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Nuclear Matters: Lithuanian Security Culture in the Context of NATO Trends

This study traces and contrasts two parallel processes: the development of Lithuanian security culture since the country's independence in 1990, and the evolution of NATO's relation to nuclear weapons since the collapse of the Soviet Union. While Lithuania has historically been a vocal advocate for NATO shoring up defences vis-à-vis Russia, the nuclear nature of NATO's deterrent has largely escaped the public discourse. Lacking historical traditions of open public discussion on matters of defence and security, the gap between Lithuania's foreign and domestic discourse had only started to close in the aftermath of the 2014 Ukraine conflict. Narratives surrounding this watershed event also differ dramatically: for NATO it marked the end of the non-proliferation and arms reduction era, while Lithuania focused on the role of Russian militias and failed to take note of the changes in NATO's nuclear stance. As NATO dusts off classical nuclear deterrent doctrines, posturing in the new geopolitical environment, the limited ability of Eastern European member states like Lithuania to adequately participate in these debates risks subsequently undermining the utility of the agreed concepts and eventually – chipping away at alliance unity. A Lithuanian case study offers insights into the security culture challenges common among NATO's Eastern European members and partners – acknowledging and understanding them can help identify the building blocks needed to get more of these countries on-board as effective creators of a collective security environment.

Introduction

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO has undergone a series of efforts to adjust its posture and vision – including debates about removing American nuclear weapons from Europe, fighting the spread of nuclear weapons and dual-use technologies, and the Global Zero Movement. However, NATO's nuclear deterrence posture and non-proliferation debates have practically bypassed Lithuania. A country ever eager to recall the great conquests of its medieval dukes has, in its most modern iteration, shown a dramatic lack of

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appetite for public discourse on hard security issues.[1]

For over two decades, public discourse on defence and security matters was virtually non-existent in Lithuania, with only technocratic discussions on defence acquisitions or related corruption occasionally surfacing in the domestic news cycle. Two of the three watershed events discussed here – the restoration of Lithuania's independence from the Soviet Union in 1990, and accession to NATO in 2004 – have led to a decline of public interest in matters of national security. Viewed as crowning achievements after years of effort to resist Russian influence and ally more closely with the West, these events have fostered a dangerous illusion of a "mission-accomplished", and Lithuania's security as virtually ensured. Combined with the lack of security discourse tradition of the Soviet era, security quickly took a back seat as a socio-economic agenda came to the fore – both, in terms of public attention and government budget allocations. The butter-over-guns preference may not seem unusual in the context of other European democracies – except for Lithuania's consistent foreign policy of a loud emphasis on the growing Russian threat, seemingly to be addressed by everyone but Lithuania.

Needless to say, nuclear weapons related issues have not entered the Lithuanian public discourse either. Nuclear energy and related risks have received some attention, with references to disasters in Chernobyl (1986) and Fukushima (2011) surrounding most coverage of the new power plant under construction in neighbouring Ostrovets, Belarus. However, the local nuclear power plant in Ignalina (closed in 2009) was a popular project, mostly discussed in terms of cheap and efficient energy, and the project for a new pan-Baltic power plant in the nearby town of Visaginas is presented in similar terms. Interestingly, the public largely dismisses the prospects of nuclear contraband and its relations to radiological terrorism. Lithuania remains on the list of transit territories for nuclear and radioactive materials and related technology flowing out of the former Soviet Union (FSU) member states – including several nuclear trafficking incidents that involved Lithuanian citizens or materials originating here.[2]

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine was the third watershed, which served as a wake-up call, bringing national security matters to the top of the public and political agenda. In early

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[1] See, e.g., Šlekys, D., *Mąslaus vyčio beieskant: Lietuviškos karines minties raida ir buklė po nepriklausomybės atkūrimo (1990-2014)* [*In search for pensive vytis: the development of Lithuanian military thought since the restoration of independence (1990-2014)*, in Lithuanian], Vilnius: Lietuvos karo akademija, 2015, p. 20-52.

[2] See Murauskaitė E., "Nuclear Smuggling and Threat to Lithuanian Security," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, 2015-2016, vol. 14, p. 181-196.

2015, Lithuania reintroduced the draft, pushing hard for increased NATO presence in its territory (which was agreed upon during the Warsaw Summit in mid-2016), and at the end of 2016, the newly elected government committed to going beyond the NATO requirement of 2% GDP spending for defence. The Riflemen Union and volunteer forces have grown significantly in numbers, and vivid debates have flared up on the reintroduction of the draft and treatment of the conscripts,[3] as well as prioritizing new defence acquisitions and the associated corruption scandals.[4]

With Russia's deployment of nuclear weapons in Crimea and blatant nuclear sabre-rattling,[5] many in the West saw the crises in Ukraine as a turning point that made nuclear weapons relevant again in a conflict calculus. In addition, the annexation of Crimea was a breach of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum that had provided security assurances against military threats to Ukraine's territorial integrity and political independence in exchange for its nuclear weapons – carrying concerning future proliferation implications.[6] Yet, in Lithuania, despite significant sustained attention to the conflict in Ukraine, the nuclear aspect of that crisis did not resonate, and has been discounted by local experts.[7]

Lithuania is a prime example of the subtle, rhetorical dissonance between Eastern European NATO members and partners, and the West. Undergirded by diverging security culture traditions (or a lack of thereof), they produce different narratives, when it comes to addressing a crisis – context, implications, and desirable response. Acute awareness of these differences could help NATO capitalize on different member competences, addressing a particular challenge across multiple domains.

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[3] See, e.g., Khomami, N. "Return of conscription in Lithuania sparks debate over gender roles," *The Guardian*, June 4, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/04/lithuanian-army-conscripts-moving-photography-project.

[4] BNS, "Labour Party summons Lithuanian chief of defense to parlt [sic] over costly purchases. *The Baltic Times*, August 30, 2016, http://www.baltictimes.com/labour_party_summons_lithuanian_chief_of_defense_to_parlt_over_costly_purchases/.

[5] See, e.g., USA Today, "Russian nuclear weapons have arrived in Crimea," Dec 16, 2015, http://uatoday.tv/politics/russian-nuclear-weapons-have-arrived-in-crimea-dzhemilev-says-555248.html; Sonne, P. "As Tensions With West Rise, Russia Increasingly Rattles Nuclear Saber," *The Wall Street Journal*, Apr 5, 2015, http://www.wsj.com/articles/as-tensions-with-west-rise-russia-increasingly-rattles-nuclear-saber-1428249620.

[6] Braw E., "After Ukraine, Countries That Border Russia Start Thinking About Nuclear Deterrents," Newsweek, Apr 15, 2014, http://europe.newsweek.com/after-ukraine-countries-border-russia-start-thinking-about-nuclear-deterrents-248133?rm=eu

[7] Murauskaitė E., Pomper, M., "NATO and the Baltics: Regional Views on Deterrence Needs," Danish Institute for International Studies, Sep 2015, http://www.diis.dk/files/media/documents/publications/nato_and_the_baltics_final_single.pdf .

This article builds and expands upon previous research on the developments of Lithuanian security culture, and narratives characteristic to the Baltic region.[8] It introduces the matter of nuclear weapons and nuclear security debates into this context, contrasting Lithuanian security discourse trends with parallel developments within NATO.[9] The study offers a reflective overview of the core security comparative discourse features along three temporal inflection points:[10] 1990-2004, 2004-2014, and 2014-2017. The goal of the article is to introduce the reader to the foundations of the divergent discourse cultures, with a heavier focus on the Baltic security realities.[11]

1. Lithuania: From Independence to NATO Membership (1990-2004)

1.1. Nascent Security Discourse

The unifying narrative of peaceful social resistance to occupation has mobilized Lithuania's independence movement (Sąjūdis) since 1988, with the images of singing revolution and the Baltic chain (Baltijos kelias) etched firmly into the DNA of the state reborn in March 1990. Having won the independence peacefully, Lithuania was in no rush to form an armed forces or military doctrine, and seriously considered proclaiming neutrality. The first government cabinet (1990-1991) did not even include a Ministry of Defense among the 17 ministries established.[12] It took more than a year to start forming national defence structures and the first military units, but through the mid-1990s,

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[8] The first two articles dedicated to Lithuanian security culture were by Urbelis (2006) and Seselgyte (2010): Urbelis V., "Lithuanian Strategic Culture," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2006*, p. 195-200; Šešelgyte M., "Security Culture of Lithuania," *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2010, vol. 24, p. 23-40.

[9] While examples from several NATO member states are provided, the focus of the comparison is the alliance as a unit.

[10] In discussing the formation of strategic military thought, Šlekys divides the 2004-2014 period into two smaller sections: 2003-2009, over which Lithuania adopted NATO concepts, and 2009-2014, which he describes as the peak of development of military strategy. However, that growth spurt was limited to specialist circles and not consistent with a more active public discourse. See: Šlekys D. (Footnote 1)

[11] For quality discussions of the trends and transformations of NATO's nuclear leanings, see, e.g., Anderson, M. P., "NATO Nuclear Deterrence: The Warsaw Summit and Beyond," Connections: The Quarterly Journal, Fall 2016, Vol. 15, No. 4, 5-30; Larsen J.A., "NATO Nuclear Policy, the Ukraine Crisis, and the Wales Summit," in: Apikyan S., Diamond D., eds, *Nuclear Threats and Security Challenges*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2015; von Hlatky, S. and Wenger A., eds., *The Future of Extended Deterrence: The United States, NATO, and Beyond*, Georgetown University Press: 2015.

[12] See Žalys J., sudar., *Pirmoji vyriausybė (1990-1991). [The First Government (1990-1991)*, in Lithuanian], Vilnius: Pradai, 2000.

they were still largely viewed as a symbolic trip-wire (in case of potential re-occupation) – in the public discourse, guerrilla warfare and civil disobedience remained the key components of territorial defence.[13]

These narratives were born out of decades under oppressive occupation, which had exposed the Lithuanian public to challenges such as intuiting news from a consistent stream of propaganda from state controlled media and organizing while mindful of the deep and broad penetration by Soviet intelligence assets. Some of these tactics have made a comeback in modern Russia as gray zone warfare, and the lessons of social resilience and countering propaganda have since come in handy. Yet, this historical experience has resulted in a near total absence of public discourse on matters of national defence and security, and stamped out any interest or attempts at society's involvement in such policy decisions. Politically, national security discourse tradition has also been lacking – Soviet satellites like Lithuania were not part of any public consultations in USSR military and defence decisions.

1.2. Lithuania and Nuclear Matters

With security and defence issues generally perceived as a taboo topic, and also, paradoxically, low on the list of government priorities, questions relating to nuclear weapons were even further beyond that scope. Western doctrinal thought on their tactical or strategic functions, deterrent value, or circumstances of battlefield use remain something akin to unthinkable in Lithuania to this day. Indeed, the deployment of Soviet nuclear weapons in Lithuania remains a little known fact to many, although the intermediate-range nuclear force presence was not insignificant: an SS-4 missile base in Plokščiai (1962-1978), nuclear weapons' storage sites near the military airport in Zokniai, and mobile SS-20 missiles near Karmelava.[14] Although the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty was one of the first documents signed by the newly independent Lithuania in 1991, the decision was seemingly made as a show of good will to Western partners, since the prospect was never put forth before the public for consideration.

Nevertheless, the Lithuanian public had some familiarity with nuclear matters: nuclear energy and its safety were regularly discussed, and their impact witnessed through direct and regional experiences. Lithuania had been

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[13] Šlekys D. (Footnote 1), p. 100-103, 111-116.
[14] Česna B., Davulienė L., Aliulis K., "Lithuania's Nuclear Past: A Historical Survey," Lithuanian Energy Institute, 2004, 37-46, http://www.vatesi.lt/fileadmin/documents/leidiniai/en/lith_nucl_past.pdf.

operating a nuclear power plant in Ignalina (1983-2004), which necessitated a solid institutional background for preparing experts in nuclear physics and engineering.[15] This innovative project was rather popular, particularly in its early days, and the town that was built around it had attracted the best technical minds from the Soviet Union. The closing of this power plant, in line with the EU accession requirements, was met with considerable public pushback, and soon a joint project for a new pan-Baltic operated nuclear power plant was conceived of. Still, the 1986 disaster in Ukraine's Chernobyl power plant had deeply scarred the public psyche with fears of radiation poisoning: a number of Lithuanian men were dispatched to deal with the incident without proper information about its nature or adequate protective gear, and subsequently suffered intense trauma.[16]

Curiously, with so much attention to nuclear safety issues, nuclear security matters were not taken as an equally seriously concern, and violations brushed aside as irrelevant. The infamous theft of a 270 kg used fuel rod (2% uranium-235) from Ignalina's nuclear power plant in 1992 tends to be dismissed by local policy makers as overblown, pointing out that 80 kg of that material had been recovered over the following decade.[17] Between 1992 and 2009, there were 14 nuclear smuggling incidents (mostly enriched uranium trafficking) involving Lithuanian citizens or territory, and still, in the public discourse, nuclear proliferation was not deemed relevant.[18]

1.3. Lithuania and NATO

Lithuania petitioned to become a NATO member state in 1994, and joined the organization in 2004, with NATO's nuclear overhaul and policy re-calibration vis-à-vis new threats seemingly escaping the public entirely. As Lithuania was seeking NATO and EU membership simultaneously, the latter consistently overshadowed the former, with considerable public enthusiasm about economic development prospects, while concerns about external threats dwindled. A public opinion poll conducted in 1998 revealed that 95% of Lithu-

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[15] Ibid.

[16] See, e.g., "Chernobyl Accident Anniversary Recalled," *Voice of America,* April 17, 2011, http://www.voanews.com/a/chernobyl-accident-anniversary-recalled-120065989/138222.html; Povilaitiene I., Auskalnyte A., Grigienė D., Skruibis P., "Living After the Clean-up Works in Chernobyl: Both a Psychological and Cultural Trauma," in Gailienė D. ed., *Lithuanian Faces After Transition: Psychological Consequences of Cultural Trauma,* Vilnius: Eugrimas, 2015, p. 144-165.

[17] "Rasta prieš 11 metų pavogta kuro kasetė" ["Fuel Rod Stolen 11 Years Ago has been Recovered"], BNS, March 21, 2003, http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/crime/rasta-pries-11-metu-pavogta-branduolinio-kuro-kasete.d?id=2078037, (in Lithuanian).

[18] See: Murauskaitė E. (Footnote 2).

anian respondents saw no external threats to national security, and 45% believed internal instability to be the primary cause for concern.[19] A 1997 Eurobarometer survey also noted that, in Lithuania – distinctly from other NATO candidates – the main argument in favor of NATO membership was "the hope that NATO will control and reform the army and the military industry."[20] In another survey conducted in 2000, 51% of Lithuanians believed that NATO membership would lead to improvements in the national armed forces, and 53% thought it would help attract more foreign investments.[21] In 2002, only 0.7% of respondents saw Russia as a threat, and 53% thought NATO membership would have a negative impact on Lithuania's relations with Russia.[22] Indeed, joining NATO was never a particularly popular proposition in Lithuania, with support for membership peaking after the 9/11 events in 2001 (see Figure 1).
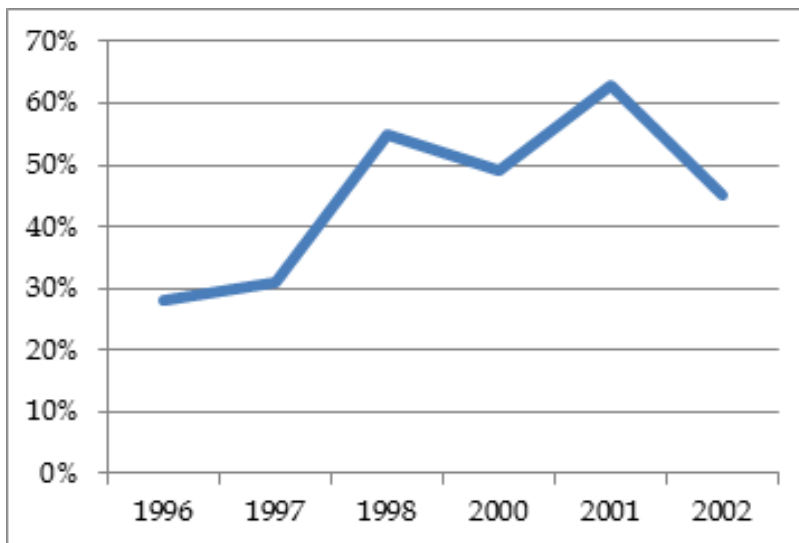

Figure 1. **Public support for NATO membership**[23]

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[19] Opinion and Level of Public Awareness on Security Issues in the Baltic Countries, Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Baltijos Tyrimai/Gallup, 1998.

[20] Central and Eastern Eurobarometer Nr. 8, 1997, p. 20, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ceeb/ceeb8/ceeb08.pdf.

[21] "Lietuvos gyventoju nuomonė saugumo klausimais," ["Lithuanian attitudes on matters of security," in Lithuanian], Baltijos tyrimai/Gallup, 2000.

[22] Janušauskienė D., Novagrockienė J., "Perception of Security Issues by Lithuanian Population", *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2002*, p. 297-319.

[23] Based on data provided in Central and Eastern Eurobarometer Nr. 8, 1997, p.19, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ceeb/ceeb8/ceeb08.pdf; Zilberman, A. and Webber, S., "Public Attitudes toward NATO Membership in Aspirant Countries," Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), 2002, 63-66, http://www.dcaf.ch/Chapter-Section/Public-Attitudes-toward-NATO-Membership-in-Aspirant-Countries.

In 2001, Lithuanian security culture had aptly been described as being built from the top-down, with a growing gap between the political elites and the public, and an increasing lack of Lithuanian socialization in international discourse on security and threats.[24] The unwavering commitment to NATO membership in Lithuanian policy making circles contrasted with the hesitant public attitudes.[25] With national focus on fighting corruption and setting the economic development agenda, matters of security and defence were increasingly falling by the wayside, even on the expert agenda. In one of the most comprehensive qualitative studies comparing threat perceptions among Lithuanian experts and the general public in 2002, only one expert explicitly mentioned military security as a concern – most respondents focused on economic factors or physical security of individuals.[26] Perhaps unsurprisingly, surveyed members of the general public were looking exclusively at the state apparatus to provide long-term security, whereas surveyed experts assigned a greater weight to the role of individuals and communities in strengthening national resilience.[27]

1.4. NATO in the Post-Soviet Decade: Disarmament and Peacekeeping

1990s were a major nuclear arms' reductions era for NATO, along with some notable posture developments. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, over 1991-1993 the U.S. had removed around 2,400 ground-launched and navy-carried nuclear weapons from European partner states, reducing NATO's forward-deployed arsenal to around 700 warheads deliverable by aircraft.[28] While some European policy makers saw the continued presence of U.S. nuclear forces as a sign of commitment to allied security, there were growing popular pressures generated by anti-nuclear movements on both sides of the Atlantic. The U.S. proceeded to consolidate its nuclear weapons bases in Europe, and eventually, completely removed them from Greece (in 2001) and

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[24] Minotaitė, G., "Lithuania and NATO Enlargement", *Baltic Defence Review*, 2001, no. 6, p. 31-32.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Janušauskienė D., Novagrockienė J. (Footnote 22)

[27] Ibid.

[28] Pifer S., "NATO, Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control," Brookings Institution, July 2011, Arms Control Paper #7, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0719_arms_control_pifer.pdf; Nassauer, O., Meier, O., Butler N., Young, S., "US nuclear NATO arsenals 1996–97," Feb 7, 1997, British American Security Information Council (BASIC), http://www.basicint.org/sites/default/files/PUB010297.pdf.

the UK (in 2008).[29] With invitations to join NATO extended to several FSU states, the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act established the so-called three "no"s principle, stating that NATO had "no intention, no plan, and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members." The role of NATO in emerging regional security dynamics in the Balkans and the Middle East also played an important part in the debate on the role of the alliance's nuclear capabilities. The conflict in Kosovo was high on the agenda from 1998-2004, with considerable focus on peacekeeping and support for security institutions, in increasingly closer cooperation with the EU.

2. Lithuania: First Decade within NATO (2004 – 2014)

2.1. Mission Accomplished

NATO accession in 2004 was largely perceived as "mission-accomplished" in terms of the need to invest in national security. Lithuania's defence spending started to systematically decline after that (see Figure 2), and the fledgling public discourse – even more so. An illustrative example was the unveiling of a plaque at Vilnius city hall with a citation of George W. Bush during his 2002 visit to Lithuania. Paraphrasing NATO's Article 5 commitment, Bush stated, "anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America"[30] – which, for most in Lithuania, came to mean that national security had effectively been outsourced to the U.S.

It is worth noting that historically, Lithuania has viewed the U.S. specifically – rather than NATO more generally – as the primary security guarantor. Lacking a tradition of strategic military thought, in advancing the development of its armed forces, Lithuania subsequently imported most of the doctrinal concepts from the U.S.[31] Following 9/11, 2001, Lithuanian foreign policy elites were among the first to support the invasion of Iraq – declaring this policy without much public consultation (or subsequent resistance). With counter-insurgency and non-state actor violence at the forefront of the U.S. agenda, Lithuania has been contributing Special Operations Force (Aitvaras)

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[29] Pifer S., "NATO, Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control," Brookings Institution, July 2011, Arms Control Paper #7, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0719_arms_control_pifer.pdf.

[30] Bumiller E., "Threats and Responses: The Allies; Bush Appeals To New Allies On Iraq Plans," *New York Time*s, Nov 24, 2002, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/24/world/threats-and-responses-the-allies-bush-appeals-to-new-allies-on-iraq-plans.html.

[31] See Šlekys D. (Footnote 1)

troops to support the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan for 13 years.[32] In Lithu-ania, that mission was viewed as the core of a tit-for-tat bargain in extended deterrence, meant to strengthen U.S. commitment to Lithuanian security vis-à-vis Russia. Notably, there was never any public desire to see nuclear weapons as part of this extended deterrent – unlike the U.S. arrangements in South Korea or Japan, – and the threat was consistently construed primarily as a risk of conventional territorial takeover.
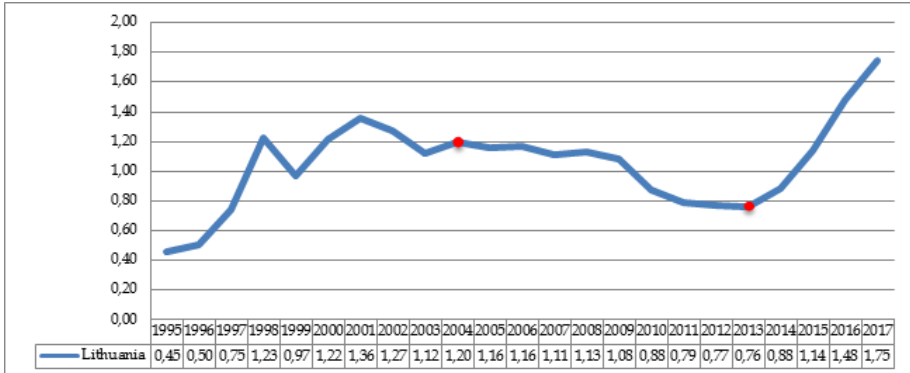

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Lithuania	0,45	0,50	0,75	1,23	0,97	1,22	1,36	1,27	1,12	1,20	1,16	1,16	1,11	1,13	1,08	0,88	0,79	0,77	0,76	0,88	1,14	1,48	1,75

Figure 2. **Lithuania: Defence spending as a percentage of GDP 1995-2017**[33]

Consistently raising Russia-related security concerns in international fo-rums has earned Lithuania an image of an active, albeit a particularly narrowly focused, state in the eyes of external observers.[34] However, the development of a national security culture and domestic public discourse on the subject matter has largely stalled, with a growing gap between experts, policy makers, and the general public, in terms of an interest and understanding. According to a 2010 Eurobarometer survey, 75% of Lithuanian experts remained concerned about Russia, while Lithuanian society continued to view security primarily through a socioeconomic lens, with a mere 2.7% of the respondents perceiving external threats as significant.[35] Indeed, "indolent participation of society in the affairs of security" has become a characteristic feature not only of Lithuania, but also

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[32] Matonis, A., *Gabrieliaus kariai. Lietuvos specialiųjų operacijų pajėgų ir „Aitvaro" istorija*, Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2014.

[33] Based on data provided by the World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND. GD.ZS?locations=LT; and Lithuanian Ministry of Defense, https://kam.lt/lt/veikla_576/biudzetas_538.html.

[34] Šešelgytė M. (Footnote 8)

[35] "Public opinion in the European Union," *Standard Eurobarometer 72*, vol. 1, Autumn 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb72/eb72_vol1_en.pdf.

other FSU republics.[36] In addition, few members of parliament took an active interest in security issues, and the small expert community was confined to diplomats, some civil servants, journalists, and academics.[37] Military officials were also reluctant to get involved in public discussions for fear of being perceived as intervening in policy making or revealing state secrets.[38]

2.2. Missing Out on the Paradigm Shifts

Against this backdrop, it is nevertheless surprising that some of the pivotal international events of this period have failed to mobilize sufficient interest and public support in Lithuania to turn around the trend of disinterest in security. For instance, consider a series of cyber attacks linked to Russia in 2007 that had isolated Estonia for days, and were arguably a major turning point in the development of international norms and legal practices vis-à-vis cyber warfare. The following year, the *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* – a key academic publication on security matters – mentioned the word "cyber" twice throughout the entire volume. While anecdotal animosity and competition with Estonia could be brought to bear, and Lithuania's support of Estonia in international forums was unwavering, the lack of resonance in domestic public discourse was astounding.

The 2008 Georgian-Russian conflict received considerably more attention: the narrative of territorial annexation of an FSU state resonated strongly, with the common refrain being that, save for NATO membership, this could have been Lithuania.[39] Lithuania's diplomatic corps had been a very active advocate of closer integration of several FSU republics with the West – including Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine – and saw this as a painful setback. In a 2016 interview, the Minister of Foreign Affairs recalled personally rallying support for Georgia among NATO members, warning at the time that if the alliance fails to take a tougher stance on Russia, Crimea or Transnistria could be next.[40] In 2008, Lithuanian defence spending saw a minor (2%) increase, potentially attributable to the impact of events in Georgia and Estonia. However, that same year the Minister of Defense signed a decree abolishing military conscription, and as the global financial crisis hit Lithuania in 2009, the defence budget was among the first to be cut – suggesting the lack

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[36] Šešelgytė M. (Footnote 8)

[37] Urbelis V. (Footnote 8); Šešelgytė M. (Footnote 8)

[38] Šlekys D. (Footnote 1), p 83-86.

[39] See, e.g., Janeliūnas T., Kirvelytė L., "Development of Georgia's Security Strategy: Tough Road Towards NATO", *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2008*, p.133-158; Paulauskas K., "NATO at 60: Lost in Transformation," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review 2009-2010*, p. 31-55.

[40] Linkevičius L., Interview with Sackur S., BBC Hard Talk, Nov 25, 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/n3ct0c67.

of systematic reassessment of the regional security situation.

Given Lithuania's active involvement with, and public support of, efforts to promote good governance, transparency, and other traits of democratic governance in the FSU space, it was somewhat surprising that the 2011 Arab Spring failed to elicit much sympathy. The narrative behind the self-immolation of Mouhamed Bouazizi in Tunisia, marking the start of the uprisings, was not too dissimilar from the self-immolation of Romas Kalanta in Lithuania in 1972,[41] and the wave of peaceful protests against oppressive dictators in the Middle East – comparable to the Baltic singing revolution. Yet, despite those parallels, the events of the Arab Spring received little attention in Lithuania, save for expressed concerns about the potential hike in oil prices.[42]

NATO's intervention in Libya – the first major European-led out of area security campaign since Kosovo – was met with a nominal nod of approval, although Lithuania did not contribute any military resources. The one event to attract more attention was president Grybauskaite's interview to the Austrian daily *Die Presse*, where she stated that NATO's mission has "clearly exceeded the UN mandate,"[43] – a position that was soon compared to that of Putin's and heavily criticized as a challenge to the alliance unity,[44] running counter to Lithuania's national security interests.

Overall, Lithuania spent the decade largely uninvolved in the discourse of modern security challenges, such as violent non-state actors or proliferation of radioactive materials to state and non-state actors. Even Lithuanian chairmanship of the OSCE during 2011,[45] taken at the start of a particularly tumultuous period, failed to energize any substantive discussions on security and defence matters internally, or produce such initiatives internationally.

2.3. Lithuania and Nuclear Nonproliferation

Lithuania continued to view nuclear arms control and reductions, as well as non-proliferation, as an indicator of either closer international cooperation

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[41] See, e.g., Hosking G. A., *The First Socialist Society: A History of the Soviet Union from Within*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 433.

[42] Gailiūnas, E., "Arab Uprisings and Western Security Interests: a View from Lithuania," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, 2011-2012, vol. 10, p. 26-30.

[43] Gabriel, A., "Der Einsatz in Libyen überschreitet das UN-Mandat", *Die Presse*, Apr 14, 2011, http://diepresse.com/home/ausland/aussenpolitik/650600/Der-Einsatz-in-Libyen-ueberschreitet-das-UNMandat?from=suche.intern.portal.

[44] Navickaitė, R., "NATO kritikai – V.Putinas ir D.Grybauskaitė" ["NATO critics – Putin and Grybauskaite," in Lithuanian], IQ.lt, Apr 30, 2011, http://iq.lt/titulinis/d-grybauskaitei-uzkliuvo-nato-atakos-libijoje/.

[45] "Lithuania takes over OSCE Chairmanship, will focus on freedom of the media, protracted conflicts, fostering regional co-operation," OSCE, Dec 31, 2010, http://www.osce.org/cio/74792.

with, or pressure on, Russia – rather than appreciating these issues on their own merit.[46] For instance, consider president Obama's Prague speech of 2009, announcing commitment to nuclear non-proliferation – a subject plaguing, yet largely ignored by, most FSU states. Commenting on this speech, Lithuania's president Adamkus expressed disappointment at not hearing anything new or significant.[47] NATO's attempt at defence policy overhaul, with the 2010 Strategic Concept for the Defense and Security of Member States and the 2012 Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR), also did not receive much public discussion or analysis in Lithuania, and were seemingly signed onto by default, without compelling strategic reasons to opt out. As a non-nuclear weapons' state, primarily concerned with ensuring regional security from potential Russian aggression, Lithuania did not register any strategic shifts along those lines in the DDPR, potentially justifying the lukewarm interest.

2.4. NATO and Modern Security Challenges

The 9/11 attacks consolidated NATO's strategic shift away from state-to-state conflict and towards the ability to regularly tackle unconventional threats – terrorism, non-state actors, radicalization, the spread of WMD, etc. Following the 2002 summit in Prague, the alliance started to restructure its command and forces in response to the changing geopolitical landscape. Starting in 2005, a number of centers of excellence were opened to hone in on core competences, particularly relating to the new security challenges (cyber warfare, energy security, counter-terrorism, counter-improvised explosive devices etc.).[48] The 2007 cyber attack against Estonia raised significant questions about the scope and applicability of Article 5 in crises short of overt conventional armed conflict, and proportionality of response. With a territorial incursion in Georgia the following year, 2009 saw increasingly vocal calls from Eastern European leaders for U.S. and NATO reassurances about deterring Russian

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[46] See, e.g., Ivanauskas V., Kasčiūnas L., Klimanskis S., Kojala, L., Šukytė D., "Lietuva ir JAV bendradarbiavimo krypciu beieskant" ["Lithuania and the U.S.: in search for avenues for cooperation," in Lithuanian], Eastern Europe Studies Center (EESC), Feb 2014, 6, http://www.eesc.lt/uploads/news/id704/Lietuva%20 ir%20JAV%20bendradarbiavimo%20krypciu%20beieskant.pdf.

[47] BNS, "V.Adamkus kritiškai įvertino Prahoje pasakytą B.Obamos kalbą" [Adamkus criticized Obama's Prague speech," in Lithuanian], *Lietuvos rytas*, Apr 5, 2009,
http://lietuvosdiena.lrytas.lt/-12389503701237735597-v-adamkus-kriti%C5%A1kai-%C4%AFverti no-prahoje-pasakyt%C4%85-b-obamos-kalb%C4%85-video.htm?utm_source=lrExtraLinks&utm_ campaign=Copy&utm_medium=Copy.

[48] See NATO, *Centers of Excellence*, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_68372.htm.

aggression.[49] Russia's Zapad 2009 exercise further fuelled the fears of territorial aggression, and even featured a mock nuclear strike against NATO forces deployed in the Baltics.

Despite these developments, the alliance consistently reiterated commitment to maintaining the lowest possible nuclear arsenal that can fulfill a deterrent function. Echoing the general U.S.-Russia rapprochement under president Obama, NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept, 2012 DDPR, and 2014 Wales summit declaration expressed commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, and hopes about continuing mutual arms reductions with Russia. Furthermore, Obama's non-proliferation agenda outlined in the 2009 Prague speech reignited the debates about removing U.S. nuclear weapons from European bases. Germany was particularly active in this effort – in line with the overall anti-nuclear sentiment in the country. Phasing out its ageing nuclear-capable Typhoon aircraft (rather than engaging in a life-extension program) seemed economically sensible, and could have served as a significant goodwill gesture of unilateral disarmament towards Russia. Many NATO members also supported the U.S. efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and technologies to new state and non-state actors. The 2004 revelation of the A.Q. Khan network that had supplied such technologies to Pakistan, North Korea, Syria, Libya, and Iran sparked a major international non-proliferation campaign of strict trade regulations and targeted sanctions. Fears of nuclear materials falling into the hands of increasingly prominent Islamic radicals, or of a new adversarial regime becoming nuclear-capable, provided a strong impetus for NATO to step up the arms control and non-proliferation efforts.

3. Ukraine: the Wake-up Call (2014 – 2017)

3.1. Lithuanian Policy Changes

The 2014 conflict in Ukraine served as a wake-up call to many in the West, revealing Russian belligerence and lack of qualms about territorial conquests in the FSU space and increasingly approaching NATO borders. In the Baltic states in general, and Lithuania in particular, the crisis in Ukraine was quite an I-told-you-so moment: after years when Asia and the Middle East

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[49] See, e.g., "An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, July 16, 2009, http://wyborcza.pl/1,75248,6825987,An_Open_Letter_to_the_Obama_ Administration_from_Central.html.

had been the main conflict arenas, Western attention turned to Europe again, validating persistent Baltic cautionary tales about engaging Russia. Many European experts surveyed on this matter in mid-2015 also felt more secure, believing that Russia was less likely to attempt further provocations in NATO member states now that the alliance was watching so closely.[50]

For Lithuanian diplomats, who have been helping to shepherd Ukraine in the effort to join the EU trade association agreement, the turn of events since Maidan was particularly painful to watch. The narrative of a small FSU state striving to turn Westward only to be assaulted by Russia again ran strong in the local discourse, alleging that save for NATO membership, Lithuania could have very well been in Ukraine's stead. In addition to Lithuania's traditionally vocal international advocacy efforts and initiatives[51] to help Ukraine, the event stirred up a great deal of domestic public discussions on security issues.

Since 2014, Lithuania's defence spending has begun to climb reliably, with double-digit annual increases (see Figure 1 in Section 1). In 2018, budget allocations for the Ministry of Defense are projected to increase by 21% – in percentage terms, this will be the largest increase among all ministries, and in Euro terms it will be second only to spending on social security.[52] In January 2017, Lithuania started building a wall along the border with Kaliningrad (a Russian enclave)[53] in response to regular border incursion incidents.[54]

Although defence topics did not feature prominently in the 2016 parliamentary elections, more parties have chosen to include national security and defence issues on their agenda. After winning the election, the Peasant-Greens have taken a particular interest in the defence portfolio from the beginning, and subsequently started to veer towards the other extreme, with controversial initiatives like introducing compulsory military education into high-school

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[50] Pomper M., Murauskaitė E., Sokov N.S., Varnum J.C., "Ensuring Deterrence against Russia: The View from NATO's Front-Line States," Occasional Paper, Heinrich Boell Foundation U.S., Dec 2015.

[51] In addition to humanitarian aid, initiatives range from fundraising for military equipment and training (see http://blue-yellow.lt/english/) to regularly held music concerts to raise funds and awareness for the cause (see http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2017-01-02-sausio-13-aja-paramos-ukrainai-koncertas-kartu-iki-pergales/153574; http://www.15min.lt/zmones/galerija/palaikymo-ukrainai-koncertas-vilniuje-98523#_).

[52] Šimėnas, D., "Ministrams pristatytas 2018 m. biudžeto projektas" [Ministers were presented with the 2018 budget plan," in Lithuanian], *Verslo zinios*, Oct 9, 2017, https://www.vz.lt/finansai-apskaita/2017/10/09/ministrams-pristatytas-2018-m-biudzeto-projektas.

[53] Sytas, A., "Lithuania to build fence along border with Russia's Kaliningrad," Reuters, Jan 17, 2017, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-lithuania-russia-fence-idUSKBN1512JU.

[54] See, e.g., Ačius, A., "Possible illegal landing of Russian militaries in Juodkrantė," LRT, Apr 8, 2016, http://www.lrt.lt/en/news_in_english/29/132927/possible_illegal_landing_of_russian_militaries_in_juodkrante.

curriculum.[55] Furthermore, the Speaker of the Parliament (also a member of the Peasant-Greens) sparked controversy by hosting the Russian ambassador at the Parliament on the week that Lithuania commemorates its independence from the USSR, right before the vote for the adoption of the National Security Strategy.[56] The Chairman of the Peasant-Greens party has been accused of ties to Kremlin intelligence assets,[57] and had previously actively campaigned against the introduction of the Euro and the right of foreign citizens to acquire land in Lithuania. A recent initiative to establish a committee for inter-parliamentary cooperation with Russia was met with outrage and suspicion,[58] with the President's office and Ministry of Foreign Affairs increasingly openly critical of the direction of parliamentary policies in this regard.[59] Nevertheless, the Parliament has successfully updated the National Security Strategy, adding corruption and the growing gap between haves and have-nots to the list of key national security concerns.[60] Efforts to tie the socio-economic and defence issues into a broader strategy geared towards strengthening social resilience in the face of modern threats are particularly laudable.

3.2. Engaging the Lithuanian Public

In addition to strengthening Lithuania's military readiness and technical capabilities, for the first time, an effort was made to better inform and in-

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[55] See Jakilaitis, E., "S. Skvernelis žada ne vieną pertvarką," ["Skvernelis promises many changes," in Lithuanian], transcript of LRT television show „Dėmesio centre", Jan 5, 2017, http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/s-skvernelis-zada-ne-viena-pertvarka.d?id=73367790.

[56] Lietuvos žinios, "Nacionalinį saugumą svarstys po susitikimo su Rusijos atstovu" ["National security to be considered after a meeting with Russian representative," in Lithuanian], Jan 6, 2017, http://www.lzinios.lt/lzinios/Lietuva/nacionalini-sauguma-svarstys-po-susitikimo-su-rusijos-atstovu/236656.

[57] Samoškaitė E., "Paviesinta su R.Karbauskiu susijusi "pazyma"" ["An intelligence "note" linked to Karbauskis has been published," in Lithuanian, Delfi.lt, Nov 15, 2016, http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/paviesinta-su-r-karbauskiu-susijusi-pazyma.d?id=72854066; Ceponyte, J., "Rinkimų dalyviai: Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga" ["Election candidates: Lithuanian Peasant-Greens Union," in Lithuanian], LRT Radijas, Oct 3, 2016, http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/kalba_vilnius/32/150111.

[58] Saldžiūnas V., "Įspėjo apie norą gerinti santykius su Rusija: tai spąstai" ["Warnings about attempts to improve relations with Russia: it's a trap," in Lithuanian], *Delfi*, Jan 11, 2017, http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/medijos-karas-propaganda/ispejo-apie-nora-gerinti-santykius-su-rusija-tai-spastai.d?id=73403662.

[59] "URM pamokymai Seimo nariams: su kuo, kiek ir apie ką galima kalbėtis su Rusija" [MFA instructions to members of parliament: what and to what extent one should discuss with Russia," in Lithuanian], *Alfa.lt*, Jan 18, 2017, http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/50129723/urm-pamokymai-seimo-nariams-su-kuo-kiek-ir-apie-ka-galima-kalbetis-su-rusija.

[60] Ramelienė R., "Saugumo strategija – ypatingos skubos tvarka" [Security Strategy under Urgent Consideration, in Lithuanian], Lietuvos Zinios, Jan 10, 2017, http://lzinios.lt/lzinios/lietuva/saugumo-strategija-ypatingos-skubos-tvarka/236811.

volve civil society in crisis preparedness. Since 2015, the Ministry of Defense has published a series of pamphlets informing the public what to do in case of an armed conflict, as well as means of armed and peaceful resistance.[61] Over the course of 2016, a system of phone text message alerts was installed and is now tested and used on a regular basis. In the autumn of 2016, the State Security Department (VSD) also established a hotline to report suspicious activities, particularly those related to recruitment efforts by foreign intelligence agencies.

A public opinion survey conducted in the summer of 2014 revealed that 55% of Lithuanians were concerned about an armed conflict breaking out in the country[62] – in stark contrast to attitudes prior to the conflict in Ukraine. For instance, in November 2012, 60% of Lithuania's residents felt that the country is not facing any real threats, with another 18% pointing to Russia as a threat. In the same survey of 2012, 54.6% of respondents opposed defence budget increases,[63] whereas by 2014, over 64% respondents were in favor[64] – an unprecedented level of support for defence spending. Another helpful measure to consider is public commitment to personally take up arms and defend the homeland: in 1990, 61% of respondents were ready to do so, but over the next decade, that share dropped to less than one-third – rising to a dramatic height of 41.6% in 2014 (see Figure 3).

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[61] For a list of instructional manuals published by Lithuania's Ministry of Defense, including English versions, see https://kam.lt/lt/naujienos_874/leidiniai/2015_m._isleisti_leidiniai.html and https://kam.lt/lt/naujienos_874/leidiniai/2016_m._isleisti_leidiniai.html.

[62] "Apklausa: pusė lietuvių – su neramiomis mintimis apie karinius konfliktus," ["Survey: half of Lithuanians concerned about a military conflict," in Lithuanian] Alfa.lt, Sep 22, 2014, http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/809053/apklausa-puse-lietuviu-su-neramiomis-mintimis-apie-karinius-konfliktus#ixzz3GhSQNiLN.

[63] Jackevičius, M. and Samoškaitė E., "Apklausa: realių grėsmių Lietuvai nėra, o jei bus – mus apgins NATO?," ["Survey: no real threats to Lithuania, and NATO will defend us?," in Lithuanian], Delfi.lt, Nov 23, 2012, http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/apklausa-realiu-gresmiu-lietuvai-nera-o-jei-bus-mus-apgins-nato.d?id=60063003.

[64] Spinter, "Visuomenės nuomonės tyrimas šalies saugumo ir gynybos klausimais," ["Public opinion poll on matters of national security and defense," in Lithuanian], Apr 14, 2014, http://www.spinter.lt/site/lt/vidinis/menutop/9/home/publish/NjAyOzk7OzA
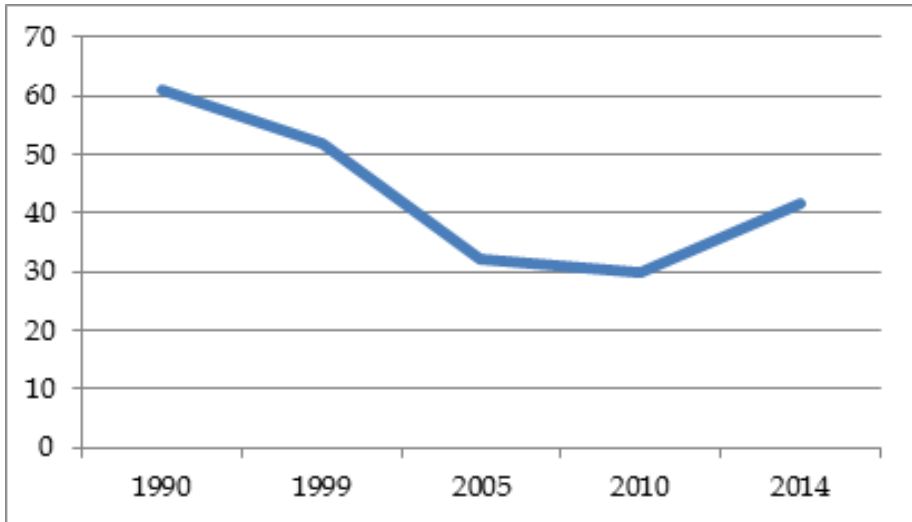
Figure 3. **Per cent of respondents ready to personally take up arms to defend Lithuania**[65]

It is interesting to note that the public tended to favor military training for civilians (38.3% supported this as a compulsory measure, and 49.8% as a voluntary one), while the re-introduction of the draft remained unpopular (49.4% of respondents were against it).[66] Only after lengthy and heated public discussions, and a dedicated campaign by the Ministry of Defense, draft approval level reached 51% in 2015.[67]

Determination to personally participate in Lithuania's defence seems to represent one extreme end of the spectrum of public response to the crisis in Ukraine – with part of the population taking the opposite, extremely fatalistic, approach, convinced that Russian invasion is just a matter of time. These tendencies are hardly surprising, given that the national security discourse has consistently and exclusively been framed in terms of looming threats, empha-

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[65] Based on data in Spinter, "Visuomenės nuomonės tyrimas šalies saugumo ir gynybos klausimais," ["Public opinion poll on matters of national security and defense," in Lithuanian], Apr 14, 2014, http://www.spinter.lt/site/lt/vidinis/menutop/9/home/publish/NjAyOzk7OzA and Spinter, "Kilus grėsmei lietuviai savo valstybės ginklu negintų," ["Lithuanians not ready to take up arms to defend their country in case of crisis, in Lithuanian], Feb 16, 2010, http://www.spinter.lt/site/lt/vidinis/menutop/9/home/publish/MTM1Ozk7OzA=.

[66] Spinter, "Visuomenės nuomonės tyrimas dėl karinių mokymų ir privalomos karinės tarnybos grąžinimo," [Public opinion poll on military training and re-introduction of the draft, in Lithuanian], Apr 22, 2014, http://www.spinter.lt/site/lt/vidinis/menutop/9/home/publish/NjA1Ozk7OzA=.

[67] Spinter, "Patriotizmas: šauktinių grąžinimas daug geriau nei didesni mokesčiai kariuomenei išlaikyti," ["Patriotism: re-introducing the draft is preferable to higher taxes for supporting the military," in Lithuanian], May 13, 2015, http://www.spinter.lt/site/lt/vidinis/menutop/9/home/publish/NzE2Ozk7OzA=.

sizing the need for state- (i.e. the army, government institutions etc.) and individual- (general public, as well as riflemen and volunteers) level preparedness for an armed territorial incursion.

A substantial portion of the looming threat discourse has been pegged to the Zapad 2017 exercise, which also attracted the significant attention of NATO partners, and increased levels of NATO force presence in the Baltics for its duration. However, the approach of mentally revving-up the nation (and the allies) to resist an imminent threat has inevitably hit a hurdle – the challenge of sustaining attention long term. A 2016 survey of threat perceptions confirmed that socio-economic concerns have returned to the forefront of the public mind: despite an uptick in media discourse on military threats, Russian invasion turned out to be one of the least worrisome (15% of respondents cited it as a concern), whereas 33% expressed fears about the ageing of the society and 26% worried about income inequality.[68]

The lack of expressed middle ground positions on matters of national security persists, with limited public involvement and interest in defence strategy decisions.[69] Nearly every debate has been cautioned with suggestions that discussions revealing our weaknesses 'play into the enemy hands' or 'needlessly frighten the public'. Indeed, the number of discussions and articles on security matters has come to be taken as directly proportionate to the level of threat – instead of being associated with a normative change and the need to fill a gap. This is particularly concerning, as social resilience is increasingly becoming key to successfully countering modern threats over the long-term, with conventional state-versus-state overt military conflict gradually displaced by gray zone confrontations across multiple domains.

While Article 139 of the Lithuanian Constitution explicitly compels every citizen to defend the country in case of an armed attack by a foreign occupying force, there are no clear guidelines for doing so. For instance, it is important to consider that a modern attack may not involve conventional arms, but rely on one or a series of cyber offensives, or a hate-inciting informa-

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[68] Pancerovas, D., "Lietuvos gyventojams baisesnės socialinės grėsmės, o ne Rusijos invazija ar terorizmas" ["Lithuanians are more concerned about social threats than Russian invasion or terrorism," in Lithuanian], *15min*, June 28, 2016, http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/lietuvos-gyventojams-baisesnes-socialines-gresmes-o-ne-rusijos-invazija-ar-terorizmas-56-647741; Lašas, A., "Rusijos karinės grėsmės anatomija" ["The anatomy of Russian military threat," in Lithuanian], *15min*, July 26, 2016, http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/komentarai/ainius-lasas-rusijos-karines-gresmes-anatomija-500-659107.

[69] For more detailed discussion, see Murauskaitė E., "Lithuanian Security Culture: Contrasts and Contradictions," Foreign Policy Research Institute, May 2016, http://www.fpri.org/article/2016/05/lithuanian-security-culture-contrasts-contradictions/.

tion campaign. A coup may be attempted using local players – self-radicalized persons, or ones whose ties to a foreign force are not immediately obvious. Another important aspect is the choice between urban or forest guerilla, and indications as to who ought to take up arms, and who ought to proceed with passive resistance efforts, like obstructing the occupying regime and providing material support for Lithuanian fighters. Though hybrid threats are increasingly mentioned as a security concern, thus far there has been little progress in discussing proper social conduct in the face of such threats, let alone arriving at policy decisions or operational directives.

3.3. Lithuanian Nuclear Fears: Power-plants, Not Weapons

Given traditional Lithuanian focus on security concerns emanating from Russia, it is worth noting that Russia's increasingly overt nuclear saber rattling in the aftermath of the crisis in Ukraine failed to raise additional red flags. For many in the West, Moscow's statements about the readiness to resort to the use of tactical nuclear weapons, if necessary, in defence of the occupied Crimea has been a major turning point, marking the return of WMD to operational planning. Yet, Lithuanian security experts seem to discount these statements: the deployment of nuclear-capable Iskander missiles to Kaliningrad in 2016 was met with less concern[70] than Russian incursions into the Baltic airspace[71] or announcements of Russian military exercises close to the Baltic borders. In an illustrative 2015 survey of threat perceptions among Baltic security professionals, Lithuanian respondents did not link the crisis in Ukraine to nuclear weapons or proliferation issues – in terms of narrative, changed threat profile or level – most dismissed them as irrelevant even when explicitly prompted.[72] In addition, many experts interviewed in 2015 were deeply opposed to any step-up in NATO's nuclear rhetoric, and cautioned that any changes in force posture or deployments would be needlessly provocative.[73]

While Russian nuclear posturing in the Baltics could be interpreted as narrative references and signals intended for NATO's western members, Li-

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[70] Agence France-Presse, "Russia is deploying nuclear-capable missiles on NATO's doorstep, Lithuania says," Oct 8, 2016, https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-10-08/russia-deploying-nuclear-capable-missiles-natos-doorstep.

[71] Milne R., Jones S., Hille, K., "Russian air incursions rattle Baltic states," *Financial Times*, Sep 24, 2014, https://www.ft.com/content/9d016276-43c3-11e4-baa7-00144feabdc0.

[72] Murauskaitė E., Pomper M., (Footnote 7); Pomper M., Murauskaite E., Sokov N.S., Varnum J.C. (Footnote 50)

[73] Ibidem.

thuania saw the development of nuclear energy projects in its neighborhood as a parallel pressure campaign directed at it. Construction of a nuclear power plant in Ostrovets, Belarus started to gain traction in 2013, despite staunch opposition from Lithuania.[74] The project, funded through Russian loans and investments, has been criticized for construction safety violations, although in international forums, the main argument Lithuania is making is the Belorussian failure to ensure public participation in environmental decision-making, including failure to appropriately inform the neighbouring countries. Lithuania's political opposition to the Ostrovets power plant has been built around the familiar narrative of a Chernobyl repeat:[75] a 2017 survey showed that 65% of Lithuanians view the project as a security threat, with Chernobyl disaster recall key to respondent opinions (e.g., younger respondents with little connection to that narrative did not view Ostrovets in such negative terms).[76] In addition, Russia has recently renewed the construction of a nuclear power plant in Kaliningrad,[77] and to Lithuania's dismay, has reportedly repurposed the damaged reactor hull from Ostrovets for this project.[78] The Kaliningrad power plant project had been halted in 2013, citing, in part, the likely political difficulties involved in selling the energy on the European market.[79] Given Lithuania's vocal opposition to the Ostrovets power plant, this has become another point of political pressure and intimidation, despite the likely limited economic viability of the project.

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[74] For key developments, see BNS, "Astravo statyba: svarbiausios datos" ["Construction in Ostrovets: key dates" (in Lithuanian), *Delfi*, March 9, 2016, https://www.delfi.lt/verslas/energetika/astravo-ae-statyba-salia-lietuvos-svarbiausios-datos.d?id=70650520.

[75] Milne R. Foy H., "Russian-built nuclear plant revives Chernobyl fears," *Financial Times*, Sep 19, 2017, https://www.ft.com/content/a98322de-96f7-11e7-b83c-9588e51488a0.

[76] Naprys, E., "Du trečdaliai lietuvių įžvelgia grėsmę dėl Astravo atominės elektrinės," ["Two-thirds of Lithuanians view Ostrovets power plant as a threat", (in Lithuanian)], *15min*, Sep 6, 2017, https://www.15min.lt/verslas/naujiena/energetika/du-trecdaliai-lietuviu-izvelgia-gresme-del-astravo-atomines-elektrines-664-849598.

[77] Kazakevičius, K., "Baltijos AE: statybos Lietuvos pašonėje nenutrūko" ["Baltiisk NPP: Construction Continues in Lithuania's Neighborhood" (in Lithuanian)], *Lietuvos žinios*, Jan 17, 2017, http://lzinios.lt/lzinios/Lietuva/baltijos-ae-statybos-lietuvos-pasoneje-nenutruko/237173.

[78] BNS, "Kritęs Astravo AE korpusas veikiausiai bus panaudotas Kaliningrade" ["Fallen Ostrovets Hull Likely to be Reused in Kaliningrad" (in Lithuanian)], Sep 6, 2017, https://www.15min.lt/verslas/naujiena/bendroves/rosatom-ketina-is-astravo-ae-atsiimta-kritusi-reaktoriaus-korpusa-panaudoti-kaliningrado-srityje-planuojamoje-branduolineje-jegaineje-663-849604.

[79] Menkiszak, M., "Russia freezes the construction of the nuclear power plant in Kaliningrad," *OSW*, June 12, 2013, https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-06-12/russia-freezes-construction-nuclear-power-plant-kaliningrad.

3.4. NATO: Warsaw Summit and Beyond

The NATO 2016 Security Summit in Warsaw reflected these geopolitical changes and signified a new chapter in alliance security policies, although the notably divergent narrative and threat perception differences among member states were notable to the focal emphases of the outcomes' discussions. First, the alliance named Russia as a security threat (rather than a partner) and signed off on the deployment of four 1,000-men-strong multinational force battalions to the Baltic region as a reassurance measure. It is important to note that although the value of NATO's deterrent rests in no small part with its nuclear capabilities, nuclear-backed security guarantees were neither requested by nor offered to the Baltic states. Citing, specifically, the change in international threat perceptions and ground force commitments, Lithuania's president Grybauskaitė said the country need not fear any longer and would consider the prospects of a dialogue with Russia[80] – something Lithuania had staunchly opposed for decades.

Second, the 2016 summit marked a significant turnaround in NATO's approach to nuclear weapons and non-proliferation. In response to Russia's nuclear saber rattling, the Warsaw communiqué language brought nuclear deployments and deterrence posture to the fore in a manner not seen for over a decade. The importance of nuclear burden sharing was reiterated, scrapping the previous considerations of pulling U.S. nuclear weapons from Germany. Later that same year, both of NATO's European nuclear states, the UK and France, initiated the modernization of their nuclear programs, starting with renewal of their nuclear submarine fleets. With Trump's presidency, the U.S. has also experienced a shift away from nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, with talks in 2017 of potentially increasing the arsenal, as well as scraping the 2015 deal with Iran. Reflecting the changing member state preferences and the new emphasis on the nuclear – rather than conventional – deterrence, in 2017 NATO issued a statement criticizing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).[81]

Nevertheless, in parallel to the return to nuclear rhetoric, NATO has committed to new cooperative initiatives in search for long-term security so-

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[80] BNS, "D.Grybauskaitė Varšuvoje: būtent dabar galima nebijoti" [Grybauskaite in Warsaw: we need not fear any more," in Lithuanian], Lrytas, July 9, 2016, http://lietuvosdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/d-grybauskaite-varsuvoje-butent-dabar-galime-nebijoti.htm?utm_source=lrExtraLinks&utm_campaign=Copy&utm_medium=Copy.

[81] "North Atlantic Council Statement on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons", Sep 20, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_146954.htm.

lutions in the face of gray zone crises and new types of threats. The NATO-EU cooperation agreement signed in Warsaw was a significant step towards formalizing a complementary approach to security and socio-economic development, the first seeds of which were sowed back in Kosovo. At the time of writing, the agreement has been slow to gain momentum, with greater inter-institutional information sharing and counter-party identification among the key progress indicators. Aside from the challenges of finding avenues for cooperation within entrenched and sizeable bureaucracies, divergent national financial pressures – to increase spending on social services versus defence – have come to the fore. In balancing European national budgets, meeting the NATO 2% of GDP requirement is helpful in boosting hard security measures that protect against state-level threats, and improve burden sharing, as the U.S. seems inclined to gradually downsize its presence and investments in this region. However, the need to distribute finite resources effectively may be at odds with addressing other security challenges – such as preventing violent extremism – that largely require socio-economic solutions.

Conclusion

This paper traces the development and the present state of Lithuanian security culture, over three distinct phases of its existence: as a newly independent FSU state, as a member of NATO, and as a member of the alliance at the forefront of the Russian conflict with Ukraine. In detailing the social and political attitudes to defence and security over these 27 years, it highlights some of the underappreciated focal and narrative differences, and demonstrates their potential impact on the conceptual juncture NATO is presently at. As a nuclear alliance increasingly faced with unconventional conflict at home and abroad, NATO is in search of a new narrative, combining its goals and capabilities with member state concerns and threat perceptions.

On one hand, member states on NATO's periphery, such as Lithuania, consistently find themselves at the forefront of the conventional security challenges that the alliance was built to address – a threat of territorial invasion. Yet, these states are not steeped in the security culture tradition that underwrites the classical NATO recipes for addressing those challenges – such as nuclear deterrence and escalation management. Over the past decade, most NATO member states, and the alliance as a whole, had emphasized nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and made considerable advancements towards these objectives. Yet, the Warsaw Summit brought the classical nuclear doctri-

nes to the fore. Most states that had joined NATO prior to 2004 have historically gone through the discourse of the costs vs. benefits of a nuclear arsenal and the horror vs. efficacy of a nuclear war and arrived at their policies as a result. Meanwhile, the Baltic states had subscribed to non-nuclear state status and policies like non-proliferation largely pro-forma, without the experience of the undergirding conceptual discourse – among the public or security elites. It is thus hardly surprising that the return to the doctrinal concepts, like the role of a nuclear deterrent and the use of tactical nuclear weapons, seems far-fetched and foreign to a Lithuanian audience. As the alliance is increasingly shifting emphasis back to its nuclear deterrent, raising awareness about its doctrinal origins and conceptual framework is important for long-term NATO unity, yet obviously controversial in the immediate term.

On the other hand, NATO's Eastern European member states have considerable experience in addressing some of the current challenges of gray zone conflict – such as manipulation of media narratives or incursions by "unidentified" armed units. However, the present way of framing these challenges in the context of the conventional state vs. state threat is considerably less effective than doing so in the context of building resilience. The latter perspective lends itself better to socio-economic solutions – the effects of which manifest over the long-term, but also, incidentally, address the threats associated with mass migration and violent extremism so acutely felt by the older members of the alliance. In order to find the new unifying narrative that encompasses member state concerns and can offer a suitable spectrum of solutions to it, NATO needs to proactively tune into the divergent mix of security cultures present under its umbrella, acknowledging those narratives in order to leverage them.

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