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Shaping Baltic States Defence Strategy: Host Nation Support

The presence of NATO troops in the Baltic states has increased in the last years due to changing international environment, increased level of potential risks and threats, and necessity to enhance deterrence in the region. As a result of NATO's Wales and Warsaw summits decisions, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are entitled to host a battalion size battle group. The article aims at investigating how host nation support (HNS) can contribute to the national defence and, additionally, to the self-defence capabilities of the Baltic states. The concept of HNS is present in the national defence concepts of all three countries. However, its active application and utilization started in the last two years. The article argues that more intensive incorporation of an HNS system in national defence policies serve the capability development in fields like national military logistics, infrastructure, and civil-military cooperation. Those capabilities can serve as an extension of the national defence.

Introduction

Since occupation of the Crimean Peninsula and hybrid warfare launched on Ukraine's eastern territories by Russia in early 2014, the balance of security in Europe's Eastern part has been disrupted. Further developments, such as Russia's unilateral engagement in Syria, constant provocations in the Baltic Sea Region, and demonstrations of its military and political power, prove that Russia aims at revision of international world order; redefinition of international norms and rules. Restoration and modernization of Russia's military power, in conjunction with its international ambitions, caused a range of questions challenging the credibility and capability of Western institutions such as whether NATO is able and willing to protect countries that are endangered by possible provocations, as well as the efficiency of the individual military capabilities of NATO's member states bordering Russia - such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

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In order to demonstrate NATO's resolve and capability to act unitedly, thus providing deterrence measures to Baltic States member states agreed upon number of decisions and actions. For instance, decisions taken in 2014 at the NATO Wales summit clearly stated that the Alliance will further enhance the ability to quickly and effectively reinforce Allies through preparation of infrastructure, prepositioning of equipment and supplies, and designation of specific bases.¹ These decisions were reinforced at the Warsaw summit in mid-2016, agreeing upon establishment of an enhanced forward presence in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania by comprising a multinational force which is able to operate in concert with home defence forces.²

In this regard the Baltic states shall host a battalion size battle group which will be present at all times in these countries, underpinned by a viable reinforcement strategy.³ Deployment of 500-1000 personnel into Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania will require adequate steps from host nations, namely, host nation support (HNS) in order to ensure appropriate living conditions and training possibilities to gain force manoeuvrability and increase responsiveness. Decision fulfilment agreed to by all NATO nations raises questions about the readiness of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to ensure all necessary support to receive the allied forces: Do the Baltic states have mechanisms or policy on how to support incoming forces? Do Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have appropriate capabilities and resources which may be dedicated to the implementation of these decisions and how reception of allied forces can be comprised with the self-defence concept? Moreover, assurance measures such as an Baltic Air policing mission, reception of U.S. rotational forces and a NATO persistent presence forces as well as establishment NATO force integration units, require unconditional efforts from the Baltic states in order to meet Allied expectations and requirements that are necessary to receive allied forces. The above mentioned actions consequently impact the Baltic states' attitude towards HNS and self-defence.

The aim of the article is to investigate how HNS can contribute to the national defence and additionally to the self-defence capabilities of the Baltic states. It is argued that capability development in fields like national military logistics, infrastructure, and civil-military cooperation can serve as an exten-

¹ NATO. "Wales Summit Declaration", accessed November 5, 2016 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm

² NATO. "Warsaw Summit Communique", accessed January 24, 2017. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm

³ NATO. "Warsaw Summit Communique", accessed January 24, 2017. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm

sion of national defence within the shape of HNS. The main thesis is justified within analyses of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian defence strategies and military concepts. Self-defence capabilities, such as the development of main combat units is enlisted as a first priority with the main task to defend territorial integrity and to gain time. At the same time HNS has been developed gradually, perceiving it as a tool for reinforcement of national armed forces by the Allied forces.

We will start with the definition of HNS and its interpretation in available NATO doctrines and other sources. In order to discover how the HNS is understood, we will analyse the national defence strategies of the three Baltic states, which will help to assess any mechanisms that are in place to receive allied forces and to what extent countries are treating HNS as a part of their national defence. The next section of the article will focus on the Baltic states' defence spending, thus indicating their resolve to enhance their readiness and commitment to fulfil the NATO decisions taken in Wales and Warsaw. The third part of our study will deal with the measures taken by NATO in order to strengthen the defensibility of the three states. In the concluding part we will summarize the most important outcomes of HNS to the national defence of the Baltic states.

1. Host Nation Support: the Definition

Within NATO and its partner nations, host nation support has been used only as a part of military logistics and not as wider States' strategy or policy. In order to understand what is host nation support, it is important to analyse the HNS definition which is accepted by NATO⁴ and its members.

The NATO definition of the host nation support describes it as civil military assistance rendered in peace, crisis, or conflict by a host nation facilitating NATO and/or other forces and NATO organizations which are located on,

⁴In the article we mostly rely on the definition accepted by NATO and its member states since the focus of the study is on HNS as a contributing measure to defence of the Baltic States. At the same time we acknowledge that there have been numerous articles looking at HNS from different perspectives, such as civilian missions, post-conflict reconstruction, security sector reform, counter-terrorism and others. For instance, Draeger J. Jeffrey, *Overseas military Bases: Understanding host Nation Support*, (Air University, Air war College, 2012); Škvařil Martin. "Application and Analysis of the Host Nation Support Planning and Providing Principles.", accessed January 24, 2017. http://www.unob.cz/eam/Documents/Archiv/EaM_2_2013/%C5%A0kva%C5%99il.pdf; Wither K. James. "Challenges of Developing Host Nation Policy Capabilities", *Prism: a Journal of the Center for Complex Operations*, September 2012.

operating on/from, or in transit through the host nation's territory.⁵

Usually HNS is understood as an operational tool to outline conditions under which a Host Nation is receiving the sending nations' military troops. More often, HNS tends to be associated with a broad range of contributions, most typically identified as cash support or designated for cost sharing, burden sharing or reimbursement.⁶ It is essential to underline that HNS is not the responsibility of only the sending nation or host nation armed forces as it was perceived during the Cold War. HNS involves a wide spectrum of different public administration institutions, which are responsible for infrastructure, environment, foreign affairs, economics, finances, transportation, and internal security, mainly engaging almost all state institutions which are responsible for crisis management in the country. Therefore, when developing policy in the field of HNS, it is important to keep responsibility over the coordination process among all involved parties, while armed forces are responsible for the planning process and utilization of the civil infrastructure in order to receive allied forces. Taking into consideration the above mentioned, in today's situation it is almost impossible to ensure HNS by the armed forces themselves; even self-sustainable armed forces may require the support of the state civilian institutions in order to fulfil HNS tasks. Countries like the Baltic states, with their small armies and shortages in military logistic capabilities are dependent on the state public administration institutions. Involvement of the civilian sector in HNS operations would proportionally be greater than that of the armed forces. Unless the armed forces would gain and develop reception facilities such as sea ports, airports, and land lines of communication. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that the HNS mechanism works in total synchronization with other defence plans as it is part of the overall defence strategy which involves both latent⁷ and military powers.

As stated in the HNS definition, it can be executed during peacetime, crisis, and conflict. Peacetime HNS reflects deterrence functions while during crisis and conflict (war), HNS is conducted when deterrence tends to fail. During peacetime, HNS is executed to receive and host partner and allied forces for exercises, simultaneously improving the HNS system's readiness and con-

⁵ NATO Standardisation Agency, "Allied Joint Doctrine for Host Nation Support.", accessed January 24, 2017. <http://nso.nato.int/nso/zPublic/ap/ajp-4.5%20edb%20v1%20e.pdf>.

⁶ RAND National Research Defence institute, "Overseas Basing of U.S Military Forces: An assessment of relative Costs and Strategic benefits.", accessed January 24, 2017. http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR201/RAND_RR201.pdf.

⁷ Latent power – resources which comes from civilian platform, such as infrastructure, people support, services etc.

ducting regular training for all involved parties. Participation in the exercises from the deterrence perspective shows commitment and resolve of the alliance to defend its ally. From the alliances perspective it is beneficial that member states develop their force receiving capabilities. The overall alliance deterrence posture depends on short notice manoeuvrability across alliances territory. At the same time Baltic States' national defence fulfils the NATO's collective security tasks where HNS plays a significant role by proving the alliance's capabilities to defend its members. Peacetime HNS includes preparation, readiness check and exercises, simultaneously using it as a deterrence measure balancing on the edge of the crisis escalation phase.

HNS is essential to sustaining alliance forces and the reception, staging and onward movement (RSOM) of reinforcement during crisis.⁸ Crisis management requires additional resources and support from the host nation. The nation's capabilities to swiftly allocate resources may influence the duration of the crisis. For instance, unconventional warfare or hybrid warfare can be classified as a crisis when adversary with the narrow focus attempts to seize a specific piece of territory.⁹ In this case, an adversary does not wish to confront the main body of the opposing force, but possess a hidden agenda. In this case, states have to be ready to implement all necessary procedures in order to react on challenges, providing all necessary support for the law-enforcement and military forces as well as to receive any deterrent force sent by the alliance. At this point, it is essential to have the HNS mechanism working smoothly –from the states' side as well as from the alliance's point of view – therefore training during the peacetime is of utmost importance to synchronize actions and gain interoperability among the involved parties. Although NATO has developed doctrine for the HNS adopted in 2004 and revised in 2013, it doesn't say much about how to act during crisis or war in field of HNS thus leaving space for improvisation and misperception. This may cause NATO's and its member states interoperability problems in provision of HNS.

Other shortfalls of the NATO definition can be identified by mentioning "conflict" instead of "war". Taking into consideration that conflict may arise not only among states but also with various terrorist groups, it is important to distinguish crisis HNS from wartime HNS. With wartime host nation support (WHNS), it is possible to offset serious shortages in logistics support for the

⁸ McLaughlin S. Douglas, *My 39 ½ years in the US Army reserve January 1964 – July 2003* (Oakland: Red Anvil Press, 2010), 230.

Wallace J. Thies, *Why NATO Endures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 239.

⁹ Mearsheimer John, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 53.

allied forces, which are in the country in times of crisis or war.¹⁰ From the military perspective, the host nation's main responsibilities are related to rear area security such as airfield repair, medical, decontamination services, and other tasks which are agreed on with the sending nation. An integral part of WHNS is the provision of civilian sector support, such as transportation, maintenance, repair services, and many other services.¹¹ Taking a significant part of logistic support, the host nation allows the armed forces to fully concentrate on the military operation, which means the high possibility to gain victory in the conflict or war. Some may argue that conflict is the same as war, therefore HNS should be provided on the same basis by applying a flexible approach. Nonetheless, it depends on the scale of the crises, but most likely it will not be necessary to introduce mobilization in order to ensure HNS, which is completely differently during wartime. In time of war, states tend to mobilize all resources in order to ensure self-defence capabilities, simultaneously finding resources to enable reception of allied forces. In comparison with peacetime and crisis HNS, WHNS mechanisms run differently. Unfortunately there is no description included within NATO HNS doctrine as to how to ensure HNS during wartime, thus leaving WHNS in each member state's interpretation, which again hinders NATO's interoperability with its member states.

At the end of the Cold War, NATO's approach to HNS changed, there was no reason for armament and Russia was perceived more as a partner rather than an enemy. NATO's policy changed towards out of area missions like Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina, counter terrorism, and various relief missions. The fundamental changes in global security policy in the wake of the 1990's discouraged countries from maintaining and further developing WHNS systems. Nevertheless some of the WHNS approaches have been used to ensure HNS during crisis.

The HNS definition is based on the bi-lateral and multilateral approach, therefore it is possible to distinguish two groups of countries taking into consideration the nature of the HNS and involved actors to fulfil obliged tasks. The first group of states consists of countries with well-developed military capable of protecting their allies and partners, this constitutes as sending nations. The second group consists of states which struggle the shortage of military capabilities in order to sustain territorial integrity in-front of militarily superior states, thus heavily relying on partners' support in the assistance of developing

¹⁰ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *U.S. – German wartime host nation support agreement* (Washington, National Security and international Affairs Division, November 3, 1987), 1.

¹¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *U.S. – German wartime host nation support agreement* (Washington, National Security and international Affairs Division, November 3, 1987), 1.

capabilities to receive and to host incoming allied forces, and acquiring duties of the host nations. Division among the sending nation and the host nation clearly highlights that HNS capability development mainly applies for the host nations as a part of defensive military capabilities. Since the Baltic States clearly belong to the second group of countries, the next section of the article will analyse how the defence strategies of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are adapted to the functions of the HNS and whether they reflect possible contribution of the HNS to national defence capabilities.

2. Host Nation Support in the Baltic States Defence Strategies

The Baltic states are countries with small latent and military powers. The recent transformations in the international security landscape questioned their role in the NATO defence strategies as well as their readiness to implement policies and build capabilities defending the eastern flank of the alliance.¹² In this case, along development of individual military capabilities and participation in the alliance, HNS becomes one of the pillars in the states' defence strategy as a reinforcement of the national armed forces. In order to evaluate the state of the HNS in all three Baltic states, we will analyse national defence strategies of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in order to identify presence of HNS mechanism in the strategies and how it is incorporated into a self-defence concept.

2.1. Estonia

2.1.1. 1991-2004

Prior to joining NATO, Estonia started the preparatory work to introduce the HNS concept with the main purpose to determine the structures, means, and procedures guaranteeing sufficient support for NATO forces for carrying

¹² See: Shlapak A. David, and Johnson W. Michael, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics*, RAND, 2016; Wess A. Mitchell, "A Bold New Baltic Strategy for NATO", *The National Interest* (2016); Ljung Bo, Malmlöf Tomas, Neretnieks Karlis, and Winnerstig Mike, eds., *The Security and Defensibility of the Baltic States*, FOI, October 2012; Coffey Luke, "The Baltic States: Why the United States Must Strengthen Security Cooperation", The Heritage Foundation, accessed January 24, 2017, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2013/10/the-baltic-states-why-the-united-states-must-strengthen-security-cooperation>

out military operations on Estonian territory.¹³ Its main efforts were targeted at development of self-defence capabilities and capabilities to conduct out of area operations in favour of the alliance as a part of the collective security policy.

2.1.2. 2004-2014

HNS as a reinforcement of self-defence turned around after joining NATO in 2004. HNS was described as a credible military deterrent and thus defence activities were primarily directed at preventing military threats. The credibility of Estonia's defence was perceived as dependent on a collective defence, where, in addition to self-defence capabilities, HNS would ensure implementation of collective security measures.¹⁴ By approving the HNS concept in December 2010, tasks and responsibilities of the key institutions responsible for provision of HNS were laid down.¹⁵

2.1.3. 2014 –

After the crisis in Ukraine, Estonia strongly advocated to increase NATO assurance measures by intensifying their military exercise program and requested the deployment of a NATO multinational combat battalion.

Moreover, Estonia put forth effort in order to improve swift border crossing and customs procedures during reception of the allied forces. On the political level, the Estonian Government acted together by allocating additional financial resources in order to develop a new military infrastructure as well as to improve the existing one.¹⁶

¹³ Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Estonia, "Estonian Defence Forces 2003 – 2006.", accessed November 19, 2016. www.digar.ee/arhiiv/et/download/232844.

¹⁴ Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Estonia, "National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia 2004", accessed November 19, 2016. <http://www.defesa.gov.br/projetosweb/livrobranco/arquivos/pdf/Estonia%202004.pdf>.

¹⁵ The main elements were related with coherent and comprehensive approach involving state institutions and agencies by marking HNS as a State policy.

¹⁶ Tambur S., "Estonia to allocate additional 40 million euros to accommodate allied troops" accessed January 24, 2017. <http://news.err.ee/v/politics/21baa88a-9012-4800-889b-f55fa479e8d1>.

2.2. Latvia

2.2.1. 1991-2004

In 2001, the Latvian Ministry of Defence implemented improvements in national legislation to receive Allied forces by abolishing restrictions on the amount of incoming Allied troops and warships entering Latvian sea ports.¹⁷ HNS guidelines were adopted with the main task of developing the way head for National armed forces and other institutions in providing support.¹⁸ The purpose of setting tasks for the armed forces was to develop a comprehensive HNS system, which could be applied for international exercises as well as for crisis, including Washington's treaty article 4 and article 5 operations.

2.2.2. 2004-2014

After joining NATO in 2004, the focal point of the HNS building process became the amendment of a legal basis, namely the memorandum of understanding between Latvia and SHAPE¹⁹ setting HNS planning guidelines for 2008 to 2010.²⁰

Through the various minor amendments in national legislation, the importance of appropriate infrastructure, civil aviation, maritime, and land transportation infrastructure as well as cooperation with municipalities was identified as important aspects in order to gain the comprehensiveness of the HNS.²¹

2.2.3. 2014 –

The crisis in Ukraine forced the development of roles and responsibili-

¹⁷ Latvian Cabinet of Ministers, "On Hosts Nation Support Guidelines" accessed November 23, 2016. http://www.l2d.lv/l.php?doc_id=66636.

¹⁸ Latvian Cabinet of Ministers, "The State Defence Concept" accessed November 24, 2016. http://www.mod.gov.lv/~media/AM/Par_aizsardzibas_nozari/Plani,%20konceptijas/2012_va_EN.ashx.

¹⁹ Saeima, "Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe and Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander transformation regarding provision of host nation support for the execution of NATO operations/exercises", accessed November 24, 2016. <http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=146482>.

²⁰ Ministru Kabinets, "Valsts aizsardzibas koncepcija", accessed November 27, 2016. http://www.mod.gov.lv/~media/AM/Par_aizsardzibas_nozari/Plani,%20konceptijas/2008va.ashx.

²¹ Latvian Cabinet of Ministers, "The State Defence Concept", accessed November 27, 2016. http://www.mod.gov.lv/~media/AM/Par_aizsardzibas_nozari/Plani,%20konceptijas/2012_va_EN.ashx.

ties for all institutions involved in Host Nation Support provisions.²² The importance of HNS was re-acknowledged in the State Defence Concept adopted by the Parliament in June 2016, foreseeing that Latvia has to implement all necessary measures in order to receive allied incoming forces and to ensure HNS for all costs.²³ Latvia is in a win-win situation by planning national defence closely with collective defence. The national defence is focused on building military resistance capabilities against external threats while the collective defence relies on HNS capabilities to receive allied forces, thus extending Latvian national defence. However, in order to ensure deterrence, Latvia's interest is to gain long-term solutions for the significant, persistent presence of allied forces on the ground, at sea, and in the air.

2.3. Lithuania

2.3.1. 1991-2004

Well commanded and properly trained armed forces, which are interoperable with NATO, become a focal point of the Lithuanian Defence Strategy while HNS was not on the list of essential capabilities.²⁴ The Defence Policy paper in 2002 highlighted that only in a case of need, should armed forces prepare for hosting partner forces. Principles, such as democratic control over military, deterrence based on defence, total and unconditional defence, as well as collective defence, served as milestones.²⁵

2.3.2. 2004-2014

Becoming a member of NATO, Lithuania initiated reforms in order to be ready to provide allies with the necessary infrastructure for HNS.²⁶

²² Ministru Kabinets, "Par uzņemošās valsts atbalsta nodrošināšanu", accessed November 27, 2016. <http://likumi.lv/ta/id/272608-par-uznemosas-valsts-atbalsta-nodrosinasanu>.

²³ Latvijas Republikas Aizsardzības ministrija, "Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija", accessed november 27, 2016. http://www.mod.gov.lv/~media/AM/Par_aizsardzibas_nozari/Plani,%20konceptijas/2016/AIM-VAK_260516.ashx.

²⁴ Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, "National Security Strategy", accessed January 24, 2017. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/156885/LithuaniaNationalSecurity-2002.pdf>.

²⁵ Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, "National Security Strategy", accessed January 24, 2017. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/156885/LithuaniaNationalSecurity-2002.pdf>.

²⁶ Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, "White Paper: Lithuanian defence policy", accessed January 24, 2017. http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/Lithuanie_-_2006_-_Lithuanian_Defence_Policy_White_Paper.pdf.

Lithuania planned its defence upon guaranteed reinforcement of NATO forces, focusing on HNS procedures and fulfilment of NATO requirements. The wartime concept of Lithuania was based on the assurance of all allies to confront potential aggression jointly, while Lithuanian reserve units, together with civil authorities, would primarily ensure HNS to allied forces.²⁷ HNS, as a part of Lithuanian reliable deterrence, started in 2012 when the new military strategy was approved. It foresaw that deterrence is built on the aggressor's understanding that Lithuania is ready and able to defend itself successfully with the help of the armed forces, citizens, and NATO allies.²⁸

2.3.3. 2014 -

In mid-2015, a significant shift in development of the HNS, including support to the implementation of NATO and the United States European Command contingency plans by evaluating national HNS potential, took place.²⁹ Development of an HNS system to enable fast and smooth deployment and movement was an important capability within the Lithuanian deterrence concept. On a political level, HNS was recognized as an essential capability. The Lithuanian parliamentary parties agreed to the development of HNS capabilities and interoperability between the Lithuanian Armed Forces, NATO command structures, and European Union member states.³⁰ Basing total and unconditional defence on the national armed forces and NATO allies, Lithuania strived to reach integrated and self-sustainable defence by delivering national resources through the HNS system in favour of national and collective security.

Analysing Estonia's, Latvia's, and Lithuania's defence concepts, it becomes clear that attitudes towards HNS has experienced several stages, which consequently reflect the gradual incorporation into NATO structures and de-

²⁷ Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, "The Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania" accessed January 24, 2017. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/15267/MilStrategyLT.pdf>.

²⁸ Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, "The Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania", accessed January 24, 2017. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/167339/THE%20MILITARY%20STRATEGY%20of%20the%20Republic%20of%20Lithuania.pdf>.

²⁹ Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, "Guidelines of the Minister of National Defence 2016-2021", accessed January 24, 2017. https://kam.lt/download/51024/gaires%202016-2021_en.pdf.

³⁰ Guidelines of Minister of national defence Republic of Lithuania. "Agreement between Lithuanian parliamentary parties regarding the defence policy for 2012 – 2016", accessed January 24, 2017. http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/agreement_between_the_lithuanian_parliamentary_parties_regarding_the_defence_policy_for_2012-2016.doc.

velopment of national defence capabilities. All three Baltic states did not prioritize HNS before joining NATO because of the diversity of tasks that had to be accomplished in a short period of time. After the accession to NATO, the HNS concept was integrated into national defence strategies. However, it was more related to the obligations of membership rather than putting the system in place as a part of deterrence measures. Since 2014, HNS reached its implementation and testing stage as a reaction to aggressive policies of Russia and the consequent decisions made during the summits of Wales and Warsaw. There are no major differences in HNS development of all three states, because at the first stage, the Baltic States received the same NATO requirements in order to become members of the alliance and later, at the second stage, continued to develop regional and national HNS systems together. However, all three Baltic states face almost the same problems, which relate to the ability to absorb and integrate NATO reassurance forces, US rotational forces, and multinational battle groups in terms of resource and infrastructure availability. For example, the Estonian military capabilities are built on its average population calculations. The reception of an additional NATO battle group, which equal 1/6 of the total Estonian peacetime military force, may cause problems with the local population or violate national laws and regulations. Difficulties may arise from the level of readiness of the national legislation to host allied forces as well as the local population's perception of the foreign troop's presence.

3. Baltic States Defence Budgets from HNS Perspective

Since HNS is perceived as a part of overall military logistics and is strongly related with the allocation of resources, governments of the Baltic states pay attention to reconsidering defence spending. HNS requires additional funding to support the chosen defence strategy, but more importantly, it serves as the long term goal in development of the modern armed forces and functional defence policy. HNS in a stable security situation does not require reallocation of additional financial resources and until 2014 the Baltic governments only dedicated resources towards the Baltic Air policing mission and military exercises. The presence of the NATO battle groups has caused the Baltic governments to shift resources to accommodate HNS. However, Latvia's and Lithuania's military budgets of 1% of GDP did not allow them to spend additional finances on infrastructure, which might never be used. The situation

changed in 2014 when implementing decisions taken at the NATO Wales and Warsaw summits influenced the governments of all three Baltic states to commit to increase defence spending corresponding to the needs of HNS.

The Estonian government, in addition to its 2% of military budget in 2015, allocated more than EUR 40 million with the aim of enabling a greater number of allied troops and to pre-position equipment in Estonia as well as setting up a training ground for tanks.³¹ With the allocation of these financial resources, the Estonian government strengthened implementation of NATO deterrence, including a permanent presence of allies. After approval of the Readiness Action plan, Estonian priorities shifted towards the expansion of the defence forces' central training areas, and building barracks and storage areas for the allied forces. Moreover, in 2016, EUR 51.6 million was spent on the development of the infrastructure, including a EUR 10,1 million investment to construct barracks for NATO troops.³²

The Latvian government, at the end of 2014, approved regulations to increase spending of EUR 19,2 million³³ on HNS, especially for infrastructure development, in order to receive forces. Latvia has increased its defence budget by 45% in comparison with 2015.³⁴ The total Latvian defence budget in 2016 was EUR 367,86 million or 1.41% of the GDP. Out of that budget, EUR 30,1 million was spent on development of infrastructure and EUR 18,71 million to support the high readiness force and the allied presence within the country.³⁵ With allocation of additional finances for infrastructure development, it mainly will cover national needs while only a small part will go for development of pre-positioning and warehouses for a persistent presence. Merging both national and allied forces needs for infrastructure, Latvia tends to develop a shared type infrastructure in order to ensure HNS related capabilities and to meet national requirements.

Just prior to the NATO Wales summit, the Lithuanian parliament, breaking all laws on fiscal discipline which were adopted in order to be able to

³¹ BNS, "Estonia to invest additionally EUR 40 million to host allies", accessed January 24, 2017. <http://news.postimees.ee/3090945/estonia-to-invest-additionally-eur-40-mln-to-host-allies>.

³² Caffrey Craig, "Estonia increase defence spending to 2,1% of GDP", *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, 30 September 2015.

³³ Ministru kabinets, "Par papildu finansējuma piešķiršanu 2016.–2018.gadam, lai nodrošinātu uzņēmamošas valsts atbalstu sabiedroto spēkiem", accessed November 19, 2016. http://likumi.lv/m/doc.php?id=271236&version_date=23.12.2014.

³⁴ Marine Alessandro, De France Olivier, Fattibene Daniele. "Defence budgets and cooperation in Europe: Developments, Trends and Drivers", accessed January 24, 2017. http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/pma_report.pdf.

³⁵ Sargs.lv, "Latvian defence budget expenditures in 2016", accessed November 27, 2016. http://www.sargs.lv/Zinas/Military_News/2016/02/16-01.aspx#lastcomment

join the eurozone, approved EUR 38 million in order to increase NATO persistent presence in the country. With this step, Lithuania put defence as a high priority, spending allocated resources on the development of infrastructure to be ready to host NATO forces. In general numbers, Lithuania, in 2015, increased its defence budget by a third, EUR 425 million, which is equivalent to 1.1% of GDP.³⁶ Nevertheless, the military budget of 2016, presented in late October 2015, was expanded by 35,2%, or EUR 574 million, equivalent to 1.48% of GDP.³⁷ If decisions made at the NATO summit at Wales were covered by the resources coming from national budgets, NATO security investment programs, or European Reassurance investment program financed by the USA, then decisions agreed in Warsaw will definitely struggle with financial support and timelines of the infrastructure project implementation. Deployment of the battalion size unit (1000 soldiers) into the country for persistent presence will require appropriate accommodation, training facilities, welfare facilities, or even a family support system.

Analysing legal, financial planning, and implementation elements (see table) in the overall terms, it was possible to identify that Estonia`s, Latvia`s, and Lithuania`s developed HNS systems are similar, differing only in aspects like approach of HNS provision, decision making procedures, and financial capabilities. Financial provisions to the development of the national defence capabilities and abilities to receive allied forces serve as essential criteria within the Baltic states defence policy. Since Estonia was able to allocate more financial resources to the development of the HNS and national defence capabilities, its readiness can be assessed higher than Latvian and Lithuanian. Prior to 2014, the Baltic states` budget focused on survival and self-defence while HNS development fell behind. HNS was not seen as a focal point for national defence. This caused a lot of problems after 2014, when the Baltic states realized that in order to ensure deterrence they have to develop HNS capabilities rapidly. The immediate actions taken by the Baltic states caused problems within the legal framework to support allied forces. The lack of funding specifically dedicated to HNS caused problems with procurement of resources and project implementation timelines. By eliminating previously mentioned problems, the

³⁶ Marine Alessandro, De France Olivier, Fattibene Daniele, "Defence budgets and cooperation in Europe: Developments, Trends and Drivers", accessed January 24, 2017. http://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/pma_report.pdf.

³⁷ Caffrey Craig, "Lithuania plans 35% increase in 2016 defence budget", *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, 1 October 2015.

Baltic States' HNS mechanisms would be ready to provide full-scale HNS to allied powers in peacetime or during crisis. Moreover, taking into consideration current security challenges as well as Latvian and Lithuanian Governments' resolve to raise defence spending to 2% of GDP, which for sure will lead national defence development back on track in the close future.

With the help of the NATO collective security and national HNS systems, all three nations are able to cover their defence capability gaps. Moreover, the U.S. Government's decision to launch a European Reassurance Initiative, foresaw not only support to its rotational forces deployed in the Baltics but also to fill gaps related with support which Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania cannot provide by themselves. The European Reassurance Initiative program revealed general problems in the overall NATO and Baltic states' defence planning, lack of interoperability mechanisms to ensure full operational capabilities and the lack of infrastructure to host allied forces within the Baltic states boundaries. Additionally, the competition for the resources between air policing mission, US rotational troops, enhanced forward presence battle group, and VJTF may take place in order to fulfil their requirements thus significantly affecting each Baltic states defence budgets and capabilities to ensure appropriate level of HNS.

Table 1. Legal, financial, planning and implementation aspects of the HNS in the Baltic states

	LEGAL	FINANCIAL	PLANNING	INPLEMENTATION
ESTONIA	Since Baltic states have close cooperation ties and they are sharing their best praxis as well as utilizing NATO standardized HNS doctrines, each of the state has well developed legal bases in field of HNS.	Spend more than 2% of GDP to its defence since 2012, thus its HNS capabilities and self-defence capabilities.	HNS is planned in accordance to national defence strategies and NATO standards for HNS.	Since the planning process is synchronized with NATO procedures implementation process of the HNS is equal.
LATVIA		Returned to the growth of defence budgets only in 2014 through development of HNS capabilities and self-defence capabilities.		
LITHUANIA				

4. Impact of NATO Reassurance Measures and HNS on Defence Capabilities of the Baltic States

In this section we look at assurance measures approved and enforced by the Wales and Warsaw summits that increase allied presence in the Baltic States and strengthen their capabilities. Consequently, such measures as boosting the NATO air policing mission in the Baltics, deployment of US rotational forces, the development of the VJTF and NFIU, increased number of military exercises in the region all require HNS system. More importantly – assurance measures will contribute to national defence systems and capabilities of the Baltic states.

4.1. Baltic Air Policing Mission

In early 2014, NATO increased its presence by deploying fighter jets in Lithuania and Estonia in order to be able to monitor airspace over the Baltic states and to send appropriate messages to Russia, that NATO is ready to defend its allies in the NATO's Eastern flank. The deployment of additional fighter aircraft within the Baltic states increased responsiveness to the Russian initiated aircraft scramble and provided further deterrence within the Baltic airspace.³⁸ But what does it mean for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, hosting NATO aircrafts on their soil, and how does it reflect on their defence strategy?

First of all the Baltic states do not have fighter jets and their defence strategies do not foresee such capabilities because of financial reasons and priorities that are related to development of land forces as a main combat force. With the support of NATO Security Investment Program, the Baltic states can afford development of the infrastructure in order to be able to receive and sustain allied forces. Military airfields in Siauliai (Lithuania) and the Amari base (Estonia) already provide all necessary support to conduct air policing mission successfully, while Latvia, with support of NATO common funding, will develop a military air base in Lielvarde, trying to achieve full operational capability in the near future to ensure air policing missions on a rotational basis among all three Baltic States.³⁹ Air policing missions serve as a clear demonstration of

³⁸ SHAPE, "Enhanced NATO air policing patrols Baltic Airspace", accessed December 2, 2016. <https://www.shape.nato.int/enhanced-nato-air-policing-patrols-baltic-airspace>.

³⁹ Latvian Institute of International affairs, "The Baltic States' air policing - a change of command and the future mission", accessed December 3, 2016. <http://liia.lv/en/blogs/the-baltic-states-air-policing-a-change-of-command/>.

solidarity and commitment among allies, allowing the Baltic states to contribute their own resources to substantially improving HNS to the mission.⁴⁰

Prior to Russia's aggression towards Ukraine, each Baltic State's financial obligation in keeping Baltic air policing jets was approximately EUR 1 million. The expansion of the mission, with additional jets, in reaction to the geopolitical tension in the neighbourhood, has prompted an imperative increase in funding. For instance, in 2015, Latvia's costs were around EUR 1.7 million.⁴¹

Patrolling missions, in their nature, is purely defensive, which sends signals to Russia that NATO is present in the region and ready to defend the Baltic states. At the same time, the mission trains ground operating units to support fighter jets and to develop HNS capabilities improving swift reception and provision of supplies which is an essential asset for the Baltic states defence strategy. From the Baltic states perspective, countries would like to see even more fighters being deployed on their soil as Russia could easily establish air superiority over the Baltic states. Baltic air policing missions, for the Baltic States, means extension of their national defence capabilities within Air Force component command, since their Air Forces consist only of a few helicopters and training jets. The way how Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania can contribute to their air defence is to provide HNS for NATO allies, thus covering expenses caused by deployment of fighter jet units. Thus, the Baltic states are filling up their defence capability gaps by means of HNS.

4.2. Operation Atlantic Resolve

In response to Russia's actions in Ukraine, the United States in April 2014 initiated deployments of U.S. coy size rotational units to each of the Baltic states as a deterrent measure. Deployment of military force in the Baltics within Operation Atlantic Resolve demonstrated the U.S. commitment to the security of NATO allies.⁴² The security challenges and the request of the Baltic nations to position NATO forces within their borders served as justification for the U.S. military to return heavy military equipment within Europe.

Similarly to the Baltic air policing, U.S. deployed those military capabili-

⁴⁰ Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Estonia, "Joint communiqué of the Ministerial Committee", accessed December 5, 2016. http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/sisulehed/balti_kaitsekoostoo/2010-12-17_jc_3b_defmin_tartu.pdf.

⁴¹ Latvian Public Broadcasting English-language service, "Latvia to allocate €1.7m to airspace policing mission", accessed, December 5, 2016. <http://www.lsm.lv/en/article/societ/society/latvia-to-allocate-1.7m-to-airspace-policing-mission.a145539/>.

⁴² U.S. Army Europe. "Operation Atlantic Resolve fact sheet", accessed January 24, 2017. <http://www.eucum.mil/doc/35204/operation-atlantic-resolve-fact-sheet-april-15-2016>.

ties which Baltic States are lacking and cannot afford, thus filling the capability gap. In conjunction with force deployment, the U.S. government approved the European Reassurance Initiative with the aim of assuring its allies the commitment of the U.S. military to ensuring NATO members' security and territorial integrity.⁴³ It supported increased U.S. investment across five categories: (1) presence; (2) training and exercises; (3) infrastructure; (4) prepositioned equipment; and (5) building partner capacity.⁴⁴ All five categories mainly influenced HNS capabilities, especially development of infrastructure and prepositioning, which are essential assets to receive forces and to ensure proper response in case of crisis. With this financial instrument, the U.S. partially tries to assist in developing national HNS capabilities in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, while defence budgets are foreseen to improve interoperability with national armed forces and raise self-defence capabilities.

With the presence of U.S. rotational forces as a tripwire force, an appropriate message to Russia was delivered: that if Russia decided to attack the Baltic states, the U.S. would engage immediately. In the short term, U.S. force persistent presence provided a deterrent force, but in the long term improved the self-defence strategy of the Baltics by increasing cooperation, improving infrastructure and overall HNS capabilities. For the Baltic states' national defence, US rotational troop presence means high quality capability development as well as improvement of force interoperability, gaining mutual understanding, and communication. Along with the benefits which are gained during common training efforts, the Baltic states learn how to better provide support to the units deployed in the country, thus learning and applying lessons learned for the improvement of a national armed forces sustainment system.

4.3. Very High Readiness Joint Task Forces (VJTF)

One of the measures strengthening NATO's Eastern flank was the decision on the development of the Very High Readiness Joint Task force (VJTF) and the NATO Force Integration Unit made at NATO summit in Wales.⁴⁵ According to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, the VJTF comprises a multi-

⁴³ Samp Lisa, and Cancian Mark, "The European Reassurance Initiative", accessed January 24, 2017. <http://csis.org/publication/european-reassurance-initiative>.

⁴⁴ Samp Lisa, and Cancian Mark, "The European Reassurance Initiative", accessed January 24, 2017. <http://csis.org/publication/european-reassurance-initiative>.

⁴⁵ NATO, "NATO's Readiness Action plan", accessed January 24, 2017. http://shape.nato.int/resources/3/images/2015/misc/20150508_factsheet-rap-en.pdf.

national brigade with approximately 5,000 troops.⁴⁶ Once fully operational, the VJTF will be supplemented by two additional brigades (approximately 6,000–10,000) with a rapid reinforcement capability. In the event of a major crisis, the Baltic states have to be prepared to receive up to 15,000 troops which means ensuring all necessary facilities are ready to support and sustain the additional forces. Making comparison to the amount of the armed forces within each of the Baltic states during peacetime, Estonia has 3,250, Latvia 5,310, and Lithuania 9,100, in grand total all three Baltic states have around 17,660,⁴⁷ which is almost the same amount as NATO forces to be received. Even if NATO would deploy only the first part of VJTF, nations have to develop the same infrastructure for incoming forces as they own currently. Moreover it is worth remembering the definition of the HNS where support has to provide military personnel working together with civilians. During peacetime all key infrastructures (if not military or negotiated differently by the state legislation), like airports, seaports or railways, are used by private sector together with the state.

Currently, VJTF for the Baltic states means NATO commitment to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity. As host nations – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania require unconditional efforts to allocate finances from their defence budgets to develop host nation capabilities in order to be ready to receive VJTF in a short period of time. VJTF, particularly, is the combat force which should reinforce national armed forces during the crisis situation with appropriate component commands like air, land, maritime, and special operations forces (SOF). In order to receive different components composing VJTF, nations have to be able to provide smooth HNS operations for land, air, and maritime as well as for SOF, thus decreasing force deployment durations. VJTF, from an HNS perspective, is a challenging combat unit to receive, although it provides valuable support to the national defence.

4.4. NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU)

Along with the VJTF, the Military Committee recommended to establish a NFIU on the territories of requesting Eastern European Allies.⁴⁸ For

⁴⁶ SHAPE, “NATO Response Force Fact Sheet”, accessed December 9, 2016. <http://www.shape.nato.int/page349011837>.

⁴⁷ Szymański Piotr, “The Baltic States` Territorial Defence Forces in the Face of Hybrid warfare threats”, accessed January 24, 2017. <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2015-03-20/baltic-states-territorial-defence-forces-face-hybrid-threats>.

⁴⁸ Allied Joint Force Command Brunsum, “NATO Force Integration units – Concept to Realization”, accessed December 10, 2016. <https://jfcs.nato.int/page7715057/nato-force-integration-units-concept-to-realisation>

NFIU, there are two main roles: primarily to continue integration processes with relatively new member states through military exercises; and secondly, to help host nations to facilitate the reception of NATO forces, like VJTF, in their countries. From the NATO perspective, it would help to achieve its long-standing mission of interoperability between its members. In large part, this initiative, and others that complement it, are being put in place to reassure NATO's weaker and more vulnerable members as well as giving a boost to NATO capabilities in the region.⁴⁹

Baltic states defence strategies, since joining NATO, envisaged HNS as one pillar of their defence, where establishment of the NFIUs in these countries would shift HNS capabilities in a completely new perspective. To establish NFIUs, host nations require investments in order to prepare infrastructure in accordance with NATO standards of life support for the allied forces. The NFIUs in the Baltic states are gaining extraordinary HNS experience as this is the first operational type structure within NATO, besides the strategic level Centers of Excellence within the Baltics.

Opening NFIUs in the Baltic states during 2015 has significantly influenced deeper integration of the Baltic states within NATO's common security system. It improves cooperation among Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on information exchange, supporting incoming allied forces with a freedom of movement in the Baltic states. As NFIU is considered as a NATO structure, it is not related directly to the national defence capability development but serving only as an HNS information exchange unit within the country receiving VJTF. The establishment of the NFIU forced all three nations to review their HNS policies in order to integrate NATO units within their national defence system, which in turn strengthened and extended the national defence capabilities.

4.5. Military Exercises

Since 2014, the number and scope of military exercises from both sides – NATO and Russia – has significantly increased. From the NATO perspective, current exercising programme with Baltic allies allows for implementation of deterrence policies against Russia, and to improve interoperability with the Baltic states armies. Russia, as a response to NATO actions, is organizing regular exercises with a large number of military personnel in front of the Baltic states' borders.

⁴⁹ STRATFOR, "NATO improves Readiness in Eastern Europe", accessed December 10, 2016. <https://www.stratfor.com/image/nato-improves-readiness-eastern-europe>.

Such military exercises raise fundamental concerns for the Baltic states because outcomes of the exercises are not predictable. Therefore, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian military exercises, separately and combined with the NATO forces and U.S. rotational forces, are improving national self-defence capabilities and gaining experience on HNS.

Since 2009, the Baltic states conducted a series of exercises called “Baltic Host” in order to train together with state civil institutions to provide HNS for allied troops.⁵⁰ This is a unique exercise where all three states are able to test their HNS capabilities, improving coordination among services and agencies as well as coordinating support provision on a strategic level among Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in order to be ready to provide Freedom of Movement for allied forces. HNS improves cooperation and coherence among NATO troops and formations by synchronizing efforts towards a common mission. Military exercises during peacetime in the Baltic states shows Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian resolve to protect and to sustain their territorial integrity and sovereignty, and if Russia will decide to launch an attack, than gained benefits will not outweigh its loses.

Conclusion

The aim of the article was to dwell upon the role of the HNS system in building and strengthening the self-defence capabilities of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In terms of military logistics, infrastructure, and civil-military cooperation, the Baltic states’ HNS system serves as the national armed force reinforcement mechanism. Military logistics allow ensuring physical reception and presence of the allied forces. The small states, like the Baltic nations, can face security challenges and increase national defence by increasing logistical support and infrastructure, HNS, for incoming forces like the NATO multinational battle groups. Absorption of NATO troops will test the flexibility and durability of the Baltic states’ national military logistic systems.

The development of appropriate infrastructure, enabling the hosting of allied troops is another challenge. Having barracks, hangars, land lines of communication, training ranges, and other military facilities in place would guarantee successful force deployment. However, in the case of Latvia and Lithuania, the current defence budget may cause friction in receiving Allied forces due to the lack of necessary infrastructure.

⁵⁰ Ministry of Defence of Latvia, “Exercise Baltic Host 2013 fact sheet”, accessed December 12, 2016. http://www.mil.lv/~media/NBS/PDF/2013/macibas/Baltic_Host_fact_sheet_2013.ashx.

The definition of HNS underlines the role of civil-military cooperation where usage of civilian operated infrastructure provides significant support for force reception. Since Baltic states' defence budgets cannot afford to develop specific military points of entry like sea ports, rail roads, roads, or airports only for force reception, mutual coordination of action taken by relevant institutions can ensure an appropriate level of HNS. The civilian side provides support to functions which, on a daily basis, is not normally included within armed forces tasks. In this regard, civil-military cooperation is a third vital aspect of the HNS, after military logistics and infrastructure.

Combining all of the above mentioned HNS aspects, we conclude that development of the HNS capabilities in order to be able to reinforce national defence forces with NATO's allies stands as a high priority in the Baltic states defence agenda. Moreover, by analysing Baltic defence concepts and strategies, as well as NATO assurance measures, we conclude that there are two main pillars of the Baltic states defence strategy: 1) national defence capabilities – development of national armed forces in order to be ready to defend territorial integrity and sovereignty and 2) Host nation support – mainly based on the NATO collective security system which, in case of crisis or war, would ensure reinforcement of national armed forces.

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