

**The Three Seas Initiative.
Involvement and priorities of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania**

Due to their size and limited economic opportunities, the Baltic states are looking for development opportunities within various political formats. One of them is the 3SI Initiative. The aim of the article is to present the current priorities and the degree of involvement of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the projects of the 3SI initiative. Since 2015, the countries have been working together to achieve better integration of the region, strengthen security areas, competitiveness of energy supplies and integration of transport pillars. What seems to be crucial is cooperation in the digital sphere, which currently has a direct impact on the security of the 3SI member states. The war in Ukraine, Russia's policy towards minorities living in all Baltic states, as well as Japan's accession as a strategic partner to 3SI, motivate Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to take dynamic steps towards further integration.

K e y w o r d s: Three Seas Initiative, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, political formats.

ELŻBIETA LESIEWICZ

Adam Mickiewicz University
ORCID: 0000-0002-6209-3455
elzbieta.lesiewicz@amu.edu.pl

AGATA WŁODARSKA-FRYKOWSKA

University of Lodz
ORCID: 0000-0003-4672-7232
agata.wlodarska@uni.lodz.pl

BARBARA JUNDO-KALISZEWSKA

University of Lodz
ORCID: 0000-0002-9615-1449
barbara.kaliszewska@uni.lodz.pl

THE THREE SEAS INITIATIVE. INVOLVEMENT AND PRIORITIES OF ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA

INTRODUCTION

The Three Seas Initiative (3SI) is an important platform for regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe, the conceptual foundations of which date back to 2014. At that time, the American think tank Atlantic Council, in cooperation with Central Europe Energy Partners, published the document *Completing Europe: From the North-South Corridor to Energy, Transportation, and Telecommunications Union*, which became a key founding act for the subsequent initiative.¹ The formal establishment of the 3SI took place in 2015 on the initiative of the presidents of Poland and Croatia, Andrzej Duda and Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, and the official inauguration took place during

¹ *Completing Europe: From the North-South Corridor to Energy, Transportation, and Telecommunications Union*, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/completing-europe-from-the-north-south-corridor-to-energy-transportation-and-telecommunications-union/> (access: 12 November 2024).

the first summit in Dubrovnik on 25–26 August 2016. The aim of the Initiative is to strengthen cooperation between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the field of energy, transport, and digital infrastructure. The key strategic objectives include increasing energy security, reducing dependence on Russia, stimulating economic development and regional integration, strengthening transatlantic ties, and improving the competitiveness of the member states' economies. The Three Seas Initiative originally involved 12 EU member states.

In 2023, Greece joined the 3SI, bringing the total number of participating countries to 13. All Member States are Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. According to the 2023 Vilnius 3SI Declaration, the initiative has four strategic partners: the European Commission, the United States of America, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Japan. In addition, Ukraine and Moldova are associated countries participating in the 3SI.² Among the founding countries, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia occupy a special place. These three Baltic republics have been actively participating in the 3SI from the very beginning, seeing it as an opportunity to strengthen regional ties, strengthen their own position in the European Union and deepen relations with the United States. For these countries, the Three Seas Initiative is a platform for the implementation of strategic infrastructure projects, key to increasing their energy independence and security.

The aim of the article is to present the current priorities and the degree of involvement of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the projects of the 3SI initiative. Since 2015, these countries have been working together to better integrate the region, strengthen security areas, competitiveness of energy supply and integrate transport pillars.³ Cooperation in the digital sphere seems to be crucial, as it currently has a direct impact on the security of 3SI member states.

² *Three Seas Initiative*, <https://trojmorze.isppan.waw.pl/inicjatywa-trojmorza/podstawowe-informacje/> (access: 12 November 2024).

³ Read more: Agnieszka Orzelska-Stączek and Piotr Bajda, 'Security Aspects of Cooperation in Central Europe Visegrád Group, Bucharest Nine and the Three Seas Initiative', *On-line Journal Modelling the New Europe* 37, 2021, pp. 4–23, <https://doi.org/10.24193/OJMNE.2021.37.01>; Ieva Grumbinaitė, *The Rotating European Union Council Presidency and Small Member States Small States, Big Challenge* (London: Routledge, 2024); Jędrzej Błaszczak, 'Different Forms of Summit Diplomacy. Case Study Analysis of the Visegrád Group, the Bucharest Nine, and the Three Seas Initiative', *Journal of European Affairs* 24: 1, 2024, pp. 127–41.

The starting point for considerations are the following research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The changing geopolitical environment, including growing tensions in the region, increased the involvement of the Baltic states in the Three Seas Initiative and changed their priorities towards a greater emphasis on security issues.

Hypothesis 2: The Three Seas Initiative is evolving from a platform for mainly economic and infrastructural cooperation towards a forum where security and military resilience issues of the region play an increasingly important role.

Hypothesis 3: Expanding the format of cooperation of the Three Seas Initiative with new strategic partners contributes to maintaining the interest of the Baltic states in this cooperation platform.

An important issue in the research is to answer the following questions: How did the approach of the Baltic states to the Three Seas Initiative change in the years 2015–24? What are the current priorities of the Baltic states in the Three Seas Initiative? What actions have Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania taken in response to geopolitical changes in the region in the context of the Three Seas Initiative? How have international crises affected the cooperation of the Baltic States with other states within the framework of the 3SI and what specific projects have been initiated or intensified during this period? How does the presence of strategic partners influence decisions regarding the implementation of infrastructure projects by the Baltic states as part of the Three Seas Initiative?

The study was conducted on the basis of the theory of political adaptation, which assumes that each state functions as a system in an international environment, forming a supersystem with it. This process develops through continuous interactions, which refers to the ability of states and their institutions to adapt to evolving political, economic, and social conditions. In the context of the Three Seas Initiative, this theory allows us to examine how participating states adapt their policies and strategies in response to the new opportunities and challenges arising from this endeavor.⁴

In order to achieve the research goal, the following methods were used: institutional and legal, which involves an in-depth analysis of institutions and legal regulations shaping cooperation within the Three

⁴ Ziemowit J. Piertaś, *Strategies of Adaptation of States to the International Environment* (Warsaw: COM SNP, 1989).

Seas Initiative. A decision-making method proved to be helpful in the research process, which allowed to understand how the participating countries make joint decisions regarding the implementation of strategic projects, as well as a broadly understood meta-analysis of publications, reports, data on the subject of research, as well as a comparative method based on detecting differences and similarities between the countries participating in the initiative. An important factor in the research was also the participant observation of the authors of the text, who took part as an observer at the Three Seas Summit in Vilnius in 2024. The motivation to reflect on the title issue is the topicality of the topic and its significance for contemporary geopolitical and economic processes. The Three Seas Initiative, as a dynamic and developing project, plays an important role in shaping regional and international policy, as well as strengthening cooperation between the countries participating in this project.

ESTONIA

Initially, Estonia's involvement in the Three Seas Initiative was not very strong. Although Tallinn confirmed its willingness to participate in the project, the original activities were not very intense. A breakthrough moment and an impulse to strengthen Estonia's presence in the Three Seas Initiative was the second summit organized in Warsaw in July 2017. The support of the initiative given by the United States was of particular importance, expressed in the words of the then President Donald Trump.⁵

Although the experiences of the member states are different, the initiatives also differ in terms of historical traditions, they all go in the same direction, strengthening security and cooperation in this part of the continent.⁶ In addition, well-established regional and sub-regional mechanisms strengthen the cohesion of the countries participating in the project.⁷ From the Estonian point of view, the issues discussed during the summit concerning the energy, economic,

⁵ Marek Górka, 'The Three Seas Initiative as a Political Challenge for the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe', *Politics in Central Europe* 14: 3, pp. 56–57, <https://doi.org/10.2478/pce-2018-0018>.

⁶ Konrad Popławski and Jakub Jakóbowski, *Building Closer Connections. The Three Seas Region as an Economic Area* (Warsaw: Polish Economic Institute 2020), pp. 7–8.

⁷ *The Second Summit of the Three Seas Initiative Joint Declaration* (Warsaw, 6-7 June 2017), 3 Sea Research Centre, <https://3si.politic.edu.pl/the-second-summit-of-the-three-seas-initiative-joint-declaration-warsaw-6-7-june-2017/> (access: 15 June 2024).

transport and broadly understood security sectors were particularly important, especially in view of the growing question of extending the 3SI to include non-EU countries.⁸ Estonia's position increased when, in 2019, during the summit in Ljubljana, it was appointed as the next and first organizer of the fifth Three Seas Summit among the Baltic states. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic raging at the time, the date of the summit was changed, and in the end, the vast majority of participants participated in the event remotely.⁹

Important goals were set ahead of the summit, the implementation of which required solid and attentive cooperation between the partners. New business and technological initiatives aimed at strengthening smart connectivity between countries, as well as intensifying ideas related to smart mobility, both the one that will allow the expansion of the 3SI into a global hotspot and innovation in the energy flow sector, have become an important element of the Tallinn summit.¹⁰ The declaration signed in Tallinn in 23 points indicated the most important and demanding areas of cooperation between the countries participating in the 3SI.¹¹

The most important ones include, above all, strengthening cooperation within the EU and with the United States, intensifying activities at the government level, as well as regional development of the economy, with an emphasis on the green economy, cohesion, and regional security. The signatories of the document also did not omit the issue of the 3SI Investment Fund, which was established with the assumption of creating a financial mechanism to support projects implemented under the 3SI.¹² It is worth noting that Estonia was the third country,¹³ following the example of Polish and Romania,

⁸ Górka, *The Three Seas Initiative*, p. 57.

⁹ *The Hostess of the Summit, President of Estonia Kersti Kajlulaid, Met in Tallinn only with the President of Poland Andrzej Duda and the President of Bulgaria Rumen Radev*, Tallinn Summit 2020, Three Sea Summit, <https://3seas.eu/about/past-summits/tallinn-summit-2020> (access: 15 June 2024).

¹⁰ *Tallinn Summit 2020. Three Sea Summit*, <https://3seas.eu/about/past-summits/tallinn-summit-2020> (access: 15 June 2024).

¹¹ The document was signed on 19 October 2020 in Tallinn during the fifth summit of the Three Seas countries. The signatories were the presidents and top representatives of the 12 countries present at the summit.

¹² Joint statement, Tallinn, Estonia, 19 October 2020, <https://3seas.eu/about/past-summits/tallinn-summit-2020> (access: 16 June 2024).

¹³ *Estonia Becomes the Third Country to Join the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund*, 16.04.2020, Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://vm.ee/en/news/estonia-becomes-third-country-join-three-seas-initiative-investment-fund> (access: 19 June 2024).

the founding countries of the fund,¹⁴ to join the initiative. An important accent that was indicated during the summit in Tallinn was the area of digitization. Estonia was the first to propose the Smart Connectivity Project, the overarching goal of which was to implement the adopted vision of strengthening digital communication, which directly resulted in the growth of new business and technological models. The project assumed a wider opening to innovation, and consequently leading to the automation of road transport and the transformation of energy networks.¹⁵ An important issue resulting from the Smart Connectivity Project was to pay attention to the speed, price and degree of technological advancement of the planned solutions.¹⁶ For Estonia, which is perceived as a leader in digital solutions and since 2005¹⁷ successfully organizes local, parliamentary and European elections electronically¹⁸ initiating new technological solutions was an important strategic goal.

The Three Seas Summit in Tallinn was also once again a clear indication of the involvement of the United States in the project. The adopted declaration clearly expressed thanks to Washington for its readiness to financially support the 3SI declared during the Munich¹⁹ Security Conference in February 2020.²⁰ Germany was also not omitted, with which cooperation, both political and economic, resounded from the declaration.²¹

¹⁴ The letter of intent on the establishment of the 3SI Investment Fund was signed in September 2018 during the Bucharest summit. The document was signatories to six countries: Croatia, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. The initiative was implemented in May 2019 and registered in Luxembourg, in the global financial center, which potentially makes it more credible, and moreover, it is completely independent of the political situation in the member states of the 3SI. Read more: Julita Wilczek and Andrzej Rudowski, *Fundusz Trójmorza. W stronę instytucjonalizacji Inicjatywy?* (Warsaw: Collegium Interethnicum, 2021), p.15.

¹⁵ The project assumed enabling energy consumers to also take on the role of a producer and creating opportunities to save energy.

¹⁶ Agnieszka Legucka and Agnieszka Orzelska-Stączek, 'Estonia's Vision of the Three Seas Initiative Interview with The Ambassador of Estonia to Poland H. E. Martin Roger, 10 September 2020', *Sprawy Międzynarodowe* 73: 2, 2020, pp. 13–14, <https://doi.org/10.35757/SM.2020.73.2.13>.

¹⁷ Piret Ehlin, Mihkel Solvak, Jan Willemson, and Priit Vinkel, 'Internet Voting in Estonia 2005–2019: Evidence from Eleven Elections', *Government Information Quarterly* 39: 4, 2022, pp. 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2022.101718>.

¹⁸ The election of the president in Estonia is carried out by the Riigikogu in accordance with the principles set out in the Constitution of Estonia of 28 June 1992. Read more: *Eesti Vabariigi põhiseadus. Vastu võetud 28.06.1992*, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/115052015002> (access: 21 June 2024).

¹⁹ Read more: *Munich Security Report 2020*, https://securityconference.org/en/search/?tx_solr%5Bfilter%5D%5B0%5D=type:all&tx_solr%5Bsort%5D=relevance%20asc&tx_solr%5Bq%5D=1%20billion%20USD (access: 20 June 2024).

²⁰ Joint statement, Tallinn.

²¹ Ibid.

It should also be emphasized that Estonia is a very loyal member of the initiative, Tallinn knows very well that the 3SI is not only about development and cooperation, but also, most importantly, a factor strengthening security in the region. Russia has always been a huge threat to Estonia, and Moscow has been observing the actions of the Estonian authorities, acting under the pretext of protecting a large group of the Russian national minority.²² Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas²³ was well aware that building and strengthening cooperation initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe was important. Tallinn hosted the First Parliamentary Forum of the 3SI which took place in June 2021. Then, in September 2021, Tallinn again hosted the Tallinn Digital Summit, where the issues of digitization and building mutual trust in the transfer of information were widely discussed.²⁴ Tallinn also held further summits on digitalization in 2022 and 2023. During her opening speech at the summit in October 2022, Kaja Kallas pointed to Estonia's presence in many organizations and initiatives, including the 3SI, which primarily allow for building partnership, not dependency. The Prime Minister also pointed out that Estonia only needs reliable and honest partners in building alliances, and that conscious action also allowed it to become independent of Russian gas, which was not an easy and cost-free action.²⁵ In September 2023, Kallas pointed out that modern technology should be used even more in strengthening democracy. Innovation strengthens security and contributes to economic openness. Responding to the needs of society and dialogue with residents will build trust and create opportunities to personalize the state, which will provide education, medical services, transport, and services for everyone. This will also be possible thanks to cooperation within the 3SI states.²⁶ Tallinn Digital Summits have

²² Russians in Estonia make up almost 25% of the population. Read more: Agata Włodarska-Frykowska, 'Mniejszość rosyjska jako czynnik oddziaływująca na bezpieczeństwo państwowe Estonii', *Studia Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego* 6: 9, 2016, pp. 243–59.

²³ Kaja Kallas has been the head of the Estonian government since January 2021. After the elections in March 2023, she formed her third cabinet. Read more: *Kaja Kallas esines Riigikogu ees ettekandega valitsuse moodustamise alustest*, <https://www.riigikogu.ee/istungi-ulevaated/kaja-kallas-esines-riigikogu-ees-ettekandega-valitsuse-moodustamise-alustest/> (access: 21 June 2024).

²⁴ *Estonia's Perspective on the Three-Seas-Initiative*, The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, 21 February 2022, <https://www.freiheit.org/central-europe-and-baltic-states/estonia-perspective-three-seas-initiative> (access: 18 June 2024).

²⁵ *Opening Speech by Prime Minister Kaja Kallas at The Tallinn Digital Summit*, 10.10.2022, Republic of Estonia Government, <https://valitsus.ee/en/TDS2022> (access: 17 June 2024).

²⁶ *Prime Minister Kallas at Tallinn Digital Summit: Technology Can Be Used to Reinforce Democracy*, 05.09.2023, Tallinn Digital Summit, <https://www.tds.icds.ee/news/prime-minister-kallas-at-tallinn-digital-summit-technology-can-be-used-to-reinforce-democracy> (access: 21 June 2024).

become a cyclical event organized in the capital of Estonia, also bringing together the states of the 3SI.²⁷ Estonian President Alar Karis strongly emphasized the need for complete independence of the Three Seas Initiative countries in the areas of transport, energy and digitization. In the current situation, only trustworthy investments should be implemented.²⁸

There is no doubt that Estonia's activity in the 3SI is visible. At the last summit, which took place in April 2024, Vilnius and Estonia were represented by President Alar Karis,²⁹ who also signed a declaration signed by 13 countries participating in the 3SI.³⁰ The organization of the Three Seas Summits in the Baltic states not only strengthens the region, but also gives a greater sense of security.³¹ Estonia is striving to make the 3SI more formal and even more institutional. What is crucial for the authorities in Tallinn is the development of the economic potential of the project countries, strengthening cooperation in the areas of politics and security.³²

Summary: Estonia's initially low interest in the activities undertaken within the 3SI quickly reversed. One of the most important factors that determined the actions taken by the country was security. Estonia's priority has always been digitalisation and building and strengthening the digital society. Presence in 3SI definitely strengthens these activities and allows for their further development. Estonia's needs related to social integration and the elimination of broad social divisions cannot be overlooked. It is not without significance that Tallinn became the first Baltic state host of the 3SI summit. It was an excellent opportunity to show Estonia's place in the structures of the initiative and its position in relations with European countries and

²⁷ In November 2024, Tallinn hosts the Tallinn Digital Summits for the third time.

²⁸ *War Demonstrates Need to Eliminate Unwanted Dependence – Estonian President at 3SI Summit*, *The Baltic Times*, 21 June 2022, https://www.baltictimes.com/war-demonstrates-need-to-eliminate-unwanted-dependence_-estonian-president-at_3si-summit/ (access: 17 November 2024).

²⁹ In 2020, Estonia introduced a concept presented by the then President of Estonia, Kersti Kaljulaid. *Estonia Unveils Three Seas Smart Connectivity Vision, Making Region Global Example Assumes Reinforcement of Digitalization*, <https://3seas.eu/media/news/estonia-unveils-three-seas-smart-connectivity-vision-making-region-global-example> (access: 17 June 2024).

³⁰ Joint declaration of the 9th Summit of the Three Seas Initiative in Vilnius (Vilnius, April 11, 2024), The Three Seas Initiative Research Center, <https://trojmorze.isppan.waw.pl/deklaracje/2394/> (access: 28 June 2024).

³¹ Łukasz Lewkowicz and Marlena Gołębiowska, 'The Three Seas Initiative after the Vilnius Summit: Security First', *IEŚ Commentaries Brief* 1102: 77, 2024, <https://ies.lublin.pl/en/comments/the-three-seas-initiative-after-the-vilnius-summit-security-first/> (access: 21 June 2024).

³² Estonia's Perspective on the Three-Seas-Initiative.

the USA. Estonia is fighting very hard for its identity and international position. Although it is a very small player in the political arena with a relatively small population, Estonians have repeatedly shown that they can successfully achieve their goals and carry out their tasks.

LATVIA

Latvia, as one of the founding countries of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI),³³ has regularly participated in its summits, starting with its inaugural meeting held in Dubrovnik in 2016. However, in the initial phase of the formation of this format of regional cooperation, Latvia showed caution and moderate interest. An example of this is the presence of Andris Maldups, director of the Department of Transit Policy of the Ministry of Transport, during the first summit, despite the fact that the meeting was dedicated to heads of state. This attitude, described as 'wait and see', reflected Latvia's pragmatic approach to the new initiative, which is typical for small states in the context of emerging regional projects. This caution can be interpreted as a strategy to minimize the risks and assess the potential benefits of participating in the 3SI.³⁴

Latvia's greater involvement in the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) became clearly visible after the Warsaw summit in 2017, during which US President Donald Trump expressed unequivocal support for the initiative. This US support eased previous concerns about Germany's initial reservations about the project,³⁵ and has motivated the countries of the region, including Latvia, to intensify cooperation. Washington's support was particularly important for countries fearing the Russian threat, such as Latvia.³⁶ This emboldened them to

³³ *Trīs jūru iniciatīva*, <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/tris-juru-iniciativa> (access: 2 May 2024); Paweł Kowal and Agnieszka Orzelska-Stączek, *Inicjatywa Trójmorza: Geneza, cele i funkcjonowanie* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2019).

³⁴ Imants Lieģis, 'Latvija: iesaistīšanās Trīs jūru iniciatīvā un ģeopolitika kā prioritāte', in Andris Sprūds and Mārtiņš Vargulis, eds, *Trīs jūru nacionālo perspeju kartēšana* (Riga: Latvijas Arpolitikas Instituts, 2022), p. 96.

³⁵ Germany's initial reservation about the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) resulted from concerns about the division of the European Union into East and West, and from the context of the 2015 refugee crisis, as well as its reaction to the Nord Stream 2 project. Germany saw the 3SI as a potential threat to its influence in the region, which intensified skepticism about American support for the initiative. However, after President Steinmeier's participation in the Ljubljana summit in 2022, Germany began to show real interest in the 3SI goals, which signals a change in its approach to regional cooperation, in: Bastian Weber, *Von Meer zu Meer – Die 'Three Seas Initiative'*, 1 April 2020, <https://www.dashochformat.org/aussen-sicherheit/von-meer-zu-meer/> (access: 12 November 2024).

³⁶ Lieģis, 'Latvija'.

strengthen their relationship within the 3SI. This evolution of Latvia's approach illustrates the process of adapting its foreign policy to changes in the regional balance of power and the growing importance of regional cooperation in the context of security. Latvia's more active involvement in the Three Seas Initiative³⁷ shows how U.S. support has changed the perception of the initiative among the countries of the region. Latvia, initially cautious, began to see the 3SI as an important element of its security strategy and regional cooperation, which led to an intensification of its participation in the work of the initiative.

However, in 2018, Latvia again showed some caution in its approach to the Three Seas Initiative. At the Bucharest summit, the Latvian state was represented by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edgars Rinkēvičs, and not by the highest-ranking representative of the state, which could suggest another hesitation in the approach to the initiative. Despite this restraint, Latvia began to see the potential economic benefits of participating in the 3SI, which consequently led to the signing of a letter of intent by representatives of Latvian institutions together with delegates from five other 3SI member states (Croatia, the Czech Republic, Polish, Romania, Slovakia) regarding the establishment of the Three Seas Investment Fund. This fund aims to support the development of infrastructure projects in the areas of energy, transport and digital communication, which is important for strengthening regional cooperation and improving connectivity in Central Europe.³⁸ An important step in the process of Latvia's involvement in 3SI was the decision made on May 7, 2020 to participate JSC 'Development Finance Institution ALTUM' in the 3SI Fund with an investment of up to EUR 20 million. ALTUM, as an institution dedicated to supporting development, not only finances key projects, but also contributes to building stronger economic and political ties within the framework of the Three Seas Initiative (3SI).³⁹ In September 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the

³⁷ Read more: Gediminas Varvuolis and Gediminas Vitkus, 'Lithuania: The Search for Synergies', in Andris Sprūds and Mārtiņš Vargulis, eds, *Three Seas Initiative: Mapping National Perspectives* (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2022), pp. 113–25, https://liia.lv/en/publications/three-seas-initiative-mapping-national-perspectives-1002?get_file=1 (access: 14 November 2024).

³⁸ Agnieszka Orzelska-Stączek, 'Fundusz Inwestycyjny Inicjatywy Trójmorza: Geneza i etapy rozwoju', *Studia Polityczne* 51: 3, 2023, p. 138, <https://doi.org/10.35757/STP.2023.51.1.06>.

³⁹ ALTUM is a state-owned financial company of Latvia that offers support in the form of financial instruments (loans, guarantees, venture capital investments) and non-financial instruments (consulting, training). Altum, <https://www.altum.lv/en/> (access: 5 May 2024).

National Coordination Group to support Latvia in the Three Seas Initiative and take care of its interests. Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs was appointed National Coordinator.⁴⁰ The presence of the President of Latvia at subsequent summits of the Three Seas Initiative indicated the growing involvement of the state in the 3SI.⁴¹ The increase in interest in the Three Seas Initiative contributed to Latvia being awarded the organization of the summit in 2022. Edgars Bondars, an experienced diplomat, has become the ambassador of the Three Seas Initiative and the head of the secretariat organizing the summit.⁴²

The priorities of the Riga Summit included: the presence and active participation of high-ranking US representatives, the contribution of the 3SI countries and the US to the Investment Fund, cooperation with Nordic, Western European and Asian countries such as Japan, the involvement of private investors, the organization of a business forum, the development of civil society and the parliamentary dimension of the 3SI.⁴³ Analyzing the political scene in Latvia, it was noticeable that despite its support for the Three Seas Initiative summit, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was more focused on the meeting of NATO foreign ministers in December 2021 in Riga. This suggested that Latvia prioritized involvement in allied security structures, despite the importance of the Three Seas Initiative summit and the business forum in 2022.⁴⁴ The attitude of Latvian politicians indicates the implementation of an adaptation strategy in foreign policy, which is characterized by a flexible approach to the changing geopolitical environment, which is manifested in the balancing act between regional cooperation and commitments within NATO, and in the desire to maximize the benefits of various international initiatives.

Latvian organizational activities within the 3SI went beyond the main political and business meetings. Latvia sought to expand it to

⁴⁰ *Informatīvais ziņojums 'Par Trīs jūru iniciatīvas koordinācijas darba grupas izveidi'*, <https://tap.mk.gov.lv/mk/tap/?pid=40489475> (access: 10 May 2024); *Trīs jūru iniciatīva* <https://www.mfa.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/tris-juru-iniciativa> (access: 10 May 2024).

⁴¹ Latvia was represented in Slovenia by President Raimonds Vējonis, and at meetings in Tallinn (2020), Sofia (2021) and Riga (2022) Egils Levits. In Bucharest (2023) and Vilnius (2024), President Edgars Rinkēvičs.

⁴² Imants Lieģis, 'Lielā kņada ap Trīs jūru iniciatīva', in Sintija Broka and Kārlis Bukovskis, eds, *Latvijas ārējā un drošības politika* (Rīga: Latvijas Ārpolitikas institūts, 2023), p. 130.

⁴³ *Informatīvais ziņojums 'Par Trīs jūru iniciatīvas samita un biznesa foruma koordinācijas sekretariāta izveidi.'* https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/73a661fc-9b9a-45fc-8be5-981b927f47bb# (access: 20 May 2024).

⁴⁴ Lieģis, 'Lielā kņada', p. 130.

include the non-governmental sector by organizing the Civil Society Forum in Riga on 20–21 May 2022. The Forum provided a platform for the exchange of ideas and knowledge, and the recommendations for the June summit increased the visibility and scope of the 3SI. This is the first such contribution from civil society that could become a regular opportunity for cooperation in the future.⁴⁵

The summit in Latvia on 20–21 June 2022, focused on Ukraine's role in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy attended the meeting virtually, expressing gratitude for the support and encouraging close cooperation. Despite this, Ukraine was not included in this format. Instead, it was decided to create a new 'participatory partnership' for countries aspiring to EU membership, including candidates.⁴⁶

During the Latvian summit in the Seimas, the Parliamentary Forum of the Three Seas Initiative was held, which was attended by members of the Foreign Affairs Committee and parliamentarians from member and partner countries. It discussed, among others, digital transformation, infrastructural connectivity, energy independence, and security, emphasizing the geopolitical importance of the Three Seas Initiative for the region. As a result, the links between the Three Seas Initiative and legislative institutions have been expanded, which was an important step towards strengthening the role of parliaments in this initiative.⁴⁷

Parallel to the summit, the Business Forum was held, during which high-level discussions were held between representatives of countries, international institutions and companies.⁴⁸ The key moment was the announcement by the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation of support for the Three Seas Fund in the amount of USD 300 million, which was an important signal for investors. The summit underscored the importance of the U.S. economic presence in the region to strengthen transatlantic ties and security. Additionally,

⁴⁵ *Levits: Trīs jūru iniciatīvā īpaši svarīga loma ir pilsoniskās sabiedrības aktivitātēm*, <https://zinas.tv3.lv/latvija/levits-tris-juru-iniciativa-ipasi-svariga-loma-ir-pilsoniskas-sabiedrības-aktivitatem/> (access: 23 May 2024); *Pilsoniskās sabiedrības forums* <https://esilv.org/pilsoniskas-sabiedrības-forums/> (access: 23 May 2024).

⁴⁶ Uģis Lībietis, Odīta Krenberga, and Ina Strazdiņa, *Trīs jūru samītā Rīgā vienojas par lielāku atbalstu Ukrainai*, <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/arzemes/tris-juru-samita-riga-vienojas-par-lielaku-atbalstu-ukrainai.a462343/> (access: 27 May 2024).

⁴⁷ *Saeimā notiek Trīs jūru iniciatīvas parlamentārais forums*, <https://lvportals.lv/dienaskartiba/342265-saeima-notiks-tris-juru-iniciativas-parlamentarais-forums-2022> (access: 27 July 2024).

⁴⁸ *Trīs jūru iniciatīvas samits un biznesa forums Rīgā pulcēs 12 valstu līderus*, <https://www.liaa.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/tris-juru-iniciativas-samits-un-biznesa-forums-riga-pulces-12-valstu-liderus> (access: 27 May 2024).

the Fund's fourth project was announced for the Port of Burgas in Bulgaria, which aimed to integrate the Three Seas region with Central Asia and the Middle East, supporting the modernization of infrastructure in this area.⁴⁹

The Three Seas Summit in Riga showed progress, but also real challenges for the Initiative, requiring attention and harmonized actions. The introduction of civil society input and greater parliamentary involvement are steps towards democratizing decision-making processes. Nevertheless, limited U.S. representation and a lack of clear political commitment signaled difficulties in building international support for the project. However, the interest of partners such as Germany, the European Commission, the United Kingdom, and Japan suggested the potential for the development of the Initiative.⁵⁰

During the 2023 Three Seas Summit in Bucharest, President Edgars Rinkēvičs presented Latvia's position, emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation and satisfaction with the expansion of the initiative to include Greece, Moldova, and Ukraine as new partners. Rinkēvičs also highlighted plans to strengthen transport, energy, and digital infrastructure, and to support exports from Ukraine through Latvian ports.⁵¹ Despite the president's participation in the summit, the Latvian media paid relatively little attention to him.

At the 9th Three Seas Summit in 2024, organized by Lithuania, the main topic was regional security, crucial for the countries involved, including Latvia. President Rinkēvičs stressed the importance of cooperation for economic growth and security, focusing on protection against hybrid threats, cyberattacks, and the need for investment in transport infrastructure and military mobility.⁵² At the meeting, Latvia and Ukraine signed an agreement on cooperation for regional security. Latvia committed to annual military support for Ukraine at the level of 0.25% of GDP and assistance in cybersecurity, mine clearance, unmanned technologies, and support for Ukraine's aspirations to join the EU and NATO.⁵³

⁴⁹ Lewkowicz and Gołębiowska, 'The Three Seas Initiative'.

⁵⁰ Lieģis, 'Liela kņada', pp. 131–32.

⁵¹ *President of Latvia: Our Region's Growth Is an Integral Element of Regional Defence*, <https://www.president.lv/en/article/president-latvia-our-regions-growth-integral-element-regional-defence> (access: 4 June 2024).

⁵² *Valsts prezidents: jāturpina stiprināt kritiskās infrastruktūras noturību pret uzbrukumiem*, <https://www.president.lv/lv/jaunums/valsts-prezidents-jaturpina-stiprinat-kritiskas-infrastrukturas-noturiba-pret-uzbrukumiem> (access: 22 May 2024).

⁵³ *Latvijas un Ukrainas prezidenti paraksta vienošanos*, https://vs-lv.translate.google.com/raksts/pasaule/2024/04/11/latvijas-un-ukrainas-prezidenti-paraksta-vienosanos?_x_tr_sl=lv&_x_tr_tl=pl&_x_tr_hl=pl&_x_tr_pto=sc (access: 22 May 2024).

The Three Seas Initiative is an opportunity for Latvia to develop economically and a key element of its national security policy. Priority is given to the development of transport infrastructure, especially Via Baltica and Rail Baltica, which are to reduce energy dependence on Russia and support military transport.⁵⁴ Through support for Ukraine and integration with Europe, Latvia is building its regional position, while limiting Russia's influence. The involvement of the EU, Germany and the US in the Three Seas Initiative is crucial to achieving these goals.⁵⁵

Summary: The analysis of Latvia's involvement in the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) indicates the evolution of the country's approach in response to the changing geopolitical environment, especially in the context of growing concerns about the threat from Russia. Latvia has adopted a pragmatic stance towards the 3SI, focusing on specific infrastructure projects, especially in the areas of transport, energy, and digitalization. Particular emphasis is placed on projects related to energy security, which reflects Latvia's desire to reduce its energy dependence on Russia. The involvement of the Latvian financial institution ALTUM in the Three Seas Investment Fund (3SIIF) demonstrates Latvia's active participation in the financial aspects of the initiative. The analysis also highlights the importance of regional cooperation for Latvia, both in economic and security contexts. One of the main challenges is to maintain unity and coherence of action among the countries participating in the 3SI, which requires Latvia to take a diplomatic approach. Latvia sees the 3SI as a tool for long-term strengthening of its position in the region and the European Union, and the analysis points to the need to find a balance between the pursuit of national interests and regional objectives within the 3SI. Latvia's involvement in the 3SI can be described as adaptive and pragmatic, focused on specific economic and strategic benefits, while striving to strengthen the state's position in the region and the EU.

LITHUANIA

Lithuania is one of the founding countries of the 3SI. The President of the State has been participating in the summits of the Initiative since 2016, and the projects implemented during this period have brought

⁵⁴ Agnieszka Orzelska-Stączek and Paweł Ukielski, *Incjatywa Trójmorza z perspektywy jej uczestników* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2020), p. 86.

⁵⁵ Read more: Valerie Kornis, *Latvia's Perspective on the Three-Seas-Initiative*, 22 December 2022, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, <https://www.freiheit.org/central-europe-and-baltic-states/latvias-perspective-three-seas-initiative> (access: 3 June 2024).

significant benefits to Vilnius. Successes include the construction of the Baltic Pipe gas pipeline connecting Poland and Lithuania and the opening of the Polish-Lithuanian gas interconnector in Klaipėda (GIPL) in 2022. Thanks to this and other investments, Lithuania has become the first country in Europe to completely abandon imports of Russian oil, gas and electricity,⁵⁶ and in the future plans to disconnect from Russian power grids and synchronize with continental European grids.

Energy independence and security are on the list of priorities of the state. In this context, the year 2014 and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation became particularly important for Vilnius. The Baltic states began to sound the alarm about President Vladimir Putin's neo-imperial intentions, and Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė called Russia a 'terrorist state'.⁵⁷ This coincided with the 'second wave of regionalisms in Central Europe', when the Bucharest Nine (B9), the Lublin Triangle and the 3SI⁵⁸ were established. Lithuania has been actively involved in the activities of all the above-mentioned formats of cooperation in the region.

We can talk about Lithuania's active participation in strategic projects of the 3SI since 2017—the summit in Warsaw with the participation of US President Donald Trump. This is reflected in Vilnius' involvement in numerous infrastructure projects: the construction of the GIPL interconnector, a digital highway, a digital platform for hydrographic monitoring of the region, a cross-border network of Data Centres, and the construction of a cross-border fibre-optic network. In addition, it was involved in projects to integrate and synchronize the power system of the Baltic States with European networks, the construction of rail (Rail Baltica) and road connections (Via Baltica, Via Carpatia) and the project to create the Three Seas Region Transport Exchange.⁵⁹ In addition, in 2021, Lithuania joined the 3SI Investment Fund.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Litwa całkowicie zrezygnowała z importu rosyjskiego gazu, <https://www.gazeta.prawna.pl/wiadomosci/swiat/artykuly/8392890,litwa-gaz-z-rosji-embargo-import.html> (access: 10 April 2024).

⁵⁷ Dalia Grybauskaitė: Rusija yra teroristinė valstybė, https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/dalia-grybauskaite-rusija-yra-teroristine-valstybe-56-467874?utm_medium=copied (access: 14 September 2014).

⁵⁸ Orzelska-Stączek and Ukielski, *Inicjatywa Trójomorza*, p. 15.

⁵⁹ Read more: Przemysław Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Litwa wobec Inicjatywy Trójomorza w kontekście nadchodzącego szczytu IT w Wilnie*, <https://trojmorze.isppan.waw.pl/najnowsze-informacje/litwa-wobec-inicjatywy-trojmorza-w-kontekscie-nadchodzacego-szczytu-it-w-wilnie-11-kwietnia-2024-roku/> (access: 10 December 2023).

⁶⁰ Trijų jūrų iniciatyvos investicinis fondas, <https://invega.lt/apie-mus/projektai/triju-juru-iniciatyvos-investicinis-fondas/290> (access: 10 December 2023).

Washington's favour, as well as the involvement of Germany and the European Commission in cooperating with the Initiative as strategic partners, have changed the position of Lithuania's political elite towards this format of cooperation.⁶¹ President Dalia Grybauskaitė (2015–19) has already participated in the first summits, but significant changes in the perception of the Initiative in Lithuania can be seen after 2019 and the election of Gitanas Nausėda as President of Lithuania. The new head of state mentioned rapprochement with Poland among the priorities of his foreign policy, including as the 'leader of the Three Seas Initiative'.⁶² In addition, the slogan of Nausėda's election campaign was the 'welfare state',⁶³ based on 'economic and social indicators'.⁶⁴ The idea of eliminating the economic backwardness of Central European states was in line with the policy of the new president, and the Initiative's projects took on a new meaning. Nausėda participated in the Initiative's summits: in Tallinn (virtually) in 2020, in Sofia in 2021, in Riga in 2022 and Bucharest in 2023. In his statements, apart from the opportunity to strengthen relations with neighbours, he pointed to the potential of the Initiative in intensifying cooperation between this part of Europe and the U.S. as a 'guarantor of security'. A similar position was presented by the government of Ingrida Šimonytė (2020–24), who saw the Initiative 'as an important element of policy towards the U.S'.⁶⁵

While representatives of some countries have consistently pointed out that the Initiative is strictly economic in nature, the Baltic states, among other priorities, have from the beginning mentioned the need to secure individual areas of state functioning. Already in 2019, the Lithuanian Ambassador to Poland, Eduardas Borisovas, pointed out that in addition to infrastructure issues, the security factor plays

⁶¹ Read more: Giedyminas Varvuolis, 'The Three Seas Initiative: New Breathing for North–South Connectivity in the Context of Current Geopolitical Shifts in Europe', *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 41, 2024, pp. 35–39; idem and Vitkus, 'Lithuania'; Andrzej Puksztó and Robertas Eismontas, 'Lithuania and the Three Seas Initiative: From Skepticism to Leadership', in Agnieszka Orzelska-Stączek, ed., *The Three Seas Initiative. An Original Concept of Regional Cooperation in Different Approaches* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2024), pp. 109–132.

⁶² *Metinis prezidento G. Nausėdos pranešimas (visas tekstas)*, <https://www.laikmetis.lt/metinis-prezidento-g-nausedos-pranesimas-visas-tekstas/> (access: 10 May 2024).

⁶³ *Pirmasis Respublikos Prezidento Gitanos Nausėdos metinis pranešimas*, https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35435&p_k=1&p_t=271645 (access: 28 May 2024).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Tomasz Żornaczuk, 'Promocja Inicjatywy Trójmorza w krajach członkowskich i wśród państw-obserwatorów', *Strategic File PISM* 104: 12, 2021, [https://www.pism.pl/webroot/upload/files/Strategic%20File/PISM%20Strategic%20File%20nr%2012%20\(104\)\(2\).pdf](https://www.pism.pl/webroot/upload/files/Strategic%20File/PISM%20Strategic%20File%20nr%2012%20(104)(2).pdf) (access: 28 May 2024).

a special role, from Vilnius' point of view, which directly affects the decisions of potential investors in the region. In the same year, Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius discussed the issue of hybrid threats during a meeting with the President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic.⁶⁶ This approach was further strengthened after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the intensification of hybrid attacks on the Lithuanian-Belarusian border in 2021,⁶⁷ and the escalation of the war in Ukraine in 2022.

Lithuania's involvement in the Initiative's infrastructure projects since 2018 has been significant, but this format has been practically absent from the public debate. Particular activity in the field of promotion of the Initiative could be observed since 2023, when the decision to organize the 9th summit in Vilnius was announced. On the one hand, this was part of the policy of building a positive image of the state, and on the other hand, it created an opportunity to take up aspects of the region's security on the international forum. The main promoter of the Initiative in Lithuania was the president. In his annual speech in 2023,⁶⁸ the head of state mentioned the Via Baltica and Rail Baltica projects and stressed the importance of the potential transport corridor⁶⁹ as the 'backbone' of the countries located between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas. In addition, he pointed to the importance of energy projects and the synchronization of the Baltic States with the system of European electricity networks.⁷⁰

Due to the presidential elections in Lithuania, which are scheduled for 12 May 2024, the date of the 3SI summit was postponed from autumn to spring of the same year. This decision was interpreted through the prism of the presidential campaign and was reflected in the difficult relations between the government and the presidential palace. Nevertheless, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the issues of the Initiative were entrusted to an efficient diplomat, the Ambassador

⁶⁶ Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministro L. Linkevičiaus oficialus vizitas Kroatijoje, <https://mvep.gov.hr/naujienos/lietuvos-respublikos-uzsienio-reikalų-ministro-l-linkevičiaus-oficialus-vizitas-kroatijoje/178797> (access: 10 June 2024).

⁶⁷ Barbara Jundo-Kaliszewska, 'Białoruskie rozrachunki albo kryzys migracyjny na Litwie', *Biuletyn Centrum Studiów Migracyjnych Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego* 14: 5, 2021, pp. 2–8.

⁶⁸ Metinis prezidento G. Nausėdos.

⁶⁹ Completing Europe – From the North-South Corridor to Energy, Transportation, and Telecommunications Union, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/completing-europe-from-the-north-south-corridor-to-energy-transportation-and-telecommunications-union/> (access: 10 June 2024).

⁷⁰ Żornaczuk, *Promocja Inicjatywy Trójmorza*.

for Communications, Gediminas Varvuolis,⁷¹ while in the Sejm a parliamentary group 'Intermarium Caucus' was established, headed by the then chairman of the National Security and Defence Committee, Laurynas Kasčiūnas.⁷² It is significant that its purpose in establishing a group of parliamentarians was to create a regional interparliamentary institution modelled on the Crimea Platform, which will develop a regional security strategy and coordinate initiatives aimed at countering Russian aggression at the legal and information level (strengthening defence cooperation, creating a common information space, geopolitical consolidation of the region, strengthening the energy security of the region and activities in support of Ukraine).⁷³

The 9th summit of the 3SI took place in Vilnius on 11 April 2024. It was attended by 25 representatives of countries, including as many as 10 presidents. A joint Declaration was signed.⁷⁴ Among the most important decisions, it is worth mentioning—granting Japan the status of a strategic partner and signing a letter of intent on the establishment of a new Innovation Fund of the 3SI.⁷⁵

The theme of the meeting in Vilnius was cooperation for Europe's resilience and strengthening transatlantic ties. The situation in Ukraine took an important place in the discussion, and President Volodymyr Zelensky personally participated in the summit. This is expressed by articulating an official position on Russian aggression in the text of the Declaration.

Among the most important achievements of the 3SI Summit in 2024, the Lithuanian side indicated:

- Support for Ukraine's transport sector by involving the ITF (International Transport Forum) and creating a special platform for this purpose, administered by the ITF secretariat.
- Cybersecurity activities Initiatives to strengthen the coverage of critical infrastructure, including the creation of an expert group based

⁷¹ Gediminas Varvuolis (born 1970) – Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania to Japan (2018–2021) and Belgium (2013–2018).

⁷² In 2024, Laurynas Kasčiūnas was appointed Minister of National Defence in the government of Ingrida Šimonytė.

⁷³ *Statement by Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Member of the Seimas: 'The Intermarium Caucus Was Established in the Parliament of Lithuania'*, https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35403&p_k=2&p_t=285326 (access: 10 May 2024).

⁷⁴ Joint Declaration of the Ninth Summit of the Three Seas Initiative Vilnius, Lithuania, 11 April 2024, <https://3si.politic.edu.pl/joint-declaration-of-the-ninth-summit-of-the-three-seas-initiative/> (access: 10 May 2024).

⁷⁵ Compare: *Studio Wilno 12.04.2024 – Barbara Jundo-Kaliszewska, PhD*, <https://wilno.tvp.pl/76959886/studio-wilno-12042024-dr-barbara-jundokaliszewska> (access: 10 May 2024).

on the knowledge of the National Cybersecurity Centre in Kaunas (*Nacionalinis kibernetinio saugumo centras*).

- Decisions on the creation of an expert network to strengthen cooperation on the green transformation of the economy, based on the knowledge and capabilities of the Lithuanian Green Policy Institute (*Žaliosios politikos institutas*).

- Lithuania's proposals for 3SI cooperation in the field of military mobility were taken into account. This topic resounded, at the forum of the 3SI Business Forum, the International Transport Forum and other accompanying events, which are taking place at the same time.

- During the Lithuanian Presidency, 143 priority projects were registered, of which 25 belonged to Ukraine and Moldova. The inclusion of the last two countries on the list of projects was one of the initiatives of the Lithuanian Presidency, which uses the forum of the Initiative to promote the pro-European aspirations of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.⁷⁶

In addition, the general consensus on the future activities of the Initiative was confirmed in Vilnius, on deepening cooperation between government institutions, strengthening relations with strategic partners, and openness to expanding cooperation with like-minded states.

Summary: Lithuania is one of the founding countries of the Three Seas Initiative. She has participated in summits regularly since 2016 at the highest level and is always represented by the president. Initially, Lithuania's weak interest in co-operation within this format increased with the U.S., Germany and the European Commission joining the Initiative as strategic partners. The warming of relations between Poland and Lithuania in 2018, after the election of Andrzej Duda as president of Poland, and in 2020 after the election of Gitanas Nausėda as president of Lithuania, was of significant importance. The mutual relations between the heads of state have contributed to Lithuania's greater involvement. The migration crisis in 2021 and the outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine in 2022 brought infrastructure issues, in particular the transport and communication dimension, to the fore. Activities that are part of the strategy of digitization or energy independence of the state are of crucial importance. The Three Seas Initiative Summit in Vilnius in 2024 is proof of the state's adaptive and

⁷⁶ The presidents of Ukraine and Moldova were present at the summit in Vilnius. The President of Georgia did not obtain Parliament's consent to participate in the summit in 2024.

pragmatic approach to the Initiative: it showed Lithuania's activity both in the area of support for Ukraine by the countries belonging to the Three Seas Initiative, as well as its increased commitment to the supra-regional expansion of the format and the continuation of cooperation with the countries of the region as part of individual projects.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the Baltic states' involvement in the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) in the context of the theory of political adaptation reveals that Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia adapt their strategies to changing geopolitical conditions, which affects their approach to regional cooperation. Initially, all three countries saw 3SI mainly as a platform for economic and infrastructural cooperation. However, as geopolitical tensions mounted, their involvement intensified, and their priorities began to evolve towards a greater emphasis on security.

Lithuania, taking a proactive approach, took over the presidency in 2024 and held a summit in Vilnius, focusing on transatlantic cooperation and investments in renewable energy and regional security. All these activities are aimed at strengthening Lithuania's position both in the EU and in the region. Latvia, in turn, organized the 3SI summit in Riga in 2022, focusing on the intra-EU and transatlantic dimensions of the initiative. The decision not to include Ukraine in the 3SI, but to grant it the status of a participating partner, was emphasized. Attention was also paid to the American support of the Investment Fund, which was to increase the investment attractiveness of the region. Estonia, which hosted the summit in 2020, actively participated in energy and digital projects, but its role on the international stage seems to be less clear.

All three countries have shown an increase in activity since 2017, especially after the Warsaw summit with the US president, which underscores their common desire to integrate economic and security aspects. The growing importance of these issues, especially in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, has prompted the Baltic states to actively participate in the Three Seas Investment Fund (3SIIF). In addition, the signing of the declaration 'The Baltic Road to Climate Neutrality' and the expansion of cooperation with new strategic partners, such as Japan, have a positive impact on

maintaining interest in the initiative. The research confirmed the evolution of the Three Seas Initiative as a platform integrating economic and security aspects and the growing involvement of the Baltic states, which adapt their strategies to changing geopolitical conditions, using this initiative as a tool to strengthen regional security and economic development.

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Elżbieta Lesiewicz, PhD – professor at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, historian of contemporary history and political scientist. Head of the Department of Contemporary Political History at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at Adam Mickiewicz University. Secretary of *Przegląd Politologiczny* (Political Review), member of the editorial board of *Przegląd Wielkopolski* (Wielkopolska Review). Head of Postgraduate Studies in History and Social Studies at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at Adam Mickiewicz University. She specialises in research on European integration and equality policy. Her research interests also focus on issues related to women's participation in public life, analysis of the conditions for broadly understood intergenerational dialogue, Polish-Czech relations and the history of the Wielkopolska region. She is the coordinator of the Research Group on Diversity, Equality and (Re)Integration at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at Adam Mickiewicz University. She is the author of several dozen articles on topics related to her research interests.

Agata Włodarska-Frykowska, PhD – an assistant professor at the University of Lodz, political scientist, works at the Faculty of International and Political Studies, department of Political Systems. Her academic interests include political systems, national and ethnic minorities, political and social communication, migrations and women's political activity in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as educational policy. She cooperates with many universities, participating in numerous scientific conferences and conducting classes. She is an author of several articles on topics related to her research interests.

Barbara Jundo-Kaliszewska, PhD – an assistant professor and lecturer at the Faculty of International and Political Studies at the University of Lodz. Her key research areas concern: Polish-Lithuanian relations in XX and XXI, foreign and security policy of the post-Soviet states, ethnonationalism, minority rights, women's rights, historical policy, and political narratives in Eastern Europe. B. Jundo-Kaliszewska is the author of the book "Hostages of History. The Polish minority in post-Soviet Lithuania" (Lodz University Press 2019). She is also an author of many scientific publications, analyses, and expert opinions prepared at the request of external institutions. B. Jundo-Kaliszewska graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy and History of the University of Lodz with an M.A. degree in History in 2004. She received a PhD in History in 2016 and completed postgraduate studies in Human Resource Management at the University of Lodz in 2021.