Editorial

The questions that have shaped European security debates in recent years have become harder to separate from one another. Russia's war against Ukraine has exposed weaknesses in defence planning and production, sharpened concerns about the credibility of deterrence, and brought renewed attention to the political and societal foundations of security. At the same time, uncertainty over the future direction of transatlantic relations has made the choices facing European states, and the Baltic States in particular, more consequential. These concerns run through the present volume of Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review.

The opening contributions consider the changing conditions of security in Europe. 'Neo-Trumpian and Post-Trumpian Security in the Baltic States: Challenges of Bridging the Deterrence Gap' takes up the question of deterrence in a period of uncertainty surrounding US policy and transatlantic commitments. 'Main Challenges of the European Defense Industry in the Light of the Russo-Ukrainian War' turns to the capacity of European defence industries to respond to a security environment in which military readiness and sustained production have acquired new urgency. The article 'Securitizing Much? The EU and NATO – Who Has the Main Role in Ensuring Energy Security in Europe?' considers how energy security was framed by the two organisations between 2022 and 2024. Together, these contributions show why discussions about European security cannot be confined to military capabilities alone: they also involve institutions, resources and political choices.

A related question is how regional cooperation develops under pressure. 'Bucharest Nine: A New Security Community Emerging?' examines the Bucharest Nine through the concept of a security community, inviting reflection on the political significance of cooperation along NATO's eastern flank. The volume also looks beyond Europe. 'China's Military Foreign Policy: Rationales in International Conflicts' addresses the reasoning behind China's military foreign policy and its engagement with international conflicts. This wider perspective is important for a journal concerned with strategic developments that affect the Baltic region but are not limited to it.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is, understandably, a central concern in this volume. Yet the articles approach the war from different angles, moving between alliance politics, domestic political developments, public discourse and international law. 'Wartime Democracy: The Evolution of the Ukrainian Case in the Context of Russian Military Aggression' addresses the tensions and changes affecting democratic governance under conditions of war. 'NATO Enlargement from a Ukrainian Perspective' places Ukrainian views at the centre of a debate often discussed primarily in terms of the policies of existing Alliance members. 'Localising Hegemony: War Discourse on Russia's War Against Ukraine Beyond the Federal Centre' directs attention to the articulation of war-related discourse beyond Russia's federal centre. These different points of entry help broaden the discussion of the war and its consequences.

The importance of how societies understand and respond to insecurity is also reflected in 'Narrating Societal Resilience: Media Framing, Solidarity, and Strategy in Georgian-Lithuanian State Brotherhood'. Its attention to media framing and the Georgian-Lithuanian relationship adds a societal and communicative dimension to the volume's discussions of security. Meanwhile, 'International Humanitarian Law and the Protection of Critical Infrastructure During the Russian-Ukrainian War' brings into focus the legal protection of infrastructure during armed conflict, a subject with direct implications for civilian life and the conduct of war.

I am particularly pleased that this volume includes contributions developed from research presented at the 2026 international scientific conference 'The Baltic States and Regional Security in the Transatlantic Context' (BRS), held on 18–19 March at the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania in Vilnius. Among these are the articles on wartime democracy in Ukraine, NATO enlargement from a Ukrainian perspective, war discourse beyond Russia's federal centre, and Georgian-Lithuanian societal resilience. The conference was conceived as a place for substantive exchange on the security challenges facing the Baltic States and the wider transatlantic community. It is gratifying to see discussions begun there taken forward in articles published in the journal. This is precisely the kind of connection between academic meetings and sustained scholarly work that we hope to encourage.

The contributions gathered here do not offer a single account of the present security environment, nor should they. Their value lies in

the different questions they ask and the range of political, strategic, legal and societal issues they bring into view. For readers interested in the Baltic States, the volume offers both a close examination of regional concerns and a reminder that those concerns are inseparable from developments elsewhere in Europe and beyond.

I would like to thank the authors for their contributions, the reviewers for their careful work, and everyone involved in preparing this volume. I hope the articles will provide useful grounds for further research and discussion.

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