsory military service and reserve army components. As the Nordic model of military culture focuses on the management of traditional symmetric conflicts, it sees national defence as the moral obligation of all citizens and aims to include all citizens in it. The roots of the Nordic model come from the era that emerged in the late 19th century, when many European constitutions were drafted. At this time socialist ideas began to spread, expanding the meaning of the services that the state should provide to its citizens including social security, environmental measures and housing. Some constitutions (e.g. Austria, Greece and Norway) specified that their citizens were bound, obliged or liable to serve in the military.²⁴

This model prepares defence primarily for massive land attacks such as those that occurred in the first half of the 20th century. Manpower forms a central element in the Nordic model and equipment and mobility will be just supportive elements to complete the system of citizen-based defence. The Nordic military culture focuses on the moral element, manifested by the will of every citizen to fight on behalf of its homeland. It relies on the concept of total defence and encompasses large conscription-based armies, large reserves, total mobilisation, preparation for civil resistance and guerrilla warfare, and territorial defence tactics.²⁵

The majority of western European countries, however, have started to promote professionalisation and voluntarism in their armed forces, which could be identified as the postmodern or European model of military culture. The postmodern European model favours cooperative efforts and professionalisation of the armed forces, and focuses on small and professional rapid reaction units, which are mobile and easily deployable into crisis areas, wherever such crises may take place. Whereas the modern military culture was oriented towards massive land attacks demanding the mobilisation of huge reserves, the air force component, with its technological advantage, has taken a more significant part in comparison with the land forces within the postmodern military culture. Almost all of the important military operations since the 1990s (including the Gulf War,

24 Christopher Jehn and Zachary Selden, "The End of Conscription in Europe" (paper prepared for presentation at the Western Economic Association International Annual Meeting, San Francisco, California, July 5-8, 2002), 14.

25 Kęstutis Paulauskas, "Yesterday Came Suddenly. The Brave New Security Agenda of the Baltic States." in *Global and Regional Security Challenges: A Baltic Outlook*, ed. Heli Tiirmaa-Klaar and Tiago Marques (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2006), 34.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya) started with massive air attacks before the land component would be ready to become involved in the crisis. There will, therefore, be a natural demand for more professional and well-trained soldiers, who are able to participate in high-tech operations.

The European model corresponds to the postmodern security environment, which emerged after the end of Cold War. This environment does not refer to the bipolar or multipolar division of power, which characterised international systems up until the end of Cold War, but can be described as a non-polar environment, where all internationally recognised states have been united under the auspices of the United Nations Organisation. Professionalisation is a result of this much more stable security environment, which includes plenty of local conflicts, but a significantly decreased possibility of major war.

These two models of military culture have competed in the Baltic states since the 1990s. In recent years, Lithuania and Latvia have driven towards the European model of military culture. The defence leadership in Estonia, on the other hand, prefers to keep the Nordic model alive because, according to Michael Clemmesen, of their admiration for Finland's defence capabilities and perceptions that the current security environment may change in the future. It is probably unfair to try to determine which of these two cultural models works better in the Baltic Sea environment. The Nordic model fits the security environment of the middle of the 20th century, when a massive land attack with support from air and naval forces was still a basic component of war – so every citizen would count in the case of armed conflict. There is a constant fear in the Baltic nations (and in some respects in Finland too) that the pre-World War II security environment, which was marked by the Soviet attack on Finland and the Baltic countries, might be established once again due to Russia's military ambitions.

The Security Environment of the Three Baltic Countries – Similarities and Differences

Similarities

The security environment around the Baltic states is influenced by a set of external factors, the stability of the institutional and social environment among them. The neighbourhood of the Baltic States includes socially and economically advanced, stable Nordic states; Poland, which has similar goals to the Baltic states; the re-united Germany, which plays a leading

role in the European Union; and the unstable former Soviet republics of Russia and Belarus. The institutional environment is exactly the same for all three Baltic states. After restoring their status as independent states in 1991, the Baltic nations became members of the UN, OSCE, the Council of Europe, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and other global and regional international institutions. In 2004, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania simultaneously joined the European Union and NATO, which strengthened their political and military security by comparison with the years 1939-40. Cooperation with these institutions had been represented in the security policy goals of the Baltic nations since the 1990s, when they started quietly to move towards future membership. The accession to NATO and the European Union brought with it a twofold agenda for Baltic cooperation. It naturally mobilised their efforts to cooperate to achieve common goals and at the same time broadened the possible forms of cooperation, where previously the Baltic nations had found their own more specific ways.

Nonetheless, the priority security concern for all three Baltic states is still Russia, whether they recognise this in their security- and defence-related political discourse or not. Indeed, in the main security and defence documents of three countries, Russia is not in any way identified as a direct security threat. The national security strategies of the three Baltic states follow the postmodern approach to security and recognise that there is no direct military threat against their sovereignty in the near future. However, in the security- and defence-related public debate in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, it is apparent that the Baltic societies are greatly worried about the possible future behaviour of Russia, and this is often hinted at in everyday public discourses. There might be different opinions on how to view Russia among Baltic security concerns – whether it is an irrational fear based on historical memories or a rational assessment derived from Russia's current political and military ambitions – but the reality is that all Russian attempts to review and reform its military capabilities have been taken extremely seriously by the Baltic nations, and their historical experience has had a general impact on emerging military cultures in the region.

The suspicious relationship, which is related to a consideration of the possible scenarios that may occur if the current security environment collapses and which characterises defence-related interactions between Russia and the Baltics, should be identified as a security concern, rather than as a risk or a threat. It would be useful here to make clear the differences between security threats, risks, concerns, and vulnerabilities (see Figure 2). Robert Keohane and Celeste Wallander recognise that when a state faces a probability that another state will either launch an attack or

seek to threaten military force for political reasons, this is a threat; but if no such threat exists, either because states do not have the intention or the capability to harm the security of others, they face a security risk.²⁶ Security vulnerabilities have the potential to bring down or significantly weaken state structures, both the territorial and institutional structures and regimes of states.²⁷ Both risks and vulnerabilities are able to produce threats.

Figure 1: Hierarchical Ontology of Security: Concerns, Risks, Vulnerabilities and Threats



Security concerns can be imagined and constructed narratives, perceptions and misperceptions – a set of issues to be worried about. Barry Buzan divides security concerns into five categories: military, political, economic, societal and environmental security concerns:

- 26 Celeste A. Wallander and Robert O. Keohane, "Risk, threat and security institutions," in *Power and Governance in a Partially Globalized World*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Routledge, 2002), 91.
- 27 Mohammed Ayoob, "Defining Security: A Subaltern Realist Perspective," in *Critical Security Studies*, ed. Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 130.

Military security concerns the two-level interplay of the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states, and states' perceptions of each other's intentions. Political security concerns the organizational stability of states, systems of government and the ideologies that give them legitimacy. Economic security concerns access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power. Societal security concerns the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and national identity and custom. Environmental security concerns the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend.²⁸

The securitisation of Russian issues in daily public discourse certainly provides a background to the three states' security and military cultures by creating an atmosphere of 'silent knowledge' – one day they will attack. A future attack by a militarily superior Russia is generally considered to be unlikely and is doubted by many western experts, but even in the worst case scenario, Baltic defence capabilities must ensure ample time for outside powers to intervene with airstrikes against invading forces.²⁹ The military superiority of Russia certainly has an impact on the defence-related establishments and understandings in the Baltic states. The military scenario has to reflect the emerging security environment, which contains multiple possible choices. The Nordic model would work effectively in an environment similar to that of the Finnish-Soviet war of 1939-40, but is it enough? A defence that relies solely on conscription would meet difficulties in using the more sophisticated equipment that could compensate for an adversary's advantage in military personnel. Also, as the mobilisation of reservists takes time, the Nordic model might not be able to deal with a surprise attack by a militarily superior adversary.

Wallin and Andersson observe that the Shakespearian "to be or not to be" question here is not whether the Baltic states can be defended, but how they can be defended and against which contingencies they should be prepared.³⁰ This is a twofold question: which defence capabilities should be established in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; and how, taking these capabilities into account, should the international community help them if they are attacked. The issues raised by these questions include that the major investments involved would seriously impede social and economic progress in the three states and, in the case of the Nordic model, that a defence based solely on conscription must not rely on equipment that requires a higher degree of technological

28 COT Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management, et al, *Notions of Security Shifting Concepts and Perspectives*, Deliverable 1, Work package 2, 'Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society' of project financed by the European Commission under the Sixth Framework Programme (February 2007), 33-34.

29 Lars Wallin and Bengt Andersson, "A Defence Model for the Baltic States," *European Security* 10, no. 1 (2001):96.

30 Ibid.

capabilities (i.e. high-tech weapons) that cannot be operated by conscripts.³¹ According to these authors, the Baltic states are not capable of standing against a potential high-tech aggressor, who can deliver vast amounts of firepower by airstrikes and artillery systems and who can destroy targets only minutes after their detection; it would, therefore, be useful to find an asymmetric solution, which relies on small combat units capable of concealment and high mobility, instead of preparing for conventional territorial defence.³²

Differences

Cultural affiliations have had a certain impact on the political realities of the Baltic nations. In terms of military culture, Estonia remains closer to Finland and Lithuania to Poland. These peculiarities may come from their common past and cultural proximity, which have brought the understandings of the nations closer. Moreover, there are visible competing cultural models, which would encourage the development of particular military cultures. Estonia is notable with its strong commitment to conscription and a units-based reserve army system (as in Finland) which can be identified by the concepts of territorial defence and total defence, and is also strongly promoted in society. It can thus be said that Estonia tends to be more supportive of the Nordic model of military culture than of the European model, has expressed a certain degree of scepticism towards NATO's readiness to fulfil its commitments in the case of possible aggression, and values more seriously national motives for independent defence in consolidation of its society. Conversely, Latvia has moved eagerly in the direction of the European model, abolishing conscription and abandoning manpower-based reserve armies after its accession to NATO in 2004. This movement towards the European model was followed a few years later by Lithuania's, which suspended conscription in 2008 after Poland had decided to do so.

There may be slight differences in the determination of security risks between Estonia and Latvia on the one hand, and their southern neighbour Lithuania on the other. The security concerns of Estonia and Latvia are accompanied by the Russian minority issue, which has a great ability to impact the bilateral relationship between these two countries and Russia. There is a large number of Russian ethnic minorities in Estonia and Latvia and a significant number of them are or non-citizens of their country of residence, being instead either citizens of Russia or residents holding an alien's passport. The considerable number of Russian citizens has caused tensions between Russia, and Latvia and Estonia. The minorities question developed differently in Lithuania, which does not have a large Russian ethnic minority population or a substantial

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., 97.

number of ethnic Russian non-citizens, making it less susceptible to criticism on ethnic issues from Moscow. In 1991, therefore, Lithuania was able to grant citizenship to all residents living on its territory.

The border agreements between Estonia and Russia, and Latvia and Russia also have a long history of destabilising relations. Latvia has negotiated in a quieter style and dropped its demand that the 1920 treaty between it and Russia should be referred to in the preamble to the border agreement.³³ The Latvians finally reached an agreement with Russia in 2007. Estonia, however, has been more inconsistent in handling the border issue. In 1996, it dropped a reference to the Tartu Peace Treaty of 1920 in the border agreement. After the agreement had been signed by the two parties in 2005, the Estonian Parliament raised the connection with the 1920 treaty once again, adding it unilaterally to the preamble of the agreement, which has not been ratified by Russia to this day. The geopolitical situation in Lithuania differs somewhat from that in the other Baltic states, making its security environment more specific than Estonia's or Latvia's. Lithuania is the only Baltic state that has a direct land border with a NATO member (Poland). It does not border Russia in the east, but does have a border to the south-west with Russia's Kaliningrad enclave and a long eastern border with Belarus. Lithuania, though it does not border mainland Russia, has its own specific issue of the highly militarised Kaliningrad enclave, although the bilateral border treaty was signed and ratified in 1999. Transit between Kaliningrad and the main territory of Russia has been solved by a series of agreements with the exception of military transit, which is governed by rules set unilaterally by Lithuania.³⁴

The Baltic Experience of Cooperative Security: Influences on the Development of Military Cultures in the Three Baltic States

The new security environment, which emerged in the Euro-Atlantic area after the Cold War, stimulated cooperative solutions for security management. Former enemies from the bipolar world have been required to cooperate within the framework of a new non-polar security concept. Following the cooperative security approach of postmodern society, NATO had launched partnership initiatives (e.g. NACC, PfP, MD)³⁵, which aimed

33 Olav F. Knudsen, "Security on the Great Power Fringe: Dilemmas Old and New in Stability and Security," in *The Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Olav F. Knudsen (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 17.

34 Dovile Budryte, "New Initiatives in Lithuania's Foreign Policy After the Dual Enlargement," in *Global and Regional Security Challenges: A Baltic Outlook*, ed. Heli Tiirmaa-Klaar and Tiago Marques (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2006), 68.

35 North-Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) 1991-1997, replaced by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC); Partnership for Peace (PfP), launched in 1994; the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD), launched in 1995.

to establish a stable peace between different nations, some of which had been standing on the opposite shore during the long years of the Cold War. Baltic military cooperation has been closely related to such peace-oriented processes after the end of the Cold War. Baltic security and defence cooperation has been a valuable asset that forced wider Baltic cooperation. The Baltic military projects – BALTBAT, BALTRON, BALTNET, BALTDEFCOL, BALTICIS etc – have promoted close ties not only between the three states, but also between the Baltic states and their supporters. The multilateral involvement of western democracies in developing national defences in the Baltic countries should be seen as one of the most successful outcomes of the cooperative security efforts to create zones of stable peace in Europe in the last two decades.

Through the international military projects, the Baltic countries and their partners significantly contributed to the concept of cooperative security. The uniqueness of the Baltic military projects relies on their multinational character, which joined together the three nations at the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea and their partners in the Euro-Atlantic area. Besides the Baltic Sea nations, many countries outside the region also became involved in the Baltic projects due to their own security concerns about the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea and assisted the build-up of the Baltic defence systems. In order to coordinate bilateral international defence-related assistance to the Baltic states, several initiatives attempted to 'multilateralise' the assistance given to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The internationalisation of the Baltic defence-related programmes has also played an important role in the elaboration of the concept of multinationality, which has been effectively executed in international peace operations since the 1990s.

The multilateral network of cooperation in the Baltic countries has been a worthy experience, offering much to other regional cooperative security initiatives (e.g. in the Balkans and south Caucasus). Training, education, and joint exercises all had a significant impact on the emerging military cultures of the Baltic states, by enhancing their relationship with other cultures and developing their particular military thinking and conceptual capabilities. The advantage of the Baltic model is the proximity of security concerns, which stimulates a common understanding in goals, even if the ways to achieve these goals may be different. The Baltic states have become internationally more visible since the 1990s than they were in the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s. They actively participate in assisting security and defence sector reforms, especially in Central and Eastern European countries and former Soviet republics (e.g. Georgia and Ukraine) but also in crisis areas such as Iraq, Afghanistan and the Balkans.

Bandwagoning with the United States is a strategic means widely used by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in order to balance possible security threats from Russia. This may be because alliance with the United States, as the world's major military power, is considered to confer a more reliable security guarantee for the Baltic states. Good relations with the United States have also been seen as a guarantee for a stable peace in the region. As Kęstutis Paulauskas has noted, "there is a persisting belief among a considerable part of the Baltic decision makers that only the United States can stand up to and repel the re-emerging and increasingly aggressive Russian expansionism."³⁶ The accession to NATO and the European Union in 2004 has meant the establishment of a safe environment for the Baltic states. For them, 'Euro-Atlantic integration' has been seen as two sides of the same coin.³⁷ NATO should guarantee a stable security environment, while the EU should guarantee stable social and economic environments.

There have been three components related to cooperative security that have significantly influenced the development of military cultures in the Baltic states: (1) Western assistance; (2) accession to NATO; (3) participation in international peace operations. Western assistance to the building-up of Baltic defence structures also stimulated Baltic security- and defence-related cooperation through multinational international projects. The accession to NATO has obviously provided an appropriate framework for defence reforms and established indispensable guidelines for defence planning and resource management in the Baltic states. Since 1995, the Baltic states have also achieved valuable experience through participation in various peace operations, in which Baltic units served as a part of international contingents with the United States, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Norway and others.

Western Assistance

After re-establishing their independence and sovereignty, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had to create their national defence systems from scratch. They abandoned any idea of using their Soviet heritage in their armed forces and decided to follow western patterns, making the Baltic case different from other former Soviet republics, which joined the Commonwealth of Independent States. The building up of armed forces in the Baltic states benefitted from international assistance from western countries. In this respect the Baltic international defence-related projects have, by promoting multilateral cooperative security initiatives, been an example of a postmodern cultural approach towards security.

³⁶ Paulauskas, *Yesterday Came Suddenly*, 25.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

Countries with different institutional affiliations and security preferences gathered together to promote national defences in the Baltic states, thus assisting the development of a stable peace environment in the Baltic Sea region. Before NATO's Washington summit in 1999 and the involvement of the Baltic nations in NATO's Membership Action Plan, bilateral international assistance programs played a major role in building up defence systems in these countries.

The overall composition and goals of the international Baltic military projects (BALTBAT, BALTRON, BALTNET, BALTSEA, etc) both benefitted from the enhancement of the cooperative security framework in Europe and strengthened cooperation between NATO members and partners. Nevertheless, there were differences within the donor countries. Some donor countries encouraged cooperation between the three Baltic states (notably Denmark), but others had specific interests towards one or another Baltic state. Finland had a special interest to develop defence-related cooperation with Estonia, and Poland primarily prioritised military cooperation with Lithuania. According to Iğors Rajevs, the attempt to create a specific relationship between Latvia and Sweden failed for several reasons, primarily due to Latvia's movement towards NATO membership, while Sweden maintained her non-alignment.

Western assistance to the development of Baltic defence capabilities often met difficulties in ensuring that the various contributions were relevant and that funds were spent rationally and effectively, raising an urgent need for the donor countries to coordinate their efforts. In 1995, at the initiative of the United Kingdom, a process called the London Initiative was launched, which focussed on the defence management issues led by the donor Ministries of Defence (e.g. budgeting, defence planning, defence policy, defence resources management). The London Initiative did not, however, coordinate the direct military assistance carried out by donor armed forces. In 1997, Norway invited the donor countries to a meeting in Oslo and initiated a programme called the Baltic Security Assistance (BALTSEA). BALTSEA covered a broad agenda in the defence-related sector of the Baltic countries and as well as all countries of the Baltic rim except Russia, and included the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, and Canada. In total fourteen nations participated in the programme which continued until 2005, after the accession of the Baltic states to NATO.

Accession to NATO

In the 1990s, the accession to NATO of the Baltic states had been considered unrealistic by the majority of experts and politicians. The promotion of security- and defence-related cooperation between the Baltic countries, together with

an active involvement in NATO's partnership programmes, was considered an alternative to the direct security guarantees which could only be achieved through NATO membership. NATO's influence on the military cultures of the Baltic states increased in 1999, when NATO launched the Membership Action Plan for eastern European countries, including Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. All the Baltic nations were successful in integrating NATO's standards within their national defence management. The eventual accession to NATO significantly contributed to the development of military cultures in all three countries, especially with regard to physical and conceptual capabilities. The Baltic nations now had full responsibility not only for their national defence, but also for the Euro-Atlantic security environment.

But there was also a positive outcome in terms of moral capabilities, when the Baltic states experienced direct support from NATO: the current NATO Air Policing mission in the Baltics might be viewed as a symbolic successor to the Baltic international projects, but it is also a real sign of NATO's involvement in Baltic security, in which NATO provides capabilities that the Baltic states do not themselves possess. NATO's commitment to collective defence has always been regarded with some wariness in the Baltic states. Given their location at NATO's eastern borders, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have always been interested in having a visible Alliance presence on their territories, which would provide an indirect assurance of NATO's readiness to fulfil its collective defence obligations should this become necessary.

International Peace Operations

The Baltic states have participated widely in international peace operations, crisis management and humanitarian operations under the aegis of different institutions since 1995, when the first contingents were sent out to international missions. In this regard, there are no significant differences in the doctrines and practices of the three countries. The international BALTBAT project, initiated in 1994, had created a foundation for the involvement of the Baltic states in such operations and they have been willing contributors to all major NATO operations, including SFOR/IFOR, KFOR and ISAF. All three nations participated in operation Iraqi Freedom, which was carried out by a coalition of willing led by the United States and its closest allies, and which the Baltic nations joined in 2003. Estonia together with the United Kingdom, Australia, and Romania was one of the longest-serving participants in this operation, ending its mission only in 2009.

Peace operations in the 21st century are not just military efforts to win battles and conquer an adversary's territory, as was usual in the 19th century, nor are they only military efforts to create peace and end fighting between

adversaries. They are invariably accompanied by civil-military cooperation and include massive security, stabilisation, reconstruction, training, development and nation-building efforts. Very often they take place in a hostile environment, very far from NATO's or the EU's borders.³⁸ NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan, for example, exactly conforms to a type of operation that may be described as a '21st century operation'. The NATO mission includes two separate dimensions – a military one that corresponds to the fulfilment of NATO obligations, and a civilian one that corresponds to the carrying out of a donor-state role.³⁹ Lithuania's initiative in leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Ghowr province and the Estonian military contribution in the extremely unstable province of Helmand should, in this context, both be seen as valid contributions to the stabilisation of the country. The post-modern enhanced security concept recognises that peace management is something more than just military security and that post-conflict nation-building, while insurgent forces are interested in destabilisation, is just as important as war-fighting.

The Development of Military Culture in the Baltic States

The Baltic nations have many similarities in their military cultures, but their social environments may be different, producing significant differences in the value systems practised in each country. The prospects for regional military cooperation may thus be limited. Although military cooperation has been one of the most successful fields of cooperation between the three nations since their re-independence, differences in military cultures can make Baltic cooperation liquid and inconsistent.

The physical capabilities of the Baltic countries do not differ significantly from each other, but there are some dissimilarities in their military spending. In 2011, Lithuania spent only 0.91% of its GDP on defence, and Latvia 1.05% of GDP, while Estonia spent 1.73% and expects to reach the 2% NATO benchmark in 2012. 59% of the Latvian defence budget and 67% of the Lithuanian defence budget in 2011 were used for personnel, while the same number in Estonia is only 34.5%, which means that more money is available for development.⁴⁰ Estonia has been considered more

38 Kęstutis Paulauskas, "NATO at 60: Lost in Transformation," in *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review. 2009-2010*, ed. Stefano Guzzini et. al. (Vilnius: Military Academy of Lithuania, 2010), 39.

39 Egdunas Račius, "Lithuania in the NATO Mission in Afghanistan: Between Idealism and Pragmatism," in *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review, 2009-2010*, ed. Stefano Guzzini et. al. (Vilnius: Military Academy of Lithuania, 2010), 201.

40 Estonian Television, *Välisilm* (The World Abroad), 14 May 2012.

advanced economically, being the only Baltic country which has been considered eligible to join the OECD and Euro-zone. This may be one reason why it has demonstrated a constant willingness to contribute 2% of GDP to national defence. Economic troubles have, however, influenced the defence budgets of Latvia and Lithuania. The Lithuanian defence budget has been decreasing since 2000, while the economic crisis led to cuts in the Latvian defence budget from 2008. Estonia and Latvia are more eager to increase their defence budgets than is Lithuania. As Latvian Defence Minister Artis Pabriks has noted, "There is always the stress on the social, medical, educational issues, but the military spending is also an investment in the future."⁴¹

The three countries define their moral capabilities in different ways and the involvement of citizens in national defence remains specific in each of the Baltic states. Latvia and Lithuania have placed more stress on the voluntary involvement of society, while Estonia emphasises mandatory obligations on all citizens. The armed forces of the Baltic nations have, however, all been supported by the voluntary defence organisations. In Latvia and Lithuania, the voluntary defence organisations (respectively the *Zemessardze* and KASP) remain the only effective reserve components after the abolition of conscription.⁴² Lithuania's KASP is smaller than its counterpart organisations in Latvia and Estonia, containing approximately only 5 000 members. Latvia's *Zemessardze* and Estonia's *Kaitseliit* both include more than 10 000 members⁴³.

The conceptual capabilities of the three states diverged after Latvia and Lithuania decided to reform their defence forces and to transform to fully professional forces. In pursuing reforms, Latvia and Lithuania have considered the requirements of the present-day security environment and the need to guarantee participation in international peace support operations. The lack of resources has also influenced these decisions, as the two states faced difficulties in both participating in international missions and preparing all citizens for national defence.⁴⁴ While in Estonia mandatory military service has experienced overwhelming public support in polls, it has met less public support in Latvia and Lithuania. In Latvia, approximately 80% of responses supported the abolition of compulsory military service.⁴⁵

41 "Riga Conference 2011: Interview with Latvian Minister of Defence," *The Lithuania Tribune*, 19 September, 2011.

42 Aarne Ermus, "Eesti lähimad sõjalised liitlased" (Estonia's Closest Military Allies), *Diplomaatia* 80 (2010).

43 I'bid.

44 I'bid.

45 Henrik Jedig Jørgensen and Henrik Ø Breitenbauch, *What if We Gave up Conscription?* (Dansk Institute for Militære Studier, 2009), 46.

Estonia

In the 1990s, Estonian political society took its intentions to return to the West very seriously and eagerly introduced societal and economic reforms that would decrease the state's dependence on its Soviet heritage. In these years, at least, Estonia was often considered the economic frontrunner among the Baltic countries. It was the first country of the former Soviet republics to set up its own currency, begin privatisation and start to balance its trade relations between the East and the West. This more committed orientation towards the West was also revealed in defence policy, as Estonia attempted to decrease its dependency on the Soviet bloc. For example, military procurement was planned to follow western standards from the start of military reforms. At this time, Israel and the South African Republic were the only reliable options to acquire military equipment from outside the former Soviet Union, which led to a somewhat controversial and often criticised military equipment deal with the Israeli company TAAZ. During the Soviet period, the military profession had not been popular among Estonians, so only a limited number of Estonian officers had served in the Soviet Army and, according to Brigadier General Michael Clemmesen, the Soviet military culture thus had less impact on Estonian military culture than it did in the other Baltic states.

Since 1991, the public debate in Estonia has focussed on the question of whether a collective defence arrangement can be relied upon for the defence of the country or whether priority should be given to the establishment of an independent self-defence capability.⁴⁶ In the first half of the 2000s, a debate on how to organise the national defence system took place in Estonia. There were different understandings between the Ministry of Defence, which supported a more collective approach to security and the Estonian Defence Forces, which preferred the traditional Nordic model based on massive reserve armies and numerous force structures that relied mainly on manpower. The Russian threat has very often been used as an argument favouring the Nordic model, but for Estonia, this model was based on wishful thinking, and was not backed up by resource analyses.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, Estonia's defence capabilities strongly rely on conscription and the reserve component, which is trained and organised into sub-units during conscript service.⁴⁸ The concepts of total defence and primary independent self-defence are concepts that are carefully promoted in Estonian society.

46 Margus Kolga, "New Challenges to the Estonian Defence System After Accession to the Alliance," in *Global and Regional Security Challenges: A Baltic Outlook*, ed. Heli Tiirmaa-Klaar and Tiago Marques (Tallinn: Tallinn University Press, 2006), 45.

47 Ibid., 46.

48 Ibid., 55.

The Finnish model is perhaps the most traditional manifestation of the Nordic model, and Finnish military doctrines and the credibility of the Finnish military mindset have made a deep impression on Estonians, notably, according to Michael Clemmesen, on Leo Kunnas, a Finnish-educated writer with a military background, and on the long-serving Chief of Defence, Ants Laaneots. After re-gaining independence, Estonia was thus ready to adopt one component of Finnish strategic culture - their defence policy - but apparently rejected their pragmatic security policy, which aims not to interfere in and to be neutral towards East-West relations. Finland's friendlier approach towards Russia and her decisions (e.g. to support the Nord Stream gas pipeline) have been often mistrusted in Estonia. The adoption of a Finnish-style defence policy can also be explained by the extensive cooperation with Finland in the building-up of the Estonian Defence Forces in the 1990s. For the Estonian military leadership, the Finnish model of national defence was a cheap and very efficient way to build up their own defence forces.⁴⁹ Estonians also have strong emotional feelings related to the Finnish Winter War of 1939-1940 and many regard the post-war Finnish defence system as an example to follow.⁵⁰

According to Henrikki Heikka, the Finnish security model during the Cold War aimed "to maintain a credible independent defence capability in order to minimize the interest of both the Soviets and NATO regarding Finnish territory."⁵¹ Finnish military doctrine combined independent conventional deterrence based on a large motivated reserve component, and pragmatic diplomacy. After the Cold War ended, Finland continued a similar policy, at the same time becoming more visible in international cooperative security efforts, including contributing to NATO's Partnership for Peace programme and the development of the EU's security and defence policy, which had been initiated at the European Council meeting in Cologne in 1998. At the same time, Finland has continually resisted NATO membership and has followed the military doctrines based on conscription and territorial defence it adopted during the Cold War. The 1995 government's Report on Finnish Security Policy defines Finnish security policy as relying on the lessons of history and geopolitics.⁵² Historical experience and geopolitical location are also often heard in daily political discourse in Estonia, making Finland's defence approach more acceptable to Estonians than NATO's cooperative alternative.

49 Erik Männik, "Development of the Estonian Defence: Finnish Assistance," *Baltic Defence Review* 7 (2002): 39.

50 Kolga, "New Challenges to the Estonian Defence System," 45.

51 Henrikki Heikka, "Republican Realism: Finnish Strategic Culture in Historical Perspective," *Cooperation and Conflict* 40, no. 3 (2005): 92.

52 *Ibid.*, 93.

Finland gained the leading position in providing assistance to the build-up of the Estonian Defence Forces in the 1990s. The modern understandings of Finnish military culture, displaying similar security concerns in the past and today to Estonia's, had a great impact on Estonian military culture. Finland was the main contributor to Estonian military education and has trained a considerable number of Estonian officers and non-commissioned officers. In December 1992, the first Estonian non-commissioned officers graduated from the Lappeenranta Military School, and in June 1994, ten future officers of the Estonian army graduated from the Santahamina Military College, followed by the first two future naval officers in 1996 from the Finnish Naval Academy. A significant number of Estonian military leaders have passed the special Finnish training course developed for the Estonian Defence Forces leadership, and in 1996, Finland started a special counselling project led by retired Lieutenant General Pentti Lehtimäki to assist the rebuilding, training and education of the Estonian Defence Forces.

As the smallest society among the Baltic states, Estonia is highly concerned to increase its defence capabilities and strives for the maximum involvement of society in defence matters. The problems of how to maximise the participation of citizens in national defence and how big the Estonian army should be has been widely discussed within society. Estonian military thinking still lives in the shadow of Napoleonic mass armies and is concerned with preparing a sufficient amount of manpower to stand against a potential Russian attack, should the security environment change. Quantitative measures such as the size of the army or the amount of military equipment available have been highly valued in defence-related political discourse. At the same time, Estonia is ready to demonstrate its commitment to cooperative security and to NATO's collective defence through active participation in international peace operations.

The average size of the Estonian armed forces in peacetime is approximately 3 800 active duty members (1 500 of whom are conscripts). The Estonian Defence Forces Development Plan 2009-2018 specifies a decisive increase in defence capability, including early warning, intelligence, anti-aircraft, anti-tank and mechanised units.⁵³ As well as devoting considerable resources for national defence, Estonia pays attention to the military training of all male citizens. Maintaining a conscription system and preparing a large number of reserves have been considered necessary cornerstones to secure the defence capabilities of small states, ensuring sustainability of the armed forces.

53 Estonian Defence Forces and Ministry of Defence (Estonia), *Estonian Long Term Defence Development Plan 2009 – 2018* (Tallinn: Ministry of Defence, 2009), 7-10.

Conscription is enshrined in the constitution, according to which, "Estonian citizens have a duty to participate in national defence on the bases of and pursuant to procedure provided by law."⁵⁴ The duration of compulsory military service is 8 or 11 months, depending on the education level and position in the defence forces. After completion of military service, conscripts may be called up for reservist duties every five years.

There have been no fierce discussions about abolishing conscription in Estonia. Since the 1990s, compulsory military service, strongly related to military pride and honour, has been highly valued in Estonian society. Quite unlike its contemporaries in western societies, the vast majority of Estonian society believes that every citizen should serve in the Estonian army and nearly 90% of answers in public opinion polls support the continuation of compulsory service.⁵⁵ Of the major political parties, only the liberal Reform Party has suggested that it might accept a fully professionalised European model. Keeping in mind the proximity of Russia and its possible imperialistic ambitions towards Estonia, conscription and the establishment of a reserve army or mass army, together with the concepts of total defence and 'armed society' similar to the Swiss model of national defence, have been often been seen in public discourse as symbols of a greater will to fight in armed conflict. Ideas about an 'armed society' became highly popular in 1990s. Former Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo, for example, has said that, "military service is the matter of honour," where young men "learn to share values that tie our whole nation. ... Our role models have been Finland and Switzerland rather than those countries that have only a paid army. In foreseeable future we'd like to continue with the reserve army."⁵⁶

Estonia regards very painfully the possible decrease of its defence budget, which may entail the weakening of its defence capabilities. According to some military experts from the United States, Estonia, the smallest of the three Baltic nations and the only one that comes close to NATO's benchmark of 2% of GDP, is "a model alliance member."⁵⁷ Since its accession to NATO in 2004, Estonia has consistently struggled to implement the commitment made to NATO to spend 2% of GDP on its defence budget. The economic crisis delayed the achievement of this goal, which should finally be met in 2012.

Estonia intends to be a good ally to its western partners and to fulfil all commitments it has assumed. It was one of the last nations to leave Iraq in

54 *Constitution of the Republic of Estonia*, article 124, paragraph 1.

55 Turu-uuringute AS, "Avalik Arvamus ja Riigikaitse 2011" (Public Opinion and National Defence 2011).

56 Kai Joost, "Estonian mandatory conscription here to stay," *Baltic Reports*, July 12, 2010.

57 "Scars, scares and scarcity," *The Economist*, 12 May, 2011.

2009 and has sent its forces to the unstable Helmand Province in Southern Afghanistan, one of the hottest places in the fight with Taliban forces. Estonia currently contributes to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Kosovo Force (KFOR), the NATO Training mission in Iraq and the EU operation Atalanta in Somalia. In July 2009, Estonia was the largest per capita contributor in Afghanistan as the Estonian parliament had decided to send an additional motorised company to support the Afghanistan elections. The current contribution makes Estonia the fourth highest per capita contributor after the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Norway.⁵⁸

Estonia is probably the most NATO-sceptic of the three Baltic states, paying more attention to the creation of a credible independent defence. Despite this sometimes sceptical attitude towards NATO's real willingness to provide assistance to Estonia in the case of conflict, Estonia has taken its commitments to NATO very seriously. Despite its strong commitment to the Nordic model of military culture and suspicions of the European model, Estonia continues to support the transformation of NATO and the EU's CSDP in promoting cooperative security approaches for the current security environment.

Latvia

Latvia opened a discussion on accession to the European Union and NATO for the first time in 1995, when the commitment to join these organisations appeared in its Foreign Policy Concept.⁵⁹ Latvia's most important national security documents largely cover general principles and imply that Latvia does not currently face a direct military threat and that such threats are not expected to be important at least for the foreseeable future.⁶⁰ Although Latvia has similar security goals to its Baltic Allies, it has been willing to follow its own way in the build-up of its defence forces. Unlike neighbouring Estonia, which is strongly committed to conscription and a reserve army, and Lithuania, which suspended conscription for peacetime in 2008, Latvia has decided to establish its national defence on a voluntary basis – a small professional army and a voluntary Home Guard (*Zemessardze*).

This full commitment to professional armed forces means that the Latvians are more consistent supporters of the European model of military culture. Latvia started to get political signals in favour of the abolition of conscription in 2003, and in 2005 became the first Baltic state to make this change.⁶¹

58 NATO Allied Command Operations, "Estonia."

59 Airis Rikveilis, "Strategic Culture in Latvia: seeking, defining and developing," *Baltic Security and Defence Review* 9 (2007): 194.

60 Ibid.; *National Security Concept* (Latvia), adopted by the Parliament of Latvia on February 2, 2005.

61 Toomas Väli, "Mõtteid Läti ja Eesti riigikaitsest" (Reflections on Latvia's and Estonia's National Defence), *Diplomaatia* 47 (2007).

According to Colonel Igors Rajevs, the reasons for the change were: (1) economic (conscripts may be cheaper, but reserve systems require instructors, while professionalism creates a sustainable capability for development); (2) usability (a professional contingent always has resources available to fight armed conflict; and (3) quality (it is easier to achieve and sustain higher quality with professional troops, and also more cost effective over the years). Its National Armed Forces would be significantly reduced when conscription was discontinued, but the decision was seen as necessary in order to realise Latvia's strategic vision to heighten its ability to take part in international operations.⁶² Airis Rikveilis recalls that,

Another discussion concerning the formation of strategic culture in Latvia during the last years have very often focused on the polemic between the supporters and deniers of professionalization of the armed forces. In other words, the fundamental choice of defence policy makers revolves around the possibility to use either poorly motivated or relatively basically equipped conscript army or to invest available limited resources in volunteer force, the motivation of which for service goes beyond the date and time of the mandatory time at the garrison.⁶³

Minister of Defence Artis Pabriks, meanwhile, notes that Latvia has three general tasks in defence matters: territorial defence; meeting the obligations of NATO membership; and participation in international peace operations. He argues that the current system, based on voluntary forces, enables all three tasks to be completed.⁶⁴

In the Latvian national defence system, the reserve component will now be developed through a voluntary Home Guard, not through mandatory service. This decision was strongly criticised in Estonia, which considers that the Latvian decision will weaken the ability to defend not only Latvia in the case of military attack, but also its neighbours. For example, Toomas Väli has criticised Latvia's choice on the grounds that it decreased not only Latvia's territorial defence capabilities because of a lack of manpower, but also its ability to participate in international missions.⁶⁵ Latvia itself seems to be happy with its decision. As Latvia's Minister of Defence Artis Pabriks said:

We don't think we are too small to have a professional army and our current experience is quite good so we think we made the right step, it improved the quality of our forces. But it is important to understand, that if you are building professional forces, like we here, in Latvia, then you also have to develop the so called home guard service. And in this regard there is still the possibility to expand and if the home guard is well developed, then also all the positive things that people speak about the conscription are sold even better, because we

62 Jørgensen and Breitenbach, *What if We Gave up Conscription*, 2.

63 Airis Rikveilis, *Strategic Culture in Latvia*, 201.

64 Estonian Television, *Välisilm*.

65 Väli, *Mõtteid Läti ja Eesti riigikaitsest*.

see the home guard service as a possible support and also as the place, where the reserve officers, reserve soldiers and simply patriotic people can gather and improve maybe even better than they would be able conscript. So I cannot say that we have a negative experience, vice versa, we are very satisfied with it.⁶⁶

The last conscripts finished their military service on 24 November 2006 and from January 2007, the Latvian National Armed Forces have been a volunteer-based professional force.⁶⁷ The Military Service Law of 2002 provides the general framework for military service of any kind, including that of professional soldiers. The minimum contract times for personnel, which can be extended, are three years in general, and five years for officers.⁶⁸

Despite the concerns of some Allies, Latvia continues to fulfil its international military commitments. Latvia has participated in international missions since 1996. It currently takes part in the NATO-led operation ISAF in Afghanistan with units manned by volunteers – soldiers still have the option to refuse to deploy to international missions. Latvia's economic troubles have influenced its attempts to build up a capable defence system in Latvia, however, the government aims to achieve a 2% of GDP level for the defence budget by least the end of the second decade of the 21st century. After the economic slowdown of the previous decade, Latvia faced decreases in its defence budget, which dropped from 1.6% of GDP in 2006 to 1.05% in 2011. Latvia had expected to reach the 2% benchmark by the year 2013;⁶⁹ however, Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis corrected this estimation in January 2012 and said that this goal could not be reached not before the year 2020.⁷⁰

Latvia's situation is more complicated than its northern and southern neighbours. Situated in the middle of the Baltic states and not having a 'family member' on its borders as Lithuania does with Poland and Estonia with Finland, the Latvians had to manage more on their own and were more dependent on NATO's cooperative efforts and the Baltic international military projects. Latvia also faced stronger economic troubles, including a serious economic crisis from 2007-2010. While Estonia has established close contacts with Finland, and Lithuania paid more attention to cooperation with Denmark, Latvia had no dedicated donor countries. According to Igors Rajevs, Sweden was supposed to be Latvia's caretaker, but this never realised. Glen Grant argues that Latvia misjudged its security situation, expecting NATO to take

66 *Riga Conference Interview with Latvian Minister of Defence.*

67 Jørgensen and Breitenbauch, *What if We Gave up Conscription*, 35.

68 Saeima (Latvian Parliament), *Military Service Law* (2002), Section 20(3).

69 *Riga Conference Interview with Latvian Minister of Defence.*

70 Nina Kolyako, "Dombrovskis: Defence spending in Latvia to reach 2% of GDP no earlier than 2020," *The Baltic Course*, 27 January, 2012.

over the defence of new Allies, while instead NATO concentrated mostly on expensive overseas operations and paid less attention to Russia's military potential, leaving Latvia and its Baltic Allies to face their unhappy fate: "The more they appear alone and unsupported by NATO and the EU, the harder in reality they must engage in the defence and security game with allies to gain the benefits that before they thought would come so easily."⁷¹

Latvia's military culture is also probably most responsive to the trends that have dominated in NATO and EU member states over the last two decades. They prepare forces for international peace management, which demands constant training and preparedness, and pay less attention to the possibility of a direct military attack on their own sovereignty. What is peculiar to Latvia is that the voluntary reserve force, the *Zemessardze*, has a more significant role in the defence system than do the respective organisations in neighbouring Estonia and Lithuania. The *Zemessardze* is geographically divided into three regions (with centres in Liepāja, Rēzekne, and Riga). Besides infantry battalions, the *Zemessardze* includes four special battalions (air defence, artillery, WMD defence, and engineer).⁷²

Lithuania

Lithuania also made a move towards a European military culture, a few years later than Latvia, by renouncing the concept of a mass army based on conscription and heading towards a smaller professional army. The defence-related debate in Lithuania between the conservatives (Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats - HU/LCD), liberals (Movement of Liberals and Liberal and Centre Union) and leftists (Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party - LSDP) has focussed on the development and maintenance of defence capabilities. The conservatives, who tend to be more concerned with Russia's intentions, are more committed to defence issues including the increase of the defence budget, which is currently among the lowest of the NATO Allies. There are thus different security and defence policy preferences among the political parties: while HU/LCD would like to focus on homeland defence due to fears of Russia's ambitions, the LSDP prefers Lithuania to be seen as a good Ally in NATO and thus to contribute more to NATO-led operations, which was behind the decision to suspend conscription in 2008.⁷³ The two liberal parties tend to support this change. However, the current Lithuanian leadership seems unhappy

71 Glen Grant, "Baltic States Defence and Security from a Latvian Perspective. The Unhappy Reality," in *EU Strategic Challenges in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Artis Pabriks and Marika Laizane (Riga: Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, 2008), 95.

72 Ermus, *Eesti lähiimad sõjalisel liitlased*.

73 Tomas Jermalavičius, "New defence leadership in Lithuania: pitfalls and opportunities," International Centre for Defence Studies Blog, 21 November 2008.

with the decision. Lithuania's President Dalia Grybauskaitė has noted that Lithuania is possibly too small for a professional army, while Lithuania's Minister of Defence Rasa Juknevičienė has said that it was a mistake to abolish conscription.⁷⁴

Recent developments show that even if Lithuania does not plan to return to the former conscription-based system, it has decided to reform the current system. The Lithuanian political parties agreed to introduce a 12-week voluntary conscription, which gives citizens who decide to go through it certain social guarantees, for example compensation of 50% of studies in universities or preferences in further employment.⁷⁵ While this differs from the Estonian model, which emphasises compulsory national service, it follows the model of many western countries, in which voluntary military service is valued by society.

The majority of Lithuanian defence experts supported the transition from two-tier (full-time volunteers plus conscripts) to all-volunteer forces;⁷⁶ while opinion polls testified that less than half of Lithuania's citizens supported compulsory conscription.⁷⁷ Kęstutis Paulauskas describes the change in military culture thus:

Lithuanian armed forces were reorganized from a large, poorly equipped, poorly trained and immobile conscript army capable of only a limited territorial defence, into a smaller but better equipped and better prepared professional force, capable to generate and deploy certain specialized capabilities to NATO operations.⁷⁸

Nonetheless, Lithuania maintains mixed feelings about this cultural change in its military, believing that NATO's guarantees of hard security and the EU's guarantees of soft security did not produce the results they expected.⁷⁹ NATO did not quickly develop defence plans against a possible attack from the East and became overstretched in Afghanistan, while the NATO Response Force, created to strengthen the mobility and deployability of NATO's defence capabilities, is not yet operational.⁸⁰ At the same time, Lithuania is less keen to increase its military budget. President Dalia Grybauskaitė has said, for example, that it will be more important to take care of retired people than to increase spending on defence.⁸¹

74 *Riga Conference Interview with Latvian Minister of Defence.*

75 Estonian Television, *Välisilm*

76 Jermalavičius, *New defence leadership in Lithuania.*

77 Lithuanian Armed Forces, "Combined Armed Forces – discussion about the future of the Lithuanian Armed Forces," 4 August 2009.

78 Paulauskas, *NATO* at 60, 51.

79 *Ibid.*, 50.

80 *Ibid.*, 51.

81 *Riga Conference: Interview with Latvian Minister of Defence.*

Conscription has been not abolished, but was suspended on 15 September 2008. The last conscripts left the Lithuanian Armed Forces on 1 July 2009. The Lithuanian Armed Forces consist of active duty personnel, supported by reserve forces. As well as an army, Lithuania has an air force, navy, and special operations force, and has recently procured small transport aircraft, mine warfare ships, modern communications equipment, and radar systems. Search and rescue is also an important function for the Lithuanian Armed Forces, which are committed to assist national and local authorities in the event of natural disasters.⁸² All Lithuanian citizens under the age of 35 with basic education and who have not been convicted of crimes can join the armed forces. The initial service period is four years, which can be renewed. There is also an option to join the forces as a part-time volunteer.⁸³

Lithuania has a long record of participation in international operations starting from 1994. In 2005, it found a new pattern for its contribution to international peace operations, taking over responsibility for the entire Ghawr province in Afghanistan. The Government approved a strategy that will guarantee the country's continued support to Afghanistan until 2013. This strategy aims to maintain the current level of military contribution and to enhance civilian efforts. In addition to contributing to the NATO mission in Iraq, Lithuania has sent a platoon-sized unit to support the KFOR mission under a Polish-Ukrainian Battalion.⁸⁴ The limited resources in the defence budget have recently produced contrasting feelings about Lithuania's contribution to international peace operations. The debate about the two dimensions of Lithuania's contribution to the NATO mission in Afghanistan – the military obligations that correspond to the fulfilment of NATO's goals and the civilian obligations that correspond to the carrying out of the donor-state role – has resurfaced among politicians.⁸⁵

The logic of Lithuanian military culture has been influenced by neighbouring Poland. Because of their common past and cultural similarity, in the 1990s Lithuania occasionally considered the option of close cooperation with the Central and Eastern European region as an alternative to Baltic cooperation. In this regard, the former Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Algirdas Saudargas, has observed that, "Lithuania's strategic partnership with Latvia and Estonia was agreed long ago, however such cooperation may sometimes not seem

82 NATO Allied Command Operations, "Lithuania".

83 Lithuanian Armed Forces, *Military Service*.

84 NATO Allied Command Operations, "Lithuania".

85 Egdunas Račius, "Lithuania in the NATO Mission in Afghanistan," in *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review. 2009-2010*, ed. Stefano Guzzini et. al. (Vilnius: Military Academy of Lithuania, 2010), 201.

beneficial.”⁸⁶ The common past and cultural closeness may facilitate security- and defence-related cooperation between Lithuania and Poland and there is an obvious tendency to strengthen the relationship between the two neighbours, which have similar security concerns as well as a common institutional environment. Many Lithuanian politicians have seen cooperation with Poland as a means of direct access to the European and transatlantic structures: Poland joined NATO in 1999, five years before Lithuania, and the lessons of the Polish experience were valuable to the Lithuanians in organising their own defence structures according to NATO’s requirements.

Similarly to the Estonian-Finnish case, defence cooperation between Lithuania and Poland made rapid progress in the 1990s, “resulting in the establishment of a Polish-Lithuanian peacekeeping battalion, a common airspace system, and the organisation of joint military exercises.”⁸⁷ Andrius Krivas has written that, “successful Polish-Lithuanian military cooperation is one of the most vivid expressions of strategic partnership between Poland and Lithuania, and the Ministries of National Defence and Armed Forces of the respective countries are particularly proud of this fact.”⁸⁸ After 1998, Lithuania connected cooperation with Poland with its own aspirations to become a NATO member.⁸⁹ Poland has donated military materiel to Lithuania and Lithuanian military personnel have been trained in Polish military training institutions. Since 1999, a Lithuanian platoon has participated in the KFOR mission in Kosovo as a part of the Polish contingent.⁹⁰ Among other priority areas, Krivas also mentions air space surveillance and control, experience from joining NATO and participation in multilateral military cooperation forums with prospective areas such as scientific research in the field of defence, defence industry, joint procurement, international arms control policy, and European Union integration processes.⁹¹ Successful security- and defence-related cooperation would also be an important factor to help overcome some tensions in the bilateral relationship, which have arisen from the two countries’ common past (e.g. the Polish minority in Lithuania, and the ‘older brother complex’).

While Latvia is firmly pursuing the European model of military culture and Estonia is committed to the Nordic model, Lithuania is experiencing an

86 Wojciech Zajackowski, “Polish-Lithuanian relations: the complexities on geopolitics,” in *The Effects of Enlargement on Bilateral Relations in Central and Eastern Europe*, Chaillot Paper 26, ed. Monika Wohlfeld (Paris: Institute for Security Studies of the Western European Union, 1997), 15.

87 Ibid., 15.

88 Andrius Krivas, “Lithuanian-Polish Military Cooperation,” *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 7 (2001).

89 Ibid.

90 A Lithuanian contingent was also a part of the Polish Division in Central Iraq during operation *Iraqi Freedom*.

91 Krivas, *Lithuanian-Polish Military Cooperation*.

internal struggle in which the conservatives support the Nordic model and the social democrats tend to be more comfortable with the European model. As the majority of the community of defence experts supported the change, Lithuania is unlikely to reverse course and bring back conscription. However, the conservative administration has introduced a basic training course which is filled with volunteers, with a provision for a mandatory draft if all slots are not filled. Many successful graduates from this course are offered contracts of professional service, while others are assigned to the active reserve. This measure was introduced as a way to enhance the recruitment of privates, with which the armed forces struggled after the transition to an all-volunteer format. According to Tomas Jermalavičius, this move also revealed the uneasiness of the current administration with the previous administration's decision to suspend conscription.

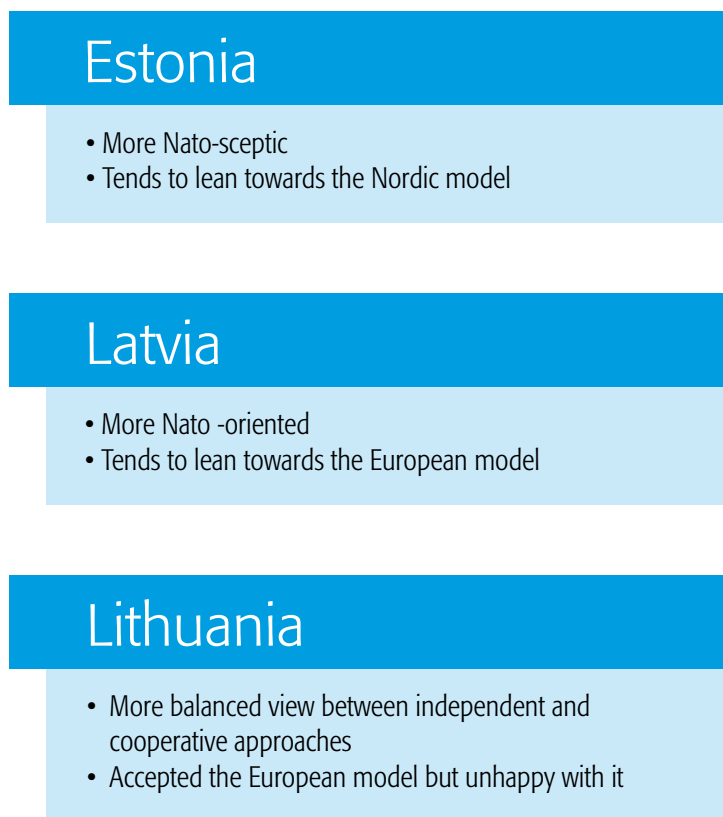
Conclusions

The three Baltic states form a specific security environment with shared or similar security concerns but they each display different types of military culture in their approaches to the problem of building up their defence systems. In security terms, Russia has been and probably will continue to be an unnamed and unpredictable security concern for all the Baltic states. This commonly identified concern makes the establishment of a cooperative regime in the region much easier. Nonetheless, their differing responses aimed at managing possible challenges make these countries distinctive from each other. These differences will often appear due to differences in Baltic military cultures, prompting the question: is Baltic unity in defence matters a necessary precondition for maintaining a stable peace in the region, or can the three countries succeed in the 'unhappy reality' of different military cultures?

Each Baltic country follows a different model of military culture (see Figure 2). Estonia highly values the moral capabilities inherent to armed forces and has made strong commitments to build up credible physical capabilities – the benchmark requirement of 2% of GDP for national defence has been declared to be a priority by all governments. Estonia has also tended to be more NATO-sceptic, and the readiness of NATO to defend the Baltics has been regarded with some doubt. The concepts of primary independent self-defence and total defence have been taken seriously, with the aim of bringing together the maximum number of people from society for the defence of country in the case of a military attack. Latvia has been the only Baltic country to completely change its defence structure to that of a small professional army and a strong

voluntary organisation – the *Zemessardze*. Although this decision has sometimes strongly been criticised by its neighbours, especially in Estonia, the Latvians themselves seem to be happy with the system. Of the three Baltic states, Lithuania has built probably the strongest military capability, although it has difficulties in increasing its defence budget to the 2% of GDP level, which is often used as a ‘mantra’ in defence-related discourses. Lithuania suspended conscription in 2008 and moved towards a professional army in peacetime, but there are still discussions in society about the impact of this decision.

Figure 2: Three Models of Military Culture in the Baltic States



The different choices of the three Baltic countries illustrate the security- and defence-related debate of the whole of Europe. Supporters of the European model of military culture base their views on the current security environment, which in Europe is stable, has for a long time been without polarity between different powers, and in which armed forces are able to deal with peace

operations all around the world. This requires professional, well-trained and deployable units, which are capable of performing a greater number of and more complex international tasks than conscript-based forces. Supporters of the Nordic model appeal to historical experience, which would predict the return of polarities in the international system. They would therefore wish to create a credible homeland defence with the maximum involvement of society in defence matters. In the case of the Baltic states, the enduring fear of the imperialistic ambitions of an unstable and authoritarian-leaning Russia is the major concern which drives the desire to keep reserve forces as large as possible in order to stand against the feared massive land-attacks. This strategy thus stresses possible changes in the security climate.

The individual choices of countries in their defence systems reflect attitudes within their societies. Estonian society is more concerned about the possibility of an attack from Russia, which is based on historical memory, and thus expects a credible homeland defence with the involvement of the whole society to be the primary task of its armed forces. Latvia stresses its international obligations as fulfilled in the current security environment through international peace operations, and has chosen the way of professional armed forces with the voluntary contribution of citizens through its Home Guard. Lithuanian society's opinion is more divided, with the conservative side preferring homeland defence to be prioritised and the liberal and left elements emphasising professionalisation. In terms of military culture, the main difference between the three states is expressed conceptually – in the ways in which they have chosen to build up their defence systems. All three countries are committed to raising their military spending to 2% of GDP, and to participating in international peace operations. Thus there are no significant differences in the physical and moral elements.

In sum, the Baltic region has formed a kind of balance between two models of military culture. The European model has become the dominant model for NATO members in recent years. Of the three Baltic states, Latvia is strongly committed to the European model and Estonia to the Nordic model. While Lithuania leans towards the European model, its movement has been inconsistent and the current Lithuanian political trends cast doubt on the decisions made in this direction.

While articles addressing Baltic security issues, especially those which concern the three states' relationship with Russia, can be frequently found in academic research, the comparative analysis of Baltic military cultures is still not well covered and requires further research. The reality is that

although the Baltic countries have chosen their own ways to build up their defence capabilities, this does not eliminate the need for security- and defence-related cooperation between them. The fact that each of these countries has preferred to develop different defence models, and to practise distinctive military cultures should not alter the chances of a stable and cooperative security environment in the region. Every nation has the privilege to make its own choices, and is unworthy to criticise the choices of others. If Latvia can succeed in building a credible reserve force through the *Zemessardze*, its defence capability can be sustainable. If Lithuania can overcome the dissonances between different political forces and create a credible defence with more limited resources, it will have lessons that can be shared with its neighbours. If Estonia is successful in developing a defence capability through a Nordic model of military culture, it too will have much to learn from.

Differences in military cultures do not, however, have a significant impact on the security cultures of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which retain many similarities. The three states' security understandings do not contradict each other. The influence of NATO, and later the EU, has been noticeable in the process of building up their defence forces. The Baltic nations have thus been active contributors to the cooperative security initiatives of the postmodern world, participating in major peace operations, supporting NATO's transformation processes and the development of the EU's CSDP framework, and contributing to NATO and EU initiatives such as the NATO Response Force and the EU Battle Groups.

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Supreme Command and Control of the Armed Forces: the Roles of Presidents, Parliaments, Governments, Ministries of Defence and Chiefs of Defence

“We have a habit in Estonia to have one president at a time.”²

Lennart Meri

“Behind me are 17 thousand armed men, and I find it hard to predict their reaction if I will not become at least the Minister of the Interior.”³

Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis

“There is only one captain of a ship.”⁴

Alar Laneman

“I as the head of the Government am a guarantee of stability in the country.”⁵

Aigars Kalvītis

1 I am grateful to the following for their guidance and advice: Lauri Almann, Colonel (ret.) Juris Amess, Brigadier General Andis Dilāns, Tomas Jermalavičius, Major General (ret.) Jonas Kronkaitis, Major General (ret.) Vello Loemaa, Colonel (ret.) Guntis Porietis, Henrik Praks, Colonel (ret.) Lars Ramström, Dr. Hain Rebas, Edgars Rinkēvičs, Dr. Vaidotas Urbelis, and Dr. Dainius Žalimas.

2 In Estonian, “Eestile on kombeks üks president korraga.” Estonian President Lennart Meri, in 1993, when democratic control was at its very beginnings in Estonia, and when the President was ready to fight for his rights and devote his energy to turning a newly independent Estonia into a democratic and just republic. There is even a song composed with this sentence as a refrain. Toomas Sildam. “Ta ei jätnud kahtlust: Eestile on kombeks üks president korraga” (He left no doubt: we have a habit in Estonia to have one president at a time) *Postimees*, 15 March, 2006.

3 In Latvian, “Man aiz muguras ir 17 tūkstoši bruņotu vīru, un man grūti prognozēt viņu reakciju, ja es nekļūšu vismaz par iekšlietu ministru.” Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis, Chief of Staff of the Zemessardze (Latvia's voluntary reserve) to a meeting of the Latvian Parliament in 1993.

4 Attributed to Alar Laneman, then Chief of General Staff who, while disappointed that he was not selected as Commander of the Defence Forces in 2006, expressed his acceptance of the new chain of command in Estonia. United States State Department (US Embassy Tallinn), *Estonia: Lanneots (sic) Appointed as New ChoD*, Cable 06TALLINN1091, 11 December 2006.

5 In Latvian, “Es kā valdības vadītājs esmu garants stabilitātei valstī”. Latvian Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis, interviewed on Latvian National Television on 11 March 2007.

Introduction

The Baltic states have developed their armed forces and defence systems over a very short period of time following the principle of 'learning by doing'. This chapter examines one aspect of this process: supreme command and control of the armed forces in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It aims to identify the major factors influencing the development of the democratic control of the armed forces of the Baltic states during the last 20 years. To do so, it explores how the chain of command at the strategic level (including the president, parliament, government, minister of defence and chief of defence) was established in the 1990s and how it has developed in the years since.

The general principle of democratic control of the armed forces is to ensure democracy and the rule of law. Democratic control of the armed forces is a precondition for ensuring that: the political supremacy of the democratically elected civilian authorities is respected; the rule of law and human rights are safeguarded; the armed forces serve the interests of the population and enjoy popular support and legitimacy; the policies and capabilities of the military are in line with the country's political objectives and commensurate with its resources; and the military is not misused for political purposes.⁶ In support of this principle, the chain of command generally runs from the parliament through the government (including the minister of defence) and exercises command and control over the armed forces structures, which are headed by the chief of defence.

In the following chapter I will consider the origins of and bases for the chains of command in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, i.e. each country's starting point in the establishment of control over its armed forces. I will then look at the various historic events in each country that were essential for, and served as turning points in, the development of the concept of democratic control of the armed forces, and explain the processes of relationship building in the chain of command at the strategic level. At the end of the chapter, I will outline the similarities and differences in the three Baltic states and identify the major (internal) factors that shaped the development of democratic control of their armed forces. There is a general perception that the processes of developing the three states' armed forces from scratch and shaping their democratic control ran smoothly. The evidence from the study presented

6 Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, *Democratic Control of Armed Forces*, DCAF Backgrounder (Geneva: DCAF, 2008), 3.

here suggests that the development has, indeed, been largely evolutionary, but has seen at least some revolutionary features.

The statements quoted at the head of this chapter were made by influential officials. The first two date from the early 1990s, when there was not much thought about the concept of democratic control of the armed forces; these snapshots thus reflect the starting point in all three Baltic states as they sought the right formula for supreme command and control of their armed forces. The second two are from a later period, when concepts of democratic control were better established.

Estonia

The Constitution of Estonia

The Constitution of Estonia, which was passed by referendum on 28 June 1992 and entered into force on 3 July 1992, represents an attempt to find a middle way in Estonia's governance, avoiding both the weaknesses of the 1920 parliamentary democracy and the authoritarianism of 1934-1938. It envisages a parliamentary and democratic republic in which the President has limited power, and executive power rests with the Government.

Chapter X, on defence, is the exception because it gives significant powers to the President over the armed forces – the eventual amendment of this chapter, in 2011 (discussed below) is perhaps one of the key turning points in the development of democratic control of the armed forces in Estonia. Due to their lack of competence in the areas of the military and civil control, the drafters of the 1992 Constitution simply took many of the defence-related paragraphs directly from the 1938 constitution.⁷ Notably, the 1938 Constitution prescribed the establishment of an authoritarian state order in Estonia. Chapter X of the 1992 Constitution thus prescribed that the President has power over the defence sector without giving any say to the Government, showing clearly that the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF) are insufficiently subordinated to civil control, and that the Government might be unable to exercise its executive power in the event of a crisis. The Government, and in particular, the Minister of Defence, was left out of the chain of command at the strategic level, although the Minister was made accountable for the armed forces to the *Riigikogu* (the Parliament of Estonia).

The Constitution further prescribed that the *Riigikogu*, on the proposal of the President, appoints to office the Commander (peace-time) or

7 Merle Maigre, "Civil-Military Relations in Estonia," *Diplomaatia* 39 (2006).

Commander-in-Chief (war-time) of the Defence Forces, and can decide upon the use of the defence forces in the fulfilment of international obligations.⁸ The *Riigikogu* declares a state of emergency in the state, on the proposal of the President or the Government; and on the proposal of the President, the *Riigikogu* declares a state of war, and orders mobilisation and demobilisation.⁹ A member of the *Riigikogu* also has the right to put inquiries to the Commander or Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces.¹⁰

Obviously, the *Riigikogu* had much less power than the President who is the supreme commander of the national defence of Estonia.¹¹ It is the President who makes proposals to the *Riigikogu* to declare a state of war, to order mobilisation and demobilisation and declare a state of emergency.¹² In case of aggression against Estonia, the President declares a state of war, orders mobilisation, and appoints the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces.¹³ According to the Constitution the President makes proposals to the *Riigikogu* for appointments to the offices of Commander or Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces¹⁴. And on the proposal of the Government and the Commander of the Defence Forces, the President appoints to and releases from office the leadership of the armed forces;¹⁵ and confers state awards, and military and diplomatic ranks.¹⁶

The Constitution, however, is rather sparse on the role of the Government in the defence and security area. It merely states that the Government can declare an emergency situation in the case of a natural disaster or a catastrophe, or to prevent the spread of an infectious disease.¹⁷

Through Chapter X of the Constitution, the Estonian President was given unique powers and direct supervision of the armed forces. This is clearly inconsistent with the intention to establish democratic control of the armed forces. Notably, the Constitution says little on the role of the Government and its relationship with the President and with the Commander of the Defence Forces; this was later to cause problems of interpretation and be a subject for political games.

8 *Constitution of the Republic of Estonia* (1992), paragraph 65(7) and paragraph 128.

9 *Ibid.*, paragraph 65(14), 65(15) and paragraph 129.

10 *Ibid.*, paragraph 74.

11 *Ibid.*, paragraph 72(16) and paragraph 127.

12 *Ibid.*, paragraph 72(17).

13 *Ibid.*, paragraph 72(18) and paragraph 128.

14 *Ibid.*, paragraph 72(11) and paragraph 127.

15 *Ibid.*, paragraph 72(14).

16 *Ibid.*, paragraph 72(15).

17 *Ibid.*, paragraph 87(8).

Towards or Away from Democratic Control of the Armed Forces?

The drafting of the Peace-Time Defence Act began in 1993, with the Constitution as its basis. The aim of this Act was to stipulate the organisation of defence and establish the responsibilities of the main institutions within defence. The then Commander of the Defence Forces – Aleksander Einseln – was himself heavily involved in the drafting process and according to Lauri Almann, a former Permanent Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defence, even hired a private law firm to support him during the drafting process. The Government's clear intention was that the Act would put the Commander of the Defence Forces under the executive branch, and thus subordinate him to the Minister of Defence without an amendment to the Constitution. However, this did not turn out as intended.

The Act, adopted on 6 February 1995, stated that the institutions responsible for state defence are the *Riigikogu*, the President, the Government and the Commander of the Defence Forces (in the case of war, the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces). The President was named as supreme commander of the defence forces, while the Minister of Defence was left out altogether.¹⁸ The Commander of the Defence Forces was named as the head of the defence forces of Estonia in peace-time and, in case of aggression against Estonia, would be appointed by the President as the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces in war-time.¹⁹

According to the War-Time National Defence Act adopted in the same year, the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces alone commands and leads military actions using all the assigned military branches, units and means.²⁰ He is directly subordinated to the President, who is the supreme commander, and reports to the *Riigikogu*.

The 1995 Act also listed the powers and responsibilities of the President as stipulated by the Constitution, namely: the powers to appoint and dismiss the Commander and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces; promulgation of a state of war, state of emergency, mobilisation and demobilisation; appointment and dismissal of the leadership of the defence forces (Chief of the General Staff, Commander of the *Kaitseliit* (Defence League – Estonia's voluntary defence organisation) and commanders of the services) on the proposal of the Government and the Commander of the Defence Forces; and

18 *Riigikogu* (Estonian Parliament), *Rahuaaja riigikaitse seadus* (Peace-Time National Defence Act) (1995), paragraphs 6(1) and 6(2).

19 *Ibid.*, paragraphs 8(1) and 8(5).

20 *Riigikogu* (Estonian Parliament), *Sõjaaja riigikaitse seadus* (War-Time National Defence Act) (1995), paragraph 12.

awarding officers and conferring ranks upon them, again on the proposal of the Commander of the Defence Forces. Besides issues of democratic control, this is interesting from another point of view: namely that the President has no say over financial means, even though every rank or promotion influences the defence budget.

The Government's main responsibility according to the War-Time National Defence Act is to prepare the state for defence, including by coordinating the work of the ministries and local municipalities that is relevant to national defence, organising the necessary acquisitions, organising evacuation, ensuring search and rescue functions, and developing communications for defence needs.²¹ In addition, in accordance with paragraph 14(2) of the Peace-Time National Defence Act, the Government has the right to issue orders to the Commander of the Defence Forces to employ the defence forces in case of a natural disaster or catastrophe, to prevent the spread of an infectious disease, to liquidate an armed terrorist group, or to guarantee national security.

President Lennart Meri, who by nature was confrontational and very eager to retain his powers, was alert to the contents of these acts. On several occasions, he entered into legal proceedings with the Government and the *Riigikogu* over their interpretation and the institutional competences they specified.

Fight for Power – the President versus the Government

The first – but not the last – constitutional case initiated by President Meri was in 1993, when he declared the unconstitutionality of the National Coats of Arms Act. Meri argued that:

the keeping of the state seal with the State Secretary ... subordinates the head of state, through the State Secretary, to the control of the Government of the Republic, and making the head of state dependent on the Government of the Republic violates the principle of balanced activities and separation of powers between the President of the Republic and the Government of the Republic, established in ... the Constitution."²²

Of course, this case has no relevance to democratic control of the armed forces, but does serve to illustrate President Meri's personality and his eagerness to clarify issues in great detail.

More closely related to the field of defence and security, in a dispute concerning The President of the Republic Rules of Procedure Act, passed

21 Ibid., paragraph 14(9)-14(21).

22 Supreme Court of Estonia, *Constitutional Judgment III-4/A/1/93*, 22 June 1993. The Court dismissed the President's petition.

by the *Riigikogu* on 3 May 1994, the President declared that it was unconstitutional for the Prime Minister to determine whether an issue amounted to a matter of 'urgent state need'. According to the Constitution, the President has the right, in matters of urgent state need, "to issue decrees which have the force of law and which shall bear the countersignatures of the Chairman of the *Riigikogu* and the Prime Minister."²³ In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution does not indeed give the Prime Minister the right to make a preliminary decision as to whether there is a matter of urgent state need.²⁴ The President was right and the Act was declared unconstitutional. Another example was the President's petition to the Supreme Court on the Decorations Act, which allowed the President to bestow decorations only on the basis of propositions made by the Committee on Decorations. The President argued, and the Supreme Court agreed, that this excluded the President's constitutional right to bestow state awards on his own initiative; this Act was also declared to be unconstitutional.²⁵

One of the most significant disputes between the President and the Government, however, took place in 1994 when the President refused to sign the Peace-Time National Defence Act, which he deemed to be unconstitutional. After the *Riigikogu* had passed the Act on 28 September 1994, Meri claimed that its provision allowing the Government to issue orders to the Commander of the Defence Forces to employ the defence forces in case of a natural disaster or catastrophe, to prevent the spread of an infectious disease, to liquidate an armed terrorist group, or to guarantee national security, was in conflict with the Constitution. He argued that only the President, as the supreme commander of national defence, was entitled to issue orders to the Commander of the Defence Forces regarding the use of the defence forces.

The petition of the President was considered by the Supreme Court, who looked at the case from the perspective of fundamental rights and freedoms, analysing the use of force in peace-time and during a state of emergency, and concluding that the Peace-Time National Defence Act did not sufficiently regulate the activities of the state authorities in situations when there is a danger to the state's security. The judgment of the Supreme Court was "to declare the Peacetime National Defence Act, passed by the *Riigikogu* on 8 November 1994, unconstitutional."²⁶ However, it concluded that,

23 *Constitution of the Republic of Estonia* (1992), paragraph 109.

24 Supreme Court of Estonia, *Constitutional Judgment III-4/A-4/94*, 13 June 1994.

25 Supreme Court of Estonia, *Constitutional Judgment III-4/A/3/94*, 18 February 1994.

26 Supreme Court of Estonia, *Constitutional Judgment III-4/A-11/94*, 21 December 1994.

It is not consistent with the spirit of the Constitution that the President of the Republic gives orders to the Commander of the Defence Forces bypassing the Government of the Republic, who is entitled to execute the domestic and foreign policies of the state. The use of defence forces in peacetime for the protection of national security is a political question, which can not be decided bypassing the Government of the Republic. The principles established by paras 1 and 4 of the Constitution, and the functions and authority vested in the Government and in the President by the Constitution, requires balanced cooperation of these two institutions.²⁷

Despite this conclusion, and the fact that the Act was amended accordingly before being finally adopted in 1995, the direct link between the President and the Commander of the Defence Forces was actively used in the following years. When the relationship between the Minister of Defence and the Commander did not work because of mutual hostility the Commander could – and did – turn to the President.

In addition to the disagreements between the President and the Government, Johannes Kert, while Commander of the Defence Forces even claimed that he had the status of another constitutional body, alongside the legislative, executive and judicial powers. Between 1998 and 2007, this issue dominated Estonia's discussions on civil-military relations and on the roles and responsibilities of the various actors.²⁸ It is a great risk to democracy when the Commander of the Defence Forces claims to be an independent institution and thus, during this period, Estonia was at risk of moving away from establishing effective democratic control of its armed forces.

These various disputes and the subsequent judgments demonstrated both the weaknesses and strengths of the Estonian system. The main weakness was that the spirit of Chapter X of the Constitution was not in line with the spirit of the rest of the Constitution. This later led to discrepancies in the legislation. The main strength was the sense and justice of the legal system.

Personalities Matter

On 11 September 1997, during a training manoeuvre in the Kurkse Strait, 14 Estonian soldiers of the Baltic Battalion drowned.²⁹ The Commander of the Defence Forces, Johannes Kert, submitted his resignation to the President, who refused it. This tragic event shattered the EDF and led many authorities

27 Ibid., 6.

28 See, for example: Eesti Vabariigi põhiseaduse ekspertiisikomisjoni (Estonian Constitution Expert Commission), *Lõpparuanne* (Final Report) (Tallinn: Ministry of Justice, 1998) (analyses the constitutional institutions and their competences and identifies legal gaps, inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the Constitution); Office of the President of the Republic (Estonia), "Interview of the President of the Republic to Eesti Päevaleht July 7, 2000," in *Speeches of the President of the Republic, 1992-2001* (Lennart Meri on the dismissal of Johannes Kert); Presidency of Estonia, "President of the Republic at the Session of the Riigikogu 15 May 2007" (Toomas Hendrik Ilves' explanatory statement on the amendments to the Constitution).

29 Joan Lofgren, "Estonia. Back to Europe," in *The Challenge of Integration. East West Institute Annual Survey of Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union 1997* (Armonk NY: M E Sharpe, 1998), 142.

to think not only about the reasons for it, but also about the issue of the chain of command; the roles of the Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Defence Forces were placed under serious consideration.

Within two years another incident occurred, when the Acting Chief of the Special Operations Group of the defence forces carried out an armed robbery, followed by a shooting in which several persons were injured.³⁰ The highest state authorities concluded that control over the staff of the regular armed forces and the *Kaitseliit* needed to be strengthened, and that the overall concept of democratic control of the armed forces was not complete. Kert once again handed his resignation to the President, who once again refused it.

Shortly after this incident, Kert was sent on a year-long study trip to the US Army War College, in Pennsylvania. Urmas Roosimägi and later Märt Tiru were appointed as acting Commanders. Interestingly enough, while he was outside the country, Kert remained legally the Commander of the Defence Forces as the legislative acts did not prescribe the appointment of an acting commander as a temporary replacement. This gave a fresh impetus for political games and interpretations.

President Meri dismissed Kert from the position of Commander of the Defence Forces on 30 June 2000, and nominated Tarmo Kõuts, the head of the Border Guard, as his replacement. The nomination apparently reflected the compromise choice of the *Riigikogu*.³¹ A lively debate and vote on Kert's dismissal took place in the *Riigikogu* on 28 August 2000.³² In the discussions, President Meri emphasised that Kert's behaviour was 'inconsistent' with civil control. Kert, in his reply, gave a 'politician's speech', indicating all his achievements; in drafting this he was advised and assisted by the Reform Party, leading some to accuse him of playing politics with the military.³³ The *Riigikogu* vote was almost even – 47 votes for and 46 votes against Kert's dismissal – and there was still ambiguity around this outcome. A crossover vote from Tõnu Kauba, a member of the opposition Centre Party, sealed the fate of Kert: instead of voting 'against' as was the line of the Centre Party, Mr. Kauba voted 'for'. For this, Kauba apologised publicly, and on the next morning he was also dismissed from the Centre Party's parliamentary faction.³⁴

30 Mel Huang, "Estonia's Year in Defence: 2000," in *Baltic Security in 2000*, ed. Graeme P. Herd and Mel Huang (Camberley: Conflict Studies Research Centre, 2001), 35.

31 Mel Huang, "Estonia's Military Musical Chairs Continue," *Central Europe Review* 2, no.29 (4 September 2000).

32 *Riigikogu, VIII Riigikogu Stenogramm, Erakorraline Istungjätk, Esmaspäev, 28. august 2000, kell 12:00* (Verbatim record of the VIII Riigikogu extraordinary session, Monday, 28 August 2000, 1200).

33 Huang, "Estonia's Military Musical Chairs Continue".

34 Ibid.

President Meri appointed three acting Commanders in a little over a year,³⁵ and offered demotion to Kert in the hope of solving the problem, before finally dismissing him. Commenting at the time on this sorry affair, Mel Huang concludes that,

the point of having civilian control of the military is to have a professional and non-political military capable of doing the job of national defence at the command of the popularly elected government. It is certainly not to be belittled as an institution that knows nothing about reforming itself, when its very core is being toyed around by civilian 'controllers'.³⁶

'Toying around', however, was not on the agenda, as Kert's eventual successor Tarmo Kõuts and the Minister of Defence Jürgen Ligi (who served from 2005-2007, and was the fifth defence minister since 2000) could not even develop working relations. The two had a publicly hostile relationship, which resulted in a lack of information sharing, and different priorities between the Ministry of Defence and the EDF, damaging morale in both institutions.³⁷

The terminology also added to the political games and possibilities for (mis) interpretation. In Estonian *Juhtimine* defines many aspects of management, such as, commanding, controlling, leading, conducting and directing. President Meri referred to himself and was addressed as the 'supreme commander of the defence forces' or of 'state defence'. When Arnold Rüütel was elected President, this terminology was used more and more rarely due to political resistance from some quarters. Terminologically, the President became instead the 'supreme head of state defence'.

Rüütel was inaugurated as President on 8 October 2001. Importantly, between 1991 and 1992, he had been a member of the Constitutional Assembly drafting the Constitution of Estonia; and from 1994 to 2000, was chairman of the centre-right Estonian Rural People's Party (called, since 1999, the Estonian People's Union) then one of the largest of Estonia's political parties.³⁸ The new President created a position in his Chancellery for a military adviser, who was able to facilitate and strengthen the direct link between the President and the Commander of the Defence Forces.

A Window of Opportunity

In 2001, under the guidance of the Minister of Defence Jüri Luik, another attempt was made to define the armed forces and the Commander of the Defence Forces as part of the executive branch, and to lay down the

35 Urmas Roosimägi for 6 months, Märt Tiru also for 6 months, and Aarne Ermus.

36 Mel Huang, "The Ups and Downs of Musical Chairs," *Central Europe Review* 2, no.27 (10 July 2000).

37 US State Department (US Embassy Tallinn), *Estonia: Lanneots (sic) Appointed as New ChoD.*

38 Presidency of Estonia, "Arnold Rüütel."

relationships within the strategic chain of command of Estonia's national defence system. A new version of the Peace-Time National Defence Act was drafted, specifying in detail the responsibilities of the President, Government, Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Defence Forces in both peace-time and in national defence during a state of war.³⁹

The importance of this Act lies in the fact that the balanced cooperation of the President and the Government was legally established. Under the section describing the competence of the President, it is stated that the acts issued by the President as supreme commander of the national defence would be implemented by the Government. The President would, in the event of war, appoint the Commander-in-Chief; and, after hearing the opinion of the Defence Council, the President could make a proposal to the *Riigikogu* on the appointment and dismissal of the Commander or Commander-in-Chief.⁴⁰

In its exercise of executive power in national defence matters the Government is responsible for: security policy and defence strategy documents; carrying out mobilisation; in cooperation with the Ministers of Defence and Internal Affairs deciding on the acquisition of the means necessary for national defence; and establishing the structure of the defence forces.⁴¹ The Act also implies that the Government and the Minister of Defence exercise supervision and control over the Commander of the Defence Forces, as it gives the Minister of Defence the right to "issue regulations and directives on the basis of law for implementation by the Defence Forces and the National Defence League."⁴²

The peace-time Commander of the Defence Forces is the head of the defence forces and: has the right to meet with the President and the *Riigikogu* and the duty to answer their questions; is accountable to the Government and the Minister of Defence and is their highest military adviser; proposes to the Government to appoint to and release from office the leadership of the defence forces; controls budgetary resources; supervises and controls the national defence system; and oversees the compliance of subordinates with legislation and deals with complaints of subordinates if they are not covered by the legislation.⁴³ The Act also thus succeeded in regulating the legal position of the armed forces, including by establishing that the Minister

39 *Riigikogu* (Estonian Parliament), *Peace-Time National Defence Act* (2002).

40 *Ibid.*, paragraphs 3(2) and 3(3).

41 *Ibid.*, paragraph 5.

42 *Ibid.*, paragraph 4(2).

43 *Ibid.*, paragraph 14(3).

of Defence would exercise supervisory control over the Commander of the Defence Forces.⁴⁴

The Minister of Defence Jüri Luik was heavily criticised by the *Riigikogu*'s Defence Committee chairman Tiit Tammsaar for trying to turn the defence forces' commander into a *de facto* adviser to the defence minister.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, because the Constitution was unchanged and because there were no provisions proscribing, for example, how the Minister might challenge a decision of the Commander of the Defence Forces, the position of the Commander of the Defence Forces itself was not fully resolved.

Closing the Loop?

After the presidential election of 2006, the newly elected President Toomas Hendrik Ilves took a great political risk and put forward changes to the Constitution. The President's proposed amendment would take away his power to appoint the Commander and Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces. While he would retain the title of supreme commander, the direct subordination of the Commander of the Defence Forces to the President would be abolished on the grounds that the President has no right to release the Commander of the Defence Forces, or challenge his decisions.

President Ilves also believed that if the Government wanted to use the armed forces in a state of emergency, there would be no need for his approval; and if military units are deployed on international operations, it is the *Riigikogu* that authorises this. NATO Article 5 operations are, in any case, delegated to the Government, which has special procedures to deal with these eventualities. And ultimately, if the *Riigikogu* is not happy with the work of the Government, it can dissolve it.

In December 2006, the *Riigikogu* approved a new Commander of the Defence Forces, Ants Laaneots, to replace Tarmo Kõuts. Notably, one of his priorities was to improve relations between the EDF and the Ministry of Defence. He believed that there was a larger problem between the two institutions, in that they were both 'young' and inexperienced, and Estonia was still struggling to work out the technical details of civil oversight of the defence forces. Laaneots' intention was to institutionalise clear and formal procedures within defined parameters in order to avoid situations in which civil-military relationships relied on personal relationships.⁴⁶

44 Ibid., paragraph 9.

45 Mel Huang, *Estonia's Year in Defence: 2000*, 36.

46 US State Department, *Estonia: Laaneots (sic) Appointed as New ChoD*.

After the cyber-attack on Estonia in 2007 the main attention of officials was diverted to the potential for war in cyberspace.⁴⁷ During this process the roles and responsibilities of the Government, Ministry of Defence and Commander of the Defence Forces were also revisited.⁴⁸

In 2008, the new Defence Forces Organisation Act stipulated that the Commander of the Defence Forces is subordinated to the Minister of Defence.⁴⁹ And in 2011, in line with the President's proposals, the *Riigikogu* adopted amendments to the Constitution, which entered into force on 22 July 2011: certain provisions concerning the Commander of the Defence Forces were removed from paragraphs 127 and 128, eliminating the concept of the institution of the 'Commander of the Defence Forces' from the Constitution. The power to appoint and release the Commander of the Defence Forces, the Chief of the General Staff of the Defence Forces, the Commander of the *Kaitseliit* and the chiefs of services was passed from the President to the Government, lowering the level of decision making. Candidates for these posts would be proposed by the Minister of Defence after hearing the position of the National Defence Committee of the *Riigikogu*; the Minister of Defence together with the Commander of the Defence Forces would make a joint proposal to the Government for appointment to and release from office of the Commander of the *Kaitseliit*, and would be solely responsible for the appointment and release of the Chief of the General Staff and commanders of the services.⁵⁰ A new Service Act, approved in the *Riigikogu* in June 2012, further specifies these provisions and appointments.

In 2011, the advisory board of the Minister of Defence went even further by proposing that the Prime Minister, rather than the President, should be the ultimate head of national defence as the Prime Minister is the only senior figure with actual power.⁵¹ In addition, Estonia's recently updated National Defence Strategy makes clear that there are many more institutions involved in defeating a threat to the state besides the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces, meaning that coordination from the Prime Minister would be necessary, for example to coordinate communication capabilities, the early warning system, and the flow of information both in times of military and non-military crises and in states of emergency or

47 John Leyden, "Cyberwarriors on the Eastern Front: In the line of fire packet floods," *The Register*, 25 April 2011.

48 Wyatt Kash, "Lessons from the cyberattacks on Estonia. Interview with Lauri Almann, Estonia's permanent undersecretary of Defence," *Government Computer News*, 13 June 2008.

49 *Riigikogu* (Estonian Parliament), *Defence Forces Organisation Act* (2008), paragraph 23(1).

50 *Riigikogu* (Estonian Parliament), *Peace-Time National Defence Act* (2002), paragraph 14(4).

51 Kristopher Rikken, "Head of Government Proposed as Supreme Commander," *ERR News*, 3 November 2011.

war.⁵² If this proposal were implemented, the loop balancing the power of the President, the *Riigikogu*, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Defence Forces could finally be considered to be closed.

Meanwhile, Estonia's situation remains ambiguous. One very symbolic way of looking at it would be to consider the ceremony of the change of the Commander of the Defence Forces, which took place on 5 December 2011, and during which the outgoing Commander Ants Laaneots handed the banner of the EDF to the incoming Commander Riho Terras. Logically and following the latest Constitutional amendments, the banner should have been passed via the Minister of Defence, thus marking the current superior-subordinate relationship; however, the banner was handed over via the President.⁵³ It might be argued that this is purely a matter of state protocol or symbolic procedure, and that nothing further should be read into it. However, Estonia's history of civil-military relations shows that influential factors such as personality and political games have played a surprisingly crucial role in the development of democratic control of the defence forces.

Latvia

The Constitution of Latvia

Latvia's Constitution was approved on 15 February 1922, alongside the birth of the State itself; as such, it reflects the international thinking of the time. The Constitution envisages a parliamentary democracy as Latvia's state order. Since its adoption, only twelve amendments have been made to the Constitution, none of them influencing the role of either the President or the *Saeima* (the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia). Chapter III states that the President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. In time of war, he or she appoints a Supreme Commander.⁵⁴ The President declares war on the basis of a decision of the *Saeima* and has "the right to take steps indispensable to the military defence of the state, if another state has declared war on Latvia, or if an enemy is attacking the borders of Latvia."⁵⁵ At the same time, the President is required to immediately convene the *Saeima*, which decides upon the declaration of war and the

52 Ministry of Defence (Estonia), *National Defence Strategy* (Tallinn: Ministry of Defence, 2010), 25.

53 *Ajalooline tseremoonia Kaitseväes* (Historic Ceremony in the Defence Forces), video (Tallinn: Estonian Defence Forces, 2011) and Headquarters of the Estonian Defence Forces, *Kaitseväe juhtimise üleandmine 05.12.2011* (Handover of Command of the Defence Forces 05.12.2011).

54 *Constitution of the Republic of Latvia* (1922), paragraph 42

55 *Ibid.*, paragraphs 43 and 44.

commencement of hostilities. The President does not bear political responsibility for his or her actions and presidential decrees are countersigned by the Prime Minister, or by the minister concerned.⁵⁶ The Government has the right to proclaim a state of emergency if the State is threatened by an external enemy, or if an internal insurrection which endangers the existing political system arises or threatens to arise in the State or in any part of the State.⁵⁷

It should be noted here that the Commander of the Armed Forces is not even a subject of the Constitution, meaning that he or she was never meant to be a part of the chain of command at the strategic level. The Constitution concentrates on the powers of the President and the *Saeima*.

Historical Overview

The drafting process of the Constitution and the legal acts of 1932 and 1940 that deal with the armed forces offer insights into and explanations of the Constitution's intentions for the roles of the President and Supreme Commander (a person the President appoints in war-time) and the organisation of the defence forces.

The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the state's armed forces. However, this is not a correct translation of the Latvian term, *augst kais vadoņis*, which might be more accurately translated by a literary or even an epic term – the 'highest leader'. This term was chosen on purpose so that the President of the parliamentary state would have no direct say over the armed forces, nor literally lead military units during war-time. As an additional guarantee in this respect, there is a norm in the Constitution that all decrees of the President should be countersigned by the Prime Minister, or by the minister concerned. Nevertheless, to prevent their politicisation, neither should the *Saeima* nor the Government have a direct say over the armed forces. A balance would need to be reached in the subordination and leadership of the armed forces.

Today's legal and normative acts are very poor in defining the rights and obligations of the Supreme Commander. The Law on Supreme Command of Armed Forces, from 1932, is the only place that stipulates this issue. It states that the Supreme Commander will act independently and be directly and only subordinated to the President. However, in terms of management he or she is subordinated to the Government. The obligations of the Supreme Commander include leading war operations, managing

56 Ibid., paragraph 53.

57 Ibid., paragraph 62.

the distribution of forces and funds, and even confiscating property in the territory of the armed conflict, concluding cease fires with the enemy and, if necessary, renewing hostilities.⁵⁸

In war-time, the Minister of Defence is responsible for fulfilling logistic and maintenance functions. Interestingly, the Law specifically stipulates the relationship between the Supreme Commander and the Minister of Defence – there are few normative acts that regulate such inter-institutional affairs. Any disputes between the Supreme Commander and the Minister of Defence are to be settled by the President.⁵⁹

The 1940 Law on State Defence stipulates that the President, as the head of the armed forces, will lead the armed forces during war-time through the Supreme Commander and the Minister of Defence.⁶⁰ It clearly states that during time of war, the Commander of the Armed forces will be replaced by a Supreme Commander appointed by the President.⁶¹ This is a crucial stipulation. One might argue that stipulating in the law that the Supreme Commander is Commander of the Armed Forces limits the constitutional right of the President to appoint the Supreme Commander who, according to the Constitution, could be anyone. The Law does not specifically mention the Supreme Commander's subordination to the Government as was the case in the 1932 Law on Supreme Command of Armed Forces.

The Constitution has thus inherited the notion of a strong tie between the President and the Supreme Commander as concerns the leadership of the armed forces in war-time and as was stipulated in the legislation of 1932 and 1940. This does not leave much room for the *Saeima* or the Government to have a say over the armed forces and military defence; The Minister of Defence is responsible only for logistic support.

Other Players in Democratic Control of the Armed Forces

The Minister of Defence

The Ministry of Defence was established on 13 November 1991 by the Law on the Ministries of the Republic of Latvia, with Tālav Jundzis appointed Minister of Defence on 19 November 1991 by the Supreme Council (as the Parliament

58 Saeima (Latvian Parliament), *Likums par Bruņoto spēku virsvadību* (Law on Supreme Command of Armed Forces) (1932), section 3.

59 Ibid., sections 4 and 5.

60 Saeima (Latvian Parliament), *Likums par Valsts aizsardzību* (Law on State Defence) (1940), paragraph 54

61 Ibid., paragraph 55

was called at that time). The Defence Staff was established on 31 January 1992 by Order Nr.15-v of the Minister of Defence, under its first Commander Dainis Turlais, and subordinated to the Ministry of Defence. In the early 1990s, the defence sector focused on the re-establishment of training centres and educational institutions, and on filling the Defence Staff with personnel. The defence structure and associated legal and normative acts developed somewhat spontaneously. Russian troops began to withdraw from Latvia on 19 March 1992. The early 1990s were thus significant years in shaping the concept of democratic control of the armed forces.

Red versus Red-White-Red Officers?

The *Zemessardze* (National Guard of Latvia) – a volunteer armed force much larger (around 17 000) than the regular army – was initially subordinated to the Chairman of Latvia's Supreme Council, Anatolijs Gorbunovs.⁶² In fact, the *Zemessardze* was led by its Chief of Staff, Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis, and consisted of so-called (in a reference to the colours of the Latvian flag) 'red-white-red officers'. Most of the volunteers did not have military backgrounds, but were very patriotic and enthusiastic in national defence matters. The regular army was mostly built around officers with Soviet army backgrounds, usually thus referred to as 'red officers'. The regular army was subordinated to the Commander, Dainis Turlais, who was also deputy to the Minister of Defence.

The Law on State Defence stipulated that the National Armed Forces (NAF) consisted of the defence forces (the regular army), the *Zemessardze* (volunteers), the Security Service, and the military formations of the Ministry of the Interior (a convoy troop and prison guard regiment). As all these entities lacked unified command and common strategic planning, any common direction of development was inconceivable. Each entity also established its own security service, thus their competitiveness only increased as they collected compromising materials on the state authorities. The regular army was controlled by the Government, but control over the *Zemessardze* was rather weak. This was partly because of the attitudes of *Zemessardze* personnel, who were volunteers representing different social and political classes, and partly because of the inability to put in place any constraints and rules to be obeyed by the *Zemessardze*; any attempt would most probably be met with accusations of being an enemy of the state.

As a result the *Zemessardze* relied largely on itself to decide what was right and what should be done for the sake of the nation. An additional factor that

62 Chairman of the Supreme Council to 6 July 1993. This office was renamed Head of State on 15 September 1992, and later Acting President.

encouraged the *Zemessardze* was the poor situation of the State Police which, due to a lack of resources and motivation, was prevented from fulfilling all of its tasks. One of the remarkable events in which the *Zemessardze* exceeded its mandate was in the case of Andrejs Ručs. In 1994, when the withdrawal of the Russian troops was on-going and Russian army property was being taken over, Riga municipality Vice President Andrejs Ručs ordered a *Zemessardze* unit to arrest and deliver to the Latvian border two Russian army generals who were considered an obstacle to the Russian army withdrawal process. Historically this incident has come to be recognised as a Russian provocation. Nevertheless, it is clear that the arrest of the Russian general was a police function, not a task for the *Zemessardze* or the Defence Forces of which they were part.

Appearance of Unified Leadership of the Armed Forces

If the Constitution did not say much on the role of the Commander of the Defence Forces, neither did the Law on State Defence adopted in 1992. This law named the State Defence Council as the head of the state defence system,⁶³ and the Minister of Defence was to lead the defence forces,⁶⁴ which were subordinated to him.⁶⁵ The Commander of the Defence Forces was still excluded from the chain of command at the strategic level.

The role and responsibility of the Commander of the Defence Forces were stipulated – albeit very poorly – in the 1993 Law on Defence Forces. Here, the Commander of the Defence Forces was named the chief of the defence force units, soldiers, military officials and employees. He/she was eligible to request information on matters of national defence from all state and local government authorities, institutions, organisations and businesses. The Commander was subordinated to the head of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia and the Minister of Defence.⁶⁶

It was not until 1993 that training at the level of the Defence Staff (led by the President, Guntis Ulmanis) took place. The aim was to develop principles, structures and functions for the management of the unified armed forces. The main lessons learned at this important and decisive event were that: the leadership of the defence forces and chain of command should

63 Saeima (Latvian Parliament), *Likums par Valsts aizsardzību* (Law on State Defence) (1992), paragraph 17. The law has not been in force since 13 December 1994.

64 Prior to 1994, Latvia's armed forces were known as the 'Defence Forces'. On November 24 1994, the *Zemessardze* and Defence Forces were united under the name the 'National Armed Forces of the Republic of Latvia'.

65 Saeima, *Law on State Defence* (1992), paragraph 23 (1).

66 Saeima (Latvian Parliament), *Likums par Aizsardzības spēkiem* (Law on Defence Forces) (1993), paragraph 13. The law has not been in force since 1 January 2002.

not much differ between peace-time and war; during peace-time, all the military units and para-military forces should in principle be subordinated to the Defence Staff or the Ministry of Defence; and the Defence Staff should be subordinated to the Ministry of Defence.⁶⁷

This seemingly 'innocent' staff level training exercise was the first and most profound input to the establishment of democratic control of the armed forces in Latvia. The issues of subordination and the legal status of the armed forces were resolved from the very beginning and the various 'independent' parts of the NAF were put into one structure under one leadership, so that they could apply one strategy and doctrine. The NAF were thus established at the end of 1994 under the unified Commander of the NAF, Juris Dalbiņš. The *Zemessardze* was led by its Commander, Juris Eihmanis. Although in practice the *Zemessardze* continued to function as a separate entity for a while, its arbitrary activities decreased.

The rights and obligations of the Commander of the NAF between 1994 and 1999 (when the Law on National Armed Forces entered into force) were formulated in rather general terms: the Commander was to lead the armed forces and develop operational plans. With this tasking, the Commander was saved from being dragged into politics. The main role of the Minister of Defence in this period was to provide logistic support to the NAF. Since the establishment of the post of Commander of the National Armed Forces, there has been a ceaseless debate about the extent to which the Commander is the state's senior military adviser, and the extent to which he or she is the main administrator of the armed forces.

The National Security Council - a Dubious Player

In the early 1990s, decisions on defence and security matters were taken by the State Defence Council. The task of the Council was to lead the state defence system,⁶⁸ and to guarantee state security and the protection of the society. It consisted of the head of the Supreme Council (chairman), the head of the Council of Ministers, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of the Interior, the Commander of the Defence Forces, the head of the Security Service and the Chief of Staff of the *Zemessardze*. The Council met twice a month and also convened on an extraordinary basis, for example, on the occasion of a demonstration of pensioners throwing

67 Ministry of Defence (Latvia), "Latvijas armija no 1991.gada līdz mūsdienām" (The Latvian Army from 1991 until today).

68 Saeima, *Law on State Defence* (1992), paragraph 17.

empty pots and pans in protest against poverty and the collapse of the pension system in 1993.⁶⁹

In 1993, Latvia appointed its first President after re-independence, Guntis Ulmanis. He was a politician who represented the Latvian Farmer's Union and became President on 8 July 1993, serving for two terms until 8 July 1999. The National Security Council (NSC) was established as an advisory body in December 1993 and, as a successor to the State Defence Council, took on many of the tasks of its predecessor. However, it turned out to be a rather dubious player in security and defence matters.

The initial idea was for the NSC to be led by the Prime Minister. However, due to the busy daily agenda and heavy work load of this office, it was decided to place it under the President instead. This could be seen as a natural continuation of history, as the State Defence Council was chaired by the head of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia – a position equivalent to that of the President. It was also decided that only the highest political officials would be permanent members of this Council, namely, the chairperson of the *Saeima*, the chairpersons of the Defence and Internal and Security Commissions of the *Saeima*,⁷⁰ the Prime Minister, and the Ministers of Defence, the Interior and Foreign Affairs. The Attorney General would also have the right to participate in meetings.

The Commander of the National Armed Forces was not included, leading to the inevitable result that without senior military advice, the aim and tasks of the NSC could not be fully and credibly achieved. On the other hand, the Commander of the National Armed Forces was 'saved' from political games and turf wars.

Dividing and Sharing Powers and Responsibilities

The first law to stipulate the responsibilities and roles of the strategic chain of command of the NAF, the *Saeima*, the NSC and the Government was the 1994 Law on State Security Services. According to this law, the *Saeima* puts forward the priorities for the state security services, develops legislation, assigns budgetary means and controls expenditure, in this way exercising democratic control of the security services. The Government reviews risks to national security, determines and implements methods and means for their prevention and establishes the state security infrastructure. The National

69 L Lapsa and S. Metuzāls, "Demokrātijas paātrinātais kurss: pareizie un nepareizie piketi un mītiņi" (Accelerated course of democracy: the right and wrong pickets and rallies), *Pietiek*, 25 March 2011.

70 Today, the chairperson of the National Security Commission of the *Saeima* and the chairpersons of the Defence, Internal Affairs and Corruption Prevention Commissions of the *Saeima*.

Security Council (NSC) has the power to assess the levels of state security and protection of society, and internal and external risks to the state and society. It determines the means and methods to prevent and eliminate potential risks; defines the priorities and tasks of the state security services; controls the work of the state security services; reviews and agrees the size, structure, monthly pay, job descriptions and necessary budgetary resources of the state security services; conducts hearings on the work of the state security services and reviews their audit; and reviews issues related to the reform of the security services.⁷¹

The law also grants the NSC, as the advisory board under the leadership of the President, exceptional powers consisting of legislative and executive powers, and specifies that its decisions are of a permissive nature. As its origins could be found in the State Defence Council, which was a Government body, the NSC also frequently took on the responsibilities of the Government. Although the Law on Defence Forces no longer applied, the NSC continued to use the powers it allowed to the greatest extent, sometimes even going beyond its mandate.

In 1995, the NSC approved the National Security Concept, which determines the strategic principles for national security, and the priorities and measures for the prevention of danger to the state.⁷² Even two years later, the NSC still had the power and responsibility to draft and agree the National Security Concept, and to develop and review the National Security Plan and coordinate its implementation. However, the NSC did not care to do so and as a result, the National Security Concept was no more than a reference document to be waved in front of foreign officials visiting Latvia. The document lacked ownership, follow-up and control over its implementation. The National Security Plan which should follow the Concept, for example, was drafted for the first time only in 2002.

When the Constitutional Protection Bureau (since 2003, the National Security Authority) was established in 1995, it was subordinated to the NSC and its head became one of the NSC's nine members. The NSC thus grew in power and became the decisive political body in state defence and security matters.

The culmination of this abuse of power and lack of parliamentary control came in October 1997, when Russia submitted an official proposal to Latvia to guarantee Latvia's security (a proposal that was kept within a small circle and

71 Saeima (Latvian Parliament), *Valsts drošības iestāžu likums* (Law on State Security Services) (1994), paragraphs 7-9.
72 *Nacionālās drošības koncepcija* (National Security Concept (Latvia)), 1995.

is still not widely known about). The NSC reviewed Russia's proposal without raising this vital national security issue in the *Saeima*. The *Saeima's* National Security Commission was outraged and raised the issue of the elimination of the NSC. This incident, which arose because national security issues were being considered *pro forma*, rather than according to their substance, had led to a constitutional crisis. Something had to be done.

Framing the Concept of Democratic Control

It was acknowledged, with the blessing of President Ulmanis, that a more careful stipulation of responsibilities and a review of the tasks of the strategic chain of command in national security and the defence sector were needed. Work thus began on drafting the Law on National Security. The aims were to streamline the chain of command, clearly specify subordination, clearly divide responsibilities and avoid duplication, and remove inter-institutional establishments such as the NSC. There was even a suggestion to revert to the original idea of having the NSC under the Prime Minister's leadership, partly because it was in any case already exercising executive powers.

The main achievement at this stage was to agree that the purpose of the Law was to determine the national security system and its tasks, the competence of the officials or institutions responsible for the system and the principles and procedures for co-ordinating, implementing and controlling their activities. Taking the previous hierarchical practice into consideration, the Law was to strengthen the *Saeima's* say over national security and defence policy formulation, preserve the power of the President as Commander-in-Chief as stipulated by the Constitution, and give the Government full responsibility over executive power without any mediators such as the NSC.

The work on framing the concept of democratic control of the armed forces was continued under the able guidance of Vaira Vīke-Freiberga who was elected Latvia's new President on 8 July 1999. She was a professor and was extremely experienced in international politics. During her two presidential terms (until 2007) she was very active in international relations, promoting and leading Latvia's bid for membership of the EU and NATO. She was independent of any political party and was known for actively exercising the powers granted to her by the Constitution.

The Basis for Democratic Control

The Law on National Security, finally adopted in 2000 under the able guidance of the Minister of Defence, Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis, made major progress in defining the roles and interrelations within the chain of command at the strategic level. It foresaw a stronger engagement of the *Saeima* in

defence matters whereby the *Saeima*: was responsible for adopting the National Security Concept and State Defence Concept; had parliamentary oversight over the armed forces and state security services; determined the basic structure and size of the NAF, and the principles for staffing of their personnel; determined the principles for staffing of the personnel of the state security services; accepted and supervised the budgetary resources granted for national security needs; decided on the employment of units of the NAF outside state territory in accordance with procedures determined by law; appointed to and released from office officials of the defence and state security institutions; decided upon the declaration and commencement of war; and assessed the justification for a declaration of a state of emergency, exceptional state or mobilisation.⁷³ The Law also stipulates the rights and obligations of the National Security Commission of the *Saeima*. Through these measures it profoundly reinforced the role of the legislature within the security and defence sector.⁷⁴

The Law names the President as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The President: appoints the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces in war-time, leads the NSC; recommends the Commander of the National Armed Forces to the *Saeima* for approval, and proposes the declaration and commencement of war for decision in the *Saeima*.⁷⁵ Because the President and NSC were thought to be lacking military expertise and advice, the Military Council was established in 2001. The Law on National Security specifies that the Military Council would be led by the President and would advise the President on defence and military issues, and on NAF development and operational plans. This was the first time that a link and working relations between the President and the Commander of the National Armed Forces was legally established.

The Law also stipulated that the Prime Minister would lead the prevention and suppression of any endangerment to the State; report to the *Saeima* on national security; co-ordinate the activities of ministers in the area of national security; and ensure that concepts and plans for national security, state defence and national economic mobilisation would be developed and implemented.⁷⁶ The Minister of Defence is, by law, a civilian and exercises civil control over the NAF.⁷⁷ He or she is politically responsible to the Parliament and subordinated to the Prime Minister, while the Ministry of Defence is

73 *Saeima* (Latvian Parliament), *Nacionālās drošības likums* (Law on National Security) (2000), section 6.

74 *Ibid.*, paragraph 7.

75 *Ibid.*, section 8.

76 *Ibid.*, section 9.

77 *Ibid.*, section 11.

responsible for developing and implementing defence policy. The practice of Government reporting to the *Saeima* on state defence policy and the development of the NAF was also introduced in 2000. The defence 'White Book' is published on the basis of these reports.

In order to strengthen the link between the executive and the legislature, the position of Parliamentary Secretary was introduced in the Ministry of Defence. This is a political position, approved by the Prime Minister on the recommendation of the Minister of Defence. The responsibilities of the Parliamentary Secretary are to represent the Minister's political opinions at the *Saeima* and other institutions when authorised, to introduce laws drafted by the Ministry of Defence at the *Saeima*, and to advocate these at the *Saeima* and its commissions. In this way, the *Saeima's* competence in defence issues was increased.

Discrepancies in the Law

The new Law on National Security was not fully compatible with the Constitution. There were at least two aspects that deserved more careful attention. First, the Government was given full responsibility for overcoming dangers to the state. This might be seen as unconstitutional *vis-à-vis* the power of the President. Second, the Law introduced a serious problem of democratic control of the armed forces. For the first time, the functions and rights of the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces, who would be appointed by the President and lead the military defence in time of war, were defined by law. The Supreme Commander was authorised in war-time to unilaterally decide on limitations to fundamental civil rights by granting him or her the right to issue orders that restricted the rights and freedoms of individuals.⁷⁸ Obviously, the Law was not developed out of blue. This particular regulation might have been inspired by the 1932 Law on Supreme Command of Armed Forces, or by paragraph 116 of the Constitution, which permits some restrictions to human rights and freedoms. It is well known and generally accepted that during war and in order to preserve state order, or in cases when state order is threatened, fundamental civil rights may be regulated (*inter alia* restricted) by international regulations.⁷⁹ However, although there is a basis for restrictions of human rights and freedoms, unilaterally issued military orders as prescribed by the Law on National Security would not be acceptable.

Another smaller discrepancy was the inappropriate authority given to the Supreme Commander to mobilise the nation's economic reserves. Although

⁷⁸ Ibid., section 12(3).

⁷⁹ United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), article 29 and United Nations General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966), article 4.

these crucial issues were pointed out not only by the domestic but also by international advisers, both above mentioned regulations have not been amended and remain in the Law.⁸⁰

Another aspect of note is that the Law on National Security disregarded the role and responsibilities of the Commander of the National Armed Forces, who is not even mentioned; once again, this position was not considered to be one of the bodies in the chain of command at the strategic level. The role and responsibilities of the Commander of the National Armed Forces were specified, however, in the 1999 Law on National Armed Forces, under the section describing the command system of the NAF.⁸¹

According to this law, the Commander of the National Armed Forces exercises direct management of the NAF and is subordinated to the Minister of Defence. He or she is the most senior military official in the state and the highest military adviser to the Minister of Defence. The Law also states that a principle of undivided authority is observed in the NAF. The Commander of the National Armed Forces: is responsible for the preparedness of the NAF, mobilisation and combat readiness; plans and controls the implementation of the tasks given by the Law; and is responsible for the development of the armed forces following the guidelines derived from defence policy and concepts.

Democratic control of the armed forces was to be exercised by the Minister of Defence, the State Audit Office, the Government, the President and the *Saeima*.⁸² The Commander of the National Armed Forces was thus clearly separated from any political decision-making body and from the strategic level of the chain of command, although direct subordination to the President was still there – through the Constitution and in practice through the Military Council established under the President in 2002. It seemed at this point that the legal system of democratic control of the armed forces was in place, although it might need some adjustment over time as it was tested in practice. The reality, however, turned out to be somewhat different.

Turmoil over Roles and Responsibilities

During the process of preparing for NATO membership, many aspects of defence came under the magnifying glass. The Membership Action Plan and Partnership Goals allowed subjects of concern to be raised to the

80 Saeima, *Law on National Security* (2000), sections 12(2) and 12(3).

81 Saeima (Latvian Parliament), *Nacionālo bruņoto spēku likums* (Law on National Armed Forces) (1999), sections 13 and 14.

82 Ibid., section 19.

highest level and discussed. It was a time when defence issues were debated and developed intensively. After the tragic events of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America, the focus of these discussions immediately turned to the chain of command and the management of the various legal states of endangerment (state of war, state of exception and emergency situations) in Latvia. Everything was tested on paper and by using charts. By looking at the various responsibilities and playing out different situations, officials attempted to answer questions such as what was the decision-making mechanism during crisis situations in Latvia. How could 'crises' be legally defined when the law referred only to endangerment regimes – states of exception and times of war? How would transition from state of exception to state of war be achieved? Who was eligible to end these legal regimes?

Prime Minister Andris Bērziņš established a working group under the leadership of the Crisis Control Centre (CCC) to make an inventory of the decision-making mechanisms and chains of command during crises. The CCC, a newly established body subordinated to the Prime Minister, was responsible for ensuring early warning of potential crisis situations and developing proposals for the state's crisis management system.

Who is the Supreme Commander of the NAF in War-Time?

One of the focal questions around which all other issues were examined was the identity of the Supreme Commander during war-time. The Constitution stated that the Supreme Commander would be appointed by the President. But in order to be able to work on state defence and operational plans, the identity of the Supreme Commander needed to be known in advance.

It was concluded that the normative acts prescribed a rather complicated decision-making mechanism in war-time, when it should in fact become simpler. During war-time, a number of decision-making bodies are assigned responsibilities and tasks – the President, the *Saeima*, the Prime Minister, the Government, the Commander of the National Armed Forces, and the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces. However, the relationship between the President and the NAF was not formulated and the subordination of the Commander of the National Armed Forces to the President was still unclear. In addition, there is no place in the normative acts that states that the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces should be a military person. Nor is it specified whether he or she should be proposed by the Minister of Defence, by the *Saeima*, by the Government

or chosen unilaterally by the President. If the latter happens, then what would be the relationship and subordination of the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces to the Prime Minister and the Commander of the National Armed Forces? And how could state defence and security plans be made, and the highest commander exercised and prepared if he or she is unknown?

The CCC developed three alternatives, namely, the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces is either Commander of the National Armed Forces, the Prime Minister, or is not appointed at all. All three alternatives were carefully worked through and assessed by, *inter alia*, the Supreme Court, the Chancery of the President and foreign advisers. Proposals for amending the normative acts were submitted to the Prime Minister, the President and the *Saeima*.

As the national defence effort was not conceived as being limited to the military sphere, all resources would need to be used in the defence of the state. As a result of the analysis of the CCC's working group, it was decided that the most favourable alternative would be to amend the Law on National Security to state that the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces in war-time would be the Prime Minister, as he or she has actual political executive and coordinating power in the state, and is responsible for the state's conduct of measures to prevent and suppress endangerments to the State.⁸³ It was clear that under no circumstances should the nomination of the Supreme Commander of the National Armed Forces be allowed to be improvised in the middle of a crisis or a war. The proposal was not perceived as putting limitations on the constitutional power of the President. The right of the President to choose the Supreme Commander in the time of war would rather be expressed in a specified and concrete manner. It would increase democratic control of the armed forces, would be in accordance with western democratic standards and would solve the problems of mobilising economic reserves during war-time and restricting human rights and freedoms. The Commander would also lead and be responsible for the military operations of the NAF in time of war.

It was also concluded that Latvia was authorised to restrict human rights and freedoms in the case of a state of exception or war. Paragraph 116 of the Constitution determines in which cases human rights and freedoms can be restricted. Although it does not say who has authority to do so it should, in accordance with the State order of Latvia, be the Parliament. However, the

83 *Saeima, Law on National Security (2000)*, section 9(1).

legislation anticipates that the Government will have the right to restrict human rights and freedoms in accordance with the Constitution (which refers only to the state of exception and war).⁸⁴

What Power Does the National Security Council Have?

In this 'inventory' process, many state institutions used the opportunity to propose amendments to the normative acts in order to clarify, strengthen and even broaden the scope of their responsibilities and powers. One of these institutions was the Chancery of the President regarding the issue of the NSC. After taking into consideration the suggestions from the Chancery of the President, the CCC working group proposed to amend the Constitution by adding a section on the NSC, as this body already represented the highest officials of the state and all state constitutional powers.

At that time, the NSC still lacked the power to take binding decisions and was able only to issue recommendations. The role of the NSC during a state of war or state of exception was also unclear. The suggestion was to include in the Constitution a regulation stating that the NSC is a collegiate body consisting of the highest state officials and institutions that implements common national security policy. In addition, the Constitution should state that the President leads this body. With these proposed changes, the NSC would become a body able to issue binding orders in times of state endangerment. It would also propose the President as a candidate for the Supreme Commander appointed in war-time. The NSC would thus become instrumental for the presidency in ensuring its rights and would significantly increase its power. What in the beginning had seemed an innocent inventory process turned out to be a dangerous exercise with everybody competing to increase their powers, disregarding the lessons of 1997 when the interpretation and abuse of powers had resulted in constitutional crisis.

After the 2002 elections, Einars Repše (New Era Party) became Prime Minister. His Government became known for its determined fight against corruption and tax evasion. The process of amending the normative acts that had been initiated before his election ended with no significant result. Obviously, the Government was not ready to undertake additional powers and responsibilities and the President wished to preserve the right to choose a Supreme Commander in war-time. The main driving force of the development of the crisis management system – the CCC – was dissolved.

84 Saeima (Latvian Parliament), *Likums par izņēmuma stāvokli* (Law on State of Exception) (1992), Chapter III, paragraph 13.

With the adoption of the Law on National Security and the Law on National Armed Forces, and despite the turmoil surrounding the various institutions' roles and responsibilities, democratic control of the armed forces had developed significantly by 2002, and remained an integral part of Latvia's security policy and national defence system. Although the process of implementing the concept of democratic control would have to be an on-going effort, it was no longer a cause for major concern. By 2002 the concept was in place and seemed to be working well.

Another Constitutional Crisis or a Test of Democratic Control?

Another test of democratic control of the armed forces was the dispute between President Vike-Freiberga, the Government under Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis, and the *Saeima*, which took place in 2006 and early 2007. The dispute concerned the Government's use of its Constitutional powers during the recess of the *Saeima* to adopt as a matter of urgency amendments to the law concerning the subordination of the security services.⁸⁵ One of the security services in question was subordinated to the Minister of Defence; another was the National Security Authority. The amendments would increase the power of the Prime Minister and decrease the power of the President and the *Saeima* in matters of national security, and the number of people permitted independent access to the operational information, including counterintelligence, of the security services would increase.

The proposal was not acceptable to the President or the opposition. Foreign experts and NATO also expressed their dissatisfaction and, despite numerous attempts to persuade the Government to withdraw, the Prime Minister refused to do so. The President accused the Government of bowing to the interests of oligarchs, who wished to influence investigations against them. Kalvitis responded that his Government could not be influenced by oligarchs and delivered his historical phrase: "I as a head of the Government am a guarantee of stability in the country." The President used her Constitutional powers to disapprove of the Law and called for a referendum on this issue. Before the process of holding a referendum was concluded, and after serious pressure on the *Saeima* from the President and NATO, the *Saeima* decided to renew the original wording of the laws.

After this dispute, the norm that allowed the Government to proclaim laws during the recess of the *Saeima* was eliminated from the Constitution and

85 *Constitution of Latvia*, paragraph 81. The Government had exercised its power under paragraph 81 of the Constitution before: in 1997 it proclaimed 12 laws during the recess of the *Saeima*.

the Government lost the legislative power it had seriously abused. This case was a test of the system of democratic control and further proof that there is a thin line to walk between using and abusing the powers embedded in the Constitution. As one of the security services in question was a part of the defence system, this case also placed democratic control of the armed forces at stake.

Lithuania

The Constitution of Lithuania

After long discussions on the role and power of the President and the *Seimas* (the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania) the Constitution of Lithuania was adopted by a referendum on 25 October 1992. Unlike the other two Baltic states, Lithuania is a parliamentary republic with some semi-presidential features, and both the President and Government are active in the daily administration of the state.

The Constitution identifies the President as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.⁸⁶ He or she is the primary deciding body in the case of an armed attack that endangers the sovereignty of the state or its territorial integrity, while the *Seimas* has a right to approve or overrule the President's decisions.⁸⁷ The President appoints the Commander of the Armed Forces, with the appointment approved by the *Seimas*, and confers the highest military ranks.⁸⁸

The *Seimas* imposes martial law, announces mobilisation or demobilisation, and adopts decisions to use the armed forces when necessary for state security and defence. In the event of armed attack the President is eligible to take the decisions on these matters after submitting them for approval to the *Seimas*.⁸⁹ In matters concerning a state of emergency, the *Seimas* is the primary decision-making body. However, if the *Seimas* is unable to react, the President will declare a state of emergency to be approved or overruled by the *Seimas*.⁹⁰

The Government, the Minister of National Defence, and the Commander of the Armed Forces are responsible to the *Seimas* for the administration and command of the armed forces. The Minister of National Defence is a civilian.⁹¹

86 *Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania* (1992), paragraph 140.

87 *Ibid.*, paragraph 142.

88 *Ibid.*, paragraph 84(14) and 84(15).

89 *Ibid.*, paragraphs 67(20) and 142.

90 *Ibid.*, paragraph 144.

91 *Ibid.*, paragraph 140.

Strengthening the Role of the President

In 2011, a group of members of the *Seimas* instigated an investigation concerning whether certain paragraphs of the 2002 Law on International Operations, Exercises and Other Events of Military Co-operation were in conflict with the Constitution.⁹² The Constitutional Court ruled that the *Seimas* may adopt a decision on the use of the armed forces only upon a proposal from the President as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. In addition, the Court ruled that the *Seimas* cannot overrule (but can only endorse) a decision of the President which has been adopted in pursuance of a collective defence (i.e. NATO) treaty.⁹³ Notably, the same principle would also apply to a declaration of martial law, state of emergency or mobilisation.

Attempt to Broaden the Competence of the State Defence Council

The Constitution prescribes the composition of the State Defence Council, the main body that considers and coordinates issues of state defence. Its members are the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the *Seimas*, the Minister of National Defence, and the Commander of the Armed Forces.⁹⁴ As Lithuania's conception of security had become more comprehensive there was an attempt in 2005 to transform the State Defence Council into a national security council with broader competence and composition. It would be composed of politicians, with the Commander of the Armed Forces acting only as a military adviser. The Constitutional amendments were prepared, but have never been officially registered, or introduced in the *Seimas*.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Law on the Basics of National Security was adopted in 1996 and describes in detail the provisions for the defence of Lithuania. Further provisions are set out in the 1998 Law on the Organisation of the National Defence System and Military Service. These are very comprehensive in the sense that they stipulate the roles and responsibilities of the strategic chain of command and describe the main principles to be followed in ensuring national security.

According to these laws, the *Seimas* determines the organisation, development, armament needs and assignments of the armed forces, and carries out parliamentary scrutiny of the armed forces and other institutions of national

92 *Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament), Republic of Lithuania Law on the Amendment of the Law on International Operations, Military Exercises and Other Military Co-operation Events (2002)*, Article 5 (paragraphs 1-4), Article 6 (paragraphs 2-4), Article 10 (paragraphs 1-3) wording of 2005, Article 14 (paragraphs 2,3,5) wording of 2002.

93 Constitutional Court (Lithuania), *ruling*, 15 March 2011.

94 *Constitution of Lithuania*, paragraph 140.

security.⁹⁵ The National Security Strategy is developed by the Government and approved by the State Defence Council. The State Defence Council considers the implementation of the strategy and submits recommendations for its amendment if necessary.⁹⁶

The division between supreme and executive command in the sphere of national security is also clear. The leading institutions are the President and the Government. Executive national security power lies with the State Defence Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Defence and other institutions subordinated to it, the armed forces, the Ministry of Interior, the State Security Department (the intelligence and counterintelligence agency), the Special Investigation Service (the anti-corruption agency) and other ministries in accordance with their competences.⁹⁷

The Law on the Basics of National Security also states that the President decides upon the deployment of the armed forces in peace-time, and over the participation of elements of the Lithuanian military forces in collective defence and other international military operations. These decisions are submitted for the approval of the *Seimas*.⁹⁸ Civilian command of defence activities is exercised by the President and the Minister of National Defence, and the Commander of the Armed Forces is subordinated to the Minister of National Defence.⁹⁹ However, in the case of aggression against the state, commanders of units of the armed forces may issue orders to defend its freedom, independence and territorial integrity in accordance with previously prepared plans without waiting for a political decision.¹⁰⁰

The Government administers the affairs of the country, protects the inviolability of the territory of Lithuania and guarantees state security and public order.¹⁰¹ It coordinates the implementation of measures to strengthen national security and the work of the ministries in this area. The Government is responsible for strategic planning for national security, and for crisis management.¹⁰²

The Minister of National Defence leads the entire system of national defence. He or she is responsible for the implementation of defence policy and the development of the system of national defence. The Minister submits

95 *Seimas* (Lithuanian Parliament), *Law on the Basics of National Security* (1996), appendix, chapter 8.

96 *Ibid.*, paragraph 3(2).

97 *Ibid.*, appendix, chapter 12.

98 *Ibid.*, appendix, chapter 13.

99 *Ibid.*, appendix, chapter 8.

100 *Ibid.*, appendix, chapter 7, Section II.

101 *Constitution of Lithuania*, paragraph 94(1).

102 *Seimas*, *Law on the Basics of National Security*, appendix, chapter 14.

proposals for candidates for the Commander of the Armed Forces to the President.¹⁰³ The Commander of the Armed Forces is the highest military official and represents the Lithuanian Army on military issues. In peacetime, he or she is directly subordinated to the Minister of National Defence and is responsible for implementing defence policy.¹⁰⁴ Upon a declaration of martial law, the Commander of the Armed Forces is, by decree of the President, appointed the Commander of all the armed forces of the State, and subordinate to the civilian command for defence actions.¹⁰⁵

The strategic and operational levels are clearly defined in Lithuania. At the strategic level, the President of the Republic, the State Defence Council, the Minister of National Defence, and the Commander of the Armed Forces take strategic decisions on the military protection of the state, armed defence, and military operations, and assign tasks to the armed forces to carry out defence or other military operations. At the operational level, the Chief of the Joint Headquarters plans and commands military operations.¹⁰⁶

Although the competences and responsibilities are clearly defined, there have been numerous occasions where inconsistencies have become apparent.

Inconsistencies in the Competences of the Military Command

The basic principles for organising, managing and controlling the national defence system were established with the adoption of the Law on the Organisation of the National Defence System and Military Service in 1998. In 1999, the position of Field Forces Commander/Land Forces Commander was created to provide operational command within the Land Forces and to ensure the possibility to generate joint military capabilities with other services of the armed forces. He or she was to be appointed by the President and would also be the Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces and the Land Forces Commander. The Field Forces Commander would also provide command and control over Lithuanian military units in international operations.¹⁰⁷

However, the law stipulates that during war-time the Chief of the Operational Headquarters, who during peacetime is the administrator of this headquarters, would become the Commander of all operational units.¹⁰⁸ The Chief of the

103 Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament), *Law on the Organisation of the National Defence System and Military Service* (1998), paragraph 10(2.14).

104 Seimas, *Law on the Basics of National Security*, appendix, chapter 18.

105 Seimas, *Law on the Organisation of the National Defence System*, paragraph 13 (9).

106 Ibid., paragraphs 14 (2) and 14(3).

107 Ibid., paragraph 14(8) – 14(13).

108 Ibid., paragraph 14 (3) and 14(8).

Operational Headquarters would then command all units assigned to him. Since the Land Forces Commander does not plan combat operations at the operational level, it follows that he would be relegated to the tactical level (in practice, brigade level) or any other role assigned by the Chief of the Operational Headquarters. The Commander of the Armed Forces, with his staff and secretariat, would provide the link and coordination with the Government and NATO, and resources to the Operational Commander. Later, in 2008, the Joint Headquarters was established, and the institution of the Field Forces Commander was abolished.¹⁰⁹

From time to time, discussions over command and control issues between the Commander of the Armed Forces, Commander of the Land Forces/Field Force Commander and, later, the Chief of the Joint Headquarters have become aggravated. The relationship between the Minister of National Defence and the Commander of the Armed Forces has also been tense at some points. During such periods, the Minister could conduct daily business with the Commander of the Land Forces, thus bypassing the Commander of the Armed Forces. Later, the Chief of the newly established Joint Headquarters could bypass his direct superior, the Commander of the Armed Forces, and turn directly to the Minister of National Defence or even the President. For example, disputes variously occurred between Linas Linkevičius, as Minister of National Defence (1993-1996 and 2000-2004), Jonas Kronkaitis as Deputy Minister (1997-1999) and Commander of the Armed Forces (1999-2004), and Valdas Tutkus as Land Forces Commander (1994-1996) and Deputy Commander/Field Forces Commander of the Armed Forces (1996-1999) and then Commander of the Armed Forces (2004-2009). The major fear driving these disputes was that of being cut out of the loop of decision making and the determination of roles and responsibilities. For example, the Chief of the Joint Headquarters heads the planning process within the armed forces. It is obvious that he or she would not wish to be perceived as a mere 'master of ceremonies' and would thus try to remain involved in strategic planning matters. However, the Commander of the Land Forces (previously also the Field Forces Commander responsible for operational issues) and the Commander of the Armed Forces also insisted on a say over the force generation and operational planning processes.

Another inconsistency concerning the Chief of Defence Staff was the main tool for the Commander of the Armed Forces to exercise his authority over the armed forces and fulfil his functions. In 2009, the operational planning

109 Ibid, paragraph 14.

functions of the Defence Staff were transferred to the Joint Headquarters, while strategic planning was fully integrated into the departments of the Ministry of National Defence led by the Director-General for Capabilities and Armaments, leaving the Commander of the Armed Forces outside. The Commander of the Armed Forces thus has to rely upon his staff through the Director-general for Capabilities and Armaments to support his duties at the strategic level. He or she is responsible for advising the Minister on strategic planning, force structure, the allocation of defence resources and efficient expenditure. The Director-General for Capabilities and Armaments is the link between the Minister and the Commander of the Armed Forces in building the force necessary for the defence of the country.¹¹⁰ By being subordinated to the Minister of National Defence and accountable to the Commander of the Armed Forces, the Director-General for Capabilities and Armaments thus serves two masters.

Conclusions. Supreme Command: a Comparison of the Three Baltic States

Common Features

The common features and shared phases of development in the establishment of democratic control of the armed forces in all three Baltic states offer insights into the building of relationships in the defence sector at the strategic level over the last 20 years. In the early 1990s, historical memories of the overly militarised Soviet defence sector played a crucial role in the development of civil-military relations. The three ministries of defence were established to be entirely civilian, thus their competence in military issues was minimal. Civil servants were young and enthusiastic, but they were inexperienced. They learned by doing. The defence staffs, which consisted only of military personnel, including in administrative positions, were perceived as adversaries with a different mentality. In areas such as military planning, conflict between the military and civilian sides was often inevitable.

By the mid-1990s, most of the former Soviet officers had been dismissed from the defence staffs in Estonia and Latvia and to a lesser extent in Lithuania. Only a few were allowed to stay and continue to serve as military experts in the ministries of defence. As a result of these dismissals, the highest decision-making level in the armed forces was in most cases filled by the officers who came from civilian backgrounds and had not served at all levels in the military.

110 Ibid., paragraph 9(7).

These developments meant that enthusiastic, but young and inexperienced civil servants and 'self-defence-focussed' military officers with fragmented military backgrounds were the ones developing and drafting the responsibilities of the institutions in the chain of command. This was obviously done with no clear vision and the result was often amenable to conflicting interpretations. This process was thus very much dependent upon personalities and often became politicised. It was often the case that ministers acted as the commanders of the armed forces, putting their noses into operational issues and thus violating the principles of the chain of command, and/or politicised the military by selecting officers for promotion and education based on their political leanings or their supposed institutional independence.

By the end of the 1990s, when the Baltic armed forces started to participate in international operations, the ministries of defence transformed into 'logistic and support' agencies and the military began to slowly take over strategy and policy development. At this time, the chiefs of defence could exercise their power and often engaged in political games.

Since regaining their independence in 1991, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had developed close relations with NATO. Initially this was within the framework of the North-Atlantic Co-operation Council and, from 1997, within the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. In mid-1990s the Baltic states joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, which proved to be an effective tool in enhancing cooperation between NATO and its partners for cooperation. In 1995, the three states joined the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP). Participation in the PARP and striving to fulfil Partnership Goals was an important factor in the build-up of the armed forces of the three countries. From 1999, through the Membership Action Plan and the preparation for membership of NATO, the Baltic states began to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the concepts of civil-military cooperation, civil control over the military and democratic control of the armed forces. The implementation of these concepts was included in NATO's assessment visits and reports: this external factor probably had the greatest impact in shaping the legal regulations for democratic control of the armed forces.

Government commissions dealing with integration into NATO were established in all three states and chaired by the prime ministers. Between 2001 and 2004, these institutions led the preparatory process at the highest political level and co-ordinated the efforts of the various governmental institutions. In most cases the NATO accession process was a positive driving force for the development of democratic command and control over the armed forces. It sped up amendments to legislation, ensured that duplication in

the structures of the armed forces was avoided, and stressed the need to pursue a single chain of command.

Another essential similarity in the Baltic states is the lack of public discussion of defence issues. Since the Baltic states achieved their goal of becoming full-fledged NATO members, public interest in the defence sector has diminished considerably. In particular, there is little public discussion during the budgeting process or on defence expenditure, which is a crucial civil control instrument.

The Constitutions

Estonia's Constitution, in particular Chapter X, was drafted with a traditional understanding of war and war-fighting. Although all essential aspects of democratic control of the armed forces can be found in the Constitution, the unstipulated relationships and discrepancies within it have been differently interpreted and used to appropriate power. Turf wars and political games meant that a direct link, or subordinate relationship between the President and the Commander of the Defence Forces was created at some point, endangering the concept of democratic control of the armed forces.

As Latvia's Constitution dates from 1922, it is no surprise that many of its provisions are cast in the international security and defence context and the traditional thinking of that time: for example, the appointment of a Supreme Commander in war-time or the strictly stipulated legal states of endangerment to the state. In addition, according to the Constitution, the Government plays a minimal role in defence matters and, remarkably, the Commander of the Armed Forces is not even mentioned.

The Constitution of Lithuania is a contemporary document, drafted in the early 1990s and adopted by referendum. It prescribes a semi-presidential parliamentary republic, where the power of the President is generally accepted. It also establishes the Commander of the Armed Forces as a strong institution: he or she is approved by the *Seimas* and is a member of the State Defence Council, thus participating in strategic discussions on national security (not just military security), defence issues and domestic and foreign policy.

The President

The President of Estonia is the supreme commander of national defence. In case of aggression against the state, the President declares a state of war and mobilisation, without waiting for a resolution to be adopted by the *Riigikogu*. Until 2011 the President also appointed and recalled the highest appointments of the defence forces (the Chief of the General Staff, chiefs

of the services and Commander of the *Kaitseliit*) following proposals by the Government and the Commander of the Defence Forces, and promoted officers (again following proposals by the Commander of the Defence Forces); however, this responsibility now lies at a lower strategic level.

According to their constitutions, in times of war the Presidents of Estonia and Latvia appoint a Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces (in Estonia) and a Supreme Commander (in Latvia). In the case of Latvia it is unclear who this key person at this most critical time would be and his or her role and responsibility is poorly stipulated. In Lithuania, the Constitution does not prescribe the appointment of a (possibly) new person during war-time; it is clearly stated that the Commander of the Armed Forces will remain in command. In both Latvia and Estonia, however, the Presidents bear no political responsibility: their decisions are co-signed by the respective minister.

The Lithuanian strategic level of command involves the President as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the Minister of National Defence, the State Defence Council, and the Commander of the Armed Forces. The Chief of Joint Headquarters sits at the operational level, although there have been some attempts to elevate this position to the strategic level. The President and the Minister of National Defence constitute the National Command Authority. They exercise control over the armed forces through a single chain of command, which runs from the President via the Minister of National Defence to the Commander of the Armed Forces.

The Parliament

The Estonian *Riigikogu*, Latvian *Saeima* and Lithuanian *Seimas* all determine the defence budget, establish the legal basis for national defence, approve policy guidelines and priorities, and agree appointments at the highest level of military leadership. Until 2011, the Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces was appointed and recalled by the *Riigikogu*, acting upon a proposal from the President, but following amendments to the Constitution, this is now the responsibility of the Government. Acting on proposals made by the respective President, the *Riigikogu*, the *Saeima*, and the *Seimas* also declare states of war, and issue mobilisation and demobilisation orders.

The *Saeima* and the *Riigikogu* determine the availability of the defence forces for fulfilling international obligations. Until recently this was also the case in Lithuania, but in 2011 it was decided that the armed forces could only be used upon a proposal from the President as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. In addition, the *Seimas* cannot overrule (but can only endorse) a decision of the President which has been made in pursuance of a collective

defence (NATO) treaty. Thus the role of the *Seimas* has been considerably weakened at the expense of the President. The *Riigikogu* is also perceived to be weak in defence matters because the defence committee is not prestigious and its members are mostly inexperienced in military and security matters.¹¹¹ Many *Riigikogu* members have a legal background and focus on legislative work without involving themselves deeply in discussions on defence matters. This is probably a side effect of a generally agreed defence policy line since the country became a member of NATO in 2004. The Latvian *Saeima*, however, has a stronger role in defence and security matters. Its commissions include retired military officers, former civil servants and professionals. The Parliamentary Secretary acts as the 'long arm' of the *Saeima* in the ministry, both facilitating the link and ensuring defence competence in the *Saeima*.

The National/State Defence Council

In all three states, the National/State Defence Council advises the President on defence and security matters and coordinates state defence issues at the strategic level. In Lithuania, the State Defence Council consists of the President, the Prime Minister, the speaker of the *Seimas*, the Minister of National Defence, and the Commander of the Armed Forces. In 2005, there was an (unsuccessful) attempt to transform the State Defence Council into a National Security Council with broader competence and composition. It would be then composed of politicians with the Commander of the Armed Forces acting only as a military adviser.

In Estonia, the State Defence Council consists of the President, the Prime Minister, the speaker of *Riigikogu*, the chairpersons of the *Riigikogu* commissions for state defence and foreign affairs, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Finance, the Interior, and Justice, and the Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces. In Latvia, the Commander of the National Armed Forces is not a member of the Council, and is thus not part of the advisory body on defence and security matters. The National Security Council consists of the Chairperson of the *Saeima*, the Chairperson of the National Security Commission of the *Saeima*, the Prime Minister, and the Ministers of Defence, the Interior, and Foreign Affairs. The President of Latvia also has a right to establish the Military Advisory Body.

In all three states, the Councils are led by the Presidents, although, in Latvia it was initially considered to be under the Prime Minister. Latvia has seen several instances in which the National Security Council sought to increase its power.

The Government

The governments implement national defence policy and co-ordinate the ministries, agencies and municipalities with responsibilities in the defence and security area. They also initiate work on legislation related to national defence, approve the organisation and decide on organisational and structural changes within the armed forces, manage the acquisition and storage of the required mobilisation reserves, and prepare any international agreements necessary for national defence.

In Estonia, until 2011, the Government, advised by the Commander of the Defence Forces, presented proposals on the appointment of the highest command appointments of the defence forces to the President. The 2011 amendments to the Constitution of Estonia delegated these powers to the Government. It might be argued that the Commander of the Defence Forces and the President were thus weakened, but this change brought Estonia more closely into line with the concept of democratic control of the armed forces.

In the early 1990s, the Baltic governments lacked ambition in security and defence issues. However, accession to the EU and NATO, prevailing ideas about the comprehensive security approach and defence's interaction with economic, communication, and transportation issues, have made the governments more willing to take more responsibilities, and to attend more closely to the security and defence sectors.

The Minister/Ministry of Defence

The three ministries are responsible for the formulation of defence policy and the co-ordination of its implementation. Decisions on state defence are made at the level of the minister, by the government or by the respective parliament. When a policy has been approved, the minister issues political guidelines to the defence forces, including priorities and an estimate of resources. The ministries of defence draft certain policy, conceptual and planning documents, and prepare legislation and the defence budget. The ministers account for national defence issues to the respective parliament, prime minister and government. They also exercise control over the implementation of defence policy, manage financial resources and are responsible for the development of the national defence system and its readiness for the defence of the State.

All three Baltic states have experienced occasional, but influential disagreements between the minister and the commander of the armed/defence forces, concerning competences, distributions of power, structure, subordination and finances. The personalities of the individuals involved and political party adherence do seem to matter in these instances.

The Commander of the Armed/Defence Forces

The commanders of the armed/defence forces are responsible for force planning, budgeting and management. They are accountable on defence forces issues to their parliament, government and minister of defence. In all three states, defence planning and resource management are a shared responsibility between the minister of defence and the commander of the armed/defence forces.

Disagreements at this level are common for several reasons. First, the Commanders in all three states have had to be on constant alert and even, on occasion, to fight in order to remain at the strategic level and be part of strategic decision making on security and defence issues. In Estonia at one point, the Commander insisted that he was one of the constitutional powers alongside the legislative, executive and judicial powers. In both Estonia and Lithuania, Commanders have made use of their links to the President when it suited them to do so. The Commander of the National Armed Force in Latvia, however, is not a subject of the Constitution and tends to have been kept out of political games and power plays. The reason might stem from the decentralised armed forces of the early 1990s when some units were under only weak control. In correcting this problem, the most prominent issue in Latvia was to determine the role of the Commander *vis-à-vis* the Minister and the Chief of Staff and to find the right balance between the roles of administrator and military adviser.

Second, the highest level of military command can easily become politicised and drawn into turf wars where democratic control of the armed forces is at stake. This was the case in Latvia in the early 1990s, when the *Zemessardze* was not under control; in Estonia in the mid-2000s, when relations between the President, the Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Defence Forces were politicised; and in Lithuania during the same time period, when decisions on the structure of the armed forces were being made.

Third, an external factor was that advisers from NATO, who guided the three states through the accession process, sought the best formula to resolve a wide range of issues, such as democratic control of the armed forces, defence structures, and even where the security services should be located. The advice could, however, differ from adviser to adviser and even from visit to visit. Different formulae were, in many cases, behind the disagreements between the Commander and the Minister.

The Main Factors Influencing the Development of Democratic Control of the Armed Forces

The Baltic states offer interesting case studies of the development and establishment of democratic control of the armed forces. The major factors that have influenced the development of democratic control during last 20 years have been both external and internal. The external factors included: first and foremost, the accession process to NATO and the associated consultations with the advisory teams which regularly screened the chains of command, force structures, defence expenditures, and security and legal issues of the three states; and second, the tragic events of 11 September, 2001 in the United States of America, and the cyber-attack in Estonia in 2007 that initiated inventories of the roles and responsibilities of the chain of command.

This chapter, however, has focussed mainly on the internal factors. In Estonia, it took almost 20 years to achieve something that, looking from a distance, seemed to have been achieved a long time ago. Key historical points for Estonia, which highlighted the lack of democratic control of the armed forces included the tragic events in Kurkse Strait in 1997, where 14 soldiers lost their lives, and the armed robbery followed by a shooting by a military commanding officer in 1999. These events put the issue of roles and responsibilities, in particular those of the President and the Chief of Defence, under the magnifying glass. Despite this however, all attempts during the last 10 years to stipulate roles and responsibilities so as to achieve a well-functioning chain of command were without far-reaching success. It became clear that without amendments to the Constitution the issue of the status of the Commander of the Defence Forces would not be solved. The 2011 Constitutional amendments thus marked a significant achievement in the history of the establishment of democratic control of the armed forces, and may be considered to have finally brought to an end the political games and turf wars surrounding the issue of the strategic chain of command. The status of both the armed forces and the Commander of the Defence Forces was defined by removing certain provisions concerning the Commander of the Defence Forces from the Constitution. The Government's role in the defence and security area was also increased significantly by assigning it the right to appoint the Commander of the Defence Forces, a responsibility that had earlier rested with the President and the *Riigikogu*. In Estonia, it was mainly the Ministers of Defence (and later also the President) who insisted on the clarification of the role and status of the Commander of the Defence Forces.

For Latvia, the early 1990s were decisive and laid the ground for the future evolution of the command and control system. The historical turning points

were the first defence staff level training, which aimed to develop the management principles, structure and functions for a unified armed force. This was thus a crucial starting point for the development of the structure of the armed forces. Another key point was the strengthening of control over the *Zemessardze* and the development of unified command over the NAF in 1994, with a clear status for the Commander of the National Armed Forces. In Latvia, like Estonia, it was the Presidents and the Ministers of Defence who strove to develop democratic control of the armed forces.

Lithuania could be perceived as an example to follow, but it too has faced some stumbling blocks on its way, namely, the roles and responsibilities of the commanding officers in the armed forces. While the roles and responsibilities of the highest level of the chain of command have always been clear, Lithuania has experienced inconsistencies in its commanding military level.

Some factors have, however, been common to all three states, albeit not to the same extent. First, all three states have witnessed political games and turf wars. This is especially true of Estonia, where the President, the Commander of the Defence Forces and the Minister of Defence had long-standing disagreements on their rights and areas of responsibilities, in some cases even resulting in litigation. There were also deep-rooted disagreements on whether the Commander of the Defence Forces was himself a constitutional body, alongside the legislative, executive and judicial powers referenced in the Constitution. Estonia's experience in this regard has been that the justice of the legal system eventually took precedence over the turf wars and political games.

Second, the three states have also witnessed struggles for power and for the subordination of the security agencies and services. This has been notable in Latvia, where the National Security Council sought to acquire power in the mid-1990s by taking on government functions. This process culminated in October 1997, when Russia submitted an official proposal to Latvia to guarantee Latvia's security, a vital national security issue which the NSC reviewed without raising it in the *Saeima*. Another important test of democratic control was the subordination and control of the security services where the Government abused its powers to proclaim laws.

Third, it has been clear in all three states that personalities matter, in particular those of the presidents, ministers and commanders. Once again, Estonia is the most obvious example of how the power of personality can lead to constitutional court cases, amendments to legislation, and interference in military and political matters. In Latvia, by contrast, the twists and turns

around the Commander were avoided by leaving this position out of the political turmoil, strengthening control over the voluntary force, and putting the armed forces under unified leadership in the early 1990s.

In conclusion, the development of democratic control of the armed forces in the three Baltic states has followed an evolutionary path in the last twenty years, but there have been occasional revolutionary events. The answer to the question of the factors that have influenced the development of democratic control of the armed forces in the Baltic states is still somewhat incomplete. This chapter has covered many of the (mostly internal aspects), but others have not been explicitly touched upon. Let this serve as an inspiration for further work.

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Financing Defence

"It's the economy, stupid."²

Bill Clinton

Introduction

A country's defence budget reflects its perception of its internal and external well-being and its government's seriousness about the provision of one of the key public goods - security and defence. It gauges how confident a particular state feels about its security, the extent to which it feels challenged by any potential threats to its sovereignty, and the level to which it feels a need to express aggression against another sovereign state. While this latter factor can be left aside in the case of the Baltic countries, the others remain valid reference points.

This chapter aims to provide an insight into defence financing in the three Baltic countries over the last two decades. It will not describe the year-by-year increases and decreases of the three countries' defence budgets, but rather will look at some general trends concerning how defence funding has been ensured in these three small nations, why and to what extent their stories are similar or different, and what lessons can be drawn for other transition economies that are aiming to develop or restructure their defence systems in a sustainable manner.

One of the major challenges in developing this analysis and making accurate comparisons was obtaining comparable defence budget data from all three countries. This automatically excluded the use of national statistics. Also, various international institutions, such as NATO, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the International Institute for Security Studies (IISS), have used different methodologies in their accounting for defence expenditure. Further, NATO has published data on the Baltic countries only since they joined the Alliance in 2004. Thus for the purposes of accuracy and comparability, the statistics used in this chapter are derived from SIPRI until 2003, and from NATO from 2004 onwards. Nationally provided statistics were only used to compare the key defence budget allocation trends. The basic statistical data was supplemented by information from interviews conducted

1 The thoughts expressed in this article do not represent the official position of the author's employer.
2 This phrase, from Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign, was created by his campaign strategist James Carville.

with Baltic and NATO experts between September 2011 and March 2012. All experts preferred to be quoted without attribution, as the views shared with the author were personal and not necessarily those of their institution. In the text, they are thus referred to anonymously as officials.

The chapter which follows will divide the topic according to the timeline set by the Baltic states' membership of the North Atlantic Alliance. The first part will thus examine the first twelve years, i.e., from the establishment of the Baltic defence ministries until all three countries joined NATO in 2004. The second part will analyse key defence budget allocation trends between 1995 and 2010. The third part will examine the strength of defence funding commitments after the three countries joined the Alliance and consider whether or not it has remained equally strong over the past seven years. Since the financial crisis overwhelmed all three countries at the end of first decade of this century – albeit not to the same extent – this part of the chapter will also look at the impact on defence financing of the austerity measures taken by all three Baltic governments. The final part of the chapter will draw some general conclusions.

Key Issues while Preparing for NATO Membership

The 2% Defence Funding Requirement

The NATO benchmark, that 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) should be spent on defence, has always been presented by the leaderships of the Baltic states as an external international requirement. In this early period, it was portrayed as establishing how much the three states ought to be devoting to defence if they aspired to join NATO, and has since served as a justification as to why governments should try to reach exactly 2%, rather than less or more. Portraying this as an external requirement largely helped to make sure that the issue of defence spending was not discussed in the three states and avoided general interest in this matter. This can be perceived as a positive aspect – for the ministries of defence, at least - as high public interest would bring different kinds of 'problems', including increased scrutiny of the use of allocated resources.

The 2% metric was used by all three countries in their preparations for joining the Alliance. However, two points ought to be made in this regard. First, at the beginning of their quest for membership, NATO itself did not require that 2% of GDP should be spent on defence. Not all of the Allied countries spent this much, so there was no basis to request it from Partner countries; in fact, it did not become official NATO policy until 2003. It was, rather, the

United States and the lobbyists who cooperated with the Baltic governments at that time who encouraged the Balts to affirm this very visible proof of their political and, of course, financial determination to fulfil their key foreign and defence policy goal of joining the Alliance. As a NATO International Staff senior expert recalled, "It was principally the United States view that was taken up by number of other NATO countries. NATO had no interest to disabuse it as all three countries had a lot to do in terms of developing their defence forces."

Second, NATO's definition of defence expenditure changed over time. Until 2004, NATO followed the definition that had existed since 1952. After that, a revised definition considered paramilitary forces to be part of a state's defence forces only if they were structured, equipped and trained to support the defence forces and were realistically deployable. The Baltic countries were also thus required to revise their own accounting for defence expenditure.

The Economy and Political Support

In considering the economies of the three Baltic countries, the very first and perhaps the most important aspect to keep in mind is that they are very small. The size of the population ranges from 1.3 million inhabitants in Estonia to 2.1 million in Latvia and 3 million in Lithuania. This affects the size of their GDP, and thus the financial volumes available for the development and sustainment of the defence sector. In absolute terms, the financial volumes of the three countries were, and remain, relatively small.

The Baltic countries established their ministries of defence in 1991 and in the beginning of 1992. Lithuania was first – its Ministry of National Defence was established in October 1991. Latvia followed a month later, in November of the same year, and Estonia founded its Ministry of Defence in April 1992.

The three states' defence systems had to be developed at a time when their overall economic situation was hampered by sharp decline. All three newly re-established countries underwent considerable structural changes as they transitioned from planned to market economies, including the establishment of central banks, the introduction of their own currencies and the transformation of their trade relations. GDP was declining in all three states and remained in decline until 1994. The data from 1992, for instance, show a drop of 14% in Estonia, 35% in Latvia and 21% in Lithuania. All three states had very high inflation rates. In 1992, inflation reached 954% in Estonia, 959% in Latvia and 1161% in Lithuania, and dropped to single digit figures only between 1997 and 1998.³ The establishment of defence

3 Rika Ishii and Nick Stern, "Ten Years of Transition and..." *NATO's Nations and Partners for Peace*, special Issue (1999), 19.

financing, along with appropriate defence budget planning and programming mechanisms and procedures, was unsteady and aggravated by uncertainty and minimal levels of financing as the countries themselves went through major economic turbulence. The first assigned defence budgets are a good reflection of the overall economic situation: they were small, both in terms of absolute numbers and as a share of the Gross Domestic Product. For instance, the defence budget for 1992, the first full year of operation, was just 4.5 million Latvian Lats in Latvia (approximately 6.4 million euros according to today's exchange rates) and did not exceed 0.3% of GDP. Estonia's defence budget, meanwhile, had a slightly bigger share of GDP - 0.5% - which in absolute terms amounted to 68 million Estonians kroons (approximately 4.4 million euros according to today's exchange rates).

As has been often noted, all three Baltic countries had to build their defence forces from scratch. It might be expected that, having just regained their independence, they would invest more in a sector so vital for the existence of their newly established statehood; but this was not so. The general attitude is well reflected in Latvia's first Defence Concept from 1995 which, in a rather peculiar statement by today's standards, noted that given the financial burden, considerable resources for defence were not justifiable and determined that the defence budget would not exceed the defence budgets of other western European countries.⁴ The Military Balance, meanwhile, reported that the armed forces the Baltic countries were forming would be modest in size and armament, and noted that progress in establishing these forces had been slow mainly due to lack of finance, but also due to a lack of necessary expertise, a general reluctance to volunteer for service, and the various exemptions from conscript service.⁵

Defence budget data for 1992-2004 are shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, indicating that to reach defence spending of 1% of GDP took the Baltic states between three and nine years. Estonia achieved the fastest growing defence budget share, reaching 1% of GDP in 1994, the same year in which the three countries joined NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. Lithuania reached 1% of GDP in 1998, but Latvia reached this level only in 2001 and experienced real growth only from 2002. A former senior official of the Ministry of Defence of Latvia explained that one of the key reasons why Latvia lagged behind the other two countries was that the ministers of defence did not represent influential parties in the beginning of the 1990s and thus did not have much influence when it came to defending the need to increase the defence budget.

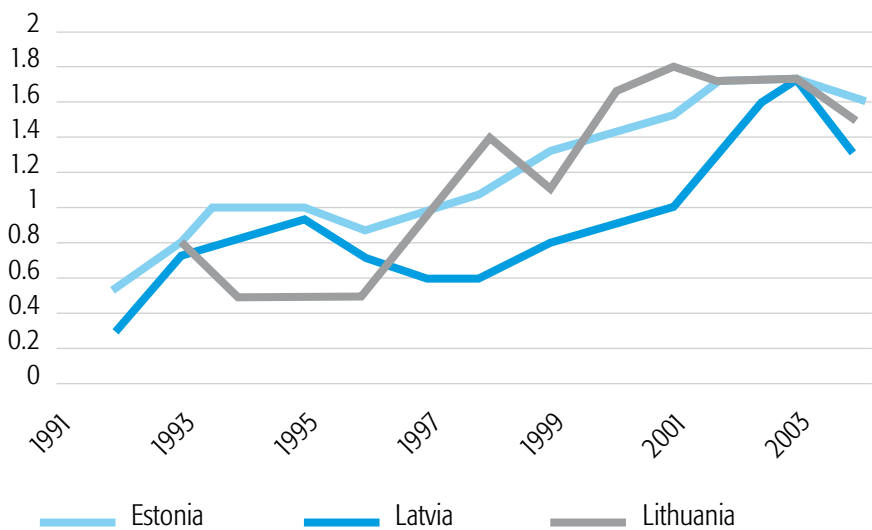
4 *Latvijas Republikas aizsardzības koncepcija* (Defence Concept of the Republic of Latvia) (Riga: 1995), 1.

5 International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 1992-1993* (London: Brassey's, 1993), 67.

Table 1: Defence Expenditure as % of GDP, 1992-2004.
Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Estonia	0.5	0.8	1	1	0.9	1	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.6
Latvia	0.3	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.9	1	1.6	1.7	1.3
Lithuania	N/A	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.4

Figure 1: Defence Expenditure as % of GDP, 1992-2004.
Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute



In contrast to these slowly growing defence budgets it is worth noting that in the 1990s, a few years after regaining independence, public support for building up the defence systems of the three states was considerable. For instance, at the beginning of the 1990s the majority of Estonians (76%) thought that the Estonian government placed “too little” emphasis on defence, and 70% were concerned about the potential of external attack.⁶ Similar attitudes existed in all three Baltic countries, stabilising over the years as cooperation with NATO developed. A few factors may have served as key reasons: first, every independent state needs its own armed forces; second, Russian troops were still present in the Baltic states, withdrawing only in 1994; and third, the geopolitical reality of the immediate proximity

6 Juhan Kivirähk, “Public Opinion on NATO Integration,” *NATO’s Nations and Partners for Peace* 47 (2001), 22.

of Russia and the fact that none of the three Baltic states was party to any security alliance that would defend them.

All three countries also enjoyed positive public attitudes towards defence financing. In Estonia, at the end of the 1990s, one third of public opinion poll respondents favoured an increase in defence expenditure, 35% thought it should be maintained at the current level, while only 16% of the respondents considered it necessary to reduce defence expenditure.⁷ This has provided the Estonian government with a strong basis of support for increased defence financing. Data from Latvia from the year 2000 show even higher support for increased defence financing – 51% of respondents believed that the defence budget should be increased, 26% considered that it should remain the same and only 9% believed that it should be decreased.⁸ Such high levels of public support have decreased over the years. This can largely be explained by the public's assurance of its security, which rose considerably after the three countries joined NATO in 2004.

Despite the high public support in Latvia for funding the defence sector, there was a struggle to secure adequate financing. In 1999 this fact seriously hindered Latvia's ability to prepare for NATO membership: Defence Minister Kristovskis was forced to recognise that if Latvia had made timely decisions to increase its defence spending, its readiness to join NATO could have been rated as highly as Lithuania's.⁹ It can thus be concluded that political commitment in the other two countries – Estonia and Lithuania – appeared earlier than in Latvia. This may be partially explained by the lag in GDP growth compared to the other two Baltic countries, which can be seen in Figure 2, but the difference is not so sharp as to single this out as a key factor. Another part of the answer is the previously mentioned limited political influence of the defence ministers, who were unable to change the financing situation. The defence budget experienced real growth only when the political parties represented in the government achieved consensus that defence supported key foreign policy goals and ought to receive adequate funding.

With regards to Lithuania, a senior official of the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania noted that defence spending was always a significant topic in political discussions; even so, the Lithuanian defence sector was not able to avoid financing problems, the most severe occurring around 1999 when, largely due to a crisis in economic relations with Russia, the Ministry was not

7 Ibid., 22.

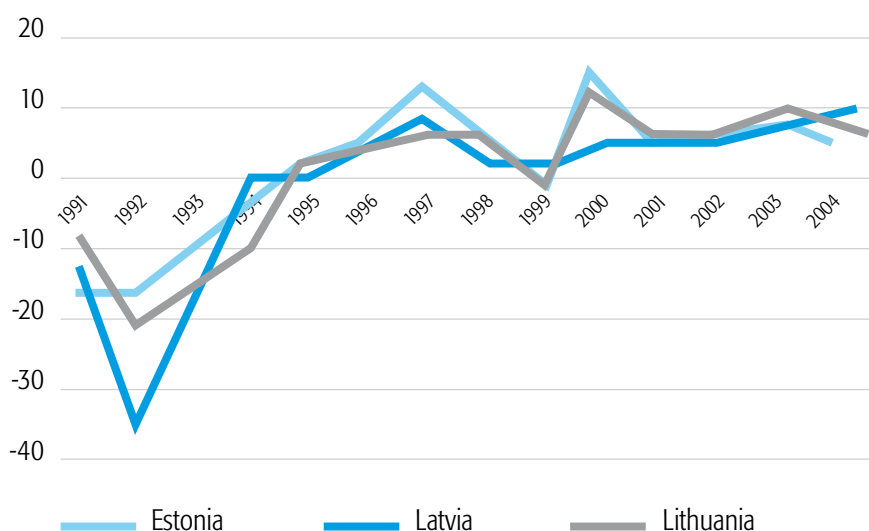
8 Ministry of Defence (Latvia), *Public Opinion Poll. Year 2000* (Riga: Ministry of Defence, 2000).

9 The Jamestown Foundation, "Low Defence Budget Hinders Latvia's Progress to NATO," *Monitor* 5, issue 29 (11 February 1999).

able to pay salaries for several months.¹⁰ Aside from the question of political commitment to defence spending, it should be noted that the negative effects of the Russian financial crisis of 1998-1999 on GDP growth rates in the Baltics were quite pronounced, as the three states still relied quite heavily on exports to Russia at that time. The Baltic banks that invested in Russia's short term treasury bills also suffered significant losses following the country's debt default. However, as has been recognised by the IMF, the Baltic countries also managed to regain positive growth relatively quickly – already by the beginning of 2000.¹¹

Figure 2: Real GDP Growth Rate (as % change on previous year).

Sources: NATO Nations Special Edition, 1999 and Eurostat



All three countries thus searched, at one point or another, for ways to visibly strengthen their political commitment to increase defence spending in order to reach their major foreign policy goal – membership of the North Atlantic Alliance. The most obvious way to enhance such political commitment was to give it strong legal power.

Legal Instruments

All three countries made use of domestic legal instruments to ensure adequate financing, in terms of percentage of GDP, for the defence sector. The

10 See also: Aušra Radzevičūtė, "Lietuvos militaristi bez algām un sakariem" (Lithuanian Militaries Without Salaries and Communications), *Diena*, 22 December 1999, 2.

11 Kingsley I. Obiora, *Decoupling from the East Towards the West? Analysis of Spillovers to the Baltic Countries*, IMF Working Paper, WP/09/125, June 2009, 5.

most widely used approach was to adopt laws or legal acts and to include language in the government programmes, national security concepts and defence concepts that are approved by governments and/or parliaments. As a result, funding allocated for defence became linked with the growth of national GDP. Estonia and Lithuania took this step in 1999, two years before Latvia which committed itself only in 2001.

In 1998, when Latvia accepted a memorandum on joining the Alliance, it also stated that its defence budget should reach 1% of GDP in 1999 and be gradually increased to 2% within the next five years.¹² However, this commitment did not materialise in practice and the real increase in the defence budget started only after the Law on State Defence Financing was adopted in 2001. This law set rather ambitious targets, stating that Latvia needed to reach 1.75% of GDP in 2002, and 2% from 2003 until 2008 (later extended until 2012).¹³ The law, the growing GDP, and the understanding reached within the government on the importance of increased defence financing in preparation for NATO membership, were the key factors in increasing defence financing in Latvia. At the time of its adoption, the law carried an important symbolic value. First, as noted by a former senior official of the Ministry of Defence, it was proof of a common understanding among the political parties, and second, it demonstrated that defence spending was imperative for securing Latvia's foreign policy interests. It demonstrated to the United States and other countries that supported NATO enlargement a significant commitment by the Latvian government to taking defence capability development seriously and underpinning its aspirations to become a NATO member country. The 2% commitment also became part of the updated State Defence Concept and has been retained in the revised 2008 and 2012 concepts.¹⁴

Political support for increased defence spending was realised earlier in Lithuania than it was in Latvia (Table 1 and Figure 1). Politicians confirmed their support in 1998, approving a decision at the National Defence Council which proposed an increase in defence funding to 2% of GDP by 2001. A year later – in 1999 – the Law on National Defence System Funding Strategy set out relative indicators for programme funding that determined defence funding of up to 1.70-1.75% of GDP for the year 2000, and 1.95-2% of GDP for the year 2001. However, these intentions had a short life and, according to a former senior official of the

12 Ministry of Defence (Latvia), Annotation to *Valsts aizsardzības finansēšanas likums* (Law on State Defence Financing) (Riga: Ministry of Defence, 2001).

13 Saeima (Latvian Parliament), "Valsts aizsardzības finansēšanas likums" (Law on State Defence Financing) (2001), *Latvijas Vestnesis* 60 (2447).

14 Ministry of Defence (Latvia), *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (State Defence Concept) (Riga: Ministry of Defence, 2001); Ministry of Defence (Latvia), *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (State Defence Concept) (Riga: Ministry of Defence, 2008); Ministry of Defence (Latvia), *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (State Defence Concept) (Riga: Ministry of Defence, 2012).

Ministry of National Defence, this practice had to be abandoned when other ministries started to prepare comparable laws and, ultimately, it was found not to be in agreement with the Constitution of Lithuania. The validity period of the law was terminated in 2001 and replaced by an agreement in May of that year among all Lithuanian parliamentary parties that concerned Lithuania's defence policy for 2001-2004. This agreement confirmed that Lithuania's defence expenditures in the year 2002 would amount to 2% of GDP, and that this percentage would not be reduced in 2003-2004. The political parties confirmed the need to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP for a second time in 2005. However, the Ministry of Finance and government failed to implement this political provision. The former senior official noted that the key reason was that from 2000-2002, defence financing was partially increased by revenues received from privatisation and borrowing through state guaranteed loans; when privatisation revenues decreased, a new source of funding to substitute that part of defence funding was not found.

The Estonian government also took the decision in 1999 to gradually increase defence financing up to 2% of GDP by 2002, noting that increasing the resources allocated to national defence would be the first step in developing the defence system and allowing the state to take advantage of the new cooperation mechanisms opened to aspirants through the Membership Action Plan (MAP); all the major political parties agreed to achieve this, so as to be ready for Alliance membership in 2002.¹⁵ The decision has had wide political support over the years and has been part of governmental coalition agreements and included in a number of official Estonian strategic documents, such as the National Security Concept, National Defence Strategy and Long Term Defence Development Plan.¹⁶

First and foremost, the economic, legal and conceptual linkage between defence funding and GDP demonstrated symbolically the determination of the three Baltic governments, which was very significant in the early years after re-independence. Internally, it helped to ensure the growth of defence financing – this correlation is well reflected in the case of Latvia, for example, where defence funding started to grow a year after the Law on State Defence Financing was adopted. But it also sent the international

15 Jüri Luik, "Membership Action Plan (MAP) – On the road towards NATO," *Baltic Defence Review* 2 (1999): 28.

16 Eesti Reformierakond, Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit, ja Sotsiaaldemokraatliku Erakond, *Valitsusliidu Programm Aastateks 2007-2011* (Estonian Reform Party, Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica, and Social Democratic Party, Coalition Agreement, 2007-2011), 31; *Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit, ja Eesti Reformierakond, Valitsusliidu Programm 2011-2015* (Estonian Reform Party and Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica, Coalition Agreement, 2011-2015), 50; *National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia* (2004) (Tallinn, 2004), paragraph 3.1; *National Security Concept of Estonia*, unofficial translation (Tallinn, 2010), paragraph 3.2; Ministry of Defence (Estonia), *National Defence Strategy* (Tallinn: Ministry of Defence, 2010), 10; Estonian Defence Forces and Ministry of Defence (Estonia), *Estonian Long Term Defence Development Plan 2009 – 2018* (Tallinn: Ministry of Defence, 2009), 13.

Baltic supporters an important signal of determination in the three states' preparation for membership of NATO.

However, none of the Baltic states had reached the 2% benchmark by 2004, even though GDP growth was between 7 and 10% from 1999 onwards. On the other hand, defence funding was still rising in absolute numbers due to the three states' fast growing economies. This, of course, is in slight contradiction to what the countries themselves were reporting in the years before NATO membership was achieved. As always, statistics can be affected by interpretation and applied methodology. In this case, the contradiction in the numbers is caused by NATO's definition of defence expenditure which, until 2004, permitted a much wider interpretation of what can be included as defence expenditure, and the Baltic countries were following this wider interpretation. Ultimately, it permitted boosting defence expenditure by between 10 and 25% and allowed Estonia to declare that it had started to spend 2% of its GDP on defence in 2002 and would maintain this until 2015. Lithuania kept gradually increasing its budget, reaching 1.87% in 2003 and 1.95% in 2005. And although Latvia was lagging behind with 1.15% in 2001, it managed to increase its budget to 1.75% in 2003 and 2% in 2004. This data is not reflected in this chapter. NATO's revised definition of defence expenditure in 2004 had an immediate effect and the three states' official defence expenditure fell considerably short of the 2% benchmark: Estonia reported 1.6%, Lithuania 1.4%, and Latvia 1.3%.

Interests and Priorities

There have been no specific studies in the Baltic states on the effect of defence expenditure in creating domestic demand for goods or boosting income and thus indirectly affecting labour/capital productivity, but it certainly had, and still has, only a very limited effect on the import/export ratio and on domestic technological improvement. Defence funding was thus able to remain at core a matter for a narrow group of political and bureaucratic decision makers, in some ways free from vested domestic interest groups and lobbies, such as the defence industry (which can be one of the strongest lobby groups in other countries). In smaller countries, defence and external security is more likely to be perceived as a 'common public good' with no particular customer for policies. Non-rival consumption and non-excludability mean that, apart from bureaucrats themselves, there have been no specific interest groups pushing for higher defence spending.

This does not mean, however, that the way in which defence funds have been spent has been free from vested domestic interests. In Latvia, for

instance, a senior official of the Ministry of Defence noted that ideas to invest or procure have often been pushed forward by interested individuals, meaning that from the mid-1990s, there was little programming and planning to define the basis for defence investments. Estonian and Lithuanian officials did not recognise such direct interference in their own defence planning processes, but the author has not further researched this issue in these states. Nonetheless, political preferences and interference have been recognised by NATO experts as present in all three Baltic countries during the years of preparation for membership. A senior force planning expert in the NATO International Staff noted that among the examples are the initial independence of home guard units and competition between the services, particularly between the army and the navy. All three countries thus faced the problem of an inability to set comprehensive sustainable priorities for their armed forces as a joint system, hampering their defence development processes. NATO experts also noted, from their regular defence reviews with the three states, that Baltic officials were unaccustomed to sit down and carry out real planning, including credible economic calculations based on national economic situations, not only for the short term but also in the long-term perspective. Sectional interests, noted a senior force planning expert in the NATO International Staff, tended to take over. Of the three states, Estonia seems to have been able to pursue a more balanced approach, but this is mainly because there was simply more money available, meaning fewer difficult choices about priorities.

NATO's Assessment and Accession Talks¹⁷

NATO's initial assessments came in the form of the Partnership Action Review Process after all three countries joined the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme in 1994. NATO officials note that the first thing that jumped out was that these are, indeed, very small countries. There was little money available for equipment, training, infrastructure etc. Initially NATO dealt with the Baltic countries in a more formal way, as with any other NATO Partner country, which essentially meant that the focus of the assessment and NATO's recommendations were limited to the forces that each country individually declared available for NATO/PfP operations. However, at the same time, NATO's comments and recommendations went beyond this as, "there was an open door and it just seemed to make sense to provide sensible advice." New member states had to comply with certain criteria that were determined by the Alliance Foreign Ministers in December 1994. The same guidelines were later published in the Study on NATO Enlargement and are still applicable for aspirant members. In the

17 Based on interviews with senior experts in force planning and resource issues, NATO International Staff.

field of defence financing, the enlargement guidelines determined that any country joining the Alliance should be capable of undertaking a commitment to ensure that adequate resources are devoted to achieve the political and military obligations the Alliance places on them, as laid out in the same document. The study also noted the importance of ensuring that potential new members were fully aware of the considerable financial obligations they would face when joining the Alliance.¹⁸

It was not until 1999, when all three countries joined the MAP process, that NATO developed the approach that NATO Partnership Goals for the aspirant countries should apply to their entire armed forces. NATO would thus undertake a thorough assessment of what aspirant countries were doing and make clear recommendations about how each country was managing its affairs. This came in the form of an annual assessment of political, economic, defence, military, security and legal issues, and resources. The key purpose of the resource part of the annual assessment was to provide an overview of the allocation of funding, and of national defence budget planning documents with certain attention drawn towards internal structures and procedures. Instead of the 2% of GDP defence spending benchmark, it required potential partners to commit sufficient budgetary resources to allow them to meet the commitments of partnership.¹⁹ This approach changed NATO's way of assessment considerably, but not immediately. NATO missed the opportunity to start this new process in 2000, when NATO experts went through the Partnership Goal exercise and so did not undertake a deeper analysis on defence spending and defence structure plans until 2001.

A NATO expert recalled that when the new process did begin, it was a very stressful experience for them, and more so for the countries being examined. In the case of Lithuania and Latvia, there were some significant reservations. All three Baltic countries envisaged development plans based on large land force structures and relying on equipment donations from other NATO and NATO Partner countries, in particular from Sweden and Finland. These plans did not appear sustainable and financially affordable in the longer term. Lithuania was very much focussed on developing five infantry brigades equipped with armoured vehicles and was not ready to understand NATO's concerns regarding the sustainability of such a large force structure. Latvia also planned a large land force structure based on reserve and territorial battalions, while in Estonia, the plan was a large

18 NATO, *Study on NATO Enlargement* (Brussels: NATO, 1995), paragraphs 67 and 72.

19 NATO, *The Readers Guide to the NATO Summit in Washington. 23-25 April 1999* (Brussels: NATO, 1999), 77.

war-time structure through mobilisation. NATO's assessment thus concluded that the development of effective defence capabilities in the three states would take many years and would require considerable investment. Over the years, NATO consistently tried to emphasise to all three countries that it would be interested in deployable forces, rather than territorial defence capabilities and mobilisation structures. NATO sought defence establishments that were sustainable and that had themselves set some priorities, and which would be able to make contributions to operations. While NATO understood that contributions from small countries with small armed forces would be proportionally small, the three states needed to understand that they should be prepared to send their soldiers to operations.

As regards defence funding, a NATO International Staff expert recalled certain oddities, mostly in the way defence expenditure had been accounted for, and a tendency for a wider than usual interpretation. All three countries had read NATO's definition of defence expenditure very carefully. Lithuania included its Interior Service troops, Border Police formations, and Riflemen Union. Latvia also managed to fund the activities of other governmental bodies, such as the security service of the Latvian Central Bank, from of its defence budget, and in Estonia the defence budget included the Border Guard and Rescue Service. All this appeared to be legitimate at the time due to the way definition was written. The Baltic countries were behaving no differently from many Allies in accounting for defence, but the relatively large proportions of non-defence items included considerably increased their defence expenditure on paper, later prompting NATO itself to look very carefully at its definition of defence expenditure.

For NATO, the accession talks with the three Baltic states were easy in terms of the 'cost of membership'. As expected (and similarly to the previous round of enlargement) the three Baltic countries simply said, "yes" to what was proposed. The overriding importance of becoming members of a stable alliance, and gaining the resultant security guarantees, was so great that all the rest did not matter. As a senior expert in the NATO Office of Resources noted, "There was also not an interest from the NATO side to make these accession talks more difficult, as internally – within the Alliance – the thinking process was we want European security, stability and that meant ... we need those new member nations. NATO wanted you to join the club."

The accession of the three countries had a relatively small financial impact on NATO itself. For none of them did their average contribution to the NATO budget exceed 0.5% of their annual defence budgets. The cost share was,

and still is, set according to each member's relative Gross National Income, expressed in purchasing power parity terms, and extrapolated to the date of accession. These direct annual payments to NATO and the costs of officers sent to work in the NATO command structure were, and remain, the only direct expenses that NATO membership entailed for the newcomers. All other expenses or costs of membership, such as contributions to NATO operations, are voluntary in nature. NATO had no desire to make it financially difficult for the new members to join the Alliance, so the accession barrier was set relatively low. In this regard, the new members were notably exempted from joining the only NATO owned capability at that time – the airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) system, an airborne radar system designed to detect aircraft at long ranges, and control the battle space in an air engagement by directing fighter and attack aircraft strikes. A similar exemption was granted to the other four countries that joined the Alliance at the time, as was also the case in 1999 when Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic became members. Since then, some of the new Allies have joined this NATO programme; others, including the Baltic countries, have not, mainly due to its high costs. Eight years after the Baltic states joined the Alliance, the NATO International Staff see this exemption as mistake, as there is no doubt that all three countries would have readily agreed to take part if asked during the accession talks.

In the run up to accession, none of the Baltic countries were actively scrutinising what membership would cost then, or in the long run; just as today, they do not discuss membership's economic impact as for all three states the alternative option – not being a member – would cost a great deal more. Indirect economic benefits can also most probably be traced, for example in the form of a safer environment for foreign direct investment, tourism, and trade relations. More direct benefits, such as hosting NATO military headquarters or other installations and defence industry contracts from NATO or NATO member countries, will not be on the agenda for the foreseeable future. This ought to be viewed as a positive sign, as considering defence as a business activity would be a dangerous approach.

Key Spending Areas

Even if the available statistics on defence budgets may not be entirely reliable, the analysis of defence expenditure can still reveal historical national defence priorities and the defence establishment's ability to follow these through. NATO experts indicated that the latter was one of the constant problems in all three Baltic states. One way to compare key defence

funding allocation trends is to analyse changes in expenditure categories as a percentage of the defence budget over time; this approach will be used here, every five years from 1995 to 2010. The funding allocation trends in the key categories – personnel expenses, procurement, infrastructure and other expenses (to a large extent being operational and maintenance costs) – reveal certain differences between the three states. The most obvious one is the balance among the expenditure categories. Starting from the year 2000, the most balanced budget appears to be Estonia’s. The other two countries appear to have a less balanced approach, and in both cases expenditure on personnel tends to take up a large portion of the defence budget already from the year 1995. The allocation of the defence budget to personnel, procurement, infrastructure, and other expenses for the years 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010 is shown in Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Figure 3: Defence Budget Allocation in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1995. Sources: MoD Estonia; MoD Latvia; MoD Lithuania, White Paper, 1999, 45.

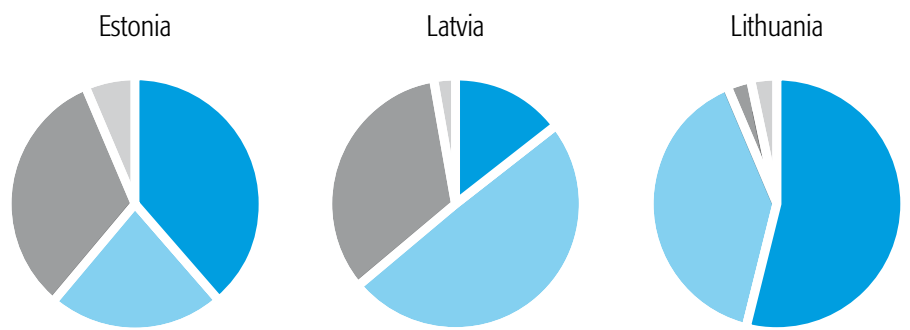


Figure 4: Defence Budget Allocation in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 2000. Sources: MoD Estonia; MoD Latvia; MoD Lithuania, White Paper, 1999, 45 (prognosis).

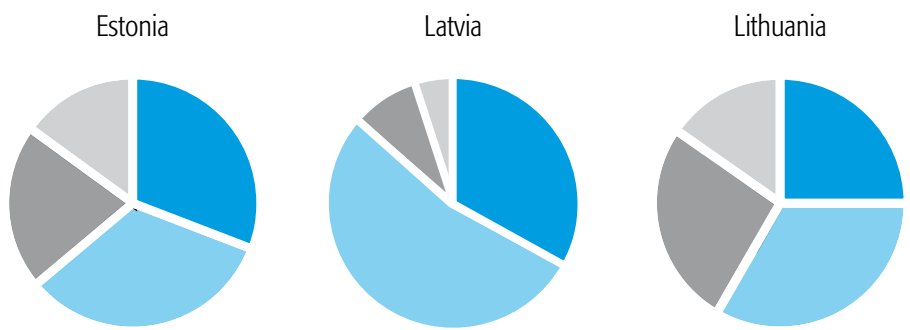


Figure 5: Defence Budget Allocation in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 2005. Source: NATO, NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence, 9.

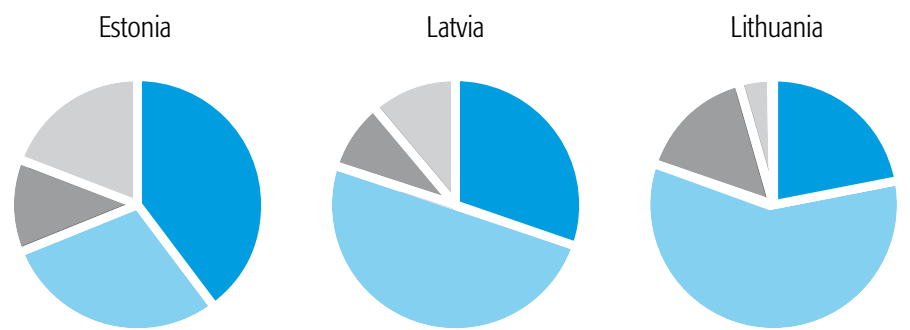
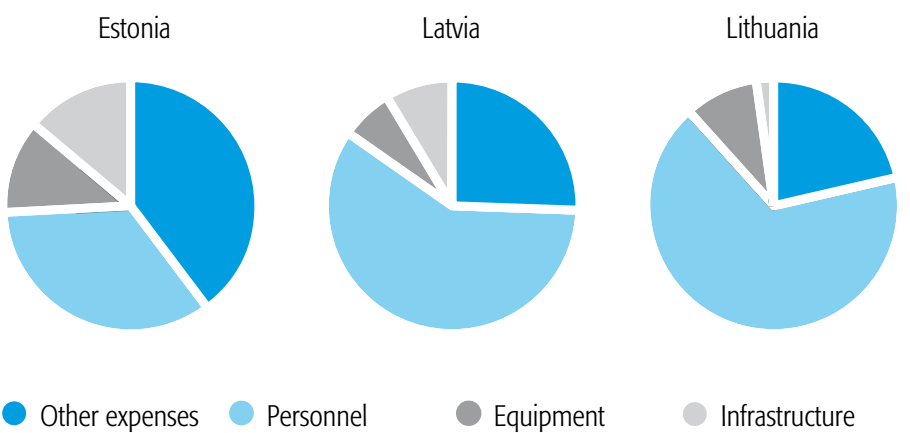


Figure 6: Defence Budget Allocation in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 2010. Source: NATO, Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence, 8



The figures show that the first and most obvious difference between the three countries stretches over the entire period: of the three states, Estonia has allocated the smallest share to personnel – about one-fifth in 1995 and from 2000 about one-third of its defence budget (specifically, 23% in 1995, 33% in 2000, 29% in 2005 and 35% in 2010). In the other two countries this expense category tends to take up a much larger share. Latvia allocated 49% in 1995, 52% in 2000, 50% in 2005 and 59% in 2010, while the Lithuanian allocation has tended to grow and has become the biggest in comparison with the other two Baltic countries: 41% in 1995, 33% in 2000, 58% in 2005 and 67% in 2010.

Estonia's comparatively low personnel expenses over the years can be explained by its reliance on conscripts and by the smaller size of its army. Latvia abolished conscription in 2007 and conscription in Lithuania ended in 2009, much earlier than had been planned, due to budget cuts.²⁰ In both cases, mandatory military service was not a popular policy. Professionalisation of the armed forces thus accounts for higher personnel costs. Lithuania is the frontrunner in creating a disproportionate expenditure ratio. However, Lithuania also has the biggest armed forces of the three Baltic countries and in situations when defence budgets are not growing and expenditure in other categories has been reduced, personnel costs will tend to take a bigger share. A former senior official of the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania agreed that the number of personnel in the Lithuanian armed forces and a lack of adequate funding were the main factors for a large and growing proportion of expenditure (almost 70% in 2010) devoted to personnel. The same former official also noted that prior to the economic crisis there were some attempts to keep spending on personnel below 50%, but the recession halted further steps.

All three countries show an increase in the share of personnel expenditure in 2010, which can be attributed to the fiscal austerity measures introduced in 2009. As personnel expenditure cannot easily be avoided, the budget cuts tended to raise the share of personnel costs at the aggregate level, even though salary cuts of up to 20% were implemented in all three states. It should be expected that as the economies begin to grow once more, expenditure in this category will rise only cautiously in absolute numbers due to the fiscal austerity measures taken in previous years and will most likely decrease as a proportion of total expenditure.

The expenditure category that is perhaps the most important from NATO's perspective – investment in new equipment, especially new deployable equipment – has not exceeded 33% over the years in any of the three countries, and the overall pattern has been rather variable. Economic analysts have argued that the key reason for this is that expenditure in this category is often used to balance defence budgets.²¹ For most of the period, except in 1995 when it allocated 33% for procurement, Latvia has tended to lag behind its Baltic neighbours, spending 9% in 2000 and 2005, and 7% in 2010. By comparison, Estonia spent 33% in 1995, 21% in 2000, 12% in 2005 and 12% in 2010. Meanwhile, Lithuania had the lowest expenditure level in 1995 – only 3% – but the highest in

20 Eric J. de Bakker and Robert J.M Beeres, "A Comparative Economic Analysis of Military Expenditure in the Baltic States: 2000-2010," *Baltic Security and Defence Review* 14, no.1 (2012): 17.

21 Ibid., 15.

2000, when 26% of total expenditure was devoted to the procurement of new weapon systems. Since then, Lithuania has gradually decreased its procurement expenditure to 15% in 2005 and to 9% in 2010, but has declared its intent to increase this figure to 20-25% to meet NATO recommendations.²² The expenditure pattern in this budget category clearly reflects each individual country's financial situation at particular times, for example the sharpest cuts in Latvia and Lithuania can be seen during the financial crisis. While Estonia tends to be a frontrunner in this expenditure category, it was noted by a senior force planning expert in the NATO International Staff that not all of the procured equipment is deployable as Estonia follows a total defence concept. However, Estonia has also stated that it aims to spend up to 40% in the future on procurement and infrastructure jointly.²³ This may in turn also raise expenditure levels for maintenance, as what is bought and built needs to be sustained over the years.

Investments in infrastructure, which are not seen by NATO experts as a key spending category, reflect the sharpest differences between the three states, especially after 2000. In this category, Estonia spends the greatest proportion and Lithuania the smallest. Lithuania spent 3% in 1995 and 15% in 2000, but has gradually decreased its funding since, and starting from 2003 has never really exceeded 4%, dropping to only 2.2% in 2010. By contrast, Estonia spent 6% in 1995, 15% in 2000, 19% in 2005 and 14% in 2010. These figures correspond to Estonia's stated priorities: already in the 1999 Annual National Programme it had promised an increased focus on the establishment of an adequate military infrastructure for training and to improve the quality of life of personnel.²⁴ As Estonia follows a total defence concept, the number and quality of its training facilities is one of the bases for ensuring an adequate defence readiness level. Infrastructure projects in Estonia also tend to be rather costly as the Ministry of Defence sometimes needs to comply with a number of rules and regulations set by local governments, for instance, requiring extra investments in road construction. A senior official of Ministry of Defence of Estonia noted that Estonia plans to maintain the share of its defence budget devoted to infrastructure, as in their view there remains a huge deficit of infrastructure related to their mobilisation tasks. At the same time, as noted above, it might see considerable increases in the operational and maintenance cost category in future years, potentially creating an unbalanced budget.

22 Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), *White Paper: Lithuanian Defence Policy* (Vilnius: Ministry of National Defence, 2006), 53.

23 Estonian Defence Forces and Ministry of Defence, *Estonian Long Term Defence Development Plan*, 13.

24 "Executive Summary of Estonian Annual National Program," *Baltic Defence Review* 2 (1999): 33.

Latvia spent 3% on infrastructure in 1995 and 5% in 2000, later increasing this to become the second biggest spender in the Baltics in this category with 11% in 2005 and 9% in 2010. Estonia and Latvia are also the highest spenders in this category among all NATO member states, whereas for the past few years Lithuania has represented the average NATO share.²⁵ Lithuania has committed not to spend more than 3.5% of its total defence budget on infrastructure in the future, focussing instead on extending the exploitation time of existing facilities.²⁶ Some analysts have argued that the difference between the three states is most likely caused by the lack of military infrastructure in Estonia and Latvia.²⁷ However, this argument does not entirely reflect the real situation. In the 1990s, Lithuania had stated that investment in infrastructure was one of its key priorities.²⁸ As noted above, Lithuania focussed on the improvement of conscript quality of life in the period until 2002, and nearly 90% of infrastructure investments were allocated to this, and to the development of facilities and renovation and construction of training areas. As a former senior official of the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania explained, in the years that followed, there was thus no need to allocate much funding to infrastructure and more attention could be given to the procurement of major platforms and other equipment.

Estonia's and Latvia's expenditure share in this category remained the second highest in NATO during the years of the financial recession due to the long term investment character of this category. In Estonia, investment tends to have been in smaller scale projects such as barracks, training ranges, medical centres, mobilisation warehouses, and soldiers' housing, while infrastructure projects in Latvia tend to take up a considerable proportion of the defence budget with a focus on fewer and larger projects. It is questionable how feasible investments of this scale are compared to the size of Latvia's armed forces. Further, according to Latvian officials, occasional political pressure has meant that not all allocated resources in this category have been entirely devoted to military infrastructure – barracks, training ranges, airfields, headquarters or harbours – thus the high expenditure might be misleading in terms of its impact on defence.

As the percentage of GDP difference between Estonia and Lithuania has been so big in the past six years, it is worth noting that in terms of statistics expressed

25 NATO, *Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence*, Communiqué PR/CP(2011)027 (Brussels: NATO, 2011), 8.

26 Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), *White Paper* 2006, 53.

27 Bakker and Beeres, *A Comparative Economic Analysis*, 18.

28 Ministry of National Defence (Lithuania), *White Paper* (Vilnius: Ministry of National Defence, 1999), 45.

in absolute numbers, Estonia still spends considerably more on infrastructure – three times more than Lithuania in 2005 and six times more in 2010.

The final category represented is 'other expenses' which, to a large extent, can be attributed to operational and maintenance (O&M) costs. It has been recognised that when defence budgets are being analysed O&M costs tend to be underestimated and if not properly calculated might 'crowd out' other expenditure categories within a defence budget.²⁹ A large part of O&M normally consists of fixed, recurring costs and a smaller portion is related to operational activity. For the Baltic states, the O&M category is the most difficult to assess as NATO statistical data are available only from 2004. Before that the author has relied on available sources in all three nations that cannot be fully compared, as there are some variations in what is counted against O&M.

When analysing the available information, similarly to the investment expenditure category, Estonia has spent the most in all years studied: 39% in 1995, 31% in 2000 and 40% in both of the years since joining NATO. This is also the highest expenditure share amongst all NATO members. Lithuania, with one exception in 1995 when it allocated 53% for O&M expenses, spends the least – 25% in 2000, 22% in 2005 and 22% in 2010. Latvia, spending 15% in 1995, 33% in 2000, 30% in 2005 and 26% in 2010, is in between the other two countries. One of the assumptions that could be made with regards to higher expenditures in Estonia is that Estonia follows a territorial defence concept and its force structure is built around the need to generate a reserve force, thus more expenditure is needed for training and there is a higher demand for training ranges.

Latvia and Lithuania's ability to maintain or slightly decrease their O&M expenditures in recent years could be associated with their reviews of commitments to international operations (in 2009, both countries withdrew their forces from Kosovo), the revision of recurring maintenance costs, and their attempts to streamline expenditures in this category. There is currently no reason to think that Lithuania or Latvia's expenditure levels in this category will rise, as the recent financial crisis has prevented them from expanding their procurement and investment plans, which in turn tend to have an impact on O&M expenditures. In the case of Estonia, the recent financial crisis did not affect its international troop deployments, explaining why the O&M costs have remained at the same level. As a senior

29 Anthony H., Cordesman, Jordan D'Amato and Robert Hammond, "The Coming Challenges in Defense Planning, Programming and Budgeting," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 14 July 2010, 33.

official from the Ministry of Defence noted, Estonia's increased defence budget allows it to expand plans for procurement and investment, which could mean that operational and maintenance costs might rise, or at least remain the same.

Financing Defence after 2004

The three key factors that guaranteed that defence funding would increase in all three Baltic countries were the strategic foreign and security policy goal of NATO membership, the need to develop defence structures, and continuing economic growth. The policy goal of NATO membership served to free defence expenditure from major questions in the internal political debate of all three countries; indeed, until financial turmoil struck to a greater or lesser extent five years after joining NATO, the idea that defence financing would continue to increase was safe under the umbrella of a joint political understanding between the major political parties.

Once all three Baltic states joined NATO in April 2004, membership brought not only a feeling of achievement, but also, as had been expected, a bill for regular contributions towards NATO's military and investment budgets in accordance with the agreed cost share based on Gross National Income (GNI). Although GNI does not always work in favour of less wealthy countries – as purchasing power parity varies widely among the NATO member states – the Baltic countries held certain aspirations in relation to the NATO Security Investment Programme, which provides funding for investment projects that would be over and above the requirements the Alliance could expect to be fulfilled from national budgets. Politically, the most visible NATO investment projects in all three Baltic countries are aimed at developing their military airfields, Ämari (Estonia), Lielvārde (Latvia) and Šiauliai (Lithuania). These projects are the biggest NATO investments in the Baltic countries so far, and most likely will remain so in the foreseeable future.

NATO membership did not influence domestic economic productivity in the Baltic countries in the way that it does for some older NATO members through defence industry contracts or job and service creation due to NATO or multinational military installations. At the same time, it is fair to recognise that – at least openly – the Baltic countries have never sought such linkages. The Baltic countries have very limited defence industries. The companies often produce or provide services for both the civilian and military markets. Overall, it has been recognised that Baltic industry's involvement in any defence related production is mostly project based.

National economic productivity is thus only very marginally linked with defence spending, if at all.

Each country has certain, limited aspirations in this area. In Latvia, the joint German-Latvian project for building patrol boats is one of the most visible recent defence-related production projects. Estonia established the Estonian Defence Industry Association in 2009, which signed a memorandum of cooperation in spring of that year with the Ministry of Defence to cooperate in areas such as purchase planning and exhibitions.³⁰ Estonia has also been more successful in establishing itself internationally as an advanced IT country and has been able to synchronise this with the cyber security agenda within NATO, profiling itself as a country having niche know-how in this field in the hope of future contractual benefits for its IT industry. Lithuania is home to an ammunition factory that produces cartridges in accordance with NATO standards and exports 90% of its products, its key customers being the armed forces, special forces or military units of NATO and other countries as well as private companies.³¹ Other military suppliers based in Lithuania, depend primarily on civilian commercial markets.³² Nevertheless, this shows one way that the Baltic countries might develop in this field is by creating niche and/or dual capability companies, and merging or performing as subcontractors for larger defence industry firms. However, this would require assistance from the state. For now, it can be concluded that membership has had positive side effects on the economies, sending a positive signal that the Baltic states are a safe environment for potential foreign direct investment, and has been beneficial to the national industries to only a limited extent.

After joining the Alliance, the defence budget continued to increase in absolute terms in all three countries until 2008. The fast growing economies, illustrated in Figure 7, were the key factor permitting this. However, none of the three reached the 2% of GDP defence spending benchmark in any year up to and including 2011. Table 2 and Figure 8 show defence budget data from 2004 to 2010. It can be seen that Lithuania's defence budget was lower as a percentage of GDP in comparison with those of its Baltic neighbours; in fact, it has gradually declined since Lithuania joined the Alliance, falling below 1% of GDP in 2010. At the same time, as pointed out by a former senior official of the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania, the growing economy meant that in absolute figures, the defence budget grew by a factor of 1.6 between 2004 and 2008. In

30 Ministry of Defence (Estonia), "Defence Industry" (website).

31 Giraitės Ginkluotės Gamykla, "About GGG" (website).

32 Matt Kovalick, "The Ups and Downs of the Defence Industry," *Lithuania in the World* 11, no. 5 (2003).

the other two countries, defence budgets grew in both as a percentage of GDP and in absolute terms until 2008. It thus appears that the political support for the growth of the defence budget was not as strong in Lithuania as in the other two Baltic states. To illustrate this, the former senior official reported that it had been difficult for the Ministry of National Defence to secure even a 0.05% increase for the defence budget in the parliament in 2006.

Figure 7: Real GDP Growth Rate (as % change on previous year).
Source: Eurostat

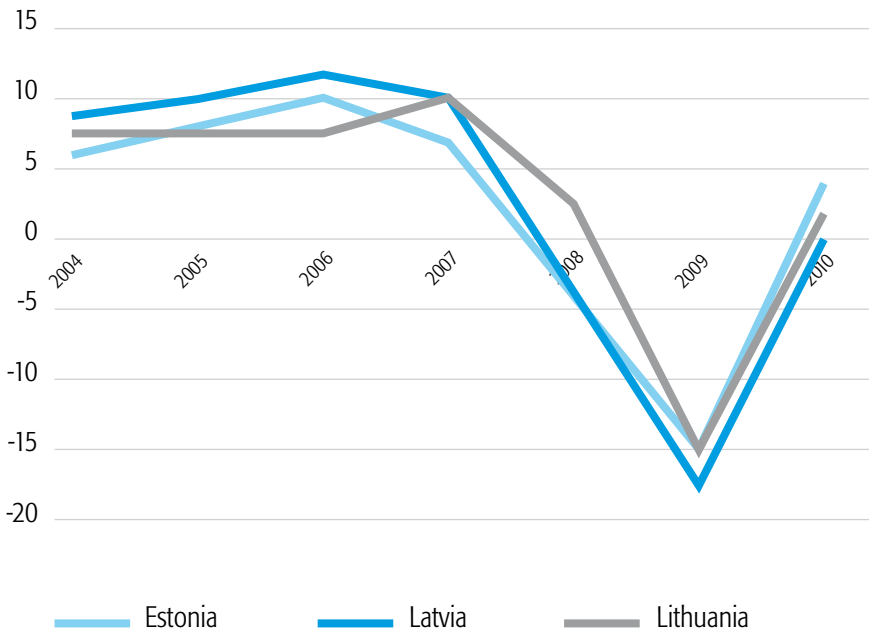
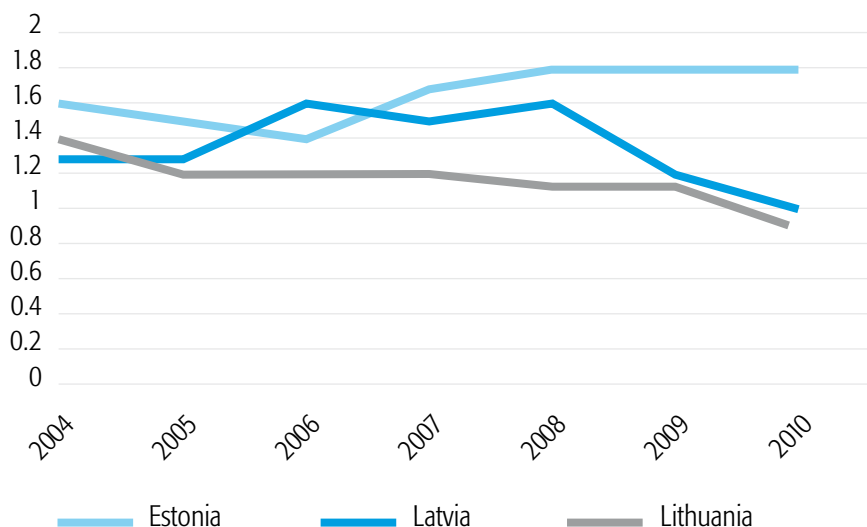


Table 2: Defence Expenditure as % of GDP, 2004-2010.
Sources: NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence, and Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Estonia	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8
Latvia	1.3	1.3	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.2	1
Lithuania	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.1	0.9

Figure 8: Defence Expenditure as % of GDP, 2004-2010.

Sources: NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence, and Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence.



Estonia has been a frontrunner in terms of the growth of its defence budget, and even during the financial crisis managed to keep its expenditure as a percentage of GDP high, showing no substantial change for the last three years. According to plans, 2012 will be the first year in which Estonia will be the only Baltic country to reach the 2% benchmark. Estonia has allowed itself to be loudly critical of the other two Baltic states, with some commentators suggesting that the only obstacle to Baltic defence cooperation is Latvia's and Lithuania's defence budget, and expressing the hope that Estonia will not find itself in a situation where its defence budget is equal to the sum of Latvia's and Lithuania's.³³ Such rhetoric might be seen as a display of arrogance on the part of Estonia, which did relatively better during the financial crisis; however, it also contains a valuable message that Latvian and Lithuanian politicians could use to safeguard their own defence budgets against further cuts.

The political commitment to reach 2% of GDP for defence remained in all three countries and was reinforced in various official documents and/or

³³ "Igaunijas aizsardzības ministrs nobažījies par Latvijas un Lietuvas aizsardzības budžetiem" (Estonian Defence Minister is Worried about the Latvian and Lithuanian Defence Budgets), *Baltic News Service*, 26 May 2011.

coalition agreements but, despite the fast growing GDP in the period until 2008, in reality none of the countries had sufficient political will to fulfil this commitment. Although the ministries of defence had this powerful legal, conceptual and at the same time symbolic instrument at their disposal, there was little incentive to use it as the fast growing GDP in the three states ensured that defence budgets grew in absolute terms. In Estonia and Latvia, the defence budget kept increasing gradually and seemed adequate at the time. For Lithuania, some research suggests that the decreasing defence budget could be attributed to the fact that the country already felt safe and had no real political inclination to increase defence spending.³⁴ In fact, a similar assumption might be made in regards to all three Baltic countries to explain why none of them increased their defence spending to 2% when GDP growth apparently would have allowed this. But the most apparent explanation is the fact that after becoming NATO member states, the pressure was off and the incentive to undertake this financial obligation became weaker. There were no immediate repercussions for not fulfilling this commitment apart from the loss of international prestige – and this is sometimes not a very understandable aspect in the domestic political value system, and certainly not a magnet for attracting electoral votes. Another factor sometimes mentioned is the fact that the three countries had completed defence reforms, which allowed them to achieve the same level of security as before, but with less funds.³⁵ This, however, appears to be a weak argument, as defence reforms tend to be a rather longer term process.

Nevertheless, according to a senior force planning expert in the NATO International Staff, NATO was satisfied with the Baltic states' approach to their membership commitments, to operations, and to their longer term plans for their defence structures, which the growth in defence budgets in absolute numbers allowed. Among the activities singled out by NATO experts as substantial contributions are: Lithuania's ambitious decision to lead a Provincial Reconstruction Team in the ISAF operation, which was viewed as a significant commitment; Latvia's efforts to gradually increase its commitment to operations, mostly in the north of Afghanistan; and Estonia's contribution to ISAF, where its soldiers were deployed in the south of Afghanistan, becoming more involved in real fighting and being more exposed to casualties. These visible contributions have helped, so far, to avoid much greater potential financial expenditures, such as the purchase of fighter aircraft that would have been necessary if air policing of Baltic

34 Jomana Amara and Martins Paskevics, "Unfulfilled Promises: The Impact of Accession on Military Expenditure Trends for New NATO Members," *Comparative Strategy* 29, issue 5 (2010): 444.

35 Ibid.

airspace was left to the Baltic states themselves (leaving aside the fact that the three states would not have had the financial resources in their defence budgets necessary to take on this responsibility). However, one disappointment in the view of NATO experts has been the lack of commitment to pursue regional defence cooperation, which flourished in the earlier years and would potentially offer better value for invested money.

Defence Financing in Times of Economic Austerity

Five years after joining the Alliance, the Baltic states' commitment to increase their defence spending had to face hard economic reality. As the global economic crisis took hold, GDP fell sharply, dropping in 2009 by 18% in Latvia, and by 15% and 14% in Lithuania and Estonia respectively. The resulting austerity measures taken by the Baltic governments led to rather sharp cuts in their defence budgets, and the three states were reminded of the words of Siim Kallas, who while Estonian Finance Minister in 1999 noted that the national security and economic development of a democratic state are tightly linked, success in one area comes from the other.³⁶ Ten years after this statement was made, its wisdom was demonstrated yet again. The economic crisis advanced and the defence establishment felt its effects straight away, most obviously in the form of available public financing. Four aspects ought to be singled out in regards to the ways in which the defence sectors of the Baltic countries responded to the crisis.

First, is the approach used to decrease defence financing. While allocating smaller funding in absolute numbers, Estonia did not decrease its defence funding as a percentage of GDP, holding it at 1.8%. Latvia, and to a lesser extent Lithuania, made rather significant steps backwards, decreasing funding in both percentage of GDP (see Figure 8) and absolute terms. According to a senior official of the Estonian Ministry of Defence, strategically, Estonia tried to avoid a budgetary decision that would require a review of defence policy as a consequence, and a longer recovery period. The Estonian defence budget was subject to three budget cutting cycles in 2009, resulting in a 17% reduction in comparison to the previous year. These cuts set back the existing coalition agreement to reach a 2% of GDP defence budget by 2010 and led for the first time to the questioning of the defence budget by political figures who, according to the defence official, asked for more severe cuts than were eventually made. Estonia was less vocal about this on the international stage; quite the contrary, as Prime Minister Ansip announced that the goal of the government remained to increase defence spending to

36 Siim Kallas, *Successfully Integrated in the Global Trading System," NATO Nations and Partners for Peace*, special Issue (1999), 42.

2% of GDP and made clear his disapproval of any further reductions. The Latvian and Lithuanian approach was different from Estonia's. Latvia not only decreased its defence budget in absolute numbers as a consequence of its sharp GDP decline, it also cut it as a percentage of GDP. In absolute numbers, Latvia cut its defence budget in 2009 by 34% in comparison to 2008, and by 50% when the years 2008 and 2010 are compared.³⁷

Lithuania's response to the financial crisis was not as sharp as Latvia's. Its spending, already the lowest among the Baltic countries before the financial crisis, reached only 1.01% of GDP in 2009. Lithuania decided to refrain from new procurements, focussing instead on maintaining its existing capabilities.³⁸ A senior official of the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania reported that the Ministry's budget in 2009 was cut by around 20% in comparison with 2008, and by a further 15% in 2010. The cuts prompted a new debate in Lithuania regarding what could be counted in the defence budget with the President taking a strong position that the defence budget was something much wider than the Ministry of Defence budget, and arguing that the State Border Guard and Public Security Service should also be counted against defence expenditure.³⁹ This debate is, of course, not new. The President was essentially calling for Lithuania to use the same accounting methodology that the Baltic countries had used to boost their defence budget numbers before entering NATO.

The second aspect is that in all three countries, defence cuts significantly exceeded cuts in other areas of government responsibility. Facing a major financial crisis, the views of society towards defence, including those of social partners,⁴⁰ was negative and showed a lack of understanding of the role of armed forces in a modern state. Making cuts in the defence budget is, of course, also a rather safe short term solution when compared to cuts in other, more socially sensitive sectors, which might immediately affect much larger segments of society. In Latvia, this negative attitude was also apparent in public opinion polls, which placed defence among the lowest priorities for the government.⁴¹ There were also suggestions from social partners to reduce the defence budget even much more drastically.⁴² Estonian and

37 Source: Ministry of Defence of Latvia.

38 Garry Holdanowicz, "Lithuania Slashes Defence Budget," *Jane's Defence Industry*, 10 February 2009.

39 Baltic News Service, "Prezidentė tvirtina, kad krašto apsaugai skiriama gerokai daugiau nei 1 proc" (President states that defence spending is much more than 1 per cent), *Lrytas.lt*, 12 October 2011.

40 Among the social partners that were consulted in Latvia were the Latvian Free Trade Union (LBAS), the Latvian Employers' Confederation, the Latvian Association of Local Governments (LPS) and the Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

41 *DnB NORD Latvijas Barometrs*, nr. 29, September 2010, 14.

42 Imants Lieģis, "Sociālie partneri atsakās no valsts dalības NATO" (Social partners refuse country's membership in NATO), blog post, 11 September 2009.

Lithuanian officials reported that similar trends were also seen in Estonia and Lithuania, where defence was among the sectors experiencing the sharpest cuts.

Third, with regard to the areas most affected by the cuts, an Estonian defence official singled out operational and maintenance expenses, personnel costs (which fell on average between 7% and 10%) and procurement and investment, which decreased by 25%. Estonia also had to postpone some of its development plans for two to three years. These cuts mostly affected areas that would have short term consequences and did not impact, for instance, international commitments, as there was a broad governmental consensus to remain firmly committed to all international obligations. No troops were called back home, nor were visible NATO commitments cancelled. In Latvia, the government's austerity measures had both short and long term consequences. The most severely affected areas were personnel costs which fell by 20-25%; existing procurements, where payments were postponed to later years; and future procurement plans. Latvia also had to review its strategic policy decisions regarding international commitments and the strengthening of its defence capabilities. Participation in the six-month NATO Response Force rotation was reduced from approximately 250 soldiers to 3, Latvia withdrew from NATO's KFOR operation in Kosovo, limited its participation in a number of military exercises, and downsized its defence attaché cadre. A senior defence official in Lithuania reported that similar decisions were taken there. Lithuania reduced its participation in international missions and operations, including withdrawing the KFOR platoon from Kosovo, reduced the number of defence attachés posted abroad, and cut its representation in the NATO command structure. At the same time, it must be noted that both countries, Latvia and Lithuania, maintained their level of participation in NATO's largest operation in Afghanistan, where Lithuania led the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Ghowr province.

Fourth, all three countries remained committed to reach defence expenditures of 2% of GDP. A senior force planning expert at NATO noted that this commitment could have been revisited, with the average European defence spending of 1.4% of GDP seeming a more reasonable aim. That the three states chose not to do so demonstrates their strong political commitment. So far, however, only Estonia's economy has allowed it to fulfil this political and strategic commitment.

In 2011, the defence budgets in all three Baltic countries began to grow once more, rising by 3% in Lithuania and 10% in Latvia in absolute numbers. The

Estonian defence budget also rose in 2011, and again in 2012 by a substantial 21%.⁴³ Such a sharp increase was one of the largest public sector budget growths and caused considerable pressure and questioning from the public. A senior Estonian defence official commented that this is now a challenge, or even a public relations risk, as the Ministry of Defence has to show that it can use the available resources in a reasonable fashion and provide the expected quality. Nonetheless, Estonian officials are convinced that they will be able to maintain the 2% benchmark in the future as well. 2012 can, in some ways, be viewed as a test for future years. The budget growth in Estonia can mostly be linked with the health of the economy, which was also at the core of the defence budget decline in all the Baltic countries in 2009, but an Estonian defence official noted that it has been easier for politicians to argue for an increase in defence spending and to keep the rhetoric positive as those costs are also aimed at providing territorial defence, something that is easier for the general public to understand and appreciate.

Officials and politicians refrain from specifying a year in which Lithuania might reach 2% of GDP for defence financing, but this remains a long term ambition.⁴⁴ Overall though, it appears that Lithuania does not possess sufficient political determination to reach this NATO benchmark, as its defence budget has remained low even in the recent years of economic prosperity.

In Latvia, two years after the first cuts were made, the government continued to be willing to decrease defence financing still further. For instance, in spring 2011 the government discussed an option to lower Latvia's defence budget from 1% to 0.7% of GDP by the year 2014.⁴⁵ While this is certainly a reflection of the financial situation and political mood, it also reflects a lack of understanding of where such tremendous cuts can leave armed forces. However, Latvia has managed to stop the decrease of defence financing in absolute terms and political commitment remains strong, and has been even strengthened by the government established in autumn 2011. This government has reconfirmed its willingness to return to a gradual increase of defence financing, thus further cuts should be avoidable in the coming years.⁴⁶ Statements have also been made by the defence⁴⁷ and foreign affairs

43 Juhan Tere, "Estonia's defence budget surges by 21% in 2012," *The Baltic Course*, 4 October 2011.

44 Baltic News Service, "A.Kubilius: skaičiai apie išlaidas gynybai neišpūsti" (A. Kubilius: figures on defence spending are real), *Išiniuos.lt*, 21 October 2011.

45 *Latvijas Republikas Ministru Kabinetašēdes Protokols* (Record of Governmental Meeting), 28 March 2011.

46 Latvijas Republikas Ministru kabinets, *Deklarācija par Valda Dombrovskā vadītā Ministru kabineta iecerēto darbību* (Latvian Cabinet of Ministers, Declaration on Planned Work of the Cabinet of Ministers, led by Valdis Dombrovskis), 2011.

47 Leta, "Artis Pabriks aicina saglabāt aizsardzības budžetu 1% apmērā no IKP" (Artis Pabriks calls for retaining defence budget of 1% of GDP), *Delfi*, 1 April 2011.

ministers,⁴⁸ noting their commitment to NATO and their intention to devote 2% of the GDP to the defence budget by 2016-2017.

Conclusions

Summing up the Baltic experience of not only ensuring sufficient financing for defence, but also of finding sustainable ways to use this financing, all three countries in one or another way had to go through a 'learning by doing' process. At the beginning of this chapter, it was noted that small economies will always have relatively small financial volumes for their defence budgets. Over the years, this realisation gradually downsized the short-term force planning ambitions of the three states in order that they would be able to have sustainable defence capabilities in the longer term. But this took time. A lesson learned by all three countries was that plans must be realistic and that choices will have to be made in building up defence capability; and the sooner this is done, the better for the outcome and for international credibility. To use today's fashionable terminology, countries that are constrained by small economies need to be very smart about their defence choices – perhaps even smarter than larger economies – if they are to ensure a credible and sustainable outcome.

Second, as in every publicly financed sector – defence is no exception – financing is clearly linked to a country's overall economic well-being and economic potential. As the recent economic recession has shown it appears to be relatively 'easier' to decrease defence budgets rather than many other publicly financed sectors, as even sharp declines in financing do not directly affect large social groups and do not apparently produce immediate national security consequences. However, once the growth of defence budgets has been reversed, it may be very difficult to turn them in the other direction, especially at the speed they once had. This is mainly because many other sectors require funding – twenty years after independence, the general public does not see defence and military affairs as a key sector for government investment – and also because the scope of providers of security has widened due to the increasingly hybrid nature of security threats themselves. In the short and long term, defence ministries and armed forces will thus need to compete for financing with other government institutions that are responsible for dealing with other types of security hazards facing society. The ministries of defence will also be subject to other challenges, among them the significance of national

48 Leta, "Edgars Rinkēvičs: aizsardzības budžets 2% no IKP apmērā jāsasniedz 5-6 gadu laikā" (Edgars Rinkēvičs: defence budget of 2% of GDP should be reached within 5-6 years), *Diena*, 26 October 2011.

security and defence for political parties, the significance of the country's reputation to the political elite, and attitudes in society towards symbols of sovereignty and the armed forces.⁴⁹

Third, besides positive economic growth, one could assume that with strong political consensus and will, adequate financing for the development of credible defence capability can be secured. As a senior NATO force planning expert argued,

The country that has more economic potential and political will to use that for building up its defence capability is going to end up with a more modern, less aging set of military equipment that tends to be better for recruitment of potential personnel thus ensuring more job satisfaction.

However, as the case of the Baltic countries suggests – this might not be enough. The three countries to a large extent shared foreign and defence policy goals: development of defence systems, joining NATO and, since 2004, being reliable NATO member states. One of the ways in which the Baltic states expressed their determination was an attempt to devote 2% of their GDP to defence. But even when relatively strong economies and political commitment were synchronised to the extent possible in the given time, they were not able to reach this target. It took thirteen years from the first announcement of a political commitment to devote 2% of GDP to defence until one state – Estonia – finally managed to meet it.

Fourth, in the set of systemic skills that appear to be useful in constructing defence budgets, the ability to address vested political interests early would be among the most important. There will always be politicians interested in keeping a particular port or garrison. There will always be services or territorial support organisations with their own reasons for wanting to continue to exist. These will come back to bite unless the inconsistencies they produce are addressed early and openly. The quality of a state's internal political culture has also been shown to play a role – it is essential to spend the time to build a shared consensus, so that everybody understands the basis for what and how things are done.

Within the ministry of defence and the armed forces, it is vital to be absolutely ruthless in setting priorities; further, this needs to become part of the culture. Even though no country will ever get away from inter-service rivalries they can be mitigated by making people work together more

49 Kristīne Rudzīte, "Defence Spending and Security: in Search for the Balance," in *Rethinking Security*, ed. Žaneta Ozoliņa, (Rīga: Zinātne, 2010), 253.

regularly and in a structured way. This should be done, particularly, in planning and budgeting. The same methodology of working together should also be extended across other governmental institutions. The regular involvement of the ministry of finance (not just the minister, but also the ministry's staff) is crucial, given the importance of the decisions they (the ministry of finance) are going to make. The ministry of defence needs to make this very important ally.

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Participation in International Military Operations

Introduction

Over the last twenty years, participation in international military operations has been one of the central themes for the Baltic countries in the field of defence and security.¹ There is no aspect of this field that has not somehow been touched or influenced by operations. Since the deployment of the first troops to a UN mission in the Balkans in the mid-1990s, operations have been a very practical everyday activity for the armed forces of the three countries. They have been a weighty subject for international contacts bilaterally and multilaterally, and an important topic for internal public debates – sometimes on the backburner, but sometimes in the spotlight.

The topic is multi-faceted and there are plenty of angles from which to examine it, and plenty of themes worth analysing. This chapter considers how and why the Baltic countries began to participate in operations in the 1990s, what their reasons and motives for deployments have been since then, and where they have reached today. It also examines the place of operations within the Baltic states' defence systems, and how operations have been perceived and how participation has changed over twenty years. The central question, however, is *why*, as none of the three countries had earlier been involved or even interested in the distant locations in which they are now active.

To answer these questions, this chapter first looks at the emergence of the idea of peacekeeping in these countries in the early 1990s. It then takes three episodes from the now almost twenty years of Baltic states' operational experience: the first is the very first deployments of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian troops to the UN mission in the Balkans in the mid-1990s; the second, from the beginning of the present century, concerns the launch of the operations in Iraq and

1 This chapter concerns only international crisis management operations, including peacekeeping, peace support, peace enforcement, stabilisation and other types of crisis management operation. The general term 'operation' is used to describe these throughout the chapter. However, the Baltic countries have been, and are, involved in other kinds of international military operations too, e.g. the NATO air policing operation on their own territory.

Afghanistan where the Baltic countries were among the first and most dedicated contributors; and the third is the case of Libya, in spring 2011, to which none of the Baltic countries contributed with military means, but which still offers insight into the state of affairs at the end of the period under observation. A complete list of the operations that the three states have contributed to is contained in an appendix to this chapter.

The choice of these three episodes is, of course, somewhat arbitrary. However, each of them is a very particular case and not only a clear milestone in the history of Baltic participation in international military operations, but also a milestone for the whole Euro-Atlantic community. They represent steps through which the evolution of Baltic participation can be well demonstrated, but they also mark important changes in the ideology of the conduct of international military operations. This wider theme, however, as well as the reasons behind the launch of these particular operations, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

One important source for this chapter is the set of interviews with key defence officials who either were themselves behind the decisions concerning Baltic participation, or stood close to the making of these decisions. Interviews were necessary firstly because not everything is documented, especially as concerns the earlier years, but also, because the perception of the situation by decision makers, which is an important variable in decision making, is not so apparent from official documents. Further, the interviews added a personal touch to an issue which is on the one hand highly political, regulated by law, and run in large part by bureaucracies, but at the same time is very much influenced by the people who happened to be in key positions at particular times. Memory is selective and subjective, certainly, but the decisions on participation in international operations were (and still are) also taken by subjective people with selective memories.²

- 2 I am very grateful to all my interviewees for their time and trust. I am also grateful to the Ministries of Defence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the Estonian Defence Forces, the Latvian National Armed Forces and the Lithuanian Armed Forces and their helpful officials and officers who provided me with the information necessary for this chapter. Interviews were conducted by the author between February and August 2012 with Siim Alatalu (Advisor to the Estonian Delegation to NATO 2007-2011), Jonas Andriškevičius (Commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces 1993-1999), Audrius Butkevičius (Lithuanian Minister of National Defence 1991-1993), Juris Dalbins, (Commander of the Latvian National Armed Forces 1994-1998), Jānis Davidovič (State Secretary of Latvian Ministry of Defence 1993-1995), Andis Dilans (Commander of LATPLA 1, currently the Chief-of-Staff of Latvian National Armed Forces Joint HQ), Aleksander Einseln (Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces 1993-1995), Jonas Gečas (Lithuanian Vice-Minister of National Defence 1992-1996), Raimonds Graube (Commander of Latvian National Armed Forces since 2010 and in 1999-2003, Military Representative to NATO and the EU 2005-2008), Tālavs Jundzis (Latvian Minister of Defence 1991-1993), Indrek Kannik (Estonian Minister of Defence in 1994, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry 2001-2004), Johannes Kert (Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces 1996-2000), Meelis Kiili (Commander of Estonian Peace Operations Centre 1998-1999), Gediminas Kirkilas (Lithuanian Minister of National Defence 2004-2006), Margus Kolga (Permanent Under-Secretary of Defence Policy of the Estonian Ministry of Defence 1996-2003, since 2011 Ambassador to the UN), Tarmo Kõuts (Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces 2000-2006), Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis (Latvian Minister of Defence 1998-2004, Minister of Foreign Affairs 2012-2011), Ants Laaneots (Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces 2006-2011), Alar Laneman (First Commander of the Estonian Single →

This chapter thus presents a version of the insiders' views – a story based on how the situations were perceived by decision makers in the defence establishments of these countries, as seen by them retrospectively. Within the governments and defence structures, not to mention within parliaments and societies, there has been a variety of opinions on the issue of deploying national troops to operations, including those that did not support it at all and those advocating other kinds of contribution. But the story of participation, and thus the subject of this chapter, is largely the story told by those who prevailed in these internal disputes and saw deployments launched. The perceptions of other countries and international players are also not reflected here, although clearly operations are by no means a discrete national undertaking, but an act of international cooperation involving multiple parties.

Participation in international operations has been somewhat different for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, demonstrating quite well the different national characters and circumstances of the three states. However, the last twenty years have also shown many similarities in the policies of these three countries, including in foreign and security affairs. No less importantly, western countries have tended to take them as a set since their re-independence, which has also had an impact on their courses of action. This chapter, therefore, mostly describes the similarities of the three states in their participation in operations, rather than dwelling on the detailed differences between them.

The Very Beginning: Peacekeeping.

Probably the first official mention of the notion of contributing to an international military mission dates back to 1992. On 1-2 June of that year, the first meeting of the Ministers of Defence of the three Baltic

←Peacekeeping Company, Commander of BALTBAT 1995-1998), Aigars Liepiņš (Commander of LATPLA 2), Linas Linkevičius (Lithuanian Minister of National Defence 1993-1996 and 2000-2004, Permanent Representative to NATO 2005-2011), Jüri Luik (Estonian Minister of Defence 1993-1994 and 1999-2002, Minister of Foreign Affairs 1994-1995, Ambassador to NATO 1996-1999, Ambassador to the United States of America 2003-2007, and Permanent Representative to NATO 2007-2012), Juozas Olekas (Lithuanian Minister of National Defence 2006-2008), Arvydas Pocius (Commander of Lithuanian Armed Forces since July 2009), Igors Rajevs (Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations of Latvian National Armed Forces in 2010, Commander of Land Forces 2007-2009), Sven Sakkov (Permanent Under-Secretary for Defence Policy of Estonian Ministry of Defence since 2008), Jānis Sarts (Secretary of State of Latvian Ministry of Defence since 2008), Ignas Stankovičius (Lithuanian Vice-Minister of National Defence 1991-1994), Riho Terras (Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces since 2011, before that Chief of the General Staff of the EDF), Enn Tupp (Estonian Minister of Defence 1994-1995), Dainis Turlais (Commander of the Latvian National Armed Forces 1991-1994), Valdas Tutkus (Commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces 2004-2009), Vaidotas Urbelis (Political Director of Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence since 2010, before that Defence Advisor at the Delegation to NATO), Einars Vaivods (State Secretary of Latvian Ministry of Defence 1995-1997), Jonatan Vseiov (Acting Permanent Under-Secretary of Defence Policy of Estonian Ministry of Defence 2011-2012, before that Head of Policy Planning Department), Raul Õpik (Head of Peacekeeping Bureau of the Estonian Ministry of Defence 1994-1997, main task being the BALTBAT project), Gaidis Andrejs Zeibots (Commander of the Latvian National Armed Forces 2003-2006).

countries was held in Estonia, in Jõulumäe near Pärnu. The agenda of this meeting covered the most acute problems related to the security of these countries. First and foremost, this meant everything related to the withdrawal of Russian troops from Baltic territory, but also included the idea to organise a joint military exercise, the development of basic national security and defence policy documents, means to further cooperation with European, and especially Nordic, countries in the field of security as well as with the UN, NATO and the WEU, and the establishment of a framework for cooperation between the three countries in the field of national security. The working language of this meeting and that of the resulting trilateral agreement was Russian. The agreement contains a list of topics on which the three parties decided to work together, including a joint contribution to UN peacekeeping forces.³

Contacts between the national security structures of the three countries had already become quite frequent by that time, becoming especially intense after the *coup d'état* in Moscow in August 1991. Once ministries of defence had been created in all three countries, relations could become official.⁴ Although peacekeeping was not a priority in the early days, it soon became one of the key topics of this trilateral cooperation.

The initiative to include it as a topic in the Pärnu agreement came from Lithuania, but both Latvia and Estonia readily agreed. Audrius Butkevičius, Lithuania's first Minister of National Defence and the originator of the idea, explained that the task of providing for the security of his country alone, or even together with the other Balts, seemed impossible. Wider international help was needed. The new government's determination to integrate with the West meant that this help could only come through NATO, presenting Baltic decision makers with a key challenge. As Butkevičius recalled:

3 Interviews with meeting participants; and *Протокольное соглашение о сотрудничестве министерств обороны Эстонской Республики, Латвийской Республики и Литовской Республики в области обеспечения общей безопасности* (Agreed Minutes Between the Ministries of Defence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on Common Security Provisions), signed in Pärnu, on 2 June 1992, by the heads of the delegations: Audrius Butkevičius, Lithuanian Minister of National Defence; Tālav Jundzis, Latvian Minister of Defence; and Enn Tupp, Head of the Defence Committee of the Estonian Supreme Council, Delegate of the Ministry of Defence. In Estonia, the Ministry of Defence had not yet been officially created. The first Minister of Defence of Estonia, Jüri Uluots was appointed only on 18 June; the first attempt to create the MoD had been in April 1992, but the candidate for Minister proposed by the Government did not gain sufficient support in the Parliament, delaying the process.

4 In Lithuania, the Ministry of National Defence was established and the first Minister (Audrius Butkevičius) appointed in October 1991; in Latvia, the Ministry of Defence was established under Tālav Jundzis in November, 1991.

We were searching for a possibility to 'go through the wall'. I looked for different ways to start cooperation with NATO. In 1991-1992 such a thing as international cooperation with NATO without being a member of NATO was impossible. What we needed was a vision for the impossible.

Peacekeeping was recognised as one good way to 'go through the wall'. NATO itself did not take part in this kind of activity yet,⁵ however, to participate in a UN mission together with NATO countries would still be a good way to creep closer to NATO itself. All three countries had become members of the UN on 17 September 1991.

The period after the August 1991 *coup d'état*, when Estonia and Latvia declared their independence and all three nations were recognised by western countries, was the most intensive time for Baltic officials in terms of beginning their contacts with the western world. The Balts and the West were beginning to discover each other and there were many invitations to visit western countries, most notably the Nordic countries, but also Brussels and other places. However, it was not easy to get the Western states to discuss hard defence matters; it was much easier to talk about participation in peacekeeping (or even natural disaster relief) missions than about the possibility of the three countries joining NATO. UN peacekeeping courses were open for the Baltic countries as soon as they became UN members, and they were actively invited to, and sometimes participated in, such courses organised in the Nordic countries, exposing participants to the western military mindset as well as to ideas about peacekeeping itself.

This particular time period was, of course, a period of peacekeeping for all of Europe. Alongside the enormous political changes and the hope for peace across the whole continent, the Balkans crisis had also emerged. The common rhetoric had it that security was indivisible, so it was only logical for the Baltic states also to take part in peacekeeping; after all, they were surely among those who most keenly wanted this rhetoric to become reality.

The expectation was that through contributing to a UN mission, a country could put itself on the map and announce to the rest of the world (most importantly, to the West) its existence and active support for the ideas they followed – peace, in particular. This would provide the grounds for equal treatment and the equal right to security. Deep in the background there was also the silent hope that the western countries would no longer be able to

5 July 1992 is considered to be the beginning of NATO crisis management activities. Major operations started only at the end of 1995. See: NATO, "Twenty years ago: the birth of NATO's crisis-management role," *NATO News*, 24 July 2012; NATO, "NATO operations and missions."

ignore the Baltic states should their security situation deteriorate. Alongside their hope for overall peace, historical experience played a predominant role in Baltic minds and there was still the fear of being left alone again to cope with their big neighbour, especially as Russian troops were still on Baltic territory and Russia was not particularly willing to withdraw them. Despite their own contributions to UN missions, however, there was no real expectation that the UN would assist the three states with its blue helmets in case of need; only political support was anticipated.

The main objectives of the three countries in taking part in peacekeeping were thus to get noticed, and to gain a place among European democratic states by joining them in protecting peace under the UN umbrella. Through their contributions to peace and stability in the world, they would demonstrate actively their ideological consistency with the West. The slogan was, 'security belongs to those who provide it', making it very important to be included in the process of conflict resolution.

Peacekeeping was also seen as one of the first steps towards NATO. Taking part alongside the armies of the longed for and dreamed of Allies was a way to demonstrate reliability and will; all the more so as for NATO, the Baltic countries were not at that time really seen as future member states and there was a good deal of hesitation from the western side even to move towards closer relations.⁶ The Baltic governments thus had no choice but to attempt through different practical activities – peacekeeping being one of them – to integrate themselves quietly but surely with the western countries, increasing trust and approaching step-by-step the world to which they believed they should belong.

At the same time, NATO was also looking for a new face and a new ideology. In the beginning of the 1990s, two new pillars of NATO that have grown to prominence in today's Alliance began to be built: partnership, and out-of-area operations. In other words, attention was redirected outwards, a new approach for NATO. The Baltic countries and, of course, the other Central and East European countries, thus fitted well into the new picture that NATO had started to paint of itself, and the evolution of both NATO and the Baltic states took place side by side, reciprocally. The interest was mutual. The Baltic countries wished to approach the West and to belong there, while the West

6 In 1991-2, there was no clear view on what kind of relations there might be between the Baltic countries and NATO. For example, one widespread position was that the best the Baltic countries could achieve would be 'finlandisation'. Among the Balts themselves there was no clear consensus, and other options were debated alongside the NATO option – see, for example: Atis Lejiņš and Daina Bleiere, eds., *The Baltic States: Search for Security* (Riga: Latvian Institute of Internal Affairs, 1996).

was interested to have the three countries within its sphere of influence, if a little more hesitantly than the Balts because of a lingering fear of, or at least discomfort concerning, the former Soviet bloc, and most importantly Russia.

First Deployments

Although the idea to participate in peacekeeping operations was agreed by the Baltic Ministers of Defence as early as summer 1992, it remained for some time nothing more than a statement of intent. The time was not yet right for concrete practical steps, not least because the three states simply did not have the armed forces suitable for such activities.⁷ Also, in the first years of re-independence peacekeeping was not the hottest defence topic; other issues, first and foremost the withdrawal of Russian troops from the three countries, took the attention of the defence ministers. In Lithuania, the withdrawal was completed by September 1993, in Latvia and in Estonia by September 1994.

The next joint statement of the Baltic countries on UN peacekeeping came on 13 September 1993. Here the agreement (now in English) said that the three countries were “striving for mutual participation in peace-keeping forces of UN and the OSCE” and that there was a plan to take concrete steps to cooperate in “administrative activities and training connected with participation in the UN and other international organizations’ peace-keeping missions, making up joint peace-keeping unit.”⁸ As was the case in 1992, peacekeeping was just one topic of the declaration, alongside others such as the withdrawal of Russian troops from Latvia and Estonia, and integration with “European collective structures including NATO ... and WEU.”⁹ But this time, the declaration was followed by concrete implementing steps. This was first, because establishing a joint unit could demonstrate the ability of the three countries to cooperate, which was important to attract western political

7 In Lithuania, the armed forces were officially established under the Commander of the Armed Forces only in autumn 1992, although some military units had been organised earlier. In Estonia, the formation of the defence forces had started already in autumn 1991, however, by the beginning of 1992 there were officially only 85 members and the first Commander of the Defence Forces was not named until May 1993. (Ministry of Defence (Estonia) and the Estonian Defence Forces. *Estonia on the Threshold of NATO, Estonian Defence Forces 1918-1998* (Tallinn: Ministry of Defence, 1999), 41). In Latvia, the land forces, navy, air force and border guards had some 8000 servicemen at the beginning of 1992, their main task being control of the state borders.

8 *Trilateral Declaration for Cooperation in the Field of Security and Defence between the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Estonia, the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Latvia and the Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania* (Tallinn, 13 September, 1993). Signed by Jüri Luik, Estonian Minister of Defence, Dainis Turlais, Commander of the Latvian Defence Forces, and Audrius Butkevicius, Lithuanian Minister of National Defence.

9 Ibid.

support; and second, because this would give the West a safe framework to provide the practical support so eagerly sought by the Baltic countries for their defence structures. The rules were set by the West, and the Balts were willing to adapt, so a contribution to peacekeeping gained more importance and popularity as a means to give the Baltic armies the western touch they were looking for.

Some two months later, in November 1993, the Chiefs of Defence (CHODs) of the three countries made the decision to establish a joint battalion, later named BALTBAT – the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion.¹⁰ The joint unit was a major topic for discussion for that meeting of the CHODs and one of only two points for decision (the other being the establishment of regular meetings between the three CHODs).¹¹ Concrete steps for developing the unit started immediately. Western Europe welcomed the Baltic initiative, although the US did not initially support it.¹² The Nordic Ministers of Defence, meanwhile, expressed their support for this project in January 1994,¹³ Denmark took the role of lead nation in May,¹⁴ and the multinational BALTBAT project was officially launched by the Baltic countries in September.¹⁵ The first real Baltic deployments, however, were not part of this project, but were conducted bilaterally with Denmark. Nonetheless, it was BALTBAT that provided the supporting framework for the practical steps necessary to launch these bilateral efforts. NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme, which Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined in February/March 1994, was also supportive of its members' peacekeeping efforts.

Of note, and characteristic of all three Baltic states, is that there was no strong internal consensus to contribute to peacekeeping. Those who were personally involved in these projects were very enthusiastic (this includes most of the individuals interviewed for this chapter; it should be acknowledged that their bias is probably reflected here). However, within the parliaments, the governments, the publics and also within the defence structures themselves,

10 Or: Baltic Battalion. There are different views as to what this battalion was initially called, and also about the purpose of its creation. In official documentation in the vast majority of cases from spring 1994 it is called the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion.

11 Estonian Defence Forces, "Press Release," 20 November 1993.

12 The joint Baltic (peacekeeping) battalion did not appear from nowhere and was not designed by the Balts in a vacuum – there were consultations with western countries before and after Baltic decisions. See, for example: Paul Latawski, "Bilateral and Multilateral Peacekeeping Units in Central and Eastern Europe," in *Aspects of Peacekeeping*, ed. D.S. Gordon and F.H. Toase (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), 65-66.

13 Margus Kolga, Merle Maigre, Maria Mäksö, Holger Mölder and Tiit Noorkoiv, *NATO A & O Taskuteatmik* (NATO A-Z Pocketbook) (Tallinn, Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus: 2004), 537.

14 Julian E Brett, *No New Dividing Lines: Danish Defence Support to the Baltic States* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Affairs, 2002), 21.

15 In the beginning, the BALTBAT supporting nations were Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK. (Margus Kolga et al, *NATO A & O Taskuteatmik*, 536).

different opinions resulted in quite serious tensions at some points (and have continued to do so since).

An illustration of the tension can be found in Lithuania in summer 1994, when the Danes were to bring a company minus one platoon, along with its equipment, within which a Lithuanian unit was going to be deployed to Croatia, to Lithuania to begin pre-mission training. The required amendments to Lithuanian laws to allow a number of foreign soldiers to come into the country proved to be difficult for the Government to push through as the Parliament was by no means unanimous in its support for peacekeeping. The Minister of National Defence was faced with the situation of awaiting the necessary amendments while the ship with Danish troops aboard was already on its way to Lithuania, and it was only with some political manoeuvring that they were adopted.¹⁶

The Ministry of National Defence led the preparations for Lithuania's first deployment, while many leading officers in the military with Soviet backgrounds were either not interested or even against peacekeeping contributions, which they saw as undermining their worldview, itself rooted in their experiences of the Soviet Army. Estonia and Latvia faced similar situations in which the BALTBAT and other peacekeeping projects were mostly supported by the younger officers and soldiers – although, of course, there were some exceptions. In Estonia, the first Commander of the Defence Forces, General Aleksander Einseln, appointed in May 1993 and with a US military background, was a firm supporter and initiator of all kinds of international cooperation, making the Estonian Defence Forces the main lead within the country for operations in the earlier years. Latvian officials recalled that in Latvia the first deployment was closer to being a joint project of the MoD and the armed forces.

It was not only Soviet background, however, that created disagreement within the defence structures on this issue. There were also those who believed that peacekeeping was simply a waste of resources in these difficult times, as the armed forces should, first and foremost, prepare for the self-defence of their own country. Such opinions, although less prominent, exist to this day in all three states.

The development of the defence policies and structures of the three countries took place at quite different tempos, especially in the very beginning

16 There was quite strong opposition from the ex-communists and the pro-peacekeeping faction used a moment when the anti faction was not in the parliament chamber to push through the vote for changes in the law.

of the 1990s, and participation in international missions followed this pattern. Lithuania was the first Baltic state to make a contribution in August 1994, followed by Estonia in March 1995 and then Latvia in April 1996. As Lithuanian officials themselves explained, after the declaration of the ministers in September 1993 there were tough debates within the Baltic countries about the joint peacekeeping unit they had decided to create. As there were many uncertainties concerning the proper size of the unit, its financing and development and so on, Lithuania decided to start with national platoons, first.¹⁷

On the practical side, the first deployments of each of the three countries were quite similar. Denmark acted as the framework country for all three. Denmark was the first country to believe that the Baltic countries had the necessary capability to participate in international operations and was ready to take on the small platoon-sized units that the Baltic countries were able to offer. Baltic units were thus deployed alongside the Danes in the Balkans to the UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) mission where Denmark had contributed since 1992. The role of Denmark in the defence development of all three Baltic states cannot be underestimated. As a NATO member and, importantly, a country of an appropriate size to work with the small Baltic nations, Denmark had taken for itself a key role in helping to develop these countries, including their defence spheres.¹⁸ This cooperation benefited not only the Balts, but the Danes too.¹⁹

Personalities and good personal relations between individuals from Denmark and the Baltic states also played an important role in smoothing this cooperation. There were close friendly relations among the Presidents of the countries, and Danish Minister of Defence Hans Hækkerup was very supportive towards all three Baltic states, even creating a separate department within

17 On the launch of the first Lithuanian deployment, see also: Linas Linkevičius, "Participation of Lithuanian Troops in International Peace Support Operations," *Baltic Defence Review* 1 (1999).

18 Denmark was also the NATO lead nation for Lithuania at that time.

19 For some background on Danish activities with the Baltic countries at that time, see: Klaus Carsten Pedersen, "Denmark and the European Security and Defence Policy," in *The Nordic Countries and the European Security and Defence Policy*, ed. Alyson J. K. Bailes, Gunilla Herolf and Bengt Sundelius (Oxford: SIPRI and Oxford University Press, 2006); Henning-A Frantzen, *NATO and Peace Support Operations 1991-1999: Policies and Doctrines* (London and New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 150-180; and Peter Viggo Jakobsen, "The Danish Approach to UN Peace Operations After the Cold War: A New Model in the Making?" *International Peacekeeping* 5, no. 3 (1998). A survey of the roles of Nordic countries in the Baltic countries at the beginning of 1990s can also be found in Lejinš and Bleiere, *The Baltic States: Search for Security*. For views of the roles other countries have played in establishing re-independence in the Baltic countries, see, for example: Ronald D. Asmus and Robert C. Nurick, "NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States," *Survival* 38, no.2 (1996); and Ann-Sofie Dahl, *US Policy in the Nordic-Baltic Region during the Cold War and After* (Stockholm: Santérus Academic Press, 2008).

the Danish Ministry of Defence for cooperation with them and Poland.²⁰ At the working level, the active role of Michael H. Clemmesen, then Danish defence attaché, was also notable.

Both Denmark and the Baltic states were fully devoted to these bilateral peacekeeping projects, their high levels of motivation and enthusiasm giving them strong momentum. The Baltic countries had little to offer to Denmark apart from their good will, but were not inhibited by their limited materiel or the absence of any real military training. The belief that 'we can' was strong and was to be proven through action. The strong support at the political level, however, was not always reflected at the practical level and in the beginning there was some hesitation from the Danish side concerning the Baltic soldiers' capabilities. But the Danes soon, according to the Baltic personnel involved at the time, preferred to assign more complicated tasks to the very enthusiastic and motivated Balts, be they Estonians, Latvians or Lithuanians. This need to prove themselves with partners, to find appreciation and acknowledgement as equals, has also required effort from the Balts with other partners in later operations, but these difficulties do not appear to have deterred either the Balts, or their partners.

The choice of individual participants in the Baltic units was made according to criteria defined by Denmark, and Danish military personnel assisted during the selection process. Participation in operations was voluntary and peacekeeping units were formed on an ad hoc basis from different units of the armed forces, and also from Latvia's voluntary national guard (*Zemessardze*) and even from some border guard units in Estonia.²¹ In all three countries, the first platoons served the purpose of 'training the trainers' – those returning from operations were expected to share their experiences with others to foster the building up of national defence structures. Training the trainers was considered to be such an important task that, although there was only one position for officers in each platoon – that of platoon commander – Lithuania decided to mostly deploy its young officers as soldiers in its first mission. For Latvia, the number of officers was 11 and for Estonia, there were 5 officers and the rest were non-commissioned officers. Within the armed forces, peacekeeping duties were popular, offering a good chance to acquire professional military experience and to see the world. Last but not least, the salary was much higher than at home. The then CHOD of Latvia, Juris Dalbins, recalled

20 Pedersen, *Denmark and the European Security and Defence Policy*, 44.

21 Members of the voluntary national guards have also been deployed to later operations by all three countries.

that Latvian soldiers who went to a mission earned more than he did in his position as head of the armed forces.

Pre-mission training for the first, and some later missions, was carried out in Denmark (except, as already noted, when the Danes came to Lithuania to carry out initial training with the first Lithuanian unit to be deployed, before continuing in Denmark). Of the criteria set by the Danes, English language ability was probably the biggest challenge for the candidates, and probably among the greatest of the challenges facing the Baltic states' armed forces at the beginning of the 1990s. English language was thus the first subject of the BALTBAT members' training programmes, and the good will of the participants on both the Danish and Baltic sides meant that language difficulties did not deter cooperation.

Although the first deployments were prepared and carried out in much the same way, each country was characterised by certain particularities. Lithuania had the most resourcefulness at that period to initiate and advance projects. It also probably had a more favourable situation in terms of personnel in the Ministry of National Defence, especially at the earlier stages of re-independence, when the individuals dealing with international cooperation, including peacekeeping, served for longer periods. Another important variable was the fact that Russian troops were withdrawn from Lithuania earlier than from Latvia and Estonia. And Lithuania's national spirit (apparently bolder than that of Estonia and Latvia) probably had its role to play too.

The Estonian defence system at the beginning of the 1990s was characterised by frequent changes in personnel, especially on the political side. The ministers of defence changed almost half-yearly.²² When interviewed, both Lithuanian and Latvian officials of the early 1990s noted that the frequent changes of Estonians participating in joint meetings was a factor that slowed down progress in cooperation between the countries – it was not possible to move anywhere when one third of the cooperation partners always started from scratch. The situation also slowed progress within Estonia. Latvian and Lithuanian officials thus warmly welcomed Estonia's long awaited appointment of a minister of defence in summer 1992, while the arrival of the firmly western-oriented Alexander Einseln, who became Commander of the Defence Forces in May 1993, also gave

22 Ülo Uluots, June-Oct 1992; Hain Rebas, Oct 1992-Aug 1993; Jüri Luik, Aug 1993-Jan 1994; Indrek Kannik, Jan-May 1994; Enn Tupp, June 1994-April 1995; and from April 1995 Andrus Öövel, who was the first Minister to stay for a longer term, up until 1999. Ministry of Defence, *Estonia on the Threshold of NATO*, 17.

a substantial kick to the development of the Estonian Defence Forces. Einseln firmly supported participation in peacekeeping, as he saw a great need for any kind of international cooperation to advance the young defence structure towards becoming a western army. Missions were not, of course, the only possibility serving this purpose. Any kind of international cooperation was good, but real practical activity was, as common sense would suggest, the best school for the Baltic states.

Latvia's first deployment was a little different from those of Lithuania and Estonia, as it was not a UN peacekeeping mission but a contribution to the NATO-led IFOR (Implementation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina) operation. Although the first Latvian peacekeeping unit LATPLA-1 was trained in Denmark (almost in parallel with the Estonian and Lithuanian units, ESTPLA-2 and LITPLA-3) and was ready to deploy to the UNPROFOR mission in Croatia in September 1995, the situation in Croatia changed quite considerably and the deployment was cancelled. UNPROFOR itself was terminated and at the end of that year the Dayton Agreement was signed, after which the NATO-led IFOR operation was initiated. At the very end of December, the Danes invited Latvia to join their IFOR deployment in Bosnia and in early January 1996, LATPLA-2 went to Denmark for pre-mission training. Although the personnel of LATPLA-1 and 2 were by and large the same, new pre-mission training was needed to prepare the unit for quite a different kind of mission than UNPROFOR's. UN peacekeeping, in blue helmets and with limited rules of engagement, was to be replaced by a readiness to conduct war-fighting, in full camouflage and new types of weapons. LATPLA-2 was deployed in April 1996, the rotation lasting for six months as planned.

As Latvia's first deployment was not traditional UN peacekeeping, but a much more controversial peace enforcement operation, it was somewhat more complicated to find a supportive consensus within the country. It had not been easy to persuade the parliament to vote for the LATPLA-1 deployment; now it was even more difficult. Latvian officials believed that the reasons lay mostly in the fact that it was still a very short time period – some five or six years – since the Soviet operation in Afghanistan had ended. The negative emotions among the Latvians who had participated in that operation had not yet disappeared, and had produced quite a deep sensitivity about Latvia sending its troops abroad.²³ Also, compared

23 Estonians and Lithuanians had also participated in the Soviet Afghanistan operation and had similar experiences; however, the sentiments were apparently not that strongly expressed in their societies. Certainly none of the Estonian and Lithuanian interviewees for this chapter raised this as an issue.

to Lithuania or Estonia, there was much weaker consensus in Latvian society for seeking closer association with NATO; in the early stages of re-independence, the option of neutrality was much more seriously discussed in Latvia than it was in the other two Baltic states. Because of these different and difficult sentiments around the deployment of LATPLA-2, some Latvian officials believe that this is probably the most difficult deployment decision that the country has faced so far (although others argue that the decision to contribute to Iraq was harder). However, as time passed so understanding evolved that Bosnia was not Afghanistan, and that Latvian soldiers were not serving in the Soviet Army, but alongside the Danes, and sentiments became more favourable. In the end, the *Saeima* (Latvia's parliament) approved the deployment, but the discussions had been so hard that now, some 15 years later, some of the interviewed individuals recall that there must have been substantial – “probably constitutional” – obstacles in place to prevent troops being sent out of the country; although, in reality, this was not the case.²⁴

Against the background of these early deployments, BALTBAT, the joint peacekeeping unit which was also the first joint defence-related project of the three countries was being developed. Peacekeeping was, at least on paper, one of the first subjects for Baltic defence cooperation. As with the topmost issue of Russian troop withdrawal, the peacekeeping issue saw moments of genuinely productive co-working (or at least, co-thinking) among the Baltic states, which had benefits for all three countries. Nonetheless, at the end of the day, each country started its international deployments on a bilateral basis and continued in this way (just as they had reached separate agreements with Russia over troop withdrawal). The battalion as such was never used as initially intended,²⁵ but BALTBAT did provide the framework which supported the emergence of the bilateral mission projects and was also important for the wider defence developments of the three countries.

To sum up, the first Baltic deployments in 1994-6 were considered by the Baltic states to be a real test on their way to West. They provided

24 As in Estonia and Lithuania, Latvian troop deployments abroad were not legally regulated in the beginning of the period, although regulations were developed, step by step, in parallel with deployments. Certainly, in the constitution of 1922 which, with some amendments, has been continuously in force in Latvia, there has never been any notion of preventing Latvian troops from deploying abroad. As a couple of Latvian officials noted, this strong uneasiness about sending troops to missions is perhaps a reflection of the Latvian national character.

25 The battalion was never fully deployed. National companies assigned to BALTBAT were used in operations in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Lebanon between 1996 and 2000, six six-month rotations all together. BALTBAT was later reorganised into an infantry battalion, and was finally closed in 2003.

the first real contacts with western militaries in the field, and allowed the Balts to operate day-by-day alongside the nations they aspired to resemble and to join. The military, the political leadership especially, and those who came along, saw contributions to international operations in this way, gave the very best they could, and showed enormous dedication to accomplishing them successfully. They viewed their participation as an examination for the whole country, and thought it very necessary to pass convincingly, both to show others and to have some grounds to believe in themselves – to demonstrate, in the words of several interviewees, that “we can”. It was also a time of great excitement for the more progressive elements of the military. Many soldiers wished to deploy again after their first mission and, indeed, many did. After some rotations, differences appeared within the national armed forces between those with mission experience and those without, experience resulting in clear career advantages. Participation also raised the question of how missions should be integrated into the national defence establishments. In the early days they were largely viewed as standalone tasks and it took some time before the need to merge and find the right balance with the rest of the armed forces was acknowledged.

Iraq and Afghanistan: Giving the Best

By the beginning of the 2000s, the situation in the world, including in the Euro-Atlantic region and the Baltic countries, had changed considerably compared to the period of 10 years earlier. The nature of military operations had also changed, and the Balts went along with these changes, just as they were swept along by the dramatic events of September 11, 2001 and its aftermath.

The three nations had progressed well in the 1990s and there was no longer a question of whether western states wanted Baltic participation in operations; now they expected the Balts to go along as well. The Baltic nations had thus already gained the recognition they had sought from participation. They were taken by the West – the US, most notably – as countries which could be counted on, and their invitation to the NATO Membership Action Plan process in 1999 was good evidence of this. But the door to NATO was still only half open. There were different opinions and rumours about whether all the Balts should be invited to join at the same time, or whether some should join earlier than others.²⁶ In

26 Mostly Lithuania was favoured, sometimes also Estonia. For a record of the debates in the pre-accession period, see for example: Ronald D. Asmus *Opening NATO's Door* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

any case, there was a long way still to go to reach NATO. The invitation to join eventually came at the NATO Prague Summit, in autumn 2002, but this was only the invitation; it had yet to be ratified by all the Allies, keeping the pressure on. For the Balts, the fear of being left out played out alongside the enthusiasm flowing from the fact that NATO's door (and that of the EU) had fallen half open. This major strategic aim was within reach, and the three states were eager to do whatever they could to move closer. It was more important than ever to demonstrate that in joining the Alliance, the Baltic countries were not only looking for the protection of NATO's umbrella, but were ready to take their own share in providing security also.

When the calls came to contribute to Operation Enduring Freedom in December 2001, and then to Operation Iraqi Freedom and to the NATO-led ISAF operation, the answers from the governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were thus eagerly positive.²⁷ The strategic rationale for participating in operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan was the same as it was for participating in earlier peacekeeping operations: to get into NATO. ISAF in Afghanistan was a more direct step, as it was a NATO operation, while going to Iraq was a bit of detour – supporting the US as the most important Ally and the key to Baltic NATO accession.

For Operation Enduring Freedom, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania formed a joint Baltic Air Movement Control Element (BALT AMCE) for deployment within a Danish C-130 unit in the Kyrgyz Republic.²⁸ This was on call, but was never deployed as a unit. Estonia deployed an Explosive Ordnance Detection Canine Team (from the Rescue Board, under the Ministry of Interior) from summer 2002,²⁹ while Lithuania deployed a special forces unit in November 2002. However small these contributions were, politically they were regarded as very important by the Balts.

Iraq

Although Enduring Freedom was chronologically the first operation in this intensive period, Iraqi Freedom, in which the three countries faced serious military action for the first time, was their first really substantial military operation. The short time available for preparations was itself a

27 In Afghanistan, the US-led operation Enduring Freedom started in autumn 2001 and ISAF operations were initiated at the end of December 2001, with NATO assuming ISAF's leadership in August 2003. The US-led coalition operation, Iraqi Freedom started in March 2003.

28 Ministry of Defence (Estonia), *Estonian Annual National Programme 2002/2003* (Tallinn: Ministry of Defence, 2002).

29 Ibid.

challenge, while the operation turned out to be a real test not only from the military perspective, but also from the political perspective.³⁰

The initial understanding of the Baltic governments was that the war in Iraq was over and that this would be a stabilisation operation, similar to the ones in the Balkans. There was not even much thought about what exactly the US was asking for. What mattered was that the US, the Baltic states' most important strategic partner, had asked for help and a positive response was necessary in order to demonstrate solidarity. This was above all a political issue, both for the Baltic countries and for the US. The three governments differed somewhat in their domestic handling, however. In Latvia, public discussions were more favoured and finding a national consensus was considered to be important, while in Estonia, the government preferred not to get lost in discussions and saw no other choice but to agree to the US request.

Baltic support was well received by the US, including on the military level, even though the troop contributions were tiny compared to the overall size of the operation; and the US military substantially supported the Baltic contributions. The Balts were among the first to go in and the last to withdraw. Lithuania was ready to deploy some units already in April 2003, and Latvia a month later. These first contributions were relatively small – things that could be offered quickly – but soon became more serious. In June, Lithuania deployed a platoon-sized unit to the British sector and in August another one to the Polish-led Multinational Division in Central-South. In August, Latvia increased its contribution to a company, also in the Polish sector. Estonia started its contribution in June, with a platoon in a US-led unit in the so-called 'Bermuda triangle' in the suburbs of Baghdad.

The Iraq operation was a real challenge for the Baltic armed forces, both in the field, and with regard to internal management in providing and supporting the deployed units. The operations in Kosovo and Bosnia had not been easy, but this was a challenge of a higher order. There was, however, no hesitation within the three states about the professional capabilities of their soldiers, as the previous missions in the Balkans had given them self-confidence in their armed forces. Estonia and Latvia at least still looked for external recognition

30 There was controversy, for example, when the Baltic and other Central and East European countries of the so-called 'Vilnius 10' announced, in the Vilnius letter of 6 February, 2003, their willingness to support the US; French President Chirac's response was widely translated as these countries having "missed a good opportunity to shut up". For background, see: "Conférence de presse de M. Jacques Chirac Feb 17, 2003," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 12 February, 2004; Eleanor Levieux and Michel Levieux, "The World; No, Chirac Didn't Say 'Shut Up'," *New York Times*, 23 February, 2003. Later, internal disputes about the legitimacy of the operation arose, when the initial justifications for intervention appeared not to be valid.

to counter perceptions that their armed forces were not yet ready for NATO membership. The Iraq mission secured this external approval.

For Iraq, the pre-mission training for the Lithuanian and Estonian platoons and Latvian company was carried out nationally, by national experts.³¹ Individual equipment was also provided on a national basis, while, as is usual when a smaller unit joins a larger one, logistics support in-theatre was provided by the framework nation. The units were formed and prepared within the peacekeeping management structures that, thanks partly to BALTBAT, existed in all three countries. In Estonia, the Peace Operations Centre, created in 1997³², carried out this task. In Lithuania, there has never been a separate structure for preparation for operations; for BALTBAT and for other operations the deployed units were formed from and prepared by different structures of the armed forces. In the case of Iraq, the platoons were prepared in Rukla (for the UK sector) and in Alytus (for the Polish sector). In Latvia, the units deployed to Iraq were provided and prepared by the 1st Infantry Battalion in Ādaži, which served as the base for all infantry units deployed to missions until professionalisation; thereafter the 2nd Infantry Battalion also had this role.

Afghanistan

Baltic operations in Afghanistan followed a similar pattern to those in Iraq. The first contributions were rather small, but increased according to the operational needs in theatre. Lithuania and Estonia started their participation in Operation Enduring Freedom in 2002, and continued contributing to the NATO-led ISAF operation in 2003. Latvia began its deployments to Afghanistan with the NATO-led ISAF operation.

The first Baltic contributions to ISAF were based around niche capabilities,³³ as the Balts' major efforts in 2002-3 were in Kosovo and Iraq, and ISAF did not require larger contributions at that stage. Considerable increases came a few years later, in 2005-6, when Latvia deployed an infantry platoon (later increased to a company) within the Norwegian brigade in the north, Estonia increased its contribution to a company and moved to Helmand province

31 Earlier, foreign advisers and experts (e.g. from Denmark, the UK and US) had been involved in the preparation of troops for missions.

32 Ministry of Defence (Estonia), *Eesti Kaitseväge Rahvusvahelised Missioonid 1995-2005* (Estonian Defence Forces International Missions, 1995-2005) (Tallinn: Ministry of Defence, 2005), 22. The Single Peacekeeping Company, formed in summer 1994, was reorganised into the Centre in 1997. The Centre was closed and its functions distributed to the components of the 1st Infantry Brigade in January 2009.

33 Operations posed new and more demanding challenges for NATO and while the older members had enough war-fighting capability, niche capabilities were missing from the overall pool of forces. The Baltic and other countries were offered assistance to develop such capabilities, and some projects were launched. There were, however, conflicting sentiments within the three states about the usefulness of such capabilities for national purposes.

in the south under UK leadership, and Lithuania took the leadership of a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Ghowr Province in the central part of Afghanistan.³⁴

The reasons for these increases lie primarily in the fact that the NATO operation in Afghanistan expanded. But at the same time, operations in Iraq were viewed enthusiastically in the Baltic armed forces, and there was a growing interest in gaining professional experience. The NATO call to increase contributions was thus not unwelcome in the three states, especially in the armed forces. Although the details of how and what were discussed, some, for example, favouring an increase in Kosovo instead, the general line in favour of increases was not controversial. A further argument in support of increased contributions was that the usability of armed forces was being underlined in NATO during this period, making it important for states to be able to show sufficiently large deployed troop numbers.³⁵ The operations in Iraq and Afghanistan provided the Baltic countries with a good opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities in this area. Positive visibility in NATO, whether in the context of the usability of forces or otherwise, was and remains a crucial topic for the three states, and military operations have offered a very good opportunity to secure it. The three countries have thus always considered very carefully the aspect of visibility in assessing their options for concrete contributions to operations (although this is certainly not unique to the Baltic states). Being the most visible of the three states has also been important to each of them.

Spring 2011: Settling Down

In 2011, all three Baltic states were involved in operations in Afghanistan. This was their major operational contribution so far; first, because it had lasted much longer than expected, and second, because the troop deployments were the largest ever for these countries. The boom that started with the Iraq operation and continued with Afghanistan is illustrated in Figures 1 to 6 through the yearly expenditures on operations and troop numbers deployed by the three states.³⁶ Table 1 presents per capita expenditures on operations in 2011.

34 The idea of a joint Baltic PRT was also on the tables of Baltic decision makers prior to stage 2 of ISAF expansion, but this was never pursued.

35 The idea behind NATO's 'usability initiative' was to enhance the operational capabilities of the Allies in order to overcome the gap between the availability of forces for operations and the growing operational needs generated by the Alliance's political commitments. At the Istanbul Summit in 2004 concrete and measurable 'usability targets' for national forces were agreed upon: 40% of a nation's land forces should be deployable to crisis response operations beyond Alliance territory, and 8% either deployed or earmarked for deployment at any time. See, for example, Steve Sturm, "Military matters: Matching capabilities to commitments," *NATO Review*, Spring 2005.

36 It should be noted that definitions of expenditures on operations vary between the three countries and have also varied in each country from year to year.

Figure 1: Estonian Defence Forces Participation in International Military Crisis Response Operations, 1995-2011: Expenditure. Source: Estonian Defence Forces, Ministry of Defence. Data from 1998-2000 not available; data for 1995, 1997 and 2001-5 are estimates.

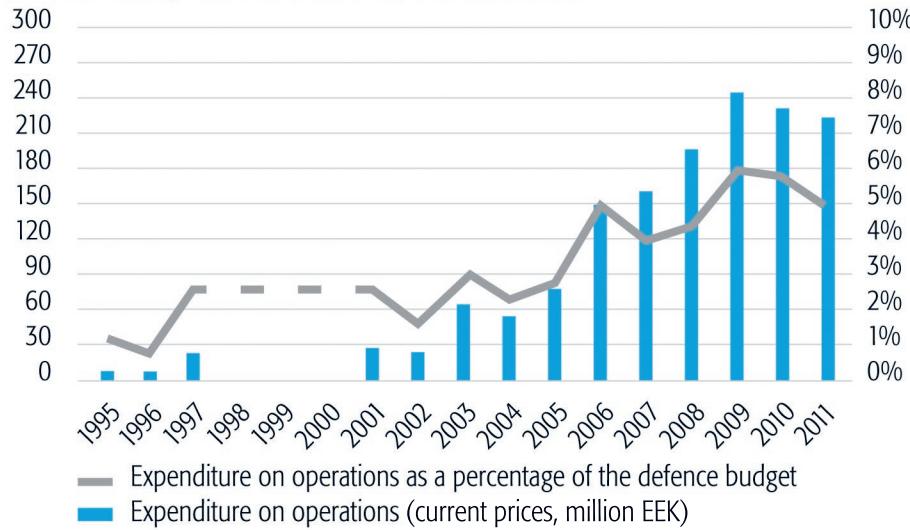


Figure 2: Estonian Defence Forces Participation in International Military Crisis Response Operations, 1995-2011: Troop Numbers. Source: Estonian Defence Forces.

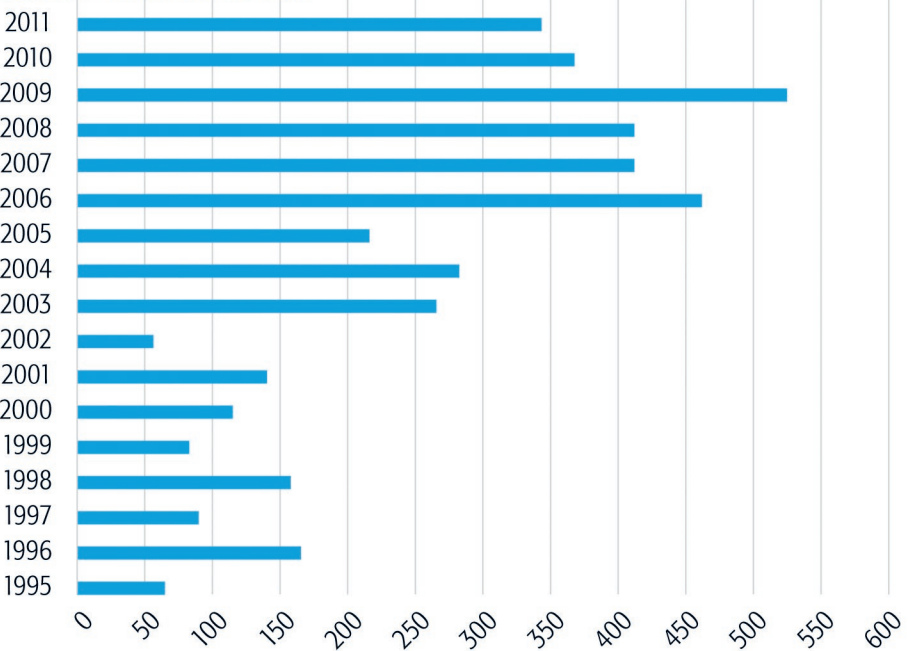


Figure 3: Latvian National Armed Forces Participation in International Military Crisis Response Operations, 1996-2011: Expenditure. Source: Latvian Ministry of Defence.

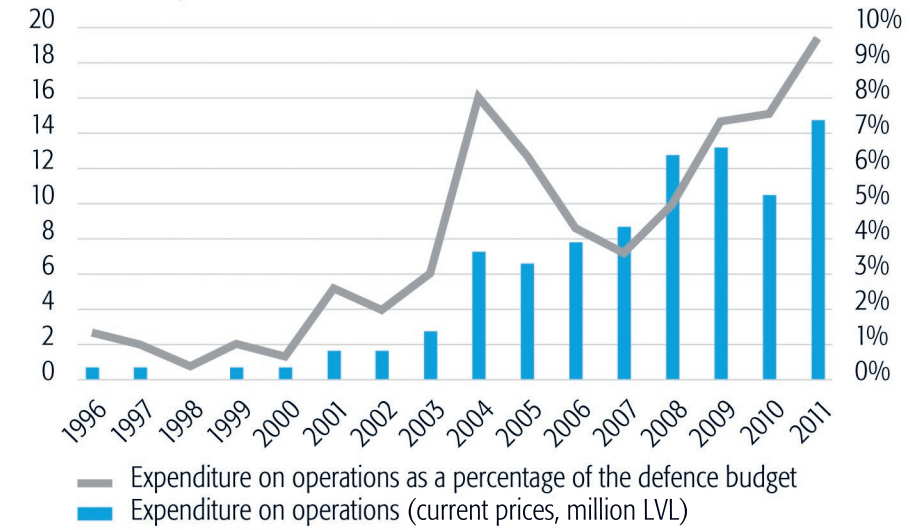


Figure 4: Latvian National Armed Forces Participation in International Military Crisis Response Operations, 1996-2011: Troop Numbers. Source: Latvian Ministry of Defence.

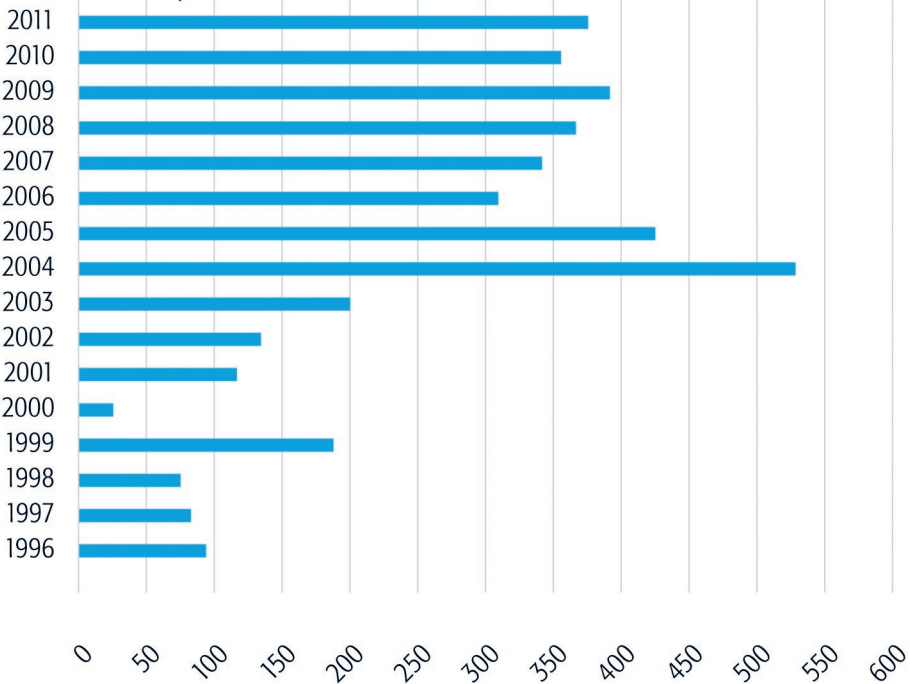


Figure 5: Lithuanian Armed Forces Participation in International Military Crisis Response Operations, 1994-2011: Expenditure. Source: Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence.

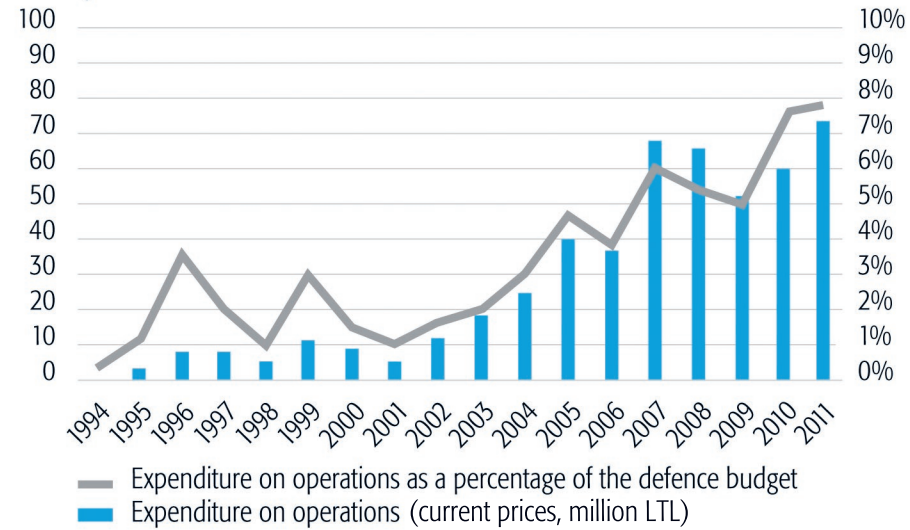


Figure 6: Lithuanian Armed Forces Participation in International Military Crisis Response Operations, 1996-2011: Troop Numbers. Source: Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence.

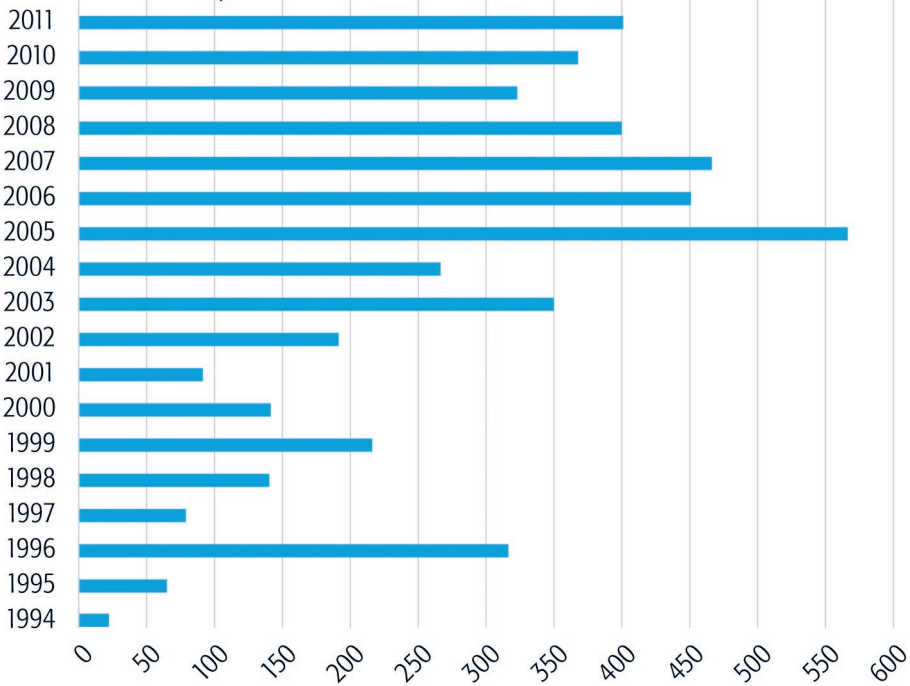


Table 1: Estonian Defence Forces, Latvian National Armed Forces and Lithuanian Armed Forces Participation in International Military Crisis Response Operations: Expenditure Per Capita 2011. Sources: Eurostat (populations as at 1 January 2011), Estonian Defence Forces, Latvian Ministry of Defence Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence.³⁷

	Expenditure on Operations (m Euro)	Population (m)	Per Capita Expenditure on Operations (Euro)
Estonia	14.37	1.34	10.72
Latvia	20.49	2.07	9.90
Lithuania	17.38	3.05	5.70

Operations were not entirely unaffected by the economic crisis of the late 2000s: the salaries of troops decreased in all three countries, both home and away, decreasing somewhat the willingness of soldiers to volunteer for deployment. But it is important to note here that although the crisis meant considerable cuts in Baltic defence budgets, especially those of Latvia and Lithuania, these cuts were not reflected in expenditure on operations, which was prioritised. This is especially pronounced in Latvia, where the defence budget was cut by more than one third, from 267 million Lats in 2008 to 173 million in 2009,³⁸ while expenditure on operations continued to increase – a small cut in 2010, was well compensated for in 2011. Budget cuts have thus had greater impact on the other parts of the defence sector, meaning the development of national forces at home. Here, Estonia stands out from the other two Baltic states: while the issue of better integrating missions into the overall national forces is an important issue for all three states, the balance between international and domestic needs is perceived to be much healthier in Estonia compared to Latvia and Lithuania, where several interviewees commented on the need to also pay more attention to the rest of the defence sector.

The greatest cost of operations, however, is perceived to be casualties. By the end of 2011, Estonia had suffered 11 fatalities on operations (2 in Iraq and 9 in Afghanistan) as well as some 100 injured.³⁹ Latvia had suffered 7

37 Exchange rates: 1 Eur = 0.7028 LVL = 3.4528 LTL (Central Bank of Latvia, Central Bank of the Republic of Lithuania).

38 Source: Latvian Ministry of Defence.

39 Source: Estonian Defence Forces.

fatalities (3 in Iraq and 4 in Afghanistan), plus injured,⁴⁰ while Lithuania had suffered 2 fatalities (1 in Bosnia, 1 in Afghanistan), plus injured.⁴¹

Nonetheless, all three nations consider the costs of operations – as high as they have been – to have been a far cheaper solution for national defence than the alternatives; in their view, the benefits have clearly exceeded the costs. The most important benefit of participation is unquestionably membership of NATO. But in addition, there are many others, such as the valuable experiences gained and lessons learned by the armed forces, including the shaping of their military mindset. Side-benefits have not only been realised in military terms, though. Operations have advanced the three states' understanding of the mechanisms of international politics and cooperation; they have widened the world and opened up new perspectives from which to view international affairs.

The three states' major strategic aim of NATO and EU membership had been achieved in spring 2004, when they officially became part of the community they had so eagerly wished to join. Participation in operations played an important role in this alongside other determinants. The three states' main concern has now shifted to a new level – to make sure that NATO really is the NATO they wanted to be a part of, that NATO is ready to protect them just as it is its other members. The Balts are now not only willing to be providers of security – the constant rationale for operations in the official rhetoric – but are also willing to consume it, and to speak up about their needs from this angle. The strong perception in the three Baltic countries is that their participation in international operations (though not only that) has given them the political capital to also make their own demands. One issue that has been on the agenda for some years already, for example, is Baltic air policing, for which the Baltic countries had long sought a permanent NATO solution – the Alliance moved in this direction in early 2012. But in other topics too, be it the filling of senior officers' posts in NATO's military structures or discussions about the balance between Article 5 and other operations in NATO's strategic documents (where the Balts are among those speaking up for collective defence to remain the core task of the Alliance) the three states have become more confident in making their voices heard.

Nonetheless, operations are still viewed by the three states as an important means of solidarity within the Alliance, and as a means for themselves to be visible and relevant. There is a firm belief that as members of NATO and the

40 Source: Latvian Ministry of Defence.

41 Source: Lithuanian Armed Forces.

EU, they have to continue contributing to NATO and EU military operations as actively as they possibly can, rather than taking a free ride. The solidarity and success of NATO are crucial for the Baltic countries.

The Libyan crisis of spring 2011 was the first major crisis in which NATO became involved while the Baltic countries were themselves Allies. Although it is very recent, some initial patterns in Baltic attitudes towards operations at that point can still be found. None of the Balts contributed troops and, although they were ready to make some minor contributions, these offers were never taken up.⁴² To be fair, there was no real demand for substantial contributions, and as the operation was not a 'boots-on-the-ground' one, the Balts had very few suitable capabilities to contribute.

Overall, in the three capitals, there was no great eagerness for a new major operational effort, nor was there thought to be a burning necessity to show the flag, as had been the case in earlier years. At the same time, however, there seemed to be no great confidence that it would be acceptable not to contribute. For example, some interviewees were keen to suggest that officers serving in NATO's peacetime structures and transferred to the operation headquarters were a national troop contribution, which is not the way this would usually be viewed. Politically, there was a strong feeling that the Libya operation itself was beyond the Balts, and that what was crucial in this event, bearing in mind the possibility of parallel situations in the Baltic region, was that NATO should succeed and that its members should show solidarity with those most affected by and involved in the crisis.

Noteworthy for the Balts, though, is the fact that this time they were at the table of NATO (and the EU) when the management of a developing crisis was discussed. This was a qualitative shift to the next level of involvement in the international crisis management process as, so far, they had participated only in the implementation phase of operations; now they had a chance to present their viewpoints concerning the launch of a crisis management operation.⁴³ They thus belonged to the club, with all the opportunities and responsibilities this brings and, in that sense, were equal – the status they had

42 Estonia and Lithuania were ready to offer their C-17 flight hours from the NATO Strategic Airlift Capability programme (Lithuania's offer was limited only to humanitarian flights) but these were not needed. At a later stage, Estonia was also prepared to send some air operations planners, but due to slow internal procedures, the operation was over before their contribution could be made (although this did provide an impetus to improve procedures). For Lithuania, there was no national consensus about the NATO operation and the issue of a troop contribution was not on the table at all. Latvia came to the conclusion that it would be very difficult to contribute any troops that could be used to reasonable effect in the operation.

43 The Baltic states' ambitions to have a seat at the table are also reflected in their aspirations for (non-permanent) membership of the UN Security Council. Lithuania is applying for the term 2014-15, Estonia for 2020-21 and Latvia for 2026-27.

sought since re-independence, which had itself been a driver for participation in operations, and the slogan so often pronounced by the governments of the three nations.

From 1991 to 2011: The Evolution of Participation, and the Role and Place of Military Operations

The story of Baltic participation in international operations began in the very beginning of the 1990s with the idea of peacekeeping and the need to find a way 'through the wall' in order to demonstrate their orientation towards the West. Peacekeeping was one of the first and easiest topics in the field of security for the West to discuss with the newly re-independent Baltic countries, while defence as such was considered to be too difficult. The first deployments in the mid-1990s took place at a time when the West and the Balts had begun to learn about each other through practical contacts, and peacekeeping became a central theme in the defence field. An important motivator behind the launch of the Baltic contributions was to give some impetus to military development in the three countries, and to work towards integration with NATO.

The nature of military operations began to change from peace operations towards war-fighting, with the operation in Afghanistan marking the beginning of a surge of military operations for the whole Euro-Atlantic area. The Balts were already included in this community and were thus expected to participate in the common effort, although not yet as members of NATO or the EU. The operation in Iraq was the first really intense military contribution, and was a real test for the Baltic countries, militarily and politically. Through it came recognition from the Allies, most notably from the US.

The ISAF expansion provided the Balts with the opportunity to demonstrate their confidence in operational tasks and at the same time their enthusiasm for the political advances they were making in terms of their membership of NATO and the EU. This substantially increased the pressure militarily, politically and economically, but it was all the more necessary for the Baltic states to prove – to themselves as much as others – that they were able to make effective contributions and that there were grounds to feel themselves as equally worthy partners within the community.

In 2011-12, there is neither an eagerness nor a burning need to take on new, big challenges as was the case at the time of the expansion of the Afghanistan mission, when operations were still on-going in parallel in Iraq and Kosovo. The three Baltic nations are breathing more easily with the knowledge that NATO is moving towards concluding its operation in Afghanistan, at least in

its current format. Future operations are seen, by and large, as tasks that have to be done as one of the responsibilities of NATO (and EU) membership, and as useful means to support key strategic partners. It is important to show up and useful to gain political capital, but there is no internal passion for operations as there was in the 1990s or the first decade of this century.

Attitudes towards participation and the military contributions themselves have thus evolved along with the growth of statehood and maturation of the Baltic countries, and their establishment of their position in the world to which they believe they belong. The three states now have much more self-confidence, as evidenced by their courage to ask for something for themselves. It would be wrong to say that the decisions of the mid-1990s or early 2000s were made blindly, but they were certainly affected by both the fear of being left out and the enthusiasm for getting in – two overriding emotions which left little room for other considerations. While the reasons for participating in operations have always been indirect – they have been, at least for the most part, a tool for something else – this tool is today used much more consciously.

This growth and maturation is most apparent at the military level. In the very first deployments to the Balkans, it was the officers who were sent to do the job of ordinary soldiers. Later, larger units with the usual distributions of military ranks could be formed. Today, through the really intense deployments of the first decade of the 2000s, the Baltic armed forces have reached an understanding that they do not want to just do the job, but they want to contribute in a smart way, to advance national defence capability and to match deployments to their current level of development: to deploy specialists, to have senior officers in international headquarters, to deploy bigger units with concentrated contributions and, when possible, to act as a lead nation. These ambitions – unimaginable in the 1990s – are a clear sign of greater confidence and a demonstration that the Baltic armed forces have advanced to the state that they now need more sophisticated activities to pose reasonable challenges to them and to provide for their continued advancement. The Baltic contribution to operations is thus perceived to have provided an important kick to the substantial progress in their defence spheres.

The programmes of the Estonian Higher Defence Courses⁴⁴ demonstrate very well the evolution of the perception of operations within the defence

44 Senior level courses that have been carried out by the Ministry of Defence twice per year since 1999. They aim to give an overview of the whole national defence sector in Estonia. Participants include members of the parliament, higher government and military officials, journalists, leaders of enterprises and NGOs. Most of the programmes can be found (in Estonian) at the website: Ministry of Defence (Estonia), "Kõrgemad Riigikaitsekursused".

establishment. The words used in the titles of the presentations talking about Estonian participation in operations have changed over the years:

2000-1	peacekeeping operations
2002-3	peace operations
2004	peace support operations, peace operations
2005-7	international military operations; EDF missions abroad; operations abroad
2008	peace and reconstruction operations: military and civilian aspects
2009	war in operations: Estonian participation and challenges

From 2004-2007, there was a separate panel for discussing Estonian participation in military operations. Estonian participation was discussed as a separate theme for the last time in 2009, to be replaced by "Lessons from the recent military conflicts", which does not touch upon Estonian activities at all. The evolution of Estonia's perceptions is apparent here. The 'peacekeeping' of the 1990s gives way to 'military operations' and the terse 'operations abroad', then 'war in operations' reflecting the (post)modern conceptions of warfare and the expansion of the discourse by turning its attention to the wider world. Participation in operations has thus developed from the best and perhaps only chance to 'go through the wall' into something that does not deserve any particular attention, something that is simply a task for the military. There is also a clear evolution of the perception of the place of operations within the national defence system, initially seen as something special or even separate from the rest of the national defence system (2004-7), and then becoming incorporated into it (from 2008). And finally, the greatest evidence of growing maturity and independent thought is the wider look at the surrounding world that emerged after 2009. Until 2007-8 the words used were those of others; today they are increasingly chosen by Estonians.

There are no similar sources for Latvia and Lithuania. While it would not be right to presume that the issues have been identical in these countries, the wider development lines have been quite close over the last 20 years and the overall trends of operations becoming a 'normal' task for the armed forces, independent thinking, and rising confidence in the defence sector could be expected to be similar. The Lithuanian President's critical statement on NATO's operation in Libya offers some evidence in support of this view.⁴⁵ Twenty years ago, such a statement (even though it simply expresses a viewpoint, rather than discord) would have been inconceivable.

45 "Grybauskaitė; military actions in Libya exceeded the UN mandate," *The Lithuania Tribune*, 29 April, 2011.

Conclusions

The main driving force for the Baltic countries to participate in international military operations has been their aspiration to belong to the West and western security structures – principally NATO. International military operations have been characteristic of the western political world over the last 20 years and it was thus only logical that the Baltic countries would also have to take part in this activity soon after regaining their independence. Step by step, deployments have become an everyday practice, and also an important policy instrument; this is nothing particular for the Balts alone. What is particular to the Baltic countries, however, is that they have never, since their re-independence, seen a time without operations.

During the past 20 years, the Baltic states' motives for contributing have stayed, by and large the same: to make friends so as not to be left alone should their own security situation deteriorate. But what has changed is their attitude towards operations. By now, the Balts have learned to use this tool much more purposefully, and they use it with much greater confidence. With some qualifications, it could be said that the initial burning need for integration into the West, and the blind enthusiasm that followed, has now been replaced by a more matter-of-fact pragmatism – at least as matter-of-fact as such an important and emotional issue as national defence can be for these three small countries who for so long did not have their own voice. It is certainly not easy to suddenly find yourself able to have an opinion, and to take part in discussion, on the subject of operations (or anything else). Though there is still room to go further, a lot has changed within these two decades, and there are the first clear signs of increased consciousness, confidence and independent thinking, best demonstrated amongst the military where, for example, there is an evident aspiration for smarter contributions to operations.

Of course, this growth has not occurred in respect of international operations only. Rather, the three countries' attitudes towards operations are a reflection of their overall maturation. The way that participation in operations has been perceived and approached in different periods accords quite well with their path of finding themselves and their place in the world, together with its ups and downs. At the same time, participation itself has contributed to this growth in self-confidence. Nonetheless, due to their small size and the historical experience of not having the right to exist, all three states still feel a need to show up and to justify their place at the table. Operations are an important vehicle for this.

The aim of this chapter was to shed some light on the history of Estonia's, Latvia's and Lithuania's participation in international military operations, to

explore their reasons for participation and the circumstances under which their decisions to contribute have been made, and to examine how their contributions have evolved over the past 20 years. Three milestones have been studied: the very beginning of the idea that the three states might participate in international military operations and the first deployments of the early 1990s; the start of the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan; and the state of affairs in spring 2011, roughly 20 years after those first considerations about peacekeeping. The intent has been, with the help of interviews and as far as is possible in retrospect, to expose perceptions, emotions and understandings in these three different time periods and to show how the situation has evolved over time. There have, of course, been other deployments in the intervening periods, each with its own characteristics, but it would not be possible to do justice to this richer picture in this short study.

The stories presented here may not always accord with each and every actor's memories. Also, none of the countries has kept a thorough archive on its participation in operations and there has been little published on the issue in the English language (somewhat more on Lithuania as compared to Estonia and Latvia). The present piece of writing will hopefully encourage individuals in all three countries who have been involved in operations – decision makers and those at each level who have implemented these decisions – to dig into their memories and in the archives, both to provide a more complete picture and to offer new perspectives on what was done. There is much yet to discover.

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Appendix: Participation of Baltic States in International Military Crisis Response Operations¹

Abbreviations

AFOR – NATO-led Albania Force
 Bn – Battalion
 CIMIC – Civil-Military Cooperation
 CJTF – Combined Joint Task Force
 CON – Contingency
 COY – company
 DANBN – Danish Battalion
 DCOS – Deputy Chief of Staff
 EOD – Explosive Ordnance Detection
 EU FHQ – EU Force Headquarters
 EUFOR – EU Military Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
 EUNAVFOR – European Union Naval Force Somalia
 FYROM – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
 IEDD – Improvised Explosives Detection Detachment
 IFOR – NATO Implementation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
 ISAF – NATO International Security Assistance Force
 KFOR – NATO Force in Kosovo
 MiTT – Military Transition Team
 MNB NE – Multinational Brigade North-East
 MNB(S) – Multinational Brigade (South)
 MNBr-B – Multinational Brigade-Baghdad
 MNC-I – Multinational Corps Iraq
 MNF-I – Multinational Force Iraq
 MNTF(N) – Multinational Task Force (North)
 MOT – Military Observer Team,
 NORDPOL Bde – Nordic-Polish Battalion
 NSE – National Support Element
 NTM-A – NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan
 NTM-I – NATO Training Mission in Ira
 NTT-K – NATO Training Team Kosovo
 OIF – Operation Iraqi Freedom
 PLA – platoon
 PRT – Provincial Reconstruction Team
 QRF – Quick Reaction Force
 RC (SW) – Regional Command (South West)
 RC(N) – Regional Command (North
 (EST)RIF – Reconnaissance in Force
 SFOR – NATO Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
 UNAMA – United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
 UNIFIL – United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
 UNPROFOR – United Nations Protection Force in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina
 UNTSO – United Nations Truce Supervision Organization.

¹ As none of the countries has kept a thorough and detailed list of national deployments, some data may be missing or inexact.

Table 1: Participation of Estonian Defence Forces in International Military Crisis Response Operations 1995-2011. Sources: Estonian Defence Forces, Estonian Ministry of Defence.

Location	Operation	Period	Type and size of unit, framework nation	No of troops
Croatia	UNPROFOR	Mar 1995 – Oct 1995	ESTPLA -1, ESTPLA-2, both within Danish Battalion.	64
Lebanon	UNIFIL	Dec 1996 – May 1997	ESTCOY within Norwegian battalion.	134
Bosnia & Herzegovina	IFOR, SFOR	Apr 1996 – 2002	ESTPLA 3-6, from 10.1998, BALTCOY 1-3, From 03.2000 BALTSQN 1-5. All within Danish battalion.	503
		1996 – Nov 2004	Staff officers in Brigade HQ and MNTF N.	33
	NATO HQ Sarajevo	Dec 2004 – June 2005	Staff officers.	4
	EUFOR ALTHEA	Dec 2005 – June 2007	ESTGUARD 1-3 Tuzla, Camp Eagle Base, platoon-size guarding unit of around 30 each within MNTF(N).	86
		Dec 2004 – Dec 2011	Staff officers and NCOs in EUFOR HQ in Camp BUTMIR.	30
Kosovo	KFOR	Mar 2001 – Oct 2004	Staff officers (CIMIC) in KFOR HQ, with 1 by rotation.	6
		Nov 1999 – June 2004	ESTPATROL – 1-14 within Italian MSU (Multinational Specialised Unit) 03.2003 – 08.2003 and 08.2004-02.2005, and in 2006 BALTSQN – 7, 10 and 3 within Danish battalion. 2007-2010 staff officers in DANBN HQ.	574
		2007- Feb 2010	ESTRIF 1-6 within Danish Military Police contingency.	159
		Aug 2003 – present	Staff officers and NCOs.	39
Israel/Syria	UNTSO	Mar 1997 – present	Military observers, 1 or 2 by rotation.	23
Macedonia	CONCORDIA	May 2003 – Dec 2003	NCO in EU FHQ (CIMIC).	1

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Location	Operation	Period	Type and size of unit, framework nation	No of troops
Iraq	OIF	June 2003 – Dec 2008	ESTPLA 7-17 within US battalion in Baghdad.	369
		June 2003 – Dec 2004	Cargo Team 1-3, at Tallil' airfield in the US Air Base.	37
		Feb 2004 – 2009	Staff officers in CJTF HQ, II MNF-I, OIF MNBr-B and MNC-I, plus media officers.	25
	NTM-I	Feb 2005 – Nov 2011	Training officers and NCO-s plus DCOS (logistics).	24
Afghanistan	ISAF	Mar 2003 – 2007	EOD 3-11 first in Kabul area, 07.2005 – 02.2006 in UK-led PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif in Balkhl Province.	96
		Aug 2005 – Oct 2006	MOT 1, 2 in Helmand with UK.	12
		June 2006 – present	ESTCOY 2-13 with national support elements (NSE); within UK contingent in Afgh-South, Helmand Province.	1668
		2010 – present	IEDD 1-4 in Helmand.	13
		Jan 2005 – Dec 2009	Cross Service Teams 1-13 at Kabul Airport.	40
		Feb 2004 – present	Staff officers. Including in ISAF HQ, ISAF MNB(S), RC (SW), Helmand PRT.	56
		2006 – present	CPT 3-11, close protection team to protect Estonian diplomatic mission in Afghanistan.	50
		Apr 2011 – July 2011 Apr 2012 – present	Surgeon Teams.	4
Horn of Africa	EUNAVFOR Somalia / Operation ATALANTA	Dec 2010 – present	Vessel Protection Detachment teams (size of 10 persons) on German (1. rotation) and French (2. and 3. rotation) vessels.	30

Table 2: Participation of Latvian National Armed Forces in International Military Crisis Response Operations 1996-2011. Sources: Ministry of Defence of Latvia, Latvian National Armed Forces, "Report on State Defence Policy and Armed forces Development 2004."

Location	Operation	Period	Type and size of unit, framework nation	No of troops
Bosnia & Herzegovina	IFOR/SFOR	Apr 1996 – Feb 2005	LATPLA-2 in Danish Battalion, LATCOY-1 in Swedish Bn, LATPLA-3 again in Danish Bn. In 1998 and in 1999/2000 LATCOY-2 and 3 (rotating with other BALTBAT companies – Estonian and Lithuanian); all within the DNK foster Bn in NORDPOL Bde. Feb 2003 – Feb 2005 staff officers	612
	ALTHEA	2004 – 2009	Staff officers.	23
Albania	AFOR	1999	Military medics.	8
Georgia, Kosovo, FYROM	OSCE Mentoring Mission	2000 – 2009	Military observers.	19
Kosovo	KFOR	2000 – 2009	2000 – 2009 Military Police unit. 2000 – 2002 Medics. 2002 – 2003 EOD specialists within Norwegian EOD team in MNB NE. 2004 – 2005 infantry company in BALTSQN in MNB NE. Staff officers and NCOs.	457
Iraq	OIF	May 2003 – Nov 2008	May – Nov 2003 a logistics platoon in the US Air Force base in Kirkuk. May 2003 – Nov 2004 EOD teams first in Kikut, then in the Multinational Division South-Centre (MND SC) in Camp Babylon with the US From August 2003 – 2007 an Infantry Company in MND SC within the Polish-led 1st Battle Group, staff officers until Nov 2008.	1165
	NTM-I	2005-2006	Latvian National Armed Forces Explosive Ordnance School carried out training within Latvia for Iraqi EOD specialists.	2
Macedonia	CONCORDIA	2003	Staff officers/NCOs.	4



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Location	Operation	Period	Type and size of unit, framework nation	No of troops
Afghanistan	ISAF	2003 – present	(currently -181).	1344
		Feb 2003 – 2005	Medical units under Netherlands-led hospital in Kabul and then in Kabul International Airport, and drivers, staff officers and NCOs.	45
		Feb 2005 – present	EOD specialists first at KAIA, then in Meymaneh PRT; now included within the Manoeuvre Unit.	30
		2006 – present	EOD officers in ISAF RC(N).	13
		Mar 2006 – Jun 2008	EOD specialists and officers in RC(N) QRF.	8
		Nov 2008 – 2010	Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) in US-led PRT-s in Nurestan and Kunar.	95
		2005 – 2011	A platoon in the Norwegian-led PRT Meymaneh, increased to a company (100 troops) in 2007.	1025
		2010 – present	Contribution to Lithuanian Air Mentoring Team.	2
		2011 – present	Manoeuvre Unit within Norwegian-led PRT Meymaneh, 146 troops per rotation.	146
		2011	Special Operations Forces detachment in the south (Kandahar and Zabul provinces) (since autumn 2011, jointly with the Lithuanian special forces).	class
	NTM-A	2011 – present	Staff officer.	1
Horn of Africa	ATALANTA	2010 – present	4 Naval force Officers in 2011 (2 of them served in ATLANTA operational headquarters in Northwood, other two served in operations district on operations headquarters ship); 3 Naval Force Officers in 2012 together with France, Germany, United Kingdom.	7

Table 3: Participation of Lithuanian Armed Forces in International Military Crisis Response Operations 1994-2011. Source: Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence.

Location	Operation	Period	Type and size of unit, framework nation	No of troops
Croatia	UNPROFOR II	Aug 1994 – Feb 1996	LITPLA1, LITPLA2, LITPLA3: all infantry platoons (approx. 30 servicemen each) within Danish foster Bn.	64
Georgia	OSCE Mission	2000 – 2007	Military personnel.	7
	UNOMIG	2007 – 2008	Military observers.	5
	EU Monitoring Mission	2008 – 2009	1 military personnel.	1
Bosnia & Herzegovina	NATO IFOR/SFOR	1996 – 2003	LITPLA (platoon size) 1 to LITPLA 7, varying from 34 to 41 servicemen. From 1999 increased to LITCOY 1 to 3 (company size), 145 in each deployment (rotating with other BALTBAT coys – Estonian and Latvian); all within the DNK foster Bn in NORDPOL Bde. BALTCOY 1-3, BALTSQN 1-6.	824
	ALTHEA	2004 – 2010	Staff officers.	12
Kosovo	SFOR/KFOR	Mar 2001 – July 2003	An26 transport aircraft.	98
	KFOR	1999 – 2009	Aug 2003- Mar 2004: a company size infantry unit (90 servicemen) within Baltic Squadron (BALTSQN) of the Danish foster Bn. 2004- July 2009: platoon size unit (KFOR-20 was the last deployment) of ca 30 servicemen, each generated from the National Defence Volunteer Forces within the Polish-Ukrainian Bn, POLUKRBAT. Military personnel at KFOR HQ and in NTT-K.	823
	OSCE Verification Mission	1998 – 1999	Observers.	3
Albania	ALLIED HARBOUR	May – Sept 1999	Military medics and support personnel from the Military Medical Service of the Logistics Command.	10
Pakistan	Humanitarian Operation	2005 – 2006	Water purification specialists.	10
FYROM	CONCORDIA	Apr – Dec 2003	Staff officer.	1



Location	Operation	Period	Type and size of unit, framework nation	No of troops
Iraq	OIF	Apr 2003 – Aug 2008	<p>Apr-June 2003 military medics on board of Spanish hospital ship “Galicia” and Umm Qasr hospital.</p> <p>Apr-Nov 2003 8 logistics specialists of the National Defence Volunteer Forces, at Talil air base (British sector, 20 km from An Nasiriyah).</p> <p>Aug 2003-Jan 2006 LITDET (Lithuanian Detachment) 1 to 5, platoon size each within the POL Div, in Al Hillah and, LITDET 10, in Al Kut towns, withdrawn when POL decided to terminate its deployment.</p> <p>June 2003-Aug 2008 LITCON (Lithuanian Contingent) 1 to 10, platoon size each, deployed in the British sector (Al Qurnah, Al Medinah, Al Basrah)</p> <p>Dec 2004-Jan 2006 two platoons from Birute Motorised infantry Bn also served within DANCON 4 and 5 in Al Basrah.</p> <p>Staff officers in CJTF HQ, MNF-I HQ, MNC-I HQ, MiTT, British-led multinational division HQ and Polish-led multinational division HQ.</p>	890
	NTM-I	Feb 2005 – Dec 2011	Military instructors, staff officers.	41
Afghanistan	ENDURING FREEDOM	Nov 2002 – Dec 2006	Special operations forces’ squadron and staff officers.	class
	ISAF	2003 – present	<p>Military medics in the German-led field hospital in Kabul (2003-2005)</p> <p>Logistics, cargo handling and air navigation specialists in Kabul International Airport (2004-2005).</p> <p>Military medics within the PRT in Mazar-al-Sharif (2004-2005)</p> <p>Leading nation and main contributor to the PRT in Ghawr province in Central Afghanistan (2005- present): more than 200 soldiers and civilians in the PRT, ISAF HQs and NSE in each rotation.</p> <p>Special Operations Forces detachment in the south (Kandahar and Zabul provinces) (Aug 2007 – present; since autumn of 2011 – jointly with the Latvian special forces), numbers classified.</p> <p>Tactical Air Component Party (TACP) in 2008 and again from 2010</p> <p>From Nov 2010, contribution to and lead of the Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (POMLT) in Ghawr province: 8 military servicemen (mainly military police).</p> <p>Since the beginning of 2011, contribution to and lead of the Air-Mentoring Team (ATM) in Kandahar airport, 8 servicemen for each deployment.</p>	more than 2200
	UNAMA	2007 – 2008	Mission’s military advisor.	1
	ISAF/NTM-A	Oct 2010 – present	1 Staff Officer.	2

Baltic Military Cooperative Projects: a Record of Success

Introduction

After the Baltic states regained their independence in 1991, western countries, spearheaded by the Nordic states, undertook a number of cooperative military projects to develop Baltic defence capabilities. The Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT) served in particular as a basis for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to develop their military forces with western assistance. BALTBAT became the model for other projects: the Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON), the Baltic Air Surveillance Network (BALTNET) and the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL). The Baltic Security Assistance Group (BALTSEA) was established to coordinate military assistance. This chapter will focus on BALTBAT as a case study, as it was the first project and provided the general operating template for the other Baltic defence cooperation programmes. Moreover, a number of issues were addressed in establishing BALTBAT which were important for the other projects, such as organisational structures and decision-making processes.

The Baltic projects arguably were a great success, and have value as both operational and academic case studies. They functioned at a challenging time in a sensitive region. The Baltic states had virtually no modern military forces upon regaining independence, and relations with Russia were tense. The Baltic projects, particularly the political decisions which laid the foundation, also provide lessons which continue to be crucial for effective military aid projects. In short, BALTBAT and the other Baltic projects have significant historical and contemporary relevance.

Drawing on the literature and semi-structured interviews with key officials involved with the Baltic projects,² a number of important factors for success become apparent. They include:

1 The opinions and characterisations in this chapter are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent official positions of the United States Government.

2 In addition to those who spoke on the record and are quoted in the text, one Estonian, one Latvian and one US official as well as one retired US military officer provided comments, but not for attribution.

- Utilisation of available political and military opportunities.
- Establishment of clear political goals.
- A long-term commitment from supporting states.
- Establishment of a solid project framework.
- Clear linkages with other goals (such as NATO membership).
- The commitment for recipient states to take more responsibility at the right time.

The Baseline – “Starting From Zero”

When Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined NATO on March 29, 2004, they achieved a long-term security policy objective. To assess the success of the Baltic projects, it is important to note the extent of the journey from 1991 to 2004, as the Baltic states began from an abysmally low baseline, and not just with regard to pieces of equipment. A former Latvian National Security Advisor wrote that at the time of re-independence, the Latvian military had no military threat analysis, defence concept, defence plan, or knowledge of budgetary processes or force planning.³ At that time in the Baltic states there was “a wide-spread feeling that defence efforts are futile.”⁴ It was difficult to get politicians to focus on defence, to give priority to military spending or to get acceptance of conscription, all of which was amplified by the difficult economic circumstances.

Individuals involved in the process of establishing the Baltic projects recalled in interviews the extent of the challenge. Former Lithuanian Defence Minister Linas Linkevičius stated that Lithuania had nothing in 1994 and there were no resources available. It was clear that the situation was “a mess.” Former Danish Defence Minister Hans Hækkerup commented that the Baltic states had serious problems regarding their military forces, adding that their professional soldiers were Soviet-trained and needed substantial re-training. Former Norwegian Foreign (and later Defence) Minister Bjørn Tove Godal concurred that the Baltic states had little to start with upon regaining their independence.

Former NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Sir Jeremy Mackenzie, thought the Baltic states were almost in as bad a state as Albania, adding that he could visit the entire Estonian army in one afternoon. In his view, the Baltic states had a lower starting-point than the other countries that regained

3 Gundars Zalkans, “The Development of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Latvia,” *Baltic Defence Review* 1, no. 1 (1999): 2.

4 Robert Dalsjö, “Baltic Self-Defence Capabilities - Achievable and Necessary, or Futile Symbolism?” *Baltic Defence Review* 1, no. 1 (1999): 3.

independence with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and USSR. Margus Kolga, former Deputy Secretary General of Policy in the Estonian Ministry of Defence and Estonian representative in the BALTBAT Steering Group, emphasised that the Baltic states did not have indigenous defence structures at the time of regaining independence. And various attempts by interviewees to statistically assess the poor state of the Baltic forces showed general agreement. Sir Garry Johnson, former Commander of NATO Allied Forces Northern Europe, said that the Baltic states “started from zero,” a score also given by former BALTDEFCOL Commandant Gundars Abols. One retired US military officer thought the Baltic states in 1994 “were at 1 on a 1-10 scale of military capabilities.”

Concerns about Russia

For the Baltic and western supporting states, a critical concern was how Russia might react as the Baltic states sought to develop defence capabilities under the guidance of the West. This was particularly important as Russian military forces did not complete their withdrawal from Lithuania until 1993 and from Latvia and Estonia until 1994. And for the Baltic states, the withdrawal of Russian troops was the key immediate security concern and critical to regaining full sovereignty.

There were numerous facets to the concern about Russian reactions. The first involved the practical reasons why Moscow was focussed on the Baltic states, which “have traditionally been an extremely sensitive region for Russia.”⁵ It was difficult for Russia to give up Baltic ports, which gave Moscow access to the Baltic Sea and the Atlantic. One pillar of Russian policy had been to prevent “the militarization of the Baltic states and the establishment of a foreign military presence there.”⁶ In 1992, the Commander of the Russian General Staff Academy listed what one writer termed the “conditions for transformation of the Soviet superpower into the Russian great power.”⁷ One point was free Russian access to Baltic state seaports, and another was a combination of the exclusion of other military forces from the Baltic states and the non-membership of the Baltic states in military blocs directed at Russia. Thus, Russia made it clear that it would not accept Baltic state membership of NATO, and threatened to break cooperative efforts with the West.⁸ NATO

5 Sergei Oznobistchev, “Russia in its Neighboring Environment: New Challenges and New Policy?” in *Nordic-Baltic Security - An International Perspective*, ed. Arne Olav Brundtland and Don M. Snider (Washington DC: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994), 105.

6 Ibid., 106.

7 Jakub M. Godzimirski, “Soviet Legacy and Baltic Security: The Case of Kaliningrad,” in *Stability and Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Olav F. Knudsen (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 37.

8 Stephen J. Blank, *NATO Enlargement and The Baltic States: What Can the Great Powers Do?* (Carlisle PA: United States Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 1997), v.

cruise missiles would pass through Baltic air space to get to Moscow, so the early warning and other defence systems in the Baltic states were important.⁹ There was also the problem of the isolation of the Kaliningrad region, which served as the redeployment area for Russian troops departing Poland and the former East Germany.¹⁰

A second aspect involved Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia. Russian nationalist parties seized upon the issue, and Russian statements about what would be done to protect ethnic Russians were unnerving to the Baltic states. One 1992 article outlined a proposal to use defence of Russians in non-Russian states as a foreign policy tool under the guise of defending human rights.¹¹ A third aspect was that Russian policy-makers arguably had a psychological barrier to accepting Baltic independence,¹² and the view was expressed that the "confrontational attitude towards the Baltic states is thus deeply entrenched in Russian political culture and the domestic political situation."¹³

The final aspect was that Russian statements generated fear in the Baltic states. They were confused by the messages coming out of Russia during 1992-1993,¹⁴ and that generated unease in the Baltic capitals. There were comments from parts of the Russian military early after Baltic re-independence that the military would not withdraw from the Baltic states under any circumstances,¹⁵ and there was a feeling in Baltic capitals that it was possible that local military commanders would disobey a withdrawal order from Moscow.¹⁶ The Russian army openly rehearsed and discussed invasion scenarios for the Baltic states, despite the fact that by 1992, "Russian generals reportedly realized their Baltic position was untenable, and the army's current condition rules out invasion for a long time,"¹⁷ a point seconded by others assessing the state of the Russian military.¹⁸

9 Ibid., 7-8.

10 Richard Latter, *Nordic and Baltic Security in the 1990s*, Wilton Park Paper 56 (London: HMSO, 1992), 14.

11 Sergei Karaganov, "Problems in Defending the Rights of Russian-oriented Residents of the 'Near Abroad,'" *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik* (1992), quoted in Trivimi Velliste, "The 'Near Abroad' in the Baltic Republics: The View from Estonia," in *Nordic-Baltic Security - An International Perspective*, ed. Arne Olav Brundtland and Don M. Snider (Washington DC: The Center for Strategic and international Studies, 1994), 58-59.

12 Atis Lejins, "Latvia in a Post-Cold War Europe," in *Nordic-Baltic Security - An International Perspective*, ed. Arne Olav Brundtland and Don M. Snider (Washington DC: The Center for Strategic and international Studies, 1994), 33.

13 Viatcheslav Morozov, "The Baltic States in Russian Foreign Policy Discourse: Can Russia Become a Baltic Country?" in *Post-Cold War Identity Politics*, ed. Marko Lehti and David J. Smith (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 231.

14 William C. Bodie, *Moscow's 'Near Abroad' - Security Policy in Post-Soviet Europe*, McNair Paper Sixteen (Washington DC: National Defence University, 1993), 13.

15 Latter, *Nordic and Baltic Security*, 2.

16 Ibid., 13.

17 Blank, *NATO Enlargement*, 14.

18 Bodie, *Moscow's 'Near Abroad'*, 15, 18.

Interviewees indicated the extent to which Russian views and Baltic concerns were considered in planning western assistance. Hækkerup emphasised that the primary concern was to get Russian forces out of the Baltic states as quickly as possible. He added that a focus on the ability to conduct peacekeeping operations (PKO) was a good way to train Baltic forces, and was also less threatening to Russia. Mackenzie commented that the Baltic states were tiny, but important, and Kaliningrad added to the special sensitivity of the area. And he frankly stated that at this point in time, Russia was “imploding.” Johnson added that concern about Russia was an overwhelming and motivating force.

One Latvian official stressed that the Baltic states were still afraid of Russia when BALTBAT began, and one Estonian official concurred that Russia was certainly in the minds of people working on these issues. Walter Andrusyszyn, former Chargé d'affaires at the US Embassy in Tallinn, and former Director of the Office of Regional Political-Military Affairs in the Bureau of European Affairs at the US Department of State, agreed that the immediate policy challenge was to ensure that Russia completed the troop withdrawal, adding that there were grounds to believe that Moscow was at times ready to find an excuse to halt it. He noted that during this critical period, people were still hedging their bets on how Russian relations with the Baltic states would develop. And Kristian Fischer, Danish Deputy Permanent Secretary of State for Defence, noted that there were concerns about the reaction from Russia to western military assistance to the Baltic states. However there was also a general consensus among participants that they would deal with Russian reactions if and when they arose.

Taking a somewhat different perspective, Godal commented that Norway had counselled that the Baltic states should take a patient attitude, adding that Oslo was not overly concerned about whether Russia would have issues with defence assistance to the Baltic states, which themselves did not make unreasonable requests for aid. Former Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen echoed Godal's views, stating that in formulating Danish policy in the years up to Baltic re-independence, “We really did not give it much thought if Russia was offended, and when the Soviet Ambassador showed up in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to protest, he was told that Denmark had never recognised the inclusion of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union.” But Ellemann-Jensen noted that up to August 1991 there was resistance to an overly-energetic Baltic policy. Some larger European countries made it clear that they did not want to move too fast to embrace the Baltic states as this might create problems for then Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Former Icelandic Foreign Minister Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson concurred, noting that despite official rhetoric, Baltic independence leaders were told not to rock the boat, to restrain their demands, and to settle for a compromise.

Focus on Peacekeeping

The 'Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Co-operation on the Formation of a Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion' was signed by the Baltic states, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the UK in June 1994. The MOU laid out the project framework for BALTBAT. France, the US, Germany and the Netherlands later signed on as supporting nations. The MOU noted that the project was designed to have the Baltic states take over BALTBAT. (With regard to the question of who gets the credit for BALTBAT, the Baltic states signed a 'Protocol on Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Defence' in June 1992, which set out the framework for Baltic defence cooperation. A writer notes that, "the idea of forming a joint Baltic peacekeeping force was first proposed in November 1993 at a meeting of the Chiefs of Defence of the Baltic States in Tallinn,"¹⁹ with another writer crediting Alexander Einseln, Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces, with introducing the idea of a joint Baltic peacekeeping battalion.²⁰) The project participants agreed that Denmark would act as the lead donor and chair of the Steering Group and Military Working Group. BALTBAT was de-activated on September 26, 2003.

BALTBAT allowed for the development of military capabilities among the Baltic states by focussing on the ability to contribute to PKO, where Russia had little basis for objection. The founders of BALTBAT rode the prevailing international support for PKO,²¹ and it was easier for western countries to support BALTBAT than to provide direct military aid to the Baltic states, as the former could not be considered provocative.²² NATO had expressed its emphasis on peacekeeping, including it as an objective within the 1994 Partnership for Peace (PfP) Framework Document.²³ In the PfP Invitation, NATO proposed peacekeeping field exercises within the PfP framework. The Invitation noted that, "active participation in the Partnership for Peace will play an important role in the evolutionary process of the expansion of NATO."²⁴ And a positive US view on peacekeeping at this time was apparent.²⁵ Thus, BALTBAT was tailored to meet NATO objectives, allowed the Baltic states to make a contribution and indicated in a concrete manner their political commitment to NATO.

19 Juris Dalbins, "Baltic Cooperation - The Key to Wider Security," *NATO Review* 44, no. 1 (1996).

20 Annikab Bergman, "BALTBAT: The Emergence of a Common Defence Dimension to Nordic Co-operation," *Columbia International Affairs Online* (2000).

21 Julian Brett, *Lessons learned from the BALTBAT project* (Copenhagen: Ministry of Defence, 2001), 5.

22 Robert Saproas, "BALTBAT and development of Baltic Defence Forces," *Baltic Defence Review* 2, no. 2 (1999): 59.

23 North Atlantic Council, "Partnership for Peace: Framework Document" (1994), paragraph 3.

24 North Atlantic Council, "Partnership for Peace: Invitation" (1994), paragraph 2.

25 Stephen Cambone, "The Implications of US Foreign and Defense Policies for the Nordic and Baltic Region," in *Nordic-Baltic Security - An International Perspective*, ed. Arne Olav Brundtland and Don M. Snider (Washington DC: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994), 75.

Peacekeeping was also a way to cement Nordic support. From 1945-90, the four militarily capable Nordic states were among the seven most active participants in international PKO missions.²⁶ Sweden, scrupulous about its policy of neutrality, was very supportive of Baltic projects to develop PKO capabilities as well as the later Baltic programmes.²⁷ And while all Nordic states supported the Baltic states, there were policy differences which made the common bond of PKO significant. Finland had a very careful Russia-first policy,²⁸ while Norway had a greater focus on Barents Sea cooperation as an area for engaging with Russia.²⁹

The interviews reinforced the attention given to selecting PKO as the BALTBAT focus. Hækkerup stressed that PKO was less threatening to Russia, a good way to train Baltic forces, and an area which allowed Baltic forces to "learn by doing." A retired US military officer concurred on the practical importance of the PKO focus, noting that the deployment of BALTBAT companies allowed Baltic personnel to see and experience real operations, which furthered their training and development. Godal agreed that BALTBAT was well-suited to help the Baltic states develop military capabilities, would fit neatly with the Nordic focus on PKO, and would not raise concerns in Russia. Linkevičius commented that there was not an excessive concern about Russian reactions to these Baltic military initiatives, but it was a good idea to have some political cover, so the focus on PKO was wise, particularly as PfP included Russia.

The model for BALTBAT, stressed Mackenzie, was "excellent." The Baltic states could be seen to be a part of the western effort to generate security. NATO was in need of PKO forces, so any state which could make a contribution was viewed positively. A small but effective force was important, so BALTBAT was useful and carried political weight. And the political concern about not offending Russia, he continued, was important in selecting PKO as the focus of initial activity for the Baltic states. Johnson added that PKOs are a good way of developing military skills. And Arunas Molis of the BALTDEFCOL stressed that the Nordics were looking for a niche military capability, and the BALTBAT focus on PKO served that goal as well as providing a prudent way of developing Baltic military forces.

26 Bergman, *BALTBAT: The Emergence of a Common Defence Dimension*.

27 Ann-Sofie Dahl, "Sweden and the Baltic Sea Region - Activism on a New Arena or the End of Free-Riding?" in *Stability and Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Olav F. Knudsen (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 144.

28 Grethe Værnø, "Bridging the Nordic-Baltic Gap or - the Nordic Predicament in the Baltics," in *Stability and Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Olav F. Knudsen (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 193.

29 Arne Olav Brundtland, "Nordic Security at the End of the Cold War: Old Legacies and New Challenges," in *Nordic-Baltic Security - An International Perspective*, ed. Arne Olav Brundtland and Don M. Snider (Washington DC: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1994), 25.

Per Carlsen, former Danish Deputy Permanent Secretary of State for Defence, noted that PKO was a “safe” area in which to support the development of Baltic capabilities. An effort to generate additional UN PKO forces was not contentious, and it was in NATO’s interest that BALTBAT put “meat on the bones” of PfP. The PKO focus, particularly for UN missions, made the general push for military assistance to the Baltic states acceptable to all. One US official emphasised that it was important that the Baltic projects focussed on areas in which opportunities were available, and PKO was the only good starting point for the Baltic states to develop military forces and receive aid from the West.

Chris Donnelly, Special Advisor for Central and Eastern Europe to the NATO Secretary General during this period, stated that NATO did not want to antagonise Russia, and the Baltic states “did not get an enthusiastic response” from Brussels on establishing a territorial defence force. In view of Russian politics, BALTBAT might have been about all that was possible. There was always a concern about Russia, stressed one Latvian official, which was why PKO was chosen. However, he added, there was a debate within the Baltic states about whether to focus resources on ‘hard defence’ rather than PKO. Kolga concurred, noting that some in the Baltic states thought PKO was a less “useful” area of focus, although the supporters of PKO won the argument. Moreover, commented one Estonian official, while there were reasons for the Nordic states to assist the Baltic states, the Nordics were also wary of giving the impression that aid was directed against any particular nation. Sweden and Finland were worried about the provision of military assistance, so PKO was the best area in which to focus efforts.

Russian Non-Reaction

One measure of the significance of the decision to focus on PKO is the lack of a reaction from Moscow. Godal stated that he did not recall that the Russians gave him a difficult time regarding BALTBAT. Hækkerup stressed that there was no direct opposition from Moscow to BALTBAT at the outset, although Russia increasingly soured on the project as criticism of NATO enlargement fed criticism of BALTBAT. He added that Russia later tried to dissuade and even split the Nordics; an attempt which failed, noted Hækkerup, due to Nordic solidarity. Carlsen added that Russia was informed about BALTBAT developments and he briefed Russian defence attachés. At the start, Russia was at ease with BALTBAT as there was no discussion about NATO membership for the Baltic states. Carlsen added that Russian views on BALTBAT never fundamentally changed, in contrast to Moscow’s views on the Danish-Polish-German corps, which generated increasingly negative

commentary, as it had a decidedly NATO angle. He noted that the Danes had expected more difficulties and a negative reaction from Moscow, which ultimately were not realised.

Kolga stated that Denmark had informed Russia about BALTBAT and the understanding among the Baltic capitals was that Moscow was not opposed. He added that Russia did not say anything to the Baltic states directly about BALTBAT, and the assumption in the Baltic capitals was that if Russia did object, it would voice those objections to the US. Kolga commented that the donor states needed to ensure that Moscow was aware of the Baltic projects, but there was no "excessive concern" by the donor states regarding Russia. Even during disputes on issues such as Russian minorities, Moscow never made a connection to Baltic military efforts. As an example, he cited the 1996 BALTIC CHALLENGE exercise, when Russia simply sent observers at the defence attaché level. One US official stated that Russia basically left the Baltic states alone to work on these projects. And one Estonian official noted that he was not surprised by the lack of a strident Russian reaction to BALTBAT. One factor was that Russia was more at ease as the assistance came from the Nordic states. Having a US flag on the projects would have made things more difficult.

Nordic Support

While general Russian statements about Moscow's interests in the Baltic states and specific commentary on issues such as not completing the Russian troop withdrawal generated concern, they also reinforced the determination of the Nordic and other states to support the Baltic states. While western actions and statements were not security guarantees, they were a useful response to such Russian statements.³⁰ Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt emphasised that, "The security of the Baltic nations needs to be assured by integration with the institutions of the West.... The Baltic region provides the critical test of the relationship between Russia and the West. We must not fail."³¹ And despite the policy divisions noted below, there was a degree of Nordic competition to be seen as the champion of the Baltic states.³² The Nordics largely believed that with the end of the Cold War they faced no direct military threat, but were concerned about developments in Russia and Moscow's intentions regarding the Baltic states.³³ A Russian-Baltic conflict which spun out of control could generate social and economic disruption,

30 Blank, *NATO Enlargement*, 20.

31 Carl Bildt, "The Baltic Litmus Test," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 5 (1994): 85.

32 Bergman, *BALTBAT: The Emergence of a Common Defence Dimension*.

33 Væmø, *Bridging the Nordic-Baltic Gap*, 191.

and possibly refugees.³⁴ One of the key aspects of the Baltic policy of the Nordics was a perceived need to educate the Baltic states to manage a new and delicate situation.³⁵ There was also a Nordic perception that the US and Germany were not as well-suited to assist the Baltic states.³⁶ And increased Nordic military cooperation, spurred by common enthusiasm for PKO,³⁷ exemplified by Swedish enthusiasm for PfP and PKO activities,³⁸ aligned neatly with BALTBAT goals.

The Nordic states, to an extent, had responsibility for aiding the Baltic states thrust upon them,³⁹ and the ability of the Baltic capitals to achieve political, economic and military reform depended on enhanced cooperation with the Nordic states.⁴⁰ There were reasons why they were supportive, but also hesitant about assisting the Baltic capitals.⁴¹ They wanted security for the Baltic states, but within a larger security structure, wishing to avoid anything resembling a regional arrangement that would involve them in Russian-Baltic disputes. The Nordics rejected any idea that it would be their responsibility to handle the security concerns of the Baltic capitals.⁴² There was Nordic unity on aid for the Baltic states, but solid Nordic agreement that they would not accept a regional responsibility for Baltic defence.⁴³ BALTBAT was thus a platform melding Nordic views on Europe, security policy and PKO, with ultimate responsibility for BALTBAT placed on the Baltic capitals.⁴⁴ As a result, once the goal of Baltic state membership in NATO was achieved, the impetus for a continued Nordic leadership role on Baltic defence was reduced, and the security framework in which Baltic-Russian relations were addressed moved to Brussels.

The interviews support the extent of the commitment of the Nordic states to assisting the Baltic capitals. Hækkerup stressed that there was substantial Nordic solidarity on BALTBAT, noting that there had been extensive Nordic cooperation on efforts to bolster PKO capabilities. However, he candidly noted that there were disagreements, citing as an example the concern expressed

34 Clive Archer and Christopher Jones, "The Security Policies and Concepts of the Baltic States - Learning from their Nordic Neighbours?" in *Stability and Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Olav F. Knudsen (London: Frank Cass Publishers 1999), 175.

35 Marko Lehti, "Possessing a Baltic Europe: Retold National Narratives in the European North," in *Post-Cold War Identity Politics - Northern and Baltic Experiences*, ed. Marko Lehti and David J. Smith (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 25.

36 Archer and Jones, *Security Policies and Concepts*, 175.

37 Brundtland, *Nordic Security at the End of the Cold War*, 26.

38 Dahl, *Sweden and the Baltic Sea Region*, 148 and 151.

39 Værnø, *Bridging the Nordic-Baltic Gap*, 194-5.

40 Ronald Asmus and Robert Nurick, "NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States," *Survival* 38, no. 2 (1996): 132.

41 Værnø, *Bridging the Nordic-Baltic Gap*, 200.

42 Olav F. Knudsen, "Security on the Great Power Fringe: Dilemmas Old and New" in *Stability and Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Olav F. Knudsen (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 6.

43 Bergman, *BALTBAT: The Emergence of a Common Defence Dimension*.

44 Ibid.

by some Nordics when he pushed to get Baltic forces immediately involved in PKO efforts in Croatia. Godal concurred that there was overall unity among the Nordic states on policy, and they were committed to assisting the Baltic states. He noted that the Nordics worked well together, although there was no organisational framework or existing process that could be used.

Carlsen added that the Nordics had worked together to establish training courses in their countries, and the cooperative framework that had been used provided a sort of a model for the Baltic projects. The Military Working Group mechanism, for example, was used effectively. Carlsen emphasised that within the Nordic states, the ministries of defence were supportive of BALTBAT. However, in some capitals, there were debates between defence and foreign ministries, particularly due to the concern over Russian reactions. And Fischer added that there were probably different political goals among participating states in 1994. Ellemann-Jensen stressed that it would be erroneous to provide too sharp an image of early, constant Nordic unity on the Baltic states. Citing an example, at an August 1991 Nordic Foreign Ministers meeting, soon after the attempted putsch in Moscow, one counterpart criticised Ellemann-Jensen for pushing too hard on the Baltic issue. In retrospect, he said, he was extremely pleased with what the Nordic states did at that time to support the Baltic states. After some initial divisions, he stressed, events generated a situation in which there was a Nordic competition to assist the Baltic states.

Andrusyszyn commented that the Nordic effort to assist the Baltic states was important. The US had a positive view of Nordic-Baltic efforts which allowed the Baltic states to profile themselves, and BALTBAT and the other projects were vehicles to demonstrate that the Baltic states were working to develop military capabilities. One Estonian official said they also provided a gateway for assistance from the Nordic states to be effectively utilised. Kolga noted that the Nordics took the lead, and they had an understanding of the Baltic states which was beneficial. To be frank, he added, if the US had led the effort, it would have just "come in and given us the package and said 'do it.'" Instead, under Nordic guidance, the projects had an invaluable maturation process for the Baltic states. And one Latvian official added that it is important to give due credit to the UK for the role it played in the early stages of establishing BALTBAT, which also served to encourage and embolden the Nordic states.

Developing New Personnel

One key aspect noted by interviewees was the importance of developing the right kind of personnel in the new Baltic forces. More generally, working on these projects provided an opportunity for the next generation of military and

civilian policy-makers to develop skills and form a network. With accession to NATO and the development of an established cadre of Baltic officials and officers, regional projects were far less critical. However, having capable people was a critical need at the time of regaining independence, and BALTBAT and the other projects assisted in developing those new personnel.

Carlsen stressed that it was important that those who worked in BALTBAT were the young personnel who generated the cooperation that was needed for the Baltic states to open up to and work with each other, and with the West. Michael Clemmesen, the first Commandant of the BALTDEFCOL, emphasised that perhaps the key accomplishment of BALTBAT was the development of the first of the next generation of Baltic military officers. It was significant that a network of Baltic officers and civil servants was developed by common programmes and meetings. There were about 20 important individuals who had the opportunity to work together and learn to trust each other. In retrospect, said one Latvian official, he is very proud of the people who came out of the BALTBAT process.

Kolga noted that BALTBAT served as a “window to the West.” He stressed that the Baltic states in 1991 could not recruit enough good people with the understanding of military matters to establish their armed forces. BALTBAT and the other projects allowed Baltic military personnel to get experience in a number of key areas, such as the generation of defence systems, and allowed them to develop understanding of the broader political-military area. The Baltic projects, continued Kolga, forced the Baltic states to work together, as well as refine their thinking in the defence area. They may not have led to the immediate development of military capability, but they provided the three states with exposure to western military structures and operating in a multinational environment. They also supported the development of key, basic skills, such as consensus building.

By the late 1990s, continued Kolga, ‘Baltification’ (turning responsibility over to the Baltic states) had become an issue. However, up to that point, their knowledge base was very thin. The Baltic projects consumed time and energy, he conceded, but this was unavoidable as the focus was on developing the mentality of the young officers of the nascent Baltic forces. Ultimately, a substantial number of Baltic officers had BALTBAT project background, which was important in developing people who could handle the NATO Membership Action Plan process and generally could work within NATO processes.

Linkevičius concurred that the results of the efforts in the 1990s still have an impact, as the young people working on these projects are now in positions

of leadership in defence and security policy. At that stage in their development, concurred Mackenzie, it was important to instil in the new generation a mindset centred on Baltic independence and away from a reliance on others. This was the only way to really help them as they faced a steep learning curve. The aid to the Baltic states was an effective way of addressing a number of tasks, as the projects made it possible to address these questions in a logical manner, with concrete results showing that the process worked. Abols stressed that the Baltic projects were crucial to developing the right kind of military officers, and over the long-term, leadership and professional development were critical. And on reflection, the process went as fast as possible with regard to development of personnel.

Building National Defence Capabilities

A question noted previously was whether BALTBAT and the other projects diverted resources from the generation of traditional national defence forces, and whether this was an error. Some argued that BALTBAT's influence on national defence forces was rather limited,⁴⁵ and even wrote that BALTBAT was "militarily useless" and a "multinational effort of symbolic and political importance."⁴⁶ BALTBAT was useful in training Baltic soldiers in western military techniques, but "the creation of a whole army cannot be based upon this single cooperative venture alone which is politically symbolic but not very useful."⁴⁷

BALTBAT supporters provide a number of responses, one of which is that the programmes maximised the offers of military resources. Moreover, the goal of national defence for the Baltic states could not be an ability to defend against a Russian attack, but a system that would raise the price Moscow would pay for an attack.⁴⁸ It was argued, with specific reference to BALTBAT and a recommendation that it be expanded, that the best model for the Baltic states would be to make a contribution to regional and international security efforts. Participation in broader efforts would allow them to show they are "producers" of security.⁴⁹

The argument is also made that BALTBAT did indeed provide support for national defence capabilities. For example, the Baltic states drew on the training from BALTBAT instructors to put into place national structures that could

45 Saprois, *BALTBAT and development of Baltic Defence Forces*, 59-60.

46 Daniel Austin, *NATO Expansion and the Baltic States* (Sandhurst: Conflict Studies Research Centre, 1999), 1.

47 Ibid., 2.

48 Asmus and Nurick, *NATO Enlargement*, 131.

49 Ibid, 131.

handle most military training.⁵⁰ It also provided the Baltic defence ministries the chance to work on a concrete project under the tutelage of experienced military forces, which encouraged democratic control of military forces.⁵¹ However, it is also conceded that BALTBAT could have done more to aid the development of national defence capabilities,⁵² and that there were missed opportunities to provide benefits to national forces.⁵³ The twin problems were that BALTBAT became separated from national defence development and was not adequately supported by national efforts.⁵⁴

Reflecting on the question, Godal commented that the Baltic projects were good for development of national defences, and provided a starting point for building capabilities. Hækkerup stressed that the value of BALTBAT also came as a unit that could serve as an example for Baltic military establishments. Practices and processes could filter down to other levels, especially as BALTBAT exercised with other Baltic units. The range of initiatives was important in helping develop Baltic self-assurance and improving capabilities. Mackenzie emphasised that BALTBAT actually was national defence for the Baltic states. It was the solution to how to take the initial steps to defend the Baltic states, and was critical to the overall development of national defence forces. Indeed, stressed Mackenzie, it was the only realistic model for the Baltic states. He flatly stated that the idea of three independent Baltic military forces was “fanciful.” Johnson was equally clear that a focus on national defence for the Baltic states was not possible.

Kolga questioned where the Baltic states would have found resources for defence in the absence of BALTBAT. Western transfers of weapons would have been difficult without BALTBAT, and the Baltic states had few potential suppliers of weapons. He added that one advantage of BALTBAT was that it was small enough to provide Baltic personnel an overview of all aspects of a military project. Kolga also stressed that the Baltic projects provided the political foundation for defence spending by the Baltic capitals. And they covered all the military services and generated a common focus on practical implementation.

Linkevičius noted that the Baltic states did not ignore requirements for hard defence. But as Defence Minister, he had to decide how to allocate scarce resources. The Baltic capitals focussed on the resources needed for

50 Brett, *Lessons Learned*, 6.

51 Ibid, 5.

52 Ibid, 7.

53 Ibid, 59-60.

54 Ibid, 59.

interoperability and selected niche capabilities in NATO which they could realistically address, and which they still provide today. Ultimately, he concluded, he would not do anything differently if he had to do it over again. One Latvian official emphasised that the idea was to have the skills generated through the BALTBAT experience spread to the rest of the Baltic military forces. However, echoing Linkevičius, there was only so much that could be done on a “trickle-down” basis as there was so little money available for the military. Urgent requirements for weapons, housing and other needs could not be addressed adequately. Even with the benefit of hindsight, he stressed, what was achieved in the Baltic states was as much as could have been accomplished in view of the situation and the available resources.

Taking a slightly different position, Carlsen acknowledged some validity to the argument that BALTBAT may have received too much priority and too high an allocation of resources. And one US official noted that by 1997-98, there was recognition that a reassessment was needed on whether there should be greater attention to the development of traditional, national military forces by the Baltic states. Abols stated it probably would have been better to have devoted more resources to national defence instead of PKO, as transferring capabilities for PKO to national defence is challenging. But there were no problems with the resources devoted to BALTBAT, as they provided value and generated benefits which are still important. He noted the projects brought the Baltic states together and laid a foundation for essential common activities, such as the development of doctrine.

Alar Laneman, the first BALTBAT commander, stated that the goal was to develop national defence capabilities. Due to the shortage of trained personnel, people were training and working at the same time, and personnel were constantly being rotated through BALTBAT. Laneman conceded that there is some truth to the argument that BALTBAT may have received a disproportionately large amount of resources, and there was equipment which went to BALTBAT that national military forces tried to get. However, he asserted that the problem was that the Baltic states did not take the opportunity to maximise the benefits that could have been derived from BALTBAT. If they had done so, it would have been a very appropriate allocation of resources.

An Estonian official, echoing Laneman, commented that the projects contributed to development of national defences, which was one of the goals. But more could have been done so that BALTBAT and the other programmes made a greater contribution. Again, there was a split within the Baltic states over the development of hard defence versus PKO capabilities. That was the primary reason why BALTBAT expertise was not spread around the rest of

the military as intensely as it should have been. As a result, there was no universal support inside the countries for the focus on BALTBAT and the other projects. The Estonian official believed the balance on PKO versus hard defence ultimately was right, but more spillover from BALTBAT to the rest of the military could have been achieved. In retrospect, he would have worked to get a consensus within the Baltic military forces to use the projects for national defence development, which would have generated more support for the Baltic projects. A Latvian official echoed the point, stating that if he could do it again, he might have had more coordination with Latvian officers to address the lack of support for BALTBAT within the rest of the defence forces. He commented that BALTBAT was seen as the pandered child while others did “real” defence.

Clear Political Goals – NATO Membership

One of the significant aspects of BALTBAT was that it aligned neatly with the overarching security policy goal of the Baltic states: NATO membership. NATO had made clear in 1991 its support for “the expectations and legitimate aspirations of the Baltic peoples.”⁵⁵ However, the proximity of the Baltic states to Russia and Moscow’s objections to the Baltic states joining NATO made this a sensitive issue. Some writers noted that NATO membership in the immediate future was unlikely and the requirement was a western strategy to strengthen Baltic independence and ground them firmly in the West.⁵⁶ It was apparent the Baltic states would need to make their case for membership.⁵⁷ Thus, as one of the policy rationales for BALTBAT was to make that case by showing the Baltic states could be producers of security, the need to continue BALTBAT evaporated when NATO membership for the Baltic states was assured. In contrast, programmes such as the BALTDEFCOL continued to have utility within a NATO framework.

On this issue, Godal stressed that the Baltic projects had a natural connection to the desire of the Baltic states for NATO membership. Mackenzie noted that from the NATO perspective, the task was to have them take small steps to improve themselves. He stressed that the Baltic capitals were very clear about their desire for NATO membership, adding that military assistance projects often lack a goal or definition of success, but this was not the case with BALTBAT and the other Baltic military projects. Kolga commented that when the Baltic states entered into intensified dialogue

55 North Atlantic Council, “Partnership with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe,” (1991), paragraph 7.

56 Asmus and Nurick, *NATO Enlargement*, 121.

57 Archer and Jones, *Security Policies and Concepts*, 171.

with NATO in 1995-96, the projects were concrete examples of defence efforts. He noted that while they may not have generated “meaningful military capabilities,” they were important to the development of the necessary culture, an awareness of procedures, and education and training for military personnel.

Carlsen said NATO membership was not an official goal of the Baltic initiatives, due to the sensitivities of some Nordic states. But with PfP, the focus on PKO, particularly for UN missions, made the general push for military assistance to the Baltic states acceptable to all. And it was in NATO’s interest that BALTBAT put “meat on the bones” of PfP. He stressed that the goal was to assist the Baltic states so they were more able to defend their territory and could make a credible claim for NATO membership. One Estonian official stressed that these were foreign policy tools and not just military projects, as they raised the profile of the Baltic states and proved they could be providers of security.

From the US perspective, Andrusyszyn noted that in the early 1990s, there was resistance in the US government to the idea of NATO membership for the Baltic states, as senior officials were focussed on completing the Russian troop withdrawal. And at that time all the eastern European states wanted to be in NATO, which led to PfP, which in turn laid the foundation for BALTBAT and the other programmes. The general perception, continued Andrusyszyn, was that the Baltic states would be consumers of security. A clear US policy came with the 1998 Baltic Charter, which indicated US support for NATO membership of the Baltic states. He agreed that efforts like BALTBAT made a contribution to mollify those in the West who were sceptical about Baltic military contributions. In 1996, this was still a topic for discussion, and there were concerns about whether the Baltic capitals were committed to doing what was needed to develop military capabilities.

Fischer concurred, noting that the projects allowed the Baltic states to make a real contribution to PKO, establishing that they were not just consumers of security. A retired US military officer noted that NATO had said it needed infantry forces, and the Baltic capitals should focus on generating these capabilities, so BALTBAT sent the right message to Brussels. However, this focus on NATO membership did generate difficulties. One US official commented that for Denmark it was critical to use BALTBAT and the other projects to make the case for NATO membership, but Sweden and Finland objected to the NATO emphasis. Finland said in 1998 that it would curtail support for all the Baltic efforts except the BALTDEFCOL due to the focus on NATO and the direction of BALTSEA.

Long-Term Political Commitment from the West

It was critical to the success of BALTBAT and the other projects that the donor states made a long-term commitment of support. While there was no binding obligation in the BALTBAT MOU, it was clear that BALTBAT was part of a lengthy process. Hækkerup emphasised that it was critical that the Nordics, in signing up to BALTBAT, understood they were making such a commitment to support the Baltic states, a point on which Linkevičius strongly concurred. The Baltic projects were part of a larger effort, stressed Godal, where one successful effort could lead to the next, and a durable western commitment was important to that process.

Mackenzie noted that the long-term support of assisting states is key and possibly most difficult to obtain. The cost of the support is usually underestimated, and nations usually want to get out of commitments early. There is always an initial rush of enthusiasm. Then costs and problems pile up and enthusiasm wanes. It is important, he emphasised, to set out the time frame for the assistance effort at the start. Carlsen commented that it was made clear to supporting states that this would be a commitment of some three years, and all of the states agreed. Fischer echoed the point that the donor states knew they had to make a long-term commitment to BALTBAT in particular, and to military aid to the Baltic states in general. This was one of the keys to the success. And Molis added that development of PKO capabilities required extensive assistance from donor states.

Kolga also noted the long-term commitment by the donor countries as an important factor for success, and highlighted what he viewed as possibly the key factor: trust. The donor states trusted that the Baltic states would work hard to make these projects a success, and the Baltic states trusted that the West would stay committed to the projects for the long haul. One Latvian official emphasised that this was not a short, quick effort, and the supporting states needed to be determined in order to ensure success. Certainly, emphasised one US official, it was valuable that there was long-term support from the donor states to the Baltic states, although he added that the level of commitment varied among supporting states. Taking a somewhat different view, Clemmesen stated that in the early stages, the anticipation was of a limited western commitment to the Baltic states, so there was no need to twist western arms. There certainly was recognition that the task was not easy and that it would take time, but there was no sense that this would become a commitment to a major, long-term set of military assistance programmes.

Unity and Disunity among the Baltic States

Another significant accomplishment of BALTBAT and the other projects was to generate unity among the Baltic states, which was often as challenging as it was necessary. Whether for political or military reasons, the case for Baltic unity seems readily apparent to outsiders. And there was a common Baltic desire to ground security in the overall context of European security,⁵⁸ specifically NATO,⁵⁹ and show Baltic contributions to NATO and readiness to join.⁶⁰ However, the literature indicates Baltic unity was often problematic, as the Baltic states emphasised differences to serve national interests.⁶¹ Estonia pursued EU membership,⁶² Lithuania moved closer to Poland and Denmark,⁶³ and Latvia was left to press for Baltic solidarity.⁶⁴ Baltic unity was not inevitable, and projects like BALTBAT served as the glue to hold the Baltic states together in pursuing political-military objectives.

At a basic level, there was political support in the Baltic capitals for BALTBAT and the other projects. Godal emphasised that Baltic assumption of responsibilities contributed to success, and there was substantial "nation-building energy." They had strong political enthusiasm to pursue such initiatives, and their own determination was crucial. One Latvian official noted a historical factor: the Baltic states had not cooperated at the onset of World War II and they were determined not to repeat that mistake. To be candid, noted Kolga, the Baltic states did not understand initially what was involved. But that understanding grew and the support spread from the top down until it became part of a foundation of political support. One retired US military officer noted that the Baltic capitals were tied together in their own self-interest, and the West pressed them to be so. Moreover, Baltic solidarity made it more difficult for Russia to bully three states viewed as a unit, rather than three individual states.

However, unity among the Baltic states did not come naturally. Graham Herd, Head of the International Security Programme of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, noted that trilateral military cooperation was driven by the desire for NATO membership rather than internal collaborative impulses. Erkki Tori, head of the outreach and Baltic cooperation section of the Estonian Ministry of Defence, added that there is not a strong instinctive desire among

58 Ibid., 168-69.

59 Ibid., 170-71.

60 Ibid., 171.

61 Raimo Väyrynen, "The Security of the Baltic Countries: Cooperation and Defection," in *Stability and Security in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Olav F. Knudsen (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 208.

62 Ibid., 208.

63 Ibid., 211-212.

64 Ibid., 215.

the Baltic states to work together. The three independence movements were a basis for cooperation, but the momentum for Baltic cooperation flagged after they regained independence, and cooperation among the three states was not at the top of the list. Tori stated that the West pushed the Baltic states to act in a way that was not “natural” to them, and they recognised their common need to turn to the West, which generated a common interest. Ultimately, noted Tori, the Baltic states were “stuck in one boat.”

Buttressing that point, Clemmesen said that one foreign military officer serving in Estonia told him the military leadership of the three Baltic states were supportive of BALTBAT, but nowhere near enough to remove mutual suspicion. Clemmesen frankly stated that key people in the Baltic states “deeply distrusted each other”. He noted that Vilnius pushed hard for creation of a Lithuanian-Polish battalion even after BALTBAT was established. And Lithuania was initially sceptical of the BALTDEFCOL, as Vilnius wanted to use education options in western countries. Laneman commented that the Baltic states were not happy with national visibility within BALTBAT. And a retired US military officer highlighted the fact that once the Baltic states were in NATO, divisions arose among them, even about deploying and operating together.

Each of the Baltic states, noted Clemmesen, would go back to capitals and undermine agreed upon decisions regarding Baltic projects. This mutual suspicion was a remnant of how people had to act under the Soviet regime and such habits are difficult to break. Interpersonal relationships were, he commented, clearly lacking in trust. As Clemmesen said of the Baltic states, “their minds were in it, but not their hearts.” While they understood the policy rationale, this was not enough to guide their behaviour, and the political structures were weak, so it was hard for them to commit. Ultimately, emphasised Clemmesen, the West had to “twist arms” to get Baltic coordination and participation, as only outside factors could get the Baltic capitals to cooperate. Thus, he added, arguably the most important factor for success of these projects was creating a framework to force the Baltic states to work in their own best interest. To achieve this, noted Clemmesen, US commitment remained the decisive factor.

It was difficult, agreed Linkevičius, to get agreement among the Baltic states. There were disputes over which project would be located in which state. Ultimately there was more in common to hold them together than differences to separate them. Godal said the Baltic states knew the donor states appreciated agreed Baltic action. The message to the Baltic capitals focussed on the positive aspects of collaboration, and the Nordics could not unduly pressure them. However, stressed Godal, the Baltic states “got the message.” Certainly, noted Mackenzie, the Baltic capitals did not want to be lumped

together. There were differences, such as language, which made cooperation difficult. But the logic was that they needed to hang together, and working together in the military sphere may have been easier. Johnson noted that he impressed on Baltic capitals the need to approach NATO as an entity of three Baltic states, rather than three small individual states.

Carlsen emphasised that getting the Baltic capitals to work together was essential, and a challenge. Sometimes, he conceded, Denmark had to apply pressure to get a common decision. Selecting a training base or a force commander became points of contention, and Denmark had to press for a unified decision. Carlsen noted that Denmark explained to the Baltic capitals that the Danes could not support a decision and take it to the other supporting states if the Baltic states themselves were not in agreement. He commented that steady pressure on the Baltic capitals to work together was key to success. Kolga noted that there were debates within the Baltic states about defence, but BALTBAT and the other projects forced them to work together and refine their thinking. Baltic cooperation was sometimes good, and at times there were difficulties. But a lot of work needed to be done on all the projects, he stated, and the Baltic states understood they "had to deliver." One Estonian official concurred, adding that there also were differences of opinion between older and younger officers within the Baltic military forces as well as between those with different areas of responsibility.

Andrusyszyn stressed that there were clear divisions among the Baltic states, and it was important to find a way to get them to work together and avoid disunity, as differences among them occasionally came into public view. He noted that one senior Estonian official told him frankly there was a Baltic view and an Estonian view. This indicated the extent to which maintenance of Baltic unity was an important rationale for the Baltic projects, said Andrusyszyn. In that regard, Baltification was irrelevant. More important, he stressed, was ensuring that the Baltic states continued to work together, and that was a primary benefit of BALTBAT and the other programmes. Abols concurred that in 1992-94, coordination between the Baltic states was not well-developed, and they had different visions on how they wanted to develop policies. However, the West pushed the Baltic states to act together, and this ultimately was a sound policy.

Lessons Learned – Good Planning

One legacy of BALTBAT which has historical and contemporary relevance is as an example of a well-run multinational military assistance project. BALTBAT was described as "one of the most successful examples of military cooperation in the Baltic region and serves as a good example of what can be done,

given the necessary will and determination.”⁶⁵ And training hundreds of Baltic military personnel into a single unit familiar with western doctrine was cited as a remarkable accomplishment.⁶⁶ The best analysis on BALTBAT management is Julian Brett’s 2001 report on the “Lessons Learned” from BALTBAT.⁶⁷ The specific lessons cited were in the areas of project management, planning and implementation.⁶⁸ The focus of the assessment is organisation and management of BALTBAT,⁶⁹ and one key recommendation which should be highlighted is that the management of such a programme must be “clear and realistic about its objectives and their implementation.”⁷⁰

It was also important that the political leadership was not fixated on the original goals, but showed flexibility in addressing new challenges, all of which indicates the responsible management and political decision-making critical to success. The planning for BALTBAT allowed western militaries to provide assistance to a joint programme, rather than three national programmes, while not generating Russian ire.⁷¹ As noted by one writer:

In reality, the establishment of a modern Western-type multinational battalion from scratch in the countries that basically had no regular armed forces was a truly Herculean task. Looking back to the early days of the project, one tends to conclude that even those who understood the complexities and difficulties involved in the project tended to underestimate them. Otherwise they probably would not have started the project at all.⁷²

The significance of the planning is buttressed by the interviews. Godal noted that clear political goals were key, and there was western agreement on goals and policies. The political and military frameworks set up for the Baltic projects were important to their success. There had been Nordic support for PKO for decades, but the processes used for the Baltic projects had to be developed, and there was flexibility in the way in which the Nordic states provided assistance. Hækkerup said Denmark had the lead on BALTBAT decision-making, but all the crucial decisions were made in common. He emphasised that there was no blueprint to follow. But, he stressed, the will to take action was decisive, and that is how leaders have to respond “when sailing in uncharted waters.” Mackenzie concurred that clear political goals are essential, and Afghanistan shows the problems if they are not established. The absence of goals generates delays and inefficiencies. But it is important for programmes to have both a good framework and the flexibility to head in the strategic direction

65 Janis Kazocins, “The Baltic Battalion five years on,” *Baltic Defence Review* 2, no. 2 (1999): 47.

66 Ibid., 48.

67 Brett, Lessons learned.

68 Ibid., 61-67.

69 Ibid., 5.

70 Ibid., 6.

71 Saponis, *BALTBAT and development of Baltic Defence Forces*, 59-60.

72 Ibid., 57.

which has been laid out. Too much doctrinaire thinking, he stressed, generates problems and increases the chances of failure. As forces develop, advantages may arise, and it is important to be able to take opportunities. It is critical, emphasised Mackenzie, to have policy first and then establish military mechanisms. It is not a case of being doctrinaire and using a specific model. It is important to look at functions, rather than structures, which is why the Danish model worked for BALTBAT.

Carlsen stated that the Danes were focussed on how to adapt projects to succeed. It was not the case of beginning with a plan and just sticking to it. Clemmesen concurred that there was no roadmap to follow, and Denmark had to make up the process as it went along. It was a learning process by which lessons were analysed as work proceeded. Laneman provided an example of that flexibility, noting that initial plans were optimistic, with a proposal for just one BALTBAT support organisation. When that clearly was not sufficient, two more were developed.

Fischer echoed the point that when work on BALTBAT began, the Danish MOD had to generate and develop that process, taking advantage of available opportunities to build BALTBAT and Baltic capabilities. And echoing the point made by Hækkerup, all this was accomplished even though the Danish MOD did not have a solid blueprint or a significant amount of experience in handling this type of task. One Estonian official offered the view that the essential elements for success are shared values and shared strategic objectives, and for these projects, the goals and objectives of the Nordic and other donor states were in agreement. However, while one US official thought that it was certainly critical that there were clear political goals, he added that it is important to note that while the Baltic states and Denmark had a clear goal, the other donor states did not necessarily have the identical goal.

Lessons Learned – Good Organisation

Good decisions on organisation and structure were also critical to BALTBAT's success and, once again, are of historical and contemporary relevance. They included not only basic decisions for a multinational project, such as a common command language (English), but also effective structures for policy (Steering Group) and operational (Military Working Group) decisions. These bodies performed well gathering equipment and arranging training and support.⁷³ A 'training the trainers' approach was utilised by BALTBAT⁷⁴

⁷³ Brett, *Lessons learned*, 6.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

with a Finnish officer, for example, judging that the original western Training Teams (TT) were doing “commendable and valuable work.”⁷⁵ There was a clear division of Nordic responsibility, but BALTBAT gathered donor and recipient states into one project, which generated effective coordination in channelling military assistance.⁷⁶ Certainly, BALTBAT was most successful when political and military objectives were in alignment,⁷⁷ and where there was disagreement, there were difficulties.

However, it should be noted that there were criticisms of BALTBAT organisational decisions.⁷⁸ This includes the decision to let the TTs move away from a training function to an advisory role, and the decision to use UK tactics and doctrine, while most of the TT officers came from the Nordic countries, as noted by one writer.⁷⁹ (However, one Latvian official commented that the UK provided many of the initial personnel for the TTs with the start-up of BALTBAT, which would explain the use of UK tactics and doctrine.) In addition, the criticisms were raised that BALTBAT officers often did not have sufficient basic officer education, and equipment donations were disorganised.⁸⁰

The interviews reaffirmed the importance of good organisation and structures. Hækkerup stated that the Working Group and Steering Group framework worked well, and Godal concurred that the structures set up for the Baltic projects were important to their success. Carlsen stressed that the Baltic programmes arose from different sources, and the development of initiatives was facilitated by the opportunity for work in the Steering Group. He added that use of the Nordic framework sometimes generated problems with the UK, Germany and the US. In the early stages, use of Nordic processes was fine. Later on, however, when difficult issues such as weapons had to be addressed, it generated complications. On the TTs, Carlsen emphasised that they were drawn from existing pools of capable personnel, and there was no attempt to generate new areas of expertise.

Linkevičius noted that the Steering Group and Working Group were important as practical bodies that worked on concrete issues. And BALTSEA was a forum where Baltic projects were discussed, also serving as a useful model for implementation of non-military Baltic cooperative efforts. Kolga added that establishment of BALTSEA was necessary due to the growth of

75 Jyrki Raunio, “Engineering in the Peace Support Operations and the Baltic Battalion,” *Baltic Defence Review* 1, no. 7 (2002): 167.

76 Brett, *Lessons learned*, 59.

77 *Ibid.*, 58.

78 T.D. Møller, “BALTBAT - Lessons Learned and the Way Ahead,” *Baltic Defence Review* 1, no. 3 (2000).

79 *Ibid.*, 39-40.

80 *Ibid.*, 40-41.

numerous bilateral agreements. It was not needed from the start of BALTBAT, as there were sufficient coordination processes. Kolga thought that from the Steering Group down to the TTs, the bodies performed well, with the TTs, for example, having the autonomy to do what was needed. The coordination of military assistance to the Baltic states under BALTSEA was efficient, stressed Mackenzie, and Denmark did a very good job running this coordination.

There were, Fischer stressed, difficult negotiations on funding, especially as the Baltic capitals had few available resources. However, all of the participating states managed to construct a solid framework to provide assistance. He added that it was important that, compared to other military aid programmes, BALTBAT and the other projects were relatively cleanly organised and run. A large part of this was due to the fact that the Baltic capitals knew that reports of corruption would damage political support in the donor countries, and the Baltic states recognised it was in their interest to avoid allegations of graft.

There were, however, caveats and comments about organisational and procedural weaknesses. One Latvian official noted there were no difficulties on general principles, but coordination was difficult. The Steering Group, Working Group and TTs were good mechanisms, but depended on personalities, referring to the importance of the role played by Carlsen in driving the process. Similarly, a good TT commander was essential for getting results and resolving problems. Laneman stated that he got good support from all the bodies, which were "positive, patient and focussed on what had to be done," with the Steering Group providing "top cover and support." However, he noted one key weakness in the structure - the authority given to the BALTBAT commander did not match his responsibility, which occasionally generated difficulties in addressing disciplinary issues involving personnel from three military forces.

Lessons Learned – Baltification at the Right Time

One of the most significant topics regarding BALTBAT and the other projects, and a key, continuing consideration in implementing military aid projects, is how and when to promote self-sufficiency of the recipient forces and wean them off donor assistance. In that regard, the Baltic projects are instructive. The BALTBAT MOU emphasised that the Baltic states would ultimately assume responsibility under a Baltification process.⁸¹ Instructors from supporting states moved to an advisory role once Baltic personnel had acquired sufficient experience, and Baltic personnel were moved from a passive to

81 Brett, *Lessons learned*, 6.

an active role as appropriate. But the key question regarding Baltification appears to be one of timing.⁸²

Hækkerup stressed that the Baltic states were not ready to assume more responsibility for the projects at the outset, but he was surprised at how quickly they developed their abilities. Godal stated that it is hard to say if the Baltic capitals could have taken more responsibility for BALTBAT and the other projects at an earlier stage as they needed substantial guidance. It is hard to imagine, he added, that if it could be done again, the donor states would change the way in which they directed action. Linkevičius agreed that he would not alter the pace at which responsibility was shifted to the Baltic capitals, stressing that at that time, they needed assistance. The process of moving responsibility was not fixed, he emphasised, but happened gradually as they developed their abilities.

Mackenzie concurred that the Baltic states could not have done more or done it sooner. They were at a very low stage of development and the leaders were used to taking orders, not giving them. The BALTBAT model, he emphasised, was good because it developed at a reasonable pace. Too much change too quickly would have generated a "disaster." Drawing a comparison, Mackenzie stated that other former Warsaw Pact states went too far, for example, in getting new military equipment, but did not think through the changes they were making. He noted that it is important to be clear on a roadmap for devolution of responsibility, and it has to be seen as a journey of assistance for the recipient states.

The Baltic states, commented Abols, were not ready at early stages to own the projects. One retired US military officer agreed that, looking back, he would not have changed anything significant, as the Baltic forces were in a situation in which they could only absorb so much information, assistance and equipment. Julian Brett, author of the referenced "Lessons Learned" assessment, and former UK exchange officer at the Danish Defence Ministry, stated there was comparatively little input from the Baltic capitals during Steering Group meetings in the early days. However, this gradually improved as the officials concerned gained experience and confidence, and by the late 1990s they were demonstrating more ownership. Brett stressed that this is vital to achieve long-term sustainability of such projects, so an effort needs to be made to mentor and coach such ownership where it is not otherwise present.

82 Kristian Fischer, "Could Baltic Experiences be Applicable to the Countries of South Caucasus?" *Baltic Defence Review* 3, special issue (2003): 13.

Elements of the Baltic forces were corrupt and inefficient in their early days. Denmark had to send quartermasters to take care of the equipment, and there was an agreement with donor states that the equipment would not fall into the hands of third parties. And in the early stages, the personnel in the Baltic states had questionable English. However, Carlsen commented, in retrospect, perhaps more could have been done earlier to shift responsibilities to the Baltic capitals and they could have received more encouragement from the supporting states to do more. He noted that the Danes and other supporting states may have “guarded” the Baltic states too much.

An early transfer of more authority to the Baltic capitals simply was not possible, thought Clemmesen, and more Baltification was not an option. While some have argued that the Baltic capitals could have been given more responsibility, the problem was always to achieve “a full-hearted Baltic will to cooperate and coordinate.” Fischer felt that, even with the benefit of hindsight, the division of labour between the supporting and Baltic states in the early stages was about right. Baltification was pursued with greater intensity in 1997-8, and could not have been accomplished until then. The capabilities of the Baltic states in 1994 simply did not allow them to take more responsibility. This was markedly different by 1997, but that was because they had had time to learn at a steady pace with the aid of supporting states. The patient process by which the Baltic states developed abilities and could handle more tasks was, even in retrospect, the most effective way to proceed.

One Latvian official noted that Baltification was always the aim of BALTBAT, and around 1997 there was a desire to have the Baltic states take more responsibility. But he agreed it could not have been done any earlier than that. Indeed, the supporting states needed to push the Baltic capitals to do more on Baltification. Kolga noted that it might have been possible for donor states to have “pushed” the Baltic states more as they were initially quite passive. However, the method was one of patient dialogue to ensure they understood how things had to be done. One US official noted that around 1996, Baltification was under way, and this was the right time to have Baltic capitals assume more responsibility. The first security assistance conference with the eastern European democracies was in the mid-1990s, and it was apparent these states were not yet ready to handle more tasks. In the early years of BALTBAT and the other programmes, the Baltic states required a lot of “hand-holding” from the West, but by 1999-2000, they were ready to take more responsibility.

Advice to the Baltic States

One of the other notable aspects of the Baltic projects, which continues to be a concern in military assistance projects, is how do recipient states decide among conflicting donor recommendations, and how should donor states provide clear advice to recipient states? In a 2000 article,⁸³ Clemmesen addressed the advice provided to the Baltic states, the problems which arose, and the decisions which helped solve the problems. He then provided general recommendations. First, supporting states must accept the existing situation. Second, recipient states need to get experience in implementation. Third, all the states must recognise that long-term plans are irrelevant to meeting immediate challenges. Fourth, supporting states must coordinate efforts and support each other more strenuously. Finally, "all support should be based on sound knowledge of previous advice and better preparation of advisors."⁸⁴

The interviews reinforce the point that while the western effort was good, there were difficulties due to the lack of clarity regarding advice to the Baltic states. Mackenzie stated that each NATO member came in with advice for former Warsaw Pact states, and usually tied it to military sales. This almost upset the western assistance effort. The eastern European states suffered from corruption and rapid changes of Ministers, particularly soon after they had regained their freedom. The Baltic states did not have the finances, he commented, and were fortunate to be too small and too poor to draw such attention.

Abols commented that the donor states could have done better in coordinating assistance for Baltic projects with other bilateral aid. Kolga added that western donations for BALTBAT did at times appear to be channelling a lot of varied material to the Baltic capitals, which occasionally refused offers of equipment. However, he emphasised, the processes continued to improve over time and there was increasingly critical assessment among donor states of what material would be useful for the Baltic states. In retrospect, noted Molis, there could have been better coordination of material, goals and forces in the Baltic projects. The Baltic capitals should have been more determined about what they needed and more forceful in raising objections to some of the directions from donor states. However, commented Molis, there were times when it was easier for Baltic military forces to work with donor states than each other.

83 Michael Clemmesen, "Supporting States Advice and Defence Development," *Baltic Defence Review* 2, no. 4 (2000).

84 Ibid., 11-12.

In general, however, the West did a good job overall in providing equipment and targeted support as well as advice. The establishment of BALTSEA, noted Brett, was important for the alignment and harmonisation of efforts. The supporting states had a list of what they wanted to give, while the Baltic capitals had a list of what they needed. It was sometimes unclear whether the cooperation was driven by demand (i.e. led by the Baltic states) or supply (i.e. led by donors who had surplus equipment). A retired US military officer said he had warned the Baltic states about taking some old equipment no longer used by western forces, as this could become a “money pit” into which resources would be thrown.

BALTBAT Did Not Deploy as a Whole

One criticism of BALTBAT which is important to address is that while the three Baltic component companies deployed along with Nordic units, BALTBAT as a whole never deployed for a PKO (BALTBAT was composed of an Estonian, a Latvian and a Lithuanian company, plus a tri-national HQ element.) This was due to a lack of finances, a lack of logistical support and a problem with sustainability after a six-month deployment.⁸⁵ BALTBAT was trained to perform classical UN PKO, so independent deployment to the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia was not acceptable, as that was a peace enforcement mission.⁸⁶ And BALTBAT had some 700 personnel, which limited the number of UN PKOs into which it could be slotted. Even for those operations for which BALTBAT was the right size, it was not possible to find another nation supplying PKO personnel prepared to withdraw forces to allow BALTBAT to assume the mission. And BALTBAT could only deploy for six months, as that was the limit of its resources and capabilities.⁸⁷ The inability to conduct a sustained deployment, and the costs for such a deployment along with logistical challenges, made it difficult for the UN to find an appropriate mission for BALTBAT. Thus, the decision was made by the Military Working Group in 1998 to rotate the BALTBAT companies within the Danish battalion in SFOR in Bosnia.⁸⁸ As noted previously, there was substantial agreement among the Nordics on objectives, training and project structure,⁸⁹ but there also were disputes, as in this case when Denmark pushed for BALTBAT deployment, while the other Nordics were much more cautious.

Some writers argue that the goal was a Baltic contribution to a PKO, and that is what the various Baltic companies accomplished.⁹⁰ BALTBAT provided

85 Møller, *BALTBAT - Lessons Learned*, 38.

86 Sapronas, *BALTBAT and development of Baltic Defence Forces*, 61.

87 Ibid., 61.

88 Ibid., 62.

89 Bergman, *BALTBAT: Common Defence Dimension*.

90 Kazocins, *The Baltic Battalion five years on*, 51-52.

the basis for deployments of the individual companies, and it was not a mark of failure that BALTBAT changed its goals as circumstances required. Indeed, the BALTBAT leadership showed that it was flexible. Supporters of BALTBAT point out that some 1200 Baltic soldiers served in BALTBAT, and their deployments to Lebanon and Bosnia were high profile and visible marks of success. They generated and reinforced good basic military performance. And deployments with the Nordic forces provided valuable experience with western forces.⁹¹

Such views are buttressed by the interviews. Hækkerup said that he thought BALTBAT as a whole could deploy, but the others disagreed, so the result was to proceed with what was politically feasible, with BALTBAT component companies participating in missions. Godal concurred that the fact that BALTBAT did not deploy as a whole for an operation was not an indication of failure, as the Nordic states were pragmatic on this issue. Linkevičius felt that this was not a blot on the record, as the objective of BALTBAT was training and development of personnel, which was achieved.

Carlsen thought that the deployment decisions showed the extent to which the supporting states were flexible about what could be accomplished and were focussed on getting the Baltic forces missions they could handle, and from which they could learn. He noted that there is some validity to the criticism that BALTBAT as a whole did not deploy for a PKO. However, it is also true that as the component companies served in missions alongside western forces, they did achieve genuine military capabilities. One US official noted that this does not appear in retrospect to have been a significant issue. However at the time, it was a serious political question and there was indeed a perception, especially among the Nordic states, that this was a failure.

Laneman stated that not deploying as a whole was indeed a failure of BALTBAT, emphasising it is important to be critical, but not negative about that failure, as cost was a major factor in the decision. Kolga stated there was some disappointment in the Baltic and donor states that BALTBAT as a whole could not deploy. However, the donor states did not believe BALTBAT was able to undertake such a mission, and while the Baltic states did want deployment as a whole, they agreed that BALTBAT was not ready. And in view of the fact that only Baltic platoons had been sent previously, deployment of companies was a step up for the Baltic states.

91 Brett, *Lessons learned*, 5.

Key Role of a Strong Lead Nation and Strong Individuals

As noted previously, there are many factors for success of BALTBAT and the other projects which should be assessed and could be replicated in other military assistance programmes. However, there are two important factors in the Baltic projects which are hard to replicate, but appear to be essential for success. The first is the leadership role played by Denmark as the supporting state which drove BALTBAT. The second is the key role of individuals in driving the projects to success.

On the significance of Danish leadership, Linkevičius stressed that the Danes were the key, and it is not possible to overstate the important role that Denmark played. It did an excellent job of coordinating military assistance. Mackenzie concurred that Denmark did a very good job. At this point in time, he noted, recipient states were generally irritated by too much control by others. States had to show they knew what they were doing, and the Danes showed they did indeed have that knowledge. Johnson added that often it is better to let smaller nations take a leadership role, as recipient states will find that easier to accept. Thus, Denmark was perfect for the role. Kolga emphasised that the Danish leadership on BALTBAT was critical to the success of that project, which was recognised by the Baltic states. In general, he noted, it was important to have strong lead donor countries. One US official agreed that the role of Denmark in providing leadership was important for BALTBAT success, and Laneman flatly stated that the Danes were “great.”

The Danes, noted Andrusyszyn, put a lot of effort into making BALTBAT work, and it was important that they did all the detailed work to move BALTBAT forward. Without those efforts, he stated, there would have been divisions and difficulties among the Baltic states. Keeping them together was the important outcome, and the Danes were critical to achieving that objective. Without their efforts, corrosive influences would have crept in. A retired US military officer concurred that the Danes were crucial to BALTBAT’s success, noting they were committed to the project and gave substantial amounts of material support. Brett added that in the early days of establishing BALTBAT, Danish support was significant. The Danish chairmanship included dedicated civilian and military support which enabled Copenhagen to play a strong leadership role.

The significance of a strong lead nation was apparent in other Baltic projects. Igor Schvede, Commander of the Estonian Navy and former BALTRON commander, commented that the support of Germany, as the lead nation, was

critical to success, particularly in establishing a good framework for cooperation. He noted that the pace of work on BALTRON was good and Germany pushed at the right tempo. And returning to the issue of Baltification, Germany pressed the Baltic navies to take over responsibilities as soon as possible. It never pushed for a key command role, and stressed that the Baltic navies were in charge.

The second element for success which is essential, but hard to replicate, is strong leadership from key individuals. Linkevičius emphasised that personalities were important in driving the Baltic initiatives forward. It was strong leadership which kept things moving in the right direction and worked out solutions to problems. If Hækkerup had not been there, he stated, none of the Baltic assistance programmes would have worked. Johnson noted energetic Danish leadership, and cited Carlsen as “the driving force” on BALTBAT, a point on which Clemmesen, Laneman and one Latvian official strongly concurred. Clemmesen added that the UK Defence Attaché in Riga, Janis Kazocins, the son of Latvian refugees, led the UK effort to be much more supportive of the Baltic states, a position he also pushed with other states. Similarly, continued Clemmesen, former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Ron Asmus played a key role in pushing the development of US policy toward the Baltic states.

The significance of key individuals was also reinforced by other Baltic projects. Valeri Saar, Chief of Staff of the Estonian Air Force when BALTNET was established, noted that an energetic Norwegian Brigadier General was designated the BALTNET project leader, and made things happen. From concept to details, commented Saar, the Norwegian drove the process and generated results, using NATO guidelines to show the Baltic states the optimal way forward.

A Model for Others?

In light of the challenges and results, the contemporary question is whether BALTBAT and the other projects could serve as a model for military assistance programmes elsewhere. The commentary on that point is mixed, and even when it is generally positive, it is also laden with caveats. Mackenzie noted that the Baltic model was well-received in NATO, and copied to an extent in Bulgaria. It addressed a number of challenges and for the Baltic states, it was “perfect.” The BALTBAT template can be transferred to other states, opined Mackenzie, and is a good first step, but it is important for the political aspects to be synchronised with military goals. Hækkerup emphasised that “BALTBAT is a good model,” and tried to get the Southern African Development Community to copy it, but the effort failed due to the war in the Congo and

developments in Zimbabwe. He also pushed to see if the Central Asian countries could copy BALTBAT. Godal stressed there were unique conditions for the Baltic states, but there are aspects of the Baltic projects that could be applicable elsewhere. Hannibalsson agreed that the framework that evolved could set a good example in other regions.

Linkevičius thought the BALTBAT model could not be used in areas like the Caucasus, but might be possible in other places. The BALTBAT Steering Group at the political level and the Military Working Group at the practical level were important bodies that worked on concrete issues. That could be applied, he commented, to other countries, and be useful to donor and recipient states. Fischer commented that states in Africa and Central Asia had cited BALTBAT as a possible template they could utilise to develop national or regional military capabilities. He believed the Baltic programmes provided good inspiration for how to utilise assistance. Brett thought that, in theory, BALTBAT could serve as a useful model for future programmes, noting that elements of it could be seen in the joint support being provided today to the East African Standby Force which, while an altogether more ambitious enterprise, does include joint donor support. Laneman believed the BALTBAT framework could be transferred to other countries.

However, Carlsen said it was hard to see if it was realistic to have BALTBAT and the other projects serve as a model for other developing military forces. Johnson concurred, stating that one should not expect too much from use of that model elsewhere. BALTBAT, commented Andrusyszyn, is indeed a good framework, but while African states have expressed an interest in the template, the situation in Africa is different. One US official noted the situation with the Baltic states involved three small nations with a common threat, a shared goal of NATO membership, and a clear group of supporters. One Latvian official said that it was important that the Baltic capitals were still afraid of Russia when BALTBAT began. NATO membership and fear of Russia drove the Baltic states together, so political interests were critical to the success of BALTBAT. He thought BALTBAT could be used elsewhere, but the model requires a strong policy motivation to succeed.

One Estonian official asserted that the model used for the Baltic projects could be used elsewhere, but that there must be political unity among recipient and donor states. Success depends on political will, and the Baltic states also shared the same values. A retired US military officer reiterated that in Africa, there is no outside threat that drives cohesion. The Baltic states perceived a common threat from Russia, and none of the Baltic states was a threat to the others, all of which provided a strong impetus for successful, cooperative programmes.

Conclusion – Past and Future

The proposition put forth in this chapter is that BALTBAT in particular and the Baltic military projects in general were indeed successful. Such an assertion generates the immediate question of the definition of success. As indicated by the numerous issues which have been addressed in this chapter, the assertion is that success regarding the Baltic projects involved a number of different political and military goals. For example, BALTBAT did not survive accession of the Baltic states to NATO. Does that mean that BALTBAT was not successful? The case could be made that BALTBAT succeeded in assisting the Baltic states in making the case that they were suitable NATO members. It was also successful in serving as the template for the other Baltic assistance projects. BALTBAT therefore became superfluous once the larger political goal of NATO membership had been achieved, and the existing Alliance vehicles for military cooperation became available to the Baltic states. Another aspect of determining success is assessing what was achieved in light of the challenges at a particular point in time. In light of the sensitive relationship with Russia, BALTBAT served as a critical vehicle for obtaining western military assistance. And a final aspect of success is whether larger goals were achieved and the extent to which BALTBAT and the other projects contributed to that result. That is not limited to political goals such as NATO membership, as it appears the case has been made that BALTBAT and the Baltic projects served as useful vehicles to establish national defence capabilities.

Thus, despite the instances in which performance fell short, it appears that the Baltic projects were arguably a success. In view of the challenges, the results are a reason for the Baltic and supporting states to review their accomplishments with a substantial amount of pride. Mackenzie stated simply, “the result was a good one.” Andrusyszyn stressed that the goals which were set were realistic and in the best interests of the Baltic states and the West. The political and security environment was quite challenging, and western policy regarding the Baltic states was a success, both with regard to overarching policy goals and doing the detailed work that was needed. A potentially unstable, tense relationship between Russia and the Baltic states was avoided due to sound policy decisions and patient, concrete western assistance to Baltic capitals. Johnson concurred that the West handled the challenge of assisting the Baltic states very well, both with regard to policy in general and the Baltic military projects in particular.

Carlsen commented that he was surprised that things actually kept on schedule. Progress was made, problems were resolved and the process worked. One Latvian official concurred that it was, to an extent, made up as the BALTBAT process went along, and in view of the risks and challenges when the work

began, he was proud that BALTBAT even worked at all. Clemmesen noted that even with the benefit of hindsight, he would not have done anything differently. Ultimately, the Baltic states were better prepared for NATO upon accession and understood NATO better than the other new members, and that was because of the Baltic programmes. Developing trust and real interoperability with the West were critical. The Baltic capitals understood the importance of those factors from the start, and the Baltic programmes gave them the opportunity to develop their abilities in these areas.

Perhaps more important, BALTBAT and the other Baltic projects provide lessons for effective implementation of multinational assistance programmes. Certainly, there should be no assumption that the BALTBAT model could simply be transferred to other states and regions and prove equally successful. And some of the ingredients for success (strong Danish leadership and the presence of key individuals) may be difficult to replicate. However, many of the other important factors (clear political goals, a long-term political commitment, a solid project framework, a process by which recipient countries handle more responsibilities at the appropriate time) would appear to be prerequisites for any efficient military assistance project, and would appear to justify continued review and reflection on the success of the Baltic programmes.

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Conclusions

When the Baltic states regained their independence in 1991 and set their sights upon becoming, once again, part of the western community of states, they faced little choice but to build their armed forces entirely from scratch. They had no military structures or equipment, no defence institutions or policies and, as the 'return to the West' would also mean the adoption of NATO military ideas and the rejection of Soviet ones, no doctrine or strategy. Russian forces were still present on their territories and would remain so until 1994 and western states were, at least in the early days, wary of extending the hand of friendship. To have built defence structures and armed forces at all in only twenty years would have been a substantial achievement. To have done so in a way that has allowed the three states to become NATO Allies, EU member states and participants in the CSDP, and significant contributors to international peace support operations, is an achievement that warrants nothing but the highest praise.

It has not, however, been the intention of this volume only to celebrate achievement; rather the authors have cast critical eyes over the performance of the three Baltic states in the development of their defence establishments in the first twenty years since they regained their independence. They have tried to identify the problems and mistakes as well as the successes. We hope that this will firstly provide an accurate record of recent history, secondly allow other states undergoing transition to learn from Baltic experience and thirdly, and perhaps most importantly of all, persuade the three states themselves to step back and view what they have achieved, as well as the missteps they have taken, and to learn from this as they continue to develop their defence policies and structures in the next twenty years.

The authors have also compared developments across each of the three states. The aim here has not been to identify winners and losers – indeed, as some of the foregoing material suggests, Baltic defence development has not benefited when the three states have tried to compete against each other – but to identify the different ways in which the Baltic states have tried to cope with broadly similar circumstances. Inevitably, some of these ways have been more successful than others, but in overall terms it is hard to say that after twenty years any one of the Baltic states has developed a 'better' defence capability than the other two; each has their strong points and each their failings. Furthermore, with the exception of the deployment of forces to international operations, in which all three states have performed admirably, the Baltic defence structures have not

(thankfully) been tested in the real circumstances that would expose flawed assumptions and systemic weaknesses. While individual aspects of the three defence systems can be studied and compared, any general claim that one is superior to the others would be, at best, speculative.

The twenty year timespan since 1991 can, as several of the authors of this volume have identified, be broadly divided into three periods. In the first, lasting until the mid to late 1990s, the three states were establishing not only their fledgling defence forces, but also their fundamental defence policies. NATO (and EU) membership, an aspiration almost from the beginning, was largely considered a distant prospect, and certainly not one which could be relied upon. In the middle period, from the mid to late 1990s until 2004, the possibility of joining the Alliance became more tangible. In this 'pre-accession' period, the three states developed and executed with impressive determination the policies and actions that would help them to achieve this goal. In the final period, since 2004, the three states have, of course, been Allies themselves. This period has seen them adjust to the reality presented by Alliance membership and has been characterised by both a growing confidence in their security arrangements, alongside the acceptance that membership would not be quite the 'end of history' moment they sought.

The Baltic states' defence policies have altered to match the strategic situations presented by these three periods. The changing circumstances have been reflected in key security and defence documents, in force structure planning, in participation in international operations, in Baltic defence co-operation and, for Latvia and Lithuania at least, in defence finances. In the first period, the three states attempted to create armed forces following a western model, but the uncertainties over their eventual destiny meant that their policies, and the structures to be developed according to them, were somewhat erratic and often overly ambitious.¹ A severe lack of resources and the caution of the West in providing materiel support added to the confusion, but also restrained the three states from heading too far in directions that would be unsustainable. The second period was marked by the unwavering determination of the three states to demonstrate that they could be good Allies. They worked hard to reform their defence policies and structures so as to be compatible with NATO's needs and to show that they could be not just consumers, but also providers of security.

1 Estonia, for example, argued in 1999 that it was "realistic to achieve combat ready reserves in accordance with the above number [45,000 – already a substantial reduction from the aspirations of previous years] within five years." Less than a year later, this goal had been reduced to 25-30,000. See Ants Laaneots, "The Estonian Defence Forces – 2000," *Baltic Defence Review* 1 (1999); Jüri Luik, "Membership Action Plan (MAP). On the road toward NATO," *Baltic Defence Review* 2 (1999): 32. Latvia and Lithuania had similarly high ambitions.

In the third period, the Baltic states have become more circumspect, demonstrating a reduced commitment to the requirements of the Alliance and a greater focus on their own perceived security needs. While all three states have largely maintained their impressive levels of participation in international operations, even in the face of the severe financial crisis which struck in 2008, they have all become less steadfast Allies – Latvia and Lithuania in their shockingly reduced defence budgets, and Estonia, through its unwillingness to trust wholly in NATO's article 5 guarantee, in maintaining a defence system whose feasibility is questionable, and certainly unlike the defence arrangements of the majority of Allies. To be fair, the three Baltic states are not alone in this and the European Allies have justly faced significant US criticism of their dwindling commitment to NATO.² Nonetheless, for the three states this period has been marked by their efforts to increase their own security within the Alliance context and to push hard for NATO policies that would demonstrate the Alliance's continuing commitment to their security needs, such as a renewed emphasis on territorial defence in the strategic concept, contingency plans for the defence of their territories, NATO military exercises on Baltic soil, and a long term NATO solution for the policing of Baltic airspace. The message today seems to be that the Baltic states are ready to continue to be providers of security, but the Alliance must also recognise their supposedly unique strategic circumstances and allow them also to be consumers of it.

A cynical explanation for these developments might be that the three states did what they needed to do to become NATO members and, with that goal achieved, no longer feel the need to make so great an effort to follow the direction that the Alliance promotes. Or it may be that they are somewhat dissatisfied with the Alliance they joined – they wanted to join the strong and single-minded NATO of the Cold War, but ended up joining a NATO that downplayed their own security concerns and demanded expeditionary capability to fight a geographically and conceptually distant enemy. A more charitable interpretation would be that the three Baltic states have, after twenty years, achieved 'normalcy'. As Allies, they have just as much right as others to lobby for the policies that reflect their own interests, and now the confidence to do so, and just as much right to follow their own path within the Alliance. If Latvia and Lithuania feel no greater threat to their security than do their Allies in the west and trust the Alliance to keep them safe, why should they not, as many of their western

2 See, for example: Robert Gates, "The Security and Defense Agenda (Future of NATO)" (speech delivered at the Security and Defence Agenda, Brussels, Belgium, June 10, 2011). In this, one of his final speeches as US Defense Secretary, Gates delivered an unusually stinging critique of Europe's "meager defense budgets" and unwillingness "to fundamentally change how they set priorities and allocate resources."

Allies, prioritise social welfare issues over defence? If Estonia believes that a conscript- and reserve-based system is better suited to its own defence needs than the professional expeditionary forces advocated by Brussels, why should it not retain this system, just as others retain various inefficient legacy arrangements to satisfy domestic political needs? If the three Baltic states consider that the threat from Russia to their sovereignty has grown since 2004, and that NATO policies should adjust accordingly, should they not alert their Allies to this development? The truth is probably a mix of the both the cynical and charitable interpretations.

Whatever the explanations for these three periods of defence development, their patterns have been visible in all three Baltic states. This should, perhaps, not be a surprise as over the last twenty years the three states have shared a broadly common strategic environment and similar foreign and security policies. They have spoken the same language and have certainly found no difficulty in understanding and (mostly) supporting each other's positions. In defence too, the three states have shared many features, such as a strong commitment to international operations, a longer term commitment to increase their defence expenditures, and, of course, the aim fulfilled in 2004 of NATO membership. It is, then, perhaps a surprise that when considered at a more fundamental level, the three states should have taken such dissimilar paths in their defence development. Estonia, the most different of the three states, is the only one to have maintained a defence system partly based on universal male conscription and the mobilisation of a large reserve, and to remain solidly committed to this policy even as surrounding states have abandoned it.³ Latvia, by contrast, moved very quickly in the direction of small, professional armed forces with high levels of deployability and sustainability, alongside a voluntary reserve force. Lithuania also professionalised its armed forces, although this move has been less widely accepted among the political class and Vilnius continues to debate the force structure best-suited to Lithuania's needs.

A much deeper study would be required to understand the reasons for these differences, rooted as they are in national culture, and historical experience and interpretation, and probably exacerbated by the lack of coordination of western advice to the three states in the 1990s. Today, however, the role the three different military cultures make Baltic defence cooperation more difficult, as an inability to agree on the basics of how the armed forces should be structured and operate will inevitably limit the

3 Within NATO, aside from Estonia, only Denmark and Norway retain conscription. EU member states Austria and Finland also retain conscription.

scope of potential cooperation areas, and the motivation to do business together. The 2011 agreement to deploy a Latvian special forces contingent to Afghanistan under the Lithuanian Special Operations Task Group *Aitvaras*, may be an early indicator that the greater similarity between the Latvian and Lithuanian force structures will make cooperation between these two countries more easy than with Estonia;⁴ all the more so while Estonian officials and commentators seem more ready to criticise the defence choices of their southern neighbours.⁵

Unfortunately, then, it seems that Baltic defence cooperation has been one of the casualties of the third period of Baltic defence development. The final chapter in this book deals with a case study of BALTBAT, which was by any of several measures certainly a successful project, as were the other Baltic defence cooperation projects of the same vintage BALTRON, BALTNET and BALTDEFCOL. Today, however, the Baltic states do not cooperate in defence to the extent that they might. There is, of course, no reason why the three states should cooperate together on every aspect of their defence, or that they should cooperate exclusively with each other. Lithuania still has a natural cooperation partner in Poland, while Estonia shares many similarities with Finland (although the opportunities for Estonian-Finnish cooperation are reduced due to Finland's non-NATO status). But the fact remains that the three states are of a similar size, have similar defence budgets, are at a similar stage in their defence development, and have many similar defence needs. They are natural cooperation partners. Successive sets of Baltic defence ministers have regularly pointed out, in the communiqués they issue at each of their twice-yearly meetings, the value they attach to defence cooperation. Concrete progress in this area in the last ten years has, however, been limited. A cursory glance at each of the three states defence projects over the last decade reveals a long list of missed opportunities.

While there are wider benefits from defence cooperation, the core rationale is a financial one. The increase in the cost of defence capability exceeds general inflation and, without cooperation, defence will become progressively unaffordable for the three small Baltic economies, especially as securing sufficient resources for defence is likely to continue to be a challenge for some years to come. While Estonia is rightly praised in this volume – and more widely – for its determination to quickly increase its defence spending

4 Ministry of Defence (Lithuania), "Latvian special operations forces to join Lithuanian counterparts in the mission in Afghanistan," 11 November 2011.

5 Mikk Salu, "Eesti suurim julgeolekuoht on Läti" (Estonia's biggest security vulnerability is Latvia), *Postimees*, 6 November 2012.

to the NATO benchmark of 2% of GDP, the stark reality is that even this will be a miniscule contribution in real terms.⁶

Whether the three states work more closely together to solve the challenges of defence or not, it is clear that, despite the progress they have made in the last twenty years, there is still much to be done. Some progress might be made by working on some key problems. Supreme command arrangements and civil-military relations, for example, still appear to be fragile, reflecting perhaps, a lack of maturity in the defence establishments. Finances are uncertain, especially in Latvia and Lithuania, suggesting that their defence establishments have more work to do in persuading their populations of the importance of defence. Fundamentally though if, as seems likely, the security environment and economic conditions continue to be as complex and turbulent as they have been in recent years, the Baltic defence systems are unlikely to approach anything resembling stability and will continue to wrestle with dilemmas similar to those of the last twenty years. In this, the question of the appropriate balance between their own needs and means for achieving territorial defence, and NATO's needs for expeditionary capability, will remain paramount. The different military postures that stem from different answers to this question divide not only the three Baltic states, but NATO as a whole.

The essays in this short book have merely scratched the surface of Baltic defence development over the last twenty years. The seven main chapters, reflecting the experience and backgrounds of their authors, have largely focussed on the strategic level. But there are other issues that also deserve attention and study. A provisional list might include: the changing structures and roles of the Ministries of Defence; civil-military relations; crisis management procedures and responsibilities; the development of military thinking and doctrine; the development of military competence; the role of outside advisers; military education; styles of leadership; force structures; development of the Baltic navies and air forces; the role of voluntary and reserve organisations; equipment, manning and infrastructure choices; the soviet legacy; the armed forces relations with wider society; the armed forces and the integration of minorities; the policies and impacts of the geographical distribution of the armed forces; the role of women in the armed forces; and the role the three defence establishments have played in exporting lessons to other nations in transition. We hope that this list, and the preceding chapters, will serve as inspirations for further work.

6 In 2011, Estonia's defence expenditure of 1.7% of GDP represented only 0.04% of the total defence spending of all NATO Allies, or 0.14% of that of the European Allies. The equivalent figures for Latvia, which spent 1.0% of GDP on defence, are 0.03% of total defence spending or 0.1% of that of the European Allies; and for Lithuania, which spent 0.8% of GDP on defence, 0.03% of total defence spending or 0.12% of that of the European Allies. Rounded figures for 2011, based on current prices and exchange rates from: NATO, *Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence*, Communiqué PR/CP(2012)047, 13 April 2012, 4, 6.

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