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Preface

The Strategic Research Centre of the Lithuanian Military Academy, alongside its partners at Vilnius University and Vytautas Magnus University, present their readers with the fourteenth volume of the “Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review”, devoted to security problems of Lithuania and the Baltics in 2015-2016. Attention is focused on in-depth research topics of contemporary relevance related to various aspects of Lithuania’s national security as well as to that of the entire Baltic region. Geopolitical changes and their multifaceted consequences that took place in Eastern Europe in 2014 continue to dominate the security agenda of this region and thus the themes of the regular publication the “Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review” as well.

Continuing the established tradition, we have categorized all the studies published in the journal into four groups. The first group, “The Global International System and Lithuania”, is comprised of two articles. In the first of them, International Law specialists Erika Leonaitė and Dainius Žalimas analyze and deconstruct Russia’s attempts to justify the annexation of Crimea carried out in 2014. The article discloses how attempts are made in the works of Russian law-related scholars to create a favourable position for the Russian Federation, to attribute a different content to the concepts of the International Law and form a pseudo-legal narrative beneficial to Russia’s political interests. The second study, prepared by Lithuania’s Ambassador to India Laimonas Talat-Kelpša, acquaints the reader with the South Asian region so far scarcely researched in Lithuania and the Baltic States and directs attention not only to the fundamental problems of this region but also attempts to understand and estimate the variants and possibilities of greater Lithuanian involvement in South Asia.

The second part of the “Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review” – “The Changing European Security Space” – also consists of two studies. The author of the first article is an eminent American theologian, the biographer of the Pope John Paul II, George Weigel. In the text specially written for the “Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review”, the author directs the reader’s attention to the fact that the security architecture established after the Cold War is facing a serious danger because Russia’s attitude, which is becoming more and more aggressive, has not yet received an appropriate response from the West. Therefore, according to the author, Lithuania and other NATO borderline member countries, due to their unique liberation experience, have an absolute moral right to urge the Alliance to publicly and unambiguously take upon itself anew the obligation in case of necessity to comply with Article 5 of the North Atlan-
tic Treaty. Wolfgang Koeth, the author of the other study of this part from the Netherlands, an expert on European Union policy, explores and assesses the significance for Lithuania of changes in the formation of the European foreign policy. The author reveals how Germany established itself, albeit reluctantly (particularly because of the Ukrainian crisis that began in 2014), as the key initiator of decisions pertaining to the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union and became a de facto leading country in preparing the Union’s response to Russia.

The third, traditional part of the journal “Lithuania’s Eastern Neighborhood” again focuses on Russia, the greatest neighbour from the East that most significantly changed its foreign and security policy in 2014. This time Russia’s policy and warfare has attracted the attention of four researchers. Marius Laurinavičius, a political analyst on Russia, at present residing in the USA, prepared a comprehensive study in which the author presents his attitude about the nature of the current political regime of Russia. The author critically estimates the opinion that the essence of the regime is the “Power Vertical” at the top of which is the absolute ruler President Putin. On the basis of numerous sources, the author provides arguments that the ruling system of Russia would be more accurately defined if it were named as a conglomerate of clans and groups competing among themselves over resources whereas Putin in this system is not so much an autocrat but a judge and a mediator. The other study of this part, prepared by the historian Kęstutis Kilinskas, is devoted to the deconstruction of the concept “hybrid war”. The author seeks an answer to the question whether the concept of the hybrid war is more orientating or misleading in analyzing Russia’s military actions in Ukraine and ultimately comes to the conclusion that the analysis limited to just this category would be a simplification without sufficient basis. No less significant and perhaps even a greater role was played not by the principles of the hybrid war but by the unique political, economic, social and military conditions of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, which were effectively exploited by Russia in implementing its criminal intents. The third article of this part is devoted to security problems of Georgia, a state of South Caucasus important for Lithuania. Hungarian researchers Gela Merabishvili and Annamária Kiss thoroughly analyze the dynamics of the changes in perception about the security problem in Georgia in connection with the most important political and geopolitical events of the country. The authors point out that the security concept of Georgia is not constant – it is characterized by great changes ranging from expectations of closer cooperation with Russia to undisguised hostility towards it. In a similar manner, the perspective of the
rapprochement with the West, first of all with NATO and also with the EU, is not always estimated to be unambiguously positive.

The fourth part of the “Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review” traditionally analyses urgent aspects, problems and cases of the Lithuanian national security. This time readers have the opportunity to get acquainted with the work of two authors. A scholar from the University of Maryland (USA), Eglė Murauskaitė, explores the lesser studied though highly topical problem of nuclear smuggling. The author points out that the situation, destabilized by the conflict in Ukraine, creates additional preconditions for smuggling nuclear substances and warns that Lithuania might face a threat— relatively new to the country—for which no adequate preparation has been done. The author of the other article, a researcher Benas Brunalas, whose article provides substantiation of a solid theoretical basis intended for reflection on the meaning of emotions and fear in foreign policy, estimates the impact of the changed geopolitical situation in 2014 on the formation of Lithuanian foreign policy. The author states that the number of decisions based on the logic of fear and para bellum is obviously growing; therefore, the article poses the question awaiting further polemics of whether the new ideological trend that is getting established in Lithuanian foreign policy will become an inflexible system of convictions that in the future might hinder the optimal shaping of foreign policy.

We hope this new research will engage and interest our readers. Please note that this and previous volumes of the “Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review” can be found at the General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania Internet website as well as in various international databases, including the open access platform of our publisher De Gruyter.

Vilnius, June 2015

Editor-in-Chief


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