



## BALTIC JOURNAL OF LAW & POLITICS

A Journal of Vytautas Magnus University

VOLUME 16, NUMBER 2 (2023)

ISSN 2029-0454



Cit.: *Baltic Journal of Law & Politics* 16:2 (2023): 176–193

<https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/bjlp/>

[bjlp-overview.xml](#)

DOI: 10.2478/bjlp-2023-0019

# FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY: LITHUANIA'S TOTAL DEFENCE RESPONSE TO RUSSIAN THREATS

**Dovydas Rogulis**

**PhD student**

**General Jonas Žemaitis Military Academy of Lithuania, Lithuania**

### Contact information

Address: Šilo g. 5A, LT-10322 Vilnius, Lithuania

Phone: +370 5 212 6313

Email: [dovydas.rogulis@edu.lka.lt](mailto:dovydas.rogulis@edu.lka.lt)

Received: October 8, 2023; reviews: 2; accepted: December 27, 2023.

## ABSTRACT

This research delves into Lithuania's response to the perceived threat from Russia and the practical implementation of its total defence approach. Key political figures, including the President, Prime Minister, Minister of National Defence, and Chairman of the National Security and Defence Committee, are scrutinized using securitization theory. The study explores how these actors frame total defence as an urgent response to an existential threat and analyses both their discourse and tangible actions from 2020 onwards. Distinct approaches among political figures emerge, with the President prioritizing communication, the Minister of Defence emphasizing tangible improvements, and the Chairman of the NSDC acting as a driving force. Despite increased military spending, the involvement of society in national defence—integral to the total defence strategy—remains limited. Factors contributing to this limitation include unclear leadership, insincere rhetoric, bureaucratic obstacles, and the initial unpreparedness of the Armed Forces to integrate civilians. The study underscores the critical need for genuine commitment and leadership to achieve meaningful breakthroughs in Lithuania's total defence approach. While politicians employ securitization and public discourse to align with public sentiment and present themselves as problem solvers, the actual progress in engaging the public and the private sector remains limited. The discrepancy between discourse and material implementation suggests that a more substantial commitment is essential for effective societal involvement in national defence, making it

clear that symbolic gestures fall short of achieving impactful results in Lithuania's total defence approach.

**KEY WORDS**

Lithuania, total defence, securitization, political discourse, Russia.

## INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, Russia's expansionist policies and military interventions into sovereign states compel Lithuania to review its defence strategy objectives and their implementation. Military invasions, cyber attacks, actions of private military groups, creation of pseudo-states, energy blackmail, territorial occupations, fabrication of false news, establishment of influence agents and non-governmental organizations have become a new "norm" in Russia's politics.<sup>1</sup>

Perceiving Russia as a threat in Lithuania is based not only on the country's size and power but also on its identity, which is heavily influenced by history, including the Soviet past, post-communist transformations, and the Russian Federation itself.<sup>2</sup> Upon regaining the independence of the Republic of Lithuania in 1990, when considering external threats, the focus was placed on the threats of neighbouring states Russia and Belarus. Membership in the EU and NATO was regarded as an external security lever for Lithuania.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Lithuania's membership in NATO and the EU does not eliminate Russia as one of the most significant challenges to Lithuania's sovereignty.<sup>4</sup> This is reflected not only in academic publications discussing the threat posed by Russia to Lithuania and the region<sup>5</sup> but also in opinion polls<sup>6</sup>, as well as citizens' willingness to defend Lithuania.

Being in the aggressive neighbourhood of Russia, Lithuania must rely not only on the support of its allies and the principles of collective defence but also on developing its own national capabilities. According to the updated 2016 military strategy, these capabilities are based on a total defence approach. This involves the interaction between military and civilian capabilities, close collaboration between the Lithuanian Armed Forces and other state institutions, ensuring Lithuania's national security.<sup>7</sup>

After the annexation of Crimea, the engagement of Lithuanian society in the defence of the country became a topic of extensive discussions among scholars, experts, and political decision-makers, who clearly stated that Russia is an existential

<sup>1</sup> Dalia Bankauskaite, Janis Berzins, Tony Lawrence, Deividas Šlekys, Brett Swaney and T. X. Hammes, "Baltics Left of Bang: Comprehensive Defense in the Baltic States," *In Strategic Forum*, No. 307 (National Defense University Press, 2020), 1–19.

<sup>2</sup> Mindaugas Jurkynas, "Security concerns of the Baltic States in the twenty-first century," *In Small States and International Security* (Routledge, 2014), 113–129.

<sup>3</sup> Diana Janušauskienė and Jūratė Novagrockienė, "Lietuvos gyventojų požiūrio į saugumą analizė," *Lietuvos metinė strateginė apžvalga* 1 (2003): 294–298.

<sup>4</sup> Gintaras Šumskas and Irmina Matonytė, "Impact of the mass media on the assessment of military threats," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 16, No. 2017–2018 (2018): 425–426.

<sup>5</sup> Gražina Miniutaitė, "Lithuania's Evolving Security and Defence Policy: Problems and Prospects," *Lithuanian Annual Strategy Review* 2006 (2007); Margarita Šešelgytė, "Security culture of Lithuania," *Lithuanian foreign policy review* 24 (2010): 23–40; Gražina Miniutaitė, "Europeanization tendencies of the foreign and security policy of the baltic states," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 9, No. 1 (2011): 101; Tomas Janeliūnas and Agnija Tumkevič, "Securitization of the energy sectors in Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine: Motives and extraordinary measures," *Lithuanian foreign policy review* 30 (2013): 67.

<sup>6</sup> Eglė Vileikienė and Diana Janušauskienė, "Subjective Security in a Volatile Geopolitical Situation: Does Lithuanian Society Feel Safe?" *Journal on Baltic Security* 2, No. 2 (2016): 126; Māris Andžāns, Ilvija Brūge and Andris Sprūds, *Psihologiskā aizsardzība Latvijā: ievainojamības un iespējas* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2017), 17; Diana Janušauskienė, Eglė Vileikienė, Laima Nevinskaitė and Ingrida Gečienė-Janulionė, "Ar Lietuvos gyventojai jaučiasi saugūs," *Subjektyvus saugumas kintančiame geopolitiniame kontekste* (2017); Irmina Matonytė, Vaidas Morkevičius, Ainius Lašas and Vaida Jankauskaitė, "Grėsmių visuomenės gerovei suvokimas: socialinio optimizmo, socialinio ir institucinio pasitikėjimo bei pasitikėjimo savimi įtaka," *Politologija* 85, No. 1 (2017): 26–29; Ainė Ramonaitė, Leva Petronytė-Urbonavičienė, Paulius Skirkevičius and Eugenijus Vosylis, *Kas eitų ginti Lietuvos?: pilietinio pasipriešinimo prielaidos ir galimybės* (Vilnius: Aukso žuvis, 2018); Ainius Lašas, Irmina Matonytė and Vaida Jankauskaitė, "Facing past, present, and future: the role of historical beliefs and experiences in the Lithuanian public perception of military threats," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 51, No. 2 (2020): 208–212.

<sup>7</sup> *Military Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania 2016* (March 2022) // <https://kam.lt/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/karine-strategija-LT-2016.pdf>.

threat to the national security of Lithuania and the entire region<sup>8</sup>. Among scholars and experts, there have been studies aimed at addressing what determines the selection of a total defence approach. However, there is a noticeable absence of studies on total defence that identify the factors contributing to the relationship between official declarations by the ruling political elite and the practical implementation of chosen total defence methods to mitigate the threat<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, the central question of this research revolves around whether there is a dissonance between official declarations and implemented measures concerning a total defence approach in Lithuania. This article seeks to uncover a deeper causal relationship among what was publicly announced by the Lithuanian ruling political elite regarding the total defence approach, the suggested methods, and what has actually been implemented in the face of the growing Russian threat in recent years.

This research is divided into two distinct segments. First it employs a reconceptualized framework rooted in securitization theory to conduct an in-depth analysis of the contemporary political discourse and its political implications among prominent Lithuanian figures. The ensuing section involves a comparative analysis between compiled empirical data and outcomes obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with Lithuanian experts. The research concludes with a summary presentation of the findings.

### The process of securitizing the Lithuanian total defence approach

In the field of international relations and security studies, securitization theory is one of the fundamental analytical tools that examines how issues become matters of security in political discourse. This theory helps explain why certain issues become priorities in security policy while others do not. Securitization theory explores how certain phenomena become security issues through language and political discourse. The theory is based on the idea that security issues are not inherent aspects of objective reality but are constructed through language and political discourse. The theory is grounded in constructivist notions that security issues are socially constructed and depend on

<sup>8</sup> Deividas Šlekys, "Mašlaus Vyčio beiėškant: lietuviėkos karinės minties raida ir būklė po Nepriklausomybės atkūrimo (1990–2014)," (2015): 234; Vytautas Jokubauskas, Jonas Vaiėenonis, Vygantas Vareikis and Hektoras Vitkus, "Valia prieėintis: paramilitarizmas ir Lietuvos karinio saugumo problemos: mokslo monografija" (Klaipėda: Druka, 2015); Giedrius Česnakas, "The implications of the technological trends in military on the defence of small states," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 17 (2019): 273–293; Deividas Šlekys, "Lithuanian military transformation and changing efficiency of defence," *Lithuania in the global context: national security and defence policy dilemmas* (2020): 307–325; Liudas Zdanaviėius and Nortautas Statkus, "Strengthening resilience of Lithuania in an era of great power competition: the case for total defence," *Journal on Baltic security* 6, No. 2 (2020): 1–21.

<sup>9</sup> Kristine Atmante, "Comprehensive defence in Latvia-rebranding state defence and call for society's involvement," *Journal on Baltic Security* 6, No. 2 (2020); Dalia Bankauskaite, *supra* note 1; Ieva Berzina, "From 'total' to 'comprehensive' national defence: the development of the concept in Europe," *Journal on Baltic Security* 6, No. 2 (2020): 1–9; Eugeniusz Cieėlak, "Putting Comprehensive Defence to Work: What Can Poland Learn from the Baltic States?" *Politeja-Pismo Wydziału Studiów Międzynarodowych i Politycznych Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* 19, No. 79 (2022): 73–93; Tuukka Elonheimo, "Comprehensive security approach in response to Russian hybrid warfare," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 15, No. 3 (2021): 113–137; Terry Johanson, "Differing concepts of total defence in small states: comparing the cases of New Zealand and Poland," *Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka* 48, No. 3 (2022): 199–210; Karl Lallerstedt, "Rebuilding Total Defense in a Globalized Deregulated Economy," *PRISM* 9, No. 3 (2021): 90–105; Juha Pyykönen and Stefan Forss, *Deterrence in the Nordic-Baltic Region: The Role of the Nordic Countries Together with the US Army* (Strategic Studies Institute and US Army War College Press, 2019); Håkon Lunde Saxi, Bengt Sundelius and Brett Swaney, "Baltics left of bang: Nordic total defense and implications for the Baltic Sea region," *In Strategic forum* No. 304 (National Defense University Press, 2020), 1–19; Kevin Stringer, "Special Operations Forces (SOF): The Integrators for Total Defense and Resistance," *Journal on Baltic Security* 8, No. 1 (2022): 67–76; Bengt Sundelius and Jan Eldeblad, "Societal Security and Total Defense," *PRISM* 10, No. 2 (2023): 92–111; James Kenneth Wither, "Back to the future? Nordic total defence concepts," *Defence studies* 20, No. 1 (2020): 61–81.

the discourse of political actors. The central argument of this theory is that an issue becomes a matter of security when a political actor "securitizes" it, presenting it as an existential threat that requires urgent and exceptional measures. Securitization is the result of political discourse, where political actors seek to convince the audience that a particular problem is a security issue.

Over the past few decades, securitization theory has not only evolved but also faced considerable criticism. Authors who have criticized or continue to criticize securitization theory can broadly be categorized into two groups: those who raise questions about theoretical assumptions and concepts, and those who have raised doubts about its empirical validation<sup>10</sup> and normative implications<sup>11</sup>. Taking into consideration the securitization theory and its criticism, it is crucial to operationalize the long-term discourse (speech acts) and behaviour (actions) of securitizing actors as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Securitizing actors are those who address security issues and employ speech acts. These individuals or groups can include political leaders, bureaucrats, lobbyists, governments, or influence groups. If decisions require the highest level of political approval, then it can be argued that the political elite takes responsibility for them and serves as vital security actors.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, this research will follow theoretical logic and apply accordingly. Securitization actors in this context are considered to be the President of the Republic of Lithuania, the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence, and the Chairman of the National Security and Defence Committee of the Parliament.

Considering the assessment criteria, the contemporary political actors whose discourse and actions related to total defence from the year 2020 will be presented are as follows: Gitanas Nausėda, the President of the Republic of Lithuania (since 2019 July); Ingrida Šimonytė, the Prime Minister; Arvydas Anušauskas, the Minister of National Defence; and Laurynas Kasčiūnas, the Chairman of the National Security and Defence Committee of the Seimas (the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania). It is notable that all of these political actors, except for President Gitanas Nausėda, were in opposition in the Parliament in the period from December 2016 to December 2020. From 2020 December onwards, they formed the majority in the Parliament. Furthermore, all three of them belong to the same political faction, namely, the Conservatives.

<sup>10</sup> Matt McDonald, "Securitization and the Construction of Security," *European journal of international relations* 14.4 (2008): 563–587; Başar Baysal, "20 Years of Securitization: Strengths, Limitations and A New Dual Framework," *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi* 17.67 (2020): 11–13; Thierry Balzacq, *Enquiries into methods: a new framework for securitization analysis*, Securitization theory (Routledge, 2010), 35–37; Thierry Balzacq, "The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience and context," *European journal of international relations* 11, No. 2 (2005): 171–201; Thierry Balzacq, *Enquiries into methods: a new framework for securitization analysis*, Securitization theory (Routledge, 2010), 40–41; J. Huysmans, "Security! What do you mean? From concept to thick signifier," *European journal of international relations* 4(2) (1998): 226–255; Jef Huysmans, *The politics of insecurity: Fear, migration and asylum in the EU* (Routledge, 2006); Holger Stritzel, "Towards a theory of securitization: Copenhagen and beyond," *European journal of international relations* 13, No. 3 (2007): 357–383.

<sup>11</sup> Williams, Michael C. "Words, images, enemies: Securitization and international politics." *International studies quarterly* 47.4 (2003): 511–531.; Williams, Michael C. "Securitization and the liberalism of fear." *Security Dialogue* 42.4–5 (2011): 453–463.; Hansen, Lene. "Theorizing the image for security studies: Visual securitization and the Muhammad cartoon crisis." *European journal of international relations* 17.1 (2011): 51–74.; Aradau, Claudia. "The perverse politics of four-letter words: Risk and pity in the securitisation of human trafficking." *Millennium* 33.2 (2004): 251–277.; Floyd, Rita. "Can securitization theory be used in normative analysis? Towards a just securitization theory." *Security Dialogue* 42.4–5 (2011): 428–430.

<sup>12</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A new framework for analysis* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 35–42.

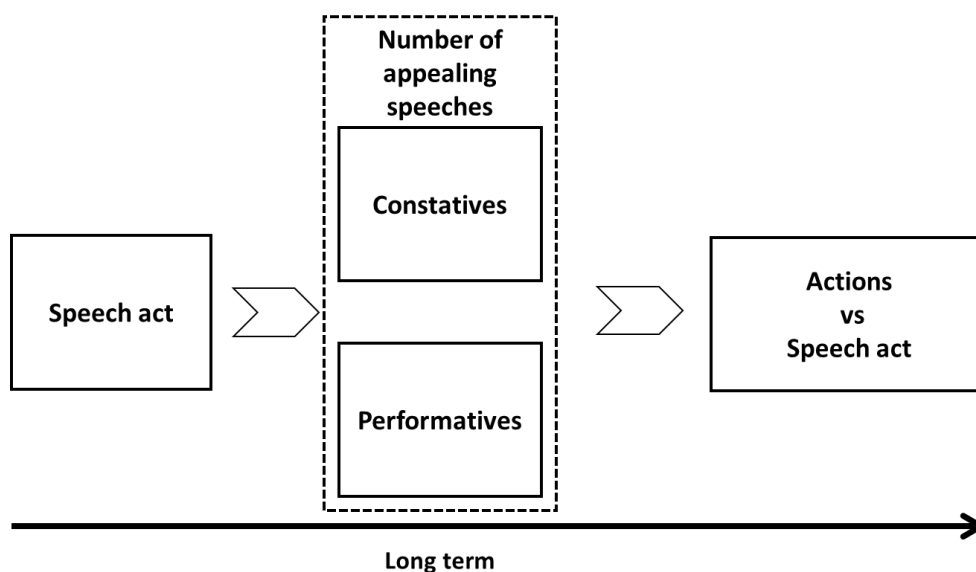


Figure 1. Long term speech acts versus actions

Source: created by the author.

The research will proceed through the following steps. First, an overview of the discourse of recent political figures related to total defence from 2020 will be provided. Second, speech acts will be categorized into constative and performative categories. Performatives are utterances that perform a specific action. For example, “I swear” is a performative because the action (swearing) is performed immediately upon uttering these words. Constatives are statements whose truth can be verified or understood as a fact. Third, emotional appeals<sup>13</sup> within public speech acts will be counted. Fourth, all speeches will be compared with their initiated actions. The interrelation between speeches and actions will present which political figure justified his utterances with certain deeds. All empirical data is acquired through the utilization of the software “Mediaskopas,” which facilitates the detection of publicly disseminated speeches across various online platforms, radio, television, as well as national and regional online publications.

### Mr. Gitanas Nausėda, the President of the Republic of Lithuania

Starting from the year 2020, Mr. Nausėda has been featured in a total of 25,006 public articles spanning diverse subjects. Before assuming the presidency in July 2019, Mr. Gitanas Nausėda held a senior advisory role at SEB, a Swedish bank operating in Lithuania. Since taking office as President, Nausėda’s engagement in matters concerning Lithuania’s total defence has been documented in 268 articles. Due to overlapping coverage across various media outlets, only 16 distinct topics could be recognized. His initial mention occurred on April 2nd, 2021, during discussions about the preliminary drafts of the Civil Resistance Strategy within the National Security and Defence Committee of the Seimas. Among these 16 instances, 10 speeches were categorized as constatives, wherein Mr. Nausėda provided commentary on general situations pertaining to total defence.

<sup>13</sup> *Psychological Operations Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures* (2003) (Obtained 2023 07 20) // <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/army/fm3-05-301.pdf>



Table 1. Total defence topics of Mr. Nausėda

Total public appearances on media January 1 <sup>st</sup> 2020 – August 31 <sup>st</sup> 2023: <b>25 006 articles</b>		
Out of them related to the Lithuanian total defence topic: <b>268 articles (1,07% of all)</b>		
Total defence topics covered: <b>16</b>	First appearance of topic about total defence: April 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2021 (7 articles)	Most appearances of a topic about total defence: March 23, 2022 (37 articles)
Most frequent media type: Internet websites (179 articles)	Average audience reach: 687 855	Maximum audience reach: 1 390 452 via internet news portal DELFI
Speech acts		
Constatives	Performatives	Appealing speeches
10 speeches	4 speeches	2 speeches

Source: created by the author.

When it comes to performative speeches, President Nausėda has conducted only four and delivered two appealing speeches. Most of the speeches occurred after the massive Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2024. Therefore, it is possible to claim that the total defence question for the President has been influenced by the external context, which required prompt actions. However, discourse analyses show that more than half of the speeches are constative (Table 2).

Table 2. Speech acts of Mr. Nausėda

Constative	<p><i>“Total defence readiness is also the collective effort of all citizens, soldiers, riflemen, state, and municipal institutions.”</i></p> <p><i>“When reviewing the strategy, it is important to adhere to the principles of the state’s comprehensive defence and ensure the involvement of civil institutions, the private sector, and the public in national security and defence readiness.”</i></p> <p><i>“At all levels – from NATO to each individual citizen – preparation is needed for total comprehensive defence.”</i></p>
Performative	<p><i>“I urge the parties represented in the Seimas to reach an agreement on the introduction of universal military service in the country”</i></p> <p><i>“In conditions of existential threats, we must rapidly reinforce the army’s reserve and better reflect the equality and duty to the Homeland of all Lithuanian citizens.”</i></p> <p><i>“The principle of a lottery, applied when summoning conscripts to the army, should not be discarded.”</i></p> <p><i>“Regarding the universal mandatory initial military service, I invite all political parties to agree on this provision as well as on increasing the defence budget.”</i></p>
Appealing	<p><i>“When it comes to national defence, it is crucial that we involve the younger generation as well. Clearly, the situation in schools today is not the best. I would like the word ‘patriot’ to not be erased from our vocabulary. Each of us must strive and work to ensure that our Homeland is loved and secure.”</i></p> <p><i>“With the support of a freedom-loving, determined, and responsive society, the Lithuanian Armed Forces will continue to successfully carry out the tasks entrusted to them. The strength of our military and the development of our total defence capabilities will determine our country’s ability to achieve its political objectives.”</i></p>

Source: created by the author.

When it comes to actions related to total defence, several events are worth noting. First, the President from time to time meets with representatives of state institutions responsible for education to discuss civic and patriotic education. He also engages with national security representatives to discuss the directions and priorities for updating official documents and strategies related to total defence. Second, his advisors actively participate in working groups responsible for the implementation of normative documents related to total defence.

In summary, when examining public discourse from 2020 onwards, it is evident that Nausėda did not deliver any speeches pertaining to total defence until 2022. In his speeches, the President of the country emphasizes the importance of citizens, especially the younger generation, contributing to the defence of the country. Analysing the content of the speeches, it is evident that the President of the Republic of Lithuania uses a considerable number of “glittering generalities”, idiomatic expressions, and comparisons. When speaking about total defence, the President not only transmits it in his speeches but also in congratulatory speeches (three identified speeches about total defence). Eventually, the President is more inclined to state facts rather than encourage action through practical measures. An analysis of implemented actions shows that President takes a mediator’s role rather than that of a proactive political figure implementing the total defence approach in Lithuania.

### Ms. Ingrida Šimonytė, the Prime Minister

Table 3. Total defence topics of Ms. Šimonytė

Total public appearances on media January 1st, 2020 – August 31st 2023: <b>12646 articles</b>		
Out of them related to the Lithuanian total defence topic: <b>84 articles (0,66% of all)</b>		
Total defence topics covered: <b>6</b>	First appearance of topic about total defence: January 27, 2022 (7 articles)	Most appearances of a topic about total defence: July 15, 2022 (9 articles)
Most frequent media type: Internet websites (47 articles)	Average audience reach: 666 931	Maximum audience reach: 1 403 001 via internet news portal DELFI
Speech acts		
Constatives 1 speech	Performatives 3 speech	Appealing speeches 2 speeches

Source: created by the author.

Prime Minister Šimonytė formed a ruling coalition in December 2020. Starting from January 1, 2020, she has been featured in 12,646 articles covering various topics. However, in relation to total defence, only 84 articles could be attributed, and only six overlapping topics were identified. The first appearance in this context was observed on January 27th, 2022, which took more than two years to emerge. This suggests that total defence might not be a central or frequently addressed aspect of the Prime Minister’s public discourse. The low quantity of discourse, even after the massive Russian invasion, indicates that the Prime Minister symbolically announced the necessity of total defence and delegated this topic to the Minister of Defence. In terms of speech acts, only one constative, three performative, and two appealing speeches have been recognized over the entire period of time (see a Table 4 below).



Table 4. Speech acts of Ms. Šimonytė

Constative	"Lithuanian politicians, despite disputes on certain domestic matters, agree on essential principles, and other countries may envy such consensus. Such agreement on fundamental principles is important to ensure their adherence even with changing governing powers."
Performative	"the Government has identified the universal conscription of boys and girls into the military and a gradual transition to such a universal model as a goal in their program." "Upon adopting the new Law of the Riflemen's Union and approving the organization's new activity plans, its funding will also be increased." "This (conscript reform - ELTA) is (...) just a certain intermediate reform, which in one way or another will probably take place. However, the question of what the further path is remains. Here, it seems, this discussion is only the first step."
Appealing	"Alongside the will to resist partners, love for the homeland and homeland's freedom is the primary tool of civil resistance." "The Riflemen's Union is not only about national defence but also about fostering connections between people, civic responsibility, mutual trust, valuable and character-building skills. Therefore, the growing Riflemen's Union signifies the growth and strengthening of Lithuania as well"

Source: created by the author.

When considering actions, there are several events that could be associated with the concept of total defence. The goal of preparing and approving the National Agenda "Strategy for Training Lithuanian Republic Citizens for Civil Resistance" by the end of 2021 was set in Šimonytė's government program. The program was approved in Spring 2022; however, the action plan has not been approved as of August 2023 when writing this article. Furthermore, by enhancing the resilience and preparedness of the state and society to withstand various threats, LRU has been strengthened: amendments to the LRU statute were adopted, outlining broader directions for LRU activities. In 2022, funding for LRU increased more than threefold, reaching 7 million euros. This increase enabled the LRU to acquire weaponry, transportation, communication tools, and other necessary equipment for training its members. Moreover, a citizenship and defence skills course for students has been initiated: in 2022, 10% of 9th-grade students were trained, and it is projected that in 2023, 30% will be trained. The course, which lasts three days, focuses on practical skills related to citizenship, defence, survival, and general preparedness.

In sum, analysing the discourse and actions of the Prime Minister, it becomes evident that total defence is not among the significant priorities of the Prime Minister. Despite speeches being eventually accompanied by actions, these actions did not bring substantial changes to the overall implementation of the total defence approach in Lithuania. The increase in funding from 3 million to 10 million euro<sup>14</sup> for the LRU only occurred after the massive invasion of Russia into Ukraine. The majority of the additional funding is allocated for the procurement of new outdoor uniforms, helmets, body armour vests, equipment belts, and backpacks. Additionally, it will be used to purchase G-36 automatic weapons with magazines, thermal imagers, and digital radio stations, but these resources will only be provided up to 400 riflemen. Furthermore, the slow

<sup>14</sup> LRU planned to acquire new outdoor uniforms, helmets, body armour vests, equipment belts, and backpacks, as well as automatic weapons G-36 with magazines, thermal imagers, and digital radio stations.

pace of educating pupils in this regard has been inadequately executed and demands additional support from the government.

### Mr. Arvydas Anušauskas, the Minister of defence

Table 5. Total defence topics of Mr. Anušauskas.

Total public appearances on media January 1st, 2020 – August 31st 2023: <b>19 512 articles</b>		
Out of them related to the Lithuanian total defence topic: <b>194 articles (0,99% of all)</b>		
Total defence topics covered: <b>18</b>	First appearance of total defence topic: November 23, 2020 (1 article)	Most appearances of a topic about total defence: January 5, 2023 (18 articles)
Most frequent media type: Internet websites (150 articles)	Average audience reach: 729 749	Maximum audience reach: 1 403 001 via internet news portal DELFI
Speech acts		
Constatives	Performatives	Appealing speeches
7 speeches	7 speeches	4 speeches

Source: created by the author.

Since December 2020, Mr. Anušauskas has held the position of Minister of Defence. Prior to becoming the defence minister, from 2016 to 2020, he was a member of the parliamentary opposition. Starting from January 1st, 2020, he has been featured in 19,512 articles, with only 1% of them being related to total defence. Despite his tenure as Minister of Defence, only 1% of the articles featuring Mr. Anušauskas are related to total defence. This might indicate that while he covers various topics, total defence is not a predominant focus in his public appearances or media coverage. The Minister made his first public appearance as a candidate for the Minister of defence position on November 23, 2020. This suggests that his engagement with the public on matters of defence started just before assuming the role. The relatively low percentage of articles related to total defence could imply that his discourse on this topic might not be as frequent or emphasized. An analysis of his public speeches revealed 7 constative, 7 performative, and 4 appealing speeches (see a Table 6 below). The majority of Mr. Anušauskas's speeches on total defence appear after the massive Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 24, 2022. This timing indicates a responsive approach, with increased public engagement on defence matters following significant geopolitical events.

When analysing Mr Anušauskas' public discourse, it becomes evident that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has backed up most of his performative speeches with concrete actions. First, the Ministry of National Defence, in collaboration with other institutions of the Republic of Lithuania and non-governmental organizations, is working on developing an implementation plan for the National Agenda "Strategy for Training Citizens of the Republic of Lithuania for Civil Resistance." However, as of August 2023, the implementation plan has not yet been approved. Second, in an effort to enhance the nation's defence and encourage greater public involvement in total defence, the MOD is initiating changes to the mandatory initial military service system and engaging in discussions about these changes. Third, a highly important aspect of total defence has been introduced: the increase in the active military personnel reserve. The measures enacted have encountered substantial criticism from student and pupil associations.

However, the biggest criticism revolves around funding, where there has been a lack of substantial engagement from civilian and private enterprises in contributing to total defence efforts.

Table 6. Speech acts of Mr. Anušauskas

Constative	<p><i>“mandatory women’s conscription currently receives support from a small portion of society, but the possibility needed to be theoretically evaluated.”</i></p> <p><i>“The strategy of total defence, based on national and collective defence and involving all civilian institutions and society, is effective. We are facing the worst security situation since the times of the Second World War”</i></p> <p><i>“The trends in recruitment into the professional military service are positive, and currently, the number of professional military service personnel reaches 11,500. In implementing personnel policy, the essential goal is not only to attract as many new personnel as possible but also to retain them in service.”</i></p>
Performative	<p><i>“The Minister of National Defence proposes a new strategy - to prepare citizens for civilian resistance. Through the Riflemen’s Union and non-governmental organizations, both children and adults should receive more knowledge on how to respond not only to possible military threats but also to cyber attacks.”</i></p> <p><i>“After three years, Lithuania should introduce universal conscription into the military. In the vision of the right-wing, girls should also learn to defend the homeland.”</i></p> <p><i>“The goal of the reform is to increase the involvement of young people in total defence. We aim to increase the number of the active reserve.”</i></p>
Appealing	<p><i>“Core values that ensure citizens’ identification with the state and their trust in it directly encourage their participation in its defence. Therefore, we must pay even more attention to nurturing civic engagement, patriotism, historical memory, and finding new ways to reach every citizen of Lithuania.”</i></p> <p><i>“The historical experience of Lithuania and other countries demonstrates that the most crucial pillar of defence power is the state’s citizens, their will, and determination to defend the state. I am convinced that every citizen, regardless of their age or abilities, can find their place in the state’s defence, especially now when the spectrum of threats includes both military and unconventional dangers. Even during times of peace, hostile forces attempt to test society’s trust in the state and democratic values.”</i></p> <p><i>“Both in the past and today, the Scouts are actively working for the benefit of the Homeland. The crisis of illegal migration, the pandemic, and the assistance provided to Ukrainian war refugees once again confirmed that the Scouts are important not only for strengthening the readiness to defend but also for overcoming other challenges to national security. The strategic goals we are jointly implementing significantly contribute to the implementation of the principle of total defence.”</i></p>

Source: created by the author.

Eventually, the MOD has preplanned the upcoming years to include expanding the armed forces to the division size and acquiring a significant amount of conventional equipment, such as additional artillery, armoured vehicles, and potentially tanks. Therefore, there are doubts as to whether the set strategic goals align with the allocated resources and the development of the material defence potential.

**Mr. Laurynas Kasčiūnas, the Chairman of the National Security and Defence Committee (NSDC) of the Seimas**

*Table 7. Total defence topics of Mr. Kasčiūnas*

Total public appearances on media January 1st, 2020 – August 31st 2023: <b>5512 articles</b>		
Out of them related to the Lithuanian total defence topic: <b>411 articles (7,45% of all)</b>		
Total defence topics covered: <b>42</b>	First appearance of total defence topic: December 12, 2020 (7 articles)	Most appearances of a topic about total defence: March 23, 2023 (25 articles)
Most frequent media type: Internet websites (326 articles)	Average audience reach: 729 749	Maximum audience reach: 1 390 452 via internet news portal DELFI
Speech acts		
Constatives	Performatives	Appealing speeches
13 speeches	28 speeches	1 speech

Source: created by the author.

From December 2020, when Mr. Kasčiūnas took the role of Chairman of the National Security and Defence Committee of the Seimas, he has been a central figure in media coverage in 411 articles pertaining to the concept of total defence. This versatility may indicate a comprehensive understanding and involvement in the concept of total defence. Prior to this, during the years 2016-2020, Mr. Kasčiūnas served as part of the opposition. His initial public appearance in this capacity occurred upon commencing his role as committee chairman. Over the course of these media appearances, Mr. Kasčiūnas has addressed a wide array of topics, spanning a total of 42 distinct subjects. Within these discussions, he emerges as a prominent political figure known for engaging in speech acts. Significantly, among these speeches, 13 are categorized as constative, 28 as performative, and only one as appealing. The breakdown of speech acts reveals a notable emphasis on performative speeches, indicating his involvement in actions or commitments. The presence of constative speeches suggests a balance of conveying information, while the limited number of appealing speeches may indicate a focus on action-oriented communication. For example see a Table 8.

Mr. Kasčiūnas is actively involved in promoting total defence and translating this discourse into actions. He has conducted numerous<sup>15</sup> meetings of NSDC, which deals with matters related to total defence. It took four amendments to finalize the Strategy for Training Citizens of the Republic of Lithuania for Civil Resistance. Furthermore, he has worked to promote total defence among different political parties in the parliament. His active role also includes efforts to increase the number of reserve soldiers, allocate more funding for the LRU, and organize committee hearings to assess the progress of the MOD in implementing the Strategy for Training Citizens of the Republic of Lithuania for Civil Resistance. These hearings have resulted in public announcements where Mr. Kasčiūnas emphasized: "three thousand prepared citizens in 2022. Thank you for the number. Well, it doesn't seem like total defence."

<sup>15</sup> Since January 2021 till August 2023 Kasčiūnas has hold 30 committee meetings that were working on the total defence. For more information, see [https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p\\_r=38475&p\\_k=1](https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=38475&p_k=1).

Table 8. Speech acts of Mr. Kasčiūnas

Constative	<p>"When we talk about total defence, it's not just the military, organized groups, and organizations, but also individual people. They also need to be organized somehow. There will be talk about that - about organizing and involving them. So that it's not just the military that resists but the nation, every citizen."</p> <p>"I consistently promote the idea of total defence and strive for its implementation. We often emphasize this, but in the past, it remained political declarations without practical expression"</p> <p>"Indeed, there were many declarations in some cases, but too few real actions. Now, I believe that real actions will start to dominate."</p> <p>"The indicators of those willing and ready to defend Lithuania, especially since the war against Ukraine began, are indeed quite solid. They have increased by at least 20 percent. The younger generation, in particular, is very patriotic. But we often hear a valid question – how can I contribute to defence and how to do it. This is where we can rarely provide a specific answer because we have been using the term 'total defence' for ten years as a political declaration. Now, our goal is to turn total defence into real actions."</p>
Performative	<p>More than half of his topics and speeches are performative in nature, focusing on encouraging various methods to implement total defence. For example:</p> <p>"Next year (2023), people will be trained in special training centers to prepare for resistance actions, recognize threats, provide medical assistance, and in some cases, use weapons. Additionally, this summer, lessons on civic basics will be held in ten schools."</p> <p>"The training of the active military reserve is crucial in preparing citizens for total defence. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the active military personnel reserve to ensure it is sufficient to fill the structure of the Lithuanian Armed Forces during wartime."</p> <p>"People who want to acquire firearms for self-defence, hunting, or sport should be required to complete a civil resistance course"</p> <p>"The proposal to the Seimas is to introduce an obligation for state officials to complete introductory training in mobilization and civil resistance during times of war"</p> <p>"Civil defence is very important in the context of the total defence principle, as the war in Ukraine has shown. According to the project, by strengthening the training of riflemen, a training centre would be established."</p>
Appealing	<p>"The uprising is evidence of the nation's will to resist the occupiers – the beginning of Lithuania's resistance to Soviet occupation, during which the organized armed phase, as partisan resistance, continued until 1953. This uprising leaves no doubt that the Lithuanian people had a clear understanding of the Soviet occupation that had occurred and were determined to restore the independent Republic of Lithuania. It is an excellent example of creating and strengthening the concept of civil resistance in modern Lithuania."</p>

Source: created by the author.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSES

The research revealed that the President of Lithuania, while being the Chief of the Armed Forces and the head of the State defence Council, operates within the framework of the total defence development system from a mediator's position, where priority is given to ideas, their shaping, and presentation to the target audience. Meanwhile, the Minister of Defence approach the system more from a material standpoint, where the total defence system is solidified through normative documents that encourage increasing tangible societal defence potential and direct involvement in the country's defence. Nevertheless, the observed augmentation in military expenditure aimed at enhancing total defence capabilities, as well as the observed increments in the numbers of reservists and civilian participation in defence efforts, are relatively modest. While the imposition of normative documents represents a commendable initial step, it falls short of fulfilling the ambitious principles outlined in military strategy and national defence strategy. Meanwhile the role the Chairman of the NSDC and can be identified as a driving force<sup>16</sup>, who is not only monitoring how the MOD achieves its set goals, but suggests various approaches to boost the total defence of Lithuania.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, when it comes to implementing the total defence strategy, the role of the Lithuanian Prime Minister is primarily symbolic and ceremonial.

Looking at the long-term perspective, the political figures in power did not publicly comment on or take concrete initiatives to develop total defence before coming into office. Some change becomes evident when holding a governing political position. This is reflected in the documents of the Government and MOD, where the goal of creating a Civil Resistance Strategy is set. This is also visible in individual public statements, but the most significant breakthrough is identified in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This resonant event strongly affected the society, the discourse of political figures, and the measures they propose. In the face of a Russian threat, politicians who propose measures to protect society can gain additional approval points from the electorate. The timing of resource allocation and implementation may be less important than providing immediate answers to the public when a threat is perceived.<sup>18</sup> As an example, the interviewed Expert 3 suggested that a similar situation occurred in March 2014 when Russia illegally annexed Crimea. The Lithuanian President Grybauskaitė, who was running for re-election, quickly changed her stance on the defence strategy and began advocating for increased military spending to align with the public sentiment.<sup>19</sup> Expert 1 highlighted the current situation with the Minister of Defence Anušauskas, who is notably active in sharing his thoughts about defence issues on social media. This eagerness gives him a leading position in delivering important news to his online followers.<sup>20</sup>

However, when analysing the political implications, it is notable that almost a decade after the annexation of Crimea and a year and a half after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the third principle of implementing the total defence strategy (involvement of society in national defence) does not see a breakthrough. 99% of military spending are allocated for the implementation of the first two principles (strengthening national capabilities and support of the host country). The governing political figures are more

<sup>16</sup> That was also double confirmed in a interview with Expert 3 (Obtained on August 22, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Expert 1 (Obtained on July 25, 2023).

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Expert 1 (Obtained on July 25, 2023).

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Expert 3 (Obtained on August 22, 2023).

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Expert 1 (Obtained on July 25, 2023).



inclined to carry out conventional military acquisitions: howitzers, infantry fighting vehicles, Joint Light Tactical Vehicles, helicopters, artillery, HIMARS systems, tanks, rather than developing the empowerment of society and the private sector in total defence, which has been declared in normative documents and strategies since 2016.

Several factors could contribute to the delayed implementation of the total defence strategy. First, as suggested by Expert 1, there may have been a lack of clear political decisions on which institutions would lead and execute the total defence strategy, particularly involving citizens and private companies<sup>21</sup>. In addition, as Expert 4 claimed, public rhetoric of politicians is insincere<sup>22</sup>, and, as Expert 5 noticed, there is a significant difference between the political statements declared by politicians and unimplemented measures; for example, they talk about what should be but, in reality, too little is being done<sup>23</sup>. Second, as mentioned by Expert 2, bureaucratic procedures and coordination issues among various institutions could have hindered the smooth process.<sup>24</sup> It appears that the exclusive responsibility for national defence remains only in the Lithuanian Armed Forces, the LRU, and several other institutions.<sup>25</sup> Third, as noted by Expert 3, the Lithuanian Armed Forces may not have been initially prepared to incorporate eager civilians into their defence plans, which could have also influenced the MOD's stance on the matter.<sup>26</sup> Public engagement must be structured, encompassing education, non-governmental organizations, political will, and the military leadership's perception.<sup>27</sup>

While writing this article in August 2023, the action plan for the civil resistance strategy has not yet been approved, even though the strategy itself has been adopted in the spring of 2022. When looking at the discourse of political figures and the allocation of material resources for engaging society and the private sector in national defence, it can be argued that in the context of resonant events, politicians' discourse adapts to the current relevance and public sentiment at the time. However, the material implementation is influenced by long-term debates, bureaucratic mechanisms and the Lithuanian Armed Forces. This is further supported by the prevailing constative discourse and appealing speeches among political figures. As Expert 1 noticed, when it comes to the total defence it must be led by an example. No leadership – no breakthrough. For now, there is no evidence of that, only talks.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the involvement of citizens, NGOs and private sector is more symbolic rather than making a real impact to the defence of Lithuania.

Ultimately, interviews with experts confirmed the assumption that, by using securitization and public discourse, politicians seek not only to address the issue but also to adapt to public sentiment and present themselves as problem solvers. This is evident in the rapidly increasing approval ratings of the Minister of Defence Anušauskas, despite the simultaneous observation of sluggish allocation of funds and implementation of measures for engaging the public and the private sector in total defence.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Expert 1 (Obtained on July 25, 2023).

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Expert 4 (Obtained on August 31, 2023).

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Expert 5 (Obtained on August 31, 2023).

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Expert 2 (Obtained on July 25, 2023).

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Expert 5 (Obtained on August 31, 2023).

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Expert 3 (Obtained on August 22, 2023).

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Expert 4 (Obtained on August 31, 2023).

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Expert 1 (Obtained on July 25, 2023).

## CONCLUSIONS

The research findings shed light on the roles and approaches of key political figures in Lithuania's total defence development system. The President of Lithuania, as Chief of the Armed Forces and head of the State Defence Council, operates primarily as a mediator, emphasizing the importance of ideas and communication. In contrast, the Minister of Defence adopts a more material-oriented approach, focusing on the consolidation of the total defence system through normative documents and tangible improvements in societal defence potential. However, despite the adoption of normative documents and some incremental progress, the observed increases in military spending and citizen involvement in defence efforts remain relatively modest. The role of the Chairman of the NSDC emerges as a driving force, actively monitoring and suggesting approaches to enhance Lithuania's total defence.

The significant change was catalysed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which prompted politicians to align their positions with public sentiment and propose measures for societal protection. Nevertheless, the involvement of society in national defence, the third principle of the total defence approach, has not seen significant progress. The majority of military spending remains dedicated to the first two principles, namely, strengthening national capabilities and developing the infrastructure to host allied forces. This discrepancy may be attributed to factors such as unclear leadership, disingenuous rhetoric, bureaucratic obstacles, and the initial unpreparedness of the Lithuanian Armed Forces to integrate civilians into defence plans. As of August 2023, almost a decade after the Crimean occupation and 18 months after the massive Russian invasion, the action plan for the civil resistance strategy remains unapproved, highlighting the gap between political discourse and material implementation. The involvement of citizens, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector in national defence appears more symbolic than impactful.

This research confirms that politicians employ securitization and public discourse to align with public sentiment and present themselves as problem solvers. While this has resulted in increased approval ratings for some political figures, the actual progress in engaging the public and the private sector in total defence remains limited. Leadership and genuine commitment are essential for meaningful breakthroughs in Lithuania's total defence approach.

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