

Lithuania's 30 Years on the Frontline against Russia

——From Zero Military Armament to the Establishment of a Tank Battalion

Research Fellow, Military History Division, Center for Military History **MATSUO Koji**

Introduction

On October 22, 2024, the Lithuanian Seimas approved the purchase of tanks from Germany.¹ The combat vehicle to be acquired is the Leopard 2A8, the latest model from the Leopard series frequently mentioned in reports about the Russia-Ukraine war. Under negotiations since January 23, 2024,² the plan is to purchase 54 tanks to form a single tank battalion. The Lithuanian forces will be equipped with tanks for the first time in the more than 30 years since the restoration of independence. Like other Baltic states, Lithuania lacked a military when it regained independence and hence developed its defense capabilities at full speed. While there may appear to be an increasing focus on national defense following the onset of the Ukraine war in 2022, it was the Crimean crisis in 2014 that further heightened the Baltic states' vigilance against the Russian threat. On March 3, 2022, shortly after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated, "If we are no more, then, God forbid, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia will be next,"³ indicating that European countries have a shared recognition of the Baltic situation to some degree.

NATO's stance toward Russia has changed significantly after Russia began its invasion of Ukraine. The NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed in 1997, confirming in writing that neither would regard the other as an adversary. This stance was maintained for the next quarter-century. However, following the invasion in June 2022, NATO adopted a Strategic Concept emphasizing deterrence against Russia and forward defense. This Strategic Concept, representing the highest level of NATO's strategic guidance, marked a 180-degree shift from a focus on strategic partnership. In the course of this transformation, Lithuania and the other Baltic states have consistently taken a hardline stance toward Russia. The Baltic states are also the top three donors to Ukraine as a percentage of GDP.⁴ In this light, focusing attention on Lithuania and the Baltic states is meaningful in analyzing the situation in Russia and Europe.

The chances that Russia will use force against Lithuania seem unlikely at least in the foreseeable future, given also the situation in Ukraine. On the other hand, Lithuania has experienced a Soviet invasion in the past, making its ongoing vigilance against Russia entirely understandable. "Soviet invasion" refers not to

the one during World War II but to the one in January 1991, just before Lithuania regained its independence. It declared the restoration of its independence on March 11, 1990, and the Soviet Union recognized Lithuanian independence on September 6, 1991. As such, the invasion is not internationally deemed as the use of force against a sovereign state. The Soviet Union dissolved in December of that year, closing a tumultuous year for the world.

After regaining independence, Lithuania gradually functioned as a sovereign state but faced challenges, such as establishing a national defense force and acceding to NATO. Although it might have been easier to establish a national defense force by recruiting personnel such as former Soviet military officers in the country, this would have made it more difficult to fulfill its goal of NATO membership. Therefore, from the outset, Lithuania sought to build up defense capabilities with NATO interoperability in mind and with the support of Western countries. As a result, Lithuania acceded to NATO in 2004, and NATO's defense arrangements have been strengthened since 2016. NATO itself had a longstanding concern. Lithuania's southern area bordering Poland, known as the Suwałki Gap, is a narrow and vulnerable area between the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad and Belarus. If this area were to come under Russian control, the Baltic states would become isolated geographically. The establishment of the tank battalion mentioned earlier is intended to help strengthen the defense capabilities of Lithuania and the Baltic region. This article outlines Lithuania's defense policies, focusing on those following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the transformation of NATO during the same period.

Historical Background: The Soviet Annexation of Lithuania and Its Restoration of Independence

Japanese high school world history textbooks, for example, do not necessarily discuss Lithuania in depth. Yet, considering that Lithuania effectively united with Poland in the 16th century, a significant portion of Polish history can be regarded as Lithuanian history. Lithuania was one of the last places in Europe to adopt Christianity. In the 14th century, the Grand Duke of Lithuania converted to Christianity when he ascended to the Polish throne. Subsequently, the two countries were united under the Union of Lublin in 1569. During the three partitions of Poland in the late 18th century, Lithuania too was divided. From then on, the Baltic region, including Lithuania, became part of the Russian Empire. While Lithuania gained independence at the end of World War I, it was annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 and became its 14th union republic. This annexation was based on the secret protocol of the 1939 German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact in which Germany and the Soviet Union unilaterally stipulated the spheres of influence. But, in June 1941, Germany launched its invasion of the Soviet Union, and Lithuania fell under German occupation. In 1944, Lithuania was re-annexed due to Soviet comeback, marking another chapter in its turbulent history. Under Soviet rule, particularly during Stalin's era, communist policies such as forced collectivization of agriculture were

imposed, and many people who objected against them were exiled to Siberia or the Far East. These events remain a source of Lithuanian resentment toward Russia even now. In addition, this situation gave rise to partisans' intense armed struggle against Soviet rule, which resulted in over 20,000 deaths among partisans alone.⁵ The number of victims is even higher when counting those mobilized by the Soviet regime, the affected civilians, and those who were exiled far away and could not return. Known as the "Forest Brothers," the partisans were a formidable force, but they were largely suppressed by the late 1940s and disappeared entirely by the mid-1950s.

Lithuania's turning point came in March 1985: the death of Konstantin Chernenko and the subsequent appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev as general secretary of the Communist Party. Gorbachev initiated perestroika (political reform) and glasnost (openness), triggering Lithuanian moves aimed at restoring independence. The decisive date was August 23, 1987. August 23 was the date that German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov signed the Nonaggression Pact in 1939. For Lithuania, it was the date that the pact's secret protocol destined the country's incorporation into the Soviet sphere of influence in disregard of Lithuania's wishes. On this day in 1987, dissidents held a rally in a public square in Vilnius, the country's capital, and openly denounced the illegitimacy of the Soviet's annexation of Lithuania. Following this rally, intellectuals promoted a reform movement known as "Sąjūdis" that was joined by even some Communist Party members. On August 23, 1989, the "Baltic Way" was carried out in which two million Baltic people joined their hands and formed a human chain spanning 650 kilometers through Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius. It was meant to demonstrate the shared destiny of the three states to the international community, along with demonstrating the injustice of Soviet annexation and the states' desire for independence.⁶

Contrary to his open-minded image, Gorbachev took firm measures against the Baltic states' moves for independence. On March 11, 1990, the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic declared Lithuania's restoration of independence and invalidation of the Soviet constitution. The country's name was also reverted to the prewar "Republic of Lithuania." Gorbachev deemed the declaration invalid and imposed countermeasures, including economic sanctions. Ultimately, on January 10, 1991, he issued an ultimatum demanding the immediate reinstatement of the Soviet constitution. From that evening to the next day, Soviet troops were deployed and seized control of the defense ministry, media outlets, and major train stations. In response, unarmed Lithuanian people gathered and sought to defend the parliament building and broadcasting stations. On January 13, the TV Tower in Vilnius was attacked, causing 14 deaths and more than 600 injured.⁷

While the number of people killed in the incident was by no means insignificant, it was relatively small compared to that of the armed conflicts of half a century earlier. This partly owed to the presence of Western Bloc journalists in Vilnius at the time. Furthermore, after the Lithuanian Radio was silenced, it changed location and continued to air information. This resulted in drawing global attention to the events and restraining the actions of the Soviet forces. On the 11th of the following February, Iceland recognized Lithuania's independence. After the failed coup in Moscow in August of that year, major countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France also recognized Lithuania's independence. No longer

able to resist this momentum, the Soviet Union recognized the independence of the Baltic states, including Lithuania, on September 6. This marked the restoration of its status as an independent state recognized by all. The Soviet Union itself dissolved in December of that year. For around three months until then, the Soviet Union and the Baltic states coexisted as independent states, and the maps and atlases published during this period have become a type of rare collectible.

The Establishment of a National Defense Force and Accession to NATO

After regaining independence, Vytautas Landsbergis, the chairman of the Supreme Council and formerly a member of the Sajūdis movement, became the head of state. In 1993, a presidential system was introduced, and Algirdas Brazauskas became the first president. One of the military challenges after independence was establishing a national defense force, but the most pressing issue was the withdrawal of Russian troops in the country. Since the Soviet era, all three Baltic states hosted Soviet military facilities and thousands of officers. They comprised strategically critical military facilities, including the Paldiski nuclear submarine training and maintenance facility in Estonia and the Skrunda early-warning radar station in Latvia. These facilities and units were taken over by the Russian forces. Lithuania hosted only units and no critical military facilities, and tensions with the Russian-speaking population were relatively less compared to those in the other two Baltic states. These factors contributed to relatively smoother withdrawal negotiations, and a bilateral agreement was reached on September 9, 1992. Under this agreement, Russian units in Lithuania completed their withdrawal on August 31, 1993.

The moves for establishing a national defense force began in 1990, before independence was internationally recognized. First, Lithuania developed legislation that stipulated the status and objectives of the military. At this point, there existed a clear policy to develop the Lithuanian Armed Forces into a military interoperable with other Western forces.⁸ The law on the national defense force and military service enacted at this time stipulated that the command and control system of the armed forces would align with both Lithuanian and NATO standards. The country was divided into three regions, and brigades consisting of three infantry battalions were in charge of their respective regions. These battalions were developed with the goal of achieving capabilities and equipment comparable to NATO battalions. For armament acquisition, the following terms and conditions were specified: "reduce the diversity of weapon systems and types"; "acquire armaments cost-effective to maintain"; and "provide the Armed Forces with modern weapons corresponding to NATO standards."⁹ To join NATO, Lithuania also made defense budget allocation efforts. It increased its defense budget from 0.9% of GDP in 1997 to 1.5% in 1999, with "integration with NATO" listed as one of the main areas for defense spending. Furthermore, Lithuania set a goal of increasing its defense spending to 2% of GDP by 2001 and achieved this target. This 2% commitment is maintained even now, nearly two decades later. As of 2018, Lithuania's GDP was US\$52.5 billion and defense budget US\$1.04 billion (1.98% of GDP).¹⁰ At the 2014 NATO Wales Summit, member

states reaffirmed in the joint declaration their guideline to spend 2% of GDP on defense. In 2021, only eight countries, including Lithuania, met this target.¹¹

Lithuania's aspiration to achieve interoperability with NATO presented personnel challenges. If it had merely wanted to build a national defense force, the simplest and fastest method would have been to recruit former Soviet military officers and others with military experience. However, the Soviet forces were entirely different from the armed forces of Western countries. Compared to their Western counterparts, Soviet forces tended to impose highly specific regulations on the actions of soldiers and officers. The "Field Manual of the Red Army" stipulated action guidelines and detailed numerical standards.¹² While this approach was suited for managing large-scale units, it had the disadvantage of eliminating flexibility at the lower levels, leading to rigid operations. This rigidity largely remained even toward the end of the Soviet era, with assessments noting, "Compared to Western armed forces, the discretionary authority of commanders at all levels is somewhat limited, while the powers of central or high-level commanders appear to be considerably stronger."¹³ If Lithuania were to first build an armed force based on the Soviet model, it would require immense time and effort to reform it into a NATO model. Consequently, there were concerns that if the newly built Lithuanian Armed Forces adopted Soviet characteristics, it would become challenging to achieve interoperability with NATO. At the same time, there was concern that individuals with ties to Russia could infiltrate the military. Therefore, the United States was asked to assist in building a national defense force, and U.S. support measures were explored. In 1992, the U.S. Department of Defense's National Guard established the Military Liaison Team, leading to Lithuania forming a cooperative relationship with the Pennsylvania Guard and receiving its support.¹⁴ This initiative demonstrated the U.S. commitment to supporting the Baltic states and is regarded as a beneficial mechanism for transferring U.S. military know-how.¹⁵ This arrangement of state guards supporting foreign forces evolved into the State Partnership Program, which has been implemented between U.S. states and 106 countries as of 2024.¹⁶

While the establishment of the national defense force began to gain momentum, Lithuania's goal of joining NATO remained a distant one. In the 1990s, former Warsaw Pact countries strongly pressed for NATO membership, even more than Lithuania, arousing friction with NATO, which did not want to provoke Russia. One of the causes of this friction was NATO's lack of specific criteria for new membership. The accession of four states (Greece, Turkey, West Germany, and Spain) and the accession of unified Germany during the Cold War were the outcomes of individual deliberations and negotiations. In this light, NATO adopted the Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 1999, the year that Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary joined the alliance during the first eastward expansion. Since then, the fulfillment of programs developed under the MAP became a benchmark for accession. Regarding defense and military issues, the MAP states: "The ability of aspiring countries to contribute militarily to collective defence and to the Alliance's new missions and their willingness to commit to gradual improvements in their military capabilities will be factors to be considered in determining their suitability for NATO membership." It further describes that expected roles upon accession would include "provide forces and capabilities for collective defence and other Alliance missions" and "participate, as appropriate, in the military structure."¹⁷ Beyond the MAP's guidelines, some have noted that more direct contributions to NATO's missions have become a de facto prerequisite for membership.¹⁸ Indeed, all 16 countries that joined NATO after the Cold War had participated in NATO-led

international peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan prior to their accession.

It is interesting that, in this process, the Estonian Defense Forces commander proposed the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT) project at a 1993 meeting of Baltic military commanders. The project's objective was to "provide a mechanism for the development of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian defence forces, to enhance the capacity of Baltic international peacekeeping, to assist Baltic security and military co-operation."¹⁹ The role of the BALTBAT was defined as: "to exercise mandates given by the UN and/or CSCE [later OSCE] for peacekeeping, also cooperating with NATO and WEU in the field of peacekeeping. The BALTBAT shall be organized in accordance with internationally recognized military and peacekeeping principles."²⁰ Although the battalion was formed, it was never deployed. However, it did contribute to the Baltic states' subsequent participation in international peacekeeping operations. The Baltic states deployed forces to Bosnia and Herzegovina—in 1996 to the Implementation Force (IFOR) and from 1997 to the Stabilization Force (SFOR).²¹ The Baltic states did not make the deployments independently. Rather, one platoon was provided by the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian forces, respectively, which were combined into an ad hoc composite company that was integrated into a Danish battalion for deployment. The Danish battalion, including the Baltic forces, began full-scale operations after October 1997 and engaged in operations in northern Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of the Multinational Task Force North (MNTF-N).²²

In January of the following year, 1998, the "U.S.-Baltic Charter of Partnership" was concluded between the United States and the Baltic states. The charter explicitly commends the activities of the Baltic states, stating: "The United States welcomes and appreciates the contributions that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have already made to European security through the peaceful restoration of independence and their active participation in the Partnership for Peace."²³ The United States also welcomes their contributions to IFOR, SFOR, and other international peacekeeping missions." In addition, the charter states, "The United States of America welcomes the aspirations and supports the efforts of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to join NATO."²⁴ Subsequently, the accession of seven countries, including Lithuania, was agreed upon at the Prague NATO Summit held in November 2002, and the seven countries officially joined NATO on March 29, 2004.

The Crimean Crisis and Beyond

During the first decade following the accession to NATO, the Lithuanian Armed Forces conducted primarily overseas operations, including deployment to Afghanistan. A major turning point for the Lithuanian defense posture came in 2014 with the Crimean crisis. To bolster its collective defense posture and deter potential threats, NATO decided to rotationally deploy battalion-size battlegroups to the Baltic states and Poland, which share borders with Russia (the mainland and the Kaliningrad Oblast). This arrangement is known as the "enhanced Forward Presence (eFP)." The battlegroup deployed to Lithuania is led by Germany and participated by a total of seven countries.²⁵ Rotational deployment was chosen over permanent

deployment, partly because the latter would require a deeper commitment from the sending nation to the host nation, but more so because of the impact on Russia.

In May 1997, NATO and Russia signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act. As NATO's expansion was already becoming inevitable by this time, the Act articulated that both parties would not consider each other as adversaries, and stipulated that NATO would neither deploy nuclear weapons nor permanently station combat forces on the territory of new members. Since the term "new members" implies that states will newly join NATO in the future, it can be construed that Russia had accepted NATO's expansion as of the signing date. The Russian government at the time did not, however, react explicitly to this term. The fact that "permanent stationing of combat forces" was not clearly defined as of the signing date went on to cause confusion later on. While Russia raised concerns that the eFP might be in conflict with the "permanent stationing of combat forces," it was ultimately concluded that the rotational deployment of battalion-size battlegroups did not constitute "permanent stationing of combat forces." The eFP was established in 2017 and deployed four multinational battalion-size battlegroups to the Baltic states and Poland.

Following Russia's launch of an invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, NATO reinforced its existing battalion-size battlegroups and agreed to deploy additional ones to four countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. This brought the total number of multinational battalion-size battlegroups to eight, extending NATO's presence along its eastern flank from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea while maintaining the framework of "rotational deployment of battalion-size battlegroups." Albeit with criticism from Russia, the deployments have been deemed to fall under the NATO-Russia Founding Act. Since then, NATO has undergone various changes. In its Strategic Concept adopted in June 2022, NATO identified Russia as a threat in a marked departure from the past. Finland and Sweden reversed their policies on NATO membership and joined the alliance in April 2023 and March 2024, respectively. Meanwhile, NATO endorses Ukraine's right to self-defense under the Charter of the United Nations. While member states have provided various support for Ukraine and identify Russia as a threat in the Strategic Concept, they do not seek direct confrontation with Russia.

On December 18, 2023, Lithuanian Defense Minister Arvydas Anusauskas reached an agreement with German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius on the permanent stationing of the German armed forces in Lithuania.²⁶ This agreement has the potential to significantly alter the future relationship between NATO and Russia. Under the agreement, a German army brigade consisting of 4,800 troops will be permanently stationed in Lithuania. Housing, training grounds, and other infrastructure are to be constructed over the next several years at a cost equivalent to approximately 0.3% of Lithuania's GDP and are scheduled to be completed in 2027. While the German forces have been deployed outside NATO's borders since 30 years ago, this is their first permanent stationing since World War II. Moreover, by de facto nullifying the NATO-Russia Founding Act, Germany appears to have adopted a more confrontational stance toward Russia. As of August 2022, Tsuruoka Michito wrote, "However, the Madrid NATO Summit in late June 2022 refrained from explicitly nullifying the agreement. Both the newly adopted Strategic Concept and the summit's concluding documents made no reference to the NATO-Russia Founding Act. It was completely ignored

so to speak. This was not likely by coincidence or an oversight. By omitting references, NATO effectively signaled that the Act had lost its force, while deciding to avoid an explicit nullification.”²⁷ The permanent stationing went a step further. The agreement was made strictly between Lithuania and Germany, and NATO has not expressed an opinion on it. Nonetheless, it would be reasonable to interpret that NATO tacitly approves the stationing.

Germany and Lithuania share deep historical ties. The 1410 Battle of Tannenberg, where the combined forces of Lithuania and Poland decisively defeated the Teutonic Order, is well-known. In 1914, Germany overwrote this defeat from 500 years ago by naming its major victory over the Russian forces as the “Battle of Tannenberg.” Lithuania’s principal port city, Klaipėda, was also established by the Teutonic Knights. The city was once known as Memel and was part of Germany until World War I. The lyrics of the prewar German national anthem include “From the Meuse to the Memel,” indicating Germany’s territories at the time. Despite this fraught history, which includes a German military invasion, Germany refrained from permanently stationing its forces outside its territory after World War II. In this sense, the permanent stationing of the German forces in Lithuania represents a historic change.

The Reality of a Russian Invasion

With Lithuania (as well as Estonia and Latvia) under the protection of NATO, is a Russian invasion of these countries a real possibility? As mentioned earlier, Lithuania (and Latvia) was attacked by Soviet forces in 1991. However, this attack was aimed at containing the Baltic attempt to achieve independence from the Soviet Union.

To examine this possibility, *War with Russia*²⁸ published in 2016 may provide some reference. It is a novel about Russia invading the Baltic region and eastern Ukraine in 2017 and is obviously fiction. The author, Sir Richard Shirreff, is a retired British Army general who served as NATO’s deputy supreme allied commander Europe from 2011 to 2014. Though the book is fictional, it incorporates Shirreff’s experience. NATO’s most defining feature is collective defense stipulated in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states that an attack on one member is considered an attack on all. In *War with Russia*, however, NATO member states are portrayed as not being in alignment and requiring 13 days to invoke Article 5 unanimously at the North Atlantic Council, NATO’s highest decision-making body that requires unanimity in principle. Furthermore, NATO does not begin counterattacks until 47 days later. Member states’ varying stances on support for Ukraine, coupled with Shirreff’s background, lends credibility to such delays, even if they are fictional. The invasion in the novel begins with riots by Russian-speaking people living in Latvia, which Russia uses as a pretext to act under the guise of protecting its ethnic kin. This appears to take into account Russia’s actions during the annexation of Crimea. Russia’s real-world action against Ukraine in 2022 was a direct invasion and was less skillful and less calculated than in the fictional world. In this regard, Shirreff may have overestimated Russia.

Russia's actions even before the Crimean crisis were sufficient to alarm neighboring countries. The Russian forces conducted Exercise Kavkaz 2008 near the border with Georgia in the summer of 2008 and remained there even after the exercise concluded, leading to the subsequent South Ossetia conflict. Since 2013, Russia has repeatedly conducted unannounced snap exercises near its borders with NATO. Given that exercises with many participating troops would require the Russian forces to accept NATO observers, the reported troop numbers may have been underreported.²⁹ Several exercises have also taken place in Belarus, Lithuania's neighboring country. As long as there are real-world examples like the Crimean conflict, Lithuania must remain vigilant, suspecting that such exercises might be preparations for an invasion disguised as a military exercise.

As epitomized by the Bucha massacre in Ukraine, the Russian forces' display of brutality in the early stages of the invasion gave NATO a sense of urgency. While brutality by the Russian forces is not a new phenomenon, the atrocities in Ukraine garnered widespread global attention. Brutality is different from military strength, and demonstrated that regions invaded by Russia could face significant civilian casualties beyond collateral damage from combat. For NATO member states, particularly the Baltic states that share direct borders with Russia (and Belarus), these events, including torture and killings entirely unrelated to military necessity, serve as a reminder that such states could be next.

Does Russia have any reason to invade Lithuania or the Baltic region? *War with Russia* indicates that such an invasion could be aimed at breaking NATO's encirclement to strengthen Russia's defense posture. In the immediate aftermath of Russia's actual invasion of Ukraine, some suggested that NATO's eastward expansion was the cause. However, President Putin himself emphasized the historical unity between Russia and Ukraine. He explained that he was protecting the Russian-speaking population from the "violent" Ukrainian government, as well as demilitarizing and de-nazifying it. In any event, these reasons lack evidence and are inconceivable based on the values of democratic nations. While it is possible that it was simply a series of miscalculations, Russia has demonstrated that an aggression could be launched without a rational justification.

Conclusion

In this context, the permanent stationing of the German forces in Lithuania can be regarded as highly effective for strengthening the defense posture. While Russia has not directly reacted to the reports, according to the U.S. Institute for the Study of War (ISW), President Putin asserted on January 16, 2024 that Latvia and other Baltic states are "throwing [ethnic] Russian people," a situation he claimed "directly affects [Russia's] security."³⁰ Such rhetoric has traditionally been used as a pretext for aggression. On January 19, the defense ministers of the Baltic states announced plans to construct defensive installations along the Russia-Belarus border.³¹ On the same day, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius stated, "Our experts expect a period of five to eight years in which this [a Russian attack on a NATO member] could be

possible.”³² NATO treated Russia as a partner for 30 years following the Cold War but shifted this stance in 2022. The establishment of a new tank battalion in the Lithuanian Armed Forces and the permanent stationing of the German forces indicate a further shift in NATO’s approach.

(Draft completed November 13, 2024)

¹ “Lithuania confirms purchase of Leopard 2A8 main battle tanks from Germany,” *Defence Industry Europe*, October 22, 2024, <https://defence-industry.eu/lithuania-confirms-purchase-of-leopard-2a8-main-battle-tanks-from-germany/> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

² “Lithuania seeks to buy Leopard 2 tanks from Germany,” Reuters, January 23, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/lithuania-seeks-buy-leopard-2-tanks-germany-2024-01-23/> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

³ “Ukuraina kanraku nara ‘tsugi wa Baruto sangoku’ Zerensukii daitoryo [If Ukraine falls ‘the three Baltic states will be next,’ says President Zelenskyy],” AFPBB News, March 4, 2022, <https://www.afpbb.com/articles/-/3393170> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

⁴ “Ukuraina e no shiengaku: Ichii wa Amerika, GDP hi no joi wa Baruto sangoku [Support for Ukraine: U.S. ranks in first, Baltic states rank in the top three as a percentage of GDP],” NHK, February 24, 2023, <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20230224/k10013989781000.html> (last accessed November 18, 2024).

⁵ Alfonsas Eidintas, Alfredas Bumblauskas, Antanas Kulakauskas, and Mindaugas Tamošaitis, *The History of Lithuania*, Eugrimas Publishing House, 2016.

⁶ Ito Takayuki, Inouchi Toshio, and Nakai Kazuo, eds., *Porando Ukuraina Barutoshi* [The history of Poland, Ukraine, and the Baltic states], Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1998, pp. 423-425.

⁷ Eidintas, Bumblauskas, Kulakauskas, and Tamošaitis, *The History of Lithuania*.

⁸ Giedre Statkeviciute, “The Development of Lithuanian Armed Forces: View Ahead,” *Baltic Defence Review* 1/1999, Baltic Defence College, p. 1.

⁹ Statkeviciute, “The Development of Lithuanian Armed Forces: View Ahead,” p. 5.

¹⁰ IISS, “The Military Balance 2019,” Routledge, 2018, pp. 125-126.

¹¹ Hirose Yoshikazu, “Kyotsu yosan to gunjihi [Common budget and military expenditures],” in *NATO (kita taiseiyo joyaku kiko) wo shiru tame no 71 sho* [71 chapters for understanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)], ed. Hirose Yoshikazu, Akashi Shoten, 2023, pp. 28-31.

¹² Tamura Naoya, *Kakkoku rikugun no kyohan wo yomu* [Reading the manuals of various countries’ armies], Ikaros Publications, 2015, p. 350.

¹³ Minakata Heiji and Sekino Hideo, *Sorengun “kokeki-gata” ni tenkan suru senryaku to senryoku no subete* [About the strategy and capabilities for converting to the Soviet’s “offensive-type” military forces], Kyoikusha, 1978, p. 26.

¹⁴ The Joint Baltic American National Committee, “The Baltic Journey to NATO,” December 21, 2020, <https://www.jbanc.org/nato/> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

¹⁵ Gundars Zalkans, “The Development of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Latvia,” *Baltic Defence Review*, 1/1999, p. 2.

¹⁶ Lawrence Kapp and Nina M. Serafino, “The National Guard State Partnership Program: Background, Issues, and Options for Congress,” Congressional Research Service, August 15, 2011, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R41957.pdf> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

¹⁷ NATO, “Official text: Membership Action Plan (MAP),” April 24, 1999, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_27444.htm?selectedLocale=en (last accessed November 5, 2024).

¹⁸ Vaidotas Urbelis, “Defence Policies of the Baltic States: from the Concept of Neutrality towards NATO membership,” *NATO-EAPC Individual Fellowship Report 2001-2003*, p. 12.

¹⁹ Annika Bergman Rosamond, “BALTBAT: the emergence of a common defence dimension to Nordic co-operation,” Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, 2000, <https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/wps/ban01/> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

²⁰ Janis Kazocins, “The Baltic Battalion five years on,” *Baltic Defence Review* 2/1999, Baltic Defence College, p. 48.

²¹ Piret Paljak, “Participation in International Military Operations,” in *Apprenticeship, Partnership, Membership: Twenty Years of Defence Development in the Baltic States*, ed. Tony Lawrence and Tomas Jermalavičius, International Centre for Defence Studies, 2013, pp. 202-239.

²² SFOR, “Baltics and Danes live, task together,” December 29, 1997, <https://www.nato.int/sfor/nations/various/denmark/Baltic%20Detachment/baltics.htm> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

²³ The Partnership for Peace (PfP) is a program for fostering trust between NATO and former Soviet states and other European countries. Partners can build up an individual relationship with NATO and receive support from the alliance in areas such as capacity building.

²⁴ “A Charter of Partnership among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia, and Republic of Lithuania,” U.S. Department of State Archive, January 16, 1998, https://1997-2001.state.gov/www/regions/eur/ch_9801_baltic_charter.html (last accessed November 5, 2024).

²⁵ NATO, “NATO’s military presence in the east of the Alliance,” Last updated December 8, 2023, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topic_s_136388.htm (last accessed November 5, 2024).

²⁶ “German brigade to be combat ready in Lithuania, on Russian border, in 2027,” Reuters, December 18, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/german-brigade-be-combat-ready-lithuania-russian-border-2027-2023-12-18/> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

²⁷ Tsuruoka Michito, "NATO Roshia kihon giteisho no borei: mittsu no ronten [An apparition of the NATO-Russia Founding Act: three issues]," The Japan Forum on International Relations (JFIR) Commentary, August 1, 2022, https://www.jfir.or.jp/studygroup_article/8872/ (last accessed November 5, 2024).

²⁸ General Sir Richard Shirreff, *War with Russia*, Quercus, 2016, p. 400.

²⁹ Dave Johnson, "ZAPAD 2017 and Euro-Atlantic security," *NATO Review*, December 14, 2017, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2017/12/14/zapad-2017-and-euro-atlantic-security/index.html> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

³⁰ "Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment," ISW, January 16, 2024, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-january-16-2024> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

³¹ "Baruto sangoku Roshia ya Berarushi to no kokkyozoi ni boei shisetsu kochiku e [The three Baltic states to build defensive installations along the Russia-Belarus border]," NHK, January 24, 2024, <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20240121/k10014328831000.html> (last accessed November 5, 2024).

³² 'Roshia, 10 nen'nai ni NATO kogeki' Dokukokubosho ga yosoku, tsuyomaru keikaikan [German defense minister predicts 'Russia will attack NATO within 10 years,' increasing alarm]," Asahi Shimbun Digital, January 20, 2024, <https://news.livedoor.com/article/detail/25730889/> (last accessed May 1, 2024).

PROFILE

MATSUO Koji

Research Fellow, Military History Division, Center for Military History

Field of expertise: History of the Baltic states, history of NATO

The views expressed in this paper do not represent the official views of the National Institute for Defense Studies.
We do not permit any unauthorized reproduction or unauthorized copying.

Planning and Coordination Office

National Institute for Defense Studies

Telephone (direct) : 03-3260-3011

Telephone (general) : 03-3268-3111 (ext. 29177)

National Institute for Defense Studies website: www.nids.mod.go.jp