

EDITORS' NOTE

The 2013 crisis in Ukraine that developed into the annexation of Crimea and war in the Eastern part of the country might not have changed the security situation in the three Baltic states *per se*, but definitely changed the perceptions of threats and vulnerabilities. A part of the elites always emphasized actual or potential threats from the big neighbour and seemed to be vindicated in their visions by the events in Ukraine. For others, these events came as unexpected as for the rest of the world, and forced to rethink the existing frameworks of security. Over the next two years, all countries chose to increase their defence budgets and sought to gain more substantial guarantees from the two major security providers: the EU and the NATO. The increased NATO presence was seen as especially important to deter potential aggression and the summits of the organization in Wales and in Warsaw acknowledged these fears and took measures to reassure the countries. While the entire Eastern flank was seen as vulnerable, the three Baltic states, forming a kind of geopolitical island, with only 104 kilometre border between Poland and Lithuania connecting it by land to the rest of Europe were especially so. This border was named the Suwalki gap as an analogy with the Fulda gap that kept military planners awake during the Cold War nights.

Yet, the military dimension is not all that there is to security perceptions. Even the hard-core realists realize that economy is as important for the nation's future as is its military prowess. For the people of the countries, the safety of their homes may not be necessarily linked to the potential military aggression, but rather economic stability and levels of everyday crime. Energy security has been seen as an issue over the past decade. The isolation of the

Baltic states from the energy networks of the rest of Europe made them vulnerable to the economico-political blackmail. Even cyber issues came often on the agenda, especially in Estonia, which prides itself as a digitalized nation.

The purpose of this special issue is thus to look deeper into these and other concerns of the Baltic elites and the populations. It gathers four researchers looking at these issues from their country's perspective and assessing the changes in both elite and public perceptions of security over the current two years. The three book reviews give some theoretical context to this discussion, assessing new contributions to the understanding of security.

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