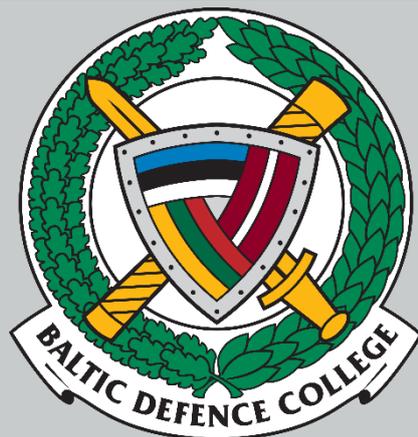




# *AD SECURITATEM*

THE BEST ESSAYS BY COURSE PARTICIPANTS  
AT THE BALTIC DEFENCE COLLEGE,  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2021/2022



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## Foreword

Welcome to *Ad Securitatem*, a collection of the best papers from the Baltic Defence College's academic year 2021-2022.

Over the last two years, we discussed the unusual circumstances under which our courses were delivered, with COVID-19 restrictions limiting face-to-face interactions, classroom activities, and how we interacted with one another as colleagues, course mates, supervisors, and supervisees. This year, we were thrown off course by Russia's renewed aggression in Ukraine, which brought conventional armed conflict back to Europe after seventy years of peace. Our Ukrainian course participants returned home to defend their country, leaving their potentially valuable work unfinished. We cherish their contributions, and we hope that some of them will be able to continue their thinking, reading, and writing not only as a regular life-long learning exercise, but also in the completion academic degrees, such as the MA degree offered by the College under the auspices of the Latvian Defence Academy.

The difficult period is also reflected in the works written during this year. Because the JCGSC participants' papers were nearly finished before the conflict began, some of their conclusions were validated, while others required revisions to remain relevant. Nonetheless, the year was filled with insightful contributions and thought-provoking works. We chose four papers from JCGSC and one from HCSC and CSELIC to represent the year this year. The collection is introduced by the best papers from the JCGSC.

Maj. William Minior discusses Sino-Baltic relations and makes the case that, while Russia is understandably important to the Baltics, China may pose a greater challenge in the long run. As many in the Baltic countries tend to overlook this issue, especially now that the war is on our doorstep, the essay serves as a timely reminder that the world faces additional challenges that policymakers must address.

Maj. Antonio d'Apolito's investigation into how Defence Planning can support National Policy in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world continues this collection. The unexpected war in Ukraine has highlighted the importance of having a vision and clear mechanisms in place to deal with unexpected problems. As this paper convincingly argues, clarity in defense planning mechanisms can help avoid situations where 'grey rhinos,' events with large impacts but also clear warning signs, become 'black swans.' Reducing uncertainty gives planners an advantage over their competitors, and this paper presents some useful tools for such planners in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world.

LCDR Rene Kalmaru's paper examines Russia's security strategy from 2021 and its implications. The war in Ukraine highlighted these efforts to comprehend Russian

security and strategic thinking, and this paper attempts to explain the logic of Russian thinking that culminated with the invasion. It does raise some important questions, particularly the identified struggle for autarchy, which may now be aided by the imposition of sanctions by the West. However, it is questionable whether Russian leaders truly understood the implications of this autarchy, which currently means that they will be unable to continue their desired military modernization programs.

Maj. Siim Vuntus then goes on to discuss another current issue – the impact of the COVID-19 on global security, particularly its impact on the EU. It addresses the issue of EU cohesion as well as the effect of the pandemic on the armed forces. It is convincingly argued that the latter became entangled in the provision of services and was used by states in ways that were detrimental to their readiness to deal with their major tasks, namely confronting potential adversaries. The paper suggests that states develop proper crisis management systems rather than relying on the military as a jack of all trades. The primary goal should not be to combat pandemics.

LTC Tarmo Kundla's paper has been chosen to represent the HCSC's work. It addresses the strategic leadership requirements for a collective Baltic military effort. The paper addresses the painful topic of limited cooperation among the three Baltic countries, which can undoubtedly be expanded to create a more unified effort to protect a geographically tightly contiguous area. It examines the various projects that have been implemented thus far and makes insightful recommendations for their development, including how to better employ what is considered the best cooperation project thus far – the Baltic Defence College.

We hope that this collection exemplifies the intellectual stimulation that college course participants provide for all of us. Additionally, we hope that these interesting ideas will not only inspire our own course participants and faculty, but also policymakers and opinion leaders.

**BEST ESSAYS OF THE JOINT COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF  
COURSE**



# **SINO-BALTIC RELATIONS: SHORT-TERM GAIN VS LONG-TERM EROSION**

**William Minior, Major, US Army**

## **Introduction**

The astonishing growth of the Baltic Countries since their respective re-independence movements in 1990-1991 brought them visibility on the world stage. As the international paradigm shifts to a multipolar world order between the US and China, the Baltics need to consider every foreign policy option available to them to continue thriving in a globally connected environment. The countries have many similarities, the most prescient of which is the threat of Russian Federation aggression and expansion. While they all support the post-World War II Security framework that allowed their sovereignty in the first place, each Baltic Nation has nuanced considerations to pursue their own interests moving forward.

It's no secret that the 21<sup>st</sup> century international strategic landscape continues to trend towards a multipolar world order. A rising China and an increasingly aggravated Russia are challenging the post-World War II (WWII) collective security arrangements that created a US-centric unipolar world order. While the US shifts away from the Middle East and towards this Sino-Russian paradigm dubbed "Great Power Competition (US Congressional Research Service, 2021)," the rest of the world is in a position to re-evaluate strategic partnerships.

For small states, foreign alliances and international economic agreements are necessary for security and prosperity. Depending on their geography, many small states walk a knife-edge when weighing their strategic relationships. The multipolar nature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century makes coherent and beneficial foreign policy development a difficult and nuanced production. No region knows this pain more than the Baltic countries: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. As former Soviet states, the Baltics have

historically fought for autonomy by leveraging relationships with European powers against their Russian neighbour. When the Baltics re-declared independence and left the collapsing Soviet Union in 1991, they found themselves relying on Europe and the United States.

To offset Russian influence and secure their collective autonomy, the Baltic States applied for inclusion in both the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004. Chief among their advocates was the United States, who believed that Baltic inclusion in NATO would cement the Soviet collapse and contain any possible Russian expansion (Kuo, 2022). Throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Baltic states proved themselves to be reliable and competent allies with flourishing democratic governments and growth-focused free market economies. Baltic growth has been nothing short of remarkable, averaging nearly 9% year-over-year growth since 2004. They consistently score in the top 40 countries in the world in Human Development Index (Madan, 2021). Given this growth, it's only logical that the Baltic states look to multiple strategic partners to reach new international markets.

The Republic of Estonia's desire to be seen as a Nordic Country will likely push it towards some degree of cooperation with every global and regional player possible. They will attempt to balance relationships between the EU, US, China, and Russia while pursuing economic sovereignty. The Republic of Latvia's geographic boundaries combined with severely constrained demographic issues will likely force its hand towards the most economically beneficial arrangements. They are the most likely of the Baltic states to benefit from Chinese investment, which will in turn assist deterring the Russian Federation. The Republic of Lithuania's recent foreign policy shift against an Authoritarian China will force increased participation in the EU and NATO while simultaneously drawing the Lithuanian economy into US orbit.

### Chinese Global Interests and the Baltic States

Starting in 2012, the Baltic States began economic engagement with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in the form of the China and Central & Eastern European Countries cooperation forum, colloquially known as “16+1” (Bērziņa-Čerenkova, 2018). This was China’s first iteration of a multilateral foreign policy network with trade as the epicentre of relations. Over time, “16+1” became the foundation for Chinese President Xi Jinping’s “One Belt, One Road (OBOR)” initiative, an economic plan that seeks to “connect Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks with the aim of improving regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth (Freund, et al., 2018).” OBOR was officially adopted into the PRC constitution in 2017 as the “Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).” As the name suggests, the policy has two facets: a land “belt” and a maritime “road,” based on the Chinese Han Dynasty “Silk Road” trade route (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2021).



FIGURE 1: Xi Jinping's proposed "One *Belt*, One *Road*" initiative (Freund, et al., 2018)

The "*Belt*" refers to a trans-continental passage that links China with southeast Asia, south Asia, Central Asia, Russia and Europe by land

The "*Road*" refers to a sea route connecting China's coastal regions with southeast Asia, South Asia, the South Pacific, the Middle East and Eastern Africa, all the way to Europe

The PRC's BRI foreign policy aims to create a new Silk Road with China as the centre of global trade. The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) aggressive implementation of the policy has caused a global shift, bringing China to the doorstep of regions previously inaccessible to them. Recent PRC initiatives in Europe and North America, to include infrastructure projects, governmental and education partnerships, and economic market manipulation has forced NATO to acknowledge China as a threat (NATO Summit, 2021). As a Communist government, Chinese economic interests are intrinsically tied to political and security policies.

Chinese innovation and advances in hybrid warfare continually surprise and outflank Western military and defence industries. The CCP's ability to focus its efforts across multiple industries at one time makes developing coherent deterrence strategies nearly impossible. The Chinese will continue to exploit gaps in multi-lateral foreign policies in pursuit of their aim to restore the Han Dynasty's global reach. The BRI intends to "carve out an economic corridor to the Baltic Sea and close the Eurasian infrastructural gap" that has existed since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Larsen, 2021).

The Baltic states will be of keen interest to the CCP as they continue to develop their new Silk Road. There is bound to be friction points with the Baltic states' primary security guarantor, the US, who will continue to pressure its' allies in the EU to curb Chinese investment and expansion (Michaels, et al., 2021). As the Baltic states consider US, EU, and NATO guidance on China, an in-depth analysis of the defence and diplomatic foreign policies of all actors is required to predict and alleviate future tension points surrounding Chinese endeavours into the region. There is a fine line

between legitimate diplomatic engagement and China's subtle Hybrid warfare (Mattis, 2018). This paper aims to answer the question: Do the Baltic states stand to gain from cooperation with China and where do those interests diverge with NATO, the EU, and the United States?

### **Estonia and China**

Following Estonian "re-independence" in 1991, the country has strived to cement an autonomous identity and craft an image that differentiates it from all aspects of the former Soviet umbrella. Having strong historic, lingual, and cultural ties to Finland, the Estonian people tend to see themselves and their nation as Nordic-like. As former Estonian president Toomas Ilves put it, the Estonian people have a "Nordic mental geography (Ilves, 1999)." The Estonian government has worked diligently since the turn of the century to rebrand itself on the international stage. In 2000, they stood up a government agency called "Enterprise Estonia" whose mission is to manage the country's image and digital footprint; they "serve as a bridge between the Estonian business environment and the world (Enterprise Estonia, 2021)." Chief among their responsibilities is overseeing Estonian trade development and raising direct international investment into the country (Enterprise Estonia, 2021).

Given its small population of 1.2 million people and precarious geographic location butted against Russia and the Baltic Sea, Estonia can't afford to stand alone. The Nordic image-crafting efforts frame the country's economic, security, and foreign policies; Estonia needs consistent trade and strong alliances to maintain its security. Membership in the EU and NATO are necessary not only to develop economic growth, but also to guarantee sovereignty and deter Russian aggression. Estonia strives to balance its security policy through multi-lateral and bi-lateral partnerships based on common interests with the EU, the US, the Nordic bloc and its Baltic neighbours.

As a NATO partner, Estonia relies primarily on US deterrence strategies to offset Russian aggression. While the country does not have significant conventional force capacity, they've carved a niche for themselves in the technology space through their hosting of the NATO Cyber Centre of Excellence as well as their "digital society (e-

Estonia, 2022)” efforts, which span both the defence sector and private industry. Estonia’s cyber security capability has proven one of the most remarkable economic growth areas for the small government, which has drawn attention from the international community. As an EU member state trying to follow a Nordic model, Estonia balances its personal defence interests with its reliance on the EU for trade. 77% of Estonian imports and 68% of exports come from other EU member states (European Union, 2021). Reliance on the EU for economic development and NATO for self-defense are the two primary drivers of Estonia’s state and foreign policy development.

In 2011, Chinese-Estonian relations were at an all-time low due to Estonia hosting the Dalai Lama. To rectify these relations and open the possibility of trade with the Chinese market, Estonia joined the Chinese “16+1” framework in 2012 with 11 other EU members and 5 Balkan countries (Hillman, 2019). This initial framework was broadly written as an economic forum for developing policy and projects in infrastructure, advanced technology, and green technology. However, while the forum gives the outward impression of multilateralism it has been mainly used to mask bilateral deals with China and a partner nation (Hillman, 2019). Under the 16+1 format, Estonia and China began multiple joint ventures, including a 2.2 billion euro shale power plant in Jordan (Chinese Embassy in Estonia, 2018) and the 43 million euro acquisition of Estonia’s largest airline parts supplier, Magnetic MRO, to the Chinese parent company Guangzhou Hangxin Aviation Technology (Vahtla, 2018).

The initial 16+1 successes led to Estonia joining the official PRC Belt & Road initiative in 2017. As of 2020, an independent think-tank described Sino-Estonian relations as “the best cooperation period with China in history (Karindi, 2020).” These economic ties with the PRC put Estonia and many EU member states at odds with the United States’ shift to Great Power Competition. The EU 2016 China Strategy and subsequent 2020 EU-China Strategic Communique outlined a “more realistic, assertive, and multi-faceted approach” for EU member states to deal with China (European Commission, 2020). Larger EU countries such as Germany and France expressed concern with predatory Chinese business practices such as technology company takeovers and “beauty contest” exploitation, a foreign relations engagement method that forces

countries to undercut and outbid each other for more favourable access to the Chinese market.

By the end of 2020, Estonian scepticism of China grew as increased Chinese presence in Estonian political affairs began. “The growing wariness of the People’s Republic of China in the Baltics can be tracked through the countries’ annual national intelligence reports. Traditionally, these strategic documents have almost exclusively fixated on their larger eastern neighbour, Russia. Today, however, paragraphs and pages are also reserved for the threat posed by China (Banka, 2021).” The Chinese encroachment into Estonian affairs mirror tactics seen in predatory Chinese business practices seen in the US market, such as reverse mergers (Sharara, 2020) and the siphoning of key infrastructure providers. Last year, the Chinese-acquired Estonian airline parts supplier Magnetic MRO saw the lowest annual revenue income, but highest profit margin since its purchase by Guangzhou Hangxin Aviation Technology (Shenzhen Stock Exchange, 2021). While this would often indicate streamlined and optimized business practices, with Chinese-owned acquisitions this is more often an indicator that parts are being moved to a Chinese market at the price of short-term market gains for the host country.

In addition to scepticism regarding the Magnetic MRO acquisition, the Estonian government strongly rebuked further Chinese investment when it denied a large infrastructure project that proposed an underground tunnel that would link the Estonian capital of Tallinn with Helsinki, Finland. In late 2020, Estonian Minister of Public Administration Jaak Aab cited “environmental, economic, and security reasons” to reject the project (Aab, 2020). “An Estonian think tank report raised concerns of the project inviting more Chinese political and strategic presence in the country, potentially blurring economic and military aims with dual-use investments (Alliance for Securing Democracy, 2020).”

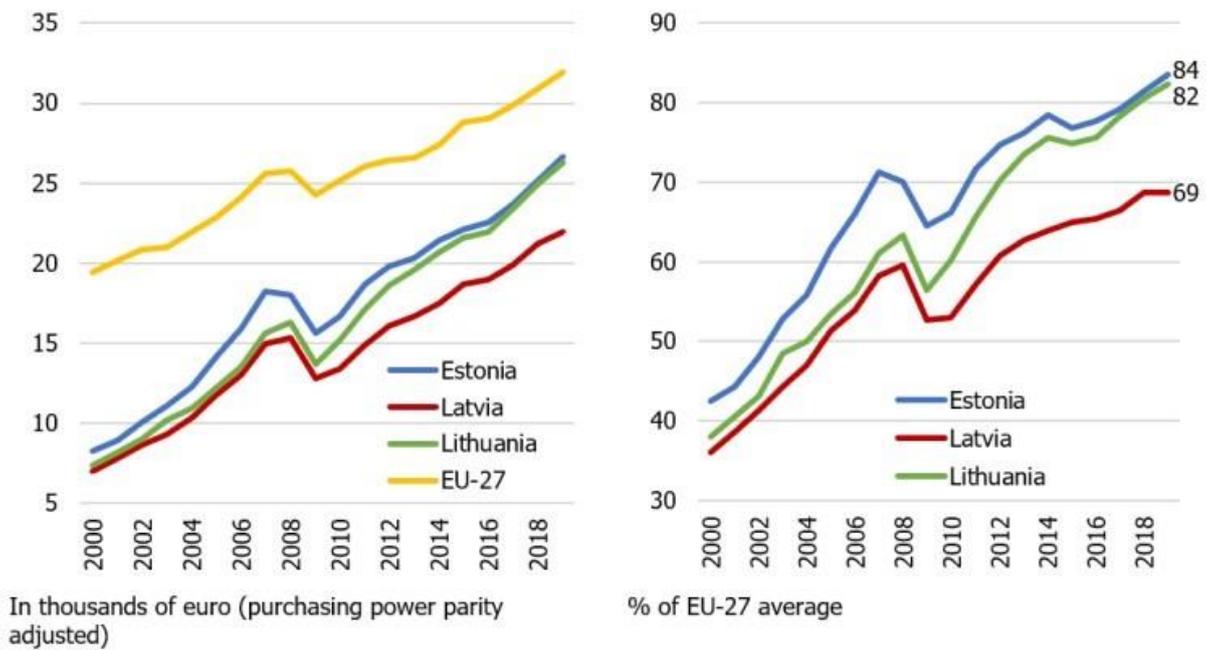
The continued encroachment of Chinese companies into the Estonian economy along with continued Chinese partnerships with Russia (Hadano, 2019) have created a trust rift between Estonia and the PRC. While the allure of exports to the Chinese market

is tempting, the Estonian government seems to currently view PRC partnership as outside their pragmatic interests. The inexorably tied economic and security policies of the BRI place Estonia's desire to forge a Nordic identity at risk. PRC foreign engagement is communist in nature and at odds with Estonia's desire to maintain autonomy.

### **Latvia and China**

The Latvian re-independence declaration of 1991 brought with it a plethora of complex problems. Almost Fifty years of Soviet occupation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century drastically altered the footprint of the nation. As of 2021, Roughly a quarter of the Latvian population identified as “ethnically Russian (European Commission, 2021). That said, the Baltic middle child's primary focus remains freedom and sovereignty. As with its Baltic siblings, the main economic and military challenge for Latvia is to survive growing Russian power (Scott, 2018). It's nestled geographic position between Estonia and Lithuania present unique challenges as it strives to forge an independent identity.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, so did the Latvian economy which largely relied on factories, collective farms, and goods going to and from Belarus (Lovett, 2021). To gain traction and build a thriving independent nation, Latvia leaned heavily into the EU and NATO. Latvia's introduction into the two organizations in 2003 and 2004 respectively, signalled a strategic push towards democracy and transparent, free market trade. Like Estonia, Latvia utilized strong partnership with the US, through NATO, to deter an aggressive Russia. Simultaneously the small country leveraged every aspect of its EU membership to grow the economy. Unfortunately, Latvia continues to lag behind both Estonia and Lithuania in terms of economic growth. As of 2021, the average Latvian citizen is about as prosperous as the average EU citizen from 2005 (Krasnopjorovs, 2021).

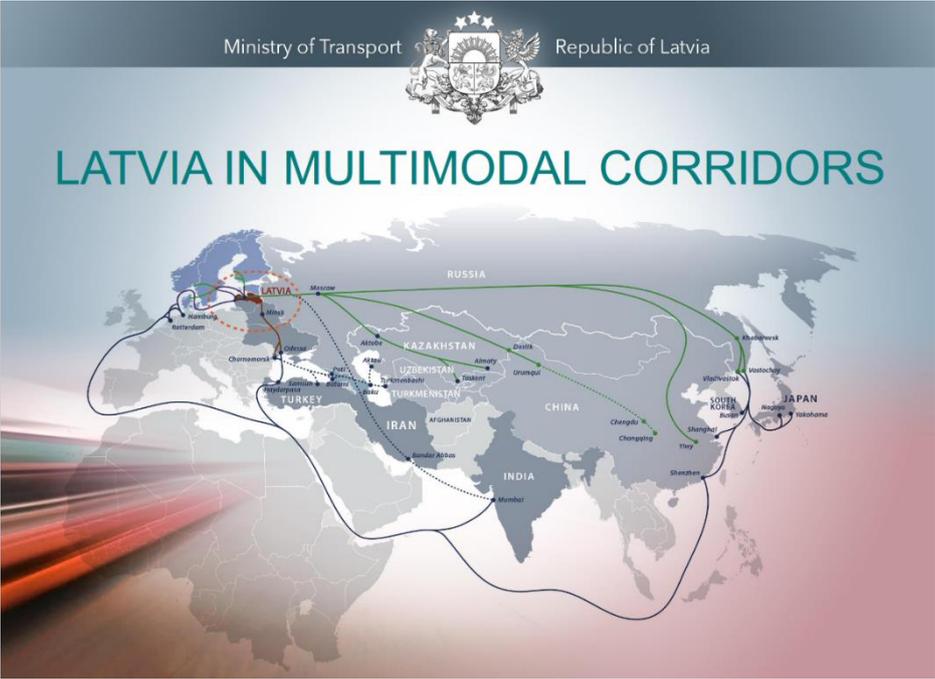


**FIGURE 2:** Left shows GDP purchasing power of the Baltic countries set against the EU average (EU-27) over time; Right shows GDP per capita percentage of the Baltic countries over time (Krasnopjorovs, 2021).

Latvia's slower economic growth compared to its Baltic neighbours is indicative of some larger issues. Economic reports from the Wall Street Journal suggest that Latvia's slow growth is due largely to low birth rates and a dwindling population. Since joining the EU, Latvia has lost 17% of its population and seen its lowest number of births in a century and the sharpest population drop in the EU, at 0.8% (Lovett, 2021). These issues likely arise from the ability of citizens being able to work anywhere within the EU bloc as well as a reluctance on behalf of the Latvian government to accept immigrants from outside of Europe. While the population issue may seem like a largely domestic economic problem, it created a series of gaps in Latvia's security agenda. Specifically, to offset its economic woes, Latvia readily embraced PRC assistance in early 2000 (Scott, 2018) and began down a road of weakening Baltic solidarity as well as possibly creating a schism within NATO.

Starting in 2000, the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs noticed an opportunity to pursue a privileged relationship with the PRC. They worked actively to open the port of Riga

to Chinese companies and by 2007, Latvian president Vaira Vike-Freiberga visited China and declared her intent to pursue a trade corridor linking East Asia and Europe in support of China's new silk Road (Vike-Freiberga, 2007). This PRC-proposed trade corridor would place Latvia in a highly prosperous situation as a primary distribution link to Western Europe and the Nordic countries. The trade strategy became known as the "Northern Spur" of the BRI Belt. However, Like many Chinese trade proposals, the offer was issued to multiple countries at once in a bi-lateral lens.



**FIGURE 3:** The envisaged PRC trade corridor proposed to Latvia in 2007 and briefed in a 2016 "16+1" conference (Latvian Ministry of Transportation, 2017).

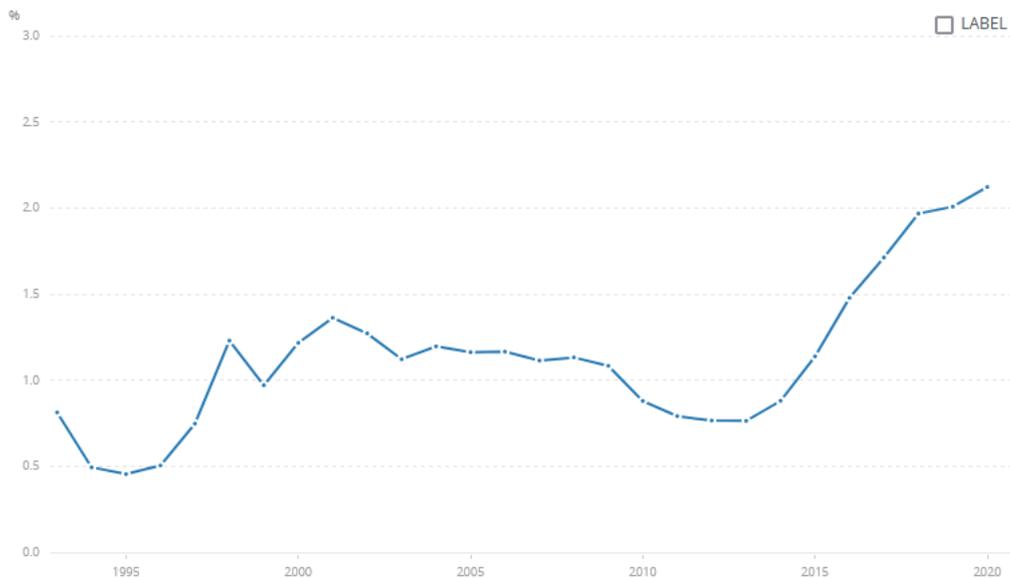
China enticed both Latvia and Lithuania with the chance to become the "Northern Spur" in the BRI Belt. This highly lucrative trade deal incentivized Latvia and Lithuania to undercut one another for access to the Chinese Market. Both Baltic partners held international conferences about linking East to West and invited the PRC, but not the opposing bid partner (Scott, 2018). This small nation "Beauty Contest" model is a key tactic of PRC trade deals. It pressures small nations' politicians and decision makers to do whatever they can to gain Chinese favour. For the PRC, these trade deals are not merely economic. As a Communist government, their political, diplomatic, and security goals are carefully nested to every economic endeavour.

In the case of the “Northern Spur,” the Latvian Government outbid Lithuania by refusing to meet with the Dalai Lama, a highly important political issue to the PRC. In 2016, Latvia hosted the first “16+1” Transport Minister Conference in Riga and boasted a milestone “when a trial container train from Yiwu City in Zhejiang province in China arrived in Latvia after completing an 11,000 km journey over 12 days through North-eastern China and Siberia (Scott, 2018).” This milestone resulted in a cooperation agreement between the Freeport of Riga Authority and the Port of Lianyungang in China. The cost of this agreement, however, was a weakening of Baltic relations and a strengthening of the PRC on a global scale.

The PRC’s “Northern Spur” trade deal did not result in a more prosperous Latvia. Rather, as of 2016, it left Latvia with an \$870 million trade deficit (China Customs Administration, 2016) and strained relations with one its closest allies. Then in 2017, China further exploited the Latvian relationship when it conducted joint naval exercises with Russia in the Baltic Sea. While the Estonian and Lithuanian governments publicly decried the military show of force that undermined Baltic security interests, Latvia remained silent in an attempt to keep its BRI economic arrangement in place (Scott, 2018). Latvia’s precarious BRI deal has placed the country in a neutral zone while the PRC works against NATO to tear down the post WWII security environment that allowed for Latvian sovereignty in the first place.

### **Lithuania and China**

As the first of the former Soviet republics to re-establish independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Lithuania has rarely faltered in its fight against communism and authoritarianism. The roughly three million strong European Nation utilized the same strategies as its Baltic neighbours in the beginning of the 21st century; they embraced open trade with the EU and utilized NATO membership as the primary bulwark against Russian aggression. According to the 2021 Economic Freedom Index, Lithuania ranked seventh most free economy in the world (Fraser Institute, 2021). This economic growth has allowed the small Country to increase Defence spending to its highest rates in history.



**FIGURE 4:** Lithuanian Defence Spending by percentage of GDP from 1993 – 2020 (World Bank, 2021)

The increased defence spending has allowed Lithuania to pursue its unique foreign policy objectives. As a roughly 93% Christian nation (PEW Research Center, 2018), Lithuania’s foreign policy has consistently walked a fine line between pragmatism and values. According to many legal scholars, the preamble of the Lithuanian constitution “has legal implications and is assigned normative significance, thus becoming a source for value-based policies (Eriksonas, 2021).” As of 2021, the new Lithuanian government declared its value-based foreign policy as the guiding principle of its conduct in international relations.

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, Lithuania began flirting with the idea of access to the Chinese market in 2013 when Beijing launched the “16+1” framework. Lithuania initially expressed great interest in using Klaipeda Port, roughly 300 kilometres from the capital city of Vilnius, as the site for the “Northern Spur” project designed to link Asia to Western Europe. However, over the five three years, the Dalai Lama visit scandal along with Chinese predatory lending allegations sowed distrust between the two nations. As Lithuania considered the “Northern Spur” project, four other countries’ (Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Greece) deep-water ports were taken over by

various PRC-owned companies (Scott, 2018). A review of the PRC-owned China Merchants Group triggered a security investigation from the Lithuanian Government (Lau, 2021). In 2019, President Gitanas Nauseda publicly denounced PRC investment into Lithuanian ports.

Perceived trickery from the PRC along with multiple allegations of Human Rights violations against the Uighur Muslims in the Chinese province of Xianjing forged a deep divide between China and Lithuania. In May 2021, Lithuania officially withdrew the “16+1” framework and denounced Chinese technology and infrastructure investment (Kishnevsky, 2021). Roughly 6 months later in November 2021, Lithuania became the first European nation to open what many consider to be a “de facto” Taiwanese Embassy in Vilnius (Associated Foreign Press, 2021). This action drew severe ire from the PRC, as they believe it violates the “One China” principle. The PRC promptly downgraded official relations with Lithuania and began blockading Lithuanian exports. As of December 2021, the PRC called for multinational corporations to sever all ties with Lithuania (O'Donnell, et al., 2021).

The bold foreign Policy by Lithuania to condemn PRC actions has put both the Baltic States and the EU as-a-whole in a precarious situation. Larger EU countries such as France and Germany rely heavily on Chinese trade. The Baltic countries’ primary threat remains Russian aggression, and the move to pull away from China may further enhance relations between Moscow to Beijing. The decision to pull away from China could be seen as both values-based and pragmatic. Lithuania is actively condemning what it perceives to be an Authoritarian power. Meanwhile, the move further solidified Lithuania’s relationship with the US.

## **Conclusion**

Given the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, it would seem a logical conclusion for the Baltic nations to focus all their security and economic efforts to stave off Russian expansionism. Pragmatically however, Russian aggression is only a small slice of global security. Baltic existence and sovereignty is guaranteed by NATO and

the post WWII security framework. Russian aggression is designed to erode those agreements by specifically targeting the US' global economic system.

The Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine seems to be a belligerent action. However, a closer analysis would posit that it is a small facet nested within Russia's strategic aim to erode the US' global reach. The Russian invasion and subsequent reaction from the West provided an opportunity for a re-evaluation of the global security system. More specifically, the economic sanctions placed on Russia may degrade their economy in the near term. However, it opens the door for China to attack the US' centre of gravity, the global reserve.

The West's sanctions on Russia have allowed global players to begin discussions about replacing the dollar as the global reserve currency. China seized the initiative and used the Russian sanctions as justification for conducting oil trade with Saudi Arabia in Yuan. This erodes the petrodollar concept that underpins the US dollar as the global reserve currency. Russia's invasion of Ukraine had global ramifications well beyond Europe's borders.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine destabilizes Europe, but not for the obvious reasons. Their attack on a NATO preferred partner undermined NATO's strategic relevance by legitimizing China's status as a global alternative to the US. Erosion of faith in the US economy will lead to a catastrophic metamorphosis for security in Europe. US military security guarantees to NATO are incumbent on the ability to project power over vast distance, which requires significant capitol. The slow erosion of the US economic system's legitimacy could severely hinder NATO's military might, collective will, and political bargaining power.

In the near term, Chinese and Russian interests are aligned. The post WWII security framework, NATO, and US unipolarism are the enemies. For the moment, the PRC stands only to gain from an empowered and aggressive Russia. Belligerence in Europe bifurcates portions of the globe trying to maintain a state of peace and pushes them towards a Chinese economic order. Every BRI project brings the global centre of

gravity closer to China and Russia, which is the antithesis of each Baltic Nation's ultimate goals.

Over the next 10 years, each of the Baltic Countries' interests are likely to undergo strain with China. They may be able to gain some short-term economic incentives, but every official interaction with China will only further deteriorate the Baltic security situation. As a Communist government, Every Chinese economic endeavour serves only to benefit Xi Jinping's CCP government. There is no independent Chinese industry nor any consideration of mutually beneficial engagement with other nations. To offset the CCP's initiatives and ensure continued Baltic sovereignty, each country should consider the following policy recommendations.

The Estonian government should not allow any single Chinese company or conglomeration of companies to hold more than 20% of any Tallinn exchange based publicly traded companies. With this stopgap in place, the Estonian Ministry of Defence should then implement a review process of every Chinese investment into Estonian businesses prior to allowing any purchase. Once these two measures are in place, Estonian Parliament should stand up a special committee tasked with reviewing recent Chinese reverse merger fraud cases and then develop Estonian specific anti-trust laws to address emerging threats as they evolve.

To stem immediate issues, the Latvian government should not sign any further agreements with the PRC regarding the Port of Riga. Latvian parliament should take measures to forbid any official Chinese companies or declared contractors from taking over any facet of operations at the port. Once the arterial wounds on the port of Riga are triaged, Latvian parliament should create an independent government agency responsible for monitoring Chinese import/export deficits. This agency should then carefully monitor Chinese investment moving forward to avoid the aforementioned issues currently underway in neighbouring Estonia.

Given recent events in Sino-Lithuanian relations, not many ties remain between the two relations. That said, Lithuanian parliament should stand up a special committee

tasked with identifying any economic or trade-based dependence that derives from China. China will likely use every tool in its arsenal to rebuke Lithuania's defiance. The special committee can then utilize those Chinese dependencies and leverage the US' interests in anti-China sentiment to infuse the Lithuanian economy with capital in specific areas.

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# How can Defence Planning support National Policy in a Volatile Uncertain Complex Ambiguous (VUCA) world?

Maj. Antonio D'Apolito

*'In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable' (Dwight D. Eisenhower).*

*'Do not repeat the tactics which have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances' (Sun Tzu).*

## Introduction

Defence planning has spanned the entire history of humanity. It has been vital for essentially any State organisation, for which it has played, and plays only in a different form, a constitutive role (Breitenbauch, et al., 2018) (Hintze, 1975). Some hypotheses of organised fights between competing groups even date back to the prehistoric period, but there is no direct evidence. The development of city-states and empires, with the following agricultural and food surplus, implied the emergence of military elites and permanent armies. By 3000 BC, Mesopotamia's cities were firmly established, and this social upheaval was the time of the first remarkable military activities and plans (Meistrich, 2005).

This paper aims to outline the proper defence planning methodology and approach in the current Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) environment. It will argue that uncertainty is a central element of analysis for defence planning (Gray, 2014), and despite today's VUCA world (Jeroen, 2019), with the appropriate methodology, short/medium term reliable forecasting is feasible and essential to achieve national policy objectives and missions. It will be asserted that black swans are the common pretext of modern strategists and policymakers and that even if defence planning remains guesswork (Gray, 2014), at least irrecoverable errors could and should be avoided.

Grey rhinos (Wucker, 2016), predictable events with huge impacts but clear warnings, are too often unidentified and then later represented as black swans (Wucker, 2020) (Taleb, et al., 2011), unknown events deemed unpredictable. Furthermore, misleading scientific use of defence planning is the other primary source of strategy failure (Gray, 2014). In fact, it will be shown that, due to the rational and not rational nature of war (Fearon, 1995), it is possible to approach defence planning both as a social and formal science, taking benefits from both perspectives and methodologies. Thus, the two most significant highlighted shortfalls occur in the case of the predominance of one approach over the other.

First, the field of action of defence planning, its relevance and link with uncertainty, will be outlined, theoretically and critically addressing the matter according to the relevant literature. Second, the Volatile Uncertain Complex Ambiguous (VUCA) concept, one of the most specific characteristics of today's context, will be introduced and its model application to defence planning explained. Third, the paper will focus on the reasons for the mentioned primary defence planning shortfalls. Different theories from other fields too will be applied, creating a new unitary approach to defence planning methodology in the VUCA environment. Finally, the research will assess the best practices in dealing with the necessity to predict the future for defence planners.

All conclusions and suggestions of this research paper, primarily based on historical lessons identified, are confirmed against the present, focusing on two major recent events (i.e. COVID-19 pandemic and 2021 Taliban reconquest).

### **Defence planning field of action and inextricable link with uncertainty**

First, it is appropriate to clarify the definition of Defense Planning for how the matter will be treated in this essay. There are apparent contiguities with the terms strategy or military planning, which, however, have a stronger focus on purely military and non-military aspects. War planning can be misleading because it eludes the necessary planning for peace and not just for war. In this work, the definition provided by one of the most authoritative experts in strategic planning, Colin S. Gray, was chosen, who

by defence planning means the organisation for the defence of a political system in the future (Gray, 2014 p. 4). In this context, defence planning includes advice for the feasibility of specific political choices, design of the grand and military strategy, preparation and management of military plans, harmonisation with complementary programs in the social, diplomatic and economic fields, collection of intelligence sources about the threats and possible risks to political objectives, cooperation with allies and non-belligerents. This is a holistic approach, also partly inclusive of politics and strategy aspects, which considers the unity of the matter in question and the risks that would otherwise be run by excessively limiting the field of analysis (Gray, 2014 p. 4).

Gray, therefore, has the merit of having introduced the need to study this subject from a strategic and social point of view, rather than a technical and practical problem-solving one, as mostly happened earlier (Gray, 2014 p. 10) (Breitenbauch, et al., 2018). However, this essay will show that Gray's new proto-theory's added value is not that of the depreciation of the technical-scientific aspects of the matter, as some strategy authors sometimes imply (Gray, 2014) (Breitenbauch, et al., 2018). But instead, it provides enrichment by a synergistic approach between social and formal sciences. The rest of this essay will return to this duality to identify the optimal methodology for defence planning.

Defence Planning is a matter that has crossed the entire history of humanity, vital for the survival of any state organisation, while in reality previously attributable to warfighting activities only (Breitenbauch, et al., 2018) (Hintze, 1975). It has played in this sense a constitutive role of the state, which remains nowadays, changed in the form of the interaction between civilians and military, bureaucracy and politics (Breitenbauch, et al., 2018).

Defence planning is astonishingly challenging, to the point that Gray argues that it remains pure guesswork after all (Gray, 2014). As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, this paper does not fully agree with this thesis. Still, it certainly supports the concept of the unavoidable fundamental difficulty of the subject, right up to the stages of setting the problem. The same allocation of funds for Defence remains a critical

choice for defence planners. It follows a relationship between the political tolerance of economic suffering and the public and political perception of a threat to national security. (Gray, 2014 pp. 180-182).

Moreover, there is an evident prevalence in forgetting the importance of economic aspects in explaining war facts (Hamilton, et al., 2003). The military power of a nation, after all, finds its ultimate limit in economic availability. For example, The Seven Years' War was primarily concluded by Austria because a single year of the war had cost four times what was planned, and the finance minister informed Empress Maria Theresa that the country had exhausted its financial resources. Additionally, even after the end of the war in 1763, the debt due to the war did not stop, especially for France, contributing to subsequent revolutionary implications (Hamilton, et al., 2003).

Furthermore, we have always to keep in mind the adversarial nature of strategy. In this sense, defence planning is absurdly more straightforward in wartime when assumptions immediately clash with the adversary's actions. In peacetime, even the identity of the future opponent remains an assumption (Gray, 2014 p. 10). As Clausewitz maintains, interaction with the adversary is the centre of gravity of war (Clausewitz, 1946 p. 268). By its very nature, this interaction is chaotic and unpredictable (Clausewitz, 1946 p. 268). Thus uncertainty is a central element of interaction with defence planning, as much as strategy and politics, as shown in Fig. 1 (Gray, 2014 p. 11).



Fig. 1 Defence Planning Concept (Gray, 2014 p. 11)

### **The Volatile Uncertain Complex Ambiguous (VUCA) environment**

The acronym VUCA appeared in 1987 by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus concerning the changed military context of the post-Cold War era (Craske, 2021). This model (Fig. 2) is designed to identify four different scenarios and related response strategies based on the degree of knowledge of the situation and the predictability of the results of our actions. In this sense, the four terms included in the acronym VUCA are a specific declination of the generic term uncertainty, as used in the previous chapter, and common sense.

In the VUCA model, there is talk of volatility in the case of a well-known and understood situation, but with wildly varying results as conditions change. So also, in this positive case characterised by good information and comprehension of the phenomena, the variability of conditions remain a threat. Uncertainty indicates contexts with a good level of knowledge but difficult predictability of the effects resulting from specific actions. Complexity is typical of those situations with little information but good predictability about evolutions of the context following specific steps. Ambiguity is the domain of the unknown unknowns, with a complete absence of historical data and an understanding of cause-and-effect links.



Fig. 2 The VUCA Model, Harvard Business Review (Craske, 2021)

The term VUCA has now gained considerable popularity, especially as an expression of one of the most evident characteristics of the contemporary world. Technological discoveries that are increasingly disruptive and close together, the effects of climate change and the geopolitical order in an increasingly interconnected world, seem to confirm this widespread opinion. However, this certainty is less evident if we reflect on challenges that have characterised humanity in the past. Only recently can we think of the early 1900s with the two world wars, or more remotely of black death, to the discovery that the Earth is not flat, nor is it at the centre of the Universe, for example, as certain (Jeroen, 2019). Even in the field of strategic and management literature, numerous authors since 1970 report this increase in complexity, uncertainty, and volatility characterising the modern world (Jeroen, 2019). For example, the subject discussed in this paper is cited by analogy, 'Defense planning: The uncertainty factor'

by J.L. Moulton (1971). In short, it seems that every era claims to be more VUCA than the previous one. In a general sense, this statement appears undoubtedly true, especially about the aspects of volatility and complexity, variables that are objectively easier to measure. Uncertainty and Ambiguity seem to have an essentially subjective character, for example, linked to the person's age carrying out the assessment and are also directly conditioned by the first two (Jeroen, 2019).

However, an important distinction concerns the sector in question. Not all sectors, for instance, economic ones, are constantly subjected to changes. Still, they seem to evolve more than anything between alternating relative stationarity phases with sudden upheavals (Jeroen, 2019) (Bárta, 2018). Moreover, in these phases, they may be more or less dependent on changes in the surrounding world. Finally, it should be noticed that the same external upheavals that impact a particular sector can also provide tools for simplification and increased efficiency.

Therefore, it will be necessary to contextualise the sectors and situations, to avoid inefficient generalisations and treat all contexts as VUCA. The model suggests the best approach to deal with the four different possible VUCA situations, but this does not imply that Business as Usual circumstances are unlikely. In these cases introducing excessive innovations could be counterproductive (Kastelle, 2014) (Adner, et al., 2016). Additionally, it will be essential to distinguish between the four VUCA situations. For example, in the context of volatility, it is advisable to invest in human resources and additional stocks not to be surprised by events. The approach is entirely different in the case of ambiguous situations. The previous solution would be ineffective and inefficient, being an adequate experimentation campaign necessary before implementing application solutions to the problem. Still, the VUCA model helps identify and cope with the unknowns of a context, as shown in Fig. 3, better preparing for the future, as explained in the next chapter.



Fig. 3 Different approaches for different unknowns (US Journal of Academics, 2017)

Thus, in defence planning, if we can at least reduce our assumptions' mistakes, we will gain a strategic advantage over our enemies by considering uncertainty an opportunity and not only a threat. Sun Tzu argued: 'In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity'.

### **Defence Planning failures in the VUCA environment: black swans and grey rhinos**

Grey rhino is a metaphor introduced by Michele Wucker. It is a fitting description for situations comparable to that of a grey rhino running towards us, in which, despite the obvious and manifest danger, we nevertheless do nothing to avoid it (Wucker, 2016). These are highly probable events with a high impact, which are neglected, often precisely because of the enormous proportions, despite the apparent warnings present (Scheurwater, 2020). Following the work of Nassim Taleb, we instead talk about black swan to describe events with significant consequences but impossible to predict. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, before the discovery of Australia, Europeans believed that all swans were white. The discovery of black species in the new continent was surprising and unimaginable. Taleb argues these kinds of events are the only ones involved in the evolution of human history, which, therefore, always have a sudden and unpredictable discontinuous character (Blyth, 2009).

Gray has comprehensively addressed the difficulty of elaborating correct defence plans. He claims that a problem in strategic analysis lies in the glaring mistakes made in the past about unidentified significant upheavals taking place, such as for the use of nuclear weapons in the late 1940s (Gray, 2014). In his opinion, strategy and politics

remain linked to human behaviour and, as such, escape scientific analysis based on the following argumentations. Defence planning cannot be used to find the right question but rather provide good answers to specific questions. The possibility of giving scientific solutions to the need to determine, dissuade, prevent or defend unknown values on an unspecified date is very modest (Gray, 2014). Despite this, politics often seek scientific answers in support or opposition to a specific strategic choice. 'Hitchcraft' is the term used to refer to the methodological approach introduced by the economist Charles Johnston Hitch at the Pentagon in the 1960s, and it is still primarily in use today. While its positive contribution to strategic weapons management during the Cold War is doubtful, it certainly contributed significantly to the strategic failure of the American wars of the last decades (Gray, 2014). Thus according to Gray, the problems arise due to improper use of rigorous defence analysis methodologies to support strategic choices, whose social and human domain escapes the scientific context (Gray, 2014 pp. 177-180).

This essay disagrees partially with Gray's opinion that could underestimate the contribution of technical branches to the matter. In fact, the same author argues the importance of a scientific approach to managing strategic nuclear weapons in the 1960s. Instead, this paper entirely supports the idea of the danger constituted by the false certainty that the scientific method can offer in strategic analyses. In this aspect, Gray's thesis is sustained regarding the consequent dangerous tendency of politicians to rely entirely on such evaluations, completely discarding the social approach, typical instead of human interaction in war situations and at the basis of the theories on the irrational nature of conflicts (Fearon, 1995). In this sense, political leaders err on the side of laziness and lack of imagination, and paraphrasing Gray, they avoid asking the right question by already having a good answer, which could be utterly wrong if applied to a different unexpected evolution of the situation. For instance, an identified challenge in the current US planning process is that DoD ends up its regular defence planning analysis with a single new influential scenario, a single specific answer rather than an exploration of the various evolutions that might impact a future conflict (Mazarr, et al., 2019). Senior defence leaders are naturally focused on the issues ahead of

them, and they are less likely to think about long-term or unusual possibilities (Mazarr, et al., 2019).

However, the essay will demonstrate that this type of inconvenience is only the first case of defence planning primary errors. They are generally attributable to the prevarication of the scientific method over the social one, as in the case just discussed, but also to the opposite eventuality. Gray does not consider this second issue, arguing about the absolute relevance of the social approach. In fact, it is believed that the success of the scientific method reported in the same example cited by Gray (i.e. cold war strategic weapons management) is mainly due to the rational nature (Fearon, 1995) of the situation under examination. The use of nuclear weapons poses such a high risk that the actors involved tend to get much closer to the model of the rational actor. They will minimise psychological, emotional and social inputs, thus making the logical-scientific method more appropriate to such situations (e.g. game and decision theory). This paper argues that in the case of the first type of errors (i.e. predominance of scientific aspect over the social one), defence planners risk encountering black swans. In the second case (i.e. predominance of social element over the scientific one), grey rhinos are likely, as shown in fig. 4.



Fig. 4 Defence Planning Failures in the VUCA environment (author)

Furthermore, recalling the VUCA model, it is possible to assert that black swans occur in the case of Ambiguity, the quadrant of unknown unknowns, and grey rhinos are typical in the case of Volatility, Uncertainty and Complexity. Thus, the different suggested strategies reported in the VUCA model should also be applied according to the current planning methodology ratio (i.e. social vs formal one) to avoid or at least minimise the risks of both types of defence planning primary failures.

A brilliant example of the first type of defence planning error (i.e. predominance of scientific aspect over the social one) is the recent case of the lightning-fast reconquest of Afghanistan by the Taliban. On 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021, Kabul fell into the hands of the Taliban with surprising speed. Just two days earlier, the Pentagon claimed that Kabul was not in imminent danger and, a few weeks earlier, it believed that such an event could take six months. Many authors wonder about the causes of this apparent inability to evaluate (Fetzer, et al., 2021). One of the aspects that seem to have influenced this

erroneous estimate was the strategic management of violence by the Taliban. They would have deliberately reduced hostilities in appropriate phases as early as 2011-2014 to give a false image of weakness, to accelerate the US-NATO retreat (Fetzer, et al., 2021). The same tactic was used during the withdrawal of troops in the last few months before the final departure scheduled for 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021, when the Taliban quickly conquered provincial capitals and important logistics hubs.

How much this erroneous assessment weighed the US decision to withdraw is not easily verifiable (Fetzer, et al., 2021). Still, this wrong assumption did not help avoid the Biden administration order to leave by the symbolic date of 11<sup>th</sup> September, even if the absence of a complete and safe evacuation plan was known. Indeed, by redeploying up to 8,000 combat soldiers to Kabul to guard and aid in the evacuation of embassy workers, Biden had to backtrack on his goal for a quick pullout. The retreat would not have been as dangerous if the government had prepared better and allocated more resources to safeguarding and removing US diplomats and Afghan friends (Shepp, 2021). The error was due to the creativity of the adversary's strategic approach, typical of the human and social nature of conflicts, which has been wholly neglected. The false certainty offered by the intelligence/technical assessment of the security situation in the country (Seligman, 2021) prevented strategic analysts from asking the right question. Sun Tzu himself argued: 'Appear weak when you are strong, and strong when you are weak'.

Instead, a clear example of the second type of defence planning primary errors (i.e. predominance of social aspect over the scientific one) is the COVID-19 pandemic, given that for several years the World Health Organization and other experts had warned of the possibility of a pandemic (Scheurwater, 2020) (Wucker, 2020). During the previous Ebola and SARS foci, the Western world was not involved, creating false security sense. Nothing or little has been done, even though potential impacts of the threat were manifest. In 2019 the report 'A World at Risk' was distributed by the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, a joint program of the World Bank and World Health Organization. It affirmed that:

'Multiple pandemics, numerous outbreaks, thousands of lives lost, and billions of dollars of national income wiped out [...] since the turn of this century in barely 17 years. [...] The world's investments in pandemic preparedness and response remain woefully inadequate. We know by now that the world will see another pandemic in the not-too-distant future; [...] that there is the increased potential for intentional or accidental release of a synthesised agent. The result is that the world remains scarily vulnerable.' (Mongáin, 2021).

The pandemic COVID case is very fitting for defence planning. In fact, the fight against COVID-19 has been equated to war by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, French President Emmanuel Macron, and many other government leaders (Mongáin, 2021). Moreover, investigations are still ongoing to verify if China intentionally created the COVID-19 virus as a bioweapon and maybe only accidentally released it (The Tribune of India, 2021) (The Economist, 2021). Then, considering millions of victims, due even only partially to China's lack of transparency (The Economist, 2021), and thinking to strategic (Peck, 2021) and economic advantages (BBC, 2020) (CNBS, 2021) China got after the pandemic, may make us consider that we are already fighting a hybrid war. Finally, all armed forces in the world were broadly involved in the fight against the pandemic, making its impacts on military budgets and capabilities for sure a matter for defence planning.

As mentioned, this paper argues that this kind of defence planning failure occurs when the discipline's social aspect overwhelms the scientific one. Politicians and senior leaders are often too focused on the most pressing current needs. Their myopia is so high that they cannot or don't want to look at the grey rhinos that technical and scientific evidence shows running in front of them. Paraphrasing Gray, they are not asking the right question because they know that it could be too harsh for them to cope with the correct answer provided by scientists. So they choose to delay the problems hoping that scientists are wrong at least on the right timing of the foreseen threats. In the last decades, other examples of grey rhinos were the upheavals in the Middle East and the global financial crisis. Both were possible worst-case developments, the likelihood of

which was drastically underestimated. When politicians try to eliminate political or economic volatility, they only raise the risk of huge crises (Taleb, et al., 2011).

### **Predicting the future and lessons from history**

Several authors have analysed the difficulty of making reliable predictions in various sectors. Nobel laureate in Economics Daniel Kahneman, professor of psychology and expert in decision-making processes, describes the reliability of forecasts by experts as neither more nor less accurate than those of dart-throwing monkeys who distribute in this way your choices among the possible options (Kahneman, 2011). In this sense, it applies to all types of planning, a concept introduced in the financial field by Professor Burton G. Malkiel with the book 'A Random Walk Down Wall Street' about the best strategy for building an equity portfolio (Malkiel, 2020). Over the years, various institutions have tried to verify in practice this challenge. They registered mixed results in one or the other direction, depending on the contexts and the evaluation parameters. However, what is undoubtedly striking is how little, considering costs, education and consultancy times of these super-experts, the future forecasts of the stock market may differ on average from the purely random choice of dart-throwing monkeys. One of the problems with the poor reliability of experts' predictions lies in the lack of accountability, as professor Philip Tetlock, an expert in the forecasting field, claims (Huawei Technologies, 2019). Indeed this paper argues that planners too often blame lousy timing or the manifestation of unpredictable events, turning grey rhinos into black swans.

Philip Tetlock participated in an intelligence research experiment sponsored by the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA). His ability to predict was impressive. The precision forecasting project team routinely outperformed the competition, including academic groups and government experts with access to confidential data. His team received a forecasting award in IARPA's second year of participation with an accuracy of 80%. In his investigation, Tetlock came to two findings: precise forecasting is feasible, and the forecasting methodology is more significant than the forecaster's authoritativeness (Huawei Technologies, 2019).

According to Tetlock, statistical algorithms can surpass subjective judgment in most circumstances. Using computers to assist individuals in overcoming their understanding's limits and prejudices can greatly enhance forecast accuracy. Tetlock also discovered that group predicting findings were more accurate. Of course, the individuals participating must be well-versed in the topic in question. This outcome is most likely the consequence of combining many alternative viewpoints. Individual independence must be ensured in group forecasting, and severe groupthink must be avoided (Huawei Technologies, 2019).

According to Nassim Taleb, Tetlock's efforts to increase predicting skill are outstanding. On the other hand, Taleb believes that predictable occurrences are insignificant and that genuinely important events are unpredictable (Blyth, 2009). One point on which Taleb and Tetlock agree is that there is little evidence that geopolitical and economic analysts can reliably predict events beyond ten years. Forecasting is restricted due to unexpected, non-linear, and systemic changes. Over time, slight variations in projections get amplified. Gray expresses a more pessimistic view about future forecasting reliability and the possibility that science could benefit the process, but he emphasises a similar idea of time. In his opinion, the past, the only source of evidence, is the best and unique guide for analysing the future (Gray, 2014 p. 80). However, according to him, history shows continuity but also discontinuity, a definite non-linear behaviour. Furthermore, we are usually consoled to think that tomorrow will be very similar to today. This is certainly not an unreasonable statement but remains guesswork (Gray, 2014 p. 2). Only a historical contextualisation of the events can reduce the uncertainty of prudent anticipations of the future (Gray, 2014 p. 79).

Thus predicting the future could be challenging in this vast and incredibly VUCA world. Still, some things can be learned from the significant trends in history. Moreover, many examples show that major trend predictions can become self-fulfilling prophecies once accepted by an organisation or society (Rosecrance, et al., 2014). In the course of WWI, a contingent of hundreds of German soldiers was lost in the Swiss Alps and almost ran out of supplies. The group had different opinions on how to move, and the

commander did not know what to do. They found an old yellowed hand-drawn map in an abandoned cabin in the mountains, but no one could understand the writing. Even so, the soldiers were convinced that the map was of the local region. Based on the route indicated on the map, despite many dead ends, turns and forks, they persevered and finally miraculously found the way to exit from the mountains. Later, the commander discovered that the map came from a completely different region in southern Austria. By relying on this wrong map, they could still find the right path (Huawei Technologies, 2019). The map was wrong, but it helped the group level their disagreements and reach a consensus. Combined with perseverance and constant refinement, they finally succeeded.

With the appropriate method and caution, accurate short/medium term future predictions in defence planning are then possible. Moreover, adequate forecasting may become self-fulfilling prophecies due to the positive outcome they can generate in involved actors, organisations and in society. Such an example applies to the use of scenarios, a great approach to handle uncertainty and give plans more consistency, used in the US DoD since 1950 and still in place (Mazarr, et al., 2019). Scenario planning consists in developing coherent pictures of plausible and alternative futures. It is not the panacea for defence planning, especially when it comes to translating predictions into current concrete decisions and actions, but it provides a perfect environment for focused and effective decision making, early warning about current strategy failure, prioritisation, and consensus-building (Wigert, 2004) (Mazarr, et al., 2019) To maximise its benefits and unity of intent of all actors involved in the defence planning process, all of them and especially decision-makers should be involved in the scenario development. However, great attention shall be paid when a single or too limited number of scenarios are employed to derive capability investments and force-sizing. In this case, scenario planning increases the danger of misidentifying future adversaries and their capabilities (Mazarr, et al., 2019).

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

Defence planning has existed throughout human history. It has always been critical for basically any state organisation in which it has played, and continues to play, a

constitutive function. Defence planning is exceptionally challenging but necessary due to an undeniable historical continuity in strategic thinking. Thucydides has perhaps too simplistically reduced political motivations to three simple factors typical of human nature: fear, honour and interest. But this triptych, despite its simplicity, proved to be valid for about 2,500 years (Gray, 2014).

There is a clear tendency to overlook the significance of economic factors in interpreting war events. Still, we have always to keep in mind that a nation's military might reach its limit regarding financial resources after all. Thus efficiency should always be considered as much as effectiveness, so that having reliable assumptions and forecastings stays essential for defence planning.

As much as strategy and politics, uncertainty is a critical component of interaction with defence planning due to war's chaotic and unpredictable nature. This is notably true in today's society, which is typically more Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) than in previous decades. The VUCA theoretical model can help defence planners to identify four different scenarios and related optimal response strategies, based on the degree of knowledge of the situation and the predictability of the results after specific actions. However, we must consider every field (e.g. technical, economic, etc.) as a specific one, as not all of them are evolving in a disruptive manner at the same time. A forced innovative approach might be useless and harmful. Furthermore, the VUCA model facilitates the identification of the unknowns of a context to better prepare for the future. If we succeed in reducing uncertainty more than our adversaries, we will gain a strategic advantage, offering in this sense the VUCA world opportunities and not only threats.

This is why the strategic context must be prepared in time to achieve national policy objectives and missions, which is the motivation of defence planning. Considering the rational and not rational nature of war, it is possible to approach defence planning as a social and formal science, benefiting from both perspectives and methodologies. Critical and avoidable defence planning failures occur in the case of one method preeminence on the other. We may encounter black swans in the event of the

predominance of the scientific component over the social one (e.g. 2021 Taliban reconquest) and grey rhinos in the case of the superiority of the social element over the scientific one (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic). Given the complexity and unpredictability of the matter, defence planning errors are plausible. However, too frequently, planners blame bad timing or the occurrence of unforeseen circumstances, thus converting grey rhinos into black swans. On the other hand, politicians continually and with too much confidence seek scientific evidence to support or refute a specific strategic decision, sinning from laziness and lack of creativity in identifying new possible scenarios.

Not absolute, but reliable forecasting is feasible, especially in short/medium term, and the methodology is more significant than the forecaster's authoritativeness. Statistical algorithms and group predicting can surpass subjective judgment. A further study could evaluate the expected performance of Artificial Intelligence in this scope. Despite its ineludible difficulty, defence planners must do everything possible to set correct assumptions and goals for the future. If a large company or organisation has no predictions for the future, how can it make significant multi-year investments?

The finest and only guide for analysing the future is the past. On the other hand, history exhibits both continuity and discontinuity, indicating a distinct non-linear pattern. Thus, it is necessary to emasculate presentism, which projects current conditions into the future, taking their persistence over time for granted. Defence planners should look to the past more as a training ground for the strategic challenges of tomorrow than in search of guidance.

Can we predict the future? It is not always possible, especially in the long term. As shown, we could reduce fake black swans with the appropriate methodology, but real ones will never go extinct. Still, a consensus in society, industry, and public organisations can help make predictions and assumptions self-fulfilling. The future doesn't exist yet, which means that we can shape it together. Thus one challenge is to stay resilient in the face of upheavals, even when this involves wide variations of political ends. Regardless of whether a forecast is correct or not, in many cases, a courageous spirit of inquiry, constant action, commitment, and flexibility in the face of

change will produce a positive result. However, even adaptability has limits. Irrecoverable errors must be avoided in defence planning, like binding to a single doctrinal vision of future scenario or trying to ignore predictable high impact events.

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# What trends can be expected in Russian Security State in the 2020s?

**LCDR Rene Kalmaru**

## **Introduction**

Winston Churchill once said that 'Russia is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma'. However, despite its seemingly diffuse tactics, Russia has during the last decades demonstrated rather linear approaches concerning its strategic goals, thus reducing its impenetrable mysticism. It is therefore beneficial to pay attention to its doctrinal documents to gain insight about possible future outcomes. Having good conception about its contingencies can pay abundant dividends, especially for the so called near abroad states.

The Russian military interventions in Georgia, Ukraine and the frequent border violations in the Baltic States have corroborated that the unipolar world order of the 1990s did not end the history, as claimed by Francis Fukuyama. Rather it created a fertile ground for unexpected contingencies that fuelled the ascendance of renewed aspirations for redesigned world order by many of its contained former giants. An order where Russia could reclaim its imperial status as a global stakeholder if the turmoil of the transition period would be wisely endured. According to Sergey Karaganov and Dimitry Suslov, 'Russian history, coupled with its efforts in recent years, has made it possible for Russia to play a role in the building of a new world order' (Suslov, 2018). To reach the above-mentioned status; Russian security architects have developed interlinked doctrines, strategies, and concepts. Be it the Primakov doctrine, the adjacent Gerasimov concept or the Patrushev threat perception, it is important to understand in which phase the implementers assess themselves to be. The incentives from strategies with a smaller time span can be good indicators of the latter. It is therefore the 2021 Russian National Security Strategy (RSS21), which will publicly set the directions for Russian defence development on the strategic level for the next five years, should be analysed for the mentioned indications, providing notions on what trends can be expected in Russian security state in 2020s.

The RSS21 in the context of the overarching doctrines indicates that, for the current decade, Russia will continue to build a new multipolar world, where Russian led Eurasia is one of the new global actors. As the unpredictability of the transition period may result in unforeseen contingencies, Russia will opt for increased autarky, imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation.

This argumentative essay will first provide a short overview on Russian geopolitics in recent history, including what have been its views on the world order and how it is perceived currently. Thereafter a predictive analysis on RSS21 will be done. It will concentrate on pointing out the expected strategic directions for the next five years. Once identified, the consequent implications on its economy, population and information space will be brought forward. In the conclusion, a concise summary of how the Russian doctrinal security architecture is built up and what will be its implications during the current decade will be presented.

### **The new world order via Russian doctrinal approaches**

Despite the seemingly diffuse tactical endeavours, Russia's strategic approaches have linearly followed 'Primakov doctrine'. Following the contours of Mikhail Gorbachev's late-Soviet foreign policy, which was further pursued by foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the newly constituted Russian Federation generally sought accommodation with the West (Rumer, 2019 p. 4). The alternative to the above-mentioned policies, that according to Russian nationalists were demeaning and destructive, were presented in 1996 by newly appointed foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov, in the so-called 'Primakov doctrine'. In contrast to the submissive Kozyrev foreign policy, the latter called for reestablishment of Russia as a global stakeholder by rather assertive means. The doctrine stated three main directions:

'Russia's primacy in the post-Soviet space and pursuit of closer integration among former Soviet republics with Russia in the lead; opposition to NATO expansion and, more broadly, persistent efforts to weaken transatlantic institutions and the

U.S.-led international order; partnership with China' (Rumer, 2019 p. 4).

The 'Primakov doctrine' has been paving the way for the new world order. The Russian military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine - especially the current escalation - are closely tied to the 'Primakov doctrine' incentives stated earlier. The general idea behind the doctrine is that a unipolar world, though void of strategic or nuclear danger, will be prone towards smaller regional conflicts. That peace and stability can only be achieved in a multipolar world through negotiations and consensus of regional hegemons. The ascending multipolarity will be split between the existing unipolar force (the United States, the European Union - the West) and the new emergent power centres (Russia, China, India, and Brazil) (Suslov, 2018). Thus, in Russian strategic understanding to achieve geopolitical state of peace and stability, 'Primakov doctrine' must be fulfilled.

In support of the 'Primakov doctrine', the so-called 'Gerasimov doctrine' works as a concept of operations (Rumer, 2019 p. 4). In 2013 the Chief of General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces General Valeri Gerasimov's views on a whole government approach to warfare were published in Russian newspaper 'Military-Industrial Courier'. The published material became known in the western media as the 'Gerasimov doctrine'. Despite this, the author who proclaimed the published materials as doctrine, has later disavowed his initial idea (Galeotti, 2018). However, the recent Russian military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine provide a basis for stating that the Russian asymmetric whole government approach in asserting its regional dominance is in line with the overarching main directions of the 'Primakov doctrine'. Thus, acting as concept of operations. Therefore, it is irrelevant what name the concept bears as it is existing and in use. For further consideration it will be referred to as 'Gerasimov concept'.

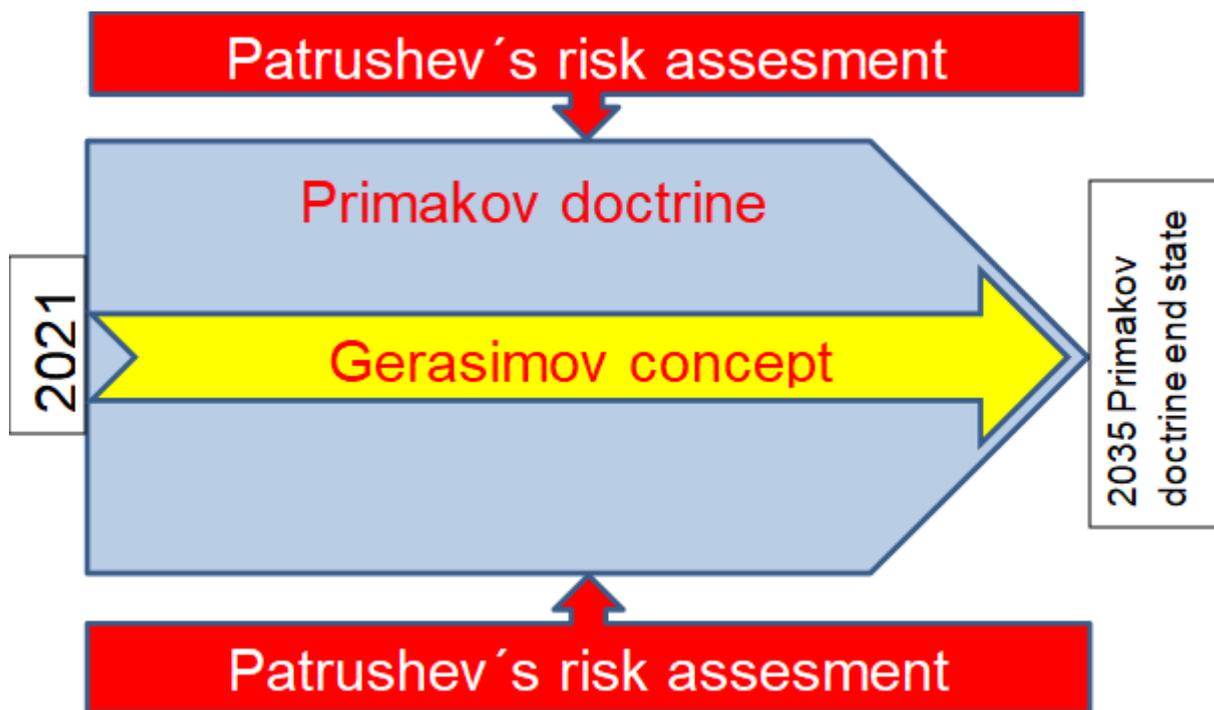
The former Director of the Russian Federal Security Service and current Secretary of the Security Council of Russia Nikolai Patrushev has drafted a document that portrays the Russian state risk assessment considering possible world development scenarios until 2035. According to Patrushev:

‘The Strategic Forecast of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2035 identifies four scenarios for the development of the global situation. Namely, the first of them is the transition to a polycentric world order. The second is the continuation of US efforts to maintain its dominance. The third is the formation of a bipolar model of the world order. And, finally, the fourth development scenario is the strengthening of regionalization processes’ (Patrushev, 2019).

The comparison of the ‘Primakov doctrine’ and the Patrushev’s Strategic Forecast shows a clear compatibility of the two documents, thus confirming the notion that the latter operates within the overarching influence of the first. Patrushev also concludes the following battle spheres for the journey into 2035, drawn from the US 2017 National Security Strategy:

‘2017 US National Security Strategy states that Moscow and Beijing are challenging American power, influence, and interests in an attempt to undermine America’s security and well-being. It is emphasized that both countries intend to “limit freedom and justice in the economy, build up military capabilities, and control information and data to oppress their societies and expand their influence.” In this regard, three main areas were identified as priority spheres of containment of Russia and China - military-political, economic, and information and communication’ (Patrushev, 2019).

From the above-mentioned strategy three main battle spheres for the current decade – and even further – are identified: military-political, economic and information/communication. The compatibility of Russian state strategic visions and risk assessments are depicted on the scheme below:



The Russian state grand strategy envisions a new world order where the global dominance is divided between regional power hubs of which Russia is one. Its geopolitical dominance will contain the post-Soviet space and central Asia. All transatlantic cooperation in its dominion will be marginalized. The journey towards the named end-state will comprise of smaller scale regional conflicts between the declining global powers and the ascending ones, in three main battle spheres: military-political, economic and information technology. To counter the named threats Russia will employ the whole of government approach to war – the 'Gerasimov concept'. In conclusion it must be stated that the official public doctrines/strategies will never give a complete and exact overview of Russia's future actions, as the specific decisions are usually made by a small circle of people and can – if necessary – deviate from the general direction for a short while. However, as recent history has shown in the grand scheme of things the above-mentioned doctrine, concept and threat perception tend to be accurate perceptions of Kremlin's agenda.

Following the broad doctrines and strategies will not provide a comprehensive picture of current incentives for gaining insight into near and midterm contingencies. The 'Primakov doctrine' achieves its broad goals gradually. This is where the value of conceiving short-term plans such as the RSS21 will be realized.

On 02 July 2021, The President of Russian Federation Vladimir Putin signed the new Russian National Security Strategy. The document will set the strategic goals for Russia approximately for the next five years. The tough game of coercion and assertiveness has paid off during the past decade and has set Russia back on the map as a global stakeholder. However, it has also created strategic isolation in the form of economic sanctions, decreased diplomatic inclusion and political confrontation. All of this - contrary to Russian public claims – has had a considerable impact on its populations attitude towards its leadership, mainly due to decreased economic wellbeing (e.g., mainstream Russian television RTR, Rossiya 24). The predominantly unwavering support of the 2000s has occasionally changed into discontent, protests, and support of political opposition. If not contained, the global successes could be rendered insignificant considering possible domestic failures. Russia requires a story as well as a tool to keep that narrative relevant. The theme has been in place since at least 2019, when Russia's domestic and external policies were regularly justified by a narrative that exaggerates and simplifies risks, portraying Russia as a besieged castle besieged by hostile forces attempting to destroy it. (Ministry of Defence of Finland, 2019). For the following five years, RSS21 will serves as the tool or the castle figuratively speaking, guarding Russia's broad doctrinal motivations from besieging rivals. The following diagram depicts the compatibility of Russian state strategies, risk assessments, and security strategies:



The security strategies, as depicted in the diagram, will serve as five-year strategic toolkits to combat Patrushev's risk assessment and protect Russia's broad strategic approaches to its objectives.

### **RSS 21, looking inward and opting for increased autarky, imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation**

#### **Autarky**

RSS21 contains developments for the need to look inwards. When it comes to national strategic priorities, Russia currently prioritizes 'quality of life' and 'well-being of Russian citizens' (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Meaning that safeguarding the country's self-sufficiency, recovering its growth, and implementing a coherent demographic policy in which ensuring the Russian population a 'decent life' is a strategic aim in and of itself has been prioritized (Duclos, 2021). Other innovations include the defence of traditional Russian values and the prioritization of information security (Ibid.).

While considering the terms 'quality of life' and 'wellbeing of citizens', one must understand them with a Russian twist. While economic growth, advanced education and general rising of living standards are all very good incentives – they must follow Kremlin's implicit and explicit directives. All implications of non-domestic origin are a threat and must be contained in all domains. The safe way to improve the lives of Russian people according to RSS21 is through increased autarky, imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation. This is also where elements of Patrushev's strategic forecast are clearly felt, which implies that all non-domestic ramifications, particularly those embedded in the political, economic, and information technology spheres, are viewed as a danger. 'In 2021 Russian Security Strategy, experts have noted the influence exerted by Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Russia's Security Council' (Duclos, 2021). In other words, only domestic actors who support Russian moral ideals and are immune to western media warfare can make life better. The RSS 21 clauses that follow eloquently demonstrate this.

The general isolationist narrative is implicit in clauses like 7, declaring that the failing Western international order, as well as the urgent efforts to preserve it, exacerbate interstate contradictions and diminish global security (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). The current clause echoes the 'Primakov doctrine' narrative of a failing western society, emphasizing the need for increasing isolation. Furthermore, clause 18 is asserting that the desire to isolate Russia using double standards will limit global collaboration in critical areas such as combating terrorism and extremism, as well as ensuring international information security (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Both clauses, emphasize the necessity to strengthen Russia's independence, as it is already being alienated from the western world.

The isolationist narrative is developed further by clause 20, which argues that indirect methods by unfriendly countries are increasingly being used to wreak long-term havoc within the Russian Federation (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). The current provision expressly declares that Russia is engaged in an unconventional conflict with the West. This complies entirely with the Patrushev's strategic forecast, implying that increased autarky, imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation are all necessary countermeasures. Moreover, clause 21 indicates much of the same, stating that strengthened sovereignty, independence, state and territorial integrity, and protection of traditional spiritual and moral underpinnings are the foundation pillars against containment (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 21 states unequivocally that growing isolation in all aspects of life is required to withstand the future period of declining western hegemony's attempts to maintain its status.

Enhanced autarky stands out the most in the following clauses like 55, that highlights the risks of relying on foreign information technologies and telecommunications equipment, arguing that it increases the vulnerability of Russian information resources, including important information infrastructure facilities, to foreign attack (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Increased autarky is implied by Clause 55, through the necessity of developing independent information technology sector that would enable later digital isolation.

Clause 63 states that large-scale investment and innovation programs and projects that contribute to the consolidation of Russia's scientific, technical, industrial, and resource potential, as well as the saturation of the domestic market with Russian-made goods and the emergence of new advanced scientific competencies, will all help the Russian Federation's long-term economic development and national security (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 63 advocates for enhanced autarky by laying forth most of the required milestones and components.

Clause 66 states directly that one of the objectives of economic security is to strengthen Russia's economic sovereignty (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). This almost sounds like a direct order to increase autarky. Clause 67 states that achieving economic security in Russia entails: overcoming critical reliance on imported technologies through accelerated implementation of advanced Russian technological developments and localization of production in Russia; strengthening the financial system and its sovereignty; development of national infrastructure financial markets, including payment infrastructure; reducing the transfer of financial assets abroad (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 67 is depicted as almost a conduct of operations to clause 66, emphasizing the need for financial isolation for protection of economy.

Clause 87 alleges that the US and its allies, as well as multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations, religious, extremist, and terrorist organizations, are aggressively destroying traditional Russian spiritual, moral, and cultural-historical values (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 87 expresses the necessity for increased autarky by portraying international companies and non-governmental organizations as villains who are attempting to morally ruin Russia.

### **Nationalist culture**

In the clauses that follow, imposed nationalist culture stands out the most. Clause 19 claims that the Russian way of life is under attack. Against the backdrop of the collapse of the Western liberal model, Western states are attempting to falsify and diminish traditional values, falsify world history, revise views on Russia's role and place in it,

rehabilitate fascism, and incite interethnic and inter-confessional conflicts through hostile information efforts (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 19 emphasizes the necessity to impose Russian nationalist culture directly, while providing indirect incentives to control information, which in the current decade entails a high degree of control over the digital domain.

Clause 22 indicates that the preservation of Russian identity, culture, traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, and citizens' patriotic upbringing will help to the Russian Federation's democratic framework and openness to the rest of the world (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 22 advocates for the unambiguous imposition of Russian nationalist culture on its citizens through preservation and patriotic education.

Clause 25 outlines the Russian Federation's national interests, which include, among other things, saving the Russian people, developing human potential, and improving citizens' quality of life and well-being; developing a secure information space, protecting Russian society from harmful information and psychological effects; strengthening traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, and preserving the Russian people's cultural and historical heritage (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 25 has obvious implications related to imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation.

Clause 40 emphasizes the significance of increasing the Russian Federation's mobilization readiness as well as the readiness of civil defence forces and means, including military-patriotic education and training for citizen military service. (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 40 elevates imposed nationalist culture to a new level by combining it with public militarization.

Clause 93 identifies the following tasks for preserving traditional Russian spiritual and moral values: development of the educational, training, and upbringing system as the foundation for the formation of a developed and socially responsible personality striving for spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical perfection; funding for public programmes

aiming at educating citizens on patriotism (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). This clause emphasizes the need for an upbringing system to educate morally and socially patriotic Russians, conveying the incentive of imposed nationalist culture to the very young.

### **Digital control and isolation**

Digital control and isolation are the prominent incentives in the following clauses. Clause 44 highlights the danger of false information and illegal public actions induced by global internet companies (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). The current clause highlights the dangers of losing control of the digital realm and the possible devastating consequences for the Russian regime.

Clause 52 states that terrorist and extremist materials, calls for mass disturbances, extremist activities, participation in mass-public events held in violation of the established order, suicide, propaganda for a criminal lifestyle, consumption of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and other illegal information are all posted on the internet, with young people being the primary target of such destructive influence (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 52, like Clause 44, discusses the dangers of not having control over the digital domain, but this time with a focus on the greater risk to young people.

Clause 53 says that internet censorship and banning of alternative internet platforms is motivated by transnational companies' goal to consolidate their dominant position and control all information resources, not by international law principles (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 53 argues that digital isolation – the possession of one's own digital infrastructure – is required because the international digital environment is not impartial and does not adhere to international law.

Clause 57 calls for the creation of information-confrontation forces and means (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Clause 57 provides a direct incentive for development of manned units for both digital control and isolation implementation.

Regarding the above-mentioned RSS 21 clauses, it is fair to assess that for next five years Russia will pursue strategic paths that promote increased autarky, imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation.

## **Existing repercussions of increased autarky, imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation**

### **Autarky**

To shield itself against the instabilities of a changing world order, Russia will strengthen its autarky. Even though RSS21 is clearly opting for economic isolation, international sanctions in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 are likely to have contributed to this desire as well - the aggression in Ukraine led to Western sanctions that may have cost Russia over 6% of GDP (William Courtney, 2020) – however, autarky it is arguably a new global trend. Scott Malcolmson claims that bipolarity, multipolarity, or even great-power conflict have not been the most remarkable geopolitical aspect of the last four years. To guarantee national security, innovative capacity, domestic stability, and economic prospects, major economies have pursued self-sufficiency and a partial withdrawal from globalization (Malcomson, 2021).

It is debatable whether Russia is a major economy; yet it is evident from recent moves that increased autonomy is on the Kremlin's agenda. According to Bloomberg Putin's administration and central bank have reduced Russia's dollar exposure, transferred assets out of the United States, and sold a lower share of the country's debt to foreigners in the seven years since the invasion of Crimea (Natasha Doff, 2021).

Following a multi-year push to limit exposure to U.S. assets, the share of gold in Russia's \$581 billion international reserves surpassed dollars for the first time ever in 2020. As of the end of September 2020, the most recent date for which data is available, the precious metal accounted for 24% of the central bank's stockpile. Dollar assets accounted for 22% of total assets, down from more than 40% in 2018. (Natasha Doff, 2021).

It is clear from the foregoing that Russia is moving in the direction of more isolation. It could be argued that to a large extent these steps are reactionary to western sanctions. However, regardless of the severity of the sanctions-induced economic isolation, the Russians are masters at putting up a tough front and continuing their path of hubris in international politics. The inherent Russian autarky will always be portrayed as self-imposed defence measures for Ruski-Mir.

### **Nationalist culture**

As part of the above mentioned, Russia will continue to develop its civilizational nationalism as a political tool for ensuring internal structure, stability, and security. Long-term feudal rule has instilled in the Russian national character a psychological proclivity for authority and obedience to power (Zhaozhen, 2019 p. 35). As a result, implementing the imposed civilizational culture is possible and, to a large extent, even desired.

The need for a coherent counter narrative against westernization has been recognized for some time. Following repeated colour revolutions in former Soviet republics in the early 2000s and the Arab Spring in 2011, Russia has been increasingly concerned about malicious foreign interference in domestic affairs. (Samuel Charap, 2021). However, the events in Ukraine in 2014 pushed it to the top of the priority list. According to Russia's 2015 Security Strategy, which was released in the aftermath of Ukraine's Maidan movement in 2014, the practice of overthrowing legitimate political regimes and causing intrastate instability and conflicts is becoming more common (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2015).

Several legislative safeguards have been implemented to protect against undesirable parallel or counter narratives that may exist or emerge, damaging the state-created myth of Russian greatness and justified historical acts. In recent years, the Kremlin has passed a number of legislations aimed at limiting foreign influence in Russian society, including a 2012 law that gave the government the authority to name any Russian NGO (e.g. Memorial) that engages in political activity while receiving financing from overseas as a 'foreign agent' (Ridgwell, 2018).

Civilizational nationalism and the Russian civilization's superiority myth have been adopted by the Russian government as guiding principles for structuring the state and establishing internal stability and have therefore become the country's official ideology. The major indicators of Russian superior civilisation are language, culture, and Orthodox Christianity. This has been increasingly important in both domestic and foreign affairs, as it has been utilised in the creation of post-Soviet space foreign policy (Aridici, 2018 p. 4). As a result, post-Soviet states that do not share Russia's narrative are labelled as anti-Russian or Russophobes and are thus legitimate foes.

Vladislav Surkov, one of the later developers of Primakov's doctrine and President Putin's close ally, best answers the question of where Russian civilizational nationalism will be located on the international map. He writes that 'Russia had spent four centuries moving East and then another four centuries moving West. Attempts to take root failed in either case. Both roads were tried. These days the demand will be for third-way ideologies, third-type civilizations, a third world, a third Rome... A civilization that has absorbed the East and the West. European and Asian at the same time, and for this reason neither quite Asian and nor quite European' (Surkov, 2018).

### **Digital control and isolation**

Russia has and will continue to exploit the digital environment and data networks as a vital strategy to promote the imposed nationalist narrative, among other strategic aims. Information warfare and cyberattacks are the two main areas of operations. Information warfare activities will take place concurrently in domestic and international arenas, whereas cyberattacks according to CSIS report have and will likely continue to have a more international focus (Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2021).

Both domains will almost certainly be used in a proactive manner. A 2019 analysis done by the Ministry of Defence of Finland claims that in the recent past these activities have followed the principle of competitive strategy, according to which passivity leads to inaction and retreat (Ministry of Defence of Finland, 2019). Furthermore, the same

analysis states that the coordinating role in both domains will be carried out by Russian state security services such as: military intelligence service (GRU), the internal security service (FSB) and the foreign intelligence service (SVR) (Ministry of Defence of Finland, 2019).

Though cyber capabilities will be important and inextricably linked to information warfare, the latter will be Russia's most important battleground. All the RSS21's recent new strategic directions imply that Russia must dominate in information warfare. Increased autarky, imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation are all largely reliant on the Russian narrative dominating. As analysed by the Ministry of Defence of Finland, information warfare is a continuous process: the battle is waged in all available areas, both within Russia and abroad, in both peacetime and wartime. The goal of these operations is to persuade the opponent to act in a way that is consistent with Russia's strategic objectives. (Ministry of Defence of Finland, 2019).

The above-mentioned continuous information warfare process can be used to destabilize regimes, provoke protests, perplex opponents, sway public opinion, and demoralize foes (Jaitner, 2015). Typically, the goal of influencing is to instil widespread distrust of Western governmental and institutional actors, both within Western countries and internationally (Michael Kofman, 2015 p. 6).

Attempts can be made to slow down an adversary's reactions in a crisis, for example, by leaking private political negotiations (Nicu Popescu, 2018). A noteworthy example is the leaked phone conversation between Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and European Union First Vice-President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton during the 2014 Ukrainian Maidan revolution. The call's content made international headlines and sparked stories such as 'A leaked phone call between the EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton and Estonian foreign minister Urmas Paet has revealed that the two discussed a conspiracy theory that blamed the killing of civilian protesters in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, on the opposition rather than the ousted government' (MacAskill, 2014).

The use of social media to influence people's minds is convenient. It's impossible to know whether communications are truthful in a continuously changing environment, and disinformation is economical to disseminate (Elina Lange-Ionatamishvili, 2015 p. 105). The Russian intervention in the 2016 US presidential elections is a good example of this. All of this was laid out in detail in Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller III's 2019 report: 'Russia stoked societal tensions and undermined the integrity of the US election process by leaking emails, spreading misinformation, and using social media' (Meg Kelly, 2019).

In RSS21, Russia also places a high priority on digital isolation through information technology autonomy. Clauses 53, which calls for the construction of information-confrontation forces and means, and 57, which calls for the possession of one's own digital infrastructure, both imply this. (Prezident Rossiyskoy Federatsii, 2021). Defence against cyber and information technology offensives can be divided into two categories: physical and non-physical. The physical domain comprises safeguarding national networks, institutions, and anything else vulnerable to cyber-attacks from adversaries, while protection of one's narrative from hostile information warfare activities is part of the non-physical domain.

The protection of the physical domain is inherently related to the aspirations of 'digital sovereignty' a.k.a. digital isolation. This ambition is not a new trend. The law on a 'sovereign internet' was passed in 2019, but specific plans had been in the works since 2014 and had been discussed among security services as long-term goals even earlier (Carolina Vendil Pallin, 2021). Russia is pursuing a long-term digital autonomy plan, and its early implementation indicates alignment with the 'Primakov doctrines' broader strategic goals. It's impossible to build a multipolar world system while being digitally reliant on a single hegemon.

The Multi-service Transport Network Method (MTSS), a new system for exchanging digital information, is currently being developed. According to Russian military officials, the first testing occurred during Zapad-2017, a large military exercise performed in September 2017 in the western military district and Northern Fleet. The military internet

might eventually serve as the foundation for a broader, nationalized Russian internet that could eventually replace the current world wide web (Staalesen, 2019).

The System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS), a Russian-made alternative to Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT), was released in 2016 as a component of financial digital sovereignty. There are presently 402 Russian banks connected to SPFS, and if Russia loses access to SWIFT, they will switch to intra- and interbank messaging within Russia (Aydrus, 2021).

So, based on the aforementioned previous events, what can be expected in the future? What will be the ramifications of opting for increased autarky, imposed nationalist culture and digital control and isolation on the country's economy, people, and information space? Unfortunately for the Russian people, it will be their diminished living standards that will fund the crusade of economic arrogance. The game of autarky, as Malcolmson points out, is for major economies with the ability and know-how to self-sustain. Both are lacking in Russia, and the current path of autarky will ultimately stymie Russian economic advancement from a raw material exporting country to the industrial powerhouse it aspires to be.

As the fight between the media and the refrigerator rages on in the Russian public, imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation become increasingly important. And just now, the Kremlin can't afford the refrigerator to win. To keep it from succeeding, the Russian populace is fed a self-satisfying nationalist narrative by the media. The goal of imposed nationalist culture is to distort popular perceptions of harmful economic and foreign policies in exchange for the satisfaction of being a part of the great Russian civilization. At the very least, this should be the ultimate outcome.

The control of the digital environment is critical in moving this narrative forward. Digital control and isolation in the form of cyber-attacks, information warfare, and Russia's own internet are undeniably important tools in Russia's arsenal for maintaining autarky and imposed nationalist culture. Unfortunately for the Russian people, their opportunities of living in an educated media arena, opposing government policies, and

fostering fresh economic ideals of collaboration and mutual gain have been postponed till unknown future.

## **Conclusion**

Russia will continue to establish a new multipolar world in the coming decade, with Russian-led Eurasia as one of the new global actors. Because the transition period's unpredictability will result in undesirable changes, Russia will opt for further autarky, imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation.

The 'Primakov doctrine' is laying the groundwork for a new world order, with the 'Gerasimov doctrine' serving as a concept of operations, and Nikolai Patrushev providing strategic risk assessment. This is the Russian Federation's broad grand strategy, which spans several decades. The more variable and dispersed issues are handled by security strategies setting the major efforts for five years at a time to preserve its linear advance against anticipated uncertainties in the shifting world order.

Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, signed the new Russian National Security Strategy on July 2, 2021. According to the analysis, it will serve as a castle in the coming years, guarding Russia's broad strategic aims from besieging adversaries primarily through expanding autarky, imposed nationalist culture, digital control and isolation.

Unfortunately for the Russian people, current strategic incentives will exacerbate their lower living standards, dogmatic self-complacency based on false narratives, opportunities to live in an educated media environment, oppose government policies, and foster new economic ideals of collaboration and mutual gain. Increased autarky fuels imposed nationalist culture, which drives digital control and isolation, producing a closed loop that is detrimental to Russia's progress but effective in preserving its strategic course toward the desired end state of 'Primakov's doctrine'.

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# How has COVID-19 affected the world and the European Union, and what is the prospect of the armed forces in this?

Siim Vuntus

*'Enemies are usually carefully constructed to suit political strategy, whereas now states face a situation, not of their creation or choosing.'*

*(Hamourtziadou, Jackson, 2020, p. 96)*

## Introduction

At the time of writing, coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus), which produce a sickness known as COVID-19 (a coronavirus induced disease that occurred in 2019) (Albert, Baez, Rutland, 2021), has been active for two full years. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2022, there were 305,661,089 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 5,486,310 deaths (JHCRC, 2022). If excluding the gradual onset of the disease worldwide, it is currently the fourth largest wave of morbidity and mortality: 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020-January 2021, 2<sup>nd</sup> April-May 2021, 3<sup>rd</sup> August-September 2021, and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2021 - ... (WHO, 2022). Most countries still apply less voluntary and more mandatory medium to high stringency level restrictions (Ritchie, et al., 2020). In terms of pandemic proportions, something similar last happened in 1918-1920 when the Spanish Flu hit the world (Derr, 2020), or from another perspective, as the UN Secretary-General has compared it, it is the most significant upheaval since the Second World War (Aidnik, 2021).

The world has changed so that all political and economic relations and society have become more indistinct and insecure and thus more conducive to hostilities. This paper will argue that COVID-19 has not only weakened the world security and stability perception in general but directly influenced the European Union's cohesion and functioning. Further, the author suggests that the armed forces, as the primary traditional security instrument, should not be involved as a first resort so that the conventional purpose of the military does not get interfered with.

This paper consists of three chapters and an annexe. In the first chapter, the author gives an overview and understanding of the areas which COVID-19 has affected and discuss how it weakened the overall security cognition. In the second chapter, the author discusses the possible implications for the EU, its functioning and security. In the third and final chapter, the connectivity with COVID-19, security perception and armed forces are analysed. Annexe 1. provides an overview of security and its different approaches and is not intended to be part of the main body of the work but rather to provide background information. This work does not focus on individual countries, although relevant examples are given, but rather on the international and European Union level.

The methodologies used by writing this paper are fundamental and exploratory research. The author used academically relevant news articles, think tanks, research papers, case studies, databases, and policy documents.

## CHAPTER 1

*'The world remains a risky place, but many of those who would normally contribute to stability are somewhat weaker and a lot poorer.'*

*(Giegerich, McGerty, Round 2021, p. 15)*

What areas have COVID-19 affected in general? Based on the literature, the vast number of areas impacted is daunting: overloaded medical sector; lack of infrastructure, personnel, supplies, equipment; restriction of regular health treatment; health security/sustainability/resilience issues; mental health problems; economic impacts; individual and national economic coping; food security; supply chain problems; social isolation and distancing; domestic violence; unemployment; lockdowns – closure of borders, schools, shops, workplaces, entertainment places; restrictions to travel; limitation of freedom of movement/associations/gatherings; increased direct and indirect surveillance; individual, institutional and national financial struggles and budget cuts; dependence on technology and the Internet; cyber security; the strengthening of authoritarian regimes and the weakening of democracy. Even if this list is not definitive, 'the COVID-19 epidemic has evidenced countries'

unpreparedness to face such a challenge' (Branco, 2020) in a situation where a single virus triggers the aforementioned large-scale global disruption.

All of this, in turn, affects the understanding and approach to security and safety. When one facet of security is favoured, another is hampered. When national security becomes a governmental priority, it is done at the expense of human or international security (Hamourtziadou, Jackson, 2020). In the perspective of COVID-19, there might be a risk that the emphasis tends to be rather some kind of combination of political, national, and economic security at the cost of international, traditional, and human security.

### **Occurrence and Initial Response**

At the end of 2019, pneumonia cases increased in Wuhan, China. The disease resembled pneumonia caused by the coronavirus SARS, but no known virus has been found (Lutsar, 2022). When the situation turned sharply worse in the spring of 2020, a problem emerged where neither countries nor international instruments were ready for the impending cataclysm. The more terrible the statistics of infected and dead got, the more chaotic the situation became. The sanitary crisis, pandemics and epidemics that preceded COVID-19 – H5N1 (1997), SARS (2003), H1N1 (2009), MERS (2012), H7N9 (2013), Ebola (2014), Zika (2007, 2013, 2015) – should have prepared societies for such events. In theory, countries should have had time to consider, plan and brace themselves for situations where a similar event could occur and develop into a large-scale pandemic. But all those predecessors turned out to be milder than initially feared and were easily overcome. Thus, as none of them turned out to be excessively severe on a global scale, that might be the reason when COVID-19 first appeared in 2019/2020, it was treated quite coldly and calmly. (Lutsar, 2022; Drylie-Carey, Sánchez-Castillo, 2020) Inevitably, this delayed an adequate national and international response to the pandemic and only exacerbated the situation's complexity.

Even though different detection systems and mechanisms are in use, e.g. National Public Health Institute, Medical Intelligence, disease surveillance system ASTER, Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, foresight reports, risk assessments,

policy simulations (Agachi, 2020; Rogg, 2020), according to the Global Health Security Index (GHS, n.d.), no country was adequately prepared for a pandemic or epidemic. Hence, it is safe to say the pandemic of that scale was neither unpredictable nor impossible to prepare. In addition to detection systems, countries and international organisations have warned of the possibility of a worldwide pandemic for many years. NATO, for instance, cautioned that regardless of the magnitude of global shocks, a worldwide pandemic or the deployment of weapons of mass destruction can be a threat for all countries (Giegerich, McGerty, Round, 2021). It has been strongly emphasised that military danger is not the only threat to security. The infectious disease (ID) can be an as severe concern at the national and international level, which should be given more attention (Albert, Baez, Rutland, 2021). But at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, only a handful of countries presented the successful ability to contain it – South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia and New Zealand (Martín, ROMÁN, 2021).

In the light of the should have known prospect, it is evident that there was no use of information in advance because leaders and politicians did not take it seriously (Drylie-Carey, Sánchez-Castillo, 2020). According to the WHO, social communication is critical in persuading people to take preventative actions during sanitary emergencies and is a technique for limiting pandemic outbreaks (Drylie-Carey, Sánchez-Castillo, 2020). But finding accurate and trustworthy sources of information was somewhat complicated. This was further reinforced with the reality that the fight against misinformation has become increasingly difficult in the digital age – science, evidence, facts, and truth are significantly distorted. The growth of social media as a favoured source of information, rather than relying on traditional media channels, only weakened the possible pandemic preparedness, increasing the devastating effects of COVID-19. The main problem with this situation was that if society cannot – or does not want to – believe in and rely on official sources and adequate information, a case will inevitably arise that will force them to look for more alternative approaches. This, in turn, can have a significant impact on government or state reliability and cohesion, which can undermine overall security and stability.

## **Health and Poverty**

First and foremost, the pandemic significantly impacted the medical area and health care, only then economic, security, social, and general well-being. Consecutively, all of this has directly impacted the global labour market, the productivity of the global economy, education, and people's mental health (Di Liddo, 2021). Although the pandemic is still raging and the environment is fast-changing, it is evident that there are severe reductions in production, household spending, business investment, and foreign trade. The shutdowns have caused one-fifth to one-quarter loss of output in many countries and a one-third reduction in consumer spending. This level of change dwarfed anything seen during the global financial crisis in 2008/2009. (OECD, 2020) All of this has raised a governmental question of whether to stop the pandemic at the expense of economic destruction or accept a higher human cost to preserve the economy.

Crises and pandemics have always been societal challenges, testing society's cohesion, legitimacy, and adequacy of living standards. Its ability to affect anybody, COVID-19 seems to have preferentially harmed the middle and lower classes the most. The connection between poverty and ID is well documented, and poorer people are typically at-risk due to pre-existing health conditions, the absence of adequate healthcare, and general well-being. (Laruelle, et al., 2021) In addition, the working poor usually do not have the chance to work at home or remotely. Thus comes the loss of income or job. (Ihlamur-Öner, 2020) Global extreme poverty rates had declined significantly, from 28% in 2000 to 8.6% by 2018. Because of the pandemic, the gap between different classes of society has widened in many countries and amplified structural inequalities in affected societies. (Di Liddo, 2021) Thus, COVID-19 has emphasised that health problems have become a social, economic, environmental, and political challenge impacting stability and internal cohesion.

## **Democracy and Autocracy**

COVID-19 has raised another area of concern, which is democratic vs authoritarian regimes of governing (Greer, et al., 2020; O'Rourke, McInnis, 2021). The vulnerabilities of democratic systems, institutions and societies and the failure to reach a consensus

or a common approach are particularly evident. That is mainly because in the fight against the pandemic, ‘... authoritarian regimes have the strategic advantage of being irresponsible, reckless and aggressive’ (Gvineria, 2020, p. 1). Many have voiced their fear that the epidemic will erode democracy and bolster the influence of authoritarian regimes worldwide (Greitens, 2020).

Therefore, although the COVID-19 epidemic is a health and economic disaster, it has also become a political and ideological conflict, as authoritarian regimes have utilised it to stifle dissent and consolidate their power. For example, few believed Western democracy could implement similar control measures as authoritarian regimes did or that so fundamental divide could arise between Western democracies (Gordon, 2020). For democratic nations, implementing an efficient pandemic response plan in the face of noisy media and a segmented party system was challenging in comparison (Hamourtziadou, Jackson, 2020; Greer, et al., 2020). In addition, disinformation and ‘trolling’ can be wildly successful when society does not trust its government (van Vark, 2021). And the more chaotic and confusing the governmental approach to handle the pandemic is in democratic countries, the more it negatively affects people’s attitudes towards it.

From that point of view, one of the many threats to the Euro-Atlantic in the past few decades has been the growth of authoritarian governments and their aggressive approaches against the Western-dominated liberal global order (Gvineria, 2020). And now, authoritarian states like China and Russia are taking significant advantage of the situation. They have launched various and sometimes parallel information campaigns from the outset to show how well they are coping with the pandemic and how the West is struggling – rulers cannot be trusted, democracy does not work, Russian and Chinese regimes are working better (European Parliament, 2020; Bricknell, Pardo, Meyer, 2021).

In China, COVID-19 only strengthens the ruling elite’s grip over the population. Externally, by using the economic and financial turmoil caused by the pandemic, China exports its pandemic control model worldwide, proving itself to be a very effective form

of government and fighter against the pandemic. (Rogg, 2020; Greitens, 2020) While China is taking decisive steps to achieve international recognition and leadership, the US position and image have somewhat fluctuated (Campbell, Doshi, 2021). Because of the shortage of US leadership (O'Rourke, McInnis, 2021), China will be presenting itself as a new soft power provider (Mölling, Schütz, Becker, 2020). This strategy is even defined by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as a way to restore China's power, riches, and global leadership and overcome everything that might threaten its sovereignty, security, and economic interests (U.S. DoD, 2020).

In the light of the above, there is disillusionment with major political parties, an increase in populism, strengthening the position of populist leaders, a deterioration in social cohesiveness, stress on the rule of law, media freedom, civil rights concerns, breakdown of state institutions, and a reduction in public faith in democratic governance. For illustration, in Finland, Sweden, and the Netherlands, a relatively small percentage of young people find it absolutely important to live in a democracy, and the democracy trend is declining (van Vark, 2021).

### **Privacy, Surveillance, Human Rights**

The other relevant topic has also come to the fore – liberty versus security, privacy versus surveillance. COVID-19 has shown a need to adopt actions that require limitations on privacy, human rights, and freedoms to safeguard health and lives. Most states have adopted emergency steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by limiting people's freedom of movement, assembly, and association. States have restricted or altered citizens' rights to liberty, respect for private and family life, a fair trial, property protection, freedom of speech, and education. Some measures force institutions and companies to be limited or complete closure. Other methods include reorganising or nationalising health- and social-care networks, mandating the licensing of pharmaceuticals and local manufacturers, and imposing export limits on medical supplies. (Margna, 2021)

But many countries have used COVID-19 to implement questionable activities: freedom of expression (Romania, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kosovo, Turkey, India), privacy

and law-enforcement agencies data-mining (Bulgaria, Israel, Republic of Korea, China), freedom of peaceful assembly (Peru, Panama, Ukraine), controversial restrictions (Hungary, China, Algeria, Russia), accumulation of power and growing disbalance (Hungary, the Philippines, many countries in Africa), postponing different form of political representation (hundreds of elections have been delayed worldwide) (Laruelle, et al., 2021; Greitens, 2020; Rogg, 2020).

All the more, to enable previous ventures, countries have started to use the term securitisation more frequently. As Stone (2009) puts it: an issue is securitised when it gets constructed into a threat, the elites declare it to be so, it has been reported as a security problem, and the audience accepts it. The same has happened during this pandemic. Public health has become an object of security, and the securitisation of public health has allowed additional measures to be taken to monitor people (van Kolschooten, de Ruijter, 2020) – activities like border control, checkpoints, contact tracking, drone feeds, mobile apps, thermal cameras, COVID-passes, etc. In addition, China has demonstrated not just securitising public health but also medicalising public security (Greitens, 2020), which can justify even more repressive measures.

Intrusion into people's privacy to prevent or control the spreading of COVID-19 is partially understood; therefore, a reasonably convenient approach for governments to use – general security vs individual privacy, public health vs personal privacy. In many cases, this is even acceptable at the level of law – ECHR, Article 8 (2); ECHR, Article 15; CFREU, Article 52 (van Kolschooten, de Ruijter, 2020). For example, as of January 2021, 30 countries have used Article 15 of the ECHR to restrict citizens' freedom (Margna, 2021). Suppose, in the context of COVID-19, society may understand the need to increase control and monitoring to enhance security and coping. In that case, it should not be forgotten whether governments will be willing to relinquish control once the situation has returned to normal (Nihás, 2020).

### **Abstract**

As seen from this chapter and in combination with different security approaches, the COVID-19 placed pressure on countries and has affected almost the whole spectrum of different dimensions, from individual income to international cooperation, from well-

fare of a single person to an ideological division between political regimes, from human to non-traditional as well as traditional security. To add a slowly disappearing middle class, steadily growing gap between masses and the elite, and rising inequality, all of those have had and continue to have a severe impact on internal and external security and stability perception.

After understanding how COVID-19 affected the world, the following chapter will examine activities from the EU side.

## CHAPTER 2

*'Our only security is our ability to change.'*

*John Lilly*

To review responses and implications from the EU perspective, the fundamental principles of this union should be covered. By Buzan (1991), European Union is described as an international society. A group of states or independent political communities not just form a system where the activities affect others and *vice versa* but also establish common rules and institutions and recognise the common interest in maintaining this order. This social model of EU has six pillars, which are 1) increased rights at work and improved working conditions 2) universal and sustainable social protection systems 3) inclusive labour markets 4) solid and well-functioning social dialogue 5) public services and services of general interest 6) social inclusion and social cohesion (Aidnik, 2021).

To add a security layer, Briknell et al. (2021) stated that there is security in the traditional sense of protection against kinetic or physical assaults on European citizens and protection of the geographical sovereignty and integrity of EU Member States. This also includes a wider variety of risks and hazards that may be detrimental to state cohesion, democratic institutions, essential infrastructure, and societal welfare as kinetic assaults. Additionally, there are challenges to world security, which may have various adverse secondary effects on the EU's foreign policy goals.

Ongoing pandemic has shown that theoretical models and pure peacetime principles from union cohesion and security perspective can be easily forgotten in a crisis affecting everyone.

### **Impact**

During the initial chaos, COVID-19 immediately demonstrated the critical need for a more proactive, cohesive, and united EU internal and external policies and security strategies. Confusion and inconsistencies between countries over differing approaches to leaving society open or closed, to implement one or another restriction, or even to understand what this COVID-19 is all about highlighted the tensions in the EU. In addition, people's cognition towards the EU were also affected by the institution's ability, or inability, to cope with the crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic showed that it did not take long for countries to compete and prioritise themselves above others. The same selfish action occurred during H1N1 in 2009 (Martín, ROMÁN, 2021). The democratic unity, which should have been the EU's biggest strength, shuddered significantly.

The way the EU initially handled COVID-19 had serious consequences for the Union because a new political gap appeared between voters and politicians, West and East, Europe and America (Jones, 2020). The problem at the EU level was not the decision making but rather hectic actions and bureaucracy, the understanding that the key to success relies on friends, partners and allies (Kuusik, 2021). Even though the EU *modus operandi* should be solidarity and cooperation, the initial trend was that EU countries concentrated almost entirely on domestic affairs. The intensity and duration of lockdowns, the economy's over-reliance on contact-intensive services and manufacturing, which were the areas worst hit by social distance and supply-chain disruptions, also had a role.

Also, at the beginning of the pandemic, several signs of danger toward the EU from outside the union were noticeable. First and foremost, the dependence on Chinese production and supply chains became particularly visible (Bricknell, Pardo, Meyer, 2021), along with a vast and dangerous impact on the European economic security by

using its endless resources to increase its influence. On the other hand, Russia undermined the EU's political and social security by launching extensive campaigns that included misinformation, propaganda, and support for authoritarian segments (von Münchow, 2020).

Liability, political cohesion, government validity, administrative quality, the rule of law, and anti-corruption efforts are all critical components of any successful policy response, let alone the comprehensive and multifaceted steps required to contain and mitigate the economic consequences of a pandemic (IISS, 2021). For example, the analysis shows that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on the level of GDP in twenty-one of the twenty-seven countries in the EU (Lööke, 2021). Perhaps the most influential factor in bringing countries to their knees was the poor resilience of the healthcare system resulting from cuts in this area since the 2008 economic crisis (Martín, ROMÁN, 2021), economic reforms and privatisation in the health sector (Ihlamur-Öner, 2020). All this in combination, where the failure of one factor affected the following aspects, forced countries to forget the EU's core values and foundations quickly.

## **Outcome**

Despite the chaos, the EU started to strengthen the fight against the pandemic and helped struggling countries. In March 2020, the Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program (PEPP) was created, which contained 750 bln EUR. In April, an additional support package was agreed to support member states, companies and workers, including 540 bln EUR. (Aidnik, 2021) In July 2020 EU accepted another 750 bln EUR Recovery Plan (Major, 2020). Very generally, in addition to direct financial support, positive activities across the EU included repatriation of its citizens, different economic measures, border and mobility aid measures, fight against disinformation, promoting research on vaccines, treatment of COVID-19 and other health measures, State aid rules to save jobs and companies, joint procurement of medical supplies, etc. (European Parliament, 2020; Roloff, 2020). It only affirms that to overcome catastrophe of this magnitude and mitigate its impact on member states throughout all security spectrums, not only to produce political guidance but also to the fight against the

pandemic through real action can have a positive outcome for the EU coping capabilities and for its image.

### **Abstract**

As we see from the abovementioned, COVID-19 created economic tension, political and social division competition, lack of consensus and autocratic pressure have negatively impacted the EU's internal security and stability. Still, after the initial shock, the action has given confidence that it is possible to overcome the internal discord and strengthen the union position. Especially when it is understood that '... no European state has the size and resources to be effective on its own' (Mölling, Schütz, Becker, 2020, p. 4). Accordingly, the EU's areas to strengthen to be more effective and resilient in non-traditional and human security areas are the coherence of values throughout uniform actions and responses, appreciation of individuals and their freedom, and internal economic flexibility to cope and maintain its position globally.

After reviewing the general security and stability struggles and perception, it is worth considering how and why countries have used military capabilities and resources and whether it has affected armed forces. Could it be a mistake when the most influential traditional security instrument is overlooked or misused?

### **CHAPTER 3**

*'If you call it a war, then you think of people  
in uniform as being the solution.'*

*(van Vark, 2021, p. 305)*

Because of the overwhelming impact and extent of COVID-19, initial shock, unpreparedness, and chaotic approach to handle the situation – although this pandemic is not a military nature *per se* – it has had an impact not only on the non-military aspects but also it influenced and highlighted the possible threats from military areas as well.

Events like global pandemics and health crises affect military and civilian domains alike, and COVID-19 is no exception from that perspective. It disrupted the armed forces as much as the civilian sector – social distancing, distance working, reduced or

cancelled training and exercises, financial problems, future capability cuts. But it has not changed the core purpose of the army, which is to be ready and act when a military type of crisis or war demands it. Military power is still one of the primary fundamental means nations use to safeguard vital and peripheral interests. Thus, the military might greatly influence a country's ability to continue existing and developing, thus affecting its security (Szpyra, 2014). But as Brooks (2016) writes, 'As we face novel security threats from novel quarters ... we've gotten into the habit of viewing every new threat through the lens of 'war''.

### **Impact**

In more general terms, Homan (2008) has listed the most relevant aspects on military tasks area: protection as a duty in time of war, as the use of traditional force, as a military mission to prevent mass killings, as a task within UN-mandated peace operations, as providing area security for humanitarian action, protection through assistance/functional design. Only the latter can be linked to what the armies did during this pandemic out of this lineout.

From that point of view, there has been increasing military use in a national context in recent years. Also, during this pandemic, almost all countries used their armed forces to support activities against COVID-19 (EUROMIL, n.d.), varying only in size and extent, which were related to specific countries' military capabilities. The different levels of deployment of the armed forces were also due to the classification of the threat posed by the pandemic and how easily the legislation allowed armed forces to enforce established restrictions. For example, the Italian Carabinieri, the French Gendarmerie, and the Spanish Guardia Civil militarised police forces were among the first who participated in the fight against COVID-19 (Clarke, 2020) due to the relative ease to utilize them if needed.

The reasoning, therefore, why the armed forces were needed during the time of crisis might be because of their unique capabilities – state of readiness, greater number of personnel and equipment on their disposal, self-deployability and -sustainability, command and control capabilities, expertise in several areas like medical, law

enforcement, communication, engineering, etc. (Clarke, 2020). These same unique capabilities were seen to be used to support the civilian sector in managing the pandemic. The involvement of armed forces included assistance with command and control capabilities, repatriation of citizens, logistics, disinfection of public spaces, support to police, border and other internal security units, provision of equipment, help to the medical sector, sample collection, diagnostic testing, and tracing of contacts (Bricknell, Pardo, Meyer, 2021).

Another argument for using the military in the current crisis might be that a significant part of GDP goes to armed forces. And COVID-19 showed that pandemics could produce demands that exceed available resources (Gersons, et al., 2020). Hence, when the situation demands an abrupt reaction, states can hastily overlook the purpose of the armed forces, and in the absence of imminent military danger, the army is a straightforward and suitable organisation that might fall under the budget or capability cuts, or it may be used in situations for which it was not designed. This, in turn, can inversely cause a desire of some countries to take military advantage of the extra layer of uncertainty the pandemic poses.

In addition, because most people equate 'safety and security' with health, social welfare, and economic security (Rogg, 2020), and because this association is unlikely to alter in the future, many elements of EU military security – also its funding – might be pushed to the side-lines.

In the near term, the result could be a further rollback of defence integration, less financing for EU military capabilities, and a wave of defence industry renationalisation. In the long run, this would exacerbate developing concerns about the democratic accountability of the union's institutional apparatus associated with security and defence. (Csernatoni, 2020) Even though it is important not to cut, but rather to continue defence capability and planning initiatives, the pandemic has already and might henceforth hamper projects and initiatives like Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD), European

Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB), and the European Defence Fund (EDF) (Roloff, 2020; Bricknell, Pardo, Meyer, 2021).

### **Outcome**

Although defence and security were not among the top priorities for many countries before the pandemic, given the active role of China and Russia and the paralysis/division of US leadership (Major, 2020), these issues have begun to be re-evaluated. Due to the global power competition, the security situation in and around Europe and rising threat perception, which COVID-19 amplified and helped to highlight, all this could help stimulate the EU to understand the importance of increasing defence budget (Bricknell, Pardo, Meyer, 2021). There are indications that security and defence issues might still not be side-lined further. As Csernaton (2020) points out, Brussels has fortunately suggested taking more decisive steps on the defence field. Efforts have been taken toward more consolidated and competitive Europe's military sector and market, identifying realistic ways to enhance the EU's strategic autonomy to mitigate new internal and foreign security concerns and elevate industrial defence to establish European defence sovereignty. This aligns well with French President Macron's worries and statements that Europe should 'regain military sovereignty' and 'reassess the reality of what NATO is in the light of the commitment of the United States' (Hannah, 2019). From that perspective, it is welcoming that even in the times on COVID-19, for example, countries like Germany, Norway, the UK, Finland, France, Sweden and others decided to keep the planned defence budget increases and even add the additional amount (Giegerich, McGerty, Round, 2021).

### **Abstract**

Although the support of the armed forces in the fight against the pandemic has been valuable, their actual role and purpose should not be forgotten. Armed forces should be used but with caution. Considerations can be different, either the legality to use them, their lethality, associated risks, effects on their readiness, cost-effectiveness, situational appropriateness, unique capabilities (Clarke, 2020). As stated in the defence planning MANTRA, to be relevant, the armed forces must be adequately manned, equipped, trained, and available when needed (Murumets, 2021). The ability

to conduct warfighting means a purpose-built coherent structure, constant training, proper equipment and techniques, a reasonable stockpile of resources, and on top of all that ‘... responding to a pandemic is not what the military is built to do.’ (Friedman, 2020). Therefore, the military should not be the first step in the face of human and non-traditional security threats. However, coordination, dialogue, and cooperation between the civilian and military sectors are of utmost importance (Agachi, 2020). Suppose the army is overloaded with extensive non-military security tasks and constant distribution of its equipment and resources. In that case, the outcome may be when the necessity arises for warfighting, it might not be up to the task.

## CONCLUSION

*‘We all know what to do, but we don’t know  
how to get re-elected once we have done it.’*

*(IISS, 2021, p. 9)*

COVID-19 has created national and international turbulence, which have left societies more vulnerable. It has weakened the overall cohesion, resilience, and stability. For one thing, COVID-19 has taught that not only military or hybrid activities are a threat to states and societies, but also a pandemic can destabilise the entire global community, economy, and political system. Despite all the theoretical know-hows, risk or threat assessments, and early warnings, states were unprepared and defenceless. The difference in perceptions of what to do or how to do from the individual to the international level almost split the governments and societies. There was a lack of a more comprehensive political approach to understanding how aspects like state, society, defence and security, economy, health, environment, and individual inequality are interrelated and must be tackled together.

From the EU perspective, the greatest threat at the beginning of this period was the lack of consensus and cooperation when each country acted and stood for its interests and needs. The cleavage emerged between member states and inside the states and society, which threatened the security and stability within the EU. Furthermore, it became clear that government agencies' and NGOs' overall resilience was not up to the task – neither in terms of manpower nor resources – to mitigate the impact of the

crisis with that scale. But despite the initial disorder, it soon became apparent that a robust framework and cooperation are the only means to help overcome this kind of challenge.

Through the condition in which the ongoing pandemic has placed societies and states, the armed forces were also affected. It came to a convenient organisation that could distribute its resources and capabilities. Despite this, because the geopolitical situation will remain the same, if not worse, thus it is essential to maintain the readiness of the military to fight military types of adversaries and not to be stretched thin countering the pandemic. If the enemy is not present at the given moment, it does not mean it might not emerge tomorrow. Although the army should not be like a spectator in a non-military act, it is critical to consider the organisation's primary role and purpose. When countries' internal struggles should be tackled with non-military instruments of power, not letting someone take advantage of internal crisis, the military instrument of power should not be drained to fight the non-military type of adversary. The politics and army together must choose the road ahead, but in a way that does not compromise the army's capabilities; on a large scale, long-term and thorough, the army should be used as a last resort.

### **ANNEXE 1. Security**

The understanding of security in today's world is not taken narrowly – it is not viewed only as the defence of territory against foreign attack, the safeguarding of national interests, or world security against the prospect of all-out war. Security in everyday life is interpreted as not suffering from famine, cold or poor treatment, an illness that has been contained, a job that is not lost, an opinion that can be expressed, and a fundamental right that is not abused (Hamourtziadou, Jackson, 2020). Security is the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states and societies to uphold their independent identity and functional integrity against forces of change that they see as hostile (Buzan, 1991).

## **Traditional and Non-traditional Security**

Subsequently, security can be broadly divided into individual, state (national), and international levels (Osisanya, n.d.). Nihlas (2020) has divided it accordingly to explore different approaches further. Traditional security focuses on national security, where independence and integrity are central, and focal points – pacts, alliances, treaties, and military might and force – play a role. At the same time, from the point of view of non-traditional security – multisectoral security (Buzan, 1991) – the state's interests are still vital, but the security dimensions have been expanded – military, political, economic, environmental, and societal. The Copenhagen School of Thought, on the other hand, believes that the approach to security cannot be so one-sided, the state and its use of force, but that the security picture is affected by a myriad of factors, often of a non-military nature and not just limited to the state. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) approach includes better health, education and well-being to the issues related to human dignity, freedom, equality, and liberty. The Canadian Approach places even greater emphasis on the security of an individual and, for the first time, addresses freedom from fear and freedom from want.

## **Human Security**

Official humans' security concept addresses this topic even more thoroughly. Based on UN classification, the components of human security are health, economic, food, environmental, personal, community and political security (Di Liddo, 2021). "It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease, and repression. And second, protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or communities" (UN, n.d.).

As we can see, further emphasis is being placed on individuals at the international and domestic levels. It "gives primacy to human beings and their complex social and economic interactions" (Di Liddo, 2021). Hence, putting the person first is the main difference between human security and the traditional and non-traditional approaches (Homan, 2008) because it highlights the well-being of humans. In contrast, national security means the well-being of the state (Albert, Baez, Rutland, 2021). Still, human

security does not replace state security (UN, 2016). It is important to emphasise that no matter what security approach is taken, security is always “relational” and therefore, all aspects of it must be considered together (Stone, 2009).

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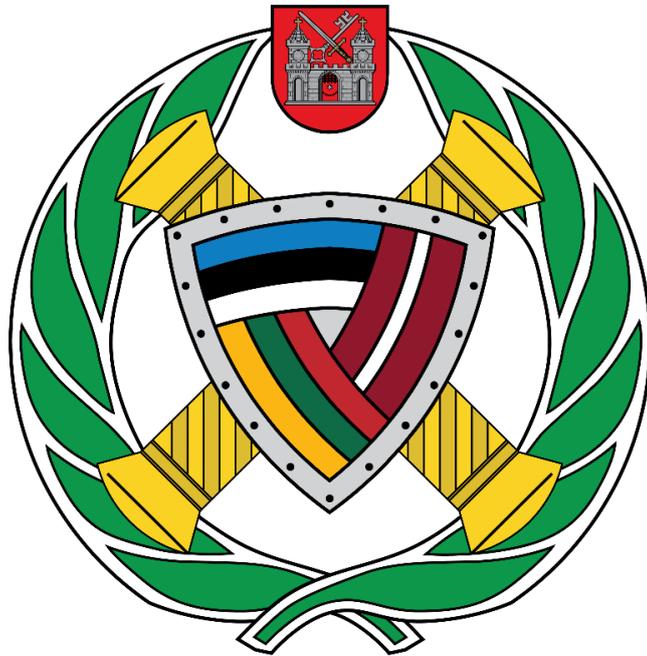
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**BEST ESSAY OF THE HIGHER COMMAND STUDIES COURSE  
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# **Strategic leadership requirements for a Baltic unified military effort**

**LTC Tarmo Kundla**

## **Introduction**

The Baltic states were accepted into NATO in April 2004 after fulfilling all the general requirements stated in NATO Membership Action Plan (NATO, 1999) first issued in 1999. It was a significant effort from the countries as they started to develop their states and armed forces almost from nothing in 1991. To reach the full membership, the Baltic states worked separately and together, being heavily supported by western countries, especially the Nordic states.

Historic roots of cooperation among independent Baltic states lay in the interwar period. There were several attempts to form an alliance between the Baltic states, Poland, and Finland in the 1920s, but for different reasons those failed (Männik, 2013 p. 17). Finally, the Baltic Entente was created in 1934, but 'this format was not utilized as a security and defense policy tool because of increasing tensions in Europe and weak trilateral cooperation' (Ozoliņa, 2019 p. ix). In the end, all the Baltic states chose to remain neutral and were occupied by the USSR one by one. Learning from history, it was decided in mid-90s that neutrality would not be the policy to follow, and cooperation is the only way how not to remain alone again. However, like in history, the cooperation between the Baltic states today has not been so self-evident. Being competitors for western resources at the same time have made the cooperation relatively hard to achieve. One thing is sure: it needs strategic leadership.

'Strategic leadership is about developing and maintaining the capabilities that will enable success at the operational and tactical levels of command both today and tomorrow. The objective of strategic leadership is to ensure the long-term effectiveness' (Institute, 2005 p. 98). Strategic leadership is about leading the institution rather than leading at the strategic level of war (McKay, 2008 p. 106). Regardless of the definition, it is based on human relationships (McKay, 2008 p. 18) and includes also shaping the external and improving the internal environment of the institution (Institute, 2007 p. 48). In the current paper, the author will not differentiate

between state (policy) and military strategy. The reason lays in the understanding that strategic leadership is considered more teamwork than individual endeavour. It does not matter whether you are civilian or military, a decision maker, recommender of policy or adviser in military matters.

The main thesis of the research paper is that the security and defence cooperation between the Baltic states to deter Russia is still more declarative than actual, and it is, at least partly, caused by lack of strategic leadership. The aim of the paper is to find those strategic leadership requirements which should be followed to enhance the Baltic cooperation and therefore strengthen NATO's eastern boundary. It is a qualitative analysis with case study elements. At first the author describes the context of the subject – how the cooperation has evolved since 1991, what has driven it and how important it is in today's security situation. Thereafter the author analyses three different cooperation fields in more detail, namely joint procurements, possible integration of land forces, and the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL). Based on the comparison of the findings, the author presents recommendations for strategic leadership on how to enhance the Baltic unified military effort to deter and, if needed, to defend the countries.

### **Baltic cooperation since 1991 – need for strategic leadership**

There are four main joint projects which illustrate the Baltic states' cooperation since the restoration of their independence. According to Jermalavičius (2009) and Molis (2009 pp. 32-33) the Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT) was formed in 1994, followed by a trilateral naval squadron (BALTRON) in 1997, a common air surveillance network (BALTNET) in 1998, and the establishment of joint staff college (BALTDEFCOL) in 1999. The most visible and influential projects were BALTBAT and BALTDEFCOL (Vaidotas, 2003 pp. 11-12), especially BALTDEFCOL (Romanovs, 2014). They all are considered successful and sometimes brought up as examples of how a regional cooperation should be organized. Of course, there have been smaller initiatives: cooperation in operations, some joint procurements, and contribution to NATO

Response Force (NRF) (Molis, 2009 p. 33). All those joint initiatives helped to develop the Baltic states' defence forces, enhanced foreign assistance and support, and in the end, were important for the states to become NATO members.

However, already 'five years after accession to NATO, Baltic military cooperation became stagnating' (Jermalavičius, 2009). The regional cooperation did not disappear, but 'massive new projects of regional cooperation among the Baltic States have not been initiated' (Molis, 2009 p. 46). 'Intra-regional cooperation lost its unique relevance and became part of the wider Alliance's landscape' (Ozoliņa, 2019 pp. ix-x). In fact, the problems were there already from the beginning. In his BALTBAT case study, Pete Ilo describes the lack of trust between the Baltic states and how western countries sometimes had to force the Balts to cooperate (2013 pp. 258-260). The main reasons of low cooperation can be described as 'critical combination of three factors: foreign disengagement, divergent national responses to NATO's global strategy and the competitive instincts of the three defence organizations' (Jermalavičius, 2009).

The common goal after the restoration of independence which forced the Baltic states to cooperate was the ambition to join NATO. After being accepted 2004, the Baltic states came to the conclusion that their security was guaranteed, and Russia was not seen as the main threat anymore (Männik, 2013 p. 13). Therefore, the cooperation started to erode, and each country followed their own agendas. From the above-mentioned initiatives only BALTDEFCOL and BALTNET have survived till today. The former has become a respected professional military education institution (Dilans, 2019 p. 22) and the latter one can be considered as the backbone of all the Baltic Air Forces and is fully integrated into NATO. BALTBAT was deactivated already in 2003 (Ilo, 2013 p. 245) and in 2016, Estonia stepped out from BALTRON to turn its focus on the standing NATO mine-countermeasure squadron (Grant, et al., 2019 p. 20).

Today's security situation is completely different compared to the time the Baltic states joined NATO. Attacks against Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine since 2014, as well as constant hybrid actions against the Baltic states and others have forced western world and NATO to reassess the situation and come up with new NATO 2022 Strategic Concept (NATO, 2021). The new NATO military strategy named as Defence and

Deterrence Concept, is 'built on a concept of direct defence designed to defeat an aggressor and such a direct defence capability is a deterrent because it can either defeat an aggressor or impose intolerable costs' (Group, 2022 p. 17). The two most significant deterrence strategies are: deterrence by denial and by punishment (Rostocks, 2020 p. 23). Knowing that conventional balance in the region is not achievable by the Baltic countries alone, even with the pre-positioned NATO battalions (Veebel, 2018 p. 237), and looking at the geography of the Baltic region, the main conclusion to be drawn is as follows: deterrence by denial will be the Baltic states' duty and deterrence by punishment will remain for the rest of NATO. The purpose of that magnitude is not achievable if the Baltic countries continue to act separately following their own agendas.

Therefore, the purpose of Baltic cooperation today should be to deter Russia by denial and, if deterrence fails, to defend until the other NATO countries will join the fight. In the other words, in case of an attack it will be NATO's fight from the first moment and the Baltic states will be just the first ones to react on the ground. There are three possible scenarios for Russia to act against the Baltics to undermine NATO cohesion and credibility: a hybrid attack, a large-scale conventional attack or a surprise attack. When launched, it will, of course, be a combination with some additions like destroying critical targets and infrastructure, cyber-attacks, etc. At least initially, all the Baltic states will be cut off from the rest of the allies and must manage with what they have at their disposal. It can be currently estimated that a hybrid scenario will be the most likely and a surprise attack most dangerous one; however, a large-scale attack cannot be ruled out (Kundla, 2022). Neither deterrence nor defence is just military business. Effective deterrence involves activities in all DIME domains and the Baltic states' joint effort supported by other NATO countries. Using NATO terms, comprehensive approach is the basis to approach all the security matters.

To sum up, regarding the security situation, the need for the Baltic states' strategic level cooperation is inevitable, but there are currently no large-scale projects ongoing, except the old ones. Most of the cooperation continues to take place proceeded by NATO. The lack of the Baltic states' ability to deter Russia by denial indicates the

absence of strategic leadership. At the same time, there are a lot of areas where Baltic militaries and MoD-s can cooperate and work jointly. According to Jermalavičius (2009), 'from sub-regional contingency planning to the integration of command, control, communication and information systems; from joint procurements to the organization of common defence R&D activities – the Baltics can do a lot together to increase the credibility of NATO's collective defence system in the Baltic region, while saving resources and remaining at the forefront of progressive defence thinking within the Alliance'. Enhanced cooperation between the Baltic states will probably be not enough to deter Russia. Therefore, besides the need to rethink the operational strategy and concepts of the Baltic states, it is also critical to cooperate with Finland and Sweden (Grant, et al., 2019 p. 46). It can be stated that there is an urgent requirement for strategic thinking and leadership if the Baltic states really want to successfully deter Russia.

### **Joint procurements – a field to improve**

Many authors, for instance Jermalavičius (2009), Romanovs (2014), Veebel, (2018), Mehta (2019), Grant et al (2019), have studied the Baltic states' cooperation and pointed out the absence of joint procurements. It is hard to understand why small states with common enemy and limited resources buy and maintain different equipment. The most popular argument for acting jointly is the cost-effectiveness. 'Joint procurement would drive down costs for large defence articles by allowing the smaller Baltic nations to buy in greater numbers and allow the countries to share maintenance responsibilities, which would save money' (Mehta, 2019). Joint procurements are often cost-efficient (Veebel, 2018 p. 239). There are also some different opinions, arguing that sometimes it is possible to get a better deal by acting bi-laterally. 'It could be assumed that the Baltic states main consideration for procuring different equipment of the same type is driven by trying to find the best deal with the money available' (Romanovs, 2014).

Theoretically, joint procurements are beneficial, but in practice, there are several problems. Mehta (2019) interviewed the Baltic officials and concluded that small-scale procurements are doable and practiced, but there are severe problems with big ones resulting from different budget cycles of the states, different threat assessments, the bureaucracy of the seller country to handle different buyers, and organization of maintenance. There have been some smaller-scale joint procurements but none regarding the main equipment. For example, Estonian and Latvian procured jointly Lockheed Martin long-range radars (Jermalavičius, 2009) and the Baltics states together acquired Carl Gustav ammunition (Romanovs, 2014). In 2020, Estonia and Latvia procured Carl-Gustav M4 grenade launchers and are planning to buy practice hand grenades (BC, 2020).

In contrast, between 2016 and 2021, all the three Baltic states have acquired different types of main weapon systems, for example, infantry fighting vehicles: Estonia bought 44 CV-90's, Latvia 123 CVR(T)'s and Lithuania 88 Boxer's Combat vehicles. The same goes for artillery, 12 K9 Thunder's, 47 M109's and 21 Pz2000's, respectively, and air defence systems, namely Mistral 3, RBS70 Mk2 and NASAMS, respectively (Finabel, 2019 pp. 17-19). Based on the procurement programs, it can be concluded that the Baltic states are developing different land forces and there is practically no cooperation concerning joint procurements.

However, in the light of the Russia-Ukraine War, there can be seen some positive changes in joint procurements. Now also big projects are agreed and in process. The Estonian Centre for Defence Investment (RKIK) and the Latvian Ministry of Defence announced 'the largest procurement in the military field so far' by planning to buy different types of vehicles together (LETA/BNS/TBT, 2022). Unfortunately, Lithuania is not taking part in this project. At the end of 2021, all the Baltic defence ministers revealed plans to procure M270 Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS) (ERR, 2021). The last is not just joint procurement; it can be illustrated as joint capability development.

The issue is not so much about cost-effectiveness but interoperability and military necessity when preparing to fight against Russia. Interoperability means 'the ability to

act together coherently, effectively, and efficiently to achieve Allied tactical, operational and strategic objectives' (OFFICE, 2021). Different main weapon systems bring about different organization, procedures, tactics, and demand different logistical and command solutions. On the one hand, diversity is good, but on the other hand, it works against you when there is a need for joint collective effort to win the war. The side effects on tactical level can be and have been mitigated by extensive joint training. But on the operational level and considering the sustainability of force, training doesn't help. Again, in the first days of a potential war, there will be no issues, but after that, all the Baltic states will be dependent on outside support regarding supplies, spare parts, ammunition etc. It is much easier for NATO and Allies to help the Baltic states as one entity with similar goods than three different countries with very different ones.

It can be said that there is no need for joint procurements just to buy stuff together, especially in circumstances where every state has developed their land forces according to their own threat assessment, geographical conditions, resources available, and following NATO standards. However, as concluded previously, to deter and defend, there is no other options than to fight together. In other terms, the real need for joint procurements arises from military necessity – to create conditions to win the war. It will not be so much about cost-effectiveness, but building, developing, and maintaining capabilities in a coordinated manner. In other words, it is a question of strategy, how to create conditions for future success on tactical and operational level. This joint strategy and future perspectives seem to be missing currently.

### **BALTBAT – why not Baltic Division?**

From time to time, people refer to BALTBAT project and ask why the Baltic states have not used it as an example and created a Baltic brigade or even a division. To put it very simply, BALTBAT project cannot be considered as an example for creating a joint force, and forming a Baltic division is much more complicated than it seems.

BALTBAT was founded and designed for peacekeeping missions. The format was chosen not to provoke Russia. Thereby western countries, especially the Nordic

countries, were able to equip, train, and develop Baltic militaries in the western way (Ito, 2013 pp. 245-246). The focus solely on peace support operations deviated BALTBAT from the rest of the defence forces and the expertise was not spread among the militaries as intensely as it was desired (Ito, 2013 pp. 254-255). 'BALTBAT was seen more as a tool for gaining NATO membership and interoperability than as a specific defence capability' (Grant, et al., 2019 p. 19). Being closed already before 2004, BALTBAT has been activated three more times to contribute NRF. Currently, since 2021, the project has been suspended (Times, 2020).

The Baltic states have never had a desire to have a joint force to defend the Baltic states as a region. The idea of creating the "Baltic state military union" was rejected at the very beginning of the 90s (Molis, 2009 p. 29). The Baltic states became busy to build their own countries and probably were not ready for such level cooperation. In other words, there was lack of strategic thinking and leadership at that time. There is also another and maybe simpler reason for the absence of cooperation: from the distance the Baltic states may look similar, but they are actually very different. 'History and cultural identity, history of the statehood, language, dominant religion, geographical identification and even major external cultural influences differ considerably in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia' (Molis, 2009 p. 29). And lastly, the constitutions of the Baltic states 'do not permit creating common military forces in the sense of a shared army' (Miļūna, et al., 2019 p. 63). Therefore, 'while potential threats from the Russian side and NATO collective defence commitments are similar' (Andžāns, et al., 2017 pp. 29-30), the Baltic states have developed three different models of militaries (Nikers, et al., 2019). Estonia has followed 'a compulsory military service and a reservist army, Latvia has opted a solely professional army with a considerably smaller amount of supporting manpower' (Andžāns, et al., 2017 pp. 29-30). Lithuania re-established conscription in 2015 and started to use a mixed model relying mainly on professional force, 'the conscript ratio of the total force structure is and will remain relatively small' (Jermalavičius, 2017). As independent states, all Baltic countries have followed their own agendas, relied on NATO, and forgot the need for comprehensive regional cooperation when developing their military forces.

The Baltic states' different military forces and security systems which in the initial phase of war are prepared to fight alone and are not tied together regionally, are relatively easy targets for Russia, especially in case of a surprise attack. From 2014 to 2015, RAND corporation conducted a series of wargames to 'examine the shape and probable outcome of Russian short-warning invasion of the Baltic states' (Shlapak, et al., 2016 p. 1). The results were not promising: 'about a week warning, which enabled NATO to flow in some reinforcements, it took 36-60hrs for Russian forces to reach the outskirts of Tallinn and Riga' (Shlapak, et al., 2016 p. 1). It can be considered as a theoretical war-game result if Russians have not conducted a field exercise to practice it. The Russian-Belarusian joint exercise ZAPAD 2017 'simulated a conventional large-scale and intense conflict' against the countries in the Baltic Sea region and in exercise conditions they reached to the same conclusion (Dyner, 2017). As the Balts most likely have to face the first wave of Russian aggression alone, the need for cooperation is even more urgent (Nikers, et al., 2019 p. 16).

There is a need for a strong division-size force to defend the Baltic states until NATO reinforcements arrive. The war-games by RAND corporation indicated that 'a force of about seven brigades, including three heavy armoured brigades – adequately supported by airpower, land-based fires, and other enablers on the ground and ready to fight at the onset of hostilities are needed' (Shlapak, et al., 2016). In the Baltic Security Strategy Report (2019 p. 28), the authors proposed that a new NATO Multinational Headquarters (NMH) should be established to better coordinate and integrate operational units in the Baltic States. The primary task of the NMH should be 'to make the Joint Operational Area fully operational as a coherent geographical area, not three separate and distinct battle spaces as now' (Grant, et al., 2019 p. 28). However, the current NATO framework has split the Baltic states, and does not support the idea of the Baltic Division and trilateral cooperation. The Baltic states belong to NATO Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) area of responsibility together with Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary. The Multinational Division North (NND N) HQ, subordinated to NNC NE HQ, has its main task to support defence planning in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and coordinate regional military activities (NE, 2022). But

Lithuania is not part of MND N since they are part of the Multinational Division North-East (MND NE).

To conclude, there is a need for a strong division-size operationally ready force to defend the Baltic states, but creation of it as a joint Baltic division is probably the biggest strategic leadership challenge that the Baltic states could have. It demands changes in the states' constitutions, NATO's framework on its eastern boundary, the Baltic states' security policy, military build-up, etc. The other option, which is probably more realistic and demands a little fewer change, could be to invest more in the existing NATO framework divisions (MND N and MND NE) regarding capabilities, operational planning, readiness, training, etc., so that those will become fighting forces and not just units on paper. It also means that the Baltic states must take a more active leadership role in those divisions, which is not the case currently.

### **BALTDEFCOL – successful project, but not fully exploited**

BALTDEFCOL has been viewed as the most successful cooperation project of the Baltic states. It is a unique professional military education (PME) institution in NATO. From the very beginning, BALTDEFCOL has had English as the only language of instruction; the college has been regionally focused and multinational regarding the faculty and the students. Today, most of the Baltic states' officers have received their operational and strategic level education in BALTDEFCOL.

BALTDEFCOL was established on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1999. It was a project of the Baltic and Nordic states supported by many others (Corum, et al., 2019 pp. 15-16). There were two main reasons behind this joint effort: continued concerns about potential Russian aggression and the prospect of NATO membership (Libel, 2016 p. 24). The process was led by Danish colonel Michael Clemmesen, at that time the defence attaché of Denmark accredited to all the Baltic states, who also became the first commandant of the college as brigadier general (Corum, et al., 2019). BALTDEFCOL became a unique trilateral multinational military education college to teach intermediate and senior officers as well as civil servants in accordance with Western

military doctrine and standards (Libel, 2016 p. 138). Started at the end of 2004, the project went through a successful “Baltification process” which means that all three Baltic states took the responsibility to lead, finance and staff the college.

BALTDEFCOL’s structure is quite straightforward and simple, but it is difficult regarding the stake holders and the external level cooperation. The college is led by Commandant, manned on the rotational basis by the Baltic states. Commandant is assisted by the Commandant Office and the Deputy Commandant who also serves as Chief of Staff and is responsible for drafting the main documents, regulations, etc. However, all the strategic and annual documents are discussed and approved by BALTDEFCOL Co-ordination Group, Baltic Military Committee (consists of CHODs), Baltic Management Group (MoDs), and finally confirmed by Baltic Ministerial Committee, which is the most senior decision-making authority concerning the Baltic cooperation (Libel, 2016 p. 144). This is the way the Baltic states have found a method to commonly ensure that everybody’s interests are taken into account. It is complicated, but it works.

Since its foundation, the college has been change-oriented and emphasized the importance of research. Internal and external evaluation and long-term planning processes have been implemented there (Libel, 2016 p. 140). Based on the overview of the college history (Corum, et al., 2019) it can be said that the college has been constantly developed and kept up to date. The ambition to become research centre for war studies in the Baltic states (Maskaliunaite, et al., 2007 p. 88) has backed it further. A former Commandant have said that the role of the Baltic Defence College is to be ‘at the forefront of strategic and operational military thinking for the Baltic states, the Baltic region, and beyond’ (Dilans, 2019 p. 32). As the Baltic states own the college, they can ‘establish the aim and scope of the College courses, as well as include topics into their curriculum based on their requirements’ (Leika, 2019 p. 37). It is in the Baltic military and civilian leaders’ hands what to teach and research in BALTDEFCOL.

Despite being a successful cooperation project, BALTDEFCOL has not reached the level to influence the operational and strategic level thinking in the Baltic states’ militaries regarding the regional cooperation. The problem is also brought up in the

Baltic Security Strategy Report (Grant, et al., 2019 p. 21). The college teaches NATO procedures and follows NATO manuals but does not consider the ways how the Baltic states could fight jointly against Russia. In other words, there is no commonly agreed doctrine to follow and therefore no widespread culture of cooperation, either. There are two basic documents which are created and used in teaching the Joint Command and General Staff Course (JGCSC): “Handbook for Operational Parameters” (BALTDEFCOL, 2013) and “The Standing Operation Procedures” (BALTDEFCOL, 2019). Neither of the documents can be considered a doctrinal piece. However, there has been a common understanding of how to defend the Baltic states. It was agreed in 1997 that instruction should reflect the idea of territorial defence (Clemmesen, 2000 p. 83) and ‘mirror the terrain and defence conditions of the Baltic States, including the need for independent action by often widely separated combat units’ (Clemmesen, 1999 p. 6). The concept of territorial defence was created and briefly described by BGEN Clemmesen in Baltic Defence Review vol 3 (2000 pp. 83-86). However, after receiving the invitation to join NATO, the content of training switched to NATO needs and the common national and regional doctrinal ideas vanished (Foot, 2003 pp. 13-14).

To sum up, BALTDEFCOL is a great example of Baltic cooperation. It started with a vision and leadership of Danish BGEN Clemmesen. He was followed by Baltic generals who continued and further developed the college. The Baltic states have agreed on how to run and what to teach in the college but have failed to come up with regionally focused ideas about how the Baltic states could jointly deter the adversary and, if needed, to defend their countries. In the development of such a doctrine, BALTDEFCOL could play a more important role than it currently does, especially if the college desires to be the center of war studies in the Baltic region. Already in 1999, the first Commandant wrote that ‘it must be written in close interaction with the Baltic States Main Staffs and officer education academies/centres’ (Clemmesen, 1999 p. 6) and ‘as the creation of this concept is of crucial importance to development of the overall structure and concept of the defence forces of all three states, it is only natural that the Baltic Defence College is a focal point of developing such doctrine, with inputs and contributions from all three Baltic states’ (Clemmesen, 2000 p. 86).

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

After studying the Baltic states' cooperation, first in general and then in more detail regarding joint procurements, opportunities to act as joint force, and BALTDEFCOL as the most successful project so far, it can be concluded that the Baltic cooperation in security matters seems to be more declarative than actual. Most of the cooperation has taken place in NATO's framework and there are no real regionally focused initiatives, except BALTDEFCOL. Of course, the author studied only a few cases, used open sources, and did not consider cooperation in the areas like navy, air force, special forces, cyber, intelligence, Ministry of Defence or everyday communication and cooperation regarding the ongoing situation, etc. Those fields must be also studied carefully to validate the conclusion that there is lack of strategic leadership in the Baltic states when speaking of the joint effort of deterring Russia.

The biggest problem concerning the cooperation between the Baltic states in security matters is lack of vision. Therefore, there are no ideas about how to proceed. In other words, the collective strategy is missing, and each country continues to develop their defence forces based on their own agenda. The main uniting factor of those improvements is NATO. At the same time everybody acknowledges that at least in the first phase of war with Russia, the Baltic states must fight alone. Unfortunately, the Balts are currently on the way to repeat the history – they are preparing to fight alone. Having no common idea about how and with what to fight together, they do not take the maximum from the jewel of their cooperation, BALTDEFCOL, either. The latter can be a real uniting institution regarding the joint doctrine, studies, war games, and most importantly developing future leaders and enhancing joint cooperation-oriented military culture.

Based on the findings, the author makes the following recommendations for strategic leadership to improve Baltic unified military effort:

1. Create and agree upon the overall vision to deter and, if needed, defend the Baltic states as a joint effort to halt Russia and enable NATO to reinforce the

region. It requires a commonly agreed joint operational strategy including threat assessments, prepared and ready forces (national and NATO forces in the region), agreed command relations (between nations and with NATO forces), etc. At the same time, possible cooperation with Finland, Sweden, and Poland should not be forgotten.

2. When strategy in place, work out what current and additional capabilities must be developed to create conditions for future success on battlefield. Then create a joint plan for procurement, maintenance, resupply, etc. and execute it. In the long term, the Baltic states should use the same or very similar equipment to raise interoperability and make outside support easier during a war.
3. Write and update a joint regional doctrine based on vision, selected strategy, and developing capabilities not forgetting that it all must fit into NATO's framework. The process should be led by BALTDEFCOL and supported by the Baltic states' defence forces HQs. Simultaneously continue to promote research and development of operational and strategic level leaders in BALTDEFCOL, which will further improve regional cooperation in the Baltic region.

In the short term, the described ideas could be discussed, formulated, agreed, and led by all Baltic states CHOD's. Following their vision, possible operational strategies should be designed by a joint planning group consisting of planners from all the Baltic states' HQs and selected individuals from NATO structures and the Baltic MoDs. The planning must include several extensive war-games regarding different Russian courses of actions and capabilities currently available in the Baltic states (national and NATO). By that it should be clear what level of cooperation and capabilities are needed. Games could be prepared and executed by BALTDEFCOL under the supervision of the Baltic states' CHODs. Finally, the draft joint operational strategy is ready to be introduced to and agreed by top state officials (ministers, prime ministers).

In the medium term, joint or at least coordinated and commonly agreed states' defence policies must be worked out led by the Baltic states' MoDs, supported by all CHODs and other ministries. It regards capability developments, joint procurements, necessary changes in different laws, disbanding or re-establishing conscription, creating, for

example, a joint Navy and Air Force, agreements and joint exercises with Finland and Sweden, and many other issues which fall under defence policy. Simultaneously, a lot could be done in BALTDEFCOL which should be promoted and developed to be really the regional centre of defence studies and maybe a Baltic Defence University to educate the people working in the field of security and defence.

In the long term, it can be envisioned that the Baltic states will finally agree to form “a military union” which will be part of NATO’s strategy, will be strong enough, and regarding regional security will bring together all the non-NATO countries in the Baltic Sea region. By that the Baltic states will not only be consumers of the security but also providers. The state officials do not have to fly around and ask for more NATO troops in the Baltics; instead, they could provide more options to allies to work together either in the Baltic region or, when the situation is calm, some other areas in the world.

To conclude, enhancing the cooperation among the Baltic states is not only military business as previously described, but the Baltic militaries, at top level, can provide continuous strategic leadership to the process. It demands regional and even wider strategical thinking, understanding of states’ policies, negotiation skills, professionalism, cultural awareness, and most importantly courage – the will to act. Russian threat will not diminish. Regardless of how things end in Ukraine, Russia will continue challenging the West and try to restore their USSR boundaries. To deter Russia, the Baltic states must work together, because it is the only way to avoid repeating the mistakes they made before WW II. Militarily strong, united, and well-prepared Baltic states will make NATO stronger, and thereby the overall deterrence effect produced by NATO will certainly be more valuable as well.

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