

Small States Security and Defence

ESTONIA

Külli Sarapuu

Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance,
Tallinn University of Technology

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Security and Defence – Country Overview

Statehood and sovereignty of Estonia:

- Estonian territory under different **foreign rules** until 18th century (Danish, Swedish, Polish, German, Russian). Part of the Russian Empire until 1917.
- On **24 February 1918**, independence was declared.
- 1918-1920 War of Independence against Bolshevist Russia and the Baltic German forces. **1920 Tartu Peace Treaty** between Estonia and Soviet Russia.
- Military base agreement between Estonia and the Soviet Union in **September 1939**. In **1940** the Soviet Union illegally occupied Estonia.
- From 1941 to 1944 **Germany** occupied Estonia.
- In 1944 the reoccupation by **the Soviet Union**.
- **20 August 1991** Estonia regained independence.

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Security and Defence – Country Overview



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Estonia_in_Europe.svg

- Located in the **Baltic Sea region**, in the northern part of Europe.
- Neighbouring countries: Finland, Sweden, Latvia, Russia.
- **Main security challenges:**
 - Large **neighbour** with authoritarian regime and imperial ambitions.
 - **Energy** security (energy system connected to Russia; need to exit oil shale based energy production).
 - **Societal** security (limited integration of Estonian and Russian-speaking communities; increasing economic and regional differences).
 - Increasing acknowledgement of **cyber** security threats.
 - **Economic** security (limited market and economies of scale, vulnerability to events in the EU and global markets).

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Security and Defence – Country Overview

- The highest leader of the national defence is **the President of the Republic**.
- **The Ministry of Defence** is responsible for organising national defence.
- The Ministry's area of responsibility includes the **Defence Forces**, the **Centre for Defence Investments**, the **Defence Resources Agency** (organises recruitment and conscription), the **Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service** and a few other supporting institutions.
- The key strategic planning document is **the Estonian National Defence Development Plan 2017-2026**
- „The development plan's objective is to develop the Defence Forces into a military that can rapidly and effectively respond to crises.“
- The national defence relies on a **comprehensive approach**:
 - ✓ defence is much broader than just military defence and relies on **societal resilience** and capability to deal with different crises, both military and other.

Small States National Defence I

- The average size of the Estonian Regular **Armed Forces** in peacetime is about **6000 persons**. About half of the persons are conscripts.
- **Voluntary Defence League** has about **15 000 members**.
- The planned size of the operational (wartime) structure is 60 000 personnel (high readiness reserve is 21 000 personnel with an aim to grow to 25 000 by 2026).
- Protocols or agreements of **bilateral co-operation** have been signed with states from inside and outside the EU (e.g. Ukraine, Georgia, Norway, Canada, Turkey from outside).
- Baltic defence cooperation focuses on the **trilateral co-operation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania**. The three key elements are:
 - ✓ BALTNET – the Baltic Air Surveillance Network;
 - ✓ BALTDEFCOL – the Baltic Defence College;
 - ✓ BALTRON – the Baltic countermining squad.
- In addition, some **multilateral cooperation projects** exist (e.g. NORBALTPERS – a Norwegian assistance in personnel policy in the defence forces to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania).

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National Defence II

- A member of **the United Nations** since 1991.
 - ✓ On 7 June 2019, Estonia was elected for the position of a non-permanent member of **the UN Security Council** for 2020-2021.
 - ✓ „Estonia, a small country, will bring a small state perspective and act as an advocate for their common interests in the activities of the Security Council.“
- A member of the **Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)** since 1991.
- A member of the **Council of Europe** since 1993.
- A member of **OECD** since 2010
- A member of **NATO** since 2004.
- A member state of **the European Union** since 2004. In Schengen area since 2007. Member of the Eurozone since 2011.
- **EU and NATO are seen as the main international shelter providers for Estonia.**

Small States National Defence III

- Active **NATO membership** is the top priority of Estonian security and defence policy.
 - ✓ Estonia is one of the NATO members that spend 2% of their GDP on defence (2.16% of GDP in 2019).
 - ✓ The **NATO Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence** is located in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.
 - ✓ The **air-policing** in the airspace of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is carried out by the NATO mission.
- The **EU** is seen as the key source of **economic security**, but not only.
- Active participation in the **Schengen** border cooperation. Estonia is managing the EU external border with Russia.
- Estonian police, border guard and customs officials, and other experts of civil matters act within the framework of **EU missions** in the western Balkans, Georgia, and Afghanistan.
- Estonia has taken an active stance towards **PESCO**. Together with MoDs from Finland and Latvia, a plan to develop unmanned terrain vehicles has been initiated.
- The EU provides international levers and diplomatic channels to influence **Russia**.

Small States Role in Peacekeeping



<https://pildid.mil.ee/picture.php?/451354/category/59454>
[ESTPLA-30 patrullid Gao linnas, mai 2019.](#)

- The guiding principle of Estonian security and defence policy is to be **an active provider of security on its own**.
- The principle has led to participation in crisis management and peace support operations led by **different international organisations**.
- Defence Forces have been active in foreign operations **since 1995** UN Protection Force mission to Croatia.
- The first combat experiences were gained from **Iraq in 2003**.
- Since then the **military and civilian missions** have included Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, Mali, Mediterranean Sea and others.
- Estonian experts have participated in the **OSCE** missions in the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus and elsewhere.
- **In 2019**, Estonia participates in nine foreign missions.

Conclusion: Main future security challenges

- **Several challenges, including:**

- ✓ The need to deal with the risks of **cyber security** stemming from the overwhelming digitalisation and dependence on digital services.
- ✓ Increasing **the resilience of the society** in the face of crises (state, private sector, non-profit sector, citizens, and their collaboration).
- ✓ Increasing **energy security**. Finding balance between security, environmental and economic considerations.
- ✓ Increasing the ability to deal with different types of **migration** (for example, the ability to integrate refugees).
- ✓ Reliance on **the international system** as the shelter provider, but dependence on the other states' will for cooperation and for investing into the international institutions. Vulnerability to the events in the global environment.
- ✓ Potential loss of international partners and positive **image** as a result of the recent political changes.