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Civil Society’s Subjective Perception of What a Defence Alliance Is

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

In the period of the Russia-Ukraine war, one of the most important questions is about defence alliances and partnerships. Under this international geopolitical tension, countries reassess their security situations, and make strategic decisions which side to support. For Lithuania, these and related issues are even more important, considering geographical distance from the war location, as well, because recent historical past of soviet times. At the meso level, the state's strategic decisions require the support of civil society.

The research aim is to explore how civil society perceives the defence alliance that ensure international security of Lithuania.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following research hypotheses formulated: H1: Society associates the alliance for the Lithuania defence with NATO support. H2: Civil Society’s subjective perception of what a defence alliance is depends on persons’ socio-demographic characteristics, as well, on their values, interest in politics, use of certain information sources.

For the hypotheses testing, empirical data of the representative quantitative survey were used. The latter data collected within the research project “Sociological studies of the development of the Lithuanian Armed Forces in the changing international security environment” that is funded by the Ministry of National Defence of Lithuania. A field-work of the survey was conducted in August, 2021. In total, 1053 respondents of 15+ years of old were questioned face-to-face. A standardized questionnaire as a survey instrument was used.

MAIN FINDINGS

First, was explored perception of the civil societies’ members how they understand, whether NATO soldiers and equipment deployed in Lithuania are causing tension in the region. The analysis results let to state that the perception depend on opinions related the threats from Belorussia and Russia. Civil society’s members perception about the tension in the region because of NATO dislocation in Lithuania also depend on their opinion about Russia’s policy as a response to the US and NATO actions. Though, no any statistical significant relationship with persons’ socio-demographic characteristics, or usage of certain information sources is found.

Concerning sufficiency of the NATO and US security measures (deployed forces, exercises) in Lithuania, civil society’s perception depend on opinion related to policy of Russia as a response to actions of US and NATO, threats from Belorussia, Russia and China, also on sources of information that citizens use, and sense of importance to be a citizen of Lithuania.

Further, it was tested who would defend Lithuania in case of threats from Russia. It was found that members of the civil society percept the only possibility to be defenced by the alliance of the state of Lithuania with NATO. At the same, in the defence process they see some role of the civil society. All these findings are related to the usage of the internet platforms as a source of information, and also depend on value to be a citizen of Lithuania.

The opinion that the country may be defended by the Lithuanian army without allies depend on persons’ age, their believes about the possibility to defend the country by the Lithuanian society, trust in State Border Guard Service, also, on perception that Russia poses a direct danger to Lithuania.

Concerning opinions that NATO would defend Lithuania in case of attack, if was found dependence on trust in the European Union, and NATO, on usage press as information sources, believe that Russia poses a direct danger to Lithuania, and that Lithuania’s policy towards Russia is correct. Finally, it was the opinions depend on value to be citizen of Lithuania.

CONCLUSIONS

The research results proved both the hypothesis H1, and the hypothesis H2, and suggest more findings that will be presented in extended form.

KEYWORDS

Threat of war; Defence; Defence alliance; NATO; Lithuania; Civil society.