

Editorial

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Strategic Challenges for Baltic States in Dangerous Times

This Special Issue (Volume 9, Issue 2, 2023) of the Journal on Baltic Security is inspired by the needs, lessons, and challenges of two years of Russian aggression against Ukraine. The 24 February 2022 invasion of Ukraine has made earlier security strategies of the Baltic Sea region seem both outdated and obsolete.

The concept of multilateral credible deterrence championed by NATO and the EU, being the main corner stone of security of the states around Baltic Sea is in 2023 not considered to be sufficient against new level of risks and threats. New solutions need to be found collectively and on multilateral levels. What is more, the old alternatives like the concept of total defense or Baltic cooperation are seen useful in dramatically changed security environment.

Among the other states in region, the Baltic states, Denmark and Finland are under greatest threat as expected to withstand Russia pressure against key border areas of NATO and entrance to Baltic Sea. While NATO assets are remarkable, the land-border with Russia is mostly covered by small and non-aggressive countries, the same relates to Danish Straits. As in 2023, security has also become the main social concern and central topic for every election campaign in countries around Baltic Sea.

In the year 2024 even a short-term containment and risk reduction strategy is needed to avoid Russia's aggressive gaze. In long term, a new sustainable national

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or trans-Baltic security strategy is needed: cost-effective and affordable, supported by allies that are in sync with each other, and able to create sufficient protection against neighbouring Russia for the upcoming decades.

There are also significant internal changes, especially in the Baltic states and Poland. First, the local Russian-speaking population in Baltic states has become more polarised and mobilised, mostly in support of Putin's imperialistic goals and against helping Ukraine. In addition, the Baltic states accommodate around 200 000 Ukrainian refugees, while Poland alone has received around 1,5 million refugees, bringing additional tensions, costs, and unpredictability. Accordingly internal security and integration will find a new and more important role for regional stability and security.

There is also good news for Baltic security outlook: Finland has joined NATO, while Sweden is ever closer to membership. Finnish NATO membership has more than doubled the NATO-Russia border by adding 1300 kilometres and will force Russia to relocate a big share of its remaining military capabilities to this 'new NATO border'. This might distribute the border pressure and ease the tensions on the Baltic and Polish borders. At the same time, Finnish defence forces will offer a very sizeable addition to NATO capabilities in the region, helping to secure the Baltic sky and be able to quickly deploy naval and land-force capabilities, if needed.

Instead of conclusions, there are many questions for academic thinkers, policy makers and shapers. Authors of the current issue of *Journal on Baltic Security* have done their best to address and analyze those challenges from their national perspective.

In the first article by Dr. Toms Rostoks and Kate Elizabete Kanasta titled *Long-term foreign and domestic implications of Latvia's reaction to Russia's aggression against Ukraine*, the focus is on Latvian external and internal variables, defining its success to survive Russian current pressure and possible growing aggression in the future. However, even when authors discuss only the Latvian examples, they recognize that similar processes appear in and impact also other Baltic states. The article looks at the potential long-term implications of Latvia's foreign and domestic policy responses to Russia's war against Ukraine. On the foreign policy front the support for economic sanctions against Russia, holding Russia responsible for war crimes in

Ukraine, and ensuring stronger NATO military presence in Latvia are the main topics of discussion. On the domestic front, the article examines the potential consequences of removal of Soviet-era monuments in Latvia, limiting access to Russian media, and reducing the role of the Russian language in public communication. The article concludes cautiously, giving real-life scenario warnings to the policymakers.

Second article *Germany Moving in to Keep Russia out: Implications and Challenges of the Bundeswehr's Permanent Deployment in Lithuania*, written by Dr. Justinas Juozaitis analyses implications and challenges of Germany's upcoming military deployment in Lithuania. A permanent stationing of brigade-sized military unit on NATO's Eastern frontier represents a major change in its force posture. Despite the official German position, that the implementation of its military commitments is contingent on Lithuania's timely improvement of its host nation support infrastructure, the paper suggests that the speed, quantity, and structure of Germany's deployment depends on the progress made in rearming the Bundeswehr and its defence policy priorities. The paper contributes to the debates on Germany's security and defence policy by providing a case-study scrutinizing the German brigade deployment in Lithuania.

The third article of this issue is written by Dr. Illimar Ploom and Iida Eliise Murumets, titled *Estonian expectations on the regional security arrangements after Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2022: disillusionment with the EU and new expectations from NATO*. This article investigates the ideas, plans and actions of Estonia to mitigate risks created by Russian aggression in Ukraine and hostile behaviour towards its NATO neighbours. It reveals that a response is gradually taking shape. In terms of collective defence a clear shift is expected from deterrence by punishment to deterrence by denial. This shift is paralleled by nearly complete disillusionment with the European Common Security and Defence Policy. While the EU is understood as a crucial actor in non-military domains, in matters of military defence Estonia solely relies on NATO. Nonetheless, no single aspect of this response at the collective level of defence is without its own risks and problems, let alone their

combination. Therefore, the article aims to find a solution in within individual, integrated and total defence.

The fourth paper is written by Dr. Asta Maskaliunaite and is titled *Do 3Bs need a new policy towards Russian emigres? Debates on the status and role of the Russian émigrés since February 2022*. She focuses on the internal security matters related with the influx of Russian and Belarusian émigrés to the Baltic states. Presence of many Russian and Belarusian citizens in the Baltics creates some tensions in the Baltics states, leading to high profile discussions on the nature and direction of their engagement with the Russian (and, to some extent, Belarusian) diaspora. The purpose of the article is to explore the policies directed towards Russian émigrés and the potential development in the future. The Baltic states, Finland and Poland became the most important entry points for those fleeing Russia towards the West in 2022. The discussion on implications of this development allows a deeper look into security threat vs. humanitarian obligations dilemma. The third section of her article considers how to deal with the new Russian diaspora, especially when it comes to political and legal representation, fostering its democratic potential, and addressing the issue of imperialism and reconciliation.

The Special Issue concludes with my review on the outlooks of the book *European Strategic Autonomy and Small States Security*, edited by Prof. Dr. Giedrius Česnakas and Dr. Justinas Juozaitis and published by Routledge earlier this year.