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Editors' Note

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The *Journal on Baltic Security* continues with its Special Edition series. Issue 2 of Volume 3 is dedicated to the delicate balancing of the three countries located on the Eastern shore of the Baltic Sea between the requirements of territorial defence and the alliance obligations, attempting to ensure their security in a volatile international environment. Having gained and lost independence in a short span of 22 years at the beginning of the past century, the three states spent considerable time and effort trying to ensure that their regained independence lasts.

In the first decade of renewed existence, the security strategies of the three states were largely identical – security was to be achieved through integration into Western institutions, especially the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. Once this goal had been achieved, however, the approaches to defence and security gradually started to drift apart. The differences became starker with the advent of the economic crisis in 2008, which hit the three countries unevenly and which forced two of them (Latvia and Lithuania) to significantly reduce all public spending, including the one dedicated for defence. The events in Ukraine, on the other hand, brought back the hard security issues to the forefront of the agenda. The responses to it, however, again differed. All countries increased their defence budgets. Yet, Latvia and Estonia stayed their course in the development of armed forces, while Lithuania went from the policy of suspended conscription to reinstalling conscription, with a much stronger emphasis on territorial defence.

This is the context in which the current issue of the *Journal on Baltic Security* has been conceived. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania seem to present a very interesting case for comparison as these three countries, which are similar in size and share recent history and security environment, have chosen varied responses to their security predicament. The issue starts with theoretical considerations and an analysis of the security strategies of smaller states by Živilė Vaitiekaitė. If the larger states can pursue the goal of increasing their power, smaller states have to focus on their survival. In order to achieve this goal, they can either concentrate on themselves, trying to stay nonaligned and focusing on their own defence, or participate in various cooperative schemes by joining the larger powers, forming alliances among themselves to counter dominant states or develop hedging strategies.

Throughout their two periods of independence, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania experimented with a variety of such strategies both together and as separate actors. Faced with almost identical security conditions, they nevertheless developed different responses. These different responses are explored in the remaining articles of this issue. Maris Andžans and Viljar Veebel tackle the issue of external military solidarity in Latvia and in Estonia. Considering recent developments – ranging from the crisis in Ukraine to the establishment of the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) and against the backdrop of constant budget constraints, Andžans and Veebel outline the main dynamics of the two countries' security dilemma, stretched between the imperatives of external military solidarity and territorial defence.

Deividas Šlekys similarly analyzes Lithuania's balancing exercise between territorial and collective defence, examining the fundamental interplays between military solidarity through participation in international operations and the necessities of defence in depth. Lithuania presents an interesting dynamic, having increased its defence budget quite substantially and reinstating conscription while continuing, if not increasing, its contribution to Allied operations.

Anthony Lawrence finally looks at the Estonian participation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) mission in the context of the country's strategic vision, which includes a strong focus on territorial defence in combination with international visibility through participation in military missions

abroad. The article offers insight into Estonia's participation in international operations in the post-Afghanistan context, in line with Estonia's concept of security as indivisible from that of its allies, including within the United Nations (UN) context. Visible commitment to UN missions also allows Estonia to obtain closer working relationship with the Finnish military in order to tie closer defence links with Helsinki.

The articles in this issue of the journal thus hopefully provide a good overview of how the three states use the means available to them to deal with their security predicament. As editors of this edition, we hope that this will trigger a wider international discussion on the differing security strategies of the states in a situation such as that of the Baltic countries and also contribute to the work on the politics of alliances that can provide inspiration for the security practitioners in the region and beyond.

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