

## ***Defense Transformation: A Lithuanian Perspective***

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Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

For us, members of the defence community, defence transformation is a state of mind more than anything else. It seems to me that it is a never-ending process, with interim goals and benchmarks, but with hardly any permanent solutions. It is a buzzword in both national and multinational defence planning settings, but in different context it may have a different form and a different meaning.

In my presentation today, I will first briefly outline what factors drive Lithuanian defence transformation; second, I will address more general transformation dilemmas that most NATO Allies, including Lithuania, as well as Partners, have been facing or still face in reforming their armed forces and planning defence; third, I will discuss the impact of NATO membership and ongoing NATO transformation on Lithuania's defence policy and planning; and finally I will conclude with some lessons learned and suggestions for the way ahead.

After regaining independence in 1990, we had to build our Armed Forces from scratch. At the time, we had literally nothing: no ministry of defence, no equipment, no weapons, only Soviet legacy infrastructure, most of which was nothing more than bare walls. But we did have a good number of enthusiastic people. The first military units were comprised of patriotic volunteers and officers who served in the Soviet Armed Forces. After officially establishing the Armed Forces, we started reforming and have continued to reform ever since. Our defence establishment has undergone three modes of defence planning: build-up from scratch, total defence, and currently, collective defence. At this point, I would like to note that we shifted to the collective defence concept before we managed to fully implement the total defence concept. Paradoxically, we were lucky to not have completed the creation of a total defence system as it would have made the transformation much more difficult.

I believe the logic behind the need for defense transformation is well known to all of us. There are basically two factors that drive Lithuanian defence transformation: First, threat assessment is the cornerstone upon which everything else from defence policy and force planning to training and equipment of military units is built.

The second factor is membership in NATO and the EU. I would like to stress that both factors are strongly interrelated; enlargement of NATO and the EU has had a positive impact on the overall security climate. By the same token, changes in the strategic environment directly influence NATO and EU activities.

The main feature of this environment is constant, unpredictable change. It puts a huge pressure on us to adapt our national and multinational institutional settings as rapidly as possible. Otherwise, we will be forced to confront challenges of tomorrow with structures and capabilities designed for yesterday.

Transformation, however, is accompanied by a good number of dilemmas. First of all, national threat perception does not necessarily overlap with that of NATO threat assessment, which is based on political assumptions and multinational consensus. This, in turn, leads to three-fold difficulties in formulating requirements and missions for the Armed Forces: while certain requirements are dictated by the national assessment of security threats; another set of requirements stem from NATO defence planning, based on a consensual threat assessment; and finally, there are the actual forces, which, as a rule, are often below the requirements, based on resources available. We thus face the dilemma of national defence needs as opposed to collective defence. (I will elaborate on this dilemma later.)

There is also a decision-making dilemma. What part of national sovereignty are nations ready to sacrifice in favor of more flexible and rapid decision making, and thus, a more efficient NATO?

Then there is the question of the overall role of the armed forces in the new strategic environment. While words “transformation” and “expeditionary” are almost always used in the same sentence, there is an increasing concern about the domestic role of the military. As the deployment of troops for operations often has more to do with foreign policy than homeland defense, the military is losing visibility at home. This, in turn, makes it more and more difficult to maintain public support and persuade the politicians to increase defence spending. One also needs to remember that politicians are always tempted to allocate more resources to areas that bring votes, such as social services, education and healthcare. It is difficult to win voters by advocating foreign military adventures.

Indeed, for the common people and even for some politicians, “transformation” terminology is not comprehensible. For them, Armed Force is all about tanks, guns and homeland defence against aggressors, not about crisis management, provincial reconstruction and peacemaking in far away lands.

On the other hand, using the military to clean up streets or put out forest fires is too much of a luxury for any nation. The question remains open: what should be the role of the military in ensuring societal security and civil defense? Should the armed forces be used at home at the request of civilian authorities? Is it necessary to train the troops of interior and the police with the military? Should we train Border Guards to perform some military functions in times of crises?

While the armed forces are going back to expeditionary warfare in a (somewhat) medieval style, the public image of a soldier is changing in the eyes of the public. A soldier used to be seen as a homeland defender, as a hero, but today the media often pictures servicemen deployed in operations as mercenaries or even merchants of death.

While Lithuania has been bringing its Armed Forces up to NATO standards, NATO itself has been in constant transition. Moreover, adapting to NATO defence planning and adopting NATO standards has been challenging enough, but we now also have to partake in creating and developing a European Security and Defence Policy with its own institutional setting, operations and capability requirements.

There is also another set of questions that relate directly to the way we develop forces and capabilities. What should be the balance between the in-place, static forces that carry out national tasks, and the deployable forces designated for international operations? I believe even the most advanced and “transformed” nations still retain some units that are used solely for national purposes. How do we establish a balance between the national units that have longstanding traditions and training programs with the equipment, weaponry and specialized units required by

NATO? For example, not all the units offered by Lithuania to NATO as “niche capabilities” were NATO-essential and vice versa; NATO has requested certain capabilities that Lithuania has never planned to have in its armed force structure.

Another ever-present dilemma is combat versus logistics capabilities. When NATO was preparing for a total annihilation war against the Warsaw pact, by far the main priority was development of heavy combat capabilities: tanks, bombers, jet fighters, and artillery. In the new environment, NATO finds itself greatly lacking in logistics capabilities: transportation, air-to-air refueling, field hospitals, etc. This means nations need to make difficult decisions to scrap some “sexy” military toys in favor of less than sexy field kitchens and laundries. Here, the main concern for smaller nations is over-specializing: legitimizing deployments in remote areas in the eyes of the public is already difficult enough, but turning any nation’s armed forces into one niche capability, such as water purification, even if it would cover all the needs of the Alliance, would be unthinkable politically and practically.

Last but not least, how does conscription fit into the collective defense system? It did fit nicely into plans of total defence. Today, however, conscripts are of much less use for international deployments and operating high-tech weaponry, unless conscription is used only for the purposes of recruiting and training to enter professional service. In such a case, it remains conscription only in name, which is, in my personal opinion, already pretty much the case in Lithuania.

Let me now turn to the next part of my presentation and discuss how all these difficult dilemmas affect Lithuanian defence transformation.

Changes in security environment, membership in NATO and the EU and the resulting new threat assessment have prompted Lithuania to change its defence planning assumptions.

First of all, in accordance with NATO and national threat assessments, any threat of military aggression is absent in the near-mid term future (10 years). Had such a threat re-emerged, the escalation time of a major armed conflict would likely be long. At the same time, unconventional threats like terrorism and the proliferation of WMD, hostile activities of rogue regimes and civil wars within failed states are increasing in severity and scope. To respond to these threats, the international community is forced to use military force more often.

Being part of a collective defence system, Lithuania does not expect that it would have to defend its territory alone, therefore Lithuania does not need to develop all-around armed forces, in other words, to have a fully and equally capable land force, navy and air force. We also assume that the NRF, once it reaches full operational capability, will be able to deploy in 5 to 15 days, which again has certain important implications to Allied nations. There is also an increasing perception that Lithuania must counter threats where they arise, in other words, the defence of Lithuania today starts in Afghanistan rather than within Lithuania’s borders. All these assumptions lead to a term coined by the former Secretary General Lord Robertson - “Usability”. Usability has become the keyword for Allied planning. Non-usable forces are unnecessary forces.

These new planning assumptions caused a major shift in Lithuania’s main strategic concepts. For more than ten years we have been planning our defence and building our armed forces upon the principle of total and unconditional defence. Somewhat reminiscent of the defence model of Nordic countries, the key elements of total defence concept are: large reserves, large territorial defence structures, a compulsory conscription system, preparation of state resources for total mobilization and the preparation of society for resistance and guerrilla warfare. In other words, Lithuanian armed forces had to be prepared to defend the country alone and at any cost in case of a total war. It had

an obvious impact on the armed forces structure, training, personnel management, command and control system, and procurement priorities. The principle of Euroatlantic solidarity was more of an assumption than a planning guideline – there is an obvious qualitative difference between “solidarity” and “collective defence”.

With the accession to NATO, the concept of total defence has been replaced with the concepts of collective defence and crisis response. In addition, taking into account the terrorist threat, a new concept of homeland security has been introduced.

Membership in NATO has changed significantly the ways we plan our defence, how we make key defence policy decisions and implement them, and how we structure and organize our armed forces. We had to get accustomed to working in a harmonized, collective, centralized manner, by specializing and combining our units with Allied units.

At the end of the day, these changes caused a major shift in our overall planning approach. We have turned away from the purely threat based approach, which implied preparations for the worst case scenario, to a capability based approach, which implies having capabilities to respond to a variety of the most likely or most demanding scenarios. We initially planned to have 4 regular brigades and some 10 territorial brigades consisting of National Defence Volunteers. However, we have never lived up to the plan, therefore, it was easier to switch over to the new approach of collective defence. Today, Lithuania aims at having one reaction brigade for a full spectrum of operations.

It is important to emphasize that Lithuanian defence transformation has been taking place parallel to and affected by the overall NATO transformation process. Just as NATO has been setting new tasks for the Allied forces, reviewing force structures, defence planning and force generation systems, searching for multinational solutions to capability shortfalls, Lithuania has pursued the same objectives nationally. Let me elaborate on these elements more broadly.

First of all, Lithuanian Armed Forces must carry out more complex and demanding missions, not only to assist civilian authorities in homeland security but also to carry out collective defence operations as part of an Allied force and take part in non-Article 5 operations inside and outside the Euroatlantic area.

A new force structure has been put in place, consisting of smaller, lighter, deployable units. The force is structured in such a way that would facilitate the generation of deployable units. Priority is given to the development of the Reaction Brigade, which by the end of 2014, together with the pooled CS and CSS assets, should be capable of deploying and sustaining one infantry battalion task group.

Major changes in structure and capabilities are taking place in the Reserve Command consisting of National Defence Volunteers. The reserves have been reoriented from territorial defence tasks towards providing specialists and sub-units to support international deployments as well as some additional functions in homeland security. The reserves have been significantly reduced from 10 territorial units to 5 reserve groups.

The logistics system is another key area, in which we seek to achieve major improvements. As long as we have been planning our defence against major aggression, we did not need a well-developed logistics system other than direct combat support. To put it simply, who would have thought 15

years back that Lithuania would lead a provincial reconstruction team in a remote province of Afghanistan?

The national goal is to have 50% of our Land Force structured, prepared, and equipped for deployment operations and 10% undertaking sustained operations at any time, as compared to NATO usability targets of 40% and 8% respectively. In addition to the battalion task group, Lithuania will also be able to sustain one special operations squadron, 1 MCM ship and some brigade level CSS capabilities for operations at any time.

To be able to achieve such goals, we also need to have efficient institutions, an appropriate work culture and fitting procedures in place. Of course, we would need a big bureaucracy if we had to run a big army. We need to overhaul our management and command structures in accordance with the new structure and missions of the Armed Forces.

For example, in order to reduce duplication of effort and save personnel costs, we aim at having an integrated civil-military Ministry of Defence, which will perform strategic planning and carry out defence policy. At the operational level, in the Land Forces, we have too many headquarters elements commanding a single reaction brigade. The separate services of the Armed Forces have very little experience of joint planning and execution of tasks. For this reason, we aim at establishing a Joint Staff, which will be responsible for all operational activities. At the tactical level, the units will perform the daily training, administration and implementation of assigned tasks.

At the end of the day, we seek to create a modern management system that would correspond to the new Armed Forces structure and ensure a more efficient decision-making process. This effort is perfectly in line with what NATO as a whole has been trying to achieve during the past few years in streamlining military command and NATO HQ structures and procedures.

Straightening out defence planning in general and force planning and operational planning in particular, is another crucial part of our overall transformation effort. Coherence within national and between national and NATO relevant processes is the key to success. It is the area in which NATO transformation has a very direct effect on Lithuanian defence transformation.

In our force planning, we give top priority to implementation of Force Goals. Deployability, sustainability and usability of forces are the core requirements underpinning all our development plans. The introduction of longer term force planning and operational planning in NATO should further facilitate preparation for and participation in operations of Lithuanian troops. The NRF also factors heavily into our planning processes. In this regard, coherence between the rotation plans of NRF and EU Battle groups will be very important. NATO Force Planning may have its shortcomings, however, we do not have any better tool to develop and deliver capabilities needed for Alliance and national goals. Linking force planning to force generation still remains an unresolved matter that NATO will have to keep thinking about. Finally, lessons learned in the actual operations, provides feedback to the overall planning process and prompts new capability requirements.

Transformation also involves the right allocation of resources as a key enabler. In addition to what I have already discussed, we are looking into a number of areas in which we could save or reallocate resources to deliver deployable capabilities that are necessary to the Alliance. Inside the defence system, we seek to eliminate our non-deployable structures and non-usable capabilities as well as those designed solely for national purposes. We seek to rationalize the use of existing infrastructure and get rid of those functions that are not appropriate for the armed forces. We are also reviewing training requirements, in particular those of the Military Academy.

It is also important to remember that long-term defence plans are projected for 10 years and beyond. Some of the major procurement projects take several years. Thus, the key decisions that NATO as a whole as well as our national politicians make today will have direct consequences on the long-term outlook of our Armed Forces. Such decisions are never easy. Take, for example, the NATO air policing mission. Discussions on the future of air defence policy continue in NATO and the final decision remains uncertain. Nevertheless, we build our air defence plans on the assumption that the current interim solution will evolve into a long-term solution. Some voices inside and outside Lithuania urge us to consider purchasing our own fighter jets. However, any such purchase would inevitably mean huge cuts in other crucial areas. It would also be irrational, given that NATO has more than enough fighter jets. Such proposals come close to the idea of re-nationalisation of defence. I sincerely believe this is not the aim of NATO, indeed on the contrary.

Of course, there are limits of manoeuvre within the defence budget, with the main battle taking place externally: we need to continue informing society why defence spending must not suffer at the expense of other important areas. The public debate is important. We continue to talk to the Parliament and politicians to make them aware about the needs of national and collective defence. And, of course, the Ministry of Finance always drives a hard bargain.

Our current defence expenditure, which today stands at 1.27% of GDP, obviously limits our ability to implement Armed Forces development plans and NATO commitments.

In any case, all these ongoing defence reform efforts have already enabled a rather significant increase in the potential to deploy and sustain Lithuanian armed forces in international operations. The costs of operations, the limits set by the Parliament and the actual deployment of troops have all been rising during the past few years and will continue to rise.

As a result, Lithuania went “truly global”. We were able to establish the PRT in the remote Gowhr Province in Afghanistan. I can confidently say that it has become an important driving vehicle for our own defence reform. Lessons learned from this mission in the long run will allow us to better identify the shortfalls in the development of our Armed Forces.

We believe the time has come to participate in operations not solely because of the will to show the national flag on the map, but to participate in operations with a much more substantial footprint, one that aims at reaching a higher efficiency level of the capabilities used. For this reason, we plan to reduce the number of operations and, instead, increase the size of our units in operations.

This new approach will allow us to consolidate our national contributions, allocate resources more efficiently, and better test the capabilities developed through the Force goals cycle. In addition, commanders and staff officers will get more opportunities to serve in higher positions; troops will be able to gain more experience and develop their skills.

Participation in operations helps and encourages us to further develop our forces. Units that are deployed in operations are being equipped with more advanced equipment, structured and trained to be able to act smoothly as part of multinational contingents.

In general, participation in operations, especially those in Afghanistan, serves as a testing ground whether the required capabilities are developed in a correct way. For example, our leading role in the PRT allows us to test and improve our deployable command and control, our deployable logistic

capabilities, and the skills of our units. The received expertise and lessons learned “feedbacks” into our armed forces development plans.

Our participation in the NRF mission to Pakistan was a valuable experience in terms of unit deployment to the area of operation and redeployment back home. The experience and lessons learned will greatly help us in planning our future participation in the NRF.

To sum up, we have learned some very valuable lessons in transforming our defence and at the same time keeping it in line with NATO transformation processes.

One of the most difficult challenges has been a mental one: to start thinking in terms of collective defence of the Alliance instead of a collective defence for Lithuania. We had to learn, that territorial units without any CS and CSS capabilities are simply not necessary and are a waste of resources in a collective defence system. We had to develop a logistics system to a large extent “from scratch,” and we are still on a learning curve. We had to learn that NATO needs would not necessarily overlap with what we would be willing to offer NATO. All NATO Allies want to showcase “sexy” capabilities and equipment, but what NATO actually needs is something else, namely combat service support. In defence procurement, there is a temptation to seek for the best available equipment regardless of the cost, although good equipment could be available at a more affordable price.

As we are learning in Afghanistan that more synergy is needed between the civilian and military aspects of crisis response operations. This is one of the areas we will definitely have to improve.

Domestically, we still struggle to set up an efficient crisis management system with a clear delineation of functions between the military, the interior troops and the police. For example, the debate is ongoing on who does what and how in case of a terrorist attack in Lithuania.

What counts at the end of the day, is having a clear vision and understanding of what should be the end result of what is being done – reformed, created or abolished. Innovative thinking and modernisation of equipment are also indispensable for transformation efforts to be successful.

We are ready to share all those lessons with our partners in the East that either aspire for NATO membership or look forward to more effective cooperation with the Alliance. A number of bilateral and multilateral initiatives have already been launched especially with Georgia and other South Caucasus states, Ukraine, the Adriatic countries and, lately, Moldova.

If Lithuania succeeds in all the directions I have outlined in my presentation, there is a great chance we will arrive at our long term vision for 2014 – having a modern capable force, which is neither too heavy nor too light, but fit enough to carry out any mission throughout the full spectrum of operations.

At least this is the plan. However, as Clausewitz has taught us, the first shot of the battle changes even the most perfect plan.

THANK YOU.