Leadership Opportunities of Small NATO States in the Context of Military Deterrence Theories (the Case of Lithuania)

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The Identity of Small NATO State

There are no single methodology identifying states as a small [2]. Given this in the context of NATO it may varies and do not have common understanding. For this article statistical method of defence expenditure were taken to clarify small. The key criterions consist of two key elements: total defence expenditures and share of overall GDP. NATO data [9] disclose the current situation in the graph below.
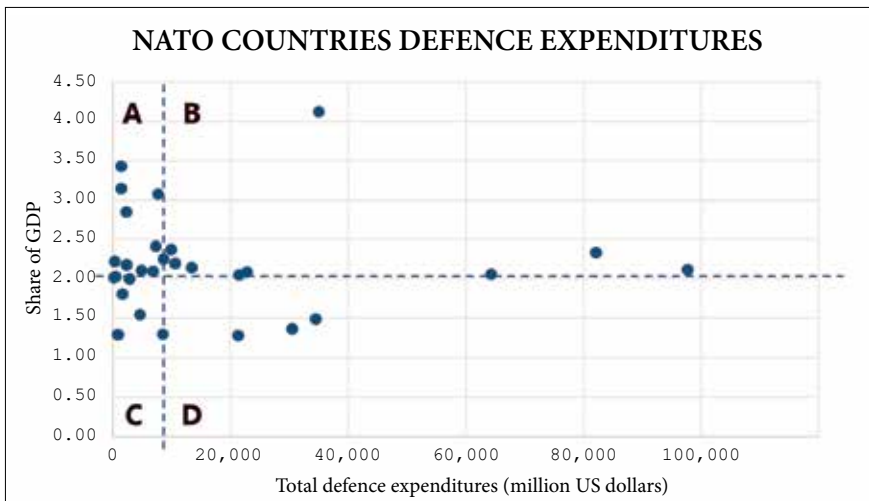
Source: developed by author.

* USA is not included due to significant higher defence expenditures compare to other NATO countries.

Graphic does not include USA data just because its' expenditures are way higher compare other states and it consist of approx. two-thirds of whole defence expenditures among whole NATO countries. The whole graph is segregated into 4 quarters and USA gets into B quarter. Vertical dashed line mark total defence expenditure limit of 10 000 (mln. USD). Horizontal line determines 2 % share of national GDP to defence. There are huge debates along experts which of parameter is more important. First we should stress out that states in B quarter are NATO strongest countries like USA, United Kingdom, Germany and etc. Meanwhile opposite are states in C quarter with low level of expenditure for defence and share of GDP. Such countries are Croatia, Luxembourg, Slovenia and etc. A quarter determines countries with relatively small expenditure to defence but significant contribution of share of GDP. There are Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the same quarter. Next quarter D distinguish countries with relatively low level of commitments to NATO regarding defence share of GDP, but still quite high total defence expenditures. Such countries are Canada, Spain, Italy. To sum up based on these statistical data small NATO states are located in quarters A and C. The key difference between them is their commitment to the NATO defence expenditures.

Small NATO states differ regarding their focus on defence policies. To clarify their focus this article, focus on neorealism approach which mainly focuses on structural realism ideas. Jervis [11] emphasizes that international relations determining competition and conflict features. Additionally stressing out that international systems are not trustworthy so every subject needs to take part in politics. For small NATO states like it was disclosed in the first part crucial national interest is to survive. Given this further development of NATO small states policy are based on Mearsheimer [7] ideas and bedrock assumptions, which are:

● The international system is anarchic.

● Great powers inherently possess some offensive military capability, which gives them the wherewithal to hurt and possibly destroy each other.

- States can never be certain about other states' intentions.
- Survival is the primary goal of great powers.
- Great powers are rational actors.

In the context of article along the NATO member great powers might be identified as B quarter countries like USA, Germany, United Kingdon and etc. Still other countries which participates in international relations and differ with their own national interests. Such countries are China, Russia, India and etc. Most of Mearsheimers' assumptions are already being confirmed except the last one that great powers are rational actors. It is a point of discussion what is rationality in the context of NATO countries and Russia. This leads that Russia as aggressor and NATO enemy number 1 do not confront great powers on the conventional battlefield. So small NATO countries take all action to maintain their national interests. Lehto [6] executed research analysing how small states effect NATO decision making processes. It disclosed that 3 Baltic countries seek theirs goals, which ensure national security and enables them to overcome disruptions in NATO's structural governance. The Baltic states have common denominators of national security fundamentals. Being small states, they seek to ensure their security. According to M. Jurkynas [4], the Baltic states have a well-developed, anti-Russian identity. Researches [5] confirms that Russia might easily occupy small states. In order to make focus on small state the example of 3 Baltic states were taken. The data is being depicted in the Table No. 1.

1 table. The assessment of 3 Baltic states national security determinants

Countries	First defence priority	Second defence priority	Defence expenditure share of GDP in percent (2022 y. data) [12]	Expected future defence expenditure share of GDP in percent	Main source of threat of national security
Estonia	State defence	Threat deterrence	2,1	3	Russia
Latvia	Threat deterrence	State defence	2	3	Russia
Lithuania	Threat deterrence	State defence	2,5	2,77[1]	Russia

Source: developed by author using open-source material.

To sum up it is possible to determine that NATO small countries are looking forward for their national interest given this security comes as priority especially to countries which are situated along the border with Russia and Belarus. The best example of defence policy development of NATO small states is 3 Baltic states. Generally, it is possible to assume that countries dedicating 2 and above percent of expenditure of GDP for defence are taking defence policy at the highest priorities. Moreover, still NATO small states can't be certain for their safety and additional means required.

The Meaning of NATO Deterrence Policy to the Small NATO States

In the context of NATO defence policy, there are two fundamental approaches. First focuses on NATO defence mainly addressing essence of Washington treaty and its' purpose. Second determines all means and operation in order to deter possible threats to NATO members. Hereby NATO defence in conventional matter never been tested by any country so far. Still since the beginning of 2000 Russia and NATO relationship is getting worse and worse and as it

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[1]   Lithuanian defence expenditure approved for 2024.

is now NATO calls Russia as an enemy. No conventional military activities against NATO are being conducted, but the whole NATO defence policy triggered and raise deterrence concept. Current situation disclose that it works. However different NATO states perceive the threat with diverse focuses. NATO small countries like Belgium, Bulgaria, Slovak Republic, Hungary and others do not stress Russian threat as direct threat to their national security. Vice versa NATO small states like Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania significantly strengthened their defence policy highlighting Russian military threat. Finland just joined NATO and 3 Baltics significantly increased their defence budgets in order to mean national interest goals. Radvila [10] has conducted research with Lithuanian military experts on deterrence policy for 3 Baltic States. Theoretical part disclosed 5 key deterrence theories which are most common for military domain (see Table No. 2).

2 table. Deterrence theories

Theory	Authors / sources	Key statements
Classic deterrence theory	Thomas Schelling (Mazarr, 2021, Zagare, 1996 and others)	Deterrence is based on the persuasion that a retaliatory threat would have consequences that outweigh the adversary's potential benefits.
Theory of games	John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern (Ho at al., 2022)	Rational actors make decisions based on the potential risks and expected benefits of their decisions.
Compel-lence theory	Thomas Schelling (Schaub, 2004)	The main focus is on the influence of the opponent's actions and the use of coercive mechanisms against him.
Extended deterrence theory	Paul K. Huth (Lee, 2021)	The concept of deterrence towards the protected entity is expanded, where alliances and security commitments are emphasized.
Nuclear deterrence theory	Thomas Schelling (Powell, 1985)	An essential ingredient is the escalation of the use of nuclear weapons, where the result would be catastrophic consequences for both (all) parties to the conflict.

Source: developed by author.

Research named above confirmed that all of the theories might be applicable for the 3 Baltic states. Nevertheless, the most clearly emphasized theories were compellence and extended deterrence theories. These deterrence theories are the backbone of the eastern flank NATO countries. Given this, 3 Baltic states joined NATO in 2004 which have different outcome in the Eastern Europe with the relationship with Russia. Also, it is confirmed that in example of 3 Baltic countries as separate countries or a region do not have sufficient capabilities to deter Russian military threat of counter offensive capabilities alone.

To sum up NATO eastern flank countries are highly dependent on alliance and bilateral / multi-lateral partners. In order to maintain national interests such countries as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are using neorealism ideology to maintain security and able them to act. In the most cases these countries are grounding their defence policies on so call defensive neorealism. Moreover, with the limited resource their looking forward developing certain capabilities to defend themselves and contribute to overall NATO deterrence plan.

The Contribution of the Small NATO States to the Overall NATO Defence and Deterrence Policy

Noteworthy, that theoretically defensive neorealism focus on two substantive ideologies. First one discloses balance of power idea [8]. This leads to assumption that current NATO military power development is highly dependent on aggressors' possible national interests. Hereby small state input into overall defence and deterrence plans are significantly limited. Hereby the great powers forces all states to combine their capabilities in order to counter the threat. Small state role here is so small that it just contributes to the vital defence power. Next defensive structural approach from the perspective of the small states is band wagoning. Cladi and Locatelli [1] states that smaller powers enjoy the benefits of public goods that only the superior power can produce, and they cannot

simply replace it. Small states themselves are not capable to focus on defence and deterrence for them to stand alone given this they band wagoning the great powers. In both ideologies small states do no play crucial role in global defence politics and they contribute to great power play. In order to maintain national security interest small states in both ways use their capabilities to contribute to overall defence and deterrence plan. On the current case small states like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are looking forward countering Russian threat and seeks for national security. For this purpose, to meet NATO security goals NATO develops joint functions. Based on different perspective [3] there might be indicated as much as ten joint functions: Command and Control, Movement and Manoeuvre, Fires, Protection, Intelligence, Sustainment, Information, Civil and Military Cooperation (CIMIC), Planning, Targeting. Great NATO military powers develop most of the joint functions. It is noteworthy that small states are not able to develop their own self sufficient joint functions. However, there are practical examples of small states initiative that contributed to the NATO (strategic) level. Such examples are The NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (Estonia), The NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence (Lithuania) and the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (Latvia).

To sum up such initiatives are examples how small states could contribute to overall NATO defence and deterrence plans. Still, it does not change the fact that solely small states are not capable to ensure their own national security goals and different cooperation means / capabilities are required. For this purpose, countries like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania seeks for more possibilities ensure their safety.
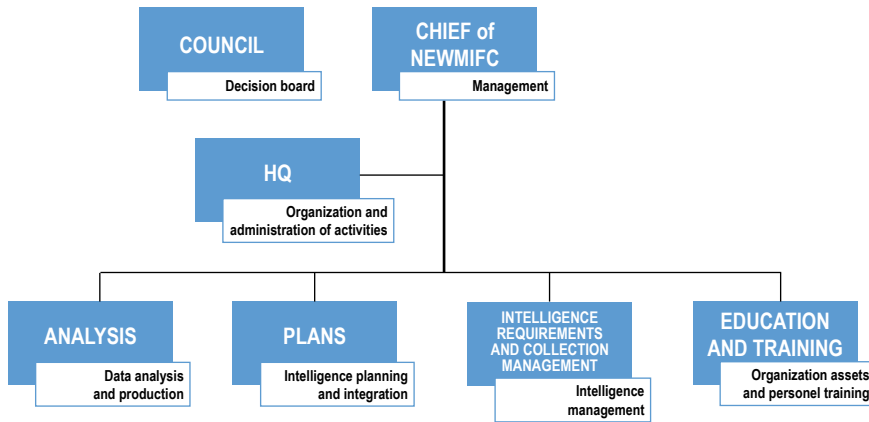
The Development of NATO Early Warning Military
Intelligence Fusion Center in Lithuania

Some of the researches like Radvila [10] confirms that based on neorealism theory countries are looking forward seeking national interest by developing state level military capabilities. Contrary the deterrence effect is being achieved on the institutional level (NATO). It is exceedingly difficult for small states to contribute to the institutional level capabilities. Hereby countries like Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania are not able to develop significant capabilities to contribute to specific NATO joint function. Still based on neorealism theory small states should seek after effective defence and deterrence means themselves also contributing to the institutional level set. On

Picture No. 1. NATO ground border with Russia and Belarus

the institutional level there is NATO Intelligence Fusion Center which is responsible on the strategic intelligence issues. On the national level Lithuania owns own defence intelligence security service institutions. Still there is a gap of intelligence related architecture on the regional / operational level. For this purpose, Lithuania has unique possibility to develop NATO operational level capability in intelligence joint function. First of all, Lithuania has the most intelligence focus terrain against NATO opposing force. Picture No. 1 disclose NATO ground border with Russia and Belarus. These countries are confirmed by allies opposing security architecture in the NATO eastern flanks. Poland has approximately 650 km of border with potential enemy, Estonia – 350 km, Latvia – 450 km and meanwhile Lithuania – 950 km. Based on this data it is possible to state, that Lithuania has unique opportunity to cover bigger intelligence area of NATO intelligence area. Still certain regions are not suitable, but based on NATO focus Lithuania has the best possibilities. The only issue regarding intelligence collection is that small countries like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have quite limited capabilities to develop intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance due to the small defence budget. Lithuanian case disclose weakness which might be redesign into unique national opportunity. Other NATO countries own significant intelligence capabilities, but still do not have opportunities to exploit it targeting NATO threat. NATO members like Spain, France, Germany, United Kingdom and etc. uses their intelligence platforms to collect data on opposing force, but still the usage is limited. For example, in some cases, during peacetime there are no possibilities to use intelligence collectors or "train as you fight". Meanwhile Russia and Belarus likely do not have such restrictions and already wining by exploiting intelligence. Summarizing all the issues presented above it is possible to state that Lithuania might avail this situation for the national and NATO benefits. Hereby the opportunity of the development of NATO early warning military intelligence fusion center (abbreviation. NEWMIFC) rises. Suggested structure presented below (see Picture No. 2).

Picture No. 2. NATO early warning military intelligence fusion center

Source: developed by author.

The purpose of NEWMIFC would be to provide timely intelligence information to decision makers of NATO and partner countries. The main tasks of the center would be:

- Military threat early warning.
- Military situational awareness.
- Common intelligence development.
- Development of knowledge and competences.
- Support to NATO and national defence planning process.
- Intelligence capability and personnel training.

NEWMIFC council is the main decision-making board which transforms NATO and nations defence policies into support and implementation state. Given this council should consist of single member from each contributing nation. The structure of NEWMIFC supports intelligence cycle and contributes to overall NATO intelligence architecture. The chief of center is being elected by the council and serve as a CEO of organization. Other units of the structure consist of multinational personnel fulfilling the certain tasks. Analysis branch is responsible for data analysis and production. Hereby the operation level intelligence is being development and transcript into the certain products. Planning branch is solely responsible to support intelligence plans and

integrate to meet certain NATO and national requirements. Additional all the cooperation issues along nations and NATO should be settle with internal working groups. Intelligence requirements and collection management branch are purely focusing on the running of intelligence cycle supporting operation and activities. Education and training branch allows countries to train intelligence personnel within wide scope of intelligence disciplines and means.

The NEWMIFC structure might have significant input on strategic and operational levels. Firstly, on strategic level it supports nations' national leadership decision making process. Furthermore, it contributes to NATO indication and warning system by covering operational level. Moreover, it develops supporting nation common sense on the perception of Russian / Belarussian threat. Additionally, it provides NATO and national early warning for military threat. Secondly on operational level it supports the development of NATO and national joint intelligence preparation of environment (JIPOE). Beside it contributes to operational level indication and warning systems. Along the contributors it serves as a unit that helps developing knowledge on enemy threats. Further it raises personnel competence and allow training and exercise of intelligence personnel.

To sum up NEWMIFC initiative determines the possibility of small states like Lithuania to contribute to institutional level means which support one of the crucial NATO joint functions like intelligence. Furthermore, while there is lack of possibilities for small states to develop their own deterrence effect against Russian threat, they are capable to support different initiative and contributing to deterrence package. NEWMIFC initiative might be one of the best examples where small states enables NATO core countries to operate more efficiently and also support NATO and nations defence policies.

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