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**SMALL STATES IN SEARCH FOR STABILITY AND
SECURITY THROUGH BALANCING: THE BALTICS IN THE
EU AND NATO**

Bachelor's Thesis

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Tallinn 2015

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the role, which both the EU and NATO have in providing stability and security for its small Member States. The conceptual framework for this research is based on postulates of the political Realism-driven theory of balancing. In this context, the paper will analyse to what extent does being a part of a large framework lead to the political balancing of small Member States of the EU and NATO. General examples will be brought forward on the small Member State concept, and specific examples on the Baltic States. Correspondingly, this paper attempts to answer the following question: **do small Member States of the EU and NATO adapt the strategy of balancing through exercising stability- and security-related mechanisms, provided by large integrative frameworks?**

The methodology used for this dissertation is mainly qualitative research. Apart from a number of primary sources and secondary used, the author conducted few structured (via e-mail) interviews with foreign relation specialists from the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The results of the interviews, despite a low level of sociological representativeness of the survey, play an important role in framing up the outcome of this research.

The first part of the paper will concentrate on the EU and its role in protecting the interests of its small Member States, through which stability and security and, therefore, balance is achieved. The second part of the paper will mainly concentrate on NATO's role in protecting the security needs of its small Member States. Case studies on the two organizations' linkages with their small Member States (an emphasis on the Baltics), were examined for looking at a detailed picture.

Knowing that some of the smaller states have become integral parts of NATO and EU, one can suggest that small Member States of NATO and EU can adopt the strategy of balancing, whilst being a part of a large framework.

Keywords: EU, NATO, small Member States, Baltic States, stability, security, balance

INTRODUCTION

The European Union's (EU) predecessor, known as the European Economic Community (EEC), was established in 1958 for the development of economic cooperation and interdependence between European states. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), also known as the North Atlantic Alliance, was established in 1949 for creating an Intergovernmental Military Alliance.

Currently there are 28 member countries in both the EU and NATO, of which 22 are common members of the two organizations. Many of the Member States of the EU and NATO are considered to be 'small states' (due to their sizes of population, territory and military capabilities, such as for example the Baltics) and due to their limited resources, they tend to be the ones to gain the most out of the memberships.

Bailes and Thorhallsson (2012, 100) state that "for small states, membership of regional institutions can be a strategic aim- easing multiple security concerns". There is an argument that small states, in order to survive, need to think about long-term perspectives of being a member of a large framework, such as the EU or/and NATO. Through the prism of Realism-driven postulates and the balance of power paradigm, the motives of small states in this context could be explained. Accordingly, the main research question is as follows: **do small Member States of the EU and NATO adapt the strategy of balancing through stability and security provided by a large framework?** In this case, the small Member States adapt the strategy of balance, through which they ensure security and stability for themselves. Fortunately, it is clear that general assistance provided by the EU and NATO can be of immense support especially to smaller states, who often struggle with their social, economic as well as defence statuses. Moreover, the two organizations confirm that they "cooperate on issues of common interest and are working side by side in crisis management, capability development and political consultations" (NATO, 2014) in order to provide stability as well as security for its Member States.

This paper will discuss as well as analyse different functions of the EU and NATO in terms of making their positive and, possibly, negative influences towards their Member States, placing this discussion within a theoretical framework of a scholarly debate on small states.

The first half of this research work will concentrate on the EU and its role in protecting the interests of its small Member States, through which stability and security and therefore balance, is provided. The second half of the paper will mainly concentrate on NATO's role in protecting the security needs of its small Member States. The aim of this relatively descriptive research is to figure out whether or not small Member States apart of the EU and NATO are in search of stability and security through the strategy of balancing. Throughout the paper, many examples on the Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – are brought forward, contextualising them with the research question.

In a significant addition, in order to receive data on first-hand experiences in terms of small states' roles in a large framework, the author conducted structured (via e-mail) interviews with foreign relation specialists from the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The results of the interviews play an important role in framing up the outcome of this research and help in answering the questions: what is the role of small Member States in the process of formulating EU policies?

In short, the thesis statement to be tested in this research work is that **the EU and NATO have a substantial impact on its Member States, playing an important role in maintaining balance as well as remaining protective in case of interference by other states – in any case, the EU and NATO play significant role in providing stability and security for its small Member States.**

1. METHODOLOGY

The research method for this dissertation was mostly relying on the qualitative approach – the intention was to get a clearer picture on the extent, to which small Member States of the EU and NATO are in search of stability and security through balancing. Extensive research was done on the aspects of small Member States roles in the EU and NATO – their role in foreign policy making, European integration, stability and security. Scholars have examined why and how small Member States are in a weaker position in terms of those areas in comparison to for example ‘The Big Three’.

Apart from normative data, the primary sources that the author used for this research were interviews conducted with foreign relations specialists from the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This helped to get a good review of the point of view of a small Member State’s representatives. The range of secondary sources were collected to provide this research with a good balance of analytical qualitative data and reliable quantitative material, such as Panke (2008), Jermalavicius and Lawrence (2013), *Foreign Affairs*, official web-portals of the EU and NATO, the Global Firepower. Certainly, news providers like *BBC News* and *Postimees* were of immense support in the process of conducting this study.

The basis for this paper was formed by research on the general benefits provided by the EU and NATO towards their small Member States. The perceived inequality between small and big Member States of both organizations as well as the small Member States role in protecting their own interests were important factors to be studied in order to be able to create a ground for the research. This work based its assumptions on the fact that small Member States as parts of the EU and NATO have more to gain than offer out of the membership, namely in terms of searching for stability and security through gaining balance by being a part of the aforementioned large frameworks.

The findings of this research were put in perspective considering the recent political development in the European East. The Ukrainian crisis and its possible negative impact on general security of the Baltic States’ region has evidently gave both the EU and NATO plenty of chances to test their capabilities in protecting the interests of their respective Member States, namely in terms of providing stability as well as security.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theory of Realism has until this day been the fundamental method of explaining the structure of the international system as well as the behavior of international relations. The theory claims that states are the most important actors of an international system, with military power as well as national security being their main motives (Nicholson 1998, 126). According to the theory, order is achieved and maintained by the balance of power, creating stability through equilibrium.

Realism and Realpolitik both play an important role in defining the motives of the small Member States of EU and NATO and their desire for balance. Bull (2012, 100) claims “that only when power is balanced have states any real freedom in the world”. Therefore, especially for the formerly occupied states such as the Baltics, the search for stability and security through balancing has played a substantial role.

Kenneth Waltz believes that states are not necessarily aggressive, but, nevertheless, desire to preserve themselves. Thus, states are obligated to be concerned with their own security while at the same time must be aware of other states posing a potential threat. In addition, it is important for every state to correct their position in the international arena “in accordance with their reading of the power of others and of their own power” (Brown *et al.* 2009, 42). These aspects define the emergence of the balance of power.

In the 1970’s, there was an understanding that the international system is bipolar, defined by the belief that only the US and the Soviet Union were able to pose a threat to each others survival and “changes in the capacity of one actor can only be met by similar changes in the other” (*Ibid.*). Contrary to the belief of the 1970’s, currently more states are equal, therefore posing threats towards one another. Thus, by not being a part of a large framework such as the EU and NATO might put states into jeopardy. This is also the case with the smaller and weaker states such as the Baltics.

It may be one potential aggressor who pushes other states into a Realist world where their survival depends on building up working security mechanisms as the main priority. As history has shown us with cases of hostility (for example, committed by the Soviet Union, the Nazi Germany, the Empire of Japan or the fascist Italy), it is evident that security must be a priority for any country, especially for the smaller, less powerful states.

The purpose of the EU, NATO and other similar organizations is to create a large framework in order to secure the further existence of the less powerful states. Their policies within the organizations and cooperation with each other are the basis for providing stability and security, and through bipolarity, a balance of power is formed.

In a bipolar system, Waltz claims that “power management is easier, as two parties can negotiate their way to stability more easily than is the case with any larger number” (2009, 110). In addition, Morgenthau argues that “when states pursue their national interests and seek power in the world, a balance will emerge” (*Ibid.*). On the contrary, balance and sufficient power management is not always guaranteed. Waltz claims that the states that tend to ignore “the distribution of power in the world will find that they suffer harm as a result” (2009, 43). However, all states a part of a large framework tend to concentrate on their national interests and seek power through cooperation, therefore being able to develop a sense of stability and security through balance. This is also the case with the Baltics in the EU and NATO.

All in all, defensive Realists such as Waltz claim that states achieve security by preserving their position within the international system, thus leaning towards the achievement of “an appropriate amount of power, in balance with other states” (2009, 44), such as the Baltics in the EU and NATO. Defensive realists believe “that more power can lead to less security” (2009, 45), therefore feeling secure relative to other powers is enough.

On the other hand, offensive Realists such as Mearsheimer argue that security is so imperceptible in a “self-help system”. Therefore, states aim to achieve as much power as possible in order to become “the global, or at least regional, hegemon” (2009, 45), due to which they tend to “pursue aggressive, expansionist policies” (*Ibid.*) which in the opinion of the offensive realists are much more profitable, which could be seen in the case of the US and the Soviet Union in 1970’s.

It is argued by Brown and Ainley that states do not actually “wish to create a balance of power, at least not as a first preference” as “each party would in reality like the other to disappear” (2009, 111). Since the disappearance is unlikely, it is preferable to create a balance through a large framework such as the EU and NATO, which have proven to provide balance for its small Member states through purveying stability and security.

3. GENERAL BACKGROUND

3.1. Distinguishing a small state from a big one

The line drawn between a small and a big state can be debatable. One can distinguish a small state from a big state in various ways- according to economic and political power, size of population as well as territory. If to look at the size of the population of a country, then the countries considered as 'big' in the EU, would be for example Germany (82 million), France (64.3 million) and United Kingdom (61.7 million) (EU 2015). On the contrary, countries considered small according to population would be for example Cyprus (0.8 million), Luxembourg (0.5 million) and Malta (0.4 million) (*Ibid.*).

On the other hand, the size of a country can also be distinguished by territory in which case France would be the biggest country in the EU (550,000 km²) (*Ibid.*), Germany would be the fifth largest (356,854 km²) and the UK only the ninth (244,820 km²). Slovenia (9,250 km²) (*Ibid.*), Luxembourg (2,586 km²) and Malta (316km²), according to these measures, would be considered small countries. Moreover, some scholars, such as Diana Panke, prefer to determine the size of an EU member country by their amount of votes in the Council of Ministers. She claims that the amount of votes in the Council of Ministers measures a country's "political and economic power, which is an important shaping capacity in EU policy" (Panke 2008).

Despite the different measures on how to distinguish a small state from a big one, the more logical approach would be to look towards the concept of the size of population of the EU and NATO countries, in opposed to territorial or economic/ political power. This does not imply that population is the most significant measuring method, but many scholars such as Susi Dennison, an expert on the EU's foreign policy as well as European Global Strategy (US Census 2014), prefer it.

Taking into consideration the size of the population of a country, the three largest Member States of NATO are the USA (320.6 million) (*Ibid.*), France (64.3 million) and the United Kingdom (61.7 million) (EU 2015). On the other hand, the three smallest Member States of NATO in accordance to population are Luxembourg (549,680), Estonia (1,315,819) and Latvia (2,001,468) (*Ibid.*).

The size of NATO Member States can also, moreover, be determined by territory, in which case the largest states would be Canada (9,970,610 km²) (YourCanada 2014), the USA (9,826,675 km²) (CIA, 2013) and France (632,833 km²) (EU 2015). However on the other hand, Albania (28,748 km²) (CIA 2015), Slovenia (20,273 km²) and Luxembourg (2,586 km²), according to these measures, would be considered as small countries (EU 2015). In addition, the size of the Member States can also be determined by military capacities (see page 31-32).

There are twenty-eight Member States in the EU as well as NATO. It is fair to consider ten of them as large states according to population, eight as average sized and the rest of the half, as small states. By these means, the ten small countries of the EU are Malta, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Estonia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Ireland and Finland (ECFR 2015). The ten small member countries of NATO are Luxembourg, Estonia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, Albania (CIA 2015), Slovakia, Denmark and Bulgaria (EU 2015). Therefore, countries considered as small Member States apart of both organizations are Luxembourg, Estonia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania and Croatia.

3.2. General perceived benefits provided by the EU to its Member States

As previously mentioned, both the EU and NATO represent the interests of all its Member States and their citizens. In order to become familiar with the EU Member States citizens complacency level, the EU annually holds a series of public surveys called a *Eurobarometer* in relation to various topics (European Commission 2015). These surveys concentrate on receiving an overview of people's opinions concerning integration as well as quality of life.

For example a Eurobarometer survey published on 7 September 2013 shows that citizens of small Member States of the EU give the Union a rather positive rating (72%-77%). This is mainly resulted by the economic benefits gained from a single currency as well as open borders (Rhein 2013). The fact of conducting these surveys is a small step, but an important one: in order to be able to develop various areas of the EU into a more suitable way for its citizens, the opinion of every individual must be heard and taken into consideration. The propositions and concerns of every inhabitant, despite the size of their home country, must be taken into account in order to be able to form a well-functioning society suitable for everyone.

4. EU PROVIDES

4.1. European integration as a process: trying to integrate big and small

The ongoing European integration is one of the most important factors, which are put into practice through the EU, strengthening the aspects of stability and security. Through the *Treaty of Amsterdam* as well as the *Treaty of Lisbon*, the EU focuses on establishing measures concerning appropriate integration within and between Member States of the (European Commission, 2015). For example, due of the Schengen Agreement of 1985 (Europa 2009), a “huge single market” (European Union 2015) has been developed, creating a free market flow between countries. In one way, it is a positive thing due to the expanded opportunities for working, education as well as travelling, but on the negative side, free borders may also lead to the possible spread of immigration and therefore threaten the stability and security of a state. Despite this, there are several institutions of the EU such as the European Parliament, Council of the EU and European Commission, which all represent respectively, the citizens, governments, as well as the whole of the EU (*Ibid.*), providing assistance in various ways that have proven to be beneficial. The assistance provided by the EU bodies is generally of most help towards smaller Member States, since they tend to face bigger difficulties in the sense of development.

European integration in an economic sense provides free trade benefits resulted by the single market. Currently, citizens of the Member States of the EU who are a part of Schengen, have the advantage of being able to travel freely within the European continent, which is very convenient and plays an important role in providing balance as well as stability. In addition, the opening of borders continues to provide better opportunities for citizens to live and work abroad within Europe – there are “common rules regarding visas, right of asylum and checks at external borders” (Europa 2009). According to a Eurobarometer survey held in November 2012, “more than two thirds consider that free movement of people within the EU has economic benefits for their country (67%)” (Flash Eurobarometer 2013). Moreover, the single market also enables free flow of services, goods as well as money. Having a single currency, the ‘Euro’, makes traveling as well as trade more convenient (EU 2015). All of these aspects lead to a very good opportunity for the smaller states of the EU to participate in international

markets and develop socially as well as economically by doing so, bringing further stability and security into the picture.

Despite the many positive and beneficial aspects, there have been troubles concerning the Schengen framework. In April 2011, political tensions between some Schengen members arose due to the conflicts of the so-called Arab Spring period (Ajami 2012), threatening the security of many states. Because of several uprisings and tensions between the public and governments in various middle-east countries, many victims sought for asylum to escape the political instability. About 48,000 Tunisians immigrated to “the small Italian island of Lampedusa and to Puglia” (Brady 2012) and Italy’s then Interior Minister Roberto Maroni provided them with residency papers, which gave them the right to move freely within the Schengen area (*Ibid.*). This resulted in France re-imposing border checks with Italy, as they did not wish to support a big wave of immigration into the EU. France was especially concerned because Maroni pressured them into taking in the French-speaking migrants from their former colony (*Ibid.*).

Despite the fact that this dispute ended up being a relatively minor one with the leaders of the two countries settling it at a “bilateral summit the same month” (*Ibid.*), the political impact was big, as the tactics of Maroni disturbed other members of Schengen as well. This led to the renegotiation of the “basic rules governing the Schengen area” (*Ibid.*).

Promoting peace through multilateral cooperation in addition to developing peace and security are aspects related to European integration. The EU deploys observers into different troubled parts of the world to observe the situation and provide necessary aid to the parties affected. Such action, for example, took place in August 2008 with the ceasefire between Russia and Georgia and, as a result, humanitarian aid was provided (EU 2015). Having the backing of such an influential Union such as the EU, small states of the EU are well secured and have to worry less in regards to another country wanting to attack. This means, however, that the small states, in some cases, have to support the peace and security policies of the EU in every way – even if there are some policy segments, with which a country does not feel fully comfortable in terms of supporting, it is important to comply in order to secure the backing of the Union.

4.2. The EU as a security provider: the ‘small states’ context

The EU has developed its own security as well as foreign policies based on diplomacy, enabling the Union to act as one in relation to world affairs (EU 2015). The twenty-eight Member States of the EU acting together as one has a greater influence in regards to security, than if each country acted individually according to their own policies. The *Treaty of Lisbon* strengthened the previously mentioned policies held by the EU. According to the document, the post of EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was created in addition to the European External Action Service (EEAS) (*Ibid.*), all of which aim to improve and maintain a secure environment for all Member States.

The purpose of the foreign and security policies of the EU is to maintain peace as well as strengthen international security, highly similar to those of NATO. Moreover, the policies concentrate on promoting international cooperation as well as securing the development of democracy, which leads to respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms (*Ibid.*). These aspects are particularly important for smaller and developing countries a part of the EU as they tend to have limited resources of their own, especially when it comes to international conflicts. However, the security policies of the EU do not replace the legislation which every Member State holds, it only provides general regulations to protect ones social security rights when moving within the EU (European Commission 2015).

4.3. Benefits gained by small states through their membership in the EU

Evidently, small Member States of the EU in oppose to big ones, have limited influence on most matters concerning the Union. In some cases, it might even seem that only the big states of France, Germany and UK have opinions that matter (Dennison 2013). Small Member States tend to have limited political influence in shaping the EU law, mainly driven by the fact that they have a small GDP and population in addition to being new members to the Union (Panke 2008). Consequently, they have less argumentative power than bigger states, which prevents them in being a bigger part in forming the general agendas.

It is common that smaller and less developed countries need more economical as well as social support from outside of the state than bigger and developed countries do. Therefore, the

EU has in a sense a bigger responsibility to support its less developed members. Additional humanitarian aid as well as financial support is needed by small states, especially the countries that gained independence from the USSR only in the late XX century. Small Member States of the EU, which used to be a part of the Soviet Union, are the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (Burke 2014). These countries broke free from a poorly organised entity and began building up their own lives from the ground ‘zero’, which was twice as difficult, after having been occupied for decades. The fact that they joined the EU has helped these developing countries to get on the path in becoming economically and socially stronger, providing stability as well as security.

The EU funds many areas of the society, such as education, health, consumer protection and environmental protection in addition to providing humanitarian aid. There are two types of funding: ‘Grants’ “for specific projects” (EU 2015) as well as ‘Public Contracts’ “to buy services, goods or works” (*Ibid.*), the last one particularly providing money to projects related to EU policies. Since the GDPs of the smaller states of EU are small, it is very beneficial for them to receive funding from the Union in order to be able to build proper roads, strengthen the educational system as well as provide proper health care. The dispensing of funds to each member country is supposed to be strictly controlled to make sure that they are spent in responsible manner (*Ibid.*). Therefore, no state could presumably use the help provided by the EU in a wrong way.

5. IS THERE AN UNEQUALITY OF BEING A SMALL MEMBER STATE OF THE EU?

5.1. Issues resulted from being a small Member State of the EU

Despite the fact that there is a variety of benefits, which small states can gain by becoming a member of the EU, there are still many problematic areas that must be taken into consideration. The main issue that concerns the smaller Member States is the lack of influence they have regarding EU matters. In spite of the fact that the EU is supposed to represent a “sovereign equality of all Member States” (Lehne 2012), it is evident that some Member States have more capacity than others do. This issue makes policies of the EU perceivably unjust, as some states could make a bigger impact as compared to the other ones. Despite the fact that being a member of a large Union provides security and develops socially as well as economically, not being able to have influence over general matters is a relatively negative aspect.

5.2. Lack of influence of small states over EU matters

The limited say which small states of the EU have concerning EU matters, is largely resulted by the lack of votes they have in The Council of the EU. The number of votes provided for a state goes hand in hand with the population of that country. Largely populated countries such as the UK, France and Germany have twenty-nine votes for each, whilst countries with a small population, such as Cyprus, Estonia and Slovenia, have only four (European Council 2015). In total, 20 out of 28 countries have less than the EU-28 average votes (12.57) in the Council of Ministers. It is an issue due to the fact that decisions are decided upon the majority, and the majority is decided once the following two conditions are met: “if a majority of Member States approve (in some cases a two-thirds majority)” and “a minimum of 260 votes is cast in favor of the proposal, out of a total of 352 votes” (*Ibid.*). Therefore, “states with lower number of votes can less easily form winning coalitions in the Council” (Panke 2008). The meaning that the smaller amount of votes a county has, the fewer incidences they have regarding EU matters.

There are three main power dimensions that have to be taken into consideration while examining the level of structural disadvantages of small EU states: “voting and bargaining power, argumentative power as well as moral and institutional power” (Panke 2008), which all reflect different things. The voting and bargaining power expresses how influential a state can be in influencing EU decisions politically as well as socially for the purpose of the outcomes to reflect on their national interests. Small states “have lower bargaining powers, due to their smaller national economies (measured on the basis of GDPs), the restricted ability to offer package deals and side-payments to other states and less valuable unilateral options to act outside the EU” (*Ibid.*).

In regards to the argumentative power, small Member States of the EU have less of it, driven by the fact that they are, in most cases, new members of the Union and therefore have limited “policy expertise and scientific resources” (*Ibid.*), meaning that they lack the opportunity of preparing Council meetings and maintaining “direct contacts to the Commission” (*Ibid.*). Lack of moral and institutional power relates to the restricted administrative and political power they have, which limits the small states in making a strong impact in regards to EU matters (*Ibid.*). These aspects all make the small states of the EU less influential compared to the big countries.

5.3. Influence of big states over EU matters

Unlike the lack of influence small Member States have, the big EU states (Germany, UK and France), having 29 votes in the Council of EU for each, have the opportunity to make the biggest differences in regards to EU policies. These countries are considered as the ‘Big Three’. Due to their amount of resources, they are the most influential and unlike the other Member States, they have the opportunity to “rely on their own weight” (Lehne 2012) meaning they are also powerful merely on their own. Moreover, the big states also have a bigger number of policy experts and personnel in national delegations to Brussels, giving them better opportunities in expressing their opinions. In addition, they have more resources, which is an important factor in being able to play an influential role. This superiority over the other states gives the Big Three a certain “informal leadership role in shaping EU foreign policy” (*Ibid.*). Nevertheless, it is understandable due to the fact that they evidently have more

to offer than the smaller states a part of the EU do. These aspects all refer to the fact that some member countries are “more equal than others” (Lehne 2012).

6. POLICIES OF THE EU: CREATING STABILITY

6.1. Opportunity for small Member States to protect their own interests

It is rarely the case that a country joins the EU just for the sake of participation. However, participation and the gaining of EU's membership have a positive affect on any state- the EU provides its members with a certain respectable image. This is especially beneficial for a small state- being a part of such an influential and powerful Union strengthens their position in the international arena. Moreover, the membership provides security in a sense that it threatens provocateurs as well as opens up many opportunities to form good relations with countries outside of the Union. Teija Tiilikainen, Director of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, states that “the small state perspectives pushed Finland towards full EU membership at the beginning of the 1990’s” (2007, 85). Although Finland, by means of population, would not be considered as one of the small Member States of the EU, the aspect of a small state perspective pushing a country towards EU or other organizations membership is common. This was also the case with the Baltic States that joined both the EU and NATO in 2004.

It is in a sense obvious that joining the EU gives each country, especially the small Member States, a sense of stability and security. The EU provides benefits for all its Member States and every country, despite their size, has some troubled areas which can be solved by being a part of a large framework. In order to be more influential in the EU decision-making processes and for the bigger states to consider their ideas, the smaller and less authoritative countries must first form a positive and respectable image about themselves. As small states tend to have a small amount of votes in the Council of EU, which is one of the defining aspects of the amount of influence a country has, they must be active in various areas “in order to gain moral authority for advancing specific policies” (Panke 2008).

6.2. Examples shown upon the case of the Baltic States

It is known and already presumed that the small Baltic States suffered dramatically during their years of occupation by the Soviet Union. When they re-gained independence, they had almost nothing of their own – “no army, ministry of defense, diplomats, national currency, central bank, border guards, customs officials, etc.” (Grigas *et al.* 2013), which in a sense opened up a good opportunity to adapt the best practices of Europe (*Ibid.*). Now, during the XXI century, things are progressing in a very positive manner for the Baltics. One of the most important goals for all three Baltic States after gaining independence was to join as many international and Western organizations as possible to gain stability as well as security. It was essential to accomplish this while Russia was still at its weak point, thus helping to maintain their independences (*Ibid.*). Fortunately, they have managed to do so, therefore being able to secure themselves from possible threats.

In 2013, Latvia was the second Baltic State after Estonia to be invited to join the Euro area. Moreover, Lithuania was chosen to hold the office of President of the EU Council from July-December 2013, becoming the first Baltic State to do so (Official Journal of the EU 2007). The EU has so far had a very positive impact on the Baltic States, helping the three states develop economically as well as socially. For example, just like for all the other states, the common currency and open borders have benefited the Baltic States in various ways. According to a Eurobarometer conducted in October 2013, in “4 cities, at least 40% of respondents regarded road infrastructure as an important issue” (Flash Eurobarometer 2013). Tallinn was one of the cities concerned with this matter and it is beneficial to receive such feedback, as through these surveys the EU knows which areas in each city are problematic. Therefore, although not all citizens of the Baltic States agree with every aspect that comes along with the changes brought forward by the EU, they have the chance to speak up and express their opinions and concerns through these surveys.

In regards to security, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also joined NATO in 2004 (EU 2015), which has provided them with a new security level. Being a part of Schengen has also not only given an opportunity to more effectively participate in trade, but this also provides international security- “cooperation and coordination between police services and judicial authorities” (Europa 2009) has been strengthened in order to safeguard the citizens of the Member States. Since security was a priority to the Baltic States after gaining independence,

as “their entire recent history had been marked by an absence of security” (Grigas *et al.* 2013), driven by the Realist theory of balancing, these aspects have been of major importance and will continue to be in the future.

6.3. EU’s Foreign and Security Policy: an opportunity for small Member States to create stability

Although each country has its own foreign policy for the purpose of protecting their national interests, the foreign policy of the EU must concentrate on protecting the interests of the Union as a whole, in addition to every country individually. Such a big Union consisting of so many independent countries must be especially attentive whilst compiling their policies, although sometimes fail to do so.

The main body “responsible for the EU’s external action” (European Council 2015) is The Foreign Affairs Council, which “defines and implements the EU's foreign and security policy on the basis of the guidelines set by the European Council” (*Ibid.*). The main aims of the EU’s foreign policy are to protect its citizens in the sense of security, peace, development, mutual respect among peoples, human rights, etc (*Ibid.*), keeping in mind the different needs of each separate Member State. Above all, the previously mentioned aspects are the basis for a stable state.

On the other hand, the CFSP has not turned out to be as successful and beneficial as expected. An amount of issues such as the “majority voting for the CFSP has not been successfully attempted” and “delays have plagued the implementation or funding of joint actions” (Smith 1997, 2). Moreover, difficulties such as a substantial lack of political will, a complex international environment as well as expectations for the CFSP were set too high can be sources of high critique (*Ibid.*)

As already mentioned, small Member States have less influence in forming the policies of the EU, while bigger states have more authority due to their amount of resources, same goes to the CFSP. On the other hand, it is a matter of opinion whether this has brought along more positive or negative aspects for the smaller countries. Here again, we can highlight the importance of Eurobarometers, as these surveys are the way for citizens to reach out and

express their opinions, as well as the conducted interviews, helping to form a better understanding of the complacency of the general public as well as foreign relations experts.

In order to receive a better understanding of benefits which small Member States of the EU are able to receive in the area of foreign affairs, which brings forward political stability by being a part of a large framework, the author interviewed seven specialists in the area. Conducting the interviews was a way of collecting information from individuals who work in the field, giving a new perspective about the foreign policies of small Member States of the EU. The answers help to receive a better understanding to what extent does being a part of a large framework help to create political stability and provide a sense of security towards small states.

All of the specialists interviewed work/ have previously worked, in the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and are experts in foreign affairs as well as Foreign Policy matters of Estonia as well as other small Member States of the EU. The results seek to answer several questions regarding the topic of this research work: does being a small Member State of the EU in some ways limit their process of communication or cooperation with countries outside of the EU? Has the membership of EU facilitated small states possibilities in some ways in establishing relations with countries outside of the EU? How and with which countries? Do you feel that opinions, proposals and interests of your country as a small Member State of EU are taken into account while forming the EU's policy?

The data for this questionnaire was acquired from a variety of primary sources employing one specific method of data collection with an emphasis on conducting structural (via e-mail) interviews with key informants from the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thoughts, personal opinions and ideas were conveyed by a number of interviewees representing diplomats, who agreed to answer questions from a standard questionnaire (see *Appendix*). The interviewees are all experts in foreign affairs, diplomacy as well as politics, giving a thorough overview of the concerned topic.

It is important to keep in mind that all the above mentioned foreign affairs specialists work in different fields, such as 'EU development cooperation', 'EU commercial policy' and 'Asia relations', thus leading them to having separate opinions from each other in some cases. Moreover, only a few examples of specific countries were mentioned, as the respondents did not wish to put a mark on any state in particular.

Question 1:

Does being a small Member State of the EU in some ways limit their process of communication/cooperation with countries outside of the EU? How and with which countries?

Three out of seven respondents believe that being a small Member State of the EU does not limit their process of communication or cooperation with countries outside of the EU. They believe that EU members, despite their size, are independent in the sense of communicating with third countries. However, the amount of resources plays an influential role- bigger countries have more resources, which favors them and invites countries outside of the EU to cooperate with them. In addition, in some cases, the EU has policies, which prevent Member States from being able to form foreign relations with third countries, but at the end, a common foreign policy is the result of a compromise, which means that there has to be reasonable cooperation between the EU and its Member States through which stability and balance is achieved.

The four other respondents believe that being a small Member State of the EU limits their process of communication/ cooperation with countries outside of the EU. Small states have limited resources and therefore it is more difficult to communicate with third countries on their own. Fortunately, in some cases, small Member States themselves have limited interests towards some areas (ex. South America). It is difficult for small countries to form relations with bigger states outside of the EU due to having a fewer amount of embassies than for example France and England. Moreover, it is difficult also since small states have different interests and values and are geographically far from some big countries. However, being a small state is positive in a sense that they do not have the responsibility of communicating with the whole world but can only do it with the countries they need to – the rest is left to the hands of the EU.

Question 2:

Has the membership of EU facilitated small states in some ways in forming relations with countries outside of the EU? How and with which countries?

In regards to the question, whether or not the membership of EU has facilitated small states possibilities in some ways in establishing relations with countries outside of the EU, six out of seven respondents agree with this. With countries that are geographically far away from the small states of EU and where they do not have representation, the EU has contributed to establishing relations. If a country sees that, for example, Slovenia is a member of the EU, they do not hesitate much before cooperation.

Thanks to the EU, many countries in the Asia region are aware of the existence of a developed small country called Estonia and their developed technology. Moreover, it is easier for small Member States of the EU to communicate and cooperate with third countries such as Russia and China through EU representatives. In case of a misunderstanding in relation to the commercial policy, it is preferable to communicate with Russia through European Commission, as they are relatively more influential than a small country by itself. Therefore, in case for example Estonia needs to communicate with some third country, they have the possibility to do so through the EU and EEAS. As a result, being a member of the EU facilitates in establishing relations with countries outside of the EU.

Question 3:

Do you feel that opinions, proposals and interests of your country as a small Member State of are taken into account while forming the EU's policy?

All seven respondents agree in a consensus that opinions, proposals and interests of their country as a small Member State of EU are taken into account while forming the EU's policy. However, the proposals must be balanced, thought through as well as well-presented for them to be taken into consideration. In the case of Estonia, it is almost obvious that they have opinions and ideas to present in relation in ICT. The fact that small Member States of the EU have fewer votes than the big states makes it even more important for them to be active and collaborate with members of the EU council. In addition, steps, which are against the interests of some of the Member States, cannot be added into the EU's foreign policy framework.

However, it becomes evident that it is easier for small states such as Estonia to make a difference in the matters of internal politics rather than foreign politics. However, it is evident that the bigger and more influential states with more resources have the ability to persuade the EU decision makers more, which once again shows that some countries are 'more even than others'. All the respondents agree that the more active a small state is diplomatically, the bigger the opportunity is that their opinions, proposals and interests are taken into account.

7. BENEFITS GAINED OUT OF NATO MEMBERSHIP

7.1. NATO in a nutshell

NATO is an international political as well as military organisation that serves the purpose of safeguarding “the freedom and security of its members through political and military means” (NATO 2015).

The Alliance consists of a system of collective defense which aim is to seek cooperation between European countries and the United States of America for the purpose of equipping its Member States with political as well as military assistance and providing security at an international level. In other words, NATO is an organization in which the Member States have agreed on creating a mutual defense system in case of an attack from an external party outside of the organization. In return for the collective defense system, all Member States are required to “meet certain requirements” (*Ibid.*). The assistance provided by NATO towards its Member States is of immense support especially for its smaller member countries, which often struggle with their social, economic as well as security statuses. Considering this, it is important to figure out the role NATO has in providing aid as well as stability and security towards its small Member States.

7.2. General perceived benefits provided by NATO to its Member States

The enlargement of the EU as well as NATO has benefitted countries from both the Central and Eastern Europe to “tackle difficult reforms which were required prior to accession” (NATO 2014). This has provided citizens to enjoy the advantages provided by democracy- the rule of law as well as substantial economic growth. As a result, “these efforts have moved Europe closer to being whole, free and at peace than at any other time in history” (NATO 2014).

As mentioned previously, the main aim of NATO is to provide political and military assistance to its Member States, meaning that the purpose of the organization is to purvey security in various areas, therefore creating a collective defense system. It is evident that all Member States of such an organization cooperate for the purpose of gaining a sense of

security for their own benefit, at the same time providing protection for other member countries. A case study conducted by Erik Männik (2004, 34) on the topic of small states invited to NATO on the example of Estonia reveals that Estonia's as well as evidently other small states "NATO interaction has largely been driven by its threat perceptions and lack of physical resources to enhance its own security".

It is evident that it is the small, less politically, economically as well as militarily powerful states that have in a sense, the most to gain. These small states would never independently be able to fulfill such a level of stability in regards to security, meaning that NATO plays an important role in protecting its small Member States security needs.

NATO is both a political as well as a military Alliance. From a political perspective, NATO aims to promote democracy and its values as well as further cooperation for the purpose of building trust and preventing the outbreak of conflict within and outside of the organization (NATO 2015). From a military perspective, the organization aims to resolute disputes in a diplomatic and peaceful manner, and in case these efforts fail, uses its military capacity to "undertake crisis-management operations" (*Ibid.*). The previously mentioned operations are carried out under NATO's founding treaty, the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty or "under the UN mandate" (*Ibid.*). All decisions made in NATO are taken by a consensus; therefore all decisions made are "of the collective will of all 28 member countries" (*Ibid.*), showing an intelligent level of willingness for creating functioning political as well as military cooperation.

7.3. NATO as a stability and security provider for its small Member States

NATO has, since its formation in 1949, put its focus on developing a common security policy between European states as well as the US. NATO concentrates primarily on achieving peace based on diplomacy, but is also militarily well-equipped in case peaceful negotiations are not effective and stronger methods have to be taken into use. The aim is for all twenty-eight Member States of NATO to act together as one body, which is achieved by mutual democratic cooperation. This has, so far, had a greater influence in regards to developing a sense of security for each of the Member States, in comparison to each country acting on their

own. Therefore, as already mentioned, NATO is a political as well as a military organisation, which provides security to all its Member States because of effective cooperation.

NATO has developed its own security policies based on diplomacy and democracy, enabling the Union to act as one in relation to international threats. It is evident that all twenty-eight Member States of NATO acting together as one Union has definitely a greater influence in regards to security than if each country acted individually according to their own policies and military capability. This is especially evident in the case of small Member States of NATO, considering that according to Global Firepower, the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have a total military capacity (active frontline and reserve personnel) of 63.200, 22.600 and 19.260 (GFP 2015.) accordingly. In comparison to the military capacity of the largest and most powerful European states such as France (398,531), United Kingdom (328,980) and Germany (324,046) in addition to the USA which has a total of 2,500,00 (*Ibid.*) which is equivalent to the population of Latvia, these small states would be weak if having to stand on their own.

NATO cooperates with other countries and is a part of programs, which advance the creation of peaceful, stable and more secured international relations. One of the programs created by NATO is the Partnership for Peace Program (established in 1994). PfP is a program, which was created for the purpose of “practical bilateral cooperation between individual Euro-Atlantic partner countries and NATO” (NATO 2014). Currently the program consists of 22 member countries from NATO and Euro-Atlantic partners, all of which are committed to “the democratic principles that underpin the Alliance itself” (NATO 2014). The aim of the program is to “increase stability, diminish threats to peace and build strengthened security relationships between individual Euro-Atlantic partners and NATO, as well as among partner countries”. All three Baltic States joined the program in the same year of its establishment, 1994 (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013).

In addition, there is an Individual Partnership Action Plan which aims to bring countries who “have the political will and ability to deepen their relations with NATO” (NATO 2014) to a closer cooperation with the organization. This kind of a partnership tool “allows NATO to provide focused country-specific advice on defense and security-related domestic reforms” (*Ibid.*). The main issues dealt with are security, defense, military, science, environment, civil emergency planning, administrative, and protective and resource issues related (NATO 2014), all of which play an important role in creating stability for all of the member countries.

7.4. Comparing small and big Member States levels of domestic security

Without NATO, the variance of levels of domestic security between big and small states a part of the organization is large. It is important to look at the size of local armed forces, including military capacities and amounts of equipment to be able to understand the actual difference. If we are to look at the large members of NATO, such as France, UK and Germany, it is evident that their military capacities exceed the levels of other states in a significant way. As previously mentioned, their military capacities are quite large: France (398,531), UK (328,980) and Germany (324,046) (GFP 2015). This data is important to be able to understand that the 'Big Three' of the EU/NATO are capable of standing out for themselves if necessary. On the other hand, the states with the smallest military capacity a part of EU/NATO are the Baltic States Estonia (63,200), Latvia (22,600) and Lithuania (19,260) (*Ibid.*)

In comparison with the previously mentioned 'Big Three', these states are nowhere near close to having the capability of protecting themselves on their own. Therefore, additional assistance by NATO and its member countries towards the Baltic States is of substantial importance. Moreover, "to a large extent, the Baltic States owe their ability to contribute to international operations, the development of their military capabilities, and their readiness for NATO membership to the early trilateral defense cooperation projects and to the western assistance that was channeled through them" (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013).

In addition to the military capacity, which includes active frontline and reserve personnel, another important figure is the amount of military equipment each state holds. For example, France currently holds 423 tanks, 1264 aircrafts and has a total naval strength of 113 (all known auxiliaries) (GFP 2015). The UK holds 407 tanks, 936 aircrafts and has a total naval strength of 66 (*Ibid.*). Thirdly, Germany currently holds 408 tanks, 663 aircrafts and has a total naval strength of 81 (GFP 2015). In comparison, for example, none of the three Baltic States has any sort of tanks. In addition, Estonia only has 6 aircrafts and has a naval strength of 6; Latvia has a total of 4 aircrafts and a naval strength of 18 and Lithuania has a total of 10 aircrafts and a naval strength of 12 (GFO 2015). It is evident that the gap between the big and small states capacities is quite large.

8. BALTIC STATES

8.1. NATO's presence in the Baltic States

The Ukrainian crisis has played an important role in NATO's policies towards the Baltic States. The crisis began in November 2013 once the Ukrainian "pro-Moscow President Viktor Yanukovich's government abandoned a deal with the European Union in favor of stronger ties with Russia" (BBC 2015). Because of this, tensions in the area have increased and as a result, the level of security has grown stronger in the neighboring countries including the three Baltic States. NATO's role in the issue concerned has been substantial as a result of its open door policy. Under this policy the Alliance consents to protect its members and partners. Moreover, the foundation for the security issues resulted by the Ukrainian crisis is that "the security and stability of neighbors remains one of the permanent interests of all states" (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013).

Unlike Ukraine, the Baltic States in cooperation with NATO would be able to, in theory, bring an end to an 'occupation' by a tough response. The Baltic States rely on the Alliance's 'Baltic Air Policing Mission' as well as on NATO's rapid reaction force (total force counting up to around 30,000 troops and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force at around 5000 troops) (NATO 2015).

The President of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, in his speech affirmed his belief that NATO should place permanent units in the so-called new Member States (Beltadze 2015). However, due to a treaty signed in Russia in 1997, it is prohibited to have a "permanent deployment of foreign troops in any member east of Germany" (Blair 2015), therefore in case of an attack (on any of the NATO Member States including the Baltics) a quick response (2-3 days) would be made by a total of around 5000 troops (*Ibid.*), followed by the joining of the rest of the 30,000 troops a part of NATO's rapid reaction force.

Currently, around 3,000 troops have been sent by the US to the three Baltic States for a three-month exercise because of NATO's Operation Atlantic Resolve. This amount of troops would never be enough to resist in the event of an actual attack, but it shows the "American political commitment to defend the Baltic States under Article 5 of The North Atlantic treaty" (Russia Today 2015). This, furthermore, shows Russia the effort as well as contribution which NATO (especially its largest Member State, the US) is willing to make towards its Member

States that are in need of aid and protection. Including all three Baltic States, who are all also involved in the current situation.

On the contrary, “an issue that has recently divided Estonia on the one hand and Latvia and Lithuania on the other is that of defense spending [...] – all three countries maintain a commitment to meeting NATO’s benchmark of spending 2% of GDP on defense, but Latvia and Lithuania have found this difficult to achieve” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 11). This has led the two countries to a “receiving end of criticism from the Alliance’s officials” (*Ibid.*), as it is an unequal position for Estonia to contribute most out of the Baltic States, but for all of the three countries to receive the same amount of aid from NATO.

8.2. Baltic States role in financing their own defense

The accession talks with the Baltic States in regards to the ‘cost of membership’ were easy for NATO as the “overriding importance of becoming members of a stable Alliance, and gaining the resultant security guarantees, was so great that all the rest did not matter” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 180) for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In addition, gaining new member nations into the Alliance was an important step for NATO itself, therefore aiming to make the process as simple as possible for all sides involved.

As previously mentioned, a 2% of GDP spending benchmark has been laid down for all NATO’s Member States “as an external international requirement” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 169). Estonia was the first of the Baltics who began spending 2% of its GDP on defense already in 2002. Moreover, they have declared to do so up until 2015, making it the most committed out of the three Baltic States. On the other hand, “Lithuania kept gradually increasing its budget, reaching 1.87% in 2003 and 1.95% in 2005”. In addition, Latvia, despite “lagging behind with 1.15% in 2001”, managed to “increase its budget to 1.75% in 2003 and 2% in 2004” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 177). It became quickly evident that the “economic, legal and conceptual linkage between defense funding and GDP demonstrated symbolically the determination of the three Baltic governments” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 176). All in all, out of the three Baltic States, Estonia has had the most balanced budget since 2000 in regards to the four expenditures categories (personnel expenses, procurement, infrastructure and other expenses), while as a comparison, Latvia and Lithuania “appear to

have a less balanced approach” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 182). As a result, President Ilves in his speech delivered on 18 April 2015 at the 11th Joint Baltic American National Committee Conference, announced that if a country spends “1% or less of GDP on defense”, there is no right for them to “blame NATO in under any conditions for not doing enough”. In addition, he added that the only country who is in a position to “whine and complain” is Estonia, who are the “only ones left doing 2%” (Beltadze 2015).

A study on NATO Enlargement guidelines determines “that any country joining the Alliance should be capable of undertaking a commitment to ensure that adequate resources are devoted to achieve the political and military obligations the Alliance places on them as well as note “the importance of ensuring that potential new members were fully aware of the considerable financial obligations they would face when joining the Alliance” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 179). NATO consistently tries “to emphasize to all three countries [Baltic States] that it would be interested in deployable forces, rather than territorial defense capabilities and mobilization structures” (*Ibid.*). Moreover, although NATO is aware of the fact that “contributions from small countries with small armed forces would be proportionally small”, the three Baltic States need to understand the fact “that they should be prepared to send their soldiers to operations” (*Ibid.*), as an obligation to being a member of the Alliance.

Being a member of the Alliance provides many indirect economic benefits for example “in the form of a safer environment for foreign direct investment, tourism, and trade relations” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 181). On the other hand, direct benefits “such as hosting NATO military headquarters or other installations and defense industry contracts from NATO or NATO member countries, will not be on the agenda for the foreseeable future”, which could be seen as a positive sign, “as considering defense as a business activity would be a dangerous approach” (*Ibid.*). On the contrary, “the most visible NATO investment projects in all three Baltic countries are aimed at developing their military airfields. Ämari (Estonia), Lielvarde (Latvia) and Šiauliai (Lithuania)” are the biggest project investments in the Baltic States so far “and most likely will remain so in the foreseeable future” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 188).

8.3. Tensions resulted by the former Soviet Union

In January and August 1920, after the end of the Wars of Independence of the Baltic States, Estonia and Latvia, respectively, succeeded in signing peace treaties with the Soviet Union. At this point, sovereign rights were renounced to the two states. Lithuania and its capital Vilnius, on the other hand, was seized and retained by Polish troops. As a result, “the three Baltic States faced different challenges from different directions” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 17). Estonia and Latvia were threatened by having a border-line with the former Soviet Union, which was considered (and is in the present day) as “a major source of security challenges and threats” (*Ibid.*).

Long before the establishment of NATO and a military Alliance as such, the three Baltic States had a plan to create a Grand Military Alliance among new States of the USSR. In 1921, all three States joined the League of Nations (League of Nations Photo Archive 2015) which seemed to be “the only guarantee of independence and sovereignty for small states” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 18), but ended up being an ineffective one. Only in 1993, all three presidents of the Baltic States “declared that NATO membership would be the main guarantee of Baltic security” (Jermalavicius *et al.* 2013, 22), all three states were invited to join the Alliance in 2002 and, as previously mentioned, officially became members of NATO in 2004. As a result, the tensions eased between the Baltic States and Russia, as a feeling of stability and security was created – all parties involved were aware of the retrench of the Member States and capability of NATO.

Tensions and fear in regards to the joint border-line between Russia and the Baltic States arose once again in 2013 once the Ukrainian crisis emerged and began posing a threat towards the security of the neighboring countries, including the three Baltic States. NATO and especially the United States have played an important role in providing security towards the Baltic States in regards to the previously mentioned crisis. This primarily includes providing aid in the form of military personnel and equipment. The US deployed a total of 3000 troops to the Baltic States in addition to over “750 US Army tanks, fighting vehicles and other military equipment” (Deutsche Welle 2015). In addition, from NATO, there is a total force counting to around 30,000 as well as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force of 5000 troops in case of a sudden attack towards the Baltics.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to contribute to the indication that the EU and NATO are both protective of all its Member States, but play an especially significant role in providing them with stability and security. All countries a part of the EU and NATO have something to gain from being a member, but to what extent, is a matter of opinion.

The best way to understand the functions of the EU and NATO and their effects on Member States, is to analyze and see what benefits they have to offer and to what extent they protect their interests by providing stability and security. It has become evident throughout the research that all Member States apart of the EU and NATO, despite their size, have something positive to gain from being a member. The smaller Member States such as the Baltics however, benefit the most.

The EU's focus is on developing economic cooperation and interdependence between European States and NATO provides political and military assistance, resulting in providence of general security and stability. Due to EU's as well as NATO's well-known capabilities, the membership for all states, but especially for the ten smaller countries, creates a sense of stability and security.

The goal of both the EU and NATO is to, above all, offer diplomatic solutions to disputes and only once these efforts fail, use its military capacity to undertake crisis-management operations. On the other hand, the strength of the Union and the Alliance scares potential aggressors, preventing conflicts.

All of the previously mentioned occurs because of cooperation between European countries and in the case of NATO, the United States, providing assistance on an international level, making the EU the most successful intergovernmental Union and NATO the world's most powerful intergovernmental military Alliance.

Throughout this research, it has become apparent that being a part of a large framework such as the EU and NATO provides balance for the small Member States, through which stability and security is achieved.

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APPENDIX

Interview questions:

1. Does being a small Member State of the EU in some ways limit their process of communication/cooperation with countries outside of the EU? How and with which countries?
2. Has the membership of EU facilitated small states in some ways in forming relations with countries outside of the EU? How and with which countries?
3. Do you feel that opinions, proposals and interests of your country as a small Member State of are taken into account while forming the EU's policy?

Individuals interviewed:

1. Ivo Parmas- Former Estonian representative in the EU Middle-East and Gulf States working group (Maghreb/Mashreq)
2. Anne Mardiste- Estonian representative in the EU Asian countries working group (COASI)
3. Kristi Karelsohn- EMFA commercial policy and economic organizations bureau director (field of work: EU Commercial Policy)
4. Toomas Tirs- Specialist working in Brussels in the field of Commercial Policy
5. Martin Karner- Expert in Development Cooperation in the EU
6. Siiri Königsberg- Former expert in bureau of Asia, Africa, Australia ja Latin-America in the Department of Politics of EMFA
7. Marge Mardisalu-Kahar- Head of the Estonian Center of Eastern Partnership