

FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

A nation must think before it acts.

BALTIC INITIATIVE



ABOUT FPRI

FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE (FPRI)

The Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) is a non-partisan think tank based in Philadelphia. Its founding principle is that a nation must think before it acts. The organization is dedicated to producing the highest quality scholarship and nonpartisan policy analysis focused on crucial foreign policy and national security challenges facing the United States. We educate those who make and influence policy, as well as the public at large, through the lens of history, geography, and culture. Accordingly, FPRI's Eurasia Program has undertaken activities in 2020 to inform the U.S. public and policy on key trends in Russia and Eurasia.

EURASIA PROGRAM

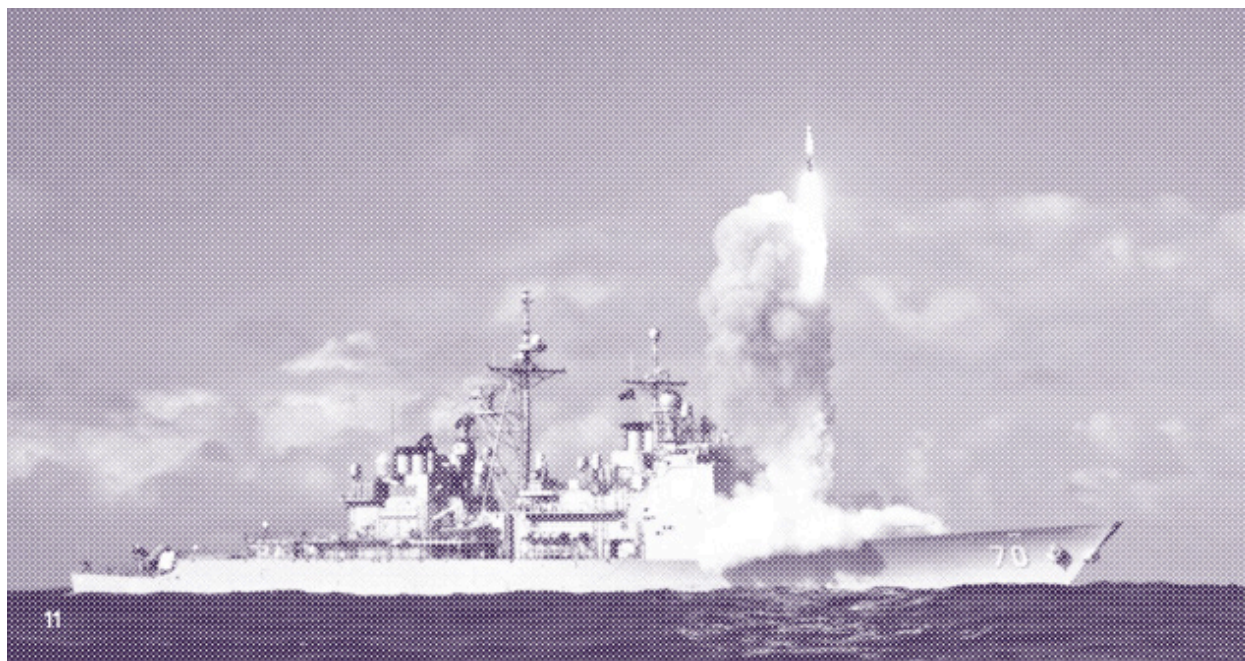
The [Eurasia Program at FPRI](#) examines the political, security, economic, and social trends shaping Russia and Eurasia. Our research agenda covers the increasingly tense competition roiling the region from several angles. It has a multi-year focus on the [Baltic Sea](#) and the [Black Sea](#), emphasizing how geography, economics, ideology, and history continue to shape politics and security in both regions. The program also publishes analyses of Russian foreign policy, including Russia's role in Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East. [The Russia Political Economy Project](#), along with [BMB Russia](#), analyzes the linkages between Russia's economy and its political system. The Eurasia Program's thematic initiatives also include the Democracy at Risk rubric, which examines the trends of democratization and authoritarian pushback in the region. [The Central Asia Initiative](#) is our newest project dedicated to examining the geopolitics and geoeconomics of the rapidly changing region and informing the U.S. policymakers and policy-influencers on matters that affect U.S. national interests. Currently the Eurasia Program includes [25 affiliated scholars](#), five thematic initiatives, and seven regular publication series.

ABOUT FPRI'S BALTIC INITIATIVE

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and its ongoing confrontation with the West has brought the Baltic region to the top of Western policymakers' agendas. The U.S. and its partners have been challenged to develop a coherent response. FPRI believes that at a time of international tension in the Baltic Sea, it is crucial for Americans to understand the history, politics, and culture of the region.

[The Baltic Initiative](#) analyzes the geopolitics, geo-economics, defense and security issues of the Baltic Sea region, and their role in European security as well as their implications to the United States. The Baltic Bulletins feature research by both American experts and analysts from the Baltic States and Central Europe. [The monthly Baltic Roundup newsletter](#), authored by Dr. Indra Ekmanis, the Editor of the Baltic Bulletin, regularly sums up major political, cultural, and economic events in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Every year we appoint Baltic Sea Fellows who drive FPRI's focus on political and security issues in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and on NATO-Russia relations in the Baltic Sea region more generally.



FEATURED SCHOLARS



DR. INDRA EKMANIS is the editor of FPRI's Baltic Bulletin, and a Baltic Sea Fellow in the Eurasia Program. She was previously an editor for public radio's The World through the ACLS/Mellon Public Fellows Program, where she focused on worldwide migration and European issues. Dr. Ekmanis recently completed a fellowship as a Kennan Institute Title VIII Research Scholar at The Wilson Center. She has a PhD in International Studies from the University of Washington. Her academic research looks at social integration, minority rights, nationalism, civil society and democratic transition, with an area specialization in the Baltic Sea Region and post-Soviet space. She is currently working on an interdisciplinary edited volume on disinformation in the Baltic region.



LINAS KOJALA is the Director of the Eastern Europe Studies Centre, a think tank in Vilnius, Lithuania, and Lecturer at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University. He is currently serving as an associate at the negotiation task force, Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard university. He was a Baltic Sea Fellow in FPRI's Eurasia Program in 2020.



FEATURED SCHOLARS



UNA BERGMANE is a Baltic Sea Fellow in the Eurasia Program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and a Teaching Fellow at the London School of Economics. She holds a Ph.D. from Sciences Po Paris. She was a 2016-2017 postdoctoral fellow at the Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies at Cornell University. Her research focuses on the Soviet disintegration and the end of the Cold War, Russian-Baltic relations, and contemporary politics of Latvia.



LUKAS MILEVSKI is an assistant professor at Leiden University, where he teaches strategy on the MA International Relations and BA International Studies programs. He was a Baltic Sea Fellow at FPRI in 2017 and is again in 2019. He has published two books with Oxford University Press, *The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought* (2016) and *The West's East: Contemporary Baltic Defense in Strategic Perspective* (2018).



EVENTS & CONFERENCES

In addition to this research, we continue to expand on Baltic-related partnerships in the U.S. and Baltic Sea region. In October 2019, FPRI co-sponsored a conference with the Vilnius Institute for Policy Analysis, titled [Europe on the Edge: The Politics of Grey Zones](#). The event, which took place in Vilnius, Lithuania, emphasized the destabilizing role that China and Russia play in Central and Eastern Europe.



In the fall of 2018, FPRI held a conference in Philadelphia, marking the 100th anniversary of the Baltic States' independence and seeking to draw lessons from history for preserving Baltic Sea security. The conference featured a key note address from historian and FPRI fellow Stephen Kotkin.



In a July 2020 event Una Bergmane addressed the increased NATO presence in the region, Baltic energy security, and the unique nature of Baltic Russian-speaking communities to explain why predictions of insecurity in the Baltics have proven false. Dr. Indra Ekmanis, Editor of FPRI's Baltic Bulletin, will further explore this question from a different angle, discussing the civic and cultural integration among Russian speakers in Latvia.

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Maria Shagina



IN THE CROSSFIRE: THE IMPACT OF WEST-RUSSIA TENSIONS OF POST-SOVIET STATES

By Maria Shagina

In this report, Maria Shagina explores how post-Soviet states opted for a strategy of diversification to mitigate the destabilizing economic effects, pivoting to third countries and altering previously Russia-centric trade structures, labor migration, and remittance flows. The new geopolitical reality has shown the limitations of the European Union's and Russia's leverage over the region, while a gradual rise of third powers has given post-Soviet states more ability to balance West and East.

[Download the report here.](#)

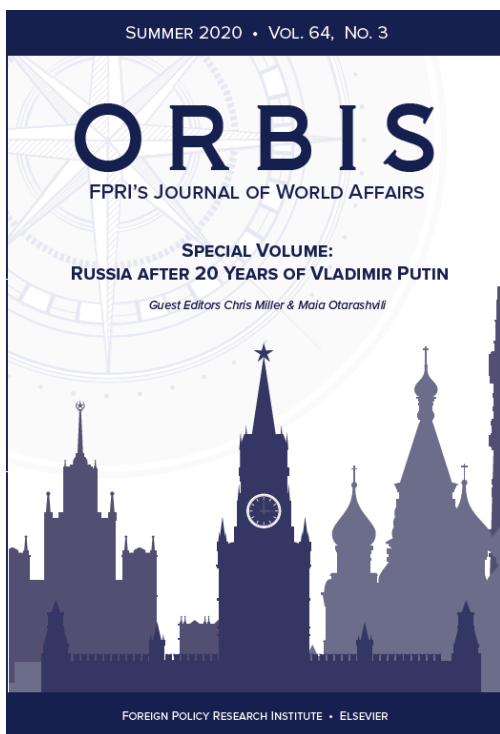
NATO IN THE BALTICS: DETERRING PHANTOM THREATS?

By Robert E. Hamilton

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is right to focus on the security of the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, its most exposed members. However, the idea that deterring Russia in the Baltics requires the deployment of significant additional NATO forces there is misguided.

[Download the report here.](#)





WHY ISN'T LATVIA THE “NEXT” CRIMEA? RECONSIDERING ETHNIC INTEGRATION

By Indra Ekmanis

In the aftermath of Russia’s military incursion in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, a flurry of articles predicted the next territorial conquest of President Vladimir Putin’s Russian revanchism. High on the list were the Baltic countries, which sit precariously on the edge of Europe and historically have been the “bloodlands” between East and West in author Timothy Snyder’s phrasing. More specifically, journalists and analysts pointed to the “Russian enclaves” in northeastern Estonia and southeastern Latvia, where, by many accounts, large ethnic Russian populations were prepared to rise up against Baltic governments with a bit of provocation from across the eastern border. However, six years on, there is little indication that Russian speakers in the Baltic countries are on the brink of causing an internal uprising.

While there are multiple factors that can help explain the Baltic “dog that didn’t bark,” this essay considers an often overlooked variable in the equation: the depth of civic and cultural integration among Russian speakers in Latvia. [_](#)

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FADING RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN THE BALTIC STATES

By Una Bergmane

Since the beginning of Vladimir Putin’s rule in Russia 20 years ago, Russia has lost much of the leverage that it previously enjoyed in the Baltics. On the one hand, Russia has antagonized Baltic states through its wars in Georgia and Ukraine, on the other hand, deep integration in the EU and NATO has pulled the Baltic states from the Russian zone of influence. This article discusses the gradual decrease of Russia’s influence in the Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania while considering the increased NATO presence in the region, Baltic energy security, and Baltic Russian-speaking communities.

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