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15 YEARS OF NATO MEMBERSHIP OF THE BALTIC STATES – WHAT ROLE DOES
TRUST PLAY AMONGST THE MEMBERS OF THE ALLIANCE?

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BS – Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia)

CFI – The Connected Forces Initiative

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

JISR – The Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance initiative

MS – Member States

NATO – The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NIFC – The NATO Intelligence Fusion Center

UK – The United Kingdom

USA – The United States of America

THE BODY PART

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (hereinafter – NATO) – is an intergovernmental alliance with twenty nine Member States (hereinafter – MS), including three Baltic States (hereinafter – BS) which joined NATO in 2004. There was argued that an enlargement with three BS would expand „the area of Europe where wars do not happen“ thereby preventing conflicts that could draw Russia back into the region or necessitate NATO intervention. Proponents of enlargement see NATO as benign institution representing the Western „security community“ that serves to promote and foster cooperation among its members¹.

A „NATO decision“ is the expression of the collective will of all twenty nine MS since all decisions are taken by consensus. The larger NATO becomes, the more problematic it becomes to reach consensus on key issues². Whereas there are a big number of participants in NATO, therefore, the question arises – how it is possible to find a consensus and make necessary decisions between such a large number of members with different cultures, preferences, aims, national interests and etc.? How such a big organisation can act effectively and viably? The author agrees with some authors' assumption that trust provides an important resource for cooperation³. Thus, the answer is the following – the MS of NATO can find a consensus between themselves because they trust each other. However, then other questions arise – what role does trust play amongst the members of the alliance and how it can be ensured by MS within the alliance? What MS need do in order keep trust in the eyes of other MS? Further in this work the author will try to answer into all these questions. Whereas, there are achieved a nice and symbolic number of years in participation in NATO of three Baltic States, therefore, further the author during examining the above provided questions will more focus on real examples of BS and their relation with the NATO: before joining the alliance and now as MS of the NATO.

Before evaluation of the role of trust amongst the members of the NATO, the author would like to provide and discuss some scholars' view whether trust is required at all for cooperation within organisation. For example, Robert Axelrod states that cooperation requires neither rationality

¹ Andrew Kydd, „Trust Building, Trust Breaking: The Dilemma of NATO Enlargement,“ *International Organization* 55, 4 (2001): 802, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3078616>

² „What is NATO?,“ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed 2019 May 10, <https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html>

³ Florian Böller and Wilfried Mausbach, „NATO at 70: Trust and Mistrust among Allies,“ paper presented at Heidelberg Center for American Studies Conference, Heidelberg, 8-9 April 2019.

nor trust. Also, the same opinion is observed in the statement of other authors, such as Karen Cook, Russell Hardin, and Margaret Levi. These scholars argue that mutually beneficial cooperation is possible without trust, while highlighting a variety of mechanisms to enable, aid, and expedite cooperation in the absence of trust, such as facilitating mutually beneficial conditions, monitoring, sanctions, and legislation. They state that for cooperation to work, the parties need simply to be able to identify each other and recognise that potential benefits outweigh any potential costs⁴. The author of this work, as was already stated in introduction – disagrees with such position. He agrees with other scholars which keep opposite view – they state that trust is necessary for cooperation within any organisation. For example, according to Niklas Luhman, trust takes centre stage as an essential ingredient for the smooth functioning of society and thereby facilitates individual and societal wellbeing. Without trust, only very simple forms of human cooperation – effectively, those which can be fully transacted on the spot – are possible⁵. Although Luhman talks about human cooperation, however, the author thinks that this statement is also applicable to cooperation between members within organisation, especially NATO. This is so, because the NATO was founded in order to perform collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security⁶ and there is a real question whether the country would like to participate in a mission in order to perform collective defence with the state it does not trust. The answer is only one – for sure, not. If country does not trust in other state, then it will not participate with that state in a mission or any other activity or process. Hence, trust is necessary between MS within any organisation and plays an essential role for effective functioning of such organisation.

So, it is determined that trust is necessary amongst members of the NATO. Now, it is necessary to examine how trust can be achieved and ensured by MS within the alliance and in which stages it is required. The author thinks, and will explain the reasons of such thinking, that trust is essential and plays an important role in the following stages:

- **Before joining the NATO.** To earn trust amongst existing members of the alliance is necessary before joining the NATO. The potential participant to the NATO will not become a real member of the alliance if it will not earn trust. This is so, because present members will not want to cooperate with a state it does not trust, they will not want to

⁴ Francesca Granelli, „What Does it Mean for a Communication to be Trusted?“, *Defence strategic communications* 5, Autumn (2018): 184-185, <https://www.stratcomcoe.org/francesca-granelli-what-does-it-mean-communication-be-trusted>

⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁶ „The North Atlantic Treaty (1949)“, *NATO publications*, (2009).

share experience with such state and etc. The real example, to this argument is the three BS. The Russia was against their joining of NATO. Some other MS (at that time) did not want to weaken relations with Russia and lessen trust with this country. Therefore, they were critical about enlargement of the NATO. Besides, the infrastructure, budget, military resources of these countries were limited and small, therefore, they need to prove that they will not be just „consumers“, but real and serious members which will perform their obligations. In order to prove it, the BS decided to participate in various missions before joining the NATO. For example, in 2003, the three BS all strongly supported the United States of America (hereinafter – USA) led coalition in Iraq, and all BS contributed forces to serve under USA and coalition command in the Iraq war. Also, all three BS have been very active in Afghanistan, and all have contributed contingents of hundreds of fighting troops, as well as civilian trainers, to serve under USA and NATO command⁷. Thus, the BS proved that they will take seriously their obligations to the MS of the NATO and that they share with the NATO the same values: democracy, liberty, and the rule of law⁸. Thus, such activity of the BS led that at that time existing MS of the NATO believed in serious intentions of the three BS and agreed to their joining NATO.

- **During participation in the NATO.** It is required to maintain and keep trust during participation in an alliance. If after joining the NATO a state losses trust amongst other MS of the alliance, then such country will be fictive and passive member of the NATO. This is so, because other MS will not take such member seriously and will not support its ideas and proposals. The maintenance of trust within the NATO is possible, for example, in the following:
 - ***To share the risk and participate in various missions.*** The participation in various missions and operations is also an important index showing other MS that a particular country is responsible, keeping its obligations and sharing the same values as all NATO MS do. For example, the three BS are also involved in ongoing combat operations in Afghanistan and peacekeeping operation in the Balkans as

⁷ James S. Corum, „The Security Concerns of the Baltic States as NATO Allies,“ *The Letort Papers* (2013): 4-5, <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdf/PUB1171.pdf>; *Lietuva ir NATO: 10 metų kartu. Straipsnių rinkinys* (Vilnius: Lietuvos Respublikos Krašto apsaugos ministerija, 2014), 16-17, 114.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 42; Kydd, *supra note* 1: 805.

part of the Western alliance⁹. This shows that the BS are serious participants of NATO and that other MS trust them.

If MS refuses to fulfill their promises and obligations or to share the risk with other MS, then trust is weakened within the alliance. For example, France disappointed the USA in the run-up to the January 2010 London Conference on Afghanistan when French president stated that his country would not send additional troops¹⁰. Such position and statement of MS for sure lessen trust level within the alliance and thus, the effectiveness of the NATO.

- ***To meet 2% of Gross Domestic Product (hereinafter – GDP).*** The MS which keep their word and contribute as promised, are more trustable and admitted more seriously by other MS than countries which do not pay 2% of GDP. For example, although the three BS are small nations, however, they make a serious effort to support the Western security system, by striving, to meet the goal of 2% of GDP for defence¹¹.
- ***To specialise in specific areas.*** It is normal in practice that small countries do not have an equal influence as big countries. This is why, it is recommended to small countries in order to be trustable and in order to have an influence on other members and to be heard, specialise and deep their knowledge in specific areas. Then big countries, before making decisions on specific issues, will consult with small countries on these specific issues¹². This is why the Estonians have established the NATO Cyber Center of Excellence in Tallin and the Lithuanians have set up the NATO Center for Energy Policy in Vilnius¹³. Also, Danes like to discuss about ecology and climate changes, Latvians – about strategic communication and etc¹⁴.
- ***To provide and share your experience (intelligence) and advices.*** If any state had experience in one or some matters, then other MS seeing and knowing about experience of that country will rely on its decisions and proposals. It is

⁹ Corum, *supra note* 7: 1-2.

¹⁰ James M. Goldgeier, „The Future of NATO,“ *Council Special Report*, 51 (2010): 19, file:///C:/Users/c_anas/Downloads/NATO_CSR51.pdf

¹¹ Corum, *op. cit.*, 5; *Lietuva ir NATO: 10 metų kartu. Straipsnių rinkinys, supra note* 7: 118.

¹² *Ibid.*, 116.

¹³ Corum, *op. cit.*, 37; *Lietuva ir NATO: 10 metų kartu. Straipsnių rinkinys, op. cit.*, 119.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

recommended for MS to share their experience with other MS and not be afraid in saying loudly and openly opinion and giving advices on particular matter. Also, it is recommended to create the common training centres where the specialists would be trained. This will show other MS that a state is open and friendly member of the NATO which is honest and trusts in other participants, thus, they also, can trust to such a member. For example, the three BS in particular see the current Russian behavior in a much less benign light than the political leadership in the USA or older NATO nations do. The BS do not see evidence of any „reset“ in relations with Russia and instead can point to many specific actions of the Russian Federation’s government that demonstrate a clear hostility to NATO and Western interests, especially, that the BS know Russians and the language well¹⁵. Before the Georgia invasion the BS suffered from a creditibility problem on the Russia issue due to the nature of their painful relationship with Russia in the past and the suspicion of other MS that the BS view is too colored by emotion to be taken seriously. However, after the Georgia invasion and later after annexation of Crimea, the destabilization of Eastern Ukraine and etc., trust that Russia might be an honest and cooperative partner was, at least for a time, shattered¹⁶ and this led that other MS started more seriously listen the arguments of the BS. For example, Lithuania played an important role to support the United Kingdom (hereinafter – UK) for uniting all MS of the NATO and coordinating their actions in expelling over one hundred twenty Russians diplomats¹⁷. This was a significant diplomatic victory for the UK and this quick coordination of actions shows the trusting relationships the UK’s government have built.

In order to develop an experts and professionals in military forces there was established the Baltic Defence College in Tartu. This College is the institution of higher military learning for the three BS¹⁸. Also, based on commitment displayed during the Prague Summit, the NATO Intelligence Fusion Center (hereinafter –

¹⁵ Corum, *supra* note 7: vi.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19-20; Nicholas Burns, „Does the US need NATO?“, *Quartz*, April 4, 2019, <https://qz.com/1585911/does-the-us-need-nato/>; Linas Linkevičius, „Building Trust in the NATO – Russia relationship: what NATO can offer“, *European Leadership Network*, March (2012): <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/building-trust-in-the-nato-russia-relationship-what-nato-can-offer/>

¹⁷ Granelli, *supra* note 4: 178.

¹⁸ Corum, *op. cit.*, 6, 16.

NIFC) was created in Molesworth, UK, allowing MS to jointly develop, fuse and share information¹⁹. At Chicago Summit, the Alliance launched the Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (hereinafter – JISR) initiative and the Connected Forces Initiative (hereinafter – CFI)²⁰. The author agrees with Stewart Webb, acknowledging that „intelligence sharing is the ultimate demonstration of trust and interoperability“²¹, and such initiatives as establishment of NIFC, JISC and CFI shows that MS trust each other within the NATO.

- ***To develop national armed forces.*** In order to gain and increase trust between MS, the country need to improve its military forces in order to add support in various missions and operations. For example, the three BS developed their armed forces very quickly and efficiently, receiving considerable aid and assistance from the Nordic nations and from NATO nations and the USA. By 2005, the BS had developed fairly sophisticated national security strategies that included dealing with irregular as well as conventional threats²².

In conclusion, trust is the main and essential element, an essence of effectively operating organisation, including the NATO. In order to achieve a consensus within the MS of the alliance that MS need trust each other. MS need to be trustable not only after joining the alliance, but also before, because the potential participant will not become a real member of the alliance if it will not earn trust. It is also important to every MS maintain trust within the NATO during participation in the alliance, because if it will not be trustable, then such country will be fictive and passive member of the NATO. To maintain trust during participation in the NATO is possible, for example, in the following: to share the risk and participate in various missions, to meet 2% of GDP, to specialise in specific areas, to provide and share your experience (intelligence) and advices, to develop national armed force.

Finally, at the end of this work, the author would like to add that all three BS made a huge work in order to be trustable in the eyes by other members of the NATO, and now it can be concluded that BS are taken by other MS as serious and trustable partner of the alliance, despite the fact that BS are small countries.

¹⁹ Jan Ballast, „Trust (in) NATO: The future of intelligence sharing within the Alliance,“ *Research Paper*, 140 (2017): 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8; Stephen J. Maranian, „NATO Interoperability: Sustaining Trust and Capacity within the Alliance,“ *Research Paper*, 115 (2015): 5.

²¹ Ballast, *op. cit.*, 15.

²² Corum, *op. cit.*, 29.

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