

# **Baltic Security Foundation August 2019 Newsletter**



**Is Baltic Security Important for the  
U.S., NATO, and Europe? Absolutely!**

**Plus: What's happening at Baltic  
Security Foundation (p. 3) and  
Meet BSF President, Olevs Nikers**

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# What's happening at Baltic Security Foundation

*This article originally appeared in Latvia Weekly on July 11, 2019*

This week the Baltic Security Foundation (BSF) was officially established by Mr. Olevs Nikers, President of the BSF and Mr. Otto Tabuns, Director. The goal of the BSF is to promote and foster Baltic regional defense and security.

Thirty years ago, on August 23, 1989, two million Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians joined hands in the Baltic Way human chain. Their common deliberation paved the way to regaining Baltic independence. Today, the three Baltic States stand strong.

However, many find that so much more could be done by speaking in one, stronger voice. This is especially the case in regard to security and the three Baltic expert communities. This is one of the key conclusions of the Baltic Security Strategy Project, which was led by Mr. Olevs Nikers and Mr. Otto Tabuns (February 2018 – March 2019) – the largest independent Baltic security cooperation projects involving regional stakeholders from across the board. Common security is predicated on common expertise that requires strategic thinking and a systematic approach.

Current analytic structures in each Baltic state are limited by human resources and funding to implement systematic medium and long-term regional strategic analysis, representing the region in one voice. Intraregional cooperation of scholars and professionals on the matters of their region is incidental. E.g. the Baltic Security Strategy Project was unique in its nature, gathering security experts – scholars and professionals from the Baltic countries within a single cooperation endeavor. There is also lack of a single pool of expertise, gathering the contact information and the material of work of the most notable regional field experts. An umbrella organization is needed to do just that, therefore strengthening the think tanks and other research organizations across the Baltic countries.

The objectives of BSF are to:

- 1) Raise awareness of Baltic defense and security matters among allied and regional partners,
- 2) Organize and facilitate Baltic security expert cooperation through designated instruments of financial and administrative support,
- 3) Provide and facilitate Baltic security policy analysis and advice for Baltic and Allied stakeholders,

- 4) Foster Baltic security and defense synchronization through discussion and legislation, 5) strengthen local Baltic expertise and raise national think tank capacity.

The BSF works as a cluster of Baltic defense and security experts, professionals and think tanks, organizing activities that involve at least three Baltic states, and as an instrument for attraction of financial resources to maintain and facilitate activities which support Objectives of the BSF.

The primary focus of the BSF activity is the Baltic Sea region within the Euro Atlantic framework. It is a non-profit organization which operates on the concluding co-operation agreements with Baltic think tanks and individual experts. Partnership is open for all governmental and private institutions, as well as individual experts that support the goal and objectives of the BSF.

Anyone who shares the goals and objectives of the BSF — individual experts and organizations within the region and beyond — is welcome to partner with BSF!

BSF membership will grant access to our network of Baltic defense and Security experts and Organizations and priority to be engaged in our activities and Projects as agreed and (2) Individual Members and Organizations are eligible to apply for any support from BSF available - to implement activities/ Projects etc., which supports Goal and Objective of the BSF or (3) provide moral support to BSF mission, which is also necessary for demonstration of our unity and coherence and will help to succeed Goal and Objectives of the BSF.



*Photo: BSF President Olevs Nikers speaks to members of the Latvian-American community in Houston, TX, July 2019*

# Is Baltic Security Important for the U.S., NATO, and Europe? Absolutely!



*By Matthew Thomas  
August 25, 2019*

The three Baltic States are key members of the NATO defensive alliance. Since regaining independence after the illegal Soviet occupation, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia have all become deeply integrated into Western institutions, such as NATO and the EU. These small countries, understanding the potential peril of reoccupation by a resurgent Russia after the annexation of Crimea, have been extremely vocal in sounding the alarm that Russia remains a security threat. They understand that the West must get serious about security lest its more vulnerable members once more get trampled.

Thirty years ago this month, the Baltic States sent Gorbachev a clear message by forming a massive, 2 million member human chain from Tallinn, Estonia all the way to Vilnius, Lithuania. This show of resolve, known as the Baltic Way, demonstrated that the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian patriots would not be suppressed in their push for independence from Communist tyranny. This large-scale, peaceful popular protest was a remarkable event within the broader miracle of 1989 in Eastern Europe, and has today inspired the people of Hong Kong to make their own “Hong Kong

Way.” But, as we in the West celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baltic Way, let us not forget the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the danger posed by ambitious neighbors.

The Baltic States’ geographic situation is an unfortunate one. They are largely cut off by land from their NATO allies, their terrain has few natural barriers to an invading force, and the Russian Baltic Sea Fleet operates to the Baltic States’ north and south in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad. The Suwałki Gap, a narrow strip of land on the border of Lithuania and Poland, constitutes the only land border between the Baltic States and the rest of NATO. This tiny strip with two highways lies between Belarus and Kaliningrad, meaning that Russia could easily seal it off, making a logistical nightmare for NATO to come to the Baltics’ aid. At sea, the Russian Navy is not particularly impressive, but is more than capable of harassing ships and conducting grey zone operations on infrastructure and the port and supply chains.

*Photo Credit: NATO (nato.int)*



## *Is Baltic Security Important for the U.S., NATO, and Europe? Absolutely! (cont.)*

This unfortunate geographic situation, combined with Russian military buildup in the Western Military District and Russia's propensity to meddle in its neighbors' affairs, makes Baltic Security of vital importance to NATO. As things currently stand, Russia prefers to stay below the threshold of conventional war, knowing that its conventional forces may have a short-term advantage, but that in the long-run, NATO forces are superior. As such, Russia seeks to destabilize the political situation through hybrid means, such as misinformation/disinformation, economic capture, the use of proxy groups as an element of "aktivnye meropriyatiya" ("active measures") in intelligence operations, and cyber-attacks. By utilizing hybrid warfare against the spectrum of a state's governmental and societal functions, Russia economizes the use of force and is able to continuously adjust the intensity of conflict. It is important to remember that Russia views itself in conflict with NATO, even though the two are not locked in conventional war.

As the situation stands now, Russia is probably unlikely to conduct conventional military operations against the Baltic States. Its economy cannot sustain this kind of war, and it is currently mired in other theaters. Nevertheless, Russia *will* absolutely continue its hybrid efforts against Baltic society and government, as it seeks to undermine Western influence and restore the Baltic States to its sphere of influence. Indeed, Russia successfully annexed Crimea without firing a shot using a comprehensive package of hybrid tactics, perhaps most famously the "little green men" at a time when it viewed Western leadership as weak and feckless. NATO leadership must remain strong and resolute against the Russian threat, and Western European leaders need to understand that they have a moral imperative to defend their own people as part and parcel of their obligation to NATO. A Russian attack on the Baltic States will inevitably test Article 5 (the principle of "an attack on one is an attack on all"), upon which NATO's credibility hangs. Likewise, the Baltic States must continue to make strides on societal security, infrastructural security (including energy se-

curity), financial security, cyber-security, and defense/deterrence. The work being done in the region is good, and needs to continue in order to maintain freedom in the Baltics.

From the "Year of Terror" in 1941 to re-independence in 1991, the Baltic States suffered under tyranny. For Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, national security is a matter of state survival. Freedom is vulnerable, and must be guarded with vigilance and enthusiasm. Russia must be taken seriously: all too often, the political discourse in the U.S. and Europe recognizes the threat that Russia poses, but fails to understand the nature of Russian tactics. Likewise, many political groups seek to associate their opponents with Russia, while ignoring Russian influence on their own parties, undermining faith in democratic institutions and doing the Russians' work for them. For NATO, Baltic security is a matter of credibility. If the Baltic States fall and NATO does not respond, the alliance will no longer be taken seriously, and its defense will be undermined. For the United States, it is a matter of both credibility and affinity – the U.S. seeks to defend liberty in the face of tyranny wherever it exists. An aggressive Russia not only threatens security in Europe, but also threatens security in the U.S. After all, Russia seeks to undermine American political stability as well. In geopolitics, everything is interconnected, and the U.S. and Europe cannot afford to neglect any region, especially not the Baltics.



*Photo credit: U.S. Embassy, Latvia*

# Meet Olevs Nikers, BSF President

Olevs Nikers is President of the Baltic Security Foundation and a senior analyst at the Jamestown Foundation, a Washington, D.C. based think tank. He has led the Baltic Security Strategy Project supported by the Baltic-American Freedom Foundation and the Jamestown Foundation (2017-2019) and currently he is Director of the Baltic Sea Security Initiative. From 2001 to 2019 Olevs has worked at the Ministry of Defense of Latvia. Among his other responsibilities, in a position of Chief Expert he has been responsible for preparing the Latvian military Contingent for International Peacekeeping missions, as well as planning, coordinating and implementing International Development and Logistics projects for the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

Olevs holds a Master's degree in Political Science from University of Latvia (2001), as well as a Master's degree in International Relations from The Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas, USA (2016). Currently he is studying at the Riga Stradins University's doctoral program in political science.

He is a member of Latvian Association of Political Scientists and the Association for Advancement of Baltic Studies.



# Baltic Security Foundation

## September 2019 Newsletter



### Improving the Baltic States' Maritime Security

Plus: Baltic Security Foundation presents  
at the ECPR General Conference in  
Wrocław (p. 3) and Meet BSF Director,  
Mr. Otto Tabuns (p. 7)

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# Baltic Security Foundation Presents at the ECPR General Conference in Wrocław

BSF President Mr. Olevs Nikers and BSF Director Mr. Otto Tabuns took part in the panel “Addressing Security Challenges in the Baltic Region through Multilateral Cooperation” of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) 13th General Conference September 5, 2019 in Wrocław, Poland.

During his presentation “Sub-Regional Defense Synchronization – Theory Perspectives and Security Expectations for the Baltics,” Mr. Nikers outlined and discussed the origin and sustainability of the modern security alliance between small countries. He focused on the Baltic States, and took the issue of alliance formation beyond the realm of Cold War-era power balancing, upon which the main alliance-building theory was formed.

From one side, the presentation discussed current issues regarding the Baltic States’ security cooperation, which were identified and analyzed within the Baltic Security Strategy Project (2018-2019) by scholars and government professionals from the Baltic States. From the other side, the panel examined traditional and modern theoretical perspectives, answering the question of whether small states are capable of boosting their defenses and enhancing deterrence by synchronizing their security and improving military interoperability within the collective security system.

The 13th ECPR General Conference took place in Wrocław September 4-7, 2019. The ECPR is an independent scholarly association, established in 1970. Its 350 institutional members across around 50 countries represent the leading universities, students and senior academics engaged in the research and teaching of political science worldwide.

The 14th ECPR General Conference will take place in Innsbruck, Austria August 26-28, 2020.



*Photo: BSF President Olevs Nikers delivers his presentation at the ECPR General Conference/Otto Tabuns/BSF Facebook page*

# Improving the Baltic States' Maritime Security



*By Matthew Thomas*  
*September 25, 2019*

Maritime operations have once again been a major theme of recent headlines in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Following the NATO BALTOPS exercises this summer, repeated violations of the Baltic States' airspace by Russia, and observing current combat diving operations in Tallinn Bay, maritime security issues are particularly relevant. Unfortunately, given the long-standing emphasis on land-based deterrence, the maritime domain has largely been neglected.

BALTOPS 2019 revealed a key weakness for naval operations: the shallow and largely unmarked coastline hampered amphibious landing operations in Lithuania. Not only do

these conditions make amphibious landing operations slower and more difficult, they even present major operational hazards. One Polish landing vessel reportedly ran aground during the exercises. While there is not much that can be done about shallow water, Lithuanian and U.S. forces have responded to these weaknesses by conducting coastal observation studies and exploring the seabed along the Lithuanian coast. Given that the Baltic States' only land border with the rest of the alliance is the narrow Suwałki Gap on the Polish-Lithuanian border, NATO cannot rely on land connections for logistical support. As such, the ability to conduct amphibious landings with troops and supplies is vital.

*Photo: BALTOPS 2019 / Benas Gerdžiūnas/LRT*

## *Improving the Baltic States' Maritime Security (cont.)*

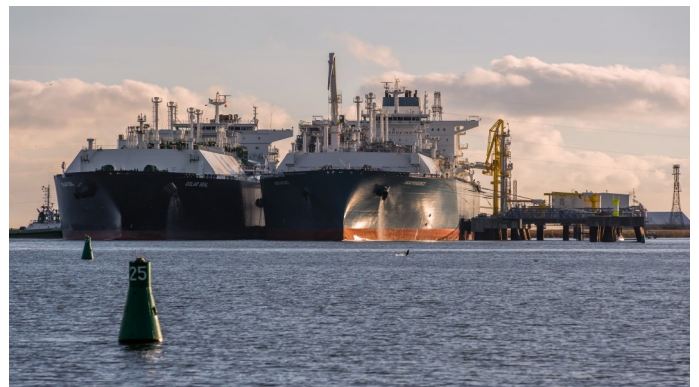
It would be wonderful if a poorly marked coastline and shallow water were the only deficiencies in the Baltic States' maritime defense. Unfortunately, the Baltic States lack the ability to prevent Russia from projecting power into their territorial waters, port facilities, exclusive economic zones, and other littoral areas. Furthermore, the Baltic States cannot prevent Russia from temporarily taking control of these areas. The Russian Baltic Sea fleet may not be overly large or impressive, but it is more than capable of maintaining the status quo, harassing military and civilian activity at sea, and taking surprise offensive action. After all, Russian naval harassment is not unknown – Lithuanian sailors laying the NordBalt cable were repeatedly antagonized by Russian ships – and grey zone operations are a key component of Russian strategy.

This situation only gets worse. The Baltic States are currently deficient in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities at sea. They do not have full, integrated, and shared awareness across the surface, subsurface, and air domains. Individual states' capabilities vary, but Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are all deficient at ISR in the maritime domain given the context of their current security environment. Likewise, the Baltic States have had varying levels of success with sharing information. As it stands, there is no full-time command center to process threats at sea and determine how to respond. The multiple recent violations of Baltic airspace by Russian military aircraft underscores the importance of ISR capabilities and information sharing between the Baltic States. In order to process and respond to threats, one first

must know that they are there.

Yet more bad news: the maritime domain hosts several key components of the Baltic States' critical energy and communications infrastructure. Undersea cables, gas interconnectors, and onshore facilities such as the Klaipėda LNG terminal are all vulnerable to attack. Many cables are unburied and unhidden, such as the NordBalt cable, which connects the Baltic and Nordic electricity markets. Likewise, many other infrastructural components are poorly guarded, if at all. These components create key weaknesses for Russia to exploit in the event of an attack. Cutting off gas or electricity supply will likely wear down societal resilience to propaganda, and will complicate military logistics and decision making as well.

With such a heavy focus over the last several years on land-based deterrence, the Baltic States have largely neglected the maritime domain. CPT Bill Combes (U.S. Navy, retired) refers to this condition as “sea-apathy,” and it has led to gaps in procurement, awareness, capabilities, and strategy. Many experts, such as Combes, have provided excellent suggestions to improve the situation. The author makes no attempt to



*Photo: Klaipėda LNG Terminal/enmin.lrv.lt*



## *Improving the Baltic States' Maritime Security (cont.)*

claim the following recommendations as his own, but has selected those from other experts that he has deemed most practical and actionable:

First: the Baltic States need to develop clear goals and a comprehensive maritime strategy. This strategy should identify important investments required for robust maritime domain awareness.

Second: in order to reduce costs and improve interoperability, the Baltic States should identify opportunities for joint procurements in maritime ISR technology.

Third: the Baltic States need to implement a combined and cooperative Naval Operations Center in order to best focus individual maritime capabilities to mutual benefit and facilitate higher-end NATO operations. Further, the Baltic

States should establish a joint Maritime Command Center which could identify and process threats and determine how best to respond.

Finally: Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia all need to focus on becoming effective “coastal powers,” as Combes calls it. Their navies do not need to be large and grandiose, but they do need to be able to protect infrastructural assets, trade, and communication in the maritime domain.

The current situation in the maritime domain is most certainly not ideal. However, it can be improved by taking practical steps like those outlined above and participating in ongoing NATO training exercises. The coast is a key component of the Baltic States' security both in peacetime and in the event of war. As such, “seapathy” cannot remain a feature of the Baltic States' defense posture.



*Photo: BALTOPS 2019 / Benas Gerdžiūnas/LRT*

# Meet BSF Director, Mr. Otto Tabuns

Otto Tabuns is the founding director of the Baltic Security Foundation. He is the co-editor of two books (together with Mr. Olevs Nikers) and author of several publications on national and regional security, and is a lecturer of international security and policy debate at the Riga Graduate School of Law. Additionally, Otto is the permanent co-host of the Latvia Weekly broadcast in English on current affairs in his country.

Following his studies in diplomacy at the University of Latvia, and of international law at the Riga Graduate School of Law, Otto worked in the Latvian public service in the fields of strategic communications, defense planning, and crisis management for five years. He is a recipient of the Vitolu Foundation scholarship for international studies, and has been the first participant from Latvia in the MIRAI exchange program by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. He has also participated in the SUSI foreign policy scholars program by the United States Department of State at the University of Delaware.

Between 2017 and 2019, Otto was Executive Director of the Baltic Security Strategy Project, where 90 regional security experts the world over discussed and provided assessments and recommendations on shared military, societal and economic issues in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Otto is a member of the Association for Advancement of Baltic Studies, International Studies Association, Japan Alumni Association of Latvia, and the Latvian Political Science Association.





# **Baltic Security Foundation**

## **October 2019 Newsletter**



### **Why Stopping Nord Stream 2 Matters for the Baltics**

Plus: Texas A&M University Students Participate in the BSF Young Leaders Mobility Program (p.3), BSF Regional Activities (p.7) and Meet BSF Expert Matthew Thomas (p.8)



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# Texas A&M University Students Participate in BSF Young Leaders Mobility Program



In October 2019, Baltic Security Foundation hosted Master of International Affairs students from Texas A&M University's Bush School of Government and Public Service for the Young Leaders Mobility Program in Rīga. The students were led by Dr. Gabriela Marin-Thornton.

While on the program, the students had the opportunity to visit the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Parliament, and participated in the Rīga Conference, organized by the Latvian MFA, MoD, and Latvian Transatlantic Organisation.

At Parliament, the students got to meet Deputy Speaker Dagmāra Beitnere-Le Galla and discussed U.S.-Latvian relations, the European security architecture, and the importance of NATO for both countries.

At MFA, the students met with Parliamentary Secretary Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica, Advisor to the Minister Gunda Reire, Second Secre-

tary of the American and the Caribbean Division Egils Leimanis, and Third Secretary of NATO and European Security Policy Division Linda Jaunaraja-Janvare, learning more about Latvia in the international arena, priorities of national and European foreign policy, and discussed the factors that determine the local security perception.

The students will return to complete their Capstone class and prepare a presentation to the Atlantic Council and a publication together with BSF, raising scholarly awareness of top regional security issues and considering possible solutions.

The Young Leaders Mobility Program was made possible in cooperation with the BAFF - Baltic-American Freedom Foundation, The Jamestown Foundation and the Latvian Political Science Association.

# Why Stopping Nord Stream 2 Matters for the Baltics



*By Matthew Thomas*

*October 27, 2019 [Updated October 30, 2019]*

Nord Stream 2 is a Russian gas pipeline project running mostly parallel to the current Nord Stream pipeline from Vyborg to Greifswald, Germany. This second line would allow for additional gas flows directly from Russia to Western Europe up to a potential 110 billion cubic meters annually. At face value, this expansion is an economic opportunity that makes sense for Germany and other potential Western European customers. In a perfect world, it would be just that. Unfortunately, economic relations with Russia contain security risks. For precisely this reason, Nord Stream 2 faces opposition among Eastern European nations and the Baltic States, as well as from the United States. By cozying up to Russia for cheap gas, Germany is making a Faustian bargain that will not only endanger its allies to the east, but itself as well.

Russia has long used energy supplies as a foreign policy tool. From the name of the Soviet-era *Druzhba* (“Friendship”) pipeline on up to Russia’s nearly annual cutting of Ukrainian gas supplies during the winter, it is clear that energy supply has been a key component of Moscow’s soft and hard power tactics alike. Like-

wise, in cases of “state capture,” the energy sector frequently plays a major role, as in Bulgaria. In Belarus, energy is front and center in disputes between Minsk and Moscow, as the latter seeks to coerce the former into falling in lock-step with the Kremlin’s policies and demands. For the Baltic States, the Soviet-era BRELL Agreement, which connects the electrical grids of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Belarus, and Russia synchronously, has given Moscow leverage since it controls the power supply. To their credit, the Baltic States have broken up Gazprom’s vertical monopoly in the regional gas market and have begun preparations to exit the BRELL Agreement, and these positive steps should serve as a model for others to reduce their dependence on Russian energy. But, as Europe’s dependence on foreign energy supplies continues to grow, many other European nations lack the political will to follow the Baltics’ lead, particularly those that do not share the threat perception evident in the east.

Energy has likewise served as a point of contention historically between the United States and the European allies. When Egypt, Jordan, and Syria attacked Israel during the 1967 Six Day War, the United States called upon the Europeans to support the Israelis. The Europeans, however, were not so keen to support Israel, even if they were sympathetic to the Israeli cause. For Britain, the decision to maintain a



## Why Stopping Nord Stream 2 Matters for the Baltics (cont.)

neutral, and even borderline pro-Arab stance, hinged on protecting its image among the Arab states in large part to secure oil supplies and retain Arab investment in British banks. In 2003, opponents of the Iraq War accused the United States of invading Iraq to secure its oil supplies, a refrain picked up by anti-American political leaders in Western Europe. Among these, Gerhard Schröder capitalized on the radical pacifism and anti-Americanism of the German left and excoriated the U.S. for Iraq, which he had previously supported. Now, Schröder, who has long been cozy with Putin, is Chairman of the Board for Nord Stream AG. This inspired the term *Schroederizatsiya* (“Schröderization”), which refers to the corruption of another country’s political elite. Alongside “state capture,” and often a key component of it, Schröderization is an important part of Russia’s broader hybrid warfare strategy.

Just as in 2003, Germany and France once again are leading the anti-American bloc among the Europeans. These two are also united with the Kremlin on promoting the Steinmeier Formula for peace in Donetsk and Luhansk. Should the Steinmeier Formula be adopted in Ukraine, France and Germany would be responsible for legitimizing Russia’s actions not only in Ukraine, but in Georgia and Transnistria as well. With so little else in common with Russia, it is not difficult to ascertain that Germany and France have a vested interest in securing Russian energy supplies and are thus willing to side with the Kremlin against Ukraine, NATO allies along the Eastern Flank, and the United States.

What, then, does this all mean? Nord Stream 2, along with the southern Turk Stream route, will enable Russia to bypass old routes through Ukraine and Eastern Europe, ensuring a continuous stream of supply to Western European

customers while at the same time denying that security to Eastern European nations that oppose Moscow. If Nord Stream 2 is completed, it will increase Western Europe’s dependence on Russian energy, giving Russia greater political and diplomatic leverage in its relations with those countries. While there has been much panic about divisions within NATO, the alliance has always experienced some disunity. But as many rush to defend the more complacent allies, such as Germany, they fail to realize the potential damage its recalcitrance may bring to the alliance. Though U.S. President Trump’s bluster may aggravate the Europeans, his administration has shown that in deed, the United States is hardly bent on retrenchment, and is in reality more committed to Europe than perhaps any other time since the Cold War. By cozying up to Russia on Nord Stream, however, Germany risks betraying its allies and increasing Russian influence at home. This dangerous policy alignment sets Germany down the path towards state capture and could do serious, lasting damage to NATO’s effectiveness as a defensive alliance.

Unfortunately, what good news there was on stopping Nord Stream 2 took a decidedly negative turn this week. Along with U.S. sanctions on companies affiliated with Nord Stream, Denmark was holding up progress laying the pipeline through its territorial waters via its permitting process. The Danes have been



Photo Credit: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty  
rferl.org



## Why Stopping Nord Stream 2 Matters for the Baltics (cont.)

key friends to the Baltic States since Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia regained independence in 1991. Unfortunately, Denmark approved the permits for Nord Stream 2 on Wednesday, October 30th. Should U.S. and other E.U. members' efforts succeed in derailing Nord Stream 2, NATO can potentially avoid the situation outlined above. With Denmark's efforts over, however, it is looking more and more bleak. Western Europe should seek instead to diversify its energy resources and where these resources come from. The Baltic model for greater self-sufficiency, coupled with American and South Korean partnerships on liquefied natural gas (LNG), serves as a potential pathway towards reducing dependence on Russian energy. Likewise, Poland has announced that it is cutting off Russian gas imports and instead turning towards the Norwegians, American LNG, and its own wells off the Norwegian coast. On energy, the Baltics and Poland serve as positive models to the rest of Europe: by reducing their dependence on Russian energy supplies, they remove political and diplomatic leverage from Moscow and reduce Russian influence on their governments. By choosing to pursue Nord Stream 2, however, Germany risks going the way of Bulgaria, where the energy sector is dominated by Gazprom and the political system now much more resembles that of Russia than when it first joined the European Union. Should Nord Stream 2 prevail, Germany will betray its allies and weaken the defensive alliance, dividing Europe between East and West once more.

For the Baltic States, Nord Stream 2 is not an immediate threat to their energy supplies. They have greatly reduced their dependence on Russia in the energy sector. Their primary concern regarding Russia's ability to cut off

their energy supplies is not the route those supplies take, but the insecurity of their infrastructure, as many cables are unburied and unhidden, and many onshore components are poorly guarded, if at all. Nord Stream 2 is, however, a grave threat to the Baltic States' broader security. Should Germany be a whole nation "Schröderized," NATO will have a difficult time coping politically. Worse than that, though, NATO logistics will risk being completely thrown off track. While this scenario seems unlikely to come into fruition completely in the near-term, some aspects of the scenario will. The radical pacifism of Germany's left and center, as well as growing anti-Americanism, open the door for Russian influence in government. Increased dependence on Russian energy will open that door wider, making Germany an even weaker link in NATO than it already is. Many Western European nations that do not have such heightened threat perception with regard to Russia, and that have a greater affinity towards the German-led European Union over NATO, will be tempted to follow Germany's lead. For Russia, a weakened NATO is an opportunity. For the Baltics, a weakened NATO is an existential threat.



*A single section of pipeline remains incomplete around the Danish island of Bornholm, but Denmark approved the permits to build the pipeline on Wednesday, October 30.*

*Photo credit: neftegaz.ru*

# BSF Regional Activities

*By Otto Tabuns*  
*October 31, 2019*

October 2019 has been busy for the Baltic Security Foundation, pursuing our goal of fostering and promoting Baltic defense and security. The team has both participated in and organized events covering regional security issues.

The Rīga Conference 2019 took place on October 11th and 12th. Mr. Olevs Nikers and Mr. Otto Tabuns were both invited to participate. The agenda included current challenges, such as the issue of EU and NATO identities as well as understanding European strategic autonomy. In a regional scope, the conference strongly emphasized the increasing importance of China and the Arctic region, and did not forget to keep Ukraine and Georgia on the agenda, too. Human rights and political power in the digital age formed another fundamental debate among the participants. In addition to the regular program, Mr. Tabuns was invited to moderate the Rīga Conference Future Leaders Forum that gathered 30 graduate students and young professionals from Europe, the U.S., and South Africa. They discussed the preconditions necessary for NATO to remain a relevant and modern alliance. The future leaders identified which NATO priorities are more important to them, personally, and worked on a set of recommendations for what the Alliance could do to obtain the necessary toolkit for it to succeed in the coming years. This is significant in understanding the certain different perspectives across the Transatlantic space, paving the way to common ground among the new generation of opinion and decision makers.

Between October 20th and 24th, BSF was honored to host Ms. Maia Otarashvili, a Research Fellow and Deputy Director of the Eurasia Program at Foreign Policy Research Insti-

tute. She met the BSF team, as well as officials, diplomats, and scholars in Rīga. FPRI runs the Baltic Initiative, designed to advance Americans' awareness of our region while providing a platform for voices from the region. The Initiative has launched a regular publication titled the Baltic Bulletin, which shares insights about the region with thousands of readers worldwide. The Initiative also organizes public events, and FPRI has supported the organization of AABS conference in Philadelphia.

Therefore, Ms. Otarashvili's visit is expected to strengthen networking between experts on the Baltic region across the Atlantic, especially beyond the Beltway in the U.S.

On October 23rd, BSF, in cooperation with BW Consulting, hosted another Baltic Sea Security Initiative Workshop in Berlin, Germany. Experts from Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States assessed the military aspects of Baltic Sea security. They devoted particular attention to the maritime and air domains, strategic and bureaucratic culture, national defense planning, and constitutional considerations. This will be used to formulate practical recommendations to Baltic and Allied decision makers.

On October 30th, BSF representatives were invited to participate in the Baltic Security Strategy Forum in Kiel. Hosted by the Institute of Security Policy by Christian Albrecht University in Kiel, the forum dealt with key regional issues in the maritime domain. The high level presenters, including many from the German, Swedish, and U.S. Navies, discussed Swedish-Finnish naval cooperation, gaps in Baltic naval cooperation with the rest of the NATO, and former Soviet naval offensive plans in the Baltic Sea in context of the Russian maritime strategy today.

# Meet BSF Expert Matthew Thomas



Mr. Matthew Thomas is a Russia and post-Soviet area specialist. He works extensively with issues relating to hybrid warfare, intelligence, and diplomacy, and has served on projects dealing with NATO, Russia, and the Baltic States. He received his B.A. in International Studies and Modern Languages - Russian and his Master of International Affairs degrees from Texas A&M University. While at Texas A&M, he held numerous leadership positions in that institution's Corps of Cadets, serving as Corps Scholastic Officer his senior year. He is a member of Dobro Slovo National Slavic Honor Society and a Glasscock Award recipient. He has previously served as a Project Assistant on the Baltic Security Strategy Project and has presented at Atlantic Council on the subject: How can NATO best respond to threats from a resurgent Russia over the next five years?

With Baltic Security Foundation, Mr. Thomas serves as an expert contributor and as writer/editor of the Foundation newsletters. Outside of work, he enjoys hockey, baseball, and college football, and is an avid reader of classic literature. He is a classical music buff, and can often be found playing the piano, clarinet, or singing. Mr. Thomas is a "dyed-in-the-wool" Texan and a direct descendent of the oldest signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence from Mexico, Collin McKinney. He is from Weatherford, Texas.

# Baltic Security Foundation

## November 2019 Newsletter



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# Baltic Security Foundation Team

## Activities in November



By Otto Tabuns

This month the Baltic Security Foundation team has been very active on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, continuing existing projects and pursuing new areas of cooperation with likeminded experts and stakeholders.

On November 8, the Foundation team participated in the second annual Baltic Advocacy Day in Washington D.C., as well as the 13th annual Baltic Conference organized by the Joint Baltic American National Committee that represents major Baltic-American organizations. This gave an opportunity to speak with members of several offices of U.S. representatives across the political aisle to discuss U.S. foreign and security policy towards the Baltic Sea region and specific acts of legislation in particular. The trip also allowed for the team to visit a number of American think tanks focused, among others, towards the Baltic Sea region and consider potential cooperation.

On November 11, Marist College in New York hosted the Foundation team. President Olevs Nikers gave a lecture on security politics in the Baltics and Northeastern Europe. Director Otto Tabuns spoke at the International Law and Organizations course, covering legal aspects of national and international security in the region. This was made possible by the effort of Associate Professor of Political

Science Dr. Juris Pupcenoks and the Marist College Global Affairs Club. Altogether, 80 students, representatives of the faculty, and interested members of the local community participated.

The Baltic Sea Security Initiative saw a number of activities this month. On November 15, the Foundation hosted experts from Estonia, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden in Riga to assess common societal security challenges. On November 22, the Foundation team visited the Baltic Defence College in Tartu and continued to Tallinn, where they hosted the cyber security assessment workshop in the National Library of Estonia. Experts from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia and the United Kingdom provided an intraregional assessment that will serve as a basis for outlining the main common issues and shaping recommendations for Baltic decision makers and other stakeholders.

On November 29, the Foundation team participated in the NATO Eastern Flank Security Conference, hosted by Warsaw Institute. Following a keynote speech by Mr. Piotr Naimski, Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland, Government Plenipotentiary for Strategic Energy Infrastructure, Mr. Olevs Nikers spoke at the panel on energy security, covering political and economic issues of nuclear power and natural gas. Mr. Otto Tabuns gave his views on intraregional and European challenges for Baltic security at the discussion on defence.

The highlight of the conference was signing a Joint Declaration between Warsaw Institute, International Centre for Defence and Security, Baltic Security Foundation, Memel Institute and Eastern Europe Studies Centre on establishing a Baltic Fund to strengthen and institutionalize cooperation between Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

*Photo: Baltic and Polish Think Tank presidents holding the Declaration establishing the Baltic Fund. BSF President Olevs Nikers, left. Credit: Warsaw Institute Facebook page*

# Belarus: An Overlooked Key to Baltic Security



By Matthew Thomas  
November 24, 2019

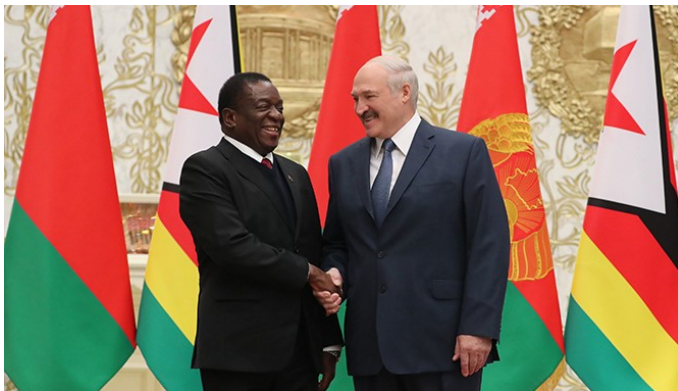
Winston Churchill once famously quipped that “Russia is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” A keen observer will notice that Alyaksandar Lukashenka’s Belarus is much the same. All too often, Western analysts have made the mistake of grossly oversimplifying Belarus’ relationship with Russia, as well as its domestic political affairs and broader foreign policy. This has led the West to neglect relations with Minsk, where despite a less than ideal government, great strategic opportunity lies, and where there is also significant strategic risk. The reality is this: Lukashenka is not simply Putin’s puppet in Minsk. He is concerned for his own nation’s sovereignty, and walks a thin tightrope in his relations with both Moscow and the West. Like him or not, there is no viable alternative to Lukashenka, and NATO needs a sovereign and neutral Belarus on the Baltics’ southeastern flank.

Russia and Belarus have had extensive disagreements on economic matters. While Russia has largely been the economic lifeline for Minsk, and while Minsk has enjoyed huge subsidies on Russian gas, the special relationship between the two has largely gone sour. Arguments over energy prices, much of which center around the purported “oil tax maneuver,” in which Russia will reduce its “dotations” on Belarusian oil by lowering export duties while taxing resource extraction. This is estimated to result in critical losses to the Belarusian energy sector and will likely put significant strain on Belarus’ already weak economy. Likewise, Russia and Belarus have had major disagreements about the latter’s role in the Russian led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). In response, Lukashenka’s government has been seeking economic ties elsewhere, particularly China, the European Union, and Africa. Earlier this year, Lithuania and Poland were making overtures towards Minsk regarding trade in the energy sector, and Belarusian agricultural products reach E.U. markets regularly. However, a central pillar in Minsk’s future trade relations will most certainly be politics. Lukashenka

## *Belarus: An Overlooked Key to Baltic Security (cont.)*

sees too many political demands from both Russia and the E.U., and will increasingly seek to develop ties with the Chinese and with African nations such as Zimbabwe. Case in point, earlier this year Minsk began work on a deal to trade Belarusian heavy machinery for Zimbabwean diamonds and precious metals.

Belarus' relations with the West are just as complicated. Lukashenka has sought to balance cooperation with Western governments on the Northern Distribution Network during the war in Afghanistan and its role as a neutral mediator between Russia and Ukraine in the Minsk Accords against its staunch refusal to acquiesce to Western demands on democratic governance, human rights, and economic liberalization. From the American side, this has led to the imposition of sanctions on Belarus, along with numerous postponements of sanctions, and the two are only



now ending an extended period of frosty diplomatic relations wherein Washington and Minsk did not exchange ambassadors.

In military affairs, Lukashenka's tightrope becomes even more bizarre. While Russia and Belarus are friendly partners on paper, and while the two have enjoyed extensive military cooperation, notably in Russia's Zapad ("West") military exercises, Russia actively threatens Belarusian security. In response to Lukashenka's gradual "soft-Belarusianization" and

stubbornness on economic matters, Moscow has ramped up its campaign of hybrid warfare on Belarus, particularly with regard to disinformation. Further, many hardliners in the Russian political elite have called for a "Krymnash" ("Crimea is ours") scenario for Belarus, wherein Belarus would be absorbed into the Russian state in much the same manner as Crimea. Even more, Russia has recently increased its troop presence in both Smolensk and Klinty near the Belarusian border. Smolensk puts the Russians within a straight shot of Minsk by the E30 highway, along which there are few population centers to offer resistance. At Klinty, the Russians are near the major Belarusian railway hub at Gomel'. This presence certainly increases the pressure on Minsk.

For NATO, Belarus is a key strategic point on the Eastern Flank. A sovereign Belarus stands in the way of Russian aggression in the Baltic States. Should the Russians control Belarus, the Suwałki Gap, a narrow strip of land on the border of Lithuania and Poland between Belarus and Kaliningrad, could easily be sealed off, giving the Russians a key logistical advantage while denying land access to the Baltics by NATO reinforcements. Likewise, the current lack of Russian ground troops or air bases in Belarus is a key buffer between Poland, Lithuania, and Russia. By being de facto non-aligned, Belarus provides greater security on the Eastern Flank, allowing for continued NATO access to the Suwałki Gap. The strategic depth Belarus provides is clouded somewhat by its military and economic weakness should Russia decide to violate the former's sovereignty, and this is precisely why relations with Minsk are taking on greater importance. Much as Western governments do not like the Lukashenka regime, and much as they are right not to, there are no viable alternatives that will maintain stability. The West, therefore, has to accept Lukashenka for who he is and encourage him to keep his country sovereign and neutral.

*Photo: President Lukashenka meets with Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa, January 2019.*

*Photo source: [president.gov.by](http://president.gov.by)*



# Meet BSF Cybersecurity Expert

## Andreis Purim

Mr. Andreis Purim/ Andrejs Puriņš is a Computer Engineer specializing in Cyber-defense. He graduated as an Electronic Technician at the Federal University of Technology - Paraná. There, he participated in numerous projects, including developing autonomous robots in partnership with the Advanced Laboratory of Robotics and Embedded Systems. He also became a Junior Researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development.

Andreis previously worked with Industrial Automation and Research and Development before enrolling at the University of Campinas (UNICAMP). At UNICAMP, he focuses two main areas: Cryptography and Data Science.

Andreis serves as a Liaison Officer for Baltic Security Foundation in Latin America, and contributes as an expert on Computer Science.

Andreis was born in Curitiba, from one of the first Latvian families to arrive in Brazil, and has long worked to preserve his Latvian heritage. He is the Head of the Media Department of the Brazilian Association of Latvian Culture and worked extensively with the Latvian Consulate and the Latvian Association of Latin America and the Caribbean.

