

Preface

2014 marks ten years since Estonia's accession to NATO and the European Union. The Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum celebrated these events a year earlier with the international conference 'Inventing the National Defence 1990–2004', which was held on the 25th & 26th of April 2013 in Tallinn, Estonia. The first and most substantial peer-reviewed part of this yearbook comprises papers written on the basis of the presentations delivered at the conference.

The end of the Cold War affected many nations and Estonia was not the only country to become a new member of NATO during the enlargement. This is why experts from other countries – from Latvia to the United States, and from Finland to the Czech Republic – were also invited to the conference. The years that have already passed since these events allow us to draw parallels and find differences. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were the only countries in Europe whose independence was not restored after World War II and who remained occupied by the Soviet Union. This is why the Baltic States had to build their armed forces from scratch, 'inventing' its national defence.

Nothing appears from nowhere. Traditions, or rather memories of traditions, were still there. There were officers and experts who had served in the armed forces of different countries, some of them on opposite sides during the Cold War. Their diverse experience had to form a harmonious whole, which did happen in the end, but was by no means easy to achieve.

The other countries that became NATO members during the enlargement of the alliance used to belong to the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and had to reorganise their armies. The only exception was the German Democratic Republic, whose army was merged with the Bundeswehr and freed from any unnecessary burdens in the course thereof. The question of whether building a new army from scratch is easier or more difficult than the reorganisation of the army of an authoritarian regime into the one of a democratic country subjected to civilian control will not be

answered in this yearbook. It's likely that there is no single answer to such a question at all.

None of the stories presented to the public as a success or failure are ever fully either one or the other. One of the tasks of the science of history is to highlight all significant facts and arrive at a generalisation that explains why everything went the way it did. History is a discipline that in the ideal case uses all relevant sources, from documents and legislation to old press, opinions expressed later and the personal memories of the people involved. Events that occurred 20 years ago, especially if they concern national defence and issues of military security, are not an ideal case. Not even all of the documents related to the history of World War II, which happened 70 years ago, are accessible to researchers today, let alone the events that occurred just a quarter of a century ago. Many of the people who were involved in these events are still in civil or military service, or in politics. Their memoirs are obviously influenced by their current position as well as their experience of the last 25 years. Also, memories are nothing but a story, which is never completely objective despite the best intentions of the person telling it.

Although we're living at a time when the *Erinnerungskultur* or national memory are fighting the academic science of history for the position of the one that tells the story of our past, the purpose of this yearbook is to stick to the latter. This is why the texts that fall into the category of memoirs or memory-based research can be found in the second, non-peer-reviewed part of the yearbook.

In 2014, seventy-five years will pass from the day Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union made the non-aggression treaty and signed its secret protocol. This secret protocol determined the fate of many Eastern European countries and nations for the next fifty years – sometimes even longer. This event is remembered in the last article in the yearbook, which describes the approach to the history of World War II in the Soviet Union and Russia, and the actions of and decisions made by the high military command of the Soviet Union at the start of the war.

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