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# Latvia's comprehensive defence approach

## Introduction

After Russia's actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, many think-tankers, policy-makers, and scholars became convinced that the next Russian military action would happen in the Baltics. The underlying presupposition is that, first, the Russian President Vladimir Putin wants to recreate the Soviet Union; second, that invading and annexing the Baltic states is one of the necessary steps for achieving this objective; third, that the Russian speaking population could be easily used to support subversive operations in a Crimea-like scenario. At the operational level, this was to be done by employing what became known as Russian Hybrid Warfare tactics, which would be based on the alleged Gerasimov Doctrine.

A serious problem with this assumption is that it projects falsified strategic objectives and military instruments to be employed by Russia based on a narrative created by the West. The Russian strategic considerations and military concepts differ from the Western conceptualisation. The Russians have their own concepts based on their own military thought. They use the term Hybrid Warfare to refer to the allegedly American and NATO strategy of creating colour revolutions to promote social and political destabilisation in targeted countries. The Russians refer to their own way of warfare as "New Generation Warfare."<sup>1</sup>

Within this strategic framework, the Baltic countries are constantly under non-kinetic attack by non-military and military instruments. Among these are psychological,

<sup>1</sup> J. Bērziņš, "The Theory and Practice of New Generation Warfare: The Case of Ukraine and Syria", *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2020, pp. 355–380.

information, and influence operations, including financing pseudo-non-governmental organisations for achieving political goals, disinformation campaigns, and strong military posturing near the Baltic countries' borders. The Russian strategy for the Baltic states is multi-layered and chiefly determined by Russia considering them part of the West. As a result, since the threat is multi-layered and presents a comprehensive challenge, Latvia has developed its own comprehensive defence strategy.

The objective of this article is to analyse the evolution of Latvia's defence strategy from the 1990's until its current form of comprehensive defence. To this end, the main defence and security documents were analysed and structured to establish the process of evolution of Latvia's security policy as a reflection of the evolution of the threat perception by Latvian policy makers and experts on the matter.

## From total to comprehensive defence

The idea that war and defence should go beyond the armed forces and involve the whole of society appeared for the first time in General Ludendorff's book *Der Totale Krieg* (The Total War), published in 1935. According to him, the military should have complete power over the political realm, while the role of the civilian component was to serve military needs. At the same time, Ludendorff considered war to be a multi-layered phenomenon going beyond the military since it was directly aimed against the constituent factors of the nation, including its people. Therefore, the survival of the nation would depend on the total annihilation of other states by offensive means with total national mobilisation. In other words, war does not end with a military defeat of the enemy, but with the elimination of all its citizens, and the whole society should take part in defence and war efforts.<sup>2</sup>

Today, especially in the West, Ludendorff's ideas are an absurd relic. They go against the very basic principles of the Western society. However, with the development of new technologies and the rise of what the West calls "hybrid warfare," the fabrics of the nation are becoming increasingly targeted by hostile actors to achieve the ultimate objectives of warfare in the political realm as postulated by Clausewitz.<sup>3</sup> Since nowadays warfare targets a nation in its totality, defence must go beyond the traditional military realm. It must include the people, information system, culture, politics, economics, and infrastructure increasing the nation's resilience. Although NATO has its concept of comprehensive defence,<sup>4</sup> Latvia's defence strategy reflects

<sup>2</sup> E. Ludendorff, *Der Totale Krieg*, München: Ludendorffs Verlag, 1935, <https://archive.org/details/erich-ludendorff-der-totale-krieg-1935-130-s.-scan-fraktur/page/n1/mode/2up> [accessed: 26 June 2022].

<sup>3</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by M.E. Howard, P. Paret, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

<sup>4</sup> For NATO's concept of comprehensive defence see *Comprehensive Defence Handbook*, Edition A, Version 1, Mons: NATO Special Operations Headquarters, December 2020.

specific challenges posed by its size, population, economic structure, and shared history with Russia.

The main document defining Latvia's defence strategy and providing guidelines to the defence and security agencies is the National Defence Concept (NDC). By article 29 of the National Security Law, the Ministry of Defence prepares the National Defence Concept. It is a planning and policy document based on the analysis of current military threats. It defines the strategic objectives, basic principles, priorities, and measures to be taken during peacetime, escalation, and war. According to the National Security Law, the Cabinet of Ministers discusses the National Defence Concept, and the Saeima, the Latvian Parliament, for the national defence policy. It specifies the operational measures, planned resources, the resources needed for the implementation and development of the National Defence Forces, the necessary preparedness of government bodies, agencies, and other public authorities, including at the local level, and private and legal persons during peace, escalation, and war. Its implementation is dependent on the National Armed Forces' available resources and capabilities as defined by law. The national authorities shall ensure the NDC implementation according to their competencies. In other words, until now, its implementation has been decentralised.<sup>5</sup>

The first version of the NDC was published in 1995, one year after the Russian troops withdrew from Latvia. It was a superficial document defining the security of Latvia as an integral part of the Baltic region and providing some guidelines for the development of the Armed Forces. It was more of a bureaucratic document than a security and defence assessment.<sup>6</sup> The second version was approved in 2001. It was a significant evolution since it linked the country's strategic assessment with the possible threats and the Armed Forces' and other security structures' development. Still, the threat assessment was limited to two paragraphs. It considered the main issues for Latvia's security, including the overall geopolitical conditions, the level of economic development, the historical relations with foreign states, the potential of the Latvian society's education and culture, the capabilities of the military and civilian defence apparatus, the environmental situation, and other important factors.

The document stressed that after the end of the Cold War, the global security environment changed dramatically. Although the threat of a global war has considerably reduced, the risk of regional and local crises resulting from ethnic conflict, massive migration, environmental disasters, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction,

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<sup>5</sup> Saeima, *Nacionālās drošības likums* (National Security Law), Latvijas Vēstnesis, 473/476, 29.12.2000, with amendments, <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/14011-nacionalas-drosibas-likums> [accessed: 26 June 2022]; Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (National Defence Concept), 2020, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika> [accessed: 26 June 2022].

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (National Defence Concept), Ministry of Defence, 1995, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika> [accessed: 26 June 2022].

and organised crime has increased. The document did not mention the global war on terrorism. Latvia's security is closely related with international processes, especially with the development of the Estonian and Lithuanian defence systems.

The integration into the European defence system and joining NATO are important pillars for Latvia's defence. Nevertheless, the document made it clear that the main partner for guaranteeing Latvia's security was the United States, since it was also the main actor determining the European security development and Latvia's independence. The document did not mention Russia as a direct threat to Latvia or the Baltic states' security. The main issue was the instability of internal and foreign policy. On a positive note, the document emphasised that Russia was developing a market economy, a democratic society, and the Russian military presence in the Baltic region has been significantly reduced.

Latvia's defence was to be based on the idea of total defence. Latvia's population is small and material resources are limited because of the country's level of economic development. Therefore, the idea of total defence had to be based on developing professional society had to be ready to defend the country by all means and using all available resources. The military forces were to consist of a small professional contingent complemented by conscripts, who would later become part of the active reserve. The rest of the document did not provide concrete guidelines but made it clear that the Armed Forces development was to follow all standards and procedures to join NATO as soon as possible.<sup>7</sup> The third version of the NDC was approved by the Parliament in 2003. At the time, it was already clear that the country would join NATO in 2004.

The threat assessment was slightly rephrased. It included an explicit reference to NATO being the main guarantor of Latvia's security, while Russia was not mentioned. Since Latvia was to become a NATO member soon, the idea of total defence gave place to the notion of collective defence, the guidelines of the Armed Forces' integration in the NATO structures were defined, and conscription was to be abolished by 2006 to develop the Armed Forces as fully professional service. The National Guard and the Youth Guard were to be auxiliary forces which would help recruit future professional military personnel.<sup>8</sup>

The fourth version of the document was published in 2008. It reinforced the idea of Latvian security being determined by its membership in NATO. In other words, the Latvian National Armed Forces were to protect Latvia's territory and be ready for integrating with NATO troops when they arrived. At the same time, the Latvian military was to take part in NATO missions within the principle of

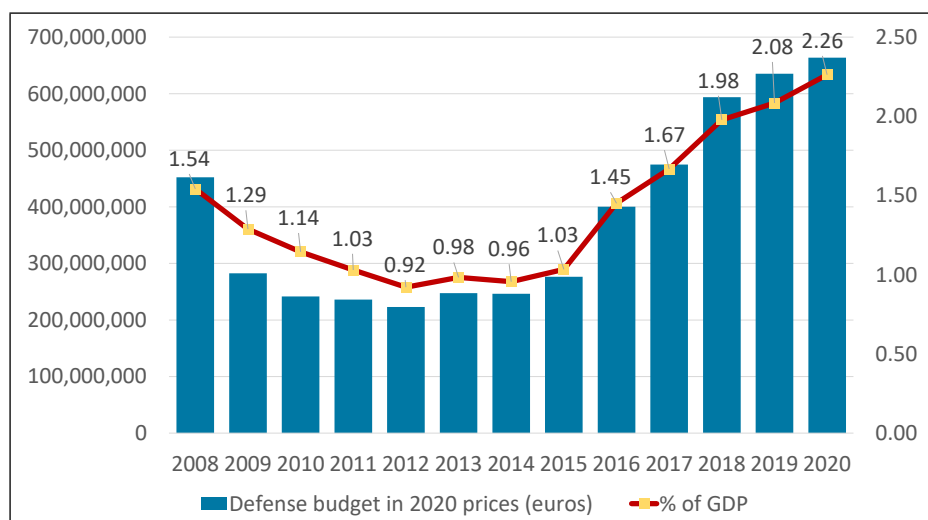
<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (National Defence Concept), Ministry of Defence, 2001, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika> [accessed: 26 June 2022].

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (National Defence Concept), Ministry of Defence, 2003, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika> [accessed: 26 June 2022].

collective defence and transatlantic solidarity. The rest of the document presented deeper analysis of the challenges for increasing the effectiveness and capabilities of the Armed Forces, at the same time providing more nuanced guidance for achieving these objectives. Nevertheless, the threat analysis was quite superficial. Russia and China were not explicitly mentioned, although the 2001 NDC version mentioned “specific countries with unstable internal and foreign policies” or Russia, and the “probable change in the equilibrium of international politics as a result of some specific countries’ rapid economic development, military power increase, and competition for natural resources and influence in world politics” – a very clear reference to Beijing.<sup>9</sup>

In 2012, a new version of the NDC was approved by the Parliament. The biggest challenge was the result of the defence budget shrinking from 452 million in 2008 to 223 million in 2012 in 2020 prices. The threat assessment stressed Latvia’s dependence on NATO and the European Union, and the world’s increasing interconnectedness affecting Latvia’s security. In this version, the idea of total defence and society’s active participation gave place to the notion of collective defence based on NATO and the European Union.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 1. Latvia’s Defence Budget (2008–2020) (euros, in 2020 prices)



Source: own's calculations with data from Latvia's Ministry of Finance, State Treasury, and Central Statistical Bureau.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (National Defence Concept), Ministry of Defence, 2008. Available at <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika> [accessed: 26 June 2022].

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (National Defence Concept), Ministry of Defence, 2012, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika> [accessed: 26 June 2022].

With the election of a new Parliament in 2016, a new version of the NDC was approved. For the first time, Russia and what the West called Hybrid Warfare were clearly mentioned as the main threat to Latvia's security. This was a natural consequence of Russia's actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. It also mentioned terrorism and migration as significant threats. There were three defence principles: the country's capacity and will to defend its sovereignty, deterrence policy as instrument to reduce external threats, and the operationalisation of the national defence principles to overcome external threats within the framework of collective defence based on NATO. The role of society was considered important, but as non-organised resistance and as the base for the National and the Youth Guard.<sup>11</sup> At that time, internal discussions about the necessity to develop a system of comprehensive defence in Latvia as complementary measures for the Transatlantic collective defence arrangement were already taking place at the Ministry of Defence and in the National Armed Forces. Thus, although the concept of Comprehensive Defence was not an explicit part of this NDC version, it was the basis for the amendments of the National Security Law in 2018 and the 2020 NDC.

The current version of the NDC was approved by the Parliament in 2020. It is a comprehensive document providing solid guidance for the development of Latvia's defence system. The threat assessment emphasises the understanding that the post-Cold War unipolar moment gave place to international competition, where some countries ignore the international legal system and the sovereignty of other countries to achieve their strategic ambitions. The fragmentation of the global system in combination with the development of new technologies, private military companies, climate change, and pandemics has made the international security system increasing uncertain. As a result, economic and diplomatic instruments have lost their effectiveness to maintain peace and stability, and it is necessary to go beyond the model of collective defence based on transatlantic alliance. Therefore, the current version of the NDC determines four pillars for Latvia's defence: the Armed Forces, a comprehensive defence system, NATO's collective defence, and international cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

The comprehensive defence system in Latvia has two objectives: societal resilience in peacetime and the protection of the state in case of a conflict. The system is based on the idea of the society supporting the National Armed Forces and, together with the national economic structure, guaranteeing the vital functions of the state, including material support for the Armed Forces. The Latvian society is expected to:<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (National Defence Concept), Ministry of Defence, 2016, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika> [accessed: 26 June 2022].

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (National Defence Concept), Ministry of Defence, 2020, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lv/nozares-politika> [accessed: 26 June 2022].

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Informatīvais ziņojums "Par visaptverošas valsts aizsardzības sistēmas ieviešanu Latvijā"* (Informative Report "About the Implementation of the Comprehensive Defence System in Latvia"), 2018, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/>

- get involved in the National Armed Forces and to organise armed resistance;
- support the incoming allied forces;
- implement anti-mobility measures;
- provide any kind of support for the National Armed Forces and the allied forces, including information exchange, supply of goods and services, and other activities and measures;
- take part in resistance movements and to establish support networks;
- engage in passive resistance, for example, by not cooperating with the aggressor structures and by civil non-compliance.

The ability of society and the economy to provide vital functions and to overcome any shocks, including a military conflict, has the following objectives:

- maintaining the capacity and the efficient functioning and continuity of the state structures;
- defining clear tasks and roles of institutions and municipalities, including personnel and activities;
- the continuity of vital activities (electricity, communications, financial services, ensuring food, critical infrastructure, and personnel safety) in any way and under any circumstances;
- timely building and storing vital resource and raw material reserves;
- being prepared to act in crisis and war situations across various societal levels, including individual civic preparedness.

The Latvian system of comprehensive defence is based on eight pillars. According to the 2020 NDC, they are:<sup>14</sup>

*Maintaining the vital functions of the state*

In order to guarantee the basic functions of the state during periods of crises and war, it is necessary to implement pre-established mechanisms at all institutional levels. Each structure must have well-defined strategies and objectives, and staff to ensure its operability. Given the dependence of public administration and society on technology, it is important to maintain backup copies of database systems abroad to restore important national data in case of disruption in the national systems.

*Society's resilience*

Comprehensive defence is possible only with the involvement of the entire society. Thus, the civic activity of the Latvian population with a greater responsibility for the processes taking place in the country, including national defence, are of fundamental importance. It is necessary to create a culture of readiness, where every private and public organisation is prepared to deal with potential crises. This results

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Informativais%20zinojums\_VVA%20ieviesana\_2018.pdf [accessed: 26 June 2022].

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Valsts aizsardzības koncepcija* (National Defence Concept), 2020, <https://www.mod.gov.lv/lozares-politika> [accessed: 26 June 2022].

from education and training, including increasing the society's ability to survive and sustain itself for at least 72 hours. This shall be done by disseminating information, regular seminars and lectures, and by providing training to different groups of Latvian society. The society's participation may take the form of supporting the national defence structures with knowledge, skills, and material means, or providing psychological support, just to cite a few.

*Protection of the information space*

Latvia's population must be aware that it is necessary to protect the society against influence operations and attacks in the information space. It is a constant and permanent activity. It is necessary to increase the society's media literacy, critical thinking, and psychological resilience against influence operations by including this subject in school curricula and by providing educational opportunities to different groups of the society. A clear strategy of communication needs to be developed in the defence sector to enhance the state's ability to respond to information and psychological operations.

*Sustainability of the national economy*

Providers of basic services and companies with more than 250 employees must ensure the continuity of their operations during times of crisis and war. Therefore, business planning must include provisions for guaranteeing supply security and economic and technological dependence on non-NATO and non-European Union countries. The state has to establish a reserve system and prepare for the restriction of the exports of food, medicines, and essential raw materials. It is necessary to assign mobilisation tasks for companies during peacetime, including by promoting the participation of employees in the National Guard and the National Armed Forces reserve forces, and forming National Guard subunits to guarantee the physical security of strategic facilities.

*Non-governmental organisations and the church*

Non-governmental organisations are expected to take part in the process of defence planning by organising exercises and training and informing the society. The church has a significant role in strengthening the psychological resilience of its members, helping and motivating them to overcome difficulties and to support society, providing reliable information, assisting victims, and strengthening those individuals who have experienced trauma.

*Civil resistance*

In case of a conflict, the civilian population must evacuate as far as possible within the territory controlled by the National Armed Forces and the Allied troops. At the same time, it has to passively resist by not cooperating with the adversary's armed units and established administrative institutions. This is to be done by isolating oneself from the decisions and actions of the occupiers, such as not taking part in public events organised by the occupying forces and structures, not providing information,



and not participating in elections and referendums organised by the occupiers. The success of the resistance movement depends on the covert support of the population (such as security, medical care, information, finance, communications, training, recruitment, and intelligence) to members of civil resistance, armed resistance, the National Armed Forces, and the Allied forces.

#### *Cyber security*

To reduce the vulnerabilities of state institutions, society, and companies, it is necessary to guarantee the implementation of minimum security standards and a reduction of technological dependence on countries that are not members of NATO or the European Union. Cyber security issues are to be included in the curricula of educational institutions as part of the national defence subject, and in the annual training of state and local institutions. In addition, subdivisions of the Cyber Youth Guard and the National Guard Cyber Defence Unit are to be established. It is very important to ensure storage of important data in Latvia to guarantee the continuity of critical services.

#### *Youth education*

The Youth Guard and the introduction of national defence education in schools have a key role in strengthening Latvian society's resilience. This is to be done by educating the youth about national defence, developing their sense of patriotism, civic consciousness, cohesion, leadership, and physical skills. The Ministry of Defence will establish a vocational secondary education institution where general education will be combined with the acquisition of skills and values to develop students' intellectual capacity, including developing a strong sense of responsibility and improving the necessary competencies to withstand increased physical and psychological challenges. The general secondary school curriculum will focus on mathematics, physics, chemistry, and technologies to develop the students' competencies to use modern combat equipment. The subject of national defence is to be introduced in the national curricula for secondary schools (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades) by 2024. The objective is to develop competencies associated with national defence, crisis management, critical thinking, and civic patriotism. In addition, students will have an opportunity to take part in voluntary national defence summer camps, where the knowledge acquired at school will be practiced. It is expected that around 30,000 students aged 15–17 will take the course each year, amounting to almost a third of Latvia's population in ten years.

## Implementation

The implementation of the system of comprehensive defence is an ongoing process with many challenges. Following the 2016 version of the NDC, the National

Security Law was amended to reflect the necessities of implementing the system of comprehensive defence and civil resistance. Although both ideas were broadly supported by many significant stakeholders in the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence, they were considered to be politically sensitive. With different threat assessment, it became viable to include the two ideas among the amendments of the National Security Law. The next step was to prepare the strategy for implementing the system of comprehensive defence, which was defined in the *Informatīvais ziņojums "Par visaptverošas valsts aizsardzības sistēmas ieviešanu Latvijā"* (About the Implementation of the Comprehensive Defence System in Latvia). This document defines seven key strategic objectives, the institutions responsible for the implementation, and their main tasks.<sup>15</sup>

Table 1. Latvia's comprehensive defence strategic objectives, stakeholders, and tasks

Strategic objective	Stakeholders	Tasks
Developing military capabilities and defining defence strategies	Ministry of Defence National Armed Forces	Developing military capabilities Developing a defence strategy Increasing the individuals' willingness to engage in national defence and resist occupation
Establishing closer cooperation between private and public sectors	All government	Cross-governmental threat identification and reduction measures Cooperation with NGOs and their involvement in national defence Developing national and local volunteer networks Organising annual defence training for professionals and experts from various fields Developing the national defence industry and increasing its role in national defence
Introducing the course of National Defence in schools and increasing public awareness of defence issues	Ministry of Education and Science Ministry of Defence Other government agencies and bodies	Implementing the National Defence curriculum Introducing national defence subjects in the higher education and science system Strengthening the relationship between the state and the society
Civil defence and disaster management	Ministry of Internal Affairs State and local government agencies and bodies Juridical and private persons	Implementing NATO's seven baseline requirements for civil resilience. Closer civil-military relations Population readiness to withstand initial stages of disaster or war

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Informatīvais ziņojums "Par visaptverošas valsts aizsardzības sistēmas ieviešanu Latvijā"*, op. cit.

Strategic objective	Stakeholders	Tasks
Psychological defence	State Chancellery Ministry of Defence Ministry of Education and Science Ministry of Culture Other government agencies and bodies	To increase society's resilience against influence, information, and psychological operations To increase social cohesion To increase social engagement in domestic political and social process To establish direct channels of communication with religious organisations
Strategic communication	State Chancellery Other government agencies and bodies	To encourage the population to behave in accordance with the comprehensive defence model. To manage the government's crisis communication To increase resilience against information operations against Latvia
Economic resilience	Ministry of Finance Ministry of Economics	To guarantee the provision of the essential government services in times of crisis and war To establish reserves of essential commodities at the national level To sustain businesses during crisis and war To guarantee personal economic security

Source: Ministry of Defence of Latvia, *Informatīvais ziņojums "Par visaptverošas valsts aizsardzības sistēmas ieviešanu Latvijā"* (Informative Report "About the Implementation of the Comprehensive Defence System in Latvia"), 2018, [https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/Informativais%20zinojums\\_VVA%20ieviesana\\_2018.pdf](https://www.mod.gov.lv/sites/mod/files/document/Informativais%20zinojums_VVA%20ieviesana_2018.pdf), [accessed: 26 June 2022].

In 2020, the working group responsible for implementing these tasks produced a report evaluating their progress. It stressed that during 2019, the focus was on informing the society, amending the legislation, strengthening the relationship between the public and the private sector, and increasing the society's participation in the country's military defence system within the comprehensive defence's framework. The ministries engaged in a tabletop exercise to help establish priorities, tasks of specific organisations, and check the ministries' individual reaction plans in accordance with the exercise scenario. The conclusions showed the importance of the access to financial systems and energy reserves, as well as proper communication during crisis and identifying the staff responsible to guarantee the critical functions of the state.

These points were included in the Kristaps 2019 exercises, when the private sector had the opportunity to directly interact with the defence establishment to deal with a crisis situation. The exercise provided many valuable insights into critical services included in several pieces of legislation. The implementation of the subject of National Defence in the national school curricula started in the school year 2019/2020, with about 1000 students from 54 schools and 67 youngsters taking part in a defence camp. It will become mandatory in the school year 2024/2025. In addition, many events intended to raise society's awareness and provide the

opportunity to obtain information about defence issues such as the creation of the Sargs internet portal, the participation in the Lampa festival, just to name a few. These actions will continue.

## Conclusions

Non-kinetic instruments of warfare are gaining importance to achieve military strategic objectives. At the same time, kinetic instruments might be used to reach non-military strategic objectives, blurring the traditional division into military and non-military means of warfare. As a result, the first step to evaluate the instruments a country might use against an opponent is to determine its strategic objectives.

In open-source discussions, Russia's strategic goal in the Baltic states is to stimulate a process described in literature as Finlandisation. It can be achieved by kinetic or non-kinetic means, although a combination of the two is also possible. In the case of the Baltic states, Russia has chosen non-kinetic means until now. This is mostly the result of NATO's reassurance and deterrence actions, but also the Baltic states' development of new defence capabilities. Therefore, one should not underestimate the relevance of military deterrence in the region. An important point to be taken into consideration is that the operationalisation of non-kinetic warfare, especially information, psychological, and influence operations, depends very much on the opponent's idiosyncratic fragilities. As a result, deterrence has to be mostly by denial. This means that it surpasses the mandate of the military and belongs in the political realm.

Finally, the Latvian Minister of Defence has initiated several programmes to establish a reliable system of comprehensive defence, in which society's role is fundamental. The results are already noticeable. These actions have been focusing on both increasing enlistment in the National Guard and raising the society's awareness and resilience in case of a military or non-military crisis.

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## Latvia's comprehensive defence approach

### Abstract

Russia has been employing old methods of warfare in innovative ways with the help of new technologies. At the same time, it has been looking to exploit non-military means to achieve political objectives. Among these are psychological, information, and influence operations, including financing pseudo-NGOs for achieving political goals, disinformation campaigns, and strong military posturing near the Baltic Countries' borders. The Russian strategy for the Baltic States is multi-layered and chiefly determined by Russia considering them part of the West. As a result, since the threat is multi-layered and presents a comprehensive challenge, Latvia developed a comprehensive defence strategy. This article analysis the evolution of Latvia's security and defence strategy towards a system that may be characterized as comprehensive defence. Its main features include several initiatives where society's role is fundamental. The results are already noticeable. These actions have been focussing on both enlarging enlistment in the National Guard, but also in increasing the society's awareness and resilience in case of military or non-military crisis.

Key words: comprehensive defence, Latvia, hybrid warfare, Russia, Latvian National Armed Forces, National Guard