

Willingness to Defend Own Country in the Baltic States:

Implications for
National Security
and NATO's
Collective
Defence

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The publication reflects on one of the core aspects and indicators of societal resilience and national defence – why ordinary people are or are not willing to defend their own countries. Based on a review of conceptual considerations and statistical data, an international team of scientists have explored the situation in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and its implications to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

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Introduction

This publication reflects on one of the core aspects and indicators of societal resilience and national defence – why ordinary people are or are not willing to defend their own countries. Low willingness to defend a country may not necessarily be detrimental to its defence capabilities. However, under certain circumstances it can have profound effects. Low morale can have a significant impact on actions taken or not taken by decision makers, as well as armed forces.

With the continuous weaponization of the information space and cyberspace, control over the minds of people has further intensified. Distant actors and factors can considerably influence views of domestic societies and exacerbate their perceptions. For this and other reasons, resilience of societies is becoming an ever-present theme of decision makers in NATO and its member states, as well as far beyond the Alliance.

In this regard, three NATO member states Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania present a compelling case for analysis. Since the Russian–Ukrainian conflict unfolded in 2014, all three along with other NATO Allies have significantly invested in their defence capabilities and national security. A notable focus has been the resilience of the societies, including attempts to increase the involvement of inhabitants in state defence activities.

This publication re-visits the issue of willingness to defend one’s own country in the Baltic states. While in previous years multiple Baltic-centric academic publications have been presented, neither have they arrived at coherent conclusions, nor have they yet been sufficiently corroborated in fora of international experts’ interaction and presented in popular science.

This publication opens with two chapters conceptualizing the willingness to defend and to fight for own country by Dr. Yao-Yuan Yeh from University of St. Thomas – Houston in the United States and Dr. Māris Andžāns from Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU) and the Latvian Institute of International Affairs (LIIA). With these chapters both authors bring to a wider audience results of their previous scientific studies. These are followed by a review

of the societal resilience in the agenda of NATO by Mārtiņš Vargulis, also from RSU and LIIA. Then, another section of Dr. Andžāns outlines statistical data on the willingness issue from the Baltic states from the beginning of 1990s to the date. It then paves the way for country chapters on all three Baltic states which discuss situation in each of them. The chapter on Estonia was prepared by Dr. Ivo Juurvee of the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS) and the Estonian Military Academy, on Latvia – by Aleksandra Palkova of RSU and LIIA, and on Lithuania – by Dr. Ieva Gajauskaitė of the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania.

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Public Preferences Between Wars of Necessity and Wars of Choice

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Since its earlier study by Mueller, the literature on public support for war or military intervention has been one of the most critical subfields in international relations for over five decades.¹ Various scholars have found a series of factors explaining the fluctuation of public support for war, including the human and financial cost of war², objectives of war³, multilateral linkages and institutions⁴, ethnicity⁵, partisanship⁶, education⁷, gender⁸, and war experience⁹. The accumulation of these research findings provides a strong benchmark for policymakers to assess the costs and impact of their foreign intervention policies and behaviours from the domestic audience.

Nevertheless, the extant literature suffers two major shortcomings. First, most cases of this study focus on the Western states, especially the public opinion in the United States and United Kingdom, with a few exceptions.¹⁰ This generates a generalizability issue as to whether the extant literature findings could apply to explain the fluctuations of public support for wars in non-Western contexts. Following the first notion, the second critical issue in the current studies of war support is that in most cases, since these are established powers, and their foreign military operations are all interventionist wars outside their homelands; to the public in these countries, whether to support these operations is considered as a choice instead of a “must.”

To elaborate, citizens in non-Western and non-major power states are more likely to be subject to the threat of war in which their livelihood may become the battlefield if the war occurs. For example, if China decides to

invade Taiwan for the purpose of unification, then Taiwan will likely be the battlefield where Taiwanese citizens have to defend the island from a Chinese military operation. Another vivid example is Russia's military intervention in Ukraine. What Ukrainians needed to consider was whether they would stand up and fight against Russian troops and how exactly they could defend against Russian troops in the Ukrainian homeland. Unlike the US military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US citizens only needed to consider whether they should support the administration's decisions in waging wars on foreign soil without worrying that the wars could spread back to the US homeland. Therefore, it is reasonable to suspect that the mechanisms driving the public support for war outside the Western contexts are different. That is, how the public views wars of choice is not the same as wars of necessity.

Three reasons support this articulation. First, the research on war support indicates that when the public learns about casualties originated from local neighbourhoods, they would reduce their support for this ongoing military operation.¹¹ Wars would certainly incur a higher number of casualties, and these casualties, undoubtedly, would come from the homeland. However, whether the public would simply reduce their support of self-defence willingness due to the increase in casualties is not clear, since losing the battle may mean the elimination of their beloved sovereign state and the political institutions and society they embrace.

Second, we often see that countries facing wars of necessity rely on a conscription system instead of a voluntary military system. Research has shown that the employment of conscription systems has a substantial impact on public support for wars.¹² The conscription enhances the capability of defending from an aggressor and helps the public be more aware of the cost and consequence of war. Some research has indicated that the public will be more supportive of conflict when they consider their training could help them better prepare to defend themselves.¹³

The reason is obvious. When a large segment of the population is required to serve in the military, the public is generally more aware of the costs and benefits of an armed conflict. Moreover, in the event where people's living environment will be intruded by the war, the public will certainly take a different type of consideration when judging the utility of defending their livelihood, given the fact that more accurate information

and understanding of warfare is aware by the general public. Thus, with the conscription system installed, the general public would certainly take a different standpoint when considering their support of self-defence, especially in the case of wars of necessity.

Third, considering those countries that face immediate threats from aggressors, such as South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, they often need to rely on other major powers to support their military operations against the aggressors. In this scenario, public support for wars of necessity would have to channel in the security commitment from the major powers and their likelihood of intervention if the war occurs. The literature on war support has found that the public tends to feel more secure and confident with their capability of defending from aggressors if an ally provides a strong security commitment.¹⁴ Nevertheless, some do disagree with this view and contend that the ally's security provision may invoke backlash. Scholars have found that the public in Japan and South Korea perceive the United States troops who station in these two countries as a source of social chaos and unease.¹⁵

By far, it is clear that the public may react in distinctive ways toward wars of necessity and wars of choice. In this chapter, I discuss how the existing mechanisms explaining public support for war could be altered under the condition of wars for necessity. Yeh and Wu provided an empirical examination of public support for wars of necessity with a case study on Taiwan.¹⁶ It would serve as the benchmark for our theoretical reasonings below. I focus my discussion on four main factors – costs of war, objectives of war, ethnicity, and multilateralism.

As mentioned before, the literature of public support for wars of choice has generated a solid conclusion that war costs, such as casualties and financial expenses, would lead to a lower level of support for this military operation, as evidenced in the Vietnam War, US military intervention in Somalia, Iraq War in 2003, and many others. In general, public support for war declines along with the increase of war costs.

However, in the context of public support for wars of necessity, it may not work in the same venue. In studies of public support for wars of choice, the costs are tangible and often can be observed in the real world (unless it is an experimental study with a hypothetical scenario). In studies of public support for wars of necessity, the costs are *always* hypothetical. That is, it is impossible to examine the public support for wars of necessity with a

war onset as the subjects' livelihood is invaded by perpetrators at the same moment. All we can understand is the willingness to defend the subjects' homeland before the war occurs.

Therefore, whether the public facing wars of necessity would be relatively more supportive of self-defence is likely to depend on how it views the importance of defending the country. This means, the willingness of self-defence is highly contingent on the perceived objectives and values among the public when the war breaks out. If defending the state's sovereignty, its political institution, and the society is considered the top priority of its citizens, then war costs may not be associated with the degree of willingness of self-defence. On the other hand, if the public deems the invasion from a foreign state as favourable, or at least is indifferent to the idea of replacing the current government with the one from the invader, then they may be unwilling to support the hypothetical war and are very sensitive to the war costs.

To be specific, in the scenario whether the public is choosing to support an intervention war where their homeland is intact, which applies to every foreign intervention operation carried out by a major military power, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, the public can comprehend the war objectively and rationally in a simple cost and benefit calculation. But when the war is determined to intrude on the citizens' livelihood, it is a matter of life and death, and the public does not have a choice. Therefore, when the public faces the potential challenge of wars of necessity, they rely on another rationale to consider whether they are willing to protect their home country. This includes whether protecting their political institutions and society is critical in their value system, and also whether they perceive the enemy is generally an acceptable alternative ruler due to ethnical similarity, economic incentives, party identification if there are political parties promoting a narrative favouring surrender to the potential perpetrator, etc.

In addition to a different calculation of war costs and other political and social factors when comparing public support for wars of necessity and wars of choice, the influence of multilateralism is critical in gauging the will to defend. This is particularly the case for those small powers under the threats of major powers. As the nature of this war is likely to be unbalanced, the public of those small states tends to evaluate the chances of a successful

defence or deterrence against the major power invader to be lower. Thus, whether another major state or a set of strong powers are willing to bear the costs of war collectively is important in citizens' calculation of war success and leads to a higher level of showing their defence willingness.¹⁷ However, alternatively, citizens may free ride the major powers' commitment, and they may instead become unwilling to defend their home country. Future studies may discover more evidence in this domain.

Taiwan would serve as an excellent example to illustrate the mechanisms mentioned above. Its complicated historical past, including the Japanese colonization and the loss of war to the Communist Party of China and the Mainland China by the Nationalist party (Kuomintang) and its authoritarian rules before democratization in 1996, the public in Taiwan used to encounter some identity crises in their entangling cultural, social, and historical traits with China. On the other hand, China has also tried its best to co-opt Taiwanese business and political elites and wished this could attract the public to be more leaning toward the idea of unification without warfare. However, as the majority of Taiwanese has claimed a Taiwanese identity¹⁸ in recent years and the favouritism toward unification declined significantly¹⁹, China has resorted to coercion with the People's Liberation Army's fighter jets crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait constantly since the campaigning period of the 2020 Taiwanese presidential election to even now in 2021.²⁰ Aside from the bilateral interaction, the US-China relationship also plays a critical role as we are witnessing another great power competition after the Cold War, starting during the US-China trade war in 2018.²¹ Compared to China's military threats to Taiwan, the United States is making its stance over Taiwan's security clearer without fundamentally altering its foreign policy doctrine, Strategic Ambiguity, toward the Strait.²² This evidences that studies of public support for wars of necessity are ever more critical than now.

As Yeh and Wu detail in their study of the war of necessity in Taiwan against a potential invasion from China: "Although there are several reasons to postulate that the public facing a war of necessity will react differently from those facing wars of choice in Western states, we found support for most of the indicators such as principle policy objectives, multilateralism, ethnicity, partisanship, generation, and education. This result increases our confidence of the generalizability of existing findings in the literature."²³

In addition, other research also has shown that the security commitment from the United States is vital to the self-defence willingness among the Taiwanese public.²⁴ To enhance the generalizability of the research on the willingness of self-defence for wars of necessity, replications of the research by Yeh and Wu and its extension are urgent.

Taken together, individual preferences of wars of choice compared to wars of necessity is certainly different. This chapter provides an overview and illustrates some mechanisms that would extend our understanding of this comparison. Scholars and policymakers have to consider these visible and vital differences to better understand the public support for wars of necessity.

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Conceptualizing Willingness to Defend and to Fight for Own Country¹

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Willingness to fight war(fare), willingness to fight for own country and willingness to defend one's own country has been the subject to various academic studies. The issue has been approached from different perspectives, though usually relying on the interpretation of quantitative data acquired via public polls.

The most comprehensive research in this field has been conducted by Inglehart, Puranen and Welzel, as summarized in their article of 2015. The article presents four hypotheses. First, in a cross-sectional aspect, societies with higher life opportunities and existential security level emphasize pro-choice values and thus demonstrate lower willingness to risk their lives in wars. Second, in a longitudinal aspect, the stronger growth in pro-choice values, the sharper the decline in willingness to endanger their lives. Third, in a multi-level aspect, societies with more common pro-choice values inflict members of those societies with lower levels of willingness to imperil themselves. Fourth, in a historical aspect, humiliation in past wars decreases the willingness to fight. All in all, the authors argued that increased life opportunities contribute to higher valuation of lives and, accordingly, lead to a lower willingness to risk lives.²

Several other hypotheses deserve attention as well. Díez-Nicolás concluded that the level of national pride, as well as the level of confidence in national armed forces is the most accurate prognosticator for the willingness to fight for own country – the higher the national pride and confidence in national armed forces, the higher the willingness to fight for the country. According to him, this trend can be observed in countries with significant differences, and it tends to be stable over long periods of

time.³ Also, Puranen and Torgler have underlined the strong link between higher level of national pride and trust in armed forces, and the willingness to fight. Torgler also added the trust in governments and legal systems as indicators of higher levels.⁴

Several studies have noted that the willingness to fight for one's country significantly depends on the historical, social and political context. Previous research, also that of Inglehart, Puranen and Welzel, has found two groups of countries standing out amongst others – the World War Two Axis powers (Germany and Japan in particular) and the Nordic countries. In the former, willingness to fight is low,⁵ while in the latter it surpasses the predictions of other hypotheses and indicators.⁶ Inglehart, Puranen and Welzel (and Puranen in a separate article) have explained these findings with the lifestyles of the Nordics and the vicinity of Russia which results in associating defence of a state with defence and promotion of values.⁷ Similarly, Díez-Nicolás observed that entanglement in ongoing conflicts and external threats can raise the level of willingness.⁸

Studies have also assessed regional, cultural and socio-economic contexts as determinants. Díez Nicolás concluded that the highest willingness to fight can be observed in Asian Sino-Confucian, Islamic and Sub-Saharan countries, while the lowest in West European Catholic and Anglo-Saxon countries (Baltic states here were classified among West European Protestant countries).⁹ A WIN/Gallup International Global Survey from 2014 concluded that the highest willingness to fight for one's country is in the Middle East and Northern Africa, as well as in Asia (also among Muslims and Hindus in terms of religious affiliation), whereas it is the lowest in Western Europe and North America (also among Protestants).¹⁰ Furthermore, Anderson, Getmansky, and Hirsch-Hoefler concluded that in societies with higher income inequality the willingness to fight for one's own country is lower compared to those with lower inequality levels.¹¹

Among research focusing on choices of individuals, it has often been observed that indicators such as gender and attitude towards the country are notable factors. While various studies tend to arrive at different conclusions on certain indicators, many have concluded that men are more likely to fight than women¹² (some others note also a younger age¹³ and marital status¹⁴), as well as that individuals with higher national pride and trust in the armed forces are willing to fight¹⁵ (some also note the related

trust in the government and legal system, as well as religiousness and ideological inclination towards the right).¹⁶ While the level of education has been discussed as a factor, Anderson, Getmansky, and Hirsch-Hoefler noted a lack of evidence for interrelationship between education of individuals and willingness to fight for country.¹⁷

Other literature has assessed the impact of socio-economic factors on individual's choices. Anderson and Hirsch-Hoefler¹⁸ and Anderson, Getmansky, and Hirsch-Hoefler evaluated the link between economic equality and willingness to fight. The latter research concluded that in societies with low levels of inequality there is no difference in willingness to fight among the rich and the poor. However, as inequality in society grows, rich people become less willing to fight compared to their poor counterparts (poorer individuals are more prone to mobilize to fight).¹⁹ Torgler assessed the impact of divergence between benefits and costs in willingness to go to war. He did not find sufficient evidence that calculation between benefits and costs significantly influences the choice of individuals.²⁰

Finally, Horowitz and Levendusky in an experiment in the United States assessed the impact of conscription in supporting warfare. They concluded that mandatory service reduces public support for wars. The most likely explanation is self-interest of individuals, i.e., preference not to risk their own life as conscripts.²¹

ENDNOTES

¹ The chapter is an updated version of a fragment of a previous study – Māris Andžāns, and Andris Sprūds, "Three-Decade Evolution of the Willingness to Defend One's Own Country: the Case of the Baltic States," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 18, no. 1 (2020): 195–220.

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NATO and the Role of Societal Resilience and Willingness to Defend Own Country

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Global connectivity, technological development, information, and psychological operations as well as other evolving elements present new security challenges for NATO, especially in relation to the resilience of society. Alongside strengthening collective defence, building resilience through civil preparedness and innovation will be a game-changer for the ability to withstand any form of aggression in future. In the long-term perspective, it will require a swift adaptation to new innovations and technology, as well as the readiness and willingness of society to take a part in defending own country. State and non-state actors will need to be engaged to maintain and enhance the security of Allies. The resilience of the society is becoming one of the dominating centres of gravity within the context of modern warfare. It is a precondition of credible deterrence and defence posture – a complementing aspect to the collective defence.

Russia's aggression in Ukraine stimulated discussion of societal elements in the overall deterrence and defence planning among Allies. Although the concept within NATO is still under development, several conclusions can already be drawn about how the Alliance perceives the resilience and what impact it may have on the overall NATO's adaptation process, including within the discussion surrounding the formulation of the new Strategic Concept. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to analyse what collective defence measures have been adopted in recent years and how they relate to the overall resilience of the Alliance and willingness of the society to defend own country – and those of Allies.

Renaissance and dynamics of the resilience within NATO

Considering the lessons learned from Russia's aggression in Ukraine since 2014, the issue of the resilience of Alliance became an indispensable element. From the Wales Summit in 2014 to the Brussels Summit in 2021, the concept of resilience has undergone a transformation. In the declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government in 2014, the concept of resilience was described only through the prism of the cyber dimension. The Enhanced Cyber Defence Policy was endorsed. Overall, it contributed to the fulfilment of the Alliance's core tasks. It recalled that the "fundamental cyber defence responsibility of NATO is to defend its own networks, and that assistance to Allies should be addressed in accordance with the spirit of solidarity, emphasizing the responsibility of Allies to develop the relevant capabilities for the protection of national networks".¹

At the Warsaw Summit in 2016, resilience was further emphasized in the context of the overall agenda. It was linked not only to the cyber dimension, but to the wider debate on societal resilience. In addition to reinforcing collective defence and enhancing capabilities, strengthening resilience was described as an incremental pillar of adaptation process of the Alliance. As stated in the declaration, "[Heads of State and Government] made a commitment to continue to enhance resilience and to maintain and further develop individual and collective capacity to resist any form of armed attack".²

The policy adapted at the Warsaw Summit emphasized that resilience must be seen first and foremost through the prism of national responsibility – as an expression of Article 3. Heads of State and Government in 2016 reinforced the Resilience Guidelines that were adopted by the ministers of defence in 2016 prior to the Summit. Resilience Guidelines set by NATO focused "on continuity of government and essential services, security of critical civilian infrastructure, and support to military forces with civilian means"³. By adopting a new sustainability policy, the Allies acknowledged that the security issue was complex and comprehensive, requiring a coordinated and unconventional solutions. It also pointed to the need for a long-term development and adaptation. To face the challenges of the new security environment, Allies need to develop critical civilian capabilities, alongside and in support of military capabilities. It also requires intensified

and integrated cooperation between entire government and private sector. Thus, strengthening whole of government approach. The policy required resilience to be seen in the context of NATO's defence capabilities and operational planning. This is a new precondition for strengthening overall deterrence and defence posture.

Unlike previous summits, the policy in Brussels Summit in 2021 envisaged an increasing role for NATO in developing and advancing the requirements of resilience. Although the perception of Heads of State and Government that resilience is first and foremost a national responsibility hasn't significantly transformed, a number of strengthening elements in 2021 have been introduced. In the light of the collective commitments set out in Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, a number of integrated measures have been adopted to strengthen the overall resilience of the Alliance. It is important that the principles of resilience are linked to any type of contingency – peace, crisis, as well as to conflict. In the Brussels Summit it was agreed that “Allies will develop a proposal to establish, assess, review, and monitor resilience objectives to guide nationally developed resilience goals and implementation plans [and] that it will be up to each individual Ally to determine how to establish and meet national resilience goals and implementation plans, allowing them to do so in a manner that is compatible with respective national competences, structures, processes and obligations”⁴. Thus, the role of the Alliance in the overall supervision of the resilience increased.

In order to fulfil the Alliance's core tasks and strengthen the credibility of the Alliance resilience is essential and of utmost importance. Therefore, at the Brussels Summit leaders went further and agreed that resilience isn't just a national responsibility, but also a collective commitment. The importance of the resilience in the overall discussion within NATO was shown by the establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience that is located in Romania.

To ensure a coherent approach, the Alliance's role is expected to increase in the future. Today, each country still has a different understanding of what measures need to be taken and what effect they have on the overall sustainability of the Alliance. The creation of guidelines and rules is a step in the right direction in the context of the overall adaptation process of the Alliance.

Strengthening (improving) the concept of resilience

According to Sun Tzu, supremacy derives from a conquest without fighting. In the book “Art of War”, he stressed the excellence of victorious leaders who had won before a battle even started, opposed to the failures of those who first went to war, attempting to win thereafter. Thus, power derives from the skill to break the enemy’s resilience without firing a single shot. The same importance of the resilience could be perceived through the prism of deterrence. As very clearly described by the Ministry of Defence of the United Kingdom “... deterrence is a general reputation, generated over time by a posture (and visible actions) that portrays an image of credibility and resilience regarding any hostile intent. This reputation is built by how adversaries interpret that posture. It is essential to understand that posture is not the same as reputation”⁵. In practice, deterrence by denial consists of resilience and entanglement. It is vital to understand the value of resilience, indisputably the less glamorous part of deterrence and one that has long been treated as an afterthought⁶. Despite this neglected position, deterrence by resilience can significantly change the attacker’s cost-benefit calculation. Successful deterrence is based on resilience.

Recognising the complexity and importance of the issue of the resilience, the Alliance has gone further and set out additional steps to take a whole-of-government approach to enhancing the resilience of societies. Whole-of-government approach involving most of the government institutions into defence planning is of utmost importance to ensure resilience in various dimensions and fields. In this context, the Alliance has adopted “seven NATO Baseline Requirements for national resilience, through enhanced civil-military cooperation and civil preparedness; closer engagement with populations, the private sector, and non-governmental actors; and the centres of expertise on resilience established by Allies”⁷. Especially, civil preparedness has been perceived as a central pillar of the whole-of-government approach. It is a “game changer” for the overall Alliance’s deterrence and defence posture. Enhancing civil preparedness will be crucial in ensuring the credibility of the posture. NATO’s increased role and shared responsibility among Allies will be a important precondition to deliver it.

Among other critical infrastructure, supply chains, and communication information networks, including 5G, are the most common elements found

in the Alliance's debate on resilience. Given the growing activity of Russia and China, the ability to meet these challenges is becoming vital to the overall deterrence and defence posture of the Alliance. Launching the #NATO2030 process, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg pointed out that "credible deterrence and defence are central, because "the best way to prevent a conflict, is to remove any room for doubt, any room for miscalculation about NATO's readiness, willingness to protect all Allies."⁸ He also underscored that resilience is key and "that resilience – be it infrastructure, telecommunications, 5G or healthcare, access to protective equipment – all of that matters for the civilian society, but it actually also matters for NATO as a military alliance and our military capabilities."⁹ This confirms the assumption that, whatever adaptation processes take place, the overall resilience of the Alliance is one of the key pillars of the future of the Alliance.

Brussels Summit in 2021 was affected not only by the adaptation processes that began at the Wales and Warsaw summits and the increasing notion of the importance of technologies, but also by the global pandemic and the Alliance's ability to meet such unprecedented challenges. This has added a new dimension to the resilience. The challenges posed by COVID-19 call for new measures. The compatibility of the civil, environmental, health, economic and political spheres with the military takes on an even more pronounced hue. Like other organizations, NATO was not prepared to face challenges at the beginning of the pandemic. Military exercises were abolished, decision-making was interrupted, and coordination between the Allies was undermined. Although the Alliance had the ability to find short-term solutions more rapidly than other organizations, long-term resilience to such challenges needs to be strengthened. The need for military involvement and integration with the civilian sphere in today's hybrid warfare will only increase. Separating them would be an inappropriate approach, which would undermine the Alliance's resilience to external threats, which may be caused by both national ambitions and international disasters. Success will be based on NATO's ability to coordinate and supervise the integration of civil and military sectors.

Current challenges require NATO to continue to strengthen its resilience. Joint and coordinated action between the Allies will be an essential precondition for promoting common sustainability. At the same

time, cooperation with partners and international organizations matters. First, it provides the best solutions for strengthening resilience. Second, it mutually strengthens and enhances overall security in the Euro-Atlantic area. In this context, the cooperation with the EU is vital. In a crisis and conflict situation, the EU's role in providing civilian support to military operations will be crucial in the context of the success of the joint operation. Strengthening the overall resilience of NATO and EU requires enhanced cooperation between both organizations in the form of joint civil-military exercises and common regulations, as well as information exchange.

Shared threat perception and solidarity as preconditions of resilience

Strength and power are elements that Russia respects. To have credible deterrence, the Alliance needs to strengthen and to demonstrate its ability to use might and power, if that is required. A demonstration of strength, which could be expressed both in large-scale exercises and deployment of permanent Allied forces, is the best signal to the aggressor that the defence of each country, and thus of the Alliance as a whole, is being seriously planned, tested and valued. Softening and reducing positions will be perceived as a point of weakness that Russia will utilize according to its own interests. Therefore, measures adapted since 2014, including in the Baltic region, is the (minimum) basis in the current security environment on which the Alliance's common deterrence and defence policy should be further strengthened.

Solidarity and the desire to protect the country are two other highly valued elements in the administration of Vladimir Putin. According to Russia's General Gerasimov's doctrine, influencing public sentiment in a way that provides a basis for military intervention is one of the main centres of gravity of the operation. Accordingly, the strength (or weakness) of states depends directly on society's willingness to protect its country as well as Allies, if that is required.

One of the essential elements of the resilience and solidarity is the common understanding of the level and classification of threats. As mentioned in

the previous chapters, following Russia's aggression in Ukraine, several decisions were taken at the Wales Summit in 2014 and at the Warsaw Summit in 2016, which illustrated the change of consciousness and mindset among Allies. Both summits indicated that Allies have "come to" a common threat perception where Russia's aggression in Ukraine creates a long-term consequence for the transatlantic security. A common understanding of Russia's ambitions and its revisionist approach in the international arena was demonstrated. That was a turning point for the security of the Baltic states. Prior to Russia's aggression in Ukraine, several Central and Western European Allies were rather interested in normalizing relations with Russia, even in the form of civil-military cooperation. From the perspective of Baltic states, such an approach was considered as unfavourable and risky, based on the national threat assessment. Nevertheless, the Heads of State and Government in Wales and Warsaw were able to agree on far-reaching measures to strengthen the Alliance's collective defence and rapid response capabilities, as well as the re-enforcing of the central role of transatlantic relations in ensuring security, while maintaining a clear and common understanding of the threat and challenges the Alliance is facing.

Although there was emerging unity among the Allies at the 2014 and 2016 summits, in recent years, national interests and perceptions have come to the fore again. Russia's aggression in Ukraine and aggressive assertiveness expressed in many forms are no longer a unifying threat that bring all these actors together. In this regard, Baltic states have a completely different perception compared to other Allies – being very sceptical of Russian military activism in the Baltic Sea and other surrounding regions. Consequently, resilience in the context of NATO must be seen in the broader sense of solidarity and unity among Allies. Although resilience is primarily a national responsibility, it is the shared understanding among Allies that will determine the extent to which collective defence is corresponding with existing challenges. To ensure the willingness and readiness of society to be involved in defending itself and its Allies, a common threat perception communicated by the political and military leaders is vital.

Understanding the necessity and willingness to defend (not only) own country

The willingness to protect Allies and engage in conflict (if that is the case) is an essential deterrent element. There are several ways in which the willingness to protect the Allies can be projected, demonstrated and analysed. One of the most striking forms of expression, which has contributed to the calculation on the aggressor's side, is the deployment of Allied forces in the Baltic states and Poland - enhanced Forward Presence (eFP). Within the discussion of the deployment, issue of the willingness to defend other Allies became relevant. Overall, it highlighted the challenges and lack of unity among Allies, as there are, for instance, still several Allies that are not present in any of the eFP battlegroups. It illustrates the perception of both political leaders and societies of various Allies that differ from one Ally to another.

This doesn't imply that Article 5 has been challenged. It remains the cornerstone of the Alliance deterrence and defence posture. In addition, NATO as a whole continues to be supported by the vast majority. Although tensions and issues exist among Allies, NATO's overall support and position is rock solid. However, when it comes to the practical steps, opinions of NATO and issues related to the Alliance vary widely across the countries. The sentiment of the society highlights the challenges of the overall willingness to step on the soil of an Ally from the very outset of the conflict or crisis. According to the survey made by Pew Research Center, "when asked if their country should defend a fellow NATO Ally against a potential attack from Russia, a median of 50% across 16 NATO member states say their country should not defend an Ally, compared with 38% who say their country should defend an Ally against a Russian attack"¹⁰. Half of the Allies' societies are against involvement in the conflict with Russia. This type of research only stimulates Russia's appetite to test the Alliance's unity and solidarity.

According to other survey made by the Institute of Land Warfare, significant negative indicators of political will do exist because of following reasons:

1. "NATO lacks sufficient key leaders who support the use of force to defend the Baltics.

2. NATO displays evidence of diverging alliance missions, threats, interests, perceptions of Russia and domestic interests, all of which diminish common understanding of the threat.
3. NATO retains significant strength in the third component – a potentially-effective solution – due to latent military and economic power”.¹¹

The (un)willingness to protect Allies poses significant challenges in the context of collective defence. First of all, it affects the speed of decision-making. Aware that there is no consensus among the Allies, Russia will be able to exploit the lack of political will. By pursuing covert hybrid warfare, Russia may thus deter most of the Allies from engaging in the first phase of a conflict or crisis. Second, it may provide an incentive to Russia to implement a large-scale Anti Access / Area Denial (A2/AD) scenario. A large-scale and unexpected conventional attack could lead to the blockade of the Baltic states from the rest of the Alliance. In this case, the reinforcement of Allied forces will be crucial. The involvement of the Allies will be based on the willingness (support) of societies to protect the Baltic states, which have emerged during peacetime. Finally, the public’s willingness to defend its Allies is particularly important in the context of new threats: cyber, strategic communications (disinformation), energy, etc. In order to meet the challenges posed by Russia (as well as China), the Alliance’s common resilience and the Allies’ willingness to improve each other is of utmost importance.

Conclusions

Strengthening deterrence and resilience is a permanent task. The Baltic region borders with an actor who exploits the opponent’s weaknesses in its own interests. To deter such an adversary, the Alliance must continue to strengthen its capabilities, ensure an enhanced and integrated Allied force presence, and send signals that any form of aggression will provoke a broad and rapid collective response. The credibility of the messaging will be determined by society’s desire to protect more than just its own country. The willingness to protect the Alliance is, therefore, a cornerstone of the deterrence and defence posture.

From NATO's perspective, it is premature to predict that resilience in near or mid-term future will become, first and foremost, NATO's responsibility. Member States are expected strengthen their resilience internal and external shocks, thus, overall enhancing the Alliance's ability to adapt to new challenges. In this context, Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty is a complementary element to Article 5. By strengthening national resilience, NATO's collective defence is enhanced. If each member state individually and the Alliance as a whole is resilient to external attacks, this makes the Alliance stronger as a whole. In this context, it is important to identify the innovative areas and niche skills that each member state can contribute to a common NATO capability pot. It must be rather a complementary than competitive process. In this regard, NATO as unifying framework will be crucial to set the agenda and specific requirements when it comes to ensuring resilient society.

However, in recent years, differences among Allies in their threat perception as well as their willingness to defend other Allies have intensified. The ability to adapt to uncertain and ever-changing international security environment has been a precondition for NATO's success and development, and so will be the issue of resilience and willingness to engage. Since the founding of NATO in 1949, the Alliance has experienced several internal and external shocks that have eventually affected NATO's future existence. NATO has been able to adapt and find solutions to the challenges it faces. Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 was a wake-up call that highlighted gaps and weaknesses in the Alliance's perception, approach, and action. It also illustrated the importance of willingness, readiness, and ability of the society to take part in defence against any form of the attack. Without increased willingness to defend whole Alliance the adaptation process of the deterrence and defence posture is useless. Allied leaders and the Alliance as a whole need to find ways to raise awareness of the society that could stimulate the overall willingness to engage, if that is necessary. Otherwise, it creates an additional appetite for the adversary to test the unity and solidarity of the Alliance.

ENDNOTES

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Willingness to Defend the Baltic States in Quantitative Terms¹

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Willingness to defend or fight for own country has been tracked by various sociological surveys. For the Baltic states, the earliest data goes back to the European Values Study of 1990, when all three countries formally were still part of the Soviet Union.

While methods and questions have varied across the surveys, nevertheless, they provide a generally coherent picture, as Figure 1 suggests. The positive answers of respondents, i.e., expression on willingness to defend or fight for the country (in percent), are mapped year by year (some years contain more than one source while others contain no data at all).

The data mapped in Figure 1 draw from various sources, including polls from 1990 to 2020 for the European Values Study² and the World Values Survey,³ a WIN/Gallup International Global Survey poll,⁴ multiple surveys ordered by the Ministry of Defence of Estonia (polls conducted by Turu-uuringute, Faktum uuringukeskus and Saar Poll),⁵ a survey of the Civic Empowerment Index⁶ and project “Subjective Security in a Volatile Geopolitical Context: Traits, Factors and Individual Strategies” discussed in the publication of Vileikienė and Janušauskienė,⁷ a poll by Spinter Tyrimai commented in a publication of Sutkus,⁸ polls ordered by the Ministry of Defence of Latvia (polls conducted by SKDS),⁹ a poll presented in publication of Andžāns, Sprūds and Bruģe (poll conducted by SKDS),¹⁰ a poll presented in a publication of Ainė Ramonaitė, Petronytė-Urbonavičienė, Skirkevičius and Vosylius,¹¹ a poll presented in the publication by Andžāns and Sprūds (poll conducted by Turu-uuringute, SKDS and Baltic Surveys),¹² a poll presented in the publication by Bērziņa and Zupa (poll conducted by Latvian Facts),¹³ as well as a poll from an upcoming publication of Andžāns (polls conducted by Turu-uuringute, SKDS and Baltic Surveys).¹⁴

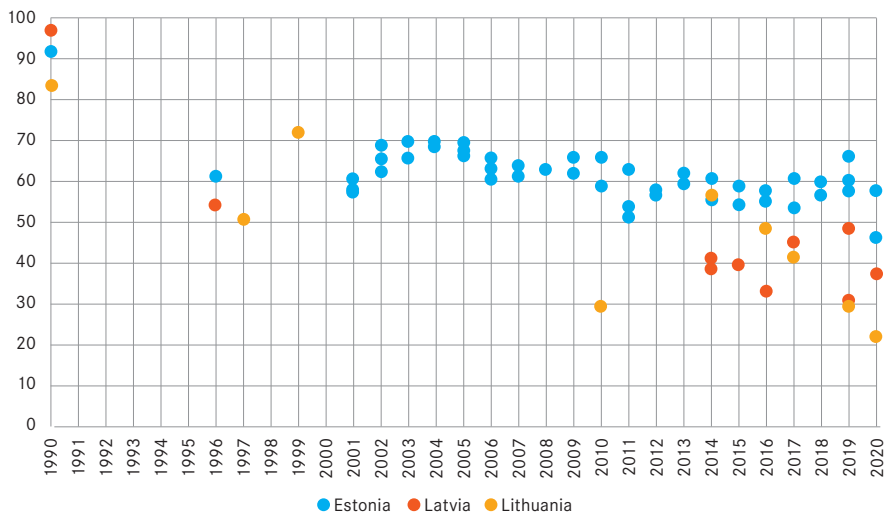


Figure 1: Willingness to defend and fight for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania according to polls from 1990 to 2020 (percent of the respondents).

According to Figure 1, the richest pool of public data is available for Estonia, while the scarcest – for Lithuania. Situation in 1990s can be traced via the contribution of the data from European Values Study and the World Values Survey. The latest decade provides the most intense pool of data as both the polls ordered by state institutions, as well as those requested by academic studies have multiplied.

As the mapping results exemplify, since the beginning of 2000s, the highest level of willingness has been consistently recorded in Estonia, while Latvia and Lithuania have trailed. Also, data for Estonia have been more consistent, even with different sources of survey data per one year and in the following years.

Moving further, Figure 2 and Figure 3 offer a closer look on the situation in the Baltics with assistance of two nationally representative polls which were conducted simultaneously across all three states in November and December of 2019 and 2020, accordingly: 870 and 876 respondents surveyed in Estonia (face-to-face interviews combined with internet interviews), 1001 and 1003 in Latvia, and 892 and 970 respondents in Lithuania (in both countries – face-to-face interviews).¹⁵

In both polls, each respondent was asked the following question – “If [Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania] was attacked, should inhabitants of [Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania], in your opinion, take up arms to defend themselves in all situations, even if the outcome seemed uncertain?” The available answers were “certainly yes”, “rather yes”, “rather no”, “certainly no” and “hard to answer”.

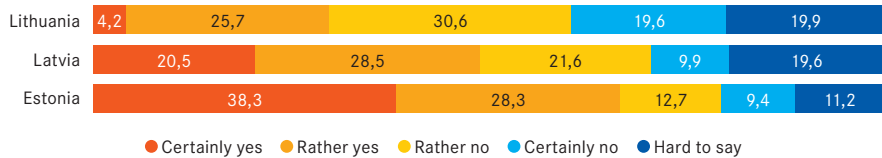


Figure 2: Willingness to defend Baltic states according to a nationally representative poll, ordered by Rīga Stradiņš University, in November/December 2019 (percent of the respondents).

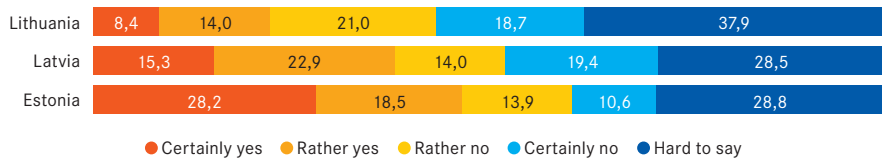


Figure 3: Willingness to defend Baltic states according to a nationally representative poll, ordered by Rīga Stradiņš University, in November/December 2020 (percent of the respondents).

According to both polls, the highest level of willingness to defend one’s own country was recorded in Estonia, while Latvia came second and Lithuania – third, on both occasions. It is important to mention that the second poll was conducted during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. For this or another reason, the results returned significantly higher number of hard-to-say answers.

Needless to say, results from public surveys have to be approached with care and they need a robust interpretation. The same questions can mean different things to different people. Also, people’s opinions and positions do not necessarily reflect in action. Therefore, authors of each of the following country chapters on Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will approach these data in a broader context, providing their analytical perspective.

ENDNOTES

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Willingness to Defend Estonia: Fostered by Civil-Military Integration and Communication

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Will to defend one's own country is of multifold importance in Estonia, and it may mean more in legal, practical, and cognitive ways than is usual elsewhere. First of all, the article 54 of the Estonian Constitution states: "Estonian citizens have a duty to be loyal to the constitutional order and to defend the independence of Estonia."¹ Obviously, if the will were absent, it would be impossible for the state to enforce this duty on every single citizen.

Secondly, the practical importance of the will to defend is connected to the defence system used in Estonia – there is compulsory military service for all male citizens that features fighting training. In the case of war these reservists would be mobilized in order to bolster existing units and from reserve ones. Such a system could not be implemented unless the people were willing to go through the military service or to join their units in the case of mobilization. Additionally, some defence tasks are carried out by the Defence League, a voluntary organization.

Thirdly, people think that defending one's own country is important. According to public opinion polls, when people were asked to name the strongest guarantees of the security of the country, "defence willingness of people" was in solid second place, losing only to "membership in NATO".² The same notion has been shared by high-ranking defence officials.³

The popular knowledge shared also by opinion of Estonian press is that the will to defend is "high" in the country. Although this notion does not

necessarily have to be wrong, it raises some following questions this article tries to answer: How the will to defend is defined and measured in Estonia? What are the results and dynamics of the results over time? Finally, the most sophisticated question: What are the reasons and processes behind such results? While first three questions are answerable based on earlier literature and public opinion polls, in the case of the last question, establishing, not to mention proving, all the causal relationships may prove to be overcomplicated. Therefore, in addition to consultation of earlier studies, a focus group and more essayistic approach was used.

There are different options for defining will to defend (or in other words: will to fight for one's own country). In Estonian usually the term "kaitsetahe" is used, which literally translates to English as "will to defend". Although it is used in various strategy documents, it has not been defined there. According to a practitioner researching the issue, the definition best applicable for Estonia would be "will of every individual to defend his/her country".⁴ It can be divided into active (readiness to personally participate in armed resistance) and passive (general approval of resistance in the case of foreign aggression) willingness to defend.⁵

Measuring the will to defend in Estonia

The mainstay of measuring the will to defend is the "Public opinion on national defence" – a poll conducted on the order of Ministry of Defence for more than 20 years. During the period of 2000–2006 the survey was conducted trice a year, since 2007, twice a year. The planned sample has always been 1000, the methodology and questions similar and comparable, although some alternations and adding more questions has been necessary. Reports of the surveys conducted since 2001 are freely available on the website of the Ministry of Defence in Estonian, reports since 2012 are also available in English.⁶ In current questionnaires there are 51 questions on the subject matter plus 18 questions on background of the respondent.⁷ In addition to the will to defend, a wide set of opinions on security is asked.

The reports contain a comparison of data going back to 2000 and serve as a solid basis for both academic and public discussion. However, there are some limitations.

Firstly, the most obvious limitation is that gathering of data only started in 2000. Therefore, research on public opinion on the defence issues during the first nine years after regaining Estonia's independence cannot be conducted with the same accuracy as during the later period. There have been attempts to overcome the problem by using other data, and, in the case of Estonia, these have led researchers to use the European Values Survey 1990.⁸ Data gathering for that survey in Estonia was conducted 1 June to 30 August 1990.⁹ The approach poses some problems, since at that time Estonia was still occupied by Soviet forces and had no military power of its own. What did the respondents have in mind while asked of their "confidence in armed forces"? It is complicated to figure it out 30 years later and even more so to compare it with more recent data.

Secondly, although the questionnaire is rather long – that also means time-consuming for the respondent and resource consuming for the customer – there may always be some more questions of interest for academic study. In such cases additional (sometimes *ad hoc*) surveys are conducted, but this cannot be done retrospectively. The largest of them is the survey of persons going through their compulsory military service that saw light for the first time in 2016.¹⁰ Smaller surveys concerning different aspects of the will to defend have been executed as a part of BA¹¹ or MA¹² studies at universities or as a part of higher-level officer training.¹³

In addition to the polls, there are other indicators of the will to defend. Some of them are easily measurable, like the percentage of conscripts entering the service as volunteers. Some others are also measurable, but the data is not easily available in the public domain, like the percentage of reservists showing up for the annual planned or snap military exercises.

Others may be a bit more indirect, but still showing something. After the Russian-speaking pro-Communist hardliners' coup d'état attempt in Tallinn on 15 May 1990, there was an influx of volunteers to the newly formed Home Guard and Border Guard, the same way there was an influx of members to Defence League and Volunteer Police after riots in Tallinn on 26–27 April 2007. An even more drastic example may be August 1991, when estimated 2000 thousand volunteers of Home Guard and Defence League were ready to face the additional Soviet troops entering Estonia from the direction of Pskov. They had almost no firearms and lacked structure, equipment, and

training – one might argue they did not have much except the will to defend. Although such events do not show any long-time trends, they probably show the heightened will to defend during troubled times for the country.

Results of the survey “Public opinion on national defence”

The overall dynamics of the will to defend of Estonia’s population are probably best demonstrated by the Figure 1.

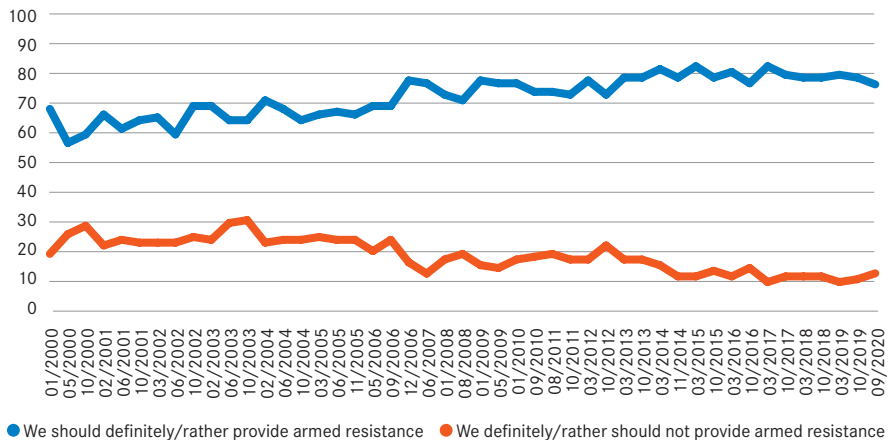


Figure 1: Assessments of the need to provide armed resistance, comparison of 2000–2020 (percent, n=all respondents) (surveys ordered by the Estonian Ministry of Defence).¹⁴

In order to understand the numbers, a timeline of security related events in Estonia and the region is helpful. The reason for starting the surveys was the process of Estonia becoming a NATO member, however, the threat picture was not the same as two decades later. By 2000, Russia was not aggressive towards the West or Estonia (although maybe cold towards the latter) and its military resources were limited, struggling inside its own borders in Chechnya, not invading any neighbours.

Since 2003, Estonian Defence Forces widened their foreign missions to Iraq (platoon until 2009) and Afghanistan (in 2006–2014 there was a company serving there), over the years 11 EDF personnel were killed in

action and 130 were wounded or injured.¹⁵ In 2004, Estonia became a full member of NATO. In 2007, pro-Russian riots took place in Tallinn and the country faced cyber-attacks from the same source.¹⁶ In 2008, Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. There were also some positive news regarding security – in 2014, NATO air policing fighters arrived to Ämari AFB in Estonia to stay and 150 US soldiers were temporarily stationed in Estonia. In 2016, the decision was made during NATO summit to position Enhanced Forward Presence troops in Estonia, that arrived at Tapa Military Base in spring 2017.

Not all of the abovementioned events have had detectable traces on Figure 1. Still, some heightened alertness seems to be detectable in 2006–2007 and 2013–2014, since when the level of the will to defend has remained constantly high.

Although the perception of security of Estonians and representatives of other nationalities (mainly Russian-speakers) may be different, the number of supporters of armed resistance among them do not differ drastically, at some point in 2006 and 2013 non-Estonians even surpassing Estonians, see Figure 2. Again, the numbers are rather stable since 2014, however, the reasons for earlier changes in the public mood remain unknown.

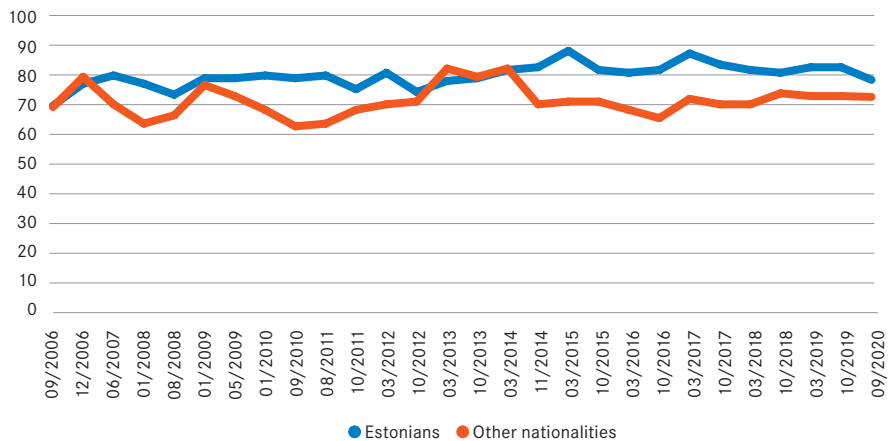


Figure 2: Proportion of supporters of armed resistance, comparison of Estonians and non-Estonians, 2006-2020 (percent of respondents considering armed resistance definitely and probably necessary, n=all respondents) (surveys ordered by the Estonian Ministry of Defence).¹⁷

The two figures presented above speak of the passive will to defend. The survey also monitors the active will to defend. Figure 3 shows the results making distinction between ethnic Estonians, Estonian citizens who are not ethnic Estonians, and others. As one can notice, the numbers of people willing to actively participate are considerably lower than those on the previous figure supporting the fighting in principle. In this context, it is worth mentioning that according to Estonian legislation only citizens have to serve in the armed forces. Therefore, although the non-citizens have some will to defend, they are not trained for it.

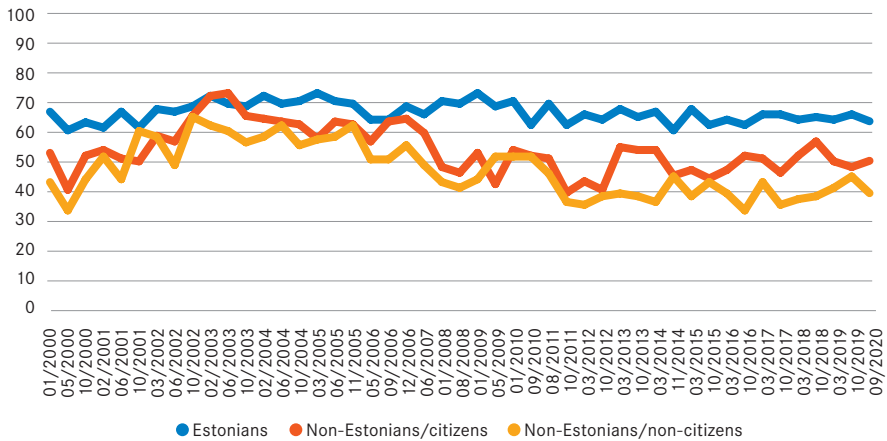


Figure 3: Proportion of residents willing to participate in defence activities in the case of an attack, comparison of Estonian and non-Estonian speaking residents, 2000–2020 (percent of respondents definitely or probably willing to participate, n=all respondents) (surveys ordered by the Estonian Ministry of Defence).¹⁸

Finally, results with most practical utility from the military perspective, according to Estonian legislation, a person liable for national defence obligation is “a male person between the ages of 18 and 60 years”.¹⁹ Table 1 shows will to defend of those who are trained and would be expected to do so. Although among Estonians the results are higher than among non-ethnic-Estonians, both seem to be fairly high, although not at the same level as the number of overall supporters of military resistance.

Category	All age groups	15–34 years of age	35–49 years of age	50–64 years of age	65+ years of age
Men of Estonian nationality with Estonian citizenship	74,4	70,6	80,6	79,1	65,9
Men of other nationalities with Estonian citizenship*	64,1	61,5	66,7	68,8	50,0
All men with Estonian citizenship	72,8	69,4	78,8	77,3	63,5

Table 1: Proportion of people willing to participate in defence activities in the case of attack among men with Estonian citizenship by age and nationality, autumn 2020 (survey ordered by the Estonian Ministry of Defence) (percent).²⁰

Although these numbers never have and hopefully never will be tested, they seem to be high enough to make mobilised EDF a credible deterrent.

Possible reasons for survey results

In 1993, the Head of the General Staff [and de facto Chief of Defence] Colonel [and later 4-star General] Ants Laaneots was asked by journalist on the issue of will in the following wording: “General Laidoner [C-in-C 1934-1940] considered the state’s will to defend to be the basis of the state’s defence capability. Does Estonia have enough of it now?” Laaneots answered with a gloomy face:

“Today it would be an overstatement to say that people’s will to defend is on the appropriate level. The will of Estonian people in years 1938, 1939, 1940 and later cannot be compared with the one today. This is probably the legacy of our slave psychology, which has come due to this 52-year occupation, and as this inertia, this mood is passed on. It is still the case today that many citizens, both male and female, do not realize that we are an independent country and nobody except ourselves is going to defend us. Patriotism, a sense of responsibility towards one’s homeland, which is especially developed among, say, young men in the Scandinavian countries, we have not reached it yet, and it is probably a long process to get there.”²¹

This quote was used as a starting point for a focus group (FG) of four experienced practitioners of the field to discuss the undercurrents of Estonia's will to defend in three last decades, and the following conclusions are based on the results of the group.²² It adds considerably to basic timeline sketched in previous subchapter.

Besides many socio-economic reasons behind the low will to defend in 1990ies, the FG pointed out the low perception of threat based on philosophy – interpretation of Francis Fukuyama's ideas as the end of history with the good winning was popular also in Estonia. Additionally, in the criminal turmoil of 1990, some EDF or Defence League members attracted the media interest because of criminal activities or consuming alcohol while on duty. In 1997, there was a tragedy of 14 soldiers getting killed in one accident during peace-time training. The First Chechen War starting in 1994 raised the sense of threat only moderately. On the other hand, the first positive trends also started in the same decade, like reserve officer courses for student lasting for three summers (1996–1998) and reserve exercises involving VIP-s.

The reserve military in general disrupts the borders between the armed forces and civilian society – most males go to the military service and later return to the society with more knowledge, also the reserve officers spread understanding of military affairs among civilians and vice versa. These processes are made even smoother by vocational military education in high schools. In the same context the Higher Defence Courses must be mentioned, organised for opinion leaders and decision makers since 1999.

Popularity of the military has been upgraded by its help to civilians in crises. Most publicly known is the deployment of field hospital with military personnel to the island of Saaremaa during the hight of Covid-19 crisis in Spring 2020, but the military has also participated in saving the plane after a crash landing on the ice of Lake Ülemiste next to Tallinn airport in 2010, and in other minor cases.

Last not least, the communication efforts of the military have been effective. The first large campaigns like “Conscription is an Honour”²³ (since 2000) and “Father defends” (since 2003, jointly with police) started already long ago and have changed significantly.

The importance of history and its popularity after regaining independence in the formation of the will to defend should not be underestimated. The War

of Independence of 1918–1920 showed, that even Russia is beatable if the will is strong. The Soviet-initiated Communist coup d'état attempt in 1924 showed that there are some dangers even during – seemingly – peace time. The silent submission of 1939 left a shadow of shame (although Finland managed to remain independent through fighting) and occupations of 1940–1991 showed what happens to those who do not fight.

A part of the historical heritage is also the volunteer culture, Defence League having the most impact. The military is also traditionally involved in celebrations of the two most important national holidays, with EDF parade on 24 February (Independence Day of 1918) and Defence League Parade on 23 June (Victory Day of 1919). The survival of historical heritage has been supported by cinema productions and TV series, to a lesser extent by literature. The film “Names in Marble”²⁴ (2002), based on 1936 novel depicting the battle route of volunteer schoolboys battalion during the War of Independence breaking battles of January 1919, has had the highest impact.

Historical memory is also preserved by war memorials all over the country and the museums, such as the Estonian War Museum in Tallinn and the Permanent Exhibition of the Patriotic Education in Valga.

Conclusions

The will to defend is a complex phenomenon. For Estonia it has a high practical meaning, making its reserve military operational and deterrence credible. Luckily for Estonia this phenomenon is rather precisely and frequently measured for already more than two decades. The current numbers – last poll available during preparation of this article is from September 2020 – are encouraging. However, there are still some problems remaining, like the gap in the will to defend between ethnic Estonians and their other compatriots.

The blank spot in the knowledge on the will to defend are the 1990ies. Since frequent polls with sound methodology were not conducted at the time, it would be a complex task to provide any final conclusions on that period.

The reasons behind the relatively high will to defend are more debatable. In addition to the events in the field of security and the overall threat picture,

the experts in the focus group also saw the importance of the integration of military and civilian sector caused by the reserve military system and overall conscription, the visibility of NATO, education in high schools and among opinion leaders, military public affairs activities and, last but not least – historical heritage.

Compared to Latvia and Lithuania, the will to defend seems to be higher in Estonia according to available data. There is no single and easily identifiable reason behind these differences. On one hand, explaining everything with differences in national psyche would be short-sighted and far from academic approach. On the other hand, the security concerns of the three countries are similar and have been so for already a century. These countries are similar in many other respects as well, although Estonia's nominal per capita GDP is slightly higher, considering some other measurable factors the countries have rather similar scores and ranking in the United Nations Human Development Index – Estonia ranks 29, Lithuania 34 and Latvia 37 among 189 countries.²⁵

The only obvious difference between the countries is in the military system. Latvia abolished conscription in 2007, Lithuania in the period between 2008 and 2015, while in Estonia conscription has been constant. This has had positive influence on the will to defend inside the Estonian society. There may also be some geographical reasons, like Estonia being more influenced by Nordic Countries, especially Finland where the will to defend has traditionally been high.²⁶ It is possible that the communication of defence issues has been more successful in Estonia, or maybe some historical reasons contribute to the data. Probably only a detailed survey of different aspects on the will to defend simultaneously and with the same methodology in all three countries could provide a clearer understanding.

ENDNOTES

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Willingness to Defend Latvia: Suffering from Disillusionment, Distrust and Individual Preferences and Abilities

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There is a significant number of existing polling and research on willingness of the Latvian population to defend its own country. The polling done for this research does not demonstrate significant deviations from the classical trends. The Latvian population traditionally has been prone to support its country against external enmities after regaining independence. The country of Latvia is being held dear, while criticism of the ruling political parties, politicians, the overall development of the state of Latvia has been high with clear signs of disappointment. Complicated relationships with neighbouring countries, in particular the Russian Federation, also increase the equivocal outlook among the Latvian population.

This chapter will deal with the trends in willingness of the population of the country to defend Latvia. It will provide three central explanations of what has been influencing and shaping the attitudes of the Latvian population and what is influencing them now. The three aspects to reckon with are: the attitudes towards Latvia's political and economic development over the last thirty years; the relationship with the Russian Federation (and Belarus); and the psychological and physical factors required for active actual defence. The chapter will argue that there is a significant disappointment and confusion among the Latvian population that prevents it from being stronger supporters of defending Latvia. The chapter will build on the polling data gathered for this research to demonstrate tendencies and make conclusions.

Attitudes towards Latvia's political and economic development

Since Latvia regained independence, the willingness to defend the country among the Latvian population has had the tendency to decrease. The momentum of regaining independence, popular resistance against the Soviet Union and hopes for brighter future in the re-established nation state influenced the spirit of people. The uplifting feelings associated with the new state after the Soviet Union collapsed were visible through the Latvian society. Defending the state against external enemies was especially outspoken among the Latvian speaking part of the population. Poverty and living standard discrepancies between the Soviet Union and Western countries raised hopes for rapidly improving life as Latvia would tilt towards the West.

The political, economic, and social transformation of the 1990s did not result in increased welfare for the masses. This together with continuous political scandals facilitated disappointment among the Latvian population. Lengthy inability to improve the living standards for most of the population in combination with widespread corruption, criminality, highly negative opinions in mass media, with lack of perspective on individual level can be regarded as reasons for disappointment and consequently – decreasing patriotism and willingness to defend the country. Disappointment in the state and its political leadership, and country's slow economic development continued throughout the 2000s and into 2010s, especially when in the 2008-2009 economic crisis hit Latvia hard. As the Figure 1 of the chapter "Willingness to Defend the Baltic States in Quantitative Terms" research demonstrates, the willingness to defend Latvia has been gradually falling and in early 2010s reached the record lows of approximately 30 to 40 percent of the ones who are ready. The original disappointment about Latvia's post-Soviet economic and political development in the 1990s was gradually substituted with growing disillusionment after Latvia was struck by economic and financial crisis in 2008.

Data demonstrate that despite post-crisis economic development and worsening of the geopolitical situation in the region, the willingness to defend the country has not been rapidly increasing. In 2014, when the

Ukrainian crisis emerged, the numbers of willingness to defend did increase, but the overall tendency of willingness to defend has kept falling instead. To explain the trend and the current situation with 2020 data, two factors must be analysed separately: economic disappointment and political disillusionment. The economic disappointment is related to the means and options that are available to most of the Latvian population both objectively and subjectively. The political disillusionment is tied to losing interest in political participation and sense of belonging to the nation state.

Economic disappointment is tied to the fact that despite being part of the European Union, the Eurozone, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and many other multilateral economic organisations and institutions Latvia's socio-economic situation is still worse than that of the most other European Union member states. Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of Latvia is not only at the levels of 69 percent of the EU average,¹ but it is lower than that of the closest partners and historical friends Estonia and Lithuania. In reality, Latvia is the poorest country in the Baltic Sea region, besides Belarus and the Russian Federation. The fact that Latvia for 30 years already has been less developed economically in comparison to its closest neighbours does not facilitate the populations' willingness to defend the country.

Inequality levels in Latvia are significant, with GINI index still reaching 35.1 in 2018,² which does not help to improve the people's trust and support for the country or its society. Risk of poverty and social exclusion is high in Latvia, with 26 percent of population being subjected to risk of poverty. Although the number has been steadily decreasing over the years, the absolute number of poor people in 2019 was almost half a million.³ This is a sour situation if one takes into account that people with a sense of economic safety in their country are the backbone of those willing to defend the state by any means against any foreign enemy. Those who have material possessions, especially real estate property and lifestyle that they could lose in case of foreign attack and change of the government, are more willing to defend the status quo, including their own country.

Economic disappointment over three decades has become embedded in some parts of the Latvian state. In particular, in Eastern regions with continuously high structural unemployment rates, lack of perspective and an unbreakable poverty cycle over generations.⁴ Low levels of accumulated

personal capital and economic perspectives lead to decreased willingness to defend the state. Sense of belonging and economic welfare cannot be separated. Willingness to defend the political system which has brought hardships and has not alleviated socio-economic burdens does not stimulate individual or popular support.

And this is tied to the second aspect – the political disillusionment among the Latvian population. Political disillusionment is a result of several factors. Most important of which is the continuous lack of strong nationwide political narrative. Latvia is a multi-ethnic society with freedom of religion and all the traditional civil liberties guaranteed to most of the population. Meanwhile, not only the ethnical, religious, cultural disunity has limited the development of a strong dominating yet inclusive narrative. It is also the long-term challenges with exclusion of certain parts of the population from the political process. Moreover, the complexity of the country's history, especially that of the World War II and the Soviet occupation, and decades-long debates on historical memories did not result in generating one single, unifying message that would be acceptable to the majority of the population.

Due to the communist experiences, the post-Soviet transition, the EU accession and the constantly evolving political, social, cultural, and economic value system, the Latvian society is often confused and lacks a clear national narrative that would serve as the basis for patriotism in Latvia beyond the Latvian ethnical group. Attempts to build a national narrative are also traditionally tied to Latvia's past and history, neglecting modern day achievements and success stories. Such attempts at a national narrative ignore the natural diversity of every society and seek to exclude a wide range of smaller and bigger groups from the economic, social, legal, or political process. This exclusion over the past thirty years has diminished or prevented increasing the willingness especially of the ethnic non-Latvian population, i.e., predominantly Russian speakers, to defend the country. Ethnic non-Latvian population traditionally demonstrates low levels of readiness to defend the country.

Yet, it is not only the lack of an overarching and inclusive national narrative that would fit the socio-economic and culturally linguistic realities of modern Latvia. It is also about the political disillusionment stemming from the democratic political party system and its actors' behaviour. The political scene of Latvia for thirty years has been dominated by a high

turnover of political parties. The political parties tend to not only adjust their names frequently, but also change their leadership, political positions, and allegiances. A visible and confusing problem for voters is the regular birth of new parties and their alliances before every elections and fundamental transformation of existing political parties even while they are represented in the parliament. Both eligible voters and general population tends to follow and support individual candidates and their failure to gain power or fulfil promises is seen with disappointment.

In addition – a large number of corruption scandals, as well as constantly high corruption perception in the country shows that the population distrusts the decision makers. Corruption scandals ranging from state capture to oligarchy and petty corruption have been a constant presence in the country. In addition to mismanagement of state funds, fraud cases, as well as inefficient public procurement procedures both on national level and municipal level, increases distrust in politicians and both elected and appointed officials. This has led to political disillusionment that is also clearly visible via the great number of protest voters at every election. A high number of people choosing to stay out of the political process, including elections, is also alarming and demonstrates that people do not see themselves as stakeholders in Latvia's political process, affecting also the willingness to defend the country.

Lastly, political disillusionment and economic disappointment is attributable to the low overall media-literacy level,⁵ as well as the limited understanding of democratic political process and free market economics among the general population. Too many people see themselves as being constantly played by the state, the decision makers, the entrepreneurs and the economic system itself. An abundance of political positions, media sources, as well as people-to-people connections within the country and with neighbouring countries have also an effect on willingness to defend Latvia.

Relationships with the Russian Federation (and Belarus)

The relationship with Russia and Belarus is a significant aspect to fully understand the willingness of the population to defend Latvia. Both neighbouring countries exercise significant presence not only in Latvia's foreign and security policy, but also in Latvia's media space and society's mental space. Due to the Soviet past, there is a significant familiarity on the political, economic, and people-to-people levels. Diplomatic relations and economic cooperation between countries have been worsening over the past decade and currently have reached the level where Russia officially is seen as the main security threat of Latvia.⁶ Recently, also relations with Belarus have reached lows after the post-2020 election crisis. Meanwhile, for a significant number of Latvia's inhabitants, personal family and friendship connections with Belarus and Russia play a substantial role in perceiving or not perceiving either of these countries as a potential threat.

The case of defending Latvia against military threats from Russia is complex to explain. There is a greater number of factors that need to be considered. The first is that the number of ethnic Russians in Latvia is more than a quarter of population – more than 520 thousand. Out of those a little short of 137 thousand are non-citizens of the Republic of Latvia.⁷ The same logic and principles apply in the case of established long-term family, friendship, and business relations. Familiarity with people from the Russian Federation influences the way how the Latvian society, regardless of ethnicity, perceives the possible threats from the big neighbour.

Russian influence on the minds and hearts of the Latvian population is also actively exercised via Russian mass media, including entertainment programs. Due to widespread Russian language skills among the Latvian population and wide accessibility of programs originating from the Russian Federation, Russia may not be seen as aggressor or even a threat neither to Latvia, nor to the Western world in general. Russia may be perceived as misunderstood by the West and just exercising its legitimate national security interests. Such a perception is especially outspoken among the ethnically Russian population.

Belarus, on the other hand, has not been seen as an immediate security threat. Despite differences in geopolitical approaches and differences in political regimes, both countries have had constructive and improving

economic relations, regular political consultations and even moments of friendly relations. In the minds of many Latvian people, Belarus was seen not only as a friendly country, but even as an example of a successfully governed state. The Latvian society has not learned to perceive Belarus as a potential security threat and defending against it is not seen as a concern. Even now, with Belarus openly leading hybrid warfare against Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, the population is not strongly positioned towards Belarus as a military security threat. Belarus like Russia should be considered from the point of view of active people-to-people relations. Common border regions and common economic projects are just the first examples. One should not forget almost 64 thousand ethnic Belarusians living in Latvia in 2021.⁸ Approximately 28 000 of those are citizens of the Republic of Latvia and approximately the same number are non-citizens of the Republic of Latvia.⁹

Among many other things, the high number of ethnically mixed marriages in Latvia contribute to the mutual understanding and decreasing willingness to defend the country against potential Russian (and Belarusian) invasion. The positive attitudes, predominantly among a significant part of Russian speakers in Latvia, towards Russia and its aggressive policies domestically and abroad are facilitated not only by the official channels but also by misinformation campaigns online. Very often people acquire their information about political processes from entertainment materials unrelated to news or credible information agencies. In combination with the distrust towards the national government and belief that “everyone lies”, the Latvian population tends not to accept the neighbouring countries as an actual threat and their populations as enemies.

People don't want to accept that things they like could be wrong. And the same thing applies to Russia (and to reasonable extent Belarus) as the most immediate threats that Latvia would need to be defended against. Low readiness to defend the country is also tied to the fact that Latvia is part of the European Union and NATO. This situation facilitates understanding and belief that war is not imminent. Threats from China, North Korea or Middle Eastern countries like Iran are too distant for the Latvian population, therefore they do not cause a sense of anxiety and necessity to be prepared for actual warfare. The geopolitical situation in the region over the past thirty years has influenced the threat perception and the psychology of the Latvian population and consequently their willingness to defend the country.

Psychological and physical factors

Individual's readiness to defend his or her country is an actual rational calculation based on arguments, fears, preferences, and mental predisposition. It is a complex structure of concerns, embedded beliefs and expected practical outcomes from action or inaction. Each individual in Latvia forms their position towards war and defence of their own country based on their own personal experiences with military and defence structures and products, including warfare itself.

Peoples' personal experiences with war may be an aspect influencing one's readiness to defend the country with military means. Highest numbers of people willing to defend Latvia were registered during the national movement that emerged during the protests among others against the war in Afghanistan. With many young people having personal experience with warfare and being part of the two-year mandatory military service in the Soviet army, the attitude towards the possibility of war and individual's participation in it was much more acceptable than nowadays. Several aspects are influencing this.

The first aspect is that more than one generation has grown up in Latvia without personal experiences of war and armed conflicts. In combination with video materials and real time stories available via news channels, documentaries, and even social media, people are acquiring a distaste towards engaging in a modern-day warfare. Unwillingness to be killed or severely crippled "as seen on TV", influences the way people are psychologically ready to defend¹⁰ Latvia.

The abolishing of conscription in Latvia in 2007 has also had a direct effect on people's readiness to defend their country via military means. People may see warfare as something very distant. They may see the war and defence as the responsibility solely of the professional army and not them personally. Additionally, a significant number of people in Latvia due to options to avoid military service when enrolment was still compulsory and because of the introduction of voluntary military enlistment have no practical experience with weapons, with military structures, with military equipment and modern war. Because of lack of military training, physical preparation and theoretical skills of warfare, the general population is ignorant towards war and does not think of itself as capable of surviving any armed conflict.

Even the basic information on military infrastructure in the country or behaviour during a military conflict is unknown to most of the people in Latvia. With this emotional feeling of helplessness, Latvian population may be more prepared to physically leave the country rather than defend it.

Due to the aforementioned distrust in their own skills and physical abilities, people may tend to choose not to believe in a possibility of an armed conflict emerging where they could be asked to defend their country. Population will choose to believe that war is impossible rather than prepare themselves. Due to the inability to understand their role and place in the country in case of a military attack, individuals may choose to hope for the situation to never arrive instead of actively preparing themselves and their communities.

Finally, it is about the communities – friends, family, co-workers, and their willingness to defend the country. Defensive military actions are a mass event. The positioning and attitudes of the closest friends and Allies, as well as mass psychology is essential in convincing people to take action or to abstain from it. Lack of alternatives and threats to life, health, living standard, property and family are the reasons why people may opt for weapons. In case of missing immediate and unavoidable pressures, the choice may be alternatives to defending the country. Same is with the peer-pressure – with existing peer-pressure people will chose to act one way or another. They may also choose to promise doing one thing or the other. This only means, that peacetime polling on people's willingness to defend the country may not accurately present their actual readiness.

Conclusions

The question if people are willing to defend Latvia is a complex one, that requires complex answers. The decreasing percentage of the population that is ready to defend the country can be explained by the overall development in and of Latvia within the past thirty years. The country has managed to achieve geopolitical and geo-economic stability and does not face immediate threats even from its most worrisome neighbours, especially Russia. Current low levels of readiness to defend Latvia that the population demonstrates should be considered as a natural outcome of the situation that the Latvian

society has been living in. The readiness level to defend Latvia among the Latvian population is only around thirty percent due to several reasons: NATO membership and Euro-Atlantic partnerships as safety guarantees, biased views on Russia (and Belarus), low levels of skills and knowledge of how to act in case of military conflict, low levels of trust in the political system and political disillusionment, as well as high levels of economic disappointment within the Latvian society.

Too many Latvian people do not feel like they are shareholders in their own country. They do not see the country worth defending. And they don't see why they should be defending it against Russia, Belarus, or any other country. Hence, the country should think about its patriotism level and the possibility of deepening the bond with citizens via public diplomacy instruments such as open activities and public events. A good example is the "Latvian Song and Dance Festival", where individuals feel a sense of belonging to the country and share common values. That kind of impact on society could contribute to the growth of the patriotism level and the willingness to defend.

One of the core problems are that individuals don't know how to defend not only the country, but even themselves. Defence of the country has become something distant and most likely would be met with widespread panic and mass exodus. Consequently, engaging more people, both young and older, in military training, including via theoretical and informative programs on television and internet that the population can access at any time, would be a major step towards raising people's awareness and, accordingly – the willingness to defend Latvia.

ENDNOTES

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Willingness to Defend Lithuania: “System Problem Detected, Action Pending”

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After joining NATO, Lithuania mobilized all its military capabilities to become a responsible partner of the Alliance, primarily by participating in expeditionary missions. The annexation of Crimea inspired the return of Lithuania’s security and defence policy to territorial defence. Conventional capacity building and tactics to combat hybrid threats have become key challenges for the national defence system. The first task was to find ways to increase Lithuania’s quantitative advantage over a potential aggressor, i.e., to strengthen deterrence by denial. Compulsory permanent initial military service was used to create an army reserve. In this context, the question arose as to whether the duty to the homeland should be performed out of love for it or simply because it is mandated. In fact, one of the direct expressions of love for the homeland may be willingness to defend one’s own country.

According to a 2019 representative public survey¹, only 4.2 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that in the case of an armed attack Lithuania’s inhabitants should defend themselves and the state. In 2020, the number of respondents with this attitude rose to 8.4 percent. Even before the Covid-2019 pandemic, the reluctance of Lithuania’s inhabitants to express willingness to defend the state was the strongest of all the Baltic states, comparing the survey data of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in 2019 and 2020. Unlike in the case of Estonia,² annual representative surveys using the same questionnaire to assess the willingness to defend one’s own country are not conducted in Lithuania. Consequently, it becomes difficult to draw general conclusions about the dynamics of the willingness to defend Lithuania. The most important problem encountered in analysing the results

of different surveys is not only that the wording of the question differs, but also that the surveys do not reveal the motives of those who do not want to contribute to Lithuania's defence. The first part of the chapter is intended to discuss how willingness to defend one's own state is measured in Lithuania. In the second part, the will to defend one's state using a weapon is linked to the readiness to do so. It is assumed that in the case of armed resistance, the will alone is not enough, and skills are necessary to strengthen the will. The third part aims to briefly discuss the possible reasons why Lithuanians may lack the will to defend their state. What is not discussed in this chapter is no less important. How does belief in the capabilities of the military affect the will of the people to resist and the will to defend the state? How do public discourses about "small Lithuania" and "big hostile Russia" affect people's belief that defending the country is not a case lost before it even began due to the asymmetry in military capabilities? And, most importantly, what will predict how the willingness to defend one's state could become a real action? Since respondents are asked a hypothetical question whether they would defend the state, they provide a hypothetical answer.

Who is willing to defend Lithuania?

In fact, the willingness of Lithuanians to defend their homeland is not a frequent object of sociological surveys. The Civil Society Institute "Civitas" (CSI) has been conducting a survey of the Civic empowerment index in Lithuania since 2007. After the annexation of Crimea, in 2014 and 2015 the institute included a question in its annual surveys: "Of course, we all hope that there will be no more war, but if it would, would you defend your country?" To measure a change of the willingness to defend one's country, the institute included data from the European Social Survey (ESS) (Table 1). According to the Civic power index of 2014 and 2015, the willingness to defend one's country is related to one's active participation in civil and political activities, inclination to contribute to solutions of various social problems, and belief that citizens have influence in society.³

Of course, we all hope that there will be no more war, but if it would, would you defend your country?	1990 (ESS)	1999 (ESS)	2005 (ESS)	2014 (CSI)	2015 (CSI)
Yes	61	46	32	56,7	56
No	12	18	41	14,5	17
Don't know	27	37	27	28,9	27

Table 1. Willingness to defend Lithuania according to polls included in the Civic empowerment index by the Civil Society Institute (Lithuania) (percent).⁴

In 2017, the results of the research project “Subjective Security in a Changing Geopolitical Context: Peculiarities, Forming Factors, and Strategies Developed by Individuals” were published. According to the survey included in the project, in 2016, only 49 percent of respondents were willing to defend Lithuania, while 34 percent of the respondents were not. The study showed that young men with military experience were more willing to defend their homeland. The authors of the study also made the assumption that pride in one’s state and patriotic attitudes may influence the will to defend Lithuania in the event of military aggression. The survey showed that 39 percent of the respondents were proud to be citizens of Lithuania and would go to defend their homeland in the event of war; 20 percent of the respondents were not proud to be Lithuanians, but willing to defend their homeland, while 17 percent were proud, but not willing to defend one’s country due to their age, health status or other reasons. It is also necessary to mention that the results of the study indicate that patriotism is linked to specific actions in the event of war, i.e., less patriotic individuals in the case of war indicated a desire to emigrate, while patriotic-minded individuals stated that they would seek to actively contribute to the country’s defence.⁵

In 2018 and 2020, a Sociological Survey of Media Preferences, Geopolitical Situation Assessment and Attitudes towards Threats was commissioned by the Ministry of National Defence and the Eastern Europe Studies Centre (EESC). The survey was based on the same assumption – pride in one’s state and patriotic attitudes may influence the willingness to defend one’s state. However, the report on the conducted survey includes just one illustrated

example, that the respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement: “Unable to resist with weapon, I would contribute to the defence of the country in other way” (Table 2). For some reason the willingness of the respondents to contribute to the defence of homeland with a weapon was mentioned as if by the way without providing clear data with figures: “32% of the respondents said they would contribute to the country’s defence with a weapon if needed: compared to 2018, the change in these numbers were not statistically significant”⁶. Meanwhile, in 2018, only 24 percent of the respondents were inclined to contribute to armed resistance in case of war.⁷ Whether the population’s higher level of willingness to engage in peaceful civic resistance is related to personal attitudes or simply to a lack of knowledge on how to use a weapon remains open.

Year	Statement	Totally agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Dis-agree	Totally dis-agree	No opinion
2018	Proud to be citizens of Lithuania	22	36	21	13	6	3
	Unable to resist with a weapon, would resist in another way	18	30	19	13	14	6
2020	Proud to be citizens of Lithuania	24	38	20	15	2	1
	Unable to resist with a weapon, would resist in another way	21	37	17	8	14	3

Table 2. Comparison of being proud in Lithuanian citizenship and willingness to participate in civic resistance in 2018 and 2020 (surveys ordered by the ministry of National Defence and the Eastern Europe Studies Centre (Lithuania)) (percent).⁸

The most comprehensive study of the willingness to defend the homeland titled “Who would go to defend Lithuania? Assumptions and possibilities of civic resistance” was published in 2018. According to the results of a public survey conducted in 2017, 42.2 percent answered positively to the question “Of course, we all hope that there will be no more war, but if it arises, would you personally contribute to Lithuania’s defence?” 25.2 percent of the respondents did not express the will to defend the homeland, and 29.9 said they did not know. 3 percent of the respondents indicated that they would take the initiative to organize the resistance and 36 percent of the respondents would contribute to it, although as many as 32 percent would not contribute, and 29 percent did not know how they would behave in the case of armed attack.⁹ A lack of knowledge and skills can lead people to declare they do not know whether they will defend their homeland in the event of war. One thing is to have a particular set of skills and decide not to use it, another thing is to actually have no clue what to do in case of military attack.

Since 2018, the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania commissions public surveys to assess public trust in the army and willingness to defend the homeland.¹⁰ The results of the survey are included in the Annual Activity Reports of the Ministry. According to the surveys, in 2018, 47 percent of the respondents were willing to defend one’s homeland, while 34 percent were unwilling, and 19 percent were undecided. The number of the willing to defend Lithuania is slowly increasing (48.5 percent in 2019 and 49 percent in 2020).¹¹ The goal in 2021 is to reach 52 percent of the citizens willing to defend the homeland. As in 2018, the Minister of National Defence Raimundas Karoblis stated: “A strong army is unimaginable without public support. Growing public support for the Armed Forces and determination to protect the Homeland if it is threatened is directly related to the ongoing modernization of the Armed Forces and the growing public awareness of emerging threats and the information impact of hostile forces.”¹² The Annual Reports include just a percentage share of Lithuania’s citizens willing to defend the country, whereas data on unwilling or ignorant citizens are not provided. Thus, there is no possibility to determine whether the number of those who are not willing to defend their state is decreasing or increasing. It also remains unclear what proportion of the population would contribute to peaceful resistance and how many would be willing and able to contribute to armed resistance.

Who is ready to defend Lithuania?

Article 139 of Lithuania's constitution defines that "The defence of the State of Lithuania against a foreign armed attack shall be the right and duty of each citizen of the Republic of Lithuania. The citizens of the Republic of Lithuania must perform military or alternative national defence service according to the procedure established by law."¹³ The duty to defend was defined by two basic forms: an initial period of mandatory military service (12 months duration) and alternative national defence service. Alternative types of service included Leadership courses, basic military training programme, studies at the Military Academy of Lithuania, and volunteer service in the national defence volunteer forces.¹⁴

In 2008, the Lithuanian government decided to change the mixed army recruitment model to a professional army, even though conscripts made up about 75 percent of the battalions' contingent at that time. Accordingly, the abolition of compulsory initial military service had far-reaching negative consequences, i.e., when Russia annexed Crimea, the full staffing of different units in Lithuania ranged from 18 to 72 percent.¹⁵ Thus, in 2015, it was decided to return the conscription duty (nine months of mandatory service) as a matter of urgency. The decision had two main objectives: to fill army units and to prepare a reserve.¹⁶ At first, the conscription age was 19–26 years, however, in 2019, the draftees age group was changed to 18–23 years.

When the Lithuanian Parliament urgently decided in 2015 to return to the conscript model, which was abandoned in 2008, the slogan began to spread among young people: "Everyone has the right to not kill."¹⁷ This illustrates that a country's defence may have two connotations. The first is that people are not willing to contribute to the defence of the country because they want to stay alive (desire to survive). The second is that they don't want to defend the state because they don't want to take the life of another.

A photo project "They Won the Lottery" was soon presented to the public. Fourteen portraits of crying men and their insights into masculinity and conscript army¹⁸ in Lithuania received condemnation in the public space for the reluctance of young men to perform their duties to the homeland. Some influential people called the photo project an "insightful, ideological, intellectual, attractive and extremely beautiful betrayal of the state."¹⁹ In

response to the project, members of the Estonian National Defence League, a voluntary national defence organization, presented a photo project “Without Tears”, which sought to demonstrate that people living in the small Baltic states need to protect their “beloved freedom”²⁰. Nevertheless, according to the public opinion poll, 68 percent of the respondents supported the return of the conscript army, and only 26 percent of the respondents opposed the decision.²¹ Moreover, in 2016, 81 percent of the respondents believed that mandatory military service is beneficial for young people, 12 percent of the respondents indicated the opposite.²²

In 2015, 36825 draftees were selected by a random electronic selection system, i.e., won the lottery. Of these, 3000 were scheduled to be called up for service that year (Table 3). Draftees could choose:

1. to perform the service voluntarily, although they were not included in the lists of conscripts of that year (conscripts volunteers);
2. to perform the service without requesting a postponement of the service time (conscripts in order of priority).

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Planned number of conscripts	3000	3000	3537	3827	3827	3828
Voluntary requests (have not been included in the list of conscripts for a calendar year and who have expressed a wish to perform the service)	2859	3085	2914	2963	2749	2725
Share of all requests for compulsory military service received that year	71%	63%	50%	42%	40%	39%
Priority requests (draftees on the list of conscripts for a calendar year who have expressed a wish to perform the service)	1170	1789	2865	4113	4084	4245
Share of all requests for compulsory military service received that year	29%	37%	50%	58%	60%	61%

Table 3. Assessment of conscripts’ request to serve in the Lithuanian Armed Forces in 2015–2020.²³

3010 soldiers started permanent mandatory initial military service for nine months, of which 2133 young people were volunteers and 877 were conscripts who expressed a desire to serve in order of priority.²⁴

According to statistical data provided by the National Military Conscription and Recruitment Service, the nature of requests for compulsory military service began to change (Figure 1). The share of the draftees that were on the list of conscripts for the calendar year and expressed their will to be conscripted on the priority basis has increased from 29 percent in 2015 up to 61 percent in 2020. This indicates that in many cases young people are not unwilling to perform compulsory service, but rather they want to anticipate and plan it.

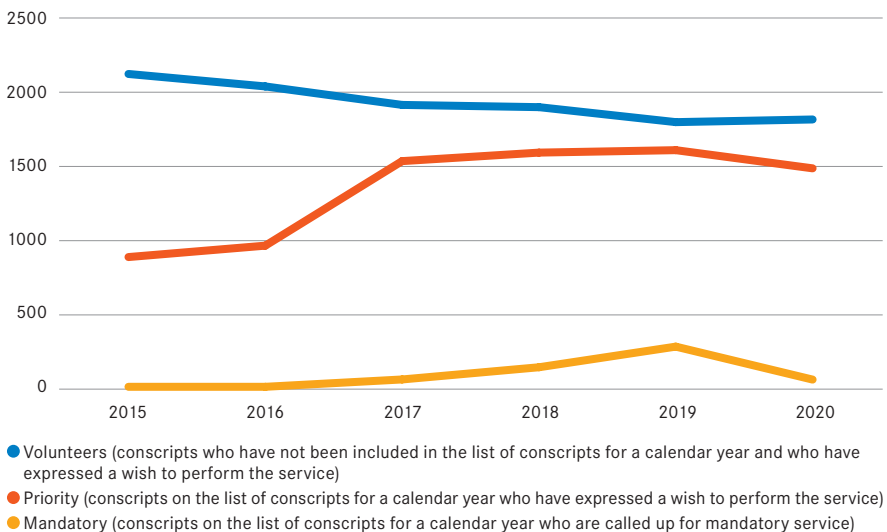


Figure 1. Dynamics of conscripts serving in the Lithuanian Armed Forces in 2015–2020.²⁵

Motivation for compulsory military service is supported by paying allowances to soldiers. Not only each soldier is being paid 148 Eur monthly to cover household expenses, but also soldiers are getting cumulative payment after the service period based upon the military service performance level (Table 4). The payment for a volunteer soldier is increased by 30 percent and for a soldier who has been called up for service and expressed a desire to be conscripted on the priority basis by 15 percent.

Evaluation of service performance	Compulsorily called	On priority basis	Volunteer
Excellent	160	184	208
Good	120	138	156
Satisfactory	80	92	104

Table 4. Allowances paid (EUR) to soldiers based on their service performance level.²⁶

The conscription allowance system was designed not only to increase young people’s motivation to perform mandatory military service, but also to compensate for possible financial losses they experience when they leave the labour market. However, the continuing desire to perform the military service on voluntary or on priority basis cannot be explained by financial incentives alone.

In fact, it is necessary to mention that the analysis of young people’s motivation to perform permanent compulsory primary military service in 2016 and 2017 shows that up to 63 percent of those who wanted to perform the service stated that they would serve even without reward. Based on the results of the study, it can be argued that the main reason for wanting to serve is to learn to protect one’s family and homeland. Also, two important stimuli can be identified: the real potential of the threat of attack and previous experience in military organizations. Thus, at the beginning of service, 81 percent of conscripts were willing to defend the homeland in the case of armed attack, while at the end of service the number of those willing to defend Lithuania with a weapon decreased to 71 percent.²⁷ Such annual conscript surveys should help to identify the reasons for the decline in the will to defend one’s country.

Volunteers form a significant part of the Lithuanian Armed Forces (Table 5). Although serving in the National Defence Volunteer Forces (NDVF) is an alternative form to mandatory military service, the decision of most volunteers is based on patriotic or lifestyle motives.

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Professionals	8146	8660	9400	10173	10729	11168	11428
Conscripts	3010	3000	3507	3638	3697	3352	3800*
National Defence Volunteer Forces	4578	4635	4903	5041	5140	5290	5188
Cadets in the Military Academy of Lithuania	211	211	209	210	217	263	295
Total	15945	16506	18019	19062	19783	20073	20711

Table 5. Lithuania’s national defence system’s personnel size (2015–2021).²⁸

* Planned.

According to the complex sociological research study “Motivation to Serve in the Lithuanian army”, published in 2015, 81 percent of the volunteer soldiers stated that they joined the NDVF because they wanted to defend their homeland in the case of a threat and were driven by patriotic feelings. Additionally, 94 percent of the soldiers stated they wanted to experience adventure and challenges, while 72 percent indicated that they wanted to spend their free time in a worthwhile way. However, only 64 percent of the volunteers were certain that they would go to war to defend Lithuania and 28 percent indicated that they would probably go to war, while 8 percent were undecided or stated that they would not defend their own country. The latter were younger and had less experience, so some of them were simply not convinced they had enough training and skills.²⁹ Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine whether the reasons for serving in the NDVF have changed during the last six years, as continuous sociological research on this topic is not being conducted.

Other factual evidence of increasing citizens’ willingness to participate in national defence is the activities of the Lithuanian Riflemen’s Union. According to the Law of the Lithuanian Riflemen’s Union, the Union is a voluntary, self-governing civil society organization that strengthens the

state's defence capabilities and develops defence educational activities. Although the Union's main objective is to prepare for non-violent civil resistance and armed national defence, it also promotes trust in national institutions and public spirit. In case of war the Riflemen's combat units shall carry out the defence tasks assigned by the command of Lithuania's armed forces.³⁰ Before the Russia–Ukraine war, the Union united about 7,000 members, and since 2015, the number of members has exceeded 10,000 (Table 6).

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Riflemen	3834	4443	4514	4645	5277	5116
Young Riflemen (age 11–18)	5426	6314	5910	5880	5910	5021
Total	9260	10757	10424	10525	11187	10137

Table 6. Dynamics of change of members of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in 2015–2020 according to the Union's annual reports.³¹

The union experienced its hour of glory in 2014, when the country's political leaders began to recognize the importance of the Riflemen in increasing the state's defence capabilities.³² In the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, in 2014 alone, more than 800 volunteers joined the union, including many famous and popular people. The call to “become a rifleman to defend the homeland” was effective. It must be borne in mind that this effect may have been temporary, i.e., caused by a sense of threat and mobilization of patriotism due to the annexation of Crimea. For the effect to be lasting, it is necessary to identify the reasons for one's unwillingness to participate in the defence of the state.

Why wouldn't someone defend Lithuania?

If we were to evaluate the results of the different national public opinion polls discussed in this chapter, we would have to admit that, in the event of war, Lithuanian citizens would be the least willing of all the Baltic states to defend their country. Moreover, as the questions in these surveys differ,

with some placing more emphasis on armed defence and others simply on defence, it is difficult to say that respondents would defend Lithuania using weapons rather than by resisting peacefully.

The theoretical framework of willingness to defend one's country is based on a couple of assumptions.³³ In the case of Lithuania, compulsory military service did not have a decisive effect, as the vast majority of conscripts choose to perform their service voluntarily or in order of priority. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, most of the society supports compulsory military service and even sees it as beneficial to young people.

In 2018, parliamentary parties signed an agreement on Lithuanian defence policy guidelines. Decisions on the possibility of introducing universal military service was scheduled for 2022.³⁴ It is not known when the final decision on the universal military service will be made, but the Minister of National Defence Arvydas Anušauskas confirmed that, due to the poor demographic situation, the universal military service will be inevitable.³⁵ How this can change the general tendency of willingness to defend the state, so far can only be speculated.

Previously discussed studies suggested that those proud of their citizenship are more likely to participate in civic resistance.³⁶ According to surveys, in 2020, 62 percent of respondents were proud to be Lithuanian, but only 49 percent said they were willing to defend Lithuania. Lack of pride in Lithuanian citizenship, lost sense of duty to defend one's state and low trust in political institutions were also mentioned in the 2018 monograph "Who would go to defend Lithuania? Civic resistance assumptions and possibilities"³⁷. Although comparing the data of different surveys, from 2018 to 2020, the share of the population being proud citizens of Lithuania increased by 4 percent, unfortunately the share of those willing to defend the state increased just by 2 percent. One might argue that survey data is not reflecting reality, because people of other nationalities also are citizens of Lithuania and maybe their national identity is stronger than feeling of political association with the political entity.

In fact, ethnic Lithuanians are the dominant majority in Lithuania and make up more than 85 percent of the population (Figure 2). At the same time, the largest ethnic community consists of Poles (almost 6 percent of the population) and Russians (less than 5 percent of the population). Analysis of data from a representative public survey³⁸ shows that the proportion of

Lithuanians certainly not willing to defend Lithuania remained the same (19.4 percent), while the proportion of Russians who certainly would not contribute to the country’s defence decreased from 20.1 percent to 9.4 percent. The share of Russian respondents who said they would defend Lithuania in 2019 was 26.8 percent, and in 2020 only 16.3 percent declared willingness to defend the state. However, in the 2019 survey, the demographic indicator is the language spoken in the family and only two are mentioned (Lithuanian and Russian). In the 2020 survey, the indicator is nationality and there are already three categories (Lithuanian, Russian and other). It can be assumed that the majority of respondents who declared their nationality to be ‘other’ are representatives of the Polish ethnic community, as this community is the most numerous in Lithuania. Thus, in 2020, as many as 63.9 percent of respondents of other nationalities could not answer whether would they defend the state, while 14.1 percent of the respondents were willing to defend Lithuania.

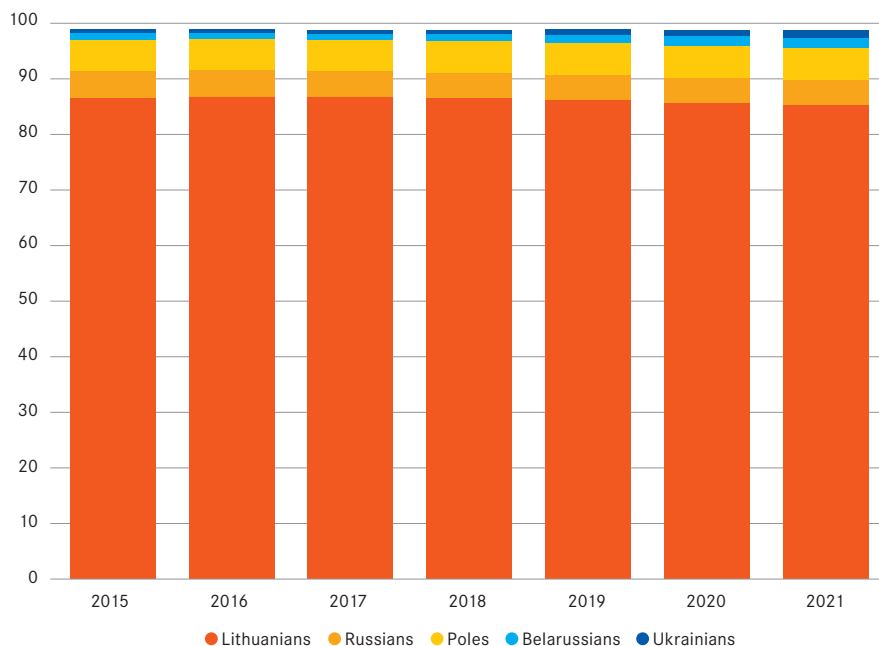


Figure 2. Proportion of population by nationality in relation to the total number of permanent residents.³⁹

Virgilijus Rutkauskas in his 2018 publication assessed individual data from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and concluded that citizens of the Baltic states who lack trust in national governmental institutions or army demonstrate less willingness to defend one’s own country.⁴⁰ According to the data of a representative public opinion poll in the Baltic states in 2020, 41 percent of respondents in Lithuania trust the government, and only 24 percent trust the parliament. In Latvia, 30 percent of respondents trust the government and 28 percent trust the parliament. In Estonia, on the other hand, 53 percent of respondents trust the government and 51 percent trust the parliament.⁴¹ Thus, the main task should be to increase the trust in political institutions and democracy to increase the willingness of the population to defend their homeland.

It is true that when comparing public confidence in the army with trust in other institutions, such as the Lithuanian parliament, government or justice system, the army is the most trusted national institution (Figure 3). According to Eurobarometer surveys, Lithuania’s public trust in the army since 2015 has ranged between 70 and 80 percent. The peak of confidence was reached in the summer of 2020, and in 2021, 78 percent of the respondents expressed their trust in the army.

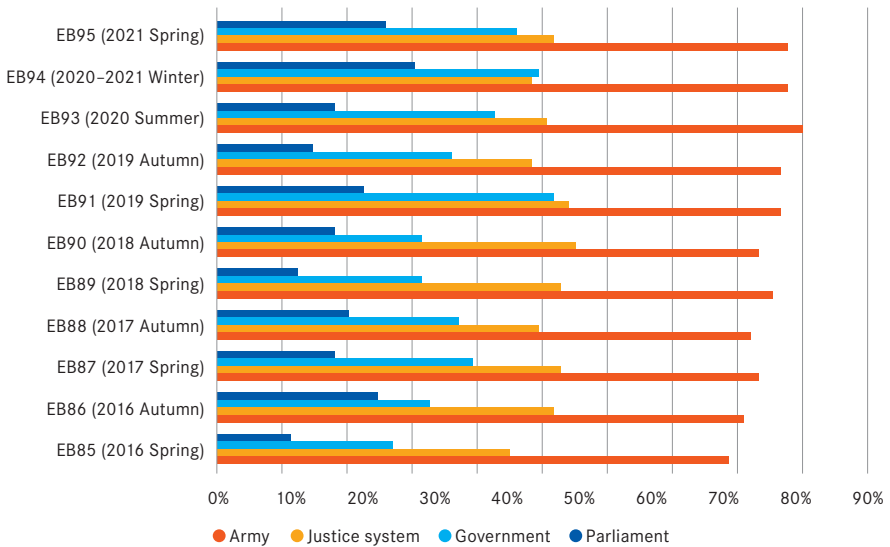


Figure 3. Trust of Lithuania’s citizens in national institutions according to Eurobarometer surveys.⁴²

It is important to mention that, according to the results of surveys conducted by national public opinion research companies which are included in the annual reports of the Ministry of National Defence, trust in the army in September 2021 was 64 percent and almost 11 percent distrusted Lithuania’s armed forces (Table 7).

Tend to trust (annual average)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
According to the national public opinion research companies	54	56	58	60	62	66*
According to Eurobarometer	71	74	75	77	79	78*

Table 7. Dynamics of public trust in the Lithuanian army (percent).⁴³

*Estimated average.

According to Lithuanian National Anti-Poverty Network, in 2020, 585 thousand people lived below the at-risk of poverty line. It means that almost 21 percent of the population received only 430 Eur income per month for one person or 904 Eur for a family with two children under 14 years old. Income inequality in Lithuania is one of the largest in the European Union. It is true that income inequality is declining. In 2015, the income level of 20 percent of the richest and 20 percent of the poorest people in Lithuania differed 7.5 times, in 2020 the difference was 6.1 times.⁴⁴ Comparing the Baltic states income inequality, Latvia and Lithuania rank among the highest in the EU,⁴⁵ however, to determine whether income inequality is a decisive factor in why the willingness to defend one’s country is higher in Estonia and lower in Lithuania and Latvia, long-term comparative studies should be conducted based not only on public survey data but also on qualitative research methods.

Conclusions

In 2015, the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania updated the Strategy of preparing the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania for state defence. The strategy defines that an integrated system of civic preparation must have two complementary elements: the nation’s determination to fight for the country’s

independence and resist the aggressor in every possible way, and certain knowledge and practical skills required for both civil and armed defence. Consequently, one of the main goals of the strategy was to provide two types of knowledge to Lithuania's citizens. Firstly, military training. Secondly, knowledge and skills required to participate in civilian resistance.⁴⁶ The surveys discussed earlier illustrate that the experience gained in military organizations has a positive effect on the willingness to defend one's state. In general, the greater the number of organizations in which a person participates, the greater the willingness to participate in resistance in the event of war.⁴⁷ However, for the resistance to be universal and armed, it is necessary to nationally cultivate the military training of young people.

Five years later, the Ministry of National Defence announced a draft Strategy of preparing the citizens of the Republic of Lithuania for civil resistance, which includes an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The main identified weakness is the lack of knowledge of citizens about participation in state defence and civil resistance.⁴⁸ This indicates that prior strategy was not successfully implemented. Moreover, it is noticed that only 50 percent of citizens would be willing to be involved in the country's defence and civil resistance. At the same time, in public schools, optional modules dedicated to national defence are not popular among students. The main threats to civil resistance that are defined in the Draft Strategy is a lack of trust in parliament and government, low participation in public organizations and civic activities. The main task defined in the Strategy is to introduce values that would promote citizens' identification with the state and patriotism, and willingness to defend one's state.⁴⁹ Does this mean that Lithuanian citizens are the most unpatriotic of all the Baltic states and can this explain the lack of willingness to defend the state? In addition, it remains unclear how success will be measured. Would 60 or 70 percent of the population willing to defend Lithuania be enough?

Perhaps the explanation for why Lithuanians are the least willing of all the Baltic states to defend their state is simpler. The message about threats is not being clearly articulated, i.e., it is too abstract just to announce that Russia is posing a military threat to Lithuania. As long as people are bombarded with discourses of hybrid threats or attacks without a clear plan of action for what they could do in their personal lives to contribute to national security, it is doubtful that a mere spread of values will make

any difference. Knowing that one has a duty to contribute to a country's defence must be based on an understanding of what is threatening the country and how specifically it should be acted upon. Another explanation is that the message is not reaching the target group. For instance, in 2020, the Department of Mobilization and Civil Resistance under the Ministry of National Defence issued "The Alphabet of Civil Resistance: Tips for Combating Without Weapons." Only the Lithuanian radio and television reported on this publication. Not even one popular internet news site informed about the importance of this publication in the educational or civil society building process. The publicity of the book was not universal, i.e., no social networks, influencers or other modern means of communication were used to substantiate its importance for the public. Consequently, one may argue that Lithuania's citizens live in a false sense of existential security.

Distrust of state institutions and media, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, further encourages the population to question all messages that the government is trying to send. In this case, a reliable intermediary must be used for successful communication. The Lithuanian Riflemen's Union or the National Defence Volunteer Forces could play a greater role not only in informing the population, but also in promoting a sense of duty build on the motto "the one is not worthy of freedom, who does not protect it".

ENDNOTES

¹ Please see chapter of this publication "Willingness to Defend the Baltic States in Quantitative Terms" by Māris Andžāns.

² Please see chapters of this publication "Willingness to Defend the Baltic States in Quantitative Terms" by Māris Andžāns and "Willingness to defend Estonia: Fostered by Civil-Military Integration and Communication" by Ivo Juurvee.

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⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Diana Janušauskienė, Eglė Vileikienė, Laima Nevinskaitė, and Ingrida Gečienė – Janulionė, *Ar Lietuvos gyventojai jaučiasi saugūs?: subjektyvus saugumas kintančiame geopolitiniame kontekste*. [Do Lithuanians feel safe?: subjective security in a changing geopolitical context.] (Vilnius: Lietuvos socialinių tyrimų centras, 2017), https://www.lstc.lt/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Ar_gyventojai_jauciasi_saugus.pdf.

⁶ Linas Kojala (ed.) *Research on The Assessment of The Geopolitical Situation and Perception Of Threats: Based On Representative Research On The Lithuanian Public Opinion*. (Vilnius: Eastern Europe Studies Centre, 2020), 23, https://www.eesc.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/v02-web_Research-of-Perception-of-Threats_paper_A4.pdf.

- ⁷ Vaidas Saldžiūnas, “Apklausė gyventojus dėl grėsmių Lietuvai: rezultatuose – keli netikėtumai [Surveyed the population about threats to Lithuania: the results contain several surprises]”, *Delfi*, January 7, 2019, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/medijos-karas-propaganda/apklause-gyventojus-del-gresmiu-lietuvai-rezultatuose-keli-netiketumai.d?id=80015657>.
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- ⁹ Ieva Petronytė – Urbonavičienė, “Ar esame pasiryžę gintis? Visuomenės nusiteikimo priešintis užsienio agresijos atveju apžvalga [Are we determined to defend ourselves? A review of public attitudes to resist foreign aggression]” in *Kas eitų ginti Lietuvos? Pilietinio pasipriešinimo prielaidos ir galimybės [Who would go to defend Lithuania? Assumptions and possibilities of civic resistance]* Ainė Ramonaitė, Ieva Petronytė – Urbonavičienė, Paulius Skirkevičius, Eugenijus Vosylius (Vilnius: Aukso žuvis, 2018), 57–59.
- ¹⁰ Lietuvos Respublikos Krašto apsaugos ministerija, *Galimybių studijos, analizės, tyrimai [Feasibility studies, analyses, research]*, https://kam.lt/lt/administracine_informacija/galimybiu_studijos_analizes_tyrimai.html.
- ¹¹ Krašto apsaugos ministerijos 2020 m. veiklos ataskaita [Annual Activity Report of the Ministry of National Defence 2020], https://kam.lt/lt/administracine_informacija/ataskaitos_498.html.
- ¹² Lietuvos Respublikos Krašto apsaugos ministerija, *Auga pasitikinčių Lietuvos kariuomene ir Tėvynę pasiryžusių ginti gyventojų skaičius [The number of people who trust the Lithuanian army and are determined to defend the Homeland is growing]*, January 7, 2019, http://kam.lt/lt/naujienos_874/aktualijos_875/auga_pasitikinciu_lietuvos_kariuomene_ir_tevyne_pasiryzusių_ginti_gyventojų_skaicius.html.
- ¹³ The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Chapter XII Foreign policy and National Defence, Article 139, <https://www.lrk.lt/en/about-the-court/legal-information/the-constitution/192>.
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- ¹⁷ Mindaugas Jackevičius, Prie Vyriausybės – protestas prieš militarizaciją [Next to the Government a protest against militarization], *Delfi*, May 23, 2015, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/prie-vyriausybes-protestas-pries-militarizacija.d?id=68048482>.
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- ¹⁹ Ašaroti šauktiniai sulaukė pašaipų bangos – dabar ašaras lieja verktiniai [The tearful conscripts received a wave of ridicule - now the tears are really flowing], *15min*, June 3, 2015, <https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/asaroti-sauktiniai-sulauke-pasaipu-bangos-dabar-asaras-lieja-verktiniai-56-507294?copied>.
- ²⁰ Rūta Pukienė, Estai pasijuokė iš verkiančių lietuvių [Estonians laughed at the crying Lithuanians], *Delfi*, June 23, 2015, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/estai-pasijuoke-is-verkianciu-lietuviiu.d?id=68321580>.

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Conclusions and Recommendations: Between Unwillingness and Willingness to Defend Own Country in the Baltic States and Beyond

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The reasons for willing or not willing to defend own country are many and usually case specific. They include but are not limited to the (lack) of patriotism and national pride, (dis)trust in state institutions and politicians, economic situation and (in)equality, historical grievances and past victories, religious and cultural affiliations, education level, gender, ethnicity, political and ideological affiliations, and military recruitment models. The level of willingness also depends on the nature of a (potential) conflict that the society in question is about to face – either one of necessity, or as a choice; the former relates to self-defence against immediate threats while the latter to more distant threats. These aspects were in detail deliberated in the first two chapters by the author of these lines, as well as Dr. Yao-Yuan Yeh.

The level of willingness to defend own country is usually assessed with the help of sociological polls. Plenty of them have been conducted in the Baltic states. Most of such polls have been organized in Estonia. The least data are available for Lithuania. While the methodological approaches and questions in such surveys tend to vary, they nevertheless demonstrate some consistent trends. Most notably, the level of willingness to defend Estonia is the highest. Latvia and Lithuania trail their northern neighbour, as further discussed in the chapter “Willingness to Defend the Baltic States in Quantitative Terms”.

Reasons for the current situation in the Baltics are multiple and complex. Authors of this publication provided their explanations. For Estonia, which

excels not only via a rich pool of data, but also by demonstrating the highest willingness level, Dr. Ivo Juurvee puts forth several points. While such factors as historical experience, i.e., the Soviet occupation and visibility of NATO Allies, are shared with both Latvia and Lithuania, other reasons are more Estonia-specific. Among these are the effective integration of military and civilian sector, i.e., a mature conscription system, operational reservists' system, and effective military-civilian communication. Another positive factor is the Nordic, or more specifically Finnish, influence on the Estonian military culture, as well as the governance approach and lifestyle in broader terms (as the second chapter of this publication notes, Nordic societies have traditionally espoused high levels of willingness to defend own country). Nevertheless, a notable issue remains – level of willingness is lower among non-Estonians, i.e., Russian speakers.

In Latvia, the willingness level is lower than in Estonia but higher than in Lithuania. That level is neither high nor low in a regional and global context. Aleksandra Palkova in her chapter names the main categories of reasons that affect the situation. First, a set of detrimental factors – disillusionment with political and economic development and the related widespread distrust in state institutions and politicians. Second is a mixed factor & actor – Russia. Its military conflict with Ukraine, assertive behaviour and negative rhetoric towards Latvia have made a considerable part of the Latvian society feel insecure, whereas another part of the society, mostly Russian speakers, remain more sympathetic to Russia. Third is an impeding mix of physiological and physical factors – complacency resulting from the lack of recent experience of notable conflicts and the lack of military training of most people.

For Lithuania, Dr. Ieva Gajauskaitė suggests taking extra care in interpreting the scarce data available on Lithuania. Nevertheless, she observes that issues with willingness to defend Lithuania exist. She underlines patriotism, pride in the state, as well as specific skills, i.e., military experience, and active civil society as the main preconditions for willingness to defend own country. To a various degree, in all those aspects space for progress in Lithuania remains. Attitude towards the state is a broad and complex issue to address. While conscription was reintroduced in Lithuania in 2015, its effect on willingness to defend Lithuania has not yet reached its full potential. Space for progress in societal attitudes is

acknowledged also by the Lithuanian authorities, which treat it primarily in the context of civil resistance.

The analyses presented in this book, as well as in other similar studies should draw the attention not only of policy makers in the Baltic states but also in other NATO member states and beyond. Professional soldiers, conscripts and (paramilitary) volunteers are part of the society. Mood dominant in the society can have impact on their resolve and determination to fight. Furthermore, since patterns of modern conflicts have evolved, societies increasingly have become subjected to competing narratives. States, at least in the West, have no monopoly over the main channels and narratives of information.

That said, the role of societies and collective and individual willingness to defend own country today is even more paramount. While such issues are primarily a national responsibility, the concept of resilience in NATO has received growing attention. Nevertheless, NATO collectively and its member states individually should pay more attention to the societal factors. Institutions of some member states, including Latvia and Lithuania, should better comprehend the situation in their societies and should seek a more subtle balance between slogans and reality about the determination of their inhabitants to fight and resist if it came to that. The situation with the Covid-19 vaccination rates and the underlying distrust in state institutions & their messages serve as yet another indicator that there is space for progress. Or else, in an unlikely situation of armed confrontation, support from the members of society can disappoint.

As to how to strive for higher levels of willingness to defend own country, there is no one single formula. Estonia's example and lessons from its experience might be a good start for both its southern neighbours. Meanwhile, both Estonia and Latvia should continue working towards integrated societies. That is, however, a complex mix of issues. Finally, the margin between desirable and undesirable methods in enhancing the willingness level is subtle. Ideally, members of a society should genuinely share the view that their country is worth defending, not merely be indoctrinated that the country must be defended.

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