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Strengthening Resilience of Lithuania in an Era of Great Power Competition: The Case for Total Defence

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Abstract: In response to the power redistribution in the international system, the United States prepares for long-term Great power competition. It is aiming at strengthening America's network of alliances and partnerships in order to counter a rising China and revisionist Russia. The other states react to greater or lesser extent to the changing constraints and opportunities in the international system. The article examines how Lithuania, being a small state that belongs to the North Atlantic Alliance, is adapting to these systemic pressures. Current NATO's deterrence posture in the Baltic region is something akin to *deterrence by the assured response* – NATO is sending a signal that if the Russians attacked, NATO would respond in the Baltics. Lithuania, as well as other Baltic countries, has undertaken many legal, procedural, financial and technical measures to boost resilience and deterrence. However, there are not enough national or NATO military forces that would be able to counter conventional Russian forces deployed in the region. There are challenges such as air defence and control of the Baltic Sea. Also land forces are not present in adequate quantities. As a result, Lithuania has to strengthen its own capabilities with the help of the allied countries. It argued in the article that building up a total defence system in Lithuania would be a right effort in this regard.

Keywords: Great power competition; total defence; societal resilience; resistance.

1 Introduction

Many international relations analysts and commentators note that the world order is changing and humanity has entered a transitional phase. In the second decade of the 21st century, regional competition in Europe, Asia and in the Americas has intensified (Mearsheimer, 2018) (Kagan, 2018), (Mazarr, 2018). Technology innovation and development is uneven. It is fuelled by the growing geopolitical opposition of Russia, Iran, and China to the US global leadership and economic globalization. The US liberal hegemony, in securing a global open world economy, was the one that created conditions for China to emerge as a main challenger to the U.S. (Mearsheimer, 2018), (Kotkin, 2018). However, the USA retains its hegemony in almost every sphere since the disparity between the USA and other poles of power is still very conspicuous. However, the gap between the USA and China which claim the status of emerging potential superpower is gradually diminishing (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2016).

As realists would expect, relative US power decline to a rising China and other challengers, results in a situation when states that have lived under the US security guarantees, including Lithuania, should respond to the redistribution of power in the global international system. Bearing in mind such systemic change, a question for this research is to explore has Lithuania responded? And if it does, then to what extent and in which ways Lithuania adapts to an emerging great power competition?

Since 2014 Lithuania, as well as other Baltic countries, has undertaken many legal, procedural, financial and technical measures to improve resilience and deterrence. The thorough document analysis has been carried out during the research. Also, Lithuanian national security policy research is based not only on the analysis of the judicial acts,

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documents of the Lithuanian government institutions, statistical data but on extensive interviews with the national security officials.

In total, 7 interviews were carried on with the decision makers from Lithuanian MOD, Armed forces, Government office and other institutions. Their identities are not disclosed, but are known to authors. During the interviews the experts were asked for an assessment of the existing total defence system, recent developments in this system (changes in judicial regulation, institutional design, existing practices), and discussions concerning the future changes in this field.

2 Theoretical and methodological premises

International politics can be defined as an interrelation determined by the strategic choices (and implementation of strategies) of states and other subjects in the international arena. The consequences of international politics are the variations of the actors' power. This analytical approach to international processes is based on the neoclassical realist approach that posits a strategic choice in the discipline of international relations. It is one of the realist approaches which itself represent the paradigm of rationalism.

The contemporary realist theories (both structural and neoclassical variants) remain dominant within the paradigm of rationalism in international relations. Rationalism is based on materialist ontology and positivist epistemology. It is assumed that the reality is real, material and does not depend on an observer's point of view. Such stance enables a clear distinction between facts and ideas (including their normative evaluation) and objective, scientifically based exploration of the former. Rationalism holds an unambiguously holistic approach towards the structure – agent dilemma assuming that the structural factors determine the actions of agents, and, in turn, these actions (intended or unintended) affect the structure (Waever, 1999, 17-29).

Neoclassical realism has emerged as an augmented theory of structural realism or neorealism. It combines structural realism's accentuation upon importance of the international structure (distribution of power, threats and interests, tendency to balance) with classical realists' recognition that a closer look is needed at "unit-level" factors (domestic political, institutional, social, economic and cognitive variables). It posits that behaviour of the states can be accounted for by systemic factors as well as cognitive variables, such as perception/misperception of systemic pressures, intentions by other actors, and domestic distribution of power that allows decision-makers to pursue their goals in regard of the international distribution of power (Van Hooft & Freyberg-Inan, 2019, 55-56).

In other words, neoclassical realism postulates the key explanatory importance to the international distribution of power which constrains and (dis)incentivises states to act in the international arena. It sets the options they can pursue, despite the intentions of decision-makers. However, realists maintain that, although policymakers attempt to respond rationally to these constraints and opportunities, misperceptions or other sources of deviation - limited information, ideology, culture, identity or historical experiences - may actually lead to erroneous (suboptimal) actions.

From a realist perspective, states fail to respond adequately to systemic pressures either by inappropriate balancing (overbalancing /underbalancing) or non-balancing or avoiding balancing either because of political inefficiency, military/economic/social weakness, incorrect perception of threats and other cognitive factors that lead to overall inability to balance. All in all, neoclassical realist synthesis holds that international and domestic distribution of power defines the survival of the states and their political regimes (Van Hooft & Freyberg-Inan, 2019, 55-56).

The proponents of the neoclassical realist approach suggest that actors (subjects) are rational. They have goals (interests) and make priorities, and seek to achieve them by the best means in their own consideration. The actors create strategies for achieving their goals. The implementation of the actor's strategies creates possibilities of interaction with other subjects and strategic choices of these subjects (the actor's environment) determining the goal achievement of the actor in the international system (Lake & Powell, 1999, 3-38).

Another realist approach (method) to international relations is geopolitics. Acknowledging constraints and opportunities given by international distribution of power, geopolitics points out that foreign policy decisions are made in specific times and concrete places. Geopolitical view stresses the dynamic mutually determined interaction between geography, economics, culture and politics, where geography (in broad sense) sets conditions (imperatives, constraints, enablers) subject to political interpretation by actors in the international arena. Out of these subjective interpretations

national security strategies arise that bring about unintended outcomes resulting in global and regional geopolitical structures. Since politicians and states seeking their goals, are constrained by geographical, economic, technological realities and their relations with other states (Friedman, 2009, 10-13)

If the end of the Cold War had discredited realism to an extent that some of its apologists, began desperately asking: “Is anybody still a realist?” (Legro & Moravcsik, 1999), then after the Crimea annexation by Russia many analysts and policy practitioners started to proclaim the return of geopolitics (Mead, 2014) and realism (Mearsheimer, 2018), (Orsi et al., 2018), (Walt, 2019), (Belloni et al., 2019), (Rynning, 2019).

There have been many events and processes in the last ten years that have demonstrated return of geopolitical thinking in international politics: conflicts in Libya, Syria, the US trade war with China, the annexation of Crimea, the suppression of democratic protests in Belarus, the recent Azerbaijan war over Nagorno-Karabakh war, and so on. The international policy choices of many powers in the world (both great and middle ones) suggest that realist and geopolitical motives lie behind them. However, this is not a decisive argument in this article to choose the perspective of realism (in its synthetic form combining neoclassical and structural realism), as a theoretical basis, to analyse Lithuania’s national security policy in the global context of rising competition between great powers.

Neoclassical realism provides more convincing, than other theories and approaches, not only accounts for historical developments in international relations (Gilpin, 1987, 9-49) but also successful predictions (Van Hooft & Freyberg-Inan, 2019, 65). Realists have foreseen counterbalancing on the part of Russia and China emerging during the U.S. unipolar moment” (Waltz, 2000, 26-35) (Posen, 2003, 41-42). Neoclassical realism is better in explaining and predicting contemporary conflicts and cooperation by the international actors than liberal institutionalism, economic interdependence theory or democratic peace theory (Mearsheimer, 2018, 175-200). As expected by realist theories, the subjects of the international system are disposed to act according to balance-of-power logic. First and foremost, actors of the international system, primarily states (especially great powers) tend to balance because the anarchic international system prompts them to do so (Mearsheimer, 2018, 201-206).

Thus, the international system, as a regular interaction of various political actors historically oscillated between hegemonic, balance power, and bipolar structure. There is a tendency for bipolar systems to be unstable and non-permanent (Gilpin, 1987, 29). They are replaced through great power competition by either a hegemonic structure or a balance of power, though there is no clear tendency that favours either a balance of power or hegemony (Wohlforth et al., 2007, 20).

Since the world remains decentralized and sufficiently competitive, the realist analysis of power politics by states (and other actors), and consequences of differential distribution of material and organizational capabilities in the international system provide a more parsimonious explanation for choices, actions by the states and outcomes of their interaction on Earth (Van Hooft & Freyberg-Inan, 2019, 53-77). M.J. Peterson has nicely concluded the ongoing debates on the usefulness of realism “IR Realism is not sufficient for understanding and explaining international politics, but its concerns with power politics in a decentralized system remain necessary. That is why it persists” (Peterson, 2018, 165).

3 Strategic choices for the hegemonic power and for small states

From a realist perspective, the United States is a super-power, the hegemon of the international system (Mearsheimer, 2001, 40). All other states positioning themselves and construct their policies with the view of their relation to the USA (Ferguson, 2004) (Ikenberry, 2011). As a hegemonic state the U.S. seeks to preserve its status and primacy in a unipolar international system (Mearsheimer, 2001). According to geopolitical view, the fundamental geopolitical interest of the US is politically divided Eurasia (Brzezinski, 1997). International system, however, is slowly sliding towards asymmetric unipolarity (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2016), (Mazarr, 2018).

Any hegemon has two strategic choices to follow in order to retain the status quo: 1) active engagement of competing revisionists; 2) passive blockage of the rival states. Each of these choices presupposes adoption of the appropriate strategies. Hegemon may attempt to turn growing revisionists into *status quo* actors, by serving some of their important interests, building collective security systems, and thus “*incorporating*” the revisionist state (or other actors) into the existing international order. In such a way it would be changing their intentions to resist the existing structure of

international relations. Likewise, the *prevention* of revisionists can mean an aggressive attack on states and other actors (from diplomatic isolation to armed conflict) questioning the current international situation in order to change the intentions and / or opportunities of revisionists.

On the other hand, the hegemon can maintain its position by *blocking* the rise of competitors. Revisionists can be contained (checked) by surrounding them with hostile military, political, economic alliances, in other words, by isolating and denying rival actors opportunities for territorial, political and economic expansion. The hegemon can achieve the same effect of blocking revisionists by encouraging competition and hostility among revisionists themselves (*indirect/offshore balancing*). In this way, revisionist states themselves restrain the development of each other's influence (Kapstein & Mastanduno, 1999), (Brown, 2000), (Layne, 2007).

Small states, as a rule, are *status quo* states, which are first and foremost interested in ensuring their self-security. They should have some power for avoiding (limiting) the control of great powers over them and they acquire this power by bandwagoning with more powerful states. Such a weak *status quo* state uses the strategy of strategic surrender. They bandwagon the revisionist trying to appease it or bandwagon *status quo* states in effort to ensure security against revisionist.

Small states may use the tactics of bargaining while seeking for more favourable terms of “strategic surrender”. Due to the limited resources, they are not able to offer a lot in the negotiations and therefore they have to bandwagon offering their benevolence and expecting to retain autonomy in exchange (Steinsson & Thorhallsson, 2017, 6-9), (Simpson, 2018, 126-128).

4 Changing global and regional context

The rise of major revisionist powers, seeking to counter the U.S. and become regional dominants is a major driving force underlying international dynamics. Their objective is to carve out for themselves exclusive zones of interests. The dominant state or group of states in the region attempt at creating regional military-political and economic blocs that some other nation states oppose while others cling to these military-political groupings. However, the political, economic, civilizational and ethnic boundaries of these regional groupings intertwine and the regional configuration of the international system remains very dynamic (Barbieri, 2019), (Creutz et al., 2019, 25-26), (Acharya, 2014). In addition, the COVID-19 crisis has reduced the volume of cross-border trade, thus bringing to the forefront the need for ‘decoupling’ and ‘onsourcing’ in the USA and Europe, and thereby, causing uncertainty in the global economy (Pisani, 2020).

Small and medium-sized states cannot and will not be able in the future to compete with the economically strongest states and their blocks, capable of making the biggest allocations for military research and its technological application, which are highly advanced in terms of military technological power (in outer space, potentially there may be nine competing states in general, however realistically—only the USA, Russia, and China) (Česnakas, 2019).

Therefore, small states according to realists' prescriptions are expected either to ally with a hegemon or the strongest revisionist state, or pursue neutrality to ensure security. Their choice depends on a variety of geopolitical, economic, cultural and other factors. However, during such periods of great power competition, as H. Morgenthau once noticed, independence (or even survival) of a small state depends on which side of competing rivals - revisionist or status quo - it would decide to choose (Morgenthau et al., 2005, 188-192). If the great power rivalry accelerates, the survival of small states will be in their ability to find specialised niches/functions which are beneficial for great powers in such an international environment.

However, this approach does not give much guidance to security and defence policy practitioners in Lithuania. Lithuania made a strategic choice to work alongside the U.S. in the nineties of XX century when it applied for NATO membership. Geopolitics provides for a much clearer imperatives to be pursued for Lithuania if it wants to assure its national security.

Because of the historical circumstances, Russia, as the most powerful state of Central Eurasia, can exert a multifaceted influence upon the Baltic States. For Russia, the eastern part of the Baltic Sea region is a natural *barrier* protecting it from the power of the maritime states. In addition, this territory is a handy outpost with which to project its influence further into Central Europe (Statkus & Paulauskas, 2006).

It is reasonable to believe that no state or group of states apart from the U.S. currently is capable or willing to counterbalance Russia's influence in the Eastern part of the Baltic Sea region. The U.S. (and also, partially, the United Kingdom [UK]) have the interests, willingness, and capabilities to defend the Baltic states from Russia's ostensibly malign influence (Hooker, Jr., 2019). Thus, the U.S.'s and Lithuania's long-term interests towards Russia are the same. Since Lithuania is on the Eastern frontier of NATO, it has all the prerequisites to obtain for the U.S. political, diplomatic, and certain forms of military support in the context of heated competition with Russia and China. U.S. Secretary of Defence M. T. Esper has recently emphasized that 'great-power competition requires us to engage with every nation more strategically, no matter its size.' (Wemer, 2020).

A credible deterrence in the Baltic States could be achieved only by establishing a power balance to counter around 350,000 Russian troops in the region. A famous RAND study indicated that around seven brigades (three heavy armoured) with supporting airpower and land-fires are needed at the beginning of the hostilities in this regard (Shlapak & Johnson, 2016). To close the existing gap of conventional forces would require placing an additional number of NATO and U.S. troops to currently deployed eFP battalions.

This proposition is politically hardly attainable in the current international security situation when American troops might be needed outside Europe and American domestic political circumstances. Since the political will to move more NATO troops into the Baltics is lacking, a conventional rebalancing would not come into the region very soon, and despite impressive assurance and adaptation measures undertaken by NATO, its overall defence position remains delicate in the Baltic Sea region (Hooker, 2019, 4, pp. 13–14).

There is a broad understanding in the West, that in order to stabilize the security situation in the Baltic Sea region and deter Russia from possible aggressive actions, Western countries need to solve such problems as regional conventional forces asymmetry in the region (Boston et al., 2018, pp. 5–11) and differences in the reaction time, so-called the *distance-time gap* problem (Milevski, 2018, pp. 172–175). Thus, the main burden of deterrence might fall on the Baltics' shoulders themselves (Hooker, 2019, pp. 14–16), as a consequence bringing back to life total/comprehensive defence concepts (Wither, 2020, p. 62).

The U.S. expects Lithuania and other Baltics to increase their own defence efforts. Strengthening defence does not merely refer to maintaining military spending at least 2% of GDP (Jakštaitė, 2019; Hooker, 2019). Therefore, Lithuania and other Baltic States have to do more to motivate their domestic societies to improve resilience and resistance capabilities to increase the cost of aggression. American partners suppose that Lithuania, as well as other Baltic States, will be conducting a resistance war, making it a Whole-of-Society effort rather than a fight by dispersed individuals, groups, or solely the armed forces (Flanagan et al., 2019; Urbelis, 2020, p. 79).

It is expected that Lithuania would enhance not only societal resilience, but also energy security, and introduce necessary changes in the legal base to counter hybrid and other unconventional threats to national security. From the American point of view, it is vital to improve infrastructure to support the forward defence of NATO and enable enhanced deployment and mobility of defence assets (Urbelis, 2020).

Though the focus of Western analysts and planners is on resistance after a potential occupation, Lithuanians view societal resilience and resistance more as a deterrence and self-defence effort (Bankauskaitė, 2020). This is a compelling approach since resilience complements comprehensive/total defence efforts and falls nicely within the provisions of Article 3 (self-help and mutual aid) and Article 5 (solidarity) of the North Atlantic Treaty.

In the Warsaw summit NATO countries committed to enhancing resilience through civil preparedness since Alliance has understood resilience's crucial relationship to supporting NATO's collective security and reinforcing Allied deterrence and defence. Resilience remains primarily national responsibility, though NATO has formulated 7 baseline requirements for national resilience to be achieved and maintained. The requirements consist of the continuity of core functions of government, provision of vital services to the population and civil assistance to the military in a case of crisis (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 2020).

Total (or comprehensive) defence belongs to the holistic attitude to national security that aims at deterring potential enemies by increasing the cost and diminishing the success of aggression (Wither, 2020, p. 62). The total defence was employed by non-aligned countries, in particular Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, and Yugoslavia during the Cold War. Currently, Finland retains the total defence approach; Israel, Singapore, Sweden, and Norway also implement Total defence policies that include Whole-of-Society preparedness for the military and civilian crisis, cooperation between government institutions, NGOs, the private sector and the general public (Wither, 2020, p. 62).

After the Cold War, theoretical underpinnings for total defence have been nicely supplied by B. Buzan's 'societal security' concept. This concept holds that threats to modern complex society manifest themselves in a variety of forms across a spectrum ranging from economic deficiencies, lack of social cohesion, malfunctioning of infrastructure, to military attack. All threats might lead to loss of independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity (Bailes, 2014, pp. 68–71).

Therefore, the majority of the definitions of total defence accentuate the essential feature - total defence is focused not only on military defence but includes civil defence as well. It is a national security policy framework that encompasses 'all activities necessary to prepare a nation for conflict in defense of its independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity' (Fiala, 2020, p. 2).

Societal and infrastructural resilience constitute a civilian dimension, while territorial defence constitutes the military dimension of total defence. The territorial defence comprises mobilization through conscription, preparedness for civil defence, violent and non-violent, active and passive resistance (Wither, 2020, p. 62). Total defence, as being a comprehensive approach to national security and deterrence strategy at the same time, comprises military, civilian, informational and psychological dimensions. Each of the dimensions consist of a number of crucial elements that can be included into this strategy (Berzina, 2019, 71).

In total defence concept deterrence and resilience become closely related and support each other. Military aspects (conventional and unconventional) constitute the essential component of national deterrence. Thus, civilian, informational and psychological elements underpin societal and infrastructure pillars of resilience. In turn, resilience forms an effective basis for deterrence by denial (Berzina, 2019, 82-83).

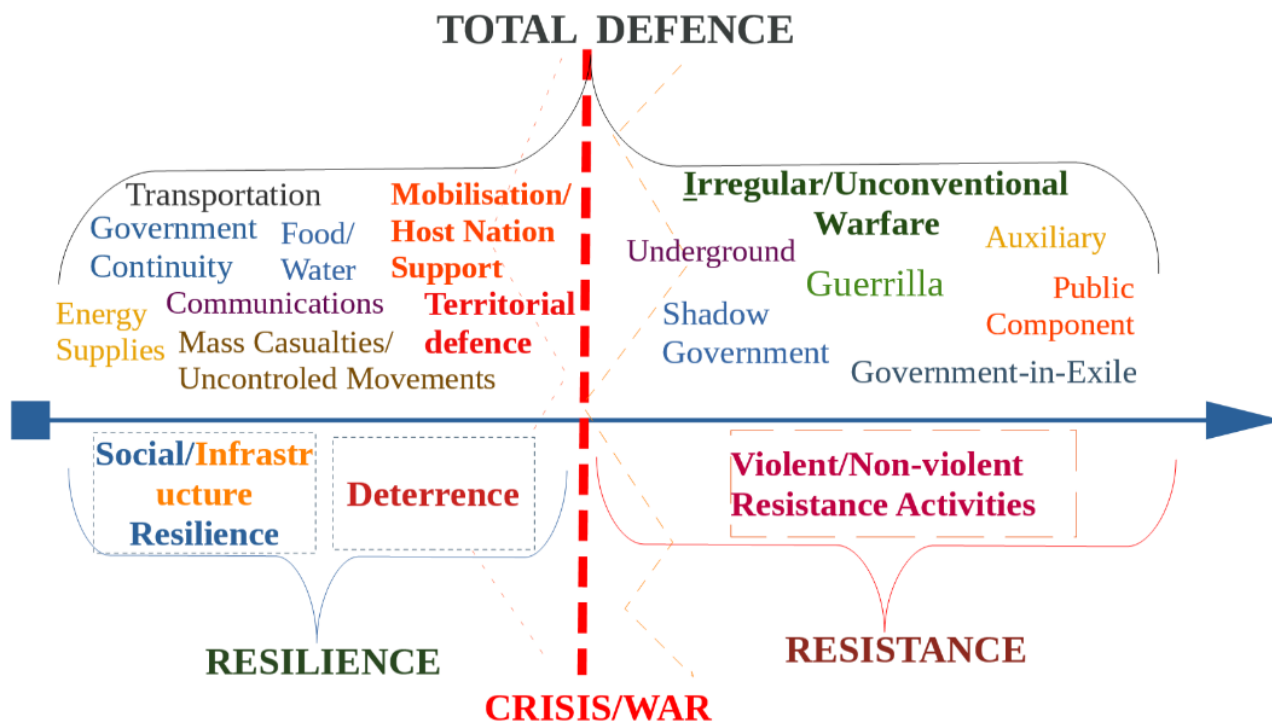
Within the above-mentioned 4 dimensions of total defence, I. Berzina distinguishes key elements for total defence to be effective. As a rule, **military pillar** of total defence encompasses *compulsory military or alternative service; speedy mobilization*, the combination of *conventional and unconventional war-fighting tactics; coordination of military and non-military measure; use of advanced military technologies*. The **civilian dimension** provides for *civil defence/protection system, protection of critical infrastructure* and a *robust economic development*. The **information dimension** consists of: *a strategic communication, countering disinformation* and *vibrant cyber security system*. **Psychological sphere** of total defence ensures a strong *state and societal identity, social cohesion* and *willingness to defend the country* (Berzina, 2019, 72-81).

Societal security puts a premium on comprehensiveness, mutual dependence, and shared discipline. Although it should be easier to attain in small states, the practice shows that internal social/ethnic divisions, political/ideological polarisation, governmental factionalism fuelled by nepotism, and corruption can prevent even a few million nations to instrumentalise total defence effectively. However, if such obstacles are overcome, the total/comprehensive defence approach provides the most promising avenue to bolster a small state's resilience and ability to offer resistance, since, in comparison, a big, strong military nation might not be effective because of a weak divided society (Bailes, 2014, pp. 71–73).

Therefore, the doctrine of resilience becomes relevant to the national and collective defence and overall deterrence, and resistance against aggression. Enhancing resilience lays the basis for resolute resistance. Societal, infrastructure, governmental resilience and military deterrence is being intertwined with resistance as its foundation – deterrence through resilience. The essence of deterrence through resilience is to discourage a potential opponent that aggression would not be worthy not only because of resolute military response, but also because of the overarching governmental and society will and ability to push back the attack (Žilinskas, 2017, 58).

As Dr. Jyri Raitasalo points out in his recent interview the best defence against hybrid threats and gray-zone warfare is to make sure that society is resilient/functional which, in turn, is a society which every citizen feels a stakeholder in defence of a country and all segments of society have a role to play in keeping the nation protected (Raitasalo, 2020). Therefore, the relationship between resilience, deterrence and resistance is mutually reinforcing in total defence approach (see 1 scheme).

As it is clear that the Baltic States would not be in a position to prevent Russian aggression by themselves, if Russia were determined to launch a full-spectrum conventional offensive, the NATO Article 5 (solidarity) would remain the foundation of Baltic countries' security. Having said that, however, one has to assume that in case of a large-scale conventional attack, defence of the Baltic countries would depend on the capabilities provided by the allies, the Baltic Armed Forces' ability to fight back the aggressor, and their capacity to support arriving allies on the ground by themselves. In turn, this ability of the Baltic countries would be based on preparedness for territorial defence (including



Scheme 1: Total Defence relation to Resilience and Resistance.

frontline operations, host-nation support, military installations to slow down enemy’s advance, and maintaining order in non-occupied territories) (Andžāns & Veebel, 2017).

If the conventional territorial defence fails, national resistance, that includes irregular and unconventional warfare actions, would gain importance in delaying the occupiers (Fiala, 2020, pp. 19–21), imposing costs of occupation, and assisting NATO’s eventual counterattack. Indeed, a pervasive active resistance combined with a strategic communication campaign addressed at global audiences would impede annexation and demonstrate that occupied countries are not pacified (Flanagan et al., 2019, pp. 15–16, 26).

Thus, the total defence concept nicely complements deterrence by denial strategy since Russia, similar to other aggressive, revisionist powers, seeks swift, opportunistic territorial acquisition, and, therefore, demonstration to Russia that an occupation attempt would be rather costly could be effective (Saxi et al., 2020).

However, Lithuanian national security cannot be safeguarded as a sole success story, if all in the transatlantic community are not on the same page in countering threats and risks. The key political question is how receptive Central East European Countries and Alliances, in general, would be to indicators of Russian aggression (Milevski, 2019, 209).

5 Threat perception in Lithuania

Similar to other Baltic states, Lithuania, because of its strategic geographical position, being on the frontline of military-political and economic blocs (NATO and European Union [EU] membership), and other cultural-historical reasons, is a target of traditional Russian expansionist policy and ever increasing (particularly in the last few years) and openly exerted Chinese interests.

In the case of Russia, one can observe the use of a broad range of tools aimed at weakening societal resilience (‘will to resist/defend’), and subvert ruling elites (both public and corporate components). This could be seen both as the tool for achievement of the foreign and national security policy objectives (weak and easy to manipulate Lithuania, ‘trojan horse’ inside of the NATO and EU, etc.) and also possible preparation for full scale takeover (including through usage of conventional military forces).

Russia has ‘weaponised’ almost everything in all domains. Military force build-up and projection, information warfare, economic statecraft (including energy and financial tools), consolidation of the sympathizers, and other activities of the adversaries against Lithuanian (and other Western) states and society are thriving on the existing vulnerabilities of the targets. Opponents just try to amplify active fundamental problems, which are often not addressed by the government. Russian intelligence services support Russian foreign policy by conducting active and aggressive influence operations, including espionage, against Lithuania. They use business, tourist, and other non-diplomatic covers, expanding the geographical spectrum of the intelligence work and conducting intelligence operations from Russia or in third countries (Second Investigation Department Under the Ministry of National Defence & State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2020).

Chinese intelligence operations also seek to support Chinese foreign policy objectives, primarily to ensure passivity in Lithuanian authorities regarding Tibet and Taiwan. They also collect information on Lithuanian foreign and economic policies, defence sector, international cooperation, NATO, and EU classified information (Second Investigation Department Under the Ministry of National Defence & State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, 2020, pp. 32–34).

6 Resolute national response

Lithuania, at least formally, is developing its comprehensive/total defence system from the 1990s. There is a strong feeling of importance of the involvement of the society in the field of defence.

This is in some sense a result of the painful historical experiences of the 20th century. In 1940, the Lithuanian government decided not to fight against Soviet occupation and ordered the armed forces to lay down their arms. On the other hand, there was an active guerrilla insurgency in 1944–1952, which is often considered as compensation for the painful experiences of the 1940 surrender.

Achievement of Lithuanian independence in 1988–1991 was partially the result of societal resistance against Soviet occupation forces (there was also a less visible paramilitary component). The main lessons were summarized in the 1992 Lithuanian Constitution. Article 3 states that, ‘The Nation and each citizen shall have the right to resist anyone who encroaches on the independence, territorial integrity, and constitutional order of the State of Lithuania by force.’ Article 139 states that, ‘The defence of the State of Lithuania against a foreign armed attack shall be the right and duty of each citizen of the Republic of Lithuania.’ (*The Constitution of The Republic of Lithuania*, 1992).

From the very onset of independence, which Lithuania regained by peaceful Whole-of-Society non-violent resistance efforts (‘singing revolution’), the conceptual foundations of civil defence and resistance were laid down, together with launching certain educational activities. Having applied for NATO membership in 1994, the ideas of conventional territorial defence, combined with irregular (partisan) warfare and civil resistance, came into the national security debate. The first successful Chechen war stimulated a lot of enthusiasm for combined defensive urban warfare, and both violent and non-violent civil resistance (Šlekys, 2015, pp. 113–114).

In the end, a solution for national defence has been found in merging non-violent societal resistance with civil defence and incorporating military elements by the introduction of the *Law on Basics of National Security* in 1996. It states that Lithuanian national security shall be ensured by two main actors – the state and the citizens. One of the main components for citizens shall be the preparation for total civil resistance and the development of public (civil) institutions, citizen unions, and associations (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, 2020). Since then, at least ‘on paper’, Lithuania is developing a total defence system, based both on ‘whole of government’ and ‘whole of society’ approaches; however, priority always was placed on conventional armed forces (Šlekys, 2015, p. 166).

Russian aggression against Ukraine has revived the issue of citizens’ preparedness for national defence. Main documents on national security and defence policy have been updated in recent years in response to changes in the security environment, to make sure that provisions on civil and patriotic education and civil resistance are developed further. In other words, it is understood that even if the highest leaders of the country or the armed forces decide not to fight back against aggression, the armed forces and citizens have the right and should do so.

This idea is clearly stated in the *Law on Armed Defence and Resistance Against Aggression*, which states that defence against aggression is obligatory both for the armed forces and every citizen. The nation and every citizen should defend the country using every possible means which does not breach the norms of international law. Even more explicitly,

Article 9.2 of this Law states, that ‘In case of aggression none of the government institutions or specific officials is allowed to make a decision or to give an order, which would prohibit defence against aggression. Any of such decisions or orders are null and void’ (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, 2000).

Lithuania does not want a repetition of the painful historical experiences when independence was lost, and later regained because of the favourable environment and will of the society. Despite the considerable advantage of Russia in the field of conventional military forces in the Baltic Sea region, it could be managed by the strengthening of both the national and NATO military capabilities, and improvement of the resilience of national governmental institutions and society.

It is believed that a resilient national security system and prepared society could act as efficient deterrents. For example, even if Lithuania is preparing society for civil resistance (even for the cases of aggression and possible partial or full occupation), ‘deterrence by denial’ (changing the strategic calculus of the potential opponent in order to prevent aggression) is preferred over ‘deterrence by punishment’ (civil resistance in the occupied territory, which would be later freed by the Allies).

In other words, Lithuania should become as difficult to ‘swallow’ as possible.

Russia in its strategic calculations must understand that it will be impossible to achieve easy, rapid victory till Western partners will decide what to do and gather necessary resources. The key deterring factor is Moscow’s perception that NATO partners will act swiftly and decisively, and that Lithuanian Armed Forces (LAF) with a civilian population will be able to provide sufficient resistance until the relief will come.

One has to mention that a resilient governmental system and society are also very important for countering different kinds of hybrid (‘grey zone’) influences and aggression scenarios. For example, protection of the critical infrastructure, deterring information threats, election interference, countering intelligence activities, etc. (Schaus et al., 2018; Braw, 2019).

7 Towards whole-of-government approach: rapid transformation after 2014

Russian aggression against Georgia in 2008, but particularly aggression against Ukraine in 2014, created a very strong stimulus for Lithuanian state institutions to achieve considerable progress in tackling both conventional and unconventional complex threats stemming from Russia (and to a lesser extent, China). The progress is clearly visible both in the fields of conventional military capabilities and in tackling non-conventional threats.

From 2014 to 2020, the defence budget quadrupled in nominal terms and increased from 0.76% to 2.02% of GDP (Lietuvos Respublikos krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2020). Such rapid increase helped to start serious military capabilities, building projects (creation of the second armoured brigade, big arms acquisition projects such as Boxer AFV [180], PZH 2000, NASAMS-3 air defence systems, UH-60M ‘Black Hawk’ helicopters, JLTVs, etc.), and modernization of the existing and creation of the new military infrastructure.

In 2015, Lithuania reintroduced military conscription (it was suspended in 2008). Importance of this factor in the development of the total defence system is discussed later in this article.

There are also considerable achievements in tackling non-conventional threats. Lithuania has considerable achievements in **information warfare** – both in the public and non-governmental sectors.

For example, the understanding of the Lithuanian society on Russian information warfare methods was considerably improved. Such tools as TV programs, internet articles on debunking unfriendly propaganda narratives, improvement of media literacy, and other related topics are initiated both by the governmental institutions and public initiative. There are also a considerable number of seminars and presentations for public officials and different groups of society (school pupils, pensioners, different regions of Lithuania, and so on).

Lithuania undertook legal actions to suspend licenses for those Russian TV programs disseminating disinformation and hatred. Lithuanian civilian sector initiatives in the field of defence against information warfare were internationally acclaimed. The most well known are the so-called ‘elves’ (the group of active citizens who are organized to debunk ‘fake news’ and other unfriendly informational activities) (Debunk. eu, n.d.).

Until recently, Lithuanian governmental institutions' activities in the field of tackling information threats were very active, but not always well coordinated. Sometimes there were overlaps between different institutions, which occasionally led to inefficient use of limited resources, and also to uncoordinated messages.

In 2019–2020 the new integrated Governmental Strategic Communication Coordination System was introduced, which consolidated all government efforts in this sphere. The system operated under the coordination of the Risk Management and Crisis Prevention Group of the Chancellery of the Government of Lithuania (Prime Minister's office). The Inter-institutional Strategic Communication coordination group led by the Group, analyses information space, detects information threat challenges, discusses and prepares the Government STRATCOM guidelines, and coordinates relevant public information campaigns (e.g., how to recognize information and cyber threat challenges).

The Lithuanian government also consolidated the **cyber security system** under the Ministry of National Defense (MOD) umbrella. The National cyber security centre was created, which considerably improved coordination of cyber security efforts, which were earlier scattered between the different governmental institutions. This, besides other benefits, should help to achieve better protection of the critical infrastructure. The newly created centre is very active in educating both governmental institutions and society on cyber threat prevention (for example, on unsafe hardware and software products from adversary countries).

Lithuania aims to achieve considerable **strengthening of the energy independence** from Russia. After closing of the Ignalina nuclear power plant in 2010, Lithuania was 90% dependent on the energy resources procured from Russia. This created a wide range of influence tools (including financing of the local politicians through natural gas and electricity intermediary companies). Now the situation is dramatically better. Energy independence projects such as re-nationalization of the natural gas company (previously partly owned by GAZPROM), liberalization of the natural gas and electricity markets, construction of the LNG terminal in Klaipėda, and construction of the electricity links with Poland and Sweden, has created viable alternatives against possible Russian use of pressure tools. Currently, the crucially important project of synchronization of the electricity network with the Western European networks (and desynchronization with BRELL, operated from Moscow) is underway.

In 2018, Lithuania considerably strengthened the already efficient **judicial regulation of the investments from the adversary countries** into the strategically important sectors. The new regulation also limits acquisitions of potentially dangerous software and equipment, produced by these countries (for example, Kaspersky antivirus). This regulation was already used to block dangerous investment and acquisitions (for example, plans to build aircraft repair facilities close to the NATO air policing mission base, and creation of very big data centres). In the future, this legislation will be tested on such sensitive issues as Huawei and 5G. **Financial system is cleaning itself** from the banks, which were actively involved in the problematic financial transactions.

Lithuanian intelligence agencies are active in **countering intelligence activities** of the adversary countries. From 2013, societal awareness on intelligence and other security threats has risen through the publication of fully explicit annual threat assessments, in which officials and the civilian population are educated on the unfriendly activities of the adversary countries (for example, recruitment for intelligence activities mechanisms) (State Security Department of Lithuania, 2020).

Not less important is the transformation of the governmental institutional system, which is aimed towards efficient tackling of the conventional and so-called hybrid threats. Lithuania is aiming to create an efficient crisis management system, based on the good 'total or comprehensive defence' practices adopted from such countries as Finland, UK, Sweden, Switzerland, and others. Integrated crisis management systems are being developed with the changes of institutional mechanisms.

Creation of the efficient 'whole-of-government' national security system in Lithuania is also on the way, but results in this field are still mixed. After 2014, there are considerable achievements, but coordination between institutions and judicial regulation still needs improvement.

At the highest political strategic level, crucial decisions on national security and defence are made by the **State Defence Council** that comprises the President, the Chairman of the Parliament, the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence and the Chief of Defence. Other ministers and heads of agencies could be invited to meetings of the Council depending on the problem at hand. The president is the chairman of the Council. However, the Council, contrary to the other national security councils in some other countries, lacks an administrative staff.

The main executive body is the **National Security Commission** led by the Prime Minister, which runs an integrated crisis management system (to which legal changes were made in 2019). The Commission aims at monitoring, preventing,

and responding to the crisis at the political level. For this purpose, the main supporting/coordinating administrative body is the **Joint Threat Prevention and Crisis Management Group** that draws experts from various Government ministries and agencies. Its work is supported by the **Threat Management and Crisis Prevention Group (Bureau)** that was established at the Government Office. Its activity is based on national indicators and warnings systems, which forms the basis for this integrated threat and crisis management system.

The **National Security Commission** plays the main coordinating role in crisis management. Other state institutions take lead on specific issues or contribute according to their areas of responsibility. These other main government institutions involved in developing policy for total defence are the MOD, the Ministry of Interior (MOI), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Health, the LAF, and the State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania.

The leading agencies that are responsible for preparedness for total defence include the Mobilization and Civil Resistance Department (MCRD) under Ministry of National Defence, the Second Investigation Department under the MOD, the National Cyber Security Centre under the MOD, and several agencies under the MOI: Fire and Rescue Department, Police Department, Border Protection Service, VIP Protection Service, and Public Security Service.

Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats, the main party that won the recent elections to the Parliament, will be forming the Government and envisages turning Threat Management and Crisis Prevention Group (Bureau) into **Emergency Situations and Crisis Management Centre**, which includes 24/7 situation awareness capability. The Centre would be directly subordinate to the Prime Minister. In this manner, it is expected to strengthen the Prime Minister's ability to deal with National level security crises (Tėvynės Sąjunga - Lietuvos Krikščionys Demokratai, 2020).

In the case of armed defence, Lithuania has already a well-structured and planned system. There is a 'Plan for State Armed Defence' (classified), which describes the role of the different institutions which will take part in the armed defence (the LAF, the Border Protection Service, the VIP Protection Service, and the Public Security Service under Ministry of Interior).

Still, in the words of National security adviser to the President and former Chief of Defence Lieutenant General (ret.) V. Žukas, Lithuania lacks an all-encompassing defence plan, which would define how different government institutions and society would need to act as a whole in case the country were faced with armed aggression (Jaruševičiūtė, 2019).

The existing crisis management system was stress-tested during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (and to a lesser extent during the fire in the used tyres processing factory in Alytus in 2019). These situations demonstrated considerable shortcomings of the existing regulations and institutional arrangements, which are being tackled in the upcoming reforms. Lithuanian government institutions understand this gap and the situation is being improved.

Lithuania undertook to carry out considerable changes in the existing judicial regulation, which in theory even before 2014 was well developed. On one side, Russian aggression against Ukraine and other events demonstrated existing shortcomings. Many practical aspects were only vaguely described, or even omitted. On the other hand, existing regulations have not fully matched the emerging challenges and the non-conventional and conventional threat pictures. Necessary changes in the legislation defining the state of war, mobilization, crisis management, information security, conscription, regulation of the Riflemen union, and other areas have been made.

In 2014, Lithuania introduced the new concept of the so-called 'military territory', which allows the LAF to use military force in a specific territory of the state in case of limited scale aggression (for example, the 'green men' scenario) without introducing Marshall law (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, 2014). Such a legal arrangement allows an efficient response (for example, the LAF could efficiently help law enforcement agencies).

In 2020, a new edition of the *Mobilization and Host Nation Support Law* was approved (and will come into effect from January 2020). This law (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, 2020a) clearly defines both preparation and actual mobilization stages. It defines more clearly the roles of the different institutions (both state and municipal level) in the case of mobilization. The Mobilization and Civil Resistance Departments under the MOD (MCRD), will, in case of mobilization, become state-level mobilization operational centres, which will coordinate all activities in this field.

In 2020, Seimas also approved a new edition of the *Law on Martial Law* (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, 2020b), which will take force from 2021, where some of these problematic questions are being answered. The law clearly defines the roles and functions of different state institutions and the armed forces in the case of armed conflict. Also more clearly stated is the fact of which institutions and armed groups will play the role of the armed forces, the role of the paramilitary organizations, and how life will be regulated both in the stated controlled and occupied territories.

This law also clearly defines the function of the so-called war time (military) commandants. This position is specific for Lithuania. Military commandants operated in the Interwar period and the early independence years, but later they were abolished. Currently, more than 45 war time commandants (from the ranks of reserve officers) are appointed by the Chief of Staff of the LAF. In future, there will be 60 of them (1 in each municipality).

The status of war time commandants still has some ambiguities. The Law clearly defines their functions through the introduction to Martial law. In case of aggression, commandants will do the following: communicate to the municipal government the needs of the armed forces, which needs the municipal government is obliged to fulfil; introduce or stop curfews and control their implementation; and inform municipal institutions about movement restrictions.

In case the municipal government fails to fulfil its duties, the commandant replaces the director of municipal administration. The law does not define the activities of commandants during peacetime. Currently, commandants are not fully paid but receive payment only for days of service. Theoretically, they should actively participate in the preparation for the mobilization process, interact with the local members of the Riflemen union, the Volunteer Forces, and other organizations that will participate in strengthening the preparedness of society for resistance to aggression.

When there is a lack of clear regulation, actual operations heavily depend on the personnel, institutional and other factors (for example, willingness of the municipal government institutions to cooperate). Therefore, it would be efficient to include military commandants in the preparation for crisis management and actual crisis management process. This would create a path towards a more integrated crisis management system, which would synergize both military and civilian components.

As the latest arrangement, the Lithuanian government approved the new civilian crisis management mechanism in October 2020. This mechanism stipulates that higher responsibilities will be given to the Fire and Rescue Department under the Ministry of interior, which should become the main coordinating body for civil emergencies.

In the opinion of the authors, the division between civil and military emergencies in the current security environment could not be clearly defined. The administrative mechanism according to which civil emergencies are managed by one institution, and crises of a more military nature by another, could not always be viable since resources are limited in a small state such as Lithuania.

There are other mechanisms of building up inter-institutional cooperation in the national security community. Annually, Lithuanian Armed Forces, the Police, the VIP Protection Service, the Border Protection Service, the Public Security Service, and the Customs Department sign inter-institutional cooperation plans, which include joint response to the crisis situations, joint training, exchange of information, and other activities (Lietuvos policija, 2020).

Training and exercises play a crucial role in strengthening inter-institutional collaboration. From 2014, the intensity of such activities has seen quantitative and qualitative improvement. On the one hand, there are **regular exercises** during which the military trains together with the Police, the Public Protection Service, the Border protection service and representatives of other institutions; they train together to tackle different military and non-military scenarios (including cooperation with the armed forces from the NATO allies). Such scenarios as city warfare, border protection, and armed incursions are being ‘tackled’.

For example:

- In 2018, one of the biggest national military exercises, ‘Perkūno griausmas 2018’, in which more than 9000 thousand soldiers and officers from the Lithuanian Armed Forces, the police, the border protection service, and other services and civilian institutions participated. One of the main components of the scenario was the protection of the Lithuanian town Alytus from hybrid aggression by unidentified enemy combatants.
- In 2016 and 2018, the LAF, the police, the border protection service, and other institutions trained to tackle incidents related to the Kaliningrad transit train (ELTA, 2016).
- In 2017, there were not very successful exercises organized by the Ministry of Interior, which simulated incursion of the ‘green men’ in the Šalčininkai region, situated near the Belarus border. The scandal has arisen because the local officials were not informed about this simulation for the sake of efficiency (BNS, 2017).

Also, **table top exercises and simulations**, both on strategic and tactical levels, are being organized. There are a considerable number of exercises, both on state and municipal levels. The officials simulate decision making processes in a difficult security environment. Examples of such simulation have taken place:

- In January 2019, a government level table top exercise seminar on disruption of electricity infrastructure due to cyber-attack and management of its consequences, ‘Operation in Isolated Mode’ was conducted. It was led by the

Chancellor of the Government Algirdas Stončaitis. The aim of the exercise was to assess the ability of state institutions to respond to cyber-attacks against electricity network infrastructure, to ensure continuity of activities, provision of public services in case of electricity infrastructure disruption, to strengthen institutional interoperability in crisis situations, and to manage potential risks in isolated power systems operation (Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės kanceliarija, 2019).

- Two strategic level simulations (in 2017 and 2019) (with the participation of high-level officials) were conducted. The exercises were organized together with the US think tank ‘The Atlantic Council’ (Lietuvos Respublikos krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2017).
- In October 2019, state-level civil protection functional exercises were organized, with the intent to simulate reaction to the possible incident in the Astravets nuclear power plant.
- The mobilization department, together with other institutional partners, organize regular crisis management table top exercises, ‘Perkūno bastionas’, for municipal level institutions (interaction with the armed forces, law enforcement institutions, private sector, etc. in the case of developed military aggression).

Other exercises included such topics as security of the LNG terminal, protection of the other critical infrastructure and other crisis scenarios. Such exercises not only identify shortcomings and strengthen crisis management qualifications but also create horizontal links between different state and municipal level institutions and state/private companies.

The **training and education** are also playing a crucial role in the strengthening of the whole-of-government system. Since 2012, week long strategic level Lithuanian national security and defence courses are being organized (twice annually), in which high level officials from different government institutions and state-owned strategic companies participate. Such courses, similar to those organized in Estonia and Finland, are important tools for the creation of horizontal links and strengthening the national security community.

Considerable lists of other training and educational activities also contribute to the strengthening of institutional resilience. For example, the Lithuanian Armed Forces organize civil resistance courses and the Mobilization and Civil Resistance Department organise courses on mobilization and host nation support. The LAF strategic communication department, the National Cyber Security Centre, and other institutions are also organizing regular educational and training events for representatives of different state and municipal level institutions.

8 Societal Resilience and Total Defence

In order to strengthen societal resilience, we should also address the major political and ethical questions, which Lithuania as a state and society is facing. The questions include, ‘Why do I need to defend my country?’, ‘What we are actually defending?’, ‘Do we still believe in democracy? Or do we see it as merely a procedural thing and facade?’, and ‘What is the broader mission of our society/state/Western world?’.

Opinion polls provide some information on the current state of societal resilience in Lithuania. The trust level in governmental institutions is mixed. On the one hand, there is a really high level of trust in national security institutions. Firefighters in 2020 were trusted by 87.1% of the surveyed persons, the police were trusted by 66.2%, the LAF by 62.6%, and the border protection service by 47.7%. On the other hand, trust in the main political bodies (with the exception of the office of president, which is trusted by more than 48%) and the media was very low: the media was trusted by 36.2%, Government offices – 28.3%, judiciary – 25.4%, parliament – 13%, and political parties – 6.4% (Vilmorus. Public opinion and market research, 2020).

According to the public survey conducted in 2017, 36% of the respondents would support civil resistance and 22% would join armed resistance. 3% of the respondents would organize civil resistance efforts themselves (Ramonaitė et al., 2018). On 3 July 2020, another study of Lithuanian citizens’ perceptions of international politics and threats was presented. The results revealed that 32% will be willing to join armed defence, which is similar to the situation prevailing in 2018 (Kojala et al., 2020).

Societal resilience building is mainly focused on countering disinformation and propaganda, and educating citizens on security and defence issues. Currently, the responsibility for this task is shared by several institutions (e.g., Civil resistance and mobilization department under the MOD, Ministry of Culture, and Ministry of Education and Science).

Specifically, for civil resistance, the main institution responsible is the Ministry of Defence and the Mobilization and Civil Resistance Department under the Ministry of Defence. Such unclear boundaries between responsibilities and competencies of various government institutions often lead to overlapping and a lack of political will to implement the necessary decisions.

The most recent changes are in the *Law on Mobilization and Host Nation Support*, more distinctly defined by the functions of the Mobilization and Civil Resistance Department under the Ministry of Defence as a lead institution for the preparation of mobilisation before the introduction of martial law, and implementation of mobilization after martial law is declared. In that case, the MCRD would become the State Operation Centre for Mobilization (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, 2020).

These changes are a right step towards total defence; however, it should be noted that the MCRD will be a full-functioning lead/coordinating agency neither for integrated national resilience, nor resistance operational planning in Lithuania, as it is understood and recommended in the Resistance Operating Concept which is initiated by U.S Special Operations Command Europe (Fiala, 2020, pp. 11–13).

Seimas National Security and Defence Committee, in the beginning of June 2020, analysed the issue of preparedness for civil resistance. Improvement in this field should be achieved if the Parliament will approve the 'National Strategy for Preparation of the Society for Civil Resistance'. This document more intelligibly states that the main responsibility for the implementation of the civil resistance improvement measures will lie with the Lithuanian government's shoulders (including a special commission, consisting of both representatives of the governmental institutions and civil society). The main coordinating body will be the MOD.

All in all, there is no agreed opinion on societal resilience in Lithuania. The conception of societal resilience ranges from the understanding as a passive ability of citizens not to panic in the event of a threat and create obstacles for troops or for state institutions to maintain the essential functions of the state to the other end of the spectrum, which is active civil resistance. Views on resilience comprise at minimum providing no support for an enemy and disobedience to occupational forces. At maximum, it is argued that Lithuania should aim at an active, creative, and timely response by citizens to imminent/direct and covert/latent threats, and the most important aspect is the ability to deal with them autonomously/independently, without guidance and direction from above.

On balance, role in civil resistance by active citizens is seen as being crucial, but officials in the national defence establishment believe that citizens' efforts should be geared more not towards preparedness to civil crisis and disasters, but rather towards national defence efforts. The state could do more to build up citizens' resilience, resistance, knowledge, and skills: to foster patriotism and provide them with the necessary training. Education and regular training should be a key component in cooperation with schools, NGOs and the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union.

However, the idea of total defence or comprehensive defence is misleadingly contra-posed conceptually to conventional defence and, although mentioned in major strategic documents such as the *Law on Basics of National Security* and others, it is still debated in the national security and defence establishment. The debate boils down to the capital question of who should function as the main 'stakeholder' of the state's defence – the LAF or Society as a whole or both as equals (Šlekys, 2020).

The new Parliament and Government will have to solve this conundrum when some hold that mobilization plans are national defence plans and nothing additional is required while others argue that national defence is a matter for all institutions and citizens and Lithuania needs a better inter-institutional cooperation and clearer procedures and division of labour. Crisis management and preparedness for war is a whole-of-society matter, though the military are responsible for armed defence of the country. National defence plans should not be confused with State's armed defence plans (Šlekys, 2020).

One of the main aspects of the total defence is conscription and preparation of the reserve forces. Results of the public opinion poll in 2016 demonstrated that 68% of respondents supported reintroduction of conscription (Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, 2016). A considerable (but declining) share of conscripts are volunteers, but it is important to note that often the decision to become a volunteer is based on receiving financial and other benefits (if the person was already included in the list of selected candidates).

In 2020, it is planned to train around 3800 conscripts (Karys.lt, 2020). Service is mandatory for men between 18 and 26 years old (from 2021, 18–23 years) (selection is based on the lottery system), but women can join voluntarily. Compared to the total pool of available young citizens, the current conscription level is quite low. For example, in 2020,

more than 28,000 young men were taking the final high school exams, but the total number of 18-year-old citizens is even higher (Nacionalinė švietimo agentūra, 2020).

Such limited numbers of conscripts (which are very low, if compared for example with Finland and even Estonia) raise discussions about the possible need to introduce full conscription (at least for men). Many voices (including members of the Parliament) were voicing support for rapidly increasing the number of conscripts. It is seen as the tool for strengthening the armed forces and societal resilience in general.

At the same time, even this considerably low number is straining the resources of the LAF, which, at the same time, needs to rapidly develop its capabilities (after the long years of shortage of financing). Training of conscripts creates the need for new infrastructure (barracks, armaments, equipment, etc.), officers, and NCOs.

The assessment prepared by the MOD in 2018 for the National Security and Defence Committee of the Seimas, stated that based on the available financing, it was realistic to introduce full conscription not earlier than 2024. Such introduction only for men (more than 6,000 annually) would cost at least EUR 400 million, and for both men and women (around 12,000 annually) up to EUR 1.5 billion (Gudavičius, 2018). It is clear that with such projected costs, full conscription does not seem to be the viable option.

Reintroduction of the conscription system serves not only as the source of the manpower for the LAF but also a strong mechanism for the development of the total defence system. Beside such benefits as strengthening societal cohesion and patriotism, it also facilitates the preparation of military reserves, which could be activated in case of aggression.

In recent years, Lithuanian decision-makers have more clearly acknowledged the importance of availability of a prepared military reserve. In 2016, the then Lithuanian Chief of Defence Lt. Gen. J.V. Žukas declared the plans to have at least 30,000–40,000 of active reserve forces (BNS, 2016).

The recent changes to the judicial regulation (*The Law on National Conscription*) have more clearly defined the term of the so-called ‘active military personnel reserve’, which includes decommissioned soldiers, officers, and conscripts, which successfully finished the obligatory military service. During the 10 years after the service, they are enlisted to the active personnel reserve and must undergo at least 20–60 days of skills refreshment training (during the whole period). It is planned to invite members of active reserve for training at least once in every 5 years.

Still, the process of development of the reserve forces is in its beginning. In 2019, Lithuania managed to organize exercises for only 1200 reservists, whereas in 2020 – it is planned to carry on such activities for 1,500 (Danilevičiūtė, 2019). The total number of active reservists is classified, but it could be estimated (by a simple summing up of the number of conscripts in 2015–2020) that in 2020 it has reached at least 15,000.

The current active reserve training method has also received some criticism. For example, the Head of NGO Defence Support Fund ret. col. V. Malinionis states that contrary to Finland (which has 300,000 prepared reservists) Lithuania is not adequately preparing the active reserve. Current refreshment training is very short and does not create efficient military units, because members of the reserve do not regularly train together, and do not know their possible superiors. This means that in the case of mobilization in order to become fully operational, they will need additional time (Malinionis, 2020).

The question of efficient reserve forces is closely related with the operations of the paramilitary organization - Lithuanian Riflemen Union. This organization was recreated after regaining independence. Contrary to Estonia, because of historical and other reasons (Vaičenonis et al., 2015), Lithuania has both the Volunteer forces (which acts as the National Guard) and a paramilitary organization – the Lithuanian Riflemen Union (RU). After 2014, the popularity of this organization considerably increased and in 2020 the membership reached 12,000 persons. Half of the members are young riflemen (up to 18 years old). This new wave of members has changed the age balance of adult members of the organization. Until 2014, the older generation was more prevalent; now there is a considerable share of young and middle-aged members.

The popularity and influence of the organization was fostered by many important members of society joining – politicians (including Mayor of Vilnius, Ministers of defence and healthcare, etc.), actors, musicians, journalists etc. Despite receiving some support from the LAF, the members of the RU purchase their equipment from their own funds. The role and functions of the RU until recently were not fully specified. It was seen both as a patriotic, educational organization and a possible force which could participate in the defence of the country and to be used in the tackling of emergencies.

Currently, Lithuania has introduced the new judicial regulation, which more clearly defines the role of the RU. Most of the adult members received at least minimal training, but the RU members are distributed into the following groups:

- *Combat riflemen*: Around 300 are the so-called ‘combat riflemen’ (in Lithuanian – *koviniai šauliai*), who receive full basic military training. They are allocated to specific military units (mostly to the KASP) and train together with the military. They have their own more capable weapons, but they are stored in the military units (contrary to the Estonian model) and can only be accessed for training purposes or in the case of a military emergency. Recent amendments in the *Law on Armed Defence and Resistance against Aggression* and the *Law on the Riflemen Union* clarified the status of the RU in case of armed aggression. Combat riflemen will become the part of the regular armed forces. It is planned to increase the number of ‘combat riflemen’ by at least 50 annually.
- An interesting group of the combat riflemen are the so-called ‘Owls’. The group includes famous journalists, public relations specialists, and other experts. Besides military training, this group supports the capabilities of the LAF in the field of strategic communication (Alfa.lt, 2019).
- *Kinetic (commandant) rifleman*: This group does not receive full-scale military training, but is still being prepared for fulfilling military duties during crisis or war situations. In this case, they will start to act under command of the local municipality or military commandant. They will work together with the police and other institutions, enforce the public order, ensure the protection of important objects, and perform other duties.
- *Civil resistance rifleman*: These so-called non-kinetic riflemen, which are not able or not willing to carry on military duties, will act in supportive roles (including logistical support, IT services, etc.) and in the case of military occupation would participate in non-violent civil resistance.

In recent years there were active discussions on the role of the RU. It was proposed to allow them their own automatic rifles and other heavy weapons (similarly to the Estonian *Kaitseliit* model). It was decided to allow ownership of only semi-automatic weapons (together with storage at home-safes). In this case, they receive a special exemption from the requirements of the EU Firearms Directive, which considerably tightened requirements for semi-automatic arms possession.

In Lithuania, the question of other armed citizens in possible defence against aggression is sometimes discussed. There are at least 30,000 registered hunters. In general, Lithuania has a rather liberal firearms ownership regime. In 2014, members of Seimas proposed a law project, which would allow them to prepare and include hunters in possible defence against armed aggression, but this project was not approved.

The main question in this discussion: will the unorganized armed resistance against attackers will be efficient? Supporters of this idea often state that if the enemy will expect shooting ‘from each window’ it could affect his calculations and decision to attack (Saldžiūnas, Plikūnė, & Meidutė, 2017). The other side (including representatives of the LAF and other decision-makers) are more sceptical towards such unorganized armed resistance, which potentially could harm organized resistance aims.

Interestingly, the new edition of the Law on Martial Law, which was approved by the parliament in Summer, 2020 (and will be enacted with effect from 2021) clearly defined the status and role of citizen armed resistance units (operating in a non-occupied territory) and partisans (operating in the occupied part of the territory) (Seimas, 2020).

Citizen armed resistance units must declare themselves to the armed forces and then become part of the armed forces (including obeying orders). Partisans become part of the armed forces only in case of the decision of the Chief of Defence (or another person in charge). In this case, they must also obey the order of the armed forces and act in coordination. The head of the partisan unit must inform the armed forces about the members of these units, the territory of their planned activities, and their insignia.

Partisans must act in the organised way, obey norms of the international law, and during their military operations they should use clear identification signs. Such regulations are difficult to implement (particularly in the case of partisan activities). On the other hand, they are intended to avoid possible marauding and other crimes, conflicts between different resistance groups, and uncoordinated activities, which could hamper the Lithuanian and the Allies’ armed forces.

In the case of societal resilience, a crucial role is played by **education and training**. It was already mentioned that government institutions and NGOs provide fragmented educational and training activities on some topics, which are related to national security (mostly, information security). The RU is also organizing summer camp activities for youth.

Also, there are regular events for society, organized by the armed forces (demonstration of the armaments, ‘open doors’, commemoration events, parades, etc.).

MOD has also published two instruction books on civil resistance and tackling of crisis situations for the general public. At the same time, a systemic approach in this field is still lacking.

In 2017, the Lithuanian parliament approved a course program of ‘National security and state defence’ for the last graders of the high schools. The main problem is that this course was not made obligatory and only a minimal number of schools taught it to pupils. This happened because of the passive position of the Ministry of Education, which has not created enough motivation. Also, other reasons are stated – the course by itself is not very interesting (too bureaucratic). It is planned to considerably improve the course program, with the aim to introduce it in as many schools as possible.

Also, MOD is planning to organize regular national security and defence courses for different groups of society (journalists, members of civil society, etc.). This should considerably improve societal awareness and resilience. What is more, emphasis is planned on the improvement of the cooperation with the **NGOs**. Non-governmental initiatives are already visible in the field of countering information threats. Also, there was a burst of societal, voluntary, and other activities during the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic. This demonstrates the availability of significant potential in this field.

Currently MOD and other institutions cooperate with the NGOs on a limited scale. For example, in 2019, for 22 projects of NGOs, the Lithuanian MOD provided more than EUR 75,000.

Another important aspect is **the participation of private businesses** in crisis management and state defence activities. Currently, it has duties to participate in crisis management and mobilization procedures. Private companies also sometimes participate in the table top and other exercises, but activity in this field needs considerable expansion.

9 Conclusions

International global system is experiencing a noticeable change in power relations - it is edging towards asymmetric unipolarity - heralding a return of great power rivalry. Neoclassical realism synthetic theory would expect that the hegemonic and other states have to respond to these developments to different extents and in different ways depending on their specific external and domestic circumstances.

The current U.S. national security and national defence strategies indicate that the world has entered an era of great power competition. The focus on great power competition and conflict has led to the idea that America has to build a stronger grouping of like-minded democratic allies and partners to block the revisionist powers – China and Russia.

The U.S. is planning to enable its allies and partners to counteract adversaries in conventional warfare and operations in the so-called grey zone, below the threshold of regular military conflict, to support the strategic objectives that the U.S. is following in maintaining ties with its strategic allies.

The irredentist annexation of Crimea Lithuania took as a signal of a changing shifting security situation in Europe and in the international system by extension. Lithuania has responded by commencing a number of legal, procedural, financial and technical measures to enhance resilience and deterrence. Despite of noticeable improvements, the U.S. expect that Lithuania continue its internal mobilisation efforts since there are not enough national or NATO military forces that would be able to counter conventional Russian forces deployed in the region. The challenges of air defence and control of the Baltic Sea.

The building up a sort of comprehensive/total defence system is an issue that is on table for decision-makers to be discussed. Enhancing Lithuanian security and defence efforts with a whole-of-society total defence strategy will solidify societal resilience and resistance, and will contribute to the U.S.’s larger denial-based deterrence strategy to check an aggressive Russia.

In Lithuania, an approach to the national defence that embraces whole-of-society efforts still faces difficulty in being put into practice. However, in the legal system and public opinion, it is understood that total defence supplements and strengthens conventional defence, if societal resilience and civic resistance are geared to conventional military efforts. Despite existing political consensus in Lithuania on the importance of total defence for the national defence, the practical challenge remains to ensure both better strategic and operational coordination and cooperation among state institutions and better involvement of private and NGO sectors.

These organizational difficulties will not be ameliorated until governmental decisions on total defence, including societal resilience, are made on the highest political level. It is noticeable, however, that there is no top-level administrative structure that oversees, coordinates, and manages the policy of societal resilience, civil defence, and resistance on the national level. It would be desirable to refine the vagueness for which specific governmental institutions are responsible, in developing assessments and decisions in total defence at the strategic level.

However, all national security and defence-related essential decisions are supposed to be made by the State Defence Council (lead by the President). On the other hand, emergencies and crises are expected to be prevented and managed by the National Security Commission (headed by the Prime Minister). Unexplicit understanding that all armed defence-related matters should go to the State Defence Council and all the others should go to the National Security Commission, brings about a contradiction that hinders progress in building a national total defence system. Since, as it has been said above, total defence has both military and civil dimensions, and is related both to resilience (societal, infrastructure, functional) and resistance (armed and unarmed).

The Lithuanian State Defence Council, the highest political body for strategic security and defence decisions, does not possess relevant administrative resources to formulate decisions and oversee their implementation regularly. However, a new coalition government led by a conservative Prime minister could muster such administrative resources, by establishing an Emergency Situation and Crisis Management Centre at the Government Office.

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