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**HOW SMALL STATES ACHIEVE FOCUS:
BALTIC COUNTRIES' ACTIONS IN THE WAKE OF THE UKRAINE-
RUSSIAN WAR TO STRENGTHEN SECURITY IN THE BALTIC
REGION**

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Summary: The case study was made in order to explain the Baltic Sea region's security increase. To do so, Therslson's and Steinsson's theory was used. Authors present the strategy, which argues that small states in the same region, due to shared security concerns, should use cooperation among themselves in order to increase their security. The provided analysis shows that the Baltic States, being the small states and bound by the same threats from Russia, successfully used cooperation among themselves and the situation of Russia's war against Ukraine, to increase their security in the Baltic Sea region.

Confirmation

I confirm that I am the author of the submitted thesis: *How small states achieve focus: Baltic countries' actions in the wake of the Ukraine-Russian war to strengthen security in the Baltic region*, which has been prepared independently and has never been presented for any other course or used in another educational institution, nor in Lithuania or abroad. I also provide a full bibliographical list that indicates all the sources used to prepare this assignment and contains no unused sources.

Mantas Kužinauskas

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Introduction

Russian military aggression in Ukraine is in part the consequence of bilateral relationships between Russia and the USA. Putin's approach to foreign policy is dedicated to his goal of retaining a superpower image in the world of politics.¹ Russia being the successor to USSR means that the collapse of the USSR for Putin is viewed as a loss for Russia, as with its collapse Russia has taken a step back in world domination.² Thus, his goals are to fix the "geopolitical disaster" of the 20th century by bringing Russia back to superpower status. As the main threats to his goal Putin identifies NATO and the West, in both instances meaning the USA. This outlook of his is typical of a realistic approach where two regimes compete for power against each other, thus in this instance, Putin sees all the actions and moves by NATO, as the moves of the USA to expand its power within the world.³ That is the case with NATO expansion within former geopolitical interest zones of the USSR starting with expansion in 1999 that directly disturbed and was aimed against diminishing Russia's power. This was also clear with pre-war demands made not to Ukraine, but to the USA now. Those demands included a ban on Ukraine from entering NATO and that NATO was to remove any troops or weapons deployed to countries that entered the alliance after 1997, meaning Poland, Baltic countries, and the Balkan countries, returning geopolitical order in Europe to what it was in 1997, before NATO Eastern Europe expansion.⁴ Those demands were directly aimed to restore Russia's power by reclaiming its predecessor's geopolitical spheres. After demands were not met, Russia invaded Ukraine on the 24th of February, NATO followed that up by supplying Ukraine with weaponry, expanding its membership with the membership applications of Finland and Sweden, and an increase in the number of military personnel in the Baltic region. The decisions that were made by NATO in the region could be explained by the bilateral struggle for power in the region against USA and Russia, but it would leave out economic decisions that were made in the EU. Such explanation also would not provide a clear answer as to why the USA was so hesitant to increase military personnel in the region before the war, which by some experts thought would have prevented the war or at least Russia's escalation in NATO eastern borders.⁵

¹ Minkina, Mirosław. "Russia's return to the superpower status." *Security and Defence Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2019, pp. 34-50. doi:10.35467/sdq/110335. p.40-43.

² The same p.36-37.

³ Tsygankov, A. P. „*The frustrating partnership: Honor, status, and emotions in Russia's discourses of the West. Communist and Post-Communist Studies*“, 47(3/4), 345–354. 2014., p. 347.

⁴ Roth, A., “*Russia Issues List of Demands It Says Must Be Met to Lower Tensions in Europe,*” *The Guardian*, December 17, 2021, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/17/russia-issues-list-demands-tensions-europe-ukraine-nato>. accessed June 3, 2022.

⁵ Kühn, U., “*Consequences for NATO - Preventing Escalation in the Baltics: A NATO Playbook,*” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/03/28/consequences-for-nato-pub-75881>. accessed June 3. 2022. p. 23.

To find those answers, one should look at countries that besides Ukraine are threatened the most by the existing presence of Russia in its region. Existing NATO presence in Eastern Europe is most vital for Baltic states, more than any other country within NATO or EU. The history of occupation in the USSR, and Russia's ambitions to restore its dominance in the region threaten the sovereignty of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. With Putin's outlook on the world, where the most important factor is the power, small states like the Baltics have to employ strategies that would allow them to deter the potential threat of large states within their geopolitical area. The theory of small states implies three main strategies that small states could use - balancing against potential threats, developing hedging strategies (sometimes even staying) neutral, and shelter seeking as part of a bandwagon strategy.⁶ Due to Baltic countries' reliance on NATO to ensure military protection, the bandwagon strategy is used when a small state faces far greater powers. Thus, small states employ bandwagon to join alliances because they allow them to punch above their weight in asymmetrical relationships with the large state.⁷ This would explain why NATO presence is essential for Baltic countries. Also, NATO forces is only one of the many components to ensure sovereignty for Baltic states, as threats from Russia are also economic and political.⁸ This helps to see why Baltic actions could be viewed as a potential key in decisions made in the Baltic region during the war, as the scope of actions against Russia directly correlates with threats to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia's sovereignty.

When discussing military threats there seems to be an agreement among academics that NATO is the main security provider in the region, but there are gaps in the current (pre-war) situation in the NATO Baltic region. M. Šešelgytė in her article in 2020 wrote that the existing NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) Battalion in Lithuania is not enough to counter possible Russian aggression and that there is a need for additional personnel and equipment in the region putting emphasis on the USA stationed military personnel.⁹ This thought is also supported by other researchers.¹⁰ Economic threat is also described as energy security that Russia is using to influence decisions within the Baltics¹¹ and also political actors within organizations on which Baltic states rely

⁶ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž., „*Security Strategies of Small States in a Changing World.*“ *Journal on Baltic Security*, 3(2) 7-15, 2017., p. 10.

⁷ Lamoreaux, W., J., „*Acting small in a large state's world: Russia and the Baltic states, European Security*“, 23:4, 565-582. 2014., p. 567.

⁸ Lamoreaux, W. 2014., p. 572-573.

⁹ Šešelgytė, M., „*Lithuania as host nation.*“ In A. Lanoszka, C. Leuprecht, & A. Moens (Eds.), *Lessons from the Enhanced Forward Presence, 2017-2020* p. 71–78. NATO Defense College. 2020., p. 76-77.

¹⁰ Clark, Wesley, et al. „*Closing NATO's Baltic Gap.*“ Tallinn, Estonia: International Centre for Defence and Security, 2016. p. 6.

¹¹ Lamoreaux, W., p. 574-575.

heavily (EU)¹². Lastly, there is a political issue of existing Russian ethnic groups that Putin can manipulate, influence, or even create reasoning for interventions as was done with Ukraine.¹³ Even though Lithuania is less affected than Estonia and Latvia, it is still an issue that has to be taken into account as it can be used by Russia as a tool to achieve their geopolitical goals in the Baltic region.¹⁴

Small states are regarded as those states which do not wield great political power, as they are too weak to make any difference in the international arena, by not being able to impose their will to protect their national interests from larger states.¹⁵ By overviewing the discussion on Baltic states' relationship with Russia and its threat to their existential values (political, economic, and military), a pattern is noticed between actions that are taken and issues that had to be addressed, in order to ensure security for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. From this, **thesis question** is formulated: How do Baltic states use the international arena and the situation of the war in Ukraine to push and promote their security agendas and achieve strategic goals for themselves?

Thesis goal: To analyze how Baltic countries collectively acted in Russia's war against Ukraine period to strengthen their position in the international arena, what was done (is being done) to catch the arena's attention on Baltics security issues, and how much of it (security in a region) is caused by actions of the Baltic countries.

Tasks that are set for the thesis:

1. To overview and present the theory of small states;
2. To define Baltic sovereignty threats from Russia (Economic, Political, Military);
3. To analyze Baltic countries' joint actions in foreign policy within small state security strategy scopes in countering sovereignty threats from Russia;
4. To provide examples of how Baltic states strengthened regions security within the Baltic region.

Methodology: This research will present a case study of the Baltic states' actions within NATO and EU from 2022 and onwards. Aim of the research is to find of Baltic states influences in NATO and EU action within Baltic Sea region. To do so, it will rely on theory of small state security strategy within international organizations, proposed by Thorhallson and Steinsson, which relies on small states' joint action in pushing specific issues to influence decision making within the international arena. Theory suggests that small states in the same proximity within threatening large

¹² Johnson, Debra. "EU-RUSSIAN ENERGY POLICY - SINGLE OR MULTIPLE POLICY PARADIGMS?" *Energy & Environment* 15, no. 3., 451–68. 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43735501>.

¹³ Veebel, Viljar, and Illimar Ploom. "The Deterrence Credibility of NATO and the Readiness of the Baltic States to Employ the Deterrence Instruments." *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 16 no. 1., 171-200. 2018., p.171-173.

¹⁴ Kallas K., *Is Russian Minority a State Security Risk in the Baltic States?*, Policy Memo Presented at the BEAR Policy Conference Bridging the EU and Russia, 2021, p. 4-6.

¹⁵ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž., p. 8-9.

state should form coalitions among themselves as they usually share similar issues caused by large states threats to their sovereignty.¹⁶ To identify threats it will focus on sovereignty threats that are shared between Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. And to prove existing link of Baltic influences in decisions that were made research will focus on joint actions such as planned meeting (schedules) of Lithuania's, Latvia's and Estonia's foreign ministries to see where and when decisions could have been made, and what followed after those meetings within organizations, also what was said individually and collectively within organization by Baltic states and their officials that could have supported their joint goals.

¹⁶ Thorhallsson, B., Steinsson, S., p. 10.

Theory of small states

General explanation, when defining what is a small state, relies on the country's population, territorial size, and economic growth as small in a global sense.¹⁷ In 1967, D. Vidal also provided population boundaries to support the general explanation of small states - he stated that small countries in developed economies have a population up to 10-15 million, while in underdeveloped states this number could be increased to 30 million.¹⁸ These quantitative measures could help to filter small states, but they cannot always be applied just on their own, for example if we take Israel, which has a population of around 9,2 million, with its military capabilities (having also nuclear capabilities) they are far from a small state in their geopolitical region.¹⁹ Measurements in the provided explanation are not used as a comparative measurement. As measurements without comparison cannot tell if one state is small and the other is large. To do that they have to be directly compared between states and provide causation of asymmetrical relationships between states (small versus large). When one of the compared states has an advantage in the majority of the measurements (gross domestic product (GDP; geographical size, population size, and military size), it becomes clear that that state is large in comparison to another one, thus later one is small in that sense.²⁰ Thus, just factual numbers alone cannot tell a whole story, as a strategic environment is also important as one can only be small in relation to a large one.²¹ It can modify a state's security goal since they are of interest and problems are reflected by other countries a state is surrounded by. For a better understanding of small states in the international arena, political explanation rather than quantitative is needed for this research.

In the traditional political sense, small states are defined as states that are not great powers, as those states (small) are incapable of changing the international order or its rules. They are described as states that do not have the capacity to impose their will to secure their interests globally or regionally, as they lack political power and resources to do so.²² Small states also are in a weaker position as they are in asymmetric relations with the large state, which are formed by the resources of those states and also by their historical and geographical contexts, which shape political attitudes

¹⁷ Peya, M., Van Wyk, J. "The Diplomacy of Small States in the International Political System". Journal for Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, November, 118-45. 2019. p. 2

¹⁸ Vidal, D. *The Inequality of States: A Study of Small Power in International Relations*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1967, p. 8

¹⁹ Merom, Gil. "Israel's National Security and the Myth of Exceptionalism." *Political Science Quarterly* 114, no. 3 409–34. 1999. .: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2658204>. p. 422

²⁰ Lamoreaux, W. 2014., p.569

²¹ Goetschel, L., *The Foreign and Security Policy Interests of Small States In Today's Europe*. In: Goetschel, L., ed. *Small States Inside and Outside the European Union: Interests and Policies*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998. p. 14.

²² Vaicekauskaitė, Ž., p. 8-9.

and preferences.²³ Because of this, small states tend to have a foreign policy, which primary focus is dedicated to their nearest geographical surroundings and their relationship to the large state in the region.²⁴ Due to that, relationship's threats that are often based on mentioned geographical and historical context, small states have explicit interests only in their immediate neighborhood. That interest comes from their primary goal of sovereignty. Sovereignty usually depends on "hard values" - military, political and economic. But it is not always bound just to those three factors, it can also come from other values, which the state associates them as existential to its survival. As is usually the case with societal values such as language or ethnic identity.²⁵ Those values of identity are especially important to a small state's sovereignty, as can be seen in such a state's reluctance to accept refugees, to protect societal values. Mentioned "hard values" are the most important for small states in relation to large states, as those are usually threatened by the latter, and thus, securing those values ensures their sovereignty from large states.²⁶

Security Strategies for small states

As mentioned, the primary goal of the state is to secure its sovereignty and the means for doing that is by obtaining power, primarily military power, to secure its "hard values". These characteristics can also be applied to large states as well. However, unlike large states, small states, as theory suggests, have limited capabilities to secure their sovereignty, and thus are limited in their ways of achieving it.²⁷ To do so, small states can choose to be neutral, or to engage with great powers by joining alliances and seeking shelter, they can also balance against potential threats and develop hedging strategies.

Strategy of neutrality

For small states to be entirely sovereign is to be neutral. Rules of neutrality are simple, states who declare neutrality are required not to participate in wars or support any military alliances or states militarily.²⁸ But those countries must also be ready to defend themselves from other countries in case of violations of their sovereignty. In this case, taking into account that small states do not have the military capacity to counter large ones, this solution is only viable if no large states threaten them. In

²³ Baldachino, G., Wiwel A., *Small states: concepts and theories. In: Handbook on the politics of small states. Edward Elgar Publishing*, 2020. p.6

²⁴ Pastore, Gunta. *SMALL NEW MEMBER STATES IN THE EU FOREIGN POLICY: TOWARD 'SMALL STATE SMART STRATEGY'?*. *Baltic Journal of Political Science*2. . 2013 10.15388/BJPS.2013.2.2818.

²⁵ Lamoreaux, W., 2014., p. 568-569.

²⁶ The same.

²⁷ Vital, D. *The Survival of Small States: Studies in Small Power/Great Power Conflict* (London and New York, Oxford University Press). 1971. p.120

²⁸ Goetschel, L., p. 19

other words, small states can only be neutral if large states allow them to be.²⁹ Neutrality allows states to be sovereign and autonomous as it allows them to avoid taking sides in conflicts between large states. By being neutral, small states seek to demonstrate to large states, that they do not intend to take any military actions and that they do not pose any threat.³⁰ This is important as small states' neutrality, as mentioned, is dependable on large states. This policy could allow the small state to ensure their independence and at the same time mitigate the tensions with their neighbors, as long as the latter does not seek to exploit the sovereignty of the small state. This strategy was well used in the Cold-War period by Scandinavian countries who were small states in comparison to the USSR. During that period the majority of Western European states joined NATO rather than stayed neutral but it had to be taken into account that those countries did not have proximity to the USSR that Scandinavians did. A good example of that is Finland, as it had borders with the USSR and a history of conflict with it too. In order not to provoke the USSR, Finland chose to stay non-aligned. This allowed Finland to remain sovereign and ease tensions with the USSR as well as by not joining NATO it did not pose a military threat, which NATO did.³¹

Also, it is worth mentioning in the post-Cold War era, the growth of the international system in the international arena helped the small states to remain neutral. It also provides small states with instruments, which can be used to increase their security and influence in the international arena. Since small states face greater external threats in comparison to bigger states, an international system provides rules and norms for international order, which in terms provides more stability and security guarantees from greater powers to small states. Also, international organizations (not alliances) can put small states at the same table as large states, if those organizations are based on equal membership.³²

Balancing strategy

As mentioned, if neutrality can be risky, as if large states decide to challenge small states' sovereignty, small states (which are small in comparison to large states) are forced to contend with this alone and face the very real possibility of losing their sovereignty entirely.³³ For a small state to ensure its's security from possible challenges to it by threatening large states, the small state has to align with another large state. This strategic decision allows small states to deter possible challenges to their sovereignty and thus keep their security, but by doing so, it loses some of its political decision

²⁹ Vital, D. p. 12.

³⁰ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž., p. 12.

³¹ The same.

³² Vaicekauskaitė, Ž., p. 10.

³³ Vital, D. p. 123.

freedom to an aligned state.³⁴ When engaging with another state to form alliances against large states, there are two strategies that are used – balancing or bandwagoning.³⁵ Balancing is considered when state decides to join opposition of a great power, which (opposing side) is weaker in a conflict or relationship with a great power. This is done in order to prevent large state from dominating the international or regional arena, in other words to balance the powers.³⁶ Balancing can, in theory, allow the joining state to join weaker side (in relationships to state that is joining to state that is joined) increase their influences in the alliances, because weaker side depends on assistance. If one is to join stronger state (again, in comparison to joining state, to state that is joined), new member receives less influence as its importance to a coalition is much lesser.³⁷ In small states context, latter is usually a more common example, as small states usually have little resources to influence order in existing alliances, thus balancing strategy is rarely an effective choice against threat of a great power, as it is more useful against regional powers of similar capabilities.³⁸

Bandwagoning strategy

For small state states joining the winning side should be more preferable as, mentioned, they rarely can influence the outcome of a conflict, as they have little to offer to an alliance. And if small state decides to join a weaker side, despite their insignificance, they still can be punished by large state, as they (small states) were still in collation against them.³⁹ When state decides to join a strong actor, who are perceived as a winning side in existing conflicts or rivalries, this is called bandwagon strategy.⁴⁰ According to Walt “*the weaker the state, the more likely it is to bandwagon rather than balance*”.⁴¹ By employing bandwagon strategy, small state in exchange for protection received from larger powers, have to give up some of their freedom to maneuver politically and allow them (large state of whom one bandwagon) to interfere with their domestic and foreign affairs.⁴² Bandwagon allows small states to secure their military and political values which as mentioned are the most important for a small state’s sovereignty.⁴³ Also when choosing this strategy small state have to rely on the large state to protect them, which at points are not the scenario for large states to follow, if they seek to avoid confrontation.⁴⁴

³⁴ Vital, D. p. 123-124.

³⁵ Walt, S., Stephen M. “*The Origins of Alliances*”, Cornell University Press, 2013. p. 17.

³⁶ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž. p. 10.

³⁷ Walt, S., p. 18-19.

³⁸ Walt, S., p. 30.

³⁹ Walt, S., p. 29-31.

⁴⁰ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž. p. 10-11.

⁴¹ Walt, S., p. 29.

⁴² Vaicekauskaitė, Ž. p. 11.

⁴³ Bladaitė, N., Šešelgytė, M., “*Building a Multiple ‘Security Shelter’ in the Baltic States after EU and NATO Accession*”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 72:6, p. 1010-1032., 2020., p. 1012.

⁴⁴ Walt, S., p. 29.

Alliances can also be useful for small states as even though it limits their freedom, they can extend their influence, as alliances are often composed of members with similar ideologies and strategic interests. They could either be offensive - aimed to attack a third party, or defensive - aimed at defending members of the alliance against potential threats. By being in the alliance, small state can exercise influence on particular foreign policy issues and increase its prestige in the international arena by advancing its international status. Alliances allow members (small states included) to increase the likelihood of gaining political support and military assistance from other member states. It also shares resources between members when needed, this is especially beneficial for small states, which usually lack them.⁴⁵ Alliances create a possibility for small states to punch above their weight by providing possibilities to in some shape or form influence political order. It is worth mentioning that even though alliances are combined of different members, they still rely on great powers within an alliance for it to be successful.

NATO alliance can be used as a great example. It is a defensive alliance with an aim to provide security guarantees for its members, but also is reliant on the great power of the USA, which can use it as a tool to influence its members. Being defensive alliance provides its members, especially the small states, with security and deterrence as NATO is committed to collective defense. One-third of NATO members are considered small states, who rely heavily on latter commitment as their main security guarantee against possible aggressors.⁴⁶ But as mentioned, those guarantees rely on USA's commitment to NATO and its members, which was heavily challenged by the Trump administration.⁴⁷ Even with the existing institutionalized frameworks of NATO, the USA alone did manage to enforce its rules on members of the alliance and threatened to leave an alliance as it is not beneficial for the USA, putting the securities of small states at risk.⁴⁸ This example shows that small states cannot solely rely on alliances and bandwagon strategies.

Small states strategy within an alliance

For small countries relying on bandwagon strategy in order to ensure security, they must be able to influence large states and alliances to policies closest to their preferences. To compensate for their lack of political power to influence political order, small states have to prioritize their efforts in the international system. They should focus on sectors that are the most important for them and where the benefits of resolved issues would be most beneficial for them. In doing so, small states should be

⁴⁵ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž. p. 11.

⁴⁶ The same.

⁴⁷ Banka, A., „*Reclaiming a good ally status: Baltic coping strategies in the America First world*“, *European Security*, 30:2, 159-177, 2021., p. 159-161.

⁴⁸ The same.

proactive and use their resources for that issue freely. This allows small states to outweigh the lack of aggregate structural power with greater issue-specific power. Thus, small states, by contracting their attention and resources to the specific issue or threat, can even the scale of influences with the larger state.⁴⁹ Small states, in this case, can benefit from their short list of issues, as unlike large states they do not need to compromise on a wide range of issues to please different groups, as they are reliant primarily on the most threatening ones to their sovereignty.

In order to push for specified issues agenda on the mainstream, small states should rely on one another by forming a coalition within an alliance. Small states within the same region usually hold the same “hard values” thus, they are more likely to cooperate between themselves, rather than large states, as small states do not seek to export their influences or power, they are preoccupied with securing existential threats in order to survive. What also leads small states towards better cooperation among them is that their officials tend to have more autonomy within their governments to act out their own decisions.⁵⁰ This autonomy allows small state officials to form a coalition much quicker with other small states of the same region. Joint decision-making processes between small states tend to be much quicker than between large states as representatives of those coalitions have the autonomy to make their own decision.⁵¹

Working in a coalition and concentrating on specified issues, small states can use their international organizations or alliances to their benefit. As those structures can be used to reduce political resources by gathering members of the organization into one forum, where political views and issues can be expressed and decisions made.⁵² As those forums host multiple actors, it is important that, in order for a small state to be heard and addressed, it should have coalition actors who are dedicated to the same issue to catch the attention of other states and, thus influence the decisions made.

Overlooking presented theories, small states, in general, are characterized by their small population, territorial size, and economic growth compared to other states on a global scale.⁵³ However, these characteristics alone do not necessarily determine a state's smallness, as other factors such as military capabilities and geopolitical influence can also play a role.⁵⁴ In a traditional political sense, small states are those that lack the ability to significantly influence the international order or

⁴⁹ Thorhallsson, B., Steinsson, S., "Small State Foreign Policy." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. 2017; p. 9-10.

⁵⁰ The same, p.10.

⁵¹ The same.

⁵² The same. p. 11-12.

⁵³ Peya, M., Van Wyk. J. p. 2

⁵⁴ Lamoreaux, W. 2014., p.569

impose their will on other states in order to secure their interests.⁵⁵ These states often have asymmetrical relationships with larger states due to their limited resources and political power, and may focus their foreign policy on their immediate geographical surroundings and their relationship with larger states in the region. In order to secure their sovereignty and protect their "hard values" such as military, political, and economic power, small states may adopt security strategies such as neutrality, bandwagoning, or balancing.⁵⁶ Neutrality involves remaining impartial and not aligning with any particular group or state. The strategies of balancing or bandwagoning can be used in forming alliances with other states, with balancing involving joining the weaker side in a conflict or relationship with a larger state in order to increase influence within the alliance and prevent domination, while bandwagoning involves aligning with a dominant state for protection.⁵⁷ Therlson and Steinsson provided a blueprint for states that are employing bandwagon strategies, where authors emphasize that small states can compensate for their lack of political power by focusing on specific issues that are important to them and using their resources to achieve their goals.⁵⁸ By forming coalitions with other small states and working within international organizations or alliances, small states can increase their influence and push their agenda on mainstream issues. By prioritizing their efforts and concentrating on specific issues, small states can use their issue-specific power to balance out their lack of aggregate structural power. Working in coalitions allows small states to make quicker decisions and effectively lobby for their preferred policies.⁵⁹ In order to be heard and have their issues addressed, small states should gather a coalition of actors dedicated to the same issue in order to catch the attention of other states and influence decision-making. Such strategy will be applied to the Baltic states' relationship with Russia in order to make analysis the ways in which the Baltic states can work together to address their shared concerns and protect their sovereignty in the face of potential threats from Russia, during the time of war in Ukraine.

⁵⁵ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž., p. 8-9.

⁵⁶ Vital, D. *The Survival of Small States: Studies in Small Power/Great Power Conflict* (London and New York, Oxford University Press). 1971. p.120

⁵⁷ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž., p. 10-12.

⁵⁸ Thorhallsson, B., Steinsson, S. p. 10-12.

⁵⁹ The same.

Methodology

The analysis part of this thesis will be based on a case study. In the first stage of the research, Baltic states will be analyzed in comparison to Russia to determine which “hard values” of Baltic States' sovereignty were threatened by Russia before the war in Ukraine. This will be done in order to determine what areas within economic, political and military sense need to be addressed in the asymmetric relationship between the Baltic states and Russia. Theory suggests that those threats can be implied by historical and geographical contexts (in the case of political threats) and by comparative analyses of the size and resources between a small state and a large one (economic and military threats).⁶⁰

Once threats are identified, research will be made on how Baltic countries employ small state strategies based on bandwagon and alliances. To do that research will rely on Thorhallsson's and Steinsson's provided theory on how small states should engage with international organizations to influence their decisions. Theory suggests that small states, in the same proximity within threatening large state, should form coalitions among themselves as they usually share similar issues caused by large state's threats to their sovereignty.⁶¹ Identified threats of the Baltic States will help to provide issues on, which the Baltic States can form a coalition. The theory also states that is crucial for small states to concentrate on specific issues that are the most challenging to their security environment and dedicate the majority of resources available at hand to influence decision-making inside international organizations.⁶²

Thus, research will focus on how Baltic states jointly cooperated among themselves in exercising issue-specified goals in organizations (NATO, EU). It will be done by overviewing what were the decisions made by the Baltic States themselves during the war, and how those decisions impacted their security. It will also analyze decisions made by the EU and NATO within the Baltic Sea region, and if those decisions correlate with an issue regarding Baltic states' security. To prove the involvement of Baltic states in influencing those decisions, the actions of Baltic states will be analyzed. The research scope will focus on planned meetings (schedules) of Lithuania's, Latvia's, and Estonia's foreign ministries to see where and when decisions among Baltic states could have been made, what followed after those meetings within organizations, also what was said individually and collectively within the organization by Baltic states and their officials that could have supported their joint goals.

⁶⁰ Lamoreaux, W., 2014., p. 568-569.

⁶¹ Thorhallsson, B., Steinsson, S., p. 10.

⁶² The same.

1. Need for collective strategy: bound by the threats

As outlined in the theory, small states are defined by their asymmetrical relationship with “larger” countries in a geopolitical sphere, in which (relationship) the larger threatens small states' sovereignty by challenging Hard values (military, political, economic spheres).⁶³ As after the collapse of the USSR, Russia declared itself its successor, with an ambition to restore once-held dominance over Eastern Europe. In this particular example, the Baltics States' understanding of their asymmetrical relationship with Russia relies on the bandwagon strategy that was talked about in the previous part. The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have a long history of engagement with the West, dating back to the period of Soviet occupation and their eventual independence in the early 1990s. Since then, these countries have sought to strengthen their ties with Western European and North American countries, particularly through their membership in organizations such as the European Union and NATO. These ties provide a deterrent against potential aggression from Russia, as they signal to Moscow that an attack on the Baltic states would have consequences for its relationships with the West. Additionally, the presence of NATO forces in the region serves as a further deterrent against Russian aggression. Thus, the inclusion of the Baltic countries in the EU and NATO significantly reduced Russia's ability to influence these countries' domestic policies, which disrupted Putin's foreign goals. But besides aligning themselves with the West, the Baltic States are still influenced and challenged by their neighbor in the East, as Putin's goals remain the same – regain lost geopolitical control over Eastern Europe.⁶⁴ Thus, such foreign policy goals of Russia are sovereignty threats to the governments of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia.⁶⁵ According to Dr. Agnia Grigas - “Russian influence in the Baltics aims to constrain their independence and undermine the political, economic, and civilizational choices they have made.”⁶⁶ Tactics employed by Putin's government to retain control in the region are often covert and coercive and seek to utilize their natural resources, the private sector and its citizens as a tool to employ their foreign policy, through their role as a principal energy supplier, and soft power, through extensive networks of ethnic Russians living in the Baltics. However, Russia's use of their tactics in their foreign policy to gain influence and challenge the Baltics States' sovereignties, would not be possible without conditions within those countries that make them vulnerable to Russian influence.⁶⁷ To analyze how Baltic countries

⁶³ Lamoreaux, W., 2014., p. 568-569.

⁶⁴ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž., p. 10.

⁶⁵ Grigas, A. (2012). „Legacies, coercion and soft power: Russian influence in the Baltic States. Chatham House Briefing“, 2012 p. 4. Retrieved from http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Russia%20and%20Eurasia/0812bp_grigas.pdf

⁶⁶ The same p. 2.

⁶⁷ Hanson, Z., “Russia's Energy Diplomacy in the Baltic States,” *Auctus: The Journal of Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship*, January 1, 2013, <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/auctus/53>. p. 5.

employed their strategy within existing alliances, mentioned “hard values” and conditions, which allow Russia to exploit their tactics on challenging those “hard values”, to be defined within their relationship with Russia. It is important to outline how each sector (political, economic, military) is threatened by Russia within the Baltic States, and find similarities that fit all three countries, as that would suggest that collectively they can increase each other security from Russia as they (Baltics) bound by the same (or similar) challenges within their geopolitical region. In the following subchapters military, political and economic threats will be overlooked in order find mentioned similarities among the Baltic States

1.1. Russia’s military threat overseeing the Baltic Sea region

When thinking about possible threats to one country’s sovereignty, the most important one is the military. An idea of another country’s military intervention or the sheer power one holds against another to impose its will. Thus, in the Baltic state’s case, the most visible threat that Russia holds against them is a possible military intervention that could happen, as all three Baltic states mention Russia’s military as the main threat in their national security concepts.⁶⁸ When compared to Russia in the military aspect, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania are dwarfed by it. Russia currently has around 800 thousand active personnel, whereas combined Baltic states have 29 thousand, Russian land forces boast around 30 thousand armored vehicles to the Baltic’s 1.1 k, 12 thousand tanks Baltics - 0, also Russia has a superior air force to Baltic as Baltic air force is non-existent.⁶⁹ Current-day tactical handbooks and historical data suggest that a defending side should be able to successfully hold off enemy forces if they are at 1 to 3 disadvantages (current tactical handbooks suggest 1 to 5 disadvantages if the battle takes place in the urban terrain).⁷⁰ Even if we would combine Baltics States’ military capabilities it would not be enough to counter Russia’s military threat. Realizing that, Russia will always pose a military threat over the Baltic Sea region, since Baltic countries have chosen to join NATO back in 2004.⁷¹ This move shows that to strengthen their security, Baltic states chose the Bandwagon strategy by aligning themselves with United States-led NATO.

⁶⁸ Report of the Saeima „*On Approval of the National Security Concept*“, LIKUMI.LV, accessed October 29, 2022, <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=309647>.

“National Security Concept of Estonia – Kaitseministeerium,” 2017.

https://kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/national_security_concept_2017.pdf

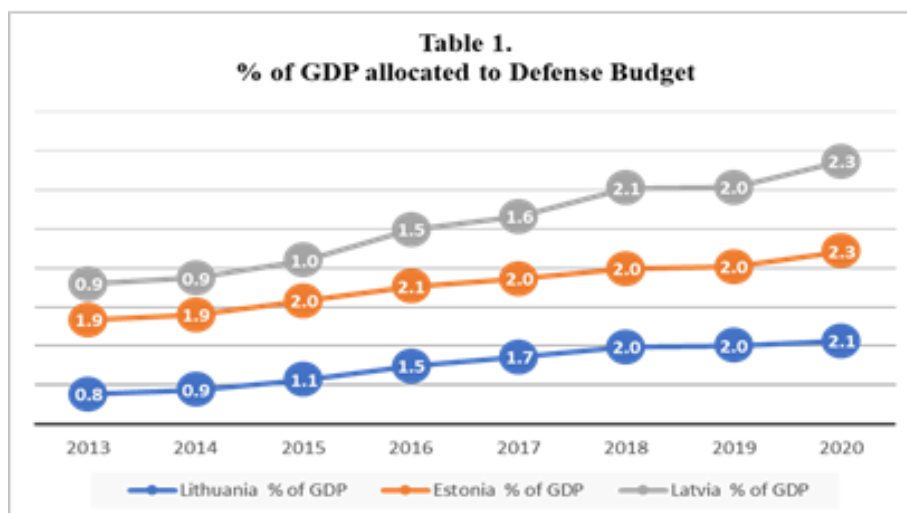
Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Resolution Amending Resolution No IX-907 of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of 28 May 2002 on the Approval of the National Security Strategy 2021. <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/3ec6a2027a9a11ecb2fe9975f8a9e52e?jfwid=rivwzvpgv>

⁶⁹ Information taken from <https://www.globalfirepower.com/>.

⁷⁰ Česūnas, L., „Būrio Vado Atmintinė“, Generolo Jono „Žemaičio“ Lietuvos Karo Akademija, Vilnius, 2016., p. 18

⁷¹ “NATO Update: Seven New Members Join NATO - 29 March 2004,” accessed November 5, 2022, <https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/03-march/e0329a.htm>.

Until Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, it was believed that being in NATO is enough to ensure deterrence from possible Russian military attack, as at the time (before 2014) there were even thoughts of Russian democratization and closer relation with the West, whom Baltics were (and still are) part of.⁷² Thus, after those ideas of a Western Russia were shattered, when Russia used military aggression in Ukraine, and growing tensions in the Baltic sea region, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia started to readjust their security policies, shifting focus on strengthening their national defense capabilities by increasing defense spending (see Table 1.) to help modernize their militaries.⁷³ As seen in the table, there seem to be two spikes in the increase in military budgets spendings - one after Russian military actions in Ukraine in 2014 and the other, after 2017, which correlates heavily with then-US president Donald Trump’s push for NATO members to “pay up” and increase its spendings to required 2per cent of GDP.⁷⁴



It was due to the understanding that to counter existing military imbalance in the region, the Baltic countries have to rely on their bilateral defense cooperation with the United States, which has been always seen as the key ally in shoring up their national defense and deterrence posture.⁷⁵ It was understood that in order to successfully deter a possible Russian military intervention, the Baltics have to bandwagon on their allies in NATO and especially the US, as in 2017 Lithuanian Defense Minister said - “The US is the most powerful ally and its deterrent effect is not comparable to other allies”.⁷⁶ It is one of the ways that the Baltic States seek to receive reassurance from NATO members that they will act upon article 5, as the Baltic States are “fully paid” members of the alliance.⁷⁷ It is

⁷² Kubilius, A., “On Western Strategy towards Russia: From ‘Putin First’ to ‘Democracy First,’” *European View* 20, no. 1 (April 1, 2021): 6–13, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17816858211003348>.

⁷³ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž., p. 10.

⁷⁴ Banka, A., p. 160

⁷⁵ Vaicekauskaitė, Ž., p. 10.

⁷⁶ The same, p. 164.

⁷⁷ The same, p. 167.

worthy to note that NATO also responded to increased tensions in the Baltic Sea region by deploying the enhanced forward presence (EFP) battalions in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, thus reducing the risk of military conflict in the region.⁷⁸ But even with increased military budgets and EFP battalions in the region, there is still a military imbalance between NATO and Russia in the Baltic Sea region.⁷⁹ A research done by a RAND corporation in 2016 stated: "*As currently postured, NATO cannot successfully defend the territory of its most exposed members. Across multiple games using a wide range of expert participants in and out of uniform playing both sides, the longest it has taken Russian forces to reach the outskirts of the Estonian and/or Latvian capitals of Tallinn and Riga, respectively, is 60 hours.*".⁸⁰ Thus, an increased NATO (and US) presence is still needed as in 2017 Lithuanian Defense Minister said that he is reassured by the deployment of NATO troops to his country and the Baltics, but would prefer an allied brigade.⁸¹ Another gap, that is vital to defensive success, is reaction time, which is also could be hampered by both militaries (by current low defense air capabilities in the region and the Suwalki corridor which could cut off Baltics from the rest of the NATO) and political, as slow political processes in NATO (and member states).⁸² Thus, the Baltic States must address existing military security gaps together, as done in the past, to ensure their serenity from Russia.

1.2. Russia's political influences in the Baltics

Besides having the military advantage over the Baltic States, Russia seeks to gain political influence in the region as well, to retain back the power, it once held over Eastern Europe. In his 2005 annual state of the nation address to parliament, Putin said that the collapse of the USSR "*was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century... for Russian people, it became a genuine tragedy. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens and countrymen found themselves beyond the fringes of Russian territory.*".⁸³ Because of that, Latvia and Estonia have a significant portion of their society tied to Russia - 25.2 per cent of Latvian inhabitants and 24.8 per cent of Estonian residents are of Russian descent while in Lithuania there is only about 6 per cent.⁸⁴ Those that are Russian borders, are used as political instruments. There is enough evidence to support a claim that the cultural and linguistic

⁷⁸ Judson, J., 2019. „Do the Baltics need more US military support to deter Russia?“ Defense News, 16 Jul.

⁷⁹ Šešelgytė, M., p. 76.

⁸⁰ Shlapak, D., A., Johnson, M., W., "*Reinforcing deterrence on NATO's Eastern flank: wargaming the defence of the Baltics*", Santa Monica, RAND, 2016., p.1.

⁸¹ Karoblis, R., "*Lithuania reassured by NATO troops, but prefers allied brigade*" Defense & Aerospace Report, 2017 11 Jun.

⁸² Šešelgytė, M., p. 78.

⁸³ "*Putin: Soviet Collapse a 'Genuine Tragedy,'*" NBC News, accessed November 7, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna7632057>.

⁸⁴ Bergmane, U., "*Fading Russian Influence in the Baltic States,*" *Orbis* 64, no. 3 2020: 479–88, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2020.05.009>.

connection of Russophones in the Baltics with Russia is maintained through the Russian language, which is used in private and public sectors, such as Russian-language education, literature and especially through Russian media consumption.⁸⁵ And even if, as mentioned, Lithuania does not house many Russian speakers, they are still affected by Russian influence. Research done by Eastern Europe's Studies Centre in 2016 shows that Russophones support Putin and its regime as presented with the question "How do you see (*in Lithuanian "vertinate"*) V. Putin?", 41 per cent responded "very positive" and 32 per cent responded "positive". And only 15 per cent chose "very negative" or "negative".⁸⁶

Having such Russian-speaking groups inside a country poses a threat of having a pro-Russian government inside one's country, thus to avoid such threats both Estonia and Latvia, after the collapse of the USSR, did not automatically grant citizenship to anyone whose forebears arrived after June 1940, as similar policies were drafted that required knowledge of language and history for obtaining citizenship, policies that affected ethnic Russians as in both countries Russian minorities accounted of around 30 per cent of all population.⁸⁷ Lithuania followed a different path and granted citizenship without such requirements, mainly due to the fact that Russian speakers accounted for a much smaller share (around 8 per cent). Those decisions left a mark on Russian minorities as in Latvia and Estonia, the Russian diaspora was left out from the rest of society and often viewed by local governments as the *others*.⁸⁸ Those emotions are often used by Putin and its government as having such minorities within one's country is also a tool of foreign policy for Russia, as Putin declared Russia to be the protector of Russian-speaking people living outside Russia's borders. Such claims were also followed by official documents as in 2010 Russia's military doctrine stated that "*The Russian Federation considers it legitimate to utilize the Armed Forces and other troops in order ... to ensure the protection of its citizens located beyond the borders of the Russian Federation in accordance with generally recognized principles and norms of international law and international treaties of the Russian Federation.*"⁸⁹ In 2014, protection of Russian ethnic minorities within Ukraine was one of the main presented arguments to the public, as to why Russia used military intervention.⁹⁰ And even though Lithuania followed a different path from Estonia and Latvia in terms of nationalization of

⁸⁵ Kallas, K. „*Is Russian Minority a State Security Risk in the Baltic States?*“. 2021., p.4.

⁸⁶ Kasčiūnas L., K. L. (2017). „*RUSIJOS PROPAGANDA: ANALIZĖ, ĮVERTINIMAS, REKOMENDACIJOS*“, Vilnius, Eastern Europe Studies Centre, p. 151.

⁸⁷ Coolican S., „*The Russian Diaspora in the Baltic States: The Trojan Horse That Never Was,*“ London School of Economics and Political Science, p.6.

⁸⁸ Kallas, K., p.4.

⁸⁹ "Voyennaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii" Военная доктрина Российской Федерации [Military doctrine of the Russian Federation]. scrf.gov.ru (in Russian). Moscow: Security Council of the Russian Federation. 2010-06-25 [presidential decree 2010-06-25].

⁹⁰ Biersack, J., & O'lear, S. „*The geopolitics of Russia's annexation of Crimea: narratives, identity, silences, and energy*“. Eurasian Geography and Economics, 2014 March. , p. 254.

Russian speakers, it still faces the same issues as Latvia and Estonia, as Russia does not exclude Lithuania from the discrimination against Russian minorities narrative. Thus, such minorities are being transformed into a foreign policy tool which allows Putin not only to export influences but also, to hold the possibility of threat over countries that have such minorities, especially if those minorities express support of their Motherland's government, by presenting those groups as a vital interest of Russia's foreign affairs.

Baltic countries, housing Russophones in their country, faces possible threats which are not only internal but external, as they pose a viable threat to their sovereignty. Taking into account that Russia's media outlets are being used to export propaganda which is systematically used to mold their listeners to support Putin's governance and spread false accusations on NATO, the West and Baltic countries, in which such minorities live. As for example in Lithuania "*Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance*" received majority of the votes in regions where Russian speakers were a majority (Šalčininkai region – 60,46 per cent, Medininkai – 52 per cent)⁹¹. The same party's leader Valdemar Tomaševski, when talking about the 2014 conflict in Ukraine noted the importance of discrimination and unacceptable treatment of Russian minorities in Ukraine. In addition to that, after military actions in Ukraine, he was seen celebrating May 9th and wearing a Georgian ribbon, the same ribbon that separatists in Ukraine are wearing, and often is seen with politics tied to Russia and its regime.⁹² Other than propaganda used to form narratives and use of Russian minorities as a foreign policy tool, Russia uses its funds to push pro-Russian parties in Baltic countries in hopes to forge governance that would be loyal to Russia. Such parties in Baltics as "Labour Party" in Lithuania which was founded by Russian-born oligarch Viktor Uspaskich, "Estonian Centre Party" and Social Democratic Party "Harmony", which both had ties with "United Russia" parties and were often labeled as pro-Russian, usually receive substantial votes to secure seats in parliaments and often indirectly acts or try to slow-down political process in Baltics which, would help to secure sovereignty from Russia's influences.

1.3. Russia's use of economical tools to keep Baltics in its sphere of influences

During the times of the USSR, the economy in the Baltics was built to be a part of the USSR and their energy sector was solely dependent on the USSR. Thus, once political ties with USSR (Russia) were cut and countries declared their independence, energy dependence, on the other hand,

⁹¹ 2020 m. spalio 11 d. Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo rinkimai (I turas) "Rezultatai - Vrk.Lt," accessed December 3, 2022, https://www.vrk.lt/2020-seimo/rezultatai?srcUrl=/rinkimai/1104/1/1746/rezultatai/lt/rezultataiDaugmPartVrt_rorgId-30614.html.

⁹² Lapinskas, A. „*Kas jūs, pone Tomaševski?*.“ Lietuvos Rytas. 2014 September 2. <https://lietuvsodiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/2018/12/11/news/streikuojanrys-mokytojai-sulauke-17-tukst-euru-finansines-paramos-8529117/>

can still be felt in the Baltic States to this day, due to their entanglement in Russia's energy infrastructure and market. Thus, after the collapse of the USSR, all three Baltic states attempted some form of "shock therapy" in the early 1990s to ease their reliance on Russia - Estonia's attempts proved successful, while Latvia and Lithuania initially struggled.⁹³ And even though Baltic countries aligned themselves with the West (EU; NATO), they were (are) still much more dependent (and connected) with Russia as instead of connections to the West, energy and economic sectors (natural gas, electricity infrastructure, markets) were largely intertwined and depended on Russia.⁹⁴ As Russia's state-owned Gazprom, other such companies owned by Russia owned up to 50 per cent shares in Baltic states' natural gas companies.⁹⁵ Such reliance energy situation and dependence on external resources mainly provided by Russia, was used as a political tool by Putin's government, as Lithuania's Ambassador to the United States testified to the U.S. Senate that, the Kremlin has "*used supply of energy resources, investment in strategically important sectors of economy and trade relations as a tool to influence domestic and foreign policy of Lithuania.*"⁹⁶ As in the past, Russia exploited such dependence by raising the prices or cutting the supply whenever it suited their foreign policy goals, as has been demonstrated through events such as the prolonged shutdown of the Druzhba pipeline to Lithuania and the disruption of gas supplies to Ukraine, which also affected other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Currently, Russia is attempting to persuade Germany to certify the Nord Stream 2 pipeline in the Baltic Sea.⁹⁷ Thus, it is important to consider this history when evaluating Russia's willingness to use its energy resources for geoeconomic and geopolitical purposes and the threats it poses for the Baltic Sea region.

Understanding such conditions, the Baltic States were prominent in lowering their energy dependence from Russia for the past decade. In 2014, Lithuania opened a liquified natural gas terminal in Klaipėda, which is to this day the only infrastructure capable of supplying natural gas to Lithuania and other Baltics states. Also, a notable example is the construction of the Balticconnector natural gas pipeline, which connected the gas markets of Estonia and Finland. This project is being implemented by the Baltic Connector Oy company, which is owned by the Estonian natural gas

⁹³ Lamoreaux, W., 2014., p. 574.

⁹⁴ Andžāns, M., "*The Baltic Road to Energy Independence from Russia Is Nearing Completion - Foreign Policy Research Institute*," accessed December 4, 2022, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/05/the-baltic-road-to-energy-independence-from-russia-is-nearing-completion/>.

⁹⁵ "PUTIN'S ASYMMETRIC ASSAULT ON DEMOCRACY IN RUSSIA AND EUROPE: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY" (U.S. Government Publishing Office, January 10, 2018), <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/CPRT-115SPRT28110>. p. 107.

⁹⁶ Statement of Rolandas Krisciunas, Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania, Russian Policies & Intentions Toward Specific European Countries, Hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Mar. 7, 2017, at 8

⁹⁷ Jermalavičius, T., "Baltic States Must Remain on the Same Frequency in Energy Security," ICDS, December 17, 2021, <https://icds.ee/en/baltic-states-must-remain-on-the-same-frequency-in-energy-security/>.

transmission system operator Elering and the Finnish natural gas transmission system operator Gasum.⁹⁸ The pipelines completed in 2014 and 2020 helped to reduce the Baltic states' dependence on Russian natural gas (especially in Lithuania's case, as Lithuania used to pay around 15 per cent more than Estonia and Baltics to Gazprom) and its ability to use such tools for their foreign policy benefit. But reducing natural gas dependency alone is only a partial success, as the Baltic states are still dependent Russia's power supply, as they are still operate as a part of the BRELL (Belarus–Russia–Estonia–Latvia–Lithuania), because of it, Russia still has ability to influence electricity flows in the Baltic states.⁹⁹ And even though the desynchronization of the Baltic States from the BRELL grid shared with Belarus and Russia and synchronizing with continental Europe through Poland is ongoing it, plans that are in place, are set so that the synchronization of the Baltic States' power system with the Continental European Network will be completed only by 2025.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, Russia can use it to extort the Baltic Sea region, as if it were to separate its electricity system from the Baltic states, it would pose a risk of power outages and increase the expenses required to maintain the system.

Following opening of Balticconnector, which added Finland to the Baltic Sea region market, the region as a whole (the Baltic States and Finland) consumed roughly 66.8 TWh (≈ 5.6 bcm) of gas in 2021 (Estonia consumed 5.1 TWh (≈ 0.43 bcm); Lithuania 24.1 TWh (≈ 2.02 bcm); Latvia 12.5 TWh (≈ 1.05 bcm); Finland 25.1 TWh (≈ 2.1 bcm)).¹⁰¹ During 2021 Russian imports accounted of 49.2 TWh (≈ 4.12 bcm), with 45.91 TWh being delivered directly by pipeline.¹⁰² This means that based on the Baltic Sea region's market consumption and imports that came from Russia, Russia accounted for 74 per cent of all gas consumed in the Baltic Sea region during 2021. It is difficult to quantify the degree to which each country was dependent on Russian gas relative to the others, because of a well-integrated market, then imported Russian gas might be exported and consumed by other countries instead. The integration of the gas market makes it difficult to accurately compare the dependence of different countries on Russian gas. For example, Latvia imported significantly more gas from Russia at the Luhamaa border crossing than it actually consumed (19.71 TWh imported versus 12.5 TWh consumed), while Estonia imported less gas from Russia at the Värskä border crossing than it consumed (789 GWh imported versus 5.1 TWh consumed).¹⁰³ This is because gas imported from

⁹⁸ Andžāns, M.

⁹⁹ Jermalavičius.

¹⁰⁰ The same.

¹⁰¹ Brendan A'Hearn, "Baltic Gas Consumption down More than 60pc in October | Argus Media," November 17, 2022, <https://www.argusmedia.com/en/news/2392124-baltic-gas-consumption-down-more-than-60pc-in-october>.

¹⁰² "The Baltic Gas Market: A Microcosm of Europe's Struggle to Quit Russian Gas," *Oxford Institute for Energy Studies* (blog), accessed January 3, 2023, <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/publications/the-baltic-gas-market-a-microcosm-of-europes-struggle-to-quit-russian-gas/>. p. 4.

¹⁰³ The same p.5.

Russia into one country may be stored and then re-exported to another country during periods of high demand. Additionally, Lithuanian TSO Amber Grid stated that Russia supplied less than a third of its gas imports in 2021, with an increase in imports of liquified natural gas from the United States accounting for the majority of the country's imports.¹⁰⁴

Despite efforts by the Baltic states to reduce their dependence on Russian gas and increase their energy security by seeking intervention from the EU, the integration of the gas market and the EU's own dependence on Russian gas have made it difficult to significantly decrease reliance on Russia as an energy source. While Russia's energy network extends beyond the Baltic Sea region, the high consumption of Russian gas in the region and the lack of alternative options in recent years, due to favorable prices and availability, have contributed to the continued reliance on Russia as a source of energy. Understanding that Russia's energy networking expands far more than just The Baltic Sea region, the Baltic states have tried on several occasions to get the EU to intervene on their behalf or push the notion for reducing Europe dependency on Russia as energy source. But such attempts usually are ignored as the EU itself is exposed to such dependence without real alternative to Russian gas, as there was no need for alternative in recent years due to prices and availability Russia is able to provide to the Western Europe.¹⁰⁵ Thus, there is still need for cooperation between the Baltics States as their dependence on Russia for energy supply is one the key elements to their sovereignty. This is due to the fact that such dependence is used not only to influence the Baltic States' economic and energy sector but it also spans over to foreign policies and is used as tool to extort them, cutting of such conditions would take away a huge advantage from Russia while allowing the Baltics to secure economical/energy sectors and provide more decision-making capacity within international and domestics arena as those decision would not have economic implications caused by acting against Russia.

Covered sectors of "hard" values (military, political and economic) in the Baltic states shows that Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are all facing similar threats from Russia. Then, looking over a military threat from Russia to the Baltic States, all three countries rely on NATO and the USA to counter the existing imbalance in the Baltic Sea Region. With existing battlegroups, which are battalion size, the Baltic States have a common goal to increase military sector security from Russia, by lobbying an increase NATO military personnel in the region, from mention battlegroups that are

¹⁰⁴ "Natural Gas Transmission System Operator," accessed January 3, 2023, <https://www.ambergrid.lt/en/news/pressrelease/the-lithuanian-gas-transmission-system-is-stable-safe-and-works-in-a-normal-mode>.

¹⁰⁵ "Analysis | How Europe Became So Dependent on Putin for Its Gas," *Washington Post*, July 12, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/energy/how-europe-became-so-dependent-on-putin-for-its-gas/2022/07/11/8c5cbe8c-0122-11ed-8beb-2b4e481b1500_story.html.

currently at the battalion's level to the brigade level. Overview of political threats from Russia, shows that the Baltic Sea region is threatened by Putin's use of Russian ethnic minorities as a foreign policy tool to influence regional security. On economical and energy sector levels the region has currently done the most to minimize Russia threats to the sector security, but they are still somewhat dependent on Russia's energy supply, which provides Putin possibilities to have influence over the region. Shared threats to the "hard" values will be a key element on which analysis of the Baltic States cooperation during the time of war will be made, as those threats are, as theory suggests, the main issues, on which the small states (the Baltic States) should form coalition and dedicate its resources in order to influence international organizations.

2. The Baltics States' use of new political order in Europe to securitize the Baltic Sea region

Since the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the war in eastern Ukraine, EU and NATO made decisions to impose sanctions and deter Russia from their (NATO) borders.¹⁰⁶ Actions that were taken by the West during this period (annexation of Crimea and beginning of Russian invasion) were cautious as it avoided major shake ups in political order in Europe, as illustrated by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, who said that he did not want confrontation with Russia or another “Cold War”.¹⁰⁷ Besides challenging political order, Europe also wanted to keep relationships between Europe and Russia, as major EU members did not want to damage energy projects or economic cooperation, which were still held to be valuable for both sides.¹⁰⁸ As in 2019, French president Emmanuel Macron said that that closer relations with Moscow were essential for European strategic autonomy, or as Josep Borrel (The EU’s high representative for foreign affairs and security policy) also warned EU against a further deterioration of relations with Moscow, in his June 2021 report on a new Russia strategy.¹⁰⁹ Such West stance against Russia meant that the Baltic States could not succeed at securing their region, as being a small states they need to rely on international organizations, which in this case did not want to disrupt an international order and relationships among large members of West and Russia, as the Baltic Sea region was still partly in Putin’s geopolitical influence sphere, and such actions as enlarged NATO presence in the region to secure the Baltic States would cause confrontation with Russia and the West. Thus, when Putin launched a military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, he believed that due to the earlier weak stance of the existing order would not be disrupted.¹¹⁰ Putin’s underestimation as Lithuanian President Nausėda said “*Opened Europe’s eyes to Putin’s intentions*”¹¹¹ and led to a total change in political order in Europe and the West, where the partners of EU and NATO were ready to make necessary changes, even if those changes were to anger Russia.¹¹² Changes in political order provided a perfect opportunity to the Baltic States to once again push for their goals in securitizing their region, as they were no longer facing such a major pushback from large players within international organizations.

¹⁰⁶ Meister S., “A Paradigm Shift: EU-Russia Relations After the War in Ukraine,” Carnegie Europe, accessed January 1, 2023, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2022/11/29/paradigm-shift-eu-russia-relations-after-war-in-ukraine-pub-88476>;

¹⁰⁷ “Nato Chief Says Alliance ‘Does Not Want New Cold War,’” *BBC News*, October 28, 2016, sec. Europe, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37795668>.

¹⁰⁸ Meister, S.

¹⁰⁹ “10 2022 | A Stronger Europe in the World | Joint Communication on EU-Russia Relations - Push Back, Constrain and Engage,” n.d.

¹¹⁰ Meister, S.

¹¹¹ Nausėda: ‘Ukraine War Opened Europe’s Eyes to Putin’s Intentions,’” accessed January 1, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/talk-to-al-jazeera/2022/5/14/nauseda-ukraine-war-opened-europes-eyes-to-putins-intentions>.

¹¹² Meister, S.

2.1. Military threat analysis

As mentioned in the previous chapter, before the start of the war in Ukraine, the Baltic States were (and still are) threatened by Russia's military in the Baltic Sea Region, as existing NATO forces did not guarantee military sovereignty from Russia.¹¹³ But the actions of Russia put the focus in the Baltic Sea Region, which in terms allowed the Baltic States to push their security goals in NATO. As outlined in chapter 1.1., the main goal the Baltic States have to achieve is an increased NATO (and USA) presence (an allied brigade) in the Baltic Sea Region.¹¹⁴ To do so, the Baltic States tried to use the attention in the Eastern Europe caused by Russia's invasion in Ukraine to gain attention on need to address security issues in the Baltic Sea Region, as Lithuania's Foreign Affairs Minister G. Landsbergis said - "*Russia's illegal aggression against the neighbouring state of Ukraine proves that we need to reassess the European security situation and threats posed to NATO member countries, especially on its eastern flank. We believe that the Alliance must promptly move from frontline deterrence to frontline defense in the Baltic region,*"¹¹⁵. Which was followed by the joint statement of The Nordic and Baltic Foreign Ministers on March 2nd where they state that "*...Russia's military aggression against Ukraine poses a threat also to the Baltic states, our entire region, and Europe.*"¹¹⁶. Stressing the fact that aggression in Ukraine is an example of the threat that Russia hold over the Baltic Sea Region which is real and that current NATO plan does not counter such threat ("*Alliance must promptly move from frontline deterrence to frontline defense in the Baltic region* "). Even though, in early stages of the conflict, NATO reacted to ongoing security issues in their eastern flank by increasing number of battlegroups in the Eastern edge, as NATO secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg said "*The next step in NATO's response is set to be the deployment of battlegroups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. That will increase the number of multinational battlegroups along the alliance's eastern edge from four to eight.*"¹¹⁷, there was nothing mentioned regarding substantial security increase in the Baltic Sea Region as the main focus on such decisions

¹¹³ Šešelgytė, M., p. 76.

¹¹⁴ Karoblis, R., 2017. Karoblis: Lithuania reassured by NATO troops, but prefers allied brigade. Defense & Aerospace Report, 11 Jun.

¹¹⁵ "Lithuania's Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis: Russia's Illegal Aggression against Its Neighbouring State of Ukraine Proves That We Need to Reassess the European Security Situation and Threats Posed to NATO Members" News, accessed December 28, 2022, <https://www.urm.lt/default/en/news/lithuanias-foreign-minister-gabrielius-landsbergis-russias-illegal-aggression-against-the-neighbouring-state-of-ukraine-proves-that-we-need-to-reassess-europes-security-situation-and-threats-posed-to-nato-members>.

¹¹⁶ "Nordic and Baltic Foreign Ministers Adopt a Joint Statement, Condemning in the Strongest Terms Russias Military Aggression against Ukraine" News, accessed December 28, 2022, <https://www.urm.lt/default/en/news/nordic-and-baltic-foreign-ministers-adopt-a-joint-statement-condemning-in-the-strongest-terms-russias-military-aggression-against-ukraine>.

¹¹⁷ Matina Stevis-Gridneff, "NATO Doubles Its Battlegroups in Eastern Europe Ahead of Multiple Summits.," *The New York Times*, March 23, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/23/world/europe/nato-troops-ukraine.html>.

was aimed at the Black Sea region.¹¹⁸ To ensure that NATO increased attention on the Eastern Flank and did not stop only at Black Sea region - Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia embarked on the mission to use this attention to their geopolitical security benefit.

The timeframe to make substantial security improvements in the Baltic Sea Region was quite small, as USA's president Biden stated on March 24th "*Between now (March 24th 2022) and the NATO summit in June (June 28th 2022), we will develop plans for additional forces and capabilities to strengthen NATO's defenses. We will adopt an updated Strategic Concept to ensure NATO is ready to meet any challenge in the new and more dangerous security environment.*"¹¹⁹. This meant that, in order to secure their goals, the Baltic States had a window of 3 months to influence decisions in NATO to guarantee their security. To make sure that such decisions would be implemented, the Baltic States argued that existing defense plans and measures in their region were not enough. Days after Russia invaded Ukraine Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda in his meeting with USA Secretary Blinken said that "*the fact of obstruction of Belarus and Russia is an additional very dangerous factor for us, for the region. And probably this is a very good opportunity to rethink, rethink the alliance response, alliance defense plans, procedures. Russia's reckless aggression... deterrence is no longer enough, and we need more defense, because otherwise it will be too late here.*"¹²⁰. Need for reviewing and strengthening NATO defense in plans in eastern flank was also stressed by Latvian Foreign Minister¹²¹ and Estonian Prime Minister¹²² in their meetings with the USA Secretary. Lithuania's Foreign Minister G. Landsbergis in May provided a blueprint for the defense plan in the Baltic Sea Region stating that "*it is imperative — for our security, our unity and our certainty — that the alliance reinforce its presence in the Baltic countries. At the very least this should include full air-defense capabilities, including missile defense and fighter jets prepared to engage enemy assets; a permanent base of at least a brigade-size NATO deployment with required command elements in each of the Baltic countries; and should Sweden and Finland proceed with NATO membership, immediate plans for a new, integrated Nordic-Baltic defense posture that accounts for regional air defense and*

¹¹⁸ "NATO's Eastern Nations Want Better Protection from Alliance," AP NEWS, June 10, 2022,

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-klaus-iohannis-bulgaria-bucharest-419787bd3b22492102124586393d8892>.

¹¹⁹ The White House, "Statement from President Biden on the Extraordinary NATO Summit," The White House, March 24, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/24/statement-from-president-biden-on-the-extraordinary-nato-summit/>.

¹²⁰ "Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda Before Their Meeting," *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed December 29, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-lithuanian-president-gitanas-nauseda-before-their-meeting/>.

¹²¹ U. S. Embassy Latvia, "Remarks by Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs At a Joint Press Availability," U.S. Embassy in Latvia, March 8, 2022, <https://lv.usembassy.gov/remarks-by-secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-latvian-foreign-minister-edgars-rinkevics-at-a-joint-press-availability/>.

¹²² U. S. Embassy Tallinn, "Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas Before Their Meeting," U.S. Embassy in Estonia, March 8, 2022, <https://ee.usembassy.gov/2022-03-08-2/>.

enhanced NATO presence in the Baltic Sea.”¹²³, such ideas were also supported by Estonia and Latvia, as all three Baltic States advocated the same goals.¹²⁴ Prior to the NATO summit in Madrid, the Baltic States also met with key NATO members to ensure that decisions in Madrid would reflect the needs of the Baltic Sea region. Estonia’s PM, K. Kallas, on June 6th, met with then-PM of UK Boris Johnson. During the meeting K. Kallas said that “*The threat that Russia poses is not gone... NATO must adapt in the new security environment.*”¹²⁵ emphasizing the need for NATO to make changes in its defense plan and also securing support from the UK before NATO summit in Madrid.¹²⁶ Lithuania’s President had a similar meeting with German chancellor O. Scholz in Vilnius on June 7th which was also attended by Estonia’s and Latvia’s Prime Ministers. In this meeting the Baltic States again stressed the need to strengthen NATO presence in the Baltic Sea Region and also received German support to do so, with Germany pledging 15,000 troops to the expanding force, with up to 5,000 more in a brigade specifically assigned to Lithuania.¹²⁷ Thus, going into Madrid, the Baltics States managed to adopt necessary changes in NATO defense plans and support from key member of NATO, to make sufficient changes in order to increase security in their region, as NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said in Pre-Summit press conference “...we will strengthen our forward defences. We will enhance our battlegroups in the eastern part of the Alliance up to brigade-levels.”¹²⁸ Such enhancement or forward defense with enhancement of battle groups up to brigade levels is a direct result of the Baltic States' joint cooperation and their focus on security goals. The increase of NATO personnel in the Baltics States in the beginning of the war was not acknowledged by top heads of the NATO and only with the push from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia was brought into attention.

The Baltic States used attention generated in Ukraine to their advantage alerting NATO members that war in Ukraine is damaging security in the Baltic Sea Region which in term is a security issue of all Europe not just the Baltic Sea Region or Ukraine. As President of Lithuania G. Nausėda

¹²³ Landsbergis, G., “The End of Naivete: How NATO Must Boost Baltic Defenses,” *POLITICO* (blog), May 11, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/nato-baltic-defence-ukraine-russia-war/>.

¹²⁴ Dudik, A. and Mathieson, R., “Latvia’s President Wants a NATO Brigade to Deter Russia,” Bloomberg, May 23, 2022; Gramer, R., and Detsch, J., “Baltic States Are Pushing NATO for More Than Just a Tripwire Against Russia,” *Foreign Policy*, May 19, 2022; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty “Lithuania Seeks Permanent U.S. Military Presence in Country,” February 9, 2022; Estonian Public Broadcasting, “Congressman: Permanent U.S. Baltics Base Being Discussed, Would Be Major Task,” February 22, 2022.

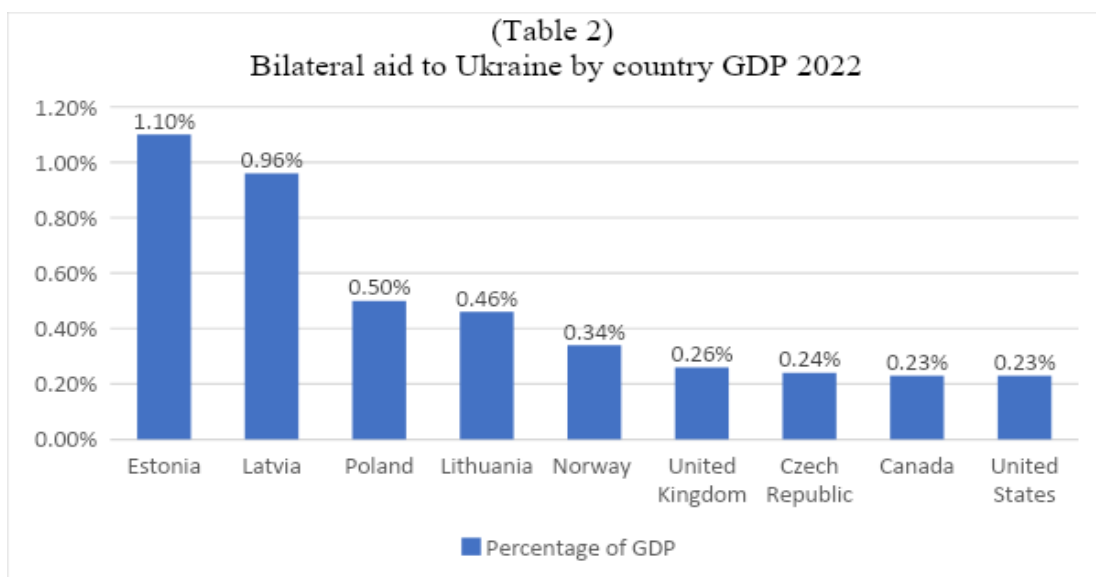
¹²⁵ “Estonia’s PM Kaja Kallas Met with PM of the United Kingdom Boris Johnson – London,” accessed December 29, 2022, <https://london.mfa.ee/estonias-pm-kaja-kallas-met-with-pm-of-the-united-kingdom-boris-johnson/>.

¹²⁶The same.

¹²⁷ “German Chancellor in Vilnius Gives Nod to More NATO Troops in Baltics,” *lrt.lt*, June 7, 2022, <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1713728/german-chancellor-in-vilnius-gives-nod-to-more-nato-troops-in-baltics>.

¹²⁸ NATO, “Pre-Summit Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg,” NATO, accessed December 29, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_197080.htm.

said “Unfortunately, the worsening security situation in the Baltic region is of great concern for all of us and around the world...Russia’s reckless aggression against Ukraine once again proves that it is a long-term threat to European security, the security of our alliance.”¹²⁹. Such narrative bounded them to Ukraine as situation in Ukraine was a matter of their own security, as Nausėda said “It is our collective duty as a nation to help all Ukrainians with all means available...By saying all, I mean, indeed all means all, if we want to avoid the Third World War. The choice is in our hands.”¹³⁰. This meant that Baltic States had to be frontrunners in support of Ukraine, as it reflects their own security and that they are willing not only to ask NATO members for help, but also to take actions and spend on their security by helping Ukraine. As they often told to their NATO colleagues that they must invest in the Baltic State region security as it is threatened by Russia, which is a common threat, Baltics had to show that they are investing in Ukraine in order to challenge that common threat, otherwise their narrative would not be successful in pushing NATO to invest in them. When looking into bilateral aid commitments to Ukraine as a percentage of donor gross domestic product (GDP) between January 24 and November 20, 2022, by country (see Table 2),



(Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1303450/bilateral-aid-to-ukraine-in-a-percent-of-donor-gdp/>)

all three Baltic countries are in the top 5 (Estonia No. 1; Latvia – 2; Lithuania – 4), showing their commitment to their and Ukraine's security.¹³¹ All three countries also exceed NATO requirements for defense spending (2 per cent of GDP) as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania currently spend a respective 2.34, 2.10, and 2.36 per cent of GDP on defense.¹³² Such spendings on their defense

¹²⁹ “Secretary Antony J. Blinken and Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda Before Their Meeting.”

¹³⁰ The same

¹³¹ “Bilateral Aid to Ukraine by Country GDP 2022,” Statista, accessed December 29, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1303450/bilateral-aid-to-ukraine-in-a-percent-of-donor-gdp/>.

¹³² Staff Writer With AFP, “Baltics to Up Defense Spending to Three Percent of GDP,” *The Defense Post* (blog), December 12, 2022, <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2022/12/12/baltics-up-defense-spending/>.

budgets, help to Ukraine, and also commitments to increase defense budgets up to 3 per cent of GDP¹³³ shows that the Baltic States are doing their part in securing their region, which allows them to “put the ball” into NATO’s hands, when talking about regional security.

To add to their commitment to NATO, the Baltic States also kept their strong commitment to the USA, which remains one of the most important allies to the Baltics.¹³⁴ As mentioned in chapter one, the Baltic States were willing to take stand with US when dealing with its (USA) adversaries, a stand that did not change during the war, even with inflation souring in the countries, all three Baltic states on August 11, announced that they were quitting the 16+1, an economic forum set up by China with Central and Eastern European governments 10 years ago to boost business relations. Such announcement came just days after US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan on August 2, which was followed by China's intensified military activities around Taiwan.¹³⁵ As Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Minister G. Landsbergis said in regards to his relationship with China and USA *“the days of having only a “regional” focus are gone when you depend on global powers for your security... We depend on the US for our security on this continent. It's understandable that we have to calculate global security interests into our security interests. We need to show the US can depend on us.”*¹³⁶ Such actions and statements of the Baltic States show that they are not “free-riders” or only benefit seekers in their relationship with NATO and USA. Reacting to the Baltic States, USA not only reaffirmed its commitments to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, but also approved the deal for 20 HIMARS artillery systems which will be fully delivered to the Baltic States until 2025.¹³⁷ Such systems will greatly improve the Baltic States military capabilities as Lithuanian Defense Minister Arvydas Anušauskas said: *“Now we are starting to talk about cooperation with the US on the integration of HIMARS – personnel training, maintenance. It is very important that all the Baltic states buy HIMARS. We will actively cooperate with Estonia and Latvia in developing this potential and increasing the security of the entire region.”*¹³⁸

¹³³ The same.

¹³⁴ Derek E Mix, “Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania: Background and U.S.-Baltic Relations,” Congressional Research Service, September 29, 2022.

¹³⁵ “Why Are Baltics Skeptical of China Relations? – DW – 08/22/2022,” accessed December 30, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/why-are-the-baltics-becoming-skeptical-of-relations-with-china/a-62890458>.

¹³⁶ “Hard Line on China Rattles Lithuania’s Allies,” *Financial Times*, November 28, 2022.

¹³⁷ “Latvia Plans to Buy Six HIMARS Systems,” accessed December 30, 2022,

<https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/defense/latvia-plans-to-buy-six-himars-systems.a477726/>; Jaroslaw Adamowski, “Estonia Buys HIMARS, as Eastern Allies Boost Artillery Arsenal,” *Defense News*, December 5, 2022,

<https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2022/12/05/estonia-buys-himars-as-eastern-allies-boost-artillery-arsenal/>; “Lithuania Buying 8 HIMARS, ATACMS Missiles to Be in Their Arsenal,” *Militarnyi* (blog), accessed December 30, 2022, <https://mil.in.ua/en/news/lithuania-buying-8-himars-atacms-missiles-to-be-in-their-arsenal/>.

¹³⁸ “Lithuania Buying 8 HIMARS, ATACMS Missiles to Be in Their Arsenal.”

Looking at the Baltic States cooperation among themselves to increase its military security from Russia within the Baltic Sea region, it is evident that situation is better than it was. Decisions that were made in NATO to improve regional security in the Baltic Sea Region had a lot to do with the Baltic States lobbying for them. One of the key elements of increased security was a decision to increase existing battlegroups in the Baltics from battalion to brigade. As those decisions were not talked about prior to Madrid summit by top countries of NATO, as they were (and still are) reluctant to send additional troops the Baltic Sea region. It is also important to note that first decisions were aimed at reinforcing the Black Sea Region and increasing NATO Reaction Force.¹³⁹ What also indicated that the Baltic States had influenced such decision is that, decisions that were made and threats that were identified were presented by the Baltics prior to the war (covered in chapter 1), but because of the focus that was set on the region allowed the Baltic State to push their goals once again. As illustrated by Lithuanian's Prime Minister I. Šimonytė *“Ironically, for our country and our region, it is a period where we have good reasons to feel much safer than we used to feel 10 years ago, when countries were doubting that Russia is a real threat.”*¹⁴⁰

2.2. Political threat analysis

As described in the previous chapter, the Baltic States share the same threat of Russian speakers, being used by Russia as a tool of Putin's foreign policy, to influence political stability of the Baltic States. Thus, political threats that the Baltic States face come from Russian speakers being used as a tool – for propaganda to influence internal political decisions and as a possible Putin's tool as a protector of Russian speakers outside their homeland, which can be used to impose policies and even military action. This helps to outline the two main goals for the Baltics to counter political threat from Russia – countering propaganda and views of existing Russian minorities and canceling Putin's ability to such groups as a tool for his foreign policy in the Baltic region.

As mentioned, the Russian ethnic community in Latvia and Estonia makes up around 25 per cent of population (in Lithuania it is 5 per cent) and those parts of population are exposed to Russian propaganda. Footprints of Russian propaganda machine were visible at the beginning of the war, whereas Majority of the population of the Baltic States condemned Russia for its action, Russian ethnic minorities had different opinions. For example, polls that were conducted weeks after war in Estonia showed that 88 per cent of Russian-speakers didn't see Russia as a security threat¹⁴¹, in Latvia

¹³⁹ “NATO's Eastern Nations Want Better Protection from Alliance,” AP NEWS, June 10, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-klaus-iohannis-bulgaria-bucharest-419787bd3b22492102124586393d8892>

¹⁴⁰ “Hard Line on China Rattles Lithuania's Allies,” *Financial Times*, November 28, 2022.

¹⁴¹ “Tanks for the Memories: War Upends Ethnic Relations in Estonia,” *POLITICO* (blog), August 23, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-russia-estonia-narva-ethnic-relation-integration/>.

the similar pattern was also seen as 21 cent of Russian-speakers living in Latvia supported Russia in war against Ukraine, and 57 per cent did not condemn Russia for its action¹⁴². Those numbers were eye-opening for the Baltics as they understood the need to counter Russian propaganda within their countries as it could be detrimental to their political sovereignty. Threats of Russian state's propaganda on Russian ethnic minorities within the Baltics can be seen as an internal threat, that is countered by internal decision (e.g., ban on Russian media outlets inside the Baltics States)¹⁴³, but limiting access to Putin's propaganda does not solve such a threat. In order to do so, the Baltic States have to challenge the perception of Russia in the eyes of the Russophones, as it is their motherland identity and perception of it that matters to Russophones.¹⁴⁴ In order to achieve that, it is important how Russia is portrayed not only in the Baltics, but in the international arena expanding outside the West, as the EU and NATO are viewed as rivals by Russia, thus their portrayal of Russia, could be seen as subjective in the eyes of the Russians. First official instance of the Baltics trying to form the international narrative around Russia's identity, that would extend to Russian speakers and their societies, could be seen by Lithuania's May 10 resolution in which Lithuania's Seimas declares Russia to be supporter of terrorism "*states that the Russian Federation, whose military forces deliberately and systematically target civilian objects for bombing, is a state sponsor and perpetrator of terrorism.*"¹⁴⁵ and also calls for international arena to create the establishment of Criminal Tribunal to prosecute Russia on action taken against Ukraine "*advocates the establishment of a Special International Criminal Tribunal (hereinafter: the 'Special Tribunal') to investigate and assess the crime of aggression committed by Russia against sovereign Ukraine and to prosecute the perpetrators through the concerted efforts of the international community and on the basis of the precedents known from history (Nuremberg, Tokyo, Sierra Leone and other special tribunals)*"¹⁴⁶. After Lithuania's statement all three Baltic states on October 16th issued a joint statement pushing EU and international arena to establish the Special Tribunal – "*The Special Tribunal for the Punishment of the Crime of*

¹⁴² Sune Engel Rasmussen | Photographs by Katrina Kepule for The Wall Street Journal, "Putin's War in Ukraine Tests Allegiances of Russian Speakers in Former Soviet Latvia," *Wall Street Journal*, March 28, 2022, sec. World, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/putins-war-in-ukraine-tests-allegiances-of-russian-speakers-in-former-soviet-latvia-11648459800>.

¹⁴³ "Estonia Bans Latvia-Based Russian TV Station Dozhd Following Its Bans in Latvia and Lithuania," Euromaidan Press, December 8, 2022, <https://euromaidanpress.com/2022/12/08/estonia-bans-latvia-based-russian-tv-station-dozhd-following-its-bans-in-latvia-and-lithuania/>.

¹⁴⁴ The same.

¹⁴⁵ SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA RESOLUTION ON THE RECOGNITION OF THE ACTIONS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN UKRAINE AS GENOCIDE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL TO INVESTIGATE THE CRIME OF RUSSIAN AGGRESSION (10 May 2022 No XIV-1070) p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ The same p. 3.

*Aggression against Ukraine has to be established to fill this jurisdictional loophole. The EU together with our partners must be at the center of this effort.”*¹⁴⁷

Following the joint statement of the Baltic States, both the Latvia’s Foreign Affairs minister¹⁴⁸ and Lithuania Foreign Affairs vice-minister¹⁴⁹ took part in the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union in Luxembourg, where both countries expressed the need for EU counterparts to establish a special tribunal. Following meeting Luxemburg, European council held meeting on October 21st -22nd, in which the Baltics again pushed for Tribunal as Estonian prime minister said during the summit *“We definitely have to discuss the legal response to the crimes of aggression that have been committed and how to make a separate tribunal to prosecute those”*¹⁵⁰. After the European council meeting, the EU acknowledged *“efforts to secure accountability for war crimes and invited the High Representative and the Commission to explore options to ensure full accountability for these crimes.”*¹⁵¹. During the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 14th of November this topic remained on the agenda as *“The Council focused on ensuring accountability for violations of international law and war crimes committed in Ukraine, working closely with NATO and partners worldwide to defend the rules-based international order...”*¹⁵². Following Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Lithuania had a separate meetings with Sweden on November 22nd, with Norway on 24th - 25th and on 28th the Baltics ministers of Foreign Affairs visited Kyiv together with Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden ministers, which was followed by their joint statement in support for establishment of an international tribunal for crime of aggression committed during the aggression in Ukraine.¹⁵³ On November 30th the EU commission formally proposed a special tribunal *“This is why the Commission is proposing...a special independent international tribunal based on a multilateral treaty or a*

¹⁴⁷ “The Ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania Call to Establish a Special Tribunal to Investigate the Crime of Russia’s Aggression | News,” accessed December 16, 2022, <https://jp.mfa.lt/default/en/news/the-ministers-of-estonia-latvia-and-lithuania-call-to-establish-a-special-tribunal-to-investigate-the-crime-of-russias-aggression>.

¹⁴⁸ “The Latvian Foreign Minister: A Special Tribunal Must Be Established to Punish Russia’s Crime of Aggression against Ukraine | Ārlietu Ministrija,” accessed December 17, 2022, <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/article/latvian-foreign-minister-special-tribunal-must-be-established-punish-russias-crime-aggression-against-ukraine>.

¹⁴⁹ Lithuania’s Foreign Vice-Minister Neliupšienė in the General Affairs Council Called for the Creation of a Special Tribunal to Prosecute the Crime of Russia’s Aggression, Tightening Sanctions and Introducing Price Ceiling on Gas as Soon as Possibl | News,” accessed December 17, 2022, <https://urm.lt/default/en/news/lithuanias-foreign-vice-minister-neliupsiene-in-the-general-affairs-council-called-for-the-creation-of-a-special-tribunal-to-prosecute-the-crime-of-russias-aggression-tightening-sanctions-and-urgently-introducing-price-ceiling-on-gas>.

¹⁵⁰ “Baltics Push EU on Ukraine War Tribunal for Russia,” Al Arabiya English, October 21, 2022, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2022/10/21/Baltics-push-EU-on-Ukraine-war-tribunal-for-Russia->

¹⁵¹ “European Council, 20-21 October 2022,” accessed December 17, 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2022/10/20-21/>.

¹⁵² “Foreign Affairs Council, 14 November 2022,” accessed December 17, 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2022/11/14/>.

¹⁵³ Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, “Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and Ukraine,” Text, Regeringskansliet (Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, November28, 2022), <https://www.government.se/statements/2022/11/joint-statement-by-the-foreign-ministers-of-estonia-finland-iceland-latvia-lithuania-norway-sweden-and-ukraine/>.

*specialized court integrated in a national justice system with international judges – a hybrid court – could be put in place. For both options, strong backing of the United Nations would be essential.*¹⁵⁴ such claims were also backed by France¹⁵⁵, thus, in a short span of few months, a special tribunal question was raised from small countries to the top of the international arena. Call for a Special Tribunal is significant as there were only few major war crime tribunals held (The Special Court for Sierra Leone, International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and for Yugoslavia, The Nuremberg Trials), all of whom had lasting consequences on the parties that were prosecuted. If Russia were to be trialed in such a tribunal, it could provide a different outlook to Russians that view their country as a “savior”, “protector” as it was the same Nazi Germany that was prosecuted on such crimes during Nuremberg Trials. Russia, being officially on the trial against the same crimes that were committed by Nazi Germany, would debunk Putin’s created myth about his protection of the “Russian World”, which in turn could challenge the Russophones identity formed around Russia. The polls that were made later in the year shows the change in attitude towards Russia from Russian-speaking population as in Latvia a decrease in support for Russia, fell from 21 per cent to 13 per cent, while simultaneously displaying an increase in support for Ukraine, from 25 per cent to 30 per cent.¹⁵⁶ In Estonia survey regarding views on Russia were not updated, but similar poll regarding Russian-ethnic minorities trust of Russian media was made which also shows that only 27 per cent of ethnic Russians holds Russian media as trustworthy, a 13 per cent drop since invasion.¹⁵⁷

Understanding the threat of Putin’s ability to use Russian speakers as instruments in his foreign policy, as claims of persecution against Russian communities were a large part of Russia’s pretext for its invasion of Ukraine¹⁵⁸, the Baltic States focus on limiting flows of Russian people to limit potential threats that Russian speakers could cause. As mentioned, one of the central principles of Russian foreign policy is to act as the protector and guarantor of the “rights” of Russian-speaking people outside Russia.¹⁵⁹ In early days of conflict the EU imposed sanctions that banned travel to and from Russia, limiting the influx of people that come from Russia.¹⁶⁰ But even with such a flight ban,

¹⁵⁴ “Commission Presents Options to Make Russia Pay for Its Crime,” Text, European Commission - European Commission, accessed December 17, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_7311.

¹⁵⁵ “France Backs Plans for Tribunal for Russian Officials over Ukraine War | Russia | The Guardian,” accessed December 17, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/01/france-backs-plans-for-tribunal-for-russian-officials-over-ukraine-war>.

¹⁵⁶ “Support for Russia in War Shrinks among Russian-Speaking Latvian Population,” accessed January 8, 2023, <https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/society/support-for-russia-in-war-shrinks-among-russian-speaking-latvian-population.a455042/>.

¹⁵⁷ Pekka Vanttinen, “Russian Minority in Estonia Turns Its Back on Putin,” www.euractiv.com, March 23, 2022, https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/russian-minority-in-estonia-turns-its-back-on-putin/.

¹⁵⁸ Derek E Mix, p. 10.

¹⁵⁹ The same.

¹⁶⁰ Child, D., “What Travel Restrictions Is the EU Imposing on Russians?,” accessed December 17, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/20/explainer-the-european-unions-travel-restrictions-on-russians>.

Russian people had the ability to enter the EU and Baltic Sea Region through bordering countries. Understanding such circumstances, the Baltic States were quick to use the war to push for restrictions on Russian people movement in the EU. On August 18th Estonia had banned Russian citizens holding a Schengen visa issued by the country for tourism, business, sports, or culture from crossing the border.¹⁶¹ Before sanction could take place Estonia had also met with Finland's PM on August 17th to talk about this matter stressing that Russian should be stopped from entering the European Union.¹⁶² Such actions of Estonia signaled that the Baltic States are taking initiative in this matter and putting pressure on the EU to make a decision, stressing the fact that such a ban is in order to protect the EU. In addition to Estonia, Lithuania Foreign Affairs minister G. Landsbergis said that even though he prefers *"a European solution because it's the most sustainable and legally correct."* but also informed that *"If such a solution is not found, we do not rule out looking for a regional solution,"* showing support for Estonia's decision to look for cooperation without EU consent. Leading EU countries such as Germany and France did not support such a suggestion as they claimed such sanctions were aimed at Russian people not Putin.¹⁶³ After an informal meeting of foreign ministers of the European Union that took place in August on 30th-31st G.Landsbergis said that *"...millions of Russian citizens holding Schengen visas are a problem not only for the countries that border Russia, but also for the EU's regional security. Together with Estonia, Latvia and Poland, we will seek solutions in the coming weeks that will significantly limit the flow of Russian tourists"*¹⁶⁴ focusing on the fact that this is a matter of EU security, but also letting know that the Baltic States together with Poland will act on themselves as there were no EU decisions made to ban Russian citizens from entering the EU, similar remarks were made by both Estonia and Latvia. On September 9th, joint decision to restrict Russian citizens entering EU was made by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Estonian PM Kaja Kallas said this joint decision was made in order to protect the EU - *"... As the border states of the EU, we must keep Europe safe. Currently it is not possible to ensure that the Russian citizens entering the EU through Estonia do not pose a security threat. A regional agreement has been reached and now we will continue working towards a tourism restriction on*

¹⁶¹ "The Government Restricts Entry to Estonia for Russian Nationals from 18 August | Välisministeerium," accessed December 17, 2022, <https://www.vm.ee/en/news/government-restricts-entry-estonia-russian-nationals-18-august>.

¹⁶² "Reinsalu to the Finnish Foreign Minister: We Must Stop Entry to the European Union for Russian Nationals | Välisministeerium," accessed December 17, 2022, <https://www.vm.ee/en/news/reinsalu-finnish-foreign-minister-we-must-stop-entry-european-union-russian-nationals>.

¹⁶³ Reuters, "Germany and France Oppose EU Visa Ban for Russian Tourists - Document," *Reuters*, August 30, 2022, sec. Europe, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-france-oppose-eu-visa-ban-russian-tourists-document-2022-08-30/>.

¹⁶⁴ "Lithuania's Foreign Minister Landsbergis: All EU Countries Approve Regional Decisions to Limit the Flow of Tourists from Russia" accessed December 17, 2022, <https://urm.lt/default/en/news/lithuanias-foreign-minister-landsbergis-all-eu-countries-approve-regional-decisions-to-limit-the-flow-of-tourists-from-russia>.

Russian citizens in the entire European Union."¹⁶⁵. At first Finland was also involved in such discussion, but backed out as Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto said that Helsinki did not want to act without clarification from the European Commission as to whether the country could bar entry for the Russians holding Schengen visas issued by another country.¹⁶⁶ This decision meant that 4 countries out of 5, directly bordering Russia in Europe, had closed their borders for its citizens, Finland not imposing the same ban also left 1,340 km. of the 2,377 km. open to Russia, as the Estonian PM said "*There is a loophole, and the loophole is Finland,*" understanding that without Finland, the travel restrictions are not entirely effective.¹⁶⁷ Finland indecisiveness did not last long, as its decision not to join the Baltics and Poland, was met with disappointment both from its people and the Baltic States, to whom Finland showed support in this matter, before backing out,¹⁶⁸ and on September 30 made the decision to join regional cooperation with Baltic States and Poland implementing ban on visas and travelers from Russia as Finland's Foreign Affairs minister told "*The decision in principle aims to completely prevent Russian tourism to Finland and the related transit through Finland,*"¹⁶⁹. Such examples show that the Baltics States by cooperating together managed to secure its region even without EU complete support as they used a bounding threat to recruit countries into regional cooperation expanding their ability to act within a region and achieving substantial gains in security. By closing all direct routes to Europe, they managed to significantly decrease an influx of Russian people coming to their region as before this ban, more than 1.36 million Russians have crossed land borders to the European Union since the beginning of the Russian invasion.¹⁷⁰

Analysis shows that in forming cooperation among themselves Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia managed to successfully limit existing political threats to their sovereignty caused by Russia and its people. First example portrayed how the Baltic States used cooperation in existing international organizations by pushing a need for a Special Tribunal that would investigate war crimes that are being committed by Russia, as it is a matter of international human right laws. Support for the Special

¹⁶⁵ "Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland Stop Entry to Russian Tourists through External Borders - News," Police and Border Guard Board, accessed December 17, 2022, <https://www.politsei.ee/en/news/estonia-latvia-lithuania-and-poland-stop-entry-to-russian-tourists-through-external-borders-10757>.

¹⁶⁶ "Baltics Taking Action to Restrict Entry of Russian Citizens," Irt.lt, September 7, 2022, <https://www.irt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1774204/baltics-taking-action-to-restrict-entry-of-russian-citizens>.

¹⁶⁷ V. O. A. News, "Baltic Countries to Stop Russian Citizens from Entering," VOA, accessed December 17, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/baltic-countries-to-stop-russian-citizens-from-entering/6754085.html>.

¹⁶⁸ Pekka Vantinen, "Finland Now Only EU Land Border for Russian Tourists," www.euractiv.com, September 20, 2022, https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/finland-now-only-eu-land-border-for-russian-tourists/.

¹⁶⁹ "Finland to Ban Russian Tourists over Fears of 'Endangering International Relations,'" Sky News, accessed December 18, 2022, <https://news.sky.com/story/finland-to-ban-russian-tourists-over-fears-of-endangering-international-relations-12707640>.

¹⁷⁰ "Update: Situation at the EU's Land Border with Russia," accessed December 18, 2022, <https://frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/update-situation-at-the-eu-s-land-border-with-russia-X3iWuK>.

Tribunal also allowed the Baltic States to use the international arena to form an identity around Russia that would challenge existing Russophones view of their homeland, thus making it harder for them to justify Russia actions in the international arena and also providing the necessary outlook that would challenge propaganda coming from Putin. Implementing a ban on Russian people coming in EU, showed how cooperation can be used without consent of international organization, in order to make decisions in small state's proximity, as in this case the Baltics States used binding threats to gather all the necessary support in the Baltic Sea region, to counter a threat posed by Russian people coming into the region.

2.3. Energy threat analysis

In reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, the Baltic States escalated the process of securing energy sovereignty. On April 2nd Lithuania announced that it completely cut Russian gas from its energy sector, as confirmed by the data of the Lithuanian gas transmission system operator Amber Grid, which shows that on 2 April the import of Russian gas for Lithuania's needs through the Lithuanian-Belarusian interconnection was equal to 0 MWh, as all Lithuanian gas demand is supplied through Klaipeda LNG terminal.¹⁷¹ Such a decision was monumental as Minister of Energy Dainius Kreivys said *"We are the first EU country among Gazprom's supply countries to gain independence from Russian gas supplies, and this is the result of a multi-year coherent energy policy and timely infrastructure decisions"*.¹⁷² On June 28th Lithuania passed the law that ensured that Russian gas that was in transit for Kaliningrad, through Lithuania, could only amount not exceed necessary for transit.¹⁷³ Following Lithuania's April announcement Estonia also announced that it will stop importing Russia's gas as Estonian PM K. Kallas said *"We must stop buying gas from Putin's regime as soon as we can since they are using the revenue from sales of it to fund their war against Ukraine"*.¹⁷⁴ Decision went into full effect on December 31st banning the importing and buying of natural gas from Russia.¹⁷⁵ On April 17th Latvian government also agreed to quit using Russian natural gas in 2023, as it did not had its own gas terminals (unlike it's Baltic Sea Region counterparts), thus had to negotiate with Estonia and Finland on LNG supplies from the Paldiski terminal, to receive

¹⁷¹ "Lithuania completely abandons Russian gas imports," accessed January 4, 2023, <https://enmin.lrv.lt/en/news/lithuania-completely-abandons-russian-gas-imports>

¹⁷² The same.

¹⁷³ "Gamtinių Dujų Įstatymo Nr. VIII-1973 2, 46, 47 Ir 52 Straipsnių Pakeitimo Įstatymo Projektas," accessed January 5, 2023, <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/0ac0c830f22911ecbfe9c72e552dd5bd>

¹⁷⁴ ERR News | ERR, "Estonia to Stop Importing Russian Gas by End of 2022," ERR, April 7, 2022, <https://news.err.ee/1608557521/estonia-to-stop-importing-russian-gas-by-end-of-2022>.

¹⁷⁵ ERR News | ERR, "Estonia Bans Natural Gas Imports and Purchases from Russia," ERR, September 29, 2022, <https://news.err.ee/1608733657/estonia-bans-natural-gas-imports-and-purchases-from-russia>.

the gas that was previously imported by Russia.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, while a relatively small sample size, pipeline imports from Russia between 21 May-15 June 2022 were just 41 GWh in total, against 3.6 TWh in the corresponding period of 2021. In other words, Russian gas imports to the Baltics in this period all but completely ceased; send out from Klaipeda increased to 2.88 TWh from 1.63 TWh in 2021 over the same period, helping to offset some of the lost receipts of pipeline gas.

With reduced gas supply dependence from Russia, which was done primarily by region cooperation without international organizations help, the Baltics States still had to rely on the EU to achieve full energy sovereignty from Russia. As in May 3rd at an extraordinary meeting of the Energy Council Lithuania's Minister of Energy Kreivys said *"The security of gas supply to Lithuania is ensured by the existing liquefied natural gas terminal in Klaipėda, and this is the result of targeted and systematic investment in energy security over the last decade. However, the Baltic countries still operate in the Russian-controlled IPS/UPS system. This is a major threat to our energy security, so we need to complete synchronisation with the continental European network as soon as possible."*, for which (synchronisation with the continental European network) priority must be given at EU level.¹⁷⁷ Acceleration process was being promoted as a main task of the Baltic States energy sector and lobbying it to become the European Union's as well as Lithuania's President G. Nausėda in his meeting on June 13th with Commissioner for Energy, Kadri Simson, said *"Energy independence from Russia needs to become a strategic goal for the European Union. Synchronization is an important part of this process. Getting connected to the European electricity grid as soon as possible would boost the energy security of the Baltic States and the EU as a whole. We should leave no room for an aggressor to use energy as a tool for political manipulation,"*.¹⁷⁸ Following the July meeting of the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP), officials discussed the possibility of expediting the synchronization of the Baltic power grids with Continental Europe. The European Commission, Poland, and the Baltic States were represented at the meeting. Donatas Matelionis, head of the Power System Operations Department at Litgrid (Lithuania's transmission system operator), presented the idea of accelerated synchronization to the attendees. According to Mr. Matelionis, the essential work

¹⁷⁶ "Latvia to Stop Using Russian Gas as of 2023," accessed January 4, 2023,

<https://eng.lsm.lv/article/economy/economy/latvia-to-stop-using-russian-gas-as-of-2023.a453028/>.

¹⁷⁷ "Minister Kreivys speaks about the need for faster synchronisation at an extraordinary meeting of the Energy Council," accessed January 4, 2023, <https://enmin.lrv.lt/en/news/minister-kreivys-speaks-about-the-need-for-faster-synchronisation-at-an-extraordinary-meeting-of-the-energy-council>.

¹⁷⁸ Fresh Media, "The President: Synchronization Is an Inherent Part of EU Energy Independence | President of the Republic of Lithuania," The President: Synchronization is an inherent part of EU energy independence | President of the Republic of Lithuania, accessed January 5, 2023, <https://www.lrp.lt/en/media-center/news/the-president-synchronization-is-an-inherent-part-of-eu-energy-independence/38578>.

and projects needed for synchronization will be finished by early 2024.¹⁷⁹ As was also noted by Lithuanian Vice-Minister of Energy Albinas Zananavičius faster synchronization is entirely possible, as it does not require all of the planned measures to be implemented by then – including the Harmony Link interconnection with Poland as he said - “*This project is included in the synchronisation action plan, but it is not critical for the synchronous connection of the Baltic power systems with the continental European network, as it is intended for electricity trade. At present, trade with Poland is being carried out via the asynchronous LitPol Link interconnection, which, after synchronisation, will only be used for ancillary services.*”¹⁸⁰ In the same meeting the transmission system operators of the Baltic States and Poland, with the support of the European Commission, have agreed to begin preparing studies to assess the necessary critical elements for the synchronization of the Baltic States with Continental Europe's synchronous grid before the scheduled deadline.¹⁸¹ Regional cooperation for the Baltic States on this product is important and shows that it (cooperation) increased in wartime as countries feel the need to reduce energy dependence from Russia as soon as possible, that is why the synchronous operation is currently aiming to beat the timeline of 2025 by the year and connect to Continental European electricity network by the year 2024, as communication among countries should improve contracting, management and coordination and prioritization should allow for providing additional funds if needed for expedited implementation costs.¹⁸²

The Baltic synchronisation project, which has the support of four nations and the EU, has made significant progress and is moving forward quickly. However, it has taken over a decade to coordinate the political will, strategic visions, legal and financial instruments, and technical solutions between the involved parties. Despite this success, the project is still vulnerable to interference from Moscow and to a lack of regional solidarity and harmony within the participating countries.¹⁸³ As said by Nausėda - “*If the political will is there*”, the project can be completed “*faster than planned*”.¹⁸⁴ The Baltic synchronisation project is crucial for the national and regional security of the Baltic States and the EU, as well as for their political and economic well-being. If it were to fail at this late stage, the consequences would be severe and the costs of this failure would outweigh any

¹⁷⁹ “Lithuania proposes speeding up the process of synchronising the Baltic power grids with the synchronous grid of Continental Europe,” accessed January 5, 2023, <https://enmin.lrv.lt/en/news/lithuania-proposes-speeding-up-the-process-of-synchronising-the-baltic-power-grids-with-the-synchronous-grid-of-continental-europe>.

¹⁸⁰ The same.

¹⁸¹ The same.

¹⁸² “Rapid Response: The Future of European Energy Security,” *Atlantic Council* (blog), March 1, 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/energysource/rapid-response-the-future-of-european-energy-security/>.

¹⁸³ Jermalavičius, T.

¹⁸⁴ “How Lithuania Is Freeing Itself from Russian Energy,” *lrv.lt*, May 11, 2022, <https://www.lrv.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1691351/how-lithuania-is-freeing-itself-from-russian-energy>.

investments made towards its completion.¹⁸⁵ Regional cooperation among the Baltic States has been essential in the development of this project and will continue to be vital in order to ensure its success through improved communication, coordination, and management. It may also be necessary to provide additional funding in order to expedite the implementation of the synchronization plan. Regional cooperation among The Baltic States shows promises for completing faster synchronization as was seen in efforts to secure energy sovereignty in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Lithuania and Estonia both stopped importing Russian gas, with achieving complete independence from Russian gas banning the import and purchase of natural gas from Russia. Latvia also agreed to stop using Russian natural gas in 2023. It will still remain to be seen if such a goal will be accomplished but nonetheless the actions that were made in war provided a positive push for escalating energy independence in the Baltic Sea region.

The analysis made on Lithuania's, Latvia's and Estonia's cooperation during the time of war in Ukraine from February 24th till December 31st of 2022 shows that they have successfully used cooperation and lobbying within international organizations and regional initiatives to increase their security within the Baltic Sea region by focusing on main "hard" values which were identified in chapter one. Putin's invasion in Ukraine generated the sense of urgency among the West and especially Europe to act in order to stop its aggression by supporting Ukraine and securing the Eastern Europe Region. Even though initial NATO rhetoric and decisions were aimed at securing the Black Sea region and its partners, the Baltics States successfully lobbied the need for increasing the military presence in their region as well, by pushing its members to make decisions that would increase existing military personnel so it would deter Russia by denial. Decisions that were agreed upon during NATO's Madrid summit, which promised that battlegroups will be increased from battalions up to brigade size, where and when required, and with Germany promising a brigade in Lithuania. These decisions directly affect the Baltic States military security in the region, and are also the result of the Baltic States cooperation. This cooperation was also used to secure remaining "hard" values which are political and economic. The main political threats faced by the Baltic states in relation to Russia are the use of Russian speakers in the region as a tool for propaganda and influence, and the potential use of these groups as a tool for Russia's foreign policy in the region. In order to counter these threats, the Baltic states have implemented measures such as banning Russian media outlets and seeking to shape the international narrative around Russia's actions in the region. One example of this is the push for the establishment of a Special Tribunal to investigate and prosecute Russia for its actions against Ukraine. The Baltic states sought to challenge the perception of Russia held by Russian speakers in

¹⁸⁵ Jermalavičius.

the region and to counter Russian propaganda through initiatives such as supporting independent media outlets and promoting the integration of Russian speakers into society. The Baltic states also limited the flows of Russian people that were coming into the EU and the Baltic Sea region as a way to counter potential threats posed by Russian speakers in the region. In response to the conflict with Ukraine, the EU imposed sanctions that included a ban on travel to and from Russia. However, Russian citizens were still able to enter the EU and the Baltic Sea region through neighboring countries. In response, Estonia banned Russian citizens holding Schengen visas issued by the country from crossing its border, and Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland also made a joint decision to restrict Russian citizens from entering the EU. These actions were taken in order to protect the EU and regional security, but Finland's decision not to join the ban left a significant portion of the border with Russia open to travel. This led to pressure from the Baltic states and Poland for Finland to reconsider its decision, and eventually Finland also imposed travel restrictions on Russian citizens. The decision by the Baltic states and Poland to restrict Russian citizens from entering the EU was seen as a way to counter potential threats posed by Russian speakers in the region, as the use of Russian speakers as a tool for propaganda and influence has been a significant concern for the Baltic States. Lastly, Putin's aggression in Ukraine accelerated the Baltic Sea region energy sector securitization from dependence on Russia. The Baltic States (and Finland) managed to cut off the Russian gas imports without any major issues and help from international organizations. To fully counter Russia's threat to the energy sector, the Baltic States lobbied for accelerating the process of synchronization of Baltic power grids from BRELL network to Continental European Network. As the shift is originally planned to happen in 2025, the Baltic States believe that with enough political will and support from the EU and themselves this could be done by 2024.

Conclusions

The presented analysis examines the actions taken by the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia to counter threats to their sovereignty in the Baltic Sea region. Utilizing the small states theory and presented strategy by Therlson and Steinsson on how the small states should act within international organizations. Therlsons and Steinssons strategy posits that small states should form coalitions in order to effectively address shared threats from a larger state. Authors outline the need of those coalitions to concentrate on the most important issues to their military, economic and political sectors, as theory presents those sectors as “hard” values to sovereignty of small states’. According to the theory, small states' existence relies upon sovereignty of those three values (sectors). The case study method was employed to analyze the Baltic states' efforts to secure their military, economic, and political sectors within the presented strategy of small states.

To do so, the analysis was made on each of the three sectors of the Baltic States in order to find shared threats, (before February 24th of 2022) from Russia to the Baltic States, upon which the collaboration is made to secure the Baltic Sea region. The military was identified as the greatest threat to the sovereignty of the Baltic states, due to the aggressive Putin foreign policy and significant imbalance, that is shared among all three Baltic States in military power with Russia. In the past to respond to such a threat, the Baltic states have sought support and deterrence from NATO, particularly the United States, through increased military budgets and modernization efforts, as well as the deployment of enhanced forward presence battalions by NATO. Despite these measures, a military imbalance between NATO and Russia in the Baltic Sea region persists. Thus, the Baltic states need an increased NATO military personnel in the region as means of further deterring potential threats from Russia. Analyzed political sectors showed that Russia seeks to gain political influence in the Baltic region, partly by leveraging the presence of Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic states. These minorities are often used as a tool of foreign policy by Russia, as the country has a history of using its ethnic minorities for justification of military intervention, as was seen in the case of its annexation of Crimea. The Russian government has also used propaganda to influence the views of Russian minorities in the Baltic States, in an effort to create support for its actions and to destabilize the region. This poses a significant threat to the political stability of the Baltic States, as it could be used to justify military intervention or other forms of interference in the region. The Baltic states, particularly Latvia and Estonia, have taken steps to address this threat by imposing requirements for citizenship and integration, while Lithuania has taken a different approach and granted citizenship more readily. However, all three Baltic states still face the threat of Russian influence and interference

through these minority groups. When overlooking the energy sector, the Baltic states, particularly Lithuania and Latvia, have historically had a high level of dependence on Russia for their energy needs, particularly in the natural gas and electricity sectors. As the Baltic Sea regions' market consumption and imports were mostly dominated by Russia, which imports accounted for two thirds of all gas consumed in the Baltic Sea region during 2021. This dependency has been used by Russia as a tool to exert influence and pressure on the Baltic states. In response, the Baltic states have taken steps to reduce their dependence on Russia, including building new infrastructure such as the Balticconnector natural gas pipeline and the Klaipėda liquefied natural gas terminal. However, the process of fully reducing their dependence on Russia is ongoing and is not expected to be completed until 2025. In the meantime, Russia still has the ability to influence the energy market in the Baltic region through its control of energy supply and infrastructure. These shared security threats were used to make further analysis on how they were addressed during Russia's invasion of Ukraine from February 24th till December 31st, 2022.

Second part of the thesis focused on collective actions from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia during the war time (February 24th – December 31st). The act of war provided a new outlook for the West towards Russia, which, as argued in the thesis, was used by the Baltic States to address the existing threats to their sovereignty. To make analysis on this case, the thesis overlooks collective and individual statements, as well as decisions that were made by the Baltic States representatives during the provided time frame. The emphasis was put on analyzing what effect those actions had on decisions that were made by the international organizations of which the Baltic States are part of (EU, NATO), and how those decisions increased the Baltic Sea region's security.

As mentioned, the main threat that Russia poses to the Baltic States' sovereignty is military superiority in the region, which the Baltic States can only address with the help of NATO. The Baltic States used the attention generated by the war in Ukraine to their advantage by highlighting the impact the war was having on security in the Baltic Sea region, and framing it as a European security issue rather than just a regional or Ukrainian issue. They argued that Russia's aggression against Ukraine posed a long-term threat to European security and the security of the NATO alliance. To persuade NATO to invest in security in the Baltic Sea region, the Baltic States emphasized the common threat posed by Russia and the need for collective action to address it. They implied that investing in the security of the Baltic States was necessary for the security of the entire NATO alliance. To support this argument, the Baltic States demonstrated their own commitment to addressing the common threat by investing in their own defense budgets exceeding NATO requirements (2 per cent of GDP

allocated to the defense budget) and being one the biggest aid to Ukraine. Without this demonstrated commitment, their narrative may not have been successful in convincing NATO to invest in regional security. This approach was successful, as evidenced by the decisions made at the NATO Madrid summit to increase military presence in the region and the high levels of bilateral aid provided to Ukraine by the Baltic States.

When analyzing joint actions of the Baltic States in countering political threats in relation to Russia, the main actions were seen to be taken in order to limit propaganda, aimed at Russian minorities in the region, and flow of new Russians into the region, which later could be used as a tool for Putin's foreign policy. In response to this threat, the Baltic States have implemented measures such as banning Russian media outlets and seeking to shape the international narrative around Russia's actions in the region. One example of this is the push for the establishment of a Special Tribunal to investigate and prosecute Russia for its actions against Ukraine, which was done to challenge the perception of Russia held by Russian minorities in the region and to counter Russian propaganda through initiatives such as supporting independent media outlets and promoting the integration of Russian speakers into society. They have also limited the flows of Russian people entering the EU and the Baltic Sea region in order to counter potential threats posed by Russian speakers in the region by limiting Russia's ability to use Russian speakers as a tool for its foreign policy in the region. In August, Estonia banned Russian citizens holding Schengen visas issued by the country from crossing its border, and in September, the Baltic States and Poland jointly decided to impose travel restrictions on Russian citizens entering the EU. These measures were motivated by concerns about the security of the EU and the belief that it was necessary to protect the region from potential threats posed by Russian speakers. However, leading EU countries such as Germany and France did not initially support the Baltic States' suggestion, arguing that the sanctions were aimed at Russian people, not Putin. Despite this, the Baltic States moved forward with their own restrictions, claiming that it was done to protect the EU. Finland, which also borders Russia, did not initially impose the same restrictions, leaving a gap in the travel ban. However, following backlash and pressure from its own citizens and the Baltic States, Finland reversed its decision and joined the other countries in restricting Russian citizens. This demonstrated cooperation of the Baltic States showed their ability to take independent actions to address the perceived threat from Russia, by using the situation of war to make decisions that affected the whole international organization, which otherwise would not be possible.

To counter Russia's energy threat in the region, the Baltic States were quick to accelerate the process of energy independence, as Russia's action provided the necessary political will and support to make economic decisions, which would not necessarily be beneficial for (short-term) economic situation. Lithuania announced in April that it had completely cut Russian gas from its energy sector, becoming the first EU country to gain independence from Russian gas supplies. Estonia also announced that it would stop importing Russian gas, with the ban going into full effect on December 31st. Latvia, which does not have its own gas terminals, agreed to stop using Russian natural gas in 2023, negotiating with Estonia and Finland for LNG supplies from the Paldiski terminal to meet its previously imported gas needs. However, to fully counter Russia's threat to their energy sector, the Baltic States were lobbying for the acceleration of the process of synchronizing the Baltic power grids from the BRELL network to the Continental European Network, as connection to BRELL is unsafe due to the geopolitical situation caused by Russia's invasion. The EU has recognized the importance of the Baltic synchronization project and has expressed support for its acceleration. While the shift is originally planned to occur in 2025, the Baltic States believe that with sufficient political will and support from the EU, which is a direct result of the situation war, this process could be completed by 2024. This would increase energy security and help to integrate renewable energy sources into the region's energy mix.

The case study was made in order to explain the Baltic Sea region's security increase. To do so, Thersson's and Steinsson's theory was used. Authors present the strategy, which argues that small states in the same region, due to shared security concerns, should use cooperation among themselves in order to increase their security. The provided analysis shows that the Baltic States, being the small states and bound by the same threats from Russia, successfully used cooperation among themselves and the situation of Russia's war against Ukraine, to increase their security in the Baltic Sea region. It is important to note that the cooperation of the Baltics States was successful only with the right conditions that were present because of war, which theory does not account for. Prior cooperation among the Baltic States was not successful, as large members of EU and NATO were hesitant to challenge the existing international order, just to please (secure) the Baltic States. It is also worth to note that further analysis could be made on possibilities of new coalitions and regional cooperation between the Baltic States and Finland as they share borders and threats from Russia, and with Finland set to join NATO in the future, cooperation among them is likely to be even more present.

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Summary

Analysis examines the actions taken by the Baltic States - Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia - to counter threats to their sovereignty in the Baltic Sea region. The Baltic States are classified as small states that do not have much political power because they are too weak to make a difference on the international stage, due to their inability to impose their will and defend their national interests against the big powers. A review of the debate on the Baltic States' relations with Russia and the threat it poses to their existential values (political, economic and military) reveals a pattern between the actions taken and the problems that had to be solved in order to guarantee the security of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. This leads to the **research question**: How do Baltic states use the international arena and the situation of the war in Ukraine to push and promote their security agendas and achieve strategic goals for themselves? To answer this question, the **aim of the thesis** is to analyze how Baltic countries collectively acted in Russia's war against Ukraine period to strengthen their position in the international arena, what was done (is being done) to catch the arena's attention on Baltics security issues, and how much of it (security in a region) is caused by actions of the Baltic countries. Objectives of the paper:

1. To overview and present the theory of small states;
2. To define Baltic sovereignty threats from Russia (Economic, Political, Military);
3. To analyze Baltic countries' joint actions in foreign policy within small state security strategy scopes in countering sovereignty threats from Russia;
4. To provide examples of how Baltic states strengthened regions security within the Baltic region.

The paper draws on the theory of small states and the strategy put forward by Therlson and Steinsson to describe how small states should operate in international organizations. Therlson and Steinsson's strategy argues that small states should form coalitions in order to be able to effectively counter common threats from larger states. These coalitions should focus on key issues in their military, economic and political sectors, as these sectors are theorized as "hard" values for the sovereignty of small states. According to the theory, the existence of small states depends on the sovereignty of these three values (sectors). In order to analyze the efforts of the Baltic States to secure their military, economic and political sectors in line with the presented small states strategy, a case study approach was used.

The analysis of cooperation between Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia during the war in Ukraine from 24 February to 31 December 2022 shows that they have successfully used cooperation and lobbying in international organizations and regional initiatives to enhance their security in the Baltic Sea region by focusing on core hard values. Putin's invasion of Ukraine provoked the West, and

Europe in particular, to take action to stop the aggression. This led to support for Ukraine and the security of the Eastern European region. While NATO's initial rhetoric and decisions were aimed at protecting the Black Sea region and its regional partners, the Baltic States have successfully attracted the attention of the West also to the Baltic Sea region through the use of the war situation. This has allowed the Baltic states to exert pressure for military buildups in their region, influencing NATO member states to take decisions that would increase existing military personnel to deter Russia and strengthen the military sector in the region. This was reflected at the NATO summit in Madrid, where it was promised that battle groups would be increased from battalion to brigade size where and when required, and Germany promised to deploy a brigade in Lithuania. These decisions have a direct impact on the military security of the Baltic States in the region and are also the result of cooperation between the Baltic States, because in the early days of the war, when NATO talked about responding to Russia, it did not mention the objectives of increasing military capabilities in the Baltic Sea region, but was initiated and encouraged by the Baltic States.

This cooperation has also been used to secure the remaining "hard" values - political and economic. The main political threats that the Baltic countries face vis-à-vis Russia are the use of Russian-speaking groups in the region as propaganda and influence tools, and the possible use of these groups for Russian foreign policy in the region. To counter these threats, the Baltic States have implemented measures such as the banning of Russian media outlets and efforts to shape the international narrative on Russia's actions in the region. One example is the move to establish a special tribunal to investigate and prosecute Russia for its actions against Ukraine. The Baltic countries have sought to challenge the perceptions of Russian speakers in the region towards Russia and to counter Russian propaganda through initiatives such as supporting independent media outlets and promoting the integration of Russian speakers into society. The Baltic countries have also restricted the flow of Russian speakers into the EU and the Baltic Sea region to counter potential threats from Russian speakers in the region. In response to the conflict with Ukraine, the EU imposed sanctions, including travel bans to and from Russia. However, Russian citizens were still able to enter the EU and the Baltic Sea region through neighboring countries. In response, Estonia banned Russian citizens holding Schengen visas from crossing its border, while Lithuania, Latvia and Poland also took a joint decision to restrict Russian citizens' entry into the EU. These steps were taken to protect the security of the EU and the region, but after Finland decided not to join the ban, a large part of the border with Russia remained open for travel. As a result, the Baltic countries and Poland pressured Finland to reconsider its decision and eventually Finland also imposed travel restrictions on Russian citizens. The decision by the Baltic States and Poland to restrict the entry of Russian citizens into the EU was seen as a way of countering potential threats posed by Russian speakers in the region, as the use of

Russian speakers as a tool for propaganda and influence is a major concern for the Baltic States. Finally, Putin's aggression in Ukraine has accelerated the protection of the Baltic Sea region's energy sector from dependence on Russia. The Baltic States (and Finland) managed to cut off Russian gas imports without major problems and without the help of international organizations. In order to fully counter the Russian threat to the energy sector, the Baltic States have encouraged the EU to accelerate the process of synchronization of the Baltic electricity grids from the BRELL network to the continental European grid. As this transition was originally planned for 2025, the Baltic States believe that with sufficient political will and support from the EU and themselves, it could be done by 2024.

The analysis shows that the Baltic States, being small and bound by the same Russian threats, have successfully used their cooperation and the situation of the Russian war against Ukraine to increase their security in the Baltic Sea region. It is important to note that the Baltic States' cooperation was only successful under the right conditions, which were created by the war, although the theory does not take this into account. Previous cooperation between the Baltic States has not been successful because the major EU and NATO members have been hesitant to challenge the existing international order just to provide security for the Baltic States. It is also worth noting that the possibility of new coalitions and regional cooperation between the Baltic States and Finland could be further explored, given that they share borders and threats from Russia, and that Finland's future accession to NATO is likely to make cooperation between the two countries even more relevant.

Aprašymas

Pateiktoje analizėje nagrinėjami Baltijos šalių - Latvijos, Lietuvos ir Estijos - veiksmai, kurių jos ėmėsi siekdamos atremti grėsmes savo suverenitetui Baltijos jūros regione. Kadangi Baltijos šalys priskiriamos mažomis valstybėmis, kurios neturi didelės politinės galios, nes yra per silpnos, kad galėtų ką nors pakeisti tarptautinėje arenoje, dėl negalėjimo primesti savo valios ir apginti savo nacionalinių interesų prieš didžiąsias valstybes. Apžvelgus diskusiją apie Baltijos valstybių santykius su Rusija ir jos keliamą grėsmę jų egzistencinėms vertybėms (politinėms, ekonominėms ir karinėms), pastebimas dėsningumas tarp veiksmų, kurių imtasi, ir problemų, kurias reikėjo spręsti, siekiant užtikrinti Lietuvos, Latvijos ir Estijos saugumą. Iš to suformuluotas **tyrimo klausimas**: kaip Baltijos šalys naudojasi tarptautine arena ir karo Ukrainoje situacija, siekdamos savo saugumo darbotvarkės ir strateginių tikslų? Keliamam klausimui atsakyti iškeltas **darbo tikslas**: išanalizuoti, kaip Baltijos šalys kolektyviai veikė Rusijos karo prieš Ukrainą laikotarpiu, siekdamos sustiprinti savo pozicijas tarptautinėje arenoje, kas buvo daroma, kad arena atkreiptų dėmesį į Baltijos šalių saugumo problemas, ir kiek tai (regiono saugumą) lėmė Baltijos šalių veiksmai.

Darbui keliami **uždaviniai**:

1. Apžvelgti ir pristatyti mažųjų valstybių teoriją;
2. Apibrėžti Rusijos keliamas grėsmes Baltijos šalių suverenitetui (ekonominės, politinės, karinės);
3. Išanalizuoti Baltijos šalių bendrus veiksmus užsienio politikoje pagal mažų valstybių saugumo strategiją, siekiant atremti Rusijos keliamas grėsmes suverenitetui;
4. Pateikti pavyzdžių, kaip Baltijos šalys stiprino regionų saugumą Baltijos regione.

Darbe pasitelkiama mažųjų valstybių teorija ir Therlsono bei Steinssono pateikta strategija, kurioje autoriai aprašo kaip mažosios valstybės turėtų veikti tarptautinėse organizacijose. Therlsono ir Steinssono strategijoje teigiama, kad mažosios valstybės turėtų sudaryti koalicijas, kad galėtų veiksmingai kovoti su bendromis grėsmėmis, kylančiomis iš didesnių valstybių. Šios koalicijos turi susitelkti ties svarbiausiais jų karinio, ekonominio ir politinio sektorių klausimais, nes teorijoje šie sektoriai pateikiami kaip "kietosios" vertybės mažųjų valstybių suverenumui. Remiantis teorija, mažųjų valstybių egzistavimas priklauso nuo šių trijų vertybių (sektorių) suverenumo. Siekiant išanalizuoti Baltijos valstybių pastangas užtikrinti savo karinį, ekonominį ir politinį sektorius pagal pateiktą mažųjų valstybių strategiją buvo taikomas atvejo analizės metodas.

Atlikta Lietuvos, Latvijos ir Estijos bendradarbiavimo karo Ukrainoje metu nuo 2022 m. vasario 24 d. iki gruodžio 31 d. analizė rodo, kad jos sėkmingai naudojo bendradarbiavimą ir lobizmą tarptautinėse organizacijose ir regioninėse iniciatyvose, kad padidintų savo saugumą Baltijos jūros regione, sutelkdamos dėmesį į pagrindines "kietąsias" vertybes. V. Putino invazija į Ukrainą

išprovokavo Vakarus, ypač Europą, imtis veiksmų, kad būtų sustabdyta agresija. Todėl buvo imtasi remti Ukrainą ir užtikrinti Rytų Europos regiono saugumą. Nors pradinė NATO retorika ir sprendimai buvo skirti Juodosios jūros regionui ir regiono partneriams apsaugoti, Baltijos valstybės sėkmingai pritraukė Vakarų dėmesį ir Baltijos Jūros regionui, pasitelkdamos karo situacija. Tai leido Baltijos šalims daryti spaudimą didinti karinį pajėgų didinimą savo regione, darant įtaką NATO narėms šalims priimti sprendimus, kurie padidintų esamą karinį personalą, siekiant atgrasyti Rusiją ir sustiprinti karinį sektorių regione. Tai atsispindėjo NATO viršūnių susitikimo Madride metu, kuriame pažadėta, kad kovinės grupės bus padidintos nuo batalionų iki brigadų dydžio, kur ir kada to reikės, o Vokietija pažadėjo Lietuvoje dislokuoti brigadą. Šie sprendimai turi tiesioginės įtakos Baltijos šalių kariniam saugumui regione, be to, jie yra Baltijos šalių bendradarbiavimo rezultatas, kadangi pirmosiomis karo dienomis NATO kalbėdama apie atsaką Rusijai, neminėjo tikslų didinti karinį pajėgumą Baltijos jūros regione, tai buvo inicijuota ir skatinta daryti Baltijos šalių.

Šiuo bendradarbiavimu taip pat buvo pasinaudota siekiant užtikrinti likusias "kietąsias" vertybes - politines ir ekonomines. Pagrindinės politinės grėsmės, su kuriomis Baltijos šalys susiduria Rusijos atžvilgiu, yra rusakalbių grupių naudojimas regione, kaip propagandos ir įtakos įrankių, bei galimas šių grupių naudojimas Rusijos užsienio politikos regione tikslams. Siekdamas kovoti su šiomis grėsmėmis, Baltijos šalys įgyvendino tokias priemones kaip Rusijos žiniasklaidos priemonių draudimas ir siekis formuoti tarptautinį naratyvą apie Rusijos veiksmus regione. Vienas iš pavyzdžių - siekis įsteigti specialųjį tribunolą, kuris tirtų ir persekiotų Rusiją už jos veiksmus prieš Ukrainą. Baltijos šalys siekė paneigti regione gyvenančių rusakalbių požiūrį į Rusiją ir pasipriešinti Rusijos propagandai tokiomis iniciatyvomis kaip nepriklausomos žiniasklaidos priemonių rėmimas ir rusakalbių integracijos į visuomenę skatinimas. Baltijos šalys taip pat ribojo į ES ir Baltijos jūros regioną atvykstančių rusakalbių srautus, taip siekdamas atremti galimas rusakalbių keliamas grėsmes regione. Reaguodama į konfliktą su Ukraina, ES įvedė sankcijas, įskaitant draudimą keliauti į Rusiją ir iš jos. Tačiau Rusijos piliečiai vis tiek galėjo atvykti į ES ir Baltijos jūros regioną per kaimynines šalis. Atsakydama į tai, Estija uždraudė Rusijos piliečiams, turintiems šios šalies išduotas Šengeno visas, kirsti jos sieną, o Lietuva, Latvija ir Lenkija taip pat priėmė bendrą sprendimą apriboti Rusijos piliečių įvažiavimą į ES. Šių veiksmų buvo imtasi siekiant apsaugoti ES ir regiono saugumą, tačiau Suomijai nusprendus neprisijungti prie draudimo, nemaža dalis sienos su Rusija liko atvira kelionėms. Dėl to Baltijos šalys ir Lenkija spaudė Suomiją persvarstyti savo sprendimą ir galiausiai Suomija taip pat nustatė kelionių apribojimus Rusijos piliečiams. Baltijos šalių ir Lenkijos sprendimas apriboti Rusijos piliečių įvažiavimą į ES buvo vertinamas kaip būdas kovoti su galimomis grėsmėmis, kurias regione kelia rusakalbiai, nes rusakalbių naudojimas kaip propagandos ir įtakos įrankis kelia didelį susirūpinimą Baltijos šalims. Galiausiai V. Putino agresija Ukrainoje paspartino

Baltijos jūros regiono energetikos sektoriaus saugojimą nuo priklausomybės nuo Rusijos. Baltijos valstybėms (ir Suomijai) pavyko nutraukti Rusijos dujų importą be didesnių problemų ir tarptautinių organizacijų pagalbos. Siekdamos visapusiškai atremti Rusijos grėsmę energetikos sektoriui, Baltijos šalys skatino ES, kad būtų paspartintas Baltijos šalių elektros tinklų sinchronizacijos iš BRELL tinklo į kontinentinės Europos tinklą procesas. Kadangi iš pradžių planuota, kad šis perėjimas įvyks 2025 m., Baltijos valstybės mano, kad turint pakankamai politinės valios ir ES bei jų pačių paramos, tai būtų galima padaryti iki 2024 m.

Atlikta analizė rodo, kad Baltijos valstybės, būdamos mažos ir saistomos tų pačių Rusijos keliamų grėsmių, sėkmingai pasinaudojo tarpusavio bendradarbiavimu ir Rusijos karo prieš Ukrainą situacija, kad padidintų savo saugumą Baltijos jūros regione. Svarbu pažymėti, kad Baltijos valstybių bendradarbiavimas buvo sėkmingas tik esant tinkamoms sąlygoms, kurios susiklostė dėl karo, nors teorija to neįvertina. Ankstesnis Baltijos valstybių bendradarbiavimas nebuvo sėkmingas, nes didžiosios ES ir NATO narės nesiryžo mesti iššūkio esamai tarptautinei tvarkai, vien tam, kad užtikrintų saugumą Baltijos valstybėms. Taip pat verta pažymėti, kad būtų galima toliau analizuoti naujų koalicijų ir regioninio bendradarbiavimo tarp Baltijos valstybių ir Suomijos galimybes, nes jos turi bendras sienas ir Rusijos keliamas grėsmes, o Suomijai ateityje įstojus į NATO, tikėtina, kad bendradarbiavimas tarp šių valstybių bus dar aktualesnis.