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The Trump Administration's Security Policy and its Significance for the Baltic States

“Designed many years ago, NATO is obsolete”, said Donald Trump in January 2017. Yet in August 2017, he said the US would be very protective of the Baltic region. In the US National Security Strategy published in December 2017, the Trump administration said it would abide by “Article 5 of the Washington Treaty”. This article aims to analyze the US security policy during the Trump presidency, with a particular focus on military security and NATO’s role in it, and to assess its significance for the Baltic States. What are the guiding principles of Trump’s military security policy? What is NATO’s role in the Trump administration’s security policy? Is the administration’s policy regarding NATO coherent? Has the Trump administration’s military security policy changed compared to traditional US military security policy? Does the Trump administration plan to maintain its commitment to defend the Baltic States? What does Trump’s military security policy mean to the Baltic States? Based on the original study, the article discusses official positions of US officials (the President, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense) expressed in strategic documents and political discourse, also analyzing initiatives taken by the administration based on compiled event data sets.

Introduction

After Donald Trump was elected the new President of the US, the country’s foreign and security policy has become extremely dynamic and more difficult to predict. In two years, the Trump administration has taken a number of initiatives that challenged the principles of the liberal world order that existed so far and the foreign policy developed by the Barack Obama administration: the US withdrew from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP, on 23 January 2017), the administration expressed its plans to renegotiate the NAFTA Agreement (18 May 2017), it withdrew from the Paris Climate Change Agreement (1 June 2017), expressed its doubts about the Iran Nuclear Deal (13 October 2017),

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used military force to manage international crises (following the use of chemical weapons in Syria in April 2017), deployed more troops in Afghanistan and recognized Jerusalem the capital of Israel (in December 2017)¹. It should be noted that the US President Donald Trump was the one who has contributed a great deal of confusion to US foreign and security policy: he used a sharp rhetoric in respect of the North Korean leader (calling Kim Jong-un the “Little Rocket Man” on Twitter) and met with Kim Jong-un in 2018; the US President sharply criticized US Allies (the UK, Germany and other NATO members), questioned the benefit of certain international organizations (European Union (EU), NATO), praised the Russian President Vladimir Putin (saying that Putin is “very, very strong”²) and said that he trusted the Russian President’s words when he said that Russia would stay away from the US election.

Trump’s presidency is a major challenge for the Baltic States, which are strategic partners of the US and consider the US to be a guarantor of their security: US political institutions have sent ambiguous signals regarding further US policy in the transatlantic region, NATO and relations with Russia. In the beginning of his presidency, Trump said NATO “is obsolete, first because it was designed many, many years ago”³. He also has repeatedly set a condition for NATO, saying that members of the Alliance had to contribute sufficient funds to defense: “Many nations owe vast sums of money from past years, and it is very unfair to the United States. These nations must pay what they owe.”⁴. Meanwhile, the Trump administration stated in the US. National Security Strategy (NSS) published in December 2017 that “the United States remains committed to Article V of the Washington Treaty”⁵.

The aim of this article is to analyze the US security policy during the Trump presidency, focusing on military security, and the significance of such a policy for the Baltic States, which treat the US as their security guarantor. What are the guiding principles of the Trump administration’s military security policy? Is political discourse of the Trump administration on military se-

¹ CRE, Trump’s Foreign Policy Moments 2017–2018, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/trumps-foreign-policy-moments>, 2019 09 22

² Tatum S. (2018), „Trump: Putin was ‘very, very strong’“, CNN, 2018 07 17, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/16/politics/donald-trump-fox-news/index.html>, 2019 09 22.

³ Kentish B. (2017), „Donald Trump says he previously claimed Nato was ‘obsolete’ because he ‘did not know much about it’“, *The Independent*, 2017 06 26, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/donald-trump-not-know-much-nato-alliance-wolf-blitzer-cnn-obsolete-a7702201.html>, 2019 09 22.

⁴ The President’s News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, *The American Presidency Project*, 2017 03 17, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=123533>, 2019 09 22.

⁵ The White House (2017), *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2017 12, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 2019 09 22.

curity different from the administration's practical initiatives? What is NATO's role in the Trump administration's security policy? Is the administration's policy towards NATO coherent? Has the Trump administration's military security policy moved away from the traditional US military security policy? Does the current administration plan to comply with its commitments to protect the Baltic States? What does the Trump administration's security policy mean to the Baltic States? This article aims to answer these and other questions. Reflecting on the importance of the checks and balances mechanism in the US political system, the article claims that, despite the unconventional attitudes of the new US President Donald Trump, the principles of US military security policy in the transatlantic region have not changed. The article presents the results of the research that covers the 2017-2018 period and focuses on the Trump administration's political discourse and initiatives on military security in the transatlantic region.

Even though the Trump administration's security policy is frequently discussed in public, there is a lack of systematic analysis of the US security policy after 2017. The published results of a systematic analysis of US foreign and security policy usually cover the period till the end of Obama's second term (Thomas H. Henriksen "Cycles in US Foreign Policy Since the Cold War"⁶; Harvey M. Sapolsky, Eugene Gholz' and Caitlin Talmadge "US Defense Politics"⁷; Steven W. Hook and John W. Spanier "American Foreign Policy Since World War II"⁸). Reinhard Wolf⁹, Rebecca Friedman Lissner, Mira Rapp-Hooper¹⁰, Roland Freudenstein, Craig Kennedy¹¹, Hal Brands¹² and John Peterson¹³ also analyzed Trump administration's foreign policy, while Jeffrey W. Knopf¹⁴ (without focusing on the transatlantic region), Richard Burt¹⁵ (his

⁶ Henriksen Th. H. (2017), *Cycles In Us Foreign Policy Since The Cold War*, Palgrave Macmillan.

⁷ Sapolsky H. M., Gholz E., Talmadge C. (2017), *US Defense Politics*, Routledge.

⁸ Hook S. W., Spanier J. (2018), *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, CQ Press.

⁹ Wolf R. (2017), "Donald Trump's Status-Driven Foreign Policy", *Survival*, 2017, 59:5, DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2017.1375260, 2019 09 22.

¹⁰ Lissner R. F., Rapp-Hooper M. (2018), "The Day after Trump: American Strategy for a New International Order", *The Washington Quarterly*, 2018, 41:1, 7-25, DOI: 10.1080/0163660X.2018.1445353, 2019 09 22.

¹¹ Freudenstein R., Kennedy C. (2017), "A New Transatlantic Agenda in Focus. Challenges and Opportunities in the Trump Era", *Wilfried Martens Center For European Studies*, May 2017.

¹² Brands H. (2017), "The Unexceptional Superpower: American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump", *Survival*, 2017, 59:6, DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2017.1399722, 2019 09 22.

¹³ Peterson J. (2018), „Present at the Destruction? The Liberal Order in the Trump Era", *The International Spectator*, 2018, 53:1, 28-44, DOI: 10.1080/03932729.2018.1421295, 2019 09 22.

¹⁴ Knopf J. W. (2017), "Security assurances and proliferation risks in the Trump administration", *Contemporary Security Policy*, 2017, 38:1, 26-34, DOI: 10.1080/13523260.2016.1271688, 2019 09 22.

¹⁵ Burt R., „Trump and Europe", *The National Interest*, January/February 2017. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/grand-strategy-trump-20176>, 2019 09 22.

analysis covers the transatlantic region, but focuses solely on the great powers of Europe), Wu Yue¹⁶ (focusing on testing theoretical models) and Daniel S. Hamilton¹⁷ (review of US foreign policy traditions) analyzed the security policy of the Trump's administration. When it comes to the Trump administration's security policy, research usually focuses on the analysis of certain segments of the administration's foreign and security policy: Joyce P. Kaufman¹⁸, Tod Lindberg¹⁹, Dominika Kunertova²⁰ examined the NATO factor in the Trump administration's foreign and security policy; Nikolas K. Gvosdev²¹ analyzed the role of the National Security Council; Ramesh Thakur²², Stephan Frühling & Andrew O'Neil²³, Brad Roberts²⁴ explored the aspects of nuclear weapons; Dmitri Trenin²⁵, Robert D. Blackwill, Philip H. Gordon²⁶, et. al. focused on the relations between the US and Russia. This article complements the research on the Trump administration's security policy in the transatlantic region. Furthermore, the article mainly explores a specific niche: the military security policy and its potential implications for the Baltic States.

The article consists of several parts. The first part introduces the concept of a security policy and the criteria for analyzing the security policy that have been used in the research, which forms the basis of the article. The second part of the article is designated for exploring the US military security policy un-

¹⁶ Wu Y. (2006), "US foreign and national security policies: An explanation based on theoretical approaches", *Defense & Security Analysis*, 2006, 22:2, DOI: 10.1080/14751790600775462, 2019 09 22.

¹⁷ Hamilton D. (2017), „Trump's Jacksonian Foreign Policy and its Implications for European Security”, *Swedish Institute of International Affairs*, N. 2/2017. <https://www.ui.se/globalassets/butiken/ui-brief/2017/hamilton-ui--brief.-05-23.pdf>, 2019 09 22.

¹⁸ Kaufman J. (2017), „The US perspective on NATO under Trump: lessons of the past and prospects for the future”, *International Affairs*, 93: 2 (2017) 251–266; doi: 10.1093/ia/iix009, 2019 09 22.

¹⁹ Lindberg T. (2016), „Taking Trump Seriously On NATO”, *Commentary*, April 2016. <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/taking-trump-seriously-nato/>, 2019 09 22.

²⁰ Kunertova D. (2017), “One measure cannot trump it all: lessons from NATO's early burden-sharing debates”, *European Security*, 2017, 26:4, DOI:10.1080/09662839.2017.1353495, 2019 09 22.

²¹ Gvosdev N. (2017), “Trump and National Security Council”, *The National Interest*, January/February 2017. <https://nationalinterest.org/tag/national-security-council>, 2019 09 22.

²² Thakur R. (2018), “Nuclear Turbulence in the Age of Trump, Diplomacy & Statecraft”, 2018, 29:1, 105-128, DOI: 10.1080/09592296.2017.1420531, 2019 09 22.

²³ Frühling S., O'Neil A. (2017), “Nuclear weapons and alliance institutions in the era of President Trump”, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 2017, 38:1, 47-53, DOI: 10.1080/13523260.2016.1277054, 2019 09 22.

²⁴ Roberts B. (2017), “Strategic Stability Under Obama and Trump”, *Survival*, 2017, 59:4, DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2017.1349780, 2019 09 22.

²⁵ Trenin D. (2018), “Avoiding U.S.-Russia Military Escalation During the Hybrid War”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, January 2018. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Trenin_Hybrid_War_web.pdf, 2019 09 22; Trenin D. (2018), “Highs and Lows: Russia's Foreign Policy at the start of 2018”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, February 2, 2018. <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/75425>, 2019 09 22.

²⁶ Blackwill R. D., Gordon Ph. H. (2018), “Containing Russia, Again: An Adversary Attacked the United States—It's Time to Respond,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 19, <https://www.cfr.org/article/containing-russia-again-adversary-attacked-united-states-its-time-respond>, 2019 09 22.

der the Trump's presidency and comparing it with the traditional US military security policy. The third part of the article examines the practical initiatives taken by the Trump's administration in the field of military security, and the fourth part assesses the significance of the current US military security policy for the Baltic States.

1. Concept of a Security Policy and Principles of the Analysis

The concept of security is ambiguous and constantly changing. In the broadest sense, security is defined as the absence of threats. Traditionally, the concept of security has been associated with the state and military security measures. However, researchers call the end of the Cold War a breakthrough in security studies, led to questioning the concept of security used so far²⁷. Richard Ullman and Jessica Mathews were among the first ones to criticize the traditional concept of security, arguing that during the Cold War, each Washington administration defined American national security in purely military terms²⁸. Researchers offered interpreting security not only as a territory security, but also as security of individuals, paying attention to such factors as economic, environmental impact, health, and food aspects²⁹. According to B. Buzan, security can be divided into several sectors: military, economic, political, public and environmental³⁰.

This article uses the traditional definition of security, which is formulated according to the theory of realism and is related to ensuring state security by military means. According to Hans Morgenthau, military force as a threat is the most important material factor that determines the country's political power³¹. Several factors determined the choice of this concept. First, the Trump administration itself emphasizes that it associates the assurance of US security with military means (for example, the 2017 US National Security Strategy repeats the idea "We will preserve peace through strength")³². Second, the military level is the most stable in the US-Baltic strategic partnership, and,

²⁷ Caballero-Anthony M. (2018), *An Introduction to Non-Traditional Security Studies*, Sage, p. 4.

²⁸ Ullman R. (1983), "Redefining Security", *International Security*, vol. 8, no. 1, Summer, p. 129–153.

²⁹ Haq M. (1994), „New Imperatives of Human Security“, New York: United Nations Development Programme.

³⁰ Buzan B. (1997), *Žmonės, valstybės ir baimė*, Vilnius: Eugrimas.

³¹ Morgenthau H. (2011), *Politika tarp valstybių*, Vilnius: Margi raštai, p. 133–196.

³² The White House, „National Security Strategy of the United States of America“, December 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 2019 09 22.

it is also the most important one according to Lithuanian strategic documents and political discourse of Lithuanian representatives³³. Thus, the research, the outcomes of which are presented in the article, focuses on the military security policy: the use of military measures (such as strength and effectiveness of armed forces) to deal with military threats.

The article is based on the approach that a national security policy covers 4 important aspects: the setting of national objectives and interests, identification of threats to national interests, anticipation of a response to threats and implementation of these approaches³⁴. Countries can implement their military security policies through internal and external (threats) balancing³⁵. Internal (threats) balancing includes such elements as the military budget, the development of military technologies (including drones), the improvement of armed forces' quality, and the development of nuclear weapons, while external (threats) balancing covers the use of (or threatening to use) military forces, the deployment of armed forces and their presence outside the national borders³⁶.

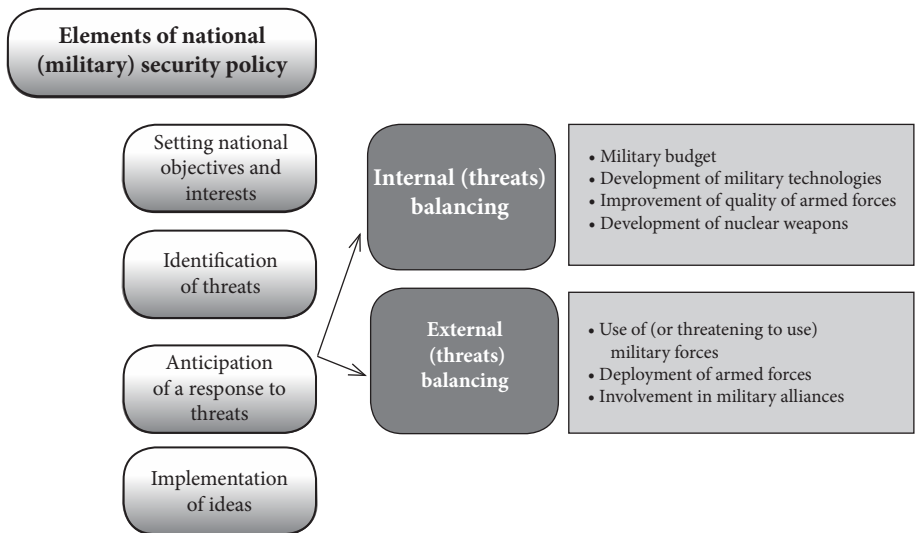


Figure 1. Elements of national (military) security policy³⁷

³³ Resolution on the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, *LR Seimas*, 2016 12 13, Nr. XIII-82, <https://eseimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/886c7282c12811e682539852a4b72dd4>.

³⁴ Wu Y. (2006), "US foreign and national security policies: An explanation based on theoretical approaches", *Defense & Security Analysis*, 22:2, 191-196, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14751790600775462>

³⁵ Hook S. (2017), *US Foreign Policy*, Sage. Chapter 10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Made by author, based on S. Hook and W. Yue ideas. Wu Y. (2006), *op. cit.*; Hook S. (2017), *op. cit.* Chapter 10.

In order to test the hypothesis (that despite the unconventional attitudes of the new US President Donald Trump, the principles of the US military security policy in the transatlantic region have not changed), the research consists of several segments. In order to identify the goals, interests of the US military security, the anticipated threats and possible responses thereto, US strategic documents and rhetoric of US politicians have been analyzed, including the US National Security Strategy (released in December 2017), the US Military Strategy (19 January 2018), speeches by the US President Donald Trump, the US Secretary of State, the US Secretary of Defense, press releases and interviews published on official websites of US institutions. As a result of the limited information provided by the White House, the American Presidency Project (APP) data archive has also been used to collect data on Trump's rhetoric, using it as a source of Trump's speeches. Posts on Trump's Twitter account have also been analyzed. According to Nancy McEldowney and Kenneth Weinstein³⁸, they can be treated as a part of official US foreign and security policy. The conducted research covers the period from Trump's inauguration (i.e. from 20 January 2017 till 1 July 2018). During the research the before mentioned strategies have been analyzed, 34 units of Trump's official rhetoric³⁹, 35 units of the US Secretary's of State official rhetoric (Rex Tillerson till 26 April 2018 and Mike Pompeo afterwards) and 56 units of the US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis official rhetoric. A rhetoric, which focused on US security policy and / or which contained keywords "security" or "NATO" has been considered suitable for the research. US military security objectives, interests, threats, and response to them have been the criteria used in analyzing US strategic documents and rhetoric of US politicians. Europe, Russia, NATO and the Baltic States have been chosen as additional criteria for the analysis since the research focuses on the US security policy in the transatlantic region in particular. Given the specifics of the US political system and the political situation formed during the Trump's presidency, and to identify the consistency of the US political authorities' security policy positions of, the research also took into consideration the position of the US Congress, using information provided on the US Congress official website.

³⁸ „How Trump's love of Twitter translates abroad“, *PBS*, 2018 01 03, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-trumps-love-of-twitter-translates-abroad>, 2019 09 22

³⁹ The piece of official rhetoric in this article is considered to be one statement by a politician: speech, press release, interview. Posts on Twitter were also analyzed but not included into the statistics.

Table 1. Research segments and sources⁴⁰

| Security policy provisions | | Sources |
|---|--|--|
| <p><i>Criteria of the analysis:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives and interests • Threats • Response to threats | <p><i>Additional criteria of the analysis:</i></p> <p>Europe NATO Russia Baltic States</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US NSS • US Military Strategy • Speeches, interviews of the US President, the US Secretary of State and the US Secretary of Defense) • Press releases • Trump's Twitter account |
| <p>Security policy initiatives</p> <p><i>Internal (threats) balancing analysis criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military budget • Development of military technology • Improvement of quality of armed forces • Development of nuclear weapons | <p><i>Additional criteria of the analysis:</i></p> <p>Europe NATO Russia Baltic States</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event data sets compiled by the author according to the information provided by the US Department of State, US Department of Defense, the White House, and articles in the <i>New York Times</i>. • Information from research centers • Statistics of Military Balance indicators. |
| <p><i>External (threats) balancing analysis criteria:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of (or threatening to use) military forces • Deployment of troops • NATO policy | | |

In order to explore the implementation of attitudes declared by the US political authorities, event data sets have been constructed⁴¹ and information presented by the US Department of Defense has been analysed. Information from research centers (RAND, SIPRI and others) has been used as an additional source. The analysis of the implementation of attitudes declared by political US authorities mainly focuses on manifestations of internal and external threats balancing: i.e. building alliances, using (or threatening to use) military

⁴⁰ Compiled by the author.

⁴¹ Event data-set is a research method that measures events which help to understand foreign policy phenomenon, based on the analysis of events presented in the media. Edward Azar defines events as international signals between two actors in international relations with the following characteristics: at some point, international actor commits an action to achieve specific goal on a matter of common concern for both actors. This perception of „event“ is used in the research presented in the article. Schrodt, Ph. Event Data in Foreign Policy Analysis. October, 1993. <http://eventdata.psu.edu/papers.dir/Haney.pdf>. Schrodt, Ph. Event Data in Foreign Policy Analysis // (Sud.) Neack, L., Hey J. A. K., Haney P. J. (1994), *Foreign Policy Analysis: Continuity and Change in its Second Generation*, New York: Prentice Hall, p. 826.

force and improving armed forces. Event data sets have been constructed using websites of the US Department of Defense, the US Department of State, the White House and the US newspaper *The New York Times*. The research has covered the period from 20 January 2017 till 1 July 2018.

The outcomes of the research are presented further in the article.

2. US Security Policy during Trump's Presidency

The Trump administration cannot be stated to have sent an unequivocal and consistent message on US security policy priorities. The conducted research shows that strategic documents of the administration have been consistent, but political discourse of US officials on certain aspects of the security policy have been contradictory. The Trump administration has formed and demonstrated a coherent vision of threat perception, US interests, resources and instruments planned to ensure security. However, the administration's attitudes to NATO, transatlantic relations and Russia (in the security area) were chaotic in 2017-2018: while the rhetoric of officials of the US State Department, the Department of Defense, representatives of the US Congress, and US strategic documents reflected attitudes that have already become traditional⁴², the US President's vision on these aspects seemed contradictory and often in conflict with ideas of other US political institutions. To paraphrase Peter Baker, contrary to the opinion about the US security policy having formed during the Trump's presidency, Trump's personal opinion was the only thing that changed in the US security policy⁴³, which shows that the US President himself was the weak link in the US security policy during the Trump presidency.

The Trump administration perceived the international environment as a challenge to the US in many ways: in terms of the existing threats and the position of international actors towards the United States. Like previous administrations, the Trump administration emphasized the political, economic, and military superiority of the United States in the international arena ("America's military remains the strongest in the world"⁴⁴). At the same time, the Trump

⁴² Traditional U.S. security policy ideas are considered to be the following: NATO is the key element of the U.S. security policy; U.S. is a security guarantor for European countries and is committed to Washington Treaty article 5.

⁴³ Baker P. (2017), „How Trump Has Reshaped the Presidency, and How It's Changed Him, Too“, *The New York Times*, 2017 04 29, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/29/us/politics/trump-presidency-100-days.html>, 2019 09 22

⁴⁴ *The White House*, „National Security Strategy of the United States of America“, December 2017, p. i, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 2019 09 22

administration's political discourse was based on the idea, which Trump himself has also repeated a number of times, that the US does not receive a deserved respect, thus "America First" policy should be implemented ("It is those words, Make America Great Again, that we test our policies against, and how are we representing America's interest first and foremost. And I think you've seen that articulated in many different ways by many different people, but it is what guides our formulation of policy here at the State Department")⁴⁵.

US officials highlighted three groups of threats to the US in 2017–2018: Russia and China, known as "revisionist powers", North Korea and Iran, terrorist organizations and ISIS. These actors have been mentioned in US strategic documents in the context of international threats before, but the Trump administration had a different perception of the level of seriousness of the threats. According to the Trump administration, competition between countries rather than terrorism is US's primary concern⁴⁶. In other words, competition with Russia and China in particular is a top priority of the US. Such an attitude illustrates that there have been some changes in the US security policy: at the top strategic level, the US has shifted fight against unconventional threats (which started during the Bush presidency after 9/11) as a priority to the focus on traditional threats (stemming from different countries) and traditional instruments to fight them.

In 2017, the US National Security Strategy, the US key security document, declared that "Peace through strength"⁴⁷ was one of the four the most important national interests of the US along with such national interests as protection of US citizens and US values, enhancing US prosperity and expanding US influence in the world. In other words, like Trump's rhetoric, the US National Security Strategy emphasizes the idea of "America first".

In its political discourse, the Trump administration has unanimously stated that the US still has superiority in the competitive international environment in terms of military, economic, and technological power⁴⁸, but at the same time it emphasized that US's advantage has been declining, in terms of

⁴⁵ Tillerson R. W. (2017), „Remarks at a Press Availability“, *The U.S. Department of State*, 2017 08 01, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/20172018tillerson/remarks/2017/08/272979.htm>, 2019 09 22

⁴⁶ Summary of the National Defence Strategy of the United States of America, *The U.S. Department of Defence*, 2018 01 19, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

⁴⁷ *The White House*, „National Security Strategy of the United States of America“, December 2017, P. 4, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 2019 09 22

⁴⁸ Ibid.

its military power as well⁴⁹. Nonetheless, hard power means, primarily those of military power, dominated among the declared instruments for ensuring security: increasing US advantage, improving military capabilities, military industry, nuclear forces and intelligence, and a greater focus on activities in cyberspace and space. Some of the US priorities in the area of hard security are extremely important to the Baltic States. The military strategy issued during the Trump presidency declared that the administration has set allies' deterrence against aggressors and maintaining the balance of power in Europe as the priority⁵⁰. Interestingly, while strategic documents state that one of the administration's primary goals is strategic predictability, inconsistent rhetoric and actions of the US President himself contradict this statement. Thus, the US security policy ideas voiced during Trump presidency reflect the republican perception of the international situation and security measures. Officers of Trump administration have emphasized "hard security" related issues and hard power instruments to ensure security, which reflects certain changes in the US security policy, but these changes are not fundamental.

NATO, transatlantic relations, and Russia related issues, which are of particular importance to the Baltic States and Lithuania, sounded controversial in Trump administration's discourse because of a very dynamic rhetoric of the President and position of US' political institutions that did not always match.

It is quite difficult to define Trump's vision on NATO's role in the US security policy is. Trump called NATO established at the initiative of the US after the World War II, "obsolete" (on 16 January 2017), on 12 April 2017, he denied his words, while in his interview on 24 April 2017, he said he was right to call NATO obsolete and was proud of his criticism of the alliance⁵¹. The US President, on the one hand, claimed his administration would remain committed to the Washington Treaty Article 5. On the other hand, he also treated the military alliance as a business-based company and demanded NATO members to "repay their debts"⁵². Statements regarding defense spending have been re-

⁴⁹ Summary of the National Defence Strategy of the United States of America, *The U.S. Department of Defence*, 2018 01 19, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>, 2019 09 22

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Gove M., Wright O. (2017), „Donald Trump: I'll do a deal with Britain,“ *The Times*, 2017 01 16, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/i-ll-do-a-deal-with-britain-6hl2hl73l>; 2019 09 22, „Transcript of AP interview with Trump“, *The Associated Press*, 2017 04 24, <https://apnews.com/c810d7de280a47e-88848b0ac74690c83>, 2019 09 22

⁵² „The President's News Conference With Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization“, *The American Presidency Project*, 2017 04 17., <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=123739>, 2019 09 22

peated by Trump each time he talked about NATO. The requirement for the European countries to spend more on defense have been part of every phone conversation with European leaders. This was also the main topic of Trump's speech at the NATO summit.

Despite the fact that Trump has spoken about continued commitment to NATO (among other controversial claims), his declared ideas about NATO were often similar to a sort of a blackmailing tool: US support in exchange for discharge of financial obligations. Such statements made by the US president can be understood as an inappropriate message sent by the United States: this kind of political discourse revealed problems in the US political system and undermined the US image in the international arena. Trump's official speeches, interviews, press conferences and tweets concerning NATO focused solely on the financial aspects; he also expressed expectations for allies to show support in Syria and Afghanistan in the fight against migration and terrorism. Russia's factor in NATO context has only been mentioned a few times in Trump's rhetoric ("NATO was weak, but now it is strong again (too bad for Russia)⁵³; however, this statement should not be perceived as Trump's return to traditional US policy towards NATO. During a press conference in Brussels, the US President confirmed US commitment to defending NATO members, but he also expressed hope for cooperation with Russia in that same speech⁵⁴. It thus can be presumed that the US President does not have such a vision and sometimes simply succumbs to the pressure of the political environment, which is based on traditional attitudes. On the one hand, Trump's criticism of the allies is nothing new: similar criticism of financial obligations was also voiced by the Obama administration. On the other hand, no administration has used the financial argument as a tool for blackmailing because such statements undermine the fundamental principles of the US security policy and reduce the predictability and credibility of the US as a party to international relations. The US President's political discourse ranged from Trump's personal opinions and the discourse that can be called the result of the US checks and balances system.

Meanwhile, strategic US documents and rhetoric of various US officials show unchanged US priorities. Although the US National Security Strategy issued by the Trump administration pays less attention to NATO than national security strategies of the Obama administration (NATO was mentioned 10

⁵³ Trump's Twitter message 2018 07 17.

⁵⁴ „The President's News Conference With Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization“, *The American Presidency Project*, 2017 04 17, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=123739>, 2019 09 22

times in 2010, 7 times in 2015 and 6 times in 2017), the document emphasizes traditional US attitudes to NATO. In 2017, the US National Security Strategy calls NATO “one of our great advantages over our competitors”⁵⁵. The document also emphasizes that the US will continue to abide by its obligation under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Other aspects also reflect the unchanged US priorities regarding NATO. The US Secretary of Defense spoke to the Secretary General of NATO on the very first day of his term of office. US officials called commitments to NATO “ironclad” and the transatlantic relationship – “very strong”⁵⁶. While the topic of funding dominated in President’s rhetoric regarding NATO, statements made by the US Secretary of Defense were mainly aimed at reassuring US allies in Europe and convincing them that the US’s position regarding NATO remains unchanged. It should be noted that in his speeches, the US Secretary of Defense expressed the (traditional) attitude towards NATO, which is not only his own, but also supposedly that of Trump. This is most probably done with the aim to alleviate a possible concern relating to Trump which allies may feel.

Trump administration’s position on Russia did not seem unanimous either. US strategic documents and Trump administration’s officials (with the exception of the US President Trump) named Russia as a threat that violates international law and supports separatists. For example, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson directly called Russia the country which occupied Crimea⁵⁷. Meanwhile, the US President’s talks about Russia were controversial: in February 2017, Trump called Russia an opponent, while in 2017, he referred to it as a potential ally. In general, there are several views within the Trump administration regarding US policy towards Russia: US strategic documents contain an attitude on strict policy towards Russia; the US State Department has taken a principled stance, leaving a possibility for cooperation open, if Russia fulfils certain conditions; and the US President has repeatedly expressed his willingness to cooperate with Russia.

⁵⁵ „National Security Strategy of the United States of America“, *The White House*, December 2017, P. 4, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, 2019 09 22

⁵⁶ “Remarks by Secretary Mattis at the Munich Security Conference in Munich, Germany”, *The U.S. Department of Defense*, 2017 02 17, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/1087838/remarks-by-secretary-mattis-at-the-munich-security-conference-in-munich-germany/>, 2019 09 22

⁵⁷ Tillerson R. W. (2017), „I Am Proud of Our Diplomacy“, *U.S. Department of State*, 2017 12 27, <https://www.state.gov/secretary/20172018tillerson/remarks/2017/12/276770.htm>, 2019 09 22

3. Practical Trump Administration's Initiatives in the Area of Military Security

During Trump presidency, the practical US security policy was dynamic, but less controversial than the political discourse of US representatives on the security policy. On the one hand, the Trump administration has taken active steps to implement certain Trump's ideas expressed during his US presidential campaign, such as regarding a higher spending of NATO members on defense or increasing the US military budget. On the other hand, the pursuit of the US political system to counterbalance certain initiatives of the Trump administration could be observed. The article further analyses the Trump administration's initiatives for balancing internal (military budget, development of military technology, improvement of quality of military forces and nuclear weapons) and external (the use (or a threat to use) military force, deployment of troops, and the policy in respect of allies / NATO).

3.1. Internal Threats Balancing Initiatives

Despite the fact that the US outperforms the rest of the world in terms of its military power, security experts, such as the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), believe that the United States should pay more attention to preparing armed forces to fight well-trained and armed state actors, because it has given a priority for preparing for an asymmetric warfare in the military field for quite a while⁵⁸. The US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis also recognized this problem saying that "worn equipment and constrained supplies have forced our personnel to work overtime while deployed or preparing to deploy"⁵⁹. The conducted research shows that in 2017–2018, Trump administration took different actions in the area of internal threats balancing. This included increasing the military budget, planning improvements to weapons and technology, modernization and expansion of nuclear forces.

Budget. During the Trump presidency, the base US military budget was increased: in 2018, the base military budget increased by USD 83 million compared to 2017, and the military budget planned for 2019 will increase by USD 95.7 million compared to 2017.

⁵⁸ *The Military Balance 2018*, IISS: 2018. p. 30.

⁵⁹ *The Military Balance 2018*, IISS: 2018. p. 29. „Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis Senate Armed Services Committee Written Statement for the Record Tuesday, June 13, 2017.“, *United States Senate Committee on Armed Services*, 2017 06 13, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Mattis_06-13-17.pdf, 2019 09 22

Table 2. US military budget⁶⁰

| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Base [*] | 550.1 | 565.8 | 553 | 544.8 | 544.4 | 513.4 | 540.4 | 543.4 | 626.4 | 639.1 |
| OCO ^{**} | 129.9 | 158.7 | 131 | 88.4 | 80.7 | 63.7 | 58.7 | 67.7 | 65.7 | 69.0 |
| Total: | 680 | 724.5 | 684.7 | 633.2 | 625.1 | 577.1 | 599.1 | 611.1 | 692.1 | 708.1 |

The following key aspects can be distinguished in the Trump administration's base military budget: increasing the number of troops, addressing the problem of a shortage of pilots, improving conventional military equipment, and enhancing nuclear capacities. The plan is to increase the number of US military troops both in 2018 and 2019. In 2018, the budget increased US troops from 980,000 to 1,018,000⁶¹. In 2019, financing was allocated for increasing US troops by 15,600 (to 1 338 100)⁶².

On the one hand, it shows that the Trump administration has taken steps to implement certain of Trump's statements made during his presidential campaign (for example, Trump said, "I will make our Military so big, powerful & strong that no one will mess with us")⁶³. On the other hand, boosting US military spending should not be seen as Trump's personal merit only. It should also be noted that the Republican Party had a majority in the US Congress during the Trump presidency (Republicans held a majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives until the 2018 US Congress elections), who usually advocate for strengthening the military power. In the majority of cases, the US Congress allocated in the planned US military base budget more money to the Pentagon than requested by the administration (for example, for purchasing helicopters, fighter planes and warships). Thus, during the Trump presidency, the US security policy can be said to be the outcome of both executive and legislative attitudes and initiatives.

US armed forces were also modernized, and investment in new technologies was increased in 2017-2018. The plan was to purchase 90 F-35 fighter planes, 24 F / A-18 Super Hornet fighter planes (according to US Navy, 2/3 of such fighter planes are under repair), AH-64 Apache and UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, also allocating funding to accelerate the construction of warships.

^{*} This type of military budget funds activities of the U.S. Department of Defense and other military related agencies.

^{**} OCO: Overseas Contingency Operations.

⁶⁰ Compiled by the author on the basis of SIPRI and IISS data.

⁶¹ The Military Balance 2018, IISS: 2018. p. 31.

⁶² „FY2019 National Defense Authorization Act An Overview of H.R. 5015, as Reported“, CRS, 2018 08 07, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/IF10942.pdf>, 2019 09 22

⁶³ D. Trump's Twitter message, 2016 01 24, <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/691276412666261504>

As per the US National Security Strategy, US *nuclear weapons* were an essential element of internal threats balancing. They had been improved. The Trump administration received USD 65 billion to develop next-generation nuclear warheads and to purchase more interceptors⁶⁴. There were also plans to intensify nuclear technology research to replace the Minuteman III intercontinental missile and the AGM-86 nuclear missile. The Nuclear Posture Review released by the Trump administration also emphasized the need to acquire the SLCM (Submarine Launched Cruise Missile), B-21 bomber and the LRSO (Long Range Stand Off Air Missile). It should be noted that the US Congress allocated more funding for the development of nuclear weapons than requested by the Trump administration.

The Trump administration linked the modernization of nuclear weapons to the deterrence strategy (the US National Security Strategy identifies deterrence as one of the most important tools in meeting the challenges posed by Russia and China). Given the planned deployment of certain US nuclear weapons to Poland, the Trump administration's nuclear weaponry policy is of particular relevance to the Baltic States.

Interestingly, under the Trump presidency funding was also provided for mobile ground missiles, which are banned under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty). Thus, on the one hand, the US President and the Secretary of State alluded to the need to change the nature of US relations with Russia and the potential involvement of Russia in cooperation, and on the other hand, the administration envisaged steps in the nuclear field that would complicate potential cooperation. Yet Pentagon Spokesman Thomas Crosson said that the US is prepared to stop such investigations, if Russia itself starts complying with provisions of the treaty⁶⁵. Thus, choosing such a position can also be treated as a certain instrument of pressure or a deterrent to Russia. More instruments indicating a potential Russia's restraint in the nuclear field can also be found. The Trump administration banned the supply of advanced aircraft to Turkey because of Turkey's plans to buy a nuclear weapon system from Russia and to integrate it into NATO systems, asking it to refuse making such a purchase.

Still, according to experts, such as Frank A. Rose, the Trump adminis-

⁶⁴ Macias A. (2018), „Trump gives \$717 billion defense bill a green light. Here's what the Pentagon is poised to get“, *CNBC*, 2018 08 13, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/13/trump-signs-717-billion-defense-bill.html>, 2019 09 22

⁶⁵ Hennigan WJ. (2018), “President Trump is Developing a Missile that Would Break a Nuclear Arms Treaty With Russia”, *Time*, 2018 01 03, <http://time.com/5085257/donald-trump-nuclear-missile-russia-treaty/>, 2019 09 22

tration's nuclear weapons policy has remained quite similar to the ideas of the Barack Obama administration. While Obama declared his vision of a "nuclear-free world", his administration also emphasized the need to modernize the US nuclear forces, which the Trump administration is also doing. One of the major differences between the Trump and Obama administration's nuclear policies is political discourse or certain statements by Trump himself ("Let there be an arms race" and other statements made in the context of the North Korean crisis) rather than actions. The Obama administration's rhetoric was more moderate and was reluctant to escalate disagreements with parties to international relations, which it considered to be threats. However, this feature of Trump's political discourse relating to nuclear weapons is not very important to the Baltic States, as the results of the US nuclear policy show that the US political system tends to balance out the rather incautious statements of the US President.

To sum up the elements of the Trump administration's internal threats balancing policy, it can be said to have been cohesive and reflective of Republican attitudes; the Trump administration initiated an increase in US military capabilities and the military budget, while the US Congress approved them. Such initiatives also show that military security and its internal capacities are a crucial part of the Trump administration's national security policy. On the other hand, the potential results of internal threats balancing and their significance are closely linked to external threat balancing, which often reveals the real long-term priorities. Therefore, in order to determine the significance of the Trump administration's military security policy for Lithuania, it is useful to carry out an analysis of elements of the external threats balancing policy.

3.2. External Threats Balancing

Despite administration's controversial rhetoric, the Trump administration pursued a similar security policy as previous US administrations. This section discusses aspects of the Trump administration's external balancing policy, such as the deployment of US troops, sale of weapons, number of military exercises, imposition of sanctions, and its policy towards allies and NATO.

3.2.1. Deployment of Troops

So far, it has been difficult to assess the Trump administration's policy regarding the deployment of troops. Year 2017 is the most recent date when

the most respected military policy research center IISS provided data on this policy: i.e. 2017 is the year when the Obama administration still planned military priorities. In case of Trump administration, its military plans should be assessed for 2018-2019, but this information will be available later on. In 2017, the deployment of US troops in Europe was reinstated to the 2015 level: i.e. their number was increased in many European countries (for example, in Germany - from 36 850 to 40 450 and in the United Kingdom - from 8 700 to 9 550)⁶⁶.

Table 3. **Deployment of US military forces in Europe**⁶⁷

| | 2017 | 2018 |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Belgium | 900 | 1 200 |
| Greece | 370 | 380 |
| Spain | 2 950 | 2 100 |
| Italy | 12 550 | 11 360 |
| United Kingdom | 8 700 | 9550 |
| Netherlands | 380 | 380 |
| Portugal | 220 | 700 |
| Romania | 550 | |
| Turkey | 2 700 | 1 550 |
| Germany | 36 850 | 40 450 |
| Total: | 66 170 | 67 670 |

The Trump administration's position on this issue has been controversial. The administration's military strategy emphasized maintaining / increasing the military forces deployed. The military budget planned by the Trump administration also shows initiatives to increase the US military presence in Europe: the Trump administration asked to increase funding for EDI (formerly ERI, and the EDI (European Deterrence Initiative) – since 2017), including for increasing military forces of all categories in Europe. Meanwhile, the US President questioned the need to maintain such a level of deployed troops in Europe. According to the report published by the US newspaper *Washington Post*, Trump expressed the desire to reduce US military forces deployed

⁶⁶ *The Military Balance 2018*, IISS: 2018. *The Military Balance 2017*, IISS: 2017. *The Military Balance 2016*, IISS: 2016.

⁶⁷ Compiled by author, on the basis of IISS data.

in Germany⁶⁸. Trump's decisions seem to have been influenced by economic calculations rather than by a long-term strategic planning or geopolitical considerations. The transatlantic region has not been an exception for the Trump administration in this context. For instance, Trump ordered to cancel US military exercises in South Korea, which would supposedly save USD 14 million, and offered withdrawing US troops from the region⁶⁹.

3.2.2. Sales of Weapons

During the Trump's presidency, sales of US weapons increased by 33 % (compared to 2017). The administration sold weapons for USD 55.66 billion, which was the highest sales amount since 2012⁷⁰. Weapons sales to the European countries accounted for 23.75 % in 2017 and 35.48 % in 2018⁷¹.

On the one hand, weapons sales can be assumed to have been a more important part of economic rather than the security policy. The Trump administration can be distinguished for having linked the areas of military security and economy more than any other US administration since the Cold War and lifted certain restrictions on the US military industry: for example, it allowed US manufacturers to conclude direct transactions on certain types of weaponry without the obligation to consult with US institutions. The need for a closer link between economy and military security is highlighted in the US National Security Strategy. According to the head of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the changes made by the Trump administration make the US weaponry market more attractive in the world and thus "enhance the US national security"⁷².

⁶⁸ Hudson J., Sonne P., deYoung K., Dawsey J. (2018), „U.S. assessing cost of keeping troops in Germany as Trump battles with Europe“, *Washington Post*, 2018 06 29, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-assessing-cost-of-keeping-troops-in-germany-as-trump-battles-with-europe/2018/06/29/94689094-ca9f-490c-b3be-b135970de3fc_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.69df98b30f00, 2019 09 22

⁶⁹ Shane III L. (2018), „As Trump talks about reducing military missions, lawmakers still push to boost troop totals“, 2018 07 12, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2018/07/12/as-trump-talks-about-reducing-military-missions-lawmakers-still-push-to-boost-troop-totals/>, 2019 09 22

⁷⁰ Cohen Z. (2018), „Trump administration touts 33% increase in foreign arms sales“, *CNN*, 2018 10 10. <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/10/10/politics/trump-administration-foreign-arms-sales-2018/index.html>, 2019 09 22

⁷¹ Calculated by author, on the basis of Defense Security Cooperation Agency data.

⁷² „News Release“, *The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA)*, 2018 10 09, <http://www.dsca.mil/news-media/news-archive/fiscal-year-2018-sales-total-5566-billion>, 2019 09 22

Table 4. US weapons sales⁷³

| States | Transaction amount (USD million) | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
| | 2017 | 2018 |
| Belgium | – | 6 530 |
| Czech Republic | 575 | – |
| Denmark | – | 242 |
| Greece | 2 480 | – |
| Spain | – | 2 160 |
| United Kingdom | 1 550 | 1 315 |
| Latvia | – | 200 |
| Poland | 1 500 | – |
| Netherlands | 145 | 1 644 |
| Norway | 170 | – |
| Romania | 5 150 | – |
| Slovakia | 150 | 2 910 |
| Finland | – | 804 |
| Ukraine | – | 47 |
| Germany | 1 500 | 3 900 |
| Total: | 13 220 | 19 752 |

On the other hand, it was during the Trump presidency in particular that the decision was made to supply Ukraine with lethal weapons of the latest generation (on 22 December 2017), namely, the *Javelin* anti-tank weapons (these weapons fall within the category of anti-tank guided weapons of the latest generation), which the US and many NATO members use for defense against possible Russian actions). US enterprises also supplied lethal weapons to Ukraine during the Obama presidency, but those were older generation weapons whose sales were tightly controlled by US political authorities⁷⁴. The Trump administration's decision to sell arms to Ukraine is significant because it is the first time the US government decided to supply lethal defense equipment to the Ukrainian military. So, under the Trump presidency, the US shifted from the sale of commercial arms to official assistance in weapons. Such a decision of the administration is ambiguous. According to some experts, this decision will make Trump boast that he has pursued a tougher policy towards

⁷³ Made by author, on the basis of Defense Security Cooperation Agency data.

⁷⁴ Marzalik P. J., Toler A. (2018), „Lethal Weapons to Ukraine: A Primer“, *Atlantic Council*, 2018 01 26, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/lethal-weapons-to-ukraine-a-primer>, 2019 09 22

Russia than anyone else before⁷⁵. On the other hand, such a decision is considered dangerous due to corruption in Ukraine: should such weaponry end up at the disposal of Russia, it would compromise the security of the US itself.

3.3.3. Allies Policy

When it comes to the US policy towards its allies, Trump has so far made no significant systematic changes (as opposed to his rhetoric). An assumption can be made that he is constrained by the US Congress, his team, and the realities.

Even though the Trump administration (and Trump himself for the most part) has constantly criticized European allies of taking advantage of the United States, the US policy in respect of its European allies can be characterized by continuity rather than changes. Two key requirements, which Trump administration raised for NATO, can be distinguished: 2 % of GDP for defense and increased focus on the fight against terrorism. To paraphrase Roland Freudenstein, the US call for increasing expenses on defense can be said to be as old as NATO itself. The Obama administration also repeatedly emphasized to European countries the need for assuming more responsibility for defense. It should, however, be mentioned that no US President before Trump has threatened to withdraw from NATO. Claims of this kind have a negative impact on transatlantic relations and call into question the reliability of transatlantic relationships, because political discourse is an important part of foreign and security policy. The US President himself emphasized that such a stance of his administration rendered clear positive results (“United States was not being treated fairly, but now we are.”)⁷⁶. Data provided by NATO indicate that on the one hand, defense spending in the majority of NATO members (all of them, with the exception of the United Kingdom, Canada and Greece) increased⁷⁷. On the other hand, during the Trump presidency, the spending on defense of solely a very few NATO members passed the 2% mark (4 NATO members, 2 of whom did not show a trend of an increase in defense expenditure).

The fight against terrorism as a priority had also been declared by the Obama administration referred to at the first NATO summit. In other words,

⁷⁵ Gressel G. (2018), „Lethal weapon: Has Trump mis-stepped on Ukraine?“, *European Council on Foreign Relations*. May 17, 2018.

⁷⁶ „Trump Declares Victory at NATO, says U.S. now is treated fairly“, *CBS News*, 2018 07 12, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-nato-germany-allies-pressure-defense-spending-brussels-4-percent/>, 2019 09 22

⁷⁷ „Defense Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011-2018)“, *Communiqué*, 2018 07 10, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_07/20180709_180710-pr2018-91-en.pdf, 2019 09 22

the priorities raised by the Trump administration over NATO in the context of US security policy were not exceptional; solely the way they were presented was different. While the strategic documents of the Trump administration emphasized US strategic predictability as one of the most important elements, the US President's political statements made this element more difficult to implement. Despite the controversial stance of the administration on European allies in its political discourse, the Trump administration continued the policy of strengthening military forces in Europe started by the Obama administration after the Ukrainian crisis: it continued missions started by the previous administration (Operation Atlantic Resolve, Enhanced Forward Presence, JMTG-Ukraine) financed through the EDI initiative, retained large US troops deployed in Europe, and conducted joint exercises with European countries.

The EDI launched by the Obama administration was continued, which is of particular importance to the Baltic States: the quality of training the military forces and weaponry was improved, the number of military exercises was increased. EDI funding has steadily increased since the very beginning of the initiative (from USD 1 billion in 2014 to USD 6.5 billion in 2019)⁷⁸. The Trump administration's military budget provided not only for the strengthening of the U.S. military presence in the Europe's Eastern flank, but also for additional military assistance in the air, sea and land. The plan is to deploy 9 095 troops in 2019 as a part of EUCOM. In total, four brigades are planned to be deployed in Europe (according to RAND experts, seven brigades are needed to ensure defense of the Baltic States⁷⁹). The place of the strengthened Combat Aviation Brigade's deployment will move in between Latvia, Poland and Romania. The Trump administration also planned for the deployment of 350 navy troops.

The operations "Atlantic Resolve" and "Enhanced Forward Presence" were conducted in accordance with NATO's decision. The operation "Atlantic Resolve" launched in 2014 had to reassure the European Allies of the US, especially those, which border with Russia. It included improving infrastructure in Europe, multilateral exercises, and a closer cooperation between NATO and the Baltic States. When conducting these operations, the administration retained the intensity of joint exercises with European countries. For example, in 2017, USEUCOM trained 9 allies in 22 exercises and participated in 2 500 military-to-military engagements in 22 countries⁸⁰.

⁷⁸ Lațici T., „European Deterrence Initiative: the transatlantic security guarantee“, Briefing, *Euro-parliamentary Parliamentary Research Service*, July 2018, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/625117/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)625117_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/625117/EPRS_BRI(2018)625117_EN.pdf), 2019 09 22

⁷⁹ Shlapak D., Johnson M. (2016), „Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank“, *RAND*, 2016, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html, 2019 09 22

⁸⁰ Scaparrotti (2018), „Statement on EUCOM posture“, March 8, 2018.

The “Enhanced Forwards Presence” had to enhance NATO’s collective defense, planning for the deployment of 4 battalions in Poland and 3 in the Baltic States. NATO created 8 units to facilitate the redeployment of military forces. These operations improved the logistics of the alliance (2 teams were set up for NATO to this end in 2018). In 2017, the Baltic States signed an agreement to facilitate the movement of NATO troops in its territory. In the performance of the Enhanced Forwards Presence operation, the number of NATO exercises with the participation of the US increase from 108 in 2017 to 180 in 2018⁸¹.

Along with operations with NATO members, the Trump administration also planned for JMTG-U exercises, which should train up to 5 Ukrainian battalions per year together with Canada, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the United Kingdom. In the field of external balancing, the Trump administration’s focus on cybersecurity (which was also mentioned in the US National Security Strategy) can be distinguished. The Trump administration’s initiative to expand and to integrate USEUCOM’s cybersecurity capabilities in the military field is important to European and Baltic countries.

Thus, at the tactical level, the Trump administration’s decisions regarding NATO can be characterized by continuity and the strengthening of military capacities in Europe. The US increased its military investment in Europe and strengthened its military position in the region. Nevertheless, according to the assessment of research centers, this is not enough for defending the Baltic States. In 2018, the US had about 65 000 troops stationed in Europe (which was 75% less than during the Cold War period).

4. Significance of Trump Administration’s Security Policy to the Baltic States

US administration’ security policy has always been important to the Baltic States, as the US is their main security guarantor and a strategic partner that devoted a significant attention to the military level of strategic partnership. The Trump administration’s security policy is important to the Baltic States both because of the already established strategic partnership trends and the formulated and implemented US security policy provisions.

⁸¹ Fact Sheet, “Key NATO and Allied Exercises in 2018,” *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, June 2018, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_04/20180425_1804-factsheet_exercises_en.pdf, 2019 09 22

Among the provisions of the US security policy formulated by the Trump administration, the administration's ideas regarding threats to the US, the planned response thereto and the declared US primary purpose may be considered particularly relevant to the Baltic States. On the one hand, the Trump administration named Russia as one of the key threats to the US and emphasized that it prioritizes hard power to ensure security. Such attitudes directly resonate with the position expressed by the Baltic States after the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, i.e. the aim to draw the attention of the transatlantic community to the seriousness of the threat posed by Russia and to encourage a stronger response to Russian aggression and a more active role in ensuring the security of the Baltic States, thus the Baltic States highly welcome them. On the other hand, the Trump administration also declared the "America First" idea, and continuously raised the issue of defense spending in the NATO context. The latter attitudes declared by the Trump administration in the US strategic documents revealed that his administration was pragmatic (both in the field of security and in other sectors), which meant that the Baltic States would have to be even more active and driven in transatlantic relations, proving their contribution to NATO. Overall, the Trump administration's stance on the strategic security policy showed an emphasis on traditional attitudes under the US security policy, and the Baltic States could expect them. It is not the strategic documents of Trump administration, but the political discourse of this administration, or the US President in particular, its instability and certain actions of the US President that are in conflict with the declared US strategic provisions what create tension: political discourse is an important part of foreign and security policy, interpreted by friendly and unfriendly states in developing their security policies. Thus, the Trump administration's strategic attitudes are close to those of the Baltic States, but the dynamics of the administration's political discourse is dangerous.

In the context of the security policy implemented by the US, administration's decisions regarding the external threats balancing were important to the Baltic States during the Trump presidency, particularly with regard to the deployment of US troops and policies towards its allies. On the one hand, the Trump administration increased the number of US troops stationed in Europe back to the level of 2015, also increasing funding for the EDI initiative. On the other hand, in his political discourse, the US President questioned the need for such decisions made. The decisions of the Trump administration on external threats balancing are significant to the Baltic States as they reflect the administration's priorities towards Europe and the strengthening of military presence

in Europe, which is in the interest of the Baltic States. Unlike in the political discourse, there have been no major changes in the practical action in respect of the US allies in the transatlantic region - certain contradictory statements made by the US President (regarding US withdrawal from NATO, etc.) have not been implemented. Here the absence of changes in transatlantic policy is favorable to the Baltic States.

In summary, the Trump administration's strategic documents show that the framework US attitudes towards the transatlantic relations and the related security policies have remained unchanged. During the Trump presidency, the US security policy seems chaotic due to the President himself and his actions. Thus, after 2017, the US security policy has been both stable and unstable, and the resulting instability has adversely affected the US image and credibility. Transatlantic countries, including the Baltic States, have responded to Trump's ideas. On the one hand, the Baltic States have been noticed to take efforts to discharge their obligations to NATO allocating 2 % of their GDP for defense. On the other hand, the reaction is likely to not always be what the Trump administration (or, in this case, the US President) pursues. The Trump administration's policy in respect of the European Union members was one of the impetus to take initiatives to strengthen their defense, which would be independent from the US (such as the PESCO case). The US internal institutional structures have also resisted the administration's policy (for example, the resignation of the US ambassador to Estonia or strong position of the US Congress regarding the tightening of sanctions on Russia), which reflects the functioning of the checks and balances system.

What could the Baltic States do in this context? They could form and implement a constructive response to the Trump administration's security policy, making specific proposals to US authorities as to what they propose instead of administration's proposals, and proactively communicating with Republicans and Democrats who support traditional US security policy ideas, allocating 2 % of GDP for defense and clearly reporting on constructive use of military funds, developing a constructive stance on Russia and promoting a uniform position towards Russia. In other words, it would be useful for the Baltic States to make greater efforts to appear rational players in international relations rather than causing confusion.

Conclusions

Despite the fears that members of the transatlantic community may have had, the analysis of the US military security policy of 2017-2018 shows that the basic principles of the US military security policy in the transatlantic region have not changed. The US strategic documents and the political discourse of the US Secretary of State and the US Secretary of Defense emphasized NATO's importance in shaping the security environment in Europe and the US commitment to comply with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The Trump administration also named Russia as one of the major threats to the US, increased the US military budget, continued the EDI initiative, and increased the number of US troops stationed in Europe.

On the other hand, the Trump administration's military security policy cannot be said to have been sustainable in the transatlantic region: the US President's political discourse (speeches, interviews, tweets) often did not coincide with the position formed by other US institutions (the Department of State, the Department of Defense and the US Congress) and strategic documents of the US - the dynamic rhetoric of the US President on NATO's role in the today's security system, the refusal to declare a US commitment to defend other NATO members, the officially expressed mistrust in US intelligence agencies and sympathies to the Russian President Putin raised serious doubts.

Thus, attitudes of the US President were the major change in the US military security policy during the Trump presidency. After two years of Trump's presidency, the question what is it that Trump actually seeks to achieve - to break the rules underpinning transatlantic cooperation or to simply get more from such a relationship - remains open. Due to such a "stably unstable" military security policy of the Trump administration, the impact of the Trump administration's military security on the Baltic States and Lithuania is twofold: the Trump presidency can be characterized by continuity of the US traditional military security policy, which is favorable to the Baltic States, and a significant dynamics, which the Baltic States and other members of the transatlantic community must adapt to. The dynamics in the Trump's military security policy is likely to slightly change due to the changed balance of political forces in the US Congress after the elections of November 2018; with Democrats gaining a majority in the US House of Representatives and Republicans retaining a majority in the US Senate, the checks and balances system in US political processes, including in the US military security policy, is likely to be more prominent,

including efforts to “put” the President of the United States in certain frames that would not damage the international image of the United States and increase the predictability of the country. The Baltic States (and not only them) are interested in such a scenario.

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