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**Securitizing Russia: the Baltic States Perception of Russia
as a Threat after 2014**

Master's thesis

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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on
May 10, 2019

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Abstract

The thesis proposes the analytical review on how the Baltic States, namely, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia perceive Russia as a threat to their national security by addressing and evaluating the main changes in their security policies. To analyze the changes and differences in their perception, the securitization theory is applied. Following the most recent changes in the security environment in Europe, starting from the Ukraine crisis and annexation of Crimea in 2014, supplementary theoretic concept such as security dilemma is used for better understanding of the challenges that the Baltic States/NATO - Russia relations face.

The main goal of this thesis is to provide a detailed overview of how Russian interference in Ukraine's domestic affairs, created a sense of anxiety in the Eastern Europe and affected security sectors of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia.

Keywords: the Baltic States, Russia, Ukraine Crisis, Securitization theory, Security Dilemma, NATO

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1. Introduction

USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics/ Soviet Union) existed between 1922-1991 and consisted of 15 Soviet Socialist Republics, including Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. By December of 1991, the Soviet Union ceased to exist and transformed into the Russian Federation. The biggest issue was the future of its former territories. 1991 was the year when three Baltic republics together with Ukraine were recognized as the sovereign states by the international community (Conquest, McCauley et al. 2018).

Whereas the events in Georgia in 2008 were taken as an early warning by Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, the Russian invasion of Crimea was a game-changer that sparked real fears among the Balts (Vihalemm and Masso, 2007).

Perception of Russia as a threat is a historic feature for the three Baltic States and this feeling as such has not changed significantly after Russia started applying its revisionist policies in Ukraine, however, it was a wake-up call that deepened the security discourse. The perception of Russia as a threat after 2014 events was different in terms of measures taken to avoid being on Vladimir Putin's hit-list (Clark et al., 2016; Lucas, 2015). The Baltic States fear a repetition of the '*Crimean*' scenario given the number of Russian minorities residing on their territory. Therefore, the issue of internal stability and integration of communities has returned on the agenda. However, there were differences in how intense Russia was securitized by the Baltic States.

The main objective of this thesis is to illustrate the current security situation in the Baltic States region. More specifically, it analyzes the threats Russia poses to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and their proposed ways to combat the challenges they face on different security levels.

To explain the current dynamics of the Baltic States-Russia relations, the securitization theory is applied and security dilemma concept is used in order to demonstrate how insecurities of the Baltic States regarding Kremlin's policies directly affect relations between NATO and Russia in the Baltic States region. In author's opinion, both theories can complement each other and give a comprehensive review of securitization processes in the Baltic States from 2014 onwards, giving the emphasis to the changes that have occurred in the military, political, economic, societal and cyber security sector of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia.

2. Methodology

The research aims to evaluate how Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have securitized Russia. Specifically, indicating the change of their perception after Russia's involvement into the Ukraine crisis in 2013 and annexation of Crimea in 2014. Accordingly, the following research questions try to achieve the goal:

1. *Are there differences in the Baltic States' mode of securitizing Russia?*
2. *Do different securitization paths transform into different policy steps undertaken by the Baltic States?*

The analysis will proceed in four parts. The introduction is followed by a methodology chapter which introduces the research questions, the structure of the thesis and explains the research method. Then the theoretical framework is introduced. Securitization theory is chosen as a fundamental theory for the following investigation. The chapter introduces and compares the Copenhagen and Paris Schools of thought and describes the model of securitization. The theory is fruitful to examine public perception of a certain issue as a threat after authorities' manipulations. Hence, the author assumes that the research agenda would benefit from the securitization theory, despite all its critics and disadvantages.

Chapter II provides an overview of the theoretical concepts of security, the differences between different schools of thought as well as the shortcomings of the theory. The chapter introduces the Securitization theory along with the securitization process and encompasses 5 different sectors of security - military, political, economic, societal, economic and environmental security. This thesis does not look into the environmental security matters. Nonetheless, the cyber sector of security is introduced. The cyber security sector is not included into the securitization theory discourse, however, it should be considered as cyberspace activities are directly interconnected with the other four security sectors and cyber attacks can be used as tools to affect/destabilize other sectors of security.

The Security Dilemma concept is reviewed in order to better understand the dynamics that the Baltic States-Russia-NATO relations and the security dilemma that all the parties face. The role of Media in securitizing Russia in the Baltic States along with Russian New Generation Warfare are added to agenda as both are used as Moscow's tools to achieve its geopolitical goals that have become an integral part of securitization discourse in the Baltic States. A short overview of the Ukraine crisis with the following annexation of Crimea and

the war in the Donbass region with the connection to the Baltic States will be presented as the outbreak of the crisis provided impetus for the Baltic States' authorities to securitize (re-securitize) Russia on different security levels.

Chapter III examines the securitization of Russia in Lithuania by thoroughly examining the four security sectors, namely, the military, political, economic, societal and cyber one, and the differences on how intense Russia is securitized on a policy-making level in each one of them. Chapter IV analyzes the securitization practices in Estonia and Chapter V focuses on Latvia's way to speak of security. The same approach as in Chapter III is applied to delve into how Estonia and Latvia securitize Russia: both Chapter IV and Chapter V take a thorough look at developments in the countries' policies in the five security sectors.

The thesis finishes with a conclusion that seeks to summarize and critically discuss the findings.

2.1 Research Method

In order to effectively evaluate how Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia securitize Russia, this thesis methodology applies case studies. Case studies analysis is seen as a clear choice by the author resulting from the in-depth and accurate set of data the method provides, where in this research case, on the security discourse on the (re)emergence of the Russian threat in the Baltic States after the annexation of Crimea. The essential precondition to conducting the case studies is an understanding of the historical background in regards to the nature of the Baltic States fears and distrust vis-a-vis Moscow and the general parameters of the Baltic States-Russia relations. This will offer insights into contextual conditions of portraying Russia as a threat and will help to calculate the different extents of the securitization in Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia.

A case study research is applied to analyze and describe a particular person, group of people, a specific challenge, process or a phenomenon providing a detailed overview (Starman, 2013, p. 31). This being said, to address the research questions, three separate case studies will be conducted. First, the thesis will look into how Lithuania securitizes Russia within its five security sectors, namely, the military, political, economic, societal, and cyber one. After that, the second case study will analyze the securitization of Russia dynamics in Estonia. The third case study will explore Latvia's degree of securitizing Russia. These case studies will provide essential information on the Baltic States-Russia relations and reveal the differences in the

Baltic States modes of securitizing Russia, thus, they will be crucial for answering the research questions.

2.2 Primary Sources

To begin, the official documents used as primary and secondary sources for this research paper are presented by governmental sources from Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia as well as documents published by the EU and NATO. These present a range of official statements, articles, interviews, communiqués and policy papers. The National Security Concepts of the Baltic States were chosen as they reflect the security policies together with the risks, threats, and dangers to national security. These official documents were analyzed in relation to the five sectors of security, namely, the military, political, economic, societal, and cyber sectors. The author believes that the primary sources have offered relevant data which will provide a framework to trace the securitization of Russia processes in the Baltic States.

The concept of ‘speech act’ is introduced in this subject area within the speeches conducted by the Baltic State and NATO officials, as they engage in a discussion regarding the security threats Russia poses. The majority of these speeches were made by the presidents of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia as well as by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Ministers of Defence and other official representatives of the different security sectors. These speeches featured in interviews, public events, discussions, and official announcements, and shed light on the Baltic States’ security discourse and their feelings towards Russia. Furthermore, they are a direct product of Russian foreign policies that define the changing security environment in Europe. These primary sources demonstrate the presence of the securitization language which is urgently important for understanding the nature of the research questions. Meanwhile, the secondary sources provide the background for the Baltic States’ perception of Russia as a threat.

2.3 Secondary Sources

Earlier research and interpretations of scholarly articles and chapters are used as secondary source documents, and will primarily reflect the theoretical framework of this thesis. Particular attention will be given to mass media, as it is seen as a catalyst that often takes a lead in the construction of the image and reputation of relevant events and discourses that revolve around the Russian security threats. It should not be overlooked that even in a democratic country a free media is not always impartial; rather the content they disperse depends on the

influences of the principal players - politicians and other stakeholders - as much as the views and convictions of the journalists preparing the material. The thesis analyses the rhetoric used in news addresses on Russia, its influence on the audience, and the expansionist politics of the Russian President, Vladimir Putin.

The articles provide a detailed overview of the security situation in the Baltic States region. These materials were published by the Baltic States' think-tank. Yet, since many of the events describe the current state of affairs and are not reflected in the world of academia, the media and Internet sources were used to analyze the issues relevant to the subject such as: LTR, Delfi, The Baltic Times, BNS, ERR, ETV+, LNT, LTV and LETA among others. As has been acknowledged before, the media outlets do not always stay objective and can complicate or securitize the topic purposely.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data was collected and analyzed in qualitative form. Due to a broad subject matter of this thesis, several analysis tools were applied.

Discourse analysis (DA) is a term for the study that looks into how language is used in different contexts (both in written form and in the form of spoken words). Discourse analysis combines linguistics and sociology and focuses on 'the larger discourse context in order to understand how it affects the meaning of the sentence' (Tanen). DA recognizes a correlation between power and use of language which, in turn, may produce a security discourse or a hidden call for action (Van Dijk, 1985, pp. 135-136). It will be used to detect how intensity of the securitization of Russia varies in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia by applying on official documents, decision-makers' and media statements as well as on interviews and social media posts. Since this research is based on the securitization theory, discourse analysis (DA) is seen as a clear choice resulting from the 'speech act' being the gist of the theoretical framework.

Furthermore, a tool of Critical Method Analysis (CMA) will be used. The method is considered relevant to this research because 'CMA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of 'social practice'. Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it' (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). In other words, language is seen as an important tool to produce physical or mental changes, for example,

changes in perception (Fairclough et al., 2011). The use of CDA will help to acquire a better understanding of the shifts in the security discourse of the Baltic States.

Due to the author's lack of knowledge of the Baltic States' official languages, the data gathered and analyzed is presented in English and Russian.

3. Theoretical Framework: Security and Securitization Theory

The concept of security received a new lease of life shortly after the end of the Cold War. The traditional perception of security was linked to the military sector and the state was seen as the main referent object. But when the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union started to gradually fade away, the traditional military aspect of security felt biased and narrow. Though the state continued being the main referent object of security studies, it became clear that the threats could emanate from the other areas as well, such as the political, economic, societal or ecological ones (Buzan, 2007).

The term securitization appeared in the international relations discourse in the late 1980s, thanks to Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan, the main authors of the Copenhagen School, who pioneered and widened debate in the field of security studies. In their book "*Security: A New Framework for Analysis*" (Buzan et al, 1998) the scholars presented a new framework to 'securitization studies' that included Buzan's multi-sectoral approach that encompassed new sectors to the existing military one and introduced Wæver's concept of 'securitization' the main dilemma of which was whether security was objective or subjective (Wæver et al. 1993; Wæver 1995; Buzan et al. 1998).

The approach to Securitization theory introduced by them demonstrates that national security policy is not developed spontaneously, but is designed thoroughly by the relevant actors:

At the heart of the concept we still find something to do with defense and the state. As a result, addressing an issue in security terms still evokes an image of threat-defense, allocating to the state an important role in addressing it (Wæver, 1995: 1).

Hence, two schools of academic thought have evolved: The Copenhagen (CS) and the Paris School (PS). In order to comprehend the securitization theory more assiduously, it is necessary to look into the key outputs of these two schools.

3.1 The Copenhagen and Paris Schools of Thought

The Copenhagen School (CS) of Security Studies was founded by the Conflict Studies and Peace Research Institute of Copenhagen (COPRI) and contributed noteworthy to clarify the definition of security, most notably through its narrative of securitization and desecuritization through the works of Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, and others (Wæver 1995; Buzan et al. 1998; Buzan and Wæver 2003).

From the CS perspective, the securitization process is the shift from a politicized topic into a securitized topic, where *'securitization'* is characterized as *'a more extreme version of politicization'* (Buzan et al, 1998: 23). The CS scholars stick to the traditional definition of security connecting it with a military context: *'security is about survival'* (Buzan et al. 1998:36).

The initial discourse of CS stresses the importance of so-called a *'speech act'* normally performed by *'political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists, and pressure groups'* (Buzan et al. 1998:40), who place a particular matter as a life-and-death.

The assessment of a given security threat normally depends on a political actor who has power and public influence. Nevertheless, this role can also be played by other non-political actors that can, directly and indirectly, influence the perceived security threat and political decisions of the securitizing actor. Securitizing actors may be represented by individuals or groups seeking to implement a speech act. Therefore, a successful linguistic representation is an essential tool of the securitization process, *'through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat'*(Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 491).

There are three essential components needed for the securitization recognized by the Copenhagen school:

- The speech act;
- The securitizing actor, *'who securitize issues by declaring something, a referent object, existentially threatened'* (Buzan et al. 1998:36);
- The relevant audience.

Therefore, the framework determines a background that a securitizing actor uses to build the threat and shoot it at a suitable audience.

The theory of securitization considers security being socially constructed and not solemnly focused on the political and military orbits of the state's matters. This represents a

shift from a traditional perspective on security studies with its focal point on the military component to acknowledging the potential impact and menace coming from non-military challenges by introducing four additional sectors of security: (1) political, (2) economic, (3) societal and (4) environmental. According to Buzan, military and political threats represent a different type of threats because of their proximity and potential impact on the state (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998, p 5-6). Evidently, the referent objects and the type of existential threats they experience alter depending on the security sectors. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that security sectors are interconnected, for example, economic vitality and growth are crucial to social and political stability, they affect military capacities and the state of the environment and also help to maintain high approval ratings of the ruling government.

As was mentioned the CS sees the basis of security in survival; if some sort of challenge is displayed via speech act (usually performed by political leaders or people with high credibility in the area they represent) as an existential threat to the survival of a referent object, which in turn (after receiving the consent of the relevant audience) legitimizes the extraordinary measures to be taken in order to take care of the issue regardless of whether the security threat is real or not (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998: 21). In other words, when the posed threat takes the measures out of the '*normal politics*' sphere to deal with it, there is a case of securitization (Buzan, Wæver, 2003, p. 491). These measures differ in their intensity drawing on the ruling political regime, feeling of insecurity and other factors (Eichler 2002: 100-101).

By introducing the multi-sectoral approach, the scholars showed that a threat not necessarily has to come from something physical but may be also driven by a social discourse that does not represent a threat itself but designs it.

The concept of securitization introduced by the CS is often criticized by the scholars of the so-called Paris School (PS) of thought the main idea of which is delivered by the writings of Thierry Balzacq, Didier Bigo, Anastasia Tsoukala, and others. The PS sees security from a wider angle, going far beyond the speech act.

Balzacq characterizes securitization as:

An articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artifacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc.) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions) about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor's reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of

unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized policy must be immediately undertaken to block it (Balzacq, 2011:3).

In his observation of the securitization theory, he criticizes the Copenhagen School's textualization of everything, and ignorance of the importance of the visualization part in the theory and argues that the securitization process driven exclusively by the speech act can be narrow and misleading in analyzing a situation that poses a real threat.

The subjective view of the securitizing actor performing a speech act might overlook the objective context of a security situation. Balzacq considers an effective act of securitization being dependent on the favor of the public where the causality of securitization is differentiated on the rhetorics of securitizing actors who are aiming to win people's minds by presenting their real capacities and objectives. Furthermore, a successful securitization is built upon a context, mood of the public and relevance of reference subject and upon the ability of a securitizing actor to use proper words and arguments to perceive the audience. Securitization process is a more convoluted phenomenon that does not guarantee straightforward or transparent round of interactions (Balzacq 2005: 191-193).

With time and amount of critiques received, the scholars of the CS reviewed and recognized the importance of audiences in '*backing up speech acts*' (Buzan et al 1998:26-33).

A successful speech act started to be seen as a combination of language and society, the securitization became discursive. The role of the speech act shifted from being the producer of security to being one of the essential variables needed for a successful securitization process.

3.2 Sectors of Security

3.2.1 The Military Sector

The existence of military security was seen as a mandatory condition assuring the existence of other security sectors such as a societal or economic one. The military security sector has always prevailed over the other sectors and has been the first concern for the governments. This sector still ranks first on the number of referent objects. The principal referent object in this sector is the state. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are focused on the protection of their territorial integrity and sovereignty at local and global levels.

The sector's main functions are to identify actual/potential threats and to protect the state's sovereignty, its domain against these threats. However, the other objectives of the military sector may be applied, for instance, protection of other states from different types of dangers (including the non-military ones) posed by the other countries, by themselves or both ((Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998, p 49-70).

This thesis examines whether there are any differences in the Baltic States' mode of securitizing Russia. The sector will demonstrate whether the Balts undertake different policy actions in their way of dealing with the threat on this level.

3.2.2 The Political Sector

The most important referent object in this sector is the state. However, '*...other state-like or state-paralleling political organizations (i.e., other unit-level referent objects) that can sometimes serve as referent at the unit level are (1) emerging quasi-super states, such as the EU (2) some of the self-organized, stateless societal groups dealt with in the societal chapter....; and (3) transnational movement that are able to mobilize supreme allegiance from adherents*' are to be considered as the referent objects (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998, p 145).

The securitization of Russia by the Baltic States was not a product of the military intervention of Georgia in 2008, nor was it sparked by Russia's latest land grab in Ukraine in 2014. It actually stemmed from the accumulation of historical events dating back to the 18th century, starting with the Balts' dependency on the Russian Empire. This was furthered by the Soviet takeover of the Baltic States' territories in 1941 and their occupation that last half a century (Aalto, 2003; Noreen, 2007). However, events in Georgia and Ukraine were the wake-up call for the former Soviet dependencies, who had experienced first-hand being bullied or influenced by the Russian Federation after the Soviet Union was gone, and brought Russia back to the security agenda almost immediately after they secede (Jurkynas, 2014).

The Baltic States cannot ignore the number of Russian speaking minorities that reside on their territories, knowing that they may be used to replay the Crimean scenario. This concern addresses the most important referent object of the political sector – sovereignty.

The referent object could be the state's territorial integrity, the political system or governmental structures. Threats may come from political or ideological disputes, nationalism ethnic or linguistic heterogeneity, etc. (Buzan, Wæver, Wilde 2005: 175-188).

It is crucial to understand that Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, acknowledging the possible threat coming from Russia, yet have taken different policy paths to face it, depending on their history of being former Soviet dependencies (Clemens 2010, p. 259).

3.2.3 The Economic Sector

The state is one of the most important referent objects of this sector. However, monopolies, global markets or individuals can be seen as the referent objects as well (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998, p 100). The main threat posed to this sector is a threat to its stability:

'Stability' means changes only occur only within known limits-that is, that that the misfortune of individual actors or relations does not trigger damaging chain reactions that threaten the system. 'Known' limits can be interpreted as socially accepted risks of economic enterprises or as calculated risk (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998, p 107).

First and foremost, the main significance of the economic sector lies in its direct relationship with other security sectors and its ability to influence them. Economic matter such as energy security can affect the state's political and military sectors (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998, p 95-117). When the economic sector is threatened, it can cause a domino effect, for instance, if a state A imposes sanctions on a state B, apart from the state's B economy, the sanctions would affect its political security, as well as societal one. Economic crisis causes economic decline = disbalance = despair that can affect as single individuals as the community as a whole.

3.2.4 The Societal Sector

The first reference of '*societal security*' was made in the book "*People, State and Fear*" (Buzan, 1991), where societal security formed part of other security sectors (military, political, economic and environmental ones). The sector was conceived as just another way to challenge the state's stability through its language, culture, religion, etc. (1991: 122-3). However, the role of this sector has grown. The main aspects of this sector are identity and self-determination. Individuals perceive themselves because of their ideas and habits and their particular vision of the world to a particular social group that does not have to coincide with the current regime, ideology or system in general. Self-identity concept shapes the societal sector of security.

Social groups combine nationalities, traditions, cultural heritage, language, affiliations between tribes and families, religious and ethnic components that at the same time serve as referent objects. The most important referent objects of the societal sector are “*Tribes/clans/ nations (nation like ethnic units, which others call minorities), civilizations, religions and race*” (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998, p 123).

According to Buzan, Wæver and Wilde (1998, p. 120), a basic assumption of a threat lies on a division of ‘us’ from ‘them’, ‘self’ and ‘other’. For example, securitization of Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic States that has re-entered security agenda after the breakout of the Ukraine crisis. Russian-speaking part of the Baltic States’ population, given the fact that it has never been fully integrated in the first place, was defined as ‘others’ and as a possible trigger for the ‘*Crimean scenario*’. In other words, when it comes to the sentiment of the national identity, the securitization process can be described as a form of ‘*othering*’ (Jaeger, 2000), which is especially applicable for the societal sector of security.

Figure 1 demonstrates the constitution of ethnic Russian minorities in Lithuania (5.8%), Latvia (26.9%) and Estonia (24.8%). However, it is crucial to understand that national minorities do not necessarily pose a threat to a state if not radicalized. Their level of securitization would depend on several factors, namely, their political, economic, social and linguistic involvement in the everyday life of the state, together with their recognition of national values (Appadurai, 2006).

Social instability or social insecurity arises when a particular social group sees some happening as an existential threat. These threats may include epidemics, genocide, all sorts of discrimination, migration, extreme nationalism, fake news and media propaganda. The societal sector is closely intertwined with information.

An important role is played by the media. Different media sources with their budget coming from different institutions tend to portray news in the way that is more beneficial for their sponsors even if it does not show the whole picture to the audience and exaggerates or leaves out the details, and all these subjective interpretations of news may have a strong, dangerous impact on social groups. In addition, a possible security threat can arise when the media incites vulnerable ethnic groups that can become radical and dangerous (Buzan, Wæver, Wilde 2005: 140-144, Jakniunaite 2016: 24-25). The presence of ethnic minorities may become a pitfall in bilateral relations that may lead to a conflict of interests between the two states.



Figure 1: Ethnic Russian Minorities in the Baltics (Stratfor, 2014)

Real or even subjectively perceived ill-treatment against ethnic minorities could cause tensions and protests. For example, ethnic differences together with nationalistic sentiment may provoke conflicts between different ethnic groups, thus, deteriorate bilateral relations between concerned states (Tang 2009: 620-622, Eichler 2002: 100-102). For instance, a significant number of Russian-speaking minorities is concentrated on the territory of the Baltic States.

3.2.5 The Cyber Sector

The CS does not consider cyber security as a separate security sector on its own (Buzan et al. 1998; Laustsen and Wæver 2000). However, since *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* was presented in 1998 a lot of things regarding threats and their perception have changed – cyber security sector has been securitized.

One of the definitions accurately stresses that: '*Cyberspace, in its present condition, has a lot in common with the 19th century west, it is vast, unmapped culturally and legally ambiguous, verbally terse, hard to get around in, and up for grabs.*' (Betz and Stevens, 2011, p. 14). Thus, the cyberspace has proven to be a very dangerous invention of humankind. The protection of society against digital threats has transformed into a high priority on the national level for many countries. Cyber security is interconnected with governmental institutions, stakeholders, people's security and privacy. Securitization of the cyberspace has happened due to the fact that the potential hazard and power of information technologies (IT) have been leveled up to national security agenda: '*Cyberspace has become a new international battlefield*' (Adams 2001, p 98). Lene Hansen and Helen Nissenbaum (2009, 115-1175) in their article '*Digital Disaster, Cyber Security, and the Copenhagen School*' have proposed the inclusion of cybersecurity as a distinct sector within the securitization framework. The scholars highlighted the possible cybersecurity threats that vary from digital espionage performed by other states to hackings that may influence/damage the functioning of real physical objects (Hansen and Nissenbaum 2009).

In 2007, Estonia was the first European country to come under a massive range of cyber attacks that disabled country's critical infrastructure such as governmental websites, the banking system, and media platforms. The Russian government was suspected in orchestrating attacks, however, Estonia failed to prove that Moscow was responsible for the organization and management of the attacks that lasted around two weeks. The closer overview of the crisis will be presented in Chapter V under the '*cyber security sector*'. These cyber attacks turned Estonia into E-estonia and added cyber threats to a security discourse. In 2014, during NATO Wales Summit included cyber attacks to the Article 5 which is previously could be applied only in case of a military aggression (Stoltenberg 2018). Article 5 is a cornerstone of NATO's collective defence policy, that states that an '*armed attack*' against any NATO member-state '*shall be considered an armed attack against them all*' (NATO Collective Defence Article 5).

This thesis will discuss how the Baltic States securitized digital space because of the Russian threat. the author acknowledges that the cyber security sector does not exist per se. However, taking a closer look at the cyber-defense actions taken by Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania will provide a fuller image of the security dynamics these countries are facing as it is hard to imagine any future conflict that does not include a cyberspace dimension.

3.3 The Securitization Process

The CS and PS agreed on four roles and two stages of the securitization process, such as:

1. *The securitizing actor* is the individual or an institution that speaks security (realizes the speech act). This is considered to be a starting point of the securitization process. However, it does not mean that the problem would be automatically framed as a security question (the relevant audience needs to back it up). The role of the securitizing actor can be played by the government, military staff, the ruling political elite, etc. In the CS securitizing actors can be represented by entities with minimal political power and influence (small protest groups, separatist groups), as well as by international and non-state actors (Buzan, Wæver, Wilde 2005: 48-50). In the case of this research, the role of the securitizing actor would depend on the sector it represents. For instance, the political leaders of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia would be the main securitizing actors for the military, political, economic sectors, whilst media outlets might speak for the societal one, etc.
2. The *referent subjects* the threat, namely, Russia, hybrid or informational warfare, Putin's regime, revisionist policies, annexation or military intervention, etc.
3. The *referent objects* are the '*things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival*' (Buzan et al. 1998:36). The referent objects can be individuals or groups (refugees, population of the state, national minorities and so on). In a traditional security perspective, the most legitimate and important referent object is a state that seeks its survival, wants to preserve its sovereignty, protect its population, national values, identity and territorial integrity. These can be the Baltic states (military security sector), national sovereignty of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (political sector), national economies (economic sector) or collective identities (societal sector). Concrete policy goals can also be seen as the referent objects; e.g. Russian propaganda might be seen as a prelude to the future invasion.
4. After an existence of the threat is acknowledged, in response to its existential nature the *extraordinary measures* can be taken. Accordingly, the securitization '*is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics*' (Buzan et al. 1998:23).
5. The *relevant audience* is a specific group or an individual (politicians, military commanders or the public, depending on the security sector) that has to be convinced

in the reality of the threat and in the call for extraordinary measures to tackle the crisis. Persuading the audience is the second and the most important stage of the securitization process.

Figure 2 illustrates a two-stage process of securitization. If the securitization process is successful, it enables the securitizing actors with the authority to deal with the issue by applying exceptional means.

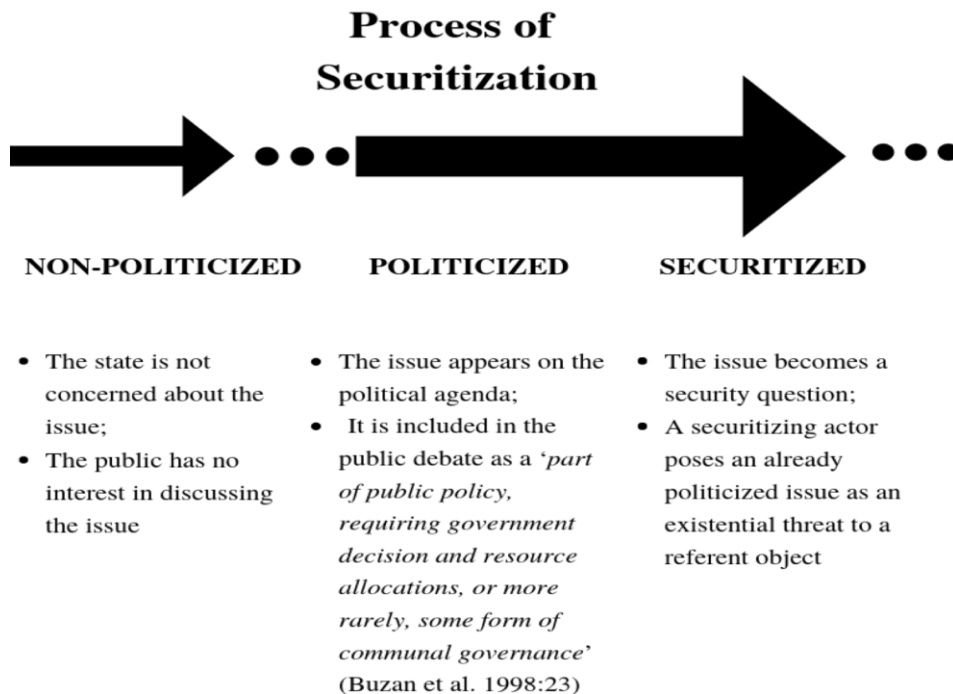


Figure 2: The two-stage process of securitizations (created by the author)

It is important to understand that the act of securitization is considered successful only when the relevant audience has believed that the existential threat is the existential threat in fact which would give the green light to securitizing actors for applying exceptional means. Desecuritization on the contrary is a reverse process *'shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into normal bargaining processes of the political sphere'*(Buzan et al. 1998:4). Resecuritization, however, might be seen as an alternative of desecuritization, as a failed attempt to withdraw some issue from the security agenda. In case of the Baltic States, Russia has never been fully resecuritized.

After becoming independent countries, the three counties included three main objectives in their politics: *'restoration, redress and deterrence'* (Galbreath, Lasas and

Lamoreaux, 2008, 108, p. 59). Meaning that they, by all means, avoid being included in Russia's footprint and lessen the consequences after living under the Soviet occupation.

Both schools of thought consider resecuritization, a return to normal politics, as an ideal step beyond the securitization process. As the perception of Russia as a threat by the Balts is an opened-ended issue, this research will not look into desecuritization in depth.

3.4 Debate and Criticism

The Securitization theory pioneered by the Copenhagen School proved to be applicable in the context of national and international conflicts, debates on HIV/AIDS (Elbe 2006), human trafficking (Jackson 2006), racism (Roe 2004). It highlighted the impact of the speech act together with the consequences it might cause (Hansen 2000; Bigo 2002; Balzacq 2005). The empirical applicability of the securitization model has been used for a better understanding and analysis of the securitization process.

Although the Copenhagen School determined the framework to define security, it is often criticized for a unilateral or biased approach lacking the differentiation between politics and security (Anthony et al. 2006). The debate revolved around how adequately the securitization theory can be applied to the real-time cases given the different political context and circumstances (Balzacq 2011). The confusion may appear while distinguishing the extreme case of politicization from a successful act of securitization (in undemocratic societies the borders between the security and political matters are almost invisible). Politicians can use the power of the speech act in order to boost their ratings prior to elections. For example, taking in consideration that both Chechen wars (the First Chechen Campaign 1994 -1996 and the Second Chechen Campaign 1999-2009) began in the run-up to presidential elections), it may appear that Russian elites used the language of security to use the war as an electoral advantage to wax the ratings of Yeltsin in 1996 and then of his successor Putin in 2000 (Treisman 2011: 607).

A lot of criticism against the Copenhagen School of Thought is concentrated on:

(...) other aspects of the theory such as the lack of empirical and methodological detail, or that the Copenhagen School is focused on the 'speech-act' ignoring then the context of such acts, failing to specify how audiences, the specific local audience, sociological conditions and choice of policy tools affect the likely outcome and motivation of securitizing moves (Corry 2012).

The theory also faces attacks on moral and ethical constituents and its state-centrism (as cited in Taureck, 2006, p. 54) as well as it is often viewed as Eurocentric, meaning that it is often linked to European identity and the notion of security coming from a European experience.

3.5 The Role of the Mass Media in the Securitization Process

The impact of media on the securitization process was highly underestimated before. The government was getting the reins of power over putting some issue on agenda and securitizing it. The scholars of the Copenhagen School fixated their attention on the speech act, leaving alone how it wins the people's hearts and minds (Dolinec, 2010:29). The so-called '*agenda-setting effect*' of the mass media that influences people's way to perceive news, differentiate more important issues from less important ones, and in some cases, makes the audience start claiming what they read or saw in the news section as their own point of view, together with the phenomenon of framing (McCobs and Shaw, 1972) that highlights only the convenient pieces of information, helps the selected existential threat to be endorsed by the public that in turn allows extra measures to be applied in future (Dolinec, 2010:30).

This research considers media to be not only a tool in the hands of the securitizing actors, but an independent player pursuing its own interests and goals, i.e. providing the audience with the interesting/entertaining news will boost the ratings, and therefore the profit. It is important to understand that the media is not always the voice of truth, it can be biased. Assuming that the media in the Baltic States is relatively free, and the journalists working there are independent, however, they are not callous instruments, and cannot help being objective all the time or even may securitize some issues intentionally. For that reason, detecting the role of the media in securitizing Russia processes is another objective of this thesis.

3.6 Security Dilemma

The security dilemma is one of the most widely applicable concepts in analyzing and understanding the dynamics of international relations. The theory was first introduced in the work of Herbert Butterfield, John Herz, and Robert Jervis in the second half of the 20th century.

According to Herz, the notion of security dilemma is based on political realism and reflects a feeling of insecurity coming from a fear of being attacked by someone stronger and more powerful. He defined security dilemma as follows:

Groups and individuals who live alongside each other without being organized into a higher unity . . . must be . . . concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated by other groups and individuals. Striving to attain security from such attacks, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the effect of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Because no state can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on (Herz 1951:157).

Herz formulated his perception of the security dilemma in the context of the postwar world order. He sees a man as a social being, and whether he is '*peaceful and cooperative, or aggressive and domineering*' such characteristics as sense of nationalism, sovereignty, cooperation, and imperial ambitions to preserve his existence are a part of his nature. Social interactions provoke conflicts, generate mutual distrust among states: '*uncertainty and anxiety as to neighbors' intentions that places man in this basic [security] dilemma...that leads to competition for even more power*' (Herz 1951:3-4).

The other important contributor to the concept of security dilemma is Herbert Butterfield. In his opinion, a security dilemma may lead the states to war, though war is not their goal, in fact, they are trying to avoid conflict. As Herz, Butterfield connects security dilemma with fear that comes out of a human nature. This in turn provokes anxiety among states, even though an unintended mistrust is natural, if escalated it could lead to an armed conflict: '*universal sin of humanity*' (Butterfield, 1951:19-22).

A more comprehensive and relevant analysis of security dilemma was presented by Robert Jervis in the 1970 that provided a framework for conflict analysis studies. Without giving a clear definition of the concept, he describes the phenomenon as follows: '*these unintended and undesired consequences of actions meant to be defensive,*' (Jervis 1976:66). In other words, states are trying to increase their level of defense that in turn jeopardizes the safety of other states on the basis of the zero sum game: '*The heart of the security dilemma argument is that an increase in one state's security can make others less secure, not because of misperceptions or imaged hostility, but because of the anarchic context of international*

relations' (Jervis 1976:76). Robert Jervis further contributed to the analysis of the security dilemma by including in the picture physical /material factors and psychological/perceptual factors (Tang 2009: 591-592).

Shiping Tang, Professor of the School of International Relations and Public Affairs (SIRPA) in China, stated that '*Under a condition of anarchy, two states are defensive realist states—that is, they do not intend to threaten each other's security*' (Tang 2009: 594). However, not knowing the intentions of one another encourages fear and increase of defensive capabilities that in turn 'contain some offensive capabilities' that accumulate more fear and mutual distrust. Tang thinks that '*this vicious cycle can also lead to unnecessary thus tragic conflicts — threats of war or war*' (Tang 2009: 594-595).

The security dilemma is differently seen by offensive and defensive realists. For defensive realists, the security dilemma is an explanation of why states build alliances and capabilities to face a common threat. Offensive realists perceive it from a different angle, they see the security dilemma as the main reason for the conflict that makes war unavoidable and rational outcome. However, if understood correctly security dilemma theory represents '*a powerful theory of war and peace via interaction*' (Tang 2009: 588).

In summarizing the debate, the main aspects of the security dilemma are:

1. The basic condition for the emergence of the security dilemma is the existence of an anarchic international order with the lack of higher authority;
2. The main reason for the security dilemma is mutual mistrust and fear among states towards one another's intentions. States cannot guarantee the current or future plans and actions of other states;
3. A simple way out of this circle of fear and mistrust may be by increasing states' defensive capabilities in order to assure state's survival. However, this measure boosts security dilemma and triggers competition and more mistrust among states that can lead to an open conflict;
4. Paradoxically, defense policies instead of fulfilling their main function could result in destabilization and insecurity. The dynamics of security dilemma represents a self-reinforcing spiral that can lead to a cooling off or to a deterioration of relations between the states, to an arms race, to an armed conflict, or to war. However, it is important to understand that the security dilemma does not have to be the cause of war.

The subjective perception of security among states is determined by their past experiences, mentality, and traditions that generates their subjective image of other states' perceptions and intentions. Once a state has an impression about another state it is difficult to

change it. This state filters information in order to find one that confirms its presumptions (Jervis 1978: 168-170). Material factors are also important: defensive (offensive) weapons and readiness to use them, technological superiority.

3.7 Russia and New Generation Warfare

Hybrid warfare and hybrid security threats are relatively recent phenomena in the field of security studies. Some scholars use the term to describe irregular tactics, others refer to both conventional and non-conventional strategies while defining it, and others keep in mind the concept of New Generation Warfare (NGW) designed by Kremlin and defined as ‘*an amalgamation of hard and soft power across various domains, through skillful application of coordinated military, diplomatic, and economic tools.*’ (Pindják 2014, Hoffman 2014, Galeotti 2014, Adamsky 2015). Because of the difficulties of agreeing on a universal definition of ‘*hybrid warfare*’, this section does not seek to define, rather than describe the tools Russia might apply on the Baltic States in order to reach its goals.

One of the first examples of hybrid warfare in action is the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah (a non-state actor sponsored by Iran). Although Hezbollah lost the war on the battlefield, it succeeded in winning hearts and minds of the public by controlling its perception of the conflict (through mass media propaganda, distribution of photos and videos from the battlefield, etc.) (Grant, 2008).

Hybrid warfare can be seen as:

the synchronized use of military and non-military means against specific vulnerabilities to create effects against its opponent. Its instruments can be ratcheted up and down simultaneously, using different tools against different targets, across the whole of society. (Cullen, Reichborn-Kjennerud 2017).

Hybrid warfare employs a different set of tools on vulnerabilities of different adversaries. For example, in the case of Ukraine, these pressure points could be found in: a) Ukrainian dependence on Russian gas; b) Ukrainian debt to Russia c) social discord.

Hence it is important to understand that the concept of hybrid warfare extends far beyond the military realm and impacts the political, economic, social, informational sectors

(Cullen, Reichborn-Kjennerud 2017). The main danger of hybrid warfare is that at initial stages the target might not be able to even detect the threat, a hybrid attack itself.

Ulrich Kühn, a non-resident scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in his paper '*Preventing Escalation in the Baltics*' has described the tools Moscow is using as a part of its NGW tactics, namely:

1. *Nonkinetic tools* that represent non-military means such as '*standard diplomacy; economic pressure; financial and/or rhetorical support of political groups or parties that are friendly to Russia and hostile to the EU and NATO; propaganda and disinformation campaigns; overt criminal activities by paid mercenaries or mafia-style groups; and covert intelligence and cyber operations.*';
2. *Classical and non-traditional military activities* that combine both classical and non-traditional military activities. The former includes '*procurement; research and development; modernization; exercises, including snap and large-scale exercises; brinkmanship; covert operations and open attack*'. The latter involves '*financial and military support of militias or mercenaries, and the employment of Russian soldiers without national insignia*';
3. *Nuclear weapons* that have always played an important role in Russia's tactics.

Crimea experience has demonstrated that the use of irregular activities without launching conventional means is of a little success. Russia has developed a new type of warfare that blends conventional and nuclear capacities with cyber attacks, disinformation in a form of fake news, and propaganda (Kühn 2018). Hybrid warfare and New Generation Warfare were reviewed in order to get a better understanding in the following chapters of why Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia perceive certain irregular activities on the part of Russia with hostility and introduce security measures, even if these activities do not pose a direct threat to their security domain.

3.8 Ukraine Crisis and Security Dilemma of the Baltic States

In order to answer the research questions, it is crucial to understand what was the core of the Ukrainian crisis. Both Russia and the EU saw Ukraine as an important part of their geopolitical project. The Eastern Partnership program that was launched in 2009 by Brussels

called for the economic and political integration of Ukraine along with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova into the EU. For its part, in 2009 Russia started its customs union's project, that led in 2014 to establish a Eurasian Economic Union (Eurasia project) that was supposed to give its member-countries economic benefits (Clem 2014, p 219). Russian perception of the situation in Ukraine was based on the possibility to lose influence over a geopolitically important neighbor country.

The conflict itself started in 2013 when a pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovich (2010-2014) instead of signing a Political and Economic Association Agreement with the EU that would have shifted Ukraine out of Moscow's influence orbit, announced '*renewing dialogue*' with Moscow on trade and economic issues, which meant between the lines, joining a Eurasia project (Traynor and Grytsenko, 2013). This led to '*EuroMaidan*', protests in the capital of Ukraine, Yanukovich's resignation and his replacement by the interim government.

The highest point of the conflict was the annexation of Crimea that was the first time since World War II when Russia seized the territory of another country (Clem 2014, p. 219). The annexation of Crimea provoked the protests and separatist moods in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (so-called '*Donbass*' region) in the Eastern part of Ukraine which has prevailing numbers of Russian-speaking inhabitants with people demanding either becoming a part of Russia or getting greater autonomy from Kiev (Rainsford, 2016).

These protests were becoming more and more violent and escalated into an armed conflict between self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DPR and LPR) and Ukrainian official government. Russia has been backing up the separatists all along, however firstly openly admitted it just in 2015 (Walker, 2015). There were two failed attempts to stop the war - two ceasefire agreements known as Minsk I (2014) and Minsk II (2015) that worked only on paper (Coffey 2019). On May 1, 2019, Russian President signed a document that fast-tracks obtaining Russian citizenship for Eastern Ukrainians '*to protect the human and civil rights and freedoms*' of people living in the Eastern part of Ukraine (The Moscow Times 2019). Moscow's questionable choices fuel the tensions between Russia and Europe. Ukraine's President-elect Volodymyr Zelenskiy said that '*The reality is that today, after the annexation of Crimea and the aggression in the Donbass, the only thing we have left in 'common' is the state border*', commenting on Putin's decision to simplify obtaining Russian passports procedure (Zelenskiy quoted in The Moscow Times, May 3, 2019).

Nevertheless, it is important to say that initially, Moscow did not launch a traditional conventional intervention to annex Crimea, instead, it used hybrid warfare that gave it '*plausible deniability*'. Kremlin-sponsored and supported pro-Russian demonstrations and sent

unmarked militia groups that were called *'little green men'* or *'polite people'*. They succeeded to get control over government buildings in Crimea and helped in an organization of a referendum that was supposed to legitimize the annexation (Lanoszka, 2016).

Ethnic Russians make up the majority of the population (65%), but with significant Ukrainian (15%) and Crimean Tatar minorities (12%) (Crimean Federal District Census, 2014). Prior to annexation, Moscow was extremely discreet in all the statements regarding ethnic Russians living in the Crimean Peninsula, whom they were going to protect by all means necessary (Mankoff, 2014 p. 2).

Moscow conceived a so-called *'Putin Doctrine'*, a statement that Russia has the right and obligations to protect its citizens no matter where they reside: *'Russia is the country on which the Russian world is based' and Putin "is probably the main guarantor of the safety of the Russian world.'* (Coalson, 2014). Following these statements, the issue of national minorities has been reconsidered as a potential threat and has re-entered the security discourse.

The war in Eastern Ukraine is now about to enter its sixth year - it has carried away more than 13,000 lives. Nevertheless, Kremlin does not miss an opportunity to use the conflict as its tool to pressure the Ukrainian government (Pifer 2019). The new test for the President-elect Volodymyr Zelensky is Russia's decision to facilitate the procedure of issuance of the Russian citizenship for the residents of the separatist Donbass region. The Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs said that:

It is absolutely unacceptable [issuance of Russian passports]; it is an attempt of the silent annexation. I think that all countries of the region should be united in this case and we need significantly more powerful, the resolute response of the EU to such actions (Rinkēvičs 2019 quoted in 112UA 2019).

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia face a great many security concerns connected to their geographical location and historical experience of living under the Soviet control. For example, the Baltic States have a small population overall, but this includes a high presence of Russian-speaking minorities living within the zone of Russian influence. Due to their size and prolonged occupation by the Soviet Union their militaries are underdeveloped and comparatively weak. All of this makes them highly sensitive to the potential security threats Russia poses. The Baltic States have expressed mistrust and fears towards Russia on a frequent basis since their independence. Before the crisis in Ukraine started the Baltic States had felt more secure thanks to their participation in NATO and EU. However, the annexation of Crimea, an armed conflict

in the Eastern Ukraine, and the statements made by Russian officials' have emerged new concerns. Different ruling ideologies, values, mutual historic background, Russian aggressive rhetoric alongside with propaganda and misinformation, demonstration of power and involvement into Eastern Ukraine conflict generated mistrust and security dilemmas in the eyes of the weaker neighbors.

Russian invasion to Georgia in 2008 and the ongoing Ukraine crisis triggered a redistribution of the Baltic States' budget with a new greater emphasis on the defence sector. Knowing a little too well Russian martial capability to launch hybrid and conventional attacks that could potentially threaten the existence and sovereignty of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and in order to avoid being deceived by the '*little green men*', the Baltic States were forced to increase their military capacity and securitize their defense level. They perceive Russia as a regional and military hegemony and a possible aggressor, and although they are part of the strongest military alliance in the world, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), they seek to deter Russia in order to prevent from coming true their worst nightmares: loss of their sovereignty, territorial integrity, neglect of their traditions and values. The factual emerge of security dilemma that showed a mutual distrust between the Baltic States and NATO on one hand and Russia on the other hand happened and shaped the post-Soviet security situation in 2014. The main consequence of the events of 2014 was the shift from a mutual distrust between the Baltic States and Russia to an open and successful securitization of the topic with a premonition of a possible military attack coming from Russia. This change led to an implementation of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) that included '*assurance measures*' and '*adaptation measures*' that ensured that the '*Alliance is ready to respond swiftly and firmly to new security challenges from the east and the south*' (RAP, 2017). The assurance measures include land, sea and air activities in, on and around the Baltic States territories, and do not have confrontational nature meaning NATO's reinforcing its presence in the Baltic States but only to increase the credibility of the deterrence and to maintain the status quo at the eastern borders. Some of these measures have already been transferred from the paper into a real life, for example, the NATO Response Force (NRF) has increased its troops up to 40, 000 units and the Very High Joint Task Force (VJTF) was established, accounting 5,000 high readiness ground troops that could be deployed in 48 hours with the support of the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) (Pezard, Radin, Szayna, Larrabee, 2017).

Following the decisions of the Warsaw Summit in 2016, NATO deployed four additional multinational battalions to the three Baltic States and Poland in 2018. The battalions

are led by the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany on a rotational basis (Radio Free Europe, June 8, 2018).

NATO openly declares that it does not pose any security threat to Russia, does not strive for mutual confrontation and that the Alliance's principles and objectives are based on total transparency. It seeks to maintain and strengthen military and diplomatic channels with Russia in order to prevent mutual misunderstandings and misconduct that may lead to an unintentional escalation of their relations. However, the Alliance states that cooperation and normalization of relations are possible only after Russia complies with international law agreements, respects NATO's vital interests and understand that maintaining the current security architecture in Europe is a mutual strategic goal.

Next three chapters aim to explore the differences on how deep these concerns are in each one of the Baltic States and on how intense the securitization processes are in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia.

4. Securitizing Russia in Lithuania

4.1 Lithuania - Russia Relationship Parameters

This section is not intended to give a detailed overview of relations between Lithuania and Russia, the main ambition is to show why Lithuania acquired a certain attitude towards the Russian Federation. Lithuania, officially the Republic of Lithuania, a country of northeastern Europe, is the largest one of the Baltic States (see **figure 3**). The country, understandably, holds concerned views on Russian foreign policy. It formed a part of the Soviet Union for more than half a century, from 1940 to 1991. The nature of this merger was far from the one carried out on a voluntary basis, it was interpreted as an illegal annexation by the population of Lithuania.

The stumbling rock of Russia-Lithuania relations would always be their different interpretation of history: in Russia's perspective, the occupation influenced the development of all spheres of life, whilst in the Lithuanian version of events, instead of an unprecedented growth rates, appears violence, violation of human rights and thousands of lost lives (Cooper, 2018).

Lithuania was the first state to declare independence from Kremlin's rule in 1990 (Remnick, 1990). The country, sharing borders both with the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad and Belarus, has found itself being a target of Russian bullying and hybrid warfare tactics for

countless times as in the years of annexation, as after the declaration of independence. Together with Estonia and Latvia, Lithuania became UN member-state in 1991 (Van Ham, 1995), joined the European Union (EU) and aspired the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership in 2004 (Jurkynas, 2004).

Lithuanian strategic location and the lessons from the past have put the country at the forefront of bringing awareness about Russian threat, together with the other Baltic States and Poland (Kremlin Watch Report p. 74, 2017).



Figure 3: Lithuania on the map (The Washington Post)

Despite getting the liberation from the Soviet regime, ‘*at the opening of the twenty-first century, the Baltics states are in the Russia-centered complex irrespective of how much they dislike this*’ (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 415). They can be part of the West on the paper, but “*security-wise they are not*” (2003, p. 413). In the beginning, Russia openly opposed the Baltic States willingness to join NATO, however, the Western society believed that the Euro-Atlantic integration would be fruitful for Russia-EU relations (Ehin and Berg, 2009). Unfortunately, the ideas of improving frosty Russia-Lithuania relations waned with the 2004 presidential elections in Ukraine and the Orange Revolution that followed (Jakniūnaitė, 2015). The relationship between two counties has always had their ups and downs, nevertheless, there are two crises

that impacted the Lithuanian perception of Russia as a threat significantly: The Georgia-Russia conflict in 2008 and the Ukrainian crisis in 2014.

This chapter would analyze the change in Lithuanian perception mainly after the annexation of Crimea in 2014. However, the events of 2008 may be also mentioned. Since the country's independence, the major clashes of interest were: the withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuanian soil (The last Soviet army echelon left Lithuania on August 31 of 1993), the transit of Russian military through the Kaliningrad oblast that borders with Lithuania, NATO's expansion to Eastern Europe (Vitkus, 2006a; 2006b). Nevertheless, the Russo-Georgian war, when Georgia de facto lost Abkhazia and South Ossetia, added new concerns to the Lithuanian leadership. Russia's intervention into the region was a wake-up call for the Lithuanian Government. One of the outcomes for the NATO and EU member states was the agreement calling for *'more effective policies of NATO, the EU, and other international organizations with regard to the Russian Federation,'* and *'... that challenges arising out of the Russian Federation government's policies should be properly considered in the EU and NATO'* (Agreement of Political Parties, 2008). Another important event that influenced the bilateral Russia-Lithuania relations deeply was the Ukrainian crisis taking place throughout 2012-2013 with the following annexation of Crimea in 2014. Lithuania and Ukraine are not neighboring countries. Nevertheless, they share the common Soviet past from 1945 to 1990 and belong to the same geopolitical region. Lithuanian politicians openly opposed Russian involvement in Ukraine and reiterated concern *'over the challenges presented by Russia's aggressive policy to the security of the world, Europe, and especially our region'*, and that *"central and Eastern Europe presents a major and prevailing foreign policy challenge and this Russian policy poses the main threat to Lithuanian national security'* (Accord between the Political Parties, 2014).

From the very beginning of the Ukrainian crisis Lithuania was focused on the developing situation. In 2014 Lithuanian government provided €307,000 to support Ukraine. The same year, LITPOLUKRBRIG, a Lithuania-Poland-Ukraine joint military brigade was established (Elta, 2015). Lithuania also was one of the 6 countries who backed the UN General Assembly Resolution 68/262 on *'Territorial Integrity of Ukraine'* (United Nations News Centre, March 27, 2014). Being a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Lithuania set up eight meetings to bring to the attention of the international community the situation in Ukraine (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014). During one of the meetings of the UN Security Council, the Lithuanian permanent representative to the UN, Raimonda Murrmokaite, stressed that:

The conflict in Ukraine is not an internal affair. Not a civil war. Nor a rebellion of disgruntled citizens. It is Russia's war against Ukraine for daring to choose a different – European – path (Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the UN, November 12, 2014).

He emphasized that Russia was fighting an *'undeclared war'* against Ukraine which reflected the Lithuanian position towards the crisis (Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the UN November 12, 2014). Hence, Lithuania has never taken the conflict as only Ukraine's challenge: *'it has never been only Ukraine's fight, it is Europe's fight and for that reason Lithuania cannot ignore it'* (Jakniūnaitė, 2017).

This chapter will look into five different sectors of security, namely, the military, political, economic, societal, and cyber one. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze to which extent Lithuania has securitized Russia and its actions as a response to this threat.

4.2 Military Security Sector

The security threats are specified and accounted in the Basics of National Security of Lithuania (1996), the National Security Strategy (2002, 2005, 2012, 2017) and the Military Strategy (2000, 2004, 2012, 2016).

Table 1 compares the Military Strategies of 2004, 2012 and 2016. As the table shows, the conventional military threats are still the main danger to the country's security situation. However, since 2004 the security environment has changed and *'irregular military formations'* that are directly related to hybrid warfare and Russia's actions in Ukraine that included *'little green men'*, disinformation campaign and propaganda. The other threats in the list have shifted one position or two down. In 2016 (2) *Irregular military formations*, (4) *Information attacks*, (6) *cyber attacks threats* have obtained a new value as all of them leave a lot of room for interpretation.

Military Strategy, 2004	Military Strategy, 2012	Military Strategy, 2016
1. <i>Conventional military threats</i>	<i>Conventional military threats</i>	<i>Conventional military threats</i>

2. <i>Provocations, demonstration of military force and threat to use force</i>	<i>Local and regional crises</i>	<i>Irregular military formations</i>
3. <i>Regional conflicts</i>	<i>Information attacks</i>	<i>Regional crises</i>
4. <i>Terrorism</i>	<i>Cyber attacks</i>	<i>Information attacks</i>
5. <i>Proliferation of weapons of massive destruction</i>	<i>Energy security challenges</i>	<i>Activities of foreign intelligence services</i>
6. <i>Activities of foreign intelligence services</i>	<i>Activities of foreign intelligence services</i>	<i>Cyber attacks</i>
7. <i>Industrial accidents and ecological catastrophes</i>	<i>Terrorism</i>	<i>Energy security challenges</i>
8. <i>Uncontrolled migration</i>	<i>Climate change, natural disasters and industrial accidents</i>	<i>Terrorism</i>
9.		<i>Natural and industrial disasters</i>

Table 1. Comparison of risks, dangers and threats of Lithuanian Military Strategies
(Created by the author)

In 2017, a new version of the National Security Strategy (NSS) was adopted by the Lithuanian Parliament demonstrated a changed security perspective in the country and merged internal and external threats into one security group. It introduces two new ‘*threats, dangers, and risk factors*’:

1. *14.1. Conventional military threats, caused by the Russian Federation’s capacity and will to use military force in order to achieve its objectives, concentration and*

development of its military capabilities in the neighborhood of the Republic of Lithuania as well as military activities lacking transparency and demonstrating power at the borders of the Republic of Lithuania and other NATO member countries;

2. 14.2. *Covert military and intelligence threats* (The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania 2017).

It is important to mention that just back in 2013 due to the economic crisis and prevailing public opinion that NATO membership is a sufficient guarantee against the external aggression the defense spending amounted 0.78% of GDP (see **figure 4**). However, as the Military Strategy of 2016 and the National Security Strategy of 2017 demonstrate, Lithuania has taken the situation in Ukraine as no joke. The NSS stresses out that *‘in the current period, the main threat for the security of the Republic of Lithuania is posed by aggressive actions of the Russian Federation violating the security architecture based on universal rules and principles of international law and peaceful co-existence.’* (The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania 2017). During the speech at the United Nations General Assembly, the Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė shared her concerns in regard to Russia seeking *‘to rewrite history and redraw the borders of post-war Europe’* (Grybauskaite, 2015). **Figure 4** demonstrates that since 2014 the country has increased its military expenditure significantly (Ministry of National Defence Republic of Lithuania, 2015). In 2014 Lithuanian defence budget was the second smallest after Luxemburg among NATO member-states (0.8% of GDP on defence in 2013). The country was on its way to reach 2 percent GDP in 2018 (Sytas, 2018). However, it is still below the estimated mark. The goal for 2019 is to reach 2.01% of GDP *‘due to the country’s faster than expected economic growth’* (DELFI, October 16, 2018).

Lithuania is committed to increase its defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2030. Russia’s annexation of Crimea was the main motivation to review the budget spent on its military sector. According to the Lithuanian Defence Minister, Raimundas Karoblis *‘reaching the 2.5 percent threshold would allow it to develop real deterrence and defence capabilities, which is very important in today’s situation’* (Karoblis 2018 quoted in Reuters, September 10, 2018). In 2015 and 2016 the military expenditure budget equaled to 1.15 % of GDP and 1.48 % of GDP with an approved budget of 2.18% of GDP for 2018 (Szymański 2017: 12-13). In 2017, the amount was increased to 1.77% of GDP (Lithuanian Ministry of Defence, 2017).

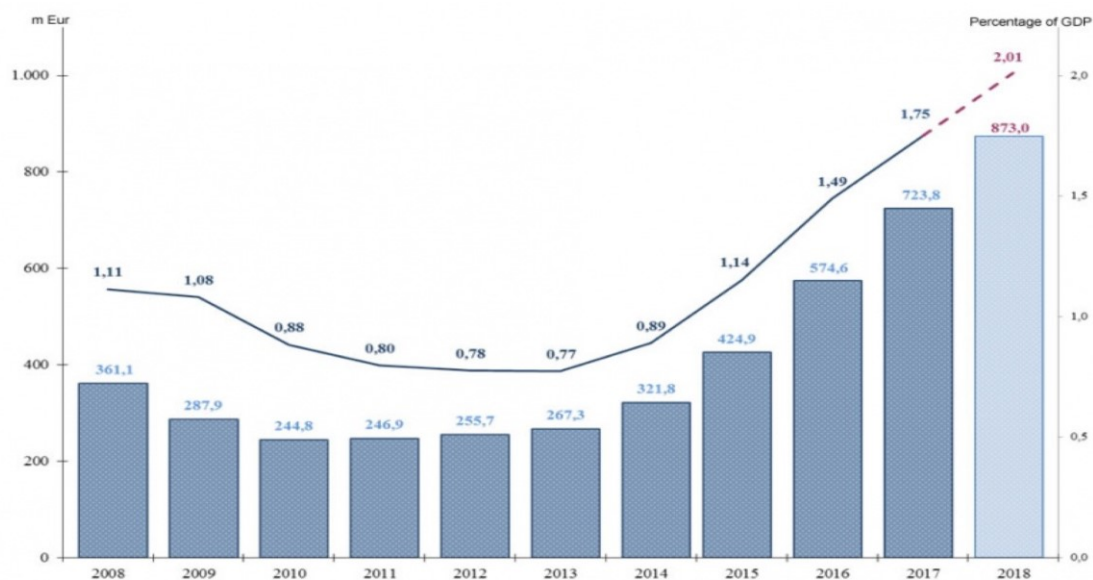


Figure 4: Dynamics of appropriations of the Ministry of National Defence of Republic of Lithuania in diagram for 2008-2018 (Lithuanian Ministry of Defence)

In addition, the prevailing public opinion that NATO is the main security guarantor was replaced with an understanding that the country itself and its armed forces bear the responsibility and obligation for defending their homeland. The 2014 survey showed that 44% of Lithuanians believed that NATO would immediately defend Lithuania and its sovereignty in case of military aggression and, according to 35% of respondents, NATO would protect them, but with delay. These data still demonstrate a high level of confidence in NATO alongside with a sign of doubt in the strength and ability of the Lithuanian armed forces to defend their country. 55% of Lithuanians were pessimistic about the readiness and capabilities of the Lithuanian army to defend their country independently without NATO backup (Janušauskiene, Vileikiene 2016: 125-134). This change of attitude was followed by policy measures that reintroduced conscription and mandatory military service, that had been replaced with a voluntary one in 2008 with the proviso that it could be reintroduced due to the potential threat (Palowski, 2015). In 2016, a number of people who joined armed forces has risen by 24% in comparison with 2014.

Lithuania is carrying out a massive modernization of its armed forces (see **table 2**). From 2013 to 2017 the country increased the defense budget for 170%, 30% out of which is invested into purchase of new technologies. These are investments in armored vehicles (Boxer Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFV) supplied with 30mm gun and Spike-LR anti-tank missiles),

ground-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft missile systems (Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence, 2015).

Equipment	Quantity	Supplier	Price	Delivery
Javelin anti-tank missiles (new)	n/a	USA	US\$ 28 million	2015 - 2017
PzH 2000 self-propelled howitzers (used)	21	Germany Daimler AG (via NSPA)	EUR 16.2 million	2016 - 2019
UNIMOG trucks (new)	340	Daimler AG (via NSPA)	EUR 60 million	2016 - 2021
Boxer infantry fighting vehicles (new)	88	ARTEC (via OCCAR)	EUR 385.6 million	2017 - 2021
NASAMS air defence systems (n/a)	2 batteries	Norwegian government and Kongsberg (negotiations underway)	~ EUR 100 million	by 2020
M577 support vehicles (used)	168	Germany	EUR 1.6 million	2016 - 2017

Table 2: The Most Important Armament Programmes of Lithuania. **OSW Studies**

4.3 Political Security Sector

The country's political elites play an important role in securitizing Russia. Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė is one of the main securitizing actors. She defined Russia as a ‘terrorist state’ and a direct threat to Lithuanian National Security on multiple occasions as well as condemned Russia’s actions in Ukraine. In 2017, during an interview she said:

Russia is a threat not only to Lithuania but to the whole region and to all of Europe. We see how Russia is behaving in Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave on our border. There

they have deployed nuclear-capable missiles that can reach European capitals. It is not just about the Baltic region anymore (Grybauskaite for Foreign Policy 2017).

During her interview to Michael Weiss she outlined Lithuanians attitude towards future cooperation with Moscow:

It's evident that having a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council that occupies and annexed territories of its neighbors poses a serious threat to the international security system. This is the goal pursued by the Kremlin. Divide and rule is the name of the game (...) We cannot accept any "new normal" in our relationship with Russia (...) The EU and NATO should see beyond Kremlin propaganda. The EU and NATO must have their own agenda with Russia, not be part of the Kremlin's puppet show. That means expanding our influence in the neighborhood, strengthening our defenses, breaking barriers for trade, and protecting the rule-based international order (Grybauskaite 2016 quoted in Daily Beast 2016).

Another Lithuanian official, Raimund Karoblis, Minister of Defence, in the context of Russian disinformation campaign, when it was said that Klaipeda and Vilnius never belonged to Lithuania, directly identified Russia as a threat capable of attacking within 24 hours thanks to Lithuania being geographically squeezed between Kaliningrad and Belarus: *'There are real parallels with Crimea's annexation... We are speaking of a danger to the territorial integrity of Lithuania,'* (Woody, 2017).

In 2014 monitoring situation in Ukraine and understanding the possible consequences for Lithuania, the Lithuanian Parliament signed so-called *'Agreement on the Strategic Guidelines for the 2014–2020 Foreign, Security and Defence Policies'*, a document that securitized Russia as an existential threat and presented a road map determining the direction of the national security of Lithuania strategy in the context of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, annexation of Crimea (LR Parlamente atstovaujamų politinių partijų susitarimas dėl 2014-2020 Lietuvos užsienio, saugumo ir gynybos politikos strateginių gairių).

In 2018, after Russia attacked Ukrainian navy ships and injured three people from the crew whilst they were crossing the Kerch streight, Lithuania's conservative Homeland Union–Lithuanian Christian Democrats (HU-LCD) party proposed imposing additional sanctions on Russian officials responsible for the seizure of the Ukrainian vessels (The Baltic Times, November 27, 2018).

On the fourth anniversary of the annexation of Crimea, Lithuanian Foreign Ministry posted a statement reiterating its non-recognition and deep disapproval of actions on Russian behalf:

We will continue to strive to maintain the EU and other international sanctions against the Russian Federation in response to the illegal occupation of the peninsula until Russia withdraws from the illegally occupied territory of Ukraine (Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania 2018 quoted in The Baltic Times, February 22, 2018).

On the fifth anniversary of Crimea's occupation Lithuanian Foreign Ministry issued another statement rehashing that Crimea is an integral part of Ukraine's territory and condemning Russia's attempts to militize the Sea of Azov:

Lithuania will continue to aim at having the international community strengthen its response to flagrant violations of international law by the Russian Federation in Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in Ukraine, the Kerch Strait, and the Sea of Azov. Thus, international and EU sanctions against the Russian Federation must stay in place until Russia completely withdraws from the illegally occupied territory of Ukraine (Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Lithuania 2019).

Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the order on facilitating the process of obtaining Russian passport for the residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk rebel-controlled regions three days after Volodymyr Zelenskiy Ukrainian President-elect entered the office. Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius proposed imposing new sanctions on Moscow and urged the international community not to recognize these passports as they represent '*a blatant violation of international law. And basically also a kind of test to the new [Ukrainian] leadership, which is also a usual game*' (Linkevicius 2019 quoted in Reuters 2019).

4.4 Economic Security Sector

Lithuania's concerns in the economic security sector are mainly about its energy dependence on Russia (Trenin 2014). Crimea brought an understanding that it was time to come

off its oil dependency. In 2018, the National Energy Independence Strategy one of the main goals of which, according to the Minister of Energy Žygimantas Vaičiūnas, is *‘to end Lithuania's energy dependence on Russia once and for all, and no longer be either an energy island or peninsula’*, was approved (Ministry of Energy of Lithuania 2018). During 2017 Lithuanian dependency rate decline by 2.4% to 72.9%. The country still remains dependant on imported energy and misses 19.3% to reach EU average dependency rate which was 53.6% in 2016 (The Baltic Times, June 17, 2018).

Lithuania tends to strengthen its economic ties with the EU countries and Asia rather than with Russia. It is the only EU state that does not have any ties with Russia beyond the diplomatic ones (majority of the Western Europe countries even after Crimea continue cooperation with Russia on the presidential or prime ministerial levels, whilst the more cautious and critical towards Moscow’s policies Eastern Europe states keep ties on the ministerial level). Vilnius justifies its decision saying that a return to normal relations with Russia may be misinterpreted and would encourage Kremlin to maintain its imperialistic policies (The Baltic Times, April 19, 2019).

4.5 Societal Security Sector

Lithuania that has a larger number of the native Lithuanian population, comparing to Latvia and Estonia. Russian-speaking minorities constitute 5.8% of the Lithuanian population and reside mostly in Vilnius (12%), Klaipeda (20%), and Visaginas (50%). The country did not see Russian minorities as a threat to the country's national security. The annexation of Crimea affected the subjective perception of the sense of security of 2.9 million inhabitants of Lithuania provoking distrust and fears towards Russian foreign policy (The World Factbook 2017). According to opinion polls, 53% of Lithuanians perceive Russia as a hostile country and 49% feel less secure after events in Ukraine due to fears of a possible military threat or direct Russian attack on Lithuania (Janušauskiene, Vileikiene 2016: 110,124).

The Lithuanian government after seeing what happened in Ukraine started questioning to whom 176,900 Russian-speaking minorities living in Lithuania were loyal? However, the government acknowledges that the main threat is not the Russian-speaking population itself but the possible consequences of the Kremlin’s fake news and propaganda campaigns on those whose hearts are still in Moscow. In 2017, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė expressed

concerns about the tools Russia is using and addressed their possible impact on the ethnic Russian population residing in Lithuania:

Propaganda and information attacks are part of [Russian] hybrid warfare. They seek to provoke social and ethnic tensions, promote mistrust in government, discredit our history, independence, and statehood, and demonstrate that Western democracy is functioning on dual standards. But the most dangerous goal of information warfare is to break the people's will to resist and defend their state, and to create a favorable environment for possible military intervention. And the example of Ukraine is proof that conventional war in Europe is no longer theoretical (Grybauskaite, March 2016)

After the country became independent, the government issued the principle of 'zero' citizenship, according to which everybody who wanted to stay in Lithuania and become the Lithuanian citizen was able to fulfill these 'minority rights' (Matonyte, 2013). This policy decision helped the newly established government to avoid the risk of fueling anger and discontent on an ethnic basis. However, even if not perceiving Russian-speaking minorities as a direct threat to the sovereignty and national security of the country, Lithuania acknowledges the vulnerability of the Russian ethnic minorities to Russian propaganda and fears the consequences the In Kremlin's 'information warfare' may cause. In regards to Russian-language media channel, prior to the annexation of Crimea Lithuanian government decided to ban NTV Mir TV channel sponsored and owned by Gazprom and also the First Baltic Channel (PBK) as the both platforms were accused of 'spreading lies about the events in Vilnius in January 1991' (Reuters, March 21 2014). These actions initiated the securitization of Russian-language media platforms. In 2015 RTR Planeta TV channel was banned for 3 months on the grounds of 'inciting discord, warmongering, spreading biased information' (Deutsche Welle, September 27, 2018). In 2016, the channel was suspended for another three months 'for distributing content inciting to war and hatred'. In 2018 the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania (LRTK) decided to take the channel off the year for a year because of its disturbing content and speculations that 'contained threats to destroy the United States and to restore the Soviet Union with all of its former territories. In another program, aired last May, threats were made to seize the Baltic countries' (DELFI, February 14, 2018).

However, suspending Russian-language media platforms is not enough to win the disinformation war. Lithuania's Military Strategic Communications (STRATCOM) alongside

with the volunteers and civil society representatives monitor news in order to detect the fake ones and denounce it before it is spread around the country (Strategic Communications Division of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Another platform, **Demaskuok.lt** [debunk it' in English], the website that scans around 10,000 articles both in Lithuanian and Russian language across the two countries, targeting such topics as Ukraine, domestic and international politics, and finding the ones that may consist potential disinformation or propaganda (Gerdziunas, 2018).

4.6 Cyber Security Sector

According to the National Threat Assessment carried out by Lithuania the main threat to national security in the cyber sector is posed by Russia. The assessment mentions other global cyber actors such as China, Iran, and North Korea, however, it stresses that Lithuania is out of their areas of interest at least for now (National Threat Assessment 2018). The New National Threat Assessment report, prepared by the State Security Department and the Second Investigation Department under the Ministry of National Defence that was released at the beginning of 2019, reaffirmed that Russia continues being the most dangerous threat for the cyber security sector. According to the report, Russia uses cyberspace as its policy tool in order to achieve its geopolitical claims whenever it feels necessary:

Russian intelligence and security services pose major threat to Lithuanian cyber domain: they conduct intelligence gathering, disturb the performance of IT systems, and contribute to influence (The National Threat Assessment Report 2019).

When it comes to a cyber security sector, Lithuania remembering the bitter experience of cyber attacks against Estonia carried out in 2007, takes the matter of cyber security and possible challenges arising there seriously. In 2015, the National Cyber Security Centre was founded in Vilnius under the authority of the Ministry of National Defence (NKSC) that currently responsible for detecting and countering cyber attacks. The Cyber Security Council which includes representatives from different sectors was set up later in 2015 with the main goal 'to strengthen the cooperation between private and public sectors and among representatives of scientific institutions and thus to efficiently prepare ourselves for potential cyber threats' (Ministry of National Defense Republic of Lithuania, July 27, 2015)

In 2018, the head of Lithuania's National Cyber Security Center, Rytis Rainys, accused popular in Lithuania Russian Yandex Taxi application of illegally gathering private data on its users and recommended not to download the app, especially to those who work for the government. Yandex denied all allegations saying that the company is '*open and ready to any necessary checks*' (Schumacher 2018).

The Lithuanian government's response to Russian '*trolls*' (the web brigades also known as Russia's troll army that usually consists of state-sponsored anonymous Internet political commentators that are connected to the Russian government) was the creation of Lithuania's own '*army*' of Internet commentators that would be able to counter Russian propaganda and disinformation online, the so-called '*elves*' (Gerdziunas, 2018). Elves are state-sponsored volunteers whose main goals are to detect and debunk fake news.

4.7 Summary

Since 2014 Lithuanian perception of security has changed significantly. This chapter aimed to analyze the objective and subjective perception of Russia as a threat in the five security sectors and look into the measures applied to deal with it. Just in several years, Lithuania managed to increase its military expenditure from the second smallest among NATO member-states in 2013 (0,8%) to 2,06% in 2018 (Lithuanian Ministry of Defence, 2019). In 2015, the country has renewed the selective army conscription which made it possible to create reserves. In 2018, Lithuania held the presidency of the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers. The country highlighted its priorities in the region: (1) facilitation of military maneuvers in the Baltic States' region; (2) advancement of border management; (3) development of cooperation on cyber security issues; (4) lessen dependence on Russian gas and electricity market; (5) strengthen nuclear security sector (6) achievement of a common Baltic economic alignment (2021-2027) (José de Espona, 2018). The country prioritizes all these points in its National Strategy as well with a major focus on the cyber security issues as the country believes that Russia's propaganda and disinformation campaigns could be a prelude to an actual invasion. The government sees parallels in Russian disinformation tactics in Lithuania with the narrative in Crimea and considers all the attempts to rewrite the history by saying that Lithuania never existed as a sovereign state could be a pre-game to justify future '*kinetic operations*' (Graham-Harrison & Boffey 2017). Countering Russian hybrid warfare, detecting

fake news and maintaining cooperation with the citizens both Lithuanian and Russian-speaking through different agencies and institutions within the country as well as at the EU level.

The reason why Lithuania has taken the most active measures to securitize Russian threat lies in its strategic location. Not only Lithuania has the largest economic and demographic capacities among the Baltic States, but it also feels like the most vulnerable one. Sharing a border with the Russian city of Kaliningrad fuels fears of the Lithuanian government as Russia has the right of military transit through Lithuanian territory together with a ‘*sovereign right*’ to station military forces on its territory (Woody 2018). And Russia uses this ‘*sovereign right*’ and keeps militarizing the Kaliningrad Oblast. In 2016, Russia transferred nuclear capable Iskander-M missiles into the Kaliningrad enclave saying it was part of its military exercises. The Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė expressed concern over Russia’s actions:

Knowing that Iskanders are not defense but offense equipment, that means an aggressive, open demonstration of power and aggression against not the Baltic states but against European capitals (Grybauskaitė 2016 quoted in Reuters, October 18, 2016).

Sharing a border with Kaliningrad and Kremlin’s pressure on Lithuania to provide Russia the indefinite military transit through its domain were the main triggers for Vilnius to call for a permanent US troop presence on its territory and start reinforcing its Kaliningrad border with a 45 km long fence (Woody 2017).

In March 1990, Lithuania was the first of the three Baltic States to declare its independence (it was the first of the 15 Soviet Republics). This chapter has aimed to explain the change of national security agendas in the different sectors of security by applying B. Buzan’s and O. Wæver’s theory of securitization. Barry Buzan, stressed, ‘*the invocation of security has been the key to legitimizing the use of force, but more generally, it has opened the way for the state to mobilize, or to take special powers, to handle existential threats*’ (Buzan et al, 1998). The case of Lithuania has revealed that the emergence (re-emergence) of Russia as an existential threat helped to mobilize and bring together Lithuanian officials representing different political parties (and different sectors of security) and make them agree on a clear set of countermeasures ensuring and reinforcing the protection and survival of the state. For example, all military, security, and defence-related institutions to the various extent defined Russia as a threat which proves that they acted together through the securitization process. The

securitization of Russia in Lithuania was successful because the speech acts carried out by the securitizing actors, mostly by the governmental representatives, were accepted by the prevailing part of the targeted audience as relevant. The media affects the securitization process, however, it does not act as an independent securitizing actor but as a transmission mechanism revealing the challenges to the state's security that had been already identified by the government:

Securitization will seem like a better choice when it seems like the natural choice: the referential scheme that the right authorities (even, in many cases, the appropriately official opposition) are saying in a way that makes contextual sense in the newsroom and in the audience. The more closely they are bound by identity, the more readily is a perceived threat to that identity passed along (Vultee, 2011).

However, bringing Russia back to the security agenda turned out not to be challenging as in the Lithuanian national collective identity Russia had been already perceived through the lens of 'us' versus 'them'. Identity can serve as a tool of legitimization of extraordinary measures and, in this context, Russia has always been an important referent subject for the Lithuanian domestic and foreign policies.

5. Securitizing Russia in Estonia

5.1 Estonia - Russia Relationship Parameters

The Republic of Estonia is a country in northeastern Europe, the northernmost of the three Baltic States that shares borders with Russia and Latvia. It was occupied or dominated by other countries the most part of its history. Estonia became an independent state shortly after the Russian revolution of 1917 and Bolshevik's victory. Russian SFSR (Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) recognized Estonia's independence. However, Estonian sovereignty did not last long. It was occupied by the Red Army at the outbreak of World War II, an occupation that lasted until 1991 (Misiunas, Tarmisto et al. 2019).

After joining the EU and NATO in 2004, Estonia breathed a sigh of relief feeling more secure about the country's future. Estonia as well as Lithuania, and Latvia wanted to be out of Russia's sphere of influence. Estonia together with the other Baltic States shares anti-Russian

sentiment so-called Russophobia and lessons of the past taught the country to stay beware (Subrenat 2004). Following the 2007 events that included violent protests among the Russian minorities in Estonia and cyber attacks that will be discussed in a more detail in the ‘*cyber security sector*’ section, Russia-Georgia war in 2008 and Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the armed conflict in the Eastern , made Estonia together with the other Baltic States reconsider and evolve their policies towards Russia in order not to be the next targets of Russia that “*seeks to rewrite history and redraw the borders of post-war Europe*” (Grybauskaite, 2015).

In this chapter, the author will analyze how the perception of Russia as a threat by the Republic of Estonia has changed if changed at all through a qualitative discourse analysis as a main method of examination of the speech acts carried out by the country’s securitizing actors after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and look into steps taken by Estonia to securitize Russia in the different security sectors.

5.2 Military Security Sector

Surprisingly, no drastic measures/changes were introduced in the military security sector. Estonia is one of a few NATO member-states that has been maintaining defence budget at 2% of GDP starting from 2013 (Republic of Estonia Ministry of Defence). Estonia Defence budget has been growing since then (See **Figure 5**). In the present moment Estonia spends 2.16% of GDP for defence expenditures (EUR 585 million). The defence budget focuses on procurement and investment, personnel related expenditures, and management costs and other expenditures that aim to ‘*to ensure preparedness for the military defence of the country*’ through increasing Defence League training, ensuring the adequate and modern conditions for the staff (Defence Budget, Republic of Estonia Ministry of Defence).

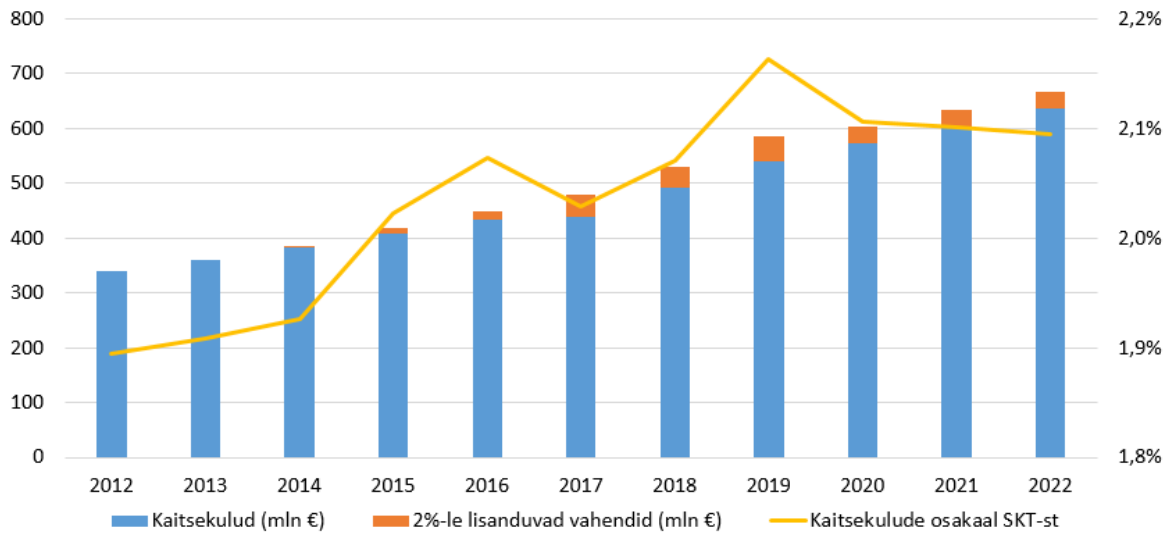


Figure 5: Dynamics of appropriations of the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Estonia in diagram for 2012-2022

The security threats are specified and accounted in the the National Defence Act that serves as the basis for the implementation of the national defence system arising from the National Security Concept of Estonia, the National Defence Strategy, the National Defence Development Plan (2017-2026), the Military Defence Action Plan, and the Emergency Defence Plan. The National Security Concept is a document that is revised depending on the security environment inside and outside the country. The National Security Concept of 2004 and the National Security Concept of 2010 delineate two different security frameworks as the first document holds optimistic views on the future of Estonia-Russia relations, whilst the second one generated after the ‘*Bronze Horseman*’ incident in 2007, and after Russia-Georgia war in 2008, and offers more concerned views of Russian foreign policy as well as rethinks the seriousness of the Russian threat (National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia 2004, National Security Concept of the Republic of Estonia 2010).

In addition to the National Security Concept, Estonia also designs a Long-Term Defence Development Plan. The 2009-2018 Plan that was released after Russia’s invasion to Georgia in 2008, acknowledged the shortcomings within the Estonian policy system and concentrated on the enhancement of communications, intelligence and surveillance capabilities as ‘*this will ensure early warning to prepare for crisis and also adequate command and decision making process of military units in times of crisis*’ (Estonian Long-Term Development Defense Plan 2009-2018). Some of the practical goals of the plan were to upgrade the anti-tank capabilities,

to establish additional units both in the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF) and the Defence League, and to create a high-alert readiness brigade that would be ready to react to any sort of invasion at any time (Plan 2018). Increasing defense spending in Estonia includes both the development of national defense and the building of infrastructure and facilities for NATO Allied forces operating in Estonia. Another significant upgrade of the Estonian military sector after Crimea events was receiving of the Raytheon-Lockheed Martin Javelin JV Anti-Tank Missile systems from the United States Department of Defence. Estonian Minister of Defence Sven Mikser stressed the importance of increasing deterrence against a possible aggressor in the changed security environment. This initiative was of even greater importance because Estonia did not possess any battle tanks in its armed forces (Republic of Estonia Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

The Estonian Defence League is a voluntary national defence organization which tactically supports the Estonian Defence Forces and the main purpose of which is *‘to enhance, by relying on free will and self-initiative, the readiness of the nation to defend the independence of Estonia and its constitutional order’* (EDL, Kaitseliit 2019). According to the Estonian Defence Forces website, the number of the Estonian Regular Armed Forces in peacetime comprises 6,000 people, about half of whom are recruits. Defence League counts another 15,000 persons. Wartime numbers of personnel account for 60,000 with the high readiness brigade reserve of 21,000 people (Kaitsevägi 2014). Moreover, since 2017, the country has been focused on improving and expanding the territorial defence system as well as increasing the number of recruits for the military reserves to from 3,200 to 4,000 per year (Vahtla, 2017).

As a result of Russian aggression in Ukraine, former president of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves said that a permanent NATO force might be needed in the country, expressing concern regarding a possibility of Russia attacking Estonia. However, the NATO-Russia Founding Act is based on a prohibition of a permanent NATO forces presence in Eastern and Central Europe (Baltic News Network, April 13, 2015). NATO and EU memberships are seen as stability and security guarantors in the country:

Estonia conducts the ensuring of its security through membership in NATO and the European Union, as well as close co-operation with its allies and other international partners. NATO, with its transatlantic nature and the principle of collective defense serves as the cornerstone of European security and defense (Republic of Estonia Ministry of Defence).

Tallinn has also taken steps to improve and increase the battlefield mobility. The country has purchased CV90 infantry fighting machines from the Netherlands for 200 million euros. The former Minister of Defence Margus Tsahkna noted that this upgrade would ‘*have a serious deterrent impact on potential adversaries*’ (Hanso, 2016). **Table 3** demonstrates the most important purchases Estonia managed in order to modernise the country’s military capabilities.

Equipment	Quantity	Supplier	Price	Delivery
Javelin anti-tank missiles (new)	80 launchers	USA	EUR 40 million	2015-2016
CV90 infantry fighting vehicles (used)	44	The Netherlands	EUR 113 million	2016-2019
Mistral 3 air defence and Milan 2 antitank missiles (new)	n/a	MBDA	EUR 23.8 million	2015-2020
K9 Thunder self-propelled howitzers (used)	12	South Korea	EUR 47 million	since 2021

Table 3: Most Important Armament Programmes of Estonia. OSW Studies

5.3 Political Security Sector

The Russian actions in Ukraine in 2014 were a painful reminder of the 1940 Soviet occupation. The Estonian government was concerned because of the inadequate response of the Western states alongside with the United States to Russia’s actions and started questioning whether Estonia’s Western allies fully understand the meaning and implications of Kremlin foreign policies for the Russian ‘*near abroad*’ countries in case if Moscow decided to play its

'minority card', meaning the right to protect the "Russian World", the Russian ethnic minorities residing anywhere (Pentassuglia, 2014).

The Estonian government is the main securitizing actor. Former Foreign Minister Marina Kaljurand noted: *'Europe forgave Russia for the war in Georgia in less than a year. It is our duty to see to it that the same didn't happen with the occupation of Crimea and fighting in Eastern Ukraine. Behaviour like this mustn't become usual practice'* (Kaljurand 2016 quoted in BNS, February 11, 2016).

Current Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Estonia Sven Mikser on the fifth year anniversary of the annexation of Crimea in March 2019 commented that:

We strongly condemn this act [annexation], which ignored both the Ukrainian constitution and the will of the people, and poses a serious threat to European security and the international rule of law. To Estonia, Crimea is and will remain part of Ukraine (Mikser 2019 for ERR News, April 12, 2019).

Estonia also condemned Russia for its actions in the Kerch Strait in November 2018 when Ukrainian ships were attacked and three members of the crew were injured (Cavegn, 2018). Following the accident, the Estonian Parliament proposed to introduce individual sanctions against four Russian officials responsible for the incident that would ban them from entering Estonia and also the whole Schengen zone. The draft resolution stated:

Following the occupation of Crimea and the establishment of separatist puppet regimes in eastern Ukraine, it is clear that each aggression has to be responded to in a concrete and effective manner, otherwise the aggression will be repeated and expanded (Riigikogu 2019)

This motion that was declined in the end demonstrated the readiness of the Estonian officials to deal with the Russian threat and their firmness when it comes to the protection of their own country. Furthermore, in April 2019 Estonia banned Russian ship entering its territorial waters as *'its crew included cadets from the Kerch State Maritime Technological School'* (Whyte, 2019).

The statements made by the governmental officials indicate that they perceive Russia as a threat to Estonia's sovereignty, condemn its actions in Ukraine and will continue backing up the sanctions against Russia. However, steps to normalize bilateral relations between the

countries were also made. The most significant one was the official visit of the Estonian president Kersti Kaljulaid to Moscow after nearly a decade. The last Estonian president to visit Russia was Toomas Hendrik Ilves in 2011 (Associated Press April 18, 2019).

The aim of Kaljulaid's visit was to open the renovated building of the Estonian Embassy in Moscow and to discuss Estonia-Russia relations. According to the Estonian leader during the meeting with the Russian President Vladimir Putin they '*talked for long about complicated topics while demonstrating mutual respect even during the most difficult moments*' (The Baltic Times April 19, 2019).

According to survey results conducted with the financial support of the Estonian Ministry of Defence, nearly 90% of the Estonian-speaking population approves the presence of NATO troops in the country, whilst more than a half of Russian-speaking residents are against it. The same distinction in views in regards to NATO military assistance in the face of military intervention to Estonia, 53% of ethnic Estonians believe that the alliance would back them up military if necessary, just 19% of Russian-speaking residents think that NATO will protect them (ERR News 2016).

5.4 Economic Security Sector

Estonia alongside with the other Baltic States and Finland is dependent on Russian gas. After the Ukraine crisis broke out, the country decided to take actions and get rid of its energy dependency on a possible aggressor. Balticconnector, the joint Finnish-Estonian project to build a gas pipeline connecting the two countries and supplying them with the natural gas coming from the other EU countries and the United States, was agreed on implementation in 2017. The project aims to improve regional security and in the long run, it will also allow bidirectional gas transmission between Estonia and Latvia. Commercial operations are supposed to start by 2020 (Noak, 2018).

Whilst some of the EU countries try to strengthen their economic ties with Russia to lower the tensions between Moscow and the West, Estonia is not to rush into specific decisions in regards to cooperation with the Kremlin. On the contrary, the Baltic State prefers seeking alternatives to Russia and tries to be less dependent it:

As long as the commitments taken have not been fulfilled, the pressure of sanctions must continue and Ukraine must remain in the center of Europe's attention. While sanctions

are not a goal in itself, by combining their effective implementation with diplomatic efforts and other foreign policy measures the common foreign policy goals of Europe can be achieved. It's important to find a solution to the conflict in Ukraine that would respect and reinforce the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. In the shorter perspective the goal must be fulfilment of the Minsk agreements (Kaljurand 2016 quoted in BNS, February 11, 2016).

Private investments in the Estonian military-industrial complex have always been a well-adjusted mechanism successfully integrated into the country's economic system. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 did not entail any drastic changes in the economic security sector of Estonia. In other words, the Estonian government did not introduce any extraordinary measures to this security sector after Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Nevertheless, slow and steady flow of investments in the Estonian defence sector continued followed by the increase in the number of private contracts concluded with the Estonian military which in turn allowed focusing on the public and private sectors and better equip them for the possible scenario of the Russian invasion (Cooper, 2018). Investments made in the country's defence sector positively influence the domestic production of the military hardware, which, in turn, in the long run, implies less dependence on the NATO allies when it comes to the provision of the military equipment (Pärnamäe, 2018).

It is important to mention that the Estonian government is engaged in the development of ready-to-sell military equipment together with high-tech software. The corrections were made in order to provide a legal framework necessary for the Estonian military industry enterprises to ensure the production, processing and sale of heavy military equipment, the revenue from which would be reassimilated into the country's military sector (DefenceNews 2016). The emergence on the market of the Estonian heavy military systems will launch the mechanism enhancing cooperation with the Allied countries that will bring more foreign direct investments conducive for economic growth and stability in the country. The growth of private investment in Estonia will contribute to the well-being of the economic security sector and make Estonia less reliant on the EU and NATO member-states in case of the direct Russian aggression.

When it comes to economy sector, Estonia cooperates closely with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Bank and other organizations that work in a financial sector. The country is developing its ties with the Nordic-Baltic region (The Republic of Estonia Finance Ministry).

5.5 Societal Security Sector

In 1945 prior to the Soviet occupation the ethnic composition of Estonia was rather homogeneous (94% of ethnic Estonians). However, ethnic composition of Estonia suffered noticeable changes over the years thanks to a migration flow of Russians arriving in the country. By 1989 the percent of indigenous Estonian population was only 62% (Kasekamp, 2010, pp.154-155). 55% and 32% of the ethnic Russian minorities in Estonia reside in Harju county (ethnic Russians form 37% of Tallinn residents) and the north-eastern Ida Viru County that borders with Russia, respectively (Grigas 2014).

According to the social identity theory, the interethnic balance is based on three social psychological factors such as 1) the recognition of the legitimacy of the acting authority; 2) the perception of ethnic deprivation; 3) the perception of difference in strength between competing parties. If we apply this theory to Ukraine case, the resignation of Viktor Yanukovych and the non-recognition of the new government by the majority of the Russian-speaking population demonstrated the implementation of the first condition. The next step that probably tripled the feeling of deprivation was caused by the decision of the Ukrainian parliament to revoke Russian of its status as the country's official language. Thirdly, one should not forget about professional support on a state level and propaganda campaigns that intensified pro-Russian sentiments in Ukraine, and especially in Crimea, which turned the idea of changing status quo into reality and legitimated it in the eyes of the Russian minorities (Ehala 2014).

After regaining independence Estonia has securitized Russian-speaking minorities, however, the Ukraine painful experience made the country realize that the well-being of Russian ethnic minorities residing in Estonia would guarantee stability and non-applicability of Crimea scenario to the Baltic State. In regards to the social identity theory in the case of Estonia, Russian ethnic population recognises the ruling government, as well as Estonia's membership in the EU and NATO. The feeling of ethnic deprivation was somehow increased thanks to a language reform that started in 2007 and obliged the last three grades of the secondary school to be taught in Estonian (before the reform 100% of the subjects could be in Russian language). Furthermore, in 2018 the Riigikogu board accepted a draft resolution that proposed making pre-elementary, elementary and secondary school education in Estonian language only (Whyte 2018). Reducing the Russian-language education could cause a deeper

cultural assimilation as well as be used as an excuse for cooling relations between Moscow and Tallinn.

Another stumbling block for the Russian-speaking population in Estonia is the citizenship policy. After regaining independence, the Estonian citizenship was granted only to those who had had it before the Soviet occupation in 1990 (Kuczyńska-Zonik p. 31 2017). The direct result of introducing this policy was that only 54% of the Russian speakers have Estonian citizenship, while a quarter has Russian citizenship and a 20% is still stateless (Ehala 2014).

In regards to the perceived strength differential, the main question after Crimea was whether Estonia's Russian speaking minorities would back up Russia's military intervention or create instability in the country. Many ethnic Russians in Estonia follow Russian-language news outlets controlled and articulated by the Russian government which means that the Russian-speaking audience is exposed to fake news and propaganda. One of the results is a different perception of the current issues by the ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians residing in Estonia. A survey conducted by the Ministry of Defence showed that that 57% of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia are against the presence of the NATO forces in the country (Cavegn 2017).

Estonia acknowledges the threat coming from disinformation campaigns conducted/financed by Kremlin. In 2016 several Russian-speaking NGOs registered in Estonia were accused by the Estonian government of discrediting Estonian authority during the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw (Estonian Internal Security Service Annual Review 2016). According to Pezard et al:

Estonians and non-Estonians live in different information spaces, often with contrasting content. (...) Most of the Russian-speaking population derives its information and views on history and current events from Russian television channels that are directly subordinate to the Kremlin and can be used as a mechanism of propaganda (Pezard et al, 2017)

Välisluureamet, the official foreign news service sponsored by the Estonian government, provides yearly reports on the threats and challenges Estonia faces. Russian domestic and foreign politics are often mentioned as a possible menace to Estonian stability. The reports of 2016 and 2017 mainly focus on a '*eastern neighbour is the only country that could potentially pose a risk to the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Estonia*', on Russia (International Security and Estonia, 2017).

The government, understanding that Estonian and Russian speakers still live in two different news spaces, decided not to follow Lithuania and Latvia's examples of banning Russian TV channels, and instead of securitizing the issue in extreme way, created an alternative one. In 2015 ETV+, Estonia's first government-funded Russian language TV channel, was launched. Darja Saar, the former channel's editor-in-chief, insisted that that main goal of creating the channel was not to address Russian propaganda:

ETV+ is a platform on which various points of view are expressed. It's not a black-and-white picture. We have people who believe that Crimea belongs to Russia and those who think it belongs to Ukraine. Well, sorry, but that's the way it is. We have a lot of issues on which there is no single point of view (Saar quoted in RKK ICDS).

While in the past analysts feared a Russian hybrid warfare invasion with ethnic Russians in Estonia acting as the catalyst for a Crimea-style takeover, the economic success of the EU contrasted with the substandard living conditions on the Russian side of the border keeps many ethnic Russians supportive of the Estonian government even if their hearts remain in Moscow.

5.6 Cyber Security Sector

Estonia was one of the first countries to experience the destructive potential of hybrid warfare. Cyber security component has been a sensitive subject for the Estonian government ever since the 2007 cyber attacks against Estonian network infrastructure that lasted a total of 22 days and were a wake-up call for international community showing the power and damage capacities of cyber activities when targeted against the state. The so-called 'Bronze Soldier' (ironically for the Estonians previously called 'Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn'), a Soviet-era memorial and a painful reminder for the Estonian people of decades of injustice and oppression, triggered demonstrations taking on a violent turn that resulted in two nights of riots and looting, the arrests of 1.300 people, more than 100 injured and one person dead (Rid 2012, p. 11). The Estonian government decided to move the monument from its initial location in Tõnismägi Park in the city center of Tallinn to the Defense Forces' Cemetery in the outskirts of the city.

For the ethnically Russian Estonians this decision was a direct assault as in the Russian perspective the memorial signified liberation, a commemoration of the fallen Soviet soldiers that died during the II World War fighting the Nazis. Violent protests were followed by the cyber attacks that continued advancing in scale and complexity against critical Estonian infrastructure such as websites of the largest Estonian banks, Hansapank and SEB Eesti Ühispank, governmental websites, the email servers used by parliamentary members and other public officials, media outlets websites (Delfi, EPL Online, Postimees.ee, Baltic News Service). All these websites and servers went offline after being exposed to a mass spam distribution that overloaded their systems, caused widespread service disruptions that made it impossible to access them both for people with Estonian IP addresses and those with the foreign IP addresses (Tikk, Kaska, Vihul 2010, p. 19). The step-by-step manuals on how to perform simple cyber attacks such as different types of Denial-of-Service attacks (DOS) were spread in the Russian language on online forums so everyone interested could take a part in the attacks (Finn, 2007). Although most parts of the cyber attacks came from the Russian IP addresses, the Russian government ignored Estonian demands for help/cooperation and refused to give out those responsible for the attacks, there is still a lack of evidence that these attacks were carried out by the Russian government. We cannot deny the silent consent and the lack of action on the part of Russia, however, the IP addresses used for the cyber attacks were registered in 178 different countries, including China, United States, Vietnam, etc. (Tikk, Kaska, Vihul 2010, p. 23). After the 2007 '*Bronze Soldier*' events, cybrid warfare has been used all over the world, including the Russia-Georgia war in 2008, Russia-Ukraine ongoing conflict. Considering cyber lessons learned from 2007 and fully acknowledging the danger of cyber security sector, Estonia has set up a voluntary organization '*Cyber Defense League*', the Estonian '*Cyber Security Strategy*' for 2008 - 2013 was released next year following the cyber attacks by the Estonian Ministry of Defense.

Estonian Information Systems Authority (EISA), Summary on Ensuring Cyber Security in 2012, the EISA Annual Reports on Cyber Security, and the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication's Cyber Security Strategy for 2014 - 2017 - are the documents that demonstrate that Estonia takes cyber security threats as no joke.

Since Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, the Tallinn Agenda for Freedom Online was initiated by the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Freedom Online Coalition in order to provide more information on a more secured usage of Internet (Free and Secure Internet for All, 2014). In 2015 a major cyber security drill was held in Estonia during which experts from 16 different countries took part in the Locked Shields 2015 exercise at the NATO

Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallinn. Although the exercise was based on a fictional scenario, the attacks simulated were similar to those used by Russia (Baltic News Network, April 22, 2015). To protect its data from a possible cyber attack, Estonia created a concept of Data Embassy, a database outside the country that has the same level of protection and immunity that a traditional embassy has:

A “data embassy” is a national cloud solution through which it is possible to host data and services and, if necessary, to operate them from a secure data centre outside the territorial borders of Estonia. This will enable to ensure the functioning of the Estonian state in times of potential crisis, such as a huge-scale cyberattack or an invasion by a hostile country – which in Estonia’s case can only be Russia (Tambur, 2018).

In 2017 Prime Minister of Estonia Jüri Ratas and Prime Minister of Luxembourg Xavier Bettel signed an agreement on housing data and information systems between the two countries. The main goal is to enhance the security of data and services (Naylor, 2017). The Estonia became a first to use a blockchain on a national level alongside with investing 20 million euros in cyber security annually (Amaro, 2018). Estonia has become a significant actor shaping the framework of the cyber security sector, thanks to its advanced e-government, the headquarters of NATO's cyber security center and its painful cyber attacks experience, the country contributes significantly to the cyber-defense capabilities of the Alliance.

5.7 Summary

Changes in the perception of Russia in Estonia after the 2014 events in Ukraine can be described in the statement of the former Minister of Defense Hannes Hanso:

I would not say Estonia is nervous about the current situation in our neighbourhood, but we are concerned. Many things are working well for us, including the NATO Response Force and our response plans. Our professional Army, together with our reserve forces and our volunteer-based Defence League, are all working well. Combined, this gives us a substantial defence force. So our own forces, along with the commitment of allies, provide a credible deterrent. Naturally, we have historically very painful memories of being occupied by the Soviet Union, and that makes independence

and sovereignty even more valuable for us. The security situation could always be better, but we are making the best of our situation (Hanso 2016 quoted in Defence News, 2016).

The securitization of Russia in Estonia, as in Lithuania and Latvia, had happened along time before the Ukraine crisis. However, the annexation of Crimea has risen a number of questions regarding the adequacy of the Estonian defence system in times of emergency. The desire to preserve and protect independency defines Estonia's policies. Nevertheless, the policy steps taken in military and non-military sectors were not that extreme if to compare to the other two Baltic States as the country had already reached 2% of GDP on military expenditure, the defense sector did not require massive budget allocations. The country has not abolished the conscription as Lithuania and Latvia did, thus, the discourse on its reintroduction has never been an issue. Estonia's approach demonstrates the involvement of the Estonian society in the country's defense system and their commitment to defend their homeland. Estonia is aware of its limited human and material capacities, and therefore every year it performs and develops rapid and sudden exercises (Walker, 2016). The deterrence strategy Estonia is enhancing is aimed to prepare the country for the variable crisis scenarios involving asymmetric warfare, hybrid conflict, a surprise invasion, or occupation by enemy troops.

Curiously, instead of securitizing Russian-speaking minorities as extremely as the other two Baltic States did, Estonia decided to integrate them more. Creating a Russian-language TV channel was a big step towards this integration as the Russian minorities (around 330,00 individuals) could see the government's attempts to bring them a reliable source of information in their own language. Estonia is the only country among the Baltic States that has a Russian-language state-sponsored platform. However, despite this resecuritizing step, the societal sector of Estonia share the same characteristic with the Lithuanian and Latvian one, more specifically, a element of *'othering'*. Although, Russian-speaking minorities are not perceived as an existential threat to a national security, they are perceived as a separate, independent variable of the Estonian population, not fully integrated into society. Although the Estonian government does not perceive the Russian-speaking minorities as the direct threat, does not take any decisive actions to accelerate their full integration, for example, by simplifying the Estonian citizenship exam.

This chapter has sought to analyze the different modes of securitizing of Russia processes in the different security sectors of Estonia by looking into the speech acts performed by the Estonian officials. As in Lithuania case, the Estonian government is the most significant

securitizing actor. Feeling insecure because of the possible Russian threat, the country has demonstrated willingness in regards to its international cooperation and has sought to further itself from Russia's sphere of influence.

6. Securitizing Russia in Latvia

6.1 Latvia - Russia Relationship Parameters

Latvia is a country situated in northeastern Europe in the middle of the three Baltic States. It was occupied by the Soviet Union together with Lithuania and Estonia in June 1940 and was renamed into Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic which ceased to exist on August 21, 1991, after the country declared its independence from the Soviet rule. The USSR recognized its sovereignty on September 6, 1941 (Maciej, Smogorzewski, Gulyans et al. 2019). However, the Russian troops left Latvia just several years later.

In 1995 the Latvian Parliament (Saeima) adopted the Foreign Policy Concept for 1995-2005 with the main policy goals focusing on integration into NATO and the EU, as the pro-western course was seen as the only way to distance from everything that Latvia had experienced under the Soviet rule, and becoming a part of the world's strongest economic union and the most powerful security organization that would guarantee the country's protection, was seen as a necessary move that in a long-run would help Latvia to become less dependent on Moscow. The concept also stressed the importance *'to maintain normal bilateral relations with Russian Federation. They must be based on norms of international rights, international obligations and mutually beneficial cooperation.'* (Foreign Policy Concept of Latvia 1995-2005).

The final step towards westernization for Latvia was becoming a United Nations member-state in 1991 and joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the European Union in 2004 (Jurkynas, 2004). The main pitfall for Latvia-Russia relations that is also related to Lithuania/Estonia perception is the controversy regarding the perception of history. In the Soviet and Russian historical narrative, the Red Army soldiers are seen as liberators, whilst, in contrast, for ethnic Latvians, the Soviet victory in the WWII put the end to their own independence and was the starting point of a half a century long occupation (Birka, 2016). However, Latvia tried to maintain closer relations with Moscow and to prove it Riga renounced

its rights to the Russian-controlled Abrene Country in 2007, by signing the border treaty that was ratified by both countries (Andžāns, Veeber, 2017).

In this chapter as in two previous ones, the author will look into Latvia's bilateral relations with Russia and analyze how Ukraine crisis affected Latvia's perception of Russia and whether it influenced or speeded up the securitization process of Kremlin or not. The research will be focused on five security sectors and evaluate the difference in the intensity of securitization process of Russia in each one of them.

6.2 Military Security Sector

Before 2014 events, Latvia held concerned views over Russian policies and Kremlin's interference into domestic matters of other states, Crimea has changed everything and put Latvia at the forefront of the European response to its imperialistic policies and aggression alongside with Lithuania and Estonia (Janda, Sharibzhanov, Terzi et al. 2017). After Ukraine crisis broke out, Latvia has come to an understanding that a deterrence strategy is needed on how to deal with a potential threat coming from its borders with Russia. Russian military exercises close to Latvian borders was perceived as a threat because, according to the Latvian president they *'have already seen in Georgia and Ukraine how such exercises can turn into aggression, occupation, and annexation'* (Vejonis, July 11, 2016). First step taken was enhancing deterrence provided by NATO. The country focused on strengthening *'NATO's collective defence and deterrence policy, which mainly consists of NATO reaction capabilities and military presence'*, acknowledging that *'only effective and credible deterrence policy of NATO will prevent potential attack'* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia 2016:1). The cooperation with NATO was increased through joint intensive military exercises, establishing multinational battalion-size groups in the Baltic States and in Poland would facilitate the rapid deployment of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) (Szymański 2017).

The most important decision concerning the military security sector was to increase defence expenditure aiming to reach 2% of GDP by 2018 (see **figure 6**). In 2015 the defence spending accounted one percent of GDP, in 2016 it reached 1.4 percent, 1.7 percent in 2017, in 2018 the defence expenditure achieved 2 percent goal (EUR 594 million). In 2019, the Consolidated Budget Law set the defence spending at 2% of the GDP, or EUR 636.65 million (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia 2019).

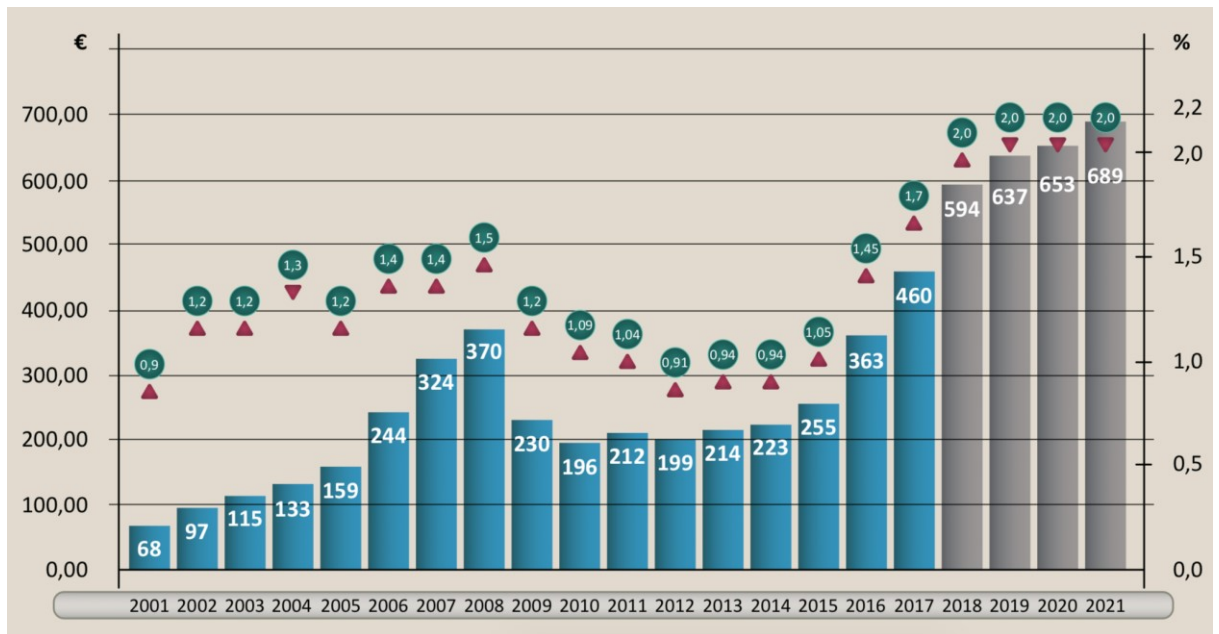


Figure 6: Republic of Latvia Defence Budget Dynamics 2001-2021, Million EUR Defence Budget % of GDP (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia)

However, even though Crimea speeded up the process, the decision to increase the defence expenditure was approved in 2012 before the NATO Chicago Summit. The country was aiming to reach 2% of GDP by 2010 (The State Defence Concept 2012, p. 15). The 2008 economic crisis was the main reason why the country did not increase its military budget before it felt that it was a necessary measure to guarantee its national security. The crisis affected all Latvia's sectors (especially military, health care and education ones) and reduced its GDP by almost a quarter (the budget dropped by 44%) (Romanovs, 2016). Another important step taken after Crimea was the reinforcement of the National Guard (NG) which is a part of Latvian Armed Forces, consisting of volunteers who are responsible for traditional national guard duties such as crisis response and support for military operations (similar to Estonian Defence League and Lithuanian Riflemen's Union). The underfunding problem was acknowledged and in 2014, Latvian government agreed on a three-year plan, assigning EUR 70 million for development of 18 increased readiness National Guard units as well as for procurement of new equipment such as air defence, anti-tank weapons and engineer equipment (Ministry of Defence 2014).

The annexation of Crimea was a game changer for Latvia that made it review and increase its funds spent on the defence sector. Latvia focused on developing its relations with its strategic partners as well as seeking their financial assistance with a goal of increasing the country's defence capacities. For example, as **table 4** shows, the most important decision was the EUR 48.1 million investment into 123 surplus Combat Reconnaissance Armored vehicles

equipped with Spike fourth-generation anti-tank missile systems from the United Kingdom (UK Government 2014).

Also in that regard, after in 2014 Russia put an Army Aviation Base in the Pskov area which is close to Latvia-Russia border, US Department of Defence signed an agreement approving procurement of the Sentinel radars for Latvia. These are short-range air defence radars that can detect low-flying targets, including the helicopters (Palowski, 2015). In 2017, the first self-propelled howitzers have been purchased from Austria together with the Stinger ground-to-air missiles from Denmark (Milevski, 2018).

Equipment	Quantity	Supplier	Price	Delivery
CVR(T) armoured vehicles (used)	123	United Kingdom	EUR 52.2 million	2016 - 2020
AN/MPQ-64F1 Sentinel radars (new)	4	USA	US\$ 23 million	2016
RBS70 Mk2 missiles (new)	n/a	Saab Dynamics AB	EUR 6.8 million	2015/2017
TPS-77 radars (new)	3	Lockheed Martin	n/a	since 2017
M109 self-propelled howitzers (used)	47	Austria	EUR 6 million	since 2017

Table 4: Most Important Armament Programmes of Latvia. OSW Studies

In 2006, Latvia cancelled conscription and replaced it with a professional military service. According to the National Defense Concept, approved in 2016, Latvia is supposed to account 6,500 people during peacetime. According to the Defense Ministry’s press office, Latvia’s goal for 2019 is to recruit up to 710 conscripts. A total number of 640 recruits joined the armed forces in 2018, which is the highest number since 2007 (LSM.LV, December 27,

2018). Curiously, the topic of the reintroduction of conscription has not entered Latvian national debate. In case of its Baltic neighbors, Lithuania has reintroduced the conscription shortly after the events in Ukraine, whilst Estonia has never abolished it in the first place. Latvian officials have mentioned on numerous occasions that there is no need to reintroduce it as well as there are no financial means to it (Rostoks, Vanaga 2016).

6.3 Political Security Sector

Although the Latvian leadership considers the military aggression against Latvia unlikely to happen, the history of the country has shown that the possibility of an invasion is still quite real. The Russian hybrid warfare made the country to rethink its domestic security. A really important change took place in regards to decision-making procedures and command during a potential crisis. For example, the mandate of the Minister of Defence, the Chief of Defence and unit commanders will be extended in case of an emergency. The necessity of enhancing collaboration between these security institutions has been acknowledged and strengthened together with the intensifying the civil-military collaboration between the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence (Vanaga, Rostoks 2018).

Furthermore, the Latvian government delegated the border guards under the command and control of the army shall the crisis break out. The Ministry of Defence is responsible for conducting the drills and early warning activities as well as border guards training (Rostoks, Vanaga 2018). Latvian government also focused on increasing involvement and awareness of the Civil Defence sector on how to behave in the event of the armed conflict, invasion or war (Szymański 2017). The *'Long-Term Development Plan of Armed Forces of Latvia (2012-2024)'* was revised and replaced to the *'Long-Term Development Plan of Armed Forces of Latvia (2016-2028)'*. The new plan demonstrated that the threat posed by Russia was taken seriously by prioritizing the Special Operation Forces, the National Guard, early warning systems, airspace monitoring, air defense together with cyber security hybrid warfare (LSM.LV, November 29, 2016). Alongside setting up new security priorities, another result of Russian aggression in Ukraine for Latvia was the revision of the state budget spent on security forces. The salaries were revised and increased for policemen, border and coast guard officers, intelligence services. Understanding the importance of educating the youth on military and defence matters, a new initiative was launched in 2015, a Youth Development programme (2015-2024) with the main goal of strengthening patriotism and the interest of young Latvians

in defending their own state. This programme aims to increase its membership from 6,000 to 16,000 (Cabinet of Ministers 2015).

The Saeima (Latvian Parliament) demonstrates support regarding the situation in Ukraine. Latvian Saeima speaker Inara Murniece confirmed Latvia's readiness to continue cooperation with Ukraine in regards to monitoring international human rights violations, especially paying attention to the illegally annexed Crimea region. She criticized the Russian President's decision to simplify obtaining of Russian passport process for the citizens of separatist areas in Eastern Ukraine:

Latvia is Ukraine's friend and Ukraine can always rely on our support. I condemn the decree of the Russian president to ease granting Russian citizenship to those Ukrainian citizens who live in eastern Ukraine - the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. Latvia strongly supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Murniece 2019 quoted in The Baltic Times, April 19, 2019).

Latvia will pursue the policy of non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea. In March 2019, Latvia shut down an exhibition organized by the Russian Consulate General in Daugavpils dedicated to the fifth anniversary of the annexation of Crimea as it contained 'a number of well-known fakes about developments on the Ukrainian peninsula, and is an attempt to impose the Russian view of the developments that the entire world has considered criminal' (The Ukrainian Embassy in Riga statement 2019 quoted in UAWire March 21, 2019).

Latvia together with Lithuania and Estonia highlights the necessity of full implementation of the Minsk agreements as they are crucial for the ending the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine. On the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website different infographics can be found in regards to the Ukraine crisis, the annexation of Crimea and Latvia's support for Ukraine in Facts and Figures. Latvia will continue supporting sanctions against Russia imposed by the EU until Moscow recognizes the territorial integrity of Ukraine (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia 2018).

6.4 Economic Security Sector

Despite criticism of Russian actions in Ukraine, the Latvian public is open to continuing economic cooperation with Moscow. The rates of disapproval are still high, however, in

contrast to Lithuania and Estonia, the country does not display that hostile attitudes towards Russia. Current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Edgars Rinkevics in his interview with Reuters stressed that the states should be careful while using provocative and securitizing language as it may cause ‘*devastating*’ consequences for everyone involved:

We should not underestimate rhetoric. Sometimes rhetoric can drive you into the spiral you would want to avoid (...) I do hope that we all understand that any provocations, any deterioration of the situation, may lead to consequences that would be devastating to everyone, including, of course, to Russia (Rinkevics 2015 quoted in Reuters March 27, 2015)

With this statement Latvia’s Foreign Minister addressed the comment of Russia’s ambassador in Denmark who said that Moscow could target Danish vessels with its nuclear missiles if Denmark decided to join NATO’s missile defense system (Krutaine, Golubkova, 2015).

In 2018, during the NATO Summit in Brussels, the NATO member-states agreed to establish Multinational Division North headquarters in Adazi Military Base for land forces. NATO showing its support for improving the Baltic States defence and deterrence capabilities, continue investing in development of Latvian infrastructure (Adazi Military Camp, Lielvarde Base for the air force, NAF air base) (Rostoks, Vanaga, 2018).

One more important aspect of the economic security sector of Latvia is energy security. Along with its Baltic States neighbors, the Latvian state tries to become less dependent on Russian oil as any sort dependency on Russia could be used by Moscow as a tool for future manipulation.

Russia-Germany project called the ‘*Nord Stream 2*’ triggered a controversial debate in the Baltic States. Nord Stream 2 initiative includes Russian gas giant Gazprom, Germany, France, Austria and the Netherlands. Latvia together with Lithuania and Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, and Romania signed a petition against the project in 2016 stressing that: ‘*The Nord Stream 2 project that is currently under preparation can pose certain risks for energy security in the region of Central and Eastern Europe*’ that might have ‘*potentially destabilizing geopolitical consequences*’ (Jacques, 2019). The Eastern Europe leaders believe that the pipelines will increase Russia’s influence on Ukraine and on other countries of the post-Soviet space including the Baltic States because if Germany has its own

gas stream, nothing will stand on Russia's way to politicize/militarize the other pipelines and shut off the gas shipments when it feels like it (De Maio, 2019).

Latvian Foreign Minister described the project as a possible collision point in transatlantic relations. The official believes that the only way to solve the problem at the EU level was 'to support the diversification of energy supply sources and develop the EU's internal energy market'. Rinkēvičs highlighted that Latvia together with Lithuania and Estonia had taken steps to integrate into the EU energy market, meaning that definition 'energy islands' should not be used in regards to the Baltic States anymore (Rinkēvičs 2018 quoted in The Baltic Times, August 28, 2018). Member of the European Parliament (MEP) on the Latvian behalf, Sandra Kalniete, composed a resolution stating:

The European parliament stresses that the EU is currently Russia's largest trading partner and will keep its position as key economic partner for the foreseeable future, but that Nord Stream 2 reinforces the EU's dependence on Russian gas supplies, threatens the EU internal market and is not in line with EU energy policy or its strategic interests, and therefore needs to be stopped (resolution quoted in Emerging Europe, March 14, 2019).

The resolution was adopted by 402 votes to 163, with 89 abstentions. Ms. Kalniete said that 'Russia can no longer be considered a strategic partner of the EU' stressing the necessity to extend the EU sanctions against Russia until the territorial integrity of Ukraine is restored (Kalniete 2019 quoted in European Parliament News, March 12, 2019)

6.5. Societal Security Sector

In Latvia the Russian-speaking minorities that form 32% of the overall Latvian population are concentrated in the region of Latgale (60% of total population), in the city of Daugavpils (54%), and in the Latvian capital city of Riga, where the ethnic Russian minorities constitute around 40% of the population (Kuczyńska-Zonik, 2017).

Alongside with Estonia and Lithuania, Latvia has securitized the national minorities to recover national identity following the dissolution of the USSR. In 1945, the percentage of the ethnic Latvian population was around 80%. However, fifty-one year under the Soviet rule has drastically changed the ethnic composition of the country and declined the percentage of

indigenous Latvians to 52% (Kasekamp, 2010, pp. 154-155). Following these drastic changes after regaining independence, Latvia together with Estonia granted citizenship on a principle of *jus sanguinis* meaning that it was granted only to those people who had already had it or had been in the country before the Soviet occupation in 1940 (Matonyte, 2013). Around 300,000 Russian-speakers, or 13% of Latvia's population, continue being so-called "*non-citizens*" as to obtain Latvian passport, they have to pass an exam on their knowledge of the Latvian language and history, even if they were born in Latvia.

In a 2012 referendum, three-quarters of Latvian voters rejected the proposal of making Russian the country's second official language (BBC News, February 12, 2012). In 1991, when Latvia became an independent state, it preserved a bilingual educational system both in Latvian and Russian languages. However, after the country obtained EU and NATO membership it felt more secure in regards to furthering itself from the Russian sphere of influence - minimizing the use of Russian language was seen as one of the necessary steps. The classes taught in Russian were reduced to 40% of school instruction, whilst at least 60% were supposed to be taught in Latvian (Ozolins, 2016). Furthermore, in 2016 Latvian President Raimonds Vējonis accepted new amendments to the Educational Law that would provide legal framework for the resignation of teachers based on their disloyalty/unfaithfulness to the Latvian state. The goal of this controversial decision was to avoid and prevent risks and threats to national and public interests, democracy and security of Latvia (The Baltic Times, December 3, 2016). Teachers and school principals are seen as a powerful securitizing actors that could possibly destabilize the situation in the country and radicalize younger population of Latvia through speech acts based on promoting Russia's view of history, propaganda, and disinformation.

In 2018, following the events in Ukraine and a growing feeling of anxiety because of the prevalence of Russian language in day-to-day life in Latvia, Latvian government signed the law that would limit even more the use of Russian language making the last three years of secondary school to be taught solemnly in the country's only official language (Kim 2018). The Russian foreign ministry called the decision "odious" and the Russian Duma resolution called this law a violation of internationally recognized rights and proposed imposing economic sanctions on Latvia (BBC News, April 3, 2018).

Russian foreign policy is seen from two different angles by the ethnic Latvian population and the Russian-speaking minorities. In 2014 after the annexation of Crimea, 64% of Latvians considered Russia as a military threat to their national security. However, in 2015 this number declined to 54%. Despite a significant drop, these results are still high if to be compared to the time of Russo-Georgia war in 2008, when only 40% of Latvians perceived

Russia as a military threat (Rostocks, Vanaga 2016:92, 100-102). In regards to Latvia's membership in NATO, 65% of Latvians support it, whilst 69% of Russian-speaking population is against it. Curiously, just 50% of Latvians approve the massive presence of NATO troops in the country, the other 50% is against because of the provocations on the Russian behalf. The division of support is clear along linguistic and cultural lines (Khudenko, 2016).

Although Latvia has done little to integrate and influence Russian-speaking minorities, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 has not turned them into a threat in the eyes of Latvian officials as they believe that despite Russian information warfare and news speculations, the ethnic Russian minorities are divided in regards to their political views. The concerns about separatist tendencies of the ethnic Russian minorities have entered the discourse of some Latvian politicians, fearing that the city of Latgale would become the second Crimea due to its prevailing Russian-speaking population. However, according to the surveys, part of the Russian-speaking minorities residing in Riga and Latgale have successfully integrated into Latvian society. And even though Russia carries out different activities to impact the Russian-speaking population, such as financially supports non-governmental organizations which in turn aim to strengthen its political-economic influence at all levels in the country, the Russian-speaking minorities while feeling connected to Russia, do not support Moscow's interference into Latvian internal agenda and its efforts to destabilize the country (Rostocks, Vanaga 2016: 72-78).

However, unlike the ethnic Latvian population, Russian-speaking minorities do not support EU sanctions against Russia as they believe that deterioration of relations with Moscow could have a negative impact on Latvian economy which is still dependent on a cooperation with Russia (Kuczyńska-Zonik, 2017). Even though Russian-speaking minorities are not perceived as an existential threat by the Latvian government, annexation of Crimea and war in the Eastern Ukraine have sharpened Latvia's ethnic tensions. In 2014, Latvia banned three Russian artists, Valeriya, Iosif Kobzon and Oleg Gazmanov, from taking part in a popular Russian-run music festival New Wave (Novaya Volna or Новая Волна) because of their open support of Russian actions in Ukraine (Delfi.it, July 21, 2014). A year later it was announced that the Russian-run summer festival would no longer be held in Latvian city of Jurmala, its venue since 2002 (Brooks-Pollock, 2015).

The Latvian Ministry of Defence National Security Concept published in 2015 established a roadmap to prevent further menaces to its information space focusing on *'development of the public media, reduction of influence of the information space of the Russian*

Federation, and development of the Media Literacy and Media Education.' (The National Security Concept. Latvian Ministry of Defence. 2015).

In 2014, Latvia's National Council for Electronic Media that controls the activity of TV and radio broadcasters decided to suspend a Russian-language state TV channel Rossiya RTR for three months, accusing it of '*war propaganda*' and broadcasting one-sided biased information regarding the situation in Ukraine. Latvia's media watchdog also initiated an administrative case against language First Baltic Channel (PBK) based on the same allegations (Kaža, 2014). After these two precedents, Latvia's broadcast regulator the National Electronic Media Council (NEPLP), knowing the possible consequences of fake news and Russian propaganda on both Latvian and Russian-speaking population continued monitoring Russian-language media channels. In 2016, the Latvian website of the Russian media channel Sputnik was shut down because, according to the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the channel was used as a '*propaganda tool*' by Moscow (Jansons, 2016, quoted in EURACTIV March 30, 2016). In 2019, Russian TV channel Rossiya RTR was taken off air for three months. According to the statement posted on the NEPLP website:

The Kremlin propaganda program's hate speech and incitement to war in the territory of Latvia will not be tolerated and this is a clear signal to unfriendly states and forces - we defend and will defend our informational space (Ivars Āboliņš 2019 quoted in LMS.LM January 31, 2019).

Shortly after the annexation of Crimea the surveys carried out in Latvia showed the effects of Russian propaganda in action. According to Factum survey (2015), 72% of Latvian speaking respondents perceived Russia and its meddling in the internal affairs of another state as the main catalyst for the Ukraine crisis, whilst 64% of Russian-speaking respondents thought the crisis was caused by the Western interference. Latvia considered following Estonia's example and establishing a state Russian-language TV channel that would be an alternative news platform that would help to counter Kremlin's information warfare. However, this idea was not met with a positive response by the politicians as many of them thought that having a Russian-language state-sponsored media platform would discourage the Russian-speaking minorities from learning Latvian language (Rostoks, Vanaga 2016). A different path was chosen, Latvia focused on the existing bilingual TV channel LTV7 which is considered to be '*too Latvian*' for the Russian-speaking minorities. However, in 2018, the channel started collaborating with the BBC's Broadcasting House in London that delivers news in Russian

language. The channel hopes that it will help to catch attention of Russian-speaking part of residents in Latvia (Dziadul, 2018).

Ukraine crisis with the following annexation of Crimea and the war in the Eastern Ukraine have influenced the securitization process of the ethnic Russian minorities and the overall Russian-speaking population residing in Latvia. Nevertheless, this process has begun long before the recent Russian land grab and is mostly related to the building of national identity according to Latvia's ethnic, cultural, and language heritage that has gone through rough changes thanks to a half a century long Soviet occupation.

6.6 Cyber Security Sector

In 2008, Latvia's state security service, the Constitution Protection Bureau (SAB) following the Netherlands example went public and accused Russia of carrying out cyber attacks against governmental bodies and institutions:

The cyber attacks in Latvia were carried out by the GU [Russia's military intelligence agency] for espionage purposes, and the most frequent attacks were directed against state institutions, including the foreign and defense sectors. Rarely, attacks were targeted at private companies, including the media (SAB statement 2018 quoted in LMS.LV 2018).

SAB was established in 1995 and its main goals include intelligence gathering, counter-intelligence and protection of Latvia's, NATO and EU classified information. In 2018 annual threat assessment report, Russia is seen as the main destabilizer of the Latvian cyber security sector, posing a serious threat to the national security of the country and to the collective security of the West as a whole:

The aggressive activities of Russian intelligence and security services pose a serious threat to the collective security of NATO and EU, and the national security of Latvia, while the activities conducted by special services of other countries over the past year are assessed by SAB as moderate and not having posed a direct threat to Latvian national security. The activities of the Russian special services against Latvia are within the scope of their general activities aimed against the West (SAB 2018 Annual Report)

According to the investigation carried out by SAB, cyber attacks targeting Latvian politicians and governmental institutions have been carried out by both GU and FSB [Federal Security Service] over the last few years in order to perform information operations, espionage and destructive activities: *'Russia constitutes the main cyber threat to Latvia'* (SAB 2018 Annual Report).

Latvia has its own Cyber security Strategy that was released in 2014. The National Information Technology Security Council is responsible for the development and implementation of cyber security policy, as well as for *'the exchange of information and cooperation between the public and private sectors'* (Latvijas kiberdrošības stratēģija 2014-2018).

The Latvian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT.LV) is an agency in the Latvian Ministry of Defence, which is in charge of the state's IT security. The institution monitors and analyses cyberspace activities either to prevent cyber attacks or to provide a timely and adequate response in case of emergency. CERT.LV cooperates with more than 600 IT experts from government institutions and is also responsible for the organization of workshops, training and other educational activities (CERT.LV, 2019).

The Cyber Defence Unit is a voluntary military organization that forms a part of the National Guard of Latvia. The only difference is that the cyber unit will also have to provide assistance to the CERT.LV team shall an emergency or a conflict break out (Ģelzis, 2014).

The Latvian government believes that bringing awareness, involving Latvian citizens into cyber security matters through workshops, courses and projects, targeting the younger population, will contribute to the country's fight against Russian hybrid activities in the cyberspace.

6.7. Summary

Since the security environment has changed in Europe thanks to Russian aggression towards Ukraine, its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the ongoing war in the Donbass region, Latvia has acknowledged the gaps in its defence capabilities and resilience against both conventional and hybrid types of threats. Sharing same concerns and fears with Lithuania and Estonia about being the next target on Russia's hit-list, Latvia has taken action to increase its defence efficiency towards Russian foreign policy.

The country invested less in its military sector before 2014, compared to Lithuania and Estonia due to the consequences of the 2008 financial crisis. However, after the Ukraine crisis broke out, the Baltic State felt the strong necessity to catch up in terms of increasing the military expenditure and has reached 2% of GDP by 2018. The decision to increase the investment into the military sector had been taken before the Ukraine crisis, however, Crimea and armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine added motivation and speeded up the process.

Latvian steps to securitize Russia are softer, compared to the other Baltic States. The country has not re-introduced compulsory conscription and is not planning to do so. However, this decision is mostly motivated by insufficient financial means, as the compulsory military service will need a huge budget allocation (Szymanski, 2017).

Looking at political security sector, several important amendments related to a military sector were made in order to give more flexibility to critical institutions in case of an emergency and guarantee efficient cooperation between the ministries (for example, shall Latvia find itself under a surprise attack or a military intervention, the Armed Forces have the right to undertake self-defence measures without waiting for a command/approval from the superior entities) (Fernandes and Correia 2018).

In regards to the economic security sector, Latvia has taken several steps to become less dependent from Russia (energy security keeps being one of the main concerns of the economic security sector as Russian oil company Gazprom is still the biggest gas supplier to the region). Although Latvian and Russian speaking population of Latvia is divided in regards to their perception of Russian actions in Ukraine, the Russian-speaking minorities do not support Kremlin's attempts to leverage Latvia. Curiously, the Latvian-speaking part of the population is also divided over whether Russia should be perceived as a threat or not. This is the reason why Latvia is less keen than Lithuania and Estonia in terms of involving its residents into defence matters on a broader scale, prioritizing voluntary initiatives instead (Szymański, 2017).

In the case of countering Russian propaganda, Latvia has banned several Russian-language media channels trying to spread confusion, disinformation and influence the public opinion. In 2014, NATO's Strategic Center of Excellence was opened in the Latvian capital to bring awareness about Russian information warfare by publishing reports on Russian digital activities, monitoring Russian media and debunking fake news (Thompson, 2019). The cyber security sector tries to tackle the Russian threat from different angles. A lot of resources are invested in bringing awareness campaigns. The country continues releasing a series of materials on the Information Technology Security Incident Response Institution of the Republic of Latvia website (CERT.LV) that provide information on IT security solutions, for example, free-of-

charge firewalls. Twice a year, the Institution has doors open days, when people can bring their computers and laptops for a security check-up, and it also distributes free antivirus programmes (Global Cybersecurity Index Report 2017).

The overview of the five Latvian security sectors has provided concrete and visible proof of how Russian threat was securitized on a national level. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that although the annexation of Crimea with the ongoing armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine have contributed significantly to the decision-makers' and public perception of Russia and made the country address new challenges in the context of the changing security environment in Europe, the origins of these changes are to be found way before the Ukraine crisis outbreak (Rostoks, Vanaga, 2016).

7. Conclusion

A myriad of factors contributed towards the securitization of Russia by the Baltic States, though the main destabilizing constituents are the ongoing Ukraine crisis and the armed conflict in the Donbass region where the Russian Federation plays the role of the main destabilizing actor. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have constantly expressed their mistrust and anxieties about Russia, and these are mainly attributed to their previous period of existence under Soviet control, the Russia-Georgia war in 2008, and large-scale military exercises being carried out near their borders. However, the biggest factor that pushed the Baltic States to (re)securitize Russia as an existential threat to their national security emerged after 2014. Russian support of separatists in Eastern Ukraine, and the illegal annexation of Crimea, shocked the Western states and reaffirmed the Baltic States' concerns regarding Russia's revisionist claims, further exacerbating their distrust. The connection between history, security and culture is an integral part of the securitization process in the Baltic States. On one hand, the Baltic States' perception of Russia as a threat is primarily preconditioned by the material factors such as their geographical proximity to Russia, small population, limited military capabilities and a large number of ethnic Russian minorities residing in the three countries (especially, in Estonia and Latvia, where the Russian-speaking minorities comprise up to 25% of the population). On the other hand, the Baltic States' fears are also shaped by the subjective perception based on half a century long occupation by Russia, fueled by its hate speeches and hybrid tactics of spreading misleading information and questioning the Baltic States' sovereignty.

As a result, the three countries find themselves at the forefront of Russian security threats. They have acknowledged that any underestimation of potential threats from Russia could lead to the end of their sovereignty. In addition to securitizing speech acts carried out by the Baltic States' officials, the three countries have introduced compelling policy changes on both military and non-military levels. Potential Russian threats have re-emerged as a topic of concern on military, political, economic, societal and cyber security fronts. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia discuss these issues and present solutions with varying degrees of securitization to prepare to withstand such threats.

This thesis research has sought to explore how Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have securitized Russia and whether different magnitudes of securitization resulted in different policy steps. Specifically, exploring the change in their perception of Russia after its involvement in Ukraine, followed by the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the outbreak of war in Eastern Ukraine provoked by Russia-backed separatist movements. With regards to the securitization theory, the analysis indicates that the Baltic States have different manners of addressing security. Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia are similar in many ways in that they share the same historical experience, their geopolitical positions are comparable, they became EU and NATO member-states at the same time and they all perceive Russia as a possible aggressor. That being said, their securitization paths featuring certain policy steps are different due to the difference in threat perception in each country. Each Baltic State recognize Russia as a threat of different intensities, depending on the lessons learnt from their common past and their individual experiences managing Russian hostility.

The analysis has shown that the authorities in these countries are normally the ones who '*speak security*' and securitize Russia. However, the research has shown that a securitizing actor does not necessarily have to be a government official in order to apply a '*speech act*'. It suffices that the lead is a person with trust, authority, experience and knowledge about the sector they represent. The media sources, along with think-tanks, could possibly be powerful securitizing actors in that they spread the '*speech act*' on a national level for mass consumption and '*speak security*' on a daily basis; this makes them part of the outer rings of domestic and foreign policy (Rogers & Rishikof, 2011). And yet, the media in the Baltic States acted as a catalyst, transmitting what was said by the authorities, rather than securitizing the topic independently (Andžāns, 2014).

The Baltic States are often perceived as a sub-region of a regional security complex, and, thus, are often seen as a single interconnected group with the identical perception of security agenda. Furthermore, they see their NATO membership as the main guarantee of

maintaining security in the region and this perception defines the limits of securitization processes for them. Out of the three states, Lithuania - named the '*New Cold Warrior*' - turned out to be the most active securitizing actor in terms of openly criticizing Russia's aggressive politics and dealing with the threat on a national security level. The securitizing tendencies of Estonia and Latvia were less dynamic and have been described as '*frosty pragmatist*', with Latvia being the softest one (Leonard and Popescu 2007, p. 2). Nevertheless, despite having different views on how intense securitization of Russia should be, the three Baltic States' have managed to improve their defense capabilities through massive budget allocations during a short period of time (except Estonia who had already reached 2% of GDP by 2014).

The analysis has shown that it is quite challenging to separate threats in the military, political, economic and societal sectors as they are deeply interconnected. For example, a threat posed to a societal sector would automatically be mirrored in the political or military sector, as the responsibility to introduce extraordinary measures to tackle threats lies with these security dimensions (Jakniunaite 2016). The securitization of Russia by the Baltic States resulted from the aggressive Russian foreign policies, and was an adequate and necessary response in the Balts' perception. One of the main consequences was the militarisation of military security sector which, in turn, affected other sectors in the sense that they started being perceived through the lens of a military threat as well.

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Appendix



Figure 1: Ethnic Russian Minorities in the Baltics (Stratfor, 2014)

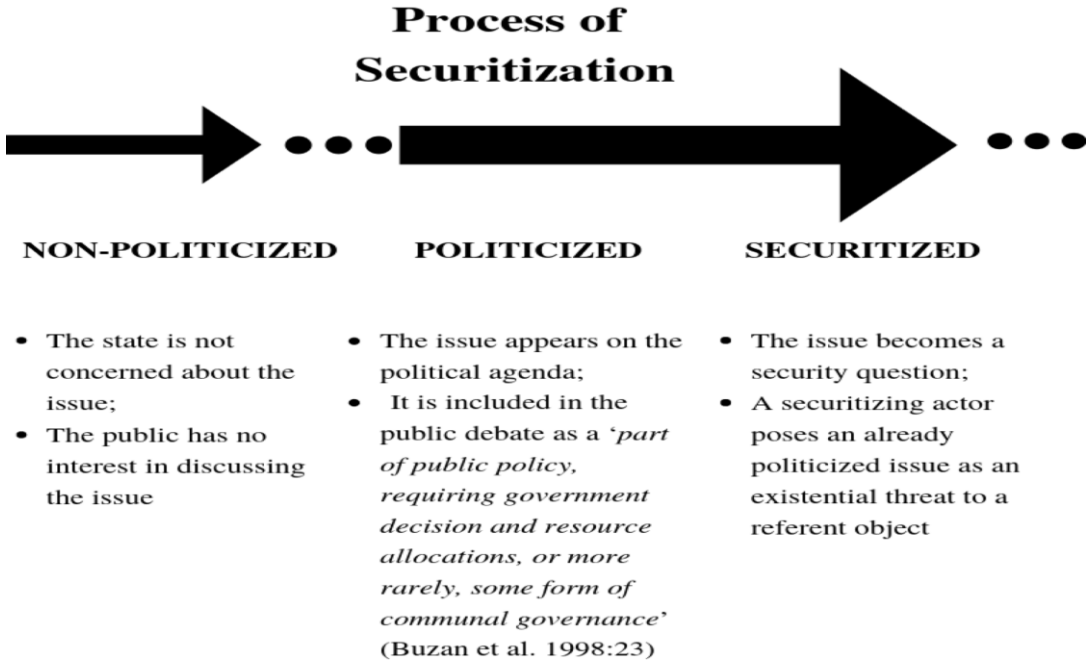


Figure 2: The two-stage process of securitizations (created by the author)



Figure 3: Lithuania on the map (The Washington Post)

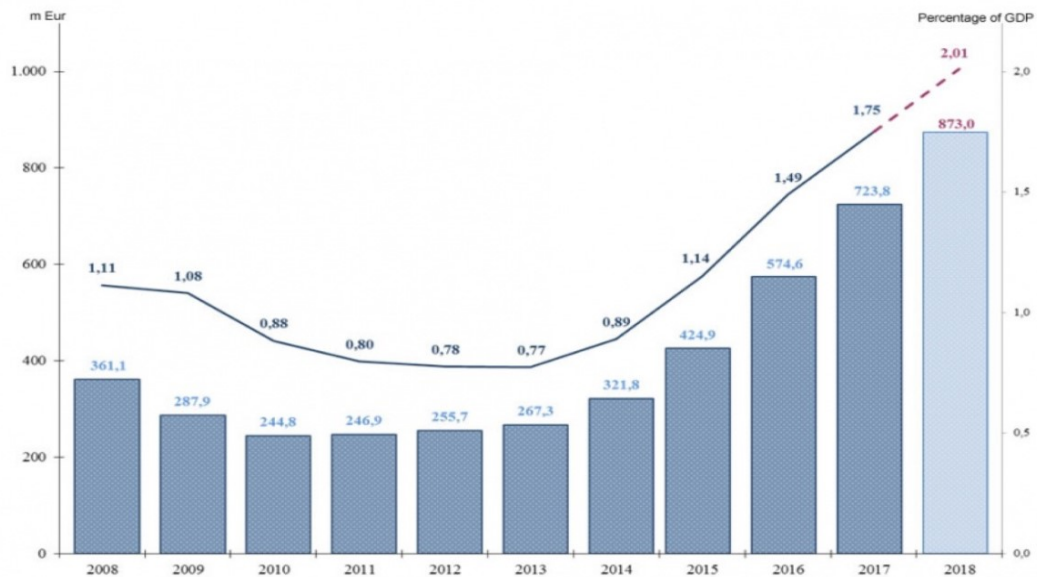


Figure 4: Dynamics of appropriations of the Ministry of National Defence of Republic of Lithuania in diagram for 2008-2018 (Lithuanian Ministry of Defence)

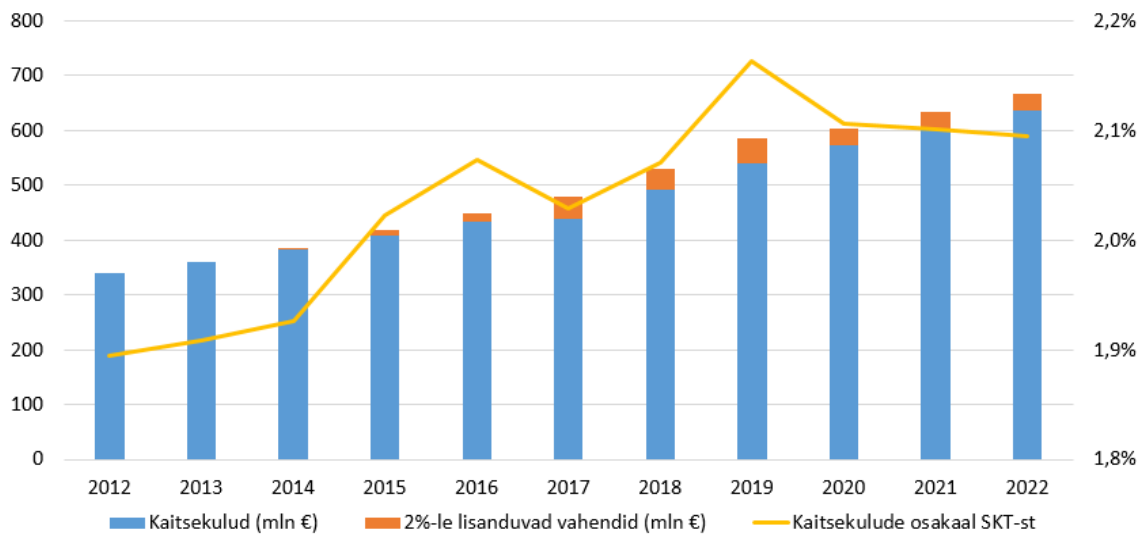


Figure 5: Dynamics of appropriations of the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Estonia in diagram for 2012-2022

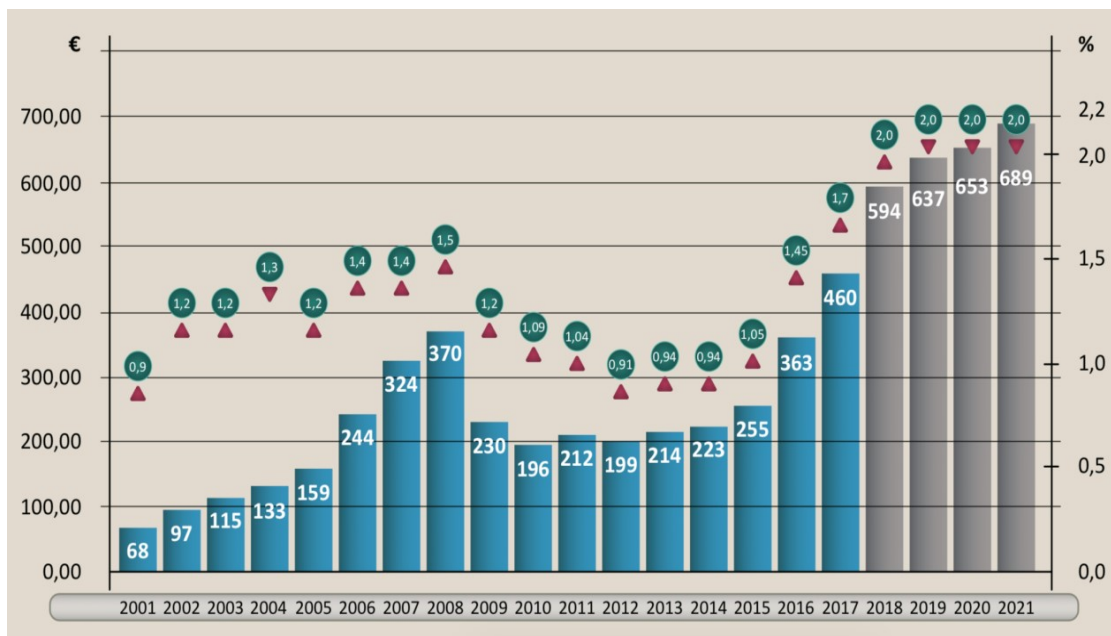


Figure 6: Republic of Latvia Defence Budget Dynamics 2001-2021, Million EUR Defence Budget % of GDP (Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia)

Research Proposal
Master's Thesis

**Securitizing Russia: the Baltic States Perception of Russia
as a Threat after 2014**

Author: B.A. B.Sc. Daria Zybeleva

Study programme: International Security Studies

Securitizing Russia: the Baltic States Perception of Russia as a Threat after 2014

Justification of the topic: The ongoing Ukraine crisis accompanied by the armed conflict in the Donbass region of Ukraine with Russia playing the role of the main destabilizing actor has shaped the security discourse in the three Baltic States significantly. Although it is difficult to indicate whether Russia has been ever desecuritized by the Baltic countries, considering the historical context, geographical proximity and a large number of Russian minorities living in the three Baltic countries, the feelings towards Russia's foreign policies have been mixed, but moderate. The actual re-emergence of the Russian threat happened after the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

The purpose of the research is to explore the change in the Baltic State's perception of Russia as a threat and the differences in their modes of securitizing it that would lie in their policy steps. This being said, the deterioration of relations between the Baltic States and Russia does not affect just these four countries but also shapes the bilateral relations between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia, as the Baltic countries form part of the Alliance.

Research questions:

1. Are there differences in the Baltic States' mode of securitizing Russia?
2. Do different securitization paths transform into different policy steps undertaken by the Baltic States?

Methodology: Securitization theory is chosen as a fundamental theory for the following investigation as it will be the most relevant one to explain the change of national security agendas affected by the changes of perception of existential security threats in the five security sectors, namely, the military, political, economic, societal and cyber one. The cyber security sector is not included into the securitization theory discourse, however, it should be considered as cyberspace activities are directly interconnected with the other four security sectors and cyber attacks can be used as tools to affect/destabilize other sectors of security. The Security Dilemma concept is reviewed in order to better understand the dynamics that the Baltic States-Russia-NATO relations and the security dilemma that all the parties face.

In order to effectively evaluate how Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia securitize Russia, this thesis methodology applies case studies. Case studies analysis is seen as a clear choice by

the author resulting from the in-depth and accurate set of data the method provides, where in this research case, on the security discourse on the (re)emergence of the Russian threat in the Baltic States after the annexation of Crimea. The essential precondition to conducting the case studies is an understanding of the historical background in regards to the nature of the Baltic States fears and distrust *vis-a-vis* Moscow and the general parameters of the Baltic States-Russia relations. This will offer insights into contextual conditions of portraying Russia as a threat and will help to calculate the different extents of the securitization in Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia.

Time frame: The time period analyzed in the research covers the security situation starting from 2014 to 2019 in the context of the Baltic States-Russia relations. The chosen timeline is complemented by a short historical background on the Baltic States-Russia relationship parameters and the events that influenced the securitization of Russia dynamics in the Baltic States region.

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