

## Research Article

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# Lithuania's Balancing Act

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**Abstract:** Since regaining independence in 1990 and creating its regular armed forces, Lithuania has had to do a balancing act. It has had to balance between different approaches of state defence, military structure, collective and national defence. Due to events in Ukraine Lithuania had to reconfigure this balance. The Russian threat forced to emphasize strategy of territorial defence, which altogether required tying up forces and enlarging its numbers by bringing back conscription, substantially increased defence budget, followed by higher tempo and scale in procurement and training. However, Lithuania has managed to maintain its activity and participation in international military operations and political initiatives. Its recent contributions have led to an assumption that its participation in various military missions in the future will not diminish, quite the opposite. Increasing the framework of cooperation in terms of defence and security initiatives will involve Lithuania more deeply and will require further contributions.

**Keywords:** Lithuania, territorial defence, conscription, international obligations.

Events of 2014 in Ukraine created an international crisis of such a scale and magnitude that not only brought back talks about the Cold War, but also pushed Western countries and Russia to the brink of a real, hot war. Politicians in the Western capitals reluctantly accepted the fact that this time Russia had started a new and more serious geopolitical game.<sup>1</sup>

If the mood in Western capitals was that of confusion, it was close to despair and panic in the Central Eastern European countries. Suddenly in March 2014 citizens of the Baltic states realized how fragile their well-being and the existence of their independence is. Russia's bullying through energy politics, restrictions on agricultural products and similar acts became routine for people in that region. However, the Ukrainian events pushed all that to a totally different, more frightening level. Moreover, the immediate, cautious reaction from the Western countries, especially Germany, added additional layers of frustration and anxiety. Very soon, social media, TV and newspapers were full of sceptical, angry and disappointed reactions and comments about this soft or defeatist behaviour of Western capitals. It did not take long for the appearance of articles about a new Munich, appeasement or Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact agreement.<sup>2</sup>

Russia's actions scared the countries in the region. It seemed that the words, thought to be said by L. Trotsky, "that you may be not interested in war, but war is interested in you" pushed the Baltic states and Poland out of their comfort zones. From 2018 onwards it is already clear that 2014 will be seen as a watershed moment in Lithuanian history. Its numbers of soldiers, military budget and mobilization of society increased to unprecedented levels. Such a tempo, scope and scale of changes always brings unintended consequences. In many ways traditional, patriotic and even militaristic perspectives defined

<sup>1</sup> "Obama Rules Out Military Force Over Ukraine", The New York Times, March 20, 2014. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/21/world/europe/obama-ukraine.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/21/world/europe/obama-ukraine.html?_r=0)

<sup>2</sup> Rimvydas Valatka, "V. Putinas Krymą prarijo be šūvio, ir tai tik karo pradžia", 16 March, 2014 <http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/ziniosgyvai/komentarai/rimvydas-valatka-v-putinas-kryma-prarijo-be-suvio-ir-tai-tik-karo-pradzia-500-412490#ixzz3JFqFFb31>; Aleknonis: tikėtis ko nors „karštesnio“ iš Vakarų neverta, 19 March, 2014, <http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/15777674/aleknonis-tikėtis-ko-nors-karštesnio-is-vakaru-neverta#ixzz3JFrYYvb7>

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by geopolitical realities pushed aside postmodern issues like climate change, the refugee crises, military missions for humanitarian reasons, etc. The postmodern military, suited for the wars of choice, had to yield to the possibility of wars of necessity and change accordingly.

## 1 The situation before 2014

Since regaining independence in 1990 and creating its regular armed forces, Lithuania has had to do a balancing act. It has had to balance between different approaches of state defence: from civil resistance to military resistance in the form of insurgency, to territorial defence centred around the use of regular forces.<sup>3</sup> The complex situation became even more entangled when the President of Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas, in January 1994 sent a letter to Manfred Wörner, the then Secretary General of NATO, in which he expressed Lithuania's intent and desire to become a member of the Alliance.<sup>4</sup> In order to earn political points in the international arena and adopt Western ways of warfare, Lithuania decided to participate in international peacekeeping missions. At the end of August 1994 Lithuania started its first international mission. A unit of 32 soldiers, LITPLA-1, served with a Danish battalion in a United Nation's mission in Croatia (UNPROFOR II). However, from the beginning there were scepticism and doubts expressed by members of parliament, who said that Lithuania was not interested in participating and fighting in distant theatres.<sup>5</sup> Their argument was to concentrate on state territorial defence and keep forces tied on.

Yet, despite these reservations, from 1994 onwards Lithuania participated in numerous international missions and operations, prior to becoming a member of the EU and NATO, mostly in the Balkans: Implementation Force (IFOR) (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Stabilisation Force (SFOR) (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Operation Allied Harbour (Albania), Kosovo Force (KFOR) (Kosovo), and Organization For Security And Co-operation In Europe (OSCE) monitoring missions (Kosovo, Georgia). When membership in Western institutional structures became more and more realistic participation in international missions sped up: The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) (Afghanistan), NATO training mission (Iraq), NATO humanitarian mission (Pakistan), and US-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> In the case of the ISAF mission, Lithuania was a leading state of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Chaghcharan/Firuzkoh, Ghor province. In these operations Lithuanian soldiers conducted a wide variety of operations: from special operations and combat support, to peacekeeping, military assistance, training and logistics. The biggest unit committed for one mission never exceeded company level. This participation continued after becoming a member of the EU and NATO. Additionally, it added extra levels of participation in the form of EU Battlegroups and the NATO Response Force (NRF).

There was also regional military cooperation. The three Baltic states established a joint battalion – the Joint Baltic Peace-keeping Battalion, BALBAT (functioned from 1994 to 2003), for peacekeeping missions, as well as joint naval squadrons – The Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON), Baltic Air Surveillance Network and Control System (BALTNET) and Baltic Defence College.<sup>7</sup> Together with Poland, Lithuania had a joint peacekeeping battalion, the Lithuanian–Polish Peace Force Battalion (LITPOLBAT, 1997-2007), which before 2004 was the only permanent Lithuanian military unit belonging to NATO.<sup>8</sup>

On the one hand all this provides a picture of political will and eagerness to show commitment to Western political initiatives and values. All that resonated positively especially considering the size of the

<sup>3</sup> Deividas Šlekys, *Mąslaus Vyčio beieškant: lietuviškos karinės minties raida ir būklė po Nepriklausomybės atkūrimo (1990-2014)*. Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, 2015, pp. 91-131.

<sup>4</sup> President of the Republic of Lithuania Algirdas Brazauskas Letter to NATO Secretary General, 4 January, 1994. [http://www.urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/uzienio\\_politika/NATO/pareiskimas.jpg](http://www.urm.lt/uploads/default/documents/uzienio_politika/NATO/pareiskimas.jpg)

<sup>5</sup> *Teritorinė gynyba : (1995 m. sausio 25 d. seminaro medžiaga, Vilnius)*, Vilnius: Lietuvos karo akademija, 1995, pp. 40-44.

<sup>6</sup> Gražvydas Jasutis, Jurgis Bonifacas Stanaitis (red.), *Taikos sargyboje: Lietuvos kariai tarptautinėse operacijose 1994–2014 m.*, Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2014, pp. 105-106.

<sup>7</sup> Baltijos šalių bendradarbiavimas [http://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis\\_bendradarbiavimas/baltijos\\_saliu\\_bendradarbiavimas.html](http://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis_bendradarbiavimas/baltijos_saliu_bendradarbiavimas.html)

<sup>8</sup> Andrius Krivas, "Lithuanian-Polish military cooperation", *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2001, 7, pp. 35-40.

state and novice-nature of the Lithuanian armed forces. Yet, on the other hand, the size of committed units considered in the light of the actual size of the Lithuanian armed forces looked minuscule, for example, the confirmed structure of its armed forces in 2002 was 4 infantry brigades, a logistic brigade, 12 specialised battalions, 10 territorial defence units and around 38 thousand soldiers trained for territorial defence.<sup>9</sup>

There were two major reasons why Lithuania kept the majority of soldiers within its borders. The first one, political/social, was an issue of conscription. Since regaining independence in 1990, Lithuania has imposed a conscription service, which was suspended in 2008. Article 139 of the Lithuanian Constitution states that “the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania must perform military or alternative national defence service according to the procedure established by law”.<sup>10</sup> Conscription was seen as a continuation of interwar tradition, which despite the legacy of the soviet army, especially the practice of *dedovshchina* (soviet hazing in the military tradition), had political and social support. It is well known, that politically it is problematic to send conscripts to international missions and operations. Therefore, Lithuania implemented the approach of a voluntary agreement to serve outside the country. Professional, volunteer military personnel cost more and as a result, the armed forces was smaller. Therefore, Lithuania always had to compromise in this regard.

The second reason was a conceptual one. The question was what the best way to defend the country was. As mentioned above, discussions were held about concentrating on more insurgency-like defence or territorial defence, with regular forces playing a central role. After expressing its desire to become a member of NATO, Lithuania concentrated more and more on creating properly functioning and regular armed forces, a properly functioning institutional-legal system with regard to security and defence, and a conceptual state defence framework.<sup>11</sup> There was an increasing number of discussions about territorial defence. One of the approaches was the so-called “Polish model”, where the state would be defended by “large indigenous land and air forces, plus a robust NATO reinforcement package”.<sup>12</sup> It meant that the majority of soldiers would be prepared to defend the homeland but insufficiently trained nor ready to participate in out of area operations. In this perspective it was allies and partners who came to help not the other way around.

As possible alternatives to this model were technological and hybrid ones, the technological model emphasized that reinforcements would come from ‘over the horizon’ and would be “largely based on American air power and precision-guided munitions”<sup>13</sup>. As will be shown later on, this option was adapted in the form of Transformation. Finally, the third option, the hybrid model, was based upon the idea that large native forces would be supported by modest reinforcements and ‘over the horizon’ airstrikes.<sup>14</sup> In the end, before joining NATO, Lithuania decided to have large armed forces, centred around large land forces and small air and sea components.

These wider strategic discussions were supplemented by discussions about operational and tactical issues. In the early 2000's Lithuania opted for a concept of active territorial defence.<sup>15</sup> The essential

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9 Povilas Malakauskas, „Namų darbai, rengiantis narystei NATO“, *Kardas*, 2003, Nr. 2, p. 3; Principinės kariuomenės struktūros 2002 metais nustatymo ĮSTATYMO PROJEKTAS, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/TAIS.154156?positionInSearchResults=146&searchModelUUJD=db901cbd-5a47-41b6-85be-2e82b7f8d1d9>

10 The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, October 25, 1992, <http://www3.lrs.lt/home/Konstitucija/Constitution.htm>

11 Lietuvos Respublikos nacionalinio saugumo pagrindų įstatymas, 1996-12-19, Nr. VIII-49, *Valstybės žinios*, 1997-01-08, Nr. 2-16; Teritorinė gynyba, 1995; Mokslinė konferencija „Lietuvos Respublikos gynybos problemos“, Vilnius: Lietuvos karo akademija, 1996.

12 Larrabee F.S. *The Baltic States and NATO Membership*. Testimony for the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, April 3, 2003.

13 Vaidotas Urbelis, “Defence Policies of the Baltic States: from the Concept of Neutrality towards NATO membership”. *NATO-EAPC Individual Fellowship Report, 2001-2003*, 2003, p. 18.

14 *Ibid.*

15 LaGrone R., “Deep Operations and Active Territorial Defence: Some Ideas for the Baltic States”, *Baltic Defence Review* 4, no. 2 (2000), pp. 122–128.; *NATO C3 Technical Architecture Volumes Operational Manual*, Baltic Defence College Operational Publications, vol. 2, Second revised edition, May 2001.; A. Leika ir A. Leita, „Baltijos gynybos koledžo aktyviosios teritorinės gynybos (ATG) operacinė koncepcija“, Konferencija „Teritorinė gynyba“, 2001, pp. 16–29; G. Zenkevičius, „Teritorinė gynyba“, Konferencija „Teritorinė gynyba“, 2001, pp. 39–41.

precondition for such a defence is very simple - active defence is carried out only when part of the territory has already been occupied by the enemy. Its principles are depth, close battle and rear. At the same time there are three different operations in motion: forces left behind conduct an insurgency-like resistance in order to exhaust an opponent, while regular forces conduct mobile defence and are engaged in close combat. The remaining forces at the rear guard against diversions and airborne attacks. This concept was developed by the Baltic Defence College to facilitate military planning in the Baltic states. The Swedish total defence model served as a source of inspiration for the development of this concept.<sup>16</sup> It provided ideas of how to combine the use of regular and irregular/paramilitary units in addition to components of civil resistance.

Overall, before joining NATO and the EU, Lithuania concentrated on keeping the majority of its forces at home and accordingly its participation in international mission was small, largely to show off its flag. Considering the size of the manpower used in these international military activities, the Lithuanian input was minuscule in military terms, but on a political level it was not. Some missions like in Kosovo or the US-led coalition in Iraq were in need of more flags than soldiers.

*Membership of NATO and the EU.* By becoming a member of trans-atlantic structures, Lithuania was eager to gain as many points as possible from allies.

Lithuania moved to the armed forces of one infantry brigade, active reserve forces (around 4,000), and Special Operations Force (SOF).<sup>17</sup> Lithuania wholeheartedly embraced the Alliance's targets for a pool of deployable and sustainable national forces, or the so-called Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) and Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC). Lithuania emulated Western military practices. Lithuanian officers started to talk about Transformation, with clear indications that they embraced the ideas of Revolution in military affairs, network-centric warfare and effects-based operations.<sup>18</sup> This tradition of military thought is about small, networked, modular, agile, lethal and precise military units fighting in battlespace with such a level of situational awareness that fog of war was substantially diminished and victory was achieved in a matter of days or even hours not weeks. It was a vision of war that was capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive.

Lithuania also became an active contributor to the campaign in Afghanistan as well as to the US-led Second Gulf War and occupation of Iraq. Eventually, this produced a decision in 2005 to lead a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan, which increased the operational and personnel tempo and put great pressure on the armed forces to keep generating sufficient numbers of well-trained and equipped troops. Mandatory military draft, with its short service period, administrative burden and ability to tie up precious human resources – both sergeants and non-commissioned officers – became a drag on the ability of the armed forces to focus on such operations. The mission in Afghanistan was a sensitive political issue due to legacies and memories of the Soviet-Afghan War, where many young Lithuanian men served. In such a context sending conscripts was out of the question. It is worth mentioning, that during the financial crisis, when major financial cuts also affected the military, Lithuania kept its obligations to allies and continued serving in the mission in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup>

However, 2008 was a pivotal year for 4 reasons. The Russo-Georgian War forced Lithuania to think about the defence of its borders, and not focus on distant Afghanistan. The start of the global financial crisis, as mentioned above, severely limited available options. In the autumn in the national elections, the majority of the parliament formed by conservative party, which traditionally pushed for more territorial defence-oriented armed forces, not expeditionary ones. Also, before the election the acting defence

<sup>16</sup> B. von Sydow, "The Baltic Defence College: Strengthening Baltic Defence Structures Through Education", *Baltic Defence Review*, No 1, 1999, pp. 1–2; M. H. Clemmesen, "Territorial Defence in Baltic Defence College", *Baltic Defence Review*, no. 3, vol. 2000, p. 83.

<sup>17</sup> Malakauskas P., „Namų darbai, rengiantis narystei NATO“, *Kardas*, 2003, Nr. 2, pp. 2–9.

<sup>18</sup> Lietuvos kariuomenės transformacijos plano gairės. Krašto apsaugos ministro įsakymas Nr. V-1171, 2007 m. lapkričio 23 d.; Krašto apsaugos ministro 2009–2014 m. gairės. Krašto apsaugos ministro 2008 m. vasario 29 d. įsakymas Nr. V-166.; Laimis Bratikas, „Penki žingsniai, pakeisiantys Lietuvos kariuomenę“, *Kardas*, 2008 m. Nr. 2 (431); A. Litvaitis, "Challenges of Implementation of the Network Centric Warfare Tenets in Coalition Environment", *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, vol. 10, 2008, pp. 143–170; Justina Budginaitė, „Tinklinė karyba“, *Kardas*, 2010, Nr.6, (447), pp. 28–33.

<sup>19</sup> Its budget from 1.1 % GDP (€104.6 m) in 2008 decreased to 0.77 % (€77.4 m) in 2013.

minister, Juozas Olekas, issued a decree suspending conscription and thereby switching the Lithuanian Armed Forces to the all-volunteer force (AVF) format.<sup>20</sup>

This last episode basically was an attempt from the ongoing social democratic government to earn extra points before the election. It seemed that Lithuania appeared to be willing to abandon conscription, even though there had been no extensive political or societal debate or any publicly visible push from the military.<sup>21</sup> Considering that this decision was taken only one month after the Russian victory against Georgia it raised some eyebrows. Yet the decision did not deliver electoral victory to the social democrats. However, in the subsequent parliamentary term between 2008 and 2012, the new coalition led by the conservatives did little to reverse it. Some members of parliament took the matter concerning the legality of the suspension of conscription to the Constitutional Court. However, the court decided that the suspension was constitutional and should be observed. Yet it also decided that the state should find the way and means to prepare citizens to defend its homeland.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of this, with the new government in place and new realities in the region, Lithuania started considering defence closer to home. The new Minister of Defence, Rasa Juknevičienė, gave an order to form the Domestic Support Forces of the Lithuanian Armed Forces, with the goal of having forces able to respond quickly to local incidents, unlawful military action and cases of aggression.<sup>23</sup> The creation of this new military structure did not mean the full return to an idea of territorial defence, but it signalled the end of the Transformation project.<sup>24</sup> Yet Lithuania honoured its commitments to international missions. Its participation in Afghanistan continued, yet with considerable financial sacrifices for other military needs. It also continued to provide units to the NATO Response Force (NRF) and EU Battlegroups, in 2013 it joined the EU Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali.

Overall, before the events in Ukraine, Lithuania was in a transitional phase, trying to maintain its participation in international missions and strategically important political visibility, while at the same time concentrating on territorial defence issues.

## 2 The Post-Crimean situation

2014 was a wake-up call for Lithuania. As previously mentioned, the Russo-Ukrainian War scared people in Lithuania and catalysed unseen political, societal and military activities. These activities were based on three assumptions. First, in the case of the worst scenario Lithuania cannot and would not repeat the mistake of 1940.<sup>25</sup> Second, it should focus on its home works (budget, manning, equipment, etc.). Third, it needed allies more than ever. The rest of the article will cover the latter two aforementioned assumptions.

*Enhancing defence.* To begin with the issue of defence funding needed to be sorted out. Lithuania started 2014 by only allocating 0.78% of GDP to defence. It was clear, if Vilnius wanted to get any proper help from allies and in particular to have any effect in longer term politics of the Alliance, the defence budget had to be substantially increased. Desperate times required desperate measures. One month after events in Crimea had started, major Lithuanian political parties signed an agreement stating that between

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<sup>20</sup> „Stabdomas šaukimas į privalomą pradinę karo tarnybą“, <https://lietuvsdiena.lrytas.lt/-12214791101220230314-stabdomas-%C5%A1aukimas-%C4%AF-privalom%C4%85-pradin%C4%99-karo-tarnyb%C4%85-papildyta.htm>, 2008-09-15.

<sup>21</sup> T. Jermalavičius, “Reinstating conscription in Lithuania: bringing society back into defence?”; A. Sprūds, M. Andžāns (ed.), *Security in the Baltic Sea Region: Realities and Prospects. The Riga Conference Papers 2017*. Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2017, pp. 33-53.

<sup>22</sup> „KT: šauktinių atsisakymas neprieštaruja Konstitucijai“, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/kt-sauktiniu-atsisakymas-neprieštaruja-konstitucijai.d?id=24205755>, 2009-09-24; „R. Juknevičienė: patekome į bėdą, staiga atsisakydami šauktinių kariuomenės“, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/rjuknevicienne-patekome-i-beda-staiga-atsisakydami-sauktiniu-kariuomenes.d?id=24141103>, 2009-09-21.

<sup>23</sup> [http://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/structure\\_1469/land\\_force/domestic\\_support\\_forces.html](http://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/structure_1469/land_force/domestic_support_forces.html)

<sup>24</sup> Šlekys, pp. 132-165.

<sup>25</sup> Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940 without showing any armed resistance. This moment is seen as a national act of shame and disgrace, which should not be repeated under any circumstances.

2014 and 2020 the Lithuanian military budget would reach the required 2% of GDP.<sup>26</sup> Such an agreement was not something new in Lithuanian politics. However, in the past not all of them delivered what was promised. This time it was different because of three reasons. First, ongoing Russian aggression in Ukraine did not provide any chance for populism and pro-Russian voices becoming more influential. Second, civil society, again threatened by Russian actions, was very active through mainstream and social media to keep the pressure on lukewarm politicians. Finally, the third and most important reason was an iron leadership of the Lithuanian president, Dalia Grybauskaitė. All in all, Lithuania in this area became a success story. Between 2014 and 2018 its defence budget increased from 0.78 % of GDP in 2014 (€282 m) to 2.06 % of GDP in 2018 (€873 m). This is one of the most rapid increases in a NATO country in such a short timespan and it seems it will probably continue in the near future. The official position expressed by the minister of the Ministry of National Defence (MoND), some government officials and some members of the Parliament is to try and achieve 2.5 % of GDP.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, critical voices were expressed stressing that the NATO requirement of 2 % of GDP had been achieved and that there is no need nor an emergency situation that would justify a continued increase in funding.<sup>28</sup> It is unclear how much the defence budget will increase after 2018. However, reaching the symbolic threshold of 2 % of GDP not only provided necessary material means to the Lithuanian military, but also was a powerful signal to allies and partners confirming its political will to take issues of defence seriously.

Settling financial questions led to even more serious and challenging issues, namely conscription. It so happened that the minister of the MoND at that time was the same person who suspended conscription in 2008. It was not surprising that J. Olekas, even in the context of increasing Russian aggression, remained committed to AVF and critical of conscription.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the new Chief of Defence, Lieutenant General J. Žukas, was inclined to tread carefully on the issue of manning. His overall aim was to increase the number of soldiers in military units and diminish the difference between peacetime and wartime manning. Basically, the general was seeking armed forces which could fight on short notice, with soldiers at hand. That meant that as many soldiers as possible were needed in the barracks. According to him, in order to achieve a gradual increase in the size of the military it was necessary to recruit around 1,500 volunteers annually. However, he was willing to give the existing system a chance and not reinstate conscription.<sup>30</sup> Yet in the fall of 2014 a growing number of discussions concerning the reinstatement of conscription arose.<sup>31</sup>

The genesis of the decision to revert back to conscription is simple: in early 2015, President Dalia Grybauskaitė summoned the Chief of Defence to discuss the situation within and the needs of the military. The most senior military official of the nation gave a frank and honest picture concerning the consequences of financial austerity.<sup>32</sup> President Grybauskaitė on 24<sup>th</sup> February convened the State Defence Council which, in a meeting that lasted less than an hour, approved the initiative to go ahead with a

26 „Partijos įsipareigos 2 proc. BVP gynybai skirti 2020 metais, dalis valdančiųjų abejoja dėl susitarimo“, <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/karo-zona/partijos-ispareigos-2-proc-bvp-gynybai-skirti-2020-metais-dalis-valdanciuju-abejoja-del-susitarimo-784-415597>, 2014-03-28

27 Kariuomenės raumenis reikia auginti toliau, <http://lzinios.lt/lzinios/Lietuva/kariuomenes-raumenis-reikia-auginti-toliau/250076/>, 2017 09 12 ; Karoblis: jeigu gynybos finansavimas sustos ties 2 proc. riba, visuotinis šaukimas neįmanomas, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/karoblis-jeigu-gynybos-finansavimas-sustos-ties-2-proc-riba-visuotinis-saukimas-neimanomas.d?id=76425587>, 2017-11-22.

28 Gynybos finansavimas: ar laidojami planai pasiekti 2,5 proc. BVP? , <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/gynybos-finansavimas-ar-laidojami-planai-pasiekti-2-5-proc-bvp.d?id=75824163>, 2017 09 21; S. Skvernelis: kalbant apie tolesnį gynybos biudžeto didinimą reikia nepamiršti kitų sričių, <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2017-10-12-s-skvernelis-kalbant-apie-tolesni-gynybos-biudzeto-didinima-reikia-nepamirsti-kitu-sriciu/164817>, 2017 10 12.

29 Krašto apsaugos ministras Juozas Olekas: nereikia grįžti prie šauktinių kariuomenės, <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/karo-zona/krasto-apsaugos-ministras-nereikia-grizti-prie-sauktiniu-kariuomenes-784-432549>, 2014-06-09

30 „Ar grįš šauktiniai?“, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/ar-gris-sauktiniai.d?id=65983684>, 2014-09-30; „Kariuomenės vadas: atsilaikyti dvi dienas – per mažai“, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/kariuomenes-vadas-atsilaikyti-dvi-dienas-per-mazai.d?id=65870912>, 2014-09-17.

31 Jonas Kronkaitis: Ar pakaks politinės valios atgaivinti šauktinių karinę tarnybą?, <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/nuomones/jonas-a-kronkaitis-ar-pakaks-politines-valios-atgaivinant-sauktiniu-karine-tarnyba-18-459707>, 2014-10-14

32 Jermalavičius, p. 41.

temporary reinstatement of compulsory military draft for a duration of five or six years and to recruit 3,500 conscripts into the army annually.<sup>33</sup> This push from the presidency caught everyone – including the Minister of Defence and the Chief of Defence himself – off guard. It was obvious to everyone who was eager to listen and watch that the decision was made in a hurry. Within a few days different officials publicly made conflicting comments which confused the wider society: General Zukas referred to a Vietnam-era draft and lottery;<sup>34</sup> a MoND public relations official said that in all likelihood males up to the age of 38 and younger females will be called to serve so that emigrants will not be exempt;<sup>35</sup> while the Speaker of the Parliament and the Prime Minister denied most of what the MoND said.<sup>36</sup> Military commentators and public relations pundits immediately spotted this confusion.<sup>37</sup> The confusion and damage control measures, which followed showed that the MoND and ruling majority in general had lost the initiative in defence politics, which now was dictated from the Presidential Palace.

In a matter of a few months, a raft of legislative measures to modify the laws governing mandatory military service was passed through the Seimas. In a pivotal vote – in which 112 out of the 141 members of the Seimas cast their votes in favour, 3 against and 5 abstained – the parliament established that all male citizens between the ages of 19 and 26 years were, once again, obliged to do mandatory military service for 9 months. The decision had to be reviewed after five years, in 2020.<sup>38</sup> Only some members of the Seimas voiced their reservations that conscription did not really suit the needs of the modern armed forces and that it could be unnecessarily disruptive to society. Given the importance of such a question it was one of the fastest decision-making processes since independence was regained.

The return of conscription, alongside obvious domestic reasons, sent a clear message to the international community. It sent a strong signal to the NATO Allies that Lithuania takes its own defence seriously. This was combined with a tremendous increase in the defence budget that “served to convey the sense of a nation mobilizing itself to confront an existential threat and thus not only a security consumer within NATO”.<sup>39</sup>

The first conscripts started their service in August 2015. Almost immediately afterwards discussions started about what should happen to conscription after 2020. The President, General Žukas, and Chairman of the National Security and Defence Committee, A. Paulauskas, suggested that conscription should continue indefinitely.<sup>40</sup> They argued that politically, militarily and financially-speaking it would be a waste of time and resources if conscription was suspended again. The armed forces had had to invest heavily in infrastructure to prepare the necessary infrastructure for manning conscripts. It allocated scarce human resources. By reinstating conscription, politicians risked rebuff and rejection by citizens, therefore, they considered it unwise to set a clear deadline. While the Minister of Defence together with the Prime Minister wanted to proceed more gradually to wait and see how society would react.<sup>41</sup> In the end, position of the

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33 „VGT sprendimas: atėjo laikas grąžinti privalomąją karo tarnybą“, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/vgt-sprendimas-atejo-laikas-grazinti-privalomaja-karo-tarnyba.d?id=67259680> ; 2015-02-25.

34 „J. V. Žukas: jaunuoliams bus garbė tarnauti Lietuvos kariuomenėje“, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/j-v-zukas-jaunuoliams-bus-garbe-tarnauti-lietuvos-kariuomeneje.d?id=67267162> , 2015-02-25

35 Atsakė į potencialiems šauktiniams svarbiausius klausimus: kuriuos kvies, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/atsake-i-potencialiems-sauktiniams-svarbiausius-klausimus-kuriuos-kvies.d?id=67276302> , 2015-02-26

36 Moterys – šauktinės? Pagrindinė moters misija - gimdyti vaikus, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/moterys-sauktines-pagrindine-moters-misija-gimdyti-vaikus.d?id=67294020> , 2015-02-27

37 M. Katkus. Mobilizacija, loterija ir Vietnamo karas: kaip mes pralaimėjome svarbų mūšį, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/m-katkus-mobilizacija-loterija-ir-vietnamo-karas-kaip-mes-pralaimėjome-svarbu-musi.d?id=67292162> , 2015-02-27; Šauktinių grąžinimas: nematomi sprendimo efektai, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/sauktiniu-grazinimas-nematomi-sprendimo-efektai.d?id=67261982> , 2015-02-24

38 Sprendimas priimtas – šauktiniai grįžta į kariuomenę <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/sprendimas-priimtas-sauktiniai-grizta-i-kariuomene.d?id=67473984> , 2015-03-19

39 Jermalavičius, p. 43.

40 Prezidentė: šaukimas į kariuomenę gali tapti būtinybe, <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/karo-zona/prezidente-saukimas-i-kariuomene-gali-tapti-butinybe-784-532839> , 2015-10-08; Šauktinių kariuomenė: privaloma tarnyba žadama ir po 5 metų, [https://lietuvosdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/2015/11/05/news/sauktiniu-kariuomene-privaloma-tarnyba-zadama-ir-po-5-metu-2844041/?utm\\_source=lrExtraLinks&utm\\_campaign=Copy&utm\\_medium=Copy](https://lietuvosdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/2015/11/05/news/sauktiniu-kariuomene-privaloma-tarnyba-zadama-ir-po-5-metu-2844041/?utm_source=lrExtraLinks&utm_campaign=Copy&utm_medium=Copy) , 2015-11-05

41 Krašto apsaugos ministerija siūlo nesvarstyti šaukimo į kariuomenę po 5 metų, <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/krasto-apsaugos-ministerija-siuolo-nesvarstyti-saukimo-i-kariuomene-po-5-metu-56-561903> , 2015-12-31 ; A. Butkevičius

Presidency prevailed once again and in the summer of 2016 the Seimas voted in favour of continuous conscription.<sup>42</sup>

In 2017, the overall size of the Lithuanian armed forces was 17,800. More than half are long-term servicemen and there are only 3,500 conscripts. The rest are active reservists and cadets of the military academy.

Another important area, which has seen tremendous change was the sphere of procurement. Since 2014 Lithuania procured from Germany 155 mm self-propelled PzH 2000 (Panzerhaubitze 2000) howitzers (21 piece including the necessary logistical components)<sup>43</sup>, “Boxer” armoured fighting vehicles (88 in total),<sup>44</sup> and a Norwegian Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS) (two air-defence batteries and a logistical maintenance package)<sup>45</sup>. These three biggest purchases will substantially increase the firepower and manoeuvrability of the Lithuanian armed forces.

No less important was the replenishment of depleted ammunition reserves and the upgrading of tactical kit. In November 2017, it was announced that for the first time since Lithuania regained independence every single soldier possessed a full tactical kit with all the necessary components.<sup>46</sup>

Also over the last few years, Lithuania has increased the tempo and volume of training and introduced more local, national, international and interagency training in addition to more training not only on training grounds but also in urban areas. The persistent deployment of allied military units at some points even led to peculiar bottlenecks when there physically was no space to accommodate everyone who wanted to train with Lithuanians. Finally, Lithuania successfully passed the test of hosting NATO Enhanced Forward Presence units which require enormous logistical efforts.

*International contribution.* Alongside all of its duties at home, Lithuania also worked intensively to not isolate itself on the Eastern flank, but to be an active participant in various international security and defence initiatives. In many ways the situation resembled the one in the late 1990’s early 2000’s when Lithuania settled for the so-called “Polish model”. Once again the majority of its armed forces are tied up and prepared for the tasks of territorial defence, supported by rotating allied forces. This strategic structure requires operational and tactical tasks which are defensive in nature, while any participation in international operations would require more in the way of expeditionary/offensive and peacekeeping skills and capabilities. Therefore, it is a dilemma to some extent to find the appropriate balance between national and international interests. One of the possibilities discussed in the Lithuanian security community is to dedicate one particular unit, probably the size of an enhanced company, to be a major contributor to particular missions. The alternative is to contribute components from various military units in order to maintain some level of proficiency in international missions. By looking into the composition of units sent to missions it is clear that Lithuania has adopted the second model.

As far as the geography of Lithuanian participation in international missions is concerned, it is clear that it covers a wide area: the Balkans, Ukraine, Mali, Central African Republic, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey,

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ir J.Olekas ragina neskubinti diskusijos dėl šauktinių, <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/a-butkevicius-ir-j-olekas-ragina-neskubinti-diskusijos-del-sauktiniu-56-556423>, 2015-12-17;

42 Valstybės gynimo taryba: privalomoji karo tarnyba turi būti gražinta visam laikui, <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/valstybes-gynimo-taryba-privalomoji-karo-tarnyba-turi-buti-grazinta-visam-laikui-56-595565>, 2016-03-14.

43 First two PzH2000 howitzers the Lithuanian Armed Forces have procured from the Bundeswehr are on the way to Lithuania, [http://kam.lt/en/news\\_1098/current\\_issues/first\\_two\\_pzh2000\\_howitzers\\_the\\_lithuanian\\_armed\\_forces\\_have\\_procured\\_from\\_the\\_bundeswehr\\_are\\_on\\_the\\_way\\_to\\_lithuania.html](http://kam.lt/en/news_1098/current_issues/first_two_pzh2000_howitzers_the_lithuanian_armed_forces_have_procured_from_the_bundeswehr_are_on_the_way_to_lithuania.html), 2016 06 23; Germany prepared to sell tank howitzers to Lithuania - Der Spiegel, <https://www.reuters.com/article/germany-lithuania-howitzers/germany-prepared-to-sell-tank-howitzers-to-lithuania-der-spiegel-idUSL5NOW20CO20150228>, 2015 02 28.

44 VGT nusprendė: įsigis vokiečių šarvuočių „Boxer“, <http://www.vz.lt/verslo-aplinka/politika/2015/12/11/vgt-nusprende-isi-gys-vokieciu-sarvuocius-boxer>, 2015-12-11.

45 Contract on procurement of NASAMS medium range air defence systems signed, [https://kam.lt/en/news\\_1098/current\\_issues/contract\\_on\\_procurement\\_of\\_nasams\\_medium\\_range\\_air\\_defence\\_systems\\_signed.html](https://kam.lt/en/news_1098/current_issues/contract_on_procurement_of_nasams_medium_range_air_defence_systems_signed.html), 2017 10 26.

46 Paskutinį žingsnį šimtmečio link kariuomenė žengia geriausiai pasirengusi, <https://lietuvsodiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/2017/11/22/news/zingsni-simtmečio-link-lietuvos-kariuomenė-pasitinka-kaip-niekada-galinga-3604782/>, 2017-11-22



Somalia and the Mediterranean.<sup>47</sup> As with all NATO states Lithuania has substantially reduced its forces in Afghanistan. After the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, Lithuanian forces remained in Afghanistan by participating in the Resolute Support Mission. At a different time it contributed a squadron of special forces, a military-police team, an air-mentoring team, logistics and staff officers. At the end of 2017 Lithuania deployed 21 soldiers and officers to Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup> According to law, in 2018 Lithuania can send up to 50 soldiers to Afghanistan.<sup>49</sup> Lithuania also participated in the NATO mission “Operation Active Fence” in Turkey (2014 April - 2016 May, Deployable Communications and Information Systems Module (DCISM) specialists).<sup>50</sup> Lithuania also continues to participate in the NATO mission in Kosovo, although its participation is minimal, one soldier on a 6 month rotational basis.<sup>51</sup>

Under the flag of the EU, Lithuania participates in the missions in Mali (European Union Training Mission, on a 6 month rotational basis, 1-2 instructors),<sup>52</sup> the Central African Republic (EU training mission in CAR), on a 6 month rotational basis, 1 staff officer),<sup>53</sup> the Mediterranean (Operation Sophia, 2-3 staff officers, in 2017 two Vessel Boarding Teams, continuation planned in 2018),<sup>54</sup> the EU Naval Force Operation Atalanta (2-3 staff officers) and since December 2017 in the Autonomous Vessel Protection Detachment (3 month deployment).<sup>55</sup> Lithuania also participates in missions in Africa led by the UN, namely in MINUSMA (Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, 1-2 staff officers and since October 2017, a 34-men strong unit).<sup>56</sup>

Lithuania has also participated in international missions on the grounds of bilateral agreements. In the spring of 2014 Lithuania deployed a transport plane and a 10-man crew to the French-led Operation Sangaris in the Central African Republic.<sup>57</sup> Also since January 2017, Lithuania has participated in the US-led coalition against ISIS and has sent 6 military instructors to Iraq.<sup>58</sup> In October 2017 the Lithuanian parliament decided to expand Lithuania's participation in international operations by increasing the number of soldiers committed to US-led operations in Iraq.<sup>59</sup> This decision is seen as a serious commitment, because these additional soldiers will be a special operations squadron. Furthermore, it was confirmed that it will be a joint unit involving all three Baltic states with Latvia and Estonia providing other components.<sup>60</sup>

There is also one more additional mission that deserves to be mentioned separately. Since 2015 Lithuania has participated in the US-led Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine. At first it started as a small delegation consisting of a few military instructors to train the National Guard of Ukraine, later on it was expanded and included the training of regular military units. In a year this delegation was once more expanded, this time to include instructors from the Lithuanian Special Operations Force.<sup>61</sup> Finally in

47 Tarptautinės operacijos ir misijos, [http://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis\\_bendradarbiavimas/tarptautines\\_operacijos.html](http://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis_bendradarbiavimas/tarptautines_operacijos.html)

48 Ibid.

49 NUTARIMAS DĖL LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS KARINIŲ VIENETŲ DALYVAVIMO TARPTAUTINĖSE OPERACIJOSE, 2017 m. spalio 12 d. Nr. XIII-678, Vilnius. <https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/b5550160b23411e7afdadc0e4460de4>

50 Seven Lithuanian troops deployed to NATO's air defence operation in Turkey, <http://124.lt/en/world/item/105998-seven-lithuanian-troops-deployed-to-nato-s-air-defence-operation-in-turkey>, 2015-12-29.

51 <http://www.jungtinisstabas.lt/lt/vykdomos-to/kosofo-force-kfor/>

52 ES mokymo misija Malyje (EUTM Mali), [http://www.jungtinisstabas.lt/lt/vykdomos-to/malis\\_1/](http://www.jungtinisstabas.lt/lt/vykdomos-to/malis_1/)

53 ES Mokymo misija Afrikoje (EUTM RCA), <http://www.jungtinisstabas.lt/lt/vykdomos-to/es-mokymo-misija-afrikoje-eutm-rca/>

54 ES SOPHIA, <http://www.jungtinisstabas.lt/lt/vykdomos-to/eunavformed/>

55 <http://www.jungtinisstabas.lt/lt/i-es-operacija-prie-somalio-krantu-atalanta-isvyksta-14-lietuvos-kariu/>

56 Į ES operaciją prie Somalio krantų ATALANTA išvyko 14 Lietuvos karių, <https://mission-un-ny.mfa.lt/missionny/en/news/another-34-lithuanian-soldiers-joined-un-minusma-in-mali>, 2017-11-30.

57 Sangaris Centrinė Afrikos Respublika, <http://www.jungtinisstabas.lt/lt/ivykdytos-tarptautines-operacijos/sangaris/>

58 Įgimtas ryžtas „Inherent Resolve“, <http://www.jungtinisstabas.lt/lt/vykdomos-to/igimtas-ryztas-nuo-2017m/>

59 Seimas apsisprendė dėl Lietuvos karių dalyvavimo tarptautinėse operacijose, <https://lietuvosdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/2017/10/12/news/seimas-apsisprende-del-lietuvos-kariu-dalyvavimo-tarptautinese-operacijose-2986621/>, 2017-10-12

60 Baltijos šalys tariasi, kaip prisidėti prie kovos su džihadistais, <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2017-11-22-baltijos-salys-tariasi-kaip-prisideti-prie-kovos-su-dzihadistais/166369>, 2017 11 22 ; VGT uždegė žalią šviesą: į kovą su „Islamo valstybe“ stos Lietuvos specialiosios pajėgos, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/medijos-karas-propaganda/vgt-uzdege-zalia-sviesa-i-kova-su-islamo-valstybe-stos-lietuvos-specialiosios-pajegos.d?id=75530375>, 2017 08 21.

61 Husarų bataliono kariai išvyko į mokymo misiją Ukrainoje, <https://aina.lt/husaru-bataliono-kariai-isvyko-i-mokymo-misija-ukrainoje/>, 2016 02 25; Lietuvos kariuomenės Specialiųjų operacijų pajėgų kariai Ukrainoje dalysis pajėgų rengimo ir

June 2017 the Lithuanian parliament officially renamed this mission as the International Military Training Operation, which at the end of 2017 included up to 60 soldiers.<sup>62</sup> Alongside this operation Lithuania also provided the Ukrainian military with material help: medical supplies, food rations, ammunition and weapons.<sup>63</sup>

Overall, in December 2017 there were around 140 Lithuanian soldiers serving in various international missions and operations. This number will increase up to 255 over the next two years.<sup>64</sup> It would be fitting to say that since the beginning of 2014 Lithuania has expanded its geographical participation in international missions. It has become more involved in Africa, returned to Iraq, established a strong mission in Ukraine and committed some of its best capabilities, i.e. special forces.

Alongside these commitments Lithuania has continued and expanded its level of participation in NATO and EU military units. Since 2014 Lithuanian units have been on standby for the NATO Response Force: in 2014 (98 soldiers commanded the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 1), in 2015 (244 soldiers), in 2016 (550 soldiers), and in 2017 (around 400 soldiers).<sup>65</sup> It is important to emphasize that in 2016 Lithuania made its biggest contribution since becoming a member of the Alliance. Part of the 2017 “package” was committed to the NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, VJTF. The company of the mechanized infantry battalion “Algridas” was on standby for these forces in the first half of 2017. The same infantry company (140 strong) from January 2018 will be part of the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, JEF. Lithuania together with 7 other countries in September 2014 signed a letter of intent to make this force fully operational before 2018.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the increased tempo Lithuania has continued its contribution to European battlegroups. In 2015 it contributed an infantry squad (40 soldiers on a 6 month rotation), and in 2016 a company (100 soldiers on a 6 month rotation).<sup>67</sup> However, after its last rotation, Lithuania decided to make a break and will recommence its contribution in 2019.

The last, but not least, permanent international military cooperation format is the joint Lithuanian, Polish and Ukrainian brigade – LITPOLUKRBRIG. The idea to form such a tripartite military unit had been in the air since around 2007. The political decision to create the brigade was made in 2014, in the autumn of 2015 it was finally formed, it became fully operational in December 2016 and in October 2017 it was assigned the name of the great Voivode and Prince Constantine of Ostrog.<sup>68</sup> The main task for this brigade is to be able to participate in peacekeeping and crisis management operations conducted on the basis of a mandate from the United Nations. Lithuania’s contribution to this brigade is the Grand Duchess Birutė Uhlan Battalion (BUB).

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organizavimo patirtimi, [http://kam.lt/lt/naujienos\\_874/aktualijos\\_875/lietuvos\\_kariuomenes\\_specialiuju\\_operaciju\\_pajegu\\_kariai\\_ukrainoje\\_dalysis\\_pajegu\\_rengimo\\_ir\\_organizavimo\\_patirtimi](http://kam.lt/lt/naujienos_874/aktualijos_875/lietuvos_kariuomenes_specialiuju_operaciju_pajegu_kariai_ukrainoje_dalysis_pajegu_rengimo_ir_organizavimo_patirtimi), 2016 01 04

<sup>62</sup> Seimas suteikė karinių instruktorių misijai Ukrainoje tarptautinės operacijos statusą, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/seimas-suteike-kariniu-instruktoriu-misijai-ukrainoje-tarptautines-operacijos-statusa.d?id=75059534>, 2017 06 27.

<sup>63</sup> Krašto apsaugos ministerija skirs paramą Ukrainos kariuomenei, <https://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/629703/krasto-apsaugos-ministerija-skirs-parama-ukrainos-kariuomenei>, 2014-08-26; Lietuva perduos karinę paramą Ukrainai, <http://kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/lietuva/salies-pulsas/lietuva-perduos-karine-parama-ukrainai-839795>, 2017-11-29.

<sup>64</sup> Seimas apsisprendė dėl Lietuvos karių dalyvavimo tarptautinėse operacijose, [http://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p\\_r=119&p\\_k=1&p\\_t=251342](http://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=119&p_k=1&p_t=251342), 2017 10 12.

<sup>65</sup> Lietuvos kariai NATO greitojo reagavimo pajėgų veikloje, [http://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis\\_bendradarbiavimas/nato/nato\\_greitojo\\_reagavimo\\_pajegos.html](http://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis_bendradarbiavimas/nato/nato_greitojo_reagavimo_pajegos.html)

<sup>66</sup> Algirdo bataliono kariai ruošiasi budėti Jungtinės Karalystės vadovaujamos Jungtinės ekspedicinės pajėgose, [http://kam.lt/lt/naujienos\\_874/aktualijos\\_875/algirdo\\_bataliono\\_kariai\\_ruosiasi\\_budeti\\_jungtines\\_karalystes\\_vadovaujamos\\_jungtines\\_ekspedicines\\_pajegose.html?pbck=40](http://kam.lt/lt/naujienos_874/aktualijos_875/algirdo_bataliono_kariai_ruosiasi_budeti_jungtines_karalystes_vadovaujamos_jungtines_ekspedicines_pajegose.html?pbck=40), 2017 11 13; International partners sign Joint Expeditionary Force agreement, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/international-partners-sign-joint-expeditionary-force-agreement>, 2014 10 05.

<sup>67</sup> ES kovinės grupės, [http://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis\\_bendradarbiavimas/europos\\_sajunga\\_612/es\\_kovines\\_grupes\\_617.html](http://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis_bendradarbiavimas/europos_sajunga_612/es_kovines_grupes_617.html)

<sup>68</sup> <http://litpolukrbrig.wp.mil.pl/en/91.html>; Polish-Lithuanian-Ukrainian brigade reaches full operational capability: report, <http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/290516.PolishLithuanianUkrainian-brigade-reaches-full-operational-capability-report>, 2017 01 25; Trišalei Lietuvos, Lenkijos ir Ukrainos brigadai bus suteiktas didžiojo etmono Konstantino Ostrogiško vardas, [https://kam.lt/lt/naujienos\\_874/aktualijos\\_875/trisalei\\_lietuvos\\_lenkijos\\_ir\\_ukrainos\\_brigadai\\_bus\\_suteiktas\\_didziojo\\_etmono\\_konstantino\\_ostrogiskio\\_vardas.html?pbck=0](https://kam.lt/lt/naujienos_874/aktualijos_875/trisalei_lietuvos_lenkijos_ir_ukrainos_brigadai_bus_suteiktas_didziojo_etmono_konstantino_ostrogiskio_vardas.html?pbck=0), 2017 10 04.

By summarizing all these areas of participation and cooperation it is clear that events in Ukraine rather than slowing down Lithuania's activities they sped them up. It expanded its geography of operations, and increased the number of soldiers committed to missions and on standby within NATO, EU or multilateral frameworks. On the other hand, all these commitments are to some extent window dressing because for the last few years units committed to EU battlegroups of NATO military units have come from the same two battalions and even the same company. Also these two battalions are core units of the Lithuanian rapid response forces.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, to some extent Lithuania may have overextended itself and be subject to operational fatigue.

The last few years have also seen more dynamics on the political level too. It is natural that Lithuania was forthcoming in initiatives proposed in the summits in Wales and Warsaw, which led to further involvement of the Alliance along its Eastern flank. Also, Lithuania has become a staunch supporter of initiatives promoting more comprehensive EU defence integration. Together with some other EU members Lithuania has proposed to create a military Schengen in order to ease the movement of troops in Europe.<sup>70</sup> In November 2017, Lithuania affirmed its intent to join the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).<sup>71</sup> It also proposed to create rapid response teams for handling cyberattacks, namely a European "Cyber Schengen".<sup>72</sup>

Support of EU initiatives might seem a bit strange considering that Lithuania, together with the other Baltic states and Poland, in the past was quite wary of EU security and defence initiatives due to the possible duplication of NATO functions. It is enough to remember how the French President Jacques Chirac in 2003 lectured eastern European countries claiming they "missed a good opportunity to keep quiet" and supported US operations in Iraq.<sup>73</sup> New EU states were seen as pro-American and pro-NATO. However, recent events in Ukraine and the ambivalent position of Trump's administration are forcing Europeans to reconsider cooperation in the field of defence. For instance, it is clear that the defence of NATO's Eastern flank will require the rapid deployment of soldiers by moving them through territories which are subject to different legal jurisdictions. In order to hurdle these obstacles it is necessary to make changes to EU policies and procedures. Therefore, Lithuania, by supporting an EU "Military Schengen" initiative, also supports NATO policies.

Another NATO project of political importance, for which Lithuania is in charge, is the Energy Security Centre of Excellence, established in Vilnius in October 2012. In five years this centre has gained more prominence, which is confirmed by the increasing contributions of allies. In the summer of 2017, Germany and the US became the latest sponsoring nations, which in itself confirms the rising status of the centre.<sup>74</sup>

Lithuania has also increased multilateral and bilateral cooperation. Facing the same threat from Russia, the three Baltic states were naturally drawn closer together. Even before the events in Ukraine in January 2013, these countries had signed a memorandum of understanding with the intent to restructure cooperation in order to make it similar to the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF) framework.<sup>75</sup> Later on, in 2014, the Baltic states agreed to form a temporary Baltic Force (BALTFOR) battalion, which was on

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69 Lithuania starts forming rapid response force, [http://www.lrt.lt/en/news\\_in\\_english/29/75421/lithuania\\_starts\\_forming\\_rapid\\_response\\_force](http://www.lrt.lt/en/news_in_english/29/75421/lithuania_starts_forming_rapid_response_force), 2014-11-03

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75 Baltijos šalių bendradarbiavimas, [http://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis\\_bendradarbiavimas/baltijos\\_saliu\\_bendradarbiavimas.html](http://kam.lt/lt/tarptautinis_bendradarbiavimas/baltijos_saliu_bendradarbiavimas.html)

standby for the NATO Response Force (NRF) in 2016.<sup>76</sup> The states decided to explore options to possibly develop joint air defence systems to counteract hybrid threats.<sup>77</sup>

Even before the events in Ukraine it was decided that the cooperation of the three Baltic states should be seen in part as a broader international cooperation framework, which also includes NORDEFECO. The Baltic states joined NORDEFECO in October 2014 which opened the door to even deeper regional security and defence cooperation, for instance, the Nordic-Baltic Capacity Building Initiative, which provides a framework to assist countries like Ukraine and Georgia<sup>78</sup>.

On the bilateral level cooperation increased with major Western allies. The US became more involved in the Baltic region, while Lithuania joined the Washington-led coalition against ISIS. In a similar manner Lithuania increased its cooperation with France. Lithuania joined and supported the French involvement in Africa. Relationships with the UK and Germany strengthened within the framework of NATO. Additionally, the purchase of military equipment manufactured in Germany drew Vilnius and Berlin into closer cooperation.

As an overall conclusion it would seem that Lithuania is achieving quite a good balancing act. Considering the scope, scale and tempo of national defence, which it has orchestrated over the last few years, Lithuania has managed to maintain its activity and participation in international military operations and political initiatives. A national emphasis on territorial defence will tie up the majority of Lithuanian forces, however, its recent contributions have led to an assumption that its participation in various military missions in the future will not diminish, quite the opposite. Increasing the framework of cooperation in terms of defence and security initiatives will involve Lithuania more deeply and will require further contributions.

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<sup>76</sup> Trilateral and multilateral cooperation of Baltic land forces addressed in Vilnius, [http://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/military-insignia/news\\_1889/trilateral\\_and\\_multilateral\\_cooperation\\_of\\_baltic\\_land\\_forces\\_addressed\\_in\\_vilnius](http://kariuomene.kam.lt/en/military-insignia/news_1889/trilateral_and_multilateral_cooperation_of_baltic_land_forces_addressed_in_vilnius), 2014 03 06.

<sup>77</sup> Baltic states must develop joint air defence system, Lithuanian defence minister says, <https://en.delfi.lt/nordic-baltic/baltic-states-must-develop-joint-air-defence-system-lithuanian-defence-minister-says.d?id=68552144>, 2015 07 23.

<sup>78</sup> With the deterrence measures in place, we have to proceed to consider strengthening defence, R. Karoblis said to the Northern Group Defence Ministers, [http://kam.lt/en/news\\_1098/current\\_issues/with\\_the\\_deterrence\\_measures\\_in\\_place\\_we\\_have\\_to\\_proceed\\_to\\_considering\\_strengthening\\_defence\\_r\\_karoblis\\_said\\_to\\_the\\_northern\\_group\\_defence\\_ministers.html?pbck=30](http://kam.lt/en/news_1098/current_issues/with_the_deterrence_measures_in_place_we_have_to_proceed_to_considering_strengthening_defence_r_karoblis_said_to_the_northern_group_defence_ministers.html?pbck=30), 2017 11 07.