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PUTTING COMPREHENSIVE DEFENSE TO WORK

WHAT CAN POLAND LEARN FROM THE BALTIC STATES?

ABSTRACT

The article analyses Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian developments in the implementation of comprehensive defense concepts. The analysis is intentionally limited to post-2014 period, when efforts by the Baltic States intensified in response to Russian aggression against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea. The article begins with a brief review of national perspectives on total and comprehensive defense. Then, it discusses the factors that prompted the Baltic States' adoption of comprehensive defense. A comparative analysis of the concepts developed and actions taken by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania serves as a starting point for a discussion on development and implementation of comprehensive defense for Poland. The research uses a critical analysis of publicly available governmental documents synthesized with academic and think tank research on the subject. The article purposefully concludes before 24 February 2022 and Russian aggression against Ukraine in order to avoid unsupported speculation on decisions and actions taken by the Baltic States in response to the war.

Keywords: Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, comprehensive defense

INTRODUCTION

After regaining independence in the early nineties, the Baltic States immediately faced a dilemma of how to organize their national security and defense. They tried to develop solutions – modelled after the Nordic nations – for total defense that match post-Soviet realities and the threat posed by their eastern neighbour. Those efforts stagnated somewhat during the early years of Baltic membership in NATO. However, 2014 was a watershed moment in the Baltic States' security and defense policies as NATO's frontline members. Faced with increasing conventional and hybrid threats from Russia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania accelerated the implementation of comprehensive defense concepts. Due to limited resources, they decided to adapt the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches that prioritized resilience against both conventional and hybrid threats.¹ As the security situation in the region has worsened and Poland's prospects of becoming a frontline state have increased, the lessons gained by the Baltic States are becoming increasingly important for Poland. Poland is also facing a mounting hybrid pressure that requires a comprehensive approach to counter it. As public discourse in Poland on comprehensive defense is rather limited and, to some extent, naive, a critical assessment of the insights into lessons learned by the Baltic States thus far may be beneficial.²

The article explores and assesses the development and implementation of comprehensive defense concepts by the Baltic States with an emphasis on the post-2014 period. A brief excursus on the understanding of comprehensive defense, followed by an analysis of factors which led to the adoption of comprehensive defense concepts by the Baltic States, sets the stage for further discussion. Case studies for each of the Baltic States constitute the main part of the article. They are followed by a review of recommendations that need to be considered in ongoing political and scientific discourse on comprehensive defense in Poland.

The research is focused on a comparative analysis of the concepts and solutions adopted by the Baltic States in the post-2014 field of comprehensive defense. It uses publicly available documents from the Baltic States and Poland which discuss security and defense policies, strategies, and concepts. Figures and trends related to comprehensive defense are derived from unclassified governmental sources. Research reports by regional experts on the subject matter backs up the qualitative analysis and strengthens the argument. While the Russian aggression against Ukraine of February 24th, 2022 was reflected in declarations and actions by the Baltic States and Poland, it appears

¹ M. Kepe, J. Osburg, "Total Defense: How the Baltic States Are Integrating Citizenry into Their National Security Strategies", *Small Wars Journal*, 24 September 2017, at <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/total-defense-how-the-baltic-states-are-integrating-citizenry-into-their-national-security>, 20 March 2022.

² P. Szymański, "»Sisu« i »kerksus«: północne inspiracje dla obrony powszechnej", *Defence24*, 28 June 2020, at <https://defence24.pl/sily-zbrojne/sisu-i-kerksus-polnocne-inspiracje-dla-obrony-powszechnej>, 20 March 2022.

premature to draw conclusions about its potential impact on comprehensive defense in all of those States. As a result, for the purposes of this article, this topic has been purposefully avoided.

UNDERSTANDING COMPREHENSIVE DEFENSE

The contemporary understanding of comprehensive defense may be present in some elements of total defense concepts. Historically, total defense has been equated to the involvement of the civilian population in a war conducted by the state. In this historical perspective, the key assumption of the concept of total defense was that the state could enact a rapid and universal mobilization of all people capable of fighting in the event of a threat of war. Total defense promised cost savings as a result of the elimination of the need to maintain regular armed forces. Therefore, it is an attractive solution for small and medium-sized States, additionally characterized by appropriate natural conditions conducive to defense, as it is perceived as a solution ensuring self-sufficiency in defense. The most complex elements of total defense are usually territorial defense and civil defense. Contrary to traditional defense conducted mainly by the armed forces, total defense assumes the broad involvement of all citizens in various spheres of social, economic, military, civil and psychological life.³

Contemporary concepts of total and comprehensive defense build upon lessons learned during the Cold War. The conceptual and organizational solutions adopted by the Scandinavian countries emphasize the complexity of threats and required responses as the basic premises for total defense. In Swedish law, total defense is defined as all activities necessary to prepare a country for war. In this approach, total defense includes two complementary types of activities: military (military defense) and civilian (civil defense). The Danish model of total defense calls for the use of all resources in order to maintain an organized, functional society and to protect people and national property. Due to the complex nature of the threats to be counteracted by total defense, it requires joint solutions and close coordination between the responsible international and national authorities.⁴

Total defense concepts are also known in non-European countries. Singapore adopted the concept of total defense due to anticipated changes in the nature of armed conflicts, limited state resources, the nature of the society, and the size of the state. The capacity for total defense covers not only the armed forces of Singapore but also the civilian population. Every sector of society is mobilized and has a role to play in ensuring Singapore's security and defense against all forms of attack, both military and non-military. The Singaporean concept of total defense distinguishes six areas of activity,

³ K.P. Marczuk, "Obrona totalna", in W. Fehler, J. Piątek, R. Podgórzńska (eds), *Leksykon bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego*, Szczecin 2017, pp. 340-341.

⁴ F. Lindgren, A. Odlund, "Total Defence at the Crossroads", *FOI Memo*, 6208, Offprint from Strategic Outlook 7, November 2017, <https://www.foi.se/rest-api/report/FOI%20Memo%206208>, 20 March 2022.

including military defense, civil defense, economic defense, social defense, and digital and psychological defense.⁵

The comprehensive approach is a trademark of Baltic defense. The term 'total defense' is used in the founding documents of Lithuania's defense policy, which emphasizes that the defense of Lithuania is total and unconditional. Total defense means that not only the national armed forces and the forces of NATO allies defend Lithuania. It assumes that all national resources are mobilized for national defense, and that every Lithuanian citizen and the nation as a whole will mount resistance in every way as allowed by international law. Lithuanian total defense includes military defense and the participation of non-military institutions and society in the civilian resistance movement.⁶ Latvia characterizes its approach to defense as a comprehensive national defense. This understanding of defense means that society is organized to defend the state against all forms of attack, both military and non-military. The Latvian model of comprehensive defense distinguishes the following seven pillars: military capabilities, public-private cooperation, public education, civil defense, strategic communication, economic resilience, and psychological resilience.⁷ Estonian understanding of national defense results in integration of national military defense, activities of all of the governmental ministries, participation of the society in national defense and the protection of the population within comprehensive approach to national defense.⁸ This comprehensive approach to national defense envisages the use of combined efforts of the armed forces, institutions, and society of the entire country to ensure the security of Estonia in the event of a military threat.

Regardless of the nature of threats, a comprehensive approach to national defense includes not only military defense but also activities in the international arena, support from the civilian sector, psychological defense, internal security, and coherence in the provision of basic services. Aside from some terminological differences, current understandings of comprehensive defense in the Baltic States go beyond military defense. They encompass defense against military and non-military threats and include both military and non-military actions. A characteristic feature of this comprehensive approach to defense is its coordinated involvement of state institutions, the private sector, civic organizations, and individual citizens in the preparation of defense and its conduct.

⁵ "What Is Total Defence?", A Singapore Government Agency, 2021, at https://www.mindef.gov.sg/oms/imindef/mindef_websites/topics/totaldefence/about.html, 20 March 2022.

⁶ *The Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania Approved by the Order No. V-252 of the Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania*, 17 March 2016, at <http://mepoforum.sk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Military-Strategy-Lithuania-2016.pdf>, 20 March 2022.

⁷ "Comprehensive National Defence in Latvia", Ministry of Defense, 2019, at <https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/Comprehensive%20National%20Defence%20in%20Latvia.docx>, 20 March 2022.

⁸ "Basic National Defence Documents", The Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Defense, at <https://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/en/objectives-activities/basic-national-defence-documents>, 20 March 2022.

THE DRIVERS OF COMPREHENSIVE DEFENSE IN THE BALTIC STATES

A number of factors influenced the adoption and implementation of the comprehensive defense concepts by the Baltic States. After regaining independence in 1991, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had to rebuild their defense capacity from the ground up, with no chance of establishing regular armed forces capable of defending effectively against a potential Russian aggression. In the event of aggression, it was necessary to prepare the entire society to defend statehood, and then to maintain resistance during the occupation. Initially, the standing armed forces of the Baltic States were small with light infantry as the dominant element, which needed to be supported by reserve forces and paramilitary formations in the implementation of territorial defense. Patterns for such solutions were drawn from the Scandinavian experience, mainly the Swedish and Finnish cases.⁹

The Baltic States' accession to NATO and the EU in 2004 slowed to some extent the pace of preparations for comprehensive defense. For nearly a decade, the participation of armed forces of the Baltic States in allied and coalition out-of-area operations served as a means of compensating allied efforts to ensure the military security of the Baltic Sea region. In principle, NATO's symbolic military presence in the form of air policing and strict adherence to the 1997 NATO Russia Founding Act precluded a rapid and effective military assistance to the Baltic States in the event of an aggression by Russia. However, it must be acknowledged that at that time the threat of conventional military aggression against the Baltic States remained low. Russia's aggression against Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014 changed that situation. The Baltic States recognized the need to strengthen their national capabilities to counter potential military aggression, both in the early stages of the conflict and in the event that a potential aggressor occupied a portion of their territory.¹⁰

It is impossible to ignore the historical context that led to the adoption and implementation of the comprehensive defense concepts by the Baltic States. To some extent, history determines the Baltic thinking about comprehensive defense. The experiences of the early years of World War II, when Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia did not use their armed forces to oppose the Soviet aggression, are still present in the current political discourse. One interesting argument is that the cost of not resisting back then was higher than that of a hypothetical military defense.¹¹ The lack of resistance to the ultimatum, and then to the Soviet aggression, deprived the Baltic States of the argument

⁹ K. Atamante, "Comprehensive Defence in Latvia – Rebranding State Defence and Call for Society's Involvement," *Journal on Baltic Security*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2020), p. 32.

¹⁰ S.J. Flanagan et al., *Deterring Russian Aggression in the Baltic States through Resilience and Resistance*, Santa Monica 2019, p. 6.

¹¹ M. Ilmjärv, "The Loss of the Baltics' Independence: Options and Choices in 1939-40", International Centre for Defence and Security, 16 February 2018, at <https://icds.ee/en/the-loss-of-the-baltics-independence-options-and-choices-in-193940/>, 20 March 2022.

regarding their will to defend independence for many years and limited international support in the period of the Soviet occupation, until regaining independence in the early 1990s. This has now translated into an imperative to resist, regardless of the outcome of a military confrontation.

Another historical narrative that influences the Baltic concepts of defense is the assessment of threats from Russia. There is a perception of threat persistence, as well as parallels between the present Russian actions and the former Soviet methods. Although specific assessments changed over time, the Baltic efforts in the field of comprehensive defense were determined by their awareness of the threat's continuity. Russia's growing assertiveness in the international arena, as well as its use of the armed forces against its neighbours have given credence to this threat assessment. Prior to the 2008 aggression against Georgia, the threat from Russia was perceived through the lens of information, political, economic, and cyberspace activities. Such threats require an increased resilience in societies and economies, but did not entail radically new military requirements. The Russian annexation and occupation of Crimea in 2014 demonstrated that Moscow's assertiveness could translate into armed aggression, including against the Baltic States.¹² In such a situation, re-evaluations of military defense preparations became necessary, in addition to the improvement of resilience building in the economies and societies.¹³

Comprehensive defense of the Baltic States is also a result of awareness of the limitations of their capabilities in terms of preparation for conventional military defense. With the radical deterioration of the military security situation after 2014, a critical assessment of the military potential in the context of defending the territorial integrity of the Baltic States became necessary. When assessing comprehensive defense after 2014, it is important to consider the choices made by each Baltic state to balance threats against financial capabilities. Long-term modernization efforts initiated after 2014 have put a premium on the introduction of heavier weapon systems that could reinforce conventional military defense in the future. An interesting element of comprehensive defense of the Baltic States is the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of security and defense. The recognition of NATO's operational limitations and the speed with which assistance can be provided as part of collective defense have resulted in new forms of military cooperation with the United States, individual NATO member States, and partner countries.¹⁴ Such an approach complements national efforts in the field of comprehensive defense and needs to be taken into account.¹⁵

¹² L. Milevski, "Scenarios for Baltic Defence: What to Prepare Against", *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2019), pp. 197-198.

¹³ D. Bankauskaite et al., "Baltics Left of Bang: Comprehensive Defense in the Baltic States", *Strategic Forum*, no. 307 (2020), p. 3, at <https://inss.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-307.pdf>, 20 March 2022.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10.

¹⁵ M. Andžāns, V. Veebel, "Deterrence Dilemma in Latvia and Estonia: Finding the Balance between External Military Solidarity and Territorial Defense", *Journal on Baltic Security*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2017), p. 39.

COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO NATIONAL DEFENSE IN ESTONIA

The Concept of National Security of Estonia, adopted in 2017, described the most recent iteration of the Estonian model of comprehensive approach to national defense. The concept promotes a broad approach to national security and defense issues. Security is defined as the ability of the state and its citizens to defend their inherent values and goals against various external political, military, economic, and social threats and risks, as well as the ability to neutralize these threats and risks.¹⁶ As a result, the comprehensive approach to national defense includes both military and non-military capabilities, along with activities and resources of the public and private sectors, as well as civil society.

The Estonian comprehensive approach to national defense stresses the importance of the complementarity of actions taken in the national and allied dimensions. In the event of a potential aggression, defense will be carried out independently at first, and then as part of NATO collective defense. Comprehensive approach to national defense recognizes that the responsibility for state defense does not rest solely with the military defense subsystem, but with all state institutions and society as a whole, all of which must be prepared to defend the state. It should be noted that the goal of the Estonian national defense is not only to effectively counteract military aggression in the event of a potential conflict, but also to prevent it through deterrence, which is regarded as the most effective and least expensive way to defend the state. It also aims to strengthen the overall resilience and preparedness of Estonian society in the face of any crisis. As a result, a comprehensive approach to national defense serves as a deterrent, signaling to a potential aggressor that Estonia is a resilient state and society. Estonia's defense policy is founded on the belief that a potential aggressor who threatens the country's security will recognize that the losses it will incur by attacking Estonia will outweigh any potential benefits.¹⁷

Activities forming Estonian comprehensive approach to national defense include six broad areas. These are: actions for the sustainable development of the state and society, actions in the international arena, strategic communication with psychological defense, actions for internal security, support by the civilian sector for military defense, as well as actions within the framework of military defense. Actions for the sustainable development of the state and society include the ensuring of the continuity of basic or other services necessary for the state's defense in every situation. Estonian comprehensive approach to national defense places a special emphasis on social cohesion. It is believed that increasing societal awareness and readiness for crisis situations is necessary for a coherent response to security threats. The more united a society is and the more shared values it has, the less easily it can be influenced and the less vulnerable it is to security threats.¹⁸

¹⁶ "National Security Concept of Estonia", Riigikogu, 2017, p. 3, at https://kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/elfinder/article_files/national_security_concept_2017_0.pdf, 20 March 2022.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁸ T. Jermalavičius, P. Pernik, M. Hurt, *Comprehensive Security and Integrated Defence: Challenges of Implementing Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society Approaches*, Tallinn 2014, pp. 16-18.

As part of the comprehensive approach to national defense, Estonia envisions international actions aimed at preventing crises and conflicts, reducing tensions in international relations, and creating appropriate conditions for credible deterrence, as well as collective defense and crisis management. International activities are viewed through the lens of creating favorable conditions for NATO's collective defense or international crisis management. NATO's and the European Union's international activities are also aimed at ensuring solidarity and a common understanding of the situation in the event of a crisis or an armed conflict.¹⁹

Increasing Estonia's security and society's resistance to hostile information influences will be accomplished through the development of strategic communication and psychological defense mechanisms. Strategic communication supports Estonian security policy, maintains public awareness of the state of security and prevents panic, neutralizes hostile influences, reveals false information, and prevents its spread. Strategic communication consolidates state activities into a single narrative and assures its transmission to the public. Psychological defense is intended to inform the public and raise awareness of information activities aimed at damaging Estonia's constitutional order, the values and virtues of society. The need for psychological defense is due to the possibility of states using hostile influences on the attacked society in the cognitive sphere. Psychological defense is expected to contribute to preventing crises in Estonia, raising public awareness of security and neutralizing information attacks. It is expected to inform society about attacks, manipulations, and false information, as well as to provide all segments of society with access to multifaceted information. Psychological defense is being developed in Estonia in cooperation with civil society. Estonian strategic communication and psychological defense complement each other. While psychological defense is mainly seen as reactive, strategic communication is expected to be proactive in reaching both one's own society and foreign target groups, even when the narrative is disrupted and information noise is generated during a conflict.²⁰

The Estonian comprehensive approach to national defense emphasizes the key importance of actions to ensure internal security and institutional readiness in the event of a crisis or attack, as well as the protection of Estonia's independence, sovereignty, and constitutional order. Internal security is expected to contribute to prevention of any covert or hybrid activities against the constitutional order of Estonia and to the protection of public order. Annual reports of the Estonian Internal Security Service reveal activities to counter the ongoing threat of Russian influence and intelligence operations, hostile propaganda, corruption, as well as right-wing extremism and international terrorism.²¹

¹⁹ "National Security Concept of Estonia", p. 3.

²⁰ I. Juurvee, U. Arold, "Psychological Defence and Cyber Security: Two Integral Parts of Estonia's Comprehensive Approach for Countering Hybrid Threats", *ICONO14*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2021), p. 88.

²¹ *Estonian Internal Security Service. Annual Review 2020-2021*, Tallinn 2021, pp. 3-4, at https://kapo.ee/sites/default/files/content_page_attachments/Annual%20Review%202020-2021.pdf, 20 March 2022.

Actions aimed at support by the civilian sector for military defense are to ensure effective activation and support for the continuation of military defense. Civilian support for military defense includes mobilizing the economy and utilizing state assets for defense. It is crucial for providing host nation support to allies and ensuring the availability of necessary infrastructure. Finally, it covers imposing defense obligations on institutions and citizens, and providing owners with essential assets and services in accordance with agreements. This aspect of preparations is regularly rehearsed to improve coordination not only at central, but also at local levels.²² It should be noted that Estonian comprehensive approach to national defense states unequivocally that civilian support for military defense must not significantly jeopardize the resilience of the rest of society.

Military defense activities include the development and availability of national operational capabilities of the armed forces, as well as participation in NATO's collective defense. The Estonian Defense Forces are built upon the model of a reserve force. Most of its wartime personnel are reserves, and active duty personnel include both professional soldiers and conscripts. A voluntary Defense League organization plays important role in preparation of military reserves and other activities within a comprehensive approach to national defense. As a result of increased military threat from Russia, the Estonian Defense Forces have increased their wartime structure from 21 to 25 thousand troops. This includes an increase in annual conscription from three to four thousand soldiers. One of its brigades will be mechanized by 2026, while the other will be a motorized light infantry brigade.²³ The defense budget in Estonia has been higher than two percent of the GDP from 2012 onward. In 2021, it was 645.5 million EUR, and in 2022, it is planned to be 745.5 million EUR. A well-thought-out logic and sequential approach has been visible in developing the operational capabilities of Estonian armed forces required for conventional state defense. This applies to both the introduction of new weapon systems and the expansion of operational and reserve forces.

COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL DEFENSE IN LATVIA

The Latvian Ministry of Defense made public the current framework for comprehensive national defense in February 2019. The complexity of security threats necessitated the articulation of a comprehensive national defense. It meant that the national defense system and its conventional forces would be unable to deal with all aspects of hybrid threats on their own. This became the foundation for actions to construct a comprehensive state defense system. Such a system makes all non-governmental and governmental entities prepared to manage the crisis, ensure resistance to external influences, and resist

²² V. Veebel, I. Ploom, "Estonia's Comprehensive Approach to National Defence: Origins and Dilemmas", *Journal on Baltic Security*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2018), p. 6.

²³ "Estonian Military Defence 2026", Kaitseministeerium, 2018, p. 4, at https://kaitseministeerium.ee/sites/default/files/sisulehed/eesmargid_tegevused/rkak2026-a6-spreads_eng-v6.pdf, 20 March 2022.

and overcome serious shocks and challenges.²⁴ The Latvian concept of comprehensive national defense emphasizes the importance of trust and cooperation between society and the government, as well as societal support for the state and its security.²⁵

The goal of comprehensive national defense is to ensure security and crisis preparedness in all sectors, including armed conflicts. Because NATO is a cornerstone of Latvia's security, comprehensive national defense is not intended to contradict NATO's collective defense goals, plans, or other regional initiatives. Such an approach strengthens deterrence and builds resilience to possible crises or armed conflicts. It also prepares Latvian society for state defense, facilitates effective crisis management at the national level, and supports critical state functions in times of crisis or other threat.

The comprehensive national defense of Latvia covers a number of areas of activities, including the development of military capabilities and defense strategies, closer defense cooperation between the private and public sectors, and civil protection.²⁶ The introduction of patriotic education and defense preparation in Latvian schools, activities to raise public awareness, psychological defense, and strategic communication are worth mentioning as means of building societal resilience. The Latvian national military defense system relies on the operational capabilities of the armed forces to defend Latvia's freedom, territorial integrity, and sovereignty in the event of an armed conflict. Should Latvia lose all or part of its sovereign control over its territory during a crisis or an armed conflict, resistance would be one of the means of defense.

The return of military threat to Latvian territorial integrity after 2014 led to a more than threefold increase in the size of the defense budget. In 2014, it was EUR 223 million, in 2021 it was already EUR 708 million, and for 2022, the preliminary planned budget has risen to EUR 758 million. Regular units of the armed forces expanded from 4,600 soldiers in 2014 to 6,600 in 2020. Simultaneously, the size of the National Guard forces increased from around 6,600 in 2014 to 8,200 in 2020.²⁷ Further plans envisage an increase of the National Guard to 12,000.²⁸ The threat of a hybrid invasion led to creation of an immediate response forces consisting of eighteen subunits of the National Guard. Capabilities for military defense were improved by the mechanization of the Latvian land forces, which received 120 armored fighting vehicles and 47 self-propelled howitzers after 2014. Significant funds were also set aside for the modernization of the National Guard with antitank and anti-aircraft weapons.²⁹

²⁴ "Comprehensive National Defence in Latvia".

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 3-10.

²⁷ "Latvian National Armed Forces. Fact Sheet", Military Public Affairs Department, Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Latvia, 2021, p. 1, at <https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/NBS%20faktu%20lapa%20%202020%20ENG.pdf>, 20 March 2022.

²⁸ J. Gustafsson, "Northern European and Transatlantic Security (NOTS): Latvia's Military Capability 2020", *FOI Memo*, 7594, September 2021.

²⁹ "Latvia's Defence Ministry to Focus on Army Modernization and Cyber Security in 2021", Baltic News Network, 20 October 2020, at <https://bnn-news.com/latvias-defence-ministry-to-focus-on-army-modernization-and-cyber-security-in-2021-218030>, 20 March 2022.

Latvian defense capabilities are being strengthened by improved defense cooperation between the private and public sectors. The Latvian comprehensive national defense concept emphasizes that non-governmental organizations should be entrusted with specific national defense roles and should participate in defense planning. It is also assumed that the government will actively pursue cooperation with non-governmental organizations, approaching each one separately. Provisions for annual defense training for selected groups of professionals and experts, including opinion leaders, public officials, representatives of the mass media, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and other industries should be also noted. At the same time, the legal and financial terms of cooperation between the private and public sectors still need to be clarified so that they are understood and acceptable by both parties.³⁰

An important element of Latvian comprehensive national defense are activities aimed at raising public awareness and shaping patriotic attitudes. Education is expected to shape respect for the statehood, people, and national security of Latvia, as well as to promote critical thinking and patriotism. The inclusion of national defense content in curricula was viewed as a first step toward promoting a sense of duty in a more coordinated and integrated manner. The importance of restoring public trust in the government cannot be overstated. It is intended to be a direct communication with teachers, the media, large and medium-sized businesses, local governments, and representatives from other important sectors. This approach is expected to contribute to a better understanding of state defense challenges, as well as the role, position, and responsibilities of each industry in the field of comprehensive national defense.

The Latvian model of comprehensive national defense stresses the importance of crisis management and civil protection capabilities. It is anticipated that the improvement of civil-military coordination, the allocation of resources, and the harmonization of capabilities may contribute to the improvement of civil-military cooperation, and, consequently, increase the capabilities of the national defense system. Further improvements to crisis management are expected as a result of individual preparation and shaping of citizens' responsibility for their own safety in emergencies or in the first days or hours of war. The public information campaign and a guide on how to act during the first 72 hours of a crisis serves as a good example of raising awareness and educating the society on how to respond to a crisis and conflict.³¹

Similar to the Estonian approach, psychological defense is a part of comprehensive national defense. The psychological defense of society is intended to strengthen its resistance to negative psychological campaigns and operations against the state, processes occurring in the country, specific events, and so on. It should be noted that the Latvian concept emphasizes the shaping and strengthening of all groups of society's loyalty to the state rather than to one's own ethnic group. It is predicted that the internalization of pro-state attitudes in society will increase its resistance to provocations and will help

³⁰ "Comprehensive National Defence in Latvia," pp. 3-10.

³¹ "What To Do in Case of a Crisis," Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Latvia, 2020, at <https://www.sargs.lv/sites/default/files/2020-06/brochure.pdf>, 20 March 2022.

avoid ethnic conflicts. An interesting element of Latvian approach to comprehensive national defense is the involvement of various non-governmental organizations in psychological defense. It includes religious organizations that provide people with psychological support, giving them the strength to survive and overcome difficulties during a crisis or war.³²

Strategic communication activities are also part of comprehensive national defense. It includes information campaigns involving opinion leaders who will explain the importance of comprehensive defense to the rest of society. Longer term, Latvian society's information resilience is expected to be strengthened. Latvia intends to improve the quality of Latvia's most important national news platforms in order to prevent the spread of false, unverified information and the misinforming of the public about events in Latvia and abroad.³³

One of the elements of Latvia's comprehensive national defense is ensuring the economic resilience of the state and society. Preserving economic resilience is expected to ensure that essential government services remain intact in the event of disaster or war. It envisages a more responsible approach to national security by creating the necessary strategic reserves to ensure that the basic functions of the state are maintained for at least three weeks after the crisis. It is also being considered to donate basic necessities to Latvian society in order to ensure that every citizen has the necessary crisis stocks to survive for at least a week without assistance.

In sum, the current approach to comprehensive national defense allows Latvia adapting its model of national defense to diverse security situations and threats. Comprehensive national defense integrates activities of the government and public administration bodies with the private sector, business, non-governmental organizations, and society. In the long term, the comprehensive approach to state defense is expected to contribute to increasing the resilience of society and the state to external threats and, consequently, to improving its security.

TOTAL DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

The principle of total and unconditional defense was introduced as one of the fundamental provisions of defense policy in the Republic of Lithuania's law on the basics of national security. Total defense means that the armed forces will defend Lithuania in a military way, all state resources will be used for defense, and that every citizen and the nation will resist by all possible means. Unconditional defense means that the defense of Lithuania will not be subject to any preconditions, and that no one may restrict the right of the nation and any citizen to resist an aggressor, invader or anyone who violates the independence, territorial integrity, or constitutional order of Lithuania.³⁴ The current

³² K. Atamante, "Comprehensive Defence in Latvia...", p. 41.

³³ "Comprehensive National Defence in Latvia", pp. 5-10.

³⁴ *The Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania Approved by the Order No. V-252...*, p. 6.

legal framework states that in the event of aggression, Lithuania will seek international assistance while also defending itself on its own, without waiting for such assistance.

The Lithuanian total defense concept focuses efforts on deterrence and defense. The priorities for counteracting threats include denying the aggressor winning the information war, eliminating the risk of a local armed conflict, and deterring and preventing the occupation of the state's territory. The concept of Lithuanian total defense emphasizes the need to oppose military aggression. It is believed that an excessive focus solely on resistance during the occupation could indicate a lack of will to defend and potentially provoke military actions of the enemy.³⁵

Lithuania's defense capability is based on the nation's determination to resist any aggressor, universal military service, and the readiness of the armed forces and active reserves. Citizens' readiness for total armed and unarmed resistance and civil defense, as well as armed forces' mutual understanding and cooperation with citizens, are all essential components of defense capability. Total Lithuanian defense includes training and preparing citizens for defense and resistance. The general readiness of society to resist and the readiness of the armed forces to defend unconditionally in the event of aggression are also to serve as a deterrent. Lithuania envisages countering aggression by all means available: military defense, guerrilla warfare, civil disobedience, non-cooperation and other means.³⁶ It should be noted that Lithuanian law expressly states that, in the event of aggression, no state institution or official may make a decision or issue an order prohibiting the defense of Lithuania's sovereignty, territorial integrity, or constitutional order. The legal regulations also provide for the punishment of Lithuanian citizens who cooperate with an occupying force.

Military defense by the armed forces aims at exhausting and destroying the enemy's forces. The armed forces are expected to resist aggression based on action plans, following the decisions of tactical commanders, rather than waiting for a special political decision. After 2014, the Lithuanian armed forces resumed compulsory military service and increased their numbers from 12,450 soldiers in 2014 to over 20,000 in 2020. Purchases of infantry fighting vehicles, heavy self-propelled artillery, and NASAMS medium-range anti-aircraft missile systems were completed. In 2014, the National High Readiness Forces were created in the strength of two battalion battle groups capable of taking action in 24 to 48 hours.³⁷ Great importance is attached to the preparation of the armed forces to continue guerrilla warfare in territories occupied by an enemy.

Military defense will be complemented by actions defined in Lithuanian legal regulations as civil resilience. In case of armed aggression or an attempt to violate the territorial integrity of Lithuania or its constitutional order, citizens and social organizations

³⁵ D. Bankauskaite, "Lithuanian Total Defense. Reforging National Security in the Baltics", 27 February 2020, at <https://cepa.org/lithuanian-total-defense/>, 20 March 2022.

³⁶ L. Zdanavicius, N. Statkus, "Strengthening Resilience of Lithuania in an Era of Great Power Competition. The Case for Total Defense", *Journal of Baltic Security*, vol. 6, no. 2 (2020), p. 53.

³⁷ "Lithuanian Defence System: Facts and Figures 2020", Ministry of National Defence, 2020, at <https://kam.lt/download/69971/skai%C4%8Ddai%20ir%20faktai%202020%20ang%20final.pdf>, 20 March 2022.

will undertake defensive measures, such as peaceful resistance, disobedience, and refusal to cooperate with illegal administration, as well as armed resistance. Lithuania provides a wide range of actions by government institutions to prepare citizens for social resistance. Since the beginning of Russian aggression in Ukraine in 2014 Lithuania published a series of guides on non-violent defense, behaviours during emergencies and war, and civil resistance. Preparations include regular training on various means of resistance and civil defense and the provision of the necessary technical resources. Civic education and the teaching of resistance measures and the training of resistance skills have been introduced as an obligatory part of school education programs. The state also supports civil society organizations that contribute to preparing for civil resistance and strengthening defense capabilities. Raising the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union's budget more than 2.5 times from 2014 to 2017 may be one of illustrative examples of such support.³⁸ Lithuania has considerable achievements in countering information threats. As a result of recent efforts by governmental institutions and public initiatives, societal resilience against Russian information warfare methods has significantly improved. Lithuanian civilian volunteers – known as 'elves', who fight hostile propaganda are internationally recognized. An integrated Governmental Strategic Communication Coordination System introduced in 2019 and 2020 allows for the consolidation of strategic communication and psychological defense efforts.

Prospects for implementation of total defense in Lithuania appear promising, as they are supported by a cross-party agreement on defense policy guidelines for 2020-2030. Those guidelines ensure the continuity of efforts to strengthen national defense, regardless of election cycles, campaigns, results, and changes in political power. The bulk of the commitments relate to the armed forces and their military defense capabilities. In the long-term modernization of the armed forces, priority is given to the land forces. It is assumed that the ability of rapid reaction forces and special operations forces to respond quickly to violations of sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the state will be increased. Some efforts for the preparation of society for the defense of the state are also envisaged. It is planned to strengthen the society's readiness for universal civil resistance and to continue activities aimed at utilizing the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in national defense. Due to an increase in hybrid threats to national security and social resistance, it is intended to continue activities in accordance with the national strategy for defending democracy against such threats. It is intended to improve monitoring of hybrid threats as well as preparation for preventing and mitigating their impact on the state and society. There are plans to raise awareness and strengthen society's ability to recognize and critically assess information attacks, as well as to develop a standardized system for analyzing the information space, assessing threats, and responding to information attacks.³⁹

³⁸ "Lithuanian Defence System: Facts and Trends 2017", Ministry of National Defence, 2017, p. 15, at <https://urm.lt/uploads/nato/documents/nato.pdf>, 20 March 2022.

³⁹ "Agreement on Lithuanian Defence Policy Guidelines signed", Permanent Delegation of the Republic of Lithuania to NATO, 11 September 2018, at <https://urm.lt/nato/en/news/agreement-on-lithuanian-defence-policy-guidelines-signed>, 20 March 2022.

LESSONS FOR POLAND

Awareness of a possible military threat from Russia arose in the Polish political discourse in connection with the war in Georgia in 2008. However, the words of late President Lech Kaczyński, *today Georgia, tomorrow Ukraine, and then maybe it's time for my country*, remained separate from official assessments of the government of the time. The first years of Poland's membership to NATO and the EU and cooperation in the field of security with the United States created a climate for optimistic assessments of national security. The majority of society and the ruling political elite were not worried about threat of war in Poland.⁴⁰ Political discourse between 1999 and 2014 was dominated by a technological approach to the transformation of the armed forces and a strong fusion of Poland's military security with the NATO and the partnership with the United States. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Poland's size and location influenced the perception of defense as a task of the armed forces, but not that of society as a whole. Russian aggression against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 dramatically influenced such an approach to national defense in Poland.⁴¹ The re-valuation in NATO's relations with Russia and the change of the ruling elite in Poland influenced changes in the concepts of defense and shaping of national security.

The Concept of Defense of the Republic of Poland of May 2017 addressed the threat of conventional military aggression. It attempted to broaden the scope of defense. Nevertheless, in perceiving national defense as an effort of the entire state, considerations were narrowed down to cooperation of the armed forces with other state institutions and agencies, mainly regarding their preparation for defense tasks.⁴² Some attention was also paid to cooperation with commercial partners and pro-defense organizations.

The national security strategy of Poland adopted in May 2020 introduced the term 'common defense'. That term, along with the state's resilience, has been discussed as one of the pillars of the security of the state and its citizens. The strategy called for a system of common (comprehensive) defense based on the efforts of the entire country. This defense system was supposed to integrate capabilities and actions of the state and local government institutions, entities of the education and higher education system, local communities, business entities, non-governmental organizations, and citizens.⁴³ Unfortunately, almost two years after the adoption of the national security strategy, it is impossible to find any provisions regarding common defense in any official government documents. It is still an ambiguous high-level concept that had not translated into actions that are more concrete.

⁴⁰ *Biała księga bezpieczeństwa narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, red. S. Koziej et al., Warszawa 2013, pp. 127-128.

⁴¹ Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, "O polskiej armii i przygotowaniu obywateli na wypadek powszechnego zagrożenia", *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, no. 125 (2014), pp. 16-18.

⁴² Ministry of National Defense, *The Concept of Defence of the Republic of Poland*, Warszawa 2017, pp. 62-65.

⁴³ *Strategia bezpieczeństwa narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 2020, pp. 13-15.

Observations of the Baltic States' efforts related to the development and implementation of comprehensive defense allow for a number of conclusions that could be useful in Poland's development of such defense. The basic condition for adopting the concept of common (comprehensive) defense in Poland will be the acceptance of individual and social responsibility related to the defense of the state.⁴⁴ This necessitates, on the one hand, a realistic assessment of threats and their consequences, and, on the other, a clear division of responsibilities between state and non-state actors.⁴⁵ In the discourse so far, the topic of waging war in Poland or the threat of occupation of a part of the country's territory has been avoided. The lack of public awareness of the consequences of such a situation limits the preparation of the society and administration at the lowest levels for such scenarios. In the official narrative, it was the state that was responsible for military security, conducting foreign policy, and developing the armed forces. Poland lacks coherent strategic communication building individual and social responsibility for national defense. Finally, a common perception is that it is the state and government to provide for security, not the individual citizen. Such skewed perceptions absolve citizens of responsibility for security and fosters a sense of entitlement among them.

Comprehensive defense requires consistent regulations regarding various aspects of military defense, civil protection, defense cooperation with commercial entities and social organizations. The experience of the Baltic States shows that the process of creating and implementing such regulations takes time. One may easily observe challenges related to harmonization of legal and conceptual frameworks. The legal framework for comprehensive defense in Poland, as it is understood by the Baltic States, remains fragmented and outdated at best. The law on defense of the fatherland, adopted in March 2022, attempts to regulate development and sustainment of the armed forces. However, it does not regulate other aspects of national defense.⁴⁶ In the case of Poland, an important step toward comprehensive defense would be the adoption of statutory civil protection regulations followed by the harmonization of lower-level implementing regulations. Again, for more than a decade, there is no progress in implementing a law on civil protection and civil defense.⁴⁷

Comprehensive defense requires a more balanced and long-term approach to the development of the operational capabilities of the armed forces. There is a noticeable consistency in prioritizing capabilities in the Baltic States, from what is needed and can

⁴⁴ Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, "Postrzeganie bezpieczeństwa państwa i stosunek do NATO", *Komunikat z badań CBOS*, no. 28 (2020), p. 11.

⁴⁵ L. Komorowski, "Strategiczne kryteria systemu obrony powszechnej Polski [opinia]", *Defence24*, 8 January 2021, at <https://defence24.pl/sily-zbrojne/strategiczne-kryteria-systemu-obrony-powszechnej-polski-opinia>, 20 March 2022.

⁴⁶ M. Sobczak, "Ustawa o obronie ojczyzny już obowiązuje", *Prawo.pl*, 23 April 2022, at <https://www.prawo.pl/prawo/ustawa-o-obronie-ojczyzny-opublikowana,511406.html>, 24 March 2022.

⁴⁷ D. Mikołajczyk, "Ponad 2,5 mld złotych na ochronę ludności i obronę cywilną. MSWiA szykuje przewrót w systemie zarządzania kryzysowego", *InfoSecurity24*, 29 March 2022, at <https://infosecurity24.pl/bezpieczenstwo-wewnetrzne/ponad-25-mld-zlotych-na-ochrone-ludnosci-i-obrone-cywilna-mswia-szykuje-przewrot-w-systemie-zarzadzania-kryzysowego>, 29 March 2022.

be afforded to what is needed but cannot be afforded at the moment. One may argue that the Baltic States were able to define a long-term approach to maintaining a balance among conventional, territorial, and unconventional defense capabilities. There is also a conservative approach to increasing the size of the armed forces there. In case of Poland, one can see a desire for a radical, almost one-off generational change in operational capabilities through the introduction of modern weapon systems. Such an approach does not take into account the harmonization of the development of operational capabilities of the entire armed forces and does not fully consider the costs of sustaining the force. It seems harmful to change the priorities of the development of operational capabilities in a hasty manner or give up previously agreed modernization programs.⁴⁸

The education of the society is crucial for the state's preparations for defense. The examples of social campaigns in Lithuania and Latvia concerning the conduct in crises and during the occupation highlight the need for a similar approach in Poland. Despite the existence of guides at local levels, there is no clear communication of the needs and requirements of individual preparation for crises by state authorities at the central level. Similarly, as indicated by a number of experts in Poland, it appears necessary to modify security education programs and content in order to adapt them to changing security threats.⁴⁹ Even with both proposals accepted, it must be understood that investments in education of society will bring most results in medium and long term. Not necessarily immediately after they were announced.

To summarize, public debate in Poland on comprehensive defense is far from producing tangible results. With the lack of common understanding of the concept, absent conceptual and legal frameworks, and other priorities at hand, comprehensive defense will remain an empty buzzword for a while. To give comprehensive defense a chance, an open discussion about the division of individual and state responsibilities based on realistic scenarios should begin. There is much to be improved in the existing legal framework, particularly in the areas of civil protection and civil defense. Finally, there is room for improvement in strategic communication, psychological defense, and societal education. With a good starting point and focused efforts, one can anticipate gradual improvements over the next decade.

CONCLUSIONS

Russian aggression against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 fuelled the Baltic States' efforts to strengthen their national defenses. In addition to hybrid threats, the worst case scenario of armed aggression by the Russian Federation and the occupation of some or all of these countries' territories emerged. Despite some differences in

⁴⁸ M. Piątek, "Słabosilna polska armia. Rakiety nas nie obronią, czołgi za ciężkie", *Polityka*, 19 March 2022, at <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/swiat/2158265,1,slabosilna-polska-armia-rakiety-nas-nie-obronia-czolgi-za-ciezkie.read>, 20 March 2022.

⁴⁹ "Przysposobienie obronne wróci do szkół?", *Defence24*, 18 March 2022, <https://defence24.pl/polityka-obronna/czarnek-od-wrzesnia-do-szkol-wraca-przysposobienie-obronne>, 20 March 2022.

national approaches, all Baltic States have taken steps to implement a model of comprehensive (total) national defense, significantly extending the scope of involvement in national defense of the non-military sector and society. While not all activities are completely new, recent years have seen an emphasis on integrating public administration, private sector, and society in defense preparations. The Baltic States consider comprehensive defense as complementary to the activities undertaken within the framework of the North Atlantic Alliance and bilateral defense cooperation. Increasing the ability to deter aggression and the ability to resist aggression independently is viewed by the Baltic States as a supplement to NATO's collective defense capacity and the European Union's security activities.

A unique feature of the comprehensive defense in all of the Baltic States is the readiness to start immediate decentralized military defense by operational units of the armed forces and reserve forces, supported by voluntary territorial defense formations and pro-defense organizations. Military defense is perceived as a necessary element of counteracting military aggression, supporting further national defense activities in the international arena and within the country. A key component of the Baltic States' comprehensive defense concept is increasing society's resilience to hostile information influences through psychological defense projects and strategic communication. Both activities are carried out in times of peace and are intended to limit the possibility of external actors to influence the state and society. The Baltic States prepare their societies to face a possible armed occupation. The scope of social resistance during the occupation includes not only self-help and passive resistance against the occupation authorities, but also active actions and support for the resistance movement.

Preparedness for comprehensive defense varies between the Baltic States and for different elements of defense. Legislative and conceptual frameworks for comprehensive defense can be assessed as advanced. Most of the necessary legislative changes have been introduced in all the Baltic States, and the issues of defense have been included in strategic documents on security and defense. The plans for the development of operational capabilities of the armed forces have been developed and are being implemented, with the specification of requirements in shorter planning cycles. Solutions in the field of civil preparations for total defense are systematically implemented. Taking into account the aforementioned conditions, it is reasonable to expect that the majority of the planned solutions to strengthen the Baltic States' comprehensive defense capabilities will be implemented within the next decade.

In comparison to the Baltic States, Poland has taken a more traditional, armed forces-centred approach to national defense. While intergovernmental coordination supports overall defense efforts, military defense remains its core, with the armed forces in the lead. Public debates on comprehensive or common defense in Poland refer often to lessons learned by the Scandinavian and Baltic States. However, it fails to see the prerequisites for adopting such a concept, as well as the complexity and timelines for comprehensive defense preparations.

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