CHANGES IN SECURITY POLICY AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE BALTIC STATES 2014 – 2016

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ABSTRACT The article proposes the analytical review on what and how to think about the security of the Baltic States from 2014 till 2016 by evaluating and reflecting the main changes in their security policy and perceptions. These three years demonstrated that the perceptions about security itself have not changed much while comparing with the previous five years. The changes were mostly in the security measures. The security discourse intensified a lot also, which was significant not only for the internal civic mobilisation, but even more importantly, but even more importantly for the mobilisation of the attention of the partners and their increased commitment. I explain my argument in two steps: first, by using traditional – rationalists – questions to analyse security policy, and second, by discussing security perceptions and discourses and asking these questions: security "for whom", security "from what", and security "how".

Introduction

Events in Ukraine in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine have without doubt created a sense of insecurity for Central and Eastern European countries. By annexing a part of the territory of a sovereign nation, and stirring up separatism in another part, Russia became the most important

threat and cause for worry in the region, and also the driving force behind a variety of security measures which were taken against it unilaterally, bilaterally, and multilaterally. It is not an exaggeration to say that no other states have felt and still feel more threatened and vulnerable than the three Baltic States - Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania[1].

The foreign policy of the Baltic States since they regained their independence in 1990–1991 evolved in the context of their past: the painful history of being occupied and forcibly included into the USSR. And the USSR in the minds of many was and still is inseparable from Russia - its past and its present. Putin's famous remarks about the collapse of the USSR as "the major geopolitical disaster" (Putin, 2005) of 20th century only strengthened the attitude of Russian policy makers still longing for past "greatness". Thus, the main implicit, and from time to time explicit, foreign policy goal of the Baltic States has been to assure their security which means mostly one thing: being further from Russia, living safely, as was believed, behind the backs of bigger partners in the frameworks of NATO and the EU.

Membership of these two organisations was achieved in 2004, however this has not erased Russia from the security agendas of the Baltic States, contrary to what was believed by some experts and decision makers advocating integrationist policy. As Eiki Berg and Piret Ehin explain, the idea was that the integration "would force Russia to abandon its post-imperial manners and treat the Baltics as 'normal' countries" (2009, p. 3)[2]. Words and actions of

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1   In this article I use Baltic States, or Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania as a shortcut to describe the actions and decisions by the policy makers and officials of the respective countries. This should not imply neither the personification of the countries nor that all people in these countries are of the same opinion.

2   For example, Berg and Ehin cite Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that membership in NATO and the EU would "definitely

Russian policy makers still gave cause for worries and the bilateral relations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with Russia continued to encounter variety of problems and provocations (Zagorski, 2015). The Bronze soldier events in Estonia in 2007, Lithuania's worries about energy dependence and price manipulations, or Latvia's dependence on Russian business in politics - these were just a few prominent examples of how Russia was part of the political and security agendas of the Baltic States (Jakniūnaitė, 2015; Astrov, 2009; Mužnieks, 2006).

There were differences in how intense the Russian threat was perceived: Lithuania most of the time has been the most active critic, while the position of the Estonian and Latvian governments varied a little bit more, the latter being the softest. In one of the reports reviewing relations between Russia and EU member states written in 2007, Lithuania together with Poland was called a "New Cold Warrior" with overtly hostile relationship with Russia while Latvia and Estonia were included into "Frosty Pragmatist" group which focuses "on business interests but are less afraid than others to speak out against Russian behaviour on human rights or other issues" (Leonard and Popescu, 2007, p. 2). Differences notwithstanding it is fair to state that Russia never left the security agendas of the Baltic States. However, till 2014 though constantly being an important, and dominant part of foreign and security thinking, Russia's threat was perceived more as a constant feature of these policies and constructed mostly in geopolitically deterministic way. That is Russia was a constant, fixture with which you had to work, and find the ways around, but it was never securitised absolutely on the state level, as an existentialist threat. This situation has changed in 2014, and the main reason was the situation Ukraine (more about the events see: Sakwa, 2016; Menon

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contribute to strengthening co-operation with Russia while creating more stability in Estonian-Russian Relations" (2009, p. 4, statement was made on December 20, 2007).

and Rumer, 2015; Wilson, 2014) as hardly anyone questioned Russia's meddling into the military conflict and its obvious disinclination to contribute anyhow towards pacifying the situation.

Ample analysis and reports about the changed security environment in the region with the policy recommendations and evaluations have been already written, and I will not repeat the story (see for example, Clark et al., 2016; Pugsley and Wesslau, 2016; Lucas, 2015; Darczewska, 2014). Here I want to propose the analytical review on what and how to think about the security of the Baltic States from 2014 till 2016 by evaluating and reflecting the main changes in their security policy and perceptions. Focusing on change of course is not a straightforward task: there are different layers and dimensions of change, varying both in kind and in degree: from change as a new thing, change as addition or subtraction to change as transformation or reversion (Holsti, 2004, pp. 12–17). These three years demonstrated that the perceptions about security itself have not changed much while comparing with the previous three or five years. The changes were mostly in the security measures. The security discourse intensified a lot also, which was significant not only for the internal civic mobilisation, but even more importantly, but even more importantly for the mobilisation of the attention of the partners and their increased commitment. I explain my argument in two steps: first, by using traditional – rationalists – questions to analyse security policy, and second, by discussing security perceptions and discourses.

Changes in Policy?

To understand policy changes means, first, to answer what is the policy, and then to compare the situation before and after. Having some defining external or internal event which gets indicated as a marker for "before and after" makes it easier to talk about the possible change. The change becomes part of the security

discourse and allows identification of what is considered new, different, other ways of doing security policy.

On the other hand, at the end of twentieth century it became fashionable and even obligatory to define the security of a sovereign state as broadly as possible. The Baltic States were no exception. The National Security Strategy of Lithuania besides the vital interests (like sovereignty and territorial integrity) lists ten primary security interests of the country (starting from tEuro-Atlantic security and finishing with national and ethnic distinctiveness) (Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, 2012). The National Security Concept of the Republic of Latvia similarly enumerates threats and priorities starting with international security, radicalisation and societal unity, military threats and ending with protection of information space and economy (Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, 2015). The National Security Concept of Estonia spells out a multitude of threats in four domains (foreign policy, defence, internal security and societal cohesion) (Riigikogu, 2010).

The multiple official security issues not only make the prioritisation of security policies difficult, it also means that security definitions and descriptions hardly change in a substantial way. When the policy makers try to encompass all possibilities of what can go wrong with the country and in the country, there is a huge chance that they have already covered that one threat we endeavour to analyse. Very often then the analysis becomes a matter of catching the changes in nuances, emphasis, and prioritisation. But security policy involves not only the definitions of security, it also involves actions - policy measures taken, and the quality and effectiveness of these measures. So, next, I will review what kind of changes took place in the realm of security definitions and security measures for the Baltic States.

David Baldwin promoting "rational policy analysis by facilitating comparison of one type of security policy with another" (Baldwin, 1997, p. 6) proposed to analyse security as an analytical concept. This meant not to start discussing the advantages and disadvantages of one security policy over the over but to build analytical framework for a more systematic empirical analysis. What this meant, actually, was simply the set of questions which should be asked by anyone envisioning or evaluating any security policy. The advantage of such an endeavour is the structured thinking which starts from understanding how the problem is defined, then asks what the reasons are for their existence, what types of solutions are proposed, and how effective they are.

Any theoretical understanding starts from the definitions, and debates about definitions of security involve a variety of sophisticated theoretical discussions (Buzan et al., 1998; Waever, 1995; Booth, 1991; Walt, 1991). Simplifying somewhat, we might talk about three definitions of security: absolute, relative and discursive. When we talk about security as the presence or absence of threats we talk about it in absolute terms. Baldwin's definition of security as "a low probability of damage to acquired values" (Baldwin, 1997, p. 13) is the relative one. And Weaver's idea about security as "a speech act" is the discursive understanding of security which does not ask if we have reached some level of security, but is interested in the role debates about security in state's policy and their justifications (Waever, 1995).

It is worth mentioning that it is impossible to achieve the absolute state of security in social life, but the absolutist definition nevertheless is worth keeping in mind as the national security policies implicitly very often assume this to be the end goal - eradication of all threats. Therefore, the enumeration of security threats is usually the basis of talking security. The relative definition though focuses on policies, forcing one to answer two sets of questions: security for what ("values") and with what

measures ("lowering probabilities"). This division guides further discussion on the changes in the security policies of the Baltic States using these questions: security "for whom", security "from what" (including security "how").

Security for What?

The question "security for what" encompasses two questions: the first is about the referent object, the second is about the values. The Baltic States in this regard are typical nation states considering their referent objects to be the state, its people, and its institutions. The typical formulation is: "[t]he goal of the Estonian security policy is to safeguard Estonia's independence and sovereignty, territorial integrity, constitutional order and public safety" (Riigikogu, 2010, p. 4). Usually, when security in general becomes the centre of the political life, questions about the referent object are not raised. They become more important when security policy is competing with other areas of state policy and the choice of the referent object becomes more controversial (e.g. making some group inside the state more safe).

It is worth mentioning that before 2014 we could see more divergence between public and elite perceptions about security and its referent object. The public cared much less about military, territorial aspects of security and considered their own wellbeing a matter of security as well. So, one of the important transformations throughout 2014-2016 is a convergence between public and elite attitudes towards the idea about which and whose security is a priority: without doubt it was territorial defence. It seems, though the tendency is far from obvious, that currently, as the situation in Ukraine gets more enduring and stable, the divergence in question whose security should be a priority started to reappear again (e.g. parliamentary elections in Lithuania in the autumn of 2016 demonstrated the importance of social and economic security for the majority of electorate).

The value aspect of discussing security definitions is less straightforward and allows a deeper look into state "thinking"[3]. Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Linas Linkevičius stated that "[t]he confidence with which Russia is acting now comes partly from our inability to stand by our values and principles" (Linkevičius, 2014). Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkēvičs called the annexation of the Crimea, "the breach of the international order and principles as challenges to Latvia, Europe and the world" (quoted in Bruge, 2016, p. 72). The President of the Republic of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaite also explained: "[We, Baltic States] knew that freedom is not a given, as we took responsibility for our nations and walked resolutely along the European road. Today, as Europe faces new challenges, it is especially important not to forget the values which encouraged [us] to come together forming the Baltic Way. [...] Only together, looking for what unites us rather than divides, can we maintain peace in our continent" (President of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014). This selection of quotation is a representative sample of the rhetoric used to explain the situation.

As the referent point and context was the situation in Ukraine and Russia's action there, the security situation had to be justified in broader terms than a direct threat to territorial integrity or safety to the nation's own citizens. Thus, international order, peace and security were the focus, combined with the solidarity rhetoric. In this sense, it was "pure" value discourse: it was about securing "our way of life" and "our freedoms". Another part of this rhetoric worth mentioning is emphasis on "we" which did not mean only "we Estonians", "we Latvians", or "we Lithuanians", it usually meant a much broader community: either "we Europeans",

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3   Referent objects, of course, are also value statements, the difference here is more heuristic. In the first case, it is more direct answer to "what", and the values dimensions explains "why", or what the substance of the object entails.

or "we Westerners". And this was an effort to mobilise not only the national communities, but also their partners. That is, the appeal to solidarity was not only to support Ukrainians, these appeals were also towards other countries which still needed to be persuaded or reminded (see, e.g., Jakniūnaitė, 2017).

Thus, though Baldwin using his rational approach treats the question about values mostly as a necessary routine and straightforward step towards the calculated policy measures, in this case, the value rhetoric actually does much more. It is used as a mobilisation and persuasion device by employing the identity categories and connecting all further actions about "us" and "them" with the effort to limit vocabulary centred on interests which is more adjustable to the lenient policy measures than the rigid identity distinctions. The reasoning becomes more obvious analysing the next question – security from what?

Security from What: Sources and Threats

The question of "security from what" again encompasses two further questions: one is about the source, the second is about the threats. As we are talking about the security policy and perceptions in the context of the Ukrainian events during the first three years of the crisis, the source of insecurity is easy to identify: we are talking about Russia as the greatest security issue from which the majority of significant security threats arise or have a close connection to.

As mentioned in the introduction, Russia never left the security thinking of the Baltic States. For example as Edward Lucas notices, already from the beginning "Russian withdrawal of the occupation forces from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania after the restoration of independence in 1991 was marked by economic pressure, political intrigue, provocations, the use of organised crime, phony terrorist outrages, propaganda and stay-behind

operations" (Lucas, 2015, p. 6). Russia was always on the agenda, just the degree of accommodativeness varied a little bit. Currently, there is hardly any difference among the Baltic States in their assessments of Russia, and using the words of the Estonian Information Board they can be summed up: "[t]he policies adopted by the current Russian government will remain the greatest factor threatening the military security of the Baltic Sea region in the near future" (Estonian Information Board, 2016, p. 9), or in the words of President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaite, "Threats to NATO's security are most clearly seen in the Baltic states. Russia continues to demonstrate its military power and unpredictable behavior in the Alliance's neighborhood" (President of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016).

Latvia was the most "pragmatic" in their relations with Russia until 2014. It had the most accommodating tone, and according to Anna Beitane was trying to build "relations on a pragmatic and rational basis without emphasising the contested historical discourses and narratives" (Beitane, 2015, p. 59). However, with the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis, Latvian policy makers also have been very outspoken. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Edgars Rinkevičs' rhetoric was "clear and straightforward showing undivided solidarity to Ukraine" (Bruge, 2016, p. 71), President Andris Berzinš in one of his speeches named Russia as "a threat to global peace and security", and the new President of Latvia Raimonds Vējonis described the country as "an aggressor and accused it of obstruction of justice" (both quotes from Bruge, 2016, p. 72). It is not customary in national security assessments to have one clear source for the majority of threats, and one should not get the impression that the Baltic States put other security sources and threats totally aside (e.g. the European refugee crises evoked other fears – they will be discussed a little bit later), but it is not an exaggeration to say that everything else for a long time was

overshadowed by the threats from Russia, and without doubt this was a distinguished feature of Baltic security in 2014-2016.

Naming the security threats is the main task of the security policy of the state. One of the main goals of the security strategies and concepts of the states is to identify the threats, to rank them and evaluate them. Richard Ulman defines a threat to national security as "an action or sequence of events that threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of a state or to private, nongovernmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state" (Ulman, 1983). The threat identification logic requires that we need to name the threat, to classify it, and to estimate its intensity. The classification of threats is usually done using the sectoral approach. Sectors are defined as "distinctive patterns of interaction" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 8), they differ in the way they are functioning, so it makes sense to differentiate threats according to the sectors as well. Barry Buzan's contribution to sectoral analysis is the most commonly used: he talked about military, political, economic, societal, and ecological sectors of security (Buzan, 1991). In order to demonstrate the changes that took place I will review three types of threats - military, informational and societal[4]. Buzan does not talk about information security, but other researchers have expanded his typology to include the communication/information sector as it becomes a significant part of that state's security policy as well (e.g., see Janeliūnas, 2007). The analysis of these three sectors will also demonstrate what changes did and did not take place.

Military Threats

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4   As the goal of this article is not to cover all security policy of Baltic States, but to highlight those features which took prominence in 2014-2016 and were the most salient in the context of Ukraine crisis.

Military threats from Russia coming into the fore of the security agendas of the Baltic States is the greatest change. Through taking control of Crimea, instigating unrest in Eastern Ukraine and facilitating the creation of quasi states, though never getting openly involved in direct actions, Russia expanded the limits of imagined possibilities. The idea that Russia might somehow invade one of the Baltic States became an accepted and normal part of discussions – a thought which was very rarely discussed seriously before 2014. Still, security experts do not believe such an event is highly probable: "although unlikely", writes the Estonian Information Board, but also adds: "the use of military power against the Baltic States cannot be entirely ruled out since conflicts that occur farther away may spill over into the Baltics" (Estonian Information Board, 2016, p. 9). This is a huge systemic change in political thinking: it appeared that in 21st century Europe, forcible territorial changes are possible and they can happen almost without resistance by the powerful and influential European states. This is also the reason why the Baltic States approach the military threats from two sides: highlighting Russian actions and keeping a close eye on the moods and decisions of their partners.

Already the Georgian–Russian conflict in 2008 was a worrying signal of the extent of Russian actions. It definitely made the life of Georgia much more difficult and the prospects of territorial unification very distant. But the war also "demonstrated inadequate troop training, communications systems, weapons, and other shortcomings of the Russian military" (Lucas, 2015, p. 6). Since 2014 the situation is qualitatively different. There are four big areas in the military sector which have increased the intensification of this threat (apart from the Russian actions in Ukraine mentioned above).

First, Russia's military reform which had been announced for many years finally began to show it effects, its comprehensive modernisation has intensified, and defence spending had increased.

It started hugely investing in new anti-access/area denial capabilities, new surveillance and reconnaissance systems, advanced missiles, and the Iskander tactical ballistic missiles (Smith and Hendrix, 2016, p. 7). In the context of the constant underfunding of defence in Europe these developments urge at least to keep a watchful eye on Russia, and at most – prepare to counterbalance.

Second, several extensive and elaborate military exercises were organised in the region, close to the borders of Baltic States. Russia held two large military exercises simulating the occupation of the Baltic States in 2009 (Zapad–09 and Ladoga) and also in 2013. In 2009 exercises envisaged the deployment and use of nuclear weapons, and one of the targets was Warsaw (Lucas, 2015, p. 9). The 2013 exercises demonstrated the ability to move large numbers of troops and equipment over long distances.

Third, there were various provocations which involved violations of sovereign territory. Russian war planes regularly intrude into or come close to the airspace of the Baltic States, maritime borders violations also take place pretty often. An important provocation happened on the Estonian land border, when in September of 2014 an Estonian security officer was seized on the Estonian side of the border while doing an investigation (two days after President Obama visited Tallinn, where he talked about US security guarantees).

Fourth, there is a problem of Kaliningrad – its ongoing militarisation (it has the Baltic fleet, a large military garrison, air defence system, and recently– Iskander ballistic missiles (Reuters, 2016)) and the fact that Russian transit goes through Lithuanian territory. Kaliningrad depends on gas, electricity and rail across Lithuania - on the one hand, the region itself is vulnerable against various disruptions of services, on the other hand, because of the

transit the territory of Lithuania becomes vulnerable as well and provides possibilities for a variety of provocations.

Taken separately all these threats are not very new: military transit through Kaliningrad is a vulnerability since the agreement was reached in 1995, violations of airspace are so customary that they even do not get reported in the media (on one more visible incident, see (Jurgelevičiūtė, 2006a)), and now we see the effects of Russian military modernisation rather than its inception. Thus, what makes the Russian military threat truly actual is the changed context. And this changed context did not need to persuade the Baltic States more, though they of course became more categorical and more internally united. The changed context served a much bigger goal: to make the commitment of their partners towards the security of Baltic States much stronger and more durable.

So, it was not surprising that as much attention was paid towards the attitudes and actions of the partners in the EU and NATO. As Estonian Foreign Minister at that time Marina Kaljurand explained, "Europe forgave Russia for the war in Georgia in less than a year. It is our duty to see to it that the same didn't happen with the occupation of Crimea and fighting in Eastern Ukraine. Behaviour like this mustn't become usual practice" (BNS, 2016). Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaite as usual was categorical and at some point talked about the "naiveté" and "unwillingness to take the threat seriously" (CNN Video, 2015) of the West/Europe. Thus, in the context of security policy the questions were being raised: Would NATO Article 5 be activated in case of an attack on Baltic States? Would it be activated if something similar to that in Ukraine happened? How quickly would NATO forces reach the countries? Would the decision by NATO be collective or would it be up to individual states to decide what to do? These questions indicated not just mistrust towards partners, but also uncertainty about the decision process in NATO and the level of readiness in the organisation.

During these two years of increased tension between the West and Russia, worries that the partners would become lenient towards Russia were never realised. Still, the need to observe the partners did not vanish and is part of the (military) security agenda. In 2009, Ehin and Berg wrote that "the Baltic States present themselves as more Western than the West, reproaching the West for its failure to understand the 'true' nature of Russia" (2009, p. p.12). In 2016 we could state the same: the Baltic States still perceive themselves as the best and acute decoders of Russia's intentions and because of that, the role of watchdog is taken very seriously. Sometimes, even too seriously, as for example, Grybauskaite did when she called Russia "a terrorist state" (BNS, 2015). Who if not us, the thinking goes. Thus, there is also a constant worry, as indicated in the quotation by Kaljurand above, that European partners would revert to normal relations with Russia.

The measures against these main threats were taken also in two directions. The first one was to demonstrate the willingness by the Baltic States themselves to take responsibility for military defence of their countries, partly also not to receive criticism for not doing enough, as was the case in the past. For example, because of the economic crisis, defence budget cuts of between 21% and 36% were made in 2012. For example, in 2014, defence spending of Latvia reached 0.94% of its GDP, Lithuania had just 0.88%, and only Estonia demonstrated a good example with 1.94% of its GDP for defence. In 2016 though still only Estonia fulfils the requirement of spending a minimum of 2% of GDP on defence (for 2016, the estimate was 2.16%), but the other two countries visibly increased their spending: Lithuania dedicates 1.49 % of GDP and Latvia 1.45 % of GDP (NATO, 2016a, p. 5). So, it was necessary to prove that the Baltic States are prepared to take obligations. Both countries – Latvia and Lithuania – declared that by 2020 they will gradually reach the required amount of defence spending. All three Baltic Defence ministers announced the

participation of the Baltic Battalion in NATO's Response Force in 2016, and the development of cooperation in planning and command operations (Beitane, 2015, p. 62), and Lithuania brought back conscription service.

A variety of measures inside allowed for pressuring and lobbying NATO to ensure its more visible presence in the region. And the last two NATO summits – in Wales in 2014, and in Warsaw in 2016 – made important steps towards assuring the Baltic States about their security. In Wales NATO agreed to a number of short-term measures to bolster the alliance's conventional deterrent (called the Readiness Action Plan), which for example included doubling the size of the NATO Response Force and holding them at a much higher state of readiness (NATO, 2014). In Warsaw NATO presence in the eastern part of the Alliance was declared and each country was promised to receive a battalion of 1000 soldiers on a rotating basis (NATO Force Integration Units), while cyberspace was recognised as a new operational domain (NATO, 2016b). A pledge for permanence of the NATO basis was not achieved. Despite suspending all the NATO-Russia Council activities, the organisation still tries not to be accused of breaking any prior agreements. On the other hand, it also seems that the Baltic States try not to overplay their cards and accept the term "on a rotational basis" as a question of semantics than of the sign of avoiding the commitment. Thus, one might conclude that the Baltic States have reached their goals against military threats and got the necessary commitments.

During these three years the military dimension of security was emphasised to the extent that it almost overshadowed all other aspects of security (the militarised concept of security was also noticed by Mickus, 2016). Strictly militarised security rhetoric also created the context for reformulating the threats in other sectors in more militarised terms. This was especially noticeable in the discussions about information security and societal cohesion.

Information and Society

For the analysis and goal-setting of security policy, military threats are the easiest: they are the most tangible, often measurable, and therefore (more or less) straightforwardly explainable. The biggest challenge with them is that the states can hardly use them without escalating tensions and getting into the downward spiral of insecurity. Therefore, we get to turn to more ambiguous "soft" threats which are still threats but are less clearly defined and subsequently more difficult to resist. Besides, military threats are "easy" as they usually come from the outside – and the external enemy is the best in terms of mobilisation and explanatory heuristics. Soft threats though are more complex and interact with the internal, domestic processes, and are multi-causal. Thus, their formulation and apportioning of guilt is more controversial. The cases of information security and societal security manifest these challenges.

The fight against threats in the information space of the Baltic States became an important security topic. Sometimes, and more frankly, the strategy is defined as the fight against Russian propaganda. Again, resisting the unfavourable portrayal of the Baltic States inside and outside of Russia, and also competing with Russian narratives of the past and present events were on the security agenda of all three countries already. Such tropes as calling the Baltics "fascists", denying their occupation in 1940, criticising the treatment of national minorities, labelling them "rusophobic", single-issue states, and the "puppets" of the West or the United States have been prevalent in Russian media with differing intensity already for many years (e.g., Jurgelevičiūtė, 2006b; Laurinavičius, 2006).

During the last few years, and especially since 2014, the informational activity of Russia intensified and the domains where it is enacted multiplied: more finances were directed towards

popularising Russia Today, supporting pro-Russian NGOs abroad (connections with Russkyi Mir Foundation, the Gorchakov Foundation, Rossotrudnichestvo and the Historical Memory Foundation - the Russian organisations dedicated to working with Russian "compatriots"), paying PR firms for promoting the Russian point of view, and making the Russian point of view visible on social media (and the famous "Russian trolls") (Kojala and Žukauskas, 2015; Veebel, 2015; Wake, 2015). The hostile rhetoric might not have changed substantially, but rather the volume and intensity have intensified. And also the changed context (Ukraine, again) made the hearing more acute.

Apart from the vast rhetoric about information security some concrete and sometimes controversial measures have been taken. For example, in 2014 Latvia and Lithuania temporarily suspended some Russian television channels broadcasted to local viewers. Broadcasting in Russian language was also increased: for example, in Estonia, in 2015 the local public broadcasting opened a new, Russian-language TV-channel called ETV+, Russian TV broadcasting became more supported in Latvia as well. Latvia got support from NATO countries to establish the NATO Centre of Excellence on Strategic Communication. On the EU level, a variety of measures have been supported as well (e.g. https://euvsdisinfo.eu/ and www.stopfake.org).

In light of these activities counterbalancing Russian activities became a part of the security agenda. The task is multiple as there are multiple audiences that have to be persuaded: domestic, Russian, and international. Domestically worries about information security are inseparable from the societal cohesion and trust of Baltic States policy makers in their citizens. Concentrating on the information channels in Russian language is considered essential because of the Russian speaking people in the Baltic States. Keeping in mind that "protecting the rights of Russians" or "Russian speakers" was the dominant rhetoric while occupying

Crimea, the Russian comments about the situation of Russian speakers in the Baltic States was also seen almost like an act of aggression. On the other hand, it also demonstrated how insecure all three Baltic States are about their own population. Not surprisingly, the biggest mistrust was directed at Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia. Estonia has the city of Narva and in Latvia there is Daugavpils, which both have Russian speaking majorities. Though capital cities, Tallinn and Riga are also considered to be vulnerable in this regard. Although there are little data supporting the idea that Russian speakers would somehow be supportive of Russian intervention in any of the Baltic States (there is some data that they are more pro-Russian than the general population, e.g. (Saldžiūnas, 2016)), they are still considered "the weakest link". But keeping in mind the level of economic development and other advantages of living in an EU country and also the political socialisation process which took place during the last twenty years, the Ukraine scenario where a substantial part of the local population in its East supported separatism, seems very unlikely (for similar arguments see, e.g., Kasekamp, 2015).

Approaching information and societal security from a strictly rationalistic point of view, the problems might seem to be of a technical nature: how to create the system of counter-propaganda activities, how to frame messages and to create more interesting narratives, how to close channels of unwanted information legally, how to neutralise vulnerabilities with ethnic minorities by persuading them etc. However, such measures leave their discursive and social effects aside. In the tradition of the securitisation school (Buzan et al., 1998), we could say that it matters who is defined as unreliable, not loyal, and therefore dangerous. Identifying one group as a "vulnerability" in the context of militarised (i.e. existential) security discourse makes that group dangerous by definition, therefore in some sense alien to the state and its goals. In the same vein, the fight against the

adversary's propaganda always borders on censorship, discussions about which always raise the question how much is enough. The usual explanation is the argument about the exceptional situation, like the quotation of the "undeclared war" earlier, which justify some not so ordinary measures. Thus, the biggest change which was taken in the domains of information and security was the measures: apart from the rhetoric, more actions were taken, some with more opportunities (like alternative sources of information and educational activities), and some creating restrictions and estrangement.

Living with the Danger: Concluding Remarks

The still developing situation in Ukraine was a watershed moment in European security and mobilised all the EU members states to take action in the form of sanctions, and some even to take more drastic and resolute measures in order to demonstrate to Russia – the main instigator of the anxiety and insecurity situation – the discontent, irritation and even preparedness to resist. In the article I argued that for the Baltic States, the changes in security policy were a matter of degree and the emphasis and bulk of efforts were directed towards partners: convincing them about the realness of the threats and the need to take some measures. One of the main consequences of the changed security perception for the Baltic States was the militarisaton of security policy and its discourse. On one hand, military security came into the fore, on the other hand, other sectors of security began to be treated through the military lens as well.

Concluding, I would like to make three final points about Baltic States security. One of the biggest consequences of the military security discourse is the famous security dilemma which can be restated in two questions: when is there enough security and how to persuade the opponent/adversary that the measures taken are defensive, not offensive. "In a world in which scarce resources

must be allocated among competing objectives, none of which is completely attainable, one cannot escape from the question 'How much is enough?' and one should not try" (Baldwin, 1997, p. 15) – this question, however, was rarely raised. The quarter of a century since gaining independence demonstrated that structural conditions in the region are the limiting factor to gain absolute security, nor should it be the goal. However, the question about the level of uncertainty tolerance still seems to be under-discussed and this creates internal societal tensions which no external mobilisation politics would be able to untangle.

Russia's actions illustrate the second dimension of security dilemma: in response to NATO's military exercises in the region, the country increased its military activities in the Baltic Sea area even more. Besides, NATO activity in the Baltic region provides Russia with the plenty of opportunities to say that NATO is preparing for offence, or supports the Russian perception that it is perceived as an enemy and encircled by antagonistic states. So, now the situation in the Baltic Sea becomes the classical security dilemma situation with the possibility of a self-fulfilling prophesy of conflict escalation. This description of the situation does not imply the conclusion that Baltic States and NATO should have done nothing. Nevertheless, the structural consequences of the security dilemma in this region should be kept in mind as the military rhetoric and actions contribute to this situation as well.

Second, the issue of solidarity and responsibility for European values was emphasised by all Baltic leaders on many occasions. It is a value-laden, usually passionate and principled position which if not taken consistently can turn against those who speak in these terms. The refugee crisis which hit Europe in 2015 – a year after the Ukraine crisis intensified – was an important test for the Baltic States. The discussions about the response created friction both among the EU member states and inside the states as well. In all three states there was huge enough resistance, from the policy

makers as well as from the populations against the obligatory quotas to refugees and it was clear that in this case it was an effort to downplay the solidarity discourse.

Finally, at the end of 2016 the situation in Ukraine has stabilised (though it is not solved or even calmed), Russia's attention has turned towards Syria, and international attention is on Brexit and the incoming Trump presidency. However, the implication of security policy of the last three years will stay with the Baltic States for some time to come. Russia, as the dominant insecurity source will not go away, and there will be a need to find "softer" solutions to security challenges and the ability to find balance and compromise with the security needs of partners.

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