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**Perceptions of Grandeur: Small States, Alliance Membership, and the value of
Status Seeking**

MA Thesis

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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Abstract:

This thesis, “Perceptions of Grandeur: Small States, Alliance Membership, and the value of Status Seeking”, focuses on examining the degree to which small states choose to pursue status-seeking within alliances. Considering the nature of contemporary alliances and organizations which directly confer material and ideological benefits upon their members, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), coercive mechanisms which end in the removal of the offending member or relinquishing all material and ideological benefits are not built into either alliance. As a result, most of the impetus for smaller states to invest heavily in accumulating status and showcasing their capabilities would rationally occur beforehand, garnering them enough status to enter the alliance and then benefit from the membership without contributing large amounts of support. This is not to say that small state leaders are greedier or disposed to free riding, but that small states would, in comparison to larger states, have fewer material resources to contribute to the alliance. Considering that and the importance of precluding free riding, determining the perceptions of small states regarding the value of alliance membership which leads to status-seeking within them is a vital topic for those invested in the perpetuation and continued survival of alliances to examine. Additionally, unpacking the composition of small states in relation to one another is another salient area of focus, to more aptly understand how perceptions of status against one another as members of peer groups of similar states might impact their status-seeking within alliances.

Alliance membership is also not as simplistic a proposition with the existence of alliances such as NATO and the EU, which, while not the same as one another, nevertheless overlap heavily with regards to their security pursuits and ideological stances. This nature and its applicability to the pursuit of alliance memberships ensures that overlapping dimensions of similar alliances need to be examined to best determine if status accumulation for a small state within both alliances did not occur in general, or if it changes occurred in status-seeking due to contributions being more heavily focused around supporting one alliance over another. The two states examined within this thesis, Estonia and Lithuania, while very similar small states in terms of their pursuit of NATO and EU membership, are distinguished not only by their status-seeking patterns within NATO (and to a lesser extent,

the EU and the United Nations), but by their sizes in relation to one another when traditional status markers of gross domestic product and population are considered. Unpacking their perceptions of the value of status-seeking within alliances provides an important means of understanding not only which perceptions are more likely to lead to status-seeking within alliances, but how the comparative statuses of small states within peer groups also might influence perceptions.

The analysis itself was predicated upon rectifying two reoccurring facets of academic analyses of status-seeking and small states. The first was a lack of comparison to other states, in favor of deeper analyses of single small states and their status-seeking patterns or comparing small states with large states in comparison to other relatively similar members in terms of relative size. The second stemmed from comparisons to other small states predicated upon examining singular potential theoretical explanations underpinning small state status-seeking in alliances, such as the accumulation and usage of prestige as a result. Comparing Estonia and Lithuania as members of the same peer group, and relatively homogenous states in terms of overall size (but not in comparison to one another) and examining multiple theoretical explanations underpinning status-seeking for small states within alliances. These benefits included material ones, such as the provision of security guarantees through alliance membership or attaining prestige in the eyes of larger members of alliances, increasing the likelihood of garnering economic benefits or support for issues of national importance outside of the traditional realm of support guaranteed by the alliance. They also included ideological, less tangible benefits, such as membership as a means of promoting an identity predicated upon attaining the status associated with membership, or stigma management, wherein status-seeking in alliances served to preclude being externally perceived as a poor member or bad state actor and showing the capability to transform and meet expectations.

A vital aspect of status-seeking which ensured that proceeding with analyses of these perceptions of alliance value is that status-seeking is not contrary to security-seeking or identity-seeking. Status-seeking in alliances (especially in NATO and the EU) confers both. The assurance that greater security guarantees exist for a state and their accumulation of greater material prowess confers a more desirable identity upon them in the form of

developing a positive reputation as a powerful and capable state. Likewise, developing a more reputable and positive identity in the eyes of other states increases the likelihood of other states choosing to accept the more positively viewed state into alliances, out of a perceived belief that they will equitably contribute to the alliance. The goal of this research was then to determine what aspects of alliance membership were emphasized in publicly made statements from relevant political actors regarding their state's alliance membership, if they reflected material benefits and goals such as security guarantees, or more ideological goals such as proving themselves capable of equitably contributing to alliance goals.

To accomplish this, a qualitative content analysis of documents written by, and transcripts of speeches made by relevant domestic political elites regarding their and general alliance membership were analyzed. Three important factors influenced which were included in the qualitative content analysis. The first was that they had to be made and released to a wide audience. For this reason, transcriptions of speeches made at NATO and released by Lithuania's Ministry of Defence, as well as articles from relevant Estonian political elites released through the Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbook, were chosen as examples of reputable information intended for public consumption. Status-seeking is predicated upon changing and manipulating external perceptions of an action, meaning that meaningful attempts will be as visible and obvious as possible. The second was that they had to be at least one hundred words long, to preclude the potentiality of attempting to code a less formal and content-filled statement. The third was that they had to have specifically been made from a relevant domestic political elite, so direct transcripts or articles were necessary as compared to coverage of their position by a third party. This ensures that the statements coded originated directly from relevant domestic political figures and were not potentially skewed or misrepresented through the interpretation of another party.

The research conducted in this thesis was predicated upon the results of the qualitative coding frame alongside data available from NATO, ministries of defence, and the EU regarding personnel contributions to international missions, defence spending as a percentage of gross domestic product, and niche contributions through the development of centres of excellence (referred to as status accumulation) specifically, which aspect of the value of

alliance membership (material or ideological, referred to as alliance valuation) led to increased status accumulation. In addition to these, academic analyses of aspects of status accumulation for Estonia and Lithuania, such as more specific research regarding their experiences within the International Security Assurance Force, were examined as well, to ascertain a more complete understanding of their experiences. This pursuit was not made due to the belief that the relevant domestic political elites were lying or misinformed, but rather that their status-seeking might not include all aspects of relevant information, or purposefully exclude information which might preclude their status-seeking efforts.

The results of this research concluded that the hypothesized relationship between the perceived value of alliance membership and status-seeking for small states, wherein confluence between material and ideological goals indicates a greater likelihood of a small state pursuing consistent status-seeking. Even controlling for external events which occurred in specific periods of time during their membership, such as their original pursuit and initial attainment of membership and the actions of a resurgent Russia shows that consistency in status-seeking pursuits has more of an overall influence on status-seeking patterns. In terms of applicability to alliances, these results suggest that being perceived as having both aspects available as potential goals for status-seeking small states to achieve will lead to more equitable status-seeking than focusing more heavily upon material or ideological assurances.

Two suggestions regarding potential future applications of the research conducted within this thesis include broadening the scope of documents indicating status-seeking originating from relevant domestic political elites included within the qualitative content analysis, more strongly pursuing interviews with other relevant domestic political elites. The first suggestion stems from the relative scarcity of pertinent documents and transcripts fit for the qualitative coding analysis: the one within this thesis features a total of 23 coded documents (13 from Estonian political elites, 10 from Lithuanian ones) which while not a non-considerable amount of statements to examine, nonetheless might not entirely encapsulate status-seeking statements made over the course of the fifteen years of membership within NATO and the EU experienced by both states. While expanding the scope of documents to be included within further qualitative content analyses might impact

the validity of the information gathered, expanding what could be included while being mindful of their applicability to status-seeking and alliance membership for the small states in question would provide more content to analyze and hopefully provide a richer picture of alliance valuation expressed by small states.

The second suggestion, the pursuit of interviews with relevant political elites, would provide more information both in terms of alliance valuation and for status accumulation practices. Some pertinent aspects of alliance valuation, such as prestige in the form of deepening relations between the United States and ensuring its support, were present in academic analyses of Estonian and Lithuanian perceptions of value regarding status-seeking in alliances but were largely not present in the results of the qualitative coding analysis. Pursuing interviews might help fill in the gaps of that alliance valuation, providing a greater amount of variation in determining what perceptions guided status-seeking efforts on the parts of small states. Additionally, some aspects of the examined status accumulation (such as niche contributions) had less information immediately available or officially provided. Interviews with relevant political actors would provide more insight into those contributions and a greater amount of relevant information regarding those aspects of status accumulation.

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Introduction:

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) are both noteworthy international organizations presenting both ideological and security benefits to their members. NATO, as a strong and stable pillar of the Euro-Atlantic community since the Cold War, represented both a phenomenal hard security guarantee with respect to Article 5, wherein the liberal community it encapsulated would collectively come to the aid of an attacked member. The EU likewise presented ideological and material benefits through the promise of increasingly unifying Europe and providing some security provisions under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Both also largely lack commonly utilized means of enforcement against members who do not contribute, easing the potentiality of free-riding for smaller members with less resources to spare (Goldstein, 1995, p. 40). Considering this fact and the relative homogeneity of small states within alliances, what leads some of them to risk larger amounts than their peers and contribute more to alliances and seek status within them? What perceived benefits lead them to make such large and seemingly unnecessary sacrifices to alliances?

This thesis will set out to discern motives for small states pursuing, or not as aptly pursuing, status-seeking within alliances by examining contributions from Estonia and Lithuania. Both states are largely similar small states as far as NATO and EU membership is concerned but are distinguished by their status-seeking strategies within NATO and their relative sizes as members of the same peer group (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, pp. 12-13; Renshon, 2017, pp. 22-23; Graeger, 2014, p. 87). Determining what expressions of alliance value, whether they be due to material goals rising from ensuring the perpetuation of security or provision of additional support toward achieving some economic or national interest, or ideological ones centered around demonstrating their capabilities or overcoming stigma placed upon them, will be important for determining why small states choose to status-seek within alliances. Doing so will be critical for understanding what aspects of alliances are most important for encouraging small states to contribute more, potentially precluding the potentiality of free-riding within them.

Several issues have arisen in studies of small state status-seeking within alliances. One such problem arises from a lack of consideration of multiple potential forms of benefits stemming from alliance membership, in favor of focusing on potential theoretical benefit of its pursuit (such as the accumulation of prestige) (Jakobsen, Ringsmose, & Saxi, 2018, pp. 256-257). This pursuit curtails determining other potential explanations for status-seeking within alliances, limiting the potential scope of examining status-seeking. Another has stemmed from a lack of consideration of distinctions between small states within peer groups, contributing to a misleading perception of small states as almost entirely homogenous actors. Previous academic works have either focused upon deeper examinations of single states and their status-seeking within alliances, preventing comparisons from being made (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, pp. 17-18), or, if comparisons have been made with regards to status-seeking strategies, they have been between states with considerable differences in status and size (Jakobsen & Ringsmose, 2015, p. 135-136).

This thesis seeks to address both problems through the establishment of a most-similar systems design predicated upon comparing and distinguishing Estonia and Lithuania as similar but not homogenous members of the same peer group based upon traditional status indicators of size. Doing so will allow for a comparison of perceptions of alliance value and status-seeking patterns between two relatively similar small states, allowing for a more detailed examination of the appeal of alliance membership for small states and a distinction between how that appeal might differ within members of the same peer group. The hypothesized relationship between perceptions of alliance value and status-seeking for small states is that increased confluence between attaining material and ideological goals will lead to a greater amount of status-seeking. The caveat to this hypothesis is that different sized states might place more value on ideological benefits (if they are larger within the same peer group) or on material benefits (if they are smaller), leading to less status-seeking overall.

To examine distinctions in the perceived value of the alliance (alliance valuation) over time between Estonian and Lithuanian actors, a qualitative coding analysis of transcripts and documents from relevant Baltic actors regarding the alliance and its benefits throughout their history will be conducted. These originated from transcripts of speeches given at NATO

events, articles written about the subject from relevant Estonian political elites within the Estonian Foreign Yearbook, and transcripts from Lithuania's Ministry of Defence. Considering the difficulties associated with reliability and qualitative content analyses (ensuring that the conclusions reached by one researcher can be repeated), inter-coding reliability checks with two other persons were conducted, to gauge the results and ensure that the results were intelligible and replicable.

Gauging degrees of status-seeking (status accumulation) pursued by Estonia and Lithuania in given years was first accomplished by establishing three pertinent means of accumulating status within their respective alliances: by contributing troops to international missions, spending money on defence with the goal of reaching the 2% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) spending on defence espoused by NATO, and developing niche contributions through their respective centres of excellence. In addition to gathering data from relevant sites (websites for Ministries of Defence, data from NATO and the EU), academic articles relating to these status accumulation pursuits were examined. These allowed for a deeper analysis of the facets that went into status accumulation pursuits and provided more details regarding the events and environments within which Estonia and Lithuania found themselves. In addition to not covering every year of membership, viewing statements designed for public events might not allow insight into every event impacting the state the year that statement was made, either because the speaker did not want to specifically draw attention to it, or simply due to time constraints or a lack of information on their part. Examining these other sources of information in addition to the speaker's depiction of events provides a means of filling those gaps in information and providing a better understanding of what underpinned their expressed alliance valuation.

This thesis will be broken into four distinct chapters, as well as an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter will be a literature review of literature pertaining to classical alliance theories (Walt, 1985; 1997; Goldstein, 1995), more contemporary examples of articles pertaining to small state status-seeking and status in general (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015; Dafoe, Renshon, & Huth, 2014; Jakobsen, Ringsmose, & Saxi, 2018), and theories underpinning the two major goals of alliance valuation, material and ideological goals. These

include articles pertaining to alliance membership as sources of material benefits, such as security (Massie & Zyla, 2018; Pollard, 1923) and prestige ((Pedersen, 2017; Jakobsen et al., 2018; Haugevik, 2015), and ideological benefits, such as identity promotion (Mitzen, 2006; Gibler, 2008) and stigma mitigation (Adler-Nissen, 2014; Zarakol, 2014). The second chapter will provide a much more detailed look at the methodology underpinning the research undertaken in this thesis, predicated in large part upon more deeply exploring alliance valuation with regards to the theories in chapter one. The third and fourth chapters will apply the methodology to Estonia and Lithuania, to discern their individual patterns of alliance valuation and status accumulation. The conclusion will examine what was similar and what was different between the two of them, and how accurate the hypothesized relationship between confluence in alliance valuation and status accumulation was.

Chapter One: Status-Seeking, Small States, and Alliances Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will provide an in-depth overview of the evolution of academic analyses of the value of alliance membership for small states. To properly analyze these historic trends, the first section of this chapter will examine earlier academic theories which ascribed value solely to security-seeking and survival and proceed alongside the developing literature to review status-seeking. The second section of this chapter will focus on the importance of alliances as a way for academic examinations of state pursuits of status-seeking. The third section examines the conceptualization of several key terms inherent to status-seeking (reputation, status, and prestige) throughout the literature. The fourth section deepens theoretical examinations of status-seeking and its inclusion of identity formation and stigma management as ideological goals for states status-seeking in alliances. The fifth and final section examines how the literature came to include small state status-seeking and accumulation within alliances, breaking away from previously held notions of only large states having the capacity to accumulate status and allowing for an examination of how and why it is pursued.

Developing theoretical perspectives

The premise underpinning security-seeking as the most important motivating factor for small states to join alliances was a realist assumption on the predominance of survival in an anarchic world system (Haugevik, 2015, p. 43). More classical interpretations of security-seeking purposefully afford little to no active role to small states aside from responding to larger powers and their provocations (Reiter, 1994, p. 500), due to their general inability to act individually. Perspectives regarding small states within this view entirely subordinated them to greater states, with the continued survival of international society and sovereign small states accepted as either a show of mercy granted to smaller states from larger states, or from smaller states successfully playing the interests and “mutual jealousies” of larger states off one another (Pollard, 1923, pp. 54-55). Small state participation in alliances is then predicated not upon any sort of ideological factors or additional perceptions of alliance value, but the necessity of ensuring their survival from an immediate external threat. Within this

theoretical perspective, contributions to the alliance from a small state therefore only indicate their desire to survive and remain sovereign. The potential threat of other states within the alliance perceiving them as free-riders and refusing to come to their aid creates an unbearable security concern when the small state is faced with a grievous external threat, and alliance participation becomes a means to mitigate those concerns and ensure the provision of material benefits in the forms of concrete support (Goldstein, 1995, pp. 47-48; Massie & Zyla, 2018, p. 335).

Security as provided through alliances is predicated on the chosen response to an external threat and the need to establish or maintain a balance of power. Small states, in pursuing security from this threatening power, can either balance with one another against the threat's source, or bandwagon with the source of the threat (Walt, 1985, p. 4; Miller, 2003, p. 52). The existence of a perceived threat is the determinant of an alliance's establishment, with its nature and the decisions of small states to mitigate their insecurity against it forming the foundations of an alliance. An external threat is therefore necessary for an alliance to be maintained, with its reduction or termination leading to the alliance losing its reason to exist and breaking apart (Walt, 1997, p. 158; Barany & Rauchhaus, 2011, pp. 286-288). Some additional areas of interest remained regarding alliance formation and maintenance, developing from other potentially salient variables such as the ideological importance of alliance membership and additional benefits awarded to certain alliance members (Walt, 1985, pp. 25-25, 27-29). Further analyses of these factors came an understanding of alliances as a way for states to measure, seek, and attain status through status-seeking, as opposed to only procuring increased security.

Status-seeking and security-seeking, while distinguishable goals for states to pursue, do not diametrically oppose one another. Status confers, or is perceived to have the potential to confer, general benefits, even within a theory which presents an inextricably anarchical view of the world, by elevating a state above its competitors and making it more attractive for other states and small states to organize around (Renshon, 2017, pp. 8-9). This support can assume multiple forms from increasing the probability of successful alliance or international organization formation, facilitating economic, material, and security benefits for a state possessing enough status by establishing itself as an appealing actor on the global

stage (Gibler, 2008, p. 432; Miller, 2003, pp. 41-42). A state seeking to develop a positive reputation to increase its status, and thus standing, in an international hierarchy or procure membership in an alliance will likewise acquire the security associated with belonging to a larger community or alliance through its success. Conversely, even a state primarily seeking to accumulate security through the development and acquisition of military hardware will still accumulate status as a result, giving it, at the very least, a positive reputation as an increasingly capable power (Graeger, 2015, p. 87). Considering how status is conferred upon states attaining either ideological (normative successes, increase of position in hierarchy, etc.) or material (economic gains, security assurances, etc.), security-seeking can most appropriately be understood not as its own separate category, but rather a goal inherent to a broader understanding of what status-seeking entails.

Status-seeking is predicated on the view of international society and alliances as founded upon hierarchical, and thus inherently unequal, relations between states and members of an organization or alliance. Classical scholars such as Machiavelli and Hobbes and their interpretations of international relations recognized the existence of status and its critical importance to states and their leaders in the forms of, among other things, “honor”, “glory”, and “standing” (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, pp. 3, 6-7; Dafoe et al., 2014, p. 372). Even these predominantly anarchical views of the international system, largely spared the complexities and trappings of modern codified alliances, was predicated (at least in part) on the relationships states had with one another and the value of attaining and maintaining positive perceptions of themselves. Regardless of the lack of concrete relations ensured through alliance formation and diplomatic negotiations, nebulous ideas of some form of hierarchy nonetheless abounded, predominantly with regards to great powers struggling to maintain some sort of superiority over one another and inexorably attract smaller powers to aid them in warding off conflict or establishing material superiority over a competing power (Gibler, 2008, p. 432; Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, p. 2). Status-seeking, the internal pursuit of desirable traits by a state to gain positive reputation to attain status and its myriad of benefits, is a means of analyzing how states attain (or try to attain) status.

Studying alliances and their composition provides an appropriate means of examining the salience of status-seeking for individual small states through their alliance contributions.

The most immediate benefit of alliances for analyzing status-seeking is the nature of alliance commitments in comparison to less formalized agreements: member-states possess a more concrete understanding of what membership contributions are meant to entail in comparison to other forms of diplomatic communication (Gibler, 2008, pp. 433-434), ensuring that their fulfillment or failure to ensure commitment does not arise due to misunderstandings or poor communication. Alliances are also crucially important and commonly examined subjects for the study of international relations and the states within. This significance to the discipline stems from both their ubiquitous nature as a means of constructing a broadly encompassing foreign policy with other states, and their importance as early signals for developing security concerns and, potentially, the outbreak of conflict between groups of states (Miller, 2003, p. 51; Reiter, 1994, p. 490). One facet of status-seeking which must be addressed is the incredibly broad encapsulation of concepts such as reputation, status, and prestige under broader and often interchangeable terminology within status-related research. These terms are not interchangeable and determining what distinctions exist between them will be critical for appropriately examining status and the many reasons potentially underpinning its value.

Conceptualizing Reputation, Status, and Prestige

While reputation, status, and prestige are closely related when applied to states, their conceptualization precludes them from being interchangeable terms for the same phenomena. Reputation refers to the external perception of a state based upon historical trends and behaviors that it has exhibited, and how other states view it in comparison to themselves and as a singular actor (Dafoe et al., 2014, pp. 372-373, 375). Its pursuit and maintenance has driven states and their leaders to go to exceptional lengths to ensure its defence, for fear of developing a more negative reputation which might curtail the effectiveness of future political actors (Gibler, 2008, pp. 427-428; Miller, 2003, pp. 41-42). Reputation does not necessarily have to be relational or positive and can take several different forms or traits for individual states, such as developing reputations for possessing resolve, honesty, or multiple forms of reputation simultaneously (Ibid, pp. 41, 47; Gibler, 2008, pp. 429-430). Additionally, reputation does not necessarily have to be universally constant across all external actors. Multiple reputations for an individual state can exist among those perceiving

it externally, increasing the difficulty of determining a relatively homogenous reputation that a state may possess (Dafoe et al., 2014, p. 374). While reputation cannot exist without other states and their perceptions, forms of it and their applicability to a single state can be determined without directly drawing comparisons between multiple states. This characteristic, alongside the less positively associated aspects of reputation, most strongly distinguishes it from status.

In its simplest terms, status is a form of reputation which is contingent upon comparison to external sources. It is predominantly focused upon the perception of a state's reputation and outside perception among its peers or another closely related social group (Renshon, 2017, p. 4; Massie & Zyla, 2018, p. 325; Jakobsen, Ringsmose, & Saxi, 2018, p. 261; Pedersen, 2017, p. 220). It provides a means for states to hierarchically position themselves in comparison to allies, neighbors, alliance members, or a targeted reference group with some shared common characteristics (Dafoe et al., 2014, pp. 378-379). Identity formation and confirmation through status is also a noteworthy end achieved through the procurement of status, with its attainment potentially confirming membership to an international organization or alliance (Renshon, 2017, p. 4). Even assuming that a state may not hold some degree of status within a specific group, their status will nonetheless determine their general position as an international actor, for example, their perception as a "great" or "minor" power. Their status may also place them within a peer group (or status community) of similar states, whether objectively determined groups of states connected to one another regionally, or subjectively determined groups of peers (such as the BRICS), at once ordering the world and placing those specific states within a hierarchy (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, pp. 12-13; Renshon, 2017, pp. 22-23).

Status, due to its inherently relational characteristics, produces a zero-sum hierarchical stratification of states and their status-based relationships with one another: when one state's status increases or diminishes, it will always be in relation to other states, whose own status will diminish or increase in comparison (although the distinction may be negligible, depending on the size and formation of the group) (Dafoe et al., 2014, p. 375). The ultimate goal of status is the cultivation of a positive reputation, allowing for a state to

stand out and above its neighbors, groups, or in the broadest possible sense within the international community, a process eased for smaller states by virtue of their small size, which lowers expectations among larger powers and eases their status-seeking woes (Pedersen, 2017, p. 221; Jakobsen & Ringsmose, 2015, p. 136). The benefits of cultivating status are multi-faceted and subject to further academic investigation, especially considering the strategic flaws which may present themselves in the process of status-seeking: despite the strong relationship between status-seeking and security provision within a military alliance, pursuing status can preclude the attainment of security assurances, with its pursuit potentially causing states to take greater risks or expose themselves to more insecurity to ensure its provision (Jakobsen et al., 2018, pp. 262-263; Renshon, 2017, pp. 15-16). Considering these potential detriments, further research into potential reasons underpinning the desirability of status-seeking for individual small states within alliances was conducted. One material benefit from status-seeking, prestige, focuses on the implication of status as a means of accumulating tangible benefits from other states and ensuring some reward from their risks.

Prestige, the utilization of status to attain material benefits, aid, or other diplomatic and social capital, examines reputation and the attainment of status as a means to achieving some manner of strategic or resource-driven goal. The analysis of prestige as an end-result of attaining status originally was constrained to the behavior of larger states. The belief underpinning that theoretical development was that only greater powers would be able to utilize prestige to protect their own interests, due to their comparatively insurmountable advantages in terms of resources and other material wealth in comparison to smaller states. Those lesser powers, lacking similar capabilities and the means to develop it, would essentially be locked out of utilizing their status for similar purposes (Jakobsen et al., 2018, p. 260; Renshon, 2017, p. 14). Prestige as a perceived goal for small states in alliances, however, has become a more viable topic to examine among contemporary researchers. The major impetus behind the change came from further discerning how prestige could be utilized by smaller states in a distinctive, yet still materially beneficial, manner from larger states.

In comparison to larger states enshrining their interests through utilizing prestige to persuade smaller states, smaller states could utilize prestige accumulated through status-

seeking with larger powers to attain concessions from them or obtain greater political access to politicians from large states for the pursuit of their national interests (Pedersen, 2017, pp. 218-219; Jakobsen et al., 2018, pp. 257-258, 262-263; Haugevik, 2015, p. 44). Prestige accumulation, as applied to small states within alliances, postulates that status-seeking is a means to an end. That end is the procurement of diplomatic capital (goodwill which leads to greater political access and the potential to influence the decision-making of other states) (Adler-Nissen, 2008, p. 670) and material benefits by improving a small state's status and perceived value in the eyes of larger states the ultimate goal (Jakobsen et al., 2015, pp. 257-258). The acquisition of these benefits, alongside the provision of security accompanying diminished concerns of alliance abandonment, provide two valuable perspectives on the value of status-seeking for small states within alliances to acquire material benefits. However, research on the potential value of alliance membership for small states does not universally end with the consideration of material benefits but continues to examine other potential benefits which may arise.

Identity formation and stigma management as ideological goals

Academic analyses of the reasons underpinning status-seeking find that other forms of benefits exist for states which are not as strictly focused upon material benefits (although those benefits can certainly be achieved as well). A large part of this continued analysis was predicated on the distinctions between states and their alliance making decisions in similar circumstances. Despite a relatively large amount of homogeneity regarding the composition of states in certain and their perceptions of external threats, distinctions existed between the choices they made when joining alliances (Reiter, 1994, p. 226). Exploring potential reasons led to a resurgence of the necessity to study status-seeking not as a means to an end, but as an end to itself, as a means of allowing a state to position itself on the global stage. These ideological considerations were explored to an extent in earlier literature as curious adventures which threatened domestic material interests, ultimately demonstrating little more than displays of irrationality on the part of leaders which could lead only to further insecurity and conflict (Haugevik, 2015, p. 44; Dafoe et al., 2014, p. 379; Renshon, 2017, pp. 11, 18-19). Whether these decision-making processes fit into models of realist rational state behavior

or not was not as concerning as discerning the potential motivations for pursuing an ideological end for its own sake, and the inherent value to a state developing a greater status.

Status-seeking and the accumulation of positive reputation as a result is enormously beneficial for states looking for membership among a specific and subjective peer group by altering the beliefs of others to match their internal perceptions of themselves (Renshon, 2017, pp. 23-24). Additionally, and especially for small states, alliance membership allows for these smaller states to prove their ideological strength by promoting themselves as morally “good” states, modeling exemplary behavior for the rest of the world to strive to adhere to (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, pp. 10-11). These benefits, while also potential avenues to obtain material gains as a result, are predominantly predicated on achieving ideological aims because of status-seeking. This pursuit most frequently takes two forms: identity building, wherein status-seeking is a means for a state to make external perceptions match internal perceptions, and stigma management, predicated more upon concerns over accumulating negative reputation.

Identity building occurs alongside the codification of the world associated with alliance membership. Entering an alliance, as expressed in earlier academic theories discussing alliances as providing a balance of power, is a means for security procurement from like-minded states against an external threat. In tandem with this provision of security is the potentiality of joining a community which represents a desirable social community of positively perceived states (Barnett, 1996, p. 401). While the degree to which belonging to an alliance-based community might impact a state’s decision to pursue membership in one has been contested (Waltz, 1985, p. 26), an alliance creating some sort of community for its member-states is unquestionable: communication between members of an alliance is expected for a member to join and maintain their membership (Gibler, 2008, p. 433), ensuring that some form of relationship developing between the members, at the very least, within the context of maintaining the alliance and positive relations with one another, inevitable. This communication theoretically also has the capacity to transcend alliance maintenance, creating a simplified field for dialogue between member states and easing the process of creating and deepening their diplomatic ties to one another (Mitzen, 2006, pp. 344-345).

A state gaining membership to an alliance also provides confirmation of attaining a specific status. Considering the nature of alliances as bringing together states which hold certain characteristics, obtaining membership to an alliance of attractive peers can signify a state's attainment of an equivalent status to other members within that group (Renshon, 2017, p. 23). Previously held theories viewed alliance membership in the face of a threat to be inevitable, with neutrality an unacceptable choice for a small state to make. Neutrality was viewed not as a strategic decision for a small state to pursue, but as equivalent to bandwagoning with the source of the threat by not combating the source of insecurity (Reiter, 1994, p. 495). Ideological solidarity as another motivating factor for small states to join and maintain alliances would indicate a reason for this seemingly peculiar choice. The fulfillment of an ideal related to identity through an appropriate alliance would be a powerful determinant for pursuing membership over neutrality, and vice-versa if such solidarity could not be found (Walt, 1997, pp. 168-169). Viewing this paradigm outside previously held notions of the value of alliance membership for small states therefore allows for an examination not of how irrationality might play out in alliances, but the value of a certain alliance to a small state as a means of indicating a form of ideological fulfillment and the attainment of a positive identity (Haugevik, 2015, p. 44). In this case, the actions of the small state are a means of reinforcing and indicating their status through procuring good reputation, but the inverse, status-seeking as a means of preventing the accumulation of negative reputation to preserve (or regain) status and prevent stigmatization, also exists as an important ideological end.

A final possible goal for states pursuing status-seeking is as a means of managing stigma because of developing negative reputation within a peer group. Developed from the English school's perception of the world as an international society predicated upon frequent communication between states (Adler-Nissen, 2014, pp. 147-149), the key idea underpinning stigma management is that norms develop within a community, and members will recognize transgressions and castigate the offender. Stigma management differs from identity promotion as a strategy more closely interwoven with the actor's desire to avoid shaming and other deleterious consequences due to violating norms considered to be of paramount importance to a peer group (Ibid, pp. 143-144). Stigmatization in international politics occurs

through the creation of stigma in relation to the behaviors within a collection of states. Members of an alliance, international organization, or other group of closely interrelated states develop norms and attitudes toward behaviors which are both considered normal and acceptable, and, at the very least, known by all and developed into a shared common social ground (Zarakol, 2014, p. 314). Stigma stems from actors within the group recognizing the actions of another as violating those values held in common, leading to their stigmatizing the misbehaving actor by publicly castigating them in the hopes of causing them to alter their behavior and ensure future compliance (Adler-Nissen, 2014, p. 148). This process ends in stigmatization if the misbehaving actor understands that they are misbehaving in some way. Their reaction does not always necessitate altering their behavior to ensure compliance (other strategies do exist, such as accepting such deviant behavior as a core aspect of their identity) (Ibid, p. 172), their understanding that the action was perceived as unacceptable within the group is critical for stigmatization to have occurred (Zarakol, 2014, pp. 314, 318-319).

While opting out of the specific peer group and joining another to avoid developing a negative reputation and diminished place in the group's hierarchy is an option (Dafoe et al., 2014, p. 379), choosing instead to remain within the group (especially in the case of small states and alliances facing a strong external threat, who may not perceive another option) necessitates some strategic maneuvering. The pursuit of stigmatizing misbehaving actors is therefore particularly useful both as a means of punishment without relying on more material forms of castigation, and as a way of reinforcing the organizational structure of the group. Regardless of the reaction of the state being stigmatized, the matter becoming officially presented and reacted to emphasizes the group's composition and the importance of the value in question (Zarakol & Mattern, 2016, p. 640). This management could, depending upon specific situations, be an exceptionally prominent and negative identity-based motivator. It would contingent not merely upon domestic attempts from small states to enshrine an identity for themselves within a peer group, but upon the perceived necessity of preventing their perception from noteworthy actors within the community from becoming predicated upon negative connotations. Recognition of the necessity to avoid such outcomes by pursuing stigma management may play a significant role in determining why small states within alliances may status-seek (Adler-Nissen, 2014, p 153).

Security, prestige, identity, and stigma management are all potential reasons as to why small states pursue status-seeking in alliances. Those four explanations essentially deal with two larger groups of concerns, which, while largely interrelated to one another, do represent varied goals, specifically the pursuit of ideological and material goals. Ideological goals, wherein status-seeking predicated upon ensuring recognition within a peer group of states and the potential procurement of normative benefits stemming from its attainment, are exemplified by identity and stigma management explanations. Material goals view status-seeking within an alliance as a means to an end, that end being ensuring security and additional material benefits in the future, exemplified by security and prestige explanations. A final, vital topic which largely escaped greater discussion in more classic forms of literature is the ways smaller states can accumulate status within alliances. The goals explored earlier provide a multiplicity of potential reasons underscoring its pursuit, but the form which such status-seeking might take for smaller states is likewise a critically important subject.

On this subject, more traditional explorations and views of status-seeking fall short. Due to previously held notions of status-seeking being reserved to larger states as the only powers great enough to distinguish themselves, researching how status is accumulated by states seeking it has been limited. One such form is procuring weaponry and material capabilities with highly symbolic value, leading to status-seeking research which examines status accumulation based upon states acquiring nuclear capabilities and purchasing aircraft carriers (Renshon, 2017, pp. 15-17). Failing to move beyond such a research design would be innately self-defeating, doing little more than regulating the study of status-seeking to the most economically prominent states within the international system and again rendering smaller states as homogenous and vestigial entities in comparison. The goal of status-seeking is not to pursue internally-derived solutions to accumulate status (considering the lesser capabilities of smaller states, this would be impossible), but rather to increase their visibility to members of the alliance by having their contributions be recognized (Jakobsen et al., 2018, p. 263), enabling smaller states to attain some ideological or material goals.

Status-seeking as applied to small states within alliances is derived more from meeting commitments and their forms of contributions. Two factors significantly ease the

process of making this status-seeking not only visible but quantifiable. The first is the nature of alliances as ones which require firm commitments which are agreed upon by the small-state prior to its entry. These agreements ensure that expectations for appropriately contributing are known to all involved actors (Gibler, 2008, pp. 433-434), making it possible for small states to accumulate status by meeting or exceeding those commitment goals, which can include procuring materials for defence, personnel contributions to international missions, and other forms of niche contributions (Graeger, 2015, pp. 86, 88). Second is the more modest expectations placed upon small states due to their more limited resources: status-seeking is greatly eased by their smaller size, making it easier to exceed the expectations of other alliance members and larger states (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, p. 2; Jakobsen et al., 2018, p. 263). Small states seeking status in alliances then have the means to do so not by purchasing symbolically loaded weaponry or defence materials, but in ensuring that their contributions are as visible as possible and predicated upon the needs and desires of the alliance.

Numerous potential goals have been researched in the literature on the value of status as explanations predicating small-states pursuing status-seeking in alliances through contributing to the strength of the alliance and distinguishing themselves as members. In doing so, the groundwork has been laid for analyzing what forms of alliance valuation are most salient for making status accumulation a desirable goal for small states. More effectively examining these theories as they apply to small state status-seeking in alliances will require establishing appropriate case studies to determine how these alternative goals apply to small states within alliances.

Conclusion

This thesis will additionally address two weaknesses of the literature reviewed and studies of reasons underpinning status accumulation. One has been the lack of comparative studies of multiple small states within similar peer groups, in favor of either deeply examining single small states and their status-seeking (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, pp. 17-18), or states with larger disparities in their respective statuses (Jakobsen & Ringsmose, 2015, p. 135-136). The other has been, in literature wherein similar peer group states and their status

accumulation patterns are explored, a more specific focus on a singular alliance valuation reason underpinning its pursuit (Jakobsen et al., 2018, pp. 256-257), precluding other factors which might also factor into small state status accumulation patterns. To further explore this topic, this thesis will examine the Baltic states as relatively homogenous actors within their peer group, and otherwise distinguished actors with regards to their alliance contributions, to determine which factors differentiate alliance valuation and status-seeking pursuits among small states. The next chapter focuses on conceptualizing and distinguishing small states, how they express their perceptions of the value of alliance membership, and how they accumulate status within alliances themselves. Additionally, an appropriate methodology for determining a means to measure and compare alliance valuation and status accumulation between small states will be established and expanded upon.

Chapter Two: Conceptualization and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will conceptualize the variables to be examined within this thesis. Alliance valuation, the independent variable, will be gleaned from a qualitative content analysis of transcripts and documents from relevant Estonian and Lithuanian political elites to determine patterns in perceptions of alliance membership and status-seeking within it fulfilling material goals versus identity goals. Status accumulation, the dependent variable, will be determined by examining three vital indicators of the pursuit of status-seeking, international mission personnel contributions, defence spending as a percentage of GDP, and niche contributions. The first section of this chapter will determine the value of examining the Baltic states through a most similar systems design as a means of determining their similarities and finding the most pertinent point of distinction between them.

The Most-Similar Systems Design

As established within the literature review, alliance membership provides a particularly valuable frame of reference with regards to analyzing the value and reasons underpinning status-seeking for small states. The label itself, however, is one that demands a comparison group to be readily understood, as a state cannot be considered a certain size without another state with which to compare it to. Should the size of a state be best compared to the entirety of the global community, to the alliance within which they reside, or another measure entirely? Status-seeking theories ascertain the value of another option entirely, specifically, subjective and objective social communities within which a state may reside. Objective peer groups are ones linked to one another by geographical considerations, subjective peer groups by perception and ideological factors (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, p. 12; Renshon, 2018, pp. 22-23). The Baltic states would qualify as a peer group by both metrics. They are objectively tied to one another via their location between the Baltic sea and Russia, and subjectively tied to one another through strong internal and external perceptions of themselves as forming a tightly-knit group of similar and allied states within the larger global community (Medijainen, 2012, pp. 183, 197-198; “Declaration on Unity and Cooperation”, 1990).

Not only do the Baltic states exist within a single peer group (both subjectively or objectively ordered), they also share a common historic threat and security-related reason to pursue alliance membership through their foreign policy history with Russia. Their previous and unwilling entrance into the Soviet Union left them with two enduring factors which impacted their decision to pursue membership in NATO and the EU. The first is their security relationship with Russia, both due to historical tensions and perceived risk stemming from its proximity and military presence (Shetty, Kearns, & Lunn, 2012, pp. 5-7), which provided a strong impetus for foreign policy decisions following the end of the Cold War (Ilves, 2007, p. 11). The second is the vital nature of the Euro-Atlantic community and the United States as sources of ideological solidarity, with closer relations proving the identity of Baltic states as free and democratic states capable of upholding globally ubiquitous values (Valionis, 2004).

Despite these similarities and how historic policies have led to the peaceful cooperation between them, the Baltic states are far from homogenous entities. The notion of a singular Baltic identity and the implications of cohesive unity stemming as a result has been received with some consternation, with individual Baltic states taking actions specifically to unpin perceptions of themselves from their neighbors as comprising only one state within a homogeneous Baltic identity (Mockutė, 2008, pp. 11-12, 36-37; Paulauskas, 2005, pp. 52-55). These desires to distinguish themselves from their neighbors impacted the Baltic states' pursuit of membership within the EU and NATO, with internal diplomatic tensions periodically arising over which state would take leadership over hosting Baltic defence cooperation projects (Ibid, pp. 53-54). These considerations for their comparative statuses, especially with regards to their prospects as NATO and EU membership candidates, fit the model for status-seeking as a means of seeking a more favorable position when compared to relevant others (Pedersen, 2018, p. 219). While the Baltic community was overemphasized as a homogenous one, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania nonetheless, even as they deepened their cooperation in pursuit of NATO membership, competed with one another with considerations to their statuses.

A less traditional form of status marker for distinguishing state size also exists, specifically, the examination of state size as relational to the perceptual and preference sizes of the examined states (Thorhallsson, 2006, p. 8). Perceptual size refers to the domestic perception of the size of the state and its capabilities for acting meaningfully internationally (Ibid, pp. 24-25), and preference size delineates their ambitions and desired status (for example, if they desire and realistically strive to achieve great power status) (Ibid, pp. 26-27). In these regards, the Baltic states once again are relatively homogenous. All three viewed themselves as small, vulnerable, yet capable states following the end of the Cold War. The pursuit of membership in NATO and the EU was therefore both a necessity for ensuring that they could rebuild their economies and remain secure, and a possibility that was well within their capacities to eventually attain (Paulauskas, 2013, pp. 50-51).

Examining the Baltic states does highlight a critical point of contention between them, namely, their varying sizes (in terms of traditional status markers) in comparison to one another. While all three are typically considered small states in relation to (and often alongside) many of their fellow members in NATO (Urbelis, 2015, pp. 70-71), clear distinctions exist in their size in comparison to one another. Defining what qualifies a state as a small state is far from a universally decided and quantified measure, and a plethora of terminology labeling states as medium and major states, or regional and great powers among others (Carvalho & Neumann, 2015, p. 13; Renshon, 2017, pp. 16-17) illustrate the numerous theoretical attempts to distinguish the characters of states from one another in terms of size. One aspect of these size labels is that they, much like status, are relational: for a state to be a “large” state or “great” power, there must be other examples of states which fail to develop such a reputation, and vice-versa. Fittingly, traditional deliberations of status predicated upon the size of a state are most concerned with economic strength and access to natural resources stemming from their population and the geographic size of their sovereign territory (Graeger, 2014, p. 87). Immediate and uninterrupted access to differing amounts of these critical resources determines the effective size of the state, with smaller states being less capable of accessing them than larger states.

Their peer group membership, coupled with external perceptions of a dangerous other in Russia, their internal perceptual and preference sizes, and the desirability of proving their ideological strength and European identity through increased cohesion with the Euro-Atlantic community (Paulaskas, 2013, p. 49), would provide similar reasons underpinning status-seeking. A pertinent research puzzle arises when considering their alliance contributions and status-seeking within NATO. As homogenous as the Baltic states appear to be via a cursory inspection, their similarities fall short of precluding any meaningful differences from developing, as their paths and status-seeking strategies within NATO have varied considerably. Two research questions within the research puzzle arise based upon this observation. To what extent does the perceived value of status-seeking in an alliance differ for the largest state compared to the smallest in a peer group of small states? And if perceptions do differ, which perceptions of status-seeking value (ideological or material) within an alliance lead to more status-seeking, and does the size of the small state in the peer group lead to a difference in which perceptions lead to status-seeking?

Re-evaluating Baltic states based on their size (measured by access to traditional status indicators, access to economic and natural resources) reveals larger distinctions between all three of them, and the largest distinctions in terms of those status-related indicators of size are Estonia and Lithuania. Numerous common factors are shared between them, such as their peer group membership and similar views of Russia as a large historical (and potentially contemporary) security threat. Additionally, both found the value of NATO and EU membership vital and ascended to both bodies in the same year (Shetty et al., 2012, pp. 3, 15), ensuring that no variation exists with regards to their time as fully-fledged members within each organization. The sizes of Estonia and Lithuania, as understood by the status markers, presents a much larger and salient point of distinction between them. Measuring their respective sizes based on those indicators since regaining independence in 1991 illustrates the size difference which has consistently distinguished Estonia and Lithuania from one another. While Estonia's population has remained more stable than Lithuania's (which only dwindled to 1.3 million in 2017 compared to 1.5 million in 1991), Lithuania's population has remained constantly and noticeably larger than Estonia's, despite dropping more significantly from just over 3.7 million in 1991 to approximately 2.8 million

in 2017 (World Bank, 2019a). Their respective GDPs have fared better following independence, climbing from \$4 and \$7 billion in 1991 to \$25 and \$47 billion in 2017 (for Estonia and Lithuania respectively) (Ibid, 2019b), and the physical size of their states has remained constant. Estonia's territorial size is smaller than Lithuania's at 45.2 thousand square kilometers, in comparison to Lithuania's 65.3 thousand (Nestor et al., 2016, p. 6).

Latvia's position within the Baltic states as another potential case study would be less appropriate for determining size as a factor in status-seeking within a peer group, as its distinctions between Estonia and Lithuania are not as significant as theirs are between one another. An additional and critical factor inherent to Estonia and Lithuania as status-seekers among the Baltic peer group is their greater sensitivity, due to their geographic positions, on foreign policy developments outside of the Baltic region. Estonia and Lithuania were both more directly exposed to foreign policy developments, such as the growth of German and Soviet influence in the years leading up to World War 2 (Männik, 2013, p. 19), and as a result, sought (with extremely varying degrees of success, particularly regarding Lithuania's relations with Poland) greater cooperation with their non-Baltic neighbors (Medijainen, 2012, p. 188). It would be erroneous to argue that Latvia did not also pursue developing foreign policy and relations with states outside of the Baltic states, as for example, the United States has been perceived as an enormously vital source of support for all three Baltic states (Männik, 2013, p. 29). Latvia's position in between Estonia and Lithuania did, to an extent, preclude the development of policies which did not take its immediate and unavoidable neighbors into account. Fittingly, its security vision between regaining independence and attaining NATO membership heavily focused on developing further cooperation with the other Baltic states (Ibid, pp. 24-25). Estonia and Lithuania's security visions before joining NATO likewise ascribed enormous benefits to attaining membership but placed heavier emphasis on working to develop their own security and cooperation with neighboring Nordic countries and Poland respectively, and were less willing than Latvia to depend entirely upon NATO's collective security (Ibid, pp. 26-29).

Determining Alliance Valuation and Status Accumulation

The independent variable to be examined in this article is the perceived value of alliance membership as a viable platform to pursue status-seeking to Lithuania and Estonia (alliance valuation), specifically, what aspects of the characteristics of NATO are stressed and to which degrees of frequency over time. The hypothesized relationship is that the increased confluence of alliance valuation between material and ideological goals for small states will lead to a larger amount of status accumulation, with perceptions substantially favoring material or ideological benefits over the other leading to less status accumulation. For Estonia and Lithuania, this distinction stems from their distinctions in size, as defined via status-related economic and material resources. One of the best possible illustrations of this distinction can be found in their respective security visions before joining NATO: While Estonia placed a fairly sizeable degree of importance on the security and stability of all three Baltic states, Lithuania placed its own preservation into a more important category than ensuring the stability of the rest of its respective peer group, to the point of Lithuanian politicians viewing entry into NATO alongside Poland as equally or more desirable than joint entry with the rest of the Baltic states (Ibid, p. 29). For Estonia, the stability of the rest of the Baltic states was necessary for ensuring the best possible security environment, for Lithuania, there was more of an internally perceived capacity for the state to attain security without relying as heavily upon the rest of the Baltic states to survive or provide aid should a hypothetical crisis occur.

To test the degree to which this hypothesis applies via the cases of Estonia and Lithuania, a qualitative data analysis will be applied to statements originating from pertinent elite actors from both Baltic states. This will provide a means of determining the degree and presence of alliance valuation, through analyzing the existence of patterns and the presence of pertinent theoretical categories in the collected qualitative data (Saldaña, 2013, pp. 3-4, 14). A noticeable caveat is that status-seeking is done as publicly and noticeably, with the aim of ensuring that as large and pertinent an audience as possible is aware of the actions undertaken to impact perceptions of the status-seeking state (Renshon, 2017, p. 24; Dafoe et al., 2014, p. 376). As such, the statements examined in the qualitative content analysis were selected with an important qualification in mind, namely, their intended audience. Due to the public nature of status-seeking, the statements selected had to be ones intended for

consumption by the public and larger audiences. While statements made from Baltic states regarding the alliance and its value (or shortcomings) without such concerns certainly have been made over the course of their membership (Traynor, 2010), the higher visibility of status-seeking precludes the value of including such statements in the data, even if they were uniformly possible to find.

The statements examined within the data analysis include transcribed statements and responses from Estonian and Lithuanian political elites made at press points and political functions performed at NATO meetings and related events. Supplementing statements made at NATO related functions are official statements released from Lithuanian and Estonian political elites via the Lithuanian Ministry of National Defence and the Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbook (published by the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) which are primarily predicated upon their respective countries experiences in the alliance. All the qualitative coding analysis performed has been directed at the specific transcriptions or information provided by the specific actor. This precludes the possibility of examining news articles or other sources of information summarizing what the relevant actor said, which will control for the possibility of bias entering the summary predicated upon potential biases held by the individual summarizing the information, or limitations inherent to presenting it through the lenses of another party.

These statements may not necessarily be indicative of all the information underpinning an experience Estonia and (or) Lithuania had at a point in time, due to a plethora of potential reasons such as an unwillingness to potentially offend other alliance members or a simple lack of knowledge on the part of the speaker. To fill in these gaps and provide as accurate a summation of their experiences as possible, academic articles relating to Estonia and Lithuania's experiences and developments over the course of their alliance membership will be examined (although not as parts of the qualitative coding frame) alongside the data gleaned from statements. The aim of this qualitative content analysis is to determine which perceptions of the alliance and its relationship to their country were expressed by domestic actors from Estonia and Lithuania when status-seeking via contributions were (or were not) pursued. Of the two greater explanations underpinning status-seeking and status

accumulation (ideological, which is concerned with normative factors underpinned by identity and stigma management, or material, predicated upon security concerns and additional material benefits gained through prestige), which expressed perspectives occurred most frequently for Estonia or Lithuania?

The dependent variable, status accumulation, is the degree and form of status-seeking pursued via alliance contributions from Estonia and Lithuania through participation in international missions, development of niche contributions, and defence spending as a percentage of GDP. NATO faces a broad and expansive number of security challenges because of its relatively contemporary (with consideration to the length of time the alliance has existed) shift away from confronting the Soviet Union to pursuing alternative security pursuits (Hartley & Sandler, 1999, p. 665). As a result, examining contributions made by member states to the alliance cannot simply be reduced to analyzing the raw financial support they provide. Such a reductive study of contributions would reveal little other than the economic strength and size of the country in question, indicating nothing that might be relevant regarding that state's pursuit of status-seeking within the alliance. This paradigm becomes even less helpful when examining smaller states within the alliance, with even the considerable differences between Estonia and Lithuania leading to little meaningful difference in terms of financial support for the alliance. While spending will be analyzed as a means of pursuing status-seeking, this thesis will continue and examine it along two other salient forms of contributions to NATO: defence spending as a percentage of GDP, troop participation in international missions, and support in the form of developing unique niche capabilities. These forms of contributions are meaningful enough to potentially attract some favorable status within the alliance (in the form of endangering security forces and committing other material resources) and broad enough to provide an additional degree of certainty with regards to the full spectrum of forms of status-seeking which are pursued or neglected.

While not desirable for the purposes of an academic analysis, attempts to reduce indicators to provide a semblance of easily-understandable comprehensibility for contributions are nonetheless incredibly salient among state politicians and the public alike.

Stripping away the complexity underpinning alliance contributions is comforting as a means of providing immediate (albeit inaccurate) information about the reliability of the member of an alliance. Defence spending, as measured by the general defence spending pursued by an alliance member as a percentage (specifically, 2%) of their gross domestic product (GDP), fills this need reasonably well, and as a result, is perhaps the most politically expedient indicator. This marker, while only established as official NATO policy in 2004 (Rudzīte-Stejskala, 2013, p. 169) is nonetheless especially popular for politicians examining NATO in the USA, wherein a dichotomous relationship is established based entirely on this 2% marker: members within the alliance either meet the marker and are considered valuable and reliable members, or fail to do so and largely become perceived as little more than free-riders (Techau, 2015, pp. 8-10). The difficulty of decreasing dependence upon the perceived reliability of viewing defence spending as a supremely reliable indicator has been exemplified by the difficulties in presenting alternative defence-spending related viewpoints. An alternative measure of determining relative contributions was developed by the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Center within NATO in 2011 but failed to catch on as an alternative means of examining defence spending due to the simplicity (and ambiguous nature, to curtail the potentiality of increased castigation) of the 2% GDP marker (Ibid, pp. 10-11).

The 2% defence spending expectation has not always been a part of NATO's membership goals throughout its history, it has always been an integral facet of the Baltic states' understanding of what membership in the alliance entailed. Striving to hit this 2% defence spending marker has always been a goal for all three of the Baltic states (Corum, 2013, p. 11), and has been most successfully reached by Estonia, with Lithuania continually striving to reach the marker despite the recognition that its pursuit might not be economically feasible (Rudzīte-Stejskala, 2013, pp. 195-197). This determination was embedded ever since the Baltic states' plan for ascension: The USA directly invoked striving for reaching this level of defence expenditure as a means of signaling financial and political determination to support the alliance (Ibid, pp. 169-170), a perspective which has been further reinforced as an integral aspect of status-seeking because of the 2014 Wales summit (NATO, 2014). Defence spending as a percentage of GDP is a politically expedient marker and a means of

reducing the status of NATO member-states to a simple binary of achieving respectable membership or perception as free-riders, but it would be erroneous for it to be considered the sole determinant of effective membership. In the cases of Estonia and Lithuania, their small and relatively similar sized economies (in relation to the rest of the NATO community, not their peer group) ensures that their financial contributions will be similar, comparatively negligible when larger member states such as the USA and UK are considered, and ultimately the least important of their individual contributions to the alliance.

Committing personnel and troops to support international missions is another salient form of contribution that a member-state can make to the alliance. NATO's scope of activities does not end with ensuring security for all its members under Article 5, but rather expanded following the end of the Cold War to include the pursuit of peacekeeping missions, with reconstruction and contributing to security developments in critical areas becoming another salient focus for the alliance (NATO, 2018). The International Security Assurance Force (ISAF) mission to Afghanistan under NATO's leadership was an enormously important international mission effort which was considered vitally important for determining the prospects of the alliance in general (Maskaliūnaitė, 2014b, p. 224). It was also a mission in which the Baltic state played a pivotal part, not only in terms of general troop contributions, but in terms of their prominent roles: both Estonia and Lithuania adopted leadership roles in leading Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan's Helmand and Ghor provinces respectively (Mölder, 2014, p. 65; Račius, 2010, pp. 190-191). Additionally, while not as significant a focus as their contributions to the ISAF operations in Afghanistan, Estonia and Lithuania have also contributed to EU and United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Estonia, 2017). Variations in those contributions may either affect their contributions to NATO-led international missions or emphasize the degree to which a certain perspective of alliance valuation may lead to broader status accumulation via international mission contributions.

The troop contributions made by Estonia and Lithuania to the EU's international missions under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP, which would later become

the CSDP) are also notable, in large part because the pursuit of security through the EU was historically not seen as vital as the pursuit of NATO membership. While attempts from Western elites were made to sway the Baltic states into perceiving the EU as an equally valuable security guarantee, they were never met with success: the generally held perception among all three Baltic states ascribed primacy to NATO's value as a security provider (Tiido, 2002; Paulaskas, 2013, pp. 54, 57). Contributions to the ESDP and its international missions and security cooperation are best understood as being very much like those made to NATO, with the primary distinction stemming from the perceived value of the organizations. Alliance membership in NATO was considered an optimal hard security guarantee, the same perception did not extend to the EU and the ESDP. Despite not being as vital for the security assurances required by the Baltic states stemming from alliance membership, these contributions should nonetheless receive some focus alongside those made to NATO.

Niche contributions, the third marker, likewise differs from state to state. A significant niche contribution to be analyzed from both Estonia and Lithuania will be their respective Centres of Excellence. In general, Centres of Excellence represent critical contributions to NATO's operations as an alliance for two reasons. They firstly provide concrete forms of support by providing a form of service and developing expertise in targeted areas which would otherwise be impossible, and secondly provide a vital way for member-states to establish a niche specialty within the alliance by allowing them to act in a more responsible capacity as Framework Nations, with the additional responsibility of hosting the centre within its borders (Roberts, 2014, pp. 4, 9). Establishing such centers with Estonia and Lithuania operating as respective Framework Nations provides an exceptional means for status-seeking, as a means of providing their unique specialization to the rest of NATO.

Estonia's Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE), accredited in 2008, predominantly focuses on cyber-security issues, such as preventing cyber-attacks and researching the development of cyber-warfare. (NATO, 2019). Lithuania's Energy Security Centre of Excellence (ENSEC), accredited in 2012, provides a central research location for energy security issues as they relate to NATO missions and interoperability (Ibid). These niche contributions will be a particularly vital source of status-seeking, as they

provide a means for Estonia and Lithuania to status-seek through means considered domestically important, rather than more internationally homogenous forms of contributions such as contributing troops to international missions or spending more on defence.

Measuring Alliance Valuation and Constructing the Coding Frame

Both Estonia and Lithuania held favorable perceptions regarding the value of NATO membership for ideological and security purposes upon regaining independence, ensuring that its pursuit was an immediate foreign policy pursuit (Johnny, 2013, p. 5; Männik, 2013, pp. 21-22). This desirability was expressed publicly, with prominent politicians from Estonia and Lithuania declaring the desirability of NATO membership to their respective countries (Meri, 1997; Brazauskas, 1997), and their willingness to pursue domestic and security reforms to ensure that they could enter the alliance before formally joining in 2004. Had the value of joining the alliance not been perceived and stated in some form, they certainly would not have sought and committed to defence cooperation projects with the goal of attaining membership within the alliance at all, let alone continued to pursue status-seeking within the alliance upon achieving membership.

As a vital aspect of status-seeking is that it is done in as visible and impactful a manner as possible (Renshon, 2017, p. 24; Dafoe et al., 2014, p. 376), the statements examined within this thesis' coding frame will originate from domestic political elites and originate from highly visible events or reputable organizations connected to the foreign policy of Estonia or Lithuania respectively. The three sources utilized were transcriptions of statements made at meetings and press points at NATO events, articles written by Estonian domestic political elites published in the Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbook regarding NATO (and EU) membership and security provisions, and transcripts made available from official statements released by Lithuania's Ministry of National Defence. NATO-related transcripts were chosen as a marker of alliance membership due to the primacy of NATO as the most desired alliance for Estonia and Lithuania to join following the end of the Cold War (Paulaskas, 2013, pp. 54, 57). The EU is significant enough to examine due to its repeated invocation and means of providing another avenue for status accumulation but does have less significance as a traditional alliance for Estonia and Lithuania than NATO. All three sources

contain directly transcribed statements connected to relevant political figures, ensuring that the statements examined are not potentially distorted by third-party interpretations or summaries which bear some relevance to the perceptions of such figures regarding alliance valuation.

The data collected was compiled over the course of Estonia and Lithuania's ascension to and membership within NATO. The earliest statements examined were made in 1997, during the Madrid summit which culminated in the ascension of several Eastern European states (Brazauskas, 1997; Meri, 1997), as representing the beginning of a more pragmatic approach to NATO membership. With their ascension and the promise of a continued open door to NATO (Brazauskas 1997), future membership in the alliance became far more attainable (although difficulties rising from Russia's acceptance of the Baltic states remained a salient concern) (Paulaskas, 2013, pp. 53-57). The most contemporary statements analyzed within the collected data are from 2017 to present an analysis which can be more effectively supplemented by backing literature and academic perspectives on Estonia and Lithuania's alliance valuation (outside of the coded statements) and status accumulation.

A caveat does exist regarding the value of publicly made statements, namely in the debatable salience of domestic opinion and its impact on decisions made regarding status-seeking within alliances (Maskaliūnaitė, 2014a, pp. 45-46), but they still hold a considerable amount of importance for two critical reasons. The first is that Estonia and Lithuania are both democracies, and while domestic opinion may not be the most critical factor in affecting decision-making processes, the value of alliance contributions is still stressed and expressed in a manner meant to assuage the concerns of as many members of the concerned public as possible (Ibid, p. 46). The second stems from the fact that domestic audiences are not the only concerned actors: internal political discussions and developments, while far from being under NATO's control, are nonetheless noticed and consulted upon (Vike-Freiberga, 2002). Responsible political figures concerned with security and foreign policy developments would certainly be concerned with how actors related to NATO might respond to certain statements alongside domestic figures. Additionally, it is important to note that the establishment of the coding frame is a means to ease the process of determining coded aspects of statements which

relate to those theoretical explanations. While it is enormously unlikely that a politician would directly cite or quote a relevant academic source when, for example, invoking the importance of avoiding stigma formation by contributing more in the form of defence spending, those ideas would nonetheless find some presence through their expression, albeit indirectly.

For the aforementioned reasons, this thesis will examine stated perceptions of the benefits of alliance participation and its impact on status-seeking via the case of Estonia and Lithuania as both NATO aspirants and members. Examining how data obtained from statements varied over periods of time also allow for variations in the status-seeking of Estonia and Lithuania prior to membership compared to after attaining it, due to the potentiality of an adjustment in status-seeking strategies following the attainment of membership. The security guarantees gained through NATO membership are vitally important to the alliance and its perception, and the potential difficulties of NATO cutting them (or other states unconcerned with status-seeking or even stigma management) off from those security guarantees would be considerable (Goldstein, 1949, p. 40). Additionally, examining status-seeking over a broader period allows for simultaneous analyses of the domestic and international environments facing Estonia and Lithuania during their time as NATO members (such as the potential impacts of the 2007 cyberattacks against Estonia and the 2008 financial crisis), precluding the possibility of mistaking such unexpected shocks as abrupt changes in status-seeking strategies.

Considering the broad scope of the information stemming from speeches and other statements which will be analyzed, an effective and comprehensive form of qualitative content analysis must be pursued to ensure that any relevant information is gleaned from them in a cohesive and readily understandable manner. To achieve this goal, a descriptive coding frame has been constructed as a first-level means of discerning the presence of relevant portions within the statements and determining how they pertain to the benefits obtained from alliance membership. A descriptive coding frame organizes pertinent codes by identifying the topic or topics associated with the coded statements themselves, enabling insight to be gleaned on a specific topic from less specific content (Ibid, p. 88). By doing so,

patterns of thought intrinsic to the perceptions expressed via these statements become much clearer, revealing which Baltic state placed emphasis on which aspects of membership at different points in time (Ibid, pp. 3-6). The goal of this initial coding was to determine the frequency with which the value of alliance membership as a means of procuring security benefits, prestige possibilities, identity formation, or stigma management occurred within the data.

Descriptive coding, however, is not quite enough to fully utilize a qualitative data analysis: it, as a form of first-level coding, is beneficial for providing an immediate introduction to the presence of specific themes and establishing groundwork for a more appropriate second-level coding (Ibid, p. 89). For this purpose, the initial descriptive coding was followed by further analysis utilizing focused coding, a means of determining the most pertinent codes for establishing more distinctive and appropriate themes from the descriptive coding results (Ibid, pp. 218-219).

The scores for each document were established by the frequency of portions of analyzed transcripts or documents which reflected the pursuit of the goals inherent to alliance valuation. The presence of a material goal was predicated on the espoused benefits of alliance membership as providing a security benefit or guarantee (security), or alliance membership providing a means for the state to access a goal related to diplomatic or other forms of capital beyond what alliance membership would ordinarily entail (prestige). The presence of ideological goals was predicated upon sections wherein alliance valuation was espoused to prove the identity or normative power of either state (identity) or to prove that they could contribute responsibly and not lag behind other members (stigma management). The juxtaposition of these two categories of alliance valuation, and which score highlights a greater degree of perception frequency, indicates what espoused perception of alliance membership was stronger at a period in time.

The values within coding frame itself is composed of the number of pertinent comments within the analyzed transcripts and documents. To ensure that they encapsulate fuller thoughts and statements of alliance valuation perceptions on the part of the speaker (or writer), the transcripts and documents chosen all contain statements which are at least one

hundred words in length. This both ensures that they contain enough material for a qualitative content analysis to be conducted and precludes the potentiality of less deliberated statements from potentially skewing the results. A total of twenty-three transcripts and documents are utilized within the qualitative content analysis: thirteen of them are from relevant Estonian political elites, and ten are from relevant Lithuanian political elites. Statements within these coded materials which pertain to the alliance's value as providing a material or ideological benefit increase that category's value by one, with a minimum of zero and a maximum of ten per document. A significant distinction between valuation of these two goals (in general or within a specific period) will be determined by a difference of at least two (if values for material or ideological valuation do not exceed five) or 50%, should one of the two alliance valuation categories have a value over five. To illustrate these constraints, a period wherein four portions of coded statements correlate with the valuation of material benefits of alliance membership and three correlates with ideological ones would not indicate a significant distinction between material and ideological benefit perceptions. In contrast, a period wherein six portions which correlate with ideological benefits compared to two which correlate with material benefits would be significant. The limitation of a maximum of ten coded statements per category per transcript (or document) is not one placed upon speakers, who could invoke both material and ideological goals as many times as necessary within a statement, but rather as a general precaution to ensure that the coding is being performed as accurately as possible, to preclude the possibility of two errors which might deleteriously impact the results.

One such error would arise from categories which are too broadly defined to properly encapsulate only the material or ideological goal in question. The second would stem from mistakes arising from coding a statement which focused on a singular material or ideological goal multiple times. The first was addressed through an inter-coder reliability inspection, wherein the assistance of two additional persons to examine the results within the same coding guidelines was sought and attained. This ensured that the coded sections not only were appropriate but could be considered more reliable due to multiple persons reaching the same conclusion. Ensuring that sections would be coded the appropriate number of times entailed determining patterns not just from the frequency of specific words (such as the

invocation of belonging to the “Euro-Atlantic family” as indicating an ideological goal), but the longer statement they were associated with (with a longer statement indicating the value of belonging to the “Euro-Atlantic family” and proving democratic strength emphasizing the same ideological goal, but not showcasing multiple examples).

To more effectively control for external events which could potentially act as intervening variables and provide a more comprehensive examination of the development of alliance valuation, the qualitative content analysis results will be examined in four distinct periods of time. These include 1997-2004, when Estonian and Lithuanian political elites espoused perceptions of alliance valuation upon seeing other states enlarge the alliance and deepened their pursuit of attaining alliance membership themselves, and formally entered the alliance. 2005-2008 is the second period, one of adjustment made tumultuous by cyber-attacks launched against Estonia and the beginning of the Russo-Georgian war. 2009-2013 is the third, a relatively less dangerous period in terms of actions taken directly against Estonia or Lithuania or taken by Russia against neighboring states. 2014-2017 is the fourth and final period of alliance valuation reflecting contemporary perspectives and Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine round out the significant periods of alliance membership for Estonia and Lithuania for the purposes of this thesis.

A notable additional source of alliance valuation which would have been pertinent to Estonia and Lithuania, but was not included in the qualitative data analysis, was the respective national security concepts and strategies for both states. While very relevant for analyzing alliance valuation, they nonetheless were not chosen for inclusion for two salient reasons. The first is due to their length in comparison to the other data: the length of the material contained within far exceeds the comparatively shorter transcripts and documents from the Estonian Foreign Policy Yearbook and official statements released by Lithuania’s Ministry of National Defence (Estonian Ministry of Defence, 2011; Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, 2002). As a result, the alliance valuation results from a qualitative content analysis would overwhelmingly favor the material within those strategic documents, as compared to statements made by relevant political elites. The second is that these documents contain a much more in-depth and comprehensive examination of material and ideological value within NATO and the EU. An analysis of transcripts and shorter

publications provides a narrower focus on alliance valuation and which aspects are most favorable, in comparison to a broader examination which would be far more likely to contain all related information without as much of a need to emphasize certain aspects of alliance valuation.

Conclusion

As similar as Estonia and Lithuania are as members of the same peer group, their status-seeking paths and strategies as pertaining to NATO and, to a lesser extent, other international organizations such as the EU and UN, have varied to a respectable degree. The methodology and coding frame detailed above indicate how alliance valuation will be measured and ascertained. It, alongside status accumulation indicators (personnel international mission contributions, defence spending as a percentage of GDP, and niche contributions) will be examined to see how alliance valuation correlates with status accumulation. The following chapter will primarily be concerned with Estonia's experiences within NATO, and how its alliance valuation and status accumulation patterns developed over the course of its membership.

Chapter Three: Estonia

Introduction

This chapter will examine Estonia's alliance valuation and status accumulation patterns within NATO and, to a lesser extent, the EU and the UN. The first section of this chapter will focus on Estonia's alliance valuation over the course of its earlier pursuits of NATO and EU membership and time spent as a full member of both alliances until 2017. Its alliance valuation patterns will be discerned through a qualitative content analysis of transcripts and documents originating from relevant political actors, to discern the degree to which material and ideological goals and benefits were stressed alongside alliance membership. The second section of this chapter will analyze Estonia's status accumulation patterns, as measured by its participation in international missions with NATO, the EU, and the UN, its defence spending patterns, and its development of niche capabilities within the alliance. The chapter will conclude by determining the degree of correlation between Estonia's alliance valuation and status accumulation patterns, to discern the impact that certain alliance valuation patterns had on the state's pursuit of status accumulation.

Estonia's Alliance Valuation

Estonia, the smallest in terms of physical size and access to resources of the Baltic states, has nonetheless found a large amount of success through status-seeking as a member of NATO. Its status within the alliance as the foremost state for developing vital cyber security advancements through the CCDCOE (Ilves & Rasmussen, 2013), as well as its prominence as one of the few "elite" alliance members to meet the 2% defence spending target (Rasmussen, 2014), exemplifies it as an enormously reputable state within NATO, even when compared to its Baltic neighbors. These distinctions have not gone unnoticed even before achieving the optional defence spending target, with Estonia's actions in the ISAF and rapid development distinguishing it as a "model alliance member" within the United States (Mölder, 2013, pp. 107-108). What espoused perspectives drove Estonia's pursuit of status-seeking to such an extent?

Table 1. Coding Frame Totals, Estonia's Alliance Valuation

Code:	Estonia:
Identity:	18
Stigma Management:	11
<i>Ideological Total (Identity and Stigma Management):</i>	29
Security:	29
Prestige:	1
<i>Material Total (Security and Prestige):</i>	30
Statements Included:	13

While the total value of codes indicating the perceived value of status-seeking within NATO for Estonia appear to indicate confluence between ideological and material goals (with a slightly higher focus on material goals), it does not provide a complete picture of Estonia's experiences within the alliance with regards to historic events. The statements analyzed occurred between 1997 (at the Madrid summit, in response to NATO' inviting three new states to join the alliance) and 2017, a significant length of time replete with environmental transformations. Fully understanding how alliance valuation stemming from Estonian political elites will require a more in-depth analysis of its transformations (or lack thereof) as time progressed. Alliance membership does not occur in a vacuum and taking these events into account may provide an explanation for a sudden change in alliance valuation or status accumulation. For this purpose, the deeper analysis of the results of the coding frame will be analyzed from the four time periods mentioned previously (1997-2004, 2005-2008, 2009-2013, and 2014-2017 to account for events which may have factored in to alliance valuation.

Alliance valuation as espoused by Estonian political elites in the years leading up to membership highlights a predominant focus on material goals over ideological ones. The clear focus expressed by these actors when discussing the possibility of joining NATO was on the security benefits membership would bestow upon Estonia. These, for the most part, centered around the nature of the alliance itself, both as the “only hard security guarantee” available for them to pursue (Tiido, 2003) and its provision of security through enlargement creating a more secure environment for all of Europe, Estonia included (Meri, 1997). The expressed desirability of alliance membership was then predominantly predicated upon material goals, with the insurance of Estonia’s security and ability to affect security developments in Europe (Tiido, 2003) taking precedence over ideological goals. The ideological goals expressed as alliance valuation from Estonian political elites were less frequently expressed, but nonetheless were present in their stated perceptions. These ideological hopes stemmed from achieving ideological solidarity with the rest of Europe as equals with whom to discuss regional developments, as well as definitively breaking away from the negative perceptions they developed over the course of the Cold War (Ibid, Meri, 1997).

Estonia’s attainment of NATO membership was received as a remarkably significant attainment from both materially and ideologically oriented perspectives. The espoused valuation of attaining alliance membership addressed both aspects of ideological goals. NATO membership as confirmation of attaining an exceptionally fulfilling ideological status was acknowledged alongside the need to continue acting responsibly in accordance with their newly attained membership (and the proactive steps Estonia had already taken to prove itself through international mission participation) (Ojulang, 2004; Jürgenson, 2004, p. 11). 2004 also led to Estonia’s admission into the EU as a member on May 1st, shortly after their induction into NATO on March 29th, and a strong linkage was likewise espoused between membership into the two international organizations as alliances as a means of proving identity and creating a need to act responsibly (Ibid). Ultimately, attaining alliance membership in NATO and entering the EU was valued as firmly proving that Estonia was worthy of standing in solidarity and equality with the other members of the Euro-Atlantic community (Ojulang, 2004; Jürgenson, 2004, pp. 11-12).

Material goals were likewise expressed to a similar frequency as ideological ones, particularly through security assurances. Alongside ideological solidarity came an acknowledgement of issues confronting Estonia that did not fall into the traditional purview of domestic threat assessments. While international mission participation had been pursued by Estonia (and the other Baltic states) before attaining NATO and EU membership, becoming a part of a larger group of states in solidarity drove their need to consider the global landscape ever further. Alongside the ideological gains from alliance membership and the elimination of perceived threats to Estonia's territorial integrity came a greater need to examine "soft security" challenges, necessitating Estonia becoming more attuned to common and global security risks facing its new fellow alliance members as well (Ibid, p. 12). With these new security challenges came tremendous benefits, however. Domestic perceptions of NATO as the greatest security guarantor in Europe became more explicitly pronounced. NATO's immediate and beneficial impacts on European security in general were present the day of (Ojulang, 2004), and these perceptions of the material benefits associated with NATO increased as the perks of alliance membership began coming into effect, with NATO airplanes beginning flights over Baltic airspace specifically mentioned as immediately coming into effect upon entrance (Jürgenson, 2004, p. 11).

The following four years Estonia spent adjusting to membership in NATO and the EU from 2005 to 2008 were vital ones for transforming Estonia's foreign policy outlook and its feelings of belonging to the organizations. Comparisons between Estonia's acclimation to NATO and EU membership with other member states were stressed as indicating Estonia's entering the membership community (Ilves, 2007, p. 11), as was the overlap between NATO members and EU members as neighbors in a similarly ideologically-oriented community. However, that time was not entirely uneventful, and the immediate ramifications of the bronze-soldier incident and the cyber-attacks targeted against Estonia highlighted the value of alliance membership to Estonia with consideration to more traditional material concerns and contemporary ideological goals (Ibid, pp. 13-14). The solidarity demonstrated by the Euro-Atlantic community with Estonia was the most significant ideological marker and was perceived as indicating the definitive attainment of equality with other members, wherein the solidarity given by the Baltic state to these alliances was paid back by the rest of the

community (Ibid, p. 13). Some consternation was also expressed regarding their experience signifying some divergence in the supposed solidarity between NATO and the EU. While attaining membership in both organizations was (and remained) vitally important for showcasing Estonia's Euro-Atlantic identity, there was also a realization that Estonia could highlight the need for greater solidarity between the two organizations and emphasize the need for them to deepen their ideological ties (Ibid, p. 14; Ilves & Scheffer, 2008).

This Estonian valuation of and desire to reinforce the solidarity between NATO and the EU was also predicated upon the perception of fulfilling material goals. Security garnered through this solidarity likewise underpinned its value to Estonia, especially in association with the establishment of the CCDCOE as a means for promoting the development of cyber security for and alongside the rest of the Euro-Atlantic community (Ibid). Previously expressed views of alliance valuation regarding material goals were still mentioned within these material perceptions of value, namely in the form of air policing in the Baltic airspace (Ilves, 2007, pp. 11-12). However, the indication following the events of 2007 was an indication of the perception of material benefits shifting toward more contemporary forms of security benefits in the face of a rapidly transforming foreign policy landscape (at least, in terms of what Estonia could most benefit from ensuring its protection from). The material goals concerning ensuring Estonia's protection from external threats were expressed frequently following the cyber-attacks, alongside the perception of alliance membership as ensuring the successful maintenance of ideological goals: the resurgence of a physical threat to security did not diminish the importance of NATO and the EU as proof of Estonia's worthiness and place within the Euro-Atlantic community.

These perspectives on the value of alliance membership intensified in the years following the cyber-attacks from 2009-2013. The constantly stressed linkage of NATO and the EU as two vitally important communities continues, with a more significant predication upon material goals, such as promoting the welfare of European "security pillars" and ensuring that the alliance continued to predominantly support European security alongside other missions, as well as the significant hard-power capabilities NATO possessed (Luik, 2009, p. 25). Traditional sources of material support from the alliance (such as the continued provision of air policing) (Ansip & Rasmussen, 2011) continued to play a role, alongside a

more contemporary reiterated source of material support from the alliance, namely, cyber-security. The perception of alliance membership as a means of ensuring Estonia's security through the promotion of future solidarity among the Euro-Atlantic community remained a salient material goal that Estonia strove for (Ilves and Rasmussen, 2013). Additionally, positive perceptions regarding the potentiality of strengthening of NATO and the EU leading to the successful deepening of trade agreements which would directly benefit Estonia were expressed. The specific form hoped for was the establishment of a Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Agreement between EU countries and the United States, which was simultaneously and explicitly stated to not be within NATO's purview, providing a material benefit beyond the provisions of alliance membership from a larger state which could be attained via the continued promotion of NATO and the EU as transatlantic links to the United States (Ibid).

The perceived benefits stemming from Estonia's continued membership in the alliance during this period more strongly related the promotion of ideological goals. A perception which was repeatedly reinforced during this time was of the need for all members to contribute their fair share, specifically with regards to the 2% of GDP defense spending goal. This was perceived as providing proof of highlighting the need for members to maintain the strength of NATO even during times of perceived security and was expressed alongside a more nascent view of Estonia highlighting its own capabilities as a responsible actor which kept its promises (and preventing itself from failing the alliance) by attaining this distinction (Ansip & Rasmussen, 2011). This espoused perception of an ideological goal which could be attained through alliance membership was a swift and resounding success. This was signified with the perspective from Estonia on defence spending commitments switching from its own need to meet NATO's commitments to the importance of this spending figure for all members, and expressed disappointment that Estonia was the "exception rather than the rule" when it came to small members and their likelihood of meeting the spending target (Ilves and Rasmussen, 2013).

In addition to meeting those stigma-related ideological goals during this period, perceived hopes of continuing to improve Estonia's image by deepening commitments to alliance membership also affected Estonia's alliance valuation. The continued promotion of Euro-Atlantic ties and solidarity as a two-way street (with Estonia's contributions to

international missions being matched by alliance support for them) continued to be a salient factor (Ansip & Rasmussen, 2011; Ilves & Rasmussen, 2013), and was further emphasized by means of distinguishing between Estonia's less-than nascent adoption of membership status. Some consternation over the perpetuation of Estonia's reputation as a "new European" state was expressed, as well as the hope for the perpetuation of their time in the alliance to cultivate a positive status as a fully European state and eliminate the divide between old and new European states within the Euro-Atlantic community (Ibid).

Estonia's alliance valuation in the period from 2014-2017, fittingly following the military actions Russia took against Ukraine in 2014, was more predominantly concerned with material provisions via continued security assurances than ideological goals. This did not entirely preclude perceptions of NATO as a valuable guarantor of ideological strength, but those perceptions were less muted than in previous years. The capabilities of the alliance as the only concrete to bind the Euro-Atlantic community together and keep both sides of the Atlantic thinking about one another was stressed as a particularly important goal (Ilves et al., 2016). The need for the European community to maintain its solidarity was likewise important, but it was the perspective of a strong alliance keeping the United States in particular interested in Europe that most strongly expressed itself.

Material goals, specifically the maintenance and provision of security, were repeatedly and far more strongly stressed during this period specifically with regards to Russian actions. The distinction between the security environment following Russia's actions and developments in Ukraine was invoked as a complete departure from the otherwise peaceful 25 years of peace Europe had enjoyed following the end of the Cold War, as well as the need for a strong and collective response to those military actions (Ibid). These abstractions of NATO and the EU's collective security as guarantors of Estonian security were surpassed with the Zapad exercises and need for collective combatting of Russian propaganda distribution noted as directly affecting Estonia's individual sense of security (Ratas & Stoltenberg, 2017). This perception of the material value of NATO as specifically helping protect Estonia's sovereignty from Russian actions indicated the rising perception of alliance membership as an insurance policy against what had become a very real and salient threat to Estonia's immediate security.

Table 2. Coding Frame Totals by Year, Estonia Alliance Valuation

Year:	Material Goals Coding Frequency:	Ideological Goals Coding Frequency:
1997:	2	1
2003:	2	1
2004:	6	6
2007:	4	6
2008:	2	2
2009:	3	2
2010:	2	2
2011:	1	3
2013:	3	5
2016:	3	1
2017:	2	0

Table 2 indicates the pattern of alliance valuation expressed by Estonian political elites from 1997 to 2017. Confluence between the perceived necessity of alliance membership to attain material and ideological goals may not have occurred in every year, but for the most part, few major disparities between codes indicating the value of material and ideological goals occurred. The largest distinction between these material and ideological goals over Estonia's time as a prospective and contributing member of NATO and the EU is found with regards to their expression and the form of success their attainment would take. Material goals developed the most with distinctions in the security environment, with subjects such as air policing over Baltic airspace (Jürgenson, 2004, p. 11; Ilves, 2007, pp. 11-12; Ansip & Rasmussen, 2011) giving way to needs to address cyber-security challenges (Ilves, & Scheffer, 2008; Ilves & Rasmussen, 2013) and a resurgent Russia (Ilves et al., 2016; Ratas & Stoltenberg, 2017). Prestige related benefits were only directly invoked once with regards to deepening economic ties between the United States and the EU because of NATO's success (Ilves & Rasmussen, 2013), an understandably desirable goal for Estonia

as a member of the EU but limited in comparison to other potential national interests Estonia might have (such as bi-lateral defense cooperation or gaining greater diplomatic access in Washington).

Ideological goals, however, remained comparatively fixed and unchanging throughout Estonia's membership. Goals which specifically focused on identity promotion fixated on the need for Estonia to showcase itself as a member of the Euro-Atlantic community through NATO and EU membership, with alliance membership providing a way for it to prove its innate European identity (Meri, 1997; Tiido, 2003; Ojulang, 2004; Jürgenson, 2004, pp. 11-12; Ilves & Rasmussen, 2013). Stigma management concerns were first predicated upon generally contributing enough to be considered an equitably contributing NATO member and precluding free-riding (Ojulang, 2004; Jürgenson, 2004, p. 11; Ilves, 2007, p. 14; Ilves & Scheffer, 2008). These goals became more specifically predicated upon meeting defence spending commitments, specifically, meeting NATO's 2% defence spending target (Ansip & Rasmussen, 2011), a shift which became much more understandable upon Estonia readily meeting that defense spending target (Ilves & Rasmussen, 2013).

Estonia's perceptions and expressed alliance valuation from relevant domestic political elites with regards to pursuing ideological and material goals remained relatively constant since the statements made in 1997. While the goals of some material and ideological pursuits shifted during that period, the expressed patterns between those two aspects of alliance valuation demonstrated a reasonably high degree of confluence overall. No period suggests a significant departure from this relative confluence with regards to the distinction established within the methodology (a difference of at least two for distinctive values which do not exceed five, or 50% if either one does). The degree to which this stability correlates with status accumulation, however, remains uncertain. Some statements made do contain some information regarding Estonia's successes meeting certain goals which would be pertinent for status accumulation (Ibid), but appropriately summarizing Estonia's history of status accumulation within NATO and the EU will require a closer analysis of more focused academic and primary materials.

Estonia's Status Accumulation

The first aspect of Estonia's status accumulation to be analyzed is the most readily accessible one, its percentage of GDP spent on defence. This metric predominantly applies to NATO membership as a spending target: not meeting this spending goal will not lead to the dismissal of a member from the alliance but will preclude the development of one form of positive reputation as a member. Defence spending is one of the more pertinent expressed goals from Estonian political elites, with the pursuit of meeting the 2% spending target and its success being recognized domestically and within NATO as an achievement placing Estonia into a group of "elite" members within NATO (Rasmussen, 2014). Examining patterns of alliance valuation in the years before reaching this spending target reveals a constant perceived need to prove their competence as a member by pursuing equitable contributions (Meri, 1997; Jürgenson, 2004, p. 11). Considering Estonia's status accumulation from achieving this target, and that its membership was predicated upon understanding its importance to it as an alliance member (Corum, 2013, p. 11; Rudzīte-Stejskala, 2013, pp. 169-170), Estonia's specific focus upon it is both completely understandable and puzzling. Few other alliance members meet this target, and other salient forms of contributions could have been pursued in search of alliance status accumulation.

Estonia, like the other Baltic states, was initially in no condition to pursue higher levels of defense spending following their re-attainment of independence. Their primary focus in terms of defence preparations was rebuilding from an extremely low military capability to a more respectable force (Corum, 2011, p.8) despite being in an economically precarious position. Their respective GDPs continued to dramatically decline until 1994, but the importance of rebuilding their respective militaries kept budgets relatively stable regardless: the security situations in all three Baltic states were far from ideal, and general feelings of insecurity buoyed public support (Rudzīte-Stejskala, 2013, pp. 172-173). Estonia had a considerable amount of domestic support for increased funding which remained constant into the mid-1990's, well after the departure of Russian soldiers and the stabilization of their economy (Ibid, p. 170). Alongside this desire to increase their military viability was the understanding that greater security guarantees had to be pursued in addition to this national defense procurement (Corum, 2011, p. 10; Tiido 2002).

A potentially large factor impacting the pursuit of increased defense spending in Estonia (and the other Baltic states) was the perceived necessity of ensuring that NATO viewed their initial acceptance as a net positive. One of the factors which would make a potential member state more desirable for alliance membership was, alongside the pursuit of various domestic transformations, the development of a military under the purview of a state both capable of contributing and willing to do so (Meri, 1997; Paulaskas, 2013, pp. 57-58). The process of contributing to the defence budget, alongside the understanding of the salience of the 2% target, certainly contributed to its perceived necessity for attaining the status necessary to ensure NATO membership, with the Estonian government committing to meeting that spending goal by 2002 in preparation for attaining membership (Rudzīte-Stejskala p. 176). Considering this, in addition with the expressed alliance valuation patterns, it will be important to examine Estonia's defence budget spending trends to see if any correlation can be found between material or ideological goal valuation in alliance valuation and defence spending.

Table 3: Defence Spending per year as a percentage of GDP, Estonia

Year:	Defence Spending (% of GDP)
1997:	1.047%
1998:	1.067%
1999:	1.287%
2000:	1.376%
2001:	1.502%
2002:	1.667%
2003:	1.743%
2004:	1.7%
2005:	1.6%
2006:	1.4%
2007:	1.7%

2008:	1.8%
2009:	1.8%
2010:	1.8%
2011:	1.68%
2012:	1.90%
2013:	1.91%
2014:	1.93%
2015:	2.02%
2016:	2.07%
2017:	2.03%
2018:	2.07%

(World Bank, 2019c; NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2011, p. 6; NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2019, p. 8)

Table 3 contains a record of Estonia's defence related expenditures by percentage of GDP. The data from 2005-2010 and 2011-2018 was accessed from NATO's records of defense expenditures by member state (with 2010 and 2018 recorded as estimates) (NATO Public Diplomacy Division 2011; NATO Public Diplomacy Division 2019). The data from 1997-2004 was accessed from the World Bank's dataset (World Bank, 2019c), a distinction which had to be made as Estonia's first year as a member of NATO occurred in 2005. A pertinent factor which did impact NATO's perception of Baltic (and Estonia's) defence spending in its earlier years was a distinction in how spending was calculated in 2004. The capabilities of paramilitary forces (specifically on if they could realistically be deployed and were adequately equipped had to be considered before they were viewed as an actual part of the member-state's defence, leading to discrepancies developing between Baltic perceptions of spending patterns and NATO's findings (Rudzīte-Stejskala, 2013, pp. 170, 177). The Baltic's wider interpretation of effective spending created some consternation regarding reported defence spending, and in the cases of Estonia and Lithuania, this discrepancy plays as much of a role in their not immediately meeting the 2% spending target. Internal measurements

before this change occurred had Estonia hitting the spending target in 2002 (Tiido, 2002) and Lithuania reaching 1.87% by 2003 (Rudzīte-Stejskala, 2013, p. 177).

What continued to support the growth of Estonian defence spending was a strong and consistent drive to continually contribute more. The lack of enforcement mechanisms within NATO provide some incentive to free-ride, as not meeting spending targets will not lead to the failing member-state's removal from the alliance, and in the case of the other Baltic states, spending was not stressed as much as a result (Paulaskas, 2013, p. 62). Meeting this spending target remained a desirable goal for Estonia, and despite the economic difficulties caused by the economic crisis in 2008 for NATO members (and small states in particular) (Mölling, 2012, pp. 3-4), their defence spending as a percentage of GDP was not curtailed. Rather, its pursuit became a firmer goal in 2010, with strong domestic action to ensure that it did not diminish (Rudzīte-Stejskala, 2013, pp. 193-194), and its attainment in 2012 stood out as a pivotal accomplishment for Estonia showcasing itself as a reputable NATO member despite being within a period of global economic turmoil (Paet, 2012). While there continued to be some discrepancies between internal and external measurements of Estonia's defence spending (NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2019), the overall trend continued to increase (save for a brief dip in 2011) until reaching the defence spending target in 2015, where it has remained relatively constant since.

International mission contributions, the second status accumulation indicator, have been pursued by Estonia shortly following its attainment of independence. Estonia gained membership in the United Nations in 1991, long before becoming a member of either NATO or the EU and contributed to peacekeeping missions in Croatia starting in 1995 (UNPROFOR), Bosnia and Herzegovina starting in 1996, the Middle East starting in 1997 (UNTSO), and Kosovo starting in 1999 (KFOR) (MFA Estonia, 2017; Estonian Defence Forces, 2018). These missions were significant as they reflected the desire of a newly independent Estonia to contribute to international peacekeeping and were in less actively dangerous areas. This ultimately led to the Estonian military contributing with decreased risk, and deployed forces did not experience direct combat while undertaking an international mission until 2003, as a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom (Ibid, Molder, 2014, p. 65). Later

UN Missions undertaken by Estonia following their acquisition of membership in NATO and the EU include the MINUSMA mission in Mali, which began in 2013, and the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon (Estonian Defence Forces, 2018). This mission initially began with a temporarily deployed company under the purview of a Norwegian battalion within the BALTBAT development program from 1996 to 1997 (Lawrence, 2017, p. 18), with operations resuming with the deployment of another battalion in 2015 (Ibid, p. 20; Estonian Defence Forces, 2018).

These missions taken under the purview of the UN were not altogether significant sources of troop contributions for Estonia. Apart from contributions made to UNPROFOR in Croatia, the larger battalion deployed in the late 1990's to contribute to UNIFIL and garner peacekeeping training for Estonian forces, and the later deployment of 38 troops to once again support UNIFIL, Estonia's contributions to UN missions have been considerably smaller than those made to support NATO and EU missions (although it does remain a significant contributor on a per-capita basis) (Lawrence, 2017, pp. 17-19). This does not indicate that Estonia does not ascribe value to UN mission participation. Quite the contrary, continued participation in UN peacekeeping operations when no alternatives were available was perceived as a valuable way to continue demonstrating Estonian resolve for remaining a global actor without overstressing its limited resources (Ibid, pp. 17, 20-21). It is understandable, however, given the comparatively smaller sizes of NATO and the EU, that more value would be placed upon pursuing operations within them (particularly NATO) as a means of status-seeking than the UN (Ibid, p. 19).

Estonia's participation in EU led missions have, despite the greater importance accredited to them in comparison to UN missions, attracted a consistent and more limited amount of contributions. The EU missions within which Estonia participated make up an extensive list, with a total of 13 overall, mostly concentrated in Eastern Europe in countries such as Ukraine, Georgia, and Kosovo), alongside support for missions in the Middle East (Iraq and Palestine), the Mediterranean, and Mali (Estonian Defence Forces, 2008; Mauro, Krotz, & Wright, 2017, pp. 46, 49-50, 56, 60, 62, 66-67, 71, 73-74, 79). However, the total amount of troops and personnel involved in these missions never exceeded double digits,

unlike the UN missions previously discussed. The total number of troops sent to support these missions has never exceeded 30 (Ibid, p. 92), and while that number trended upward sharply between 2007 and 2008, it only amounted to an increase of 11 available personnel. In terms of the contributions Estonia made toward supporting international missions, the EU's subordinate position in terms of perceived capabilities of providing security in comparison to NATO continues to be applicable. Domestic consternation regarding the roles of the EU and NATO as security providers without significant overlap in mission pursuits and security provision diminished their perceived benefits to Estonia. Supporting two organizations and their different approaches in dealing with the same issue without working to increase cooperation between them became perceived as a wasteful proposition for Estonia (Tiido, 2006, pp. 17-20), and the outcome of those concerns is evident in the distinctions to mission contributions.

The most significant source of contributions and status accumulation Estonia made to international missions came through support for NATO missions, specifically, operations in Afghanistan in general and within the ISAF. Estonia's contributions to the ISAF were significant, not just with regards to its status as a small member-state within NATO, but in terms of contributing beyond the level of even larger states by being one of the highest per-capita contributors (and becoming the highest per-capita contributor in 2009) (Mölder, 2014, p. 65). Its willingness to send troops at the risk of heavy casualties to support the Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Helmand province in 2006, a considerably unstable and dangerous province, highlighted its considerable willingness to contribute to mission success (Ibid; McNamara, 2015, pp. 159-160; Paulaskas, 2013, p. 74). The decrease in Estonian personnel in Afghanistan within ISAF after 2014 is not indicative of a radical departure in status-accumulation strategies but the natural progression of the ISAF, which largely finished in 2014, leaving the smaller contingent of Estonian personnel to continue playing diminished support roles as necessary (Mölder, 2014, pp. 72-74).

As highlighted in Table 4 (page 53), Estonia's troop contributions to ISAF increased dramatically shortly after they began providing support to bolster the security within the Helmand province's PRT. Contrary to their contributions to UN and EU missions, however,

the personnel numbers sent remained fixed at increased levels for several years, with a rough equivalent to the number of troops involved in UNPROFOR serving in Afghanistan for several consecutive years. This price becomes even more significant when the casualties and hundreds of injuries incurred during the ISAF are considered (Lawrence, 2017, p. 19; Mölder, 2014, p. 66), indicating a willingness to continue protracted engagement despite the comparatively extreme risks.

Table 4: Estonian Troop Contributions to the ISAF Mission by Year

Year:	Estonian Troop Contributions to ISAF:
2004:	12
2005:	23
2006:	No data available
2007:	90
2008:	130
2009:	130
2010:	150
2011:	159
2012:	154
2013:	162
2014:	156
2015:	4
2016:	5
2017:	4
2018:	5

(Pernik, 2006, p. 203; Resolute Mission Support Placemats 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018).

The reasons underpinning this enhanced contribution stem from the perceived vitality of participation in ISAF as a means to pursue effective status accumulation. NATO's operations in Afghanistan were considered exceptionally vital as a means of proving that the alliance could operate successfully in a post-Cold-War environment (Maskaliūnaitė, 2014b, p. 224). Additionally, the nature of the operations in Afghanistan highlighted the perceived vulnerabilities of the alliance to the United States, specifically, growing concerns about free-riding within the alliance in terms of contributing to metrics such as defence spending targets and making material contributions on the ground (Ibid, pp. 224-225; McNamara, 2015, p. 157). These factors were known to political elites in Estonia, who perceived a larger and more credible contribution to the ISAF as an invaluable means of pursuing status accumulation in a time of transformation for the alliance (Mölder, 2014, p. 64). With considerations to the distinctions between NATO, EU, and UN missions in terms of importance to Estonian status accumulation, clear primacy was granted to NATO's ISAF mission. Aside from the larger personnel contributions over a longer period, the mission became a priority mission in 2005 and became the largest recipient of funding allocated for international missions within the defence budget shortly afterward (Ibid). The ISAF mission ended in 2014, and while other missions through the EU and UN have been pursued, the amount of personnel involved has not reached the levels committed during the ISAF mission.

The third status accumulation marker, niche contributions, is best exemplified by Estonia's CCDCOE. The CCDCOE's establishment in 2008 was appropriately timed considering the cyberattacks launched against Estonia in 2007. However, the conceptualization of such issues as particularly pertinent for Estonia to address had been around for a far longer period. Estonia's development of its digital infrastructure and e-governance system had been a consistent focus for the country since independence which, during that time, was starting to provide a plethora of benefits, such as the implementation of nationwide digital voting in 2007 (Hall & Trechsel, 2009, p. 498). As such, the attacks were less of an impetus to begin looking into developing viable cyber-security and defence options, but rather a sign of its increased necessity to deal with contemporary threats.

A caveat of Estonia's focus on cyber defence is its promotion as a means of further increasing defence cooperation between NATO and the EU. Estonia's promoted strategy for

furthering the goals of the CSDP in 2017 included specifically focusing on cyber defence not just as a vital security problem to be addressed by the EU, but as a problem to be engaged in concert with NATO. Cooperation in general was stressed, but Estonia specifically stressed its abilities to contribute to furthering cyber security cooperation between both organizations “in particular”, and cyber security and defense has become an integral component of defence cooperation between NATO and the EU (Estonian Presidency of the EU Council, 2017, pp. 1-2; European External Action Service, 2018, pp. 1-2). This desire to enhance cooperation between the two organizations is far from a contemporary one, with related desires expressed years beforehand (Ilves, 2007, p. 14; Ilves & Scheffer). Estonia’s positive reputation as the foremost NATO state in terms of cyber defence, especially due to their framework nation status with regards to the CCDCOE, provides a means for them to accomplish exactly that, further ensuring the perpetuation of their status within both communities.

The increasing financial support provided to the CCDCOE, alongside the increasingly broad scope of activities conducted through it, confirms its value as a vital source of status accumulation for Estonia. Its budgetary expenditures have only increased each year since its establishment, indicating confidence in its pursuits via the provision of a broader scope of operations and base of financial support from Estonia as its framework nation (National Audit Office, 2012, p. 2; National Audit Office, 2014, p. 2; National Audit Office, 2016, p. 5; National Audit Office, 2018, p. 4). The exercises conducted through the CCDCOE have also increased in prominence and scope, including Locked Shields, which began in 2010 and focuses on cyber defence training, and Crossed Swords, which began in 2016 and focuses on cyber penetration training for member nations of the CCDCOE (Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence 2019a; 2019b). In terms of support and scope, Estonia’s niche contributions to NATO and the EU through the CCDCOE follows the general trend of defence spending, in that its support and status accumulation pursued through it has contemporarily only increased.

Correlating Estonia’s Alliance Valuation and Status Accumulation

Estonia’s alliance valuation, as indicated by the results of the Qualitative Data Analysis in Table 2 (page 45), indicates that Estonia’s perceptions of alliance valuation did not remain consistent throughout its membership (and pursuit of membership attainment) in

NATO and the EU. Its earlier years of pursuing and attaining membership in NATO and the EU highlighted perceived desires to attain material goals (through the provision of security from those alliances) (Meri, 1997, Tiido, 2002). This developed into more confluence between material and ideological goals from 2004-2013, with perceived material benefits from NATO's security guarantees and the ideological benefits of rejoining the Atlantic community serving as primary focuses (Ilves, 2007, pp. 11-12; Ansip & Rasmussen, 2011; Ilves & Rasmussen, 2013). More contemporary expressions of alliance valuation once again stressed the importance of material goals predicated upon security provisions with a newly perceived intense threat stemming from Russia (Ratas & Stoltenberg, 2017).

To what degree did these shifting feelings of alliance valuation affect status accumulation patterns? Estonia's status accumulation patterns (apart from international mission contributions, which declined when their mission they were contributing to in Afghanistan finished) reliably trended upward and remained consistent after 2008 (apart from a short-lived decline in their defence spending as a percentage of GDP in 2011). Examining the alliance valuation patterns in Table 2 (page 45) reveals that the divide between material and ideological perceptions of alliance value was small (16 material codes compared to 15 ideological ones), highlighting the near-attainment of confluence between material and ideological alliance valuation despite shifts in Estonia's security and economic environment. This meshes with the patterns indicated from 1997-2007, which likewise indicates confluence between the two alliance valuation patterns (14 material and ideological codes), leading to two conclusions with regards to the relationship between Estonia's alliance valuation and status accumulation.

The first is that Estonia was (and remains) ultimately more predisposed to value material benefits over ideological ones in more traditionally insecure periods of time (1997-2003, before attaining NATO membership, and 2016-2017, following Russia's military actions against Ukraine). Hybrid actions do not seem as readily trackable, as the cyber attacks leveled against them in 2007 did not lead to an equivalent focus upon material benefits over ideological ones, and extended periods of time of relative security do lead to a more salient focus on ideological pursuits instead of material ones (such as in 2011 and 2013). Estonia's relatively small status within the Baltic peer group in terms of traditional, material status

indicators (such as economic size and population) would explain this trend. Attaining material guarantees would be a primary goal with that disparity in mind and pursuing status accumulation within for ideological reasons as a means of indicating belonging to another, less geographically contingent peer group and the development of a prominent status within their own peer group. Doing this provides a means for them to develop more favorable external perceptions, and, while not leaving one peer group for another, finding ways to distinguish themselves in terms of identity in both through pursuing highly visible status accumulation (Dafoe et al., 2014, p. 379; Renshon, 2017, pp. 23-24), a worthy pursuit when material goals as well as the mitigation of insecurity has largely been satisfied.

The second is that confluence between material and ideological goals and benefits perceived within an alliance, at least in terms of broadly established trends in Estonia's case, does indicate the increased likelihood of a state pursuing status accumulation within that alliance. Even external factors which impacted alliance valuation, such as economic downturns and military actions undertaken by Russia, ultimately did not skew alliance valuation toward overall favoring material or ideological goals by more than a single value. While it is important to understand how those events might impact alliance valuation on a yearly basis, it is likewise vital to discern a broader picture of the overall espoused value of alliance membership. For Estonia, that value was split almost evenly between the pursuit of material and ideological goals through alliance membership, a perspective that developed alongside its strong and continuous development toward pursuing greater amounts of status accumulation.

Conclusion

Estonia's alliance valuation pattern varied during periods during larger amounts of traditional insecurity toward more material goals (such as before officially attaining membership and in the wake of Russian actions against Ukraine). However, despite variation between the two and external developments such as the economic crisis, it ultimately trended toward confluence between pursuing material and ideological benefits and goals through alliance membership. Coupled with Estonia's consistent status accumulation efforts, this would strongly suggest that, at least in the case of the smallest state within a peer group of small states, expressed confluence between material and ideological benefits and goals within

alliance valuation among relevant political elites will lead to greater amounts of status seeking within an alliance. The next chapter will compare these results with those of the largest state within the Baltic peer group, Lithuania, to determine the similarity or differences between their alliance valuation and status accumulation patterns.

Chapter Four: Lithuania

Introduction

This chapter will, much like the earlier chapter's analysis of Estonia examine Lithuania's alliance valuation and status accumulation patterns within NATO, the EU, and the UN. The first section of this chapter will focus on Lithuania's alliance valuation over the course of its earlier pursuits of NATO and EU membership, and time spent as a full member of both alliances until 2017. The qualitative content analysis of transcripts and documents originating from relevant political actors will be applied to Lithuania as well, to discern the degree to which material and ideological goals and benefits were stressed alongside alliance membership in comparison to Estonia's. The second section of this chapter will analyze Lithuania's status accumulation patterns, as measured by its participation in international missions with NATO, the EU, and the UN, its defence spending patterns, and its development of niche capabilities within the alliance through the incorporation of the ENSEC. The chapter will conclude by determining the degree of correlation between Lithuania's alliance valuation and status accumulation patterns.

Lithuania's Alliance Valuation

Lithuania pursued a similar path to Estonia regarding alliance membership following the end of the Cold War and resumption of independence, but the status accumulation trajectory it ultimately pursued has varied quite strongly from its northern neighbor. Its defence spending did not hit the expected spending target as quickly or readily as did Estonia, largely due to a very different domestic opinion on the target itself (Paulaskas, 2013, p. 62). Additional points of divergence can be found in the two other aspects of status accumulation. Its focus on Energy Security through its Centre of Excellence, the ENSEC, has been comparably less successful than Estonia's CCDCOE, in part due to its later date of establishment and less prominent fixture within NATO. However, Lithuania did play a larger role in the ISAF, wherein it was tasked and admirably rose to the occasion of leading a PRT within the Ghor province of Afghanistan (Maskaliūnaitė, 2014a, p. 48). Estonia's perceived relationship between material and ideological goals within alliance valuation indicated an overall confluence regarding stated perceptions of both. Table 5 indicates that, for Lithuania,

value stemming from the achievement of ideological goals were more frequently expressed within alliance valuation than material goals.

Table 5. Coding Frame Totals, Lithuania's Alliance Valuation

Code:	Lithuania:
Identity:	36
Stigma Management:	15
<i>Ideological Total (Identity and Stigma Management):</i>	51
Security:	36
Prestige:	0
<i>Material Total (Security and Prestige):</i>	36
Statements Included:	10

The results of the qualitative content analysis do indicate a much greater degree of expressed ideological benefits from alliance membership in comparison to those espoused by Estonian political elites in Table 1 (page 39). However, as determined earlier, the overarching depiction of alliance valuation does not necessarily indicate that those patterns remained constant for the duration of their alliance pursuit and membership. Examining how these patterns developed over time continues to be critical for developing a fuller understanding of Lithuania's alliance valuation patterns. They will be fully explored within the four established and distinctive periods of time, 1997-2004, 2005-2008, 2009-2013, and 2014-2017.

The period from 1997 to 2004 was one predominantly predicated upon aspiring to and attaining NATO and EU membership, and to relevant domestic political elites, the most espoused benefits from attaining these memberships came from the ideological benefits they would impart. This is not to say that material benefits were not espoused at all: security benefits and guarantees were likewise stressed (albeit to a lesser degree) during this period. A significant factor of the pursuit of NATO membership was the security provisions

enshrined within membership which were notably equal and equitable for all alliance members (Brazauskas, 1997; Valonis, 2004; Paskas, 2004), alongside developing new means of countering more contemporary threats (Brazauskas, 1997; Valonis, 2004). In terms of preferable security choices, the espoused alliance valuation perception clearly highlighted NATO's capabilities as a pertinent source of those material benefits.

Ideological goals were more strongly espoused than material goals during this time, with an exceptionally close split between identity and stigma management goals. Alliance membership as a means of showcasing Lithuania's normative growth as a state following the end of the Cold War was stressed as a particularly important goal (Brazauskas, 1997), as was officially demonstrating their attainment of equality with other alliance members (Paskas, 2003; Valonis, 2004). Perceptions of attaining solidarity with the rest of a rapidly democratizing and unifying Europe under the purview of NATO strongly colored domestic statements espousing the benefits of alliance membership for Lithuania (Brazauskas, 1997; Valonis, 2004). Alliance membership was then understood as a means for Lithuania to highlight its capabilities as a state which had transformed following the end of the Cold War along with the rest of Europe, and formally codify its positive transformation with other, similarly democratic states throughout Europe.

Alongside this desire for alliance membership as a means of proving what had been attained developed a more pragmatic view of Lithuania's abilities and need to continue developing through NATO membership. Chief among these were statements espousing the necessity of developing capabilities which would allow Lithuania to contribute more equitably to missions, air policing, and other alliance responsibilities (Brazauskas, 1997; Adamkus, 2004). Lithuania's expression of ideological goals during this period ultimately presented a double-faceted perspective on what alliance membership would entail for their identity, at once reinforcing the progress they had made and the necessity of continuing to improve for the sake of better serving newly developing European solidarity. An interesting facet of these espoused perspectives was the primacy of NATO membership in comparison to EU membership as a means of encouraging cooperation in Europe. While membership as a means of reinforcing their belonging to the Euro-Atlantic community was a minor focus of these early statements (Brazauskas, 1997), yet the EU was not mentioned by name in the

statements made during this time, a stark point of distinction from Estonia (Ojula, 2004). While NATO membership was the prime objective for both Lithuania and Estonia, this does suggest that membership in the former was comparatively stronger for Lithuania.

The next period, from 2005-2008, led to the development of confluence between material and ideological goals within Lithuania's alliance valuation. Material goals and benefits factored more heavily into domestic perceptions of the value of alliance membership more than they did during Lithuania's pursuit and immediate attainment. The material benefits Lithuania continued to most strongly emphasize reflected NATO's collective defense treaty under Article 5, as the most effective means available for ensuring a continuation of domestic development for Lithuania (and other alliance members) (Kirkilas, 2005). The transformative capabilities of NATO in terms of providing security against contemporary and further reaching threats (such as terrorism and instability in Afghanistan) likewise factored into material alliance valuation, but the primary focus remained on emphasizing, and ensuring that the security benefits provided to Europe remained in place (Ibid).

Ideological goals remained salient points of focus, with most of their benefits stemming from Lithuania formally adopting an identity as a new and capable member of the alliance. Notes of the need to meet responsibilities and commitments were noted alongside these. The continued demands of alliance membership notably highlighted the necessity of showcasing Lithuania's capabilities to rapidly develop to meet the alliance's demands and maintain proper contributions to equitably burden-share with other members, highlighting the value of the alliance as a means of showcasing responsibility and reliability (Ibid). Alongside these desires to mitigate potential concerns arising alongside Lithuania's nascent membership status, however, were perceptions of notable benefits arising from their new status acquisition. Lithuania's new member status afforded it the rights and privileges of other members and was indeed enormously positive as there were no "sacred cows" for it with regards to NATO (Ibid). With that in mind, Lithuania could stand as a more trustworthy member with regards to future alliance transformations, as it had no preconceived notions of what should specifically be maintained within NATO and could help organize positive

transformations, such as increasing cooperation between the alliance, the EU, and the UN (Ibid).

The period from 2009-2013, following the cyberattacks launched against Estonia as well as the beginning of the Russo-Georgian war, led to a shift in Lithuania's alliance valuation pattern. Statements within transcripts during this period indicated a much stronger inclination on the part of relevant Lithuanian political elite to perceive and note larger material benefits from alliance membership, rather than espouse its value as an effective way for Lithuania to achieve ideological goals. These material benefits predominantly centered upon NATO membership as a critically important facet of Lithuania's security, particularly considering Russian war scenario training and return to historically unacceptable practices (Juknevičienė, 2011). NATO as a vehicle for inspiring and fomenting greater cooperation between Lithuania and the EU and Trans-Atlantic community in general was also heavily emphasized alongside an espoused willingness to continue contributing and showcasing Lithuania's capabilities by contributing to international security (Olekas, 2013, Juknevičienė, 2011). Emphasized alongside security benefits regarding alliance membership and deterring Russian aggression was the need to continue focusing on developing responses to less traditional threats, such as cyber defence and energy security. Invoked alongside alliance membership providing a more stable means of developing cooperative defence projects such as enhanced integration and air policing (Olekas, 2013), these means of deterring more contemporary forms of aggression were clearly perceived as equally salient a material benefit and desirable goal for Lithuania to fulfill (Juknevičienė, 2011).

Ideological goals and benefits were definitively emphasized to a much lesser extent than material goals, but likewise held sway. Among them was a strong linkage between energy security as a material benefit to Lithuania from alliance cooperation and a marker of identity in Lithuania's decision and resolve to establish the ENSEC (Ibid). Alongside this desire to showcase Lithuania's capabilities in contributing to security solutions, its role as a normative marker within the alliance and the rest of Europe was likewise emphasized. The state of Europe, as perceived during this time, was one fraught with ideological tensions and the "cracking" of the European unity which had been developing since the end of the Cold War (Olekas, 2013). Lithuania's role in contributing to NATO and the development of

cooperation with the EU and UN then highlighted its capabilities as a newer member and symbol of successful transformation in Europe: ideologically speaking, there was a perceived belief in the potentiality of Lithuania to attain and pursue a unique position as a bridge between the East and the West, reinforcing the waning Trans-Atlantic security in the face of renewed dangers from Russia (Juknevičienė, 2011; Olekas, 2013).

The last examined period of statements from 2014 to 2017, following the development of Russia's military actions against Ukraine, saw a resurgence of perspectives relating to the fulfilment of ideological goals and acquisition of ideological benefits. Material goals perceived by domestic Lithuanian elites as more achievable due to alliance membership stressed during this time predominantly focused upon the security guarantees afforded by NATO, both in terms of deepening defence cooperation between Lithuania and other states, and in ascertaining and countering the presence of new and unconventional threats (Olekas, 2004; Grybauskaite, 2015; Velička, 2016). Ukraine stood out as another state included within this agreement, as a particularly salient testing point for European security and NATO's capabilities. Standing with Ukraine in its time of need against Russian aggression stood out as a particularly important goal where Lithuania was concerned, as a pivotal test for ensuring that NATO's security guarantees would continue to protect all of Europe, instead of leaving non-alliance members to fend for themselves (Velička, 2016).

Ideological goals and benefits were stressed to a greater degree during this period, in large part due to the relevant Lithuanian political elites tying their experiences with joining the Euro-Atlantic community with the current situation Ukraine faced. The need and capabilities of the alliance to continue reaching out to Eastern Europe and expanding NATO's open-door policy were stressed as being vitally important, due to the shared values of the alliance (and the Euro-Atlantic community) which Ukraine continued to embrace (Olekas, 2004; Velička, 2016). The alliance as the greatest form of maintaining this ideological strength through the pursuit of greater cooperative projects within a "family" beyond shared defence was likewise emphasized: the equitable and expansive nature of alliance cooperation was invoked as an important positive aspect of membership (Ibid). Alongside this cooperation was a sense of increased responsibility for commitments, in part for all alliance members, and in large part, for Lithuania to mitigate moving forward. While

Lithuania's other forms of commitments such as their leadership role in Afghanistan with the PRT were mentioned (Olekas, 2004), the predominant concern regarding Lithuania's development of status within the alliance came down to their failure (and desire) to reach the 2% GDP defence spending target by 2018 (Grybauskaitė & Stoltenberg, 2015; Velička, 2016).

Lithuania's alliance valuation, as gleaned through a qualitative content analysis of transcripts of statements made by relevant political elites and laid out in Table 6 (Page 66), has been less consistent in terms of attaining confluence between material and ideological goals, both in the overall pattern and in individual years. Overwhelming support for material goals (in terms of discerning significant distinctions between ideological and material goals and benefits within alliance valuation laid out in the methodology), compared to ideological goals occurred in 2011, largely coinciding with perceptions of an ascendant and aggressive Russia in the wake of the cyber attacks against Estonia and the Russo-Georgian war. 2004 and 2014 indicated a greater focus on ideological goals and benefits within alliance membership, meshing with their initial attainment of membership in NATO and the EU, as well as the ideological benefits of alliance membership for appealing to Eastern European states, consolidating and expanding the values espoused as vital by the alliance.

The most important material goals which were continually invoked over the span of Lithuania's membership stemmed from defence cooperation within the rest of the alliance (Paskas & Robertson, 2003; Valionis, 2004; Kirkilas, 2005; Juknevičienė, 2011; Olekas, 2013; Velička, 2016), and its capabilities of facing and surmounting new forms of threats (Valionis, 2004; Kirkilas, 2005; Olekas, 2014; Velička, 2016), highlighting less of a focus on increasing Baltic and Lithuanian security in particular and more toward the development of a broader European security which could safeguard against developing forms of threats. Alliance valuation which reflected deepening national interest and other goals not traditionally supported through the security assurances of an alliance, in contrast to the still mild presence they had in Estonian perceptions and statements, did not appear to any appreciable degree in coded statements from Lithuanian relevant political elites.

Ideological goals and benefits espoused repeatedly throughout Lithuania's membership reflected the theoretical underpinnings of both identity formation and stigma

management. The latter's appearances in Lithuanian alliance valuation centered around meeting alliance expectations and commitments (Paskas & Robertson, 2003; Olekas, 2014) and ensuring that defence spending reached the 2% of GDP target (Valionis, 2004, Grybauskaitė & Stoltenberg, 2015; Velička, 2016) as a means of showcasing Lithuania's abilities to overcome more negative reputation accumulation and prove its capabilities. Identity, as it related to Lithuania and its alliance membership, appeared in the form of formalizing its ascension from its Soviet past to becoming perceived as a free, democratic state and supporter of the values enshrined by NATO (and the EU) within the global community (Brazauskas, 1997; Valionis, 2004; Juknevičienė, 2011; Olekas, 2013; Olekas, 2014). Much like Estonia, the value of alliance membership as confirming their identity as an equal and equitable member of the Euro-Atlantic community was truly invaluable.

Table 6. Coding Frame Totals by Year, Lithuania's Alliance Valuation

Year:	Material Goals:	Ideological Goals:
1997:	2	3
2003:	1	2
2004:	2	11
2005:	5	5
2011:	9	4
2013:	3	4
2014:	2	8
2015:	3	2
2016:	6	7

Overall, Lithuania's perspectives on the value of alliance membership, while not quite different enough to equate to a significant difference (46 to 33, about a 40% difference) favored the fulfilment of ideological goals and attainment of those benefits through alliance membership more than material ones. Considering the differences in access to material

resources between Lithuania and Estonia, this result is hardly unexpected. However, considering Lithuania's comparative status accumulation patterns and the three periods which did demonstrate more significant distinctions between perceptions of material and ideological alliance valuation (2004, 2011, and 2014), more pertinent questions to be addressed arise. How did these larger distinctions in alliance valuation from confluence impact (or fail to impact) Lithuania's status accumulation, and how did they differ from Estonia's?

Lithuania's Status Accumulation

The first of the three markers of status accumulation to examine in Lithuania's case is defence spending, a marker which affords it considerably less status than for Estonia. Meeting the defence spending target has, albeit to a lesser degree than Estonia, been expressed regularly as a salient goal for Lithuania in terms of highlighting its capabilities and mitigating stigma (Valionis, 2004, Grybauskaitė & Stoltenberg, 2015; Velička, 2016), but despite strong promises to raise defence spending to meet this target, it did not happen until 2018 (NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2019, pp. 3, 8). While meeting this marker is important for status accumulation, it nonetheless does not preclude examining historical defence spending trends with regards to Lithuania. Table 7 provides a complete historical overview of the state's defence spending trends.

Table 7: Defence Spending per year as a percentage of GDP, Lithuania

Year:	Defence Spending (% of GDP)
1997:	0.747%
1998:	1.229%
1999:	0.97%
2000:	1.217%
2001:	1.362%
2002:	1.271%
2003:	1.121%

2004:	1.196%
2005:	1.1%
2006:	1.2%
2007:	1.2%
2008:	1.1%
2009:	1.1%
2010:	0.9%
2011:	0.79%
2012:	0.76%
2013:	0.76%
2014:	0.88%
2015:	1.14%
2016:	1.48%
2017:	1.72%
2018:	2.00%

(World Bank, 2019c; NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2011, p. 6; NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2019, p. 8)

These trends indicate a relatively steady (albeit lower than Estonia, in terms of percentages) spending trend until declining considerably in 2010. This decline was countered by a resurgence in defence spending in 2015, with a greater emphasis on reaching the 2% target, considering both the fact that it rose to unprecedented levels shortly after and was an expressed domestic goal according to President Grybauskaitė in 2015. What's rather curious about this decline is the timing underpinning its occurrence. Alongside the outbreak of the Russo-Georgian war in 2008 came an expressed period of insecurity in Lithuania, which sparked a renewed desire to specifically spend more on defence to reach the 2% target (Männik, 2013, pp. 36-37). What distinguished defence spending for Lithuania from Estonia,

which hit the spending marker comparatively more readily? And why did even the insecurity stemming from a resurgent Russia fail to increase defence spending?

The largest distinction between Lithuanian and Estonian defence spending stems importance placed upon reaching the defence spending marker. Unlike the strong domestic support in Estonia for continuing to increase defence spending, domestic reactions in Lithuania were comparatively more constrained following the attainment of membership. The most pertinent illustration of this comparatively relaxed attitude toward the target stemmed from President Grybauskaitė in 2004, who noted (in comparison to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the same year) that raising the defence spending was not a priority, due to the unofficial nature of the spending target. As it was not written into any NATO treaty, and the need to showcase various forms of commitment were not as pertinent following the attainment of NATO membership the perception she espoused was that it did not apply to Lithuania (Valionis, 2004; Paulaskas, 2013, p. 62). Domestic consternation over defence spending was not only treated as less than a priority, but a detriment to Lithuania's prosperity, with political tensions occasionally flaring between political parties over the importance of defence spending in comparison to other goals (Mölder, 2013, pp. 111-112). The economic crisis did not help matters in the Baltic states in general, and Lithuania's decline shortly thereafter can best be understood not as a move away from status accumulation, but a shift in already concerned domestic spending priorities (Paljak, 2013, p. 224).

Lithuania's slow increase of defence spending can best be understood then not as a lack of concern over Russia's actions against Georgia (and allegedly against Estonia), but rather a continuation of political concerns over defence spending in general. In comparison to Estonia's more considerable base of support and historical precedent, Lithuania had to contend with historical apathy toward increasing defence spending, in large part due to what were perceived as lacking responses by NATO to the East and a disproportionately large focus on Afghanistan (Mölder, 2013, p. 112). This consternation and hope for the alliance became more saliently expressed following Russia's military actions against Ukraine, wherein the lack of support to the East was perceived as a problem that the alliance could solve, if only it engaged with the East more appropriately (Velička, 2016). Fittingly, while Lithuania's strong support for supporting the alliance and commitments has been prevalent

since 1997, mentions of defence spending in general became more commonplace in 2015, following a domestic pledge to increase defence spending until it reached the target marker (Grybauskaitė & Stoltenberg, 2015). Due to larger domestic consternation in comparison to Estonia stemming from the defence budget in comparison to other spending needs, Lithuania's pursuit of defence spending as a salient form of status accumulation was largely curtailed.

The lacking state of defence spending does not indicate a lack of status seeking on Lithuania's part, but rather a distinction on their status accumulation strategies. Their personnel contributions to international missions, especially with regards to their leadership role in the Ghawr province PRT in Afghanistan during the ISAF mission, stands out as a particularly valuable means of both accumulating status and mitigating stigma arising from their other, less salient alliance commitments (Paulaskas, 2013, p. 76). This is not to say that the ISAF mission was their only contribution to NATO and other international missions. Much like Estonia, Lithuania contributed to international missions even before formally joining either NATO or the EU. NATO missions that Lithuania contributed to before attaining membership included ones in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Albania (Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016). They also contributed to an EU mission in Macedonia during this same period, as well as the UN protection force in Georgia (Ibid). The ISAF, by far the biggest and most ambitious mission undertaken by Lithuania, came shortly after their attainment of membership and involved an unprecedented degree of contributions. Table 8 contains information on the number of troops sent to support the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

Table 8: Lithuanian Troop Contributions to the ISAF Mission by Year

Year:	Lithuanian Troop Contributions to ISAF:
2004:	40
2005:	No data available
2006:	No data available
2007:	130
2008:	260
2009:	200
2010:	165
2011:	179
2012:	237
2013:	240
2014:	99
2015:	70
2016:	13
2017:	21
2018:	50

(Adamkus, 2004; Resolute Mission Support Placemats 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018).

As was the case with Estonia, Lithuania's participation in ISAF was not meant to go on into perpetuity. The Lithuanian government's plan for troop contributions to ISAF was for the state's role to wind down in 2013 (Mölder, 2013, p. 113), providing a salient explanation for the otherwise inexplicably large diminishment of troops sent to Afghanistan. The initial process of leading the PRT was mostly spurred on by encouragement from the United States: a similar invitation had likewise been offered to Estonia and Latvia, which both declined to adopt that responsibility (Maskaliūnaitė, 2014b, pp. 233-234). Accepting the leadership role and committing to maintaining the security of the PRT was internally

perceived as a vital means of gaining experience and accumulating status for Lithuania within NATO. The hope for the results of leading the PRT went beyond just status within the alliance, however, as it provided them with a very welcome chance to showcase their capabilities as the largest Baltic state and their ambitions to ascend to regional leadership and attain a greater status within their peer group and potentially the post-Soviet space (Maskaliūnaitė, 2014a, pp. 51-53; Maskaliūnaitė, 2014b, pp. 240-241).

Despite the large risks associated with committing troops and assuming a leadership position in an insecure area, casualties during the mission were relatively light, with only a single Lithuanian soldier's death occurring in 2008 (Maskaliūnaitė, 2014a, p. 51). It would not be possible to draw any conclusions from a hypothetical situation, but the lack of fatalities stemming from troop contributions certainly would have helped ease the difficulties of maintaining levels of contributions. Additionally, the per capita costs with sending in Lithuanian troops did not rise to the same levels as Latvia and Estonia paid, highlighting Lithuania's capabilities at accumulating status abroad without paying too much domestically (Paljak, 2013, p. 224). 21 Lithuanian troops remain committed in Afghanistan within Operation Enduring Support,

Their contributions to EU missions, perhaps reflecting their more ambitious foreign policy designs, are slightly more varied than Estonia's and include missions in states like Indonesia and Niger (Mauro, Krotz, & Wright, 2017, pp. 45-47, 52, 56, 58, 60, 62, 66, 69, 71, 73-74, 79). However, while Lithuania might be more willing to contribute to EU missions in more regions of the world, their troop contributions fall short of those made to the ISAF: none of the EU mission locations led to the involvement of more than a handful of Lithuanian personnel (Ibid). They, much like the mission support provided to the UN mission in Mali, did not attract the same amount of contributions in the form of personnel support as did the ISAF (Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016).

In terms of international mission support, Lithuania's contributions peaked within the ISAF, which was afforded a considerable amount of attention within alliance valuation as a reminder of Lithuania's determination to continue equitably contributing to security (Adamkus, 2004; Juknevičienė, 2011; Olekas, 2014; Velička, 2016). Like Estonia, Lithuania placed a comparatively high amount of value on NATO as a military and security alliance,

both in terms of domestic and international hard security provisions. The primacy of their contributions to NATO, both in terms of the amount of personnel sent to support the ISAF and the details underpinning their pursuit of a leadership role in establishing a PRT in Afghanistan, highlights the value ascribed to it as a source of status accumulation and a key focal point for international mission contributions.

Lithuania's niche contribution to the alliance, the ENSEC, was very much like Estonia's CCDCOE in that its establishment was predicated upon historical developments. Lithuania's status as an energy island, reliant upon external sources of energy provision (such as from Russia) made pursuing more cooperative solutions to solving this dilemma particularly appealing (Vilpišauskas, Vandecasteele, & Vaznonytė, 2013, pp. 28-29). Deliberation over energy security in NATO became more commonplace in 2005 and 2006 following the Russian and Ukrainian gas transit disputes (Molis & Vaišnoras, 2014, pp. 14-15), making Lithuania's establishment of ENSEC in 2012 of considerable importance to the alliance (Ibid, pp. 28-29). The ENSEC, like the CCDCOE, is also of paramount importance to Lithuania as a means of linking together their participation in NATO and the EU. Lithuania's term as president of the EU featured a stronger focus on establishing energy security policies, in large part due to their desire to make the issue, and their interest and role in addressing it, more noticeable to the rest of the EU (Jurkynas & Daukšaitė, 2014, p. 25; Vilpišauskas, Vandecasteele, & Vaznonytė, 2013, p. 13).

NATO's nascent amount of progress in addressing energy security concerns prior to Lithuania's establishment of the ENSEC provided a salient opportunity for Lithuania to adopt a leadership role in addressing energy security across the alliance (Molis & Vaišnoras, 2014, pp. 29-31). The official website and activities listed within, while not quite as expansive as exercises such as locked shields and crossed swords, nonetheless does highlight contemporary efforts at expanding alliance understanding and interactions with energy security. These include 12 workshops, courses, and conferences offered by or with the cooperation of the ENSEC since 2017 (NATO Energy Security Center of Excellence, 2016a) and numerous publications on various topics relating back to energy security and its military applications (NATO Energy Security Center of Excellence, 2016b).

Energy security as a topic within alliance valuation has been an important focus for Lithuania in conjunction with other hybrid threats to the alliance since 2011 (Juknevičienė, 2011; Olekas, 2013; Olekas, 2014). The ENSEC has mentioned alongside energy security concerns as a positive response twice (Juknevičienė, 2011; Olekas, 2014), years close to the establishment of the ENSEC itself. The comparative lack of the ENSEC's presence within alliance valuation and promotion via cooperative exercises with other cooperating countries to the CCDCOE indicates that, in comparison to personnel contributions to international missions and increasing their defence spending, the ENSEC and promotion of energy security are not perceived as equally salient sources of status accumulation.

Correlating Lithuania's Alliance Valuation and Status Accumulation

Lithuania's alliance valuation, as indicated in Table 7 (page 67), was more divided between material and ideological perceptions of alliance valuation than Estonia. Its pursuit of ideological goals through status accumulation within alliance membership has been consistently more frequent than its material perceptions of value, with some years distinguishing themselves as highlighting significant differences in alliance valuation. The most significant splits between these perceptions of the value of status accumulation occurred in 2004 and 2014 (in favor of ideological goals) and 2011 (in favor of material goals). Reasons underpinning these significant differences in opinions can be gleaned through an examination of both the coded transcripts and the environment within which Lithuania found itself. There was a greater propensity among relevant Lithuanian political elites to espouse ideological benefits of joining NATO and the EU before officially attaining membership. Polling data suggested that, alongside the security provisions inherent to membership in both organizations, there existed widespread faith in their capabilities in promoting democratic values and securing the existence of a more equitable and accountable government in Lithuania (Kačinskas, 1998, pp. 3-4).

The periods in 2011 and 2014 reflect an evolution not only in Lithuania's alliance valuation patterns, but in their perceptions of the security environment in Europe. The development of the ENSEC in 2011 and focus on energy security as a result factored considerably into Juknevičienė's speech, as did the necessity of cooperative security responses to Russia's military exercises (Juknevičienė, 2011). Expressed identity then

became a dichotomous relationship between Lithuania and the Baltic states, who had changed and become more peaceful through the adoption of liberal values, and Russia, which was continuing to threaten security in Europe much as it did in its past (Ibid). This perspective, in the wake of Russia's actions against Ukraine, developed into less of a question of material distinctions afforded through cooperative action to emphasize the shared values and normative cooperation between members of the alliance (Olekas, 2014). Perceptions of NATO as simply not seizing the moment and properly utilizing its ideological capabilities to properly reach out to the people of Ukraine through their open-door policy were expressed alongside Lithuania's own experience with joining the alliance, and the benefits of such ideological growth (Ibid).

This is not to say that material and ideological values were not espoused alongside those years of significant distinctions between ideological and material goal valuation. It was the distinction in values between NATO and Russia which helped foment insecurity as presented in Juknevičienė's speech (Juknevičienė, 2011), and the capabilities of NATO to afford new protection against contemporary insecurity was likewise afforded some consideration in Olekas' speech (Olekas, 2014). However, there was a significant distinction in their respective manners of emphasis on material or ideological valuation, reflecting both the overlap between them as intrinsic portions of status-seeking and the multifaceted nature of potential alliance membership benefits.

The disparity between Estonia's relative confluence in terms of alliance valuation perceptions and Lithuania's periods of significant distinctions between material and ideological valuation presents an opportunity to examine how those variations impact status accumulation patterns. What impact did those three years of significant distinctions have on Lithuania's status accumulation? 2004 and 2014 marked periods of greater ideological valuation perceptions and marked important periods regarding their contributions to their most salient international mission, NATO's ISAF, from their earliest commitment of 40 soldiers (Adamkus, 2004) to their winding down operations following the end of the mission (Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, 2016). Table 7 (Page 67) highlights the relative lack of defence spending during these periods, with a downward trend from slightly over 1% in 2004 to marking the beginning of an increasing trend from less than

1% in 2014. Significantly increased material valuation of alliance membership occurred in 2011, during a time wherein the defence spending budget was close to its lowest levels ever but Lithuania's troop contributions to the ISAF were still relatively high (Table 8, page 71). Both the increased material and ideological valuations after 2011 would have been relatively close to the opening of the ENSEC, and both speeches made during those years mentioned the salience of energy security and the ENSEC by name (Juknevičienė, 2011; Olekas, 2014).

Lithuania's relationship between alliance valuation and status accumulation is ultimately one predicated upon valuing ideological benefits and the pursuit of likewise goals more than material ones. Apart from the period following the Russo-Georgian war and the cyber-attacks launched against Estonia, there were no periods of time which indicated a significant focus on alliance valuation as a means of attaining material benefits. What material benefits were mentioned predominantly fixated upon the provision of security through cooperation with the alliance against contemporary threats (Paskas & Robertson, 2003; Valionis, 2004; Kirkilas, 2005; Juknevičienė, 2011; Olekas, 2013; Olekas, 2014; Velička, 2016). The potentiality of utilizing accumulated prestige to curry favor from larger states (such as the United States) to gain other material benefits or otherwise advance the national interest did not factor in to material alliance valuation. In contrast, ideological goals and benefits stemming from status seeking within alliances received a far greater amount of attention, both in terms of promoting Lithuania's identity as a promoter and inheritor of liberal values (Brazauskas, 1997; Valionis, 2004; Juknevičienė, 2011; Olekas, 2013; Olekas, 2014), and as a means of mitigating stigma and proving its worth despite more negative aspects of its reputation (Brazauskas, 1997; Valionis, 2004; Juknevičienė, 2011; Olekas, 2013; Olekas, 2014; Grybauskaitė & Stoltenberg, 2015).

Two conclusions can be reached from examining Lithuania's alliance valuation and status accumulation patterns. The first is that Lithuania placed far more emphasis on ideological goals and benefits than did Estonia. Considering their hierarchical positions as members of the Baltic states peer group in terms of traditional status markers, this reflects Lithuania's comparatively higher position in relation to Estonia. While still a small state, its position in terms of access to more material resources exceeds that of its Baltic neighbors, making the pursuit of material benefits less critically important in comparison to enshrining

its identity as a member of the liberal Euro-Atlantic community. The second is that, while factors such as the end of international missions and economic hardships influenced status accumulation quite heavily, significant distinctions in ideological alliance valuation does indicate a shift in status accumulation patterns, considering its occurrence during the beginning and ending of the ISAF, the most pursued source of status accumulation for Lithuania. While concluding that an increase in material or ideological valuation would not be a plausible conclusion to draw from the findings, it certainly does indicate that some shift in status accumulation will be pursued.

Conclusion

Lithuania's alliance valuation pattern varied more than Estonia's, in general toward ideological benefits, and during its oscillation between material and ideological benefits of status-seeking. These periods occurred from 1997-2004, wherein ideological goals were stressed during the pursuit of membership, 2009-2013, wherein material goals were more frequently espoused following the Russo-Georgian war, and 2014-2017, wherein ideological goals were again primarily pursued following Russia's military actions against Ukraine. These substantial periods of contrasting alliance valuation distinguish Lithuania from Estonia, suggesting that Lithuania's predominant alliance valuation and determinant of status-seeking and accumulation is driven by perceived ideological benefits and goals, rather than material ones. This thesis' conclusion will conclude the contrasting alliance valuation and status accumulation patterns between Lithuania and Estonia and answer the two research questions within the research puzzle. Specifically, how the value of status-seeking within an alliance (alliance valuation) differed for Estonia and Lithuania as two differently sized states within the same small state peer group, and the impact that alliance valuation has on status accumulation patterns.

Conclusion

This thesis explored status-seeking for small states within alliances to aptly determine answers to three salient questions. The first, how disparities in terms of status hierarchy within a small state peer group affect alliance valuation with regards to the primacy of ideological or material goals. The second, what perspectives of alliance valuation were present during periods of status-seeking. Finally, to better determine how status-seeking is defined and how it is pursued by small states within alliances. Examining small states was of pivotal importance to this thesis for two reasons. The first was more appropriately determining how states within peer groups of small states could be hierarchically ranked in comparison to one another, to preclude the potentiality of small state perceptions leading to inaccurate analyses through an assumption of complete homogeneity. In the cases of Estonia and Lithuania, examining both states as members of the same peer group allowed for the development of an analysis which compared distinctions between peer group members of small states, rather than members of markedly different peer groups or size groups. The most salient factor which divided them came down to their traditional status markers as relating back to their access to material resources, such as their overall GDPs and population sizes. The second was, considering the more limited resources small states would have in comparison to larger states within NATO and the EU (such as the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom), determining a means by which they could realistically status-seek and pursue status-accumulation given their more limited options to make contributions.

Estonia and Lithuania both pursued relatively similar tracks when it came to alliance membership and status-seeking within them. NATO was perceived as the most appropriate security guarantee, but EU membership and contributions to UN missions also played a role in their status-seeking and contributions. Estonia's alliance valuation patterns achieved more confluence between the pursuit of material and ideological goals overall, with Lithuania's patterns reflecting more significant support for ideological goals and significant disparities in alliance valuation in particular years. While the research was unable to discern status accumulation patterns for small states with regards to their alliance valuation based on

specific years, it does draw two important conclusions. One of which is that confluence within alliance valuation between the pursuit of material and ideological goals suggests a greater likelihood of consistent status-seeking for small states within alliances. The second is that significant disparities trending toward favoring ideological goals in alliance valuation will indicate a change in status accumulation patterns.

In Lithuania's case, these distinctions reflect a greater disparity regarding the role of alliances such as NATO and the EU with regards to defence provisions and Lithuania's national interests. Whereas Estonia's domestic political perceptions of the value of alliance membership and the need to fulfill certain criteria, such as with regards to defence spending, remained consistently supported by domestic political groups, Lithuania experienced a much different domestic environment. Consternation over the cost of equitably contributing to NATO and focusing attention away from areas of Europe which coincided with Lithuania's national interests (specifically Eastern Europe) negatively impacted their status accumulation patterns. Their largest source of status accumulation contributions, their troop contributions and PRT leadership adoption within the ISAF, was motivated in large part due to their desire to fulfill their national interests with regards to adopting a more dominant status within both the Baltic peer group and within the larger post-Soviet space. Estonia's status contributions, while perhaps not on the same level as Lithuania's ISAF contributions, accumulated more steadily: their defence spending remained more consistent than Lithuania's, and their CCDCOE remains more prevalent in terms of attracting other NATO members for broad exercises than Lithuania's ENSEC.

This analysis of the domestic political space gleans insight as to reasons underpinning the two conclusions reached within this thesis. Confluence between ideological and material goals within alliance membership for small states is indicative of a consistent political view regarding the value of status-seeking and accumulation within alliances, suggesting that status accumulation patterns will remain consistent. Conversely, alliance valuation values which indicate substantial distinctions between desires to achieve material and ideological goals highlight internal consternation over the value of status-seeking to that small state and insecurity regarding the benefits of continuing to status-seek within alliances. More specific periods of material or ideological valuation did not seem to have as much of an impact as

larger general trends within alliance valuation, which is an understandable outcome considering that altering spending patterns or making salient contributions is not an instantaneous political process.

Finally, with regards to status-seeking for small states, this thesis both more deeply defined and distinguished definitions within status-seeking and determined how it could be pursued by small states within alliances. Distinguishing terms associated with status such as reputation, status itself, prestige, and stigma provided a more concrete examination of how those terms have been used interchangeably when status has been deliberated in the past, and a more contemporary understanding of how they might be more homogeneously applied and understood in relation to status-seeking. Further unpinning status-seeking from the territory of large states and more simplistic indicators, such as the acquisition of more symbolically important military equipment like aircraft carriers, allows for the incorporation of small states into the paradigm and to determine alternative perspectives on what status-seeking includes. Estonia and Lithuania illustrate the importance of determining a broader and more inclusive picture of status-seeking, considering how states might belong to multiple alliances and international organizations simultaneously. Such developments preclude the potentiality of reducing alliance membership to an overly simplistic and individualistic paradigm, allowing for more complete and fulfilling analyses of small states and their status-seeking in more contemporary settings and overlapping alliance memberships.

Ultimately, the hypothesized relationship regarding confluence in alliance valuation between small states most aptly determines that status accumulation will be more likely to be consistently pursued when perceptions of status-seeking as the best way to attain material and ideological goals maintain a constant state of relative confluence. Periods of time wherein alliance valuation substantially differs between perceiving both as worthy goals indicate domestic insecurity or uncertainty regarding the value of alliance membership, suggesting future transformations in status accumulation patterns. Larger states in small state peer groups will ascribe more value to ideological goals over material goals than small states, but this distinction matters less than the attainment of confluence for states within the same small state peer group.

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